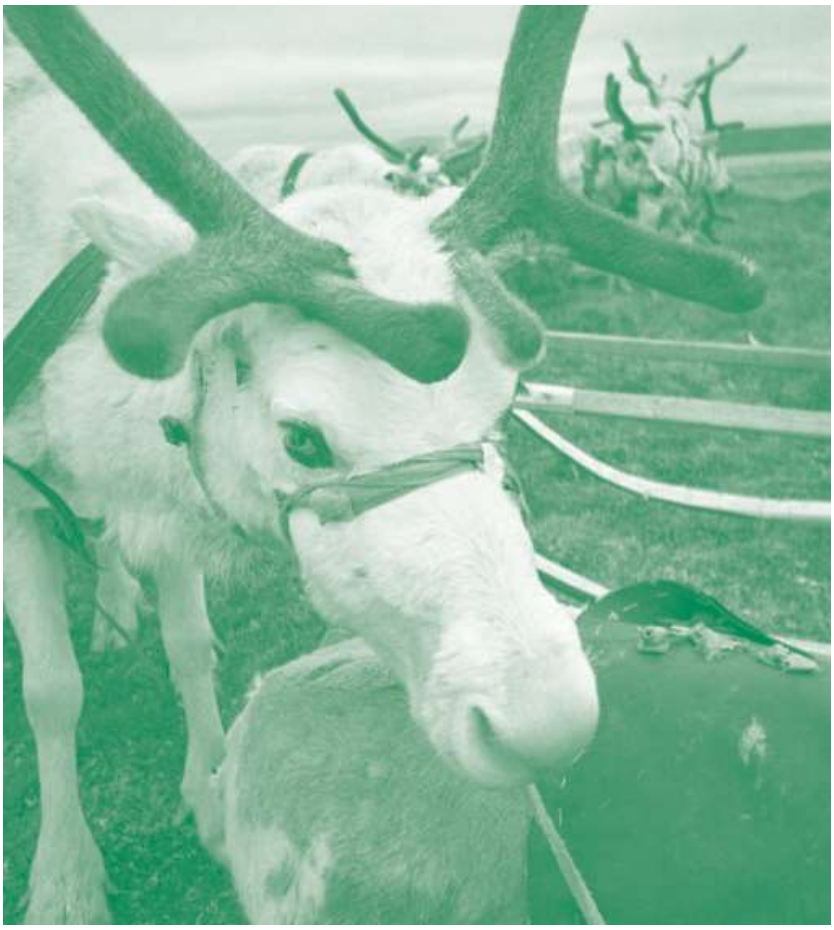
Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

What it Means to be a Herdsman

The Practice and Image of Reindeer Husbandry among the Komi of Northern Russia

Joachim Otto Habeck



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What it Means to be a Herdsman

The Practice and Image of Reindeer Husbandry among the Komi of Northern Russia

This study examines the social, economic, symbolic and political significance of reindeer husbandry among the Komi, a people in the north of European Russia. Habeck examines how agency is to be understood in various domains: the reindeer-herding unit, the household, the enterprise and the village community. He broadens the sphere of analysis to include herders' relations with oil companies using the same land and with other actors further afield. The concept of agency is developed as a counter to structural constraints, yielding a complex picture of herders' opportunities and strategic resources. In this light, "tradition" figures as a discursive resource, yet by the same token introduces a new range of problems since it originates and is validated from outside the community.

Habeck concludes that the prospects for reindeer herding should be assessed not only from economic and ecological perspectives, but also with regard to its prestige in the eyes of the herders themselves, their neighbours and the public at large. Reindeer herders have very limited scope for agency when it comes to crafting their own image. Their view of their occupation is strikingly different from that promoted by actors in governmental, educational and economic spheres. The herders' self-understanding also diverges from the way activists in non-governmental organizations portray them.

Habeck's pioneering approach consists in applying the concepts of agency and structure to an ethnographic case study in the circumpolar region. This book contributes to our understandings of constraints and choices under postsocialism and in contemporary pastoral societies generally. It is the first of a trilogy of studies exploring reindeer husbandry in the Russian North; it is planned to publish the monographs of Florian Stammler and Aimar Ventsel in this series in 2005.

Joachim Otto Habeck received his PhD degree at the University of Cambridge. After working for several years as a research assistant in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, he joined the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in 2003 as co-ordinator of the Siberian Studies Centre.

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Joachim Otto Habeck

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Preface

Reindeer herding is the economic and symbolic mainstay of many of the thirty or more indigenous minority peoples of the Russian North, who live at the remotest reaches of the postsocialist world. The greater openness of these regions since *perestroika* has allowed a young generation of Russian and foreign anthropologists to chart an unexpected diversity among these communities, and to ask new kinds of questions.

Joachim Otto Habeck's work is based on extended fieldwork in the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, both in Russia's European North. He combines the experience of living on the land for a year and migrating with the herders with research in local archives, a mastery of a wide technical literature in Russian, a fine sense of history, and an awareness of comparisons with the Fennoscandian North. His beautiful descriptions of the intimacies of life in the tent, village and town are no mere literary embellishment, but convey a powerful sense of a contested landscape and of the diverse interests and roles among its players.

Habeck's distinctive contribution to the literature on reindeer-herding communities goes beyond the ethnic essentialism which still haunts much recent writing, with its continuing bias towards the indigenous as a value in itself. The Komi are not what has been officially known in the Russian North as a 'small people'. Yet Komi reindeer herders are a marginal minority within the Komi population, perceived by mainstream Komi as a 'traditional' and backward branch of their own people. Habeck establishes a politically dominant concept of tradition and at the same time problematises it within a wider theoretical discussion of agency and structure. In international and Russian discourse, a claim to tradition is one of the best resources available to an indigenous people. But Habeck's detailed analysis of historical sources shows, on the contrary, that Komi reindeer herders have been 'modern' ever since the late 17th century, when they learned herding from the neighbouring Nenets and then gradually turned it into an expansive, market-oriented system of meat production. What claims, then, can Komi herders make to agency in the postsocialist turmoil of ethnic and local politics?

To tackle this question, Habeck develops an innovative framework for accommodating the competing structures and powers in which Komi reindeer herders are implicated. Moving ever outwards from the fire at the centre of the nomadic tent, he reviews in turn the landscape of herding, the village

or town, and the oil industry, and then moves to the heart of the reindeer herding business: the production and marketing of meat. He interprets these as a series of interlinked 'domains', each domain occupying its own kind of space, and each offering a distinctive arena for the exercise of agency.

Through a detailed study of personal relations within a nomadic tent, he shows how the herders are at their most free from control by the state farm administration when on the land. Their mobility across the tundra gives access to certain kinds of resource through skill and experience, key criteria by which agency and choice can be exercised by oneself and appreciated by others. But the herders' mobility also takes in the domain of village and town, where every family has a house or flat, giving them access to resources of a different kind. It is here that agency becomes more complex and ambiguous, and it can even involve choosing *not* to act.

Some parts of the picture are familiar to specialists on reindeer herding in Russia: the gender imbalance which lures women away from the tents and into the town, the lower status of the workers who actually produce the reindeer meat compared to their administrators, the ghastliness of school which inherently disadvantages the herders through its concept of 'culturedness' (*kul'turnost'*). But Habeck's meticulous description and analysis of these phenomena allow him to build up a new and subtle argument about agency, in which the herders are no mere victims. Building on Giddens' view of agency as a reflexive and creative exercise of choice within available structures, his model of interacting domains allows him to make a profoundly anthropological contribution by showing *who* has agency *in which situations*, and equally importantly, just where agency is absent and how this absence works.

Herders have most agency in the daily activity of their herding practices, and least in their dealings with the oil industry. Their own administrators stand somewhere in between: while herders work *on* the land, their administrators negotiate with oil companies *about* the land. But the domain in which the agency of both parties meet and is most strongly tested is the marketing of meat. The author analyses the practices surrounding the autumn slaughterhouse in a pivotal chapter which could be called 'the social life of meat'. Where nomadic tent and village office were earlier explored as distinct kinds of space, now we see them interacting in an intense nexus of mutual agency, dependence and opportunism. The slaughterhouse is the space in which the state farm reaches out into the tundra to audit the herders' freedom during the rest of the year, compelling them to justify their agency on the land by demonstrating their productivity, while the herders try to take advantage of the farm's infrastructure for their own private economic purposes. The discussion brilliantly demonstrates why herders do not want full

privatisation, and perhaps could not even survive it, but are able to handle this domain in a way which allows them a relatively high degree of economic agency.

The account of meat marketing allows the author to develop a wider picture of the informal economy, reviewing kinds of household, their access to resources and networks, and their varying scope for subsistence, mobility and prosperity. He draws together the key topics of family dynamics, gender and generation, in order to explore the question of who might still want to work in reindeer husbandry and why. Here, Habeck sets his problematic of agency in a wider political and theoretical context by establishing a further domain, this time in the realm of symbolism: how herders are perceived, both by themselves and by others. He analyses a series of typologies and oppositions between discourses of the herders and of agro-industrial, scientific, cultural and political actors who seek to manage the herders, at the same time as considering them backward – an irony given the historical role of Komi herders as the vanguard of modern reindeer herding techniques in the Russian North, but consistent with the official 'history' of the region which begins with the founding of the oil industry in 1970, thereby rendering the herders and their practices forever prehistoric.

If, as Habeck persuasively argues, image is the ultimate symbolic capital, then for all the subtlety of their social relations with each other on the land, in the public sphere Komi reindeer herders are symbolic paupers. Habeck's work reveals with unprecedented clarity just 'what it means' to be a herder if one cannot capitalise on ready-made discourses of indigeneity, traditionality, agency, and even victimhood. Komi herders are not able to join their administrators in the wider public sphere of negotiations about land and oil, but are also absent from the creation and manipulation of ethno-political rhetoric – modern entrepreneurs condemned forever to be traditional, through a self-perpetuating symbolism over which they have little control.

Underlying all the description and analysis, one senses the author's passionate concern for the wellbeing of the community and the healthy future development of a highly skilled and flexible way of life. But the implications of Habeck's work reach far beyond the periphery of the remote Russian North to mainstream postsocialist studies and beyond. In a setting where resources are contested and discourses of ethnicity, modernity and identity are thrown into the melting pot, he uses a sensitive case study to show why solutions cannot be only economic, nor even structural, but must include an attempt to take control of one's own image.

Piers Vitebsky Cambridge, November 2004

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Anthropological fieldwork is more than just an academic exercise; it always involves friendship and co-operation. Fieldwork would be impossible were it not for the courage and freedom of people to accept an unexpected acquaintance as a member of their everyday lives. I was granted this unreserved benevolence countless times in many places in the Russian Federation. My sincere thanks go to the families and individuals who received me so well in the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, notably the Arteev, Filippov, Gusev, Kanev, Khatanzeiskii, Khoziainov, Kozhevin, Pavlov, Panshin, Pechenkin and Rochev families in Novikbozh and Ust'-Usa. Thanks to the management and employees of the former state farm Ust'-Usinskii, I was able to participate in the everyday lives of reindeer-herding units. People in other reindeer-herding communities, too, supported my research, and I am grateful to many people in the villages and hamlets Siziabsk, Mutnyi Materik, Shcheliabozh, Kolva, Rogovaia, Petrun', Tosh-Pi, Abez', Yar-Pi-Yak, Kharuta, Khoseda-Khard, Khorei-Ver and Krasnoe.

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As a research assistant to Tim Ingold in the TUNDRA and SPICE projects, I also spent many months at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Aberdeen. To work and live in Aberdeen was a great privilege and a pleasure. I felt happy to return to a country I had known from my youth, and I was to get to know it better through many excursions with Tony Glendinning and his insightful thoughts and stories. I remember them with gratitude and affection. I also feel indebted to David Anderson, whose scholarship and friendliness have been an example to me since the start of

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Notes on languages, transliteration, sources and field-work

Apart from English and standard Latin expressions, the text of this book contains words from the Russian and Komi languages, which are indicated by different formats. Russian words are set in italic type (*russkii yazyk*); Komi words, as well as Nenets words that are used among Komi reindeer-herding families, are set in italics and also underlined (*komi kyv*). I have used the Library of Congress transliteration system for Cyrillic script, with one exception, in which I follow the standard of David Anderson (2000): the iotised vowels *ia*, *ie* and *iu*, when they appear as the first letter of a word, are rendered as *ya*, *ye* and *yu* (for example, *yando* instead of *iando*). Pre-revolutionary Russian orthography is replaced by the currently existing spelling. Russian words are generally rendered in their dictionary form.

Komi uses two characters that are missing in the Russian alphabet: *i* and *ö*. To distinguish *i* from the Cyrillic letter и, the former is rendered in transliteration as *ï* and the latter as *i*. Komi reindeer-herding families usually speak the northern vernacular of the Komi language, which is called the Izhma Komi dialect (*Iz'vatas*), or some dialect close to it. Although some scholars propose a specific orthography for the Izhma Komi dialect (see Anufrieva 1992), I use the transliterated version of the orthographic equivalent in standard Komi tongue (for example, *argysh* instead of *argyzh*, as suggested by Anufrieva 1992: 8). Komi words, too, are given in dictionary form.

The research draws on various types of data, such as published and unpublished printed texts, Internet web pages, personal communications with colleagues, archival materials and, most importantly, fieldwork materials. To explain the provenance and process of collection of fieldwork materials, let me briefly summarise my research activities in the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. The main period of fieldwork was from July 1998 to July 1999. Subsequent stays in the region in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 were each limited to three months maximum. The central locations of my fieldwork were the villages and towns in the north-eastern part of the Komi Republic (between Izhma and Vorkuta), as well as the south-eastern part of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (see the map attached to this book). I visited all reindeer-herding enterprises (former state farms) in the Komi Republic that existed in 1999, along with four enterprises in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, but the visits differed considerably in length. The reindeer-herding community that I know best is the one which encompasses

Novikbozh and Ust'-Usa, two villages in the vicinity of Usinsk. I stayed for extended periods in both the villages and the reindeer-herding camps with several families from these communities. With regard to the practice of reindeer herding, I can draw on participant observation for most parts of the year, except late summer and early autumn.

I have documented and indexed the fieldwork in a series of notebooks, as is customary in anthropological research, and I numbered the various entries or units. I refer to such fieldwork materials by using the abbreviation FM and the number of the unit. Usually I refer to fieldwork materials only in cases of direct quotations.

In summer 1999 I carried out two weeks of archival work in the State Archive of the Komi Republic (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Komi) in the Komi capital, Syktyvkar. In this book I refer to only a few of the materials I went through; these are included in the Bibliography.

Glossary of frequently used Russian terms

Avtonomnaia Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika (ASSR). Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.
bania. Bathhouse.
brigada. Brigade; herding unit.
chum (Komi: *chom*). Tent; reindeer herders' tent.
kontora. Counting house; office.
kolkhoz (*kollektivnoe khoziaistvo*). Collective enterprise; collective farm.
okrug. District, area.
panty. Antlers.
raion. Rayon; district.
sovkhoz (*sovetskoe khoziaistvo*). Soviet enterprise; state farm.

Main actors

Reindeer-Herding Brigada N° 9

Vasilii, head of the brigade
Tania, his wife, senior tent worker
Tonia, niece of Tania and junior tent worker
Sasha, son of Tania and Vasilii, junior herder
Irina, daughter of Tania and Vasilii, schoolgirl, lives with the brigade in summer herders' tent

} left-hand side of the reindeer herder's tent

Ivan, younger brother of Vasilii, senior herder
Polina, his partner, second tent worker in the brigade
Ter' Mish Andrei, son of Polina, junior herder
Lyzhasa Andrei, a distant relative of everybody, junior herder
Lesha, a distant relative, apprentice herder
Zhen'ko, nephew of Polina, to become an apprentice herder
Vitko, son of Polina, to become an apprentice herder

} right-hand side

Reindeer-Herding Brigada N° 10

Zhenia, new head of the brigade, nephew of Vasilii and Ivan
Vitalii, former head of this brigade
Liuda, Vitalii's wife, formerly senior tent worker in this brigade

} right-hand side

Izhma Fed', senior herder
Stepan, senior herder
Liuba, his wife, senior tent worker
Kostia, son of Liuba and Stepan, junior reindeer herder
Öndriuk, nephew of Liuba and Vitalii, junior herder

} left-hand side

The Khatanzeiskii family

Yelena, Zhenia's mother
Ania, his older sister
Roza, his younger sister
Katia, his younger sister
Van'ko, his younger brother
Mishko, his younger brother

The farm office

Khoziainov, supervisor of all brigades
Sharikov, zoo-technician
Oleg, nephew of Sharikov, veterinary surgeon
Svetlana, Oleg's wife, veterinary surgeon
Tret'iakov, driver

Farther afield

Volodia, works as a foreman in an oil company
Mr Danilov, works as a driver in another oil company
G. P. Pasynkov, director of a reindeer-herding enterprise in the town of Vorkuta
L. V. Bezumov, works in the Ministry of Agriculture in Syktyvkar, capital of the Komi Republic

(The names of some persons have been changed by the author.)

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Background

In this book I examine the past and present of reindeer herding among the Komi, a people in the north of the European part of the Russian Federation, in the hope of contributing to the assessment of the future prospects for reindeer herding in this region. Reindeer herding is pursued by many peoples in the north of Russia and is well documented in anthropological and other writings, but comparatively little attention has been paid to the role of the Komi in reindeer husbandry.

This oversight is conspicuous, considering the peculiar position of the Komi among the peoples of the north and the significant influence that Komi practices of reindeer herding have exerted on the wider region. There are more than thirty indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation with the special legal status of being "small-numbered", and for many of these peoples reindeer herding serves as a symbol of their ethnic identity. The Komi do not belong to the "small-numbered peoples", and although some Komi groups engage in reindeer herding, it is not central to the ethnic identity of the Komi as a whole. Reindeer-herding groups constitute a minority among the Komi. Komi reindeer herders are therefore in an anomalous position in ethnographic, economic and symbolic terms.

Precisely because of this anomalous position, their relationship to the current political discourse about indigenous identities and tradition is also unusual and problematic. I argue that while the representatives of the small-numbered peoples can take advantage of this discourse, Komi reindeer herders are more likely to be its victims. Particularly the usage of "tradition" as a discursive resource may be reducing rather than extending the space for manœuvre for Komi reindeer herders.

Thus, I analyse not only the practice of Komi reindeer herding but also its image among the wider public. This image, it should be emphasised, has changed repeatedly since the time when the Komi began to engage in reindeer herding. In the nineteenth century, Komi reindeer husbandry pro-

vided an example of market economy and capitalist relations in the rural north of Russia. In the twentieth century, Komi practices of reindeer herding were officially promoted as a blueprint for "progressive" reindeer husbandry all over the Russian North, yet at the same time officials began to associate the reindeer business with backwardness. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we witness Komi reindeer herding gradually acquiring a new image: that of a traditional life-style.

In the political discourse on identities and indigenous peoples, the notion of tradition is frequently used as a resource. Such cases have been illustrated in the anthropological literature throughout the world (e.g. Appadurai 1981; Barth 1969; Keesing 1992; Lawson 1997; Linnekin 1983; Sissons 1993; Thomas 1992) and with regard to the Circumpolar North in particular (e.g. Bjerkli 1996; Brox 1973; Feit 2001; Müller-Wille 2001; Dorais and Searles 2001 provide a useful overview of studies on Inuit identities). Publications in English concerning indigenous identities in the north of the Russian Federation include, among others, Anderson 2000; Balzer 1999; Golovnev and Osherenko 1999; Grant 1995; Kasten, forthcoming; King 2002; Nobl Øverland 1999; Pika and Prokhorov 1994; Slezkine 1994; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003; and Vitebsky 1992 and 2002. Some authors have sought to deconstruct identities as "invented", though others have emphasized that "created identities are not somehow contrived and insincere" (Thomas 1992); rather, the formulation and negotiation of identities and traditions constitute a dynamic and creative process. Traditions "are invented as they are lived and thought about" (Linnekin 1983: 250; cf. Sahlins 1999).

However – and this is my main argument – for Komi reindeer herders and their family members, the notion of tradition is a problematic discursive resource. What is more, they seldom talk about tradition, nor do they imagine themselves as traditional – they describe themselves in other terms. Instead, other people, notably intellectuals and politicians in Russia and abroad, are prone to describe Komi reindeer herders as traditional, as leading a traditional way of life. Thus, Komi reindeer herders themselves have no control over their own image, as this image is created and reproduced by outsiders.

I interpret Komi reindeer herders' lack of control over their image as reflecting a lack of agency in the political sphere. This does not mean, however, that they have no agency at all. Their agency is of a different kind; it is present in other domains. Domains, as I use the term, are different settings of everyday existence that together constitute the life-world of an individual or group – in this case, Komi reindeer herders and their family members.

The chapters of the book correlate broadly with different domains and their associated kinds of space: the reindeer-herding unit (chapter 2), the

agricultural enterprise (chapters 3 and 6), the village community (chapters 3 and 7), the oil companies operating on former reindeer-herding pastures (chapter 5), and the administrative and political environment that encompasses reindeer husbandry (chapter 8). I discuss each domain by focusing on one key resource and its role in relations between reindeer herders and other actors in the given domain. Thus, the chapter on the oil industry (chapter 5) deals with land as a key resource; the chapter on the agricultural enterprise (chapter 6) deals with meat as a key resource. In chapter 7 I analyse reindeer-herding households in terms of various sources of income, and in chapter 8 I discuss the image of reindeer husbandry by examining the usage of "tradition" as a resource of a different kind, which I call discursive. What follows is a brief overview of the contents of these chapters.

1.2 Overview

Many ethnographic accounts begin with the arrival of the anthropologist at a remote destination and his or her first contact with the "others" (what Campbell [1995: 28] calls the "arrival topos"). In contrast, the story of this book starts in the tent of the reindeer herders, as this is the point of reference from which everything else unfolds. Chapter 2 is an ethnography of the reindeer-herding Brigada N^{o} 9 (Brigade Number 9) of the former state farm Ust'-Usinskii, a reindeer-herding enterprise in the north of the Komi Republic. I do not use concepts such as "agency" or "tradition" in this chapter, because the Komi reindeer herders and their family members do not talk about "agency" or "tradition" themselves. I simply want to describe Komi reindeer husbandry *in vivo* and to prepare the ground for the subsequent analytical chapters. The story revolves around the tent as the centre of the life-world of the reindeer herders and tent workers in the tundra and forest. From there, the story moves outward across the rivers and pastures towards the Komi villages farther south.

In chapter 3 we follow the reindeer herders and tent workers into "their" village. Although the tent is the centre of the life-world for a considerable part of the year, it is not the only one. A Komi reindeer-herding family has two bases: the tent in the tundra and the house in the village. Social relations in the tundra are not the same as social relations in the village. We shall get to know some officials from the reindeer-herding enterprise, who have interests and rationales different from those of the actual herders and tent workers. We shall also visit the village school and explore how reindeer herding is portrayed in local cultural institutions. Teachers and librarians play an important role in formulating the image of reindeer herding in the local context, yet the paradigms they use to define reindeer herding are imported from outside the community. The chapter ends

with an excursion to the nearest town, which was erected on the pastures of the reindeer herders and has developed into the centre of oil production in the Komi Republic. The identity of the town is promoted to a wider public in the Komi Republic and the Russian Federation in a strikingly different way from the identity of the reindeer-herding villages. The local narrative, which is based on the appropriation of oil and gas, associates the construction of the town with the "beginning of history" and ironically, albeit unintentionally, extradites the reindeer herders and tent workers into prehistoric times.

Chapters 2 and 3 establish the domains of subsequent chapters (5-8) and raise questions about various kinds of agency in these domains. Each of the domains is related to a specific configuration of agency, and though one and the same actor may have a difficult standing in one domain, he or she may be excellently placed in another.

In chapter 4 I describe the dynamics of reindeer herding in the European North in time and space. The Komi learnt how to herd reindeer from their northern neighbours, the Nenets. The Komi started to engage in reindeer herding comparatively late, notably in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, the history and "traditionality" of Komi involvement in reindeer husbandry go no deeper than those of the cotton industry in Britain. Just as the cotton industry ushered in Britain's industrial revolution, so the emergence of large-scale reindeer husbandry transformed the rural economy in many parts of the Russian North. By the mid-nineteenth century, reindeer husbandry in the European North had developed into a fully market-oriented and highly profitable business. The ways in which the Komi practised reindeer husbandry were considered to be progressive and, at times, aggressive and expansive at the cost of the Nenets. From 1930 onwards, this "progressive" image of Komi reindeer husbandry gradually gave way to an image of "backwardness". Communist Party officials assumed that any activity to do with reindeer must be backward; they constructed this image accordingly.

Reindeer herding connects the Komi with their neighbours, the Nenets, geographically as well as historically. The pastures of the Komi and European Nenets herders are intertwined and constitute a single region that stretches from the shores of the White Sea to the Urals and beyond. Since the 1970s, though, many of the southernmost pastures have lain fallow; the herders no longer use them. I shall explain why, in various cases, herders and their managers decided either to abandon or to continue using these lands.

Rights to land use are the focus of chapter 5.[1] With the advent of the oil and gas industry in the region, Komi and Nenets reindeer herders have

[1] Chapter 5 is a modified version of an earlier publication, Habeck 2002.

had to cope with the fact that part of the land officially allotted to them has been transferred to oil and gas companies, and oil and gas production negatively affects the quality of their pastures. In this process of "encroachment", however, lie some elements that herders and their managers take as opportunities. In chapter 5 I assess the extent to which reindeer herders have control over land transfer and compensation and what strategies they develop to tackle the challenges of this encroachment. It will become evident that the withdrawal of land for oil and gas production constitutes one among many problems for Komi reindeer herding, but not the most threatening one.

In chapter 6 I argue that relations between Komi reindeer herders and the managers of the reindeer-herding enterprises are different from those between factory workers and their bosses or between farm workers and farm managers in the central part of Russia. For many months the herders operate outside the sphere of direct control by management. Management's control is restricted to some seasonal key events such as "taking stock" of the herds during spring and autumn corrals. Equally, managers have to render supplies and services at certain times and in certain locations. Events such as taking stock and providing supplies are moments when the relations between managers and herders are exposed and tested. For the rest of the year, both sides – the herding unit and management – have to rely on each other without close scrutiny. Thus, in addition to the mechanisms of contract and control, there must be trust between the two sides. I shall describe these relations as a kind of symbiosis. That the two groups operate out of sight of each other for most of the year gives reason to treat them as two separate domains. By the same token, both groups stick to the old organisational structure of the state farm, and in that regard they may be seen as constituting a single domain.

Komi reindeer husbandry has generally bypassed federal privatisation policies. From a conventional market economy perspective, the reasons why the mechanisms of socialist agriculture still survive and people remain with the former state farm even if they receive no regular wages year after year are enigmatic. I discuss this question with reference to anthropological studies in other regions of Russia and propose that the former state farm provides a basis for the informal entrepreneurial activities of both herders and managers. The currency of this informal trade is manipulable resources, which seldom turn up in the official statistics of the enterprise. Social networks – kinship and friendship – are resources themselves. Social stratification among reindeer-herding families shows that different actors use resources with different success.

Chapter 7 illustrates that reindeer herding is an important element in the livelihood of many northern Komi families, yet it is not the only element. In times of economic hardship families place their members in various

occupational spheres and subsistence sectors in order to diversify their monetary and non-monetary income. Every Komi reindeer-herding family is implicitly confronted with the question of who is going to work with the reindeer and who is going to stay in the village or move to town. Who is willing and able to work in reindeer herding? I answer this question for each gender specifically, because the criteria for women to work and live in tents differ from those for men. The remoteness of a rural community appears as one among various factors that influence the willingness of young people to work in reindeer husbandry. At first sight, this finding implies that there is a relation between lack of transportation and the existence of supposedly traditional life-styles.

However, people work in reindeer husbandry not for the sake of tradition but in order to make a living. In chapter 8 I examine the concept of tradition and other elements in the discourse surrounding reindeer husbandry. The reindeer herders rarely speak about tradition; instead, they define their ethos through experience. Those who try to promote reindeer husbandry in politics and international organisations use tradition as a discursive resource. The farther one moves away from the tent, the more the concept of tradition gains political value. The arrangement of the chapters in this book mirrors the journey from places where reindeer herding is actually done to places where the image of reindeer herding is crafted. In other words, the architecture of my account follows the pathways of the emergence of tradition as a discursive resource. While other peoples of the Russian North may be able to use and manipulate such traditional imagery, Komi reindeer herders are less likely to do so, for specific reasons: the Komi do not fulfil certain criteria linked to "indigenousness" in the Russian Federation; reindeer husbandry is not an ethnic marker for the Komi in general; and their involvement in reindeer husbandry began in comparatively recent times.

While chapters 2 and 3 describe reindeer herding at "ground level", chapters 5 through 8 deal with various domains in the life-world of the reindeer herders and tent workers. For each of these domains, the scope and quality of agency are discussed for various actors (members of reindeer-herding families, managers, oil companies, and politicians). After having shown what the choices are and how decisions are made, in the conclusion – chapter 9 – I return to the issue of Komi reindeer herders' agency in a wider perspective. Ultimately, the prospects for reindeer herding depend on its attractiveness and viability, and these in turn depend on agency. In conclusion, I argue that gaining control over their own image is a vital requirement for the reindeer herders and their family members in order to develop a viable future.

1.3 Key concepts

As key concepts in this book I use *agency* and *structure*, *resources*, and *tradition*. The concept of agency has been used in various senses, as is evident in the wide range of literature dealing with it (cf. Ritzer 2000). I employ the word *agency* in a sense that comes close to the conceptualisations presented by Giddens (1984; cf. Dietz and Burns 1992). My preference for Giddens's approach to the relation between agency and structure over other approaches is based in large part on his emphasis on "the active, reflexive character of human conduct" (1984: xvi).[2] Thereby he provides more space for wilful power, or choice, than other sociological theoreticians do. Agency, as I define it, is the potential (the power, the possibility) to make things happen. It is the potential to "make a difference" (Giddens 1984: 14) and to make a choice. Ultimately, it is the capability to act, to choose and decide over one's life and livelihood.

Agency is *not* the instantiated action itself but the necessary condition underlying all occurrences of intentional actions. Agency in the sense in which I use it is *not* equal to power. In accordance with Dietz and Burns (1992: 190), power is defined as "the ability to influence the situation so as to ensure that others behave as desired, that is, the ability to influence the rules upon which others act". Power, then, refers to actions that have an intended influence on other persons, whereas agency in its intentionality is not necessarily directed towards any other person but only towards oneself. Further, agency may be expressed as the choice to abstain from any kind of action in a certain situation; in other words, agency may include the option of doing nothing that might change the situation.

There are different kinds of agency, and these are exerted in various domains. A few examples illuminate this in the context of Komi reindeer husbandry. One kind of agency is contained in the practical skills of the individual reindeer herder, which enable him to manage the herd, and in the operational skills of the state farm accountant, which enable her to manage the accounts. Another kind lies in the preference for certain activities over others, such as the preference for spending one's time fishing rather than participating in a public hearing on the potential effects of the development of new oil fields. This may be understood as the option of abstaining from action. Thus, individuals "may choose to *withhold* their voices – an act of silence or non-participation may equally express a position" (Wilson 2002b: 19-20, her emphasis). In terms of domains, in this example the individual

[2] In addition, Giddens's views about history (1984: xxviii-xxix, 202, 227-260) are less teleological and unidirectional than those of others, which is essential for the discussion of tradition and modernity that follows.

prefers to exert his or her agency in the private rather than the public domain. Yet another kind of agency is exemplified by the varying arrangements of the meat trade and meat consumption by the reindeer-herding brigades (chapter 6). Finally, the ability to speak the language of high-ranking officials is also a specific kind of agency, one which obviously relates to the public domain. The latter kind of agency comes closest to the notion of power, although all four examples have implications for power relations in the social structure of the reindeer-herding enterprise and community.

In what follows, I pitch the concept of agency against the concept of structure. The term *structure* will appear infrequently in the following chapters, but even so, it is implicitly present all the time and will have its comeback in the concluding chapter. For example, structure is inherent in the shape of the state farm or the different tiers of bureaucracy. Structure, as I understand it, is the state of affairs, the situation as a given.

Although structure is subject to change – and in fact is constantly changing – its main property is nevertheless persistence. Sometimes the persistence appears to be equal to inertia, because there is apparently so little change. Nevertheless, this inertia itself may be endorsed by the agency of certain actors, as shall be exemplified by the story of the state farm which is centre stage for the protagonists of this book. Agency can "work" in either direction: continuity or change. Actors may challenge or promote the existing system of social relations. Structure provides pathways and possibilities as well as obstacles. *Enabling* and *constraining* are dialectic properties of the structure (Giddens 1984: 162). While structure often impedes or resists agency, it nevertheless constitutes the conditions without which agency could not occur.

In connection with the concepts of agency and structure, I also offer a brief definition of the term *resources.* Resources are elements or components of the structure that provide the preconditions for an actor to exert his or her agency. In order to realise a certain intention, one needs agency *and* resources together (even if the intention is "not to change" anything). Resources may be further distinguished as various types of capital: economic, social, cultural and symbolic (Ritzer 2000: 536, with reference to Bourdieu). Economic and social capital, in the context of Komi reindeer herding, are illustrated and discussed throughout chapters 5, 6 and 7. Economic and social capital relate predominantly to the practice of reindeer herding, whereas cultural and symbolic capital relate mainly to the image of reindeer herding, which I discuss in chapters 7 and 8. *Tradition*, the other key concept of this book, may also serve as a resource that may help to create cultural and symbolic capital.

While the concepts of agency and structure provide a general framework, the concept of tradition is the one I intend to problematise, particularly in chapters 8 and 9. "Tradition" can be defined in the sense of convention or routine, standards and rules (cf. Shils 1997 [1958]; Boyer 1990; Hobsbawm 1983: 3).[3] Some authors imply that traditions are received or handed down from one generation to another (e.g. Shils 1997: 105; the large body of literature on "traditional environmental knowledge" provides many additional examples). For the discussion in this book, however, it is important to underline that traditions are not "received" or "handed down" through a process of transmission. Rather, they are learnt through practice, or, to use Ingold's (2000) terms, acquired through enskilment. The process of acquiring skills and practical knowledge involves demonstration and observation, repetition and imitation. The individual is repeating and reinventing actions (including acts of speech) that other people have carried out before. The imitation need not be a fully accurate copy of the original. Indeed, it may be dangerous to believe that the most accurate copy is the best (see page 149). Thus, while the repetitive character of an act permits us to take notice of its being part of a tradition, it "cannot afford to be invariant" (Hobsbawm 1983: 2). Tradition necessarily includes some flexibility and variance, yet at the same time it presupposes endurance (Giddens 1994: 62). Tradition and structure, in the senses in which I use them, have one important quality in common: persistence. The relation between the notions of tradition and structure are discussed in section 9.2.

When I speak of the "traditionalist paradigm", I mean the reference to tradition, with a certain positive connotation, in discourse. Shils has called this "the search for a usable past" (1997: 106; cf. Appadurai 1981; Bjerkli 1996; Lawson 1997). It is in this sense that "tradition" – or, to be more exact, the reference to tradition – may constitute a resource. Members of the so-called small-numbered peoples in the Russian North are able to utilise this resource, and often they do so successfully. My concern is to show that "tradition" turns out to be a problematic resource in the case of Komi reindeer herding. I also show that the perception of Komi reindeer herding as something "traditional" has been brought into political play by external actors. It has been the wider Soviet and Russian society – not the Komi reindeer herders themselves – that has found a "usable past" for them. To speak in analogy to Suzman about the Namibian Bushmen (2000: 9), the image of Komi reindeer herders has very little to do with the herders themselves, and a great deal to do with how Soviet and post-Soviet society has

[3] Hobsbawm (1983: 3) emphasises that his own definition of tradition should be distinguished from convention or routine.

been constructing its self-image (see section 9.3). This society conceives of itself as being "modern".

In Soviet society, the values ascribed to progress and backwardness derived directly from a view of history with a markedly teleological character. In historical materialism and the "Marxist-Leninist" worldview, history flows in a unilinear direction from hunter-gatherer societies via various stages to capitalist society and on through socialist society to communist society. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the notion of a unilinear path of history and development has by no means suffered, since this notion has been part and parcel of mainstream occidental thinking for the last 150 years or so, with the idea of evolutionism lurking in the background (see Giddens 1984: 228-243 and *passim*). Although the ideas of progress and evolutionism are common to both socialist and mainstream capitalist thinking, I hold that in socialist thinking they were at their strongest because they were so firmly connected with social engineering. With Giddens (1984), Ingold (2000) and Thomas (1996) I share a critical stance towards the prevailing conception of history and evolution, but to discuss this stance in detail is beyond the scope of this study. To return to the issue of reindeer herding, I put forward the argument that a quite "modern" thing has been labelled "traditional" by certain people for certain reasons. These people and reasons will emerge throughout the following chapters.

Chapter 2
Tundra and forest

2.1 The tent, the campsite and the inhabitants

I can think of no object that is more central in the everyday life of Komi reindeer herders than the stove. The day in the tent usually starts with filling the stove with logs and lighting the fire. As the communal alarm clock rings, I get up to fulfil this duty while the other inhabitants of the tent are still more or less asleep. Time to look around meditatively in the dawn's twilight. The inside of the tent remains unchanged for much of the year, although it is taken down and set up again with every migration, and the landscape outside does change. Everything in the tent has its place. Before the "protagonists" turn up, I briefly describe this "stage" as it looks in autumn, winter and spring.[4]

The conical tent, about seven or eight metres in diameter and almost equally high, has a clearly symmetrical interior (fig. 1). The stove dominates the central axis, which commences at the entrance of the tent. Logs, the fuel supply, are piled up between the entrance and the stove, although a few drier logs are placed under the stove in order to make the stoker's morning task easier. The kettles and pots standing on the floor to the right and left of the stove are to be set onto it once it has started heating. In case they are not yet full, water can be found in the two milk cans standing immediately behind the stove. Farther along the same axis is the storage area for pots and pans and other kitchen sundries. The end of the axis is so far away from the stove that in winter and spring the snow on the ground there does not melt. This is where the meat supply is kept.

[4] Appendix 1 gives the Komi words for the various items of and within the tent and explains how the household equipment is dealt with during migrations from one camp to another. This chapter describes the tents and herding practices of two brigades of the former state farm Ust'-Usinskii; the inner appearances of tents and herding practices differ in other regions of Komi.

Indeed, within the tent the temperature drops noticeably with every step away from the stove. The stove is supported by two planks, parallel to which there are four planks to the right and four to the left, constituting the floor of the tent. At this time of the day, the space they provide is occupied merely by a number of stools and wooden boxes. Two low tables, one on each side, stand close to the front end of the tent, waiting to be brought forward for breakfast.

The tentmates are still asleep behind linen curtains that occlude from sight the remaining sectors, beyond the planks to the left and right. These curtains are fixed to the wooden poles that carry the felt cover of the tent. Hanging from a height of approximately one metre, they appear to form small tents within the tent proper. Two or three such sleeping compartments are situated on each side. Further, the eyes of the observer follow the wooden poles all the way up to their apex, where the stovepipe joins them. The felt cover does not stretch that high; some space is left where warm air flows out and light comes in. Above the sleeping compartment, at head height, is the place where people have stuck their felt boots behind the poles. At the same height are also four thin wooden beams fixed to some poles, forming a sort of square rack used for drying clothes and fur boots. The beams also sustain a cord with a soap box and a small metal vessel at its end,

Figure 1. Interior of the reindeer herders' tent, daytime appearance. Left to right: Table of the left-hand tent side, food storage area, stove, stool and box on the floorplanks, sitting area with bedding stored behind a linen cloth. (Near the Sandivei River, 16 May 1999).

the latter serving as a kind of washstand. From there one's view drops to the large metal bowl for wastewater situated on the ground just between the stove door and the firewood.

As the kettles are now boiling and warmth has crept into all corners of the abode, the willingness of the others to get up has increased. The first to do so are the women, who are deemed responsible for household affairs in general. To be honest, most days I did not get up first – they did. Usually, Polina got up before Tania. Both are "tent workers" (*chum-rabotnitsa*), which is the official name of their occupation. Each of them has a reindeer herder (*pastukh*) as partner, and the latter are considered the heads of the two households that are united under one tent. This represents the usual case in Komi reindeer husbandry. Each reindeer-herding unit (*brigada*) consists of one tent (*chum*, *chom*), and each tent comprises two sides (*chom bök*), functioning as two households: the left tent half and the right tent half. It is for this reason that there are two tables, two boxes for crockery storage, two milk cans, two meat mincers and so forth in the tent. The tent itself consists of two felt covers, two fur covers and two sets of wooden poles. One needs both halves (households) to pitch it. One household alone cannot travel through the tundra. The iron stove and all other things related to the fire are the main objects that yoke the two households together.

Tania (who was 42 years old in spring 1999) is married to Vasilii (45), the senior herder in the tent by both his age and his professional status; he is head of the brigade (the *brigadir*). Polina (40) lives with Ivan (33), Vasilii's younger brother. Once Polina has put her pots and kettles onto the stove, Tania and Tonia (18), her niece, ought to get up, too. The three women prepare breakfast and place the two tables on the planks, at the same time urging the others to rise. Once the men have got up, the women roll the bedding to the outer fringes of the tent and tie up the linen curtains: the tent now has its daytime appearance, with two sitting areas, one on either side, padded with reindeer skins to loll on and the bedding at the back to lean against.

During my stay with Brigada Nº 9 from April to July 1999, I (age 30) lived on the left-hand side of the tent and shared a sleeping compartment with Tania's and Vasilii's son Sasha (19). Tonia included, we were five people on that side. Ivan, Polina, her son Andrei (18), another Andrei (18) and Lesha (17) – the last two being distant relations of all other members of the *brigada* – occupied the right-hand side. Thus, although the inhabitants of the two halves of this tent maintain close family relations, within each household live individuals who are not necessarily closely related to each other. Furthermore, the composition of the two households changes often, for seasonal and other reasons. In early May, two more males joined the

right-hand side: Polina's second son, Vitko (12), and her nephew, Zhen'ko (14). In late June, Irina (16), Tania and Vasilii's daughter, arrived, and it was planned that she would stay until the end of her school holidays in early September. Figure 2 illustrates who lived where in the tent of Brigada N° 9 while I was there and also shows the main elements of the interior.

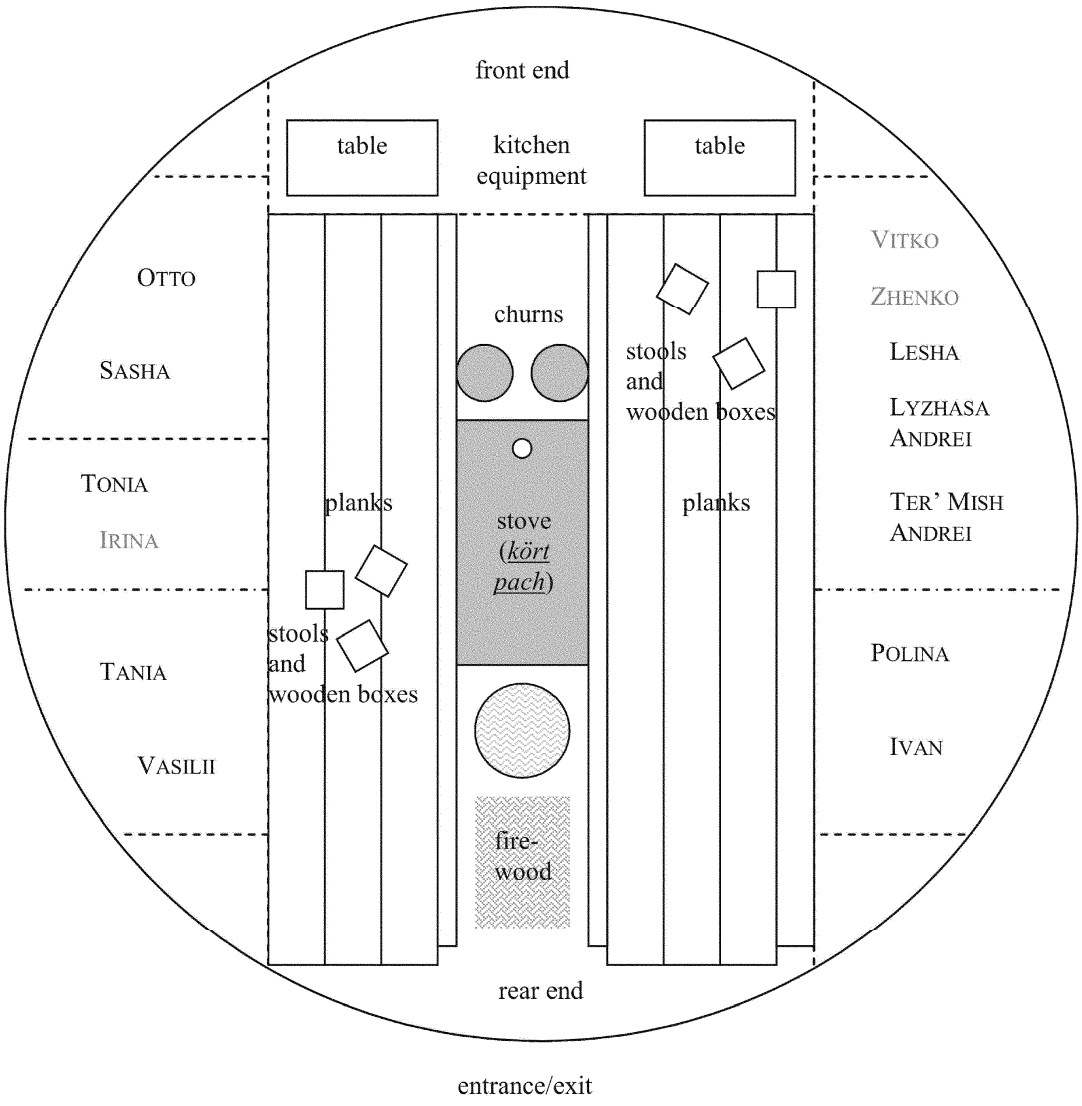

Figure 2. Plan of a Komi herders' tent in spring, autumn and winter. (Reindeer-herding enterprise Ust'-Usinskii, Brigada N° 9, June 1999.)

Considering the number of women and men in each half of the tent, it will be understood that the households were managed in quite different ways. The two women in the left half could carry out the household work comfortably, whereas there was a shortage of herders on that side, since Sasha was not considered an experienced herdsman. On the right-hand side, Polina demanded that the three youngest men (Vitko, Zhen'ko and Lesha) help in all domestic affairs and established a system of kitchen duty shifts. The three older men on the right-hand side were all experienced herders and, together with Vasilii, did the bulk of the herding work. Zhen'ko and Lesha counted as apprentice herders. Lesha, in particular, had a very heavy workload, being scolded and called a greenhorn (*yando*) time and again. Frequently, Vasilii scoffed at Lesha because of his limited command of the local vernacular. People in the tent speak the northernmost dialect of Komi, although not uncommonly they switch to Russian and back to Komi in the middle of a conversation.

Young herdsmen undergo a two-pronged treatment: they are supposed to be skilful and durable herders, yet they are also expected to fulfil the work in the tent if there are few women or none at all. When it comes to the number of women, Brigada N° 9 is by no means typical of a Komi reindeer-herding brigade: many brigades have to get along with only one tent worker, and a few teams consist of men only. In those cases, the youngest members usually do all the cooking, clean the dishes, discard the garbage, make the beds in the evening and take them away in the morning and so forth. All these activities are usually considered women's work, but they have to be done anyway. By the same token, women are generally able to do many of the "male" tasks, such as sharpening the knives, chopping wood and killing animals, and they do perform this kind of work if no man is at hand. Some activities depend not only on gender but also on age, such as poking the fire and replenishing the supplies of water and firewood, which are all done by the younger members of the brigade. Among the few things that are done exclusively by women are the sewing of reindeer-fur clothes and the mending of the tent covers.

After breakfast, the men put on their boots and professional clothes, all of which are stored in the area next to the entrance to the tent. Soon it will be time for the daily corral, but the reindeer are not yet here. While the women clean the dishes and sweep the tent, the men are busy with various tasks, or they just gang up around the sledges and smoke. They scan the camp and its surroundings, checking the whereabouts of the reindeer.

Like the tent, the campsite (*chom mesta*) has a spatial structure, and its various items are arranged in a particular way. The tent is usually erected on an elevated spot, a place that offers a fairly good view in all directions in

order to observe the movements of the herd. Most of the tundra is wet in summer, which makes it even more important to be on the top of a hill. Furthermore, the wind helps to reduce harassment by insects. A source of firewood should be nearby; in summer the brigades have to content themselves with shrubby willows, but in spring and autumn they tend to set up their camps near a forest island or a brook with birches. The cover of the tent corresponds to the season and the weather: the inner layer is made of felt, and the outer layer consists of reindeer skins sewn together. The *brigada* people do not use this outer cover over the summer. Instead, they hoist canvas overlays and, during rain, additional nylon cladding. The segments of these various layers are fixed to the bottoms of the poles by means of ropes. The entrance of the tent needs no special door or frame, just two strong poles: as the corners of the felt and upper cover are half-loose at this point, one can flap them aside.

The entrance usually faces south, southwest or southeast, although there are no hard and fast rules about this, as the reindeer herders asserted. Adjacent to the entrance is the "zone" of firewood production (fig. 3). The birch and spruce trunks that have been hauled to the tent are cut and split here, and the logs are then piled up in front of the tent. During the summer, when no birch and spruce wood is available, willow branches serve as fuel.

Figure 3. Entrance to the tent, with firewood stacked in front. Birch and spruce are used for fuel. Tonia is plucking a grouse that Vasilii had killed on his way back from the reindeer herd. Some of the left-hand side's sledges are visible in the background. (Near the Sandivei River, 9 May 1999).

Again, the young members of the brigade are responsible for collecting firewood, which was also one of my main duties.

A few metres farther away is the place where the stove sledge is parked. There are many other sledges, standing to the right and left and behind the tent (fig. 4). All of them have their particular purposes, as explained in Appendix 1. Most conspicuous are the dozen sledges behind the tent arranged in two parallel lines with a net between them, the whole construction resembling a U-shaped form. This is the corral (*yör*) that in a couple of minutes will become the focus of the brigade's work. All these sledges are freight sledges (*dod'*), whereas the passenger sledges (*dad'*) of the tent inmates stand just outside the corral, on the right- or left-hand side in accordance with the residence of the person within the tent.

On this day in mid-May, Sasha has left the tent before the others, during breakfast. He is looking for the "oxen" and will drive them to the tent. An "ox" (*byk* in Russian and in this specific sense also used in Komi) is a castrated reindeer trained to pull a sledge. The oxen constitute only a small part of the brigade's reindeer, but they are kept separately from the others so as to avoid their intermingling for part of the year. Indeed, each Komi reindeer-herding brigade has actually two herds, and I refer to them henceforward as the small herd, comprising the oxen, and the large herd, with all other deer (collectively called *kör* in the Komi language). Throughout their migrations, the herders and all other members of the brigade travel by sledge – in winter as well as in summer, on the snow as well as over the hillocks and wetlands. Without the oxen, the entire reindeer-herding ménage would be basically immobilised. Collecting the oxen and penning them is done every day from mid-April to December and occasionally over the rest of the year, whenever they are required for transportation.

Sasha is walking behind the oxen, driving them slowly towards the tent. One or two dogs assist him by guarding the flanks. While the oxen are approaching the campsite, all other members of the brigade get ready for the penning. Standing with two long ropes in their hands (like pearls on a chain), they funnel the small herd into the corral. Then they close the corral with their ropes and block the exit with a second net. Everybody is guarding the exit, unless he is working in the interior of the corral (fig. 5). Depending on their plans for the day, some of the men (and less frequently the women) select three or more oxen, tie them together, lead them out of the corral to their personal sledges and harness them. Today, only Vasilii and the two Andreis put oxen to their sledges; all other people will stay by the tent. Selecting nine oxen takes little time, and the whole penning business is done within approximately half an hour. The remaining oxen are let loose and trot away peacefully.

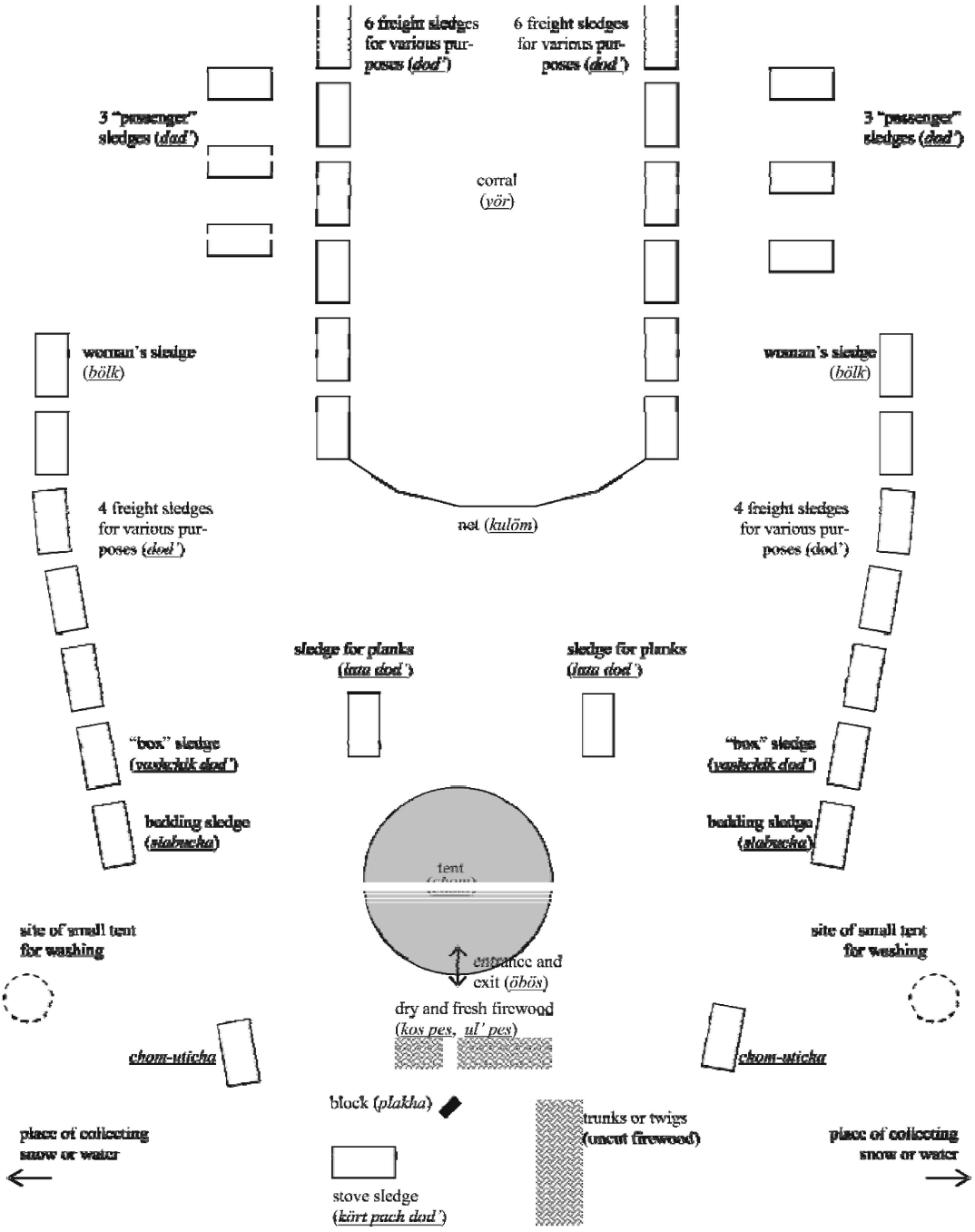

Figure 4. Plan of a Komi herders' camp in spring. (Reindeer-herding enterprise Ust'-Usinskii, Brigada N° 9, June 1999.)

Before Vasilii, Andrei and Andrei set off, everybody goes back to the tent again to have a second breakfast. Each meal finishes with tea and rusks (or bread, if available) and a cigarette. There are quite a number of occasions when the herders discuss the herd's business, but the cigarette breaks after the meals are particularly useful for briefings. Because Vasilii, the *brigadir,* will tend the large herd today and will not be back until the next morning, he gives some final instructions to the other herders before taking off. A herder's shift lasts about 24 hours. On arriving at the place where the large herd is, Vasilii will relieve Ivan, who had left the camp the morning before. Depending on how far away the large herd is, Ivan may be expected to get back to the camp in the early afternoon. The tending of the small herd is done in 24-hour shifts, too. Sasha, who had been responsible for the oxen until this moment, is succeeded by the two apprentice herders Lesha and Zhen'ko.

The frequency of the shifts is dependent on the number of herdsmen in the brigade. In this one, Ivan, Vasilii, Andrei and Andrei tend the large herd consecutively. The duty of herding the oxen passes from Sasha to Lesha plus Zhen'ko, then to the one Andrei and finally to the other Andrei. The last two, who in spite of their only slight seniority are already much more experienced in herding than the other youths, have their shifts every second day, alternating between the large and small herds. This does not mean, however, that they enjoy much relaxation during the intervening days. The professional ethos of the brigade members, whether women or men, means almost constant work from early till late and sometimes also during the night. This is how Komi reindeer herders and tent workers like to see themselves: they know the land and the animals; they are proud of their ability to endure adverse conditions and overcome difficulties through inventiveness and experience.

Reindeer husbandry is very unlike an eight-and-a-half-hour job. For weeks and months the brigades work entirely on their own, their bosses being ultimately unable to exert any effective control over them. Times of double or triple workload are compensated for by times of languor or exuberance. Not today, though. The two Andreis are going to fell spruce trees some kilometres away, procuring the raw material for new sledge runners.
Those remaining in the camp are occupied with various things. Tonia is cutting and mincing meat; Tania and Polina are sewing. I am shovelling snow, putting it into a large bag and dragging it into the tent. Then I put it into "our" milk can, where it will slowly melt. Lesha gets the water supply for the other half of the tent and feeds the dogs of the whole camp with leftover soup. Sasha, Zhen'ko, Vitko and I are then told by the two senior women to fetch some firewood. We take our axes, walk down to a birch

grove and fell two dozen or so trees, experiencing some difficulty because of the deep, slushy snow. This fact provides us with a pretext for repeated cigarette breaks. We experience yet more difficulty while dragging the birch trunks back to the tent: the additional weight on our shoulders makes us sink into the snow with almost every move. Having finished this task, Vitko and I saw the trunks into pieces, which undergo further treatment by Sasha and the wood-chopper. Meanwhile, Polina has got Lesha to remove the inner side from a hide, which takes him most of the day. Lesha and Zhen'ko's herding-task has not yet begun: in the slushy season, the oxen are set free and permitted to roam throughout the day, and the actual shift begins when the other members of the brigade go to bed.

Ivan arrives in the early afternoon, and all the people who are in or around the tent "drink tea" (the Russian and Komi word for tea, *chai*, is used for every meal throughout the day), each person in her or his side of the tent. Ivan may retire now, whereas the others continue their sundry activities. Two or three hours later, Andrei and Andrei are back, too, and they may now enjoy their delayed lunch. There are still many hours of daylight left on this May evening, and Ivan, Andrei and Andrei decide to spend some time improving their sledges and building new ones. Andrei is just finishing his new *dad'*. We younger males follow his construction work with much attention,

Figure 5. Selecting sledge reindeer (*yöras'ny*). Various herdsmen are working inside the corral while other members of the brigade guard the fence, which is made of a fishing net and a number of rods. (Near the Sandivei River, 14 May 1999.)

and from time to time Ivan comes around to give his advice. At this time of the year, all the men are more or less busy with sledge building. Farther ahead, spruce will be sparse and crooked, so timber convenient for sledge building will no longer be available. Although the light fall of snow is now getting heavier, the men are still outside, as is Polina, who unties one of the sledges in her search for an extra pair of wader boots. The wet season is just about to start.

After the last "tea" of the day, Lesha and Zhen'ko prepare themselves for their night shift. Like all members of the brigade who leave the tent for a longer time, they receive their "packed lunch" from Polina: a kettle, tea and sugar, rusks and butter, perhaps some sweets, or some more substantial fare. Never forget your knife and your matches when you go out. Ivan has permitted them to take a rifle with them; they might shoot the odd goose and diversify tomorrow's menu. The others call it a day, but as it is yet a bit early to go to bed, Ivan engages me in a chat about his military service in Mongolia and fumbles about with his radio, trying with eventual success to catch Moscow on shortwave. Polina and Tania inquire about my parents and other relations. Sasha examines the sheath of my knife from Finland, decorated with a sketch showing a Saami reindeer-herding motif. The two Andreis try to repair an audiotape of Russian pop music; Vitko, on the contrary, tries for some reason to deconstruct my dictating machine; and Tonia is just observing what the others are up to. A peaceful evening around the stove, the centre of the tent – the tent itself playing a central role in the lives of these people. While it may seem that they are forlorn in the tundra, in fact they are interested in, and connected with, the outside world in many ways. In the following sections and chapters, I describe the various spheres of the world surrounding them, starting with the tundra and the forest as the brigade's immediate environment and moving on to the villages and towns in the north of the Komi Republic and then beyond.

2.2 The practice of reindeer husbandry in the four seasons

2.2.1 Spring

A convenient start for the description of the annual cycle of reindeer husbandry among the herders I lived with is early April, when the herders and tent workers resume their migrations after a time of relative "immobility". In early 1999, the winter camp of Brigada N^{o} 9 was located some ten kilometres from an oil well with an all-year road connection, to the south of the Sandivei oil field (see map). The road made travelling between the camp and the village much easier. On 17 April, the driver from the former state farm drove Polina, Andrei and me to the oil well, where we were met by the other

Andrei and Sasha with their sledges. There we changed our clothes and got into the heavy reindeer-fur overcoats (*malitsa*, *malicha*) typical of Komi and Nenets reindeer herders. We set off for a half-hour drive to the tent. On our arrival, it was Vasilii who decided first thing that I would stay in the left-hand half and work together with his son, Sasha. After ten days we moved the tent to a site some 15 kilometres away. The procedure of breaking the tent, putting things on sledges, arranging the sledges into half a dozen trains, travelling to a new place, and pitching the tent again is described in detail in Appendix 1.

Driving a sledge is fairly easy if one is behind somebody else. I remember well that the first time when I travelled, midway we experienced a snowstorm: while I was driving my sledge I could not see the sledge train in front of me, yet the oxen I was given by Vasilii just followed the tracks of the preceding reindeer, and I was made confident by the constant tinkle of the bell of one of the oxen of the preceding train.

Before early May we moved two more times. The snow is crusty at this time of year and driving is easy, so the *brigada* people can travel quickly over large distances. They try to make use of this advantage by frequent and comparatively long migrations. The migration route (*vörga*) leads along frozen swamps and through open patches amid the forest. Driving through the thicket is scarcely possible because the snow is too deep and not crusty enough.

The forests to the north of the Usa and Pechora Rivers consist mainly of spruce and birch, the latter becoming more dominant as one proceeds northwards. The vegetation is generally sparser in the forest tundra: spruce and birch stands there are interspersed between large areas of open land, forming forest islands. Spruce and birch trees also nestle in the shallow valleys of the many rivers and rivulets. The combination of open and forested areas is ideal for the reindeer in this season: in periods of harsh snowstorms they can retire to the fringe of, or into, the forest islands. Usually, though, the gregarious animals gather in open areas. Throughout the winter and until May the reindeer are on short rations. Lichens are the main forage resource. Arboreal lichens can be found in the forest islands; lichens on the ground are widespread, and the reindeer dig holes in the snow in order to get them. The crust of snow that makes for good driving conditions can cause severe problems for the animals: if the crust is too solid, the reindeer cannot break it with their hooves to reach the ground lichens. This can bring on the starvation of a significant part of the herd. Dearth of forage occurred in spring 1999, when I migrated with Brigada N° 9.

