

COMING BACK TO THE SAME PLACES: THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF HUMAN-REINDEER RELATIONS IN THE NORTHERN BAIKAL REGION

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ABSTRACT

This article* is based on the results of recent fieldwork among the Evenk reindeer herders in the northern Baikal region. It argues that reindeer domestication should be approached as a never-ending process that happens in the context of animal and human movement and can be described as domestication-in-practice and domestication-on-the-move. An important signal of the fact that animals became closer to people is their constant return to a camp. This article presents the ethnography of how people try to facilitate these returns by feeding reindeer with salt, producing smoke and binding calves to stakes and poles. On the one hand, animals periodically come back to a camp. On the other hand, reindeer herders know the places to which the animals return outside the camp and this helps them to find reindeer in certain places. Reindeer herding in the northern Baikal region is based on constant relocation of the herd from place to place, implying daily short-term movement in order to bring animals to the camp and meaning a continuous monitoring of reindeer and predator movements.

KEYWORDS: human-animal relations • reindeer domestication • northern Baikal reindeer herders • mobility • Evenk native village

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on fieldwork I did in the northern Baikal region in July–August 2012 and includes some observations I made between 2007 and 2009 and during short visits in 2013. The purpose of this research was to document socio-ecological relationships and to investigate local categories of ‘domestic’ and ‘wild’ reindeer. In 2012 the fieldwork was conducted in 3 main locations: the village of Kholodnoye Evenkiyskoye,¹

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which is located 18 kilometres northeast of Lake Baikal in the territories of the Uluki *obshchina*² (communal organisation); in the reindeer herders' camp near the mouth of the Nomama River about 70 kilometres from Kholodnoye; and at the abandoned former geologists' village of Pereval, which is now used as a central base by the Oron *obshchina* and is located 45 kilometres from that village.

According to the data provided by the local administration, as of the 1st August 2012, the population of Kholodnoye and two neighbouring small settlements Dushkachan and Turtukit was 436, including 183 Evenks. Kholodnoye (Ev. Niandarakan) was part the Soviet administration's project designed to 'sedentarise' Kindigir Evenk reindeer herders and hunters (Zabelin 1930: 55). Historically the village was central to state megaprojects such as the Complex Geological Survey and the construction of the Baikal-Amur Railway (BAM), which seriously affected reindeer herding in the region. The BAM construction project took place between 1976 and 1984 and attracted a new population of newcomers (*bamovtsy*) to the region. Later on, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the closing the Severnyi (northern) sovkhos the number of reindeer in the Severobaikalsk Rayon considerably decreased. Reindeer herding almost disappeared here in the 1990s, but was gradually re-established in the 2000s. Today people keep reindeer in 3 *obshchiny*: in the Uluki and Oron *obshchiny* in Kholodnoye and the Plotnikov brothers' *obshchina* in Staryi Uoyan. In 2011 reindeer herds started decreasing again. Thus, in 2010, the Uluki *obshchina* possessed about 600 reindeer, while in mid-July 2012 I counted 153 reindeer, and at the beginning of August 2012 there were only 118 animals left. The Oron *obshchina* is in a similar situation: in autumn 2007 there were 43 reindeer, in summer 2009 37 reindeer (Kharinskiy 2010: 19), and in the mid-august 2012 they had only 6 she-deer without bulls. In April 2014 the Oron *obshchina* purchased 18 reindeer in the Kalarsk Rayon in the Zabaikal Krai. The Plotnikov brothers started to breed reindeer in 2011 when they purchased 5 she-deer and 5 bulls from the Uluki *obshchina*. As I heard in Kholodnoye, in spring 2013 their number had increased to 17.

There is a long history of human-reindeer relations in the northern Baikal region. Historical sources contain information that shows the northern Baikal Evenks used to move with their reindeer long ago: they employed reindeer to transport belongings, women, children and the infirm (Radde 1858: 42–43). Petr Shimkevich (1894: 5) accurately observed that northern Baikal male hunters preferred to move with the reindeer on skis. Aleksey Alekseyevich Ganyiugin confirmed that the Kindigir Evenks did not load a reindeer with more than fifty kilograms. He further stressed along with local elders that Kindigir male hunters never rode reindeer, although it was common practice among the neighbouring groups of Evenks. Aleksey Alekseyevich explained that Kindigir Evenk adult males never rode reindeer because they considered it to be shameful for a man. (Fieldnotes 2007a) He remembered that an old reindeer herder called Simorchin said that Kindigir men even crossed rivers on foot (Fieldnotes 2013a).

Another point to make is that northern Baikal Evenk reindeer herders historically did not use a sledge in their movements: the Shamagir Evenk adapted it at the end of the 19th or beginning of the 20th century from the Yakuts, who used sledges near the Lena River (Levin 1936: 73). However, in this case, the northern Baikal Evenks mainly adapted sledges for flat places. For instance, they started to use them in order to move on the ice of Baikal. Today, they perceive sledges as a traditional element. During the late Soviet period, sledge races between reindeer herders on the ice of the Lake became

an element of the Feast of the North (*Prazdnik Severa*) in early spring. In the 2000s, reindeer herders employed sledges to entertain tourists. In this sense, Evenk reindeer herders pragmatically and constructively adapted a lot of new elements from neighbouring groups and newcomers (Vasilyevich 1969: 101).

Starting from the end of the 18th century, reindeer were gradually incorporated into industrial development projects as a transport resource. Reindeer transport was very important for the geological exploration of the region. Aleksey Alekseyevich Ganyugin said that in the 1960s and the 1970s reindeer porters (*kaiury*) usually used a team of 5 reindeer because of the broken ground. In some cases they walked up to the mountains with 3 reindeer, leaving the other animals at the foot of a mountain and returning to take them later. At the same time in other regions a *kaiury* might use 10 reindeer in a caravan. (Fieldnotes 2007a) According to Nikolay Tulbukonov, local *kaiury* never loaded a reindeer with more than 50 kilos (Fieldnotes 2007b).

Generally, the Soviet attitude towards reindeer herding in the region steadily shifted to a more 'industrial' form in which every animal was supposed to be counted and measured (Habeck 2005: 76). This logic was based on the hierarchical view, neglecting a more intimate inter-species approach and presenting reindeer as if they were not associated with people but stayed rather separated. Moreover, the Soviet administrators saw animals and people as attached to certain places, such as reindeer farms. However, reindeer numbers were always an object of manipulation and the data of the rayon administration rarely presented the exact picture. In a similar manner, contemporary reindeer herders report more reindeer than they actually have in order to receive the special state subsidy for she-deer. They have not reported the decrease of reindeer that has happened within the last 3 years to the official authorities.

