Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Reindeer Nomads Meet the Market

Culture, Property and Globalisation at the 'End of the Land'

Florian Stammler







2nd edition 2007

LIT

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Pastoral nomads are often idealised for their independence, pride and freedom. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the reindeer herds of the Yamal-Nenets District have become the largest in the world and Nenets herders are renowned throughout the circumpolar world as self-reliant, independent pastoralists.

Stammler meticulously analyses relations between these reindeer nomads and their social, political and natural environment, exploring continuities and changes in their concepts of property and territory, as well as in their engagement with the developing market economy. Their high social adaptability is combined with a sense of belonging to their animals and their land by living out the nomadic *nenei ilngana*, or 'real lifestyle'.

Refuting essentialist notions of Nenets culture, the author explores the dialogue between reindeer nomads and the surrounding world and shows how global processes and concepts such as culture, property and market are expressed in local practices. He demonstrates how reindeer nomads move freely between subsistence and commodity production; state-owned and private reindeer; animism, communism, and market relations; and territorial defence and cooperative knowledge of the land. This study makes an original and significant contribution to wider debates about nomadic pastoralism and to anthropological studies of trade, barter, property and territoriality.

Florian Stammler was a founding member of the Siberia Project Group at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle. He received his PhD degree in 2004 from the Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg. After working for two years as a research associate in the Scott Polar Institute at the University of Cambridge, in 2005 he joined the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi as a senior researcher in anthropology.



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Cover Photos: Florian Stammler
Photo 1 (upper left): The official emblem of the Yamal-Nenets autonomous Okrug, here carved in ice; Salekhard 2001.
Photo 2 (upper right): Reindeer meat traded on the market in Salekhard, 2001.
Photo 3 (bottom): Alexei Tusida choosing harnesses for his transport reindeer; Tambei tundra, 2001.

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Preface

In this book Florian Stammler deploys the data gathered during his (physically exceptionally demanding) fieldwork among the Nentsy on the Yamal peninsula (North-West Siberia) to address questions which are both of theoretical significance to anthropology and of practical urgency in their economic and political implications. Engaging with scholarly traditions as diverse as evolutionist Marxism and the new institutional economics, he addresses three distinct thematic clusters, which reinforce each other cumulatively throughout the study. First, Stammler shows that the herding of reindeer in Arctic conditions has been neglected in the general literature on nomadism, and his study goes a very long way towards filling this gap. The second cluster concerns property, not only in animals but also in land; here the author makes perceptive contributions to the literature on territoriality and the 'tragedy of the commons'. Thirdly, Stammler addresses the recent literature on postsocialist transformations, and shows how the economic possibilities open to Yamal reindeer herders have enabled them—so far—to manage rather better than most other communities, in Siberia and elsewhere.

The Nentsy are widely recognised to have held on to many elements of their traditional social organisation and economic practices. Stammler rejects the notion, common in Russia, that 'culture' is the explanation for this exceptional continuity, as well as for the entrepreneurial prosperity of postsocialist years. His reasons echo the criticisms made by Jack Goody in a number of recent publications (e.g. *Capitalism and Modernity*, Cambridge 2004) of those who would explain the 'miraculous' emergence of industrial modernity in Europe in terms of values or culture. The latter concept is simply too 'inclusive' to serve as an independent variable: only if culture is broken down and analysed as *process* can the term still be of use. The job of the social anthropologist is to identify more precise factors shaping the beliefs and practices observed in the field: Even when local people themselves lump these together as 'our traditional culture', anthropological investigations will bring out differentiation, a variety which subverts homogenising reification. In postsocialist Siberia the dangers of 'essentialising' identities are currently acute, due both to the legacy of Soviet nationalities policies and the worldwide promotion of 'cultural rights'. The attention which Stammler pays to this theme is therefore fully warranted. In place of the mystique of 'culture', he gives detailed historical and contemporary accounts of Nenets *adaptation*. Stammler applies this term not only to their delicate ecology but also to fluctuating political regimes. His examination of the interplay with Soviet powerholders and with recent forms of market econ-

omy shows that local forms have never been entirely subjugated. Soviet institutions were established in such a way as to allow the Nentsy to continue their migrations as cooperating households, without the dramatic dislocation which collectivisation caused in some other parts of the Soviet Union.

The Nentsy with whom Stammler worked define themselves as nomadic reindeer herders and it is therefore only appropriate to place them and their animals in the comparative analytic frameworks developed over several generations by specialists on pastoral nomadism. Yet few of the leading theoreticians in this field have paid close attention to reindeer: Stammler shows in his overview in chapter 2 why it is so important to take account of the specific biological characteristics of these animals. He is able to draw not only on the insights of numerous Russian scholars but also to integrate contributions from the German literature, notably the notion that herders 'accompany' the animals in their migrations. The arguments brought forward by Stammler are likely to have considerable impact on the international debates, since these contributions have been ignored in recent influential English-language syntheses.

The second thematic cluster addressed in this book is property. This was the focus theme of Stammler's group at the Max Planck Institute and therefore an obligatory object of his data collection. Using the same broad definition of 'property relations' as other members of the group, he confirms some of the patterns identified by colleagues working in other postsocialist regions. For example, he points to ambiguities originating in the socialist period in differentiating private from collectively owned animals. Such fuzziness has continued under postsocialism, though Stammler makes it clear that private ownership and commerce outside of collective structures have been pushed further in Yamal than elsewhere in postsocialist Russia. In chapters 5 and 6 he examines human relations to animals and to the land in innovative ways which open up many avenues for comparison. Contrary to the assumptions of an evolutionist model put forward some time ago by Tim Ingold, Stammler shows that the Nentsy emphasise long term reciprocal relations by passing animals between households and between generations. This form of ownership is given visual expression through earmarks and furmarks. They also have a sense of territoriality, in the sense that persons identify with particular districts or features of the landscape. Yet the basic character of their property relations remains inclusive, according to Stammler's elaboration of the 'knowledge paradigm' of territoriality, because access is granted to others whenever need arises. Stammler engages indirectly with economists' archetypal accounts of the origins of private property in terms of the scarcity of resources and the costs of protecting territory, and more directly in chapter 7 with one recent variant of this tradi-

tion, the 'tragedy of the commons' thesis. He shows that recent discussion alleging the degradation of pastures has been exaggerated and that the obsessive concern of scientists to measure 'carrying capacity' is based on a misunderstanding of the flexibility which the herders can realise through their migrations. Degradation has not so far led to a decrease in reindeer numbers. Nonetheless the pressures are increasing, partly because of the successful marketing of reindeer products in recent years, which creates incentives to increase numbers, and partly due to the encroachments on land made by the oil and gas industries. Stammler shows in chapter 7 that the new institution of the *obshchina* has, in the Nentsy case, yet to prove itself as an efficient mechanism for regulating access to pastures.

The third cluster of topics addressed in this monograph pertains to postsocialism. The disintegration of collective institutions, notably the state farms, has in this region not been accompanied by many of the negative side effects documented elsewhere. This is mainly a consequence of the expansion of the oil and gas industries and the funds they generate for the provincial government, enabling it to subsidise herding and to continue to provide much of the infrastructure and supports to which people became accustomed in the Soviet era. In this sense the reindeer herders, a small minority in Yamal, can be viewed as the beneficiaries of a windfall, of the largesse of what John Davis has theorised in the Libyan context as a 'hydrocarbon state' (*Libyan Politics*, London 1988). It turns out that Nentsy herders are doubly fortunate, since cash is flowing not only as a result of the flow of oil and gas but also thanks to buoyant demand for reindeer products themselves, notably the velvet antlers (*panty*). This market is the space which nowadays allows Nentsy to express their agency most effectively. Noting the work of Caroline Humphrey and others, who have shown that postsocialist managers have often been compelled by the collapse of the monetary economy to resort to barter, Stammler argues that for the Nentsy this is a matter of deliberate choice: they exchange their products with 'new native entrepreneurs' possessing the necessary local knowledge. This analysis invites comparison with the discussion of Komi herders' agency provided by Joachim Otto Habeck in the preceding volume of this series.

Like Habeck, Stammler takes the actors' viewpoint seriously. He is a pioneer of 'western' fieldwork methods of long-term participant observation among people who, though relatively well known in the Russian literature, do not feature prominently in the comparative anthropological literature. Stammler had a head start in his fieldwork because he chose to return to a region where he had already built up a range of contacts in the course of his Masters dissertation for the University of Cologne. When not collecting archival and other data in the regional capital of Salekhard and in Moscow,

he divided his time between villages and the tundra, joining Nentsy households to participate fully in their migrations. This enables him to provide rich detail on the herders' daily life and to give the reader a deeper grasp of their attachment to this 'lifestyle'.

Some readers of Stammler's analysis may fear that further rapid changes in the regional political economy could jeopardise the continuing identification of the Nentsy with a nomadic lifestyle. If the reindeer market were to collapse, would the continued flow of hydrocarbon wealth be sufficient to maintain the vigorous identification as 'lifestyle' nomads? What will happen when that flow ceases? The author is optimistic, provided that the Nentsy can hold on to their land. Whether or not they themselves are overusing their pastures, the oil and gas companies seem to pose a more urgent threat. In short, Nenets adaptations to socialism and to the current forms of mixed economy have brought impressive accomplishments; but it is possible to imagine circumstances in which, like other postsocialist pastoralists, these herders could be confronted with more formidable problems of collective action, to which their previous patterns of adaptation can no longer offer solutions.

Chris Hann

Halle, September 2005.

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Notes on Transliteration

Russian and Nenets words in italics and in the references are transliterated from Cyrillic script following the Library of Congress transliteration table. Words and names in the text are rendered in a simplified version found in most popular writings and the media, providing the English reader with a rough guide to pronunciation.

The ethnonym for the Nentsy is used in the way common in the Russian language, where *Nentsy* is the plural for people, whereas *Nenets* is the singular for a person, as well as the adjectival form: hence one *Nenets*, *Nenets* culture, but reindeer herding among the *Nentsy*.

Glossary

Russian	Nenets	English
Adzhika		Caucasian barbecue-sauce
Aibat (aibarit')	*aiba*	Meal of raw fresh meat and blood eaten directly after slaughtering
Aktsionernoe obshchestvo *1. otkrytoe (OAO)* *2. zakrytoe (ZAO)*		Joint stock company 1. closed (shares only for staff members) 2. open (shares sellable to everybody)
Arenda		lease/land lease for land
Argysh	*miud*	Migration caravan with six to eight sledges
Arkan	*tynziang*	Lasso
Avtonomnyi Okrug (Yamalo-Nenetskii, YNAO)		Administrative unit within the Russian Federation, with its own government, parliament, laws etc.
Bedniak		Soviet term for a poor herder
Beschumnyi vypas		'*Chum*less grazing': when the herder drives the herd ahead of the camp in summer, without taking the family with him.
Boloto		Swamp
Brezent		Canvas for summer tent cover
Brigadir		Brigade leader, leader of a work team in a reindeer enterprise, responsible for one herd
Buran		1. Snowmobile, 2. Snow storm
Burovye		Drilling stations
Byk kastrat	*khabt*	Castrated bull
-- peredovoi		'Front bull', the first bull on the left side in a harness
-- proizvoditel'	*khor*	Reproductive bull
Chizhy	*tobaki*	Reindeer boots (inner)
Chum	*mia'*	Tepee-like nomadic tent for hunters and reindeer herders, the dominant nomadic dwelling in the Russian Arctic.

Chumovye palki	*miad' nu'*	Poles for building *chum*
Chumrabotnitsa		'Professional houseworker'. A job category created by sovkhozy for the work that is done by the wife of a reindeer herder. From the sovkhoz she receives a regular salary and benefits such as health insurance, pension, etc.
Darnit		Industrial chemical textile (similar to rough fleece), used on drilling stations, now often by reindeer herders for tent covers or shoe-covers
Dezhurstvo		Herding service: a shift, normally of 24 hours, during which one herder bears the responsibility for the herd.
Domashnaia khranitel'nitsa	*miad pukhutsia*	The female protecting spiritual figure of the *chum*, takes the form of a wooden doll
Doski	*miad' lata'*	The boards/wooden blanks of a *chum* floor
Dukh	*khekhe*	Spirit
Faktoriia		Trading post. Since the 1920s, all villages on the Yamal Peninsula started as trading posts or supply stations for reindeer herders
Gololed	*serabt'*	Bare ice, iceshield (on pasture)
Grekh	*khebiakha*	Sin
Griby	*tudako*	Mushrooms
Gus'	*sovik*	Outer coat (normally for men) for the coldest time of the year
Iagel'	*niada*	Reindeer lichen (*Cladonia* sp, *cetraria* sp)
Iagushka	*pany*	Female reindeer coat
	iarabtsy	Nenets legends describing the origin of their clans and their connections to the land
Idol	*siadei*	Sacred figure, made of wood
	ilebts	1. Wild reindeer 2. The basis of life (name of an *obshchina*)
Iva	*nero*	Willow (various species)
Izbennoe olenevodstvo		Taiga reindeer herding with the use of wooden huts (Rus. *izba*) instead of *chum*s.
Kalym	*ne-mir*	Brideprice, literally 'woman-money'
Karlikovaia bereza	*piung*	Dwarf birch

Kastratsiia	*1. nialkapas'* *2. siatorpas'*	Castration of reindeer by (1) knife (2) bite
Khorei	*tiur*	Pole for directing reindeer
Khoziain		Master, to whom an object belongs, or who knows the objects best
Kisy	*piva*	Reindeer boots (outer)
Kladbishche	*khalmer'* *mar'*	Cemetery
Kleima, metka	*kha', ne-nadumd'*	Earmark
Kochevanie *1. bytovoe* *2. proizvodst-vennoe*		Nomadism, divided in Soviet terminology into 1. domestic or everyday life 2. productive (industrial)
Kommersanty		Trader-retailers (often used pejoratively)
Kontora		(Sovkhoz) headquarters
Kopiia		The 'copy' of a dead person, protecting the *chum* and the household (takes the form of a wooden doll dressed in reindeer clothes)
Koral'	*va, iuroch*	Corral for catching reindeer in the tundra
Koslanie	*iamda*	Migration
Koslat' nado	*tiuko iala iamda guna*	'Today we shall migrate'
Koster		Open fire used in the *chum* during summer for cooking tea and food
Krai zemli	*ya-mal*	The end of the land
Krest'ianskoe fermerskoe khoziaistvo (KfKh)		Peasant farming enterprise
Krov'	*khem, veia*	Blood
Kulak		Soviet term for a wealthy reindeer herder
Kuropatka	*khorky*	Willow grouse, ptarmigan
Lesnoi fond		Land fund of the state forestry authorities
Lichnoe pod-sobnoe khoziaistvo		'Personal supplementary economy', Soviet category for all personal economic activity taking place outside the sovkhoz structure, e.g. a private reindeer herd (equivalent to the private garden plot in arable farming zones)

Malitsa	*mal'tsa*	Male reindeer parka
	mandala, mandalada, mandolyda	Nenets resistance against collectivisation in the 1930s
Mesiats, luna	*iry*	Month, moon
Miaso	*ngamsa*	Meat
Munitsipal'noe obrazovanie		'Municipal Formation', the smallest administrative unit
Nadezhda		Hope (name of an *obshchina*)
Narodnaia selektsiia		'Folk selection': the process of selecting particular animals for reproduction in a reindeer herd as an indigenous practice, as opposed to artificial selection in the *plemennaia rabota*
Narta	*khan*	Sledge
--	*ne-khan*	Women's sledges, specially fitted for transporting babies, at the front of a caravan
--	*nguto*	Sledge for *chum*-poles
--	*siabu*	Sledge for the floor boards of the *chum*
-- *Sviashennaia*	*khekhe khan*	Sacred sledge (on which all sacred items are stored)
Ne nado	*ni tara*	'It's not needed' (meaning don't do this!)
	nenei ilnga-na	'Real life', 'human lifestyle' (refers to the lifestyle of migrating with reindeer herds)
	niada-iagoch'	Lichen test stick to check a snow-covered pasture before deciding to set up camp
Niuki	*eia, niur'*	Reindeer-fur covers for the *chum*
Novye formiro-vaniia		Generic term for all new forms of property in agricultural institutions after Perestroika
Obida	*edia, khe'mia*	Insult, offence
Obshchestvo ogranichennoi otvetstvennosti (OOO)		Limited liability company
Obychai	*mesy*	Custom
Okhotnik	*khanena, okhotnik*	'Hunter': a category (of staff) used in sovkhoz documents for private herders)

	Okotetto	'People with many reindeer'. One of the leading reindeer herder families on the Yamal Peninsula
Oleneemkost'		The carrying capacity of reindeer pastures
Olenevodstvo		Reindeer herding (-breeding, -husbandry) (from the Russian verb *vodit'*, 'to lead', 'to conduct')
Oleni	*ty*	Reindeer
-- Kak oleni?	*ty savo?*	Are the reindeer all right?
Ol'kha	*paë*	Alder (*Alnus* sp.), shrubs for preparing tea in the tundra in summer
Organ mestnogo samoupravleniia		Organ of local self-administration. (*Obshchina* can fulfil such a function)
Otel	*nichs'*	Calving
Ovod	*piliu*	Warble-fly
Ozero	*to*	Lake
Panty	*mora*	Fresh 'velvet' reindeer antlers
	parma	Loose cooperation between households for pooling their labour force (pre- and early Soviet periods)
Pastbishche	*ty ia*	Pasture (land for reindeer)
Pastukh		Herder (employed by an enterprise)
Pechka		Stove
Peredyshka	*nyl'*	Short break for reindeer during migration
Perekur'		Short break of few minutes for people, originally used for smoking, but now often used for any stop during movement.
Pesets	*nokho*	Arctic fox
Plemennaia rabota		Scientifically based selection work in specialised reindeer farms to optimise breeding characteristics and production capacities
Poias		Male belt for *malitsa*
Pokoinye	*khalmer*	Dead persons
Polovina		1) 'Half', referring to one of the two Nenets moieties Vanuito or Khariutschi / Okotetto 2) 'Half', referring to one of the two sections within the *chum*
Poroda		Breed (of reindeer)

Postanovlenie		Resolution
Pozhiznennoe nasleduemoe vladenie		Lifelong inheritable land tenure
Priezzhye	*lutse*	Incomers (Russians and all non-indigenous population in the YNAO)
Prokhodnye puti		Migration corridors in spring and autumn
Protalina	*varë*	First thawed patches of earth
Raion		The administrative sub-unit (YNAO consists of 7 *raiony*)
Rod	*erkar*	Clan, today applied to all Nentsy who share the same surname
Rodoplemen-naia obshchina		Clan-based tribal community
Rodovaia obshchina		Clan-based community
Rybzavod		Fishing factory
Samogon		Moonshine, self-made vodka
	sangi	Imaginary line dividing the *chum* in two halfs
Sannadzor		Sanitary inspectorate
Sanreis		Emergency helicopter flight
Sberknizhka		Savings bank account in Soviet times
Sel'skokhoziai-stvennye ugodia		Agricultural territories (official category)
Sel'skokhoziai-stvennyi proiz-vodstvennyi kooperativ (SPK)		Agricultural production cooperative
Seredniak		Soviet term for a reindeer herder with a middle-sized herd
Sfagnum	*khurëkha-niartso*	Moss (*sphagnum*) collected for use as toilet paper or as nappies and towels
Shkura	*khoba*	Reindeer hide (comes in many variations according to age and sex of the animal)
	sikhirtia	Ancient arctic sea-mammal hunters living in underground houses; figure prominently in Nenets legends

Sovkhoz		Soviet state farm; after 1992 also used as the term for the successor enterprises of the state farms
Sushki		Small ring-shaped crackers
Svezhie travy	*plibei ngum*	Fresh grasses on pastures (early summer)
Taiga		Boreal forest
Telennok	*suiu*	Calf
Telia khor		1–2 year old male calf
Torgovtsy		Traders
Traditsionnyi obraz zhizny		Traditional lifestyle (term applied by Russian authorities and indigenous *intelligentsiia*)
Tsekh		Workshop (as part of an enterprise)
Tundra		Treeless arctic ranges forming the main reindeer pastures
Tundrovik		Tundra dweller
Tusha		Carcass
Uboinyi ves'		Slaughtering weight
Ukaz		Decree
Ukazanie		Instruction
Ukrupnenie		Enlargement of Soviet enterprises as a result of merging to form bigger units
Upriazhka	*khan ty*	Harness (reindeer and sledge)
Ustav		Charter (of an institution)
Vakhtovyi metod		Soviet monthly shift method of labour organisation in reindeer herding (for *proizvodstvennoe kochevanie*)
Vakhtovyi poselok		Oil and gas workers' village
Vazhenka	*iakhadei*	Doe
Vezdekhod		Passenger tank, tracked vehicle
Vochina		Inheritable land of the Nentsy (based on their hunting territories as drawn on maps by Soviet ethnographers)
Zaboi	*khavodava*	Slaughter
Zakon tundry		'Law of the tundra', informal code of conduct
Zapreshchenie	*ngevadala-bava*	Prohibition

Zemelnyi komitet		Land committee
Zemle-pol'zovatel'		Land user
Zemleustroistvo		Land reorganisation
Zemlia	*ia'*	Land
Zootekhnik		Zootechnician (sovkhoz employee responsible for the health of one or several herds, for many husbandry decisions, planning the migration, and organising supplies)

Chapter 1
Introduction

This is a study of a group of nomadic reindeer herders—the Nentsy—in the Russian North who, despite widespread economic declines elsewhere in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union, have experienced an unusual 'boom' in their fortunes. I try to demystify what has been called the 'Nenets phenomenon'—a myth created by ethnographers and activists, who have sought to emphasise the highly exceptional character of this particular ethnic group. A significant proportion of the Nentsy live as nomadic reindeer pastoralists on a peninsula in north-western Siberia called Yamal, which, in the Nenets language, means the 'end of the land'. They are the main bearers of this myth and form the focus of this work. But the study goes beyond purely ethnographic research and aims to contribute to ongoing debates on postsocialist market transformation in the former Soviet Union. It explores how nomads are integrated into a national and increasingly global economy and the implications this has for a territorial behaviour based on the mobile use of pastures.

In analysing the 'boom' experienced by the Nentsy, I describe how the reindeer herders have performed economically since the fall of the Soviet Union, and focus on their 'reindeer-herding culture'. My approach, however, is not simply economic. I explore how reindeer herders act upon their environment—social and political, as well as geographical—and how this environment acts upon them by presenting constraints and opportunities. Thus, I show that, economically and socially, successful reindeer herding is the result of a profound mutual interaction between the nomads and their surroundings. This challenges a recent tendency found in some ethnographic studies, and in most of the popular discourse, in which the Nentsy are seen as brave defenders of their traditions and as the last of the exotic noble savages of the Russian North.

At the crux of this study is an apparent paradox. How can an indigenous population, viewed as the 'most traditional' in the Russian North, become the 'most progressive' in the evolving post-Soviet market economy?

To explore this I analyse the role of property in various forms as one of the basic factors in explaining the economic behaviour of the Nentsy during the period of adaptation to a market economy. My interest here arose from being a member of the first research group in the Postsocialist Eurasia Department at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. Some 15 research projects were set up across postsocialist countries, each investigating various aspects of property relations (see Hann et al. 2003). Property is also a key issue in understanding the system of extensive pasture use, which in turn is crucial for the economic and cultural future of these nomadic pastoralists. Territorial behaviour reveals a special notion of property in the nomads' perception, since it is not bound to the physical ownership of a piece of land, but rather to a broader identification with one's surroundings.

1.1 Region

1.1.1 Territory

The Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (hereafter YNAO) covers an area of 750,300 square kilometres, approximately 1.5 times the size of France. It is situated in the West Siberian North on the geographic border between Europe and Asia, east of the Ural Mountains (map 1).[1]

More than half of the okrug lies above 66.5°N, i.e. beyond the Arctic Circle. The population of 507,000 people consists mainly of Russian-speaking industrial workers who extract 90% of Russia's natural gas, and administrative workers who live in the cities in the south of the YNAO: Novyi Urengoi (pop. 99,300), Nadym (pop. 40,000), Noiabrsk (pop. 105,000), Muravlenko (pop. 36,900), Gubkinskii (pop. 18,710), the railway-town of Labytnangi (pop. 32,800) and the administrative centre of Salekhard (pop. 32,000). The urban share of the total population is 82%.[2]

Administratively, the YNAO is divided into seven *raiony* (districts, see map 1):

- Yamal'skii (1): Yamal Peninsula, tundra, centre of reindeer herding, huge gas deposits at Bovanenkovskoe, Novoportovskoe and Mys-Kamenskoe. Other deposits have been discovered and extraction is planned. Native population in the majority.
- Tazovskii (2): Gydan Peninsula, centre of reindeer herding, tundra, wild deer sometimes entering from Taimyr. Now becoming a gas ex-

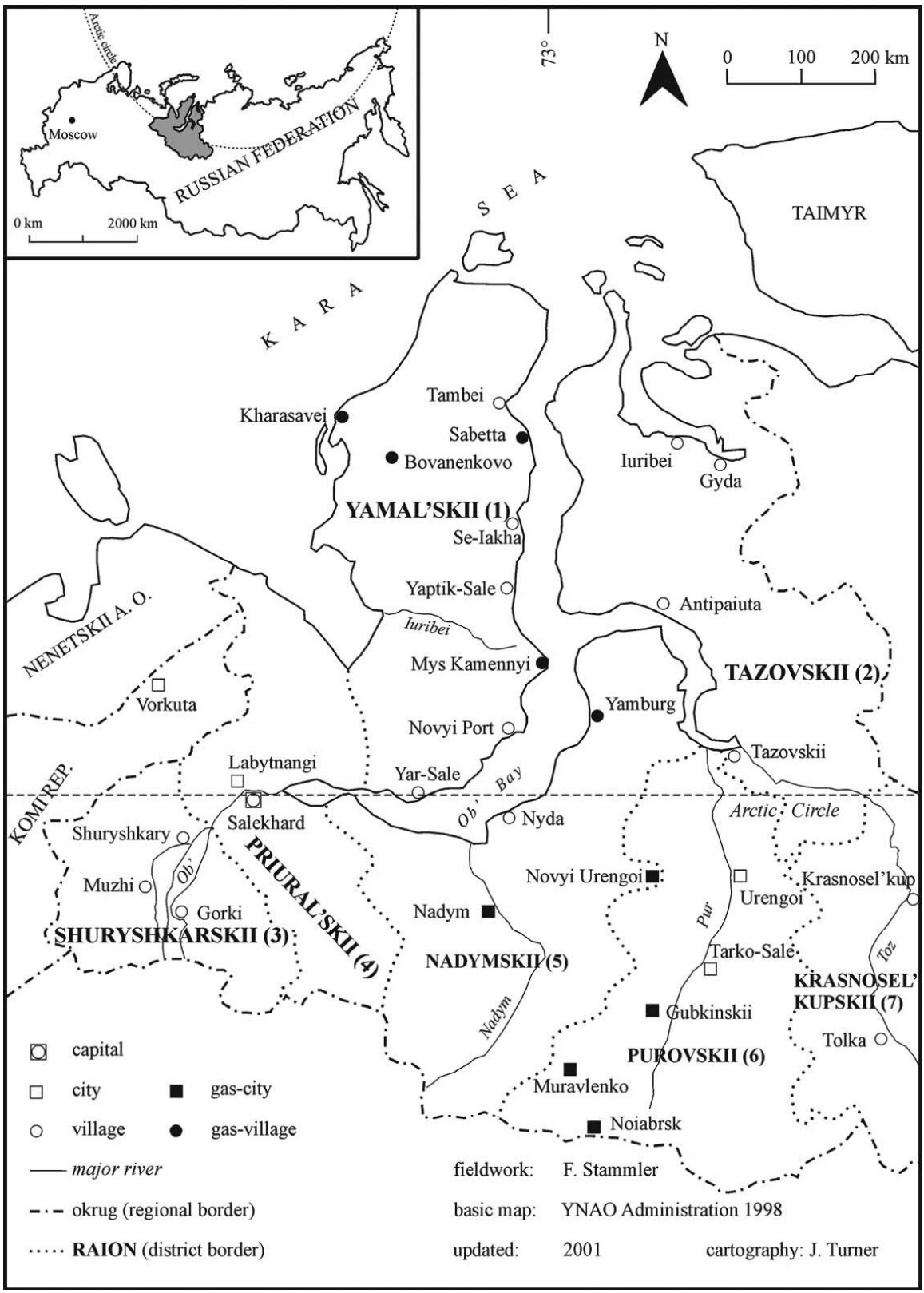
[1] In the following, I will use the abbreviation YNAO when referring to the okrug as a whole. The word 'Yamal' will be used to refer to the Yamal Peninsula itself, which forms the central northern part of the YNAO.

[2] Population data for 2001 from the okrug administration and http://www.yamalinfo.ru/naselenie.shtml.

traction centre, and has the giant zapolarnoe deposit. Half of the population is native.

- Shuryshkarskii (3): taiga and Polar Ural Mountain tundra, Khanty national *raion* with some Komi population too, reindeer herding diminished, hunting and fishing important. Linked to south Siberian regions by water transport on Ob' River. Half of the population is native. No industry.
- Priural'skii (4): Polar Ural Mountain tundra, tundra, forest-tundra margin, taiga. Reindeer herding, fishing, mining for precious metals, native population in the minority. Salekhard is the administrative centre, Labytnangi is the rail 'gateway to Moscow'.
- Nadymskii (5): tundra, forest-tundra margin, taiga. Reindeer herding (Yamal winter pastures), also taiga herding by Forest Nentsy (numerically marginal). Centre of gas extraction since the 1970s with biggest deposits. Native population in the minority, urban centres.
- Purovskii (6): taiga, forest-tundra margin. Taiga reindeer herding by Forest Nentsy (numerically marginal). Centre of gas and oil extraction since the 1970s. Native population in the minority, urban centres. Linked to Siberian centres by railway (Surgut, Tyumen', Omsk, etc.)
- Krasnosel'kupskii (7): taiga region with no reindeer herding anymore. Industrialisation based on one oil deposit with extraction since 1990. Sel'kup natives, engaged in hunting and fishing, are therefore rather marginalised.

Gas and oil are mainly extracted in the southern and central *raiony*, whereas the centres of reindeer herding comprise the two peninsulas of Yamal and Gydan in the north.



Map 1. The Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YNAO).

1.1.2 Native Population

The Nentsy and Khanty are officially designated as one of the 'indigenous numerically small peoples of the north of the Russian Federation' (*korennye malochislennye narody severa Rossiiskoi Federatsii*). Currently there are 44 such ethnic groups listed in this way, a designation which provides certain privileges, such as free transport in some regions and the possibility of studying at university without taking entrance examinations. Since 1999 a federal law also requires an ethnic group to meet a number of qualitative and quantitative requirements: a 'numerically small people' must have no more than 50,000 members, must live on the territories of its ancestors, must be actively conscious of its ethnic sense of belonging, and must preserve the so-called 'traditional way of life and economy' (*traditsionnye obraz zhizni, khoziaistvovania i promysli*).[3] With approximately 40,000 and 28,000 members respectively, the Nentsy and Khanty are the first and third largest of these small ethnic groups. With increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of their region, the importance of reindeer herding, fishing and hunting in their economies has decreased, but these activities still form the basis of their survival as distinct ethnic groups in political discourse.

In the YNAO the indigenous population (comprising Nentsy, Forest Nentsy, Khanty and Sel'kupy) numbers only 36,810 or 7.38% of the okrug population (see table 1). In the rural areas, however, where 523,000 reindeer graze, this percentage is considerably higher; for example, on the Yamal and Gydan peninsulas more than 70% of the population is indigenous. Approximately 40% of the indigenous population in the YNAO lead a nomadic way of life. Since the incoming (*priezzhye*) population lives mostly in the cities, the percentage of the indigenous population in the countryside is higher than that of the incomers.

Table 1 shows population numbers for the Nentsy and the other two indigenous peoples in the YNAO.[4]

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[3] 'Federal law on guaranteeing the rights for the indigenous people' (30 April1999, No. 82-F3), Art. 1 §1, and official list of the indigenous peoples of the North of the Russian Federation.

[4] All Russian figures from the All Soviet Population Censuses quoted from Bogoiavlenskii 1996: 39f, for 2002 from the recent Russian Population Census.

Table 1. Indigenous population.

Year	Nentsy	Khanty	Sel'kup
1959	23,007	19,410	3,768
1970	28,705	21,138	4,282
1979	29,894	20,934	3,565
1989	34,665	22,521	3,612
2002	41,454	28,773	4,367

These figures indicate a steady growth, particularly of the Nenets population. However, the official census data must be interpreted very carefully. We have to bear in mind that in the 2002 census ethnic belonging was recorded according to the respondents' self-identification. Therefore, many people may have been counted as being indigenous in 2002 who were recorded in other categories of the population in 1989. This is because of the political and material privileges that come with being officially recognised as 'indigenous' in contemporary Russia. Thus, growth is not only a measure of the physical increase of the population but also tells of a growing conscious choice to be counted as indigenous.[5]

Within the Uralic language family is the Samoyedic language group, which includes the Nenets, Nganasan, Sel'kup and Enets languages. The Nenets language is further divided into Forest Nenets and Tundra Nenets dialects, the latter spoken by the vast majority of the Nentsy. There are 11 dialects of Tundra Nenets, which are for the most part mutually intelligible. Most Nentsy in the YNAO speak the Yamal'skii dialect of Tundra Nenets, but in the eastern part of the okrug, the *gydanskie* and *tazovskie* dialects are also spoken (Golovnev 1995: 71–3; Khomich 1995: 30–6; Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 5f). In 1989 77.1% of Nentsy considered the Nenets language to be their mother tongue. This is among the highest of the indigenous peoples of the Russian North (Khanty 60.5%, Sel'kup 47.6%). However, Vakhtin (2001: 77f) shows that people calling a language their mother tongue do not necessarily really speak that language. A popular assumption that these figures are related to the preservation of Nenets 'traditional culture' is not necessarily correct.

Unlike other northern peoples, such as the Dolgans (Anderson 2000a; Ventsel 2004), Nenets ethnogenesis is not contested nowadays and locally is not an important topic for ethnic or regional identity. There is little competition with other groups about indigeneity and who came first to the tundra.

[5] There are many more telling factors about indigenous identity in the census data, but further critical analysis of the data must properly be part of a separate demographic study.

The Nenets scholarly community does not support a particular model of their ethnogenesis. Authors such as Petrova & Khariutschi (1999: 10) leave open the question of the origins of the Nentsy as an ethnic group, mentioning the various lines of argument without judging them to be more or less relevant. One problem common to all theories of ethnogenesis among the Nentsy is that they treat 'ethnic group' and 'culture' almost as synonyms. Both are squeezed into a static framework that does not allow for development once 'the finishing phase of the formation of the Nenets culture, as distinguished from the culture of other peoples' (Khomich 1995: 290) is terminated. This leads me to emphasise the processual character of culture in this study. Soviet and Russian research has introduced three main theories concerning the ethnogenesis of the Nentsy. One of them claims that contemporary Nentsy evolved from a mixing of the descendants of the Altai-Sayan peoples and ancient Arctic hunters (Castrén 1862: 119; Khomich 1995: 37ff; Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 8f).[6] These people (Nen: *sikhirtia*) still form part of contemporary Nenets legends about their origin.

The Yamal Nentsy think of themselves as originating from two main clans (*rody*), one being Vanuito (Nen. for 'root') and one being Khariutschi (Nen. for 'crane-like'). Many of my informants thought the Okotetto (Nen. for 'those with many reindeer') as being one of two original clans rather than the Khariutschi. All contemporary surnames are thought to have developed out of these two original clans. A 'clan' (Rus: *rod*; Nen: *erkar*) is currently understood to mean people with the same surname. Some of the earlier clans were merged together by the Soviets. Russian scholars called these two groups phratries, whereas Nentsy referred to them in Russian as *polovina* (Rus. for half). I think the term 'moiety' better describes the meaning of this division of Nentsy today. Vasilev (1979: 55) and Dolgikh (1970: 100) consider these moieties as representing the southern-Sayan branch (Khariutschi-moiety) and the northern aboriginal branch (Vanuito-moiety) within the ethnic group of the Nentsy. More recently, however, Khomich (1995: 289f) rejected this by saying that it does not fit together with the exogamous character of the two halves. All clans were thought to have their own ancestral hunting grounds, *vochiny*, and Soviet ethnography carefully mapped these territories (Brodnev 1950: 93f; Brodnev 1959; Dolgikh 1970; see section 6.2 below). Brodnev's two publications describe how the meaning of these *vochiny* declined. He concluded that they became subordinated under the reindeer-herding land rights.

[6] The other theory claims that they are indigenous to the Northern Urals, while a third one argues for a Finno-Ugrian origin in the Volga region (Haidu 1963). For an overview, see Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 7–10 and Khomich 1995.

Most Nentsy I met still know to which *polovina* they belong. In principle, marriage partners have to be chosen exclusively from the other 'half', but today this is not always observed. However, marriages within one's own *polovina* are still considered exceptions to the rule. All members of a clan trace their kinship links back to imaginary founding figures described in legends, which are still sometimes sung by northern Yamal elders over periods of days (Nen: *iarabtsy*). Some of these legends describe how the various lineages within one clan evolved.[7]

1.1.3 Industrialisation

Industrialisation is responsible for the YNAO's financial potential, and enables the administration to subsidise reindeer herding. The income to the okrug budget from oil and gas has a direct impact on the financial situation of reindeer herding, as I will show in chapter 8. This financial aspect is the positive side of the coin. The cost side is the growing appropriation of land by industrial enterprises, which results in a reduction of reindeer pastures. As plans mature to start gas extraction on the Yamal Peninsula, pressure on reindeer pastures will increase.

The YNAO is Russia's top gas-producing region, and after the collapse of Chukotkan reindeer herding in 1991, it also became the top reindeer-herding region. The gas extracted from the YNAO in 2003—some 540 billion cubic metres—accounts for almost 25% of total world gas production. Extraction of the huge reserves in the north on the Yamal Peninsula has not yet started. The dominance of the YNAO as a gas producer makes the YNAO of crucial strategic importance to the Russian Federation. Oil and gas incomes form the backbone of the Russian economy, which has prompted President Putin's economic advisor, Andrei Illarionov, to warn that Russia is addicted to these incomes 'like a junkie to the needle'.[8] However, one of the main problems is the remoteness of these huge gas deposits. Therefore, a modification of the 'junkie metaphor' sees Russia as a 'gas drug addict with a 4000 km-long needle' (Gagarinski 1997: 1).[9] That the economy of this remote northern region of Russia performs well is now of vital interest, not only within the okrug, but far beyond its borders. According to statistics, the YNAO is now the third largest contributor to the Russian economy after

[7] One of the Vanuito lineages is called Makh'ko, which is the Nenets equivalent of my own surname Stammler, meaning in English 'splutterer', 'stammerer'. This is why Anatolii Tynzikovich Makh'ko Vanuito (see chapters 3 and 5) adopted me as his nephew.

[8] In an article in the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, no. 19, 5 May 2003, p. 146.

[9] The pipeline from the Yamal gas fields to the western parts of Russia covers a distance of just under 4,000 kilometres.

Moscow and its southern neighbour, the Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous Okrug.

The Russian gas monopoly, Gasprom, extracts 94% of the YNAO gas and produces one-fifth of the revenue of the Russian federal budget. In 1992 the YNAO and the Russian Federation signed a treaty regulating the new relationship between Moscow and the okrug. This guaranteed the YNAO the status of a fully recognised 'subject of the Federation' with a budget independent of the Tyumen' oblast', the administrative unit to which the YNAO belonged when part of the Soviet Union (see chapter 4; YNAO Ustav 1998, Art 1 and 6). A considerable part of the oil and gas income, in the form of taxes, could thus become the basis for the economic development of the okrug and its administration.[10] The YNAO is one of Europe's leading gas exporters, and is the most important gas supplier to Germany, providing more than one-third of all the natural gas used there. Many Western European enterprises are currently participants in the YNAO's lucrative energy sector.

The history of the industrial development of the okrug, like its main cities, is relatively recent: resource development started at the beginning of the 1970s, when the first gas city, Novyi Urengoi, was founded in 1973 to provide accommodation for the developers of the giant Novourengoiskoe gas deposit. The most recent city to be founded was Gubkinskii in 1986. During Perestroika and the political and economic reorientation of Russia, the region's industry coped relatively well with the stagnation that accompanied it. The upper layers of the oil and gas deposits had largely been exhausted by the 1990s, pressure levels and the quality of the resources went down and it became more expensive to extract them. There was no money available for investing in further geological exploration or for modern technical equipment. Therefore, the amount of gas extracted in Russia decreased, although to a lesser extent than for oil and coal (Gagarinski 1997: figure 1). Since the late 1990s, production in the YNAO has seen a recovery and in 2001 the milestone of extracting 10 trillion cubic metres of gas was widely celebrated (Neelov 2002: 1). One of the main goals for the near future is to begin extraction of the gas deposits of the Yamal Peninsula. The YNAO governor and the Gasprom director signed a memorandum of cooperation for this huge project with an estimated investment sum of US$30 billion.[11] However, experts estimate that due to infrastructural, financial and technical problems in this Arctic region, regular extraction will not start for about 10 years. This

[10] This considerable budgetary autonomy may be restricted in the immediate future, since the YNAO has to comply with a recent Federal Russian law that takes power away from okrugi and gives it to oblasti, the administrative unit above the YNAO.

[11] http://www.yamalinfo.ru/on_line/3001news.shtml (2002).

means that Yamal reindeer herding and its associated players have until 2012 to organise their position in the growing competition for land in the tundra.

1.2 Four Fields of Social Anthropology

This study places the case of the Yamal-Nentsy in relation to several current debates in anthropology which have not previously been brought together, notably the anthropology of nomadic pastoralists, postsocialist transition studies, the anthropology of markets, and territoriality and landscape studies.

1.2.1 Siberia: Ethnographic Literature

The Nentsy are a comparatively well-studied ethnic group in the well-studied area of West Siberia. During the Tsarist Empire several multidisciplinary expeditions to the Russian North studied West Siberia and its inhabitants, both separately and as part of pan-Siberian overviews to record basic facts on all ethnic groups and their ways of life. For those early ethnographers such as Zhitkov (1911) or Evladov (1992 [1929]) it was extremely difficult to reach the northernmost fringes of the tundra, which were the field sites for my research. Where they had to travel months on reindeer sleds with their own herd bought from natives, the anthropologist of today can get there in a three-hour helicopter flight from the regional capital. However, to arrange a place on such a flight can also take months of negotiation and requires a lot of inside knowledge into the workings of local power relations. Early Russian studies, such those mentioned above, or the international pan-regional studies by Donner (1936), Castrén (1969 [1856]), or Middendorff (1953 [1856]) form a useful comparison with my post-Soviet contemporary material. Moreover, alongside archival sources, historians used a range of pre-Soviet studies for their pan-regional analyses of the Russian North (Forsyth 1992; Slezkine 1994; see Kappeler 1993). Both Forsyth and Slezkine mention the northern fringes of Yamal as examples of regions where the Tsars and Soviets had difficulty exerting their power, a situation that I shall address in chapter 4 in more detail.

Research in Soviet times was carried out primarily by ethnographers based in Moscow and Leningrad, whose studies prove to be very valuable for understanding the ethnographic landscape in Siberia generally. Studies from the early Soviet period (such as Shirokogoroff 1979 [1929]; Vasilevich & Levin 1951; Dolgikh 1960, 1970; and Gurvich & Dolgikh 1970) are still frequently used by Russian and Western scholars because of their detailed ethnographies. In some cases, even studies with obvious ideological titles, such as Brodnev's 1950 article 'From clan construction towards Socialism', provide valuable information on the basic ethnography of the Nentsy. Au-

thors had to assign the information to the past—be it still relevant or not—since it was politically correct to argue that the poor backward natives had already become good Soviet citizens. As for most Soviet ethnography, studies of the Nentsy (Dolgikh, Brodnev) extensively elaborated on ethnogenesis and clan organisation. However, a contemporary analysis of the meaning of kinship for tundra nomads in the YNAO has yet to be undertaken. A second generation of Soviet ethnographers provided extensive studies on West Siberia, such as Sokolova (1982) on the Khanty, who are the neighbours of the Nentsy, and Khomich (1995) on the Nentsy, first published in 1966, or the more anecdotal and accessible writings by Simchenko (1984 [1972]) on the Nentsy, Nganasany and Dolgans. These works provide in-depth information about the classical spheres of Soviet ethnography, such as material culture, day-to-day practices, and social structure and kinship systems. In many cases the authors draw on a large number of fieldwork periods for their studies, sometimes over several decades, which enables them to collect in-depth data that is beyond the grasp of a Western anthropologist on a one-year field trip. German translations of Metelski (1970), Sokolova (1982) and Simchenko (1984) indicate that during the Soviet period popular works on the cultures of the north were widespread in East Germany. In West Germany, books from GDR publishers were not available to a wide readership.

The first scholar to address the contemporary problems of the northern minorities was Alexandr Pika (Pika & Prokhorov 1989; Pika & Bogoiavlensky 1995; Pika 1999). His accessible analyses of the demographic situation, and especially of the health problems of the Yamal Peninsula, were politically influential during Perestroika. The same is true for his concept of 'neotraditionalism' (1999), which shaped the ideas and research agendas of many Russian and Western anthropologists (e.g. Grant 1995; Gray 2003), who studied political processes among the northern minorities in Russia. Currently, the most distinguished specialist on Nenets culture is Andrei Golovnev, who has for many years been conducting fieldwork on Yamal, and who, in 1995, published a comparative volume on the Nentsy, Sel'kupy, Khanty and Mansi ethnic groups in West Siberia. In most cases my work has supported his findings, which enables me to draw a much richer picture of the basic ethnographic background. His works on Nenets cosmology (1995: 380–493, 2000b) have generated lively discussions and are greatly admired by indigenous scholars.

Two important indigenous sources on which I have drawn are Petrova & Khariutschi's (1999) historical ethnography of the Yamal Nentsy, and Khariutschi's (2001) work on Nenets spiritual perceptions of the land and the position of the village in contemporary Nenets culture. Both combine

academic expertise with personal experience. Recently, the results of this academic work also became available in English (Khariutschi & Lipatova 1999). A recent ethnography of the Nentsy by Liarskaia (2003) separates Nenets culture into the two sub-spheres of tundra culture and village culture. Whereas Khariutschi (2001) focuses specifically on the innovative aspect of the village for what she calls Nenets culture, Liarskaia shows, using the example of boarding schools, that the very same people can be actors in both spheres, switching back and forth. A form of 'village culture' among the Nentsy has developed only recently (Liarskaia 2003: 22), which is why our understanding of the relation between the sedentary villagers and the nomadic tundra dwellers is still very poor. Further research, particularly by indigenous scholars, will help to enhance our understanding of these social changes.

All the above-mentioned works have helped shape my ethnographic view and my interpretation of the material presented here. However, most Russian publications implicitly or explicitly claim that 'ethnic stability is based upon the preservation of culture on a given territory' (Khariutschi 2001: 3). Therefore I still feel I have to engage in demystifying what is called 'Nenets culture'. The anthropological studies of the Nentsy do not adequately consider the concrete ecological and economic bases of their livelihood, such as the systems of pasture rotation, migration, trade relationships and property relations among the reindeer herders. Here, the works by two local agronomists and reindeer-herding specialists, Podkorytov (1995) and Yuzhakov (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2000, 2001), prove to be of particular value. Although I question the usefulness of Yuzhakov's model of 'ethnic reindeer herding', his ten-years' experience of Nenets herding practices and pasture use, especially his linking of ecological and anthropological data, provides a better insight into the physical preconditions for particular practices of the reindeer herders, which in turn influences the performance of their reindeer herding in general.

Contemporary Western anthropological research on Siberia started with the seminal work by Caroline Humphrey (1998, first published 1983) on the theoretical and practical functioning of a Soviet collective farm. Scholars throughout the former Soviet bloc found much 'path dependence' (Stark 1992) with late socialism in the postsocialist period. Humphrey's case study from Buriatia, which analysed conditions within late socialism, is relevant today to the contemporary lived realities of the people studied here. In particular, her argument that financial practices and the 'flexible' allocation of state resources within the collective farm were vital as much for the material well-being as for the psychological identification of the workers with their *kollektiv* is a major anthropological contribution to a better under-

standing of the state agricultural system of the Soviet Union, although I find some remarkable differences here with the Yamal situation. Many scholars stress the importance of the *kollektiv* in building new identifications, far beyond material reasons (Humphrey 1998, 2002 a, b; Ashwin 1999; Creed 1999; Anderson 2000a). My finding is that the Yamal reindeer herders view the state farm more pragmatically. They do not want to get rid of it because they think of it as the only source of security in an unstable economic environment, as Konstantinov (2002) has pointed out in relation to Murmansk reindeer herders.

The regional focus of Balzer's dissertation (1979) is the Northern Khanty, the group neighbouring the Yamal Nentsy. For the first time, Western theories of ethnic identity, such as those of Barth (1969), are applied in a Siberian context. In Balzer's analysis of sovietisation (1979: 440–57) it becomes clear how important pre-Soviet economic practice is in terms of the extent to which the natives embraced the Soviet model. She shows how the fishing and hunting Khanty became sedentarised more easily than the reindeer-breeding Khanty. This is consistent with my argument that we do not have to essentialise Nenets culture (as vague as the concept is) to explain continuity in nomadic reindeer-herding. What is important for this continuity is not only their culture but also their economic activity. At this point I challenge the otherwise well-argued study in English by Golovnev & Osherenko (1999) on the Yamal Nentsy. Drawing on Golovnev's earlier ethnographic fieldwork, this work tends to portray Nenets culture and tradition as exceptionally stubborn and resistant to external pressures such as sovietisation. Balzer argued that, in West Siberia, the nomads succeeded in convincing the Soviets that nomadism of the whole family was more profitable for reindeer herding than sedentarisation (1979: 442). My argument on this theme takes a different perspective, namely that the local Soviets were pragmatic enough to be convinced by the advantages of a nomadic economy. This was not the case in other parts of the Russian North, where only men continued to live in the tundra, whereas their families were settled in villages (Vitebsky & Wolfe 2001; Krupnik & Vakhtin 2002; Vitebsky 2002).

Following Perestroika, Western anthropologists started to stream into the Russian North and other regions of the former Soviet bloc. The first book to result from this was Grant's work (1995) on the Nivkhi of Sakhalin, in which he analyses the local outcome of Soviet identity policy for the indigenous peoples. He discusses Soviet reifications of a static dichotomy between 'the traditional' and 'the modern' and finds evidence that for contemporary lived realities 'dualisms that for so long held sway over Nivkh identity lost their currency' (1995: 159). The works of David Anderson (1998, 2000a) and John Ziker (1998, 2002a, b) focus on Taimyr, the neighbouring region to

the east of Yamal. Their study of territorial patterns (Anderson) and resource management (Ziker 2002b) among the Evenki and the Dolgans allowed me to position the respective Nenets patterns in a broader context, illustrating the difference between hunters and herders as well as the impact of certain ecological features in the region. In a remote region of the Sakha Republic, Ventsel (2004) focused mainly on the importance of kinship networks in reindeer-herding and hunting communities. Patty Gray's work (1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005) on Chukotka does not focus specifically on reindeer herding in the tundra, but her careful analyses of the institutional changes show that in the Russian North alone there exists a whole range of differing models for the privatisation of state farms, and of their influence on the reindeer herders. The difference between Chukotka and Yamal, which we compare elsewhere (Gray & Stammler 2002), supports my argument against essentialising culture to explain continuity and discontinuity in reindeer herding. I claim neither that Chukchi culture was 'too weak' to resist sovietisation, nor that Nenets culture was 'resistant enough', although many of my informants are convinced that they are the best reindeer herders in the world. Gray's (2003) work supports my argument from the opposite angle, stressing how much the institutional, political and broader economic framework matters when attempting to explain the performance of one region in relation to another. Tuisku's work (2002) on the European Nentsy also provides a supporting example for this. In the region bordering Yamal to the west, the so-called 'Euronentsy' seem to continue to rely much more on collective ownership of reindeer with a rather moderate decline in herd numbers, whereas in Yamal growing private herds are responsible for the sharp increase in reindeer numbers.

I support the view that 'Nentsyness' as an analytical tool in anthropology is not of explanatory value, just as 'Russianness' (or 'Germanness') is not, as has recently been pointed out by Humphrey (2002b: xx), who has warned of essentialising Russian culture. Such work in North America has been called 'nationalist social science' (Handler 1988). In fact, assuming ethnic identities (Nentsyness) as organic entities is similar to assuming a 'totalitarian concept of culture', a phrase which Hann (2002: 260) uses to describe tendencies in many postsocialist countries that result in ethnic nationalism. I believe we should think rather of culture as peoples' local understandings and reactions to events, changes and phenomena influenced by their institutional, ecological, economic and social surroundings. It is this particular local understanding that influences, among others, economic performance and social life, rather than a vague, generalised concept of culture. Here, I am in agreement with Tim Ingold, who, although not deliberately avoiding 'culture' as a term, stresses the activity of humans and their

relationship to their environment as being the starting point of anthropological analysis (2000: 170f), and sees, like Bourdieu in his *habitus*, culture developing out of people's involvement with others and their environment (2000: 162).

These local understandings also influence another important focus of this study—land. An ethno-archaeological dissertation by Haakanson (2000) on the Yamal Nentsy shows how these local concepts have an immediate influence on the micro-environment, specifically campsites. How and where the camps are built up is determined by spatial concepts, which, in turn, are closely connected to the non-material world. Haakanson's analysis of the spatial conception of nomadic campsites supports my focus on the interaction of humans with the space around them. Analysing this interaction is crucial for understanding their territorial behaviour, and their relations with each other and their animals.

The last decade has also seen a growing number of works on issues of property and land rights in Siberia. Here, economic, legal and non-material aspects of property are at issue. In relation to north-western European Russia, Konstantinov (2000, 2002) convincingly questions the very distinction between 'private' and 'collective' (or public) ownership of reindeer. He claims that the reindeer herders positioned themselves so well within the world of the state farm (2000: 61–2), that it is no wonder that they have been reluctant to move away from this system in post-Soviet times, especially given the insecurities of the global free market (2002: 172f). Although I find parallel evidence for this in Yamal, especially for an ambiguous mixed-ownership regime of the herd, I question Konstantinov's view that 'crypto-entrepreneurship', as he calls entrepreneurial activities that are 'under the umbrella' of the state farm (2002: 173), is likely to be the most appropriate form of economic activity in reindeer herding. My ethnography of vertically integrated commercial reindeer-herding enterprises in Yamal (chapter 8) shows how commercial activity, independent of the state-farm structure, does not have to be 'burdened with negative connotations (*kommersanty*, *mafia*, etc.)' (Konstantinov 2002: 173f, italics in original).

For an analysis of current transformations of property relations on land it is important to look beyond the disciplinary limits of anthropology. The geographer Gail Fondahl (1995, 1998, Fondahl et al. 2000) has devoted most of her academic work to an analysis of land rights and changing entitlements in a post-Soviet context. Her case studies from Transbaikalia suggest many parallels with the situation in Yamal, although in the Sakha Republic, where Fondahl did some of her work, a regional law made the process of redistri-buting land faster there than in Yamal. In her book (1998), Fondahl shows how difficult it is to speak of 'a post-Soviet land rights

situation', because different administrative regions in the Russian North have taken different directions in providing a legal framework for indigenous land claims, even though they deal with the same people, the Evenki. However, as I shall show in chapter 7, a reified concept of Evenki culture seems to underlie her work on the indigenous clan community—*rodovaia obshchina*.

The first anthropological case studies (Novikova 1997, 2002; Sirina 1999; Gray 2001) of the nature of these clan communities underline the fact that many of them have little more in common than the name '*obshchina*' itself. Whereas Gray (2001) reports that some members of a community in Chukotka did not even know that they were officially an *obshchina*, I found the reverse in Yamal, where communities are referred to as *obshchiny* but officially are not registered as such. A decade after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian North is clearly still undergoing considerable territorial and political changes, which makes a common direction in this regard difficult to discern. This is complicated by a multiplicity of alternative terminologies, such as the family/clan holdings in Taimyr (Ziker 2002a, 2003).

1.2.2 Nomadic Peoples

This book links the study of West Siberian reindeer herders to reindeer herding elsewhere in the circumpolar regions, and beyond this, to the broader framework of pastoral herding elsewhere. The reason for this approach is my wish to stress that, although regional and national borders matter (and, indeed, mattered a lot for the development of specific economic and cultural practices among northern indigenous peoples), there is a unique environment that links all of these people together—namely, the Arctic tundra. The inhabitants of these regions rely almost entirely on one species of animal to satisfy their basic needs: the northern reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*). This reliance on a single species is a very distinctive feature of reindeer pastoralism; in pastoralism elsewhere there is a much broader species diversification within the herds, be it in Central Asia or Africa (Galaty & Johnson 1990: 7; Khazanov 1994: 41). However, the very fact that northern and non-northern pastoralists react to ecological and social constraints through mobility justifies a comparative approach to studies of nomadic pastoralism elsewhere.

There are very few general studies of reindeer pastoralism, and few anthropological studies that address reindeer herding across the whole of the Russian North. Some studies focus on one particular region, but so far only Anderson (2000a) and Habeck (2005) have made reindeer herding the central focus. In this regional study I attempt to relate my material to the more general issues raised in the literature and to an understanding of reindeer

economies outside West Siberia. There is certainly room to improve our understanding of reindeer pastoralism in relation to nomadism in general.

Linking reindeer herding to general questions of animal husbandry has long been a tradition among German-speaking academics. Important works on the origins of the domestication of animals and herding cultures (Flor 1930; Menghin 1931; Pohlhausen 1954; Vajda 1968) have shown that the study of reindeer herding contributes to a more general understanding of pastoralism. Like the early works by Soviet anthropologists, such works are valuable since they contain interesting ethnographic material, thorough analyses of the features of pastoralism, and are good examples of interregional comparison of an overarching topic. However, they were rarely the result of long-term anthropological fieldwork. If we treat with care the theoretically 'old fashioned' arguments, often ideologically loaded, these works are certainly worth revisiting, though they are scarcely known within the English-speaking world.

Vajda's (1968) work is of particular interest since he uses many sources from Russian and Soviet anthropologists on reindeer herding and links them to the general debates of that time: namely, whether reindeer breeding evolved out of hunting or out of agriculture, which animals were the first to be domesticated, and where domestication first took place. Vajda anticipated some of the key debates in pastoralism of the 1980s and later, but his work is no longer acknowledged, probably because he engages in outdated debates such as whether the evolutionists or the diffusionists were right in their assumptions of the development of cultures. Vajda argued that reindeer herding could not evolve out of hunting as a kind of 'internal development'. Instead he claimed that there must have been external influences, probably from agricultural societies. However, he claimed that reindeer herding ensured 'maximum independence' from imported produce for the herders (1968: 416), an assumption challenged by Khazanov (1994; see below). Vajda also anticipated the debate about 'herd following', which generated much interest in the 1980s (see Burch 1991). Whereas Burch identified a lack of clarity about the understanding of 'following', Vajda (1968: 64, 116) reminded us of Pohlhausen's (1954) distinction between '*folgen*' (following) and '*begleiten*' (accompanying), the latter referring to the attachment of a group of mobile hunters to a special herd all year round (1954: 29–31).

Moreover, Vajda (1968: 309) argued that collective ownership of pastures, and the individual ownership of herds, led to overgrazing among East African cattle herders, the key argument of the well-known hypothesis of the 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968), which shaped decades of research on land use among pastoralists. Quoting a source from Yamal (Zhitkov

1911), Vajda claims that for reindeer herders there is no such danger because they have a land-use pattern similar to the family hunting territories of their taiga predecessors (Vajda 1968: 309, 413–17). Combining his analysis with historical and recent ethnographic material I shall point to the importance of this argument in the controversial debate over whether increasing the size of private herds in Yamal causes overgrazing and degradation of pastures. Although appreciating the hunting patterns of Yamal Nentsy, I claim that a thorough analysis has to take into account multi-layered forms of land use, which I investigate more extensively in chapters 6 and 7. Neither Vajda's work nor German anthropology was absorbed by English-speaking anthropologists, who have tended more towards the works of French theorists and have largely ignored German and Russian studies.

Western anthropological understanding of reindeer herding before the opening up of the Russian North is based mainly on research undertaken in Fennoscandia. The three main contemporary works on 'reindeer economies' are those by Ingold (1980), with which I shall engage in more detail in my chapters 2 and 5, a comparative article by Beach (1990), and a book by Krupnik (1993) on Arctic peoples. Before the Soviet Union opened its borders to fieldworkers, Western anthropologists suffered from a lack of real data, which is why Beach's claim for the 'brightest future' (1990: 296) for reindeer herding in the Soviet Union had to be substantially corrected (cf. Krupnik 2000a). Nevertheless his work is useful for comparison. He describes how non-communist governments such as Sweden tried to push reindeer herding towards more collective forms of organisation (Beach 1990: 285) and to rationalise it in the framework of a state model, rather than fitting it to the Saami way of life. This indicates that the paths of modernity and state intervention had a lot in common, and were not unique to the Soviet Union.

The early work by Paine (1964), based on research in Norway, is significant for its engagement with the concept of deer and animal, which has helped to clarify the distinction between breeding and herding or husbandry. The discourse around these terms has certainly influenced my ethnographic analysis of Nenets reindeer herding (see chapters 2 and 3). Paine (1994) later also mentioned the importance of reindeer as a species whose behaviour shapes the herders' day-to-day interaction with the animals, but he was restricted in developing this by the fact that Norway has only the Saami type of reindeer. Taking Paine's argument further, I show that understanding differences between different types of reindeer in Russia (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001) helps to explain differences in reindeer management, migration and herding practices (see chapter 2). Also useful from Fennoscandia is the ethnography of calf marking by Beach (1981, 1993), which is

a good example of how reindeer ownership can be visualised. Using studies by Konstantinov (2002) and Ingold (1980: 114ff; 1986a: 10) I show in chapter 5 that there is considerable variation in this visualisation of reindeer property, which points to different systems of rights to use and own the animals.

The strength of Ingold's (1980) work lies in his integrated account of pan-regional relevance, which relates reindeer herding to other forms of pastoralism, taking up some topics dealt with by Vajda (1968). However, I doubt whether some of Ingold's findings can be applied in the Yamal context. The reason may lie in the nature of his Arctic-wide approach, or in the fact that his sources on the Russian North were rather scarce. Ingold presents a model resembling linear evolution, suggesting that the reindeer economy started with hunting, evolved into the herding of domestic reindeer, and then into reindeer 'ranching'. At the core of Ingold's argument is the notion that these three modes of production have different sets of property rights, which determine the social relations of the units of production within the community. Although historically there were developments from hunting to herding, I maintain that models basing on these are of limited use today, since in the current crisis of reindeer herding we can observe an increase in reindeer hunting (Klokov 1997; Syroechkovski 2000). We have to beware of assuming an evolutionary order from hunting through herding to ranching, because any increase in reindeer hunting would then have to be seen as a 'devolution'. I argue that such developments are better conceptualised as adaptations by the people to a changing environment, which in fact is very progressive and 'forward looking'.

This is supported by Krupnik's (1993) study on human adaptation in the Arctic environment, where tundra reindeer-herding is seen as the result of a decrease in the population of wild reindeer, which rendered hunting unprofitable. Krupnik sees these shifts as long-term fluctuations within broader climatic trends and in the changing balance of species, supporting the Lotka-Volta model of predator–prey oscillations: an increase in the number of predators leads to a reduction in available prey, until starvation leads to a reduction of the predator population, after which the prey population recovers and the cycle begins again (Fratkin 1997: 238). This is mirrored in the reindeer population, where, when pastures are overgrazed or lost, the reindeer population declines until it reaches a level at which the pasture can regenerate and the reindeer population revives again. Krupnik's study (1993) filled many gaps left by Ingold, because it opened up to Western researchers the whole biological and ethnographic record from Russia, and because it stressed some cyclical elements in the long-term development of the Arctic as opposed to linear evolutionary ones. However, Krupnik did

not attempt to link reindeer pastoralism to other forms of animal husbandry, whereas Khazanov's book (1994) focuses mainly on more southern pastoralism with only occasional excursions into reindeer herding. Therefore, Ingold's work still remains the prime source on this topic.

In the course of chapter 5, I engage with Ingold's (1980) categorisation of tundra reindeer pastoralism as 'carnivorous' (meat oriented) as opposed to 'milch pastoralism', where reindeer are used for repeatable, sustainable activities such as milking and transport. This categorisation sees tundra reindeer as having the characteristics of so-called 'small stock' (goats, sheep). Animals are kept for producing a commodity for exchange (meat) and hence their ownership is private and exclusive. Such animals have a lower social significance than 'large stock' (cattle, camel) with high prestige in other pastoralist communities (1980: 188). I question whether this categorisation into meat pastoralism and 'milch pastoralism' can be used to distinguish different property regimes in animals. In contrast to Ingold (1980: 172), I investigate how long-term reciprocal animal transfer does indeed happen in tundra reindeer pastoralism. Reindeer in Yamal are more than a commodity produced for the market and a means of subsistence for the herders. Rather, they bear for the people multiple inclusive notions of property 'wherein an object is embedded in and reflects durable relationships between … peoples' (Carrier 1998: 86), although these relationships might not go as far back into the past as Carrier's Ponam example from Malaysia. Hence, I call for a reassessment of the social significance of tundra reindeer for the herding communities.

Like Krupnik, Khazanov (1994) illustrates the advantages of integrating Russian and English sources in his contribution to the anthropology of pastoralism. Although focusing on Central Asia, Khazanov explores the similarities and differences between tundra and steppe nomadism. His main argument is the non-autarky of pastoralists. He claims, contrary to the 'independence argument' of Vajda (1968: 416), that all nomads rely heavily on either subsidiary agricultural production, as many African agropastoralists do (Scholz 1991; Fratkin 1997: 246), or on trading for agricultural products, as reindeer herders do. With the Yamal material, I claim that the truth lies somewhere between the two, because although the reindeer herders always traded with the 'outside world', it is also true that in cases of emergency they could live for a long time in autarky (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999). Even today, when the delivery of staples such as bread and sugar to a remote trading post in Yamal was unsuccessful, my host lived for months in what I would term a state of 'forced autarky'. Thus, reindeer herders, by possessing the means to be self-sufficient, can survive the uncertainties that are common in a consolidating market economy—for example, the sudden bank-

ruptcy of a trading company or a delay in receiving supplies caused by disruption to transport services.

Khazanov's work has been lauded as a 'landmark book' (Ingold 1985; Fratkin 1997), and his approach to the analysis of nomadism is certainly of major importance to this study. His basic assumption that the nomadic way of life and economy can be understood only by looking at the nomads' interaction with their 'outside world' has never been applied to the example of the Nentsy. I start with this basic assumption in order to deconstruct the essentialist notion of Nenets culture as having within it the inherent potential of successful pastoralism, no matter how much pressure is imposed upon it from outside. Recently Ingold (2000: 171) argued in this direction for any society, 'taking the agent-in-an-environment rather than the isolated, self-contained individual as a point of departure'.

Isolation, or independence, was a topic explored by Soviet scholars in the years between the 1930s and 1960s, and by French Marxists such as Bonte (1977), who have argued for an internal potential of pastoralist societies to develop independently,[12] an assumption which Khazanov feels himself particularly obliged to challenge (1994: 192–6). He doubts that there has been any empirical evidence for such an internal independent development of a pastoral society. Instead, he reaffirms a broadly recognised sociological hypothesis, namely 'that nomadic society is stagnant. It does not and cannot, *as* pastoral nomadic society, develop any further. It constitutes a sociological cul-de-sac' (Gellner 1994 [1981]: xix, italics in original). On the other hand, Khazanov also rightly argues against any determinism from outside, be it ecological or economic. There are too many differences between pastoralists of one and the same ecosystem, as well as too many similarities between pastoralists of different ecosystems (1994: 192). This is what makes it worthwhile to attempt an integrated approach—one which considers the nomads in relation to their surroundings and which, in so doing, opens up the field for fruitful comparisons across geographical and political borders. I stress this because explicitly general pan-regional and theoretical works, such as Scholz (1991), include neither the circumpolar north in the study of pastoral regions, nor reindeer in the study of pastoral animals.

Carrying on the 'stagnant argument', Scholz (1991) suggests the theoretical view that 'nomadism' is a mode of production of the past, which is why we should no longer use the term. Nomadism *per se* is seen as being oriented towards long-term subsistence. Since it is the most perfect adaptation of a society to an arid environment, nomadism holds no intrinsic potential for innovation and development, no further transformation to a 'higher' stage (Scholz 1991: 31–2). Here Scholz is implicitly responding to the

[12] For a short overview on this debate see Gellner 1994 [1981]: xiii–xviii.

evolutionist Marxist assumptions mentioned above and agreeing with Gellner and Khazanov. However, since this 'stagnant nature of nomadism' (Gellner 1994 [1981]: xxii) cannot account for the changes resulting from commoditisation and globalisation, Scholz suggests the use of 'mobile Tierhaltung' (mobile animal tenure) as the more appropriate term. In his view, the end of nomadism has come, the result of outside pressures such as sedentarisation, rationalisation, commoditisation, low prestige and an assumed primitiveness of nomadism, which leads to the marginalisation of nomadic peoples. Humphrey & Sneath (1999), in their work on central Asian nomadism, prefer the term 'mobile pastoralism', like Scholz (1991), for the similar reason that 'nomadism' is loaded with too many stereotypes.

Behind all this lies the definition of nomadism as a mobile pastoral economy, where whole families, or larger groups, migrate without having any permanent houses (Schlee 2001). Khazanov has a slightly wider but similar definition, declaring that in pastoral nomadism 'the majority of the population is drawn into periodic pastoral migrations' (Khazanov 1994: 17). However, Khazanov does not agree that nomadism is a mode of production like feudalism or capitalism, but argues instead that it is a 'distinct form of economic activity', like hunting and fishing (1994: 193). In this definition, nomadism as a food-producing economy, based on extensive use of pastures by animals, is still to be observed all over the Old World in arid regions, as well as in the circumpolar north. Therefore I do not agree that stereotypes should be a sufficient reason to avoid a term that otherwise well describes the economy in question.

Besides reintroducing the term 'nomadism', I go further by claiming that the importance of movement for the Nenets understanding of themselves challenges a mere economic definition of nomadism. When using the term 'lifestyle nomadism',[13] I mean this combination of the importance of the economic as well as the social and mental aspects of movement. This draws on an old Soviet distinction between *proizvodstvennoe kochevanie* (productive nomadism) and *bytovoe kochevanie* (domestic or everyday nomadism) (see Kopylova 1960; Shapalin 1965; Vitebsky 1992: 232), the distinction between the two being migration without, or with, the whole family. But by lifestyle nomadism I not only mean family migration, but also something that encompasses the *emic* concepts of the Nenets nomads, for whom constant movement on particular routes lies at the core of their 'real lifestyle' (*nenei ilngana*). Yuzhakov (2001) also takes this approach, as illustrated by the title of his article on Nenets nomads: 'To move is to live' (*zhit' chtoby*

[13] I am grateful to Chris Hann, Piers Vitebsky and Larry Rockhill for fruitful discussions about the appropriate term for describing the meaning of nomadism for these Siberian reindeer pastoralists. In the following, I shall use lifestyle nomadism without quotation marks.

kochevat'). It is this deeply implemented 'nomadic logic' that leads me to the term lifestyle nomadism, in the same way that Bird-David (1992: 40) claimed to have found a specific logic for hunter-gatherers that is 'deeply integrated into their experience of the world, and of themselves', even in cases where they no longer hunt and gather constantly. When I apply the term lifestyle nomadism, I mean this logic, the importance of which extends even beyond pastoralism as a mode of subsistence. Indeed, out of the 26 household heads I interviewed, only five would give up their nomadic lifestyle if offered a job and house in the village, seven thought it was an unrealistic scenario, whereas 14 would never give it up. This enthusiasm for lifestyle nomadism goes beyond the translation of *bytovoe kochevanie* as 'way-of-life nomadism'. Lifestyle nomadism is about their 'whole heartedness', how people feel when moving on the land with their animals and how this shapes their values, whereas the latter is about how the actions they perform in everyday life are linked to movement. The following statement by a young herder whom I interviewed, describes well this 'nomadic ethos' among the Nentsy:

> We like to live and work here on the tundra and we would never give up our life in exchange for a village life. Here, we have no fixed timetable of getting up, having our meals, going to bed. There is no '*nachalnik*' [boss], who can tell us what and how to work. Our days are organised by the needs of our reindeer. As long as they are well, we have all the freedom in the world to live how we want (personal communication with Konstantin Tusida, 2 June 2001).

The case of the Yamal Nentsy does indeed appear very 'classical', or stereotypical even, with these nomads having lived in the same way for generations. Many follow long migration routes, requiring frequent moves by the whole family, with large herds and no permanent houses. However, I shall show that this does not mean 'exotic backwardness' as is implied in much of the recent popular discourse about Siberian peoples on TV or in the newspapers. In fact there is a lot of innovation, creativity and appropriation of new techniques in this nomadic way of life (cf. Stammler 2002). This study deals with both elements in the reindeer herders' life: continuity and stability, as well as change and innovation.

It is also a question of how we define 'innovation' and 'development' in the context of our research aims. When Ingold (1986a: 9) argues that in spite of innovations such as radio and snowmobiles reindeer herders still live on the same principles as before, this is because his aim is to stress the continuity between life as a hunter and life as a herder. My aim here is to avoid the impression of contributing to what has been called 'museification' of reindeer herding (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 5). This refers to a static

concept of 'tradition', seeing the reindeer herders as remnants of the past and as 'noble savages' who must be protected from the aggressions of civilisation and market capitalism, a concept that has become prevalent in Russian popular and indigenous discourse (IWGIA & RAIPON 2002), recently challenged by Habeck's (2005) work on Komi herders. Instead, I shall draw a picture of a community that, in many spheres of post-Soviet market capitalism, is capable of reacting flexibly to its changing surroundings. This flexibility is true not only for the Nentsy (Golovnev 1997a: 88), but also for nomadic societies in general, where it has been identified as a central characteristic (Casimir 1992a).

The proponents of the 'stagnation' argument could claim that adopting innovations from outside (such as the snowmobile) does not indicate any development potential within a society. I have argued elsewhere (Stammler 2002) that the innovative potential in such cases lies in the new ways in which such 'imported goods' are used, ways that were not presupposed by the non-nomadic producers or manufacturers of these goods. I move further than Khazanov by claiming that it is possible to ascribe development and innovation to nomads without subscribing to Marxist theories about the evolution of societies. A Boasian line of argumentation would be to see contact with 'external' (outside) societies as part of the 'internal' historical development of a society. I shall provide evidence of the integration of items, objects and views within the Nenets way of life, which I see as an adaptive strategy of the reindeer herders to a changing natural and social environment. This is not the same as assuming that processes of acculturation can lead to an assimilation of 'Nenets culture' into a dominant surrounding Russian one in the sense of Herskovits and Kroeber (Herskovits 1938: 13). The Nentsy do not acculturate in Herskovits' sense, seeing acculturation as a process 'by means of which people adapt themselves to what has been newly introduced' (Herskovits 1938: 14). They adapt these new introductions to their own lifestyle rather than vice versa. However, rather than exploring whether a reindeer-herding culture becomes more similar to the dominant Russian culture, which is implied by the modern definition of acculturation (Glick 1997: 1), I set out to examine changes in the herders' lifestyle as reactions to a changing natural, social and economic environment. This is better described by the term 'adaptation', which originally referred to evolutionary biological adjustments of organisms, but recently also encompasses behavioural and historical adjustments (adaptation through learning) (Fleischhacker 1988; Moran 1997: 1; Moran 2000). Such an extended definition of adaptation beyond evolution (what could be called 'natural and social adaptability') is in line with Krupnik's (1993) application of the term for Arctic indigenous peoples.

1.2.3 Property and Territoriality

The topics of property and territoriality are linked as much to the study of pastoral nomadism as to the anthropology of postsocialism. In this book my key concerns are the property relations embedded within the two main assets of pastoral production—animals and land—as well as the impact of these property regimes on the performance of reindeer herders in a post-Soviet economy.

An economic analysis of property in the means of production, here reindeer, is important for understanding market transformations. But more than this, I explore the life and importance of property beyond economics, namely in the social relations of the community. In doing so, I follow a broad definition of property introduced into recent theoretical discourse by Hann (1998). The starting point of the analysis is the general assumption with regard to nomadic societies that we expect to see 'communal ownership of pastures, family ownership of herds' (Gellner 1994 [1981]: xii). This opens up the whole discussion of the well-known 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968), to which I will contribute in the chapters on territoriality (chapters 6 and 7). However, the ethnographic material from Yamal leaves us to discover more than the categories of family and communal ownership would suggest.

We have to deal with a very flexible regime of private, family, collective, communal, public, or open access entitlements to the means of pastoral production, land and animals. So far, attempts to explain those property relations have not been convincing in my view, such as those by Osherenko (1995: 1091), who suggested a 'form of limited common property' of pastures. The debate on the 'tragedy of the commons' in the 1980s developed far enough to establish that common property *per se* is limited to a certain group, as opposed to open access regimes, which are more likely to degrade the land (Casimir 1992a; Fratkin 1997: 242). The reason for the widely perceived overgrazing of pastures in Yamal is to be found in the mixed ownership of the herds by former state farms (sovkhozy) and by private herders (Osherenko 1995: 1091). I shall show that in order to explain the possible overgrazing of pastures and the consequences of this for Yamal reindeer herding, we must understand first the property relations among the Nentsy, in terms of both the animals and the land. I shall elaborate in chapter 7 on the incompatibility of overgrazing scenarios by scientists and inclusive property regimes among herders.

I suggest that we have to investigate property in animals at two different levels: first, the whole herd as it grazes on pastures; and second, the individual animal because it reveals insights into the reindeer herders' social life and beliefs, their work ethics and their economic behaviour. Here I touch

upon a classical theme in the anthropology of pastoralism: human–animal relations and their meaning for the culture of pastoralists. In my view we can see two extreme notions of this: one is the animal as a central element in social, cultural and religious life, as argued by Evans-Pritchard for the Nuer (1940: 18f); the second one is the animal as 'meat on the hoof', i.e. a resource waiting to be transformed from live property into dead property. Since then, many studies of African pastoralists have elaborated on this, focusing on how property relations in animals are the central link between the economic, the social, the political and the religious sphere in pastoral societies. In East Africa a bundle of social ties, entitlements and duties is characteristic of property relations in animals, as Baxter (1975: 216) put it: 'The Boran … split and dispersed their herds and flocks, and … following from that dispersal the set of persons with whom any stock-owner was involved in shared interests … were widespread territorially and extensive in social span.' Comaroff & Comaroff (1991: 36) described the meaning of animals for the Tswana with the Maussian term 'total social phenomenon'. In the animal they see 'the supreme form of property' (1991: 45). The exchange of animals in African pastoralist societies is analysed as constitutive of all social relations and alliances (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 19). This led Kuper (1982: 18) to see in the exchange of women for animals a central social transaction for Bantu-speaking peoples, also constitutive of gender relations, since it links the male economy of pastoralism and the female economy of agriculture. Large stock animals are exchanged on a long-term basis among households, sometimes over generations, perpetuating their alliances and serving as risk insurance for the pastoralists (Baxter 1975; Ring 1990: 194).

It is perhaps this extreme embeddedness of animal property among East African (milch) pastoralists that leads Ingold (1980: 185) to claim the opposite extreme in order to make clear the difference. For Ingold, reindeer in tundra pastoralism have the 'social significance of small stock' (1980: 188). This means that animals such as sheep and goats for their owners represent first and foremost capital to make money in a market, to satisfy basic needs of subsistence, or to transfer to more prestigious forms of wealth. Here, one herd normally is exclusively owned by one household, and herders all engage with the market independently of each other (Barth 1964: 101f). These animals do not represent the highest form of property, since most owners strive to convert them into large stock, seen as more prestigious and secure for long-term capital (Ingold 1980: 177), or into land (Barth 1964: 104). Thus these animals are rarely exchanged or loaned among households, since they have no value while they are alive but are viewed only as 'meat on the hoof' (Baxter 1975: 211). From this we see that the

economic and social significance of the animal is closely interlinked with the herders' entitlements to it.

I argue that the significance of reindeer for herders has to encompass traits of both small and large stock, since in contrast to all other forms of pastoralism, in reindeer herding it is not possible to diversify risk and significance by owning a variety of species of pastoral animals (Spencer 1998: 23). Risk may be buffered by maintaining herd numbers above those needed, and by diversifying activities (see sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2). Where the reindeer is the only pastoral animal, it can become the 'supreme form of property', being central to social transactions, and at the same time also serving as meat on the hoof. Thus, in chapter 5, I show that the significance of reindeer for the Nentsy lies on the continuum between the extremes 'to define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle' (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 19) and meat on the hoof for commodity-oriented households (Barth 1964; Baxter 1975: 211; Spencer 1998: 22).

Reindeer among the Nentsy encompass elements of both extremes. Characteristic of this is a set of multiple rights and entitlements of use and ownership, of a terminative (rights to dead property) and reproductive nature (rights to live property). A multiplicity of rights exists at both levels of reindeer ownership, the herd and the individual animal. Herds of mixed ownership form the centre of a system of cooperation and mutual aid among Nenets households. Such systems figure prominently in the analysis of cattle redistribution among African pastoralists (Baxter 1975; Bassi 1990). Bassi describes such a system for the Boran as being very institutionalised (1990: 34) in comparison to the Nentsy, but the very notion of mutual assistance, rather than a Marxist notion of exploitation of the poor reindeer-owners by the rich, helps us to understand better how property in animals is linked to the social structure of the society as a whole.

Taking this system further, I suggest that we can also analyse the relations between the Nentsy and the headquarters of the state farm, where part of the herd belongs to the farm, as characterised by cooperation and mutual aid. This point of view differs markedly from analyses of the coercive and sometimes violent ways in which state farms redirected the lives of reindeer herders (see Vitebsky 2002). Without wanting to discredit this argument altogether, I suggest that an analysis from the cooperative starting point allows us to see the reindeer herders more in the role of agents (cf. Habeck 2005) than as passive receivers of orders. A state farm could not have worked without the cooperation of the herders, and in order to get this cooperation, the state farm had to offer advantages to the herders. These mutual benefits partly explain why herders have continued to support the state-farm system after the end of the Soviet Union.

The other key element around which property relations develop is land. Land and territoriality are seen as crucial aspects of postsocialist decollectivisation, as well as crucial for the future of indigenous peoples (Osherenko 2001). Land is also gaining importance regionally in Yamal, where projects to exploit huge gas deposits under the reindeer pastures are being planned, and where increasing reindeer herds threaten to degrade pastures in some regions in Yamal. An in-depth analysis of the importance of land in this study is essential to take us beyond the mere statistical evidence of growing herd numbers and successful interaction of herders with 'the market'. Baxter (1990: vi) has reminded us that 'the market ... is only one measure of efficiency', and the debate about pasture degradation in Yamal (see chapter 7) suggests that entitlements in land are crucial if the initial success of reindeer herding in the market economy is to become sustainable. In fact, sustainability is one of the main arguments in the discourse on resource use in Yamal; as a popular saying goes: 'the extraction of the mineral resources may be finished in 50 years, but the resources of the traditional uses of nature will be available for generations'.

One important theme in the anthropological literature on land centres around the analysis of how access to land is gained, secured and defended. Since 1968, when Hardin's seminal article on the 'tragedy of the commons' was published, the debate has raged as to whether it is communal or private ownership, or 'open access' to land that is responsible for degradation. Baxter (1990: vi), referring to African pastoralism, was surprised 'that the argument still requires refutation' and sees herein 'an indication of the colonising power of Western ideologies'. The same is true for post-Soviet debates, where the Western ideology of private property and neoliberalism figured most prominently in the recommendations of development advisors. Indeed, in Yamal we can find confirmation of Dyson-Hudson's version of the 'economic defendability model' (Dyson-Hudson & Smith 1978), according to which claims of exclusive access to a resource (e.g. land) increase as the potential benefits from it outweigh the costs of its defence. However, as I show in chapters 6 and 7, defendability models are not sufficient to explain the multiple layers of entitlements in land among the Nentsy. In fact, the 'defence paradigm' in the analysis of territoriality suits best the Western idea of private property and capital accumulation. The more such a model infiltrates Yamal, the more likely it is that we will find evidence of some sort of defence in respect of land (see chapter 7).

The privatisation and growing competition for land leads scholars such as Humphrey and Sneath (Humphrey & Sneath 1999: 270; Sneath 2002) to provide further ethnographic evidence that private ownership of pastures, contrary to Hardin's argument, can cause pasture degradation,

because it leads to reduced mobility and flexibility among the nomads. Mongolia, one of Humphrey and Sneath's foci for their study, is of interest in comparative terms, since it was thought to be a 'success story' for pastoralism after the end of the Soviet Union. By contrast, Fratkin (1997: 248f) initially found an explanation for the successful revival of subsistence and market pastoralism there in the system of public ownership of pastures and the private property of the herds. This combination is popularly blamed for causing pasture degradation in Yamal. Since Sneath's study (2002) relies on more recent data, his analysis is probably correct and an initial revival of the pastoral sector in Mongolia is now threatened by degradation owing to private pasture rights.

However, the mere assigning of a property regime as being 'private' or 'communal' cannot save the land. Khazanov (1997: 24–34) has pointed out that for Central Asian pastoralists neither the American modernisation concept for nomadic societies of private farmers nor the Russian/Soviet one of planned collectivisation succeeded. He favours independent collective enterprises of farmers as units for the communal property of pastures. But again, this does not guarantee that the land is actually used as it is stipulated on paper. In Yamal, rights to pastures are nominally assigned to the collective of a state farm work-team (brigade), but the crucial issue is whose reindeer graze on this land. I argue that rather than simply blaming private herders for destroying pastures we have to analyse their relations to the state farms and the sovkhoz herds and seek the solution in the adjustment of these relations (chapter 7).

Other scholars have developed a less material approach to land. Hirsch & O'Hanlon's edited volume *Anthropology of Landscape* (1996) stressed the immaterial traits of the land, the spiritual meaning of the land for the people, and the meaning of the space that structures the social life of the people. Winslow (2002: 157) linked an inclusive meaning of landscape to economic processes, by showing that economic change in Sri Lanka is first and foremost experienced through change in spatial movement (2002: 175). For Yamal, Haakanson (2000) has shown how, at Nenets camps, space is enacted through numerous aspects of gender, of working spheres and of spirituality. Haakanson provides a vivid ethnography of the Nentsy's day-to-day interaction with the micro-space around them. Anderson's conception of 'knowing the land' (1998, 2000a) among reindeer herders in Taimyr shows that the meaning of land can embrace very subtle implications of property relations. This 'knowing' has led to different entitlements in Soviet and post-Soviet times. In Anderson's work, processes of inclusive property negotiations and those with more exclusive claims are subsumed under the single concept of 'knowing'. Without mentioning it, Anderson enters the sphere

between the 'defence paradigm' and the inclusive approach to land use. A similar approach has been applied to Australian aborigines by Myers (1997), who sees rights to an object as expressing the identity of the right holder.

For my analysis, this approach is relevant in so far as it leads away from a materialistic notion of ownership and defence. For example, among the Pintupi (the Aboriginal group studied by Myers 1997) access to land by others is not necessarily restricted. If somebody else uses the land which others 'know' more deeply, they do not *lose* the rights to it. Even 'giving some knowledge away' does not deprive somebody of his rights to the land (Myers 1997: 53, 70). In Yamal, I show a similar notion of 'inclusivity' when I distinguish between two notions of entitlements to the land among the Nentsy, which once were connected to hunting and herding as the main subsistence activities. The fact that somebody grazes his deer on my pastures does not deprive me of my special rights to the land where my ancestors once hunted and are buried.

However, just as the 'defence paradigm' neglects the immaterial meaning of land, so the 'knowing paradigm' can also be accused of neglecting the material traits and cost-benefit implications of land use. Vitebsky (2002: 181) summarises both notions by claiming that land 'is both a material base and a base metaphor for much else that matters to people, encompassing landscape, territory and space. In all these senses, it corresponds in part to "property".' Whereas Vitebsky concentrates thereafter more on this 'much else that matters', for example gender division of space (2002: 183, see also Vitebsky & Wolfe 2001) and 'the soul of property' (2002: 185–7), I shall show that we must combine the 'defence approaches' and the 'knowing approaches' to explain the importance of land for contemporary Yamal reindeer herders.

Although Smith (1995: 246) emphasises that land tenure systems lie on a continuum and can be a mix of various systems, he does restrict 'territoriality' to 'communal property ownership' with strong 'controls on local-group membership'. Unlike such prominent studies of territoriality, I argue for a definition of territoriality that also incorporates non-defensive behaviour. Given the Nenets conception of engagement with land through movement, I claim that this territorial behaviour can bridge the gap between a purely material defence approach and an inclusive one.

1.2.4 The Postsocialist Market Economy

There is an extensive literature on the development of the market, especially on the market integration of so-called 'remote economies' and the postsocialist economies of 'transition'. The YNAO fits into both of these categories. Here I review the main studies in economics and geography, sociology

and anthropology, and explore what they can contribute to an explanation of my research question, namely why reindeer herding in Yamal has performed so well with no observable disruption to the Nenets lifestyle, in spite of the general postsocialist economic crisis. Models by economists do not count Russia among the 'winners' of transition, unlike some Central European countries (Blanchard 1998; Gustafson 1999; Åslund 2002). Their basic findings are that a few rich people are getting richer, while, at the base of this wealth pyramid, the mass of the poor are getting poorer. The Russian economy at the beginning of the twenty-first century is characterised as 'predatory capitalism' (Hedlund 1999), full of dishonest 'rent seekers' (Åslund 2002: 441, 446–9). Blanchard sees the whole transition process as being 'U-shaped' (1998: 1–2), a model based on the GDP of the former socialist economies, which after socialism sharply declined and then slowly started to recover. In 1998, Russia was still thought to be at the bottom of the 'U', whereas countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic had already started their climb out of it.

If we take a reindeer-herding region such as Yamal and the total headcount of reindeer as an indicator of the performance of this type of economy, we do not see a 'U-shaped' development but rather a steady rise since Perestroika. The big economic crash of August 1998 in Russia, identified as a key event in the recent economic history of Russia (Gustafson 1999), apparently did not influence the development of reindeer herds in Yamal. The very fact that inside a 'loser country', such as Russia, a region like Yamal was able to develop successfully, challenges some of these models as being oversimplified. Economists as well as world system theorists would hold to the explanation that remote wilderness is not part of the market economy and therefore the consequences did not filter through to the tundra. However, in chapter 8 I show that the reindeer economy, through the antler trade, is significantly incorporated into the global international economy.

The failed transition to a neoliberal economy in many postsocialist countries has led even economists such as Blanchard (1998: 118f) to argue against the pure neoclassical approach for future reforms. He claims that private firms could learn from existing state farms in the transition period, before the latter are abandoned completely. This approach he calls 'gradualism' in opposition to 'big bang policies' in privatisation (1998: 127), a distinction shared by other authors (e.g. Pickles & Smith 1998; Åslund 2002). However, Pickles & Smith (1998: 4) observed that in the initial euphoria after 1989, public opinion did not often allow for a 'third way' and pushed most postsocialist states to pursue a policy of 'shock therapy' in one form or another. Here the question is whether within Russia the YNAO was a region of 'gradualism', rather than a region in which the radical reforms of

privatisation from Moscow were implemented directly. Would this explain why Yamal herding did not crash, unlike the Soviet primary reindeer-herding region of Chukotka (Gray 2000, 2003; Mironenko 2000; Gray & Stammler 2002; Krupnik & Vakhtin 2002)?

Social scientists have convincingly argued against the radical implementation of 'shock therapy' (Szelényi 1998; Burawoy & Verdery 1999; Humphrey & Mandel 2002: 9f). A key aspect of the reform politics is the question of subsidies and the extent to which they are maintained. A detailed study of the nature of subsidies helps to identify the direction of political approaches, hence my investigation of the redistributive aspect of subsidies for Yamal. The main criticism by analysts of the socialist rural economy is the fact that agriculture has had to subsidise the development of heavy industry, particularly in Russia. Industrial products were scarce and expensive, whereas agricultural products had to be sold at prices sometimes even below the cost of production (cf. Nicholsky 1998; Szelényi 1998: 2). This was also the argument of the farm directors I interviewed, who said that their enterprises would have been profitable had they been able to sell their produce at higher prices. Jernsletten & Klokov (2002: 51–3) have calculated how the profitability of a reindeer enterprise (e.g. sovkhoz) changes when its wholesale price for reindeer meat increases to $5 per kilogram.

On the other hand, such views tend to overlook the fact that in Soviet times the state farm also benefited from free state services, such as transportation, which was especially important in Yamal. Today in Yamal it is industry that supports the development of agriculture, which in the Russian North means reindeer herding, directly and indirectly through the regional budget. I shall show what this means in detail, and how the reindeer herders feel the consequences of this, in chapter 8. In this way the role of industry helps us to understand why Yamal reindeer herding has performed so well and has not followed the 'U'-shaped pattern of crash and gradual rise back to previous levels (Blanchard 1998). This is in spite of the finding by Jernsletten & Klokov (2002: 52, figure 11) that reindeer herding in Yamal is not profitable.

Social scientists have developed comprehensive concepts to help us understand why 'the transition' went in so many different directions in different countries, despite the fact that many of them implemented quite radical reforms to bring about privatisation, liberalisation and democratisation, as recommended by economists. Kornai (1992) argued that reforms can only be successful when a comprehensive reform package is implemented that approaches the problems of over-centralisation, rushed growth, the disequilibrium of prices, and public ownership all at the same time (for a summary of this, see Szelényi 1998: 2f). The sociologist Szelényi (1998: 15)

believes the reason for the differences lies in the different 'class forces' of the agriculturalists after the end of socialism. The problem he describes is mainly a question of the relative power of different groups of economic and political actors, although he uses the term 'class capacity' instead of 'power' (1998: 8). Szelényi argues not only on the question of power but also in relation to formations of postsocialist institutions for the transition to 'path dependence with late state socialism' (1998: 14), linking up with a broad body of literature from various disciplines (e.g. Stark 1992; Pickles & Smith 1998; Hedlund 1999).

The importance of the Soviet legacy forms another thread in my study of Yamal, exploring whether the practice of collectivisation and sovietisation determines the path of privatisation and liberalisation. This is also connected to the discourse about the term 'transition' itself. Social scientists blame the neoliberals for seeing transition only as 'a relatively unproblematic implementation of a set of policies involving economic liberalisation and marketisation alongside democratisation, enabling the creation of a market economy' (Pickles & Smith 1998: 2). They argue that in the postsocialist world changes do not automatically have to lead to a Western market economy and democracy. Some authors therefore ask whether 'transformation' might be the better term to employ rather than 'transition', because it leaves the end of the process open (Stark 1992; Verdery 1996: 15f; Szelényi 1998: 12; Burawoy & Verdery 1999). Although these studies rightly argue that the economic view of one model of transition is oversimplified and that social scientists can better understand the diversity of the concepts and outcomes of postsocialist changes, sociologists (Evers 1996; Szelényi 1998) and also social geographers (Pickles & Smith 1998) mainly take into account the differences between various postsocialist states. However, the macrosociological answers as to why Poland and the Czech Republic were more successful in their transformations than Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union do not help us to understand how one region such as the YNAO can differ in its transformation from the framework of a state (here the Russian Federal state). For agriculture in Yamal I show that decisions made at the okrug administrative level (below the Russian Federal level) are of much greater importance than those decisions taken in Moscow.[14]

In their study of postsocialist changes anthropologists often look beneath the international or national level to the regional or local level, and thus can contribute more to explanations of intranational differences. They not only see most economic models as being inappropriate, but they note a

[14] In the following I use okrug administration to refer to the administrative bodies of the YNAO.

certain 'Western centrism' in that most studies compare changes in the former Soviet bloc against an ideal Western concept. Burawoy & Verdery (1999: 15) have therefore argued that anthropologists should liberate their studies from these comparisons in order to better understand the dynamics of our own study areas instead of the 'deficits in transition'. Szelényi (1998: 5) argues that economic performance is not correlated at all with a special political regime. I maintain that we cannot understand the reindeer economy in the YNAO without analysing the political environment and thus I take the view of Humphrey and other anthropologists that it is 'impossible to disentangle the "economic" from the "political" in postsocialist Russia' (Burawoy & Verdery 1999: 14; Humphrey 2002b: xxii; Sneath 2002: 204).

