SUOMEN ANTROPOLOGI: JOURNAL OF THE FINNISH ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 47, Issue 3, 2023

Editors' note

Articles

Book forum: *The Dawn of Everything*

Lectures

EDITORS' NOTE: STUDENT PROTESTS, HISTORICITIES, AND GENRES

We are excited to once again introduce a new issue of S*uomen antropologi: The Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*. This special issue, guest edited by Dmitry Arzyutov (University of Oulu) and Karina Lukin (University of Helsinki), is entitled 'Entangled historicities in the Eurasian North'. The special issue consists of Arzyutov and Lukin's introduction, as well as articles by Lukin, Art Leete (University of Tartu), Otso Kortekangas (University of Turku) and Victoria Peemot (University of Helsinki). In addition to the special issue, we include a book forum, curated by our former long-time editorial secretary Ville Laakkonen (Tampere University) on *The Dawn of Everything* (Graeber and Wengrow 2021), with contributions from Khalil 'Avi' Betz-Heinemann (University of Helsinki), Matti Eräsaari (University of Helsinki), Linda Hulin (University of Oxford) and Veronica Walker Vadillo (University of Helsinki), and Tuomas Tammisto (Tampere University). Last, but not least, Ilana Gershon (Rice University) contributed a thought-provoking essay on artificial intelligence and genre.

Before introducing the texts in this issue in more detail, we want use this space to discuss some goings-on at the journal as well as a few topical issues in anthropology and universities in Finland.

Since publishing our last issue, two new editors have joined our team—Suvi Rautio from the University of Helsinki and Henni Alava from Tampere University. Suvi and Henni are both impressively accomplished anthropologists. Suvi conducted research for her PhD on village community-making in rural China (2019). Guided by stories of her own family history, Suvi is currently working on a postdoctoral project on the transmission of memory and loss among Beijing's intellectual class during the Mao Zedong era. Henni has conducted long-term research in Uganda on the politics of religion, silence and hope in the post-civil war era (2022). She is continuing her work on trauma, silence and hope through an examination of paediatric care for chronic pain in Finland in an ethnographic study of families, medical practitioners and children impacted by chronic pain. We are delighted that Suvi and Henni offer their insights and intellect, expanding the expertise of our editorial team. More personally, we studied as post-graduate students with both Suvi and Henni, have worked together and formed communities with them, and are thus thrilled to continue working with both scholars in this capacity.

STUDENT PROTESTS IN FINLAND

At the time of writing this in late September 2023, students at several Finnish universities and high schools are occupying their institutions to protest proposed austerity and anti-immigration policies from Finland's new government. In June 2023, the chair of the right-wing National Coalition Party, Petteri Orpo, formed a coalition government with the far-right True Finns party, the conservative right-wing Christian Democrats, and the liberal Swedish People's Party. Over the summer, racist writings from True Finn ministers as well as their connections to far-right extremists emerged in media discussions in Finland and internationally, ultimately leading to a government crisis when the Swedish People's Party refused a vote of confidence for one True Finns minister given their racist writings. Prime Minister Orpo avoided the collapse of his newly formed government by issuing an antiracist statement, to which all coalition party members should be committed. The credibility of the statement has since been considerably undermined by a True Finns member downplaying the importance of the statement and their subsequent refusal to distance themselves from their racist writings.

All of this serves as backdrop to the current student protests. Since avoiding an early collapse, the government can now begin implementing its policies, policies described as one of the most right-wing agendas in Finnish political history. This agenda is based on austerity politics and balancing the state budget through sweeping cuts to social safety nets and security. That is, instead of increasing state revenue generated through taxation, for example, social programmes will be gutted.

Students at the universities of Helsinki and Tampere, our home institutions, have occupied university buildings to protest the proposed cuts. The students protesting note that cuts to housing subsidies will directly impact their livelihoods by lowering students' income. Students also demand that student mental health services must be protected, and oppose any possible tuition fees and racism within the government. Soon after the occupation, researchers from the Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism (CEREN) in Helsinki publicly expressed their support of the students' demands. The anthropology teaching and research communities in Helsinki followed suit, issuing a statement of support of their own—and collected food to donate to the occupying students (Forde and Eräsaari 2023).

It is easy for anthropologists to support these students' demands. The cuts to the housing subsidies alone are unfair, since they affect many

low-income households, and from the students' perspective, contradict other government plans. With a reduction to student incomes, students must find further wage-based work to finance their studies, increasing the time it will take for them to complete their degree programmes. The government, however, funds universities based on the proportion of students graduating within specified time limits. Thus, the government demands students graduate as quickly as possible, whilst making it harder for them to do so in practice.

Furthermore, student mental health services should be a priority, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit students and school children especially hard. Currently, there is an increased need for mental health services for students. We know from previous periods of depression and austerity measures that cuts to mental health services cost more money in the long run than any short-term 'savings' achieved. Hence, a government proclaiming 'debt control' should know that cuts to student mental health results in a debt we cannot repay.

Finally, opposing the tightening of immigration and racist policies is crucial to anthropologists and our discipline. First, anthropology, despite or because its own complicity in colonialism and racism, has for its part dispelled racist notions and shown that racism has no scientific basis. Second, anthropologists are ethically committed to the unity of humankind and antiracism. Finally, anthropology in Finland is a highly international field of study. The tightening of immigration policies hits many of our international students and colleagues hard, individuals who work on fixed-term contracts, already precarious conditions, whilst contributing to research and teaching here in Finland.

Statements of support and donations of food are important, but only go so far. To our minds, we need to concretely support the students protesting. Universities, through their leaders and boards, could (and, in our opinion, should) unequivocally demand from politicians and the Ministry of Education that students are, for example, given leeway with degree completion times—and that the funding of universities should be de-coupled from such goals. Given that students must work in order to fund their studies and make a living to simply survive, it is unfair and counterproductive to expect them to graduate in a short time. More broadly, strict 'in-and-out' degrees do not nurture the broad-based learning we advocate for nor the pursuit of knowledge, both of which should be the basis of higher education.

In addition to trying to change existing structures, universities as institutions need to creatively approach how they support students in

increasingly precarious situations. That is easier said than done, and just one of many problematic results of austerity—namely, attempting to achieve more with less. Nevertheless, we must figure out how we use existing resources to take better care of our students.

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

In the first piece in this issue, Dmitry Arzyutov and Karina Lukin introduce the special issue they guest edited and its central topic, indigenous historicity in the Eurasian North. The articles in this special issue focus on how the Khanty, Sámi, Nenets and Tyva continue to and have conceptualised their pasts, and how their historicities interact with the dominant conceptualisations of the past in Russia and Finland. Arzyutov and Lukin use the term 'historicity', rather than 'history', which, following François Hartog's definition, they understand as a tool for comparing different types of histories and ways of existing in time. This project is necessarily interdisciplinary, and, thus, the authors of this special issue represent various discipline-specific backgrounds, such as ethnology, folkore studies, history and indigenous studies. As the guest editors note, this project aimed at understanding different histories—and, indeed, historicities—has also been influenced by historical anthropology and by authors such as Eric Wolf and Marhsall Sahlins, whose works are critically examined. The various historicities analysed in this issue, as the guest editors note, have been situated within long-term encounters with each other within both peaceful and conflictual contexts. Through these encounters, the diversity of meanings of the past have been shaped and developed amongst and between indigenous communities, state agencies and communities of scholars. Accordingly, the articles in this special issue are based both on field work and archival research.

In the opening article of the special issue, Karina Lukin examines Nenets epic songs by focusing on two texts collected at the beginning of the twentieth century, examining the songs from two perspectives. The first context involves the collection of them, and specifically dissects the processes that influenced that collection, namely Finnish nationalism and Russian imperialism, which resulted in the 'folklorisation' of the Nenets song. 'Folklorisation', as Lukin argues, is based on ideologies of modernity hindering historical interpretations of the Nenets. In the context of the collection, the Nenets and their historical narration were situated at the margins or beyond historical knowledge. Second, Lukin interprets the songs themselves as meaningful acts, through which the Nenets have

narrated their historicity and agency through the poetic means of the singers. As Lukin shows, the songs have both criticised Russian imperial administration and its relationship to the Nenets as well as resisted Finnish 'folklorisation' of the songs as 'things from the past'. Instead, the Nenets singers have asserted through poetic songs a past that is not unchanging and static, but something that recurs through relationships with the other-worldly, ultimately repeated and regenerated through the very act of performance.

In his article, Otso Kortekangas examines how a Finnish geodeist and self-taught ethnographer working in the early twentieth century framed Skolt Sámi notions of their past through his examination of their toponymy. Kortekangas specifically does this by analysing Nickul's early publications and his international correspondence. As Kortekangas notes, Nickul argued that the Skolt Sámi had a moral right in naming their own territory, whereby Skolt Sámi names should remain in cartographic representations. In Nickul's understanding, the Skolt Sámi toponyms did not simply reflect the topography, but revealed relationships with ancient events, beliefs and livelihood practices and were, thus, a way to understand the 'mental imagery of the Sámi'. Kortekangas notes that even if Nickul was in contact with international scholars who studied Sámi linguistics, he was essentially self-taught and his project represented one that paralleled scholarly debates of indigenous historicities of the era. However, Nickul's interpretations bear striking similarities to the ways in which anthropologists examined and classified, for example, indigenous place names in North America.

Art Leete for his part analyses the so-called Kazym War of 1931–1934, namely, the armed uprising of the Khanty and Forest Nenets against the Soviets. As Leete notes, the rebellion is well-covered in archival sources, scholarly research as well as popular writings. Indigenous narratives of the uprising also continue circulating in the local communities. In his text, Leete examines the various means by which the uprising is examined and narrated, demonstrating how indigenous history sometimes reproduces and adopts a dominant discourse about the uprising, by largely rejecting official narratives and by establishing an autonomous discussion of events. As Leete notes, indigenous scholars and intellectuals also rely heavily on the official archival sources, but incorporate indigenous oral accounts into their work to a much greater degree than other scholars. According to him, the multiplicity of sources available on the Kazym War have rendered indigenous understandings of it hybrid knowledge which emerged through a colonial encounter. However, the indigenous narratives remain quite independent of the dominant discourses.

Next, Victoria Soyan Peemot investigates the relationship between Tyva pastoralists and their home landscapes. Here, the focus lies on the Soyan kinship group's construction of a Buddhist stupa in 2019, viewed as a means of engaging with the past and reinforcing their community–homeland connection. Peemot's research reveals how the community has remembered and interacted with their past, particularly during the socialist era when the state neglected human–nonhuman relationships. Peemot uses the concept of *storying*, especially related to landscapes, to examine the collective memory amongst Tyva pastoralists' interactions with the environment. The construction of the Buddhist stupa serves as an act of resilience and a way to protect their current seasonal grounds from potential chromite mining operations. Peemot also discusses the Soyans' relationship with landscape within the broader context of memory politics under Putin's regime, noting that after a brief period of democracy in the 1990s, Russia reinstated state control over narratives of the past, clashing with indigenous narratives amongst groups like the Soyans. The Soyans' engagement with their traumatic past and their active sharing of these stories are thus interpreted as acts of resilience.

BOOK FORUM AND A KEYNOTE LECTURE

The theme of history and historicity continues beyond the special issue co-edited by Arzyutov and Lukin with a book forum curated by Ville Laakkonen on David Graeber's and David Wengrow's book, *The Dawn of Everything* (2021). In his introduction, Laakkonen introduces the essays in the forum and reflects on the work of Graeber and Wengrow. Laakkonen focuses specifically on the generative aspect of the book, and its main argument that humans have always been socially creative and have experimented with different forms of social organisation. In short, things do not have to be as they are. This, as Laakkonen notes, is a welcome glimpse of hope in an era characterised by multiple overlapping crises.

Matti Eräsaari discusses in his essay the 'mission' of *The Dawn of Everything*, particularly how it challenges popular 'grand narratives' of human histories, and, indeed, even 'historicities', referring to Arzyutov's and Lukin's special issue. More so, Eräsaari discusses the intended audiences of the book.

Khalil 'Avi' Betz-Heinemann examines in his in-depth essay how the book by Graeber and Wengrow focuses on possibilities: on the ability to do differently and how this also grants respect and agency to our ancestors. In addition, Betz-Heinemann notes that focusing on our collective ability

to organise ourselves in various ways serves as a form of 'emergency preparedness' in the era of multiple crises Lakkonen mentioned.

A key part of the appeal of *The Dawn of Everything* stems from its archaeological discussion. We are incredibly pleased, then, to include in the book forum an essay from two archaeologists, Linda Hulin and Veronica Walker Vadillo. As maritime archaeologists, Hulin and Walker Vadillo analyse the book with 'a view from the water'. This is particularly apt, since Graeber and Wengrow mention coastal and maritime archaeology in their book. As Hulin and Walker Vadillo point out, the fluctuation of oceans is an important factor in discussions on the seasonality of social organisation—a key theme throughout *The Dawn of Everything*. Hulin and Walker Vadillo also point out how waterways serve as important conduits of contact, rather than obstacles, making them central to discussions about human social creativity.

In the last piece in the book forum, Tuomas Tammisto discusses questions of egalitarian social organisation. Here, Tammisto argues that rather than such questions being archaic baselines of human existence, let alone 'simple' social formations, egalitarianism should be viewed as the result of a great deal of effort and creativity—and, accordingly, as major social and cultural achievements.

Finally, we close out this issue with Ilana Gershon's essay, reworked from a keynote conference lecture delivered in May 2023 at the University of Siegen, on the kinds of anthropological approaches that can be applied to studying ChatGPT and related technologies based on large language models (LLMs). Applying the concept of genre as used in linguistic anthropology to LLMs, Gershon frames LLM-based software as genre machines. By examining the figures of personhood associated with artificial intelligence (AI), Gershon contends that anthropologists are well placed to understand the changes to participant structures in the workplace. Another change brought about by new kinds of AI software is how genre and style, presumably rooted in human creativity, are structured in new ways. Gershon also discusses the role of the generic, based on the work of Scott MacLochlainn (2023), noting that ChatGPT and associated technologies seem to be especially apt at producing generic versions of a genre, for instance. Genericness can, thus, be useful when authorship is problematic, and, hence, AI-created content will be accompanied by 'new forms of non-authorship', Gershon argues.

TUOMAS TAMMISTO & HEIKKI WILENIUS
Editors-in-Chief

REFERENCES

Alava, Henni 2022. *Christianity, Politics and the Afterlives of War in Uganda: There Is Confusion*. London: Bloomsburry Academic.

Forde, Maarit and Matti Eräsaari 2023. Anthropology Researchers' Letter of Support for the Striking Students in the University Main Building. *Blog of Social and Cultural Anthropology* 21 September 2023. https://blogs.helsinki.fi/anthropology/2023/09/21/anthropology-researchers-letter-of-support-for-the-striking-students-in-the-university-main-building/. <Accessed 2 October 2023>

Graeber, David and David Wengrow 2021. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity.* London: Penguin Books.

MacLochlainn, Scott 2022. *The Copy Generic: How the Nonspecific Makes Our Social Worlds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rautio, Suvi 2019. *The Jade Emperor's Last Taste of Water: An Ethnography on the Making of a Village in China.* PhD. thesis. Helsinki: University of Helsinki. http://hdl.handle.net/10138/299276.

Dmitry Arzyutov and Karina Lukin

INTRODUCTION TO 'ENTANGLED INDIGENOUS HISTORICITIES FROM THE EURASIAN NORTH'

ABSTRACT

The present collection examines the ways in which Indigenous peoples—the Sámi, Khanty, Nenets, and Tyva—deal with the past and how their conceptualisations of the past entangle with dominant ideologies in Russia and Finland, human–environment relations, and the colonial experiences they navigated. The researchers summarised here employ the notion of historicity, which is understood in François Hartog's terms as a 'temporal experience'. In this collection, we expand this notion towards a relational nature of 'temporal experiences', where 'their' and 'our' historicities are not necessarily 'the same' or culturally determined, but have been situated in long-term peaceful and conflictual encounters. Through those encounters, the diversity of meanings of the past were shaped and developed within and between local communities and communities of scholars. This collection comprises pieces by scholars from folklore studies, ethnology, cultural studies, and history, who analyse Indigenous historicities through extensive archival and field research.

Keywords: historicities, ethnohistory, Indigenous peoples, Eurasian North

In recent decades, historians and anthropologists have debated diverse ways of narrating the past as they are understood across different communities and cultures (e.g., Quijada 2019). The acknowledgement of that diversity has already significantly expanded the intellectual horizon and also brought about new questions. One of the earliest attempts to conceptualise this diversity was the development of the subdiscipline of *ethnohistory*, a societal project within North American anthropology. Apart from advocacy on behalf of various Indigenous communities in the courtroom in relation to their land claims, ethnohistorians were able to expose different Indigenous peoples' narratives of the past, which often hinted at the agency of the environment and invisible worlds (Harkin 2010; McMillen 2007; Galloway 2006; Nabokov 2002). Thanks to that experience, the scholars posed a variety of questions about relations between 'Western' and Indigenous ways of perceiving and narrating the past. This was later provocatively summarised in a book by Eric Wolf entitled *Europe and the People Without History* (1982: 19). Therein, he stated, 'The more ethnohistory we know, the more clearly "their" history and "our" history emerge as part of the same history'. To a certain degree, that

statement remains relevant when reflecting upon the subtle cultural and political intersections shaping the meaning of the past. Yet, this did not come without its own controversy. The intellectual provocation of Wolf could not avoid the implicit dichotomy that we either have a 'shared' history or two 'different' histories ('theirs' and 'ours'), which always remain positioned in relations with Europe (see Asad 1987).

The subsequent intellectual debates, evoked by both the very title of Wolf's book and his statements, revealed the extent to which the encounters of various ways of history writing and narrating are embedded in social and political contexts and are situated in place and time (see Chakrabarty 2000). All of that—along with the histories of inequality and colonialism—could not be excluded from the way the present collection deals with the past of Indigenous peoples, whose voices are still barely audible in the metropolitical offices of intellectuals, not simply due to geographic, but also socially constructed distances. Here, one may recall Raymond D. Fogelson's idea of ethno-ethnohistory as an Indigenous perspective on their own pasts. Specifically, Fogelson writes that ethnohistorians should 'take seriously native theories of history as embedded in cosmology, in narratives, in rituals and ceremonies, and more generally in native philosophies and worldviews' (Fogelson 1989: 134; see also Kan 2019). Such a perspective, apart from its highly ethical and epistemic value, allowed many ethnohistorians to encapsulate various entanglements of multiple local/Indigenous and 'Western' forms of writing and narrating the past (see Burkhart 2016). As a result, the emerging variety of failed and successful conversations and their multidirectional evolvements and further intersections also become central in the present collection. Similar appeals to pay closer attention to 'the importance and agency of post-contact changes sparked by Indigenous people's engagement with settler colonialism and modernity' are audible in more recent works dedicated to the *New Ethnohistory*, which 'embraces notions like hybridity; seeks to deconstruct discourse for what it reveals about colonial and patriarchal exploitation; is comfortable finding and critiquing power relationships of various kinds—including those within Indigenous society; recognizes that cultural change (even colonial-induced cultural change) need not be unidirectional; embraces the tensions between tradition and innovation; and does not need to be reminded that non-Native newcomers are not always the most important thing in Indigenous society and history' (Carlson et al. 2018).

Agreeing with this and given both the interdisciplinary nature of ethnohistory itself and our focus on conversations across various ways of narrating the past, we prefer to use the term 'historicity' over history. As François Hartog states in his work *Regimes of Historicity (Régimes d'historicité)*, historicity can be held as 'a tool for comparing different types of history, and also (...) for highlighting modes of relation to time, and exploring forms of temporal experience here and elsewhere, today and in the past—in short, it serves to explore ways of being in time' (Hartog 2015: 9). This observation, as historians of anthropology may remind us, echoes the anthropological structuralism and its later development in the works of Marshall Sahlins, who concentrated the discussion on a famous statement that 'history is culture' (and 'culture is history') (1985; 2004). In our analysis, we expand the notion of historicity towards a relational nature of 'temporal experiences'. Here, 'their' and 'our' historicities are not necessarily 'the same' as in Wolf's reflections or culturally determined as Sahlins states. Instead, these historicities have been situated in

long-term peaceful and conflictual encounters through which the diversity of meanings of the past were eventually shaped and developed within and between local communities, state agencies, and communities of scholars.

Bringing those ideas to the circumpolar North and Siberia, one may conclude that this understanding has not quite been integrated into conversations that flourish in the field of ethnohistory. This collection aims to fill that gap. To pave our way through that intellectual polyphony, the authors of this special issue from different disciplines—folklore studies, ethnology, cultural studies, and history—aim to create their own field (Karina Lukin, Art Leete, and Victoria Peemot) with archival research (Karina Lukin and Otso Kortekangas).

Most of the articles within this special issue deal with the Russian social and cultural contexts, where the histories of non-Russian communities were quite often associated with the dominant Soviet theory of ethnogenesis or ethnic origin (*etnogenez* or *etnogoniya*) or ethnic history (*etnicheskaya istoriya*). As is well documented, that theory served as a tool of both Soviet policy policy on nationalities (Shnirelman 1993; Slezkine 1996; Laruelle 2008; Abashin 2018) and the post-Soviet ethnic identity claims (e.g., Bauer 2014). Its rhetoric continues to echo in public projects and even Putin's speeches today (Bassin and Kotkina 2016), and is also now mobilised in Russian sovereignty claims in the Arctic (Pirnes 2019). Born around the same time as ethnohistory, the Soviet ethnogenesis project was quite different from the ideas proposed by its overseas colleagues (Anderson 2007). As such, it aimed to construct a coherent univocal narrative where the examples taken from Indigenous songs, material artefacts, and even anthropometric measurements served the linearity of time and embraced the country's past (cf. Sleeper-Smith et al. 2015). Despite this, ethnogenesis was designed as a multidisciplinary project, which brought together Soviet ethnographers, linguists, archaeologists, and physical (biological) anthropologists, who were all able to enjoy some freedom in narrating the past of Indigenous and ethnic groups, which awkwardly neighboured the official Soviet history, but never fully coalesced with it. What's more, the ethnogenesis theory incorporated some Indigenous concepts of the past into its epistemic fabric, which return in today's discussions by Indigenous authors about the Siberian Indigenous people's pasts.

The historicities that Indigenous communities construct and maintain through complex relations with words, things, and the environment, the development of scientific ideas, and the dialogues between the past and the present are what sit at the centre of our collective work.

* * *

In her article, 'Encountering the Tsar: Nenets Epic Singing as a Representation of Historicity', which opens our special issue, Karina Lukin (University of Helsinki, Finland) outlines the relations between the tundra Nenets communities and the Tsar's administration as depicted in epic songs dating to the beginning of the twentieth century. She argues that folklore as a scientifically constructed category was historically tied to European (and Russian) colonisation and modernisation, and served amongst other purposes to alienate the voices of Indigenous and local communities, rendering them as either backward or 'endangered'. Simultaneously, folklore was quite often interpreted as a vernacular form of narration, remembering and projecting the future—in other words, as a way of constructing Indigenous historicities which were tightly entangled with dominant colonial narratives. Lukin's article

is dedicated to the Russian imperial conquest of Western Siberia that took place beginning at the end of the sixteenth century and led to a colonial situation where the Tsar used local Khanty elites as administrators to govern the frontiers populated by Indigenous peoples such as the Mansi, Nenets, and Selkup. As we may judge from the historical documents, that system remained unchanged until 1822, when the new administrative reform shifted the role of the so-called Khanty prince (*knyazets*) in the town of Obdorsk (today's Salekhard) and lifted Nenets elders—or princes—to roles as administrators alongside the Khanty. Although those events are fairly well documented in Siberian historiography, they represent the point of view of the Russian imperial power (see Bakhrushin 1935). The Indigenous ways of narrating imperial governance, by contrast, have only been fragmentarily studied. Based on a microhistorical analysis of the narratives recorded by Finnish linguist and folklorist Toivo Lehtisalo amongst the Nenets in 1912, Lukin placed the notions of 'folklorisation' (Anttonen 2005) and 'traditionalisation' (Bauman 2004) in a critical dialogue as two epistemically entwined research technologies of constructing the Other. This is accomplished through ascribing some narratives to the 'living past' (folklorisation) and perceiving the oral performance as authentic evidence of a long-standing historical tradition (traditionalisation). Lukin examines Nenets epic singing as a register within which the Indigenous community has reflected upon its own past as entwined with relations with the Tsar's administration and how visiting scholars understood and recorded local narratives. Such a research perspective allows Lukin to reveal multiple historicities, which simultaneously diverged and converged in narrating the past. Furthermore, Lukin documented those fluctuations between 'official' and 'unofficial' narratives during her ethnographic fieldwork amongst the Nenets.

Relations between the Russian state and Indigenous communities in the North unfold further in the article by Art Leete (University of Tartu, Estonia), who takes us to the early Soviet time in the North with its multiple uprisings against the newly established Soviet power. His article, entitled 'Narratives of the Indigenous Resistance in North-western Siberia in the 1930s', discusses official and Indigenous takes on the Khanty and Forest Nenets rebellion against the Soviets in Western Siberia, also known as the Kazym War (1931–1934) (see Leete's other works on the topic: Leete 2004; 2009). Some details of that resistance are known to scholars, thanks to a few published archival documents, historical articles, and several popular essays, as well as novels including those by Indigenous authors (e.g., Aipin 2002). Moreover, there are a few post-Soviet films which adapted some episodes from the tragic history of the Kazym War (*Red Ice: The Saga of Ugra Khanty* 2010; *Angels of the Revolution* 2014). Despite all of these, the oral history of the event scarcely appears in scholarly accounts. Indigenous narratives continue to circulate amongst people, with field scholars coming across them quite often. Therefore, inspired by the postcolonial scholarship and the idea of hybridity (see Bhabha 1994; see also Leete's reflections upon hybridity in Leete 2019), Leete analyses selected episodes of the Kazym War since they are reflected both in official Soviet/Russian historiography and Indigenous narratives. He focuses on the diverse modes of narrating, the possibility of revealing the vibrant Khanty historicity across the borderline between facts and fiction, and the mythic imagination shaping the way those events are remembered.

Art Leete's and Karina Lukin's articles thus discuss the contradictions between

and interfaces across official and unofficial narratives about the past. They both unravel the relationship between 'myth' and 'history', and examine the influence of the genre on the meaning and circulation of narration. The next two articles, however, written by Otso Kortekangas (Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland) and Victoria Peemot (University of Helsinki, Finland), bring us to one of the dominant themes in the field of ethnohistory: the relations between the land and the past in the narratives of Indigenous and local communities. They both consider the role of human and non-human beings in relation to the landscape and the stories that they shape amongst the Fennoscandian Sámi and the Inner Asian Tyva. While Kortekangas draws from data collected during fieldwork by the Finnish geodesist and amateur ethnographer Karl Nickul (1900–1980), Peemot discusses her own fieldwork materials and contemporary relations between material artefacts, land, and the past in her native Tyva.

Kortekangas's paper, 'Toponymic Notions of Sámi Past(s): Geodesist/Cartographer Karl Nickul and Skolt Sámi Historicity', examines the ethnographic materials collected by Karl Nickul, whose research beyond the geodesy aimed at reconstructing the Sámi past(s) through their place names. Based on the established scholarship on place-naming and the ethics which underlay Indigenous peoples' relations to the land (e.g., Basso 1996; Siragusa and Ferguson 2020) and the sociology of the co-production of knowledge (Jasanoff 2004), Kortekangas shows the extent to which the Indigenous toponymic nomenclature amongst the Skolt Sámi in northeastern Finland/northwestern USSR was entangled with Nickul's construction of Sámi historicity. Nickul's case opens up a view to the period between 1920 and 1940 when the Petsamo area, which is historically populated by the Skolt Sámi, was colonised by Finland. As an employee of the Finnish government, Nickul can be viewed as a part of the colonial administration, but his writings served as a way to depict Sámi historicities using their own terms. Nickul considered the Sámi as possessing the 'moral right' to name their own region and to keep those names in cartographic representations: 'With the sensitive intuition of a people of nature, they identify with the landscape that they know through and through. They belong to it [landscape],' he wrote. According to Nickul, documenting Sámi place names was an epistemic gateway to the mental imagery of Sáminess. He was certain that those names not only reflected the landscape 'as it was', but also the ancient events, beliefs, and livelihoods of the Sámi. The life trajectories of those ideas are centred in Kortekangas' article. He pedantically depicts how the correspondence with his Skolt Sámi addressees, on the one hand, and with a wide international network of scholars, on the other hand, rendering Nickul's co-constructed idea of the Skolt Sámi's past, travel from Sámi communities to the international scholarly sphere. In those conceptualisations, Nickul defended Skolt Sámi historicity through place names as a tool to reconstruct the 'real' historical events that he could or tried to confirm from other sources, as the expression of mythological events that nevertheless could convey a lot of information about the Skolt Sámi culture. All of that, as Nickul wrote, might bring us close to understanding the Skolt Sámi themselves as remnants of the past. All of Kortekangas' observations described within his article are situated in the larger history of anthropological debates that took place in the first half of the twentieth century.

Notably, the Sámi historical writing has its own trajectories charted through national

Scandinavian historiographies, which have recently encountered post- and decolonial discussions aimed at overcoming national borders and raising larger theoretical questions (Nyyssönen and Lehtola 2017). As is known, earlier works focused on archaeology, historical linguistics, and ethnography—previously called *ethnology* in the Fenno-Scandinavian countries—which brought together with folklore studies centred on conceptualising the ancient Sámi history or comparisons between the Fenno-Scandian modernities and the 'traditional' nature of Sámi social and cultural practices. The ongoing decolonisation of the field of Sámi studies has already led to the reconfiguration of research questions and approaches. Moreover, there is also an urge for more knowledge because of the truth and reconciliation commissions' work in Norway, Sweden, and Finland (see Sønneland and Lingaas 2023; Kuokkanen 2020). Lately, emphasis has been placed on more recent pasts, for example, the World War II era emigration and post-war boarding school experiences. This research was conducted through a dialogue with broader trends in the 'democratisation of history', but it rarely touches upon ethnographic questions (e.g., Lakomäki, Aalto and Kylli 2020; Junka-Aikio et al. 2022). One of the leading Sámi historians, Veli-Pekka Lehtola (2022), has brought multiple sources, such as narrations, ethnographic and historical descriptions of human–landscape relations, photography, art, and literature, into dialogue to reveal the scarcity of academic knowledge about the Sámi. Although applying the terms 'our' histories alongside 'theirs', Lehtola carefully manoeuvres between dichotomies, advocating for attentive interpretations that respect different opinions within Sámi communities or between various producers of historical sources and their subjects (see also Lehtola 2015).

