

# Valuing Difference

## Bear Ceremonialism, the Eastern Khanty, and Cultural Variation among Ob-Ugrians

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**Abstract:** This article draws on a large archive of original video documentation to complement ethnographic literature to provide the first description of modern Eastern Khanty bear ceremonialism and locate it in relation to the traditions of other Ob-Ugrian groups. The comparative analysis of Ob-Ugrian bear ceremonial traditions underscores fundamental differences in the function of such ceremonies, highlights foundational elements of local group identity, and suggests ways in which Ob-Ugrian groups interacted with adjacent populations.

**Keywords:** bear ceremonialism, identity, Ob-Ugrian, revival, ritual, variation, visual anthropology

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Although linked together linguistically as Ob-Ugrians, the relationship of cultural forms among the communities of Khanty and Mansi people widely dispersed across western Siberia has never been clear. Given the vast extent of their historical territories—from west of the Urals eastward across the basins of Ob' and Irtysh Rivers—and the difficulty in accessing isolated Ob-Ugrian settlements, west Siberian ethnography has emerged as a mosaic focused on one or another local subgroup.<sup>1</sup> Ethnographers conventionally denominate these subgroups by their historical territories or by dialectical differences, as Northern and Southern Mansi and Northern, Eastern and Southern Khanty, terms we shall also use. The southern Mansi on Losva River are very much reduced, and the Southern Khanty no longer exist as an identifiable ethnographic community or dialectical group. Of the extant groups, the Eastern Khanty is perhaps the least well-known, though it is among the most numerous and most widely distributed. Eastern Khanty settlements are found along the Iugan, Salym, and Balyk rivers,

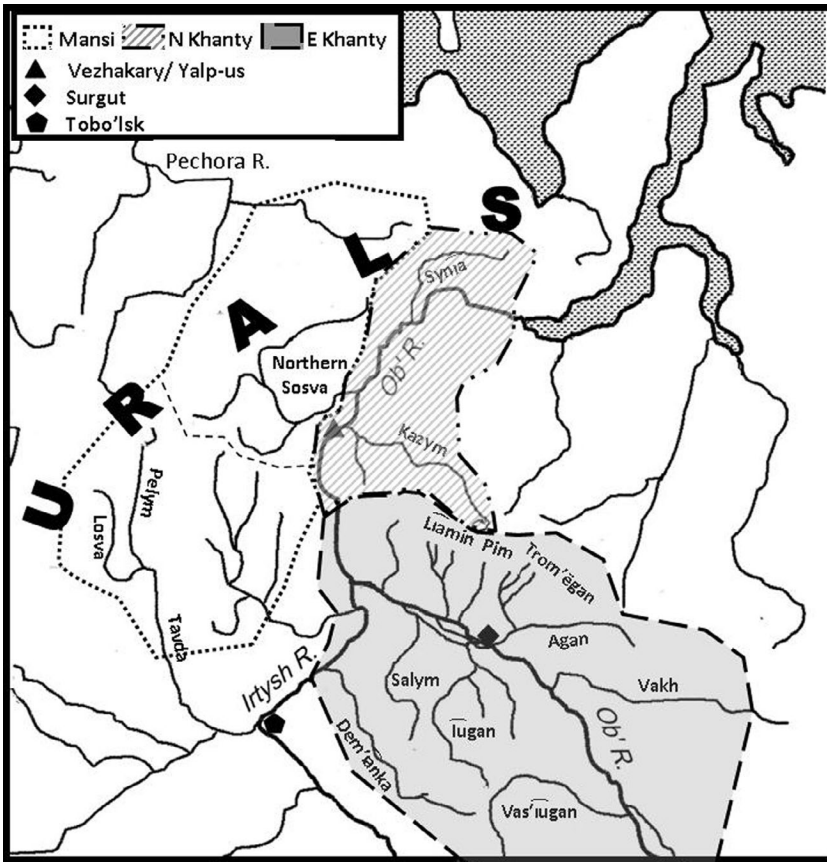


left bank tributaries of the middle Ob'; the Vas'iugan River, a left bank tributary of the lower upper Ob'; and the Dem'ianka River, a tributary of the Irtysh River. On the north side of the middle Ob', Eastern Khanty speakers live along the Liamin, Pim, Trom'egan, Agan, and Vakh rivers (see figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

For a number of reasons, the conventional dialect-based distinctions, while not inaccurate linguistically, are insufficient for characterizing Ob-Ugrians culturally. As one might expect of widely dispersed communities, indigenous peoples much more carefully discriminate local residence groups, often by collectively identifying themselves as "the people of a particular river" (Khanty, *iakh*, e.g., *iayun iakh*, Iugan River People). Historically, these river residence group identities were reinforced by both imperial and Soviet administrative practices. Despite the impact of acculturative forces and contrary to the popular tendency to make unqualified generalizations about the Khanty or the Mansi, contemporary Siberian indigenous communities still regularly deploy these residence group identifications based on distinctions of speech, marriage patterns, descent systems, beliefs, and customs (Lukina 2004: 24, 49; Wiget and Balalaeva 2011). And historical patterns of interaction—especially trade, conflict, and marriage—wove more complex patterns of inter- and intraregional relationships.

This article provides the first complete outline of the Eastern Khanty bear ceremony tradition and so more clearly the Eastern Khanty cultural formation in relation to the other Ob-Ugrian groups, especially the Northern Khanty and the Mansi. Although our primary research has concerned the Eastern Khanty almost exclusively (Wiget and Balalaeva 2011), like most Siberian ethnography, it was not comparative. This article takes the first modest steps toward addressing that general need for a broader comparative framework that has emerged from the historical mosaic of west Siberian ethnography. It also examines the possibility of significant but previously overlooked intraregional cultural variation, especially among the Eastern Khanty, a possibility suggested by the wide distribution of Ob-Ugrian communities coupled with their intensive localization as river residence groups. Our field research suggests that important regional variations can be identified by comparing bear ceremony performances, a cultural form common to these groups.

Attending to such cultural variation, what we call valuing difference, is doubly important. For scholars, such variation may suggest how populations interacted with others, as the Eastern Khanty did with Mansi, Northern Khanty, Forest Nenets, Selkups, Kets, and Tatars. At



**Figure 1.** Historical territories of current Ob-Ugrian river residence groups.

the same time, [redacted] variation can highlight the foundational elements of local group identity, which is a matter of significance for Ob-Ugrians as well as scholars (see Pivneva 2011). At one point, for example, during a discussion of ways to support cultural heritage preservation and the Bear Festival revival, we heard an indigenous Ob-Ugrian legislator insist on the importance of it being “done correctly,” as if there were a single canonical form rather than a dynamic folklore tradition with regional variants. On another occasion, while leaving a Northern Khanty Bear Festival in Kazym, we overheard a young Eastern Khanty woman from the Bol’shoi Iugan River who, not knowing her own tradition, lamented, “O how much we have lost!” Her exclamation might be construed more usefully as a question, one this paper aims to explore.

