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This special issue of the Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics is composed on the basis of papers presented at the University of Tartu’s 5th International Arctic Workshop, titled Responsibility and Authority in Drinking (May 30–31, 2014). We have held annual international Arctic workshops at the University of Tartu, Estonia, since 2010. The first three workshops were dedicated to problems relating to movement in the North (see Leete and Ventsel 2011; 2012; 2014). We considered the topics discussed rather comprehensibly and started to search for a new theme. We found a challenge in positioning our workshop to relate to problems surrounding drinking in the Arctic.

Our first meeting about the role of alcohol in sociocultural practices in the Arctic in spring of 2013 appeared a solid achievement (see Dudeck 2013; Leete and Ventsel 2015). We asked the participants to concentrate on drinking both in indigenous and non-indigenous communities. The reason is that the High North is notorious for the excessive use of alcohol, which is associated primarily with negative themes such as alcohol-related injuries, violence, suicide, a decline in indigenous traditions, culture shock and other misfortunes that result from binge drinking. Despite the scholarly take and the efforts of state institutions to limit alcohol use, many people still continue to over-consume alcohol, an activity associated not only with death and loss but also with leisure, pleasure and celebration. Another factor is that alcohol is deeply embedded within many rituals, such as greeting an honoured guest, demonstrations of masculinity, and with religious ceremonies.

Inspired by lively discussions at the first alcohol workshop, we decided to continue with the same topic from a slightly different angle. The aim was to widen both the scope as well as the geographic area covered by the next workshop. Our particular interest lay in the dimensions of morality and power related to the use or non-use of alcohol and the concept of (ir)responsibility both inside communities as well as in state discourse. We invited scholars to talk on how individuals, groups, NGOs, churches, the alcohol industry and the state conceptualise ‘moderate’ and ‘excessive’ alcohol consumption, to what extent people are held responsible for their actions when intoxicated, how culturally varying concepts of personhood are reflected in the discourse of drinking, what kind of social partnerships emerge and disappear, how drinking patterns influence other social and cultural aspects of a functioning community, and similar issues. While previously we concentrated on the phenomenon of ‘Arctic drinking’ (whether it exists or not), at the 2014 workshop our aim was to include more researchers (anthropologists, sociolo-
gists, researchers in alcohol policies, medical experts) from other-than-Arctic areas in order to take our comparative endeavour further in understanding social and cultural aspects of drinking.

During our second alcohol workshop we hosted twelve scholars from Russia, Germany, Finland, Belgium, Netherlands, Canada, and Estonia. Although the Arctic topic dominated the scene, our attempt to expand the geographical reach of the presentations was still successful. Most importantly, the general background to drinking in Russia was discussed, thus providing a valuable frame for the themes related to the Russian Arctic that remained the primary concern of our workshop. In addition, the global context of so-called northern drinking was also outlined by reports about drinking in Sweden and Canada. The workshop was summarised by the discussant whose role was brilliantly performed by professor Nikolay Vakhtin from European University at St. Petersburg. Only about half of the presentations have made their way into this collection, but we hope to publish more material later. This special issue enables our readers to get a rather adequate impression of the main lines of discussion covered during our workshop.

Andrei Tutorsky composed the first paper of the volume, outlining how his research concerns the attitudes of the Russians and non-Russians of the Russian North towards drinking. Tutorsky analyses the role of alcohol in Russian culture in general with ethno-graphic insights that recount situations in the north-western regions of country. Tutorsky gives an overview of various approaches to the cultural role of alcohol. Initially, Tutorsky describes the option to consider vodka as a currency that facilitates social coherence. Secondly, he puts alcohol into the context of colonial encounter, relating it to power and friendship, honour and respect. It is also possible to treat alcohol consumption as an indicator of moral crisis in a society, and Tutorsky discusses alcohol as a device for reproducing imagined social consensus in the Russian North.

Igor Mikeshin concentrates his study on the Baptist rehabilitation ministry in the north-western part of European Russia. Mikeshin reflects on the understanding alcohol addicts have of their problems in comparison with drug abusers and the Baptist way of dealing with both addictions. In these rehabilitation facilities the elders teach people with alcohol and drug addiction Baptist theology, direct them to repent and to take Jesus into their hearts. The main existential problem in the rehabilitation process is that addicts in Russia are accustomed to considering alcohol a very normal part of life. Alcoholics recognise their dependence more reluctantly and at a later stage of addiction compared to drug users. Because of this, the Baptist ministry is less successful rehabilitating alcoholics than drug addicts.

Kirill Istomin discusses in some way similar problems associated with the passive or fatalistic attitude of the Nenets people towards their drinking habits and alcohol-related suicides. Istomin’s paper is based on his ethnographic fieldwork among the Tundra Nenets in the Yamal Nenets Autonomous Okrug in the western Siberia. Istomin concentrates on culture-specific ways of conceptualising responsibility for one’s actions. As it appears from Istomin’s study, the Nenets recognise little personal concern when compared with the other people in the region (Russians, Komi). This culture-based psychological orientation makes the Nenets people not active when it comes to quitting alcohol consumption. At the same time, this “external locus of control” provides them some adaptive tools for handling their drinking practice.
Lyudmila Khakhovskaya explores drinking in the Koryak community in the Magadan Region. The author analyses treatment of alcohol in the context of the traditional practice of using a hallucinogenic substance, the amanita mushroom. Khakhovskaya demonstrates that, in the contemporary situation, the Pentecostal missions are the most successful agents in the anti-alcohol campaign. Khakhovskaya investigates the alcohol addiction of the Koryak within the framework of the culture-specific arrangements. In the dialogue between the local archaic animistic world understanding, and the Pentecostal ideology that has been introduced to the Koryak community, numerous cases of abstinence from drink have occurred among the Koryak people.

Laurent Legrain’s article takes us to another Siberian border area and a completely different alcohol-related cultural domain. The author discusses the tradition of using alcohol to facilitate good relations between humans, and as a medium of communicating with spirits in Mongolia. Legrain demonstrates how drinking is engaged in the singer–audience encounter. He explores the magic of singing and language use that creates a soundscape for social harmony. Drunkards, on the other end, produce noise that spoils the sonic frame of social and spiritual coherence. Drunkards are considered to become vessels for evil spirits because noisy speaking attracts undefined evil forces that are potentially dangerous to the drunkard and his or her kin.

Anastasiya Yarzutkina’s report (based on the paper she presented at our workshop) on trading networks on the Chukchee Peninsula enables us to understand the social mechanisms by which alcohol spreads in the region. The initial results of the study indicate that this approach may also be applied in the other regions of the North as it is logical to assume that similar social agents function elsewhere.

Alcohol-related problems have a global character and similar driving forces shape the social field in different areas of Russia. The interests of producers, legal regulations and administrative measures significantly influence people’s behaviour. But when we look more closely, culture-specific issues also occur that play certain roles in the development of alcohol consumption in various regions. The way in which economic pressure and the legal framework are integrated into local traditions and ideologies plays a decisive role in the treatment of alcohol by different ethnic and social groups.

This dialogue between more general political, economic and social developments and the way in which alcohol is perceived in particular communities highlights the problem of responsibility. People are not just victims of a global alcohol conspiracy. They have their own cultural tools with which to treat drinking practices and shaping attitudes towards it. As we can see from the case studies published in this volume, these local ideas and practices may be rather nuanced and can be detected only in the course of careful examination of cultural mechanisms. Furthermore, even if one adequately understands local rules and rituals, it remains unclear how we could apply this knowledge in order to improve the situation. This remains an important question, as scholars, being an authority of a different kind, also feel the need to understand and act responsibly.
REFERENCES


DRINKING IN THE NORTH OF EUROPEAN RUSSIA: FROM TRADITIONAL TO TOTALISING LIMINALITY

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ABSTRACT
This article* explores the topic of alcohol consumption in Russia. My fieldwork was conducted in the north of European Russia between 2010 and 2014 in Arkhangelskaya and Vologodskaya oblasts. The main idea of the paper is to look at alcohol drinking through the lens of rites of passage and especially liminality. I argue that the traditional festivities, and alcohol consumption with the traditional type of liminality, were based on a small amount of sugar and money and also the long period of time required to make beer. In 1960s, after ukrupneniye and the urbanisation of villages, money and spirits came to the villages. Together with an existing prohibition on ceremonies and rites they created a new permanent liminality of drinking. This new liminality included getting dead drunk and was paradoxically approved by Soviet ideology.

KEYWORDS: North of European Russia • drinking • community • liminality • Vologodskaya oblast • post-Soviet village

INTRODUCTION: WHAT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION MEANS FOR RUSSIANS AND NON-RUSSIANS?

Alcohol consumption plays an important role in Russian culture. This feature is distinctly recorded both by culture bearers and by foreign observers. For the majority of Russians the issue of alcohol consumption is associated with a quote from an ancient Russian chronicle. According to the legend, when choosing a state religion Prince Vladimir turned down Islam on the grounds that “happiness in the Russ means drinking”. Recorded around the year 987 it is one of the most famous quotes from the chronicle in contemporary Russia.

The idea vividly manifests itself in the anecdotes of the late Soviet period. One of the main themes of such anecdotes is the Russian ability to drink alcohol without limit. One

* This research was supported by the grant of the Russian Foundation for Humanities (project no. 16-31-01063).
joke concerns an international drinking tournament where the participants compete to drink the most alcohol. The joke is told on the part of the sports commentator.

A German athlete enters the arena. 1, 2, 3 ... 45, 46. The German athlete cracks. He managed to drink 46 bowls. And where is uncle Vanya? Uncle Vanya is in the bar warming up with red wine. An American athlete enters the arena. 1, 2, 3 ... 95, 96, 97. The American athlete cracks. He managed to drink 97 bowls. Uncle Vanya enters the arena. 1, 2, 3 ... 150, 151, 152 ... 200, 201, 202. Crack! It came apart! The bowl! Comrades, the bowl came apart!

In the joke the Russian appears as a person whose ability to consume alcohol is only limited by the boundaries of the environment. The special relationship of Russians with alcohol is considered a unique Russian feature.

The significant role of alcohol consumption in Russian culture is obvious to a foreign researcher. In 2001 the journal *Geographical Review* (the “Doing Fieldwork” section) published the work of Melinda Herrold, an American researcher who studied the attitude of the residents of Amurskaya Oblast towards the construction of a nature reserve for birds built with the participation of American NGOs. The text is full of notes such as the following: “Rare is the gathering of two or more people at which no alcohol is consumed” (Herrold 2001: 301). The main idea of such notes is that the answers people give to anthropologist’s questions differ depending on the amount of alcohol consumed. Finally the researcher observes:

Should I have just not interviewed people when they were or had been drinking? Had I done this in Muraviovka and Kuropatino, I’m not sure that I would have gotten very far with my research – and my year in those two villages would have been very long and very lonely. (Herrold 2001: 303)

Again, alcohol consumption becomes the centrepiece of Russian culture.

Anthropologists’ approaches to the research of alcohol consumption in today’s Russia vary. I would like to single out three of them. First, a study of alcohol serving as currency that looks at how it is used to establish and maintain social relationships within a group. Second, emphasis on the political aspect of alcohol consumption and how it is used by the state to control ‘indigenous peoples’ of the Russian North and Siberia. And thirdly, a study of situations in which drinking becomes a symbol of the degradation of the population and the decline of public relations.

Articles by Myriam Hivon (1998) and Douglas Rogers (2005) illustrate very well the first of the approaches mentioned above. Canadian researcher Myriam Hivon (1998: 516), who worked in Vologoskaya Oblast, specifies the importance of vodka in the everyday life of the village: “Vodka is not always consumed immediately, rather it is used in different transactions.” Vodka is viewed by the author on the one hand as a traditional payment instrument common in mid-20th century, and on the other hand as a special “non-inflationary” currency (ibid.: 519). American scholar Douglas Rogers (2005: 67) expresses similar views, explaining the financial role of moonshine (home-made spirit) in a contemporary village in the Ural mountains. As a metaphor for moonshine he uses the word liquidity, which has two meanings: a) liquid and b) currency. Rogers points out that these circulations of money and alcohol depend on gender. If women primarily use money as a payment instrument, men use moonshine for this
Articles by David Koester (2003) and by Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2000) can serve as examples of the second approach. David Koester from Alaska University of Fairbanks treats alcohol consumption as a way to facilitate the expression of honour, respect, friendship in the context of colonial encounters. This is how he sums up his article:

[...] the status and power in Russian drinking patterns has social, political implications in the asymmetric power situations of interethic encounters in minority indigenous communities. The obligation to receive in the form of accepting a drink was heightened by the legacy of threat and violence against those who resist or stand out and by the assumption of colonized status. (Koester 2003: 46)

In other words, the author highlights that the aim of drinking practices in Siberia is to perform colonisation in everyday life. Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2000: 349–350) from the University of Cambridge considers drinking as a complicated, polyfunctional social process that includes such aspects as demonstrating respect and at the same time pre-paying for future deals, re-actualisation of friendships, and at the same time making gifts by one side to another that create relations of mutual obligation. He depicts a situation in which transferring a bearskin when drinking together becomes the main means of turning a sale into a gift, and he stresses that drinking practices often play a very important role in interethic relationships. I should also note that these studies pertain to drinking among indigenous communities in Russia, and therefore it seems natural to highlight the colonial aspect of relations between drinkers.

An example of a totally negative attitude towards excessive drinking is Boris Segal’s book *The Drunken Society*. The author concludes that binge drinking in Russia is a “result of a spiritual crisis, in particular by a post-Christian denial of immortality, which is associated with erosion of the basic foundations of our civilization”. This causes “the growing feelings of uncertainty, dissatisfaction and apprehension”. (Segal 1990: 521) Thus, excessive drinking may be explained in many ways depending on the interests of the researcher. American anthropologist Lynn Attwood (1985: 73) thinks that one of the reasons for binge-drinking practices in male groups is “erosion of traditional masculinity and femininity”. The papers in support of this approach are numerous, but they only link alcohol consumption with their major preoccupation and do not really explore the many implications of drinking practices in society.

To sum up, the best-researched issue is the power relations between drinkers. But such emphasis presents a problem. On the one hand, it is justified because anthropologists should always be attentive to questions of power, but on the other it can also be seen as somewhat Eurocentric. I think in the generally defined ‘West’, power is hegemonic. Hegemonic power is defined by Antonio Gramsci (1971: 5–10) as invisible power, power that has saturated social relations to the degree that it becomes naturalised, and hence invisible, to people. Therefore, it makes sense to a European anthropologist to uncover the relationships of power and hierarchy. In Russia, especially in rural areas, power has never been hegemonic, it has never been hidden. It has been quite ‘in-your-face’, supported brutally, physically, for example by *prodarmeytsy* in the 1920s or by collective farm chairmen in the 1930s and 1960s, or promoted forcibly by political agitators. It was never far away from the gun and enforced political propaganda.
Therefore, I find an interpretative approach, which looks at power relations through the lens of meaning, more appropriate from both an ethical and epistemological point of view. Yes, the discourse and practice of drinking is a discourse about egalitarianism, of liminal *communitas*, here in the Turnerian sense (Turner 1995: 94–130), but egalitarianism should not immediately drive an anthropologist to the issue of power relations. In the Russian North at any rate drinking is about the active reproducing of an ideal of egalitarianism that does exist in reality.

When an anthropologist tries to uncover power relations behind drinking, s/he does precisely the opposite of what my informants attempt to do by drinking: specifically to form, to create, an ideal picture of society both in the flow of everyday life and during festive occasions. The egalitarianism of liminality is not the naturalisation of power relations, nor some sort of blindness or oversight on the part of the drinkers, but first and foremost an attempt to mask, to cover up the absolute matter-of-factness of the presence of power relations and inequality in their lives.

So I offer an alternative approach. My hypothesis is that today drinking practices in rural areas are the result of the transformation of function, and hence the meaning of liminality, a dislocation that followed when traditional drinking encountered the demands and the realities of Soviet modernity. My hypothesis is that that the liminality of drinking became totalising: fulfilling numerous functions and becoming somewhat self-sufficient in its meaning.

**MY FIELD: THE NORTH OF EUROPEAN RUSSIA**

Before I proceed directly to my argument I have to say a few words about my data and experience. I performed fieldwork in this region from 2006 until 2013, mainly in rural areas, so I cannot extrapolate my conclusions to include the practices of alcohol drinking in the towns and cities. I would also like to point out that when I was in the field drinking was not the focus of my research. But naturally, it was something that interested my informants, and my notes contain numerous references to drinking.

In the Russian explorative tradition the Russian North is an alternative name for North European Russia. By saying the Russian North, I do not mean the circumpolar regions of Russia, which have come to be associated with this notion in the English language. In Russian ethnographic tradition the Russian North is the north of the European part of Russia. This consists of Arkhangelskaya and Vologodskaya oblasts and also the Republic of Karelia. Murmanskaya Oblast is also considered a part of the Russian North but will be out of our focus in this paper as its population is mainly urban. The region studied is populated primarily by Russians, who according to the 2010 census amount to 93% of the population in Archangelskaya Oblast, 92% in Vologodskaya Oblast and 78% in the Republic of Karelia.

These regions are viewed as a separate ethnographic area due to their specific historic development. Russia has two areas of taiga colonisation located to the North East of Central European Russia, the ‘Vladimir High Plains’, where the shaping of the Moscow Russ took place. The first one is the Novgorod colonisation area and the second is the Moscow area. In this article we will closely look at the first one. Novgorod colonisation was carried out primarily by water. Novgorod fur buyers carried boats between
Lake Onega and the White Sea roughly along the route of the present-day Belomorsko-Baltiyskiy Kanal. Further from the White Sea they moved along major rivers – the Onega, Severnaya Dvina, Pinega, Mezen, Pechora and even the Ob – deeper into the land domain. What is peculiar about the Novgorod colonisation is that Novgorod residents brought in and sustained the traditions of the Novgorod medieval republic and escaped omnipresent state control. I mention these historical facts to show that the North of European Russia was a region on its own, where Moscow officials appeared very seldom: less than once a year. State power here was always something alien.

This very remoteness and isolation – as those settlements were not only far away from the mainland but were also very difficult to reach – led to the development of a distinct culture. This culture preserves a number of features that could be called archaic and obsolete. At the same time, the Russian tradition somehow romanticises them: they are viewed as signs of integrity, old traditions and a lack of sophistication. In the early 21st century the Russian North still preserves the traditions of village co-operation as opposed to just one neighbour helping another, village festivities, and a very detached attitude towards state authorities and officials. They are treated as infrequent visitors totally irrelevant to everyday life. I shall use the term Zapinezhie for the three the most remote districts of Archangelskaya Oblast located to the east of the Pinega river.

The same remoteness of the Russian North created a special vector in its development, which can be also traced throughout the Soviet period. And this is essential for this paper. The year 1917 is not an important critical point. And the collectivisation years are described calmly by one of the villagers as follows: “In 1930 newspapers published an announcement that collective farms must be organised. We got together and organised Leninetz collective farm.” In the other village a villager was sent to the city of Archangelsk to attend Communist Party School as a part of the late 1920s programme to improve villagers’ awareness of the new order. In the 1930s he returned as one of the 25,000 urban workers (dvadtsatipyatitysiachniki), who were sent to the villages to oversee the organisation of the collective farms. These facts show that the period of the 1920s–1930s was not as destructive for the Russian North as it was for Central Russia. In central regions the dvadtsatipyatitysiachniki were people who really destroyed the traditional, communal way of life in the villages.

However, the 1960s brought about much more serious changes, i.e. merging of collective farms (ukrupneniye). During the Khrushchev period the state made an attempt to turn collective farms into agricultural factories. For this purpose smaller villages were wiped out while larger villages were further enlarged. New urban infrastructure was created: kindergartens, schools, hospitals, grocery and department stores, car repairs shops, etc. If previously the villagers were paid ‘points’ for a certain amount of work performed and those points were exchanged for a proportional share of the crops at the end of the year, now they were paid (increasingly in money) by the hour. Hourly pay did not depend on the amount of work performed. As the residents of Samogora village told me: “You came to work, started the tractor – and – and you were already being paid.” The cultural shift relating to the agricultural reforms of the 1960s will be a turning point in my reasoning. I divide the 20th century into the pre-1960s and post-1960s periods. In short, I shall argue that the shift in the liminal function of alcohol consumption took place in the Russian North in the 1960s.
Rural culture of the first half of the 20th century was primarily based on manual labour. A lack of machinery was compensated for by an extremely complex system of mutual co-operation that included redistribution of physical resources between households, between brigades in a collective farm and between neighbouring villages (Milov 1998: 418–434; Paxson 2005: 271–275; Rogers 2005: 68–71).

Before I begin to describe the types of work involved, the idea of the collective farm deserves a short explanation. Until the merger (укрупнение), both in the Russian North and in the rest of Russia a collective farm or колхоз was a collectivised village. As a rule, villagers were divided into several working groups – brigades – frequently formed on a geographical principle. In the Russian North a brigade consisted of the residents of one околок, part of the village separated from the rest of the village by a natural barrier: a stream, a ravine or a grove. In central or southern Russia a brigade was a group of villagers living in the same street. Thus, one can single out several layers of the collective organisation of the village: household, brigade and kolkhoz (on this see Humphrey 1983; Arkhipova and Tutorskiy 2013).

To have a clear understanding of the agricultural cycle in the Russian North, one should take into account that this is a risky area for farming: the first ground frost can happen in mid-August, and the last in mid-June. Thus, the growing season is very short, and the period from June 15 to August 15 should be used very efficiently. I would single out three elements in the working process essential to the present paper: working time, festivals, and alcohol consumption during holidays.

I would start with a few words about what kind of alcohol was common in the Russian North in the first part of 20th century. Home brewed beer was a traditional drink. It was made of malted rye with the addition of yeast and flavoured with hops. Beer preparation and brewing took from seven to ten days. After two or three days of fermenting the beer was ready to serve. The whole process was very labour intensive and required special equipment. Many respondents noted that a huge 300–400 litre wooden vat was needed for brewing and thus the very same people who owned such utensils were the ones who brewed the beer. One could borrow a neighbour’s bowl, but a return service would be expected (as a rule some type of work). It was compulsory to give the owner of the bowl freshly brewed beer as a treat. Second, the process of beer brewing (in large volumes in particular) required the presence and work of several people. In this process one or two people would be making a fire where stones would be heated. One person would put them in the bowl with the help of wooden tongs, one more person would be stirring the mash to ensure it was warm enough but did not boil. It turns out that the beer brewing process took around two weeks and required several pairs of hands and special equipment. I go into this detail in order to demonstrate that beer brewing was only possible through the co-operation of several households. It was not possible to brew beer at home in the same way home-brew spirits are made. The amount of beer was often limited because the more beer one makes the more guests one should invite. And last but not the least, the process of consumption included a ceremony at which the master of the beer would treat guests. This meant natural limits to the amount of beer each person could consume. One of my informants said that, “usually, we got one glass
of beer for two [people]”. In other words, the beer brewing process required publicity, cooperation and the mutual effort of many villagers.

Now let’s move to the liminal function of alcohol. The most important structural element of labour activity during the summer season were festivities at which residents from neighbouring villages would get together. Village festivities would take place alternately in villages located not far from each other. The village hosting the festivity would have to prepare treats in the form of beer and food. A village festivity enabled people to join in larger groups on a short-term basis, while smaller brigades performed the majority of agricultural activities. One of the important functions of such village festivities was the exchange of information on the completion periods for certain types of agricultural activities. Village festivities were like milestones that allowed the public to see if a person or a brigade managed to meet the deadlines. For example, the harvesting of spring crops should be finished before the Assumption Fest, or August 28 according to the Orthodox church calendar. After the Assumption the sowing period for winter crops commenced. Such festivities delimited farming operations and hence performed a liminal function.

Here and after I use this term rather in Van-Gennepian than in Turnerian sense, as *limen*, meaning between two stages of life – for example childhood and adulthood or as in this case between two types of work. In other words the middle of the three stages of every *rite de passage*. A state of ritual chaos between two different cultural statuses, a condition of “non-existence”, when ritually all social restrictions were removed. It is also important to stress that this stage of this rite of passage was rather short. In this case with the festivals, one or two days of festivity was a threshold between two agricultural jobs: harvesting of the spring crops and sowing the winter crops.

However, in the eyes of informants the most important part of the festivity was the consumption of alcohol. After looking into my notes, I have noticed that when people talk about alcohol, every second conversation mentions some sort of festivity. For instance, “The adult man climbs a tree and makes a zalaz’. Then a young man puts a bottle on the table.” In this case *zalaz’* is a ritual of introduction into adulthood that has alcohol consumption as an integral part. Or another example from peasant remembrances: “In spring young women helped each other to clean their houses. After cleaning they drank tea, or wine.” Here we can also clearly see that drinking practices were closely connected community work.

There is a narrative that specifically mentions that there were some festivities “without drinking”: “There were besedki. This was a special kind of feast, but without dancing and beer.” These are examples of memories of the traditional meaning of drinking. I should repeat that by writing traditional, I mean the practices of drinking as they were between the 1920s and 1950s, before *ukrupneniye* was extended to the Russian North.

In the course of the festivities, alcohol consumption also played a liminal role, separating various events within the festivity itself. Informants give the following example. “The guests will get together, drink and go out with an accordion to gulyat’ [‘to walk around’]” – meaning some sort of a merry communal parade. The goal of drinking was to cheer up the festivities so that people danced better or sang more. After such a walk through the village with dancing and singing, festivity participants could visit their neighbours or return home for more drinking. Drinking therefore had a function of
time structuring: it was a marker with which the festivity commenced and a boundary that separated different stages of the fest.

In summary, alcohol consumption fulfilled a liminal function on two levels. On one level, the festivities and holidays were perceived as drinking time. Festivities divided various stages of the agricultural cycle. On the second, deeper level, alcohol consumption divided various stages within the festival. Notwithstanding the importance of beer, it was not the main idea of the festival. Dancing, songs and conversations were much more important; there was a “culture of laughter” or even a “laughter counter-culture” that had a significant place in traditional culture (see Bakhtin 2010: 5). Such a traditional cultural model aimed at intensive labour during the summer months and the activation of various forms of mutual cooperation existed in more or less recognizable form until the early 1960s.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN RUSSIA AFTER ‘UKRUPNENIYE’ AND THE APPEARANCE OF STATE FARMS

In the 1960s after the program of merging villages (ukrupneniye) was accomplished, alcohol consumption patterns changed considerably, which resulted in widespread binge drinking in the 1970s and later. Binge drinking in the villages of North Russia does not have to be connected with similar practices in the cities and the villages of Central Russia. The connection of such a shift with the 1960s is characteristic of the region under review.

In order to understand the meaning of the shift that took place in the 1960s when the villages turned into collective farms, the following factors should be taken into consideration.

First, manual labour, which made mutual cooperation the only means of survival, was replaced with machinery. In the centre of European Russia this process took place earlier in the 1930s and 1940s. The introduction of machine labour, for example the use of a harvester instead of the manual harvesting of wheat resulted in joint effort being replaced by two-way relations with the operators of certain agricultural machinery. Such relations between two households was very well described by Douglas Rogers (2005: 69–71) in his work on Sepych. In such relationships a machine plays a far bigger role than the helpers.