The concluding article in our special collection brings us back to Siberia, from where it builds a bridge between the region and the decolonial conversations within Sámi studies and ethnohistory. This piece is written by Tyva social scientist Viktoria Peemot (University of Helsinki, Finland), who possesses a deep knowledge of the language and the cultural practices of various groups of Tyva people living at the crossroads of Mongolia, Russia, and China. Her article, 'Storying with Homelands: Emplaced (Hi)stories and Resilience-In-Making', deals with the stories of land in the Sayan and Altay Mountains and focuses on how a pastoralist community makes use of the landscape agency to define its meaning of the past. Peemot traces that meaning through human–nonhuman stories which support joint community–homeland resilience to a possible threat from a mining project. To disentangle the complexity of those relations, Peemot carefully depicts the long history of the Tyva people, whose territory since the beginning of the twentieth century has been controlled, consecutively, by the Qing Empire, the Russian Empire, and Soviet Russia. Peemot's article centres around the construction of a Buddhist stupa erected by a local clan in the southern part of the Tyva Republic (Russian Federation). In her analysis, the religious material artefact becomes the epistemic knot in conversations about the past. The article relates to the ongoing debates in academia about the importance of human–nonhuman stories through collaborative efforts towards planetary survival. Despite growing recognition of human–nonhuman relations in scholarship, questions about whose stories are told reveal a power disparity in the practices of narration. All of this allows us today to highlight stories which have been silenced or marginalised by colonial rule, authoritarian

regimes, and various other forms of disparity. The re-conceptualised traumatic heritage in the work by Peemot places her research into conversations with recent anthropology writings about Indigenous Siberian sovereignty (Balzer 2022; Bernstein 2013) and especially with works by Justine Quijada about the 'rituals of history', where he wonders 'how people in post-Soviet, Putin-era Buryatia produce knowledge about the past in religious and civic rituals and how this knowledge of the past produces identities in the present' (Quijada 2019: 7).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Eudaimonia Institute in Oulu (the 'Archiving the Planet' project) and the Academy of Finland ('Imperialism in vernacular terms: Appraising the coloniality of folklore, tradition, and heritage through and by the Nenets' project) for financially supporting our research and funding the preparation of this collection. This work would not have been completed without the assistance, advice, and support of Laura Siragusa (Columbus, USA), David Anderson (Aberdeen, UK), and Vesa-Pekka Herva (Oulu, Finland). Our special thanks go to Roza Laptander (Hamburg, Germany) and Veli-Pekka Lehtola (Oulu, Finland) for their valuable contribution to the discussion at the SIEF panel on the topic in 2021.

NOTES

When the first drafts of these articles were completed and we began preparing them for publication in 2022, Russia had invaded Ukraine once again. It is quite difficult to describe the shock we all continue experiencing, the constant pain we feel for the lives of Ukrainians and other people involuntarily involved in the conflict, and the depth of our need to provide whatever help we can through charities, funding bodies, and personal cooperation. All of this has paralysed our work for some time. Today, nearly a year-and-a-half after the beginning of that brutal invasion, we have been able to gather our strength to finalise this collection. From our perspective, this topic is even more relevant today than it was during the 15th Congress of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF), held in Helsinki in 2021, where Karina Lukin and Dmitry Arzyutov organised the panel on Indigenous historicities. We have plenty of evidence of the ethnically disproportionate drafting of people from Russian 'national' regions, anti-military protests in Yakutia, and other Siberian regions which neighbour the strong support of the 'special military operation' in Ukraine by dominant Indigenous rights organisations in the country, including RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North) as well as separate regional associations representing the Khanty, Kola Sámi, Nenets, and Tyva, whose relations with the past and the state are discussed in our thematic volume (Assotsiatsiya 2022). The involvement of Indigenous peoples in the war in Ukraine and in the discourses that legitimise that violence displays the extent to which Russian metropolitan powers continue to oppress the Indigenous populations of the country. However, a sharp look at local processes, as we provide in this collection, reveals not only the centralised metropolitan historicities, but also their encounters with the multiplicity of local ways of dealing with that dominance and the narratives of the past accepted within communities. The work on disentangling those dialogues and conflicts opens up broad perspectives on our perceptions of the past and its importance for understanding the present.

DMITRY ARZYUTOV
RESEARCHER
UNIVERSITY OF OULU; THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
darzyutov@gmail.com

KARINA LUKIN
ACADEMY RESEARCH FELLOW
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURES
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
karina.lukin@helsinki.fi

REFERENCES

Aipin, Eremei 2002. *Bozh'ya mater' v krovavykh snegakh*. Ekaterinburg: Pakrus.

Abashin, Sergei N. 2014. Ethnogenesis and Historiography: Historical Narratives for Central Asia in the 1940s and 1950s. In Roland Cvetkovski and Alexis Hofmeister (eds.). *An Empire of Others: Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR*. Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 145–168.

Anderson, David G. 2007. Ethnohistory and Ethnic History: A Comparative Analysis of English and Russian Language Traditions of Writing the History of Indigenous People. In *Etnoistoriya i arkheologiya Severnoi Evrazii: teoriya, metodologiya i praktika issledovaniya*. Irkutsk, 581–583.

Anttonen, Pertti J. 2005. *Tradition through Modernity: Postmodernism and the Nation-State in Folklore Scholarship*. Vol. 15. Studia Fennica Folkloristica. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. https://doi.org/10.21435/sff.15.

Asad, Talal 1987. "Are there histories of peoples without Europe? A review article." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29.3 (1987): 594–607.

Assotsiatsiya 2022. *Assotsiatsiya KMNSS i DV RF vystupila v podderzhku Prezidenta strany V. V. Putina*. https://raipon.info/press-tsentr/novosti/assotsiatsiya-kmnss-i-dv-rf-vystupila-v-podderzhku-prezidenta-nashey-strany-v-v-putina-/ <accessed 17 April 2022>

Bakhrushin, S. V. 1935. *Ostyatskie i vogul'skie kyazhestva v XVI-XVII vekakh*. Leningrad: Nauchno-issledovatel'skaya assotsatsiya Instituta narodov Severa TSIK SSSR.

Balzer, Marjorie Mandelstam 2022. *Galvanizing Nostalgia? Indigeneity and Sovereignty in Siberia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Basso, Keith H. 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Bassin, Mark, and Irina Kotkina 2016. The Etnogenez Project: Ideology and Science Fiction in Putin's Russia. *Utopian Studies* 27 (1): 53–76.

Bauer, Susanne 2014. Virtual Geographies of Belonging: The Case of Soviet and Post-Soviet Human Genetic Diversity Research. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 39 (4): 511–537.

Bauman, Richard 2004. *A World of Others' Words: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Bernstein, Anya 2013. *Religious Bodies Politic: Rituals of Sovereignty in Buryat Buddhism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Burkhart, Louise M. 2016. 2014 Presidential Address: Christian Salvation as Ethno-Ethnohistory: Two Views from 1714. *Ethnohistory* 63 (2): 215–35. https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-3455267.

Carlson, Keith T., John S. Lutz, David M. Schaepe, and Naxaxalhts'i-Albert "Sonny" McHalsie, eds. 2018. *Towards a New Ethnohistory: Community-Engaged Scholarship among the People of the River*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Fogelson, Raymond D. 1989. The Ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents. *Ethnohistory* 36 (2): 133–147. https://doi.org/10.2307/482275.

Galloway, Patricia K. 2006. *Practicing Ethnohistory: Mining Archives, Hearing Testimony, Constructing Narrative*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Harkin, Michael E. 2010. Ethnohistory's Ethnohistory: Creating a Discipline from the Ground Up. *Social Science History* 34 (2): 113–128. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0145553200011184.

Hartog, François 2015. *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jasanoff, Sheila 2004. The Idiom of Co-Production. In Sheila Jasanoff (ed.). *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and Social Order*. London: Routledge, 1–12.

Junka-Aikio, Laura, Jukka Nyyssönen, and Veli-Pekka Lehtola, eds. 2022. *Sámi Research in Transition: Knowledge, Politics and Social Change*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.

Kan, Sergei 2019. Raymond D. Fogelson's 'The Ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents.' *Ethnohistory* 66 (1): 171–177. https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-7217455.

Kuokkanen, Rauna 2020. Reconciliation as a Threat or Structural Change? The Truth and Reconciliation Process and Settler Colonial Policy Making in Finland. *Human Rights Review* 21 (3): 293–312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-020-00594-x.

Lakomäki, Sami, Sirpa Aalto, and Ritva Kylli 2020. Näkymättömissä ja kuulumattomissa?: saamelaiset ja koloniaaliset arkistot. *Historiallinen aikakauskirja* 118 (4): 438–450.

Laruelle, Marlène 2008. The Concept of Ethnogenesis in Central Asia: Political Context and Institutional Mediators (1940–50). *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9 (1): 169–188. https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2008.0005.

Leete, Art 2004. *Kazymskaya voina: vosstanie khantov i lesnykh nentsev protiv sovetskoi vlasti*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.

Leete, Art 2009. The Role of Young People in Resistance against the Soviet Rule among the Northern Peoples in the 1930s–1940s. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 41: 219–32. https://doi.org/10.7592/FEJF2009.41.leete.

Leete, Art 2019. Editorial Impressions: Feelings of Hybridity. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 13 (1): 3–7. https://doi.org/10.2478/jef-2019-0001.

Lehtola, Veli-Pekka 2015. Sami Histories, Colonialism, and Finland. *Arctic Anthropology* 52 (2): 22–36. https://doi.org/10.3368/aa.52.2.22.

Leete, Art 2022. *Entiset elävät meissä. Saamelaisten historiat ja Suomi*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

McMillen, Christian W. 2007. *Making Indian Law: The Hualapai Land Case and the Birth of Ethnohistory*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Nabokov, Peter 2002. *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nyyssönen, Jukka, and Veli-Pekka Lehtola 2017. Introduction. From Depictions of Race to Revitalizing a People: Aspects of Research on the Sámi in Finland and Norway. *Arktika i sever*, no. 27: 50–62. https://doi.org/10.17238/issn2221-2698.2017.27.58.

Quijada, Justine B. 2019. *Buddhists, Shamans, and Soviets: Rituals of History in Post-Soviet Buryatia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pirnes, Susanna 2019. History as a Resource in Russian Arctic Politics. In Monica Tennberg, Hanna Lempinen, and Susanna Pirnes (eds.). *Resources, Social and Cultural Sustainabilities in the Arctic*. London: Routledge, 163–174.

Sahlins, Marshall 1985. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sahlins, Marshall 2004. *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shnirelman, Victor A. 1993. Zloklyucheniya odnoi nauki: etnogeneticheskie issledovaniiya i stalinskaya natsional'naya politika. *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* no. 3: 52–68.

Siragusa, Laura, and Jenanne K. Ferguson, eds. 2020. *Responsibility and Language Practices in Place*. Studia Fennica Anthropologica Vol. 5. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. https://doi.org/10.21435/sfa.5.

Sleeper-Smith, Susan, Juliana Barr, Jean M. O'Brien, Nancy Shoemaker, and Scott Manning Stevens (eds) 2015. *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Slezkine, Yuri 1996. N. Ia. Marr and the National Origins of Soviet Ethnogenetics. *Slavic Review* 55 (4): 826–862. https://doi.org/10.2307/2501240.

Sønneland, Anne Margrethe, and Carola Lingaas 2023. Righting Injustices Towards the Sámi: A Critical Perspective on the Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, February, 1–29. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-bja10105.

Wolf, Eric R. 1982. *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Karina Lukin

ENCOUNTERING THE TSAR: NENETS EPIC SINGING AS A REPRESENTATION OF HISTORICITY[1]

ABSTRACT

This article discusses Nenets epic songs, focusing on two texts collected at the beginning of the twentieth century in relation to the divergent historicities they represent. The process of gathering and publishing folklore is analysed as folklorisation, whereby the texts have come to represent a negation of the modern, but not giving voice to the singers or their communities. Nenets epic songs have served Finnish nationalism and Russian imperialism in creating hierarchies between Finns and their linguistic relatives and between different Russian ethnic groups, including Russians and the Nenets. The process of traditionalisation is discussed as a local strategy of recreating meaningful narration that relates both to tradition and other contextually relevant discourses. The songs discussed are shown to depict not specific past events, but rather Nenets historical experiences and understandings about their subaltern position and agency within the imperial context.

Keywords: Nenets, epic poetry, historicity, folklorisation, traditionalisation, imperialism

In 1912, Finnish linguist and folklorist Toivo Lehtisalo met a company of Nenets near the town of Mezen'[2] in northwestern Russia. He ended up spending some time with the community, specifically an elderly woman, Katerina Vyuchei, who was, according to Lehtisalo, a talented singer and narrator. Lehtisalo transcribed 11 of Katerina Vyuchei's narratives, and later edited and published them in *Juraksamojedische Volksdichtung* 'Nenets Folklore'(1947). Katerina's songs reflect two kinds of imperceptible worlds—namely, the past and the mythic realms—as is often the case with Nenets epic poetry. In this article, I focus on two of her songs and the ways in which culturally patterned ways of narrating intersect with culturally patterned ways of experiencing and understanding the past—in other words, with historicity. In the narratives, the Nenets protagonists move across the imperial landscape, meet administrators and the tsar himself, and negotiate their rights to govern in the north. The songs' heroes are powerless and vulnerable in front of the imperial administration until they receive signs of power from the tsar, correct the administrators, and become governors in their own lands.

My reading aims in two directions. I am, firstly, interested in the processes whereby the poems were transcribed, published, and

later interpreted together with similar kinds of sung epic poems. This process, which I call folklorisation (Anttonen 2005: 32), is embedded in the ideologies of modernity and, as I will show, hinders historical interpretations of the Nenets. I aim to show how the songs themselves were collected in an encounter that situated others and their historical narration at the margins of or beyond historical knowledge. Then, I interpret the songs as representations of meaningful acts within which Nenets historicity and agency are narrated through the poetic means available to the singer. Through this process, called traditionalisation, the performer aims to authorise their performance as tradition in order to enhance its situated power and meaning. The process of folklorisation, on the contrary, tends to freeze Nenets epic performances as non-modern texts that do not speak to the coevalness (Fabian 1983) of the performers or the audiences and the researcher who recorded the folklore. We would not know Katerina Vyuchei's songs if not for folklorisation, which has also had a significant impact on the ways in which the songs have been (or have not been) studied. This is why it is crucial to unravel this process. Traditionalisation focuses on the performance as meaningful in its own context as a tradition or in reference to it, thus gaining its authority from a marked use of language, but not as a mere representative of the past or non-modernity. Analysing the ways in which Katerina Vyuchei traditionalised her songs about the protagonists travelling to the tsar allows me to illustrate how her narration is structured and linked to the Nenets epic registers. This is crucial to my discussion of the poems as representations of a historicity, a 'culturally patterned way of experiencing and understanding history' (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 4). I show how Katerina Vyuchei used tradition both as a strategic and thematic source in depicting the past, making her narration locally meaningful and, at the same time, commenting on the Nenets relations and status within the broader Russian society. Similar to what has been described by Timo Kaartinen (2010: 29–31) in another ethnographical context, the Nenets point of view and agency in the narration are preserved despite the fact that the narration also depicts the subaltern position of the Nenets. This is why texts collected in contexts of othering and colonisation may also serve to give voice and agency to their subjects.

THE CONQUEST

Before moving onto the analysis, I provide a brief introduction to the colonisation of the Nenets and the legislative and administrative processes that relate to the poems discussed. The Nenets represent an ethnic and linguistic community living in the arctic tundra zones of Russia and Western Siberia. On the eve of the First World War and the October Revolution when Lehtisalo was doing fieldwork amongst them, the Nenets numbered around 18 000 (J. F. Lukin 2013: 1–2). They were living as nomadic or semi-nomadic reindeer herders, hunters, and fishermen as one of the native (*inorodcheskie*[3]) communities of imperial Russia. The Ural Mountains, which separated the Nenets' territorial areas and formed a border for Russian colonisers, were later dubbed the divide between Europe and Asia. Areas west of the mountain range were colonised by the Novgorod Rus′ beginning in the fourteenth century, following the Muscovy annexation of Novgorod in 1478, at which point those areas became a part of Russia. Later, at the end of the sixteenth century, the Muscovy also began to expand east to the Ural Mountains to areas that had been part of the Khanate of Sibir′ of the Golden Horde. The Russian conquest of the

north was a slow process, typically preceded by first-hand commercial contacts together with cooperation in hunting and fishing between local Indigenous peoples and Russian merchants. Such encounters occurred in parallel with or followed by a flow of peasants fleeing serfdom and looking for new prospects. The military, administrative, and legal waves of colonisation followed or intertwined with these earlier encounters. Accordingly, the governance of the lands during the initial phases of colonisation can be characterised as nominal. The first waves of merchants, serfs, and administrators entailed the construction of fortifications in order to protect the tsarist administration and merchants, and to build bridgeheads for further movement eastwards and with the tax paid in furs, called *yasak*. Colonisation was a violent process during which constant uprisings and revolts ended in wars between the native populations and Russian troops. Administration also took Indigenous leaders hostage in order to collect *yasak* (Forsyth 1992: 28–47, 117–228; Lëzova 2000; Dameshek and Remnev 2007; Alekseev [ed.] 2010: 120–126; Perevalova 2019).

The first comprehensive law concerning the native populations was included in the so-called Speranskii reform of 1822, according to which Indigenous peoples were divided into three different groups. Those settled were equated with peasants, and fell under the general administration and jurisdiction of the state. The nomadic (*kochevye*) and the wandering or foragers (*brodiachie* or *lovtsy*) represented two communities with their own administrations and courts. However, the nomadic groups paid their taxes in money while the wandering groups paid in furs. This reform was significant in several ways, representing, for example, a first legal act defining the status of the Indigenous peoples within the Russian Empire. Related to the theme of this article, it is also important to note the right to a native administration along with the changes that followed from that right in Obdorsk (contemporary Salekhard) and the surrounding Nenets territorial areas. Before the Speranskii reform, Khanty Prince (Russian *kniazets*) Taishin led the Obdorsk princedom for centuries. He also took care of the native administration and what was considered the most significant part of it, the collection of the *yasak*. The Khanty are a neighbouring Indigenous group of the Nenets. The Taishin family had close ties with the tsar and the tsarist administration, and they ruled the northernmost areas from the end of seventeenth century onwards. In addition to Prince Taishin, there were several other Indigenous princedoms in Western Siberia, but only the princedom of Obdorsk had contact with the Nenets living primarily north of Obdorsk. Prince Taishin's Nenets contacts were one of the reasons for the family's strong position in the administration: there was a long-lasting image of the Nenets being too savage to be administered by anyone else. In practice, Taishin's position meant that the Nenets *starshiny* 'chiefs' brought furs to Taishin, who then accounted for them in Berëzov. For instance, in 1816, the administrative documents name Prince Taishin as the overseer of the tax collection amongst 15 Nenets chiefs accountable for the taxation within their families (Lëzova 2000: 194; Perevalova 2019: 47, 74). There were, however, constant tensions already before and after the Speranskii reforms. For example, several chiefs refused to return their taxes to Prince Taishin, and, instead, took them straight to Berëzov themselves in 1821–1830 (Lëzova 2000: 194).

Because of Speranskii's reforms, the Nenets were granted self-governance, although Prince Taishin was unwilling to share his power. This, together with misconduct related to tax collection and trade, rumours about

the violent Orthodox mission amongst the European Nenets, and social and economic changes to reindeer herding, resulted in ongoing restlessness in the Obdorsk region during the early nineteenth century. After the rather peaceful late-eighteenth century, Nenets bands raided Obdorsk, and aggressions occurred between the native peoples themselves. Despite Prince Taishin's reluctance, Paigol Nyrmin Tylov was nominated as the main chief or prince of the Nenets in 1824 (Lëzova 2000: 194). In addition, Iaura Udulla was granted the right to collect taxes and oversee the court of law, with Maila Niuzin and Emru Madari also mentioned as Nenets chiefs (Lëzova 2000: 197; Perevalova 2019: 47, 74–75, 106–110). Nevertheless, the Indigenous elite experienced constant disputes over their power in the north. After the demise of Paigol Nyrmin in 1827–1829, Prince Taishin seized power once again. The situation changed when, just before Prince Taishin, Nenets Naëna Khudin went to St. Petersburg, where he was christened and Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich of Russia (son of Tsar Nikolai I of Russia) was named his godfather in 1854. Naëna Khudin was christened Aleksandr Mikhailov Narin Khudin, and together with various gifts he also received the right to act as the chief of the Samoyeds—or, the Nenets. Later, in 1863, the governor of Tobol′sk visited Obdorsk and noted that several Nenets chiefs wanted to travel to St. Petersburg in order not to handover their taxes to Prince Taishin, instead paying them directly to Berëzov. In 1864, Paigol Nyrmin, grandson of the earlier Paigol Nyrmin, was nominated as the main chief of the Nenets, with Lakuri Khudi and Khymdanan Ader designated as his assistants. They began overseeing the taxation and the local court of the Nenets in the same building with Prince Taishin (Lëzova 2000: 202–206).

FOLKLORISATION AND TRADITIONALISATION

The epic poems analysed in this article relate to the above-described nineteenth-century relations between the metropole and its northwestern periphery and between ethnic minorities, especially their elites. My analysis aims to hybridise the history through a reading of oral poetry as an expression and recreation of a particular historicity, which has been in dialogue with different, simultaneous historicities. Despite the fact that the recent history of Siberia has emphasised the multifaceted nature of the conquest (see, e.g., Forsyth 1992; Slezkine 1994; Dameshek and Remnev 2007; Perevalova 2019), no study has focused on Indigenous forms of historicising in their own terms, instead examining them as a part of Russian history. The Russian historical narrative, again, has typically produced a division between Russian and Indigenous histories and between elite and non-elite views (Bakhrushin 1927; Forsyth 1992: 109–110; Slezkine 1994; Dameshek and Remnev 2007; Perevalova 2019). Therefore, the Indigenous peoples of Western Siberia have been, similar to many other objects of anthropology, often represented as people without a history as long as there are no written sources available about them (Wolf 1982) or as people living in a different time (Fabian 1983). Additionally, their history has been narrated as part of the history of the Russian Empire and using periods meaningful to the state, with their own agency not told within these narratives. In this context of writing history, hybridising means both discussing why the Nenets historical narration has not been studied as well as interpreting such narratives. I discuss these within the frames of folklorisation and traditionalisation.

The process of folklorisation refers to acts of recognising certain cultural practices, often oral communication, as folklore and, thus, worth collecting, archiving, and publishing. According to Pertti Anttonen (2005: 32), folklorisation is the result of a 'discovering gaze' in which 'the collectibles from non-modernity […] speak for the moderness of the society that collects and displays them.' During this process, communication 'discovered' becomes categorised as 'a particular type of social knowledge, which is then given epistemic power to legitimate the very practice of representation' (Anttonen 2005: 57). This kind of gaze is naturally embedded not only in the nationalistic processes thoroughly discussed in folklore studies (Wilson 1976; Bendix 1997; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Ó Giolláin 2000; Baycroft and Hopkin 2012), but also in colonialism (Naithani 2010; Briggs and Naithani 2012). In the above-cited discussions, the non-modern appears to represent Europe's own past (through uneducated folk) as well as the primitive life of non-European peoples. The category of folklore has served as a source of this past, evidence of it, but also as an object of the past of humankind or of a vanishing authenticity, and, thus, something to be saved and represented. Folklore is oblique, and, as a category of knowledge, it has long served in depicting informants as simple and ignorant instead of observing situated meanings pointing, not only to the subordinate and local discourses, but also to the dominant ones (Anttonen 2005; Wilce 2009; Briggs 2021).

When oral tradition is performed, processes of traditionalisation also take place perhaps alongside possible folklorisation. Traditionalisation is a process whereby performers and audience make use of and recognise the tradition and its connections to past discourses in the performance. This may include, for example, framing discourse as tradition or indexing it through verbal or nonverbal communication. Hence, traditionalisation is about actively linking current narration with past discourses, but 'not with some objective quality of pastness that inheres in a cultural object', as in folklorisation, but with contextually meaningful ties (Bauman 2004: 26–27, also 147–149). Analysing texts collected more than 100 years ago, it is no longer possible to scrutinise the situated meanings of the performance or the audience reception, which are obviously significant in verbal historicisations as well as for traditionalisation (Tonkin 1992: 1–49). Consequently, my analysis focuses on the meanings that arise from the meta-textual strategies used by Katerina Vyuchei, which have been situated as how she constructs her singing in relation to the Nenets epic registers and, thus, to traditionalisations. It is important to note that traditionalisation is not necessarily about constructing close, stable, or inevitable links to the tradition, but may also include establishing gaps or creating relationships to other discourses known by the performer and their audience (Briggs and Bauman 1992). This is related to the selectiveness of any historicity, on the one hand, and to the multiple ways of representing histories within them, on the other. Both are stressed by Ohnuki-Tierney (1990: 20) as important features of historicities. I would add to this that the representations themselves seek a dialogue with other forms of narration both within historicity and in relation to the larger society.

Performing the songs to Lehtisalo, Katerina Vyuchei was simultaneously taking part in the processes of folklorisation, choosing texts to perform for a Finnish scholar, and processes of traditionalisation, implying the authority of oral tradition in her poetics and practice. These processes are embedded in the fieldwork, where

the discovering gaze of Lehtisalo and Katerina Vyuchei's talent enter into a dialogue. From the point of view of historicity, it is important to note the different epistemic premises of the Nenets epic registers when they take part in the processes of folklorisation or traditionalisation. In the folklorisation, Katerina Vyuchei's songs represent replicas that could be recorded and then published as folklore representing non-modernity—that is, the past. Katerina Vyuchei, again, has chosen to perform songs that historicise the imperial past so that different Nenets points of view and ways of structuring narration meet with Russian imperial spaces and discourses over the Nenets subaltern status. Here, the songs represent a historicity, a way of understanding and experiencing the past. In what follows, I shall scrutinise the folklorisation first and then unravel the Nenets historicities.

FOLKLORISATION AND ITS TEMPORAL PREMISES

Katerina Vyuchei was, according to Lehtisalo's travelogue, an elderly woman who during her youth moved from the Bol′shezemel′skaia tundra to Kanin Peninsula in the company of Zyrians, the Komi reindeer herders (Toivo Lehtisalo 1956: LXXXII). Her movement from the easternmost areas of European Russia to the westernmost territorial areas of the Nenets was long, around 800–900 kilometres, and related to the development of large-scale reindeer herding not only amongst the Nenets but also amongst a neighbouring ethnic group, the Komi. Because of the rapid growth of herds and simultaneous reindeer epizootics in the area, the Komi were hiring Nenets as herders and looking for new pastures. This resulted in the movement of both people and reindeer, as well as local conflicts. One should note that this kind of East–West movement was not typical, although seasonal, nomadic migrations between southern forest tundra and northern arctic areas provide a rather ordinary picture. The relocation of Katerina Vyuchei explains how songs describing events beyond the Ural Mountains were sung in the westernmost territories of the Nenets, although the songs might also have travelled from singer to singer through certain contingent encounters. The movements in Katerina Vyuchei's songs and the circulation of them after her performance provide different images.

Katerina Vyuchei's songs are all about movement, quintessential to the Nenets epic poetry and their nomadic lifestyle (Pushkarëva 2000; Golovnëv 2004; K. Lukin 2015). The two songs discussed in this article, published in 1947, are number 69 under the section narrative epic songs and number 75 labelled '*jarabts*' under the section *Erzählende Klagelieder* ('narrative crying songs'). The song texts share a circular structure. In both, the protagonist is a young man accused of murders and, thus, taken first to the court in the town of Obdorsk (Tundra Nenets *Salya′ xarad*), where his case cannot be tried. He is thus sent to Berëzov (Tundra Nenets *Xo′ mar″*), to Tobol′sk (Tundra Nenets *Tobol′ mar″*) in song number 69, to Kondinskoe (Tundra Nenets *Ense′ mar″*) in song 75, and eventually to the tsar. There, the protagonist manages to convince the tsar of his decency and receives a letter—in the text, song 75 also indicates signs of power—with which he returns through the towns via which he originally arrived (Pushkarëva 2000: 9–10; Golovnëv 2004; K. Lukin 2015). In each town, the Russian administrator reads the letter, regrets his earlier decision, and is hanged. Song 69 ends in the protagonist returning to Obdorsk and beginning to govern there. In song 75, the hero also visits his home camp in the tundra, geographically completing the circle.

Before discussing the songs' poetics and historicities, I disentangle the songs' histories

as texts and knowledge, and their circulation in scholarly discourses through the process of folklorisation. I do this in order to highlight the different orders of organising knowledge about the past in processes where texts end up published in the first place and later became part of folklore studies, ethnography, and the history of the Nenets.

Toivo Lehtisalo's fieldwork and his premises for collecting and publishing Nenets folklore become understandable within the framework of folklorisation informed by Finnish nationalism and the colonial discourses embedded within it. His fieldwork was financed by the Finno-Ugrian Society, a scholarly community founded in Helsinki in 1883 in order to 'spark patriotic spirits' and offer financial help so that young scholars could continue the work of Matthias Alexander Castrén in studying what was called 'the Finnish family' (Salminen 2008: 10). Castrén had travelled extensively in northern Russia and Siberia, and his work is closely linked to the development of ethnography as well as comparative linguistics and mythology in imperial Russia and the Grand Duchy of Finland, a part of the Russian Empire (Branch 1968; Ahola and Lukin 2017; K. Lukin 2017; Salminen 2019). In mapping Russia, its minorities, and its history, Castrén's activities and texts regarding the linguistic and cultural affinity of the Finns with several minorities in Russia served both Finnish nationalism and Russian imperialism. When working with tradition, folklorisation worked in these two directions. First, it looked for and discovered poetry linked to Finno-Karelian and would, thus, uncover the history of ancient Finnish poetry and its worldview. Folklorisation created temporal hierarchies between speakers of kindred languages so that Finns were situated as higher in civilisation than most other communities within the Finno-Ugric family (Anttonen 2005; Kuutma 2005). The Nenets, together with speakers of other Samoyed languages, were defined as residing within the lowest state of civilisation (e.g., Castrén 1857). Second, the work of Castrén produced knowledge about the cultural and linguistic variety of the Russian Empire within an ethnographic project framed as history. Castrén's work was planned and financed by the Russian Academy of Sciences (Branch 1968). Accordingly, colonial tones of discourse were embedded within Finnish nationalism and the scholarly activities related to it from at least the nineteenth century onward.