It is beyond the scope of this anthropological study to investigate whether the political and the economic are entangled on the level of nation states as Szelényi sees them, but the political sphere certainly matters on a regional level. In many cases, neoliberal politics did not generate satisfactory economic results, not because politics does not influence economics, but because the politics were not locally embedded. Anthropologists have observed the retreat from the market, and the rise of subsistence economies, as a reaction in times of crisis (cf. Evers 1996; Humphrey & Sneath 1996; Zbierski-Salameh 1999; Sneath 2002: 196). However, an increase in reindeer herds in Yamal is not adequately explained by a general retreat to subsistence. Within the Soviet planned economy, the Nentsy interacted in a hidden way with the market (see chapter 4), and in post-Soviet times, they do it overtly (see chapter 8). However, the situation in Soviet Yamal cannot be described properly by drawing similarities with the more open 'quasi market environment' described for Hungary (Swain 2000: 6). I shall show that in Yamal the Soviet planned economy did not allow for markets to arise, yet nonetheless they evolved through peoples' behaviour under the roof of the sovkhoz. Common to the two is the principle, described by Hann (1980), that in some cases centrally planned models undergo considerable adjustment during their implementation due to the awareness of local leaders of regional particularities.

In my ethnography of the present economic situation for Yamal reindeer herding, I explore the tension between global markets and the ongoing importance of the subsistence economy. My case study analyses how integration into a global market does not need to result in cultural disruption and a decline in the subsistence economy. I follow the anthropological view of the market as being always socially and culturally bound (Carrier 1997b; Humphrey 2002b: xx; Humphrey & Mandel 2002: 2) rather than seeing it as a universal category. I heard some villagers accusing 'the market' as if it were an actor. They said, 'Look what the market has done', when complain-

ing about price increases, because transport subsidies to the remote Arctic villages have been removed. This sounded familiar to me—Western European politicians justify the cutting back of the welfare state, for example, in just the same terms: 'The market forces us to take these measures.' This reference to the Market (with a capital 'M') relates to the model in Carrier's analysis. The model assumes free individuals, following an instrumental rationality, wanting more for less in a world consisting of buyers and sellers (Carrier 1997a: 2f). This is what Carrier calls a Western cultural symbol, and I did not hear reindeer herders presenting the Market as a universal instant explanation. Therefore I began to look at the market from the actors' perspective. 'The market' may be influenced by 'the culture', but 'the culture' again is not an independent entity—rather, it is the sum of people's everyday practices in a given environment, combined with their historical experience and worldviews. How 'the market' works can thus be analysed best by looking at the reindeer herders' economic behaviour. This is one way of analysing what the market actually means in Yamal. Behind this approach lies the basic assumption by anthropologists like Carrier (1997a: 28) that 'the concept of the Market is itself shaped, even if only indirectly, by the uses to which it is put, as it gains legitimacy from those uses'.

Uses of the 'Market' as a model also find their way into laws, the behaviour of organisations and a broader social and moral setting. The role of the (regional) state as an institution is of particular importance. For the broader framework, the 'marriage' between new institutionalist economics and anthropology (Ensminger 1996, 2002) proves to be useful in so far as they analyse the role of the state in reducing the transaction costs which is important in improving market performance. The use of this approach in a postsocialist context has been tested before by Finke (2004). Ensminger (1996) identifies changes in relative prices as the key variable causing changes in economic and property relations among the Orma in Kenya. This goes so far that people's worldviews, which Ensminger calls 'ideologies', change according to these relative prices (Ensminger 1996: 176ff). Therefore Ensminger argues for 'economic determinism' (1996: 168), claiming that the 'moral economy' (Scott 1976) is practised only as long as the benefits of it for the people outweigh the costs. Chapman & Buckley (1997) refine this by stressing that the perceived transaction costs, which do not have to be identical to the real ones, determine economic behaviour. Although I see the usefulness of such an approach in explaining, for example, why people in Yamal still support sovkhozy as reindeer-herding institutions, economic determinism does not explain sufficiently why Nenets reindeer herders still have such an elaborate system of exchange and mutual help in the tundra

(see chapter 5), when they can receive all the social security they need from the sovkhoz.

Gudeman has pointed out that the new institutionalists are wrong in reducing the role of social bonds among the actors to rational risk minimising (1998: xviii). Along with these terms we also have to investigate how it happens that in Yamal, reindeer meat is consumed by the population of incomers, who present the biggest purchasing power in the region, whereas in other regions Russians do not buy reindeer meat, which has a very poor reputation. I investigate whether this confirms Gudeman's (1998: xviii) view that markets always need sociality to function, although to get viable data on this proved difficult in practice. In Yamal, as in other postsocialist places, the economic landscape is still characterised by a dualism between the former state sector and the private sector (cf. Humphrey 1998, 2002b; Nicholsky 1998). But this is only the surface, and Humphrey & Mandel (2002: 2; see also Burawoy & Verdery 1999) have argued that the situation is much more complicated than the dichotomy between 'the market' and the planned economy, or neoliberalism and neo-Marxism, or 'catch-up development' in capitalism and the return to socialism.[15]

Gudeman (2001: 154) noted that one characteristic of a socialist enterprise was that it economises on its resources from the state in order to spend them 'outside' the state system, so that the borders between the property of the state, public property and private property all become unclear. Humphrey calls these resources 'manipulable' (1995: 6; 1998: 435). For Yamal, I trace the flow of these resources down to the lichen ranges and show when, where and how they are manipulated. In everyday practice it does not matter whether an enterprise is a state farm or a former state farm. In both cases it is connected with the state sector. In the post-Soviet rural market economy, manipulable resources form a link between the two sectors, which is partly continuing a Soviet practice where private initiative took place under the roof of the state farm. Unlike Nicholsky (1998: 204), I claim that the fact that reindeer herders are still members of a state farm does not imply that there is no 'family farming'. It just happens inside the old framework. This was common within many cooperative enterprises throughout the socialist bloc, where we still find considerable private entrepreneurial activities (Hann 1980; Konstantinov 2002; Eidson 2003).

What then is the new driving force for the market in reindeer herding? My ethnographic investigation of the production and trade in fresh velvet reindeer antlers brings some answers, and reveals much about the nature of trade relationships and the market. In this trade, we can see most types of

[15] I have investigated the space between these dichotomies in a comparative study of Yamal and Sakha (Stammler & Ventsel 2003).

traders typical of the postsocialist space (Humphrey 1999), and I identify a new form, namely vertically integrated reindeer trading enterprises. I also explore the moral implications of business and the money involved, arguing contrary to Hutchinson (1996) in relation to Sudan that a low prestige business does not have to generate low prestige money. She introduces various categories of money, e.g. 'shit money', earned by carrying the excrement of the rich to the waste deposit. Such money is dirty and cannot be invested for clean purposes such as bride price. Here we see that different exchange relations can belong to different moral categories, which cannot be mixed, even though money as such generalises exchange relations and makes them more anonymous (Parry & Bloch 1989).

The trade in antlers on Yamal is closer to the situation described by Pine (2002) in socialist Poland, where there are clearly preferred and disliked sources of income and currencies, but the use of money gained from them is not restricted to certain purposes, 'and almost any means of obtaining it [money] is legitimate' (Pine 2002: 77). Like the dollars in socialist Poland, income from antlers is spent mainly on non-basic goods, such as snowmobiles, ammunition, vodka or entertainment devices (tape recorders, tapes, radios). The basic needs are still satisfied by selling reindeer meat. The ethnography of velvet antler trading also provides insights into the distinction between the 'community' and the 'market sphere of exchange'. Gudeman (1998, 2001) shows that they have different characteristics, although both are an arena in which goods are exchanged. These two meet within the set of actions performed in the reindeer antler trade.

The role of velvet antlers in the reindeer market economy in the YNAO, as well as the regional market economy generally, can add a new dimension to the understanding of postsocialist economic transformation. Most studies of the former Soviet bloc either deal with developing models and concepts for 'transition', by which they mean a 'development' towards neoliberal democracy in a Western style, or they examine why this kind of development failed. In analysing this 'success story', I contribute to the ongoing debate on the integration of remote regions into world capitalism (Wallerstein 1974–89), and on globalisation (O'Meara, Mehlinger & Krain 2000). The integration of the Yamal reindeer economy into an international trade network shows that globalisation is not necessarily 'undermining social cohesion' and nor is it accompanied by cultural imperialism (Rodrik 2000: 235). Anthropological analysis at the grass roots (or out on the lichen ranges) can show on the one hand how lifestyle nomadism gives globalisation a local face that is suited to the special requirements in this corner of the world, and on the other hand how the overarching global economy leaves lifestyle nomadism enough space and freedom to also influence the global economy.

1.3 Methods

For one year, from summer 2000 to summer 2001, I carried out fieldwork among the people of the Yamal Okrug (YNAO). My entrance into this field was made easier on account of my earlier work in West Siberia in 1998, where I had conducted four months of fieldwork for a master's degree at the University of Cologne (published as Stammler 2003). There I had focused mainly on the ecological and social problems caused by oil extraction for hunters, fishers and taiga reindeer herders in the Khanty-Mansiisk Okrug, but one month in the YNAO made possible some first contacts in Salekhard too. These earlier experiences were also important for learning enough Russian to allow me to conduct substantial fieldwork from the outset. However, I was completely unfamiliar with the Nenets language. Most Nenets herders in Yamal still speak this language when they stay in the tundra, but they instantly switch to Russian as soon as a non-Nenets speaker is present. Therefore, most of my fieldwork was conducted in Russian, although I did acquire some rudimentary skills in Nenets, including special terminology on reindeer and tundra life.

This study required me to gain an understanding of life in three different places relevant to the analysis. First and foremost, it meant spending time with the reindeer nomads in the tundra and trying to understand whether there is a 'secret Nenets culture' there. Secondly, living in the villages, I tried to gain an insight into the views of the immediate partners of the herders, the administrative staff and entrepreneurs of all kinds, private commercial or state-controlled. The third group of actors for my fieldwork were those in the corridors of power in the regional capital town of Salekhard, who were important for understanding the role of the okrug administration within the market economy of the YNAO. These three regional foci were supplemented by data gathered in Moscow from the Ministry of Agriculture, and interviews with its employees. This multi-level approach allowed me to find out where the differences lie between the representation of Nenets culture outside the tundra, and the lived realities of people's interaction with one another and with the outside world.

Participant observation, the backbone of social anthropological methods, allowed unstructured narrative interviews to be carried out in all spheres. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I conducted a survey, using more structured questions, of 28 reindeer-herding households in the tundra. This survey focused on questions of subsistence and the market economy, economic transformation, property and the nomadic use of land. Carrying out a survey in the tundra and getting a reasonable sample is a big challenge, because the distance among the nomadic households is enormous and transport in many cases is not available. This explains the seemingly small sam-

ple size of 28 households, which I admit is below the limits for representative generalisations in the social sciences. Moreover, the participants in the survey were not chosen by using random sampling techniques, but I tried to incorporate representative sampling as far as was possible given the difficult transport conditions.

I chose the interview partners carefully according to different geographical, economic and social factors, which all leave their stamp on the reindeer herders' worldview, in order to incorporate as wide a range of herding conditions as possible. Those factors include kinship relations and economic networks, remoteness of camps in relation to villages, patterns of movement, employment in state structures or with private herders, and ethnic identity. I tried to survey households that were not closely interrelated in everyday life, be it through kinship or just through joint economic interests. I also tried to include in the survey households moving within the vicinity of settlements, and those located in the remotest places of Yamal, the northern part of the peninsula close to the Arctic Ocean. Moreover, I interviewed households practising two different kinds of movement: large migrations of more than 1,000 kilometres a year, and more 'localised' circular movements of not more than 100 kilometres a year. To control the institutional affiliation of interview partners, I tried to have an equal number of herders employed in sovkhozy brigades (work teams), the successors of state farms, and of herders who worked outside the brigades. The 25 households interviewed on the Yamal Peninsula were of Nenets origin. Three important means of transport were used to reach these households (ordered by frequency of usage): reindeer, snowmobile and helicopter. Finally, my control group for the survey were three reindeer-herding households of the Shuryshkary Khanty, employed in brigades of the former state farm in Muzhi, a village in the south-western part of the YNAO.[16]

Despite having tried to control these parameters, the data derived from these surveys can only be used here to indicate qualitative tendencies or opinions of reindeer herders, rather than 'hard facts'. Therefore I do not present formal tables with figures or diagrams, as they would implicitly suggest a greater degree of 'representativeness' in my data than I actually achieved. However, the structured answers of my respondents allowed me to ask further questions, which again resulted in unstructured narratives relating

[16] They migrate from the Ob' Riverbank through the Polar Ural Mountains to their summer pastures on the territory of another administrative unit of the Russian Federation, the Komi Republic (see maps 2 and 3). I stayed there for one month. These northern Khanty adopted large-scale reindeer herding from the Nentsy but adjusted their lifestyle to the particular conditions of the mountains. Their permanent contact with the neighbouring groups of Komi and Nentsy makes this case interesting in terms of inter-ethnic relations and identity issues, which I cannot further explore in this framework.

to the particular topics of property in land and animals, economic relations, and reindeer-herding techniques.

Another way of enhancing my knowledge of the practice of reindeer herding and of verifying the statements made during interviews was the use of a video-camera. Its inbuilt microphone and inbuilt screen allowed me, in situations where I did not have to economise on battery power, to show my hosts and interview partners what I had recorded. This immediate revisiting of the audiovisual material had two advantages. First, by watching and hearing themselves the people could comment as to whether they perceived the recorded material to be representative of what they normally do. In many cases I heard comments like 'normally we would do this differently, but it is easier to do it in the way you recorded it'. Therefore I could capture what they thought would be the proper way to do things as well as what they actually did. In addition to the differences between ideal and practice, they also often added more information about certain events, actions or techniques, while watching themselves on the small screen of the video camera.



Plate 1. Revisiting and commenting on the video footage after a day's work.

The same effect resulted from working with maps. I asked most of the reindeer herders to show me their seasonal movements on maps (see chapter 6). I had checked the general patterns in the village headquarters and asked them about these. Here again ideals became distinguishable from practice, when I heard comments like 'normally our winter pastures are on the other

side of that river, but crossing it is hard work for us and the herd, therefore we stay on different pastures'. Another advantage of this method is that it enhances the trust between the anthropologist and his informants. The tundra dwellers get to know at least some of the things the anthropologist does, which, in addition to seeing the anthropologist writing in his notebook, enhances their respect for the work of the fieldworker.

Their basic assumption is that nobody comes to the tundra just for fun or for tourism. Whoever comes has got something to do (see section 3.3). But there is work that is taken more or less seriously, attracting higher or lower prestige; for example reindeer herding is still more prestigious than fishing and hunting. Some of the herders have experience with journalists flying to the tundra for a day, getting their story and flying back. The 'law of the tundra' (*zakon tundry*) stipulates implicitly that everyone who comes has to be offered a place to sleep and something to eat, since they must have a good reason to be there. However, hospitality does not include engaging in communication right away and becoming friends. This takes, in most cases, at least two or three days. The anthropologist wanting to stay longer is exceptional, and I felt that for my work it was tremendously important that they saw it as serious and relevant. It was through a shared view of the importance of our respective work that I became close friends with many of my hosts. I would not have been able to gain this reputation without applying the above-mentioned techniques, or by trying to develop my reindeer herding skills in order to work with them. Herding reindeer and living in the tundra requires a lot of knowledge and skill, as I will outline in this study, and my attempts to engage in this always stayed at a very primitive level, sometimes resulting in much fun and merriment among the reindeer herders.

1.4 Book Outline

In the following chapter (chapter 2) I present an overview of reindeer and reindeer-herding practices in Russia, and contribute to a more comprehensive discussion of the way in which different kinds of domestic reindeer behave, as this influences the life cycle and practice of reindeer herding. The wide gap between animal biology/ethology and anthropology brings an unhelpful separation within reindeer-herding research, where humans and animals are intrinsically part of the same tundra-based activity. Differences and similarities between Yamal reindeer and wild reindeer lead me to a discussion of 'herd following' (Burch 1991), as hunters of wild reindeer share traits relevant to herders of domestic reindeer. If the reindeer herders' migration is in fact a following of the migration instincts of the reindeer, then we cannot consider this to be an example of classical nomadic pastoralism, for they independently make the migration decision for their herds and

households. I show how we have to distinguish between a general natural framework and particular grazing regimes, which are actually determined by the herders themselves. Chapter 2 also situates Yamal reindeer herding quantitatively in comparison with the other main reindeer-herding groups in the Russian North. We need to ask whether their performance in the evolving market economy is based on a special property regime, and whether 'culture', the 'outside world', or both are responsible for their performance.

Abstract considerations about reindeer grazing regimes and human–animal relations become more concrete in chapter 3, where I take the reader on an ethnographic journey starting in the capital of Salekhard, passing through villages associated with reindeer herding, and out onto the lichen ranges of the tundra. I describe the herders' day-to-day practices and the mobility of the households, and the seasonal variability of these everyday practices. Many of these practices contain underlying guidelines for proper behaviour in everyday life on the tundra, which are seen by many herders as the 'law of the tundra'.

Chapter 4 is an investigation of the historical factors that lie behind the present social and economic changes affecting the Yamal nomads. I identify and describe those aspects of local, regional and national history that have influenced present developments. Underlying this is the assumption of path dependency (as used by Stark 1992), an approach which claims that 'future forms of development arise out of the particular trajectories or paths that have been taken in the past' (Pickles & Smith 1998: 15). The argument of remoteness as a reason for incomplete sovietisation does not hold, since remoter regions such as Chukotka were 'more successfully' sovietised (see Gray 2003, 2005). For Yamal, one assumption is that the Nentsy pretended to integrate themselves into the system and the authorities pretended to believe that this was true, although both sides knew that it was mutually beneficial if the Nenets reindeer-herding system could continue in the tundra and be supplemented by the institutional framework of the Soviet planned economy. This historical chapter covers not only the Soviet period but also the period of collectivisation and decollectivisation, because they mark the opposite ends of the same Soviet project, which aimed to transform reindeer herding into part of Soviet agricultural industry and the indigenous peoples into good Soviet citizens. For both collectivisation and privatisation there existed centrally designed models, which in the end were implemented differently.

Chapter 5 begins with the outcome of incomplete privatisation, dealing with the current property regime based on reindeer in the YNAO. Behind this lies a whole universe of property relations, revealing insights into the modes of interaction within Nenets society. Exploring the different layers of

entitlements in reindeer, be it in the herd as a whole or in particular animals, leads me to engage with Tim Ingold's (1980) assumption about the social significance of animal property. I suggest the repositioning of tundra reindeer among the Nentsy on a 'property continuum' between 'meat on the hoof' (Baxter 1975: 211) and 'the supreme form of property' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 45)

Having outlined property regimes in animals, I proceed in chapter 6 to the second crucial object of property analysis in the YNAO—land. I suggest that the tundra should be seen as more than 'land'. My analysis of territoriality among the Nentsy shows that both exclusive and inclusive property relations regarding the tundra can be important simultaneously, which leads me to argue for a multilayered territoriality and property pluralism on land. Drawing on historical material, I show that families in northern Yamal still have a sense of belonging to particular territories that were once their hunting grounds. At the same time, they perceive their rights to reindeer pastures differently to their rights to the old hunting grounds, being collective rights for the whole group. Therefore I suggest a definition of territoriality that considers both the hunting and herding ways of relating to the tundra. This definition theoretically combines the two elements of territorial behaviour: namely, defending access to land and moving on the land, i.e. using it flexibly and knowing its characteristics. Chapter 7 explores the consequences of the growing perception of the tundra as a limited resource. I critically investigate the prominent politics of reindeer-herding administrations across the North, which regulate reindeer numbers according to carrying capacities of the pastures. Among the administrations there is neither a shared understanding of what carrying capacity is nor adequate consideration of the related social factors. I argue that this approach unjustly blames private reindeer herders as being responsible for the loss of pastures, and suggest the introduction of the concept of a 'social carrying capacity'. However, such debates have led reindeer herders to buy into defending boundaries, be they geographical or social. This is another reason why today we can see 'property pluralism' on land. One of the ways of securing exclusive access to the tundra in Russia is to establish so-called *obshchiny*, clan-based communities, for which I present an ethnography. In my analysis I argue for a careful distinction between the political efforts to achieve more self-determination and buying into a discourse of 'inventing traditions'.

Chapter 8 is an ethnography of market transactions in Yamal reindeer herding. Out of this evolves the final piece in the whole mosaic that explains the performance of Yamal reindeer herding. I analyse the interactions of the different actors in this market, namely private reindeer herders, commercial reindeer-herding enterprises, former state farms, gas companies and the

YNAO Department of Agriculture. I demystify the view that the reason for the increase in the size of Yamal reindeer herds is the free market economy. Instead, I confirm the stance taken by Konstantinov (2000) in presenting evidence that the okrug government and the state-controlled enterprises provide a crucially important framework in providing a material basis as well as moral stability for the reindeer herders. However, this does not prevent Yamal herders from overtly doing business with recently established private enterprises. I investigate their performance in an ethnography of the trade in 'velvet' reindeer antlers (*panty*).[17] The relations between herders and traders also invite reconsideration of the meaning of barter in the postsocialist economy as an involuntary substitute for cash.

By bringing together analyses of reindeer herding in general and the Yamal practice in particular (chapters 2 and 3), the history of sovietisation and de-sovietisation (chapter 4), the importance of property in animals (chapter 5), territorial behaviour and efforts to reorganise reindeer-herding territories (chapters 6 and 7) and market transactions in reindeer herding (chapter 8), I am finally in a position to suggest that the current prosperity among Yamal 'lifestyle nomads' is mainly a result of the ways in which these people and the sedentary actors around them have interacted in the course of the last century. The Nentsy have adapted many innovations from the 'outside world' that have become beneficial supplements to their tundra lifestyle. These permanent processes of innovation and change imply that we cannot think about the Yamal Nenets culture as a single entity with fixed characteristics, what Hann (2002) called a culture with a 'totalitarian character'. We can better understand what happens when nomads meet the market if we remember the arguments of Ingold (2000) about human actors who shape their worldviews as a result of their practice of interaction among themselves and with their environment. In this way, we do not have to reify the three concepts of culture, market and globalisation as entities that can impose principles or actions on other peoples, but see them as models that take on a local face as a result of the practices of these people's engagement with the tundra and with all human and non-human beings around them.

[17] Although being aware of the English meaning of this term, I would like to encourage the reader to accept '*panty*' as the Russian name for fresh velvet reindeer antlers, which is used throughout this book.

Chapter 2
Reindeer Herding: An Overview

This chapter provides an overview of reindeer herding in Russia and examines some of the basic characteristics of the animals that determine herding practices. One shortcoming of most anthropological writing on the indigenous reindeer herders of the Russian North is the lack of comparative data analyses for particular regions. Another shortcoming in this ethnographic literature is the almost exclusive focus on cultural and social practices, and the neglect of the natural environment that influences these practices. The works of Robert Paine (1964, 1994), Tim Ingold (1980), Leonid Baskin (1991, 2000) and David Anderson (2000c) suggest that a fruitful approach is to consider the ways in which the animals' behaviour influences reindeer-herding cultures.

In this chapter I introduce reindeer management in Yamal as one of many possible forms of human–animal relations on a 'hunting–herding continuum'. In analysing such a relationship it is essential to consider the characteristics of the animals themselves, for they are the resource that is common to all reindeer people throughout the world, both herders and hunters. In addition, I link this study of the YNAO to other reindeer-herding regions in Russia, which share a similar economic, social and cultural background. In subsequent chapters, however, I will stress the particularities in Yamal that set the region apart from the rest of post-Soviet Russia. For comparative reasons, then, we start with a basic quantitative overview of the ethnic groups that are engaged in reindeer herding, together with their animals, for it is only when we are equipped with this information that we can begin to explore the effect of the market economy and property relations on the performance of reindeer herding. Much of the macro-level data presented here were obtained from various institutions in Moscow, Salekhard and Yakutsk, as well as from written sources.

2.1 Origins and the 'Hunting–Herding Continuum'

Reindeer have been crucial for human subsistence throughout the Arctic. Whereas indigenous peoples in Fennoscandia, Northwest Russia and Northwest Siberia rely mainly on the herding of domestic reindeer for their subsistence, the hunting of wild reindeer has recently gained importance in those Siberian and Russian Far Eastern regions where domestic reindeer herding declined sharply after the fall of the Soviet Union. In North America, Eskimo and Inuit groups obtain their food largely by hunting wild reindeer (caribou) (Burch 1991). Domestic reindeer were introduced to North America only in the nineteenth century from Siberia (Ingold 1980: 109).

The domestication of reindeer and the origin of herding is a well-researched and widely discussed issue. As much academic writing shows, the subject is closely entwined with the ethnogenesis of the herding peoples. One hypothesis claims that reindeer were first domesticated and herded when the Protosamoyeds lived in the Sayan Mountains and also, at much the same time, by the ancestors of the Tungus around Lake Baikal (Vasilevich & Levin 1951: 77–81) in the first millennium BC (Eidlitz 1969: 12; see Ingold 1980: 104f; Krupnik 1993: 161; Khomich 1995: 51).[18] Other authors believe that reindeer domestication may have occurred independently at multiple sites in the tundra, and at various times (Borozdin et al. 1990: 7). Two Chinese sources report that people were 'using reindeer like horses' in Siberia, north of Lake Baikal, as early as the sixth and seventh century AD. They were using the deer as draught animals to pull 'wagons' for transport. Since at this time there was no word in the Chinese language for 'sledge', it may be that they were already using sledges. However, probably the riding of reindeer has preceded sledge-driving.[19]

As far as West Siberia is concerned, the so-called 'Protosamoyeds', who are thought to be the ancestors of the Nentsy (see Introduction, section 1.1.2), supposedly migrated northwest from the Sayan Mountains with their domesticated reindeer in the first millennium BC (Vasilevich & Levin 1951: 78). However, the date of this migration is hotly debated (Eidlitz 1969: 12). The migration hypothesis was put forward as early as 1930 by Flor (1930: 139). Vajda (1968: 376–83) argues that these Protosamoyeds developed reindeer breeding from their close contact with their Turkic horse-breeding

[18] Domestication of animals was one of the German ethnographers favourite topics (see Flor 1930; Menghin 1931; Pohlhausen 1954; Vajda 1968). Tim Ingold (1980, 1986a) revived the debate some decades later.

[19] I am grateful to Ingo Nentwig for the translation of these Chinese sources. The two sources are the Empire Chronicle of the State *Lang* 502–57, chapter 48, and the *Xing Tang Shu,* the Second Chronicle of the Tang Dynasty 618907, chapter 217. Both sources are referred to in Lü 1981: 139.

neighbours. Ingold (1986a: 6) supports this position without quoting these earlier works, whereas Flor (1930: 133) claimed that the breeding of reindeer is more ancient than that of horses. All authors agree, however, that the main source of food for these early reindeer herders was derived from hunting wild animals, and the deer themselves were used for transport. This led Vajda (1968: 418) to argue that reindeer herding did not evolve from the hunting of wild reindeer in the tundra and domesticating them, but from the taiga hunting economies which needed animals for transport. For the purposes of this study, however, it is relevant that reindeer herding in West Siberia has its roots among the Protosamoyeds of the Altai-Sayan Mountains.

Another issue is the appearance of large herds of domestic reindeer in the tundra which formed the basis of the herders' subsistence. Large-scale reindeer pastoralism is first recorded in tundra regions from the late seventeenth century, long before the Soviets introduced it in the northern taiga in the 1920s. Its development has been called a 'radical innovation' in the circumpolar world (Ingold 1980: 105, referring to undefined sources), or 'the most important turning point in the cultural history of the native peoples of the Eurasian Arctic' (Krupnik 1993: 160). However, Krupnik later admits that this 'radical innovation' occurred more gradually (1993: 173).

Periods of starvation were a normal part of the seasonal cycle for reindeer hunters in Eurasia as well as in North America (Eidlitz 1969: 120; Burch 1991: 443). Although some of the groups tried to follow the herds during their migrations, they were not able to stay with them, and therefore wild reindeer as a source of meat was not constantly available to them (Anderson 2000a: 140f). The decisive advantage of large-scale reindeer herding was that it made available constant access to the herd as a source of meat, an economy which Ingold has labelled 'carnivorous pastoralism' as opposed to 'milch pastoralism' (Ingold 1980: 85). Bogoras (1901: 87; 1904: 95) emphasised the advantages that this advanced form of food security gave to reindeer herders in contrast to hunters. The greater the control exerted by humans over the herd, the more predictable are their food supplies, which brings us back to human–animal interactions and the term 'herd following'.

Burch (1991) revised his original argument that the North American Chipewyan people followed wild reindeer herds, saying that they did not actually follow a particular herd, but rather followed the general pattern of migration of these herds. As far as domestic reindeer herding is concerned, Menghin (1931: 501) suggested that the step from 'following' to actively 'leading' the reindeer is actually a rather minor one. This is what Pohlhausen (1954) had suggested for people whom he called *wildfeste Jäger*. He refined the terminology by introducing *Rentierbegleiten* (accompanying reindeer) as

a practice lying somewhere between hunting and herding (1954: 39). 'Accompaniers' of reindeer would use transport animals to keep up with a particular herd and would try to influence its migration without really domesticating it. However, this notion of 'accompanying' was rejected as impossible by Vajda (1968: 273). Both Burch (1991) and Vajda thought that the yearly distances covered by migratory reindeer were too great to be accompanied by humans. These early debates show that the idea that 'hunting equals humans following the animals' and 'herding equals animals following the humans' is too simplified.

We should think rather of a continuum between hunting and herding practices, since in both cases the same species of animal is used as the basic resource. The position of a particular group at a particular time on this continuum has to be assessed by detailed ethnography, which I shall provide in chapter 3. Given this continuum, the development of herding then is not as abrupt as Krupnik suggested, and the innovative aspect of it, in Menghin's (1931: 501) terms 'the step from a herd follower to a herd leader', is rather modest (as Ingold shows (1980: 84)). If we assume such a continuum, in line with the argument put forward by Layton et al. (1991), then the term 'accompanying' seems to be useful to describe practices such as those among the Chukchi (Bogoras 1901: 87), where the reindeer are herded but far from tame. In Nenets reindeer herding, herd control is much tighter, but the pattern of migration and its seasonality is still seen as closely linked to the natural environment of the herd.

To breathe empirical life into Menghin's (1931) hypothesis, it is necessary to examine decision-making in reindeer migration. Among the Nentsy, for example, the herd determines the general pattern of migration. The herders decide the choice of a particular pasture at a certain time, and they direct their herds on a day-to-day basis. This makes the Nentsy, in Menghin's sense, 'herd leaders', rather than 'herd followers'. Under this close control, directing herds to a new pasture is certainly more than merely accompanying them. Thus, humans make the day-to-day decisions, whereas the animals determine the seasonal pattern. This gives the Nentsy the status of 'full nomads' in the sense that their herd is a unit of 'production' rather than, as hunters, a unit of 'extraction' (see Khazanov 1994: 17).

It is now widely agreed that large-scale reindeer herding developed simultaneously in different areas of the Eurasian tundra in the 1700s. For many regions in Siberia this was around the time of the conquest by the Russians. However, a clear, causal relationship between Russian influence historically and the development of reindeer herding has so far been claimed only by Golovnev (2000b: 232). Such influence must have been more indirect for the Nentsy and Khanty, for example through the growing Russian

demand for transportation reindeer (cf. Jernsletten & Klokov 2002: 28). The incorporation of the Nentsy into the tribute system by the Russians could also have contributed indirectly to the development of large-scale reindeer herding, since the over-hunting of animals for their fur would have required the Nentsy to find a more reliable subsistence base (cf. Krupnik 1993: 170). For the Nentsy the development of reindeer herding was, perhaps most of all, a reaction to the sharp decrease in wild reindeer in the 1700s (Khomich 1995: 51; Golovnev 1997a: 86–8). This decline of the wild reindeer populations affected Eurasia generally, and, by the beginning of the twentieth century, domestic reindeer herding had become the dominant subsistence activity for tundra populations from Fennoscandia to Chukotka (Krupnik 1993: 175).

2.2 Herding, Husbandry, Breeding: Terminology and Typology

There is no consensus on a proper term for the management of domestic reindeer. The term that finds the greatest acceptance across all languages and regions seems to be the 'mastering' of reindeer,[20] since this reflects best what people directly involved with these animals actually do and how they perceive themselves as part of the tundra. Mastering encompasses all reindeer-related activities, but this recent terminological innovation has not yet entered the broader academic discourse. For comparative reasons, a clear definition of what the kinds of management that each term refers to is analytically useful. As well as different terms for the same activity, there are also terms for the different types of reindeer management. Interestingly, it is the English literature that deals with the terminology, while the Russian literature is more concerned with distinguishing different types of reindeer herding and their genesis. The connection between terms and types of reindeer herding, however, hardly features in the literature. The common line here is that the terminology and types of reindeer management relate to practices that impose human control on animals which otherwise would be wild. In the words of Paine (1994: 30): 'Pastoralism is a system of impositions. Reversion to the wild state is a constant possibility.'

In his analysis of the Saami, Paine (1964) saw distinctions between herding and husbandry, between making short-term and long-term decisions in reindeer herding, as well as between individual engagement and collective efforts in managing the deer. 'Herding' for him is the day-to-day work with

[20] Put forward by Tim Ingold during a lecture 'Work, identity and environment among Finns and Saami in Lapland', Aberdeen, 5 December 2003. 'Mastering' is Ingold's translation of the Finnish word for reindeer herding. The Russian term *olenevodstvo* comes from the verb *vodit',* which translates into English as 'to lead', 'to conduct', or 'to drive'.

the herd on the pastures, i.e. the ecological aspects of reindeer management (1964: 83f). This imposing of control on the organisation of the herd in space requires a lot of the manual work, and the labour performed here is more easily organised in a collective way. This social dimension of herding, although not explicitly analysed by Paine, is important for the social relations within a community of herders. By contrast, 'husbandry' for Paine (1964: 85) is the economic part of reindeer management. It encompasses the individual decisions made by each owner in managing his animals. The deer are seen as a harvestable resource, and as capital, and so each deer is an asset. Husbandry thus relates to the individual long-term decision-making of each household. Paine illustrates the difference between herding and husbandry ethnographically (1994: 19f): driving the herd (collectively) to the next pasture, to observe it, to separate the calves and their mothers from the male herd (as the Nentsy do), to separate herds that have inter-mixed, to drive the deer to the camp—all this is herding. Husbandry, on the other hand, has naturally a lot to do with ownership. The herd is the capital of the owner, so the 'husbander' earmarks his calves, decides on slaughtering, castration, which deer are to be trained for transport, and (in the Nenets case) which ones are to have their antlers cut for *panty* (a raw material used in medical products; see Takakura 1997; Stammler 2004, chapter 8).

Ingold (1980: 113f) rightly notes that collective and individual practices influence both the number of animals per unit of pasture as well as per consumer unit. Therefore, herding and husbandry must be considered together. Both actions are clearly rational, since the individual decisions relate to the herd as capital while the collective decisions concern management decisions such as the pooling of labour. Obviously, both are two aspects of a single set of human practices concerned with reindeer.

Paine did not introduce these distinctions to separate reindeer practices, but to analyse them. The fact that his definitions are based on his study of the Saami brings with it some limitations that were not considered by him or Ingold. The first part of my comments on Paine's work (1964) relates directly to the central themes of this book, property and economy. In Paine's case, there was only private ownership of the herd by the respective households, and the Saami had the choice of opting for collective or individual decision-making. In Soviet reindeer herding, and to some extent in post-Soviet herding too, there was collective or state ownership of the herds. In Paine's definition, a 'husbander' has to be an owner of the deer. Yet if the owner is the state or another institution, the typical 'husbandry–decisions' are not taken individually but according to a plan set out by a collective of *brigadiry* (work team leaders) and *zootekhniki* (veterinarian specialists and

reindeer experts).[21] So, the decision-makers are neither owners nor individuals. Furthermore, their goal was not the growth of capital or profit, but the fulfilling of the plan. As far as the day-to-day practice of herding is concerned, in the state-farm context the supposed equality of all herders (Paine 1964: 85f) is challenged by the hierarchical structure of the brigade, where the *brigadir* has the right to make many of the herding decisions by himself, such as choosing the pastures on a daily basis, and splitting the herd. In the Russian context, the only area where there is real equality is in the herders' work-shifts (*dezhurstvo*), where each herder during his shift has equal responsibility for the herd, whether or not he is owner, *brigadir*, *zootekhnik* or guest. In the Yamal case, this organisation into shifts occurs even in private family herds, where the members work voluntarily according to a shift regime of, for example, 24 hours. Here it is not '*as if* they are equals' (Paine 1964: 85, my italics) but their responsibility *is* truly equal.

A concentration on the two terms 'herding' and 'husbandry' risks obscuring what is meant by another term, 'reindeer breeding'. Krupnik uses it but he makes no distinction between breeding and herding (e.g. 1993: 160f, 164). What he uses, following Paine, is 'reindeer pastoralism' as the overarching term for herd management and meat production, but not for reindeer herded as transport animals. When Ingold uses 'carnivorous pastoralism' (see above) he applies ecosystem terminology related to meat-oriented reindeer management. He tries to clarify confusion about breeding. He states that breeding of animals by humans is restricted to the creation of breeds by artificial selection (1980: 133); i.e. that some deer are purposefully selected for reproduction with the goal of achieving a breed with hereditary traits that makes it superior to their naturally reproducing counterparts.

Breeding leads us directly to the Soviet context, since it was during this era that breeding in this Ingoldian sense was carried out systematically. This does not contradict Ingold's argument that pastoralists under subsistence conditions do not engage in breeding (1980: 134). In the Soviet Union it was not the pastoralists themselves but the state planners who introduced breeding to increase yields far beyond what was required for subsistence use (see section 2.3). In Russian terminology there is only one word for reindeer management—*olenevodstvo*—and thus there can be no discussion about herding or husbandry. *Olenevodstvo* has various translations: 'reindeer herding', 'reindeer husbandry' and also often 'reindeer breeding'. Derived

[21] Being a *zootekhnik* was a very important profession within Soviet reindeer herding. In Yamal, the *zootekhnik* was responsible not only for the veterinary health of the herd but also for making the principal husbandry and migration decisions, in conjunction with the *brigadir*. Many experts regret the decline of the role of the *zootekhniki* and demand an improvement in their status and a better salary.

from the Russian verb *vodit'*, which can be translated as 'to lead', 'to conduct', it stresses the active part that humans play in managing the animals. Although *olenevodstvo* is a generic term, it incorporates an understanding of the day-to-day practices of herding, for which there is the Soviet job category of the *pastukh* (herder), whereas the longer-term husbandry-related decisions (in the Paineian sense) are taken by the *brigadir* and the *zootekhnik*. Paine's herding/husbandry distinction, in spite of the criticisms above, covers these differences and I suggest we should use this when referring to distinctions between day-to-day and long-term management of reindeer. In all other cases, I use 'reindeer herding' as a generic term (like *olenevodstvo*) to describe this economy and way of life.

As noted above, ongoing discussions about the typology, rather than terminology, of reindeer herding are prevalent among Russian authors. This interest in typology began with discussions about the origins of reindeer herding, and is closely related to it.[22] Reindeer herding types can be distinguished along ecological, geographical, ethnic and economic lines with varying degrees of differentiation.

The most basic distinction is that between tundra reindeer herding and forest reindeer herding. This book deals with tundra herding for meat and antler production, with some transport reindeer, within a herd size that can vary from 500 to 5,000 deer (depending on seasonal variation and management practices). Within this tundra type, an arctic subtype of reindeer herding relying on winter pastures in the farthest north has been identified (cf. Golovnev 1995). This is practised by the northernmost Yamal herders, among whom I conducted part of my fieldwork. The Khanty and Nentsy in the Polar Ural Mountains are also tundra reindeer herders. However, the most numerous and well-known tundra reindeer herders in Russia are the Nentsy in western Eurasia and the Chukchi and Koryaks in eastern Eurasia.

The most ancient type of reindeer herding, which can be traced back to the Protosamoyedic peoples of the Sayan Mountains (Flor 1930; Vasilevich & Levin 1951), is practised today by the current indigenous inhabitants of this region, the Tozhu and the Tofalars (Donahoe 2004). Nowadays the forest reindeer herders in Russia, the Evenki and to some extent the Even, use reindeer in a similar way for transport, riding and milking, whereas other peoples such as the Forest-Nentsy, some of the Khanty and some of the Sel'kup, neither milk nor ride their reindeer. Taiga reindeer herding was on the verge of extinction in the 1920s (cf. Kertselli 1931: 28f, 32) and after the 'snowmobile revolution' (Pelto & Müller-Wille 1987), yet against all the odds it has survived, and private herds among the Khanty and Forest-Nentsy

[22] A comprehensive overview of the discussion is given in Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2001: 18–26)

are now even increasing slightly. However, it is still regarded as the form of reindeer herding with the weakest economic future (Jernsletten & Klokov 2002: 28f, 34).

Another typology of reindeer herding has been suggested by Bogoras (1933, cited in Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 14 and in Vasilevich & Levin 1951). Drawing an east-west line across Russia he distinguished those areas of large-scale tundra herding which used sledge driving and those that practised the smaller-scale taiga herding using reindeer for riding. Then, with a north-south line, Bogoras identified the area west of the Yenisei River as one where reindeer were herded with the use of dogs, while to the east of the Yenisei River they were herded without the use of dogs.

The extent of the mobility practised in reindeer management has also been used as a classificatory device, i.e. whether practised in nomadic, semi-nomadic or settled groups. In the Russian context this classification is familiar because, since the 1822 Speranskii Code,[23] indigenous peoples have been classified according to three similar mobility classes. This classification embodies the inherently evolutionary categorisation in the sense that 'the more mobile a people are, the more primitive they are'. Most of the reindeer herding peoples were classified as 'wandering' (*brodiachie*), which was the most mobile category. The Yamal-Nentsy, for example, are known to migrate up to 1,000 km per year between the tundra and the forest-tundra margin, whereas the Khanty and Forest-Nentsy in the taiga, with their much smaller herds of about 50 reindeer, do not move more than 20–30 km and live at separate locations in fixed wooden houses (Stammler 2003: 38–41). In Russian, this practice was called *izbennoe olenevodstvo*[24] by Kertselli & Khudavov (1919: 4), who described it in the context of Russian peasants who used a couple of reindeer, instead of horses, for transport.

Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2000, 2001) have introduced an additional categorisation which they call 'production-commercial' herding (*proizvodstvenno-kommercheskoe olenevodstvo*) as opposed to 'ethnic' reindeer herding. I view 'ethnicisation' in reindeer herding analysis as partly a reaction to the Soviet unification efforts in reindeer herding models (e.g. Druri & Mitiushev 1963; Zabrodin et al. 1979; Borozdin et al. 1990), which largely ignored ethnic distinctions. It is a matter of opinion and of programmatic or ideological orientation whether one stresses more the unifying or separating aspects of ethnicity in an analysis of different reindeer herding practices. In their investigation of the origin of the production-commercial type, Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2001: 17) stress that this was not a Soviet innovation,

[23] See chapter 4, and the interpretation of the Speranskii Code in Forsyth 1992, Slezkine 1994 and Pika 1999: 35–43.
[24] Rus: *izba* = wooden hut

but that the Soviets borrowed the main traits of this management style from the Komi-izhemtsy.[25]

The Komi themselves took over reindeer herding from the Nentsy in the nineteenth century, and then introduced a set of innovations in order to engage in selling reindeer furs for leather clothes to factories in Moscow, St. Petersburg and abroad. Reindeer leather production was more important than reindeer meat at this time: before World War I approximately 120,000 furs per year were processed into leather (Dmitriev 1925: 106f). Some of the Komi herding practices later became characteristic of Soviet reindeer management, such as the grazing of large herds throughout the year, 24-hour herd control, an increased proportion of females designated for meat production, and a change of migration rhythms (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 24f). The Nentsy, in their turn, adopted this first 'capitalistic' orientation from the Komi when the latter migrated with their herds across the Ural Mountains on Nenets territory in search of new pastures.

Last but not least there is the classification of reindeer herding according to ownership of the animals. This was of course especially relevant in Soviet times, when statistics distinguished between reindeer and herders in the state sector (*gosudarstvennyi sector*) and those in personal households (*lichnye khoziaistva*). The practice of taking an annual inventory continued after the end of the Soviet Union. In terms of the actual formation of herds this classification may be of minor importance, since in many regions state and private reindeer now use the same pastures, and at the outset state herds and private herds were not distinct units. On the other hand, in terms of management decisions in reindeer husbandry, the difference does matter, since the herders are free to decide on behalf of their own reindeer, whereas the state makes the decision for 'its' reindeer. Even within one herd, herders may behave differently in managing their own animals compared with those belonging to the state. I shall show in chapter 5, however, that this dichotomy of ownership oversimplifies the issue.

Property is relevant to ongoing political discussions on a regional as well as the Russian federal level concerning the future of reindeer herding and the role played here by the state. Some experts claim that sooner or later 'sovkhoz reindeer herding' (*sovkhoznoe olenevodstvo*) will be replaced by private herding altogether (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 17). Statistical figures on the share of private and state-owned reindeer in Yamal support this assumption. In the other reindeer herding regions and on a federal level,

[25] One of the two subgroups of the Komi west of the Ural Mountains. For a fuller description of the main traits of Komi reindeer herding as an examplar of the Soviet model see Kertselli & Khudavov (1919). On the historical and contemporary situation in Komi reindeer herding see Istomin (1998) and Habeck (2005).

however, the picture still looks different (Gray & Stammler 2002; Jernsletten & Klokov 2002: 29, figure 3). My own data show that even those Yamal reindeer herders who have always had private herds do not wish to abandon the sovkhozy altogether as they rely on them for the stability they offer (see chapter 8). So Yuzhakov & Mukhachev may be proved wrong as witnessed already by the rebuilding of sovkhoz herds in the northernmost sovkhoz of the Yamal Peninsula and by the recollectivisation of reindeer herding in regions such as Sakha[26] and Chukotka (Gray 2000: 36).

To regard 'sovkhoz herding' as the opposite of 'ethnic herding', as Yuzhakov & Mukhachev do, is too simplistic, since detailed case studies have shown that the regional implementation of Soviet policy differed a great deal from the unified model designed in Moscow (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999; Anderson 2000a; see chapter 4). Yuzhakov & Mukhachev also assume that their definition of ethnic reindeer herding equates with private reindeer herding, while sovkhoz herding is solely state owned. The underlying assumption here is that everything that is not state property has to be private (individual property). This neglects a whole range of collective and multiple forms of ownership.[27] In Yamal, as well as in Chukotka (Bogoras 1904–9: 676), pre-Soviet reindeer herding was indeed based on private individual ownership (Evladov 1992), but as I show in chapter 5 this does not automatically mean the absence of multiple forms of entitlements to reindeer. Even under Soviet regulation of sovkhoz herds at least a small proportion of private reindeer ownership was allowed. Therefore, construction of a simple reindeer-herding dichotomy based on the two extremes of 'ethnic, private, non-commercial' versus 'sovkhoz, state-owned, commercial' ignores the multiplicity of strategies applied by reindeer owners, who combine subsistence and market strategies within a framework of private needs and state involvement. Such an approach also risks reifying whole ethnic groups and labelling them as 'traditional'.

2.3 Reindeer

The deer family is technically known as *Cervidae*, consisting of many genera, species and subspecies. Questions concerning the various classifications and groupings, as well as the species and subspecies of reindeer, are still being debated in both the Western and Russian literature.[28] Eurasian reindeer

[26] Interview with a reindeer-herding specialist in the Ministry of Agriculture, Yakutsk, August 2000.

[27] Ingold (1980: esp. 162–76) and Anderson (2000a: chapters 6 and 7) have touched upon these questions before; see also chapter 5 below.

[28] Zabrodin et al. 1979: 65, Podkorytov 1995: 14; and the discussion in Whitehead 1972: xii; Flagstad & Roed 2003.

belong to the genus *Rangifer* and the species *tarandus*. Within this species, tundra reindeer are classified as *Rangifer tarandus tarandus*. Whitehead (1972: 166) distinguishes nine subspecies of *Rangifer tarandus*, of which only two are found on the Eurasian continent. Geist (1999: 326f) suggests a classification comprising seven subspecies in Eurasia, five of which are to be found on the continent and two are insular populations. Baskin & Danell (2003: 127) classify five subspecies in Eurasia. However, Flagstad & Roed (2003), arguing from the basis of mitochondrial DNA analysis, claim that the classification into subspecies cannot be upheld. Their data also support fewer independent original refuges of *Rangifer tarandus* than have previously been assumed.

Related to this is the discussion concerning domestic reindeer and whether they are descended from wild reindeer (Simchenko 1976, quoted in Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 36; Ingold 1980; Krupnik 1993; Paine 1994) or from their close relatives (Skalon 1956, quoted in Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 36; Pomishin 1990). Supporting the latter view, Baskin & Danell (2003: 127) claim that different frequencies of alleles suggest that domestic and wild reindeer evolved separately. However, the species from which they were domesticated is extinct now, which explains the allele differences. There is even less agreement concerning the morphological variation among different groups of domestic reindeer. Ingold (1980: 84, 99, 103), for example, sees domestic reindeer as nothing more than tamed wild reindeer, a view supported by Paine (1994: 201ff). Flagstad & Roed (2003) attribute the morphological differences within the reindeer to different adaptive responses to postglacial environmental change.

Morphological difference has been a favourite research topic of Soviet reindeer biologists. In the late 1970s scholars such as Zabrodin et al. (1979: 92) concluded that the morphological differences between various domestic reindeer populations in Northern Russia were not sufficiently significant to constitute distinct breeds (*porody*). They saw domestic reindeer as being divided into three main groups: European forest-tundra, Siberian tundra and Siberian forest (taiga). In the Western literature, these more or less match the subspecies *Rangifer tarandus tarandus* in the tundra, *Rangifer tarandus fennicus* in the forests (Whitehead 1972: 94, following Banfield 1961), and *Rangifer tarandus sibiricus* in the Siberian tundra mainland (Geist 1999: 327).

More recent Russian publications agree on the existence of four breeds (*porody*) beyond the general distinction of tundra and taiga reindeer (Baskin 1986; Borozdin et al. 1990: 72–6; Baskin 1991: 219; Podkorytov 1995: 37–9; Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2000, 2001: 36ff). The breeds were officially recognised by the scientific council of the Soviet Ministry of

Agriculture in 1985 (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 44). This distinct classification of domestic reindeer into productive breeds is little recognised by Western academics, with the exception of Geist (1999: 320). Anderson (2000c) argues that Soviet reindeer research, with its focus on behaviour and adaptation, takes the anthropogenic impact on the formation of reindeer population into greater account. Although he does not speak of breeds, he speaks of different ecotypes of domestic reindeer 'created' by people (2000c: 169).

Krupnik sees these ecotypes as a result of long-term human impact. According to his sources, in the 1700s people were already able to manipulate the age–sex structure of the herds (Krupnik 1993: 170). This challenges Ingold's (1980: 133) strict definition of breeding, namely the artificial, scientific breeding carried out by Soviet biologists. I suggest adopting the broader view of breeding; otherwise we risk implying that herders did not engage in purposeful selection before the existence of the Soviet Union. In fact, purposeful castration of bulls (e.g. for transport needs), which has always practiced by reindeer herders, can be seen as a form of selection. Yuzhakov and Mukhachev (2001: 42) refer to this form as *narodnaia selektsiia* (popular selection), as opposed to scientific artificial selection. Baskin (1991: 219) argues that the different breeds are the result of both 'artificial conditions and selection preferences' of indigenous herders.

The four ethnic groups after which these breeds are named—the Nentsy, the Even, Evenk, and the Chukchi—can be seen as the 'creators' or at least the 'establishers' of these breeds with their particular traits of behaviour and adaptability to their respective environments. Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2001: 84) provide evidence that wild migratory reindeer use only 1–4% of the available forage per unit of pasture, whereas domestic reindeer use 25–40%. This is in line with Geist's (1999: 321) observation about the differences in grazing patterns. It enables the domestic deer to stay longer on each pasture and requires less movement, which is more acceptable to the herders. Geist (1999: 317) sees this high adaptive capacity of reindeer as the decisive characteristic that made domestication possible: 'Humans could give the reindeer habits that are useful in its control and exploitation'.

Among the four breeds of domestic reindeer, there are also considerable differences, as the following comparison shows. Today, few Russian authors doubt that the differences between the breeds 'have been so genetically stabilised that they retain their properties even after introduction to other regions' (Baskin 1991: 219). These differences are both morphological and behavioural. For reindeer-herding practices, the behavioural differences are the most important, such as feeding patterns and temperament.

The Nenets reindeer, the most numerous of the four species, are characterised as being very good for transport, for long-distance migrations, and at the same time for meat production. The animals use extensive areas of pasture with a selective foraging behaviour. They harvest only a small portion of the available forage per section of pasture before they move on. Thus, the same piece of pasture regenerates quickly and can be used again the following year. Such a regime suits long migrations across pastures with low plant production. Nenets reindeer can be kept under arctic tundra conditions as well as in the taiga, as shown by the herding practices of the Khanty and Forest-Nentsy. Nenets reindeer are the smallest in size and are not used for riding at all. The average carcass weight is 52–58 kg after slaughter.[29]

The Chukchi (*Khargin*) reindeer are the second most numerous after the Nenets reindeer. They are characterised as being best for meat production and of least use for transport, since they are difficult to tame. The carcass weight is approximately 60 kg. One trait of this reindeer is that, in short seasons, it is able to use pastures very intensively, 'eating the vegetation to bare ground' (Baskin 1986: 335). It relies on pastures with high annual primary production, and it uses grass-type foods not only in summer but also in winter when most other reindeer rely mainly on lichens. These animals are less suited to long-distance migrations. Mukhachev (1990: 24) identifies these traits with the Chukchi practice of herding their animals on foot instead of driving sleds. They systematically slaughter reindeer with the highest mobility in order to maintain a less mobile reindeer population.

The Evenk taiga reindeer are the least numerous of the four breeds. The slaughtered weight is 70–85 kg, making it the best meat producer. This trait, however, is less important for their herders than transport, for which reindeer of the Evenki breed possess very special qualities. They are tall enough to ride on, and can be used for milking. This results in a type of herding practice similar to that of the southernmost Tofalar reindeer herders in Tuva Republic. According to Baskin (1986: 334–7), their grazing patterns are different to other reindeer, as is their herd instinct and migration behaviour. They usually do not move between tundra and taiga, are tamer and graze less in herds than other reindeer.

The Even breed is characterised as being somewhere between the Chukchi *Khargin* and the Evenk breeds. Owing to its body characteristics (its skull and body are of a different form to the other breeds), it can carry loads on its back as well as pull sledges. This is useful for herding in the mountainous terrain of the Sakha Republic and the Russian Far East. Its carcass weight is 55–65 kg, which is less than the Evenk breed (Baskin

[29] I give carcass weights for adult male reindeer in all four breeds.

1986: 334–6; Borozdin et al. 1990: 72–86; Mukhachev 1990: 21–6; Podkorytov 1995: 37–9; Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 37).

The most important point here is the fact that the different reindeer breeds are adapted to particular environmental conditions. Bodily adaptations include the length of the legs, height and shape of the body, shape of the skull, firmness of the skeleton, fur colours, and calving times. Behavioural adaptations include patterns of seasonal movements and foraging, and temperament. The Russian authors (Baskin 1986, 1991; Borozdin et al. 1990; Podkorytov 1995; Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001) appreciate the role of the respective ethnic groups in the selection of these breeds. Therefore the breeds can also be seen as a visual stamp of the peoples' special engagement with the animal under certain eco-climatic circumstances. Anthropological work dealing with human–animal relations therefore should consider the 'animal' side of the coin too.

Recognising separate breeds of domestic reindeer implies understanding the particular sets of practices in the human–animal relationship that were established in different regions. Through breeding activities, humans have determined these practices, and then have behaved in a way to promote the optimal development of their reindeer. Selective breeding has occurred in two steps: first, through the century-long process of purposefully preventing animals with unfavourable traits from reproducing, e.g. those with a weak herd instinct, those with a different foraging behaviour, etc. This is what is called in Russian *narodnaia selektsiia* (folk selection). The second step, in Russian called *plemannaia rabota* (scientifically based selection), was established during the era of the Soviet Union. From the 1930s onwards, sovkhozy were set up to 'produce' males and females with the best breeding qualities to suit the ecological and social environment of a particular region. Later, the systematic slaughtering of animals with unfavourable traits or unwanted qualities was common in enterprises all over the Soviet Union.

Particularly important was the pure-strain breeding in these special sovkhozy in order to stabilise the traits of the breeds genetically, and thereby attain better adaptability in conjunction with higher productive output. This kind of breeding work was carried out, under strictly controlled conditions, between the 1930s and the 1980s. It was based on the controlled pairing of only the 'best' females with the 'best' males, the strict control of growing calves, and the establishment of lineages of the descendants of those best breeding animals. Cross-breeding of different breeds, e.g. Chukchi males with Nenets females, was practised only occasionally, and mostly for immediate slaughter of the first offspring (*promyshlennoe skreshchivanie*). Experiments with artificial insemination of reindeer of different breeds have

been carried out, but to date have not been widely applied (Borozdin et al. 1990: 77f; Podkorytov 1995: 51–4).

Borozdin et al. (1990: 9) stress the importance of the herd instinct of domestic reindeer for their management by humans. Unlike wild reindeer, domestic reindeer across most of Russia are kept in herds all year round. There are regional differences, however, in the use made by herders of the ability of young reindeer to learn behaviour imposed by humans (Geist 1999: 317). This is why some herds can move southwards in autumn, whereas neighbouring ones stay in the north, or even move to more northern winter pastures.[30] According to reindeer herders, old deer rarely get used to new migration routes, whereas calves learn them in their first year. On the other hand, in the YNAO the general patterns of movement among domestic reindeer herds show similarities with wild reindeer migrations, for example those of the Taimyr population (Geller & Vorzhonov 1975: 81–4; Baskin 1986: 336f; Anderson 2000a: 138ff; Kolpashikov 2000: 527f). Three general regimes can be distinguished for wild reindeer:

- Most herds cover long distances (up to 2,000 km) between tundra (spring, summer, autumn pastures) and forest-tundra margin (Rus: *lesotundra*, winter pastures).
- Less mobile, small, so-called 'local' populations of wild reindeer stay on the tundra in winter; this has also been documented for the eastern Taimyr wild reindeer (Malygina 2001).
- Other populations of wild reindeer move above the tree line as they progress with their herds higher up the mountains to their spring and summer pastures.

Among the domestic herds in Yamal I can distinguish the following similar patterns:

- The most prominent group migrates from the forest to the tundra and to the arctic seashore (up to 1,200 km, Central Yamal Nentsy and to some extent the Tazovskie Nentsy from the Tazovskii *raion* east of the Yamal Peninsula).
- The northernmost herders and their herds on the Yamal and Gydan Peninsulas do not move between vegetation zones, but instead migrate only small distances (100 km). This pattern by domestic herds could also reflect a similar pattern of wild deer, just as the long migrations reflect similar patterns among wild reindeer.

[30] I observed this rather exceptional pattern during fieldwork in 2003 and 2004 in brigades numbers 5 and 6 of the kolkhoz 'Vyucheiskogo' in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug.

- Herds and herders in south-western areas of the YNAO on the forest-tundra margin undertake migrations of up to 800 km across the Ural Mountains into Eastern Europe, to their summer pastures.

The similarity of these patterns seems to suggest that it is the vegetation of these pastures and the foraging behaviour of the animals that largely determines the migration of both wild and domestic reindeer. However, we have to bear in mind that human mobility is not just a passive following of the animals, but comes from consciously supporting those traits in the domestic animals that earlier herders had cultivated through 'folk selection' (*narodnaia selektsiia*) over many generations.

Like wild reindeer, domestic breeds also use different types of pastures on their migration throughout the year. However, the vegetation they consume on these pastures is controlled by the herders. Syroechkovski (1995: 114–16) records that lichen makes up 77% of the winter diet of domestic reindeer in Taimyr compared to 36% among their wild counterparts. This change in dietary composition is the result of conscious decisions made by the herders. Among the Nentsy it seems that animal–human relations mirror plant–animal relations to some extent, since the peoples' migration behaviour is a tracking of the 'wave' of herd migration. The herd migration is caused by the foraging behaviour of the animals. As a consequence, human nomadic migration is partially determined by the seasonal plant growth in the Arctic. An important variable in reindeer pastures is the abundance, availability and accessibility of lichens, especially the reindeer moss (*Cladonia sp, Cetraria sp*) and other species. Whereas the *Khargin* reindeer (Chukotka) live almost exclusively on a grass-based diet, Nenets deer rely predominantly on sedges, shrubs and grass in summer, and on lichens in winter, which they find beneath the snow by digging with their hooves (up to 80% of the diet; Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 80). An exception to this pattern is the northern Yamal reindeer population. Their diet includes almost no lichen, which in this respect makes them similar to the *Khargin* reindeer.

The general variation of the reindeer diet through the seasons can be imagined as forming a continuum between the two extremes of eating almost exclusively lichen (winter) and green plants (summer). In autumn and spring the reindeer eat a combination of the two. Skogland's observation that the animals demonstrate a 'deliberate behavioural tracking of the wave of plant production' (quoted in Paine 1994: 205) means that the herding households are also caught up in this pattern of movement. Herders say that the first grass and the young leaves of the shrubs are the best, and therefore the reindeer migrate with the first appearance of green plants from south to north, which equates to the thawing snow-line. In the case of the majority of the Nenets herders, migration therefore implies movement through ecologi-

cal zones from forest tundra (*lesotundra*) to arctic tundra and back. The following rule developed by Spiess (1979: 64) for wild reindeer also appears to be valid for the nomads (see also Paine 1994: 203f):

> The distance covered by each major movement is a direct function of the distance between ecological zones and between habitats that are best for the herd at different times of the year.

Data from my personal survey confirm that many Yamal reindeer herders also follow this pattern. The majority of respondents opted for a long migration, despite the hardships and increased workload for the household, because of the advantage afforded to the animals.[31] However, as Burch (1991) and Malygina (2001) found for wild reindeer, the northern Yamal domestic reindeer population can also be seen as a 'local population', and their herders do not move between ecological zones with the seasons. So the behavioural pattern of the animals appears to be dominant, but only to the level that Spiess called 'major movements' (and I call patterns) rather than the day-to-day movements.

2.4 Herds, Herd Following and Grazing Regimes

There has been much confusion concerning the definition of 'the herd'. For non-biologists, the herd can commonly be defined as the number of reindeer grazing together (cf. Burch 1991: 440). In many cases, the behavioural dynamics of the herd are the main reason for the cooperation and pooling of labour in reindeer herding (see chapter 5). Western biologists often define a herd as a breeding population, which is why research on calving grounds plays a major role in their definition (Anderson 2000c: 167). A social definition of a herd, as against a biological definition, usually relies on notions of ownership. Thus a herd may be owned or managed by one herder, or owned by one household. For example, the herds of the Nuer, referred to by Evans-Pritchard (1956: 258), are defined as a collection of animals of one owner, dispersed in many different places.

In Yamal, a herd is a dynamic entity. Herds are usually larger in summer than in winter. Larger herds are said to be more advantageous because it is easier to protect them from insect harassment. In chapters 3 and 5 I show that non-sovkhoz-based cooperation in reindeer herding is most likely to happen in summer. On the other hand, there is a limit to the number of deer that can be managed. Herds in excess of 3,000 animals are likely to fragment (see Ingold 1980: 211; Baskin 2000: 25) in the absence of labour-

[31] For more detail, see chapter 3. Although Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2001: 39) argue that long migrations result in reduced weight gain among deer in summer and autumn, this disadvantage is balanced by access to better quality pastures.

intensive control. In winter, especially in the forest zone, smaller herds are easier to manage and ecologically more sustainable for the pastures.

In this section I shall show how herders have adjusted their migration patterns considerably in order to achieve an acceptable balance between the people's and the animals' needs. Humans are not 'enslaved' by the migratory instinct of the reindeer but have the power to determine the nature of migration. Examples for this are the recent transfer of reindeer herds from the Yamal Peninsula to the neighbouring Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous Okrug (see below), or the transfer of whole herds to different pastures in the malozemel'skaia tundra of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug after 2000. As Borozdin et al. (1990: 8) put it:

> It is not that man has tried to alter the type of reindeer, rather he has deliberately worked to preserve and develop natural traits in them, such as the ability of extracting forage from pastures all year round and other economically beneficial characteristics.

If the herders' migrations were determined solely by ecological factors, they would not be nomads in the proper sense of the word. We have to bear in mind that these long migrations are a conscious decision taken every year by the herders themselves. Another example from the Khanty of the sovkhoz Muzhevskii shows that people can also modify decisions about the migration. There, former winter pastures to the east of the Ob' River have not been used since 1991 and migration routes have become shorter because of the herders' preferences.[32]

In the general organisation of the movement of domestic reindeer herds, two key aspects stand out that make herding very different from the foraging behaviour of wild reindeer: the practice of reindeer grazing and the separation of the herd. Based on participant observation in Yamal I distinguish two main grazing patterns around the nomadic campsite. These patterns indicate the temporary organisation of space by the nomads in the YNAO. Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2001: 81) call these patterns of pasture use 'ribbon-like' and 'radial', but I shall refer to these grazing regimes as linear and circular.

In spring, migration normally follows a route from south to north, and in northern Yamal, also in other directions. The households set up their camp approximately 5–7 km ahead of the herd (in spring, this would be to the north). The herd will use these pastures, move northwards according to their migration instinct, and pass by the *chum*, the tepee-like nomadic tent of the Nentsy and other reindeer-herding groups. Within two or three days, the herd will have moved 5–7 km northwards of the *chum*. The household then moves

[32] From data based on one month's fieldwork among two brigades of the Muzhevskii sovkhoz, and personal communication with their director, 20 March 2003.

approximately 15 km north, thus setting up the camp again 5–7 km ahead of the herd (see figure 1). The same practice is followed in autumn but in the opposite direction, i.e. the daily migration ends 5–7 km in front of the herd (i.e. to the south).

In winter and summer, when the camp stays longer at one place, the grazing regime of the herd is not linear but circular. The camp is placed at the centre of the available pastures, and the herd grazes within a 5–7 km radius of it. On one day, the herder drives the herd north of the *chum*, the next day northwest, then west, and so on, depending on the wind, temperature and other variables that determine the direction in which the reindeer go. The minimum distance between neighbouring camps must therefore be 15 km in order to prevent the mixing of herds (see figure 2).

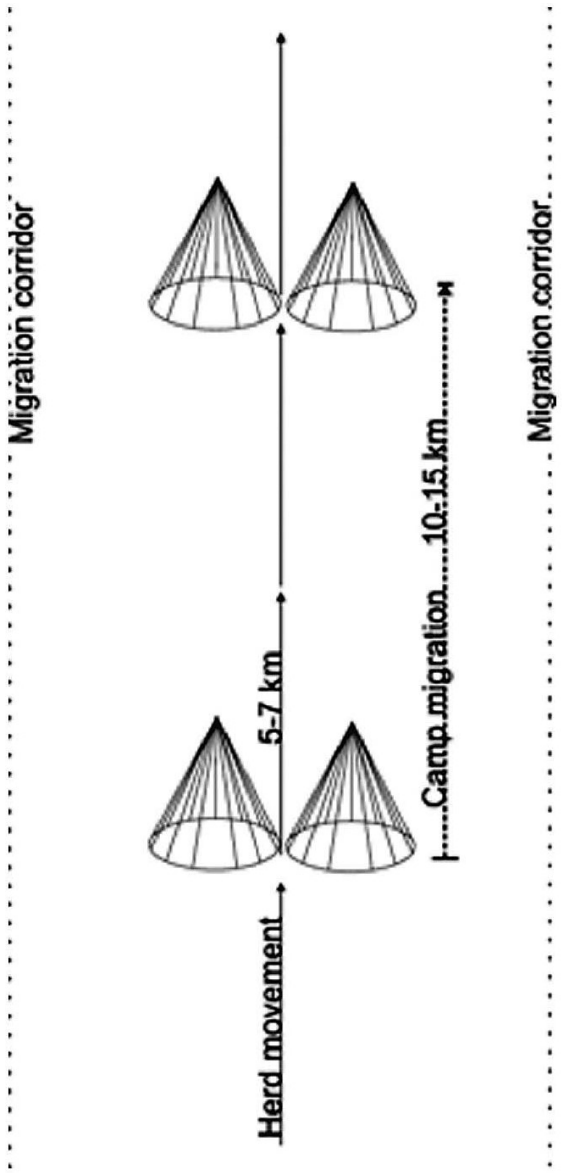


Figure 1. The linear grazing regime.

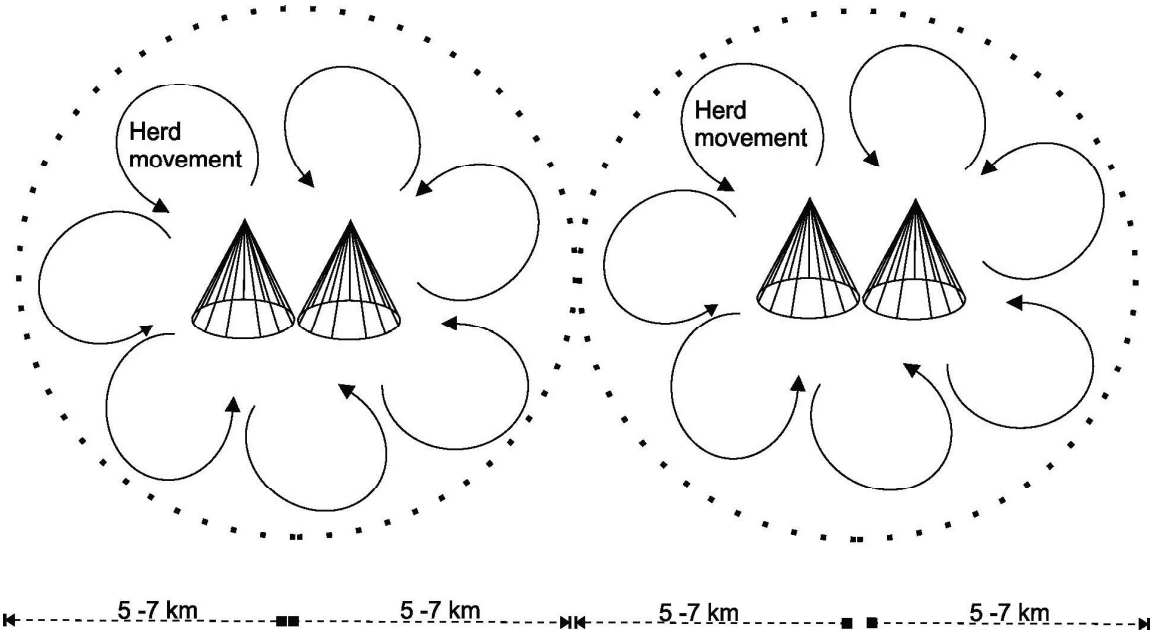


Figure 2. The circular grazing regime.

Another important feature of reindeer herding throughout the seasons is the separation of the herd, which I will describe in detail in my ethnography in chapter 3. Separation practices vary considerably within and across regions, but they are all important means of exerting human control over the reindeer herd. I observed three main seasons of separation: spring, autumn and winter. In spring, at calving time, the mothers with young calves are kept separate because they move at a different pace: before calving, they move faster than the rest of the herd, in order to reach the freshest pastures, and after the calves are born, they move slowly to keep pace with and protect their young. Some herders make this separation before calving (in the second half of April), and some at the beginning of mass calving (in the second half of May).

This is the most widespread practice I recorded during my fieldwork: 15 out of 18 herders said that they separated herds at calving time, despite having different herd sizes and different regional backgrounds, while only three kept their herds together. The second separation practice concerns the autumn separation of the females in order to minimise disturbance and excitement during the rut. Eight herders said that they did this, while ten did not. The last practice concerns the separate grazing of females in winter, which a minority of five herders confirmed that they do, whereas 13 kept their herds together in winter. The reason for this practice is to improve the nutritional state of the reindeer. Some herders seem to be more concerned about calm grazing conditions for the females, an argument put forward by Druri & Mitiushev (1963: 57). Other herders, particularly those cutting *panty*, are concerned that without antlers the transport males cannot compete

for the best lichens with the females. Common among all herders is the practice of bringing smaller herds together for the summer to create larger units.

The basic pattern of these separation practices corresponds closely with household cooperation and reindeer ownership, which I shall describe in chapter 5. The separation practice of households varies as I have shown, and is mostly connected to the herd size. Herders with fewer than 300 animals do not tend to separate their herds, whereas separation is done in all herds with more than 1,000 animals. One practice I did not encounter was the separation of the pregnant does in March in order to give them a quieter grazing regime. Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2001: 81) mention this as being an advantageous management practice. They saw the herd separations mentioned above as being the rule in reindeer herding, whereas my data indicate that nowadays there is much diversity in these practices.

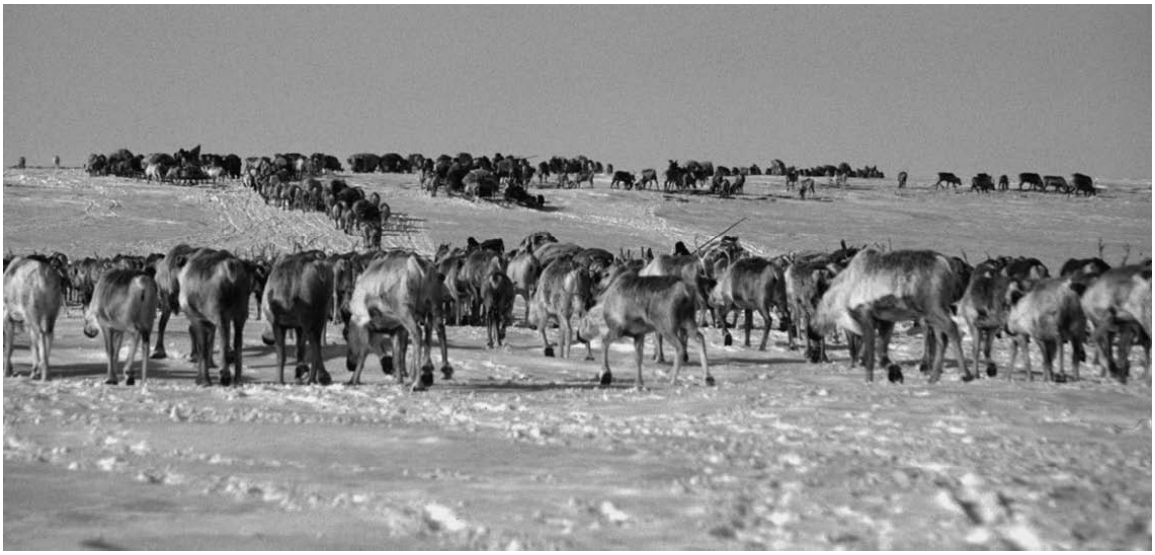


Plate 2. An unseparated herd migrating with the camp, southern Yamal Peninsula.

It is clear from the above that a number of important factors are closely interrelated: the overall ecological framework, the behavioural and biological characteristics of the reindeer, the human decisions about grazing regimes on pastures, and herd separation in reindeer herding. By understanding the interplay of these factors we are in a better position to understand how herders form relationships with their animals and with their land—the two most important elements of their tundra environment.

2.5 The Performance of Reindeer Herding in Russia

Having introduced the main aspects of reindeer types and reindeer herding in Russia, and the position of the Nentsy in particular, this section provides a

quantitative picture of reindeer herding in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Statistical data on reindeer numbers in Russia, as well as in Scandinavia, are not always accurate. However, my fieldwork with reindeer herders and administrators in the three regions (YNAO, NAO and Sakha Republic) makes me confident that the figures are reliable enough to indicate broad trends.

Overall, in Russia, domestic reindeer increased in number at the beginning of the twentieth century from 1.5 to 2.1 million, then declined with collectivisation to 1.4 million, stabilised after World War II, climbed back to very high levels of more than 2.1 million during the three sovkhoz decades (1961–93), and then declined sharply after the collapse of the Soviet Union to numbers lower than those of the early twentieth century.[33] This recent sharp decline led authors such as Baskin (2000) to consider domestic reindeer herding as being on the edge of extinction. A less dramatic and more thorough analysis of the general trends after the fall of the Soviet Union is given by Krupnik (2000a).

The Russian figures comprise the regional reindeer herding performances in the seven regional clusters of this economy, which cover approximately 90% of all Russian reindeer.

From west to east, these regions are:

- **Murmansk region**, European Russia, tundra reindeer herding on the Kola Peninsula by Saami and Komi with mixed Saami-Nenets reindeer.
- **Arkhangelsk region** (with Nenetskii Autonomous Okrug), European Russia, mainly tundra reindeer herding by European Nentsy with Nenets reindeer.
- **Komi Republic**, European Russia, reindeer herding at the forest-tundra margin and mountain type by Komi and Nentsy with Nenets reindeer.
- **YNAO**, West Siberia, mainly tundra reindeer herding, but also taiga, forest-tundra margin and mountain type by Nentsy, Khanty and Komi with Nenets reindeer.
- **Sakha Republic**, East Siberia, tundra, taiga and forest type, by Evenki (taiga) Eveny (taiga, mountain, tundra), Sakha and Dolgans (mainly tundra) with Evenk, Even and Khargin reindeer.
- **Chukotka**, Far East, tundra type, mainly by Chukchi with Chukchi reindeer.

[33] Reindeer numbers from the Russian Ministry of Agriculture; Syroechkovski 2000; Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001.

- **Koryak Autonomous Okrug**, Far East, forest-tundra margin, by Koryaks with Chukchi and Even reindeer.

Figure 3 reveals considerable differences in the performance of these regions since World War II. It is clear that sovietisation and 'de-sovietisation' had the most significant effect on Chukotka: in Soviet times it was the exemplary region for Soviet reindeer herding, but suffered a massive collapse when the Soviet era ended (cf. Gray 2000; Mironenko 2000; Krupnik & Vakhtin 2002). It seems that Chukotkan reindeer herding reacted erratically to outside influences, for which there are various explanations (see Gray 2003). The other extreme cases are the European regions, which reacted least to outside changes.[34] One possible explanation could be that commercial reindeer herding was introduced by the Komi even before the Soviet Union was established and thus had to undergo less 'adjustment' when the Soviet Union collapsed. In addition, the commercial environment of the European regions can be likened to the industrial oil and gas areas of the YNAO, which was buffered in times of economic crisis by access to markets and the prospect of financial support.

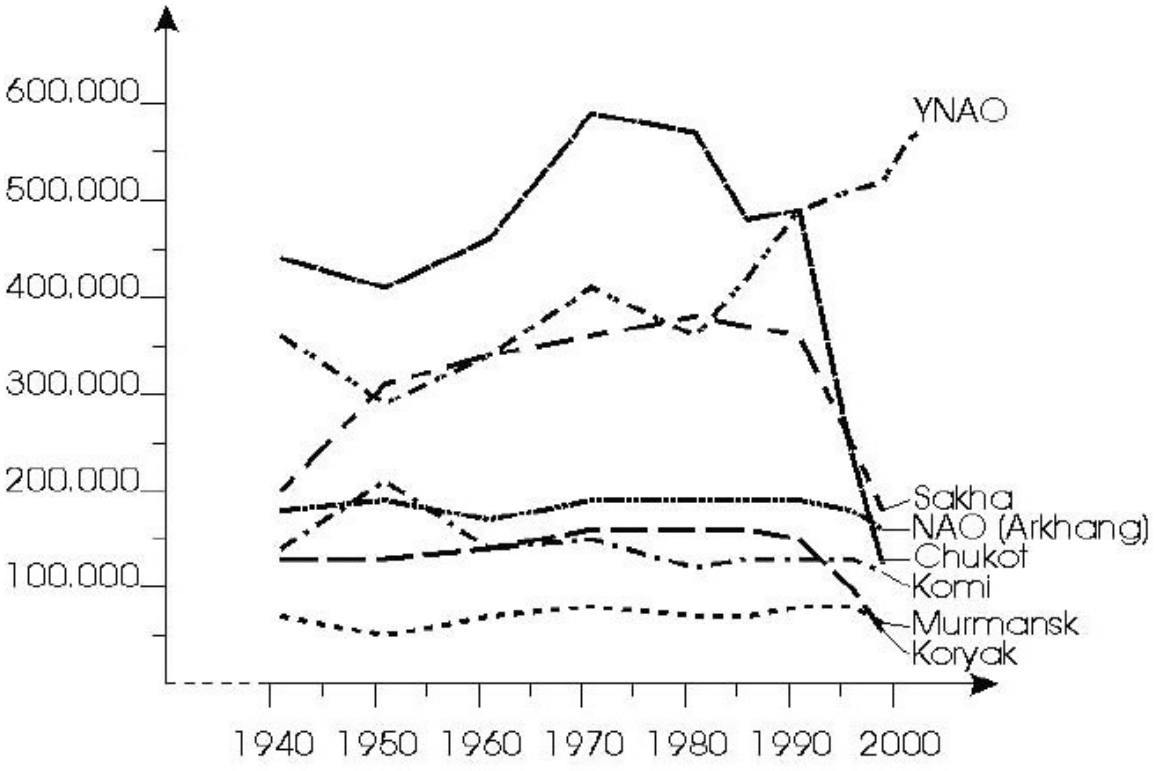


Figure 3. Regional reindeer headcounts.
Sources: Russian reindeer herding report 1999 and Syroechkovski 2000, appendix.

[34] A thorough analysis of reindeer herding in the European Russian North is provided in the studies by Tuisku (2002) for Nenetskii A. O., and by the Association of World Reindeer Herders (1999) for Komi.

In the Koryak Okrug, reindeer herding seems to have been almost as stable as in the European regions, but suffered a severe crash with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which still remains to be explained. Local experts see the crash as a result of failings in the introduction of the market economy, namely the shock privatisation and the abrupt cancelling of state support, the loss of qualified personnel, and problems with poaching.[35] In Sakha, numbers increased after World War II, then stabilised with a slight increase, but suffered a sharp decline during Perestroika. This is interesting in that Sakha, like Yamal, is financially strong and subsidises reindeer herding even more generously than the YNAO government.[36] It is significant to this study that Yamal was the only region to experience a real increase in the size of its herds after the fall of the Soviet Union. There are various explanations for this (e.g. Baskin 2000: 23, 27; Jernsletten & Klokov 2002: 31), all overly simplistic, which we will examine in later chapters.

Figure 3 reveals that the Nentsy dominate post-Soviet reindeer herding. In the two most stable regions (Yamal-Nenetskii and Nenetskii Okrugi (*Arkhangel'skaia oblast'*)) it is the Nentsy who manage the herds. The domination of this one ethnic group in post-Soviet reindeer herding deserves critical attention. Publications such as Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2000, 2001) and Baskin (2000) specifically mention an 'ethnic aspect' to reindeer herding. But why should one ethnic group perform better than another? In the same way as we avoided essentialising culture, so we should avoid claiming ethnicity as being the decisive reason for the success or failure of post-Soviet reindeer herding. Instead we should look at specific factors. For example, the herding practices among the Nentsy reveal a continuity over the past 100 years. The implementation of Soviet power, the interaction between nomads and the state, property relations, the role of local markets for reindeer production, and the role of industrialisation in the region all have to be considered as contributing to the quantitative development of reindeer herding.

In the seven above-mentioned regions, reindeer herding is the main livelihood of their respective indigenous peoples. Together these regions account for almost 100% of Russia's marketed reindeer production. However, there are a few other ethnic groups (Evenki, Eveny, Khanty, Mansi) whose reindeer herding is mainly for transport purposes. For their food subsistence needs, they rely on fishing and hunting. Reindeer herding for transport purposes, as practised in taiga regions, has diminished significantly since the introduction of the snowmobile in the 1970s. This is especially true for the central regions of the Krasnoiarskii Krai (Klokov 2001b: 55–7).

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[35] Speech of the Koryak delegate at the 2nd Congress of Russian Reindeer Herding, Salekhard, 12 March 2002; see also Krapovitskii 2000.

[36] Interviews in the Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Sakha, August 2000.

The most important transport reindeer herders are the Evenki, living mainly in the taiga and mountain taiga of Krasnoiarskii Krai, Taimyr Okrug (Anderson 2000a), Evenkiia (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003) and the southern Sakha Republic (Lavrillier 2000; Klokov 2001a). The Evenki have the widest spatial distribution of all indigenous peoples within Siberia. Some migrated to northern China, where a small group of 200 still keep a small reindeer herd (Heyne 1987; Nentwig 1991; Beach 2003). Another taiga people with reindeer are the Khanty, mainly living in the Khanty-Mansiiskii Autonomous Okrug. They have reindeer of the Nenets breed, mainly for transport purposes. Their reindeer headcount has diminished from 60,000 towards the end of the Soviet era to 28,000 in 2000. However, an increase among the private herds has been observed, from 10,000 in 1990 to 13,300 in 2000, helped by transfers of deer from Yamal, which were bought by the Khanty Mansiisk 'northern fund'. A herd of 1,500 reindeer of the sovkhoz Yar-Salinskii was driven to Lake Numto, where Khanty and Forest-Nenets private herders of the taiga received them in order to increase private reindeer herding in the okrug. A similar transaction had taken place in 1996, and a Khanty herder told me that it took him two years of hard work to adapt his Yamal reindeer to the taiga conditions with almost no migration, but good pastures.[37] The Forest-Nentsy, living in the south of the Yamal-Nenetskii Okrug and the north of the Khanty-Mansiiskii Okrug, herd reindeer under the same conditions. As mentioned above, they are far less mobile than tundra herders, living in wooden huts (*izba*) at up to six places a year. The north-western Khanty (*Kazymskie* and *Shurysharskie*) have adopted large-scale reindeer herding of the mountain type from the Komi and Nentsy.

A speciality of these taiga herders is reindeer herding using fences (mainly for summer pastures) and *dymokur*, a smoke-producing moss-fire to reduce insect harassment in summer. Holding a herd together in summer and autumn in the taiga is much harder than on the tundra, since the impact of mosquitoes is greater in the forest and it is much more difficult to find reindeer in the forest than out on the 'naked tundra' (*golaia tundra*), as reindeer herders call it.[38]

The westernmost people herding reindeer in Russia are the Saami on the Kola Peninsula. Their reindeer are a mixture of the Saami breed and the Nenets reindeer brought in by Komi and Nentsy from the Arkhangelsk

[37] Personal conversation with Iosif Ketchimov, late August 1998. Statistics for Khanty Mansiisk Okrug from the okrug administration, http://www.admhmao.ru/people/spravka/tradhoz.htm, accessed 28 December 2003.

[38] From field research in 1998 in the Khanty-Mansiiksii Okrug and February–March 2002 among the Shuryshkarskie Khanty. Cf. the monographs of Sokolova (1982) and Andrei Golovnev (1995) on the West Siberian taiga peoples.

region. Their main herding trait is *poluvolnyi vypas* (loose herding), when deer are set free on the summer pastures for a few months and collected only in autumn for slaughter (Baskin 2000; Konstantinov 2000: 54–7). Konstantinov's recent analyses show that efforts to introduce 'close herding' with year-round control of the Nenets-Komi type were not sustainable; herders returned to loose herding with the fall of the Soviet Union.[39]

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to examine reindeer pastoralism in broad, regional terms and then set Yamal reindeer herding in the context of these trends and of the ongoing academic debates. In providing this background, I wanted to show that the separate cultural and ecological, social and behavioural, national and regional, theoretical and practical aspects are all part of one inseparable complex, and that it is in this context that reindeer herders engage with their social, political and natural environment.

In order to understand the particular lifestyle practices of groups such as the Nenets reindeer herders, it helps to understand some of the ecological and behavioural foundations of the animals on which these practices are based. In this study of property and economy, it is important to establish what is actually owned and what people actually sell, barter, trade, exchange, and otherwise use. I have shown that general patterns of movement among wild reindeer in Taimyr share certain similarities with the domestic herds of the Nentsy. I have also shown that the Nenets migration routes are determined not only by natural factors, but also by conscious decision-making on the part of the herders. This applies to both seasonal migration and the day-to-day organisation of herd movements, as indicated by the linear and circular grazing regimes. The herders know the particular characteristics of their animals and their behaviour in the environment, and their way of perceiving this behaviour and relating it to their own needs shapes their practice of reindeer herding.

To exemplify this, I described the different breeds of domestic reindeer with their main characteristics, such as migration inclination, foraging behaviour and suitability for meat and transport use. For example, because Chukchi reindeer are able to forage intensively and are less mobile per unit of pasture they require a different herding regime than Nenets deer, which use pastures extensively and readily learn long migration routes, to which they then return every year throughout their life. This connection between animal behaviour and human practices has been underestimated in the Soviet

[39] Some overview information on the regions involved in Russian reindeer herding are available online at http://www.rangifer.org/it_eng.shtml

Union, even though Soviet biological reindeer researchers worked with herders to improve reindeer herding as a branch of the Soviet agricultural industry. Herders regarded attempts to transfer reindeer of different breeds into a region, such as Chukchi reindeer to Nenets or Dolgan areas, either as a curious experiment or as a failure, as Ventsel (2004: chapter 6.2) describes for the northern Sakha Republic. Originally, these transfers were undertaken by Soviet reindeer scientists for the advancement of knowledge.

On the other hand, people of the ethnic groups after which the four types of domestic reindeer were named have contributed to their development through century-long selection. Therefore I have argued for a broad definition of the term 'reindeer breeding', encompassing historical *narodnaia selektsiia* rather than only scientifically based selection. This is why the argument also goes in the other direction: it was the people who 'created' the animals that possess the particular behavioural characteristics that best fit the requirements of a particular environment. To put these two strains of the argument together, the people and the reindeer have together adapted to fit the particular conditions of the natural and social environment to which they belong.

The other way to place the Yamal situation within the wider 'reindeer-herding universe' is to show its position within a whole range of reindeer-herding practices and management implications. I introduced the theoretical debate about terminology and expressed support for Paine (1964) in his distinction between herding on a day-to-day basis and husbandry of a longer-term nature. This principal distinction is still helpful in a broad sense, although I have shown that its implications for property rights cannot be applied to the sovkhoz structure.

Whereas the theoretical terminological debate has taken place almost exclusively among Western scholars, I rely mainly on the discourse in Russian about reindeer-herding typology in order to show where the Yamal-Nentsy are to be positioned among the seven herding regions: they currently manage the largest herds of domestic reindeer in the world, under constant 24-hour control, practising fully nomadic tundra reindeer herding with the use of sledges and dogs even in summer, applying a combination of what was called commercial-production and domestic herding, as well as a combination of state and private herding.

Because private ownership as well as the overall number of animals is increasing in the YNAO (figure 3), reindeer herding continues to be an attractive source of income for the people engaged in it. The quantitative data presented here supports the view that post-Soviet reindeer herding is not teetering on the edge of extinction altogether—slumps, relative stability and prosperity all exist at the same time under the same macro-economic condi-

tions in different regions. It is the YNAO, on the basis of its increasing numbers of reindeer, which today is the only prosperous region in post-Soviet reindeer herding, and I shall attempt to explain the reasons for this apparent anomaly in the following chapters.

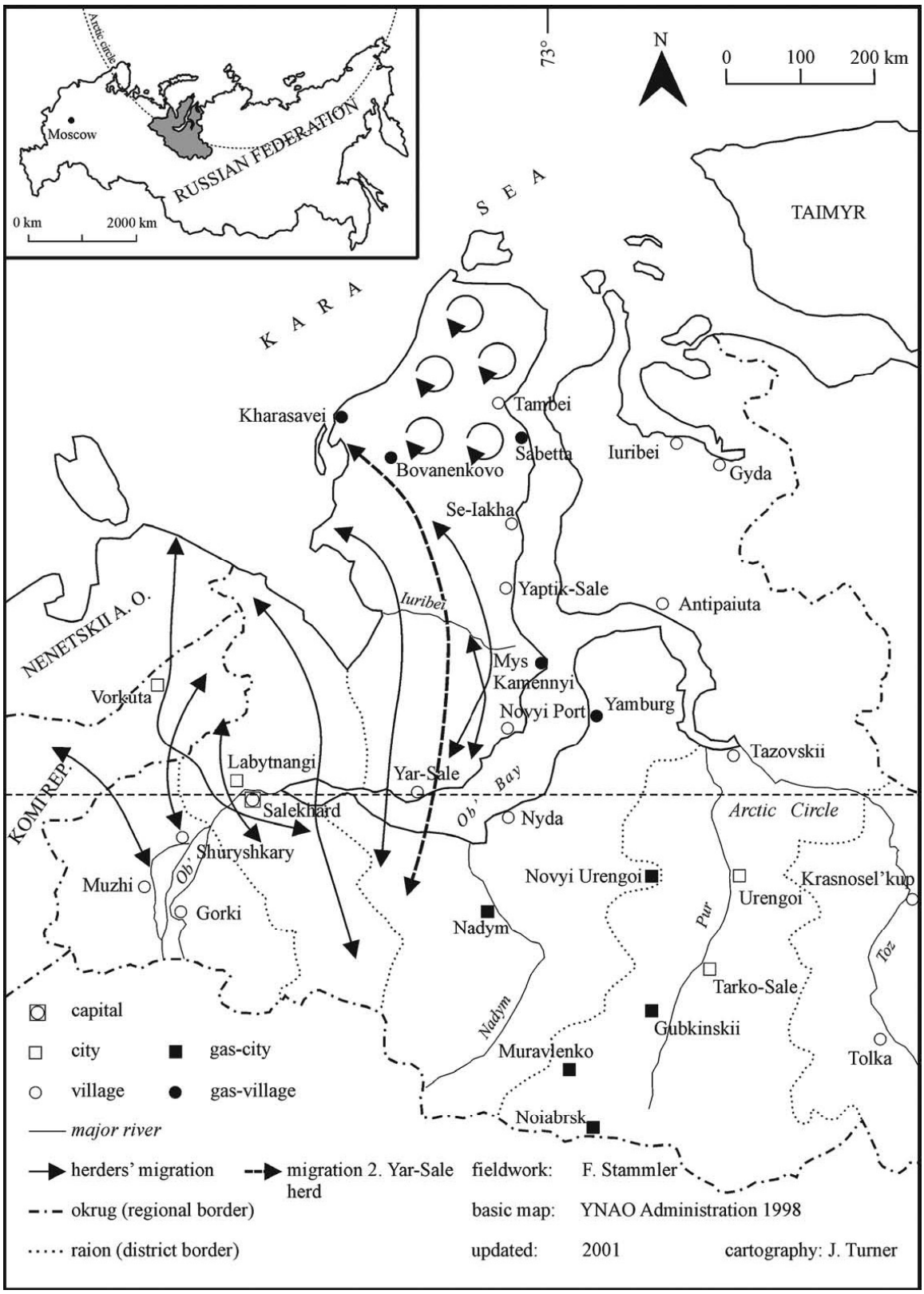
Chapter 3
The Practice of Reindeer Herding in Yamal

This chapter comprises an ethnography of reindeer herders and their work in the YNAO. Its aim is to provide a more detailed view of life on the Yamal Peninsula, so setting the scene for the topic-oriented analysis in the following chapters.

When I arrived to start my fieldwork in the YNAO, the first information I collected comprised facts, figures and overviews from Salekhard, the capital of the YNAO. This information provided a useful background against which I could begin to make sense of local developments, and which is why I present it at the beginning of this chapter. From Salekhard I travelled to the *raion* centre of Yar-Sale on the Yamal Peninsula, where the biggest sovkhoz has its headquarters. While waiting there for a helicopter to take me to the tundra, I met for the first time some people who were engaged in reindeer herding, and they gave me a glimpse of the importance of villages for Yamal reindeer herders. Villages are thus the focus of the second section of this chapter. In the village, my hosts reminded me not to forget the *zakon tundry*, a term that I had not met before. Yet, upon entering the tundra, I quickly understood that they meant by this that I should pay careful attention to the guidelines of solidarity in tundra life, a specific informal code of conduct. I introduce the basics of this code of conduct (section 3.3) before we come to the core of the chapter, the ethnography of the day-to-day life and the seasonal activities of reindeer herders on the Yamal Peninsula.

