

みんなのポジトリ

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5. The Entrance to the Spiritual World

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5. The Entrance to the Spiritual World

5.1 The World on the Other Side

The Koryaks call the world of the dead the Other Side, *nganenka*, in the sense that it is distinct from this side of the world. It is located in the east, from where the sun rises, but at the same time, it refers to the world above the sky. In the world on the “other side”, the dead breed reindeer, live in *yananas*, and lead their daily lives in the same way it is done here in this world. In the reindeer-sending ceremony, held in memory of the deceased, which we had seen in the autumn, the families and relatives of people who had died during the year send them reindeer so that the dead can live in the upper-world without difficulty. They say the killed reindeer go directly to the upper-world. According to Zoya, the old lady who lives on the tundra behind the village, there is no such thing as the “underground-world.” As a matter of fact, she said she had heard that some people living near Apuka bury the dead underground, but she herself had never heard that an underground-world exists. The Koryaks cremate the dead so that they can go to the upper-world. I came to see with my own eyes this ritual of departure to the Other Side when I revisited Srednie-Pakhachi Village two years later.

However, dogs do not go to the upper-world after their death, but go to the dog’s world, which is said to be between this world and the upper-world. This dog’s world is a totally different place from the country of the dead; thus no dogs exist in the world of the dead. Natalia says that if someone sees a dog in his dream, it means a dog needs to be sent to the upper-world before that person’s death: so they kill a dog. This is interpreted as a precaution against evil spirits interfering with a person on their way to the upper-world after he dies. The dog supposedly drives away evil spirits and shows the way to the upper world for the deceased. Before the person kills the dog, he says,

“I will kill a dog before I go the Other Side, because I saw it in a dream.” This should be done on the following day the person saw the dream. But the dog to be killed doesn’t necessarily have to be the same dog as the one seen in the dream. The owner just has to kill one of the dogs that they own. Dogs are usually never allowed in their houses, but on this occasion they let the dog inside and offer it a little bit of fat as an *inawet*. Supposing it was Natalia who saw the dream: after the dog had eaten the fat, she would take the dog outside and head towards the east. Then two men would tie a lasso onto it. One of them would tie it around the dog’s neck, and the other would tie it around its waist. By pulling it from both sides, they would lift the dog up a little above the ground. Then another man would stab the dog in the heart with a spear. Actually, if the dog keeps still and doesn’t bark, they can also kill it with a knife. The dog’s owner praises it in the same way they do when they kill a reindeer. Then they predict the future according to the cry the dog gives when it is

being killed. When killing a reindeer, it is good-luck if the reindeer falls to the front, and bad-luck if it falls backwards - meaning someone will die in the near future. When killing a dog, they decide this by its voice. The killed dog is skinned in the same way they skin reindeer fur, leaving only the skin on the head. The fur on the front legs is used as the hemming when they make winter hats. They use it for this because the fur on this part of the body is long and of high quality - it doesn't freeze even if snow falls on it. They spread twigs on the ground and lay the skinned dog on top of them on its stomach. Then a wooden stick is put beneath the dog's chin, as though it is leaning its chin over it. If the quality of its fur is not very good, they only skin the fur on its back. They take out the organs and offer them to the crows.

If the dream was a very bad one, two men stick two long wooden poles in the ground like pillars and hang the dog's intestines across them to make a gate. Then they place the dog beneath the gate and people step over the dog. As they do this, they kick the dog behind them with their heel. They do this in the same way as they do at funerals, as it is a ceremony to send the dead out of this world. The year before, Slava, Natalia's son, killed a dog in this way and sent its spirit off to the dog's world. Natalia and her husband, Alekseev, went with him then. Natalia said that in former days she had also seen people putting the dog's head inside the *yanana* by opening the back wall of the tent, and placing it on top of the pillar. She said that this had something to do with the dream as well, and that the *mukhomor* probably told to do so. Another man, who is a reindeer herder that I will mention later on, told me about his experience sacrificing a dog. When he had gone to Apuka on September 1, an old lady living there - aged 60 - who had eaten *mukhomor*, told him to sacrifice a dog to the river. She was probably "an experienced person" and must have been a shaman. People must obey what a person who has eaten *mukhomor* says. Therefore, when he returned to Srednie-Pakhachi Village, he killed a dog and offered it to the river.