These tendencies were reflected in the quality of the texts Lehtisalo collected: he focused on mythic and shamanic folklore and sung epic traditions, although it must be noted that he also collected a notable amount of individual songs and proverbs. Lehtisalo also followed the general trend of his times in that he transcribed less communication that would not be specially marked by meta-linguistic or performative signs. Lehtisalo did not elaborate much about his ideas regarding the texts he published. That is, he published only a short article in Finnish, where he continues Castrén's idea of Nenets epic singing as poetically inferior to the Finno-Karelian tradition. He also stated that most poems are 'more or less like fairy-tales; especially the ones that describe the life, heroic deeds, and the wars of the ancient Samoyeds (Toivo Lehtisalo 1922: 86). In his collection of folklore, *Juraksamojedische Volksdichtung* 'Nenets Folklore', Lehtisalo divided the sung texts into several different categories, fairytale-like (*märchenartige*, *märchenhafte*), shamanic (*schamanistische*, *Zauberlieder*), epic or narrative (*erzählende*), and crying (*Klagelieder*) songs, to name a few. The fact that Lehtisalo categorised the texts as folklore—as expressions of Nenets national spirit distantly related to

Finno-Karelian epic poetry—shows that he took little interest in the knowledge they contained, such as information about Nenets historicities. The publication of the texts was important for the sake of exposing the history of Finns, the diversity of folklore globally and its various comparisons, and studying the Tundra Nenets language. Comparisons, based on diffusionist ideas about the circulation of motives and tale types, appeared in a never-published manuscript (SUS: Lehtisalo). The texts themselves remained uninterpreted for decades.

In the years that followed, Soviet scholars began actively collecting Nenets folklore. This resulted in the publication of several new collections, and continued the emphasis on the epic and mythic tradition (Kupriyanova 1965; Tereshchenko 1990; Labanauskas 2001). Despite the different ideological tendencies, the Soviet paradigm was guided by the premises of folklorisation, and uncovering the vanishing pieces of texts and the possibly last (good) singers of the tradition. Research followed Marxist evolutionary lines and interpreted folklore historically as a source of the stages of development of Nenets society from the early stages of what was called a patriarchal society to the later stages (Kupriianova 1965: 55–56; Khomich 1984). Additionally, themes denoting the actual historical events, such as the revolts of Vavlë Neniang in the early nineteenth century, were highlighted and compared to the revolutionary spirit (Kornienko 1932; Khomich 1984; K. Lukin 2020). Furthermore, folklore was thought to provide an artistic representation of a culture's inner real-life including its customs, morals, interethnic relations, and livelihood in the past (Vasil'ev 1984). Soviet, specfically post-World War II, interpretations continued to value folklore as an expression of traditionality which could hardly touch modernity, instead reflecting the ancient past. Such interpretations were inherently linked to the concept *etnos*, developed in Soviet ethnography. The theory around the concept, as discussed by David Anderson and Dmitri Arzyutov (2019: 741, passim.), linked *etnos*—in other words, the ethno-linguistic community—to 'its ethnonym, common territory, and distinctive worldview (…)' and was keenly interested in defining the historical homeland and biological foundations of each *etnos*. In these discussions, Nenets folklore is tied to the historical interpretations of the empire, where the position of the Nenets as one *etnos* of the empire is naturalised.

Researchers of Nenets epic poetry have conventionally categorised the songs as *syudbabc* and *yarabc*, using Tundra Nenets vernacular labels. Recently, Elena Pushkarëva (2000) drew attention to one more genre of the Nenets songs that is more historical in nature compared with *syudbabc* and *yarabc*. In her study, she also analysed one of the texts of Katerina Vyuchei, leaving the other analysed in this article possibly because it is named *yarabc* in *Juraksamojedische Volksdichtung* (the other text does not have a label). According to Pushkarëva, the songs she categorised as *khinabc* are not easy to classify, because the *khinabc* partially share themes, poetics, and a performance style with two other epic sung genres. In addition, she mentions that the concept *khinabc* may also refer to individual songs, which again are not epic in nature. Pushkarëva repeatedly discusses the historical or chronological nature of the *khinabc* and ends up disputing their realism because of the mythical or fantastical elements in the narration (Pushkarëva 2000: 7–10, 54). Pushkarëva's study stands as rather unconventional and fresh, because it brings into focus the epic texts previously unstudied due to their realistic or historic features. The texts seem to cross the line of an imagined traditionality that has been so powerfully told to live outside the spheres of

the modern and, thus, also chronological histories.

Despite the unconventional nature of her work, Pushkarëva adheres to the divide between myth and history, noting that the *khinabc* represents a mythologised history. Both Pushkarëva and Lehtisalo treated the songs of Katerina Vyuchei as tradition and, thus, grant them a label that has kept them separate from Western or Russian rational, chronological historical writing. More recently, Andrei Golovnëv (2004) published thematically similar narratives to those Katerina Vyuchei sang, discussing them together with Perevalova (Golovnëv 2004: 7–8, 11; Golovnëv and Perevalova 2017; Perevalova 2019: 31) in relation to their value in providing an understanding of the meaning of politics and the embeddedness of politics and vernacular religion amongst the Indigenous elite. It seems typical that the narration Golovnëv and Perevalova discuss depicts local disputes such as poaching and murders and their reconciliation and punitive sentences. Their historical interpretations highlight the obvious differences between folklore and history, and, thus, both Perevalova and Golovnëv frame folklore and research as two different points of views of the leadership or of the Nenets culture. Folklore is deemed internal, whilst research represents an external view. I find Perevalova's view, according to which the Nenets leaders were able to strategically use both the internal and the external views, extremely interesting. Still, the premise of her and Golovnëv's work lies in writing Russian history and placing Indigenous narratives within it. Therefore, such work continues to grant secondary value to oral traditions as a source of history rather than interpret it within its meaningful frames (Golovnëv 2004: 7–8, 11; Golovnëv and Perevalova 2017: 115; Perevalova 2019: 31). I, therefore, include Perevalova's and Golovnëv's works within the processes of folklorisation.

Folklorisation has not made note of or has downplayed the processes of communication within which the utterances inscribed took part, trivialising their complex interrelations in the local and interlocal webs of communication. The question regarding the historical nature of folklore, often represented within the process of folklorisation, remains problematic, because oral tradition does not represent modern, rational discourses of universal or even local history. Instead, oral tradition provides the possibility of reading and learning about situated historicities. This does not mean that an oral tradition or their performers are ignorant of historical writings or would not take part in historical discourses. Quite the opposite: oral traditions rather often describe the past and comment on other discourses about it. Moreover, the texts identified as representing folklore might also represent culturally relevant ways of relating past, present, and future and seek a dialogue with other representations. I, therefore, highlight the fact that folklore should not be understood as something predating modernity or the Russian conquest, or reflecting pre-modern temporalities. Instead, oral tradition, like any other form of communication, may have its basis in modernity or in dialogue with it and the experiences or events reflecting the violence of colonial encounters (Briggs 2021). In the following analysis, I aim to show that the texts collected in the early twentieth century become understandable within the frames of Nenets historicities. Within these, the Russian imperial experience and its material features have their own positions. Whilst they relate to imperial orders, they are narrated within the the Nenets registers of communication so that the points of views, objectives, and results of the narration hybridise the Russian imperial pasts.

THE IMPERIAL LANDSCAPES MYTHOLOGISED

This textual analysis is based on an understanding of Nenets epic singing as a special communicative register consisting of locally and variably named genres poetically interrelated, yet also separated from each other (Pushkarëva 2000; Pushkarëva and Khomich 2001; Niemi and Lapsui 2004). Register here is understood as a conventional poetic idiom shared and recognised within a linguistic community (Foley 1995: 15–16; Tarkka 2005: 40). The different genres of Nenets epic singing emphasise divergent moments of life and differ somewhat in their poetics. Thus, for example, the *syudbabc* represents myths told in the third person, whilst the *yarabc* and *khinabc* are told in the first person with themes more mundane and contemporary. The genres share the six-syllable line structure, themes, and contents, and the lines or longer stretches of lines are easily borrowed from one text or genre to another. Additionally, the enchanted character of the texts—that is, the porous nature of gods and men, or otherworld and this world—is pervasive for Nenets epic singing. The relationship between the register and genre lies beyond the focus of this article (Koski 2011: 322–344; Frog 2015). Instead, I emphasise the intergeneric nature of the epic genres—that is, the formation of a poetic idiom—and how the leaky borders spill features of this and the otherworld to understandings of the narrated past.

The defining features of Nenets sung epic registers—in addition to their six-syllable line structuring—include the voice produced in the back of the throat, the singing style based on vocality, solo singing, restricted tonal substance, and isometricity (Niemi 1998: 78–82). There are numerous other features of performance, such as the use of a helper performer and the use of gestures to name of few. These are all meta-communicative features that imply traditionalisation. One of the implicit understandings produced by the meta-textual elements and the traditionalisation in Tundra Nenets is that the performer is not the first narrator of the text nor the owner of it, but the narrator of what was told to them through the personification of the song. Therefore, the origins of a song lie in the otherworld, for which the events narrated unfold when sung (Kupriianova 1965: 37–40; Niemi 1998: 62; Pushkarëva 2003: 216–241). Therefore, the text itself together with the actors in it originate in the otherworld, and the performer is capable of and has spiritual powers to communicate with agents beyond the audience's senses. As a result, the veracity of the text stems from different epistemic notions related to Western historiography and folklorisation. According to Nenets conceptions, epic singing's veracity results from the proper relationship of the performer with the otherworldly agents. The epistemic stance can be recognised in the use of the poetical features that produce the texts' relation to the tradition and, therefore, the epic register itself.

In addition to the above-mentioned features, the texts' contents are related to and recognised by the audience in relation to other traditional texts. Both of Katerina Vyuchei's songs analysed here begin with plotlines that create expectations for aetiological motives, and thus are related to the texts Andrei Golovnëv historically published and analysed. Indeed, a large part of the songs consists of narration that occurs in the tundra and recounts intra- or interethnic disputes eventually tried in court. In song 69, the protagonist accidentally or intentionally kills three starving Khanty men, and, in song 75, the male protagonist's sister kills their little brother, father, and a dog,

although her brother is accused of the murders. Mythic narratives with comparable themes end in protagonists becoming deities or spirits important to the narrator's listeners' environment (Golovnëv 2004: 267–269, 276–285). I argue that Katerina Vyuchei's songs are creatively continuing the plotline of a myth in order to enlarge the geographical and political spheres of narration and simultaneously complicate both Nenets and imperial registers of storying of colonial encounters. She takes advantage of the shared idiom and moves between genres so that mythic themes describing the relationships between the Nenets and their deities end up being a narrative about Nenets encounters with imperial Russian figures.

Recently, Anna-Leena Siikala (2002: 158–169) and Lotte Tarkka (2013: 207, 384, 423–425, 457) interpreted similar kinds of Finno-Karelian epic texts as mythic history. The mythic history arranges the past as enchanted frames, working in two directions. First, it articulates the otherness of the past and the otherworld, and, second, familiarises it by relating it to the world in which the performers and audience live. Siikala's and Tarkka's insistence on the intergeneric significance and the enchanted nature of narration are of vital importance to my analysis. Amongst the Nenets, narratives provided a source for historicity, where the tundra—understood as an everyday landscape—could be narrated into a mythic or otherwise narratively heightened landscape with features imperceptible except through singing.

In the songs analysed, Katerina Vyuchei narrates the imperial landscapes that for most Nenets were likewise beyond the senses using the epic register. She, therefore, frames the imperial landscape and the protagonists within historicities emanating in the register. This carries crucial consequences for the epistemologies of the songs. As noted above, their veracity derives from the otherworldly connections, implying that Katerina Vyuchei received knowledge concerning the events about which she is singing in a dialogue with the personification of a song. Additionally, the events are thought to take place as the song is performed. Thus, its agents act as the story unravels. Accordingly, the past comes about as it is narrated. Consequently, the past itself is inherently otherworldly when told. It is here that the traditionalisation produces a different way of experiencing history if compared with the folklorisation described above. Where folklore text represents an imagined past of Finns or of humankind for folklorisation, when the same text is traditionalised by a Nenets performer, they recreate the past events to be experienced. Both are about understanding the past: folklorisation is tied to disenchanted schemes of progression typical for its modern gaze; Katerina Vyuchei's traditionalisation links the narration to the Nenets storyworlds and spills mythic elements into the past. Indeed, the enchanted nature of the narration is further created within the processes of traditionalisation. Using these further points of traditionalisation, I refer to the intertextual links Katerina Vyuchei built to Nenets mythic narration. These links are related to the above-mentioned frames of expectations and the strategies of creating distance and strangeness analysed below. The movement from the home camp to the strange lands represents a signifying feature of the narrative registers and the strangeness is produced by the distance of the movement itself. The distance also tends to denote the otherworldiness of the landscape (K. Lukin 2015). The movement and strangeness relate to power such that the spiritual or otherwise important knowledge and relationships are dispersed in the tundra landscape, where the protagonist of the epic narrative travels in order

to uncover meaningful knowledge and establish solidarity (Leeuwen 2007: 43; K. Lukin 2015).

The textual strategies of creating distance and strangeness permeate Katerina Vyuchei's songs. For example, when the administrator in Obdorsk decided that the case cannot be tried there and sends the protagonist forward, Katerina Vyuchei sings about the long journeys of the imprisoned protagonist from one town to another in short and concise forms. The parallel repetition of similar whole lines creates a sense of ever-growing distance. Thus, Katerina Vyuchei recreates the lines describing the travel and the forced movement of the protagonist three times, when he is taken to Berëzov, Tobol'sk (song 69), or Kondinskoe (song 75) and to the tsar's town:

anyi′ khanado″	again they took me
syuw khanambada″	they drove me,
pido″ taryem′ ma″:	they said like this:
”teki nyernyana	'the one ahead of us
tyeda′ sirkar	look, now
teki khayeryoda″	the one glancing
tyenyewaruw	do you know it
amge ngebnando″	what could it be?'
many taryem′ mam′:	I said like this:
”amgem′ tyenyewam′	'what should I know
syakha′ manecyam′?”	when have I seen?'
pido′ taryem′ ma″:	They said like this:
”Kho′ mar″yar	'of Berëzov
yalya″ ngedaki″.”	lights they should be'
kho′ mar″yan	To Berëzov
syuw tewra.	they brought me.
maradm′ pomna	Along the town
syuw khanabi′	they drove me.
wad′ nyokhona	On the door of the wall
wenyeko syari	a dog was tied
yesya cyepocykana	with an iron chain
wenyeko lakedarnga.	the dog wrenched.
marad′ yerwotan′	To the town's leader
syuw tyulya″.	they brought me.
(Lehtisalo 1947: 362)	

Katerina Vyuchei's parallel wholes reproduce verbs of motion, images of the town, and the ignorance of the protagonist about them. In the extract above taken from song 69, the verbs of motion highlight the deprivation of agency of the protagonist: he is not actively moving, but he *is taken*, *carried*, and *brought*. This not only emphasises the forced movement, but also the inability to choose his own route. The hero's ignorance and lack of agency are also underlined by the questions from his drivers and his answers, confirming that the landscape is totally unknown to the hero. In song 75, for example, the ignorance is stressed with the help of the probabilitative mood of the verb *ngesy* 'to be', when the hero says, '*Kho' mar" ngedaki'"* ('I guess it is Berëzov'). These kinds of strategies are pervasive in Nenets epic poetry. The parallel structures are indeed typical for long epic narration globally, which not only helps the performer to produce coherent narrative structures, but also enhances listening to and following along with the epic singing. The structures also produce meanings and, here, the repeating expressions of movements and growing distance cause a sense of strangeness. The question–answer structure together with the use of probabilitative mood stressing the ignorance of the protagonist, are also typical for Nenets epic poetry. Within the poems at hand, the lack of agency clearly lies in contrast to the poem's earlier descriptions of travel in the tundra, where the protagonist actively moves with his reindeer. The strategy of distance and strangeness is not only about poetics, but is also deeply related to what has been called sentient ecology (Anderson 2000) or the law of the tundra (Stammler 2005). These terms refer to reindeer herders' and hunters' holistic knowledge of the environment and its agents, and the impact this has on their decisions. The movement demands this kind of knowledge, because one must be reciprocally related to the surrounding agents in order to make the correct decisions. At the same time, this means that the distance possibly refers to a deficient knowledge and possible danger, as well as involuntarily inflicting harm.

Overall, Katerina Vyuchei's textual strategies link her songs to the other epic registers of the Nenets. She not only links but also creates a new representative of the register and, thus, the strategies are meta-textual: they speak about the relation of the song to other similar songs. This relationship produces a field of meanings related to the otherworld typical for epic registers. The epic singing, again, construes Nenets historicities in important ways: they describe pasts using mythic and otherwise unseen agents, and have considerable impact on the general knowledge and its structuring principles in the linguistic community. The crucial difference to the pool of epic singing is that their protagonists tend to primarily move in the tundra environment familiar to the Nenets. Katerina Vyuchei's protagonist moves within the landscapes of imperial Russia. He passes the cities in order, from those closest to the Nenets until the metropole. The imperial landscape cannot avoid attaining otherworldly meanings, given the songs' basis within the mythic registers and the epistemic notions that stress the otherworldly origin of the texts. The mythic qualities, then, flow into the imperial landscapes and enchant it. Similarly, the process of establishing solidarity with the tsar becomes narrated within the same frames used in the epic registers.

DIALOGUES BETWEEN THE SUBALTERN AND THE IMPERIAL

The epic registers are also affected when they relate to the imperial landscapes and agents, which is evident in the use of Russian vocabulary. Reading the texts intertextually with other recordings of the Tundra Nenets epic registers, we note that the language not only highlights Tundra Nenets, but also the interaction between Nenets and Russian. Whilst Russian never enters the vocabulary of the *syudbabc*—that is, myths told in the third person—the other epic registers appear to allow Russian loans, expressions, and quotes. These naturally describe the interaction of the Nenets with Russians, as do the themes in many of the poems. I also find the choice of loan words and quotes meaningful and an important act highlighting the interaction with the imperial power. Direct quotes require, within the already quite reflective art of singing epic songs, a sense of reflexivity, pointing toward utterances that report someone else's speech (Lucy 1993). In epic narration, the performer not only describes the movements of the protagonists, but, in quoting speech, they also perform the agents and their words (Tarkka 2013:169). Nenets epic registers prefer direct quotes, which often represent questions and answers, representing advice or orders to those about to embark upon a journey. Not everyone can provide advice or orders—only those with a specific power and at a specific age can. Others tend to silently agree and act, or note '*pudar mambad / khanya sawa nyi nga"*' ('if you say so / how is it not good').

When narrating the arrival of the protagonist to the Siberian administrative centres, Katerina Vyuchei quotes the administrators. She sings, '*marad' yerwotar / pol tanakhalnga / "lop samodyin / wor samodyin / syan khibyarim' / syan khadasan"?*' ('the town chief / stamped his foot on the floor / "thief Samoyed / pagan Samoyed / how many men / how many have you killed?"') (Lehtisalo 1947: 323) Again, Katerina Vyuchei used parallelism to describe similar scenes in each town. The chiefs stamp their feet and gravely accuse the protagonist. These quotations do not represent advice nor questions or answers similar to the Nenets epic registers that usually highlight politeness despite the possible social differences of the speakers. The lines '*lop samodyin / wor samodyin*' ('pagan Samoyed / thief Samoyed') denote the stereotypical images that the Russian administrators ascribed to the Nenets: they were perceived as wild and violent thieves and as heathens, which both appear in the direct quote as slander. In addition to the offence, the quote's two lines also consist of Russian, which further underlines the reported speech's similitude to the actual words of the administrator. Their use in the epic poem clearly reflect the fact that the Nenets were actively and sufficiently a part of the Russian imperial state in order to know how they were spoken of and addressed by the administrative elite. Thus, the quote also stresses the socially inferior status of the Nenets in the imperial court or administrative system, rendering it a part of the singing. Moreover, the distinction between the heathen and the Orthodox was a central dichotomy within the Russian Empire. This dichotomy not only produced divisions between dominant imperial actors and subaltern inhabitants, but Orthodoxy was also taken to be a defining feature of Russian citizenship (Leete and Vallikivi 2011; Toulouze 2011). This quote then recreates the manner in which this divide between modern and non-modern was produced.

The parallel structures not only contrast with earlier movements in the tundra well-known to the protagonists, but also to the

following description of the encounter with the tsar. The imperial towns characterised within the parallel structures share features, such as a wall and a gate and a dog tethered by a chain. By contrast, Katerina Vyuchei describes the tsar's house as bright (*yalya mya"*). The tsar himself is not called *yerw* ('leader'), which is used to refer to the administrators of colonial towns, but *parengoda*, a Tundra Nenets expression for 'tsar', as well as *pili" nyesya* ('eternal father'), which seems to represent a parallel expression, possibly a translation from the Russian epithet for the tsar.

Katerina Vyuchei also places in opposition the ways in which the administrators and the tsar each communicate with and relate to the Nenets protagonist. The administrators do not question the crime, but the number of victims. This clearly contrasts with the way in which the encounter with the tsar is narrated. The tsar asks questions and listens to the protagonist. The narration tends to emphasise the fair-mindedness and good nature of the tsar, also depicting the encounter with the tsar in the same manner as the encounters with the other actors in the poem—that is, beyond the Siberian administrators. When the protagonist meets the tsar in song 75, he gifts him black and arctic fox furs and in return receives a letter in an iron box, a woven overcoat, a hat, and a sword. Then, the tsar states in a direct quote:

salyan′ khardan′	to Salekhard
khuna tewbat	arriving
tyiki yascyikkhana	in this box
myaryo tanyewa.	there is a letter
335 tyiki myaryomt	This letter
salya′ yerwotan′	to the chief of the town
mitar.	give.
salya′ yerwotan′	To the chief of the town
tewbat	arriving
340 tyiki noi pannemt	this woven overcoat
syerad	wear.
tyiki sawamt	This cap
syerad,	wear,
tyiki palir	this sword
345 khewdenat ngeye!"	put at your side.
(Lehtisalo 1947: 366)	

This represents typical advice in the epic registers of the Nenets oral tradition. The protagonist who travels to faraway places or to the otherworld typically drifts in a position where he must negotiate in order to perform his task or form an alliance with the agents of the storyworld. Even before the journey, a clever protagonist could foretell what they would need in order to cope. Katerina Vyuchei structured her song according to this principle and her hero, finally arriving at the tsar's palace and getting the opportunity to meet face-to-face with the eternal father, exposes his tools of negotiation. It is here that the text begins to

break the border or the imperial arrangements that it strengthened or previously followed. If in previous encounters with the Siberian administrators, the protagonist was deficient in his agency and silenced, here he takes it all back. He first protests his innocence, thus taking the chance to describe the wrongdoings of the Siberian administrators. Second, he presents a bagful of the most valuable furs to the tsar. The furs represented one of the core reasons for the conquest of Siberia: they were central to the imperial economy and foreign relations. Consequently, the furs materially bound the tsar and the Indigenous elite, because the elite were tasked with collecting *yasak*, the tax which Indigenous peoples paid in furs. Thus, it was also in their shared interest to remain on good terms with the hunting and tax-paying people. Yet, we also know that the Indigenous peoples were often in debt, not only to their trading partners, but also to the tax collectors, which caused misery and tension in the northern regions (e.g., Forsyth 1992: 158–162). Nevertheless, the furs provided the Nenets and other Indigenous peoples with a material device via which to regulate their relations with those in power. This then provides them with a vibrant agency, which is well demonstrated in the song's text.

Furthermore, in recent research on the relationship between the Indigenous elite and the tsar, Perevalova demonstrated how the Indigenous elite used their visits to the tsar as a tool of control and power. From the point of view of the metropole, this represented diplomacy, in which the relationship between the tsar and the Indigenous elite was regulated with the help of deeds (*gramoty*). In principle, the role of the deeds ended following Speranskii's reforms; but, in practice, the visits and the exchange of furs and the administrative honour continued long into the nineteenth century (Perevalova 2019: 56–57, 100–106). The Indigenous elite, however, used the tsar's gifts in the north to publicly show their power in the towns. The gifts and deeds were also passed down as central signs of the power of 'Indigenous dynasties' (Perevalova 2011, 2019: 113–115). In addition, the paraphernalia that the tsar gifted are signified both by the poetics and the power of the textual references and by the actual ways in which these were used. In the poem's register, the items given are comparable with mythic and ritually powerful items that the epic poems' protagonists either have or obtain during their journeys. These typically include shamanic drums or bows, or spiritual animals, all of which enhance the power and agency of the hero. The items gifted by the tsar similarly elevate the protagonist's authority and influence. The source of power is the tsar, who not only presents the items, but also gives advice on how to use them. Thus, the letter should be given to the administrators who should read it, whilst the rest of the paraphernalia the protagonist should wear before arriving at Salekhard. Although the items tend to lie at the centre of the narration and the known behaviour of the Nenets chiefs, I highlight how their centrality denotes the relationship between the protagonist and the tsar, the imperial chief (Siikala and Siikala 2005: 271). It is the establishment of this relationship which renders the travel, the encounter, and the subsequent homecoming meaningful.

The power of the letter is extremely interesting, because neither the members of the Indigenous elite nor the non-elite members could read or write before the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Still, the administrative and imperial power granted to written pieces of paper—in this context, representing so-called *gramoty* 'deeds'—was immense and acknowledged by both administrators and the Indigenous elite (also Perevalova 2019: 119–120). We can here see how the divide between

the oral tradition and literacy so central to modern hierarchies also became part of the oral communicative registers of the Nenets. The clothes and the sword, again, are narrated to have been used only in imperial situations, where the protagonist must demonstrate his administrative position. Thus, he wears them before going to Salekhard and removes them before returning to his home camp in the tundra. Indeed, the clothes and swords have also been kept and stored by the elites and their descendants, and they are eagerly presented to the fieldworkers.

The gifts given by the tsar secure the protagonist's journey back to the north, but importantly also rank him as one of the agents in the imperial system. His letter makes the formerly insulting administrators cry and voice their regrets, and subsequently lavishly entertain the protagonist or be hanged. The former divisions and deficient agency have thus disappeared and the power resulting from the tsar enables the protagonist to act within the administration. In the epic registers, the protagonist's homecoming is often narrated, placing emphasis on the reunion with the family or a wedding celebration. Nevertheless, the journey back is seldom emphasised to such an extent as it is in the songs of Katerina Vyuchei. She clearly wanted to highlight the results of the long journey and the higher status in relation to the administrators in the town, rather than speak about the Khanty Prince who must content himself with co-ruling alongside the protagonist. The travel and return to Obdorsk evidently point to the changed status of the protagonist and the overall administrative situation resulting from his long journey and the power gained.

CONCLUSIONS

In the end, Katerina Vyuchei's songs tend to highlight the supreme power of the tsar and thus take part in the orders of imperial Russia. They also tend to criticise the Siberian administrators. Indeed, one of the captivating features of these songs must have been the ridiculous image they created of the administrators in the towns and their unfortunate fates in the narration. These features describe the subaltern position of the Nenets and the ways in which they were produced within the tsarist administration. Consequently, the songs themselves exist in dialogue with the imperial orders of modernity within which the tradition was seen as not belonging to it, but traditional. As I have also argued above, the communicative situation within which the texts were transcribed, were also replete with the obliqueness of modernity: Lehtisalo wanted to collect texts that would enable him a glimpse backwards and Katerina Vyuchei chose to sing texts that relied on their traditional authority and which she thought represented the folklore the Finnish linguist sought. In their encounter, an indigenous actor, Katerina Vyuchei, narrated a past tied to the Nenets relationships with the Russian imperial power, its inner categorisations, and various hierarchies. The decisive difference between the folklorisation of Lehtisalo and traditionalisation of Katerina Vyuchei lies in opposition. Whilst the folkloristic gaze relies on a rupture and holds onto it, traditionalisation is about situating the authority of tradition in the context of the performance. In my analysis of the poems, I aimed to interpret not only the difference between folklorisation and traditionalisation, but the possible historicities that lie behind and were recreated by Katerina Vyuchei. Lehtisalo and Katerina Vyuchei were communicating through two different historicities. Lehtisalo's

understanding stressed folklore's value as a thing of the past which could also be used as proof of Nenets backwardness or traditionality. Katerina Vyuchei's understanding of history highlights the mythic and otherworldly nature of the past, which cannot be explained away as mere features of the epic register's style. Choosing to narrate a past using an epic register is a conscious choice, which equates mythic with past worlds, their protagonists, and their landscapes. This equation renders the past a mythic country, but similarly brings imperial, contemporary details to the storyworld. Within this process, Nenets heroes become powerful in circumstances where they have been viewed as subaltern. In narrating both the subaltern position and the mythic heroism, Katerina Vyuchei recreates the Nenets historicity and the experience of the past where Indigenous agency is also voiced.

The strategies of the Nenets epic register are themselves codes which create expectations for structures and contents for narration. The actors, their acts, and their contexts are not as contingent as the encounters within the world. Thus, the ways of narrating the contingencies also become entwined with the strategies of the register. Katerina Vyuchei recreates the register: she begins with themes that expect the protagonist to be named a local deity, but instead continues to narrate a hero who becomes an imperial actor with administrative power. His power does not, however, lie in the paraphernalia received from the tsar alone, but is inherently linked to the entire journey the protagonist completes. This includes the distance and the experience of the strange, his resourceful negotiations with the tsar, and his return following the tsar's advice. These all assign his administrative power within frames that are central to the Nenets historicity, emphasising the knowledge gained through hard, sometimes pitiful, but in the end triumphant travel in unknown and unseen landscapes where new and valuable knowledge is available. Within these frames, the mythic qualities of the landscape typical for an epic register extend to imperial centres and the metropole such that the administrators and the tsar can be compared to the deities, gods, and giants with whom the epic register's protagonists also communicate. This comparison is valid because of the register, the shared idiom that forms an important condition of knowing about the past within the Tundra Nenets linguistic community. Consequently, the register has been discussed as a form of Nenets historicity.

A significant point to Katerina Vyuchei's songs is their implicit epistemic relation to the otherworld, based on the idea that the performer is singing texts narrated to them by an otherworldly agent. In addition, it is important to note that this also implies that the events unravel when told. Accordingly, Katerina Vyuchei is not only recollecting or repeating a story, but making the past happen again. The past is thus not unchanging and static, but—if the relationship with the otherworldly agents is proper—regenerated and happening through performance.

KARINA LUKIN
ACADEMY RESEARCH FELLOW
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURES
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
karina.lukin@helsinki.fi

NOTES

1 I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers and the editors of *JFAS* for their helpful and critical comments on this manuscript. This research was funded by the Academy of Finland (*'Imperialism in vernacular terms. Appraising the coloniality of folklore, tradition and heritage through and by the Nenets'*, grant number 330374).

2 Russian is transliterated following the ALA-LC. Tundra Nenets is transliterated following the system introduced by Niemi and Lapsui (2004). I have omitted the diacritics from the British standard and the sign ˚ from the Tundra Nenets transliteration.
3 The verbatim translation is 'of other/alien descent', and thus has several possible translations. I prefer 'native', used, for example, by Forsyth.

REFERENCES

Ahola, Joonas and Karina Lukin 2017. Matthias Alexander Castrénin Suomalaisen Mytologian Taustoja. In *Luentoja Suomalaisesta Mytologiasta*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Alekseev, V. V. (ed.) 2010. *Istoriia Iamala. Tom I, Kniga 2. Rossiiskaia Kolonizatsiia*. Ekaterinburg: Basko.