Second, as has been already mentioned, the merging of villages also included the construction of urban infrastructure, in particular shops. From the late 1960s the workers of collective and state farms started to be paid with money instead of crop shares, so money became available and villagers were able to spend it in shops, where in particular vodka was sold. This led to a situation in which the owner and distributor of alcohol was no longer the host to whose house the guests would come, but practically everyone. As a result the village festivity of the first half of the 20th century, which included such activities as a walk along a village street with a harmonica, as well as the gathering of the whole village at one table, ceased to exist. Villagers began to get together at a table and drink with those with whom they worked in the fields.

Third, the type of alcohol has changed. In the villages of the Russian North home-brewed beer was replaced with vodka. However, this did not change the drinking rit-
usal: drinkers still use table glasses containing 150 ml of vodka. The practice of drinking in small shots of around 50 ml with toasting is not widespread in rural areas to this day. As a rule, the whole glass of vodka is drunk in one gulp, as it was previously with beer. This means that several rounds of toasting in village festivities become next to impossible. The chance that someone will sing or dance better reduces with every glass drunk.

And finally, the change of attitude towards the opportunity to get drunk as such is of paramount importance. In my view a very insightful example of the understanding of Soviet ideology is given by Cynthia Hooper (2006: 64–65):

In one typical incident in 1937 Novosibirsk, NKVD officers denounced a colleague for having refused to participate, seven years earlier, in a firing squad to shoot his own uncle despite the fact that the lieutenant in question had been the first to turn his relative in to the police for suspected treason. The officer was saved from immediate party expulsion on grounds of cowardice and disloyalty only when the Novosibirsk regional NKVD chief intervened to argue that his subordinate’s request to be dismissed from the execution team should be considered a consequence of strictly physical rather than sentimental weakness. As he explained: “Not every Chekist can carry out a sentence simply, on occasion by virtue of the condition of his health, therefore to raise that as a motive of direct political accusation would not be completely fair.”

What is important in this example is the idea of the omnipotent mind, which was put forward by Soviet thinkers and finally gained a foothold in the 1930s (see Halfin 2003: 179–192), in fact turned out to be a very vague idea of insurmountable physical aspects. In the example above the intention to participate in the execution of the uncle (triumph of omnipotent mind) can be brought to nothing by physical weakness – a hand tremor – which a person is unable to control. In other words, inability to control, at least, some of one’s body functions gave an opportunity to ‘hide’ a weaknesses of mind. This only possibility of being weak because of imperfect body is essential, if we try to apply this scheme to various stages of alcoholic intoxication.

These four factors – the reducing of the importance of collective labour, the appearance of trade in the village, the replacement of beer by vodka and the idea of insurmountable physical aspects – came into being in the late 1960s. The process was launched in different places, although the speed of expansion and its intensity varied from place to place. In the first instance the system of community festivities began to break down. There were too many reasons not to go to a fest: permanent availability of alcohol in all villages, the possibility to obtain alcohol without beer brewing equipment, etc. Besides, during the Khushchev years religious ceremonies were under pressure. Village festivities were considered by Khushchev (and it was translated via all Communist Party members to the villagers) as something unworthy of the workers’ culture, a relic of bourgeois relationships where alcohol played the role of money, and, most importantly, a meaningless waste of time for the ‘omnipresent mind of the worker’, who could do something else instead.

In other words, one could no longer voluntarily make a fest, drink and then sing. However, it was quite appropriate to get drunk and collapse. This became quite acceptable, because this is where the exception comes into force: the weak body prevents the manifestation of the omnipresent mind.
This new type of drinking and getting drunk at the same time achieved some of positive connotations in relation to labour and communal approval. For instance, drinking vodka – which, unlike domestic beer, could only be brought from the city – meant drinking by the approval of the state farm director, who sanctioned such imports. At the same time, if a person drinks to the point of collapsing, it means that s/he worked extremely hard and did not have the strength to dance or sing. Thus, this person could prove s/he was ‘Soviet’ by nature and by idea, i.e. with a weak body and a strong mind. It was not very good, but possible, although these people who did not drink a lot and kept their strength for dancing and singing were considered as weak in mind and thus unSoviet, and, class-wise, aliens. And that was much worse.

On the days off, correspondingly, the emphasis was no longer on communal dancing and singing but on the very act of drinking. This was a dislocation of liminality that also redefined its meaning; no longer a creation of communitas but of, using the expression popularised by Arpad Szakolczai (2009) and Bjorn Thomassen (2009), permanent liminality. The drunken liminality of late Soviet society was a condition without restriction that one could enter every time one wanted. This was a state of breaking rules that was accepted by the community but did not divide any life stages or work phases. That liminal stage became permanent for those people who were drinking every day or very often.

I see this permanent liminality as a form of the adaptation of traditional liminality to the challenges of Soviet modernity.

IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION

The problem of drinking in the North of European Russia can be seen from an anthropologist’s point of view through the lens of liminality. The traditional model of Russian rural liminality included different agricultural festivities as a central part of the rites of passage. Inside those festivities the culture of laughter – songs, jokes, dancing – played the primary role. The role of alcohol drinking was marginal and it was linked with a small amount of sugar in the villages and a long period of preparation of homemade beer. After the 1960s the economic and cultural changes that came to the rural areas were too quick for culture to adapt to them. The amount of sugar and spirits in the shops rose precipitously, plus rural dwellers already had a salary at that time. These changes came together with another wave of ideological company against religion, traditions, ceremonies and other ‘survivals’ of pre-revolutionary times.

The result of that situation was a shift of the central idea of festivities from laughter culture to alcohol consumption. And that alcohol consumption was paradoxically legitimised in the socialist culture by the final stage, getting dead drunk, meaning that a person was an ardent worker and was not prepared for non-work activities and that s/he got drunk unintentionally. Getting dead drunk meant the mind lost control (forcibly, not willingly) over the body, and thus this was not punished by the authorities. And slowly, outside of traditional liminality with the environmental help of Soviet changes, the permanent liminality of late-Soviet alcoholism emerged.

Though I see this permanent liminality as a form of adaptation of traditional liminality to the challenges of Soviet modernity, at the same time this adaptation to new condi-
tions can be, at least partially, interpreted as resistance or counter-action. For instance, a drunk man was seen by local people as being transferred, or transferring himself, to another world, a world outside of the world of Soviet rationality and the Soviet order of things. Drunk people very often were not punished. They received a sort of carte-blanche to many activities. For instance, they could play accordion and sing songs, as indicated by a very common phrase – “got drunk and bellowed some songs”. Within this permanent, total liminality one could hold onto the tradition, the relics of former past times that were banned as irrational from the modern Soviet point of view.

This new liminality spawned a new culture of drinking and new drinking traditions of which the majority of people are aware, such as having at least three people to drink, a ban on putting an empty bottle on the table, to clink or not to clink glasses while drinking. These new traditions are taken for granted, while the old customs connection to drinking are often contested as something that people ‘do not believe in’, for instance, the custom of colouring eggs for Easter or baking crepes for Maslenitsa (a weekly Russian equivalent of Pancake Tuesday).

NOTES

1 Prod – from Russian prodovolstvie ‘foodstuff’ and armeitsy ‘militants’. Prodarmeitsy were those people who implemented the Bolshevik policy of grain confiscation.

2 Zalaz’ is an anthropomorphic decoration of a tree top made for young people who come for the first time to the haymaking.

3 A youth revelry combined with work, something like wool spinning and a kind of singing evening.

REFERENCES


"I'M NOT LIKE MOST OF YOU HERE, I'M JUST AN ALCOHOLIC": A RUSSIAN BAPTIST THEORY OF ADDICTION

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ABSTRACT
In my paper I discuss alcoholics in the Russian Baptist rehabilitation ministry by comparing them to drug addicts. In the outside world, as well as in the early stages of the rehabilitation program, alcoholics and illicit drug abusers are perceived as different cultural groups. However, during the program, rehabilitants learn Russian Baptist dogma and theology, and soon afterwards the distinction becomes obsolete for them. I address narratives of distinction and the Russian Baptist response to them. Then I reconstruct the Russian Baptist theory of addiction to demonstrate why alcoholism and substance dependence are not regarded as a problem, but rather as consequences of the real problem, which is a life in sin.

KEYWORDS: alcoholism • addiction • rehabilitation • Russian Baptist Church

INTRODUCTION
This paper is a comparative account of alcohol and illicit drug abusers in the Russian Baptist rehabilitation ministry called Good Samaritan. I will address the context of alcoholism in Russia and its interpretation in the ministry. I will emphasise a comparison of drug users and alcoholics in the discourse of rehabilitation, and then reconstruct a Russian Baptist theory of addiction according to Good Samaritan.

Good Samaritan is a rehabilitation ministry for addicted people founded in 2004. Initially occupying two rooms in the church premises in St. Petersburg, today there are more than thirty rehabs in northwestern Russia, one in the Moscow region, one in the outskirts of Voronezh, one in Finland, and one in Latvia. The rehabs commonly occupy a rural house, part of a church building, a farm or former kolkhoz, or a small apartment. The rehabs are usually situated far away from the temptations of big cities, families, and drug dealers in an attempt to prevent rehabilitants from dropping out of the program. The program is free of charge, surviving on occasional donations and support from the congregations and local inhabitants. The rehabs are maintained by rehabilitants in the second stage of the program, but since they are often bad manual workers, due to their past, the premises are in poor condition.

The program lasts for eight months and consists of two stages. In the first stage, Rehabilitation, newcomers are introduced to the New Testament and the basics of
Christian life according to Russian Baptist interpretation. The schedule is very tight and mandatory for all present. At this stage rehabilitants study the Scriptures for the whole day, pass seminars, pray, and glorify God in the form of singing with almost no free time. The second stage, Adaptation, involves working assignments meant to support the rehab, keep people busy, and teach them to interact and take responsibility.

The regime, spatial division, segregation of stages and genders enforce the strict rules (Mikeshin 2015a), as are a long list of limitations and prohibitions of anything considered sinful, like smoking, cursing, gambling, verbosity (speaking too much and in vain – pustosloviye), and so on. My fieldwork methodology was also affected by a ban on recording equipment, mobile phones, photos and videos, literature apart from the Scriptures (or complementary literature in the second stage), and especially on discussing drugs, drug use, and crime outside of the context of Scripture (for instance, reflections on the bygone life and application of Scripture).

The people in the rehabs have various backgrounds, but their habits eventually make their stories typical. Initially, most of the newcomers have no idea about the Baptist affiliation of the ministry and what the term Baptist implies. However, those who do not leave after the first few days are commonly impressed by the depth of, and dedication to, Bible study in the rehabs. Addicted life in contemporary Russia often involves prison sentences, homelessness, harsh and chronic illnesses, and abandoned families. All these issues are common for most rehabilitants of both genders. Such a background makes many rehabilitants disobedient and unstable, and hence many of them drop out of the program without finishing it. Those who complete the whole program, remain in faith, and join a local church, commonly maintaining remission for a long time. Most of those who quit the program relapse soon afterwards (Mikeshin forthcoming).

The rehabilitation program takes the form of studying, learning, and incorporating the Scriptures as the language of liturgy, communication, and even thought and reasoning (cf. Coleman 2000). This is based on the particular literalist reading of the Bible, influenced by the 150-year history of oppression and marginalization of Russian Evangelicals, the contemporary Russian sociocultural context, and especially the specificity of the Russian Synodal translation, made under the heavy influence of the Orthodox Church in the 19th century (Mikeshin 2015b). The rehabilitation process thus addresses the twofold nature of addiction, physical and psychological (Volkow and Li 2005), offering a twofold transformation – bodily, through prolonged isolation and abstinence, and moral through conversion to Christianity.

I conducted my fieldwork in the ministry in 2014–2015, staying in the rehabs as a full-time rehabilitant. This mode of presence was a condition of my research in the rehabs, but I was able to declare my research intentions at all times. Conducting interviews on the program was impossible, due to the limitations and lack of time in the tight schedule. Yet, I also participated in missionary trips, church services, festivities, seminars, leadership meetings, and many other events of the ministry and congregation.

For the ministers there was no difference between me being there to conduct research or to treat drug addiction (which I did not have), for the ministry is intended not to cure the body, but to bring people to Christ. The target audience of the ministry is obviously addicted people and the missionaries and ministers approach potential rehabilitants offering them help with substance use dependence. However, as addiction itself is seen as part of a major problem, which is sin, the ministry deals with sinful human nature,
rather than sobriety. Sobriety comes as a consequence and even evidence of repentance, just as good works come as a consequence and evidence of salvation by faith alone in the Evangelical dogma of *sola fide*.

**ALCOHOL AND DRUGS IN RUSSIA**

It is the most difficult task to write an overview of the social and cultural role of alcohol in contemporary Russia. So much has been written and said on Russians and drinking, and yet one can hardly embrace the vast multitude of explanations of what causes alcoholism in Russia to the extent that the nation itself is often associated with vodka from the outside as well as in the inside. In my paper, I have to limit my account of alcoholism and rehabilitation to the most vivid references to the Soviet and post-Soviet past, although it is evident that the causes of Russian alcoholism can be traced to much earlier times (Herlihy 2002).

I focus on one important distinction for my study. Although there is a conventional understanding of alcohol and nicotine as drugs of abuse, with averagely high addictiveness and damage to health (Nutt et al. 2007), in Russia as well as globally alcohol plays a radically different cultural and social roles in Russia as compared to the rest of the world. Its specificity and the vast spread of marijuana and opiates in the USSR in the 1980s and 1990s, instigated by the war in Afghanistan, constructed a totally different image of illicit drug abusers. The dangerous and unpredictable junkie (*narkoman*), as compared to the familiar image of the boozier (*alkash*), was seen as a new growing threat to Russian morals, security, and health. No one would doubt similarities between the effects of certain drugs of abuse and alcohol, but there is much more social tolerance towards the consumption of alcohol to the extent that it is often considered a desired behaviour. Alcohol is a common ice-breaker, cure for stress, and marker of important events, good causes, and even masculinity. Some experience with, and willingness to drink, alcohol is expected from normal people, “like anybody else”, especially in the masculine context.

What makes the distinction even more remarkable is the legal status of alcohol (and nicotine), as compared to other drugs. One can buy, sell, produce, store, and transport alcohol with certain restrictions without a threat of spending ten years behind bars. In 2012, the prison sentences for drug-related crimes were increased in Russia, and today it is possible to serve more years, for instance, for one episode of drug dealing than for murder without aggravating circumstances. The narrative behind this claims that those selling drugs are killing dozens or even hundreds of people and hence should be dealt with more severely. Consequently, one fifth of the prison population in Russia were sentenced under the drug-related articles 228–234 of the Criminal Code. (FSIN 2014)

Such a situation, however, does not merely create problems for illicit drug users but for alcoholics as well. Compulsive drinkers recognize their addiction to alcohol much later than drug users. With the exception of marijuana and some other types of ‘light narcotics’, drug users, especially those who inject, are regarded as junkies, and they themselves start admitting it relatively quickly. Regular drinkers, on the other hand, are often regarded as “those who just like to drink” (*lyubyat vypit’*), as being “like anybody else”, or as those who like company and parties. Drinkers, in turn, provide lots of
conventional excuses for their relapses, such as claiming their right to “relax” or have some rest at the end of the busy week, referring to a stressful situation, merry company, a football game, some other serious cause, or tradition.

To summarise, I focus on the cultural perception of drugs and alcohol in Russian society. Apart from the biochemical similarities, alcohol and illicit drugs have radically different legal and cultural statuses. In certain situations, the consumption of alcohol is expected and generally approved, while even a moderate amount (more than six grams) of marijuana can put the user in prison. The public stigma of junkies is so strong that even abusers themselves generally share it, which substantially adds to their moral collapse. This collapse constitutes their life-stories and defines the cultural and psychological context in their first encounter with Good Samaritan.

**ALCOHOLICS AND ILLICIT DRUG USERS IN REHABS**

The late acceptance of alcoholic addiction brings alcoholics to rehabilitation programs late. In the rehabs where I did my fieldwork, alcoholics were commonly older than illicit drug addicts, and many of them hesitated to fully acknowledge their problem. In the first days of the program, when it is time for introductions, alcoholics often say something like: “I’m not like most of you here, I’m just an alcoholic” (37-year-old Marat).³ Many illicit drug addicts also support this distinction, especially in the early stage of the program, by mocking the alcoholics and their “petty” problems, and even calling them names, like “the politicals” (politicheskiye).⁴ When asked why they were at the rehab, many of rehabilitants came up with creative answers that took attention away from their alcoholism:

37-year-old Vladislav: “I boozed up a little (zabukhal chut’-chut’). Well, actually I came here to find inner harmony and learn how to love people.”

30-year-old Vova: “I just want to quit smoking.”

32-year-old Dima: “I want to get rid of my sex addiction.”

54-year-old Sergey Ivanych: “Well, my wife sent me here. I didn’t know anything about it.”

67-year-old Andrey Viktorovich: “I came to get some treatment (podlechit’syia), and I’m very much satisfied with the therapy I’m getting here.”

Remarkably enough, the idea of treatment or therapy is something most of addicts are used to in other rehabilitation programs. At the same time, Christian rehabilitation at Good Samaritan rejects this notion for its focus on a bodily cure. Bodily transformation, the ministers claim, can only follow the moral and spiritual transformation of a converted individual. Without conversion, surrender to Jesus and being born again, an addict will sooner or later relapse. At Good Samaritan, this is apparently the case – the program only works if the dogma behind it is taken in fully, unconditionally, and wholeheartedly (Mikeshin forthcoming).

Due to late acceptance and many more temptations in the outside world, alcoholics at Good Samaritan relapse more frequently. Even in the rehab setting, when permitted to go out to work, alcoholics often bump into drunk people, liquor stores, and bottles with leftovers. Once, a 38-year-old homeless alcoholic Misha was sent to clean the stair-
ways in the neighbouring housing blocks with three other “brothers”. There he found a half-empty bottle of vodka. He managed to throw it away, and later he claimed that Satan was tempting him, an alcoholic, with this bottle: “This was not an accident, no doubt about it. No one among those three junkies with me found it. But I – the boozer (siniak) – did.”

The overall spread and tolerance towards alcohol consumption links it with the concept of bygone life (vetkhaya zhizn’). The life before repentance is regarded as selfish and sinful, and would inevitably lead to death – i.e. both physical and eternal damnation. Even in the testimonies of people who have never been addicted, consumption of alcohol is listed as one of the common vices. A description of one’s bygone life often involves if not compulsive, then at least occasional, drinking (vypivat’ inogda). One of the marks of genuine repentance for a common Russian Baptist is termination of drinking. Remarkably, for the whole history of Russian Baptists, they have been associated with total abstinence, which was in different contexts regarded as high morals, odd, or even hypocritical (Nikol’skaya 2009; Mitrokhin 1997).

Unlike illicit drugs, alcohol is mentioned and addressed in Russian Baptist theology, dogma, and exegesis. One of the regular questions the rehabilitants ask their elders during Bible study is why alcohol is considered a vice, while at the same time it is so much present in the Bible – even Jesus is depicted constantly drinking wine. The usual explanation the elders are taught to give addresses the historical and geographical context. Referring to the supplementary literature (for instance, the Russian translation of John F. MacArthur’s Study Bible), they describe the poor condition of water in Palestine, claiming that the actual beverage was water diluted with wine for disinfection. Moreover, the problem of compulsive drinking is addressed in the Bible using numerous examples (see, for instance, Ephesians 5:18), so there must be a clear distinction between drinking and abusing.

The following three stories of alcoholics in rehabs illustrate the variety of attitudes and reflections on drinking by abusers in the rehabs. All three men are described in the beginning of their programs, when most people still have their convictions and ideas unaffected by Russian Baptist dogma, especially when it comes to their everyday addicted experience. Even those who admit the inability to control their alcohol consumption and, ultimately, to manage their own lives, often make a distinction between illicit drug users and themselves. Learning to reject this distinction is an important step towards understanding and accepting the narrative of rehabilitation at Good Samaritan.

THE STORY OF MISHA

Misha was 38 at the time I met him in the rehab. He was an interesting story-teller with a great sense of humour, yet his life was far from joyful. Misha was brought to the rehab from the street, drunk, dirty, and with a frostbitten toe. The rehab literally saved his life, which he did not value much anyway, considering suicide as an option.

Misha grew up in a small town 120 kilometres from St. Petersburg. He described his childhood and youth as “normal”, growing up with an older brother and going to school. After the school, Misha served in the army, but after that he was sentenced to eight years in prison for murder. The army and prison took a considerable part of
his adult life, and later in the rehab he would tell many stories and provide examples based on that experience. In prison Misha worked, got along with other inmates well, and even managed to get a cell phone with Internet access, which was never allowed.

After prison, Misha returned home and found a job. When his brother asphyxiated on exhaust fumes in his garage, Misha was shocked and depressed and started drinking heavily. He recalled: “I didn’t drink at all, neither after the army, nor after prison. It’s when my brother choked, then I started, and fucked up (prosral) everything.” He ultimately came to the point of drinking hard spirits every day, which he did not cease doing even after becoming homeless. He lost his apartment to some fraudulent scheme and was too busy drinking to do anything about it.

Living on the street, Misha made his living by collecting various metal parts. He spent most of his earnings on cheap booze and became indifferent to his life and fate. He tried to commit suicide even before losing his home, and in total he made three attempts to hang himself. Once, he would later recall, he went to a forest and tried to use a cable to hang himself, but it ripped apart. Misha passed out, but soon recovered. Still unsure that he was alive, he conducted a reality check by asking a passer-by for a cigarette and went home.

Later in the rehab, he explained this attitude towards his own life: “I don’t give a damn (pofig) about what happens to me.” When he speculated about the possibility of being cut by a nail, he said: “If I die instantly – I don’t care. But I wouldn’t like to suffer.” He also added that he would not care more if he lost a leg: “It’s never too late to hang myself. Even with one leg.” Yet, in the rehab, Misha accepted the rules and agreed to revisit his life, though he still kept the suicide option open in case he found himself on the street again.

THE STORY OF OLEG

35-year-old Oleg came to the rehab from the northern city of Arkhangelsk. With lots of scars on his head, in danger of losing his sight due to a head trauma, and with a damaged arm, although despite this Oleg kept in good spirits and maintained a sense of humour. He had difficulties understanding some passages in the Scriptures, but was willing to discuss and comprehend the tenets of the Christian faith and a ‘decent’ life. He was hesitant to pray in public at first, but soon started doing so, and even repented on his knees during the Sunday church visit, though he was worried about his clean white trousers afterwards.

A considerable part of Oleg’s life was spent in prison, where he served three sentences for robbery. He claimed that the cause of all three crimes was alcohol. Every time he got drunk he lost control and became violent, either fighting with someone or committing a violent crime. As is common among former inmates, he never disclosed details of his crimes, only blaming his alcoholism for them. He spent many years in prison and many of the stories and life examples he used for Bible study were from his prison past.

In between his prison sentences, Oleg got married and soon his wife bore a daughter. Their marriage, though, did not last long, and eventually Oleg’s wife divorced him when he was in prison. When he got out, she denied him contact with their daughter,
not so much because of his drinking habit, but because he was a jailbird (ugolovnik). His violent behaviour also affected his family, and sometimes he even got in fights with his relatives, for instance, beating his father-in-law for calling him a “young jerk-off” (molodoj kozel) over a bottle of vodka.

During his stay in the rehab, Oleg sometimes talked about his daughter, but they were separated when she was small and he never really knew her. Oleg was mainly concerned about his recent girlfriend and her spiritual state. He said that she was baptized in the Orthodox Church, but he did not see it as a problem, for he would “make her a believer”. He also had trouble accepting the Russian Baptist model of decent behaviour with the opposite sex (see also Mikeshin 2015a), claiming that as a normal man he is a predator:

There is nothing wrong if I look at some girl, say, in a skirt. I’m a man, after all. We are predators. We need prey. Even if I undress her with my eyes, I just want to enjoy her beauty.

Oleg’s attitude towards illicit drug users in the rehab was somewhat anxious. When they started discussing drugs and drug use, he frowned and asked them to stop. Once, a 29-year-old Matvey retorted: “Why does it stumble you [an alcoholic]?” Oleg responded: “I feel sorry for you all! You’re supposed to change your lives. You should force yourselves. God commands you.” Initially, he also shared an idea that he was just an alcoholic, although alcohol caused him and his family much trouble, yet he perceived it as something easier than drugs.

THE STORY OF MAX

One of the successful rehabilitants who later became an elder and minister is the man I call Max, then 34 years old. Max grew up in the family of a military officer and doctor. He spent his early childhood in Central Asia, then the USSR, in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Later, the family moved to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), where Max went to school and lives to this day. He then went to a military college, but did not graduate. Later, he started working at a telecommunications company and soon after started his own business and became successful and wealthy. He was married twice. After the first divorce, his first wife took their son and emigrated to Australia. His second wife also bore Max a son, but later divorced him.

The cause and reason for both of Max’s divorces, and for him eventually ending up in rehab, was his alcoholism. He started off in the company of friends and colleagues, but soon became addicted and began drinking alone. He first drank expensive and fancy alcohol, but with time he became much less picky and drank whatever was available. By the age of 33, when he ended up in the rehab, he had already experienced alcoholic delirium twice. Once he was left alone with his son for several days. He began to hallucinate intensely and behave inappropriately, and later realized that his son, who was less than ten at that time, was in great danger. After that occasion, his wife took the child and moved out of his apartment. Max started drinking even more heavily and, eventually, on another occasion of delirium, this time in the city centre, thought he was shooting lasers out of his fingers to fight aliens.

Mikeshin: “I’m Not Like Most of You Here, I’m Just an Alcoholic”: A Russian Baptist Theory of Addiction

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Despite owning a four-room apartment, Max was tramping around his neighbourhood, sleeping on common stairways of housing blocks, eating waste food, and, as he put it, “living with bums”. Realising the extent of his problem, he tried to quit drinking by switching to drugs, something he considered a good solution. Once, Max’s homeless friends told him that there was a soup kitchen organised once a week by the local Baptist church. So Max went several times to eat. During one of his visits, a minister, a former rehabilitant himself, asked Max if he wanted to go to the rehab. Max had lost the will to live and was actively considering hanging himself. He promptly agreed, deciding to give it a go. After spending a week collecting medical references, he was directed to the rehab.

In the first days of the program, Max had a horrible hangover. While slowly getting back to normal, Max started reading and participating. In the beginning, he did not feel there were solutions to his problems, but he started enjoying reading Scripture and “rediscovered” the Bible. At first, he was just reading it out of interest, and did not take the advice seriously. Vasya, his elder, claimed that Scripture had all the answers and solutions for Max, but Max could not figure them out.

Once, Max was reading Acts 17:27: “so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us” (NRSV). This passage struck him like a bolt of lightning. He realized that he was actually searching for God all of his life: he was looking for any meaning of life in Eastern philosophies, pleasure, books, various religions, and, ultimately, altering his mind with psychoactive substances. The second part of the verse – “though indeed he is not far from each one of us” – revealed the answer to all of Max’s questions: “I realized that God is near me and always was. He loves me whatever I do and wherever I go. I just didn’t want to notice his presence.”

He went on reading and the next verse: “For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring’”, revealed to Max that God is the giver of life, that he maintains life, and that we belong to God fully and unconditionally. Max, a sinner, always ignored God, or even rejected him, but this rejection led to a total moral and material failure. That same evening, Max asked Vasya to talk and pray face-to-face in the kitchen, and with his support and in his presence, repented with a sinner’s prayer.