Dogs play an important role in the Koryaks' day-to-day life, as they do in their spiritual world. Many dogs wander about in the village, and there are many dogs on leashes tied to stakes in the outskirts of the village. These dogs are used to pull dog-sleighs. If a female dog falls pregnant and someone asks Natalia for a puppy, she says, "If you need it," and gives that person one of the puppies when it is born. Then that person gives something like a small beaded necklace as a return gift to the mother dog. However, the puppies that have nowhere to go are killed. They press black charcoal against the puppy's unopened eyes, and kill it by stabbing its heart with a small knife. Then they cut and peel off the skin from the back. Natalia said she always hurried through this procedure, because she didn't like it. The puppy's body is then left in the bushes for the crows. She takes a small amount of the grass from the marsh, and takes it home. This grass is kept under the bed or where they keep the *Gichigi*, or on top of their clothes, so they won't lose it. It will be renewed when they kill the next dog.

They keep only one female dog for breeding puppies. Hence, they must kill the female puppies. Only male dogs are used to pull dog-sleighs. They are neutered when they become one year old. In other words, families with dog-sleighs keep one female dog, one male dog and several neutered dogs. As a matter of fact, Natalia remembers her parents using female dogs to pull dog-sleighs, but normally they don't make female dogs pull dog-sleighs. In order to pull dog-sleighs, they use 12 dogs at the most. Usually, it is pulled by six dogs, and in exceptional cases by four. Sometimes they can make two pull it, but in such cases, they don't load it with luggage: only people get on the sleigh. The dog-sleigh is pulled by one rope, onto either side of which one or two dogs are tied with short ropes. One or two dogs are also tied on at the front. Dog-sleighs have a slightly different structure from reindeer-sleighs. Four posts stand on each of the two planks of wood that look like skis, and a platform for the luggage and humans to ride is set on top of the eight posts on both planks. I was surprised at the fact that they used dog-sleighs in this village, because I had thought it was originally used by Coastal Koryaks who didn't keep reindeer. However, it is understandable that dogs are needed in real life, considering the fact that dogs play an important role in their spiritual world. What's more, they even control the dogs by selecting their sexes and gelding them, in the same way they do to manage the reindeer.

Actually, the country of the dead in the upper-world, to which the dog guides you part of the way, is not merely "believed in" by the Koryaks. They have actually gone to the country of the dead and seen the dead people. They later told me about this themselves when they were talking about the dream caused by the *mukhomor*.

5.2 The Dream of Mukhomor

When I came to this village and climbed up the tundra hill with Natalia for the first time, I saw mushrooms strung on a thread and hung outside a raised storage platform built beside the *yanana* where an old lady lived. This mushroom is called *mukhomor*, which is the general name for mushrooms in Russian, but is actually a poisonous and halucagenic mushroom known as fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*). There are white spots on its red cap, and there is a ring around its stem. I had seen old women eating them at the festival of *Koyanaitatek* held in autumn, and the reindeer-sending ceremony held in memory of the dead. In Europe, it has been used as a flytrap since the old days, because many flies gather around this mushroom. The Russian researchers say that they also gather the mushrooms that grow in the forests near the city. However, the Koryaks, who live in the north-eastern corner of Northern Eurasia, are the only ones who use this mushroom for special rituals and in their daily lives. The Evenks living in the northern forests of Siberia do not use this mushroom themselves, but collect them to trade with the Koryaks. The Koryak shamans used to eat this mushroom and give the ceremony. Hallucinatory effects are

caused by the substance contained in the mushrooms (muscarine), which makes it closely related to the Koryak's spiritual world.