The spring of 1999 was an exceptionally difficult one. Although we had a rainy day on 21 April (still on the winter pasture) and some sunny days

now and then, in general the temperature stayed below zero and snow fell as late as 14 June. There was a delay in the phenology by three or four weeks, and the growing period of vegetation was equally belated. From 5 to 20 May we stayed put, and again from 28 May to 16 June, with one short migration on 9 June, which was definitely the hardest that spring. Several circumstances came together. First, farther to the north the crust of snow was so solid that it made no sense to move any further. Second, as the growth of the vegetation was retarded, there was no point in migrating into an area with even more snow and fewer forest islands. At this time of year the reindeer are emaciated after the long winter without fresh forage, and what they need foremost are green leaves and shoots, as I was told by Vasilii. Moreover, the calving season commenced in the last week of May (also about four weeks later than in a usual year), and the herd had to have a rest, the young calves not yet being able to travel long distances.

To aggravate the situation, with the thawing of the snow, the period of slush set in and lasted until mid-June. At the beginning of June the people in the tent were in low spirits: a number of calves had already died, the large herd tended to disperse in search for hillocks bare of snow, the oxen became increasingly lethargic, and the slush made walking, driving and herding very cumbersome. On 2 June I wrote in my diary: "We wait for the time when driving gets easier and reindeer can find more fresh forage. The bushes are still covered by snow, and further ahead there are hardly any trees" (and therefore no firewood). On 18 and 19 June we finally witnessed the harbingers of summer: the first mosquitoes and the break-up of the ice on the Kolva-Vis River, the left bank of which we had been following for a couple of weeks.

Calving is a highly important and work-intensive period in the annual cycle of reindeer husbandry. As a rule, calving starts towards the end of April and continues throughout the month of May. It is said that the animals have a good sense of where their calving grounds are, and the herders try to be there with the herds in time. Open areas with small forest patches provide the best calving grounds. When the first calves are born, the herders stay day and night with the large herd – that is, a herder's 24-hour shift is spent entirely on the calving ground. They have to find the newborn animals and make sure that the doe does not leave the calf in the lurch.[5] A calf is able to stand on its feet in the first minutes after its birth (fig. 6), but it walks with a clumsy gait, and if the herd moves at all, it moves slowly. To give some numbers for a typical calving season, a herd of 1,000 animals altogether

[5] A doe that gives birth for the first time is sometimes frightened by the dark colour of the calf and might not accept it as hers; instead, she might try to drive it away (Konakov, Kotov and Sharapov 1992: 29).

(among them 500 or 550 does) will increase to 1,350 animals after calving. Unfortunately, 1999 was a bad year for reindeer husbandry in this region, and half of the calves perished in the course of the calendar year through starvation, predation or other kinds of "unproductive" loss.[6] Brigada Nº 9 fared little better than the average brigade.

Figure 6. Female reindeer with her calf. (Near Konkovör, 30 May 1999)

Before the beginning of the calving, the members of the brigade had to do another important job: on 28 April, we selected "new" oxen from among the animals of the large herd. For this purpose, the herders drive the large herd to a place that is naturally enclosed on two or three sides – for example, by a wooded riverbank. The remaining sides are guarded by all the other inmates of the tent and the dogs. The herdsmen are in the centre of this "arena", using their lassoes (*niartala*) to catch young males. (One can easily distinguish between males and females: male reindeer shed their antlers

[6] About "unproductive losses", see section 6.5. Newborn calves are never slaughtered, but the herders kill them if they have no chance of surviving, as when a calf has a broken leg. Such calves, as well as those that are found dead on the pasture, are skinned, and the fur can be used for embroidery and other purposes. The people give the meat of these calves to the dogs and do not eat it themselves. The same rule applies to all other reindeer that have died from causes other than human interference.

every March or April, whereas females lose them only after the calving season.) The prospective oxen are castrated and integrated into the small herd. The herders apply a precut birch crotch (*nösh*) to the animal, preventing it from leaping or running too speedily. A few weeks later, the new oxen are harnessed for the first training session. Each animal starts its training between two experienced oxen, the leading ox (*vozhak*, *vözhzhivyv*) on its left and the offside ox (*dor pelei*) on its right, itself serving as the middle one (*shör pelei*). The herder who caught the animal does the castration and training, and he is henceforth considered the person who has the right to use this ox or to let other people use it. That day in late April, Lesha was extremely proud that he had caught an ox for himself; it was the first time in his life and a major event on his path towards becoming a herdsman.

From April to mid-June, the male members of the brigade spent most of their "leisure" time mending their sledges and building new ones. Among the most essential parts are the sledge runners, the making of which requires large, crooked spruce trunks, as shown in figure 7. Such trees cannot be found any farther to the north. When we passed the former hamlet of Konkovör, I was told that this was the site of the "last" forest. Consequently, between June and December the herders have no chance of finding suitable building material for sledge runners (and other sledge details). Hence the men's frenzied sledge building throughout the spring (fig. 8). Tania, Tonia

Figure 7. Young herder carrying a tree trunk for sledge building. He will carve it into a sledge runner (*siu*). (Near the Sandivei River, 2 May 1999.)

Figure 8. Sledge building. The senior herder is fitting one of the three pairs of legs (*pod*) plus crosspiece (*yaz*) into the pair of runners (*siu*). The junior herders hold two poles with ropes, which produce the tension and curvature of the runners. (Near the Sandivei River, 11 may 1999.)

and Polina were busy with sewing and the scraping of skins, but towards the end of spring their main task was to mend the tent covers (fig. 9), which were going to be stored away a fortnight later.

At the peak of the thaw, the rivers open up and swell, and even a harmless little brook can become extremely risky. One of the rivulets that we forded in June is known to the reindeer people as Siabucha-Shor – "brook of the bedding-sledge" – because a long time ago that sledge turned upside down and all the bedding got wet. The herders know by experience where to ford the rivers. Each train of sledges passes the valley slowly and carefully; an extra rope is fixed to the collar of the leading ox and thrown to the other bank, where Vasilii or Ivan catches it in order to tug the oxen across the river (fig. 10). Reindeer are good swimmers but show some resistance to doing so when harnessed.

The opening up of the rivers also means the beginning of the fishing season. Ice fishing is not common among herdsmen while on the trek; rather, they do some occasional fishing in the warmer period of the year and only when time allows. With the arrival of wild geese and other migratory bird species, the men start shooting birds and collecting the eggs they find in nests all over the tundra and forest tundra. The trapping of willow grouse starts as early as May. Fresh fish, poultry and eggs diversify the menu of the

brigada people, which consists mainly of reindeer meat, frozen fish, and food products from the village: bread or rusks, flour, rice, potatoes, canned vegetables, tea, sugar and sweets.

In the last days of June 1999 (again, three weeks later than in an average year), the life of the herders and tent workers got comparatively busy. We had reached the "corral" (*koral'*). In this case, I speak not about the corral behind the tent that is used for the everyday penning of oxen but about the stationary corral of the reindeer-herding enterprise, into which the entire herd is driven twice a year for several purposes. The so-called spring corral takes about two weeks and is carried out for earmarking the newborn calves, counting the animals and vaccinating them against anthrax. During the autumn corral, animals are selected for slaughter, and again the workers of the enterprise compile statistics on the number of deer. All the herds of the enterprise pass the corral one after another. The autumn corral lasts for approximately four weeks because the slaughter is quite labour intensive.[7]

The spring and autumn corrals are integral parts of the annual cycle of the brigade's activities, yet what makes them special is that for a short time the herders and tent workers encounter their bosses and other workers who, throughout the year, live in the village. In other words, the enterprise takes stock, and the people who live with the reindeer undergo a period of accountability. At the same time, the herders actively engage in trade, most prominently in connection with the cutting and marketing of antlers, which is also done in connection with the spring corral (see section 6.4).

Furthermore, for the members of the brigade the corral is not only work, decision-making and marketing but an enjoyable event, too – a time of socialising and partying, a time for exchanging news and memories with members of other brigades and people from the village. The tents of the various brigades are now all located in the surroundings of the corral, some kilometres apart from it and from each other, and people make frequent visits to their "neighbours".

[7] The corral is also known by the name of its location: Kolva-Ty. Work in the corral takes one or two days per herd; the next brigade will arrive three or five days later. The tent of the brigade whose herd is in the corral is set up some kilometres away from the corral. The herders commute between tent and corral by sledge. The oxen are not driven into the corral but graze close to the tent. The practice of slaughtering the deer directly at the corral is rather uncommon; in most enterprises the animals selected for slaughter during the autumn corral are driven to the actual slaughter place in the vicinity of a road or railway. Chapter 6 deals with the slaughter in more detail.

Figure 9. Mending the tent covers. Before the outer tent cover (*niuk*), which is made of reindeer fur, is stored away at the reindeer-herding enterprise's main corral, the tent workers do all necessary repairs and also mend the inner tent cover (*noi*), which is made of felt. (Near Konkovör, 15 June 1999.)

2.2.2 Summer

Before leaving the corral, the *brigada* people make preparations for the summer. The heavy outer cover of the tent will not be needed over the next few months, and it is stored in a shed where all the brigades have their own compartments. The inner appearance of the tent has changed markedly (fig. 11). The central element that I had cherished so much in the cold days – the stove – has been replaced by an open fire.[8] The herders and tent workers give various reasons for this modification: for one thing, the smoke of the open fire reduces the number of mosquitoes in the tent. The fuel has changed, too. We have finally left the forest tundra and there are hardly any spruce or birch trees available, so instead of split logs the tentmates use chopped branches and twigs of shrubby willow as fuel for cooking. On the central axis that connects the front end of the tent with the entrance at the

[8] Kirill Istomin (personal communication, September 2004) notes that the reindeer herders of Ust'-Usinskii and the neighbouring enterprise, Severnyi, are known among other Komi herders for using open fires instead of the stove during the summer. Other brigades use the stove throughout the year. I return to this peculiarity in Appendix 3.

rear, two solid poles stretch from the ground to the apex. At head height, two wooden beams are fixed. They run parallel to each other and support iron hooks, at the lower ends of which the pots and kettles are hung above the fire. For the time being, the stove and stovepipe are stored on their sledge. Instead of leaving the stove sledge at the corral, Vasilii has his oxen pull it as part of his train of sledges to the next important station along the migration route, Lake Servis-Ty.

I left Brigada N° 9 at the corral and returned to the south, so for my description of summer in the tundra I have to rely mainly on what I was told by the *brigada* people and other interviewees and on previous studies of reindeer husbandry in the region (Istomin 1998, 2000; Kertselli 1911; Konakov 1994; Konakov, Kotov and Sharapov 1992). Apart from the interior of the tent, herd management and driving techniques also change. The herders unite the small herd (the oxen) with the large herd (all other animals) soon after leaving the spring corral. There are two explanations for this. First, with the increase of insects the reindeer get more nervous. Herding one herd becomes more difficult, and herding two herds almost impossible, particularly because a small herd can easily disintegrate when harassed by insects. Second, the calves are now sufficiently grown up and will not be trampled by the other reindeer when the animals undergo the procedure in which oxen are selected, which is now done differently.

Figure 10. Fording a river. (Yarei-Shor near Kolva-Ty, 29 June 1999.)

Driving conditions in the now snowless tundra require more draught animals. Five or six oxen are harnessed in front of the first sledge in the train, and three in front of each subsequent sledge. The migration route leads along and across mossy hillocks as well as through shallow pools, puddles and muddy peatlands. Most of the time the *vörga* is clearly visible: it resembles a rough track in the flat and treeless parts of the Scottish Highlands.

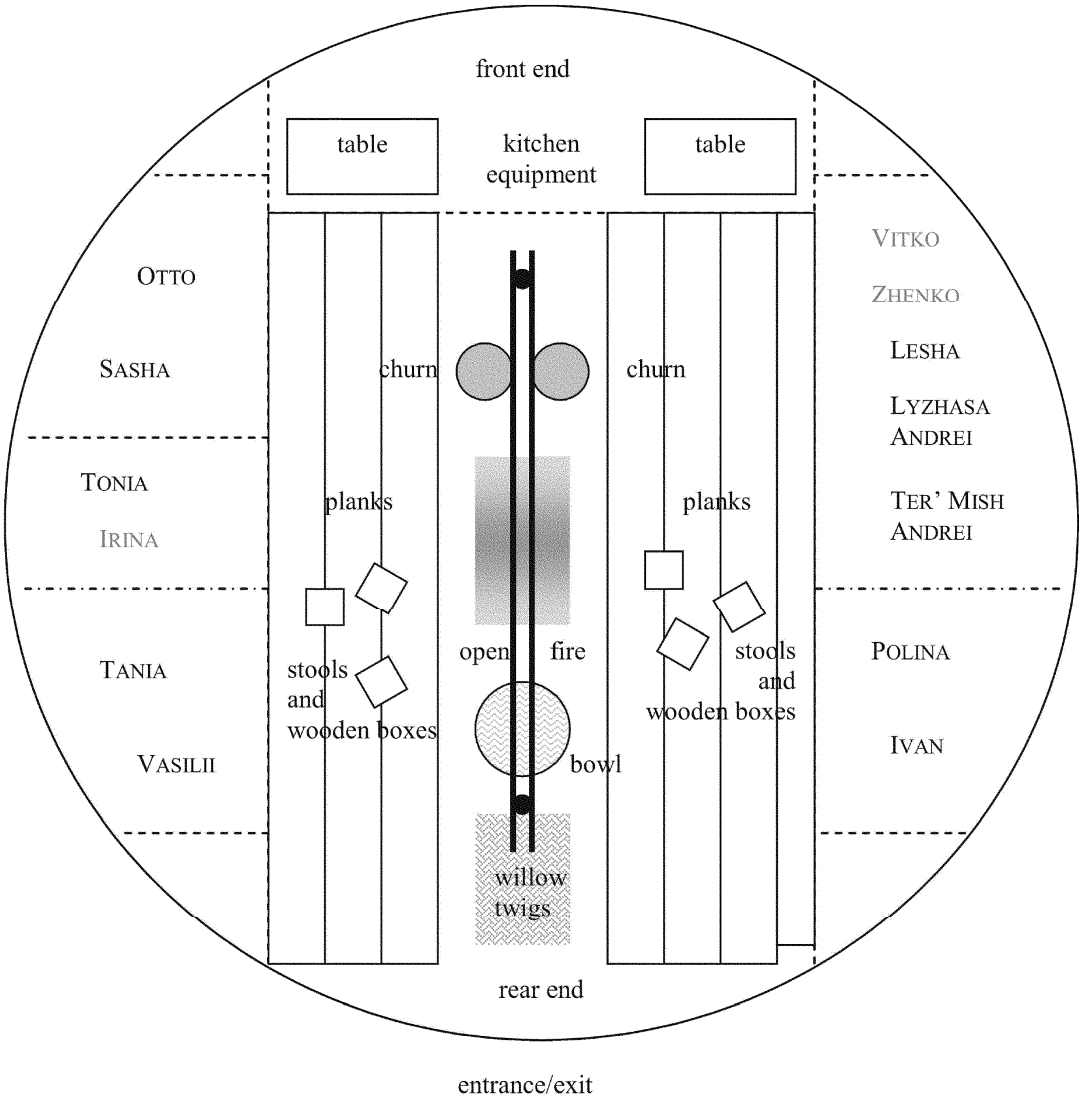

Figure 11. Plan of a Komi herders' tent in summer. (Reindeer-herding enterprise Ust'-Usinskii, Brigada N° 9, June-July 1999.)

Crooked branches of shrubby birches and willows and the numerous knolls make driving a daunting task, and it is difficult to keep one's balance when sitting on the sledge. Nevertheless, the whole migration gradually picks up speed. The brigade moves camp almost every day.

The main concern of the herders is to lead the animals northward as quickly as possible in order to get to cooler and windier places that are less affected by insects, the main foe all summer. On the occasion of extreme insect harassment (as well as in other situations of stress), the deer instinctively congregate and form a circle; the farther an animal is from the centre of the circle, the quicker it runs around it. The circle protects the animals at the centre from the gadflies and mosquitoes while those at the fringe bear the brunt of the plague. Days with warm southerly winds are particularly bad because the herd runs against the wind, trying to get rid of the insects, and so moves in the "wrong" direction for dozens of kilometres. Herding the animals on such days is next to impossible.

On the way northward, Brigada Nº 9 passes the lake system of Vashutkino and stays a couple of days at Lake Servis-Ty (on maps recorded under its Nenets name, Seres'-To). Townspeople, mainly from Vorkuta, spend a few weeks here to fish and barter with the herders. The latter appreciate this opportunity for stocking up on supplies. The brigade then proceeds to the Karataika Valley. The Karataika is the largest and deepest river on the way from the winter to the summer pastures, and crossing it in spring is one of the most adventurous happenings in the annual cycle of reindeer herding. Anyone who has taken part in it remembers it well. It may take a whole day to get across. People inflate their rubber dinghies and take aboard everything that is not waterproof. They hold the reins of the draught animals, which swim behind the boats, dragging the sledges across the river. Once a small number of deer has entered the river, the others do not hesitate to swim across, too.

After this episode, the herds and people migrate speedily to the actual summer pastures, which are located roughly 100 kilometres away, not far from the coast of the Kara Sea. The herds reach the northernmost point of their annual migration in mid-July. In summer 1999, though, Brigada Nº 9 did not get to the summer pastures. In fact, they did not even cross the Karataika. This was due to the delayed beginning of the warm period. Had they gone much farther, they would have been unable to get back to the autumn corral in time. The neighbouring brigades had similar difficulties.

During the summer and autumn, it may happen that the herds intermingle (owing to harassment by insects), and they will be separated no earlier than during the autumn corral. The brigades whose animals have intermingled set up their tents near each other and do the herding work

together. Thus, in 1999 Brigada N° 9 and Brigada N° 10 spent the summer and autumn together. The head of the latter, Zhenia, is a nephew of Vasilii's and Ivan's, and the inmates of the two tents visit each other often. People think Zhenia is a good herder, considering his youth (in 1999 he was 22). Like the older herders, he commands a thorough knowledge of the migration route and the pastures; in addition, he has been a regular visitor to settlements to the right and left of the actual route, such as the military base Amderma on the shore of the Kara Sea. Such visits are not only welcome breaks from herding but also chances to barter for vodka, which is needed for the social event lying ahead.

Saint Elias's Day (*Il'in den*, *Il'ia lun*), 2 August, is a major holiday and also designates the turning point in the annual cycle. The reindeer herders decide in advance where to meet for the festivities, the highlight of which is the sledge race. In previous years, the leading managers of the reindeer-herding enterprise and the district officials (Department of Agriculture) had hired a helicopter and visited the herders and tent workers for a couple of hours. The helicopter has a special significance in the everyday lives of the *brigada* people: for them, it is a link to their relatives in the village, a source of supply, a moment of sudden farewells and unexpected welcomes. Helicopters have names: apart from the "Elias-Day Helicopter", there are two "Children's Helicopters" that bring the children of school age – like Irina – home in early June and take them away by 1 September. However, as transportation costs became ever steeper over the 1990s, the managers began to think twice about whether the enterprise could afford to send out a helicopter on 2 August, and the small number of helicopters caused much concern among the *brigada* people. Helicopters used to be a resource people could rely on, but now they are rare opportunities.

2.2.3 Autumn

Soon after 2 August, the brigades start their migration back south. Autumn has set in, and from 20 August onwards the herders on duty are permitted to have a nap in the tent when the weather is unfavourable. The tundra is now draped with ripe cloudberries, cowberries and cranberries, and the women spend many an hour picking them. Mushrooms are abundant, too, but the *brigada* people do not appreciate them. In fact, herding is becoming difficult again: the reindeer have an exceptional hankering for mushrooms and can trace them over considerable distances. It is not uncommon for animals to become victims of their zest for mushrooms and ultimately to get lost or reappear in other herds.

Apart from rain, snow may fall on any day during the summer, but in late September it starts lasting on the tundra. Shortly before this, the herds

again pass Servis-Ty (Seres'-To) and receive a prophylactic vaccination against the eggs and larvae of gadflies. The *brigada* people pick up the stove sledge and continue their migration in a southwesterly direction. The rutting season is now in full swing, which means that the herders must work intensively to look after the nervous herd. The bucks compete for females and tend to lead them away from the herd, thereby causing much unrest. The herdsmen have difficulty in predicting the movements of the herd and its components; they frequently have to look for animals that have split off and return them to the main herd. Towards the end of October, with the development of the snow cover, the animals calm down, and the speed of the herd's migration decreases.

Prior to my stay with Brigada N° 9, I had the chance of accompanying its members' relatives in Brigada N° 10 for a fortnight in November 1998. They were approaching the autumn corral but had to wait for a couple of days because the corral people were still busy with "processing" two preceding herds. Apart from Zhenia (22), who was not yet head of the brigade at that time, there were seven more people in the tent: Stepan (46), his wife, Liuba (45), and their son, Kostia (16), the then *brigadir,* Vitalii (ca 35), his wife, Liuda (ca 30), and Andrei, called Öndriuk (16), a nephew of both Stepan's and Vitalii's. Finally, there was Izhma Fed' (Fedor Ivanovich Kanev), whose advanced age (66), eventful biography and peculiar manners would require an extra chapter. He is not related to any of those named above but comes from a different place (Izhma) and joined Brigada N° 10 many years ago, for reasons no longer talked about. Izhma Fed' has no contact with his relatives and lives in the tent throughout the winter, with one or two short breaks in the village of his tentmates. If there is any "real" nomad among the Komi reindeer herders, then it is most likely Izhma Fed', because he actually does not care about village life (whereas the others do).

Liuda and Vitalii had been on sick leave and arrived in the tent some days after me, and until that time Brigada N° 10 lived with only one tent worker. The tables were placed between the two halves of the tent, and all meals were taken commonly. It was Liuba with whom I spent most of the day and from whom I learned a lot about cooking and family ties. The men gave me some lessons in sawing wooden panels, which they had taken from an abandoned oil-drilling site. However, one after another, the herdsmen departed to the corral and, for some strange reason, did not come back. The tent was almost destitute of men, and the remaining inhabitants wondered what might have happened. It was only after some more days that the men came back and reported that the head of another brigade had committed suicide while staying at the corral. Apart from the grief, this death had one

important consequence: Vitalii and Liuba joined the other brigade and Zhenia was designated the new head of Brigada N° 10.

Two days later, Brigada N° 10 drove the reindeer into the autumn corral, and Zhenia was already the acting, albeit not official, head of the brigade. He did his job at the gate of the central chamber of the corral, identifying the animals and deciding which of them would go for slaughter. Thus, he acted as the executive in the most decisive moment of the brigade's activities (most decisive at least from the managers' point of view). The slaughter and the "statistics" of the reindeer-herding enterprise are the focus of chapter 6.

2.2.4 Winter

The slaughter usually comes to an end in the first days of December, and the brigades have only a month to move to their winter pastures. The *brigada* people want to celebrate New Year and Christmas (7 January for Orthodox Christians) in the village, and it must be decided who will stay with the herd over the holidays. In 1998-1999, Brigada N° 9 had its winter camp in the northern part of the forest. Brigada N° 10 went deeper into the forest, because its members wanted to have their tent close to the village. The camp was set up on the fringe of a frozen swamp, only 25 kilometres from the settlement, a distance that can be covered by snowmobile (*buran*) in about two and a half hours. Nowadays the animals are never taken into the village, whereas 40 years ago a reindeer sledge in front of the village bakery was still a common thing. For most herders and tent workers, winter is a time for replenishing supplies, living in the village, having a rest, and refreshing one's social ties within the village community (see chapter 3). In January and February 1999 there were a maximum of three herdsmen and no tent worker in the tent of Brigada N° 9. Sasha was the only one who stayed there nearly all the time. The other herdsmen worked in shifts and got lifts from the nearby oil well to the village and back again. The tent of Brigada N° 10 was sometimes entirely empty: the herder on duty slept in the village, travelled the short distance to the tent in the morning, identified the location of the deer, checked whether things were all right, and went back to the village in the evening.

Over the winter, only a few herdsmen are needed to maintain the herd. Provided that snow conditions permit the reindeer to dig out lichens, they do not disperse much and move about comparatively slowly. However, the herders have to be vigilant to prevent deer from falling prey to a wolf or a bear and the remainder of the herd from being scattered to the four winds. At least once or twice per week, the herder responsible takes a couple of dogs and skis around the herd to make it more compact, or he drives it a few kilometres further to ensure that the animals find enough forage. He should

also make sure that the pasture is not covered with too much snow; otherwise the animals lose too much energy when digging through to the ground.

In March, when the hardest frosts are finally waning and the period of daylight is lengthening, life in the tent becomes more active again. The herders prepare for the departure in April (they repair the sledges, etc.), and the tent community gradually congregates. The supplies that people bought for the new migration season are transported from the village to the camp, where the tent workers distribute the load between the different freight sledges. With the day when the brigade leaves the winter camp, the annual cycle has come to completion and starts afresh. *Da capo*.

2.3 Spatial mobility and the life-world of Komi herdspeople

For reindeer-herding families, mobility is a necessity. By the same token, mobility enlarges the remit of the family's activities. Notwithstanding the spatial and temporal limitations of the herders' migrations, the very condition of migrating entails a certain flexibility and freedom. Reindeer-herding families, and herdsmen in particular, are aware of their special vocation and feel proud of their knowledge, skills and experience in the tundra. In this section I analyse how the *brigada* members themselves perceive and describe the spatial aspects of the practice of reindeer husbandry.[9]

The tent is a centre of the reindeer herders' and tent workers' life-world, yet it is not the only centre. The house in the village, too, is central to the *brigada* people's livelihood and life experience (see chapter 3). Every Komi family whose members are engaged in reindeer husbandry has two household "bases": one in the village and one in the camp.

In comparison with the other inhabitants of the village, the reindeer herders and tent workers have a broader spatial range of everyday activities. The average village dweller knows the village itself, its closer surroundings, some neighbouring settlements and the district centre. The local fishermen know the rivers and lakes, and many of them travel more than a hundred kilometres to get to their fishing grounds. Yet the *brigada* people know not only the village, the district centre and so forth, but every year they travel at least 400 kilometres from southwest to northeast and all the way back again. Most of the distance is covered by reindeer-hauled transport. The *brigada*

[9] In an article recently submitted to the journal *Nomadic Peoples* (Habeck, forthcoming), I discuss the conceptual differences between migration, mobility and movement. While "migration" reflects the description of regular patterns of movement from an outsider's perspective, and "mobility" reflects the potential to move, the term "movement" offers the best approach to studying the perception of the environment from the insider's perspective.

members cross vast and roadless expanses, they feel at home where other people would feel entirely lost, and (at least the older among them) have been several times to the shores of the Kara Sea, a place that in the cognition of most village inhabitants seems even farther away than Moscow. Thus, the reindeer herders and tent workers "enjoy" a spatial mobility much greater than that of their village neighbours. They also feel that they enjoy more freedom.

On the other hand, the movements of the *brigada* people are confined by the migration route and the pastures within the "corridor" allotted to their reindeer-herding enterprise. With regard to the late spring and early autumn pastures, these corridors can be as narrow as 12 kilometres. The migration route itself, the *vörga*, is visible even to the most inexperienced *yando* for a considerable part of the year. At any rate, the older herders know their route by heart. The younger herdsmen, who do not yet know it sufficiently well, should learn it. Interviewees told me that it takes more than five years to memorise the migration route.

Basically this mobility extends over one corridor only, and every *brigada* is supposed to proceed over its own route. However, there is also a second kind of mobility – a privilege of the older herdsmen. It struck me that the older herders had very good knowledge of what was to be found to the left and right of their corridor, whereas the young ones had not yet had opportunities to explore the space beyond the corridor. I believe this is an important element in the education of an apprentice herdsman: the older herders will not let him travel the "byways" before he has gained enough competence to master the "main road". Obviously, the older the herder, the more experienced he is. "Experienced" means, in this case, well travelled. Being an older herdsman gives one the privilege of visiting the brigades of other reindeer-herding enterprises that have their corridors adjacent to his. The head of Brigada N° 9, Vasilii, knows many of the neighbouring brigades; moreover, throughout the spring he appeared to have up-to-date intelligence about the presence of fishermen at various sites far beyond the borders of the own corridor. Herders such as Zhenia and the two Andreis occupy an intermediate position: they have reached a work stage in which they are permitted to make excursions to the nearest oil workers' base or even to the military base on the coast of the Kara Sea.

Spatial mobility and competence to travel clearly have not only an age aspect but also a gender aspect. Istomin, a Komi anthropologist, writes about Komi tent workers (2000: 71): "The 'world of woman' is very different from the world of men. … A woman cannot travel in a separate sledge (*dad'*), her place is in the line of sledges loaded with the equipment she takes care of". He states that male and female adolescents enjoy the same degree of mobil-

ity, but with increasing age, mobility increases for men while it decreases for women.[10] Polina and Tania complained two or three times that they generally had to stay in or around the tent: "We too would like to drive around like the men". On 8 May 1999, Polina travelled to her native village, Khorei-Ver, about 40 kilometres from the campsite, to pick up Vitko and Zhen'ko; she was accompanied by the two Andreis and travelled not on her usual sledge but on a herder's sledge that someone had lent to her. I was surprised to see how difficult it was for her to get control over the reindeer and that she drove in circles for quite a while. Now I can explain this fact by Istomin's observation, and I see Polina's ride as an exception that proves the rule. In short, the remit of the women is even more restricted than that of the apprentice herders.

In the perception of the environment there is a clear interconnectivity between place and time (season). The *brigada* people know the area north of the Karataika, towards the Kara Sea, only in its summer state. This landscape is experienced as mossy and green and with up to six oxen in front of one's sledge. When the women talk about the Karataika Valley they associate it with the smell of flowers and herbs and the multitude of mosquitoes. Similarly, thoughts about the landscape along the Kolva-Vis River evoke connotations of slush, dangerous fords and newborn calves. Earlier I mentioned that Konkovör is perceived as the "last forest" and marks the last stage of the time of sledge building.

Moreover, the connectedness of time and place includes a third element: events, encounters, stories and biographies. The environment is a natural and a social one at the same time. Again, Konkovör is a good example. A hamlet existed there some 40 years ago, and one of its inhabitants was a great-aunt of Vasilii's and Ivan's. She is buried in the tiny cemetery in the valley that the brigade passes twice a year. Very close to this place, Lesha's grandfather, who was also a reindeer herder, died in an accident. Polina's memories of Konkovör centre around the food and shelter she was given when she and her fellow pupils made their two-day walk from her native village to the next boarding school, every year at the end of August. Saint Elias's Day and the spring and autumn corrals constitute the highlights of the social year in the tundra. People recollect and exchange their own episodes and biographies and those of others.

At the corral, in a sense, the village and town come to visit the tundra. At the spring corral there are always a number of pensioners, both women and men, who earlier worked in the tundra themselves; they use their occupational ties to spend a fortnight fishing. At the autumn corral there are

[10] Kirill Istomin, personal communication, September 2004.

always a number of townsmen. Herders slaughter reindeer only for their own purposes, whereas the slaughtering of animals on behalf of the reindeer-herding enterprise is done by seasonal workers, many of whom come from the district centre or from farther afield.

Each brigade ought to have a radio and go on air every morning at 09:30 for the daily briefing by the enterprise's central base. That Brigada N° 9's radio was defunct slackened the managers' control over the brigade's activities, but it did not mean that the tentmates lived a life of complete isolation in the depths of the tundra. The "outside world" is always present in the minds of the *brigada* members, and sometimes it is present physically, be it through the company of the anthropologist, the occasional visits of oil workers or traders or encounters with "outsiders" at the corral.[11] Harking back to the issues of spatial mobility and life-world, everybody brings his or her own experiences and stories from the "outside": Ivan served as a soldier in Mongolia, Vasilii went as a child to the Black Sea for a holiday with his parents, the women have visited relatives in places that other members of the brigade do not know and so forth. The life-world of each individual is thus bound to places that may differ significantly from everybody else's. There are, of course, places that are common to everyone by virtue of their working as members of a reindeer-herding brigade: the tent, the places along the migration route, the corral and the village with the central base of the enterprise. In the next chapter, I shift my description to the second important centre of the reindeer people's life-world, the village.

[11] Compare the discussion of Nenets nomads' relations to the "outside world" in Stammler's forthcoming volume in this series. Stammler refers to Khazanov (1984), who emphasises that nomadic societies and economies cannot be properly understood if one fails to examine their relations to other (in many cases, sedentary) groups. To avoid any misinterpretation, let me stress that although Komi reindeer herders perform mobile pastoralism, they do not qualify as nomads proper. In fact, they have a sedentary background and began to engage in mobile pastoralism only three centuries ago (see section 4.2).

Chapter 3
Small village, large village and town

Having described the reindeer herders' and tent workers' life in the tundra and the camp as their transportable base, I now want to highlight the other centre of their life-world, the village, as well as their other base, the house in the village. We shall first visit Novikbozh, a village of about 550 people on the banks of the Pechora River, and then Ust'-Usa, similarly situated on the Pechora, but larger (1,400 inhabitants). The two villages are just five kilometres from each other; they are connected by a tarmac road and a regular bus service. The reindeer herders and tent workers whom we met in the previous chapter live in either Novikbozh or Ust'-Usa. The village of Ust'-Usa serves as a centre for Novikbozh in many respects: the office of the reindeer-herding enterprise, the high school and many other institutions are all located in Ust'-Usa. It used to be the capital of the whole district (*raion*) but lost this function because of the rapid development of a new town nearby in the 1970s and 1980s. This town is Usinsk, the unofficial oil capital of the Komi Republic. In the third part of this chapter I take readers to Usinsk and show how the emergence of this industrial town with its own local identity has influenced the identities of the surrounding villages and the image of the families living in those villages.

Reindeer-herding families have to tackle the same problem as all other families in the villages of the Komi Republic: creating household income by applying as many and as diversified formal and informal strategies as possible. Having some family members who work in reindeer husbandry can be seen as an economic asset. By the same token, this asset causes specific difficulties, and the question of transportation is the most pressing one. Managing two or three household "bases" requires mobility. Means of transportation other than reindeer and sledges must be paid for. As the herders and tent workers are employed by a reindeer-herding enterprise, it is the enterprise that pays for transportation. As Polina's example in chapter 2 shows, the herders' families have two choices: they can either try to use reindeer-hauled sledge transport as often as possible (and stay close to the

village in winter) or hope that the enterprise they work for will find the financial means to send helicopters to the camp. A single reindeer-herding family would not find the capital to pay for a helicopter flight. Transportation by helicopter has become an unpredictable resource. The executive members of the former state farm, who often are relatives of the herding families, try to control this resource as much as possible, yet frequently without success.

Herding families can exchange meat for other products. They also have the opportunity to fish in the tundra, even if they spend much less time fishing than their neighbours who live permanently in the village. Employment figures for the state farm's milk-production sector have gone down, and people have been forced to find work in other spheres, notably in privately run shops or in town. Everybody in the countryside saw a steep decline in income and standard of living over the 1990s; however, non-herding families have been more affected by this development than herding families. The economic situation of reindeer-herding and other families is discussed in general terms in chapter 7. Here, in section 3.1, I draw a picture of everyday life in the village and the everyday life of a reindeer-herding family.

3.1 Novikbozh

Few people in the Russian Federation have ever heard of Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh, yet nearly everyone has heard of the Russian pop star Valerii Leont'ev. Leont'ev was born in 1949 in Ust'-Usa. The local grapevine has it that he was actually born not in the village itself but on the road between Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh. I have travelled on this road many times, frequently by school bus. This is what I am doing just now. While the bus passes the ruins of the abandoned building site of the state farm's cowshed halfway between the two villages, I am chatting with Irina about Leont'ev's music. Irina says she likes it, whereas her father, Vasilii, does not. Leont'ev's father worked as a reindeer veterinarian for a state farm farther downstream, but the parents moved to Ust'-Usa in the mid-1950s. That Valerii Leont'ev left these parts and now lives a rakish life in St Petersburg, Russia, and Miami, Florida, explains why Irina envies him and why Vasilii says that Leont'ev has forsaken and forgotten his fellow villagers.

Apart from Irina, my other friend in the school bus is Mishko, Zhenia's brother. I am staying with their family, whose surname is Khatanzeiskii. Shortly after reaching Novikbozh, the bus stops and we get out. With Mishko I walk to "our" house (fig. 12). The head of the household is already awaiting us: Yelena Borisovna (45), a widow with three daughters and three sons. Yelena's father was Russian; her mother is Komi. Her mother lives in the house next door, and Yelena and her daughters look after her. Yelena

Figure 12. The house of the Khatanzeiskii family in Novikbozh. (25 February 1999.)

does not "travel" (*ne yezdit*) any more, which means she does not work as a tent worker as she did when her husband, Aleksei, was still alive.

Aleksei was the brother of Vasilii and Ivan; they all belong to the Khatanzeiskii family. They trace their ancestry back to their grandfather Terentii (referred to as Ter' Starik), and nothing is known about earlier generations except that Ter' Starik was of Nenets provenance. Although the knowledge of genealogies is not very deep historically, people in Novikbozh do have extensive knowledge about the ties between the families in the village over the last two or three generations. These ties are important in a community where a large part of the local economy depends on informal social networks, mutual help and exchange.

Yelena and her family also depend on these ties. Like most parents in Russia and elsewhere, she tries to make ends meet, looks after her children, cares about their education, helps them to find jobs and also actively maintains links and co-operation with related (and unrelated) families in the village. Zhenia (22), her oldest son, works as a reindeer herder and is the main source of the family's income. He contributes reindeer meat and the wages he receives from the state farm (if he receives them). Yelena herself sews fur boots and is paid a widow's pension. She helps her neighbours to make hay in the summer and gets milk and sometimes a piece of beef in return. Ania (21) used to work as a shop assistant, but she was soon going to marry a Russian from Ukhta, a city some 200 kilometres farther south, and

the couple was considering moving there. Katia (16) also worked in one of the four small village shops until it shut down. Roza (17) recently finished school and would like to study philology in Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic, but the family would have difficulty supporting her financially. The two youngest sons, Van'ko (14) and Mishko (12), go to school in Ust'-Usa, as do all the Novikbozh children who have completed the primary school in Novikbozh. Van'ko does not like school and tries to escape whenever possible. He hangs out in the forest. In the summer holidays and in winter he spends much of his time with his brother Zhenia in the herders' tent. Mishko does not like school, either, but attends it more regularly than Van'ko.

My presence caused a rearrangement of the sleeping facilities among the family members. The three daughters slept in the house of their grandmother, Yelena shared her sleeping room with Mishko (and Van'ko, when he was around). When Zhenia lived in the house, he stayed in the living room. I slept on a sofa bed in a small room between the kitchen and the living room. There are no doors separating the four rooms from each other. Instead, three rooms open into a space dominated by the big brick-laid stove (with a cat residing on top of it). A curtain maintains the privacy of the sleeping room, which is farthest from the stove. The kitchen is the largest room and comprises not only the kitchen proper but also the corner where people have their meals, the washstand and the wardrobe close to the door that leads to the porch. Some of the food is stored on the porch, whereas the work equipment (including the reindeer-herding gear) is piled up in a wide corridor that connects the porch with the toilet at the back of the house. Next to it is a large room that apparently used to be a shed for cattle but serves now as an additional storage room. The two houses share a *bania* (bathhouse) and a shed for firewood.

Mishko and I get up at the same time, urged by Yelena's persistent shouts. After the morning ablutions and a hasty breakfast, we catch the school bus to Ust'-Usa. Usually I do my interviews, visits and shopping in Ust'-Usa in the morning; the afternoon I spend in visits to families in Novikbozh. Visits are usually lengthy, and in most cases the guest is urged to stay and "drink tea". We saw in the previous chapter that "tea" is not just tea. When a guest pops around, "tea" involves all the kinds of food the hosts can bring up: frozen and salted fish, sometimes meat, always bread and potatoes or noodles, preserved mushrooms and berries, sweets and the like. Sometimes the head of the household comes out with a bottle of vodka, and it would be utterly impolite to leave the house before the third toast.

Back, at Yelena's house, I tried to help my host family as much as possible, although many of the daily tasks were done by the other family

members in a routine and consequently better manner. At times, though, my help was genuinely appreciated, most notably when I offered to accompany Yelena and some others to the river island close to the village in order to make hay. This business lasts several days. While we had a break, Yelena's neighbour explained what kind of work people need to do at what time of the year. To give just a few examples, the hay that is cut in July is left in haystacks until November, when the river is frozen and the hay can be transported to the village by snowmobile. Potatoes are planted in June, in late July the earth around the potato plants must be piled up, and the harvest happens in mid-September, when the nights get frosty.

The procuring of staple food for the long winter is so important that officials and white-collar workers also take leave from work. In August the whole village is busy picking berries and mushrooms in any place people can travel to. Families who are not engaged in reindeer husbandry earn a considerable part of their subsistence by fishing, and the men are on the rivers or lakes many days throughout most of the year. To be a fisherman is no longer an occupation (as it used to be in Soviet times), yet many families in Novikbozh have a boat at the shore of the river and an outboard motor at home.

Novikbozh looks like hundreds of other villages of the same size in this part of Russia (fig. 13). Many Western visitors may feel pleased by the absence of the concrete blocks of flats that are so ubiquitous in larger villages. All houses in Novikbozh are wooden buildings; there is neither running water nor district heating. What looks quaint and cosy to Western observers is considered uncomfortable and "backward" by local people: they have to fetch water from a nearby brook and firewood from the forest. With its approximately 500 inhabitants, Novikbozh is classified as a "small village" (*derevnia*), whereas Ust'-Usa, which is almost three times as large, figures as a "large village" (*selo*).

Imagine you arrive by boat in Novikbozh: either you climb the steep riverbank by one of the little paths or you take the easier, albeit longer, way and walk up the ramp to the village road. Turn left, and after some hundred metres the road fans out, its branches turning into footpaths at the fringe of the village. Turn right, and the road will lead you to what could be called the centre of the village and ultimately to Ust'-Usa. The actual centre of Novikbozh is the village hall – literally, the "House of Culture" (*Dom kul'tury*, *Kul'tura kerka*) – at the end of a little street that comes up from the main road. There are no paved roads other than the main road and this little side street. The buses that call at Novikbozh turn here, their passengers embarking and disembarking. The House of Culture, the bus shelter and the two shops make up the focal point of the village's "public" sphere from early

morning until late evening. The other public buildings you can count on the fingers of one hand: the post office, the elementary school and another shop. Apart from the House of Culture, the largest and most impressive building in Novikbozh is the old cowshed of the former state farm. It is situated in the back lane of the village, which connects Yelena's house with that of Vasilii and Tania's family.

Frequently I walked from one house to the other – from one branch of the Khatanzeiskii kin to the other, from the people of Brigada Nº 10 to those of Brigada Nº 9, most of whom the reader got to know in chapter 2. Judging from their house and its interior, Vasilii and Tania are slightly better off than Yelena's family and more affluent than the average family in Novikbozh (the other people who work in the two brigades also live in Novikbozh, with the exception of Ivan and Polina, who have a flat in Ust'-Usa.). But even their standard of living seems modest in comparison with the house a few steps away, at the edge of the village. This is the home of Vasilii Ivanovich Khoziainov (49) and his family. They built it two or three years earlier, and it still looks brand new. Everything seems more generous and ample there. Senior reindeer herders often come around for a visit, because Khoziainov works in the former state farm as chief executive for reindeer husbandry (*upravliaiushchii po olenevodstvu*), and in the hierarchy of the enterprise he

Figure 13. The village of Novikbozh. The photograph was taken from the southern edge of the village, with the Pechora River in the background to the left. (25 February 1999.)

comes de facto second after the director. If things in the reindeer-herding brigades go wrong, then the brigadiers have to answer to him. Soon we will visit him at his office in Ust'-Usa.

3.2 Ust'-Usa

Ust'-Usa is not only larger than Novikbozh, but it has a markedly different appearance and hosts more public buildings. The explanation lies in the village's function as a district centre from 1932 to 1959. In those days Ust'-Usa served as an administrative and transportation hub for the wider area. The old village that nestles on the riverbank where the Usa flows into the Pechora witnessed the emergence of a new village, the square building blocks of which occupy a large area on the terrace above.[12] Most of the new buildings were standardised types of wooden houses with two floors. Nowadays, many of them look miserable: when the administrative status of Ust'-Usa was downgraded, the village's period of prosperity came to an end.

However, it retained the function of a community council (*sel'sovet*), encompassing Novikbozh and two other villages.[13] Therefore, the array of public services offered in Ust'-Usa is still comparatively large: the main street is lined by a hospital, the council building and kindergarten, a diversity of shops, the secondary school and the post office. At the end of the main street, where the new village meets the old one, is the church. In Soviet times it served as the House of Culture of the erstwhile district; then it became defunct; and it was recently refurbished with the financial support of an oil company (fig. 14 shows the old village and the church). In the 1980s, one of the square blocks in the village centre was built up with two concrete buildings that, on three floors each, provide living space for about fifty households. A number of reindeer-herding families live in these grey houses, which are locally known as "well-built" (*blagoustroennye*) because they have running water and central heating.

Among the inhabitants of the "well-built" houses are Ivan, Polina and Ter' Mish Andrei. Ivan is Polina's second husband. Earlier, she was married to Mikhail (the older brother of Vasilii, Aleksei and Ivan) and had three children with him (Ter' Mish Andrei, Vitko and a third son). Until his death soon after 1990, Mikhail was the head of Brigada N° 9, and Polina enjoyed the status of being the senior tent worker. In accordance with the ages of the

[12] See Belitzer 1958: 161 for a map of Ust'-Usa in the mid-1950s.

[13] These two villages are Akis', where Lesha comes from, and Ust'-Lyzha, the home of Lyzhasa Andrei (his nickname means "Andrei from Lyzha").

Figure 14. The village of Ust'-Usa. The photograph was taken from the frozen Pechora River and shows the old part of the village. The building in the centre is the church. (1 November 1998.)

Khatanzeiskii brothers, the leadership of the brigade then passed to Vasilii and Tania. Some years later, the youngest unmarried Khatanzeiskii brother, Ivan, and Polina became a couple, and she stayed in the brigade, but she was no longer tent worker number one, which explains the complexity in the relations between Polina and Tania. Though they live under the same canvas in the tundra, the two families do not see each other often when they are in the village.

As we have seen, each Komi reindeer-herding family has two household "bases": one in the tundra and one in the village. Consequently, a significant part of life is spent shuffling around loads of flasks, bags and boxes with the family's labels attached to them.[14] Yet Polina's case is even more complex. She grew up in Khorei-Ver, a place beyond the borders of the Komi Republic (in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug) and without direct connection to Ust'-Usa. Her two younger sons attend school there and live with her sister's family. When she wants to see her sons, Polina has the choice of

[14] I found great interest in these labels (*birka*, *pas*): usually they consist of three letters that stand for the family name, the given name and the patronymic. The same letters appear on some of the herders' personal belongings, such as axes. On the luggage labels, the letters are often accompanied by the number of the brigade, indicated by the abbreviation ST, which stands for *stado* (herd).

hitchhiking for two days along indifferent roads and tracks or sitting and waiting in the district centre, Usinsk, to catch the occasional helicopter that takes her to her native place. The third option was described in the previous chapter: in spring, Polina can make use of the brigade's location near Khorei-Ver and travel there by reindeer sledge. When planning the family's economic affairs, Polina has to think about three household "bases", each providing specific resources in time (seasons) and space (distance) as well as in social terms (members, relatives and neighbours).

To return to Ust'-Usa and the "well-built" houses, one of them hosts the local leisure centre, a small library and the office (*kontora*) of the reindeer-herding enterprise (fig. 15). The plate on the door says: "Milk-producing and reindeer-herding state farm Ust'-Usinskii" (*Molochno-olenevodcheskii sovkhoz Ust'-Usinskii*).[15] Since January 2000 the state farm has had the official status of "municipal unitary enterprise" (*munitsipal'noe unitarnoe predpriiatie*), but most people in the villages keep saying "state farm" (*sovkhoz*). And although a few financial and management procedures may have changed, the old *sovkhoz* ambience is still very much alive. After you have passed the two sets of slamming doors that are so ubiquitous in the cold northern regions of Russia, you walk upstairs and find yourself in a dismal corridor and in company with one or two persons waiting for their audience. There is a cashier's window in the corridor, but it is never open. Employees who want to receive their salary make sure they see the white-collar worker whom they know best, who has the highest rank, or both. For approximately five years (the second half of the 1990s) the state farm could not pay wages in cash: the wages were written down in booklets and balanced with the expenses that the state farm paid on behalf of the employee (such as food supplies for the herders in the tundra). As an exception to the rule of this barter economy, the lucky employee might finagle a so-called advance (*avans*) paid out in cash. In fact such payments covered tiny bits of the long-standing arrears of the employees' salaries. At least this changed when the state farm was transformed into a municipal enterprise: now wages

[15] With the aim of securing some form of income throughout the year, both state and collective farms were to combine reindeer husbandry with other agricultural activities. From approximately 1960 to 1995, all reindeer-herding enterprises in the Komi Republic engaged in additional activities such as cattle farming and milk production or fishing and hunting. This is why Ust'-Usinskii was classified as a "milk-producing and reindeer-herding state farm" before its official status changed in January 2000 to "municipal unitary enterprise". More recently, in early 2003, Ust'-Usinskii became part of the neighbouring enterprise Severnyi. The present book can be seen as the documentation of a state-farm-successor enterprise under adverse conditions and at a stage when it was already threatened by collapse.

Figure 15. The state farm's office (kontora). The office of the reindeer-herding enterprise Ust'-Usinskii is situated on the top floor of the building in the centre. The red-brick section underneath marks a leisure centre. The entire block consists of such standardised houses with central heating and running water. (Ust'-Usa, 28 November 1998.)

are transferred to the bank accounts of employees.

At certain times of the day the corridor resounds with shouts that emanate from the radio room. This room is officially the realm of the dispatcher (*dispecher*), but during radio sessions it is crammed with white-collar workers as well as relatives of those who work in the tundra. Unfortunately, not all the reindeer-herding brigades have a radio: the one belonging to Brigada N° 9 is broken, and the one belonging to Brigada N° 10 should be replaced soon, but there is no money for that. It was in this room that I first met Khoziainov – while he was having a debate with a number of workers. Many issues had been raised, and one employee (a technician) spoke about civil disobedience and strikes. Another complained about lack of support from the government. Khoziainov said that in the Urals there were herders who worked entirely on a private base; they got no support and still made a reasonable living. Further, he said, this showed how important it was that everybody continue working at his or her place ("*kazhdyi na svoem meste*"); all the talk about strikes was just nonsense. The discussion went on for a while, until the smokers among the workers made their way to the staircase – the usual place where the men have their informal talks.

I remained with Khoziainov in the radio room, and he remarked that he often felt as if he worked in a "madhouse" (*durdom*). Later I asked him about the possibility of travelling by helicopter to the state farm's corral – Kolva-Ty – as I had heard that there would be a helicopter within the next few days. Khoziainov accepted my request without hesitation and told me to get ready: the flight would be the next morning. Without really knowing me, Khoziainov and many other state farm workers were willing to help me from the first moment. State farm executives can be quite uninterested when strangers turn up and want to know the enterprise's latest production figures, but they may become keen when the stranger declares a desire to live in a camp.

The executive staff of the *kontora* comprises the director, the deputy director, who is at the same time the chief economist (*glavnyi ekonomist*), the chief accountant (*glavnyi bukhgalter*) and her subordinates, the chief engineer (*glavnyi inzhener*), the chief zoo-technician (*glavnyi zootekhnik*), the chief executive for cattle rearing (*upravliaiushchii po zhivotnovodstvu*), the chief executive for reindeer husbandry (*upravliaiushchii po olenevodstvu*), the zoo-technician for reindeer husbandry (*zootekhnik po olenevodstvu*) and others. The enterprise used to employ a veterinarian, but this function has been outsourced since April 1998 and is now fulfilled by the district veterinarian whenever necessary.

The former state farm (municipal enterprise) does not pursue any land cultivation; it engages in animal farming exclusively. As the plate on the front door indicates, Ust'-Usinskii operates in two fields: milk production and reindeer husbandry. In the previous chapter I described Ust'-Usinskii as a reindeer-herding enterprise. This simplification can now be revised: in late 1998, 130 people were employed in the three milk farms and about 80 worked in reindeer husbandry. More than 30 people worked in the office (*kontora*) and on the state farm's central site; this group included both white-collar workers and technicians. Yet my description of Ust'-Usinskii as a reindeer-herding enterprise serves to emphasise that reindeer husbandry is, in economic terms, the enterprise's most important activity. It is the big plus in the state farm's accounts, whereas milk farming is the big minus. For the same reason, I consider Khoziainov as, de facto, the second most important official of the enterprise, although on paper he is not.

The state farm's milk farming has seen a serious decline over the last ten years: many workers were dismissed, some cowsheds were closed, and the new shed halfway between the two villages has never been completed. However, people in Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh have their private cattle. The island meadows where Yelena and her neighbours make hay are actually state-farm territory, but owing to the enterprise's decreasing demand for hay,

the director has "opened" the island for private use. Making hay is still collective work, organised in teams (again, the word *brigada* is used), but the hay is shared by the workers and no longer taken by the former state farm.

As in other former state farms and collective farms, the accounting department is a stronghold of female officials, whereas positions such as the director and the zoo-technicians are dominated by males. Most of the staff of this enterprise are Komi and grew up in Ust'-Usa or Novikbozh, and many of them (for example, the director, the deputy director and Khoziainov) are the brothers, sisters or children of reindeer herders and tent workers. However, there are also a few Russian workers in the *kontora*.

I made friends with one "incomer" family that had close ties to the former state farm, and I introduce these people because – together with Khoziainov – they play a pivotal role in meat marketing and other commercial activities. Boris Vladimirovich Sharikov (49), the Russian zoo-technician of Ust'-Usinskii, grew up in the southern Urals and had worked in the reindeer business in other northern regions of Russia before he came here. He now lives with his family in Usinsk, the district centre, and commutes to work by car (160 kilometres for a round trip). His nephew Oleg Anatol'evich Pechenkin (33) worked for several years as reindeer veterinarian for the state farm, but in connection with the outsourcing of his function, he had recently been promoted to the position of chief veterinarian for the entire district. The flat of the Pechenkin family is located in one of the "well-built" houses in Ust'-Usa, but the young couple wants to move with their two children to Usinsk. Oleg's wife, Svetlana Vasil'evna (26), follows the same profession: as the village veterinarian, she looks after (non-reindeer) animals in the village. She is hoping to get a similar job in her husband's office, the veterinary station in Usinsk.

The first time I met Oleg was – like so many other meetings – a helicopter episode. Oleg had been sitting in faraway Servis-Ty (Seres'-To), waiting a whole month to be taken to Ust'-Usa. When he was finally picked up, the helicopter he travelled in had a stopover at the corral Kolva-Ty, where I had spent a few days with Khoziainov, Sharikov and others. When the helicopter landed in Ust'-Usa, I helped to unload bags and boxes. Oleg had not really noticed me during the flight, but now he was wondering about this unknown person who seemed to be "involved" in state farm work. Two days later, Sharikov invited me to Oleg and Svetlana's flat. After dinner, we watched the video that Oleg had filmed at Servis-Ty. Svetlana has also frequently been to the tundra, and she enjoys it. While we were watching the video, she said, "You know, Otto, perhaps it is different in your country, but here the everyday life is often very tiring. Sometimes I want to [leave it all

behind and] go into the tundra, where there is no such trouble". Similarly, Oleg told me one day, "I am moving into town for my career and in order to give my family a better life, but actually, I don't like office work. I would love to keep working in the tundra [but it would be difficult]. Before, the herders and I were sort of colleagues, but now I am in a senior position, and as a 'boss' I will become unpopular".

When Oleg first showed me all his tundra equipment, he mentioned, in a proud voice, that the reindeer herders sometimes call him a *yaran.* From my own conversations with Komi reindeer herders I knew that the word *yaran* is used as the opposite of *yando* ("greenhorn"). *Yaran* is an attribute of an experienced, skilful reindeer herder (see chapter 7). For Oleg, the importance of his nickname derived from his feeling that the herdsmen accepted and respected him.

My entrée and adoption into the Khatanzeiskii families and the two brigades described in chapter 2 was facilitated and endorsed by an enigmatic first encounter with Yelena (who claimed she had read about me in a newspaper, long before I had ever thought of working in this region), the help and recommendations of Khoziainov and Sharikov and some long talks with Oleg. There must have been a lot of communication going on behind the scenes. One night Oleg told me that if I wanted to migrate with the brigades of Ust'-Usinskii, I should stay in the community and settle in, help the state farm workers during the slaughter and get to know the reindeer herders. Some days later it was decided that I would leave the flat that I had hired in one of the "well-built" houses in Ust'-Usa and live with Yelena's family in Novikbozh. Such episodes made me realise how much my presence had already become enmeshed in the informal network of the community and how, in the future, I myself would move along the lines of these social ties.

Svetlana and Oleg arrived in the region in 1992 and lived for a number of years in Novikbozh. Her daughter attended the elementary school in the village, where the Komi language prevails over Russian in everyday conversation as well as among the pupils in the schoolyard. Little wonder that she started to use Komi phrases in the local vernacular not only at school but also at home. This changed when the family moved to Ust'-Usa, where ethnic Russians make up a quarter of all inhabitants. In the streets of Ust'-Usa one can hear both Komi and Russian. At school in Ust'-Usa the language of instruction is Russian, whilst Komi is taught alongside other subjects. However, the Komi dialect that the pupils learn at this school differs from the Komi dialect they pick up at home or in the streets. Svetlana and Oleg's neighbours and good friends, a Komi family of local provenance, told me that they and other parents had set up a study group for the literary Komi language – otherwise they would be unable to help their children with

homework. Before I had got to know Irina, she approached me one day after school at the bus stop and asked me, the foreigner, whether I spoke Komi. I tried some phrases that I had learnt in my Komi textbook. She smiled and scoffed at me: "You don't speak Komi, you speak Zyrian", the latter being the term that local people use for the literary language, which derives from the southern part of Komi. In later chapters I return to the issues of language, ethnic and regional identity in Ust'-Usa and the wider area and the salience of such issues to the image of Komi reindeer herding.

The school building in Ust'-Usa, a showpiece of austere Soviet architecture of the early 1980s, is situated just opposite the office of the former state farm. Inside the entrance to the school, a large wall painting leaps into one's eye: it is an allegory of herders' life in the sunny tundra, where humans and animals live in friendship (fig. 16). The painting helps to promote the prestige of reindeer husbandry among the pupils, the teachers and visitors to the school. So does the small local museum on the second floor of the school. Metal badges (*rubezh*) used as ornaments on the herder's belt (*tasma*) and other specimens of herders' craftsmanship are exhibited behind glass. The collection in the museum includes one photographic portrait of a reindeer herder, who happens to be the late Mitrofan Terent'evich Khatanzeiskii, the father of Mikhail, Vasilii, Aleksei and Ivan.

But neither the portrait of his grandfather nor the painting in the vestibule can mitigate Van'ko's dislike for school. For Van'ko, the lessons are utterly boring. He finds it difficult to sit still, to listen and respond to the in-

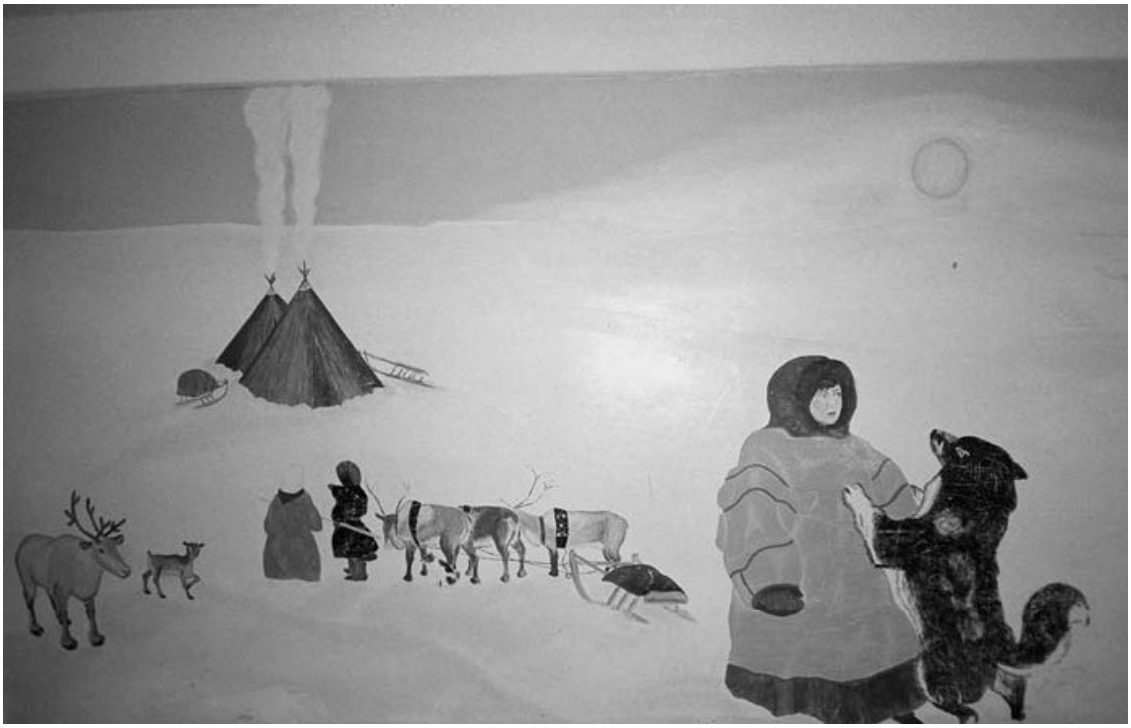

Figure 16. Painting in the foyer of the Ust'-Usa school building. (February 1999.)

structions of the teacher. He would rather gaze out of the window and observe what is going on outside. His actual sphere of learning seems to be in the tundra and forest, and his main mode of learning, the experiential acquisition of manual and mental skills. According to the teachers, children of reindeer-herding families perform worse at school than the average (see section 7.5.4). Some young herdsmen, such as Öndriuk, Lesha and Sasha, have considerable difficulty with reading and writing; indeed, Sasha is illiterate. My interpretation is that their lack of interest in learning these things challenges or even undermines the values that are central to school: education (*obrazovanie*), civilisation (*tsivilizatsiia*) and culture (*kul'tura*).

Tsivilizatsiia and *kul'tura* have some specific connotations in the Russian context and had them in Soviet times, too. The presence of "well-built" houses, a water tower and the like make Ust'-Usa a more "cultured" place than Novikbozh. On the far end of the scale of "culturedness" is the reindeer herders' camp, a place that lacks even the most elementary cultural "achievements", such as a *bania*. *Tsivilizatsiia* is often used in a sense similar to that of *kul'tura*. To express it in a somewhat provocative manner, *tsivilizatsiia* ends where the roads run out of tarmac.

Like some other institutions (such as the House of Culture), school is the main dispensary of culture in the second sense, not only for children but also for adults, as is illustrated in what follows. The sixtieth anniversary of Ust'-Usa's secondary school was celebrated with a large official function. The director and several senior teachers were awarded congratulations and certificates, the younger teachers presented a theatre sketch in the Komi language, the pupils recited poems and the school bus driver and his girlfriend performed Russian pop songs. The evening continued with a banquet and dancing (fig. 17). All this took place in the presence of the local media. I was amazed by the atmosphere of this event. It was not so much that the people (many of whom I had known before) had changed, but rather that my perception of them did. With hindsight, I think that in my desire to examine everyday activities and social networks I had underestimated the desire of my interviewees for official and "cultural" self-representation. I felt underdressed. To the best of my knowledge, reindeer herders were absent. They are not part of the local intellectual élite in Ust'-Usa.

Figure 17. Sixtieth anniversary of the Ust'-Usa school. Teachers and invited guests are dancing in the school's main hall. (6 November 1998.)

Examining the social status of reindeer-herding families, my impression is that they do not stand out in the village community of Novikbozh, whereas in Ust'-Usa their status is slightly different. Kinship ties incorporate the reindeer-herding families into the close-knit social fabric of Novikbozh. In contrast, some of the reindeer-herding families who live in the "well-built" houses in Ust'-Usa are blamed by their non-herding neighbours for their occasional drinking bouts and the boisterous behaviour of their children – both clearly signs of "unculturedness".