The Soviet planners also experimented with 'wild' animals through the introduction of polar fox farms – a factory-like fur production enterprise that they expected would be a 'sedentary' alternative to hunting. In many cases they ignored the fact that human-reindeer relations were linked to a number of places rather than to any single point associated with reindeer farms. Furthermore, the human-reindeer relationship was a mobile one, taking both to places such as summer and winter pastures, calving, and rutting territories.

Russian ethnographers saw domestication as a sudden event rather than a long process and described it as something achieved in the remote past (Vasilyevich, Levin 1951; Vainshtein 1971). Furthermore, their accounts often omitted the fact that people had certain relations with animals and the landscape, and stated that the northern Baikal Evenk keep reindeer in an a 'more sedentary' manner (Kirilov 1894a: 548; 1894b: 9). In this sense, they saw people, animals, landscape and structures as fixed and separate objects of research, and, therefore, did not take into consideration the importance of movement in the process of reindeer domestication. However, people were not separated from animals, either ontologically or spatially. Rather they were with the reindeer, they moved together with them. Domestication is not something that is finished, and neither is it fixed. It is not a result; it is a process through which the proximity of humans and animals constantly changes. It is always domestication-on-the-move. To be and to move with animals was a normal condition of daily life for Evenk reindeer herders. The reindeer farm, as a unit of the kolkhoz, was never located in one certain place; people constantly relocated it to new places. Therefore, it was not a geographical

point, but rather it meant a certain kind of human-reindeer relationship on the move from place to place with periodic returns to the same places. Yet, the role of movements in the process of domestication was poorly documented by ethnographers. This article stresses the role of periodic short-term returns to the same places in the process of domestication.

Soviet administrators reproduced a paradigm of human dominance and approached reindeer not as “companions” or “partners” for people (Vitebsky 2005) but rather as “tools” or “transport” they employed to move (Kishkintsev 1929: 17). In this context, the Soviet administration perceived numbers as more important than any personal characteristics the reindeer may have had. This article aims to show how reindeer can be perceived as partners that have their own names and distinctive characters; it will also analyse the process of domestication in the context of practical engagement of humans and animals where they all periodically come back to the same places.

THE CATEGORISATION AND PERSONALISATION OF REINDEER

Even though Soviet administrators saw a reindeer herd as a homogenous mass, the reindeer herders perceived it as composed of animals with distinctive characters and habits (Stépanoff 2012: 302). As Alexandra Lavrillier (2012: 126) argues, the Evenk perceive animals not as a uniform whole, rather they make several levels of differentiation within the animal realm. Therefore, the domestication of animal involves vernacular categorisation and the naming of animals. Northern Baikal reindeer herders distinguish many different types of domestic reindeer depending on the animal’s sex, age, character and colour. In northern Baikal people use many different categories of reindeer. I recorded the following Evenk words from Praskovya Platonovna Lekareva (Fieldnotes 2013b):

oron – domestic reindeer

baiun – wild reindeer

boiunchikan or *baiunchukan* – a reindeer which has a ‘domestic’ mother and a ‘wild’ father

uuchag – working reindeer

gilge – castrated reindeer

botalohet – a reindeer with a bell (from the Russian word *botalo*)

engnakan – a small calf

multakan – a one-year-old male reindeer

songachan – a young she-deer

sachari or *sacharikan* – a one-year-old she-deer

niami – an adult working she-deer

iktane – a three-year-old male reindeer

umiri – a she-deer that will not calve this year

sagdaku – an old reindeer

bagdarin or *bagdama* – a white reindeer that is considered a sacred animal

kongnorin – a black reindeer

Most of these words are still in use in Kholodnoye. According to informants, all these

words are very important when remembering certain animals. Sometimes these words can be used as personal names for the reindeer.

I remember from my visits to Nomama between 2007 and 2009 that many reindeer in the Uluki *obshchina*, and all the animals in the Oron *obshchina*, had personal names. I recorded the names Utolkan, Bichara, Malofeyev, Terroristka, Khokhol, Gonka and Gevchaka. Most of these names repeated the names and nicknames of people in Kholodnoye. Reindeer herders often gave reindeer the names of real people when they saw the similarities in behaviour and appearance. This is slightly different to the approach in southern Yakutia and Zabaikalye, where reindeer herders usually give reindeer the name of a former owner.

In summer 2012, the situation with reindeer names changed dramatically. When I visited the Oron *obshchina*, I was really surprised that only one she-deer of the six had a name. All the other reindeer I saw in 2009, which had names, had been killed by wolves. In 2012 the reindeer did not have names because Georgiy Lekarev, who knew their names, moved to the Uluki *obshchina* and Aleksey Popov and Leonid Tulbukonov had left Uluki and joined Oron *obshchina*. As they explained, they did not perceive themselves as owners of the reindeer with which they worked. They said that they were looking after reindeer belonging to the head of the *obshchina*. Aleksey Tulbukonov commented on this situation: "There was no actual need up to now to give names to these reindeer. We can give a name at any time if we need to." He explained that he could see differences in their colour and behaviour and remember reindeer even without the names: "Thus, one of them has a knob-nose, another is white and has a collar". (Fieldnotes 2012d)

The same year most reindeer in the Uluki *obshchina* were nameless, and reindeer herders were unable to reconstruct their biographies. According to Yuriy Chernoyev, many reindeer were lost, with wolves killing most of them: "Utolkan disappeared last year. We did not manage to find him." (Fieldnotes 2012e) Georgiy Lekarev gave names only to the calves which appeared after he had joined the Uluki *obshchina*. These names often repeated a name or a surname of particular people in Kholodnoye, for instance Bukidaika, or emphasised the colour of a calf: Pestryi (Mottled), Ryzhik or Ryzhiy (Ginger). One of the calves received the name Chulok (Stocking) because he was black and had white legs. Sometimes a reindeer has several variants of a name. For instance, Georgiy often called Bukidaika both Raskosaya (Slanting) and Buroglazka (Brown-eyed). The name Bukidaika derives from the surname Bukidayeva which belonged to a woman from Kholodnoye. Georgiy gave this name to the young deer because he found it and this woman had similar eyes.

People perceive animals as mindful beings. Reindeer herders speak to reindeer and dogs. Thus, Praskovya Lekareva from Kholodnoye advised me to speak to her small black dog Artamoshka when it was barking: "You have to speak to him. Say 'Artamoshka, Artamoshka'. He will get used to you." (Fieldnotes 2013b) During my stay at a reindeer herders' camp near the Nomama River Pavel Atolaynen recommended that I speak to the reindeer when I brought firewood to make smoke. He said that they can be scared of people, but they recognise the reindeer herders' voices when they talk – they are used to hearing people. I observed that when Pavel approached the reindeer, he usually talked to them. For instance, when he brought moss and branches with leaves to the calf, which was bound to a stake, he usually greeted him with the words:

“Dinner time. Please, enjoy your meal.” Pavel also recommended not moving too fast between the reindeer. Reindeer herders emphasised that in contrast to dogs, reindeer never recognise their names. At the same time people believe they are used to certain sounds. People usually call reindeer with a long sound “E-e-e-e” and by repeating “Mot-mot-mot”.