When I met Zoya, I told her without hesitation that I wanted to hear about *mukhomor*. To my surprise, talking about *mukhomor* is not considered a secret topic for them, in contrast to talking about gods. Just talking about the *Gichigi* or about how many reindeer they own is thought to lessen their power, so they seldom talked to me about them. However, they use the *mukhomor* in their daily lives, and they talked to me about it freely, in the same way they would talk about tobacco or alcohol.

She said she could work happily when she ate *mukhomor*. I remembered how Maria had dissected the reindeer happily as she sang a song. At the reindeer ritual for the dead or for the autumn land, people had sat on the tundra, gazing at the mountain that stands in the distance as they sung away endlessly. She also said that people must follow what the *mukhomor* tells them to do. Therefore, I asked her if the *mukhomor* was something like a god. But she said there was no concrete image for the *mukhomor*. In fact, some people saw a human-like image, and she said that although she thinks *mukhomor* is a male, she wasn't sure of it.

When she ate *mukhomor* three years ago, she said that the *mukhomor* had told her, "For a long time from now, there will continue to be a difficult situation. This difficult period of time will last for the next three generations." The current Russian situation was just as it had been predicted. What's more, she said she had met her dead relatives, which had been the only such experience up till that time. She told it to me as follows:

"I was walking along a road. It was a flat road extending straight toward the east – the direction of the sun. On the road ahead I saw a *yanana*. There were many people there, and among them were my dead mother and grandmother. They realized I was coming close, but although they must have seen me, they ignored me and didn't talk to me. It meant that I couldn't stay there in the country of the dead in the upper-world. Then I left the country of the dead, and when I woke up I was on my bed."

I also asked a man who was a reindeer herder about the *mukhomor*. He had graduated from 11th grade, which would be the equivalent to the last year in high school in Japan, and said that he had done some research himself about *mukhomor* because he was interested in it. He came to Alekseev's house at first saying he wanted to greet the Japanese visitor. He must have been drinking because he smelled off vodka, but he was quiet and calm. As he was leaving, he began to talk a little bit about *mukhomor*. When I asked him more about it, he started to talk about it enthusiastically. Therefore, I decided to listen his story somewhere that was quiet, and took him with Vasha to the bedroom, which Alekseev and his wife had told me I

could use as my bedroom, to hear to him talk.

“This mushroom is called *Wapaka* in our language. We eat three of them. The effect increases and repeats itself when you drink your own urine after eating them, and it makes you sleepy. You lie down on your bed and your head stops functioning. It is as if you turn off the light switch. But you can hear everything and see everything. In fact, you are just seeing and hearing things while your brain is suspended. Then you sing a song. Each person has his or her own song particular to himself or herself. Just as Russian songs have Russian melodies to them, these *mukhomor* songs have their own melodies. These songs are given to people by the *mukhomor*.”

When people eat *mukhomor*, apparently they jump up and down on both their feet. According to what he said, they don’t jump of their own will, but are kicked up by the ground as if the ground were bouncing a ball. At least that was how it felt for him. He explained that this is caused by the function of the nerves. He said his hands jerk up and down when he grabs a cup to drink tea. He also said,

“We can see our families in the upper-world even with our eyes closed. This is because the *mukhomor* takes our soul to the upper-world. I saw a fire after I had eaten *mukhomor*. I talked to my brothers and children in the upper-world. But no matter what I said to them, all they answered was ‘*Da, da* (Yes, yes.)’”

I felt sad to hear that he had lost his brothers and children. However, he went on and said, “The *mukhomor* not only gives people songs, but also gives lives.” By the power of life provided by the *mukhomor*, I guessed he had converted the sadness of living into the power of life.

