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## 4. A Year in the Life of Koryaks

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### 4.1 A Year of Reindeer Herding

Maria's house was in the woods across the stream on the outskirts of the village. We crossed the stream in a boat we borrowed from some children playing in the water and climbed up toward the hill on the other side. I was surprised at the fact that she, with her furrowed face, was only 46 years old, but at the same time felt close to her, as she was the same age as myself. She must have felt the same way too. She smiled gently as with her hands she rumbled the fawn's hide to make it softer for winter underwear – as powerfully as she had cut up the reindeer in the land of autumn. Then she started to tell us the myth of “How the reindeer first came to where people live.”

“It was during the wonderful days. There were many people living there and some of them were shamans. Children were playing around the houses. They cut off some branches and made a reindeer out of them. Then they said to each other ‘let's play reindeer’ and played around. They discussed who would play shaman and do odd things. Soon after, evening came and the children finished playing and went home. Since some of the children were still thinking about playing reindeer, they dreamt about it. In the morning, they saw many reindeer. These children went to sleep thinking that they wanted to play more, so there were many reindeer around their houses. On the other hand, lazy children who weren't so interested didn't have playing reindeer in mind during their sleep, and therefore there were only few reindeer around their houses. This is how those who only got a small herd of reindeer started living near the shore, and those who got a large herd started living on the tundra.”

This reindeer that the children made out of branches in the myth of the first domestication of reindeer reminded me of the reindeer made of branches that I had seen at the reindeer ritual for the deceased a few days earlier. Not only the reindeer to be sent to the deceased was made of wood, but also the first reindeer that appeared to people was born from a wooden reindeer. They thought that the very spirit of a reindeer was the essence of the reindeer itself, and that it could even turn wood into reindeer's flesh.

Moreover, this story tells us two important facts about the Koryak lifestyle. The first is the origin of domesticated reindeer – how the reindeer came to people – and the other is the origin of the difference in lifestyle between the Reindeer-herding Nomadic Koryaks and the Coastal Koryaks. The important part about the origin of domesticated reindeer is that it is related to a dream. The wish in a dream realized the play reindeer by changing the reindeer made of branches into real reindeer. To wish in a dream is also exercising shamanistic power, and is similar to a shamanistic trance. People came in touch supernaturally with the reindeer in a dream, and the

reindeer came to them in reality. This has common points with the Canadian Indians who get the animals' consents to be hunted by communicating with them in their dreams before they hunt. The difference is that the hunters end up actually killing the animals, while the Reindeer-herding Koryaks found many reindeer around their houses.

What is even more interesting is that regarding the origin of domesticated reindeer; the heroes that made it possible were children. They existed long before the adults that lived in the real world, and they lived in a play-world that is removed from the real life. Or rather, the play-world was reality for them. It belongs to the mythical times, or the "wonderful days" that was first told in this myth, which must have been a world where dreams and reality, humans and reindeer could come in contact with each other freely. The Koryaks sought guidance from the origin of domesticated reindeer in the power exercised in this world of dreams.

Considering the second point – the origin of the Reindeer-herding Nomadic Koryaks and the Coastal Koryaks – the story explains the different lifestyles as the difference in the number of reindeer in the herd, as caused by their enthusiasm over playing reindeer. In fact, the Reindeer-herding Koryaks live with large herds of reindeer in the inland tundra, unlike the Coastal Koryaks who keep small or no herds of reindeer and make a living by hunting for whales and seals or catching salmon. In addition, it is a fact derived from their experience that the eagerness in managing the reindeer directly affects the number of the Koryaks' reindeer. Therefore, the myth is supposed to explain these facts of reality.

However, you can't tell the actual origin of reindeer herding, or even the origin of the Reindeer-herding Koryaks and the Coastal Koryaks only from this story. There have been some cases, in reality, in which a Reindeer-herding Koryak lost his reindeer and became a Coastal Koryak, or contrarily, a Coastal Koryak increased his reindeer herd and became a Reindeer-herding Koryak. What's more, there isn't enough evidence to prove when reindeer breeding started. But at least the Koryaks themselves tell in their myth that the Reindeer-herding Koryaks and the Coastal Koryaks were originally the same group of people, and that their life-style started to differ after the reindeer came to where they lived.

According to the statistics of 1993 regarding the village of Srednie-Pakhachi, there were 380 so-called Chukchees, 164 so-called Koryaks, amounting to a total of 544 people and 136 families. The figures of 1991 indicate two other people called "Itelmen." There were 220 Russians, but they started to go back to the mainland as the regional economy went downhill, and the population has decreased rapidly over recent years. Moreover, the number of reindeer in this village was tallied at 10,541 in January 1993: This number can be broken down to 5,462 mature female reindeer, 1,126 immature female reindeer, 246 male reindeer above 4 years old, 198 male 3-year-olds, 569 male 2-year-olds, 2,779 one-year-old fawns born the previous year,

161 geldings and sleigh-reindeer. These reindeer are divided into five groups, four of which are owned by and taken care of in a *sovkhov*, the state-run farm, and the other group consists of privately owned reindeer. From what Vakhtangov, Alekseev's father says, apparently there are 12,000 reindeer that belong to the *sovkhov*, and apart from that there are 2,000 reindeer that are privately owned. However, Alekseev says there are 1,400 private owned reindeer, and someone else says 1,600; it seems like the number varies from one person to another. The significance of this variation will become clear later on. There were 68 people who directly worked as reindeer herders.

The Koryaks of this region live in the hilly areas and the tundra, south of the Koryak Range which extends from the southwest to the northeast of the northern tip of Kamchatka Peninsula. Three large rivers – the Vivenka, Pakhachi, and Apuka – flow from the west into the Bering Sea, which is located further south. At the mouth of the river Vivenka, there are two towns called Korf and Tilichiki, and halfway upstream there is the village of Khailino. At the Pakhachi River mouth there is the town of Pakhachi – where we arrived in the small plane – and going halfway upstream there is the village of Srednie-Pakhachi. *Srednie* means “middle” in Russian. It is called Srednie-Pakhachi because it is located halfway between the Pakhachi Village at the river mouth and the Upper Pakhachi Village that used to exist upstream. At the Apuka River mouth there is a town called Apuka, and halfway upstream is Achaivayam Village. The grazing of reindeer is done by the three *sovkhov* located mainly in the basins of these three rivers. The large herds characterize the reindeer herding of this area. Normally, one herd consists of 2,000 to 5,000 reindeer. In winter, they move the reindeer to the west side of the mountains, because the wind is not so strong and the snow is not so deep. When there is not much snow accumulated, the reindeer can eat the moss which is their winter subsistence. In summer they go southward and move along the coastal tundra. The village where the Koryaks now live is located halfway along the road that runs north and south, connecting this mountain and the coastal tundra. Therefore, the reindeer herd passes by the village in autumn and spring.

I decided to hear from Slava, Natalia's son, about how a year was spent grazing reindeer. He was a reindeer herder, who moved along with the herd we had seen the other day. He had come near the village with his reindeer herd and had come home, so he responded to my request – I wanted to know about the reindeer – by attentively showing me on the map the nomadic route the reindeer follow throughout the year. According to him, this reindeer herd arrived near the village in September 1992 – last year – where the ritual was held. The ritual in the land of autumn was called *Koyanaitatek*, of which the practical purpose was to get the thin fur from fawns. Since they were born between early April and May, by autumn they were four months old and had, a light high-quality fur on them. These furs are used to make

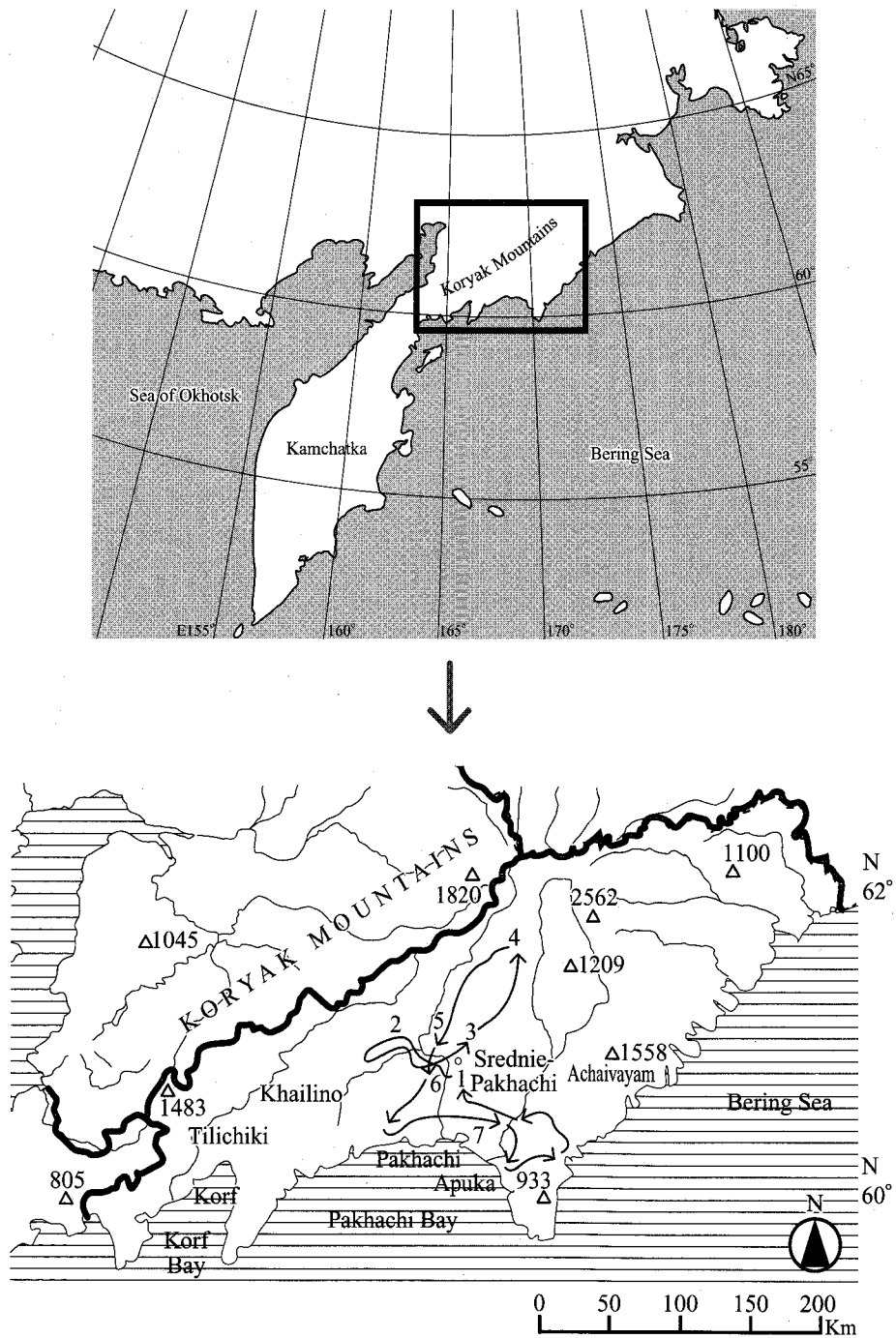
winter clothes. The Koryaks wear their clothes doubled in winter – the first layer with its furry side facing inside, and the second with its furry side to the outside. In the severe winters when it hits 30 to 40 degrees below zero Celsius, high-quality furs are indispensable. So the furs from the killed reindeer are turned into clothes and the meat is turned into people's food.