Anderson, David G. and Dmitry V. Arzyutov 2019. The Etnos Archipelago: Sergei M. Shirokogoroff and the Life History of a Controversial Anthropological Concept. *Current Anthropology* 60 (6): 741–773. https://doi.org/10.1086/704685.

Anderson, David G. 2000. *Identity and Ecology in Arctic Siberia: The Number One Reindeer Brigade*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Anttonen, Pertti 2005. *Tradition through Modernity: Postmodernism and the Nation-State in Folklore Scholarship*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. https://doi.org/10.21435/sff.15.

Bakhrushin, S.V. 1927. *Ocherki po istorii kolonizatsii Sibiri v XVI i XVII vv*. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo M. & S. Sabashnikovykh.

Bauman, Richard 2004. *A World of Others' Words : Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Baycroft, Timothy and David M. Hopkin 2012. *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century*. Leiden: Brill.

Bendix, Regina 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Branch, Michael 1968. M. A. Castrénin Siperian-Matkojen Alkuvaiheista. *Virittäjä* 72 (4): 336.

Briggs, Charles L. and Richard Bauman 1992. Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2 (2): 131–172.

Briggs, Charles L. and Sadhana Naithani 2012. The Coloniality of Folklore: Towards a Multi-Genealogical Practice of Folkloristics. *Studies in History* 28 (2): 231–270. https://doi.org/10.1177/0257643013482404.

Briggs, Charles L. 2021. *Unlearning: Rethinking Poetics, Pandemics, and the Politics of Knowledge*. Logan: Utah State University Press.

Castrén, M.A. 1857. *Ethnologiska Föreläsningar Öfver Altaiska Folken*. Helsingfors: Finska Litteratur-Sällskapets tryckeri.

Dameshek, L.M. and A.V. Remnev 2007. *Sibir' v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.

Fabian, Johannes 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Foley, John Miles 1995. *The Singer of Tales in Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Forsyth, James 1992. *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony, 1581–1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Frog 2015. Registers of Oral Poetry. In Asif Agha and Frog (eds.). *Registers of Communication*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. https://doi.org/10.21435/sflin.18

Golovnëv, Andrei 2004. *Kochevniki tundry: nentsy i ikh fol'klor*. Ekaterinburg: UrO RAN.

Golovnëv, Andrei and Elena Perevalova 2017. Vozhdi Obskikh ugrov i nentsev (po dannym fol'klora). *Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Istoriia* (49): 115–122. https://doi.org/10.17223/19988613/49/21.

Kaartinen, Timo 2010. *Songs of Travel, Stories of Place: Poetics of Absence in an Eastern Indonesian Society*. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Khomich, L.V. 1984. Real'nost' i fantaziia v fol'klore nentsev. In *Fol'klor i etnografi'a. U etnograficheskikh istokov fol'klornykh siuzhetov i obrazov*. Leningrad: Nauka.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara 1998. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kornienko, V. 1932. Vosstanie Vaulia. *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* (5–6): 112–119.

Koski, Kaarina 2011. *Kuoleman voimat: kirkonväki suomalaisessa uskomusperinteessä*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Kupriianova, Zinaida Nikolaevna 1965. *Epicheskie pesni nentsev*. Moskva: Nauka.

Kuutma, Kristin 2005. Vernacular Religions and the Invention of Identities Behind the Finno-Ugric Wall. *Temenos - Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 41 (1): 51–76. https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4802.

Labanauskas, K.I. 2001. *Skazy sedoi stariny. Nenetskaia fol'klornaia khrestomatiia*. Moskva: Russkaia literatura.

Leete, Art and Laur Vallikivi 2011. Imitating Enemies or Friends: Comparative Notes on Christianity in the Indigenous Russian Arctic during the Early Soviet Period. *Asian Ethnology* 70 (1): 81–104.

Leeuwen, Richard van 2007. *The Thousand and One Nights: Space, Travel and Transformation*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

Lehtisalo, Toivo 1922. Jurakkisamojedien Lauluista. *Kalevalaseuran Vuosikirja* (2): 82–102.

Lehtisalo, Toivo 1947. *Juraksamojedische Volksdichtung*. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.

Lehtisalo, Toivo 1956. *Juraksamojedisches Wörterbuch*. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura.

Lëzova, Svetlana Vasil'evna 2000. Sibirskie nentsy (samoedy) v seredine XIX veka: dialog kochevnikov i chinovnikov. In Andrei Vladimirovich Golovnëv (ed.). *Drevnosti Yamala. Vypusk 1*. Ekaterinbug, Salekhard: Institut istorii i arkheologii UrO RAN.

Lucy, John Arthur 1993. *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lukin, J.F. 2013. Iavliaiutsia li nentsy vymiraiushchim etnosom? *Arktika i Sever* (12): 1–19.

Lukin, Karina 2015. Matka ja liike nenetsien epiikassa ja šamanistisessa runoudessa. *Elore* 22 (1). https://doi.org/10.30666/elore.79180.

Lukin, Karina 2017. Matthias Alexander Castrén's Notes on Nenets Folklore. *Suomalais-Ugrilaisen Seuran Aikakauskirja* (96): 169–211. https://doi.org/10.33340/susa.70257.

Lukin, Karina 2020. Recategorising an Arctic Hero: Entitlement and (Un)Tellability in a Soviet Drama. *Ethnologia Fennica* 47 (1): 33–56. https://doi.org/10.23991/ef.v47i1.84285.

Naithani, Sadhana 2010. *The Story-Time of the British Empire: Colonial and Postcolonial Folkloristics*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Niemi, Jarkko 1998. *The Nenets Songs: A Structural Analysis of Text and Melody*. Tampere: University of Tampere.

Niemi, Jarkko and Anastasia Lapsui 2004. *Network of Songs: Individual Songs of the Ob' Gulf Nenets: Music and Local History as Sung by Maria Maksimovna Lapsui*. Helsinki: Finno-Ugrian Society.

Ó Giolláin, Diarmuid 2000. *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity*. Cork: Cork University Press.

Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko 1990. Introduction: The Historicization of Anthropology. In Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (ed.). *Culture through Time: Anthropological Approaches*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Perevalova, Elena 2011. Rodovye 'kantseliarii' samoedskikh starshin (iz praktiki upravleniia tuzemnym naseleniem Severo-Zapadnoi Sibiri v XIX v.). *Ural'skii istoricheskii vestnik* 32 (3): 84–88.

Perevalova, Elena 2019. *Obskie ugry i nentsy Zapadnoi Sibiri: etnichnost' i vlast'*. Sankt-Peterburg: Muzei antropologii i etnografii imeni Petra Velikogo (Kunstkamera) RAN.

Pushkarëva, Elena Timofeevna 2000. *Nenetskie pesni-khynabtsy: siuzhetika, semantika i poetika.* Moskva: Vostochnaia literatura.

Pushkarëva, Elena Timofeevna and Lyudmila Vasil'evna Khomich 2001. *Fol'klor nentsev v zapisiakh 1911, 1937, 1946, 1953, 1965–1987 godov: sbornik*. Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie.

Pushkarëva, Elena Timofeevna 2003. *Kartina mira v fol'klore nentsev: sistemno-fenomelogicheskii analiz*. Moskva: RAN.

Salminen, Timo 2008. *Aatteen tiede: Suomalais-ugrilainen seura 1883–2008*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Salminen, Timo 2019. Matthias Alexander Castrén as a Travelling Researcher. In Timo Salminen (ed.). *Itineraria. 1*. Helsinki: Finno-Ugrian Society.

Siikala, Anna-Leena 2002. *Mythic Images and Shamanism: A Perspective on Kalevala Poetry*. Helsinki: Academia scientiarum Fennica.

Siikala, Anna-Leena and Jukka Siikala 2005. *Return to Culture: Oral Tradition and Society in the Southern Cook Islands*. Helsinki: Academia scientiarum Fennica.

Slezkine, Yuri 1994. *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Stammler, Florian 2005. *Reindeer Nomads Meet the Market: Culture, Property and Globalisation at the 'End of the Land'*. Münster: LIT.

Tarkka, Lotte 2005. *Rajarahvaan laulu. Tutkimus Vuokkiniemen kalevalamittaisesta runokulttuurista 1821–1921*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Tarkka, Lotte 2013. *Songs of the Border People: Genre, Reflexivity, and Performance in Karelian Oral Poetry*. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Tereshchenko, Natal'ya Mitrofanovna 1990. *Nenetskii epos: materialy i issledovaniia po samodiiskim iazykam*. Leningrad: Nauka.

Tonkin, Elizabeth 1992. *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Toulouze, Eva 2011. Indigenous Agency in the Missionary Encounter: The Example of the Khanty and the Nenets. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 5 (1): 63–74. https://ojs.utlib.ee/index.php/JEF/article/view/22585/17130

Vasil'ev, V.I. 1984. Istoricheskie osnovy nekotorykh zhanrov fol'klora narodov Severa. In *Fol'klor i etnografiia. U etnograficheskikh istokov fol'klornykh siuzhetov i obrazov*. Leningrad: Nauka.

Wilce, James MacLynn 2009. *Crying Shame: Metaculture, Modernity, and the Exaggerated Death of Lament*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Wilson, William A. (William Albert) 1976. *Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wolf, Eric R. 1982. *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Otso Kortekangas

TOPONYMIC NOTIONS OF SÁMI PAST(S): KARL NICKUL AND THE HISTORICITY OF SKOLT SÁMI PLACE NAMES

ABSTRACT

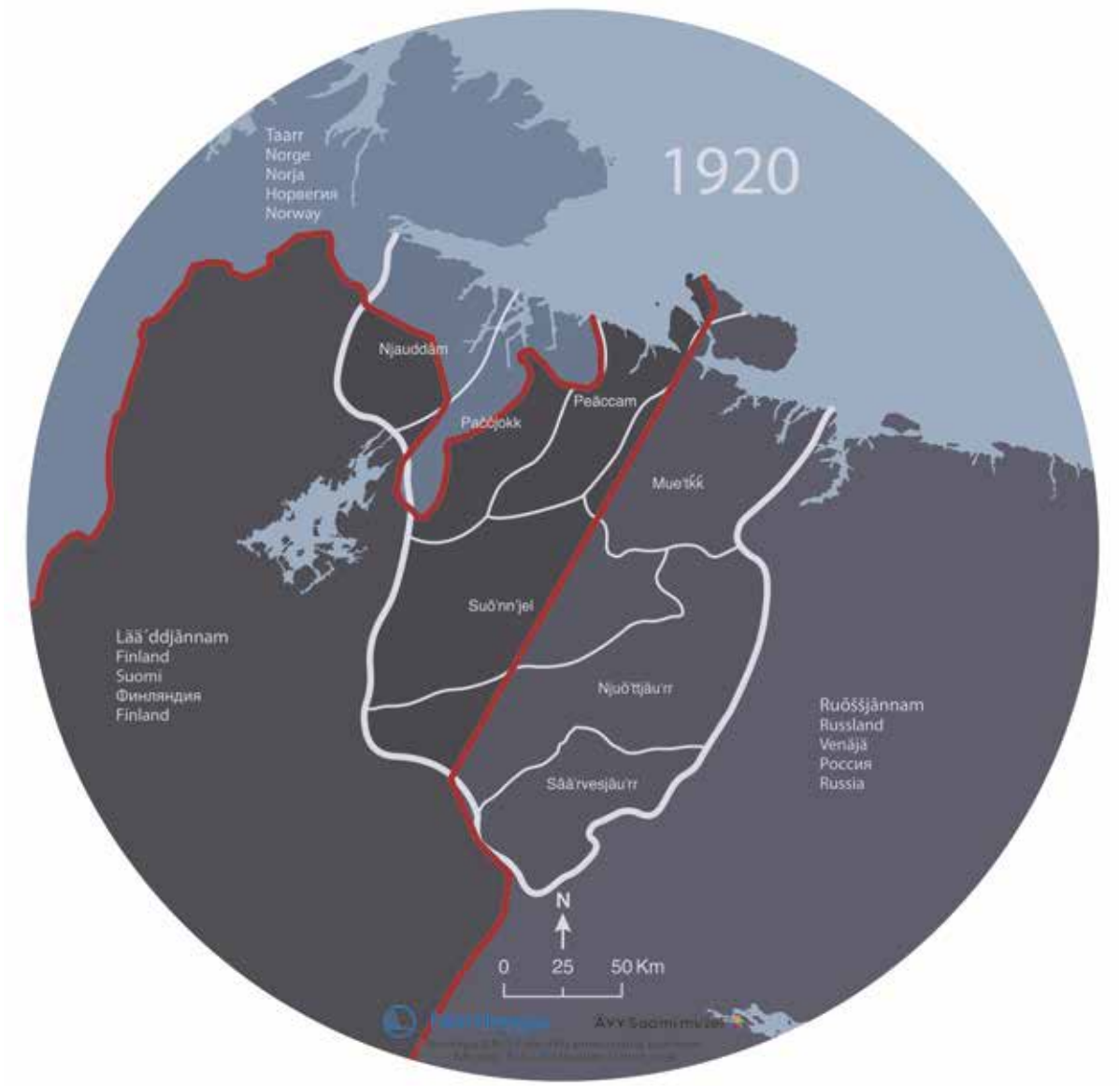
The Finnish geodesist and self-taught ethnographer Karl Nickul (1900–1980) studied the Indigenous toponymy among the Skolt Sámi in northeastern Finland. This article analyses Nickul's early publications and international correspondence, focusing on the ways Nickul framed Sámi notions of the past as reflected in their toponymy. Nickul argued that the Sámi possessed the 'moral right' to name their own region and advocated for keeping these names in cartographic representations. According to Nickul, studying and documenting Sámi place names was a gateway to the mental imagery of the Sámi. Place names did not merely reflect the area 'as it was', but also reflected ancient events, beliefs, and livelihoods.

Keywords: Sámi history, Sámi toponymy, situated knowledge, Indigenous toponymy, Karl Nickul, Skolt Sámi, Petsamo, Suenjel, Suonikylä

INTRODUCTION

This article studies the ways in which the Finnish geodesist, pacifist, and self-taught ethnographer Karl Nickul (1900–1980) framed Sámi notions of the past as reflected in the toponymy of Petsamo, a strip of land between modern-day Finland and the Arctic Ocean. I argue that Nickul's publications and correspondence convey a combination of three views of *historicity*. Firstly, Nickul considered Sámi place names as capable of conveying something about actual historical events or practices in the area. Secondly, aside from actual historical occurrences that could be confirmed from other sources, the place names carried information about Sámi religious life, reflecting both the Russian Orthodox faith most Petsamo Sámi practiced and the pre-Christian Sámi religion. Thirdly, place names, according to Nickul, situated the Petsamo Sámi, and especially the *siida* of *Suenjel*, as a 'relict culture', a belated culture preserved in place names during the era of modernity.

In what follows, I examine Nickul's notions of Skolt Sámi pasts as reflected in their place names in three separate but related cases: Skolt Sámi toponymy reflecting 1) the actual 'factual' Sámi past, 2) what the Sámi religion(s) say about the past, and 3) the Sámi past as a relict. The research question guiding this analysis in all three cases is as follows: In what ways did Nickul consider the Sámi toponymy as reflecting the past of the Sámi in the southern Petsamo area?



The location of Suenjel (in its modern-day Skolt Sámi spelling Suõ'nn'jel), in the Skolt Sámi area (white borders) with national borders (red) in 1920.
Cartographer: Linus Rispling, Nordregio; Design: Martin Skulstad, Rethink. and Ruth Thomlevold; Concept:
Yngvar Julin and Honna Havas, Ä'vv Skolt Sámi museum; Data source: Nordregio. 16 January 2018. https://nordregio.org/maps/saa'mijannam-borders-1920/.

Nickul's views on place names is first and foremost indicative of his own view of how toponymy reflected Sámi historicity. Place names also say a great deal about how the Sámi viewed history as reflected in the toponymy given that Nickul received most of the information about place names in the Petsamo area from Sámi individuals.

BACKGROUND

Finland acquired the Petsamo area in 1920 and ceded it back to the USSR following the Finnish–Soviet conflicts of the Second World War. During its rather short period as a part of Finland, Petsamo emerged as the focus of Finnish industrialisation and modernisation projects, including those in the fishing industry, nickel extraction, and infrastructure projects such as building roads and schools. Many scholars and scientists travelled to the area, since it was considered the only truly Arctic part of Finland with access to the Arctic Ocean. Many Finnish scholars studying the development of human cultures developed a keen interest in Petsamo's multicultural population, and especially the Skolt Sámi minority. This Sámi population speaking the Skolt variety of Sámi in particular attracted the attention and interest of a number of geographers, linguists, and ethnologists (Vahtola 1999: 485–501; Stadius 2016). Karl Nickul became the foremost expert on this population. Following the example of geographer Väinö Tanner who published on the Skolt Sámi of the Petsamo area, Nickul chose a route that took him beyond the areas studied by earlier scholars, easily accessible via newly built roads to and in the Petsamo area. Instead, Nickul travelled to the Sámi regions further away from the road network and other infrastructure (Nyyssönen 2016: 20–34).

Nickul's interest was especially focused on one specific *siida*,[1] the Skolt Sámi *siida* of Suenjel (Suonikylä).[2] Nickul perceived Suenjel as a 'relict' of the age-old and 'original' Sámi life cycle, a half-nomadic lifestyle alternating between summer and winter villages. Whereas other Skolt Sámi *siidas*, and Sámi *siidas* in general, had moved away from this traditional way of life due to intensified contact with other, 'modern', populations, Suenjel kept this life form alive. According to Nickul, the *siida* was a valuable example of an ancient life form unparalleled in Europe (Lehtola 2000: 58–59).

Nickul became an internationally esteemed scholarly expert on the Skolt Sámi population of the Petsamo area, and the *siida* of Suenjel specifically. Nickul's contacts ranged from Skolt Sámi individuals to renowned international scholars. Nickul corresponded, for instance, with the first curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, Henry Balfour, and the American-British anthropologist Ethel John Lindgren (editor of the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*). The Swedish ethnographer Ernst Manker, one of the most important scholars on Sámi culture around the mid-twentieth century, and the head of Sámi collections at the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, dubbed Nickul the 'foremost expert' on the Skolt Sámi population (Manker 1946, Lucy Cavendish College Archives [LCCA], University of Cambridge [UC]). Nickul later served as the secretary of the transnational organisation, the Nordic Sámi Council, and was a pivotal figure in the process whereby the Sámi were recognised first and foremost as an Indigenous population rather than a minority in northernmost Europe (Andresen 2016). Nickul's Skolt Sámi as well as national, Nordic, and international contacts made him a key figure or gate keeper between Sámi notions of the past and the international scholarly community interested in the Sámi culture or cultures.

In contrast to most Finnish scholars studying populations linguistically related to Finns at the time, Nickul, a pacifist and internationalist, was not interested in Finnish-nationalist ideals of reconstructing large Finnic or Finno-Ugric groups indicating connections and, eventually, cultural and even territorial claims to the home areas of these populations. Rather, Nickul contextualised the Skolt Sámi

within a wide international setting. Fuelling this interest was Nickul's study of Skolt place names, in which Nickul identified an intimate connection between the population and nature, comparable to that amongst Native American populations. His mapping of the Petsamo area and contact with the local Skolt Sámi and their information regarding place names led to his realisation that he was not mapping an empty space of nature, but rather a rich culture that had existed in the region for a very long time (Lehtola 2000: 61–77; Kortekangas 2021: 786).

The study of place names served as the gateway for Nickul's scholarly interest in the Skolt Sámi culture. He travelled the Skolt Sámi areas in the 1920s, as a geodesist appointed by the Finnish government to measure and map the area the USSR ceded to Finland in 1920. When Nickul first travelled in Petsamo, he assumed that he was mapping a region empty of any larger human influence. Soon enough, he began seeing and realising that the area was not empty, but the home of a specific Sámi culture that had lived in the Russian northwestern periphery for quite some time. This population, however, had relatively little contact with other populations when compared with the Sámi in the Nordic countries that lived closer to infrastructure and larger population centres. This, at least, was Nickul's impression. Talking to the local Skolt Sámi in order to collect names to appear on the maps produced for the area, Nickul was fascinated by the Skolt Sámi way of life, which he perceived as resembling the most original Sámi way of life. Their way of life followed a half-nomadic yearly pattern between winter and summer villages. These place names initiated and launched the geodesist Nickul as a scholar interested in ethnology and anthropology.

The close connection that Nickul considered existing between the Skolt Sámi place names and the physical landscape lead him to becoming the primary planner of cultural preservation projects. He developed his ideas as the secretary of the Finnish 'Society for the Culture of the Lapps' (*Lapin Sivistysseura LSS*),[3] in political initiatives in the form of indirect rule (referencing the Native Americans and British subject populations under the indirect rule principle), and subsequently, as the first secretary of the Sámi Council. The place names and the intimate connection to the environment and the history of the Skolts served as the starting point for Nickul's career as an ethnographer, even if self-taught in an academic sense (Susiluoto 2003: 75–101; Lehtola 2000: 33, 38; Nickul 1934: 7–19; Kortekangas 2021: 787).

RESEARCH TASK, METHODS, AND QUESTIONS

This article examines Nickul's views on the Skolt Sámi place names, and, more specifically, his understanding of the historicity they transmitted. This focus opens up a larger analytical horizon about questions related to the relationship between the Sámi and other populations historically and those existing in Nickul's own time. An important theme running through Nickul's publications and correspondence is the relationship between the Sámi and the area in which they lived. As Nickul wrote in German to Czech cartographer and professor Jaroslav Pantoflíček, 'the place names allow us to gain insight into the essence of the culture of the nomadic Skolt Sámi' (Nickul 1937a, Karl Nickul's archives [KNA], The Sámi Archives of Finland [SAF]).

In my analysis, I read Nickul's early publications and correspondence on the Skolt Sámi toponymy, specially focusing on the ways in which Nickul thought these names reflected the history of the Sámi population, whether 'mythical' or 'factual'. Nickul was a professional

geodesist, as well as an amateur ethnographer, a fact he openly discussed and candidly admitted. His toponymic notions of Skolt Sámi pasts were coproduced with the Skolt Sámi themselves. As such, Nickul described his method for collecting place names as sitting down by a campfire, where the 'Skolts would tell their stories'. This is a rather apt example of what Kapil Raj, following Michel Callon, calls 'open air practices'. Such practices consist of Western amateur scholars coproducing scholarly knowledge with locals, knowledge that would then travel—through publications and correspondence in the Skolt–Nickul case—to Western scholarly centres, and thereby influence the history of Western science itself (Raj 2007: 14–19). As discussed by many science and technology studies (STS) scholars, such as Sheila Jasanoff and Bruno Latour, all scientific knowledge is always coproduced in the sense that we are always affected by the social, economic, and political structures of the places we inhabit. Knowledge is produced within and in relation to these structures. In Latour's words, there is no outside view of the planet, since our knowledge is always situated (Jasanoff 2004: 1–12; Latour 2016). Within Indigenous studies, the notion of coproduction has been used to resuscitate historical and contemporary Indigenous voices and epistemologies traditionally ignored by Western research (see, e.g., Hill et al. 2020).

Here, the discussion above directs me to reflect upon how Nickul's own previous understandings of history and historicity blended with the history of the Sámi, accessible to Nickul through Sámi toponymy and discussions with the Sámi around toponymy.

Ethnographic and anthropological studies of place names represented a field active in early twentieth century Europe and North America. In fact, mapping and cartography were immensely important parts of the emerging field of ethnography already in the mid-eighteenth century (see, e.g., Vermeulen 2015). As Thomas F. Thornton (1997) points out, within American anthropological research, the study of Indigenous toponymy was a rather inactive field of study for a large part of the twentieth century. Early in the century, however, Franz Boas and many of his followers (e.g., Thomas Waterman) regarded place names as an excellent area where the culture and history (including religion) of native populations could be studied (Thornton 1997: 209–212). Along a similar vein, both Keith H. Basso (1996) and Peter Nabokov (2002) noted the close connection between cartography and mapping of the 'historicity' of Indigenous populations in the North American context, whereas others like Sergei Alymov (2019) established a similar link in the Soviet context, albeit during a somewhat later period.

Moreover, in the Nordic countries, the study of Sámi linguistics and place names was one of the most active fields within the study of the Sámi culture around the turn of the twentieth century. The Norwegian linguist and folklorist Just Qvigstad and the Swedish professor of Finno-Ugric languages K. B. Wiklund both studied and published important analyses of Sámi place names during the early decades of the twentieth century. Nickul's correspondence on toponymy was initially primarily directed toward cartographers. Quite soon after his first contact with the Skolt Sámi, however, Nickul extended his correspondence to linguists in Norway and Sweden, including both Qvigstad and Wiklund, and somewhat later, to renown anthropologists around Europe (Kortekangas 2021: 788).

In his 1934 article, *Petsamon eteläosan koltankieliset paikannimet kartografiselta kannalta* ('The toponymy of Southern Petsamo from a cartographic perspective "PEKPKK"'), Nickul made clear that he thought that the local

population in each area had the 'moral right' to name the area, which extended to the Sámi of the Petsamo area as well. According to Nickul, it was paramount that these local names, rather than Finnish translations or altogether new Finnish names, were also used in the official map of the area. Nickul thought that it was ethically and cartographically erroneous to translate the names. The attitudes of Finnish authorities who took control of the Petsamo area after 1920 were rather ignorant of the inhabitants. Nickul represented another line of thought, highlighting the value of listening to existing inhabitants rather than importing Finnish values, mindsets, economic practices, and place names[4] (Stadius 2016). This issue also relates to a topical theme regarding the ownership of the Sámi history, which I discuss in detail in the section about the Sámi religion (see, e.g., Evjen and Beck 2015: 51–52).

SKOLT SÁMI TOPONYMY AND THE 'FACTUAL' SÁMI PAST

The first research question relates to Nickul's view of the Skolt Sámi toponymy as a gateway to determining what the 'original' Sámi past looked like. Here, I mean to say that Nickul was convinced that the way of life of the Suenjel Sámi represented the last fragment of what remained of the way of life and mix of livelihoods characterising the Sámi before intensified contact with other populations. As Nickul wrote to many scholars, including curator of the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge (today, the MAA) Louis C. G. Clarke, Sámi 'social conceptions' still existed amongst the Suenjel Skolt Sámi, whereas the same conceptions of daily and yearly life were disappearing from other parts of Sámi society. To Cambridge anthropologist Ethel John Lindgren, Nickul (1937b, 1937c) emphasised the originality of the Suenjel Skolts, maintaining that they represented the last fragment of the Sámi 'race', interesting especially in scholarly terms, and something was needed in order to preserve this race.

These letters to two important international contacts from the late 1930s already point toward a later phase in Nickul's career, where he actively worked on a protection plan for the Suenjel Sámi, for scholarly purposes and for the sake of preserving the population for its own sake. Prior to this period, however, Nickul was primarily interested in the toponymy of the Skolt Sámi areas in Petsamo. The main source for studying Nickul's notions of Skolt Sámi place names lay in his 1934 publication in Finnish, *Petsamon eteläosan koltankieliset paikannimet kartografiselta kannalta*, ('The toponymy of Southern Petsamo from a cartographic perspective "PEKPKK"').

Describing the dimension that place names provided for a map, Nickul compared them to topographical markings. Whilst topographical contours produced an illusion of topography, place names created the illusion of time, and, hence, an experience of the past. Nickul was well aware of the problems associated with attempting to uncover most original name forms, and followed a pragmatic principle in this case. As such, the current name form used by the local population should be printed on a map aiming for accuracy. The current name form reflected the history of the place and the people as experienced at the moment of drawing the map. A map, and more specifically the place names, provided an image of development, as well as of the expansion of agriculture and infrastructure, changes to language, and the 'conquering of the cultural landscape in general' (Nickul 1934: 8–11).

Nickul also provided an example for how Finnish and Norwegian mistranslations of Sámi names wiped out their original meanings. This

also served as an example of the toponymic subjugation, and, more severely, silencing, which Rautio Helander (2014: 336–340) noted in the Norwegian context. Specifically, first assigning the Sámi names a secondary status to the majority-language names, then completely discontinuing the use of the Sámi name form, silenced the Sámi toponymy and everything it carried. Nickul (1934: 9) provided the example of *Muetkevarr*. The Sámi word *muetke* translates to a tract of land between two bodies of water. A Finnish map translated the word mistakenly as *mutka* (*Mutkavaara*) in Finnish, meaning a curve, a corner, or a hook ('Curve mountain'). This mistake was then reproduced in a Norwegian map, which took the Finnish *mutka* and translated it to the Norwegian word for corner or hook, *krog*[5] (*Krogfjeld*) (Nickul 1934: 9).

For Nickul, the place names characterised the 'human influence in the landscape, that is, culture'. But, there was a significant difference between different kinds or levels of cultures (Nickul 1934: 12–13). In the conclusion to Nickul's article, he stated that, even in the case of a 'higher civilisation', place names told the story about the humans in the region, of their actions and their state of mind. According to Nickul, this was even more so with the 'primitive' Sámi region, where names reflect the people, their 'character, world views, history, livelihoods, [and] culture' in a much more accurate manner than in modernised regions. Citing the Norwegian professor of Finno-Ugric languages at the University of Oslo, Konrad Nielsen, and Finnish–Swedish geographer Väinö Tanner, Nickul stated that the level of specialisation and detail the Sámi demonstrated when naming their home area was completely unique in the Northern European context. The life conditions of the Sámi had developed their observation skills to an admirable subtlety. Nickul (1934: 12–13, 17) paraphrased Tanner, maintaining that no other Northern European language could demonstrate the level of specialisation related to geological forms and sizes, and vegetation in their home region as accurately as the Sámi languages.

This richness in detail for Indigenous place naming is something other scholars noted in other contexts. In the 1920s, American anthropologist Thomas Waterman described the Native American place naming practices, especially amongst populations in the Puget Sound area. Waterman, like Nielsen, Tanner, and Nickul in the Sámi case, was impressed by the subtlety and accurate descriptiveness demonstrated in the toponymy of Native Americans. Waterman spoke of abundant or even excessive native place names. This subtlety was also noted by Nickul in the Sámi case. Interestingly, Waterman was one of the first anthropologists to produce a typology of Native American place names. Waterman's typology systematically shows what the most prominent and frequent subjects for place names were in the Puget Sound region. In order of frequency, these consisted of, first, the rather general category of 'descriptive names' (202 names), followed by 'references to mythic episodes' (67 names), then 'references to animals' (35 names), and, finally, 'references to the food supply' (Thornton 1997: 214–216).

Nickul included a rather similar, yet more extensive typology of Skolt Sámi place names in his article. In Nickul's table, names based on livelihoods were followed by names depicting older religious forms and 'factual' historical events such as encounters with Russian monks. For example, two such categories consisted of names consisting of various fish species, suggesting a relationship with fishing, as well as names with the words *pass* ('holy / sacred') and *paas* ('something to be aware of and wary about').