3.1 Reindeer Herding as a Regional Economy

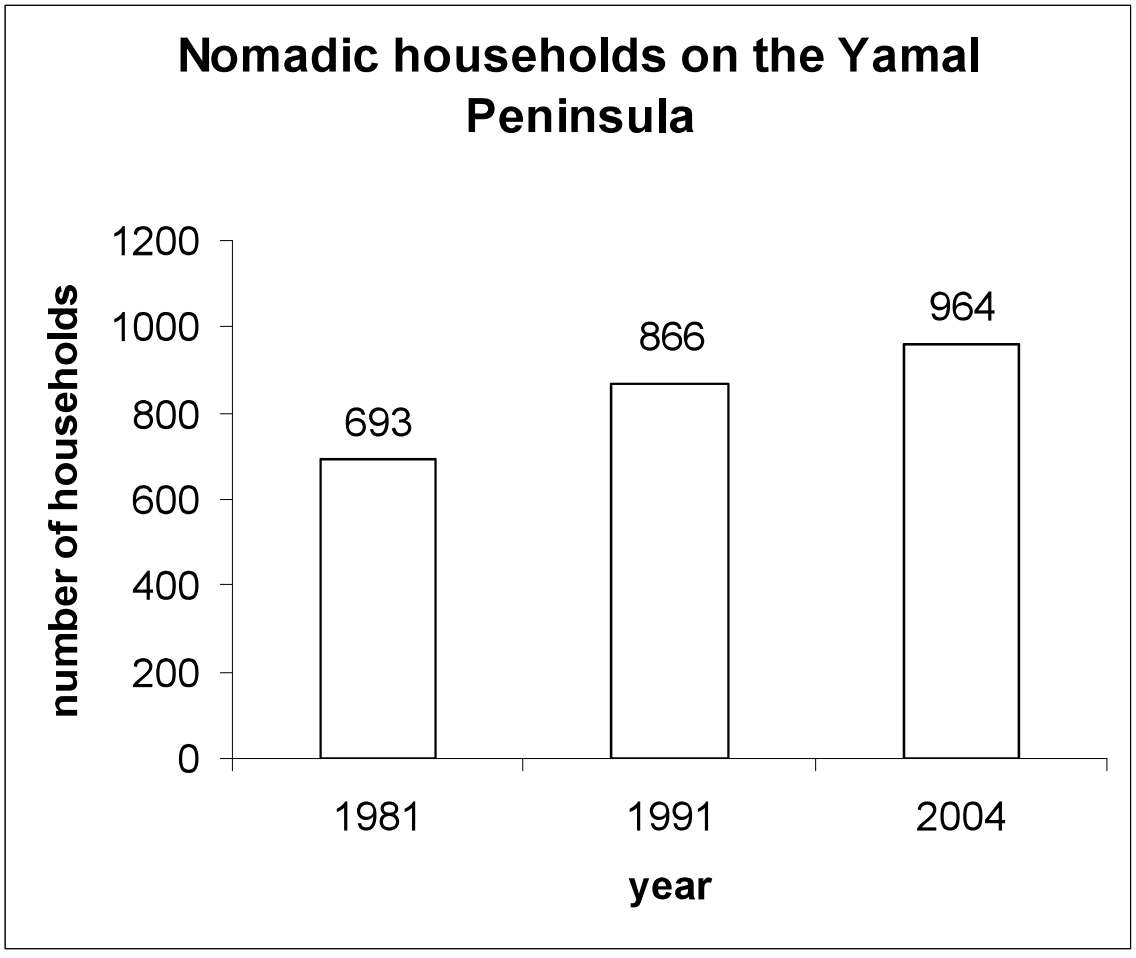
As plans are advanced to extract gas in the northern parts of the Yamal and Tazovsk peninsulas, these two reindeer-herding areas are increasingly becoming the focus of interest within the YNAO—not only from the Russian Federation but also from foreign investors. As an example of this, during my stay in the tundra with reindeer herders in June 2001, a delegation from the United Arab Emirates found its way to the remote gas village of Sabetta to negotiate the purchase of the whole village.



Map 2. Reindeer herding and the main patterns of migration in the YNAO.

The YNAO is the only region in Russia where reindeer herding did not decline or stagnate after the collapse of the Soviet Union but grew steadily.

This is particularly true of the private herds of the Nentsy, which migrate over the northern parts of the okrug (map 2). Today in the Yamal'skii and Tazovskii *raiony* more than 10,200 people (comprising 2,000 households, and representing more than 50% of the indigenous population) are registered as nomads. They hold 292,000 reindeer in private ownership, which is almost 80% of the total number of domestic reindeer in the two *raiony*.[40] A smaller share of reindeer herding is undertaken by the Khanty, Nentsy and Komi in the western part of the okrug. They engage in migrations from the taiga and forest-tundra margin around the Ob', across the Polar Ural Mountains to the territory of the Komi Republic (map 2). As noted earlier, since the fall of the Soviet Union there has been an increase in reindeer numbers in the YNAO, which is almost exclusively due to the increase in private herds, especially on the Yamal Peninsula (figure 4).



[40] Approximate rounded figures, data for 2001 from the YNAO Department of Agriculture. The real number is probably a little higher. I thank A. Yuzhakov in providing me with much statistical data at the okrug level and for those *raiony* where I did not do fieldwork. Without his help, many tables and diagrams would be incomplete. In section 7.1.1 I discuss some problems with the interpretation of official figures on reindeer herds in the YNAO.

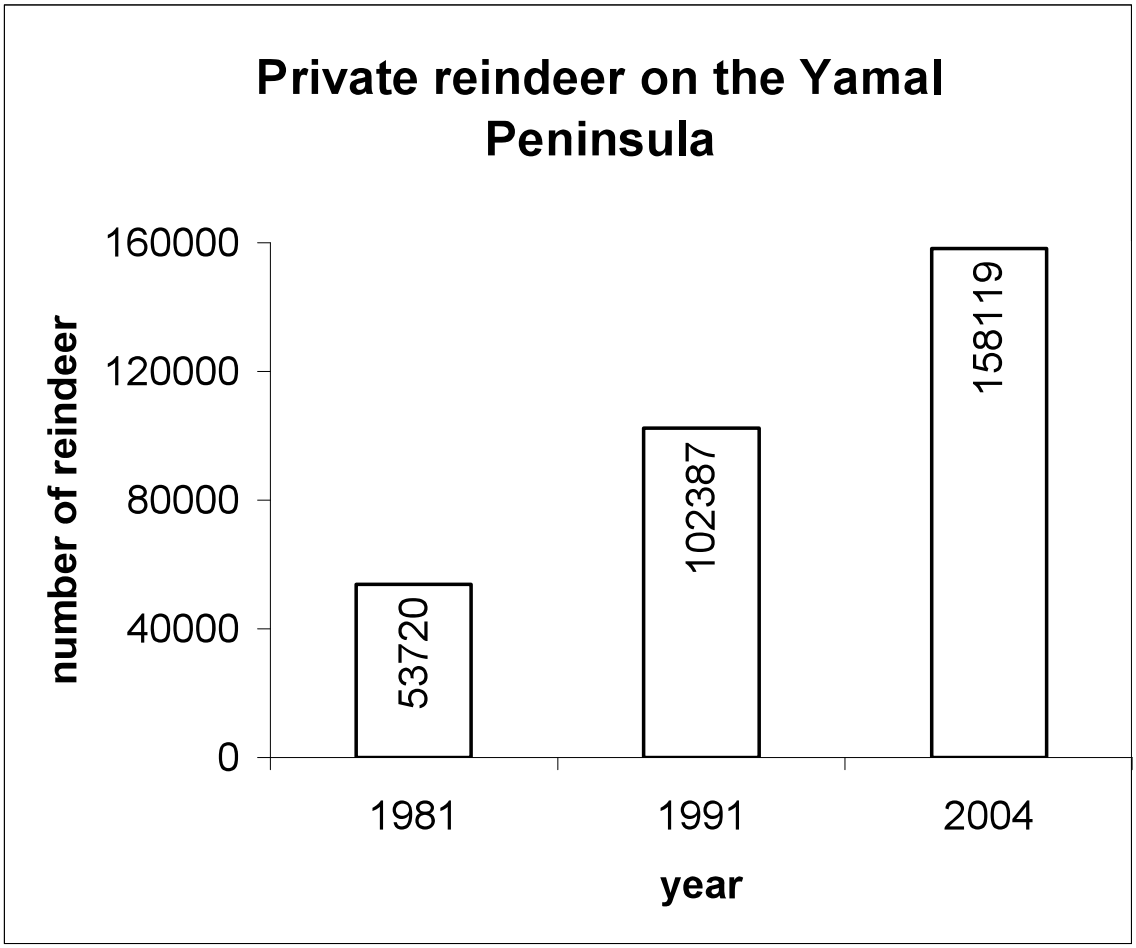


Figure 4. The increase of nomads and reindeer on the Yamal Peninsula.

The increase in herds has been accompanied by an increase in the nomadic population, as figure 4 shows (see also section 4.4.7). Although this may seem impossible to the newcomer to the peninsula who sees nothing but the vastness of the tundra ranges, the reindeer herders are troubled by this increase in the nomadic population: they say that the 'tundra is becoming overcrowded' (*tundra perepolnitsia*; see chapter 7). For the Yamal Peninsula and the Tazovskii and Priuralskii *raiony* there is indeed a boom in private reindeer herding, and the tundra is becoming attractive once more as a place in which to live and earn money, in some cases at levels far beyond basic subsistence.

During the Soviet period, owing to deals made between herders and the Soviet controllers of reindeer ownership (the *zootekhniki*, see chapter 4), privately owned deer always comprised at least one-third of the Yamal herds (Podkorytov 1995: 6). So when economic liberalisation was introduced there was already an uninterrupted stable basis for the development of these big private herds. The problem with this situation is that the growth is potentially unsustainable—there has been no commensurate increase in the pastures of

the Yamal to support the growing numbers of reindeer and people (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 110; see the analysis in chapter 7).

The herd size of individual households varies greatly. Personal observations indicate that the further north a herder lives, the bigger his herd. In the northernmost parts of the Yamal Peninsula, a herd of 500 reindeer is seen as sufficient for the subsistence needs of a household, whereas in the central and southern parts, a herd of 150–300 is adequate. Among the mountain reindeer herders in the south-west of the YNAO, a private herder with 100 deer is thought to be well-off. These differences stem from the greater accessibility to additional sources of income in the southern regions. The absence of firewood in the far north, and the need to transport wood over long distances, considerably increases the need for transport animals. Yakov Vanuito in northern Yamal explained the need for such animals:

> We need a lot of transport bulls, because there is no wood up north here nearby. We mostly use driftwood from the seashore, or have to get it from places where the sovkhoz tractor deposits it. Therefore, we need two shifts of strong transport animals with 25 bulls, which makes 50. The bulls get tired quickly from this heavy work, and they need a long time to recover. Then I need in addition 20 bulls to harness my sledge, to do herding work, to visit neighbours, to go to the *faktoriia* [trading post] in Tambei, and so on. I need a minimum of another 30 deer to move my household. This makes up a total of 100 bulls for transport. Then I need uncastrated bulls, and females and calves for my herd. Therefore, a herd of 200 head is far too small for us to survive here in the north, and so if I want to make some profit, I have to have 500 (personal communication, 17 February 2001).

These numbers do not equate to the actual number of deer grazing on a particular pasture. This is because throughout much of Yamal a herd usually comprises both private- and state-owned reindeer, or several private herds, according to the season (see below, and chapter 5). The size of a grazing herd can be as many as 5,000 animals, perhaps even more in big herds with a state-owned core. Some poorer private herders therefore complain about the big herds trampling their pastures or driving away their own deer. Whereas the actual number of deer owned by a household is based on the people's need for subsistence and on their herding skills, the size of the grazing herd is a management decision. Baskin (1991: 220; 2000: 25) has established that the minimum herd size that can be managed effectively is 35 animals. Herding is most efficient with herd sizes of between 100 and 300 animals, while a herd beyond 3,000 becomes almost unmanageable. This is related to the development of group behaviour and herd instinct among reindeer. According to Baskin, a particular group instinct manifests itself in herds from 300

head upwards. In Soviet times, it was thought to be more rational to keep big herds. Today, sovkhoz brigades still keep the biggest herds, although the state-owned share of the overall herd is usually less than 50%. The problem is that the sovkhoz no longer has any control over the number of private deer held by herders within the sovkhoz herd.

The result of this development, in addition to problems with pastures, is that the sovkhozy are becoming increasingly marginal as owners of deer (see chapter 5), yet they maintain their importance as the institution running the native economy. In the YNAO in 2002 there were still 15 sovkhozy, all under the control of the Okrug Department of Agriculture, although, on paper, they have different juridical forms of ownership (see section 4.5.2). In the market economy, the importance of their infrastructure and social functions has been maintained, and they still occupy a leading position in the processing and marketing of reindeer meat. The difference between the present day and Soviet times is that now sovkhozy find themselves in growing competition with private companies, and they act as commercial enterprises themselves according to capitalist market principles, with the one exception that if they go bankrupt, the Okrug Administration is likely to rescue them, as recently happened with the biggest sovkhoz, Yar-Salinskii (see chapter 4).

3.2 Reindeer Herders and the Village in Yamal

Before heading out to the lichen ranges of the tundra, I shall now examine the role of the village in the lives of reindeer herders. Whereas in most other regions of the Russian North reindeer herders have become partly sedentarised (see chapter 4; and Tuisku 2002: 199–201; Ventsel 2004: chapters 2 and 5), in Yamal many still do not own a house in a village. This continuity with their lifestyle nomadism is important if we are to understand why reindeer herding among the Yamal Nentsy is steadily increasing. There has been little research into the place of villages within Nenets society, but Khariutschi (2001) sees it as the 'innovative part in Nenets culture' and Liarskaia (2003) found that Nenets individuals can show traits of both the 'traditional tundra culture' and the 'village culture'.

For many reindeer nomads in other northern regions, the village has become the focus for one's sense of belonging, as is the case for many European Nentsy.[41] Habeck (2005) shows how the Komi have two homes, the tundra across which they migrate and the village where their sovkhoz headquarters (*kontora*) is located. Among the Yamal Nenets nomads, the sense of belonging is still clearly directed towards the tundra and their *chum*.

[41] Fieldwork in the village of Nel'min Nos and adjacent tundra, July 2003.

Khariutschi (2001: 13) argued that the village for many Nenets nomads is somewhat strange as a physical place. Indeed my experience shows that they visit villages first and foremost to get supplies, to take part in the activities relating to Reindeer Herders' Day (see section 3.4), and to bring their children to and from the boarding schools. However, most nomads now have relatives living in a village, so they also have a place to stay.

On the Yamal Peninsula villages are important to reindeer herders as an outlet to the market (see chapter 8) and as administrative centres. There are now five main villages that are important to these nomads: Yar-Sale (*raion* centre), Panaevsk, Novyi Port, Yaptik-Sale and Se-Iakha. Only Yar-Sale has more than 2,000 inhabitants. Four elements today link reindeer herders to these villages: the state-controlled reindeer enterprises, the village administration (*sel'sovet*), boarding schools, and relatives. The villages inhabited mostly by Russians, such as Mys-Kamennyi, Kharasavei and Sabetta, are visited only when the nomads need to engage in business with the oil and gas companies. The herders I interviewed during my fieldwork had strong connections with the two villages of Yar-Sale and Se-Iakha. In Yar-Sale, out of a total population of 2,600 inhabitants, some 1,560 were Nenets, while in Se-Iakha, out of 1,040 inhabitants, 640 were Nenets.

Most reindeer herders visit a village at least two or three times a year. These visits are their only contact with the village except in cases of emergency, since the village has lost its function of supervising the nomads' migration through daily radio contact. Because the sovkhoz leadership no longer maintains the radio stations in the tundra, many of them are broken, leaving herders with no radio contact at all. This reflects the fact that the sovkhoz is not as concerned as it was in Soviet times to monitor the herders' exact migration routes. The most important visits to the village are made in spring and autumn. In spring, herders attend the reindeer herders' festivals and also purchase the staple food and other products that they will need to survive in the tundra until autumn. This is known as the 'spring supply'. In autumn, when they take the reindeer to the slaughterhouse, they purchase supplies for the winter (see section 3.4). During these visits herders also receive their salaries, welfare payments and pensions, they go to the administration to announce marriages, births and deaths, and when they see their relatives, many have drinking parties. Normally these stays in the village last no more than a few days, and although alcohol eases the feeling of not being at home, most are happy to go back to their camp. Many still travel by reindeer to the village, which limits the length of their visit because the animals cannot stay more than two days in a village without fresh pastures. Therefore, day trips to the villages to conduct business and make social calls

are quite common in spring and autumn when the camps are not too far away.

The relative importance of the village becomes clear when we look at how the herders spend their leisure time. Every herder employed in a sovkhoz gets three months' 'holiday' every third year. This means he does not have to work in the reindeer brigade during this time. Whereas the Komi herders I lived with told me they would always go to the village to see their families during their 'holidays', the reverse is true among the Yamal Nentsy, with many village families taking the opportunity to go out to the tundra to visit their tundra relatives for a holiday. For the three months that they are on 'holiday', Yamal Nentsy move with their families, quite separately from the brigade, taking with them only their transport reindeer, or all their private animals. Thus, for many Yamal Nentsy, a 'holiday' still means practising lifestyle nomadism rather than living in a village. It is very rare for reindeer-herding Nentsy to travel to other parts of Russia during their holidays, although some have been to the Black Sea. Many of those native villagers who have close relatives in the tundra send their children out to the *chum* for the summer holidays. The nomadic tundra life has a high reputation as being a good 'school for life'[42] as well as a clean and healthy environment. Many adults also visit their tundra relatives for holidays in summer, if they can find a helicopter to give them a lift. Some villagers also join tundra camps in spring for the goose-hunting season.

In an economic sense, the most important aspect of the village is its role as the interface between the tundra and the outside world. Nowadays, not only is the sovkhoz *kontora* there, but also the headquarters of the vertically integrated private reindeer enterprises (see chapter 8). Village-based Nentsy working for the latter or for the sovkhozy can be seen as the gatekeepers of the tundra. In the developing market economy, they are the only people who know how to reach reindeer herders in the tundra. Thus, every entrepreneur from the outside has to go through the village in order to engage in business with the tundra people.[43]

The village is also important for the herders in cases of emergency. Herders have the right to call for an emergency helicopter (*sanreis*) at any time from any telephone or radio station; but sometimes they have to travel long distances in order get access to telecommunication. In most cases it

[42] The army has a similar reputation for young Nenets men, most of whom are very proud to have served in it. Some of them served in East Germany, e.g. in the Russian base at 'Potsdam Olympisches Dorf'.

[43] This gatekeeping role has not yet been the focus of research but certainly deserves such attention, as it promises to make an important contribution to ongoing anthropological debates about nomads and the sedentary world.

takes less than 12 hours for a helicopter to arrive at the camp. This ability to link the tundra with villages makes the YNAO's transport infrastructure exceptional in comparison with most other northern regions (cf. Vitebsky 2000 on Sakha; Gray 2001: 2 on Chukotka; King 2003: 404 on Kamtchatka). The doctor at the helicopter base in Mys-Kamennyi told me in May 2001 that they make almost 30 flights each month, and some Nentsy take the opportunity to travel aboard the emergency helicopters to the villages.

Nowadays not many children are born in the tundra, and all children go to boarding schools in villages, a development that King (2003: 397) described as 'greater state intervention in reproduction'. However, Liarskaia's work (2003) confirms the argument of this book, namely that these interventions—in this case the boarding schools—have not replaced the Nenets lifestyle nomadism, but rather they have supplemented it, and the Nentsy welcome this. For example, the boarding schools have become an important place for young people to meet future marriage partners. Also, boarding schools in the villages do not keep families apart for great lengths of time, since in most cases helicopters bring children home to the tundra for summer holidays, and in winter the parents collect them when the camps are not too far away. In cases where transport is not available, the school administration releases children as early as April from school so that they can join their parents from spring until the end of summer.

This brief outline of the role of villages in the lives of reindeer herders shows that although reindeer herders are linked to villages through economic, administrative and kinship ties, these links do not go so far as to integrate them into village life. Contemporary Nenets life on Yamal is characterised by contacts between the tundra and villages in both directions, with villagers also having many links to the tundra. Although all tundra inhabitants spend some years of their lives in villages during school time, they are not deprived of their nomadic lifestyle, and this lifestyle does not lose its prestige and reputation as a result of closer village contacts. Without question, the tundra remains the main place to which people direct their sense of belonging, and for many the village remains the place to which they go in order to fulfil duties or meet obligations.

3.3 An Everyday 'Code of Conduct': The *zakon tundry*

Entering the tundra from the village means entering a different world, a space that is organised differently, according to principles of movement and flexibility, to satisfy the interests of all 'beings' in the tundra, both natural and supernatural. For me as a newcomer-anthropologist, many of the people's everyday practices were difficult to fathom without understanding this wider context. In order to save the reader from the same bewildering experi-

ence, I now introduce some of the basic guidelines of the everyday code of conduct—the 'law of the tundra'.

The 'law of the tundra' (*zakon tundry*) is not a law in the Western sense—it is not written or carved in stone, nor is it even an explicit set of rules. I came to see it as a means of implicitly organising the way people relate to the tundra not merely as territory, but as holistic space, embracing all its beings. The newcomer to the tundra will only become aware of the existence of these guidelines by making mistakes. In Yamal, people talked much to me about the *zakon tundry*, but mainly when explaining the mistakes I made when I did not behave properly. By contrast, children brought up on the tundra learn how to lead a real nomadic life (*nenei ilngana*) from older generations. They become aware of the moral dimensions of practices in the tundra without explicitly being taught rules. Therefore, the *zakon tundry* might in fact be more important as a tool for *tundroviki* to use to explain to outsiders what tundra life is about and how they ought to behave, rather than as a set of rules for their own community. In other parts of the Russian North the *zakon tundry* has received considerable attention from scholars in recent years. Ziker (2002b: 125–47) introduces the whole system of land use in Taimyr, including the administrative regulations, under the heading 'Law of the tundra'. I do not agree with such a broad definition. In Yamal, official land titles and *obshchiny* (see chapter 7) are certainly not part of the *zakon tundry*. Rather, it is closer to what Anderson (2000a: 116–47) describes under the heading of 'sentient ecology'. At the heart of it lies the particular way by which the inhabitants know the tundra, which essentially means knowing how to behave properly.

My approach to the *zakon tundry* here is very selective and does not aim to be a comprehensive overview of Nenets morality and cosmology. The real experts on this subject spend years travelling across the tundra.[44] Many practices are part of a 'code of conduct' based essentially on a common sense approach to living and indeed surviving in the tundra. The *zakon tundry* guides people implicitly in their engagement with the natural and supernatural, protects them in everyday life, and provides a framework for structuring the domestic sphere and assigning roles.

In my ethnography of a day spent on migration (see the following section) I describe the packing and unpacking of the household as a routine shaped by countless repetitions of the task over many years. Similarly, as they move across the tundra, including within the domestic sphere of the *chum*, the people subconsciously observe the precautionary guidelines of the

[44] There are good accounts of the Nenets religion by Golovnev (1995: 380–494), Khomich (1995: 208–52), Khariutschi & Lipatova (1999), and Khariutschi (2001: 81–167).

zakon tundry hundreds of times throughout the year. This regulation of their behaviour minimises harm to the environment, their fellows and the spirits.

The *chum* is the principal shelter in the tundra, and one which requires people to live together very closely. It therefore provides a good example of how behaviour in space is guided by this implicit code of conduct. The nomads imagine the *chum* as consisting of two halves (*polovina*), one to the left of the stove and one to the right (figure 5). On either side there are three or four (often coloured) boards used as a floor. Men must not lift, pack or unpack these boards, which are a female responsibility. While on migration women put the boards on a particular sledge called *siabu*, which has particular harnesses. These are kept separate from the other harnesses, next to the *chum* entrance on the floor, and men must not touch them.

In the *chum* there exists an imaginary line between the entrance, the stove and the sacred place at the back, where food and spiritual items are kept (figure 5). This line, *sangi*, divides the two halves of the *chum* and continues outside, where a sledge leans against the *chum* tent wall, and extends behind the *chum* as far as the immediate realm of the camp extends. When the *chum* is not close or visible anymore, the open tundra begins and the line ceases to exist. If women cross this line they can bring misfortune upon the *chum* and its members. They should not cross this line, even when outside, while the *chum* is visible. Within the *chum* and immediately behind it, the men too should not cross this line. This custom (Nen: *mesy*, Rus: *obychai*) is practised not only among all the households with which I lived but by all Yamal-Nentsy (cf. Haakanson 2000: 83–7) and the Northern Khanty.

In many cases the division of this line also separates the domestic sphere of two families living in the same *chum*. In many sovkhoz brigades people not related by kinship would live in either half of the *chum*, whereas in private camps the second half is mostly inhabited by another generation of the same family, either by the head of the household's parent(s) or children. Therefore this line also serves to divide the property of the two families, with only the stove being shared as it is positioned right in the middle of the *chum*. Within each half, the sleeping and sitting place of the main herder is in the middle behind the table, whereas every incoming male guest is given the 'honorary' place next to him towards the sacred place. I describe this organisation of domestic space as an exemplar for the guidelines that structure people's behaviour in the tundra: like the *sangi* line, the regulatory force of the *zakon tundry* is not visible and yet most people adhere closely to it.

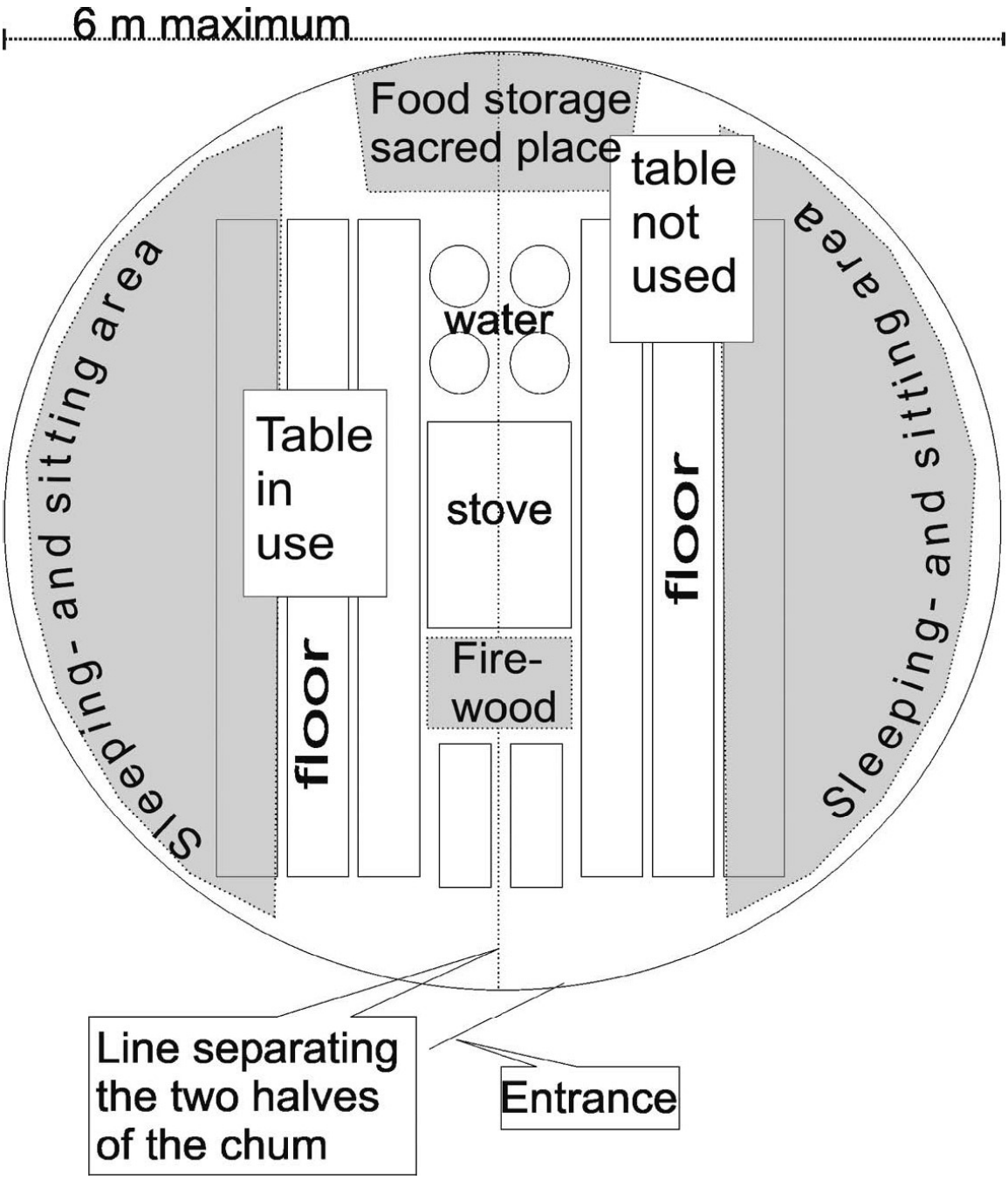


Figure 5. Layout of a *chum*.

The notion of a 'guide-line' is an appropriate characterisation of the way in which the *zakon tundry* works, since the idea of a 'line', visible or imagined, plays a crucial role. As we saw for the imaginary line dividing the *chum*, women must not step over the physical line of ropes or lassos (Nen: *tyn-ziang*), but always lift them above their heads and pass under them, and neither must they step over the *tiur* pole used for directing reindeer harnesses, or any other pole. They have to perform this lifting or circumventing a hundred times every day, when they pack, unpack or work in the camp, or

help to collect the herd in the corral (see section 3.4). This applies to women, but not to young girls. Some Nentsy, though not all, explain this in terms of women being unclean because of their menstruation, which is why they have to observe more taboos than men. If women touch specifically male items, these items can lose their protective power, such as a bear's tooth on a reindeer-herder's belt, which would lose its power to protect the owner from evil out in the tundra. However, it was more often the case that Nentsy could not—or did not want to—tell me the origin of these guidelines.

When spirits notice that guidelines for proper behaviour are not being followed, they may become angry and expose people to evil powers. Purification rituals in such cases can be performed to calm down the spirits. However, for various reasons, I did not witness any of these rituals in the course of my fieldwork. First, such rituals were not the focus of my fieldwork, so I may have been less sensitive to them; secondly, people generally followed the guidelines so such rituals were rarely needed; thirdly, the people who did transgress may have hoped that the spirits would not notice their minor offences and so may not have bothered to perform the necessary rituals.

From the above, it becomes clear that the *zakon tundry* regulates a lot of gender-specific behaviour in Nenets everyday life, which structures the natural space of the tundra for the people within it. Gender-regulated behaviour is very detailed, and has been ethnographically described by native scholars from their own experience. Khariutschi (2001: 36) even distinguishes a male and female way of entering the *chum*.[45] When I joined the reindeer herders for part of their migration (see next section), knowing some of these guidelines helped me to make sense of their behaviour and their everyday lives.

The principle of gender division of labour in the tundra is that men care for the herd and women for the household. Given the important role of women in everyday life in the tundra, it is not difficult to imagine that their withdrawal from it would be very disruptive. This is what might have happened had the Soviet sedentarisation campaign (see chapter 4) been successful in Yamal as elsewhere (e.g. Vitebsky & Wolfe 2001; Gray 2003).

Assigning roles and regulating gender cooperation is well exemplified by the people's dealings with reindeer at slaughter, a topic to which I return in chapter 5. Women do not usually slaughter reindeer but they butcher them (Haakanson 2000: 91f). I argue that this is because live reindeer are men's responsibility, whereas preparing food (dead reindeer) is women's responsibility.

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[45] I do not want to go too much into a detailed analysis of gender relations. More detailed analyses have already been undertaken by Golovnev & Osherenko (1999: chapter 2) and Haakanson (2000: 118–20).

Reindeer are turned from live to dead property by slaughtering. Most herders in the North, and some in central Yamal, slaughter for subsistence by strangling in order not to spill any blood on the ground, whereas slaughtering for sale is done by knife. The explanation I heard for this was that blood is thought to be a valuable nutritious supplement for people, and it is only consciously poured on the earth when given to ancestors. Other aspects such as blood containing the animal's soul might be implicitly considered by people, but it was not mentioned to me.

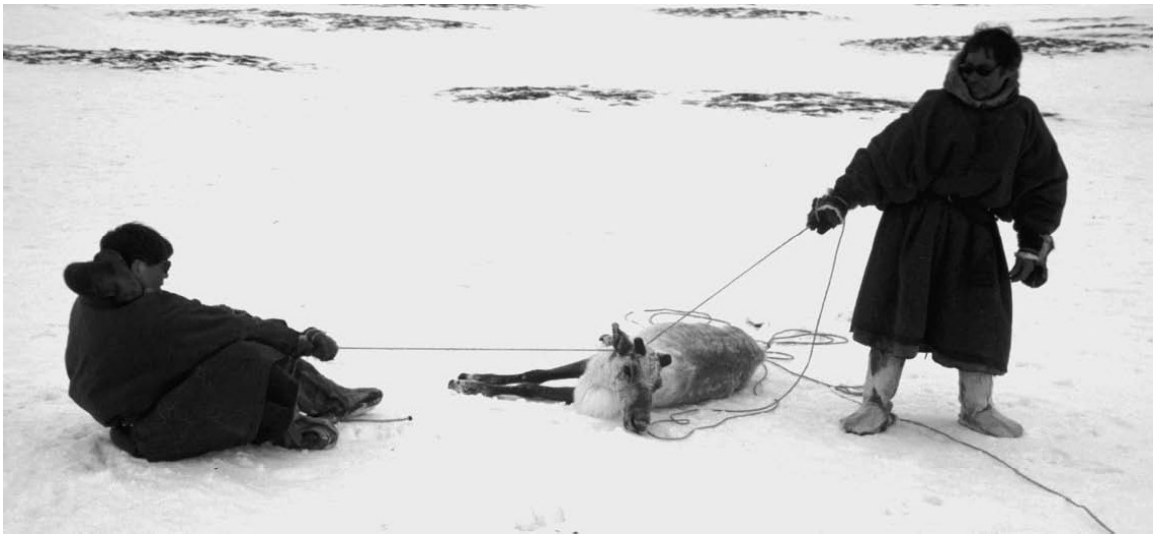


Plate 3. Strangling reindeer for domestic use, northern Yamal

Although I never saw a woman slaughter a deer with a knife, women in northern Yamal indeed do slaughter deer for subsistence by strangling them when there are no men to do this work. For example, I saw Natasha and Alla Okotetto, a mother and her daughter, strangling a reindeer, even though they knew that they were not adhering to the 'law of the tundra'. This shows another important principle of the *zakon tundry*. It is very much about people's needs and about organising one's life in order to survive. Therefore, guidelines of how to behave properly can be flexible when there is an urgent need to behave differently, and there is always room for negotiation. Before shamans were persecuted, they fulfilled much of the role of negotiating proper behaviour with spirits.

Another important sphere regulated by the *zakon tundry* are the relations between humans and what we might call the surrounding nature. In this sphere it is almost impossible to distinguish between what could be called 'ecological ethics' and spiritual beliefs. The importance of lichen is a good example of this. My host Anatolii Tynzikovich Makh'ko (see section 3.4) complained to me once that people no longer followed the guidelines of the *zakon tundry* concerning lichen: for example, one must not set up a *chum* on

a site covered with lichen (Nen: *niada*, Rus: *iagel*). He explained this rule in 'ecological' terms of preserving lichens as pasture for reindeer. There is also a spiritual explanation, mentioned to me on another occasion, in which the spirit of the lichen (Nen: *niada khekhe*) might become angry by such behaviour. One explanation complements the other.

On their seasonal migration the Nentsy pass many places inhabited by spirits, and the spirits of their ancestors accompany the nomads during the journey. However, spirits do not figure explicitly in their lives when there is no particular need for people to talk about them or engage with them openly. Ideas about spirits often guide everyday behaviour because Nentsy move in an animate environment, but these ideas are not generally expanded into overt performances. Religiosity today among the reindeer herders seems to be fluid and flexible. Much of it depends on personal beliefs, and Anatolii was vehement that 'the young people do not pay attention to our beliefs any more'. Nevertheless, many (but not all) households have a sacred sledge (*khekhe khan*), where all spiritual items are held. These are wooden figures (Nen: *siadei*, Rus: *idoly*), some of which were made by shamans and taken from one of the main sacred sites. They represent the spirits of the land. In most households, these figures remain on the sacred sledge, which has to stay behind the *chum* with its 'nose' pointing towards the *chum*. My host, Tokcha Parivich Khudi, with whom the reader will become acquainted in the course of the following chapters, is a rich private reindeer herder in central Yamal. He explained this aspect of spirituality to me as follows:

> The *idoly* in the sacred sledge are connected only with the natural spirits, not with the ancestors, except that you inherit them from your ancestors. It happens quite often that a master (*khoziain*)[46] does not even know which spirits his *idoly* represent. They do not leave the sledge, except when a sacred reindeer is slaughtered for them. In such cases we devote this reindeer to the sacred site associated with the *idol* (Tokcha Parivich Khudi, personal communication 12 May 2001).

Physically present in most Nenets *chum*s are wooden statuettes or dolls of ancestors, which reindeer herders introduced to me as 'copies' (Rus: *kopiia*). They have to be dressed in proper reindeer herders' clothes. The senior and major figure is called the 'old woman of the *chum*' (Nen: *myad pukhutsia*), who protects the *chum*. In many cases the mother of the head of the household fulfils the task of caring for the *kopii* and teaches one of her granddaughters to take on this role after her death. 'Caring' consists of packing

[46] The notion of *khoziain* is important for the perception of land rights in hunting societies in the Russian North up to the present. Recent research by Ventsel (2004) has documented the importance of the *khoziain* for the Anabarsk district in Sakha (Yakutia).

and unpacking the *kopii* during migration, sewing new clothes for them, and keeping them in their sleeping place in the *chum*.

Tokcha's *chum*, for example, hosts several *kopii*. When his father died, a shaman carved a wooden doll, and Tokcha's mother sewed clothes for it. Sometimes, when reindeer get lost, they put the doll outside the *chum*, and it helps to find them. Another *kopiia* represents Tokcha's great-grandmother, and *myad pukhutsia* represents a very distant ancestor, the origin of which Tokcha no longer knows. When no extraordinary events happen, a newcomer would not notice any of this. There are no explicit rituals to be performed with the *idoly* or the *kopii*, they just accompany the lives of the herders through the tundra, and as long as there are no extreme reasons to call on them, they do not figure prominently. Indeed, many times I heard people saying that the spirits should not be bothered too often.

A more explicit and noticeable trait of the *zakon tundry* is that it binds people to the tundra in a net of generalised exchange with each other as well as with all non-human beings. The general idea is that every being is engaged in giving to and taking from others in this tundra network. Therefore people assume that there must be a good reason for every 'taking', and they are guided to take only what they need (see Anderson 2000a: 126f). For example, in spring they must not shoot more geese during the hunt than they can consume or give to relatives and neighbours (see section 3.5.3). In this way, the geese will 'understand' that people have a good reason for taking them from the tundra.

Interactions with other people are governed mainly by the needs of nomadic life. Hospitality and the obligation to provide mutual help are crucial components of this. Giving to other people when they are in need is one of the most important guidelines of the *zakon tundry*. This generalised reciprocity implies that givers do not know whether they will receive something in return, and there is no sense that this help will come from the very same person they helped. But in cases of need they can be sure that they will receive help from someone. There are many ways in which people cooperate, as my ethnography of cooperation in reindeer herding (chapter 5.6) shows. Problems arise, however, when incomers to the tundra, who are not acquainted with these guidelines, behave improperly (see chapter 8). In this harsh environment, one must rely on the help of others, as well as helping others, in order to live off its plentiful resources. Just as the nomads would never go to a sacred site without a real need to do so, they assume that everybody in the tundra coming to visit them has a good reason for doing this too. Generally, they do not visit each other unless they have a firm purpose in mind, be it an exchange of reindeer, the transmission of important news, or a joint hunting or fishing expedition. In a similar way everybody

assumed that I, as an anthropologist, had a good reason to be there, and that I would not accept all the hardships of tundra life if my visit did not have a meaningful purpose.

3.4 A Migration Day in Spring

With the underlying guidelines of the *zakon tundry* now forming the framework of my understanding of tundra life, I shall describe a typical working day in the lives of a group of private reindeer herders in the territory of the sovkhoz Yar-Salinskii during their spring migration in April.[47] This is representative of large-scale herding in the central Yamal Peninsula. These herders have a general pattern of spending the winter in the forest-tundra margin, and the summer in the northern tundra, some on the shore of the Kara Sea. It is surprising how similar the practices of the sovkhoz brigades and private camps are, and this confirms my argument about continuity in reindeer herding, the practice of which seems to be determined more by geographic location and the herd size than by the institutional framework governing it.

At this time of year, Tokcha's camp consisted of four *chum*s where he, his brothers, his sister, and a nephew all lived with their families (see figure 7 on p. 194). The herd was quite large, difficult to estimate, but certainly more than 3,000 animals. Everyone who works in the Yamal tundra knows that it is offensive to ask somebody about the number of reindeer he owns (Nen: *khe'mia*). Tokcha Parivich Khudi, the richest, but not the oldest of the herders, is the unofficial camp leader, called *brigadir*, even though this is not a brigade in the sovkhoz sense of the word, but a private family camp consisting of four households. His *chum* is always erected on the right-hand side of the camp (as viewed from the back); likewise, the *chum*s of the heads of the sovkhoz brigades where I lived were also always on the right-hand side of the camp.

All the herders in this camp had their extended families living with them. Tokcha's mother represented the grandparents' generation in the *chum*, and Anatolii Tynzikovich Vanuito hosted his mother in the neighbouring *chum*. These two *chum*s were related through cross-marriage, since Tokcha had married Anatolii's sister Elena Parivna, and Anatolii had married Tokcha's sister Natasha Tynzikovna (see figure 7).

The day began at 7.30 a.m. Natasha, the *chumrabotnitsa*, heard the reindeer far away and the shouts of the herder (Mishene, Tokcha's older brother), who had been in charge (*dezhurnyi*) overnight. Natasha got up to

[47] I deliberately did not choose a sovkhoz brigade, since these have already been the subject of several ethnographic descriptions (e.g. Haakanson 2000; Zen'ko 2001). This is the first ethnography of a private camp.

heat the stove (*pechka*) and boil water for tea. When the herd approached the *chum*, everyone got up since the herd's arrival meant that the day's work would soon begin. Tokcha said: '*Tiuko iala iamda guna*' (Nen; Rus: *kaslat' nado*): 'Today we shall move on.' In addition to strong black tea, breakfast consisted of frozen raw reindeer meat with salt and mustard, and small ring-shaped crackers (Rus: *sushki*), bread, and reindeer fat. During breakfast Mishene arrived and was given a cup of tea. After a while, Tokcha asked him: '*Ty savo?*' 'Are the reindeer all right?' This was the invitation for Mishene to give a short report on what had happened to the reindeer during the night. Everything was all right, but the herd had already begun to move northwards. He had left the herd near the camp and would drive it to the *chum* after breakfast. The household had to keep up with the animals moving northwards, which was one reason for frequent camp movements in spring. Another reason was that soon, in early June, the Iuribei River would thaw and become impassable for herds and households.

Mishene said that a small reindeer had been born last night. This was the first one and far too early. As yet, only very few patches of thawed ground (Nen: *varë*, Rus: *protalina*) had appeared through the snow-cover, and there was a danger of the calves dying from the cold. The mass calving would take place once they had crossed the Iuribei River, when there was no need to hurry with the migration. The problem of saving the first calf of the year from death was the main topic over breakfast. It would not survive the migration on its own, because the mother would go faster to keep up with the herd. It was decided to wrap the calf in reindeer furs and carry it on a sledge, although there was a danger that the mother would subsequently reject it. Therefore they lassoed the mother and attached her with a rope to the sledge with the calf. After breakfast Tokcha washed his head with warm water from the stove and brushed his teeth. Then he went out and started work. Without having to call for them, the men of the other *chum*s also arrived. They helped each other arrange the sledges into caravans (Nen: *miud*, Rus: *argyshy*) of approximately eight sledges each.

While the men were occupied with the sledges, the women began to pack up the contents of the *chum*. This was done very carefully according to a fixed order, shaped by countless repetitions of the task over the years. They started by putting most of the interior items on the sledges. Only the shrub mats in the sitting/sleeping area, the stove, the table, the kettles and the floor remained in the *chum*, as well as the poles and one layer of reindeer-fur covers (Nen: *eia*, *niur'*, Rus: *niuki*). While the women packed the other interior items on the sledges, the men fixed the harness equipment and constructed the corral into which the reindeer to be caught for transport were driven. The corral (Nen: *va*, *iuroch*, Rus: *koral*) comprised a circle of some

10 sledges, around which was hung a fishing net on poles, open at the end opposite the *chum*. Despite its flimsiness, the reindeer rarely tried to break through and escape from the corral. Once everything was prepared for lassoing the transport animals and most of the household was packed, there was time for more tea. Everyone gathered in the now almost disassembled *chum* and the women prepared more tea to put in the thermoses ready for the next tea-break when no stove would be available.

After the tea-break, the women continued disassembling the *chum*. The men helped to pack the outer tent-covers of the *chum*s onto the sledges, as these are very heavy: each half of the *chum* cover consists of approximately 25 reindeer furs sewn together, and a winter *chum* requires two layers which means a total of 100 furs.

The *chum* poles were put on two special sledges (Nen: *nguto*), each half on one sledge, and the table then secured on top of the poles. The *chum* floorboards and the stove with its metal sheet beneath it remained in place until the very end. Even when only these remnants of the camp remain, this small patch of land is still transformed from open tundra into a microcosm of human inhabited space. Although in principle this is women's work, I have often seen, in Tokcha's camp and elsewhere, the men help to disassemble the poles, preparing the *nguto* sledge with the *chum* poles, and cleaning the stove.



Plate 4. Leonid Vylko, helping to disassemble the *chum*.

Once the *chum* had been completely disassembled, the herders prepared to catch the deer by stretching their lassos (Nen: *tynziang*, Rus: *arkan*) to make them more flexible, and then they started to round up the herd. The reindeer moved in front of the corral and circled clockwise. The men all lined up with their lassos and caught the transport deer. In most cases, the young, less trained bulls had to be lassoed as they were not as tame as the more experienced castrated bulls. After being lassoed, the young ones were trained by putting a Y-shaped piece of wood (Nen: *longgali*) between their front legs. This acted as an obstacle to stop them running too fast. Edik, Anatolii's son, explained that these sticks 'calm down the deer' (Rus: *uspakaivaet ikh*). Some herders used long pieces of rubber or plastic procured from drilling stations instead of wood. The training consisted of forcing the young deer to go in a direction chosen by the herders. Sometimes two men were needed to do this, one holding the deer with the lasso around the neck, another one using his foot to push it from the rear. The women and children stood with the dogs in a larger circle to prevent the herd from escaping. The herd kept circling around the corral and the *chum*s, always clockwise, unless forced by lassos to turn.

Two women (or one and the anthropologist) stood with a rope on each side of the entrance to the corral and blocked the reindeer once they entered it. The men then entered the corral and selected the deer to be used for transport, binding two together with a rope and attaching them to a sledge. Ideally, they would harness experienced transport deer, usually four, at the front of a caravan (*argysh*), whereas on the other sledges in the caravan less experienced deer could be used. The most important deer in an *argysh* is the one on the front sledge on the left side (Rus: *peredovoi byk*). It is he who receives the orders about the direction that the whole caravan is to take. Selecting the deer from the corral was done very quietly, in order not to disturb the reindeer, and the atmosphere felt rather solemn. Everyone selected the deer they needed to harness to their *argysh*, the men first, and then the women, who took the men's advice as to which deer to select. The whole process of catching the deer, training the young ones and harnessing them took several hours, and in the case of Tokcha's big herd, up to four hours.

Women also had to prepare their particular sledges (Nen: *ne-khan*) for the babies and children travelling with them, especially when they were still breast-feeding, which many do for several years. These *ne-khan* sledges are constructed differently, with a high wall on the right side but open on the left, and most are very carefully equipped with beautiful textiles and reindeer furs to keep the children warm during the migration. They are always the front sledge of an *argysh*. Children can start to travel using their own harnesses quite early, normally from the age of six or eight years. Ideally,

leading an *argysh* is a woman's task during migration, for the men are occupied with keeping the herd on course to the next pastures.



Plate 5. A child in a *ne-khan* sledge waiting for the spring migration.

Once all the harnesses had been prepared and the households packed up, the camp convoy—Tokcha's 'family brigade' (*semeinaia brigada*)—consisted of 110 sledges with some 250 transport reindeer harnessed and ready for the day's journey (Rus: *kaslanie*, Nen: *iamda*). Tokcha's household alone made up 30 sledges. Before we left, every household drank tea once more, sitting on the snow next to the *ne-khan* sledge of the *chumrabotnitsa*. Tea was poured from the thermos, and we ate leftovers from breakfast. After this very short break, the *brigadir* and his wife were the first to leave. In order to get the *argysh* going, someone had to try to encourage the reindeer forward by shouting and waving at them. The whole camp finally moved off in the afternoon, around 4 p.m.

Anatolii explained to me that it is a good idea in spring to move in the evening, because the snow is harder and the *argyshy* glide more easily. During the day, it is usually warm enough to work outdoors without a reindeer-fur coat (Nen: *mal'tsa*, Rus: *malitsa*); in April, in the sun, the temperature can be as high as 10ºC. The snow may thaw during the day, but it freezes again each night.

The whole convoy, approximately 15 *argyshy*, took on the appearance of a kilometre-long dark snake on the white, treeless tundra, as it headed northwards with the herd. One or two men or youngsters were given the job of watching and directing the herd, though it was often well ahead of the *argyshy*, and often out of sight of it. The transport deer pull well when they can follow their herd instinct and follow the main herd. In this case they hardly have to be driven at all. However, on other occasions I have observed a herd of some several thousand reindeer surrounding the *argyshy* during the migration through the tundra (see plate 2), so that the convoy does not follow the herd but is enveloped by it.

While staying with Tokcha and his relatives, I discovered how beneficial it is for an anthropologist to sit atop an *argysh* and be able to watch the herd in the company of a knowledgeable herder. While on the move with the reindeer, the herders were calm and had time to answer all my questions. I therefore learned a lot about their life, their environment, and their work. At the same time they themselves were more talkative and started to ask me questions about my own worldviews, and what was happening in the rest of the world. For example, I travelled with Tokcha on the sledge over the frozen surface of Lake Iaro-To (cf. map 3, lake number 12) in the evening, surrounded by nothing but ice and snow. Tokcha began to ask me about the situation in the Congo, which turned into a lengthy conversation about the problems of developing countries, development policy and the liberal economy. This showed me how aware these tundra dwellers are, not only of their immediate environment but also of their extended environment and how this matters to them. Many of them see themselves as being very closely connected with the fate of the world beyond, a fact that supports an important argument in this book, namely that we have to learn about the reindeer herders' understanding of and interactions with the world surrounding them, however close or far that might be. Reindeer herders are actors in the post-Soviet economy, which is steadily being integrated into global processes of production, consumption and exchange. This urges us to investigate the relations between the 'outside world' and the nomads in both directions, rather than explaining their performance in the last 15 years as a quality inherent to their culture.

From time to time, we stopped during migration to give the animals a break (Nen: *nyl'*, Rus: *peredyshka*), and have a smoke (Rus: *perekur*). Either Tokcha or Anatolii, being the most knowledgeable people in the camp, would stand on the top of a sledge to look out over the route with their binoculars. On our way, we saw a slowly hobbling deer that certainly would not have made it to the summer pastures, because it could barely walk. Anatolii's son Edik slaughtered it, using his sharp knife to make an incision

into the brain. He quickly removed the fur around the belly, cut a hole to remove the stomach and intestines, and we had a quick bite of fresh warm reindeer meat and blood (Nen: *aibat*; see chapter 5). In such a big herd, weak deer are unable to endure the long trip to the green northern summer pastures, and often have to be slaughtered. I noticed that for their daily subsistence through the year herders usually slaughter the weak deer while the healthy calves and bulls are reserved for the slaughter in October and November, when their carcasses are sold. Edik fastened the carcass of the slaughtered deer onto his sledge and we moved on.

After several hours we had travelled a distance of some 15–20 kilometres. Anatolii arrived first and took his *niada-iagoch'*, the lichen-test stick, to check whether the lichen on the snow-covered pasture was abundant enough to support the herd for two or three days. He dug a small crater in the snow to uncover a piece of pasture, just as reindeer do, and took a piece of lichen (Nen: *niada*, Rus: *iagel'*) to check it. If the pasture was bad, the deer would head further north immediately, and the herders would have a hard time holding the herd together. The second thing to be done was to choose a campsite. First Tokcha had to ensure that the neighbouring *chum*s of other camps were not too close. A distance of 10 kilometres is usually enough to prevent the herds from mixing with each other. Anatolii complained that these days the rule of where to put one's *chum* is not obeyed. He explained:

> The camp itself should never stand on a lichen-covered place (*iagel'noe mesto*), because the reindeer circling around the corral trample the pasture (*vytaptyvaiut*) and people leave their rubbish there.

Once a place was chosen, the leading herder in the camp put his *tiur* (Rus: *khorei*)—the pole used to drive reindeer—into the ground at the spot where he envisioned the centre of his *chum*. All the other herders did the same with their *tiur* within a distance of several metres from the first one.[48] Upon arrival, all the *argyshy* (caravans) of one *chum* were placed in a loose circle around the *tiur*. Then the men removed the harnesses and let the reindeer roam free in the pasture, prepared the harnesses for the next day's move, and then brought water for the evening tea.

Setting up the *chum*, heating the stove, preparing tea and making the meal is women's work, although there were exceptions to this. Tokcha's older brother, for example, helped his wife because they didn't have any other women in the household. The *chum* was assembled again according to the exact order befitting the social, ritual and physical needs of the camp. First, the iron stove was placed on the spot where the household head had stuck his *tiur* into the earth. The stove is generally lit even before the *chum* is

[48] Cf. Haakanson 2000: 82f and 117f for camp-site selection.

erected. The stove stands on a flat sheet of metal, often taken from abandoned gas drilling stations. On each side of the stove, women put down the wooden floor, consisting of four boards, and behind it, the shrub mats were placed at the outer end of the *chum*. These items form the essential interior, dividing the *chum* in half and turning these few square metres of tundra into a human habitable space. Then the table, or tables, if there is one per half, were brought in and the storage shelf (if any) placed opposite the entrance at the back of the *chum*.

The women began to assemble the long *chum* poles, starting with those bound together at the top. These were placed opposite each other to form the basic frame for the other approximately 35 poles. The poles are all the same size, but the diameter of the *chum* can be changed according to their vertical angle. Thus, the wider a *chum* is, the lower it becomes. My hosts often varied the *chum* size according to the number of guests visiting them. The diameter of a big *chum*, hosting 10 or more inhabitants, like Tokcha's was some 6 metres. Two people hold the first poles during the initial stage of *chum* construction, and the housewife of each *chum* half puts the remaining poles in a circle. The Forest-Nenets poet Iuri Vella Aivasseda told me that the difference between the Khanty and the Nenets *chum*s is that the former have three poles bound together, whereas the latter have only two and need additional single poles in order to turn it into a stable structure (see plate 4).[49] The skeleton of the *chum* is then ready. In most cases the interior items are brought into the *chum* before the poles and the outer cover are secured—it is more convenient to build a house around the furniture than to bring furniture into the house.

Placing the outer cover onto the poles is a task carried out jointly by both men and women. They put the *niuki* on the *chum* with the help of poles, with the tips fitting into leather pockets on the edges of the *niuki* especially made for this purpose. They fasten the covers to the poles with ropes. Depending on how cold it is, the *chum* cover varies in thickness. Just as most people stop wearing their outer coats (*gus'*) as the days warm up in spring, so households tend to put only one layer of *niuki* rather than two on the *chum*. In spring, some households use a fleece-like material used on gas drilling stations called *darnit*.

Once the *chum* had been set up and the household unpacked, the *chumrabotnitsa* served a meal consisting of frozen fish or meat, a soup with noodles and cooked meat and bread, reindeer fat or butter, *sushki* (small ring-shaped crackers) and jam. The Nenets diet has become spicier in recent years, since goods from central Russia and the Caucasus are delivered to

[49] Iuri Vella Aivasseda, personal communication, Salekhard, 13 March 2002.

northern Siberia. Salt and pepper are standard, and often fresh or dried onions, ketchup or Caucasian barbecue sauces (*adzhika*) are also available.

In spring the close proximity of neighbouring camps—often just 5 kilometres away and so much closer than the optimum 10 kilometres—makes 24-hour surveillance of the reindeer herds necessary. Over dinner, the herders talked about the day's activities, the new pastures and the duties for the coming night. Tokcha's brother Mishene remembered that in Soviet times, *zootekhniki* were sent out by the sovkhoz to supervise the actual herding work. If a reindeer herder fell asleep during the night shift, they would cut his fur gloves off the *malitsa* (parka) and he would wake up with frozen, perhaps even seriously damaged, hands.

Former *zootekhniki* of Mishene's generation confirmed that they had actually carried out such disciplinary measures. Nadezhda Kolmakova, a former head *zootekhnik* for example, remembered how they had visited herders on duty during the night while everyone else in the *chum* was asleep.[50] This was in the 1960s and 1970s, the strictest era in many respects, when some ambitious local authorities and Russian sovkhoz directors tried to extend their influence in the tundra, but were not very successful. However, according to herders such strict measures were not common. The very threat of punishment or losing reindeer while on duty (*dezhurstvo*) was enough to keep the herders' vigilance and discipline at a high level. Kolmakova also talked about informal agreements that offered mutual benefits to herders and *zootekhniki*, especially concerning the reindeer count (see chapter 4). This indicates that these disciplinary incidents were extreme cases remembered by older herders. Soviet influence on the tundra was still limited at this time, and most herders today tend to view the Soviet period in positive rather than negative terms. The present lack of discipline among brigades during herding is therefore something to complain about in comparison to the 'good old times'. However, in the private sector, such as in Tokcha's camp, this is not a problem—they are herding their own deer, and it is in their interests to look after them carefully.

After dinner and the evening chat, all the inhabitants of the *chum* went to bed. Sometimes the youngsters went out to socialise with their friends from the other *chum*s. If this went on too long, a mother would call from inside the *chum*: '*hona guna!* Go to sleep!' Then they would come home and go to bed.

This example of a day on migration is typical for the herders of the Yar-Sale tundra who have large herds, whether private or sovkhoz ones. The northernmost herders with less migratory activity, as well as the fishermen with small herds in the central parts of the Yamal Peninsula, move approxi-

[50] Nadezhda Kolmakova, personal communication, Se-Iakha, 11 September 2000.

mately 15 or 20 times a year, whereas the big camps move 10 times more often (i.e. 150 to 200 times a year). Their daily routine, of course, differs significantly. However, all herders follow a set of common activities and rules.[51]

The main activity is the daily supervision of the herd and the driving of the working animals into the corral. Such activities give the day its main rhythm. With the remaining time the herders feel they have freedom to structure their day as they like. They see this freedom as the great advantage of life in the tundra compared with life as an employee in a village. Many of those I talked to would not give up their tundra life if offered a decent house and job in a village. The term 'lifestyle nomadism' is therefore a fitting description of their life in the tundra.

3.5 The Seasonal Practice of Reindeer Herding

The necessity for movement is based on the reindeers' need to reach fresh pastures as well as the people's need to get supplies, slaughter their reindeer, go fishing, see relatives, do business, and so on. These activities imply a more or less steady movement of herd and household. The people in the tundra of Yamal perceive their year-round life as truly cyclical, with no discernible beginning or end, unlike other reindeer herding communities, who live part-time in towns or villages (Tuisku 2002: 199–202). Still, the date of the beginning of the spring migration at the end of March or beginning of April seems to me a good time to start with, and this was when I joined the Yar-Sale herders on their way northwards.

Table 2 shows a one-year migration of the 5th Yar-Sale brigade, with whom I stayed for some time. I chose them because they practised one of the longest possible migrations on Yamal. Their *brigadir*, Leonid, explained how their activities and movements are related to the needs of the reindeer and to various events in the environment.

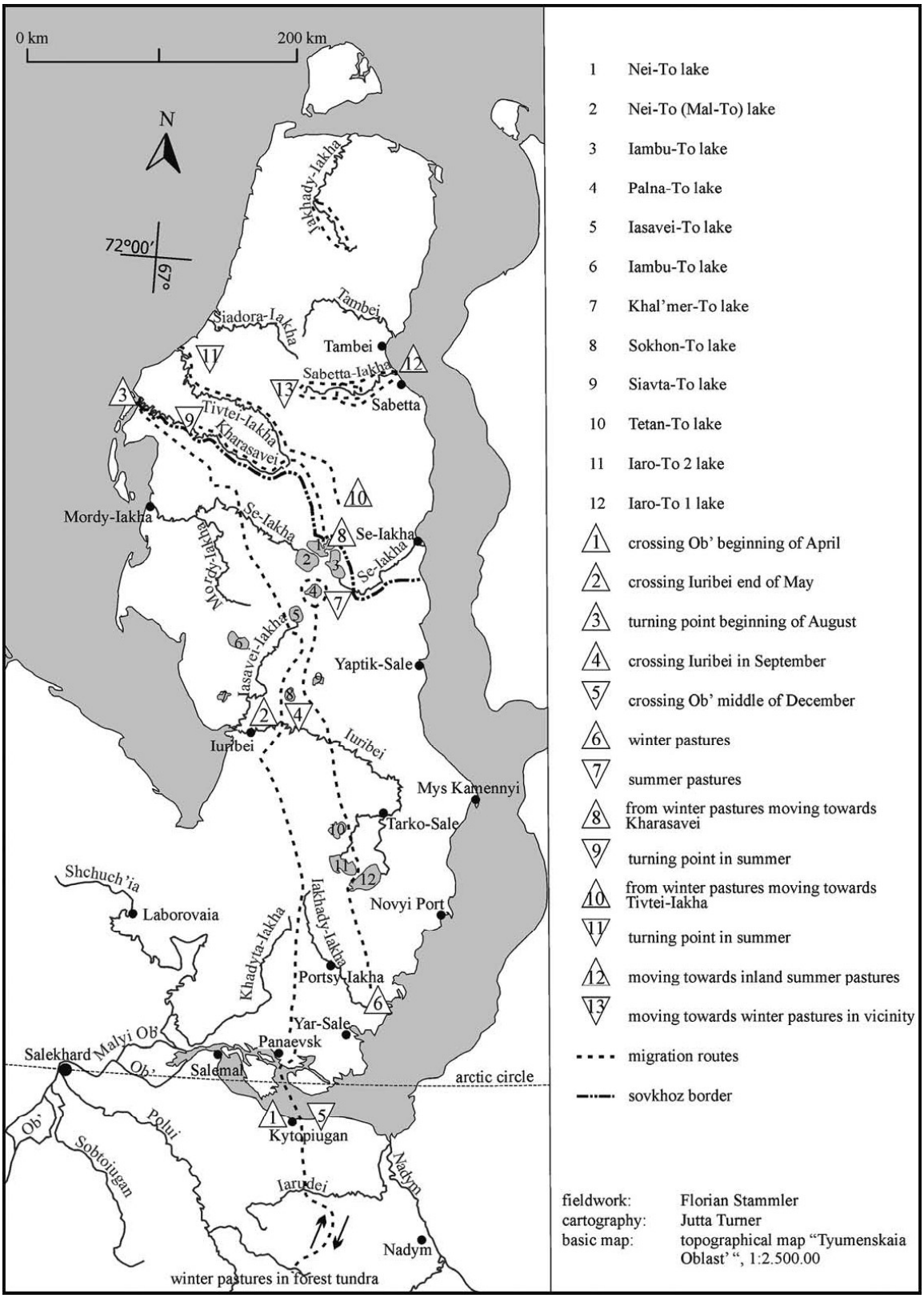
[51] It is more difficult for an anthropologist to stay a long time with poor households in the tundra, since every additional person makes their life more difficult. They have less space in the *chum*, fewer transport deer to carry additional food or luggage, and less free time to teach the anthropologist about the tundra life. However, on the occasions of visiting neighbours, I was able to hold interviews with herders who were not as rich as Tokcha and his relatives.

Table 2. Example of the seasonal cycle of a reindeer brigade in the central Yamal tundra.

Date	Event	Climate	Movement	Distance	Comment
April	After reindeer herders' festival, day and night duty (*dezhurstvo*) with herds.	End of winter, –10 to –15°C.	Departing from the village Yar-Sale northwards, new camp every three days.	5–20 km per daily move (*kaslanie*).	In village, purchase groceries and other necessities to last through the summer until end of September.
Early May, until June	Reindeer calving (*otel*) begins. Soon after this, ear-marking of new calves. End of May, arrival of migratory geese from Europe. Hunting.	Snow melts, first patches of bare land (*proталin'*) appear.	Rushing northwards quickly, as long as the water courses are still frozen. Crossing Iuribei River.	260 km from Ob' Bay shore.	In June the upper level of the permafrost thaws and the earth becomes swampy, which makes moving slower and harder for the transport deer. Winter equipment (tent cover, winter sleds, stove, etc.) exchanged for lighter summer equipment.
Mid-end of June	*Otel* ends, spring corral, ear-marking, sovkhoz collects 'velvet' antlers ('*panty*'), and deer are vaccinated against anthrax (*sibirskaia iazva*).	Temperature rises to +15°C.	Crossing rivers through water, arriving at river Se-Iakha, near Bovanenkovo gas village.	Approximately 430 km from Ob' Bay shore.	After crossing of Iuribei River, migration route goes alongside the planned railway route between Labytnangi and Bovanenkovo (giant gas deposit). Summer pastures here with perennial grasses, good for rapid fattening of deer, but threatened by gas development.
Early August	Northernmost point, coastal climate, few mosquitoes.	Highest temperature of 20°C.	Reaching mouth of Kharasavei river, turning point is the seashore at Sharapov-Shar strait (*proliv Sharapov shar*).	Ob' Bay shore to mouth of Kharasavei ca. 530 km.	Stay at this northernmost point only for a few days.

Mid August until end Sept.	September, vaccination of herd against gadfly, (*oestrinae*).	Temperature falling to 0°C, first snow.	Southward movement, slightly east of the northward-route. Crossing the Iuribei River in September.		Most groceries are used up; '*panty*' helicopter supplies essential groceries until November, in exchange for antlers. Winter household luggage picked up, summer luggage left south of Iuribei River.
Oct. - early Nov.	Amount of lichens in pastures increases.	Rivers freeze; in Nov. temperatures fall to –30°C.	Moving southwards towards the *faktoriia* Portsy-Iakha.	Kharasavei to Portsy-Iakha, ca. 450 km.	Portsy-Iakha (*faktoriia*) of the Yar-Sale sovkhoz. In the vicinity are the corrals for the autumn count and selection of the slaughtering herds.
Nov.	Heavily degraded temporary pastures.	Coldest season, temperatures down to –50°C.	Less mobility, slower movements, in close vicinity to other brigades, ca. 80 km in one month.	Portsy-Iakha to Ob' Bay shore, 80 km.	Counting of the herd, sometimes lost sovkhoz animals must be paid for with one's personal animals.
Mid Nov. until mid Dec.	Reindeer slaughter, households use snowmobiles to visit each other.	Extreme cold.	Moving southwards in vicinity of Yar-Sale village.	30 km away from Yar-Sale.	Early and mid-December: visiting the village, receiving salaries, buying groceries for the winter, visiting and seeing friends and relatives, having fun.
Mid Dec.	Crossing the Ob' River, the Arctic Circle and the tree line.	Extreme cold.	Near the village of Panaevsk mid-December crossing Ob' Bay, arriving at the other side near the village Kutopiugan.	50 km ice-crossing.	Herd without pastures, some deer die (21 died in 2000). Sometimes deaths are misrecorded so that it is sovkhoz deer that died, not private ones.

Mid Jan.	Arriving at winter pastures in forest tundra. Enough fire-wood.	Extreme cold.	Alongside River Kup-toiugan, southwards to upper ranges of Khaby-Iakha River (Khanty-River).	From Ob' Bay 120 km.	60 km south of Ob' Bay, having crossed the old Stalin railway '501' with many prison camp ruins. Southernmost point. Possible to make trading visit to gas city of Nadym, 180 km to the south, by snowmobile.
End Jan. to end March	Encounters with herders of the taiga sovkhoz 'Nydinskii'.	Gradual rise in tempera-ture to –25°C.	Little mobility, possi-ble to remain at one camp for 15 days, then gradually moving back towards Ob' Bay.	Turning northwards again, 120 km.	Long winter nights in the *chum* spent chatting, sitting, women sewing, less work. Search for the thickest pastures of lichens (e.g. *Cladonia rangiferania*); in deep snow use hunting skis to drive the herd in.
Early April	Crossing the Ob' again.	Temperature increase to –10°C.	Moving back to the tundra, and towards the village of Yar-Sale.	Yar-Sale.	During visits to the village and on Rein-deer Herders' Day, one family stays with the herd in the tundra, some 30 km from the village.
SUMMARY: Overall distance at least 1,100 km. Southern winter pastures at a latitude of 65.30°N, northern summer pastures at 70.55°N. Five households, 5,000 deer, of which 45% are sovkhoz-owned. Some 150 changes of camp site.					



Map 3. Migration patterns on the Yamal Peninsula.

Where appropriate, I indicate in the following where shorter migrations differ from this cycle. Map 3 shows the migration route of the 5th brigade

(see triangles 1–5) and also of Tokcha's camp (triangles 6–7). Shorter migrations can be observed in the north (triangles 8–13).

In addition to the schematic table and the map, I provide a more detailed description of the main seasonal activities of a reindeer herding family (or brigade). Many of these are closely connected with natural changes through the year. Most Nenets terms for the months describe these changes, and I shall provide translations (provided by my friends Natasha and Andrei Okotetto in the Sabetta tundra) where appropriate.

3.5.1 The Reindeer Herders' Festival: Welcoming the Spring

In many herders' minds the spring is associated with the most important social event of the year, Reindeer Herders' Day (*den' olenevodov*), celebrated at the end of March or the beginning of April. This is when most camps are able to travel to villages prior to starting their long spring migration northwards. Like most other professions during Soviet times, the reindeer herders had a special day designated to them. They welcome this Soviet festival, which has now become an integral part of what is popularly called 'traditional culture' (cf. Khariutschi 2001; Zen'ko 2001; Liarskaia 2003). However, a number of anthropologists have recently argued convincingly for a careful revisiting of the concept of tradition, calling for its use as an analytical term to be distinguished from its use as a political instrument (see Gray 2003; Stammler 2005; Habeck 2005).

The festival that surrounds Reindeer Herders' Day has a multiple function in the nomads' seasonal life. It is one of the rare occasions when they meet many of their 'neighbours' in the tundra, an occasion to express their views on the current state of reindeer herding in meetings with the policy-makers and administrators, and the main occasion to show to the outside world their strength and vitality in sports competitions. In the villages, and even in the gas city of Nadym, Reindeer Herders' Day is a prestigious festival, for the Russian population as much as for the herders and their families. What follows is a description of the main events of the 40th Reindeer Herders' Day in Yar-Sale in 2001.

During the afternoon before the main festival, herders gather together for an official session at which an official of the Okrug Department of Agriculture and the leaders of the main enterprises report on their activities and listen to suggestions and complaints from herders. In 2001 there were tough discussions concerning the shortage of pastures on the spring and autumn narrow corridors (*prokhodnye puti*) and about too many private herders occupying pastures that should be used by sovkhoz brigades. On this point, many private herders claim that the sovkhozy should reduce their herd size to provide more capacity for private herders (see chapter 7). These discus-

sions exemplify the ongoing competition between the various forms of reindeer herding. The discussion culminated in speeches against the sovkhoz Yamal'skii, the northernmost sovkhoz in Yamal, whose director was blamed for having ruined the enterprise to the extent that it slaughtered only 2,000 deer in the year 2000, whereas it had slaughtered more than 9,000 deer in earlier years. Out of 1,400 people registered as living in the tundra, only about 90 were employed as *pastukhi* (reindeer herders) or *chumrabotnitsy* (professional housewives). It was therefore argued that the sovkhoz can no longer claim to speak for the entire tundra population. The sovkhoz leadership replied that they had to survive more difficult conditions than the commercial enterprises.[52] In a way, these discussions revealed a certain sense of insecurity about the future of reindeer herding in an institutional context, but recognised the stability of reindeer herding as a basis for making a living in the tundra. The population of domestic reindeer is not directly affected by the performance of one or other reindeer herding institution. They did well under sovkhoz administration and they also perform well under private ownership.

After the session with the *intelligenciia* and the reindeer-herding politicians, the administration organised a performance of the indigenous culture ensemble 'Syro-Sev', which was a dance performance with stylised elements of Nenets and Khanty wrestling, and modern versions of indigenous people's songs. This kind of performance is well known across the Russian North, and almost every region has an ensemble of its own. Just as the Soviets 'invented the tradition' (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) of Reindeer Herders' Day, so these dancing ensembles are also a Soviet invention throughout the North (cf. Grant 1995: 10, quoting Derevianko & Boiko 1986). These ensembles became part of the 'tradition', as it is represented officially, and this has not changed since the fall of the Soviet Union. This is not necessarily seen as representing 'authentic culture', as King (2004) shows, but in Yamal it causes a lot of amusement among reindeer herders and therefore is popular. They enjoy seeing stylisations of their own 'culture', and so these dances can now be interpreted as part of identity politics and identity construction. King's (2004) analysis of dance in Kamtchatka reveals the whole scope of the meaning of such performances under different conditions for identity, authenticity and culture in cities and in the tundra. In Yar-Sale, no less popular is the evening disco in the house of culture (*dom kul'tury*), which goes on late into the night. During such evenings young boys and girls meet each other, perhaps fall in love, and, quite often, eventually get married.

[52] Speeches by reindeer herders and directors during the 40th Reindeer Herders' Day, in Yar-Sale, 7 April 2001, and sovkhoz statistics for the year 2000.

A whole day of the annual reindeer herders' festival is reserved for entertainment, mainly consisting of sports competitions where quite substantial prizes can be won. One young herder, Valera, won six snowmobiles by winning reindeer races.[53] In 2001, the crew of the Yar-Sale sovkhoz won a brand new *vezdekhod* (passenger tank, the most popular land transport all-terrain vehicle in the tundra), worth more than RUR 1 million (almost €40,000).[54] These days the prizes for Reindeer Herders' Day are sponsored by the oil and gas companies. The most popular events are reindeer racing and northern national wrestling, with other events including lasso throwing, jumping over sledges, 'tug of war' using a pole not a rope (*peretiagivanie palki*), and a beauty contest in which the contestants wear national clothing.

The reindeer herders use the rare occasion of being in the village to sort out their affairs with the local administration and bureaucracy. Most of the herders will not see the village again till the autumn, some seven months away.

*3.5.2 Spring (*nara*): Provisioning and Starting out on the Migration to the Summer Pastures*

Spring migration for most reindeer herders begins at the middle or end of March. In the case of the big herds of the central Yamal, they cross the frozen Ob' River at the end of March, which is a difficult one-day journey of up to 40 km for the reindeer. Often, some 20–50 animals are lost from the herd during this river crossing. This river crossing marks also the end of the brigades' stay on the winter pastures in the forest zone. From now on, they will live without trees. Therefore, some herders provision themselves with trees on sledges for eventual repairs of sledges or *chum*s. Towards the end of March and in April some female reindeer have miscarriages and abortions, and so the Nenets name for this time is *sia nichs'*, the month of wrong calving.[55] In early April, households must provision themselves with everything they need for subsistence until they come back to the village in November. Although this pattern has become more flexible owing to access to fresh groceries from helicopters in summer, it is still commonly agreed that the

[53] Valera Khudi tragically died in 2004. I express my condolences to his parents, who were my generous hosts for a week in the tundra in April 2001, before I moved on to Tokcha's camp.

[54] In the following, RUR refers to Russian roubles, $ to US dollars, and € to Euros.

[55] The Nenets months are called *iry*, moon. Personal communication, Andrei and Natasha Okotetto, October 2000 and June 2001. Their interpretation of the Nenets months is not necessarily representative. They say that nowadays mostly Russian names of the months are used. Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2000: 60–75) give an alternative interpretation of the names of months.

'spring supply' is the main logistical and organisational challenge for a reindeer-herding household. Even those herders in the north, with less demanding migration routes, follow this pattern because the villages in summer are inaccessible on account of swamps, and the rivers and lakes are difficult to cross. Moreover, all herders are unwilling to strain their transport reindeer by demanding that they pull heavy sledges in summer when there is no snow. Table 3 shows a typical set of provisions purchased during the 'spring supply'.[56]

Table 3. Supplies required in spring by a nomadic household.

400–600 loaves of bread
at least 10 kg black tea
50 kg flour
20 sachets of 60 g of dry yeast powder
75 kg sugar
25 kg butter
17.5 kg rice
17.5 kg salt
1 sack *sushki* (round white crackers)
20 sachets of 100 g of dry mustard powder
1 sack of dried onions or potatoes (if sold in the village)
10 litres of vegetable oil
Caucasian spices and barbecue sauces
Several small boxes of sweets for children
ice cream for the children (in rare cases)
45 tins of sweet milk (*sgushenka*)
laundry soap 10 pieces, toothpaste, toilet soap
newspapers, pens
kerosene for lamps
petrol, one or two 100-litre barrels (some families use a snowmobile until May)

Otto Yaptik, a reindeer herder of the 5th brigade, told me that the spring supply is the only occasion when it really makes sense to have a snowmobile (*buran*). Most herders transport their supplies by *buran* from the village to their *chum*. For everything else the *buran* causes too many problems: it is noisy, it disturbs the herd, and it costs much in time and money to maintain

[56] The data presented here are the approximate averages generated from a sample of 20 households, collected in 2000–1. Not everyone buys all these products.

or repair it. The 'snowmobile revolution' (Pelto & Müller-Wille 1987) has therefore not happened here—the herders are not convinced by the apparent advantages. Most herders leave their *buran* behind in the village when they begin spring migration. Once all the supplies are at the *chum* site, the housewife packs them all onto sledges. The most space is occupied by the bread, which needs two or three sledges. The food supply usually is kept outside the *chum*, and has to be defrosted before it is used. In this sense the cold climate is very useful for keeping things fresh for several months.

From April onwards, the herders migrate towards their summer pastures. Reindeer graze mainly on lichen pastures, but with the thawing snow they increasingly eat green plants such as fresh grass or shrubs. Reindeer herders say that fresh green plants are the reindeers' favourite food in this season. The second half of April and the first days in May are called *ty sapolana*, which translates as when 'the first calves appear'. However, in many cases these don't survive, since it is still very cold. The central Yamal Yar-Sale herders migrate northwards as quickly as possible in order to cross the major rivers while they are still frozen. This has to be done before the end of May. The calving grounds and summer pastures for all the big migratory brigades from southern Yamal lie north of the Iuribei River, and they all have to rush in order to cross it in time. Spring and autumn are particularly challenging, since all the camps move at the same time in narrow corridors (*prokhodnye puti*) northwards (spring) or southwards (autumn) between the Iuribei River and Ob' Bay south of Yar-Sale. The herders and fishermen from the south and central Yamal Peninsula, whose migrations are less extensive, head for summer pastures that lie south of the Iuribei River and so do not have to cross it. The northern herders of the Se-Iakha and Tambei tundra also do not need to hurry, but normally move away from villages either towards the middle of the Yamal Peninsula, or northwards towards the Arctic Ocean (see map 3).

3.5.3 Late Spring: Calving, Thawing of Snow and Rivers

Around mid-May, the next important event in the seasonal cycle is the calving of reindeer. The Nenets name for this month is *nichaudy iry*. Whereas those herders on short migrations try to reach specific calving grounds close to their summer pastures, the Yar-Sale herders on long migrations, such as Tokcha and his relatives, and the 5th brigade, have to organise calving on the move. Each herd has its own calving ground, which the deer know and which they head towards at all speed so that they arrive before the mass calving. By that time they have crossed the Iuribei River. The mothers and their newborn calves are then separated from the rest of the herd and usually continue on for another 10–15 km (the distance of one daily move)

ahead of the main herd. Mass calving takes place from the last week of May until the beginning of June, but, exceptionally, it has been known for calving to start at the beginning of May and finish as late as August. Calves born at these extremes rarely survive. It is important for the deer that the weather is warm enough and that the doe finds a snow-free patch of ground (Nen: *varë*, Rus: *protalina*) where the newborn lies during its first few hours of life. If it lies on snow, it can catch cold or get pneumonia, and generally dies soon afterwards. In 2001, due to cold weather and snowstorms (*burany*) in northern Yamal, more than half of all newborn calves died in the household I was staying with. Many neighbours told the same story. If the calf does not die immediately after birth, its fur can be used for hats or children's clothes. The meat goes to the dogs, of which every reindeer herder has at least two and perhaps as many as four. On one occasion, a calf that had not been born but had died in the last stages of pregnancy travelled with us for several weeks, after Tokcha had slaughtered the mother and pulled the dead calf out of the womb. This puzzled me so I asked him about it.

> *Author*: Shuriknesia,[57] tell me please, why does this dead calf travel so long with us, and it lies always in the night next to my sleeping place? Is this something sacred, and do you keep that for a ritual?
>
> *Tokcha*: (laughing) Oh Filipnesia, no, don't you like sleeping next to a dead frozen unborn reindeer calf? Don't worry; babushka [Tokcha's mother] cannot chew so well anymore; therefore she took it with her. For our elders, the tender meat is a delicacy.

By June, most of the snow has usually thawed and it becomes more difficult to move across the land. The *buran* season ends, even in the farthest north of Yamal, when the ice on the rivers and lakes is too thin to cross over them. Therefore, *reki poshli* (Russian for: 'the rivers have started to go') is an important event in the tundra, since it structures the space of the tundra and restricts movement within natural boundaries. Suddenly, the season for visiting neighbours comes to an end, nobody travels to villages or *faktorii* (trading posts) anymore. The only mobility from now until November is the migration with the herd. With the snow thawing, the camps leave behind their winter equipment such as heavy winter sleds and everything that is not urgently needed during summer. In summer the *chum* is covered with canvas instead of reindeer furs, and the herders leave the stove behind. They cook and make tea in the *chum* on a campfire (Rus: *kastior*). Many even leave behind the floorboards. In the north, collecting firewood in the absence of trees becomes very complicated. The children spend a lot of time collecting particular shrubs (Nen: *paë*, Rus: *ol'kha*, Lat: *alder* spp.) and a particular

[57] Adult Nentsy call each other not by their given name but as the father of their children. So Tokcha for me was 'Shurik's father', and I was for him 'Philipp's father'.

moss (Nen: *khurëkha-niartso*, Rus, Lat: *sphagnum*) that serves as toilet paper, nappies and towels. The ground becomes dry and pleasant to walk on barefoot, and around the *chum* site people commonly do not wear shoes at all, or only inner fur-shoes (Nen: *tobaki*, Rus: *chizhy*). The diet of the reindeer is now more variable, consisting of many kinds of green plants and fresh grass (Nen: *plibei ngum*), preferably leaves of dwarf birches (Nen: *piung*) and various kinds of willows (Nen: *nero*, Rus: *iva*).

From mid-May, for about a month, this is the main season for hunting geese. In general, the Nenets term for the period from the end of May through June is *marty iry*, the month of the birds' nests. The geese build their nests all over the Yamal Peninsula, flying in from Western Europe. Sometimes hunters use decoy geese made of cardboard or plywood to lure the geese down from the sky and then they shoot them. The meat is a welcome addition to their diet. Many herders and gas workers have a collection of bands or rings that they have removed from the legs of dead geese. These bear a registration number and often a Dutch place name, such as Arnhem. Herders say that one household can shoot up to 30 geese a day, and this can happen several times in a season. But even in good years they are careful not to hunt more than they can use within a short period of time, because it is already too warm to store any food, and the 'law of the tundra' makes clear that people should not take more than they need (see section 3.3). Therefore, the geese only unpredictably and sporadically diversify the late spring diet. However, in 2001 this did not happen at all, and we hardly shot any geese. The herders explained that the geese may have taken a slightly different route and do not always migrate over the same territory. For the people in the villages (as well as in the tundra perhaps) it is the sporting element that is most important nowadays. The hunters can demonstrate their shooting skills as well as socialise while waiting out on the sunny warm tundra for the prey to fly in.

As far as food intake is concerned, springtime, after the snow has melted, is rather unpleasant. Historically, early spring was the time when famines would hit the northern peoples. Their supplies would have been exhausted and the spring hunt would not yet have begun (Eidlitz 1969: 120f). Today the period of shortage is slightly later in spring, when the warm temperatures take away the tundra dwellers' 'natural freezers' and they lose their ability to conserve their food.

This causes some changes in the daily diet. Meat can be salted, and sometimes they salt fish, which can then be kept for some time. However, they are reluctant to slaughter reindeer for food, since the meat will spoil quickly, and after spring the animals are in bad condition. In June, we ate mainly reindeer heads, leftovers from an earlier slaughtering, which do not

have much meat to offer. Moreover, it is very difficult to remove all the hair off the head-meat. Thus, we involuntarily ate quite a lot of reindeer hair, with the head, in our soup. In most cases the butter supply is also finished by June, or if not, it has melted and turned rancid. Reindeer fat, taken from the freshly slaughtered deer's midriff, replaces butter (though even this is now being replaced by vegetable oil). The *chumrabotnitsa* dries the fat and then cooks or melts it on the stove. The bread gradually thaws out and by June it is starting to go mouldy. This is why tundra households cut all their remaining bread into slices, dry it in the sun, and then eat it dry with tea until the autumn.



Plate 6. Bread is dried in June for consumption in the summer and autumn.

In many herds the end of spring is associated with the reindeer vaccinations. If the vaccine is available, reindeer are vaccinated against anthrax. At this time most calves are marked with their owners' ear-marks. Whereas earlier, under the sovkhozy, calf marking was an important collective event, today private herders do this on their own. For some sovkhozy, the lack of portable corrals has resulted in the abandonment of, or at least a delay in, vaccination and marking. Calf marking as an event of collective labour in Yamal is less important than it is, for example, in Sweden (see Beach 1993: 61–74). This is connected to the fact that the Saami herding technique requires much less contact between herder and herd. Herders in Sweden gather all their herds

collectively on a single occasion in autumn, and the marking is the outcome of negotiations over which reindeer belongs to whom.

Many Nentsy, in contrast, know their reindeer without having to look at an earmark. The marking is no longer a single event, but between May and July, herders gradually mark more and more calves which are caught during the day-to-day round-up in the corral at the camp. Thus, marking as an event of shared labour and gathering of herders is not significant among Nentsy anymore, but it is very important for introducing the reindeer in the complex set of social relations among people in the tundra and between reindeer and people. A marked reindeer becomes part of the network of exchange in the tundra, and it becomes part of the kinship system, as the earmark tells about its relation to a particular family, such as Khudi, or Vanuito (see section 5.5).

*3.5.4 Summer (*tangy*): Mosquitoes and Warble Flies*

July is named the mosquito month (Nen: *neniang iry*). This is a period of intensive herding work, since the reindeer have to be held together in a large herd for maximum protection against the mosquitoes. This involves taking them three to six times a day to various pastures, depending on the weather and 'mosquito-density'. Sometimes herders move with a small tent out of the main camp, and travel with the herd in order to keep maximum control. This is called *beschumnyi vypas* (*chum*less grazing; Druri & Mitiushev 1963: 51–3; Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 81). Herds that reach the shore of the Kara Sea, as well as those in the northern Tambei tundra, are better off since there are fewer mosquitoes there. On the other summer pastures, when the mosquito nuisance is at its worst, the herd circles clockwise over a small area, keeping tightly together. A large number of animals are required to reach a 'critical mass' against the mosquitoes. The combined breath of so many animals creates a high temperature in the middle of the circle, so that 'every single mosquito will die from heat in there', as one herder explained. In a snail-shaped, spiral form there is constant movement of reindeer from the middle of the circle towards the outer edges, and of the outer reindeer towards the hot middle. The herd can only keep this up for an hour or more, however, before exhaustion sets in. After this exhausting circling, the reindeer need to roam in peace, recover and cool down. A herder sits with the dogs at the edge of the circle and prevents the formation from disintegrating too soon. After this, the herd trots away to the green pastures, normally heading into the wind. The herder in charge accompanies it with his harnessed sledge and one or two dogs. He follows the herd for a period of several hours, during which the reindeer graze and drink, before driving them back towards the *chum*. When it is cold in the summer, overcast or

very windy, or at night, the mosquitoes are less of a problem and the herder can let the herd roam more freely, bringing it back after several hours.



Plate 7. A herd circling clockwise in mid-July, the worst mosquito time.

A relatively recent event in summer reindeer herding in Yamal is the cutting of *panty*, the fresh velvet antlers. This formerly calm season has become very hectic on account of the highly competitive nature of the *panty* trade. In some years commercial helicopters fly in and out of the camps perhaps as often as eight times in six weeks to collect *panty* and to trade. However, this is how *tundroviki* earn considerable additional income and sometimes get fresh food.[58] As soon as the mosquitoes are gone, the warble flies (Rus: *ovody*) arrive and bring a fresh irritation to the reindeer. August is therefore the warble fly month (Nen: *piliu iry*), which marks the end of summer. Warble flies harm the reindeer, as they deposit their eggs underneath the fur, where they grow and develop up to hazelnut-size. When they come out of the fur, they leave a hole, which makes the reindeer skin unusable for clothing or as *chum* coverings. Apart from killing the eggs with medication (see below), neither the herders nor the reindeer themselves have an efficient way of getting rid of warble flies.

*3.5.5 Early Autumn (***ngerë***): Mushrooms, Castration, Vaccination and Rut*

Late summer and early autumn is the time for mushrooms (Nen: *tudako*, Rus: *griby*). The herders say that mushrooms are the reindeers' favourite

[58] The *panty* business is a significant element in the reindeer economy, which is why I devote more space to this topic in chapter 8.

delicacy, and at this time in late August, two herders are needed to supervise the herd to stop it disintegrating—the animals have a tendency to break away in their urge to find more mushrooms. When there are a lot of mushrooms, this overactivity often results in the reindeer losing the bodyweight they accumulated during summer.

August is also the best time to slaughter calves for reindeer clothing as their summer fur is shorter and more stable for clothes than the longer winter fur, which loses hair more quickly.

The end of August is, in most cases, the time when the long-distance herders head back south on their 500 kilometre migration towards the winter pastures. On their way, the reindeer eat green plants such as grass and sedges, and also the shrubs before they lose their leaves. The Nentsy call September *vyba iry*, the leaf-falling month. As green plants decrease so the proportion of lichens in the reindeer diet increases again. The colder months are a good time for castration, which is done before the rut. It involves the herder removing the testes with a knife (Nen: *nialkapas'*), or, more traditionally, using his teeth to bite through the seminal ducts (Nen: *siatorpas'*). In a typical herd, there are normally between 15 and 50 does (the sovkhoz average is 18) for each bull older than two years. All the other bulls are castrated or slaughtered in late autumn. Two weeks before the rut the injection against warble flies should be given, but in practice this is often done when the herd is driven into the counting corral (see below).[59] These injections are important in sovkhoz herds as the furs are destined to be sold on the market. Herders, or veterinary specialists (*zootekhniki*), inject vaccines such as *Ivomec* or *Avertin*, which cause the eggs of the warble flies to die before they can grow and destroy the reindeer skin.

In late September and October the herders have to cope with the reindeer rut. The number of bulls involved can be regulated to some extent by castration, but some herders keep the bulls separated from the rest of the herd, in order to keep it quieter. The month of the rut has its corresponding name in Nenets: *khora iry*, month of the rut/bull. In September the first snow may fall, the rivers become more difficult to cross and the *argyshy* become wet. At river crossings, important items such as food, personal belongings and documentation have to be transported in rubber boats. All reindeer brigades and many private camps have at least one of these boats, which are inflated by foot-pump. Most were originally supplied by the sovkhoz. When the river is small, two men hold a long rope spanning the width of the river, with a third in the boat to pull it across along the rope. Wider rivers have to be crossed by paddling the boat. The sledges carrying less important items,

[59] Nadezhda Kolmakova, chief pharmacist of the Yamal'skii sovkhoz, personal communication, 11 September 2000.

and the reindeer themselves (which are good swimmers), can cross relatively easily, but each caravan has to be led through by a herder standing on the front sledge. Thus, even crossing a small river may take several hours. When rivers are too deep, as in the spring melt, they cannot be crossed at all. So deep, wide rivers can block migration routes, which is why it is important for the herd to cross them before the thaw.



Plate 8. Crossing a small river in autumn, near Portsy-Iakha.

In October or early November the herds arrive at the big permanent counting corrals, where reindeer are selected for slaughter. In some cases the injections against warble flies are also given here. In sovkhoz herds, sorting out which reindeer are state-owned and which are privately owned can become very difficult. In the bigger private herds in northern Yamal, herders temporarily employed by the vertically integrated commercial enterprises[60] collect the reindeer selected by the private herders for slaughter and drive them towards the slaughtering point.

*3.5.6 Winter (***syra'***): Slaughtering, Coping with Cold, Wolves, Repairing the Household*

In November the real winter begins, with daylight fading and finally disappearing completely. Therefore, the Nenets term for November is *ngiudia pevdei*, the little darkness. Nowadays this is slaughtering time. Slaughtering itself is the harsh reality of the end-stage of industrial production. The

[60] These enterprises engage in the whole production chain of reindeer meat and antlers, from herding to selling in supermarkets. Many of them are run by Nenets businessmen, 'new native entrepreneurs' (see chapter 8).

quicker the herds are slaughtered the better, since they lose weight on the poor pastures around the villages, and they destroy the pastures by trampling them as they wait for death. In 2000, at three slaughtering points, the sovkhoz in Yar-Sale slaughtered approximately 10,000 reindeer, the vertically integrated enterprise in Sabetta approximately 6,000 private deer, a similar enterprise in Se-Iakha approximately 4,000 private deer, and the sovkhoz in Se-Iakha 2,500 reindeer.[61] There was a conflict between the two latter enterprises, which led to a situation where the herds of the commercial enterprise that were destined for slaughter had to graze for a week on the pastures surrounding the village of Se-Iakha, until the matter was resolved. Many complained about the destruction of the pasture. Timing is also a very important component of slaughtering for another reason: the earlier slaughtering is done, the better will be the slaughtering weight and the meat quality. However, early slaughtering is risky, since a rise in temperature to 0°C or above can destroy the entire meat stock in the absence of large freezers and processing facilities.

December and most of January is the time of the big darkness, or *ngarka pevdei*, when the herders move to their winter pastures. The richer central Yamal herds cross the Ob' River to what is called the '*khenskaia storona*', where the reindeer feed mainly on lichen in the forest zone. The people can also enjoy the comfort of having firewood close by. In the northern Tambei tundra, however, where there is very little lichen, the local reindeer are adapted to survive in winter almost without lichen (see section 2.3). In many cases herders do not need to manage their herds on a 24-hour basis, and they move less during winter, staying at one campsite for a week or perhaps as long as a month. However, this risks losing animals to predators such as wolves or wolverines, or, in rare cases, to bears. Some herders keep the herd together in winter, while others separate the bulls from the does and calves.

Winter is also the time when the herders spend more time in the *chum*, for example sleeping longer, with the women engaged in sewing or other sedentary activities. Men also hunt for arctic foxes (Nen: *nokho*, Rus: *pesets*). Winter is also *buran* time, and people head off to villages by snowmobile if their camp is not too far away. Sometimes, traders arrive on passenger tanks (*vezdekhody*) or snowmobiles to trade vodka or other goods for meat. Some herders go to the village to celebrate New Year's Eve, leaving just a 'watchman' behind to mind the herd and camp. But as winter draws to an end, the camps prepare once more for the spring migration.

[61] Data gathered in Sabetta and Se-Iakha after slaughtering and in Yar-Sale from the *raion* statistical committee.

At the end of January, the 'sun shows up above the trees just like an eagle', *limbia iry*, which is the Nenets term for the month ahead, when the sky brightens and the weather improves. Sledges and *chum*s have to be repaired or replaced and the household equipment checked over. February and early March is called *iara iry* and is the time when the people move closer to villages to buy their provisions ready for the spring migration. With this, and Reindeer Herders' Day, the seasonal cycle starts again.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has served to introduce life in the tundra, relating it to people's lives in the village or the town, and showing how people, animals and land are linked together.

I approached the lifestyle nomadism of the Nentsy by tracing the position and movement of the herders and herds in the tundra over different seasons. The debates in the okrug administrative centre about the reindeer economy and the increasing numbers of animals and people in the tundra is also mirrored there. In chapter 7 I elaborate on this, but here I have drawn attention to the connection between the two. The YNAO-wide figure for the total reindeer population reflects local practices. Official reindeer numbers are the result of herding and husbandry decisions in the tundra. However, numbers do not reflect those practices, which remain hidden from the administrators. The statistics are biased to create the picture that officials and herders would like to put to paper.

On the lichen ranges I have shown how people engage with a small area of tundra on a daily basis during the spring migration. The route is more than the distance between two campsites. While moving, herders relate to this route by experiencing its features, its condition and the events that happen along the way, such as a reindeer dying, patches of *protalina* appearing, and talks with the anthropologist. Tokcha will perhaps remember for many years how we talked about world development while crossing the ice.

I then sought to clarify how humans make their seasonal rhythm compatible with that of the reindeer, and how reindeer follow the people's instructions in a day-to-day organisation of movement. This interaction results in the linear and circular grazing patterns (see chapter 2), which are embedded in the yearly circle of human and animal migration. Features relating to the climate, such as insect harassment, snow depth and melting time, thawing of rivers, and wind protection, are all important, but so also are the social and cultural factors. The movement of reindeer herds with the households is determined by economic cycles, slaughtering times, proximity to villages and markets. All these determine where a reindeer herders' camp will be established at a specific time in the cycle.

The ethnography of packing up and setting up a camp showed how a tiny area on the migration route is turned into a space inhabited by humans, first by pushing the *tiur* into it, and then by placing the stove on it, around which the *chum* is built. This domestic space takes on characteristics that are different to the reindeers' space, the pastures. What makes this human space different are the guidelines governing its use and placement, for example the guideline that camps should never be set up on lichen. This human space, characterised by a complex set of guidelines for proper behaviour, is embedded in the Nenets society.