After this, the reindeer herd went up north along the west side of the Pakhachi River, crossing the tributary that flows into the Pakhachi from the west in the beginning of October and went upstream westward along the north side of this tributary. When they moved to the autumn grazing land, their second cull took place. The second cull used to take place within a few weeks to a month from the first, but currently it is done at the beginning of December. Therefore, the reindeer herd was moved back from the autumn grazing land along the same route, crossing the Pakhachi River to the south side of the village. The second cull was done to obtain thick fur. Apart from clothing, these furs are used to make the dome-shaped *yanana* or to carpet the bedroom floor inside the tent. The reindeer would have changed its fur from summer coat to winter coat by then. Nowadays however, this cull's main purpose is to obtain meat for the *sovkhoz* to sell. Between the first cull and the second, the herders pick the sick and weak reindeer and kill them, because weak fawns can't survive the winter. In addition, female reindeer that are too old to give birth to fawns are killed too. As a result, only strong and fit reindeer are left without being killed.

The reindeer herd that Slava keeps consists of 1,400 privately owned reindeer. They say that 1,500 to 2,000 is a convenient size to keep control of the herd. The object of keeping a herd is not only to produce fawns, but is also to maintain the same number of reindeer. Almost 50 to 55% of the herd consists of female reindeer, and one male reindeer for every 17 to 20 female is needed. Beside these, geldings

**table.1** Annual cycle of reindeer herding of the Olyutorskii Koryak with related rituals or festivals.

Numbers on Map in Figure 2	Months	Reindeer Herding Activities	Rituals/Festivals
1	Aug.–Sept.	Harvesting	<i>Koyanaitatek</i> <i>Tanteginin</i>
2	Oct.–Nov.	Autumn pasturing	<i>(Mageilavt)</i>
3	Dec.	Harvesting	
4	Dec.–Apr.	Winter pasturing	<i>Pegitim</i> <i>Nevrab-karare</i>
5	Apr.–May.	Fawn's birth	<i>Kilway</i>
6	June	Harvesting	
7	July–Aug.	Summer pasturing	<i>Anoatt</i>



**fig.2** Annual nomadic routes for reindeer herding by Slava's brigade in the Olyutorskii district of the Koryak Autonomous Region (Okrug) in Kamchatka Oblast during 1992-93.

are included in the herd. The big male reindeer dig the snow with their front legs and can look under it for the moss they eat. This is convenient for the other reindeer looking for food as well. This herd includes the fawns born during that year and the year before. Furthermore, they need a herd of healthy and strong reindeer to produce fawns. It is all right if a reindeer recovers from an illness, but if that seems difficult, they end up killing the sick reindeer. When they kill a reindeer for its meat or for a ritual, they avoid killing females. The second cull is a fete just like the first, but does not accompany a big ceremony. After the slaughter at the end of December, they count the reindeer.

If 50% of 2,000 reindeer were fully-grown does, there would be 1,000 does. If half of them gave birth to fawns, 500 fawns would be produced every year. If half of them were does and the other half bucks, there would be 250 bucks. A buck is needed by 20 does, which means 50 bucks should be kept to 1,000 does, so the 200 reindeer out of the 250 bucks that are born will be slaughtered sooner or later. Of course, a few gelded ones and sled-pulling reindeer will be left. However, aged bucks and does are slaughtered regularly. Estimating that 20% (200 reindeer) become of old age out of the 10,000 full-grown does, the number of reindeer culled every year will add up to 400 or about 20% of the 2,000, including the sickly ones and the 200 bucks that are killed.

As of January, the *sovkhos* owned 10,541 reindeer, whereas Vakhtangov said 14,000 in total. Vakhtangov refers to the number of privately owned reindeer in a herd as 2,000, which coincides with the number mentioned by Slava, his grandson who manages reindeer as a herder; this indicates that the number Vakhtangov mentioned is credible. There was a difference between the statistics of the *sovkhos* and Vakhtangov's number because the statistics of the *sovkhos* were based on the headcount in January, which is after the culling in December, whereas Vakhtangov's version was the number before culling the herd. If so, 3,500, the difference between the two, would be the number slaughtered in 1992. In fact, the *sovkhos* leader had told me 3,000 head were slaughtered in December and about 1,000 head were slaughtered in other seasons due to other reasons such as illness. There is not much difference between 3,500 and 4,000, which is about 25% to 28% of the herd of 14,000; this does not contradict the former estimation made that approximately 20% of the total herd is slaughtered annually. In addition, Vakhtangov said there were 2,000 head in a private-owned reindeer herd, whereas others said 1,400 to 1,600; this difference of 400 to 600 most probably owes to slaughtering as well. This number of difference also coincides with the estimated number of slaughtered head (400) based on what Slava had told us.

Needless to say, the slaughtering rate of 20 to 30% is the number when they want to stabilize the herd within a certain size. When the herd is too small, they have to keep the slaughtering rate of does down low so the number will grow, or

contrarily, if the herd is growing too large, they must increase the slaughtering rate of does to control the growth of numbers. As a matter of fact, from the point of view of reindeer herding, a herd of 2,000 is most appropriate to manage, as Slava says. Furthermore, calculating from the fact that there are 68 people directly engaged in reindeer herding, 13 to 14 people per herd are needed to control a herd.

From autumn to winter before the snow falls, the reindeer eat green grass and the green leaves of the shrubs. These are what they eat during the summer – of course they eat moss in summer as well, but they mainly live on green grass. However, once it snows their staple food changes to moss. In fact, the herders try to move the herd to mossy areas, even in early autumn, so that the reindeer won't eat *mukhomor*, the halucagenic mushroom. If they eat it, the reindeer run around in circles and it is difficult for the herder to control their movements. What's more, if they keep the reindeer in one place, they eat all the moss up, so the herders make them move everyday. During this season, the reindeer breed – though they geld them in spring. Before the breeding season, the herders check the males and geld the sick males, if any, so they don't breed. By leaving only the fit and sound male reindeer, they can produce healthier and stronger fawns. During this season, they also cut the sharp antlers off the male reindeer so they won't hurt each other when fighting. Eventually when the breeding season ends, the reindeer herd moves to the winter grazing land.

In winter, when the temperature drops and the snow becomes deeper, the reindeer settle down. There are neither mosquitoes nor *mukhomor*, so the reindeer become quieter day by day. Then all the herder needs to do is to go check the herd once a day on his reindeer-sleigh from the tent. The winter grazing land is the highlands that spread between the Apuka River and the Pakhachi River further north along its eastern side from the village. They stay here from the end of December till the beginning of the following April. In this season, the Koryaks bring a number of special reindeer from the herd, near to the tent, that are used for pulling the sleigh. But the reindeer are not tethered there, so they move around freely to eat moss. Consequently, every morning the herder goes out to gather the sleigh-reindeer and bring them back near the tent again. As I had been told before, people sleep in the bedroom inside the *yanana*. They used to keep their urine in a wooden container and pour it over a pile of snow inside the tent – though outside the bedroom. Then this pile of snow was taken outside the tent in the morning. The reindeer would gather there and lick the urine, because it contained salt. Nowadays however, salt is brought from the village, during the winter, to the winter grazing land and this is given to the reindeer.

After breakfast, the herders go to see the herd on their reindeer sleighs. The sleighs are pulled by two reindeer. Slava says he enjoys more than anything to run around on this reindeer sleigh. He showed me the small sharp bone that they attach



at the end of a long stick to steer the reindeer. They tap the reindeer's head with it and freely steer them from left to right. The herders climb on top of a high mountain to keep an eye on the reindeer herd's movements. If some of the reindeer wander far away from the herd, a few herders make them rejoin the herd again by shepherding them back to the rest of the herd.

Wild reindeer are said to inhabit the Anadiri Region, far away to the east of the Pakhachi area. They visit the domesticated herd in the autumn breeding season. The herders take this as something lucky. It certainly involves many risks, because wild reindeer may take the domesticated reindeer away with them. However, the herders keep the wild reindeer together with the domesticated herd because they think that fawns born to a wild reindeer are stronger. The fawns born from wild reindeer are said to have an aptitude for pulling sleighs. Nevertheless, when the breeding season ends, they usually kill the wild reindeer.

The winter grazing lands were traditionally changed every year in three-year cycles. If they used the same place every year, they would run out of moss for the reindeer to eat. Once the moss is eaten up completely, they say it takes 25 years for it to grow back. Therefore, they rotate between one spot a year out of the three places they use as winter grazing lands. Currently however, the land itself is divided into five districts by the *sovkhos* – one district only consists of coastlines, another only of inland, and so forth. And five reindeer herds are supposed to use each one of them alone. In such a situation, it is difficult for them to continue their traditional way. Slava added that he used the same area every year as the winter grazing land. Hence eventually they might face the problem of moss shortage due to overgrazing. In fact, if you drew on a map the route Slava told me that they follow throughout the year for reindeer breeding, it was not limited within the divided district. Contrarily, regardless of the districts, they had kept moving back and forth traditionally between the coastlines and the inland every season.

The weather conditions in this region differ from the coastline to the inner highlands. The coastal area is warm and the inland is cold. The coastal area is not suitable for grazing in the winter. The humidity is high, the temperature varies widely and the wind changes its direction. When the wind blows from the southwest across the sea, the temperature rises and it sleets. Such weather is not good for the reindeer. When the wind blows from the north, then the temperature drops and the surface of the accumulated snow turns into ice. When this happens, it makes it difficult for the reindeer to eat the moss under the snow, and they die. This is why the Koryaks move inland with the reindeer during the winter. Even going inland, their biggest obstacle doesn't change – the strong wind.