Encounters with Russian Greek Orthodox monks travelling in the areas were normally peaceful according to the toponymic records of these encounters. Nickul described the way Skolt Sámi place names preserved the memory of the Orthodox hermit monks travelling in the area in a rather illuminating way. These hermits were a nuisance in the sense that they used the traditional Skolt Sámi fishing lakes and rivers. Yet, their influence was tangible in the sense that monks converted the first Skolts, leading to the conversion of the entire population over time. This process was traceable, according to Nickul, via place names. Many places on the shorelines and in bodies of water along the riverine and lake routes the monks travelled bear the word '*söörnets*', derived from a Russian word for monk, *чернец* (*tsernets)*. The earliest place names reflecting the introduction of the new religion are, according to Nickul, names which include the word '*kaavas*', depicting a small icon that people carried with them during their travels. According to Nickul (1934: 20), these kinds of names with Russian Orthodox elements mixed with names bearing witness of older belief systems tell us about the 'nature, child-like devotion' with which the Skolt Sámi adopted external forms of the Greek Catholic religion, while maintaining much of their older religion.

In relation to travelling Russian monks, Nickul described the way he gathered and confirmed his name forms. When gathering a name, such as those reflecting the presence of monks, Nickul consulted the Skolt Sámi population to discuss the origins and possible dating of the names. In some cases, Nickul identified the specific individual that provided him with information regarding names. In most cases, however, Nickul used the collective form 'the Skolt Sámi say that' or a passive form such as 'it is said that'. Nickul coproduced the knowledge of place names with the Skolt Sámi through open air practices of discussing names with them. When reporting his results in scholarly publications, the role of the Skolt Sámi lay in the background, although Nickul did refer to his contact and the role of the Skolts in the coproduction process in a rather transparent manner.

When Nickul gathered information, he provided an interesting discussion regarding his views on the reliability of the Skolt Sámi expertise in previous times. Nickul wrote that some of the place names reflect the borders of various Skolt Sámi *siidas*, indicating which lakes each *siida* had the right to fish, for instance. But, these rights changed somewhat over time. As Nickul observed, a certain *siida* had abandoned a number of lakes for fishing, thus discussing these names with the 'middle aged men' of the *siida* was 'in vain'. The oral tradition had, according to Nickul, collapsed; thus, in this case, talking to the Sámi yielded no results. This appears to be a pragmatic issue at first sight, but Nickul's formulation reveals a certain attitude about the Skolt Sámi as mere informers. If the chain of the oral tradition was broken down, then the sort of abstract knowledge regarding things of the past was something that Nickul did not expect to find amongst locals. Whilst ascribing the Skolt Sámi a certain status and role as experts of the toponymy of their own region, Nickul viewed himself as capable of extracting this information, processing it, and passing it on to the scholarly community. Yet, the information of discontinued fishing practices on lakes also came from the Skolt Sámi, but for some reason Nickul did not single out the providers of this information. Clearly, this information was preserved amongst the Sámi, even if Nickul (1934: 22–23) thought that etymological information of place names was not.

One important interpretation that Nickul made regarding place names was that whilst wild reindeer were represented in a substantial number of place names (e.g., names including the word *reut* ['wild male reindeer / male deer']), the half-domesticated reindeer typical of the Sámi culture in the early twentieth century and today was not. Nickul's conclusions, referring to some earlier records later confirmed by many researchers, was that reindeer herding in a more extensive form was a rather recent development in the Petsamo area than it was in other parts of the Sámi region. This serves as a prime example of Nickul's skilful interpretations, as well as his belief in the power of place names to transmit factual, older events, livelihood patterns, and social structures (Nickul 1934: 24–25).

SKOLT SÁMI TOPONYMY AND THE SÁMI RELIGION

Apart from the 'factual', chronological history—events and circumstances that Nickul could confirm had taken place—place names reflected Sámi historicity in other ways as well according to Nickul. Nickul quoted Finnish geographer Väinö Tanner, who wrote that the Sámi added a level of refined symbolism to their place names of which no other Nordic population was capable. This note on Sámi symbolism directs us away from the 'factual past' that Nickul saw reflected in place names, and toward another kind of notion of historicity, relating to the religious, and, more specifically, pre-Christian, past. One example of such a connection between beliefs and the physical landscape that Nickul refers to is the mountain *Kaarablekk*. Based on his discussions with the Sámi, Nickul understood that this name was composed of the Skolt Sámi names for a sail boat and its transom. The mountain name reflected its form: The mountain, which looked like a stranded boat, carried the memory of a deluge in the distant past which obviously had left its mark on Skolt Sámi culture. The place names transmitted events and structures that had historically formed the Skolt Sámi way of life, revealing a longer time perspective on the culture of the Sámi by offering a glimpse of the layers of beliefs and religion that preceded the current state of the Russian Orthodox religion practiced amongst the Skolt Sámi (Nickul 1934: 13, 19).

Nickul's discussion of religion, beliefs, and toponymy also includes an important comment on the ownership of Skolt Sámi history. This issue, who owns Sámi history, is topical, since many researchers within the Indigenous studies tradition have examined the question of who owns, participates, and makes scholarship on Indigenous populations such as the Sámi (see, e.g., Evjen and Beck 2015: 51–52). The Skolt Sámi, who, at least nominally, converted to Greek Catholic Christianity, still venerated or had at least until recently venerated and worshipped various spirits. According to Nickul, a common Skolt Sámi belief was that the pre-Christian deities and spirits worshipped at specific places had left these holy loci when such worshipping ceased. Their existence, at least locally, thus depended on the Skolt Sámi actively worshipping and remembering them. This is a relevant notion of historicity amongst the Skolt Sámi, and perhaps of historicity in general. When something disappeared or began fading from the collective memory and from everyday practices, its relevance diminished and vanished. The past—in this case, the past relating to religion and beliefs—is accessible and relevant to the present through functions and meanings that render the present more legible and liveable. When these messages from the past are no longer of any use given changing habits or physical relocations of the people

inhabiting a specific area, the past stops talking to the present.

Ownership of religious history was also visible in another way. According to the Skolt Sámi, certain places named after deities or other sacred elements (such as names with the word *pass* ['holy / sacred']) had their own spells or curses attached to them. But these curses or spells applied only to those people who had knowledge of these forces. A stranger passing and violating a sacred place out of ignorance was not at risk of placing a curse on themselves. These observations supported Nickul's general thesis regarding the close connection he perceived between the Skolt Sámi and the area they inhabited: nature, its deities, and its spirits spoke to the 'real' inhabitants of the place and only to them. The landscape became active and alive only during encounters with local people, who coded it with meanings and signifiers that only they themselves could read and decipher. This also meant that place names were sometimes forgotten when their denotations no longer meant anything to the people. One example of this lies in the old fishing areas named after families. When these ownership relations ceased to matter, the names themselves were forgotten. Owning the place and the area was, in Nickul's early work, very much connected to naming it. The place names indicated the true ownership of the area, as the example of the Skolt Sámi toponymy describing the environment and history of their home area clearly demonstrated (Nickul 1934: 18–23).

SÁMI PAST AS A RELICT: A 'BELATED' CULTURE PRESERVED IN PLACE NAMES IN THE ERA OF MODERNITY

Apart from the previous two points on the Skolt Sámi historicity as reflected in place names, one other notion of historicity appeared in Nickul's text, related to the place of the Skolt Sámi in the modern world. Nickul wrote that 'place names have brought us close to the Skolt Sámi him/herself. We meet him/her not only as a curiosity craving a moment of awareness without further depth, but rather as a belated representative of a culture tied to nature. The Suenjel names reflect their people, the people who live in a close relationship of dependence to their region.' The designation of the Skolt Sámi as *belated* points to a scientific discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century discussing 'native' populations as somehow inherently from, or of, the past, carrying in themselves a historicity that stood in stark contrast to Western modernity. This temporal limit between the modern peoples and the peoples of the past, famously dubbed allochronism by Johannes Fabian (1983) in his book *Time and the Other*, is a theme widely discussed in both anthropology and global history. Patrick Brantlinger (2003) noted this temporal limit as one singling out 'primitive' races or peoples, a term Nickul also used frequently. According to Brantlinger, nineteenth and early twentieth-century Western scholars and administrators considered native 'primitive races' as inherently living in the past, and they could not pass into modernity without losing their culture (Brantlinger 2003: 1–4). Bruno Latour and Siep Stuurman made similar observations. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour (1993) notes that 'savage' customs could not pass into a 'civilised' modernity. Stuurman

(2017), for his part, summarised the relationship between modernism and native peoples in saying that, in the eyes of 'Westerners', native populations were *in* this world, but not really *of* it (Latour 1993: 10–12; Stuurman 2017: 20–30).

Nickul viewed the Skolt Sámi culture as belated, attached to nature in a 'mysterious'[6] way, substantially different than the 'technological' Western cultures. Nickul was an optimist, however, and he observed the intervention from the side of Finnish scholars and the Finnish government a possible recourse that could preserve the Skolt Sámi culture, and allow it to continue developing in its own way. Differently from the 'Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races' that Brantlinger identified in the British colonial context in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Nickul did not believe in the deterministic extinction of the Skolt Sámi population. Here, he also differed from most of his Finnish and international coevals within Sámi studies who believed that the Sámi's time was running out. Rather, as he wrote to ecologist Kenneth Mellanby of the Royal Society, he did not consider the Sámi a 'dying race' (Nickul 1939).

Despite this optimism, Nickul nevertheless considered the Skolt Sámi and the Suenjel culture as existing on borrowed time. Without a scholarly and policy intervention, the culture would not survive the pressures of assimilation. Nickul wrote to the inspector of elementary schools in the district of Lapland, Antti Hämäläinen, that in all depictions of the Sámi one should be extremely careful and precise, since 'no one among them [the Sámi] will rise up to defend their people' (Nickul 1937d). Preserving the Suenjel culture would allow their further existence, but also an organic cultural development was possible. However, according to Nickul, driving this process required someone from the outside, preferably from the scholarly community who knew the Suenjel culture well. The Suenjel culture, as vivid as it appeared to Nickul, was still a 'belated' culture, and place names reflected this belatedness in various ways.

Nickul argued that a 'culture of nature' was inherently more connected to the nature of the area they inhabited, and the physical landscape and its history, whether factual or 'mythological'. The old names reflected the 'magical might' that nature holds over people. It was, then, nature that was the stronger party in this relationship, and human beings in the area had adapted to the unbreakable and unchangeable laws of nature in the region. This was reflected in the toponymy, and the technological names given by an 'industrialised' culture demonstrated an opposing relationship in which human beings conquered nature. According to Nickul, industrialised peoples detached themselves from the might of the landscape. Exemplifying this, Nickul (1934: 7) cited such disenchanted names as the Finnish-language '*Myllykoski*' ('mill brook') and the Swedish '*Telegrafberget*' ('telegraph mountain'). What Nickul did not know was that the Petsamo area would soon acquire a new layer of highly technological and industrial names. After Finland ceded the area to the Soviet Union, one of the most important places of Petsamo area became '*Никель*' (*Nikel'*), named after the nickel deposits discovered in the area already during the Finnish period

CONCLUSIONS

Nickul found history reflected in Skolt Sámi place names in three ways. First of all, Nickul considered it possible to decode factual historical events from place names and events which Nickul sought to confirm using other sources. Such place names included, for instance, those related to Russian monks travelling the areas, leaving behind place names that reflected

the process of conversion of the Skolt Sámi to the Orthodox faith.

Second, the names spoke of another type of history, namely, the past of the Skolt Sámi culture relating to beliefs and pre-Christian and Christian religions. Place names reflecting religious events or traditions could still reveal a great deal about the Skolt Sámi culture.

Third, another type of historicity that Nickul considered reflected in place names was the 'belatedness' of the Skolt Sami culture. These place names recounted a culture from the past, a life form that had been more widespread amongst the Sámi of the Nordic region and Russia, but which only survived amongst a small number of Skolt Sámi, under and threatened by mounting pressure from modernisation.

All three types of historicity reflected in place names can be contextualised in a larger anthropological and ethnographic discussion, active in the first half of the twentieth century, whereby Indigenous place names reflected the culture and historicity of the peoples inhabiting a specific area. Nickul corresponded with cartographers, geographers, ethnographers, and anthropologists on issues related to place names. As his letter to the Czech cartographer Pantoflíček indicates, he considered place names a key source for studying a 'culture of nature´ such as the Suenjel Sámi. Place names carried within them 'the essence of culture', according to Nickul. Contrary to many of his coevals and the general trend in Sámi areas to rename places with majority-language names, Nickul emphasised the ethics of allowing each people to name their own home areas. In such framings, Nickul connected the Suenjel Sámi to nature, closer to the physical landscape than other Nordic populations.

Even if Nickul was in contact with Scandinavian linguists studying Sámi place names, in his early publications and correspondence he remained very much self-taught. His ideas on Sámi toponymy as reflecting Sámi pasts in various ways should, for this reason, be viewed as a parallel case rather than directly a part of scholarly debates and observations of Indigenous toponymy and historicity in, for instance, North American anthropology. Still, there are striking similarities in the ways Nickul and North American anthropologists such as Waterman classified and treated Indigenous place names. More research on possible connections and shared influences could help further clarify the early twentieth century context of renaming, collecting, and preserving Indigenous place names.

OTSO KORTEKANGAS
RESEARCHER
CULTURE, HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY
okorteka@abo.fi

NOTES

1 Traditional Sámi area, organisation, or 'village' used for fishing and hunting, and subsequently and today predominantly used for reindeer herding. According to him, the Suenjel *siida* Nickul was particularly interested in was in a more 'original' state than most of the *siidas* in Finland and Scandinavia based on reindeer herding.

2 Suenjel is the name form following the early twentieth-century Skolt Sámi orthography used by Nickul. The Finnish name of the *siida* is Suonikylä.

3 Nickul's work led, for instance, to a proposal for the cultural preservation of the Suenjel area. See Karl Nickul, 'Eräs Petsamokysymys. Suonikylän alueesta kolttakulttuurin suojelualue', *Terra* 47, no. 3 (1935): 17–24.

4 For a discussion on the renaming of Sámi place names in a northern Norwegian context, see Kaisa Rautio Helander's (2014) article 'Sámi Place Names, Power Relations, and Representations'.

5 The modern spelling of the word is *krok*.

6 Nickul uses the Finnish word '*salaperäinen*', which means 'mysterious', but also awakens connotations of 'mystical'.

REFERENCES

Alymov, Sergei 2019. World War II and the Cold War as a Context for Discipline Formation: The Case of Soviet Ethnography, 1940s–1960s. In Katja Naumann et al. (eds.), *In Search of Other Worlds. Essays towards a Cross-Regional History of Area Studies*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.

Andresen, Astri 2016. Vitenskapene og den nye samepolitikken (1945–1963). *Historisk tidsskrift* 3: 405–435. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1504-2944-2016-03-05

Basso, Keith H 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Brantlinger, Patrick 2003. *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Evjen, Bjørg and Beck, David R.M. 2015. Growing Indigenous Influence on Research, Extended Perspectives and a New Methodology. A Historical Approach. In Kathryn W. Shanley and Bjørg Evjen (eds.) 2015. *Mapping Indigenous Presence. North Scandinavian and North American Perspectives.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Fabian, Johannes 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hill, Rosemary, Fiona Walsh, Jocelyn Davies, Ashley Sparrow, Meg Mooney, Central Land Council, Russell Wise and Maria Tengö 2020. Knowledge Co-production for Indigenous Adaptation Pathways. Transform Post-Colonial Articulation Complexes to Empower Local Decision-Making. *Global Environmental Change* 65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2020.102161.

Jasanoff, Sheila 2004. The Idiom of Co-Production. In Sheila Jasanoff (ed.). *States of knowledge: the co-production of science and social order*. Lonon: Routledge.

Kortekangas, Otso 2021. Putting the Suenjel Sámi on the Map. Knowledge Circulation and Scholarly Persona Formation in the Finnish Petsamo 1933–1940. *Nuncius: Journal of the Material and Visual History of Science* 36: 779–804. https://doi.org/10.1163/18253911-03603007.

Latour, Bruno 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Latour, Bruno 2016. *Reset Modernity!* Karlsruhe: ZKM Center for Art and Media.

Lehtola, Veli-Pekka 2000. *Nickul: Rauhan mies, rauhan kansa*. Inari: Kustannus-Puntsi.

Manker, Ernst 1946. Letter to Ethel J. Lindgren, January 3, 1946, Scientific correspondence January–March 1946, Lucy Cavendish College Archives (LCCA), University of Cambridge (UC).

Nabokov, Peter 2002. *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nickul, Karl 1934. *Petsamon eteläosan koltankieliset paikannimet kartografiselta kannalta*, Fennia. Helsinki: Maanmittaushallitus.

Nickul, Karl 1935. Eräs Petsamokysymys. Suonikylän alueesta kolttakulttuurin suojelualue. *Terra* 47 (3): 17–24.

Nickul, Karl 1937a. Letter to Jaroslav Pantoflíček, April 27, 1937. BA 1, Karl Nickul's Archives (KNA), The Sámi Archives of Finland (SAF).

Nickul, Karl 1937b. Letter to Louis Clarke, April 14, 1937 . BA1, KNA, SAF.

Nickul, Karl 1937c. Letter to EJ Lindgren, April 14, 1937. BA1, KNA, SAF.

Nickul, Karl 1937d. Letter to Antti Hämäläinen, November 25, 1937. BA1, KNA, SAF.

Nickul, Karl 1939. Letter to Kenneth Mellanby, October 27, 1939. BA1, KNA, SAF.

Nyyssönen, Jukka 2016. A Cosmopolitan, Sami-friendly Scholar? Väinö Tanner on the Best Way to Treat the Sami. *Arktika i Sever* 25: 20–34. DOI: 10.17238/issn2221-2698.2016.25.23

Raj, Kapil 2007. *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe 1650–1900*. London: Palgrave.

Rautio Helander, Kaisa 2014. Sámi Place Names, Power Relations and Representations. In Ian D. Clark, Luise Hercus, and Laura Kostanski (eds). *Indigenous and Minority Placenames: Australian and International Perspectives*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Stadius, Peter 2016. Petsamo: Bringing Modernity to Finland's Arctic Ocean Shore 1920–1939. *Acta Borealia* 33 (2): 140–165. https://doi.org/10.1080/08003831.2016.1238177

Susiluoto, Paulo 2003. Two Skolt Geographies from Petsamo during the 1920s and 1930s. In Frank Möller and Samu Pehkonen (eds). *Encountering the North. Cultural Geography, International Relations and Northern Landscapes*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

Stuurman, Siep 2017. *The Invention of Humanity. Equality and Cultural Difference in World History*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Thornton, Thomas F. 1997. Anthropological Studies of Native American Place Naming, *American Indian Quarterly* 21 (2): 209–228. https://doi.org/10.2307/1185645.

Vahtola, Jouko 1999. Petsamo Suomen tieteen tutkimuskohteena. In Jouko Vahtola (ed.), *Turjanmeren maa. Petsamon historia 1920–1944*, ed. Jouko Vahtola. Rovaniemi: Petsamo-seura, 1999.

Vermeulen, Han F. 2015. *Before Boas: The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Art Leete

NARRATIVES OF INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE IN NORTHWESTERN SIBERIA IN THE 1930S[1]

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses official and Indigenous views of the Khanty and Forest Nenets uprising against the Soviets, known as the Kazym War (1931–1934). The rebellion is well documented in archival sources and covered by scholarly research, popular essays, and novels. Almost a century after the uprising, Indigenous narratives about the uprising are still circulating in local communities. Specifically, this paper addresses selected episodes of the Kazym War reflected both in official and Indigenous narratives. I focus on the analysis of diverse modes of narrating hybrid knowledge produced in a contact zone, and the mythic imagination of shamans shaping narratives about the uprising. Here, I argue that perceptions of Indigenous history sometimes adopt and reproduce the dominant discourse about the uprising, but link to the official story predominantly by rejecting it and establishing autonomous discussions.

Keywords: Khanty, Forest Nenets, Indigenous, uprising, narratives, shaman

In this article, I explore reflections on a major Indigenous uprising in the 1930s in northwestern Siberia, known amongst the Indigenous communities as the Kazym War. I intend to discuss official and Indigenous narratives that evolved from different sources. In doing so, I concentrate on various episodes in this revolt from the Khanty and Forest Nenets people.[2]

Colonisation was the most general and continuous process which began during the Tsarist period shaping the situation in northwestern Siberia along with the continually increasing number of settlers (Iadrintsev 1892: 190–242; Golovnev 1997: 157; Patkanov 1999: 193–240; Sablin and Savel′eva 2011; Khariuchi 2018: 22). The attitude of the Indigenous groups and their leaders towards the Russian/Soviet colonial regime was not well-documented. Thus, we lack sufficient evidence regarding the Indigenous perspective. But, this is typical when considering colonial encounters on a global scale as well.

Indigenous peoples' perceptions of their history are not normally reflected in official documents or in history books. Raymond Fogelson noted that Indigenous people's feelings of the past may appear peculiar for 'literately conditioned perspectives' (Fogelson 1989: 134). The interpretation of any episode from the past depends upon the 'values, meanings, symbolism, worldviews, social structural principles, and

other variables'. If traumatic experiences are forgotten or denied, they become unreal (ibid.: 141–143). Sergei Kan (2019: 171) also allows for the possibility of highly exaggerated events appearing nonexistent.

For Indigenous people, the Kazym uprising was a huge episode in their history, but for the Soviets it was more like a nonevent. During my first fieldwork trip in 1991, the Khanty themselves began talking about 'the Khanty War against the Russians'. I was surprised by the disposition of my field partners to tell stories about the Kazym War at their own initiative. Young people were also aware of the topic. It might have just been by chance that I happened to meet such people, although I felt strongly that everybody knew something about the uprising.

However, according to official accounts, this event should not be considered a war or even an uprising. For example, in the annual report of Berezovo raion's executive committee for 1934, the event was simply described as an 'especially sharp sedition of kulaks and shamans' (GAKhMAO, f. 111, l. 1, f. 9: 9). The official discourse reflects the colonial clash of the early Soviet period rather clearly. Soviet documents and articles by academic and popular authors described the extensive damage done to the Soviet regime by elders, shamans, and the rest of the Indigenous population (see, for example, GAKhMAO, Astrakhantseva 1934; GMPiCh, Loskutov f. 1–9; Pastukhov 1937: 51; Vol′skii 1937: 67–73; Budarin 1968; Fates of the peoples 1994). At the same time, the Soviet suppression of Indigenous people following uprisings was generally ignored (Golovnev 1995: 165; Shishkin 2000: 7–8; Sundström 2007: 209). Officials aimed to record all misconduct by Indigenous leaders, shamans, and common people. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine the point where accounts of real offences shifted toward fabrication. During the 1930s, Soviet propaganda introduced the image of the shaman as a religious class enemy. Over time, people absorbed the guidelines from the discourse. This approach also shaped Indigenous people's modes of reflection, such that at times they remember shamanism based on Soviet rules of understanding it. Thus, Indigenous oral accounts have become more hybrid models over time.

The concept of hybridity involves new cultural experiences that occur through the process of cultural exchange (Ashcroft et al. 2007: 108), particularly in the colonial context. Hybridity employs 'the indeterminate temporality of in-between, that needs to be engaged in creating the conditions through which "newness comes into the world"' (Bhabha 1994: 227–228), engaging confrontation and adjustment (ibid.: 33). Mikhail Bakhtin (1981: 358) explains hybridity as a simultaneously limited and fragmented mode of sensitivity and communication, a meeting of socially diverse genres of perception. The hybridisation of recollections can be spontaneous, but also politically driven, intending to unsettle Indigenous communities. Hybrid memories connect encounter, disruption, and controversy. Colonial control may be overturned or contested, but Indigenous debates may still reiterate colonial discourse from the past. Hybridity, then, acts through a long-term colonial process and quiet subjugation of local traditions (Bhabha 1994: 154–156; Young 1995: 21–24; Ashcroft et al. 2007: 110).

I intend to explore how knowledge is produced in a contact zone, which Mary Louise Pratt (1991: 34; 2003 [1992]: 6–7) conceptualises as colonial spaces where historically and geographically unconnected peoples settle ongoing interactions that often involve highly asymmetrical relations of power and conflict

over time. Departing from Pratt's concept, James Clifford (1997: 192–194) treats a contact zone as 'a power charged set of exchanges' inspired by a continuing colonial relationship. Indigenous narratives, motivated by this contact, depict people's fate by connecting their stories to institutional (as well as academic) representations (Pratt 1991: 35). This intangible dialogue (sometimes explicit, but mainly imagined) penetrates my analysis and serves as the key point of departure for discussion.

Oral history communicates the meaning of events, but it also implies an objective interest by revealing 'unknown events or unknown aspects of known events' and illuminates unknown specifics of life (Portelli 1981: 99). Marshall Sahlins (1987: vii) maintains that history is distinctive in different societies, but always appears meaningful. Furthermore, Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat (2017: 372–376) also argue that, in reconstructive cross-analysis, oral evidence serves as a basis for understanding 'patterns of behaviour or events in the past' as well as details of a social context and 'knowledge, relationships, values, conflicts, and special language, gathered through reflective accounts of practical lived experience'. Amongst others, oral history reflects facts, but those need to be measured comparatively against information from other sources. An analysis of such facts must remain simpler and should aim to recognise only 'strong correlation patterns' without further claims of objective and ultimate truth regarding events.[3]

Although oral history expresses truth from people's perspectives, it is more complicated to comprehend for a researcher. To unpack these narratives, we need 'a cluster of perspectives' and must attempt to detect social 'images and attitudes' that shape the stories (Thompson and Bornat 2017: 365–366). A scholar, therefore, must consider modes of narrating, manifested topics, and concealed meanings. Thus, narrative analysis assumes a sympathetic listening by an ethnographer (ibid.: 372).

In the current study, I aim to analyse information about the Kazym uprising attained from various sources, including official documents, literature, and oral history accounts. My analysis relies primarily on field data, collected mainly during the 1990s and later. The entire topic of Indigenous resistance in the early Soviet period appeared to me during fieldwork. My Khanty, Forest Nenets, and Mansi field partners mostly began talking about the Kazym events at their own initiative. Most of these conversations were spontaneous and unstructured. I never wrote down questions for a focussed inquiry of this topic. I specifically prepared only for the most recent interview conducted online in winter 2022. Moreover, I relied on archival materials available in the 1990s and a heterogeneous body of literature on this theme.

I chose four topics related to the Kazym War and reflected in both official and Indigenous discourses. The availability of alternative evidence allows for a comparative interpretation of these cases. In my analysis, I put these competing sources (Indigenous/vernacular and official/authoritative) into conditional and sometimes also explicit negotiation with one another. I attempt to reach a flexible interpretation of the official historical sources and evidence from Indigenous recollections of these Kazym War episodes. In doing so, I attempt to demonstrate how differences in understanding have been maintained or enhanced, but also in what way a cognitive distance between these discourses is sometimes diminished.

THE COURSE OF THE KAZYM WAR

In the 1930s, Soviet authorities entered the northern Indigenous communities' lives to an unprecedented degree. The intensity of the colonial encounter was shocking for the Khanty and Forest Nenets. The Soviets chose the Kazym River region as an arena for particularly intensive reforms. Tensions in the area began to rise after a cultural base[4] was established in the village of Kazym in 1930. The first violent public act of Indigenous resistance occurred when children gathered at the Kazym school in the autumn of 1931. Parents, upset by the authorities' cruel measures (children were taken to school by force and using threats of violence), invaded the cultural base and returned their children to winter camps in the forest tundra.

Following that first act of resistance, pressure increased as the collectivisation campaign was launched and the repression of shamans began. Active confrontation resumed in 1933, when administration-initiated fishing on Num To Lake began. Since the lake is one of the most sacred bodies of water for the Khanty and Forest Nenets (Leete 2017: 25–27), they obstructed the initiative. Several groups of Soviet administrators and enlighteners ('agit-brigades') were sent to Num To to negotiate with Indigenous leaders. In December 1933, the most prominent group, led by Berezovo raion executive committee head Piotr Astrakhantsev, arrived in Num To. Another member of the group, female communist party officer Polina Shnaider, visited a sacred island in the middle of the lake. Given that it was strictly prohibited for women to step onto that island, the Indigenous people became extremely upset, captured the group of Soviet 'agitators', and killed them through a sacrificial ceremony.

The Soviet side reacted to this act of resistance severely, sending military troops to the forest and tundra to punish the Indigenous people. The uprising was quickly suppressed, tens of Indigenous people were arrested, and many were left in taiga camps to die, whilst their hunting and fishing gear, food supplies and reindeer were confiscated. For more details of the Kazym War, see Golovnev 1995: 165–178; Balzer 1999: 110–117; Ernykhova 2003; Leete 2004.

In what follows, I present an analysis of selected topics that enable a better understanding of the relationship between Indigenous and institutional understandings of the uprising. Each case presented illuminates the different configurations of contesting perspectives on the revolt. These topics also demonstrate important aspects of the conflict, each one in its own way.

SCHOOLTEACHER IN A FOREST CAMP

In 1933, tension between the authorities and Indigenous people escalated because of the fishing *artel'* sent to Num To Lake. Several agit-brigades arrived in the area to solve the ensuing problem. A Russian teacher from the Kazym boarding school, Arkadii Loskutov, was directed to negotiate with Indigenous rebels twice as a member of the second and fourth agit-brigades. During his first trip (from early June to early August 1933), the group met no Indigenous people in the forest tundra (GMPiCh, Loskutov f. 1: 18–20; GAKhMAO, Astrakhantseva 1934: l 7; Fates of the Peoples 1994: 212). But, during the second journey, Loskutov made contact with several Khanty families and spent some time in one Khanty forest camp. Later, Loskutov described his experience in his memoirs (written in the 1960s).

Loskutov mentions this trip in several manuscripts he prepared for the Khanty-Mansiisk museum. Loskutov and Konstantin Filipov (from *Uralpushnina*[5] *Faktoriia*) left the Kazym base on the 10th (or 14th) of October 1933. According to Loskutov's memoirs, they passed the village of Iuil′sk and learned from nomads that, in the tundra, 'people are preparing for a counter-revolutionary uprising'. Loskutov and Filipov returned to Kazym base by the 6th or 16th of November (GMPiCh, Loskutov f. 1: 22–23, f. 5: 2–3, f. 7: 14).