After repentance, “everything became in order” for Max (vse vstalo na svoi mesta) and most of all, Max got rid of the overwhelming feeling of emptiness and loneliness. At that moment, he felt the constant presence of God, craved for his will in the Bible, and started changing his life. Max realised that these changes would not come in the blink of an eye, but required persistent spiritual work, rejection and denial of worldly experience and self-reliance. A sinful nature and habits are strong, for one accumulates them for years, and Satan holds sinners tightly. Thus, one should not expect to radically change in a month or two. Even the eight-month program only gives direction, a vector for the spiritual growth and changes in life. At some point when already an elder of Rehabilitation, Max shared:

Right now, I’m not ready to leave the rehab and start solving my problems. Sooner or later, I won’t be able to resist and I’ll gulp (zhakhnu) a shot of cognac. Or even add one drop to my coffee to take delight (posibaristvuyu). I need to solve many problems, and before I start dealing with the people I used to deal with and explain
to them why I don’t drink, I’ve got to have as much fellowship with Christians, otherwise my old friends will pull me back there.

Max successfully completed his program and stayed with the ministry for several months to serve as a minister. Later, he became an active member of the umbrella Church in St. Petersburg and was baptised.

THE RUSSIAN BAPTIST THEORY OF ADDICTION

These three stories have much in common, though they show a different attitude towards alcoholism. All three rehabilitants admitted that alcohol destroyed their lives and they could not control it. Yet, Oleg, for instance, still perceived alcoholism as a less serious problem than intravenous drug abuse. He was puzzled when addicts treated their problems lightly and felt sorry for them. He realised that he should transform and change his life, but during the two weeks I spent with him in the rehab, he was still in doubt about the particularities of the Baptist faith and way of living.

Misha, in turn, also distinguished illicit drug use from alcoholism, although he did not claim any hierarchy. He was sceptical about his future, and saw the rehabilitation program as something that kept him alive but which could end at any moment, and thus leave him with no further reason to live. Misha’s understanding of the program echoed a narcological concept of remission, which should be constantly maintained (see, for instance, Raikhel 2013). He knew that he could not stop drinking and control his life without help from others, and was thankful for each day he was able to live sober, not hungry, and with a roof over his head.

Max represents a different example. He accepted the Good Samaritan message fully and unconditionally, and constantly worked on his spiritual growth and better knowledge, understanding, and application of the Scripture. Although at some point he became at odds with the ministry of Good Samaritan, he remained in the church and became enthusiastically engaged in different ministries. Full acceptance of the program gave him an understanding of his alcoholism as an element of his bygone sinful life, rather than a problem in itself. Another rehabilitant, a 34-year-old intravenous user, Slava, once neatly summarised: “I didn’t come here for a cure. I came here to comprehend how to live further.” Initially, Max came to the rehab for a cure, taking his last chance to stay alive. Eventually, however, he realised that a bodily cure meant nothing and could not be maintained for any period unless he transformed morally, surrendering his life to Christ.

Max’s example and his interpretation of the Scriptures reveals the discourse constructed in Good Samaritan, which I call the Russian Baptist theory of addiction. This theory explains that addiction itself, as well as many other vices, such as sexual immorality, cursing, lying, crime, pride, envy, and so on, is just one manifestation of the sinful bygone life. Living a self-centred life inevitably leads to moral destruction, the Baptists claim, and often to physical collapse as well. Curing addiction, thus, does not solve a problem; rather it only gives a false, temporary, sense of freedom from a harmful vice. Good Samaritan emphasizes a radical transformation of self, rather than just a bodily cure.
All newcomers in the program are commonly asked to undergo detoxification in advance, yet many are taken from the street or even get intoxicated on their way to the distant rehabs, thus there is a three-day rule. For three days, each newcomer is allowed to rest in bed and do nothing, except eating with the rest of Rehabilitation, if they want to. After those three days, they have to follow all the rules and the schedule like everybody else.

When the body of an addict is clean from substances, either through a medical procedure or just prolonged abstinence, the physical addiction soon ends. Cravings, hangover, or dope sickness are normally caused by residual substances in the bloodstream and the effect they have on the brain. However, most of the addicts return to their habit soon after detoxification. The changes in the addicted brain are irreversible, and the brain at the same time creates psychological problems and suggests an easy and familiar way to solve them (Volkow and Li 2005). Many Russian addicts often abuse detoxification as a way to feel better, have a break, and lower the dose.

The state of psychological addiction after detoxification is commonly described with such words as emptiness, depression, apathy, or a feeling of having nothing to live for. Good Samaritan suggests filling this emptiness with Jesus, changing the vector of one’s life towards God’s plan and thus living a full and meaningful life. A common explanation used in the rehabs is based on Luke 11:24–26 (also rephrased in Matthew 12:43–45):

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any, it says, “I will return to my house from which I came”. When it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. (NRSV)

Applied to an addict’s life, this excerpt illustrates the need for moral transformation in addiction treatment. The unclear spirit of addiction can be relatively easily cast out of the individual. However, if one does not fill their heart, soul, and mind with something meaningful, the unclean spirit comes back, and with seven other spirits, “more evil than itself”. In the rehabilitation context, these spirits could be pride (“I can abstain. I can control myself.”), blasphemy (“I got rid of my addiction myself. God had nothing to do with it.”), envy of the non-dependent, anger towards God, low spirits, and so on. Hence, “the last state of that person is worse than the first”, and they “fall much deeper than they were before” (Max, explaining the moral collapse of those who drop the program).

When one lets Jesus into one’s heart, one does not simply declare oneself a Christian and start following the rules. A genuine conversion implies letting God control the whole life of a repentant sinner. One gives up control, admitting inability to manage life on one’s own and allowing Jesus into one’s “house”, which is not “swept and put in order”, but dirty, broken, and abandoned, for only Jesus is claimed capable to fix it and set one’s life on the right track. Once, Sergey, a former minister with 15 years of injecting experience, shared:

When my brother learned about my deliverance from drugs, he said: “Oh, you’ve got such a strong will!” What will? I could never do it alone! I am actually very weak. All I tried to do with my life on my own led me here [to the rehab]. Without Jesus you simply can’t do anything.
Evangelicals are generally defined by their focus on the Bible as the inerrant and sufficient word of God, substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross, the individuality of conversion, and missionary activism (Bebbington 1989). Dogmatically, this is formulated in Luther’s *five solae*, of which I here emphasize *sola fide*. Unlike the Eastern Orthodox or Catholics, Evangelical Christians believe in salvation by faith alone, thus rejecting the doctrine of justification by good works. Even if good works are understood not merely as a moral behaviour, but rather as a deeper concept of orthopraxy – proper conduct – it is still rejected as justification in Evangelical soteriology. Good works are praised, but as a consequence and evidence of a born-again transformed individual. Consequently, as drug addiction is seen as a direct consequence of a life of sin, rehabilitation and remission are perceived as a consequence and evidence of sincere repentance and giving control over one’s life to Christ.

What is the role of alcohol and alcoholism in the Russian Baptist theory of addiction? The stories of the three men I provided earlier, and many more stories of addicts at Good Samaritan, clearly show that those who distinguish between alcohol and drugs in the rehabs are only half way to accepting the narrative of rehabilitation, or are even in denial. The specificity of substance use dependence (including alcohol) is in its extreme psychological pressure. Rehabilitation only succeeds when the self experiences a radical transformation. Evangelical conversion is not always radical (see for instance Glazier 2003), but Russian Baptist conversion does require a complete break with the past (cf. Meyer 1998) and in the rehabilitation settings such a break is stressed.

Russian Baptists tend to share the cultural role of alcohol in Russia, and hence do not simply regard it as one of the addictions that lead people to the rehabs. As I mentioned earlier, many testimonies address alcohol as a sign of a bygone life, or even as a comparative example: “Even though I never drank or smoked, I was still a great sinner” (Viktor, a pastor who was converted in his youth as a student of physics and maths). Still, alcohol is regarded as one of numerous vices, one of the vivid and evident ones, which even makes it easier to treat.

Despite a common Baptist abstinence, some alcohol may be accepted in certain situations. Apart from the Palestinian context, discussed earlier, alcohol is used in medicine, cooking, or, remarkably, in Holy Communion (although the most conservative churches may use grape juice instead). The abstinence itself is not so much emphasized. Rather, sincere repentance and following God’s will is regarded as the way to control one’s body and desires. After all, the Russian Baptists often claim, “All things are lawful for me’, but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are lawful for me’, but I will not be dominated by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12, NRSV).

**CONCLUSION**

This paper addresses the sociocultural role of alcohol in Russian society and the Russian Baptist community in comparison to illicit drugs. Drinking has always been a distinct phenomenon in Russian history, but illicit drugs, like opiates and marijuana, spread rapidly only in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, there are two different cultural images of the drug user and alcoholic, both negative, yet the former is seen as much more dangerous and much less predictable than the latter.
Russian Baptists generally address this distinction. Although they regard drinking as one of the multitude of vices, they acknowledge its role in the Russian sociocultural context and often refer to it as an attribute of the old, bygone, and sinful life. The ministry of Good Samaritan deals with addicts directly, thus in the rehabilitation program the distinction between alcohol and drug abuse is deliberately removed.

The Russian Baptist theory of addiction regards alcohol or drug addiction not as a problem per se, but rather as a consequence and property of the ‘real’ larger problem, which is a life in sin. This life does not imply conscious immorality or intentional evil. The bygone life was one directed towards false values and purposes, the Baptists claim. The only way to adopt Christian living and ultimate salvation after death, thus, is total surrender to God and his will through the acceptance of Christ’s atonement sacrifice and the unconditional acknowledgement of Biblical truth. A bodily cure, in this context, could be the consequence or even evidence of such a moral transformation, rather than a starting point or even ultimate goal.

In the initial stages of the program, many rehabilitants, both alcohol and drug addicts, share the cultural context of alcohol in Russia. Those who successfully pass through the program, or at least do not drop it too soon, eventually get rid of this context and distinction between alcoholics and illicit drug users. Such an understanding may thus serve as evidence of the process of conversion, which in Russian Baptist terms implies incorporating the Scriptures as a language of communication, thought and reasoning. The converts, on the one hand, stop seeing alcohol as a culturally distinct Russian phenomenon. On the other hand, they begin to realise that alcohol is no less dangerous and harmful than any other illicit drug that is abused, and thus one cannot contend that “I’m not like most of you here, I’m just an alcoholic”.

NOTES

1 The latter two rehabs house Russian-speaking residents of the European Union, who cannot legally stay in Russia for more than two months.
2 There are 15 classes, called seminars, covering topics such as the nature of God, the credibility of the Bible, and various aspects of the Christian life. During these classes rehabilitants write down the seminar material and learn it by heart along with two or three verses from the Scriptures. Rehabilitants should pass all 15 seminars in order to progress to the second stage of the program, although in smaller rehabs this rule is not strict.
3 All names have been replaced with pseudonyms.
4 “The politcals” is a reference to the distinction made in the Stalin-era prison camps. With this term, ‘professional’ criminals distanced themselves from those serving their sentences under political articles, which indicated their unfamiliarity with prison life and lower rank.
5 A testimony is a common Evangelical narrative used as an introduction and as an evangelizing technique. With their testimony, converted Christians witness about their lives, starting from their sinful past through the conversion and salvation by Christ, up to their current state.
6 I had almost no access to women during my stays, as it goes against the spatial segregation of genders rooted in the concept of decency (Mikeshin 2015a).
7 It is also remarkable that besides being a pejorative, in prison hierarchy kozel is someone who cooperates with the administration and thus they are particularly despised and hated.
8 The verb “stumble” is a biblical term. It refers, for instance, to Romans 14:21: “it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble”. (NRSV) In the rehab settings it is widely used.

9 The extended version of Max’s story is published in Mikeshin 2016: 71–77.

10 The other four solae are sola Scriptura (the Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice), soli Deo gloria (glory to God only), sola gratia (salvation by grace alone), and solus Christus (salvation through Christ alone).

REFERENCES


"SUDDENLY A BINGE DRINKING EPISODE HAS HAPPENED TO HIM": LOCUS OF CONTROL, NOTION OF RESPONSIBILITY, ALCOHOLISM AND SUICIDE IN THE TAZ REGION, YAMAL NENETS AUTONOMOUS OKRUG

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ABSTRACT
Although the notion of responsibility is often invoked by mass-media reports, activists and lay people when discussing alcoholism and suicides, anthropological discussions of this topic seem to deliberately avoid the notion. Based on the example of the Taz Nenets of western Siberia, this paper explores how cross-cultural differences in the notion of responsibility, if approached in a non-moralising way, can enrich our understanding of several aspects of the drinking and suicidal behaviours of native northerners. The Nenets seem to believe that both positive and negative events in their lives happen more due to chance or for highly localised reasons that they do not control rather than being caused by their own informed and wilful actions (external locus of control). Particularly, acts of suicide and binge drinking episodes just happen to people and, therefore, people cannot be held responsible for them. This attitude can be a compensatory mechanism for the flat attribution style observed among Nenets in previous studies. It should be taken into account in programs of suicide prevention and the treatment of alcoholism.

KEYWORDS: alcoholism • suicide • locus of control • attribution style • Siberia • Nenets • responsibility taking

INTRODUCTION
Alcoholism and suicide represent enduring problems among the indigenous peoples of circumpolar regions (Arctic Human Development Report 2004). In the public discourse, particularly in the discourse prevalent in local and regional newspapers, TV and radio broadcasts, these problems are frequently discussed in moralistic terms and such topics as (moral) responsibility, irresponsible behaviour and free will (or lack of it) on the part of individuals are often invoked. This stands in a sharp contrast to academic lit-
erature, including anthropological literature, which, once it gets to alcoholism and suicide, seems to carefully avoid the topic of individual responsibility, despite being quite willing to discuss it in other contexts. Indeed, this literature, which has proliferated significantly during last decades, points to a whole range of factors that can be blamed for the problems. These include political factors such as the sedentarisation policy (Pika 1987), collectivisation and the breakup of family households (Bogoyavlenskiy and Pika 1991; Klokov 1996); demographic factors such as urbanisation, the influx of newcomers (Kozlov et al. 2002), and the gender shift (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001); economic factors such as poverty and economic insecurity (Pivneva 2005); social factors such as the lack of social mobility (Spillane and Smith 2007) and social disadaptation (Pivneva 2005); cultural factors such as a degradation of the traditional normative culture and of the traditional system of values (Abryutina 1999); even biomedical factors such as the alleged genetically based vulnerability of native northerners to alcoholism (Abryutina 1999; Pivneva 2005) to name just a few (and these are the factors discussed only in the context of Russian circumpolar regions). In these accounts, individuals are usually depicted as passive recipients of external influence, reacting to these factors by drinking or killing themselves. The question of their responsibility for their own behaviour is usually not discussed or even touched on.

This avoidance is completely understandable as far as discussion of responsibility is used (as this often happens in the popular mass-media discourse) as a context to make moral judgments about the behaviour of informants from the viewpoint of the author’s moral principles or those of the ‘universal society’. Indeed, such judgments would violate one of the fundamental principles of anthropological research, the principle of cultural relativity (and making moral judgments is in any case not the business of science). However, the notion of responsibility can be discussed in a number of other contexts even when the focus is on topics as sensitive and prone to moral judgement as alcoholism and suicide. Furthermore, at a certain level of research, such a discussion becomes absolutely necessary. Indeed, native northerners are not marionettes whose behaviour is directly and completely determined by political, demographic, social or other forces, despite the fact that some of the studies mentioned above can leave such an impression. Their behaviour, including drinking and suicidal behaviour, is determined primarily by their beliefs about what is right and what is wrong as well as about what they can do and what they should do. Political, social, demographic and, probably, even biomedical forces can influence their behaviour only by altering these beliefs. Therefore, any account that relates drinking and suicide among native northerners to any set of external factors should, at some point, provide a discussion of how these factors can cause specific behavioural patterns by influencing the notion of responsibility. Furthermore, an arguably better approach would be to start by describing the notion of responsibility among members of a particular group and only then speculate about how it can be related to drinking and suicidal behaviour on one hand and external forces on the other. Unfortunately few studies have utilised this approach so far.

This paper aims to explore this approach in a study of alcoholism and suicide among the Nenets of northwestern Siberia. As everywhere in the circumpolar region, the number of suicides per 100,000 inhabitants in this region is much higher among Nenets in comparison to non-aboriginal newcomers (Arctic Human Development Report 2004). Among Nenets, this number is very close to the mean for native northerners in Russia
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(101 per 100,000; Bogoyavlenskiy 2008), while among the non-aborigines it is in fact slightly lower than the mean for Russia in general (19 per 100,000, state statistical committee). Obtaining reliable data on alcoholism is more difficult, but there can be little doubt that the rate among native northerners is high (Pivneva 2005). Research presented in this paper represents a continuation of the previously published study by the author (Istomin 2012) drawing on psychological theories and methods. In contrast to the previous study, however, the data and results presented and discussed in this paper deal more directly with the notion of responsibility and its implication in drinking and suicidal behaviour.

The empirical data for this paper has been collected over the course of an extensive fieldwork period performed by the author in Tazovsky district, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (Area), Russia. Geographically, this region includes the Gydan peninsula and the lower part of the River Taz. The fieldwork period included six visits to the area between 2005 and 2012. During these visits, which lasted two to four months each, the author migrated over the southern part of the district with nomadic reindeer herders (mainly members of the Tazovsky herding enterprise) and lived with semi-nomadic Nenets fishermen in the river Taz delta. In 2010, the author performed a comparative quantitative study of the so-called attribution style. The samples compared consisted of Nenets children from the Tazovsky boarding school for children of reindeer herders on the one hand, and of non-aboriginal children attending Tazovsky secondary school on the other. The current article draws on this study as well as on qualitative fieldwork data.

The paper consists of three parts. The first part discusses the concept of responsibility as well as theories that can account for differences in it between individuals and groups. The second part presents and discusses field material on the topic collected among Taz Nenets. The final part of the article explores some theoretical implications of this material.

RESPONSIBILITY: A THEORETICAL ACCOUNT

As was stated by Aristotle, responsibility should be understood as the ability to be blamed or prized (see Brown 2009). In other words, someone can be named responsible for his or her actions, including mental actions, if it is appropriate to respond to these actions with blame or praise. Aristotle continues by stating two conditions that make such responses appropriate. First is the so-called control condition: in order for an agent to be blamed or praised for his or her actions, these actions must have their origin in this agent and the agent should be able to control them. Second is the condition of awareness: it must be possible to expect the agent to be aware of the consequences of his or her actions that lead to blame or praise before the action itself is performed. This shows that only some agents can have responsibility and even these agents can be held responsible for only some of their actions (Eshleman 2014). The Aristotelian definition of responsibility and the conditions for being responsible have been accepted by most subsequent philosophers. Indeed, a heated debate has been going on about what agents’ actions (if any) satisfy the control condition and what grounds (if any) are sufficient to expect an agent to satisfy the awareness condition (Woolfolk et al. 2008). However, the conditions themselves are not denied and those who argue that one or the other of them cannot be
satisfied usually conclude that people simply cannot be properly held responsible for their actions (Eshleman 2014).

It seems that the reason the Aristotelian account of responsibility is widely accepted by both scholars and lay people is that the philosopher has managed to describe a true cultural and psychological universal (Nichols and Knobe 2007). Indeed, there seems to be no culture in the world whose members would not be blamed by their fellows for some actions and praised for others. The phenomena of blame and praise make up the foundation of the social order everywhere. At the same time, in all cultures people would be blamed or praised only for those actions that they performed while able to refrain. This ability to refrain can be just an illusion as fatalists or adherents of modern neuroethics would argue, but still this illusion should be there, otherwise there is indeed nothing the actor could be praised or blamed for (ibid.). Similarly, everywhere in the world people are expected to foresee the direct consequences of their actions and are blamed if they fail to do something and instead perform an action despite foreseeable negative consequences. On the other hand, nowhere in the world are people expected to foresee all the consequences of their actions: it is widely accepted that there are consequences they cannot foresee and, therefore, for which he cannot be blamed.

On the other hand, just like professional philosophers, ordinary people also differ in their beliefs about what is foreseeable and what is not, and, more importantly, about how much control one has over one’s actions. The later beliefs are often implicit and they constitute an important aspect of personality. In cognitive and clinical psychology, there is a relatively long tradition of research on this aspect of personality. This research was pioneered by Julian Rotter (1966), who coined the term locus of control to refer to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events affecting them. A personal locus of control is conceptualised as being either internal, meaning that the person believes he or she can control his/her behaviour and effect influence on his/her life, or external, meaning the person believes his/her decisions and life are controlled by environmental factors that he or she cannot influence, or by chance or fate (ibid.). However, Rotter has always stressed (1975; 1990) that externality and internality are not either–or categories. Rather they are the two poles of a continuum, with the loci of control of real people differing in how close they fall to one or the other of them. Rotter (1966) has also created the first instrument to measure the internality/externality of the locus of control in an individual. This instrument represents a questionnaire consisting of 23 pairs of statements, with the individual choosing one of the statements in each pair. Other instruments were developed later, including the so-called ICI (Internal Control Index; see Duttweiler 1984), which is the most widely used instrument today. These instruments have been used to study differences in the locus of control between individuals and groups. One result of these studies, which is particularly relevant to our topic, has been the demonstration of differences in the locus of control that exist between representatives of different cultures (Berry et al. 2011). Thus several studies have demonstrated that white Americans on average have a more internal locus of control than Afro-Americans and several groups of Native Americans. Differences in the average locus of control have also been reported to exist between Americans and Mexicans (Dyal 1984). Therefore, culture is definitely an important factor influencing a person’s locus of control.

Locus of control studies were quite popular in the 1970s and in the first half of the 1980s, but have almost stopped since the early 1990s. They have been replaced by stud-
ies of the so-called attribution or explanatory style. This concept came from the so-called learned helplessness theory of Martin Seligman (Peterson et al. 1993). Being itself a development of the locus of control theory, the learned helplessness theory focuses not on the extent to which a person believes he or she can control any kind of event, but rather on the extent he or she believes he can control events with a positive affect in comparison to those with a negative affect (Peterson and Seligman 1985; Robins and Hayes 1995). The reason for this switch of focus was the discovery made by Seligman in the middle of the 1970s that, in most people, beliefs about the extent of control exercised over positive and over negative events differ (Seligman 1978; Peterson and Seligman 1985). Thus the majority of people believe that events that affect them positively occur more often due to their own behaviour and personality traits (i.e. for internal reasons). In contrast, negative events are more often attributed to external reasons beyond the actor’s control. This difference in attribution came to be known as “self-serving attributional bias” (Miller 1978; Miller and Ross 1975). Just as with the locus of control, this bias has been shown to differ in size between people and groups giving rise to differences in their so-called attribution (or explanatory) styles (Peterson et al. 1995). Thus, there are people who do not have this bias (or have zero bias, as theorists would put it), which means they believe that their ability to control positive and negative events occurring to them is equal. Such people have been termed “attribution realists” or people with “realistic attribution styles” (Robins and Hayes 1995). There are also people who have negative self-serving bias, which means that they believe that positive events more often occur to them due to chance, while negative events are more likely to be a result of their own actions and personality traits. These people are termed “attribution pessimists” (ibid.). Most people have the self-serving attribution bias to a certain extent: they are attribution optimists to different degrees. It should be added that in the most developed form of the learned helplessness theory, the attribution style is based not on the single dimension of internality/externality of control, but on three dimensions (Buchanan and Seligman 1995).

Apart from the internality/externality dimension, there are stability and globality dimensions. Stability refers to the degree a person believes the same events, weather positive or negative, would happen again for the same reasons. Globality refers to the range of events that, as the person believes, can be caused by the same internal or external factor (Peterson et al. 1993; Bentall 2004). The so-called ASQ (Attribution Style Questionnaire; see Peterson et al. 1982), the main instrument psychologists use to assess personal attribution style, measures personal scores on all these three dimensions separately for positive and negative events. Then the mean scores for the three dimensions are summed separately for positive and negative events and the combined score for negative events is subtracted from that for positive events. The size of the self-serving attribution bias obtained in this way has been found to be a good predictor of a range of important medical and social phenomena including the probability of clinical and sub-clinical depression (Peterson and Seligman 1985; Ruehman et al. 1985; Robins 1988; Robins and Hayes 1995), the probability of cardiovascular disease (Peterson 1995), and, which is important, alcohol consumption (Dowd et al. 1986; Finn and Pihl 1987) and suicide (Peterson 1995). The attribution style, which also varies not only between people but also between cultural groups (Oettingen 1995), has been found to be a much better predictor of these disasters than the locus of control. Hence many modern researchers
believe that the locus of control theory is outdated and rarely invoke the concept when analysing their data.

RESPONSIBILITY AND LOCUS OF CONTROL AMONG TAZ NENETS

In 2010, the author of this paper performed comparative research on attribution style among Russian, Nenets and Komi teenagers living in the town of Tazovsky, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and in the city of Syktyvkar, Komi Republic. In that study, the Attribution Style Questionnaire was used to assess the attribution styles of the three groups of children aged between 14 and 15: a group of non-indigenous, Russian-speaking and mainly Russian by identity children who attend the Tazovsky secondary school; a group of Nenets children who attend the Tazovsky boarding school for children from nomadic families; and a group of Komi children who live in two orphanages and one boarding school in the city of Syktyvkar. The details and the results of the study have been published in Russian (Istomin 2011) as well as in English (Istomin 2012). It would be enough to say here that Nenets children have been found to possess a significantly flatter attribution style (their mean self-serving bias was significantly lower) than both Russian and Komi children (Figure 1). This difference could not be explained by factors relating to the physical environment since these factors were similar for Russian and Nenets children. This difference could not be explained by factors relating to the immediate social situation (for example living in a boarding school without parents, living in a new and strange cultural milieu, having a low social status) either. Indeed, Komi children were in a rather similar immediate social situation as the Nenets children, if not worse, since some of them were orphans – although essentially their attribution style did not differ from that of Russian children from Tazovsky. Therefore, cultural reasons for the attribution style differences had to be suspected. On the other hand, the flat attribution style is known to be associated with increased risks of alcoholism and suicide, which could explain the higher rate of these social disasters among the Nenets.

However the comparative data collected in that study showed yet another difference between the Nenets children on one hand and Russian and Komi children on the other. This difference was not discussed in the publications, but can easily be seen in the same Figure 1 showing the combined scores – internality+stability+globality – of each of the three groups separately for positive and for negative events. On this graph, the lines connecting the positive events score with the negative events score for each group represent a good way to see the size of the self-serving attribution biases, i.e. the attribution styles of the group. For the three groups, the lines make slopes descending to the right, which shows that the groups have self-serving biases. It is easy to see that the slope of the Nenets is smaller (i.e. their attribution style is flatter) than those of the other two groups, a fact that has been presented in the publication as the main finding of the study. It is also easy to see, however, that the Nenets’ line is also situated much lower than the lines of the other two groups, which suggests that Nenets attribute fewer internal, fewer global and fewer stable reasons to all kinds of events that happen to them, irrespective of whether these are positive or negative. This conclusion is further supported by a comparative analysis of the dimensions: on all three dimensions, the mean scores of Nenets were from 1 to 1.5 points lower than those of Komi and Russians.
From the viewpoint of attribution style theory, these findings are of little consequence because, as this theory suggests, it is only the self-serving bias, for example the difference between attributions made for positive and for negative events, which matters. However, from the viewpoint of the older locus of control theory these findings are completely essential because they obviously suggest that Nenets children have a more external locus of control in comparison to both Komi and Russian children.