In springtime, Slava drives the reindeer herd down south and crosses the river to the west side, a little south from where a tributary branches off from the Pakhachi River. They move to where the reindeer give birth to their fawns. Before the fawns

are born, an experienced herder goes out to look for a good place for the does to give birth. Just like the winter grazing land, the spring birthplace differs every year. A place is chosen where there is no wind, no puddles like a swamp and where soft grass grows. Besides that, drinking water and firewood are prerequisite for people to live there. From March till early April, before the fawns are born, they count the number of the reindeer again and divide the herd into two. One herd is made only of pregnant female reindeer and the other consists of females that are not pregnant and the rest of the herd. These two herds are grazed separately about 5 to 15 kilometres apart, because large male reindeer sometimes carelessly step on the fawns with their hooves and kill them. Moreover if you split the herd into two, it is easier when a fawn strays from its mother to find the mother by putting the fawn back into the mothers' herd. The herders watch out everyday for reindeer that are about to give birth in order to protect the newborn fawns from animals like birds of prey and bears.

The does give birth to the fawns from April to May. From time to time, a fawn with white eyes and white eyelashes is born. They think these fawns are weak and kill them. So the women come out to look for such fawns in the herd. Some reindeer abandon their fawns and disappear somewhere. If a doe does this for two years running, it is killed. They have effectively kept reproducing a stronger herd apt for livestock by artificially eliminating these weak reindeer and those that act inappropriately.

In this season, the male reindeer are gelded except for the studs. When they divide the herd into two before the fawns are born, they drive the herd into a pen, letting the females out and leaving the males inside to choose the ones to geld here. Apparently, the procedure itself of gelding is done just by cutting the testicles off with a knife, which only takes three seconds. They grill the testicles over a fire and eat them – though only men are allowed to do this.

Over the past few years, they have started to cut off the newly grown antlers and sell them, and brokers from China and Korea come to buy them. The antlers are sold at high prices because they are used to make Chinese medicine. Therefore, people started to sell the antlers, competing with one another. But the newly grown antlers are still soft and blood vessels run through them, so they bleed when they cut them. What's more, once they are cut, the antlers don't grow anymore during that year so the reindeer have to live the rest of the year without antlers. People are starting to think that this is not good for the reindeer's health. The reindeer's antlers grow anew every year, so they sometimes use the old antlers that have come off, lying about on the tundra. They told me that a broker said that if they collected many antlers off the tundra ground, he would buy them too. However, the soft newly grown antlers are more suitable for making Chinese medicine. They contain growth hormones and humans use them as a tonic medicine.

After the fawns are born from the end of May to early June, the two herds are merged into one herd again. They start descending south along the west side of the Pakhachi River, heading towards the coastal area, which is the summer grazing land. In mid-June, they arrive at point a little downstream from the other side of the village and slaughter the reindeer for their meat here. It is supposedly the same place as where the offering to the autumn land was held. This is the season in which green grass grows from spring to summer, so they move to the tundra that spreads across the coastal area. The mother reindeer and fawns follow the herd from behind because the fawns cannot run fast. At this time of the year, the herders watch the reindeer 24 hours a day. Two herders keep control of the herd during the daytime and two others stay with the herd at night.

When they get to the shore they stay there for two to three weeks, and the reindeer drink seawater; this is to supply them with salt. They choose a very windy place at the shore as the summer grazing land, because many mosquitoes come out in summer and without the wind they collect around the reindeer making them run around crazily. Slava says grazing in summer is a hard job for everyday they have to gather the reindeer that run away from the herd because of the mosquitoes. He says he runs all day at full speed around the small hills and valleys on the tundra. He sleeps in his clothes on the tundra and as soon as he awakes he is running from right to left around the reindeer to lead them. According to him, grazing in winter is much easier compared to summer. In fact, they have a reindeer-sleigh race in winter, which makes it his favourite season.

As mentioned above, this is how they graze the reindeer on the tundra area that spreads along the coast between August and September. There are years when they stay on the tundra that spreads downstream along the west side of the Pakhachi River from autumn to winter. However, this year Slava took the reindeer herd to the east side of the Pakhachi River. After that he crossed the Apuka River from the west side to the east and once he had reached the shore he moved further east as he crossed the hilly areas of the peninsula. When he got to the east coast of the peninsula, he crossed over to the west coast again via another route to get back to the village. Then after travelling downstream to the Apuka River, he crossed the river from the east side to the west and came close to the village, as he kept travelling westward. As we saw a few days ago, this is how the herd of reindeer returns to the autumn land, crossing the Pakhachi River from the east side to the west. The ceremony took place there, which meant the reindeer had completed their yearly cycle.

Looking at it as a whole, you can summarize the seasonal migratory herding cycle of the region's reindeer as follows: The grazing of reindeer is done within the winter grazing land, the summer grazing land and along the route that links those places. Ideally, they have three to four pastures inland as winter grazing lands, which they use in turns every winter. They choose low mountainous areas or hilly areas,

where there is not much snow or wind. In addition, they sometimes reserve a spot that is only used when it is urgently needed. At the end of spring, they descend the valley along the river. Especially when there is a mountain range between the coast and the hinterland they use the ravine along the river as a path. The village is located on the border between the winter and summer grazing lands. When they pass through the village, the herd that was divided into two is gathered as one and they move on to the coastal tundra area. Only men accompany the reindeer and the rest of the family stays behind in the village. If they use the left side of the river one year, then they use the right side the year after so that the reindeer won't eat up all the moss in one place. In summer they graze the reindeer on the tundra area at the shore, and at the end of summer they return to the village, at the border of the winter pasture. There they hold the ceremony. Thereafter they migrate to the winter grazing land and move within that area. If they use one of the three pastures they have, then they use the second one the following year and then the third the year after that. They change the winter pasture every year because the growth of the moss is slow. Accordingly, they return to the first pasture in the fourth year. In fact, they can use the same pasture in summer because the reindeer eat grass then. Traditionally, the whole family lived in the *yanana* during winter, migrating with the reindeer; in that case, the *yananas* were built close to a lake where they could fish on the ice. However, now the families stay behind in the village and the herders move along with the reindeer alone in a simple tent. I later ended up hearing in detail about the historical transition in reindeer breeding from Vakhtangov.

The distance between the summer and winter pasture – regarding the seasonal migration of breeding reindeer – is 150 kilometres when measured in a straight line, and would represent a distance of 300 kilometres in getting there and back. However, if you put down on a map the actual migration route Slava passed along last year, the total distance between each point in a straight line adds up to 680 kilometres. This is merely the straight distance on the map, and is not the total distance including the ups and downs of the route due to the difference in sea levels, or the actual path they walked within the summer or winter pastures. Calculating the real distance, including the sea-level difference, as 1.5 times the distance on the map, and estimating the actual migration distance taking into consideration the topography and the meandering movement of the reindeer as 3 times the straight distance between points, the total distance can be revised at 4.5 times the original number. Based on this calculation, they need to travel a distance of 1,350 kilometres for the seasonal migration from summer to winter. And the actual distance that Slava travelled during the seasonal migration last year would be 3,060 kilometres. If you divide this by a year (365 days), you would need to travel 8.4 kilometres per day for the seasonal migration, and Slava would have travelled 8.4 kilometres a day on the average. Of course, these figures are the average throughout the year and they do

not represent the day-to-day reality, because the reindeer move rapidly in summer but not so much in winter. Therefore, the daily distance travelled is higher than the figures in summer and lower in winter. Consequently, it is estimated that they travel 20 to 30 kilometres a day in summer when they move fast, which does not contradict Slava's explanation – that he is running all day long, chasing the reindeer, when he grazes them in summer. The Koryaks, who are reindeer-herding herders, try to keep the reindeer herds under the control of human beings all throughout the year. However, in order to do so, the herders have to run all day long with the reindeer herds during the summer.

#### **4.2 A Year of Rituals and Feasts**

Maria works at a dormitory called "*Internat*" in Russian, looking after children. The children have to live in the dormitory to go to school while their parents live on the tundra with the reindeer. She says she tells old tales to them when they go to bed. The children fall asleep in their beds in the dormitory while listening to Maria tell the story of a boy who flew about the vast sky on the back of a reindeer, wolf or an eagle – the same way Maria used to hear it from her grandmother in the tent on the tundra. Her husband lives in this village, but Maria said she liked to live on her own in a small hut across the stream. They sometimes left the village and lived on the tundra from winter to spring. She said there was nothing inconvenient about it because they had snowmobiles and radios there.

Ever since *perestroika* took place, Maria says the situation in this village has been getting worse. The shelves in the stores are almost empty and people can't buy anything. Young people are at a loss because they can't make the traditional fur clothes themselves. Maria can make these fur clothes well. We visited Maria's hut and entered the doorway, where it had been made into a small room. This room was a storage room, but was also an anteroom to protect the small room further inside the hut, which was a living room that was also used as a bedroom, from the winter chill. There, in front of the door to this back room, a reindeer's fur was placed, as a doormat with its inside facing up. Inside the room, there was a firewood-stove on the right of the room; a handmade bench on the left and the bed was pushed against the far wall. There was a small table at the right hand side of the bed and a stand to keep the clothes on the left. In front of the bed, there were four reindeer furs spread on the floor with their furry side up, so that it looked like they were surrounding the stove. It was a fur carpet. In the corner to the left of the entrance, there was a washbowl and a container filled with water was hanging over it. Since the firewood stove was burning and food was cooking over it inside this small room of about five square meters, it was hot inside – so hot that I, who had come from the outside world of 4 degrees Celsius in mid-September, had to take off piece by piece my heavy winter clothing. Then I asked Maria what kind of rituals and feasts took place throughout

the year.

The reindeer offering for the autumn land that we had seen the other day was called *Koyanaitatek* or *Hojanaitatek*, which was a feast to welcome back the reindeer herds that had been parted from their families during the summer. The next ritual to be held was in late December; a feast called *Pegitim* held to celebrate the New Year. After that in spring, they hold a small feast when they divide the reindeer herd into two before they give birth to fawns. Then after the fawns are born, a feast named *Kilway* is held from April to May. Finally before summer, when the tree leaves begin to turn green, a small feast called *Anoatt* takes place. This is a ritual saying farewell to the reindeer.

