

# みんなくりポジトリ

国立民族学博物館学術情報リポジトリ National Museum of Ethnology

## 9. The Real Fire

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## 9. The Real Fire

### 9.1 The Kilway Festival Celebrating the Birth of the Fawns

Maria told me a story that illustrated the significance of fawns to the Koryak.

“Long ago, when a wolf was looking for something to eat, he found a female reindeer with her fawn. The wolf stalked this reindeer for half a day. When the night’s darkness came, the wolf decided to go for the big mother reindeer. It attacked the mother reindeer and killed her. Then the wolf decided to say hello to the fawn to become friends with him. The fawn was a little male fawn. The wolf said to the fawn, ‘My young friend, I am thinking about how to stay friends over the four to five years to come, which is a long period of time.’ After that, the fawn continued to grow. He stayed near his mother’s grave. He became big and strong, and firm antlers grew on him. He waited to kill the wolf. When the fourth year came, the reindeer had grown strong and he waited for the wolf to come. He was supposed to appear anytime after the promised four years had passed. It happened in the breeding season. The reindeer’s antlers were sharp and he was out of his mind. They began to fight. The wolf bit the reindeer. With his antlers the reindeer tried to kill the wolf near his mother’s grave, because the mother reindeer would be happy if her son were to kill it. In the end, the reindeer finally killed the wolf. Then he made a song for humans and the reindeer, which went like this: ‘May everyone be blessed with a son so that they may all live happily.’”

Then Maria went on and said, “It doesn’t matter whether the son is born to a reindeer, or to a human being. Both reindeer and human beings are always relying on their sons.”

People celebrate the birth of fawns. It is the festival to begin the spring, as well as the first festival of the yearly reindeer cycle. Two years earlier, when I had first heard about the *Kilway* – in which they make a new fire with the *Gichigi*, circle around the *yanana* and throw the offerings on the roof – I felt I wanted to see this festival with my own eyes. This was one of the reasons why I visited the Srednie-Pakhachi Village for the second time.

After Vakhtangov’s son’s funeral had finished, Alekseev and Slava came back from the tundra in their snowmobile, they told me to go immediately to a *yanana* on the tundra since a Chukchee family was about to start the *Kilway*. Bazarov, the Russian linguist, and I got our things together in a rush, and left for the tundra with Nina. It was early May when the temperature was just zero degrees Celsius; we walked up the hill behind the village underneath the cloudy sky as our feet sank into the snow that had just started to soften. After an hour’s walk, a dome-shaped *yanana* standing on the tundra plateau came into sight. It was 8:50 in the morning. It was still covered with snow around the *yanana*. A pair of snowshoes about a meter long leaned against the tent beside the entrance. Two long pieces of wood are joined together at either end, forming a long leaf-shape; this is called the Athapaskan type,

which is the same as the type the Athapaskan Indians in Canada use. In fact, these snowshoes were just made of thick wooden frames without the woven net of leather straps – they must have been for walking on the solid spring snow. On the other side of the entrance, a wooden hoe for scraping the snow leaned against the tent. Just a little bit off to the side from this *yanana*, square tents for winter had been built. People had been living in these tents during the winter.

Entering the *yanana*, I found a completely different world. A fire was burning in the centre, sending up purple pillars of smoke into the dim light that poured in from the hole in the middle of the ceiling. A few small stones were placed around the fire, indicating that this was the hearth located in the centre of the dwelling. A small willow branch with buds wrapped with cotton fluff was put beside one of the sticks that were framed together for hanging pots over the fire. Over the fire was placed a large iron pot, billowing with white steam, in which meat was being cooked. A middle-aged woman transferred the reindeer meat from this pot onto a large but long and narrow wooden plate. She held it with both her hands and put it on the wooden platform that was built along the wall on the right side of the *yanana*. In the midst of the steam, I could vaguely see the reindeer's intestines and blocks of meat. Blown on the tundra wind and snow, she had a dark-coloured face and sharp looking eyes, and she worked around the place very devotedly. Although she was short, she moved around very swiftly wearing her reindeer-fur jacket, trousers and rubber boots. On the back of her reindeer-fur jacket that was smoked dark brown, small circular patterns beaded in white stood out clearly in the gloomy, smoky atmosphere. In addition, around her waist she was wearing a belt, also outlined with white beads, over her jacket.

Another old woman, sitting in front of the platform on the floor where the meat was placed, was tearing the reindeer's tendon with her fingers and taking out the thread. She was wearing a grey striped whitish jacket with a blue hem. It seemed to be made of cotton. She must have felt a little cold, because she put on a reindeer-fur jacket made for winter over the cotton one. This woman, with a chubby but kind looking face, then tried to thread a needle, but took her time doing it. She was wearing beaded earrings that dangled to her shoulders. On the left side of the entrance, a third woman had spread a piece of reindeer fur over the stone platform and was smashing the small reindeer bones put on top of it with a hammer – the knocking sound echoed in the room. Her slender face was furrowed with many wrinkles. She seemed to be the eldest in this *yanana*, and was sitting on the floor beside her cane with her back hunched in her reindeer-fur outfit. The others followed whatever she said when she spoke.

At first sight, the inside of a *yanana* looks as if many poles run in various directions. But if you look carefully, it consists of three to four poles that are connected at the top where it holds up the *yanana*, and many poles that run

diagonally on the inside of the tent like props – these push the surrounding walls out so that it forms a dome shape – and horizontal poles that connect these props. They hang their reindeer-fur clothes and bags on these horizontal poles. Along the wall to the left, there was a high pile of narrow branches. On the other side of the fire from the entrance, at the back, a small square room had been framed off with wooden poles – reindeer hides were used as walls and ceilings. This room was the bedroom and reindeer-fur had been spread on the floor as well.

I just sat there watching this scene and observing how people moved about. In a village not even a few kilometres away from here, people cooked with electric stoves and watched television. However, the scene that spread in front of my eyes here had nothing to do with that; it was the traditional lifestyle on the tundra. It reminded me of Natalia when she tried to tell me how comfortable the life in a *yanana* was by spreading her arms wide. What I was seeing here was the exciting way of life, which remained the same from ages ago.

About an hour later, the woman who was threading the needle began to sew up the open seam of a little teddy bear. When she finished sewing this, she began to crush a whole lot of small green grains in a round bowl with a stone hammer. They were reindeer's droppings. They became sticky as she crushed them. They probably took them out from the dissected reindeer's intestines. Two girls came into the *yanana*, sat beside her and watched. One of them looked like she was two years old, and the other about three years old. They were wearing modern clothes that looked like the ski outfits sold in the stores in the village. Nothing else but their clothes told me that the scene I was seeing in front of my eyes was not taking place in a dream. After a while, one of the girls took the woman's place and helped her. She hit the reindeer's dung and ground them as if she were kneading them with the brightly polished long stone hammer. The stone hammer was about 20 cm long, which must have been quite heavy for her. Then another young woman wearing glasses came in and helped crush the reindeer bones with a stone. She was wearing jeans and modern clothes too. She took the bones that had been put on the reindeer hide spread on a stone platform, and crushed them into small pieces with a stone hammer, different from the one they had used to crush the reindeer dung.

They brought in from outside the *yanana* a pot full of snow and put it over the fire. On this day, they were going to make water out of snow. When the snow melted eventually, the children brought in more snow in a washbowl and added it to the pot. At 10:30, they finished crushing the bones, which they put into the hot, melted snow water. By then, fish had been cooked in another pot, which was then put out on a plate and set in front of the bedroom. First, the three women and the girl in this *yanana* sat in front of the bedroom and ate the meal. When they finished, they drank tea. We drank tea and had a little bit of dried fish as well. One of the women cut off the gills from the dried fish and ate them after she beat them with a stone and

softened them. I wasn't aware of how much time had passed, but it was already 12 o'clock when the meal was finished.

Inside the *yanana*, a woman was scooping off into a washbowl the fat floating in the pot in which they had cooked the meat. Afterwards she also scooped off with a spoon the floating fat in the pot that they boiled the bones in. They carried this outside the *yanana*, and took it to another tent. I went outside and entered the other tent. The woman wearing glasses, who had been crushing the reindeer bones earlier, was mixing snow with the grease in the washbowl. It turned into a creamy white substance. Then they kneaded the crushed reindeer dung brought from the *yanana* into a mushier and softer substance, and mixed it with a bowl full – approximately five kilograms – of red bilberries. Then these foods were taken into the *yanana* again. When men came back on their dog-sleighs, all the women gathered at the *yanana* and told the children to go fetch the firewood.