The main reason these findings were not properly discussed in previous publications was that it is rather unclear what they can mean in relation to alcohol/suicide studies. Indeed, as mentioned above, the locus of control turned out to be a rather poor predictor of behaviour or any significant personality characteristic. The single exception is reportedly the subjective feeling of self-efficiency: the more internal is one’s locus of control, the more one is inclined to believe that he or she can make a difference (Judge et al. 2002). However, as was argued in the previous paragraph of this paper, there should be a direct relationship between the locus of control and the notion of responsibility as
a cultural factor. Indeed, in order to hold someone, including oneself, responsible for any act or state of affairs, one should believe that this person has or had a certain degree of control over this act or state of affairs. Indeed, one possibility to explain the flat attribution style among Nenets could have been a reference to a particularly acute sense of responsibility among Nenets. Indeed, it could have been suggested that the Nenets, whose way of life includes everyday struggle alone or in small groups with negative factors of the natural and social environment, should feel more personal responsibility for negative events happening to them or to their families. Hence the small self-serving bias that leads to alcoholism and suicide. This theory is very appealing, although unfortunately the low scores of Nenets in all the three dimensions suggest a very different story. It can be noted, that the Nenets children’s scores for negative events are rather similar to those of Russian and Komi, in fact a little bit lower than theirs. Therefore Nenets do not seem to be more inclined to take responsibility for negative events in comparison to the other groups. What makes Nenets really different is that they, it seems, do not praise themselves for the positive events that happen to them, but rather ascribe these events to chance or luck. However, the best way to interpret the data would be to conclude that Nenets take surprisingly little responsibility for both positive and negative events, ascribing them more to chance and situation and believing – as both logic and their low score on stability and globality suggest – that both negative and positive events rarely happen again for the same reasons and that reasons are usually specific and particular, causing few very particular events each. In our comparative study, this fatalistic attitude has just been more visible in the case of positive events due to the persistent tendency of the other groups to give very internal, stable and global reasons to them. But the attitude itself is fairly general.

Indeed, it seems that this fatalistic attitude and the refusal to take or ascribe responsibility can, in fact, be observed among Nenets even directly, without any help of specific quantitative questionnaires. It could be sensed particularly strongly in Nenets informants when the author discussed the topics of alcoholism and suicide with them. The tendency to attribute the causes to alcohol-related events externally is so strong in fact, that it can be detected even on the level of language. Thus, when speaking Russian, Nenets clearly avoid the very famous and colourful Russian expression *uyti v zapoy* (‘to go into binge drinking’). Instead, they prefer passive constructions, among which the most popular is *s nim sluchilsya zapoy* (‘the binge drinking episode happened to him’) as well as a very strange expression *mne vyviloś* (literally ‘it drunk to me’), which is profoundly ungrammatical even for Russian. When speaking about suicide, relying completely on the passive voice is difficult because this would not describe the essence of the event adequately. However, even in this case the Nenets have found a way. For Nenets, the usual way to describe a case of suicide in Russian would be *yego perekleinilo i on strel’nul sebya*. It is very difficult to translate this phrase adequately into English, particularly because, as the author suspects, the Nenets themselves would not be able to explain what the word *perekleinilo* would mean here. I suspect, that the sole function of this verb is to designate that in the following clause, for example ‘he shot himself down’, the actor did not have control over his actions and, therefore, cannot be blamed. In Nenets, the difference between active and passive voices, especially when one refers to the third person, is not quite clear, which, of course, makes the denial of control easier and less visible.
The denial of control becomes even more obvious when we switch from the way of speaking to the actual things spoken. It should be mentioned first of all that the concepts of good and bad lack, which, as often happens in cultures worldwide, are closely related to the concepts of sacral purity/impurity (see Douglas 1968), play very important roles in the everyday life of the Nenets (Khomich 1995; Kharyuchi 2001). Thus diseases, loss of reindeer, bad lack in fishing and hunting as well as most other negative events are believed to happen to a person because of an accumulation of sa’mej, sacral impurity, which, according to some researchers represent the central concept of Nenets culture determining the everyday life of the people (Lyarskaya 2005: 324; see also Lyarskaya 1999). The sa’mej can be accumulated by breaching social norms and taboos, showing disrespect of any sort towards the dead, misbehaving in sacred sites, being near a halmer (surface tomb of a dead person) during the night or after midday, having any kind of sexual intercourse, and by touching sa’mej substances, most notably menstrual blood and the flesh of a dead human, as well as anything that was in contact with these substances (for example the clothes a women wears during menstruation, women’s sledge, the clothes of a dead person, his or her sledge, hides that person was laying on, etc.). Although both people and material items can be cleansed of sa’mej by the means of special rituals, these rituals usually involve valuable and difficult-to-obtain substances (for example beaver hair and/or testicles) as well as taking time; therefore, they cannot be performed too often. Therefore, some accumulation of sa’mej is in practice unavoidable. Nenets seem to believe that the more sa’mej one accumulates, the less effective become one’s attempts to avoid negative events and create positive events in one’s life. Finally, with a certain accumulation of the sa’mej, negative events start to happen automatically, irrespective of what one does to prevent them. On the other hand, a high degree of purity ensures positive events and good luck, which come by themselves, without much effort to attract them.

In the light of this description, the attitude of the Nenets towards suicide and alcoholism seems to be quite logical. Thus, Nenets prefer not to discuss the topic of suicide at all, which is rather understandable taking into account that death and all dead things are sa’mej. However, the refusal to discuss suicide goes even further then a simple aversion to the topic of death. Thus Nenets informants uniformly refused to consider the reasons for a person’s suicide. Unfortunately, like probably any anthropologist who has worked among native northerners, the author has quite a history of being informed about people he knows committing suicide. On each occasion, his first reaction to the information was “Oh my god, why?”; which is, probably, quite natural for any non-native. However, in every single case the reply the Nenets gave to this question was the same: Pereklínilo naverno, and they always tried to demonstrate that any further discussion of the topic would be out of place as far as they are concerned. A proposal that the suicide could be a reaction to someone’s behaviour or attitude and, therefore, that someone could be responsible for it was usually rejected almost with disgust.

Understandably, the topic of alcoholism was much easier to discuss and, therefore, the examples of fatalistic attitudes towards it are more numerous. “The weather is good, he will be back by the day after tomorrow if a binge drinking episode does not happen to him” (Pogoda khoroshaya, poslezavatra vernet’sya, yesli yemu ne zap’yet’sya) – this is what reindeer herders would often say about someone who has just left to a village or gone to a neighbouring brigade. “I was going to be back in one day, but suddenly a binge drink-
ing episode happened to me” – that is how a herder would often start a story – usually a sad one – that has happened to him in a village. All these phrases and statements have a distinct scent of helplessness, the implication that a person lacks any control over his drinking behaviour, that drinking just happens to him. During the fieldwork I encountered only very few instances when someone was held responsible for his or her drinking behaviour, although even these instances usually only supported the rule. Thus, once the author was told a story about a herder who gave up drinking after being ‘coded’ (treated for alcoholism by the means of hypnosis) in the village. After becoming a non-drinker, this herder became very greedy for money and started several business projects. One of them consisted in bringing vodka to the tundra and selling it to herd- ers for inflated prices. However, a little bit later the herder was suddenly ‘de-coded’ and had a particularly long and heavy binge-drinking episode, which cost him a large part of his property. Thus during this episode he slaughtered most of his reindeer to give meat to his new friends – Russian businessmen – whom he asked to bring him vodka in return. The narrator said, that this drinking episode was just a punishment to the herder for his previous greed and particularly for his selling vodka in the tundra to other herd- ers, which clearly was sa’mej. The herder brought this misfortune upon himself and, therefore, was responsible for it. This was a punishment the herder deserved but did not want – a fate he could not avoid.

**CONCLUSIONS: LOCUS OF CONTROL AND THE ATTRIBUTION STYLE**

It would be appropriate to ask why this kind of strong fatalism – or the external locus of control – is present among Nenets. This question has not yet been addressed empirically and any attempt to give a reply to it would involve a certain degree of speculation. There can be little doubt that the external locus of control is related to the system of beliefs about luck and sa’mej described briefly in the previous paragraph. However, the exact character of this relationship is not clear: although it is possible that the beliefs about luck and sa’mej contribute to the formation of the external locus of control, it is also possible that it is the external locus of control that gives rise to these beliefs. What is more likely, however, is that this relationship is mutual as is the case with many other cognitive phenomena: the beliefs in sa’mej contribute to the externalisation of the locus of control, while the more external locus of control contribute to the deepening and spread of sa’mej beliefs. In any case, however, since cultural phenomena cannot cause themselves, the specific beliefs can only be the proximate cause of the external locus of control, not the ultimate cause.

It can be cautiously supposed that the highly external locus of control can be related to the flat attribution style that has been observed among Nenets (Istomin 2011; 2012). Indeed, the flat attribution style of Nenets actually means that the negative events cause more stress to them, which can easily lead them to hypodepression, and then to sub-clinical and clinical depression, and cause higher risk of suicide and alcoholism. For anyone who has an attribution style of this kind, it can indeed be a good idea to keep the locus of control as external as possible. A tendency to attribute external, unstable and local reasons to both positive and negative events decrease the psychological effects of
all events and, therefore, mediates the impact of the small difference between positive and negative attributions. Therefore, the external locus of control can be a psychological mechanism to compensate for the flat attribution style. The other possibility can be that the flat attribution style as observed in the study of 2010 (see Istomin 2011; 2012) can be a consequence of, rather than a reason for, the external locus of control. Indeed, given the general difference in the locus of control, the difference in the self-serving attribution bias between the groups can be a measurement artefact. To make it clearer, let’s take an analogue: the difference in size between, let’s say, an ant and a mouse is a dozen centimetres. The difference in size between a men and an elephant, on the other hand, amounts to several metres. Does this mean that the difference in size between a man and an elephant is bigger than that between an ant and a mouse? Yes if we are speaking about absolute numbers. No if we are speaking about relative sizes. In fact, the difference between the mouse and the ant is relatively larger. The same can be true here: although the self-serving biases of Komi and Russians are bigger in absolute numbers, the self-serving bias of the Nenets can be just as big if their general tendency to ascribe reasons to external factors is taken in consideration. Seligman, the author of the attribution style theory would decline this idea – he seems to believe that this is an absolute rather than a relative difference between the positive and the negative attributions that predicts the behavioural and psychological effects. However in fact there is nothing in his theory that would justify such a belief. Just the contrary in fact, it seems that the general design of the theory would suggest exactly the opposite: it should be the internality, stability and globality of positive attributions relative to the externality, stability and globality of the negative attribution that would predict learned helplessness. The smaller is the latter, the smaller the former can be and the smaller should be the difference between the two in order to lead to the same psychological effects.

Whatever the reasons are, the external locus of control is probably responsible for a number of phenomena in Nenets society – some of them are negative and others are positive. Thus it is intuitively obvious that the denial of personal responsibility greatly decreases the effectiveness of both personal and social moral control and motivation. Indeed, it hardly makes any sense to explain how alcoholism is morally disgusting and devastating for heath to someone who does not in fact believe that it is up to him or her to choose between drinking and not drinking. Of course, a society that believes alcoholism and suicides just happen to people would hardly press on its members to avoid these disasters. Finally, the low perceived self-effectiveness that is associated with external locus of control is generally not a good thing in modern society. On the other hand, there are positive aspects as well. The certain resistance to stress has already been mentioned. The other thing is sensitivity to external influences on health. People who believe that things just happen to them can also be easily assured that they can cease to happen. It can be supposed that the good effects of the anti-alcohol coding in the case of the Nenets can be somehow related to this fact.


ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION PRACTICES IN THE KORYAK COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT
The article* is dedicated to the analysis of alcohol consumption practices within the Koryak ethno-cultural community. The aim of the article is to understand how the reasons for alcohol consumption are explained within the framework of the community. The analysis is based on the ideas of Durkheim’s social theory. The author of the article claims that the practice of consuming alcohol is essentially connected with the more archaic practice of mushroom consumption since both have a grounding in the Koryak perception of the world. The analysed models of behaviour stem from appropriate Koryak epistemology and ontology, which themselves are based on the notion of the ‘other world’ and communication with supernatural entities (spirits). The isomorphism of consuming alcohol and amanita intoxication reflects the inner core of this connection: the Koryak believe that an entity enters the human body and controls their actions. The transition from one type of intoxication to another is accompanied by drastic transformation of the materiality of the consumed product, which, in turn, leads towards social transformations. Such social changes are qualified as anomie by the author of the article. The visual materiality of the amanita mushroom dictated its symbolic anthropomorphism and creation of special rules for the treatment (amanita codex). The physical amorphousness of vodka does not imply the same intellectual work. The author claims that this factor was one of the reasons why the Koryak do not have social regulations about vodka consumption – which leads to mass alcoholism. It is possible that indigenous communities have difficulties in working out the required social regulations because of the complexities surrounding the non-utilitarian treatment of the unusual materiality of vodka.

KEYWORDS: the Koryak; other world; supernatural entities; alcohol; amanita mushroom; sacredness; social factors; material features.

* I thank Aimar Ventsel for inviting me to the Arctic Workshop at the University of Tartu. I am sincerely grateful to Igor’ Yevgen’evich Vorobey for his help in writing the article and sharing his fieldwork materials, pictures and archive notes. I thank my son Dmitry Zhukov for the English translation of the article. This study was prepared with the support of the grant of the Russian Foundation for Humanities (project RFH 15-41-93032).
INTRODUCTION

This article is dedicated to the analysis of alcohol consumption practices within Koryak ethno-cultural community. The aim of the analysis is to understand how the reasons for alcohol consumption are explained within the framework of the community. A field case attracted my attention to this topic more than ten years ago, although the detailed research started later, when I prepared my presentation for the Arctic Workshop at the University of Tartu, titled Responsibility and Authority in Drinking, held on May 30–31, 2014.

During the research period, I found matters that persuaded me to move beyond the limits of the contemporary sociocultural context and study this topic from a historical perspective. I saw how bizarrely the indigenous people perceive their behaviour to be when under the influence of alcohol for the first time in summer 2002 when I travelled from Evensk to Gizhiga village in a tractor trailer. A group of Gizhiga inhabitants (gizhigintsy) consisting of Even, Koryak and Kamchadal men also headed to the village. On the way they drank some vodka, began to swagger and then, in response to my protests, one of the natives said: “This is not me acting, this is the vodka in me acting”. That was pronounced with full gravity, although with a sense of shame for such bad, ‘not-his’, behaviour. That case led me to the conclusion that the natives in this area perceive the person’s unusual behaviour as an intervention of an outside power. It is noteworthy that this external power is individual for every human being. It seems as though an entity from outside, corresponding with the situation, enters the person’s body for a while to control his or her thoughts and actions.

According to the Koryak idea, the world is inhabited by various spirits and a human being is attacked by an evil spirit they call a ninvit. When realising the presence of an external entity in the body, the owner of the body does not fight the temporary suppression of personality and does not dispute the right to give or, it would be better to say, share the soul with the temporary guest. The person is practically split apart in his or her own feelings and fixes this ambivalent status by any means possible. It is significant that other aborigines do not criticise such abnormal behaviour, considering it quite legitimate.

Carrying out periodic fieldwork in Severo-Evenskiy district I encountered such explanations of the drunkenness in the indigenous people themselves. Beyond this, my attention was caught by the communal refusals of alcoholic and narcotic substances (tobacco, spirits) that have taken place among the Koryak people of the Magadan region in the last decades. This refusal was inspired by their conversion to the Protestantism and membership of the Pentecostal church. My fieldwork focused on the western group of Koryak people living in the Magadan region. I also use the archive material and literature regarding Koryak people found in different regions of Kamchatka.

The following sources are used as a basis for the research: texts (archive documents and publications); oral information (interviews); and data gathered during the fieldwork. The last two sources cover the contemporary period, while the texts bring to us events of different periods, giving this research chronological depth.

I will use Emile Durkheim’s (1964 [1895]) social factor theory. According to Durkheim, behavioural rules, shared by a community, possess binding force and do not depend on individual attitudes) for a theoretical explanation of alcohol consumption practice amongst Koryaks. Durkheim considers social factors as evolving through time,
transforming into other forms but not losing their essential features. The social factors statement allows us to believe that consumption of alcoholic beverages is essentially tied with the more archaic practice of amanita mushroom narcotisation since both practices have an explanation in the Koryak worldview. With the help of archive documents and field materials I will illustrate how the abovementioned behaviour models come from appropriate Koryak epistemology and ontology, and are connected to immanent ideas of the other world and communication with supernatural entities (spirits).

The central idea of Durkheim’s social theory is the statement about sacral phenomena being perceived as universal, inseparably associated with any society (Durkheim 1965 [1915]). Sacred beliefs, according to Durkheim, are always rational because they appeal not to the natural but to the social world. Durkheim differentiates between materialistic and non-materialistic social factors. The former are backed up with existent material infrastructure while the latter are products of collective symbolic activity. I want to show that the switching from eating amanita to drinking vodka was accompanied by a qualitative change in the physical characteristics of the toxic substance. This was an important reason for changes in the social regulations of narcotisation practices.

Koryaks have strict rules, and accepted ways, of reflection about men’s behaviour under amanitas. Society recognises the right for only particular people to eat mushrooms, however episodically anyone can eat amanita. I assume that the efficiency of social control over this practice is determined by the material and visual persuasiveness of amanita activity, which presents itself as an entity absolutely equivalent to human. According to the Koryak and Chukchi people, amanitas gather into communities like humans and have their own will, expressed during communication with humans (Bogoraz 1939: 5). According to this, material existence of amanitas and their imagined personality strongly back up the efficiency of social sanctions.

At the same time, vodka drinking does not involve any significant reflection within Koryak society since the amorphousness of the physical beverage obstructs any symbolism that could lead to the creation of social norms. Although the Koryaks have been familiar with vodka for more than three centuries, their cultural perception of alcohol remains very simple and does not go beyond the point of recognition of its spiritual power. From this perspective, alcohol consumption amongst Koryaks can be classified as anomia, based on an asymmetry between its consumption and its intellectual perception within the framework of the traditional Koryak worldview. In the final part of this study I shall deal with the fact that Protestant (Pentecostal) missions amongst the Koryak appear to be a significant force in the regulation of alcohol consumption.

**THE ONTOLOGICAL AND COGNITIVE BACKGROUND FOR HALLUCINOGENIC PRACTICES**

It is necessary to underline how the identification of non-material entities is absolutely normal, natural, and, to a certain degree, operational for the Koryak. Moreover, the association of sacred and social matters, theoretically grounded by Durkheim, points to the importance of communication with the other world for the indigenous people. The meaning of this communication goes beyond the individual spiritual area and is projected onto the wider range of social facts.
I would like to demonstrate that Koryak hallucinogenic practices conceal models of behaviour that are strongly connected with their intercommunication with the non-material world and have a solid ground in religious ideas and views. However, the development of religious ideas is, in turn, related to the comprehension of observed natural phenomena, which are approached rationally, by intuition or through altered states of consciousness. Researchers claim that the absence of a clear natural ontology restricts development of religion drastically (Boyer 1994). The coherence of ideas about both the non-material and material worlds secures a cognitive optimum in society that is favourable for the maintenance of social order.

The Koryak worldview includes the following basic ideas: 1) the existence of other worlds; 2) these other worlds are inhabited by spiritual entities; 3) the Earth world and other worlds can interpenetrate. The Koryaks personalise the spiritual entities, determine a hierarchy, and assign moral qualities among them (kind and evil spirits). Many literary sources are dedicated to this issue (Antropova 1976; Vdovin 1979; Lebedev and Simchenko 1983; Gurvich 1987). Unpublished manuscripts by Konstantin Ivanovich Bauerman² shed some extra light on this problem. Here is an excerpt from his notes:

They think of a soul as of a bodiless though very mobile shadow, like a breath, like a spirit. Parenetsy³ believe that when they are asleep, their souls, alter egos, leave their bodies. However, sometimes the soul can stay within the body. [...] And all that is seen and told in a dream the parenets imagines as being real and feasible. [...] When a man dies, his soul continues to live. It just abandons the dead shell and travels to the Pynennelo – the place where all parenets’ souls dwell. [...] they also know a whole host of gods. Some of them are prime, others are inferior, some of them are kind to a parenets, others are mean and try to harm people.

The main kind divinity that always lives in heaven (or, as a parenets said, “in a light”) is Edna. His helpers in heaven are Kagytelan and Kun’yailatyllaan. [...] the evil divinity is called Toienyultynyllaan – a devil who always lives on Earth whose helper is Ningvingysnen (also known as Kamak). The latter is kind of a fetish among the parenets and is a worn on clothes by children, men and women. [...] Should a Koryak have a bad dream, he sacrifices a dog to the spirit that talked to him in the dream. Should a parenets feel better after a long illness, he sacrifices a dog to the glory of the god who removed the evil spirit. (GARF F. P-3977, l. 1, f. 448, pp. 14v, 15, 15v)

Hence the Koryak admit the power of spirits to enter a person’s inner space for a short (dream) or for a long (illness) period. Acceptance of such spiritual power is a characteristic feature of the Koryak worldview even today. However, the Koryak do not formulate their ideas neatly, but rather these ideas are manifested by their ceremonies and everyday behaviour.

I now focus on some significant points that characterise the religious worldview of the Koryak people. First of all, the Koryak views on evil spirits are ambivalent. For example, one can point to Ningvingysnen, the harmful entity whose name has become generic – the Koryak call all evil spirits ninvit (Stebnitskiy 1930: 42). At the same time the Koryak also believe in Kamak, the spirit defender against evil, whose image is worn on clothes for protection.⁴ Hence evil is not absolute and different spirits are related to it in various ways (Jochelson 1905: 30, 35; Antropova 1976). Thus, representatives of the
other world cannot be unambiguously determined as good or bad (kind or evil). Simple and final determination does not correspond with Koryak beliefs because inversion and simultaneous recognition of oppositional features is possible in their worldview. Accordingly, the Koryak do not evaluate or label the entity that comes from amanita or vodka consumption unanimously as kind or evil.

Secondly, the Koryak do not perceive death as something evil or as a punishment but only as a transition (Vdovin 1979: 90). The Koryak believe that the departed person will be reborn in descendants, i.e. they believe in the circle of life. The Koryak sincerely see their departed ancestors in their children. This is proved by the ceremony of giving names (Orlova 1929: 93; Dedyk 2006), rituals that are held today as well (Kurebito 2008). This leads to the fascinatingly calm attitude of Koryak people to death. Scientific evidence concerning the harmful influence of narcotic substances thus has little impact on Koryak practices of amanita mushrooms and alcohol consumption.

Thirdly, the Koryak believe that spirits act as active social agents. Spirits are often considered to interact with each other, but they also fight against their own kind. This can be most vividly illustrated in actions related to amulets. According to the Koryak, amulets can enlarge themselves for better effect during a fight or turn into traps. The fight between spirits can happen in secrecy, for example, during human illness. To control such contact the Koryak adopted a set of special rules that include mushroom eating (amanita codex).

Finally, the fact is that such a set of rules leads to the development of consensus in society, which is maintained because the comprehension of certain events contributes to a common Koryak worldview. This is why the Koryak people pay significant attention to daily situations – every once in a while the Koryak reveal their sacral side. Sacralisation of the environment is always object-oriented. A man can discover a sacred object in the surrounding environment during unusual situations, yet according to Koryaks the object presented itself. Such an appearance is a signal from a supernatural power. Sacral object can be manufactured if a man gets instructions while being in altered state of consciousness (for instance during a dream). This is why Koryak culture is rich in different amulets: forks, wooden dog figures, soft dolls, stones, buttons, bead roses, etc. (Khakhovskaya 2014; see Photo 1). So, the nature of sacral matters is connected with individualisation of objects and events.

Due to the cognitive selectivity of the perception of nature and transcendent phenomena the Koryak associate their lives with a coordinate system that is different to that adopted by the non-indigenous inhabitants of the region. They invest the world with categories that they have becomes used to and that are reflected in the practices of amanita mushroom and alcohol consumption.
KORYAK AMANITA MUSHROOMS PRACTICES

The usage of hallucinogenic mushrooms implies a collectively experienced approach to the world and a mastery of social control over people’s behaviour. The condition of man that is under narcotic effect (in local expression, “under amanitas”) was explained as a connection with the other world and spiritual beings. According to such beliefs, a person’s behaviour as they prepare to eat mushrooms was treated as a special code where the amanita itself set the rules. Some points of that code could vary, but ethnographic evidence proves its imperative character for the Koryak (Vereshchaka 2014).

The Koryak believed in the spiritual power of the amanita mushroom and how it controlled people’s behaviour. A member of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, Dina Lazarevna Brodskaya-Jochelson, wrote about such a situation (the record is dated November 8, 1900, the location was the Koryak village Kamenskoe, in Gzhigiskii Okrug):

[…] a lot of reindeer Koryak arrived, Chukchi are here, as well as one Lamut. […] all guests along with the hosts are under amanitas. […] Igei is under amanitas too. His hands are shaking, eyes are shining unnaturally; he is seeing things; he walks, speaks and nods off repeatedly and beats the drum. Amanita tells him what to do.
When under amanitas, people are not responsible for their actions, amanita is in charge and all the things people imagine while intoxicated are shown by the amanita. (AIVR F. 23, l. 2, f. 129, pp. 5v, 6)

Anthropologist Il’ya Samuilovich Gurvich recorded in his diary Koryak Ivan Stepanovich Tayn’v’s opinion about the effect of the mushroom effect (dated July 20, 1969; Achayvayam village, Olytor rayon, Koryak okrug): “A man who eats amanita becomes very strong. Amanita tricks him (hallucinations). The man does not feel tired or predict future.” (AIEA F. 44, l. 7, f. 1109, p. 25) I suppose this opinion reflects long experience of mushroom consumption. According to the images of human-shaped amanitas in the Pegtymel petroglyphs (Chukotka), indigenous people of the Siberian Far East have been familiar with effects of the mushrooms for at least one thousand years (Dikov 1971: 36–50). Perhaps, because of such a long period and collected experiences, the Koryak are able to intellectually comprehend their condition during amanita intoxication and create a set of spiritual rules for communication with the mushroom.

According to the indigenous inhabitants of the Siberian Far East, the amanita mushroom is personified as supernatural, but tangible, matter with synthetic morphology (with both human and mushroom features). The physical features of the mushroom generate bright visual associations and mental interpretations since it has a specific shape, bright colour and thick structure. Hallucinations induced by eating amanita supposedly express the pictures of body contact with the mushroom. As a result, the Koryak think that the amanita is equal to humans because it has an anthropomorphic figure and acts like a partner. These ideas have visual expression – on the rocks of Pegtymel there are images of couples consisting of a human and human-shaped amanita holding hands (Dikov 1971: 26).

It is believed that the spirit of the amanita can replace the human spirit, that is why people identify themselves with the mushroom when under amanita. For example, once Atkin, a Koryak, was drying amanitas, placing them on open spaces and covering them with twigs. When the mushrooms were dry, Atkin ate them, then lay down and covered himself with the tree branches. His behaviour had somehow gained features of the amanita mushroom. Other similar cases are reported by other researches (see also Bogoraz 1991: 141).

Communication with the mushroom is enjoyable and beneficial. The mushroom endows one with extraordinary powers that are hard or impossible to gain in other ways. One gets access to secret knowledge, becomes strong and agile. Witnesses say that under amanita people begin to climb trees “like squirrels”, walk on smouldering bonfire coals with no harm, and that they “fly” and “see” things in other places and times.