Actually, I had to spend quite an amount of time to ask her all this. It was also the first time for Maria to be asked questions like this. She preferred to talk freely about what she wanted to say rather than to answer one question at a time. For instance, she started to explain about the round stone in the room that the men picked up when they went to the shore with the reindeer, and brought back in autumn to the wives that had been waiting for them in the village. Later in winter, they put a little bit of reindeer blood on it as an offering. This was to maintain the relationship with the spirits of the land in winter, even though they were away from the coastal grazing land. Stones form a part of the land that spreads along the coast and symbolize the earth. Normally, they did not talk about these spiritual matters to anyone other than Koryaks. Therefore, even though what she was telling me had nothing to do with my questions, it was very important for me to listen to her stories.

Moreover, Mikhail, who served as my interpreter, was worried about the way I asked them questions intensively. He says that researchers should get information by asking the questions concerning their religion or rituals once in a while mixed in with the harmless conversation – acting as if you are not interested in these topics – because these subjects are secretive and delicate. And he says you should not collect information intensively from a single person, but should gather a little bit from as many people as possible. It was true that Mikhail had acquired rich experience in research, as he had been a schoolteacher at a Chukchee village further north of this region for two years while he was still a researcher at the Russian Academy of Sciences. It was also true that he was trying to build a network of relationships by actively getting in touch with the key figures that were involved in the administration and education of this village. He was interested not only in the academic details of the research, but also in building a relationship with the local villagers and keeping it. In order to do that, he gave priority to maintaining his day-to-day association with them and mentioning delicate issues as little as possible.

Certainly, the way of collecting materials that Mikhail advocated is effective for long-term investigations and originally it might have been the ideal way for the study to have been carried out. However, when investigating something in a limited

amount of time, it is also necessary to pick a person with experience and knowledge, and who is willing to cooperate, and then to ask the questions in a concentrated manner. When proceeding with research, the other problem is to whom you are going to ask questions. Since we were staying at Alekseev's house at the time, the Russian researchers said that if we wanted to go out to talk to someone else, we should ask Alekseev or his wife, Natalia, to ask them a favour, and then go out. I thought they were quite right when I heard the reason. As it later became clear, Alekseev's family – which was a unit within the reindeer-herding community – was receiving us as their guests, so if we went to someone else's place on our own, they would wonder whether Alekseev's family was taking care of us properly. This would be something shameful for his family and our relationship with them would be broken.

Moreover, an even worse problem was that after two weeks of investigations, the enthusiasm of the Russian researchers had decreased. Over the past few days, they had been turning the TV on as soon as they woke up and had been watching it all day long until late at night. The government station was tuned in, but they would borrow videos of American films from the villagers and watch them. Of course, the Koryaks liked watching video movies. Action or spy movies starring Arnold Schwarzenegger were popular. The Koryaks looked worried and bewildered watching people being killed in the movie, as if it were actually happening in reality. The video was in English, but a simultaneous interpretation was recorded over it. It wasn't synchronized with the mouth movements the way Japanese dubbing (voice-overs) is, but sounded like the Russian script was being read monotonously regardless of the movements in the film. I have heard that in the past, Japanese people used to set their TV in the living room and turn it on as soon as a guest came. When Alekseev came home from hunting one day and entered the room, he immediately turned on the TV as he saw us talking away with the TV turned off – which was something we had not done in a while. Then he left the room and went into the kitchen to have his meal. He might have thought that it was a way of entertaining his guests to turn the TV on – in the same way it used to be in Japan.

In fact, they said there must be a Japanese movie video in the village, and went to look for it for me. It was a movie called "*Shiko Funjatta* (Sumo Do, Sumo Don't)" directed by Masayuki Suo. The theme song is called "*Ringo no Kinoshita de* (Under the Apple Tree)", and the story is based on a sumo wrestling team at a university, where the freshmen and a girl, who is the manager, struggle to stop the disbandment of the club. Because Naoto Takenaka's acting is unique, and the story seems to unfold with a touch of comedy – and human warmth and sadness is part of the situation – the Koryaks liked the movie too. Nina also seemed to like it very much as she was laughing quietly while watching it. However, they were interested in this movie more because Japanese Sumo was similar to the kind of sumo the Koryaks do, stripped to the waist, on the snow at festivals and funerals, rather than the story.

Moreover, the Koryaks said they sympathized very much with the Japanese movie “*Narayama Bushiko* (Ballad of Narayama).” This is a movie directed by Shohei Imamura, based on a legend called *ubasute* (abandoning old people). It depicts the warmth in people’s hearts of those living a poor life in a rural area, in comparison to the meagre mindset of those living an affluent life in modern society. It won an award at the Cannes Film Festival and was probably shown in Russia as well. Furthermore, they liked an actress named Komaki Kurihara who appeared in various Japanese-Russian films, and felt an affinity to Japan as if they knew everything about Japan because they knew her name.

In addition, the Koryaks liked a soap opera called “Maria.” Russia had bought the Mexican TV drama and it was on the air at the time of our visit. The story was about a poor girl who came out of a Mexican village in the mountains to live in the city and gradually became rich overcoming various difficulties. It was a Mexican version of “My Fair Lady” or a Mexican “Oshin” – a Cinderella story or a success story starring a woman – but in this case, it was a comedy-like soap opera that dealt with men’s relationships involving women and money. According to the Russian researchers, it was the most popular serial TV drama in Russia at the moment, but was a vulgar comedy. Alekseev watched it too, but laughed bitterly with the Russians saying it was truly nonsense. “This is something made for the Chukchees,” he would say, making fun of the Chukchees.

At any rate, I was in a modern Koryak village. TV was very much a part of their current life-style, and at the same time, the myths that Maria told or reindeer herding on the tundra were also part of their life. I had discovered that the Russians and I had a slight difference in the way of doing research, and I had also found out that the Koryak life-style seemed complex, as it was a mixture of modernity and traditions. Anyhow I wanted to get on with my research in the limited time I had, which I explained to the Russians, and they didn’t resist in cooperating with it. Therefore, we decided not to watch TV all day the next day, but to go to Maria’s place or Vakhtangov’s – Alekseev’s father – place and listen to either of them talk for about two hours, and do the same in the afternoon. Then, if necessary, meet as many villagers as possible and listen to them talk too. Mikhail and Vasha agreed to take turns in being my interpreter, and they told this to Natalia, who was going to ask Maria and Vakhtangov for their cooperation in this research. That was how I continued experiencing the daily life of the Koryaks and listening to the villagers talk about all kinds of things, at the same time. The procedure felt like harvesting persimmons one by one off a high branch, by connecting numerous wooden sticks together. The persimmon drops only when the joints of the sticks are adjusted well and power is conveyed to the end of the stick effectively. Much time is spent adjusting the joints. Nevertheless, I made up my mind that all I could do now was to proceed with the research.



I went to Maria's place again and asked her in more detail about the festivals throughout the year that she had told me about before. First of all, she started to talk about the *Pegitim*, which was a festival to prepare for the coming of the New Year.

*Pegitim* is a ceremony held in December. As is the case with all the festivals, this one is also held when a new moon appears. The Koryaks watch the moon in their daily life, and say that festivals take place when the moon is waxing. On the evening before the festival, they make a new fire called *Gichigi-Mirgi* (the fire of Gichigi). They prepare special food over that fire. Reindeer meat killed for the feast, blood soup with grass roots and a dish called *Kirikiru*, which is a mixture of reindeer brain and bilberries of some kind. In addition, they make a small symbolic reindeer called *Yoyat*, which is a stomach stuffed with grease, and another symbolic reindeer made of a bundle of green grass. At night, they eat *mukhomor*, and sing, play the drums and dance a little.

Early next morning when they wake up at four o'clock, a young man representing the reindeer owners goes to the reindeer herd and brings them nearer to where the festival will take place. When the herd arrives, people welcome them outside the tent with food and fire in their hands. They take with them the guardian deity of the *yanana* called "*Gichigi*" and throw the new fire at the reindeer herd. Then they bring another fire with them and make a bonfire about 10 meters away from the tent. This is for cooking the meat or boiling water. The *Yoyat* is a slender-shaped object about 20 centimetres long, which symbolizes the reindeer itself. They tie a lasso to it, stab it with a real spear and "kill" it. Then the head of the symbolic reindeer is cut off and is separated from the body. This "reindeer" is cut and divided into small pieces. This can be eaten, and if there are any invited guests there, they can also have some.

They then take out the "reindeer" made of bundled green grass. It is called *Wiatwiat-Kayana* (green reindeer). Antlers made of twigs are attached to it and blackberries are fitted into the eyes. The guests take the blood soup and sprinkle it in the four directions – east, south, west and north, in turn. Many guests repeat this one after another. Then the symbolic reindeer made of green grass is "killed." They say that "green" represents the memories of summer. They tie a lasso around the "green reindeer's" neck and "kill" it with a real spear. After it's killed, they turn this "reindeer" around clockwise, which is the direction in which the sun revolves. The other symbolic reindeer, *Yoyat*, which is the fat-stuffed stomach, is also turned around in the direction the sun moves after it is "killed."

When they finish ritually killing the symbolic reindeer, they begin to kill real reindeer. Some kill one to three reindeer to offer to the fire. Maria's family kills two, she says. Then another reindeer is killed so that it can be offered to the *yanana*. They kill a reindeer behind the *yanana* and paint its blood on it. They offer this reindeer to the *yanana*. The reindeer offered to the fire is made into dried meat and the family

lives on it until spring. However, the meat from the reindeer offered to the *yanana* is for guests, so they do not keep it for the family. The antlers of the reindeer offered to the fire are set over a tripod-like stand made of three sticks tied together at the top. If a male and a female reindeer are offered, then each pair of antlers is set on a separate stand, and if only one female is killed, then only those antlers are set over the stand. The way they did this was the same as the way we saw in September at the reindeer offering for the land of autumn. This festival is to pray for the reindeer's prosperity as well. The reindeer used as an offering to the *yanana* is put inside the tent by opening the rear cover, after taking out all the internal organs behind the *yanana*. Then it is cut apart inside the *yanana*. This reindeer is for the *Gichigi* – the guardian deity of the *yanana* – so they offer a meal to it. They put the food inside a small wooden container made especially to offer things to the *Gichigi* and bring the food to its mouth with a special spoon and smear it on its lips.

Maria was making thread by splitting dried reindeer's tendons while she talked. Another young woman was rubbing reindeer's hide – which had been dried and had red alder (*Alnus rubra*) sap painted on it – between her feet and softening it. This was to be made into clothes, and the thread Maria was making would be used to sew them. The young woman's husband, who had been here for a while, went out to get the salted salmon they kept upstream.