We have been documenting bear ceremonialism traditions throughout western Siberia since 2008.<sup>3</sup> To supplement the ethnographic literature, we have developed an extensive video archive documenting modern bear festivals, totaling more than 125 hours, 80 hours of which we ourselves originally recorded. The authors also availed themselves of the few publicly available commercial and non-commercial videos. Unless otherwise indicated, all video sources are original field documentation of performances at the location and date indicated. Our Mansi colleague Svetlana Popova and Kazym Khanty colleague Timofei Moldanov generously made their own recordings available to the authors and are not responsible for the conclusions drawn from them. Throughout this article, these videos will be identified by the following abbreviations, which point to the site and date of their performance, the videographer, the length and digital form of the documentation, and the identity of the singers if known:

*Mansi* (no singers)

- K Kimk'iasui, R. Northern Sosva. 1994. Popova, S. 18.9 GB, MPG. 5h 29m.
- H Khulimsunt, R. Northern Sosva. 1994. Popova, S. 18.2 GB, MPG. 5h 24m.
- L Lombovozh, 2001. R. Liapin. Popova, S. 54.2 GB, MPG. 14h 09m.
- LP Leplia, R. Leplia. 2020. Popova, S. 80.2 GB, AVI. 6h 35m.

*Northern Khanty*

- TMB Torum Maa, Khanty-Mansiisk. 1990. Mikhailov, A. N. "Medvezhii Prazdnik Khanty Berezovskogo Raiona." Nauchno-Metodogichkogo Tsentr of Khanty-Mansiisk. Russia. VHS to Stream. 31.5 m. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8Rn0ISuV5s>.
- BDO Sengepov settlement, R. Kazym. 2005. Kornienko, O. and Moldanov, T. "Bear Dancings on the Ob River." Surgut, Russia: Studio OK. DVD, 28 m. Singer: Timofei Moldanov.
- O Ovalymgort, R. Synia. 2007. Longortova, Z. "Severnye Misterii." Salekhard, Russia. Yamal-Region TV. DVD. 33 m.
- KZ Kazym, R. Kazym. 2015. Wiget, A. 58 GB, AVCHD. 24h 21 m. Singers. Timofei Moldanov, A. Yernikov.

*Eastern Khanty*

- SOT Aipin Settlement, R. Agan, 1985/1988. Meri, L. "Torumii pojad"/"Sons of Torum." Tallinn: Eesti Film, 1989. DVD. 60 m. Original Estonian language version available at <https://www.efis.ee/en/film-categories/movies/id/6720>. Singers: Petr Kuplandeev, Ivan Sopochin.
- TMY Torum Maa, Khanty-Mansiisk. 1990. Mikhailov, A. N. "Medvezhii Prazdnik Khanty Surgutskogo Raiona." Nauchno-Metodogichkogo Tsentr of Khanty-Mansiisk, Russia. VHS to Stream. 32 m. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cw5msoZMvCg>. Singer: Petr Kuplandeev.

- L Larlomkiny settlement, R. Bol'shoi Iugan, 1995. Moldanov, T. 61 GB, MPEG (digitized from VHS original). 24h 4 m. Singers: Petr Kuplandeev, Petr V. Kurlomkin.
- K1 Kiniamino settlement, R. Malyi Iugan, 2010. Wiget, A. 46.3 GB, MPEG, 26h 41m. Singers: Sergei V. Kechimov, Ivan G. Kanterov.
- K2 Kiniamino settlement, R. Malyi Iugan, 2016. Wiget, A. 55.7 GB, MTS/MPEG. 21h 40m. Singers: Sergei V. Kechimov, Iakov Tailakhov, Viacheslav Kogonchin.
- P Pesikova Settlement, R. Pim, 2021. Wiget, A. 28.2 GB, MTS. 8h 25m. Singers: Semen G. Rynkov, Daniil N. Pokachev.

From this video archive, we carefully documented the setting, event sequence, and manner of performance. We have also transcribed and translated texts of songs, narratives, and side conversations, as well as interviews with the participants, though a comparison of song texts is beyond the scope of this paper. Analysis of these materials reveals significant differences in the structure, function, and performance of bear festivals among Ob-Ugrians, as well as significant intraregional variation among Eastern Khanty residence groups. These variations disclose important information that helps to establish relations among all these groups.<sup>4</sup>

## Regional Traditions of Ob-Ugrian Bear Ceremonies

Ob-Ugrian bear ceremonialism entails certain rites associated with hunting, killing, and skinning bears before the celebration as well as with the final disposition of the bear's bones after the celebration. However, our focus is on the most complex and public intermediate phase, the elaborate community celebration that has come to be spoken of in Russian, even by Khanty and Mansi, as a *medvezhiĭ prazdnik* (bear festival) or *medvezh'i igrishcha* (bear games), or in Eastern Khanty as *voi ėk* (animal dances) or *pupi kot* (the Bear's House), and in Mansi as [redacted] (beast dances) or [redacted] ('to dance the beasts). These community celebrations have attracted the attention of ethnographers from the beginning. Historically, the ethnographic literature describes Northern Khanty and Mansi as having two forms of bear ceremonials: a *sporadic* form, which took place after a bear was killed, and a *periodic* form, which was a much larger calendrical event, held every seven years in a large communal house at a town site called Vezhakary/Yalp-us, whose patron's avatar is a bear (Baulo 2016; Chernetsov 1968, 2001; Popova 2016). Northern Khanty and Mansi colleagues say the periodic form is


no longer practiced, and contemporary performances are only of the sporadic type. Knowledgeable Eastern Khanty colleagues report that they never had such a periodic form. Their bear ceremony was only performed after having killed a bear, although not every killed bear was so elaborately celebrated. Several Eastern Khanty from both Iugan and Trom'egan rivers told us that in their youth, when a bear was killed but a bear ceremony was not performed, a small, brief ritual of prayers and a few songs was made nevertheless by the hunter and his family behind their house. V. M. Kulemzin describes a much shorter indoor event among the Eastern Vakh Khanty, which his host referred to as a "big Bear Festival," although it transpired over a single May evening (1972: 95).

Among all Ob' Ugrians, the performance structure of the bear ceremony is fundamentally bipartite. The first part, or the opening days (depending on the gender of the bear guest), are characterized by songs, dances, and dramatic folk skits. The second part, the last day, is marked by the appearance of specific personages, the identity and appearance of which significantly differentiates Mansi, Northern and Eastern Khanty bear ceremony traditions. The following performative components appear in Ob-Ugrian bear festivals, whether Northern Mansi, Northern Khanty, or Eastern Khanty. The recurrence of these common elements in the bipartite structure led to the assumption of a basic Ob-Ugrian form, a view succinctly expressed by M. B. Shatilov that "celebrations to honor the slain bear are everywhere the same except for some variations in the details" ([1931] 2000: 177). In actual performances, the components identified below, while following the basic order of performance, differ in both the paradigmatic selection of each component's specific elements and in their syntagmatic arrangement (see Glavatskaya 2005; Vasylenko, 2016). We provide new data from Eastern Khanty traditions, which underscore how these differences enable us to more carefully identify regional traditions in ways that challenge the perception of a single, unitary Ob-Ugrian bear festival form.