People become emotionally attached to reindeer. According to Georgiy Lekarev, he starts to think about the reindeer when he leaves the herd and he imagines the animals when he closes his eyes (Fieldnotes 2012a). I heard from several reindeer herders that they became attached to reindeer, think about them all the time and keep in mind their probable location. Georgiy said that every reindeer has its own face. He used the word ‘face’ (*litso*) instead of ‘muzzle’ (*morda*). Georgiy continued: “All reindeer looked the same to newcomers. But I see that all their faces are different.” (Fieldnotes 2012a)

The study of animal life histories was a difficult task in Kholodnoye in summer 2012. Most reindeer herders left their job in *obshchiny* for some time and the new workers started to reconstruct animal biographies by looking at the animals’ personal characteristics. Pavel Atolaynen did not work in the herd for many years, but he started to recognise which animals had ‘a bad character’ and needed particular attention immediately. He knew which animals usually lead the herd and gave names to animals that needed particular care and special attention. For instance, a young white deer whose head was bitten by a wolf received the name Gorbonosaya (Knob-nosed). Therefore, naming of reindeer often reflects practical things. People often name an animal they have a close relationship with and which needs particular attention.

LOCAL DISCOURSES OF ‘WILD’ AND ‘DOMESTIC’

I asked people in Kholodnoye how they approached the difference between the categories ‘wild’ and ‘domestic’. It was apparent that they are relative categories, which suggest one should avoid constructing a binary opposition of ‘wild’ and ‘domestic’ reindeer. On the one hand, Tungus-speaking reindeer herders can easily differentiate ‘wild’ reindeer (Ev. *baiun*) and ‘domestic’ reindeer (Ev. *oron*) (Vasilyevich 1964; Myreyeva 2001: 12, 28; Willerslev, Ulturgasheva 2012: 53). These herders say that a wild reindeer usually has a much longer head and longer legs, and emphasise that the difference is especially obvious in autumn when wild reindeer have very fat necks and a thick hide. Georgiy Lekarev said that this change in a wild reindeer’s hide makes it very difficult to process. In summer 2012 he planned to produce a lasso (Ev. *maut*) from a wild hide:

I defatted it. Yakha had brought this skin. I left it in a barrel with water for one week. However this June was very cold. I planned to make a lasso from it. Yet it would be more productive to do this work in a pair – the skin needs to be cut, stretched and twisted. (Fieldnotes 2012a)

On the other hand, some animals are considered to be ‘wilder’ than others and people call them wild reindeer. According to local informants, today’s reindeer have become ‘wilder’ because their diet is different. Previously people used combined feed, which attracted reindeer to return to the same place. According to Kholodnintsy, people in the Oron *obshchina* did not pay attention to the reindeer and so they started to become

'wilder', returning less often to the central base. They realised that reindeer herders always face the risk that the reindeer may become wilder. At the same time, as Stépanoff (2012: 290) has emphasised, "the paradox of reindeer herding is that, compared to other domesticated species, *humans can domesticate reindeer only if they keep them (in the) wild*" (original emphasis).

Reindeer are surrounded by other species and people usually employ their knowledge of other animals when they talk about reindeer. Domestication is on-going process which cannot be reduced to one universal model. For instance, Uilta from Sakhalin Island compares domesticated reindeer with dogs (Fieldnotes 2013c). Evenk from southern Yakutia and northern Zabaikalye usually compare tamed animals with cows (Fieldnotes 2013d). In a similar manner, one Evenk informant from northern Buryatia, Lyubov Bashkirova said:

It is very important to define what we understand by 'wild'. In my opinion, a cow is a domestic animal. She lives close to household and people have to prepare hay. A reindeer is not a domestic animal. This animal moves through different places searching for cup moss. (Fieldnotes 2012b)

Then she concluded that a reindeer is "a wild animal which is accustomed to people" (ibid.). At the same time, if a reindeer returns to people or takes food from herders' hands, it may be compared with a cow. I observed that some reindeer used to eat bread from people's hands.

In the northern Baikal region the herders interbreed wild and domestic reindeer (Kharinskiy 2010; Fieldnotes 2012a; 2012e). My informants emphasised that a reindeer which has a 'domestic' mother and a 'wild' father may be 'fully domesticated' and its behaviour would not be different from others. Some informants consider these reindeer to be stronger than domestic ones (Povoroznyuk 2011: 45). At the same time I have observed that people pay special attention to these 'half-wild' (*poludikiy*) reindeer. This practice is common for many groups of Evenk, however the number of these 'semi-wild' reindeer in the herds is usually small (Sirina 2012: 228). Informants call these calves *baiunchukany* (Ev.) or calves of 'wild reindeer' breed (*baiunchey porody*). According to Georgiy Lekarev, many calves who were born in May 2012 where from this category and they were especially strong. Georgiy said that the strongest calves are born in May and the late calves from June and July rarely survive. (Fieldnotes 2012a) Local people may define a *baiunchukan* both through its behaviour and through its appearance. These reindeer usually have a knob nose, long and thin legs and a wild (*dikovaty*) character. At the reindeer herders' camp at Pereval, I saw a 3-years-old she-deer that had been named Gorbonosaya (Knob-nosed), emphasising her 'kin relations' with wild reindeer (Photo 1). In this case this nickname served as a rationalisation of control. Due to this 'blood relationship' she was a reindeer that needed particular attention. This nickname helped reindeer herders to reference her and to exchange the necessary information.

The treatment of calves born from wild reindeer may vary (Povoroznyuk 2007: 140). Even though some reindeer herders confirmed that if people pay particular attention to a *baiunchikan* it will be no different from other domestic reindeer, Praskovya Lekareva considered that, "a wild reindeer will remain wild anyway" (*Dikiy vse ravno dikarem ostayetsya*). She remembered that most *baiunchikany* were wilder than other reindeer. She said that Arkadiy Petrovich Lekarev, who worked in the 1950s as the direc-



Photo 1. Knob-nosed reindeer. Pereval, August 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.

tor of reindeer farm in Kholodnoye, was very nervous in autumn when wild reindeer approached the herd. They might kill domestic reindeer and impregnate domestic she-deer. According to Praskovya Lekareva, reindeer herders were very angry when she-deer bore calves from wild reindeer: "Again a wild reindeer has just been born!" (*Opyat' dikiy rodilsya!*) (Fieldnotes 2013b)

In autumn herders may use domestic reindeer in order to lure and hunt wild reindeer (Kharinskiy 2010: 191). Herders sometimes also use the strategy of creating the impression of a 'wilderness', for instance by using domesticated reindeer to be mistaken for wild reindeer. Both in the Oron and Uluki *obschiny* herders specially prepared a reindeer and put it in the forest in a certain place in order to satisfy tourists' desire to shoot wild reindeer, although this happens rarely.