At one in the afternoon, the women finally took the *Gichigi* out of the bag kept in the rear right corner of the *yanana*, and prepared to start the fire. In the bag, there were seven to eight *Gichigi* all darkly smeared with grease. Tied to one of the *Gichigi* were a small forked branch and a bird's bill, which also gave off a black lustre from the grease. The *Gichigi*'s body was a wooden board about 10 cm wide, 40 cm long and 3 cm thick, which was cut round like a face at one end with the eyes and mouth carved in. Down the body there were one or two vertical rows of four to five round depressions, which they pressed the fire sticks against to start a fire. The stick is about 1-2 cm in diameter and is 20 cm long, and the broad part at the bottom is made to fit the dent. In order to rotate this stick, they stretch a strap made of sealskin across a bow-shaped piece of wood about 40 cm long, wrap the strap around the stick once and move the bow back and forth. When they do this, they make a small slot at the top of the stick, put the hem of the reindeer-fur clothes over it and press down hard with their hand.

The young woman fixed the *Gichigi* to the floor so it wouldn't move, and the two older women held the bow from both sides and pulled it in turns. One of them was holding down the slot on the top of the stick with the other hand that wasn't holding the bow (Plate 21). However, the way she moved the bow was slow, and the sealskin strap stretched on the bow seemed wide; the stick moved awkwardly and stopped repeatedly, and it looked as if the fire was nowhere near starting. Nevertheless, they used all their strength to try to start the fire. A man came inside the *yanana* and watched them. Then another old lady came along and watched what was going on. One of the women carved out the dent in the *Gichigi*, and tried to make the fire again. But it still wouldn't start, so the old lady who was watching at their side started to sharpen the end of the stick with a knife.

Then the women took out another *Gichigi* and tried again. Their breath came out white even inside the *yanana* as they panted and took a rest. Then they took the

*Gichigi* to the fire and shook into it the wood dust accumulated in the dent, knocking the back of the *Gichigi* with the stick. The *Gichigi* was taken back to the bag where it had been kept. They seemed to have considered that the fire had started when the charred wood dust accumulated in the dent after they turned the stick in it. Now two elderly women began to make a fire. With the *Gichigi* in the middle, they both held the top of the stick with their left hands, from either side. They both held the bow from each side with their right hands and pushed and pulled, respectively. The stick rasped against the dent in the *Gichigi* and made a high-pitched creaking sound. Since they were moving it faster than before, smoke eventually came out. But that was it – the fire didn't start. One of the women put the stick in the dent and sharpened it with a knife so it would fit the hole. They rotated the stick again and it smoked. Then they turned the *Gichigi* upside down over the fire and shook the wood dust into it. They took out one *Gichigi* after another and repeatedly went through the motions of making a fire. The children watched alongside them while young women took turns in trying to start a fire. Older women watched them at their sides and taught them how to start the fire.

The cooked reindeer meat that had been put on the platform to cool was now put back on the wooden plate again, and two women cut it up into small pieces with a knife. They added to this the reindeer dung and the white cream made of mixed fat and snow. This was an *inawet* to be offered to the spirits outside the *yanana* later on, and was served on many small plates so that every person could hold one.

To the left inside the entrance of the *yanana*, children were playing with pebbles, in a game that is similar to the game of Jacks. Two children would sit down facing each other, holding about ten stones in the right hand. One would throw the stones up in the air and catch them on the back of his right hand – these he immediately held in his left hand. Then he picked up one of the stones that he dropped on the floor with his right hand, threw it up in the air, picked up another stone on the floor with the same hand and caught them both in the air before they fell, together in the same hand. If he succeeded, he passed the two stones into his left hand. He repeated this and picked up and passed all the stones on the floor into his left hand. If he failed to catch a stone, it was the other child's turn – this was how they continued their game. Eventually, the other children who visited this *yanana* also joined in, playing the stone game in pairs.

The women carried on making a fire producing a loud squeaking sound. Then the young men tried. People gathered around them and watched, but the men weren't used to doing it, and the left hand that was supposed to be holding the stick moved and the stick was very unstable. However fast they moved their right hand, the fire wouldn't start. After about 20 minutes, it finally started to give off smoke. The old woman took the *Gichigi* to the fire and dropped the wood dust into it, making the fire spark high in the air. For the first time, it really felt like the fire had started. It

was already three o'clock in the afternoon, and the fire starting ceremony, which had started at one o'clock, had somehow settled. The eldest woman, looking relieved to have finished her work, took out a small bag from her pocket and threw a piece of dried *mukhomor* into her mouth.

Then the *Gichigi* were taken out again and they lined them up. They were going to offer food to them. They smeared the white cream made of mixed fat and snow onto the *Gichigi's* lips. They also smeared the white cream on the skull of a bear that was kept in the bag. The teddy bear was also smeared with this cream. This teddy had been repaired – the open seam had been sewn together. I had thought this teddy bear was a child's toy, but it was a religious subject. Furthermore, they smeared this white cream on the small round stones around the fire and the willow branch put beside the pillar. Inside the gloomy *yanana* filled with purple smoke, the white grease stood out like dots on the mouths of the many darkly shining *Gichigi*.

Then an annoying problem arose. The eldest woman told us to leave the room. As a matter of fact, they hadn't agreed to our presence in the *yanana* during the ceremony in the first place. This family weren't relatives of Alekseev's. Their rituals were held mainly among the family members living together in one *yanana*, – or a domestic unit – and only the relatives of that family participated. When a non-family member is to take part, the person has to be invited in advance as a guest. Alekseev's family had found out by chance on the way home from the funeral that they were going to hold this ceremony and had informed us, so it turned out we had suddenly turned up at their place like uninvited guests. Natalia's daughter had introduced us to the older women, but she said their reaction had not been very nice. I wasn't thoroughly aware of this situation, but had taken the highest precautions – as usual when I observe a ceremony – not to disturb their activities. However, I had set up my tripod with my video camera in the corner of the *yanana*, and continued to film them. What's more, although I had kept it to the minimum, the flash had gone off many times. When they were to offer food to the *Gichigi*, I was so impressed by it that I had lost myself in shooting it very closely with my camera and video camera. In the end, the eldest woman had lost her patience. The other women seemed to sympathize with us, but the eldest woman just would not agree to our presence.

Bazarov and I went outside the *yanana* and were at our wit's end for a while. Nina had gone back to the village long ago. It was snowing heavily and it was impossible for us to stay outside. Bazarov, who had been giving me an attitude since that morning that he wasn't really interested in ethnological works like these, said, "We don't have much choice left now," looking anxious to go back to the village. But from my standpoint, I couldn't just give up. In the snow, I came to a conclusion that two things had caused this problem. The first was the presence of outsiders who were not invited guests. The second was the filming and shooting using the camera. Photographing the *Gichigi*, which is a guardian deity that is thought to lose its power

if it is shown it to other people, was not, apparently, something that was pleasing to them.

I made up my mind and told Bazarov to stay inside another tent. I also told him he could go back to the village straight away if he felt cold and tired. Then I said I would try convincing her again on my own. I entered the *yanana* alone and put away the tripod that I had set up, put the video camera in my backpack, and told them I wanted to stay there, as I wouldn't use my video camera or my camera. To my surprise, the eldest woman easily gave me permission to stay. She took out a piece of reindeer fur for me to sit on, and told me to stay seated there. Then she went into the rear bedroom and sank heavily into her seat in the middle. I was surprised at the level of the women's authority – especially of this eldest woman. The other women and even the men there obeyed her. She had all the authority regarding this ritual.

Now, in front of me as I sat there in silence, they gave out the *inawet* that they had made and served onto small plates to the young women, middle-aged women and the children who were there. This dish was made of chopped up reindeer meat, reindeer dung and the white cream made of mixed grease and snow. The elder women stayed behind in the *yanana*, and the rest went outside. Then they threw it up onto the domed roof of the *yanana*, and circled around the tent clockwise, the direction in which the sun rotates. Then the meal began when they went back into the *yanana*.

They divided themselves into four groups and sat on the floor surrounding the food. The groups consisted of infants and young boys, young women and middle-aged women, elderly women, and a young man – he seemed to be the husband of the woman wearing glasses – and I. Cooked reindeer meat, cream made of reindeer fat and snow, and a mixture of reindeer dung and bilberries were served. The reindeer dung smelled like the tundra moss, but at the same time, since it smelled like digested reindeer faeces, I couldn't eat much. I had eaten many reindeer dishes in Canada at the Forest Indian's place, but this was the first time for me to eat dung – just taking one bite was the best I could do.

The ceremony had finished. The elderly women stayed behind in the *yanana*, and everybody else began to prepare to go home to their houses in the village. At five o'clock as the snow sprinkled down, I headed home with the other people. More than eight hours had passed since I had arrived there at 8:50 in the morning. It was a day in which I had completely forgotten about the time, and the scene as the women moved the bow strenuously back and forth – when they were not even sure when it would end – in effort to start the fire with the *Gichigi* inside the *yanana*, is branded on my memory. It wasn't that I was unsatisfied, but it was sad we couldn't build a good relationship with the women. The people walking with me seemed to sympathize with me and I could see they seemed to care.