I have introduced the *zakon tundry* as structuring this human space and the human relations with the tundra, assigning tasks and identifying roles. Most noticeable is the strong emphasis on mutual help, cooperation and generalised reciprocity (see chapter 5). The prominent role of gender relations within the *zakon tundry* is in a way compatible with both the socialist and the postsocialist order beyond the tundra. As Ashwin (2000: 2) has pointed out, 'gender was always a key organising principle of the Soviet system'. This was always true of tundra life as well. Ashwin sees in Soviet gender roles the purpose of serving 'the state in the way implied by their assumed "natural" characteristics' (2000: 11). For the tundra, the purpose is to support nomadic life in roles based on men's and women's 'natural' differences. This is probably why the tundra version of the Soviet 'worker-mothers' (Ashwin 2000: 9)—*chumrabotnitsa* (professional housewife)—fits very well with the pre-existing division of labour in the tundra. The difference is that in the tundra the workplace and mother-place are one and the same. This continuity is responsible for the fact that women in the tundra, unlike their post-Soviet counterparts in villages and cities, do not experience an identity crisis because of unemployment (see Bridger & Kay 1996).

Many of the guidelines of the *zakon tundry* are connected with controlling behaviour in order to prevent causing harm to oneself, one's herd and one's household. The origin of most of these guidelines is, in many cases, no longer known, but they still form part of people's everyday behaviour, which Varlamova (1993: 84) has also found to be the case for the Evenki, and Krupnik & Vakhtin (1997: 246) for the Yupik in Chukotka.

On several occasions in this book I agree with the argument put forward by Khazanov (1994) and Ingold (2000) concerning nomads and their relation to the 'outside world' and to their environment, a key theme of this book. However, the lives of the reindeer herders described here explicitly challenge Khazanov in another area where he sees nomadism as 'a distinct form of food-producing economy' (1994: 17), alongside other food producing economic activities such as agriculture (1994: 193). Although I do not object to the basic argument, I suggest that the definition of nomadism

should also encompass particular traits of their way of life, and of engaging with the natural, social and super-natural environment. The three do not exclude each other, but all are important for a complete definition of nomadism. This is why I suggest the term lifestyle nomadism for the Yamal reindeer herders. My ethnography of these nomads' mobility has been an attempt to capture their real enthusiasm for life on the tundra.

Chapter 4
Colonisation–Sovietisation–Desovietisation: Incomplete 'Mastery' of the Yamal Region in the Twentieth Century

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I take an historical approach in order to consider the most influential events that have affected reindeer herders in the YNAO during the twentieth century. This examination encompasses an overview of collectivisation and decollectivisation, the legacy of which continues to influence current developments in the region. I argue that at the beginning of the twenty-first century both can be seen as part of the same history, as the beginning and the end of an experiment in reindeer herding in the Russian North. Such a view enables us to see both processes as ways by which the 'outside world' structures its interactions with the tundra sphere. I also consider earlier contacts between reindeer herders and Russians, in so far as they are important for understanding the reactions of the native population in Soviet times, and developments after the collapse of the Soviet Union. By taking all this together I shall identify points of change and of continuity, and discuss their relevance to the contemporary situation.

My goal in analysing history is to find out to what extent the present stability of the native economy in the YNAO is the result of past developments. Collectivisation, decollectivisation and the famous *osvoenie severa* ('mastering', or opening up of the North), were ideas that emanated from central planners in Moscow, and I shall analyse the extent to which they were compatible with the reindeer herders' basic autonomy in economic decision-making. Such a situation does not necessarily support the culturalistic argument of Golovnev & Osherenko (1999) that Nenets culture and traditions are strong and stable enough to resist every imposed influence. This would be the equivalent of a capitulation by scientists to an apparently inexplicable problem, what colloquially is called 'the Nenets phenomenon'.

Russian expansion in Siberia met resistance everywhere (Forsyth 1992; Slezkine 1994; Golovnev 1995: 154–96), but the almost complete sovietisation of Chukchi reindeer herding (Gray 2000, 2003) is the best

example of a long and enduring culture of resistance that was eventually not strong enough to prevent the Soviets from destroying indigenous ways of reindeer herding. The Chukchi herders had the basics taken from them, and without these they were unable to rebuild their way of life after the end of the Soviet Union. What, then, have the Yamal Nentsy used from their past to create their success of today? This question leads me to investigate what happened to reindeer ownership and nomadic migration under Soviet rule.

I explore the factors that contribute to an explanation of why the sovietisation and de-sovietisation experiments left traces of their impact in the reindeer herders' lifestyle, but never replaced it completely. Analysing these factors will build a better understanding than any general essentialising claim that there is some nondefinable secret in Nenets culture. History and state politics in the twentieth century are crucial aspects to consider if we want to understand the way in which factors such as geographical position, infrastructure, mineral wealth, property regimes and contemporary okrug government support all combine today to shape the surrounding world with which tundra reindeer herders interact successfully. Underlying this is the assumption that lived experiences from people's actions in a given environment (social and natural) shape what is called their culture (Ingold 2000).

4.2 Trade or Taxpaying? The Tsars and the Natives

The reindeer herders of north-west Siberia have a long history of interaction with incomers to their lands, although the latter were not very numerous until the influx of millions of industrial workers into the region in the 1960s. The Russian penetration into Siberia is usually connected with the movements of Cossacks searching for fur from the sixteenth century (Forsyth 1992: 30–3; Lincoln 1994). However, historians hold different views as to the nature and the date of the growth of Russian influence in Siberia. According to Dmytryshin (1985, cited in Forsyth 1992) the conquest lasted from 1581 to 1700, whereas Lincoln (1994) states that the incorporation was completed only with the end of the Brezhnev era in 1982.

In fact, contact between West Siberian indigenous inhabitants and Russians is recorded much earlier, in 1030, when representatives of the pretsarist Novgorod state came to West Siberia and began trading for furs. The Novgorodians at that time counted West Siberia as a 'subordinated province' (*volost'iu poddanoi*, Patrikeev 1995: 3), and the fur traded as a tribute (*dan'*) although their contact with *Khanty* (then Ostiak) and Nentsy (then Samoyed) was very occasional. Kappeler (1993: 21) maintains that in the Novgorod state all later strategies and goals of executing power over non-Russians already existed, such as direct and indirect rule, and the step-by-step incor-

poration of non-Russians through administrative and then social and religious acculturation.

Variations on the idea of 'conquest' for Russian penetration into Siberia included 'colonisation', espoused by Dmytryshin (referred to by Forsyth 1992), whereas Marxist historiography rather saw it as 'unification' (*prisoedinenie*) (Kappeler 1993: 16, 54). Accepted as the official term for a long period, 'unification' continues to appear in recent publications, even those written by natives themselves (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 10–18). Since Tsarist times, the Russian population has been approaching the indigenous peoples of Siberia in a very paternalistic way. The anthropologist doing fieldwork today is still confronted with that idea in conversations with Russian government officials and also Russian ethnographers.

From 1822, when a law on the Siberian population was passed (see below), right up to the present, the general idea has always been that the indigenous people are weak, in danger of extinction, cannot protect themselves because they are primitive, and therefore need the Russians to protect them and help them improve their living standards. Many Russians say that indigenous peoples should thank Russia for bringing civilisation to them.

> You know, I really love these people, they are so wonderful, so wise, but so naive. They do not know how to cope with the challenges of the present, this is why they need our, the ethnographers' help (Russian ethnographer to author, personal communication, March 1998).

The 1822 Charter of Administration of Siberian Aliens[62] (*inorodsy*) is a good example of the paternalistic way in which Russians tried to organise indigenous people and help them to develop. The Charter, also known as the 'Speranskii Code', is seen as a crucial point in Russian policy towards Siberia and is described by many historians. A comprehensive short overview is provided by Pika (1999: 36–43). This law had a very long-lasting influence as far as the categorisation of the indigenous population was concerned. Speranskii divided them into hunter-gatherers (*brodiashchie*), nomads (*kochevye*, the biggest group), and settled *inorodsy* (*osedlye*). The Nentsy were classified as *brodiashchie*, which implied having the fewest rights and duties as citizens. Each of these categories had a different set of responsibilities and rights within the Russian Empire, thereby assigning them different levels of self-determination (e.g. *rodovye upravleniia*, clan administration), the settled *inorodsy* being close to full Russian citizenship. This categorisation continued to exist as part of the communist approach, which set for the Siberian peoples the goal of moving up the evolutionary

[62] 'Alien' is the translation used in the English edition of Pika (1999) for the Russian term *inorodsy*, which literally translated means 'foreign peoples'. I will use the original Russian term because the English one is contested.

ladder from hunter-gatherers, through nomads, to becoming a settled population (see section 4.4.7 on Soviet sedentarisation). Even in 2001, a sovkhoz hunter counted less than a sovkhoz nomadic reindeer herder, having a smaller pension, a lower salary, and fewer privileges. This is rooted in the Marxist evolutionary model adapted from Morgan's work (1995 [1877]), where hunter-gatherers are below the nomads on the evolutionary ladder.

The effects of the 1822 law are evaluated in different ways. Whereas Lincoln (1994) sees the reforms as being successful for the protection of the indigenous peoples and development of their way of live, Kappeler (1993: 140f), Forsyth (1992: 154–61) and Pika (1999) maintain that in reality the state of the Siberian peoples did not improve. Having in mind the statement by Lincoln (1994), who sees the conquest of Siberia as being completed in 1982, I was surprised to hear in 1998 a Surgut *Khanty* intellectual saying that, according to the Speranskii Code, Siberia belongs to the Siberians, and there is still no official document that states that Siberia is a part of Russia. Russians just pretend that the land is theirs, she explained, but in fact their presence there is still illegal.[63] Although such statements are anecdotal, it is still telling for the implicit independent mindset of some West Siberian indigenous inhabitants.

The difficulties of incorporating Siberian nomads into the Russian Empire are also striking throughout the sixteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. Russian statehood in Siberia was established mainly because of the incredible wealth that was to be gained through furs, similar to the oil and gas treasures of today. Furs were the main source of international trade for the Russian Empire. *Iasak*, the fur tribute, was the instrument for the incorporation of native people. Golovnev & Osherenko (1999: 44) divide this period into three phases: the first to 1720 under direct rule, the second to 1822 under indirect rule, and the third to 1900 under native rule. In the first phase, similar to the Novgorod rule (cf. Patrikeev 1995) natives were thought to be obliged to pay *iasak* directly to Russian representatives, but many natives did not come from the forests and tundra to the Russian settlements to pay (Slezkine 1994: 20f). In the period of indirect rule, native middlemen, rulers assigned by the tsars, had to collect the *iasak*. There is no common agreement in the literature as to whether these native middlemen were part of an already existing system or whether they were 'created' by the Russians for better execution of their indirect rule (Slezkine 1994: 67–9).

The consolidation of the state's position in Siberia is expressed by a movement of Cossacks and traders from west to east, and the establishment of trading posts and towns from the late fifteenth century where *iasak* could be collected. Salekhard, the capital of what today is the YNAO, was founded

[63]Personal communication, Agrafena Sopotchina, 22 March 1998.

in 1593, and in 1632 Russians arrived at the Pacific Ocean edge of Siberia. This enabled the St. Petersburg leadership to see Siberia as part of Russia and its peoples were subordinated.

The inhabitants, however, tended to view the collection of furs more as trade than as a tax, and indeed the distinction between the two was often unclear. Ssorin-Chaikov (2000) shows how the Evenki saw the *iasak* as a form of trade (cf. also Ziker 2002b: 68): they first demanded bread and other products they needed, and then gave furs. Gumilev (2000: 256) argues that the native people gave the furs as gifts to the Russians, as a sign of respect and politeness. In so doing, they were behaving in accordance with the guidelines of the *zakon tundry* (see section 3.3), which stresses mutual giving and receiving as part of general reciprocity. The Russians, however, stressed that the goods they gave in return for the furs were just gifts for the indigenous tax-payers (Slezkine 1994: 20). Differing perceptions of these interrelationships caused problems when the native people looked to other 'trading partners' and preferred doing business with private traders because they had better goods or prices to offer. The state insisted that the Siberian peoples were obliged to pay the taxes to its institutions and to nobody else. Here, an interesting parallel can be drawn with the present-day market economy, where reindeer herders without warning may sell their meat and antlers to private commercial enterprises instead of to the sovkhoz, or switch between various enterprises when officially they are considered to be sovkhoz workers (see section 4.5 and chapter 8).

This overview of the main reasons for tsarist–indigenous interactions provides an interesting point of historical continuity in the context of the nature of Russian interest in Siberia: it was, and still is, mainly centred on resource extraction. In tsarist times the resources were furs, as at the beginning of the Soviet Union with the establishment of fur-breeding farms (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 89). From the 1960s onwards, the primary resources have been oil and gas. The difference is that for the extraction of the latter, the native population is not needed, a fact which holds dangers for the future.

4.3 'Path Dependency', 'Conservatives' and 'Progressives': Central Soviet Development Models 1917–1930

The advent of Soviet power in Siberia during Lenin's rule meant a certain degree of path dependence with tsarist times. The parallels between Russian tsarist policies and those of Lenin towards non-Russian people are especially emphasised by Kappeler (1993: 302). The concepts of Leninist Siberian politics largely drew upon the idea of self-determination of the people. Many

communist decrees argued for the goal of 'improving the poor living standard' of the Siberian population (cf. Kopylova 1960). This paternalistic approach sounds very similar to the idea of the protection of indigenous people by Catherine II, and an earlier form of self-determination can be seen in the concept of native rule by Speranskii. Paradoxically, path dependence with tsarist times can also be seen as the opposite of protection, namely the repression of indigenous peoples. Repression had been growing continually since 1831, when more efforts were directed towards Russification and consolidation of the empire (Kappeler 1993: 224).

The consolidation of the Soviet Empire in the Russian North during the 1920s was rather weak for two reasons. One was the difficulty of reaching the northern regions due to poor transport and communications, which is the main reason why development in Siberia lags several years behind that of the Russian centre (Slezkine 1994). The other reason was of a political nature. The 1920s were a period of intensive discussion centred on how to consolidate the newly founded state. Nationality politics at this time were quite flexible, giving ethnic groups a lot of freedom as long as the main goals of the consolidation of power and increased socio-political stability were not compromised (Kappeler 1993: 302).

In 1924 the Soviets established a Committee of the North, which was responsible for the relations of the Soviet state with its northern residents. In this committee there were two factions of Russian planners and theoreticians, the first of which was dominant throughout the 1920s. These so-called 'conservatives' wanted to improve the living standard of the local population through the establishment of reserves under special protection. With state support they would then be able to develop their own local economies and cultures. The state should not do more than provide a stable framework for the small ethnic groups by protecting them from 'bad' external influences.

The other faction in the committee, the 'progressives', focused their plans around the concept of classes rather than self-determination. Their main goals were sovietisation and an exploration of the natural resources of Siberia. In their view, the unified development concept, which was already being applied across the Soviet Union, should also be extended to the North. These planners, who were dominant within the committee by the end of the 1920s, classified the culture of Siberian peoples as very low on the evolutionary ladder. The policies proposed to bring the people out of this 'backwater' included sedentarisation, reduction of economic and cultural autonomy, and repression of political and religious leaders (shamans). Reindeer herding became a branch of agriculture, and rich herders were treated like rich land owners in Russian agriculture—as *kulaki* exploiting their poor neighbours as subordinates. Their property was to be confiscated and trans-

ferred to the state (Forsyth 1992: 287–9; Kasten 1992: 4f; Golovnev 1995: 165–78, 183–94; Vakhtin 1998: 82–5; Pika 1999: 11–20).

This simple superimposition of class models on the indigenous peoples is typical for many regions in the Russian North. The standard model divided the population into the exploiters (*kulaki*) and the exploited (*bedniaki*). Between the two, there was the middle class (*seredniaki*). Slezkine (1994: 192–5) describes the struggles within the Committee of the North to adapt this model to the north: 'Most urgent, however, someone would have to become an exploiter. At the time of the "intensification of the class struggle" one had to find class enemies or face the risk of becoming one' (p. 193). Although *kulaki* in the North were defined mainly as exploiting less powerful people (see Balzer 1999: 108), in the end it came down to a simple counting of the reindeer herds to identify the class enemy, because in practice everything else turned out to be too complicated among the herders. This resulted in tables comparing ratios of reindeer per owner as the main criterion (e.g. Kopylova 1960: 38). Not many authors invested as much effort as Kudriavtsev (1931: 36), who identified numerous types of exploitation by *kulaki*: guardianship of orphans and *bedniaki*, while maximally exploiting them for work; renting workers as herders for exploitative terms of trade; jointly migrating with *bedniaki* while using them as unpaid herders; distribution of *bedniaki* among *kulak* households for one or more years; lending out reindeer to *bedniaki* under exploitative terms of trade; and selling reindeer on credit to be paid in fish. All these class relations were seen as 'masked by the remaining patriarchal clan structures'.

Gray (2003: 140) identified one of the crucial misunderstandings in the simple imposition of a generalised model, which 'took as given that there was class differentiation between poor labourers and rich exploiters'. This basic Marxist assumption, 'proved' by Soviet ethnographic works (e.g. Brodnev 1950, 1959; Kopylova 1960; Shapalin 1965) ignores the fact that the difference between being rich and poor was flexible in nature, and rich herders after one reindeer epidemic could become poor, a fact which has been generalised by Slezkine for all reindeer pastoralists of the Soviet Union (1994: 193).

To sum up, early Soviet policy towards the North can be divided into two periods: one in the 1920s during the period of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) with its 'conservative' protection approach to the indigenous peoples, and the second from the 1930s with the so-called 'progressive' approach of sovietisation, which forced native economies to fit into a single centrally planned industrialised economy based on the ideology of class conflict. As I will show below, the second model, planned in Moscow, became increasingly influential in Siberia.

4.4 The Sovietisation Model in the Yamal-Nenets Okrug

From 1917 until 1921 there was a power vacuum in Yamal. Petrova & Khariutschi (1999: 43f) describe how the Yamal-Nentsy's European relatives brought the news of some strange *nar'iana lutsa* (Red Russians),[64] who had installed 'their Tsar'. For the reindeer herders, such distant news was of minor importance, since the first expedition of the Red Army (Bolsheviks) did not arrive in Salekhard until 1920. Nevertheless, they were at least warned that something had happened which could affect them too. The local version of the civil war in settlements like Obdorsk (today Salekhard) brought about several power shifts and saw a dual structure of the old tsarist–native administrations and communist councils. In 1921, the communists were defeated and were forced to escape on reindeer to the northern Yamal Peninsula. In 1922, the communists at last succeeded in gaining power, but this still had no real effect on the nomadic tundra population. In the years of civil war, the strategy of reindeer herders was to avoid settlements on their migration routes, because they knew that there was nothing to obtain from them. They simply stayed out in the tundra (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 45–9).

Looking at the implementation of Soviet power in Yamal, it becomes clear that from the outset regional communists held a view markedly different to the centrally planned directives. For example, as early as 1921, the Obdorsk communists were convinced that forced appropriation of surplus from peasants (reindeer herders), as planned by Moscow, was the wrong method for the nomadic North. They continued to work as in tsarist times (path dependency), on the basis of exchange for mutual benefit, although at unfavourable terms of trade. Even so, in the first year local Bolsheviks did not have enough products or goods to offer, so they could not take all the meat that the reindeer herders were offering (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 45). Herders found themselves in a very similar position in the early 1990s, when the Soviet institutions could not pay them for everything they offered. Thus, herders responded similarly to this strikingly parallel situation at the very beginning and the very end of Soviet power in Yamal: they continued, and continue, to find alternative ways of getting income. In the 1920s they did this by working with traders (*kuptsy*); in the 1990s they worked with the commercial enterprises (*kommersanty*, see chapter 8).

The Committee of the North began to exert its influence in Yamal in the second half of the 1920s, when it introduced clan councils (*rodovye sovety*) and clan gatherings (*rodovye sobraniia*) for the native population.

[64] Nenets: *nar'ian* means red and *lutsa* is the term for all foreigners except the Nentsy's direct neighbours, with whom they had contacts even before the Russians.

This was considered a compromise between the need to establish Soviet institutions and the need to continue native rule under the banner of self-determination of native peoples as proclaimed by Lenin (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 51). As far as actual contacts with the tundra population were concerned, the Soviets built up trading posts (*faktorii*) in the tundra as close as possible to the migration routes of the reindeer herders. These posts were designed to supply the nomads with bread and other staples as well as goods and services. *Faktorii* gradually developed into small village-like settlements, equipped with a bakery, a store, a sauna, a medical station, and even *kul'tbazy*, institutions providing socialist enlightenment through books, and education for native adults and children. The first *faktoriia* was established in 1926 close to the present-day administrative centre of Yar-Sale. By the beginning of the 1930s the *faktoriia* movement had reached the remotest northern edges of the peninsula (Shapalin 1965: 35; Greb et al. 1997: 12; Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 75f). Before 1926, there had not been a single village on the Yamal Peninsula.

4.4.1 The Territorial Principle in the Administration of the Region

The early 1930s saw the introduction of the first political and administrative changes on the tundra, which for the native hunters, fishermen and reindeer herders became more and more difficult to escape. The dominance of the 'progressives' within the Committee of the North became obvious. The principle of native administration (clan councils) was radically changed to a principle of territorial administration, with a structure that has basically remained the same, even surviving the Soviet Union, until today. The lowest level of territorial administration became the *sel'sovet* (village council) in the transitional period, and also the *kochevoi sovet* (nomadic council), instead of the *rodovoi sovet* (clan council). One level above this, the *raiony* were established, where there used to be *tuzemnye sovety* (indigenous councils). The third level became the *Nationalnyi Okrug* and, from 1977, the *Avtonomnyi Okrug*. The big *Tobol'sk Okrug* was abandoned and in its place the *Ostiako-Vogulskii Nationalnyi Okrug* (later *Khanty-Mansiiskii Avtonomnyi Okrug*, KMAO) and the *Yamalo-Nenetskii Nationalnyi Okrug* (later *Yamalo-Nenetskii Avtonomnyi Okrug*, YNAO) were established (see table 4).

Table 4. Simplified administrative structure from pre-Soviet to post-Soviet times.[65]

Pre-Soviet admin. unit	Post-1931 admin. unit	Post-Soviet unit
rodovoi sovet	*sel'sovet, kochevoi sovet*	*sel'sovet*
tuzemnyi sovet	*raion*	*raion*
Tobol'sk Okrug	*YNAOkrug, KMAOkrug*	*YNAOkrug, KMAOkrug*
Tyumen'skaia Guberniia'	*Ural'skaia (1944: Tyumen'skaia) Oblast'*	*since 2000 Ural'skii federalnyi Okrug, over still existing Tyumen'skaia Oblast'*
Late Russian Empire	*Soviet Union*	*Russian Federation*

This was an important reorganisation in so far as the introduction of a territorial principle at the base of the administrative structure contradicted the highly flexible nomadic lifestyle of the tundra and taiga population. This has led authors such as Petrova & Khariutschi to speak of 'alienation of power from the people' (1999: 52, see also 67f; and Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 77). Anderson goes even further in arguing that assigning a territory and a language to a group, which has its origins in the Speranskii classification, became the main criterion for constructing identities for the indigenous ethnic groups. Originally, this was not an *emic* concept of the tundra population itself. Slezkine (1994: 269–75) shows how the implementation of the territorial units largely ignored moderate advice and sees in it the eventual defeat of the Committee of the North as a whole. However, during the period of the Soviet Union, indigenous people themselves largely bought into the principle of ethnic groups being assigned to bounded lands (Anderson 2000a: 46, 82–4, 132f). With each group being assigned a territory, nomadism as a way of life was seen as anomalous, and sedentarisation became an ideological necessity. Its implementation in Yamal, however, did not go as smoothly as the planners wished (see section 4.4.7).

Many authors have investigated the aspects of transformation and change for indigenous people in the North during sovietisation (Forsyth 1992; Slezkine 1994; Golovnev & Osherenko 1999; Anderson 2000a).

[65] This table shows general outcomes of reorganisation and is not time-consistent. For example, Ural'skaia Oblast was established only in 1923, and today the Tyumen'skaia Oblast' still exists, but the degree of independence of the YNAO and the KMAO of Tyumen' is highly contested.

Without wanting to deny changes and ruptures, I suggest that the Yamal example can be better understood by asking why so many things changed so little. If we take the territorial reorganisation as an example of change, we would expect that this would also influence how reindeer pastures were allocated. However, under the umbrella of Soviet restructuring, there was considerable continuity of territorial principles in the tundra. I show this with the example of nomadic movements and clan lands in chapter 6. When Golovnev & Osherenko claim that migration routes were radically altered (1999: 117), they are starting with an assumption of continuity and so were surprised by how many migration routes changed. When I start from the assumption of radical changes, I am more surprised that the actual changes were so moderate given the radical statements of state planners. In drawing on field material I maintain that the general pattern did not change and that migration is one of the main examples of continuity from pre- to post-Soviet times (see chapter 6).

4.4.2 Starting Points for Collectivisation

Initially, sovietisation efforts in Yamal and elsewhere centred on the poor (*bedniaki*) people within the indigenous population. The political strategy of the communists focused on convincing them how uneven was the distribution of wealth among reindeer herders, and how the poor were exploited by the rich *kulaki* and the shamans. Soviet literature provides data on the distribution of reindeer among Nentsy. In 1926, a *pokhoziaistvennaia perepis* (household census) of the native population and their herds revealed that 78.3% of all nomadic households had fewer than 100 reindeer (Brodnev 1950: 97). Kopylova (1960: 38) mentions figures of 9.3% of the households owning 49.9% of all reindeer in the early 1930s. This shows the preoccupation of the authorities with reindeer numbers in determining who class enemies were. In 1928, the Ural section of the Committee of the North organised an expedition to the Yamal Peninsula headed by Vladimir Evladov, whose diaries and other materials from his one year in the field form an early and most valuable anthropological primary source, providing a snapshot of the Nenets economy, society and culture just before collectivisation (Evladov 1992 [1929]). Evladov also provided data on several rich reindeer herders of northern Yamal, who held herds of more than 5,000 head. However, Evladov also describes on several occasions the system of mutual help among the Nentsy, which provided poorer herders with deer (see chapter 5). Soviet ethnographers describe this as a good basis on which to build socialism, although others saw in it the basis of 'inner exploitation' (of the poor by the rich). Their examples for this are the so-called *parmy* united summer camps comprising three to 12 households who pooled the

herding work during the mosquito time, when large herds are easier to manage than small ones, and a lot of labour is needed to do this. Similar practices were also recorded for hunting arctic foxes and fishing with long casting nets called *nevody*. The revenues of these collective economic activities were evenly divided among the households participating in the work (Brodnev 1950: 95f; cf. Terletski 1934; Brodnev 1959). The communists regarded these practices as helpful for the introduction of collectivisation, saying that they were the 'beginnings of *arteli* in the primitive household economy' (Shapalin 1965: 33; cf. Greb et al. 1997: 39f). What the communists needed to do was to transform these flexible seasonal collectives into permanent ones that fitted general Soviet ideas. The basic principles for collective work in reindeer herding did not change, however, which makes continuity between pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet times more likely.

Indeed, all the above-mentioned practices can be observed today by anyone who joins the reindeer herders for their respective activities. They are still an important characteristic of Nenets social relations in the tundra, centring on entitlements and herding duties (see chapter 5). As far as joint fishing and hunting are concerned, the practices described for pre-Soviet times are also still important today. The joining together of households for a short period for ice-fishing in autumn or fishing in summer happens every year, and also for hunting arctic foxes (*talavara*) in winter, where a whole group of hunters on sledges is needed to intersect the routes of the arctic foxes, chase them, round them up until they are trapped in a closing circle of hunters and then shoot them.

4.4.3 Various Institutional Frameworks for Collective Enterprises and Their Implementation

The first steps towards collectivisation in Yamal were taken in the second half of the 1920s. The new Soviet leaders saw in the large difference between big and small herds an intolerable stratification of the reindeer herders. Experts worked out a program for turning native reindeer herding, fishing and hunting into part of the planned economy. The ideology was that 'only the collectivisation of reindeer herding could save the poor masses from misery and ruin'. This should be done by 'overcoming the natural character of reindeer herding' and making it a commodity, suitable for integration into the market (Kopylova 1960: 39). In practical terms, these goals should be achieved by establishing reindeer sovkhozy, and simultaneously by collectivising the poor and middle-class reindeer households (*bedniaki* and *seredniaki*). However, collectivisation started with fishing collectives, and reached reindeer herding only at the beginning of the 1930s, and

on a wide scale not until 1936 (Shapalin 1965: 33). The Soviets in Yamal realised that collectivisation had to be done carefully and followed a step-by-step 'up the ladder' model of ever more collective property. In each type of collective institution, the share of collective property would be different. The idea was that the collectives would start with a simple form, such as 'PPO', and gradually would move 'up' until the final step, the sovkhoz, where all private property is forbidden. Therefore, all private property of reindeer herding households was reclassified and given the status of personal belongings. In sovkhozy, reindeer belonging to the herders were 'personal' (*lichnye*) reindeer and not the forbidden private ones (*chastnye*).[66] However, there were also cases where collectives started off as sovkhozy, or others that 'jumped' over one phase while moving up the ladder (see table 5).

Table 5. Collective institutions for indigenous peoples in the YNAO and their approximate duration.

Name	Characteristics	Duration
Parma	Cooperation between reindeer herding 'neighbours' or relatives, for the pooling of labour mainly in summer	Pre-Soviet–1932
PPO, PPT	*Prosteishchoe proizvodstvennoe obedinenie* (or *tovarichestvo*). A group of workers, mostly relatives, jointly doing reindeer herding or fishing. No limit on the number of private reindeer.	1932–6 North Yamal
Artel'	Cooperative association of workmen (first mainly fishers). Private herd maximum 100–250 deer. Fishing *arteli* have a different charter from agricultural *arteli*.	Pre-Soviet–1961
Kolkhoz	General term for cooperative enterprise. Property is owned by the workers themselves, but jointly. Gradually became 'non-dividable', i.e. cannot be separated by workers leaving the collective. Herding work divided up among work teams (*brigady*) consisting often of relatives.	1933–61
Sovkhoz	State agricultural enterprise with a unified structure all over Russia. 'Total social institution', dominates the entire social life of rural villages. Limit on personal herds of 50–100 per herder. Membership of *brigady* deliberately organised to consist of unrelated people.	1961–93 and up to the present

[66] See my discussion of the difference between the two in chapter 5.

Brodnev, who in the 1930s was in charge of organising the activities of the Nentsy in Yar-Sale, has argued against the general Soviet idea of consciously splitting up clan ties when establishing collectives (Brodnev 1950: 94). He thought that PPTs with herders from just one clan should cause no problem in the implementation of Soviet rules. For Brodnev it was clear that the pre-Soviet Nenets associations of *parma* (reindeer herders) 'were easy to transform to PPT, and depending on their stability, to transfer to the charter of an *artel'* (Brodnev 1950: 96). Here we have to understand that *artel'* as a Soviet institution was seen to be more advanced than a PPO or PPT, whereas Brodnev (1950: 95) refers to pre-Soviet fishing associations also as *arteli*.

According to the plans of the Committee of the North, the procedure for moving 'up the collective ladder' from *parma* to kolkhoz was to establish so-called 'integrated cooperatives', which were mainly thought to help the natives overcome the crises they faced during and after the civil war, when they could not trade and did not get any supplies. The work of these cooperatives is evaluated positively by Nentsy today (cf. Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 56). They strongly believe that collectives helped tundra people to recover after the hardships of the civil war. I see this Nenets perception as being in line with statements found in Soviet publications, which claim that the task of the integrated cooperations was to make socialist restructuring more understandable and affordable for the natives (Kopylova 1960: 39).

The early forms of collective organisations (PPO, see table 5), which had their origins in *parma*, were very loose cooperations, sometimes intended to exist only for a certain period of time (Greb et al. 1997: 40). The different forms of collective organisations shown in table 5 are listed according to their 'strictness' of collective property. It is interesting that the early establishment of the first sovkhoz in 1929 (Nadymskii) occurred even before most of the kolkhozy. However, it was not until 1961 that sovkhozy became the unified principle of state agricultural enterprises. Early sovkhozy had the task of improving the breeds (*plemennaia rabota*, see chapter 2) of reindeer based on scientific research and of selling these deer to the kolkhozy. Moreover, they were requested to provide the state institutions with meat. The first three sovkhozy in the YNAO—Nadymskii, Purovskii and Muzhevskii—were also testing fields for the implementation of socialist reindeer herding with controlled seasonal changes of pastures, carrying capacity, migration routes and breeding techniques (Kopylova 1960: 40f).

This reveals that it was not intended that the initial sovkhoz concept would become the leading institutional principle of agricultural organisation in the north. Instead, it was thought of more as a kind of 'elite' enterprise. A similar situation existed in Chukotka even before Yamal, from 1926. There, local Soviet administrators had been 'over-eager' in their efforts to collectiv-

ise (Gray 2003: 140f). In Yamal, it is significant that none of the early sovkhozy were established on the northern peninsulas of the YNAO, but in the more central and southern regions. In the north, collectivisation met more resistance, because here the influential herders were controlling the tundra without much interference from outsiders.

The forms of collective institutions differed mainly according to the organisation of property relations. The more collectivised the institutions, the more progressive they were in the eyes of the communists. Each of these organisational forms had its own charter (*ustav*). For the communists, transferring a cooperative from one *ustav* to another was a sign of progress towards communism (Kopylova 1960: 32). Whereas in PPOs there was no limit to the size of members' private herds, in *arteli* the limit was 100 deer per member. In kolkhozy, the number was later reduced to 70, a standard afterwards applied even to sovkhozy (Shapalin 1965: 41). However, there were many variations to these limits on herders' ownership of their reindeer. The charter of some *arteli* allowed the ownership of 50 male and 200 female reindeer (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 71), a herd size roughly corresponding to the number of animals needed for the subsistence of one household in the tundra.

The existence of these limits in the charter did not mean that every member had the maximum of deer allowed, nor that herders did not hide their real number of personal deer from inspectors, as reported by Golovnev & Osherenko (1999: 98). Handling of these limits at the local level is another example of how planned models were altered on their way from city offices 'down' to the tundra level. The Soviets had a hard time controlling the size of personal reindeer herds. They sent out special teams comprising several *zootekhniki* in order to avoid bribing and widespread 'informal agreements' with herders. These teams would sometimes go out during the night to count deer without the presence of the owners. The owners at times tried to divide the herds and drive some away into the tundra, collecting them back after the inspectors had left. But even when the real numbers were known in the village, the local administration, which was headed by Nentsy, did not necessarily report them to the okrug administration.[67] Thus, although there were inspections and a lot of information was obtained at the local level, this was not always passed on to the regional administrations, let alone to the federal centres of power.

[67] Personal communication with Nadezhda Kolmakova, former *zootekhnik* of the sovkhoz Yamalskii, 11 September 2000, and with the senior head of the Se-Iakhinskii *sel'sovet*, Nikolai Lachevich Okotetto, June 2001.

4.4.4 Problems and Incompleteness of Collectivisation (to 1945)

Soviet and post-Soviet sources, as well as reindeer herders' representatives, claim that sovietisation, with its goal of creating a unified economy across the country, worked badly in Yamal. Neither collectivising the private herds nor sedentarising the nomads was really successful. One of my main arguments in this chapter is that this also helped tundra people to be successful in private reindeer herding when the Soviet experiment ended towards the end of the 1980s and the reindeer herders were left alone again, just as they had been from 1917 to 1922.

When the first experiments in collectivisation failed, even the communist party stated that it was wrong to try to collectivise every aspect of life immediately such as hunting rifles, traps and *chum*s. Therefore, a Communist Party resolution accused local 'collectivisers' of having ignored the form of the PPO, corresponding best to the existing pre-Soviet forms of cooperation (quoted in Shapalin 1965: 32). However, the quote above from Brodnev (1950: 96), and his whole article, suggests that PPOs or PPTs were not ignored. What it indicates is that local Soviets tried to evaluate the 'stability' of collective institutions so that they could then decide whether or not to transfer them to the next 'higher' level.

In the 1930s, the official collectivisation policy, which aimed to erase indigenous conceptions of land rights, was introduced so that *zemel'noe-vodnoe ustroistvo* (land–water reorganisation) between 1932 and 1936 could be undertaken to 'create' land for the big collective enterprises (Shapalin 1965: 32). According to Brodnev (1950: 95), the dismantling of clan lands in order to create kolkhoz lands happened 'without any complications'. My notes from talks with reindeer herders suggest that this was because the kolkhoz territories were not so different from the clan territories, a fact that is only hinted at by Brodnev (1950: 94). It seemed to be more problematic to make kolkhoz territories compatible with new *raion* boundaries, which is why other sources report 'considerable violation of the rules of land use in kolkhozy and sovkhozy' (Kopylova 1960: 42). In fact, the idea of restricting the territories of reindeer enterprises to administrative borders has never been successful in the YNAO. Many enterprises officially have migration routes that pass through various *raiony*, such as the Yamal'skii and the Nadymskii, or Priural'skii. Some of the enterprises in the west even cross the border into the Komi Republic (see chapter 7).

Given that the principle was to start to collectivise the 'poor' population, the measurable progress of collective ownership was rather moderate. In 1936 35% of the indigenous households were collectivised, but the kolkhozy and sovkhozy had only 27,160 reindeer (out of 249,500), whereas in 1957 all households were attached to some form of collective enterprise,

which had 255,000 reindeer, representing two-thirds of the total herd number in the okrug (Kopylova 1960: 48; Shapalin 1965: 34). Collectivisation of the poor households, however, was planned to be only the first step in the complete incorporation of all herders into the Soviet system, and the ideology demanded 'liberation from the dependence of the tundra kulakhood' (Kopylova 1960: 39), which was the northern variation of the Moscow order on the 'liquidation of the kulaks as a class' (Slezkine 1994: 194).

In spite of local Soviets calling for careful implementation of central models, the collectivisation that occurred in the first half of the 1930s must have been the worst time for rich herders and shamans. The 'progressive' Stalinist leadership tried to implement central models more rigorously than ever before (or since), as far as the appropriation of reindeer was concerned. This, however, proved to be far from successful. The Red Army and other communists began confiscating reindeer from the rich herders, thereby forcing them to settle in the newly established villages (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 85ff). The reindeer herders rarely received anything in exchange for their deer. An increase of kolkhoz and sovkhoz herds by 15,000 animals was accompanied by the loss of 138,900 animals among reindeer herders (calculated from Kopylova 1960: 48). They would rather slaughter or 'lose' their animals than hand them over to the Soviets. While the Soviets were trying to enforce their ideas on these peoples, it became apparent that they were unable to supply them with basic needs. In 1933 the state owed the reindeer herders the equivalent of 11.5 tons of bread.

Dissatisfaction with the overall situation led to an open conflict between reindeer herders and the Soviets, which became widely known as the *mandala* (or *mandalada*, *mandolyda*). These violent rebellions are well described elsewhere (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 81–93; Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 79–83; Ziker 2002b: 76–80; for the Khanty, Balzer 1999: 110–17). These rebellions were repeated several times through the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, the biggest one occurring in 1933–4 when more than 500 households in northern Yamal stopped the work of three *sel'sovety*. They demanded the return of everything that the communists had taken away, freedom for all the arrested *kulaki* and shamans and the reintroduction of kinship-based native rule (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 81). They also insisted that the class principle itself, the division into *bedniak* (poor), *seredniak* (middle class) and *kulak* (rich), should be abolished for the Nentsy (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 84). However, this was the only open opposition to Soviet rule, and it is generally now agreed that in many parts of the YNAO most indigenous people did not object to the Soviet system. However, as I shall show throughout this book, this does not mean that Soviet 'culture', as Golovnev & Osherenko (1999: 85) call it, replaced Nenets

'culture'. Instead I argue that there are dynamic processes in play at the very heart of what is called a culture, so it is most likely that there will always be a combination of different influences.

For the communists, *mandala* provided the opportunity to blame the *kulaki* and shamans for all the shortcomings of their collectivisation efforts (e.g. Kopylova 1960: 40); and the reverse is used today by patriots glorifying the Nenets resistance who see the *mandala* as the reason for the incompleteness of sovietisation. However, after the turmoil, reindeer herders and Soviet authorities apparently found some *modus vivendi*, which leads Golovnev & Osherenko to speak of a 'mild but stubborn resistance' of the Nentsy within the kolkhoz system (1999: 89). Still, I claim that the end of this radical suppressive Soviet policy, which persecuted shamans and imprisoned *kulaki*, is not just 'something of a miracle' (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 97) but must be properly explained. Part of the answer lies in the possibility that the era of informal agreements between local Soviets and reindeer herders may have started in Yamal even before Stalin's death in 1953. How else could we explain the considerable increase in the number of reindeer in the private herds (from 200,800 to 259,000) between 1935 and 1940? The herds of the kolkhozy over this period increased significantly from 8,000 to 35,000 (Kopylova 1960: 48).

Based on my fieldwork, I see the Nenets approach to the Soviet system as adapting it, entering it, and using it to their own advantages within the framework of their own lifestyle. Under Soviet rule they found their niches within (or, at worst, retreated to zones within) the arctic tundra that were not subject to strict control. This approach is still evident today in the way that they manage their relations with oil and gas extractors. They use to their advantage new contacts and new goods brought to the North that can improve their own lifestyle. This is clearly not an abandonment of nomadism in favour of an ill-fitting model called 'civilisation'. Haakanson (2000: 223) has come to the same conclusion for their material culture, claiming that 'they have adapted modern material culture to fit their mode of life and not the opposite'.

The communists interpreted the Nenets strategy of adapting to the Soviet system and using it to their own advantage differently. They saw in it an attempt of the rich herders to infiltrate the kolkhozy and at the same time exert control over the poorer reindeer herders. They accused *kulaki* herders of 'often pretending to be at the forefront of kolkhoz establishment, trickling into the kolkhozy with the goal of causing damage to them' (Kopylova 1960: 40). Balzer describes the same strategy in relation to the Northern Khanty (1999: 110). This is supported by the story of one elder that some *kulaki* understood that the only way to continue life on the tundra would be by

joining a cooperative with a smaller herd of their personal reindeer. They thus gave away a considerable part of their herd to neighbours or kin, in order to pretend not to be rich.[68]

The Soviets, on their side, applied practices of collectivisation that were not in line with the theory constructed in Moscow. The collective herds were obtained mainly through buying herds from the private herders. According to Kopylova (1960: 41), in 1932 one-fifth of all collective reindeer were the result of confiscation, whereas all the other were bought from herders and the early sovkhozy. However, the drastic decrease of herds described above indicates that collectivisers indeed tried to confiscate the deer, but failed. This scenario is typical for the whole of the Russian North, where reindeer herders slaughtered deer rather than hand them over to the Soviet authorities (Grant 1995: 91, quoting Slezkine 1989: 373). On the other hand, the purchasing of reindeer rather than confiscation has also been described for other regions, such as neighbouring Taimyr Okrug (Ziker 2002b: 77, 79). Purchasing does not mean that the reindeer transfer was voluntary. The herders were forced to sell the deer, yet often the state could not fulfil its promises to pay or exchange the deer for goods. Apparently, both confiscating and purchasing were practised in Yamal, as the following quote illustrates.

> In the beginning, Pes' had 1,000 deer, but they confiscated 700, and left him 300. But then, he and his father Miari again became rich, and the kolkhoz started to buy reindeer from them. He himself sold as many as he wanted, but to the limit that both together should not have more than 300. The sovkhoz did it the same way. Therefore Pes' then had 35,000 roubles in the bank (*v zberknizhke*). In the 1980s, the sovkhoz left only 100 deer for one family, and bought up all the others. This all ended in the 1990s. But when the kolkhozy were there, life was hard. They gave us on average only half a loaf of bread per day, and sugar only once a month, if they [the kolkhoz people] had any at all (Pupta Pudanasevich Okotetto, Yamal, 26 May 2001).

This brief account from a Nenets elder indicates that after the first problems, the system of buying, instead of confiscating reindeer, worked. The only complaint was that before the sovkhoz was established, they did not get enough staples in return for their reindeer.

The practice of buying is considerably different from just confiscating private deer. My impression was that both herders and the sovkhoz administration in later Soviet times saw it mainly as an economic means rather than

[68] Personal communication with Pupta Pudanasivich Okotetto, more than 90 years old, 26 May 2001 (Yamal).

as coercive communist ideology. Forcing herders to sell their personal deer in order to fulfil the Soviet plan was a common pattern throughout the Soviet Union until the end of the 1980s, and some reindeer herders indeed became quite rich even in financial terms. The cash deposits were inheritable and could be passed on to one's descendants after death. Paradoxically, the Soviets had encouraged the herders not to abandon private property, but instead to transform it into the most 'capitalist' form of private property, a bank account, which was legalised as part of one's personal belongings (*lichnyi*). However, the difference is that in those days there was not much that reindeer herders could buy with this money. Since they did not convert their savings to material property, most of them lost all their money with the devaluation of the Russian rouble during the two major economic crises of 1991 and 1998.[69] For the sovkhoz, purchasing reindeer was a favourable practice because by their own means they were not able to fulfil the state meat plan (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 98). Kolmakova believes that the consequences for the sovkhoz would have been very serious if it had not been able to rely on the herders' personal reindeer.[70] However, this was not a real market transaction, since the sovkhoz could dictate prices for herders and they received money from the state to buy additional reindeer. So here again, from the early stages of collectivisation until the end of the Soviet Union, we see that the Soviets' relations with the reindeer herders of Yamal were not completely strict, and, similarly, the herders themselves used their intimate knowledge of the tundra to hide animals and expand their herds (see above). The point I make here is a general one, and I do not want to deny the fact that practices of individual Soviet representatives were sometimes strict or even cruel. What I do argue is that these practices were not the general pattern in Yamal during Soviet times.

To go back to the 1930s, the strictness of some of the practices was probably the reason why the Nentsy organised rebellions against the Soviet authorities. But this resistance could also be explained by the misery in the tundra during the civil war (1917–1922) and in the decade after this by the very poor provision of basic services on the tundra by the Soviets. In spite of their own poor performance, the Soviets were demanding reindeer from the herders, oppressing the shamans and deporting some *kulaki*. Taking and offering nothing in return contravened the 'law of the tundra' and was not tolerated by the Nentsy. However, rather than following a course of overt resistance, their overall strategy was to find niches within the new system and to use this position to their advantage.

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[69] The *zberbank* was closed in 1991, which was when most people lost their life savings.

[70] Personal communication with Nadezhda Kolmakova, former *zootekhnik* of the sovkhoz Yamal'skii, 11 September 2000.

The reindeer herders' endurance was tested during World War II. The war years are recognised by every inhabitant of the former Soviet Union as the most difficult the country ever experienced, and the reindeer herders were no exception to this. Not only were they ordered to the front, but many of the 250 herders from Yamal (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 104) have been the focus of stories, and even legends, which tell of their bravery. Some of these stories are even told by their descendants today. Reindeer herding at this time became subject to state planning to ensure food supplies for the state and later even for the front. Reindeer meat supplies from Yamal to the state increased from 294 tons in 1940 to 1,014 tons in 1942. This had a significant effect on the reindeer herds which fell in size from 382,300 animals in 1940 to 225,000 in 1945. During this phase, most of the slaughtered deer came from private reindeer herds that were not part of the collective herds listed in the statistics, whereas kolkhoz herds even 'gained' 56,600 head (all figures from Shapalin 1965: 164). These numbers indicate that the hard times of World War II were used to pull the last independent reindeer herders into the Soviet system. War was also the occasion to deal the final blow on the 'dekulakisation front'. Although there are sources for another *mandala* in 1943, these suggest that it was provoked and initiated by the regional secret service (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 104–8). Golovnev and Osherenko cite a Nenets who is reported as saying, 'we don't need *mandala* now', and, after a gathering of rebels: 'Nentsy just went away with their deer each on their own' (1999: 88). Here again the sources seem to support the argument that the Nenets strategy was not overt rebellion, but the adoption of the Soviet framework as a supplement to their tundra lifestyle.

4.4.5 Consolidation of kolkhozy (after World War II)

During World War II, the independent individual reindeer herders (*edinolichniki*) were forced either to give away all their deer or to join the kolkhoz. Those reindeer herders who remained outside the state in 1945 now had only 3,500 head, whereas before the war (1938) they were the biggest category of reindeer herders with 189,000 head. By 1945 the process of employing all herding households within the kolkhoz was 98.8% complete. All private herds were now classified as 'personal deer in households of kolkhoz employees'. The size of these herds for decades stayed at around 100,000 deer (all figures Kopylova 1960: 43, 48). Although the figures could be manipulated, they at least show that the state tolerated private herds up to 100,000, but that every deer beyond this limit had to be hidden or sold to the state.

After the war the Soviets tried to compensate for some of the losses by providing herders with reindeer for their personal herds. This presents something of a paradox given the ideological goal of eliminating private owner-

ship. However, it is likely that in the immediate post-war period the Soviets simply did not have any other goods to offer. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the Soviets were giving 70,000 deer to the herders of the collective enterprises (Kopylova 1960: 44). In practice, the herders received a third of all calves that were surplus to the plan, which at this time stood at 65 calves per 100 female deer (Kiselev 1974: 210). This reveals a significant trend in sovietisation politics. The main goal appeared to have moved from eliminating all private herds to incorporating every household into some sort of collective or later state structure. With this strategy the Soviets were able to declare their collectivisation policy to be a success, while still allowing herders to have their own herds, once they were employed by a collective enterprise. This led to the situation that exists today, where sovkhoz brigades include both enterprise-owned and privately owned deer.

From 1945 to 1960, the kolkhoz movement was consolidated, the living conditions of the herders improved, and the number of collective deer in kolkhozy increased from 35,400 in 1940 to 195,000 in 1960, mainly by collectivising and buying from herders, and purchasing from sovkhozy. The herds of the latter stayed constantly around 25,000 head (Kopylova 1960: 48), indicating their main purpose of producing meat for the state and of selling high-quality breeding deer to kolkhozy.

From an organisational point of view, collective reindeer herding in the 1950s was the preparation for state reindeer herding. There was a trend to concentrate herds and brigades together in bigger units (*ukrupnenie*). In industrial terms, 'the bigger the size of the herds … the higher the ratio of females, the fewer non-productive losses' (Kopylova 1960: 44), which meant that more meat could be produced with such herds. Thus the number of kolkhozy decreased from 76 in 1948, to 55 in 1958, and down to 40 in 1960, just before final sovietisation. This in fact meant a considerable change in the settlement structure of Yamal, since several small villages and hamlets were abandoned and their inhabitants transferred to bigger villages. The planners were proud to have concentrated the herds to the extent that, in 1960, eight of these enterprises owned more than 10,000 deer (Shapalin 1965: 166).

4.4.6 The Final Stage: Establishment of Sovkhozy (after 1961)

In 1961 all kolkhozy were reorganised into 12 big sovkhozy. By 1963, two of these sovkhozy already had more than 20,000 deer (Shapalin 1965: 165f). With the establishment of sovkhozy, kolkhoz members, who at least on paper owned part of the whole enterprise, became state workers just like in any other industry in the Soviet Union. The collectively owned deer now became state-owned deer, and employees were no longer permitted to take

their share with them when they left the collective, as had been possible, theoretically, in kolkhozy. This brought a loss of independence of the herders, but on the other hand an increase in state support. They were entitled to a pension after a certain age, they got health insurance, which entitled them to call a helicopter to take them from the tundra to a hospital, and they received additional incomes for the years of their work (*nadbavki na vyslugu let*) (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 128). This social security forms an important entitlement of sovkhoz workers even today. For Konstantinov (2000), it was the main factor in the formation of 'sovkhoism' as a worldview. The Nentsy became accustomed to receiving this social security, and these entitlements are one of the main reasons why most of them prefer to keep their links with sovkhozy today.

With the first consolidation of these sovkhoz enterprises, the economic process of sovietisation was complete in the communists' eyes. From the early 1960s, the sovkhozy controlled every aspect of life in the villages. They were a 'total social institution' (Humphrey 1995: 7). They maintained the village with their shops, bakery, club, sauna, kindergarten, boarding school, vehicle park, construction department, etc. This was a structure designed to meet the needs of a sedentarised population, which was still some way off in Yamal. The reorganisation of reindeer herding into the 'highest' form of communist enterprises was not completed everywhere in the early 1960s. In Chukotka, for example, where the impacts of sovietisation on the practice of reindeer herding were much more severe, there were still three kolkhozy in the 1970s (Gray 2003: 143). Similarly, in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and in many more southern regions, kolkhozy existed until the end of the Soviet Union. The fact that in regions such as Chukotka and the NAO, sovietisation had more impact than in Yamal requires us to look beyond the official forms of ownership of reindeer herding institutions. In fact, a kolkhoz could be much more strictly organised and controlled than a sovkhoz, even though the latter is considered to be the most 'Soviet' form of socialist enterprise. Therefore it is worth analysing how economic activity changed within the sovkhozy.

In the YNAO, sovkhozy were designed as big, diversified state agricultural enterprises, where reindeer herding was only one branch, albeit the main one, among other economic activities. Moreover, industrial fishing enterprises (*rybzavody*) had some reindeer brigades too. Just as these fishing enterprises had reindeer herds as a supplemental activity, the reindeer sovkhozy usually had fishing departments as well as fur-producing departments. The latter were a 1930s invention by the Soviets, when the administration of the Northern Sea route, which then had the task of preparing the YNAO for industrialisation, introduced farms for the breeding of fur animals, mostly

arctic foxes (*pesets*). These farms used the reindeer meat that was unfit for human consumption, which made them cheap to run, and they created employment for people in newly established villages.

There were also hunting departments within the sovkhozy, which were required to deliver a certain number of fur-animals from the tundra. The hunters became state workers as well, with all the privileges that went with it, but they received no salary and were paid only according to the animals they delivered. The position of a state hunter in Yamal is an interesting category in relation to the hunters in other regions like Taimyr or Sakha (Anderson 2000a; Stammler & Ventsel 2003), since there are no wild reindeer in Yamal to hunt. This shows how sovkhozy implemented a unified concept of creating distinct job categories all over the North, where tundra people always engaged in a diversified mixed economy of herding, fishing and hunting to varying extents. However, not all of these jobs made sense in a particular region where there were few resources. However, under the umbrella of these official job categories, people still continued their diversified economy in Yamal. Thus, a sovkhoz *okhotnik* (hunter) in Yamal is essentially a private reindeer herder and fisherman, whose reindeer are only very loosely controlled by the state, and whose single obligation to the sovkhoz is to meet a certain quota of arctic fox furs. On the ladder of prestigious sovkhoz professions, a hunter (*okhotnik*) is ranked far lower than a herder (*pastukh*), but after the fall of the Soviet Union it was the 'hunters' who were the most active in pushing private reindeer herding forward (see chapter 8).

In parallel with the reorganisation of people and animals in the sovkhozy in 1961, there was also another reorganisation of territories (*zemleustroistvo*), namely the reindeer pastures. Research teams from Moscow came to assess the carrying capacities of pastures and were charged with designing the optimum migration routes for the reindeer herds. Long-distance routes were considered to be inefficient for meat production and for maintaining control of the sovkhoz employees. In 1928, many of the herders in Yamal used to migrate more than 1,500 kilometres (see Evladov 1992 [1929]). Such long distances now had to be reduced. However, it is important to stress that the general pattern of long-distance migration still remained the same. Finally, each sovkhoz was assigned a territory for their herds. These territories, in spite of the different ideology, fitted relatively closely to the reindeer herders' existing patterns of migration.

On the Yamal Peninsula, for example, sovkhoz pastures were allocated so that herders and their deer could spend the summer in the north at the seashore, migrate southwards in autumn so that in November they were close to the village for the slaughter, and then spend the winter in forest

regions with access to firewood and protection from the wind, before moving northwards again in spring towards the seashore (see table 2). Except for one sovkhoz (Yamal'skii) in the very north of Yamal, this migration pattern was officially ratified by the Soviet planners and recorded onto particular maps, which were displayed in the headquarters of all sovkhozy. This general picture indicates that the Soviet authorities did not change the patterns of how herders and herds should migrate

According to elders, rich herders in the north of the Yamal Peninsula used to migrate more than 600 kilometres to the south and even to the other side of the Ob' in winter. They say that when the sovkhoz Yamal'skii was established, this pattern of migration was forbidden and the herders were supplied with enough food, goods and firewood at the new trading posts and villages, so that it was not necessary to migrate anymore.[71] Later, the southern border of the Yamal'skii sovkhoz, having been imposed artificially by the administration, became the most contested border on Yamal (see section 6.3.2). Other elders tell that in the farthest north there were always herders who did not migrate to the south, but lived by ordering supplies in exchange for deer with migrating herders. There seems to have been a pattern where rich herders migrating to the south fulfilled the role of traders, supplying goods to their northern colleagues who could not afford to migrate so far.[72]

I shall argue in chapter 6 that this pattern evolved out of the northern Nentsy being hunters of sea mammals until the nineteenth century, as described by Golovnev (1995: 46–51). Golovnev & Osherenko suggest another reason why some people stayed in the north of the Yamal Peninsula: rich reindeer herders and shamans had fled to the far north to escape sovietisation, and they stayed there rather than migrating south in winter, fearing that they would be arrested or have their deer stolen (1999: 81). As a matter of fact, this heritage seems to live on. The northern region is still the home of very rich reindeer herders, who in post-Soviet times are at the forefront of organising private reindeer businesses (see chapter 8).

The fact that those remote but rich reindeer herders have survived sovietisation and are now flourishing in the post-Soviet economy can be explained by the continuity in Nenets leadership. The Se-Iakha and Tambei tundra has been ruled for more than 30 years by a highly respected member of the Okotetto family, Nikolai Lachevich, and before him, his close relative

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[71] Personal communication with Anniko Khorotetto, pensioner, former kolkhoz herder in North Yamal, May 2001. He was even able to trace his former migration route on a map I showed him.

[72] Personal communication with the senior head of the Se-Iakhinskii *sel'sovet*, Nikolai Lachevich Okotetto, October 2000. In chapter 6, I trace these northern herders back to their past as hunters, in order to explain their pattern of territoriality.

was the head of the administration. Both of them were committed communists and at the same time powerful advocates of reindeer herding. This is an example of how particular individuals, holding important posts within the local Soviet apparatus, turned the implementation of centrally planned sovietisation models into practices that were bearable, if not favourable, for the local tundra population

Further south, in central Yamal, the composition of animal ownership within a reindeer brigade provides a visual metaphor of how reindeer herders' needs and Soviet requirements have merged together. Since 1961, in most sovkhozy of the YNAO, state-owned herds have grazed together with the personal herds of their herder-employees (cf. chapter 5). Usually a herd of a sovkhoz brigade consisted (and still consists) of 1,500 sovkhoz animals, supplemented by another 1,000–1,500 personal animals of the herders.[73] I emphasise that these practices were tolerated from the very beginning of the Soviet Union. It is a symbiotic relationship for both sides, because the sovkhoz could buy additional deer from the herders, and the herders could use all state services, such as veterinary services, helicopter transport, and food supply for their households. In addition to this, sovkhoz *okhotniki* (hunters) migrated in parallel with these big brigade herds and lived in a symbiotic relationship with them, which I describe in section 6.2.1. These creative reinterpretations of Soviet rules are again evidence of how the Nentsy found their niches and used the Soviet system to their own advantage. This is what Golovnev & Osherenko call one of the 'tricks' used by Nentsy to retain their customs (1999: 97). I argue that such a practice was made possible only because the Soviets introduced limits for private ownership (mentioned above) instead of forcing herders to give up their herds completely. I have shown that they even needed the personal herds as an additional source of meat to satisfy the orders of the central authorities to fulfil the plan. Practices like this form the main points of a general unwritten deal between the Soviet administration and reindeer herders to ensure mutual benefits. The Nentsy incorporated the Soviet models in order to suit their own lifestyle. As with many of their own codes of conduct (see section 3.3), they interpreted rules not as codified laws but as guidelines. This implied more fluidity than was possible to represent in reports to higher Soviet authorities. I argue that this became possible because local Soviets agreed to this fluidity, so long as production goals were reached.

[73] Of course, the proportion of state-owned and privatel owned animals varied according to the enterprise, the tolerance of the director, and the wealth of the herders. Current ratios are around 70:30 in favour of privately owned animals.

4.4.7 Sedentarisation and its 'Fading out'

The reorganisation of reindeer herding into sovkhozy was also intended to serve the goal of eliminating the 'backward' nomadic lifestyle (Shapalin 1965: 155). The connection between these two incentives—the economic reorganisation and sedentarisation of nomads—is well described by Gray (2003) in relation to Chukotka. However, as I will show later, the concept of sedentarisation worked against another Soviet requirement: the need to increase meat production. As with the collectivisation of herds and households, the campaign started among the poor natives, especially those with few or no reindeer (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 125). Such people were the first settlers in the trading posts and villages set up throughout the okrug in the late 1920s and 1930s.

After World War II the concentration (*ukrupnenie*) of herds and the centralisation of enterprises should have led to a sedentarisation of all native households. For a household without no or very few reindeer, it was advantageous to live close to a populated spot in the tundra (*naselennyi punkt*) because supplies of food were theoretically always available and the village could provide work. However, elders still remember how they worked hard at fishing for the Russians at the trading post even before the war.

> In Drovianoi back then, eight Russians worked. Around the village there were 20 Nenets *chum*s. We all were working for these Russians. They brought them all on a boat to the village, we were the only ones staying, and the *chum*s remained empty. My husband caught fish for them in summer in self-made boats. The chief was strict in ensuring that the fishers handed over all the fish. He gave us only a couple for food. But my husband often put another four fishes under the net, where the chief did not look. During the night, after unloading, he went back to the boat and brought the fishes home (Pupta Okotetto's wife, 26 May 2001).

This account from a trading post that was closed during the Soviet amalgamation of villages describes well the hardships at that time, when the Soviets could not provide their native workers with housing and enough food (cf. also Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 79). However, after the war, sedentarisation was promoted among middle-class and rich reindeer herders. As elders report (see above), *kulaki* from north Yamal were forced to leave their *chum*s and were deported to the southern part of Yamal. Some scholars call this action 'relocation' and present the figure of 1,500 people or 335 households having been subjected to this policy (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 95; Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 125), other authors see this as being the result of overgrazing and the ecological need to remove herds from the north to the south of the peninsula (Vostriakov & Brodnev 1964: 24).

In 1950 there came a special decree from Moscow to enforce sedentarisation in the Tyumen'skaia oblast' (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 125), part of which after 1944 comprised the YNAO. The decree required that every native family should have a house in one of the villages of the okrug, so that the primitive *chum* would not be needed anymore. Indeed 465 houses were built between 1950 and 1953 (Kiselev 1974: 206), but not all of them were given to the native population. This was because of the housing shortages among the *spetsperesenlentsy* from central Russia as well as among the influx of incomers connected with the exploration of the huge gas and oil deposits in Yamal, which started as early as 1948 (Petrova & Khariutschi 1999: 114).

Lack of housing for herders was one of the reasons why, even after previous forms of enterprises were reorganised into sovkhozy, there were still 2,300 families or 10,400 persons registered as being nomads in 1964 (Shapalin 1965: 176). Some sources, perhaps deliberately, do not tell us about the percentage of households that were sedentarised. However, Petrova & Khariutschi (1999: 111) report that the population of indigenous peoples was constantly increasing, for example by 21.7% between 1945 and 1958. In a broader historical outline, Krupnik (2000b: 146) provides evidence that the indigenous population of the Yamal Peninsula had increased fivefold over the past 300 years. With the highest rate of increase being among the tundra population, it is very likely that the nomadic population increased too. Petrova & Khariutschi (1999: 126) write that by 1964 only 2,000 families in the YNAO had been sedentarised, and confirm that the proportion of settled indigenous families in the okrug was less than 50%.[74] This leads them to conclude that the sedentarisation campaign in the 1960s had 'faded out' (1999: 128).

If one reads between the lines of Soviet literature, other problems in implementing the decree to sedentarise the nomads become apparent (Kiselev 1974: 208). These are not only connected to the limited availability of houses but to more structural reasons. The two Soviet demands of sedentarisation and increasing productiveness in reindeer breeding, which was a main goal of the Seven Year Plan 1959–65 (Kopylova 1960: 49), contradicted each other in Yamal. Here I see one important reason for the failure of sedentarisation. It seems that the regional communists finally opted to give priority to the production target rather than complete sedentarisation. Here Yamal seems to have been different from other regions. Local Soviets real-

[74] Comparing demographic data pre- and post-1932 is difficult, on account of administrative-territorial restructuring. Figures from 1926 (before collectivisation) thus are not really comparable to those after 1932. Krupnik (2000b: 122–51) has addressed the problems of the compatibility of these figures in more detail.

ised that to reach the high production targets, flexibility in pasture access, motivation of reindeer herders and migration of herds were crucial. Some Nentsy remember that in the YNAO, directors of sovkhozy were often more powerful than local party members. Directors such as Kugaevskii of the Yar-Salinskii sovkhoz understood the needs of reindeer herding and accepted that a straight implementation of sedentarisation would not be possible.[75] By contrast, in Chukotka, for example, the Soviets implemented the policy of sedentarisation rigorously, even before all the kolkhozy had become sovkhozy. Gray's work (2003: 142f) suggests that the beginning of sedentarisation in Chukotka was also accompanied by a decline in the number of reindeer. In the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, among the European Nentsy, those kolkhozy in which worked a shift regime, moving 'herding workers' back and forth between tundra and village, certainly did not have better overall productivity indices.[76]

The planners distinguished two different forms of nomadism among reindeer herders. The plan was to remove both of them through sedentarisation. *Bytovoe kochevanie*, domestic or everyday life nomadism, is when the whole household, women and children included, migrate together with the herd and control it so that it grazes in a regime of seasonal pasture rotation. The second form, *proizvodstvennoe kochevanie* or productive nomadism, is the mobility of the herders connected to the direct need of the herd to make extensive use of pastures on the tundra. In the latter, only the male workers migrate with the reindeer (Shapalin 1965: 177). Consequently, ideology was aimed first at sedentarising women and children in villages, giving work to the women and sending the children to school. In many regions such as Chukotka (Gray 2003: 142), Sakha (Vitebsky 2002: 183), Taimyr (Ziker 2002b: 60), the Kola Peninsula and even the European part of the Nentsy, the Soviets had considerable success with this strategy.[77] In the YNAO, many more women stayed in the tundra, and children were sent without their mothers to boarding schools in villages.

The migration of the whole family (*bytovoe kochevanie*) was seen as very inefficient, since to be able to carry a *chum* and the whole household, more male transport reindeer are needed, whereas for meat production, the ratio of females in the herd should be increased. Optimising the use of pas-

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[75] Personal communication with Dmitrii Khorolia, former director of the Yar-Salinskii sovkhoz, 16 April 2004, and with Galina Khariutschi, 17 April 2004.

[76] My own research into the statistics of the Vyucheiskii kolkhoz indicated that its performance was below average within the okrug.

[77] Yulian Konstantinov, lecture on Kola reindeer herding, given at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, 21 January 2002; among the 'Euro-Nentsy', approximately half of the enterprises adopted the shift method in reindeer herding, thereby abandoning everyday nomadism (own fieldwork, 2003).

tures according to their carrying capacity would imply the need for even more movement, so a grazing regime without *chum* (*beschumnyi vypas*) was recommended (Druri & Mitiushev 1963: 51–3). Indeed, in some sovkhozy of the YNAO, this is still practised for several short periods in summer and during the calving season.

Soviet reindeer-herding planners tried a number of other experiments in order to turn reindeer herding from a nomadic way of life to a sedentarised agricultural industry. The regions became experimental laboratories. Seen as very progressive was the shift-regime of herders (*vakhtovyi metod*, or *vypas olenej smennymi zven'iami pastukhov*) (Nenetskii Autonomous Okrug), where herding workers were settled in villages and flown out to work with the herd, just like oil workers to a drilling platform. With this method, reindeer herders could live for four months in villages, an achievement indeed for the planners of sedentarisation.

Other methods to rationalise reindeer herding included the use of mobile houses for herders which were transported over the tundra by tractors (Chukotka), and herding reindeer on pastures enclosed by fences (Yakutia, Kola Peninsula; Syrovatskii 1993, 2000: 109–44). Such measures were aimed at destroying the *bytovoe kochevanie* (everyday migration), whereas the productive migration did not contradict the sedentarisation ideology (Shapalin 1965: 175f). Local experts in Yamal give three main reasons, why none of these measures was ever implemented or even tested in the YNAO:

- Sedentarisation of women and children as well as herding in a shift regime would imply regular provision with helicopter transport, similar to the shifts of oil and gas workers, which would incur massive costs and render reindeer herding unprofitable.
- Abandoning the *chum* and introducing mobile houses on tractors, similar to oil and gas explorers, would require provision of passenger tanks, tractors, fuel and repair stations on the tundra.[78]
- The removal of *bytovoe kochevanie* would not be tolerated by the natives themselves, because they would never let their families be torn apart. Being detached from their own animals, the herding work performed by shift-herders would be of poorer quality than that of herders who move with their families and their animals, and they would be less willing to endure tough conditions.

However, all these reasons are also applicable to other regions, so part of the explanation must also lie in the previously mentioned informal agreements and symbiotic relationships between local authorities and the reindeer herding economy.

[78] Personal communications with Dmitrii Khorolya, Director of the Yar-Sale sovkhoz, and his deputee Nikolai Kirpiachev, 02.10.1998.

In spite of all the inadequacies of sedentarisation politics, Soviet planners had to produce the results of implementation of the ideology. So they praised the results of construction campaigns in villages and mentioned the huge investments by the state for sedentarisation. In the YNAO, the sum invested per household for sedentarisation was 15,000 roubles, which was almost twice the sum for neighbouring KMAO, where 8,000 roubles were spent per household (Kiselev 1974: 208). Having spent so much money, Soviet authorities felt it was necessary to report that sedentarisation came to a successful end in the 1960s. However, in the 1980s, official documentation shows that the policy of sedentarisation had not been forgotten. For example, five households 'became sedentarised' in 1981. The sedentarisation category on the statistical forms of 'households transferred to a sedentarised lifestyle' was abandoned in the 1980s, although sedentarisation as a campaign had long ended. A Nenets woman in charge of the *sel'sovet* statistics in north Yamal told me that in the 1980s they were just using the old statistical forms delivered by the centre, which still included the 'sedentarisation category', although they knew that there was no sedentarisation campaign anymore.

In 1981, out of 1,521 indigenous households on the Yamal Peninsula, 693 were registered as nomadic. Following a population increase 10 years later, this had grown to 876 households, and by 2004 there were 964 nomadic households on the Yamal Peninsula (see figure 4). This suggests an increase in the nomadic population of roughly one-third over the past 20 years. There are now more than 5,000 nomads registered on the Yamal Peninsula and they make up more than half of the overall indigenous population. These figures reveal that the natives in the YNAO largely succeeded in retaining their nomadic lifestyle; in 2002 the number of nomads in the whole YNAO was more than 13,000, or 36.1% of the indigenous population of the okrug.[79]

Towards the end of the Soviet Union, the presence of a large number of people and reindeer in the tundra underlines the fact that the Nentsy, who had not been forced to settle in villages, had embraced the possibility of continuing their own lifestyle out on the tundra even under the umbrella of the Soviet authorities. This is not to deny the accounts of forced deportation of shamans or *kulaki*, but the analysis over time shows that such actions did not deal the final blow against nomadism. Therefore, from a Soviet point of view, Yamal reindeer herders remained more 'backward' than colleagues in other regions.

[79] Official figures according to the resolution of the YNAO governor (*postanovlenie gubernatora*) about the focal program for the indigenous peoples, 13.09.2002, No. 264.

4.4.8 Stability and Continuity: From 1970 to 1985

The 1970s and the first half of the 1980s was a period of stability in the YNAO, as far as reindeer herding, fishing and hunting were concerned. Although the communist goal of sedentarisation failed, the economic restructuring of reindeer herding and its incorporation into the Soviet planned economy did not. The reindeer herders broadly accepted the sovkhozy, and they still appreciate the social network these institutions provide. Even the existence of the boarding schools, which are often condemned by the native intelligentsia as being tools of 'cultural genocide',[80] are widely accepted, as Liarskaia (2003) shows.

The total reindeer headcount in the YNAO increased from 335,000 in 1960, just before the sovkhozy were established, to 490,500 in 1990 just before the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Podkorytov 1995: 6). Veterinary services, health care and basic supplies of staple foods such as bread, tea, flour, sugar, as well as other goods such as kerosene for lamps, fuel and motorised snowmobiles all became available to every tundra resident. Moreover, breeding selection work (*plemennaia rabota*) was developed in special herds like the ones at the Yamal agricultural experimental station (SkhOS). For breeding purposes, reindeer were exchanged with other regions like the KMAO, the Krasnoiarskii Krai and even Chukotka (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001).

These measures increased the productivity of reindeer herding in the YNAO and decreased the production costs per unit of meat. This became an important index of Soviet profitability, as it was calculated back then, which excluded state-provided services such as transportation and supply. In 1962, the production of every 50 kilograms of meat in Yamal cost an average of 36 roubles, which was still expensive in comparison with other regions. Many former Soviet administrators still remember how profitable and efficient reindeer herding was at that time. Only recent publications acknowledge that when balancing all costs, including transportation, the northern economy even in Soviet times was not in fact profitable (Poiseev 1999: 156). Meat productivity at 15.9 '*tsentnery*' (1,590 kilograms) per 100 head in January, was lower than in Kamtchatka with 26.4, Magadan with 21.2 or Sakha (Yakutia) with 23.9 (Shapalin 1965: 169). However, as I have shown in chapter 2, this is also because the Even and Khargin reindeer of this region produce more meat per head than Nenets reindeer.

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[80] In my survey no herder said that the sovkhoz itself is a bad institution. This 'genocide' statement was made by Larissa Abrjutina, vice-president of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples (RAIPON), at a speech in Munich, autumn 1999.

The reindeer herders in the YNAO appreciated the stability and security in Brezhnev's Soviet Union. The people continued their life in the same way they had been directed since the 1960s. For the reindeer herders this meant that they were all workers in state enterprises, either as official herders (*pastukh*) or 'hunters' (*okhotnik*). They migrated with their herds on routes approved by the Soviet administration, which mostly corresponded to pre-Soviet migration routes in Yamal. At the same time, the need to develop a strategy to deal with the ever-increasing oil and gas exploration and extraction work became more urgent for the herders.

The steady increase in personal reindeer, from 29.8% in 1965 to 40% in 1985 (Podkorytov 1995: 6) points to a certain softening of the strict policies once the official aims of sovietisation had been achieved. In interviews with local experts and reindeer herders they all reported that these figures were very rough and that the real numbers of the herders' own deer were higher. This fact is important when putting forward the argument that *de facto* private ownership of reindeer in the YNAO was never removed, and so it served as an important base on which the early market economy could gain a footing. Usually, private herds grazed together with the state-owned herds, with some exceptions in the furthest north of the Yamal Peninsula. The herders benefited from every kind of state help for their private herds, and thus the Soviet system again allowed herders to keep their niches and continue their own nomadic lifestyle. Up to the present they retain their migration routes, sometimes of more than 1,000 kilometres, migrating across the borders of *raiony* or even republics.

Furthermore, they continue to practise *bytovoe kochevanie* nomadism, with women and, where possible, children migrating with the household. This means they live in their original form of housing, the *chum*. Experiments with tents and mobile homes were not accepted in Yamal. However, the covering of old reindeer furs, or even birch bark (among Khanty in the forest regions), on the summer *chum* has been replaced by canvas, which is sometimes put on top of the fleece-like material (*darnit*) (see section 3.4). Moreover, although modern transportation like aviation, passenger tanks (*vezdekhod*), and snowmobiles (*buran*) are used by reindeer herders today, the main source of transport during the seasonal migration still remains reindeer. Everything else is thought to be disturbing and confusing to the herd because of the noise that motorised vehicles produce. Another element of continuity is the use of fur clothing, especially for the winter. Imported clothing has proved not to be warm enough for the extreme climatic conditions of this arctic region. However, in the summer, people sometimes wear the same sorts of clothes as most Russians today.

Taking all this together, at the dawn of Perestroika, the reindeer herders had a stable position within the Soviet system, which they used to supplement their own lifestyle nomadism. They had incorporated those parts of the Soviet model that suited their needs, and thus these also became part of the 'tradition' that many think is so exceptional.

4.5 Restructuring Soviet Reindeer Herding (1986–1999)

The final section of this chapter is about what happened in the YNAO during Perestroika and in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union. One might argue that what is called 'privatisation' is still going on, and therefore an analysis of those processes should not be placed in a chapter on history. However, my view is that in Yamal the main process of institutionally restructuring the Soviet reindeer herding economy has already been accomplished. I do not want to speak of proper 'privatisation' here because what we deal with even today are not quite private economic enterprises. The okrug administration (i.e. the regional state) is, even now, an important actor in the reindeer economy of the YNAO.

In a way, the history of restructuring the reindeer economy in Yamal follows a similar principle to the establishment of the Soviet regime. There was a kind of federal 'template', the regional implementation of which differed considerably. This was possible only because Yeltsin's policy at the time was to allow the regions to take as much independence from the federal centre as they could afford.[81] Therefore, my analysis of the regional institutional reform of reindeer herding first requires a short summary of the federal model.

4.5.1 The Federal Template for Privatisation of Agriculture

The reform of the Soviet agricultural sector, and its transfer from a centrally planned economy to a structure resembling a market economy, can be seen as a lengthy process in legal terms and even more so in practical terms. However, a few key events were crucial for the reform of this sector. In the first phases of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the agrarian lobby was still powerful in the *Duma*, the Russian Federal parliament. Therefore, it was extremely difficult to get reforms started. At the beginning of the 1990s, even the most progressive reformers did not question the existence of the state and collective farms (Wegren 1998: 63).

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[81] *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty News Briefs* 2 (26), 14–18 June 1993. Yeltsin's policy developed against the background of competition with Gorbachev. Yeltsin was seeking the support of the regions by giving them more freedom.

Nevertheless, with the 'Law on the peasant farm' of 1990 came a formal entitlement to establish one's own private farm, the *krestianskoe fermerskoe khoziaistvo* (KfKh),[82] which guaranteed the right to a share of land and a share of the property of the collective farm (Van Atta 1993: 33). However, this law still implied that the overarching structure would be the state or collective farm. The land code from April 1991 guaranteed all types of farms equal rights to exist (Art. 3). At the end of 1991 a presidential decree forced all collective and state farms to reorganise and change their form of property by the end of March 1992, later extended to 1 January 1993.[83] The agrarian lobby had lost its influence, and what Yamal herders called 'the decade of *bardak*' (chaos) began. How radical the decree was becomes clear in Article 14, which says that every farm unable to pay off its debts would be liquidated by March 1992. In a government resolution to implement this, the following key concepts for reorganisation were proposed, which can be found today as the institutional framework of most agricultural enterprises (Van Atta 1993: 35; Wegren 1998: 69–71):[84]

- A farm could liquidate itself completely, with the members establishing independent peasant farms (KfKh). Although in the YNAO no farms dissolved completely at this stage, KfKhs were established (see chapter 7).
- A farm could sell itself to an industrial enterprise, an option which some have taken in western Siberia, selling themselves to oil or gas companies such as Gasprom and Surgutneftegaz. This is still part of a current economic strategy of some enterprises (see chapter 8).
- A farm could dissolve and reunite as an association of independent peasant farms.
- A farm could also convert to a joint stock farm, with two options: a closed stock farm, *aktsionernoe obshchestvo zakrytogo tipa*, or AOZT, ZAO, in which all shares would be handed over to a new legal structure, and people could get their shares only in agreement with the general members' assembly; or an open stock farm, *aktsionernoe obshchestvo otkrytogo tipa*, or AOOT, OAO, in which shares would be distributed among the members, who would have the right to sell them to whomever they wanted. The AOZT is the most common form throughout Russia (Wegren 1998: 73) and also can be found in the North. Some enterprises in Yamal chose this op-

[82] Law of the RSFSR, 22 November 1990, no. 348-I
[83] *Land code Zemel'nyi kodeks RSFSR*, 25.04.1991, No. 1103-I, *Ukaz Presidenta RF*, 27.12.1991, No. 323.
[84] *Postanovlenie pravitel'stva RF*, 29.12.1991, No. 86.

tion. It is similar to a *tovarichestvo ogranichennoi otvetstvennosti*, or TOO, 'a limited liability company'.

- A farm could reorganise into a new type of cooperative, with various juridical forms such as a *sel'skokhoziaistvennyi proizvodstvennyi kooperativ*, or SPK, SP. This form can also be found in the YNAO.

In spite of its defeat, the agrarian lobby succeeded in passing an amendment that farms could retain their previous status if the members voted for it. This was a way for an enterprise not to become illegal immediately and to remain in the state structure. The two crucial points in this reform were that farmland would no longer necessarily be owned by the state and that payment of all subsidies was cancelled immediately (Van Atta 1993: 36; Wegren 1998: 70ff.).

However, it remains unclear from these legal acts how the role of the regional or municipal state is envisioned. In Siberia, it was the regional or municipal administrations who commonly became the official landowners, and who rented or leased the land to the applicants. The situation was similar for state money. Although federal subsidies were cancelled, the regional government could step in if it had the financial means, so that in fact money continued to flow from the state to the enterprises.

In October 1993, another decree really opened up the market. Peasant farmers (KfKh) got legal land titles and were exempted from land tax for the first five years of their existence, the formation of smaller-scale cooperatives was encouraged, and federal state purchases of production were abandoned. This did not mean that the state withdrew from agriculture. Even today, a very large part of the production, at least in Siberia, is sold to the okrug administration, but it is done voluntarily on the basis of a beneficial contract for both sides. Nor did the reform mean that procedures for obtaining land became easier for remote indigenous land users (see e.g. Fondahl 1998: 104–7). Often a land title was given for a limited time, which sometimes was not worth the investment in obtaining it.

Thus, despite expectations that privatisation would transform the collective farm into private property and introduce a market economy, the real situation changed only slightly. The most significant change was that the means of production were no longer distributed by the state, which gave rise to the barter and exchange economy so typical of contemporary Russia (cf. Ledeneva 2000; see chapter 8).

4.5.2 Regional Implementation in the YNAO

In Yamal, restructuring of the Soviet herding economy did not have the disastrous effects that were typical of the other Asian reindeer herding regions, for example Chukotka (Gray 2000; Gray & Stammler 2002; Gray

2003) or Taimyr (Ziker 2003: 365f). However, the privatisation process in Yamal Okrug is not atypical of rural Russia. The scenario is very similar to the federal model described by Wegren (1998: 82). The most widespread 'new form' of institution for state farms was actually the old form. The biggest, and nominally most successful, farms retained their status. In 2001, out of 15 sovkhozy (including one fish factory), the six most influential were still state enterprises, now belonging to the okrug administration. Two of them are on the Yamal Peninsula itself. Four relatively competitive mid-scale state farms became closed joint stock farms (ZAO or AOZT), whereas four smaller farms chose to become cooperatives (SPK). One sovkhoz became a limited liability company (OOO).

Humphrey (1999: 29) stresses for Buriatia that Soviet enterprises either remained in place or transformed into different organisational forms, still referred to colloquially as kolkhoz. This is true for Yamal, with the difference that there have been no kolkhozy since the 1970s, so the only unit here is the sovkhoz. There was no mass dismissal of herders (*pastukhi*) during restructuring of the state farms unlike in other regions of the North, such as Chukotka and Kamtchatka.[85]

Referring to the enterprises as sovkhoz is more than just a simplification. It is justified by the interesting fact about this reorganisation that no matter what actual organisational form they have, all the enterprises continue to work in the same way, and all are administered by the Okrug Department of Agriculture, which decides on the amount of state support that they get. Therefore, even in okrug statistics they stayed sovkhozy. However, I would suggest that analytically the most appropriate term for the current situation is 'state-controlled enterprises', which I will use in the chapters to follow, because the classical understanding of a sovkhoz is an enterprise that works by order of the state, which requires that it fulfils its plans and quota. At least this trait of the Soviet system is not valid anymore. One director of an enterprise, as well as the deputy-head of the Department of Agriculture, pointed out the same assessments as the herders: in their everyday struggle to retain their position in the market, the actual juridical form of an enterprise is less important (in terms of productivity and state support) than the personality, qualifications and the social capital of the director. What matters is his ability to motivate the employees to increase the quality of the production,

[85] These two regions represent the worst scenario of a total breakdown in reindeer herding after the end of the Soviet Union. From speeches by the Chukotka and Kamtchatka delegation at the 2nd Congress of Russian reindeer herders, Salekhard, 13 March 2002.

his ability to supply the herders with necessary products and social services, and the stability of the business in the face of changing property relations.[86]

The Yamal material confirms the view that state-controlled enterprises are more than just economic units (Clarke 1992, cited in Humphrey 1999: 24). Some traits of the 'total social institution' still remain intact, although as in Buriatia, the social components are also moved step by step to become the municipal responsibility (Humphrey 1999: 29). The state subsidies are not transferred to the enterprises regardless of their current organisational form; they are transferred on the basis of the production they supply to state institutions, and recently, by their herd size. If the enterprise succeeds in continuing its work even despite economic failures, for the herders this is evidence of the stability of this institution.

This happened in 2001 to the biggest sovkhoz in the YNAO, Yar-Salinskii. It could not cover debts of 130 million roubles (then €4.7 million) and went bankrupt. Therefore the YNAO, as the owner of the sovkhoz, decided to close it down. This was a defeat for the Nenets sovkhoz director. Some of his reindeer herder employees, however, had blamed him long before this for being too involved in national and international events in his capacity as the vice-president of the World Reindeer Herders' Association and forgetting his duties to navigate the sovkhoz carefully through the difficult waters of post-Soviet transformation.[87] However, another enterprise, owned by the *raion* (*Munitsipal'noe unitarnoe predpriatie*, MUP) was simultaneously established under the same name. For the second half of 2001, these two enterprises existed alongside each other on paper. When the process of bankruptcy of the 'old' sovkhoz was finished, the new sovkhoz-MUP covered all the old sovkhoz activities. Since for the herders nothing changed, they still refer to this as the sovkhoz. The official justification for this support by the authorities is that the indigenous nomadic population would suffer with the disappearance of the sovkhoz. This was the first act of the municipalisation of a big reindeer enterprise in the YNAO, a course that other regions such as Chukotka (Gray 2000: 36f) and Sakha (Stammler & Ventsel 2003: 337–43) had already chosen from the mid-1990s in different variations.

During the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was difficult for the state-controlled enterprises to compete with other enterprises in the reindeer business. State subsidies at that time were 'paid' largely in kind instead of money. The enterprises not only had to get used to the new situa-

[86] Personal communications with Vitalii Madi, deputy-head of the Department of Agriculture, 29 June 2001, and with the director of the Verkhnepurovskii sovkhoz, 13 March 2002.

[87] Herders and villagers in Yar-Sale expressed these criticisms in personal communications to me in 1998, 2000, 2001 and 2002.

tion where they were now responsible for selling products in addition to producing them. They also became less attractive in the eyes of qualified personnel, since working in enterprises which were highly unlikely to be profitable was not an attractive career prospect. Qualified *zootekhniki* and experts in reindeer herding saw no career prospects within the state structure. In the course of the past five years, they have founded private, vertically integrated reindeer enterprises (see chapter 8), which are engaging successfully in the developing market for reindeer-herding products.

The response of some sovkhozy was to try to pressure their herder and hunter employees not to engage with these enterprises. However, in only two cases have herders lost their jobs in the sovkhoz for this reason, where they were registered as 'hunters'. Apart from these exceptions, almost all tundra dwellers still count as workers of the sovkhozy, either as herders (*pastukhi*) or as hunters (*okhotniki*). At the same time, all of these people have their private herds, and engage in other activities, mostly fishing, no matter what their affiliation. The basic principle for the herders is that nobody wants to leave the sovkhoz structure because of the social security benefits that come with it. The sovkhoz is still perceived as the organisation *per se*; 24 out of the 26 household heads I asked in Yamal were convinced that it is still needed, although they all trade with commercial enterprises. The herders welcome such stability, but they do not necessarily think that this has to be accompanied by an increase in sovkhoz herds, as I show in chapter 7. However, whereas sovkhoz herds between 1993 and 2000 had fallen by 87,550 head, they have increased again since 2000 by 8,235 head for the first time. This is telling about the more stable position of former sovkhozy in the twenty-first century.

For an anthropological argument, the institutional change of the sovkhozy in Yamal tells a story of continuity, in spite of all its transformations. What matters for the herders and their lifestyle is that the state structure in the agricultural sector is still alive and relevant for the people, as I show in my analysis of the current economic regimes (chapter 8). No matter what form of property the enterprises have now, they are still perceived as sovkhozy.

4.6 Conclusion

My analysis of the history of Russian and Soviet conquest of the Yamal region takes a 'presentist' point of view—in other words, I have studied the historical aspects not for their own sake, but because of their relevance for present conditions and situations. Describing such significant changes as the collectivisation and sovietisation of reindeer herding, I was able to identify under the umbrella of these changes many continuous factors. This argument

is important to the processes of decollectivisation too, which also led partly to new institutional forms of reindeer herding, but did not turn the practices upside-down. The material presented supports my argument that Russian-wide concepts in Yamal underwent strong regional 'reinterpretations'. I have shown how reindeer herders on the one hand escaped complete sovietisation, and on the other hand, how the Soviet power did not implement its concept of ideal industrialised reindeer herding at any price. Therefore, after Perestroika, reindeer herders still had a basis of uninterrupted private herding on which to build when they began their engagement with the open market.

I argue that this continuity from pre-Soviet times up to the present is observable not only because of the natives' 'stubbornness', as claimed by Golovnev & Osherenko (1999: 89), but also because of the regional Soviets' pragmatism. Examples from the local level show how the strictness of the central Soviet concept became smoothed by the sovkhoz directors' understandings of what was needed to fulfil the plan, and by the herders' need for a basic supply of staple food and goods as well as services for their private herds, resulting in a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship between the two sides. For the practice of Soviet reindeer herding in Yamal, non-official or semi-official agreements became typical.

The authorities in Yamal were able to emphasise the economic rather than the ideological goals of sovietisation, apparently more than in other regions such as Chukotka. There, as Patty Gray (2003: 139–43) argues, the Soviet Union had to prove that it could bring 'socialist enlightenment to every dark corner of the country' (p. 139), particularly because the tsarist empire never succeeded in fully subordinating Chukotka. In comparison, Yamal, as a region closer to Europe, was a far less 'enticing challenge to the Soviet mission' (p. 139).

Therefore I argue that the ability to retain a basis for private reindeer herding does not lie in the Nenets 'culture' as such, which would mean for example that 'cultures' where reindeer herding collapsed were 'unsuccessful'. Instead, I have tried to show how the natives developed strategies of rational reaction to the challenges of a changing outer political or economic environment. Reindeer herders, in popular opinion, are often characterised as exotic isolated savages with a 'strong culture', combining traits of their original lifestyle with innovations brought in by the Russians and Soviets (see Stammler 2002). They reinterpreted these innovations according to their needs, instead of adopting their lifestyle to fit the needs of centralised models.

The Soviets allowed the Nentsy to keep their basic understanding of a nomadic lifestyle throughout the Soviet period, and simultaneously the Nentsy accepted the sovkhoz system as an additional part of this lifestyle.

This additional part, in the course of three decades, had proven to be so useful that it became an important component of the reindeer herders' interface with the 'outside world' even after the Soviet Union. Whereas in Chukotka, the Soviet system 'systematically destroyed [pre-Soviet] reindeer herding, while at the same time it reconstructed it in a new, Soviet form' (Gray 2003: 137), I claim that in Yamal the Soviets were satisfied by implementing their model without eliminating many pre-Soviet practices.

Konstantinov (2000: 61f) argues, based on material from the Kola Peninsula, that a concept such as the sovkhozy, encompassing many social, and not just economic components, will always be attractive. I have been able to confirm this in the last section, showing that even though the actual institutional form of the sovkhozy might have become unstable, its basic principles of functioning have remained largely the same and are still highly appreciated. This is why I argue that collectivisation and decollectivisation in the YNAO can now be seen as two important events in twentieth-century reindeer herding, which at the beginning of the twenty-first century have both become part of the same history. I have shown that neither of them were complete in the sense required by central planners in Moscow, but both left their important marks in the lifestyle and worldview of reindeer herders. Both added important elements to the practice of how reindeer herders interact with the sedentary world surrounding them, but both were carried out and perceived by herders in a way that did not turn their whole lifestyle upside down. People are not isolated, but their culture is a result of the way in which they engage with their environment and with each other (Ingold 2000). Thus, lifestyle nomadism in Yamal, which for many decades was first predestined for liquidation by sovietisation and then for extinction by Soviet reality, now encompasses the pre-Soviet tundra system of reindeer herding combined with the sovkhoz industrial system. With this twofold historical heritage, it entered the twenty-first century.

Chapter 5
Reindeer as Property: Visualisation and Cooperation

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters we established that a large proportion of herds in Yamal belong to the herders themselves. We now turn to look at what kind of rights the herders have in their own reindeer and in those belonging to the sovkhoz, and what these different rights mean for social relations among the herders. Does the type of ownership change the character of a reindeer or a whole herd in the eyes of its herder? Do they treat their own animals differently to other reindeer? Are the property rights in animals that are sold on the market different to those of animals that are used for subsistence? What, in the end, is a 'private' animal, and how are entitlements transferred? What is the position of animals in Nenets society and identity? In order to clarify these questions, I provide in this chapter an ethnography of rights and duties towards animals. Maine (1861, chapter 6) already saw both as part of the same *universitas iuris*. Among nomads, rights in animals were seen to entail different sets of duties of care for them. Rights and duties are visually articulated in the form of marks on the animals.

I see property as the complex set of relations among people with respect to objects (things, animals, and incorporeal objects). So the right that a nomad has in using an animal, even though it is owned by somebody else, is part of the property relations, as is the duty to care for this animal. Different from this, I see ownership as the relation between the person and the object, and it is mostly related to possession. So rights to use I do not see as a part of ownership. Since I want to explore the position of animals for relations among people, the broad concept of property is better suited for this study than just ownership. I introduce several sets of relations based on my ethnographic data on reindeer. I find Stephen Gudeman's distinction (1998, 2001) between the community sphere and the market sphere of exchange, in conjunction with Gregory's study (1982) of gifts and commodities, useful in analysing the multiple uses of reindeer as a material and cultural resource. After introducing the official statistics of reindeer ownership, I distinguish

between uses of reindeer in the domestic sphere and in the commodity sphere. Reindeer herders in the YNAO visualise rights and duties of ownership in the form of earmarks and furmarks. The design and assigning of these play an important role in the herders' ideas about property. Reindeer are the socially most important and prestigious form of property among tundra dwellers. Therefore, the multiple entitlements and duties that are attached to reindeer are crucial to understanding the social fabric of life in the tundra. I analyse the systems of cooperation, mutual help and reciprocity in the final section of this chapter. This analysis looks beyond a simple categorisation of reindeer as being either state-owned or privately owned. Multiple reindeer property rights and 'property duties' lead us closer to the principles of social life in the tundra, which we must understand if we want to explain why the meeting of nomadic reindeer herders and the open market appears to be a successful one in the YNAO.

5.2 Theoretical Considerations

The concept of animals as property has not evoked much interest in the ethnography of reindeer-herding societies, but has been mentioned rather as peripheral matter in ethnographies concerned with other issues in Siberia.[88] Golovnev & Osherenko (1999: 118f) and Osherenko (1995) suggest a classification of proprietary rights (possession), exclusionary rights, disposition rights, and usufruct rights, but they apply this model more to land in Yamal than to reindeer, which they see mainly in statistical terms when they investigate the increase of private herds and the confiscation of private herds during collectivisation (1999: 95–7). On the other hand, research on African pastoralists has shown that, in addition to aspects of physical ownership, the social and religious meaning of animals is expressed in property relations and explains different herding and production strategies related to the social fabric of the pastoralist community (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 199–208, 250–65; Baxter 1975; Bassi 1990; Ring 1990: 193f). Comaroff & Comaroff (1991: 45) even go so far as to talk about animals as the 'supreme form of property'. These analyses show multiple combinations of owners, users and entitlements.

In David Anderson's (1998) sense, a reindeer herder has entitlements to reindeer when he knows how the animal relates to the other things and beings in the land, and how to use reindeer responsibly. However, Anderson's emphasis in his original study of property in Siberia is more generally

[88] See, for example, Golovnev & Osherenko 1999; Khomich 1995 for the Nentsy. Beach 1993 and Paine 1994 for the Saami; Anderson 2000 for the Evenki; and Bogoras 1929. An exception is Tim Ingold (1980), whose work I address in the course of this chapter.

focused on 'knowing the land', of which reindeer are one part, but not 'knowing reindeer'. Therefore Tim Ingold's work from 1980 is still the only book that engages explicitly with property in reindeer and compares this with other pastoralist settings. As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, he argues that the three modes of production in reindeer economies—hunting, herding and ranching—have different sets of property rights which determine the social relations of the units of production within the community.