3.3 Usinsk

Considering the difficulties with transportation, at least the connection with Usinsk, the district centre, has improved. Ten or twelve years ago, a road was built from Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh to Usinsk, and there are regular bus services, which are free for pensioners. The latter constitute the majority of the passengers. Shopping in town is cheaper than in the village, particularly if you need not pay for the bus, so this is how pensioners can help their children's families. The bus collects passengers in front of the school and *kontora* in Ust'-Usa, then stops at the House of Culture in Novikbozh and from there travels along the highway. Half an hour later it reaches the main road that traverses the area of oil production to both sides of the Kolva River. Every time I travel there, I am struck by the size and appearance of

the technical structures, the most impressive of them being Golovnye Sooruzheniia, a complex for collecting and forwarding oil amidst a tangle of pipelines. You can see its flares of excess gas from far away. From Golovnye Sooruzheniia, a side road leads deep into the forest tundra, to the place where Brigada N° 9 had its winter camp in 1999. The reindeer herders and state farm drivers may use this road only after obtaining a permit from an office hidden behind the oil tanks. It was on such an occasion that Tret'iakov, one of the drivers of Ust'-Usinskii, remarked edgily, "You see? Our land, and yet we have to ask for permission". Having said that, he had to acknowledge that the road was constructed and maintained by the oil companies, as is the case with many roads in the region.

Today we are travelling not to any reindeer herders' camp but to town. After another half an hour along the trunk pipeline, the road makes a turn into Usinsk. Having passed the railway station and the industrial zone, the bus arrives at the main market, where most people get out to do their shopping. In the late afternoon the bus will collect the village people at the same bus stop. This is basically the only time and place where you know you will meet people talking in the Komi language in the public sphere of Usinsk. Few inhabitants of Usinsk itself are of Komi nationality; most of them are Russians, Ukrainians and Tatars. Around the corner, a nine-floor apartment block has an inscription on top: "More oil from Usinsk for the homeland! (*Bol'she Usinskoi nefti rodine!*)". Usinsk owes its existence to the oil industry. The town's population rises and falls depending on the price of crude oil on the international markets. Late 1998 to early 1999 was a critical period, and some inhabitants anticipated that "soon the lights will be turned off in Usinsk", as one of Oleg's colleagues expressed it during one of my visits to the veterinary station. But since one of the biggest companies in the Russian oil business – Lukoil – took over the regional companies and resumed large-scale investments, Usinsk has been attracting more people again.

Some 50,000 people live in Usinsk, and some 3,000 in a suburb called Parma, where the oil-producing town was initially going to be built. Geologists arrived here in 1962 in order to explore the region for oil. They pitched their tents at a Komi hamlet on the banks of the Usa River. Just five kilometres away is the village of Kolva, one of the most significant historical sites in the whole region (see Appendix 3). The new oil workers' settlement got the name Usinsk in 1966, but local building activities stopped three years later when it was decided that the Usa Valley would be flooded as a result of the construction of a hydrological power plant. The town would have to be erected farther away from the river. Indeed, this is what happened, notwithstanding that the dam and power plant were never built.

Thus, the construction of the new town of Usinsk began in February 1970, ten kilometres from the previous oil workers' settlement, which later attained the name Parma. I would not dwell so long on the history of Usinsk were it not that in some instances, 18 February 1970 is represented as "the beginning of history" (*nachalo istorii*; see fig. 18, from the encyclopaedia *Respublika Komi* [2000]). The event is depicted as the deed of a group of pioneers: "*Oni byli pervymi*" ("They were the first") runs the caption on a photograph showing the arrival of a cohort of settlers in a tank-like vehicle in what seems an uninhabited wilderness.

This representation of history necessarily implies that the Nenets and Komi presence in this region is all about "prehistory". In this interpretation,

УСИНСК, город респ. значения в Респ. Коми, центр одноим. МО «Город Усинск» (с 1999). Расположен на С. респ., на прав. берегу р. Усы. Ж.-д. ст.

Начало истории

на линии Сыня–Усинск. Аэропорт, ж.-д. вокзал. Возник в 1966. Статус города получил 20 июля 1984. Центр нефтедобыв. пром-сти Респ. Коми. Числ. нас. на 1.1.2000 — 47,7 тыс. чел.

Figure 18. "The beginning of history". Arrival of settlers in newly founded Usinsk. (Source: Respublika Komi: entsiklopediia, 2000, vol. 3: 201.)

people like Vasilii and Yelena must have grown up in prehistoric times, for they can remember the construction of the new town on the winter pastures of one of the reindeer-herding brigades of Ust'-Usinskii.[16]

A print of the same photograph is on display in the museum of Usinsk, whose exhibition focuses almost exclusively on the opening up of oil fields (fig. 19). The director of the museum told me that its staff have long wanted to diversify their displays but do not have the material yet to do so. No hard feelings, though, for at least they have compiled a collection of photographs showing village life and festivities from all villages in the surroundings of Usinsk. For Usinsk and Ust'-Usa, as well as other places in the former Soviet Union, museums had an important function: their exhibitions legitimised the existence of the place, of certain things and events. In other words, museums authorised the history and shaped the image of the place.[17] The museum of Usinsk, which was officially organised by the local administration, has until recently promoted the pioneering role of the town in oil production. The small museum of Ust'-Usa, which was organised informally by one of the teachers, demonstrates the village's background and engagement in reindeer husbandry. Each of them mirrors and promotes a certain local identity.

Notwithstanding the strong emphasis on oil production in the local identity of the town, most inhabitants of Usinsk do know that there are Komi villages and reindeer herders somewhere in their surroundings. Some of the oil workers have also seen reindeer and reindeer herders during their work shifts in the tundra. And further, there are a small number of those whose work is directly connected with reindeer husbandry: people like Oleg and his colleagues from the veterinary station, who had gone many times to Servis-Ty for reindeer vaccinations; Sharikov, who is responsible for compiling the "reindeer statistics" twice a year; and the officials in the local Department of Agriculture, who receive these data and forward them to the capital of the Komi Republic, Syktyvkar. I want to stress that they all supported my research. For example, officials of the Department of Agriculture invited me to an excursion to a newly built reindeer slaughterhouse at Vozei (Appendix 9), a place in what seems the middle of the oil-producing area of the Komi Republic, judging from the number of gas flares in the surrounding area. No doubt the administration of Usinsk is aware of the concerns among inhabi-

[16] In section 8.3 I argue that many urban inhabitants are likely to have the notion that reindeer herders belong to a past that by the "logic" of history and progress should no longer exist.

[17] See Cruikshank and Argounova 2000 for an example from the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

Figure 19. Exhibition in the museum of Usinsk. Items in the exhibition include paintings, medals, flags, geological specimens and a model of an oil derrick. (5 November 1998.)

tants of the villages in its territory and of the concerns of the reindeer-herding enterprises.

However, the point I wish to make here is that Usinsk has a different *raison d'être* from that of Novikbozh and Ust'-Usa. Often I felt that Usinsk was a world unto itself, in the sense that oil production – as a key industry in the Russian North – overshadowed all other aspects of life in this place's environs. I shall return to the domain of oil production in chapter 5. But first, we need to know what lies beyond Usinsk's "beginning of history". In the next chapter I explore the history of the region, with special focus on the development of Komi reindeer husbandry. Although Komi reindeer husbandry has been in existence much longer than the oil industry, it can by no means be considered prehistoric.

Chapter 4
The dynamics of Komi reindeer husbandry in space and time

In order to understand the present and assess the future of Komi reindeer husbandry, it is essential to know its history. Likewise, it is necessary to look at Komi reindeer husbandry in its regional diversity in order to understand transportation issues, the delineation of pastures and other aspects bearing on spatial mobility. This chapter takes us beyond Ust'-Usinskii and the reindeer-herding brigades that we met previously. We shall now explore Komi reindeer husbandry in its temporal and spatial entirety.

The role of the Komi in reindeer herding has been powerful, yet it is of recent origin. It is recent in that it goes back merely nine or ten generations. It has been powerful because from the 1930s to the 1990s, Komi reindeer-herding strategies and practices served as a blueprint for reindeer herding by other peoples of the Russian North. But while Komi reindeer husbandry became the model for Soviet reindeer husbandry in general, it lost part of its significance within the bounds of the Komi territory itself.

Although this book is focused on reindeer herding in the Komi Republic, it is impossible to restrict the historical and geographical analysis exclusively to the Komi: reindeer herding strategies and practices of the Komi and Nenets must be understood in their interconnectedness. They did not develop separately alongside each other but influenced and reformed each other. That the analysis cannot be limited to the Komi alone becomes evident from a brief look at the map showing the delineation of pastures (attached to this book). The pastures of the enterprises based in the Komi Republic are interspersed with those of enterprises based in other administrative regions. Indeed, the whole stretch of land from the White Sea to the Urals and beyond constitutes a regional entity in many respects of reindeer husbandry. Culturally and historically there are connections from this region both westward – Komi and Nenets engage in reindeer husbandry on the Kola Peninsula (Konakov 1993; Konstantinov 2000; cf. Nobl Øverland 1999) – and

eastward – the settlement area of the Nenets extends to the Taimyr Peninsula (Golovnev and Osherenko 1999; Klokov 2000; Stammler, forthcoming).

Reindeer husbandry in the area between the White Sea and the Urals (in the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug) has been examined repeatedly, but owing to the administrative borders, there has been a tendency over the last decades to overlook the region's integrity (for example, Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999a, 1999b). This is exemplified by the fact that regional statistics for the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Komi Republic are collected and published separately. Nonetheless, by now there are some good examples for an integrated approach (notably, Istomin 1998, 2004).

While the delineation of the reindeer-herding region in the north and west simply follows the coastline, a precise definition of its current eastern and southern bounds is difficult.[18] Independent herders (so-called *chastniki*) graze their animals on both sides of the Urals. Herders of the reindeer-herding enterprise in Vorkuta drive their animals far into the western Siberian lowlands. Other Komi enterprises, too, can claim vast winter pastures on the Siberian side, although they no longer use them. The winter pastures around the town of Pechora in the Komi Republic have also been abandoned. The expansion and reduction of the herding area reflects the long-term results of choices and decisions of herders, managers and administrators. Therefore, at the end of this chapter we shall look at the reasons for the abandoning of the southern and eastern winter pastures. First, I describe the geographical and historical shape of reindeer herding in the region.

4.1 Geographical sketch

The system of reindeer husbandry in the European North usually combines winter pasture in the taiga with summer pasture in the tundra.[19] The whole business of reindeer husbandry and the life-world of the *brigada* people are based on this annual oscillation. While migration between tundra and taiga is

[18] Reindeer herding is also pursued on two islands in the North Polar Sea: Kolguev and Vaigach. Kolguev has its own reindeer-herding enterprise, Kolguevskii, whereas the pastures on Vaigach are used by the enterprise Druzhba Narodov (Karataika).

[19] A look at the atlas reveals that natural conditions in the northeastern part of European Russia correspond roughly to the zonal variation of ecosystems on the planet Earth: in the northern hemisphere, north means colder and south means warmer. Consequently, the biomass and the diversity of vegetation generally decrease from south to north. This also applies to the area in question: boreal forests (taiga) cover the largest part of the European Northeast of Russia, followed by a transitional zone of forest tundra (roughly along the Polar Circle at 66° 33' N and beyond) and the treeless tundra itself, most of which is situated beyond 68° N.

one among various spatial patterns of reindeer husbandry in the region between the White Sea and the Urals, it constitutes the most typical case.[20] Its key considerations are the avoidance of insects in the summer by moving to cooler and windier places in the north (tundra), the avoidance of severe snowstorms in the winter by moving south (forest) and the general tendency to change grazing areas when forage becomes scarce.

Behind the general pattern of movement, many factors have a bearing on the herders' techniques and decisions in the actual process of herding. Usually their camp is located a few kilometres in front of the herd. When the herd comes close to the camp, the brigade moves to a new site. The frequency and speed of the brigade's migrations are determined by the season, the weather and snow conditions, the condition of the animals, forage resources, certain key dates in the agenda of the reindeer-herding enterprise and personal considerations, as we saw in chapter 2. To say that the reindeer themselves know the way and that they guide the brigade would generally be correct; however, the herders have some influence on the movement of the herd and can drive it in different directions or at different speeds. The territory that is allotted to the reindeer-herding enterprise constrains the direction of the general movement. The whole tundra between the White Sea and the Urals, as well as the adjacent forest tundra and forest areas, is divided into a number of corridors, both broad and narrow, according to the head of deer that were owned by the enterprise at some time in the distant Soviet past. The attached map shows these territories. They stretch from the Polar Sea to the Usa or Pechora River and farther southward.

The tundra region between the White Sea and the Urals is called the Arkhangel'sk Tundras (*Arkhangel'skie tundry*). These are subdivided into four parts: the Kanin Tundra, the Timan Tundra, the Malozemel'skaia ("small land") Tundra and the Bol'shezemel'skaia ("big land") Tundra. Although all four tundras are located in the northern Russian lowlands, they are characterised by different physical conditions and landscapes. The Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra – the regional focus of this book – is of more

[20] Two additional patterns may be discerned: first, reindeer herding in the tundra zone exclusively, as it is practiced in the region to the west of the Pechora Delta, and second, reindeer herding in the taiga zone exclusively. The latter, so-called forest reindeer husbandry (*lesnoe olenevodstvo*), started in the southern parts of the Komi ASSR in the mid-1940s; it was designed as an experiment by the agricultural authorities. The reindeer-herding enterprises in the upper reaches of the Vychegda River had a comparatively successful record but ceased to exist in the early 1990s, when the whole agricultural sector of Russia entered a deep crisis. Apart from this region, forest reindeer husbandry was also pursued in the west of the Komi ASSR (Udora District) but probably had already ceased in the early 1960s.

diverse character, owing to its geological structure. Small mountain ranges and a tangled network of rivers result in localised conditions comparable to those in the forest or steppe climate zones. In his exemplary description of the development of large-scale reindeer herding, Istomin (1998: 8-19) showed that this landscape diversity provides a favourable habitat for reindeer. The multitude of hills, hillocks and interspersed valleys offers heterogeneous forage resources.[21]

Additionally, the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra is the largest of the four tundra areas compared here and extends farthest northward. Climatic conditions are such that the reindeer can usually keep pace with the greening period of plants. This circumstance goes a long way towards explaining the timing and movements of the Komi reindeer herds (Istomin 1998: 44-45), although we saw earlier that weather conditions do not guarantee the well-being of the herd and the success of the reindeer herders.

According to the general pattern, the most suitable migration routes follow the ridges in a southwestern-northeastern direction. The borders of the territories allotted to the different enterprises often coincide with larger rivers, which equally run from southwest to northeast, although frequently winding off a direct line. Zigzagging rivers force the reindeer herds and herders to make many crossings and fords on their migrations.

Winds are less harsh and the snow less crusty in the forest and forest tundra zones than in the tundra itself. Apart from ground lichens covered by snow, arboreal lichens contribute to the diet of the reindeer. Therefore, the forest and forest tundra zones provide a preferable habitat in the winter. However, the herd instinct causes the deer to prefer sites where they can see each other, regardless of the time of year. In this respect, open areas inside the forest or around forest islands are more suitable than the forest itself. Although swamps qualify as open areas, their vegetation is dominated by mosses (notably sphagnum), and lichens are scarce. The best sites are slightly elevated patches in the forest and forest tundra. Such areas also exist to the south of the Pechora River – for instance, in the Kozhva Forests, where the Ust'-Usinskii brigades had their winter pastures until some 40 years ago (section 4.5).

The easternmost part of the region, the Ural mountain range, with summits reaching 1,900 metres above sea level, differs markedly from this

[21] Flat hilltops and the upper parts of ridges with underlying permafrost are windswept and covered by crusty snow throughout most of the year. Mosses and lichens dominate the vegetation on these flat, elevated areas. Under the southern slopes, the permafrost table is comparatively deep, owing to more solar radiation. Grasses and taller plants occur mainly on such slopes and along the rivers. Reindeer feed on both lichens and fresh grasses and leaves, depending on the season.

general pattern. The higher the elevation, the harsher the natural conditions, and therefore the tree line bends sharply southward in the Urals and their foothills. The fells of the Urals are good summer pastures, but reindeer herders of the enterprises based in the Komi Republic do not use them for this purpose (their eastern neighbours, the reindeer herders of Saranpaul' in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, do). Instead, Komi reindeer herders of Vorkuta migrate across the Urals to utilise winter pastures in the forests to both sides of the Ob' River. Other Komi enterprises, too, used to drive their reindeer across the Urals for winter grazing, mainly because by about 1880 the pastures on the European side could no longer sustain the numbers of reindeer, which had been increasing quickly and fairly steadily throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I discuss this rapid development of Komi reindeer husbandry in the following section.

4.2 The emergence of Komi reindeer husbandry

Komi reindeer husbandry is a comparatively recent phenomenon. It was not until the mid-seventeenth century that the Komi became involved in reindeer herding at all. Among their northern neighbours, the Nenets, small-scale reindeer herding for the purpose of transportation had existed since at least the eleventh century (Khomich 1995: 285). A statement by L. N. Zherebtsov (1982: 165) summarises the emergence of large-scale reindeer herding among the Komi and Nenets: "Having borrowed from the Nenets reindeer herding and the pertinent implements of work and production, means of transportation and many elements of material culture, the Komi creatively converted them in conformity with the new circumstances" (my translation). Behind this summary lies a complex process that has been elucidated by scholars such as Istomin (1998), Konakov and Kotov (1991) and Krupnik (1993). Here I merely highlight some basic aspects of this process (additional details can be found in Appendix 2).

Before the sixteenth century, the northeastern border of the Komi settlement area coincided with the watersheds between the Vychegda and Pechora Rivers. The first incident of Komi settlers coming into the Pechora Basin was the foundation of Pustozersk (near present-day Nar'ian-Mar, in the delta of the Pechora) in 1499. Within a century, two more small towns with Komi settlers came into existence farther upstream: Ust'-Tsil'ma (1542) and Izhma (1567 or shortly afterwards). The northward expansion of Komi groups was due to the economic crisis that the Komi were undergoing at that time.

Komi livelihood rested on a combination of cattle breeding and land cultivation, hunting and fishing. It was characterised by a sedentary life-style (an important distinction from the Nenets). It has been argued that the "eco-

nomic and cultural type" of the Komi depended on the availability of new, hitherto unexploited hunting grounds in order to keep the economic balance positive and to guarantee population growth (Istomin 1998: 25; Konakov and Kotov 1991: 20). This form of livelihood had an inherent tendency towards spatial expansion. The northward move, however, led to an important ecological predicament. While hunting and fishing outputs again increased, the preconditions for agriculture became worse. At the same time, there was an intensification of trade in the Russian North in general. Thus, crop agriculture remained at a low level, flour and other goods were bought from the south, and in turn the Komi procured growing quantities of furs (sable, etc.) to satisfy the increasing demand of the Russian market. Izhma's economy was part of a market economy from its very early days (see Forsyth 1997: 9; Kertselli 1911: 73 and *passim*).

The move northward led the Komi ever further into Nenets territories. Nenets resistance manifested itself in raids and sieges, as well as in official complaints to the czar. Nenets-Komi relations, openly hostile in the beginning, became ambivalent in later centuries. On one hand, there was peaceful co-existence and mutual help; on the other, there was competition for hunting grounds. The Nenets had to cope with decreasing numbers of fur animals, needed for tribute payments, and wild reindeer, used for nutrition and clothing. The need to slaughter domesticated reindeer for emergency food became increasingly frequent. While domesticated reindeer had previously served as a means of transportation, in addition they now came to serve as a source of food.

Living close to the Forest Nenets, the Komi of Izhma must have been aware of the Nenets practice of slaughtering domesticated reindeer in large numbers, particularly as they themselves could see the serious decrease in the output of fur hunting. It should be remembered that fur was the prime source of monetary income for the Izhma Komi. Venturing into the field of speculation, we might imagine a series of episodes in trade relations between the two groups. First, some Izhma Komi began buying reindeer meat or hides from a Nenets reindeer owner. Second, as the exchange of reindeer products for other goods increased, some Izhma Komi got the opportunity to own reindeer themselves. And third, some Izhma Komi themselves became reindeer herders. The first event, although not noted in any historical account, is necessary as a logical prelude to the establishment of trade contacts between the two groups. The second event, Komi ownership of reindeer, dates back to 1649, according to Islavin (1847: 20-21). Yet it was not before the 1760s that the Izhma Komi started migrating with their reindeer herds (Istomin 1998: 33; cf. Kertselli 1911: 109-110).

For the Komi, reindeer herding constituted a source of marketable produce from the very start. At the same time, reindeer meat could be used as a substitute for beef, and reindeer hides could be processed into clothing. Reindeer husbandry was a new, additional element in Izhma Komi livelihood which permitted them to diversify their sources of income. Yet while the reindeer-herding families were utilising the resources of both the forest and the tundra, they nevertheless tried to retain their sedentary life-style as much as possible. Before abandoning certain activities such as agriculture, they at least tried to adapt them to local ecological conditions (Konakov and Kotov 1991: 23-49). In chapter 7 I explore the transhumant character of Komi reindeer herding and the dual location of the families' households.

It has been argued that the Izhma Komi, who were acquainted with cattle breeding, began engaging in reindeer husbandry with the clear purpose of a *productive* economic activity, whereas the Nenets had arrived at large-scale reindeer husbandry from an *appropriative* background (Krupnik 1993: 177). Komi reindeer owners and herders sought ways to increase the productivity of reindeer husbandry. Such innovations included larger herd sizes, permanent herd supervision, selective breeding for higher meat and skin output, regular slaughter in the autumn and more regularity in the annual migrations. Already by the early nineteenth century, Komi reindeer herds were growing faster than Nenets herds, and this was followed by an increase in the wealth of Komi owners. The increasing wealth also corresponded to more intensive trade relations and growing demands for certain products, such as suede. Izhma became the hub of reindeer suede production in European Russia. In the process of transition to large-scale reindeer husbandry in the European North, most Nenets were the losers, and many Komi, the winners. With the extermination of hunted animals and the increase in domesticated reindeer, Komi-Nenets quarrels about land shifted from hunting grounds to reindeer pastures. More than once it has been asked whether (and if so, to what extent) the Komi reindeer owners tried to outdo the Nenets owners on purpose. This question spurred a scholarly and political debate that has been going on since at least the 1850s.[22]

Yet even the most affluent reindeer owner can never be sure of his assets, as his stock may dwindle to almost nothing within months. In the case of reindeer decimation, the impoverished owner has two choices: either stay at one place and engage in other activities (e.g. fishing in tundra lakes, or trying to find work in Izhma) or work for another owner with a sizeable herd and in need of herdsman-power. In this way the institution of hired herders

[22] For example, Babushkin 1930: 26-33; Bartenev 1998: 143-144; Forsyth 1992: 179-180; Islavin 1847; Kertselli 1911: 109-116; Konakov and Kotov 1991: 37-40, 53-54; L. N. Zherebtsov 1982.

developed. A hired herder's pay usually comprised a small number of deer per year to be used for restoring his own herd in the ultimate hope of becoming an independent herder again. Evidently there were Nenets herdsmen working for Komi owners as well as Komi herdsmen working for Nenets owners. The large number of Komi-Nenets marriages, widespread knowledge of each other's language and the borrowing of Nenets terminology in Komi reindeer husbandry testify to positive elements in daily co-existence and co-operation (L. N. Zherebtsov 1982: 168-170).

Izhma Komi reindeer herders gradually spread into ever more remote parts of the tundra, particularly the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra. The need to expand the search for new hunting grounds and – now more importantly – access to reindeer pastures is documented in the settlement history of the adjacent forest zone. Komi colonisation along the upper Usa River began in the 1850s and continued until the late 1920s. A number of small hamlets in the forest tundra zone to the north of the Usa appeared around 1900 (V. K. Kanev 2001; I. L. Zherebtsov 1994). Izhma Komi economic strategy was successful and geographically expansive at the same time; thus the process of colonisation did not stop at the Urals or the White Sea. In the mid-1880s the first Izhma families trekked on reindeer sledges to the Kola Peninsula. Even earlier the first Komi settlers had appeared on the Siberian side of the Urals and at the lower Ob' River. The bulk of the new settlers crossed the Urals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Evidently, the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra had become "too crowded" and the risk of veterinary epidemics very high, hence the incentive to move to ever more remote regions.

Furthermore, within the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra itself, a division concerning the practices of reindeer herding emerged between the western (Izhma) and eastern (Usa) regions. In the latter region, herd sizes were generally smaller, there were fewer hired herders, and processing did not achieve the same level as in Izhma. "That is, Usa reindeer herders tended reindeer, slaughtered them, cut them up and sent off practically all the reindeer 'raw materials' to the Izhma villages, where [people] produced suede from hides, prepared lard and cooked glue from the antlers and hooves, and with these products they entered the Russian and even European market" (Konakov, Kotov and Sharapov 1992: 11; my translation).

The western and eastern groups also began to differ in their usage of winter pastures. While the reindeer herds of Izhma, and also those of Ust'-Usa and surrounding villages, had their winter pastures to the south of the Pechora River (in the Kozhva Forests), the herders of the middle and upper Usa had theirs on the other side of the Urals. Even if one considers the good quality of the pasture on the eastern slopes of the Urals, this migration route

was nevertheless the longest and most cumbersome of all, and the reindeer did not put on as much weight as those of Izhma. The reason for taking on the burden of migrating across the Urals lay in the fact that grazing pressure and the immediate danger of epidemics were lower there than in the areas of the same latitude on the European side (Konakov, Kotov and Sharapov 1992: 13-16).

The grazing pressure must have been at its height during the second half of the nineteenth century and perhaps the beginning of the twentieth century. Kertselli (1911: 78; 1929: 113) estimated the overall number of domesticated reindeer in the region between the White Sea and the Urals at 450,000 to 600,000 at the time he wrote. My estimate, based on data as of January 2000 for the same region, amounts to some 230,000 reindeer (Appendix 8). Considering that nowadays some officials speak about overgrazing and say that "there is no unlimited tundra anymore, every square kilometre is being used by someone", the situation in the early twentieth century must have been much more precarious.[23]

Overall, there was a marked diversity in the function and practices of reindeer husbandry in the various parts of the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra. To the west, Izhma and its pertaining part of the tundra were most clearly oriented towards reindeer husbandry as part of a market economy; at the same time, the Izhma Komi reindeer herders were the most sedentary of all herders. The more animals an owner had, the more likely he was to specialise in reindeer husbandry and trade and to neglect other sources of income. In the eastern part of the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra, conditions were less favourable. Reindeer herders had less access to markets, their herds were smaller, and their migration routes were longer; consequently, they spent more time on the move. The fewer reindeer in the owner's possession, the more he had to make use of additional sources of income, particularly hunting and fishing.

[23] Apart from the overall number of reindeer, there was another important difference between the state of affairs then and now. Around 1900, the main produce consisted of reindeer hides, which were processed into suede and other materials. Hides of the best quality (in terms of suede production) could be obtained in September, as was described by Kertselli, who also mentioned the places of slaughter; these were usually situated in the southern tundra zone (1911: 18-19, 101-103). Most of the meat of the animals slaughtered in September was for local use only. However, meat of good quality (*olen'i zadki*) also went for sale to clients within and beyond the reindeer-herding region. Slaughter for high-quality meat was conducted no earlier than October and in the vicinity of the reindeer herders' villages – that is, farther south, almost in the forest zone (ibid.: 105).

Relations between the Komi and the Nenets grew closer, particularly through intermarriage. In this respect the history of the village of Kolva, not far from Ust'-Usa, is highly instructive (Appendix 3). It elucidates the process of ethnic mixture between the two peoples, which resulted in the emergence of a new ethnic group, the so-called Kolvintsy, or Kolva Yaran in the Komi language (Istomin 1999; Teriukov 1986: 251; L. N. Zherebtsov 1982: 168). It was only after my fieldwork that I understood that the reindeer-herding families I lived with were likely among the descendants of the Kolvintsy. The Khatanzeiskii family not only has a Nenets family name, but the name-giving ancestor, Ter' Starik, was reportedly of Nenets origin. A man baptised and buried under an Orthodox cross, he nonetheless was said to have been a shaman (*tadibei*), which testifies to his Nenets background. Moreover, the self-perception of the people in Brigada N° 9 is not that they are Izhma Komi (*Iz'vatas* or *Izhemtsy*). "If you are not Izhemtsy, what are you?" I asked Polina. She replied: "We are Komi. Not Zyrian, you know.[24] But neither are we Izhemtsy. We are somewhere in-between". Another time she spoke about herself as *in'ka.* This term is the Komi word for a Nenets woman, while *yaran* is a Nenets man. It may be that other reindeer herders in Novikbozh and Ust'-Usa perceive the Khatanzeiskii families as being somewhat "more" Nenets than others. Yet the Khatanzeiskii are not the only reindeer-herding families of Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh with a Nenets background. In chapter 7 I explain how, for the Izhma Komi, Nenets identity relates to concepts of experience, knowledge and the quality of being a good reindeer herder.

To conclude this section, Komi reindeer husbandry is a relatively recent phenomenon and was market oriented from its early days. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, more than half of the produce of Izhma reindeer husbandry went into trade. These characteristics speak clearly against popular assumptions that reindeer herding per se is a remnant of a tribal or feudal society. If anything, Izhma was part of the capitalist world, and the Izhma Komi had a colonising influence on their northern and eastern neighbours.[25] It will be interesting to see how Soviet politics dealt with Izhma Komi reindeer owners and herders.

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[24] For "Zyrian", see page 52.

[25] During the last decades of the Russian Empire, regional administrations paid increasing attention to the development of reindeer husbandry in the European North of Russia. Between 1900 and 1915, a number of articles were published on the question of the economic value of reindeer husbandry, legal projects regulating rights to pasture, and the economic situation of Nenets and Komi reindeer-herding families. Among these publications were Dobrotvorskii 1902 and 1904; Zhukov 1909; Liubov 1911; and Kertselli 1910; these references can be found in the index of the bibliography compiled by Kuzakova (1994). Also compare the many entries in the bibliography compiled by A. F. Shidlovskii, in Kertselli 1911. Affluent Izhma

4.3 Komi reindeer husbandry between "progress" and "backwardness"

The political and economic developments of the 1920s and 1930s led to a paradoxical situation: on one hand, reindeer husbandry became peripheral and marginalised for the Komi, but on the other hand, Komi reindeer husbandry methods became even more influential for the other reindeer-herding peoples of the Soviet Union. First, we shall look at the process that made reindeer herding peripheral in the Komi context.

4.3.1 Komi reindeer husbandry becoming marginalised

After a period of turmoil from summer 1918 well into the early 1920s, the Pechora region saw a decade of relative quiet, although there were a number of significant administrative changes. In accordance with Lenin's policy on national minorities, the administrative division changed in August 1921 and again in late 1929. The first date marked the establishment of the Komi Autonomous Oblast', the second the proclamation of the Nenets National Okrug (*Atlas Respubliki Komi* 2001). Since this time a major administrative boundary has cut right across the reindeer pastures of the Komi and the Nenets. The boundary itself is invisible in the landscape; Komi and Nenets reindeer herds and herders cross it twice a year. The boundary is no neat division between the nationalities: some 5,000 ethnic Komi live in the Nenets Okrug, and a few dozens of ethnic Nenets live in Komi. However, the boundary and the different statuses of the two territories have had significant implications for the further development of reindeer husbandry in the European North.

The reindeer-herding area of the Komi Autonomous Oblast' gradually became the outskirts of a region whose agricultural function was defined by timber cutting, cattle rearing (meat and dairy products) and flax production

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reindeer owners even tried to organise a professional association in order to lobby for their interests and to improve herding conditions by their own financial means. They came up with this idea in 1899 or soon afterwards but were frustrated by the fact that by 1908 the statutes of the planned association were still sitting on the desk of the governor in Arkhangel'sk. At this stage the reindeer owners dropped their plans (Kertselli 1929: 116). Unlike the official meetings of reindeer herders from the 1930s to the 1980s, which were organised from above, this early initiative proves that Izhma reindeer owners had a comparatively high level of self-confidence in the importance of their business and actively sought to promote it.

(Babushkin 1931: 78). Archival materials show that in the first years of intensive collectivisation (1928-1929), all the emphasis was laid upon these activities, whereas reindeer husbandry was not mentioned.[26] The first published document concerning the collectivisation of reindeer-herding families in the north of Komi was circulated in January 1930. "Considering the extreme conservatism of the tundra population, [and] their unculturedness [*nekul'turnost'*]",[27] the Communist Party Committee of the Komi Autonomous Oblast' recommended initiating collectivisation by establishing state farms (*sovkhoz*) rather than collective farms (*kolkhoz*). Before explaining the meaning of this recommendation, let me stress one important point: it was not by accident that Komi reindeer herders were now described as uncultured and conservative. The "unculturedness" of Komi herders was in line with the emerging tendency to view reindeer herders in general as "backward" (Krupnik 1993: 87). The assumption that reindeer husbandry is characteristic of archaic societies contributed to the process whereby Komi reindeer husbandry lost its prestige in the Soviet context.

To return to the document of January 1930 and its recommendation, it expresses the party's official advice to regional authorities all over the North to abstain from mass collectivisation among reindeer herders until further notice (Berkhin 1981: 236; cf. Stal' 1964: 275-276). Instead, the advantages of socialist forms of reindeer husbandry were to be propagated by the establishment of state farms (*sovkhoz*).[28] Indeed, the state farm Ust'-Usinskii

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[26] The analysis of archival materials for the period from 1927 to 1937 is based on the documents compiled and published by Stal' (1964). Within the overall framework of the research I also examined documents in the Komi State Archive concerning the development of reindeer herding in the period 1954 to 1959 (see section 4.4), but I did not look at documents from the late 1920s or 1930s. The history of Komi reindeer herding in the 1920s and especially the 1930s has not yet been documented well and calls for intensive archival research.

[27] Stal' 1964: 269; my translation.

[28] Agricultural collectivisation in the Soviet Union has been described in detail by numerous authors; there is also a range of specific studies on the collectivisation in the Far North, such as Slezkine 1994 and Weiser 1989 about the entire Far North; Balzer 1999 about the Khanty; Golovnev and Osherenko 1999 about the Yamal region; and Habeck 1998 about the Evenki Autonomous Okrug. For the purposes of this study, it is expedient to explain only the different levels of collectivisation as of around 1930. Initially, there was a three-tier system of so-called associations (*tova-rishchestvo*), collectives proper (*artel'*) and communes (*kommuna*), all subsumed under the term "collective enterprises" (*kollektivnoe khoziaistvo*) – hence the well-known acronym *kolkhoz*. In theory, at least, all these "collective enterprises" were established through peasants' uniting as shareholders. Officially, the chairman of the *kolkhoz* was accountable to the plenary meeting of the members of the collective. In this, the *kolkhoz* differed from the state farm, the *sovkhoz* (acronym for *sovetskoe khoziaistvo*, or "Soviet enterprise"). In terms of its organisation, the *sovkhoz* functioned like a nationalised factory, with a director and with workers receiving regular salaries every month, whereas the members of the *kolkhoz* received their pay in relation to the enterprise's annual profits. The *sovkhoz*

came into existence sometime in 1930. In subsequent years it operated as the centre of "socialist reindeer husbandry" for the entire north of Komi.

The political executives in the regions suffered from the intended and unintended inconsistencies of the collectivisation policy at federal level. It appears that one of the easier methods for the administrators "in the provinces" (*na mestakh*) to escape the wrath of the central authorities consisted of reporting the absence of data. The northern part of the Komi Autonomous Oblast' was notoriously bad in this respect. Moreover, the data on agriculture usually did not include any figures on reindeer husbandry, for "more or less, an exact calculation of the head of reindeer did not exist".[29] We may suspect that life in Izhma and the surrounding villages in the mid-1920s had changed little from life in the early 1910s. The overwhelming majority of reindeer still belonged to private owners; suede manufacturing was still dominated by the same entrepreneurs as before; and Izhma Komi traders continued commerce in many parts of the tundra, either illegally or as officially acknowledged agents of the co-operative trading posts that existed in the 1920s (see Babushkin 1930: 187-188).

I propose that the *main* period of collectivisation among Komi reindeer herders started in late 1930 or early 1931 and ended in 1935.[30] In other words, it happened with some delay, in comparison with the non-reindeer-herding regions in the south of Komi.[31] It also lagged slightly behind the collectivisation of reindeer herders in the western part of the neighbouring Nenets Okrug.

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was deemed the most progressive institutional form of agriculture because it "equalised" the living conditions of the rural proletariat with those of the urban proletariat. This also coincided with the Soviet policy of industrialisation of the country as a whole and of agriculture in particular. More than the *kolkhoz* farms, the *sovkhoz* farms were to demonstrate the advantages of the new agricultural policies.

[29] Berkhin 1981: 231, annotation; my translation.

[30] The official data on the degree of collectivisation as of January 1935 are quoted by Berkhin (1981: 257). Data as of 1940 are quoted in the *Atlas Respubliki Komi* (2001: 393).

[31] Over the 1930s and subsequent decades, the Communist leadership paid increasing attention to the extraction of mineral resources in the Pechora Basin, and the problem of finding cheap labour was solved by deporting "the enemies of the people" to the North. With the establishment of the GULAG in the north of Komi in 1930, the influence of the central authorities superseded the remit of the Komi government in that territory. This adds to the argument that from the perspective of the Komi capital, reindeer husbandry gradually became marginal.

The fickleness of the regional collectivisation policies needs to be interpreted against the backdrop of the political mandates determined by the centre. Twice the central government clamped down on its regional executives, who allegedly had gone too far in their zeal for rapid success in the collectivisation campaign. The first reprimand came in March 1930. It was issued at a moment when the regional committee of the Communist Party in Izhma was just about to have the herds of affluent owners confiscated. Members of the regional committee were accused of hasty action.[32] The Izhma reindeer herders' property remained largely unaffected that year.

However, by autumn 1931 the leadership of the Communist Party again started to speed up the process of collectivisation, in the Far North as well as in the country as a whole. The officials responsible in Izhma and Ust'-Usa (which by then had become a district centre) had to submit reports on their achievements in collectivising reindeer herders. What emanates from these reports is frustration not only about limitations in personnel and means of transport but also about the absence of any clear line in the relevant policies (Stal' 1964: 450-453; cf. Slezkine 1994: 210, 212). While the regional authorities had no definite idea yet of how to collectivise reindeer herders, they had nonetheless embarked on a basic examination of the socio-economic breakdown of reindeer-herding households in order to isolate the richest among them and to prevent these "exploiters" from becoming the leading group in the collective farms yet to be founded. Along the lines of the Soviet pattern of classification of the peasantry, reindeer-herding households were to be grouped into four categories: people hired for agricultural work by others (*batraki*) as the supposedly poorest group, poor peasants (*bedniaki*), peasants of average means (*seredniaki*) and rich peasants (*kulaki*). The ultimate goal was to "liquidate the *kulaki* as a class". This social classification among Komi reindeer herders must have been instituted in 1929 or early 1930 (see Babushkin 1930), on the instructions of the Communist Party in Moscow and Syktyvkar.[33]

Social classification was a decisive step: in the last section we saw the emergence of a sizeable group of "capitalists" in Izhma in pre-revolutionary times, and these rich reindeer owners, suede manufacturers and tradesmen were left virtually untouched from 1922 to 1929. By early 1930, though, they must have realised that they were facing expropriation and repressive

[32] According to archival documents studied by Kirill Istomin (personal communication, 4 September 2004).

[33] Ust'-Sysol'sk, the capital of the Komi Autonomous Oblast', was renamed Syktyvkar (meaning in the Komi language "the town at the River Sysola") in 1930.

measures. The most feasible response, it must have seemed to them, was to escape from the ambit of Soviet power by retiring to the northern Urals and the areas beyond. According to a list compiled by the Izhma Committee of the Communist Party on 5 April 1932, in the course of the previous two years, 30 *kulaki* from Izhma and the middle Usa had defected to the Urals, taking with them 21,500 reindeer (almost 10 per cent of the total head of reindeer in the Komi Autonomous Oblast').[34] At the same time, the first contingents of reindeer-owning *kulaki* had been sent off to logging areas in the south of Komi. Soon the labour camps would be crammed not only with *kulaki* but also with thousands of "anti-Soviet elements", including victims of party purges, members of the *intelligentsiia*, chairmen of the first collective farms and officials "from the provinces".

For this and other reasons, the second reprimand from the centre of power, in September 1932, meant a much bigger threat for the local executives. This time the Communist Party clamped down specifically on its echelons in the Far North and accused them of having violated the basic principles of Leninism by organising collectives in the wrong way.[35] The accusations were forwarded to, among many others, the executive committee of Ust'-Usa, whose members reacted with a mixture of self-criticism and action. Instructors were sent out to the reindeer-herding collectives in order to re-organise them as required.[36] Notwithstanding the party's lip service to carrying out collectivisation in a careful way, it was now in full swing and achieved a character of mass hysteria. Between 1930 and 1936, approximately 70 reindeer-herding collective farms (*kolkhoz*) were established in the Komi part of the Pechora Basin.

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[34] "Spisok kochuiushchikh (skryvaiushchikh) kulakov Izhemskogo raiona za Uralom" (List of nomadic [hiding] *kulaki* of the Izhma District behind the Urals). Komi gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv politicheskikh partii i dvizhenii (formerly, Komi Arkhiv KPSS), fond 619, opis' 1, delo 30, list 24. The local historian of Kharuta, V. K. Kanev (2001: 23), mentions how his father talked about seven families "vanishing" in this way.The total head of deer in the Komi Autonomous Oblast' was approximately 237,000, according to Babushkin (1930: 87).

[35] To be exact, the accusation was that the local officials had organised the tundra proletarians in "collectives" (*artel'*) and not, as they should have done, in "associations" (*tovarishchestvo*). See note 28.

[36] The document has the title "Postanovlenie prezidiuma Ust'-Usinskogo raiispolkoma Komi avtonomnoi oblasti o formakh kollektivizatsii olenevodcheskikh khoziaistv v tundre" (Resolution of the Ust'-Usa District Executive Committee of the Komi Autonomous Oblast' on the forms of collectivisation among reindeer-herding households in the tundra), 20 March 1933, and is published in Stal' 1964: 531-533.

To give an example, one of the earlier collectives was the *kolkhoz* Kodzuv in Petrun', established as an "association for joint land cultivation" (TOZ) in late 1930. In the next year, three reindeer-herding households united their reindeer, which is noted as the beginning of collective reindeer herding in the history of the village (Shashok and Lytkin 1991: 21). All three households were classified as "poor" (*bedniaki*), and the head of deer in the collective herd must have been fewer than 200 initially. Obviously, the richer reindeer-herding families did not wish to join the collective. Only the impoverished part of the population would find it an attractive idea to enter the *kolkhoz*. They could hope to profit from governmental support and, after de-kulakisation, to receive their share from the redistribution of livestock. Such expectations, alongside other factors, may have prepared the ground for the later tendencies towards passivity, lack of initiative and craving for subsidies and privileges that the local historian and teacher V. K. Kanev bemoaned in his history of the settlement Kharuta (2001: 40-41). However, local Soviet historiography is ripe with examples of enthusiasm and "shock work" (*udarnichestvo*), or unpaid overtime labour, and we should not underestimate the commitment of the *kolkhoz* members to improving their lives and livelihood. Overall, the early collectives were small, and their economic base weak. What is more, owing to the havoc of collectivisation, the number of deer of the Komi Autonomous District diminished by two-thirds between 1927 and 1934 (Slezkine 1994: 212). Only in the second half of the 1930s did the herds recover (Berkhin 1981: 254).

In August 1929 the first deported people arrived in the north of Komi. April 1930 saw the establishment of the GULAG as a special "administration" for all camps and places of resettlement, and the following years were characterised by ever-increasing numbers of deported people (*Atlas Respubliki Komi* 2001: 396; Forsyth 1997: 13-15; Skvoznikov et al. 2001: 67). Their involuntary stay in Komi had two important outcomes. First, they constructed railways, coal mines, factories and whole towns in the hitherto unindustrialised Pechora region. Most settlements along the railway initially emerged as islands of the "archipelago" GULAG. Such was the case with Inta, Vorkuta and the town of Pechora (Bursian 1994: 6; I. L. Zherebtsov 1994: 48, 184). Second, a sizeable number of deported people stayed in these settlements after their release. When in 1956 the GULAG was disbanded, the Komi and Nenets on the Usa and upper Pechora Rivers were outnumbered by citizens of other nationalities, notwithstanding that countless people had lost their lives in the GULAG, as well as in the Second World War. From the 1950s onwards, the previously high prestige of reindeer husbandry gradually

gave way to a discourse dominated by the demand to extract mineral resources for the sake of the whole country (see chapter 5).[37]

4.3.2 Komi reindeer husbandry becoming a model for Soviet reindeer husbandry

In the Komi Autonomous Oblast' and later in the Komi ASSR,[38] reindeer husbandry gradually became marginal because of the specific economic functions allocated to the territory and also because the Komi government had only limited control over the northern part of its territory, which was "administered" by the GULAG. Yet at the same time, Komi methods of reindeer husbandry became increasingly influential for other reindeer-herding peoples in the Soviet Union. The rationale behind this development was the attempt to industrialise and intensify reindeer husbandry alongside other branches of agriculture.

The scientific basis for this "industrialisation" was prepared by a number of scholars who worked in co-operation with the government's Committee of the North (see Slezkine 1994 and the journal *Sovetskii Sever*). Judging from the contemporary literature, Sergei Vasil'evich Kertselli, to whom I have referred repeatedly, played a prominent role in this process (Appendix 4 gives a brief overview of his biography and ideas). After about 1929, *all* reindeer-herding peoples of the Soviet North, whether Nenets or Chukchi, Even or Evenki, were to increase their productivity indicators. For example, Nenets collectives proclaimed that they would conduct reindeer herding "in a new way".[39]

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[37] Forced labour was probably also used for the construction of two factories related to reindeer husbandry: a food-processing plant in Ust'-Usa, producing, among other things, tinned reindeer meat, and the suede plant in Ust'-Tsil'ma. The project to build such factories derived from the objective of giving reindeer husbandry an "industrial drive" (as was the case with agriculture in general). Interestingly, the suede plant was erected in Ust'-Tsil'ma and not – as one might expect – in Izhma. This may be interpreted as a deliberate measure to eliminate the suede factories in private possession and, consequently, the basis for wealth accumulation among the bourgeoisie of Izhma.

[38] In 1936 the Komi Autonomous Oblast' was conferred the status of an Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (abbreviated ASSR).

[39] To give the full quotation: "In the collective farms we will develop reindeer husbandry in a new way, we will hunt animals and catch fish in greater amounts and in a correct way". From the "Rezolutsiia pervogo Nenetskogo okruzhnogo sleta kolkhoznikov-nentsev…" (Resolution of the First Congregation of Nenets collective farmers in the Nenets Okrug…), quoted in Stal 1964: 478 (see also 400, 580-581).

It appears that the incentive to develop an "industrialised" form of reindeer husbandry was higher among the Nenets (and other northern peoples) than among the Izhma Komi, for two reasons. First, the practices of Komi reindeer husbandry already came close to the criteria of "industrialised" production (Komi reindeer husbandry represented the model case). Second, regional differences in governmental attention to reindeer husbandry derived from Soviet policies on national minorities. Most minorities received their ethnically defined territories, and once these had been delineated, they were to fulfil some kind of economic function. Komi as a region got fossil fuel extraction, timber felling, cattle breeding and flax cultivation as its main economic objectives. Owing to the more northern location of the Nenets Okrug, the region was to deliver other goods – fish, furs and reindeer – and as much as possible of these resources.[40] Hence came the initiative to establish motorised fishing bases, fox farms and "industrial" reindeer husbandry in the Nenets Okrug as well as in all other okrugs of the Soviet North. Komi reindeer herders, though, did not fit this economic classification; they ended up somewhere in-between.

Along these lines of argumentation we may also account for the fact that in the Nenets Okrug officials paid attention to collectivising reindeer husbandry slightly earlier than in the Komi Autonomous Oblast'. The European Nenets served as the model case for the integration of the so-called small-numbered peoples of the North into socialist society.[41] March 1929 marked the establishment of the "First Nenets Reindeer-Herding Kolkhoz" in the Malozemel'skaia Tundra.[42] By the end of the same year, the Nenets National Okrug was designed as the first ethnically defined territory of the small-numbered peoples of the North (the other okrugs were founded in late 1930).[43] In the regions inhabited by these peoples, the government's Committee of the North set up a number of culture bases (*kul'tbaza*). Again, one

[40] Like the Komi Autonomous Oblast', the Nenets Okrug was envisaged as a region of mineral resource extraction. In the 1930s, fluorite extraction started on the shore of the Kara Sea, and hence emerged the settlement of Amderma, probably, like Vorkuta, inhabited by deported people or prisoners. The area of Vorkuta was situated on the border of the two administrative units until 1937 or 1940, when the federal government decided to put the whole area under Komi administration (Bunakov 1936: 34; *Atlas Respubliki Komi* 2001: 395).

[41] The Komi did not, and do not, belong to this category of peoples.

[42] See Khomich 1966: 236; Saprygin 1930; its later development is described by Tuisku (1999). About the process of collectivisation in the Nenets Okrug in general, see Bunakov 1936; Khomich 1966; Tuisku 1999; Tverfjell 2001; and the journal *Sovetskii Sever*.

[43] Officially, the name was Nenets National Okrug (*Nenetskii natsional'nyi okrug*) until 1977; thereafter, Nenets Autonomous Okrug (*Nenetskii avtonomnyi okrug*).

of the first culture bases, Khoseda-Khard, was constructed in the European part of the Nenets region. Appendix 5 deals with the history of Khoseda-Khard, because it is also intertwined with the history of reindeer herding among the Komi.

To sum up, the 1930s brought de-kulakisation and collectivisation, leading not only to a decline in the total head of reindeer but also to the dwindling of the entrepreneurial drive hitherto inherent in large-scale Komi reindeer herding. At the same time, its market-oriented character begat the idea of giving reindeer herding an "industrial" shape, with the implication that other peoples of the Far North were to appropriate elements of large-scale Komi reindeer husbandry into their own patterns of reindeer herding. Further, as the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra was cut up into two ethnic territories in 1929, the historical connections between the Nenets and the Komi grew weaker and in subsequent decades were partially severed. What is more, the Nenets, as a "small-numbered people of the North", became a reindeer-herding people par excellence, whereas the government and the Communist Party paid less attention to the development of reindeer husbandry in the Komi Autonomous Oblast'. Hence, I argue that in the 1930s, reindeer husbandry was being marginalised in the political (but also cultural) context of the Komi as a nation. And hence Istomin comes to the conclusion that "a paradoxical situation has come into existence: now we know much more about the impact Komi reindeer herders made upon other peoples than about Komi reindeer herding itself" (2000: 49).

I would like to point out one additional problem: with regard to the process of collectivisation of reindeer-herding households, we know much more about the measures of the Communist Party and the government than about the reactions of those affected. The document quoted on page 73 is one of the very few sources that shed some light on the responses of the reindeer-herding families. We know the things that were done with reindeer herders but not the things they did themselves. For the present study, this has an important consequence. This book deals with aspects of agency and the ways in which members of reindeer-herding families take decisions. In this respect, the 1930s appear to be characterised by a sharply limited remit, perhaps simply because of the lack of data at the individual level, but more probably because the members of reindeer-herding families had hardly any choice indeed.

Although I do not deny the argument that "the Izhma Komi suffered … more than the Saami or Nenets" (Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999b: [14]) from the forceful transition to the new socio-economic reality, I shall show that Komi reindeer herders seemingly made peace with the resul-

ting situation. Nowadays, for most of them, the collective or state farm appears to be the most convenient way of reindeer herding (chapter 6).

4.4 "Losing reindeer without notice": centralisation and the question of responsibility

The suggestion that Komi reindeer husbandry became marginalised in the 1930s and 1940s does not mean that it ebbed away in the following decades. In the first post-war decade (1944-1954), it continued quite successfully and achieved a new climax, most notably in geographical terms. In territorial extent, Komi reindeer herding reached its maximum in the mid-1950s. Simultaneously, the overall number of deer reached a peak (in the Komi ASSR alone there were some 160,000 collective animals). Yet the subsequent years indicate a brisk decline. What happened?

On the basis of archival materials that I collected in the Komi State Archive in Syktyvkar, it is possible to reconstruct the dynamics of reindeer husbandry in the Komi ASSR in the second half of the 1950s. To exemplify the problematic situation in those years, I shall speak about the state farm Laiskii and neighbouring Ust'-Usinskii. State farms, it should be remembered, were founded as the vanguard of socialist reindeer husbandry in the Komi region. Hence, one may assume that they were in a privileged situation and showed a better economic performance than the collective farms. For Laiskii, though, the opposite seems to have been the case.

Laiskii, established in 1935 by resettled *kulaki*, had its central base in a newly constructed settlement 15 kilometres upstream from Mutnyi Materik, on the banks of the Pechora. From there the reindeer-herding brigades moved in a northerly and northeasterly direction to their summer pastures beside the Barents Sea. Although the migration route corresponded well to the general pattern of migrations in the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra, the officials of Laiskii complained about the poor quality of the pastures allotted to them. This complaint is rendered in the state farm's annual report (*otchet*) for 1955,[44] a dramatic year for reindeer husbandry in the European North in general because of an epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease. Laiskii lost three-fifths of its deer that year. Besides complaints about these losses, the report raised concerns such as bad pastures, altercations with the meat-trading organisation, a shortage of workers and a dearth of senior herdsmen in particular (which was probably a direct result of the Second World War). Of

[44] "Proizvodstvennyi otchet Laiskogo olen'sovkhoza za 1955 god" (Production report of the Laiskii Reindeer State Farm for 1955). Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Komi, fond R-408, opis' 1, tom 1, delo 2139, list 119-127.

specific interest is the conclusion that the abundance of predators, the lack of herdsmen and other factors precluded keeping every single animal under surveillance, and "reindeer losses without notice [*bez vesti*] were admitted in [all] herds".[45]

Having lost all but 3,000 reindeer, the management of the state farm recommended abandoning Laiskii altogether and handing over the remaining animals to the state farm Ust'-Usinskii. Therefore, in 1957 or 1958, the central base was shut and most state farm workers moved to Novikbozh or Ust'-Usa (FM [fieldwork materials] 129) – among them the family of young Valerii Leont'ev, the future pop star. The management of the state farm Laiskii argued that the merger with the Ust'-Usinskii would improve the pasture situation. They said that Ust'-Usinskii had favourable and abundant winter pastures in the Kozhva Forests. Yet four years later (1960) the managers of Ust'-Usinskii themselves had to hand in a report,[46] in which they said that the winter grazing areas had deteriorated owing to over-grazing as well as the logging activities of timber companies on their territory. The reindeer-herding brigades did not have enough workers because the state farm had problems acquiring new people who wanted to work in the tundra and taiga. In addition, it was reported that wolves caused big trouble. The herdsmen themselves killed four wolves and one wolverine. "In such a situation, the possibility of reindeer losses without notice [*bez vesti*] cannot be excluded".[47]

Both reports – the one by Laiskii for 1955 and the one by Ust'-Usinskii for 1959 – obviously represent justifications before the superior authorities (the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi ASSR). In the archival materials, the inclusion of comprehensive reports implies that in the given year and in the given enterprise, something went seriously wrong (if things were all right, tables like the one in Appendix 6 were deemed sufficient). Sometimes the reports read as if written for someone who had no idea about the day-to-day business of reindeer herding. Certainly, the authors believed they would be held responsible for malpractices without reason if they did not make themselves understood. The management had to explain why reindeer sometimes disappeared without any identifiable cause. Such remarks must be seen as a reaction to the constant reminders by the ministry and the Party that the herders must achieve maximum "productive output of calves per 100 January females" and "preservation of adult deer" (Appendi-

[45] Ibid., page (list) 120.

[46] "Proizvodstvennyi otchet sovkhoza 'Ust'-Usinskii' za 1959 god" (Production report of the Ust'-Usinskii Reindeer State Farm for 1959). Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Komi, fond R-408, opis' 1, tom 1, delo 2315-A, list 60-68.

[47] Ibid., page (list) 61.

ces 6 and 7). Apart from the sheer impossibility of declaring the cause of death of every single animal, the reindeer-herding families might not always have been particularly interested in this exercise, as shall be explained in chapter 6. In short, while the higher authorities could not completely trust the state farm managers and asked for reports and justifications, the state farm managers could not completely trust the brigadiers and asked equally for reports and justifications.

The individual herder's responsibility became increasingly abstract, a trend which was connected with the process of centralisation and enlargement of agricultural enterprises (*ukrupnenie*). Laiskii merged with Ust'-Usinskii; soon afterwards Ust'-Usinskii took over the reindeer herds of three nearby collective farms along the Usa; and by late 1959 the state farm had received the reindeer of the collective farms of Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh.[48] In the late 1950s and 1960s, all collective farms (*kolkhoz*) in the north of the Komi Republic were integrated into one or another state farm (*sovkhoz*), and the state farms themselves were swallowing each other up. The reorganisation was promoted as the transition to the most progressive form of socialist agriculture at the political level and as an assurance of regular pay for the workers – in other words, a salary independent from the year-to-year financial performance of the enterprise. While in 1954 there were 83 reindeer-herding collective farms and 6 reindeer-herding state farms in the Komi ASSR, by the year 2000 only 9 reindeer-herding enterprises were left (Appendix 7). By the late 1950s, two reindeer-herding enterprises had become subordinated to the Vorkuta Coal Combinate.[49] Thus, by now there were Komi herdsmen tending state reindeer on the payroll of a coal company. Comparing the situation of around 1960 with that of around 1900, we realise the fundamental differences in the reindeer herders' accountability (see page 171).

From the perspective of the members of successful collective farms, the integration into ever larger units called forth a decline in the workers' motivation and material assets. When in the late 1960s the collective farm

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[48] These two collective farms had the names Sotsialisticheskii Udarnik (Novikbozh) and Pravda (Ust'-Usa). Ibid., page (list) 60.

[49] "Otchety olenevodcheskikh sovkhozov i kolkhozov Komi ASSR" (Reports of the reindeer-herding state farms and collective farms in the Komi ASSR), Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Komi, fond R-408, opis' 1, tom 1, delo 2080, list 11; delo 2315-A, list 8. The Vorkuta Coal Combinate was not the only industrial enterprise to employ reindeer herders. Until December 1999, the state farm Fion counted as a subdivision of the Northern Railway Line. In the Soviet Union, many large industrial enterprises had their ancillary agricultural units to secure food for their workers.

Imeni Lenina (based in Petrun') became a branch of the state farm Fion (in Abez'), the inhabitants of Petrun' had to accept the redistribution of their basic funds, reindeer pastures and so forth. The inhabitants of Petrun' were not pleased when they realised that even "their" hay was being shipped to Abez'. Likewise, technical equipment was removed from Petrun' and taken to the central base. Building projects and activities were now limited to the central base. With regard to the late 1960s, Shashok and Lytkin (1991: 23) wrote that "[t]he productivity indicators are declining and, most importantly, the previous independence is not there [anymore]". Petrun' exemplifies one of the few cases where the previous management – backed by the community – successfully insisted on the restoration of their "own" enterprise: in 1971, the state farm Fion was split up again, and a "state hunting enterprise" (*gospromkhoz*) was organised in Petrun'.

Concerning the number and the pasture allotments of the reindeer-herding enterprises in the Komi Republic, the situation has been comparatively stable since the early 1970s. Until recently there were one, two or three reindeer-herding enterprises per district: Olenevod in the District of Vorkuta; Fion, Gospromkhoz Intinskii and Bol'shaia Inta in the District of Inta; Ust'-Usinskii and Severnyi in the District of Usinsk; and finally Izhemskii Olenevod in the District of Izhma. Before 1992, all of these enterprises had the official status of state farms (*sovkhoz*). As we have seen throughout this chapter, they operated in neighbourhoods with the collective farms of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. Although the enterprises of the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug went in somewhat different directions politically and economically, they share the same region – the tundra and forest tundra – and their pastures are interspersed.

It seems a long way from the beginnings of Izhma Komi reindeer herding to the transition of all Komi reindeer-herding enterprises into state farms. Yet from a historical perspective the whole development took place in a clearly confined and relatively short period. Nothing could be more mistaken than to believe that Komi reindeer herding has been going on "since time immemorial". From the 1930s onwards, though, the significance of reindeer husbandry in the Soviet Union was downgraded in the political discourse by assigning it to the past rather than to the present. Komi reindeer husbandry, too, got the label of "backwardness", although paradoxically, it was propagated as the most "progressive" form of reindeer husbandry to other reindeer-herding peoples in the Soviet North.

I have argued that in the official Soviet historiography we learn a lot about Komi reindeer herders being acted upon but very little about Komi reindeer herders being the actors themselves. Their potential for self-intended action, it seems, became smaller throughout the 1930s and in

subsequent decades. As the reindeer-herding enterprises became ever larger, the system of personal and corporate responsibility became more complex and more abstract. The following chapters will show that reindeer herders and their family members often abstain from action in the formalised and normative official sphere; instead, they focus their activities on the private and informal sphere, where direct results seem much closer at hand.

I have sought to show that, notwithstanding the seemingly standardised state-farm structure, there has always been a high degree of economic and ethnic diversity throughout the region. In the last part of this chapter we shall look at the geographical "fringes" of the system in order to establish how the decisions and actions of managers and herders leave their imprint on the land. Thereby we can scrutinise the factors that may positively or negatively influence the development of reindeer herding.

4.5 Abandoned winter pastures: how do people take decisions about land use?

The extent to which winter pastures have been abandoned by basically all Komi reindeer-herding enterprises over the last 40 years is so conspicuous that it calls for a closer analysis. The Kozhva Forests, though officially still delineated as winter pastures on the map, are no longer visited by reindeer herds, as is true for just about all the area south of the middle Pechora.[50] The only Komi reindeer-herding brigades that still cross the Pechora River with their herds are those of the enterprise Izhemskii Olenevod. Similar is the situation on the eastern side of the Urals. Three Komi reindeer-herding enterprises (those of Inta, Petrun' and Vorkuta) officially have winter pastures on the Siberian side, but only the Vorkuta brigades are still using them.

The reindeer herders and tent workers I spoke with differed about why these winter pastures had been abandoned. In the case of Ust'-Usinskii, the explanation for the loss of winter pastures seems all too easy: with the development of the oil industry since the mid-1960s, the pastures south of the Usa River were cut off from those north of the river. The town of Usinsk, the railway station, the whole area of Golovnye Sooruzheniia (the oil collection

[50] The brigades of Ust'-Usinskii, for example, crossed the Usa River regularly until 1976 or 1977. If the reindeer herders of Ust'-Usinskii use pasture maps at all, then they use those compiled in 1969. According to these maps, the southernmost winter pastures were located at the headwaters of the Chikshina River (south of Chikshino), and the northernmost winter pastures did not go beyond the Kolva River at Vozei (see the attached map). Nowadays, the latter area practically comprises the southern part of Ust'-Usinskii winter pastures, while some brigades choose to have their winter camps well beyond the Polar Circle.

complex) and surroundings were built on what used to be the winter pastures of Ust'-Usinskii. But although the expansion of the area of oil and gas production heavily affected the territory of Ust'-Usinskii – and still does – hydrocarbon extraction alone cannot account for the abandonment of winter pastures in general (other enterprises do not have to cope with the existence of oil fields and pipelines on their winter pastures).

There must be additional reasons for the withdrawal. We may think about forms of encroachments from "outside" other than the oil industry. Already by the beginning of the twentieth century, Kertselli mentioned that poaching was a constant problem for the reindeer herds in the Kozhva Forests (1911: 88). The pressure from poaching probably increased in the 1930s, when in the same region thousands of deported persons had to work in the forest without receiving adequate food. Logging itself must have caused a continual problem for the reindeer-herding brigades. We have seen that the management of Ust'-Usinskii made a complaint to this effect in 1960.