In another manuscript, Loskutov describes his journey in more detail. Loskutov and Filipov spent the first night in a Khanty forest camp, 40 km from the Kazym cultural base. The master of the family regretted that the Russians had started a dangerous trip, since 'the kulaks and shamans may kill them'. The same concerns were expressed in the next Khanty forest camp where the travellers were hosted during the next evening (GMPiCh, Loskutov f. 3; 3). But, Loskutov and Filipov were not scared by these warnings and decided to move on. Loskutov stressed that danger was growing all the time:

> But we continued our road. In Ilbikurt, we met TI[6], who was astonished and said that we are going to the flames of Hell. After that, we travelled further without a local guide. Sites were familiar to us; we had been there several times. (GMPiCh, Loskutov f. 3: 3–4)

Loskutov and Filipov spent the fourth night in the forest and, by the end of the fifth day, arrived at the camp of MP and MT. Only an elderly woman and her daughter-in-law were present. The old lady said, 'Our men are not at home. You cannot stay overnight here.' Yet, she allowed them to warm up and dry their clothes. Loskutov and Filipov received some food and were eventually allowed to stay overnight. At four o'clock in the morning, some people arrived on a reindeer sledge. They entered the hut, whispered with the ladies, and soon departed. The Russians pretended to be sleeping. The next morning, Loskutov and Filipov left and, reached the camp thirty to forty kilometres later, finding no one there. The Russians spent another night in the forest and arrived at Num To. They stayed there for two days, but met no Khanty or Forest Nenets people. Loskutov claims that they were in mortal danger, and the Khanty did not kill them only because they were considered 'small chiefs' (GMPiCh, Loskutov f. 3: 4–9).

Indigenous evidence regarding the same episode is also detailed, but provides a different story. I met a Khanty man in the 1990s who claimed that this episode was related to his family. He had also seen Loskutov's manuscripts in the museum's archives and, thus, had a comparative perspective for this incident. According to the Khanty family story, Loskutov appears less heroic than he did in his memoirs:

> My mother lives in Iuil′sk. She told me that her grandmother hid Loskutov from her sons. Her granny said that he is a good, peaceful man, teaches our children. But, Loskutov realised that the war had begun and he hid himself. You don't need to kill such a man. And grandmother provided him shelter. She fed Loskutov in secret. He lived there for a full month. After that, he was sent to Kazym. Loskutov's archive is here in Khanty-Mansiisk. He writes that he was starving. He didn't starve at all! He received normal food! He makes himself out as a hero. (M, Khanty, FM 1996, Khanty-Mansiisk)

This story continued with specific comments on details of Loskutov's description of his stay at

the forest camp with his family. A comparison with this Khanty family lore does not favour Loskutov. The Khanty man further stated:

> Loskutov stayed in Iuil′sk. Later, he moved away from Iuil′sk and in the forest camp he learned that it was dangerous to proceed further. He stayed at my great grandmother's place. My aunt recounted how they fed that man. She still feels pity for Loskutov because our men almost killed him. Grandmother's older brother arrived and saw that some strange footwear (*kisy*)[7] was drying. Doesn't he know who wears what kind of *kisy* at his sister's place? But these were rather strange. Something was not right. He started to scream at his sister, but she did not say anything. So, he left. But, he said, 'If I notice something, I'll kill him for sure!' After that, other people arrived and searched. Granny's brother told them that they must be cautious there. My aunt said that men arrived and searched everywhere. Only after that did they unload their carbines. […] Apparently, the women fed that Communist. This is exactly that incomprehensible woman's heart. Their fathers were killed, but they fed that Loskutov. They simply felt pity. (M, Khanty, FM 1996, Khanty-Mansiisk)

At the time of the uprising, Loskutov was a schoolteacher in a remote village. But, when he wrote his memoirs, he was already a regional celebrity and director of the Khanty-Mansiisk Local History Museum (today, the Museum of Natural History and Man). Thus, he had the authority to shape knowledge about the Kazym uprising and, therefore, felt he could not look like a coward or a marginal figure. Khanty ethnographer Ol′ga Ernykhova (2010: 105–106) points out that all documents about the first two Kazym school principals in the regional archives and the archives of the Khanty-Mansiisk museum have been destroyed. For a long time, Loskutov was considered the first head of the school. Being a museum director, he took the opportunity to rewrite history a bit, making 'himself out to be the hero', using the interpretation of our Khanty friend.

This piece of Indigenous history is not a pure example of Indigenous remembering. It has two sources—family lore and Loskutov's memoirs. My Khanty friend clearly prefers the story he heard from his mother and aunt, and criticises Loskutov for his arrogance. We cannot prove either narrative, but certainly the role of Loskutov remains ambivalent within this entire story. Furthermore, we can see how even a small incident is interpreted in conflicting ways from the institutional and Indigenous perspectives.

INDIGENOUS BRUTALITY

Various narratives from the Kazym uprising include descriptions of cruel behaviour by the Khanty and Forest Nenets. Regarding this dimension of the uprising, the archival sources and oral narratives concentrate on a key incident during the uprising: the execution of a group of Soviet officials by the Indigenous rebels. The interpretation of possible acts of Indigenous violence remains ambiguous when relying upon different sources.

During the uprising, the Khanty and Forest Nenets detained a group of Soviet officials, led by the administrative head of Berëzovo raion, Piotr Astrakhantsev. Next, the Indigenous protestors, led by chief shaman Efim Vandymov, arranged a shamanic séance, after which the shamans claimed that the gods required the sacrifice of the captured Russians.[8] The hostages were strangled using reindeer lassos (GAKhMAO, Astrakhantseva 1934: 12–13;

GMPICh, Loskutov f. 1: 24; Loskutov f. 9: 8; Budarin 1968: 226; Golovnev 1995: 175–176; Balzer 1999: 114; Ernykhova 2003: 74–77; Wiget and Balalaeva 2011: 25).

The official discourse adds a description of further savage brutality to this episode. According to archived descriptions of Astrakhantsev's widow, after killing the members of the group, the breasts of Polina Shnaider were cut off and the victims were scalped (GAKhMAO, Astrakhantseva 1934: 13). Although other documents do not confirm this description, this story of Indigenous cruelty has appeared in multiple sources. For example, during one of my field interviews, this description was echoed by one Indigenous respondent:

> But, they were cruel to the doctor. She was a good doctor, a young Russian lady. They tied her to a reindeer sledge and dragged her, so that afterwards it was impossible to recognise her—no eyes, no nose, nothing, no breasts. They dragged her naked; it was cruel from their side. (F, Mansi, FM 1991, Khanty-Mansiisk)

The old lady seemed convinced that this torture or desecration of a female body genuinely took place (although she replaces Shnaider with a female doctor in her story). This indicates that the official narrative was adopted into Indigenous discourse to some degree (see also Perevalova 2016: 137). I also recorded another Indigenous report of this episode. This time, the narrator confirmed that all victims of human sacrifice were dragged across a crust of snow:

> This place is called Khimti Lor. It lies to the east of Num To, where they were killed. In the tundra, you always have a crust of snow because of the strong wind. They were tied to a reindeer sledge and the reindeer were set free running. (M, Khanty, FM 1996, Khanty-Mansiisk)

But, stories circulated by officials about Indigenous cruelty could be also rejected by an Indigenous audience. Another Indigenous field partner reported that the Russians, whilst drowning the Khanty in ice holes, '…justified their action by revenge, since the Khanty did the same to the Russians. But this was a fabrication' (M, Khanty, FM 1994, Salekhard, see more details in the next section).

According to another piece of Indigenous oral heritage, documented by medical attendant L. Strus′ in 1969 in the village of Num To, the Khanty and Forest Nenets threw members of the fishing unit, sent to the Num To lake to catch fish, into the water, saying, 'You wanted to fish, now you can catch them!' Subsequently, the fishermen were supposedly locked in a house and left to starve to death (Strus′ 2003: 35). Although this piece of oral history reflects Indigenous black humour, it also indicates that the plot of throwing opponents into the water is present in Indigenous oral narratives of different kinds.

Indigenous ferocity also appeared in official documents in connection with another Indigenous revolt in the region, the *Mandalada*[9] of the Yamal Nenets. According to a report by the Yamal Nenets region's party committee, members of the Tambei and Shchucherechye Soviets were undressed, dragged across the snow, and beaten up by Indigenous rebels in 1934 (Fates of the Peoples 1994: 240–241; Golovnev 1995: 185). Indigenous cruelty became a typical motif in Soviet documents. For example, the annual account of the Berëzovo raion from 1934 includes a note about a shaman beating up a Soviet activist (GAKhMAO, f. 111, l. 1, f. 9: 9).

Scholars have discussed the possibility of the torturing and brutal killing of an enemy by Indigenous people during the Kazym uprising using historical and ethnographic evidence. It is possible to deduce from the folklore and oral history that an antagonist must be killed in an especially painful way. Andrei Golovnev exploits the idea that the Indigenous rebels of the 1930s and 1940s took inspiration from their war heritage, and claims that during these uprisings the protestors applied the cruel war traditions of earlier centuries, which involved scalping and human sacrifice[10] (Golovnev 1995: 178, 194; 1997: 154; 2000: 146–147).

The evidence regarding additional cruelty (scalping, cutting breasts, and drowning), reflected in both official and Indigenous sources, provides ambivalent speculation. Official documents, including the summary of charges, do not confirm this brutality (Golovnev 1995: 176; Ernykhova 2003: 77). In the scholarly literature, however, this possibility is overemphasised. For example, Elena Perevalova (2016: 133) hints that scalping is 'probable'. If cutting breasts and scalping took place, officials would make sure that this could be found in more archival documents than in just one account written down by a non-eyewitness.

The act of human sacrifice is acknowledged in both Indigenous and academic sources, although attitudes toward this episode differ significantly. For Soviets, it demonstrated most vividly the Khanty's and Forest Nenets' savageness. Indigenous views predominantly refrain from assessing this episode. Although the most common Indigenous activity during the Kazym War involved avoiding contact with Soviet authorities, the Khanty and Forest Nenets could also be harsh in their actions. Violence renders the contact rigorous and results in intertwined discourses. Possibly, the human sacrifice ritual was, at least partly, an attempt to imitate the cruelty of authorities, although the narratives of official ferocity clearly prevail over these stories of Indigenous brutality.

INDIGENOUS CASUALTIES

Whilst officials were careful to document the tragic fate of victims from Indigenous actions, the number of Indigenous casualties and the way in which they died remained vague. Yet, Indigenous authors and field partners provided sufficient insights into those fates. A comparative analysis of various sources provides an opportunity to estimate the number of Indigenous victims of the Kazym War as well as how they died.

According to official data, ten Indigenous individuals lost their lives during the active phase of the uprising. Official sources also confirm that 88 Indigenous men were arrested at the end of the revolt, amongst whom 34 were later released because of a lack of evidence against them or due to an insignificant involvement in the rebellion (GAKhMAO, Astrakhantseva 1934, 1978; Golovnev 1995: 177; Balzer 1999: 115; Ernykhova 2003: 82; Ernykhova, Sivkova 2008: 5; Perevalova 2016: 133). The court in Ostiako-Vogul'sk sentenced 11 of the arrested men to death, whilst the others received prison sentences of varying lengths. Later, the death penalty was overruled, and replaced with a 20-year prison sentence. Nine persons were found not guilty by the court (GAKhMAO, Astrakhantseva 1934: 13).

Official evidence validates the claim that nobody was killed by the Red Army or security forces nor executed resulting from court decisions following the uprising. According to this view, the ten individuals who lost their lives in battle remained the only Indigenous

causalities who died because of the revolt. But, the Indigenous perspective offers a completely different view of casualties.

The dominant opinion amongst Indigenous field partners remains that all participants in the Kazym War were killed or arrested, and vanished forever. Several individuals with whom I discussed the topic expressed this outlook (FM 1991–2000). The same view was articulated in the documentary film 'People from the Other Times' (1989) by a Khanty elder interviewed and shared by scholars sympathetic to the Indigenous victims of the uprising, as we can see from a short note by Nadezhda Lukina (1993: 62).

Indigenous sources also indicate that not everybody died soon after arrest. Some were even released, although this did not necessarily lead to a happy ending. Those individuals became outcasts, whose destinies could still be rather dreadful:

> When they were brought here [Khanty-Mansiisk] to court, I saw them myself. Perhaps they were not so guilty. Perhaps they were not even shamans. In spring, they were released. They had no money. […] Once I went to take water from that watershed. And he stepped into the yard for some reason. Perhaps he needed food, perhaps he wanted to ask something. And suddenly he collapsed. He was taken somewhere by horse carriage but where… I never asked. I know them in this way. (F, Mansi, FM 1991, Khanty-Mansiisk)

Eremei Aipin confirmed the possibility that those released did not make it out of Khanty-Mansiisk. According to Aipin's novel (2002: 255–256), individuals freed from prison died before spring 1934 since they lacked food supplies, shelter, and could not leave town without transport. Alternatively, they may have been killed by unknown persons.

Furthermore, Indigenous people sometimes claim that some participants in the uprising survived arrest and a prison sentence. Some may have even lived a long life afterwards. I documented one story of a Khanty man who was released following his arrest because of a lucky coincidence:

> The Khanty here tell this story, and my father told it as well. An old Khanty man lived on the Tromiugan River. He also participated in that [uprising]. There was an arrangement that if any Khanty or Nenets arrived by chance, they would hold him there by force. […] That old man was also there. He arrived there by chance and that was it—they captured him. But in one day they started to transport some Russian captives somewhere to kill them. […] One was put on his sled. There was a snowstorm. He escaped somehow and stopped in some place. He told the Russian that he had fled. And the Russian said that if you escaped, then you rescued me as well. Later, everybody who had been there was arrested. That old man, who was still young at that time, was also arrested. […] One Russian approached him and smiled. 'Do you recognise me?' 'No,' said the Khanty. 'Do you remember how you transported me on a reindeer sled?' And, so the Russian rescued him from that prison. He was still alive until recently. (M, Khanty, FM 1995, Ai Pim River)

The storyteller belongs to a Khanty clan that lives far from the region of the uprising in a region not connected to the uprising. But, there is nothing impossible in this story (tensions in the Indigenous camp during

the Kazym War were also reported by other informants). This story describes the possibility that some participants in the uprising avoided punishment. There is more oral history evidence about participants in the uprising who survived immediate punishment or even a prison sentence (see GMPiCh, Aksarina, 8–9; Voldina 2003: 7–8; Moldanov 2003: 8–9). For instance, Khanty scholar Maina Lapina (2003: 30) claims that some participants in the uprising were still alive in the 1990s.

However, the uprising also resulted in many officially undocumented Indigenous casualties. Because this topic remains neglected in archival documents, Indigenous storytelling represents the only way of preserving some of the knowledge regarding it. One motif here relates to drowning people in ice holes:

> Once an old man suddenly told me this story. One summer after the Kazym War, soldiers arrived on boats. The uprising was suppressed, but the military could not do anything because the Khanty had moved upstream during the fishing season. When the new winter began, they began pushing the Khanty into ice holes along the Kazym River. During the spring when the snow melted, those winter corpses floated for days and did not disappear, but remained visible next to Polnovat Village where an island divides the Ob River into two streams and a huge whirlpool appears. For some of those corpses, only a layer of meat floated on the surface of the water. The Khanty were forced to pull these bodies to shore. (M, Khanty, FM 1994, Salekhard)

The theme of drowning Indigenous rebels also appears in other sources based on oral narratives (Ogryzko 1996: 14; Perevalova 2016: 139). However, drowning innocent people was not the only form of punishment. Khanty writer Eremei Aipin touches upon these incidents of the post-revolt killing of Indigenous inhabitants in his short stories 'The Divine Message' and 'The Russian Doctor' (1995) as well as in the novel *Godmother in Bloody Snow* (2002). According to these fictional stories, Red Army troops killed many Indigenous people, some with rifles and canons, others using grenades and bombs, some left to freeze to death, and others battered to death with clubs made of larch.[11] Before punishment, no investigation was conducted. Whoever the Reds succeeded in catching was supposed to receive a penalty. In addition, all actual participants in the uprising were certainly killed (Aipin 1995: 118–119, 134–135, 161; 2002: 7, 123–128). Aipin also describes massacres of Indigenous people (in conical tents, everybody was shot[12]) (2002: 165–169, see also Strus′ 2003: 35).

Supposedly, oral history narratives serve as one source of these descriptions. It seems improbable that Aipin exaggerated the cruelty of authorities, even through a fictional account. He must have had some basis for these descriptions, with no official documents providing such information.

Oral history also involves stories of bombing the Khanty people from planes (FM 1996, 2000; Strus′ 2003: 35; Ernykhova 2003: 82). Aipin used this same motif (2002: 6, 67–68, 171–188, 224), although no proof of this appears in official documents. This is unsurprising since there are no documents left that describe any violent actions by security forces (Ernykhova and Sivkova 2008: 5). We only have oral history accounts, which are unverifiable against official data. We have several descriptions of the use of excessive violence by security forces, much of which quite possibly occurred.

To estimate the potential overall number of Indigenous casualties, we need to consider

the available documented deaths, the statistical evidence of the period, the relevant literature, the settlement pattern of the Khanty and Forest Nenets as well as the oral history of Indigenous peoples. An integrated analysis of these data enables us to provide an approximate number of people who died during the uprising and soon afterwards, or who vanished in prison camps.

Perevalova (2016: 133) claims that according to official records 450 Indigenous people joined the Kazym uprising. Other sources (Kopylov and Retunskii 1965: 169; Timofeev 1995: 32) and oral history data (M, b. 1951, Khanty, FM 1995, Ai Pim River) estimate that 200 to 300 Khanty and Forest Nenets people participated in the uprising. This difference in estimates indicates that it could be difficult to distinguish participants from the rest of the Indigenous population.

Indigenous eyewitnesses confirm that 20 to 30 people, including women and children, were killed by Russian troops during the final phase of the uprising (Ernykhova and Lazareva 2003: 33; Ernykhova and Sivkova 2008: 5). As mentioned before, official documents report only ten Indigenous deaths during the Kazym War. This difference in numbers of immediate casualties stems from different means of counting. Since official data do not reflect the violent actions of security forces in the forest and tundra after Indigenous resistance ceased, there is no documented proof of executions that took place on the spot. At the other extreme, Gennadii Bardin (1994: 6) asserts that 400 people died because of the Kazym War.

This number seems adequate if we also count other deaths resulting from the actions of the Soviets. For instance, the family members of individuals arrested met rather severe hardships in the forest and tundra, with many dying of hunger. From these families, the punishing troops expropriated hunting and fishing equipment, reindeer, dogs, skis, winter clothing, reindeer hides, rifles, and knives. Conical tents were sometimes burnt down, sledges destroyed, and Indigenous women raped (Moldanova 1995; Aipin 2002: 23–25, 35; Ernykhova and Sivkova 2008: 5). In these conditions, without a master of the forest camp and lacking the means for subsistence, surviving became impossible for many. Ignoring casualties amongst the family members of Indigenous rebels was a typical approach in the writing of Soviet history, with the distortion of evidence within documents widespread (Shishkin 2000: 8–11).

Before the uprising, 1630 people lived in the Kazym area, 1532 of whom represented the Khanty and Forest Nenets (BKM, Summary of Charges 1934). Considering the available official data and oral history evidence, it seems reasonable to propose that 200 to 300 Indigenous people died due to the Kazym War. What we can say is that the death rate in the Kazym area was rather high in 1934 and 1935.

Descriptions of the methods used to suppress the uprising and estimate the Indigenous casualties differ drastically comparing official sources with oral history narratives. Archival documents ignore the topic almost completely, leaving the impression that there were very few Indigenous casualties. Indigenous historical accounts reflect a more adequate number of victims albeit rather vaguely and fragmentary.

There are also other data to consider when discussing the style of Soviet repression. Perevalova (2016: 133–136) provides evidence that, after the Kazym uprising (the real revolt) between 1935 and 1938, NKVD[13] fabricated several huge Indigenous uprisings in a neighbouring region on the Sosva, Liapin, Voikar and Synia Rivers amongst the Mansi and Khanty peoples. At least 200 Indigenous men were arrested, most of whom were executed,

although these people were not engaged in actual anti-Soviet uprisings or movements. In addition to this, these fabricated revolts were supposedly led by shaman chiefs, similar to the Kazym War.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SHAMAN CHIEF?

In the Indigenous oral history tradition, the fate of the shaman who lead the Kazym uprising remains a key topic of discussion. The shamanic component is also prominent in official documents and scholarly approaches to the Kazym revolt. The abundance of data and popularity of the theme enables comparative analysis. On this topic, the most common features of institutional and vernacular history are clearly distinguished.

The Indigenous oral history often connected shamans and war parties long before the twentieth century. In folk narratives, the Nenets and Ob-Ugrian shamans appear as ideological advisors to war leaders. Shamans called clan members to war gatherings and conducted collective sacrificial ceremonies (Khomich 1981: 34; Patkanov 1999: 72, 97). During interclan warfare, the Nenets and Ob-Ugrian military chiefs also had shamanic skills (Patkanov 1999: 77–78; Golovnev 1997: 150, 154, 163; Golovnev and Perevalova 2017: 118–120). For example, Bakhrushin (1935: 46, 57) presents evidence that Khanty military chiefs simultaneously acted as religious leaders during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Wawlyo Nenyang led the prominent Nenets resistance movement during the period from the 1820s through the 1840s. Historical ethnographic evidence indicates that people believed that he possessed shamanic skills, including the ability to avoid arrest and escape imprisonment using miraculous talents. Some of Wawlyo's fellows and followers also used shamanic talents to escape capture. Real-life facts (Wawlyo Nenyang escaped his first imprisonment) supported these stories to a certain extent (Felinska 1854: 302–305, 309–310; Golovnev 1995: 156–163; Khariuchi 2018: 3, 27–28, 34, 37, 42–43, 62–65, 77, 80, 115).

In the Nenets mythology, heroes fly in the sky and bring themselves back to life. 'In folktales and personal recollections, the appearance of real historical leaders sometimes has miraculous attributes' (Golovnev 1997: 155). At the same time, the Ob-Ugrian shamans did not belong to the upper class; they were not chiefs (Ernykhova 2003: 14). Therefore, during the Kazym War, the Khanty had perhaps two leaders: Ivan Ernykhov, who was not a shaman, and Efim Vandymov, who was. Vandymov became a war chief only during the final stage of active resistance when war rituals became more frequent and the rebels more often turned to their gods for advice (Golovnev 1995: 172–174; Balzer 1999: 113–114; Ernykhova 2003: 71–74; Leete 2005: 238).

During the early decades of the Soviet period, the West Siberian shamans often acted against the new regime (Khomich 1981: 35–36, Golovnev 2000: 146–147). In the case of the Kazym War, different sources (academic, Indigenous as well as official) confirm that some leaders of the uprising were shamans. According to a file on the accused, 29 of the men arrested (out of 51 who made it to court) were shamans (Golovnev 1995: 177; 2000: 146–7; Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 92–3; Balzer 1999: 115–116; Ernykhova 2003: 144–156).

Official documents confirm and scholars agree that the Khanty shaman Efim Vandymov was elected at the end of 1933 as the war chief for all of the Khanty and Forest Nenets participating in the Kazym War (Golovnev 1995: 173; Ernykhova 1997: 6; 2003: 54, 72;

Aipin 2002: 61). Vandymov's career as a war leader ended before 20 February 1934, when he was caught by security forces (GAKhMAO, f. 111, l. 1, f. 9: 9; Astrakhantseva 1934: 11–12).

From the official documents it is quite clear what happened to Vandymov. Several other shamans who arranged sacrificial rituals during the uprising were also caught. But, Indigenous oral accounts treat Vandymov's fate differently. During interviews, several Khanty field partners claimed that the shaman escaped punishment or, at least, postponed his destiny.

Some of these stories are relatively realistic. Although the fugitive was a shaman, he did not use any extraordinary spiritual skills to avoid or confront the military who came after him. One such story was told by a young Khanty man as evidence of Indigenous bravery and savvy, as well as the Russians' fear of the extraordinary skills of a shaman:

> Shamans were caught after the uprising. But when they tracked the leader, a shaman, they could not catch him by any means. Finally, they encircled him in a conical tent, a *chum*. They started to shoot the *chum* using machine guns and, at human height, the *chum* looked like a strainer. But, the shaman continued to shoot back. The Russians were worried that it was impossible to kill him. But then one random shot hit the *chum* higher, and the shaman stopped shooting. He had climbed to the drying poles and lay there, firing back. (M, Khanty, FM 1991, Pim River)

Other documented narratives include notions of some mystical element related to the escape of a shaman. The next example, provided by a middle-aged man, presents him as a great warrior who could also perform a ritual with a dog during his eventual retreat:

> During the Khanty War a lot of Russians arrived. A kind of Khanty shaman or some wise man was there. He started to kill them. He killed, killed, and killed them all. Dropped all of them. He escaped and then saw a dog running. He killed the dog, placed its head somehow, and vanished. (M, Khanty, FM 1991, Ai Pim River)

In the following dialogue between two Khanty elders, one mentions the warrior skills of the shaman, but the older Khanty respondent stresses his magical survival and disappearance. Although the discussion appears a little obscure, the emphasis on shamanic powers is still rather evident here:

> M1: The most important one who was killed, he fought for a long time.
> M2: They tried to catch the most important one, but they managed very narrowly. They thought that he will not die at all. He was a shaman. They went after him, but he disappeared. He cannot be sighted, as if he is a god. He goes holding arrows.[14] He was a shaman, shaman. (FM 1991, Ai Pim River)

I recorded one more story in which the runaway shaman was called Uncle Kolia. He was highly skilled at hiding himself, enjoyed support from the community, and was attributed with some superpowers:

> Some legends circulate about one man, Uncle Kolia, who participated in that war. It has been told that he was not a private soldier, but somebody superior. After that war, he came here to the Salekhard region. He carried a revolver, such a huge revolver. He was chased. He had several small houses in different locations, in every village. He

> lived here and there. Once he was caught. Somebody was supposed to hide him but got scared and gave him away. Uncle Kolia slept under a mosquito net. When he was found, he ran with the net and in full clothes to the river, dived in, and did not emerge from the water. He was a good swimmer and managed to escape. People say that when he approached, there were signs in the heavens and air and clouds and everywhere before him that signalled his coming. (M, Khanty, FM 1994, Salekhard)

In real life, the shaman Kolka Nettin was actually connected to the Indigenous resistance. He escaped Sverdlovsk prison, spent some time during 1931 near the village of Polnovat around the lower banks of the Kazym River, and was engaged in 'counter-revolutionary agitation'.

Detective I. Urevich, investigating this shaman's possible involvement in the Kazym revolt in 1932, could not confirm his participation (Ernykhova 2003: 108). This evidence proves that memories about a shaman who escaped prison and acted in the area survived decades with adequate details. In another story, the chief shaman, who managed to escape the Reds, was also called White Head Elder.

> The elders said that White Head organised the uprising. The Khanty called him the White Head, *Yänk ov iki*. […] That chief, the White Head, was never captured. It was said that he was a great shaman. Nobody knows what happened to him. He disappeared after that for good. They did not capture him. People say that above his head a pack of geese flies. To demonstrate his skills, if somebody asks, he screams and the wing of one goose breaks. (M, Khanty, FM 1995, Ai Pim River)

Andrew Wiget and Olga Balalaeva (2011: 26) documented another story that they recorded on the Tromiugan River about the escape of White Head who outsmarted his guards. Stories collected from the Pim and Tromiugan Rivers as well as the Salekhard region demonstrate that folk narratives about the Kazym War circulated widely amongst the Indigenous population. But these areas were also destinations for people escaping the Kazym River when the punishment troops arrived after the uprising (GMPiCh, Loskutov 1: 31; Budarin 1968: 226; Fates of the peoples 1994: 227). Therefore, it is not completely peculiar that people in these regions know something about these events and that the related folklore tropes circulate over a broad territory.

The context of distribution of the fugitive shaman's motif includes stories related to narratives about other uprisings in the region over a long period of time. Similar stories about a miraculous escape by a rebel shaman have become attached to other uprisings in the region as well. Legends about the *Mandalada* uprising amongst the Yamal Nenets in 1943 involve narratives about shamans who were caught and killed, who later re-emerged in the tundra, or who were shot but escaped riding reindeer and emerged from the snow (Golovnev 1995: 193–194; Golovnev and Osherenko 1999: 94; Ogryzko 1996: 14; Leete 2005: 237). This represents a rather typical folklore motif, but one that also reflects existential anguish and hope.

Aipin wrote in his *Godmother in Bloody Snow* novel that the shaman chief Small Senia remained in the region after the uprising, whom Red Army troops could not kill or arrest (Aipin 2002: 7, 247). Perevalova recorded similar heroic stories about Small Senia when conducting fieldwork amongst the Khanty in 2002 (Perevalova 2016: 137). This confirms

once again that Indigenous narratives about specific shaman heroes of the Kazym uprising continued to circulate many decades following the revolt. In addition, Aipin's novel relies on folk motifs associated with these narratives.

Although official sources confirm that the chief shaman of the Kazym War, Efim Vandymov, ended his life in prison, people continue to tell stories about the shaman's miraculous escape. This is a legitimate component of Indigenous history. In 1891, Serafim Patkanov (1999: 77–78) analysed legends about miraculous escapes and the ability of Ob-Ugrian shaman chiefs to take the form of animals, birds, and fish. The plot of these stories matches the international folktale type ATU 313 (The Magic Flight), also documented amongst the Khanty (see Uther 2004: 194–198).[15]

Indigenous narrators use spiritual tools to adapt to new circumstances. 'By distorting historical facts, through exaggeration and mythologising real-life events, people tried to shield themselves against negative emotions and memories of the past' (Laptander 2014a: 22). Narratives about the Kazym War and other Indigenous uprisings reveal the folkloric understanding of these events, but also carry deeper existential meaning, reflecting the resilience of the Indigenous spirit.

CONCLUSIONS: BECOMING HYBRID KNOWLEDGE

Portelli (1981: 97) claims that 'written and oral sources are not mutually exclusive'. Oral history employs symbols and myths, and can also provide valuable information similar to 'any other human source' (Thompson and Bornat 2017: 373). In oral history both narratives and retrospective fragments matter and count against the background of written evidence.

The official narrative of the Kazym War is evidently pro-Soviet and anti-Indigenous. Documents and research from the Soviet period used real facts if these appeared useful in proving the correctness of officials' own actions and discrediting Indigenous antagonists. When reflecting episodes from the Kazym uprising, authorities stressed the cruel conduct of the Indigenous populations and the infidelity of their leaders, which obstructed collaboration and impeded the implementation of Soviet reforms.

Indigenous scholars also rely heavily on official documents leading to Indigenous oral history accounts being underrepresented in their studies. Yet, Indigenous intellectuals still use more oral records than other researchers. In addition, the archives include a notable number of Indigenous narratives. Sometimes, Indigenous scholars simply avoid writing down everything they know, which might reflect a general fear of touching upon the topic of the Kazym War at all (FM 2016).

The long-term dominance of Soviet ideology has influenced Indigenous recollections. People who spent most of their lives in the Soviet Union have somehow adopted the official rhetoric. My samples also reflect this attitude, such as the view that shamans were bad, whilst teachers were good. Under Soviet propaganda, some people (including Indigenous intellectuals) started to consider shamans as prominent rivals to officials (administrators, doctors, and teachers). It was a public ideological function enforced upon shamans by authorities, but also through a shared social sensitivity. Often, however, the Khanty, Mansi, and Forest Nenets favoured the Indigenous perspective over the official view. In general, shamans have a positive image amongst the Indigenous population and people consider the Kazym uprising justified.