Normally, people eat three *mukhomors*, but he said three was too much for him. There is no special ritual held when collecting this mushroom; they don’t cut the mushroom itself, but bring back the whole cluster. They put it on a net and let it dry in the sun and the wind. It is not good to dry it over the stove fire, because the mushrooms break. Furthermore, regarding its relation with alcohol, he said that both *mukhomor* and alcohol make them see dreams, but *mukhomor* is different from alcohol because it is a “wizard.” I remembered another old lady saying that *mukhomor* is clever, unlike alcohol. This is because they can work hard after eating *mukhomor*. Apparently, they can’t eat *mukhomor* within three days of drinking alcohol. It is impossible to mix *mukhomor* and alcohol together. When I asked him on what occasions he ate *mukhomor*, he told me he ate it at the three festivals – i.e. the festival in May after the fawns are born, the festival in September when the reindeer return and the festival in December. He also ate it at the ritual in September held in memory of those who have passed away and at the funeral where they cremate the dead. I asked him whether there weren’t any other occasions when he

ate it, and he said, "We eat it whenever there are mushrooms."

Regarding the dream he saw eating *mukhomor*, other than meeting the dead, he said he saw "a beautiful road and sky." A little drunk on vodka, he stretched out his arm and smiled as if he were recalling his memory, and said, "It was a straight and beautiful road." Since I couldn't quite understand what he actually meant by the word "beautiful," I asked him if there were many flowers in bloom, or the road was decorated. But he said no, and explained that it was a straight, flat road, easy to walk along. I remembered the road on the tundra I had walked along the other day. The winding hilly road rose and fell, and because there were puddles at the low points the saturated moss below your feet sank you right down to your knees at times. In fact, we had been wearing long rubber boots that came up to the groin – the same ones the reindeer herders who chase the reindeer herds wear. When they refer to "a beautiful road," they mean "a road that is easy to walk on."

He also said that when they eat *mukhomor* and see a dream, the *mukhomor* often tells them to do something. The villagers must follow these orders. Zoya had told me the same thing. He then said that he would bring me some of the *mukhomor* his grandmother had dried, since he didn't have any on him now. Having heard so much being talked about it, I felt by then I wanted to see, just once, what that place was like, which they referred to as the Other Side.

A few days later, I decided to eat the *mukhomor* he had given me. It was already 11 o'clock at night. Just as I had seen the old lady do at the ritual held in memory of the dead, I tore the dried *mukhomor* into small pieces and washed it down with tea. A sunny flavour spread in my mouth. About 20 minutes later, my head started to feel like it was wandering off from reality. My emotions and tangible feelings of reality were cut off from myself. Now I understood how you could see and hear things even though the brain had stopped functioning, as the man had said. The room light was turned off, but the faint light that came in through the door shone in a long beam. The light that came from the small electric stove looked like a belt of continuous small square lights, shining through the check-patterned lattice at the front of the stove. Then it suddenly turned into the window lights of a night train. A night train went past in the distance as the window lights trailed off behind it. This was a scene I had always seen ages ago alone at night in the city, far away from my hometown. Eventually, I realized the rhythm of my heartbeat and the rhythm inside my body both played a melody. It was the slow rhythm to which the Koryaks beat their drums, and the same rhythm to which the Canadian Indians sang along to with their breathing. I learned that this was a natural function of life itself, composed by the rhythm of the nervous system that forms the personality of each person.

Then I remembered how the Koryaks say that *mukhomor* gives them happiness. I could see in front of me the Koryaks dancing with drums in their hands, wearing the *kofranka*, clothes made of reindeer fur. They danced on and on to the joyous

drumbeat. The change in my senses was very gentle and natural. By then, my emotions had been completely cut off from reality, and my memory was just present there objectively in front of my eyes.

I remembered the country of the dead and the road that leads to it. Suddenly, though vaguely, a wide, flat, straight road appeared. The width of the road spread to the farthest corners of my eyes. As I had thought of the road as a narrow and straight one, I was surprised to see that the road spread to the limits of my field of vision. Looking into the distance, the road narrowed as if to follow the rules of perspective. This “beautiful road” was pale white.