When I got to Alekseev's house, Bazarov had already returned and everyone



was worried about me. I told them I was okay and that the *Kilway* was very interesting. After we had talked for a while, Tanya showed up. She was the young woman who had shown us a lot around the village and had told us many things last time. She was the daughter of Yuri, who was called “the man who entraps people in the pond” and was a schoolteacher at the village with her elder sister, Ilyna. She looked very happy to meet me again. I gave her the photo we had taken from last time.

She had already heard about us having been to the *Kilway* and not being welcomed. She told us she would invite us to the *Kilway* her father would hold in their tent on the tundra. I had no reason to turn down this sudden but kindly invitation. Moreover, she asked me to come to see an event at school celebrating the anniversary of the Russian victory over Germany in World War 2. Actually, on a previous occasion she had organized a gathering at school, for me to talk about Japan to the students. It was helpful not only for me to understand the present situation of the village, but also for the villagers to learn about Japan and myself, and for me to take part in the various events of the village. I decided to accept this offer delightedly.

## 9.2 Yuri's Kilway

May 6 was the day they would celebrate the anniversary of the former Soviet Union's victory over the Germans at the school. May 9 was the actual holiday, but the ceremony was to be held on Saturday the 6th in the village. A little past noon, we left with Tanya, who had come to pick us up. Many people had gathered and were waiting for the event to start at the auditorium where there is a stage at the front. Soon the ceremony had begun and a book was given to the only Russian ex-serviceman in this village. He had been living in this village for 17 years, and had served in the military in Manchuria during World War 2. They introduced me to this grey-haired man and we shook hands. As a Japanese, I had complex feelings about it, but he must have felt the same way too; we had nothing to say to each other. Then, on the stage-screen they showed slides of war scenes taken from the book. Then children dressed in colourful outfits performed songs and dances that showed how they said farewell to the soldiers leaving for the front, and how they tried hard to make a living when the going was tough. Soon after, we all offered a moment of silent prayer to the war dead, which was followed by an award-giving ceremony for the pictures that the children had drawn for today's Victory Anniversary. In most of the pictures, the former Soviet Union's red pentagonal stars were drawn all over the paper. On the stage, they had hung a banner that said in Russian “The 50th Anniversary of the Great Victory.” Considering the current Russian situation, the grander this copy was, the more ironic the result seemed. I realized that just because they were born in this village, the Koryak and Chukchee children – who had nothing

to do with the war – had to prepare for the Victory Anniversary skits and draw pictures of red stars. Later on, the schoolmaster, whom I had been introduced to, asked me about my impressions of the event, so I told him what I thought.

“It was very well organized.” Since I gave him the right answer, the Russian schoolmaster laughed proudly and held his head erect.

After this, I talked with Ilyna and Tanya and decided give a talk to all of the primary, secondary and high school students about Japan. So we fixed the date. Ilyna thought that information from the outside world would be of good help for the children in this village. She also said she wanted to know why our *Kilway* research didn't turned out right the day before, so I told her the elderly woman didn't want her photo to be taken. She said that it was important to leave records of the *Kilway*. Ilyna, just like her father, thought that it was necessary to keep records in order to pass down the tradition, and told me she wanted me – representing the Japanese – to leave the ritual on record. As a matter of fact, she knew well about the importance of passing on traditional cultures, and was working enthusiastically at it from her standpoint as a teacher. When I asked, she told me that since 1985, the school started giving *Chauchu* classes, which is a language spoken by the reindeer-herders, and since 1992, they had been permitted to incorporate cultural education classes in their class schedules. She smiled sadly saying that the educational history of their traditional culture is still very young. But her eyes looked keen, expressing her strong enthusiasm for education.

The following day (May 7) Tanya came to pick us up a little before noon. We left for the tundra to watch Yuri's *Kilway*. On the way, we met Yuri, who was walking back to the village – in the opposite direction we were heading. Just as he was leaving, he told us to come back to his house after the ceremony so that he could explain about it. When we arrived at the tent at 11:20 in the morning, Ilyna – Tanya's sister – and her elderly mother were already cutting reindeer meat. The tent was square and made of canvas, and had a small storage room before the entrance. Ilyna put some reindeer fat onto a small wooden plate and came out of the tent. Then she walked across the snow eastward for about 60 meters, recalled the people's names who had died and said them out loud as she put a handful of grease on the snow. She was recalling the names of the relatives who had died from January till that day. She had made an offering to the dead.

In front of the entrance of the tent a bonfire was being burnt over which a pot was hung from few branches that had been put together. The reindeer meat that they had been cutting was put into this pot. The water in the pot was made from melted snow, and they said they had been working on this from 11:10. Ilyna, Tanya and a number of children surrounded the pot and watched it cook. It was cloudy on this day, but sometimes the sun came out and it wasn't so cold because the temperature was 10 degrees Celsius.

At 12:05 they began to make a fire in the tent. They carpeted the floor with reindeer fur, laid the *Gichigi* on the floor and the mother pressed it down with her left foot so it wouldn't move. She held the slot on the top of the fire stick with her left hand, the bow with her right hand, and kept pushing the bow back and forth. The fire stick and the dent in the *Gichigi* creaked as they rasped against each other. Another middle-aged woman came and carved the dent in the *Gichigi* with a knife. Then they both held each end of the bow and pushed and pulled at each other. As they did so, the stick fell off and they laughed – as you can see, starting the fire isn't an easy job.

Then they took out another *Gichigi*, checked the dents and started to make a fire again. Beside them, a man about 30 years old, who had just come into the tent, and two boys about 7 and 10 years old were watching. For the fourth time, one of the women tried to start the fire with a *Gichigi* that only had one dent. Eventually, a little bit of smoke came off. They laid the three *Gichigi* on the floor, and Ilyna tried to start a fire with one of them. She didn't look like she was used to doing this, and the mother beside her was teaching her how to pull the bow. A young man about 20 years old walked in and watched with the children. Outside, reindeer meat was being cooked, and inside the tent, they continued to start the fire. Now the mother and the 7-year-old boy were pulling and pushing the bow, but no smoke came out. Then two other women tried doing it. After all, this fire-starting ritual ended at 12:35 p.m. They had done the fire making seven times in half an hour.

Just as I had seen at the *Kilway* last time, the elderly women taught the younger women how to make the fire with the *Gichigi* too. Children also learned it naturally as they watched it at the side or as they helped. Moreover, young men had done the fire making at the end last time, but the fire making was basically the women's role. Although there were many men around this time, they were just watching and didn't take part in doing it – except the children.

When the fire making finished, the *Gichigi* was hung on the beam at the rear end of the tent. Since the entrance of the tent faces the south, the beam is on the far side, and looking at it from the centre of the tent was placed in the north-eastern corner. This position was the same as the position where the *Gichigi* had been placed in the *yanana* last time. To be more accurate, the entrance of this tent was pointing 165 degrees to the north as measured by the compass, which meant it was 15 degrees off due south to the east. Hence the opposite side of the entrance was pointing 345 degrees. So considering this tent as a circle, the north-eastern corner would actually be 30 degrees from the north, going eastward. However, this difference of 15 degrees was not important for them. They said the offerings for the dead were to be put at a point eastward from the tent. East is the direction to “the other side,” or the country of the deceased. But in fact, it was 15 degrees off due east to the south. In addition, the offerings to the spirit – which were to be made later on – are supposed

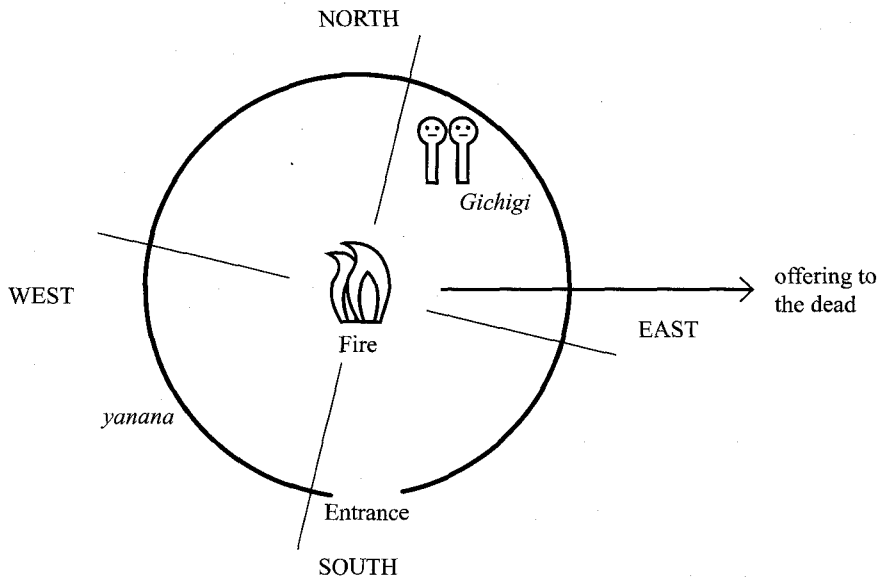


fig.17 Position of the *Gichigi* in the *yanana* and the directions for the offering to the dead.

to be buried in the snow to the east, but this place was also off 15 degrees due east to the north. Considering what I had seen at the reindeer ritual last time, in which they made offerings to the land in the four directions – east, south, west and north – it seemed they divided the land into four directions; the entrance of the *yanana* was the south and the opposite side was north, and when they made offerings to the dead or the spirits, as long as they were made to the east of the tent, it didn't matter if it was a little bit off to another direction. They thought of it as "east."