1. *Definition of Performative Time and Space.* Performative time consists of several nested temporal frames, the broadest inaugurated with the arrival of bear in the village, which is signaled by rifle shots and shouts, and closed by its removal from the village after the festival. Within the arrival-removal frame is a second frame, embracing the time of the festival proper, which begins at night (or in a fictive night created by covered windows) and ends at dawn; the length of the celebration is determined by the age/gender of the bear taken—three



days if a cub, four days if a female, five days if a male. There can be considerable variation here, though the frequency with which necessity forces compromises that shorten the festival suggests this is an ideal. The 1995 Larlomkiny festival for a huge she-bear was compressed into a three-day ceremony (Tat'iana Moldanova, personal communication, September 2020), though N. V. Lukina points out that "among Southern and Eastern Khanty the holiday usually lasted 3 days" (1990: 181; 2009–2010: 151; see also Vizgalov 2000: 249), thus the assumption of a gender-based duration may result from a mixture of traditions. Two of the Eastern Khanty celebrations (L, P) were shortened, while the Torum Maa (TMY, TMB) presentations were less bear festivals than demonstrations. Finally, nested within the frame of the festival proper is the festival "night," which is defined not by the diurnal cycle but by performative elements, such as special songs to wake the bear and put it to sleep.

Among Eastern Khanty the festival usually takes place in the home of the hunter. Northern Khanty (BDO) and Mansi (K, ) also celebrate in a home, but they also have a tradition of building special larger houses for communal celebrations (Northern Khanty KZ, Mansi L; Chernetsov 1968, 2001). The bear is brought into the house in different ways. Among the Mansi and Northern Khanty, the bear is brought in through the front door, often after first being repulsed several times by a resident armed with an ax (KZ). Among the Eastern Khanty, he is brought in through the back window, which is removed (L, K1, K2), a reflection of how historically the bear was lowered in through the roof (SOT). The exception to this among the Eastern Khanty was P, a small private ceremony, to which we were invited as observers by the host Agrafena Pesikova, a prominent Eastern Khanty colleague; there the structure of the celebration was determined by the two invited singers, one from the Upper Pim River and another from the adjacent territory on the Upper Trom'egan, who had performed together for some time. At P, the Northern Khanty procedure of bringing the bear in through the front door was repeated, the first of many behaviors to suggest a distinction among Eastern Khanty traditions that linked Pim-Trom'egan to the Northern Khanty (KZ) on one line and to the Iugan-Agan tradition on another. Another is the Northern Khanty-Trom'egan practice of preserving in the cache house after the festival the whole bear's head, wrapped in cloth, which then is brought out as the guest of honor in subsequent festivals or to which one can appeal for various issues. The Iugan tradition is different. They do not preserve the whole bear's head, but separated the skull from the pelt, consumed the bear's meat,

and put the bear's cleaned skull on the roof of the cold porch or the front porch-ledge of the raised cache house. The Eastern Vakh Khanty marked the four or five days of the festival by removing each day a portion of the pelt from the head until it was entirely skinned (Shatilov [1931] 2000: 175). Finally, in contrast to the Eastern Iugan Khanty, neither the Eastern Khanty at (P) nor the Northern Khanty (KZ) closed the window curtains to create an artificial "night."

Once inside, the bear is placed in the honored place. Among most groups, this place is on a table or the sleeping platform set against the middle of the back wall, though among some Mansi groups, it was set near the corner of the back wall. These locations are significant. The axis from the middle of the back wall to the front (and only) door opposite is considered a path from the upper world of the deities to the earth surface world of the house. Eastern and Northern Khanty reindeer herders position their sled with images of the family patron deities outside the house behind the center of the back wall. At Pim (P), a sapling of the sacred birch tree was planted in this location. Before beginning that bear festival, invocations and bloodless sacrifices (*pori*) of lengths of symbolically colored cloth were made there. One length of red cloth was first laid on the ground during an invocation to T'eres Nai Angki, Mother of the Fiery Sea, because, we were told, "there is water under the earth," a reference to the cosmology of the Khanty creation story. A song was sung and a skit performed that reenacted the hunting of the bear in its den and the skinning of the bear. The red cloth was later carried down to the river and laid on the grass of the riverbank with offerings of coins to the goddess, while the white cloth, dedicated to Torum, the high god, was carried about fifteen feet up a birch tree and tied there as an offering (Rud' 2018).

Most Eastern Khanty bear ceremonies (SOT, TMY, L, K1, K2) are readily distinguished from Northern Khanty and Mansi bear ceremonies by the construction of a special house for the bear, *pupi kot*, made by interleaving wood splints into grids, four by four if a she-bear, five by five if a he-bear (SOT, TMY, K1, K2). On the front vertical splint of the wall near the bear's right paw, between each horizontal splint, a notch is cut, the total signifying the number of days of celebration and the gender of the bear. To the same vertical splint is tied a fresh branch of the Siberian stone pine and a string made of ribbon or twisted roots about a meter long, to which is attached a small bell or other means of making a jingling sound. The string will be shaken continuously by the singer seated nearby to ring the small bell during the waking and sleeping songs. At K1, the hostess of the house put a small stone under



the oilcloth on which the [redacted] stood, on the right side. This calls to mind the funeral rite of the Eastern Khanty, in which the stone blocks the road obstructing evil spirits (Kh. *yetek kantakh*; R., [redacted]). The exception to making *pupi kot* was again P, but it is also not mentioned among the eastern Khanty of Vakh and Salym rivers, which may point to a Iugan-Agan core tradition among the Eastern Khanty (Kulemzin 1972; Vizgalov 2000: 249). As elsewhere, the bear, its head still attached to its gathered fur and resting on its paws, is carried into the house on a large flat birch bark box or “cradle” (SOT, K1, K2), in deference to the myth of the bear’s divinity and its first lowering from its heavenly home as a cub in a cradle (though in L, it was brought in a tin washtub, perhaps because of the huge size of that bear). At P, again an exception, this cradle was made by interleaving crossed branches within a hoop.

Once seated in the place of honor, the bear is richly clothed and adorned according to its gender, scarves and beads for a female bear, a cap for a male. Coins or birch bark disks are placed over its eye sockets, from which the eyeballs themselves earlier had been removed. Food such as berries, fish and meat, drink (usually vodka), and tobacco are placed before the bear, as well as dough figures representing reindeer and game. A bowl is set near the bear’s head to receive monetary offerings. Among the Iugan Khanty, behind the bear, on its table, is placed a basin containing the bear’s heart, liver, and other organs (K1, K2, Wiget and Balalaeva 2011: 237). Next to it is placed an open birch bark box with the thigh meat of the bear (K1). Eastern Khanty block the bear’s nose and mouth by inserting an oblong or diamond-shaped piece of wood (Kh., *panek-iukh*) vertically into the table exactly in front of the bear’s nose and mouth (SOT, TMY, L, K1, K2, again not P). This piece, which Agan Khanty describe as a simulacrum of an arrowhead (Perevalova and Karacharov 2006: 163), serves to prevent the bear’s spirit from harming guests if they speak too disrespectfully about the bear, according to our Iugan host, Egor Kiniamin.