This partnership between human and amanita had existed for centuries, fulfilling two basic social needs: prediction of the future and facilitation of hard work. The circle of people with rights to eat amanita is strongly limited to those who possess sacred knowledge (shamans and their helpers, i.e. mainly older men) and those who carry out hard work like hide tanning, transportation of heavy loads or searching for reindeer. This, however, does not mean that no one else may eat mushrooms on special occasions, for example, holidays.

In parallel to this, the effect of this hallucinogenic mushroom is considered dangerous. In the view of the native people, this danger is connected with the mushroom’s...
ability to trick, punish or even kill using the power of its own will. Amanita is such a sophisticated organism that it can have servants among the spirits acting on its behalf. These spirits, like the mushroom, have a material appearance, and the effectiveness as a punishment measure is fully accepted by the Koryak people. It is impossible to predict or prevent such events – all is a game of odds. For instance, one Koryak informant told of how, as far as he could remember, three male Koryaks and one female Chukchi died after they ate amanita. The informant himself nearly died too. According to him, he ate mushrooms one by one with no effect and all of a sudden everything went black for him. The Koryaks consider that spirits living in the mushroom as worms can kill people (Iokhel’son 1997: 114). Such a case is described by Brodskaya-Jochelson (the record is dated November, 8, 1900, location: Kamenskoye village):

Last year one Koryak man ate ten mushrooms at a time with no effect, but when he ate another one, he staggered, threw up and died instantly. Petr [a Cossack from Gizhiga] was a witness and said afterwards that his vomit consisted of live worms that swarmed; […] Petr expressed it this way: “These worms killed him and left him”. (AIVR F. 23, l. 2, f. 129, pp. 5v, 6).
Field materials and research show that the Koryak continue to prepare and eat amanitas (photos 2 and 3). Amanita practices involve the association of sacred and social matters that can be treated, according to Durkheim (1965 [1915]), as universal features of religious life. The experiences of people who eat mushrooms on a regular basis becomes the property of the whole community that shares the same ideas about supernatural entities within material objects. Metaphysically amanita is considered a visitor from the other world, providing the opportunity to go beyond daily experience. The Koryak assume that the nature of the amanita is identical to human nature, but this anthropomorphised mushroom is quite a contradictory creature for them: on the one hand, it is a helper, partner and cheerful mate, on the other a tricky deceiver. A specific dynamics of amanita consumption is stipulated by the fact that mushrooms are used not only for spiritual purposes, but also for stimulation (hard work). Koryak society controls the practice, emphasising specific social categories that have permission to eat amanitas. Alcohol drinking practices, in turn, do not have any elaborated reflection and social control in Koryak society.

It is not fully known how alcohol entered Koryak culture. However, on thing is obvious, the spread of alcohol was a side effect of the indigenous group’s contact with European culture, which happened in two ways: trading (barter) and treat. The tradition of drinking alcohol was accompanied by hierarchy building within the indigenous communities. Russian authorities put some people in charge among the aborigines. They had certain titles: prince, captain, steward (knyazets, starosta, starshina). These people were in trading relationships with the Russian administration.

Igor’ Yevgen’evich Vorobey found documents that fixed an event at which the Chukchi drank vodka for the first time. This was on March 4, 1778 (according to the Julian calendar) in the town of Gizhiginsk, where a protocol was signed. Since then the Chukchi have been subjects of the Russian Empire. The Chukchi were represented by their chief (toyon) Amulyat Khergyntov. Due to this occasion a thankful prayer was performed along with a cheerful event with music, dancing, drinking and cannon-fire. The Koryak chiefs were there as well. According to the document, the Koryak already had some experience of vodka drinking, so they were not allowed to drink much for security reasons (RGADA F. 199, no. 539, l. 2, f. 6, pp. 1, 14, 14v). For instance, on March 23, 1778 the Koryak chief Muykegi Engilin was “drunk as hell” and started a fight with Koryak Nutela Ivilin next to the eastern gates of Gizhiginsk town (RGVIA F. 14808, l. 1, f. 73, p. 2v). The Captains of Gizhiga fortress did not allow Koryaks to drink much in order to stop them doing anything bad when drunk (RGADA F. 199, no. 539, l. 2, f. 6, pp. 1, 14, 14v).

By the end of the 18th century alcohol became a regular part of Koryak and Chukchi life. Karl Merk reported his observations in 1791: “The Koryak people call vodka Acha-Mitill (‘bad water’), though they will learn to love it soon” (Merk 1978: 143). However, only a limited circle of Koryak clan elders drank alcohol.

At the beginning of intercultural and interethnic dialogue between the native people and Europeans, alcohol was consumed only by the upper classes of indigenous society. Since the product was not familiar to the majority of Koryak people, culture-specific regulations for alcohol consumption were not needed. A hundred years later the situation changed. Indigenous people learnt the taste and effect of alcohol, which changed the core of the practiced narcotisation – Koryaks tried to substitute vodka for mushrooms. According to Vladimir Il’ich Jochelson, Koryaks preferred amanita to vodka at the beginning of the 20th century (Jochelson 1997: 115). However, from the journals of his wife Dina Brodskaya-Jochelson we learn that at the beginning of the 20th century the Koryak valued alcohol highly. Vodka was “the highest thing on the earth” to the Koryak (AIVR F. 23, l. 2, f. 129, p. 14). Here is the passage from her journal from September 28, 1900 (from Kuel’ village):

All [of the Koryak] chew tobacco, even women and children, and happily take it for exchange. The second bait is sugar, but the most valued thing is vodka. They would sell their soul for vodka. If asked what he wants to get for a mask or other artefact, the answer would always be: “Vodka, more vodka, for my head to go round”. (AIVR F. 23, l. 2, f. 128, p. 51v)
It must be clarified that the term mask means gypsum face mask, with which the Koryak parted very reluctantly. In this case vodka was the ultimate reason on the hands of the researchers. One more passage from the journal of Dina Brodskaya-Jochelson from October 30th, 1900 (from Kamenskoye village):

Today Vladimir Il’ich [Jochelson] took a mask from the face of Khagilkhut. He refused. Vladimir Il’ich had to persuade him and he agreed only with “vodka for the head to go round”. [...] They all go crazy about vodka and sell their souls for it. One more passion is eating amanita mushrooms if they get them. (AIVR F. 23, l. 2, f. 128, pp. 89, 89v)

Therefore, vodka was valued more highly than sugar or tobacco and was as popular as amanita mushrooms.

By the beginning of the 1930s, amanita and liquor were equally attractive to the Koryak people. The manager of the Koryak kul’baza (located near Penzhino village, observation time 1930–1931) reported:

Apart from amanita, home-made vodka (brazhka) has great success among the Koryak. They brew it with berries or sugar and flour. Strong alcohol is very familiar to them. The Koryak do take wine as well, but always prefer something from the three above.10 (GARF F. P-3977, l. 1, f. 1112, pp. 124, 125)

In the Soviet period massive alcohol consumption was encouraged by infrastructural availability. The majority of the Koryak settled in villages and towns, where manufactured alcohol or surrogates were available. The ethnographer K. I. Bauerman witnessed how hooch brewing was a common activity among the Koryak of Paren’: “They drink tea with no sugar, because sugar is used for braga or burduk brewing. These beverages are like hooch (samogon) and attract all local people (both Koryak and Russian).” (GARF F. P-3977, l. 1, f. 448, p. 11) Anthropologist I. S. Gurvich worked in the Koryak village of Karaga in 1971 and noticed:

Drinking is a huge problem. Vodka from 10 am to 8 pm. [...] They also drink perfume and after-shave lotion. Vodka is delivered to the village foremost. If there is no vodka, they send complaints to Petropavlovsk or Moscow. [...] Visitors are sent back for boozing; locals must be instructed to improve their behaviour. (AIEA F. 44, l. 7, f. 1116, p. 8)

Researchers have noted some common features in daily consumption of amanita mushrooms and alcohol. Long-lasting narcotisation typical to alcoholics was also witnessed among amanita consumers: “Some eat amanitas for the whole month or even the whole winter and are constantly high” (AIVR F. 23, l. 2, f. 129, pp. 5v, 6). The same with vodka: “The Koryak drank their own urine after drinking vodka to keep up their condition” (Iokhel’son 1997: 114).

Amanita and alcohol function in a similar way in the context of spiritual acts, such as shamanistic rituals and predicting the future. Both shamans and non-shamans perceived intoxication as a contact condition. Nikolay Nikolayevich Beretti (1929: 25) who worked among the Koryak in 1924–1925, wrote:
Once I had to watch one native person who drank a quart of vodka, took off his clothes when it was 20 degrees below zero outside and started to roll on the snow. He made some drunken noise that others treated as predictions of the future.

Vodka and amanita became equal in sacral significance. The Koryak consumed them simultaneously during religious celebrations. Yelizaveta Porfir'yevna Orlova, who worked among the Koryak in 1926–1927, wrote in her field diary: “If the celebration goes on for two or three days, then during both the second and third days they continue to fight, play drums, play cards, drink spirits, eat amanitas. When high, they always talk much and stop only to play a drum.” (GAFR F. P-3977, l. 1, f. 448, p. 117)

Identifying the effects of amanita and alcohol, as noticed by ethnographers, is obvious. Scholars observed primarily the evident features of behaviour and preferences. My research materials also confirm that shifts in consciousness and behaviour brought on by amanita and alcohol are strongly connected and indicate similar worldview settings. In other words, similar spiritual experience are reflected in both practices.

Nevertheless, there are also significant discrepancies in the cognitive and sensual perception of both amanitas and liquor. I presume that the Koryaks were, in some way, defenceless in front of vodka because of its amorphousness and facelessness. Alcohol, despite having a similar effect to amanita mushrooms, has an absolutely different shape – or, to put it another way, it has no shape. Vodka’s material existence is not obvious, especially for aborigines. Vodka is liquid and so does not bring associations to aborigines’ minds. Therefore, in their eyes alcohol is a faceless substance with no characteristics.

The mushroom has a physical form and agency outside the human body. Its nature and subjectivity is projected onto the other world inhabited by amanita’s nation. Amanita’s appearance is always mysterious, situational and exists due only to its own will – the mushroom shows itself on purpose to give orders, sometimes to punish, and sometimes even to kill. In contrast, vodka’s ‘activity’ can be perceived only within the body, when drunk. Culture-specific ideas about alcohol did not appear because of this material intangibility. And for this reason the Koryak experience trouble when attempting to articulate the entrance of the alcohol spirit, except in very common and trivial ideas and analogies.

I presume that the cognitive and sensual aspects described led to a degradation in social norms, and the subsequent anemia had a significant impact on alcohol consumption. In other words, the Koryak social arsenal did not include a proper codex, or spiritual specialists like shamans, who could help in the social treatment of alcohol. Rehabilitation or community influence had little effect in the fight against massive alcohol consumption, which we can still see among the Koryak today. Sometimes alcoholism begins at a very young age so that by the time people are adults, they already have great experience of drinking. For example, one Koryak woman told me: “I quit drinking and smoking when I got married”. The absence of gender and age differentiation in alcohol consumption contrasts with selectivity when it comes to amanita eating – the Koryak consider it unwelcome for youths and women to eat mushrooms. Exceptions were made for those who demonstrated shamanic talents (they could eat amanitas constantly) and for those who carried out hard work (in this case not constantly). Vodka can be substituted for mushrooms in shamanic practice, but does not suit hard work at all.
I argue that the fight against alcohol is unsuccessful partly because of the fact that rational reasons like serious illness or premature death do not have much effect on the Koryaks. Only a few Koryak are afraid of dying (and are taunted by others for this). Since the Koryak do not fear death, life and health are not treated as separate values. One Russian informant expressed the following opinion: “the Koryak value neither their own lives, nor the lives of others”. The Amanita codex was created not to limit illness or mortality, but to regulate relationships with inhabitants of the other world.

This brings us to the issue of Durkheim’s (1965 [1915]) dichotomy, dividing cultural phenomena into sacral and profane. Within the framework of my topic this can be seen as a dichotomy of culturally framed and incomprehensible phenomena, according to a traditional worldview. The efficiency of social control in communities like the Koryak very much depends on the interpretation of the other world, and such thinking is related to the visual and materialistic features of sacred objects. Traditional Koryak religious ideas provide only superficial explanation of alcohol addiction through general recognition of an intangible entity (the spirit of vodka). However the activity of the vodka spirit is practically not included in social life and collective mentality apart from occasional episodes of clairvoyance by drunken people. This social-religious background functions as a destructive condition that fits in Durkheim’s (1964 [1895]) definition of anomia. Alcohol addiction cannot be controlled by traditional social or religious rules and intra-ethnic motivation for elaborating new norms is rather low.

Everyday matters in Koryak life cannot be divided strictly into categories of sacred and social, as was done by Durkheim. Durkheim provides a clear differentiation of these two areas in order to draw a direct projection between them: religious notions reflect the concept of an ideal, desired community, and religious practice confirms the understanding of such a community. However, as noted earlier in this work, the other world of the Koryak interferes with reality materialistically and spiritually, corrects social processes and influences social business. The connection between religious and social worlds is obviously more complicated, asymmetric and flexible because of the issues of discrepancy and the poor comprehension of new social phenomena (such as, for example, alcohol consumption).

**CONCLUSION**

In this article I demonstrate that the isomorphism of alcohol intoxication and amanita intoxication, diagnosed on the base of observed behaviour, reflects the inner essence of this connection. During my research I revealed a key peculiarity of the Koryak worldview and behaviour in terms of alcohol consumption – the Koryak perceive their condition under alcohol as being possessed by external powers. This kind of perception implies personal detachment from misconduct committed under the effects of alcohol. A person acts in the interest of this unknown power, which removes all moral limits and serves as an excuse for deviant behaviour.

The vodka spirit, like the amanita spirit, is not recognised as definitely harmful and dangerous due to ambivalent Koryak ideas about the nature of evil. In contrast, quite often these spirits can be helpful and even necessary (establishing social and spiritual contact, predicting the future, the ability to work hard). However, the Koryak were
not able to counter vodka with their authentic means of spiritual protection and social regulation because of the foreign nature of the phenomenon.

The Koryak community did not elaborate any norms or means of control over alcohol consumption, but allowed the intervention into this area of their lives from outside. Here I see a very old and solid Koryak cultural trait: an excuse for a certain moral passivity when the fight for their human souls is going on without their participation. This form of collective conscious generates the following idea: only another outside power can serve as protection from alcohol. The modern expression of this idea can be seen in the wide acceptance of the Protestant religion in the form of the Pentecostal Church. The activity of Pentecostal missionaries is a substitute for traditional Koryak agency, which is today connected with fading traditional ideas. This helps to increase the level of social control in local society. Specific continuity between traditional religious ideas and Pentecostal services supports the Pentecostal claim that they perform a role of social regulation in aboriginal communities. As a result, mediation of contact between the Koryak and the supernatural, along with the social control of a sober lifestyle, is completely in the hands of Protestant missionaries.

NOTES

1 Author’s fieldnotes. The observation took place on June 26–28, 2002 in the town of Evensk and in Gizhiga village, Severo-Evenskiy District, Magadan Region.
2 Konstantin Ivanovich Bauerman – ethnographer, administration employee, lived in Paren’ village with Koryak between 1929 and 1932. He created a cooperative, a school and blacksmith’s workshop.
3 Parenets – inhabitant of the village Paren’; plural – parentsy.
4 Kamak or okkamak – a wooden amulet that the Koryak wear on coats (kukhlyanka), belts, head-dress and tie to the ritual bunches (taynykvyt) (Vdovin 1977; Gorbacheva 1986; 2004; Koryaks... 2006).
5 For example, they do not cry but cheer. Koryak Oksana Petrovna Vachavnayut, born in 1968, told me: “The Koryak depart in fun” (interviewed on June 23, 2006; Evensk town, Severo-Evenskiy District, Magadan Region).
6 Igor’ Yevgen’evich Vorobey’s fieldnotes. Interviews with Koryak from Verkhniy Paren’ village and the town of Evensk, Severo-Evenskiy District, Magadan Region were conducted between September and October 2014.
7 Author’s fieldnotes. Interviews with Koryak from Verkhnii Paren’ village and the town of Evensk, Severo-Evenskiy District, Magadan Region were conducted in July–August 2002, June 2006, August 2011 and October 2012.
8 I. Y. Vorobey’s fieldnotes.
9 Kul’tbasa – a complex settlement with a boarding school, domestic houses, a hospital, workshops, a veterinary station, a trading station and warehouses.
10 Refering to amanita, braga and spirit.
11 Author’s fieldnotes. Interviews were conducted on November 8, 2011 in Verkhniy Paren’ village, Severo-Evenskiy District, Magadan Region.
12 Author’s fieldnotes. Interviews were conducted on June 22, 2006 in the town of Evensk, Severo-Evenskiy District, Magadan Region.
ARCHIVE SOURCES

AIEA – Archive of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences [АИЭА – Архив Института этнографии и антропологии РАН]

AIVR – Archive of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences [АИВР – Архив Института восточных рукописей РАН]

GARF – State Archive of the Russian Federation [ГАРФ – Государственный архив Российской Федерации]
F. P-3977, l. 1, f. 1112 – Organisational report of the manager of the Koryak kul’tbaza for the years 1930–1931.

RGADA – Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts [РГАДА – Российский государственный архив древних актов]
F. 199, no. 539, l. 2, f. 6 – “Additions made by captain Shmalev ...”.

RGVIA – Russian State Military-Historical Archive [РГВИА – Российский государственный военно-исторический архив]
F. 14808, l. 1, f. 73 – “Diary of everyday activities by Gizhiginps castle of mister captain Shmalev ...”.

REFERENCES


Khakhovskaya: Alcohol Consumption Practices in the Koryak Community 61


DRUNKARDS AND SINGERS: A MONGOLIAN BATTLE OF SOUNDS

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ABSTRACT
When I conducted fieldwork among the Darhad of northern Mongolia my informants repeatedly asserted that after a good singer’s performance even the most badly intoxicated lad stands still and keeps silent. In this article, I make three points in order to explain why this claim was made. In the first one, I show that the main concern about singing performance at social gatherings is not about revealing the singer’s inner emotional realm but rather about crafting a collective feeling that has the ability to make people temporarily shed their otherness and converge. The problem with drunkards lies in the fact that they are unable to participate and even noisily impede this rite of convergence. The main reason is that they are not sufficiently detached from their own inner realm. I then put the concept of noise in context, arguing that it forms the repulsive pole of a Mongolian sonic continuum. In my last point, I stress the fact that according to Mongolian linguistic ideology, noise brings misfortune to the entire community. That is why good singers must win their battle against drunkards.

KEYWORDS: Mongolia • songs • linguistic ideology • alcohol • otherness

INTRODUCTION
Speaking about songs and alcohol in Mongolia makes us travel along a complex network of intricate connections. At every feast you will come across during the summer and autumn months, you will be expected to sing after being offered airag (fermented mare’s milk, an alcoholic beverage that may contain 2–3 per cent alcohol), tsagaan arhi (a much stronger homemade alcoholic spirit distilled from milk) or vodka. It may happen that you sing well and charm the musical ears of your audience. In this case, you will be praised and offered more drinks. In the 1990s, a very famous singer named Peljeeegiin Adarsüren (1942–1998) became totally addicted to vodka. His numerous fans took the blame for it and were ashamed of having paid tribute to his talent through countless offerings of alcohol. In a novel called Av’yaas (‘Talent’) the novelist D. Batjargal told a very similar story about a skilful dancer in the grip of alcohol who fell asleep in the street on a freezing night. He survived but had to undergo amputation of his right arm, which prevented him from getting on stage (Batjargal 2005: 92–99). Once again, the main culprit was public admiration. In a recent publication on Adarsüren’s career
the Mongolian poet and journalist B. Tsenddo stressed the fact that the singer’s intoxication began during the socialist period when people did not have anything special, anything outstanding, anything worth offering to Adarsüren except alcohol. Yet this explanation is one sided only and does no justice to the enduring role alcohol has been playing in the “cultural framework of respectful giving” to exceptional people as well as to the spirits (High 2008: 187).

As far back in history as we can go, manuscripts tend to show that, among Mongolian people, alcohol was not considered the product of human labour alone. Rather, fermented mare’s milk was regarded as the index of a good relationship between spirits (most often *gazr*yn ezed ‘masters of place’) and humans. The former bestow blessings in the form of rain and favourable weather condition and the latter pay tribute through offerings as well as entertaining spirits with their manly games and their joyful sociability, a sociability that includes the performance of many songs. *Airag* – later vodka and other distilled beverages – are thus “positioned within a recursive relationship based on acts of giving between humans and spiritual beings”, as Mette High (ibid.: 185) cogently puts it. Offering alcohol to famous persons can be viewed as a translation of this general principle.

In this paper, I wish to investigate further this web of connections and ask one question that might seem at first sight anecdotal (actually it might seem anecdotal even after giving it a second thought if my argument fails to convince you). Why do my informants repeatedly assert that after a good singer’s performance at wedding ceremonies and other meetings, even the most badly intoxicated lad within the audience stands still and keeps silent? Practically, all my main interlocutors have somehow mentioned this amazing power of singers’ voices. During my fieldwork, I heard these comments again and again. For example, Davaaji – a sixty-year-old herdsman – remembered the voice of a famous Darhad singer: “The people around were unable to chat when Baasanjav was singing”, he pointed out to me. What he meant, and later made explicit, was that even the drunkards were unable to raise their voices as Baasanjav’s voice was filling the entire space.

In Mongolia, drunkards are said to be noisy – sometimes as noisy as Chinese people – and in addition to this already frowned upon sonic behaviour, they talk with no reason, just for the sake of talking (*demii yarih*) in a country where, generally speaking, silence is golden. ¹ This battle of sounds between drunkards and singers is hardly new. J. Dorjdvaga, a famous singer who entered the Mongolian art world in the 1950s, recalled how he was taken aback when listening to the powerful voice of his master M. Dugarjav (1893–1946, the father of the Mongolian modern music): “He sang until no other sound except his own came out”, and again later in the same conversation Dorjdvaga made an explicit reference to the idle talk of drunkards (*sogtson uls*) (Badraa 2005: 138–139).

The question these comments leave me with is why should it be so important for a singer to shut drunkards up? Enduring behaviours and repeated statements ring in the ears of anthropologists and might tell us something novel about sound, sociality, alcohol and morality in drinking. My interlocutors framed the issue as if it was a kind of sonic battle. Let me stick with this view in order to set the general outline of the paper. Therefore, after having described the social topology of the ‘battlefield’, I shall introduce the two opponents: the crowd of drunkards on my left and the outstanding singers on my right. As the first section will make obvious however, singers may be a
bit tipsy or even totally drunk and that very fact will right away confuse the issue, but also make it more appealing. I guess life is baroque anyway, although certainly not to an extent to which the world would become impenetrable.

AT SOCIAL GATHERINGS

From 2001 to 2011, I carried out 20 months of fieldwork among the Darhad, an ethnic minority in northern Mongolia. I resided mainly in the village of Rinchinlhümbe, which is in the centre of the district of the same name, in the eastern part of the Darhad valley (darhadyn hotgor). Half of the district population (more or less 5,000 people in total) dwell in the village in winter and the other half reaches the deep valleys situated in the mountainous area west of Hövsgöl lake (see Figure 1). There, they are sheltered from the icy wind and raise livestock (mainly yaks, sheep and goats). Many celebrations take place during autumn (a three-month period stretching from July to September) when the products of livestock herding (meat, milk, and milk alcohol) are abundant.

In this paper, I aim to deal with social gatherings in general, although the ethnographic material upon which I shall build and substantiate my argument consists of a description of a wedding celebration that evolved into a bloody brawl. I have witnessed eruption of fights related to alcohol consumption and songs many times in every genre of domestic celebrations (nair), even when these nair were on the occasion of daily hospitality like a simple visiting situation that morphed into a feast. What I want to underscore lies, I guess, in the very nature of social interactions that take place during such situations in which people seize on “the interaction’s own contradiction of closeness across political divides” as Rupert Stasch (2009: 45) terms it when he analyses host and guest interactions among the Korowai people of Papua New Guinea.

In a situation of host-guest encounter, two sets of people are in each other’s presence, and this alone creates and confirms a sense of connection between them. But their presence to each other also focuses attention on their mutual strangeness. (Ibid.: 50)

What I have in mind is quite similar. People are indeed different. Even the closest kin experience differences on a day-to-day basis (be they political, hierarchical, relational, gender or age based as well as intention related, etc.). The force of the bond that will make up a collective from this collection of differences “rests in the risks and vulnerability people overcome together by relating across […] divide[s] between them” (ibid.: 54). Needless to say, bounding is always a gamble that can be lost or won. It may seem to be an obvious consideration but reading High’s deeply insightful monograph, Dangerous Fortunes (2008), I was left with the impression that brawls and fights were only present among ninjas (illegal miners who dig the steppe in search of gold) while, on the contrary, highly formalised interactional scripts make it possible, in rural areas, to avoid slipping into uncontrolled mess.

As for my ethnographic context, brawls and arguments arise quite often even when people carry out a set of prescribed actions they call rules (yos) (Humphrey 2012), a very “formalized hospitality”. I will start from the assumption that the ‘ideal world’ constructed through the enactment of hospitality – which in Mongolia always includes
ceremonial drinking – is fragile, “momentarily upheld and easily overturned”, as Mary Douglas reminds us in her introduction to *Constructive Drinking* (1987: 12). Being in the countryside for a long period of time, I was involved in quite many brawls to a greater or lesser extent, in spite of everything. While running away, I came to understand that violence breaks out precisely because the establishment of a “peaceful sociality of hierarchical differentiation” implies the relentless work of many actors who bring with them...
their otherness. What role do alcohol practices, drunkards, singers and sounds play in establishing the very possibility of being packed together for hours with people, some of whom are increasingly intoxicated, all of whom are in many respects separate from each other by their seniority, status, gender, intention, affiliation, personal history and so forth. Talking about weddings, Caroline Humphrey metaphorically describes these events as a “sea-swell of underlying agonistic currents of social precedence, rivalry, honor, ambivalence, enmity, aggression and fears” (Humphrey 2015). The following depiction supports her view. It was written several years ago when I carried out fieldwork among the Darhad of northern Mongolia, but I am sure that it could have been observed in many other places in Mongolia.