DOMESTICATION AS A PROCESS

'Wild' and 'domestic' are not static categories. Rather, we can speak only about a degree of wildness or domestication. The domestication of reindeer is an on-going and never-



Photo 2. The wooden feeding-rack (*kormushka*). *Nomama*, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.

ending process. Herders have to invest a lot of effort for a reindeer to become accustomed, and return, to the same places. One of the purposes of my current research in the northern Baikal area is the documentation of domestication technologies. My particular interest is in what strategies people use to get reindeer to and from the same places. Constant return to the same place is an important signal of reindeer domestication. In order to facilitate these returns people use strategies such as feeding reindeer with salt, binding calves to stakes and poles, producing smoke (*Ev. somnin*). Reindeer herders believe that if people stop looking after reindeer, these animals can become ‘wild’ again. They tell stories about Staryi Uoyan village, where people stopped looking after the reindeer after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a consequence, animals were lost in the forest and were absolutely wild when herders from Kholodnoye tried to catch them.

First of all, reindeer herders emphasised the importance of salt. As reindeer herders say, “only domestic reindeer are used to eating salt from the hand and constantly return to people”. (Fieldnotes 2012a) People give salt to reindeer by hand and place it in special long wooden feeding racks (*kormushka*) (Photo 2), or put it onto tree stumps. Georgiy Lekarev said that when he worked in Sredniy Kalar he did not use feeding racks, but threw salt at bases of trees (Fieldnotes 2012a). According to Charles Stépanoff (2012) use of salt has a strong influence on reindeer behaviour. Working among Tozhu reindeer herders in the Sayan Mountains in southern Siberia, he observed that, “in the camp of a poor herder who had run out of salt, his reindeer did not come back for several days running, while some reindeer came back to the settlements of other herders who gave out salt every morning” (Stépanoff 2012: 292–293).

Reindeer herders also stressed the importance of human urine in the process of domestication in winter: "Reindeer like salt, and urine is salty, and that is why they liked it" (Fieldnotes 2012a). An informant even thinks that reindeer domestication started when large groups of people migrated from place to place and saw that reindeer visited the places where they usually went to the toilet.

Secondly, reindeer herders stressed the significance of binding reindeer to stakes (*stolbiki, kolyshki*), structures and trees. People believe that keeping calves bound can make young reindeer closer to people. Generally the same practice is common for small cows near the village. In 2012 Georgiy Lekarev used 17 stakes near the reindeer herders' camp at Nomama to bind calves. In the interview he said that he learned this practice when he had been working as a reindeer herder in Sredniy Kalar in the Zabaikal Krai (region), where he had been for about 10 years. According to Georgiy, there were about 40 calves in the herd. (Fieldnotes 2012a) This means he simultaneously bound half of the new-born calves. The poles he used were placed in the soil for that purpose. They were about 50 centimetres long and located 7–10 metres apart. At the same time they were located rather close to the place where people lived and cooked their food. Georgiy Lekarev employs these stakes to bind calves only in May and June. He used them in order that calves became tame and in order that the she-deer constantly return to them. He alternated binding calves with binding the she-deer. According to Aleksey Tulbukonov, who left the *obshchina* in 2012, he had also used these stakes in 2011. He confirmed that people kept calves bound at the beginning of the 2000s, but later when he started working in Uluki *obshchina* they neglected this practice for some time and then started it again in 2011. I did not observe any stakes in the Nomama River camp, either in 2007 or in 2009. Aleksey Tulbukonov added that they never bond she-deer during the calving period. (Fieldnotes 2012d)

The trope of kin relations or mother-child relations is very important here (Photo 3). Reindeer herders observe mother-calf relations and see when a calf or its mother is lost. They call some she-deer bad mothers when they occasionally lose their 'children'. This is especially relevant for she-deer when they have their first calves. Georgiy emphasised that reindeer that were bound to stakes became slightly less wild. He said that he used the same strategy when he worked in the Oron *obshchina* in the 2000s: "I bound them by turns – I bound she-deer during the night and calves during the day. Then I went away from there. And they [reindeer herders from the Oron *obshchina*] do not bind reindeer at all." (Fieldnotes 2012a) Aleksey Tulbukonov who worked in the *obshchina* in 2011 confirmed that he bound calves and she-deer by turns (Fieldnotes 2012d). However, in his case the temporal structure was different to Georgiy's: Aleksey bound she-deer, releasing young deer during the day and binding them for the night. He continued that in 2011 he bound only some of the young calves: "There were about 30 young deer last year. However, it is very difficult to catch those that have grown up. We bound these calves for a period less than one month." (Fieldnotes 2012a) In a similar manner, Tozhu reindeer herders recognise that the operation of tying up calves is quite tiring, although they also aware that "this critical time has a strong influence on the further development of the reindeer" (Stépanoff 2012: 294).

In 2012, Georgiy stopped binding young deer to stakes at the beginning of July because the number of biting insects had increased. I observed that in July and August reindeer herders bound only those reindeer that were ill or traumatised by wolves.



Photo 3. A calf bonded to a pole. Nomama, beginning of July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.

Reindeer herders kept one young reindeer, who got the name Goshin Syn (Son of Gosha), for more than one month because he had injured a hoof. When herders bound an animal for more than 24 hours they had to bring water, cup moss and branches with leaves. However, cup moss near the camp was very poor. Therefore, the reindeer herders had to bring it in bags attached to on an Evenk rucksack – consisting of a plank with many ropes on the sides (Ev. *poniaga*) – from places located from 1 to 2 kilometres from the camp. The *poniaga* is a very simple tool to produce, but I have observed that people use it for many years. People believe that it can bring luck (*fartovaya*) in hunting. Georgiy Lekarev used his *poniaga* with care; he brought it from the central base of the Oron *obshchina* in Pereval: “My *poniaga* is in field condition (*boyevaya*). I have been walking with it since I had found a piece of plywood at Pereval in 2002!” (Fieldnotes 2012a) Pavel Atolaynen brought cup moss for Goshyn Syn on a *poniaga* every 2 days. Moreover, Pavel changed water for this young deer several times per day and brought him fresh branches with leaves from the shore of the river every day. He attached these branches by binding them to a small stake in order that the young deer did not throw them about. I saw that Goshin Syn usually recognised Pavel and was not afraid of him at all. Moreover, this young deer was fed by his mother. He had been bound for almost one month when I left the camp. Reindeer herders were afraid to release him because of the increased number of wolves and bears.