Then it came to my mind that my grandparents were the only family members I had lost. My grandfather sat in a chair in front of the doorway of the house, staring silently at me. As a matter of fact, it was a picture from a sepia-coloured album I had seen before. Actually, in the real picture, my grandfather was holding me, still a baby, in his left arm, but I didn’t see myself being held by him in this dream. I didn’t think of it then, but later I realized that it would have been odd for me to be there in the country of the dead, since I haven’t died yet. My grandfather didn’t move at all, and he didn’t express any emotions. When I wondered if my grandmother was there, I saw her standing to the right of my grandfather looking to the side and crouching a little, as if she was half trying to hide. She, too, neither moved nor expressed any emotions, and as the old Koryak had told me, she seemed indifferent to me. Then the fences and walls beside my grandfather’s house appeared. It was a scene I had seen a lot when I was a child, but I hadn’t recalled it for a long time. Nevertheless, I could clearly see even its finest details. I slowly realized that *mukhomor* was something that made you recall your old memories again. In that sense, I was heading deeper and deeper into the past.

After that I wondered if I could see the dead leading their lives, as the old Koryaks had told me. Then I saw – as if I was looking diagonally down on it from above – several little dome-shaped *yananas* set along the stream and the people working there. Men were catching fish with harpoons in the river. Women and children were playing around the *yananas*. It looked like a small replica model of their daily life made for a museum exhibit. I later realized that I had actually seen such a replica model at the folk museum of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii. Otherwise, it might have looked like the large picture that had been drawn by the students and hung on the wall along the stairs in the village school I had visited the other day. However, in contrast to the replica model or the picture, I could see that the people in this scene were actually moving. I continued to watch the people work.

Then I had fallen asleep before I knew it. I saw a dream in my sleep. It combined the clear old memories of the past, though fragmentarily, and the situation that I was facing at that time, making it into one beautiful scene that was not just something patched together. From the sky above the sea, I saw diagonally below,

the coastline of Northern Kamchatka and the mountain range behind it, and the two wide rivers that flow between them toward the sea. Along the right river there were two villages and along the left river there were also two villages – one downstream and the other halfway upstream. Then all the way upstream I saw the village that used to be there a long time ago. The right river was the Apuka River, and the left was the Pakhachi River, where I was at that moment. The villagers were leading a traditional life-style. I was thinking of which river to choose as a research field when I could continue the investigation of the regions that I couldn't do for lack of time in this expedition. It looked as though the villagers living along the right river were living in a slightly more traditional way. There was an inn at the village at the river mouth. I entered it to find a hostelry similar to the ones from the Edo era (1603-1868) in Japan. Entering the doorway, there was a large room, and the room on the far left side had a raised floor – like a Japanese “*tatami* (straw matting) room.” In the middle, there was a sunken fireplace built in the floor – called *irori* in Japanese – and people were working busily to greet the guests. Out from the busy throng came a lady with black hair and large eyes, dressed in *kimono* (Japanese clothes) with her sleeves tied back with a white sash, who greeted me in a lively manner. Her face, with her hair bundled up in a Japanese style like the women in historical plays, didn't remind me of anybody I knew, but I felt I knew her well from the old days and that she was the person who knew me the best as well. It looked as though there was a staircase leading to the second floor from the far right corner. I could observe clearly the finest details of the *irori*, or the brazier behind it, the wooden beam across the ceiling, the features of her face and her *kimono*. People were living in a lively way, following the Japanese traditions that could surely not be seen anywhere in Japan nowadays. It was marvellous to see this.

Then I saw the two rivers flowing from the mountains into the sea. I was on the left river. I went upstream as if I was slowly moving across the sky. I felt I should go to the old village upstream – people used to live there, but they had currently moved to Srednie-Pakhachi Village located halfway downstream. I started to climb the mountain path looking down the river on my right side, wearing my mountain-climbing boots. The path was a steep one with rocks along the way. As I was climbing, I saw a small old-fashioned hut made of wood planks on the right side. I had a feeling there would be something interesting further up the river. I felt I must go to the old village upstream. Between the two rivers, the villagers on the right river might be leading a more traditional life, but I felt I should continue my research on this left river. Since I had already started the research here, I thought I should fully investigate it to the end. The mountains further upstream were covered with green forests, which attracted me. I thought there must be something in there. My feelings were calm; the two rivers, the traditional villagers and the villages, and the mountains that surrounded them all harmonized as one, which my mind

embraced entirely.