Human persons initially entering or finally exiting the performance space are cleansed with handfuls of snow in winter or water in summer or autumn. The special nature of the space is maintained by circling the room with a small smoking fire to drive out evil spirits. The opening action each day is the greeting of the bear, first by the men, then by the women. Each guest approaches, bows before the bear, and kisses its paws and forehead, then turns around sunwise before leaving the presence of the bear.

2. *Verbal Art.* After the bear is established in the place of the honored guest, clothed, adorned, and provisioned, and greeted, the festival

proper opens with songs. Among Mansi, and most Northern and Eastern Khanty (O, P are exceptions), the days begin with a “waking song,” waking the bear, telling it that it has been sleeping—that is, not dead—and that it is already late for the celebration (Lukina and Popova 2020: 4–5; Moldanov 2002, 2004: 6). The waking song is accompanied by the ringing or other jingling sound produced by a small bell or another means attached to a string fixed near the bear and pulled rhythmically by the singer, who tells the bear he has only been sleeping, that is, not dead, and now he must wake to celebrate (SOT, TMY, L, K1, K2). Then comes a series of bear songs, which retell the story of how the bear came to be lowered down from the sky by his Heavenly Father, of his travels and life on earth, and how he came eventually to be in this place where he is being honored. Although at the time of the Mansi video recordings no singers remained among them, such songs are well-documented in the ethnographic literature (Lukina 2016; Lukina and Popova 2020). The bear songs are followed by dances and skits. After each day’s waking song and bear songs come songs for individual deities. Among the Eastern Khanty, according to the late Petr Kurlomkin of the B. Iugan, the first three songs on the first day are songs for the deities Kon Iki (the high god, Torum), Voi Ort Iki (the patron of meat animals, especially moose), and As Iki (the patron of the Ob’ River) (Wiget and Balalaeva 2011: 138). It is not clear that there is a particular order here. At Kin-yamino in 2010, Sergei Kechimov, an invited Eastern Khanty singer from Trom’egan, sang about the three young thumb-sized brothers, unnamed in the song, which he identified for us in a subsequent interview as Kon Iki, Evut Iki, and Yavun (Iugan) Iki. Other mythological songs follow. Song texts may be paraphrased and recited when singers are unavailable. This is made easy because most mythological songs are narratives. We met such a song paraphrase in 2021 on Pim, when one of the singers told us he improvised parts of the song because he had forgotten the exact words at those points, but he remembered the fabula. Guests may also volunteer or be invited to sing. It is important to maximize participation in entertaining the bear. The first day, and all subsequent days but the last, end with a song or dialogue announcing that the hour is late and past time for all, including the bear, to sleep, and the bear’s head is covered, signaling the end of the day.

Mythic and oral-historical narratives may also be recited. Among the Eastern Khanty such narratives commonly appear. Individuals may come and sit before the bear and tell myths, tales, family history, or even personal narratives of encounters with bears. Narratives are sometimes stimulated by reflection on a previously performed song.

When songs are few, or there is a slowing of the rhythm of the performance—because something should always be happening—someone may call for a story to recover the momentum of the performance. This was certainly the case among the Eastern Khanty of the Iugan in 2016 (L2) when the third day was almost entirely occupied with narrative performances. Another variation is the lament or complaint. On the Iugan at both K1 and K2 we witnessed an elderly woman, mother of the bear host, who sat on the floor in front of the bear, close by, and slowly swaying her upper body back and forth, poured out her lament to the bear. The personal intimacy of this moment contrasted strongly with the formality of bear song performances, especially in the North.

There is some variability in the daily order of components and in the number of singers. Especially among Northern Khanty, the first days (redacted) depending on the gender of the bear guest) follow a prescribed order, in which bear songs and mythological songs are followed by men's and women's dances and folk dramas or skits. Although all competent Mansi singers have died, the Mansi still maintain this same order of performance with dances and skits on the first days. Among the Kazym Khanty on these opening days the first song after the bear song is a "Song of the People from Pechora River," the first in a song cycle that the Mansi never had (Popova, Personal Communication). Each of these first ceremonial days ends when the bear is put to sleep with a special song and its head entirely covered by a scarf. The Eastern Khanty, by contrast, seem to have a less rigid daily order of dances and skits, but a clear commitment to formally opening and closing the ritual days with the special songs for waking the bear and putting the bear to sleep.

The numbers of singers, their costumes, and their performance style also distinguish Mansi, Northern Khanty, and Eastern Khanty bear festivals. Mansi communities no longer have surviving bear festival singers nor, as of this writing, do the Eastern Iugan and Agan Khanty (though we have an extensive video record). Active singers remain among Eastern Khanty on Trom'egan River and among the Northern Khanty on Kazym River. The common practice everywhere was for one singer to perform at a time. Among the Northern Khanty of Kazym River, however, the singer, standing before the bear, is flanked on each side by two assistants, who do not sing. The whole company is joined as one by linking together their little fingers and together swinging their arms forward and back in rhythm to the song (KZ, BDOB). Kannisto (1958) reported that this pattern was also followed by the (redacted) also Lukina 2016: 16). Singers are costumed and gloved in special attire

specific to the local bear festival tradition. Northern Kazym Khanty celebrations featured singers wearing brightly colored pullover shirts with open collars decorated with rickrack and ribbons, over which, when singing, they would wear specially created caftans made of synthetic fabrics of symbolic colors, usually white, but sometimes pink and green, and specially made felt hats and sometimes gloves decorated with abstract northern Ob-Ugrian designs. Eastern Khanty singers had no such specially made caftans, hats, or gloves but were costumed in a borrowed Iugan Khanty woman's caftan-like outer garment (Kh., *sak*), with a woman's large scarf draped over their [REDACTED] forward to obscure their face and their hands gloved with winter fur mittens (SOT, TMY, L, K1, K2, P). Again, the exception was (P), where the singers performed in the special festive pullover shirts, but without caftans, hats, or gloves of any kind.

Singers hold in their right hand a long staff about 150 centimeters in length. When singing, the base of the staff is held against the foot on the floor and the upper end held in the hand opposite the foot; the staff is swung rhythmically from side to side across the chest of the singer, which leads to a kind of rocking motion. Among Northern Khanty singers such a staff is made of a specially carved piece of wood shaped with a wider, flatter oval end, while Eastern Khanty singers simply use a peeled sapling, cleaned of all branches (here again, P is the exception, where singers brought and used their own carved staffs). Whether an impromptu peeled pole or specially carved accessory, during folk theatrical skits, the polysemic staff can represent a rifle, a fishing pole, a paddle, a spear, or a phallus.