For Ingold, tundra reindeer herders are 'carnivorous pastoralists', who keep the animals for meat production, as opposed to 'milch pastoralists', who extract resources from the live animal (1980: 24–5). Ingold claims that in carnivorous pastoralism, which for reindeer means tundra pastoralism, animals 'do not pass between households in reciprocal transactions of a long-term nature, nor are they the foci of multiple property interests' (1980: 187). Instead, 'every herd in a carnivorous pastoral economy … is the exclusive property of the household' (Ingold 1980: 185).

Linked with this distinction between carnivorous and milch pastoralism is the social significance of stock. Large stocks such as cattle or camels among African pastoralists have a high social significance for their owners, whereas small stocks such as sheep or goats have little social significance. Ingold (1980: 187) acknowledges that reindeer have the 'unique combination … of the transport capability of large stock with the reproductive potential and manageability of small stock'. However, he claims that among carnivorous pastoralists in the tundra, unlike in the taiga, reindeer 'retain their function as beasts of burden, but take on the social significance of small stock … such that the economic role of pastoral reindeer on the tundra comes to match that of sheep and goats on the steppe' (Ingold 1980: 188). He sees reindeer carnivorous pastoralism 'as a small-stock economy in which no possibility exists for conversion to large stock'. Therefore 'the reindeer pastoralist can only continue on a course of what appears as almost reckless expansion' (Ingold 1980: 178). Here Ingold sees parallels between tundra reindeer pastoralists and the Basseri sheep and goat herders in Iran, studied by Barth, who saw their nomadic camps as living in 'social isolation' from each other (1964: 47). In both cases, Ingold (1980: 188) claims, 'animals do not pass in reciprocal transactions between households'.

It is on the economic and social significance of property in tundra reindeer where I challenge Ingold's (1980) seminal work on reindeer pastoralism. He analyses forms of property in reindeer by drawing mainly on his fieldwork among the Saami. Households with privately owned animals are his main units of analysis. All other types and subtypes of property relations regarding reindeer that are found in Russia/the Soviet Union were inaccessible to him. Data from Russia provided by Ingold describe the situation

before collectivisation, e.g. pre-Soviet sources such as Bogoras (1904–9, 1929). Contemporary Yamal is a region where Ingold's findings should still be applicable, since 70–80% of all domestic reindeer there are owned by the herders. However, as I will show in detail, his analysis, implying economic and social individualism of the reindeer-herding households, is to a certain extent questionable. His concentration on reindeer owned privately by individuals also means the exclusion of all state-owned reindeer-herding activities, which at the time of Ingold's book covered the majority of all reindeer herding worldwide.

I maintain that reindeer in the tundra as well as the taiga do not have the 'social significance of small stock', like sheep and goats in Africa and Asia (Ingold 1980: 188). Ventsel's recent work among the Dolgans in Sakha confirms this finding (Ventsel 2004: 198–206). I suggest that the distinction between the social significance of small stock and large stock for reindeer is rather artificial. Ingold (1980: 178) himself admits that, unlike any other nomadic context, the reindeer is the only pastoral animal in this economy. Therefore, both tundra and taiga reindeer have to have the social significance of both small and large stock. Although I agree that property rights in animals such as those of the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1956), the Tswana (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991), or the Boran (Bassi 1990) might be even more relevant to social networks among pastoralists in Africa, the reindeer of the Yamal Nentsy are still the principal means by which alliances between families, as well as between individuals, are enacted. Thus, we would be wrong to see them as being economically and socially isolated, as Ingold (1980: 188) saw the Basseri studied by Barth (1964).

5.3 Official Property Regimes in Reindeer

The easiest first step for a social scientist studying property in Russia is to examine the official figures. These reveal not only the numbers of deer and the ratio of property types but also how property is officially perceived. It is not difficult to imagine that the official categories are too simplistic to embrace the complex realities of multiple forms of property. For reindeer herding in Russia, there is an official set of possible variables used in gathering statistics on property. This is applied in all regions and controlled by the Russian Committee for Statistics (Goskomstat).

Currently there are three official general types of property in reindeer: reindeer in agricultural enterprises (mostly sovkhozy, i.e. state-owned enterprises, and their successors), which implies that they are controlled by the state; reindeer in peasant farming enterprises; and personally owned reindeer (by herders, and some commercial enterprises). For our purposes it is worth mentioning that these categories reflect only ownership rights and no other

entitlements such as use rights. Such general categories cannot be expected to cover the huge regional differences in property regimes. Yet although they might be dismissed as 'fiction' in the official archives, they still create a certain virtual reality in the heads of bureaucrats, politicians and enterprise directors, who negotiate subsidies. Therefore, even though they may have only limited relation to reality, these categories are still very relevant for contemporary reindeer herders.

5.3.1 Agricultural Enterprises

This term refers almost exclusively to those enterprises that used to be state-owned in Soviet times, and have since changed their institutional forms in various directions. In official statistics, their herds fall into one category: 'deer owned by agricultural enterprises' (*oleni sel'khozpredpriiatiia*). As I have shown in chapter 4, these institutions now have different owners on paper but in effect are still controlled by the Okrug Department of Agriculture. The property rights in the reindeer herds of all these enterprises are identical in practice and major husbandry decisions such as selling a whole herd or reducing the total herd size through slaughter are usually made by the directors, but not without the agreement of the Okrug Department of Agriculture. Reindeer herders therefore speak of state reindeer (*gosudarstvennye oleni*) for this type, since the registered owners of these enterprises depend on decisions and subsidies from the okrug government.

In 2001, the YNAO statistical office published a bulletin on reindeer herding that split the category 'agricultural enterprises' into two, distinguishing sovkhozy and what is loosely called *novye formirovania* (new formations). This latter category comprises all the former sovkhozy that on paper are no longer state-owned but are joint stock companies, cooperatives, or limited liability companies. However, this does not change the fact that these enterprises are state-controlled, and the reindeer in them are still referred to and perceived as sovkhoz reindeer (*sovkhoznye oleni*).

5.3.2 Peasant Farming Enterprises

This category found its way into the Russian Federal statistics after the privatisation campaign in 1992, when the basic unit of private agriculture was thought to become a *krest'ianskoe fermerskoe khoziaistvo* (KfKh). This category reveals much about the problems caused to reindeer herding by bureaucracy: the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation and Scandinavian countries all classify reindeer herding as a branch of agriculture, thereby turning reindeer pastoralists into farmers. They therefore have to comply with laws written originally for Russian or Ukrainian grain or vegetable

farmers. I have heard numerous complaints from reindeer-herding officials that these laws are generally inappropriate for the economic and administrative needs of the North. In the YNAO only four KfKh were registered in the statistics of 2001, officially with just 250 head of reindeer out of half a million reindeer in the okrug. All of these enterprises were in the forest region, not in the tundra. Since the form and size of these enterprises varies, reindeer in them could be private as well as collective, but not public or state-owned. In the near future, this category might be substituted by the category of reindeer in *obshchiny* (see chapter 7).

5.3.3 Privately or Personally Owned Reindeer

The third type of property refers to all herds and deer that are not registered with the former state farms (sovkhozy) or farming enterprises, i.e. type three is everything that is not types one or two. Here I want to draw attention to the distinction between private deer and personal deer. Neither Soviet nor Russian statistics refer to private deer in the literal sense (*chastnye*), since this type of ownership was forbidden in the Soviet Union. They refer only to personal (*lichnye*) reindeer, which were seen as a supplement to the state reindeer (*podsobnye khoziaistva*). Conceptually, these personal reindeer hold a similar place to the private or garden plots in agricultural socialist settings (Hann 1998: 17; Humphrey 1998: 9; Clarke 2000: 195). Everything produced there belongs to the household, which is conceptualised as a single unit of production. This personal property is different to private property, which is associated with private (usually commercial) enterprises. In a similar way, Tuisku (2002: 191) considers private reindeer as having been privatised after the end of the Soviet Union, whereas personal deer then would be the animals not counted as parts of sovkhoz brigades, owned by households. The absence of an explicitly 'private' category for reindeer in the statistics is telling even now about perception of reindeer by officials either as belonging to the state, or as personal belongings of individual herders.

As I showed in chapter 4, there has been tension about the traits of these personal reindeer. On the one hand they were inalienable from their tenants, just like private garden plots. However, sovkhozy sometimes relied on them in order to fulfil the meat plan. This is similar to a situation where the private plot is inalienable yet produce from it can be sold. Similarly personal deer are inalienable, yet their meat can be sold. This shows how a single object can have multiple properties and 'can assume different social forms depending upon the social context (Gregory 1982: 22).

In Yamal, the 'personal' category in the statistical records is no longer so personal, but encompasses various property regimes, which all have in

common that the herd and the deer are owned and managed without involvement of the okrug administration and the former state farms. The various subtypes of personal/private ownership can be characterised as follows:

- (a) The personal deer of herders are the largest of these subtypes. Currently, they account for around 70% of all reindeer in the okrug, i.e. ca. 350,000 head. This is the most important and typical form of 'personal property'.
- (b) A very small proportion of privately owned deer belong to commercial reindeer herding enterprises of various legal forms (see chapter 8). They are not the successors of state farms, but have grown out of private initiatives. Currently there are only three enterprises of this type, all of which are run by heads of influential Nenets families. The enterprises are mainly engaged in marketing and processing the reindeer belonging to subtype (a), i.e. the personal deer of individuals, but they are also registered by the administration as having at least a few thousand deer. These would then be truly private deer as opposed to personal, for which there was not yet a category in the Russian statistics in 2001.
- (c) The third subtype of private property comprises deer of a so-called *obshchina*, an institution which appeared for the first time in official statistics in 2001. An *obshchina* in Yamal is a registered union of private reindeer herders who wish to sell produce jointly. The animals are still owned by the households, but the *obshchina* organisation as a whole receives the subsidies from them. However, this subtype in Yamal is still in its very early stages (see chapter 7). These reindeer appear in official statistics as the personal property of the respective individual herders, who are members of the *obshchina*. This is different to the situation in the Sakha Republic, where *obshchina* reindeer are not private reindeer, and are therefore listed under category 2, peasant farming enterprises (see Stammler & Ventsel 2003).

We see that officially there is a threefold regime of property in reindeer in contemporary Yamal, although the farming enterprise category is currently empty and thus meaningless. Jernsletten & Klokov (2002: 35) conceptualise three regimes—state ownership, public property and private ownership—but they also admit that there is no actual difference between state and public ownership. Therefore, we can restrict ourselves in these official categories to two: state-controlled and personal reindeer. Under this umbrella, there are several subtypes, described above as (a), (b) and (c). These subtypes within the official regime show the limitations of generalisations in official statis-

tics, since they do not consider multiple property rights, for example when personal reindeer appear simultaneously on the record of an *obshchina* in order to increase its subsidies.

5.4 Ownership, Use Rights and Duties

Hann (2003: 24) has recently stressed that the 'rights to use and manage are often exercised by parties other than the legal owners'. Such cases include the sovkhoz situation of mixed reindeer herds and the ownership of reindeer by village dwellers. The different implications of the earmark and the fur-mark of reindeer (see below) take this into consideration. Here I show which rights are restricted to owners and which can be negotiated among different users. I distinguish several sets of rights, but also argue for broadening the view on property relations beyond rights. It is a given that with rights there are always duties and responsibilities. Reindeer herding provides an example of a situation where people not only have the right but also the duty to make use of reindeer and care for them. I think of duties as an essential part of property relations in this society of mobile pastoralists. Rights and duties are usually negotiated without any contract, or they are not negotiated at all, because they are part of the nomadic lifestyle of the reindeer herders.

There are a number of properties of reindeer that make them interesting as a resource, the use of which has many different aspects. Galaty & Johnson (1990: 20) divide the use of an animal's body into 'terminal' and 'renewable' resources. 'Terminal' or non-renewable resources are mainly meat, but also skin and sinew. 'Renewable' resources are wool, goat hair (cashmere), and in our case also antlers and the transport capacity of deer. In addition to these material resources, I suggest we should also consider the use of reindeer for cultural purposes, such as objects of prestige, sacrifice, reindeer as an idea (e.g. as an identity marker), reindeer as 'indigenous capital *par excellence*' (King 2000: 115) and, finally, the knowledge of reindeer and their environment as entitling people to their use, aspects particularly stressed by Anderson (1998, 2000a) and King (2000: 68–115). Thus, I try to conceptualise 'material and immaterial forms' of property (Goody 1998: 201). Both terminal/renewable and material/immaterial resources of reindeer can be used as commodities for commercial, domestic or subsistence purposes. In the following I shall use this distinction in a similar way to Gudeman's (1998, 2001) two spheres of exchange (community and the market) as a way to structure not only property as a 'bundle of rights' in the sense of Sir Henry Maine (1875), but as a complicated bundle of uses. I investigate whether the Nentsy have certain tendencies to organise this use in an exclusive or inclusive way, and how the rights of a reindeer owner differ

from those of a reindeer user. It therefore helps to consider the reindeer both as live property and as dead property.

5.4.1 Domestic Use

For maintaining the reindeer herders' mobile lifestyle, entitlements of non-commodity use in reindeer are crucially important. By this set of use rights, I mean every use of the reindeer which does not result in produce that can be sold on the market or result in monetary transactions with the reindeer herders. I argue that as long as a reindeer is alive, it is more likely to be shared by different users, whereas once it is dead, exclusive ownership rights characterised as typical for carnivorous pastoralists (Ingold 1980) become more relevant.

5.4.1.1 Transport

One important use of the reindeer is as a means of transport. Reindeer herders migrate over distances as much as 1,000 km a year with their whole household. A middle-sized household with approximately 5–10 members in one *chum*, needs approximately 150 deer (normally castrated bulls) for transport alone. Different property regimes influence the definition of using reindeer as a means of transport. For herders employed by the sovkhoz, migration with reindeer could be regarded as part of their job, which is why using reindeer for transport would not be an entitlement or right, but rather belong to the set of duties of this wage labour job. Reindeer then would be the tool or instrument needed to perform the job.[89] However, from a moral point of view, the sovkhoz is not just the owner but, in many herders' eyes, also the 'master', the *khoziain* of the reindeer. Many herders express this when discussing the future of the sovkhoz. It has the duty to provide conditions for the well-being of the herds. It exercises this duty by paying its employees to move these reindeer. In Yamal, many Nentsy herders enjoy nomadism, and, providing their own herds are small, they use the work in the sovkhoz to get experience in the *nenei ilngana* (Nen: for real life). Therefore, their duty to move reindeer is at the same time their right to use reindeer for transport, giving them the opportunity to exercise their lifestyle.

The same situation applies where the reindeer owner lives in the village. He also has the duties of the *khoziain*, which for the nomad can be seen as an entitlement to use reindeer to exercise his way of life. In both cases the

[89] This would set the relation between herders and their deer in a similar frame as that between tractor drivers and their tractors. Although I imagine that tractor drivers can have personal and emotional ties to their tractors, the position of the reindeer is different. Tractors are not usually sacrificed to local spirits, nor are they slaughtered for consumption after their transport mission is finished.

owner keeps the entitlements of commodity use of his deer, but he has the duty to pay the herder either in the form of a salary or in reindeer. In the latter case the herder acquires more rights in animals as a result of his work. In early Soviet times, reindeer herders were even rewarded for good herding work in the form of personal reindeer (see chapter 4; and Brodnev 1950: 104), an ideological contradiction, since the declared Soviet goal was to eliminate private property.[90] From all this we see how closely interrelated are property rights and property duties in the context of reindeer.

Among private herders, in the herd ownership referred to as type (1) and (2) below (see table 6), the use of animals for transport is a right, since they deliberately chose this mobile way of life. Therefore, in the ethnographic case described below (see also chapter 3), Mishene and Timofei ask their richer relatives Tokcha and Anatolii (see figure 7) for the right to use their reindeer for transport. This 'right to use' entails a duty as well, which is imposed by the system of mutual assistance: Mishene and Timofei have to herd Tokcha's and Anatolii's reindeer and train some for transport. Therefore they have the right to use them. In this setting, the use of deer for transport has a more obvious social facet: it builds up long-term relationships within the tundra community. Evladov (1992 [1929]: 169) describes how these relationships often lasted over a generation. The son would be obliged to give back reindeer that his father had borrowed (even though sometimes he might refuse to do so).

This is an example of what Galaty & Johnson (1990: 18) mean when they talk about the use of domestic animals for social as well as economic purposes. Social ties become even closer if the herder or apprentice lives in one *chum* with the herd owner, and they prevent the Nentsy from facing 'social isolation of the household' as occurs among the Basseri (Barth 1964), and as assumed by Ingold for reindeer herders (1980: 188). The long-term relationships built up by this cooperation between holders of use-rights and use-duties become even more important if we consider the historical dimension. The instability of Nentsy wealth has been described by Golovnev (1995: 51) and makes mutual assistance or aid even more rewarding in terms of possible delayed reciprocity over generations. Epizootic diseases, inaccessible pastures or other disasters can turn a rich herder into a poor one in a single season. Therefore, he might come back to a formerly poorer colleague or relative and ask for the entitlements to use reindeer in exchange for the duty of training them. In this case notions of delayed return as well as of generalised reciprocity are at stake.

[90] This was similar in Kamtchatka, where herders could win personal deer in competitions or receive them as bonuses (Alexander King, 2004, personal communication).

5.4.1.2 Meat for *aibat* and Money

The use of meat for domestic or subsistence purposes carries with it a completely different set of notions to the use of meat as a commodity. This is similar to Ring's (1990) account of Dinka society where animals acquired from wage labour are perceived differently to those acquired through bride price or inheritance. The difference between the community sphere of exchange and the market sphere of exchange in the economy described by Gudeman (1998: xii, 2001) becomes obvious in this case. This could also be analysed in terms of gift exchange and commodity exchange. As Gregory (1982: 22, quoting Godelier 1973) noted, a single object can be exchanged in different ways depending on the social context. When the northern Nentsy slaughter a reindeer for domestic use, they strangle it, whereas when they slaughter it for sale, they stab it to death with a knife in the brain (see section 3.3). In the community sphere, no blood should leave the reindeer and touch the earth. Leonid, the *brigadir* of herd no. 5 of the Yar-Salinskii sovkhoz, says: 'We give blood to the earth only when we devote a reindeer to spirits or our ancestors.' In these cases blood is poured consciously on the earth, in honour of the ancestor or spirit.

While being strangled, the deer should always face to the east. Strangling is done with a rope held by two people on either side of the animal, a process taking 10–15 minutes. Sometimes a short speech is addressed to the spirit to whom the reindeer is slaughtered or sacrificed. Then the fur is removed from the front underside of the deer, a hole is cut and the owner of the deer drinks the warm blood first. This is his exclusive right. In cases of sacrificial slaughtering, he waits until the spirits have finished drinking blood before doing so himself (Khariutschi & Lipatova 1999: 289). Afterwards the owner, who is better described as a master (*khoziain*) in this context, invites all the men of the camp to a shared meal of fresh warm raw meat and blood called *aibat*. After the men are finished, women and children are invited to have their share in *aibat*.[91] Everybody brings his own knife for cutting the meat to eat on the spot.

[91] In big camps with many *chum*s, sharing may not take place among all households. In a brigade of five households where I stayed, *aibat* was not shared among all of them.



Plate 9. *Aibat*, collective Nenets meal directly after slaughtering.

Every subsistence slaughter is an *aibat* and in this way has a ritual character, but I suggest that it differs from a reindeer sacrifice, because 'sacrifices are offered only on rare occasions, when it is considered absolutely essential, to the sun, the moon, thunder, lightning and the wind' (Khariutschi & Lipatova 1999: 291). This is different to what Evans-Pritchard (1956: 265) claimed for the Nuer, that every slaughtering has a sacrificial character. The character of the slaughter in everyday life is better understood as being governed by the rule of the *zakon tundry*, yet not every custom has to be a ritual. This *aibat* is an inclusive collective right to use the reindeer as a terminal resource. However, the sharing takes place just after slaughtering. The leftovers are collected by the wife of the owner and stored for future meals. All the other parts of the reindeer, such as fur, inner fat, sinews, stomach, legs and so on, are the exclusive property of the owner.

This sheds light on the distinction between dead property and live property. *Aibat* vividly exemplifies how the conversion from live to dead property is a conversion from shared rights to exclusive rights. The live animal might have been used by different people for various purposes. During subsistence slaughtering, its resources are shared for the last time, and literally, entitlements become more exclusive as the life and the warmth leaves the animal. Therefore, fresh, warm, unfrozen meat or blood is shared

during *aibat*, but once it becomes cold, the animal enters the exclusive domestic sphere of the owner's household. The domestic slaughtering of animals is also a good example of the gendered division of labour in the tundra (see section 3.3). As long as the animal is alive, responsibility for it lies in the male sphere. Usually men slaughter the animals, and they have *aibat* first, as long as the meat and blood are still warm. Only after that, when most of the life force has already left the animal, do men hand over the responsibility to the women, who drink cold blood and then butcher the reindeer. At this point it enters the domestic sphere.

Thus, *aibat* is different to what Evans-Pritchard (1956: 219) describes in the context of the Nuer *koak* practice. Although every participating Nenets may eat in *aibat* as much as he can, the ownership rights to the dead animal are still clearly allocated. It is the owner who gives use rights during *aibat* to the others, and everything is done in an ordered and quiet way. Although the most popular parts for immediate consumption are the liver, fresh blood and meat from the flank, there does not seem to be a rule that participants are entitled to particular parts of the carcass. The consumption of fresh raw meat and blood is an important component in the Nenets diet, since it provides them with many nutrients. Sharing *aibat* therefore is a redistributive practice confined to meat and blood, ensuring a more or less constant supply of nutrients in a diet without any vegetables. A similar pattern of reciprocal sharing of meat has been reported for the ancient Tatars of the 'Golden Horde' in the fourteenth century, who did the same with sheep and cattle (Khazanov 1994: 154, quoting Tizenghauzen 1884).

This practice of slaughtering for *aibat*, in the community sphere of exchange, is only done with private animals. If a sovkhoz animal is used for this, it will previously have been transferred to the personal property of a particular herder. Sovkhoz animals are not slaughtered in the community sphere. In practice, this transfer of ownership is enacted by writing a document in the brigade record about the individual herder having bought an animal for consumption. The equivalent sum is deducted from his salary by the sovkhoz. Property transactions following the same principle happen in the other direction: slaughtering by knife places a reindeer outside the community sphere and into the market sphere of exchange, at least in northern Yamal.[92] This happens in autumn, when the sovkhoz or commercial enterprises buy live reindeer from herders, who then slaughter them for the market. The herders seem to switch to the anonymous world of commodity very quickly, suddenly treating the animals as meat on the hoof, as property destined for death. The animals that they have looked after all year suddenly

[92] In central and southern Yamal, slaughtering by knife has entered subsistence slaughtering as well, and reindeer herders talk about strangling as being 'backward' *(otstalyi)*.

lose all social ties to the community sphere. We can therefore make a very clear distinction between the treatment of reindeer as personal property and of reindeer as a commodity.

The situation is slightly different when meat is sold for money on an individual basis in smaller quantities. In these cases the slaughtering takes places right in the campsite. Here, the *zakon tundry* is powerful enough to call for the respectful treatment of the animal. Although slaughtered by knife, in many cases the owner might invite other members of the camp to a limited form of *aibat*, before he puts the carcass on his sledge or snowmobile and takes it to a village. This kind of slaughtering happens only in winter, when camps are not so far from villages.

These practices illustrate how both spheres of exchange—the community and the market, or the gift and the commodity—have their place within Nenets reindeer herding. A reindeer as an object enters one or the other sphere depending on the social context. While being shared for *aibat*, during the conversion from live property to dead property, it remains in the community sphere. Reindeer meat is exchanged in generalised reciprocity, and is given away by the reindeer owner to his neighbours in the camp as a gift, being exchanged in reciprocal dependence (Gregory 1982: 12) or mutual obligation (Carrier 1995: 11). When slaughtered for sale, it becomes a commodity, becomes alienable and is treated as an object in the market sphere of exchange.

5.4.1.3 Other Domestic Uses

In addition to their physical use in the form of transport, meat, skins, sinews and fat, reindeer are used as a kind of cultural property for maintaining relations within the community sphere. This is the case mentioned below in mutual help systems (delayed exchange), and also for the purpose of bride price (Rus: *kalym*; Nen: *ne-mir'*). This form of bride price is still widely practised and also belongs to the *zakon tundry*. However, when a reindeer herder marries a woman from the village, no reindeer are transferred. The highest *kalym* is paid for women from well-known tundra families, but the reputation of the bride as a possible *chum*-keeper also plays a role. While I was in the field, the average bride price was around 20 head. However, among the younger generation there is some concern about the possible loss of individual independence through using reindeer to constitute family alliances, as Nikolai told me:

> I don't want to ask my father to give *kalym* to my bride's parents. Things are different now. Your parents don't decide anymore who you marry. Therefore I am afraid my father will complain about my choice of a wife if he has given many reindeer. He might be dissatis-

> fied with her way of working in the *chum*, or he thinks that she didn't bring enough sledges and clothes with her [as a dowry]. No, we organise all this ourselves. That's less complicated (Nikolai Annikovich Khorotetto, 25 May 2001).

This highlights the fact that the reindeer transferred to the bride's family for *kalym* were in exchange for goods transferred to the groom's family, and the fear of not meeting the requirements of the father are shared by several young men. Roman Andreevich Okotetto told me exactly the same fear of his father and thinks the *kalym* is a 'dangerous thing'. His sister's husband 'stole' her (*ukral*) from her home *chum* when the parents were in the village, thus avoiding *kalym* negotiations. However, the idea of balanced reciprocity still seems to be powerful in the parent's generation today. This leads Ingold (1980: 195) to classify *kalym* as an 'indirect dowry' in the sense of Goody. However, the *kalym*, unlike the indirect dowry described by Goody (1998: 208), usually does not go to the daughter. The things given to the daughter are mostly 'female property'—decorations for women's reindeer harnesses, hats and belts, as well as household equipment such as kettles, and, pots and pans—and only a small number of reindeer (Khomich 1995: 179). The most important part of the endowment are sledges with clothes, for women (Rus: *iagushka*; Nen: *pany*) and men (Nen: *mal'tsa*; Rus: *malitsa*), and even winter *chum* covers (Nen: *eia*, *niur'*; Rus: *niuki*).

In the old Nenets songs I heard, the prestige of the bride is praised according to the number of sledges packed with dowry that she brings to the marriage. The long-term character of the alliance between two families becomes obvious if we consider that the bride's family, in principle, is obliged to provide clothing for their daughter for the rest of her life. Evladov (1992 [1929]: 173) revealed that the 'obligation' to sew clothes for women remains with them for a lifetime in the (usually parental) *chum* which received the *kalym* (cf. also Khomich 1995: 179f). Today in some households, as in Tokcha's and Anatolii's case (see chapter 3), this extends beyond a single generation, with the grandmothers still sewing clothing for their daughters' children. This long-term reciprocal obligation is characteristic of gift exchange. Personal relations between people are established through the exchange of objects (Gregory 1982; Carrier 1995). Therefore, *kalym* is not just about buying off a daughter from her patriclan, but building up long-term alliances. This is different to Ingold's finding (1980: 196) that among carnivorous reindeer pastoralists the bride has been 'paid off' and has no further economic ties to her kin. In my view, the difference in the items transferred between the families makes the *kalym* a bride price and the endowment of the bride's kin a dowry. The two families involved are very aware of the reciprocity of these two transactions. In principle, these recipro-

cal transactions are balanced, but since they can last beyond a generation, it is very likely that in most cases the value of the transfer between the sides is no longer calculated.

In addition to its material significance, this reindeer transfer between families also has a highly symbolic significance. Animals as the 'supreme form of property' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 45) are the most important measure of one's prestige. Where many reindeer are transferred as *kalym* the bride and her family will be held in very high esteem, but she is also expected to perform her duties in the domestic sphere as a *chumrabotnitsa*. A reindeer herder with a large herd enjoys more prestige than one who slaughters many of his animals and invests the proceeds in equipment or opens a bank account. This is where the material and the sociocultural aspects of property meet. Marriages are still generally free of any money transactions, unlike those of the Saami (Ingold 1980: 195).

5.4.2 The Use of Reindeer outside the Tundra: Corporeal and 'Incorporeal' Property

The most common use of reindeer outside the tundra is the sale of reindeer products on the market. Meat is obviously the main product, but young antlers (*panty*) are increasingly important. The latter, which are covered in 'velvet' fur and have not yet hardened, are sold for hard currency on the Chinese, South Korean and Singapore markets (see chapter 8). On the domestic Russian market, meat is the staple product, and evidence for Ingold's (1980) view of reindeer herding as 'carnivorous pastoralism' as opposed to 'milch pastoralism'. Another product on the domestic market is fur taken from the legs of the reindeer (*lapy*), which is used for winter shoes. The most important Russian markets for *lapy* produced in Yamal are Yakutia and Buriatia.

Entitlement to use reindeer for such products lies almost without exception with the owners. Thus, whoever owns the deer gets paid for the product. However, it is important to remember here the dual property regime at the official macro-level: the producers of the meat and antlers of state-controlled reindeer are not the owners, so the state receives payment for the product and the herders get a salary. This is a remnant of the Soviet agricultural industry and is not part of the analysis in Ingold (1980), nor in any anthropological work published before the end of the Soviet Union. For state-controlled deer, the head of the enterprise, in agreement with the YNAO Department of Agriculture, decides how many antlers are to be cut and how many deer slaughtered from the state-controlled herds. Exceptions to this rule are the poorer, former state enterprises in the south of the YNAO

among the Khanty, who do not engage in cutting *panty*, because of lack of helicopter transport. Unofficially, the state turns a blind eye when herder-employees negotiate *panty*-cutting with private enterprises and receive the profit from *panty*, although they do not have official entitlement to this commodity. In this exceptional case, not only are the owner and user different, but also the owner and producer, and the owner and beneficiary of the profit.

This distinction is not true for private herders who have all the rights for commodity use in their deer. Although the prices are low, the profit for private reindeer owners is enough to afford some luxury goods like snowmobiles, radios and imported foodstuffs. The owner of a large private herd can sell enough *panty* to buy one snowmobile each year if he so wished, being 400 kg of fresh cut antlers. Therefore, these entitlements are the most important asset among reindeer herders in their trade relations with external bodies.

We see that, with the one exception of *panty* production in south-west YNAO, all the other material uses of reindeer are exclusively organised, the profit going to the individual owner. In all these cases, sharing and donations do not take place. This is what Barth (1964) described for the Basseri sheep and goat breeders, and Ingold (1980) for tundra reindeer herders.

The other sphere of commodity use of reindeer is non-material, or 'incorporeal', to use a term of Robert Lowie (1970 [1920]). In such cases, we have more inclusive entitlements in the way Myers (1997) describes for the Pintupi in Australia. The physical ownership of the animal is not decisive for this use, but it is still a particular form of commodity use. Thus reindeer represent cultural property for the Nentsy and are used politically as a marker for regional identity in the YNAO. In post-Soviet political discourse, reindeer herding represents the most important so-called 'traditional lifestyle' of the northern indigenous peoples. Belonging to a group that practises this way of life entitles its members to various forms of state support, from the federal government as well as the okrug government. Moreover, money from industrial enterprises is also directed to regions that have 'traditional lifestyle' groups within them, so that even sedentary persons, who are not engaged in reindeer herding at all, benefit materially from reindeer as an identity marker. I suggest that we look at reindeer as an ethnic as well as a regional identity marker, as a renewable commodity used collectively by the Nentsy as an ethnic group, and by the regional population. This kind of entitlement is independent of ownership and a very inclusive one. I argue here that to a certain extent cultural property becomes a commodity. As Myers (1997) pointed out for the Pintupi, this inclusive use right is possible because sharing the resource does not diminish its value for the individual.

In the case of reindeer as cultural property, sharing increases the value: since the non-reindeer-herding population of the YNAO started to see in reindeer a regional identity marker, a cultural property of the region, the okrug administration has increasingly used this identity argument to justify material support and protection for reindeer herding



Plate 10. Reindeer as a regional identity marker: The YNAO official emblem, here carved in ice in front of the Salekhard Administration.

However, the concept of reindeer as an identity marker carries with it further incorporeal implications than its use as a bargaining agent for the region described above suggests. This is true both for its role as an ethnic and a regional identity marker. Many Nentsy, as 'the reindeer people', are very proud of being 'the best reindeer herders in the world', and they love to be photographed with their favoured bull. Reindeer are the most prestigious ethnic sports symbol. Harnessed-reindeer races are the most popular events at the YNAO's yearly Reindeer Herders' Days, which are also attended by many non-Nentsy. In terms of the regional identity marker, at the turn of the millennium the YNAO officially designed for itself an official emblem

(*gerb*),[93] showing a reindeer, escorted by two polar bears holding a crown over the reindeer's head. This illustrates the highly symbolic meaning of reindeer as inclusive cultural property in a region where the reindeer herding economy contributes less than 1% of GDP and 93% of the population do not work in reindeer herding. The reindeer integrates the multinational population and contributes to establishing a single regional identity for it.

Analysing a very similar development in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug, King (2002: 157f) is right in pointing out that it is incomers and natives in the city who locate reindeer herding and 'traditional culture' in the past, and 'deploy reindeer as an icon of native culture'. (2002: 158). The herders in the tundra, however, neither essentialise nor exotise this, and through their relations with reindeer 'express a sense of culture that is rooted in the here and now' (King 2002: 157). Similarly, in Yamal the understanding of reindeer herding culture in the tundra is much more processual and dynamic than the discourse about it in the city suggests.

Having described these different property rights and duties in reindeer herding in different spheres of exchange, I now move on to an analysis of how these 'bundles of rights and duties' (Maine 1861) are visualised.

5.5 Visualised Property: Reindeer Marks

The marking of animals by their owners is widespread. Every farmer in the European Union, for example, has plastic clips in the ears of his cows. In Mongolia, horses and camels are brand-marked (Humphrey 1974), whereas sheep have earmarks (Barth 1964). In Yamal and elsewhere, marking of reindeer is a matter of enacting one's right to the animals, and also about placing an animal into a herd (see section 3.5.3). Among the Saami, earmarking in autumn is one of the most important activities of collective labour in reindeer herding throughout the year (Beach 1993: 61–74), and marks have become the focus of state interest (Beach 1981: 284f). The most obvious function of these marks is to identify which reindeer belong to which owner. Ingold (1980: 115) explained the general principle of earmark design, saying that the children add one or more elements to the parental earmark on the left, right or both ears. He sees in the practice of earmarking 'a symbolic manifestation of the social relations of pastoralism' (1980: 116), but does not elaborate how earmarks manifest these relations, and what these relations are. To my knowledge a detailed investigation of earmarks has not yet been carried out among reindeer herders.

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[93] Officially adopted by the YNAO duma in the '*postanovlenie gosudarstvennoi Dumy avtonomnogo okruga* ot 15.12.1999 No. 766'.

In Yamal, there are two visible ways of indicating one's right to a certain reindeer: the earmark and the furmark. Both of them are deeply rooted in the reindeer-herders' history. Their design is transmitted through the generations up to the present. Earmarks in reindeer herds are also telling about the ownership structure of the herd, as well as of multiple alliances of households via reindeer transactions. A reindeer with an earmark that differs from the majority of the herd can indicate its provenance as a gift within the system of mutual assistance, as a personal animal within a sovkhoz herd, or a non-intended mixture of herds. Earmarks also found their way into industrialised Soviet reindeer herding where they were generally left unaltered. When the sovkhoz herds were set up out of private confiscated animals, many old marks became 'confiscated' as well and further served as a sign of state property. This is in contrast to what Humphrey describes for Mongolia, where socialist enterprises developed their own marks (1974: 476).

Both earmarks and furmarks are inherited by ultimogeniture. The youngest son in the household inherits the parental *chum* and all its belongings, including the majority of the reindeer herd. Herders explained this by the fact that the parents live with the youngest son until the end of their life, so it is the youngest son who looks after them in their final years. Daughters are only entitled to very particular household items, reindeer decorations and jewellery. However, this does not mean that the youngest son inherits all of his father's deer. When a son establishes his own household, he is given some deer from his father's herd. However, it is difficult to say how many reindeer he gets from his father, and how many are the offspring of the reindeer that were given to him on the occasion of his birth (Khomich 1995: 185). Thus, all sons except the youngest inherit not at the death of their father but at attainment of their own majority. One could argue then that the youngest inherits more, because he gets his share only after the father passes away (delayed), and as a compensation for the greater effort expected in caring for elders. Inheritance is a decisive point in the 'life' and 'reproduction' of a reindeer-mark: the son who moves out to lead his life independently gets his own mark, which is normally designed by his father. In most cases, the design of this mark clearly shows the kin-relatedness between father and son, in so far as the father's mark has been changed only slightly at a certain place on the ear (see figure 6 and related discussion in section 5.6.1). Having one's own mark means having one's own property in reindeer, being an independent reindeer herder.

To my knowledge the inheritance of reindeer by women is unclear among the Nentsy. Brodnev (1959: 76f) describes how daughters inherited reindeer from their mothers, which were given different earmarks to those of their fathers. Unfortunately, Brodnev does not clarify whether these ear-

marks are women's earmarks, or those of consanguinal relatives (father, brother). In carnivorous pastoralism, according to Ingold (1980: 190), animal property is transmitted to children of both sexes. He gives evidence from the Saami, as well as from the Chukchi (quoting Bogoras), where daughters also receive animals with their own earmark. Even for the Nentsy, Entsy, Nganasan, Mansi and Khanty, Ingold, (1980: 195) cites Riasanovski (1965) who states that 'sons receive twice as much as daughters'.

My fieldwork data does not support this view, since I never heard or read about female earmarks, nor about institutionalised inheritance of fixed shares in the herd by daughters. There is occasional reindeer transfer to married women as gifts of their close kin, i.e. their fathers or brothers, which is part of the long-term exchange relation between families as a consequence of marriage. This pattern is also described by Khomich (1995: 186). However, in *kalym* (bride price) transactions, reindeer are given the earmark of the bride's father (Khomich 1995: 180), so there is a transfer of reindeer on behalf of the bride, but the deer do not become her property but her father's. Therefore, to my knowledge, the sphere of the earmark remains male.

Visualising property rights in reindeer using earmarks might easily lead to the assumption that these marks determine private individual property. However, the general design of a mark is associated with an extended family or a clan, to which the individual herder adds one small detail. One mark can also be the collective property of several herders. This is the case where two brothers live together with one herd, but possibly have two households, (i.e. having separate *chum*s and families). In many cases one of these brothers may be poor and not able or willing to create his own herd. So a collective mark could be more the mark of one brother, with the other brother dependent on him. It may also happen nowadays that one brother lives in the village and does not manage his deer himself. Therefore he shares the mark with another brother. Beyond this level, things become more complicated, since we rarely have the situation of 'one mark—one herd—one owner'. Mostly, one herd consists of deer with several marks, i.e. of several owners (see section 5.6)

Where the sovkhoz is the owner, one mark indicates that the reindeer is the property of a particular reindeer brigade, being the unit of production but not the owner. In sovkhozy one can therefore say that the mark is related to the *managers of one herd* rather than to the *owner of the deer*, as is the case among private reindeer herders. So although the Soviets have taken over the practice of marks as a means of visualising property, the contents of what is shown by the mark is different for sovkhoz brigades and for private herders.

5.5.1 Furmark

A reindeer's furmark is temporary, and connected to management and use practices more than to ownership rights. But if we see property relations as a flexible set of entitlements and duties constantly renegotiated, the furmark lies at the heart of these negotiations. The mark is cut in the fur with a knife usually during the autumn corral, when reindeer are selected for slaughtering, but also on other occasions in spring. Since reindeer shed their fur between summer and winter, the furmark lasts less than a year. The temporal nature of the furmark predestines it for temporal property arrangements and entitlements. It is frequently used during counting, to mark deer of a certain owner as already counted (as opposed to the ones still waiting to be counted). In herds of mixed ownership, the furmark can also serve as an additional sign of the owner, in order to claim the reindeer when the share of *one* herder has to be separated from the rest of the herd. Another use of the furmark is to visualise the actual user. A bride's father marks a deer with his furmark when he receives it as a *kalym* with the original earmark of the groom's family. However, he also has the right to cut his own earmark on these deer (see above). Another widespread use of the furmark is when the herder and actual trainer of a reindeer marks it on the fur to indicate that this is his transport animal. The owner of the earmark in these cases might be the sovkhoz, or a richer relative or friend from whom the animal was borrowed. Here again, the furmark stands for a temporary use right. Brodnev (1959: 76) also reports the use of a single furmark for all deer pastured together, whereas earmarks might be different, e.g. for the animals from the husband's side and those from the wife's side. However, I did not come across this use of the furmark during the course of my fieldwork.

The design of the mark itself is as constant as the earmark design. It is inherited by the youngest son from the father. In pre-Soviet times, before native Siberian peoples adopted the Cyrillic alphabet, the furmark was a sign, a practice which has been preserved to a certain extent. Different sons of the same father changed it slightly, with the youngest one inheriting the father's mark. Sons get their own marks only when they become fully-fledged independent herders. While they are young, their reindeer bear the father's mark. Within the family, everyone can distinguish animals by sight. With alphabetisation, letters also became popular, and sons often use their initials as distinguishing furmarks. A similar influence of the Cyrillic alphabet has been described by Humphrey (1974: 476) for horse marks among the Mongols.

To summarise, with its temporary character the furmark is frequently used to identify the *manager* of the animal, whereas the earmark is a clear *ownership* mark. The furmark is connected to certain entitlements of use and

management like slaughtering for meat or temporarily mixing a herd, or borrowing animals for service purposes from the owner. Both marks are rooted in kinship networks of the reindeer herding communities, but partly became detached from them through Soviet collectivisation efforts. The two forms of mark visualise multiple property relations. A herd with only one earmark or furmark is very rare.

Ingold claims that the existence of marks in reindeer is indicative of the degree of tameness of the animals and the herder's familiarity with them. The reindeer herders do not know their animals by face, and so they have to mark them, because they are not fully domesticated (Ingold 1986a: 10). In this case it would be logical that the furmark acts as an amplifier of the earmark, since the latter is smaller and less visible from a distance. However, I argue that among the Yamal Nentsy and Northern Khanty the purpose of both marks is not about recognising one's own animal. They know most of their deer so well that they give names to many of them, and not just the service or transport animals. Rather, the marks are needed to prove and visualise one's entitlements to the animal vis-à-vis outsiders, who cannot recognise by the face or the colour of a particular animal, to whom it belongs. Marks also become important to distinguish animals when herds are merged during summer, or they mix in winter because of snowstorms. A similar purpose of marks has been described by Barth (1964) for the Basseri sheep in Iran.

5.5.2 Earmark

The earmark (*kha'*, *nenadumd'*) is the most important mark of the reindeer. In many cases, it is given to a deer once in a lifetime, and can be changed only to a limited extent, since cutting a mark in the ear is irreversible. In some cases the earmark indicates the original place from which the animal came, for example when it was a gift from the first owner to a second. In such cases, the earmark often remains the same, even though the owner has changed, because many owners know their deer by face and do not need marks to distinguish them from others. Therefore, in one herd, deer with various marks can still belong to one owner. Such marks will then tell much about the alliances of the owner with other households.

However, first and foremost, earmarks are a sign of a constant and exclusive set of rights, which are rarely negotiable. An earmark is not necessarily connected to use-rights of the deer, nor even to the actual herder (manager) of the deer. It is the clearest mark of property in the sense of ultimate ownership. In most cases your own mark on a reindeer indicates that you can do anything you want with the animal. For example, the owner of an earmark may give his deer for use as transport to anybody; he will retain all

rights to productive use (such as fur, meat and antlers) and also usually becomes the owner of any offspring, unless this is specifically renegotiated with the current user. The new calves are marked shortly after birth in late spring or early summer, whereas the Saami do this in autumn (see above, section 3.5.3, and Beach 1993). Unlike the Saami system, the Nenets marks on Yamal are less sophisticated (see figure 6) and less institutionalised. In Sweden, the administration has an inventory of every earmark ascribed to its owner. The same is true for the European Nentsy. Among the Saami, if a mark is too similar to another, its use is forbidden and one party is expected to redesign the mark (Beach 1993: 69). Thus registered marks become explicitly and exclusively attached to private property in a market economy. A mark can be sold together with the herd to somebody else (Beach 1993: 68). This would be unimaginable for Nentsy or Khanty herders.

When the owner of the deer is not present, for example with sovkhoz herds, or where the owner lives in a village and places his reindeer under the care of others, there is opportunity for tampering with marks. Calves, for example, can be marked as belonging to a different owner. In such cases a distant owner does not have the control over his deer, although they have his earmark. As one villager told me: *U chuzhogo cheloveka stado nikogda ne rastet* (with a foreigner, your herd will never grow). Therefore, more and more families send at least one member out to the tundra to herd their reindeer, rather than give them to somebody else. The situation is different among the Swedish Saami: during lactation the calf follows the mother everywhere making it easy to recognise (through descent) who it belongs to. However, if the calf becomes independent before it has been marked, ownership and descent will never become clear and the calf will be auctioned (Beach 1993: 72). For the Nentsy and Khanty, such a situation is hardly imaginable, since their interaction with, and control of, the herd is more intense than that of the Saami, and most herdsmen know which calves belong to which mothers even without a mark.

In cases where owner and herder of the reindeer are different, multiple forms of property are at stake, which may lead to conflicts. This is true for every situation where the owner is located far away in a village. In the case of private herds, this problem is often solved by an alternative system of protection such as agreements of mutual aid, tundra-solidarity and kinship relations. For the last of these, earmarking is of essential importance. It connects the members of a household to the herd, so that the earmark is the visual interface between property, kinship and inheritance among West Siberian reindeer herders. As I shall show in the ethnographic example below, marks on each ear of the reindeer are conceptually similar to our system of surnames and first names (see figure 6, earmarks 1–7). One ear

stands for the clan, or in big clans for the lineage, and should not be changed, whereas the other ear is reserved for the individual owner. Where earmarks with the same surnames are different to each other, this suggests either the merging of clans during Soviet times (see chapter 6) or to multiple lineages in big clans, some of which today are barely remembered.

The two forms of marks visualise multiple property relations in so far as one rarely sees a herd with only one earmark or furmark. For outsiders, it is therefore very difficult to sort out the property relations within one herd. But understanding this also is a means to understanding the social life of a reindeer herding community.

5.6 The Embeddedness of Reindeer Property

Managing a reindeer herd requires cooperation in the day-to-day work with the animals. In this section I show how the ownership pattern visualised by reindeer marks influences cooperation between households and individuals, which is crucial for the reinforcement of social relations among people, be it kinship relations, friendship or relations between herders and the sovkhoz. Cooperation has to be of mutual benefit to both partners. This is why the topic of reciprocity plays an important role. Between households, generalised or balanced reciprocity serves as a vital form of risk insurance, as has been shown in the African context by Cashdan (1985), whereas reciprocity among individuals, as I show, is exclusively about enacting one's friendships. The idea of mutual assistance or mutual aid between households is prominent in studies about the Nentsy and other pastoralists (Evladov 1992 [1929]: 168–73; Brodnev 1950: 92; Khazanov 1994: 153–7). Here, although sharing the risk (Cashdan 1985: 457) may be a primary result of this mutual assistance, the implications for the social fabric in the tundra extend much further.

The basis of cooperation in reindeer herding appears to me to lie in ecological and behavioural imperatives of the herd. As I have shown in section 2.4, the herd is a dynamic entity, and the composition of owners within one herd varies. Inter-household cooperation in herding, for example, is most likely to take place in summer, when herds and labour have to be pooled to cope with insect harassment. Table 6 characterises the different combinations of types of property and owners within a herd.

In my analysis of how social relations and cooperation among herders are related to reindeer property, I will refer to this as ownership pattern (1), (2) or (3). The information in the table reveals the importance of cooperation: even though most of the animals are owned by individual herders, most of them rely on cooperation with others to manage the herd together.

Table 6. Composition of ownership within a reindeer herd.

	No. of ear-marks	Type of man-agement	Type of property	Number of owners	Herd size	Seasonal variation
(1)	1	Indivi-dual	Per-sonal	1 indi-vidual	10–3,000	Rich herders can live on their own all year round, poor herders do so only in winter.
(2)	2–12	Collec-tive	Per-sonal	2–12 indi-viduals	200–2,000	Temporary associations (see chapter 4 *parma*) of poorer households (<300 deer each) join-ing in summer; poor herders joining rich ones.
(3)	4–9	Collec-tive (bri-gade)	State and personal	State + 3–8 indi-viduals	1,500 – 5,000	Mixed herds of sovkhoz brigades with personal and state-owned rein-deer.

Closely corresponding to the seasonal variation in the size of the herd, the camp as the human unit accompanying it is equally dynamic. It can consist of as many as 12 *chum*s (in summer), or of only one *chum*, depending on the season, on the size of the herd, and on the number of owners. Only the combination of all three factors allows us to understand the dynamics. The pattern of 'amalgamation in summer, and disintegration in winter', which is a natural phenomenon in wild reindeer herds (see Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 84; and see chapter 2 above), is far more controlled among domestic herds. This shows how social factors such as the property regime influence herd size. If a summer herd and camp consists of 12 owner households, it is more likely that they will separate in winter (section 2.4 and chapter 3), whereas if it has only one owner, it is less likely to separate due to a lack of labour. This leads to the more detailed unit of analysis: the household.

The household is the main unit of economic production and the unit that engages in social relations with other households, either within one camp or among camps. Unlike other reindeer herding settings, such as among the Khanty, the Komi or the European Nentsy, a single household in most cases inhabits a whole *chum* among the Nentsy in Yamal (see chapter

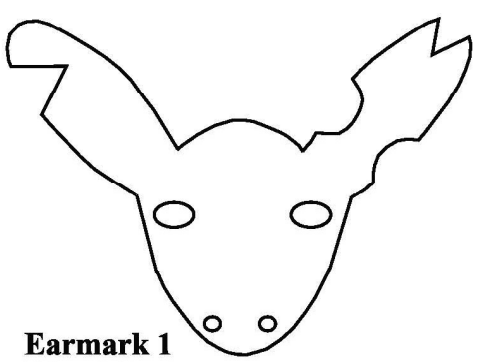
3). The household has a household head, who is the male person responsible for the herd. He makes husbandry and herding decisions (see chapter 2; and Paine 1964), in most cases in agreement with his wife and other household members involved in the herding. He is also the owner of the earmark.

Below the household level is the level of the individual, where cooperation takes place, either between individuals within one household, or between individuals of various households. I show how these individual relationships are enacted through reindeer exchange and visualised through reindeer marks.

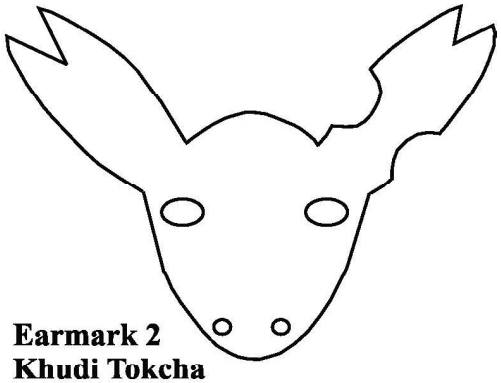
5.6.1 Reindeer Exchange among Households

In order to illustrate how closely the ownership of reindeer, as visualised by marks, is connected to relations between reindeer-herding relatives and their history, I will present one case in detail. Tokcha Parivich Khudi and his camp, introduced in chapter 3, have a herd that comprises at least six different earmarks. This indicates close interrelations between the two pairs of brothers and sisters. The son of a rich and well-known herding family, Tokcha married the daughter, Natasha Tynzikovna Vanuito Makh'ko, of another rich and well-known family. Her brother, Anatolii Tynzikovich, married Tokcha's sister, Elena Parievna Khudi. This marriage pattern extends back to both their parents, who themselves married partners from the other's respective family, and relations can be traced back up to 6 generations (see figure 7).

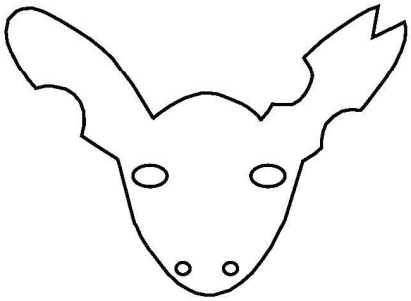
Between these families, a vital exchange of reindeer from both grooms to the fathers of both brides, and of equipment from the brides' fathers to both grooms (see above, *kalym*) took place. This is why today we find animals in Tokcha's herd with Anatolii's father's earmark (*kalym* to Tokcha's father Pari), and vice versa (*kalym* to Anatolii's father Tynzik). Tokcha Parivich is the youngest son of his father, Pari Khudi, and therefore he should have inherited his earmark (see figure 6, earmark no. 1), according to Nenets ultimogeniture. However, they decided to create another earmark (no. 2), since they felt it was too similar to the mark of a Yar-Sale sovkhoz brigade. The earmark of Tokcha's grandfather was given to Tokcha's youngest uncle, who again through ultimogeniture gave it to his youngest son (see no. 3).



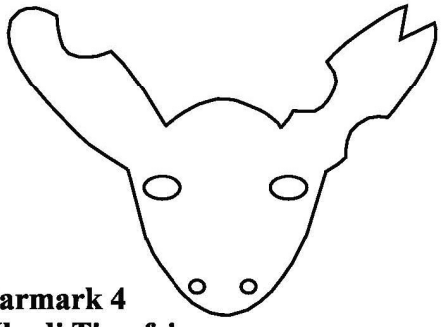
Earmark 1
Khudi Pari



Earmark 2
Khudi Tokcha



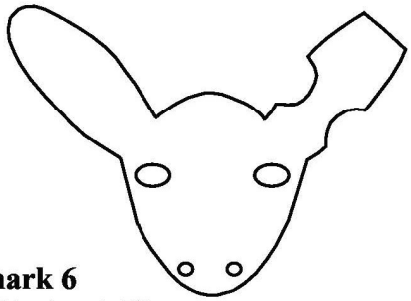
Earmark 3, Khudi Pari's youngest son



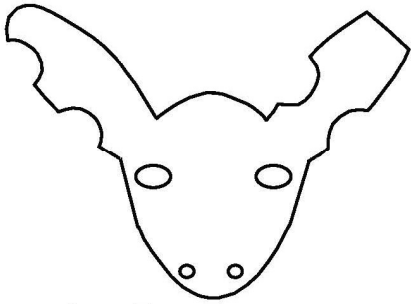
Earmark 4
Khudi Timofei



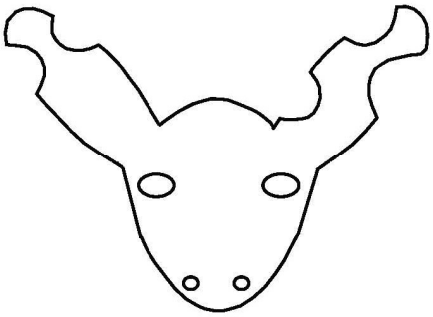
Earmark 5
Khudi Iakhachi



Earmark 6
Vanuito Anatolii



Earmark 7
Vanuito Konstantin



Earmark 8
Khudi Mishene

Figure 6. Earmarks among private herders.

This earmark is very similar again to Tokcha's distant relative Timofei (see figure 6, no. 4), who lives in the neighbouring *chum*. Timofei is a relative of Tokcha via the wife of the brother of Tokcha's grandfather (for kinship relation see figure 7). This wife is from the Nerkagi family, and adopted Timofei. Between her and Timofei, there are two generations, and Timofei told me in 2001 that she was 99 years old. The father of her husband, Khanzero Khudi, Tokcha's great-grandfather, was one of Evladov's informants in 1926–8 (Evladov 1992 [1929]: 43–6). Evladov reports that back in 1926 Khanzero was already a well-established and highly respected old man. Now Timofei's earmark is that of his adoptive father, Neleko Khudi (no. 4), Khanzero's older son. Most probably, Neleko and his wife had no children of their own, or they did not survive. In this situation many Nentsy adopt children. Neleko's brother Iakhachi gave his earmark to his son Gennadii (no. 5).



Plate 11. Tokcha (in the middle), Anatolii (right), with the author (left) and Tokcha's sons (front).

The 'next door neighbour', in the *chum* to Timofei's left, is Anatolii Tynzikovich Vanuito Makh'ko, with his wife Elena, Tokcha's sister. He also remembers how he is related to another of Evladov's informants of 1928, the brother of his grandmother. Anatolii's youngest sister married a brother of Timofei, Mikhail. Anatolii inherited his father's earmark (see no. 6), and the

parents' household in ultimogeniture. As the only son (he had younger sisters but no brothers), there would have been no difference between male primogeniture and ultimogeniture in the inheritance of the household. His mother, Edeine, still lives with him. Anatolii also herds the animals of his uncle, Konstantin, who lives in the village and has only a slightly different earmark (see no. 7). Finally, the last earmark in this private reindeer herders' camp is that of Mishene, Tokcha's oldest brother (no. 8). He used to be a fisherman for 35 years in the Novyi Port fish factory, until they 'rationalised away' most of their staff fishermen. He then joined his younger, rich brother Tokcha, and now receives transport reindeer for his household from him, and helps him with fishing on the Iuribei River.

Many herders think that kinship relations have always been very important in Yamal, although Tokcha and some others think that they have gained in importance since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a fact confirmed by Ziker's work (1998) among the Dolgan and Nganasan in Taimyr.

> We have to build up unions among ourselves. In earlier times, the sovkhoz did not trust the relatives. They deliberately tore apart brothers, so that they do not engage in 'under-handed business' (*chtoby ne zanimalis' levymi delami*). Nowadays this situation has improved (Tokcha, May 2001).

What Tokcha meant by 'under-handed business' is undermining the sovkhoz system by hiding private reindeer and not delivering meat to fulfil the plan or similar independent behaviour. However severe Soviet interventions may have been perceived by herders, the sovkhozy did not destroy the whole social fabric in the tundra. Otherwise, there would be no continuity from pre-Soviet to post-Soviet times with earmarks, marriage and migration patterns, as I described for the continuous kinship relations in Tokcha's camp from the 1920s up to the present. Evladov described Khanzero Khudi as a man rich in reindeer, 'who was highly respected by all reindeer herders of southern Yamal' (Evladov 1992 [1929]: 44). Four generations later (see figure 7), his great-grandson Tokcha holds a similar position in the very same area in southern Yamal. Evladov's description of Khanzero's character as 'clever and decisive' back in 1929 applies exactly to Tokcha, whom I got to know as an enthusiastic reindeer herder, full of energy, highly decisive, clever and spontaneous, with good leadership qualities.

Although there was no formal 'Nenets aristocracy' in this rather egalitarian society, there are still some families with a long history of descendants enjoying particular respect among relatives and neighbours. Golovnev calls this kind of leadership 'democratic' (1997b: 149; see also Golovnev 2000a), and sees a general trend back to this kind of pre-Soviet leadership patterns among the Nentsy (1997b: 163). What his and my own material suggest,

however, is that this continuity was not destroyed during the era of the Soviet Union. Therefore, in some cases there is no need to deliberately go back to pre-Soviet times. The pre-Soviet system in many ways became part of the local Soviet leadership. As a highly respected Nenets in Se-Iakha explained to me:

> Of course we [his extended family] were successful reindeer herders before the Soviet Union, and it is no wonder that we also succeeded to run our business within the sovkhoz, and now we do it with our private business. The Communist Party appointed me as village council leader, and now my reindeer herders elect me to the same position (Nikolai Lachevich Okotetto, September 2000).

The kinship-relatedness of people is reflected in their reindeer, since one part of the earmark design stands for the broader clan/family, (e.g. Khudi, Vanuito or Okotetto) whereas the other part stands for the individual. The clan part of the design must remain unchanged. This is why, in figure 6, Anatolii's and Konstantin's earmarks (nos. 5 and 6) are identical on the left ear (Vanuito), and all the Khudi's earmarks in the camp are identical on the left ear: Pari (no. 1), Tokcha (no. 2), Tokcha's youngest uncle (no. 3), Timofei (no. 4), Gennadii (no. 5). The exception to the ultimogeniture pattern is that Tokcha did not inherit his father's mark (nos. 1 and 2), since the sovkhoz appropriated a very similar mark for one of its brigades. So here in the practice of giving earmarks sovietisation has had an impact on Nenets property. The other exception is Mishene's earmark (no. 8), whose design does not seem to fit the family's pattern. There has been no ready explanation for this except that this brother did not practice reindeer herding for 35 years. He might also have taken the earmark of his wife's father, even though normally in-laws do not inherit marks.

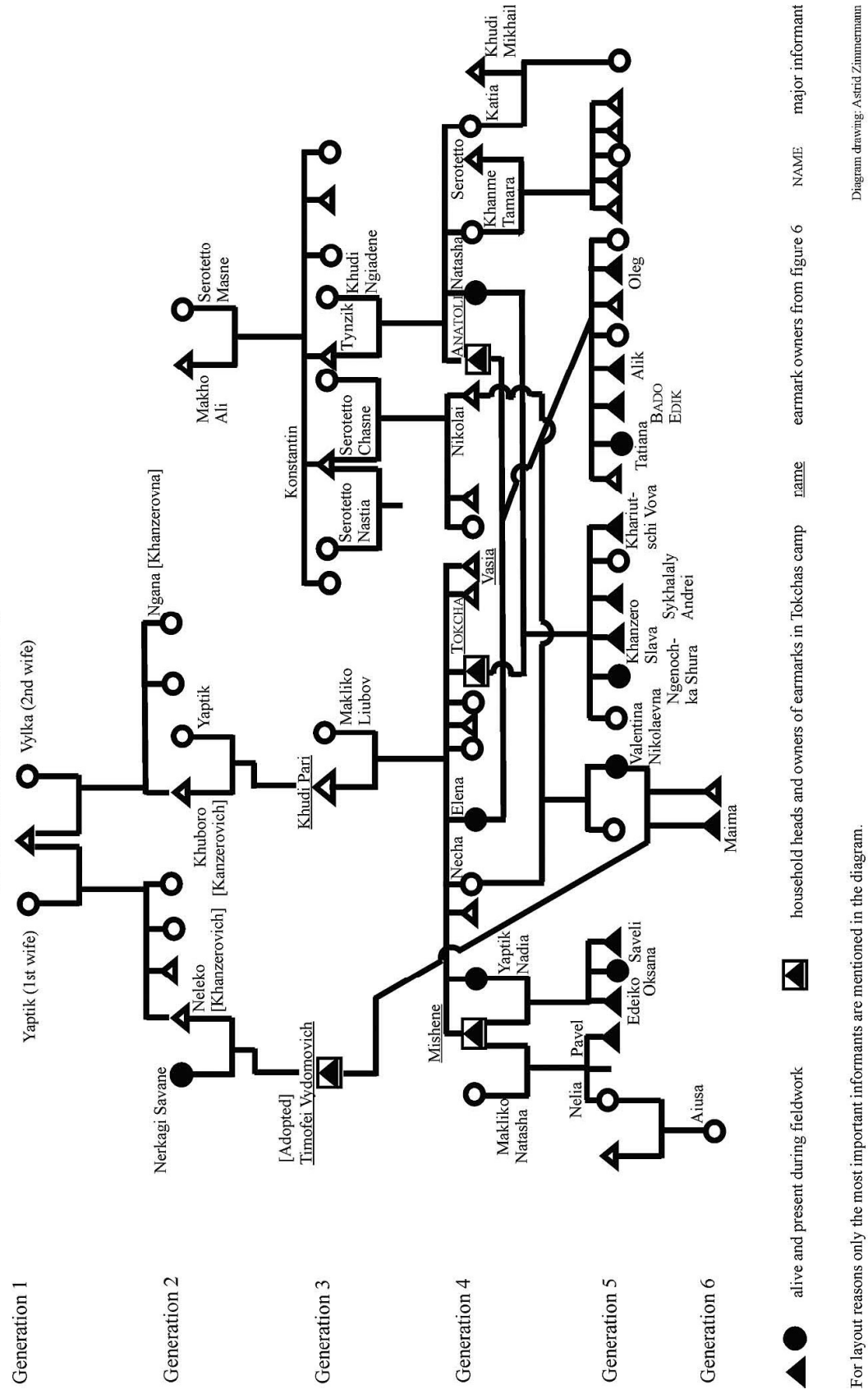


Figure 7. Kinship relations within the camp of Tokcha Parivich Khudi and relatives.

A similar 'language' of earmarks among reindeer herders still prevails among the Swedish Saami, but is more institutionalised and complicated, as pointed out by Beach (1993). Like the Nentsy, the Saami also reserve one ear for the earmark of the extended family, which remains constant over all generations, whereas the other ear stands for the individual. However, their earmarks can be sold, which makes the pattern less consistent.[94] The example of kinship, inheritance and marks among my hosts and their ancestors shows how the earmark is important in perpetuating Nenets social relations in the tundra via the visualisation of reindeer property. The system of mutual assistance among kinsmen, as well as marriages, leaves its traces in the combination of earmarks of particular reindeer within a herd.

One goal of cooperation among herders is the lending, borrowing and training of animals for transport. In Tokcha's camp, neither Mishene nor Timofei have enough transport deer to carry their households on the long migration routes. Therefore, they borrow them from Tokcha or Anatolii. In most cases, they get young, untrained, male animals, which they train for Tokcha and use for themselves. They can mark these deer with their own furmarks, whereas the earmark remains the same. Such cooperation is beneficial to both sides, since neither Tokcha nor Anatolii can train as many animals as they would like to themselves, and Mishene and Timofei do not have enough animals to transport their households. If the situation changes and their herds get bigger, Mishene or Timofei will return the trained animals to Tokcha and Anatolii. Moreover, the two poorer herders take an even share in the herding work for the whole joint herd. The actual number of animals owned does not influence the amount of herding work that an owner has to do, when you live in a camp with others. This is why Marxist ethnographers (Brodnev 1950, 1959; but cf. section 4.4.3) saw these cooperations as exploitation of the poor by the rich herders. However, rich herders might have a greater incentive to work hard and are often those with the best understanding of their own and their reindeers' relationship with the environment (cf. King 2002: 158). This sort of animal transfer also happens between households not living in the same camp. The reindeer transfer can be short term, for one migration only, or long term, when sons may give back reindeer that had been borrowed by their fathers (see Evladov 1992 [1929]: 169).

The most common pattern of cooperation is found in private Yamal herds (mainly in central and southern Yamal) with several owners, visualised by several earmarks (see table 6 (2)). Several herders with smaller herds join together, mostly in summer, with the maximum size of such a camp consisting of 12 *chum*s. This is a century-old practice (see *parma*, chapter 4; and

[94] Interview with a reindeer herder from the Lainiovuoma Sameby, northern Sweden, 5 November 2003.

Golovnev 1995: 53). They usually divide the labour of controlling the herd into 24-hour shifts. After the summer, they separate again and make their own way back to autumn and winter pastures with smaller herds.

Among herders with very small herds, these associations can last for the whole year. Both patterns are the kind of mutual assistance among Nentsy called *parma* (Brodnev 1950: 95f; Khazanov 1994: 155). They collectively manage but individually own the deer. The cooperating partners can be, but do not have to be, relatives. If a herd is small (e.g. less than 150 head), it is more likely that the owner will join a richer relative, usually a brother or brother-in-law, as I have described above for Mishene and Tokcha. The owners here are independent regarding the decisions about their own deer, but normally decisions are made in close cooperation. The owners' share in the herd may be quite different: Tokcha Parivich had 1,000 head while his brother Mishene Parivich had scarcely more than 200. This ownership pattern of multiple owners and earmarks is also found among herds where some owners have settled in a village and allowed the deer to be herded by relatives or friends, as I will describe below for brothers Fedor and Mikhail. They provide housing in exchange for the herders during village visits, assistance in marketing, and supply of non-pastoral goods.

Cooperation between households, however, is not restricted to the reindeer herd. Especially among poorer households, other additional activities such as hunting of geese in May, arctic foxes in winter, and ice-fishing in autumn and spring, make inter-household cooperation common in seasons other than summer.[95] Among poorer herders in the forest or southern tundra zone, the main source of income does not generally come from their herd, but from one of the above-mentioned activities. However, most of them wish to increase their herd size, and being a reindeer herder is more prestigious than being a fisherman, although not necessarily more profitable. They increase their herd size by buying animals from herders in return for fish. A less balanced, but more generalised reciprocity is reported by Evladov (1992 [1929]: 170f): poor households received animals for meat from the rich. There was no formal obligation to give something in return, but if the poor herder had something to give away, he might exchange fish or other hunted animal for reindeer.

5.6.2 Cooperation between Individuals

Cooperation of course also takes place in herds chiefly owned by one household (see table 6 (1)). This comes closer to what Ingold (1980: 185) had in

[95] Note, however, that in northernmost Yamal, to the south of White Island, hunting of wild reindeer is still carried out, but elsewhere in Yamal there are no wild reindeer.

mind when he described reindeer ownership as being something like 'one household, one *chum*, one herd'. This means that a private herd is owned and managed by one household with the household head being the owner and the main decision-maker. Property and ownership in animals are visualised mainly by the earmark of the owner, plus earmarks of animals given to him in the framework of his social networks of delayed exchange (see next section). This pattern of herd ownership prevails among rich herders in northernmost arctic Yamal, and among poorer herders, in winter, in the southern tundra zone. Interestingly, it prevails at both the maximum and minimum thresholds of herd size. Rich herders in the north have fewer difficulties in managing big herds in the bare flat tundra where visibility is good.

> Some time ago, when there were fewer reindeer, people used to stay together in camps. Now, every *chum* stands separately, to prevent the reindeer from mixing up. You cannot keep such large herds together, although it is more fun to live with other people instead of alone (Yakov Naberevich Vanuito, northernmost Yamal, May 2001).

Yakov's statement here reflects a tendency among private herders in northern Yamal to live separately (i.e. one household per camp), because of the increase in herd sizes. He also expresses his dissatisfaction with this situation, as it makes contact with friends and colleagues more difficult. Given the natural limits to the size of a herd that can be managed by one herder, someone like Yakov has to find help in herding since his father lives elsewhere and his children are still too small. He may recruit a relative or a friend, preferably an unmarried youngster with the desire to get experience in herding and to build up his own household in the future. Such a young man would work as an apprentice for Yakov, benefiting from his experience but doing half of the herding work for him, including training his animals for transport. However, he would be entitled to use the animals himself. In this situation, the herd remains under Yakov's ownership, but in due course the apprentice can negotiate with Yakov for a number of deer with which to start up his own private herd. This is the relation Ingold had in mind when he wrote of 'herding assistants' (1980: 190–2).

Nikolai Khorotetto's father (see section 5.4.1.3) is in a better situation, since Nikolai fulfils the position of herding assistant in the household. He was born in 1978, spent three years of his life in Chechnya, fought the first battle in Groznyi as a sniper, was injured and spent 18 months in hospital in St. Petersburg. He told me (in September 2000):

> I could have had so many girls in St. Petersburg, and they were indeed pretty, and I liked them. Life was fun there, but eventually I wanted to go back home. My father is old, and my brother, who will

> inherit the household is too young to do herding work independently. I have to help my parents, and I want to learn reindeer herding again, although it's painful with the bullet in my leg and my injured hand. But I am training, and I found a spouse. But don't tell this to my father yet. We have agreed already among ourselves, and I will go and bring her home next year.

Nikolai is indeed learning herding skills from his father, and when he brings his new wife home, they will live on one side of the *chum* as a second household (see figure 5). He does the herding work with his father and his brother. They have one earmark in their herd of just under 1,000 animals. The family of Nikolai's wife will probably give her a winter cover for half a *chum* (25 furs sewn together) as well as other equipment for her marriage, and when the family has prepared the rest of the new family's *chum* and the family herd is big enough, Nikolai will separate from his father's household. He thinks that a herd of 300 animals will be enough for him to separate. Out of these 300, he will need at least 100 trained transport animals. He will ask his father to design an earmark with him.

What we see in both Yakov's and Nikolai's cases is that cooperation within the household can be, but does not have to be, among relatives. Whether a relative or not, the assistant or apprentice is a member of the household, the household head being the herd owner. This contrasts with the situation described above for Tokcha and Mishene, where cooperation is between households.

5.6.3 Delayed Exchange of Reindeer over Distance

Another form of social relations is connected neither with the reindeer herd nor with the household as a unit of production but with individual persons and individual animals. Both kinsmen and friends engage in this. Giving reindeer to friends is a very widespread practice which I have encountered in all 28 of the herding families I interviewed. This reindeer exchange is not so much about distribution of one's herd to various pastures, but is more about passing on social ties among families to the next generation, as has been described among African pastoralists (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 258; Ring 1990). Here, reciprocity cannot be seen as a risk insuring strategy (Cashdan 1985), and this exchange is unimportant in terms of the number of reindeer transferred. The purpose is to enact social relations with another person using reindeer as a symbol, connecting 'deer and people to one another in a vital social universe', as King (2002: 134) admirably described it for the Koryaks in Kamtchatka.

For example, Roman Andreevich Okotetto, whom we met briefly near the start of this chapter, visits his friend Valera, who gives him one reindeer

to take home to his herd. Within two years, Roman gives back to Valera one reindeer more than he himself had received, in this case two reindeer. One reindeer is in direct exchange for what he received two years earlier, the other one is *za gostropriemstvo*, for the hospitality. If he does not give back another deer within two to three years, but after say five or six years, he will give back an additional reindeer, i.e. three. It is important that the quality of the reindeer should be roughly the same. If Roman was initially given a young one, he also should give back a young one. Both male and female reindeer can be given. In case of females, the calves remain in the herd of the receiver. This exchange can be very long term, and obligations to give reindeer can even be inherited. Roman is a member of many such exchange networks, which link relatives and friends. The use rights and ownership rights are transferred completely to the receiver, but, as pointed out by Gregory (1982), the gift is always associated with the donor in the herder's mind. In this way it is inalienable from the donor. This means that Roman will always remember who gave him the animals. The animals enact many long-term social relations between Roman and the givers of the animals, and between him as the donor and them as receivers. They each can use the animals as they wish, as both a terminal or a renewable resource (Galaty & Johnson 1990: 20). Thus they can slaughter them, cut *panty* from them, or use them for transport.

Therefore, in this system of delayed reciprocity the social relationship between two reindeer herders is not enacted through the transfer of a particular entitlement or obligation to one particular object (reindeer), as in the case of herding assistance. The reindeer are neither lent nor borrowed. They are given as a gift, transferring ultimate ownership to the receiver, but creating the obligation to give back an equivalent later. The social bonds are enacted by the shared subscription to the rule of the delayed gift exchange.[96] This shared set of values about property and exchange makes reindeer significant for the social networks within the tundra community. Small-scale reindeer exchange between individuals was not mentioned as a form of mutual aid by Evladov (1992 [1929]: 168–73), who focused on reindeer transfer in relation to transport and training, meat, gifts, cooperation in summer, and as bride price (*kalym*).

However, this makes reindeer much more than just a possession reduced to commodity purposes, which is assumed when Ingold (1980: 187f) talks about reindeer in the tundra having the social significance of small stock similar to the Basseri sheep and goats (Barth 1964). It also means that Ingold's assumption that among carnivorous reindeer pastoralists in the

[96] A summary of different systems of gift exchange (restricted, delayed and generalised) is given in Gregory (1982: 212).

tundra 'animals do not constitute objects of long-term reciprocal transactions' (1980: 190) must be corrected. Reindeer are indeed transferred in long-term transactions between households and enact the system of alliances between them, although this may be less elaborate than that of the Nuer, the Boran, the Dinka or other African pastoralists. If we imagine the position of animals among the Basseri and the Nuer as two extremes of a spectrum with 'social isolation' at one end and 'total social integration' at the other, the Nentsy would probably fall between the two. The properties of reindeer as commodities are of little significance in this context, whereas their power as gifts are of vital importance. This is a classic Maussian argument for the tundra economy, namely that it is not only about subsistence but very much about exchange. People in the tundra have reindeer not only to satisfy their immediate basic needs, but also, through exchange, as a means to satisfy extended social needs (Gregory 1982: 20–2).

5.6.4 Discussion: Exploitation, Cooperation, Sources of Conflict

The controversial topic of mutual assistance has been discussed not only between Marxists and capitalists but across ideological boundaries. Ingold talks about cases of herding assistance within a household (1980: 190–2). In terms of actual reindeer herding labour, cooperation is similar for all three cases described above: Mishene Khudi (inter-household, having his own *chum* and family), Yakov's apprentice (non-relative in the same *chum*) and Nikolai Khorotetto (son in the same *chum*). Ingold talks about 'an exchange of herding labour for subsistence plus a cut of each year's calves' (1980: 191). He thinks of these relationships as utilitarian and short term and confines them to owner and user living in the same household. However, associations such as those of the above-mentioned Tokcha and Mishene Parivichi can endure for years or even generations, because Mishene is older than Tokcha, but poorer. So Mishene's son will take the position of Tokcha's assistant after Mishene retires from active work. The reindeer managed in common unite the two brothers, because both benefit from this cooperation.

Whereas Soviet anthropologists (Brodnev 1950, 1959) believed that such associations had an exploitative character, another interpretation sees them as a form of mutual aid (Evladov 1992 [1929]; Khazanov 1994: 153–5f). Khazanov claims that the rich Nenets herders joined the poor, and not the reverse. However, whether the rich depend on the poor, or vice versa, is not the only issue we need to consider here. For this relationship, Khazanov's (1994: 155) interpretation of the Central Asian cooperation called *saun* applies. Rather than an exploitative relationship, he sees the aim of *saun* as being to 'discourage poor households from falling away from nomadic societies, thus helping to prevent the disintegration of the societies

in question'. In the Yamal case, we can say that *parma* or mutual assistance prevents people such as Mishene or Timofei having to move into a village with little prospect of doing any meaningful work. Two other brothers, Fedor and Mikhail Yaungad, represent the case where the owner and user do not live in the same household or camp. Fedor lives in Salekhard and Mikhail herds reindeer 600 km to the north. Their joint ownership of the herd is the main enactment of their relationship. Along with the social rationale goes an economic one. Fedor trades the meat in the city, Mikhail herds the reindeer in the tundra, and the profit is shared. Such mutual assistance bridges the gap between the city and the tundra in the sense of Khazanov's statement above. A generalised reciprocity in the tundra implies a readiness to assist people in urgent need without claiming anything back. This is true for hospitality, but even more for food, when anyone in urgent need can go to somebody else and ask for something to eat, mostly reindeer meat. Although the individual transaction does not seem reciprocal, underlying it is the shared expectation of receiving help from anyone in the tundra when in need. This generalised reciprocity unites the whole tundra community. In pre-Soviet times, this pattern was more overt than today, since in spring there were often periods of famine (Evladov 1992 [1929]: 170f).

The exploitation argument for relations between poorer and richer households seems to stem from an ideological preoccupation. However, I shall try to avoid an idealised image of constant peaceful cooperation among members of a tundra community, all following the *zakon tundry* (law of the tundra) that ties people together in their need for survival and their longing for prosperity. In all human societies the very existence of a law, be it official or customary, implies that it is not followed by everybody.

I have seen some cases and heard reports of conflicts between herders, some of which relate to matters of ownership. Sitting in the *chum* around the table after a dinner of frozen raw meat, some rice and instant soup, Nikolai's mother told me how their relative and neighbour increases his herd by stealing animals from other herds. However, this is not animal theft in the classical sense, but more subtle: in times of snowstorms and thick fog, neighbouring reindeer herds sometimes get mixed up, and herders have to separate them out later when the weather improves. Sometimes, Nikolai leaves the animals he has lost during snowstorms for a long time in other herds, and the other herders are obliged to keep these in their herd until he comes to collect them. These animals grazing in different herds are also a kind of non-institutionalised cooperation, counting on the honesty of the tundra community. This neighbour, however, sometimes just recuts the earmark, making invisible the origin of the animal and the proof that this is Nikolai's father's property. In other cases, he just slaughters the reindeer for *aibat*, allowing

him to preserve his own herd. When Nikolai arrives to collect his animals, he can no longer prove his ownership of the reindeer by its earmark. Although he might recognise the animals by face, as most reindeer herders claim to be able to do, he needs the earmark as proof, since his neighbour can claim that he also has a reindeer with such facial characteristics. This kind of animal theft undermines the widely conducted practice of longer-term uncontrolled animal exchange among households.

Another source of conflict is the situation mentioned above where poorer herders exchange reindeer for fish from richer herders. In April 2001 a reindeer herder-fisherman in southern Yamal bought two reindeer in this way from Tokcha's herd. A week later, when we all were on migration northwards with the whole camp, this fisherman suddenly appeared with a harness of four deer, two of which were Tokcha's. We all wondered what the matter was. The man complained about the quality of the deer. They would not pull loaded sledges, and they quickly became exhausted from driving. He wanted to give them back and change them for two more animals. Tokcha was very angry and told him to go away as he would not agree to an exchange. The man had to leave with the deer. Tokcha later explained that it was the man's fault for letting the deer graze on poor pastures, because he did not move camp very often. He was just a young inexperienced herder, and it would be bad for his future reputation to question Tokcha's honesty. Moreover, he himself had chosen the deer. Tokcha was not likely to do business with him again. As in the general discussion about mutual assistance, it is a question of interpretation as to whether this is exploitation of the poor by the rich. Did Tokcha deliberately offer weak animals to this man, thus being dishonest in his 'reindeer for fish' barter, or did the reindeer indeed become weak because of the new owner's lack of experience and laziness to migrate to fresh pastures?

At the gathering of brigade employees of the Yar-Sale sovkhoz in 2001,[97] the herders (*pastukhi*) of brigade number two complained about their *brigadir*:

> We have to do the day-to-day work with the reindeer (*dezhurstvo*), and he goes off fishing. He has 3,000 reindeer, and so the whole herd including private deer numbers 7,000 animals. We have to do all the work needed to hold these together.

This shows how any equal distribution of the workload for herders in a brigade, regardless of the size of one's private herd, can be ignored and the labour force of poorer herders misused. This is exactly what Brodnev (1950, 1959) had in mind when shaping his exploitation argument against the notion of mutual help. It is interesting that this case occurs within the

[97] *Faktoriia* Portsy-Iakha, 23 April 2001.

framework of a sovkhoz brigade, which shows that the imposition of state structures on the Nenets herding system did not necessarily change the character of this herding system. As in any collective, cooperation among colleagues can be just and unjust, irrespective of whether this collective is under the umbrella of the sovkhoz or not.

Conflicts can also arise within a household, for example between father and son about the bride price (*kalym*). We have seen this in the case of Nikolai discussed above, although it was avoided in this situation. Possible conflicts also arise with the inheritance pattern of ultimogeniture, where the youngest son inherits the father's household, but the older sons get a share of the father's herd when they leave home after marriage. According to 28 interviews I conducted on this question, in the majority of households the father decides on the share that the son is to receive, and this has not always satisfied the son. For example, one son might need more reindeer as a *kalym*, whereas another son may not need a *kalym* at all if he marries a woman from the village. Another line of conflict is that the father is unwilling (for whatever reason) to give the son enough reindeer to start his own household. All these conflicts are possible, but do not occur frequently enough to bring into question the general rules that govern life with the reindeer in the tundra and the social relationships woven around this life. As Evladov (1992 [1929]: 172) put it: 'People who do not give out reindeer as interest-free credit or free of charge, are so rare among the Nentsy that we can think of their behaviour as being very rare.'

5.7 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to show how property rights and duties connected with reindeer enable us to understand the reinforcement and establishment of social relations among the Nentsy and their engagement in two spheres of exchange defined by Gudeman (1998, 2001): the 'community sphere' and the 'market sphere'. For an understanding of how nomadic pastoralists enter the post-Soviet market economy, a simple investigation of 'who owns what and why' is inadequate. I have shown that reindeer property relations should be analysed not on the basis of a simple dichotomy between 'private' and 'state owned/public' but on a 'continuum from "individual" (private) to "communal" (public), with many gradations from the individual to the state' (Hann 1998: 6). This captures the more subtle nuances of public or private, collective or individual access to reindeer, the role of social relations, and the way in which a household or individual can become the inclusive or exclusive owner and user of this resource.

I have shown that a multiplicity of 'property rights' and 'property duties' is an essential part of the social fabric within the Nenets community as

well as for their interaction with forces outside the tundra. For example, in most cases, exclusive use-rights belong to the owner of the animal, whereas non-exclusive use-rights are negotiable between the owner and various possible users. The transport capacity of a single reindeer can be shared by the owner with one or more other users, whereas only the owner has the right to decide about cutting antlers and selling them. On the other hand, we cannot establish the same equation for terminal and repeatable resources. Meat as a terminal resource is shared in domestic use, but the benefit from selling it on the market goes exclusively to the owner. For the renewable resource of antlers, the use is exclusively for the owner in the market sphere.[98] Thus, the community sphere, where domestic use prevails, is characterised by having both inclusive and exclusive notions of property rights and duties, whereas the market sphere of commodities is restricted to the exclusive property rights of the owner. However, this does not seem to be true for the commodity use of reindeer as an identity marker, which is very inclusive.

The ways in which these multiple layers of entitlements and duties are enacted in various forms of mutual assistance and exchange determine the character of Nenets relationships between individuals, households, within camps and the community. Evladov (1992 [1929]: 168) even went so far as to declare: 'A Nenets without reindeer does not count himself a *bedniak* (poor), if he has rich relatives. Therefore Miari [one of Evladov's informants] is more interested in good relations with his numerous relatives than in increasing his own herd.' Evladov described Miari as a typical example of someone seeking to build insurance networks among his relatives. He increased his own security by having reindeer in many people's herds, thereby keeping them indebted to him so that, should the need arise, he—or even his sons in the event of his death—could approach these people to ask for reindeer.

I have shown that these relationships are not always necessarily free of conflicts, although I have concentrated in this chapter on explaining how the Yamal Nentsy cooperate in their practice of tundra nomadism. There are always exceptions to the rules. Reindeer are the vehicle and the reason for relations of mutual assistance among households, they are still closely connected to marriage among the Nentsy, and they are used to build up long-term, even inheritable relations between individuals through delayed exchange, a fact which challenges Ingold's (1980) generalisations of property rights among tundra carnivorous pastoralists. Mutual help embedded in a gift exchange in the tundra can be observed both in balanced reciprocity (e.g.

[98] With the one exception of the Northern Khanty herders described above.

borrowing transport reindeer) as well as generalised reciprocity (e.g. giving animals for meat to people in need).

My analysis of how the earmarks are connected with kinship relations and inheritance shows how these relationships are passed down through generations. When we look at a herd, all these relationships of exchange of ownership and use rights show that rather than a simple pattern of 'one household, one herd, one owner', we have a threefold property regime: state-controlled (table 6 (3)), owned by multiple private owners (2), and owned by a single household (1). Having this in mind, Ingold's assumptions about the social importance of tundra animals can be corrected. Although his analysis might work for the market or commodity sphere of exchange, it does not cover the whole range of relations governing the community sphere.

The ethnographic examples have presented here illustrate that the type of herd ownership, and also of individual reindeer, changes the character and use of the animal in the eyes of the herder. Whereas in the mostly collective work of herding, the herder's share of reindeer within a herd is not important for the amount of labour he invests, husbandry decisions on the other hand are taken individually. The treatment of the animals differs for domestic use and for commodity use, and in commodity production the animal loses its properties of 'personal ownership' and becomes anonymous. The duty to use and treat it according to the *zakon tundry* ceases to exist. This shows that reindeer are an essential cultural property of the 'community sphere'.

The systems of mutual assistance and reindeer exchange clarify the Nenets position on a continuum between two extremes: full social integration, embedded in networks of friends and relatives, as opposed to socially isolated, or disembedded, where pastoralists work only for the commercial market and do not cooperate with others anymore. Yamal Nentsy are less embedded than the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940), but far more integrated than the Basseri (Barth 1964). This important embeddedness in the community sphere, reinforced through cooperation in reindeer herding and the exchange of reindeer, is probably the reason why in Yamal the market economy has not replaced a system of reciprocal relationships between households. This system can be seen as a source of social and material security for reindeer herders, which enables them to take on a stronger entrepreneurial role in the evolving market.

Chapter 6
Engaging with the Tundra: Patterns of Territorial Behaviour

Flying in a helicopter high over the Yamal tundra, the newcomer is overwhelmed by an impression of the land as a huge, undifferentiated mass of snow, or, in the brief summer, as a chaotic maze of water and land. He barely sees any traces of human presence, except for a few abandoned drilling stations. However, this first impression is false: this seemingly vast and endless land has become a limiting resource in the further development of Yamal. With growing numbers of groups interested in gas deposits and reindeer pastures, this resource is under threat.



Plate 12. The Yamal tundra in summer.

When an administrator from Salekhard or Yar-Sale flies over the tundra, he primarily sees it as a characterless land mass engulfing the administrative centre which sits like an island in its midst. He knows that the centre draws its importance as a future source of wealth and potential tax income from this ocean of land. Therefore, he tries to compartmentalise the tundra into manageable sections, the borders of which he draws neatly on maps.

When an employee of an oil and gas company flies over the tundra, he maps the territory as an empty space and with his professional 'eye' looks beneath its surface. There, he sees the land as a conglomerate of huge oil and gas deposits, whose only visible traces are drilling stations (*burovye*) and workers' villages (*vakhtovye poselka*) dispersed over the tundra. When he is at the drilling station or village, his knowledge of the tundra is limited to the problems it causes when trucks or passenger tanks (*vezdekhody*) have to be pulled out of the swamps. At best, his closest contact with the tundra will be the meat he obtains from his reindeer-herding trading partners.

Another type of administrator is the director of an agricultural enterprise who holds title to land. If he knows his business well, he looks down and maps the tundra cognitively as a system of distinct migration routes of reindeer brigades. His responsibility is to administer these in such a way that they do not come too close together. Back in his office, this compartmentalisation of land is shown on maps, with territories allocated to the different brigades of his enterprise. Like the reindeer herder on the ground, he is probably among the people most affected by the growing scarcity of the 'tundra' resource.

The reindeer herder, who has snatched a lift aboard the helicopter to get back to his herd from the village, flies over 'his' territory and maps it as a complex set of seasonal pastures, crossings of migration routes, fishing and hunting places, nomadic camp sites for himself and his neighbours, and of cemeteries and other sacred places connected to his clan. He comes into contact with the institutions represented by the other passengers only when he seeks them out as potential trading partners or asks for services from them.

In post-Soviet times, these different groups of actors all have an interest in the tundra as a resource. The reindeer herders are in the position of the actual land users, who have to secure their rights to this resource. But each of these stakeholders draws a different cognitive map according to his particular interest as a member of a group with claims on the tundra.

6.1 Tundra and the Analysis of Territorial Behaviour

Currently Nentsy in the tundra have multiple ways of relating to their land. To understand these ways and the processes by which they change requires

an understanding of their identity. The two most important land use patterns are based on their practices as hunters and fishers, which they have been engaged in since ancient times, and as reindeer herders in the contemporary economy. I will show that Soviet territorial organisation of the tundra considered all these activities, but it tore them apart and rationalised the Nenets economy into an occupational structure that no longer reflected this multiplicity. Nonetheless, as I shall argue, this multiplicity is still mirrored in their territorial behaviour.

This approach draws on the debate on the differences between hunter-gatherer and pastoralist societies. The Yamal Nenets example confirms the argument of Layton et al. (1991) that we should see hunting and gathering together with pastoralism as lying on a continuum of strategies to exploit resources of the land, rather than assuming an evolutionary development from hunting to herding. Layton et al. provide evidence of symbiotic relations between both kinds of economies and argue that they exist as alternatives from which to choose. I take the argument further, introducing fishing alongside hunting as an alternative subsistence strategy to herding, and show that these choices are highly flexible. Yamal Nentsy engage in all of these activities in combination through the year at different seasons. They associate different ways of relating to the land and moving across it according to these economic strategies. Over time we can see dynamic shifts of interest in tundra resources by various groups, for example Soviet administrators and the incoming population. I will investigate in this chapter how the different ways in which the Nentsy relate to the tundra are mixed with Soviet conceptions of territory, and I suggest a combination of two theoretical approaches to explain these multiple relations of people to their land.

The term 'land' is not a very appropriate description for Yamal. The Yamal Peninsula consists of 60% water, frozen in the form of permafrost, and thus it is not 'land' in the proper sense. For nine months of the year the surface is covered with snow and ice, so that the 'land' in the sense of 'ground' or 'earth' is only touched by reindeer digging craters for fodder through the snow. One could also use the term 'space', but I share Ingold's view that space has the image of being more the perspective of 'an imaginary position above the world' (2000: 192). Since reindeer herders do not look down from 'space shuttles' to their tundra, they too would probably see this term as inappropriate. I also do not want to use 'nature', because my analysis focuses on the human activities and what 'affordances' (Ingold 1992) they draw from the tundra, i.e. what aspects of the tundra they use in their nomadic lifestyle. This encompasses more than natural features.

Yamal reindeer nomads refer to their land as tundra (Rus: *tundra*, Nen: *vy'*), which encompasses the numerous wetlands, or as 'earth' (Rus:

zemlia, Nen: *ia*) as opposed to lakes (Nen: *to*) and rivers (Nen: *iakha*). By tundra, they do not mean an ecological zone with a distinct climate and vegetation. 'Tundra' is a landscape that encompasses the entire environment in all its complexity—the reindeer pastures, watersheds, snow, permafrost, reindeer, hunting animals, birds and people. Also part of this 'tundra' are the incorporeal qualities people ascribe to it, such as spirits, cemeteries, sacred sites, and their ways of enacting them through movement and the placing of camp sites. All this is included in the term 'landscape' as suggested by Ingold (2000: 190–3), which encompasses both 'natural' and 'cultural' traits (2000: 191). Anderson (1998, 2000a) uses the term 'land' to describe this, as Canadian First Nations do. When talking to me, the Nentsy used 'tundra' as the overarching concept, of which 'land' (Rus: *zemlia*), 'territory' (Rus: *territoriia*) and 'pasture' (Rus: *pastbishde*) are parts.

Reindeer herders see themselves as part of this environment, which is constantly changing. Therefore I suggest that we start looking at what their practices tell us about the relation between people and land. We have already glimpsed this in chapter 3, for example when Tokcha organises space in the tundra by putting his *tiur* pole in the centre of the camp, or when he digs with his *niada-iagoch* stick through the snow to test the lichen, just as a reindeer digs a crater (section 3.4). They also relate themselves to other parts of the tundra by holding the head of a reindeer towards the east when it is to be strangled (see section 5.4.1.2). The Soviet and Russian way of relating to the tundra implies a singular concept, whereas the Nenets way is characterised by multiplicity. Correspondingly, two different theoretical approaches in anthropology explain people's relation with land from different angles. What I call the 'defence paradigm' focuses on the material characteristics of the land and seeks to understand under which conditions people claim exclusive rights to the land. By contrast, the 'knowledge paradigm' is about *emic* perceptions, trying to understand why land is important to the people living in it. My argument in this chapter is that both have explanatory value and are not mutually exclusive, just as Russians can use and measure the tundra simultaneously and in cooperation with Nenets living and herding reindeer in it.

6.1.1 The 'Defence Paradigm' in Territorial Analysis

Many analyses of territorial behaviour among pastoralists are based on assumptions about the role of humans in an ecosystem (Dyson-Hudson & Smith 1978; Cashdan 1983; Casimir 1992a and b; Bollig 2001). The basic need for food is either satisfied directly from plants (herbivore consumers), or from animals that eat plants (carnivore consumers). Thus, humans use the land either as primary or as secondary consumers. These two levels of using

resources from the land are referred to as 'trophic levels' in ecosystem terminology (Moran 2000: 17). In the arctic ecosystem, because of the low rate of plant growth, the human population uses the land for food production almost entirely at the second trophic level, except for gathering berries. In our case, the territorial behaviour of reindeer herders therefore is closely connected to the behaviour of the deer in order to satisfy their basic needs (see chapter 2). How people use the physical resources of the land is often explained by theories analysing the access and the defence of these resources. In the following I will show, using material from Yamal, that this 'defence paradigm' is able to predict how people are likely to organise territorial relations under current changing conditions. It cannot explain the *emic* perception by the herders of the tundra.

Although the abundance and frequency of plant biomass in the pastures is the most obvious variable conditioning territorial behaviour, recent studies stress the importance of considering both broader ecological and social dimensions of human adaptability to the environment (Berkes & Folke 2000; Moran 2000: 5). Casimir (1992b: 154) identified three main variables within this social-ecological intersection that condition the territorial behaviour of nomadic pastoralists: (1) the quantity and quality of the plant biomass on the pasture; (2) the political organisation of the community in so far as it regulates the rights to pastures; and (3) the relation of the pastoralist community to other populations, e.g. to sedentary villagers as trading partners, and (in the Yamal case) the existence and proximity of trading posts in the tundra.

Having in mind these variables, Casimir (1992b: 158) suggested the following preliminary definition of territorial behaviour among pastoralists:

> [It is] all overt and covert behaviour, whose aim it is to ensure exclusive use of a pasture area for a length of time by a specific individual or group of individuals (or households).