One may suppose that the withdrawal from the southern and eastern pastures could also have been caused by changes in the natural environment, most significantly by climate change. Difficulties occur when the ice of a major river such as the Pechora or Usa breaks up earlier than expected. Reindeer herders occasionally explain their reluctance to cross these two big rivers by early thawing.[51] Climate warming would reduce the period when the rivers are frozen and thus modify the migration pattern of the reindeer herds. Meteorological data for the last 100 years provide no clear evidence of climate warming in the region. Nevertheless, one of my interviewees assumed that climate warming had actually started and constituted the main factor that impeded the herds from visiting distant winter pastures. Owing to the later freeze-up and earlier break-up of ice on the Usa River, the Bol'shaia Inta brigades do not manage to cross the Urals in time; they have to stay on the European side (FM 111).

But even though climate change will affect reindeer herding in the coming decades, in my opinion the reasons for the abandonment of winter pastures are mostly of a social and economic character. The Komi herdsmen themselves prefer to graze their animals on winter pastures that are not too far from the villages where their families live. In mid-winter, only two or three herdsmen look after the reindeer; all the others can stay at their houses.

[51] For example, the reindeer herders of the enterprise Kharp (Nenets Autonomous Okrug) now avoid their winter pastures on the western side of the Pechora River (Tuula Tuisku, personal communication, Oulu/Rovaniemi, September 2000). Some brigades of Bol'shaia Inta double-check via radio that the Usa has a sufficient ice cover before they drive their herds to the river; otherwise the herds might over-graze the pastures near the river (FM 56).

They can look after the family's affairs in the village or just relax. As one retired herder in Ust'-Usa put it gruffly, "The herds are grazed near the village and the herders come into the village and get drunk". His wife added, "In those days there was another generation of herders. It would have been better for you if you had migrated with them. But nowadays? Well, I don't know. You will freeze!" (FM 82). Obviously, the couple has the perception that over the last decades the professional ethos of the reindeer herders has been diminishing. The same impression appears in V. K. Kanev's remarks about the tendency towards passivity, quoted on page 74, and is correlated with my argument that the herders' responsibility became increasingly normative and increasingly abstract at the same time (page 171).

Even the most conscientious brigade will stop migrating to remote pastures if it fears that it will get no provisions. With the rising expenditure for helicopter flights, the reindeer-herding enterprises have difficulty supplying the brigades in the remoter parts of the territory. Logically, the brigades have to reduce their spatial mobility, and the management has to accept this.

One might argue that there is nothing bad about the abandonment of pastures. If there are fewer animals, then of course less pasture is needed. Grazing pressure at the beginning of the twentieth century was significantly greater than in the second half of the century. That herders from the middle Usa had started to graze their reindeer on the Siberian side of the Urals was explained by the argument that the European side had become too crowded and the risk of epidemics was high. With the long-term decrease in the overall reindeer population, it became evident after some decades that there was no longer any necessity to utilise remote pastures. At present, winter pastures on the Siberian side of the Urals are kept in use only by those reindeer-herding enterprises that face an imminent risk of over-grazing. In 1999, most enterprises were told that they were operating more or less at the threshold of carrying capacity. Yet in the case of Olenevod Vorkuta, its director G. P. Pasynkov insists that his brigades must continue (or resume) their migrations to the remote winter pastures because he anticipates large-scale pasture degradation in the whole region around Vorkuta. The director said that he had been trying for years to induce a forceful change in the herders' mentality (*lomat' ikh psikhologiiu*) (FM 123). The herders' unwillingness to comply with the director's instructions is yet another indication of the divergence between the interests of the herders (the *brigada* people) and those of the managers (the *kontora* people). At the same time, it shows that the brigada people have their own ways of circumventing the control mechanisms of management. The balance of power between *brigada* and *kontora* is examined in more detail in chapter 6.

As the example of Vorkuta indicates, once the migration routes have been curtailed, they can be restored only with great difficulty. Herdsmen and tent workers from the other enterprises (Inta, Petrun' and Abez') are sceptical about the possibility of resuming the migrations across the Urals. "There are too many wolves on the other side"; "Khanty herders now graze their animals on those lands"; "our managers would not be able to supply the brigades in that area"; "the *vörga* is already overgrown"; "the young people would not find the way anymore" (FM 40, 46, 54).

Despite the difficulties in reviving abandoned pastures, the managers of the reindeer-herding enterprise might try to keep usufruct to such territories on behalf of the reindeer herders. Reindeer husbandry is dynamic, and one should not exclude the possibility of significant increases in the overall head of reindeer in the future. Are the mechanisms that regulate rights to land prepared for this? Reindeer-herding enterprises have repeatedly *lost* access to substantial portions of pasture land; they are unlikely to *gain* access to substantial portions of land. Access to pastures, access to land, is both precondition and asset in the hands of reindeer-herding enterprises. In the following chapter I examine how conflicting forms of land use are negotiated in the Komi Republic.

Chapter 5
Oil and land

In this chapter I deal with the domain of the oil industry in its relation to reindeer husbandry.[52] Land is the key resource in this chapter, for the reindeer-herding enterprises in the north of the Komi Republic have to grapple with oil companies over rights to land and other resources. Nevertheless, land is not only a resource; it is also the arena in which interactions between reindeer herders and oil workers take place. In this sense, land takes on a double meaning. In chapter 2 I showed that it is not the managers who work and live over long periods in the tundra, but the herders and tent workers. Chapter 3, especially the visit to the *kontora*, endorsed this contrast: the managers usually perceive the pastures from an outsider's point of view. (It is they who are using the pasture maps, not the herders.) Chapter 4 explained that around 1900, the reindeer pastures in the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra were commons: control over land was not exerted officially, and property rights remained largely undefined. In the 1930s, these commons were split up, a process that Fondahl (1998) described as "socialist enclosure". Since then, the government has had the privilege of allocating the land, at its own discretion, to various institutions and organisations.[53] Since 1985, previous decisions about land use have been criticised and forthcoming ones contested.

Over the last 15 years, many books, articles, reports and films have been devoted to the issue of conflicting forms of land use in the Russian North, namely, the extraction of mineral resources versus the economic activities of the native inhabitants.[54] Far smaller is the number of publica-

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[52] This chapter is a revised and expanded version of an article published earlier (Habeck 2002).

[53] Privately used plots and gardens can be neglected in this study on rights to pastures in forest and tundra.

[54] Publications include, among others, Aipin 1989; Vitebsky 1990; Ludviksen 1995; Dudeck 1996; Tuisku 1998; Okotetto and Forbes 1999; Wilson 2000, 2002a.

tions dealing with the question of the transfer of land,[55] which from my point of view is important for a deeper understanding of such conflicts. In this chapter I explain how it happened that an area allotted to reindeer-herding enterprises was turned into an area to be explored and exploited by the oil industry. I look at the legal and other political aspects of this procedure, its actual implementation and the actors involved in it: the oil companies, the managers of reindeer-herding enterprises and the authorities who are to negotiate the shift in land tenure.

For the reindeer herders themselves, the possibility of participating in this process is very restricted. Initiatives for attempting to secure their rights to land and resources come from the managers of the reindeer-herding enterprises and from external actors, but rarely from the actual reindeer herders, although they are the persons most affected (see Sabev 2002: 25). What is more, the vast majority of Komi herders whom I have met and lived with do not see negotiations about the land as their sphere of action. They leave negotiations to the management of the enterprise in which they work. As I indicated in the previous chapter, they prefer to focus their activities on personal contacts in the informal sphere. Such person-to-person interactions include those with oil workers in the tundra. So while at one level there are negotiations between managers of reindeer-herding enterprises and white-collar workers from the oil companies *about* the land, at another level there are negotiations between reindeer herders and oil workers *on* the land. After a short introduction to the Komi oil industry, I examine the negotiations about the land in their formal as well as informal dimensions and then deal with personal interaction between herders and oil workers on the land.

5.1 Oil industry in the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra

The town of Usinsk is one of the hubs of the oil business in the northeast of European Russia, and the identity of Usinsk is unthinkable without oil production. Prospecting work in the Usa region had already started by 1960, ten years before the official foundation of Usinsk. Since then and until the mid-1990s, there was a steady influx of Russian, Ukrainian and Tatar individuals and young families who found work in the oil business, affiliated industries and local services.

Oil *exploration* went on in the whole of the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra: the derricks of the petroleum-prospecting parties (*ekspeditsii*) are scattered over the entire area between Usinsk and Vorkuta. However, prospect-

[55] Novikova 2000: 154; Osherenko 1995a, 1995b: 1090-1092; in almost the same wording, Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 122-125. Wilson (2000) and Murashko and Suliandziga (2000) deal mainly with offshore oil production near Kamchatka.

ing work stopped in 1992-1993 when these *ekspeditsii* ran into financial difficulties. By 1999, few of the abandoned drilling sites were still guarded by their staffs.

Oil *exploitation*, that is, oil production, has so far been confined to the western part of the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra. In general, the development of petroleum extraction follows a number of geological structures (belts) in a northward direction, from the Komi Republic into the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the shelf of the Barents Sea. Despite this north-bound tendency of oil production activities, there are still significant resources in the territory of the Republic of Komi that might be opened up in the near future (Lausala and Valkonen 1999: fig. 24).

The first belt, which was opened up in the period from 1960 to 1980, stretches from Usinsk to Khar'iaginskii and beyond (see map). As it is the oldest zone of production, this belt bears the visible marks of an oil landscape, such as derricks, pipelines and the pertaining infrastructure. The oil pipeline that runs parallel to the Kolva River – the major artery of this industrial complex – has undergone considerable wear and tear, owing to its above-ground construction, the harsh climatic conditions and lack of maintenance. Pipeline leakages have been reported from several parts of Russia, above all from western Siberia,[56] but the Usinsk oil spill in autumn 1994 became the best-known case, as environmental consciousness in Russia had been increasing over the preceding ten years, and journalists were on the spot (Karjalainen and Habeck 2004). It is said that approximately 110,000 tonnes of oil seeped out and into the tributaries of the Pechora River.[57] To be sure, the pipeline from Khar'iaginskii to Usinsk leaked before and after the 1994 event; the latter, however, stirred up sensitivities among all inhabitants and land users.

Emotions had cooled down and the leaking pipeline had mostly been replaced, but the clean-up of the most heavily polluted areas was still under way when I made my first visit to Usinsk, Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh in October 1998. The former *sovkhoz* Ust'-Usinskii is one of the reindeer-herding enterprises most severely affected by the oil industry, but at the same time the one that has probably got the fewest benefits from it. Its western neighbour, Severnyi, has succeeded better in making contact with the oil industry, although its central base, the village of Mutnyi Materik, is much more remote from the district centre and the oil companies' offices. The migration corridors delineated for the reindeer-herding brigades of Ust'-Usinskii and Severnyi cross the largest zone of oil production. The herders

[56] See, for example, Novikova 1995: 38.

[57] Poklad 1995: 27; Vil'chek and Tishkov 1997: 414; Lukin, Dauval'ter and Novoselov 2000: 5; Lodewijkx and Hirsch 2000: 12.

frequently cross roads and pipelines with their herds and are well aware of the associated difficulties and risks.

5.2 Transfer of land, compensation and reclamation: the legal aspects

How do negotiations *about* the land take place in legal terms? The process of turning a piece of land used for reindeer husbandry into one used for oil exploration and exploitation comprises three steps. The first is called "transfer of land for non-agricultural use". Land tenure is granted to the oil companies for a number of years only, but this period can be extended several times. The transfer involves compensation to be paid by the oil company. This compensation is considered the second step. The law requires that the parcels of land eventually be restored and returned to the agricultural users. Physical reclamation and legal restoration should be seen as the third step.

The resolution regulating the entire procedure does not mention reindeer herding (which supposedly comes under agriculture in general), nor does it mention those individuals who actually work on the land, namely, reindeer herders, farmers and all other agricultural workers.[58] Before the law, their interests are represented by the collective or company for which they work. At first glance this may seem plausible, considering the absence of private land ownership. However, the reindeer-herding enterprise does not necessarily represent the interests of the reindeer herders.

Step one, the actual transfer, is a complex act of bureaucracy. The company hoping to use a certain area submits an application to the district administration, which sends all the necessary materials to the agricultural enterprise in question, the village council, the local Committee for Land Formation, the local Committee for Environmental Protection and the forestry authorities. The applicant must submit documentation stating the exact purpose of land use, detailed figures about all kinds of building projects, the planned period of use and the plans for reclamation of the area after the end of that period. The agricultural enterprise, as well as the village council, has the right to refuse the application (an example is given later).

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[58] Resolution N° 77 of the Council of Ministers (Government) of the Russian Federation, dated 28 February 1993 (Postanovlenie Soveta Ministrov – Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii, "Ob utverzhdenii Polozheniia o poriadke vozmeshcheniia ubytkov sobstvennikam zemli, zemlevladel'tsam, zemlepol'zovateliam, arendatoram i poter' sel'skokhoziaistvennogo proizvodstva ot 28 ianvaria 1993 g. N° 77"), published in *Sobranie aktov prezidenta i pravitel'stva RF* 1993 (6): 588-604. The resolution has also been adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Komi Republic ("Postanovlenie Soveta Ministrov Respubliki Komi ot 23 marta 1993 g. N° 159").

If all organisations involved give their agreement, the district administration approves the application and sends it to the respective organisations at the republic level, whose approval is also needed. The whole procedure takes months, if not years. In the meantime, the applicant company obtains a preliminary document giving it priority to this area over other applicants but not permitting it to use the area yet. Once the applicant receives the actual licence, the district administration maintains the right to check all conditions laid down in the licence: whether the area is used for the proper purpose, whether reclamation is done in the proper way and so forth.[59]

Step two is the payment of compensation money. Two different kinds of compensation must be paid. The first (*ubytki*) is to cover the expenses of reconstructing buildings and other infrastructure in a different place and also to redeem the "forgone income" from production. The "losses" (*poteri*) of agricultural production constitute the second element of the compensation. While the *ubytki* are to be paid to the agricultural enterprise, the *poteri* must be transferred to the local council, which may spend these monies to establish additional areas for agricultural use or to improve existing ones.

Representatives of the oil companies affirm that they do pay all these fees (as of 1999, at least 30,000 roubles per hectare for a period of 25 years), yet the reindeer herders complain that they see none of the compensation. It appears that the *ubytki* money is transferred not to the reindeer-herding enterprises directly but to the district's account. It is used to cover the debts of either the district or the reindeer-herding enterprise, as both accounts are permanently in the red. The *poteri* money also ends up in the district's account. In the context of reindeer husbandry, it could be spent on repairing corrals, building new fences or erecting trade and supply posts for the herders in remote parts of the tundra. However, statements by interviewees suggest that the district authorities use the monies for other, more general purposes. Osherenko's remarks on compensation payments in the northwest of Siberia are similar: "As of April 1993, according to a law passed by the council of the Yamal-Nenets Okrug, 50 percent of the compensation for damage should be paid to the land user (the sovkhoz) and 50 percent to the raion government. In practice both the okrug and the sovkhoz spend the compensation money for the same purposes – to provide housing, supplies and other material support to the local (not just native) population" (Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 124).

Thus it becomes evident why the herders feel they get no "direct" profit (even more so because the compensation must not be used for paying arrears of salaries to the herders). The formal procedure does not ensure that

[59] FM 122 (interview with Vladimir E. Strel'tsov and Sergei V. Golyshev, Committee for Land Formation, Usinsk, 1 March 1999).

Figure 20. Scrap from oil exploration in the tundra. The photograph shows the remnants of a petroleum-prospecting party (*ekspeditsiia*). (Middle course of the Adz'va River, 11 September 1998.)

the previous land user is duly compensated by the new land user. In addition, to repeat, the wording of the resolution does not refer to the reindeer herders themselves, but only to the enterprises employing them.

Plans for reclamation (step three) must be included in the initial project; otherwise it will not be accepted. After the period of tenure has ended, representatives of all the organisations mentioned earlier – but on the village and district level only – have to decide whether or not the reclamation has been done in the appropriate way. As the oil companies have sufficient money for reclamation, the results of such operations are generally deemed satisfactory by the Committee for Environmental Protection and the other institutions involved. However, as of 1999, was the situation much worse in the central and eastern parts of the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra, where the exploration wells still need to be checked, maintained and cleaned by the *ekspeditsii* but are often simply deserted. At sites where reclamation has taken take place, it was often carried out hastily: the scrap, remaining chemicals and oil residues were dumped into a pit and covered with earth.[60] The fact that many of the sites are difficult to access is exacerbated by the dire

[60] FM 44 (interview with Aleksandr I. Kanev, mayor of Abez' [District of Inta], 2 September 1998).

financial situation of the *ekspeditsii* (Poklad 1995: 27). It is mainly for this reason that scrap and other remnants of prospecting activities are scattered over the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra, as figure 20 illustrates.

5.3 Actors and their relations: the wider political aspects

In short, the three actors in the official procedure of transfer, compensation and reclamation are the oil company, the agricultural (reindeer-herding) enterprise and the various levels of the administration. If we now look at the other political aspects of the procedure, more actors come into play, and the interconnections become more intricate. Mutual agreements between land users, chats among high-ranking officers in the *bania*, campaigns by environmentalists and (in theory) protests by herders are not mentioned by the law, yet they can all be used as powerful tools when it comes to conflicts over land use.[61]

The representative of KomiArcticOil, a joint-venture company operating near Usinsk, affirmed that her company had adopted a much stricter environmental policy than would be required by the law. It had also sought to create a positive public image in the district and beyond by providing financial and technical support to the reindeer-herding enterprises and village councils. The company had helped to build a new slaughterhouse, a school and a church in the villages pertaining to Severnyi and Ust'-Usinskii. When KomiArcticOil realised that its compensation money was not reaching its final destination, the company tried to make an informal arrangement with Severnyi, and in 1998 it was agreed that the oil company would transfer 10,000 roubles directly to the enterprise. I was told, however, that it turned out to be impossible to transfer the sum to Severnyi, so it was transferred instead to the district administration, as usual.

Reindeer herders themselves, then, do not participate directly in transferring land. As employees of a reindeer-herding enterprise they have no official entitlement to the pastures. All they can do is express their opinions to the managers of the enterprise. In the best case, the executives ask the herders their views; in the worst case, the management may ignore them.

[61] Both regional and international environmental organisations hold stakes in the debate over land use in the Pechora Basin. Members of the largest regional organisation, the Committee for the Salvation of the Pechora (Komitet spaseniia Pechory), were among the first to inform international environmental groups about the major oil spill in 1994 and its consequences for the Pechora River and the people in the villages along it. Greenpeace activists visited the oil spill sites near Usinsk in 1994-1995 and again in spring 2000. Their presence has certainly had an impact on the policies of the oil companies operating in this region.

The legal situation implies that the directors of reindeer-herding enterprises have considerable influence over decisions about land transfer. Ultimately, the agricultural enterprises may exercise their right to veto the plans for industrial development. Yet when it comes to political power in general, their standing is much weaker than that of the oil companies.

Agricultural enterprises used to be the major employers in the rural areas of the Soviet Union, and the word of a *sovkhoz* director carried much more weight than the word of the local mayor. However, this authority has shrunk, as has the number of employees working in agricultural enterprises. In the era of market economy, collective farms and state farms in the north of Russia have fared particularly badly, and Severnyi and Ust'-Usinskii are no exceptions. Nowadays, the village council is no longer dependent on the agricultural enterprise; rather, the latter is dependent on the goodwill and financial support of the administration of the district and higher levels. Concerning all questions of land tenure, the reindeer-herding enterprises may seek political support from the Department of Agriculture in Usinsk and the Ministry of Agriculture in Syktyvkar, but the influence of these institutions is quite restricted, because the agricultural sector has few prominent proponents in comparison with the mineral-resources and energy sectors.

The influence of the oil companies on the various tiers of the administration can hardly be overestimated. After all, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Komi and the district of Usinsk obtain exceedingly large amounts of revenue from the petroleum industry. In addition, oil companies give direct support to the reindeer-herding enterprises. Little wonder, then, if the decision about the transfer of land is taken in favour of the oil company.

However, the *sovkhoz* Ust'-Usinskii, supported by the village council of Ust'-Usa,[62] made use of its right to veto in 1995 or 1996, when one of the prospecting organisations planned to pursue a geological survey in the area of the two Andriushkina Rivers.[63] This area comprises the only remaining winter pastures in the immediate neighbourhood of the villages (north of Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh), the others having disappeared under the industrial and residential areas of the town of Usinsk and the oil fields to the northwest of it. This stretch of pastures is cut off from the others by the road and pipelines of the Usinsk-Khar'iaginskii belt of production, but several brigades of

[62] The village council of Ust'-Usa was entitled to carry out a referendum, as envisaged by section 28 of the then valid land code, "Zemel'nyi kodeks RSFSR" (in Kriazhkov 1994: 124).
[63] FM 76 (interview with Vasilii I. Khoziainov, representative of the reindeer-herding enterprise Ust'-Usinskii, Ust'-Usa, 23 October 1998); FM 99 (interview with Lidiia F. Khoziainova, mayor of Ust'-Usa, 6 November 1998).

Ust'-Usinskii still migrate to the Andriushkina area because they prefer to have their tents close to the village. Among them is Brigada N° 10.

One day in the not too distant future, the local oil companies might hand in a new application, having come to the conclusion that it is essential to expand their activities into the Andriushkina area, and two or three herding brigades will hardly prevent them from doing so. The oil companies' spokespeople could easily argue that the livelihoods of two or three dozen people must yield to the interests of millions of consumers. This argument may be countered in equally global terms: environmental protection, sustainable development and indigenous rights. The challenge is to translate these principles into legal and other political concepts within a given case. To be sure, by diminishing the negative impacts of their operations, the petroleum companies can contribute to a "cleaner" environment. Nevertheless, the issue of conflicting interests in land use remains. This leads to the question whether there are ways of guaranteeing rights to land for reindeer husbandry in the long run. I have discussed these possibilities elsewhere (Habeck 2002); they are beyond the scope of the present work. The question I would like to address here is, how do reindeer herders and their families respond to the presence of oil companies in the tundra?

5.4 Actors and their relations: how herdsmen and oil workers see each other

While the herders keep complaining that they do not benefit at all from the exploitation of their pastures by the oil companies, which gain millions of dollars, personal relations between herdsmen and oil workers are fairly pragmatic. These relations represent what, at the beginning of this chapter, I characterised as negotiations *on* the land. Reindeer herders now share their work space, the tundra and forest tundra, with people servicing the oil wells. Oil workers often work in shifts of two weeks. Buses and helicopters bring them from Usinsk to bases located in many parts of the tundra, in some cases hundreds of kilometres away from Usinsk.[64] From such bases, oil workers go by tank-like vehicles (*vezdekhod*) to the remoter oil wells.

Thus, one day in late May 1999, when a certain Mr Danilov and his colleague were travelling in a *vezdekhod* from an oil base near Khorei-Ver to a remote well in a southeastern direction, they almost bumped into Brigada

[64] In this respect, one may see a range of similarities in the work conditions of reindeer herders and oil workers, but nonetheless I would argue that their perceptions of their work and life in the tundra are quite different, as emerges from the last section of chapter 2. For a parallel case, the relation between reindeer herders and the military on Kola Peninsula, see Sabev 2002: 24.

Nº 9. They stopped their vehicle, and Danilov went out to have a chat with the herders. For some 20 minutes, Danilov and Vasilii talked to each other in the Komi language about various issues. At some point, Vasilii complained to Danilov that his company produced lots of oil and yet the oil workers were unwilling or unable to give the reindeer herders as little as a barrel of fuel. Danilov just shrugged his shoulders and said that this was not his personal problem: Vasilii should talk to the oil company.

That this talk was conducted in Komi exemplifies that oil companies employ not only Russians, Ukrainians and Tatars but also a number of Komi (among them some employees in high-ranking positions). Thus, one cannot make a clear-cut ethnic distinction between oil workers (supposedly "newcomers") and people working in the so-called traditional occupations (supposedly "native inhabitants"). There are cases – though very few – of people who have occupational experience in both spheres, reindeer husbandry and the oil industry.[65] To be sure, some local Komi inhabitants do discuss the problem of land use and disproportionate incomes along ethnic lines. Tret'iakov's comment, "Our land, and yet we have to ask for permission", quoted in chapter 3, was not the only one of this kind that I heard during my visits to Ust'-Usa. Older people in the villages around Usinsk remember clearly how life used to be before the town existed. They feel that while the town has flourished, the villages have undergone a process of degradation. As one woman in Lyzhasa Andrei's village put it: "There is gas and oil nearby, and yet we have to use firewood for heating [*Riadom gaz i neft', a my topim drovami*]".[66]

What is true for the rural inhabitants in general is also the case for the reindeer herders. Most of them personally know some oil workers. The personal relations are not hostile but usually relaxed and sometimes very friendly. As one tent worker said: "We do our work, and they do their work". While I stayed with Brigada Nº 10 in November 1998, more than once we went to an abandoned oil-drilling site, disassembled the wooden cabins of the oil workers and used the wooden boards as fuel (fig. 21). The herders said that they did this with the permission of the oil company's watchman.

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[65] I know a man who used to work for KomiArcticOil and, after his discharge there, for Ust'-Usinskii; I met him at the corral Kolva-Ty, where he participated in the slaughter of reindeer. One of the leading political figures in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Aleksandr Ivanovich Vyucheiskii, was born into a reindeer-herding family and made a career in the oil industry, reaching the level of manager of the Khorei-Ver Expedition for Oil and Gas Exploration (Korepanova 2001: 91). In the epilogue I give one more example.

[66] Personal communication with a general practitioner in Ust'-Lyzha, 8 February 2002.

Figure 21. Abandoned oil drilling site in the tundra. Reindeer-herding Brigada N° 10 stopped here on its migration southward in order to collect additional firewood. (Near the Osovei River, 15 November 1998.)

He and his wife lived in a cabin some kilometres away, and they appeared to have a good relationship with the reindeer herders.

On the other hand, there are apprehensions and prejudices on both sides, which usually are expressed in a teasing manner. This became most apparent to me when Lyzhasa Andrei, Ter' Mish Andrei and I visited an oil workers' base at the Sandivei River, some kilometres from the camp, one evening in late April 1999. The three of us, all in reindeer-fur clothes, arrived on our reindeer sledges in a place dominated by the rhythmic ramming of a pile driver, where oil stains and rusty steel cables proliferated across the concrete platform of the base. Some of the workers turned around in surprise as we parked our reindeer. In fact, an oil workers' base is not the most suitable terrain for reindeer, as they may injure their hooves. In addition, we had to watch carefully to find our way through patches of old oil, so as not to spoil our boots.

The actual reason for travelling to the oil workers' base was Ter' Mish Andrei's urge to place a phone call to his girlfriend in Ust'-Usa. After the phone call, Lyzhasa Andrei wanted to pop into the portable cabin of a foreman called Volodia, whom he knew from a previous visit. We could have chosen a better moment. Volodia was busy seeing off a party of oil workers finishing their shift and waiting for the helicopter to bring them back to

Usinsk. At some point, though, he turned them all out and told us to stay for tea. He did put on the kettle, but then it was up to us to clean the cups, prepare the tea and refill the sugar pot. No nibbles provided – just tea. From the perspective of a reindeer herder, this kind of hospitality might have come close to an offence. But perhaps Volodia thought that because the three of us were much younger than he, why should he be bothered? He might have felt that if he were too generous, we might ask for more (cigarettes or alcohol, for example). Obviously, Ter' Mish Andrei did not feel very comfortable, for he stayed in the cabin's porch and engaged in some kind of shy daydreaming. While I kept my mouth shut and successfully tried to remain an incognito herdsman, Lyzhasa Andrei led the conversation with Volodia. They spoke about the tundra (the common element of their work) and life in the camp in comparison with life on the base. It was on this occasion that Lyzhasa Andrei scoffed at Volodia's "black business" (*chernaia rabota*). Actually, Volodia knew quite a lot about reindeer-herding affairs and inquired about our business:

> Volodia: I know you, Andrei, but I don't yet know the two others.
>
> Lyzhasa Andrei: They are people from other brigades.
>
> Volodia: And where are you migrating to now? [*Kuda vy dvigaetes' seichas?*]
>
> Lyzhasa Andrei: We are everywhere [*My vezde*].

Volodia kept trying to find out our migration route, but Lyzhasa Andrei gave him no detailed information. Without interfering, I asked myself why this information should be concealed.[67] On the way back to our camp, I had a talk with Lyzhasa Andrei:

> Otto: Volodia could have been more hospitable, I mean, the tea…
>
> Lyzhasa Andrei: Now you see what kind of people they are.
>
> Otto: But why did you say, We are everywhere? Why didn't you tell him we are moving to Kolva-Ty?
>
> Lyzhasa Andrei: Why should it be of interest for Volodia at all? He does not know all those places, anyway.

After the event, I wondered whether Volodia had an *arrière pensée* or whether Lyzhasa Andrei thought that he might have had one (and of course came to no conclusion on this). In general, though, the dialogues show that Lyzhasa Andrei (as well as other reindeer herders) thinks that the oil workers do not really respect the life-style of the herders and, moreover, that they are incapable of respecting it because they simply cannot understand it.

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[67] With regard to the concealing of my own identity, I justify this by my desire to observe an "authentic" encounter between reindeer herders and oil workers without the interference of a foreigner.

But if Lyzhasa Andrei creates the notion of the reindeer herders being wanderers roaming freely through the tundra, does not he himself contribute to the emergence of ill-informed stereotypes? It might be interpreted this way. However, the young herdsman's statement may also lay claim to a particular kind of power. The implication is not only that reindeer herders have control over geographical space (they are "everywhere") but also that the oil workers should not even think they could understand the movements of the herders. The authority exposed here derives its power from the herders' thorough knowledge of the land and their ability to live on it (even without the technical equipment that the oil workers need for survival).

While reindeer herders and tent workers have become accustomed to sharing the tundra with oil workers, they nonetheless retain their extensive agency in this space. The same may be said about the relation between reindeer herders and tent workers (the *brigada* people), on one hand, and the managers and office workers (the *kontora* people), on the other. The latter cannot survive in the tundra without the former. In fact, the *kontora* depends on the product of the *brigada* in every respect. However, as the following chapter shows, that dependence is not one-sided: both groups are entangled in complex relations and transactions of formal and informal character.

Chapter 6
Meat and markets

In this chapter I try to explain the guts of the *sovkhoz* economy. I do so in order to assess the herders' position in the enterprise hierarchy and the scope and limits of their activities within and outside the enterprise. Towards this end, I first describe and analyse a variety of classifications, categories, factors and processes, such as modes of slaughtering, pasture allotments, antlers and helicopter prices. Although on first sight this might look like a motley combination of topics, they all are variables that characterise the complex relationship between herders and white-collar workers within the reindeer-herding enterprise.

The domains we are dealing with here are constituted by the herders and tent workers (the *brigada*), on one hand, and the managers (the *kontora*), on the other. Earlier I stated that people in these two domains work out of sight of each other for comparatively long periods and that the relations between *brigada* and *kontora* are exposed by certain seasonal key events, one of which is slaughter. Meat is the key resource in these negotiations, and the distribution of meat pertains to both the official and the informal sphere. An additional key resource in the *brigada-kontora* relation is velvet antlers (*panty*), the circulation of which is restricted to the informal sphere.

By the end of this chapter it will have become clear that reindeer herders, tent workers and their families may judge things very differently from the management of the enterprise. Yet in most enterprises the two groups have one common interest: to keep the former state farm structure and use it as much as possible as a platform for their private economic activities.[68] In this relation of symbiosis and interdependence, the actual winners are a few individuals who have control over transactions and trading networks. The main argument of this chapter – that the former state farm is

[68] While this strategy is certainly typical for the enterprises in the Komi Republic, and the governmental policy of privatisation has by and large failed, the situation in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug is more diverse and calls for consideration in this context. Appendix 10 deals with this question.

the formal framework for informal activities – is linked to the analysis of reindeer herders' agency in the final section.

6.1 Explaining *sovkhoz* statistics: classifications of reindeer

A reindeer is not simply a reindeer – it can mean very different things to different people. For the herders as well as the other workers in the *sovkhoz* (the reindeer-herding enterprise), each animal has a set of attributes. Four attributes (age, sex, function and ownership) define a deer from the point of view of the *sovkhoz*, and some more do so from the herders' perspective. Without knowing these properties, it is hard to understand any of the reindeer herders' and *sovkhoz* managers' concerns, strategies and decisions.

The first two attributes are biological ones: the sex and the age of a reindeer. Together with the third attribute, the function or purpose of the animal, we obtain the basic classification as it is used in reindeer husbandry in Russia in general. This classification is rendered in Table 1, which lists the categories in English, the terms for them as commonly in use in the local (Komi and Nenets) statistics, and the percentage of each category according to the recommendations of agricultural experts. In December, the "ideal" herd should be composed as shown in the table.

Table 1. Classification of reindeer for statistical purposes and recommended herd composition

Category (by sex, age group and function)	Local term used in statistics (plural form)	Recommended herd composition (in per cent)
Females, over 3 years old	*Vazhenki*	49
Females, 2½ years old	*Syritsy* (also *neteli*)	11
Females, 1½ years old	*Nialuku-vazhenki*	5
Female calves, ½ year old	*Teliata-vazhenki*	14
Males, "bucks" (for breeding)	*Khory / proizvoditeli*	2
Males, "oxen" (for transport)	*Byki / ezdovye*	9
Males, 2½ years old	*Niamniuku*	(Subsumed under "oxen" and "bucks")
Males, 1½ years old	*Nialuku-khory*	3
Male calves, ½ year old	*Teliata-khory*	7

Source: Compiled on the basis of various archival materials.

What is remarkable here is the proportion of female animals (four-fifths) relative to male animals (one-fifth) within the herd. The recommended herd composition is clearly oriented towards production and reproduction: a large

number of adult female deer promises a high yield of calves, meat and other products. Adjusting the herd composition and size is mainly done by slaughter.[69] Twice a year each *sovkhoz* makes an inventory of all its herds: first a preliminary one during the so-called spring corral (*vesennii koral'*), after the calving period has come to an end, and second, the inventory in November-December, in connection with the main slaughter of the year in the so-called autumn corral (*osennii koral'*). An example of the spreadsheet used for counting the animals and determining production figures is shown in Appendix 6.

One of the indicators of productivity (*proizvodstvennye pokazateli*) that gains most attention among the *sovkhoz* managers is the percentage of adult females within the herd. During a meeting with herdsmen and *sovkhoz* officials (19 March 1999, FM 128), the responsible representative of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic, L. V. Bezumov, reported that "scientific recommendations" suggest at least 60 per cent of a herd be composed of adult females (*vazhenki* and *syritsy*). He stated that most enterprises in the Komi Republic were below that mark (54 per cent on average), and Ust'-Usinskii had the lowest figure of all (51 per cent). In his words, it was important to keep the number of oxen low because they reduced the productivity of the herd. However, at this point Bezumov was interrupted by the objections of some members of the audience, who felt strongly that they could assess the practice of reindeer herding better than any official from outside.

Every herder knows the importance of oxen (castrated males) for life and work in the tundra: without a sufficient number of draught animals, the brigade is immobilised and can no longer fulfil its job of herding. The proportion of draught animals within the herd increased throughout the 1990s because the enterprises had to reduce the number of helicopter flights between villages and camps. With regard to herd structure, the herders and their bosses have to find a compromise between the two functions, meat production and transportation. Bezumov dealt with the herders' objections calmly, since he was anticipating them. If for the Ministry of Agriculture and the executives of the reindeer-herding enterprises the tundra signifies first and foremost a vast "open-air factory floor" for meat production (Vitebsky 1992: 242), then for herders and their family members it is something more than that – an environment in which they spend a good deal of the year, moving around with their reindeer-hauled sledges.

The "function" of a reindeer is a less well-defined attribute than its age or sex (even if it is the justification for its existence, from the human

[69] The number of bucks (male animals for breeding) is kept low by castrating them and integrating them into the herd of oxen in May or August, and by slaughter.

point of view). A small number of animals fulfil specific roles and are consequently labelled with specific terms. *Avko*, for example, is the term for a very tame deer (usually an ox) which is well acquainted with human beings and comes close to the tent in search of human urine. Herders can attract and harness these deer if for some reason no other draught animals are available. To give another illustration, the term *menurei* applies to the leading animals in the herd, whose behaviour will trigger the other animals to behave correspondingly. For the herders it is important to know these leading animals, through which the herd's movements can be directed comparatively easily.[70]

Among the most decisive attributes is ownership. In previous chapters I avoided mentioning this rather complex issue because I wanted to keep the first description simple. In fact, nearly all brigades in the Komi Republic have herds that comprise animals of both collective and private ownership. The reindeer-herding enterprises of the Komi Republic used to be state farms (*sovkhoz*) from the 1960s to the 1990s, some of them even until 1 January 2000. Ultimately, the reindeer were the property of the state. Private property was not entirely excluded but was strictly regulated. Members of reindeer-herding families were permitted a certain number of their own animals. Owing to regional variations, the limitation of private reindeer is a complex issue in itself. With the introduction of privatisation in 1991-1992, these regulations were either abandoned or slackened: official limits now vary between 50 and 150 deer, and some enterprises do not limit the number of private deer at all.

The reindeer-herding enterprises still possess their non-private animals, which in the statistics appear as "public head [of deer]" (*obshchestvennoe pogolov'e*), in contrast to "private head [of deer]" (*chastnoe pogolov'e*). Over the last ten years, the percentage of "public" (or collective) reindeer has steadily decreased in favour of private reindeer, since the ownership of private deer translates directly into material wealth for every reindeer-herding family. While in the mid-1980s the ratio was approximately 90 collective to 10 private deer, it is now 75 to 25 or, in some enterprises, 60 to 40, and in a couple of herds the private deer outnumber the collective deer. Of course the actual number of private deer in the possession of a single herder does not necessarily correspond to the limits established by the enterprise for which he works. Herdsmen with 300 or more private reindeer can be found in almost every community, and one herder is said to own 1,000 or more animals.

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[70] The herders know basically all the animals in their herd and can distinguish them from some distance by their appearance. Therefore, the fur colour of a reindeer constitutes an important criterion for the herders, although it is not important for the people working in the slaughterhouse.

One can tell the ownership of a reindeer by its earmarks (*pel' pas, kleimo*). Private animals wear the earmark of their owner; collective animals are distinguished by the earmark of the brigade's herd. The salience of ownership for *brigada* and *kontora* people comes to the fore most visibly in the main annual inventory, the autumn corral. The count is carried out by a *sovkhoz* worker holding a wooden board and making pencil marks while the head of the brigade stands at the gate and declares the reindeer as they pass by: "*Vazhenka!*" (doe [of the collective herd]), "*Menam vazhenka!*" (my [own] doe), "*Izhma Fed'lön bykys!*" (an ox of Izhma Fed'), and so forth. This procedure is shown in figure 22.

Figure 22. Counting the deer in the corral. The two people at the gate are the brigadier (left) and an office worker (right). The brigadier identifies the animal as it runs through the gate, and the office worker registers it in a wooden board. (Kolva-Ty, 24 November 1998.)

A closer look at the board unveils some unexpected complexity in the property relations of the herd. Figure 23 depicts the 1998 inventory of Brigada N^{o} 10 of Ust'-Usinskii. The rows of the table correspond to the classification by age, sex and function as in Table 1. Thus, the first row has the title *vazhenka*. The columns refer mainly to ownership. There is a wide column for *stado N^{o} 10*, used for counting this brigade's collective deer. The following column is titled *brak* (literally, "waste" or "defective produce"). This factory-flavoured term is used to denote animals that have to pass through

Figure 23. Table for counting reindeer. (Kolva-Ty, 24 November 1998.)

the other gate, which leads straight to the slaughterhouse. What is called "defective produce" must actually be interpreted as the produce proper: the meat of the animals to be slaughtered is the enterprise's main capital.

The following columns correspond to the owners of private reindeer. Each person's name is abbreviated by three letters (family name, patronymic, given name).[71] Apart from the names of the five adult herders who at that time worked in Brigada N° 10 (Zhenia, Stepan, Vitalii, Stepan, Izhma Fed'), there were some more: Zhenia's late grandfather Mitrofan, Khoziainov (the chief executive for reindeer husbandry of Ust'-Usinskii) and two pensioners.[72] When Mitrofan died, the reindeer he left should have become the official property of his sons, among them Vasilii (head of Brigada N° 9) and Aleksei, Zhenia's father. Perhaps Mitrofan's heirs could not decide who should get how many deer. Aleksei, who died some months before his father, is not mentioned on the board. His reindeer were passed on to his son. I was told that Khoziainov, who is not associated with a brigade, has his private animals in several of them. The pensioners are relatives who used to work in Brigada N° 10. It turns out that reindeer are owned not only by those who

[71] The same abbreviations are used on luggage labels; see note 14.

[72] The last two or three columns on the wooden board are reserved for deer that belong to other brigades. These animals are led into a separate chamber of the corral and later taken back to their respective herds.

work in the *brigada* but also by people who used to work there and by some other individuals who are relatives of reindeer herders and tent workers. Khoziainov, like most other *kontora* people, has familial ties with reindeer-herding families.[73] In chapter 7 I argue, in agreement with Istomin (2000), that the reindeer herders' tent as a social space consists of more people than just those on the payroll of the *sovkhoz*. In addition to the question of who can own reindeer, I also discuss there the question of who may work as a herder or tent worker.

On the wooden board, there are no columns with female names. To the best of my knowledge, women seldom use their own earmarks. It appears that when a woman needs sledge animals, her husband chooses for her from among his animals. However, a woman can inherit or bequeath reindeer.[74] One day Zhenia's mother, Yelena, told me that she had a few reindeer in the herds of the neighbouring *sovkhoz,* Severnyi: "Reindeer live in the tundra after all, and sometimes they get mixed up" (FM 106). Later I learnt that she attends the autumn corral at Severnyi. Her animals are under the auspices of a Severnyi herder who occasionally stays at her house on his way from his native village to town and who had lived for a fortnight with both Brigada N° 9 and Brigada N° 10 when he did not get along well with the other people in his own Severnyi brigade.

I recount this as an example of the complexity of social ties and ownership issues, which do not show up in the *sovkhoz* statistics but nonetheless are part and parcel of reindeer herders' livelihood. What we should keep in mind is that *brigada* and *kontora* people may have diverse points of view about practices in reindeer herding, but for both groups, the ownership of private animals is highly important, albeit not evident in the official statistics of the *sovkhoz*.

6.2 Slaughter and marketing

The issue of ownership is closely connected with the annual inventory and slaughter in the autumn. Here I focus on the procedure of slaughtering and subsequent marketing, demonstrating that the marketing of private reindeer

[73] That Khoziainov has his animals in several brigades' herds indicates how well connected he is to the various reindeer-herding families. Nonetheless, the herders and tent workers perceive him as a member of the *kontora* and show a kind of awe when he enters their tent.

[74] The number of private reindeer is registered in the *pokhoziaistvennye knigi*, which I would describe as a combination of census, tax and registry office lists. These books are kept in each village council.

meat is done in different ways. Such arrangements give some clues about how herders and managers are dependent on each other.

In late November and early December all the herds are reduced by up to one-third, depending on the growth of the herd during the year. The selection among the collective animals is done by the brigadier. Those animals not counted as *brak* are led into the so-called last chamber (*konechnaia kamera*), where they are collected before the whole herd may leave the corral and roam around again on the pastures.

The last chamber, though, is not necessarily a safe haven for the reindeer: the herders occasionally select a small number of deer and slaughter them on the spot. Why do they not slaughter these animals in the slaughterhouse? The slaughterhouse comes under the sphere of the reindeer-herding enterprise, but the slaughter in the corral's last chamber does not. As long as the herders are in or close to the corral, *collective* deer will always be slaughtered in the slaughterhouse. The question of whether or not *private* deer may be slaughtered in the slaughterhouse depends on convention in the respective enterprise.

I took part in the slaughter in two different enterprises that have different arrangements for the slaughter and marketing of meat of private and collective deer. In the first case, Bol'shaia Inta in the town of Inta, there is a strict separation between slaughtering collective deer and slaughtering private deer; the latter are killed by specific workers, not on the premises of the corral but on a lake just outside the fence. In the second case, Ust'-Usinskii, some private deer are slaughtered in the slaughterhouse (together with the collective deer) while other private deer are slaughtered by the herders in the last chamber of the corral.

Thus, while there is a difference between the slaughtering of collective and private deer, there is an additional difference between two modes of slaughtering: slaughter as it is done by herders, and slaughter as it is done in the slaughterhouse. These two modes can be distinguished by the technique of killing and disembowelling, the people who do the slaughter, and the ways in which the produce is marketed.

Never do the herders work in the slaughterhouse – they slaughter only outside. The herdsman usually kills the deer by stabbing it in the neck. After he has removed the skin and the lower legs, he opens the carcass and takes out the inner organs (heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, stomach and bowels). The carcass lies on its back, and while all the inner organs are removed, blood flows into the hollow between the ribs. This kind of slaughter includes a short feast called *aibarch*: the herders and other members of the tent community take their knives, cut off little chunks or strips of the raw and still warm meat and dip them into the salted blood in the middle of the carcass.

Chunks of the heart, liver and kidneys are considered the most delicious bits. When I was in the corral with Brigada N° 10, the *aibarch* took place right there where the slaughter was going on, in the last chamber of the corral (fig. 24). Only the closest friends partook of this meal. Employees of the reindeer-herding enterprise who were not directly involved in herding did not participate. (The institution of *aibarch* refers to the existence of social ties that transcend the organisational framework of the *sovkhoz* and its brigades.)

Once the *aibarch* is over, the butchering continues. The carcass is cut into pieces, and the meat is hung up for deep-freezing and is later stored in big sacks. Each side of the tent receives half of the slaughtered reindeer; the head and the spine go alternately to the left and right half. This meat is used for consumption within the extended family or for barter with neighbours and other people. The hide is used for various purposes, most frequently for sewing the professional clothes that the reindeer herders and tent workers need in the tundra or for the outer cover of the tent. Leg furs are needed for sewing fur boots. All parts of the reindeer are processed; even the hooves are kept for making meat jelly.

More than once I was struck by the contrast between the herders' and tent workers' careful attitude towards the deer that they slaughtered themselves and their lack of interest in and involvement with the deer that were

Figure 24. Slaughter in the corral. Two herders of Brigada N° 10, Ust'-Usinskii, are skinning and disembowelling selected reindeer in the last chamber of the corral. (Kolva-Ty, 24 November 1998.)

slaughtered in the slaughterhouse. Such observations imply that the herders see the herding of collective deer merely as an extra job, whereas their prime concern is the herding of their private animals.

The other mode of slaughter, the one in the slaughterhouse, is done by non-herding staff of the reindeer-herding enterprise.[75] The deer are not stabbed but clubbed, usually a score of them in one go. Then the workers cut the throats of the unconscious animals and remove the hides, lower legs and heads. The inner organs are taken out, rinsed and collected in various vessels. The stomachs and bowels are thrown away, and one can find large heaps of guts out in the snow behind the slaughterhouse, occasionally together with herders' dogs attracted by the abundance of food (in Inta, the entrails are collected and sent to the local chicken farm). The heads are kept, their meat being used as dog food, part of the antlers for souvenirs and the fur of the forehead for fur boot production. Piles of reindeer heads and bundles of tongues testify to the industrial drive in reindeer husbandry that Kertselli and others were thinking of some 80 years ago (see section 4.3.2).

In the slaughterhouse, the carcass is not cut into pieces: it is weighed and then hung in a large storage room. Once it is frozen, it can be transported to town by helicopter, lorry or whatever method is best. The slaughterhouse and corral of Ust'-Usinskii are in Kolva-Ty, 180 kilometres from Ust'-Usa and Usinsk as the crow and the helicopter fly. There is no road to Kolva-Ty. Tonnes of meat are sent south by helicopter. Additional tonnes are hauled by caterpillar transport to the nearest road, 80 kilometres away, then reloaded onto lorries and taken to Ust'-Usa or Usinsk. In late November 1998, Ust'-Usinskii was lucky enough to receive unexpected help from a team of seismologists who agreed to transport five tonnes of meat to the road. The oil base at Lake Saliuku, the end of the road, serves as a staging post for overland transport. The reindeer-herding enterprise's drivers stay and eat with the oil workers, who in turn receive some reindeer carcasses. Here we see another example of how the oil industry is not only a threat to reindeer husbandry – at times it may be a resource or an opportunity.

Barter and other forms of cashless economy are the enterprises' most convenient way of transferring their produce. Barter helps to reduce taxes. If a company gets little money and is anyway in the red, then it will pay lower taxes (FM 32).[76] Barter relations can be reasonably stable. A well-developed

[75] As this is a highly seasonal activity – approximately one month per year – the reindeer-herding enterprise has to hire an additional work force – for example, coal miners (in the case of Inta) or other townspeople.

[76] On collective farm taxation during the late 1960s, see Humphrey 1998: 89, 100. In those days, collective farms could avoid paying annual taxes by bringing certain productivity figures below 15 per cent.

network of personal relations is essential for successful trading.[77] The management of Ust'-Usinskii draws up contracts with various companies in Usinsk and the neighbouring town of Pechora on a yearly basis. On the grounds of additional transportation costs, selling the meat farther afield is beyond hope, the director told me. Transportation costs, too, are paid in reindeer. In 1998 the Pechora Branch of KomiInterAvia received one helicopter load of reindeer meat (approximately 2,500 kilograms) for transporting three helicopter loads of meat from Kolva-Ty to Usinsk.[78] Consequently, it would seem that for the managers of Ust'-Usinskii, transportation expenses must pose the biggest problem and be the most decisive item in the enterprise's budget.

The enterprise Bol'shaia Inta, which I discuss here for comparison, has much lower transport expenses. Its autumn corral is located in the tundra, at roughly the same latitude as Kolva-Ty, but the slaughter is done close to the town of Inta. The animals selected for slaughter are driven in one or two herds to the slaughterhouse 150 kilometres farther south. By the time the deer reach the slaughterhouse, they have lost some of their fat, but the management need not worry about further transport to the consumers: it is the consumers who come to them. Wholesale as well as retail transactions are carried out on the premises; it takes the buyer just a 20-minute ride by car or lorry from the town centre.

In Bol'shaia Inta the private reindeer are slaughtered entirely separately from the collective ones. Yet they are not slaughtered by the herders. The owners sell them on the spot to a small team of independent slaughterers. The boss of this team is a Komi whose main place of work is the district's fishery inspection. The team has its own slaughter-stand and steelyard. He pays the members of his team (mostly coal miners) in meat, and the owners of the reindeer in money. The meat is sold to the buyers for cash (FM 110). It is most likely that he has a highly profitable business. Again, the herders themselves do not manage and control the marketing of the meat, although the whole marketing procedure is quite transparent to them.

Returning to the procedure as it is done in Ust'-Usinskii, the reindeer herders' private transactions are organised in a more restrictive way. Most of the private reindeer to be slaughtered end up with the collective ones in the slaughterhouse. More than that, the private meat is weighed not separately but together with the enterprise's meat. The people who stand at the weigh-

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[77] See Seabright 2000; Humphrey 2000.

[78] The official cost per hour for helicopter flights in this region was 7,200 roubles in July 1998, 8,400 roubles in July 1999 and 9,600 roubles in July 2000 (personal communication, V. I. Ponomarev, Syktyvkar, Institute of Biology, Komi Science Centre, Russian Academy of Sciences, August 2000).

bridge (fig. 25) explain this by saying that the weight of a deer does not depend on whether it was a private one or a *sovkhoz* one; it is enough to determine the average weight. Payment from the enterprise to the owner is also based on this average.

Figure 25. Slaughter in the slaughterhouse. The picture shows the weighbridge where short-term workers weigh the reindeer carcasses before carrying them into the storage room. (Kolva-Ty, 11 November 1998.)

The main organisers of this private meat marketing are Oleg, the veterinary surgeon, Sharikov, the zoo-technician, Tret'iakov, the driver, and (to some exent at least) Khoziainov. They all have medium- or high-level posts in Ust'-Usinskii, except Oleg, who now works for the district's veterinary authorities. Owing to this function, he has also gained some degree of control over the meat market in the whole district (with the two enterprises Ust'-Usinskii and Severnyi). In my understanding, he plays the key role in the logistics and marketing of private meat. He makes sure he attends the arrival of meat deliveries in Usinsk, and people phone him in order to find out whether the meat has arrived.[79]

There is a certain piquancy in the fact that both the private meat market and the *sovkhoz* statistics are under the control of only a few people. However, this seemingly causes little concern to the other executive workers

[79] Oleg provides a striking example of the concept of "information islands" introduced by Seabright (2000).

of Ust'-Usinskii. Although the herders and tent workers sometimes express reservations about this arrangement, they actively take part in these private transactions. For them too, one may assume, there must be some revenue from these deals. In fact, income from private reindeer is quite substantial.

The four men mentioned above control most of the Ust'-Usinskii private meat business, but they cannot control it entirely: reindeer herders have their deals with the helicopter pilots, too. This explains the occasionally shady character of activities in the last chamber of the corral: some of the reindeer slaughtered there are hauled to the outer fence clandestinely and quickly given to the helicopter pilots. Although I did not witness the moment of payment, I am sure that such meat is exchanged for vodka. Khoziainov, the boss of all reindeer herders and tent workers in the enterprise, is aware that there must be some drinking going on while the herders work in the corral, and it is his function to intervene and apply sanctions against herders caught in the act. Therefore, the transaction with the pilots must be made quickly and inconspicuously.[80]

The reasons for the differences between Ust'-Usinskii and Bol'shaia Inta in their methods of slaughtering reindeer and marketing the meat of private reindeer are clearer now. The location and accessibility of the slaughter points influence the arrangements within the reindeer-herding enterprises. In the case of Bol'shaia Inta, the private meat market is independent from the enterprise's marketing strategies. In the case of Ust'-Usinskii, a group of executive staff has the competence and the contacts needed for controlling the private meat market. In both cases, the reindeer herders do not negotiate directly with the consumers; they even seem indifferent to the ways in which the meat is marketed. In the following sections and in chapter 7 I show that nonetheless, the herders and their families are well aware not only of trade opportunities but also of their economic relationship to the enterprise they work for and of ways of benefiting from it.

6.3 Attempts at restructuring slaughter and marketing

For the last decades, meat has been the prime product of reindeer husbandry in the Russian North. Reindeer-herding enterprises are confronted with the problem that this product is available for only a short period every year, in late autumn and early winter. Russian and other experts have pointed out various possibilities for overcoming the seasonality of the output, the main one being the improvement of refrigerator and storage facilities. The managers of the reindeer-herding enterprises, supported by officials from the

[80] Most of the reindeer slaughtered in the last chamber constitute a meat supply not for the pilots but for relatives in the village.

Ministry of Agriculture, often say that if they could display and sell frozen meat throughout the year, they could hope for more stable profits. This would call for improved technology and a network of refrigerator carriages and lorries and, on the whole, for reliable all-year roads or railways between the slaughterhouses, processing factories and consumers.

Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture consider the creation of processing industries, diversification of the range of meat products (sausages, smoked meat, etc.) and improvements in the packaging and presentation of the produce to be further elements of such development strategies. For a number of years the managers and agricultural authorities have aspired to construct slaughterhouses that comply with the hygienic and other requirements of the European Union. They expect that if the slaughter technology improves, it will be easier to raise the prestige of reindeer meat in the northern towns and in big cities such as Moscow and St Petersburg. They also hope that it will become possible to export reindeer meat to the countries of the European Union. "Frankly speaking, we suggest that reindeer meat, which has high gustatory and dietary qualities, should not go into cheap canteens, it must be included in the menus of the best sanatoriums and restaurants of Russia and other countries, and of course be paid for in accordance with its [qualitative] properties" (Krug, Bezumov and Pasynkov 1997: 5; my translation).

Additionally, the reindeer-herding enterprises might aim at diversifying their output. The trade in velvet antlers (*panty*) was, and still is, seen as an essential element in such diversification strategies, and I discuss it separately in the next section. Finally, the hide trade might regain some of its previous importance if the quality of the hides could be improved. Towards this end, the enterprises must apply more accurate strategies of vaccinating the reindeer against gadflies, which is mainly a question of funding.

Measures aiming at the increase and diversification of output have been written about repeatedly, with regard to both the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug.[81] The regional governments have made many attempts to implement strategies to strengthen the reindeer industry. I discuss such recommendations and measures and the details of the meat market in Appendix 9. These details have only limited pertinence to the main topic of this chapter, which is the relations between herders and officials within the *sovkhoz*. True, technological improvements and new marketing strategies are likely to have a positive effect on the livelihood of *kontora*

[81] See Krug, Bezumov and Pasynkov 1997; Khrushchev and Klokov 1998; Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999a, 1999b; Jernsletten and Klokov 2002. Interestingly, similar suggestions were being made at the beginning of the twentieth century by Kertselli (1911: 103, 108); see section 4.3.2 and Appendix 4.

people as well as *brigada* people. However, apart from understanding what these strategies are, it is equally important to understand why they have failed more than once. These failures, which I also address in Appendix 9, can be explained, at least partially, by the social and economic arrangements within the *sovkhoz*. I argue that the *sovkhoz* is used as an operational basis for private business by both *kontora* and *brigada* people. The following sections illustrate and develop this point in more detail.

6.4 Beyond *sovkhoz* statistics: velvet antlers as extra capital

Meat is the most important but not the only product. Recommendations to diversify the "output" of reindeer husbandry prompt us to look beyond the meat market. Although the trade in reindeer hides is in a poor state, another product deserves specific attention: velvet antlers (*panty*).[82]

What are the velvet antlers used for? After the antlers have been cut, they are dried and ground. The powder is then sold predominantly to Far Eastern countries where it is considered an aphrodisiac. Around 1990 there was a virtual boom in the *panty* market. In the mid-1990s prices slumped, but *panty* still provide a viable market. Although the herders know that the margin between fresh antlers and processed *panty* is large, they nonetheless consider the *panty* trade profitable for them, too.

Some enterprises in the Komi Republic started to engage in cutting antlers in 1991 or 1992. When prices went down, *panty* production ceased to exist as a collective business, but it has survived at the private level. In fact, antlers are cut all over the region, but when I interviewed the directors of the reindeer-herding enterprises, the usual dialogue was: "We do not do *panty*". – "Yet the herders do?" – "I don't know". In a recent analysis of reindeer husbandry in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the paragraph about *panty* production closes with the remark: "Unfortunately, it is more difficult to obtain these data, as the managers of the enterprises, who act independently, try not to disclose this information" (Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999a: [10]). Consequently, knowledge about the *panty* trade comes to the fore only piecemeal. However, some people, including the herders, speak quite frankly about it.

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[82] Reindeer shed their antlers once a year, and the new antlers grow under a dark skin with short fur. In the first months the antlers consist of tissue and are not ossified. The growth of velvet antlers of the uncastrated male deer starts in March, and of the female deer, approximately in June (Mukhachev, Salatkin and Mikhailova 1992: 21). If grazing conditions are good, the antlers may grow by 1.5 centimetres per day in April (Kertselli 1911: 82). Velvet antlers are usually sawn off in June.

In the case of Ust'-Usinskii, the antlers of the male deer are cut during the spring corral (fig. 26). It is at the discretion of the herders which of their animals shall be cut. Most herders would not refuse. When the cutting took place at Brigada N° 9, Vasilii and Izhma Fed' did not take part, whereas Ivan and his nephew-cum-stepson, Andrei, each sold about 20 or 30 kilograms of antlers that day. *Panty* are taken not only from private but also from collective animals; in this case the revenue goes to the *sovkhoz*, which probably means that the revenue goes to a certain individual or peer group in the *kontora*. However, the directors assert that they "do not know" about this.

Figure 26. Cutting antlers. The reindeer herder (in the centre) selects the animals to be cut from among his private deer; the other men do the actual cutting with a small saw. (Near Kolva-Ty, 28 June 1999.)

Quite remarkable is that once again it was not the herders who were sawing their animals's antlers. Instead, this was done by a son of Khoziainov's and by Tret'iakov. Oleg was present, too, and he and Sharikov brought the fresh antlers to Usinsk and resold them. Considering the substantial profit margin, Sharikov mentioned that they were thinking about drying and grinding the antlers themselves.

Again, what becomes transparent is that some of the managers of the reindeer-herding enterprise use their jobs as an operational basis for private business. We can discern two spheres in the former *sovkhoz,* the collective and the private, yet the two are intertwined in manifold respects. From what

I have understood, the strategy behind the transactions of the enterprise as a whole is to earn reasonable profits, keep the balance close to zero in order to save on taxes, and take advantage of certain state subsidies. At the same time, part of the "real" business is done by the people of the enterprise physically *within* the enterprise but economically *outside* it. This partly explains the failure of privatisation: for the people in the *sovkhoz* (now a municipal organisation), it is more advantageous to keep the official structure while using it in their own ways. In the next section I show that not only the management but also the reindeer herders and their family members take advantage of this opportunity. The practices just described are not limited to Ust'-Usinskii; to a greater or lesser extent they can be found in all reindeer-herding enterprises in the Komi Republic and beyond. Indeed, that enterprises are being used as umbrella organisations for private entrepreneurship (Konstantinov 2002) is just one variant of the oft-mentioned informal sector of the Russian economy (e.g. Ledeneva 1998).

6.5 Supply of the brigades, and more *sovkhoz* statistics

> If young people do not want any longer to engage in reindeer husbandry, then it is first of all because the management does not pay any attention to the problems of the herders; the brigades lack even the most essential things. ... The *sovkhoz* is totally neglected; life conditions are really bad; the canvas [*brezent*] is full of holes and we do not know where to get new canvas from. There are no radios. ... Altogether, the bosses act as if they think, "Live as you want! [*Zhivite kak khotite!*]" The managers are more concerned about how to build a nice house or how to buy a posh car (FM 49).

Herders and tent workers complain copiously about the poor support given by those working in the office to those working in the tundra. Apart from canvas, there is a lack of felt cloth (for the inner tent cover), medicaments, veterinary medicaments, rifles, ammunition, waders, radios, diesel fuel and other things in most of the brigades of the Komi reindeer-herding enterprises. In some places, including Ust'-Usinskii, food supplies have also deteriorated. The director of this enterprise admitted that tea, sugar and rusks could not be dispatched to the brigades in sufficient quantities. And if they were delivered, the tent workers and herders grumbled that the quality of the provisions was a far cry from what it used to be in the 1980s. Altogether, the

members of reindeer-herding families are highly dissatisfied with the payment and services of the *sovkhoz*.[83]

In the tundra it is impossible to rely solely on *sovkhoz* supplies. Before they leave the village, the tent workers and herdsmen buy bread, rusks, tea, milk powder, flour, rice, pasta and canned products as far as their budget permits. Trading with oil workers and other visitors to the tundra (including *panty* traders as well as *kontora* members operating on a private basis) is becoming increasingly significant.

The reindeer-herding families have to pay for the food products delivered by the enterprise, but not for the transport of them. For years the tent workers and herdsmen were given only a fraction of their wages in cash, and in practice the unpaid wages covered debts for food supplies.[84] The people in the tundra and the people in the office know each other well – in many cases they are relatives – so there is seldom a need for long check-lists. The dispatchers rely on their experience.

The consumption of meat is not free of charge either, unless the herders slaughter their private animals (which they do rarely). *Obshchepit*, an abbreviation of a term best translated as "collective nutrition", is the official word for the consumption of collective animals by the brigades during their migrations. The reindeer-herding families pay a reduced price of ten roubles (as of July 1999) per kilogram to the enterprise. This kind of procurement is also known as "concessionary meat" (*l'gotnoe miaso*).

To return to the *sovkhoz* statistics (see Appendix 6), slaughter and "collective nutrition" (*obshchepit*) together make up the category "killed for realisation" (*zabito na realizatsiiu*). This category itself is subsumed under "productive expenditure" (*delovoi raskhod*). "Productive expenditure" also

[83] One reason for the poor quality and insufficient quantity of the supplies is that the enterprises are not solvent and most items are purchased by barter. The actual principles of barter *between companies* are complex (Humphrey 2000; Seabright 2000): prices always seem higher than on the "real" markets. The price of a kilogram of reindeer meat increases by 20 per cent if it is sold by barter (Appendix 9). The prices for goods purchased by the reindeer-herding enterprises are beyond reasonable imagination, as one director stated in public (FM 128), although (or perhaps even because) barter connections are frequently established through informal networks.