3. *Community Dances*. On the first days, men and women present are invited to dance collectively, but as individuals, in gender-separated groups. Dances are individually performed but do not follow formal group dance patterns. Dances are roughly mimetic. Men dance imitating the heavy gait of the bear. They also imitate a hunter by stepping heavily forward in a crouched position, alternately swinging their bent arms at the elbows and bringing each hand upward near the brow as if to shade the eyes. Women imitate gathering bird-cherries or other women's activities and dance with the heads entirely obscured under a large shawl draped over their heads and supported by outstretched arms. Men's hands are covered by gloves, women's by the ends of their shawls.

4. *Folk Theater*. Short, dramatic skits, sometimes referred to as clowning (in Northern Khanty, *tulixlap*), are a required component of the bear festival and account for the characterization of the event in its

Russian name [REDACTED] Certain skits are well-known and seem to be frequently performed throughout the entire Ob-Ugrian area and persist even to this day; examples include the “boastful brave hunter frightened by a mouse.” Many of the skits are dramatized commentary on Ob-Ugrian behaviors among themselves, in interactions with Russians and foreigners with different roles, and in encounters with spirits. Many involve courtship, marriage, or sexual behavior, feature erotic humor, and often use the ubiquitous stick or pole as a symbolic phallus. Both the video record and the ethnographic literature indicate that Mansi and Northern Khanty clowning is done in a special costume, but Eastern Khanty wear the same women’s caftans they use when singing. The birch bark masks worn by performers also differ regionally both in how they are constructed and how they are worn. Northern Khanty and Mansi actors wear masks made of a flat piece of birch bark curved to fit across the front of the face, which features either a separately attached or a cut out nose (K, H, LM, LP; TMB, BDO, KZ, O). Eastern Khanty masks are made of a long rectangular piece of birch bark, with two long cuts dividing one of the short sides of the piece into three parts more or less equal in width (SOT, TMY, L, K1, K2, P). The end of the middle part is shaped into a nose which projects when the ends of the two outer parts are brought together and tied. These unique Eastern Khanty masks are worn on the top of the head rather than in front of the face. The clown/actors disguise their voices usually by speaking in falsetto. Among the Northern Khanty, some singers, called the Men from Pechora, appear in groups but masked and costumed as clowns, and stand front to back in a row before the bear, with the singer at the front of the line, and, like all singers, use the ubiquitous staff accessory. Interestingly, a similar group formation also formerly appeared among the Iugan Khanty, though using the local costume and mask forms.<sup>5</sup>

5. *Divination*. Various forms of divination are employed to gain hunting luck, to determine who will host the next festival and how soon (which is also a matter of hunting luck). Historically, the most common forms of divination are shooting an arrow into a wall, either in front of the shooter inside the house or over the shoulder of the shooter if outside the house. The person whose arrow hits highest on the outside wall of the house or hits the gap between the wall’s logs inside the house will be rewarded by hunting luck. A variation counts the number of logs between the top of the wall or house and the arrow as the number of years before the next bear will be killed. [REDACTED] common form of divination is based on finding a tiny token in porridge. Lifting

the bear altar or table to divine whether the bear has been satisfied by the ceremony or wishes to continue further is found only among the Eastern Khanty of Surgut region (see also Rud' 2013). Vakh Khanty lifted the bear's head itself for divination (Kulemzin 1972: 95).

6. *Feasting*. Elaborate feasting with a plentiful table, even to the point of emptying the larder, is essential. Feasting takes place while the bear "sleeps." In customary Ob-Ugrian fashion, men and women sit separately. In ethnographic literature, feasting was of such importance that a host might call on family and friends to supply food and drink to make up his own deficit. Under the burden of the worse circumstances, a poor host might even transfer the privilege of hosting the bear to a friend or neighbor. In the very worst circumstances the resources of an entire small village might be called upon. The bear is also provided with its own portions of bread, berries, meat, candy, vodka, and tobacco, so as to share in the feasting.

7. *Dances of Mythological Personages*. The appearance of mythological personages on the last day of the festival distinguishes the second and final part of the bear festival from the pattern of its first days. This portion also presents the most obvious contrast between the bear festival traditions of the three Ob-Ugrian groups: the Mansi, the Northern Khanty, and the Eastern Khanty. Among the Mansi and Northern Khanty, these dances feature a single male dancer, whose face is masked or otherwise obscured, and who is specially costumed and equipped with signifying elements or attributes that identify a distinctive mythological personage; this personage is accompanied by an assistant. The dancing of such personages is not broadly gestural, as in the men's and women's dances but, in keeping with the nature and significance of the characters personified, varies from simple but dignified procession to mimesis of iconic behaviors.

Both the Mansi and the Northern Kazym Khanty refer to this final part of the bear festival as the "Sacred Night" because of the appearance of these figures. Both groups present several personages that are important to both communities: women touch the end of their scarves to Kaltash, the Great Mother, in order to draw her blessing onto themselves and their families; Mir Susne Khum, the World-Watching-Over-Man, is represented by a man riding a small stick hobby horse around the performance space watching over and safeguarding it; and Pelym Torum (High God/Torum of River Pelym), whose song explains one origin of the bear festival (Moldanova 2010). In addition, analogous figures are represented; for example, the Mansi "Mis Woman," a good spirit, who helps with fishing luck, has counterparts in the Northern



Khanty songs of the Mish spirits (KZ). Many unique Mansi personages, such as the Seven Warriors, Paiping Oika (the Defender of the Village), and Hont Torum (the god of war), are associated with the defense of their territory. Northern (Kz) Khanty also present several unique personages, including As Ty Iki (God of Middle Ob'), Khin Iki (God of Death), and the Seven Sons of Torum, who brought them to earth, dividing the earth among them and making each a patron of a territory (the sons are represented by small figures mounted on a frame carried on the shoulders of the dancer). Ar Khotan Imi, "Many Houses Woman," is the patron spirit of representatives of several clans: Tarlin, Vagatov, Vandymov.

The absence of such a parade of deities among the Eastern Khanty is confirmed by the ethnographic literature (Kulemzin 1972, 1995; Lukina 1990; Mitusova 1929; Shatilov [1931] 2000; Vizgalov 2000), and by video documentation, both historical (SOT, TMY, L) and contemporary (K1, K2), as well as by personal testimony of Eastern Khanty from the Trom'egan, Agan, and B. Iugan rivers. The culmination of Eastern Khanty bear festivals includes appearances by the personages of the Eagle-Owl (Kh., *Yipykh*, Ru., *Filin*), Crane (Kh., *Torekh*, Ru. *Zhuraol*), and Raven (Kh. *Kolengk*, Ru., *Voron*), in this order. Although such named personages appear in northern traditions, the eastern performers are costumed and behave differently and are not accompanied by an assistant. Eastern Khanty on the Agan River have said that these three "come to carry away the soul of the bear" (Perevalova and Karacharov 2006: 164).