In November 2005, the members of my host family and I were attending a distant relative’s wedding ceremonies. All of us had already sung in turn when the master of the ceremony invited us to stand near the fire, drink *airag* and appointed us to sing. The bride had lit the fire in her brand new *ger* (the Mongolian round felt tent) erected near her father-in-law’s log cabin. I did not pay much attention to my host’s grandmother, but when I caught a glimpse of her I realised that she was totally drunk. Not surprisingly, as the song of a young girl was filling the space of the *ger* where we were tightly packed together, Büree (the grandmother’s nickname) started weeping loudly, oblivious to the reproaching glances people were casting at her and refusing to hear the comforting words whispered by her neighbours. She was dissolving into noisy tears, so much so that even the young girl standing in the middle stopped singing. There was actually nothing unusual so far. The first time I was invited to a wedding, I asked a very perceptive six-year-old boy what to expect and he replied: “You will sing, you will weep, you will drink and you will fight!” But in this case, things really went amiss. Büree’s daughter was attempting to grab her, pulling her glowing gown in a desperate attempt to drag her outside the *ger*. The grandmother lost her balance and fell on some elderly people in the first row. Vodka and milk were spilling out while dishes were falling from the front table. The few helpful arms that kept on supporting her let her drop. She was then lying on the wooden ground, her face wet with tears and drool. The overall picture was driving her daughter crazy. She was yelling a lot and hitting her mother, insulting her, dragging her hard to the door. Büree was shouting the name of her sister who died a long time ago at around the same age of the girl who was singing. At the same time, on my left a fight was breaking out between two men, then three, four... A young guy grabbed me with force shoving us towards to door. Before I freed myself from this mess, I caught a glimpse of the bride and bridegroom sitting immobile, emotionless, on their brand new sofa. Shouts, cries and brawling noises continued for a while before slowly calming down. We saw many men, and one woman, with blood on their faces emerging from the *ger*. Outside, fights were breaking out again, this time they were quickly handled by young guys who managed to push them away from the encampment. The master of the ceremony (quite drunk too) was uttering something that sounded like an invitation to go and sit back inside. I was looking at the bride half-smiling at me. Someone started singing and the hostess was pouring vodka into the glasses of her guests. No traces of Büree and her daughter. The show was going on...
"There is more pleasure in sitting than in drinking and more pleasure in singing than in sitting" (uuhaas suuhyn bah suuhaas duulahyn bah). The lesson to learn from this Mongolian saying is that, at large gatherings, singing (either taking the lead when the master of the ceremony appoints you to sing or singing along with the one who has started singing) forms the desirable behaviour far more than being simply there or getting drunk. The reality is however rather different since the person who sings is also the person who is urged to drink. The general meaning of the saying may be best understood not as a condemnation of alcohol consumption but as a call to contribute – no matter how drunk you are – to the crafting of a “joyous atmosphere” (Humphrey 2012: 73), of a nostalgic or sad feeling or whatever feeling you want to concoct as long as it is geared towards shaping a collective atmosphere, “a rich sensorialized sociality” (Chau 2008) suffused with the particular feeling encapsulated in the song you choose. Concocted feelings do not need to be felt to exist. They are enacted “through the use of performed techniques” (Humphrey 2012: 74) like songs. You do not need to be sad to sing a sad song. Unlike some European music teachers, most of the time Mongols do not require such correspondence between the feeling you craft when singing and the emotion you actually feel. And still, even if you do not feel sad, even if no member of your audience feels sad, sadness hangs in the air, in the melody, in the lyrics, in the singer’s gestures. Sadness is now a constitutive element of the feast, a temporary landmark, an atmosphere that may or may not make people shed their otherness and converge on the same emotion. But again, no matter if they do converge, the feeling is there anyway and again, no matter how drunk you are, you are expected to contribute to the crafting of the different feelings that will follow one another as each person performs a song. If I were to contrast this ideal view I would say that being drunk and singing during a nair is exactly the opposite of what it means to get drunk among the Evenki. According to Tatiana Safonova and István Santhá (2013), heavy drinking practices among Evenki can be partly understood as a way to reach a manakan state of being within which people are totally disentangled from any commitment with others. In contrast, as I have already emphasised, you might get drunk at a Mongolian celebration without anyone complaining about it as long as you are able to participate in the “rite of convergence” (Chau 2008) that each song sets up one after the other. In order to achieve this, you must be aware that the song you are performing or the song you are listening to is first and foremost geared towards the introduction of an atmosphere that allows people to stay together despite their many differences, their otherness and strangeness.

Mongols hold that traditionally, at celebrations, people exclusively sang long songs (urtyn duu), the most respected and presumably more ancient vocal repertoire of Mongolian music. Long songs are an exercise of vocal virtuosity. Each syllable of the lyrics is extended and finely chiselled through modulated vibrato, vocal modulated pulsation, and glissando. Despite this repeated statement about long songs my ethnographic data makes obvious another reality. Even though elders normally open a formal ceremony with a long song, most of the time people sing authored songs (zohiolyn duu), current musical productions recorded in Ulaanbaatar. A huge number of the melodies use pentatonic scales arranged in narrow tessitura; so much so that everybody can sing it without too many problems. Successful songs may include short sections in which
the singer can let his or her voice sound on extended vowels at the end of a verse. The
lyrics depict deep love between men and woman or the pleasure of being together.
They praise motherhood in respectful words suffused with a tinge of nostalgia when
the song is sung by adults. Lyrics speak about the scenic Mongolian landscape and the
excitement you feel when riding a horse through the steppe. Roughly speaking, lyrics
portray a totally sublimated countryside smooth life. For example, the song the girl
sang when my host grandmother interrupted her was a hugely popular success at that
time, and went like this:

\begin{verbatim}
Uugaad suuhad min' uram sergeesen
Uuguul nutgiin min' amttaihan tsai
Olon tümii undaa n' bolson
Orchłond gantshan eejiin miin' chanasan tsai
\end{verbatim}

Comfortably sitting, I sip it and I get my strength back
The tasty tea of my native land
Has become the drink of the masses
In the entire universe, the only thing that counts is the tea my mother has been
making for me

While performing this kind of song at a social gathering, what matters is not to get
lost in singing but to be aware of the feeling that is crafted. Mongols, I believe, are less
likely than other people to consider the song as an act of expression. No one would
ever accuse anyone of not being sincere when singing. No one would say to the girl:
"Why do you sing it as you are widely known to be a real problem child who shows
no respect to her mother". And if someone had asked the question, the girl would have
answered: "Because I can sing it well". There is no imperative to achieve a correspond-
ence between an emotional inner realm and a performed song. The importance is to
produce a rich sensorialised sociality full of sounds that piques the senses (see below).
Two decades ago, the Mongolian composer G. Birvaa (1989: 129) wrote “through a
melody it is possible to bring into harmony (or to adjust) people’s emotions” (hünii set-
geliin hööödöögön uran ayalguuger zohitsuulna). When speaking of performance at social
gatherings, Mongols often use verbs like zohitsuulah (‘bring into harmony’), niiliüleh
(‘co-opt’ or ‘adjust’), evliüleh (‘assemble’, ‘fit together’, ‘piece together’). The general
idea that emerges from these verbs does not focus on an act of expression. Rather what
can be deduced from this list is that songs must be performed to create a common
atmosphere that allows a temporary adjustment of differences, not their erasure; not
the merging of these differences or conversion into a unique emotional state, but rather
their piecing together.

That is why in such context, songs can be viewed as a way of being detached in
Humphrey’s meaning of the term. Detachment, Humphrey (2015) notes, must not be
confused with distraction, irony or aloofness. To be detached means to be fully aware
of what is going on and this form of attention requires distance from one’s own per-
spective. Singing, it seems to me, is just the perfect technique for enacting detachment.
Songs do not belong to anyone present at the gathering and have the power to sonically
fill the space and the capacity to set a collective atmosphere. As previously stressed,
you are not required to be lost in the mood that a song conveys (although you may
as well). But what would certainly be regarded as a breach in the rite of convergence
is the cutting off, for personal reasons, of the collective effort to generate a feeling. So, “Detachment is fragile” as Humphrey puts it (ibid.: 152) and perhaps especially as people become increasingly intoxicated. The above depiction is a blatant example of this. My host grandmother was unable to stand back from her own emotion and upset the feeling of respect that the girl’s song – a song about filial piety – was striving to achieve. Büree’s sadness encroaches inappropriately upon the general atmosphere. It is not that the expression of sadness is inappropriate during a celebration (be it a wedding, a child’s first haircut, a visit or any form of social gathering). Rather, the problem lies in the very fact that it is an isolated expression of crude emotion, not geared towards the crafting of a collective atmosphere at all. And therefore this ‘hiccup’, and all the fuss it caused, released the underlying currents of amenity and rivalry that were still there but kept under control by a collective endeavour. If the girl’s song had been a sad song, and the weeping grandmother less extravagant, it would probably have passed without notice.

The people sitting next to Büree would have consoled her and if that had not been possible – a strong signal that she couldn’t be minimally detached anymore –, would have gently take her out at the end of the song. The problem with badly intoxicated people is exactly that: they are often unable to be minimally detached and become increasingly encapsulated within their own emotional realm… and increasingly noisy. Singers work up the audience, sonically creating some potential source of convergence. Drunkards, intentionally or not, mess it up… sonically as well. In this sense, singers’ and drunkards’ behaviour increasingly diverges in their “active participatory role […] as makers of the social sensorium” which means here “a sensorially rich social space”, “a place full of sensory stimulations” (Chau 2008: 488–489). Adam Chau, who suggests this notion of sensorium, worked among Chinese people from rural Shaanbei. He emphasises how festivalgoers prefer a hot and noisy (re’nao) sensorium when celebrating their deity’s anniversary (ibid.). Ideally speaking, Mongols would prefer to make it hot and melodic given their disgust for noise and their concern about the malevolent power of idle talk. In order to fully understand this point, let’s have a look to Mongolian conceptions of their sonic environment.

**Attraction and Repulsion: A Mongolian Sonic Continuum**

Singers sing songs (Duuchin duu duuldag). In Mongolian, the root morpheme duu means song, and many words are derived from it as the simple previous sentence shows. However, the semantic field of this morpheme is much broader than that. Duu also means human voice and some of the sounds produced by natural or spiritual entities. In fact, according to its definition the most encompassing meaning of the term duu is “sounds that arouse the hearing organs” (sonsoh erhtend seregdeh avian chimee) (Tsevel 1966: 213). And indeed, when a sound draws the attention, a person will choose the word duu from among other words that denote sounds, such as avia or chimee. Noise (shuugian), to the contrary, cannot be said to arouse the hearing organs. Of course, from an acoustic point of view, noises equally draw the attention of the listener, but the positive valence bestowed upon the verb sergeh (‘arouse’, ‘awaken’) makes it impossible to put it like that. In Mongolian, noise is what prevents the hearing organ from being fully deployed,
vigilant and attentive to the matter at hand. Far from arousing the senses, noise is held to hamper audition. Here is a short example of a sound that first draws the attention of the listener before becoming an obstacle to clear hearing:

A few years ago, I was sitting with a young guy in the Tengis valley, very close to the taiga inhabited by the Tsaatan people. The Tsataan form an ethnic group who live in a mountainous and forested area in the Mongolia far north. Their way of life – they herd reindeer – has attracted lots of tourists and travellers for about two decades or so. Bataa (a teenager from a nearby district) and I heard a kind of roar. Bataa asked me “What makes this sound?” (jund duugarah ve?). A helicopter crowded with travellers landed five hundred metres away from us. When we arrived close to it, Bataa shouted “What a din!” (yamar ih shuugiantai ve!). In a matter of seconds, the roaring of the helicopter had moved from one pole of a sonic continuum duu to the other extreme – noise (shuugian). This move was caused by a change in the impression left by the sound: from a sonic event that was worth considering to a noise covering all the soundscape and preventing Bataa from hearing or, in other words, from something prompting awareness to the sonic environment to something that sonically precluded any real attention to what was going on (Legrain 2014a).

In general, all that is termed noise causes disgust, particularly when relating to language use. Parents try by every means to impress upon their children not to be noisy, the importance of being cautious about not speaking too much and certainly not interrupting adults speaking or even catch the attention of elders for too long. Here is a short example that reveals this concern: In Mongolia, people have a particular attraction for the beauty of children’s clear and high-pitched voice. The basic classification for it is therefore duu (hühdiin duu ‘children’s voices’). One evening in a rural village in northern Mongolia, Mönhbayar was watching television. Two of his sons (6 and 8 years old) began to quarrel. After the first admonishment the boys kept on making a noise. Unable to watch his program, Mönhbayar leapt out of his chair and shouted “Stop banging around!” (Bitgii chalchaad bai!). The term chalchaa has a very negative connotation. A chalchaa is a person who likes to talk for the sake of talking (demii üg yarih durtai). After giving his order Mönhbayar repeated continuously the first syllable of the word “chalchalchalchal...” and in doing so, gave a sound representation of how the children’s chattering impacted him: pure noise without any coherence or any meaning. His youngest son, who tried to warrant his conduct, bumped into this wall of sound and gave up his lament. This kind of sonic behaviour is termed noisy (shuugiantai) and is severely frowned upon.

One may say that singers are the masters of the duu-side of the soundscape while drunkards tend to shift from one side (attractive sounds) to the other (disgusting noise). In addition, besides being deeply disliked, noises can have harmful consequences for the community as a whole, as I will discuss in the last two sections of this paper.

**DRUNKARDS AS RADICAL STRANGERS AND AS VESSELS FOR EVIL SPIRITS**

To be honest, with drunken people around, you are sometimes in good company. It can happen that they sing very well. They quickly lose their initial shyness and their
voice soars in the most natural and engaging manner. Drunken people are also known for beautifully and comically interweaving truths and lies, telling stories that sound marvellous and captivate the audience. They can therefore make great contributions to any social gathering. When they do these things, they remain within the duu-side of the sonic continuum. The problem arises when, for example, they do not remember the lyrics of the song they are singing or the punch line of a comical story they are telling. But, those are still minor matters. Most of the time people who sing along or listen to the story are covering these tricks of memory universally caused by alcohol consumption and remind the singer or the storyteller of the lyrics or of the end of a story. However, the situation obviously worsens. When getting increasingly intoxicated drunkards become unable to speak without stuttering and stammering a lot, or even become unable to utter a simple sentence. They may also leap frenetically from one subject to the other in a way devoid of any meaning. Worse still, they may forget themselves and use totally inappropriate language, evoking the name of a deceased person and violate every language restriction, as did my host grandmother during the wedding ceremony.

In “Moral Drinking”, a thought-provoking chapter of her PhD dissertation, Mette High delves thoroughly into the heart of the matter when she asserts that in Mongolia “speech carries exceptional potential for causing calamities” and that “a drunken man’s talk can be dangerous”, the latter statement being a straight quotation of her host father (High 2008: 191). Following High’s argument, drinking at social gatherings is moral essentially because it provides a “forum that incorporates both ninjas [illegal miners] and chötgörs” (ibid.: 206). With regards to ninjas, these fellows are most of the time common herdsmen who have broken the frame of rural sociability in search of gold in the nearby mines. They are said to earn money (sometimes a huge amount of money) by digging the ground, an action that is forbidden and can make the master of place (gazryn ezen) angry. Ninjas are portrayed as selfish people who refuse the give and take of herd-ers sociability, and as abusers of hospitality. In this context, High considers social drinking a means used by ninjas to re-incorporate the herding household. Getting drunk or pretending to be drunk and acting like a drunken man, ninjas “display their familiarity with the appropriate drinking practices of herder and the cultural value they place on lying” (ibid.). In other words, ninjas integrate the role of the guest and turn the family they visit into the thoughtful host. The crux of High’s argument is here. Overcoming the series of incidents a drunkard is likely to cause should be viewed as an opportunity to demonstrate group solidarity and togetherness. “[E]ven the most challenging situation never becomes an insurmountable threat to amicable living” (ibid.: 198). The same applies to spirits. Drunkards’ behaviour – especially that which is known to invite harm, like shouting the name of a deceased person in the way my host grandmother did at the wedding celebration – actually reflect an ontological transformation. The drinker is now directed by a malevolent spirit that has taken control of him. But again, this radical and dangerous otherness that emerges in the middle of a social gathering is not an unbeatable challenge and will soon be overcome by a “harmonious, celebratory ideal” (ibid.), as the host displays and brings to life the multiple rules of hospitality. So, in the case of the wedding ceremony I described briefly above, the interpretation would be that in going to sit back inside the round felt tent, as the drunken master of the ceremony asked us to do, we claimed a temporary victory over the threatening spirit world. The smile of the bride, the glass of vodka I was offered and the song that we sang
again together (although there was no trace of Büree when we resumed our seats in the 
ger) prove that the group succeeded in overcoming the challenge and claimed its unity. We (the humans present) won a battle we fought against evil spirits by incorporating their strangeness into a humanly made ideal.

I did not hear about chötgör the next day and even two days later when my host-grandmother reappeared from a wooden log cabin that had been built for the occasion some hundred metres away. Of course, it is not because I did not hear about it that this interpretation of the situation was not there. The only thing that I know for sure is that what made Büree’s reverse ontological transformation – from chötgör to human – was simply a good night’s sleep and had nothing to do with the performance of the group’s togetherness. To be fair, I did not hear any comment after this dramatic event. People do not talk about such crises afterwards, although I still got the sense that no one was tasting victory. Surely enough, if I had chosen to speak about it with others as witnesses, my demeanour would have constituted misconduct, “a severe breach of social amity” as Rupert Stasch (2009: 51) has formulated it. Such situations occur and disappear, it may prove to be annoying, even quite dangerous, but the day after no one will make any remarks and things will apparently return to normal. I am convinced that this silence is related to a pervasive linguistic ideology according to which talking about something bad, something hurtful, will induce other bad events to happen, will place the entire community in the grip of misfortune and will lead the group to suffer greater harm.

**DRUNKARDS’ CONVERSATIONS: THE DANGEROUS AND DISGUSTING SIDE OF THE SONIC CONTINUUM**

In this last section, I would like to delve a bit further into this Mongolian linguistic ideology. High’s interpretation of the incident prompted by drunkards is fascinating and original and, in a sense, fits perfectly with the usual statement on the battle of sounds between singers and drunkards that my interlocutors pointed out many times over the course of my fieldwork. Singers whose role is to enhance a harmonious sociability must silence the drunkards who could be directed by evil spirits. Drunkards, being therefore not totally human anymore, stretch to the limit the other’s strangeness. Singers’ voices fill the entire soundscape and neutralise the harmful potential of drunkards who find themselves muzzled and deprived of language (their best weapon). However, in High’s ethnography, speech acts are indeed potentially harmful although they seem to be quite easy to control. Apart from this, the dangerousness of language derives from the fact that it is used by chötgör, or, at least from ill-intentioned individuals. In this last section I will allocate greater force to Mongolian linguistic ideology and even to the purely sonic dimension of language without regard to the speaker’s intention or to her ontological transformation.

Let me start by quoting Alan Rumsey’s definition of linguistic ideologies based on Silverstein’s work as “shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of the language in the world” (Rumsey 1990: 345), that is to say “any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979). It should be noted that lots of cultural reflexive
conceptions about language use that linguists highlight everywhere in the world are less concerned with the information conveyed in the language than with the many ways in which the speech act impacts upon the world. The Mongolian case is a perfect example of this pervasive concern. Yet let’s look first at an example in which the information language conveys and the way language affects the world seem to be interrelated:

It sometimes happened that I was the only adult present in my host family’s ger. When Davaasüren and Mönhbayar came back from some distant place, they invariably asked me to list the name of the visitors who called while they were out. One day I answered: “The man who speaks like a woman”. Mönhbayar laughed but Daavasüren lost her temper. “No one could speak like that,” she wailed. “What is the point of using poisoned words? It is said to be a bad sign for him [the man who speaks like a woman]!”

Talking about people behind their backs is a clear means of influencing their lives in various manners, but more often than not, in a negative way. As Roberte Hamayon and Namtcha Bassanoff (1973: 70) have argued, to talk about someone means to have a grip on that person. The malevolent power of curses and gossip comes from this conception of the working of language in the world. Gossip risks bringing calamities upon the speaker and upon the person being spoken about. Speech can indeed be dangerous and it “achieves its potency from both the actual content of the utterance and the very act of speaking”, to quote High again (2008: 191). In the regional ethnographic literature, the malevolent power of words is quite well documented. More ethnographic material allows me to probe this issue further. The next example depicts the speech act of a young boy, an act that will be considered potentially harmful despite the fact that he just wanted to make his audience laugh.

Most of the time, Mönhbayar is a calm and thoughtful father. Sometimes the slowed and slurred speech of his eldest son (Bumbayar, 7 years old), his faltering voice, the noises he makes with his mouth, drives Mönhbayar crazy. On numerous occasions, I saw him making desperate efforts to keep his son’s speech problem in proportion. “It will vanish when Bumbayar grows up”, he often remarked to me. One day, however, Mönhbayar flew off the handle when hearing Bumbayar intentionally making an ass of himself in front of the other children of the encampment. The little boy was singing a well-known pop song parroting his own slurred speech to his relatives’ greatest delight. His father rushed out of the ger and punched his son’s face (an act generally frowned upon in Mongolia). He dragged him inside his ger shouting and complaining that “his own son was a fool unable to speak properly”.

How can we understand Mönhbayar’s terrible anger? It is obvious that oratory skills are still crucial in Mongolia and constitute part of what it means to be fully adult. However, a few days after this occurrence, I talked with Davaasüren, Mönhbayar’s wife. She explained to me that, as far as she knew, Mönhbayar’s concern at that time was not the future of his son. With regard to that, Mönhbayar was quite confident. No doubt Bumbayar will become a skilled herdsman. “But”, continued Davaasüren – becoming increasingly nervous – “to speak like Bumbayar is bad (muu) not only for him but possibly for all the family”. “Bumbayar’s chaotic speech” – Davaasüren imitated the noises he usually makes (most of the time unwittingly) – “is without order (zambaraagii) and may have bad consequences for all the member of the family (manaid muu)”. She said countless other things that I did not understand, but from her sudden flow of sentences I knew that Davaasüren was deeply moved and that unfortunately it was no use asking her explain to me what she meant exactly.
The lyrics Bumbayar sang – a beautiful poem praising motherhood – were meaningful as he made only a cover of a famous song. We may thus assume that the problem lay only in the speech act and more precisely in the prosodic elements of this speech. Perhaps Mönhbayar’s anger might be understood as an implication of the first basic tenet of Mongolian language ideology: speech is an act that affects the world. But here, the malevolent power is not hidden in the meaning of the lyrics. How could that be? The song is a national hit that depicts mother’s devotion to their children. What makes the song potentially harmful is the utterance. To follow Davaasüren, it is the disorder of the speech act that turns these beautiful lyrics into an uncontrollable danger. What I would suggest here is that the Mongolian linguistic ideology blurs the distinction between on the one hand the order of the language and on the other hand, the order of the world. Therefore this conception equates the introduction of disorder within the language with the introduction of disorder within the course of the world. That is precisely what should be avoided by imposing silence on drunkards and by settling a perfectly ordered soundscape through well-sung songs.

**BY WAY OF CONCLUSION**

Following Stasch’s (2009) analysis, I have assumed throughout this paper that “otherness is the crux” of any social gathering be it as large as a wedding celebration or as small as domestic celebrations. Any social gathering involves alcohol consumption as well as performances of songs. Regarding songs, it is widely assumed in many different cultural settings that a good performance must reflect a singer’s emotional inner realm. This conception, however widespread, is by no means universal. In the thick of the Mongolian celebrations, singing is rather held as an act aimed towards others. It may reflect your own emotional state but it is, first and foremost, geared towards the crafting of a feeling, the role of which is to sonically fill the place and thereby to offer to everybody present a potential source of convergence. That is where Humphrey’s (2015) conception of *detachment* and Chau’s (2008) notion of *sensorium* play out. Detachment is a “quality of action” which has nothing to do with indifference. To be detached in Humphrey’s sense means to be able to distance oneself from one’s own perspective for beneficent ends. In the case at hand, being detached means choosing a song that is not yours, which does not specially reflect your own current emotion but that is known to give a beautiful picture of Mongolian life. While singing it you will try to make it sound the best you can. In doing so, people demonstrate their mastery of vocal techniques, produce sounds that are worth hearing, reveal the atmosphere encapsulated in the lyrics and, above all, make this atmosphere concrete, materially present. What is of great importance here is to use something that is common to all, a song, a poem, a well-known story and contribute to the construction of a common social sensorium, “a place full of sensory stimulations”. Partaking in producing this sensorium certainly makes people feel that “they are in the middle of a satisfying, ‘hot’ event” as Chau (2008: 488) puts it, but, in addition, this common endeavour covers up people otherness, which continues, at least potentially, to pose a threat to the smooth continuation of a celebration. They stay together, possibly enjoying it, under cover of a collective feeling.
To some extent, consumption of alcohol supports this process. Offering alcohol is also an act towards others, a way of connecting people who are separated by their differences. Alcohol and drunkenness allow people to shed quickly their social inhibitions. Drinking is, in Mongolia, a massive social fact that creates many opportunities for people to socialise and therefore many opportunities to hear new songs, new stories they will sing and tell at other celebrations. The problem arises when people become so intoxicated that they are unable to speak, instead they chat continuously, irrespective of what is actually going on, talk nonsense or, worst of all, use language that is totally inappropriate. Universally, alcohol intoxication affects language skills but in Mongolia, language is what makes you human and the loss of language abilities is what turns you into an animal (Bianquis 2012: 133; Lacaze 2012: 198) or a čötgör (High 2008) when you are too drunk to speak or to understand what your fellow humans try to tell you. Moreover, I have argued that a pervasive linguistic ideology equates disorder in language with disorder in the world, bringing misfortune, intentionally or not.

High has told us that among the ninjas of Central Mongolia, a rumour is circulating. It goes like this: after drinking with strangers who added undiluted industrial alcohol to his drink, a man “wakes up hours later with a non-responsive tongue, paralyzed by the strong alcohol. As the tongue apparently never recovers, [the guy] becomes subject to intense ridicule and social ostracism.” (High 2008: 202) In Mongolia, the sounds you produce make you handsome, affable, cheerful and beautifully detached but they can also make you ridiculed, disgustingly noisy and even dangerous. Drunkenness plays a part on both sides of this continual process of becoming an admired or feared sonic being.

NOTES

1 A Mongolian saying states, “The mouth of the cuckoo that sings first freezes” (türülj duugar-san höhönii am höldög). One of the general maxims that frame daily conversation could be summarised as follows: “Keep information about you to yourself” (Legrain 2014b).

2 There are many opportunities to set up a celebration: the erection of a new camp, a child’s first haircut, the distillation of the first airag, anniversaries of local institutions, the arrival of an unexpected and respectful guest or a simple visits of relatives or friends.

3 You do not need to be sad to sing a sad song. In contrast to this, Kurdish women who sing Kilams about pain must, in order to affect their audience, “have personally and bodily been exposed to experience of pain, grief and suffering” (Schäfers 2015). As I am going to show, singing in Mongolia is not primarily about “transforming [an emotion] residing inside the body into an exterior form” (ibid.), but rather about making a social gathering enjoyable, pleasant, or at least satisfying.

4 A good version of the long song The Old Man and the Bird (övgön shuvuu) can be heard on YouTube (Mongol ardyn urtyn duu 2011). Lhamjav, the singer, is accompanied by a musician playing a horse-head fiddle.

5 On YouTube, S. Javhlant, a famous singer, sings the above song for all the Mongols who live in the US and miss their country (see Eejin chanasan tsai duu 2014).

6 “A čötgör is the unsatisfied, offended soul of someone who died a ‘bad death’ (suicide, wrongly executed, died too young, etc.)” wrote Humphrey (2012: 72). High specifies that, “whereas some čötgörs are identified as the souls of particular people, others seem to be an abstracted source of evil intent” (2008: 193).
For a deeper analysis of the cultural value Mongols place on the act of lying, see Legrain 2014b.

Morten Pedersen (2011) produces a subtle interpretation of violent crisis due to alcohol intoxication among the Darhad. What should be an ontological transformation from shaman to spirit turns to violent crisis (called the agsan state) because these people, not quite shamans, are unable to fully embody their shamanic spirits.