When I woke up, I was on my bed. I had slept more than usual and it was already nine o'clock in the morning. Thinking about it afterwards, I thought the real dream that the *mukhomor* had given me was the one I saw in my sleep, because the memories of the past, the present and the future all harmonized as one, and they all appeared in this dream.

5.3 The Eternal Cycle

The people living in the country of the dead will eventually be reborn in this world. They are born to their relatives. Moreover, they are reborn as 10 – the number of fingers on both hands – different people. Therefore, when babies are born, people watch closely to see whose reincarnation they are. They look to see if their bodily features or habits are similar to their relatives that have passed out. While they watch a string with a stone tied to the end of it, they call out the names of the dead one by one, and when the stone moves, the baby is determined to be the reincarnation of that person. Then that name becomes the baby's name. However, if the baby becomes sick, an old man eats *mukhomor* and sees a dream. He whispers the name of the deceased that he saw in that dream in the baby's left ear, and if the baby gets better, that name is determined as his or her real name. The first name given to the baby is regarded as a mistake.

In this case, the word "reborn" must be used carefully. It is not that a person dies and is born again. Human beings don't die. Humans are circulating between this world and the world on the Other Side. Accordingly, to be more accurate, it can be said that they believe in man's immortality. Immortality doesn't only apply to human beings. Alekseev says it is the same with reindeer, bears and seals. Of course life and death are realities for them too, but they see a consecutive life beyond them.

Alekseev says he lies down with his head facing to the east when he goes to sleep. Indeed, the bed in their room is set so that their heads have to point to the east. When I asked him why, he answered, "Because the sun is important, we sleep with our heads pointing towards it." I told him how the Japanese also thought of the sun as a god. Then he asked me if there is a special place to pray to the god in Japan. I told him that the god is inside a shrine. He asked me whether there are any places inside the house to place the god – he probably had in mind how the Koryaks keep the *Gichigi* inside the house. I explained to him how there is a household Shinto altar called *kamidana* inside the house, and that here a small house is made, in which a round shaped metal mirror or a wooden plate with the god's name written on it is placed. I added that the mirror represented the sun. He then asked me when we pray to the sun, so I told him we pray to the rising sun on New Year's day from mountain tops or beaches. He went on to ask me whether people could pray to the god placed in the house everyday, so I answered people can pray to it everyday by joining their

palms together. He nodded as if he was convinced that the Japanese thought of the sun as something important in the same way the Koryaks did, and then asked me if I shouldn't have a special implement to pray to the sun. In other words, they did have these implements -- i.e. the *Gichigi* and the small container and spoon to offer it food. I answered, a little troubled, that since the sun is the same anywhere in the world, we can pray to it without any implements.

Then I asked Alekseev if they pray to the sun everyday. He answered confidently, "Yes," and started to explain how they pray. Every morning, when they make a fire at the beginning of the day, they offer rabbit's fat to the fire and to the east, from where the sun rises. He continued, "The sun and the fire are like twin brothers, so making offerings to the fire is the same as making offerings to the sun." I then asked him how the *Gichigi*, which is also a fire-block shaped as a human, is related to fire. He answered, "The *Gichigi* symbolizes fire because we start fires from it." So I asked him what the concrete image was of a fire-god. He seemed to think about it deeply for a while, and then went into the kitchen where his wife, Natalia, was and came back to tell me, "There is no concrete image of fire." He seemed to have lost his confidence and said that I should ask older people about it, because he didn't know the traditions well enough. I had pushed the question too far. Just as the land and river don't have concrete images as gods, the fire isn't deified either. They admitted spiritual existences in the flowing river, the tundra land or the burning fire in themselves. I changed the subject and asked him about the religious difference between the Koryak and Chukchee. He shaped a frame with his hands, and emphasized that even though there might be some slight differences between them, they were in the same framework as a whole. Considering their language, he said they were basically the same, though there might be some differences in the dialect. Having answered my question completely this time, he had recovered his confidence.