[84] Official wages for tent workers ranged between 900 and 1,700 roubles per month, and for herdsmen, between 1,300 and 2,000 roubles per month, as of late 1998 in Inta District (FM 128b). A herdsman's wage depends on his work stage or degree. The first degree, *bron'uchenik* (apprentice), is usually given to herders under the age of 18. Thereafter, a herdsman may achieve the degrees of third-class, second-class and first-class herder. Brigadiers are usually enrolled as first-class herders (FM 82).

includes bonus reindeer presented by the enterprise to herders for their successful work (*naturoplata*) and other expenditures, such as reindeer transactions with neighbouring enterprises. The dark side of the *sovkhoz* inventory is known as "unproductive losses" (*neproizvoditel'naia ubyl'*), which has three sub-categories. The first, "plague" (*padezh*), denotes deer that have fallen victim to all manner of diseases. The second, literally called "trampling down" (*travezh*), stands for those animals killed by predators. The third, simply called "losses" (*poteri*), comprises the deer that have somehow vanished and those that have undergone forced slaughter.

Only the latter will be used for the brigade's meat pots: all animals that have died of diseases, predation or malnutrition will at best be fed to the dogs. However, one should always take the *sovkhoz* statistics with a generous pinch of salt. After all, the executive of the enterprise who is responsible for compiling the statistics did not witness the death of the animal. On the basis of archival materials presented in section 4.4, we have already learnt that "the possibility of reindeer losses without notice cannot be excluded". When it comes to classifying dead animals, there is probably a lot of creativity. In eastern Siberia, a reindeer herders' joke says, "Our wolves here are very clever. They read the earmarks. They can tell a *sovkhoz* reindeer from a private reindeer [*U nas volki ochen' gramotnye. Oni chitaiut metki. Oni umeiut otlichat' sovkhoznykh ot chastnykh olenei*]".[85] Discussing reindeer husbandry on the Kola Peninsula, Konstantinov (2002: 178) openly asserts: "When it comes to: (a) shooting deer for the pot; and (b) selling meat informally (*nalevo*), they are invariably taken from the collective herd, and, if circumstances allow, from another brigade's herd. Losses are attributed to poachers ... and predators". I have never personally witnessed any case of bogus losses, but from the interviews there is some evidence that they may sometimes occur also in herds in the Komi and Nenets regions.

Although the *sovkhoz* directors and agricultural authorities are well aware of the problems the herders and tent workers have to cope with, their perspective is understandably dominated by meat output and herd productivity. The remaining columns in the *sovkhoz* statistics testify to this attitude, whereas other salient economic activities – notably *panty* production – do not appear in the template of the table.[86] Herd productivity is expressed in functions such as meat production divided by the number of deer as of January (the previous year's inventory), or productive output of calves divided by the number of deer, or average live-weight of the animals slaughtered.

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[85] Piers Vitebsky, University of Cambridge, personal communication, 30 May 2001.

[86] The very absence of *panty* data in the *sovkhoz* statistics speaks to its significance as a manipulable resource in Humphrey's (1998) sense.

The herders, too, are anxious about the fate of the reindeer, and their work ethic demands that they save as many animals as possible from starvation, predators or other forms of loss and select pastures and herding strategies that facilitate the health, growth and fattening of the deer. However, good production figures can be achieved only if there is sufficiently high morale among those who work in the tundra. In the current situation of poor material support, delays in wages and alleged corruption, it is no surprise if the herders do not fulfil – and sometimes even do not want to fulfil – any productivity expectations. What the table in Appendix 6 (and "meat productivity" in particular) can tell us about is the disastrous combination of material shortcomings, uninterest and an exceptional bad weather situation in spring 1999. What it does not tell openly is about the manifold ways in which the white-collar workers and the herders gain personal benefits by using the *sovkhoz* for private purposes.

6.6 Why privatisation has failed

Considering the reindeer-herding families' harsh critique of management and their despair about insufficient supplies in the tundra, one may ask why the herders do not try to leave the enterprises and become independent – especially when the existence of large numbers of private reindeer would justify such a step. In fact, this was discussed for a couple of years among workers of the reindeer-herding enterprises in the Komi Republic, but none of them has actually left the existing enterprises. There are, however, newly established co-operatives in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and independent herders on both sides of the Urals. These co-operatives and independent herders are described in Appendix 10, which also includes a tentative explanation for the different performance of Komi and Nenets in terms of privatisation. In this section I confine myself to explaining the reasons for Komi herders' and managers' reluctance to privatise.

In theory, privatisation is possible, and it has been encouraged by the Russian government since 1991. Yet private ownership of reindeer pastures is not permitted. Reindeer-herding enterprises – be they former collective or state farms or newly founded "privatised" units – receive their titles to land in the form of long-term leases. By early 1998, the mechanisms of agricultural privatisation and the question of land tenure were either still unclear or not yet defined at all in the Komi Republic (Ivanov, Mal'tseva and Terent'ev 1998: 68-69), as well in many other regions of the Russian Federation. This circumstance does not ultimately forestall the establishment of new enter-

prises, as examples from other administrative units show,[87] but it certainly hampers it. The existing structure works in favour of the revamped collective and state farms and gives comparatively little space for reindeer herders' initiative.

Thus, as of now all the reindeer pastures in this region are officially in public ownership and allotted to the agricultural enterprises on a long-term lease (25 years) by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic and its Land Committee (FM 122) and their Nenets counterparts. All the land between the White Sea and the Urals is split up and distributed among the reindeer-herding enterprises (the former collective and state farms), with the exception of some industrial or transportation corridors and non-agricultural areas around the towns and villages of the region. If herders want to establish an independent business and apply for a land allotment, this land is to be taken from one of the enterprises already existing. Consequently, what is worth fighting for is not land as such but control of the enterprises that carry the land with them.

Considering the spatial pattern of reindeer herding in this region, it generally makes little sense to transfer separate parcels of land to individual families or small groups. A viable new enterprise requires a sizeable and contiguous pasture area. Moreover, there is the question of the minimum size of the herders' group. Komi reindeer herders, as well as officials, stress that herding cannot be done by just one family: "Life in the collective is easier" (FM 132); "You cannot survive in the tundra just on your own" (FM 12). Even if the whole brigade decided to stay together, one brigade alone would be vulnerable owing to weather conditions and veterinary diseases.

As a consequence, one might ask: Why not simply get rid of management? If the reindeer-herding families have the explicit opinion that they are subject to the whims of corrupt managers, they might dismiss them and decide their affairs themselves.

To tell the truth, it is convenient to stay. Not only the management and executive staff but also the herders and their families use the former *sovkhoz* as a platform for their private activities, notably the herding of private animals. As one brigadier put it, it is impossible to live without private reindeer; the herders and their families need them for survival, since the enterprise they work for gives them virtually nothing. However, they do not want to leave the enterprise and set up their own private businesses, because the taxes would be too high (FM 58). Later his mother added, "We cannot

[87] See Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 125-128 concerning the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug; Ziker 2002: 125-138 on Taimyr; Novikova 2000 on the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug; and Fondahl 1998 on the Transbaikal region. The situation in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug is discussed in Appendix 10.

expect anything from the enterprise". When I reported this assessment to another interviewee, this one flared up: "*They* of all people must complain! They have one of the largest private herds and live at the expense of the state. They graze their animals on pasture land they do not pay taxes for, and benefit from the helicopter financed by the enterprise" (FM 59).

Indeed, being an employee of the *sovkhoz* yields considerable advantages for the owner of a large number of private reindeer (being a relative of a herdsman or tent worker is almost as good). It facilitates access to pasture land; veterinary services are free of charge, and so is transport, even if it has become infrequent in comparison with previous years. Further, all manner of transactions can be carried out without being liable to taxation. Dealings with the revenue office and the local airline are better left in the hands of the management of the *sovkhoz*. My impression is that few herders and their family members would like to face the imponderables of economic independence (cf. Sabev 2002: 20).

However, when herders are asked about their economic situation, instead of talking about the benefits they enjoy through *sovkhoz* membership, they lament the difficulties they are experiencing. This is perfectly understandable. It is not my aim to belittle these problems – who would tolerate wages coming with a delay of more than a year? – but I wish to analyse the reasons for herders' compliance with the organisational structures as they currently exist.

The issue of combining collective with private reindeer herding is a salient and oft-mentioned one in the Komi Republic. Most interviewees did (or would) hold that in the current setting, the two could survive only together. Some people call for regulations. The representative of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic, L. V. Bezumov, recommended the introduction of public funding for reindeer herders with fewer than 50 reindeer in their possession and making herders with more than 50 deer contribute to the overheads of the enterprises they worked for. There would be no legal measures, but it would be up to the enterprises to return to, or retain, limits for the number of private deer (FM 128).

Suggestions such as this one are certainly not met with much accord on the part of the herders. In a way, it is not their fault that, as a long-term consequence of the collectivisation and allocation of pastures, scarcely any ground is left for private initiative within the current territorial framework. Confined in their spatial flexibility by the rigid boundaries of their allotments, herders are likely to resort to flexibility inside these confines. Although diddling with reindeer figures is not envisaged in the herders' work ethic, it is surely part and parcel of a modus vivendi linking the herder with

the manager in their shared intelligence that book-keeping and everyday life in the tundra may be a far cry from each other.

Thus, the importance of the spring and autumn corrals is more than an economic one: these are the moments when the office hits the tundra, when the *kontora* visits the *brigada*, when the herders and tent workers must take responsibility for the shortcomings of their work (should any be apparent). The managers, for sure, know that control mechanisms must not be too harsh. At the end of the day, managers and herders are dependent on each other. Perhaps it was not by accident that Khoziainov and Sharikov deployed a carrot-and-stick approach: while the former's role was usually to rebuke herders for slackness and drinking at work, the latter had a more psychological attitude when receiving these very herders after work in his hut, sharing with them the latest news and a shot or two. I suggest that the mutual dependence of *brigada* and *kontora* people mirrors James Scott's (1976) description of patron-client relations. The communication between the herders and their managers includes elements of both trust and tension.

We should not overestimate the gulf between those working in the office and those working in the tundra, since there are many family relations between the two groups. For example, I got to know an elderly, esteemed brigadier whose sister works in the accounting department. I reckon that from her brother's point of view, her position must be strategically excellent. "It may be added that Accountants' Offices of the former sovkhozes are past masters in mystification of reality. ... There is a long tradition here of creating a world impenetrable to the uninitiated" (Konstantinov 2002: 179). The role of the accountants, like those of other members of the staff, consists not in preventing the herders from informal business but in balancing official and unofficial business in a bureaucratically creative way.[88]

The spirit of collectivity is still alive in the reindeer-herding enterprises of the Komi Republic, but in varying degrees. In an enterprise with a charismatic boss (such as the enterprise Olenevod in Vorkuta) or prize-winning brigadiers (Bol'shaia Inta), the centripetal forces – the feeling of being part of the collective – are comparatively strong. In other cases, such as Ust'-Usinskii, few people seem to be really interested in the advancement of the enterprise as a whole. Rather, the former *sovkhoz* and now "municipal unitary enterprise" Ust'-Usinskii is used mainly for negotiating private transactions and accruing personal profits.[89]

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[88] See Humphrey's meticulous analysis of collective farm book-keeping during the Soviet era and the unintended and intended ways in which the data became distorted (1998: 195-227).

[89] Remarkably, whereas other enterprises had already changed their juridical status from *sovkhoz* to SPK (*sel'skokhoziaistvenno-proizvodstvennyi kooperativ*, agricultural production co-operative) or similar forms, Ust'-Usinskii remained a *sovkhoz* until 1 January 2000;

The comparison of Ust'-Usinskii with the other enterprises also sheds light on the relations between managers and herders in general. Drawing on his fieldwork material from the Kola Peninsula, Sabev (2002: 22-23) described the relation between *kontora* and *brigada* as formal and as one of vertical character, while he saw the relations between brigades (and between herders and other individual actors in the tundra) as informal and horizontal. Sabev's assessment, I propose, accurately describes the situation in enterprises such as Olenevod Vorkuta and Bol'shaia Inta, where the managers maintain a powerful position by tying the brigades together and reinvigorating some sense of collectivity. In doing so, they manage to distinguish themselves from the subordinate employees. In Ust'-Usinskii, managers and herders are so deeply entangled in negotiating with each other at the informal level that their formal and so-called vertical relations should rather be interpreted as a façade.

The erosion of formal leadership in an enterprise like this one may lead to its gradual disintegration. The collective is crumbling under the overwhelming weight of particular interests. Within the *kontora*, a group has attained control over almost all official and informal transactions. I call these people the oligarchs of the *sovkhoz*. We have seen that the sovkhoz comprises two interdependent domains, the *kontora* and the *brigada,* but within the *kontora* an informal circle of people manages to receive the lion's share of the profits. In the exemplary case of Ust'-Usinskii, the oligarchs are more powerful than the director, although they derive their power from their "connections" rather than from personal authority. In contrast, the ideal *sovkhoz* director is thought to combine both qualities (as is explained further in chapter 9). I contend that none of the parties involved (*brigada*, *kontora* and oligarchs) is interested in privatisation because it would mean the demolition of the formal structures upon which informal activities can take place.

6.7 The private and public dimensions of the *sovkhoz*

The former state farm – the *sovkhoz*, as it is still called – has a Janus-faced appearance. On one hand, a *sovkhoz* such as Ust'-Usinskii looks like a shattered enterprise, an apocalyptic story if interpreted along the lines of market economy. On the other hand, beyond this "reality" as perceived by

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thereafter, it was under the auspices of the district administration in Usinsk. In fact, there was no privatisation, but only devolution of responsibility from the republic level to the district level. As a *sovkhoz*, the enterprise received direct subsidies from the state; since 2000, the subsidies come via governmental development programmes and other incentives; see note 15.

Western consultants lies another "reality" that comes to the fore only if we look at personal relations and strategies within the enterprise. The *sovkhoz* provides the formal frame for informal business. These observations fully coincide with Konstantinov's concept of *crypto-entrepreneurship*: "In contrast to '*overt entrepreneurship*', this seeks existential security through social and economic activities in which private concerns operate under the umbrella of collective property and collectivistic ideology in practice" (Konstantinov 2002: 172-173, his emphasis). Various anthropologists have repeatedly discerned this phenomenon in Soviet times. Thus, on the basis of her fieldwork in Buryatia in 1966-1975, Humphrey noted in her thorough analysis of collective farm life and economy: "In other words, the 'private' is not as private as it may seem, nor is the 'public' as public" (1998: 1; see also Yurchak 1997: 165).

Many of the phenomena I have described in this chapter were present throughout the socialist era, as Humphrey vividly illustrates. A key concept she uses is the importance of "manipulable resources" (1998: 9, 195 and *passim*). In a socio-economic order characterised by five-year plans, socialist competition, a rather strict functional hierarchy and civic equality at the same time, manipulable resources could be used to raise one's personal status, express amity and/or display power. Manipulable resources were created through undeclared surplus production, through sorts of products not envisaged by the production plan and in other ways. I think that in the reindeer-herding domain, velvet antlers (*panty*) constitute such a manipulable resource: few enterprises need to mention them in the official accounts, and yet they are a highly profitable business.

But what seems odd here – and deserves closer analysis – is that this resource became prominent in the 1990s, that is, in the postsocialist period. I assume that the internal structures and functions in the revamped collective and state farms have persisted to such an extent that manipulable resources are still useful. The assumption is corroborated by the fact that reindeer herders as well as white-collar workers still use the term *sovkhoz* (or, in other regions, *kolkhoz*) when they speak about their enterprises. This attitude is manifested not only in the European North (e.g. Sabev 2002) but also well beyond, and the literature is ripe with examples from all parts of Russia. The *sovkhoz* is dead – long live the *sovkhoz*.

The authors previously quoted emphasise the dimension of the collective or state farm as "encompassing the whole of a reality of a region" (Humphrey 1998: 4), as a cultural concept or even a world-view, as "not only the most desirable form of livelihood, but indeed the only conceivable, although now seriously shattered, reality" (Konstantinov 2000: 49). Humphrey and others are inclined to describe the *kolkhoz* or *sovkhoz* as a "total

social institution" (Hann 2002: 3; Pine and Bridger 1998: 9). Apparently, the tenacity of the *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz* is rooted partly in pre-Soviet modes of collective rural economy; it is surely highly pertinent to reindeer husbandry, an activity that calls for collective labour to a greater degree than most other forms of agriculture. Little wonder, then, that independent entrepreneurship is inconceivable for most herders, and the more so as it entails setting off for the unknown and hostile realm of red tape and tax offices. A concomitant barrier is the widespread opinion that private entrepreneurs and "traders" (*kommersanty*) are exploiters, if not criminals. Generally, incentives to leave the collective and become a private herder are small – extremely small in the Komi case (but slightly larger in the Nenets case, as I analyse in Appendix 10).

This chapter has provided a range of illustrations of the ways in which resources are allocated and opportunities made use of. White-collar workers and reindeer herders have been presented as different groups with conflicting interests, yet entangled in an economic and social symbiosis. For both groups reindeer husbandry is profitable, but in ways often diverging from what is expected and accepted in the official sphere with its highly normative approach. The assets, however, are distributed unevenly, as the role of the oligarchs in the informal trade has shown. But among the reindeer-herding families, too, assets are distributed unevenly. The next chapter deals with the strategies these families apply in order to make ends meet.

Chapter 7
Households, herders, tent workers

The tundra was the centre stage of chapter 2, while chapter 3 provided an account of the protagonists' life in the village and their connections with town. Similarly, chapter 6 analysed the relations between the two domains, *brigada* and *kontora*, mainly in a tundra setting, whereas chapter 7 now takes the analysis to the village and town again. To express the arrangement of the chapters in terms of domains, chapter 2 describes the domain of the *brigada*, and the *kontora* only comes to visit them. In chapter 3, we first see how the *brigada* people make a living in the village and within the village community, but later we also meet the *kontora* people and witness how the *brigada* people come to visit them. Chapter 6 provides a detailed examination of the interrelations between the two groups, but now we shall temporarily put aside this distinction. The focus is again on the livelihood of reindeer-herding families in the context of the village community and the town. Let me map out this chapter by summarising its main arguments.

Within the rural communities of the north of the Komi Republic, reindeer-herding families are not among the poorest, although many of them live precariously. To illustrate this, I use Alexia Bloch's (1996; cf. her monograph published in 2004) pattern of social stratification. Ownership of private reindeer can give a sizeable extra income. Yet Komi reindeer-herding families also engage in other economic activities and try to diversify their sources of household income, which may be interpreted as a risk-avoidance strategy (Scott 1976) or an economy of survival (Elwert 1985). Successful strategies depend on access to a diversity of resources, which itself calls for extensive social networks and mobility. It is in this sphere that reindeer-herding families can and do exert the greatest degree of agency.

Social networks and spatial mobility go beyond the domain of the village community; they extend into the domain of town. However, here we discern a major predicament: proximity to town has a negative effect on the willingness of young people to work in reindeer husbandry. The question of who wants to work in reindeer husbandry clearly has a gendered dimension:

Komi women generally find tent life less attractive than do Komi men. My explanation of this difference builds upon research on the same phenomenon in other parts of Russia (Kwon 1997; Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001) and leads me to a discussion of differences in the valuation of "civilisation" and "culture", in relation to which women and men take on different social roles. School education implicitly promotes the superiority of village and town life but does little, if anything, to provide children with the knowledge and skills they need in the forest or tundra. Such knowledge and skills are mediated by a different kind of pedagogy, and so I discuss the differences between "school pedagogy" and "tundra pedagogy".

The practice of reindeer herding is taught in a context of kinship (Anderson 2000; Ssorin-Chaikov 1998). Thus, apart from the question of who wants to work in reindeer herding, we also have to address the question of who is able and eligible to do so. The self-esteem of reindeer herders derives from their ability to engage in a flexible way with the animals and the land. Even if kinship is important, the ability to become a reindeer herder is not "in the genes", as some outsiders suppose, and therefore does not depend primarily on ethnicity. Rather, as we shall see at the end of the chapter, one's experience in reindeer herding can provide the precondition for becoming integrated into a specific ethnic group, especially in contrast to groups engaging in other forms of land use.

7.1 Social stratification of reindeer-herding households

For Komi reindeer-herding families, reindeer husbandry constitutes just one among various sources of income, one among several elements of their livelihood. It is the most salient element for them, but as the main product (meat) is not continuously available, the families rely upon other gains, too. They complement herding with other forms of agriculture (cattle breeding), fishing and berry-picking and receive some monetary income by virtue of state pensions and social welfare payments.[90] In the second half of the 1990s such state payments were often more decisive than the state farm's wages, because the former were paid regularly and the latter were not. The average pension in the northern Komi villages added more to the household's wallet than the state farm's occasional *avans*.[91]

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[90] In addition, monetary income from employment in the oil industry has become increasingly important for the inhabitants of Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh over the last years.

[91] The average pension in this region amounted to some 550 roubles per month as of early 1999. *Avans* is a delayed and partial payment of the official wages (see note 84). To the best of my knowledge, in 1998-1999 reindeer herders and tent workers of Ust'-Usinskii never received more than 500 roubles *avans*; usually such payments were between 100 and 300 roubles.

The last chapter ended with the remark that assets are distributed unevenly, not only with regard to *kontora* and *brigada* but also within the *brigada* and within the community of reindeer-herding families. In this section I address the question of social stratification among these families. Referring to the Taimyr Peninsula, Anderson (1995: 274) observed, "In contemporary Russia, as [in] the former Soviet Union, the amount of money that one receives officially does not determine how well a person lives or if a person is able to have access to goods and services". He further argued that "access to transport and to readily exchangeable goods [is] the most meaningful axis of stratification".

Social stratification in indigenous communities in Siberia is also an issue that Bloch (1996: 143-165; cf. 2004: 64-85) dealt with in her study of boarding schools in the Evenki Autonomous Okrug. In what follows I try to adapt Bloch's pattern of social classification to Komi reindeer herders' households.[92] Her typology comprises expansive, funnelling, transitional and marginal households. The four types correspond to rich, well-off, adequate and poor households, as Bloch explains, but to describe them merely in such economic terms was not the point she wanted to make. Rather, Bloch used those terms in order to identify the "types of networks they maintain for coping with the market economy" (1996: 144; cf. 2004: 66-67). Social capital, that is, networks, goes hand in hand with economic capital. Further, in addition to the aspect of social capital, the terminology also relates to spatial mobility.

To illustrate, one indicator Bloch used was the presence or absence of a *buran* (snowmobile), a motorboat or both in the given household. Indeed, in many rural regions of northern Russia, having access to these two means of transport has become a precondition for hunting, fishing and other forms of "working the land". This holds for the north of the Komi Republic, too. A *buran* (or a boat) clearly presents a means of production, a material asset in the hands of a household and a basis for social distinction. The owner may or may not lend it to someone else, depending not only on "rational" considera-

[92] I am aware of the difficulties of differentiating the concept of household from other concepts such as family or economic unit, as discussed, for example, by Humphrey (1998: 291). Here I keep to the definition provided by Stack (1974), quoted by Bloch (1996: 143): "the smallest, organized, durable network of kin and non-kin who interact daily, providing domestic needs of children and assuring their survival". Note that both the tent and the house fulfil these criteria and functions.

tions but also on personal amities or animosities. It is a commodity negotiated in the local social network.[93]

It is appropriate to apply Bloch's typology to Komi reindeer-herding communities (being aware of her caveat: the four types are to be thought of as elastic categories; there are no clear-cut lines between them). There are very few "expansive households" in the northern villages of the Komi Republic. In Novikbozh, the only one that might qualify is the household of Khoziainov, the supervisor of Ust'-Usinskii's reindeer-herding brigades. His position in the *sovkhoz* gives him and his family the potential to expand economically (and to enlarge their house). The number of "expansive households" is slightly larger in Ust'-Usa, and they are mostly to be found among the local shop owners.

None of the reindeer-herding families belongs to the category "expansive households", and even the other oligarchs within the *sovkhoz* – Oleg's family, for instance – would come rather under "funnelling households" than under "expansive" ones. Roughly half of all Komi reindeer-herding households correspond to the category "transitional", and the other half are "marginal". Reindeer-herding families are not the poorest group among the village inhabitants. To be sure, some of them are among the poorest, but as long as at least one family member works in the tundra, the household has access to meat and antlers (*panty*) – in other words, to readily exchangeable goods (Anderson) or manipulable resources (Humphrey).

Bloch's description of the transitional households in the Evenki Autonomous Okrug deserves specific attention. "In contrast to most Tura [the Okrug centre] households, these transitional households maintained at least two bases so as to allow for flexibility and to take advantage of the possibilities in both locations" (1996: 153; cf. 2004: 76). The concept of transitional households makes us aware of a common feature all over the Russian North: families members, whether Evenki, Nenets or Komi, operate and dwell in various locations, sometimes hundreds of kilometres away from each other, in order to have access to different resources and secure their livelihood. Among the Komi reindeer-herding families, as well as other rural inhabitants in the north of the Komi Republic, there is also a tendency to

[93] The helicopter, on the other hand, is a resource so scarce, unpredictable and beyond the control of the reindeer-herding families (and even partly beyond the control of the *sovkhoz*) that people treat it nowadays rather as an opportunity: sometimes it turns up, and at other times it does not. Even if there is some competition between the reindeer-herding brigades over who and whose freight will be taken aboard, the community as a whole has a common and vital interest in these rare events.

extend their ambit to town. In a way, they try to retain and expand their spatial mobility against all the odds of erratic aviation.

To illustrate what I understand as "transitional" and "marginal" households in the context of Komi reindeer herders, I compare two families whom we already know from Brigada N° 10, both living in Novikbozh. The situation of Yelena's family (as of 1999) provides a good example of a "transitional" household (it is described in detail in section 3.1). Zhenia's appointment as a brigadier gives him favourable professional prospects for the next 20 years, by which time he will have reached pension age. Within the brigade his position is now the most influential one, and he must put this authority to use to maintain the social viability of the brigade and to re-enlarge the herd. Van'ko will be able to give him full assistance in about five years, so the future of the family's engagement in reindeer husbandry looks secure. Mishko shows great aptitude for a technical profession, and it is likely that he will find a job as a mechanic or something similar either in Ust'-Usa or in nearby Usinsk. Ania's marriage to a Russian engineer employed in the oil industry certainly has the support of her mother, although it could mean that from now on she will live far from Novikbozh and will be unable to help in the daily maintenance of Yelena's household. Perhaps Yelena's greater concern is the future of her other two daughters; it is not yet clear where they will go. When one of the local shops shut down, Katia became unemployed. Moreover, it is questionable whether Roza will be admitted to university and whether the family will find the financial means necessary for her studies.

Yelena receives visitors almost every day. Apart from her relatives, she has good connections with the family next door, and the two households operate on a basis of reciprocal help and exchange. A pensioner whose private reindeer migrate with the herd of Brigada N° 10 helps Yelena with wood chopping when Zhenia is not in the village. This pensioner also took part in the refurbishment of the house when one of the wooden beams in the foundation had to be replaced. Four men were involved in the refurbishment, two of them relatives and the other two friends of the family. These last two received a small payment for their help. Among the people who occasionally pop around to Yelena's house are Oleg and his wife, Svetlana. It was Yelena who taught Svetlana how to sew fur boots. The good relationship between the two families is certainly not to Yelena's disadvantage. If things need to be done in the district centre, Usinsk, Svetlana and Oleg may help. To conclude, apart from the children's being placed in various occupational positions, Yelena's family has access to additional resources and opportunities through its intensive social networking.

However, Yelena and her family's household budget is always tight. The moderate affluence the family has accomplished is fragile, and should Zhenia for any reason become unable to work as a herder, the whole family would face serious trouble. This almost happened in February 1999, when Zhenia was called up for the army. He was not afraid of joining the army, but it would have meant economic problems for the family. After a long period of suspense, he was finally exempted from military service, thanks to the personal and informal intervention of a distant uncle who works in a leading position in the administration of Usinsk.

The family of Stepan, Liuba and Kostia (see page 33) is in a more precarious situation and clearly represents a "marginal" household. To be sure, Stepan has been a good herdsman, but his health has been quite poor since he had a stroke a few years ago. The fate of the family now depends mainly on Stepan and Liuba's son Kostia, who is the nimblest herder I have ever seen. When Stepan is in the village he occasionally joins a group of fishermen to procure some extra food. The family owns a boat, but the outboard motor is broken, and so is the *buran* (snowmobile). They have fewer "connections" than, for example, Yelena and her children. It is the relatively limited access to resources and the lesser degree of participation in social networks that makes me think of this family as a "marginal" household.

7.2 Spatial mobility, social networks and the notion of "home"

So far we have seen that a family's potential for action depends on its access to resources, and this in turn depends to a large extent on social networks and spatial mobility. Let us now extend our perspective to a domain that earlier may have appeared peripheral to reindeer-herding families: the town. Distance and means of transportation determine how difficult access to town is. The reindeer-herding families of the enterprises Bol'shaia Inta and Olenevod (Vorkuta) are in an exceptional position, inasmuch as their houses are located just a couple of kilometres away from the town centres. For those of Ust'-Usinskii and Fion (Abez'), the district centre is accessible within two hours; the fare in 1999 was approximately 60 roubles for the round trip. Many of the reindeer-herding families of Izhemskii Olenevod, too, are in a comparatively favourable situation and can reach the district centre within a few hours. Those of Severnyi (Mutnyi Materik), Gospromkhoz Intinskii (Petrun') and most enterprises in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug cannot travel to town and back from the village within one day, so they have to find

a place to stay. For them it is highly convenient if one of the family members, usually an adult son or daughter, has a flat in the district centre.[94]

If this is not the case, then a traveller from a reindeer-herding community will rely on more distant relatives or friends in town. Putting one's social network to use during a journey is by no means uncommon in Russia. On the contrary, it seems that among the most dreadful and depressing experiences a Russian citizen can have is a journey to a town where he or she knows no one. Of course social networks exist everywhere, not only in Russia – what I want to point out is that the mechanisms employed in social networks differ in various countries and communities. Peculiar to the former Soviet Union is the fact that such networks can extend over thousands of kilometres. Considering that reindeer-herding families correspond to what in the West constitutes the working class, we can discern an exceptionally high degree of spatial mobility that in British, French or German society is matched only by families of migrant workers and immigrants who retain their contacts in their home communities.

Working and living in a place far away from the rest of the family is a common element in the biographies of reindeer herders and migrant workers in various parts of the world. And in both cases the worker usually lives in contact, or together, with other people from the home region. Yet there is a significant difference between migrant workers (see Fortier 2000: 157-165) and Komi reindeer herders in their perceptions of home and homeland. For Komi herders, the notion of "home" is not confined to the house in the village. When the herders that I stayed with spoke about travelling to Novikbozh or Ust'-Usa, they did not say, "I am going home" (*me muna gortam*), but, "I am going to the village" (*me muna völös'tö*).[95]

In chapter 2 I pictured the tent and the stove within it as the centre of the herders' and tent workers' life-world. Chapter 3 and the present chapter show that the house in the village might equally well represent the centre of

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[94] Comparing Nenets with Komi reindeer herders' strategies in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Skvirskaia discerned different patterns of familial strategies. The Komi had a preference for their children to be placed in town, whereas for the Nenets the underlying rationale was that "the tundra cannot feed all our children; some of them should stay in the village" (Vera Skvirskaia, University of Cambridge, personal communication, 25 October 2001).

[95] The Komi word *völös't,* which is here translated as "village", is derived from the Russian word *volost'*. This term denoted the administrative unit on the lowest level in czarist Russia. It could also refer to the centre of this unit (usually a village). Although this administrative level ceased to exist in Soviet times, the second meaning ("village" or "centre") still exists in the Komi language. My conclusion – it may be far-fetched – is that the herders perceive the village as the most important fixed point of reference on their migration route (see page 35-36).

it. Perhaps we should say that the village house represents the centre of a different and yet equivalent life-world.[96] The tent is certainly perceived as something more than just a seasonal work space; by the same token, the house is perceived as something more than just a place where the herdsman can relax from January to April. However, as we shall see later in this chapter, the two spheres are perceived differently by the different genders and by different individuals.

7.3 Social relations in the tundra versus the village

There are also differences between the perceptions of the tent community by those who work there and those who work in the office of the reindeer-herding enterprise. Istomin observed that the word "brigade" (*brigada*) denotes the formal composition of the herding unit as it appears on the payroll of the enterprise. The herders, tent workers and their family members usually use the Komi word for "tent", *chom* (and, derived from it, the Russian term *chum*), when they speak about those living and working in the tent. However, *chom* comprises more persons than does *brigada*: it describes "the group eligible to live there and to have their share in the group's common income" (Istomin 2000: 58). Thus, school children who join the herders during the summer holiday and pensioners who own some animals within the herd also belong to the *chom.* When members of one brigade speak about another brigade, they prefer the word *chom* to *brigada*. The latter term appears in the printed *sovkhoz* statistics and all official paperwork.

Of course the managers of the reindeer-herding enterprise are aware of the necessity of having brigades that function well in a social sense (and it is Khoziainov's job to look into this as much as he can). As the management has little or no control over the brigades for most of the year, group responsibility within the brigade replaces constant surveillance:

> Officially, every man applying to the sovkhoz can become a member of a brigade. However, the administration of the enterprise has to admit, that in the existing conditions, when the members of the brigade should work and live together for a long time, the problem of trust and psychological reciprocity is of crucial importance. Therefore, the members of a brigade, and especially its head, have the right of final decision about the acceptance of each new member (Istomin 2000: 60).

[96] In a similar vein, Chabot (2003: 14) speaks about Nunavik Inuit villages and outpost camps as "two social universes", although Inuit families exist and operate in both of them.

As Istomin has pointed out, the classic case of the *chom*'s social composition is represented by the head of the brigade and his wife and sons on one side of the tent and a younger relative of the brigadier, possibly his younger brother or cousin, with his family members on the other side. "The heads of the families can easily find consensus in the important topic of group life, even more so, because they are relatives and the younger accepts the authority of the older" (Istomin 2000: 65).

Unfortunately, this does not preclude major quarrels, even in brigades that, judging from their social and kinship structure, theoretically provide the optimal preconditions for peaceful co-existence. The social structure of the core of Brigada N° 9 mirrors the classic case – and yet the two sides of the *chom* went through a problematic period some years ago, owing to the fact that Polina had been the first lady in the tent for several years but was then superseded by Tania.

As I have mentioned, the people of the right-hand side of Brigada N° 9 and those of the left-hand side seldom meet each other when they are in the villages. It might be merely because the former live in Ust'-Usa and the latter in Novikbozh, although it takes no real effort to get from one place to the other. Vasilii and his family have more contact with their relatives who work in Brigada N° 10: these kinship ties seem more important for them. What can be learnt from this example is that social relations in the tundra are different from those in the village; people reconfigure them when they switch between the tundra and the village.

A Komi reindeer-herding family has at least two household "bases", one in the village and one in the tent. The tent always covers two households,[97] which comprise members of at least two families. The social structure of the *chom* is defined by some rather rigid principles and, nevertheless, a high degree of flexibility: the actual presence of those who are eligible to be in the tent depends on the workload (summer versus winter), absence of other duties (school, army, etc.), transportation (ill luck with helicopters) and personal predilections (as illustrated by the Khatanzeiskii children).

On one hand, the tent community can be understood as a work unit: the two families are obliged to send some members to the tundra, not only on the grounds of the contract with the *sovkhoz* but also because one-half of the tent cannot exist on its own. Privacy inside the tent is quite restricted. On the

[97] As Istomin (2000: 66) was told by one of the herders of the enterprise Izhemskii Olenevod: "*Chomys öd kyk böka. Koimöd böktö nekytchö on s'uy*" ("A tent has two sides. A third side you cannot squeeze in anywhere"). The principle that each side functions as a single household is exemplified by the herders' and tent workers' amazement about Izhma Fed', who does not abide by this rule, always uses his own dishes, pot and kettle and consumes only the meat of his own deer.

other hand, the tent community goes beyond the function of a work unit. Living in the *chom* is not all about work. For most of the inmates, it is a habit – or, as it is often asserted, a way of life (*obraz zhizni*). It entails a long-term symbiosis of a number of individuals, with comparatively few contacts with other people. If people who have reached pension age nonetheless long for the tundra ("*tianet v tundru*"), then it is because of the relative freedom, the regularity and yet impressiveness of this life-world.

7.4 Types of resources and the "economy of survival"

The annual cycle of life and work in the tundra is complemented by the annual cycle of life and work in and around the village. The reason these annual cycles manifest themselves so clearly in the everyday lives of the families in Novikbozh (and elsewhere in the north of the Komi Republic) is that the villagers are occupied in activities highly dependent on renewable natural resources. In order to have access to resources such as potatoes, hay, milk, meat, fish and berries, every reindeer-herding family must decide how to "dispatch" its members in the various seasons. Other family members work in occupations yielding monetary income, such as working in the village shop, the post office, the school or the oil company. The payment, though, is not necessarily given in money but sometimes in kind: companies pay their employees in products. Pensions and other subsidies add to the monetary income.

All these material and monetary resources can be subsumed under economic capital. Additional resources are acquired in informal ways, through the place of work or other social networks or, to use the common term in Russia, through *blat* ("connections"; see Ledeneva 1998). Such resources can be both material and non-material: the wood from abandoned oil wells, the metal rope that one has "obtained" (*dostal*) at the *sovkhoz* garage, the friends who help to refurbish the house. Access to such additional resources is conditional on social capital (see Lampland 2002: 35-36).

We can also look at the Komi reindeer-herding family's livelihood from a slightly different angle: from the perspective of sectors of production rather than types of resources. In line with Elwert's "economies of survival" (1985), it can be stated that for the Komi, the sector of non-wage production (or "subsistence production") is closely and necessarily intertwined with the sector of wage production (or production of commodities). If the wage sector can no longer guarantee a stable livelihood – and this is exactly what happened in most parts of Russia in the 1990s – then the non-wage sector gains importance. For a Komi reindeer-herding family, reindeer husbandry fulfils the function of both non-wage and wage production. Activities such as haymaking and fishing are closer to subsistence production, whereas employ-

ment at school, at the local shop and so forth can be called wage production. Elwert implies that the distinction between the formal and the informal sector has little to do with that between wage and non-wage production (1985: 76, 79). From my point of view, what keeps the non-wage and wage economies together in Russia's everyday life is exactly the informality of economic relations that can be found behind the formal façade of an enterprise such as the former *sovkhoz* (see section 6.7: Konstantinov's crypto-entrepreneurship). And this very informality of economic relations is probably rooted in, or even tantamount to, a specific understanding of "private" and "public", which itself represents a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Humphrey 1998: 1).

7.5 Who wants to work in reindeer husbandry?

The "survival" of a Komi reindeer-herding family rests on various persons tapping various resources. Komi reindeer-herding families generally try to position family members in different occupational spheres and social networks. In doing so, they seek to gain access to as many resources as possible, to diversify their livelihood and make it flexible and adaptive to changing economic conditions. The question, then, is this: Of the various members of a family, who is willing and able to work as a herdsman or tent worker? And are there any limitations on their number?

7.5.1 How many people are required in the tundra?

The number of official job appointments in the reindeer industry does not necessarily coincide with the actual number of people working and living together in the tent. In one enterprise, Fion, reindeer-herding families lamented the management's intention to cut down on jobs, implying that people do want to work in the tundra but that the enterprise offers too few jobs. For a reindeer-herding enterprise, the ratio between employees and head of reindeer has a direct effect on the budget. According to a guideline issued by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic, the ratio should be 350 deer per herdsman. The recommended herd size is 1,200 in the forest zone and 2,000 in the tundra zone. Consequently, a brigade should consist of six men and two women.

Brigada N° 9 does not resemble such a standard brigade. In spring 1999 there were four "real" herders, three herders with insufficient work experience and three tent workers – all this work force for slightly more than 1,000 collective animals. Yet there was enough work to keep everybody busy: apart from the collective animals, there were also some 500 private ones. How should a reindeer-herding enterprise act in this situation? How

many herdsmen and tent workers should it employ if, for instance, the herd consists of equal numbers of private and collective deer?

There are indications that people who have lost their jobs stay in the tundra anyway. This relates not only to pensioners. I know of one case in which a herdsman who was sacked by his enterprise is still working and living with his brothers, who are employed by the enterprise. Notably, this brigade has a very large number of private deer. The mother of the brigadier told me in an interview: "Now that people do hardly receive any money ..., more than once we suggested to them to come to the tundra and breed reindeer. But so far nobody has decided to do so" (FM 58). In my interpretation, this brigade, with more than 1,200 private reindeer, needs some extra members of the work force that the enterprise would not be willing to provide.

On the basis of these examples, it is possible to discern a first bundle of factors that determine how many people are actually required in reindeer husbandry. These factors are the social composition of the brigades (or *chom*), the ratio between herders and animals, the overall head of reindeer in the region, the percentage of private deer and the number of jobs provided by the reindeer-herding enterprises.

The first two factors can be seen as the outcomes of long-term development. Istomin (2000: 61) has shown that the average size of a brigade (six to eight herders and preferably two tent workers) is grounded in the pre-revolutionary practice of herding. One family could not provide a sufficient number of herdsmen for the typical herd size of 2,500 or more deer, but two families could well do so. This also explains the division of the tent into two halves. Regarding social composition, transformations have been going on, and I show later that more transformations may be expected. The herders-to-animals ratio is a rather stable factor, it seems to me, because the basic herding techniques have not significantly changed. The third factor, however – the overall head of reindeer – fluctuates considerably. In the north of the Komi Republic, its general tendency has been slightly recessive, but nonetheless, in comparison with other regions in the north of the Russian Federation, the Komi Republic fares quite well (Jernsletten and Klokov 2002). The overall head of reindeer does not immediately have a bearing on the number of herdsmen and tent workers. Only if there is a clear tendency over a longer period will the number of employees increase or decrease. Even so, there is a ceiling to the overall head of reindeer: carrying capacity. According to L. V. Bezumov, the expert in the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic, existing pasture reserves are being used almost to their full extent; only the herders of Ust'-Usinskii could significantly enlarge their herds (FM 128).[98]

[98] The last assessment of pasture resources was made around 1960. Nowadays, many pasture areas have been taken over by the oil industry (chapter 5) or abandoned by the herders for

The percentage of private deer – the fourth factor – is steadily rising. In chapter 6 I showed that both reindeer-herding families and *kontora* members try to gain additional, "private" profits through their work for the enterprise. Particularly for the reindeer-herding families, a major resource in this endeavour is the stock of private reindeer. But the proportion of private deer cannot be pushed up to 100 per cent without structural change in the enterprise. The fewer resources the enterprise has, the less it can provide a platform for crypto-entrepreneurship. Moreover, it will be obliged to lower wages and/or to get rid of employees (this is the fifth factor). An enterprise such as Ust'-Usinskii already operates on the brink of collapse. If the head of public reindeer diminishes even more, the administration may look at ways of abandoning the enterprise altogether.

7.5.2 How profitable is work in reindeer husbandry?

Generally, people are willing to work in reindeer husbandry only if it is profitable. Again, there is a bundle of important criteria, first and foremost the value of the product. Meat prices are mentioned in Appendix 9, but just to give the general picture, let me quote the experts' assertion that reindeer husbandry is the most productive agricultural sector in the north of the Komi Republic (Nosova 1997). The main product, meat, is sold mainly on the regional market. Recollecting the dual importance of meat output as both market production and subsistence production, the value of reindeer meat cannot be determined exclusively in monetary terms. It is also a resource that may be exchanged among kin and friends and used to accrue social rather than economic capital. In this sense, meat can be described as a manipulable resource, as can antlers (*panty*), yet there is a fine difference between the two. Reindeer-herding families use meat in acts of exchange within the village community, but they would not similarly use *panty*. The realm of *panty* is one of market-oriented production and has little to do with subsistence or social capital. A further peculiarity of *panty* consists of the fluctuation of their price. From the point of view of an "economy of survival", *panty* are a less reliable source of revenue. First and foremost, it is meat that provides for risk avoidance (Scott 1976: 48), for a secure environment (Sabev 2002: 21) and for participation in social networks, the last of which is conditional on the institutions of exchange and sharing (Chabot 2003: 11-12).

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other reasons (section 4.5). Furthermore, the methods of assessing pasture quality have changed. The ministry has been envisaging a new assessment, but as of 1999 there has been no money for such measures.

It is not impossible, though, to estimate a family's income from private reindeer. According to several interviews that Istomin conducted with members of reindeer-herding families in Inta in early 2003, every private deer (not considering calves) gives about 2,000 roubles a year from the sale of meat, antlers, and hides for processing into clothes and footwear.[99] If a family owns some 30 private reindeer, it may expect to gain an annual income of about 60,000 roubles, which is already equivalent to the official average income of Inta inhabitants (again, as of early 2003). Such calculations speak also to the general assessment that reindeer-herding families are not among the poorest households in their community. And unlike the situation in the Kola Peninsula as analysed by Sabev (2002: 25), there is a certain market for products from reindeer husbandry in the north of the Komi Republic. Considering the additional income from private animals, one wonders why every family in the northern Komi villages does not have its own reindeer.

In terms of the "economy of survival", the question is how many members of the household should work in reindeer husbandry: after all, someone has to stay in the village. The Khatanzeiskii families, like almost every other reindeer-herding family I met during my fieldwork, each have at least one family member to look after their house, private plot and other belongings while the others are in the tundra. Usually these families have four or more children, so in theory it is not too difficult to allocate family members to the two parts of the household. The call for a diversified household income must be seen in connection with job opportunities outside reindeer husbandry. Such job opportunities, in turn, depend on the economic structure and development of the given region. The town provides for job diversity. Reindeer-herding families in Vorkuta, Inta, Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh put to use the advantage of being close to the district centre.

However – and this is a major peripety of the story – as soon as a reindeer-herding village becomes connected with other places by an all-year road or railway and travel time to the district centre diminishes to less than two hours, the reindeer-herding enterprise begins to face a serious problem: young people will look for work outside the village. This has become a problem particularly for Ust'-Usinskii, as I was told by Sharikov, the zootechnician: almost none of the young people in Ust'-Usa shows any interest in reindeer herding. In contrast, the neighbouring enterprise Severnyi seems to have no problem with recruiting young herdsmen. This may be partly because of its better economic performance as a reindeer-herding enterprise, but also because it takes at least a whole day to travel from the central vil-

[99] Kirill Istomin, personal communication, Syktyvkar, 16 March 2003.

lage of Severnyi, Mutnyi Materik, to Usinsk, the district centre, unless the trip is made by helicopter. The deputy director of Severnyi mentioned that comparatively few able-bodied persons emigrated from the village to town and explicitly related this observation to the transport situation (FM 132).

Consequently, it seems that reindeer husbandry loses much of its attraction if other job opportunities are available, and it certainly does if those other jobs are more profitable. This is why the advent and expansion of the oil industry is so salient: it is absorbing human resources not only from reindeer husbandry but also from all other agricultural branches and from forestry, fishery, transportation and mining.[100]

7.5.3 Women

Reindeer-herding communities are concerned about the shortage of women who want to work in the tundra. This is a problem common to the whole region and addressed by the managers in the enterprises as well as by the reindeer-herding families. Therefore, the question of who wants to work in reindeer husbandry must be answered differently for each gender. Life in the tundra is apparently more attractive for men than for women. Over the last decades, bachelorhood has become a topical issue in reindeer husbandry, not only in the north of European Russia but also all over Siberia and the Far East (Kwon 1997; Rethmann 2001; Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001).

That young women have become so reluctant to live and work in the tundra could be explained in the same way as it has been by researchers who work in regions other than the Komi Republic. That is, the Soviet project of abandoning "nomadism as a way of life" (*bytovoe kochevanie*) in favour of "nomadism as a way of production" (*proizvodstvennoe kochevanie*) has led to a new pattern of gendered space. Since the late 1950s almost all women live and work in the village, while the men "out there in the wilderness" live a life of "enforced celibacy" (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001: 86).

However, I argued earlier that the Komi way of reindeer husbandry was the very one that served as a blueprint for "Soviet" reindeer husbandry. To have some members of the family working in reindeer husbandry and others working in and around the village was nothing new for Komi reindeer-herding families. In this aspect, the history of Komi reindeer husbandry differs considerably from that of the Nenets and other "small-numbered peoples". Thus, although the explanation given above holds for the other reindeer-herding peoples of Russia, it is not satisfying in the Komi case.

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[100] I came to this conclusion on the basis of the results of my fieldwork for the SPICE Project in early 2002 (cf. Kuhry and Soppela 2000).

Even though Komi reindeer-herding families were less affected by sedentarisation programmes and resettlement actions than other reindeer-herding peoples, they nonetheless acquired certain notions of "culture" and "civilisation" through Soviet education, like representatives of all other nationalities in Russia. This leads me back to the symbolic function of school and other "cultural" institutions as described in section 3.2 – to promote the values of culture and civilisation that are rooted in Soviet tenets of modernisation and beaux arts. The reindeer herders' tent is at the bottom of the scale of "culturedness". As Vitebsky and Wolfe put it: "There is a scale from wild, or uncouth, to civilized. ... This scale is mapped out across the face of the earth, along a continuum from wilderness, through the village, the various provincial towns and the city" (2001: 90; cf. Rethmann 2001: 111-112, 134). As in the Soviet past, the sphere of "culture" is occupied mainly by women: they dominate the collectives of teachers at school, the staff of the "Houses of Culture" and the local libraries.[101] It has been argued that women either choose to utilise this gender role in order to raise their social status and that of their children (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001: 90) or at least try to accommodate to this gender role and the expectations ensuing from it (see Bloch 1996, 2004). Kwon reports that in the Sakhalin settlement where he carried out his fieldwork, the *Dom kul'tury* was being used by the reindeer herders' women to find shelter at times when their men, the herders, turned up in the settlement after a long period of absence and got totally drunk (1997: 149). In this example, the sphere of "culture" serves as a stronghold against the "unculturedness" that comes to visit from the forest.

More than once, Irina and her cousins Ania, Roza and Katia made it clear that none of them had any interest in becoming a tent worker, even though they descended from reindeer-herding families. After she had arrived for her summer holidays at the camp, I asked Irina: "Are you glad to be here in the tent?" She replied: "Well, it's nice the first three or four days. Then it gets boring. Always the same, you know". She spent a good deal of time every morning and evening renewing her make-up, a new feature in the everyday life of the *brigada*, and Tonia, her best friend, began to take part in this. With Irina, a spirit of culturedness arrived at the tent. (The immediate effect on me was that I started to shave again.) What she has in mind when

[101] Women also work in intermediate positions in the local economy and administration: as shop assistants, as *sovkhoz* bookkeepers, in the village council, etc. In this respect, villages such as Novikbozh and Ust'-Usa fully support the thesis "that though many administrative posts ... are held by women, especially in what we have called the professionalized or collectivized caring roles ..., nonetheless the key posts involving political or fiscal control are held largely ... by men" (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001: 91).

thinking about her own future hardly matches the practice of living in the tundra: she wants to leave the village and find a better life in town.

Ania has already made this step: being married to a Russian, she is now considering moving to a town in the central part of the Komi Republic. For women like Irina, Ania, Roza and Katia, escape from the village is a strategy that can be interpreted in terms of the "economy of survival", as an attempt at social mobility. Again, this endeavour pertains not only to Komi women; it is typical for many remote parts of the Russian North. Speaking about marriages between Even women and Sakha or Russian men, Vitebsky and Wolfe noted that "[t]hese women are advancing themselves and the prospects of their children" (2001: 92). And when Evenki men on Sakhalin complain that "our girls go wild" (Kwon 1997: 153-158), they express their concern about Evenki women's preference for Russians, Ukrainians and other "outsiders" as marriage partners. From an Evenki woman's perspective, such a marriage may be rooted in the desire "to live a cultured life".

From a slightly different angle, we may propose with Pine (2002) that in socialist societies women sought to attain individual autonomy through their employment in the public sector, as opposed to the domestic and agricultural sphere, where they were more likely to be socially invisible. Drawing on her research in Poland, Pine wrote that "[t]he reciprocal obligations of kinship might provide the moral core of relatedness, but they are also the ties that bind. In their work relations and activities in the state sector women were able to realize a kind of individual value that transcended, without excluding, the prescriptions of kinship and gender located in the domestic domain" (2002: 103). To start or resume working in agriculture was like "being pushed back into what seemed to them to be the past" (Pine 2002: 100). This notion of backwardness is one of the central concerns of chapter 8.

There is one more slant to the unwillingness of young women to take up a job in the reindeer-herding brigade. It is the gendered space in and around the tent (section 2.1). "To a considerable extent this sense of a concentric gendered space around the tent still holds – except that there are hardly any women at the centre to do the women's job" (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001: 84). So far, the situation in the Komi reindeer-herding brigades is not as problematic as in the brigades in eastern Siberia, but a tendency towards men-only brigades can also be discerned in the north of European Russia. In the brigades that I stayed with, the temporary lack of tent workers was compensated for by recruiting young men (less experienced herders) for household work. However, these lads were not too happy to stay in the tent – their prime interest was to work "out there". Considering that the women in Brigada Nº 9 complained, "We too would like to drive around like the men",

the task of tent-keeping seems unattractive for both sexes. Life in the tundra is hard for women as well as for men, but only the men have a chance to roam around and enjoy the "freedom" and the "romance" of it. For the women, "freedom" and "romance" are spatially limited.

This idea is expressed not only in the academic literature but also by some of the Komi villagers I interviewed. A male villager said, "For the men, it is a kind of romance [*romantika*], while the women are busy with the more boring part of the work" (FM 63). In most cases, however, the informants connected the unwillingness of women to work and live in the tent with the recent deterioration of supplies and amenities. One might suppose that these shortcomings affect men as well as women, and there is certainly much to this argument. Yet in the implicit interpretation of many interviewees, women suffer more from this kind of hardship. Again, this thought sheds light on gender roles and the concept of "culture": the tent as an inherently "uncultured" place is becoming even more "uncultured" through the lack of amenities, and therefore an environment unsuitable for the "fair sex" (*nezhnyi pol*). Men are considered to be "tough" and to adapt more easily to the hard conditions of tundra life.

7.5.4 Men

When looking at the willingness of young men to work as reindeer herders, a good starting point is the statement that herders do their work "partly because someone still has to, partly because some of them like the sense of freedom, and partly because they do not have anywhere else to go" (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001: 82). These three "rationales" often coincide. This is illustrated by the personal situations of the young herdsmen in Brigades N° 9 and 10. Zhenia, as the inheritor of his father's reindeer, has to do the herding work; he is the main "breadwinner" (*kormilets*) of his family. He certainly enjoys the freedom of tundra life. His younger brother Van'ko no doubt will also become a reindeer herder, and everybody in the family expects him to do so. His strong aversion to school is both an indication of his choice and a limiting factor should he ever change his mind. Sasha's case looks similar: considering his illiteracy and officially acknowledged invalidity, the most useful support he can provide to his family is to help out in the tundra, where he likes to be anyway. Lesha also had difficulty finding a job in his native village south of Ust'-Usa, so his parents decided to let him work with his distant relatives and to resume the family's engagement in reindeer husbandry (his grandfather had worked in the tent, but his parents never did).

It has often been argued that reindeer herders have a low level of school education – a statement I wish to scrutinise here. On one hand, the degree of school education has supposedly been higher among Komi rein-

deer herders than among herdsmen of other nationalities (Istomin 2000: 51). On the other hand, I met many younger herders who did not finish high school (*sredniaia shkola*), which means they left school before the end of the eighth class. Considering the biographies of Sasha and Lesha, one may conclude that reindeer herding is an occupational option in particular for boys who, in educational terms, "do not have anywhere else to go". As a village teacher stated: "In reindeer husbandry you find people who did not excel at school. Once they have finished their army service, they hang out in the village for a while, but finally they have no other choice than to go to the tundra" (FM 21).

If it is sometimes said that learning difficulties are the cause and taking up a job as herdsman is the result, others reverse this statement, saying that the child's belonging to a reindeer-herding family is the cause and poor performance at school the result – not always, of course, but more often than not. When I asked a teacher in Ust'-Usa how to explain this phenomenon, she made four suggestions: most brigades have neither television nor radio; the parents are not very talkative with their children; children who grow up in the tundra have difficulty getting used to village life; and finally, as Komi is the predominant language in the tent, these children have a weak command of Russian and are shy in the presence of their village fellow pupils who speak Russian much better. Children of reindeer-herding families have serious problems in the first class, but later they usually do better (FM 83).[102]

To make my point clear, I must dwell for a moment on "school" pedagogy. It is true that the level of education in Russia was high, and it still is, perhaps higher than in most western European countries. It is also true that since about 1990 the curricula in schools in Komi and all over Russia have put greater emphasis than before on regional history and the "traditional" ways of life of the local ethnic population (Fryer 1999, cf. Fondahl 1998: 124-125). I discuss this in chapter 8. However, school education in the Komi Republic and other regions of Russia is still overcommitted to *kul'tura* in the sense of "high culture" and the Soviet version of the modernisation project. While I attended and assisted in a lesson in German at a local school, I marvelled at the teacher's attempts to make the boys and girls, aged around

[102] However, as most reindeer-herding families have their houses in Novikbozh and only a few of them live in Ust'-Usa, the majority of these children attend elementary school in Novikbozh. In Ust'-Usa children mostly talk to each other in Russian, whereas in Novikbozh they speak Russian during the lessons and the local Komi vernacular in the schoolyard. In the elementary and high schools, there are lessons in the Komi language and literature, and children are urged to use the literary Komi language.

14, say the sentence "Unsere Republik Komi ist eine entwickelte Industrierepublik im Bestand der Russischen Föderation" ("Our Republic of Komi is an industrially developed republic within the structure of the Russian Federation"). None of the pupils could say anything in German about bears or cows, rivers or forests, snowmobiles or ice fishing, although these were central elements in their everyday conversation.

Those few things in the school at Ust'-Usa that represent life in the tundra are stored behind glass – they have no practical use, either for Van'ko or for any other pupil. When children like Van'ko challenge or even undermine the central tenets of school, notably *kul'tura* and *tsivilizatsiia*, it is because Van'ko can hardly expect anything from school for his future career as a herdsman. What he seeks is not school pedagogy but a kind of knowledge and experience that he gains in the tent (cf. Willis 2000 [1977]: 56). As long as reindeer husbandry is associated with the notions of "uncouth" and "uncivilised", boys gifted to work in the forest or tundra will continue to show "poor performance" at school, while the girls will continue to find themselves unintentionally in a more advantageous position. As representatives of the "fair sex", they are deemed more susceptible to the project of enculturation, civilisation and modernisation (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001: 83-84).

To put it starkly, the existing gender roles in the village are implicitly perpetuated by school education (although not only by school education). These gender roles, in connection with the division of labour between the genders in reindeer husbandry and the gendered aspects of "romance", make life in the tundra unattractive for women – at least more unattractive for women than for men. From there it is but a small step to the concern expressed everywhere that there is a shortage of tent workers and that young herdsmen have difficulty finding wives.

It is often argued that in their frustration over their enforced bachelorhood, many young herders are prone to hit the bottle. Of course this behaviour reduces the chance of finding a marriage partner even further, but I think there is more to it than this. It seems that the absence of a tent worker removes from the brigade a certain kind of social control. If a reindeer herder enjoys the "freedom" of the tundra and is anyway perceived as uncouth by his fellow villagers, why should he not also indulge in the freedom of drinking whenever and wherever possible? One of my interviewees, a pensioner, came up with the ironical remark: "That the herdsmen do not want to marry is already a quite old story, it has been like that for more than thirty years. They don't need a wife. Their wife is the bottle [*Im nikakaia zhena ne nuzhna. Ikh zhena – butylka*]" (FM 26). Similarly, Kwon quoted an informant on the island of Sakhalin who complained about the intention of

young men to become reindeer herders. Their ultimate reason for going into reindeer herding was that there "they can fool around freely" (Kwon 1997: 148).

The "sense of freedom" may sometimes be interpreted as the unwillingness of a young man to put up with the social role and responsibilities expected by the village community. In other words, some of the men may become reindeer herders because they do not want to marry or because they see themselves as ineligible for marriage owing to a personal fate perceived as tragic. Sasha's illiteracy and invalidity make him think he is one of these "losers". He has no reason to stay in the village, as he explained himself, and there is always enough meat in the tundra. I have also met a few herdsmen who resorted both physically and mentally to the tundra after divorce. Izhma Fed' came to the tundra after some worrying experience which he has been trying to forget. One may muse on the idea of the tundra as a domain of escape from ideology and ideological norms. Yurchak (1997: 185) suggested that in Soviet society certain jobs, such as that of watchman or street sweeper, minimised involvement in the official sphere. In that sense the tundra can be imagined as a place almost devoid of ideology. Put briefly, the tundra may provide an escape for men who want to abandon their community and social network. But only in some cases, because a brigade will not simply accept any misfit as a member. Nor will the management of the enterprise give its approval. In the next section we shall see that the ranks of those actually entitled to live and work in the tundra are quite small.

7.6 Who is capable of and entitled to work in reindeer husbandry?

Lesha's difficulty in being accepted as a "real" herdsman by the rest of the brigade points to the issue of genealogy amongst reindeer herders and the continuity apparently necessary for the mediation of skills and knowledge. Even though his parents may have believed that for Lesha the future lay in reindeer herding, his tentmates did not think so straight away. The link to reindeer husbandry is through his grandfather only, not through his parents. More than once I heard people say, "Only those whose parents are working in reindeer husbandry can become reindeer herders themselves". There are exceptions to this rule, as we shall see, but what I grasp from this statement is that people who as children spent considerable time with their relatives in the tent have better preconditions for working as herdsmen or tent workers than those who did not have this experience early in life. Learning the skills that a herder or tent worker needs takes many years and becomes easier if the process starts in childhood. This is what Zhenia meant when he told me that "five or even ten years of life in the tundra are necessary to understand what it really means to be a herdsman".

"To understand what it really means to be a herdsman" is that exclusive property of experience, of knowing the tundra. Understanding the tundra and being able to interact with the animals and the land is the very essence of the reindeer herders' professional ethos. The Komi have a word for this. More than once I observed that a "real" reindeer herder – "somebody who knows the tundra" – was called *yaran* by the Komi villagers. Recall that *yaran* was also the nickname Oleg proudly took after a long period of working as a reindeer veterinarian in the tundra. At the same time, *yaran* is the Komi word for Nenets. The conspicuous inference is that for the Komi, the most experienced reindeer herders are Nenets. We have seen that the Komi learnt reindeer herding from the Nenets but then improved it and transformed it into a market-oriented business, as Komi themselves like to point out. While the Komi imply their superiority in terms of the reindeer business, they also imply the superiority of the Nenets in the actual practice of herding. To put it starkly, the Komi perceive their role in reindeer husbandry as "modern" and the role of the Nenets as "traditional". Even if this interpretation is somewhat exaggerated, the double meaning of the word *yaran* has several consequences for the analysis of self-perception and the discourse about "tradition" (chapter 8).

For a moment, let us dwell on the notion of understanding, learning and knowing. The opposite of *yaran* is *yando.* People use this word to signify a man who has not (yet) really understood. In the Komi-Russian dictionary it is translated as "novice at reindeer husbandry" (*novichok v olenevodstve*). However, in the Komi language the word appears to be etymologically related to *yan* ("[personal] shortcoming, sin"), *yandzim* ("shame"), or *yanavny* ("to disgrace oneself", "to be embarrassed", "to be confused").[103] Reindeer herders always use *yando* as a sort of admonition or malicious remark. Being a *yando* has nothing to do with age: when I heard this expression for the first time it related to an elderly man who had been officially employed as a herdsman for many years but had so little experience with herding that he actually served as a tent worker (*chum-rabotnik*).