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WOVEN IDENTITIES: SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGE, WOMEN’S AGENCY, AND THE MAKING OF A HERITAGE ART IN JØLSTER, NORWAY

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ABSTRACT
This article focuses on the recent history and contemporary practice of a kind of traditional tapestry weaving known as smettvev in the rural county of Jølster in mountainous western Norway. Jølster has a rich fibre arts tradition and a rapidly changing society and economy, which make it an exemplary study in material culture as its fibre arts transform to accommodate these changes. This article draws on ethnographic research and interviews with representative practitioners and community members to examine how conceptions about producer and audience identity and the role of this art form in everyday life have evolved in light of changing context. The article furthermore discusses the ways in which the forms and motifs associated with smettvev are being re-appropriated by local contemporary artists working in other mediums, as well as by individuals and institutions who see smettvev as a symbol of local identity and heritage.

KEYWORDS: material culture • fibre arts • weaving • heritage • identity • rural studies

I first travelled to Jølster in 2012 while living in the northern Norwegian city of Tromsø. My family had immigrated from Jølster to the United States in the 1920s, and I grew up surrounded by stories and artefacts from Jølster, a location my American family members continue to refer to as “the home place”. I had been familiar with the names and faces of my Norwegian relatives through the letters and Christmas cards our respective sides of the family had dutifully exchanged, but got the opportunity to meet them face-to-face for the first time in 2012. During my visit, I became acutely aware of the absence of women’s voices in the ‘official’ histories and genealogies presented to me, as men’s names and stories seemed to dominate the written records. Conversely, I was struck by the quiet but tangible presence of female ancestors in the form of the colorful åkler that decorated relatives’ homes, and was intrigued by how my inquiries into the tapestries often brought out stories and anecdotes about the matriarchs who had made them.

* This research was supported by the Mellon Area and International Studies Fellowship.
In observing how my relatives interacted with and talked about smettvev textiles (see Photo 1), I became fascinated by the position these objects held as a heritage art and tangible placeholder for memory. I saw in my relatives’ relationships with inherited tapestries a memorialising of ancestors. While the physical realities of these material objects remained the same, their significance had transformed over time as they developed in relation to the lives of the producers and audience, taking on new meaning as heritage objects in light of contemporary situation (Glassie 1973; Williams 1977: 116; Mondale 1994: 17).

Thus, my study into contemporary smettvev weaving in Jølster begins with some key questions: What does it mean to call something heritage? More specifically, when does a cultural phenomenon or practice go from being a normal, everyday part of life to something a group of people re-appropriate to symbolise themselves, to encapsulate their identity? I explored these questions during fieldwork conducted in the summer of 2014, as I examined the evolving role of smettvev in relation to socio-economic changes in Jølster over the past century, and was particularly interested in the relevance of this traditional craft in the globalised lives of contemporary jølstringar. As I spent time in the area and witnessed how traditional weaving is being practiced and understood by younger generations, I became aware of the ways in which jølstringar utilise this craft and its associated symbols to perform identity. My observations led me to surmise that, whereas smettvev had fulfilled subsistence and ritual needs in previous generations, its current social position is largely that of heritage art and identity symbol. Younger generations of contemporary occupational weavers are motivated largely by their interest in this traditional form as a heritage art, even as some continue to rely on it for economic viability. This indicates a profound change in how smettvev is perceived by jølstringar; a reflexive reinterpretation – brought on by socioeconomic change – of this material form as heritage.

My research and analysis takes its cue from folklorists who have increasingly examined the impact of warfare, migration, creolisation, and changing political and economic structures on the traditional practices of discrete groups. Indeed, folklorists have come to understand that the persistence of tradition requires the dynamic interplay of continuity and change; and that tradition is fundamentally a process imbued with agency through which the past is used to shape the future in light of contemporary political, social, and economic forces (Widbom and Klein 1994; Glassie 2003: 176–177). Post-colonial theorists have likewise argued that the impact of the global economy has
not created a more homogenous world, but rather that groups of people have found traditional ways to localise globalisation by creating and performing highly local cultural forms through which they relate to and interpret the larger global context (Appadurai 1996). Folklorists and scholars in the humanities and social sciences have often engaged the intersection of global economies and local traditions either by critiquing the interventions of entrepreneurial outsiders and acquisitive consumers (Whisnant 1983; Becker 1998; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998) or, more recently, by advocating ethical economic development on behalf of local communities (Hufford: 1994; Seitel 2001; Urban Institute and Fund for Folk Culture 2003; Feltault 2006). Folklorists furthermore recognise that people use their past to shape their future in light of contemporary political, social, and economic contexts (Glassie 2003: 176–177). Therefore, comprehending the cultural impact of and response to economic situations necessitates an understanding of tradition as a mode of social engagement and agency by the folk.

My research furthermore takes its cue from scholarship on ethnographic reflexivity. Scholars argue for the need by ethnographers to understand the intersubjective relationships between themselves and their collaborators, focusing on how their own sociocultural placement impacts the context in which they do fieldwork (Salzman 2002). My application of reflexive theory in this study differs from this ethnographer-centred approach, however. I wish to use reflexivity to talk about the experiences of my Norwegian collaborators and specifically to show how jølstringar shape their identities through reflections upon self and community, drawing my inspiration from Alan Dundes’ (1966: 51) call to “elicit the meaning of folklore from the folk”. This shaping and understanding happens as reflexivity catalyses a “turning-back of the experience of the individual upon [themselves]” and thus is instrumental in “the development of the mind” and of perceptual identity (Strauss 1956: 211). I will demonstrate that the reinterpretation of smettvev as a heritage art in Jølster is a product of this reflexive phenomenon, which I term folk reflexivity. Furthermore, I will show that jølstringar’s folk reflexivity has been strongly influenced by socioeconomic changes in that community over the past century.

Over the course of the summer of 2014, I engaged in fieldwork amongst a diverse group of people ranging in age from 11 to 102, all with differing levels of engagement in fibre arts. My collaborators were occupational weavers, hobby weavers, shopkeepers, community researchers and collectors, grandparents who had grown up weaving, and the grandchildren onto whom they had passed their craft. In my conversations with these collaborators, I was continually struck by the avalanche of changes in the region brought on by the increasing wave of globalisation and capitalisation that has poured steadily into the area since the early 20th century. Through their narratives, I saw how the shifting economy, landscape, and growing mobility of the people had in turn shaped developments in their weaving tradition. I noted how locals responded to socioeconomic changes in Jølster over the past hundred years by transforming traditional fibre arts from crafts done to sustain the physical wellbeing of the people, to intangible cultural heritage that validates, defines, and sustains their identity. In this way, smettvev may be seen not only as embodying a social life of its own in this rural Norwegian district, but also as playing a role in shaping the larger social imaginary of jølstringar as they seek to understand themselves reflexively through the re-appropriation of this art and its associated symbols (Appadurai 1996: 31).
In analysing my research, I identified three eras in the emergence of fibre art heritage in Jølster as narrated to me through the living memory of my collaborators: pre-1945, when a subsistence economy dominated and weaving was an integral part of traditional lifeways; 1945–1980, when the economy began to shift dramatically towards a capitalist structure and a cottage weaving industry emerged; and finally 1980–present, which finds Jølster now fully integrated into the global economy and smettvev seen decidedly as a heritage art. Writing about how constructed events like museum exhibits and folklife festivals effect perceptions of cultural identity, James Abrams (1994: 26) refers to the shift from everyday cultural phenomenon to heritage practice as “cultural objectification.” He defines this to mean “the process of reifying previously taken-for-granted behaviours as cultural property and turning them into a medium for exchange”. Abrams’ observations on heritage in the context of exhibitions apply to my understanding of heritage as it is formed through folk reflexivity in Jølster. Certainly, in becoming a symbol for identity, smettvev has transformed into a means of communicating about (“exchanging”) identity. Furthermore, as the society and economy of Jølster have transformed to fit the capitalist model, value is increasingly ascribed according to the ability of something to be exchanged, whether in the commodity sense or in the sense of performing identity.

1920–1945: AN ERA OF SUBSISTENCE

Before and during World War II, Jølster was an insular community with an intrafamily subsistence economy that had evolved from the breakdown of the previously dominant feudal system. Capitalism and globalisation had begun to creep into the area en masse towards the end of the 19th century, as the founding of banks in several communities in the 1890s and first decade of the 1900s attests (Førsund 2001). Automobile roads, stores, and companies involved in importing and exporting goods and people to and from Jølster had also sprung up, but by-and-large the life of the average resident of this rural community remained dictated by the same socioeconomic structures that had been known in the region for centuries. Collaborators of my project born before World War II described growing up with traditional farm and familial structures and following traditional calendar cycles that dictated every aspect of work and play in their agricultural communities. For women of this era, the year was largely split between agricultural work in the warm months and textile work in the long night of winter.

According to my collaborators, weaving was a subsistence craft in this period performed to produce necessary fabrics and more decorative items needed to fulfil ritual practices. These included bridal coverlets called brureåkler (‘bridal tapestries’) woven in smett by brides-to-be or by other family and community members as wedding gifts or dowry items (see Photo 2). Svanhild Åhaug (b. 1921) of Ålhus remembered weaving her first smettåkle in preparation for her wedding. She said the åkle was hung up as decoration in the church during the ceremony and in the ungdomshuset, a community social space, for the reception. Other sources told me that the brureåkle was used as a coverlet on the wedding bed, its symbolic patterns and motifs imbuing the new relationship with luck, fertility, and happiness.

Pre-World War II collaborators like Svanhild narrated for me the yearly cycle of textile work, the preparations for which began in the spring when the sheep were shorn for
the first time. This was traditionally men’s work, but also often fell upon women, demonstrating that gender roles in Jølster are often more fluid than idealised social conventions would indicate. Svanhild noted proudly in our interview that her mother always sheared her own sheep. After this initial shearing, the wool would be stored, for there was too much outdoor work to be done in the warmer months to bother with handicrafts. Once the fall harvest was over, the sheep would be shorn again. Then carding equipment and spinning wheels would be brought into the house from a storage building called the eldstove and the women would begin spinning it into yarn. Svanhild said that wool from different times of the year had different consistencies and thus different purposes. Spring wool was softer and used for weft, while fall wool was short and coarse and best for warp. The women had until Christmas to finish preparing the wool, and then the looms would be brought into the main house so that they could begin weaving. Necessities would be woven first.

Brita Kongsvik (b. 1929) of Myklebust said her family would weave fabric for women’s clothing as well as men’s work and sleep clothes. Dress clothes for men would have to be purchased from a travelling tailor, as their presence in public life necessitated their use of more cosmopolitan dress. The women would also weave blankets, like kvitla. By the time Svanhild and Brita were born, most local women had abandoned natural homemade dyes and were using synthetic, store-bought versions to colour their yarn and cloth. However, the practice of dying the yarn used for weaving blue stripes into the kvitla with potteblått, a dye made by mixing fermented urine with natural blue plant dyes like indigo, was still known by Brita.

If there was still time left after the essentials had been woven, the women would begin on decorative and ceremonial items like brureåkler. Svanhild said that brides-to-be were often made exempt from weaving necessary items so that they could focus on weaving wedding coverlets and other textiles for their dowries. In addition to their use in wedding ceremonies, smettåkle were also often hung on the walls of the main house, serving both as decoration and as insulation. Brita and Svanhild both stressed that all weaving had to be completed a bit before Easter, as the looms needed to be taken out of the main house so that spring cleaning could begin in time for the holiday season. Svanhild indicated that the timeframe dictating the presence of the loom in the house was almost taboo-like. After Easter, the sheep would be shorn anew and the cycle would begin once again.
By the time these women were born, age-old textile folklore had already begun to break down and change as Jølster became increasingly globalised. The new-and-improved roads brought novel ideas to the community, which led to rapidly changing aesthetics for locals. This in turn brought a shift in ceremonial traditions involving textiles. While several of my collaborators mentioned having woven brukreåkler for their own weddings in the 1940s and 1950s, they indicated that this tradition was on its way out by the time they had grown to adulthood. From our conversations, it seemed that women in their mothers’ generation, who married in the first two decades of the 20th century, had been the last to practice this tradition by default.

While decorative and ceremonial uses for textiles had declined sharply in this period, it appears that the traditional cycle of textile work and the production of more utilitarian textiles was kept alive by need during World War II. My collaborators indicated that rationing during these years necessitated their reliance on traditional subsistence models, and thus whatever headway locals had made in becoming more connected with the global import–export economy in the pre-war years was sharply curtailed under German occupation. They said that wool continued to be spun and textiles woven throughout the war, and that completed textiles were used until they were worn out. As had been a common practice for generations, old blankets and tapestries would often be recycled to create new objects or retired to the barn, where they were used as blankets for horses.

1945–1960: AN ERA OF PRODUCTION

The post-war economic boom that stimulated the economies of many countries also came to Norway, and Jølster returned to the globalising trends that had begun to shape its society in the first decades of the 20th century. Brita Kongsvik indicated in our interview that her first encounter with hard currency happened after World War II, and all agreed that the post-war years brought much more economic capital to the region. Suddenly, value in the society began to shift from the self-sufficiency of family units to the purchasing power of individuals. Emphasis was increasingly placed on selling goods for export to larger cities like Bergen, and more and more the family unit was sustained not through homemade goods, but rather with food and fabric purchased with the money acquired by selling goods for export. Women were caught in a tough spot as economic realities changed. Few women worked outside the home or possessed skills marketable outside the domestic sphere they had occupied for generations. Despite this, women felt the pull to make money like everyone else, and many began to weave for production and sell their wares. Sale of traditional weavings, particularly smettåkler, had been on-going since the turn of the 20th century, but the industry took on a new identity in the post-war years. Before the war, only a few local outlets that catered to tourists, like Hotel Mundal in Fjærland, employed women weavers. Most women who wanted to sell their wares before the war had to know someone in a city like Bergen or Oslo willing to act as a middleman between them and the urban markets. In the 1950s however, local entrepreneurs opened stands and shops selling smettåve products, and a localised, predominantly female-driven curation of art traditions in light of external socioeconomic pressures and market forces resulted (Swain 1993).
An important local person in this movement was Audhild Viken (1915–2000) of Skei i Jølster. Though she was no longer living at the time of my fieldwork, Viken’s legacy was one I encountered continually during my summer in Jølster. Conversations with her son, Hallvard, and daughter-in-law, Eli, gave me further insight into Audhild’s life story. Faced with the prospect of supporting her family on her own after her husband became sick and unable to work in the 1950s, Audhild brought some of her tapestries to market in a nearby city. She found to her surprise that she was able to turn a good profit, and returned to Jølster inspired to continue weaving for production. Audhild eventually started biking around Jølster, buying up weavings from other women to bring to market or to sell at roadside stands. As her business grew, she purchased a building in Skei and opened Audhild Vikens Vevstove. The choice of this name for her business demonstrates how Audhild, like many entrepreneurs peddling regional products, used nostalgia to her advantage in the marketplace (Brady 1994: 142).

Audhild Viken has been an important source of income for many women in Jølster over the years. Even some men have been employed weaving for Viken, like Zakarias Dvergsdal, who had also learned to weave when he was a child. According to their daughter Margrete, Zakarias and his wife Jorunn (b. 1929) wove side by side for years, producing large tapestries for Viken. At the time of my research, Jorunn was still weaving for the shop, which is currently operated by Hallvard and Eli Viken. (See Photo 3.)

Svanhild told me that the income she received weaving for Audhild Viken allowed her greater independence than her mother or grandmother before her. She said making her own money helped her to retain her independence even after marrying. Before this time, women had few property or monetary rights. Traditionally, they were expected to come into a marriage with a dowry of textiles and other useful items that would become part of their husband’s property. Women would also usually leave their own families and move to their new husbands’ farms. Svanhild was frustrated by this fate, especially given how women of her generation were gaining more opportunities in education and employment. She commented in our interview on how her marriage had brought an abrupt end to her life as a modern working girl in the meieri:

I was used to making my own money because I was ‘younger’, you could say, and then suddenly something changes, no way! My neighbour, she used to say that when we were younger, we took care of ourselves and used our money as we
pleased. When we got married, then suddenly we were nothing! She was kind of right, you know.

Svanhild said that it was this frustration that inspired her to start weaving for Audhild Viken. Svanhild said she would get about 1,100 kr for a large, wedding-style tapestry, and often used this money to buy luxuries, like store-bought birthday presents, which she said had previously been inaccessible to her as an economically isolated married woman.

This new focus on production changed the way traditional weaving was practiced in Jølster. Audhild Viken provided looms and materials to women interested in weaving for her, which both standardised and streamlined the process. Svanhild mentioned that both she and her mother, Johanne (who also wove for the shop), stopped processing their own wool and spinning yarn when they started weaving for Audhild Viken. Svanhild says she only wove for Audhild in the winters as she had farm work to contend with during the warmer months. However, while she kept to the traditional cycle of textile work out of ease, she did not follow the ritual taboos of moving the loom into the house after Christmas and out again by Easter. Instead, she said it was easier to just leave her loom set up year-round. She said she appreciated this new freedom because, in her words, “we didn’t want to be slaves”.

In addition to providing materials, Audhild Viken also collected and distributed patterns to weavers around Jølster. Weavers had relative freedom in their productions, but were usually tasked with weaving certain kinds of textiles based on their experience level and equipment. Many patterns the weavers used were traditional, but others were more nuanced. While even traditional patterns had certainly changed as styles came into and out of vogue in previous generations, my conversations with weavers indicated that innovation seemed to occur with greater frequency in the post-war era. Svanhild noted that the more “secular” purpose of these textiles allowed individuals to get creative with their designs and fashion interpretive pieces she and others referred to as fantasåklar (‘fantasy tapestries’). Scholars have elsewhere documented this kind of innovation in traditional arts produced for an outsider or tourist audience (Whisnant 1983; Causey 1999). (See Photo 4.)

Ceremonial uses for textiles were still known in the post-war years, but by the time women like Svanhild, Brita, and Jorunn had daughters of their own, it was relatively rare for brides to weave brureåklar. Only Svanhild mentioned that her daughter had used a brureåkle for her wedding in the 1960s. The tradition of giving smettåklar and other textiles for weddings remained, but my informants indicated that these items tended to be woven by someone other than the bride, such as an older female relative.

The rise of weaving collectives in the post-war years also led some locals to purchase these ceremonial items rather than making them at home.

Aesthetics in weaving also changed to fit the new consumer base, which during this time included locals, Norwegians from outside the area, and tourists. Large, traditional smettåklar were still purchased, but because of their cost and the diminishing importance of their ritual significance, weavers had to alter the products they made to fit the needs and desires of customers. Smaller items like table runners thus became popular. The practice of weaving more utilitarian items like kvitla likewise fell by the wayside, as all-purpose, factory-made blankets could now be purchased, and outsiders were more interested in colourful, eye-catching smett pieces. I think it is telling that I could not
find a single person in Jølster still weaving *kvitla* in the summer of 2014.

Many of the people weaving for production in the post-war years had learned the craft at home when it was still part of the subsistence model. However, a new generation who had not grown up with this art form was coming to the fore, and accommodations had to be made to teach the craft to younger production weavers. Audhild Viken’s collaborator Aud Sunde (1930–2007) travelled around Jølster giving lessons to local women who wanted to weave for the shop. It was also around this time that home crafts began to become institutionalised in the area with the founding of trade schools teaching domestic arts. The *Heimyrkjeskule* (Home Trades School) in Vassenden i Jølster, was founded in 1945, and many of the women I spoke with in my research, including Jorunn, had been educated there. Schools like this brought a new perspective to the art as they stressed learning the theory and mechanics of weaving above tradition and taught students forms of weaving not native to the area. Jorunn indicated that forms of weaving seen as more practical to the modern housewife were stressed over more traditional styles like *smettvev*. Additionally, more universal styles were taught, further eliminating indigenous practical items like *kvitla*. In keeping with the proliferation of Danish-influenced ‘folk schools’ throughout the Nordic region, the school brought in teachers from outside the community to instruct students in home-crafts. Jorunn remembers a Danish weaving instructor from her days at the *Heimyrkjeskule*.

**1970–PRESENT: AN ERA OF HERITAGE**

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Norwegian economy underwent a dramatic change after the government began extracting oil from its maritime territories in the North Sea. Continued extraction and fruitful investment strategies brought substantial economic growth to Norway in the decades that followed. While Norway had historically been one of the poorest of the Scandinavian nations, by the 1990s it had surpassed its neighbours and
former colonisers Sweden and Denmark in economic growth and capital for the first time in centuries (Røed Larsen 2006: 606). These profound economic changes thus led to a period of intense urbanisation and centralisation in Norway, and in Jølster, this translated to many people abandoning life on farms in small villages for jobs in the larger towns.

The village I spent the summer living in, Sanddalen, is a good example of this. Before the 1970s, Sanddalen had a population of about 70 people, and many families in the village had children. The village had its own store and primary school. In the 1970s, the school closed, and the children were sent to the larger town of Vassenden. Gradually, people filtered out and the store closed as well. The owner, Ingvald Hylderås, told me that he could not compete with the chain stores that were popping up in larger towns like Vassenden and Skei. Now that nearly everyone had access to transit by automobile, it was cheaper and more efficient for villagers to drive to the central towns and do their shopping where the selection was greater and the prices lower. Today Sanddalen has a population of about 30, and only a few families have children. In previous years, the village was full of small farms scattered throughout the valley, but today a select few farms dominate, some operated by single families or individuals, and others operated by multiple families who have chosen to consolidate their herds and facilities in hopes of lower production costs and greater returns. (Interview with Arne Reidar Solheimsnes, 2014) This pattern is a common one in Jølster, and it has become more so in recent years as increasingly neoliberal federal government policies bring in cheap food imports from other countries and legislation is passed in Norway favouring large, mechanised farming operations (Brennpunkt 2016). Meanwhile, small farmers in Jølster and elsewhere were actively protesting against these trends locally and at coordinated events in cities during my fieldwork in the summer of 2014 (see Photo 5).

Photo 5. An empty farm near Vassenden i Jølster, bearing a sign reading “Every nation needs its own food – just not us”. Protest signs and art responding to national farm politics peppered the landscape in Jølster during the summer of 2014. Photo by Colin Connors.
Educational expectations and realities also changed to accommodate the new system. Many of my older sources, like Svanhild and Brita, received little to no formal education, but noted that by the time they had children, education through high school was an expectation. This left little time or need for learning traditional handicrafts in the home. The Heimyrkjeskule continued as a trade high school under the name Mo og Jølster vidaregåandeskule (Mo and Jølster High School), and other schools and courses like it sprung up around the area periodically. But in June of 2014, Mo og Jølster vidaregåandeskule closed its doors for good as a part of centralisation efforts by the government of Sogn og Fjordane. During my time in Jølster that summer, I heard many locals express their dismay at the school’s closing. An emigration of young people seeking education and jobs has been on-going in the Jølster for some time, and this most recent development would mean area youth spending even less time immersed in what many jølstringar described to me as their “native” landscape and culture.

For some, the push out has also meant an incentive to return with an even stronger feeling of belonging to this landscape and its history, a phenomenon I see as indicative of contemporary folk reflexivity in Jølster. Jeweller and metalworker Anne Lise Øvrebø (b. 1978) returned to her native village of Ålhus for artistic inspiration after several years spent away at schools and apprenticeships. She now lives full-time in this hamlet of about 100 people with her husband and children, and owns Øvrebø Smykkeverkstad (Øvrebø jewelry workshop). Anne Lise attended Mo og Jølster videregåandeskule as a teenager studying art and metalworking. She eventually went on to an apprenticeship program in filigree, working under jewellery makers in the southern Norwegian district of Setesdal, and then apprenticed under a goldsmith in Oslo. She said that she chose her profession because she needed something she could “live off” (‘survive on’) and “live for”, citing her desire to stay in her hometown, creating pieces that are grounded in her sense of place and person. Her current work is thus sleek and modern, but is strongly influenced by her training in traditional techniques and her identity as a jølstring.

Anne Lise said she grew up in a traditional community, surrounded by local art and smettvevtapestries, and learned to weave as a child. While she never became a serious weaver, Anne Lise inherited her grandmother’s pattern book, and used a samrose motif to create a line of smett-inspired jewellery for her business (see Photo 6). Much of Anne Lise’s other work likewise takes influence from forms that characterise Jølster, such as a line of jewellery featuring the floral symbol of Audun Hugleikson, a successful medieval chieftain from Jølster, as well as a collection modelled after an åkle tapestry designed by Nikolai Astrup (1880–1928), a local artist revered in the area. Some of her most popular items are from her “jølstring” collection, a line of necklaces and cuff links stamped variously with the texts “jølstring”, “halv [‘half’] jølstring”, “kvart [‘quarter’] jølstring”, and “wannabe jølstring.”

Anne Lise’s example demonstrates the many layers through which the individual’s perception of heritage is formed. Anne Lise’s heritage and identity is defined not only by her experience as a native of Jølster immersed in the artistic forms of this locale, but also by her experiences living in other areas of Norway and being educated in other artistic pedagogies, both localised and globalised. An individual’s perception of identity does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is formed using frames of reference acquired through experiences both within and outside of the community. Furthermore, heritage
is defined locally by the community and the individual, who choose those things they wish to celebrate. However, heritage also *defines* the community and the individual, shaping identity and sense of self. As the Norwegian scholar Mikkel Tinn (2011: 213) argues, self-perception is firstly predicated upon cultural situation: “Long before we understand ourselves through self-reflection, we understand ourselves through family, society, and state”. Heritage therefore shapes our self-perception, even as we shape it through our social imagination and layers of experience. Heritage is a kind of collective memory that we fashion and codify, and the way that we shape it says as much about our perceptual identities as does the content of the heritage itself. Tinn (ibid.: 209) quotes Edmund Husserl’s declaration that “tradition is the power to forget the origins”, acknowledging that we not only receive heritage as a timeless inheritance, but also construct and shape it to reflect our own lives and what we want to believe about them, even as those who came before us shaped tradition to their situations. Tinn posits that traditions must therefore have “living meaning” – i.e. relevance in the multifaceted lives of their practitioners – in order for them to continue. Heritage is thus necessarily constructed, transforming in tandem with the lives of its practitioners, and thereby maintains its relevance. It has likewise been noted elsewhere that tradition, while popularly conceived of as a token of the past, is in fact “an aspect of contemporary social and cultural organization” (Williams 1977: 116; emphasis original).
For Anne-Britt Lotsberg (b. 1968), an occupational weaver in the county of Eid about an hour north of Jølster, maintaining the contemporary relevance of smettvev is vital to the continued success of her home business. Anne-Britt grew up in Fjærland, a village located on the other side of the glacier Jostedalsbreen from Jølster. Fjærland was kept relatively isolated well into the late 20th century for lack of roads, and is known for its particularly long-lived weaving tradition, which shows many holdovers from older forms that have disappeared in other areas. For example, unlike weavers in Jølster, who have been weaving on more mainstream flat looms for several generations, contemporary weavers of Fjærland continue to use old-style upright looms (see Photo 7). Growing up in Fjærland, Anne-Britt was surrounded by women weavers and other artisans, including her boat building grandfather and her mother, whom she said had a gift for drawing. Anne-Britt said she has always been particularly interested in smettvev, and started copying her grandmother’s colourful weaving patterns onto graph paper as a child (see Photo 8). Eventually, she branched out to collect patterns from around Fjærland, going from farm to farm with her notebook and taking down patterns from women, “because everybody had something different”. During our interview, Anne-Britt offered something of a genealogy of her interest in weaving, saying she started out copying down patterns because they were nice to look at, and gradually became more aware of the heritage value of the art form as she grew older: “When I started drawing patterns, that was when I started thinking that it was nice to preserve them. Well, collect; yes, it was mostly about collecting. Preserving them came after.”