Now, while they made the fire in the tent, at 12:20 p.m. they had also started to prepare their lunch. At 12:37 p.m., the boiling macaroni and reindeer meat set on top of the stove was ready, and Tanya moved the pot to the floor and scraped off the block of salt into it, with a knife. Then the pot was replaced on the stove and it continued to cook. Ilyna was cutting the reindeer meat beside the stove. At 12:50 p.m., the meal began. Children ate the food with great relish and young women drank coffee. People looked relaxed and the ritual proceeded slowly as if it were part of their daily life.

When they had taken a rest, at 1:40 p.m., they started to prepare the food to offer to the spirits. Ilyna and her mother chopped up the reindeer meat into small pieces on a wooden plate with a knife. They divided the meat into small dishes, which they then piled up in a washbowl, covered with a willow branch, and left inside the tent's entrance to the right. Outside the tent, where the bonfire was, another woman was skimming the liquid fat that floated on the surface of the pot – in which

they were cooking reindeer meat – with an iron ladle, and pouring it into another washbowl. These washbowls were products that they bought in the shops, and they used them as kitchen utensils just as the pots and plates. At 2:04 p.m., they took the washbowl with the fat in it into the tent and mixed snow from the pot little by little into the grease. As they kneaded it turning their palms and pressing it, the grease and snow mingled and a thick white cream formed. By 2:40 p.m., the white cream had turned quite stiff. Then they tilted the washbowl and poured out the small amount of water that had gathered at the bottom onto the floor. At 2:47 p.m., they added this cream little by little onto the plates holding the small pieces of reindeer meat and, prepared to offer to the spirits. So in the small dish, there were small pieces of chopped up reindeer meat and the white cream which was a mixture of grease and snow. In this *Kilway*, they didn't make the reindeer dung and bilberry mixture that I had seen at the other *yanana* a few days before. As a matter of fact, they did scrape dried dung into a hole dug in the snow to offer to the spirits, so they might have put some onto the small plates with the meat in it as well.

At 2:49 p.m., the elderly mother handed out the small plates to the people inside the tent, and they walked out with the plates in their hands – they contained the pieces of reindeer meat and white cream. Then they circled around the tent once clockwise as they threw the food onto the roof. (Plate 22) Two children playfully trying to throw the pieces of meat onto the very top of the roof wouldn't move from the entrance. Inside the tent, the white cream was being offered to the *Gichigi* as food. Ilyna, Tanya and the children smeared the white cream onto its mouth and the small twigs that were tied to it with a string, these being the *Gichigi's* assistant. Beside the *Gichigi*, there were various spirits inside the bag, so they smeared each of them with the white cream (Plate 23). These spirits were: a round fist-sized stone, dried fur from a shrewmouse, a wolf's skull (or at least it looked like one), a dried raven's head and beak, and what looked like a bear's shoulder blade. These were taken out of the bag one after another. They had been passed on from one generation to another, and were the source of their power, which supported their life. They had turned pitch-black and were glistening with grease after so many years. After the offerings had been made to these spirits, they were put back into the bag again.

At 3:08 p.m., a middle-aged woman, Ilyna and Tanya walked about 30 meters east from the tent with a plate of reindeer meat, which was an offering to the spirits, in their hands and put the food down on the ground where the snow had disappeared. Then they dug a hole (20 cm deep) in the snow about 50 meters away from the tent, squatted beside the hole to cut the meat into small pieces, and put them in the hole in the snow. Part of the fur still remained on the reindeer meat. In addition, they scraped off a chunk of dried reindeer dung with a knife into the hole. Accompanied by a boy, of about ten years of age, who had come to watch them, they ate the cooked reindeer meat as they cut it with a knife squatting on the snow. The meal had finished by 3:27

p.m.; they put the leftover food in the hole and went back to the tent. The spring tundra with its land showing in some places where the snow had melted spread before us, and the children were playing around pushing and pulling small sleighs with their hands. Far beyond the hill, the buildings from the village could be seen and the barking of dogs could be heard in the distance. Two ravens flew straight across as they croaked beneath the thin grey clouds that spread across the sky. When we returned to the tent, it was 3:33 p.m.

People ate again and drank tea. At 3:50 p.m., two guests went back to the village with their dog. Then at 4:20 p.m., we all took a photo together in the tent, and we left for home at 4:35 p.m. The general order of Yuri's *Kilway* was the same as the one I had seen done by the elderly Chukchee women in the *yanana*. However, it was simplified in that they didn't crush the bones and gather the fat, or make the dish of reindeer dung and bilberries. In addition, they had taken in modern elements such as eating macaroni and drinking coffee. Moreover, comparing Yuri's *Kilway* with the elderly women's *Kilway*, it didn't seem as powerful to me. The *Kilway* held by the elderly woman, who didn't want her photo to be taken, made me feel the invisible power of her belief in the existence of the spirits, which was why she was celebrating the ritual. Of course, the elderly mother or the middle-aged woman who made the offering to the spirits in each of the holes dug in the snow must have been communicating with the spirits. But as I watched young Ilyna and Tanya make a fire with the *Gichigi* or make offerings to the spirits, I got the impression that they were seeing it objectively from the outside as a traditional culture, holding the ceremony to pass the tradition on – rather than living within the worldview that gives meaning to the ceremony. The difference in the power that I felt might have come from the difference of the meaning of the ritual for them – the reason why they hold the ceremony.

In the evening of that day, I visited Yuri's house in the village because he said he would tell us about the *Kilway*. I had already seen the *Kilway* twice and had heard Maria explain it to me in detail two years before then. Nevertheless, I was interested to hear how Yuri himself would explain the ritual to me. So I got him to talk about it freely first, and then I asked him questions.

"To begin with," Yuri started to explain. "We can call this event in many ways. Festival, religious service, or tradition. And nowadays, people don't celebrate it as much." He finished his introductory remarks and started to talk about the *Kilway*. They start the preparation in January, when they kill a reindeer. It freezes instantly because of the cold, and still doesn't melt even in May. He said that the *Kilway* we had seen today was offered to the fawn's birth. Long ago, when these rituals were still common practice and were not simplified, after the reindeer gave birth to their fawns in April and their antlers fell off, people collected the young mother reindeer's antlers. The antlers symbolized the reindeer herd. They collected them because it

was impossible to gather all the real reindeer. All these antlers were kept behind the houses on the north side, the house entrances facing south.

From the various parts of the reindeer's dissected body, people took parts such as the spine, where there is not much meat. Then a week before the festival, they crush the bones and extract the grease.

In addition, meat dishes are prepared for the *Gichigi*, which is a guardian spirit. The spirit is a mediator between humans and reindeer. People believe in the invisible connection between humans and reindeer. The reindeer is also connected with the land or nature, and *Gichigis* are the mediators. Yuri repeated and emphasized that there is a connection between humans and reindeer, and also between the *Gichigis* and the reindeer. He then said that although it is not proved scientifically, the people living there believe in such connections.

Suppose today was the day of the festival, tomorrow, people would scatter reindeer's antlers across the tundra and imitate the reindeer's voice. This symbolizes their action of letting the reindeer out on the tundra again. Therefore, Yuri says the antler is the symbol of reindeer. He talked about the significance of the *Kilway* as if an anthropologist were analyzing, unlike Maria, Alekseev and Natalia who explained the procedure of the ritual in detail. Based on his experience and idea, he pointed out the following facts: the *Kilway* and the fawn's birth are related; the *Gichigi*, which is an idol, is a mediator between humans and reindeer; the collected antlers symbolize the real reindeer. Of course, these facts didn't explain the entire ritual. But before anything, in order to explain the *Kilway*, he stressed the relationship between the reindeer and humans.

However, this idea may not have been an original one. Two years ago, Mikhail, the Russian researcher, and I had discussed this – that there is a spiritual connection between the *Gichigi* and the reindeer, and thus the *Gichigi* must be a mediator between humans and reindeer – and Mikhail had talked about it in front of the people around us, including Ilyna, Yuri's daughter. Therefore, there was no wonder if Yuri had heard about this idea from Ilyna. Actually, I thought his most original remark was his observation that although the spiritual relationship between humans and reindeer hasn't been proved scientifically, people believe in it. Yuri, who had received an extensive education, didn't deny what hadn't been proved scientifically, but acknowledged the people's belief and made a remark that admitted the limits of science. It seemed to me that he, who believed in the *Gichigi's* spiritual power himself, was searching for an answer how it could be compatible with science.