My personal translation for *yando* is therefore "greenhorn". Lesha was frequently called a greenhorn. The situation I remember best is when he had to tie up a sledge with felled trees on top of it. Depending on the type of sledge and the material stored on it, there are various ways of doing this. Poor Lesha had already learnt one of them, only to realise that different

[103] Beznosikova, Aibabina and Kosnyreva 2000: 783. An initial etymology from Nenets rather than Komi is possible but does not have the same meaning, nor does it evoke the connotations listed here; see Lehtisalo 1956: 99. I am grateful to Tapani Salminen, Helsinki, for several personal communications about the Nenets language.

conditions call for different solutions. Lyzhasa Andrei showed and told him how to do it correctly.

There is a specific kind of pedagogy in reindeer husbandry. I call it "tundra pedagogy", as opposed to "school pedagogy" and in allusion to Anderson's "Evenki pedagogy" (2000: 33-37; cf. Ingold 2000: 37, 147; Kwon 1997: 147-148; Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 240-247). Learning is a process of close observation and gathering practical experience. Many lessons cannot be expressed in words, because skills are mediated through repetition. It does not make sense to put such knowledge down on paper, because it is highly dependent on the given situation. Anderson (2000: 35) notes that

> in an unpredictable Arctic environment, the most dangerous attribute that one can develop is the arrogance that there is a single authoritative answer to a given problem. Thus, the Evenki pedagogy is designed to develop a cautious self-reliance. The ceaseless insults that elders heap upon the young encourage humility, a knack for understanding through empathy, and an eye for the subtleties of context. In this manner, each person discovers his own method of thinking through a problem instead of mimicking a procedure by rote.

Kinship is highly important in this mode of pedagogy. Without going into detail, my observation is that the social relation between uncle and nephew is more conducive to this kind of learning than the social relation between father and son. Although this is a very tentative hypothesis, I see some evidence in Anderson's remark that skills are "taught by older kin to younger kinsmen (most often uncles to nephews)" (2000: 26-27). The relationship between apprentice and teacher should by any means be one of kinship (Kwon 1997: 147; Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 238), even if "constructed" or "actualised" via various kin twice or thrice removed or perhaps altogether fictional. Zhen'ko addresses Vasilii as "Uncle Vasia" (*Diadia Vasia*), although he would have difficulty telling how he is related to the tent senior.

Social networks in the villages extend beyond kinship, but in order to become involved in reindeer husbandry, kinship is an essential element, at least in the northeastern part of European Russia under the present conditions. This is due not only to the presence of private reindeer (usually passed from father to one or more sons) but also to the necessity of looking after the stock of the reindeer-herding enterprise. "Those few who hold the knowledge of reindeer pastoralism de facto inherit the reindeer, since both the herders and the farm require individuals interested in 'feeding the village'" (Anderson 2000: 27). Indeed, the management of the *sovkhoz* has little influence when it comes to determining who is entitled to live in the *chom*. Kinship is the overriding factor in such decisions.

However, this does not imply that an outsider can never be integrated into reindeer husbandry. Integration can best be achieved through marriage. These are rare cases, yet they document that reindeer husbandry is not "naturally" or "genetically" restricted to the Komi, Nenets, Saami or other indigenous peoples. The following example from Petrun' is well known: two reindeer-herding brothers married two Russian veterinary surgeons. The caption on the family photograph in the local museum's exhibition of "dynasties of reindeer herders" explains that the two women "came as trainees from the College of Agriculture, they liked the tundra and so they stayed" (FM 70). Some years later, one couple split up, but after the divorce this woman married her former husband's cousin. The two Russian sisters work as tent workers in the two sides of the same tent.

Among the reindeer-herding brigades of the Komi Republic, few people have a nationality other than Komi, Nenets or Khanty. Quite different is the situation on the Kola Peninsula. "There is a great ethnic variety not only ... of the whole peninsula but even in each herding brigade in the tundra as well. There are Saami, Komi, Nenets, and even Russian, Tatars and Ukrainians in the brigades" (Sabev 1999). The author of these lines continues: "I've hardly witnessed any particular 'knowledge' specific for one of these ethnic groups in the way to make difference (in terms of 'identity') against other groups. There is rather a kind of common, 'mixed' knowledge, typical for the given area. The difference is more [apparent] between tundra-located people and the urban-centred population than between indigenous and non-indigenous groups of herders".

To conclude, the talent of reindeer herding is not "in the genes", and the knowledge and skills necessary for being a successful herdsman are not transferred along lines of ethnicity. From the discussion of the term *yaran* we learn that it is rather the other way round: one becomes a real *yaran* (1. Nenets; 2. experienced herdsman) only through long-term and successful engagement in herding. Having said that, there must be some form of direct training from one generation to the next. Even if there are "newcomers" to a reindeer-herding team, at least part of this team must have long experience in the herding business and life in the tundra. In other words, at least some of the members of the team must have stayed in the tent during childhood, or else the chain of transmission of practical skills and dynamic knowledge by the virtue of "tundra pedagogy" is likely to be interrupted. Kinship is important because it is the most obvious mechanism (although perhaps not the only one) to facilitate the "shift" of skills, knowledge and thereby capability to work as a herdsman.

In this chapter I have sought to explain two key questions in Komi reindeer husbandry. First, how do reindeer-herding families try to make ends

meet? My argument is that families try to place their members in various occupational spheres in order to tap a variety of resources. Second, how many people work in reindeer husbandry, how many are needed, how many want to work as herders and tent workers, and how many are capable and eligible? These questions must be answered for each gender separately. With regard to the men, a short and practical explanation is the one given by Vitebsky and Wolfe (2001: 82): partly they work and live as herders because they like the relative freedom of the tundra; partly they do it because they have little opportunity to work in other occupations; and partly they do it simply out of necessity – there are reindeer "out there" and someone has to herd them. However, in my opinion Vitebsky and Wolfe's formulation that "someone *still* has to" (2001: 82, emphasis added) sounds too pessimistic, judging from the situation of reindeer husbandry in European Russia.

Moreover, my impression is that in the future, some young men will still be going to the tundra, even without women. Even if the tenets of "culture" and "civilisation" deter women from life in the tundra, I believe that at least the men may use it as that kind of gendered space where they exert agency beyond the ties that bind inside the village community (Pine 2002). In this sense, the tundra might become a work space shared by male workers only (oil workers as well as reindeer herders). The construction of the tundra as an "uncivilised" place of no interest to women (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001) looks like a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the next chapter we shall see that a major problem of Komi reindeer husbandry lies in the circumstance that it is constructed by outsiders according to their perceptions of the tundra and of reindeer herding and how it should be, but hardly by the members of the reindeer-herding families themselves.

Chapter 8
Image and the concept of tradition

In previous chapters I examined the practice of Komi reindeer herding from various perspectives, focusing on particular domains and key resources. In the present chapter it is not the practice but the image of Komi reindeer herding that takes centre stage. Image itself is a resource: it may be defined as the ultimate symbolic capital. With regard to domains, this chapter provides a synthesis of the *brigada* and *kontora*, the village community and the town, but it also transcends these domains and takes the analysis to places where there are no reindeer at all. The story moves from the centres of the reindeer herders' and tent workers' life-world to the centres of power.

In what follows, I look at the political and institutional context in which Komi reindeer herding is embedded and the discourse that evolves around it. How do the reindeer herders see themselves? Who forms the policies and the images of Komi reindeer husbandry? As a tool for analysis, I employ two central paradigms in the discourse about reindeer husbandry: the first has a markedly agro-industrial flavour, and the second stresses the importance of tradition.[104]

The agro-industrial paradigm, as I call it, is characterised by its constantly recurring references to rationality and productivity. It is the language of the "open-air factory floor", the realm of technocratic phrases such as "meat production divided by the head of deer as of January" and "unproductive losses".[105] I chose the name of this paradigm on the basis of an interview published in a Komi newspaper under the heading "Reindeer husbandry keeps being the most productive branch of the agro-industrial complex of the

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[104] To avoid confusion, I want to add that I see *discourse* as the top level, *paradigm* as a common pattern of argumentation within the discourse, and *concept* as an argumentative cornerstone within the paradigm.

[105] In section 4.3.2 and Appendix 4, I show that the Russian scientist Kertselli (1869-1935) played a major part in the development of this paradigm with his espousal of Komi reindeer husbandry as a model for the industrialisation of Soviet reindeer husbandry.

North" (Nosova 1997). Such messages assert implicitly that reindeer husbandry is a modern business. The traditionalist paradigm, on the contrary, emphasises the identity of Komi reindeer husbandry as something old and non-modern. It does so in either a negative or a positive sense. The negative version portrays reindeer herding as backward, whereas the positive version appreciates reindeer herding because of its genuineness.

Of course one can conceive of many other paradigms which I do not examine here.[106] Reindeer husbandry has multiple facets and can be described from many different vantage points, which do not necessarily exclude each other. Rather, my aim is to show who uses which of these two paradigms, to what extent, and the changes in usage over the last decades. In the Komi Republic of the 1990s, we can identify a growing emphasis on the traditionalist paradigm.

I also want to critically analyse the traditionalist paradigm and ask how the concept of tradition is used as symbolic capital. Neither the reindeer herders nor their family members speak explicitly about tradition. Reindeer herders tend to describe their identity in terms of experience, knowing the land, adaptability and endurance. I argue at the end of this chapter that, beyond the question of whether "tradition" as a discursive resource is conducive or counter-productive to promoting reindeer husbandry in the Komi Republic, there is a deeper and more crucial point: it is not the reindeer herders and tent workers who have control over their own image. Their image is created and negotiated by external actors.

8.1 Komi reindeer herders' self-perception and representation

How do the reindeer herders perceive themselves? How do they speak about their image? Istomin (2004: chapter 2) emphasises the herders' knowledge of the animals (*kör tödöm*) and knowledge of the land (*mu tödöm*) as essential preconditions for successful herding, along with *kuzhöm* (skill). To this I would add that their self-perception is in terms of endurance and experience. My stay with Brigada N° 9 gave me the impression that reindeer herders and tent workers often see their lives in the tundra as a kind of noble torment, as a struggle against the elements. One member of the brigade was keen to show me his scars in order to emphasise the physical suffering he had undergone; others proudly demonstrated their ability to handle certain situations that less experienced members found difficult to cope with.

[106] For example, the concept of "sustainable development" is emerging as another important issue in the discourse on reindeer husbandry, but a detailed discussion of it would exceed the purpose of this study. See Beach 2001: 236-238.

One example of such adversarial relations is Lesha's attitude towards a log that withstood the force of his axe. "*Yesli ne mozhesh', nauchim tebia!*" he said in Russian – "If you can't, we'll teach you", which can be interpreted in two ways: if you (the log) cannot (split), we will teach you; or, if you (the young herdsman) are unable, we (the older ones) will teach you. Lesha's confrontation with the log mirrors his confrontation with the experienced herders and the tent workers who scolded him if he failed to do his work. The log symbolises the adverse social situation in which he saw himself. Here, the engagement with the environment (see Ingold 2000) turns out to be a confrontation with the natural as well as the social environment. With growing experience, the herder gains composure. Generally, the older a herder, the less he complains about the trifles of life. The frequent use of abusive language that I came across in the reindeer herders' camp can also be an "adaptive strategy" in a harsh natural (and sometimes social) environment.

The herders and tent workers leave no doubt that their environment is harsh indeed. Vasilii complained about his clammy, rheumatic fingers, a result of frequent work with an axe in a cold climate. People I met in the villages often emphasised that life is tough in the North, especially in the tundra. In addition, most village inhabitants would agree that the reindeer herders are the toughest ones. Certainly, the herders do not feel uncomfortable with this image. To be tough is part and parcel of the reindeer herders' ethos.

Indeed, herders and tent workers have to cope with quite exceptional conditions. It may happen that a tent worker has to travel several days from the village to the camp, or that a herdsman must spend the night outside in a snowstorm, using his sledge as a wind shelter and sleeping in his *malitsa.* Such cases make me think that beyond the feelings of struggle against the elements, the *brigada* people have a good deal of confidence in their abilities, even in situations where others would panic. They trust their experience and their flexibility. In chapter 7 we saw that "knowing the tundra" is an exclusive property that reindeer herders gain only through several years of training. Intuition and flexibility in the application of such knowledge and skills are the basis of the reindeer herders' pride.

Importantly, the two paradigms that I outlined above are almost absent in the everyday communication of Komi reindeer herders with each other and with other members of the village community, including those working in the *kontora*. They seldom speak about productivity, rational herd management and modernisation. Even less do they use the traditionalist paradigm. Indeed, I have never heard a reindeer herder or a tent worker use the word "tradition" or "traditional" in the camp, and rarely in the village. Later

I analyse the traditionalist paradigm and discern various strands that confer symbolic value upon the concept of "tradition" (section 8.4): one of these elements is the emphasis on continuity of an activity in one's life and even over several generations of ancestors and successors. If the perception of Komi reindeer herders has anything that relates to the traditionalist paradigm, then it is this emphasis on continuity.

8.2 More voices in the discourse about Komi reindeer herding

Now we shall gradually move away from the reindeer herders' camps and villages to examine how other people talk and think of reindeer herders. Before we can look into the question of how the two paradigms characterised above are used in the discourse about Komi reindeer husbandry, we must identify the institutions in which people apply the discourse and negotiate the symbolic function of reindeer husbandry. Apart from the *brigada* and the reindeer-herding families, these institutions are the *kontora*; the village administration; agricultural officials and the administration and government in general (at district, republic and federal levels); the ethnic organisation of the Izhma Komi, Iz'vatas; the ethnic organisations of the Komi in general; the Association of the Small-Numbered Peoples of the North (RAIPON); the Association of World Reindeer Herders (AWRH); and international non-governmental organisations. Last but not least, academia, educational institutions and the media play salient roles in the formulation of positions on reindeer husbandry. Representatives of all the institutions just listed engage in this discourse, yet they do so in different ways. In each of the spheres and institutions, both the agro-industrial and the traditionalist paradigms exist in discourse, but the balance between the two varies.

The present chapter is an attempt to discuss the voices of various actors in the discourse on reindeer herding, but it would be beyond the scope of this book to discuss each of them. Here I limit myself to the administrative sphere, the ethnic organisations and the Association of World Reindeer Herders. The role of educational institutions in the discourse on reindeer husbandry was discussed in sections 3.2 and 7.5; the role of academics will be exemplified later in this chapter.

In the Russian Federation as well as in other countries, reindeer husbandry is administered mainly by Departments or Ministries of Agriculture. This is also the case in the Komi Republic. It is here that the agro-industrialist paradigm is at home. The responsible officials in Usinsk and Syktyvkar act as an interface between reindeer herders and politicians in the parliament and government of the Komi Republic. These officials usually know the interests of reindeer-herding families and those of the leading managers in the *kontora*, as well as the corridors of power in the district and

republic administration. It is their responsibility to translate and negotiate between the two sides, and they take part in formulating political tenets about reindeer husbandry. In a way, the managers of the reindeer-herding enterprises themselves are part of this sphere. They are interested in and forced to present good production figures, and the Ministry of Agriculture and the corresponding district departments express the value of reindeer husbandry according to these figures.

Thus, the attitude towards reindeer husbandry in this sphere is seemingly characterised by strictly economic considerations. Like other industries, agriculture in general and reindeer husbandry in particular should be improved by continual increases in productivity. The agro-industrial paradigm dominated the discourse on reindeer husbandry and agriculture in general throughout the Soviet period, from the 1930s to the 1980s. It was challenged somewhat in the early 1990s, when the government launched its privatisation policy and thereby withdrew the moral justification for the existence of state and collective farms.

At the same time, the rhetoric within the sphere of these institutions also includes ideas of reindeer herding as a way of life and, less frequently, as a traditional way of life. This can be documented from various sources. When L. V. Bezumov and A. D. Krug, two officers in the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic, and G. P. Pasynkov, the director of the reindeer-herding enterprise in Vorkuta, took part in an international conference in 1997, their paper started with the words, "Reindeer herding as a traditional and basic branch of agriculture among many northern peoples...".[107] Additional examples of the use of the concept of tradition by agricultural officials are the programmes for the development of reindeer husbandry in the Komi Republic. These programmes are designed by the Ministry of Agriculture and then approved by the Head of the Komi Republic. The "Programme for the development of reindeer husbandry in the Komi Republic and the social protection of the population working in this sector, 1998-2001" (Programma razvitiia... 1998) employs a twofold rhetoric. In its introduction, it draws on the value of reindeer husbandry as a "traditional way of life of the indigenous peoples in the northern districts of the Komi Republic", yet as becomes transparent in the rest of the programme, it envis-

[107] "Severnoe olenevodstvo kak traditsionnaia i osnovnaia otrasl' sel'skogo khoziaistva mnogikh severnykh narodov..." (Krug, Bezumov and Pasynkov 1997: 1). Reindeer herding was also considered "a way of life" in the speeches of some of the directors of Komi reindeer-herding enterprises present at the meeting with Bezumov in Inta on 19 March 1999 (page 103).

ages the development of reindeer husbandry first and foremost by raising its economic productivity.[108]

Generally, speakers who have a practical background in reindeer herding (by their own work or through their relatives) talk about the necessity of improving material supplies for reindeer-herding families and frequently mention social and health issues.

Statements to the effect that reindeer herding has something to do with traditions are heard comparatively seldom among *kontora* managers and administrators in the Departments of Agriculture. Later I explain my supposition that the notion of tradition has entered the discourse of the agricultural administrators fairly recently, but its importance is currently growing fast.

What attitudes towards reindeer husbandry are held by members of the village and district administrations in general (not only those engaged in the Departments of Agriculture)? The mayors of villages such as Ust'-Usa and Petrun' have a very concrete and practical picture of reindeer herding, and they personally know most of the reindeer-herding families in their communities. The situation is different for the mayors of the towns of Usinsk, Inta and Vorkuta. Indeed, reindeer herding is part and parcel of the local economy, but the majority of the inhabitants of these towns works in oil or coal production. Whether the reindeer industry is profitable or unprofitable does not matter to them much: mineral resource extraction brings more money into the local budget than the whole so-called agro-industrial sector.

What, then, is the significance of reindeer husbandry for the district? Here the concept of reindeer herding as a "traditional way of life" comes in handy. For the mayors of these towns, the symbolic value of reindeer husbandry is higher than its market value. It helps to promote a local identity. This is not to say that the town administrations pay no attention to reindeer husbandry. However, in Inta (and similarly in Vorkuta and Usinsk), reindeer husbandry attracts most attention on one occasion per year: the festival of the reindeer herders. That is the day when the herders come to town with their draught animals, sledges and a couple of tents, and the townspeople enjoy the opportunity to take their children for a short ride on a sledge driven by a herdsman.

For the government of the Komi Republic, reindeer husbandry does not figure as a main issue, either, for two reasons. First, the reindeer-herding area comprises only the northernmost quarter of the republic's territory, and second, the lion's share of the revenues in the republic's budget stems from mineral resource extraction. The prevailing image of the Komi Republic, as

[108] Investments in the social sphere of northern communities and in research on the state of reindeer pastures and historical patterns of reindeer husbandry are also included in the programme.

it is crafted by the Komi government, refers to the abundance of mineral resources (oil, gas, coal, aluminium and the like) and their importance for the federal economy (Karjalainen 2001). Reindeer herding is occasionally used as an emblem in the official self-representation, but it has no central role in this, either for the Komi Republic's territorial identity or for the identity of the Komi people.

In this context, we should look again at Komi ethnicity and ethnic markers. Fryer (1997) showed that there were two avenues for promoting the ethnic revival (*vozrozhdenie*) of non-Russian peoples in the north of European Russia. One was the concept of "minority", applied, for example, by Karelian politicians and officials. The other was the concept of being "indigenous", applied by the Komi. However, many Nenets and Saami spokespeople were unwilling to accept the Komi as "indigenous", for in historical retrospective they see the Komi as a people of colonisers. Therefore, Fryer predicted that in the long run, the Komi might face difficulties when claiming to be "indigenous". I would add that the Nenets, Khanty, Mansi and Saami are considered *more* "indigenous", because they belong to the small-numbered peoples of the North, and as such they enjoy greater international attention and sympathy. Fryer was also right to underline that for the Saami and Nenets, reindeer herding constitutes one of the strongest ethnic markers, while for the Komi, language is the predominant ethnic marker.[109]

While reindeer herding does not figure as an ethnic marker for the Komi in general, it does figure for the northern subgroup of the Komi, the Izhemtsy or *Iz'vatas* (Izhma Komi). The Izhemtsy intellectual élites are trying to take advantage of the official imagery of tradition. In 1990-1991, an association was founded in Izhma to promote the identity of the Izhemtsy and to obtain the same legal status that the small-numbered peoples of the North enjoy. The argument was based on the similarity of livelihoods (reindeer herding, fishing, hunting) of the Izhemtsy and the small-numbered peoples. Furthermore, it was argued in the first issue of the association's newsletter that of all the Komi, the Izhemtsy were "connected with the Nenets population of the tundra to the largest extent" (V. F. Kanev 1991). The "ethnic group" of the Izhemtsy is understood also to include the Komi living on the Kola Peninsula and on the Siberian side – in other words, in the regions inhabited by Saami, Khanty, and Nenets.

[109] To be sure, there is more to Komi ethnic identity than just the Komi language; there is also the comparatively early introduction of literacy and the Orthodox creed, as well as the environmental setting and land-use, "the forest and the rivers", fishing and hunting. But all these elements of ethnicity could equally well be claimed by Russians.

The Izhemtsy applications to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union for the status of a small-numbered people of the North, like later applications to the government of the Russian Federation, have thus far been unsuccessful. In the 2002 Census of the Russian Federation, approximately 14,000 individuals declared Izhemtsy ethnic identity (Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki 2004). In this context, Shabaev (2003: 171) remarked that the initiative to include this denomination in the census list of nationalities came from outside the Komi Republic, namely, from Izhma Komi spokespeople on the Kola Peninsula, again with the intention of obtaining the status of a small-numbered people. Although this goal has not yet been accomplished (and success is in doubt), it is interesting to see how the Izhemtsy *intelligentsiia* interprets reindeer husbandry as a "traditional" activity and tries to use it as an ethnic marker.

To develop this point further, let us look at the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). The actual name of this association in Russian is *Assotsiatsiia korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Association of Indigenous, Small-numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation). This full version of the name unveils why the Komi are not part of the association's target group: although the spokespeople of the Komi as an ethnic group underline that they constitute an "indigenous" (*korennoi*) people, they cannot claim to be a "small-numbered" (*malochislennyi*) people. If the publications of RAIPON speak about reindeer husbandry as a traditional way of life, then the Komi are not explicitly included – and sometimes they are implicitly excluded. In other words, being "indigenous" is not the same everywhere in the Russian North. The Komi, it seems, are somewhere in between: they are neither "really indigenous" nor "real colonisers", neither "really traditional" nor "really progressive" – at least, this is how they appear in the discourse about northern peoples in Russia and beyond. Owing to this ambivalence, they are conspicuously absent in the publications of Western NGOs that point to the problems and promote the interests of indigenous peoples.

So far I have characterised the voices of agricultural and other administrators in the villages, towns and the Komi Republic, as well as the voices of representatives of the ethnic organisations. Apart from ethnic deputations, there are also professional lobby groups. The 1990s saw the foundation of the Association of Reindeer Herders of Russia and the Association of World Reindeer Herders (AWRH). These two organisations understand themselves as a kind of trade union. Social, economic and health-related problems are at the top of their agenda (Orgkomitet… 1997). A perusal of *Reindeer Herder,* the newsletter of the AWRH, indicates that the term *tradition* occurs now

and then but has a much less central position than the term *management,* which is used frequently.[110] Altogether, the rhetoric used by the AWRH is situated between the traditionalist paradigm and the agro-industrialist one.[111]

The palpable influence of the agro-industrial paradigm can be explained in part by the fact that among the AWRH's board and council members from the various regions of the Russian Federation, there are many who work, or used to work, as heads of reindeer-herding enterprises. One of the council members, the representative of the Komi Republic, is the former director of the enterprise Izhemskii Olenevod. However, it appears that the AWRH has developed contacts with the reindeer-herding enterprises and authorities in the Komi Republic to a significantly lesser extent than with other regions, notably the Yamal-Nenets and Nenets Autonomous Okrugs.[112] I am led to explain this by the circumstance that reindeer husbandry is marginal to Komi identity and the economy of the Komi Republic, and likewise the Komi Republic is perceived as a marginal area by the core members of the AWRH.

To sum up this section, the agro-industrial paradigm prevails in the corridors of the *kontora*, among the managers of the reindeer-herding enterprises, among the agricultural officials in the districts and in the capital of the Komi Republic, Syktyvkar. Those who have an immediate relationship to reindeer herding are usually inclined to address the concerns of the reindeer-herding families in economic, social and health-related terms, as the example of the AWRH shows. The notion of "tradition", on the other hand, is often used to emphasise a specific local identity or even ethnic identity. The government of the Komi Republic is willing to support reindeer husbandry as a "traditional way of life", although the utility of "traditional ways of life" is clearly subordinate to the utility of oil and gas extraction, a relationship clearly articulated in the prevailing discourse about the Russian North as a treasury of mineral resources. At the federal and international

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[110] *Reindeer Herder* first appeared in June 1998. The later issues that I examined are dated August 1998 (no. 2), February 1999 (no. 3), September 1999, November 1999 and February 2000.

[111] Authors writing for the AWRH newsletter also frequently refer to the concept of sustainable development.

[112] This is mirrored by the AWRH Working Papers, each of which examines the situation of reindeer husbandry in one specific region. While the working papers on the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug contain comprehensive data and received favourable comments from scientific reviewers, the working paper on the situation in the Komi Republic was criticised for its lack of important data and its failure to describe the spatial complexity of Komi and Nenets reindeer herding (Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999b: [26]; Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999a, 1999c).

levels, the notion of "tradition" combines well with "indigenous peoples". However, owing to their special status in legal and political terms, the small-numbered peoples get more public attention than other peoples in the Russian North who claim they are indigenous, too. In this sense, whether Komi reindeer husbandry is promoted as "traditional" or not hardly matters – outsiders usually associate reindeer husbandry with indigenous peoples, and indigenous peoples with small-numbered peoples.

8.3 Is reindeer herding condemned to tradition?

My overall impression is that most inhabitants of the Komi Republic conceive of reindeer husbandry in very "traditional" terms. Often during my journeys by train from Moscow to Syktyvkar or from Syktyvkar to Usinsk, Inta and Vorkuta, I was asked why I was visiting this region. More than once, my reply – "I am doing research on reindeer husbandry" – evoked statements such as, "So you are going to the Chukchi, aren't you? That must be fun! They are very hospitable: as a guest you may be offered the chance to sleep with the wife of your host". I was at pains to explain that there are no Chukchi reindeer herders in this region (the Chukchi live thousands of miles farther east, in the area opposite Alaska) and that the offer to sleep with the wife of the host – even if it had existed among the Chukchi – is by no means part of Komi reindeer herders' etiquette.

Such informal conversations between travellers in a train should not be taken too seriously, but I came across them more than once. They show that many non-Komi inhabitants in the south and middle zone of the Komi Republic associate reindeer husbandry with Chukchi identity (the butt of ethnic jokes among the peoples of the Russian Federation). On other occasions my reply was met with the comment, "So you are studying the history and the traditions of the herders and how it all used to be before the revolution, don't you?"[113] These two examples support the thesis that the majority of citizens in the Russian Federation think of reindeer husbandry as a past without a present.

Even if respondents understand that reindeer husbandry is something that exists even nowadays, the predominant assessment that implicitly underlies such conversations is that reindeer husbandry is backward, a kind of life of yore, doomed to become extinct in a few decades. This tenet in turn is built upon the presumption that history is equal to advancement: what is backward will ultimately yield to progress and vanish.

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[113] The most recent time this happened to me was in Wolfson College, Cambridge, in late January 2003, during a conversation with a young Ukrainian student now living in London.

Belief in progress manifests itself particularly strongly in the countries of the former Soviet Union, since Marxist-Leninist theory and Soviet politics and historiography postulated a unidirectional and, more than that, teleological course of history. Development progresses from primitive society via various stages to capitalism and socialism, with the expectation of ultimately entering the stage of communism in the future. That reindeer herders were forced to collectivise their herds and send their children to boarding schools can be understood as the endeavour of Soviet politicians and theorists to make primitive tribes travel through time into the era of socialism (Slezkine 1994). Hence the usage of terms such as "unculturedness" (*nekul'turnost'*) and "backwardness" (*otstalost'*). To return to the post-Soviet present, people clad in hides from top to toe, travelling with their beasts over hundreds of miles, are something disturbing for their urban neighbours. Like Catweazle, the mediaeval sorcerer, they turn up from a past that, by the "logic" of history, should no longer exist.[114]

The foregoing is what I call the progressivist version of the traditionalist paradigm. There is, however, a complementary version. During another train journey, I happened to have a conversation with an official of the administration of Inta. This woman, who is Komi herself, works in the Department of Transportation and knows the settlements around Inta very well. When we came to chat about reindeer husbandry, she characterised the reindeer herders as gullible and naïve – in a positive sense. In her words, theft and similar evils of the modern world are unknown to the herders. What is implicit in conversations like this one is the notion of reindeer herders as "children of nature" (*deti prirody*).[115]

The inverse relationship between the progressivist version and the romanticising version becomes visible in their interpretations of change within reindeer-herding communities. The progressivist version supposes that change (development) will ultimately put an end to reindeer herding and the community living from it; the romanticising version sees change induced from "outside" the community as automatically harmful, while change from "within" is often ignored. Whereas from the progressivist point of view it is disturbing to see that the reindeer herders have not changed enough, from the romanticist point of view it is disturbing to see that they have changed at all.

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[114] Regarding the image of people wearing fur clothes made of reindeer skins, see Anderson 1996: 40; Bloch 1996: 124. About Catweazle, see Carmody 2000.

[115] Several authors discuss the notion of "children of nature" in their studies of the Russian North – for example, Bloch (1996: 166-167, 190-191); Grant (1995: 9, 158); Slezkine (1994: 73-80); and Ssorin-Chaikov (1998: 217; see also 233 on the notions of infantilism and paternalism).

What I find problematic about both versions of the traditionalist paradigm is the range of tenets implicitly associated with the notion of tradition. In both cases the consequence is the same: reindeer herding is characterised by its past but it is not considered to have a present or a future. In their extreme versions, neither position can acknowledge that reindeer husbandry is subject to continuity and change in the same way as all other aspects of society. What is most important, both these tenets come from outside. Both views are assumptions about how herders and tent workers should be; there is little room for what they are or want to be.

In particular, I believe the traditionalist paradigm is not conducive to encouraging young people to work as tent workers or herdsmen. In chapter 7 we saw that life in the tundra has the image of being uncouth, uncivilised and uncultured. It cannot be really "modern", either, if so much emphasis is laid on its being "traditional". These notions will last as long as history is seen as unidirectional, development as always progressive, and reindeer husbandry as characteristic of past evolutionary stages.

Such perceptions of reindeer herding in a broader historical context are not restricted to the case of the Komi: anthropological studies from other parts of the Russian North reveal similar attitudes. Examining the role of educational institutions in the negotiation of identity in Tura, the capital of the Evenki Autonomous Okrug, Bloch (1996: 166-197; cf. 2004: 146-164) elucidated the opposition of "ideal proletarians" and a sense of modernity versus the notions of "children of nature" and tradition. Striking is Bloch's account of a local lecturer on Evenki ethnography:

> The teacher made a conscious effort to emphasize how "in the past" Evenki had been pristine and honest but she stopped short of discussing specific historical social policy (like collectivization or kulakization of shamans and others) as factors in social change. In the ethnography course Evenki were "othered" through a decontextualized emphasis on their past spiritual traditions and no reference to contemporary lives and ritual practice (Bloch 1996: 175).
>
> A vivid example of this type of idealization emerged in public discussion in Tura following a showing of a Finnish documentary made in 1992 which chronicled the lives of Evenki living in the taiga and in towns. ... The same woman who taught Evenk ethnography was critical of parts of the film that had been made in a reindeer herding brigade where "those Evenki didn't wear traditional clothing" (Bloch 1996: 187).

Yet again, the past and the present seem unconnected, or connected in an awkward way, in the interpretation of history. Like the ethnographic descriptions of the peoples of the North (e.g. Levin and Potapov 1964), the "old world", the realm of tradition, stops in 1917, or 1930 at the latest, whereas the "modern world", the realm of contemporary culture, starts somewhere between 1917 and the 1950s. Regardless of where the cut is made in the specific publication or talk, the important fact is that a cut is made. The same holds true for the exhibitions in many, if not most, local museums in the Russian North, like the one in Tura, where the exhibition "continued to embody this dichotomy of 'traditional' and 'modern', and the museum plan[n]ed to continue this emphasis in future displays" (Bloch 1996: 192). Even if the exhibitions in the school at Ust'-Usa more or less consciously combine pre-revolutionary with post-revolutionary artefacts, the general tendency remains clear: in the eyes of those who are not involved in reindeer herding, reindeer herding is often associated with a far-off past, sometimes a past prior to the "beginning of history", but rarely with the present.

8.4 How could Komi reindeer herders utilise the concept of tradition?

Although I have sought to deconstruct the function of "tradition" in the discourse on reindeer husbandry, I do not intend to disqualify the concept altogether. So far I have treated tradition as an attribute which is imposed on reindeer-herding families; now I move on to their appropriation of it. The notion of tradition can be considered not merely as a negative but also as a positive factor, as a discursive resource in regional, federal and international politics. The term *tradition* is closely connected with a new kind of self-esteem among the small-numbered peoples and other peoples and with the formulation of new policies in the Russian North.

A remarkable example of the valuation of the term *tradition* is a book with the title *Neo-traditionalism in the Russian North* (Pika and Prokhorov 1994). This book has been considered a milestone in the discussion about the current situation and the future of the small-numbered peoples. Its editors explain that "neo-traditionalism" should be understood as a strategy to overcome the state policy of modernism (1994: 5). Pika and Prokhorov distinguish two political approaches towards the northern peoples: the 1920s were the time of the "traditionalist" approach, but the "modernists" took over in about 1930, and this approach dominated the government's attitude towards the North for several decades (1994: 17-19). To replace "modernism" with "traditionalism", however, does not mean that all the indigenous

northerners now have to move "back to the *chum*" (Pika and Prokhorov1994: 6). The prefix *neo* signifies that the re-emergence of "traditions" is *not* equal to moving back in time.

Briefly, the importance of the book edited by Pika and Prokhorov is based on their political rehabilitation of the term *tradition* and of the pre-1930s policies applied by the Russian and Soviet governments, particularly by the latter's Committee of the North (see Slezkine 1994). The book also encourages the representatives of the small-numbered peoples of the North to rely on their own potential to make changes for the better and to put to use the experience of their cultural and historical heritage. In this sense, the concept of neo-traditionalism aims at reducing their passivity and dependency on state paternalism and at raising the self-awareness of the indigenous peoples. In other words, neo-traditionalism aims at enhancing their agency (see Rethmann 2001: 157-158).

The programmatic book edited by Pika and Prokhorov and similar publications were widely appreciated by indigenous élites in the Russian Federation. For the first time in several decades, the image of the indigenous peoples and their "traditional way of life" was no longer necessarily associated with "backwardness". The "traditional way of life" of indigenous communities was rehabilitated in moral terms.

What is more, the concept of tradition can also be used, and is being used, as a discursive resource for achieving rights to land and other legal entitlements. New ways of securing rights to land use have opened up and found their way into federal and regional laws and regulations through the creation of so-called clan communities (*rodovaia obshchina*) and territories of traditional land use (*territoriia traditsionnogo prirodopol'zovaniia*).[116] By engaging in "traditional" modes of land use, indigenous individuals and communities have sometimes succeeded in gaining privileges that the non-indigenous inhabitants of the same region covet.[117]

Yoking together "traditional ways of life" (hunting, fishing, reindeer herding) and indigeneity has forged an important political asset for the small-numbered peoples of the North and a way to change the prestige of reindeer husbandry. It was around 1992 that intellectuals in the Komi Republic began ascribing the notion of "tradition" to Komi reindeer herding.

Prior to the 1980s, Soviet scholars emphasised that large-scale reindeer husbandry fostered the development of capitalism and a Komi bour-

[116] See, for example, Fondahl 1998; Gray 2001; Kasten 1992, 1996; Zaporotskii and Murashko 2000.

[117] From my perspective, however, this does not mean that indigenous peoples generally find themselves in a better position than other peoples of the Russian Federation.

geoisie in this region (e.g. Belitser 1958: 60-64; Lashuk 1958: 101-102). It was only in the 1990s that anthropologists began frequently using terms such as "traditional" economy and land use (Konakov, Kotov and Sharapov 1992; Konakov 1994). They were followed by agricultural officials and directors of the reindeer-herding enterprises in the Komi Republic, who began to speak about reindeer husbandry as a "traditional branch" of the regional economy. Although the discourse in this sphere is still dominated by what I have called the agro-industrial paradigm, elements of the traditionalist paradigm have, to a certain extent, been adopted.[118] What we are witnessing is a change in the valuation of the term *tradition* from a negative image to a positive one. Bearing a positive content, it is successfully used by the *intelligentsiia* of the small-numbered peoples to improve the image of reindeer husbandry.

However, I am unsure whether the application of the concept of tradition to Komi reindeer husbandry will be equally successful. The historical background of Komi reindeer herding (chapter 4) makes the concept of tradition less convincing, especially in comparison with Nenets reindeer herding.

If we analyse the notion of tradition more closely in its function as a discursive resource, we can discern different elements and strands, each of which may be articulated and utilised for specific purposes. Various voices can utilise them to various degrees. In other words, there is some inequality in the access to "tradition" as a resource. The Komi are disadvantaged in certain respects. One element of the concept of tradition is the reference to ancestral rights to land. Komi reindeer herders are not likely to use this trope to their benefit. Another element is the connotation of so-called rational land use, and in this respect the standing of Komi reindeer herders and their spokespeople is somewhat stronger. Stronger still is their position as regards a third element: the "heritage" of skills, the know-how of living in the tundra and the forest, an ability that many outsiders find fascinating because they perceive the tundra as a hostile and wild environment. Komi reindeer herders' notions of "knowing the tundra" and the animals, as well as their emphasis on continuity in the activity of reindeer husbandry, constitute the

[118] The recently published Development Plan for Reindeer Husbandry in the Izhma District (Kolegov 2003) marks an interesting twist in the crafting of the image of Komi reindeer husbandry. On one hand, it is argued in the report that reindeer husbandry is a traditional branch of Izhma Komi livelihood. On the other hand, the Izhma Komi introduced many new elements, notably "a higher culture and a commercial approach", and thus they turned the "archaic and primitive" Nenets way of herding reindeer into "a civilised, marketable" business (Kolegov 2003: section 1.2.2).

points where the self-representation of Komi reindeer herders and "tradition" as a discursive resource come together most convincingly.

Finally, the talk about "traditional ways of life" also entails an element of purity: traditional societies are thought to be unspoilt by the negative effects of modernity. Here again, the idea of "children of nature" comes to the fore. The more primitive the image, the greater the chance of attracting the attention of the international public. Nevertheless, this is the point where the connection of Komi reindeer herders to the concept of tradition fails most visibly. In this respect, Komi reindeer husbandry is not primitive enough. The imagery of "tradition" does not link up with the market-oriented character and the tendency towards modernisation which is characteristic of Komi reindeer herding. If reindeer husbandry in general appears to be traditional, then Komi reindeer husbandry has always been modern. Hence, Komi reindeer herders and their spokespeople see themselves betwixt and between tradition and modernity. The tundra is more than an open-air factory floor – but it is also more than an open-air museum.

At this point, we can return to the issue of agency: even though the concept of tradition does not fit very well, external forces (institutions) are trying to impose it upon the Komi reindeer herders. At the beginning of this section I asked how Komi herders might make use of "tradition" as symbolic capital in political discourse. I argue that while certain elements in their livelihood may enable and encourage them to utilise the traditionalist paradigm themselves, they are disadvantaged in comparison with other reindeer-herding groups that have stronger claims to "tradition" as a discursive resource. Moreover, this resource has greater currency outside the Komi reindeer-herding communities than within them. Most importantly, Komi reindeer herders are unable to exert influence on the formulation of the image ascribed to them. Although in some domains Komi reindeer-herding families enjoy a relatively broad scope for action, the formulation of their image is the sphere in which they have very little agency. This weakness, I believe, is the actual predicament of Komi reindeer husbandry.

Chapter 9
Conclusion

In the central part of this book (chapters 5-8) I analysed Komi reindeer herding from various points of view and with a focus on various resources. Each of these analytical chapters correlated broadly with a specific domain of Komi reindeer husbandry, all of which together constitute the life-world of Komi reindeer herders, tent workers and their family members. The term *agency* – a main theoretical concept in this book – was largely absent in the ethnographic chapters, because it is not used by reindeer herders, oil workers, administrators and politicians in the region. Yet it is implicit in much of the ethnographic material and discussion presented earlier. Tradition – the other main theoretical concept – was largely absent in the initial part of the ethnography, because reindeer herders and tent workers do not describe themselves as traditional. The term *tradition* became increasingly important in the later part of the ethnography, because reindeer herders and tent workers are often described as traditional by people living farther afield.

I want now to return to the concepts of agency and tradition. First I summarise the possibilities for action and the kind of agency that Komi reindeer herders and their family members have in various domains. While it may sometimes seem as though reindeer herders, tent workers and their families have limited influence over their own situation, I believe they make use of opportunities and try to circumvent constraints in their everyday lives in flexible and inventive ways. Far from being merely victims of other people's decisions and the objects of other people's actions, reindeer herders and tent workers have their own possibilities for action. They have agency of a different kind.

The relations between reindeer herders and tent workers (the *brigada*), on one hand, and the employees in the former state farm's office (the *kontora*), on the other, form a complex but salient field in which this agency of a different kind comes to the fore. For this reason I take the relations in the former state farm (*sovkhoz*) as a starting point for my summary of reindeer herders' and tent workers' possibilities for action. The relationships within

the former state farm are part of a larger field which I call the practice of reindeer herding. After discussing it, I return to the way reindeer herders, tent workers and their family members take part in negotiating the image of reindeer herding. This image constitutes the domain over which reindeer-herding families have the least influence. After summing up these points I discuss the notion of tradition within the conceptual frame of agency and structure. Finally, I examine the findings of all the previous sections in terms of the spatial idioms of centre and periphery and the way these two concepts relate to Komi reindeer herders and tent workers.

9.1 Agency

9.1.1 Agency and the practice of reindeer herding

In Western accounts dealing with the issue of collectivisation (e.g. Forsyth 1992) it has often been assumed that the policy of collectivisation reduced the possibilities for self-determined action by peasants, fishermen, hunters and herders in the Soviet Union and that inclusion in a collective farm or state farm was a decisive step in limiting the freedom of the individual or family. Recall the changes in the Komi reindeer herders' social situation before and after collectivisation. To what extent did the socialist reconstruction of agriculture enable reindeer-herding families to improve their economic situation? How did it influence their ability to take their own decisions?

In previous chapters I showed that these questions must be examined separately for various groups of reindeer-herding families. For affluent families such as the "bourgeois" reindeer owners from Izhma, possibilities for action certainly diminished during the 1930s. They were obviously oppressed, and their economic situation deteriorated. Poor reindeer-herding families, on the other hand, apparently benefited from collectivisation: not only their economic but also their social and symbolic capital initially increased. The obvious methods of pre-revolutionary exploitation by rich owners and traders had come to an end, but the reindeer herder was now confronted with a complex economic and administrative apparatus – the state or collective farm. The management of the state farms benefited from the surplus value of the reindeer herders' production in ways similar to those previously enjoyed by the "bourgeois" exploiters of Izhma. Even if the scale and the mechanisms of manipulation were different, from the perspective of the herder and his family, many working conditions remained the same. By entering the collective or state farm, herders and tent workers returned to (or remained in) a subordinate state: herding the deer and selecting animals for slaughter still had to be done according to someone else's instructions.

Before as well as after the revolution, the hired reindeer herder was answerable for the reindeer under his supervision. The interesting question is: To whom did he give account? Around 1900, a hired herdsman was directly accountable to a private owner. Sixty years later, a reindeer herdsman was accountable for the well-being of reindeer that were state property. These animals were assigned to certain enterprises, among them organisations of very abstract character, such as the Northern Railway and the Vorkuta Coal Combinate. Of course for the herdsman the large enterprise was represented by the person in the enterprise who managed the reindeer-husbandry sector. Both herdsman and manager, however, acted on the understanding that the reindeer were common property. The ultimate focal point of control moved further away. Power was now exerted through more intermediate layers, and responsibility became more diffuse. The mechanisms of control were changing, and therefore reindeer herders' agency was changing, as well as the agency of the representative of the big enterprise. The herders and the enterprise officials had (and have) different kinds of agency. They also expected (and expect) each other to have different kinds of agency.

Paine (1994: 195) described a similar process concerning Saami reindeer herders in Norway as "the erosion of the pastoralists' responsibilities", resulting from the government's well-intended but paternalistic minority policies. He added that "[i]t is the state who makes the decision of principle, not the pastoralist. From everything that I have learned about the pastoral sense of self, this is a very high price indeed" (1994: 199). In the Soviet Union, state paternalism was particularly strong. In Soviet socialist society, ideological norms were ambitious – certainly more ambitious than in pre-revolutionary times. To be a good reindeer herder required not only skills and experience but also political commitment and belief in the concepts of progress, industrialisation and so forth. In short, a good herdsman had also to be a good socialist. The pervasiveness of socialist society lay in its continual moral appeal to the individual to act for the sake of society as a whole. This moral appeal made some choices appear more appropriate than others.

The process of the individual's responsibility becoming more abstract made membership in the collective or state farm tolerable and even attractive in the long run. People realised that it was easier to swim with the flow than against it. Hence the local historian V. K. Kanev's complaint about people's growing passivity, lack of initiative and so forth (see page 74). Similarly, the normative character of the socialist enterprise led to high expectations on all parts. In principle, reindeer herders were expected to contribute to the advancement of reindeer husbandry and society, and they themselves could expect that society and the "authorities" would advance their lives and take

care of them. The *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz* came to serve as screens against which individuals and households could project not only their material expectations but also, more generally, their positive identifications as well as their anger. Gradually, the *kolkhoz* or *sovkhoz* became that all-encompassing and only conceivable reality (Humphrey 1998: 4; Konstantinov 2000: 49), the only possible life-world of reindeer herders and tent workers that it has remained until now. Some authors (Hancock 2002; Vitebsky 2000) have suggested that the institution of the *brigada* itself is becoming part of the "tradition" of reindeer husbandry in Russia, and the same may be said about the *sovkhoz* (Konstantinov 2000: 61-62; cf. Ventsel, forthcoming).

In her dissertation on institutionalised children in the Soviet Union, Khlinovskaya-Rockhill (2004) analysed the double-faced appearance of the state: it incorporated both "us" and "them" (also see Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 212, 304). As a society, it represented "us"; as a regime, it represented "them". I believe the *kolkhoz* and the *sovkhoz* embody the same kind of order and ambiguity, albeit at a different level. Ultimately, the state is responsible for the *sovkhoz* and *kolkhoz* farms, since they are part of the public sphere. At the same time, they constitute a private sphere. The *kollektiv* of the collective farm or state farm hinges on informal networks such as those of kinship and friendship (chapter 7; cf. Kharkhordin 1999: 322-328 and *passim*). "They" are those who cause the shortcomings and mediocrities of collective life and can be blamed if something goes wrong. "Us" is the collective. From the perspective of the *brigada*, "us" is the *brigada* members; "them" is the *kontora*. From the perspective of both groups together, "us" is the state farm; "them" is some abstract authority. "Us" translates as actual individuals in the centre of the reindeer herders' life-world; "them" is constituted by the periphery, which takes decisions over the reindeer herders' life-world (see Paine 1994: 197).

The members of the Soviet *kollektiv* were constantly reminded of the public (political) face of the *kollektiv*, but they were also aware of the *kollektiv*'s private face through their actual day-to-day work. A crucial contradiction between these two faces lay in the members' awareness that they could not constantly live up to the normative code of Soviet society and economy. Hence, members of the collective did things "our way". And if "they" (the farm managers, the Party, the government or whoever in the centre) could not sort out "our" problems, then "we have to do it ourselves". But usually not through the official channels: the best ways are the informal ways. *Yest' zakon, yest' i svoi zakony* ("You have the Law, and then you have your own laws") – this phrase, quoted by Wilson (2002a: 165), summarises the subtle dialectics between the agency of big and seemingly abstract institutions such as the Party, the government and the state, on one hand, and agency at the

grass-roots level, on the other. The agent cannot turn the existing structure upside down, but he or she can "make a difference" and find a way when it seemed that there was no way.

In relations between Soviet authorities and reindeer-herding brigades, the managers of the state and collective farms played a pivotal role. Their position in the relationship between "us" and "them" was intermediate: hence their carrot-and-stick approach. The managers had to require "maximum herd preservation", according to official agricultural policy, but they could never expect to have complete knowledge of what was going on in the tundra.

More than once I have described the relationship between the *brigada* (the members of the reindeer-herding unit) and the *kontora* (the members of the state farm office) as a symbiosis, for each group depends on the other. Every paid herdsman or tent worker has a written work contract with the state farm, but there is also the unwritten contract between *brigada* and *kontora*. The state farm may be understood in terms of patron-client relations as discussed by Scott (1976). The *kontora* members are the patrons; the *brigada* members are the clients. The *brigada* members do not, generally, mind that the *kontora* members live on the *brigada*'s work and product. They know that they need the *kontora* members for specific purposes. The *kontora* members, for example, deal with land claims, taxes, helicopters and, more generally, relations with external agents. These are aspects where *brigada* members do not feel competent enough (they feel that they lack agency within this domain).

Both groups have certain stakes and expectations and assess each other in terms of the fulfilment of the unwritten contract. The question for the *brigada* members is whether the contract is fair – that is, to what degree the "moral economy" is in accordance with their expectations (Scott 1976: 33 and *passim*). The *brigada* members' numerous complaints about shortages of canvas, sugar and other supplies can be understood as repeated appeals to the *kontora* members to fulfil the contract. Likewise, the *kontora* members constantly send out appeals to the *brigada* members to fulfil their part of the contract. The relation between *brigada* and *kontora*, though, is not one of equal terms: within the *kontora*, there is a group of particularly powerful actors. The director of the enterprise is not necessarily among them. I identified these "oligarchs" in chapter 6.

The *brigada* members also have clear expectations about the director (or, to speak with Scott again, about their patron). Among the qualities that a good director and other *kontora* members should have are "connections" (*blat*; see Ledeneva 1998). They should possess and exert their own *blat*, a different and more powerful kind than that of the *brigada* members.

Let me explain this by returning to the *brigada* members' lack of interest in the marketing of "public reindeer" meat. They feel that the marketing is not their business but part of the patron's job. They expect the *kontora* members to act on their behalf, because the *kontora* members are hoped to have the necessary connections. The managers may be conceived of as emperors of what Seabright (2000: 7) called "information islands": "We can think of the firm as inhabiting an 'information island' outside which its comparative advantage no longer exists. Trading networks may therefore represent its only points of contact outside the island – and barter a way to utilise the information these points of contact make possible". A very typical representation of the *sovkhoz* director is the photograph which shows him making a phone call. And it seems that the greater the number of telephones on his desk, the more power he must have. These are the harbours of his information island.

In the same collection of papers, Humphrey (2000: 78) quoted producers (factory managers in Moscow Oblast' and farmers in Buryatia): "Are we expected to produce goods *and sell them too*? How are we to do that?" (her emphasis). Workers in the reindeer-herding enterprises may say exactly the same thing. They have learnt how to sell the meat of their private reindeer, and yet, when it comes to state-farm reindeer, they do not see it as their job. Different kinds of reindeer – public and private – appear to be related to different kinds of agency. Furthermore, in Soviet times the state farm's meat was purchased by specific organisations that no longer exist. Thus, while in Soviet times *blat* was needed in order to overcome shortages rather than to sell one's product, nowadays *blat* is needed to solve both problems. Consequently, over the last 15 years or so, the importance of informal networks and connections has increased.

The accounting department within the *sovkhoz* yields an excellent example of a very specific kind of agency. Hancock observed (2002: 238): "These people often sat in front of computer screens and many were busy using the organization's resources to operate sideline business ventures". This observation leads me to the next point of my conclusion: *kontora* and *brigada* are not only dependent on each other but are also united by their dealings with the "outside world". Earlier I characterised this as the dialectics between the agency of abstract institutions and agency at the grass-roots level. The bonds between *kontora* and *brigada* rest upon people's wariness of "outside" organisations ("them"). This wariness is a legacy of the socialist period, when there was a common understanding that sometimes one must circumvent "the Law", which might include the manipulation of *sovkhoz* statistics.

Circumventing "the Law", dealing with the contradiction between the public face and the private face, "muddling through" between ideological norms and the problems of everyday life (Hann 1993: 11-14) – this reality created the moral preconditions for the remarkable development of the informal part of *sovkhoz* economy. The *sovkhoz* serves as a formal platform for the informal operations of both *kontora* and *brigada* members. While the members of both groups seem to have considerable difficulty seeing themselves as entrepreneurs in the official sphere, they have little difficulty engaging in crypto-entrepreneurship (Konstantinov 2002). The persistence of the *sovkhoz* as the only conceivable life-world of Komi reindeer herders and tent workers is rooted in the dialectics of the formal and informal spheres.

Although there is a contradiction between the public and the private face of the *sovkhoz* as a social entity, the distinction between public and private property is blurred (Humphrey 1998: 1). The individual member (or family) may consider it rightful to make claims on resources in public property, such as the reindeer owned by the state farm. Therefore, while outsiders may see crypto-entrepreneurship as parasitic on the old state structure, the *brigada* members would probably reject any such interpretation. The state farm has been established and is being sustained through their work. For them, it is "our" state farm. They have invested all their energy: they want to see some reward. As there has been no regular pay, *brigada* members take their reward in kind (cf. Rasanayagam 2003: 7-8).

To sum up, the reindeer herders' and tent workers' agency within the *sovkhoz* is of a largely informal character. The relations between this group – the *brigada* – and the workers in the state farm's office – the *kontora* – hinge on a delicate balance, on a contract which is under constant negotiation, or bargaining, as Ssorin-Chaikov (1998) has called it. As the monetary income of reindeer-herding families decreased during the 1990s, the structure of the state farm appears to have provided more security than a privatised existence would have, because the state farm allows the families to survive virtually without money. Thus, the preference (or decision) of Komi reindeer herders to remain within the state farm structure may equally be seen as a kind of agency (cf. Wilson 2002b). One may decide not to change one's situation; one may prefer not to give up certain securities, such as secure access to economic resources, in a situation of unpredictable and sometimes chaotic change (Scott 1976: 24 and *passim*).

Most of the foregoing discussion has dealt with the relations between actors within the state farm. Notwithstanding the state farm's all-encompassing role in the daily existence of reindeer-herding families, the analysis of their possibilities for action must go further, because of the

inequality of their living conditions. In chapter 7 I showed the import of various scholars' conceptual approaches to discerning socio-economic types of reindeer-herding families (Bloch 2003) and types of production (Elwert 1985). Reindeer-herding families differ in their access to resources and ownership of resources (economic and social capital). These resources largely determine the scope for agency of the different reindeer-herding families and their individual members. Without access to means of transportation, reindeer-herding families cannot "harvest" the resources in the tundra. This is why Anderson (1995: 274) called "access to transport and to readily exchangeable goods" the prime factor of social stratification in communities in the Russian North. We should not forget, however, that the reindeer themselves are used for transportation (as well as for meat); in this sense, they constitute a very specific resource.

Ethnographically specific in the case of Komi large-scale reindeer husbandry is the fact that families "work the land" and operate households hundreds of kilometres apart. The family's household is located in two or even more places: the tent in the tundra, the house in the village and in some cases the base in the town. Operating at different sites brings certain problems (constraints) but also opportunities: the wider the spatial range of activities, the more diversified is the family's livelihood and the more secure is the family's survival (for another Arctic analogy, see Chabot 2003). Operating at different sites and "harvesting" a diversity of resources constitutes a risk-avoidance strategy and testifies to a wide ambit of agency. Again, these resources include economic capital (meat, antlers, fish, waders and other goods) as well as social capital (the uncle in town who can help with the shopping or the paperwork in the administration). To have a reindeer herder or tent worker in the family translates into meat, hides and fish as resources for the household; to have a state farm driver in the family translates into easier access to fuel and transportation. The attempt at diversifying the household's economy includes creativity and reflexivity, two keywords in Giddens's (1984) characterisation of agency. In chapter 7 I presented examples of reindeer herders' children going into various professions. These careers are based partially on personal choices and preferences and partially on the household's economic requirements and other constraints.

Following from this, I discussed the question of who is willing and able to work in reindeer husbandry. This question must be answered differently for each gender. Women who might consider working in the tundra may shy away from doing so because the tundra is associated with a lack of amenities and a low level of culturedness. Life in the tundra is supposed to be "tough", and reindeer herding, to be "uncouth" (Vitebsky and Wolfe

2001). Owing to its prevailing image, reindeer husbandry seems unsuitable for women. Its very low status in terms of "culture" (in the Soviet and post-Soviet sense) is a serious constraint: the assumption that reindeer herders and tent workers lack "culture" reduces the symbolic capital of their activities and experience. Consequently, the low status of reindeer husbandry has a negative influence on the agency of the people involved in reindeer husbandry.

With regard to men going into reindeer husbandry, Vitebsky and Wolfe (2001: 82) are quite sceptical in their assessment that "someone still has to, someone likes the sense of freedom, or they do not have anywhere else to go". I partly subscribe to this point of view (see chapter 7). What becomes increasingly apparent in the north of the Komi Republic is the dominating character of the oil and gas industries. Whoever can find a job in this sector will take it simply because of the money. Agriculture, forestry and other branches are gradually developing into "second-class" and "third-class" branches of economy and occupation. Agriculture and reindeer herding are in fact developing into occupations for people who "do not have anywhere else to go", or people who have a passion for it. The tundra may afford shelter for those who do not get along with village life (or life in town). Its remoteness allows for escaping control. Yurchak (1997: 184-185) illustrated the way certain jobs and occupations in the wider Russian world belonged to the "parallel sphere", where Soviet ideological norms were largely absent. In some cases, people may choose to work in reindeer herding because it is peripheral in the "political" sense.

Many Russians, and Komi, too, assert that the ability to work as a reindeer herder is inherent "in the genes". I challenged this essentialist tenet with the concept of "tundra pedagogy" (section 7.6), according to which becoming a herdsman is a question of enskilment, not of genes (Ingold 2000). Learning by doing is crucial. However, although there are cases in which outsiders start working in reindeer husbandry and living in the tundra, these cases are exceptional. A link from one generation to the next is important, because otherwise the practice of reindeer herding cannot be demonstrated to novices. One cannot learn herding from books. Knowing the land is a resource; so is knowing how to herd reindeer. We may understand this knowledge and experience as the symbolic capital that constitutes the prime source of reindeer herders' agency. This point leads me to the question of the image of reindeer herders and tent workers.

9.1.2 Agency and the image of reindeer herding

Reindeer herders have unchallenged agency only in the domain of herding itself, since this domain is inaccessible to anybody else, most of the year. "They know the land", as their fellow villagers respectfully say. They travel through the tundra to places that other people cannot get to, because the latter would simply get lost and perish on the way. Everybody else is a *yando* (see section 7.6). Being *yando* means to have deficient agency in this specific domain. Being *yando* means to be an outsider.

Within the village community, the image of Komi reindeer-herding families is twofold. On one hand, reindeer herders enjoy a high social status through their practical knowledge and experience, through their adaptability and endurance. Reindeer herders are considered by their fellow villagers to be tough, and this is also the way they see and describe themselves. "To be tough" is a form of symbolic capital. "To be tough" is part of the herders' occupational ethos. On the other hand, school education is not likely to create or augment such capital because the curriculum does not focus on such practical knowledge (cf. Willis (2000 [1977]: 51-59). Instead, school education is informed by the values of *tsivilizatsiia* (civilisation) and *kul'tura* (culture). Thereby it tends – almost automatically – to stigmatise children of reindeer herders as pupils who perform badly, as pupils who are not quite as bright and do not quite have the "mental resources" that other children have. In this way, school pedagogy reduces the self-esteem of reindeer herders' children, which has a negative effect on the individual's agency. Overall, the social status of Komi reindeer-herding families is comparatively low in the wider Komi and Russian public.

Moreover, reindeer herders, and people in the rural communities in general, continually lack a certain agency that is represented by Leont'ev, the pop star who left his native village. He embodies an image of fortune and freedom, choice and individuality. He embodies the kind of agency for which young people in the rural communities (as well as in town) are striving. While Soviet notions of *kul'tura* and *tsivilizatsiia* have remained almost unchanged and are disseminated through school education and the Houses of Culture, television programmes and other forms of media contribute to the distribution of postsocialist cultural values: they bring in new notions of fashion and modernity (see Bloch 1996: 26, 2004: 133; Grant 1995: 29). Leont'ev is one of the figureheads of "modern" life-style.

Reindeer herders are not part of the local *intelligentsiia* or élite. With Yurchak (1997) we could say that they play a marginal role in the hegemony of representation, in this case the representation of the village community as "civilised" in the Soviet and post-Soviet sense. In chapter 3 I drew a line between the villages of Novikbozh and Ust'-Usa regarding the image and

status of reindeer-herding families. This may be associated with "culturedness" as a form of symbolic capital. Vitebsky and Wolfe (2001) illustrated this as the continuum from the cultured to the uncultured. In comparison with Novikbozh, Ust'-Usa appears to be one step farther from the centre of the reindeer herders' and tent workers' life-world and one step closer to the centres of power. Even though the villages are only five kilometres apart, they have been moulded by *tsivilizatsiia* in different ways and – one may say – to different degrees. The concrete apartment blocks in Ust'-Usa symbolise this. *Tsivilizatsiia* arrived earlier in Ust'-Usa, owing to the fact that it used to be an administrative centre for the whole region. It used to be a centre of power, even if those days are over. Both villages are now overshadowed by the newly founded town of Usinsk.

Altogether, reindeer husbandry and reindeer-herding families are marginalised in the everyday life of Usinsk, and the situation is similar in Inta and Vorkuta. True, the reindeer and the reindeer herders' tent serve as emblems on the coats of arms of Usinsk and Inta. Reindeer husbandry is useful for creating a local identity. The reindeer and the herders and tent workers fulfil a certain role for the wider public. They possess a certain symbolic capital that they "lend" to the community, to the administration of the town, on occasions such as the Inta festivities. However, that the "beginning of history" of Usinsk has been determined as February 1970 discloses the hegemonic meaning and image of this place. The actual purpose of Usinsk is oil production, not reindeer husbandry. The past has been turned into an emblem, yet the everyday reality of reindeer herding interferes with the emblem.

Let us now look at the political representations of reindeer herders and northern peoples. Jernsletten and Klokov (2002: 2) claimed that "[r]eindeer herders in Russia are practically deprived of the possibility to participate in decision making processes in the reindeer husbandry management. The NGOs of the reindeer herders need to be strengthened". At the risk of sounding overly pessimistic, my opinion is that the federal and regional associations of reindeer herders that Jernsletten and Klokov appear to have in mind are not likely to enhance reindeer herders' participation, at least in the case of the Komi. As I showed in chapter 8, in the councils of the associations of reindeer herders one finds many *kontora* members but few *brigada* members. While the associations of reindeer herders (the Association of World Reindeer Herders and the federal and regional associations) have difficulty encouraging Komi reindeer herders and tent workers to participate in politics, they do play an important role in promoting the image of reindeer herding. Spokespeople of the Association of World Reindeer Herders seldom emphasise the traditionality of reindeer husbandry; instead, they refer to

it as a steady and dynamic system that calls for specific "management" solutions. In a similar vein but with different rhetoric, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) is aiming at raising the status and promoting the interests of the indigenous peoples. RAIPON members successfully apply the traditionalist paradigm for this purpose. It is in this sphere that the traditionality of indigenous peoples obtains its greatest value as symbolic capital.