Another important technique for making reindeer return to a camp is the use of smoke (Photo 4), although this is only effective in the summer (Stépanoff 2012: 292). David Anderson et al. (2014) emphasise the importance of accounting for the agency of



Photo 4. Georgiy Lekarev and a calf near a smudge (dymokur). Nomama, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.

wind in ordering reindeer behaviour. In summer the reindeer usually return to smoke if there is dry weather and no wind. They will stay near the source of the smoke from early morning until evening and sometimes make small rounds searching for grass, cup moss and foliage on bushes. If there are many biting insects around, they return to the same place rather quickly. The reindeer herders' camp near the mouth of the Nomama River was designed for a much larger herd than I observed in summer 2012. For instance, in August 2009, when there were about 600 reindeer, people used 4 smoke fires. Aleksey Tulbukonov confirmed that he used 4 fires simultaneously (2 main and 2 additional) in 2011 (Fieldnotes 2012d). In 2012 Georgiy Lekarev, Pavel Atolaynen and Pavel Chernoyev used only 1 or 2 fires simultaneously. People extracted the fuel for the fires nearby. First of all they dig out a small hollow in the ground, then put two damp logs into the centre and cover them with spruce branches, then set a fire and cover it with moss. People look after the fire in order not to let it to die and not to allow an open fire. In order to make good smoke, the moss should be wet. If the moss is dry the fire can easily burn the skin of any reindeer trying to escape biting insects nearby. At the end of July I witnessed how a calf burned his skin when laying too close to an open fire. To avoid this, the reindeer herders construct special wooden tripods. There is the evidence from the archival sources that people used the same constructions in the 1920s (Kuftin 1927: 25).

Reindeer herders try to check the smoke every hour. They usually move the logs and bring new fuel if necessary. Pavel Atolaynen who taught me how to make smoke correctly said that a reindeer herder should always watch the intensity of the fire in order

to keep the fuel burning slowly. Reindeer herders often have to walk in the forest searching firewood and moss. As I understand from my experience, people used heavy trucks to bring firewood. However, in 2012 all of them were broken and reindeer herders had to bring firewood on a *poniaga* (Photo 5). Its weight with firewood can reach 20–30 kilograms and people have to walk for about a half kilometre in order to find proper wet firewood for smoke, and dry wood to heat the log cabin and for cooking. People usually keep a stock of moss and firewood not far from the fire. They replenish this every 2–3 days. Herders try to keep the stock wet by covering them with a large tar paper sheet. In order to bring large amounts of this stock to the fire herders from the Uluki *obshchina* constructed a litter from a sheet of metal and two planks, suitable for two people. Pavel Atolaynen attracted my attention to the fact that reindeer usually lay near smoke when there is a breeze and may walk intensively around the fire if there is windless weather in order to ‘make their own wind’ (Photo 6). He commented that reindeer use round movements to better spread the smoke. Blackflies force reindeer to return to the same place (the source of the smoke) in the summer. It would be rather difficult to keep reindeer in one particular place if there were no blackflies in summer: when the blackflies rise, reindeer return to the smoke. (Fieldnotes 2012f)

Reindeer herding involves a great deal of walking. People walk many kilometres per day in order to check the herd and bring reindeer to the camp. The ordinary situation is that only one or two reindeer herders stay with the reindeer in camp and never leave the reindeer alone for too long. Georgiy Lekarev worked in a pair with his uncle Aleksey Tulbukonov, or with hunter Vladimir Agdyreyev. Between 2007 and 2009, the reindeer were supervised by Aleksey Tulbukonov and a Russian hunter, Anatoliy Shishmarev.

Reindeer herders are skilful in observing their animals’ movements. They constantly try to keep in mind the direction in which they can find the reindeer. It is especially important to monitor the directions of reindeer movements in the autumn, during the rut. The herders say that ‘wild’ bulls sometimes take away domestic she-deer and that these she-deer might not return to the herders. In winter, reindeer herders usually follow reindeer tracks in order to find their reindeer.

Reindeer rarely walk as a whole herd. In most cases they spread out over the river valley and walk as small groups consisting of 20 to 40 reindeer. One of the most difficult tasks for reindeer herders is to bring these small groups back, especially if there is a



Photo 5. Pavel Atolaynen brings firewood on a *poniaga*. Nomama, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.



Photo 6. Reindeer are 'making their own wind'. Nomama, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.

lack of people. If reindeer left the smoke fires in small groups, herders try to remember the directions in which they left. In this case sound is very important. I have observed that northern Baikal reindeer herders attached a bell (*Ev. botal*) to a calm she-deer or to a castrated reindeer and try to remember the directions of reindeer movements by listening to these bells. Moreover, bells are usually attached to dominant reindeer, and the other reindeer recognise the sound of this bell and follow these reindeer (Stépanoff 2012: 301). In the morning, usually from 5 to 7 o'clock, the sound of a bell signified that reindeer had returned; this was therefore the time to set the fires. In 2009, I observed that people kept 4 castrated reindeer (*Ev. gilge*) in the herd, but in mid-July 2012 wolves killed 3 of them and the last one was slaughtered. At that time I observed only 2 she-deer with bells.

Therefore, the return of animals to the same places is an important part of the domestication process. The success of this process is based on the creation of different structures and the use of particular strategies that facilitate the animals' return to particular locations. Thus, returning to the same place is not a consequence of domestication. Rather, they constitute a process that takes place within these short-term movements, which implies relatively quick return to the same geographical points.

LANDSCAPES OF REINDEER HERDING

Human-reindeer relations were never attributed to one particular place. Domestication as a process involves the use of particular places and movement between them. Evenk

reindeer herders create their living spaces through “their use of landscapes for subsistence that is inseparable from their movements and maintenance paths as well as for the success of interactions with animals and other non-human beings” (Brandišauskas 2012: 10). My particular interest was how people use their knowledge about particular parts of landscape in reindeer herding.

The fieldwork in the northern Baikal region has shown that reindeer herders use the landscape pragmatically. For instance, the oldest woman in Kholodnoye, Praskovya Platonova, said that long ago the Evenk did not construct fences in the mountains. She explained that in the mountainous river valleys they simply did not need fences. (Fieldnotes 2009) In other words, local reindeer herders employed parts of the landscape instead of stationary structures. They used mountainous ridges as natural fences, restricting the movements of reindeer. Local people still use a special term ‘narrow places’ (*uzkiye mesta*) in relation to the valleys located between two ridges. It is much easier to see which direction reindeer move from a camp than on the plane. One of these ‘narrow places’ is located on the upper reaches of the Gasan-Diakit River. As Yakov Shangin, who showed me the way to this narrow valley, said, people used these pastures after the Second World War.

