



ANNA-LEENA SIIKALA AND OLEG ULYASHEV

Hidden Rituals and Public Performances

*Traditions and Belonging among the Post-Soviet Khanty,
Komi and Udmurts*

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Acknowledgements

The great break in the structure of society in the early 1990s in Russia highlighted the cultural aspirations of indigenous and minority ethnic groups. The Finno-Ugric peoples wished to affirm their identities by cherishing their tradition and bringing it to the fore. Cultural festivals have a long history going back well into the Soviet period, but from the 1990s on they have been considered more important than hitherto. Both the normal experts in tradition and representatives of the state have participated in preserving and publicly supporting their own cultures. Foreign researchers have also been invited to the cultural festivals. The present volume arose as a result of field work conducted among many of the Finno-Ugric peoples. We began our systematic field work together among the Khanty of Shuryshkary in northern Siberia and the Komi of the Ust'-Kulomsk region of the Komi Republic in 2000, though we had both been to Shuryshkary among the Khanty in the 1990s. Because Oleg Ulyashev is Komi and Anna-Leena Siikala is also a representative of a related people, the Finns, the reception afforded us was positive. Oleg was at home in the Komi region, and the framework for the field work was hence excellent. Irina Il'ina from the Ethnographic Institute of the Komi Scientific Centre arranged many trips to the areas inhabited by the Komi, and spared no effort in equipping us for our journeys to Siberia too.

The collaboration between Finnish researchers and the ethnographic department of the Linguistic, Literary and Historical Institute of the Komi Scientific Centre has been sealed by the work on the Encyclopaedia of Uralic Mythologies series. The Encyclopaedia built up a strong network in the 1990s to bring together researchers interested in the religious traditions of the Finno-Ugric peoples. The researchers of the ethnographic section of the Komi Scientific Centre under the leadership of Dr Nikolai D. Konakov were the first to prepare and publish, in Russian and English, a mythological work in the series, and collaboration between Finnish and Komi researchers has continued ever since. In Anna-Leena Siikala's first trip to Shuryshkary, Dimitriï Nesanelis and Valeriï Sharapov also took part, the latter being a travelling companion also in 2000. Thanks go to the Komi Scientific Centre and the leadership of the ethnographic section. Without the Centre's positive approach it would have been difficult to arrange trips.

The Academy of Finland funded several research trips during the project. Our research queries were formulated particularly during the projects *Myth, History and Society: Ethno-nationalism in the Era of Globalisation*, and *The Other Russia: Cultural Multiplicity in the Making*. In addition to the support of the Academy of Finland and the Komi Scientific Centre, the local official approval and the enthusiasm of the local bearers of tradition have helped bring about the publication of this work. We thank the cultural section of the Shuryshkary district government and the Regional Museum of Local Lore in Muzhi for help over many years. The professionals, intellectuals and culturally interested officials helped in the arrangements for our trips. Special thanks go to the head of Vosyakhovo village, Valerii Ivanovich Konev, who made possible the trips to Vershina Voïkar. The inhabitants of small Khanty villages, with whom we stayed during our field trips, took us into their families and gave us the information we needed. Our guide Nikolaï Nikitich Nakhračëv showed himself over the years to be the finest expert on his own culture. His brother in Kazym-Mys welcomed us heartily. Time spent in Ovol'ngort with reindeer-herder Pëtr Nikitich Longortov, his wife Varvara Petrovna and their children will always stay in our memory. The inhabitants of Ust' - Voïkar, especially Yuriï Ozelov and his family and friends, and Martin Rebas' from Vershina Voïkar offered their assistance and provided us with important information. Our Russian friends living in Muzhi, Alexander and Nina Balin, offered us help and friendship. We would like to thank them too and also all the inhabitants of Kazym-Mys, Lopkhari, Muzhi, Ovgort, Ust' - Voïkar, Vershina Voïkar and Vosyakhovo who helped us but are not named here. In the references, we only use the names of those informants who agreed to be mentioned in our publication; others are referred to by using initials or first names.