Nevertheless, the application of these values and paradigms is more complicated in the case of Komi reindeer husbandry than in the cases of other reindeer-herding peoples in the Russian Federation. Reindeer husbandry does not play a central role in the ethnic identity of the Komi in general, and the Komi do not belong to the small-numbered peoples. Nenets reindeer herders have more opportunities to benefit from the activities of RAIPON and the Association of World Reindeer Herders.

The wider public in the Komi Republic usually conceives of reindeer herders in either of two ways: as "children of nature" or as backward country folk. Both notions point to a unilinear concept of history. Reindeer husbandry is a thing of the past, it looks awkward in the present, and it is not expected to have a future. Behind this hovers the notion of progress, the commitment of Marxism and Leninism to social engineering. The political, historical and social conditions that created this image of reindeer husbandry as something uncultured and non-progressive represent the prime constraint and impediment to the agency of the reindeer herders and tent workers. Indigenous peoples' representatives try to overcome the negative image of "backwardness" by the usage of "tradition". Note that the image has changed more than once over the twentieth century. Komi reindeer husbandry was perceived as "modern", "progressive" and "capitalist" around 1900, whereas nowadays it is perceived as "traditional" and "backward" and sometimes as a "subsistence life-style".

9.1.3 Agency in different domains

Earlier I made a distinction between "the practice" of reindeer herding and "the image" of reindeer herding. Other people (experts from the Departments of Agriculture, biologists, ecologists, economists) are prone to think that reindeer husbandry in the Russian North can be improved by technological measures (for a recent example, see Jernsletten and Klokov 2002). I agree with them. However, I wish to emphasise that the future of reindeer husbandry depends not only on practical aspects but also on the *image* of reindeer husbandry. For almost a hundred years, scientists and politicians have been suggesting improvements to the technological basis of the reindeer industry (e.g. Kertselli 1911: 103, 108), but what is the point in constructing

brand-new EU-standard slaughterhouses if young people do not want to work in reindeer husbandry because it is supposedly traditional, that is, non-modern?

Reindeer herders and tent workers have different kinds and scopes of agency in various domains. Their agency becomes most visible in domains that pertain immediately to the practice of reindeer herding and in what Wilson (2002b), following de Certeau, calls the domain of everyday practice. "Everyday life is more than a domain of routinised activity, passive consumerism, triviality and habit. … It is the domain of resistance and counter-hegemonic forces; adaptation to change; the formation of moral values; creativity, utopia, spontaneity and humour" (2002b: 39). Reindeer herders and tent workers as a group enjoy unrivalled agency in the camp and the tent. Seniority and practical experience determine the social status and power of the individual within this group. Although reindeer herders show a broad scope of agency in the tundra (owing to their knowledge, experience and skill), their agency is nonetheless confronted and sometimes questioned by the presence of oil workers in the same place, the tundra.

Owing to its economic significance, the domain of the oil and gas industry is closely controlled by the domain of politics. I argued in chapter 5 that the possibilities for reindeer herders to participate in negotiating rights to land use are very restricted, although they are the ones who are most affected by the outcomes of such negotiations. Agency, therefore, seems to be very limited in this domain. Indeed, it is limited in the political domain, as has also been shown by Wilson (2002b). However, she emphasises that people may choose not to engage in certain debates or domains: they may choose to withhold their voices in certain fields. From my own research, it appears that reindeer herders and tent workers rely on the people in the state farm's *kontora* and officials in the Department of Agriculture to sort out these problems for them. Reindeer herders and tent workers prefer to exert their agency in other domains, notably in the domain of everyday life – for example, by growing vegetables around their houses – where they may expect results to be directly beneficial and to arrive more quickly.

Within the structure of the former state farm, reindeer herders and tent workers have to compete but also to live in symbiosis with the *kontora* people. In many cases these white-collar workers are the relatives of the reindeer herders and tent workers. Reindeer herders and tent workers need the white-collar workers for specific purposes, including all official contacts with "outer" domains, such as agricultural authorities, oil companies and other institutions in the district centre, the capital of the Komi Republic and the capital of the Russian Federation.

For the reindeer-herding families, the latter places constitute the periphery of their everyday world, and their social capital (informal networks) does not reach into this periphery. Consequently, transactions and communications take place in the official sphere rather than in the informal sphere. This is why these places appear so alien and distant from the domain of everyday life and why the go-betweens of the *kontora* are needed. Reindeer herders are not at home in the official sphere: officials are at home there. Reindeer herders are not at home in the political sphere: politicians are at home there. For officials and politicians, reindeer herding may seem a world far away. For the reindeer herders, the corridors of power seem to be a world apart. The question is why these spheres have so little overlap – that is, why there are so few reindeer herders and tent workers who become politicians or officials. True, some of them become officials in the *kontora* of the state farm, but few are promoted any further. For this reason, outsiders keep telling reindeer herders how to herd reindeer. And for the same reason, reindeer herders and tent workers continue to speak about "us" and "them" and see themselves as victims of "serfdom" (*kabala;* see Konstantinov 2000: 55), as powerless before the authorities and oil companies. Finally, for the same reason, crypto-entrepreneurship seems justified in moral terms. The low degree of social mobility is caused by, and at the same time perpetuates, the reindeer herders' image as living in another time (being "traditional" or "backward").

9.2 Tradition

Let me now connect the notion of tradition with the concept of agency and structure. My main point is that the concept of tradition is similar to that of structure, and my argument follows three lines. The first is of a semantic character. This line of argumentation is based on Russian vocabulary, but it works out equally well in English. Most citizens of Russia, I contend, see the attribute *traditsionnoe* ("traditional") as standing in opposition to *sovremennoe* ("contemporary", which in Russian substitutes for the attribute "modern") or *progressivnoe* ("progressive").[119] Therefore, the word *traditsiia*

[119] See Grant 1995: 159; Kwon 1997: 160. Ssorin-Chaikov (1998: 103) gives a striking example of how the "the conceptual separation of 'modern' and 'traditional'" led the Soviet ethnographer-cum-politician Suslov to have his photographs faked in order to make them "ethnographically correct". Pika and Prokhorov (1994) discuss the opposition of the attributes *sovremennoe* ("contemporary") and *etnichnoe* ("ethnic"). The "ethnic", they state, often sounds as if it means "to remain in the Stone Age" and is generally associated with the past (1994: 20-21).

("tradition") stands in opposition to the word *progress*. While the former term emphasises the continuity of things, the latter emphasises change.

More than any other society, socialist society explicitly demanded social engineering, innovation, progress and change. (It was on these grounds that around 1930 people vowed to conduct reindeer herding "in a new way".) In socialist ideology, progress itself is tantamount to agency: those who do not progress have no agency – they will be left behind. Here again enters the notion of backwardness – in Russian, *otstalost'*, literally the "standing-apart" (from the rest of "us", who have moved on). As Argounova has shown in her analysis of accusations of nationalism in Sakha (Yakutia), *otstalyi* ("backward") has frequently been used as an accusatory term. She concludes that *progressivnyi* ("progressive") is among the qualities "which represent what the ideal member of socialist society should be like" (2001: 255-256; cf. Vitebsky 2002: 187). In other words, it is a moral term.

Since the mid-1980s the term *traditional* has been used first by intellectuals and then by wider circles of élites in the Soviet Union and Russia, notably by politicians. "Tradition" is used to capture the positive traits of continuities in social life, while "backwardness" is used to capture the negative traits of the same continuities. In the postsocialist context, the notion of tradition has become a powerful discursive resource – a kind of symbolic capital, which is the key resource for image. Even so, it cannot compete against the notion of progress, which remains unchallenged in its power. Indeed, the notion of tradition – by virtue of the assumption that some societies are more traditional than others – implicitly reaffirms and strengthens the notion of progress.

The second line of my argument that tradition is similar to structure derives from the idea that both imply a certain primordial state in the arrangement of things ("our people have always done things this way"). Tradition refers to what is supposedly a structural property of a certain social group. The statement that reindeer husbandry is a traditional form of land use (or a traditional way of life) implies that reindeer husbandry, because it is primordial, should have priority over other forms of land use (or lifestyles). In the regional setting of the Russian North, the statement that reindeer herding and hunting and fishing are traditional ways of land use is employed by the political and intellectual spokespeople of the indigenous peoples to defend the status of these forms of land use against the "new" industries, notably oil and gas extraction. They use the notion of tradition to confer moral superiority upon those "old" activities, which have supposedly existed for so long that they have become an unquestionable given. Economists may argue that oil and gas extraction yield higher profits than any kind of agricultural activity. This argument attains its authority from the central

role of economy in the dominant discourse in socialist societies as well as postsocialist and Western societies ("market economies"). The assertion that reindeer herding, hunting and fishing are traditional is an attempt to challenge the primacy of the economic argument by claiming that reindeer herding, hunting and fishing should come first because they existed there first. But logically, this assertion, too, re-creates the notion of progress. This dilemma amounts to a conceptual weakness in the traditionalist paradigm, and it creates a political weakness as well. The position of the adherents of the traditionalist paradigm can be one only of defence and protection.

The third line of my argument that tradition is similar to structure derives from the idea that both underline the continuity of certain things. I illustrate this by returning to the ethnographic description in the first chapter. The words *da capo* at the end of section 1.3 indicate the repetitiveness of the reindeer herders' activities. The annual cycle of migrations, the pitching and the striking of the tent, are all structural features of reindeer herding and therefore of the lives of the reindeer herders and their families. Yet all these activities are subject to variation, for without a good deal of flexibility people would be unable to survive in the tundra. One may conclude that Komi reindeer husbandry has plenty of traditions and a highly traditional character. However, so have other occupations and life-styles, such as that of the coal miners of Vorkuta. Moreover, Komi reindeer herders and tent workers do not use the word "tradition"; instead, they continually re-create "tradition" without reflecting on it verbally.

Looking at the notion of tradition in the context of Saami reindeer herding, Bjerkli (1996: 10) wrote: "An underlying assumption about a state of affairs that can be described as 'traditional' often exists. This state of affairs is something lasting and stable". However, Bjerkli proposed treating the concept of tradition in a different way. "Seen in this perspective, there is a dynamic element embedded in 'traditional' patterns of behaviour. Such dynamics are perhaps some of the most important elements missing in much of the theories on 'tradition'" (1996: 18). To try to cast the "traditional" into a neatly carved mould means taking away its flexibility.

> If we codify the flexible, we risk standardization. Hence adaptation will lose some of its elasticity that it requires, and a genuine 'traditional' condition slips between our fingers. Adaptation is a flexible process, not a fact. If flexibility has a special 'traditional' value for Saami adaptation and survival and for many other indigenous peoples as well, then we could do much damage if we 'traditionalize' the 'traditional' (Bjerkli (1996: 18).

Similarly, "traditional" Komi reindeer herding, the "traditional way of life" (*traditsionnyi uklad zhizni*) of Komi reindeer herders, is neither rigid nor

unchanging – it is flexible and involves change all the time. To "traditionalise" the traditional means to characterise it as if it were rigid, unchanging and frozen in time (Lawson 1997; Morrow and Hensel 1992; Nadasdy 1999; cf. Halemba 2001: 285). If we use the traditionalist paradigm to describe the practice of reindeer herding, then we run the risk of making it bloodless and putting it behind the glass of the museum showcase.

Although tradition may yield symbolic capital for indigenous and other peoples, it is a problematic resource, particularly when applied to Komi reindeer husbandry. True, the notion of tradition, as in "traditional way of life", is usually seen as positive and assertive, especially if opposed to the notion of "backwardness". Nevertheless, even if the traditionalist paradigm is based on a benevolent attempt to rehabilitate non-Russian peoples in the Russian Federation, its application places these peoples in an awkward historical position.[120]

The same holds for the connection between the traditional (*traditsionnoe*) and civilisation (*tsivilizatsiia*) in the context of the post-Soviet Russian North. "Civilisation" points to some form of refinement that a society has achieved in the course of history. In this interpretation, "civilisation" may be understood as the accumulation of resources by a society through history. The resources that come to mind first are certain forms of cultural and symbolic capital (education, culture as in beaux arts) and economic capital (for example, roads, railways, telephones and other forms of transportation and telecommunication). Earlier I said that *tsivilizatsiia* ends where the roads run out of tarmac. The zone beyond is characterised by a lack of certain amenities, by the absence of specific resources. What is specific about *tsivilizatsiia* in the Soviet and post-Soviet understanding is the selection of resources usually ascribed to it (transportation is one of them). In common language, people associate *tsivilizatsiia* with books by Pushkin, cars and vegetables, but not with old tales told around the campfire, reindeer sledges and the feast called *aibarch* – the latter are all seen as tradition. Only archaeologists and anthropologists use the word *tsivilizatsiia* in connection with hunters and herders.

There is yet another slant to the interpretation of *tsivilizatsiia*. "Civilisation", in the literary sense, has the connotation of becoming civilised, or making someone civilised (*tsivilizovannyi*). Throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, administrators in the centre and the provinces of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union were wont to conceive of peo-

[120] Pika and Prokhorov (1994) were aware of this problem and addressed it in their work. While I find the term *neo-traditionalism* infelicitous because of its hidden implications about history, I generally agree with their argument, including the demand for the enhancement of self-government.

ples as standing on various levels of civilisation.[121] In other words, in the perception of the inhabitants of Russia, the various peoples have reached different stages in history. What is more, from the mid-1940s to at least the 1970s, the hegemonic discourse presented the Russian people as the leading nation and, consequently, the most progressive one. The Russian nation had the mission to bring revolution and progress, civilisation and culture to the peoples of the North (see Slezkine 1994: 199 and *passim*). (This may be described as the initial stage, the second stage being a number of trained and acculturated "nationals" bringing civilisation and culture to their own ethnic groups.) After 1930 in particular, societies had to change for the sake of progress, and what needed to be overcome was the "backwardness" of those societies. Slezkine's account of the first Soviet cadres among the northern peoples aptly illustrates how hard these cadres tried to exert their agency in order to "make a difference" and overcome the assumed indifference of the natives.

"Tradition is very much alive where transportation is poor" is a preliminary conclusion that I offered in chapter 7. There is no direct causal link between "tradition" and "transportation"; what these two terms point to is the absence of certain resources, the character of a region as not thoroughly appropriated (*osvoeno*) by the progressive forces, as an "uncivilised" place. It is a place that is not thoroughly conquered, in the political as well as the cultural sense. Politically, this translates as a lack of control, as is exemplified by reindeer owners who evaded collectivisation in the remotest parts of the tundra (Appendix 10). Culturally, it translates as an alien domain that may hold eerie surprises, as is exemplified by the slight shudder outsiders get when they hear that Komi and Nenets reindeer herders drink fresh blood.

Ultimately, the "traditional" implies otherness. "Traditional" are some other people, not us. In the Russian language, again, the "traditional" (*traditsionnoe*) is opposed to the "contemporary" (*sovremennoe*). To belong to a traditional people either means to be a relic in time (Maksimov 2002) or connotes "dwelling in 'habitats' outside of history" (Hancock 2002: 230). Hancock continues: "[I]t seems that the theories of tradition that prevail in the popular imagination … imply that indigenous economies, to be consid-

[121] Since Speranskii's administrative reforms (in 1822), ethnic groups in Siberia were graded into "sedentary", "nomadising" and "roaming" (*osedlye*, *kochuiushchie*, *brodiachie*) peoples. Each of these categories was connected with specific administrative regulations (Raeff 1956: 104-136). Lenin's national policy perpetuated the notion of peoples undergoing different stages of historical development. The multi-tiered system of administrative units (Autonomous Republic, Autonomous Oblast', Okrug) helps to sustain such assumptions about people's progress in history.

ered indigenous, ought to replicate with plausible fidelity an intact world of meaning outside of contemporary reality" (2002: 230).

Someone who is assessed as traditional cannot be contemporaneous with the person who is making this assessment. To use the terminology of Fabian (1983), the speaker denies the coevalness of the person spoken about. "Tradition and modernity are not 'opposed' (except semiotically), nor are they 'in conflict'. All this is (bad) metaphorical talk. What are opposed … are not the same societies at different stages of development, but different societies facing each other at the same time" (Fabian 1983: 155). Both Russian and Komi societies are as much traditional as they are modern. Only through such metaphorical classification does it happen that societies and ethnic groups are "assigned their slots in evolutionary schemes" (Fabian 1983: 147).

Throughout this book I have argued that Komi reindeer herders and their family members do not have control of their own image. But why does image matter? One may argue that for the Komi reindeer herders themselves it may make no difference how they are perceived from the outside, for the image has no influence, or only very little, on the *practice* of reindeer herding. Yet the image has a great influence on the decision whether or not to become a reindeer herder or tent worker. Young people will no longer be willing to work in the tundra if they are constantly confronted with the suggestion that they are going to work in a business which has no place in contemporary life, which is outside modernity. This is why the usage of the traditionalist paradigm may have an adverse rather than a conducive influence on Komi reindeer husbandry.

9.3 The ironies of the periphery

I started this book in the reindeer herders' camp and village, because these two places together constitute the centre of the life-world of the reindeer herders, tent workers and their family members. I have sought to guide the reader in successive steps from the centre outwards into the periphery of the reindeer herders' life-world. We have travelled from the herders' tent to the offices of ministries and academia in the Komi capital, Syktyvkar, in Moscow and in Cambridge. Having arrived there, we may now look back and recall the travel experiences in our own everyday-life context: and now it seems that it is *there* – far away in the forests and tundra – where tradition is at home. The remoter the area, the more it promises to be traditional. However, this is the perception from outside. The notion of tradition, which has been built up on the way from the reindeer herders' camp to the city, is now reflected backwards – straight into the camp. Although the herders seldom talk about tradition, they are supposed to act as the "custodians" of tradition.

For Komi reindeer-herding families, the relation between "centre" and "periphery" yields contradictions that might be described as three ironies. The first irony is that the reindeer herders' life-world is conceptualised inversely to the conventional concept of centre and periphery in the wider society – in other words, inversely to the way citizens of the Russian Federation usually see their country. The centre of power is Moscow; the periphery of power is the herders' village. This notion of centre and periphery is sustained by the dominant discourse, and it has a bearing on how reindeer herders, tent workers and their children see themselves. School and the House of Culture (the domain of education) teach the village children that Moscow is the centre and that they live on the periphery. In places such as Moscow and Syktyvkar, politicians, academics and others create and maintain the notions of centre and periphery, which are then disseminated through the domain of education in all parts of the country.

The second irony consists of the fact that the public image of the reindeer herders and tent workers is crafted not by themselves but by those who are far away, in the centres of power, which are on the far-flung periphery of the reindeer herders' life-world. Reindeer herders, tent workers and their family members have least agency in the formulation and negotiation of their image, and yet the image affects the way they see themselves.

How do the Komi reindeer herders imagine themselves? How do they like to see themselves? I am convinced that they take most of their pride from their knowledge, experience and endurance. These are the main qualities that enable them to live and work in the "harsh" environment of the tundra and to utilise its resources. Experience and endurance prepare the ground for the reindeer herders' unsurpassed agency in the tundra.

What is the content of the image of Komi reindeer husbandry, as defined by outsiders? It has changed throughout the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century, Komi reindeer herders were seen as being capitalist, progressive and at times even aggressive, in their role as exploiters. After 1930 this notion gradually faded and gave way to the notion that reindeer herding in general was backward and needed to be developed in industrial ways. After 1985 the northern peoples, who had been supposed to be "backward", received some kind of rehabilitation, as indigenous and other intellectuals publicly addressed the marginalisation of indigenous peoples in Soviet society and attempted to improve the image of these peoples. Nowadays the valuation of the reindeer herders' supposed otherness in time is shifting from negative terms – "backward" – to positive terms – "traditional".

The third irony is that Komi involvement in reindeer herding goes back "only" 350 years or so; thus, it is "new" in comparison with other indigenous peoples' involvement in reindeer herding. The gradual develop-

ment of large-scale reindeer husbandry gave Komi reindeer herding distinctive traits, but this development was even more recent. For this reason I have argued that Komi reindeer husbandry has "always been modern". In the Soviet period, in particular, it was propagated as a blueprint for modernising and industrialising other northern peoples' practices of reindeer herding.

Why, then, would one say that Komi reindeer herders are "traditional" people, as is said in post-Soviet times, or "backward" people, as was said in Soviet times? What is the rationale behind this image? The answer lies in their "otherness" in time (Fabian 1983). In Soviet ideology as well as in Western capitalist society, progress is the prime concern and the prime goal to be achieved. Citizens are expected to act in progressive ways. This ideological demand for progress can operate only with the "backward" or "traditional" as the antagonist to progress. Although in practice Komi reindeer husbandry was more "progressive" than that of other peoples and therefore served as a blueprint, the general image of Komi reindeer husbandry had to be, and still has to be, one of a "backward" or "traditional" life-style in order to assert the superiority of urban, industrial, progressive society. Thus, the farther one travels from the centre to the periphery of the Komi reindeer herders' life-world, the more the herders are othered as "them" in contrast to "us", the members of modern society. By constructing the periphery, the centre constructs and legitimises itself.

Chapter 10
Epilogue

I want to end this book by turning back to the lives of its protagonists. We now have a better grasp of the energy and stamina which are needed in order to make a living in the tundra. We have also seen how reindeer herders and tent workers not only operate within the limits imposed by natural and man-made constraints but also push against those limits, drawing on a variety of resources and opportunities such as personal networks and transportation.

Helicopter flights used to be a resource but now have become so erratic that they can no longer be relied upon: they have turned into rare opportunities. Let us imagine, however, that we are travelling to the north of the Komi Republic again; we were successful in our hunt for a helicopter lift and are now sitting on top of neatly labelled milk cans and boxes and all kinds of provisions which the reindeer-herding families in the village send to their relatives in the tundra. We are flying back to the reindeer herders' camp, to visit the Khatanzeiskii family and their relatives. Things have changed over the last years, and so have personal relations. Zhenia, Ivan, Polina, Ter' Mish Andrei, Zhen'ko, Van'ko, Kostia, and Izhma Fed' are in the camp and rush over to the helicopter as soon as it has landed. They shuffle around more boxes, milk cans and large chunks of meat, which will be dispatched to the village. The herders know very well that many village inhabitants depend on the meat and fish produced in the tundra; they are aware of the mutual dependence between tundra and village.

Some other friends whom we had previously met are absent. Many of them now live permanently in the village. Lesha found another job after his military service ended. Lyzhasa Andrei, when he returned from the army, was even more decided that he would no longer work as a reindeer herder. After he had hung around for some months in his native village of Ust'-Lyzha, the mayor used her connections to get him a job with an oil company. Now Lyzhasa Andrei is involved in the same "black business" (*chernaia rabota*) that he had been criticising a few years ago.

Sasha has been evicted from the tent. The other herdsmen decided that he was not, after all, a suitable herder. He now stays in the village of Novikbozh, is occasionally required by his parents and siblings to work in the garden, and does not have "anywhere else to go". Indeed, is he unhappy, because he felt much more "at home" in the tundra than in the village. He had been aware of the possibility of being expelled from Brigada N° 9 but had been hoping to be accepted by his relatives in Brigada N° 10. They might not have taken him either, but then it did not matter anyhow, because of the organisational changes that occurred some months later.

The two brigades were merged shortly after the slaughter in 2001 because both of their herds had become too small, even when the slightly growing number of private deer was taken into account. Zhenia is now brigadier of the united "herds number nine and ten". Vasilii, Tania, Liuba and Stepan retired around the same time. Tonia has left, too: she is now married to a herder from Brigada N° 5 and works as a tent worker there.

Likewise, Yelena's three oldest children have all married. Zhenia's wife is from Khorei-Ver and stays in Yelena's house with their baby. Ania and her Russian husband from the city of Ukhta have a baby, too. Instead of moving to Ukhta, they decided to stay in Novikbozh. The husband works on the construction site of an oil company just 40 kilometres from Novikbozh. After Yelena's mother died, the young couple moved into her house. For Yelena, it is good to know that Ania and her husband live next door and can take care of her, should the need arise. Roza has moved to Ust'-Usa, where she lives with her husband. She had to abandon her plans to study in Syktyvkar. Instead, her sister Katia is now in higher education in Ukhta, where she lives in the household of the parents of her brother-in-law. Van'ko is now an apprentice reindeer herder, on the pay-roll of the "municipal unitary enterprise" (or *sovkhoz*, as people keep saying), but next year he will receive his call-up. He is looking forward to army service. So is Mishko, the youngest of the Khatanzeiskii children, who still goes to school, still does not like it, and prefers his weekly work as disk jockey in the Novikbozh House of Culture.

Over the years, the existence of an all-year road and the gradual expansion of the oil industry has turned Novkibozh and Ust'-Usa into suburbs of Usinsk – at least it is no longer exceptional that people work in the town (or at an oil well) and live in the village. More and more people have started to take up jobs in the oil business. I was able to witness the transformation of a predominantly agricultural community into a commuter settlement, in its various stages. The same sort of development that took place in Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh is now well under way in Akis' and Ust'-Lyzha (the two nearest villages). All these villages belong to the former state farm Ust'-

Usinskii, and all have seen a decline in agriculture in terms of both its economic role and its symbolic role for the community. Ust'-Usinskii has been undergoing hard times, and Bezumov (the expert on reindeer husbandry in the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic) indicated in late 2001 that it will be necessary to merge the reindeer-herding brigades of this enterprise with those of its western neighbour, Severnyi. In fact, this is what happened in early 2003.

Among the reindeer-herding enterprises in the Komi Republic, Ust'-Usinskii has been one of the weakest, in the 1990s as well as in previous decades. We can only speculate about the reasons. While I was finishing the manuscript of my doctoral thesis, Kirill Istomin informed me that reindeer herders who live farther west and work in the enterprise Izhemskii Olenevod perceive the herders of Ust'-Usinskii as "backward". No Komi herders except those of Ust'-Usinskii still use open fires inside the tent in the summer. In fact, what Brigades N° 9 and 10 use in summer may be called *yaran chom* ("Nenets tent"; see fig. 11). According to Istomin, the Komi herders from Inta think their Ust'-Usinskii colleagues are somehow "like Nenets". It may seem that Vasilii, Ivan, Zhenia and other Khatanzeiskii herdsmen confirm the existing ethnic stereotypes by showing less entrepreneurial vigour than their neighbours from Izhma and Inta. But in fact, like everyone else, they try to make a living and to better their living conditions, for their own sake as well as for the benefit of the village community. For this reason, they do not easily accept the nagging of Khoziainov and other managers in the *kontora*. What do the *kontora* people really know about life in the tundra? And what do people like Bezumov really know about reindeer herding? Even if he acts as the Komi Republic's number one authority on reindeer husbandry, he lives far away from the tundra and may not understand the everyday life of a reindeer herdsman.

Nor, indeed, is it possible for any short-term visitor, truly to understand what it means to be a herdsman – exactly as Zhenia prophesied, when I had tried to convince him of my endeavour to sketch some essential features of their lives, at the outset of my research.

Appendices

Appendix 1
Moving from one campsite to another

In order to illustrate migration practices, elements of the material culture and pertinent terminology in Komi reindeer husbandry, I describe the procedure of moving from one campsite to another as I witnessed it many times in spring. The procedure is called *yamdanka* in Russian and *vörz'öm* in Komi. I divide the *vörz'öm* into three steps: first, taking the tent down and storing the two households' belongings on sledges; second, the actual movement from the old to the new campsite; and third, setting up the tent at the new site.

On such a day, the inmates of the tent get up half an hour or so earlier than usual. Breakfast (the first "tea") is taken in a hurry. The tent workers take all the bedding, the reindeer skins (*kövör vol'*), the thick plastic foil underneath and the curtains from the sleeping compartments (*bölögan*) out of the tent, fold them and place them on two special freight sledges called *siabucha.* The next items to leave the tent are the stools and wooden boxes (*kud*), which are used for the storage of valuable things. The tables (*pyzan*), the boxes for crockery storage (*pögreböch*), all the cooking equipment and the supplies usually stored in the so-called front end (*vodz pom*) are put aside because the floor planks (*lata*) must now be removed. For this purpose, the herders loosen the tent covers at the front end and push the planks out through the holes. Then they place the planks on the respective sledges (*lata dod'*) and fix them. The planks on these two sledges serve as a base upon which the stools and wooden boxes can be stored.

After the square rack (*sër*), the washstand (*rukomoinik*) and the metal bowl (*tazik*) have been taken down, the herders and tent workers can start to uncover the tent. The strings that fix the tent covers to the poles must be untied. The herders remove the snow and ice from the two halves of the outer tent cover (*niuk*), which is made from hides, fold them and heave them onto the *lata dod'* sledges. The felt parts of the inner cover (*noi*) are folded, too, but for the time being they remain on the ground. Then everybody starts to disassemble the frame of the tent, and the two sets of poles (*yv*, approximately 20 plus 20) are laid upon the *chom-uticha* sledges. The tent has a basic construction of four poles that are tied together at the top and carry all the other poles. This tetrapod (*mokhota*) is dismantled, too, and each side of the tent will transport two of the *mokhota* poles to the new campsite.

The only remaining elements that cannot be divided into two are the stovepipe (*truba*) and the stove (*kört pach*). The people in the two halves of the tent have agreed that the right-hand side (Ivan) will take the stovepipe

with them while the left-hand side (Vasilii) has the duty of hauling the stove sledge (*kört pach dod'*). But beforehand, the stove must be emptied. Two strong men heave it to a place some metres away from the former tent and turn it upside down to remove all the ashes. Once the stove has cooled down, the herders place it on the sledge, fill the inside with dry firewood (*kos pes*) and throw large logs of "fresh" firewood (*ul' pes*) next to it, thus making the best use of the remaining space on the sledge.

Meanwhile, the other herders and tent workers from each side spread the *noi* over the poles on the *chom-uticha,* put the table, cooking equipment and food supplies on top of it and wrap these items in the *noi* (see fig. 27). The two milk cans (*fliaga*) and all remaining pieces of canvas (*brezent*) or nylon claddings also end up on the freight sledges. It is now time for the herders to secure the loads on all the freight sledges and for the tent workers to examine the campsite and look for things that might prove useful in future. Depending on the site, the men collect the tree trunks that have not been processed into firewood and put them together in conical structures (*trenoga*). These help the herders' orientation on the way back south and can serve as an instant fuel supply.

Figure 27. Moving the camp: packing up the sledges. The young people store the wooden box with the china and all other kitchen equipment on a sledge and wrap it in the *noi*, the felt cover of the tent. (Near the Yarei-Shor River, 24 June 1999.)

The whole procedure so far has taken one hour or a little more. On such a "moving day", it is of great importance that all the oxen are driven to the camp in time; otherwise the *brigada* members can do nothing but sit on their sledges and twiddle their thumbs. In order to haul all 30 or so sledges from one place to another, some 85 oxen are needed (in summer, even more). After roughly one and a half hours, the penning and harnessing is over and the sledges have been brought into their appropriate positions. The two *chom-uticha* and the two *lata dod'* sledges have been appended to the respective sledge "trains" of each side of the tent. Such a train is called an *argysh;* it is composed of a number of freight sledges (the general term for which is *dod'*) and the driver's sledge (*dad'*). The number of oxen in front of a *dad'* varies: if snow conditions are good, three or four will do; if there is slushy snow or no snow at all, five or six animals are needed. Two oxen are tied to the back of the *dad'* and harnessed to the front of the following *dod',* and each subsequent *dod'* requires two additional oxen (three in the snow-free period). The herders usually tie one "spare" ox to the rear of the last sledge because the animals can easily get exhausted or even die. Figure 4 implies that there are four trains of sledges per camp, but in fact our brigade travelled with six trains, usually with five sledges each (one *dad'* plus four *dod'*).

The last pieces of equipment (such as the nets) are stored away, and the people now have time for a rest and a "tea". Each half of the tent has its meal by its "box sledge" (*yashchik dod'*),[122] which is the main storage place for Thermos flasks, perishable food and tobacco. At some point, though, Ivan and the herders of the right-hand side come over to Vasilii, because they have to talk about the trek, where to find the new campsite, what to do with the large herd and other issues. These moments have the aura of serious business, and the younger people never interrupt the negotiations of the two senior herders. After the consultation, the trains start moving, one after the other. The head of the brigade, Vasilii, is also the leader (*yasavei*) of the caravan. His *argysh* is followed by Tonia's, and after her comes Tania, then Polina, Lesha and Zhen'ko. The two Andreis and Sasha, who usually do not steer an *argysh*, look after the remaining oxen and drive them behind. Ivan has gone his own way, as someone must take care of the large herd.

Vasilii stops after a few hundred metres and checks whether all the *argysh* are all right. The whole caravan moves slowly, at a speed of five kilometres per hour. Driving an *argysh* requires experience and circumspection: an exhausted draught animal can easily be strangled. Numerous stops

[122] In ethnographic descriptions of Komi reindeer herding, this sledge is usually called *lar'* (originally a Nenets word), but the Komi reindeer herders I met call it *yashchik dod'.*

occur during the migration: either the traces are tangled up or the remaining oxen have to catch up with the caravan. After about two-thirds of the way, there will be another tea break. Such a migration can last anything between 2 and 12 hours. Before the caravan arrives at the new campsite, which is usually chosen in advance by one of the senior herdsmen, everybody stops and listens to the instructions of the brigadier. The tent workers check whether the new site is suitable and – most importantly – dry. One by one the *argysh* proceed to their appropriate positions in the new place, establishing the typical pattern shown in figure 4, with the sledges in a roughly symmetrical layout. After the *dad',* *chom-uticha* and *lata dod'* sledges have been disconnected and brought into their usual locations, all the draught animals are let loose.

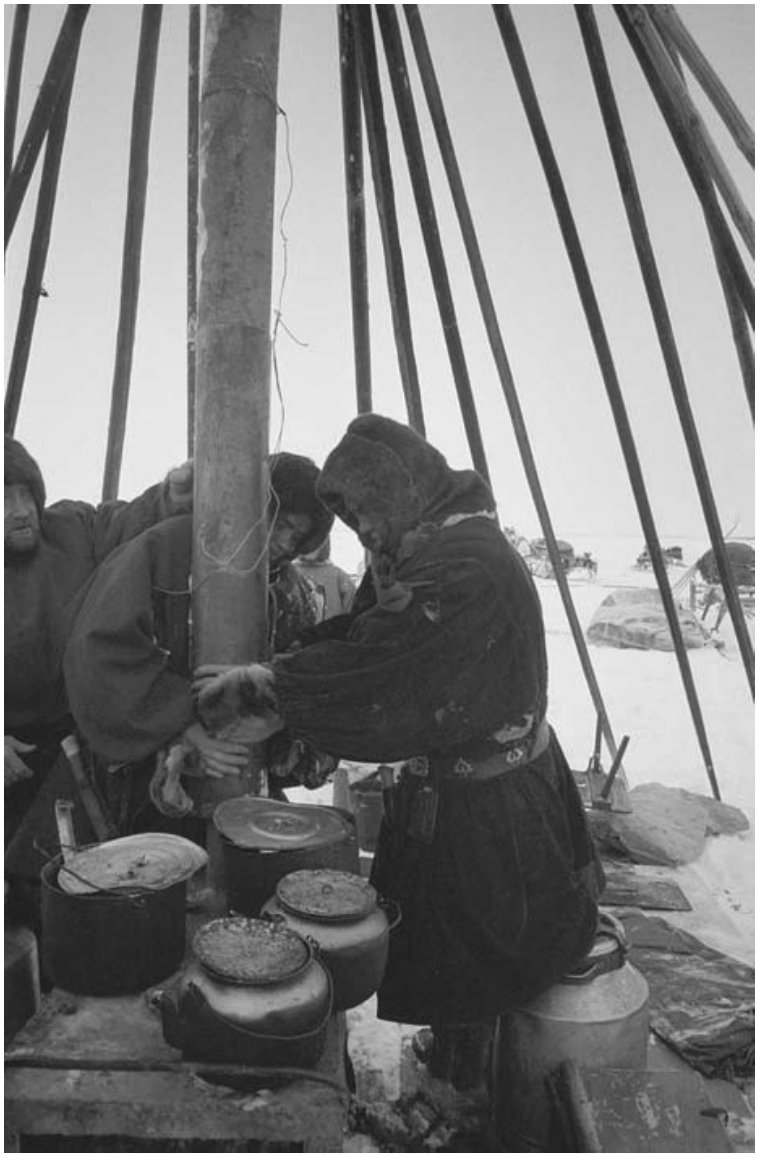

Figure 28. Moving the camp: adjusting the stovepipe.
(Near Lake Sandivei, May 1999.)

Setting up the tent starts with the floor planks, tables, stools, wooden boxes and kitchen equipment. The milk cans and kettles are filled with snow or water, and the kettles and pots will be placed on the stove as soon as the latter is available. The two sides of the tent are furnished with spruce twigs (*lys*) and plastic cladding. The tent workers can now start to unroll the reindeer skins and the bedding, if the weather is reasonably good. People from both halves of the tent bind the *mokhota* together, arrange the tetrapod and add all the remaining poles, except at the *vodz pom,* close to which the stovepipe will now be installed. Putting the pipe onto the stove and adjusting it to the frame of the tent is a moment of some delicacy (see fig. 28). Two iron poles (*kört yv*) help to support the stovepipe and add stability to the framework.

Now everybody helps to hoist the *noi* and tie the attached strings around the poles. The same applies to the *niuk*. One has to pay attention to the proper arrangement of the entrance (*öbös*) of the tent. The duality of tent life shows itself in the arrangement of the *öbös:* if the flap opened to the left at the old site, it will open to the right at the new site, and vice versa. After the tent frame is covered and the supply of dry wood has been taken out of the stove, somebody starts kindling the fire. Before the water in the kettles is boiling, people are busy with various small jobs. The *bölögan* curtains, the rack and washstand are installed. The young herders shovel snow against the lower part of the tent cover, up to 30 centimetres all around the tent, to insulate the inside against draughts and cold.

Everybody has done his or her share to make the tent look the way it was before, yet it feels cleaner and fresher and still quite chilly when the first "tea" is taken. To appease their hunger, people eat thin slices of frozen meat (*kyn yai*). The younger herders are sent out to cut trees and prepare firewood. The last task connected with the migration is the arrangement of the corral (*yör*) behind the tent: on the morrow, the herders push the freight sledges closer to each other and set one net between the two flanks. They also attach additional obstacles, such as wooden boards or whole birch trees, on top of the sledges. The corral is now ready for its daily usage. As a reminder, the procedure just described applies to the moving of the camp as it is typically done by herders of Ust'-Usisnkii in springtime; in other seasons certain practices differ significantly, and there are also slight regional variations.

Appendix 2
Transition to large-scale reindeer husbandry among Komi and Nenets

In order to analyse statements about the traditionality of Komi reindeer husbandry, it is necessary to look more closely at its origins. In chapter 4 I stated that Komi reindeer husbandry is a comparatively recent phenomenon and that the Komi appropriated the skills of herding from the Nenets. I also quoted L. N. Zherebtsov (1982: 165; my translation): "Having borrowed from the Nenets reindeer herding and the pertinent implements of work and production, means of transportation and many elements of material culture, the Komi creatively converted them in conformity with the new circumstances". Let us now look at this process in more detail. My description builds upon the works of Istomin (1998), Konakov and Kotov (1991), Krupnik (1993) and others.

In the sixteenth century, hunting was the main source of livelihood for the Nenets, who used domesticated reindeer for transportation. Only in exceptional cases did the Nenets slaughter their domesticated deer. They hunted wild reindeer in order to obtain meat and hides. Examining the development of large-scale reindeer husbandry in the European North, we should follow Istomin's analytical distinction between the Tundra Nenets and the Forest Nenets. The Tundra Nenets hunted sea mammals on the ice of the Barents and Kara Seas during the spring and intercepted herds of wild reindeer in the tundra during late summer and early autumn. In a geographical sense, their annual cycle was the reverse of that of the Forest Nenets (cf. Ingold 1980: 12-16). The latter probably followed a migration pattern corresponding to the seasonal migrations of species such as wild reindeer, squirrels and wild geese. Komi settlement in the Izhma and lower Pechora region must have had a negative effect on the hunting and fishing economy of the Nenets, notably the Forest Nenets.

It was against this historical and geographical backdrop that small-scale reindeer herding for the purpose of transportation gave way to large-scale reindeer herding for the procurement of meat and hides as well as for transportation. Scholars differ on the causes that triggered this transition. According to Khomich, "Evidently, the gradual extermination of wild reindeer herds, first in the European tundras and later in the Asian tundras, played some role. Apart from this, reindeer husbandry began to obtain importance as a means to the expansion of fur hunting, and rich herders began to look after the increase of their herds" (1966: 51; my translation).

Khomich's argument that the extinction of wild reindeer led to the emergence of large-scale herds of domesticated deer was later scrutinised by Krupnik (1993: 173-177). Examining cycles of climate change and changes in species abundance, he concluded that large-scale reindeer husbandry was likely to develop in times of cooler climate, a condition favourable for the growth of both wild and domesticated reindeer. Yet once the system of large-herd pastoralism had developed, "elements of a crisis situation apparently did catalyze a broad-scale shift to the new subsistence strategy. … Most commonly, this qualitative leap was in fact correlated with a direct reduction in the caribou [wild reindeer] population" (Krupnik 1993: 174). Krupnik implies that such reductions in populations of wild reindeer are usually caused by climate change. In Krupnik's interpretation, though, the trigger which *initially* conditioned the rapid increase in the number of domesticated reindeer included a number of social factors:

> the beginning of social stratification on the basis of wealth and property among the native peoples, which was supported, and in places even stimulated, by the Russian administrators; the demise of previous norms of clan solidarity and support, and therefore a new-found possibility for individual owners to accumulate large private herds; an increased demand for reindeer for transportation in fur trapping and fur trade; and a growing demand for transportation services required by the Russian administration. … Lastly, it appears that by this time experience in selective breeding had accumulated to a threshold sufficient to manipulate the age-sex structure of the herd, and this factor certainly hastened the transition to reindeer husdbandry (Krupnik 1993: 169-170).

Krupnik adds that the Nenets' transition to large-scale reindeer husbandry "may have been partially influenced by Komi reindeer herding, which was a full-blown and market-oriented activity since its inception in the early 1800s" (1993: 177). In this regard, Istomin has a somewhat different opinion, holding that the development of large-scale reindeer herding among the Nenets and the Komi was a process of mutual influence. The very inception of Komi reindeer herding was due to the accumulation of domesticated reindeer among the Nenets. Climatic reasons cannot have influenced the development decisively, because there is evidence that the growth of domesticated herds took place among the Forest Nenets much more strongly than among the Tundra Nenets. This salient difference, Istomin says, calls for an additional or alternative explanation (Istomin 1998: 30-31). He argues that this explanation must be found in an "external" factor, notably in the encroachment on Forest Nenets hunting grounds by Komi settlers. Forest Nenets clans were forced to hunt on the hunting grounds of other clans, and

the ensuing conflicts led to the decline of the tribal organisation. Instead of the clan, the family became the most important economic unit. And instead of the hunter's luck and skill, the number of reindeer became the most important mark of success.

Returning to Krupnik's argument that "a broad-scale shift to the new subsistence strategy" must have happened in a state of crisis, in this case created by the decrease in wild reindeer, there is general agreement among other authors. Referring to Eidlitz (1969), Istomin suggests that owing to the dearth of wild reindeer, the Nenets had to resort increasingly frequently to slaughtering their domesticated animals, which constituted their stock of "emergency food". Consequently, killing domesticated reindeer for meat and hides became the rule, and killing wild reindeer, the exception. Among the Nenets, the regular slaughter of deer has occurred since approximately the 1780s. This transition may be considered the final step to large-scale reindeer husbandry (Istomin 1998: 33).

Appendix 3
Kolva and the identity of the Kolvintsy

The epilogue and some other remarks in the present study point to an ethnically particular background for the protagonists of the story: the Khatanzeiskii families see themselves as "somewhere in between" Komi and Nenets. In what follows, I present material that allows us to see the Khatanzeiskii families of Ust'-Usa and Novikbozh as descendants of an ethnic group described in the literature as Kolvintsy.

The following description of the history of Kolva and the ethnic contacts between the Komi and the Nenets is derived mainly from an article written by Istomin (1999). Not far from the mouth of the River Kolva, a site was chosen for the construction of one of three churches for the Orthodox mission among the Nenets. The church was erected in 1827 or 1830.[123] Apart from the fact that the newly founded mission was located on one of the busiest migration routes, there were suitable preconditions for cattle breeding and sedentary livelihood. In the eyes of Orthodox priests, nomadism was a sinful way of life, as nomads could not attend mass regularly. In fact, a few Nenets families settled down at Kolva. Perhaps they had too few reindeer to keep living in the tundra and therefore decided to settle in Kolva and engage in other activities. Cattle breeding and hay making were practised after the manner of the Izhma Komi; in later decades their development and intensity exceeded even the level in the neighbouring Komi villages. Subsequently, the population of Kolva consisted mainly of Nenets who led a sedentary life in an "Izhma Komi manner", with its typical mix of cattle breeding, fishing and hunting but also reindeer husbandry and trade. Trade was pursued, on one hand, with Izhma and trading centres farther south, and on the other, with the Tundra Nenets. By trading with the Tundra Nenets, the Kolva Nenets could acquire meat, hides and other reindeer products (on which they habitually depended, notwithstanding that they had become sedentary).

At this point it is necessary to say a few more words about Kolva Nenets reindeer husbandry, as the reader might think that this group had abandoned it altogether, owing to the requirements of the missionaries. First, reindeer husbandry could be pursued on the condition that only part of the household migrated with the animals while the majority kept to the village (the "right" way of life). Again, this basically corresponded to the Izhma Komi pattern of reindeer husbandry. Second, the earliest settlers took benefit from the social institutions provided by the church, the most remarkable being the "reindeer herd of God", which has existed since 1869, if not ear-

[123] Istomin 1999: 22; I. L. Zherebtsov 1994: 103.

lier. Third, the 1860s and 1870s saw a mass influx of Tundra Nenets who had lost their herds to the combined havoc of over-grazing and veterinary diseases. The Tundra Nenets knew about the "herd of God" and, by borrowing reindeer from this herd, could hope to re-establish their own stock.

The "herd of God" was an "institution of economic and social insurance", as Istomin explains (1999: 30). The herd's sacral function, albeit dedicated to the Christian God, blended well with Nenets beliefs around sacred reindeer (Niglas 1998). Komi herders, too, benefited from the "herd of God", although it appears that their perception of these deer was more economic than religious: according to Kertselli (1911: 107), Komi herders called them "*kazennye oleni*" ("fiscal reindeer", or "reindeer of the state"). In any case, all those who profited from the "herd of God" were obliged to reinvest in it by donating reindeer when they were in a position to do so.[124] Although it seems that the service of lending reindeer was not conditional upon residence in Kolva, herders who made use of it became connected with the community and were likely to migrate along the routes passing it.

Thus, apart from the core of Nenets settlers in Kolva, who may be deemed Kolvintsy in a narrow sense, there were Kolvintsy in a broader sense: notably those who migrated in the ambit of Kolva and who considered themselves Nenets yet had the Izhma Komi dialect as their mother tongue.[125] This would account for the differences in Khomich's and L. N. Zherebtsov's comments about the Kolvintsy. The former stated that they constituted but a small number of Nenets, living in the territory of the Komi Republic (that is, in Kolva), whereas the latter affirmed that Kolvintsy also lived in settlements in the southern part of the Nenets Okrug, namely, in Kharuta and Khorei-Ver (Khomich 1966; L. N. Zherebtsov 1982: 168).

In the early 1990s, approximately 30 individuals of Nenets nationality lived in the village of Kolva.[126] Most likely these were descendants of the Kolvintsy in the narrow sense. However, V. K. Kanev's remark that the people of Kharuta were Kolvintsy supports the view that this ethnic group is

[124] By 1929, the "herd of God", with some 2,000 reindeer, had turned into the "herd of the regional department of social security" of the Izhma and later Ust'-Usa District (Berkhin 1981: 212, annotation). A "reindeer herd of God" also existed in Lovozero, on the Kola Peninsula (Konakov and Kotov 1991: 59). The income created from it was used to support orphans, invalids and the local school.

[125] Possibly some descendants of the Forest Nenets (who were assimilated by the Izhma Komi) could also be included in this ethnic group, but this depends on how broadly we want to define the term. We should remember Anderson's and other authors' insight that ethnic categories are flexible and relational.

[126] Paul Fryer, Cambridge/Joensuu, personal communication, April 1997.

not necessarily restricted to the village of Kolva proper.[127] Likewise, Istomin notes that some authors think of the Kolvintsy as an ethnic group already extinct, yet he found evidence that they still exist around Usinsk and other places of the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra (1999: 20).

In the epilogue I spoke about Inta reindeer herders' assessments that the reindeer herders of Ust'-Usinskii were somehow more Nenets than others. To have an open fire inside the tent is interpreted as a Nenets habit; the Komi supposedly do not do this any longer. For the overall argument of the present study, the particular everyday practices of Ust'-Usinskii reindeer herders have an important corollary: Ust'-Usinskii families may be seen as "more backward" than other Komi reindeer-herding communities. I believe this circumstance corroborates my argument that Komi reindeer herders generally perceive themselves as more progressive than Nenets ones and that they see the Nenets as "more genuine" herdsmen. The notion of progress – of being advanced – is a subliminal yet distinctive key concept of Komi reindeer husbandry in the perception of Komi reindeer herders themselves.[128]

[127] V. K. Kanev, personal communication (FM 11), Kharuta, August 1998.

[128] This element in the reindeer herders' perception of their own role is mirrored by what is now becoming the officially acknowledged version of Komi reindeer husbandry's role (see note 118).

Appendix 4
Sergei Vasil'evich Kertselli (1869-1935)

Sergei Vasil'evich Kertselli was born in 1869 in Będzin, a small town in the Kingdom of Poland, then part of the Russian Empire, probably into a family of Italian descent that had lived in St Petersburg before coming to Poland. Having graduated in 1896, he worked as a veterinarian in the Caucasus but then shifted his focus to the north and reindeer husbandry (Sochava 1934; Schulz, Urban and Lebed' 1972). In 1908 and again in 1909 he travelled to the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra and subsequently prepared an extensive monograph on the region (Kertselli 1911). His book served as an important source for my comparison of reindeer husbandry at present and in pre-revolutionary days. Before and after 1917 he published numerous texts devoted to the "economic significance", the "development" and the "perspectives" of reindeer husbandry in Russia (cf. Kuzakova 1994).

Kertselli had an extensive record of expeditions to various parts of Siberia. The tundras of northern Europe and the characteristics of Izhma Komi reindeer husbandry, though, remained the most important benchmark for him because, as he put it in one article, "[t]he good sales that the calf hides [reindeer hides] met with in the suede factories inverted the whole reindeer husbandry of Izhma and transformed it from the state of subsistence economy [*natural'noe khoziaistvo*] into an industrial state. … this suede production presented, no doubt, a progressive factor in the business of the Arkhangel'sk [region's] reindeer husbandry, permitting it to be regulated and placing it on a clearly economic footing" (Kertselli 1929: 114; my translation).

Kertselli regarded the Izhma Komi mode of reindeer husbandry as exemplary for the development of reindeer husbandry in the Soviet Union as a whole. His recommendations on how to make Soviet reindeer husbandry "industrialised" and "progressive" attracted the attention of the members of the Committee of the North and, more generally, proponents of the industrialisation of agriculture. We might characterise Kertselli as one of the inventors of the open-air meat factory in the Soviet North.

Striving to improve the system of reindeer husbandry led Kertselli to participate in the organisation of a bacteriological laboratory somewhere "on the Pechora" (perhaps in Izhma) in 1909-1910. It was shut down after only three years, because of political and personal altercations and ensuing scandals, as Kertselli put it (1929: 117-118). In those years he must have felt that his work and scholarship were underappreciated, a sense that also comes to the fore in his undisguised enmity towards the biologist Zhuravskii (1882-

1914).[129] The latter founded a zoological (since 1905, agricultural) research station in Ust'-Tsil'ma and passionately believed in the region's future as an area of coal mining and in the possibility of land cultivation in the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra. Kertselli never really acquired the fame that his opponent enjoyed (a fame still present in the Pechora region today).

However, Kertselli's main success was yet to come. Having helped to set up the Institute of Reindeer Husbandry in Leningrad (probably in 1931), he had gained expert authority among the members of the Committee of the North, with the result that his ideas became popular with Party officials. The government sought to implement many of Kertselli's suggestions, such as the production of tinned venison and the keeping of reindeer like cattle, under sedentary conditions (*izbennoe olenevodstvo*). He also participated in the organisation of reindeer-herding state farms in various parts of the Soviet Union (e.g. in the Chukchi region; see Omruv'e 2000). Kertselli died on 5 March 1935 in Leningrad. Although his name is almost forgotten, his idea of turning reindeer husbandry into an "industrialised" and "highly productive" business has largely driven Soviet and post-Soviet reindeer herding.

[129] See pp. 30, 70-77, 81-82, 106-107 in Kertselli's monograph (1911).

Appendix 5
Khoseda-Khard

Soon after May 1925, when the Committee of the North (Komitet Severa) had taken the decision to build the first culture bases (L'vov 1926), a first team was detached to select a site for a base in the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra. A suitable place was found some 30 kilometres upstream from Kharuta, and the settlement-to-be became known as Khoseda-Khard ("the house at [the river] Khoseda", in the Nenets language). A trading post was established there as early as 1925. According to the local historian V. K. Kanev (2001: 19-20), this measure noticeably improved the ability to procure supplies on the part of the inhabitants of nearby Kharuta and the hamlets downstream, which had not yet recovered from the effects of the civil war on trade and supplies in this region.

The culture base itself was constructed in two consecutive summers and was ready to operate in late 1927. In line with the standardised concept of culture bases, Khoseda-Khard comprised a school, a hospital, a bathhouse, a veterinary station and a "House of the Natives" (*Dom tuzemtsev*), a "House of Culture" for Soviet citizens *in statu nascendi*. This group of buildings and the Russians and Izhma Komi working in them were conceived of as an outpost of the Soviet project of bringing education, enlightenment (*prosveshchenie*), hygiene and other "cultural" values to the nomadic natives. For the reindeer-herding families, the trading post and the veterinary station were certainly the main attractions. Altogether, Khoseda-Khard operated very successfully in comparison with other culture bases.[130] Sovietisation experiences in the Nenets Okrug could be taken as a model case for other regions of the Soviet Far North.

Khoseda-Khard also served as an administrative centre, a function it inherited from the village of Kolva. This transfer exemplifies the complex bonds between Kolva and the Khoseda area, which later became part of the Nenets Okrug. The two sites were connected by the same reindeer migration route and shared a regional ethnic identity – that of the Kolvintsy (see Appendix 3).

Kolva represented the most expedient place for the foundation of a Samoied (Nenets) Tundra Soviet, which happened in 1924. But in fact, the Samoied Tundra Soviet initially migrated together with the reindeer-herding households. The chairpeople and secretary of the soviet had their own *chum*, their own reindeer herd, their own sledges, and so forth. Consequently, they spent their time in Kolva only in late autumn and early spring. With the

[130] For the development of the cultural bases in general, see also Chebotarevskii 1930; Suslov 1934; Terletskii 1935.

inauguration of the cultural base, the tundra soviet became sedentary and resided thereafter in Khoseda-Khard. The same thing took place with the two neighbouring tundra soviets.[131] In a way, by 1927-1929 the administrative divisions, which in the tundra had previously been volatile and unbounded, became rigid and fixed (the same would occur some years later with the collective farms and state farms). The delineation between the Komi Autonomous Oblast' and the newly founded Nenets Okrug created a curious situation whereby Khoseda-Khard was actually located in the territory of the Komi Autonomous Oblast'.[132] The boundary between the two regions was adjusted in the mid-1930s (*Atlas Respubliki Komi* 2001: 395).

Considering the multitude of administrative changes and the unclear "spheres of interest", one cannot exclude the possibility that reindeer herders in this region were collectivised more than once, by instructors sent from the administration of the Nenets Okrug as well as by instructors sent from the administration of the Ust'-Usa District. In their zest for collectivisation, the instructors of the Nenets Okrug might have been quicker than those of the Komi Autonomous Oblast', albeit by only a few months. Although Komi officials (Izhma and Ust'-Usa) complained in November 1931 that "the work is done extremely poorly" and did not know where to track down the last instructor, collectivisation labour emanating from Khoseda-Khard showed more results, probably owing to the goals of the cultural base, its location and its facilities. By November 1931, in the surroundings of Khoseda-Khard, four *kolkhoz* farms were up and running – officially, at least.[133]

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[131] The three tundra (nomadic) soviets had numbers: First Tundra Soviet (Siavta migration route), Second Tundra Soviet (Khoseda-Khard migration route), and Third Tundra Soviet (Karataika migration route), as of 1925. (FM 28: excerpt from a document in the State Archive of the Nenets Okrug, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Nenets-kogo avtonomnogo okruga, fond 187, opis' 1, delo 6, list 78; and fond 187, opis' 1, delo 3, list 6).

[132] Compare the case of Kharuta (see page 222).

[133] The data on these four collectives slightly contradict each other as regards the exact chronology. Here I am comparing data from the official description of the collective farm Rassvet Severa (FM 28) with data from V. K. Kanev's publication (2001: 21-23). The first *kolkhoz* to come into being was Druzhba, comprising the two hamlets of Siavta and Il'ia-Van' and founded on 21 April 1930 (or perhaps in December 1929). The second was Polokha, based in Kharuta and founded on 7 March 1930 (or perhaps in January 1930). The third was Zvezda, based in Yegor-Van' and founded in 1931 (or perhaps in February 1930). Further, there was an association for joint reindeer-herding (TSVO), Voi töv or Voite, which existed after 1931, if we rely on the description of the collective farm Rassvet Severa. V. K. Kanev states that the TSVO Voi töv had already been founded in 1926, but this seems doubtful, considering that the "First Nenets Reindeer-Herding *Kolkhoz*" was hailed as the *first* in the entire Nenets area only in March 1929.

In order to strengthen the connections between the centre and the southeastern corner of the Nenets Okrug, postal services by reindeer (in winter) or by horse (in summer) were operating from 1938 onwards. The postal route went across the migration routes of the reindeer herds and connected Nar'ian-Mar with Khorei-Ver, Konkovör, Khoseda-Khard and Siavta (from there it was only a short distance to the upper Usa and the projected railway line).[134] Nowadays such a journey would seem next to impossible unless made by helicopter (but nowadays helicopters are scarcer than the postal sledge "services" of those days). The hamlets and reindeer herders' tents were used as staging posts. Horses and reindeer had to be provided by the settlers and reindeer herders. Effectively, the government renewed (or continued) the obligatory transport services (*dorozhnaia povinnost'*) that the rural inhabitants had known from pre-revolutionary times. Part of the postal route used to be Polina's way to school. She was a pupil of V. K. Kanev, the teacher and local historian quoted previously in this book. In the late 1960s, when Polina attended Kanev's classes, the school had already been relocated from Khoseda-Khard to Kharuta.

The whole settlement of Khoseda-Khard was abandoned in 1956, and the buildings were relocated to Kharuta, for a number of reasons. Here I describe only the general political ones. Those were the days when the Soviet government decided to enhance its policies of sedentarisation (*osedanie*) of nomadic households and amalgamation (*ukrupnenie*) of small collective farms – in other words, to replace "nomadism as a way of life" (*bytovoe kochevanie*) with "production nomadism" (*proizvodstvennoe kochevanie*).[135] Again, the ultimate goal was the "industrialisation" of reindeer husbandry, as proposed by Kertselli and other Soviet experts. Agricultural enterprises of the new style needed an "economic base" (*khoziaistvennyi tsentr*), and Kharuta was chosen to fulfil this function for the new *kolkhoz* Rassvet Severa, which combined the three small *kolkhoz* farms that had

[134] V. K. Kanev (2001: 24). Cf. Golubkova (1987: 203-250), who describes vividly how she and her companions travelled on this route from Nar'ian-Mar to Vorkuta shortly after 1944.

[135] These measures have been discussed elsewhere (Anderson 2000: 56-62; Fondahl 1998: 67-71; Vitebsky 1992; to give just a few references to publications in English). I just want to emphasise that they affected the reindeer-herding communities of the Nenets Okrug more than those of the Komi ASSR. The politico-technical approaches to reindeer husbandry and ways of increasing its productivity are well illustrated in the book by Lashov and Litovka (1982). Lashov also published several articles concerning the process of sedentarisation, particularly in the Nenets Okrug (see Kuzakova 1994: 147-148).

existed in this region before.[136] The only building that still exists on the site of the previous district centre Khoseda-Khard is the meteorological station, inhabited by two families throughout the year. Together with a memorial erected on the initiative of V. K. Kanev in remembrance of the previous settlement, the station serves as a landmark for some of the reindeer-herding brigades of Rassvet Severa and Ust'-Usinskii.

[136] Polokha and Zvezda were united in the new enterprise Rassvet Severa in May 1954, and Druzhba joined in 1959 (FM 28; V. K. Kanev 2001: 33-35). Although the amalgamation (*ukrupnenie*) of collective farms had its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, earlier cases occurred in the late 1930s and 1940s. For example, Voi töv was absorbed by Polokha in July 1942.

Appendix 6
Reindeer turnover in the reindeer-herding brigades and productivity indicators for 1999, [state farm] Ust'-Usinskii

Brigadier	Brig. no.	Animals at the beginning of year	Increase	
			By birth (animals)	Other increase (animals)
[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Filippov, Andrei Valentinovich	№ 1	**1173**	432	–
Vaniuta, Maksim Yegorovich	№ 3	**955**	330	–
Chuprov, Vitalii Ivanovich	№ 5	**1000**	360	–
Anufriev, Yakov Yegorovich	№ 6	**1325**	480	–
Filippov, Ivan Vladimirovich	№ 7	**1387**	520	–
Khatanzeiskii, Vasilii Mitrofanovich	№ 9	**1090**	370	–
Khatanzeiskii, Yevgenii Alekseevich	№10	**1078**	400	–
Grand total of the state farm	(7)	**8008**	2892	–
Previous year	(7)	**10329**	3520	
Difference		**–2321**	–622	

Source: Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic, 18 July 2000, by courtesy of L. V. Bezumov.

Appendix 6 (continued)

Total expenditure						
Productive expenditure						
Killed for slaughter		No. of these for communal [brigade] nutrition	Bonus deer [for successful work]	Other productive expenditure (animals)	Productive expenditure total	
Animals	Quintals LW*				Animals	Quintals LW*
[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]	[12]
235	128.7	61	–	–	235	128.7
91	55.6	57	–	–	91	55.6
181	103.4	56	–	–	181	103.4
278	140.4	62	–	–	278	140.4
192	105.6	67	–	–	192	105.6
166	93.2	57	–	–	166	93.2
94	52.3	50	–	–	94	52.3
1237	679.0	410	–	–	1237	679.0
1828	926.0	412			1828	926.0
–591	–247.0	–2			–591	–247.0

*Quintals LW = quintals (*tsentner*) (100 kg) of live weight.

Appendix 6 (continued)

Brig. no.	Total expenditure [*continued*]							
	Unproductive expenditure							
	Plague [killed by diseases]		Trampling down [killed by predators]		[Other] losses		Unproductive expenditure total	
	Total	Calves	Total	Calves	Total	Calves	Total	Calves
	[13]	[14]	[15]	[16]	[17]	[18]	[19]	[20]
Nº 1	221	144	28	15	359	94	608	253
Nº 3	153	98	16	10	210	66	379	174
Nº 5	174	113	15	7	135	14	324	134
Nº 6	198	120	23	17	–	–	221	137
Nº 7	204	131	24	14	621	177	1041	322
Nº 9	186	124	21	10	348	8	555	142
Nº 10	188	123	18	12	455	149	661	284
Grand total	1324	853	145	85	2128	498	3597	1436
Previous year	1315	558	383	164	2315	725	4013	1447
Difference	+9	+295	–238	–79	–187	–227	–406	–11

Appendix 6 (continued)

Animals at the end of year		Meat production (increase by birth + by wght) in quintals (*tsentner*)	Meat production per 100 January reindeer, in quintals (*tsentner*)	Average live wght of deer realised, in kg	Females in herd * (%)	Preservation of adult deer (%)	Productive output of calves per 100 January females *	Vaccinated against gadfly larvae
Total	Female *							
[21]	[22]	[23]	[24]	[25]	[26]	[27]	[28]	[29]
762	339	–200	–17.0	54.8	44.5	69.7	30.3	250
815	344	–64	–6.7	61.1	42.2	78.5	33.9	950
855	356	–23	–2.3	57.1	41.6	81.0	46.5	1100
1306	671	+127	+9.6	50.5	51.4	93.7	49.0	1450
866	463	–314	–22.6	55.0	53.5	51.8	26.2	1050
739	302	–221	–20.3	56.1	40.9	62.7	42.2	1100
723	347	–254	–23.5	55.7	48.0	65.0	19.5	1100
6066	2812	–937	–11.7	54.9	46.4	73.0	35.4	7000
8008	4111	–820	–7.9	50.6	51.3	75.2	42.1	9100
–1942	–1299							

*Female = female deer older than two years.