Just as I had expected, his explanation spread into generalizations about culture and nature. He said there was a paradoxical belief that small ethnic groups protect culture and large nations lose their culture. He said this paradox happens because in large nations, many cultures mix together and each one loses the originality it used to have. Therefore, he said that the people were responsible for cultural loss. He

then went on and said, “At the beginning of this century, mankind was thought to be noble. Now, men are destroying their surroundings and human beings are thought of as being sinful. In short, humans have destroyed nature. Mankind is the most ingenious instrument for destroying nature. They aren’t thinking about the future. The vegetation has been destroyed, and animals have been wiped out. Everything has been wrecked.”

As it later became clear, Yuri had left the village and had studied veterinary medicine in urban Russia for a long time. He was looking at his own culture from the outside. He was also well informed about cultural loss or the destruction of nature done by humans – which probably appeared in the newspapers or magazines he read, and had now become a common subject in the editorial. However, what surprised me the most was that they commented on these subjects in Russia, and that there was a person who talked about it boldly, positively taking in the various new and modern ways of thinking, in this small Koryak village at the northern end of Kamchatka Oblast. He didn’t blame the nation for this critical situation regarding culture and nature. He just talked about the present situation from a pessimistic viewpoint.

Putting his generalizations aside and taking the subject back to the *Kilway*, I decided to ask him some more questions. I asked him what the purpose of it was and the meaning of the word. He said that it was a ceremony held for a newborn fawn. He also said that the word *Kilway* was an old word so he couldn’t explain its meaning – apparently, it might have been word borrowed from another language. Then I asked him why people threw the food over the tent roof. He explained that the tent symbolized the reindeer since it was made of reindeer fur. The symbolized reindeer wants to eat food, he says. In addition, the pieces of meat are thrown across the land. This is done to offer the food to all the animals living on earth, such as the ravens, mice and so forth. Then the people greet the coming of spring. He says this festival also celebrates the coming of spring. Primarily, the *Kilway* celebrates the birth of fawns, and secondly, it celebrates the coming of spring. This was the same as what Maria had told me before.

I then asked him why they start a fire using a *Gichigi*. He began to talk about fire. The fire started by a *Gichigi* is a *liji-milgen*, or a “real fire.” Other fires were not important. The fire started by the *Gichigi* was the most important source of fire, or the fire of fires. There is a deep meaning to this fire – it is an idol. It is a mediator between men and nature. Long ago, when men didn’t have matches, they used fires that were started in this way. Now, the original order of the ceremony has changed. They used to start the fire first, and then cook with that fire. In other words, the “real fire” made by the *Gichigi* was the source of fire, and was a spirit in itself.

I told him I wanted to ask him more about the fire, so he went on talking. The fire is masculine. For example, suppose I am walking along the river, and there is a cave, in which I decide to stay the night as it grows dark. I start a fire, when all of



a sudden I hear a cheep-cheep, like a seagull's cry. This means I have to leave this place and go somewhere else. It is a foretelling of an accident. He then added that if he were to analyze this situation logically, it would be like this: since a bear was catching fish at the riverbank and many seagulls gathered to eat the leftovers of what the bear had been eating, it might attack me.

Then he gave another example. Suppose I stay the night in a tent. I would burn a fire inside it. If I heard a noise coming from the entrance, there should be some guests coming. That is because the burning fire makes an unusual sound. He went on to the next example. The fire makes a special noise when you put grease in it. But sometimes it does that even when you haven't done so. When this happens, he says people look around to see if any wild animals are passing by. If a man catches the wild animal that passed by, the first piece of meat has to be offered to the fire. The role of fire he was talking about here was its power to foresee the future dangers, accidents, or incidents that people are unaware of, and to let them know.

In addition, Yuri explained why they use snow in this ritual. He said it was because the snow had something to do with the reindeer's health. The reindeer eat snow over the winter season, which lasts for nine months. So just as the reindeer eat snow, people use snow instead of water.

I also asked him why they buried food in the snow. Although he said he had never seen it himself, he said it was probably offered to the east for the wild animals living on the tundra as an *inawet*. He also said that they take a little bit of food separately, and offer it to the evil spirits. He must have been referring to the small amount of food they had put on the ground separately, before they buried the food in the snow. This evil spirit, called *Kala*, brings about disease and causes bad things to happen. By giving it food, they can eliminate its influence. Thus, the *inawet* here is an insurance against accidents.

People make offerings to all the spirits that surround them. This is called an *inawet*. When they pronounce this word slowly, it sounds like "ineluet" – the "I" sound comes in. But when they say it quickly, it becomes "inawet." According to Bazarov, the Russian linguist, the word is used as a noun in the sentence, but sometimes it becomes a verb as well – i.e. it doesn't just mean "offering" but it also means "to offer." In the imperative, it becomes *tinawet*, meaning "make an offering." Then I asked him if the word ever splits into two – "inel" and "uet." Bazarov and Yuri discussed about it making many sentences, and came to the conclusion that in a certain grammatical form, the verb inflects and the "uet" drops. Nevertheless, just as I had confirmed before, this word is basically one word and can't be divided into more elements. In any case, an *inawet* is an offering from the people to the spirits, which has an essential significance connecting the people and the spirits in their daily lives.

Yuri then started to talk about the relation between science and the fact that

people make offerings to the spirits around them. "People see things that are invisible. None of the scientists can say that they certainly exist. This is the thought of ordinary people, and is not scientific. Scientists have gone so far, they can't see the things that are close to them." He thinks that the limit lay near science, rather than near ordinary people's thoughts.

I had a final question for him that I had to ask. He had emphasized the connection of the *Kilway* and the reindeer. Consequently, I wanted to ask him about the relationship between the reindeer master and the *Gichigi*, which I had heard about from an old lady on the tundra two years before this. He answered that the reindeer's master is called *Koyavaginen*. This was the same word as what the old lady from the tundra had told me – *Koyavagin*. He said that the word itself referred to the creator of reindeer, or the creator of the reindeer's life. He also said that it is the single spiritual existence that stands for all the reindeer. Going around the *yanana* and throwing food over the roof as an *inawet* in the *Kilway* is all done for this spirit. On the other hand, he said that the *Gichigi* – which is an idol – that we saw when they were starting a fire, is the owner of the reindeer herd. At the same time, the *Gichigi* is the mediator between humans and reindeer. That is why the first piece of meat is offered to the *Gichigi*, he explained.

I think his explanation is correct. As I had interpreted before, the *Gichigi* guards each *yanana* and the people living there, which forms one domestic unit. In that sense, the *Gichigi* is a spiritual guardian of the particular reindeer herd that they own. Just as the men actually control and guard a reindeer herd, the *Gichigi* and tied to it the twigs, symbolizing the herders, control and guard the reindeer herd spiritually. Therefore, people offer food to the *Gichigi*, and the *Gichigi* exerts its power on the reindeer herd. Hence, it can be said that the *Gichigi* mediates between humans and reindeer.

The relationship between humans and reindeer here is different from the reciprocity between men and the reindeer seen among the reindeer hunters in Canada. Among the Canadian Forest Indians, animals were spirits themselves. However, among the reindeer herders, the reindeer already has a strong characteristic of being property; they don't make direct exchanges between men and the reindeer, but the relationship between them is indirect exchange through the *Gichigi*. The *Gichigi* is originally the fire-god and guards the *yanana* and human life, but this – its role as a mediator – is the outcome of expanding its role to guard reindeer herds.

Another fact that should be focused on is that in the *Kilway*, while food is being offered to the *Gichigi*, it is also being offered to the *Koyavagin*, which is the creator of the reindeer. The *Koyavagin* is the creator of the reindeer's life and it is a spirit that represents the entire reindeer species. It is the reindeer itself, but is also an abstract being separate from the individual reindeer. In other words, human beings give food to the creator of reindeer, and the reindeer give birth to new fawns.

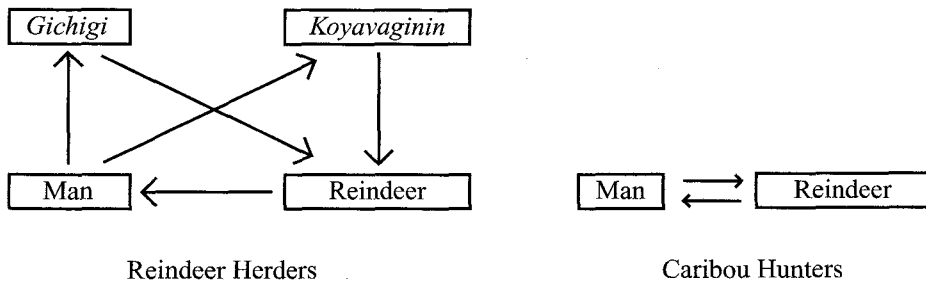


fig.18 Relationships and directions of exchange among man, reindeer and spirits. The comparison is made between reindeer herders and caribou hunters.