In Kholodnoye I observed that animals have a certain freedom of movement. This reflects the local ethics of human-animal relations in which local people perceive animals as non-human people who know how to move within the landscape. In this sense, this kind of relationship has many similarities with the villagers’ attitude to reindeer. Animals in Kholodnoye are granted a certain level of freedom. Evgeny Tikhonovich Ganyugin, who worked in the 1960s at a reindeer farm in Kholodnoye, said: “The reindeer is an animal: that is why he is found of moving” (*Olen’ est’ zver’, a potomu lyubit khodit’*) (Shubin 2007: 170). Northern Baikal reindeer herders often say that they just follow reindeer when they decide to change a pasture. Accordingly, Mark Dwyer and Kirill Istomin (2008: 529) wrote, that reindeer herders “move when reindeer no longer want to stay on a pasture”.

Landscape and its particularities is an important part of local reindeer herders’ knowledge. As the herders say, some places may attract both domestic and wild reindeer, as well as people at a particular time of the year (Anderson et al. 2014). For example, reindeer may try to escape from blackfly on the ice mounds on the shores of the rivers (Ev. *amnunda*) (Photo 7). The ice in these places disappears only at the beginning of August. Reindeer like to stay near these places during the day in summer because of a lack of biting insects: “There are no mosquitos at *amnundy*; it is windy and cold there” (Fieldnotes 2012f). During the summer time snow is also preserved up in the mountains. Local people call places in the mountains with large amounts of snow *imandany*, which derives from the Evenk word *imanda*, meaning ‘snow’. These places may attract wild reindeer and Manchurian deer, which try to avoid the blackfly. Hunters especially sometimes visit these places. A hunter said that during summer wild reindeer “walk in the mountains, along the streams, they like empty and windy spaces” (Fieldnotes 2012f).

Most informants emphasised that in the summer wind plays a significant role in reindeer herders’ practices. Reindeer herders from the Uluki *obchshina* keep reindeer in open and windy place at the mouth of the Nomama River. This particular campsite was chosen because it is located on at the crossing point of different winds. In a similar



Photo 7. Reindeer on the Amnunda, Nomama River, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.

manner, the location of contemporary Kholodnoye was suitable for keeping reindeer in the summer because of the chilling wind that could save the herds from midges. Later on, the village even got the local name ‘village on the seven winds’ (*Derevnya na semi vetrakh*). Lyubov Bashkirova remembers that old people told her they usually left reindeer near the valley of the river Kholodnoye and preferred not to bring the reindeer to the neighbouring village of Dushkachan, which was a centre of local administration in the 1920s. Dushkachan is a place with a lack of wind. Lyubov Bashkirova stressed that even now some people arrive from Dushkachan and see that it might be calm there and windy in Kholodnoye at the same time. (Fieldnotes 2012b) Accordingly, people say there are fewer biting insects near Kholodnoye than in the neighbouring Staryi Uoyan village.

I concur with Charles Stépanoff (2012: 303), who says that reindeer herders’ routes are the results of long-standing relationships among humans, animals, and their common environment and they are the spatial projections of “the reindeer-human co-engagement in the landscape”. People from the Uluki *obshchina* are used to seasonal migrations between winter and summer pastures. The movements of the first part of the summer are dictated by the need to protect the reindeer from biting insects. In winter the reindeer herders keep reindeer in the valley of the Chaya River, then gradually move to the mouth of the Nomama River and go to the riverhead of the Kholodnaya River during the rut. The distance between winter and summer pastures is only 10–15 kilometres. This allows reindeer herders to visit the bases at the Chaya and Nomama Rivers from time to time to take supplies. People do not specially relocate the herds as “reindeer themselves migrate from place to place” (Fieldnotes 2012e). As Georgiy

Lekarev said, they never stay more than 5 days in one place during the calving period (Fieldnotes 2012a).

Before the 2010s, reindeer sometimes returned to the valley of the Chaya River in August, revisiting the same places they usually used in spring. There are many mushrooms in these places in August, which is why the herd usually moved downstream along the Chaya River in August for 10–15 days and then returned. According to Pavel Chernoyev, since 2010 reindeer had never gone there at the end of the summer (Fieldnotes 2012c). However, even though people move animals from one river valley to another, reindeer may return to the same camps themselves. In a similar way, when Nenets reindeer herders move to a new campsite; those animals that are missing will most likely return to the previous campsite (Dwyer, Istomin 2008: 529; Istomin, Dwyer 2010: 619).

During the Soviet period reindeer herders divided the herd in order to save pastures. Today reindeer herders do not specially divide their herds. Yet, when the mushrooms season starts, reindeer often move from one camp to another: “We do not do anything special. They divide into groups themselves.” (Fieldnotes 2012c)

In summer reindeer herders choose a place to make camp (Ev. *bikit*) taking a number of factors into consideration. First of all, the campsite should be well positioned, because it is very important to notice the directions of reindeer movements. Reindeer herders at the mouth of the Nomama River even made 3 windows in different walls of their winter cabin (*zimovye*) in order to see and hear reindeer from inside, even though hunters usually construct cabins with only one small window. Secondly, the place should be open and windy. Local people say reindeer herders always chose windy places as campsites. Reindeer themselves constantly return to these places. When reindeer leave windy places, they sometimes return because there is no wind in other places. Therefore, reindeer herders used a combination of windy and windless places, where the wind encourages reindeer remain in certain territories, and to return to them. However, in the case of a strong wind reindeer usually leave a camp. Another important thing is the presence of water nearby. Herders usually build camps close to a river, a spring or a lake. Finally, people chose a place that is easily accessible to heavy trucks that facilitates periodic returns from the village and central base.

In camp reindeer herders use a combination of mobile and stationary constructions. In the 1990s, herders actively employed tents (*palatki*). Yet, later on at the places they used intensively from year to year, they introduced stationary structures. Thus, in 2000, reindeer herders built a small building in which to stay overnight which they called a shed (*saray*) at the place of the spring camp near the Chaya River (Photo 8). Later on the whole place received the name Saray. Pavel Chernoyev commented on this situation, saying: “We decided not to build a log cabin. If you build one every time, you will get a village in this place!” (Fieldnotes 2012c) In the 2000s, people used this place in May when the herd gradually moved from the valley of the Chaya River to the mouth of the Nomama River. Georgiy Lekarev used stakes to bind young deer at this place. People called a camp where they stay for a relatively short period an intermediate camp (*prokhnodnaya stoyanka*). Reindeer herders used the flat territory near the mouth of the Nomama River as a summer camp. They usually stayed there for several months and used smoke while there. From 2006 to 2010, reindeer herders employed a stationary conical bark lodge (*yurta*). Visiting these places after 2007 I saw how people



Photo 8. Saray. Chaya River, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.



Photo 9. Reindeer herders' camp. Nomama, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.



Photo 10. Reindeer herders cut antlers, Nomama River, August 2009. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.

constantly added new structures in the camp. In 2010 they built a log winter house near the *yrta*. In 2012 Pavel Atolaynen started to build a shed (*naves*) as rain protection for a fireplace that reindeer herders used to cook food (Photo 9). Since 2010 people have employed the *yrta* as a place to cook food, and to store products and tools. According to Georgiy Lekarev, he continued to use a tent in spring during the calving period and in autumn during the rut when reindeer move to the upper reaches of the Kholodnaya River (Fieldnotes 2012a).