This definition, focusing on achieving exclusivity, is about excluding competitors from a resource which is perceived to be scarce. This goes back to Altum's original definition of territory for birds back in 1868 'as an area defended by its holder against intrusion, to ensure food and breeding space' (quoted in Ingold 1986b: 131) and was applied to the ethology of animals by Wilson (1975: 256). From this it follows that beings that do not defend for exclusive use do not have territorial behaviour, a notion that I challenge in the next section. These assumptions are the basis of the 'economic defendability model', which was transferred from socio-biology to anthropological material by Dyson-Hudson & Smith (1978). They argue that territory is most likely to be defended in cases where the resources, such as plant biomass on pastures, is abundant and predictable enough, so that the costs of defending

it are lower than the benefits from the exclusive use (1978: 23). Since in many cases pastoralists deal with widely dispersed, unpredictable pasture resources, defence of the territory as a spatial unit is not likely to occur. Such a defence definition is still prominent among ecological theorists of human territoriality, although in some cases has been slightly amended (Dyson-Hudson & Smith 1978: 23; Cashdan 1983: 47; Casimir 1992b: 158).

This concept was refined by distinguishing between spatial boundary defence and social boundary defence. Spatial boundary defence is when an individual or a group forbids outsiders physical access to its territory. This is likely to occur when pressure on the resource increases (Dyson-Hudson & Smith 1978: 23; Casimir 1992a: 10). Here again, this does not explain the territorial organisation of most pastoral nomads. Living mostly in environments with scarce resources and low predictability, it is more likely that pastoralists apply a so-called 'social boundary defence'. Such a practice is described for Bushmen by Cashdan (1983: 49). In these cases, access to the resources is also defended, but instead of territorial borders, the users defend the borders of the social group that uses the resources. An example where this has been adopted by a state is in Scandinavia, where Sweden and Norway have restricted the right to engage in reindeer herding to the Saami population and thus only they can use the land resource as pastures (Beach et al. 1992: 64, 78). Only by becoming a Saami are you eligible to become a reindeer herder and use the Norwegian or Swedish pastures. According to Cashdan's material (1983: 50), in such cases the social group does not have to be an ethnic group. Several social groups could cooperate by delayed reciprocity in the use of their resources or territories and thus increase the flexibility of the system. This is especially important for an environment with low density and predictability of resources, such as plant biomass or water.

According to Casimir (1992b: 175), there is a kind of ecological threshold at which we can expect a change from social to spatial boundary defence. Comparative material from five continents suggests that this occurs approximately where annual precipitation is in the region of 400–700 mm. Above that level, it is more likely that we find defence of the exclusive rights to use pastures, whereas below that we more often find common access to pastures. To put it in the terminology of property relations, in areas with low precipitation we find generalised rights of access to pastures (common ideology), whereas in areas with high precipitation we find ownership rights (cf. Casimir 1992b: 172). To avoid a frequent misunderstanding in the debate of the 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968), generalised access here does not have to mean that access is open to everybody. It can be restricted to members of a group (Ostrom 2000: 335–7).

In these ecological analyses, the common variables which allow comparison of data from all over the world are plant biomass, precipitation and predictability. In the tundra, low temperature is the limiting factor for plant growth, as in alpine regions. However, unlike in these mountainous areas, there is a low predictability in the tundra (as also in deserts). Here we have to ask about the reasons for this low predictability. Unlike deserts, the precipitation is not a problem, but the unpredictable temperatures are. Especially in autumn and spring, a sudden warming and then thawing of ice is followed by a 'shock freezing', which leads to the formation of widespread ice shields over the pastures (Rus: *gololed*, Nen: *serabt'*). This makes the pastures inaccessible to the reindeer. According to reindeer herders, it is not low temperatures or lack of pastures *per se* that are the major threat to deer during the winter, but ice shields. From time to time, these sudden warmings and freezings are documented by the meteorological stations in Yamal and recently have become an issue in relation to global warming (Reuters 2003: 1). So what we have here is a reason for unpredictability, which is not a factor that can be included in the ecological or territorial analysis of warmer regions. Herders react to these conditions by applying a flexible regime of pasture use.

6.1.2 The 'Knowledge Paradigm' in Territorial Analysis

A shortcoming of the 'defendability paradigm' is the narrow definition of territory as the resource that must be defended for the satisfaction of one's basic needs. An extension of this concept from spatial boundary to social boundary defence by Cashdan (1983) and Casimir (1992a and b) overcomes the simplistic transfer of findings from animal behaviour to humans, a shortcoming of sociobiology. But it is still based on the defence assumption.

Ethnographies dealing with less defensive definitions of the land focus on what Casimir (1992a: 4) called 'social or "higher" needs', in comparison to the basic needs for physical survival. The object of analysis is often the landscape, which is presented in two contrasting views: landscape seen through the eyes of an incomer (e.g. an anthropologist), and the landscape viewed by the local people the anthropologist studies (Hirsch 1996: 1). The perceptions of different people flying over Yamal show that there is more than one landscape, depending on the interest they have in its resources. However, Ingold (2000: 191) rejects the view that landscape is just a 'cultural image' of the people. He thinks that 'neither is the landscape identical to nature, nor is it on the side of humanity against nature'. Paraphrasing Uexkuell, Ingold (1992: 41–4) claims that the beings that interact with the environment see in its objects certain properties. For example, Yamal reindeer herders see in sphagnum moss the absorptive properties of toilet paper

and nappies. These properties make possible different ways of using the environment. Discovering them is an intellectual process made by the members of a culture.

However, one cannot ascribe to the tundra the property of a gas deposit if there is no gas and if the gas has not yet been ascribed the intrinsic property of a fuel for machines. This has been pointed out by Ingold referring to Gibson, who claimed that so-called 'affordances' of the environment 'exist as inherent potentials of the objects themselves, quite independently of their being put to use or realised by a subject' (Ingold 1992: 42). The above-mentioned cognitive maps of different representatives of Yamal society thus represent the different intellectual capacities of humans to engage with their environment, the different 'affordances' they see in it, as well as the rich variety of possible modes of resource extraction offered by this environment.

Another way of overcoming the narrow definition of territory might be to apply the broader concept of tenure as suggested by Ingold (1986b: 130–60). In his view 'tenure engages nature in a system of social relations, territoriality engages society in a system of natural relations' (p. 136). The defending concept of territoriality is declared as something static, whereas tenure is more processual (p. 138). Jordan (2003: 266) writes that Ingold's view makes tenure the 'social negotiation of access to land'. However, negotiation of access would still be about including and excluding people, which would not work for the Nentsy because they all see themselves as part of the tundra. Ingold claims that 'two dimensional tenure is a consequence of agricultural production' (Ingold 1986b: 148). Thus hunters, gatherers and reindeer herders would have only one-dimensional tenure, i.e. involving lines of movement rather than places of production. Logically they would not perceive themselves as belonging to areas but rather that directions in the tundra belong to them. With respect to Khanty hunters in Western Siberia, Jordan (2003: 236–40) has convincingly challenged this one-dimensionality.

Even though Nenets migration routes can be conceptualised as a line, when sitting with Nentsy herders on a sledge and talking about where to direct the herd, I realised that pastures are very two-dimensional. Herders talk about areas of lichen, areas with shrubs, wind exposed and wind-sheltered pastures, not one-dimensional, directional lines. Still I am reluctant to use tenure as a term, since the literal meaning from *tenere* (Lat. 'to hold') implies that people 'hold' their land, rather than the land 'holding' them. People can feel they 'are held' by a territory instead of 'holding' it, and still perceive this territory and display a particular behaviour in it. 'Being held' does not imply that the land acts on the herders. On the contrary, the people are very active, but they act as part of the land, not as the holders of it.

Ingold's achievement in 1986 was that he released territoriality from the burden of 'defence' by claiming that it is mainly about cooperation and 'one aspect of the organisation of work, governing not the social appropriation of land but the practical conduct of its exploitation' (Ingold 1986b: 143). This fits the main concerns of many Nentsy of keeping a certain distance between their herds to prevent unintended mixing (see chapter 3), since separating mixed herds is a lot of work. Godelier (1979: 151) called this territorial behaviour 'abstaining from presence', a form of cooperation. Therefore I argue that even though reindeer herders do not claim exclusive rights, they behave in certain ways in their territory, as the ethnographic material in this chapter will illustrate, and thus they demonstrate territoriality.

Beach et al. (1992: 87f) claim for the Saami that aspects of time, information and 'behavioural habit in habitat' should be considered in an analysis of territoriality. However, besides showing the importance of flexibility, they do not further elaborate on this. Ingold (1992: 45) has stressed the importance of 'knowing' as the basis for environmental perception. He argues for a 'departure from the received cognitivism of most anthropological and psychological accounts of environmental perception' by overcoming the separation of 'knowing' into the two steps of perception of the senses, and the processing of this information and adding meaning to it with our minds. He argues for a wholly processual notion of perception. The knowledge of the tundra, however, implies exactly this, namely that a tundra inhabitant does not first study and get to know his environment before starting to act in it, but he continuously gathers competence by acting and engaging with the tundra. Ingold (2000: 25) connects this to a longer historical development when he says that this way of knowing develops because of these people's long experience of living in a particular environment.

Anderson (1998; 2000a: 117–31) shows for Evenki hunters and reindeer herders in Taimyr that the entitlement to use land requires knowing all 'beings' on this land, humans and non-humans, whom he calls 'sentient persons'. Therefore 'knowing the land' is a form of property. Although knowing the land has been important in both the Soviet and the post-Soviet periods, Anderson (1998: 82) claims that exclusive land tenure is now being promoted, and with this comes only one way of knowing—the knowledge of 'how to reach the marketplace'. The reaction of the Evenki to these reform politics is the claiming of exclusive rights to land, whereas before there were different ways of 'appropriation through knowing' (Anderson 1998: 83). Empirically, this assumption was confirmed by Ziker, who found that land was registered with family/clan holdings mostly in the vicinity of or with good transport access to the Taimyr cities of Dudinka or Norilsk (Ziker

2002b: 130). This situation supports the 'economic defendability model' (Dyson-Hudson & Smith 1978) in so far as the benefits from a territory close to a marketplace are more likely to exceed the costs in defending it, than in distant places. I show the consequences of such a change in territorial behaviour in the example of the *obshchina* movement in Yamal in chapter 7.

If we accept a definition of territoriality as being about cooperation, the importance of knowing the tundra with all its beings is the main condition of proper territorial behaviour. It is about knowing where the herds of one's neighbours are, knowing the location of good pastures, fresh water, good fishing spots, firewood supplies and trading posts, knowing when the reindeer disperse and when they come back together, knowing the likely effects of changes in wind direction and temperature, indeed of knowing countless factors that make up the experience of herding described in chapter 3.

Most people, when asked to describe the environment of pastoralist herders, talk of herds on a wide open range, on the arid steppes in Central Asia, on the edges of the desert in Africa, or on the high plateaus in the Central Asian mountains. Compared to these 'classic examples', it seems strange that herds and people deliberately search for the forest as a herding place, as we have seen for the long-distance migrations of people and reindeer in Yamal in winter. However, the people's special knowledge of the tundra in Yamal, and their capacity to use it to make a living, generated this pattern of resource use in Tsarist times. From a more environmental deterministic view (cf. Moran 2000, chapter 5) it can be seen as a unique form of human adaptation to the environment, but also as an intellectual achievement, people having developed a means of survival in this environment.

This achievement derives from a particular way of knowing the tundra, of identifying the useful properties of the environment, relating them to concrete needs of survival and using them to people's advantage. The experience in the practice of doing this, according to Ingold (2000: 161ff), forms the reindeer herders' cultural knowledge. For example, knowing the tundra required the ability to find in a cold, open, windy, arctic desert a proper place for the herd. In Ingold's terminology (1992: 42), knowing this is discovering the 'affordance' of a place—for example, as a potential shelter from mosquitoes in summer. The same is true for the 'affordance' of the forest as shelter in winter, where reindeer are protected from arctic storms and people have enough firewood. The youngsters in the tundra learn these ways of engaging with the tundra from early childhood. I always wondered how a 13-year-old boy could do a whole reindeer herding shift (*dezhurstvo*) and know how to find good pastures. This early apprenticeship forms one key to Ingold's idea of 'enskilment' (2000: 36f). Moran (2000: 143), using

his analysis of arctic ecosystems, sees 'most of the mechanisms for human adaptation to Arctic areas [as] regulatory (social and cultural) rather than acclamatory, developmental or genetic'. Therefore, implicitly, he is in agreement with Anderson (1998, 2000a) in appreciating the concept of knowing as a process of practice and experience.

In the following analyses of the Yamal material I will show how both the defence and the knowledge paradigm explain different parts and generate different explanations of a complex relation between people and their tundra. Ingold thinks of 'land' as a bounded surface, of which one can measure 'how much there is, but not what it is like' (2000: 190), which is very similar to territory. 'Landscape' describes more the characteristics of 'what it is like, but not how much of it there is' (2000: 191). This also captures well the difference between the two theoretical paradigms. The defence paradigm analyses how exclusively territorial relations are organised, whereas the knowledge paradigm looks at what these relations are like. The practices of communicating with the tundra, acting as part of it, and receiving responses from other actors in it, are ways of getting to know the environment. In fact, what Anderson means by 'knowing the land' (2000a: 117–31) is what I mean by 'knowing the tundra' in Yamal. Most people in Yamal use this expression: *On khorosho znaet tundru* (he knows the tundra well). Any analysis that neglects this loses any real sense of being able to understand people's behaviour and relationship with the land.

Therefore I argue that a definition of territoriality/territorial behaviour should not be restricted to strategies for ensuring exclusive control. It encompasses a kind of active reciprocal engagement of humans and the other elements of the environment, which according to Ingold (1992: 44) lies at the heart of ecological anthropology. The application of both models to ethnographic material, I shall argue, is necessary to explain how the tundra affects people's lifestyles, as well as how the people affect the tundra by engaging with it.

6.2 Hunting and Nomadic Migration as Forms of Territoriality

The patterns of nomadic migration in Yamal are but one of various ways in which native people use the tundra for making a living. Golovnev (1997a) has classified the Yamal tundra in various sub-ecosystems according to the form of resource extraction. Thus he writes of a forest-tundra, a tundra, and an arctic 'economic complex' (*khoziaistvennyi compleks*). The forest complex is based on hunting and small-scale reindeer herding, the tundra complex on large-scale reindeer herding, and the arctic complex on the hunting of wild reindeer, arctic foxes and sea-mammals. Golovnev (1997a: 84) shows how the arctic complex in the twentieth century was gradually ab-

sorbed into the tundra-reindeer herding complex, with larger herds. I shall go back to historical material for this northernmost region in a case study later in this chapter.

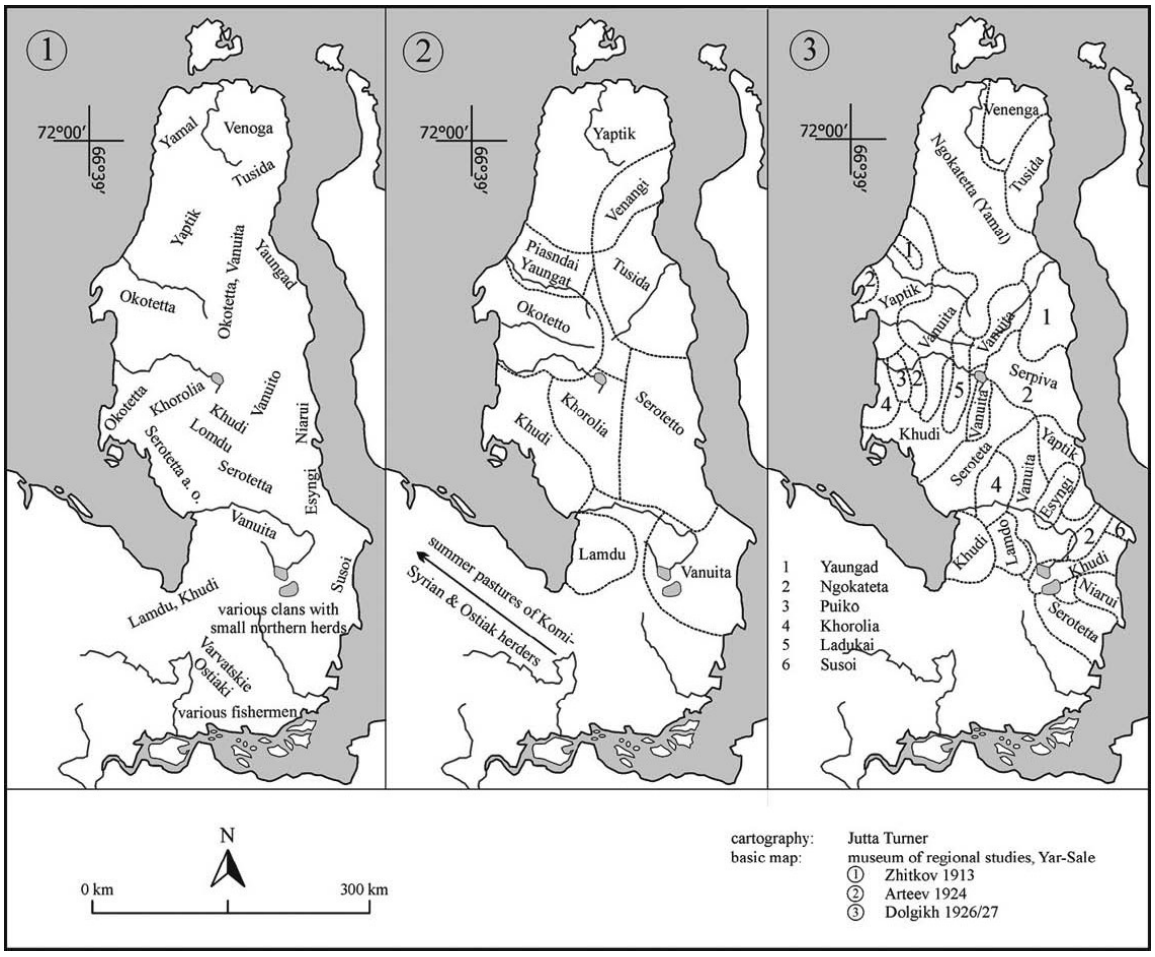
All Nentsy in this region were hunters before the big transition to reindeer herding described in chapter 2. As I will show in my case study on the North, the *emic* concept of territory among the Nentsy still reflects this hunting past. Studies undertaken at the beginning of the twentieth century saw this organisation of Nenets land into hunting territories more clearly than we do 100 years on. Vajda (1968) relies on these earlier studies when claiming that Nenets hunting territories were not common property and therefore ownership of reindeer pastures would be viewed from a family perspective. As my analysis below shows, this assumption is unlikely to be correct. It is more likely to be the result of idealtypic 'constructions' of territories in the ethnographer's mind and of the decreased importance of hunting on Yamal today. Dolgikh (1970: 66–114) described the distributions of Nenets clans on the Yamal territories in detail.[99] The museum of regional studies in Yar-Sale has a map showing Dolgikh's work, comparing early accounts of Nenets territorial patterns. This is meaningful because in the museum this information is easily accessible even to those reindeer herders who would never read Dolgikh's work. Parts of this map I show here to provide a basic overview of earlier thoughts on Yamal territoriality (map 4).

Although it must be remembered that the pinning down of particular groups to particular territories was an important task of Soviet ethnography, it is clear that a certain territorial pattern existed here before the establishment of the Soviet Union. According to Soviet publications (Brodnev 1950, 1959; Dolgikh 1970), this pattern was not connected to the long migration corridors on the peninsula that we see today, but rather to the *vochiny*, the ancestral hunting grounds of particular clans. Thus, these maps show reindeer herding groups but with the territorial pattern of hunters.

The most significant variation between parts 1, 2 and 3 of map 4 is found in central Yamal, where, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the hunting *vochiny* had lost significance on account of the activities of the rich long-distance herders of the central Yamal-tundra type (see Brodnev 1959; and next section). Therefore, the places of the central Yamal clans are recorded very differently across the three maps. In the far North there appears to be a lack of data, but we can see that on all three maps the Venenga,

[99] For his maps see Dolgikh 1970: 94, 106. He gathered the data for these maps from the polar census, and drew on data from earlier sources such as Zhitkov (1913). The same data were used for the map in the regional museum in Yar-Sale. I reproduce parts of these maps for the first time in English in map 4, by courtesy of the Yar-Salinskii kraevecheskii muzei and Gennadii Stepanovich Zaitsev.

Tusida and, to a certain extent, the Okotetto and Yamal clans were recorded at similar places. Evladov (1992 [1929]) later filled in this missing data, and I refer to his work mainly in section 6.3. In the southern part of the peninsula, no clear patterns emerge. This is because in the south there were many contacts between different groups of reindeer herders of Nenets, Khanty and Komi origin both from Asia and Europe from the nineteenth century onwards. This is why Brodnev (1959) claims that tribal land tenure was preserved only in the north, and had disintegrated in the south of Yamal even before collectivisation.



Map 4. Clans on the Yamal Peninsula in the early twentieth century.

Jordan (2003) also applies the term *vochina* to particular hunting territories of the Khanty on Malyi Iugan, who do not have reindeer. Jordan thinks of *vochina* as productive territory for hunting, fishing and gathering. They are inheritable and owned by single households or extended families. The boundaries follow natural features (Jordan 2003: 308). How can such a definition be appropriate for reindeer herders? In central Yamal, we find fewer traces of this pattern because land use is dominated by the long, nar-

row migration corridors of the large herds of the Yar-Salinskii sovkhoz described in chapter 3. However, among herders in northern Yamal and people with smaller herds in central Yamal, this pattern of land use resembles more the *vochiny*, as I will show below. Taking Layton et al. (1991) further, I argue that this can only be explained by assuming that Nentsy can unite both hunting and herding ways of relating to the environment.

In the following I shall analyse how these two ways of territoriality are interwoven on the Yamal Peninsula. I distinguish between central Yamal, which is roughly the territory of the Yar-Salinskii sovkhoz, and northern Yamal, the territory of the Yamal'skii sovkhoz. In both we find a combination of the hunting and the pastoral territorial pattern, but the way in which they relate to each other differs.

6.2.1 Engaging with the Tundra: The Central Yamal Type

The central Yamal type of reindeer economy, as I call it, is the most widespread. The majority of nomadic reindeer herders in this type follow a long-distance migration route northwards from the forest-tundra zone in the south of the Yamal Peninsula, across the Arctic Circle, to the north—in many cases to the shores of the Arctic Ocean/Kara Sea. This is the pattern of migration I described in chapter 3 for Tokcha and the northern brigades of the Yar-Sale sovkhoz. I shall not elaborate on this pattern at this stage. Conceptually, the mountain type of engaging with the tundra is similar to this pattern. For example, in the Polar Ural Mountains, Khanty, Komi and Nenets herders go from the forest to the treeless zone by changing altitude rather than latitude as do the central Yamal herders.

In central Yamal, private reindeer herders with small herds have a way of engaging with the tundra that differs from that of the far-migrating herders. They move shorter distances and usually do not cross the treeline. They do not have sufficient critical mass in reindeer numbers to cross the broad Ob' River Bay in winter. Their main occupation, however, is more likely to be fishing and hunting, and their sense of belonging to the tundra is closer to a hunting *vochina* than to the migration route of a big herd. Nonetheless, many of them yearn to become reindeer herders with larger herds and longer migrations. They think this is the 'genuine Nenets life' (*nenei ilngana*), which implies that a 'pastoralist mode of thought' is more prestigious than a 'hunting and fishing mode of thought'. Most people in the tundra think that it is the big herds of the sovkhozy that structure engagement with the tundra, but as I have shown in chapter 3 for Tokcha Parivich, there are also private big herds. The system, however, is the same for both. Therefore the following statement by the 5th Yar-Sale *brigadir* applies also to big private herds:

> Here each brigade somehow is a centre in the tundra. Each has a number of satellites (*sputniki*) around. We migrate parallel to each other, visit each other, and help each other. Our private satellites could not live without us (Leonid Vylko, 12 April 2001).

The 'satellites' have shorter movements and accompany the brigades for only part of their route. Therefore I see this brigade–satellite relation as representing the two ways of engaging with the tundra: the ancient hunting–fishing way, which nowadays is less prestigious, and the nomadic reindeer herding way. Regardless of these distinctions, both groups engage in all activities—herding, fishing and hunting—but to differing extents. The satellites need the brigades, because the sovkhoz does not feel obliged to provide services to them, since they are 'only' registered as hunters, which implies fewer duties to, and fewer benefits from, the enterprise. Therefore private herders with small herds trade fish with the brigades or big herders for supplies of food and equipment. They also give their children to the brigade at the end of the holidays, because helicopters land only at the brigades' camps to collect the children from the tundra to take to the boarding school. In this way the sovkhoz supports the reproduction of reindeer herding as a higher prestige profession than hunting and fishing. When people who are involved in yearly migrations of 1,200 km or more (such as Leonid, the *brigadir* of 5th Yar-Sale brigade), talk about their use of the tundra, they link their movement exactly to the seasons, the needs of the animals, to certain events in nature and to climatic particularities, as was described in chapter 3.[100] Together with the social elements of sharing the tundra with their 'satellites' at various stages during their yearly migration, this is characteristic of the central Yamal way of engaging with the tundra. In the interaction between 'brigades' and their 'satellites' I see a similar symbiotic relationship of hunter-gatherers with pastoralists that Layton et al. (1991) describe for different ethnic groups in Africa. In the Nenets case, however, subsistence strategies are not 'complementary but apparently stable' (Layton et al. 1991: 257), but flexible. Impoverished herders become hunter-fishermen, and rich fishermen become reindeer herders and start to move greater distances. Thus, all these strategies are united on a continuum, and people combine elements of both ways of relating to the tundra simultaneously.

[100] I give a popular ethnographic description of Leonid's migration elsewhere (Stammler & Abromeit 2003).

6.2.2 Engaging with the Tundra: The Localised Arctic Type

In northernmost Yamal, between latitudes 70°N and 73°N, approximately 1,400 people were engaged with the tundra in a 'localised arctic way' during my fieldwork. They had more than 60,000 animals, of which officially 38,000 were privately registered and 15,000 owned by the sovkhoz. Many reindeer herders there see themselves as sedentary (*osedlye*), stressing that distances between their summer and winter pastures are rather short (only 40–100 km per year) compared with those of their neighbours from the central Yamal tundra. They do not pass between climatic zones from summer to winter, but instead they circle around a more or less limited area in the tundra, often staying on one side of a river for the spring and summer pastures, and using the other side for autumn and winter pastures. This might be similar to the pattern of local wild reindeer populations (see section 2.3).

At first glance, this pattern does not seem very suitable for reindeer herding, since there is no wood in winter, and the cold wind and snowstorms (*burany*) often disperse the reindeer in all directions. However, having lived there as hunters before, the herders see other unique properties in this part of the tundra in northern Yamal: the peninsula is surrounded here on three sides by the Arctic Ocean, which limits the area over which the reindeer can disperse. This particular geographic position led the Nentsy to name this land *Yamal* (literally: 'edge of the land').[101] The reindeer herders simply have to make sure that their reindeer do not run to the side which has access to land. I have seen similar patterns on a peninsula in the malozemel'skaia tundra of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug in European northern Russia. A herd that disappears off towards the ocean can never get far. In north Yamal, people also use the ocean shore as a source of wood, since a lot of driftwood (*plavnik*) is left on the beaches to be gathered by the Nentsy.

In spite of this adaptation to the environment, the winter for the herders of northernmost Yamal is much less comfortable than that of their more mobile colleagues in the forest tundra. But this is compensated for by very favourable conditions in summer, since in the farthest north there is almost no insect harassment. This leads to better overall conditions for the animals, because the herds are not disturbed in their summer grazing. In spite of these advantages and the good economic performance of these northernmost herds, most people I talked to in the YNAO see this arctic type as somewhat exceptional to the general rule that reindeer herds cross climatic zones during their migrations.

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[101] Such a perception of their homeland seems to be common among local populations on peninsulas near oceans: For example, *finisterre* on the peninsula of Brittany in France also translates as 'edge of the land'.

In north Yamal, it is worth remembering that large-scale reindeer herding was adopted here later than in the southern and central tundra. Golovnev (1995: 51) stresses that with the development of large-scale herding, it became far more prestigious to be a herder (*pastukh*) than a hunter (*promyslovik*) of sea mammals and wild deer. There is a certain nomadic pastoralist ethos (cf. *nenei ilngana*) with a strong emphasis on mobility, which these people adopted, but without completely abandoning the 'hunter-gatherer logic' (Bird-David 1992). The way people in northern Yamal engage with the tundra still reflects this economic orientation. However, in present-day north Yamal, hunting, be it of wild deer or sea mammals, is now of minor importance. Reindeer herding has become the more profitable way of making a living since the end of the nineteenth century (Golovnev 1997a: 84).

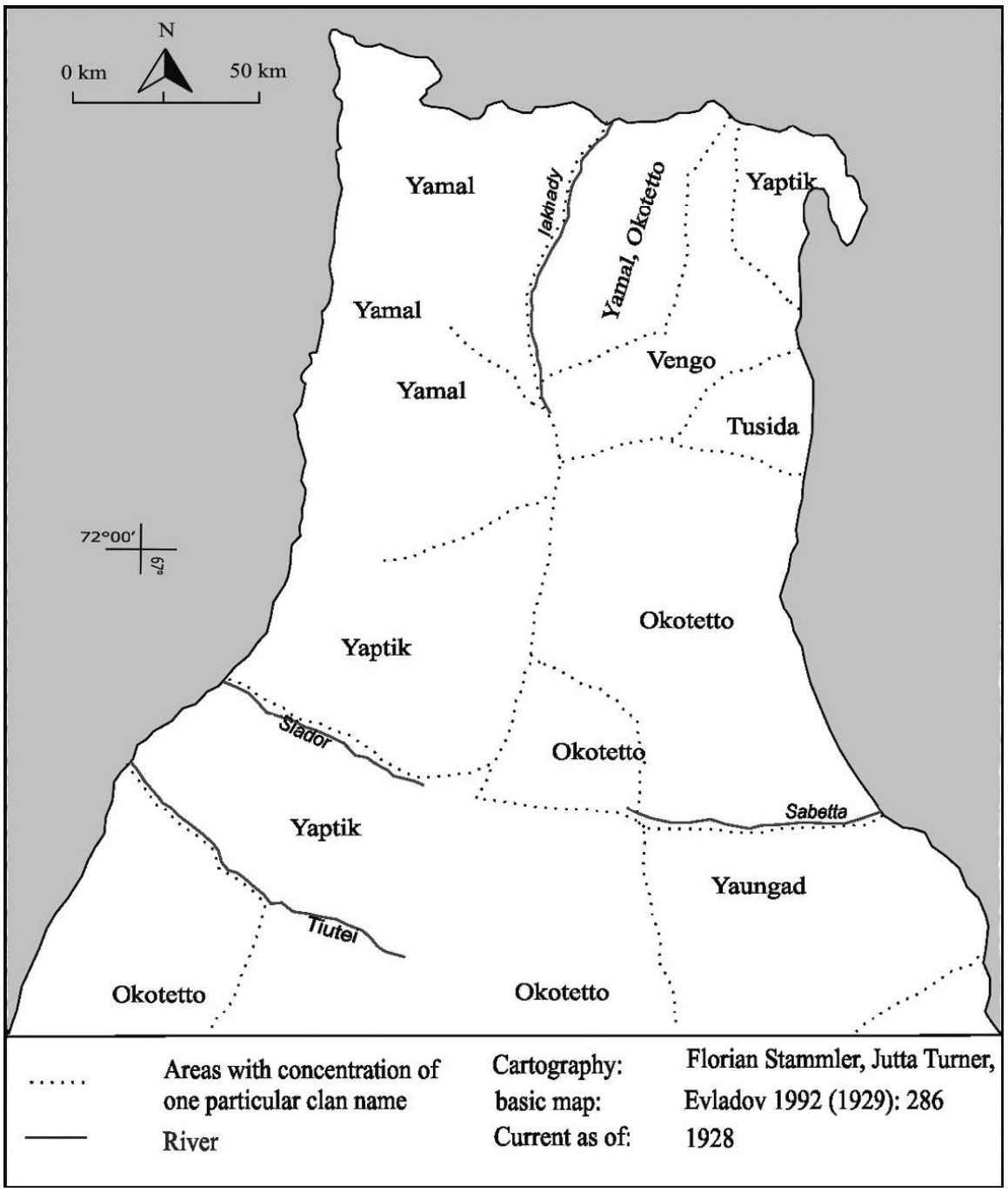
6.3 Multi-Layered Territoriality in Northern Yamal

The ways in which the localised arctic type of engaging with the tundra are compatible with large-scale reindeer herding have not been fully explored (except see Golovnev 1995). I shall clarify in this section how the hunting and herding ways of engaging with the tundra exist simultaneously on the territory for which the sovkhoz Yamal'skii today holds the land title. In my analysis I emphasise that even though the hunting activities that once formed the basis of people's livelihoods are no longer important, they still leave their traces in the territorial behaviour and ideas of the people. I shall show how land use was renegotiated because of the pasture requirements of reindeer herding and of political regimes. This has led not to the disappearance of the old territorial pattern but to a multi-layered relationship between herders and the tundra. I will show the changing relevance of the organisation of territory by hunters, the Soviet authorities and the pastoral herders by using data from three periods: first, from the 1920s, based on ethnographic accounts in north Yamal shortly prior to collectivisation; second, records from the sovkhoz time; and third, my own fieldwork data from 2001. These data shed light on how tundra people talked about where they believed they belonged, and what ethnographers thought this meant.

6.3.1 Alienable Pastures—Inalienable Hunting Grounds?

Data from early Soviet times are fortunately available for this region through the publication of the fieldwork reports of Vladimir Evladov (Evladov 1992 [1929]), who, in 1928–9, spent a year travelling through Yamal up to White Island in the far north. Having been charged by the early Soviet leaders to explore the possibility of land reform (*zemleustroistvo*) in Yamal, he ad-

dressed similar topics of land use as I did with 'my' 25 households. His report gives us a snapshot of the situation just before collectivisation started. In 1928, as well as in 2001, all land was formally state property. However, in 1928 respected reindeer herders, called *kulaki* by the communists, *de facto* controlled territorial behaviour on inheritable territories, the *vochiny*.



Map 5. Approximate territorial patterns among northernmost Yamal clans, 1928.

Evladov reports that as far as pastures were concerned, all land was accessible to everyone. The pastures were common. However, the difference with

an open access regime lay in the people's sense of belonging. You belonged to the place where your original hunting ground was, or if you did not hunt anymore, where your ancestors hunted. Therefore, as in Taimyr (see Ziker 2002a), hunting grounds had much clearer boundaries than pastures. In Evladov's time, however, people had already stopped asking the *khoziain*, the master of the land, for permission to hunt (1992 [1929]: 36). This shows a dual notion of engaging with the tundra for hunting and for herding. In addition to the pastures and the hunting territories, there were also sacred places of the Nenets clans (Rus: *rody*). These were known to all, although the members of these clans, even then, did not live together on these territories. Nonetheless, my interview partners in many cases knew where these lands of their clans were, although they perhaps had never been there personally. Map 5 shows an adapted version of data on surname-distribution in North Yamal, gathered by Evladov (1992 [1929]). This represents what Evladov called *vochiny*, but does not mean that other people did not also graze their reindeer there. The map must therefore be interpreted as showing people's perception of belonging to land, which may not be the same as actually using it for herding reindeer.

We can observe considerable differences between this map and those recorded for northern Yamal by Dolgikh (map 4). Evladov told Dolgikh (1970: 66f n) that he believed that the data of 1926/7 did not cover all clans and families. In map 4, the Yaptik and Yamal were recorded as occupying the northwestern part, whereas Evladov recorded at least some representatives of the Yaptik on the northeastern part, where normally Venenga and Tusida were thought to be the *vochiniki*. What we see in general is that Evladov added more detail compared with the maps of Dolgikh and the other researchers. Even more important than the inaccuracy of the data, in my view, are the differences between maps 4 and 5, which indicate the relative flexibility of land use in reindeer herding, compared with the less flexible sense of belonging to a particular part of the landscape. Differences from that time may stem from a misunderstanding of what the ethnographers actually recorded: the area where they found people in a particular year, or the place to which these people actually felt they belonged. The actual land use may differ from year to year, but in Evladov's time in-depth conversations revealed that people distinguished between those who belonged to the land and those who were currently merely grazing reindeer on it.

Flexibility has to be seen both spatially and socially. All ethnographic accounts show that spatially borders were not enforced, and there were no reports of anyone being excluded from using the land. Land use was socially flexible because rich herders could lose their entire livelihood through a single epidemic within one season, whereas smaller herders were more

diversified and the impacts of such setbacks were less disastrous. The once-rich herder would work for a relative as a herder (Golovnev 1995: 51), who would then help him to build up a new herd again (see chapter 5). Therefore the Soviets were wrong to stigmatise *kulaki* as a separate class. Golovnev (1997b, 2000a) showed that Nenets society was egalitarian, with wealth and poverty flexibly distributed. This flexibility is observed to be a general aspect in pastoral land use, not just among Yamal reindeer herders. Beach et al. (1992: 84) stress that the whole concept of Saami territorial behaviour is based on this flexibility, and Casimir (1992a: 16) argues that flexibility is the 'optimal general strategy to ensure access to … resources under various natural and/or social conditions'.

In Yamal, large-scale herders did not use their wealth to exclude others, and the social structure was not built in a way to defend borders. Given the vulnerability of a big herd, this would have been very risky for the future. Even rich *khoziainy* abandoned their own territories for various reasons such as climatic conditions, conflicts with neighbours or trade (Evladov 1992 [1929]: 108). Evladov highlights this in the following:

> In earlier times each clan had its fixed land [Nen: *ia'*], but the borders between these lands were not strict, they changed from time to time. Within this clan land, each *khoziain*, big or small reindeer herder, had his inheritable territory—the *vochina*.
>
> 'And what about the poor one, where will he graze his reindeer?' I asked.
>
> 'Everywhere,' answered Enzeda. 'Could I ever forbid him to graze or hunt on my land? I am strong, I go where I want to go, but the poor herder goes where his reindeer go. Let the poor ones go wherever they want.' (Evladov 1992 [1929]: 57).

Even given predictable pastures and precipitation, these herders would not defend their territories. A statement that Evladov heard often (and I heard occasionally) was that there was enough space for everybody and thus they did not invest in a defence or throw somebody out unless he ignored all the guidelines of the *zakon tundry*. The above quote also highlights that the sense of belonging to a particular area can be very different to actually grazing a herd there.

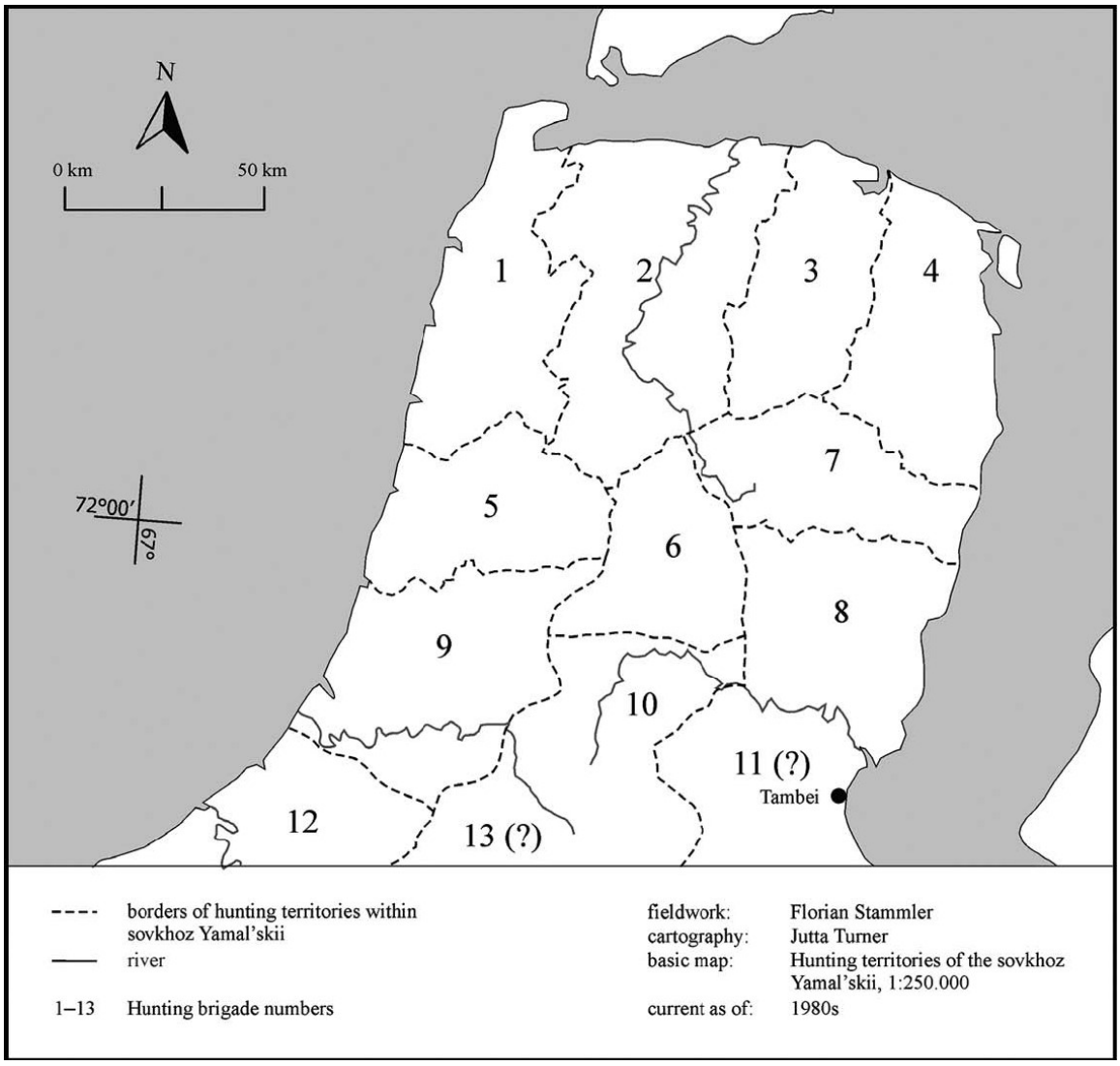
The 'commons' ideology of the pasture belongs also to the complex of the *zakon tundry*. *Tundroviki* assume that everyone has a good reason to come to their land, and they rely on the same assumption by neighbours if they themselves are in need to change pastures, for example if ice shields (Rus: *gololed*, Nen: *serabt'*) make the pastures inaccessible to reindeer. The importance of mutual help in the tundra goes far beyond flexibility in land use, as I pointed out in chapter 5. The capacity to behave according to this

risk-pooling strategy is a matter of knowing the tundra, where we come back to Anderson's concept (1998, 2000a). Knowing the tundra also implies knowing the code of conduct of the tundra.

6.3.2 Imposed Organisation—Cosmetic Correction?

During the Soviet period, territorial organisation in Yamal—like many other aspects of Nenets lifestyle—underwent change and was influenced by outside pressures. But this did not bring about the replacement of old patterns but instead gave rise to a multi-layeredness and an increased pool of experiences through the practice of engaging with the natural and social environment. Soviet *zemleustroistvo* (land reorganisation) was mainly about imposing control upon the tundra and extracting resources from it more efficiently. The sovkhoz Yamal'skii established two staff departments, one for hunting and one for herding. These were split up into separate brigades as units of production. The hunting and the herding brigades received territories in the tundra in the same places. This overlapping between hunting grounds and pastures was a common pattern before the Soviet Union too.

Distinct territories of the new reindeer brigades, as well as of the hunting brigades, were 'frozen down' to beautiful maps on the walls of the sovkhoz headquarters (*kontora*). It is interesting how the structure of sovkhoz hunting grounds resembled the pattern drawn by Evladov in 1929. If we compare the map by Evladov with a sovkhoz map (map 6), the similarity becomes obvious: the 'Yamal' *vochiny* of Evladov have become hunting brigades 1 and 2; the Okotetto-Yamal *vochiny* have become brigade 3, including parts of the Vengo, whereas Evladov's Yaptik *vochina* in the northeast have become hunting brigade 4. Hunting brigade 7 consisted mainly of Tusida *vochiny*, whereas 6 and 8 encompassed several Okotetto *vochiny*. In the northwest, hunting brigade 5 probably encompassed Laptander people. Evladov (1992 [1929]: 64) mentions that they came from the European tundra, west of the Polar Ural Mountains (see also Krupnik 2000b: 142). This happened early in the twentieth century. Therefore, when Evladov met the Laptander some 10 to 20 years later, they were not recorded as having their hunting grounds, but this did not inhibit them from herding their reindeer in these territories. Hunting brigades 9 and 12 encompassed the Yaptik *vochiny* to both sides of the Siador River. This comparison shows that the establishment of sovkhoz hunting brigades drew heavily on already existing territorial patterns among northern Yamal hunter-herders. This confirms, with respect to land, the general argument of historical continuity that I put forward in chapter 4.



Map 6. Hunting brigades in north Yamal, 1961–1991.

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Stammler & Ventsel 2003: 327, 336, 351) the sovkhoz 'created' hunters and herders as discrete job categories, whereas prior to this they were part of one single economic strategy. The Soviets in Yamal did not try to force the abandonment of hunting and make all Nentsy 'pure' pastoralists, but they envisioned these activities being done by different people at the same time, whereas most herders were also hunters and fishers and vice versa. This is mirrored by the fact that people who registered as sovkhoz hunters generally had their own (and often quite large) reindeer herds. The system of hunting territories and reindeer brigades' migration routes was approved by ecological monitoring teams from Moscow or Sverdlovsk,[102] who used data on the carrying capacity of the land and the

[102] Now Ekaterinburg. Personal communication with Mrs Khabibbulina, accountant of the sovkhoz Yamal'skii, who had studied the history of her enterprise, 5 September 2000.

populations of hunted species. Of the 15 reindeer herding brigades, half migrated during the summer towards the sea, and in winter, to the inner part of the peninsula (see for example map 3, route with triangles 10 and 11). The other half migrated in elliptical patterns on both sides of various rivers, as mentioned above.

As far as the hunters with their herds were concerned, the sovkhoz did not interfere, as long as their herds did not disturb sovkhoz brigades. Six of eight northern private 'hunter-herders' whom I interviewed stated that the sovkhoz had never required them to graze their deer in a particular territory, whereas one said that the sovkhoz would have forced them to work in the village if they found out that 'hunters' held more reindeer than was allowed. This shows that the sovkhoz leadership cared more about keeping sovkhoz and private hunters' herds separate and did not strictly bound its 'herding hunters' to their hunting grounds.

A very significant change imposed by the Soviets came about with the strict enforcement of the southern border of the sovkhoz Yamal'skii after 1961. The nomads were no longer allowed to migrate all the way to Salekhard and to the forest tundra, which some of them had done until the end of the kolkhoz time in 1960. This long route over the Yamal Peninsula was seen to be inefficient and also disruptive to the more southern reindeer herders (see section 4.4.6). Anniko Khorotetto still remembers this time and tells how he enjoyed these long-distance migrations. Life, he says, was more interesting when they moved constantly and met other herders along the way. These long-distance herders clearly regretted the restriction of movement imposed by the Soviets, since it prevented them from enacting their 'nomadic ethos'. The northern long-distance herders acted to some extent as trader nomads for their neighbours who stayed in the north, a pattern that can be compared with the Tuareg camel nomads in northern Africa (Nicolaisen & Nicolaisen 1997: 277–82): There, the significance of caravan trading decreased significantly, first with colonisation and then with the evolution of independent nation states, which enforced their borders in the 1960s. At the same time, in 1961, the Soviets enforced the sovkhoz border in northern Yamal. Both in the Sahara and Yamal, mechanised transport played an important role in eroding nomadic mobility. With goods being increasingly transported by trucks, long-distance trading by nomads was no longer seen as efficient. In Yamal, the supply of goods for the whole of the northern tundra was organised by boat in summer and by truck in winter.

Because their function as traders was lost, those nomads who followed the central Yamal tundra land-use pattern also lost one of their sources of income. Nevertheless, they still migrated to the north, as described for Leonid Vylko's 5th Yar-Sale brigade and for Tokcha and his camp (see

chapter 3, table 2 and map 3). This shows that these long migration routes existed not only because of caravan trading, but also for the ecological reasons mentioned above. Many reindeer herders say the reindeer themselves know where to migrate, and it is the herders' job to follow them (see chapter 2). Interestingly, this border, the only one that was implemented forcefully in Yamal, still causes trouble and disagreement among herders from both sides in the post-Soviet period (see chapter 7). This confirms the argument in this chapter about the persistence of earlier land use patterns in Yamal, which do not change with the same rhythm as political systems or enterprise borders.

The mapping of distinct hunting and herding grounds and the allocation of 'workers' to them was the means by which the broader goal of sovietisation of the tundra was to be met. Instead of seeing the land as a space for independent native life, it was viewed as 'territory' containing exploitable economic resources which had a calculable productivity value for the Soviet planned economy, sovietisation of land therefore meant commoditisation of land. Officially, the role of kinship relations was banned as a remnant of the old system. Land organisation therefore had to be devised independently of this. However, based on my comparison of Evladov's data and the sovkhoz data (cf. maps 5 and 6), I dare to hypothesise that assigning numbers to brigades instead of clan names to *vochiny* was a rather cosmetic operation in northern Yamal. In terms of the territorial relations among the people in the tundra, these reorganisations were of minor importance. Mapping the territories of hunting brigades and hanging maps in sovkhoz headquarters merely brought an additional layer of formality to Soviet land organisation. This demonstrates where the law of the Soviets (*sovetskii zakon*) ended. The tundra remained inhabited exclusively by native peoples and thus governed by their own *zakon*.[103] The Soviet Union and its laws were not permanently and physically present in the tundra, but only on certain occasions at particular times, for example when helicopters came to pick up school children, tanks and tractors brought firewood, and *zootekhniki* went out to count the herds.

The Soviet interpretation of multiple territoriality was separation of the two ways of engaging with the tundra: hunting and herding. This imposed a static order over a flexible one. The imposition of Soviet order was exemplified by the production of separate maps for hunting and herding brigades, frozen to the wall in the village, whereas in the tundra flexibility was maintained with a continuum between herding and hunting as subsis-

[103] In this light it becomes clear why it was easier for the Soviets to take the children away from the tundra to the village boarding schools and into Soviet surroundings, rather than to bring Soviet schools to the tundra, as they tried to do until the 1950s.

tence strategies for households. Instead of physically colonising the tundra by on-the-ground reterritorialisation, I argue that the Soviets reached their ideological goals better by withdrawing people from the land into the boarding schools. Most of the young people in these schools indeed became good Soviet citizens, just as they were expected to. They were supportive of the party, and of the sovkhoz, and of the Soviet idea in general. When these people went back to the tundra, however, the land that they met there was still governed by the same native rules as before. This was less important to Soviet officials, as long as the Nenets 'rule' at the grass roots level did not disturb the Soviet view of the tundra as meat factory and of herders as happy Soviet workers fulfilling their plans for production. This two-layered organisation is not only true for the Soviet bloc. In Saamiland, the nation states imposed their order centuries ago on reindeer herders, but still the herders have their own organisation of the *sida* (Beach et al. 1992: 67).

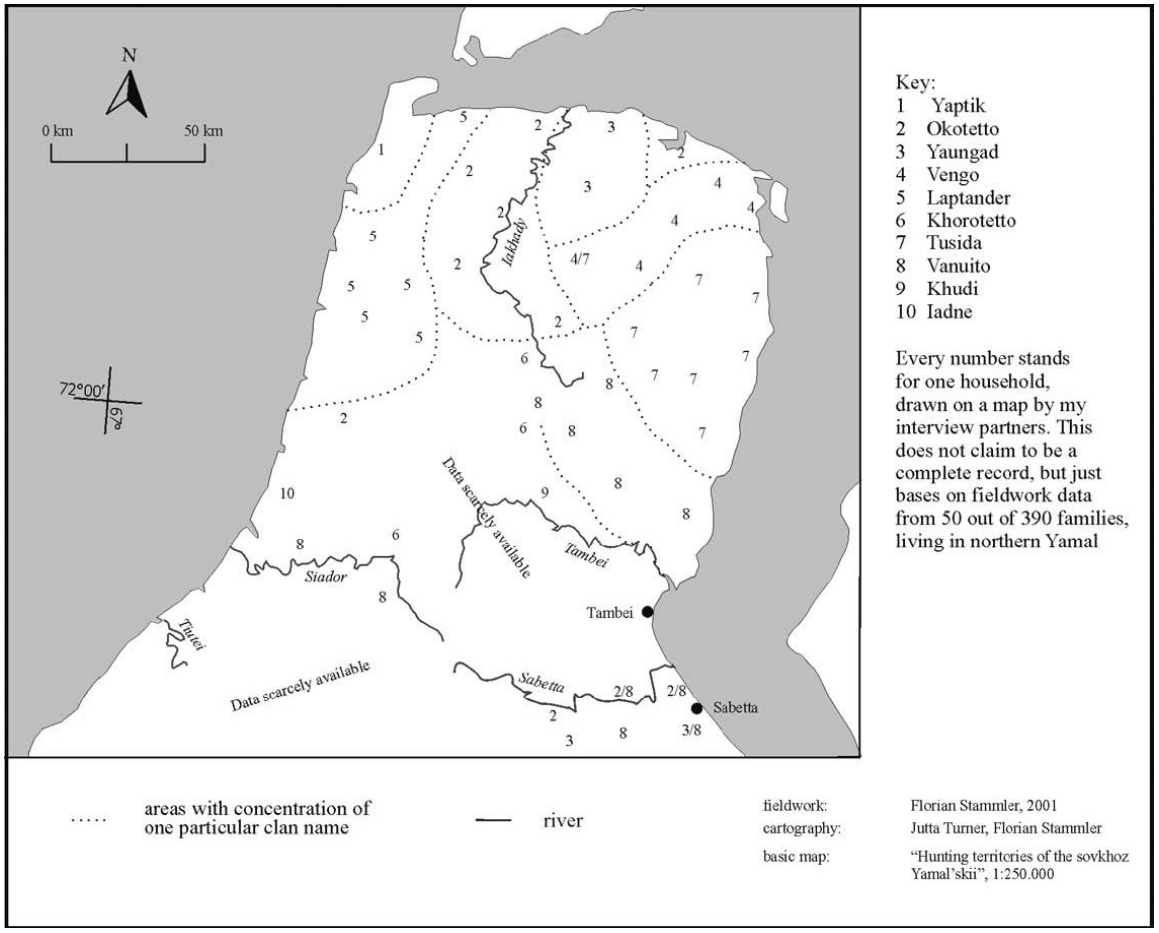
6.3.3 Property Pluralism and the iskonnaia zemlia

For an understanding of how northern Yamal nomads relate to their land today, I captured another snapshot of who was where, in May and June 2001, which I could then compare with the maps produced by Evladov and the sovkhoz. I used a GPS to record the exact locations of every herder I visited in north Yamal, and I asked each of them to draw on a map where their neighbours were located (map 7). When visiting some of those neighbours, I was impressed by the accuracy with which they had drawn the locations on the map, and by the fact that they were almost always right. Neighbours did not pretend to occupy places that they were not actually using.

I have not attempted to draw borders in the way that Evladov and the Soviet land planners did, because in the people's minds there are no fixed borders between territories and I do not want to attach people to territories in any artificial sense. However, a spatial concentration of certain surnames in my field data is evident. On the map every surname has one value, and every number stands for one household whose location I recorded. Concentrations of surnames in areas therefore can be seen by the numbers standing beside one another. In this way I use these data to show general tendencies rather than to try to provide a full record of northern Yamal reindeer herders, as Dolgikh (1970) did with the census data from 1926.

If we compare the present map (map 7) with the one drawn from Evladov's data (map 5) and the Soviet map (map 6), we see continuity and change in the distribution of tundra households in northern Yamal. The continuity confirms that the arctic type of engaging with the tundra is still a localised one. Soviet reorganisations did not result in radical changes, but

were built into the existing system. Hunting, once dominant in this kind of territorial organisation (Evladov 1992 [1929]: 57), had already been replaced by large-scale herding in Evladov's time. This led to changes in actual land use, but the underlying territorial organisation still persisted. The same patterns are observable throughout the last 100 years. On the other hand, we also see signs of change when comparing the maps.



Map 7. Approximate territorial patterns among northernmost Yamal families, 2001.

For example, the Khorotetto were not mentioned by Evladov nor by Dolgikh as living in a certain territory (Dolgikh 1970: 70–8). The Yaungad must have lived on the seashore, since their name translates as 'sea mammal hunters'. Today's well-known Yaungad, the children of Khavere, were born on the northern fringes of the Yamal Peninsula in the 1950s. In the area around the Sabetta River, the Yaungad were recorded by Evladov as having their *vochina*. This is exactly where I found them in 2000–1, intermarried with Vanuito and Okotetto.

The disappearance of the Yamal surname was explained to me by one of the oldest men in Yamal, Pupta Okotetto, whose father Pudanasi hosted Evladov personally (cf. Evladov 1992 [1929]: 158). Pupta was then a little

boy. He said that Evladov was aware of their name, but later the Soviet authorities issued passports and merged the Yamal clan with the Okotetto clan. So the authorities, for reasons of simplicity, did not use the name Yamal for their documentation, Pupta Pudanasivich said.[104] This is why today the territory which, according to Evladov, was labelled as inhabited by Yamal people, is mainly attached to Okotetto people (map 7, number 2). In fact, in many cases these Okotetto are descendants of the Yamal.

From a comparison of the present map (map 7) with the Soviet hunting brigades (map 6) we can see how these brigades also influenced the current organisation. In hunting brigade territories 1 and 5 I found Laptander people, consistent with what Evladov (1992 [1929]: 64) and Krupnik (2000b: 142) mentioned. Today they live on bigger territories. The Okotetto, Yaungad and Vengo herders mainly live on the territories of hunting brigades 2, 3 and 4, which is similar to the pre-Soviet pattern. The 6th hunting brigade territory has been partly appropriated by the Khorotetto herders, although they do not all live there continuously. The Tusida clan is probably the one showing the greatest continuity from the early twentieth-century accounts maps 4 and 5, through the Soviet period (see map 6: hunting brigades 7 and 8), until now (map 7: number 7).

It is important to bear in mind that half of my respondents, on whom I relied for information in creating map 7, were aware of the map drawn by Evladov. Therefore they might have 'constructed' historical continuity in their answers to me. However, most of the cases I recorded using GPS do show this continuous pattern. For the region south of latitude 72ºN my data are too incomplete to allow such an analysis. Therefore, I could not distinguish a clear pattern for this region except for the continuous presence of the Yaungad people around the Sabetta River throughout the whole of the twentieth century (see map 4, part 1; map 5; and map 7, number 3). However, I see no reason why the general situation should be different for the rest of northern Yamal.

The continuity revealed in the data from 2001 suggests that these herders in the twenty-first century perceive their places in the tundra and those of their neighbours still very much according to a pattern which was based originally on hunting grounds, *vochiny*. On the other hand, all my hosts in north Yamal stressed that people are free to choose where to move on the tundra. During my fieldwork there, I was puzzled by these different notions and had a long discussion about this with my host, Yakov Naberevich Vanuito. He introduced me to the following differentiation in the sense of belonging to the tundra. He started by saying: 'the tundra is common for

[104] Pupta told this to his great-grandchild Khasavomboi and his wife Valia, who then passed it on to me.

tundra people (*tundra obshchaia, u tundrovikov*)'. However, more precisely he explained that there is a notion of 'my land' (*moia zemlia*) and another notion of 'my age-old, original land' (*moia iskonnaia zemlia*). For Yakov, these are different things. '*Moia zemlia*' is where he grazes his herd, where he migrates, where he lives. In the last decades this had changed several times, so '*Moia zemlia*' can be in many places. Yakov explains:

> We are originally (*rodom*) from the Se-Iakha tundra. Our grandfather went to live further north, on the northeastern shore of Ob' Bay. There, today, his second son Manati lives. All the others went to search for new places, where they could find free tundra. My father moved together with Pes' and Pupta Okotetto, and Engo Yaungad. They had three *chum*s. My father was rather poor in reindeer. When I came out of the army in 1991, we moved to this place. Earlier, there was a sovkhoz brigade here, but then the land was freed up (Yakov, 2 June 2001).

This short overview shows how people are free to move with their herds where they like, but Yakov never left the northern Yamal territory altogether, and he still started his narrative by telling me where his ancestors were from. He did not use the land of his father for many years because somebody else lived there, although per ultimogeniture of the Nentsy, he would have an inherited connection to the land. *Moia iskonnaia zemlia* is where the main sense of belonging is directed, where his ancestors are buried, but he cannot live there and cannot forbid anybody else from living there, just as Enzeda pointed out to Evladov (1992 [1929]: 60; see section 6.3).

Nevertheless one should bury one's relatives on the *iskonnaia zemlia*, if possible, where the graveyard is, even though one does not live there. If one buries relatives at a place without ancestors, they will feel lonely and somebody else might die in order to accompany them.[105] This regulation concerning burying relatives seems to be true for cases where *moia zemlia* is not too far from *moia iskonnaia zemlia*. For example, the 5th Yar-Sale *brigadir*, Leonid Vylko, has never seen his *iskonnaia zemlia* and will not be buried there, since this is far away to the southwest, towards Europe. In all this organisation of engagement with the tundra, there is a lot of pragmatism to observe. The reindeer herders have a sense of belonging to their *iskonnaia zemlia*, but there is no requirement to use particular pastures or to visit particular sacred places (Khariutschi & Lipatova 1999: 292). They know that in cases of need they can go to almost any place in the tundra to graze their reindeer, as in Evladov's times (1992 [1929]: 57).

[105] Information from one long night's talk with Yakov Vanuito, 31 May 2001.

6.4 Conclusion

The analysis of territoriality in Yamal provides important insights into the continuities as well as the dynamics of people's engagement with the tundra.

The concepts of *iskonnaia zemlia* ('my age-old original land') and *moia zemlia* ('my land') has persisted from pre-Soviet times up to the present. They embody the hunting and herding way of engaging with the tundra, respectively, and people in north Yamal enact their movements on the tundra according to both ways simultaneously. This is remarkable for north Yamal in particular, since the local form of engagement with the tundra was based on a hunting economy, but was perpetuated even though the economy came to be dominated by large-scale reindeer herding. However, territorial behaviour on reindeer pastures among these northern herders is flexible and access is not restricted to any exclusive rights: *moia zemlia* therefore could and can change very often, mostly, but not only, within the sphere of the known. The *iskonnaia zemlia* has not lost its meaning, even though its use no longer has any economic implications. The old hunting territories still direct peoples' sense of belonging to a particular part of the tundra, but they do not think that this part of the tundra belongs to them as property. Therefore they do not restrict access to it by other members of their community.

In spite of the official abandoning of kinship principles, Soviet land organisation in north Yamal did not destroy the native order, but rather incorporated it on the ground. Otherwise, we would see more non-northern Yamal surnames in the northern territories today. This is why the distribution of people across the northern Yamal tundra has stayed much the same from the beginning of the twentieth century through to the beginning of the twenty-first century (see maps 4–7). It seems to have been a common practice in West Siberia for the state to establish an external regime of territorial organisation that would not replace but would overarch the indigenous local system. Jordan (2003: 241f) has come to the same conclusion for the Malyi Iugan Khanty in the taiga.

Similar to what Myers (1997) found among the Pintupi in Australia, the Nentsy do not lose their *iskonnaia zemlia* if someone else has access to it. They do not feel deprived of their sense of belonging to these places when they allow someone else to use them. They can enact this belonging by engaging with the tundra even from a distance, for example by dedicating an animal to be slaughtered to a particular place (Khariutschi & Lipatova 1999). They would not base their identity on the tundra pastures which they currently use if this is not their *iskonnaia zemlia*. Belonging here implies knowing the hunting resources as well as the supernatural characteristics of the place, the ancestors' and one's own relationship with the place. Myers (1997: 67) thinks of this close sense of belonging as being the basis of 'pri-

mary claims' to the land. No-one loses these if other people are allowed to become what he calls 'joint custodians' (1997: 65). The second level of land perception, which Myers calls 'an object of exchange' (1997: 67) is the tundra that people use for their physical survival, which corresponds to *moia zemlia*. They have rights to use that part of the tundra through knowing particular properties or 'affordances'.

People such as Leonid Vylko, *brigadir* of 5th Yar-Sale brigade, who I came to admire for his close association with the tundra, gathered his knowledge through lifelong experience of moving across more than 1,000 kilometres of tundra every year. However, for him all this is not his *iskonnaia zemlia*; he still connects his identity with 'our main sacred site' close to the Ural Mountains, although he has never been there. I have shown that external reorganisations of the tundra affected land as an object of exchange, although not so radical as Soviet ideology might have suggested, but the basis of belonging (*iskonnaia zemlia*) persisted throughout the twentieth century.

I want to emphasise that, although the elements of continuity identified in our comparison of the three maps (5–7) suggest a clear sense of belonging, the elements of change show the adaptability of the system and an ideology of common use of the tundra. We see that the sense of place of reindeer herders on the Yamal Peninsula encompasses both pre-Soviet and Soviet territorial organisations, both a hunting and a herding way of relating to the tundra. These two patterns and practices are inseparable. The Soviet system tried to separate the two strategies and make them stable, but under the official layer they were always fluid and flexible, so that hunters engage in herding and herders engage in hunting.

Territorial patterns mirror these two strategies. The importance of the hunting way of relating to the tundra in the north and the importance of large migration corridors in central Yamal show that both patterns form two variations on a continuum of combined mixed economies, where herding, fishing and hunting matter to different degrees at different times. This challenges a categorisation of territories and their use as having to be either inclusive or exclusive. They can be both at the same time. I agree with Smith's (1991: 268) claim that too many people combine various economic activities to allow such a dualistic categorisation of societies into hunter-gatherers and pastoralists as distinct types (cf. Ingold 1980). What Ingold (1991: 264) saw as a 'radically different understanding of relations with their environments' among hunter-gatherers and pastoralists appears to be challenged by the Nentsy who simultaneously combine elements of both the 'nomadic thinking' (Ahmed 1999) and the 'hunting logic' (Bird-David 1992). They have become part of the same tradition.

The different layers of this tradition, I argue, can be analysed using a combination of two theoretical approaches, one based on defence and one based on knowing. The defence paradigm helps explain why most herders in post-Soviet times envision a future of generalised access to the pastures—in answer to my question about land ownership, most declared that the land belongs to the state (*zemlia gosudarstvennaia*). Many added that this actually meant that 'the land is ours, belongs to all of us' (*zemlia nashaia, obshchaia*). This has the appearance of classic commons ideology as described by Casimir for ecozones with low precipitation and low predictability of resources (1992b: 172). The next question I asked was whether anyone can forbid them from using certain pastures. There was a broad consensus that every reindeer herder can choose his pastures freely. This was exactly the answer given to Evladov to the same question (1992 [1929]: 57, 60). Tokcha's radical statement in response to my question was: 'If we started to enforce borders between migration routes now, we would have war in the tundra.'

An analysis of people's relations with pastures in terms of the defence paradigm reveals that the combination of the need for flexibility and mobility with large reindeer herds, the problem of ice-encrusted or inaccessible pastures and fluctuations in herd sizes makes the defence of bounded pastures for reindeer herders unreasonable. The costs would be too high to defend huge territories, insecurity would increase and the benefits would be minor. Therefore, herders do better with one common pool of pastures, access to which is freely negotiable within the community.

The knowledge paradigm helps to explain the basis on which they negotiate this access. Herders use their pastures based on their knowledge of how the needs of their households and their herds are connected to these places. The other layer of relations between people and the tundra is that most herders on the Yamal Peninsula still have a clear sense of belonging to particular places, which a hundred or more years ago used to be their hunting *vochiny*. They have this sense of belonging because of the way in which they perceive themselves to be connected to the places from which their ancestors came and from where their families spread out with their herds all over the tundra.

My argument is that both of these paradigms belong together. The defence-oriented and the knowledge paradigm form two sides of territorial behaviour by which the tundra, with all its beings—human, non-human, and supra human—are affected. In this way the theoretical debate about the defence paradigm and the knowledge paradigm is similar to the hunting and the herding way of engaging with the tundra. Both occur at the same time and form parts of a complex set of practices on these northern ranges. There-

fore, 'separatist' theories for hunter-gatherer or pastoralist territories, which associate them with different types of societies, cannot be supported by the Nenets example. This multi-layered territorial behaviour is constantly on the move between keeping distance and approaching, amalgamation and disintegration.

If we contrast this with the cognitive maps of other groups such as gas workers, sovkhoz directors and administrative staff, we immediately see a difference. Oil people also see 'affordances' (Ingold 1992) of the tundra, which the reindeer herders do not see. Depending on this perception, interest groups have different relations with the tundra. Extractors base their concept on defence of access, and can see the tundra as a material resource to control, to buy or to sell. The same is true for the administrator and the sovkhoz director, who allocate territories on beautiful maps to certain users and draw borders to divide them. This is the dominant paradigm outside the tundra, but the Nentsy have become part of this tradition already and understand that they must comply with this if they want to maintain their own multiple ways of engaging with the tundra. This is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 7
Crowded Tundra: Do Yamal 'Commons' Have a Tragedy? Current Tendencies in Yamal Territoriality

The contemporary property regime in the YNAO is officially still quite unified. On paper, the state owns most of the land, including the whole of the Yamal Peninsula, which remains split among three sovkhozy that hold the only long-term land titles. Gas companies hold land titles over deposits for a limited time. The sovkhozy still have the same Soviet title of *bessrochnoe pravo pol'zovaniia* (unlimited use right), and on paper the territories assigned to reindeer and hunting brigades still exist. This shows that although the central framework has gone, the sovkhoz system in Yamal, controlled by the okrug administration, is still the main organising principle within reindeer herding. When we compare the present situation with that of Soviet and pre-Soviet times, the key difference is that the numbers of both deer and people have increased (see figure 4), whereas the amount of available land has not. Although the 25 household heads I interviewed in Yamal all perceive that population pressure on the tundra has increased, this has not yet led to a more defensive approach to property rights. The following statement illustrates a tension between land administrators from the village of Se-Iakha, who apply a defensive strategy, and the still inclusive approach of herders. I shall analyse the background to this tension in this chapter:

> Some years ago I crossed the border to the Se-Iakha sovkhoz, north of Lake Nei-To, with my herd [approximately 1,500 deer]. In summer, the Se-Iakha people came by helicopter, landed and thought I was one of their herders. When they got to know that I was 'foreign' [*chuzhoi*], they told me that there was no place here for me. I told them: 'If the Nentsy are now going to start arguing with each other, there will be a disaster in the tundra. We all know that finally the land belongs to the state and each herder can graze his herd where he wants. I will take care that my reindeer will not mix with your reindeer' (Tokcha Parivich Khudi, 7 May 2001).

Tokcha's preferred summer pastures are in the region around the Palna-To and Nei-Tinskie lakes (see map 3, lakes 1–4). Tokcha represents the Nenets inclusive model of generalised access as documented by Evladov (1992 [1929]: 254). He stresses that the *vochiny* are not connected to reindeer pastures. Are such incidents the first signs of an end to the inclusive common pasture ideology among the Yamal Nentsy? Is there a threshold of population density for both people and animals, beyond which the idea of 'common' pastures begins to break down? Or is it just administrators in villages who adopt a more defensive rhetoric? The following statement by Yakov, a northern Yamal herder, seems to suggest that the defensive logic could soon find more support among tundra people.

> The tundra here has become overcrowded (*perepolnilas*). It's a hell of a lot of work to herd the reindeer now, because the herd often gets mixed up with neighbouring ones. In earlier times, we often stood together with our neighbours, but now the herds are bigger, you need many reindeer these days in the tundra, and we stand alone. In autumn, the slaughtering herds of the *kommersanty*[106] also pass by very closely. Their herders get paid for that, but we don't get anything if we have to catch our reindeer out of their herds. There is no place to move to anymore. I have already thought of moving to the other side of the Ob' Bay [Gydan Peninsula], but I don't know the tundra there, and there are also people there (Yakov Naberevich Vanuito, 17 May 2001).

Today reindeer herders have to deal with two threats in a way they have never had to before: first, population pressure on the tundra is making reindeer herding increasingly difficult, and secondly, this situation is being aggravated by the ongoing loss of land to oil and gas development. Yakov's statement above describes his concern, and he is not the only one. However, many herders are more worried by the fact that increased herding work makes life harder for them than by the fear of degraded pastures. This highlights the importance of labour as the limiting factor among rich herders, a problem to which I shall return in the course of this chapter.

This chapter explores the background to perceptions of a 'crowded tundra'. Rather than drawing another scenario of tragic overgrazing and predicting an ecological disaster, I step back and investigate, first, what could be meant by the 'tragedy of the commons' in Yamal. This develops into a critique of dominant land and herd management paradigms that are not suited to the flexible nomadic way in which herders move across the tundra. Then I set out to explore one prominent alternative, the establishment of

[106] *Kommersanty* are private, vertically structured reindeer enterprises run by Nentsy in this case. A more detailed account appears in chapter 8.

indigenous communities called *obshchiny*, which have developed in response to growing pressure on the tundra. This institutional framework, however, is not simply a new means of territorial defence; rather, it should be viewed as a new form of local self-government in Russia. In my two case studies of *obshchina*, I analyse the role of leaders and politicians as cultural brokers (Paine 1971a). Some of them understand that they are more likely to be successful if they adapt to the dominant discourse imposed from outside. Outside actors, such as the state, with their models of territories and carrying capacity, are not likely to understand the inclusive way of engaging with the tundra. This argument was put forward by Paine (1992) for the Saami. Cultural brokers use the defensive approach to keep the inclusive notion of territory in the tundra intact. I shall show how local intellectuals fill the general *obshchina* idea with life and mould it to fit the conditions of a particular region.

7.1 What is Tragic?

The very fact that the tundra is more heavily populated now than in Soviet and pre-Soviet times raises the issue of preserving the common pastures. Many experts have warned for decades that the pasture resources of Yamal are being over-used. Estimates for current overgrazing rates on the peninsula vary from 61,100 reindeer above the carrying capacity (Podkorytov 1995: 9), up to twice the winter pasture capacity (Vil'chek 1992: 52; Golovnev & Osherenko 1999: 117), which corresponds to 93,000 animals above pasture capacity (Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001: 110). At first glance, the picture seems to suggest the classic 'tragedy of the commons' described by Hardin (1968): there is an increased number of reindeer herders with a strong communal sense of land ownership, and a strong will to maximise their private herds, an increase which is both statistically measurable and perceived by the herders. This, so runs the argument, has led to overgrazing, which again is scientifically proven by various experts. Is then Hardin finally right, and does the Yamal case prove all Hardin's critics wrong? This is what I want to explore in the following sections.

What seems so obvious at the beginning becomes less so when we consider a number of aspects. Yamal has experienced a more or less constant influx of people for 300 years (Krupnik 2000b). These have had growing reindeer herds, and the actual biological calculations of carrying capacity are rather poor instruments by which to measure the sustainability of a pastoral system in the Arctic. I argue that the very fact of this massive number of people and reindeer over a considerable time should make us question the experts' horror scenarios for reindeer herding. Their prediction of a massive decrease in herds due to poor pastures has not yet happened. Some authors

claim that in the past overgrazing was regulated by massive losses of reindeer due to epizootic diseases (Podkorytov 1995: 10; Krupnik 2000b: 146), but although there have been considerable losses of reindeer, these did not influence the general underlying trend to an increase in herd size. Bjorklund (1990: 79) argues for Scandinavia that there is no causal relation between overgrazing and epizootic diseases at all. His argument is that with degraded pastures lichen beds would need decades in order to recover and support large herds again, whereas Norwegian statistics show that shortly after the epidemics reindeer herds recover (often within a few years) to previous levels. Hence, there must be sufficient pastures for them.

This makes me suspicious about the applicability of carrying-capacity calculations. Could it be a tragic mistake that in Russia and elsewhere carrying-capacity measurements are still the mainstay of reindeer herding planning (e.g. Jernsletten & Klokov 2002: 19)? Most decision-making on pastures is based on the conviction that we can explain everything with the calculation of energy flows across the trophic levels. To calculate carrying capacity, the amount of biomass of edible plants available to pastoral animals per area unit is measured. To calculate the actual load of pastures, the amount of biomass consumed by the average pastoral animal of that type, e.g. cattle or reindeer, and the actual animal numbers per pasture area (stocking rate) is measured. Then, providing we know how many animals actually graze on these pastures, we can say whether this number is above or below this carrying capacity. Most of the rangeland management models based on such calculations were designed for arid areas of Africa or for intensive agricultural settings. They are not necessarily transferable to reindeer pastoralism, which is based so much on extensive movement and flexibility.

Behnke (2000: 143f) shows that there may be different stocking densities (animals per pasture unit), where an equilibrium is maintained, i.e. the plant biomass consumed by animals and the biomass production (plant growth) of the pasture is the same. To choose from one of these densities is a socio-economic decision to be made by the animal husbander, e.g. according to optimal animal performance, profit maximisation (market), yield maximisation (subsistence) or others. This means there may be many different 'carrying capacities'; for example, a market one and a subsistence one. A stocking rate at what Behnke calls 'ecological carrying capacity' (2000: 143, 145) in most cases is not a rational decision.

Therefore we should avoid accepting what has been critically called a 'preoccupation with stocking rates' (Turner 1993: 402). In Soviet times, institutes made an impressive inventory of most reindeer pastures in the north, resulting in recommendations on stocking rates. However, it is not clear to the anthropologist, to the policy makers, and not even to all experts

themselves, on what basis these carrying-capacity recommendations were calculated.[107] What is printed on maps and lists is simply a number of permitted animals. This approach is still dominant in Russia and Scandinavia, where stocking rates are even available on the internet.[108] So far, attempts by anthropologists to redirect the debate away from the biological sphere and towards social problems (Bjorklund 1990; Paine 1992; Marin 2003) have not been acknowledged by biologists or decision-makers, and a critical analysis of the post-Soviet Russian situation has not yet been undertaken.

In order to attempt this, I draw inspiration from Paine (1992), who claims for Norway that the tragedy of pastures is mainly due to a paternalistic state policy imposed on reindeer herders, who are prevented from making their own independent herding and husbandry decisions. By heavily subsidising reindeer production, the state tries to ensure that reindeer herders act according to its own bio-economical values, instead of taking the pastoralists' lifestyle and behaviour into account. Therefore, according to Paine's argument, the tragic situation is constructed not by the Saami reindeer pastoralists but by the Norwegian state itself. This argument reinforces the need to look at the socio-economic world of the reindeer herders, and to look at the interactions occurring within it, rather than seeing Nenets culture as being solely responsible for failure or success. It leads me to the following questions. First, who decides whether the actual carrying capacities are correct for particular situations? Second, what social factors could be responsible for diminishing pasture quality? Third, are there any other reasons for the rapid increase in private herds in Yamal other than a culture of maximisation among herders?

7.1.1 The Problems with Actual Figures of Carrying Capacity

Calculation of the carrying capacity of reindeer pastures—and thus of overgrazing by reindeer—is very complicated, both in general and on the Yamal Peninsula in particular. For example, from Taimyr we know that carrying capacity of pasture was calculated on the assumption that the reindeer there need a very high ratio of lichen in winter (Baskin 1986: 334). Experts were therefore surprised that the herd could keep on increasing for years when the pastures supposedly could only support a much smaller number of animals. Only later did they establish that the reindeer there can survive with a much smaller proportion of lichen in their diet. This shows how sophisticated the

[107] Interviews with a member of the land assessment enterprise of Murmansk, which carries out pasture inventarisation in the Nenets Okrug. Naryan-Mar, 12 May 2005.

[108] All sites accessed 2 January 2004, for Norway: http://www.reindrift.no/filarkiv/ressursregnskap%2000-01/ress1.htm, for Sweden: http://www.sapmi.se/ssr/statistik_ren.html, for Finland: http://www.paliskunnat.fi/yddistys/.

knowledge of reindeer feeding behaviours must be in order to make reliable and accurate calculations. I am not sure that this level of knowledge for both pastures and animals is currently available, and if it is, whether it has been incorporated in the current calculations.

Another example of this inadequacy can be seen in the calculations for Yamal pastures presented in table 7. Vil'chek (1992: 53) stressed that available figures stem in many cases from the late 1970s. He took this as a starting point to claim that the situation since then must have become worse. Although institutes in Ekaterinburg and Labytnangi have recently carried out work on evaluating pastures, there is still no complete, up-to-date record of pastures on the Yamal Peninsula. Two publications in 2001 (sources A and B in table 7) come to somewhat different conclusions as to the area of reindeer pastures (in hectares) per *raion*, compared with a historical figure from 1965 (Source C).

Table 7. Comparison of overgrazing calculations from three different sources.

	Source A (2001)			Source B (2001)			Source C (1965)		
Raion	Pasture ('000 ha.)[a]	Allowed deer	Actual (±)[b] allowed	Pasture ('000 ha.)[a]	Allowed deer	Actual (±)[b] allowed	Pasture ('000 ha.)[a]	Allowed deer	Actual (±)[b] allowed
Yamal	9,619.8	110,446	+91,317	10,601.6	109,365	+92,398	10,294.0	77,000	+30,100[c]
Tazov	11,454.4	129,282	+39,530	9,772.8	121,780	+47,032	9,556.5	84,600	-6,900
Priural	5,072.5	55,484	-6,619[c]	4,128.3	40,200	+9,045[c]	4,512.4	40,100	+18,700[c]
Shurysh	2,938.5	30,546	-17,068	2,730.8	24,043	-10,565	4,887.6	29,300	-1,600
Nadym	7,116.1	141,473	-104,137[c]	3,551.4	36,870	+466[c]	4,500.4	45,800	-14,900
Purovs	6,241.2	122,859	-92,690[c]	5,683.8	39,157	-8,988[c]	8,601.4	68,100	-33,100

Notes:

[a] 'Pasture' represents the amount of land available for reindeer grazing.

[b] '+' means that carrying capacity is supposed to be exceeded, '–' indicates that pastures are supposed to cope with additional reindeer.

[c] These figures (highlighted) are referred to in the text.

Sources: A: Appendix 2 of the *postanovlenie gubernatora* YNAO no. 373, 18 May 2001; B: Yuzhakov & Mukhachev 2001, appendix 6, p. 110; C: Shapalin 1965: 174.

This comparison shows, for example, a difference of almost 1 million hectares for the Yamal Peninsula, and for the Nadymskii *raion* a difference of 3.6 million hectares between two publications of the same year. But even more importantly, differences in the calculation of allowable reindeer numbers present us with doubtful conclusions on overgrazing: For example, the government document (A) suggests that Priural'skii pastures could cope with another 6,619 reindeer, whereas Yuzhakov & Mukhachev's data (B) suggest that there are 9,045 reindeer too many in that *raion*. Even more striking are the numbers for the Nadymskii *raion*: there the government document considers that a further 104,137 reindeer could be stocked, whereas Yuzhakov & Mukhachev's data suggest that the carrying capacity has now been reached. The historical data on carrying capacities (C) show that the overgrazing problem had been perceived at least 40 years ago and yet the number of reindeer has steadily increased since then. The population crash predicted by experts has not happened in the last half century.

These huge differences indicate the lack of reliability in these calculations. To my view, they make it impossible to assess which figure is 'right' or 'wrong'. Moreover, these calculations ostensibly use 'actual' reindeer numbers, but a private reindeer herder is hardly likely to tell the authorities the real number of reindeer he owns. This is because doing so is considered to be an offence among Nentsy, and also because there are many issues at stake, which in some cases lead herders to over-represent, in other cases to under-represent real figures.

These data are therefore of little use for making decisions about allowable reindeer numbers unless we are told the basis on which they were calculated and when and how the data were collected. For example, are the figures intended to provide an economic, profit-oriented carrying capacity, a subsistence-oriented capacity, or an ecological capacity? Furthermore, simply to divide the pastures of the Yamal Peninsula (or what is the Yamal'skii *raion* today) by the number of reindeer registered there produces a very unreliable estimate of pasture load. For example, such a calculation does not consider the actual accessibility of the pastures. In autumn, winter and spring there can be periods of rapid temperature change, which makes

the pastures ice over and thus reindeer cannot reach even the richest lichen ranges, or the snow in the forest tundra margin may be so deep that reindeer cannot dig through to the vegetation. Therefore, pasture accessibility is highly unpredictable and makes calculations almost impossible. This is different to the European or African contexts, where the carrying-capacity concept was originally applied (Behnke 2000: 148), for in these areas there is just one limiting factor to consider—namely, the variability of rainfall.

The second failure of such calculations is that they do not consider the pattern and flexibility of migrations. It is very difficult to calculate how many reindeer actually graze in a particular season, on which pastures, and what they eat there. As I have pointed out in chapter 3, most of the big herds in central Yamal migrate to their winter pastures in the south of the Yamal Peninsula on the territory of the Nadymskii *raion*, but we do not know exactly how many private reindeer migrate with these brigades, i.e. how many reindeer actually use these winter pastures. Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2001: 110) attempt to consider seasonal variations by calculating carrying capacities for six seasons: winter, early and late spring, summer, early and late autumn. They argue from this that shortages of pasture occur first and foremost in autumn and late spring in the Yamal'skii *raion*. Reindeer herders indeed talked at their session in April 2001 about pastures being unusable at this time. However, this was not because the vegetation had decreased, but because big herds had trampled it.

These simple considerations of migration behaviour and pasture use across administrative boundaries indicate that overgrazing calculations are too simple. The models (and the planners who use them) are too inflexible to be able to embrace the whole complexity of factors at stake in reindeer herding. The resulting calculations of reindeer stocking rates become seriously problematic when they are used as policy recommendations (as in the decree of the governor, table 7: A, Gov-YNAO 2001). Rangeland planning based on carrying-capacity calculations is yet another 'Western concept' that was designed for totally different pastures used by different animals (cattle, sheep, goats) with a different foraging behaviour. Its imposition on this arctic setting of highly mobile and flexible pastoralists must not be assumed to provide satisfactory results. So-called models, based on 'scientific knowledge' (i.e. purely quantitative knowledge), cannot model the flexible way in which reindeer and herders use and know the tundra.

7.1.2 Ecological and Social Suitability of Pastures

Consideration of the possible social factors involved in diminishing pasture quality leads us to address the problem of supposedly overgrazed spring and autumn pastures. Discussions during the above-mentioned reindeer herders'

session, which I attended in 2001, revealed that during spring and autumn various conflicts arose because of clashes in migration time schedules. The sovkhoz herders accused the small private herders of staying too long around the settlements of Yar-Sale and Portsy-Iakha, which is where the narrow autumn and spring migration corridors for the big sovkhoz herds are. The small private herders are there because it is convenient for them to be in the vicinity of food supplies at these times. They have little choice as the next trading post north of Portsy-Iakha is more than 100 km away and poorly stocked (if open at all).

By the same token, these private herder-fishermen accuse the large sovkhoz brigades, with herds of up to 5,000 animals, of trampling the pastures in spring and autumn with hardly any of the forage being consumed. The issue of these over-large sovkhoz herds is linked to the practices by specific brigades of herd separation. In many cases the whole brigade stays together in late autumn and early spring, and also in winter. This means that the pastures are more likely to be degraded due to trampling than overgrazing. If smaller herds migrated along these narrow corridors, trampling might be reduced. Yet trampling is an aspect not considered in calculations of carrying capacity and stocking rates and depends on decisions made by herders. Yuzhakov & Mukhachev (2001: 85) have argued that private herders historically have grazed their animals over wide areas in winter and were better able to use small patches of pastures than large herds. Therefore they argue that pasture degradation is also the result of the grazing system used in sovkhoz herds.

From this we see that both the uneven distribution of trading posts and the sovkhoz practice of herd separation are socially determined aspects that influence pasture quality, and they are not related to biomass and animal stocking. Therefore I argue that a 'social suitability of reindeer pasture' should be introduced as another variable in addition to the ecological one, as an important aspect determining reindeer herding. Because the socio-economic aim of the sovkhoz is to maintain a constant ratio of herding labour per herder, it is easier to have big herds and organise more rational herding shifts within the brigade. This brings us back to labour as a constraint on the ecologically rational use of the pasture resources. Furthermore, the social suitability of a pasture is characterised by its distance or proximity to settlements, especially for people with small herds. They have less transport capacity and therefore short distances to supplies are more important to them.

7.1.3 External Factors for Herd Increase on Yamal

The third question I posed concerned the reasons for increasing herd sizes among private owners. This is a difficult but important issue since reindeer pastoralists are sometimes characterised as individual maximisers (e.g. Paine 1971b: 166; Ingold 1980: 202–7). What is it that they are aiming to 'maximise', and are they perhaps more concerned about optimisation than maximisation? In the YNAO and elsewhere, the privatisation policy that followed the end of the Soviet Union caused what one herder called 'the time of chaos' (*vremia bardaka*). This expresses the high degree of uncertainty perceived by herders. Like most other Russian citizens, they had seen how all their savings in their bank accounts melted to nothing in two devaluations of the Russian rouble (see section 4.5). Moreover, the system of state supply through the sovkhoz had become far less reliable and much more expensive in the absence of transport subsidies to the north.

Reindeer herders then feared slaughtering animals purely for cash, which was perceived as highly unstable capital. They retreated to subsistence and insured their supply by having larger herds. They also needed these larger herds because transport had become so expensive after the end of the Soviet Union. Even in a hydrocarbon-rich province such as Yamal, fuel for snowmobiles was not always obtainable, and during my fieldwork in 2001 it took me five days to convince various people in Yar-Sale to sell me the fuel I needed to get to the tundra. In chapter 3, I described how many reindeer are needed to transport a winter's supply of firewood today, whereas in Soviet times, the sovkhoz used to bring firewood by all-terrain vehicles to the tundra. Furthermore, reindeer herders did not want to leave the tundra for the villages. Unlike other regions in Siberia, most of them had no houses or apartments in the settlements, and unlike in Chukotka (Krupnik & Vakhtin 2002: 13ff), for example, there was no depopulation of the YNAO. Reindeer herders therefore did not take up job opportunities in villages, but saw the tundra not only as their only 'home', but also as their most stable and risk-resilient source of income.

Maintaining herds of private animals, the ownership of which was no longer restricted, was therefore a viable strategy of survival and subsistence in the developing post-Soviet economy. Today, the worst times of chaos appear to be over and the YNAO is one of the richest Russian regions with the highest living standards (Abelinskas 2002). The YNAO government now has an explicit aim to support the nomadic economy of its indigenous peoples.[109] Subsidies and an improving supply situation, as well as functioning

[109] Stated in the okrug government's 'Conception of reindeer herding in the YNAO' from 2002, p. 3, and in the 'Focal program for the culture, language and traditional lifestyle of the

helicopter medical care and commercial opportunities, combine to encourage herders to remain engaged with their tundra economy. Paine (1992: 4) has shown that even slaughtering subsidies do not necessarily motivate herders to reduce their herds. In Yamal and elsewhere, a high stock of female adult reindeer can guarantee a high reproduction rate of the herd, where enough animals can be sold to slaughter while still allowing an increase in herd size. In my view all these external factors promoting privatisation will mean that more reindeer herders will decide to live a life with reindeer in the tundra. This does not necessarily mean that they are 'maximisers', and there could indeed be fewer reindeer in Yamal if the socio-economic and environmental milieus and the networks of institutions external to the Nentsy reindeer-herding system were different.

Several authors (Paine 1971b; Ingold 1980: 208) have pointed out that a more concrete limiting factor to individual pastoral expansion is labour, which we also saw in Yakov's statement at the beginning of this chapter. As Beach et al. (1992: 78) stated for Saami herders: 'internal territorial assertion has come to focus more on the appropriation of labour'. Herders cannot expand their herds beyond manageable sizes and they need ever more assistants to manage bigger herds. Therefore eight out of eleven herders whom I asked in northernmost Yamal have indicated that they do not intend to expand anymore, and would prefer to opt for a life less disturbed by the constant mixing of herds and searching for lost animals. Six of them had increased their herd in the past three years. Labour, as the limiting factor, has also been a decisive factor in organising Soviet reindeer herding in brigades (Tikhonov 1988). The number of herders that should work in each brigade was set down, although this was not necessarily correlated to the actual number of animals (Syrovatskii 2000: 228–30). Therefore it was not only an economic, but also a social decision made by the sovkhozy.

7.1.4 A Socio-Ecological Carrying Capacity

Having shown that Western formulations of 'carrying capacity' do not produce a reliable basis on which to assess any existing or future 'tragedy of the commons', and having pointed out that a pasture has to be 'socially suitable' as well as ecologically suitable for grazing, and having shown that the growth of private herds in Yamal is to a considerable extent the result of external forces rather than a 'culture of accumulation' among the Nentsy, I argue that the situation of the commons in Yamal will become 'tragic' only

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indigenous people in the YNAO' (*postanovlenie gubernatora* nr. 264, 13 September 2002). The Department for the Indigenous Peoples will receive 60 million roubles (€1.7 million) for this program every year between 2002 and 2007.

in the case of further cultural misunderstandings. I must emphasise, however, that I am not arguing that pastures are not overused at all in Yamal. They may be, but current calculations are not reliable enough to allow definite estimations, let alone to draw prescriptive conclusions as to what should be done about it.

In order to create a 'real' picture of the limits of reindeer herding, one which goes beyond naive 'bio-economic engineering' (Paine 1992: 15), many more aspects have to be considered. I have shown that such aspects include the foraging behaviour of the reindeer, the detailed patterns of mobility, practices such as separating the herds, and factors of pasture accessibility (icing over). Socio-economic factors such as the proximity or distance to markets and infrastructure, mutual aid systems, the ratio between subsistence and market production, and the organisation of labour further complicate the picture. Finally, cultural implications of the property relations in reindeer (see chapter 5) and land must not be forgotten. The steady growth in the human population on the Yamal Peninsula calls for consideration of a social carrying capacity of humans alongside that of the animals. This means that this multiplicity of factors has to be considered for every case, even within a unit such as the YNAO, and thus decentralised solutions might be better equipped to address the problems.

The problem is highly contested politically, and it is directly connected with property regimes: in those *raiony* with the highest proportion of private herds of all domestic reindeer (more than two-thirds), what is called the 'carrying capacity of pastures' is thought to be exceeded the most, whereas in the other three reindeer-herding *raiony* with headcounts below the nominal carrying capacity, the private share of herds does not exceed 40%.[110] These calculations show that pastures tend to be overloaded where the share of private ownership in reindeer is high. Therefore, it is not surprising that the administration is looking to limit private ownership of deer once more, this time not for ideological but for ecological reasons.

Discussions about reintroducing an upper limit on the size of reindeer herds by law finally resulted in a resolution by the YNAO governor in 2001.[111] This document points not merely to an ecological definition of permitted reindeer numbers, but seeks to find a balance between what is thought to be the ecological limit of reindeer per unit of pasture and the economic needs of reindeer herders. Specialists in the Department of Agriculture calculated the average supply of meat, furs and live reindeer needed

[110] Shares calculated from official figures by the YNAO Department of Agriculture as of 2001.

[111] *Postanovlenie gubernatora* YNAO No. 373 from 18 May 2001, the document which provides one set of figures in table 7.

by one person, a five-person and an eight-person family, for subsistence. A family of five, according to this report needs 385 reindeer. In my experience, this seems fairly realistic. However, this general model does not account for the particularities of places; in the north, for example, more transport deer are needed to carry firewood, and in the forest tundra there might be alternative sources of income (e.g. from game). Therefore article 3 of the decree places the responsibility for putting this into practice in the hands of the *raiony* and *sel'sovety*.

On Reindeer Herders' Day in April 2001, however, I personally witnessed the arguments that arose over this issue of setting limits on the numbers of private reindeer, and there was no agreement even among the central Yamal herders of how high the figure should be. Besides the fact that the document is based on questionable calculations of carrying capacity, it is also important to ask whether the document addressed the right group of people when prescribing limits on herd size. By calling for a reduction of private herds, these limits contradict the overall supportive policy of the YNAO state towards its nomadic households. The current policy works to preserve or even increase the size of the collective herds.

My fieldwork suggests that 21 out of 25 herders want to preserve the sovkhoz. However, they are concerned about possible losses in social security if it disappears, rather than about the preservation of collective systems of reindeer herding. Four herders from northern Yamal explicitly suggested a radical reduction of sovkhoz herds when I asked them whether the sovkhoz was still needed, but they would not like to get rid of the sovkhoz system altogether. This radical reduction of sovkhoz herds would put the sovkhozy back to the position where they started in the 1930s. Applied to a situation today, this would imply that sovkhozy would be state-controlled service-oriented enterprises. They would use the subsidies of the state to run a number of research-oriented breeding herds as they did in the early 1930s. From these herds herders could buy breeding bulls. Sovkhozy would also provide supplies to the tundra and run a number of well-distributed trading posts on the most important migration routes. They would engage in processing reindeer meat, fur and medical products, and use the waste products for running fur-breeding farms. They could make money through marketing. As stable institutions, they could still provide the social services, which make them so highly appreciated by the herders.