The Eagle-Owl is costumed in a heavy winter outer garment turned inside out to expose its thick fur lining, with bunches of long dry straw or grass shoved into the cuffs of the dancer's sleeves and pants, into his chest and around his neck; his head is covered with a birch bark mask. Most important, a long object protrudes from between his legs to suggest a turgid phallus. Entering with a loud, repeated *hu-hu*, *hu-hu*, he attempts to penetrate all the women, in some cases even the bear, before being driven away by a blunt-tipped squirrel arrow. These scenes are met with hilarity and laughter. Neither such a costume nor such behavior has been documented among the Northern Ob-Ugrians (Kannisto [1911] 1999: 20; Chernetsov 2001: fig. 14), though Eagle-Owl appeared in a very different form most recently during the Mansi performance at Lombovozh. Interestingly, an analogous personage did appear in the again exceptional Eastern Khanty Pim performance, where he was costumed in branches of leaves, which obscured all but his artificial phallus. When he entered the house, with a chuffing sound and not

the Eagle-Owl's *hu-hu*, the hostess poured a pan of cold water on his artificial phallus before he was driven away with the arrow. We were later told this personage was not a male Bear but the male Bear's autonomous genitals, which seek to penetrate human women, and which could only be driven away but not killed because the bear's lineage must continue.

Like Eagle-Owl, Crane also appears among the Northern Khanty but with dissimilar appearance and behavior. Among the Northern Khanty, the convention is to sing the Crane's song while seated with a stick figure puppet of a crane while manipulating its moveable lower jaw. At the end of the song, the performer carries the crane puppet to the bear, where it rather timidly pecks a few times at the bear's head. Among the Eastern Khanty, the role of the Crane is played by a man, bent over and carrying a pole with a fixed beak attached at the end, a large woman's shawl covering his body. Sometimes a second pole is attached by a single nail to the first about 30 centimeters behind the beak, and the ends of both poles, projecting behind and on either side of the actor, are lifted up and down rhythmically to make the shawl imitate the flapping of wings. Sometimes the flapping wings are imitated simply by raising and lowering the bent arms. Although the crane actor approaches the bear's altar slowly, even hesitantly, cooing in a musical trill, in all the performances we witnessed or recorded among the Eastern Khanty (L, K1, K2), the crane's act of revenge is invariably violent and destructive. On the B. Iugan, for example, the Crane, swaying at the altar, suddenly begins to use its beak to tear down the bear's house, to pull off its ornaments and fineries, to stab at his baskets of food offerings and at the bear itself. Similar violence by Crane occurred elsewhere only in the Mansi Bear Festival at Leplia.

A unique feature of the Eastern Khanty bear ceremony is that the bear is sent home along a special road (L, K1, K2). Split wood logs are laid at intervals at right angles to an imagined path from the bear's altar to the door of the house, four logs if the bear is female, five if male. From a Malyi Iugan woman, we learned that these represent steps on a ladder to the upper world. Over these a bed of clean dried straw, made of tall river grass, is laid. On top of the straw a new white cloth, about a meter wide, is stretched the whole length of the road from the bear's house to the door. Then comes the song, *Sending the Bear Home*.


The last of the required Eastern Khanty personages, Raven, has no clear counterpart among the Northern Khanty or Mansi. At all three events for which we have full video records (L, K1, and K2), Raven appears in the person of a hunched-over man covered by a large black

shawl, draped so that it covers his head and back, arms and hands. Imitating the Raven's gait, he hops into the room staggeringly and croaks, "KOK-kaw-kaw-kawk." He jabs with his beak at the boxes on the altar. When he arrives at the altar during (L), he uses both hands to roughly grab the bear by both ears and turn over its head, so its jaw faces upward. Then he does the same with the paws. The bear's souls having been sent on their way in the preceding Sending Home Song, clearly what remains to the Raven is only an inanimate corpse. And the Raven, satisfied that it is so, hops away on its own accord. Then the bear is carried out of the house over the sky-ladder road. Raven did appear at one Mansi ceremony (LP) but behaved quite differently, intercepting outdoors those carrying the bear to the forest but failing to stop them. Most Northern Khanty and Mansi ceremonies end simply with the guests approaching the bear, bowing and kissing it goodbye, in the same manner as they greeted it initially.

Summarizing briefly, there are significant differences both between and within regional bear festival traditions. All groups at some point historically celebrated bear ceremonies in a family home, but the Northern Khanty and Mansi alone retain the custom of performing some bear celebrations in a large communal house. Only the Eastern Khanty brought the bear in with prayer through the back window or roof; Northern Khanty and Mansi brought him in through the front door, where he was often first driven away several times by a man with an ax. Only the Eastern Khanty built a special indoor house for the bear-guest made of interleaved wood strips to which was tied a branch of Siberian pine simulating the forest. Only the Eastern Khanty consistently woke the bear and put it to sleep with special songs accompanied by ringing a bell. Only Eastern Khanty singers and clowning actors avoided special costumes in favor of disguising themselves in women's clothes. Eastern Khanty masks differ from those among the Northern Khanty and Mansi, and only Eastern Khanty singers wore their masks on top of their heads instead of in front of their faces. The largest differences occur on the last day, which the Northern Khanty and Mansi call the "Holy Night." Among them, this last night features a series of named mythological personages in anthropomorphic form, whereas the Eastern Khanty feature only Crane, Eagle-owl, and Raven. Finally, the Northern Khanty and Mansi celebrations conclude as they began, with the guests approaching the bear, bowing, and kissing it, whereas the Eastern Khanty celebration ends in a radically different manner with the creation of the sky-road over which the bear is carried out of the house.

Important variations also occur within regional traditions. Among the Eastern Khanty, many elements of the 2021 Pim bear festival (P) differ from the Iugan-Agan tradition (SOT, TMY, L, K1 K2), including the lack of a bear's house and the analogous but nevertheless distinctive costume and behavior of the Pim bear to the Iugan Eagle-Owl. Although the Mansi and Northern Kazym Khanty traditions are similar in structure and feature some shared personages (Kaltash, the Great Mother, and Mir Susne Khum, the World-Watching-Over-Man), differences between them, especially the specific character of some of the personages who appear during the Holy Night, cannot be overlooked. A partial list of personages distinctive among the Mansi would include the Seven Warriors; Paiping Oika, "Defender of the Village"; Tulang Urnai Oika, "The Guardian of the Seven Finger Mountains" (the Urals); and Hont Torum, the God of War, while distinctive personages among the Northern Kazym Khanty include the Men from Pechora River; Khin Iki, God of Death and Disease; Khoimas; Yem Vosh Iki, Elder of the Sacred Town; and the Seven Sons of Torum.