In contrast with the fact that the *Gichigi* plays the role of guarding the reindeer, the role of the *Koyavagin* is directly connected to the creation of reindeer's life, or the reproduction of the fawns.

The idea of acknowledging the spirit in the animal itself – as it is seen among hunters – has decreased here, and the vague mind of the entire reindeer species becomes to have a character of the reindeer's master spirit – the *Koyavagin*. The reciprocity between humans and reindeer is transformed into the reciprocity among humans, the master spirit of the reindeer and reindeer. This is based on the fact that humans own the reindeer. At the same time, however, human beings can't control the reindeer's reproduction or health. Therefore, men depend on spiritual power exerted upon the reindeer herd by offering reindeer to the *Koyavagin*, which is the creator of the reindeer's life, or the *Gichigi*, which guards the reindeer's health.

### 9.3 Alekseev and Natalia's Kilway

The various *Kilways* and rituals are held by each family and although the rough outline may be the same, what they do differs from case to case. What's more, every family thinks their way is the correct way, and are either not very interested in how the other families do it, or think that other families ways are not the real traditional way. Alekseev and Natalia commented about a Russian man who had married a Chukchee that there was no way a Russian could understand their tradition, so they said his family's *Kilway* must be totally wrong. As I researched how people explained the rituals, it became clear that the significance of the rituals, or the rituals that they emphasized, differed depending on the person. As a matter of fact, excluding the reindeer killing, women did most parts of the ritual. Therefore, the detailed manners of the ritual are actually passed on among women. However, as women get married, different family traditions mix together and form a new family tradition, which is then passed on to the children. Just as marriage brings forth new babies by a new combination of genes, their traditions are born anew.

According to Alekseev, the *Kilway* is held once every two years, because it is

believed that the *Gichigi* will become lazy if they offer it food every year. They also believe it is necessary to start the “real fire,” which must be done in the same way as the olden days. In fact, it is a symbolic fire, and it is all right as long as the *Gichigi*, which is an ignition board, gives off smoke. All they have to do is to prove that they don’t use matches.

Alekseev and Natalia had held the *Kilway* last year, so they didn’t do it that year. Therefore, I got Natalia to tell me about it. But she didn’t seem very happy about it. As a matter of fact, a few days after Vakhtangov’s son’s funeral, Natalia’s brother had died. He was 45 years old and lived in the neighbouring village, Achaivayam. Since he was Vakhtangov’s son-in-law, Vakhtangov had left for Achaivayam on his snowmobile the day before to attend his funeral. Since it was 100 km away, it would take him a whole day at the least, or he would have to travel overnight if the snowmobile broke down. Actually, the brother had been missing since last December, but was found dead near the river. He had been a heavy drinker, and had symptoms that they called *mania*. So he apparently had some hallucinations and saw ghosts, which led him to the river, and he had passed away there lying flat on the ground. Natalia put her hand to her chest and sighed painfully, and said she had been drinking everyday. On the previous day, she had gone to the clinic in the village and was told that she had high blood pressure, so she tottered back home and went to bed. At first, I thought she had finally become an alcoholic, but that was not it. She had completely lost her energy and I had to pour some water in the kettle and turn it on. However, she had gotten a little better this morning, and wasn’t drunk. She came into the living room, where we had been talking, and joined our conversation.

Then she talked about the *Kilway* as follows: “People bring antlers from the reindeer herd. They make an *inawet* and put it on a small plate and walk out of the *yanana*. Then they walk around the *yanana* and throw the *inawet*, and eat the meal. While they do this, they imitate the reindeer’s voice and say, ‘ho, ho, ho, ho.’ Women hold their clothes and imitate the fawn’s birth. They hold the *Gichigi* and antlers in their hands and imitate the reindeer giving birth to fawns. These things are done at night near the *yanana*.” Natalia’s explanation was partial, but the fact that the women imitated the reindeer giving birth to the fawns was an important point that I had missed from Yuri’s story or Maria’s detailed explanation two years ago. So after a while, I got Natalia to tell me again in as much detail as possible about the *Kilway*, from the beginning.

Her second explanation was as follows: “First of all, everybody has a piece of fat to offer to the *Gichigi*. Offering food to the idol is the whole meaning of these ceremonies. Everybody goes outside when the preparation is finished. One person holds the ‘real fire’ and he has an assistant. The children go first and all the invited guests go after them. They walk around the *yanana* clockwise and throw the *inawet*. Before they go outside, they divide each part of the reindeer meat equally among

them. This makes up the *inawet*. The children throw this. They throw it onto the *yanana*'s roof. Inside the tent, people start the fire and an *inawet* is offered to the 'real fire.' While people circle around the *yanana*, a man catches a small reindeer made of grass with a lasso and 'kills' this with a spear or a knife. They stab its heart from the left side as they do with a real reindeer. Then they turn this reindeer around clockwise and cut its head and body. They open the rear side of the tent and take the grass reindeer inside and put it near the fire. Then they cut the real reindeer's meat, put it on a special plate and give it out to the guests. They serve each guest a meal. When everybody finishes eating I hold on to my clothes, pull at the antlers and *Gichigi* and imitate the reindeer giving birth. On the following day, everything on the ground is cleared away." Natalia's explanation was based on what she had to do. She talked about the *Kilway* from her point of view as a woman – mimicking the reindeer's voice "ho, ho, ho, ho," serving meals to all the guests, cleaning up the next day. Then she talked about how the men "kill" the symbolic reindeer made of grass or how the children throw the *inawet* over the *yanana*'s roof, as if she was looking at them from a distance. However, she didn't talk about starting the fire with a *Gichigi* in detail. She might not have been very interested in it, or she might have thought starting a fire with a *Gichigi* was not something typical of the *Kilway*, because it is also done in the winter, or New Year, festival, *Pegitim*. In fact, she had said the significance of this ceremony, *Kilway* was to offer food to the *Gichigi*, and had not emphasized the fawn's birth, as Yuri had said. However, although she hadn't expressed it consciously and clearly, it was obvious the *Kilway* was deeply linked to this event from her explanation that they imitated the reindeer giving birth. Despite her sorrow at losing two members of her family, she simply described for me with her words a rough but precious sketch of the *Kilway* that she had taken part in and had seen with her eyes.

#### 9.4 The Worldview in the Kilway

People say the *Kilway* is a festival to celebrate the fawn's birth, the coming of spring, or to offer food to the *Gichigi*. None of these are wrong. Each person interprets the *Kilway* that way and puts it into practice based on that interpretation. However, I would like to take into consideration another fundamental meaning of the *Kilway*.

First of all, why do people circle around the *yanana*? They go around clockwise – which is the direction the sun moves – from the entrance facing south, imitating the reindeer's voice. At the north end, which is the opposite side of the entrance, reindeer's antlers and bones are placed. People walk past this point and go around in a circle to the entrance again. The bones placed at the north end of the *yanana*, symbolize the reindeer's death; walking past this point and going on to the south end symbolizes the reindeer's birth. Therefore, when they circulate around

the *yanana*, they are acting out the cycle of the reindeer's life and death. At the same time, this also symbolizes the annual cosmic cycle. The sun moves clockwise from the south where the *yanana*'s entrance is and dies away at the north. The north indicates the winter solstice in December, when the daytime is the shortest. After that, the daytime starts to get longer again. It is the birth of the sun. Then when it moves to the south, it indicates the summer solstice when the daytime is the longest. When people circulate around the *yanana*, they are also acting out the annual cosmic cycle, which is the sun's cycle of life and death.