In the evening, Alekseev came to Maria's hut with fish in his hands. Alekseev's cousin was a member of Maria's family. He had been out hunting moose today to obtain food with his brother, a Russian named Fyodor, and Sergei, who was our research colleague. Fyodor, the Russian, had lived in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii with his family but came out to work in Pakhachi, where he met Alekseev's daughter, Nina. However in order to marry her, his ability to make a living had to be approved by Nina's father, Alekseev. Therefore, he went out hunting with Alekseev. And Sergei was always looking forward to going hunting when he didn't have to translate for me. They went into a tributary downstream of the Pakhachi River. They discovered some moose there on the sandbank and tried to bring them to bay, but apparently they had run away, passing through the ambushing hunters. After that, they went to check the bear traps made of iron wire, but no bears had been caught. They had been trapped two times before that, but the bears had undone the traps and run away. Then they shot about 10 wild ducks with a shotgun and returned to the village. Maria's family was going to go seal hunting the next day. At this time of the year, people went out to the tundra to pick bilberries and blackberries, or went to the shore to hunt for seals. Even the *Chauchu*, who were herders and bred reindeer, went hunting on the coast in this season.

That night, Vasha and I had fish for our meal and then crossed the river and went back to Alekseev's house. The men who had been out hunting were already eating. Looking back at that day's meals, Mikhail and Natalia's daughter, Nina had

made milk-boiled rice and *piroshki* for lunch while I listened to Natalia talk in the morning. For dinner, they had made us cherry salmon meuniere – from salmon that had come upstream in the Pakhachi River – stewed meat and potatoes, bread and *piroshki*. The Russian researchers were good chefs. They said they cooked at home too. While we were staying at Alekseev's house, Mikhail would flash a smile and cooked frequently so that we wouldn't be a burden on the family. Moreover, they always washed their own plates when they finished eating. They scrubbed their plates and bowls under running water with a small piece of cloth that had turned black, without using detergent. They said that this was something they usually did at home too. When I went home after this expedition, I ended up continuing this little habit in Japan as well.

The festival of *Pegitim*, held in December, was no longer done in the way Maria told me. Even though they did kill reindeer and offer them, they did not migrate with the reindeer herds or live in a *yanana*. However, after the *Koyanaitatek* is held in September, they need to kill reindeer before December in order to obtain reindeer meat to live on until spring. The ritual cycle throughout the year is directly linked with the reindeer's annual cycle, and also corresponds with the time of year that human beings obtain reindeer meat as provisions. But they place more importance nowadays on killing the reindeer to secure food, simplifying the actual ceremony.

Natalia says she remembers how her parents made a reindeer out of grass when they killed reindeer in winter. She also says she has seen people sing and dance around the reindeer's head with its eyes and antlers still intact, put on top of a pole inside the *yanana*. They played the drum and closed the *yanana* to keep it dark inside during the daytime. This was done after the reindeer-sending ceremony in memory of the deceased took place, just about this time of the year. Hence it was not clear whether this reindeer ritual Natalia remembered was part of the *Koyanaitatek* or the *Pegitim*, or even if it was a ritual held between those two ceremonies – but she says it was held when the reindeer herd visited the *yanana*, in which people lived. She also says that she has seen people stick a pole inside the *yanana* and put antlers on the very top, hang the trachea, heart, lungs, pancreas, liver and the left front leg in order under the antlers, then place a willow branch besides the pole and tangle the intestines over the whole thing. Then they burnt a fire at the foot of the pole and placed stones around it in a circle. She had seen this festival in the neighbouring village of Achaivayam up till 1985, but had not seen it since she moved to Srednie-Pakhachi. Her memory was not clear, but the reindeer must have been offered to the *yanana* and its guardian deity *Gichigi* since this was made inside the *yanana*. The *Koyanaitatek* we had seen was an offering to the autumn land, and if there had been *yanana* there, they would have made an offering to the *yanana* as well; and the same could be said about the *Pegitim*. In the case of the *Koyanaitatek*, the fact that they offer food to the *Gichigi* after they go home has not changed up to

this day.

The next time I went to Maria's house, she was cooking seal meat inside a conical tent – wood poles put together and covered with canvas. They had succeeded in hunting seals on the shore and had brought back the meat. Furthermore, she had spread the sealskin over a wooden frame and, using a ladder, was trying to climb up on a platform set over a high stake, so that she could dry it. When I asked her how the hunting had gone, she said the men had got up at four in the morning and had caught the seals by the shore. This was because the seals had remained on shore early in the morning after the tide had gone out. Nowadays they used a gun to hunt, but they used to hunt with a harpoon. Later on, Alekseev showed me the iron end of a harpoon that was designed to rotate through 90° and separate from the shaft when it hit a seal. The iron tip remains inside the seal's body and they can catch the seal by hauling in the cord attached to it. He said he still used this harpoon now.

Maria said she got 40 kilograms of meat from one seal. The hunted seal is butchered, and its lips, gullet, trachea, lungs and large intestine are thrown into the sea on the spot. Other than eating its meat and fat, they also make a dish called *Kirikiru* by mixing together its brain and bilberries of some kind. Sometimes it is made by mixing the fat of fish and seals with the bilberries. When they throw the lips into the sea, they say, "May they bring us luck." This is a prayer to the sea, and is also a ritual sending back the seals' spirits to their country in the ocean. The grease in its stomach should be cooked over the fire and be eaten right away. If not, the sea will get angry. Before they hunt, they offer an *inawet* to the sea. They used to offer a reindeer to the sea as an *inawet*. This was done in the same way they offered a reindeer to the river when they were to cross it. In fact, these days they only offer food to the sea as an *inawet*. Therefore, they use a small symbolic reindeer, which is a bag made of a reindeer's stomach stuffed with fat. The symbolic reindeer used for the *Pegitim*, that Maria had showed me before at her house, was also used for this purpose too. In addition, bullets, tobacco and fat are offered along with rabbit's fur. If they can't catch any seals, they throw reindeer's fat into the sea and say out loud, "Please give us sea animals next time."

The seal's head and meat with bones are cooked and then eaten. When they have finished eating, they keep the bones. They grill the flippers over a fire and eat them or dry them on the top of the tent for a few days and keep them to use as food. The small intestine is also grilled or boiled – or they mix it with bilberries of some sort and cook them. When a boy hunts a seal for the first time, the Coastal Koryaks have a special festival – though Maria, who leads her life mainly breeding reindeer, says she doesn't know what that festival is like.

In connection with the seal hunting ritual, Maria started to talk about the fishing ritual. Before the fishing season starts in spring, they offer a little bit of *inawet* to the river. This is a ritual done to pray so that the fish will come upstream. However,

they don't do anything special when the first salmon is caught, as the Ainu or Canadian Northwest Coast Indians do. Sometimes, they happen to catch a salmon a little different from normal. When this happens, they cut it open from its back – the opposite side of the usual way – and leave it there for the seagulls. When the fishing season ends and the reindeer that had gone to the coastal tundra during the summer return, people start to prepare for the *Koyanaitatek*. They make dried salmon, which they use to prepare the meal for this ceremony. Since Maria appeared to busy this day, we went home and decided to hear the rest of her story about the rituals at another time.

It was late September and it was getting colder by the day. The temperature marked one degree Celsius at eight o'clock in the morning. It had rained, and there was a bucket in the kitchen to collect water leaking from the roof. In the evening, I visited Maria and decided to hear her talk. After the *Pegitim*, which is held in December, comes a festival called *Nevrab-Karare* in March. This is a festival held when they divide the reindeer herd into males and females before the females give birth. The name of the festival *Nevrab*, means "to divide in spring," and *Karare* means "fence" in Russian. Considering the fact that a Russian word is mixed in their language, the custom to divide the herd into two using a fence might have begun after they came in contact with the Russians. She said that this festival is not very large compared to the others.

The day before the festival, they kill a reindeer to prepare the meal for the celebrations. But they leave the antlers where they killed the reindeer. They do this in the same way as they offer a reindeer to the autumn land. The meal is prepared in the same way they do in the reindeer ritual for the deceased. Therefore, this could be referred to as an *inawet*. These foods – i.e. a small piece of meat, the left side of the lips, the left lung, the liver, the small intestine, and the heart – are put inside the fence. This would be people's breakfast. Before they eat, pieces of these foods are offered to the four directions. Maria says these directions stand for the tundra land that they live in, and the sky, which is the space above it.

When they finish breakfast, they start working. They have to divide the reindeer herd. It takes four days to a week to divide a herd of 1,600 privately owned reindeer. During the festival, before they divide the reindeer herd, anybody can hold a prize-winning race. It could be a reindeer-sleigh race or a footrace. Snowshoes or skis are not used in a footrace. Those who are most confident of themselves in each working team from the *sovkhos* come to take part in this race. As a matter of fact, reindeer-sleigh races are the only races held currently. Maria's husband is said to be a good competitor. In the reindeer-sleigh race, they compete from here to Apuka – located at the river mouth of Apuka River – and back in a day. When I later calculated the distance on a map, it was 80 kilometers in a straight line one way, and 160 kilometres there and back. The reindeer-sleigh race begins in the morning

and goes on until five o'clock in the evening. Supposing the actual distance was 1.5 times the straight distance on the map, it would be 240 kilometres to get there and back. If a competitor runs this distance in 12 hours – from five in the morning to five in the evening – the average speed of the reindeer-sleigh would be 20 km/h. In reality, it would be 10 km/h to 30 km/h, because the condition of the snow varies depending on the place. At one time, they trained the reindeer to pull sleighs from December. The prize was a snow mobile. They danced and sang again, and of course, they got drunk. In fact, fifteen years ago, they discussed about it and decided to hold this festival after they had finished the work of dividing the reindeer herd, and not to drink so much alcohol.

When the end of September came close, the temperature got lower and lower, reaching to 7 degrees below zero in the mornings. The window in the kitchen was double-glazed, but the inside of the outer window was frozen. The power plant in the village didn't operate due to a coal shortage, and the lights didn't work; neither did the water tap. Mikhail got up and shaved the firewood like sawdust and lit it. He made a fire in the firewood cooking-stove in the kitchen and made tea with the leftover water. We warmed up the fish soup he had made the night before, and had it for breakfast. Alekseev and his wife Natalia had gone seal hunting on the shore from the morning of the day before. The news was read over the portable radio that the Kamchatka provincial legislature had announced its approval of the purge resolution against Russia's president, Yeltsin. As a matter of fact, about four days ago, Yeltsin had proclaimed the Parliament invalid, while the Parliament had resolved the disqualification of the presidency, leaving both in a total confrontation. Sergei told me quite excitedly, that the military had not yet gone into action and that all was quiet, although legislators had occupied the Supreme Soviet building in Moscow. The day before, we had visited the head of the *sovkhos* in this village. Vasha had just said to her,

"We are thinking right now if it's better for us to go back to Mainland Russia or to live in Kamchatka, given the actual situation in Russia." The Russian state of affairs was changing every moment while we went on with our expedition at the east end of Russia, far away from Moscow.