Such a scenario seems to be one which many herders would favour, since it implies a reduction in the sovkhoz herds without sovkhozy losing their importance in the social system as a distributor of state subsidies. The private herds then could still continue to migrate on the same patterns as they did before. They would simply have more space in which to do so. In such a

scenario, the number of *pastukhi* employed by sovkhoz brigades would be radically reduced, but most of them could get the same employment status as so-called hunters (*okhotniki*) have today, being on the sovkhoz employment records but getting only health insurance and pension entitlements. To obtain this, employees have to send some produce to the sovkhoz processing facilities, which they would do anyway, if sovkhozy would offer competitive terms of trade. The reformed Yar-Salinskii sovkhoz, with its big new slaughter-house, could go down this route in the future.

Apart from conversations with herders, I have heard no mention of any plans to transform the sovkhozy into lean management service-oriented reindeer enterprises. Indeed, this could be done only in those regions with a good record of performance by private herds. Among the Khanty and Komi herds in the Shuryshkarskii *raion*, the sovkhoz herds are essential in preventing reindeer herding from dying out. The approach here would have to be a decentralised one. However, the above-mentioned YNAO decree about limiting private reindeer flies in the face of these considerations. It was a return to massive state intervention at the grass-roots of reindeer herding that Paine (1992) identified as the cause of the 'Norwegian tragedy' (cf. Marin 2003). The removal of decision-making from the reindeer herders is of course strongly opposed by them and by their advocates in the villages. Therefore I shall now turn to another prominent strategy for dealing with the growing competition for resources on the tundra, the *obshchina* movement.

7.2 *Obshchina*—the 'Return' of the Defenders?

The realities of the labour and pasture problems, along with the strong communal perception of land entitlements, require us to look closely at the nature of collective action by reindeer herders today. Do we see signs among the herders of a more defensive and exclusive approach to their tundra as a reaction to population pressure? Will they confirm the 'economic defendability model' (Dyson-Hudson & Smith 1978; Smith 1995) or will they be able to stick to their 'inclusive' pattern of territorial behaviour? Or will they develop a new approach combining the two models as an alternative to those okrug regulations favouring simplistic carrying-capacity calculations?

As noted earlier, according to my survey, 12 of 25 herders have reduced their herds already, while 12 want to expand them again in the near future. This is not to say that half of the herders exercise what Casimir (1992a: 12) calls 'delayed reciprocal altruism' in order to protect the land. Rather, it is labour, as a limiting factor, which plays an important role here. Many of those who want to cut their herd size plan to do so in order to reduce their workload.

On the other hand, some herders have bought into a more defensive rhetoric introduced by officials in towns and villages, complaining that the highly mobile Yar-Salinskii herds, such as Leonid's 5th brigade, or Tokcha Parivich's herd, would cross the sovkhoz border, eat up the pastures and get mixed up with other herds. This problem generated political action: on 11 March 2002, at the Second All Russian Congress of Reindeer Herders in Salekhard, a private herder appeared with a letter and read it as a speech to the governor of the YNAO:

> Dear Iurii Vasilevich! The problematic situation with the reindeer pastures in northern Yamal forces us to approach you with this letter. Here, as you know, 60,000 reindeer graze and more than 300 Nentsy families migrate. In the summer-autumn period in the region of the Nei-Tinskie Lakes, each year the herds of the sovkhoz Yar-Salinskii, with thousands of reindeer, come and graze on the pastures of the Se-Iakha administration that are reserved for the private herders. The sovkhoz herds leave behind 'black earth', the pastures are not good for continued grazing anymore. The effect is a destruction of reindeer and a reduction of the headcount in the private herds. The reindeer herders who are left without reindeer, most of all transport bulls, are forced to migrate towards the village of Se-Iakha to catch and sell fish in order to buy groceries and to survive. But the pastures around Se-Iakha are very poor (*skudnye*), because they are used already by the sovkhoz herds [from the sovkhoz Yamal'skii]. Moreover, here again other local reindeer herders migrate, who in their turn get into a complicated situation because of the arrival of 'foreign' (*chuzhye*) herders … It is necessary to forbid the grazing of the northern brigades of the sovkhoz Yar-Salinskii on the pastures of Se-Iakha by order of the administration … We ask you to make a new assignment of pastures, since the now existing system was worked out before World War II and the situation of long ago does not correspond to the actual situation anymore … .

Is this, finally, a sign that the inclusive Nenets system cannot deal with such high populations of reindeer per territory? To answer this, we have to understand the background to this letter. The border between the Yar-Sale and the Se-Iakha sovkhozy was drawn by the Soviet administration in 1961 (see chapters 4 and 6). It was the only border that had a significant impact on the herders' migration routes and is often perceived as being somewhat artificial by those to both the north and the south, and by the herders who regularly cross it. They have now returned to the pre-sovkhoz migration patterns, and they might have even done so throughout the Soviet period, but I have no evidence for this. The introductory statement to this chapter by Tokcha

Parivich Khudi about the inclusive notion of territory shows how this border contradicts the idea of a common tundra. One could argue that it was the external intervention of drawing a border that created the problem, not the herders themselves.

Did some herders in the Se-Iakha tundra internalise this sovkhoz border, or did they become instrumentalised by village officials? With regard to the letter cited above, I know that the actual authors were the leaders of the recently established community Ilebts, an '*obshchina*'. They wrote the letter and the private herder read it out at this congress. This was a politically clever move, since a private herder writing to the governor appears more 'innocent' than a community leader or a politician. In order to establish whether the *obshchina* leader expressed the will of his members in this defensive approach to territory, we have to investigate his role as cultural broker and retrace the processes of establishing *obshchiny* in Yamal.

7.2.1 Background and Characteristics of the obshchina *Movement*

Since the beginning of the 1990s communities with the name *obshchina* have become so prominent in many regions of the Russian North that they have become the leading institutional structure in the post-Soviet reorganisation of indigenous tundra and taiga dwellers in those regions. However, the widespread assumption in the political discourse that this is a truly indigenous concept is doubtful to say the least. This applies especially to those *obshchiny* with the adjective *rodovaia* or *rodoplemennaia* in their names. It suggests a direct link between an assumed ancient 'clan organisation' (Rus: *rod*—kin, clan) and the current communities. The existing research on *obshchiny* in the Russian North has not yet considered whether these are indeed indigenous institutions (e.g. Sirina 1999; Fondahl 2003). Only Gray (2001: footnote 5) notes that at least by law these communities are now not restricted to indigenous people.

In fact, *obshchiny* in the North are a rather recent 'invention'. The concept itself is rooted in the terminology of the Russian peasantry well before northern peoples adopted reindeer herding. The very word *obshchina* is a general term in Russian that can be used for almost every community. This makes it somewhat similar to the Soviet institution of the *kollektiv*, the roots of which Humphrey (2002a: 166) in Buriatia traces back to pre-Soviet times. Many people in the North call any kind of community of tundra dwellers today *obshchina*. This includes *obshchina* as a category stipulated by Russian law, as well as communities that were registered under different legal categories in the 1990s, such as peasant farms (*krest'ianskie fermerskie khoziaistva*, see section 4.5).

Platonov (2001: chapter 47), a Russian nationalist author, traces the *obshchina* back to the Middle Ages and strongly supports it as one of the main differences between the Russian and West European peasants. The *obshchina* is based on self-administration. Entitlements to the land by peasants were always the basis of temporary use rights, as long as the peasant was able to work the land with his own hands. However, these principles, according to Platonov, were considerably undermined by the Stolypin reforms. In a less ideologically biased publication, Lourie (1999: 2) provides evidence for the early Russian *obshchina* as a 'simultaneously religious and social primary unit', in which the land 'was not the property of the *obshchina*', but the peasants felt as if the *obshchina* 'was the real master of the land', and further that this was 'a self-deception'.

Post-Soviet politicians adopted this self-deception for indigenous peoples in a dual form: the first self-deception is to see *obshchina* as an indigenous idea; the second is to see it as a unit of territorial organisation. The 'Russianness' of *obshchina* reminds us that we should beware of reifying culture as a single unit instead of looking at the components that make up peoples' lives at a given time in a given place. Neither should *obshchina* be monopolised as a Russian or as a northern indigenous concept. Going back to the past for a justification does not make the *obshchina* more 'traditional and indigenous' or more Russian than the sovkhoz.

A major element of the reorganisation of territories in the North was the passing of regional and federal legal agreements in various spheres. The federal legal acts are the 'Law on guaranteeing the rights for the indigenous people' (30 April 1999, no. 82-FЗ), the 'Law on general principles of the organisation of communities (*obshchiny*) of the indigenous peoples' (20 July 2000, no. 104-FЗ), the 'Law on the territories of traditional nature use of the indigenous peoples' (7 May 2001), the 'Federal land code' (25 October 2001, no. 136-FЗ), and the 'Law on the turnover of farmland' (24 July 2002, no. 101-FЗ).[112] According to the Land Code, territories to be used for 'non-traditional' purposes, for example the construction of gas drilling towers, have to be agreed upon by their current users/inhabitants in a referendum (Art. 31, § 3). Important for the regulation of land rights is the law on the traditional use of nature, but owing to a lack of regulations on how land rights by the current land users (normally the sovkhoz) could be restricted, no such territory had been registered in Yamal as of the end of 2002. The new land code states that for the Indigenous Peoples of the North, special legal regimes can be introduced for their land use (Art. 7 § 3). Article 34 of the Land Code makes the regional and local administration responsible for

[112] All laws are normally published within a week in the *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* and are searchable on the internet at http://www.systema.ru (accessed 4 January 2004).

working out a procedure of land turnover. According to the 'Law On the Turnover of Farmland' (24 July 2002, no. 101-F3), reindeer pastures cannot be privatised but can be rented from the state by citizens or communities (Art. 10 § 5-6).

Although these Federal laws have improved the situation, the key issue has not been solved: reindeer pastures, which occupy most of the northern territories, are not referred to as a separate category in land legislation but as a subgroup of agricultural land (*sel'skokhoziaistvennye ugodia*) or forests (*lesnoi fond*). According to the deputy-chair of the land resources committee in Salekhard, this does not take into account the wide variation and specific characteristics of reindeer pastures at all. 'They seem to have forgotten our north when they designed the new land code', she said.[113] Agricultural land, in the sense of arable land in the YNAO, covers only a very small portion of the overall land area (approximately 1%) and has very different properties to reindeer pastures. First and foremost, it can be separated into plots, and its predictable biomass production and regime of usage can both be measured. Laws fall straight into this 'trap' as described above in my discussion of carrying capacity.

In the YNAO the use of reindeer pastures by indigenous people and reindeer enterprises is free from land tax, as long as reindeer are herded within a quantitative limit set by the district where they are registered (Art. 10 § 2, YNAO law no. 7, 10 February 1997). This limit is set according to the supposed carrying capacity of reindeer (*oleneemkost'*) on the pastures (Art. 1 § 3 YNAO law no. 47, 25 June 2001).[114] According to the land committee, the okrug administration intends to write its own legislation relating to all questions concerning reindeer pastures that were left open by the Federal Land Code. However, the YNAO administration has not passed the laws 'Status of reindeer pastures' and 'On the protection of reindeer pastures', and there is no standardised procedure yet. But in late 1997, *obshchiny* in the YNAO and their right to obtain land have at least been mentioned in a law: according to the YNAO law 'on the regulation of land relations of living places of the indigenous peoples' (no. 39, 14 October 1997) *obshchiny* are voluntary unions of indigenous citizens with the right to procure land for their 'traditional activities' (Art. 3, Art. 9 § 5).

In spite of this considerable legislative activity, many questions remain open. Gray (2001) has described the political struggle behind the scenes, which led to the word 'land' (*zemlia*) and the important question of

[113] Personal communication, Salekhard, 4 July 2001.

[114] Law no. 7: 'On the condition and order of land taxation and rent in the YNAO', Law no. 47: 'On the implementation of changes and supplements to the law on the condition and order of land taxation and rent in the YNAO'.

its ownership being excluded from the Federal law on *obshchiny* altogether. Instead of issues concerning land, the law stipulates issues of self-government and some aspects of the economic activity of *obshchina* members. The earliest research on *obshchina* and other collectives for indigenous peoples after the end of the Soviet Union was regionally bound to the Republic of Sakha (Belianskaia 1995; Fondahl 1998, 2003; Sirina 1999), where the *obshchina* movement has the longest institutional tradition. Here the *obshchina* was one possible successor of the sovkhoz, and enterprises would function in similar ways be they a sovkhoz or an *obshchina* (Sirina 1999). Fondahl (2003: 28) sees the *obshchina* for the Evenki as a means of returning to their pre-Soviet notions of territoriality. She introduces *obshchiny* as the 'basic indigenous territorial unit during the pre-Soviet period' for all indigenous northerners (1997: 77) and does not mention that it is in fact a concept used by Russian nationalists. In the Chita region, neighbouring the Republic of Sakha, Fondahl (1997: 80, 1998: 120f) saw the Evenki using another concept to procure land rights, the territories of traditional nature use mentioned above. This is telling about the regional variety of land claims in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union.

Anderson (1998: 80–2) shows for the same ethnic group in Taimyr that they adopted a defensive rhetoric on land when confronted with the post-Soviet threat of privatisation, although their own notion of the land is one based on inclusive ways of knowing. Also for Taimyr, but among the Dolgan and Nganasan, Ziker (2002a, 2002b) shows that people practise 'social boundary defence' (Cashdan 1983; Casimir 1992a) on a broader scale and do not tend to claim 'family-clan holdings'. However, confirming the economic defendability model (Dyson-Hudson & Smith 1978), people in Taimyr try to defend exclusive territories in the vicinity of cities or industrial zones (Ziker 2002b: 130). A different picture is drawn by Gray's study on Chukotka (2001), where the problems are more about self-determination and coping with the remoteness of the place rather than land use. There, most members of the *obshchina* did not even realise that they were part of an *obshchina*.

This regional diversity within the framework of the *obshchina* concept is enhanced by the following analysis of the *obshchina* movement in Yamal. In Yamal an *obshchina* is a social unit to strengthen the collectivity of an indigenous community that becomes an administrative body in order to claim land against a previously, or potentially, more powerful actor. Some early examples of officially registered *obshchiny* in the oil extracting Purovskii *raion* point in this direction: They define themselves as an organ of self-administration (*organ mestnogo samoupravleniia*) and act as an institution in negotiations with the oil and gas extracting enterprises working

on their territories. In other cases, communities of indigenous people registered themselves as farming enterprises (*krest'ianskie fermerskie khoziaistva*, see section 7.2.5). Nonetheless, most of these are colloquially referred to as *obshchiny*. Later, after the federal law on *obshchiny* was passed, some communities with an economic orientation started to register as an *obshchina*. Although this law does not permit *obshchiny* to engage in commercial activities, it does allow the sale of the products of its members (law of 20 July 2000, no. 104-F3, Art. 17 § 3). As a social and non-commercial economic unit, *obshchiny* do not have land rights of any sort. The beginning of one charter states:

> The form of self-organisation, of the Indigenous Small Numbered Peoples of the North, who are living on the territory of the autonomous okrug, is the tribal clan community (*rodoplemennaia obshchina*). It is imagined as being a unit of common territorial self administration of the Indigenous Small Numbered Peoples of the North at their living places within the territory of a municipal formation (*munitsipal'noe obrazovanie*) (Art. 1.1, Charter of the *obshchina* 'Ety Iala', Tarko-Sale, revised version, December 1998).

The analysis of the *obshchina* movement in Yamal starts with the paradox that a legally registered territory is not a formal precondition for registering one's community with the administration. Nevertheless, most *obshchiny* define themselves not only as originally indigenous ('*rodoplemennaia*'), but also as territorial units. Compared with Sakha, Yamal stands at the beginning of the *obshchina* movement: in 2000, there were only five *obshchiny* registered in a proper way, whereas three years later, there were more than 20. I show in this section that there has been indeed a lively discussion and a movement concerning *obshchina* over the past decade, as the case studies below indicate. The registration of them is just their institutional birth, long predated by their practical existence, and even more by their evolution in people's minds.

7.2.2 How to Establish an obshchina

The initiative for establishing these communities in most cases comes from village- or town-based kinsmen not directly engaged in the so-called 'traditional indigenous lifestyle' (*traditsionnyi obraz zhizny*).[115] They have a better

[115] This became the main basis of constructing laws for the minorities of the Russian North, such as the *obshchina* laws of Sakha (Yakutia) (cf. Sirina 1999) or of the Russian Federation. However, the issue of tradition has become a matter of some controversy in the anthropology of the Russian Far North (Schindler 1997; Pika 1999; Gray 2003; Habeck 2005). This extends the framework of this chapter, but I have outlined the issue of 'tradition' for Yamal elsewhere (Stammler 2005).

knowledge of the institutional requirements, and in many cases the necessary contacts to key persons in the administration, which makes success more probable. The most common way of founding an *obshchina* seems to be that the village indigenous leaders collect signatures of agreement in the tundra and then establish the *obshchina* according to the recently passed laws. A charter for the *obshchina* has to be written, and then a chairman (Rus: *predsedatel'*) and an executive board (Rus: *pravlenie*) will be elected. After that, the *obshchina* can apply for registration at the administrations of the *raion* and, afterwards, of the YNAO.[116] As Fondahl pointed out (1998), it is very difficult for reindeer herders to engage in registration, paperwork and the writing up of charters.

However, indigenous leaders and decision-makers find themselves in the peculiar situation of having to bridge a gap between state-imposed policies and tundra-based nomadic life. Part of this is the gap between the defence-oriented approach to land and the inclusive communal knowledge-oriented one. In order to bridge this gap, initiators are most likely to have success with recognition at the regional (YNAO) or federal level, when they present the *obshchina* as being founded at the grassroots level. Such an image could be useful when trying to get financial support from the regional administration (here the YNAO), as is planned by Federal law (law of 20 July 2000, no. 104-F3 Art. 7). In this way, leaders of the *obshchina* are 'cultural brokers', who act as the intermediary, usually between native and Western cultures. As defined by Paine (1971a), they deliberately change the emphasis or content of a concept as they move back and forth between different groups of actors with different beliefs and ideologies.

Once it exists on paper, the *obshchina* can start applying for land rights. The formal procedure for this sounds simpler than it is: the decision is made by the land committee of the *raion* (district), on the basis of a written request of the *obshchina*. If the land is under the regional or federal administration (*zemli okruzhnogo ili federal'nogo znachenia*), the respective institutions have to be contacted. If the community leader has good contacts, he may get help from the local administration in doing so, or, at worst, he has to do it himself. Before that, the *obshchina* has to come to an agreement with the current land user (*zemlepol'zovatel'*), which normally is the sovkhoz or its successor. This is in many cases the most difficult part, as the case study below will show. Whether an *obshchina* succeeds in registering its land depends heavily on the goodwill of all actors. Since in the *obshchina* law, there is no regulation of land claims at all, there is no territory inscribed in

[116] I followed this procedure in one case on the Yamal Peninsula, and another one was reported to me in an interview in the Polar Ural Mountains by an *obshchina* director, March 2001. It also corresponds to Art. 8 of the Federal Law (*obshchina* 2000).

the charters or founding documents of *obshchiny*. Land is subject to separate negotiations and documentation.

According to the Okrug Land Committee,[117] the current practice for *obshchiny* is to receive land titles for 49 years on the basis of leasing (*arenda*), which in practice is free of charge. This is true for the *obshchiny* in the industrialised Purovskii *raion*, the first of which was established in 1996. The four *obshchiny* there have separate land titles which define their territory and the conditions of its use. If a so-called *obshchina* is officially registered as a farming enterprise (*krest'ianskoe fermerskoe khoziaistvo*, KfKh), it has to pay taxes after the first five years of its existence. However, this problem can be overcome by liquidating the KfKh after five years and then registering it as a new one. For an inheritable land tenure (*pozhiznennoe nasleduemoe vladenie*), the legal basis is rather weak, since there was only one decree by President Yeltsin in 1992 which envisaged that, but it was never implemented.[118] As I have shown above, the new laws allow only for leasing the land (*arenda*).

7.2.3 Case Study 1: The Pioneer

In the following, I present a case study that illustrates the incentives for setting up an *obshchina* and the possible problems in its development. From this it will become clear that an *obshchina* is mainly a village-based institution of public interest, despite many of its members living in the tundra. Even though this case study is not of a Nenets *obshchina* and is not on the Yamal Peninsula, I present it since it exemplifies the earliest stages of this movement and illustrates the multiple problems involved. On the Yamal Peninsula, there was no *obshchina* at all until the year 2000. In the YNAO as a whole, there was one community at that early time in 1992, referred to as *obshchina* 'Nadezhda', established by the well-known Nenets writer Anna Nerkagi. Since the publicity surrounding this makes her case special, I decided to focus instead on someone less well known and visited Piotr, a Voikary-Khanty living in the village of Muzhi, chairman and founder of *obshchina* 'Khon Rut'.

Muzhi is the administrative centre of the southwestern Shuryshkarskii *raion* in the YNAO, which shares its western borders high in the Polar Ural Mountains with the Komi Republic. This border is also the geographical

[117] Information on the role of laws and the land committee was gathered in interviews with the deputy-director of the latter, Salekhard, 4 July 2001, and an official TV interview with her, spring 2001.

[118] 22 April 1992: '*O neotlozhnykh merakh po zashchite mest prozhivanija i khoziajstvennoj deiatel'nosti malochislennykh narodov severa*' (on urgent measures for the protection of places for the indigenous peoples of the North) (Krjazhkov 1994: 199).

border between Europe and Asia. In mid-2000, the total registered nomadic population of the *raion* was roughly 2,000 people, with another 7,500 people in villages, of which approximately 3,000 live in Muzhi.[119] There is no industry at all in this region, and most people engage in fishing, hunting, reindeer herding and some attempts at agriculture. The history of Piotr's enterprise begins in the early 1990s, when the sovkhoz became weaker during the era of Perestroika. As a descendant of a rich reindeer herder, Piotr, who had worked in Muzhi for many years, decided to set up an independent community with his relatives in the forest and mountain tundra of the Polar Ural Mountains. Piotr's grandfather had preserved 'his land' even in communist times before World War II, and resisted becoming part of the kolkhoz for his whole life. In the 1930s, there existed documents about the territories and migration routes of his family, which were lost probably during World War II.

> In the early days, my grandfather even crossed the Ob' River in winter, and he migrated up to the Kara Sea in summer. Now, we go the same direction, but we don't cross the Ob' anymore and we stop in summer in the Komi Republic on the other side of the Ural Mountains
>
> It was mainly the youngsters who joined the kolkhoz, not the elders. In those days, the brigades did the spring and autumn migrations together with the elders and pensioners. Later, it became very strict. There were 70 personal reindeer allowed per household, not more, regardless of how many children you had. In principle, all these personal reindeer were always half-legal, on your own land, can you imagine? Of course people tried to hide their 'surplus animals', but this was very difficult, because many specialists came to the corral to count the herds (Piotr, 26 March 2001).

Piotr proudly tells about his grandfather's long migrations. The sovkhoz 'Muzhevskii' was established in 1939, or maybe earlier (Kopylova 1960: 40), one of the first in the YNAO. Piotr's relatives later became one brigade within it. He had not been born then or was too young to remember when exactly they became part of the sovkhoz. He himself grew up among these reindeer herders, and also partly in the small fishing villages of Vershina Voikary and Ust'-Voikary. From ancient times, the territories around the Voikar River were considered to be the land of the Ozelovy, his family, together with the Vozilovy, Leipozhikh, Aliaba, Nenzhilovy, Romanovy, Sevli and Rebas' family. This is the land to which Piotr feels most attached,

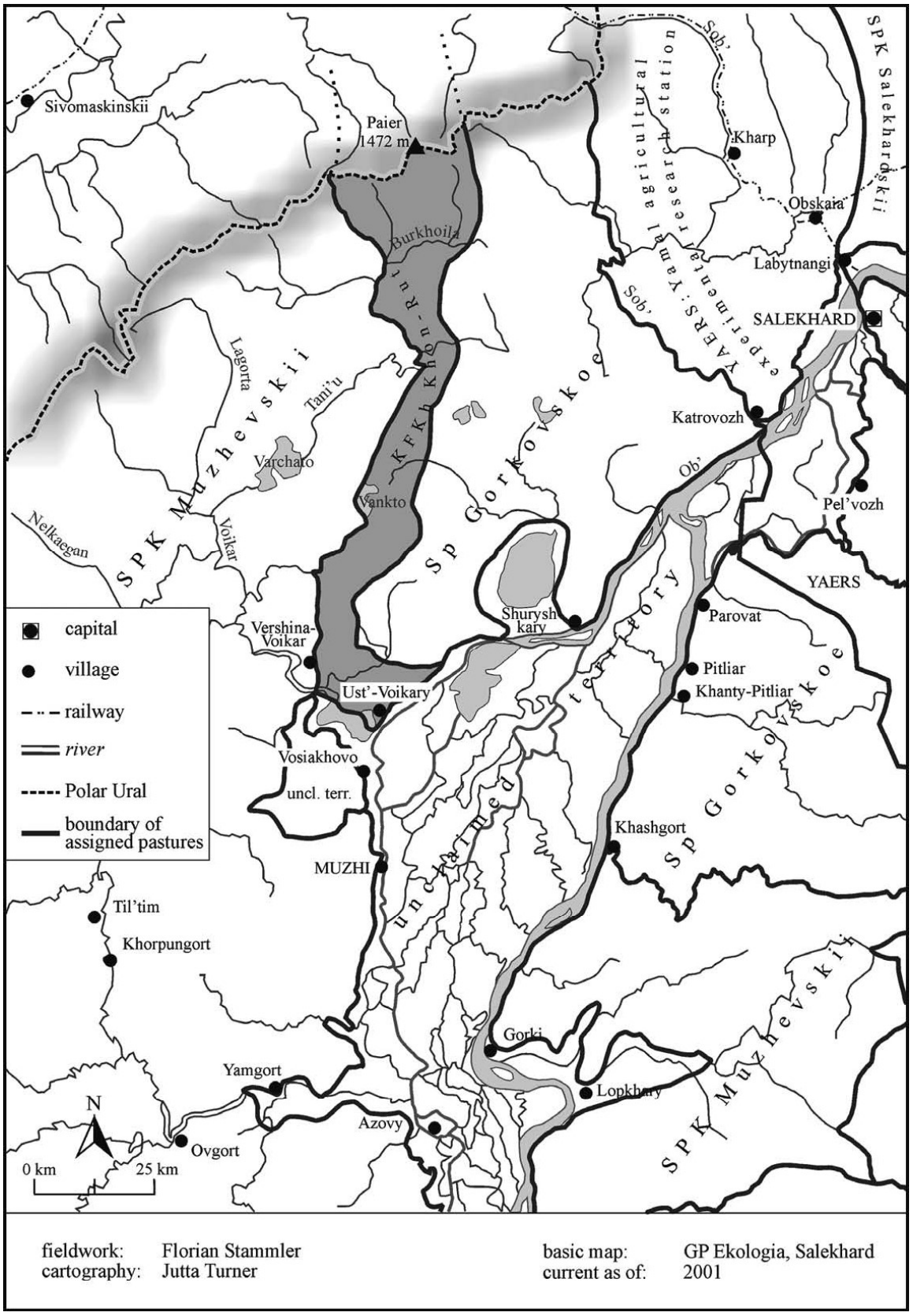
[119] Figures from the *raion* administration, August 2000. These data are not officially recognised.

it is where people respect him as an authority, building on the high reputation of his family in the pre-Soviet and early Soviet past.

In this context it is important to note that although the northern Khanty took over reindeer herding from the Nentsy centuries ago, the Khanty are still a fishing and hunting people who have a very strong notion of territoriality based on the river systems (Wiget & Balalaeva 1997; Jordan 2003; Stammler 2003: 38f).

Piotr moved from his homelands to the *raion* village of Muzhi to be educated, and then worked for many years in the sovkhoz and the village council. However, he was characterised as a person with very strong independent views, which sometimes could isolate him from the strong notion of collectivity in the team. In Muzhi he tended to 'swim against rather than float with the current'. On the other hand he always stayed in close contact with the relatives in his homeland, especially with his uncle and his mother, who migrated with the 3rd brigade. His main 'social capital' was thus situated outside the *raion* centre of Muzhi. On this basis he decided to build up this community, which he called *khon rut* (Tsar clan) and which he referred to as an *obshchina* from the outset. The name specifically referred to his rich grandfather, who was accused of being a *kulak* by the Soviets. In 1991, when Piotr gave this name, it could still generate bad feelings among his neighbours, who were part of the sovkhoz system. His vision was to institutionalise his network between village and tundra and thus ensure good conditions for contemporary nomadic life. Piotr had a strong view on the importance of the land issue in this respect: 'No *obshchina* can engage in any reindeer herding whatsoever, without additional land titles documented separately' (Piotr, 26.03.2001).

Later examples from *obshchiny* would prove him wrong. However, when he founded it in 1991, there was no law on *obshchiny*, and therefore he had to register as a KfKh according to the law on peasant farming (RSFSR Law of 22 November 1990, no. 348). At the very beginning of privatisation, this law envisioned private peasant farms, giving them the right to apply for a land title for free as private property or by leasing it (Art. 5). Piotr started to claim his territory and the reindeer of his relative's brigade back from the sovkhoz, which rejected his claim. In 1994, the sovkhoz lost their case in a court trial, and Piotr got temporary use rights over 248,930 hectares of pasture of the former sovkhoz reindeer 3rd brigade, rights which were later transferred to inheritable tenure (*pozhiznennoe naslеduemoe vladenie*). The land comprises a narrow corridor well suited to the migration of one reindeer brigade. On a map it looks as if it has been squeezed between more powerful players (see map 8).



Map 8. Land title for Piotr's *obshchina* and for neighbouring institutions.

This was considered a big success and unique for the region, because the procedure is very complicated. In order to run an independent private reindeer herding enterprise, Piotr had to write numerous requests and reach agreements with different administrative bodies. A peculiarity of the Polar Ural region is that migration routes here not only crossed *raion* borders, but also the border to the Komi Republic on the European side of the Ural Mountains (see map 8). Therefore, Piotr had to have his request signed by the leaders of all these administrative bodies. Copies of his letters were sent to the chief of the land committee (*zemel'nyi komitet*), who ratifies these documents after all actors involved have reached agreement. In the 1990s the legal basis was even less clear than it is today—the current leader of the Okrug Land Committee was amazed that Piotr had succeeded in getting land under such conditions.

Obtaining land rights was certainly a big step forward for Piotr, but he also needed reindeer to pasture on this land. The decision of the Court of First Instance was that the community would get 864 reindeer or the equivalent sum of money. But before this decision was implemented, the Russian rouble was considerably devalued, and by October 1994 the money had lost most of its value. Piotr could use only 40% of the sum, which he got not in money but in the form of fuel. Piotr says he had to run his enterprise using only the private reindeer of his relatives, and by 1998 this herd had grown to 1,100 head. However, the following winter of 1998–9 was very difficult because of heavy snow which prevented the reindeer from digging down to the lichen in the pastures. Therefore, in 1999 only around 300 head were left. In the same winter the sovkhoz also lost more than 50% of their reindeer, but as a big institution they were better able to cope with this disaster, says Piotr. Sovkhoz employees say that Piotr just mismanaged his herd. Today, the remaining herd, with three herders (*pastukhi*), has to join the sovkhoz brigade in summer because it has become too small to survive independently when the mosquitoes are at their worst.

In spite of all the difficulties, the sovkhoz remains the most powerful institution. Its director, Boris, says that without the sovkhoz reindeer herding would die out in this region, and most people confirm this view. Interestingly, in Soviet times the reindeer herders' integration in the sovkhoz economy was more complete here in comparison to the vast tundra ranges of the Yamal Peninsula.[120] Even Piotr now admits that the sovkhoz is needed in this region. It is a reliable institution and the meat it produces carries a quality certification, which is an asset at the meat sales. Piotr therefore uses sovkhoz resources for his relatives' private herds in summer. As a very early new-

[120] Sovkhozy in Yamal were established only in 1961, whereas in Muzhi it was before 1938 (Kopylova 1960: 40).

comer, Piotr fought against the powerful sovkhoz, and the people around him thought that he was isolating himself from the larger community of the collective. As a pioneer, he had to build up new structures, open up new channels to obtain the necessary resources, and invest in new social relations with the decision-makers for subsidies in the *raion* village and in Salekhard. The sovkhoz gets all this automatically.

Although sovkhozy and registered KfKh both have the legal right to get subsidies, the Department of Agriculture is inclined to use the sovkhoz structure to distribute the money rather than give it to the *raion* and *sel'sovet* administration. Therefore, Piotr complains that in 1999 his enterprise got additional support of only 5,000 roubles for its spring supply, whereas the sovkhoz herders got 8,000 roubles. Both *obshchiny* and sovkhozy can get additional state money by selling their produce to public institutions such as hospitals, prison camps and schools.[121] In order to reach this source of money, the new enterprise first had to produce and sell something. Piotr decided to establish a small processing plant (*tsekh*) in his home village. For this he was lucky enough to receive EU money amounting to €16,700 via a joint Russian–Belgian project of two NGOs called *beskonfliktnyi sever* (North Without Conflicts) and *horizon* (Dmitriev 2000: 145). Piotr tells that they advised him for taxation reasons to establish another separate KfKh based in the village of Ust' Voikary, where 60 people live. This KfKh would engage in fishing and processing, and pay separate taxes. At a meeting in the village, this second community decided to call themselves *obshchina* '*Ovs Muv Khant*' (land of the northern Khanty), which makes clear Piotr's close links with the land and the political intentions associated with it. The Russian NGO partner decided to push through the legal establishment of this community as an *obshchina*, which they succeeded in doing in November 1998, in the absence of a federal law on these communities, but with the above mentioned YNAO law 'On the regulation of land relations of living places of the indigenous peoples' (no. 39, 14 October 1997). As a member of the NGO told me, their expertise was vital because Piotr and his colleagues would not have been able to push this complicated registration through by themselves.[122] This confirms Fondahl's (1998: 103–10) finding that remoteness and lack of legal expertise inhibits the legal establishment of *obshchiny*.

The NGO helped to deliver the processing equipment to Piotr's village, including a walk-in deep-freezer, which means that meat storage is

[121] Interview with the vice-director of the Department of Agriculture, Salekhard, 28 June 2001, and with Ievgenii Iamru, Khanty member of the okrug parliament, citing legal document no. 415 'On the size of subsidies for the year 2001'.

[122] Personal communication Alexei Purtov, who passed away too young, and to whom I express my thanks for his support in the early stages of this research.

independent of weather conditions. Equipment for vacuum packaging, a diesel-electric station, and a smoking shed were set up on the site of an abandoned sovkhoz facility in the village of Ust' Voikary. Owing to a shortage of reindeer, and in order to meet the demands of *beskonfliktnyi sever* (the NGO), Piotr decided to use the equipment for processing fish, which in turn would employ women from the village. As fishing plays an important role in the economy, especially in this region, Piotr had always thought that his enterprise would focus on fish as well as reindeer.

However, here the success of the project ends. Everything connected to the production of food in Russia is governed by strict regulations and hygiene standards. Piotr and the NGO (essentially made up of lawyers and economists) encountered many problems in trying to meet these standards. They all apparently underestimated the importance of these conditions when setting up the equipment, and the sanitary inspectors (*sannadzor*) rejected the application for a licence to operate the *tsekh*. As a consequence, all the equipment still stands there, rusting in the small village, just as the old sovkhoz building had before it.

Eventually, Piotr found a partner in Muzhi for the fish enterprise. Vera, the director, had already set up a community called a 'non-commercial' partnership *obshchina* '*Ovs Muv Mir*'. She was engaged mainly in organising the production of fish and souvenirs by Khanty women from the villages and trying to find a market for these products. As Vera said: 'I enjoyed a lot working for the sovkhoz, but when they did not pay salaries anymore, I just had to do something on my own. Eventually, I had to feed my children.' (Vera 3 April 2001).

Vera is a well-educated and well-respected woman in Muzhi and many thought that this partnership with Piotr held much promise. She too got involved in the same NGO project. However, she always insisted on setting up the processing equipment in Muzhi, arguing that there was a better infrastructure and more customers there, whereas Piotr and the NGO thought it better to set it up closer to the production sites and to create employment there. Vera felt that her point of view on these issues was justified. She argues now that Piotr was too naive when setting up the plant. First, he thought that with foreign funding and good equipment, his project would be a key player in the economic and social life of the *raion*. Therefore, she believes, he behaved in too cavalier a manner with respect to the hygiene regulations. Perhaps the *sannadzor* deliberately interpreted their standards very strictly in order to demonstrate that Western funding does not mean that the standards imposed by the Russian authorities can be ignored.[123] A similar view was also reported by a Salekhard member of parliament from Piotr's

[123] Personal communications with Vera, 12 October 2000, 3 April 2001.

region. He accused Piotr of sitting in the village and not being willing to work, and as a result the rural population was unable to benefit from the foreign investment in his projects.[124] This opinion is also expressed by other villagers. As one sovkhoz reindeer herder put it:

> Piotr is guilty of all this. He was not capable of leading such an enterprise. Somehow now 'Khon Rut' works, but there are only two elders working as herders (*pastukhi*), who cannot work full time, and another *pastukh* does not accomplish anything. It hurts (*obidno*) that everything stands still. Eventually, no-one else will be able to attract international projects because this has been such a bad experience (Herder from a Muzhi brigade, 11 March 2002).

One of the main arguments is that Piotr did not behave in an honest, modest and cooperative way with the existing authorities when he set up his enterprises. His emphasis on his own kinship, restoring the glorious past of a 'tsarist clan' (*khon rut*), paired with the NGO partners from abroad, led him to underestimate the broader local 'embeddedness' of his enterprises, the importance of investing in social capital among the local decision-makers and the *raion* community.

Today the NGO support has come to an end, and Piotr is left on his own in Muzhi. He and his relatives are now economically marginalised. His day-to-day work consists of organising the basic supplies of his reindeer herders, which is especially important in spring, when the herders migrate northwards and do not have access to villages until November. Whereas the sovkhoz has its own trucks and *vezdekhody*, and centrally organises supplies of groceries and equipment for all the herders of its territory, Piotr has to find everything from various sources, which is always a big challenge. The sovkhoz was able to stabilise its reindeer herds and prevent a further decrease, and Piotr's former business partner Vera is touring Russia and Canada with her souvenir products and even has an Internet website promoting her business.[125]

This case study shows that Piotr and his *obshchina*, together with the NGO 'North Without Conflicts', did indeed generate conflict in Muzhi. On the eve of privatisation, he applied a defensive approach to territory and tried to carve a niche for himself and his relatives which was separate from the sovkhoz collective. Apparently, the way in which he did this made him some enemies in Muzhi and even in Salekhard, who afterwards claimed that they knew beforehand that his enterprise would not succeed. The NGO seems to have underestimated the economic and social power of the sovkhoz system

[124] Interview in Salekhard, 28 June 2001.
[125] http://www.ivr.ru/projects/v.phb?mode=P&id=43&lang=rus, accessed 6 January 2004.

and made the separation from the sovkhoz as a *conditio sine qua non* for support, probably dictated by the EU (Dmitriev 2000: 143).

However, despite all the problems and conflicts relating to this case, it was rather surprising to see that there was no split between sovkhoz and *obshchina* supporters in the social life of the village. Both Piotr and the sovkhoz director said that in their private lives there were no conflicts; they greet each other on the street and even sit down to drink coffee together. This is also true for Vera, Piotr's former business partner. After all, there is still a common notion of village solidarity in the *raion* centre, when representing themselves to incomers, such as an anthropologist. This case study also demonstrates how hard it is to take on a pioneering role in a region. The task is accompanied by many expected as well as unexpected difficulties, especially when institutions and structures that have worked exclusively with the sovkhoz for many decades have to get used to a new, albeit small scale, plural economy.

7.2.4 Case Study 2: The Multi-Talent

The second case study focuses on the opposite end of the YNAO, the north-east Yamal Peninsula, which is where the reindeer herders I introduced as following the 'localised arctic type' of reindeer herding live (chapter 3 and 6). This case is interesting because during my fieldwork I was able to track the very process of establishing the *obshchina*, as well as interviewing people before and after its establishment. The members of the *obshchina* mostly migrate in the tundra around the geologists' village of Sabetta on the east coast of Ob' Bay and further south towards Se-Iakha, the centre of the *sel'sovet*. Sabetta has a population of about 80 people, all non-native industrial workers, Se-Iakha has slightly more than 1,000 inhabitants, whereas in the tundra there are around 1,300 nomadic reindeer herders. The *sel'sovet* is governed by the well-known and highly respected Nenets elder Nikolai Lachevich Okotetto, who is the longest serving political administrator in Yamal, a 'veteran of work of the YNAO', and an 'honorary inhabitant' (*pochetnyi zhitel'*) of the YNAO. He enjoys a great reputation at all political levels of leadership. The sovkhoz there has been in a far weaker position than that at Muzhi or Yar-Sale, since in the northern Yamal tundra many of the private herds graze independently of the sovkhoz. As of 1 June 2001, there were only 60 people living in the tundra who were on the payrolls of the sovkhoz involved reindeer herding.

At the beginning of the 1990s the sovkhoz was no longer able to provide any career prospects for their well-qualified Nenets staff, who had worked as *zootekhniki* for many years. Therefore, when one of them was not appointed as the sovkhoz director, he decided to resign from the sovkhoz and

start an independent business. However, he did not go down the non-commercial *obshchina* route but instead started a commercial enterprise, which today is a limited liability company (Rus: TOO) and one of the major players in the *panty* business. This enterprise, which is called 'Sokh Yamal', does not own many reindeer and so for 10 years of successful existence it could get by without having any land title. 'Sokh' buys approximately 5,000 reindeer from private herders for commercial slaughtering each year, and in this way they 'outsource' the land rights problem. The second players in the private reindeer market are two sons of Nikolai Lachevich, Mikhail and Igor, who established a smaller enterprise with their relatives in the tundra north of Sabetta. Mikhail said they had land titles for this area, but unlike the 'Khon Rut', there is no record of this lodged with the land committee in Salekhard. The statistics committee of the Yar-Sale *raion* centre told me that this second enterprise, 'Nesei', worked in a semi-legal manner. Their production is not listed in any records, although by 2003 they were the largest producer in the *sel'sovet*, with approximately 6,000 animals slaughtered each year and producing 30 tonnes of antlers (see chapter 8).

In summer 2000, when I started fieldwork, Nikolai Lachevich already knew that a law on *obshchiny* was in preparation, and he told me what he envisioned for such a community in North Yamal.[126] He was convinced that in the north there was going to be competition for land: 'It is better that we grab the land (*prikhvatit' zemliu*) now, before others do it.' By 'others', he meant the gas and oil companies. This is still the main incentive for establishing *obshchiny* in the north, and Nikolai and his relatives want to do this before actual gas production begins. Three years on, his son also sees defence of Nenets land against industrial intruders as the main incentive behind the establishment of the *obshchina*. As he put it:

> We established the *obshchina* in order to increase our feeling of being masters of our land (*khoziaina svoiei zemli*), which is characteristic of the reindeer herders, fishermen and hunters, who live and work in the tundra (Mikhail Nikolaevich, 8 October 2003).[127]

Earlier, in 2000, his father Nikolai told me that he aimed to establish one *obshchina* for each kin group (Rus: *rod*, Nen: *erkar*) in northern Yamal. To my question about people living on different territories as a result of Soviet reorganisations of sovkhoz brigade migration routes, he answered:

> Before the big reindeer herding, we were all hunters up here. For this we had our established hunting territories, and the reindeer also were on these territories. That's why we do not migrate so much up here. These things have not changed so much. Sometimes one might come

[126] Personal communications, 3 and 11 September 2000.
[127] Available at: http://www.ilebts.narod.ru/2_goda.htm, accessed 7 January 2004.

> to the territory of another, but this we will sort out ourselves (Nikolai Lachevich, 3 September 2000).

This very much confirms my case study of the hunting past and territorial behaviour in North Yamal and its persistence (see the previous chapter). However, he admits that this needs some adjustment to present conditions, and therefore considers establishing the *obshchiny* on the basis of the number of people in each kin group. He also realises that such a decision might not be welcomed by richer reindeer herders, since their territories would not be sufficient for their big herds. They would have to reduce their herds by slaughtering: 'If four people have over 1,500 reindeer each and therefore have a huge territory, this also would not be right, would it?' According to Nikolai Lachevich, the *obshchiny* would first be established in the tundra, on an informal, small scale. Overarching these would be a kind of 'council of *obshchiny*', who would elect a chairman. In this way the '*obshchina* council' would be able to replace the sovkhoz completely, eventually taking over the administration of the tundra, but leaving the village council responsible for village administration. For the paperwork, Nikolai Lachevich was confident of being able to rely on his relatives and many influential friends in the okrug capital of Salekhard.

Such were the plans of the great old man in Yamal. Then I went out to the tundra and asked herders, many of whom were Nikolai Lachevich's reindeer herding relatives, about these ideas. There the message was very clear: the majority (19) of my interview partners believed the land to be communal, or state property (*zemlia obshchaia*, *gosudarstvennaia*). Another three thought it belonged to the sovkhoz, and two claimed that 'the land is ours' (*zemlia nasha*). Only one respondent could imagine private lands held by individuals in the tundra. Nikolai Lachevich is principally of the same opinion, but he explained to me:

> This is our land, and this land is common, state land. Therefore we should never allow it to belong to an individual. But now, after the Soviet Union, these bandits (*bandity*) have come and simply buy off our land. This of course we will not permit (Nikolai Lachevich 13.09.2000).

This is classical social boundary defence as referred to by Cashdan (1983) and Casimir (1992a). It sheds light on the difference between an open access regime and a commons, where you have to belong to the group of *tundroviki* to use the land. In the tundra, however, most respondents did not really differentiate between state land, common land, communal land, 'our land' or sovkhoz land. For them these are all one category. Nikolai's statement also shows that in principle the concepts do not differ much between village and tundra inhabitants. In fact, tundra people adopt the perceptions of property in

land held by their village relatives. The more defensive approach to territoriality is thus a concept imposed externally on the Yamal-Nentsy. They will try to comply with it in order to survive, without abandoning their own flexible notion of territoriality, just as they complied with the sovkhoz reorganisation of land without forgetting their ancient hunting past.

Potential *obshchiny* members in the tundra were very sceptical about the new institution. During my fieldwork in October and November 2000, I asked seven households in the Sabetta tundra[128] for their views on this issue. In every case but one they had never even heard about such plans, nor did they have any idea what an *obshchina* was. However, they were very clear about the possible implications: they did not think it would be a good idea to divide up the land between different kin groups; they all thought that the tundra is common land; and six of the seven households thought that the sovkhoz is still needed and reliable.

> The land is common. We shall not allow people to separate it, because lichens are not everywhere, and also there might be icing over. Let us *tundroviki* do this, everyone knows where he lives. No-one has the right to chase somebody else away. Our elders have agreed who shall migrate where, and we do the same (Aleksandr Okotetto, November 2000).

However, two of the households also declared that outsiders such as Russians and other non-reindeer herders should be kept out of their territories. Since the gas company in this region is not far away (in the village of Sabetta) and the tundra here is dotted with drilling holes, this view carries some legitimacy.

The scepticism towards *obshchina* ideas shows the gap between the common, inclusive way of relating to the tundra and the defensive, exclusive one imposed from outside. Cultural brokers were needed to mediate between the two. Two months later, in winter, Nikolai Lachevich and his son Mikhail sent out 'their' people from Se-Iakha on snowmobiles to do some 'agitation', as it was called in Soviet times, for the *obshchina* idea. What they explained to herders was that they were in danger of losing their land to outsiders if they did not protect it by joining the *obshchina*. They promised that determining the actual internal regime of land use would be left in the hands of the herders, and that there would not be any 'recollectivisation' of reindeer. They succeeded in convincing three reindeer herders to become founding members of the *obshchina*, alongside two sons of Nikolai Lachevich, and on 25 December 2000 they signed a founding contract (*uchreditel'nyi dogovor*). Now they had to sign up more members in order to make the *obshchina* a

[128] From the Okotetto, Vanuito and Yaungad kingroups.

powerful actor able to compete with local institutions such as the sovkhoz and the gas company in Sabetta.

Throughout most of 2001, Mikhail worked on the charter (*ustav*) of the *obshchina*, familiarising himself with the details and complexity of the existing laws. He knew that he could not state explicitly which territories the *obshchina* had and what kind of title they would have, but he still wanted to include 'land' in this charter, even though it is not part of the *obshchina* law. Several times we sat together over drafts and laws and considered how certain paragraphs could be interpreted. I also accompanied him to the Salekhard administration to obtain charters of existing *obshchiny* in the oil extracting territories of the Purovskii *raion*. After my departure Mikhail went to Moscow to receive legal training on *obshchina* and 'territories for traditional nature use',[129] the two federal laws that had been passed since 2000 by the 'Learning Centre of the Indigenous People (RITC)'. The charter was finally certified on 8 October 2001 by the 'general assembly' (*obshchee sobranie*) of all *obshchina* members. The charter states on land (Art. 4):

> The *obshchina* is founded on the basis of the common interests of the indigenous inhabitants for the joint tenure (*vladenie*) and use of the lands for traditional nature use … .

Article 5 states that the land can be given to the *obshchina* and its members as a property right (*na osnove sobstvennosti*). These territories 'form the basis of the life and activity of the Nentsy'.

The assembly confirmed the name 'Ilebts' for the *obshchina*, which translates as 'the basis of one's life'. The impressive number of more than 90 households, with 273 members in the *obshchina*, shows that Mikhail and his father succeeded in convincing the herders of the necessity of protecting their land. They even let the reindeer herders draw their migration territories on maps. On this occasion, Mikhail remembers that they were really sceptical about this, but 'I told them we just have to do that for our paperwork, and there will not be any interference in their affairs with the pastures. They all do that according to our customs (*obychai*).'

This is an example of how a native cultural broker can adapt a concept to fit the needs of his own community. Finally, in October 2001, the *obshchina* was registered as a non-commercial enterprise at the *raion* level, was given an account at the taxation office, and became a 'juridical person' (*iuridicheskoe litso*). As such, it is eligible for subsidies by the okrug, which decided to pay money to the *obshchiny* not only for meat production but also as a kind of 'seed money' for every living reindeer. Suddenly, the *obshchina*

[129] 'Traditional nature use' (*traditsionnoe prirodopol'zovanie*) is defined by Russian legislation as the way in which indigenous herders, hunters and fishermen use their northern lands for their own native economies.

had to have its own reindeer, although the members would not agree in any way to transfer their herds to collective ownership. This delicate question was again able to be sorted out because Mikhail and his father had good contacts with the speaker of the YNAO Parliament, Sergei Nikolaevich Khariutschi, also the president of the All-Russian Association of Indigenous People (RAIPON), as well as of the YNAO Department of Agriculture.

> During a session, I was suddenly called out [by a government official] and asked: 'Mikhail, hurry up and tell us how many reindeer you have in your *obshchina*!' I said, 'Well, I don't know exactly, but I will give you the figure later.' 'No', he said, 'we need that now, as you get money for every reindeer you have.' So I said I had slightly more than 30,000, which is what I thought I had. Later I found out that our members have even more than this. I wrote down 36,621, here you see. But it is even more. You know as well as I do that reindeer herders don't divulge their full head counts (Mikhail Nikolaevich, 20 February 2002).

Here we see how the *obshchina* suddenly became a major owner of reindeer for the sake of subsidies. This is more reindeer than any sovkhoz owns in the entire YNAO. But the reindeer remain the personal property of the household heads. It is not clear yet how they will figure in the yearly reindeer herding report, and Mikhail and his friends and relatives do not care about this. In 2004, the okrug government changed its policy and started paying subsidies to *obshchiny* for slaughtered reindeer, i.e. per unit of produced meat, and not for live animals. This reflects the positive development of *obshchiny*, which are now viewed as stable economic actors that no longer need 'start-up' seed money.

In June 2001, half a year after the *obshchina* was initiated, I was able to go back to the very same herders in the tundra and ask them their views on the *obshchina*. Their scepticism had dissipated almost completely, and they echoed almost exactly what Nikolai Lachevich and his activists had convinced them to think: they have to protect their land from destruction by industrial development, and if the gas company wants to drive its trucks and tanks through the tundra, then it should have to pay for this privilege. This shows how the work of the cultural brokers succeeded in adding a layer of defensive thought to the inclusive territorial behaviour of the herders. Those reindeer herders who are on good terms with the *sel'sovet* leader support this development, since they respect Nikolai Lachevich as an authority.

> We don't know all these things, but of course we became members when Nikolai Lachevich said we should protect our land. We always support his plans, because he knows all these village affairs, he is our man in the village (Natasha Khaverevna, 12 June 2001).

However, in the tundra there are still some issues awaiting clarification. For example, what happens with sovkhoz-employed reindeer herders, who graze their reindeer with those of *obshchina* members? Such is the case of Oleg Irimboevich Vanuito, who used to work in 1st brigade of the sovkhoz Yamal'skii. He says he was never asked to become a member of the *obshchina*, but now he has left the brigade in order to take care of his own herd, which grazes with that of an *obshchina* member. In March 2002 he was not sure himself whether he was a member of the *obshchina* or not. He still doubts whether this compartmentalisation of territory is the right way to go. He is afraid that the *obshchina* could monopolise territory for its own use, pushing out others. If the territorial unity of the *sel'sovet* could be preserved, it would fit his needs more closely.[130] This suggests that it was only those herders who had been personally convinced by leading figures of the *obshchina* who agreed to this more defensive approach to territory.

Today the *obshchina* is a well-established economic and political actor on the Yamal Peninsula. It has 'almost official' relations with the Sabetta administration with regard to the trade in reindeer meat, to the renting of houses during the reindeer slaughter in November, the provision of rooms and services for the slaughtering complex, and the supply of electricity for the deep freezers needed for storing the meat.[131] Mikhail Nikolaevich Okotetto uses his contacts in Salekhard to disseminate this information positively to the broader public. As a cultural broker, he spreads the news of how the Nentsy preserved their mastership of the land, how successful they are economically, and how they can organise their relationships with the industrial enterprises. The *obshchina* now has its own website with a 'news' section, it shows films on Nenets lifestyle, it explores alternative ways of transporting goods and people in the tundra, and it is involved in joint research projects focusing on the needs of the community. For its second birthday, Aleksandr Ievai, the okrug member of parliament and president of the Indigenous Peoples Association 'Yamal Potomkam', congratulated the *obshchina* as 'one of the most successful in the okrug'. Meanwhile, this example has encouraged people in other villages to follow a similar path, and at the beginning of 2004 there were approximately 20 *obshchiny* in Yamal.[132]

[130] Personal communication, 12 March 2002.
[131] Telephone communication with the chairman of Sabetta, 31 December 2003.
[132] See http://www.ilebts.narod.ru/2_goda.htm, http://www.ilebts.narod.ru/edey_il.htm, accessed 5 January 2004.

7.2.5 Analysis: Traits of the obshchina *Movement*

There are several points that can be drawn from these two case studies:

1. It is paradoxical that, although by law *obshchiny* are not about land rights but about indigenous self-administration and non-commercial 'traditional lifestyle', they have become the main instrument for pursuing defensive territorial behaviour. Piotr's example, one of the first *obshchiny* in the YNAO, shows this as do the several *obshchiny* founded in the mid-1990s in the Purovskii *raion*, which were 'established on the initiative of the *raion* administration against the oil workers on territories without previous masters',[133] as well as Nikolai Lachevich's and Mikhail Nikolaevich's *obshchina* Ilebts.

   The three factors of land rights, 'traditional lifestyle', and native self-determination are so closely interrelated that their separation into laws on *obshchina* (20 July 2000, no. 104-FZ), on 'territories of traditional nature use' (TTP, 7 May 2001, no. 49-FZ), and on 'guarantees for the indigenous people' (30 April 1999, no. 82-FZ) is artificial. This shows that laws are created according to a Russian logic and not to an indigenous logic. It is also disputable whether the non-commercial nature of these communities is something to be prescribed by law. Why should the indigenous people have no rights to procure material benefits from their engagement with the land? In fact, the example of the *obshchina* Nadezhda of Anna Nerkagi shows that indigenous communities cannot be restricted by different laws. Nadezhda, still registered as a KfKh but referred to as an *obshchina*, has a similar contract with the YNAO for the production of reindeer meat as the sovkhozy. For example, in 2000 the okrug administration planned to buy 20 tonnes of reindeer meat from Nadezhda.[134] This makes Nadezhda an economic actor of equal standing. The same could happen soon for the *obshchina* Ilebts, if the executive board makes a decision not to sell all the meat to private enterprises.

   At the same time, administratively Nerkagi runs the village Laborovaia and the neighbouring territories independently. This makes Nadezhda a unit of native self-determination, which can even replace a *sel'sovet*. Sirina (1999: 18) suggested that this 'melting together' of *obshchiny* with the local administrations is likely to happen in the future. In Yamal, a father and a son, Nikolai Lachevich

[133] This is the interpretation of the leader of a sovkhoz neighbouring one of these *obshchiny*; personal communication, 13 March 2002.
[134] Information from Evgenii Yamru, interview 21 August 2000, Salekhard.

and Mikhail Nikolaevich, represent this melting together, since the father is the head of the *sel'sovet* and the son the head of the *obshchina* Ilebts. Thus the character of an *obshchina* today is not simply territorial or economic or administrative; rather, it is a holistic way of organising indigenous communities democratically, by electing leaders and executive boards to make decisions for the whole collective, even though the electorate may opt for the continuation of former leadership patterns.

2. The differences between the two case studies highlight the importance of the *obshchina* being locally and regionally embedded in order to be successful. The social capital of Nikolai and Mikhail Okotetto was crucial at the level of the *raion* as well as the okrug. The high respect, authority and popularity that they commanded among political actors were important assets when competing with the sovkhoz and the gas enterprise. They also understood that they could reach their goals best by strategic alliances with powerful actors. They accumulated the necessary social capital during the decades of father Okotetto's experience as a local political leader. By contrast, the absence of this social capital was Piotr's fate. By relying too much on the alliance with an external NGO, he thought he could push his case through despite conflicts at the local level. This strategy proved to be unsustainable when his ally had to withdraw. Suddenly, Piotr was left without partners and had to face his opponents and competitors alone, with no experience of the regional political arena. He was the descendant of a reindeer herder who happened to have worked in the regional centre for many years and therefore had become familiar with the political discourse of the late 1980s.

A comparison of the two names of the *obshchiny* reveals this tendency. To call an *obshchina* 'the tsar's clan' (*khon rut*) in 1991 was hardly a very diplomatic move on the eve of privatisation, since local communities would perceive this as an arrogant selecting out of one group above the rest. The *obshchina* Ilebts, meaning something like 'the basis of life' suggests a more inclusive notion of uniting people who share the same resources—reindeer and land.

Bourdieu (1986: 248) defines social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition'. It is in these resources and networks that we see the difference between Piotr and Mikhail. Thus, social capital and a sense of diplomacy are important requirements for a successful *obshchina* in Yamal.

3. Piotr's case reveals the difficulties of the pioneer, who established his *obshchina* in the absence of any existing models or experiences. Piotr had to work it all out for himself, had to set the ground for his community, whereas Mikhail could work with a number of pre-existing laws and could refer to the charters and experiences of already existing *obshchiny*. Based on these experiences, the task of establishing a charter and embarking on the process of official registration was manageable and achievable for Mikhail and his legal and political advisors.
4. *Obshchina* is an imported and not an *emic* concept in Yamal. Establishing them must not be interpreted as a defensive approach to territories in Nenets society. It is a manifestation of their reaction to external intruders, in which they defend their territory socially, having accepted the *obshchina* idea from cultural brokers. Leaders such as Nikolai Lachevich and Mikhail are the mediators with this external world. They successfully fulfilled the role of cultural brokers and they reinterpreted the defence-oriented territorial behaviour in a way that reindeer herders with their explicitly inclusive approach could relate to. They made them understand that territorial defence is something to practice vis-à-vis outsiders such as gas enterprises, but which does not imply any physical compartmentalisation of the tundra. The tundra people trust that these brokers will manage the lands for them. Therefore it does not prove that the inclusive notion of territoriality in the tundra is diminishing just because some of the herders understood that they have to defend themselves against the industry. This reveals a general Nenets pattern of how to react to external forces on the lichen ranges without abandoning their own models. They accept the challenge, understand the requirements at a particular time, and respond to them flexibly by adapting the language of the surroundings. The defensive behaviour is an additional layer on top of the continuing inclusive approach of relating to the tundra (chapter 6).

Having examined these cases and the conditions under which the *obshchiny* developed, let us return to where we left off with the reading of the defensive letter by the private herder. There he seemed to advocate an exclusive, defensive approach to territory. We can now see that this relates to the strategy of 'social boundary defence' (Casimir 1992a) of the northern Yamal reindeer herders. This does not mean that they lose their inclusive flexible notion of territoriality among themselves; on the contrary, they want to prevent an 'open access grazing regime' where everybody can grab as many resources as he can without control. It shows that the northern Yamal herders

have a distinct sense of belonging together and sharing their collective memories of their hunting past in the northern Yamal Peninsula, as I have shown in the previous chapter. It is this strong sense of a broad common mastership of the land that nurtures the scepticism of many reindeer herders to break up into smaller groups of *obshchiny*. They can only be convinced by cultural brokers to do so by the threat of losing land rights to the incoming industry.

Of the 26 herders I interviewed in the YNAO, 18 found the notion of chasing someone away from a territory to be incomprehensible owing to the absence of the notion of 'trespass', whereas six herders thought such action might be justified. This explains the early scepticism of many to the *obshchina* movement, before they were convinced by villagers, as the following two statements show:

> 'Yes, I heard about *obshchiny*, they want to divide up the land, and this is bad for all of us' (Leonid).
>
> 'I don't know what an *obshchina* means, but if Nikolai Lachevich wants to set one up, this means that only his friends and relatives come in. That's why *obshchiny* are bad' (Nikolai).

The strong notion of collective entitlement to land does not mean that there is no clear sense of belonging among individual herders. Whereas five did not think of having a particular place to which they belonged, 19 had a clear notion of this. This shows that property rights to use the land must be seen as something different to one's sense of belonging not only in the past, as shown in the previous chapter, but also in the present.

Without exception, all reindeer herders categorically rejected pooling any of their reindeer property together or transferring them to an *obshchina*. In this and many other respects, *obshchiny* in Yamal are very different to those in the Sakha Republic described by Ventsel (2004: chapter 3.4).

These findings have further implications for our understanding of the *obshchina* movement throughout the Russian North. The main characteristics of *obshchiny* are negotiated mainly at the regional level, and the federal laws are just one common guideline. On the political level, I argue that the *obshchina* is an external idea for reorganising the livelihoods of indigenous people just like the sovkhoz and the peasant farming enterprises have done. It is left to the local *intelligenciia* to imbue this idea with life and make it fit the conditions of each region. In none of the cases I studied did the actual land users in the tundra push forward the idea of the *obshchina*.

Relating this case to studies of *obshchina* elsewhere, we see that the incentive for establishing it, its size and its main activities can be very different. It can become a major principle of sovkhoz reorganisation, as happened in Sakha (Sirina 1999); it can be used as a force against oil and gas

extraction, as happened partly in Yamal; it can be used to practise social boundary defence against incoming competitors for the same resource, for example the hunters in Taimyr (Ziker 2002a, 2002b). Anderson (1998), Fondahl (1998) and Ziker (2002a) have all emphasised the importance of access to population centres for the establishment of *obshchiny* in different ways. Whereas Ziker's material in Taimyr suggests that geographical proximity to centres makes establishing family/clan holdings more likely because of the economic value of the land, Fondahl (1998: 104–7) argues that distance increases the costs of establishing an *obshchina* in the centres, since information gets to remote places more slowly and transport is difficult. However, Anderson (1998: 83) stresses that 'knowing how to access the market place' is more important than physical distance.

The examples from Yamal show that social capital is a decisive factor, which can even outweigh the disadvantage of distance. I argue that social capital is the means of accessing market-based knowledge. Mikhail and Nikolai Lachevich know whom to ask for information and assistance, and therefore it does not matter that their village is 500 km away from Salekhard or the *raion* centre of Yar-Sale. Their knowledge of the best and cheapest forms of transport helps them to overcome the distance, which, unlike the situation in Fondahl's case (1998), then becomes less of an obstacle.

The development of the *obshchina* movement in Yamal between the time when Piotr and Mikhail each started out shows that the *obshchina* has indeed become the dominant unit of organisation for indigenous communities. Although it is legally not a territorial organisation, an *obshchina* is seen by most of the indigenous advocates and their partners as the means to acquiring rights to land. The other legal option of registering 'territories of traditional nature use' has not become prominent. This territorial orientation of the *obshchina* does not correspond to the indigenous models of territoriality described in the last chapter. If one would argue, as Fondahl does (1999: 58), that in pre-Soviet times 'most of the northern peoples of Russia organised their territoriality in terms of such *obshchinas*' this is a misinterpretation, at least for the Nentsy. Pre-Soviet associations of land users were of a very flexible nature and not bound to a territory, such as the Nenets *parma* described above and by Brodnev (1950), Terletski (1934) and Podkorytov (1995). They were social units established for the pooling of a labour force, not for defending territories. Even the old Russian *obshchiny* were more about social organisation than about territory (Lourie 1999). Fondahl (1999: 59) also realises this lack of flexibility and therefore thinks that the 'return to indigenous land tenure schemes is incomplete'. I argue that the *obshchina* has evolved out of a concept external to the indigenous people. It is more an invented reconstruction than a revival of pre-existing forms. Therefore,

Fondahl's statement has to be restricted to less migratory taiga hunters, like the Evenki around Baikal, or the Khanty for whom Jordan (2003: 251, see map) provided a convincing account of their community territories linked to bounded water bodies. As far as nomadic indigenous communities in the far north are concerned, if we talk of the *obshchina* as a pre-Soviet concept, we should perceive it more as a social than a territorial unit, and here lies the difference to the present-day approach. I argue that the territoriality of the *obshchina* is externally imposed for political reasons, and I have shown that reindeer herders buy into this as a defensive concept only when exposed to outside pressures, as in Mikhail's case as a defence against encroachments by the gas companies and in Piotr's case as a defence against the sovkhoz.

7.3 Conclusion

The different ways of mapping the land, introduced at the beginning of the previous chapter, collide when it comes to the concept of territoriality in contemporary Yamal. On one side, there are the views of tundra people who see their land as consisting of communal reindeer pastures, hunting and fishing grounds, migration routes and sacred places—what I call the 'nomadic approach'. On another side, there are the views of the industrial incomers who see the land in terms of its sub-surface wealth—the 'extractive approach'. And on another side still, there are the views of the village administrators who see the land as consisting of settlements, district borders, carrying capacities and population figures—the 'administrative approach'.

I have shown in the previous chapter that the *emic* concept of Nenets territoriality is neither an exclusive/defensive one nor one of 'open access'. They have a strong notion of '*nasha zemlia*' and even more of '*nasha iskonnaia zemlia*', which is why I suggest a broader definition of territoriality that also encompasses non-defensive conceptions of the land. However, herders perceive that the tundra is becoming increasingly overcrowded and that pastures are now a scarce resource. Yet I have shown that the actual degradation might well be exaggerated by biologists and politicians working with a questionable definition of carrying capacity. Most reindeer herders, in contrast to politicians, recommend a reduction in the size of the sovkhoz herds rather than the private herds. The dominant administrative approach to the tundra, which sees it in terms of plots of biomass production and quantitative carrying-capacity thresholds, imposes a territorial concept on reindeer herding that contradicts the herders' nomadic approach. Rather than abandoning their inclusive notion of territoriality, they try to push forward a kind of very broad 'social boundary defence' (Cashdan 1983), without wanting to find themselves in 'cages' of bounded territories.

I argue that the *obshchina* movement in Yamal has evolved from the collision of these different cognitive maps of the tundra and the approaches to territory that have resulted from them. In order to defend their inclusive concepts of the land, indigenous local activists act as cultural brokers and adopt the defensive language of the other interest groups, a strategy that Paine (1992) saw as most pragmatic for the promotion of Saami interests in Norway. Therefore, once reindeer herders have been convinced by the notion, they accept the *obshchina* as a unit of organisation, even though this model which developed among Russian peasants is not easily compatible with their own flexible form of territoriality. It is likely that they keep their own inclusive concept under the cover of the *obshchina*, just as they retained it under the cover of the sovkhoz or a 'peasant farming enterprise' (KfKh). Promoters of the *obshchina* idea in Yamal always stress that flexibility will be retained by giving the herders the possibility of continuing their pasture rotation and exchange according to the *zakon tundry*. Thus, *obshchina* for the Yamal Nentsy is essentially another way of dealing with claims and expectations that arise from forces external to their own communities.

The analyses in this and the previous chapter have shown that a 'defensive exclusive approach' and a 'communal inclusive approach' as principles of land use in the tundra do not have to be mutually exclusive, as long as they exist at different vertical levels. The defensive approach rests on the political and industrial surface, whereas the inclusive one is embedded in the tundra. In fact, for the Nentsy it is vitally important that they adopt the defensive approach on the political surface otherwise they risk being 'eaten up' by the appropriative nature of the industrial incomers. Neither approach can be generally proven to be right or wrong; rather, they explain territorial behaviour at different organisational levels within society, just as the different actors have their own cognitive maps when flying over the tundra.

Chapter 8
The Consolidation Process within the Reindeer Market

8.1 Introduction

The first decade in the post-Soviet Russian economy has witnessed a number of market experiments. At the Russian Federal level, these were strongly influenced by the then leading personnel in charge of economic and political reforms. Whereas the Yeltsin era saw a wave of shock privatisations and 'big bang policies' (Blanchard 1998: 127), this was also a time of much regional economic autonomy. Therefore, in the YNAO a wide variety of companies and enterprises started to engage in business, not all of which adhered seriously to the legislation. However, political stability in the YNAO has led to economic consolidation, which has had significant consequences for the reindeer-herding economy. As in other chapters, my approach to the market economy in Yamal is a qualified world systems perspective: we cannot understand its mechanism in this particular region and its significance for reindeer herders, nor can we relate it to broader theoretical concepts, if we do not consider the importance of the 'outside world' (Khazanov 1994) in shaping the current situation of the reindeer economy. Wallerstein (1989) has described the capitalist world economy as ever more expanding in formerly non-integrated regions. With the oil and gas boom, Siberia has become an example of a 'periphery' which is exploited to supply raw materials for the 'Semi-Periphery and the Core' (Wallerstein 1983: 93). In my analysis of the reindeer economy in Yamal, I explore how the global and the local, the community and the market sphere of the economy, meet (Gudeman 1998, 2001). Das (2000) and others have challenged the assumption that globalisation urges populations to apply standardised ways of economic behaviour all over the world while ironing out local diversity. Anthropologists working at the local level are perhaps in the best position to explore whether the global and the local sphere can be linked for the benefit of both.

In Yamal, I analyse the current economy of reindeer herding in terms of the relationships that have developed between reindeer herders, private and state-controlled enterprises, the okrug administration and the industrial

enterprises. After introducing the basic theoretical ideas underpinning this chapter, I analyse the influence of the current political framework on reindeer markets in the YNAO. I also provide an ethnography of the major actors: the state-controlled farms, the gas companies, and the new vertically integrated reindeer enterprises. The last are the main ones engaging in the developing market of velvet reindeer antlers as a global commodity. My ethnography of this business illustrates the dynamics of the reindeer market and the linkages between different spheres of exchange.

Unlike most of the East European states after the end of Soviet control, the YNAO government did not advocate the dominant concept of 'shock therapy' in economic reforms. Therefore, it was the redistributive aspect of subsidies that remained important in the regional economy rather than the consequences of their withdrawal as in other regions. This smoother approach to reform by maintaining some subsidies has been called 'gradualism' in opposition to 'big bang policies' in privatisation (Blanchard 1998: 127). However, the term 'gradualism' implies the idea of a transition from state-controlled to a private market economy as the end product, a line of argumentation convincingly challenged by social scientists (Stark 1992; Verdery 1996; Szelényi 1998; Burawoy & Verdery 1999). I argue that the current situation cannot be described as being 'half way through' on a transition from the command economy to a bright, liberal market future, nor on a transition from a subsistence economy to a marginalised periphery in the capitalist world system. Instead, many people in the YNAO, including the authorities and reindeer experts, think that the current situation is the intended stage, with the state maintaining a basic structure of reindeer herding institutions, as well as supporting the development of private initiatives (Stammler & Ventsel 2003: 350–8).

This does not inhibit but rather fosters economic pluralism and diversification in Yamal's markets. My analysis of these actors relates to the current models of trade and exchange in the postsocialist world. In any analysis of post-Soviet market relations, trust networks, as described by Humphrey (1999: 45; see also 2000: 75) are of utmost importance. Later works on post-Soviet entrepreneurs by Yurchak (2002) and Konstantinov (2002; Konstantinov & Vladimirova 2002) have confirmed this, both stressing the importance for Soviet and post-Soviet entrepreneurs of navigating between the official and the personal sides of their relations with institutions. An important factor in these relations is how public and state resources are used for private aims—what Humphrey, during the Soviet Union era, had called 'manipulable resources' (1995: 6, 1998: 221–6). Konstantinov & Vladimirova (2002: 24) have observed an 'increase in the scope of informalities' in the Kola reindeer herding economy, which has led Konstantinov

to speak of 'hidden entrepreneurship' (2002: 178) or 'hidden privatisation' (2003). Humphrey even argues that the personalisation of the economy is so dominant that 'it makes no sense to divide the Russian economy into informal and formal sectors' (1999: 28).

Humphrey (1999) has attempted to categorise the complex picture of current actors in trade and marketing using research undertaken in Buriatia in south-eastern Siberia. I shall analyse how the material from the YNAO fits into this. Humphrey offers a general definition of 'traders' (which matches the Russian *torgovtsy*) as 'those who aim to profit from middlemen activities involving goods and services' and who are 'not involved in productive labor' (Humphrey 1999: 24). One important subtype comprises the 'shuttlers' (Rus: *chelnoki*) who travel abroad to bring in manufactures for sale (Humphrey 1999: 19, see also 37). The source of their profit is the difference between the price at the place where they buy their goods and the place where they sell them (Humphrey 1999: 44). In Buriatia, outsiders (i.e. foreigners from China and Turkey) come in and control the business for a certain period, then disappear after having exploited the local resources. Humphrey additionally introduces five other categories of traders in Russia: the resellers (*perekupshchiki*), acting mainly inside the borders of the country; entrepreneurs (*predprinimateli*), who are thought to be the most dynamic actors, with large profits; brokers (former *snabzhentsi*), who use their intimate knowledge of production conditions from previous sovkhoz experience, but who work within a rather modest profit range; business people, who are normally engaged in buying and selling waste, metals, cars and the like; and finally, the 'trader retailers' (*kommersanty*), who are also important in Yamal, who can afford transport, buy local products in the villages and sell vodka and other goods (Humphrey 1999: 35–8). Humphrey's main point concerning all these categories is that traders who control the market always come from outside the region and have no interest in the region as such. Their only incentive for going there is the price advantage of the goods available. Their position as 'outsiders' and their lack of engagement in production make people in Yamal and elsewhere see them as dishonest and dangerous people, often close to criminals and the mafia (see Humphrey 1999: 33, 45).

By introducing material from Yamal, I show that local perceptions and understanding of these categories of traders can differ significantly. This confirms Humphrey's careful statement that they are not necessarily separate from each other or fixed (1999: 34). The common terminology used throughout Russia ignores the considerable local variations of the phenomenon of 'trading'. For example, the generic term for people engaging in trade in Yamal is now *kommersanty* and not *torgovtsy*. This leads me to challenge

the assumption in the academic and popular discourse that trade is controlled by 'outsiders', who simply exploit price differentials and are not engaged in production (Humphrey 1999: 24, 44). I am not claiming that this pattern does not exist in Yamal. A simple observation of town markets is enough to convince one of the multi-nationality of trading by outsiders in the YNAO. These 'shuttle' traders operate according to principles common across the whole former Soviet Union. However, I focus on the particularity of the reindeer business, where local integration seems to be more important, as will be shown in the cases below.

One of the well-known features of postsocialist economic development is what has been called 'demonetisation' (Verdery 1996: 206f; Woodruff 1999; Anderson 2000b; Humphrey 2000; Ledeneva 2000), meaning the replacement of money in economic transactions and the use of barter as a form of exchange. Humphrey (2000) stresses that, for the first time, barter was observed as the dominant form of exchange in a large-scale industrial economy in post-Soviet Russia. Barter in Russia is characterised by particularly complicated methods of exchange involving multiple producers and traders of goods. Ledeneva (2000) shows in detail the workings of these 'star-shaped chains' (Humphrey 2000: 77). In my analysis of the Yamal material, I show that all three categories of economic institutions—the state-controlled enterprises, vertically integrated reindeer enterprises, and gas companies—engage with the reindeer business in the demonetised sphere of the economy. I argue that in what is called the demonetised economy, money is materially absent, but still virtually present. This makes the barter relations different from non-industrial societies referred to in Humphrey's article (2000), where money does not figure at all. However, in recent times in Yamal the position of money seems to have strengthened, and it is beginning to materialise again. This gives us the opportunity to test the claims of Humphrey (2000: 79) and Anderson (2000b: 341) that barter in Russia, unlike in 'pre-industrial societies', is undertaken only because of a lack of money and is not valued as a form of exchange in itself. Increasingly, reindeer herders can choose whether to enter either the monetarised or the demonetised, spheres of exchange. This dichotomy leads me to the distinction proposed by Gudeman (1998, 2001) of the two spheres of exchange in the 'community' and the 'market'. Using the example of the economy of fresh velvet reindeer antlers, I explore the border between these two spheres. I argue that we get a better understanding when we try to integrate dichotomised categories such as community vs. market, personal vs. anonymous, informal vs. formal, trust vs. mistrust. In fact, the borders between all these dichotomies are within the production and exchange cycle of a single commodity, here fresh velvet reindeer antlers.

8.2 Current Okrug Government Policies for Reindeer Herding Markets

One main argument in this chapter is that it is mainly the combination of state planning and private markets that makes reindeer herding so attractive and promising in Yamal. I have argued elsewhere (Stammler & Ventsel 2003) that it would be far too simple to see this region merely as an example of successful implementation of a neo-classical economic model within an 'unsuccessful' country (Russia), as some economists have classified it (Blanchard 1998, Åslund 2002). Other economists such as Gustafson (1999: 234) stress how surprising it is that against all odds Russia is neither moving towards a market economy nor returning to a command economy, but rather succeeds in recovering from crises by 'muddling through'. I argue that it is the path between these two extremes that helps the YNAO to succeed, and that the role of the okrug government is important in setting the framework for economic development, here of reindeer herding. However, this has nothing to do with 'muddling through', but is a carefully chosen direction of policy.

There is no doubt that, without state support, reindeer herding as an economy and as the basis for the nomadic lifestyle in the YNAO would not have prospered after the end of the Soviet Union. This is nothing unique to the North or to Russia, but something common in agriculture throughout the world. In the European Union the agricultural budget in 2003 amounted to €44.7 billion, approximately 50% of the total EU budget; the United States budget for agriculture in 2003 was $72.4 billion, and yet, ever more farmers go bankrupt or close down their enterprises.[135] Therefore, in every analysis of a rural economy, the role of the state must figure prominently.

In reindeer herding, as in many other spheres within the okrug, the Department of Agriculture plays a significant role for the tundra population. The Federal Russian Government is largely absent in this sense, since its budget for reindeer herding is only about 70 million roubles for the whole Russian Federation, whereas in 2002 the okrug administration, backed by incomes from gas extraction, spent 688 million roubles on agriculture (ap-

[135] EU-figure: USDA Global Agriculture Information Network, Report #E23067, p. 1, accessed on the internet 27 January 2004 at http: //www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200305/145885498.pdf; US figure: Food and Agricultural Research Policy Institute (FAPRI) 2003: reflections on agricultural policy, accessed on the internet 27 January 2004 at http: //www.mosoy.org/msf/12_03.pdf

proximately €22 million).[136] Here we have to distinguish between subsidies for reindeer enterprises and subsidies for reindeer herders.

What reindeer herders get is money called *kompensatsiia*,[137] which in 2003 amounted to approximately 660 roubles, or an average of €22 per person per month. This is not very much—the cost of buying barely two loaves of bread per day. Employees of the state-controlled enterprises receive the money from their headquarters (*kontora*), whereas private herders or *obshchina* members have to apply to the *sel'sovet* for this. All inhabitants of the tundra are entitled to this *kompensatsiia*, which does not come from the agricultural budget. This is different from other regions such as the Sakha Republic, where reindeer herders actually get a proper salary (*zarabotnaia plata*) from the okrug, being 4,500 roubles per month (average €130) in 2003.[138]

Part of the subsidy is distributed to the enterprises where reindeer herders work. The YNAO is proceeding towards a policy of subsidising reindeer herding not just through agricultural enterprises, which are mostly controlled by the Department of Agriculture, but also via most of the other actors. However, private herders without an institutional 'roof' (*krysha*) are not eligible for subsidies. Every enterprise that makes a formal application, no matter whether it is commercial or state-controlled, *obshchina* or KfKh, has the right to get direct subsidies (*dotatsii*) in cash from the budget of the Okrug Department of Agriculture, although in practice state-controlled enterprises still get more than private ones. In the first half of 2000, for example, these subsidies amounted to 23.1 million roubles (€877,000).[139] The YNAO also pays 18 roubles (€0.5) per kilogram of meat sold on the free market by any form of enterprise. In addition to that, the okrug administration has contracts with enterprises for the purchase of their products (*zakup*), mostly fish and reindeer meat, for the use either by okrug-owned or by okrug-controlled institutions, such as hospitals, boarding schools, kindergartens, etc. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, this is no longer seen as a com-

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[136] Figure for the Russian Federation from Vladimir Etylen, Moscow Duma Deputee, in a speech at the 2nd Congress of Russian Reindeer Herders, Salekhard, 12 March 2002. For the okrug, according to the YNAO budget for 2002, see appendix 6 to the law on the budget for 2002 of 12 November 2001, no. 66-ZAO.

[137] YNAO law on the budget for 2001, published in *Krasnyi Sever*, 17 March 2001. Recent figures from the *postanovlenie gubernatora* Nr. 307, 23 October 2002 (resolution of the governor).

[138] *Rasporiazhenie pravitel'stvo Respubliki Sakha*, Nr. 660p, 29 November 2000 (order of the government), and personal communication with Boris Nikolaev, Vice Minister for Agriculture of the Sakha Republic, 4 August 2003.

[139] Exchange rate as at 1 June 2000; statistics from the Okrug Department of Agriculture, 1 June 2000. This money is in addition to all special programs by the YNAO and transportation subsidies.

pulsory plan or quota but as a good opportunity for enterprises to sell their production. This regulation applies not only to state-controlled enterprises, such as sovkhozy,[140] but also to *krest'ianskie fermerskie khoziaistva* (KfKh), *obshchiny* and other private enterprises as well. For example, in 1999 the okrug bought 1,825 tonnes of meat (live weight) and 6,507 tonnes of fish.[141] The okrug has also directly invested in an adequate slaughtering complex for increasing the quality of the meat, produced to EU standards, and being able to pay a better price to reindeer herders for this high quality meat. This slaughterhouse in Yar-Sale came into operation in 2002 and has a capacity of 360 reindeer per eight-hour shift (Snegirov 2002).

For a short time in 2003, additional subsidies of 200 roubles per live reindeer were paid to all reindeer enterprises no matter what organisational form they had, but in 2004 this was again restricted to sovkhozy, even though this contradicts the officially announced equal treatment of all economic actors in reindeer herding. This indicates that the state agricultural lobby is still more powerful than the private entrepreneurs.[142] Since all these subsidies go to institutions, it is up to their directors how they invest them and whether some of this money 'trickles down' to reindeer herders.

The okrug also engages in buying important goods for reindeer-herding enterprises, such as fuel, coal, firewood, stoves and canvas tent covers. In these subsidies the monetary value is not as significant as the practical value of the goods or services provided. These are paid for and transported by the okrug administration to the villages where the enterprises have their headquarters. As far as the private tundra households are concerned, the money for this comes not from the Department of Agriculture budget, but from the budget of the Department of the Indigenous Peoples.[143] The most important service area subsidised by the okrug government is transport. Helicopter flights are provided to the state-controlled enterprises. Private herding enterprises rarely can afford the use of helicopters, but they are at least eligible for fuel subsidies.

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[140] I still refer to all former sovkhozy, which are now partially in other forms of property, as sovkhozy since they are still controlled by the okrug state and everybody still perceives them as sovkhozy.

[141] YNAO *postanovlenie gubernatora* Nr. 514, 13 July 2000 (resolution of the governor).

[142] YNAO *postanovlenie gubernatora* Nr. 347, 9 December 2002 (resolution of the governor), interview with Mikhail Okotetto, head of the *obshchina* Ilebts 13 March 2002.

[143] Conversation with okrug duma representative Evgenii Yamru, 16 September 2000 and 28 June 2001 and head of Se-Iakha *sel'sovet* Nikolai Okotetto, 16 September 2000.



Plate 13. Meat is loaded into a helicopter for the sovkhoz.

These details provide evidence of the fact that state politics in the YNAO has adopted an approach which, while not focusing exclusively on state-controlled enterprises, attempts to treat equally every form of enterprise that works legally and is registered. This approach seems to resemble the agricultural politics of the European Union. I have argued elsewhere (Stammler & Ventsel 2003) that the prominent position of the okrug administration does not imply a command and planned economy as in the former Soviet Union. On the contrary, it supports the development of a market by creating a stable framework. The importance of an institutional framework for the economy has been emphasised, against neo-classical economic theory, by Ensminger (2002), who argues that a strong state reduces transaction costs for economic actors and thus sets free more potential for economic performance.

However, what is not obvious from statistics and theories of transaction costs being reduced by the state is the background of the okrug officials. No matter how progressive their political approach seems to be, the leading staff were recruited in the Soviet Union and thus are used to working with sovkhoz structures. This fact makes it more difficult for private enterprises to get their requests for subsidies or contracts approved. In neo-institutionalist terminology, we would say that the lack of familiarity and

information results in increased transaction costs for new private economic actors in comparison to the sovkhozy. A lot depends on one's social capital and on personal relations with leading figures in the Department of Agriculture. Leaders of private enterprises in most cases were former *zootekhniki* or specialists, who in their former positions did not have much experience of communicating in the halls of power. This applies especially to small enterprises based in remote villages run by natives, as I have shown in chapter 7 in my analysis of Piotr's *obshchina*/KfKh. The former sovkhozy still have their agricultural lobby and close relations with the okrug government, which can be observed at every conference or meeting concerning agriculture in the okrug: the directors and the members of the Department of Agriculture will sit together, chat informally during the breaks, go to restaurants together in the evening, and perhaps informally agree upon decisions among themselves. This is an informal network from which private enterprises, commercial and non-commercial, have been excluded until recently.

These observations confirm Yurchak's (2002) argument of the dual nature of officialised and personalised relations between entrepreneurs and the state. In the YNAO, official politics greatly influence the development of the market for the reindeer herders and their products, having concrete material consequences that reach the offices of the enterprises in the villages, and also the herders' *chum*s in the tundra. However, behind the official strategies, informal networks, lobbies and personal relationships are important aspects that can determine the fate of reindeer herding organisations, and thus the herders' working conditions as well. My impression is, however, that these lobbies are not closed groups. When dynamic private entrepreneurs invest in building up relations with the state, they can also develop the personalised side of these relations. These trust networks, as referred to by Humphrey (1999: 45; see also 2000: 75f), are especially relevant in the barter economy and, in spite of recent 're-monetisation', are still important in the reindeer-herding economy. This is true both for state-controlled and private enterprises. Only a detailed ethnography of the state, as Verdery (1996: 209) wrote 'at close range from within its daily routines and practices', can actually reveal these subtle processes, which to a large extent determine the relations between the state and the people engaged in the reindeer-herding economy.

8.3 State-Controlled Reindeer Enterprises

As we saw in chapter 4, the sovkhozy in Yamal successfully withstood the first euphoria of privatisation after Perestroika and still provide an important degree of stability for their employees. In this section, I focus on the recent position of sovkhozy in the increasingly competitive reindeer market. These

'total social institutions' (Humphrey 1995: 7; 1998: 452, quoting Clarke 1992) have gone beyond mere survival and are now actively trying to consolidate their positions and even win back lost ground.

One advantage held by the sovkhoz is that herders can get provisions there by balancing their purchase against the reindeer they hand in to the sovkhoz, i.e. all the sovkhozy engage in barter exchange, whereas not all the other competitors do so. Sovkhozy in Yamal now also engage in trading with the entire tundra population, regardless of whether a herder is listed on the payroll of the sovkhoz or not, and whether he is officially a herder (*pastukh*), hunter (*okhotnik*), a pensioner (*pensioner*), or a freelancer (*lichnik*) without institutional affiliation. Especially active in this respect was the northernmost sovkhoz Yamal'skii, who, for example, bought 3,290 reindeer from the tundra population in 1999. In 2001, reindeer herders received from this sovkhoz 20 roubles per kg carcass weight (*uboinyi ves*) for animals handed in for slaughtering. This price is the same with private enterprises. Herders had the opportunity of getting 50% of the estimated sum in advance in the form of groceries and equipment for the spring migration. These estimations were calculated according to the number and kind of reindeer being handed in, as outlined in table 8.[144]

Table 8. Prices for reindeer purchased by the sovkhoz Yamal'skii.

English	Russian	Nenets	50% price advance
Female	*Vazhenka*	*Iakhadei*	500 roubles
Young male bull	*Bychok*	*Suiu' namna, sides' khora*	400 roubles
Young unproductive female	*Netel'*	*Syrei*	500 roubles
Three-year-old bull	*Tret'iak*	*(niakhor) khor*	500 roubles
Castrated bull	*Byk kastrat*	*Khabt*	600 roubles

For example, Oleg Irimboevich wants to buy his spring supplies. He therefore goes to the sovkhoz headquarters (*kontora*) at the end of March, and says that he wants to hand in 50 private reindeer: 25 *byki kastrati* (30,000 roubles), 10 *tret'iaki* (10,000 roubles), and 5 each of *neteli* (5,000 roubles), *bychki* (4,000 roubles) and *vazhenki* (5,000) roubles). This entitles him to take groceries for the equivalent of half the total sum, which is 27,000 rou-

[144] According to the official price of the sovkhoz Yamal'skii, order no. 6, 26 March 2001.

bles. In autumn, after he has taken the reindeer to slaughter, he gets the other half (the equivalent of 27,000 roubles) on the basis of 20 roubles per kg carcass weight. This is how Oleg can afford his spring supply without having any cash in hand.

As far as the highly profitable antler production is concerned, sovkhozy are as yet only marginally involved. They have not succeeded in getting enough helicopters each year, and sometimes there is a delay in gathering the antlers which decreases their quality. They cannot compete with the private vertically integrated reindeer enterprises of the new native entrepreneurs (NNE see below), since the latter collect even the antlers of private animals within the sovkhoz herds.

However, sovkhozy have made an effort to establish new trading posts, where the herders can trade meat, furs, antlers, and sometimes arctic fox furs and fish in exchange for groceries and equipment. For example, the sovkhoz Yamal'skii in summer 2001 built a new trading post (*faktoriia*) in the village of Tambei in north-east Yamal. Prior to this, the small village, with a permanent population of approximately 20 inhabitants, had only a *faktoriia* run by the fishing cooperative and another by a private enterprise. I also heard that the sovkhoz was able to successfully bid for the northernmost *faktoriia* in Yamal, Iarodo, in late 2001. The costs of running this trading post can now be partly covered by the YNAO budget, which allocates money for a program called 'revival of trading posts' (*vozrozhdenie faktorii*).[145] The ranges of the Yamal tundra are vast, and in most cases there is only one enterprise per *faktoriia* in one particular location.

The competitive situation with regard to trading posts, as in Tambei, increasingly resembles the situation in the bigger villages, where various enterprises run independently of each other. The sovkhozy have their stores, but the reindeer herders can also choose to go to other stores run by the fishing cooperative or private enterprises. Reindeer herders come at least twice a year to get their supplies of groceries and equipment. However, only some of the stores operate on a barter basis. Until 2000, the barter prices in the sovkhoz stores were higher than in the cash economy. One *chumrabotnitsa* explained that in 2000 the cost of bread at the fishing factory was 10 roubles, Aleka (a private entrepreneur) sold it for 12, and the sovkhoz for the equivalent of 15 roubles. Tamara Serotetto, a housewife in a poor private *chum*, told of similar experiences:[146] they bought sugar from the sovkhoz for the equivalent of 1,400 roubles per sack, whereas in the village commercial store it was 800. Sovkhoz tea was 25 roubles compared with 17 roubles in the store. The problem was that the cheaper commercial store accepted only

[145] *Postanovlenie gubernatora* YNAO, no. 267, 24 September 2002.
[146] Personal communications, 5 May 2001, 1 May 2001.

payment in cash, which they did not have, so they had to pay in kind for the more expensive goods at the sovkhoz store.

This is related to the demonetisation of almost every sphere of the economy, as analysed in the anthropological works on barter introduced at the beginning of this chapter (Verdery 1996; Woodruff 1999; Anderson 2000b; Humphrey 2000; Ledeneva 2000). Until 2000, on paper, the herders received a nominal salary from the sovkhoz, which was the basis for counterbalancing the price of the groceries and goods they took from the sovkhoz store. As Anderson (2000b: 341) observed, in Russia money is still considered 'the real thing' and 'goods are *always evaluated at money prices* [Humphrey's italics], before they are exchanged' (Humphrey 2000: 79). Therefore I argue that a demonetised sphere of economy does not mean that money is absent in the exchange. On paper and in people's minds, money has not ceased to exist; it just does not materialise in the transaction. Different from this, real touchable cash in Russian is called *zhivye den'gi* (live money). In a barter economy, the money therefore is physically 'dead', but its soul, its usefulness as a medium of exchange, is still present in people's minds and influences real life, just as the souls of the dead relatives do. In a way, the existence of money in the virtual sense seems similar to credit cards, where money also does not mater-ialise as cash. However, the huge practical difference is that the paper of the virtual salary is accepted only by the sovkhoz store, whereas credit cards offer much greater freedom of choice.

This is why Tamara Serotetto feels deprived of this freedom. Seventeen of the 26 reindeer herders I asked said that it is less favourable to work with the sovkhoz, but eight of these 17 looked forward to relying more on them in the future, since in 2001 the quality as well as the terms of trade improved. I shall explain in the next section how this is connected to the gas companies. The sovkhozy have now started to pay cash as well, in some cases up to 50%. They can buy the stock for their stores with money, because the okrug government pays subsidies in money and not in kind anymore. This makes sovkhozy equal competitors with private enterprises on the reindeer market, whereas in 2000 most herders thought the sovkhoz offered poorer terms of trade and poorer quality.

However, of the 26 herders interviewed, 13 thought the sovkhoz was more reliable, five thought the commercial enterprises more reliable, four respondents thought they were similar, and four did not know. Whereas the herders feared that the commercial enterprises could go bankrupt and disappear, they believed the sovkhozy would be cared for by the authorities, as happened in 2001 with the Yar-Salinskii sovkhoz (see chapter 4). After its bankruptcy, it was re-established by the local authorities as an MUP (municipal unitary enterprise, i.e. owned by the municipality). The state policy is

to create new opportunities for employment in the tundra, and therefore the new enterprise is financed not only for economic reasons but also for the reason of giving work and respect to the tundra population and preserving the social welfare system connected to the sovkhoz.[147]

Most reindeer herders rightly perceive that the sovkhoz cannot disappear altogether, and whenever it offers convenient modes of business they will support it. Moreover, the older herders have identified with the sovkhoz as *nash* (ours) for most of their lives and feel strong connections with it. Some even feel insulted to see their enterprise in bad shape and welcome any improvements and consolidation of its position on the market. However, as I shall show in the next section, rational trading decisions in many cases were taken in favour of other economic institutions.