Appendix 7
Reindeer turnover in the reindeer-herding enterprises and productivity indicators for 1999, Komi Republic

Enterprise [central location]	No. brigs	Animals at the beginning of year	Increase	
			By birth (animals)	Other increase (animals)
[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
PSK Izhemskii Olenevod [Siziabsk]	23	**27892**	10566	774
Sovkhoz Severnyi [Mutnyi Materik]	8	**11163**	4373	–
Sovkhoz Ust'-Usinskii [Ust'-Usa]	7	**8008**	2892	–
AO Sovkhoz Bol'shaia Inta [Inta]	5	**10326**	5334	–
Gospromkhoz Intinskii [Petrun']	4	**8162**	3676	–
MUSP Fion [Abez']	3	**5563**	1800	–
PSK Olenevod [Vorkuta]	7	**12835**	5430	358
Grand total, Komi Republic	57	**83949**	34071	1132
Results 1998	56	**92507**	32981	69
1999 ± 1998	–	–	+1090	+1063
Results 1997	57	**91898**	39024	1136
1999 ± 1997	–	–	–4953	–4

Source: Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic, 18 July 2000, by courtesy of L. V. Bezumov.

Appendix 7 (continued)

Total expenditure						
Productive expenditure						
Killed for slaughter		No. of these for communal [brigade] nutrition	Bonus deer [for successful work]	Other productive expenditure (animals)	Productive expenditure total	
Animals	Quintals LW*				Animals	Quintals LW*
[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]	[12]
6413	3351	503	194	558	7165	3771
2741	1340	302	–	–	2741	1340
1237	679	410	–	–	1237	679
2034	1159	123	–	66	2100	1214
1182	751	–	–	–	1182	751
695	498	–	–	24	719	519
4227	2234	–	78	–	4305	2292
18529	10012	1338	272	648	19449	10566
19770	11161	1245	194	821	20785	11732
–1241	–1149	+93	+78	–173	–1336	–1166
28183	17045	1249	467	764	29414	17792
–9654	–7033	+89	–195	–116	–9965	–7226

*Quintals LW = quintals (*tsentner*) (100 kg) of live weight.

Appendix 7 (continued)

Enterprise	Total expenditure [*continued*]							
	Unproductive expenditure							
	Plague [killed by diseases]		Trampling down [killed by predators]		[Other] losses		Unproductive expenditure total	
	Total	Calves	Total	Calves	Total	Calves	Total	Calves
	[13]	[14]	[15]	[16]	[17]	[18]	[19]	[20]
Izhemskii Olenevod	3251	1502	862	139	1343	393	5456	2034
Severnyi	1217	423	247	44	727	–	2191	467
Ust'-Usinskii	1324	853	145	85	2128	498	3597	1436
Bol'shaia Inta	527	252	99	44	3068	2056	3694	2352
Intinskii	1487	700	1046	988	513	213	3046	1918
Fion	571	284	275	150	1126	566	1972	1000
Olenevod	306	242	–	–	2982	919	3288	1161
Grand total	8683	4256	2674	1450	11887	4645	23344	10368
1998	9441	4978	2429	563	8953	3099	20823	8640
±	–758	–722	+245	+887	+2934	+1546	+2521	+1728
1997	4116	1357	1112	272	4909	1485	10317	3114
±	+4567	+2899	+1562	+1178	+6978	+3160	+13027	+7254

Appendix 7 (continued)

Animals at the end of year		Meat production (increase by birth + by wght) in quintals (*tsentner*)	Meat production per 100 January reindeer, in quintals (*tsentner*)	Average live wght of deer realised, in kg	Females in herd * (%)	Preservation of adult deer (%)	Productive output of calves per 100 January females *	Vaccinated against gadfly larvae
Total	Female *							
[21]	[22]	[23]	[24]	[25]	[26]	[27]	[28]	[29]
26611	13055	+2157	+7.7	52.2	49.6	87.7	60.0	28800
10604	5535	+865	+7.7	48.9	52.5	84.6	64.0	15000
6066	2812	–937	–11.7	54.9	46.4	73.0	35.4	7000
9866	5691	+878	+8.5	57.8	57.7	87.0	50.5	12800
7610	3812	+462	+5.7	63.5	50.1	86.2	40.8	1600
4672	2678	–125	–2.2	72.2	57.3	81.6	29.5	–
11030	6869	+657	+5.1	52.8	62.3	83.4	53.4	12600
76459	40452	3957	4.7	54.0	52.9	84.5	52.0	77800
83949	45518	5673	6.1	56.4	54.2	86.6	50.9	45600
–7490	–5066	–1716	–1.4	–2.4	–1.3	–2.1	+1.1	+32200
92507	47842	17713	19.3	60.5	51.7	92.4	76.4	55500
–16048	–7390	–13576	–14.6	–6.5	+1.2	–7.9	–24.4	+22300

*Female = female deer older than two years.

Appendix 8
Number of reindeer, Nenets Autonomous Okrug and Komi Republic, as of 1 January 2000

Enterprise (in geographical order from west to east)	Central base of enterprise	Administrative location
Kolguevskii	Bugrino (Kolguev)	Nenets AO
Kanin	Nes'	Nenets AO
Voskhod	Oma	Nenets AO
Indigskii	Indiga	Nenets AO
Zapoliar'e	Nizhniaia Pesha	Nenets AO
Nar'iana-Ty	Khongurei	Nenets AO
Nar'ian-Marskoe OPKh	Nar'ian-Mar	Nenets AO
Imeni Vyucheiskogo	Nel'min Nos	Nenets AO
Kharp	Krasnoe	Nenets AO
Yerv	Krasnoe	Nenets AO
Izhemskii Olenevod	Siziabsk	Komi Republic
Druzhba Narodov	Karataika	Nenets AO
Put' Il'icha	Khorei-Ver	Nenets AO
Severnyi	Mutnyi Materik	Komi Republic
Ust'-Usinskii	Ust'-Usa	Komi Republic
Rassvet Severa	Kharuta	Nenets AO
Bol'shaia Inta	Inta	Komi Republic
Intinskii	Petrun'	Komi Republic
Fion	Abez'	Komi Republic
Krasnyi Oktiabr'	Ust'-Kara	Nenets AO
Olenevod	Vorkuta	Komi Republic
Private herders (so-called farmers, Yamb-To and others)		
Total		

Source: Compiled by Joachim Otto Habeck, March 2001, with later amendments. The data are based on materials from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Komi Republic and the Department of Agriculture of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. Data in italics are estimates by the compiler.

Appendix 8 (continued)

Number of animals		
Collective	Private*	Total
5311	1692	7003
12899	9653	22552
5291	1348	6639
7327	853	8180
2384	834	3218
4892	732	5624
5453	902	6355
7265	1806	9071
9133	3753	12886
6133*		6133
26611	8232	34843
5320	1526	6846
11594	3928	15522
10604	1721	12325
6066	1068	7134
12441	1790	14231
9866	2614	12480
7610	4244	11854
4672	1123	5795
2111	1100	3211
11030	5146	16176
	12500	*12500*
174013	*66565*	*240578*

* All reindeer of "Yerv" are private property but appear as "collective" in the official statistics.

Appendix 9
Strategies for improving technologies and marketing in the reindeer business

Owing to the changing economic situation over the last ten years, the question of where to slaughter, and how and when, has acquired a new significance and topicality for the managers of the reindeer-herding enterprises in the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. This appendix describes the main issues and tendencies in technology and marketing during the second half of the 1990s.[137]

The enterprise Rassvet Severa illustrates the complexity of slaughter and trade relations. Its office is located in the settlement of Kharuta, 90 kilometres north-northwest of the town of Inta and actually in the territory of the Komi Republic, though in administrative terms the settlement is part of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. With more than 10,000 collective reindeer, it is one of the strongest enterprises of the okrug. During the Soviet period, all reindeer carcasses were transported by helicopter from Kharuta to the meat factory in Nar'ian-Mar, the capital of the okrug, for further processing. In 1997, the factory's payment to Rassvet Severa could no longer make up for production costs (*sebestoimost'*), because transport costs had increased rapidly. The management of Rassvet Severa started to look for markets that were more profitable and to sell the meat in the town of Inta.

However, there is no all-year road from Kharuta to Inta, and lorries must wait until the Usa River is sufficiently frozen, which happens in late December. Keeping the meat frozen during transportation is easy, because the average air temperature in December is -17°C. Yet by this time the market in Inta is saturated with reindeer meat, as the neighbouring enterprise Bol'shaia Inta has already sold its produce. Rassvet Severa can only fetch a much lower price. Moreover, the administration of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug threatened to withdraw its financial subsidies for Rassvet Severa if the meat was sold in Inta, because the purpose of the subsidies was to compensate for the costs for air transport to Nar'ian-Mar. Probably the enterprise will ignore such intimidation and continue to orientate its marketing towards Inta. If the slaughter takes place in September, Rassvet Severa could ship the meat by boat to Inta and thus sell its produce for a higher price.

To give an idea of meat prices in this region, I quote some figures from before and after the financial crash of 17 August 1998. The production cost (*sebestoimost'*) per kilogram (kg) of meat produced by Rassvet Severa

[137] For an update on developments between 2000 and mid-2003, see the online report prepared by Kolegov (2003).

in early 1998 was 7.76 new roubles.[138] The Nenets Autonomous Okrug paid 2.60 roubles in subsidies for every kilogram produced. Expenditures for transport were estimated at 12 roubles to Nar'ian-Mar and 6 roubles to Inta. As the okrug provided 20 per cent compensation for all flights to Nar'ian-Mar, the effective transport expenses in this direction were 9.60 roubles. In order to recover its costs, Rassvet Severa would have had to sell its meat for 14.76 roubles in Nar'ian-Mar, but the meat factory gave only 8 roubles. At the same time, Bol'shaia Inta sold its meat in Inta for 12 to 14 roubles. When Rassvet Severa was finally able to deliver its own meat to Inta (later than Bol'shaia Inta), it could sell it for only 8 to 10 roubles, and it risked losing the subsidies from the okrug. By selling the meat in Inta, the enterprise could not make any profit; it just managed to minimise its losses. Rassvet Severa also sold meat at its outlet in Kharuta. For one kilogram of grade-A meat, customers had to pay 12 roubles, and for one kilogram of grade-B meat, the price was 8 roubles. However, if there were indeed any profits, they must have been small, as the demand for reindeer meat is low in a village with fewer than a thousand inhabitants, many of whom receive reindeer meat through private channels.

By the next slaughter season, in late 1998, meat prices had doubled throughout the region. In Inta, meat from private deer was sold for 25 roubles (grade A) and 20 roubles (grade B) per kilogram. Bol'shaia Inta sold the meat of its collective reindeer for 30 roubles (grade A) and 26.40 roubles (grade B). I was told that Bol'shaia Inta could fix higher prices because the enterprise accepted barter transactions and debts, whereas private trade was based exclusively on cash. Among all enterprises in the Komi Republic, Bol'shaia Inta demanded the highest payments for meat in the 1998-1999 season. Farther to the east, in Vorkuta, a kilogram was traded at 15 to 20 roubles, and farther to the west, in Usinsk, at 18 to 25 roubles. All enterprises in the Komi Republic were given a subsidy of 2.35 roubles per kilogram of live weight, so they receive about 4.70 roubles in subsidy per kilogram of meat produced, as the ratio between live weight and meat output is estimated at roughly 2 to 1. After slaughtering and disembowelling, the weight of a carcass varies between 20 and 30 kilograms; in exceptional cases, it may amount to almost 45 kilograms.

Considering that one kilogram of *smoked* reindeer meat fetched about 120 roubles on the market in Syktyvkar and at the outlet of Vorkuta's reindeer-herding enterprise, one can get a rough estimate of the margin to be earned by processing the fresh meat into a delicatessen product. The Izhma

[138] Or 7,760 old roubles. The nominal value of the rouble was cut by the Central Bank in early 1997.

enterprise sold meat to foreign customers at US$2.50 in the mid-1990s (this would have equalled approximately 100 roubles in January 1999).

Reindeer meat – when it is available – is a cheap alternative to other sorts of meat. In January 1999, grade-A beef was traded at 35.75 roubles per kilogram in the markets of Usinsk (39.55 roubles in Vorkuta, and 42.00 roubles in Inta). Chicken, which is now the cheapest meat in many regions of Russia, was sold for 45.75 roubles per kilogram in the shops in Usinsk, 31.00 in Inta and 38.15 in Vorkuta.[139] Indeed, many of inhabitants of Vorkuta and Inta (and to a lesser degree Usinsk) have become accustomed to consuming reindeer meat, and the prejudice against "crummy" reindeer meat is gradually waning.

Altogether, if the experts' and administrations' recommendations were met – if slaughterhouses, refrigeration facilities and processing plants could be updated and the demand for reindeer meat increased – then the prospects for the reindeer industry would be very promising, at least from the point of view of the managers (concerning the reindeer-herding families' perspective, see section 6.5). Alas, in practice things look more difficult. The situation in Kharuta exemplifies what can go wrong.

The management of Rassvet Severa recognised at an early stage that refrigerator capacities and processing facilities played a crucial role in improving their economic situation. One of the previous managers succeeded in arranging a co-operation agreement with a US company, which in 1992 erected a small processing plant outside Kharuta. This plant enabled the enterprise to produce reindeer sausage and vacuum-packed meat.[140] In addition, with the installation of a refrigerator for 50 tonnes of meat, Rassvet Severa achieved storage facilities that, at the time, other enterprises in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug could only dream about. Until 1996, production figures were quite encouraging, and Rassvet Severa was deemed a showcase for the whole region. By August 1998, however, the sausage factory and refrigerator were partly out of order. Rassvet Severa could not obtain spare parts for the sausage plant, because, as the chairman explained, it had lost the contract with the American company. More than that, the compressor of one refrigerator compound had broken down. My companion and I were invited by the head of Rassvet Severa to visit the sausage plant, but we never

[139] Statistical data provided by the Economic Department of the administration of Usinsk ("Srednie tseny na osnovnye vidy prodovol'stvennykh tovarov na 20 ianvaria 1999 goda").
[140] Klokov 1996: supplement, p. 11; Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999a: App. 7.

entered it.[141] Our impression was that the executive responsible felt so ashamed of the state of the plant that she would rather get ill than give us a guided tour. We were told that someone was on his way to the town of Vorkuta "in order to fix the problem": the director of the enterprise there might be able to help.

The reindeer-herding co-operative Olenevod in Vorkuta is one of the most successful enterprises in the European Northeast (alongside Bol'shaia Inta). The geographical situation of Olenevod has led to a number of peculiarities, one of them being that it is now the only enterprise that regularly uses reindeer pastures on both sides of the Urals – in other words, in the European North and in western Siberia. Its energetic director, G. P. Pasynkov, is known to herders and managers all over the North of the Komi Republic, the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug on the Siberian side.

When I visited Pasynkov's enterprise in March 1999, we discussed his plan to set up an EU-standard slaughterhouse and processing plant large enough to manage the meat production not only of Olenevod itself but also of adjacent enterprises. Of course this intention is not a totally selfless one. An entrepreneur par excellence, Pasynkov is seeking to gain control over the whole reindeer industry in the eastern part of the region. According to press releases issued in early 2001, the new slaughterhouse, stuffed with Finnish technology, has been set up and running. The meat comes from the herds of Olenevod itself, from the neighbouring enterprise Krasnyi Oktiabr' (which was taken over by Pasynkov in 1997 or 1998), private transactions with herders in the region and additional purchases in western Siberia.

Pasynkov's explicit strategy to restructure reindeer slaughtering and meat marketing is probably the best example of the tendencies of consolidation (through mergers of enterprises), on one hand, and diversification of produce, on the other. The only serious competitor in the field is Bol'shaia Inta, which is also trying to enlarge its ambit. The two smaller enterprises between Vorkuta and Inta (Fion in Abez' and Gospromkhoz Intinskii in Petrun') are unlikely to establish their own processing plants. They are left to decide which of the big players they should supply with their "raw product".

In the long run, with the completion of the all-year road between Nar'ian-Mar and the railway station at Usinsk, or even of the remaining sections leading to the south of the Komi Republic and central Russia, the

[141] While staying in Kharuta, I was accompanied by a colleague from the Komi Science Centre, Russian Academy of Sciences. Generally I carried out this fieldwork without an assistant or interpreter. On the grounds of safety, this is no longer appreciated by the regional security agencies and the academic institution that kindly provided the invitation for my stay in the region.

economic prospects for the meat factory in Nar'ian Mar may brighten. Additionally, there is the potential for another large meat compound between Nar'ian-Mar and Usinsk, which could service the western Komi enterprises (Izhemskii Olenevod, Severnyi and Ust'-Usinskii).

Actually, an up-to-date slaughter facility for the western Komi enterprises is supposed to have existed since 1996, but its story provides yet another illustration of the unexpected difficulties of introducing new strategies. In the early 1990s, the then directors of Izhemskii Olenevod and Severnyi developed a plan to establish an EU-standard slaughterhouse at Vozei, where the border between the pastures allotted to the two enterprises crosses the paved road north of Usinsk. They managed to gain governmental support and set up a stock company. Seventy per cent of the expenses were reimbursed by the KomiArcticOil development fund. The slaughterhouse began operating in 1996. Severnyi abandoned its old slaughterhouse at Kolva-Ty (a couple of kilometres away from that of Ust'-Usinskii) and sold all its collective deer to be slaughtered to the stock company. The latter, however, paid its debts to Severnyi with considerable delay, and therefore the next year and the year after the management of Severnyi refrained from such transactions. Instead, Severnyi now does its slaughtering *next to* the slaughterhouse. Thus, it still operates independently but takes advantage of the nearby road.

The other enterprise involved, Izhemskii Olenevod, may have had similar experiences with the stock company; however, it uses more than one slaughterhouse. Being the largest reindeer-herding enterprise in the region, Izhemskii Olenevod sends one part of its animals to Vozei and the other part to Okunev Nos on the lower Pechora. In 1998, most of the slaughter took place in Okunev Nos. In fact, the management of Izhemskii Olenevod indicated intentions to improve the slaughterhouse at Okunev Nos and may even count on substantial financial assistance from the government of the Komi Republic.

The hardest blow, however, ensued from a visit by inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office under the European Commission in October 1998. They had just visited a slaughterhouse in Lovozero (Kola Peninsula), the hygienic conditions and veterinary control of which were satisfactory enough to induce a positive assessment to the European Commission regarding the import of reindeer meat from this slaughterhouse. Less impressive was the visit to Vozei. The verdict in the final report on their visit reads: "Problems in the second slaughterhouse inspected related in the main to poor hygienic practices and inadequate veterinary supervision. Very little help, if any, had been provided by the central authorities prior to the EC inspection" (European Commission 1998: 10).

Since this visit, the future of the Vozei slaughterhouse seems questionable. As the director of Izhemskii Olenevod commented to me, "At present, we are not able yet to work with this technology" (FM 133). He was speaking about the lack of well-trained employees who could carry out the slaughter in an appropriate manner (from the EU point of view). Another problem, in his words, was the poor state of pastures around the new slaughterhouse. Considerations about the necessary pre-slaughter pastures (*preduboinye pastbishcha*) were not part of the planning process.

Why are the managers so eager to build EU-standard slaughterhouses and obtain permission to export reindeer meat into EU countries? The simple explanation is that the Russian reindeer-herding enterprises know that their meat fetches higher prices on the EU and Norwegian markets. Izhemskii Olenevod and some other enterprises have already found that foreign companies buy their meat for triple or quadruple the price common on the regional market. On the other side, trading companies in the Nordic countries are looking for cheap reindeer meat from Russia. The example of the new slaughterhouse in Lovozero (Kola Peninsula) has shown that such trade relations may offer favourable prospects for the reindeer industry in the European part of Russia. It is important to stress that enterprises in the European part are in a much better situation than those in western Siberia, let alone eastern Siberia, because they are located closer to the EU and Norway and have comparatively good road and railway connections to northwestern Europe. From the Kola Peninsula, the meat can be delivered to the Finnish border by refrigerator lorries within a few hours; for enterprises in the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, transportation takes considerably longer and is more expensive. Inta and Vorkuta are probably on the margin of the potential area from which meat exports to the Nordic countries make economic sense.

Apart from transport expenses, there are a number of difficulties that have dampened expectations, such as customs and the issuing of the appropriate veterinary papers.[142] Moreover, for obvious reasons, reindeer herders in Finland and Sweden and their political lobbies are unsupportive when it comes to meat imports from Russia.[143] Altogether, I expect that reindeer meat exports to the EU and Norway will have little significance for the north of the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. Therefore, with regard to the meat market, the reindeer-herding enterprises and the agricul-

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[142] Personal communication with Birger Vallström, Norfryss Polarica, Lovozero slaughterhouse (as a participant of the CAES PhD network, 8 September 2000).

[143] Personal communication with Matti Särkelä, head of Paliskuntain yhdistys (Finnish Association of Reindeer-Herding Co-operatives), Rovaniemi (as a participant of the CAES PhD network, 2 September 2000).

tural authorities should first aim at increasing the value of their produce on the domestic market, without counting too much on Western consumers. This assessment, though, does not deny the positive effects of exchanging know-how with, and learning from, slaughterhouses and processing plants in the Nordic countries (cf. Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999a: [13]).

Appendix 10
Private herders in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and Komi Republic

The first part of this appendix contains background information on the enterprise Yerv in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, because it was one of the few cases of privatisation that had taken place in this region by late 1999 (when I finished my fieldwork).[144] The second part is devoted to individual herders of Nenets and Komi origin who tend their reindeer on both sides of the Urals. Finally, I venture to explain the differences in performance between the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug in terms of privatisation policy.

Yerv (officially called the Union of Reindeer Herders "Yerv") is an offshoot of the *kolkhoz* Kharp, which is based in the village of Krasnoe. As soon as privatisation became legally possible, a number of members of this *kolkhoz* decided to leave the farm and run their own businesses. Their decision was met with fierce resistance on the part of the *kolkhoz* administration and other organisations, but this could not prevent the split-up in March 1992. The departing members received a small share of reindeer and approximately half of the pasture territory, allotted to them by the state for 15 years. Theoretically, all members of the union are independent "farmers" (*fermery*) with their own parcels of pasture land (in practice there are no hard and fast rules about the use of certain plots). Herders and tent workers receive no wages; the revenue they get stems from selling their animals for slaughter. The tent workers and herders pay the staff of the union (which can be seen as a remarkable peculiarity in the relations between herding and non-herding workers in the region's reindeer industry). The staff comprises seven people who organise the slaughter and marketing of the meat; they are also responsible for representing the "farmers" in all juridical matters (FM 161; Tuisku 1999: 104-109).[145]

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[144] Apart from Yerv, in 1999 there was a second private reindeer-herding enterprise in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug: Kanin, officially called the "Community (*obshchina*) Kanin". I collected comparatively little information about this enterprise, which is the one farthest from my actual fieldwork sites. It is situated along the shores of the White Sea, enclosing most of the Kanin Peninsula and stretching inland deep into Arkhangel'sk Province. A detailed anthropological study of Kanin has been published by Tverfjell (2001).

[145] The seven are the director, deputy director, two accountancy officers, two drivers-cum-mechanics and a veterinary surgeon.

Again, there are close connections to the petroleum sector (chapter 5): the predominant part of the meat is sold to geologists and oil workers in Varandei and other places at a reduced rate, because their companies support the union with helicopter transport. The union has not only signed agreements of "mutual help and co-operation" with various oil and gas companies operating in the region but has also actively made contact with two non-governmental organisations abroad which strive to support indigenous peoples.[146] Their project is to find financial support for the union's building of a trading post at the Pe-Yakha (Chernaia) River. The absence of a trading post in the remote eastern part of Yerv's territory was mentioned as one of its two main predicaments by the deputy director (when I interviewed him in July 2000, FM 161), the other being the increasing number of wolves. Whatever the problems of Yerv are, though, its members and their representatives have shown more engagement and creativity in tackling them than have those of almost all other reindeer-herding enterprises. To some extent, the forceful resistance to the foundation of Yerv in the early 1990s accounts for the fact that in the neighbouring Komi Republic, no herder has had the courage to leave the former state farm. Yet the example of Yerv also shows that privatisation does not necessarily result in economic destruction and the social erosion of the village community (managers of reindeer-herding enterprises see this as a major danger of privatisation).

There is yet another example of independent reindeer herding, and surely the most unexpected one, considering the tenor of previous chapters. Some groups of herders have never been collectivised. Most of them are of Nenets origin, but a few also have a Komi background. In chapter 4 I spoke about Komi *kulaki* who sought to escape collectivisation by migrating to the Urals in 1932. Roaming over the Urals and the lowland tundra on either side of it, they managed to resist the governmental pressure of the 1930s and 1940s. Thereafter, the local authorities ignored them, as it would have been too embarrassing to admit the existence of independent reindeer herders. Thus, these people entirely dropped out of Soviet society and became officially non-existent: they were not registered, their children never went to school, and their young men did not join the army. Apart from reindeer herding, hunting and fishing largely contributed to their economy, and part of the produce was traded for food and equipment. Among the few trading places where the herders were in contact with the Soviet world were small state-run trading posts along the coast of the Kara Sea. When these closed down, the herders had to re-orientate themselves to the coal miners' settlement and railway terminal of Khal'mer-Yu, north of Vorkuta. However,

[146] The two NGOs are Arctic Alert in the Netherlands and Horizon in Belgium (see de Groot 2001: 3).

Khal'mer-Yu was abandoned, too, in 1992. Subsequently the independent herders appeared in Vorkuta and its environs. Thus, since 1989 they have gradually re-emerged from oblivion (FM 123, 164; Bjørklund 1995: 72-73; Ovchinnikov 1998, Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999a: [9]).[147]

Formerly comparatively well off, the independent herding families were now suffering from a substantial decrease of their herds, probably because of the changes in the network of trading possibilities. Post-Soviet society in the Vorkuta area was shocked not only by their poverty but also by their "lack of civilisation", the more so as it turned out that the Russian language was widely unknown among these herders' families. In a way, what had happened in the 1920s all over the Soviet North happened once again in Vorkuta in the early 1990s: a call went out for "supporting" and "saving" these poor and seemingly feckless natives. Having acquired citizenship through registration, the independent herding families received access to pensions, social welfare and additional governmental help. A boarding school was established for their children in a suburb of Vorkuta in 1996, but initial enthusiasm soon gave way to harsh criticism, and the school and its staff were alleged to be alienating the children from tundra life. Some people see the presence of the independent herders in the vicinity of Vorkuta as perilous for both these herders themselves and reindeer husbandry in the region in general. As the director of Olenevod, G. P. Pasynkov, sees it,

[147] So far it is not quite clear to me and colleagues with whom I have spoken whether the independent herders mentioned here may be considered one regional group or whether they comprise a diversity of groups. There is some confusion over the terms people use when they speak about independent herders. On one hand, in the Komi Republic they are usually referred to as *yedinolichniki* ("individual [herders]") or *Nentsy-chastniki* ("the Nenets private [herders]"). They are now registered as "farmers" (*fermery*) by the Komi Ministry of Agriculture: in early 2000, there were 14 "farmers" with 4,900 deer (FM 128, 165). According to members of the staff of Olenevod and various Komi reindeer herdsmen, the independent herders migrate from the interior of the Yamal Peninsula, where they tend their animals in winter, to pastures along the European shore of the Kara Sea in summer, where they graze their animals on territories officially allotted to various Komi and Nenets enterprises, passing the vicinity of Vorkuta in April and October (FM 125 etc.). On the other hand, in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug the independent herders are also referred to as *yedinolichniki*. Since 1996 or so, there has been an apparently rather loose association under the name "Yamb-To" registered in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. It includes some 25 families of reindeer herders, who have about 6,000 animals, but there are no exact data (Association of World Reindeer Herders 1999a: [9]). Members of Yamb-To are supposed to migrate between Vorkuta in winter and Amderma (European shore of the Kara Sea) in summer (FM 163).

besides the issue of boarding-school education, the town is a dangerous place for these herders, because there has been many an occasion of local inhabitants' stealing the herders' reindeer.

Most topical for Pasynkov, though, is the issue of overgrazing. With the general deterioration of infrastructure and supplies in the remote settlements in the wider region, Vorkuta has become the hub for the trading activities of numerous different groups of herders: the independent ones, those of Kara and Karataika, the western Siberian brigades and of course those of Olenevod Vorkuta.[148] In combination with the effects of coal mining and the cement industry in and around Vorkuta (Virtanen et al. 2002), increasing grazing pressure puts the pastures in the northeastern part of the Komi Republic under more serious threat than any other area between the White Sea and the Urals. Pasynkov's strategy to mitigate the pressure is based on building or re-opening a number of trading posts farther afield from Vorkuta, so that the herders do not have to come to Vorkuta whenever they need provisions.

Why are there cases of privatisation of reindeer-herding enterprises in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug but not in the Komi Republic? My attempt to answer this question draws mainly on the history of reindeer husbandry in this region (chapter 4). The pre-revolutionary herding practices of the Komi, characterised as market-oriented and "comparatively" sedentary, seemed more suitable to the Soviet discourse of modernisation and industrial development than did herding strategies and livelihoods of other regions and peoples in the North (compare chapters 4 and 8). "[A]s an ideological premise, the industrial drive of the Komi reindeer herders was readily inherited into Soviet collective thinking" (Konstantinov 2000: 60). To be sure, the development of large-scale reindeer husbandry that had been going on in the European North of Russia over the preceding three centuries involved not the Komi alone but also the European Nenets and – considerably later – the Saami. Nonetheless, certain Soviet policies, such as sedentarisation and the boarding-school system, affected people in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug to a greater degree than those in the Komi Republic. Thus, the perception of reindeer-herding "models" other than those prescribed by the Soviet government was probably more alive among the herders' families in the Nenets

[148] Regarding the western Siberian brigades, herders of the former *sovkhoz* Gorkovskii (office located in Gorki, Shuryshkar District, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug) tend their deer in summer near Yeletskii, 50 kilometres south of Vorkuta (personal communications with Florian Stammler, Halle/Cambridge, 11 November 2000, and František Bahenský, Prague, 23 September 2001). Some brigades of Olenevod Vorkuta have their winter pastures at the Logas'egan River, 80 kilometres east of Gorki.

Autonomous Okrug. In the Komi Republic, herders and their families may have felt more "at home" with the Soviet way of reindeer husbandry. By virtue of such different experiences, still present in the memories of the older generation, herders in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug seem somehow more likely to look for alternative approaches to reindeer husbandry.

One may suppose that the propensity towards nomadic life has been greater among the Nenets than among the Komi. Similarly, there might be a stronger sense of personal independence and flexibility in livelihood among the Nenets than among other peoples of the North; at least this has recently been argued in the case of the Yamal Nenets (Golovnev and Osherenko 1999).[149] However, such a historical and cultural slant to the question of why privatisation has performed differently in the two regions can also lead in another direction. At stake, then, is not how certain peoples enact their "cultures", but how these "cultures" are perceived from outside. Outsiders' perception of the Nenets as aboriginal people (*aborigennye*, see Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 281), as opposed to the Komi (who at best would be considered indigenous, *korennye*), has a bearing on the attention paid by Western governmental and non-governmental organisations. We may say that Yerv is consciously taking advantage of this public interest. Western publications about the Nenets are ripe with references to "indigenous peoples", "traditional land use", "traditional environmental knowledge" and of course reindeer herding. Komi reindeer husbandry has been largely absent from this discourse. My intention is by no means to ask whether this is fair or not; I merely wish to point out that in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug there are political ways of promoting reindeer husbandry that seem less feasible, or not feasible at all, in the Komi Republic. This leads back to my general argument in chapter 8: in the Komi case, reindeer husbandry does not easily connect with tenets about "tradition" or "ethnic identity".

[149] According to Vera Skvirskaya, PhD student at Cambridge University, the Nenets on the Yamal Peninsula do not really care whether or not they are in the state farm – today they are leaving, tomorrow they may be joining again. The Komi, on the contrary, cannot privatise, for they do not have the possibility of obtaining land. Skvirskaya thinks that in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug the question of privatisation depends first and foremost on the availability of pasture (personal communication, 10 January 2003).

Appendix 11
Резюме (на русском языке)

Данная книга посвящена тематике оленеводства у коми-ижемцев на основе многомесячного полевого исследования автора с 1998 по 1999 г. и последующих нескольких кратковременных пребываний на севере Республики Коми. В частности, описывается положение и стратегии двух оленеводческих бригад бывшего совхоза «Усть-Усинский» и оленеводческих семей из с. Усть-Уса и д. Новикбож в окрестностях Усинска.

Практика (practice) оленеводства и его престиж (image) являются основными подходами, с помощью которых автор анализирует историческое, социально-экономическое и общественно-политическое значение и развитие оленеводства на севере европейской части России. Автор показывает, что дальнейшая судьба коми-ижемского оленеводства зависит не только от природных, экономических и технологических факторов, но и от его престижа, то есть от того, как воспринимается оленеводство в общественном мнении.

Вопрос престижа тесно связан с разнообразными рассуждениями о том, что представляет собой оленеводство. Одна из самых распространенных оценок значения оленеводства подчеркивает сравнительную рентабельность этой отрасли агропромышленного комплекса. Подразумевается, что тундра – в первую очередь производственное пространство. Другая оценка значения оленеводства связана с его восприятием как традиционного образа жизни. При этом подчеркивается необходимость его сохранения в качестве культурной ценности. В данной книге автор показывает, что рассуждения о сути оленеводства и роли оленеводов изменялись не раз в течение истекшего века: если к началу 20-ого столетия коми население Ижмы и соседних регионов часто описывалось в книгах и газетах как предприимчивые (да и прогрессивные) группы, то в тридцатых годах 20-ого столетия в партийных документах подчеркивается отсталость коми оленеводов. Идея об отсталости оленеводов внедрилась в общественнном мнении и доминирует до настоящего времени. Таким образом, престиж коми оленеводства подвергся девальвации. Рассуждения о том, что коми оленеводство является традиционным и из-за этого ценным, встречаются впервые лишь в течении последних 15 лет, так в СМИ как и в политических программах. Концепция «традиционности» коми оленеводства предлагает замену отрицательной оценки отсталости оленеводства положительной оценкой его исконного характера. Эта концепция опирается на

оценке традиционных отраслей как стержни этничности малочисленных народов Севера, Сибири и Дальнего Востока.

Однако, представители малочисленных народов, например ненцев, более успешно могут пользоваться положительным престижом оленеводства как традиционного образа жизни и более убедительно могут ссылаться на тесную связь их этничности с оленеводством. При рассуждениях специфики коми народа, оказывается что оленеводство не является основным этническим признаком. Оно играет роль этнического признака лишь для коми-ижемцев, представители которых в последнее время борются за приобретение статуса малочисленного народа Севера.

Анализ общественной понимании терминов «традиция» и «современность» в данной работе привел автора к убеждению, что молодые коми, скорее всего, не захотят работать в оленеводстве, когда оно описывается лишь как «традиционное» занятие. Их более притягивают «современные» образы жизни и профессии, несмотря на то, что «традиционные» отрасли оцениваются в СМИ как достойные защиты и сохранения. Сам факт, что речь идет о «сохранении» таких отраслей показывает, что на них смотрят как на отрасли, лишенные перспектив самостоятельного развития. Одним словом, подразумеваемое соотнесение между оленеводством и традицией, вопреки доброжелательных намерений, часто влияет негативно на готовность молодых коми мужчин и женщин выбрать оленеводческую профессию.

В данной книге анализ практики и престижа оленеводства проводится на теоретическом уровне с помощью терминов «structure» (структура) и «agency» (иногда «agency» переводится как «действенность», но автор предпочитает «действование»). «Agency» в дословном смысле понимается как «деятельность»: это не конкретное действие или сам процесс действия, а возможность и способность деятеля действовать. Рамки или ограничения действий определяются структурой, которая понимается как то, что дано и предоставлено индивидууму окружающей средой в природном и социальном, материальном и духовом планах. При этом важно заметить, что рамки или ограничения могут меняться и действително постоянно изменяются. Индивидуум-деятель своими действиями влияет на структуру, сопротивляется ей, изменяет ее, или же пользуется ей, следуя по ее тропам, используя ее в согласии со своими намерениями. «Agency» тоже включает в себя возможность отказываться от действий в даннной ситуации.

Концепты «structure» и «agency» были разработаны западноевропейскими учеными социальных наук в 1970-х и 1980-х годах. Одним из них является английский социолог Гидденс, который подчеркивает

активное, целенаправленное и творческое качество человеческого действования. Автор данной книги поддерживает этот взгляд. Чтобы дать пример действования оленевода и рамок его действий, можно рассмотреть практику выпаса оленей. Пастух исполняет выпас на основе определенных условий и намерений, т.е. он направляет оленей в определенную сторону или же оставляет их в покое. Его решения зависят от условий погоды, ландшафта, кормовых запасов, наличия насекомых, физического состояния оленей и т.д. Все эти условия являются структурными, т.е. пастух обычно не может их непосредственно менять, но он может выбрать разные стратегии внутри вышеуказанных ограничений и рамок. Возможность пастуха выбирать действия – это его действование («agency»). Пастух может принять решение избежать некоторых условий (например, перейдя на другое пастбище) или же частично изменить некоторые условия (например, подкармливая оленей).

Чем опытнее пастух, тем шире рамки его действования. Чем лучше он знает оленей и регион, тем больше выбор разнообразных стратегий, которыми он может пользоваться. Сам факт, что оленеводы умеют пасти оленей, ездить по тундре, находить свою дорогу, дает им возможности действия (и выживания), которые превышают возможности других людей. Этим и гордятся коми оленеводы. Кроме знания и умения, гордость оленеводов заключается и в выносливости и упорстве. Коми оленеводы часто описывают себя по этим категориям; они редко описывают свою деятельность как «традиционный образ жизни». Следовательно, их рассуждения о том, что представляет собой оленеводство, не совпадают с выше представленными рассуждениями «извне», из которых следует, что тундра является либо большой агропромзоной или же большим музеем традиционного быта под открытым небом. Но если посмотреть, как возможности действий оленеводов влияют на престиж оленеводства, то можно заметить, что они очень ограничены. Итак, их действование («agency») самое широкое на уровне практики оленеводства, и самое узкое на уровне престижа оленеводства. В то же время, именно престиж играет важную роль, когда молодые люди принимают решение заниматься оленеводством или выбрать другую профессию, другой образ жизни.

Тематика и территория, которые рассматриваются в данной книге, являются периферийными на первый взгляд, т.е. периферийными с точки зрения жителей Москвы или жителей Санкт-Петербурга, или даже Сыктывкара. С их точки зрения, оленеводческая территория находится на северных «окраинах». Тем самым, оленеводство не имеет большого значения. Но с точки зрения тех, кто работает оленеводом,

оленеводство имеет не только центральное, но и жизненно-важное значение. Северное село, притундровые леса и просторы тундры – пространство их ежедневной жизнедеятельности, центральное место событий, по сравнению с которым Москва, Санкт-Петербург и Сыктывкар имеют лишь периферийный характер. Составление текста и порядок глав данной книги отражают точку зрения самих коми оленеводов и их семей, начиная с центральных для них сфер жизнедеятельности и заканчивая сферами в дали, на «окраинах», но, тем не менее, с большой политической значимостью. После небольшого введения в 1-й главе, 2-ая глава начинается описанием ежедневного быта в чуме, на стойбище; она дает картину оленеводческой практики. 3-я глава посвящена ежедневной жизни в селах и деревнях, где оленеводческие семьи имеют свои дома, в которых живут их родственники. Та же глава дает краткие сведения о ближайшем городе (Усинск). При этом показывается практическое и символическое значение школьного образования, понятия «культуры» и «цивилизации». Заметим, что наличие «культуры» и «цивилизации» как будто увеличивается или уменьшается, в зависимости от движения в пространстве. К концу этой главы мы впервые увидим, как рассуждения о сути оленеводства связаны с интерпретациями исторического хода событий при освоении Севера.

Географический и исторический обзор региона и развития оленеводства дается в 4-й главе, т.е. не «изнутри» жизнедеятельности оленеводов, а из внешней временной и пространственной перспективы. Оказывается, что крупнотабунное оленеводство – сравнительно новая и очень динамичная система землепользования в североевропейских тундрах. Однако, в последние сорок лет, развивался и другой образ землепользования в этом регионе: нефте- и газодобыча, вслед за которой происходило ухудшение или изъятие многих оленьих пастбищ. Оленевод сейчас уже не единственный хозяин в тундре – он обязан привыкать к присутствию других хозяев: а именно к нефтяникам и газовикам, которые работают на той же земле. Влияние нефтегазодобычи на оленеводство и взаимоотношения оленеводов и нефтяников обсуждаются в 5-й главе.

В 6-ой главе анализируется экономическая деятельность оленеводческого предприятия, в частности производство оленьего мяса. Анализ показывает, что бывший совхоз используется в качестве «покрышки» для экономической деятельности частного, порой неформального характера. Такая деятельность выгодна не только заведующим и специалистам предприятия, но и бригадирам и самим оленьпастухам. В ограниченной мере эта деятельность совместима с официальным функционированием предприятия, но если она превышает опреде-

ленные объемы, то предприятие начинает распадаться. На севере Республики Коми идея приватизации оленеводческих предприятий не пользовалась большой популярностью потому, что совхоз принмиался, и до сих пор принимается, как общее имущество местной общности, как основа сельской солидарности, как единственный способ хозяйствования и даже как единственный «разумный» способ существования в северном селе.

7-ая глава – очерк социально-экономического положения оленеводческих семей и динамики социальных отношений между семьями. Оленеводческие домохозяйства имеют тесные связи с другими домохозяйствами в селе. Все они одинаково сталкиваются с вопросом устойчивости их доходов. Все они стараются развертывать источники семейных доходов. Кое-кто работает в бюджетной сфере, кое-кто в промышленном предприятии или в городе, а кое-кто работает в оленеводстве. Однако, не каждый человек имеет способности для работы оленеводом или чум-работницей, и не каждый человек имеет желание работать в этой сфере. Из этого следует, что внутри семей должен произойти процесс решения, кто из членов семьи работает кем. К концу этой главы рассматривается вопрос, кто может стать и кто хочет стать оленеводом или чум-работницей.

В 8-ой главе автор сосредоточивается на проблематике престижа оленеводства и разных рассуждениях о том, что оно собой представляет. Кратко характеризуется оценка самих оленеводов, политиков, государственных и негосударственных организаций, средств массовой информации, ученых. Чем дальше мы отъезжаем с оленеводческого стойбища, чем больше мы приближаемся к центрам властей, тем чаще встречаем рассуждения о традционном характере коми оленеводства. Однако, как указано выше, ссылка на «традиционность», хотя она и связана с доброжелательными политическими намерениями, имеет привкус предполагаемой бесперсективности коми оленеводства.

9-ая глава книги содержит сводную дискуссию и выводы. Вопрос о пределах действования для оленеводов, чум-работниц и рабочих в центральной усадьбе окончательно обсуждается на основе оценки разных сфер жизнедеятельности, которые описывались в предыдущих главах. Автор считает, что именно престиж оленеводства представляет одно из самих серьезных ограничений. Коми оленеводство может иметь устойчивые перспективы развития лишь тогда, когда оленеводы и чум-работницы будут иметь возможность влиять на то, какое предстaлвение об их занятии и жизни имеется среди других слоев населения и политических деятелей.

(Перевод: Хабек Й. О. / Translation: J. O. Habeck)

Appendix 12
Резюме (комиӧн)

Мый сэтшӧмыс пастукалӧм: кӧр видзан практика да престиж войвыв россияса комияс пиын.

Тайӧ небӧгсӧ сиӧма изьватас комилӧн кӧр видзӧм тематикалы. Уджсӧ гижӧма авторлӧн 1998-1999-ӧд воясся уна тӧлысьчӧжся мувывса туялӧм да Коми Республикалӧн войвылӧ сы бӧрын нин некымын регыдъя ветлӧм подув вылын. Торйӧн кӧ, тані висьтавсьӧ вӧвлӧм «Усть-Усинский» совхозса кык бригадалӧн да Усинск бердса Усвавомысь да Нӧвикбӧжысь кӧр видзан котыръяслӧн положение да стратегия йылысь.

Кӧр видзан практика (practice) да сылӧн престижыс (image) лоӧны медшӧр сибӧдчан туйяснас, код отсӧгӧн гижысьыс видлалӧ кӧр видзӧмлысь историяса, йӧзкост-овмӧсса да йӧзкотыр-политикаса тӧдчанлунсӧ да сӧвмӧмсӧ войвыв Россиялӧн европаса юкӧныс. Авторыс петкӧдлӧ, мый изьватас кӧр видзӧмлӧн аскиа луныс абу сӧмын вӧрва, экономика да технология помкаяс сайын, но тшӧтш и сылӧн престиж сайын, сідзкӧ, сы сайын, кутшӧмджык лоӧ видзӧдласыс кӧр вӧдитӧм вылас йӧзкотырас.

Престиж йылысь сёрниыс топыда йитчӧма уна сикас мӧвпалӧмкӧд сы йылысь, мый сэтшӧмыс кӧр видзӧмыс. Ӧти медпаськыда тӧдса донъялӧм тӧдчӧдӧ кӧр видзӧмлысь орччӧдӧм чӧжӧс вайӧмсӧ агропромышленнӧй комплексын. Тані гӧгӧрвосьӧ, мый тундра – медводз уджалан ылдӧс. Кӧр видзӧмлысь тӧдчанлунсӧ мӧд сикас донъялӧм йитчӧма сійӧс традицияа олан сямӧн гӧгӧрвоӧмкӧд. Тані тӧдчӧдӧма, мый сійӧс колӧ видзны кыдз культураса озырлун. Небӧгас гижысьыс петкӧдлӧ, мый кольӧм нэмӧ кӧр вӧдитӧмлӧн сюрӧс йылысь да кӧр видзысьяслӧн мог йылысь мӧвпалӧмъяс унаысь вежсьылісны: 20-ӧд нэм заводитчигӧн кӧ изьваса да орчча муясса комиясӧс газет-небӧгын петкӧдлісны босьтчысь (да и прогрессивнӧй) войтырӧн, то 20-ӧд нэмлӧн комынӧд воясся партия кабалаясын тӧдчӧдӧма коми кӧр видзысьяслысь бӧрӧ кольӧмсӧ. Кӧр видзысьяслӧн бӧрӧ кольӧм йылысь мӧвпыс вужъясис йӧзлӧн видзӧдласъясӧ да вевтыртӧ önӧдз. Татшӧм ногӧн, коми кӧр видзӧмлӧн престижыс девальвируйтчис. Сёрнияс коми кӧр видзӧмлӧн традицияа сям йылысь да та вӧсна тшӧтш и коланлун йывсьыс пондісны кывны сӧмын бӧръя 15 вонас. И СМИ-ын, и политика уджтасъясын коми кӧр видзӧмлӧн «традициялун» концепцияыс вӧзйӧ вежны кӧр вӧдитӧмлысь бӧрӧ кольӧмсӧ лёкӧдан донъялӧмсӧ сылысь нэмӧвӧйся олансерсӧ ошкана донъялӧм вылӧ. Тайӧ концепцияыс мыджсьӧ сэтшӧм донъялӧм вылӧ, код серти традицияа овмӧс

юкӧнъяс лоӧны Войвывса, Сибирса да Ылі Асыввывса этша лыда войтыръяслӧн войтырсикаслун сюрӧсӧн.

Но вот этша лыда войтыръяс, шуам, яранъяс, вермӧныджык бурсӧ босьтны кӧр видзӧмлӧн, кыдз традицияа олан сямлӧн, бур престижысь да вермӧны мӧрччанаджык ыстысьны войтырсикаслуннысlӧн да кӧр видзӧмлӧн топыд йитӧд вылӧ. Коми войтырлысь аслыссикаслун видлалігӧн тыдовтчӧ, мый кӧр видзӧмыс оз ло налӧн медшӧр войтырсикас торйӧданторйӧн. Войтырсикас пасӧн сійӧ лоӧ сӧмын изьватаслы, кодъяс бӧръя каднас зільӧны шедӧдны Войвывса этша лыда войтырлысь статус.

Йӧзкотырын «традиция» да «ӧніядыр» термин вежӧртӧм анализируйтігӧн небӧгсӧ гижысьыс гӧгӧрвоис, мый коми том войтыр, позьӧ чайтны, оз мӧдны кӧсйыны босьтчыны кӧр видзӧмӧ, лыддьыссьӧ кӧ сійӧ сӧмын «традицияа» уджӧн. «Ӧнія» олан сям да уджсикасъяс найӧс кыскӧныджык, кӧть и СМИ серти «традицияа» уджъяс сулалӧны сы дон, мед найӧс дорйыны да видзны. Тайӧ уджъяссӧ «видзны» коланлуныс нин петкӧдлӧ, мый на вылӧ видзӧдӧны отсӧгтӧг сӧвман перспективатӧм овмӧс юкӧнъяс вылӧ моз. Ӧти кывйӧн, бур кӧсйӧмъяс вылӧ видзӧдтӧг тшӧкыда кӧр видзӧм да традиция костын урчитӧм йитӧдыс лёк ногӧн имитӧ том коми ныв-зонлӧн дасьлунлы бӧрйыны кӧр видзан удж.

Тайӧ небӧгас кӧр вӧдитан практикасӧ да престижсӧ анализируйтӧма теория тшупӧдын «structure» (тэчас) да «agency» (мукӧддырйиыс «agency» вуджӧдӧны «имитӧмӧн, имитан вӧчӧмӧн», но автор лыддьӧ бурджыкӧн «вӧчны вермӧм») термин отсӧгӧн. «Agency» веськыдасӧ гӧгӧрвосьӧ кыдз «уджалӧм»: тайӧ абу урчитӧм керӧм ни ачыс керӧм процессыс, а керысьыслӧн позянлун да вермӧм вӧчны. Керӧмъяслысь выйтсӧ либӧ найӧс дзескӧдӧмсӧ урчитӧ тэчас. Тэчасыс гӧгӧрвосьӧ сэтшӧмторйӧн, кодӧс гӧгӧртасыс сетӧма индивидуумлы вӧр-вакӧд да йӧзкотыркӧд, эмбуркӧд да лов могмӧдӧмкӧд йитӧдын. Тані колӧ пасйыны, мый выйтыс либӧ дзескӧдӧмыс вермӧны вежласьны да збылысь помся вежласьӧны. Индивидуум-керысьыс имитӧ аслас вӧчӧмторъяснас тэчасыслы, водзсасьӧ сыкӧд, вежлалӧ сійӧс либӧ вӧдитчӧ сійӧн аслас кӧсйӧмъяс серти. «Agency» тшӧтш жӧ кутӧ ас пытшкас позянлун бӧрыньтчыны тайӧ ситуацияас вӧчӧмысь.

«Structure» да «agency» концептсӧ лӧсьӧдісны йӧз олӧмлы инман наукаясын уджалысь рытыв европаса туялысьяс 1970-1980-ӧд воясын. На лыдӧ пырӧ англияса социолог Гидденс, коді тӧдчӧдӧ мортлӧн вӧчны вермӧмлысь водзмӧстчан, мог олӧмӧ пӧртны зілян да творческӧй тӧдмӧссӧ. Тайӧ уджсӧ гижысьыс сулалӧ тайӧ жӧ видзӧдлас дорыс. Кӧр видзысьлысь вӧчны вермӧмсӧ да сылӧн керӧмъяслысь выйт мыччӧдӧм

могысь позьӧ видлавны кӧр йирӧдан практика. Пастук йирӧдӧ кӧръяссӧ урчитӧм ног да дум вылӧ мыджсьӧмӧн. Шуны кӧ мӧд ног, сійӧ веськӧдӧ найӧс урчитӧм туйныр̈од либӧ кольӧ ас кежаныс. Сылӧн сэтшӧм ли татшӧм помшуӧмыс сы сайын, кутшӧмджык поводдяыс, му выв серпасыс, уна-ӧ кӧрымыс, эм-ӧ ном-геб, вынаӧсь-ӧ кӧръясыс да сідз водзӧ. Став тайӧ урчитӧмторйыс пырӧ тэчасӧ, мӧд ног кӧ шуны, пырджыксӧ пастукыс оз вермы найӧс вежны, но сійӧ вермӧ бӧрйыны мӧд-мӧд стратегия ӧдзыс пасйӧм выйт да дзескӧдӧм пиын. Пастуклӧн позянлуныс бӧрйыны керӧмсӧ и лоӧ сылӧн вӧчны вермӧмӧн («agency»). Пастук вермӧ думыштны кытшовтны кутшӧмкӧ урчитӧмтор (шуам, вуджны мӧд йирсянінӧ) либӧ вежыштны сійӧс (шуам, содтӧд вердыштавны кӧръяссӧ).

Мыйӧн чӧжсямаджык пастукыс, сійӧн отаджык сылӧн вӧчны вермӧмыслӧн выйтыс. Мыйӧн бурджыка сійӧ тӧдӧ кӧръяссӧ да мусӧ, сійӧн унджык бӧръян стратегияыс. Сійӧ, мый кӧр дор йӧз кужӧны видзны кӧръясӧс, ветлыны тундраӧд, корсьны туй, сетӧ налы позянлун вӧчны-керны (да кольны ловйӧн). Мукӧд йӧзлӧн позянлунысь сійӧ ыджыдджык. Тайӧс и пуктӧны туйӧ коми кӧр видзысьяс. Тӧдӧмлунныс да сямныс кындзи найӧ пыдди пуктӧны асьнысӧ тшӧтш и дюжлунныс да зільлунныс понда. Коми кӧр видзысьяс тшӧкыда серпасалӧны асьнысӧ та боксянь; найӧ гежӧда висьталӧны удж йывсьыныс кыдз «традицияа олан сям» йылысь. Сідзкӧ, налӧн мӧвпалӧмыс кӧр вӧдитӧмлӧн сюрӧс йылысь абу ӧткодь ӧдзыс мыччӧдӧм «ортсыса» мӧвпалӧмъяскӧд, кодъяс серти тундраыс лоӧ либӧ паськыд агропромзонаӧн, либӧ традицияа оласног петкӧдлысь ывлавывса ыджыд музейӧн. Но видзӧдлыны кӧ, кутшӧма кӧр видзысьяслӧн керны позянлуныс имитӧ кӧр вӧдитӧмлӧн престижлы, позьӧ пасйыны, мый зэв омӧля. Сідзкӧ, налӧн вӧчны вермӧмыс («agency») кӧр вӧдитан практика тшупӧдын ыджыд, а кӧр видзӧмлӧн престиж тшупӧдын ичӧт. Сэк жӧ буретш престижыс лоӧ зэд тӧдчана, кор том йӧз босьтчӧны кӧр видзӧмӧ либӧ бӧрйӧны мӧд уджсикас, мӧд олан сям.

Медводдзаысь видзӧдлігӧн тайӧ небӧгас видлалан тема чукӧрыс да территорияыс чайтсьӧны бокысаӧн. Периферіясаӧн найӧ лоӧны москваса, петыркарса да весиг сыктывкарса олысьяслӧн видзӧдлас серти. Налӧн видзӧдлас серти кӧр вӧдитан муясыс кӧнкӧ ылынӧсь войвылын. Та понда кӧр видзӧмлӧн тӧдчанлуныс абу ыджыд. Но кӧр дор йӧзлӧн видзӧдлас серти кӧр видзӧмыс абу сӧмын шӧр тӧдчанлуна, но и олӧмын вывті колана. Войвывса сиктъяс, тундрабердса вӧръяс да тундраса эрдъяс – налӧн быдлунъя оланін, кӧні чужӧ-лоӧ ставыс, и накӧд орччӧдігӧн Москва, Петыркар да Сыктывкар лоӧны бокысаӧн, периферіясаӧн. Небӧг текст тэчасыс да юрпасъяслӧн артыс мыччӧдӧны

коми кӧр видзысьяслысь да налӧн гортсаяснысьлысь видзӧдлассӧ олӧмвылӧмнысьлӧн медтӧдчана юкӧнъяссянь заводитӧмӧн да ылі, «дормуса», но политика боксянь ыджыд тӧдчанлуна сфераясӧн помалӧмӧн. Небӧгсӧ панӧ 1-а юрпасса неыджыд пыртӧс. 2-ӧд юрпасыс заводитчӧ чомса быдлунъя олӧм серпасалӧмӧн кӧралӧн сулаланінын; юрпасыс видлалӧ кӧр вӧдитан практика. 3-ӧд юрпассӧ сиӧма быдлунъя олӧмлы сикт-грездын, сэні кӧр видзысь котыръяслӧн эмӧсь керкаяс, кӧні олӧ налӧн рӧдвужыс. Тайӧ жӧ юрпасас висьтавсьӧ медматысса (Усинск) кар йылысь. Такӧд тшӧтш петкӧдлӧма школаын велӧдӧмлысь, «культура» да «цивилизация» понятиеяслысь практикаса да символа тӧдчанлунсӧ. Пасъям, мый ӧтилаысь мӧдлаӧ вуджалігъясӧн «культураыс» да «цивилизацияыс» быттьӧкӧ чинӧ либӧ содӧ. Юрпас помланьыс ми медводдзаысь казялам, кутшӧма кӧр видзӧмлӧн сюрӧс йылысь мӧвпалӧмъясыс йитчӧмаӧсь Войвыв асаліг-тӧдмалігӧн лоӧмторъяс интерпретируйтӧмкӧд.

4-ӧд юрпасын сетӧма регион йылысь да кӧр видзӧм сӧвмӧм йылысь дженьыд юӧр география да история боксянь, сідзкӧ, абу кӧр вӧдитысьяслӧн олӧм «пытшсяньыс», а ортсыса кад да ылдӧс перспективасянь. Вӧлӧмкӧ, ыджыд кӧр чукӧръяс видзӧмыс войвыв европаса тундраясын мыетшкӧ выль да зэв водзмӧстчан му-видз вӧдитан система. Но бӧръя нелямын вонас тайӧ регионас сӧвмис и мӧд му-видз вӧдитан сям: мусир да биару перйӧм, коді лӧкмӧдіс да босьтіс уна кӧр йирӧданін. Тундраын ыджыдыс ӧні абу нин ӧтнас кӧр видзысь – сылы колӧ велавны мукӧд месайлӧн воӧм дінӧ, тайӧ жӧ му вылас уджалысь мусир да биару перйысьяс дінӧ. Мусир да биару перйӧмлысь имитӧмсӧ кӧр вӧдитӧмлы, кӧр видзысьяс да мусир перйысьяс костын йитӧдъяссӧ видлалӧма 5-ӧд юрпасын.

6-ӧд юрпасын видлавсьӧ кӧр видзан предприятиелӧн овмӧс нуӧдан уджыс, стӧча кӧ, кӧр яй вӧчӧм. Анализыс петкӧдлӧ, мый вӧвлӧм совхозсӧ видзӧны «вевттьӧд» пыдди аспом, мукӧддырйиыс и кабалаясӧн урчиттӧм овмӧс нуӧдӧмлы. Тадзисӧ уджалӧмыс окта да лӧсялана абу сӧмын предприятиеса юралысьяслы да специалистъяслы, но и бригадиръяслы да кӧр дор йӧзлы аслыныс. Урчитӧм этшын тайӧ уджыс лӧсялӧ предприятиелӧн официальнӧй уджалӧмкӧд, но вевтыртӧ кӧ сійӧ урчитӧм йӧрыш, то пондӧ киссьыны. Коми Республикаса войвылын кӧр вӧдитан предприятиеяс ёнасӧ эз асавлыны, сы вӧсна мый сэтчӧс войтырыс чайтлісны и ӧні на чайтӧны совхозсӧ ӧтув эмбурӧн, сиктса ӧтсӧгласлун подулӧн, дзик ӧтка овмӧс бергӧдан ногӧн да весиг ӧтка «тӧлка» олан сямӧн войвыв сиктын.

7-ӧд юрпас серпасалӧ кӧр видзан котыръяслысь йӧзкост-овмӧсса положениесӧ да котыръяскостса йитӧдъяслысь динамикасӧ. Кӧр вӧди-

тан гортовмöсъяс топыда йитчöмаöсь сиктса муköд гортовмöсköд. Ставныс найö öткодя корсьöны чöжöс зумыдлун. Ставныс зільöны пасьköдны сьöм ваян öшмöсъяснысö. Кодкö уджалö бюджета сфераын, кодкö промпредприятиеын либö карын, а кодкö и кöр видзö. Но оз быд морт шогмы кöр видзысьö либö чом-работницаö и оз быдöн köсйыны сэні уджавны. Артмö, мый колö, мед горткотыр пытшкас думыштасны, кодлы köні уджавны. Юрпас помланьыс буретш видлавсьö, коді вермö да коді köсйö уджавны кöр видзысьöн либö чом-работницаöн.

8-öд юрпасас гижысьыс весьköдö мöвпсö кöр видзöмлöн престиж проблема чукöр вылö да сылöн сюрöс йылысь мöвпалöмъяс вылö. Сійö дженьыда петköдлö кöр вöдитысьяслысь, политикъяслысь, канса да абуканса котыръяслысь, йöзлы юöр сетан средствояслысь, туялысьяслысь донъялöмсö. Кымын ми ылыстчам кöра сулалаңінсянь да матыстчам каналан шöринлань, сымын тшöкыда паныдасьлöны мöвпалöмъяс кöр видзöмлöн традицияа сюрöс йылысь. Но öдзыс нин лои пасйöма, мый политикаса бур köсйöмъяс вылö видзöдтöг «традицияа сюрöс» вылö ыстысьöмыс быттьökö индö коми кöр вöдитöмлöн перспективатöмлун вылö.

9-öд юрпас сетö öтвывтöм дискуссия да кывköртödъяс. Воддза юрпасъясын серпасалöм олöм сфераяс донъялöм подув вылын помöдз видлавсьö кöр видзысьяслöн, чом-работницаяслöн да шöр усадьбаса уджалысьяслöн вöчны вöрмöмныслöн пом тшупöд йылысь юалöм. Авторыс чайтö, мый буретш кöр вöдитöмлöн престижыс пырö медъёна дзескödысьяс лыдö. Коми кöр видзöм вермас зумыда сöвмыны сöмын сэк, кор кöр видзысьяслöн да чом-работницаяслöн лоö позянлун имитны муköд войтырлöн да политикъяслöн тödömлы кöр дор удж да олöм йылысь.

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Property Relations and the Rural Condition

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This is an age of neo-liberalism, in which the advantages and virtues of private property are often taken for granted. Postsocialist governments have privatized and broken up state farms and socialist cooperatives. However, economic outcomes and the social insecurity now experienced by many rural inhabitants highlight the need for a broader anthropological analysis of property relations, which goes beyond changes in legal form. A century after Kautsky addressed 'The Agrarian Question' in Germany, it is therefore necessary to address a postsocialist Agrarian Question throughout Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and China. The studies collected here derive from the first cycle of projects at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. They are prefaced by a substantial Introduction by Chris Hann, a Founding Director of the Institute.

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Joachim Otto Habeck received his PhD degree at the University of Cambridge. After working for several years as a research assistant in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, he joined the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in 2003 as co-ordinator of the Siberian Studies Centre.

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