In the evening, I managed to visit Maria again. She told me about a ritual called *Kilway*. This is held at the beginning of May after the fawns are born. Before the festival, all the men go to the reindeer herd and start to collect the antlers that have fallen to the ground and bring them home. The reindeer's antlers grow anew in spring. Then they put these antlers outside the *yanana* on the other side of the entrance. Women keep all the bones leftover from the meat they ate during the winter in a bag. At the *Kilway*, they take out these bones and boil them. Then they put the reindeer's tongue and breast they have kept in a big pot and boil them all day. When you boil bones, fat comes out and floats on the surface: they take this out onto

a plate. They add the same amount of snow to it and mix it together. Then it turns into a white lump. This is a dish called *mitkel*. They put the *mitkel* and boiled meat at the northern side, inside the *yanana*. The boiled tongue and breast are cut into the right parts and left parts; they are separated into a pile of all the left parts and another pile of all the right parts. Then they cut the left parts into even smaller pieces. All the women in the *yanana* go outside with these pieces in their hands and walk around the *yanana* once clockwise, which is the direction in which the sun revolves. They hold the pieces of meat in both their hands as if to scoop them, and throw them over the *yanana* with their right hand. When they do this, they imitate the voice of a newborn fawn.

Once they've returned to the entrance of the *yanana*, they offer the reindeer fat to the *Gichigi*. They take a little bit of grease on their finger and smear it around the *Gichigi's* mouth. A special little plate is used. When they finish offering the food to all the *Gichigis*, they are put back into the corner of the *yanana* where they are usually kept.

Then the right parts of the meat and breast are cut into small pieces. While they are cutting the meat, they think of how many people there are in the *yanana* at that moment and how many are still with the reindeer herd. These pieces are divided into two and the pile for the reindeer herders is put into a bag and onto a stone outside the *yanana*. This will later be taken to the herders. All the other meat is eaten by the people inside the *yanana*. When they finish eating, the guests go home, but they must take with them all the leftover meat – though they have to leave all the bones behind. Then those left there gather the bones and go outside the *yanana* holding the pot with the soup in it and go around the tent in the direction the sun moves. When they come to where they left the antlers on the opposite side of the entrance, they pour all the leftover soup over the antlers with the bones and say, "Let the pot rest for a while." Then they turn the empty pot upside down near the antlers.

Early next morning, the owner of the reindeer herd, who is also the head of the house, takes the bag – with the meat in it that they had left on the stone the day before – to where the herders are. The new fawns should have been born, or the delivery would still be going on. They still have to put in this bag a symbolic reindeer made of a grease-stuffed stomach, a small stone taken from the shore, and some beads. The owner arrives where the reindeer herd is. The reindeer are spread widely over the tundra. The herder gathers the reindeer belonging to the owner, and the fawns that can walk are gathered together as well. The fawns that can't walk yet are kept where they are, so it is only a part of the herd that is gathered. They open the bag in front of the reindeer herd, and take out everything except the meat. The lasso is tied to the symbolic reindeer just as when a real reindeer is caught. Then this symbolic reindeer is "killed" with a knife. In the same way, they "kill" the pebbles and beads. These "*inawet*" are left there as they are. After that, they take the pieces

of meat out of the bag and the herders eat them. The next day, the owner of the reindeer goes back home again. He has to take home a live branch of white birch, or a tree called *Iva* in Russian, which is then put away in the same place where the *Gichigi* is.

The *Kilway* is an important festival for them. I managed to hear about this festival from villagers other than Maria. Over all, Maria's story was most detailed and accurate, but there were facts I learned of from the conversations with other people. For example, the word *Kilway* meant "the birth of fawns." The navel is called *kirkir* in Chukchee, and they said it might have something to do with its origin. Moreover, the purpose of this spring festival is to begin a new year. Spring is the end of a year and the beginning of another. Last year was full of bad events, but now they were starting a new year, praying for everything to get better. Therefore, they make a new fire for the New Year, give food to the *Gichigi* and receive providence.

They have to make a new fire in a traditional manner. They put a bone called *murneng* on top of a fire-starting stick called *nirik*, then holding it with one hand, they rotate the stick by moving back and forth a bow called *mirganang*, which is a stick with a bowstring wrapped around it, with the other hand. The bottom end of the stick is pressed against one of the few dents made on the *Gichigi's* body, which is made of a flat piece of wood. As the stick rotates, the dent is heated and it catches fire. In other words, here the *Gichigi* is also used as an igniting board. The word *nirik*, which refers to this igniting stick, is also used to name the safety matches – matches that have a detonator and igniter at the tip and catch fire when rubbed against rough things – which they use daily these days. Since it is still damp in the season when they hold this festival, they have great difficulty starting a fire. However, they must start a fire by all means, because it is thought that the family will die out if they didn't follow the traditions. As they continue to turn the stick, a little bit of smoke comes out. A while later when it is about to catch fire, they say excitedly, "Let's meet the fire, dance, sing and live." Then this new fire is added to the old fire, and they say to their ancestors, "We have inherited this new fire from our ancestors. We will keep up this fire from the old days."

Apparently, it has to be after dark to offer food to the *Gichigi*. This is probably because the end of a day is related to the end of a year. They never interrupt the cycle of the day, because that would also mean interrupting the cycle of the year. Furthermore, the reindeer meat used to cook the meal has to be the meat from a reindeer killed in December of the year before. The meat is cut into small pieces, and all the pieces from each part of the body are gathered and boiled in a large pot. Then the people wait for sunset. These pieces of meat are divided into two lots – one for the guests and the other for the offerings to the *yanana*, fire, water, sky and the land. These are sprinkled about as an *inawet* as they go around the *yanana*, and at



the same time they exorcize all the bad things from the year before.

As I listened to people talk about the festival called *Kilway*, I could almost see the scene where people were trying to start a fire, or where people were going around the *yanana* throwing small pieces of meat in the air. Moreover, it felt like I had caught a glimpse of their mysterious world – that I still did not know of – when I learned that they feed the guardian deity of the house, *Gichigi*. I ended up visiting this village – Srednie-Pakhachi – again in May two years later in order to see this festival with my own eyes. However, at that moment, I was still in a situation where I was just going around in circles around their world, looking eagerly for an entrance to go inside of it.

Then, when I visited Maria again, she told me about the festival called *Anoatt*, which was the last one left out of the annual cycle of ceremonies. This is a small ceremony held at the beginning of July. It is held to say farewell to the reindeer, because the reindeer go to the coastal tundra during summer. They go to the reindeer herd and kill two to three reindeer. People can't see the reindeer until the end of August. They also offer a reindeer to the river, because the reindeer will cross it. People eat reindeer meat, make reindeer jerky and preserve it as the food for summer.

I decided to ask someone else about the annual cycle of festivals that Maria had told to me, from a slightly different point of view, to check it over. So I climbed the tundra hill behind the village with Sergei. We visited an old lady named Zoya who was a *Chauchu* and a knowledgeable person living in a hut there. First of all, I asked her – she was about to turn 60 – if there was a spirit that represented all the reindeer. Among the Forest Indians of Canada, who are reindeer-hunting peoples, there is a soul that unifies the entire reindeer. I was interested in how the hunting people's worldview corresponded with that of the nomadic Koryaks. She answered hesitantly, "It should exist." Then when I asked her its name, she said "*Koyavaginin*." Apparently, this head of the reindeer lives somewhere in the upper-world. According to her, the *Koyavaginin* is the head of the reindeer and watches them. She said it was like saying "god" in Russian, but she didn't know whether that god was a man or a woman, or what kind of personality he/she had. When she saw that I was puzzled because I couldn't get a concrete image of it, she explained to me,

"There are gods in Japan too, aren't there? It is the same as the way those Japanese gods guard you." Sergei, who was interpreting for me, looked terribly anxious. To make them talk about their gods was to try intruding on their world of secrecy. Moreover, to talk about gods in front of Russians was to go against the very materialism that stands upon the denial of religion – which was the ideology that had supported the Soviet establishment. She also looked a little hesitant, but started to talk little by little about what she knew.

Each one of the gods guards something. Thus, the *Koyavaginin* guards the

reindeer. In addition, she said that although the *Koyavagin* lives in the upper-world, it should be somewhere else away from where the people of the upper-world – i.e. the dead – live. So people sacrifice reindeer, make an *inawet* and offer it to this god in particular. I asked her if the reindeer wasn't offered to the land or river as an *inawet*, and she answered,

"People kill and offer reindeer to the land and the river, but at the same time, that signifies offering it to the god of reindeer as well." I was a little bit confused, because such a thing as a reindeer god, or a master spirit had never appeared in Maria's story. I had even been taught that the *Gichigi* was the head of the reindeer herd, as well as the guardian deity of the house. However, according to the old lady, Zoya, there was another guardian deity called *Koyavagin* besides the *Gichigi*. She said the two certainly had something to do with each other, but the *Gichigi* was different from the *Koyavagin* as it was something like a reindeer herder.

Actually, from what I had heard before from an "experienced man," when he showed me a *Gichigi*, this was something that guarded the reindeer and the small Y-shaped twigs that looked like human beings were the *Gichigi*'s friends and assistants. Of course, each person might have a different interpretation of the roles and hierarchy of the gods. In addition, in the same way that there were differences in the life-styles and cultures of the Reindeer-herding Koryaks and the Coastal Koryaks, it was normal here that each family would have widely different versions of their "tradition." In fact, I don't think these differences in their interpretation are necessarily contradictory. It is not incomprehensible to think that the *Gichigi* is the master who guards the reindeer herd owned by the family – from the viewpoint that it guards their family life – if you think about how each *Gichigi* kept at each household is the guardian deity of the *yanana* of each family. Then, the *Koyavagin* that Old Lady Zoya talks about, could be thought of as the master of the universal reindeer, which transcends the reindeer of each family.