In this conversation, Alekseev told me something very important -- that fire and the sun are twin brothers, and the *Gichigi* is a symbol of fire. This means that the sun, fire and the *Gichigi* are inseparable from each other. Their creation of fire at the festival celebrating the New Year in a traditional way by using a fire-block and stick is not only an act of making fire, but also is an act of making a new sun. The *Gichigi* is both the symbol, and the means by which that is done. The act of making a fire strenuously is essentially the act of creating a new fire, creating a new sun and causing the annual cycle to continue turning.

We can see how the Koryaks place much importance on the sun, not only in their daily prayers, but also in their reindeer rituals. In the reindeer offering ceremony for the autumn land, which we had seen, they rotated the reindeer herd clockwise, which is the direction the sun moves, in order to catch the reindeer with their lassoes. Then the killed reindeer was turned clockwise on the spot as well,

holding their antlers. The *inawet* made by the dissected reindeer was then placed toward the east, from where the sun rises. These procedures are also the same in the winter festival, *Pegitim*, and as Maria had told me, the symbolic reindeer made of a grease-stuffed stomach, called *yoyat* or the green reindeer made of grass called *uiatuiait kayana* are also turned clockwise – the direction in which the sun moves – after they are “killed” with a spear. In the spring festival called *Kilway*, held after the fawns are born, they circle around the *yanana* in a clockwise direction – the direction the sun moves – offering food to the *yanana* by throwing it on top of the roof.

Their act of making fire by turning a fire stick is also related to this. The fire starts as a result of the friction made by turning the fire stick against the fire-block. Fire supplies humans with heat, and makes life in the severe tundra possible. Just as the sun is the symbol of life, fire is also a symbol of life. The annual cycle of life, in which the fawns are born, the green grass grows, and the reindeer return to breed when the leaves turn yellow, is linked to the sun. Moreover, the waxing and waning of the moon also forms another small cycle within this wider cycle. Their festivals and ceremonies are held not only so that they can be unified as a part of the eternal cycle of life through linking themselves with the cosmic movements, but also to propitiate the continuation of that cycle. Certainly, the cycle of natural life doesn’t only involve the reindeer, but also includes the cycle of human death and rebirth. The belief that babies are reincarnations from the country of the dead indicates that there is an eternal cycle of human life linking this world and the upper-world. When they try to keep their traditions and say that they can’t go to the upper-world if they don’t follow them, they must – with no doubt – believe in the sequence of this cycle. They believe that they will come back to this world again after death, and in order to do so, they have to keep going around in this eternal cycle – thought to be the principle of the universe – which their ancestors discovered and passed on to them.

I had seen in the Himalayas how the Tibetan monks always had to walk clockwise past the Buddhist pagoda, which is the symbol of Buddha and the universe. People walked clockwise around the temple many times, and endlessly turned the praying-wheel that contained the sutra. The elderly people kept turning their little praying-wheels in their hands as they sat or walked. They explained to me that they do this – which to me seemed to be nothing more than a meaningless waste of their energy – to earn blessings. By doing this, they can diminish the level of the sin they have committed in this world, and could be reborn in the afterlife, not as animals or starving ghosts living in the Buddhist hell, but as a human being. Or they believe they can get closer to Buddha by earning the blessings. Looking at Tibetan Buddhism from this angle, however, it seems that although it might produce an effect of making monks and people devote their lives to Buddha, it might not be something essential. But from another point of view, even though it has now been systemized in Tibetan Buddhism, long before Buddhism began, human beings must

have been unified with the cosmic cycle in such a way as to link themselves with the movement of the sun and to try to perpetuate this circulating movement.

The Koryak ceremonies themselves are a means to preserve the activity of life, which is cultivated within this cosmic cycle. Welcoming back the reindeer in autumn, they thank the summer land that watched and kept the reindeer safe, and pray to the autumn land to continue to keep them safe, then they offer food to the *Gichigi* which guards the reindeer herd with its spiritual power. Thereafter, they send reindeer to the dead living in the world on the Other Side, and keep the eternal cycle of life circulating.