8.4 Gas Companies

Gas companies are an important factor in the development of reindeer herding in the YNAO. Their influence forms one part of the argument developed in this study, namely that the exceptional performance of reindeer herders is due to complex interactions between nomads and their surroundings rather than to a culture of resistance and the isolation of nomads. The influence of gas companies is multifaceted and some of these influences (particularly those relating to political and ecological issues in West Siberia) are described elsewhere (Stammler 2003: 49–64, 84–91). Anthropological analyses of the relations between reindeer herders and oil companies mainly focus on the negative impact of the latter, and the threat of extinction of indigenous cultures (Novikova 1997; Wiget & Balalaeva 1997; Stammler 2003; Habeck 2002; Wilson 2002; but cf. Wilson 2003). This is certainly true, and minimisation of negative impact is an aspect of vital importance for the future of reindeer herding as a way of live. However, much less attention has been paid to the less threatening, possibly even the positive side-effects of industrialisation for indigenous peoples. These side-effects are partly a result of the close relationship between industry and reindeer herding which developed during the era of the Soviet planned economy. A major factor in the transformation of reindeer herding into a meat-producing industry came with creation of a new labour force for extracting Siberian mineral resources and hence the creation of powerful new meat consumers nearby. Thus, there was a certain intended symbiotic relationship between reindeer herding and gas development, both being part of the same Soviet project in the North. The effects of this can be seen in immediate economic and social partnerships

[147] Interview with the bankruptcy director of the 'old' enterprise, 10.04.2001, and YNAO online news, 24.01.2002 (http://www.yamal.ru/new/index01.html, accessed 26.01.2002).

between industrial workers and reindeer herders (Stammler 2002: 58–60), and in the broader opportunities provided by oil enterprises to help reindeer herders to 'regenerate their livelihood strategies [and] reinforce their identity' (Wilson 2003: 28). I shall elaborate on this, because it is an important part of my argument that it is the patterns of interaction between the partners that explain the success of reindeer herding rather than an exclusive focus on the culture of the Nentsy.

In this section I examine the importance of gas enterprises for the reindeer economy of the YNAO. I distinguish between gas companies as main taxpayers in the YNAO, as providers of infrastructure for solving transport problems, their workers as the main domestic market for reindeer, gas companies as owners of reindeer herding enterprises, and gas companies as direct trading partners for reindeer herders and their institutions.

8.4.1 Gas Companies as Taxpayers

Most of the 19.5 billion roubles (€580 million) of tax income in the YNAO[148] stems from taxes paid by gas exploration and extraction companies. Financial support for the reindeer herding economy and culture therefore depends on the payment of these taxes. Humphrey (2000: 77) shows that, in Russia as a whole, the legal ban on tax payments in kind in 1998 had little effect on barter exchanges in the Russian economy. Sovkhoz directors, specialists and the Department of Agriculture report that in the YNAO the biggest taxpayer, Gasprom, only started to pay taxes in money instead of in kind in 2000.[149] In the 1990s the material absence of cash, not the mental and virtual absence, in the YNAO reindeer-herding economy was directly caused by the tax-paying practices of Gasprom and other enterprises. These enterprises did not *sell* gas to southern and central Russian regions as well as to CIS countries in the normal way, but *bartered* it in exchange for products such as flour, butter, tea and sugar.

This was the beginning of a typical post-Soviet Russian barter chain. The companies earned goods for gas instead of money for gas, and 'paid' these goods to the YNAO as taxes. The okrug administration in turn used these goods to 'pay' subsidies to the state-controlled reindeer enterprises. Considering the huge transportation costs to the remote villages in Yamal, the fictive price of these goods became much higher than that of commercial

[148] According to the law on the YNAO budget 2003, *zakon ob okruzhnom biudzhete 2003 god*, no. 63 ZAO, 25 November 2002.

[149] Personal communications with Dimitri Khorolya, until 2001 Director of the sovkhoz Yar-Salinskii, 7 April 2001; with Stepan Semjashkin, Director of the sovkhoz Muzhevskii, 20 March 2001; with Vitalii Madi, Vice-Chairman of the Department of Agriculture 28 June 2001; and with reindeer herders of the Yar-Sale tundra, May 2001.

stores. The state-controlled reindeer enterprises thus had to pass these terms onto their workers, the reindeer herders. For them, not only were the terms of trade with private commercial enterprises much better, but so was the quality of the food. This was a result of the long distance that the 'gas-goods', especially food, had to be transported. For example, reindeer herders could barter in sovkhoz stores for flour that had been paid by Belarus to Gasprom in exchange for gas, given by Gasprom to the YNAO government as tax, which was then given by the YNAO Department of Agriculture to the sovkhoz as a subsidy. This kind of barter chain is described in excellent ethnographic detail by Ledeneva (2000). Throughout the chain, from the production of flour in south Russia to its consumption by the reindeer herder in the Arctic, cash was absent. This is why a loaf of bread from the sovkhoz cost the equivalent of 15 roubles, whereas a commercial store could sell bread with fresher flour for cash for 12 roubles. Given that the spring supply for a reindeer herding family requires 500 loaves, the price difference could be as much as 1,500 roubles.

This was the situation until 2000 when cash re-entered the economy. We can therefore speak of a 'remonetisaton' after the demonetisation: Gasprom and the other enterprises now pay their taxes to the YNAO in cash, which in turn enables the okrug administration to give subsidies to the reindeer herding enterprises in cash. The latter, for their part, can buy fresh goods for their workers on the free market at favourable conditions, just as the commercial village stores do. In this way the sovkhozy have become more attractive as trading partners for the reindeer herders again, as described above, which in turn fosters competition within the reindeer market. The reindeer-herding economy thus benefits from the fact that the YNAO is one of the richest administrative units of the Russian Federation and the main supplier of Russian natural gas.

8.4.2 Gas Companies and Infrastructure

Another indirect impact of gas companies on the reindeer-herding economy lies in their investments in infrastructure in the YNAO. Reindeer enterprises in the west of the Yamal Peninsula use the railway that runs from Obskaia station to the giant gas deposits to transport goods and slaughtered reindeer (see map 2). Gasprom has constructed a railway which soon will reach as far as the Iuribei River. Alongside the railway there is also a road, used by lorries, which is a cheap and convenient transport corridor by which to reach wider markets. However, it also causes many social problems by giving easy access to the tundra for undesirable trespassers who have no idea about the *zakon tundry*. Reindeer herders and their advocates are concerned because this transport infrastructure is used by incomers from towns or cities, who let

their dogs stray or who come to shoot reindeer. Many of them may not know that the reindeer are domestic and belong to somebody. The tundra people, confronted by this damage to their property, realise that these incomers do not fall into the category of people with a good reason for coming to the tundra. They are not there to visit the reindeer herders, as incomers to the tundra usually are, nor do they behave respectfully towards the tundra's beings, be they humans, animals, plants or spirits. Thus, although the transport infrastructure provided by the gas companies does bring some economic advantages, it also has many disadvantages (see Zen'ko 2001 and Forbes 1999).

Crucially important for reindeer herding is the fleet of helicopters financed by the gas companies. For example, the Nadym branch of Gasprom provides Khamba, a private enterprise, with the use of helicopters to collect velvet reindeer antlers in summer.[150] Agreements like this are unofficial and depend on the social capital of the entrepreneur and his relations with the 'lords of transport' (*khoziain vertoletov*: the masters of the helicopters). On a more official basis, gas companies can provide access to helicopters as part of their social programs for local communities. The Department of Agriculture also subsidises helicopters from gas money for reindeer enterprises. Vitebsky (2000: 28–31) shows for the Sakha Republic the opposite dramatic impact of a lack of transportation in every sphere of life in the remote places of Siberia, and Gray (2005: 119f) speaks of a 'mobility gap' since the 1990s in Chukotka. Comparing this with the situation in the YNAO, the impact of a functioning transport infrastructure financed by the industry cannot be overestimated. If the gas enterprises moved out of the area, the whole transport system in the YNAO would collapse.

8.4.3 Gas Workers and the Domestic Market

Another consequence of the presence of the gas companies is the huge incoming labour force that forms the principal domestic market for reindeer meat. Whereas in 1959 the population of the okrug was about 51,000 (Shapalin 1965: 14f), it has increased tenfold with industrialisation, reaching 516,000 at the beginning of 2004.[151] Today, at town markets and in city stores, such as those in Salekhard, Labytnangi or Nadym, fresh reindeer meat can be purchased from autumn through to spring; and with recent improvements in processing and preservation facilities, this is rapidly ex-

[150] Personal communications with reindeer herders trading with this enterprise: Yakov Vanuito, 17 May 2001; Khasavomboi and Valia Okotetto, 26 May 2001; Nikolai Khorotetto, 21 May 2001; and Natasha Okotetto, 12 June 2001.

[151] Interfax news, 27. November 2003, http://www2.interfax.ru/rus/news/ural/031127/34888/story.html.

tending to year-round availability. These formal market transactions are almost exclusively in cash, with almost no barter being involved anymore. In autumn and winter, however, meat is also sold informally by employees of reindeer enterprises or private herders, through local TV and newspaper advertisements. Whereas in autumn 1998 I heard of many employees of organisations receiving their salary in kind as reindeer meat, two years later all salaries were paid in cash. An interesting topic for further exploration is the acceptance of reindeer meat as food by the industrial workers in the YNAO. Andrei Kugaevskii, the head of the administration of the Yamal'skii *raion*, thinks that up to now the demand for reindeer meat on the domestic market has been enough to absorb all the meat produced within the okrug (Snegirov 2002).[152] In other regions, the non-indigenous population seems to prefer pork or beef, even though this is more expensive and less fresh by the time it has been transported to the north.[153]

8.4.4 Gas Companies as Owners of Reindeer Enterprises

Gas companies have been able to extend their influence on the reindeer economy by becoming owners of reindeer enterprises. In Soviet times it was common for big industrial enterprises to also have their own agricultural departments. In post-Soviet times, this practice has been continued by some of the now privatised industrial enterprises. Oil companies such as Surgutneftegaz or Iukos, and also Gasprom, have agricultural enterprises called *podsobnye khoziaistva* (supplementary enterprises). In the YNAO, these are also eligible for subsidies just like other agricultural institutions. Thus, in a list of agricultural enterprises eligible for okrug subsidies, the Nadymgasprom supplementary enterprise is in the same category as all other private producers in agriculture, including *obshchiny*. Although Nadymgasprom is not registered as having reindeer in this particular enterprise, Golovnev & Osherenko (1999: 129) provide evidence to show that the former sovkhoz Baidaratskii, the westernmost sovkhoz on the border of the Komi Republic, was taken over by Gasprom. Gasprom was also hoping to take over the biggest sovkhoz at Yar-Salinskii, but the director, Khorolia, refused because he was afraid that the loss of independence would eventually result in the loss of land rights for reindeer herding. When a Gasprom subsidiary has to authorise a land claim on behalf of its mother enterprise, the cost of acquiring the land title is likely to be much lower since there is no

[152] However, in 2004 some people in Salekhard believed that reindeer meat should be advertised more widely in order to make this slaughterhouse profitable.

[153] Personal communication with the Vice Minister for Agriculture of the Sakha Republic and staff of the Reindeer Herding Department of the same ministry, Yakutsk, 4 August 2003.

need to invest time, energy and money in convincing an independent institution to agree. It turned out that Khorolia was right. Gasprom eventually lost interest in the Baidaratskii sovkhoz, and abandoned it when plans to complete the railway on its territory were postponed. So ownership by a rich company, which seemed to hold a lot of promise in the short term, rapidly turned sour, and today the sovkhoz is 'producing no meat at all' and is struggling economically.[154]

8.4.5 Gas Companies as Trading Partners

The final example of the importance of gas companies within the reindeer herding economy does not have much bearing on the YNAO, but it shows that even in an economic environment of 'remonetisation' and consolidation there are niches for a non-monetary barter economy. The village of Sabetta, built by geological explorers in 1981, unlike other industrial villages, is independent of meat supplies from the southern regions. In Sabetta, no gas or oil is extracted—the enterprise here is essentially for exploration rather than extraction. The gas they do extract is thought to be for testing only (*eksperimental'naia dobycha*). But the workers rely entirely on reindeer meat produced by local reindeer herders from the Yaungad and Okotetto families, who migrate on an east–west axis along the Sabetta River (see map 3, triangles 12 and 13). Today most of them are members of the *obshchina* Ilebts. After the establishment of Sabetta village, these herders became increasingly independent of the sovkhoz. The gas company exchanges its deliveries received from the south for meat, and sometimes furs and fish. Aleksandra Aleksandrovna, the head of the Social Development Department in Sabetta, explained that they sell everything to the reindeer herders at cost (i.e. without making a profit).[155] The herders therefore benefit from the subsidised transport of groceries and goods which is arranged by the gas company for their employees in the north. Indeed, for those who have cash, they sell groceries at prices equivalent to those in a southern Siberian city such as Tyumen'. In comparison, a commercial store has to ask much higher prices, as Aleksandra Aleksandrovna proudly claims. For the anthropologist with cash, it is therefore much cheaper to buy food from the gas company than from the commercial enterprise. However, the gas company buys meat from the herders for the equivalent of five roubles, one-third the price paid by a commercial enterprise. Cash is completely absent in all their transactions. Table 9 shows the terms of trade for various items that can be bought

[154] Personal communication with Dmitrii Khorolia, former director of the sovkhoz 'Yar-Salinskii', 16 April 2004.
[155] Personal communication, 5 June 2001.

using cash or meat at stores belonging to gas companies and commercial enterprises.

Table 9. Comparison of terms of trade (store prices) of a gas company and a commercial enterprise.

Item purchased	Sabetta gas company: store prices		Commercial enterprise: store prices	
	in roubles	in kg meat	in roubles	in kg meat
Bread	3.5/loaf	0.70	13/loaf	0.86
Sushki	10.27/kg	2.05	34/kg	2.30
Flour	3.9/kg	0.78	10/kg	0.70
Sugar	3.3/kg	0.66	20/kg	1.40
Tea India	15/100g	3.00	30/100g	2.00
Milk sweat	11.73/can	2.34	23/can	1.60
Milk powder	27.65/kg	5.53	70/kg	4.70
Butter	23.38/kg	4.67	120/kg	8.00
Macaroni	6/kg	1.20	18/kg	1.20
Canned meat	8.50/can	1.70	42/can	2.80
Soup	4.3/can	0.86	46/can	3.10
Fuel	5/litre	1.00	20/litre	1.40

The table shows that in seven of the twelve most popular groceries, even with a price of 5 roubles per kg of meat, the gas company offers better terms of trade than the commercial enterprise. The price difference for sugar, butter and soup, especially, is substantial and becomes significant if calculated on an annual basis. Besides these purely economic considerations, this table also shows how calculations for bartered goods distort the actual terms of trade. Money as the virtual means of standardisation of prices does not reveal the true picture, since we do not know the exchange rate for the purchase of the product (here meat). For example, the cash prices for macaroni at a gas store (6 roubles per kilogram) and at a commercial store (18 roubles per kilogram) show a large difference, yet the barter terms (in meat) for reindeer herders are exactly the same. However, the gas company enjoys the advantage of the seemingly cheaper prices, because 6 roubles sounds a good deal less than 18. Reindeer herders also appreciate the convenience of the location of Sabetta, which is easily accessible during the snow season.

Until 1994, when Sabetta had a population of over 700 workers, it bought as much as 30–40 tonnes of meat per year from the reindeer herders.

Today only 100 workers remain, but in 2003 they still bought 10 tonnes. Moreover, the company also works with the two official institutions in the reindeer market: sovkhoz Yamal'skii and the commercial enterprise Agroinvest. However, in 2001 the latter closed down on account of corruption, but was continued in northern Yamal by the *obshchina* Ilebts (see section 8.5.2 and chapter 7). In 2000 the gas enterprise bought meat from Ilebts for the equivalent of 20 roubles per kg. For this money Ilebts rent from the company the houses and equipment for their slaughtering activities.



Plate 14. The reindeer slaughtering facilities in the gas village of Sabetta.

Besides these official terms of trade, the reindeer herders also enjoy unofficial advantages from the gas companies. In 2001 the sovkhoz could not deliver its meat, and so the company provided fuel (200 tonnes) and one month's use of transport equipment free of charge. The Sabetta chairman, Sergei Kersianov, makes many such favours to individual herders and is highly respected by them. He gives out fuel for free, offers to collect their meat using lorries or passenger tanks (*vezdekhody*) directly from the campsites, brings firewood to the herders at no charge, offers them free accommodation when they come to the village, and lets them eat for free in the dining hall. His relations with the herders seem similar to those between

relatives living in the tundra and those living in the village. He sees these herders as a big family, for whom he has some responsibility. This is why they listen to him even when he dresses them down for destroying furniture in the dormitory after a heavy night's drinking of self-distilled moonshine (*samogon*). Although his views about the Nentsy are certainly influenced by paternalistic views common to almost all Russians, I have not heard any Nentsy complain about this attitude.

The Nentsy are highly appreciative of the fact that he even violates the orders of his bosses, who in 2000 forbade him to sell fuel to reindeer herders. He told me:

> It is a nightmare. We sit here on all the fuel, we extract it anyway, and they do not even allow us to sell it to the people living here. This is really annoying, and I can't accept that. That's why I send the herders out to the drilling stations. I tell them: 'Get what you want out there, but don't tell anybody, and I don't know anything about it.' (Sergei Kersianov 5 June 2001).

Zhenia, a reindeer herder of the Sabetta tundra, sees the problem, but knows that he should not blame the Sabetta Chairman, but rather the bosses above him:

> Sergei Ivanovich [the Sabetta Chairman] always told us 'we live on your land, so we help you with groceries and fuel'. But now he's got different bosses, and they want to set up stupid rules. I had to drive as far as Kharasavei in order to get fuel. Now we can get it on the drilling stations again, but there they have only gas condensate, and the *buran* does not work well with it. The oil does not mix up with the condensate, and the spark plugs become black quickly (Zhenia, 8 June 2001).

Why does the gas company engage in this trade with reindeer herders? They do not gain from it economically, and they could have all their meat delivered from the south if they wanted to. Certainly, the trust relationship between herders and the chairman of the village play a more important role than economic considerations here. However, there are also advantages for the gas company. Not only is their meat fresher, it is also cheaper than southern meat bought from one of their enterprises. The gas workers also benefit from the more friendly tundra atmosphere surrounding them, and some of them like to drive out to a *chum* and see the slaughter for themselves. The fuel for their vehicles is free, and their cooperation with herders is a welcome diversion from their normal routine.

The closure of Agroinvest (the commercial enterprise) and the establishment of the *obshchina* Ilebts (see chapter 7) influenced patterns of trade between Sabetta and the herders. Sergei Kersianov says that Sabetta village

in 2004 is about to re-establish all relations with reindeer herding on the basis of official contracts with the *obshchina*. However, this does not mean that they will stop engaging in unofficial trade with individual herders. The authorities of the *sel'sovet*, which is governed by the father of the *obshchina* director, see the developing relationship between the *obshchina* and the gas company in very positive terms.[156]

Taken together, these developments show that gas companies are major players in the reindeer economy of the YNAO, both indirectly by giving the state the means to create a supportive environment for the reindeer economy and directly by trading with herders. The Nenets herders and their advocates in villages, on the other hand, accept the challenges brought to Yamal by these enterprises and actively engage with them, in other words, act with considerable agency (see Habeck 2005). The Yamal case differs significantly from the observations of local natives made by Wilson (2002: 164; 2003: 21–47) who concluded that they were reluctant to engage with industrial workers from outside. As I have shown here and elsewhere (Stammler 2002: 58–60), the Nentsy have been developing social and economic relations with the industrial workers for over 20 years and have influenced patterns of interaction to their own benefit. However, the lack of agency in Wilson's case compared to that of Yamal should not be attributed to differences in culture. A closer look reveals that the Nentsy on the Yamal Peninsula comprise the majority of the population (at least until extraction of the big gas deposits begins). It is not they who are marginalised in the tundra regions, but the inhabitants of the gas villages. In Wilson's case, by contrast, the native population is totally marginalised and forms a tiny minority in a Russian-dominated space.

Seabright (2000: 2) has noted that barter in market economies is a well-researched topic. The example above shows that unlike barter in market economies (such as the USA, as referred to by Seabright), in Yamal it happens across ethnic and kinship boundaries, thereby linking seemingly unequal partners: nomadic reindeer herders who have lived for over a century in the northeast part of the Yamal Peninsula, and a subdivision of a gas company consisting of shift workers travelling between the southern regions of Russia and Yamal several times a year. As Seabright (2002: 7f) has argued, this is a case of a network of reciprocal exchange where having first-hand information about each other considerably lowers the costs of the business. It is a classical argument for the new institutionalist economic theory (Ensminger 2002), which stresses the importance of institutions such

[156] Telephone communication with Sergei Kersianov, 31 December 2003; and personal communication, 17 April 2004. Article by E. Stenopaitis, 11 November 2003, on the website of the *obshchina* 'Ilebts' http://www.ilebts.narod.ru/tambey01.htm, accessed 6 February 2004.

as the state in lowering transaction costs. In the Sabetta tundra, mutual trust among individuals, who at first glance are highly unequal, contributes to a lowering of these transaction costs.

8.5 Private Reindeer Businesses and the Global Economy

Private reindeer trading enterprises, referred to commonly as *kommersanty* by the population and representatives of the state structure (at okrug and municipal level), are the new dynamic force in Yamal's reindeer herding market. Unlike in Humphrey's (1999) ethnography, trader-retailers in Yamal comprise only a small proportion of the range of actors who are referred to as *kommersant*. This is a highly personalised category, and most herders have no interest in the institutional background of *kommersanty*. By contrast, the sovkhoz engaging in trade is not so personalised, but, as I have shown above, it is important for herders as an institutional structure. In this section I shall focus on one type of *kommersant* that combines many of the spheres of activity described by Humphrey (1999) for different traders. Here, the distinction between 'trader' and 'producer' is somewhat blurred, as is the line between bartering and the cash economy. The tundra, as a space with its own rules, combines all these categories. No matter what his background may be, as soon as someone enters the tundra to do business, he is a *kommersant*.

The following cases provide evidence to support an important argument, namely that traders are not necessarily outsiders who have no connection with production (Humphrey 1999: 24), but in certain contexts they may even have to be locals in order to be successful. Seabright (2000: 7f) has argued that 'information islands' in barter networks are the catalysts behind bartering. In Yamal, for example, access to these local information islands is necessary when trying to get a toehold in the specific business niche of reindeer products. The first requirement is access to transport infrastructure, which is only possible through knowledge of the 'lords of the transport', those people who control the access to helicopters (see section 8.4.2). But even obtaining a helicopter (the best-case scenario) is of no use at all if the new trader does not know the migration routes of the herders, or the location of the slaughtering corrals in a specific region. To obtain local knowledge, native expertise is needed, which must be acquired, not through offers of money, but by building up friendship and trust networks with natives. However, the Nentsy do not readily give away their knowledge, but instead become businessmen themselves. In some cases they run the business alone, in other cases jointly with incomers. The following ethnography analyses the emergence of these native vertically integrated reindeer enterprises and at the same time links the pastures of the Yamal tundra to the national and international pharmaceutical markets.

8.5.1 Velvet Reindeer Antlers: A Rediscovered Commodity

That the tundra has become the focus for private business is at first sight something of a mystery. All over the Russian North, with exception of the Murmansk Oblast' which sells meat to Scandinavia (Konstantinov 2002: 175f), reindeer meat production is seen as unprofitable from a purely macro-economic point of view (Jernsletten & Klokov 2002: 51f). So what is it that has drawn private entrepreneurs into the reindeer business? The commodity is *panty* (velvet reindeer antlers), and with its production and marketing we can see the processes of integration into a capitalist world system as described by Wallerstein. The implications of this can perhaps be compared with the 'fur rush' (Slezkine 1994) and the development in trade from Siberia throughout the world during the Russian Empire. However, the type of entrepreneurs engaged in the production and initial selling of this commodity are not 'global players', but locals.

Newly grown reindeer antlers, *panty* (Nen: *mora*), are cut from the reindeer in summer, when antlers do not yet have bone substance, but are still smooth and bloody inside, covered by a thin 'velvet-like' fur. This is considered to be a raw material rich in various medicines for strengthening the human immune system and, more importantly for Asian clients, increasing strength, improving the blood, and building masculine virility. Less expensive and prestigious are mature antlers (Rus: *okostelenye roga*), those that are shed naturally by the reindeer. These antlers can be collected from herders at any time of the year. Particular to these reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*) is that both males and females have antlers, which they grow every year. So, potentially, *panty* can be cut every year from every animal. The relevant ingredient in fresh antlers is called 'rantarine'. It is almost identical to the extract 'pantocrine' obtained from the antlers of other deer (*Cervus elaphus xanthopygus*, *Cervus nippon hortulorum*) and marals (Siberian stag, *Cervus elaphus sibiricus*). These have been used as raw materials for pharmaceuticals and delicacies in South Asia long before reindeer antlers were discovered to have similar properties. *Panty* are also rich in amino acids and many other relevant ingredients, and have been analysed in detail by Russian scientists (see Iudin 1993: 63–9). Research on the medical effects is still under way, but so far we know that giving rantarine to mice over a long period results in an increase of testosterone, and of protein in the liver. We know that when given to humans over a longer period (three weeks), rantarine improves their performance on exercise machines. Research by Russian scientists has also shown that pharmaceuticals made using velvet reindeer antlers can also reduce sleeping problems, headaches and dizziness (Iudin 1993: 66, 73).

Today, China and Korea are the most important markets for these medical products, and the Russian domestic market is also expanding. Before Perestroika, the Southeast Asian markets relied almost entirely on material coming from New Zealand, and from poached animals of various origins. In contemporary Russia, pantocrine and rantarine are advertised as having similar effects to *Echinacea* (i.e. strengthening the overall condition of the human body). In 2000, rantarine tablets made it onto the list of medicines officially recognised by the Russian Ministry of Healthcare.[157] Products made of the bone substance of mature reindeer antlers, although not yet accepted as true medicines, are available as nutritional supplements from pharmacies, e.g. Tsygapan.[158] Besides their use as medical preparations, *panty* can also be consumed in the form of dried chips in expensive restaurants in China and other Asian countries.

Although there are no clear research findings on the reproductive or general health effects on the reindeer of cutting *panty*, it is commonly understood in Yamal that *panty* should not be cut from pregnant does. It is also currently being debated whether cutting *panty* from productive bulls (*byki proizvoditelei*) should be forbidden altogether, since many people fear that it affects the long-term health of the reindeer.[159] Reindeer herders in most cases admit that it might be bad for their herd to cut *panty*, but the promise of high returns and the goods that can be bought from the proceeds means that the practice continues.

As a commodity, *panty* is not new, despite its recent official registration in Russia. The first Chinese traders bought reindeer *panty* as early as 1910 (Iudin 1993: 62). However, real production only began in the 1970s, mostly in sovkhozy in the Russian Far East, in small quantities of approximately 8 tonnes per year (Iudin 1993: 6). However, as far as I know, velvet antlers from Soviet reindeer were not a significant commodity on the global market at this time, although one source mentions a price of US$520 per kilogram in the pre-Perestroika period.[160]

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[157] *Prikaz ministerstvo zdravookhranenia* no. 472, 31 December 1999, '*O perechne lekarstvennykh sredstv spiskov A i B*'.

[158] On sale over the internet for 92 roubles, http: //03.nedug.ru/goods/group.phb?id=1640, accessed 7 February 2004. An extensive description in Russian, including research reports and ingredients, is part of the advertising campaign of tsygapan at http: //www.tsygapan.ru/ (accessed 7 February 2004).

[159] Proposal by Khotiako Esyngi, YNAO Duma Deputee, at the 2nd congress of Russian reindeer herders, 11–12 March 2002. It was rejected by all herders who argued that they need income.

[160] Interview of Nikolai Osintsev, one of the main rantarine researchers, on a website advertising his new product. http://vladimir-dovgan.ru/site_news/site_news_arhive/open_news/?&month=1&newsid=116, accessed 15 November 2003.

The real boom began at the beginning of the 1990s, when limits on entrepreneurial activities in the Soviet Union were eased, and simultaneously the need for additional income increased because of reduced state support. Since West Siberia was the only region in the former Soviet Union to experience any growth in the numbers of domestic reindeer after the end of the planned socialist economy, it was here that the development of a velvet-antler trade network was most promising. In the peak period before 1995, the price for 1 kg of high quality *panty* was $300. After the first boom, the price collapsed to $30 per kg in 1998, and is currently at about $60 to $80.[161] During Perestroika, Asian markets opened up for this commodity, and there was a big demand for *panty*. I was told that this demand increased partially because of the pressure from animal protection organisations to restrict or ban the use of elephant, rhinoceros and tiger products. In the YNAO, many people say that the price fell because of economic crises in South Asia as well as the invention of 'viagra', which was in direct competition with rantarine. The *panty* business is well known for its high profit margins, but it is also extremely risky. In Moscow and the regional urban centres, it is linked to the Mafia and other sectors of organised crime. On 10 December 1993, for example, the director of the Russian–American joint venture called 'rantarine' was assassinated, and the first *panty* trader in Yamal and Taimyr was shot and is now a quadraplegic living in Dudinka.[162]

8.5.2 From Shuttlers to 'New Native Entrepreneurs' (NNE)

It is difficult to trace how information about the huge profits to be won in velvet-antler trading first reached Yamal. Most likely, it came not from the Nentsy or from the Russians, but from the trading outsiders that Humphrey has described as 'shuttlers'.

According to the herders I interviewed, the first businessman to bring this information to Yamal was an Armenian in the late 1980s. His example perfectly supports the stereotypes of Caucasians as sophisticated traders. He seemed to have made the necessary local contacts to gain entry to the tundra and procured a helicopter to fly out to reindeer herders' *chum*s in summer. But his enterprise failed, and in the end the reindeer herders who had given him antlers received nothing in exchange. The second of the 'early stories' was a more local one. A Khanty businessman entered this sphere, but his

[161] Personal communication with the Khanty businessman German Konkin, 6 September 1998, and with Dimitrii Khorolya, then Director of the Yar-Salinskii sovkhoz. These two were among the first to cut *panty* from domestic reindeer during Perestroika.

[162] List of killings by 'hitmen' in Russia 1991–4, Russian Agency of Investigations. (http://www.flb.ru/files_full.phtm.?id=238, accessed 15 November 2003). Personal communication with John Ziker, 21 May 2004.

access to the tundra was easier, since he was born a fisherman in the YNAO himself and had better local knowledge about how to organise transport and form the necessary networks in the tundra. He attempted to work with the biggest sovkhoz in Yamal, Yar-Salinskii. Most reindeer herders welcomed his initiative and were ready to cooperate with him, and everything looked promising. He spoke of a price of $200,000 per tonne of *panty*, to be paid by a customer from South Korea. However, he said his enterprise was struggling because of bureaucratic obstacles. Suddenly, after having set up the business, the okrug government demanded extensive documentation from him, which he was not able to deliver and his enterprise had to close down. He thinks that what he calls the 'agrarian mafia' in the Department of Agriculture wanted to reap the profits for themselves.[163]

After these first two unsuccessful attempts, *kommersanty* (as defined by Humphrey 1999: 38) entered the business. These are individuals who have the capital to access ground transport (truck, *vezdekhod*, motor boat) and with the help of local knowledge, travel to the herders' camps, especially in autumn during the slaughter when the camps are not far from villages, or in summer when some camps with smaller herds are close to rivers, where the herders engage in fishing. These small enterprises buy and resell the whole range of reindeer products, such as meat, mature antlers (*okostelenye roga*), and sometimes velvet antlers in small amounts, and also fish if available, and sell goods such as vodka, tea and ammunition. Among village and town officials, and indeed among the heads of bigger enterprises, these traders are extremely unpopular. As Humphrey has described (1999: 45), these flexible small enterprises are difficult to control and are therefore seen as dangerous. They are accused of exploiting the herders, and of making them drunk (*spaivat'*). However, some of the people accusing them have good reasons to undermine the business of these traders, since they have their own economic interests which are sometimes in direct competition with them.[164] These 'typical' *kommersanty*, however, make up a rather small proportion of the whole reindeer-herding business.

The most influential economic actors, besides the sovkhozy, are the vertically integrated reindeer enterprises run by the Nentsy themselves.

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[163] Personal communication with German Konkin 7 September 1998, Salekhard. To collect objective information on the antler business is extremely difficult, since the workings of this business at the okrug level is thought to be *kommercheskaia taina* (a commercial secret). In Moscow, it is understood that just saying too much can be dangerous, because of the Mafia's involvement.

[164] Personal communication with Nikolai Lachevich Okotetto, head of the Se-Iakha *sel'sovet*, whose sons are also engaged in the antler business, and speeches by members of the okrug duma and the Department of Agriculture during the 2nd congress of Yamal reindeer herders, Salekhard 12 March 2002.

Reindeer herders refer to them as *kommersanty*, but they do not fit any of the trader categories suggested by Humphrey. They have amalgamated all the strands of the reindeer business into one, from herding live reindeer to selling meat on the market, selling furs abroad, and selling dried velvet antlers in Moscow. It is this vertical integration from the pasture up to the business meeting with a South Korean customer that stands them apart from the traders. The first enterprise to successfully enter the reindeer antler business started in the mid-1990s on the northern Yamal Peninsula, run by two former *zootekhniki* of the sovkhoz Yamal'skii. They originally wanted to establish a private reindeer enterprise using the framework of the sovkhoz reindeer brigades. There are various stories surrounding this. One is that the two *zootekhniki* established an enterprise called Sokh-Yamal while the sovkhoz director was away from the village, declaring their new enterprise to be the owner of two sovkhoz herds. The founder of Sokh-Yamal, Leonid Vanuito, had been the head *zootekhnik* and had been passed over when a new director of the sovkhoz was appointed. The Department of Agriculture had instead favoured a Tatar, who had also grown up in north Yamal. In defiance of this, Leonid Vanuito sought to register his new enterprise Sokh with all its property at the okrug level, and so a commission from Salekhard came and asked Nikolai Okotetto, the head of the municipality (*sel'sovet*), to confirm the property of the new enterprise. Nikolai refused and thus helped the sovkhoz and its Tatar director to preserve its reindeer brigades. In time, however, the Tatar director had to leave the sovkhoz, and Leonid Vanuito finally took over the leadership. His own private enterprise has been run by his brother since 2004.[165]

In spite of these early difficulties, Sokh successfully engaged in meat production by buying private reindeer from herders, driving them to a corral and slaughtering them. Through its good relationships with Nadymgasprom, Sokh was also able to have access to helicopters and started to collect velvet antlers (*panty*) in summer. In exchange for meat and *panty*, they imported food, goods and even snowmobiles to the tundra for reindeer herders. Today, the enterprise is registered as 'OOO Sokh Yamal' (limited liability company) and has the rights and the contracts to receive subsidies from the okrug government. Besides the sovkhoz it is the only other stable economic actor and offers almost all the same services for reindeer herders as the former. Its reindeer herd, however, is rather small, officially having 490 animals (as of 1 January 2001), but Sokh buys approximately 5,000 reindeer per year from reindeer herders for slaughter. Reindeer herders can also trade fish or arctic fox furs in exchange for goods. Sokh sells the meat mainly on the domestic

[165] Personal communication with Nikolai Lachevich Okotetto, head of the Se-Iakha *sel'sovet*, 8 April 2001, and Leonid Vanuito, 13 March 2005.

market, and sells furs all over the Russian North in places where the reindeer herds have decreased, such as the Sakha Republic, and on one occasion even to Poland.

One important characteristic of these locally developed vertically integrated enterprises is that they employ their own herders who collect the live reindeer from private reindeer herders. Normally two herders are responsible for one *zaboinoe stado* (herd to be slaughtered). They start working in autumn and collect all the reindeer for slaughter within one region. They drive these deer from the tundra to the corral and for this three-months work they get a salary of 15,000 roubles.[166] One problem with these practices is that the slaughtering herds arrive in ever-increasing concentrations around the corrals in autumn, which affects the quality of the pastures in these areas.

Therefore Sokh and the other enterprises have introduced very strict slaughtering timetables, which specify the exact day on which a particular herd will be slaughtered. However, in the two cases I observed, the timetable became unworkable. In one case the slaughtering workers had not yet arrived for work, and so the slaughter was delayed for three days. The herd had to be pastured for two days in the vicinity of the slaughtering complex, during which time the animals degraded the pasture and lost valuable body weight. In the other case, Sokh shared the slaughtering corral in Se-Iakha with the sovkhoz, which wanted to reserve the right to slaughter first. So the herd awaiting slaughter had to be kept on pastures nearby, which again resulted in degradation. The practice of buying live reindeer from private herders has also now been adopted by sovkhozy, and it seems to be developing as a more important element in reindeer production, since the herds owned by the sovkhozy have diminished over the past 10 years.

Although figures are very rarely available, I was told that in the summer of 2001 Sokh collected approximately 40 tonnes of *panty*. For the reindeer herders this represented the equivalent of 5–6 million roubles (in July 2001, €200,000–250,000) flowing to the tundra in the form of goods. After drying, the antlers lose approximately 60% of their weight. This means that Sokh was able to sell in Moscow 15.6 tonnes of dried *panty* for a price of approximately $60 dollars per kg, giving a total of $936,000. How much of this money is kept as profit is difficult to determine since the calculation of transport costs is rarely made available. If transport was organised efficiently, Sokh would need a minimum of 250 hours of helicopter flying-time to collect the 40 tonnes of antlers. The official cost for this would have been

[166] Figure from 2000 for the enterprise of the Okotetto brothers, first named Nesei, then Agroinvest, and now part of the *obshchina* Ilebts.

$250,000, but most enterprises are able to get hold of helicopters for less.[167] This enterprise can be considered to be the most successful private one, because it survived the 1998 crisis when the Russian rouble was devalued, and it became the first institution besides the sovkhoz to be perceived by herders as stable (and therefore reliable).

In 1997, the head of the *sel'sovet*, Nikolai Okotetto, and his sons Mikhail and Igor established another enterprise engaging in the same business as Sokh. Today this business has grown to become a serious competitor, in most years slaughtering more reindeer (approximately 6,000), but collecting fewer antlers (approximately 30 tonnes in 2003). This case is interesting in terms of its institutional transformation and embeddedness with other enterprises. For example, they set up a slaughtering complex in the gas village of Sabetta (described above) and established good relations with their chairman, Sergei Kersianov (see above). For helicopter transport, they rely on their close contacts with a key figure at Mys Kamennyi airport, who is a pilot himself and whose wife is the airport dispatcher. This allows them to reduce helicopter costs considerably.

However, reindeer herders perceive this enterprise as being less stable than Sokh, since it has undergone several transformations. Having started as a KfKh (Nesei), it became a branch of a bigger enterprise 'Agroinvest', which in 1998 was established with support from the okrug government. However, in 2001 its director was accused of tax evasion and misappropriation of okrug government funds, and the whole enterprise disappeared from the public scene. This explains why modern Finnish equipment for slaughtering reindeer in Sabetta was never bought, although the okrug government had allocated money for this. Today, this vertically integrated reindeer enterprise of the Okotetto brothers is closely linked with the *obshchina* Ilebts (chapter 7). The head of the *obshchina* and his brother also run the reindeer business. It is difficult to assess how they are able officially to preserve the non-commercial character of the *obshchina* while running a business like this, and recent conversations indicate that the taxation authorities are beginning to ask probing questions.[168]

It is worth mentioning that these two vertically integrated reindeer enterprises are run by representatives of the two most powerful pre-Soviet kingroups in Yamal, the Okotetto and the Vanuito. This confirms Golovnev's (1997b) argument about the continuity of leadership structures among the

[167] I am aware that some of these figures are speculative, since the director of the enterprise would never disclose such information to outsiders. This information stems from three different people who are familiar with the workings of the *panty* business in northern Yamal. I provide these figures to give an idea of the approximate turnover in this business.
[168] Personal communications with Mikhail Nikolaevich Okotetto, 12–17 April 2004.

Nentsy, especially in Northern Yamal. These two enterprises are the most prominent examples of private reindeer businesses in Yamal, but I am aware of another three similar cases of Nentsy, all former *zootekhniki*, setting up enterprises in this way. As a result, the private reindeer business in Yamal today is controlled by local Nenets businessmen, who have close contacts with the reindeer herders themselves.

8.5.3 Linking the Local with the Global: From Tundra Pastures through Moscow to South Asia

In this section we look at the ways in which velvet reindeer antlers are transformed into a commodity for sale on South Asian markets. A key feature is the importance of local knowledge held by the entrepreneur, since in this case it is local traders who control the business. It is also possible to identify where in the exchange chain the border between cash and barter is located. The reindeer herders' position in this business challenges Humphrey's (2000: 79) and Anderson's (2000b: 341) statement about the nature of barter in Russia. Here we have an example of people consciously choosing barter over cash, in situations where cash is a real option.

The most difficult challenge in the process of velvet antler production is to procure the raw material within the required time schedule. The success of the whole production depends on the interaction between the reindeer herders and the enterprise that collects the cut antlers. The later that *panty* are cut, the more bone they contain, which means a decrease in quality and a reduction in the price. Therefore, the younger the antlers are, the better. Secondly, *panty* have to be collected as soon as possible after the cutting, preferably within one to two days, otherwise they begin to rot. This is why the 'producers' (the reindeer herders) and the 'collectors' (the traders) have to agree on an exact date for cutting and collecting the *panty*. Without an intimate knowledge of the herders' and the animals' seasonal cycle on their migration routes, it is impossible for an enterprise to enter the business of antler production.

An illustration of this process comes from a herding family with whom I stayed in the summer of 2001. Anniko and his family have a fairly big reindeer herd of just over 1,000 head in North Yamal. By June, the antlers were already quite well developed, and the family knew that soon the helicopter would come. What the collecting enterprise normally does is to fly in by helicopter to every reindeer herders' camp in order to agree on an exact date for the collection of *panty*. The enterprise also loads up the helicopter with the most commonly requested goods and groceries for the reindeer herders. The local knowledge required by these entrepreneurs is quite

astonishing: they not only have to know what goods reindeer herders normally want to buy, but also where several hundred nomadic camps are situated in the tundra on any given day. So they flew to Anniko to ask him how many kilograms of *panty* he wanted to cut that year. On the basis of his answer (in this case 300 kg) Anniko was able to choose a variety of items from the goods in the helicopter: fresh bread, tea, tobacco, noodles, spices, fruits, newspapers, books, rubber boots and such like. The herders get these goods in advance, before having cut the antlers. The entrepreneur records the price of these purchases in his account book, and when the *panty* are collected, he compares the amount of *panty* (payment) against the cost of the sold goods and notes which herder is in debt or credit. The first visit of the trading helicopter is the occasion for the herders to order more or different goods. The entrepreneur writes down the order and the prices.

This first flight is necessary because most private camps are not connected by any means of telecommunication. Only through direct personal communication can an entrepreneur find out what his customers want to buy for the summer, what quantity of *panty* they propose to sell, and the exact date on which he will be able to collect it. Money at this stage plays the 'virtual' role of converting goods into the equivalent of velvet antlers in the same way as we saw for the meat trade with the gas companies (see table 9 above). The whole pricelist of goods is calculated in equivalents of roubles and kilograms of *panty*.

The main purpose of the second helicopter flight to each camp is the collection of the *panty*, one or two days after the herders have cut it and packed it into linen sacks. Only then will Anniko know whether he sold more or less *panty* than the value of the goods he bought in advance. The second flight also brings the herders the extra goods they ordered. This time Anniko got a spare piston for his snowmobile, batteries for his Chinese tape recorder, some tapes with recent Russian disco music for his sons, and ammunition for his gun. Moreover, he got some fresh bread because it tastes better than the old bread from the spring supply, and some spicy Caucasian barbecue sauces, which they like with fresh reindeer meat. Anniko insists that the *panty* are weighed with his own scales before they are loaded on the helicopter, in order to avoid any cheating. In the summer of 2001, Anniko sold 300 kg, which equals about two-thirds the price of a *buran* (snowmobile), of which he already has two that do not work very well.

Normally, Anniko does not know the actual price of the goods he ordered and purchased. He trusts the entrepreneurs, Leonid Vanuito and Mikhail Okotetto, because he knows them and they know him. They are his only interface with the outside world, because only they know where the herders will be at *panty* cutting time. If an entrepreneur cheats Anniko one

year, he will simply choose to work with another one the next. This time it turned out that he had selected fewer products from the helicopter than the value of his *panty*, which meant that he was in credit with the trading enterprise. He is therefore entitled to take goods equal to this sum in early winter when his migration route reaches the trading post. His son Nikolai says that in recent years *panty* has become as important a means of income as meat.

Once the *panty* are collected, Anniko and his family are happy, because at least for the rest of the summer they can live in peace until the slaughtering campaign begins in October. However, his son Nikolai mentions how the growing market competition over *panty* collection impacts heavily on their lives. He says that during one month in 2000, eight helicopters from four different enterprises flew to his camp in the tundra to ask for *panty*. The enterprises are in direct competition with each other for the velvet antlers from every household and Anniko decided to give small amounts of his *panty* to each of these enterprises. Nikolai welcomes this development. He says in the best cases prices of goods get lower as the competition increases. Anniko, his father, however, complains about how much work is involved in dealing with these enterprises, and the lack of time he and his wife have to repair sledges, tent covers, clothes, harnesses and the like. In general, the summers had become too hectic, which is why they decided to give *panty* to only two enterprises the following year.

With the second helicopter flight, the velvet antlers arrive at the village base of the entrepreneur, e.g. Se-Iakha, and are put in a natural freezer, which is an underground ice chamber set in the permafrost. Here, the *panty*, according to the rules specified by Russian scientists (Iudin 1993), have to be kept frozen for a minimum of 20 days. A herder like Anniko gets the equivalent of about 150 roubles per kg ($5 in 2001). The collecting enterprise then has several options:

- It can ship the *panty* to Moscow in its current state (i.e. by frozen wagon/container). The Chinese or Korean businessmen who organise the drying and shipment to their home country will pay a maximum of $30 per kg for this form of *panty* in Moscow.
- It can arrange transport only to the village, and sell the *panty* there to a middleman for $10–15 per kg. This middleman organises transport by train to Moscow, and gets $30 per kg from the Korean or Chinese trader.
- It can arrange transport to the regional centre at Salekhard, dry and process the *panty*, and then sell it for $45–50 per kg to an Asian trader who comes to Salekhard himself and organises transport directly to China. This is the way the first shipments of *panty* were traded in 1910. The local trader can also organise the transport of the

dry *panty* to Moscow and sell it to an Asian businessman there for a just over $60.

The last option cuts out the middleman and promises higher profits, since the price for processed material is much higher than for the raw material. A second 'unofficial' drying facility was therefore opened in 2001 in Salekhard. When the *panty* arrives in Salekhard for processing, it may already have thawed, and for about four hours it has to be put in a dry heating room at a temperature of 70–72°C (Iudin 1993: 71). Afterwards, they are put in a wind dryer for 24 hours. This process is repeated until the material is dry. By then the material has lost up to 62% of its weight, but its value has increased by 300%, from $15 to $45 per kg.[169]

In Moscow, the *panty* business is highly unstable. The entrepreneur bringing the commodity to Moscow will make a telephone call to a private house, normally where Koreans or Chinese people are living. He announces that he has a certain amount of *panty* to sell immediately. He gets a call back from a Korean or Chinese businessman, who then comes to meet him and pays for the *panty* directly in cash, at a minimum of $60 per kg. The receiving businessman normally does not disclose his identity, nor does he give his own phone number. He organises shipping to his home country, usually along unofficial trading routes in order to avoid problems with taxes and border guards (bribing increases the costs). In China or Korea he sells on the *panty* either as a medicine or as chips for use in restaurants. The only information I could get on the final prices paid by customers in the Far East comes from a Chinese market in Seoul in April 1996, where 500 grams of cheap dried *panty* slices were offered for 40,000 South Korean won ($52), which works out at $104 per kg. This product is called *Rokkaku*. The traditional Chinese medicine made using velvet antlers is called *Rokuju* and was sold for 241,071 won per 75g. This gives a price of $4,185 per kg! (Takakura 1997: 74–89).[170] Unfortunately, after the shipments of *panty* arrive in Moscow, we know almost nothing about the onward trade links. These are dominated by Mafia-style structures, which change very quickly. As we saw above, some people have paid with their lives in their bid to enter this high profit, high risk business.

The production and marketing of *panty* as a commodity has certainly made the tundra attractive as a place for private business activities. It has

[169] I am grateful for these figures from Vladimir Ezyngi, Yar-Sale, who sells the dried velvet antlers of his reindeer to a middleman in Salekhard for $45. Such an individual approach without the big Nenets reindeer enterprises is highly exceptional. Personal communications 9–11 April 2001.

[170] I am grateful to my colleague Hiroki Takakura, who translated the relevant parts of his article from the original Japanese.

brought about a new type of economic institution, the vertically integrated reindeer enterprise, which challenges some of the common assumptions about post-Soviet traders (Humphrey 1999). Although they still make their main income from buying, transporting and selling, they also engage in the production itself, i.e. slaughtering and the cutting of antlers, and they increase the value of their products by processing them, unlike the typical petty traders.

We should therefore more properly view these enterprises as being run by 'new native entrepreneurs' (NNE). Their businesses are deeply rooted in Yamal, and they not only have the necessary knowledge of the tundra economy and bureaucracy, but they also have an interest in the development of the region. Therefore, they invest in what could be called a 'civil society' in Yamal. For example, the enterprise Sokh and the sovkhoz jointly organise the Day of the Reindeer Herders in April in Se-Iakha and Sokh is active in arranging sports competitions. By contrast, the members of the Okotetto enterprise, today *obshchina* Ilebts, engage in local politics and indigenous people's issues. I agree with Yurchak (2002: 320) here, who sees new entrepreneurs as the potential builders of a new civil society, if they are able 'to *imagine* themselves as members of a unified social group, who share aspirations about a civilised state' (italics in the original).

The 'new' in the NNE is not the re-establishing of a pre-existing state structure, a result of privatisation or of a dismantling of sovkhozy. It is also not a form of 'muddling through' (Gustafson 1999) or 'crypto-entrepreneurship' (Konstantinov 2002). Nentsy here act in overt entrepreneurship as opposed to the 'hidden privatisation' among reindeer herders on the Kola Peninsula (Konstantinov 2003). Here they form an entirely new institution. This enables them to range across three borders and make use of them: the border between tundra and village/town through kinship links and access to transport, the border between cash and barter by acting as middlemen in both forms of exchange, and the border between periphery and centre by gaining access to markets and buyers in Moscow and Asian countries while at the same time working with herders in the tundra.

We have seen that the NNE are closely connected with the new commodity of velvet antlers, a new factor in the market. This has several implications. First, the *panty* business is an additional economic sphere and has not replaced the pre-existing ones of meat and fur production. Because of this coexistence of the two spheres, the reindeer herding society has not been turned upside down by the sudden advent of globalisation via the antler business, making reindeer herders dependent on companies from the centre. This is what should have happened according to dependency theory and world-systems theory (Frank 1978; Wallerstein 1983). In Yamal the reindeer

herders have gained an additional source of income enabling them to improve their living conditions significantly. They understand that this income is less predictable and less stable than the 'classic' reindeer products. As a result, they spend the money gained from velvet antlers mainly on things beyond their basic needs—on what we might term 'lifestyle money', which is spent on 'unnecessary' items such as spicy sauces, tape recorders, disco music, ammunition, and snowmobiles for their sons, just as some wealthy parents buy cars for their children after graduating from high school.

'Luxury' money from *panty* is therefore special-purpose money, as identified in many societies. Hutchinson (1996: 83f), for example, distinguishes between 'shit money' earned from 'dirty' purposes and spent only on things & activities outside the immediate community sphere of the Nuer in East Africa, whereas 'clean money' is spent on basic and respectable purposes. The Nuer have a moral distinction in the various sources of income and assign these to certain forms of expenditure, as for example 'shit money' spent for leisure activities in town, but not for cattle. Different from that, the Nentsy distinguish more between basic and extended needs. It is not that someone would be scorned for buying staples with their income from antlers. Rather, the notion here is that one should not rely too heavily on this source of income, because it is risky. This makes the income from antlers similar to income earned from speculations on the stock market. Most people would not want to risk trying to meet their everyday needs in this way, but would happily use any income from such speculation to buy luxury items such as another car or a holiday house.

8.6 Conclusion

The analysis of the reindeer market in this chapter has shown that in the YNAO today there is a plurality of markets, a plurality of economic actors and a plurality of incomes. The state-controlled enterprises exist alongside vertically integrated private enterprises, the smaller-scale traders and the shuttlers. All these are overarched by the okrug administration, which implements a policy of providing the basic framework for the development of reindeer herding as an economy as well as the basis for the ethnic identity of the Nentsy.

In the meat and the antler sectors, there are two market spheres that work to different rules. Whereas the meat market functions according to state-regulated subsidies and supplies (almost exclusively) the domestic YNAO market, the antler market fits more the stereotype of the *dikii rynok*, the wild market as it is often perceived in post-Soviet Russia (see Anderson 2000b).

Both the meat and the antler markets can be seen as part of what Gudeman calls the 'market sphere of exchange'. Opposed to this is the 'community sphere of exchange' (cf. chapter 5). According to Gudeman (2001: 26), the latter is based upon trust relations and personal contacts, and is culturally embedded and self-sufficient. The market sphere, however, is anonymous and reliant on money as a means of exchange. Although essentially verifying the existence of these two spheres, the material presented here shows that they are not entirely independent of each other. I argue that a juxtaposition of the two helps us to identify where the two spheres of exchange are linked and how they are characterised. As a generalisation then, it might be assumed that the community sphere is located in the tundra, based on trust networks, and uses barter in a form of delayed exchange; whereas the market sphere is located in the towns, based on more anonymous economic relations, and relies on cash exchanges and immediate payments.

Indeed, we find that cash in the Yamal tundra is not prominent as a material means of exchange. However, I have shown that it can be prominent as a means of calculating barter equivalents, when the community and the market sphere of exchange meet. Sahlins identified this function of money as a 'bridge between goods' as being characteristic of 'primitive money', rather than performing a commercial function. In my example of the comparative price list of goods available from the gas company in Sabetta and the commercial enterprise, both herders and traders looked at the virtual money price of the goods, which hides their real costs to the herders. Therefore I argue that the virtual presence of money in these lineal barter chains is a result of a quasi-market exchange on the border between tundra and town. There, money's virtual objectification distorts the actual terms of trade. The trading chain of velvet antlers also bridges these two spheres. In order to gain access to the raw material, local knowledge and personal relations are the key to success. This is a characteristic of the community sphere of exchange. Here we find delayed balanced exchange patterns (see Sahlins 1972: 191–6), such as between the sovkhoz and its herders for the supply of goods, the gas company and the herders, and the commercial enterprises for the meat and antler business. Balanced exchange requires the 'willingness to give for that which is received' (Sahlins 1972: 220). Money serves here as a virtual, not material 'token that stores the value in the interim' between the delivery of the good and the reindeer product (Sahlins 1972: 230).

The border between the market sphere and the community sphere of the economy, between delayed and immediate exchange, and between barter and cash in these cases lies within the area of the activity of the enterprises. The vertically integrated reindeer enterprises, such as Sokh, link these two spheres by working with herders for barter in the tundra and selling for

money in Moscow in the most immediate and anonymous way one could imagine: receiving cash on the spot from a south Asian trader who does not even disclose his identity and might never appear again. This is the extreme opposite of the trust networks and local embeddedness which are to be found in the tundra. This investigation of the links between different spheres of exchange reveals how the globalised economy is connected to particular local contexts. It is this analysis of border crossing or 'border bridging' that gives us a better understanding of economic dynamics, rather than the identification of factors separating these spheres.

It is important to understand that the tundra sphere of the economy did not lose its specific characteristics when it came into contact with the broader national and global economy. It is only partly integrated, as I have shown, and therefore the community sphere in the tundra still upholds its particular rules and characteristics. This supports one important argument about Nenets culture, namely that their way of interacting with the world 'outside of the tundra' is not to adapt themselves to models or civilisations presented by incomers, but to make these models fit their own lifestyle which is centred around mobility, flexible use of natural resources, and maintaining a common social space (cf. Stammler 2002: 55f). Interestingly, even in times of 'remonetisation', cash does not physically enter the tundra, not because it is not available, but because reindeer herders actually prefer to barter. They say in the tundra that there are no stores anyway, so cash is not needed, and an exchange *tovar za tovar* (good for good) suits them better. This finding challenges the view that postsocialist barter exists only because of a shortage of cash (Anderson 2000b: 341; Humphrey 2000: 79). It also challenges a prominent sociological argument that builds on the world system theory, namely that alongside economic integration goes a value integration (*Wertintegration* or *Werthomogenisierung*; Hoffmann-Nowotny: 1993: 58) of the peripheral regions into the world system.

This situation might be seen rather as confirming Wallerstein's (1974; in German 1986: 450) argument about the outer arenas of the periphery. World system theorists would see the Yamal tundra as such an outer arena, with the exchange of goods as the first step in its further assimilation. On this basis, the tundra economy would eventually become completely commoditised and incorporated into the market sphere. But an examination of the history of economic relations between the Russians and the Nentsy since the Tsarist Empire indicates that people engaged in the tundra economy still managed to preserve their separate sphere of values and modes of behaviour (*zakon tundry*), and unless reindeer herding is eliminated by industrial production through total destruction of the pastures, I see no reason why this special set of tundra rules should not persist even in the post-Soviet period.

The tundra sphere of the reindeer economy exists alongside the market sphere in Yamal, and is connected to it, but not consumed by globalisation. This simultaneous co-existence of economic spheres or modes of production is acknowledged in anthropological and sociological literature (e.g. Evers 1996), which dismisses the argument that there is an evolutionary order from subsistence to market integration to globalisation. It shows that anthropologists can make valuable contributions to the ongoing debate on the chances and risks of globalisation. Just as 'market' is not some external force by itself, but consists of the sum of people's economic behaviour, we also should not see globalisation as having an independent uncontrollable life of its own, although this view is still widespread in public and academic debates (Rodrik 2000). The analysis of the recent economic dynamics of the reindeer market in Yamal shows that globalisation is also the sum of the behaviour of the relevant actors. Globalisation is something in which actors can engage, and the way they do this is a result of these people's learned experiences of interaction with the outside world.

Chapter 9
Nomads on the Move—Culture in Movement

> The fact that our Yamal'skii *raion* … is at the forefront of reindeer herding today depends on the condition of our soul. If we continue to have a competitive spirit (*boevoi dukh*), I think we not only can melt the ice of the Kara Sea, we can do many more things. Therefore, I want to conclude that the spirit of our northern people depends on our culture (Khabecha Khaverevich Yaungad, Yar-Sale, 7 April 2001).

This statement by a representative of the Nenets elite clearly illustrates one of the important overarching questions that I set out to answer in this book: the interpretation of what is called 'the Nenets culture'. Even after returning from fieldwork in the YNAO, I remained puzzled by the widely held belief that 'Nenets culture' is strong, self-confident and resistant to all outside pressures. The strength of this view made me sceptical and curious at the same time: was there really no other reason than their strong culture for the exceptional performance of the Yamal-Nenets reindeer herders and the growing numbers of both animals and humans on the tundra? As fieldworkers and friends we can be sympathetic when the people we live and study with are successful as brokers who understand how to play the 'culture' card in the regional political game, as we saw for the proponents of the *obshchina* movement (chapter 7). However, I claim that such a concept of culture is not of much explanatory value in any academic sense. I argue that 'culture as a political concept' should be kept separate from 'culture as an analytical term', just as has been argued for the concept of 'tradition' (Gray 2003; Habeck 2005; Stammler 2005).

The Nentsy, as one of Siberia's smaller indigenous populations, have been well studied over many years. However, none of this research has attempted to demystify what is widely seen as the phenomenon of 'Nenets culture'. In the only English-language study of the Nentsy, Golovnev & Osherenko (1999) consider why, despite the magnitude of the changes affecting the Nentsy, their culture has survived intact. They claim that 'per-

haps, there was some remedy within the Nenets culture that served to heal the cracks, or maybe the Nenets inherited this immunity from their ancestors' (1999: 30). They also claim that a 'mild but stubborn resistance' is inherent in Nenets culture (1999: 89).

My starting point in this work was the conviction that taking 'culture' as a single all-embracing concept requires us to surrender the possibility of undertaking a thorough analysis of this issue. To explain Nenets successes using an essentialist conception of culture is to suggest that the apparently inexplicable is in fact simple and easily understandable: if it is because of 'their culture' that reindeer herders in Yamal are more successful than others, the 'how' and 'why' of their post-Soviet performance would need no further study. To assume that a culture is static and stable and then to measure how outside influences disturb this stability is to miss the fact that people's livelihoods are in constant flux, transforming and adapting to changes that come from within and from outside. This is especially true of those people whose lives are centred on mobility, since on their migrations nomads are constantly exposed to changes in their environment and must respond actively to them. They are also able to adjust quickly to very different social environments such as a Russian-dominated village or town and a nomadic camp. Buying into an essentialist discourse leads us as anthropologists inevitably into the trap of reifying culture. Hann (2002: 260–3) argues that even a more widely accepted pluralistic notion of culture supports what he calls 'a totalitarian character' of culture, and he suggests we should consider abandoning 'culture' as a noun altogether, since this implies a reification to a certain extent. I agree that we are well advised to make very conscious and careful use of the term 'culture' and to use it where we actually refer to common practices, ideas and experiences of people in a given social and natural environment. It is by studying all of these facets that we can contribute to a general understanding of how people live, rather than treating culture as a single concept. I also argue that we cannot maintain common practices as being connected to particular ethnic groups and so should not organise our perception of the world according to inflexible categories.

I believe that a detailed analysis of particular elements, especially those related to the Nenets nomadic lifestyle that influence how they deal with their social and natural environment, enables us to understand why one particular group of pastoralists has a different experience of 'meeting the market' than another. Long-term fieldwork enables the anthropologist to unravel an interdependent set of practices into constituent parts, investigate their interrelations on the ground, and then reassemble them in a theoretical analysis. This brings such work to the forefront of scholarly debate.

The argument I put forward in this book is a complex one which has required an overview of regional developments as well as detailed ethnographic accounts from fieldwork with particular families. As we have moved through the chapters of this book, we have become familiar with a wide variety of nomadic practices in relation to the people's animals, their land and each other. I see all of these tied together by one important condition: their need and their enthusiasm for movement, their readiness to move, and the high prestige accorded to movement. Connected to this is the idea that there is more to nomadism among the Nentsy than their role as actors in a food-producing economy under harsh arctic conditions, a theme to which I shall return at the end of this chapter.

9.1 Interaction, Knowing and Agency

Despite the importance of movement in the lives of the Nentsy, movement alone cannot explain why the Yamal-Nentsy have thrived so well—with increased herd sizes and levels of income—under the difficult conditions of post-Soviet economic transformations. So what is the reason then? Do others move because they have to, and the Nentsy, because they want to? To claim this would be to do an injustice to many other reindeer-herding communities throughout the Russian North. Instead, I have suggested that the way people interact with their resources—their animals and land—and among themselves in relation to these resources is worth exploring in more detail. This reveals important insights into the *nenei ilngana*, what Nentsy call the 'real life'. What is important here is not the act of movement itself, but how movement is connected to people's understanding of themselves and other beings in the tundra. It is about flexibly using pastures and animals, about shifting entitlements among friends and relatives, about sharing the use of land and animals (see chapters 3, 5, 6 and 7 above). I have shown how the nomads have an intimate knowledge of the past and present physical and social conditions of these resources, and I have analysed how these ways of knowing find their way into two types of interactions: interactions within their own nomadic community (chapters 3, 5 and 6) and interactions between nomads and their physical and social surroundings (chapters 4, 7 and 8).

It is helpful to consider examples from the chapters that show this connection between knowing and interactions among people. Herders merge herds in early summer, and separate them again in winter, because they know how the animals react to mosquito harassment in summer and to competition for lichen ranges in winter (chapters 3 and 5). The knowledge that a particular reindeer was a gift from your father's close friend ties you as a herder into a network of delayed exchange (chapter 5), which you

continue to maintain. And knowing how your neighbours move, what distance their herd is from your herd and which direction they travel in has a direct influence on your day-to-day behaviour with the land and the animals, because you want to avoid any unintended mixing of herds, as can happen when camps move too close to one another (chapter 3). Finally, knowing where your age-old land (your *iskonnaia zemlia*) lies in relation to the land you currently use for herding influences your choice of who you dedicate an animal to when you strangle it, or where you bury your parents (chapter 6).

Ways of knowing also influence interactions between people and their surroundings. Under the Soviet regime, private ownership of reindeer was limited, but herders knew how to come to informal agreements with sovkhoz or *sel'sovet* leaders in order to preserve their herds. I have shown that this led to a relationship between the sovkhoz and the private households of its workers that was beneficial to both sides (chapter 4). This also exemplifies the way in which the 'static … community of a collective or state farm' (Humphrey 1998: 440) was imbued with numerous flexibly adjusted decisions through a flow of information in both directions between the nomads and the sovkhoz.[171] Another example of this second type of interactions is the way in which herders and their representatives deal with the situation in which gas enterprises now have entitlements to land. In chapter 7 I investigated how they have established *obshchiny* in reaction to or in anticipation of large-scale hydrocarbon extraction. In this way, Misha and Nikolai of the *obshchina* Ilebts have actively been able to shape their relations with possible competitors on their tundra. However, at the same time they stick to their own flexible pattern of pasture use. Finally, the way in which they meet the market serves as another example of the second type of interaction—how their knowing of current social conditions in the surroundings finds its way into their day-to-day or seasonal economic activities (chapter 8). They have recognised the growing demand for velvet reindeer antlers as an opportunity offered by the economic environment surrounding them and taken full advantage of it, influencing the character of the business in the process. By developing vertically integrated reindeer enterprises, they now control the trade on the ground, i.e. they control interactions between reindeer herders and the representatives of the market economy.

What these examples show and what I have tried to analyse in this book is the specific form of dialogue that the Nenets nomads have developed with the actors surrounding them. The nomads maintain a specific lifestyle

[171] I agree with Humphrey that the structure and the system were static in Soviet times; but it became imbued with life only by real people living in it. For example, a state farm had exactly the same decision mechanisms and organisational structure as a state oil enterprise, but the practices within each structure made them two very different entities.

niche, and yet they are integrated into the broader society no matter what the political regime governing it. At the heart of this nomadic lifestyle lie practices and values that adjust to rapidly changing times but are built on the experience of generations and so provide a sense of continuity with the past.

None of the many changes that have impacted on the social and economic environment of the Nenets nomads, such as the coming and going of two empires, massive state interference, even Soviet institutionalisation, has managed to replace their own important principles of relating flexibly to their animals and environment. What is more, they have adapted these changes to meet the challenges of the outside world, confirming Khazanov's (1994) key argument that we can only understand dynamics within nomadic societies if we have a thorough understanding of the changes in the world surrounding them, and analyse their development in close connection to this world. In the YNAO case, sovietisation had a huge impact on Nenets nomadic life, but nomads also influenced the face of sovietisation in Yamal (see chapter 4). During industrialisation, some of the incoming population in the YNAO accepted reindeer meat in their daily diet, and reindeer have thus become an identity marker for the whole YNAO, even though only a tiny minority of the population is actively engaged in reindeer herding. This shows that the interaction between herders and their surroundings is a dynamic two-way process, in which each side considerably influences the other.

In connection with recent discussions about the agency of reindeer herders (Habeck 2005), we could say that both the nomads and the actors surrounding them direct their agency towards each other. The Soviet and post-Soviet administrators and industrialisers made active decisions in relation to reindeer herders, and the reindeer herders with their agency influenced and sometimes pre-empted these decisions. Thus, we can say that these interactions have always possessed bi-directional agency as a precondition. Pushing the agency argument further, we could also hold that the natural environment of the Nentsy has agency: the animate environment acts by changing the weather and accessibility of pastures, and the reindeer herders adjust their decisions to these changes. Therefore, reindeer herders' agency is always embedded in the agency of their natural and social environment. However, I have held back from over-emphasising the concept of agency in relation to reindeer herders. The impression that it is mainly their own agency that makes them successful in the post-Soviet context is at least doubtful, and they are certainly not the only actors with agency. Rather, I have shown that it is the nature of the dialogue between multiple actors that is important in understanding developments in the YNAO.

9.2 Innovative Adaptability

One important underlying principle of the dialogue of the nomads with other actors is the innovative way in which they relate to changes that are beyond their immediate control. This implies adopting something new but making use of it according to one's own needs. Therefore, Haakanson's (2000: 223) finding that 'they have adapted modern material culture to fit their mode of life and not the opposite' is valid not only for material culture, but also for ideas and strategies, as I have shown in chapter 7 for the *obshchina* movement and in chapter 8 for the antler trade. However, these ideas and strategies do not remain static. This particular way of bringing together new elements with their own life, adjusting them to their own needs, adding something where it makes sense, is a continuous process of a creative nature. The mental creativity can be illustrated by the simple example of how the reindeer nomads turn an old piece of rubber, disposed of on a gas drilling rig, into a valuable tool for training young reindeer bulls as draft animals.

Reindeer herders in most cases have adopted innovations to supplement their own way of life. Thus, sovietisation did not replace private herds, the construction of villages did not replace nomadic lifestyle, sovkhoz welfare did not replace the system of mutual assistance, Soviet emancipation did not replace the gender cooperation in labour in the tundra, *obshchina* territories did not replace the *iskonnaia* and *moia zemlia* concepts, commoditisation did not replace the domestic sphere of the economy, and money did not replace barter exchange in the tundra. Seemingly contradictory mental and economic systems are actively combined by reindeer nomads in an innovative way. Throughout the foregoing chapters I have demonstrated that elements of both sides of these systems are part of Nenets everyday practices and I have analysed the places at which they meet. We obtain fruitful insights when we see beyond apparent contradictions and perceive them as belonging together within one complex set of lived practices in reindeer nomadism. The reindeer herders can deliver products to the planned economy and engage in private business, they can be good shamans and good communists, they can be Soviet citizens and lifestyle nomads all at the same time, just so long as they have access to pastures and reindeer on the tundra.

The adoption of new components and practices as supplements and not as substitutes to a mobile lifestyle brings us back to a question raised at the beginning of this book (section 1.2.2) about how we can conceptualise adaptation in this case. What I have shown is a process quite different to assimilation of the Nenets into the dominant Russian 'culture'. I found it important to stress that adjustments in the tundra to a changing natural and social environment have resulted in a better performance of reindeer herding as a distinct economic activity and as a way of life for the *tundroviki*. The

border between the natural and the non-natural, supra-natural and the social environment is sometimes rather arbitrarily drawn and in fact is interwoven in the surroundings in which reindeer herders interact. Therefore I prefer to see processes of social change in the tundra as adaptations by the reindeer herders. Adaptation originally referred to evolutionary biological adjustments of organisms, but I see this process in the sense of 'natural and social adaptability' encompassing social, behavioural and historical adjustments (adaptation through learning) (Fleischhacker 1988; Moran 1997: 1; Moran 2000).

I have shown that economic change, political change and institutional change have influenced life in the tundra. However, Nenets adaptation has not resulted in their assimilation into a 'global society'. Their coexistence with the dominant Russian population in the YNAO comes close to what has been called 'stabilised pluralism', a situation quite untypical of acculturation processes (Glick 1997: 1). In this way I understand Nenets tundra nomadism—and possibly the livelihoods of many humans—as being constantly involved in actions and processes, instead of being in a constant state or fixed condition. As social actors, the nomads create experiences, which shape their practices of engaging with their social and natural environment.

9.3 Economy and Property

This study of the dialogue that Nenets reindeer nomads have with their social and natural surroundings is not only about communities of tundra nomads and their ability to adapt; it also relates to two key debates in anthropology: economy and property.

The Nentsy meet the market with a sense of adventure; they dive into new forms of business, and they try to make money, but the market is merely one among several economic arenas with which they engage. They combine their market adventures with multiple subsistence strategies that provide a secure basis for survival. The greater the variety of economic strategies they have, the less vulnerable they are if one of them fails. This multiplicity of strategies, all of which are embedded into a flexible and mobile way of life, is the local face that they give to globalisation in the YNAO. They own shares in Gasprom, the world's largest gas producing company, along with fellow shareholders in the Moscow Kremlin and in the Eon-Ruhrgas headquarters in Germany. Their products end up on markets and restaurants in Moscow, Beijing and Seoul, and yet this does not prevent them from being part of extended domestic exchange networks in the tundra, a complex set of relationships and ties, which are enforced through reindeer entitlements with neighbours and relatives.

In more theoretical terms this means that commoditisation—a growing engagement in the market economy—does not necessarily lead to a decline in economic activity in the domestic sphere and in gift exchange. This parallel existence of two economic spheres, be they called 'community' and 'market', or 'gift' and 'commodity' (Gregory 1982; Carrier 1995; Gudeman 1998), makes it interesting to analyse where the interface lies between the two. The analysis of the *panty* economy (chapter 8) revealed that among Nenets reindeer herders trade is not just the occupation of incomers, and that producers of the raw materials are not necessarily detached from the trade. Some reindeer herders, or brothers of herders, engage in *panty* trading themselves, and all the new native entrepreneurs (NNE) are reindeer owners and help with the *panty* production.

In this postsocialist community, barter is not always a replacement for 'the real thing', namely exchange through money (Anderson 2000b: 341). Barter based on a deliberate avoidance of money in the tundra is very different to the general traits of barter in Russia analysed by Humphrey (2000: 80), who found that 'everyone is conscious that if only they had money (especially dollars) they could defer the infinity of their desires without trouble'. On the contrary, Yamal nomads find it easier to get goods in exchange for their *panty*, because they get what they need immediately instead of having to convert money into goods in distant towns or villages. Barter is a conscious choice of producers, even though they are offered money as well.

Globalisation then has not led to a growth of anonymity or marginalisation, or even the 'lumpenisation' (Pika 1999) of those who produce the raw materials. The reindeer herders engage with the global market as an addition to their other economic strategies, namely meat on the domestic market, and numerous reindeer products and fish for subsistence and exchange. They shape their engagement with the global economy to their own advantage, and those outsiders who want to profit from this have to agree to their conditions, e.g. bring food and other goods for *panty* to the tundra, because money cannot buy them. In other words, through their agency they influence an economy that is otherwise controlled by incomers. In turn, as I have shown, this kind of interaction with the global market influences their seasonal activities, and thus becomes ingrained in the Nenets nomadic tundra economy.

In order to understand the basis of this tundra economy, I have argued that a detailed analysis of property relations in animals and land is of vital importance. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, this topical focus stems from the general research program of a wide group of anthropologists. In this respect I have analysed how, using material from the Yamal-Nentsy, we can

refine theoretical paradigms about property in animals and about territoriality. I believe that by examining the particular ways in which reindeer nomads and other land users build their property relations, and how they relate to their animals and their environment, we can avoid falling into the trap of reifying culture in future studies.[172]

In chapters 5–7 my research has contributed to debates about private property in land and the social significance of animals in the tundra. The case of the Yamal nomads has shown that property relations of nomads in respect of their animals and the land were transformed by external influences, such as the change from the Tsarist to the Soviet regime, and from the Soviet to the Russian presidential regime, and, as these external influences changed, so these property relations also became multi-layered. New categories and perceptions of property were added to the existing set and merged with it. This confirms my argument that innovations that have proved to be useful in the tundra did not replace existing practices but supplemented and altered them in a process of creative interaction.

In the case of animal property, reindeer herders share the use of state-owned reindeer, and they treat them as an object of exchange in addition to their exchanges of private reindeer and to cooperation in herding work. Today, herders' day-to-day interactions with their animals encompass both private and state-owned reindeer, and their simultaneous existence is not perceived as contradictory. Multiple property regimes in land and animals have thus become combined in the Nenets lifestyle. Reindeer in tundra pastoralism have significance not only as a source of income and 'meat on the hoof', but also as objects of exchange, which are vital in order to establish and maintain long-lasting social networks among nomads. I have shown in chapter 5 that tundra reindeer are frequently passed among Nenets households and are the most important means of sustaining social cohesion along friendship and kinship lines.

I have argued that on an assumed continuum of social significance of animal property we should think of the Nenets reindeer as lying in the middle between the two extremes. At one end there is the high social significance of cattle for African nomads, whose animals are crucial as a means and symbol of alliances among people and communities (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1940). At the other end is the lesser social significance of sheep

[172] On the other hand, I do not claim that economic and social change can be understood by looking at property relations alone, either among the Yamal-Nentsy or elsewhere. Ongoing research is based on some of the findings in this study, but also goes beyond it, comparing European Nentsy with Yamal Nentsy, focusing on the ways that mobile tundra economies can coexist with gas and oil extraction. This is probably the biggest challenge for this region since colonisation by the Russians. For ongoing studies see http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/events/russianoil and http://www.arcticcentre.org/contentparser.asp?deptid=15989.

and goats for the Basseri (Barth 1964), whose animals are mainly used for trading at market and come closer to the 'meat on the hoof' notion.

Reindeer among the Nentsy in Yamal are at the core of people's relations with each other, and are the supreme form of property for these nomads. This is true both as live property, when animals are used during herding and within friendship and kinship networks, and as dead property, when animals are used for meat, blood and fur. I have shown that this can happen both in the domestic and the market sphere of the economy, be it as a gift or commodity. Historically, the multiple forms of property in animals in Yamal have left traces in the current property regime of reindeer: the private herds of the Nentsy survived through the era of the Soviet Union, and the sovkhoz herds still survive 20 years after the beginning of Perestroika. Thus, the proponents of both a communist planned economy and 'neoliberal shock therapy' can find traces of their models in the lifestyle nomadism of the Yamal-Nentsy.

With regard to another set of property relations, those between people and the tundra, I have also shown the flexibility of their ideas. For example, a Nenets reindeer herder answered my question about land ownership by declaring that 'the land belongs to the state', and then quickly amended this to 'the land is common' (*zemlia obshchaia*). During the same conversation, he also told me where his land (*moia zemlia*) is, and how this differs from his age-old land (*moia iskonnaia zemlia*). This kind of 'property pluralism' has become part of the nomads' day-to-day interaction with their pastures. I have shown in chapters 6 and 7 how these findings from the Yamal-Nenets reindeer nomads contribute to a broader theory of relations between people and their land. Thinking about what model best serves the purpose of understanding the nomads' interactions with the tundra, I have suggested that even in cases where people do not defend their access to land, but rather move along their migration routes and enact their way of knowing the tundra, we can speak of territorial behaviour.

The mainstream definition of territoriality as behaviour to secure and defend access to resources (Cashdan 1983; Casimir 1992a, b) can be used to explain recent strategies such as *obshchina* formation, which the Nentsy use to respond to the growing scarcity of pastures. They perceive this scarcity to be the result of the growing numbers of animals and the loss of land to oil and gas extraction on the Yamal Peninsula. However, this narrow definition of territoriality has its limitations, just like the narrow definition of the relations between animals and pasture through carrying capacity (chapter 7). I have argued that seeing territoriality merely as defensive behaviour does not help if we want to understand the nuances and subtlety with which nomads engage with their tundra. The very definition of the tundra as 'land'

is worth reflecting on (chapter 6), since on the Yamal Peninsula it consists more of ice than land for most of the year.

Therefore I have suggested a combination of the theories of resource defence and of those of knowing the land (Anderson 1998, 2000a). Nomads on Yamal relate to the tundra, behave in it as part of a whole system, without necessarily excluding others from access to it. This form of territoriality is neither defence nor is it tenure in the original sense of the word (*tenere*: Lat. to hold). If there is any 'holding' at all, it is rather the tundra holding the Nentsy. Rather, I argue that different ways of using the tundra give it different meanings, and give it different 'affordances' (Ingold 1992). These meanings are each connected to a particular way of knowing, and they all leave their traces in the current relationship between the Nentsy and their environment. For example, knowing the best places for the collective winter hunt of arctic foxes implies that the tundra is structured in the people's minds according to the movement of arctic foxes. This is a different perception of the tundra to that used when considering the seasonal pasture needs of a reindeer herd, the size of which varies from year to year.

Even though hunting as a way of engaging with the tundra played a more prominent part in the past, I have shown in chapter 6 that property relations structured according to hunting on the tundra are still enacted. In central Yamal, the long-distance migration corridors of brigades are the dominant pattern, whereas in northern Yamal the hunting way of relating to the tundra is more alive in people's minds, even though there the richer nominal hunters have all become herders with large herds. The Soviet system tried to make the two strategies of hunting and herding separate and stable, but beneath the official layer they always remained fluid and flexible with nominal hunters engaging in herding and herders in hunting.

Territorial patterns mirror these two strategies. The patterns form two variations on a continuum of combined mixed economies, where herding, fishing and hunting become important to different extents at different times. Layton et al. (1991) argued that this hunting–herding continuum should challenge the notion of two different evolutionary stages of economic activity and the categorisation of land uses as inclusive and exclusive. I agree with Smith (1991: 268) who claims that too many communities combine various economic activities to allow a distinct categorisation of societies into hunter-gatherer and pastoralist types. Whereas Ingold (1991: 264) saw among hunter-gatherers and pastoralists a 'radically different understanding of relations with their environments', the Nentsy appear simultaneously to combine elements of both a 'nomadic thinking' (Ahmed 1999) and a 'hunting logic' (Bird-David 1992). However, presently they are more connected to herding in their daily relations with the reindeer than native northerners

elsewhere, for example the Dolgans in the Anabar district of the Sakha Republic (Ventsel 2004), where hunting wild reindeer for food is an important part of their daily lives.

I suggest that analyses of territorial behaviour among nomads should consider both the defensive aspect—how people negotiate access to land—and the cooperative aspect—how people develop partnerships with the land and with the various beings who share it. With such a combined approach, we can understand how reindeer herders can accept a territorial (defensive) rhetoric with *obshchiny*, while at the same time continue to enact their own *emic* practices. Thus this is about flexibly moving between different ideas and perceptions of the land, which implies different sets of entitlement and duties for its users.

9.4 Nomadism: Movement beyond Culture?

Nearly 70 years ago, Herskovits claimed that 'culture is no mystical entity that can travel without its human carriers'. He asked 'whether culture is an entity in its own right, whether it leads an objective existence of its own' (Herskovits 1938: 11f). Today, when studying Russia and other postsocialist countries, we find some anthropologists working with such assumptions, which are appropriated by the political representatives of the peoples themselves. As we saw at the start of this chapter, this is what Hann (2002) meant when he pointed out that the application of culture as a concept to promote rights of self-determination and to construct identity within a group has become very popular throughout the postsocialist world. The indigenous peoples of the Russian North are no exception to this. Like Hann, I have argued that culture as a political concept is not satisfactory for the purposes of scholarly debate: for example, 'culture' as a unified explanation for the success with which the Nentsy 'meet the market' would imply that Nenets culture is therefore more successful than other cultures such as the Chukchi, the Koryak or the Even.

Fox & King (2002: 4) recently suggested that we should leave this endless discussion behind and do good anthropology by employing concepts that work locally rather than struggling for a globally applicable definition of culture. On the one hand, I see my approach to the Yamal case as consistent with this suggestion, for example when I applied classical anthropological methods to explain the Nenets performance in the post-Soviet economy. On the other hand, I feel pushed by my material to contest the 'reifying culture' discourse, as it is still prevalent in many publications and even more in the minds of people. I think that today we should ask the same question that Herskovits asked of culture but this time for the terms 'market' and 'globalisation'. I extend an Ingoldian (2000) view to all three of these contested

terms—culture, market and globalisation—and suggest that we should see them as locally adjusted concepts, formed by the experiences of peoples' interactions with each other, with economic actors and with the world surrounding them.

By rejecting concepts such as culture, globalisation or market as 'totalities', or as discrete black boxes containing all practices, experiences, actions, narratives, and so on, I do not intend to reject all non-material variables in favour of materialistic ones. I have highlighted at several stages of this study the important role of the enthusiasm for movement, movement as a form of privilege, a nomadic thinking that I have experienced among the Nenets reindeer nomads. All the particular variables that I examined in this study are related through the importance of movement in its multiple dimensions: movement of people and animals across the tundra, and movement in the sense of flexibility, with the movement of ideas constituting the core quality of any human action.

If we understand the meaning of Nenets movement, with all its facets, we can recognise that it is analytically impossible to make a statement about their culture 'as it is'. Instead, I set out to show how the Nenets nomadic lifestyle is never at one particular stage. Their practices transform their lifestyle continuously, and instead of trying to produce snapshots, we should understand how people change and adapt their actions in everyday life, how they engage with the important components of this life, move them, use them, know them, and how they incorporate what they pick up from regional or global discourses. This is what I tried to do by looking at how they combine and recombine the main pieces that together produce the texture of their lifestyle nomadism. Because of this movement and flexibility, the people are well prepared to respond to changes in their physical and social environment.

I have therefore suggested that we should consider nomadism among the Nentsy beyond economic terms—as more than 'a distinct form of food producing economy' (Khazanov 1994:17). This leads me to disagree with academic reflections about the 'end of nomadism' (Scholz 1991, Humphrey & Sneath 1999). Besides mobile grazing of animals and producing food for a reliable subsistence base, nomadism among the Yamal-Nentsy is the continuous movement of families across the land as an act of free choice. This mobile way of live gives them respect and prestige in their own community, they enjoy the freedom associated with their movement, and they take pride in it. Nomadism also marks their identity, and makes them feel that they play an equal part in a broader community of beings in the tundra.

A mutual understanding between incomers and reindeer nomads has made Nenets nomadism possible throughout the twentieth century. In the

near future they will experience the effects of large-scale gas extraction on the Yamal tundra. Villages such as the *raion* centre at Yar-Sale on the Yamal Peninsula have already been transformed from a conglomerate of old wooden houses in the swamps to neatly ordered concrete homes along paved roads. Reindeer nomads will continue to interact with incomers and respond flexibly to these changes. They might change their migration routes so as to avoid the gas production sites, providing such sites are properly enclosed and the cumulative effects of extraction minimised. However, the success of this adaptation strategy will depend on whether all actors participating in the development will build on the positive experience of the last century and respect each other's conditions for maintaining flexibility.

To return to the statement that introduced this chapter, I admire the power of the Nenets cultural preservation rhetoric, even though I do not think it helps us understand the ongoing processes in the region. However, in the future, the people's competitive spirit (*boevoi dukh*) will only be a useful force if those who currently hold power agree to continue a fruitful dialogue with the nomads, and genuinely respect the region's current and future identity as one intimately connected with reindeer herding.

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Appendix
Резюме на русском языке

Оленеводы встречают рынок: культура, отношения собственности и глобализация на 'краю земли'

Уже во время моего первого визита Ямало-Ненецкого автономного округа (ЯНАО) в Западной Сибири я услышал это распространенное мнение о "ненецкой культуре" как очень своеобразной, самостоятельной и устойчивой к воздействиям внешнего мира. В "культуре", как считается в местных, так и в общероссийских академических кругах, лежат главные причины этого успешного "сохранения традиционного образа жизни" ненцев. И действитьно, на протяжении всей истории Советского Союза и после его распада мы наблюдаем устойчивое увеличение числа кочевых семей и поголовья домашных оленьих стад в этом регионе. И все же это культуралистическое объяснение не удолетворяло мой скепсис и мое любопытство: эти фразы как "ненецкий феномен" и "ненецкий миф" говорили мне не очень много об их реальном значении. Где лежат причины такой исключительности? Это стало одним из основных вопросов в моей работе в качестве члена группы по исследованию Сибири, а "культура" стала соответственно одной из основных концептуальных рамок моей книги.

Мой подход к понятию культура предполагает рассматривание ее в терминах деятельности, которая находится в постоянной трансформации, когда люди подхватывают новые идеи и адаптируют их в ходе всех их взаимодействий к своему природному и социальному окружению. С точки зрения этой перспективы, утверждение о том, что ненецкие кочевники "оградили" свою культуру от какого-либо вмешательства извне, звучит не очень реалистично. Мы должны различать между политическим использованием терминов в локальных кругах и их употрблением в качестве аналитического инструмента в академической сфере. Поскольку исходным пунктом моего исследования является понимание культуры как комплекса переживаемых людьми опытов и практик, который находится в постоянном процессе изменения, в этой книге я концентрирую свое основное внимание на непрерывающемся диалоге кочевников Ямала как со своими собственными внутренними институтами, так и с внешним миром. Я сопровождал оленеводов во время их миграций и разговаривал с их представителями в поселках и городах, а также с другими жителями региона, как например, с промышленными рабочими. Довольно скоро стало ясно, что антропологические дебаты об отношениях собственности, в рамках которых проис-

ходит основная часть упомянутого диалога, очень актуальны и своевременны для Западной Сибири.

Содержание домашних оленей в больших стадах в тундре является центральным пунктом кочевого образа жизни, как в практике, так и в мировоззрении. Хотя содержание и использование оленей очень различно, олень остается высшей формой собственности у ненцев. Размещение, размер и состав стада меняются постоянно в течение года и в высшей степени зависят как от социальных, так и от природных факторов. Другие экономические активности имеют скореее подчиненный характер. Например, кочевники ловят рыбу в бесчисленных озерах в тундре, в Оби и в Обской губе, где водится очень много рыбы высшего качества, которая могла бы сама по себе приносить большой доход. Однако многие инвестируют доходы от ловли рыбы в снабжение своего оленьего стада, с тех пор, как это стадо стало личным и является мерилом престижа в глазах сородичей и завистливых оседлых соседей. Пропорция личных оленей у ненцев в общем числе оленей никогда не была меньше чем 30% даже в советскую эру, что составляет острый контраст по сравнению с другими северными регионами как, например, Саха или Чукотка (Stammler and Ventsel 2003, Stammler and Gray 2002).

В качестве высшей формы собственности, (гл.5) олени являются решающим критерием в установлении и поддержании долговременных взаимоотношений, как индивидуальных, так и и между хозяйствами в тундре. Антропологическая литература по пасторализму посвятила особое внимание социальной значимости домашних животных. Многие исследователи (на пример Ingold 1980, Khazanov 1994) отмечают, что скотоводы других регионов используют разные породы мелких (например, овцы, козы) и крупных (например, крупный рогатый скот, верблюды) животных в одном хозяйстве, каждая из которых имеет свою особую социальную значимость. В то время как в этих регионах хозяйство ориентировано на увеличение разнообразия животных в стаде, в полярных регионах олень является единственным домашним пастбищным животным и таким образом объединяет социальную значимость как мелких, так и крупных видов животных. Олени используются и для целей личного жизнеобеспечения, и для потребностей рынка в товарной сфере экономики. Если мы представим себе линию, которая показывала бы степень включения различных животных в социальную сеть их хозяйств, то ненецкий олень находился бы где-то в середине между максимально включенным крупным рогатым скотом у народа Нуер в Африке (Evans-Pitchard 1940) и минимально включенными овцами у народа Бассери в Иране (Barth 1964).

Эту включенность (гл.5) оленей в социальную сеть можно проследить на интенсивном разделении труда и продуктов оленеводства. Родственники и соседи делятся оленями для транспорта и пасут их сожместно; преподносят их в качестве подарка или продают тем оленеводам, которые хотят увеличить свое стадо.Оленье мясо распределяется в совместной трапезе сразу же после забоя, обменивается у нефтяников или в поселках на снаряжение и продукты и после этого основная его часть продется на рынке. Эти многочисленные возможности делают оленей важным социальным "клеющим" элементом, который привязывает ненецких кочевников не только к поселкам, но также и к большому числу промышленных рабочих, которые приехали в этот регион.

В этом исследовании подчеркивается подвижная природа отношений собственности: в зависимости от того, где и когда кочевники передвигаются по тундре, изменяются и аспекты этих отношений, имеющих широкую палитру. Подвижность характеризует также отношение оленеводов к самой тундре (гл.6). Правда стоит поразмышлять над тем, что входит в понятие тундры как земли, если учесть тот факт, что поверхность Ямальского полуострова более чем на 50% покрыта водой, причем большее время года она находится подо льдом на многочисленных озерах или болотах. Я предлагаю широкое понятие тундры, которое включает и землю, и водоемы, поскольку они все находятся во взаймодейтвии как компоненты одной экосистемы, частью которой являются также и оленеводы.

Тундра играет большую роль как в космологии, так и в повседневной жизни оленеводов. Знания о тундре и глубина этих знаний влияют на поведение человека как интегральной части ландшафта. Доступ к земле ненцы организуют на основе сезонных миграций, кооперации в выпасе, охоте и рыболовстве, а также дружескими и родственными связями. Их включающий подход к восприятию тундры основан на знании ее одушевленных и неодушевленных составных, поскольку они являются наиболее важным ресурсом для выживания в суровой арктической среде. На вопрос о владении землей оленевод Яков Вануйто ответил, что "земля принадлежит государству", но тут же добавил: "земля общая". Во время этого же разговора Яков также рассказал мне, где находится "его земля", подразумевая под этим землю, которую он в настоящее время использует и которая ясно отличается от "его исконной земли", откуда он и его предки происходят.

С другой стороны, добыча нефти и месторождения газа уже оказали существенное влияние на пастбища в северной тундре, в результате чего общее космологическое восприятие в тундре все больше и

больше сопровождается защитным ракурсом, который подчеркивает, что земли становится все меньше. Из этого следует, что адекватная "теория о территориальном поведении", т.е. о поведении человека внутри территории, должна содержать оба аспекта мировосприятия, как включающий, так и защитный, исключающий. Я считаю, что этот последний аспект играет также свою роль, когда ненецкие представители отстаивают учреждение родовых общин или регламентируют порядок обеспечения и защиты прав на землю в противостоянии с нефтяными и газовыми компаниями (гл.7, Stammler 2005c). В то же время это не означает, что они отбрасывают таким образом свою включающую концепцию восприятия тундры. Скорее, они приспосабливают ее к изменяющимся под влиянием внешнего мира условиям, причем ее включающие принципы продолжают действовать дальше, но уже учитывая этих новых форм территориальности. Также как более интенсивное включение тундровиков в рамки государственных структур привело к "плюрализму собственности" относительно оленей, так и недавнее появление нефтяной промышленности в регионе привело к перенесению этого подхода и на землю.

Интеграция такого региона как ЯНАО в мировую экономику не означает, что тундровики перестают заниматься внутренним обменом и бартером для обеспечения своего существования. Наряду с акционерами в Московском кремле или в главной резиденции "Еон-Ругаз" в Германии, ненецкие оленеводы имеют свои акции в "Газпроме", самой крупной в мире газовой компании. Продукция оленеводства может оказаться на рынках и в ресторанах Москвы, Пекина или Сеула, однако это не мешает ей оставаться в общем комплексе внутренних обменных отношений в тундре (гл.8).

Растущая интеграция в международные торговые отношения стала возможна благодаря прежде всего свежим "бархатным" рогам северного оленя (панты). Чтобы собрать эти рога очень важно знать точное месторасположение стада в июне и июле. В следствие этого, этот прибыльный бизнес в значительной степени контролируется на сегодняшний день предпринимателями родом из самой ненецкой общины, которые имеют в тундре собственных оленей, пасущихся под присмотром родственников оленеводов (гл.8). Это наблюдение контрастирует с результатами многих академических исследований по торговле сырьем в постсоциалистическом пространстве, где в качестве доминантных торговых фигур выступают люди со стороны. И хотя эти исследования имеют тенденцию представлять бартер как жалкое подобие денежного обмена, многие ненецкие оленеводы сознательно выбирают бартер в

качестве формы взаимодействия с рынком. Они могли бы продавать панты за деньги, но поскольку магазины, где они могли бы реализовать эти деньги, находятся далеко от их летних стоянок, эта денежная форма обмена была бы не очень практичной для них. Вместо этого они предпочитают иметь дело напрямую с ненецкими предпринимателями, которые собирают у них рога в тундре, прилетая на вертолете, и предлагают в обмен необходимые товары и продукты. Этот вид обмена основан на доверии и личных контактах.

Таким образом, на сегодняшний день глобализация не привела к анонимности в экономической активности или к маргинализации поставщиков сырья. Оленеводы выработали своеобразный механизм двойной адаптации к тем изменениям, которые им принес рынок. Они приняли многие новшества извне, но прежде всего в качестве дополнения к уже существующим деятельностям, а не как замену им. Образ жизни ненецких оленеводов означает постоянный вызов человеческим возможностям, и до сих пор они проявляли большую гибкость в адаптации новшеств, делая их пригодными для своей собственной жизни. Эта гибкость и способность адаптировать свои реакции в измененных условиях заслуживает большего внимания, чем приписывание ненцам существования стабильной и противостоящей внешним влияниям ненецкой культуры.

Значимость оленеводческого пасторализма в нашем общем понимании номадизма ни в коем случае не исчерпана. На примере ненцев мы видим, что когда речь идет об общей природе их адаптивных способностей, концепция мобильности выходит за рамки только географического перемещения. Некоторые исследователи утверждают (Scholz 1991), что на сегодняшний день номадизм как таковой больше не существует и говорят о мобильном скотоводческом хозяйстве, однако существующий до сих пор высокий престиж кочевания на Ямале и энтузиазм кочевников по отношению к этому образу жизни, показывают, что эти прогнозы для Ямальского региона явно преждевременны. Ненцы называют жизнь в движении *неней илʔдана*, что означает “настоящая жизнь” или “жизнь настоящих людей”. Это движение не означает отказ от всех социальных и спиритуальных потребностей и сосредоточение только на удовлетворении основных нужд, как добыча пищи и устройство жилища, но и удовлетворяет эти потребности может быть в большей степени, чем при оседлом образе жизни. Также как они пересекают климатические зоны леса и тундры, оленеводы этого региона свободно передвигаются между идеологическими концепциями, производством средств к существованию и производством товаров для рынка, между

государственными и личными оленями, между анимистической верой, коммунизмом и рыночными отношениями, между защитой территории и общими знаниями о тундре. В попытках уменьшить разрыв между этими различными категориями, мы подходим ближе к пониманию диалога, который оленеводы Ямала ведут с окружающим их миром.

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