*Koyavagin* is the spirit that represents the entire herd of reindeer. At the same time, it is the master spirit of the reindeer that guards them. Following the reindeer-concept of the hunting peoples in which a unifying spirit of the whole reindeer herd is believed in, the reindeer-concept of the herders – in which they acknowledge the role of a master spirit that guards and manages the reindeer – is formed. Zoya says that in the same way, the god of the land, whose name is *Nuchukin*, lives somewhere high above in the mountains. There is also a god of the river, whose name she doesn't know, and that is why the villagers offer reindeer to the river. What's more, she says the sea is a mother, but since this village is far from the sea, she doesn't know what kind of a god lives there. She believes in the spiritual existence of the land, river or sea in itself. When I asked Alekseev and Natalia about the spirit of the river before, they answered it was the river itself, denying the existence of a specific god. Their way of thinking had some basic common

factors with what Zoya said. She used the word “god,” but it didn’t have a specific characteristic, merely being an incarnation of the land, river or sea in themselves. They didn’t separate substances from spirits, but thought of them as one. That was why Alekseev and Natalia said “the land” was the very tundra land in which they led their daily lives and “the river” was the very river that flowed. The land or river for them is not just a material object, but is something spiritual as well as being material. That is their worldview.

Then I asked Zoya more about the offering to the reindeer god that she told me about. I asked her when they offered it, and she mentioned five ceremonies. They were the following: the *Kayanaitatek* – Maria called it *Koyanaitatek* – held around September when the reindeer herd returns from the summer grazing land, the *Pegitik* – Maria called it *Pegitim* – which is a festival held in December, the *Kilway* held when the fawns are born and the *Anoatt* held in spring. In addition, there is a festival called *Gitogakoyanmatik*, which is held in October when the winter comes, but she says it is the same as the *Pegitik*. These festivals correspond with the annual cycle of ceremonies Maria told me about. In fact, Maria had added to this a small festival called *Nevrab-Karare* held in March where they divided the reindeer herd into two. Besides that, Zoya said there was a festival held between the *Kayanaitatek* and the *Pegitik*, which corresponds seasonally with the festival Natalia remembered. Therefore, there might have been some kind of ceremony held at that time of the year.

In any case, it was quite clear now about the annual cycle of rituals and feasts. They are: the *Koyanaitatek* (*Kayanaitatek*) held from late August to September when the reindeer return, the *Pegitim* (*Pegitik*) held at the end of December to start the New Year, the *Kilway* held at the beginning of May after the fawns are born and the *Anoatt* held in early July to say farewell to the reindeer heading for the summer grazing land. In addition, there is the *Nevrab-Karare* held in early March when they divide the reindeer herd into two, and there may be a ceremony held in between the *Koyanaitatek* and the *Pegitim* around October when the winter begins. Needless to say, the reindeer ritual held in memory of the deceased called *Tanteginin* that we saw in autumn is also part of the cycle as well. The reindeer offering to the river, which is done whenever the reindeer cross it, or the reindeer offering to the sea, which is done when they go to the shore to hunt for seals, are also included in it. In all of these rituals or festivals, reindeer are killed and are offered to the tundra land, river, and sea, *yanana* or *Gichigi*. Zoya says it is also an offering to the reindeer god at the same time.

Furthermore, it was now clear that these festivals closely related to the annual cycle of the reindeer. However, the way they said both the *Pegitim* held in December and the *Kilway* held in May was a festival to celebrate the coming of the New Year lacked consistency. It was necessary to clarify whether they divided a year into two

**table.2** Timing, meaning and significance in yearly cycle of the Olyutorskii Koryak rituals/festivals.

Rituals/Festivals	Timing	Meaning	Significance in Yearly Cycle
<i>Koyanaitatek</i>	late Aug. to Sept., when reindeer return	Welcome of returning of reindeer from summer pasture land to autumn land	Beginning of the first half of the yearly cycle of man-reindeer relationship
<i>Tanteginin</i>	late Aug. to Sept., when reindeer return	Memorial service for deceased persons in the year	Memorial service day in the year
<i>(Mageilavt)</i>	between <i>Koyanaitatek</i> and <i>Pegitim</i>	Dancing around reindeer head	
<i>Pegitim</i>	end of Dec. winter solstice	Celebrating of the New year	Beginning of the cosmic cycling of the year
<i>Nevrab-karare</i>	early March	Division of reindeer herd	
<i>Kilway</i>	beginning of May	Celebrating of fawn's birth and of spring	Beginning of natural cycling of the year
<i>Anoatt</i>	early July	Farewell to reindeer herd to summer pasture land	End of the first half of the yearly cycle of man-reindeer relationship

years, or they had another way of thinking. In order to do so, I needed to know in more detail what kind of months and seasons they divided their year into, and how they were each related to the reindeer festivals. I decided to think about this question by making a fresh start and hearing them talk about their traditional calendar – the Koryak Calendar.

### 4.3 The Koryak Calendar

Alekseev's father, Vakhtangov, was supposed to have been born in 1928 officially, but he himself thinks he was actually born in 1922 and is turning 71. When he was born, there was no system for registering the birth date, so they registered his approximate birth date later when they had to make his identification papers. He was born south of this village in a place called Groznyi, which is located westward of the river mouth of the Pakhachi. It was Alekseev's family's homeland, and we had already seen them sacrifice a reindeer to Mt. Groznyi in autumn. I ended up hearing from him a lot about the life he had experienced long ago, which I will mention later

on. For now I will concentrate on the Koryak calendar he described it to me. (This information is also listed in table 3.)

A year appeared to be divided into 11 months, because there wasn't a name to refer to February. If they had to refer to it, they called it *Enin-niki*, which means "without a name." January is called *Gunurevit* meaning "the middle of the head," March is *Yayavichio* meaning "reindeer with a fleshy back," April is *Gyoergin* meaning "birth month." May is called *Imirjirgin* meaning "the month of water," because the snow melts and water appears in this season. June is called *Anoergin* meaning "the month of spring," and July is called *Eleiergin* meaning "the month of summer." By the way, *Ergin* means "moon". August is called *Hycheihing* meaning "a little yellow," referring to the leaves on the trees or the grass that turn a little yellow. September is called *Myngcheiping* meaning "big yellow," which means all the leaves have turned yellow. October is *Nutahit* meaning "the freezing ground," as it is the month when the ground starts to freeze. November is *Verectepron* meaning "wild goats mating." It is the breeding season for the wild goats at this time of the year. December is called *Fuveret* meaning "narrow and short days," because it is the season of the winter solstice when the daytime is at its shortest. He also says there are four seasons during the year: the summer called *Arao*, the autumn called *Einei*, the winter called *Rufren* and the spring called *Anoan*.

Then we asked the people we met in the village about their calendar, based on the names of the months Vakhtangov told us about. However, they sometimes only knew about it ambiguously, and we came to realise that they no longer used these names of the months in their daily lives. Then we were told that there was an old man named Yuri, who apparently knew a lot about this. As a matter of fact, his daughter was a schoolteacher in the village, and she introduced me to her father. We

table.3 Olyutorskii Koryak calendar

Seasons	Months	Koryak Names	Meanings
<i>Rufren</i> (winter)	January	<i>Gunurevit</i>	the middle of the head
	February	( <i>Enin-niki</i> )	(without a name)
	March	<i>Yayavichio</i>	reindeer with a fleshy back
	April	<i>Gyoergin</i>	birth month
	May	<i>Imirjirgin</i>	month of water
<i>Anoan</i> (spring)	June	<i>Anoergin</i>	month of spring
<i>Arao</i> (summer)	July	<i>Eleiergin</i>	month of summer
<i>Einei</i> (autumn)	August	<i>Hycheihing</i>	a little yellow
	September	<i>Myngcheiping</i>	big yellow
<i>Rufren</i> (winter)	October	<i>Nutahit</i>	freezing ground
	November	<i>Verectepron</i>	wild goats mating
	December	<i>Fuveret</i>	narrow and short days

went to the end of the village with her, and crossed the stream on a boat, arriving at a hut where her father was living. It was not very far from where Maria lived. He had built a hut and was living in it – just like Maria. When we got there, he was in the middle of repairing the hut. We stood there and talked to him for a while. He said that the Russian economy would deteriorate even more in the next ten years, stopping the supply of coal and gasoline to this village. If that happened, people wouldn't be able to live without electricity in the houses built by the government. Therefore, he figured he could survive the winter by reconstructing the hut and using a firewood-stove. He said he would answer my questions if we met the next day at nine o'clock in the morning at the Soviet – the governmental building – in the village, since he was busy that day rebuilding his hut. He then gave opinions policy-wise about the current politics and status quo of the northern ethnic groups by comparing it with the situation of the ethnic groups of other countries. He said he read newspapers and magazines. We decided to go back the way we had come, feeling a little disappointed, because we had come all the way across the river, expecting to listen to him talk.

Mikhail, the Russian researcher, said he didn't like people who talked politics like that. Vasha, who had come with us and had had a positive attitude at first, saying we could go back the next day to hear his story, seemed to gradually back out, and said he didn't want to talk about politics. Yuri had criticized the Russian Minority Policy in front of the Russian researchers. When we were about to cross the river in a boat on the way back, children were fishing there. They had tied a thread and hook to branches or poles, and were using salmon roe as bait. When I looked over, they had caught small daces about 20 centimetres long. Mikhail borrowed a rod and tried, but could not catch one so easily. Since we couldn't do anything about it, we decided to go home. On the way back, Mikhail told me a story about an intellectual or "A Man who Entraps People into Ponds."

In Russian popular literature, he says there is a novel titled "Rupture," written by a man named Shukshin. He knew well about the villager's situation, because he had lived with the ethnic minorities for a long time, and also was from one of the groups himself. According to him, in all the ethnic villages of the former Soviet Union, there is always the type of person who reads the papers and keeps up with the news, knowledgeable about national affairs and international affairs. However, these people often want to show others that they know a lot. Once, a man originally from an ethnic background, but who had lived a long time in the city, returned to his village as a scholar. The intellectual of this village gathered the people and held an assembly, where he put various questions to this scholar. These questions he asked were very technical and scientific, but were odd and out of place. For instance, he asked questions such as the scientific outlook on shamanism. In the end, the scholar didn't know what to do with him and left the meeting. The people who

were there said, referring to this man who wanted to boast about his knowledge, that he entrapped the scholar into a pond. Mikhail said that the man we had met that day was that kind of person. In fact, he said that he had heard more than a hundred times the kind of story the man talked about that day, and gave me a perplexed look. Furthermore, he said it was strange how he asked us to come to the governmental building, which was the central organization of this village.