"Killing" the symbolic grass reindeer and taking it inside the *yanana* from the northern end indicates the reindeer's death. Performing the reindeer giving birth inside the *yanana* symbolizes the reindeer's life. Here too, the reindeer's cycle of life and death is being performed. For them, north is a direction that is related to life and death. From that direction, the symbolic reindeer, which has been ritually "killed", is brought inside into the *yanana*. Maybe the *yanana* symbolizes the universe itself. The inside of the *yanana*, is the human world. A fire burns at the centre and people live there. At the northeastern corner of the *yanana*, they keep the *Gichigi* which guards the family's lives. The outside of the *yanana* is the world of nature – where the reindeer also belong – and where people believe many spirits exist. However, just

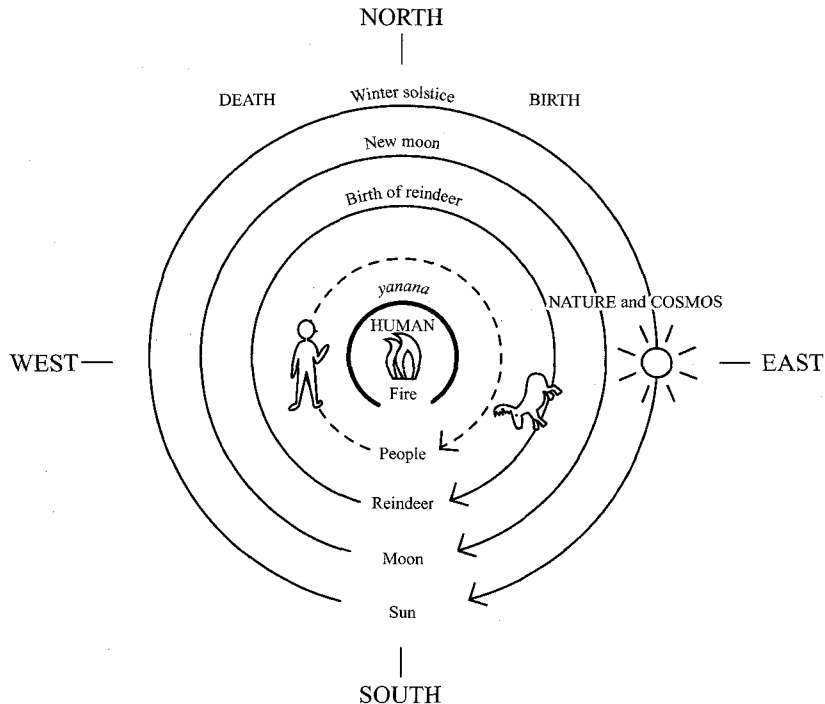


fig.19 The cosmos and nature circulating around the *yanana*, a human world in which fire is central. The dotted line indicates the direction in which people circle around the *yanana* during the *Kilway*.

as clothes or food are, the *yanana* itself is made from the reindeer. People can't live without the reindeer, so it is important to act out the fawn's birth inside the *yanana*. The reindeer's death, which is symbolized by the bone, represents the outside world. Then the symbolically "killed" reindeer is taken inside the *yanana*. The fawn's birth is performed inside the human world. People receive nature into their world, and it is the fawn that links humans and nature together.

The antlers gathered at the north end of the *yanana* can be interpreted as the symbol of the reindeer itself. Just as the other various spirits are, the reindeer and newborn fawns are invited to gather at the place where the ritual is held. The following action supports this interpretation: The day after the ceremony, the master actually visits the reindeer herd, gathers the reindeer and newborn fawns, and makes offerings to the *Koyavaginin*, which is supposedly the creator of reindeers' lives.

The reindeer bones symbolize the rebirth of the reindeer, as well as their death. By gathering the bones and burying them in the ground – not scattering them on the tundra, as Maria had told me before – the reindeer's life continues eternally. The reindeer's immortality, which the reindeer hunters of the Canadian Northern Forest also believe in, and the special way they treat the bones are also seen practiced among the reindeer herders of Northern Eurasia. For the reindeer hunters, the fawn plays a mythical role of connecting the reindeer and human beings. In the myth, the reindeer give their meat to people by letting old Indian women nurture the fawns. The performance of the fawn's birth at the *Kilway* might imply the arrival of the fawns in the human world. If so, we might be able to say that the relation between the reindeer and humans told in the hunters' myth is being performed in more detail among the reindeer herders. However, regarding the reindeer herders, the very action of acting out the fawn's birth is done in the *yanana*, which exists within the human world. They keep the fawns in the world, which is under the control of humans. Nevertheless, in both cases, they welcome with equal delight the fawns that have come to the human world.

By circling around the *yanana*, which symbolizes their universe, they are synchronizing with the cosmic principle – the cycle of life and death – and by "killing" the symbolic reindeer and imitating the fawn's birth, they are acting out the cycle of the reindeer.

Secondly, why do people offer food, or the *inawet* to the various spirits, including the *Gichigi*? This symbolizes the reciprocity between humans and spirits. As I have mentioned before, the relation between humans and reindeer is built through the reindeer herd's guardian spirit, the *Gichigi*. By giving food to the *Gichigi* and by eating the reindeer meat, they are acting out this relation precisely in a ceremonial way. The elaborately cooked dishes are offerings from human beings to the spirits. These are reindeer meat offerings that pass through human hands to the spirits. The food that is thrown above the roof of the *yanana* is probably an

offering to the *Koyavagin* – the creator of the reindeer’s life – that is thought to exist somewhere in the upper world. The *Koyavagin* is an abstract master spirit representing the entire reindeer species. People have built a reciprocal relationship with the reindeer master spirit. People also make offerings to the wild animals on the tundra, the stones that represent the land, the young willow that symbolizes life, and even to the *yanana* or fire that represents human way of living. In addition, they offer food to every guest invited to this ceremony. Looking at it from the viewpoint of the *inawet*, the whole ceremony is an occasion for making exchanges that make the relationship between nature and humans work.

It is important that the *Kilway* is held after the fawn’s birth. The reason why women imitate the fawn’s birth or people offer food to the *Koyavagin* is to make a return gift for the fawn’s birth. Among the reciprocal relationships regarding the reproduction of reindeer and humans, the *Koyavagin* gives the fawns to human beings. So people give food to the *Koyavagin* as a return gift. Of course, this offering is not only given to the *Koyavagin*, but is also given in the same way to the land that supports the fawn’s birth, the fire, or the wild animals on the tundra. Invited guests, the dead, and even the evil spirits are included. Through this ritual, they all make the reciprocity between human and nature work.

Thirdly, why do people make a “real fire” and use water from melted snow? The “real fire” is the king of the fires and is the origin of fires. It is the spirit of fire and is the original fire. Fire is indispensable for human life; by inventing the way to start a fire, *Homo sapiens* became “human”. Therefore, the fire symbolizes culture, and the act of starting the original fire indicates the birth of human culture. Furthermore, melted snow is the origin of water – the beginning of water. In the same way, by imitating the fawn’s birth, they are acting out the beginning of the reindeer’s life cycle. The willow branches with young sprouts shining in velvety silver symbolize the birth of life that returns to the tundra as winter ends and spring comes. They trace back their origin – of how they became human – and go as far back as the starting point of the natural cycle of life. In addition, the fact that they believe they must keep the tradition of the “real fire” that has been passed on to them from their ancestors indicates that they are returning to the starting point of being human, and are reconfirming it. This is an act of making sure where they belong as humans.

Finally, why do people imitate the reindeer’s voice when they go around the *yanana*, and imitate the fawn’s birth inside the tent? Of course, the purpose of the whole ceremony of the *Kilway* is to synchronize with the life cycle itself. They repeat human history from ancient times by tracing back the origin of culture through the imitation of the solar or reindeer’s cycle. Besides imitating the reindeer’s voice, they also eat pieces of meat gathered from the various parts of the reindeer. People eat the snow because the reindeer eat it. In addition, they cook the dung, and



fat extracted from the bones, and eat them. By eating up the entire reindeer, they demonstrate the full use of it, absorbing the power of life from it and managing to show the relationships between human beings and the reindeer. By imitating the voice and birth of fawns, they unify with the reindeer themselves.

I think this is the “original oneness” of the mythical world. The place where the ritual is held is the place where the world begins, where there is no distinction between reindeer and humans. Just as how there were no distinctions between the living and the dead, or between this world and the other world at the Koryak death ceremony so the border between humans and nature has not yet been built at the place where the *Kilway* is held. Human beings and the spirits of nature can come in touch with each other freely there.

The imitation of the reindeer reminds me of an old Siberian document, in which there is a picture of a shaman wearing reindeer antlers. But there aren’t any shamans who specialize in this at the *Kilway*. People turn into the reindeer, and act it out, but there is no distinction between the actor and spectator. I don’t think Natalia is a shaman when she imitates the reindeer giving birth. Certainly, there must be people who are good at it. Or we might be able to say that the important task Maria was in charge of at the funeral was a shaman’s job. Maria is not a professional shaman, but is just “an experienced person” who leads an ordinary life. Thus, they are people who act out shamanistic rituals without shamans, and perform plays without the distinction of actors and the audience.

The *Kilway* is a place of “original oneness,” a place where the world begins. There is no distinction between humans and reindeer, and it is where the life cycle begins. It seemed to me that the reason people circle around the *yanana* and imitate this cycle of life and death was not because they intended to exert their power upon the natural cycle as magic. On the contrary, by synchronizing with the natural cycle, they are just discreetly experiencing the fact that humans are part of nature itself. This unconscious behaviour is probably a voluntary action, precursors to the plays, singing or dancing that are performed for audiences, and is behaviour natural to humans. They unify with the natural world itself. Then they embody “original oneness” and the cosmic cycle – which is the principle of the natural world – through their own activities.

### 9.5 New Year’s Festival and the Reindeer Head Dance

It is not only at the *Kilway* – the festival of the fawn’s birth – that they make the “real fire.” They also make it at the *Pegitim*, which is the New Year’s festival, held in winter. I had already heard about the *Pegitim* in detail from Maria. Vakhtangov had also told me about the various competitions they hold then. The *Pegitim* is held after the winter solstice to begin the annual seasonal cycle.