## Discussion: Identity and Difference

The preceding comparison sketches the number and types of variations in bear ceremony traditions among Ob-Ugrian peoples, but some words of caution are important for assessing this comparison. First, the ethnography of Ob-Ugrian bear festivals has accumulated over a long period of time from communities that historically were relatively isolated but nevertheless were already changing (Chernetsov 2001: 47; Gondatti 1888: 65). Second, the video record assembled here, which is extensive, was gathered over the last thirty-five years, beginning in the period of glasnost and perestroika, which liberated indigenous voices to publicly revive previously suppressed traditional celebrations and redefine  how they might serve as identity symbols. Such revival activity often takes place with significant governmental support and media distribution, which can account for both some convergence of forms and some variations (Moldanova 2016; Wiget and Balalaeva 2004a). The state-supported staging of bear festivals as public events through the Dom Kul'tury (House of Culture) folklore programs, especially okrug-wide festival programs in Khanty-Mansiisk, probably accounts for the convergent use throughout the northern regions of festival shirts, decorated with rickrack, and felt hats, decorated with traditional symbols. Participation in such programs, along with other

factors, such as the historical relocation of Kazym families to the upper Pim and Trom'egan rivers following the Kazym uprising of 1933, may also account for intraregional variation in bear festivals from those rivers. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that when taken together this data, both historical and contemporary, contradicts Shatilov's assertion, cited earlier, that such "celebrations to honor the slain bear are everywhere the same *except for some variations in the details*" ([1931] 2000: 177; our emphasis). In doing so, it provides valuable pointers to understand the relationships between these communities and how bear ceremonial traditions function for each of them.

These similarities and differences evident in the comparative analysis suggest inter- and intraregional relationships among the various bear ceremony traditions. Not unexpectedly, the clearest relationship is between the Northern Khanty and Northern Mansi traditions, a relationship already pointed to by V. N. Chernetsov's observation of periodic bear festivals at Yalp-us/Vezhakary, the sacred town on the lower Ob' River, that brought together lineages of both Sosva Mansi and Kazym Khanty under the patronage of the Elder of the Sacred Town, whose avatar was the bear. Both communities draw on ethnography and the remembered practices of elders in the process of reviving bear festivals, and this has reinforced the commonality of tradition. Among both groups, the dances of the Sacred Night have an encyclopedic character, presenting the principal deities and themes of each community. Nevertheless, the distinctive elements of each tradition suggest specific histories. The Mansi tradition focuses on the community's relationship to the Urals and has distinctive martial components. The Northern Khanty bear festival lacks such martial traditions. Its invocation of both the Men from Pechora and the Pelym Torum myth of the origin of the bear festival geographically point to a western and southern origin for today's Northern Kazym tradition. Mansi do have an oral historical tradition of people from the south settling in their territories on Sosva (Chernetsov 1939; Popova 2017; Sokolova 1979). Such newcomers would have needed to be socially and culturally accommodated. The realities behind such a story may account for both the differences and the similarities between Mansi and Northern Khanty traditions.

Such speculation, however reasonable, does not account for the many distinctive elements of Eastern Khanty bear festival tradition, which lacks the mythological anthropomorphic personages and pageantry of the Sacred Night performance. The fact that all of the Mansi and Northern Khanty personages of the Sacred Night, after entering, approach and bow before the bear, suggests that Bear has

both historical and conceptual precedence over them. We believe that the Eastern Khanty tradition, which focuses exclusively on the bear, represents the older, core layer of the Ob-Ugrian tradition, onto the scaffold of which the northern Sacred Night traditions were subsequently erected, perhaps as a means of social integration. Such similarities that exist between Eastern and Northern Khanty traditions, such as the bipartite syntagmatic structural division, the preeminence of essential bear songs, the presence of masks and clowning, most probably stem from an old and common origin. Others, such as the presence or absence of certain skits, dances and song types, and the strengthening as well as the weakening of the paradigmatic selection of such elements, are probably related to change processes, both historical and modern. As an example of the latter, the singers documented in the Eastern Khanty tradition at K1, K2, and Pim, were all from the Trom'egan River. This region on the northern margin of Eastern Khanty territory was impacted by Northern Khanty in two ways. First, many Northern Khanty refugees from the repressions that followed the Kazym Uprising in 1933 fled to the upper Trom'egan River where they reestablished their families, undoubtedly bringing some of their traditions with them. Second, as one of the most easily accessible parts of Surgut region in the post-Soviet period, it benefitted from access to okrug cultural revival programs and festivals. Yet the Trom'egan singers who were brought to the festivals of K1 and K2 on the much more isolated B. Iugan River knew nothing of the unique personages and sky-road ending of the Iugan bear festival. In our view, this suggests that the Iugan-Agan tradition, now preserved only in video documentation, may represent the oldest layer of Ob-Ugrian bear festival tradition.

These inter- and intra-regional relationships are also highlighted in the mythology. Despite having much in common, Eastern Khanty mythology differs significantly from Northern Khanty and Mansi mythologies. The latter more prominently reflect strong influences, perhaps Indo-Iranian, especially in a clear solar orientation, often associated with colored metals, especially gold, and dawn, and in the seven-fold multiplication of cosmological concepts. The common three-zone vertical division of the cosmos is elaborated by seven upper and lower worlds, and the high god Torum has seven children, whom he let down to earth, giving each dominion over a seventh part of the earth. The bear is understood to be Torum's youngest son. Among the Eastern Khanty on the Iugan we could find no one who could name the seven sons of Torum or who imagined the world, as in Mansi mythology, divided among Torum's seven sons. The Eastern Khanty focus is prin-



cipally on Kon-Iki, one of three brothers who are sons of the high god, Torum. He has some of the attributes of the World-Watching-Over-Man and is also called Pastai-ert Iki or Fast-Flying Man or Nevi-Ko, White Man because he is clothed in white and rides a white horse. Rarely he is represented as Sornay (“dawn” or “golden”) Kon-Iki. The emphasis on female deities is different as well. Where Eastern Khanty venerate Teres Nay Angki (Elder Woman of the Fiery Ocean), Nai Imi (patroness of fire and the home hearth), Puus Imi (goddess of birth and long life), and Muikh Angki (Earth Mother), both Northern Khanty and Mansi bear festival traditions seem to consolidate these thematics, if not the personages, into the single figure of Kaltash, the Great Mother.