The next day, we went to the building he had designated at nine o'clock in the morning, which was the appointed time. Mikhail said on the way that he wished he wouldn't show up. But soon after we got to the building – it wasn't even five past nine yet – he showed up. He was short and plump, and his round face was suntanned, which suggested the harshness of living on the tundra for a long length of time. As we were waiting in front of the building, the people working for the bank, post office and government – whose offices were all inside the building – came and unlocked the gate, so we entered the building with them. We went upstairs and went into an extremely large reception room with just tables and chairs. The chief of the *sovkhos*, who we met before, came in and sat behind the table. We started to talk in front of her. This “man who entraps people into ponds” must have contacted her and asked her sit there to show his authority.

Although the question was quite out of keeping with this setting, I told him I wanted to ask him about the traditional Koryak calendar. Then he answered in a very logical way, “The traditional calendar is based on the moon, and a half moon, or a quarter of a moon is the standard.” I then tried to get him to give the names of the months from January to December, but the conversation wouldn't flow easily. It stopped at May, and just as we had feared, he started to talk about politics. He hit the table with his fist and carried on with his speech in a loud voice, as he scribbled something on a memo paper. According to what he said, it wasn't good the way people sold products at a higher price than cost in these past few years. For example, he said that a product bought in the town of Pakhachi, at the river mouth of the Pakhachi River, would be taken to the village of Srednie-Pakhachi and be sold at twice or three times the original price. This was, in his theory, not business but a crime. Mikhail explained to me, as I didn't quite understand it, that although selling something at a price higher than cost is the basis of commerce, it was thought of as an extremely bad thing, or even a crime in the former Soviet Union.

We were at a loss because the conversation was going nowhere. The *sovkhos* chief looked worried as well, because I kept silent not being able to interrupt. Mikhail looked a little tired and asked Vasha to interpret. However, Vasha said he couldn't interpret simultaneously either, because the man talked too fast. Actually, even though she was a Koryak, it was probably difficult for them to interpret and reveal in public the current political problems between Russia and this small northern village, in front of the chief of the *sovkhos*, which is a state-run farm.

Therefore, I changed the subject back to the Koryak calendar and told him I wanted to know from the beginning what the accurate pronunciation was for the word for January. Then I wrote it down in my notebook and asked him to tell me the meaning of it; and in the same way I wrote down the words and meanings up to December. He began to pronounce the words enthusiastically, and even showed me how to write them in Russian on his memo paper. What's more, he then wrote them for me in alphabet – though he insisted it was German, not English. I copied the words from the memo into my notebook. Finally, at a convenient moment I said to him, “Thank you. It was helpful,” and left.

Of course, Yuri was not a “man who entraps people in ponds” for me. He did know quite a lot if you talked with him for a long time. However, as Mikhail said, he had strong convictions about politics, and accordingly tended to construct the conversation in his own way. We wanted to hear people's frank opinions rather than theoretical stories. Nevertheless, I was interested in him. His theoretical opinion was still the candid reality of a man from this village. In fact, when I visited the village of Srednie-Pakhachi the second time, I got him to talk at length about whatever he wanted to talk about. Thus I got to know how he understood the reality of Russia and the ethnic minorities. His daughters didn't hesitate to cooperate with us as much as they possibly could. In fact, they were interested in the four of us who had suddenly come here from the outside world, and who tried to talk to as many people as possible. His daughter, Ilyna, who had introduced him to us, was a schoolteacher, and was working on the succession of the Koryak traditional culture – which later became of much help in understanding their present and future. Her younger sister Tanya was also a schoolteacher; she came and visited us often to talk, and created various opportunities to show us the current situation of the village. Moreover, when I visited this village for the second time and said I wanted to see the *Kilway* – a festival held after the fawns were born – it was the Yuri's daughters and family that willingly showed it to me.

By the way, what Yuri had told me about the Koryak calendar was based on his accurate knowledge. The following is as he told it to me:

January is called *Gunureut* which means “the head (of a year).” Apparently, in this case, “head” means “beginning” or “center,” and is used by both Koryaks and Chukchees. Here, the Koryak originally refers to the *Nyemulan*, who live on the coasts; Alekseev and his father Vakhtangov belong to this group. Chukchee refers to the *Chauchu*, who do reindeer-herding; Alekseev's wife, Natalia, Maria and Yuri, who I was talking to at that time, belonged to this group.

February is called *Yayavochiyin* in Chukchee, which means “reindeer's meat on the back (in good condition to eat).” Both the Chukchees and the Koryaks also used the word *Nivrevyeirgin*, which means “the month with long daytime.”

March is called *Tenmitargin*, which means “the month when female reindeer becomes



potbellied,” referring to the month when the pregnant reindeer’s stomach swells before they give birth.

April is called *Gryoyaergin* in Chukchee and *Gyoiiergin* in Koryak. It means “the month to give birth,” and it is when the fawns are born.

May is called *Imiruri-irgin*, meaning “the month of water.”

June is called *Anoyeirgin*, meaning “the month of spring.” It is the month when the natural world begins to stir, the green appears and the flowers start to blossom.

July is called *Eleye-ergin* in Chukchee, and *Alaye-ergin* in Koryak. It is the “month of summer” after spring.

August is called *Hychepieirgin*, meaning “the month when they (tree leaves) gradually turn yellow.”

September is called *Eineiirgin*, which means “the month when it becomes very yellow,” and it is the breeding season for the reindeer as well.

October is called *Nutaheite-ergin*, meaning “the month when the ground starts to freeze.”

November is called *Welkitepro*, which means “the breeding season for goats,” and it is also the month of bad weather.

December is called *Hivirait*, meaning “short,” as it is the month with the shortest daylight and the longest night.

As for the seasons, he said that spring is called *Anoan*, which corresponds to June. Summer is called *Ara-arū*, which is July. Autumn is called *Nyei-nyei*, including both August and September. Winter is called *Rifren*, which includes eight months from October to May.

Finally, the entire year is called *Gyeveginin*.

The calendar Yuri described to me, basically corresponded with the calendar that Vakhtangov had told me about. The difference was that Vakhtangov said February is “the month without a name” and March is “the month of reindeer’s meat on the back,” while Yuri said February is “the month of reindeer’s meat on the back” and March is “the month when female reindeer becomes potbellied.” Their way of dividing a year into months is based on the waxing and waning of the moon, which, as Yuri explained in the beginning, makes it a lunar calendar. Regarding the monthly division, there is a time lag between the solar calendar used today in Russia. February, which Vakhtangov referred to as “the month without a name” could have existed because of this, or March (*Tenmitargin*), which Yuri referred to as “the month when female reindeer becomes potbellied”, might have been added in order to agree with the Russian calendar.

Anyway, the names used in their calendar were based on the changes of nature or on the ecology of reindeer. The tree leaves turn yellow, the tundra land starts to freeze, wild goats breed in the mountains and daylight is at its shortest. Then when the daylight lengthens, the meat on the reindeer’s back becomes good to eat, the

female reindeer become pregnant in autumn and then the fawns are born in spring. The snow melts and water is seen on the tundra, spring comes as the trees and grass turn green, and when the short summer ends the tree leaves turn yellow again. This is how they see the annual cycle as they live with the reindeer and nature. Moreover, since they call January “the head of the year,” they consider a year as one cycle and January as its beginning. When you follow this cycle, December – when the daylight becomes the shortest – is the end of a year. Having passed the winter solstice, the New Year starts, which is when the festival of *Pegitim* is held to begin the New Year.

As a matter of fact, they do not have a special name for the summer solstice, when the daylight becomes the longest. However, they consider the sun as the source of life, so of course they know that after the winter solstice the daylight lengthens as the activity of life becomes brisk, then after the summer solstice, the daylight becomes shorter and shorter, finally returning to the winter solstice. Consequently, the summer solstice should hold an important position within the annual cycle. Maybe the *Kilway* held in May is thought to be a fete to celebrate the New Year, in the same way as the *Pegitim* held in December, because they finish the first half of the year and celebrate the start of the second half. In fact, they hold the *Kilway* in May, not in June when the summer solstice is, and explain it as a ceremony held after the fawns are born. Thus, in this case, the timing of the festival is adjusted to the reindeer’s ecological cycle, rather than the astronomical cycle based on the movement of the sun.

The reindeer finish giving birth to the fawns, and the fawns appear. This is the beginning of the reindeer’s annual cycle. They take out the bones they had saved till then, pick up and gather the antlers scattered throughout the tundra, make a new fire, sacrifice a reindeer and greet the New Year. Therefore, the *Kilway* is thought to take on the characteristics of a New Year in the reindeer’s cycle, rather than the summer solstice. In addition, the *Kilway* could be interpreted as the reindeer’s spirit-sending ceremony, backed by the concept of its immortality, because the bones that were saved throughout the winter are collected in one place. This kind of ceremony is widely practiced among Northern hunters – a typical example would be the Ainu Bear Ceremony. It is a cyclical ceremony – i.e. the animal hunt followed by the sending of its spirit – to the animal’s spirits, and is a ceremony in which they confirm and maintain the reciprocal relationship between humans and animals. Even among the Reindeer-herding Koryaks, a spiritual reciprocal relationship between the animals and humans is carried on in this manner, just as is seen among hunting peoples.

Comparing it with these, the characteristics of the *Anoatt* held at the beginning of July and the *Koyanaitatek* are clear. These are the ceremonies of the reindeer and human’s separation and reencounter. A reindeer herd is indispensable for human life, but during the summer, people can’t live with the reindeer – except the reindeer

herder. They say farewell to the reindeer at the end of spring and welcome them back when autumn comes. Their year consists of two seasonal cycles; a season when they live with the reindeer, and another when they live apart from them. This reminds me of the life-style of the Northern Canadian reindeer hunters. They hunt wild reindeer, but the reindeer come in autumn on their seasonal migration, so they hunt them during the winter and then the reindeer leave in spring. Their daily life is based on the belief that the reindeer come voluntarily in autumn to give people meat and the mythical promise that supports it. The Reindeer-herding Koryaks don't believe that the reindeer come voluntarily, because they take care of the reindeer herds themselves. Nonetheless, it is true that the prosperity and health of the reindeer is depended on the weather and disease. In autumn, the Koryaks joyously reencounter the reindeer that had been away during the summer, and thank the *Gichigi*, the land and the master spirit of the reindeer for their wellbeing during the summer, as they also wish for their prosperity and health in the coming season.