As Oleg Ulyashev is Komi, we received a warm welcome in all the Komi villages. In Vol'dino, we learned a great deal about the Komi song tradition at the home of Polina Alekseevna Ulyasheva and her singing companions. An important source of information was Yuliya Pavlovna Sergatova, who for many years led the Vol'dino folklore collective. In Bol'shelug, Bogorodsk, Izhma, Kortkeros, Nivshera, Pozheg, Troitsk, Vol'dino and Vyl'gort we got to know song groups and their leaders; thanks to them we were able to assemble some important materials.

Anna-Leena Siikala began field work among the Finno-Ugric peoples in 1991 in Udmurtia. The first field trip was organised by the National Museum of the Udmurt Republic; warm thanks to Serafima Lebedeva and her colleagues. Prof. Pekka Hakamies was a companion on many of these trips; with him, good relations were established with the inhabitants of Karamas Pel'ga, Kuzebaevo and many other villages. In particular the friendship of Lidiya Orekhova, the chair of the cultural society Kenesh, and Ol'ga Mazitova, her large family and the singers of Karamas Pel'ga, has warmed the heart over many years. Prof. Kaija Heikkinen and journalist Kirsikka Moring shared the unforgettable experiences of one culture trip. We wish to thank all, both institutions and individuals, who guided us in our research into the traditions of the Khanty, Komi and Udmurts, and their meanings.

The folklore department of Helsinki University provided working space and infrastructure for the project. It welcomed large numbers of foreign researchers into the project. The collaborative atmosphere and warm spirit of the institute's teachers and researchers was a good foundation for the research work. Research into folklore traditions of many peoples brings with it linguistic problems. Marja-Leea Hattuniemi's help on matters relating to the assembling of literature relating to the Finno-Ugric peoples, the perusal of materials and translating from Russian was irreplaceable. In transliterating Russian we have used the Standard English system (with *ы* marked by *y*). In addition to university courses, we received teaching in Northern Khanty from linguist Fedosiya Longortova, who originates from our research village of Ovolynkort. Prof. Vladimir Napol'skikh has also provided help in questions about the Khanty language, has translated various narratives and songs and provided Latin names for the Siberian birds and fishes. Merja Salo checked the transcription of the Khanty words and gave information on the dialectical variation of words, as well as providing Latin names for the Siberian fauna. The Komi researcher Galina Misharina has checked the English versions of the Komi songs. Clive Tolley has over the years translated our articles on the Khanty and Komi, has made many editorial comments and given help with the fonts. We thank all these people warmly.

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Anna-Leena Siikala

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Abbreviations

A.-L. S.	Anna-Leena Siikala
O. U.	Oleg Ulyashev
V. N.	Vladimir Napol'skikh
A. W.	Anna Widmer
rec.	recorded
b.	born

Representations of the
Russian Finno-Ugrians

I

Why are Khanty shamans still active? What are the folklore collectives of Komi? Why are the rituals of Udmurts performed at cultural festivals? In their insightful ethnographic study Anna-Leena Siikala and Oleg Ulyashev attempt to answer such questions by analysing the recreation of religious traditions, myths, and songs in public and private performances. Their work is based on long term fieldwork undertaken during the 1990s and 2000s in three different places, the Northern Ob region in North West Siberia and in the Komi and Udmurt Republics. It sheds light on how different traditions are favoured and transformed in multicultural Russia today. Siikala and Ulyashev examine rituals, songs, and festivals that emphasize specificity and create feelings of belonging between members of families, kin groups, villages, ethnic groups, and nations, and interpret them from a perspective of area, state, and cultural policies. A closer look at post-Soviet Khanty, Komi and Udmurts shows that opportunities to perform ethnic culture vary significantly among Russian minorities with different histories and administrative organisation. Within this variation the dialogue between local and administrative needs is decisive.



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