The mythogeography of the Eastern Khanty, too, is different from the Mansi and Northern Khanty. While sharing the common Ob-Ugrian story of the creation of the earth—a variant of The Woman Who Fell from the Sky/Earth-Diver tale type—Eastern Khanty do not think of the world as neatly divided into sevenths, each assigned to one of Torum’s children. Their references are much more local. According to one story we recorded about the Trom’egan River (the name means literally Torum’s River), when Torum dragged his bride, Agan Woman, from the adjacent river, her heels dug the channels of the river’s many tributaries and dredged up sand to form its many sand bars. According to another story, Torum then had three sons there: Evut Iki, Kon Iki, and Yavun Iki. Wrestling with each other, the youths managed to open the mouth of the lower Irtysh, creating its confluence with the Ob’ near today’s Khanty-Mansiysk. Then the three brothers went to the upper Irtysh to wage war against the tsar, after which each returned each to his own place: Kon-Iki to the high bank at Belogorie on the Ob’ opposite the mouth of the Irtysh, and Evut Iki and Yavun Iki to Trom’egan River. Another cycle of stories and songs tells how Yavun Iki, whose theriomorphic form is the Bear, gathered forests and stones by hook or crook and brought them to the B. Iugan River. Two other Eastern Khanty stories tell of stone bears, one on the upper Trom’egan River and the other on the upper M. Iugan River. This mythogeography is complemented by two other known sacred places, one on B. Iugan River and the other on Trom’egan River, known as Where Torum Put His Foot Down (Wiget and Balalaeva 2004b). These landscape texts underscore the north-south axial relationship between these two Eastern Khanty rivers in Surgut region, and the Bear as a topological model. As one Khanty elder, Maria Vagatova, told us, Ob-Ugrian land lies beneath an outstretched bear, his head pointing to the east. By inference, this would place his front legs on a north-south axis over Eastern Khanty lands, his heart over

Khanty-Mansiisk ("at Belogorie on the Ob' opposite the mouth of the Irtysh") and his hind legs on a north-south axis west of the Ob' (perhaps over the rivers Northern Sosva and Tavda).

Taken together, the differences and similarities among these structural elements suggest that Bear Ceremonies serve significantly different functions for the different Ob-Ugrian communities. Among Northern Khanty (KZ) and Mansi, the ceremonies reassert the connection between land and lineage, linking the patron spirits of specific rivers to the origins of families and totemic images and subsuming both under the Holy Night appearance of deities of a higher rank. This elaborate combination of cosmology and genealogy, suggestive of the periodic calendrical festivals documented by Chernetsov (1939, 1968), gives this northern tradition the character of a commemorative social integration ceremony that both validates and renews these broad yet specific connections between territory and family.

The Eastern Khanty tradition presents a picture of forest life focused on hunting and fishing. Many songs speak of the *vont hlungk* (forest spirits), and though the patron spirits of rivers are lifted up in song, and a broad connection is implied in the linkage between Yavun Iki with the bear as patron of bear clan (*pupi sir*), connections to specific lineages are not mentioned. The Eastern Khanty ceremony, with its emphasis on provisioning and fertility, its overt display of the distinction of body and spirit, and its sky-road, much more closely resembles a Sending-Off Ritual. Such rituals, which across the North involve animals ranging from Bear through Caribou to Marmot and from Herring through Salmon to Whales, share a common structure based on three mythological events: "1) the human host guiding the spirit guest to his home; 2) a welcoming party at the house to express gratitude to the spirit guest for the meat it has brought; and 3) sending off the guest so that it may begin the return journey" (Watanabe 1994: 55; Wiget and Balalaeva 2001). Watanabe's puzzlement that bears, unlike reindeer and other animals central to sending-off rituals, are not a common food source, is answered at least in part by the Eastern Khanty belief that showing such respect towards the bear as Master of the Forest (*khozyain lesu*) responsible for all in his domain ensures that human persons continue to have a harmonious and productive life in the forest.

In sum, a comparative examination of Ob-Ugrian bear ceremony traditions in both the inter- and intraregional contexts sketched here proves illuminating. The specific character of the Eastern Khanty bear ceremony tradition, even considering the variety of intraregional variation, sets it apart from other Ob-Ugrian regional traditions. It also

appears to reflect a much older layer of tradition (Karjalainen [1927] 1996, 3: 169–173; Lukina 1990: 188). The elaborate land lineage connections of the Sosva Mansi and Kazym Khanty ceremonies and the fact that their Sacred Night deities bow deferentially before the bear when taken together with the absence of both among the northernmost Khanty at Ovalymgort (O), all suggest that the Eastern Khanty tradition reflects a much older Ob-Ugrian substrate, which the Sosva Mansi and Kazym Khanty, under a variety of historical pressures, later elaborated toward convergence.

## Acknowledgments

Portions of the research on which this article is based were funded by a grant to New Mexico State University from the National Science Foundation, Award Number 1724508, Office of Polar Programs, under the title “An Anthropological and Linguistic Investigation of Arctic Ceremonial Traditions,” directed by Andrew Wiget, with Olga Balalaeva, Marta Csépregi, and indigenous scholar colleagues Timofei Moldanov and Tatiana Moldanova (Northern Khanty), Svetlana Popova (Mansi), and Agrafena Pesikova and Elena Surlomkina (Eastern Khanty). Earlier related research (Wiget and Balalaeva 2004a, 2004b, 2011) was supported by grants from the MacArthur Foundation and the Trust for Mutual Understanding and by UNESCO’s Moscow Office of Information Technologies.

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## Notes

1. Early Russian researchers include G. I. Novitskii, S. K. Patkanov, and N. L. Gondatti. M. A. Castrén's pioneering work led to the founding of the Finno-Ugrian Society and the work of its leading scholars, August Ahlqvist, Arturri Kannisto, U. T. Sirelius, and K. F. Karjalainen. Almost all of their work focused on the Mansi, with the exception of Sirelius and Karjalainen, who both did fieldwork among the Eastern Khanty. Karjalainen's massive work on Ugrian religion [REDACTED] first published in Finnish in 1918 and later in German (1922–1927), included important though scattered information on Eastern Khanty; it was only translated into Russian in 1996, the source of all references herein. The Hungarian scholars Antal Reguly, József Pápay, and Bernat Munkácsi, acknowledging their language was closely related to those of the Ob-Ugrians, did pioneering linguistic work and recorded significant texts.

2. Geographical names follow contemporary Russian cartographic usage. Khanty words and mythological personages are named according to Eastern Khanty usage, [REDACTED] according to Tereshkin (1981), but normalized to avoid special characters.

3. The literature on bear ceremonialism is multilingual and too extensive to list here and really begins with Hallowell (1926). Paproth (1976), Gemuev (1989), Black (1998), Sokolova (2000), Schweitzer (2005), and Pentikäinen (2007) focus primarily on Eurasia, and many point the way to important Russian language resources such as Vasil'iev (1948). Opening the ethnographic literature on North American Bear Ceremonialism should also begin with Hallowell and subsequent work more or less summarized in Shepard and Sanders (1985) and Rockwell (1993). The lists of references in these works provide full bibliographic documentation of the many classical ethnographic sources, such as those mentioned in the first note.

4. Some of these video materials have been edited and made publicly available on the authors' NSF-supported website, "Waking the Bear" (Wiget and Balalaeva 2020).

5. See TMY, also photograph by U. T. Sirelius of "Tanets medvedia, Iugan /Bear Dance, Iugan," taken 1898–1900, <https://humus.livejournal.com/5801326.html>.

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