Narratives that rendered the Indigenous perspective on the Kazym War and Soviet repressions public first appeared as fiction writing in short stories or novels by Khanty authors (see Moldanova 1995 [1987]; Aipin 1990, 1995). Details of the uprising were presented first as literary narratives, but everyone understood that the plots of these stories were based on real-life events. At first, this represented the way in which Indigenous intellectuals dared write about this tragedy. But, I am not sure if these stories and books became widely known amongst Indigenous audiences.

In addition, there were other media used to spread knowledge publicly. One of my Khanty informants on the Pim River claimed that in the 1990s he heard about the uprising over the radio: 'I don't know exactly. I know only from the other people's stories. Mostly, the elders tell these stories. Once I heard over the radio; they described it more precisely there' (M, b. 1951, Khanty, FM 1995, Ai Pim River). As many Khanty had radios in their forest camps, this was a highly effective way to spread knowledge about the uprising amongst the Khanty. But, in that case, my Khanty friend clearly had his own sources as well.

To my knowledge, the first photo exhibition about the Kazym War was staged in the mid-1990s. In 1996, the show was presented at a cultural house in the village of Num To. I suspect it added little to the local knowledge, but still carried symbolic significance. The exhibition demonstrated that commemorating the uprising publicly was finally allowed. In 1989, the documentary 'People from the Other Times' was shot about the Kazym War. But, to my knowledge, it is not widely known amongst the Khanty and Forest Nenets. However, a multiplicity of channels providing information about the Kazym War made indigenous knowledge hybrid once *glasnost* reached western Siberia.

Hybrid narratives of the Kazym uprising represent an outcome of colonial encounters. Usually, these discourses (Indigenous and institutional) have no obvious point of contact. But, on a few occasions, the connection between competing interpretations clearly exists. Yet, the Indigenous narratives generally appear rather independent of the official plot.

Over the years, one of my informants repeatedly stressed the problem of truth regarding the official information on the uprising. He clearly favours Indigenous narratives as a source for reconstructing episodes from the uprising and considers archival documents fabrications, or a collection of lies. Consequently, fiction stories that rely on folk memories must be true, but monographs based on documents reproduce these old but strongly established deceptions (M, Khanty, FM 2022, Khanty-Mansiisk/online).

Eremei Aipin claimed that he intended to be as unbiased as possible when writing his novel *Godmother in Bloody Snow* (Larionova 2010; see also Perevalova 2018: 189). In childhood, Aipin heard many stories about the Kazym uprising from his parents and grandparents. But, he referred to archival material as 'the real documents' that enabled him to write the book (Larionova 2010). Apparently, Aipin considered archival sources more significant and objective than the oral heritage he knew.

Indigenous discourse represents diverse understandings of credibility. Following Fogelson's (1989) approach to nonevents, miraculous escape narratives about a shaman chief appear reliable if we accept the legitimacy of the context of the Indigenous worldview. If informants view something as historical fact, it becomes equal to 'real' events (Portelli 1981: 100; see also Sahlins

1987: vii–x). For the Indigenous perception, historical and mythic incidents are the same (ibid.: xv). In the hybrid narrative space of a contact zone, various Indigenous and official stories clash and the entire tragedy of the Kazym uprising becomes increasingly evident.

From the ethnographic evidence presented, we see how hybrid traces of diverse discourses meet via Indigenous narration. However, Indigenous histories also manufacture their own assessments of truth when referring to eyewitness accounts. This study disclosed how the Indigenous oral and written reports appear to connect with the dominant official discourse by resonating, rejecting, or endorsing it.

ART LEETE
PROFESSOR
INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
art.leete@ut.ee

NOTES

1 This research was supported by the Estonian Research Council (grant no. PRG1584).

2 The Khanty and Forest Nenets are Indigenous peoples inhabiting the northern part of the taiga and forest tundra zones of western Siberia. Both groups belong to the Uralic language family, but their languages are quite distinct from one another and do not enable mutual understanding. According to the official census, the total number of Khanty was 22 170 in 1926 and 18 500 in 1939 (during the most recent census in 2021, 31 467 people identified themselves as Khanty). The Forest Nenets have never been counted separately from the Tundra Nenets; according to estimates, there are around 2000 Forest Nenets.

3 For further details on the complementary reconstruction of events using oral history accounts, see Jaago and Kõresaar (2008) and Rahi-Tamm and Salēniece (2016).

4 Cultural bases were exemplary settlements, built for Indigenous groups in different regions of the north, consisting of cultural houses and many infrastructure objects. Cultural bases were assumed to provide essential benefits and services, typical for a modern society.

5 *Uralpushnina* refers to the Soviet fur trade organisation.

6 Some names appearing in the text are coded on ethical reasons.

7 *Kisy* are winter boots with soft soles made from reindeer leg skins.

8 Sergei Bakhrushin (1935: 29) presents historical evidence of a Mansi human sacrificial ceremony from 1648. Similarly, a shaman turned to the spirits, who demanded that a Nenets captive be sacrificed. The Mansi also arranged public prayers to the spirits before initiating uprisings against the Russians (ibid.: 30, 69–70).

9 *Mandalada* ('piled up') in this context refers to 'war-gathering' (in Nenets). There were three major anti-Soviet *mandaladas* in the Nenets tundra: in the early 1930s (on the Yamal Peninsula) and during World War II (in the northern Yamal and Polar Urals) (Golovnev 1995: 183–194; Tolkachev 2000: 297–316; Vallikivi 2005; Leete, Vallikivi 2011: 95; Laptander 2014a, 2014b; Dudeck 2018: 78).

10 For more information on scalping and cutting breasts in the Khanty and Mansi legends, see Karjalainen (1918: 31–32) and Patkanov (1999: 101–103); regarding the historical record of alleged human sacrifices amongst the Ob-Ugrians until the eighteenth century, see Bakhrushin (1935: 14, 26, 29–31, 57, 78).

11 Spiky larch clubs were especially painful (Aipin 2002: 128).

12 According to Ogryzko (1993: 9), a similar suppression method was used by security forces following the *Mandalada* of the Yamal Nenets in 1943.

13 *Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del* – People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the Soviet police and secret police from 1934 to 1946.

14 According to the story, the Khanty did not have guns and fought with bows and arrows.

15 I thank the head of the Estonian Folklore Archives, Risto Järv, for consultations regarding folklore motifs.

REFERENCES

Aipin, Eremei 1995. *Kliatvoprestupnik*. Moskva: Nash sovremennik.

Aipin, Eremej 2002. *Bozh'ia mater' v krovavykh snegakh*. Ekaterinburg: Izdatel'skii dom 'Pakrus'.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin 2007. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London, New York: Routledge.

Bakhrushin, Sergei V. 1935. *Ostiatskie i vogul'skie kniazhestva v XVI–XVII vekakh*. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Instituta narodov Severa TSIK SSSR im. P. G. Smidovicha.

Bakhtin, Mikhail 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Slavic Series 1. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Balzer, Marjorie Mandelstam 1999. *The Tenacity of Ethnicity: A Siberian Saga in Global Perspective*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bardin, Gennadii 1994. Narod iugorskii: pravo na zhizn'. *Novosti Iugry* 24.2.: 6.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London, New York, NY: Routledge.

Budarin, Mikhail 1968. *Byli o sibirskikh chekistakh*. Omsk: Zapadno-Sibirskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo.

Clifford, James 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late 20th Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Dudeck, Stephan 2018. Reindeer Returning from Combat: War Stories among the Nenets of European Russia. *Arctic Anthropology* 55 (1): 73–90.

Ernykhova, Olga D. 1997. U shesti chumov. *Literaturnaia Rossiia* 31.1.: 6.

Ernykhova, Olga D. 2003. *Kazymskii miatezh: Ob istorii Kazymskogo vosstaniia 1933–1934 gg*. Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf.

Ernykhova, Olga D. 2010. Kazymskaia kul'turnaia baza kak sotsial'nii eksperiment Sovetskogo gosudarstva. *Vestnik Tiumenskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 1: 101–8.

Ernykhova, Olga D. and Svetlana V. Lazareva 2003. Kontseptsiia muzeinoi vystavki 'Kazymskaia tragediia'. In *Kazymskie chteniia 2003. Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii 19.12.2003. Khanty-Mansiisk.* Khanty-Mansiisk: Departament kul'tury i iskusstva Khanty Mansiiskogo avtonomnogo okruga – Iugra, Gosudarstvennyi muzei prirody i cheloveka.

Ernykhova Ol'ga and Anna Sivkova 2008. Kazymskii miatezh. *Dym Otechestva: Istoriko-kraevedcheskii vypusk gazety Respublika* 16.8.: 4–5.

Fates of the peoples 1994. Radchenko, N. D. and M. A. Smirnova (eds) 1994: *Sud'by narodov Ob'-irtyshkogo Severa. (Iz istorii natsional'no-gosudarstvennogo stroitel'stva. 1822–1941 gg.) Sbornik dokumentov.* Tiumen': Upravlenie po delam arkhivov Administratsii Tiumenskoi oblasti, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tiumenskoi oblasti, Tiumenskoi oblastnoi tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii.

Felinska, Ewa 1854. *Revelations of Siberia. By a Banished Lady.* London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers.

Fogelson, Raymond D. 1989. The Ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents. *Ethnohistory* 36 (2): 133–47. https://doi.org/10.2307/482275.

Golovnev, Andrei 1995. *Govoriashchie kul'tury. Traditsii samodiitsev i ugrov*. Ekaterinburg: UrO RAN.

Golovnev, Andrei 2000. Wars and Chiefs among the Samoyeds and Ugrians of Western Siberia. In Peter P. Schweitzer, Megan Biesele and Robert K. Hitchcock (eds). *Hunters and Gatherers in the Modern World. Conflict, Resistance, and Self-Determination.* New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Golovnev, Andrei 1997. Indigenous Leadership in Northwestern Siberia: Traditional Patterns and Their Contemporary Manifestations. *Arctic Anthropology* 34 (1): 149–66.

Golovnev, Andrei and Gail Osherenko 1999. *Siberian Survival: The Nenets and Their Story*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.

Golovnev, Andrei and Elena Perevalova 2017. Vozhdi obskikh ugrov i nentsev (po dannym fol'klora). *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Istoriia* 49: 115–22. https://doi.org/10.17223/19988613/49/21.

Iadrintsev, Nikolai 1892. *Sibir' kak koloniia v geograficheskom, etnograficheskom i istoricheskom otnoshenii*. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdanie I. M. Sibiriakova.

Jaago, Tiiu and Ene Kõresaar 2008. Complementarity of Sources in Studying Adaptation: An Oral History Viewpoint. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 39: 17–38.

Kan, Sergei 2019. Raymond D. Fogelson's 'The Ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents'. *Ethnohistory* 66 (1): 171–7. https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-7217455.

Karjalainen, Kustaa Fredrik 1918. *Jugralaisten uskonto*. Suomen suvun uskonnot, 3. Porvoo: Söderström.

Khariuchi, Galina P. 2018. *Vavlë Neniang (Vauli Piettomin): Istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki*. Sankt-Peterburg: Istoricheskaiia illiustratsiia.

Khomich, Liudmila V. 1981. Shamany u nentsev. In I. S. Vdovin (ed.). *Problemy istorii obshchestvennogo soznaniia aborigenov Sibiri (po materialam vtoroi poloviny XIX – nachala XX v.)*. Leningrad: Nauka.

Kopylov, Dmitrii I. and Vladimir F. Retunskii 1965. *Ocherki istorii partiinoi organisatsii Tiumenskoi oblasti*. Sverdlovsk: Sredne-Ural'skoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo.

Lapina, Maina A. 2003. Retsensiia na knigu O. D. Erkhinovoi 'Kazymskii miatezh: ob istorii Kazymskogo vosstaniia 1933–1934 gg'. In *Kazymskie chteniia 2003. Materialy naucho-prakticheskoi konferentsii 19.12.2003. Khanty-Mansiisk*. Khanty-Mansiisk: Departament kul'tury i iskusstva Khanty Mansiiskogo avtonomnogo okruga – Iugra, Gosudarstvennyi muzei prirody i cheloveka.

Laptander, Roza 2014a. Processes of Remembering and Forgetting. Tundra Nenets: Reminiscences of the 1943 Mandalada Rebellions. *Sibirica* 13 (3): 22–44.

Laptander, Roza 2014b. Kochuiushchaia istoriia v ustnykh rasskazakh yamal'skikh nentsev. In V. N. Davydov and D. V. Arziutov (eds). *Sibirskii sbornik 4: Grani sotsial'nogo: Antropologicheskie perspektivy issledovaniia sotsial'nykh otnoshenii i kul'tury. Pamiati rossiiskogo etnografa-tungusoveda Nadezhdy Vsevolodovny Ermolovoi.* Sankt-Peterburg; Kunstkamera.

Larionova, Dar'ia 2010. Interv'iu s E. D. Aipinym D. Larionovoi ot 10.11.2010. TsentrMedia. Artrepriza. https://artrepriza.ru/books/337-eremej-ajpin-bozhya-mater-v-krovavyx-snegax.html <accessed 13 January 2022>

Leete, Art 2004. *Kazymzkaia voina: vosstanie khantov i lesnykh nentsev protiv sovetskoi vlasti.* Tartu: Kafedra etnologii Tartuskogo universiteta.

Leete, Art 2005. Religious Revival as React ion to the Hegemonization of Power in Siberia in the 1920s to 1940s. *Asian Folklore Studies* 64: 233–45.

Leete, Art 2017. Landscape and Gods among the Khanty. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 11 (1): 19–38. https://doi.org/10.1515/jef-2017-0003.

Leete, Art and Laur Vallikivi 2011. Imitating Enemies or Friends: Comparative Notes on Christianity in the Indigenous Russian Arctic during the Early Soviet Period. *Asian Ethnology* 70 (1): 81–104.

Lukina, Nadezhda V. 1993. Predislovie k povesti T. Moldanovoi "Srednii mir" Anny iz Malanga. In E.V. Osokin (ed.) *Severnaia kniga*. Tomsk: Tomskii regional'nyi otdel po sotsial'no-ekonomicheskomu razvitiiu raionov Severa.

Moldanov, Timofei 2003. Lichnye pesni pervykh repressirovannykh. In *Kazymskie chteniia 2003. Materialy naucho-prakticheskoi konferentsii 19.12.2003. Khanty-Mansiisk*. Khanty-Mansiisk: Departament kul'tury i iskusstva Khanty Mansiiskogo avtonomnogo okruga – Iugra, Gosudarstvennyi muzei prirody i cheloveka.

Moldanova, Tat'iana A. 1995. V gnezdyshke odinokom. In N. I. Koniaev (ed). *Na semi kholmakh sotsvetie. Almanakh*. Moskva: Uniserv.

Ogryzko, Viacheslav V. 1993. Neizvestnyi Sever. *Slovo Narodov Severa* 1: 8–9.

Ogryzko, Viacheslav V. 1996. Mandala. *Literaturnaia Rossiia* 8.3.: 14.

Pastukhov, N. G. 1937. Kul'turnye ochagi Krainego Severa. *Sovetskaia Arktika* 11: 44–51.

Patkanov, Serafim K. 1999 [1891]. *Istoriia kolonizatsii Sibiri*. Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh: T. 2. Edited by S. G. Parkhimovich. Tiumen': Izdatel'stvo Iu. Mandriki.

People from the Other Times 1989 (Documentary). Aleksandr Aleksandrov (rezhissër) 1989. Liudi inykh vremen. Leningrad: Leningradskaiia studiia dokumental'nykh fil'mov.

Perevalova, Elena V. 2016. Ostiatsko-vogul'skie miatezhi 1930-kh gg.: byli i mify. *Ezhegodnik finno-ugorskikh issledovanii* 10 (1): 131–146.

Perevalova, Elena V. 2018. Etnichnost' i kino: nentsy, khanty i mansi na ekrane. *Kunstkamera* 2: 184–92.

Portelli, Alessandro 1981. The Peculiarities of Oral History. *History Workshop* 12: 96–107.

Pratt, Mary Louise 1991. Arts of the Contact Zone. *Profession*: 33–40.

Pratt, Mary Louise 2003 [1992]. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London, New York: Routledge.

Rahi-Tamm, Aigi and Irena Salēniece 2016. Re-educating teachers: ways and consequences of Sovietization in Estonia and Latvia (1940–1960) from the biographical perspective. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 47 (4): 451–472. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2016.1263035.

Sablin, Ivan and Maria Savelyeva 2011. Mapping Indigenous Siberia: Spatial Changes and Ethnic Realities, 1900–2010. *Settler Colonial Studies* 1 (1): 77–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2011.10648802.

Sahlins, Marshall 1987. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shishkin, Vladimir I. 2000. Vvedenie. In Vladimir Ivanovich Shishkin (ed.) *Sibirskaia Vandeia*. Tom pervyi: 1919–1920. Rossiia. XX vek. Dokumenty. Moskva: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia".

Strus', Leonid 2003. Legenda – byl'. Ozero Numto "Nebesnoe ozero, Bozh'e, Sviatoe ozero". In *Kazymskie chteniia 2003. Materialy naucho-prakticheskoi konferentsii 19.12.2003. Khanty-Mansiisk*. Khanty-Mansiisk: Departament kul'tury i iskusstva Khanty Mansiiskogo avtonomnogo okruga – Iugra, Gosudarstvennyi muzei prirody i cheloveka.

Sundström, Olle 2007. *Kampen mot "schamanismen": Sovjetisk religionspolitik gentemot inhenska religioner i Sibirien och Norra Ryssland*. Studier av inter-religiösa relationer 40. Uppsala: Universitetstryckeriet.

Thompson, Paul and Joanna Bornat 2017. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Timofeev, Gennadii 1995. Kazymskaia tragediia. *Iugra* 9: 32.

Tolkachev, Viktor F. 2000. Rossiia. Krainii Sever. Vlast'. In Viktor Fedorovich Tolkachev (ed.) *Nenetskii krai: Skvoz' v'iugi let. Ocherki. Stat'i. Dokumenty*. Arkhangel'sk: Pomorskii gosudarstvennyi universitet imeni M. V. Lomonosova.

Uther, Hans-Jörg 2004. *The Types of International Folktales. A Classification and Bibliography Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson.* Part I: Animal Tales, Tales of Magic, Religious Tales, and Realistic Tales, with an Introduction. FF Communications 284. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.

Vallikivi, Laur 2005. Two wars in conflict: Resistance among Nenets reindeer herders in the 1940s. *Studies in Folk Culture* 5: 14–54.

Voldina, Maria K. 2003. Eto byli poslednie dni Ivana Ivanovicha Moldanova… In *Kazymskie chteniia 2003. Materialy naucho-prakticheskoi konferentsii 19.12.2003. Khanty-Mansiisk*. Khanty-Mansiisk: Departament kul'tury i iskusstva Khanty Mansiiskogo avtonomnogo okruga – Iugra, Gosudarstvennyi muzei prirody i cheloveka.

Vol'skii, A. V. 1937. Dve epokhi Taimyra. *Sovetskaia Arktika* 11: 59–67.

Wiget, Andrew and Olga Balalaeva 2011. *Khanty, People of the Taiga: Surviving the Twentieth Century*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.

Young, Robert J. C. 1995. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. London, New York: Routledge.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Aksarina. Vospominaniia proshloe. Voevali dlinnokosye muzhshchiny. Besedovala s N. M. Aksarinoi A. Glukhikh.

Astrakhantseva 1934. Vospominaniia L. N. Astrakhantsevy.

Astrakhantseva 1978. Pis'mo Lidii Nikolaevny Astrakhantsevy tov. Polivanovu, 19 marta 1978.

BKM, Summary of Charges 1934. Berezovskii kraevedcheskii muzei, Obvinitel′noe zakliuchenie po delu 2/49 o k-r vooruzhennom vystuplenii protiv Sovetskoi vlasti tuzemtsev Kazymskoi tundry. Sostavleno 10 iiunia 1934 g. v PP OGPU po Obsko-Irtyshkoi oblasti (a copy).

FM. Field materials of the author, 1991–2022.

GAKhMAO. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Khanty-Mansiiskogo avtonomnogo okruga:

GMPiCh. Gosudarstvennyi Muzei Prirody i Cheloveka.:

Loskutov. MS materials of Arkadi Loskutov. Item number: 2352/537:

1. O vosstanii kulakov i shamanov na Kazyme v 1933–1934 gg.
2. Eto bylo v Kazyme.
3. Snova v pokhod.
4. Nash pokhod na ozero Num-To.
5. Iz obvinitel′nogo zakliucheniia po delu o kulakakh i shamanov Kazyma ot 10 iiunia 1934.
6. O Kazymskoi vosstanii 1933–1934 gg.
7. Iz kulatsko-shamanskogo vosstaniia na Kazyme.
8. K istorii.
9. (without a heading).

Victoria Soyan Peemot

STORYING WITH HOMELANDS: EMPLACED (HI)STORIES AND RESILIENCE-IN-MAKING

ABSTRACT

Pastoralists who live in the Tyva Republic approach their home landscapes as sentient and engage with them through a reciprocal relationship.[1] The sociality of landscapes builds upon a multigenerational belonging amongst Tyva kinship groups with their homelands. In this study, I explore how community-homeland belonging allows for a more-than-human practice of engaging with the past—storying with homelands. I draw on a case study, which involves the construction of a Buddhist stupa by the Soyan kinship group at a site named Chylgy-Dash in 2019. I suggest that the community's storying with an endangered landscape aims, first, to bridge with the past across socialist decades when the state neglected human–nonhuman relationships, and, second, to enact and to story-into-being community-homeland belonging.

Keywords: Indigenous historicities, more-than-human storytelling, memory politics, post-socialism, community-homeland belonging

REMEMBERING THE (LOST) HOMELAND

I grew up in the omnipresence of the Khaan Kögei Mountain range.[2] This mountain range formed the line of the southern horizon, visible from all encampment sites in Shara-Nuur where the herdsmen from my paternal Soyan kinship group live between April and late November. Every morning when I opened the south-facing door of my grandparents' yurt in Shara-Nuur, I saw the Khaan Kögei. Sitting in our yurt and observing the mountain through the open door, my grandmother, Kadyp-ool Irisiŋmaa Norbuevna (1930–2023), shared her memories of her grandmother, Bayan Chula, who brought edible roots of the *bes* (*Erythronium sibiricum)* and *ai* (*Lilium martagon*) from her visits to the Kögei. She remembered, 'When it was forbidden to visit the Kögei Mountains, my grandmother Chula longed for her homeland. In the summer heat of Shara-Nuur, she often recalled the Khaan Kögei's pastures with their green grass and cold streams, the cool air, and the abundance of wild animals and berries.'

What my grandmother did not tell me is the story of how our people lost their clan grounds in the Khaan Kögei Mountains, according to the 1929 Tyvan–Mongolian agreement on the border demarcation, followed by an actual demarcation in 1932, forced displacement of the clan in the 1930s, and

the final restriction on crossing the newly established border in 1946 (Aranchyn 2011: 46–48; Khertek 2016: 75–76; Otroshchenko 2015: 34–35). My grandmother and grandfather, Kadyp-ool Soyan Kunuiaevich (1930–2016), experienced these historical events and their impact as children and young adults. They both lost their fathers and many close kin during the political repressions of the 1930s, which harshly targeted the Tyva clans living along the border due to their opposition to government orders and continuing seasonal movements to the former pasturelands.

Unreachable by the Soyans during socialism, the Khaan Kögei still dominated the landscapes of the clan's seasonal grounds. Drawing upon Bender (2002), the mountains continued to provoke memories of living there and of abandoning their lands. Like my grandmother's story about the bountiful Kögei, some stories were considered 'safe' to share under the socialist rule. Other stories were too dangerous to remember collectively. These stories which carried traumas of a lost homeland, repressions, and fear began emerging only in the late socialist years, before and after the demise of the Soviet Union.

The continuing presence of the Khaan Kögei in the Soyans' collective memory aterialized for me in June 2016 when I visited the mountain range for the first time in my life. At the edge of the pine forest, a tree stood decorated with colourful *kadak* and *chalama* ritual scarves. I added to them a blue *kadak*, which I purchased for this occasion at the Gandantegchinlen monastery, the Buddhist temple in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Later, the owners of the yurt nearby told me that the scarves were left by the Soyan people who came here to pay their respects to their homeland. The Khaan Kögei range continues to participate in the Soyans' identity negotiations which, in the case of the Tyva people, include clan homelands (Bavuu-Surun 2018: 274). This vignette about the lost and remembered homeland of the Khaan Kögei provides the necessary context for understanding the case study at the centre of this article—the building of a Buddhist stupa and storying about the clan's belonging with the endangered landscape as an act of resilience against the government's plans to begin explorations of a chromite deposit. Those explorations could endanger their current seasonal grounds in the Lake Shara-Nuur area near Mount Agar in the Tes-Khem province of Tyva.

I begin by introducing the main arguments and the theoretical and methodological framework in the next section. An introduction to the case study then follows. I next provide insights for understanding the status and sentience of landscapes and discuss how the Chylgy-Dash site, where the stupa was built, is now included in the collective memory of the local kinship group. The last section discusses the entanglement of the community's identity negotiations with their homeland, collective memory, and engagements with the past and how they come together to protect the contested landscape by actively storying with the landscape and constructing the Buddhist stupa there.

FRAMING THE NARRATIVE

In this article, I draw upon one case study: the construction of a Buddhist stupa by the Soyan kinship group in southern Tyva in order to protect their land from mining during the spring and summer of 2019. In using this case study, I argue, firstly, that the landscape (of homeland) safeguards the kinship group's collective memories; secondly, it supports the clan's emplaced sense of belonging; and, thirdly, it provides the means for resilience against the

violent politics of the state (Russian Federation) and representing it in the local government (of the Tyva Republic).[3] I approach these arguments through an inquiry of the following research questions:

- How does storying with landscapes contribute to the Tyva kinship groups' identity negotiations and collective memory?
- How do landscapes offer solutions against threats to community-homeland belonging and pastoralists' livelihoods?
- How do landscapes safeguard stories and memories under repressive regimes?

The theoretical and methodological framework for this study is based on *storying*, which builds upon the work of Indigenous scholars who approach storying as a collaborative knowledge production process (Sweeney and Windchief 2019; Fast and Kovach 2019; San Pedro and Kinloch 2017). Indigenous storying methods aid me in revealing the potential of landscapes to ground a land-based identity of the Tyva kinship groups, to keep and share memories amidst the state's suppressive memory politics, and to support more-than-human resilience strategies. Briefly put, I study how a more-than-human storying 'can construct meaningful bridges in disruptive situations' (Cruikshank 1998: 3–4). In her compelling works about the power of Indigenous stories, the Canadian anthropologist Julie Cruikshank uses the term 'storytelling' (1998; 2005). Whilst inspired by Cruikshank's approach to stories, I also lean on other researchers in Indigenous studies when using the term 'storying'. For instance, Timothy San Pedro and Valerie Kinloch define storying as 'the convergence of theory and practice, theory, and method, which invites into relationships where we dialogically listen and give back to the stories shared and questions that arise with others' (2017: 377–378). My approach to storying draws upon the Tyvan concept *töögü*. In the Tyvan-language, the noun *töögü* corresponds to 'history' and 'a story' in English. Thus, my field conversations with Tyvan-speaking interlocutors lack a distinction between 'history' and 'story'. For instance, in the following excerpt from a recorded semi-structured interview, my uncle, Byzaakai Andrei, described a way of sharing knowledge about the past using the term *töögüleer*. This term reflects a verb translated literally as 'to story (about the past)'. He also used the expression *khöi töögü*, which can be translated as 'much history' or 'many stories':

> During the war, our parents had horse herds. [Our] horses originate from that herd, which included racehorses and working horses among them. Horses were traded, sold, and exchanged; they were used as meat, as a winter meat supply. The herd has grown and we still keep it. At the time when they [my parents] had to give their livestock to the collective farm and were left without horses, they managed to hide away one or two animals. Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, when it was allowed to keep a few private livestock, they restored their horse herd. If I am to story that time [literal translation of uncle Andrei's phrase '*Ol* üeni *töögüleer bolza*'], there are many stories/much history [uncle Andrei's words '*khöi töögü*' can be translated as both]. (Byzaakai Andrei Taraachevich, fieldwork interview, Kövürüg-Aksy campsite, Tes River, Tyva, 14 June 2015)

The ambivalence of the Tyvan *töögü* as 'a story' and 'history' perhaps allows for bridging between history and memory. It also provides

space for discussions about more-than-human engagements with the past and practices of keeping and sharing (hi)stories, which emphasise one's relationships with their homelands. Taking this idea further, I suggest that the more-than-human practice of storying is a process of making—reinvigorating, healing, and strengthening—relationships between Indigenous communities and their homelands.

Relationships are also grounded within my research methodology. During fieldwork in my home region in Tyva, I have storied with my kin when discussing our relationship with our homelands and observing the circulation of stories about the past and how they appear in the collective memory. I relied on participant observation as the primary ethnographic fieldwork method. In addition, I conducted semi-structured interviews and created an audiovisual documentation of land-related practices (e.g., Beahrs and Peemot 2021, ethnographic film). When the confrontation between the Soyan community and the Tyva Republic's government began in late winter and spring of 2019, I was in Finland. During this period, I followed the community–government confrontation online, through publications in local newspapers and on television news channels. In the next section, I introduce the case study. The following sections place the case study at the centre of the research debate and provide ontological insight for its understanding.

STORYING WITH THE HOMELAND AS RESILIENCE-IN-MAKING

This case study focuses on the construction of a Buddhist stupa in a place named Chylgy-Dash in the Tes-Khem province of the Tyva Republic, Russian Federation. More precisely, Chylgy-Dash is situated on the southern slopes of Mount Agar, between the eastern end of Lake Shara-Nuur and Yamaalyk Mountain less than 20 kilometres from the border with the Uvs province of Mongolia. Chylgy-Dash literally means 'the horse (herd) stone'. The name captures the landscape's distinct feature—numerous dark-coloured boulders spread around the steppe. When viewed from a distance, the large stones resemble horses. These landscapes are part of the territories where the Soyan clan, who built the stupa, have lived for numerous generations. Growing up with my grandparents, I lived with our Soyan kin at seasonal camps on both the northern and southern slopes of Mount Agar. All of these landscapes keep the (hi)stories of several generations of my family.[4]

The stupa was built in response to news about possible chromite mining in Shara-Nuur. In December 2018, the government of Tyva approved 'A Strategy for Social and Economic Development in the Tyva Republic Until 2030', which included a plan to prepare the necessary paperwork for geological investigations and the exploration of several deposits in Tyva, with the chromite deposit 'Shara-Nurskii' on Mount Agar listed amongst them.[5] The government's introduction stated that this chromite ore is one of the largest deposits in Siberia (104 km^2) and with a high quality (Decree No. 638 was issued by the Government of the Tyva Republic on 24 December 2018). Less than two months later, the limited liability company 'Resurs', registered in the Republic of Buryatia, Russian Federation, applied for the rights to begin exploration and mining at the 'Shara-Nurskii' deposit.