DEFENCE OF A HERD FROM PREDATORS

Seasonal practices imply the use of certain locations and tools and could become a reason for the movement of people and animals. For instance, in August people usually cut the reindeer's antlers because adult bulls can traumatise each other during the rut, when they become very aggressive (Photo 10). Antlers on the ground can attract bears creating a need for constant supervision of the herd. Reindeer herders constantly observe predator movements. This becomes especially relevant when their number increases, as in 2011–2013 when reindeer herders became involved in a 'war against predators'. People tried to save reindeer from other species – bears, wolves, wolverines and kites. In summer 2013 people were especially worried about the increasing population of wolves, which were the main reason for the decrease in reindeer numbers in Kholodnoye. According to the local people, wolves even killed a chained dog

in neighbouring Kichera settlement. The herd of the Uluki *obshchina* decreased 7 times: it was 118 reindeer at the beginning of August 2012 and continued to decrease in the autumn. According to informants, reindeer herders survived similar problems in the Soviet period when wolves killed many reindeer in the valley of the Gasan River, and people had to move the herd to another place.

Herders consider poison to be the best means of exterminating wolves. However, the use of the poisoning chemical was officially prohibited in the 1990s. Even though some hunters still had these chemicals left over from the Soviet period, these were finished very quickly. People complained about the low price the state paid for the extermination of wolves: the price of a wolf's skin was 5,000 roubles in 2012, which was 4 times cheaper than in the Republic of Yakutia (Fieldnotes 2013d). People emphasised that these prices were not effective in Buryatia because of the absence of professional and skilled wolf hunters. Pavel Chernoyev said that the introduction of night vision optics can also be useful in tracking wolves (Fieldnotes 2012c).

I have observed many times how Pavel Chernoyev and Pavel Atolaynen went to supervise the herd in the forest late in the evening or early in the morning to track wolves. They said that the reindeer looked scared when they sense the presence of wolves. When reindeer started to run away the reindeer herders fired several shots from a gun in order to scare the wolves. However, not all of these night trips were effective. They helped to save the herd, yet wolves continued to attack it when the herders went back to the camp.

Reindeer herders believe that wolves compete with people and will never stop until they have killed all the reindeer in the herd. People say a wolf kills reindeer not because he is hungry: "A wolf kills reindeer and then does not eat. Then he kills more and more animals and leaves them on the ground." (Fieldnotes 2012c) Hunters and reindeer herders usually track the migration routes of wolves. They always indicate the predators not as an abstract category but as "wolves from the valley of the Chaya River", "a she-wolf who came from Vyselki" or "wolves from Irkutsk Oblast". Reindeer herder Georgiy Lekarev said that the decrease of animals in the forest could be linked to the emergence of wolves who came to the Republic of Buryatia from the North trying to escape from the intense fires: "There are many wolves in the valley of the Kholodnaya River now. One cannot see animals – wolves scared them all away. They came from somewhere. They probably tried to escape from a fire." (Fieldnotes 2012a) I heard the similar explanation in the village many times.

In the Soviet period, one of the reasons for the relocation of the reindeer farm was the increasing number of predators. For instance, due to the increasing number of wolves in the 1950s, *kolkhozniki* relocated the herds from the valley of the Tyia River to the valley of the Nyurundukan River (*Nashe olenevodstvo* 1968: 1).

In summer 2012, many reindeer were traumatised by wolves. The shortage of special remedies at the reindeer herders' base gave rise to a strategy of *bricolage* in healing. Reindeer herders actively employed everything they had at hand: lubricants, solid oil, kerosene and even diesel fuel (Photo 11). Aleksey Tulbukonov said that in 2011 there very many wounded reindeer as well. He used to heal their wounds every day by using tar oil. Georgiy Lekarev said he can see if a reindeer is ill by looking into its eyes. He said that a diseased animal usually has sad eyes "as if it wants to say something". (Fieldnotes 2012a) Informants say that previously Evenks tried to heal both rein-

deer and people using the same medicine. Local people set especially great value on a rare medicinal plant called in the Evenk language *yanda* (Lat. *Gentiana algida*), which they translate as 'mountainous herb'. People consider this plant to be a universal medicine. I heard from Praskovya Platonova that people in the kolkhoz gave diseased calves a broth of *yanda* and that this helped (Fieldnotes 2009).

When, in summer 2012, reindeer returned to the camp wounded, they did not try to escape from people. In this case the reindeer herders tried to blame animals. I heard Pavel Atolaynen and Pavel Chernoyev speaking to the reindeer many times as they cleaned wounds with kerosene: "Well, it is painful. You should put up with it if you want to stay alive. This is your fault. Why are you wandering everywhere? Why did you walk in the bushes?" (Fieldnotes 2012c; 2012f) Thus, they tried to explain reindeer that they are themselves responsible for an incident, rather than wolves and people.

Bears are also very dangerous for the herd. In July 2012 reindeer herders saw bear's traces near to the camp and were able to reconstruct the bear's movements across the road; they pointed out the places where he had stopped and sniffed. Moreover, they said that in the bushes at the side of the road the bear tried to gnaw the skeleton of a reindeer killed by a wolf in the spring. According to reindeer herders, in 2011, they killed a bear near to a smoke fire that was close to the place where people kept old reindeer horns, cut off in autumn. In August 2009, I witnessed a similar situation when, early in the morning, reindeer herders killed a bear just 30 metres from their conical bark lodge (*yrta*). People say bears often visit the places where they can find the remains of old bones and reindeer horns. Therefore, people surround a camp with several traps (Kharinskiy, Ziker 2013: 280) which they mask with spruce branches (Photo 12). People call this type of a trap 'a loop' (*petlia*).

When a predator kills a reindeer, people do not eat its meat but use it as food for dogs and bait for bears, when making a trap. They keep this meat near the camp in a cold stream, holding it under the water with stones. In order to prepare pieces of the meat for bears the meat is kept in the stream for several weeks until it starts to spoil and has a strong smell: "A bear likes spoiled meat, he comes to the places where it smells" (Fieldnotes 2012f). Pavel Chernoyev told me that he made such bait from a wolf's meat as well (Fieldnotes 2012c).

In July 2012, bear hunting was not successful in Nomama River area. Reindeer herders said that it was a very sly bear because he managed to eat the bait twice and escaped



Photo 11. Pavel Atolaynen employs diesel fuel for healing a reindeer. Nomama, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.