Photo 7. Anne-Britt Lotsberg at her loom working on a commissioned smett tapestry with non-traditional heart motifs for an upcoming wedding. Photo by the author.
Many local women, including Anne-Britt’s grandmother, were connected to the tourist souvenir trade that grew up around the village’s main attraction, the glacier Jostedalsbreen. The language Anne-Britt used to talk about the women who wove for production alludes to this, as she said they wove “til breen” (‘for the glacier’). Hotel Mundal, Fjærland’s tourist resort, employed many women weavers to decorate its spaces and provide souvenirs for its customers. Anne-Britt recalled the gutting of the hotel that she witnessed as girl, and expressed her relief that she managed to get pictures of some of the largest and most impressive tapestries before they were thrown into the dump:

But think about [all the patterns] I have managed to collect, because I know that much of it has just burned. When they cleaned up after all these old ladies who died and didn’t have kids... And the people who cleaned up, they didn’t see the value – and this was what happened at the hotel too – and they chucked it all! They chucked tapestries, rugs – such luxurious tapestries; they were so luxurious. They had a loom at the hotel that was five meters long. You know, they could fit five ladies on the bench when they were making big rugs. I have a picture from one. Or a pattern, yeah. And that one – At that point they had cleaned out the hotel... And they were going to renovate, and they wanted a wooden floor rather than the carpeted one, so they pulled out all these fine tapestries. And I just thought, “Oh!” And it all went right in Kaupangerskogen, in the landfill. Right in the landfill, you know? And I am so glad, I managed to – I dared not go in and ask – think about if I had asked if I could have it, you know? No, I didn’t dare do that. I wasn’t that old yet. But I took pictures of it. Snuck up there and took pictures of it.
In 2000, Anne Britt quit her day job working for the county government and started weaving full time, selling her wares by word of mouth. She said that her customers are mainly Norwegians, locals and people from other areas of the country, like Hordaland, a province several hours to the south that has its own localised version of *smettvev*. Anne Britt said she gets most of her income weaving large, commissioned pieces for special occasions like weddings, confirmations, and business openings. She also keeps a stock of smaller items, like runners and pillow covers, and said a lot of customers buy these items to decorate their cabins, which they want to look traditional. Despite the traditional qualities inherent in Anne-Britt’s craft, however, she is in fact continually transforming her style to fit the aesthetic sensibilities of a younger audience. During my visit, she showed me a stack of ‘modern’ runners featuring a traditional pattern, but woven with more a conventionally fashionable colour scheme (see Photo 9). A tapestry featuring a non-traditional, asymmetrical heart pattern was in progress on the loom, a commissioned piece for an upcoming wedding. While she staunchly maintains her use of traditional techniques, weaving on the old-style upright looms of her home village, Anne-Britt told me that she is not afraid to bend the rules to create innovative pieces that younger people will want to buy. She said that keeping her products interesting to younger generations is a key part of maintaining a successful business over the long term. Anne Britt also does a variety of other fibre arts like knitting, quilting, and embroidery, and keeps a stock of these items on hand to fill gaps in income between her sales of lucrative tapestries.

Despite her thoroughly modern and nuanced approach to traditional weaving, Anne-Britt’s community conceptualises her craft with a more nostalgic gaze. In October of 2014, Anne-Britt was featured on the popular Norwegian television program *Norge Rundt*. Anne-Britt’s segment, which was entitled “Ho har ein utryddingstrua hobby” (‘She has an endangered hobby’), opens on a scene of Anne-Britt sitting outside her husband’s ancestral home, putting the finishing touches to a tapestry whose pattern, the narrator announces, dates back to the 13th century. The segment goes on detail how Anne-Britt’s
The craft had been placed on the **raudliste** (‘red list’), a list of endangered cultural practices and art forms curated by the *Sogn og Fjordane Husflidslag* (2014). This particular media portrayal is certainly an example of how her craft is exoticised and romanticised by the broader Norwegian society. Whereas this practice is a way of life for Anne-Britt that is simultaneously traditional but also moulded to fit her contemporary situation, for popular Norwegian society, it is a dying craft reminiscent of a previous era. Anne-Britt appears cognisant of the ways in which she is exoticised, joking in our interview about how she has become “*utdøyande rase*” (‘a dying race’).

To complicate this notion, it can be said that the segment also gives publicity and a platform to Anne-Britt as a traditional artist, which she then uses to further her own ends. Robert Baron (2010: 66) argues that, although

> [c]omunity members and their cultures may be objectified, but at the same time they may exercise agency to provide perspectives about their traditions on their own terms, advance their interests, and enable their traditions to flourish anew as a result of exposure to new audiences.

My interactions with Anne-Britt have demonstrated to me that she is proud to be a part of revitalisation and documentation efforts, and similarly takes advantage of the platforms she is provided through local arts organisations and the popular media to perpetuate *smett* weaving in the region. Anne-Britt is passing along her craft to her two young sons as well as to an interested neighbour girl, and voiced her desire to continue this living tradition in the *Norge Rundt* segment:

> We get to see to it that this doesn’t all go in the book of forgotten lore. Now we get to try and see if we can teach someone after-all. I want to do my part to make sure it doesn’t die out. (Bakke 2014)

Anne-Britt’s example is not an uncommon one. Nostalgia is a powerful and, arguably, productive force that has allowed for the commodification and exchange of traditional cultural forms for economic and social gain (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Cashman 2006). Often, traditional artists must consciously shape and curate their forms to make them desirable by the consumer audience, a phenomenon folklorist Andrew Causey (1999) refers to as *conflation*. Causey describes conflation as happening through the transfer of traditional forms to non-traditional media as the subject of his study, a Toba Batak woodcarver named Partoho, uses ritual styles and motifs to decorate a secular, Western-style table lamp, which Partoho hopes to market to tourists. This shaping and curating can also occur in the way that traditional arts are talked about and conceptualised, as in the example of Anne-Britt in the *Norge Rundt* special, where the ‘ancientness’ of her craft was highlighted by proximity to an historic building and references to the medieval age. The validation of traditional arts through the exaggeration of ancientness, characterisation of art forms as static and timeless, and the invoking of the nostalgic gaze has been well documented elsewhere as a mode through which folklife is commodified and understood by consumers, both native and tourist (Boon 1982: 26; Graburn 1984; Simpson 1993: 166–168; Becker 1998; Goertzen 2010).
FROM WEAVING TO BRANDING

While only a handful of individuals remain who regularly weave *snett*, its associated symbols and motifs are being re-appropriated in new ways to represent identity. Examples of this include the translation of traditional *snettvev* motifs into other media by artisans like Anne Lise Øvrebo and Kari ‘Kajsa’ Astrup Geelmuyden, a local potter who stamps her pieces with *snett* designs (see Photo 10). Jølstringar are also reappropriating *snett* into a symbol at the institutional level. An example of this is the logo adopted by the county government of Jølster a few years ago featuring the common *klo* pattern, a simple but ancient motif that is the basis for many other designs. The fact that the government chose to represent itself with this motif rather than another, more nuanced or contemporary pattern demonstrates their desire to harken back to ‘origins’ and to identify with ancestors. Additionally, their decision to depict this pattern in a colour scheme that was most common in the era before synthetic dyes* shows their willingness to remember and preserve an ‘authentic’ time that, in reality, few people alive in Jølster today still remember. The extraction of this motif from its traditional form and context, and its re-appropriation as an official identity symbol represent the transformation of this art form into an “instantly recognizable,” “infinitely reproducible” metonym for *jølstringar* (Anderson 1983: 175). Furthermore, the contemporary, non-traditional applications of *snett* designs show them to be a mode by which the temporal space of the past and the temporal space of the present are connected through images and symbols (Tuan 2004: 10–15).

*Photo 10. Pottery by Kari Astrup Geelmuyden stamped with the klo pattern. Photo by the author.*
Smett has become a successful brand symbol in Jølster over the past few years as this art form is re-appropriated into the popular culture. Smett designs can now be found in silk screened clothing items and mass produced accessories, and as advertising logos for local events like Aurefest, a popular summer fishing competition and festival in Jølster. In 2014, the winner of the fishing competition received a new car featuring custom smett decals. This prize was so popular, the festival organisers have continued to repeat this concept in the years since, and again in 2017 the winner of Aurefest will drive off with their own sleek automobile stamped with regional symbols, a prime example of the navigation of the local and the global, the ancient and the modern, happening in contemporary Jølster.

The re-appropriation of smettvev as heritage art and identity symbol represents the agency jølstringar have in understanding, shaping, and responding to their current context as this symbol becomes a medium through which locals negotiate their positions as both natives of this district and participants in the global culture and economy. The uses of smett motifs in official discourse, commercial production, and in the artistic creations of jølstringar thus represent the reflexive reinterpretation of this craft as a heritage art through agentive negotiations by the folk.

NOTES

1 The word åkler (‘tapestries’) is used in this article to refer specifically to tapestries done in the traditional geometric style know as smett or smettvev, the focus of this study. Same as smettåkler.

2 Smett is a geometric tapestry-weave style known in various localised forms across Western Norway. In Jølster, smett can be done in either dobbelslyng or enkelslyng (double-interlocking or single-interlocking weft). For further technical descriptions of this style and examples of patterns, see Myklebust 2013, Noss 2005, Ramstad 2005, and the collections of Sunnfjord Museum in Førde, Norway.

3 The words smett and smettvev will be used interchangeably throughout this article.

4 Demonym; people from Jølster. Singular: jølstring.

5 My fieldwork collection from that summer includes 424 digital photos, 7 digitally recorded interviews, and approximately 50 pages of field notes. The pool of people I interacted with directly for this research through formal interviews (some digitally recorded and some simply notated) and visits numbers about 20. My interactions with research participants often happened through material objects, such as by sitting with an individual and asking questions as we looked through their tapestry collection or watching and even sometimes participating as an individual demonstrated techniques on the loom or spinning wheel. Interview participants were more or less invited to tell freely, with guiding questions along the way. The questions I asked to guide my interviews varied from person to person, but often focused on how this particular individual had come to learn the craft or about the craft; what the craft had meant to them growing up; and what the craft meant to them in their contemporary life. Older participants were solicited for more in-depth histories of smettvev in the region, whereas younger participants were relied on to give information about the relevance of smettvev for younger generations in the contemporary era.

6 Certainly, the economic development of Jølster is more complex than my superficial outline suggests. Capitalism had been present in the area for centuries as feudal lords and their families exploited the labour and environmental resources of the region in their dealings with external commercial entities, such as the Hanseatic League, which had a strong presence in nearby Bergen. Indeed, the feudal model is a relatively recent memory in Jølster, as my interview with
Arne Reidar Solheimsnes (2014) about the geography and history of Sanddalen indicated. Jølster also lies along a historic thoroughfare from Bergen to Trondheim, and many of the older people I met during my fieldwork who had grown up before a modern automobile road was built recalled travelling tailors, salesmen, migrant Romani, and others moving through their villages and at times even requesting room and board at their farms. People from this region furthermore experienced transnational contact through friends and relatives who immigrated to the United States in droves during the 19th and 20th centuries. Many jølstringar who remained at home received letters and care packages from Norwegian-American relatives, and some immigrants even returned home to Jølster after a time, bringing new ideas and new money back with them. Therefore, by suggesting that the local economy in this region has transformed from subsistence to capitalist over the course of the past hundred years or so, I do not intend to deny the obviously complex economic history of this region. Rather, I mean to focus on the ongoing period of intense change as experienced by everyday jølstringar over the course of the past century. While this period is not unprecedented in the changes that it brings, it has certainly brought sweeping change at a faster rate than ever before.

7 Kvitla are traditional, all-purpose woolen blankets. They are usually white with blue stripes and edging. These blankets were a ubiquitous household accessory in pre-industrial Jølster, but my interactions with locals indicate that they have lost a degree of social capital in the contemporary era.

8 Scholars have elsewhere noted the survivalist factors that have led to the commodification of folk arts. See Spooner 1986: 214–220; Causey 1999: 424–425.

9 A vestløve is a traditional building on a farm reserved for weaving.

10 The Vikens have in recent years turned their attentions away from marketing local smett products in favour of supplying more mass-produced items that sell well amongst tourists. Conversations with Hallvard have indicated to me that he no longer sees the sale of local hand weavings as a sustainable venture. However, the Vikens have started a line of mass-produced accessories featuring smell designs.

11 A small factory for producing dairy products like butter and cheese.

12 In 1950s–1960s currency; today, large tapestries go for around 4,000 kr, which is around $500.

13 While fashions have certainly changed in Jølster, it is still common to give a tapestry for a special occasion like a wedding, confirmation, or business/building opening. Workers at Jølster Design, a hand weaving business located in the village of Myklebust, told me that most of their custom orders are for these kinds of events. However, while the rituals surrounding giving such textiles are traditional, the tapestries themselves are often not. Jølster Design, for example, specialises in computer assisted hand weaving on jacquard looms, and produces very modern artworks that are sometimes based on photographs of people or landscapes.

14 Hasla, the company where Anne Lise apprenticed makes both contemporary pieces and traditional Norwegian jewellery known as solje. Anne Lise learned to make a kind of solje native to the Setesdal region during her apprenticeship. While visiting with her in her workshop, I noticed she had a large traditional pin she made hanging alongside the diploma she received for graduating her apprenticeship.

15 My translation.

16 None of the weavers I talked to in Jølster, even the eldest informants, had ever seen anyone weaving on an upright loom. Many even seemed a bit confused by my descriptions of such looms when I asked, implying that this concept was entirely foreign to them. However, despite the fact that looms in Jølster are in the flat style, many weavers continue to keep their warp taught using weights (ljødd), a more archaic mode not found in a lot of mainstream Western weaving.

17 Anne-Britt used the word digre, which can be more directly translated as ‘thick’ and implies the sturdiness and quality of these tapestries.
18 Sogn og Fjordane’s provincial division of Norges Husflidslag, a national craft society sponsored by the Norwegian government and accredited as an NGO by UNESCO. Its raundlisa (‘red list’) project seeks to identify and document endangered cultural practices in the region, and create programing and courses designed to perpetuate these endemic practices.

19 Red, black/brown, and yellow, the colors used in the logo, were easiest to achieve with the natural plant dyes most readily available in the region in pre-industrial times.

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The process of buying and selling alcohol, when it happens on an interpersonal level in a microsociety, goes beyond a simple exchange of material values. In such trade there is always a moral (or immoral) context. Moreover, interactions on the subject of alcohol are the reflections of interethnic and political relations when representatives of different social and ethnic groups participate.

On the basis of ethnographic field materials I would like to characterise the participants in alcohol-related interactions in order to reveal the motives for their behaviour and perception of each other. My aim is to describe the communicative culture that has been established between the home-made vodka traders (home-distilled vodka producers), alcohol buyers and activists fighting for temperance.

In the title of my report* there is a reference to the microsociety of national settlements in Chukotka. Informal economic relations take place within particular settlements; the main thing that is involved in these relations is alcohol. Outside the settlement the connections between traders and buyers do not work and the network of interactions breaks.

To mark out the participants in the alcohol trade I will present the structure of settlement microsociety in Chukotka from a very generalised perspective, based on my experience of staying in these settlements and on some statistical data.

In order to demonstrate this I have made a scheme (Figure 1) that illustrates how participants in alcohol-related interactions are allocated in the settlement microsociety of Chukotka.

1) Newcomers – ‘Russians’, employees of government-financed organisations, teachers, doctors, administration workers, allochthonous population: 5–10% of the economically active population (EAP).
2) Native inhabitant elite – elders, representatives of the Association of Indigenous less-Numerous Peoples of Chukotka, educated native inhabitants: 7–15% EAP.
3) Indigenous people with no or low income – unemployed, low-skilled workers, free hunters and fishermen, native inhabitants with a low level of education: 70–85% EAP.
4) Reindeer breeders – reindeer-breeding nomad camp dwellers: 7–10%.
5) Sea hunters – workers of sea animal catch artels: 4–7% EAP.

People of these conditional groups are participants in alcohol-related interactions:

1) Purchasers (85–90% EAP). Alcoholism and drunkenness among the indigenous

* This research was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, within the research project titled Alcohol in the Micro-Society of Chukotka Settlement: Ethnographic Research of Ethno-Cultural, Social and Economic Interactions, project no. 15-31-01272.
population of the Chukotka settlements are serious problems and, accordingly, the demand for alcoholic beverages remains stable. According to unofficial data from medical workers and leaders of the administration, 23–47% of the adult population in the Chukotka settlements are addicted to alcohol.

2) Home-distilled vodka producers, so-called bootleggers (1–2% EAP). In addition to legal shops, alcohol is offered by those who produce home-made alcoholic drinks (braga and home brew). These people have a distinct position in a settlement’s social structure and economy: they receive some part of the household income from selling home-made alcohol, they have a great psychological impact on buyers and, at the same time, they feel constant public pressure.

3) Temperance activists (1–3% EAP). Measures available to fight against the illegal distillation and sale of alcohol are limited at present by the public pressure to home-distilled vodka producers. Public pressure is created by a small group of temperance activists. These people do not take part in the buying and selling process directly, although they affect the trading process, making attempts to ruin it and an make impact on the economic side of the interactions between traders and buyers.

A subdivision of trade participants on an ethnic basis is observed: most of the bootleggers are newcomers, Russians, Ukrainians and other representatives of non-indigenous peoples, while the buyers are mainly indigenous Chukotkans, such as Chukchis,
Eskimos, and Evens. Temperance activists are mainly of mixed ethnic background.

In the everyday life of the settlements alcohol buyers, temperance activists and sellers interact continuously. The nature of these interactions depends on cultural differences, specific features of economic behaviour and accepted unspoken rules.

Informants emphasised that these are in particular ‘Russians’ who produce home-distilled vodka; native inhabitants, according to my informants, do not produce or sell home-distilled vodka. I can see several reasons why native inhabitants were not included in the group of traders.

1) A cognitive division of labour made by native inhabitants separating ‘their labour’ and ‘Russian labour’. Producing home-distilled vodka, as with all activities not related to traditional economics, is the ‘labour of Russians’.

2) Gender segregation of labour within the culture of native Chukotkans. Producing home-distilled vodka – as a peculiar kind of food preparation – is from the perspective of traditional culture women’s labour. Male representatives of native peoples think that doing women’s labour contradicts traditional gender roles.

3) Peculiarities of labour culture, which reject regulation in the labour sphere. Producing home-distilled vodka is in compliance with the technological process, presupposing a certain self-organisation and regulation of activities – all characteristics that restrict the freedom of the native inhabitant. This is why they are not interested in distilling alcohol even though it can be particularly lucrative.

Relations with the producers of home-distilled vodka, and interaction with them, is closely connected with the native inhabitants’ concept of the alcohol. Native inhabitants of Chukotka connect this product with the supernatural. In speech they avoid naming alcohol directly or talk about it allegorically. Chukchis name alcohol using the word *e'k'imyl*, which can be translated as ‘bad water’. The word has a high value in the worldview of the Chukchis, Eskimos, Yukagirs; similarly everything that is somehow connected with supernatural is not articulated in everyday life.

The producer of home-distilled vodka as the person who makes alcohol is also considered to have supernatural abilities. According to the narratives of my informants, these abilities are manifested in the ability to influence weather, bedevil people, and use magic in order to fight enemies and influence people.

At the same time the magic power of the producer of home-distilled vodka, in the worldview of native inhabitants, appears to be linked to the territory where he sells alcohol, particularly in the settlement. If a producer goes to another territory outside the borders of Chukotka, he not only loses his supernatural abilities, but various misfortunes follow him and his family leading ultimately to death. Similar ideas point to a connection between producers of home-distilled vodka and local ghosts, who allow the producers to sell the alcohol.

The behaviour of the buyers during the bargaining process depends on exchange traditions and the communicative culture of buyers. For example, reindeer breeders in most cases did not purchase alcohol directly, they prefer to use dealers. Intermediation in the trade was the traditional means Chukchis communities. Before the Soviet period the dealers – *ka'ral'yt* (literally ‘turners’), usually coastal Chukchis – travelled around the nomadic reindeer-breeding camps and performed commodity exchange. They had personal connections with reindeer breeders and knew the exchange traditions.

The process of purchasing alcohol by the native inhabitants differed from case to case but can be divided into two main types. Firstly, an ambiguous formulation of the arrival purpose, embarrassment, con-
fused expressions. The second is the reverse behaviour: a loud knock on the door or window, shouting, noise close to the home of the producer, arrival at night, aggression if the door is not opened or the alcohol is not sold.

The first type of behaviour is inherent to people who have maintained the connection with traditions. One of the important communicative rules that should be followed during the process of mutual transmission of the present or object of exchange within Chukchi and Eskimo cultures is verbal and nonverbal veiling of the process. This explains the difficulty in the formulations explaining the aim of the buyer after arrival, as was mentioned by all traders with whom I talked. Among Chukchis it is not acceptable to discuss a bargain, the etiquette does not allow one to express one’s wishes openly. It is expected that the trader himself is able to understand the buyer’s needs.

For the second type of behaviour I would like to suggest two explanations, grounded on the cultural peculiarities of Chukotka. The buyer’s loud behaviour can be considered a deviation from native etiquette, appearing to be a reaction to ‘Russian’ activity. Rumbling and noisiness when arriving at someone else’s home contradict the communicative traditions of the native inhabitants of Chukotka. Traditionally the arrival of a guest presupposes moderate behaviour. Any breach of the traditional etiquette during alcohol purchase is a cognitive attempt to become ‘Russian’ for the time of the bargain.

A buyer’s behaviour when purchasing alcohol can be compared to the behaviour of a hungry child who goes to his parents. The child does not know the norms of behaviour, he or she demands, shows need, begs, and if he or she is not given what is wanted, becomes hysterical, shouts and cries. The trader or ‘parent’ can scold, objurgate or even beat the buyer as the buyer’s behaviour is considered to be acceptable. The interaction between alcohol trader and buyer in this case can be characterised as the relationship between parent and child.

Paternalism towards Chukchis and Eskimos was inherent to the producers of home-distilled vodka, as is common to Russian newcomers in Chukotka. Projection of family metaphors to other social relations and situations, including trade, are inherent to native inhabitants. That is why the roles of trader (parent) and buyer (child) can be considered designations of the alcohol trading culture of settlements in Chukotka.

The group of temperance activists consists of a native inhabitant elite. They are people of mixed ethnic background who have education and work to save traditional culture and revive national traditions. In the economic sense, temperance activists work with the aim of negating the bargain – they interact with buyers, persuading them not to buy alcohol, and also interact with traders persuading them not to sell alcohol. As a result, temperance activists are situated between buyers and traders both economically as well as ethnically.

The movement against producers of home-distilled vodka is a confrontation between native intellectuals and ‘Russians’ – newcomers, strangers, who occupy jobs and have an influence on culture. This is not only a fight against alcoholism but also a hidden fight against an alien impact on a native culture.

Anastasiya Yarzutkina (Chukotka Branch of North-Eastern Federal University in Anadyr, Russian Federation)
The organisers of this year’s Siberian Studies Conference invited scholars to discuss a variety of topics relating to the emotional dimension of Siberia and the Russian North. The managing team attempted to open the topic to a wide range of researchers and proposed themes connected to emotions from every possible point of departure: marriage, kinship, taboos, social rules, language, memory, power, industrial development, landscape and tourism. Instead of a widespread approach to Siberian indigenous cultures through the discourse of technology and rationality, traditional knowledge of the environment and communication with spirits and souls, the conference was conceptualised (as one could read from the call of papers) around northern laughter and tears, screams and whispers, around affection and dislike, love and hate. The hesitation of scholars to study or even to take into account Arctic feelings and lack of academic tools to explore the sense of Siberia inspired the convenors to provoke the academic community to start thinking collaboratively about these topics.

The main organisers of the event came from the Department of Siberian Ethnography at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Saint Petersburg. The venue of the conference was the Russian Geographical Society, which facilitated the proper emotional framework for the whole event with its solid history in Nordic exploration. The co-president of the organising committee, Vladimir Davydov, admitted in his opening speech that the theme of emotion in the North was risky for such a prominent international scientific event. But notwithstanding this, the organisers managed to receive more than one hundred applications for presentations. However, it also became evident in the course of the conference that scholars felt slightly insecure with this thematic paradigm. The overall feeling was that the papers presented somehow constituted an incomplete whole, as researchers were not always completely sure what to talk about. Similar hesitation also ruled in the audience’s mind.

For example, after the presentation about BAM (the Baikal–Amur Mainline, a 4,300-km-long railway line constructed between the 1930s and 1980s, one of the most lauded, but also controversial, construction projects in the Soviet Union), delivered by Olga Povoroznyuk and Peter Schweitzer, an experienced voice from the audience raised the rhetorical question: “Was our heroism ideological or real?” And the same voice from the epic past gave us a methodological piece of advice: “Romanticism must be estimated objectively.” A particular view on the role and style of science claims that

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no space can be left for obscure emotion in research, and neither in life. We see that the deconstruction of emotions is especially complicated in cases where the delicate but straightforward feelings of real people are involved.

As the reader may already have guessed, the conference was by no means an unexciting scholarly meeting. In the course of the forum twelve thematic sessions and round tables, the screening of documentary films, and two plenary lectures were arranged. In addition to which we had the opportunity to enjoy a display of folk art items made by indigenous artisans from the Taimyr Peninsula, and musical performances by Nganasan musicians.

Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, from the Higher School of Economics in Saint Petersburg and Andrei Golovnev from the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Yekaterinburg delivered the plenary lectures. Ssorin-Chaikov employed the anthropological notion of the ‘affective turn’ and explored the spontaneous reactions of his indigenous field partners, the reindeer herders of the Siberian Far North. Ssorin-Chaikov stressed the need to conduct micro-ethnography and to concentrate on cultural practice in particular settings and unexpected situations that may last just for a few minutes. Ssorin-Chaikov argued that an exploration of affects enables us to reveal “the microtopography of mutual relationships” that is related to wider social field and reciprocal economic practices.

Andrei Golovnev discussed the emotions of the Arctic nomads from a rather different angle. Golovnev explored reindeer herders’ experience against the background of the universal conceptual frame of power, sex, kinship, freedom, prestige and faith. In his analysis Golovnev concentrated on different emotion-related motifs that drive nomad behaviour in everyday life situations, as well as their general emotionally loaded life philosophy.

Conference sessions were dedicated to the topics of museums and memory, tastes and smells, discomfort during field encounters, feasts and rituals, industrialisation and mobility, kinship, political and economic strategies, language and oral history. These themes were discussed within the framework of emotion, which connected all reports in a more or less conventional whole. Particular topics ranged from the Siberian indigenous peoples’ shamanic rituals and folk orthodox religious symbols, to food and alcohol consumption, practices of collective work and festivals, to perception of the landscape, animals and humans in the North.

This almost incomprehensible assortment of presentations indicates that emotions penetrate all aspects of human experience in the Arctic. But it also reflects the problem that the habit of discussing the emotional effects of the North on human behaviour is not yet settled in the studies of Siberia and the Russian North. The whole event was bound together by the intellectual excitement of the participants and overwhelming enthusiasm of the conference convenors, especially that of Dima Arzyutov.

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Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics (JEF), the journal of the University of Tartu, the Estonian National Museum and the Estonian Literary Museum, welcomes articles in the research areas of ethnology, folkloristics, museology, cultural and social anthropology. JEF is a peer-reviewed journal, issued two times per year.

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Editorial address:
Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics
Estonian National Museum
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ISSN 1736-6518 (print)
ISSN 2228-0987 (online)