The following day after the *Kilway*, Yuri told me about the *Pegitim* as well.

First of all, he called this festival *Pegitten*. The old lady, Zoya, whom I had visited on the tundra, also called this festival *Pegitik*. Although they may all be the same festival, not only the details, but also the names differ slightly, according to each of their “family traditions.”

This festival has to start when the new moon is born, and it goes on until it becomes full moon. In other words, it is held until the first full moon in January. According to Yuri, all the festivals must end before the full moon appears. The meat from the reindeer killed at this festival is their food supply until spring. They kill the reindeer and offer food to the idol or the *Gichigi*. In this season, many people come because the snow is in good condition – it is easy to travel by sleigh. So many kinds of events are held – i.e. wrestling games, reindeer-sleigh races, singing competitions, and sleigh-jumping races. A special race is also held. About 30 people hold short sticks that symbolize the reindeer in their hands, and the last person in the line keeps moving up to the front. The first person to touch the prize wins the race. The first, second and third winners get a prize. This is the symbolic reindeer-sleigh race that Alekseev and Vakhtangov had told me about.

People hold this festival everywhere. Many families live on the tundra, and they all know when and where this festival will be held. For example, if one family is to hold it on January 10 and another family on January 14, people travel from the first place to the next. The sponsor of the festival has to offer food and drink to all the participants. He has to invite the villagers and kill reindeer. The festival takes place as follows: In the morning, the host kills the reindeer and all the events start at the same time. The host must kill two of his own reindeer. Then he kills another one given to him as a gift from another person. He only kills one reindeer for the guests, but has to kill more for his family. If there are a number of *yananas* in that area, each family in each *yanana* has to prepare a reindeer for the guests. In addition, besides the reindeer, the host of this festival has to serve fish and other dishes for the guests.

They start the fire in the same way they do for the *Kilway*. They do this inside the *yanana*. Then they take this fire outside the tent and cook outside.

They also make a reindeer out of special blades of grass. This special grass is tall and has yellow flowers. They gather this grass at the end of summer, boil it and bury it in the ground. They dig up this hole before the festival and take the grass out. Yuri says this grass reindeer symbolizes nature, and that nature forms part of this festival. As it later becomes clear, when he says “nature,” he is also referring to the spirit at the same time.

They also hold special races for the ravens as one of the events. This is called *welwin-eiyagin*, meaning “raven’s race.” In order to hold this race, people first take out the reindeer’s lungs. These lungs must be healthy and free from disease. The lung is cut into two and attached to the end of a pole. Then they go as far as 200 meters away from the place where the festival is held, where there aren’t any ravens,

and stick this pole in the ground. Suddenly, a raven finds this and takes it – this raven wins the race. Then when the other ravens find it and gather round it, they tear it into small pieces from the outside and eat it. This indicates that the ravens take away all the reindeer’s illnesses; all the diseases disappear.

People make an *inawet* as well. They offer food to the fire that they make from the *Gichigi*. Then they scatter the *inawet* across the tundra. If a real reindeer-sleigh race is held, a reindeer is killed specially for the *inawet*. This *inawet* is not only for the participants’ meals, but is also made into an offering to prevent accidents. Based on what Yuri had told me before, this *inawet* is offered to placate an evil spirit called *Kala*, to stop it from causing accidents. They also have to eat up all the reindeer meat, without leaving a single piece. They are not allowed to leave even a small piece of meat uneaten. If they can’t eat up all the meat, they can cut the meat off the bones and take it home. But they have to leave the bones there. The host keeps these bones and crushes them for the *Kilway* that is to be held in May.

On the night before the festival, all the villagers come together. They eat *mukhomor* and drink tea all night long. The younger ones prepare for the race on their own. They don’t have a special song for this festival, but they beat the drums and dance. If the moon is shining, the young people go out on their reindeer sleighs. They take with them some food and tea and go sleigh riding far away. They eat their dinner on the sleigh. It is just like a picnic. Of course, this is not something necessary for the festival – they go sleigh riding if they want to. Usually, they ride the sleigh in pairs – a girl and a boy. Those who are drunk are not allowed to go on this long-distance sleigh ride, because they might die if they go too far.

People also offer an *inawet* for the dead. They mourn those who have died in the past. They used to hold archery competitions too, but nowadays nobody has bows and arrows. People used to have bows about 1.5 meters long made of white birch and whalebone. The whalebone is a special part of the whale’s chin: it is also used under the sleigh.

If they are to hold the Reindeer Head Dance, they kill a reindeer in a special way. Only women know how to prepare for this. This dance is called *mageilavt*. The word *magei* is an abbreviation of *mageigining*, which means “dancing”. The word *lavt* comes from *levt*, which means “head.” Thus *mageilavt* means “the head for dancing.” People put the reindeer’s head near the fire. The trachea, lungs and a part of the hide from the chest are still connected to the reindeer’s head. The front legs are tied to the tent pole. People dance here – this dance can be held in autumn or fall as well. They can certainly do this dance during the *Pegitim*. It is danced for pleasure, and they don’t have to dance in a circle. However, since they don’t have much time nowadays, they don’t use reindeer fur anymore. Consequently, people don’t do this dance anymore.

Actually, this dance was what Natalia had told me about two years before. She

said she had seen it the previous autumn. People sang and danced inside the *yanana* around a pole on which was stuck a reindeer's head with antlers; the trachea, heart, lungs, spleen, liver and left leg were attached to it and the bowels wrapped around the top, and a willow branch was tied along its length. The dance she remembered had actually existed. As only women knew how to prepare for this, just as Yuri said, Natalia's memory was accurate. This dance was held at the autumn and winter festivals, but it wasn't directly connected to them. It is difficult to find out the significance of this dance from fragmentary memories. However, the reindeer's head stuck on top of the pole, and the reindeer's organs tied to the pole along with the willow branch, symbolize the reindeer being sent from the human world to the upper world where the reindeer's country is. The round stones that surround the fire symbolize the land. Just as the willow branch or the pole does, the fire connects this land and the upper world. When I say "upper world" here, I don't mean the world of the dead, but the reindeer's spiritual country, or the country where the creator of the reindeer lives, or the *Koyavaginin* exists. When you think about it in this way, this dance might have been a ritual in which they sent a reindeer spirit to the upper world, or the world of *Koyavaginin*, rather than just a dance for pleasure as Yuri had said.

The "reindeer head dance" is very interesting because it throws light on the mysterious parts of the reindeer *inawet* done at the other festivals. In the nomadic cycle the *inawet* offered to the autumn land was built on a wooden frame made of three poles tied together. A reindeer's head with its antlers was hung on top, a little bit of chest fur was left uncut from the head to pray for the reindeer's prosperity, and they also put the trachea on the ground in front. I definitely think that the reason why the reindeer head is hung on top of a wooden frame is because the reindeer spirit is to send-off to the upper world where the creator of the reindeer's lives, or the *Koyavaginin* lives. What Zoya had told me two years ago on the tundra when she said, "offering a reindeer to the land, river or fire also means offering it to the *Koyavaginin*," was actually being put into practice in the way they made *inawets*. In other words, reindeer sacrifice in the autumn land was composed of reindeer offering to the land of autumn and reindeer spirits sending-off ceremony to the upper world of *Koyavaginin*. And, the most direct way of expressing sending-off the reindeer spirit to the upper world is the "reindeer head dance."

If the "reindeer head dance" connects this world and the upper world of the reindeer's country, this means that a place of "original oneness" is created there. People sing and dance there. Just as the people circled around the *yanana* at the *Kilway* as if they were synchronizing with the cosmic cycle, people dance there around the reindeer's head. A direct and natural relationship between humans and reindeer is seen, different from the ceremonies that are prepared more thoroughly.

The New Year's Festival, which Yuri call *Pegitten*, is a ceremony celebrating

the birth of the cosmic cycling and life, just like the *Kilway*. Contrary to Maria, who had told me about the ritual procedure in detail, Yuri told me about it focusing on the competitions held during the event, because that was what he was most interested in. This is the same reason why Vakhtangov or his son Alekseev, or even his son Slava, talked about the competitions so enthusiastically. These competitions that they all talked about so repetitively indicated that the place where they held the festival was a place of “original oneness” among human beings, as well as a place of “original oneness” between humans and nature. Along the whole path of events in which conflicting groups clash and reconcile, different types of people experience and learn that they are basically the same kind of human being. Jealousy or bad feelings born during people’s daily lives are solved here as they trace back the origin of people and things. It is a place where they can experience through their senses the common feeling of belonging to the same human race. People enjoy this feeling. Adults get absorbed in their play just as children do. Actually, there should be no distinction between adults and children here. As Maria says, the first reindeer appeared out of the play of children; play is the place where things come to life.

The original festival occasion must have been a place of pleasure where the people danced happily around the reindeer’s head, or imitated the fawn’s birth. The cosmic cycling starts again when people experience the “original oneness” between nature and humans.