Photo 12. A trap covered by spruce bunches. Chaya River, July 2012. Photo by Vladimir Davydov.

from a trap by throwing it off to the side. He was wandering around for about two weeks and scared the herd many times. His presence was indicated by reindeer behaviour. When reindeer saw the bear, they returned to the smoke fire very quickly. Moreover, experienced hunters are able to realise the presence of a bear by a specific smell. The barking of a dog is also a signal of danger. Therefore, reindeer herders bind dogs in places with good visibility. Dogs can also signal the presence of predators when they smell a bear or a wolf.

Some predators may also attack people and their constructions. Many times I heard stories about bears attacked winter log houses (*zimovye*). Viktor Alekseyevich Ganyugin said that a bear had broken a stove in his *zimovye* (Fieldnotes 2012g). People perceive this type of behaviour as conscious competition with people. Wolverine are also dangerous when they wander around. In spring 2012 one killed several reindeer. Georgiy Lekarev told a short story about his struggle with a wolverine:

In spring, when the reindeer were sleepy, this wolverine stalked, jumped and gnawed at spines. She killed several she-deer nearby. She killed a young deer as well. Then again she killed several reindeer.

Then Georgiy prepared a trap and caught the wolverine, but she managed to free her leg from the trap. Later on he decided to poison some bait. As a result he managed to exterminate both the wolverine and a bear which was wandering nearby:

I was watching through binoculars and later saw that the bear has appeared. He came just after me, stole some bait and was poisoned as well. And they [the rein-

deer] managed to calve there [in the valley of the Chaya River] with no problems. Then wolves came to this place [the mouth of the Nomama River] and started to kill reindeer.

According to Georgiy, kites are also very dangerous for young deer. In spring 2012, reindeer herders managed to kill one. (Fieldnotes 2012a)

People assume that wild reindeer are also very dangerous for domestic ones in autumn during the rut. There were some cases when wild bulls killed domestic reindeer using their sharp horns. Another danger is that during the rut wild reindeer may take domestic she-reindeer away. In this sense, reindeer herders reflect not only the movements of domestic reindeer but of other animals as well.

CONCLUSION

Reindeer herding in the northern Baikal area is now on the edge of extinction. In 2012, local people were very sceptical about the plan of the rayon administration to increase the herd in order to produce their own tinned stewed meat. The loss of reindeer within the last several years is catastrophic and it means that local people lose emotional bounds. Pavel Chernoyev emphasised: “The loss of reindeer means for us the loss of everything” (Fieldnotes 2012c). Young people do not have the motivation to work in reindeer herding. People who work in the *obshchiny* do not receive official salaries and obtain only food and clothes. Praskovya Platonovna Lekareva said that almost the same situation existed before the Revolution of 1917, when Evenk who lost reindeer had to work with the herd of their rich relatives (Fieldnotes 2013b). Some contemporary reindeer herders, however, manage to earn some money by selling sable fur, gallbladders and other products of hunting. Yet in the case of individual hunting, the *obshchiny* may demand part of the income. People who work directly with reindeer usually do not receive the state dotation. Even though the representatives of the administration may perceive reindeer herding as a set of numbers in the documents, the local people’s main concern is to save the herd. They wish they could increase the protection from predators.

In contrast to Zabaikal Krai and Yakutia, there are no trained riding and working reindeer left in Buryatia. People from the Oron *obshchina* keep their cargo saddles and sledges in a special shed and from the Uluki *obshchina*, under the roof of a house at the central base. They were not in use for about 6–7 years. All the trained reindeer have disappeared in recent years. Another thing that is different to neighbouring regions is that people do not exchange reindeer with other *obshchiny*. They do not even exchange reindeer with Oron and Uluki *obshchiny*.

Local people have recently discussed the possibility of bringing new reindeer from neighbouring regions. The heads of both *obshchiny* had an idea to purchase reindeer in the Zabaikal Krai. In summer 2013 Aleksey Ganyugin even travelled to Kust’-Kemda village in order to agree on the purchase of 10 reindeer (Fieldnotes 2013a). While working in Zabaikalye in 2014 I witnessed now he bought 18 reindeer there.

In conclusion, I am going to emphasise that regional borders never coincided with local people’s practices. People and reindeer can easily move from one region to another. Therefore, animals, practices and strategies move with them. My recent field-

work in southern Yakutia and northern Zabaikalye has shown that people repeatedly cross the borders of 3 regions, have relatives in neighbouring regions and exchange reindeer with other *obshchiny* (Fieldnotes 2013d). Therefore, local human-animal relationships should be analysed within the wider socio-political context. There are many examples of people adapting the models which were imposed by the state and which they had begun to think of as traditional. The administrators saw reindeer herding as a certain and concrete strategy of human-animal patronage. However, the ethnographic examples show that this is not the only strategy of reindeer domestication in Siberia. It implies a number of particular local domestication strategies and different stories of the remoteness or closeness of animals to people that should be carefully documented.

In many cases, researchers neglected the role of the landscape, structures and movement between them in the process of reindeer domestication. However, domestication is not a process that is performed only by people. The agents of reindeer domestication process are people, structures, the landscape and animals, and they all constantly change the degree of being 'wild' or 'domestic'. Furthermore, human-reindeer relations were never relations attributed to one particular place, but to a number of places, such as summer and winter pastures, calving and hunting territories, which served as points of constant return for people and animals. Therefore, these relations should be approached as dynamic. In this sense, domestication can be seen as a process that occurs in the context of constant movement from place to place, or as domestication-on-the-move. Moreover, human-reindeer relations are embedded in a set of interspecies relations in which 'wild' and 'domestic' are relative categories. In this sense, domestication means a process, rather than a concrete quality.

Even though ethnographic literature contains a lack of reflection on how people have continually invested a lot of effort to keep reindeer close to them, and reindeer domestication was presented in the seminal works of Russian scholars as a primordial characteristic of modern herds (Vasilyevich, Levin 1951; Vainshtein 1971), the ethnographic examples from the northern Baikal reindeer herders' camps show that it is an on-going process rather than a fact from the past. Therefore, domestication can be approached as domestication-in-practice and domestication-on-the-move, which involve the periodic return of people and animals to the same places.

NOTES

1 People call this village Kholodnaya. The name Kholodnoye is used in official documents.

2 All words given here and below in italics refer to Russian vocabulary unless otherwise indicated. Evenk words are indicated as Ev.

SOURCES

Fieldnotes 2007a – Interview with Aleksey Alekeyevich Ganyugin, Kholodnoye, 2007.

Fieldnotes 2007b – Interview with Nikolay Tulbukonov, Kholodnoye, 2007.

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 Fieldnotes 2012g – Interview with Viktor Alekseyevich Ganyugin, Kholodnoye, 2012.
 Fieldnotes 2013a – Interview with Aleksey Alekeyevich Ganyugin, Kholodnoye, 2013.
 Fieldnotes 2013b – Interview with Praskovya Platonovna Lekareva, Kholodnoye, 2013.
 Fieldnotes 2013c – Diary of the expedition to the northern part of Sakhalin Island, 2013.
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