News about the mining company seeking a permit to explore and mine the chromium ore deposit in Shara-Nuur broke on 5 February 2019. That news was followed by a media confrontation between the local community and the government of the Tyva Republic in

February and March. The following provides a chronology of media publications.

On 19 February 2019, the newspaper *Risk Inform* published an editorial, entitled 'The people's way of life is under the threat' (*Dongur-ool* 2019a). That article quickly followed an exchange between the head of the subsoil use department of the Central Siberian region, Nina Shevtsova, and Vladislav Kanzai who, at the time, was director of the Ubsunur Biosphere Reserve. Shevtsova announced that they are considering an application from the company 'Resurs' about granting rights to conduct an exploration, evaluation, and mine at the chromium ore deposit 'Shara-Nurskii' in the Tes-Khem province, Tyva (the letter was dated 28 February 2018). Vladislav Kanzai replied that, because the deposit is situated in the territory of a protected nature reserve, no mining is permitted there. A journalist, commenting on the officials' correspondence, pointed out that, despite the negative response, Shevtsova made a subsequent, second inquiry (4 December 2018). This time, she was asked to inform if it is possible to conduct geological explorations through well-boring and pits, as well as mining, whether it is sufficient to have an agreement with the biosphere reserve and results from an ecological expertise, or if regulations regarding protected areas issued by the government of the Tyva Republic were ruled out. This article included an open letter addressed to Vladislav Kanzai, signed by 728 people from Ak-Erik, dated 7 February 2019. I include here a translated excerpt from the collective letter from the Ak-Erik community. This excerpt reveals the importance of the land to the community's livelihoods and their veneration of Mount Agar and Lake Shara-Nuur. It also demonstrates that people have kept painful memories about their clan's forced displacement from their homeland in the Khaan Kögei Mountains followed by the repressions of the 1930s and 1940s:

> Lake Shara-Nuur and Mount Agar are the only territories where the native population of the Kyzyl-Chyraa *sumu* lives and practices pastoral livestock husbandry. The above stated works [exploration and mining] will deprive 97% of the *sumu's* population of their main source of income, livestock husbandry, due to the destruction of their pasturelands. We raise our livestock in these territories where we move, depending upon the season, between summer, autumn, winter, and spring pastures.
>
> Furthermore, Mount Agar and Lake Shara-Nuur are places that our ancestors have venerated. We venerate them, too. Our ancestors have bequeathed us to preserve and protect this sacred land. We will fulfil their will. … Shara-Nuur is a salt-water lake, its water and mud are healing; hundreds of people come here from Tyva and regions of Russia seeking healing. … [O]ur people were subjected to mass repressions during Stalin's years, when the majority of our territories (up to 70%) were given to Mongolia and we were left with the smallest part, which included Lake Shara-Nuur and Mount Agar. After losing most of our homeland, our people have lived here. Now, outsiders aim to destroy this land, too. In the recent past, due to their resistance to forced displacement, more than half of our men were executed, imprisoned, or exiled. Many have never returned. We hope that this history will not repeat itself. (Risk Inform, 4 December 2018)

The letter reveals vivid memories of the state's violence experienced by the community in the early socialist period and how that violence affected Soyans' understanding of the state's

politics as a recurring danger to their belonging with their homelands. After the article and letter were published, a series of media items followed.

On 26 February 2019, an article about the Soyans' displacement from the Khaan Kögei homelands was published in the same newspaper, *Risk Inform*.

On 5 March 2019, the pro-government broadcasting company, Tyva24, aired news about the government officials' meeting with the Ak-Erik community on 2 March 2019. The officials insisted that the government had no plan for mineral explorations in the municipality's territory and condemned the community's open letter published in a newspaper, labelling it as 'a loud noise for no reason', doubting whether people signed the letter.

On 6 March 2019, digital media outlet mk-tuva.ru supported the government's narrative in a report about meeting in Ak-Erik.

On 8 March 2019, the Biosphere reserve, Ubsunur, published on its website a brief follow-up to the meeting of the government representatives with the Ak-Erik community, entitled 'Concerned people'.

On 12 March 2019, the article 'How has Kara-ool been selling Tyvan deposits' was published (*Dongur-ool* 2019c). No articles were published after that.[6]

I followed the above-listed media confrontation from a distance from Helsinki, Finland. When I arrived in Tyva at the beginning of June 2019, the Ak-Erik people were building the stupa in Shara-Nuur. I visited the site and met a group of local men working on the construction site and the person in charge, Vladlen Doptan. He told me that the Soyans living in Ak-Erik and beyond have donated money, construction materials, and food for the workers. Vladlen shared his initial concerns about building the stupa in the seasonal pastureland, where families live only for a part of the year. This would mean the stupa will be left unattended during winter. He took his concerns to the Kamby Lama, the highest-ranking Buddhist lama in the Tyva Republic. Vladlen told me that he was assured by Kamby Lama that the stupa can be built in any place, even at seasonal grounds, and that it will protect the people and their homeland. Moreover, Kamby Lama advised to build the *suburgan* in Shara-Nuur, saying that it is the right thing to do (video-recorded conversation, Chylgy-Dash, Shara-Nuur, 21 June 2019).[7] Vladlen also explained to me that this particular site, known as Chylgy-Dash, was chosen to host the stupa because of the site's beauty, special name, and since it is a part of the Soyans' story as an historic place for community gatherings:

> Chylgy-Dash was chosen because it is our beautiful homeland with a special name. Chylgy-Dash is a place where many horses graze. I have heard that in the old times when the elders performed Öör-Ovaa, the cairn consecration ritual, on Mount Agar, all people gathered here in Chylgy-Dash. In the middle of these horse-shaped stones, there is a flat area, which is suitable for *khüresh* wrestling. It is a natural stadium. During the races, horses ran from Lake Töre-Khöl to the finish line here in Chylgy-Dash. It would be great for us to gather here every year, make the *suburgan's dagylga*, and celebrate it with wrestling and horseraces. (Video-recorded conversation, Chylgy-Dash, Shara-Nuur, 21 June 2019)

Because I was conducing fieldwork with reindeer herders in another part of Tyva in the Tozhu province, I could not participate in the *dagylga* consecration ceremony of the Chylgy-Dash stupa. It took place on 6 July, which was

the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Later, I heard about the event from my kin: the Buddhist lama was invited to perform a ritual, and people cooked and shared a communal meal on the site. Since 2019, I have not been to Tyva. Thus, I asked my kinsman Vladimir Orus-ool to take a photograph of the stupa and share it with me [Feature 1. The Buddhist stupa in Chylgy-Dash on Mount Agar, Tyva, July 2022. Photograph courtesy of Vladimir Orus-ool].

The next section provides ontological insights into understanding the stupa's construction as an appeal to the superior nonhuman for protection and a way to take conversations about protecting homeland as officially and legally recognized.

THE STATUS AND SENTIENCY OF LANDSCAPES

There are two factors defining the Tyvan practice of storying with homelands: its contribution to pastoralists' identity negotiations and acknowledgement of landscapes as sentient and, often, superordinate nonhuman beings. Leaning on my doctoral dissertation research, I briefly discuss here the Tyva pastoralists' personification of a landscape as a sentient nonhuman nonanimal being—a master of the land (*cher eezi*). *Eezi* is the third-person possessive form of the singular noun *ee*, meaning 'an owner' or 'a master'. Various landscapes have nonhuman nonanimal masters (plural: *cher eeleri*), who are understood as having power within their own territories and potentially helpful or harmful to humans. My local interlocutors often omitted the word 'master' (*ee*) when talking about the masters of the land or addressing them directly. This leads to a superposition of the concepts *land* (*cher*) and *master of land* (*cher eezi)*. Anthropologists Caroline Humphrey and Urgunge Onon argued that the concept of 'master' (in Mongolian, *ejiin*) has allowed people to approach landscapes as sentient beings. They write, 'What is important is that the idea of masters allowed people to talk about the inner or concealed power of entities in the world and to have human-like intentional relations with them. In this view natural objects "gave" things to human beings, who were to use them in ways corresponding to the given parameters of nature' (Humphrey and Onon 2003 [1996]: 85). This observation by Humphrey and Onon is paramount for understanding the pastoralists' approach to landscapes as sentient, social, and powerful.

Communities in southern Tyva and western Mongolia where I have conducted fieldwork since 2015, consider the Taŋdy-Uula and Altai Mountains as the most powerful landscapes. They approach them as superior beings who oversee the lives of humans, domesticated and wild animals, and plants in their own territories. In addition, pastoralist communities develop special relationships with landscapes, which are part of their clan grounds. For instance, the Soyans venerate Mounts Agar and Kezhege in southern Tyva. Soviet ethnographer Leonid Potapov observed that the Tyva people refer to the prominent mountains as elder kin, noting that the Soyans explained the form of endogamy practised by the clan as 'the will of the Kezhege Mountain' (1969: 60). Anthropologist Selcen Küçüküstel, who studied amongst the Tyvan-speaking Dukha reindeer herders in northern Mongolia, draws a distinction between a perception of landscapes by outsiders and by people who belong with them—the former perceived the taiga as 'the wild geography', while the latter approached the taiga as the homeland, as 'the beloved taiga' (2021: 28).[8] Küçüküstel further explains the difference leaning on one's own experience. Over multiple visits to the taiga, she bonded with some landscapes which

came to hold precious memories to her (2021: 31). Küçüküstel's observation about 'a map of memories in a spirited geography' (2021: 27–46) is similar to sentient homelands, which keep and share memories amongst pastoralists in Tyva.

The Tyva people acknowledge the sentiency of landscapes in different communal and family practices: food offerings, asking for help, prohibitions on activities that could be offensive (e.g., leaving trash and speaking ill about them), and understanding some nonhumans (in the steppe ecologies—horses and wolves) as communicative bridges between homelands and human–livestock communities (Argent 2010; Charlier 2015; Peemot 2021). The above-mentioned practices are mostly individual or performed in an intimate family setting. They survived under the Soviet regime when other—communal—practices of bonding with sentient nonhumans, *dagylga*, were prohibited. Post-Soviet political transformations, including decollectivisation and a shift in memory politics, triggered the reverse process—strengthening the sense of belonging with the homelands. The communal *dagylga* of the homelands has been revived, drastically increased, and transformed since the 1990s (Lamazhaa and Suvandii 2021; Mongush 1992).

The syncretism of Buddhism and mountain worship amongst the Tyva people allows for non-conflicting hierarchies, where the superordinate being is understood as either Buddha (*Burgan bashky*) or a mountain. The best illustration for this syncretic belief system could be the mountains passes where a ritual cairn *Ovaa* and a Buddhist stupa are built next to each other. Examples can be found at the passes Kaldak-Khamar and Teeli in the Taŋdy-Uula Mountain range.

Feature 1

Feature 2. The ritual cairn *Ovaa* at the pass Teeli, western Taŋdy-Uula Mountains, Tyva, July 2016. Author's own photo.

Feature 3. The Buddhist stupa at the pass Teeli, western Taŋdy-Uula Mountains, Tyva, July 2016. Author's own photo.

I also observed this phenomenon in everyday situations amongst pastoralists in Tyva. For instance, a herder who defines himself as a Buddhist visits the Buddhist temples in Tyva and Mongolia and invites a lama to perform rituals. He also venerates (masters of) his homelands, including Mounts Agar and Khaan Kögei. The difference between the Buddhist stupa and a sentient landscape lies in the official recognition of their statuses as the sites of worship. The high hierarchy of Mount Agar and Lake Shara-Nuur as respected and sentient homelands is acknowledged by the Soyan community and revealed in multiple practices, which continue from generation to generation. However, this status is not ecognized by the state. The Buddhist stupa transforms the Chylgy-Dash site and its surrounding landscape into a religious worship site, which can be ecognized in the state-approved legal system. As such, further activities at the site, including its protection, can be interpreted within the framework of Law of the Republic of Tyva No. 253, 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations' from 1995 (modified in 2015) and Federal Law No. 125, 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations' from 1997.

CHYLGY-DASH AND SHARA-NUUR IN THE SOYANS' IDENTITY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Maurice Halbwachs noted that every collective memory unfolds within a spatial framework: 'It is to space—the space we occupy, traverse, have continual access to, or can at any time reconstruct in thought and imagination—that we must turn our attention. Our thought must focus on it if this or that category of remembrances is to reappear' (1980: 6–7). Following Halbwachs' suggestion, I link the collective memory of the Soyans to the clan's home landscapes. I begin by clarifying the community-homeland identity negotiations. Amongst pastoralists who live in the Saian and Altai mountainous regions of Inner Asia, one's identity is connected to their life's geography. Tyva linguist Mira Bavuu-Surun observed how the Tyva people define themselves in relation to the geography. She suggested that the Tyva have a strong sense of belonging to their own clan and homelands:

> The names given to each other by the Indigenous Tyva people on a geographic principle are interesting. The Tozhu–Tyva self-identify as Tozhu, or the Tyva of Tozhu, whilst they define the rest [of the Tyva people] as the Khemchik, inhabitants of the Khemchik area. People from central Tyva, which lies adjacent to the Yenisei River, are distinguished from the Erzin–Tes people, the Tozhu, and the Khemchik (inhabitants of the Khemchik River drainage basin), whilst they define themselves as the people of Ulug–Khem. Within the larger territories, the clan's grounds are distinguished as well. This reveals the Tyva people's acute sense of belonging with a particular clan and with a particular territory. (Bavuu-Surun 2018: 274, author's own translation)

In the case of my Soyan kin amongst whom I conducted research, clan identity is connected to current-day clan territories in southern Tyva. Different Soyan groups live in other parts of Tyva; my clan distinguishes themselves as the Soyans of Ak-Erik. When I say that I am from Ak-Erik, my Tyva interlocutors immediately connect the place to my clan as belonging to the Soyan. In my doctoral dissertation (Peemot 2021), I applied the Tyvan concept *cher törel*,

which I translated as 'land-based kinship', to define the relationship between the Tyva pastoralists with sentient nonhumans—that is, landscapes and animals. The concept *cher törel* encompasses the meanings 'those who are born in the same land' or 'those who are related through a shared belonging to one homeland'.

This observation, that the Tyva people tether their identity to their homeland, corresponds with other Indigenous peoples' understandings of their close ties to their homelands. For instance, Opaskwayak Cree researcher Stan Wilson, writing about '[t]he (literally) grounded identity of Indigenous peoples', coined the concept 'self-as-relationship' which underlies Indigenous epistemology where one learns through a complex relational network (Wilson 2001: 91). The same idea appears in the work of Elizabeth Fast, a Métis from St. François-Xavier, and Margaret Kovach, who has Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux ancestry. They wrote, 'A self that [has] a deep relationship with place, kinship, and community can be found in myriad Indigenous cultures' (Fast and Kovach 2019: 23). I draw attention to and emphasise the relationship with 'place, kinship, and community' due to its importance for, on the one hand, understanding Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies and, on the other hand, research methodology when working with Indigenous communities. Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson noted the inseparability of Indigenous ontology and epistemology, stating 'Nothing could be without being in relationship, without its context. Our systems of knowledge are built by and around and also form these relationships' (2008: 76–77).

The model 'self-as-relationship' (Wilson 2001; Fast and Kovach 2019) helped me in my research with my kin in our shared homelands. Tyva pastoralists follow an annual cycle when moving within their homeland—they move from one seasonal ground to another and regularly return to the same landscapes. This implies the landscapes' entanglement in the (hi) stories of different generations of local families. These landscape-bonded stories may follow the life geography of an individual (human or nonhuman animal) or a family's belonging with its seasonal grounds (a camping site with a dwelling, and close or far-afield pastures for livestock) over multiple generations. Some emplaced stories testify to the past of the entire clan. In my opinion, anthropologist and archaeologist Barbara Bender's definition of landscape as 'time materialising' suits the meanings landscapes carry for the pastoralists in Tyva. Bender discusses the landscapes' temporality and the human–landscape engagements, specifically the involvement of landscapes in memories and actions (2002):

> Landscape is time materialising: landscapes, like time, never stand still. […] Landscapes are created out of people's understanding and engagement with the world around them. They are always in the process of being shaped and reshaped. Being of the moment and in process, they are always temporal. They are not a record but a recording, and this recording is much more than a reflection of human agency and action; it is creative of them. Landscapes provoke memory, facilitate (or impede) action. Nor are they a recording for they are always polyvalent and multivocal. (Bender 2002: 103)

Similar to Bender who approaches landscapes as continually 'being shaped and reshaped', other scholars who researched pastoralist communities pointed out the inherent temporality of landscapes and how they are made in social engagements with the human–nonhuman

communities inhabiting them (Humphrey 1995; Takakura 2010; Fijn 2011; Pedersen 2016). Tim Ingold observed that a place owes 'its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there—to the sights, sounds, and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience' (2002 [2000]: 192). Likewise, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan emphasised social engagements between a place and those who interact with it. Tuan wrote, 'A place has a history and meaning. Place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning' (Tuan 1979: 387). In relation to pastoralist landscapes, Tuan noted, 'The nomad's world consists of places connected by a path. […] Nomads pause and establish camp at roughly the same places (pastures and water holes) year after year; the paths they follow also show little change. For nomads, the cyclical exigencies of life yield a sense of place at two scales: the camps and the far larger territory within which they move' (2001: 182). Tuan suggested various models in which movement, time, and space are bonded together (Tuan 2001: 181). The Finnish anthropologist Rani-Henrik Andersson, who works with the Lakota people, makes a similar observation about a connection between time and place: 'For many Indigenous peoples, time and place are linked through a connection to lands and waters, to places they hunt and fish, and to where their ancestors have lived and been buried' (2019: 68).

During fieldwork in Tyva in June 2019, the theme of the mining project in Shara-Nuur and the Ak-Erik Soyans' joint purpose to build the Buddhist stupa and protect their homeland have frequently occurred in conversations with my kin and interlocutors. My grandmother Irisiŋmaa Kadyp-ool shared her memories about living at the Chylgy-Dash site in the early 1950s. She mentioned that 'there were fewer snakes at Chylgy-Dash' compared with other summer camping sites along the southern shore of Lake Shara-Nuur. The only disadvantage of Chylgy-Dash, according to my grandmother, was a lack of drinking water, whereby women had to walk to the well close to the lake. In the stories I recorded from other interlocutors, the themes of the clan's belonging with the homeland and resilience against the state's politics of displacement and repression were prominent. Below I share excerpts from two conversations which took place in Shara-Nuur in June 2019:

> Our people are the Soyans of Mounts Agar and Iamaalyk and Lake Shara-Nuur, places that we see around us at the moment. Until 1932 or 1934, the Soyans lived in the great homeland of our ancestors—the Khaan Kögei Mountains which are now part of Mongolia. Our people were forced to move north, to here. They came here and settled around three lakes: Töre-Khöl, Shara-Nuur, and Bai-Khöl. After a few years, these people, who were relocated due to the border demarcation and just began building a new life here, were repressed. Many men were imprisoned. Our people experienced great misfortune. (Viacheslav Arina, b. 1959, video-recorded conversation, Shara-Nuur, Tyva, June 2019)

> In the past our people stayed on Mount Agar for winter. The spring and autumn places were by Lakes Töre-Khöl, Shara-Nuur, and Bai-Khöl. In summers, they moved to Khaan Kögei, some families lived there all year. My grandfather and his ancestors lived there. During the period of the People's Republic of Tyva, the Soyans' administrative unit was named the

> *Kögei sumu*. Since 1929, the Communist University of Workers of the East in Moscow began to educate the government officials for Tyva. These people had a purpose for Tyva to follow the USSR's politics, the politics of Stalin, and they returned to Tyva and organised the coup. Before that, the government in Tyva did not want to give our territories to Mongolia. When Salchak Toka and his supporters seized power, they gave large territories to Mongolia. To free the territories from the Tyva people, they used forced displacement. After that, the displaced people were repressed. Sandaŋmaa Soyan, the head of the Soyans' Tere-Khöl municipality which was established in the new place after relocation, was executed in 1938. (Vladimir Orus-ool, b. 1959, video-recorded conversation, Shara-Nuur, Tyva, June 2019)

These conversations demonstrate, firstly, how landscapes are understood as part of the clan's identity. Secondly, they show how people perceived losing a part of the clan's territory as a great injustice. Thirdly, they reveal how people's (hi)stories are tethered to their home landscapes. This leads to an understanding of landscapes as keepers of collective memory and life stories. These two stories may also illustrate Ingold's observation about the Indigenous people's history, which unfolds in 'their relationships with the land, in the very business of dwelling' and how '[b]oth the land and [the] living beings who inhabit it are caught up in the same, ongoing historical process' (2002 [2000]:139).

CONCLUSIONS

When discussing how the Soyans confronted the government and involved their homelands in storytelling about their clan's belonging to an endangered landscape, it is important to situate these activities within the broader context of Putin's tightening memory politics in the years preceding the temporary occupation of Crimea in 2014 and invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The first post-Soviet decade was a time when 'history itself was only now becoming possible' (Humphrey 1992: 379) and the past was critically re-assessed. After a brief period of democracy in the 1990s, Russia became a police state, favouring vertical power structures and attempts to control interethnic narratives, including identity narratives, amongst its subjects. Since Vladimir Putin was elected president in 2000, Russia's approach to its past has shifted to suit the state's ideology. Putin's Russia reinstated control over the narratives of the past and the collective memory using the same repressive tactics characteristic of the Soviet regime (for more on the politics of memory in contemporary Russia, see Miller 2012; Oushakine 2013; Sherlock 2011; Wijermars 2019; Weiss-Wendt 2021).

At the time of the events discussed in 2019, tension already existed between the state-approved version of history and Indigenous historicities. In the public sphere, traumas associated with Soviet colonisation were silenced and collective memories were perceived as dangerous. In these circumstances, the Soyans' engagement with the traumatic past, its revival in the collective memory, and the active sharing of these stories can be understood as acts of resilience. This case study, which focuses on Soyans remembering the stories of their belonging with the endangered site and the

building of a Buddhist stupa there, speaks to the ability of the homeland to safeguard the stories of its people and empower resilience, especially under a colonial and a totalitarian regime.

VICTORIA SOYAN PEEMOT
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER
INDIGENOUS STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
victoria.peemot@helsinki.fi

NOTES

1 The Tyva Republic is a part of the Russian Federation, which was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1944. The Tyva people are the ethnic majority in the republic. The Tyvan language belongs to the Turkic language family, and the region is situated between the Altai and Saian Mountain ranges of Inner Asia.

2 Specific letters of the Tyvan Cyrillic alphabet are transliterated as follows: ө – ö, ү – ü, ң – ŋ, ы – y, й – i, ч – ch, ш – sh, ж – zh, and х – kh. Vowels are short, long, or pharyngealised. Pharyngealisation is marked by the phonetic sign ʔ, as in aʔt [аът]. The ethnonyms and toponyms (Tyva, Kyzyl, Soyan, etc.) are listed in the established transcription system. The form Tyvan is used as an adjective.

3 Tyvan ethnographer Marina Mongush, who studies the history of Buddhism in Tyva, noted that Buddhism first came to the territory of Tyva as early as the First Turkic Khaganate in the sixth century. The second wave of Buddhism came to the territories of Mongolia and Tyva in the thirteenth century and coincided with Genghis Khan's expansion of the Mongolian empire, the most active period running from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. During socialism, Buddhism was suppressed and many lamas were persecuted during the Purges of the 1930s. The fall of the Soviet Union represented the beginning of the religious revival, with Buddhist temples and stupas built in various parts of Tyva. The Tyva follow the traditions of the Gelugpa School of Tibetan Buddhism, led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who visited Tyva in 1992. The Institute of Kamby Lama, the highest Buddhist authority in Tyva, was established in 1997 (Mongush 2000; Mongush 2001). A stupa is a Buddhist monument built for various purposes and which holds relics and/or sacred elements and treasures.

4 Lake Shara-Nuur is part of the Kyzyl-Chyraa municipality in the Tes-Khem province of the Tyva Republic. The municipality is also known by the name of its administrative centre—the Ak-Erik village. Sometimes, local Soyans refer to themselves as 'the Soyans of Ak-Erik'.

5 For more on the natural resources and geology of Tyva in general, see Hausen (1925) and Sarbaa (2015).

6 Sholban Kara-ool was the head of the government of the Republic of Tyva from 2007 through 2021. Since October 2021, Kara-ool has served as the deputy chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation. Kara-ool has been supported by Sergei Shoigu, minister of defence of the Russian Federation (2012–present), the longest-serving politician in the Russian government since the fall of the Soviet Union (*The Economist*, November 7, 2015). Shoigu was born in Tyva. Since Shoigu assumed leadership of the political party *Edinstvo* or 'Unity' (the predecessor to *Edinaia Rossiia* 'United Russia'), Tyva has been among the regions with the highest levels of support for the Kremlin's political policies.

7 I use the nouns stupa and its Tyvan translation *suburgan* interchangeably.

8 I provide here the name of the ethnic group as *Dukha*, following the orthography in the cited source. However, the people in question define themselves as the *Tukha* and refer to thier own language as the *Tukha* language; they also use the same definition 'Tukha' when speaking about the Tyva people in the Tyva Republic and the Tyvan-speaking people in western Mongolia (Peemot, fieldnotes and recorded conversations, fieldwork in Mongolia in summer 2023).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my gratitude to the editors of this issue and to the anonymous reviewers whose suggestions helped me to improve the article's arguments and structure. This research was supported by the University of Helsinki, the Swedish Cultural Foundation, and the Kone Foundation.

REFERENCES

Andersson, Rani-Henrik 2019. Re-Indigenizing National Parks: Toward a Theoretical Model of Re-Indigenization. *Dutkansearvvi dieđalaš áigečála* 3 (2): 64–83.

Aranchyn, Iuri 2011. *Tyva ulustuŋ maadyrlyg oruu*. Abakan: OOO Kooperativ "Zhurnalist."

Argent, Gala 2010. *At Home, with the Good Horses: Relationality, Roles, Identity and Ideology in Iron Age Inner Asia*. Unpublished PhD diss., Leicester: University of Leicester.

Bavuu-Surun, Mira 2018. *Istoriia formirovania dialektov i govorov tuvinskogo iazyka*. Unpublished Doctoral Degree Dissertaion. Novosibirsk: Institute of Philology of the Siberian Branch of the RAS.

Beahrs, Robbie O. And Victoria Soyan Peemot 2021. Nonhuman Attunements: Gifts of Music and Healing with the Masters of Taiga-Tangdy. An ethnographic film, 30:45 min.

Bender, Barbara 2002. Time and Landscape. *Current Anthropology* 43 (4): 103–112.

Charlier, Bernard 2015. *Faces of the Wolf: Managing the Human, Non-Human Boundary in Mongolia.* Leiden: Brill.

Cruikshank, Julie 1998. *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in Northern Canada.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Cruikshank, Julie 2005. *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters and Social Imagination.* Vancouver: UBC Press and Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Fijn, Natasha 2011. *Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Halbwachs, Maurice 1980. *The Collective Memory*. New York, Harper & Row Colophon Books.

Hausen, Hans Magnus 1925. *The Upper Yenissei Drainage Area. Territory of Uriankhai.* Acta Geographica 1 (1). Helsingfors: Societas geographica Fenniae.

Humphrey, Caroline 1992. The moral authority of the past in post-socialist Mongolia. *Religion, State and Society* 20 (3 & 4): 375–389.

Humphrey, Caroline and Urgunge Onon 2003 [1996]. *Shamans and Elders. Experience, Knowledge, and Power among the Daur Mongols.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ingold, Timothy 2002 [2000]. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill.* London & New York: Routledge.

Khertek, Liubov 2016. Tuvinsko-mongolskie sviazi i otnosheniia v period Tuvinskoi Narodnoi Respubliki. *Novye issledovaniia Tuvy* 3: 65–81. https://nit.tuva.asia/nit/article/view/464

Kovach, Margaret and Elizabeth Fast 2019. Community Relationships within Indigenous Methodologies. In Sweeney Windchief and Timothy San Pedro (eds). *Applying Indigenous Research Methods: Storying with Peoples and Communities.* New York: Routledge.

Küçüküstel, Selcen 2021. *Embracing Landscape: Living With Reindeer and Hunting Among Spirits in South Siberia.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Lamazhaa, Chimiza and Nadezhda Suvandii 2021. *Dagylga: Tuvinskie Obriady Osviashcheniia v XXI veke*. Krasnoyarsk: OOO Izdatel'stvo "Offset".

Miller, Alexei 2012. The Turns of Russian Historical Politics, from Perestroika to 2011. In Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman (eds). *The Convolutions of Historical Politics*. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Mongush, Marina 1992. *Lamaizm v Tuve. Istoriko-etnograficheskoe issledovanie*. Kyzyl: Tuvinskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo.

Mongush, Marina 2001. *Istoriia Buddkhisma v Tuve (vtoraia polovina XVIII–konets XX v.).* Novosibirsk: Nauka.

Mongush, Marina 2006. Modern Tuvan Identity. *Inner Asia* 8: 275–296.

Otroshchenko, Ivanna 2015. Iz istorii vzaimootnoshenii TNR i MNR: problema vozvrashcheniia "chasti Tuvinskogo naroda. *Novye issledovnia Tuvy* 3: 27–40. https://nit.tuva.asia/nit/article/view/4

Oushakine, Serguei 2013. Remembering in Public: On the Affective Management Of History. *Ab Imperio* 1 (1): 269–302. https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2013.0000

Pedersen, Morten Axel 2016. Moving to Remain the Same: An Anthropological Theory of Nomadism. In Pierre Charbonnier, Gildas Salmon and Peter Skafish (eds). *Comparative Metaphysics Ontology After Anthropology.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Peemot, Victoria S. 2021. The Horse in My Blood: Human-Nonhuman Kinship in the Sayan and Altay Mountains, Inner Asia. Unpublished PhD diss., Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Potapov, Leonid 1969. *Ocherki narodnogo byta tuvintsev*. Moskva: Nauka.

Sarbaa, Iakov 2015. *Geologiia Tuvy*. Kyzyl: TuvIKOPR SO RAN.

San Pedro, Timothy and Valerie Kinloch 2017. Toward Projects in Humanization: Research on Co-Creating and Sustaining Dialogic Relationships. *American Educational Research Journal* 54 (1): 373–394. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216671210

Sherlock, Thomas 2011. Confronting the Stalinist Past: The Politics of Memory in Russia. *The Washington Quarterly* 34 (2): 93–109. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2011.562115

Takakura, Hiroki 2010. The Social and Symbolic Construction of Alaas Landscapes in the Siberian Forest among the Sakha. *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 28: 51–69.

The Economist 2015. 'Russia's Sergei Shoigu: Master of Emergencies'. November 15, 417 (8963): 45–47. https://www.economist.com/europe/2015/11/07/master-of-emergencies

Tuan, Yi-Fu 1979. Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective. In Stephen Gale and Gunnar Olsson (eds). *Philosophy in Geography*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Tuan, Yi-Fu 2001 [1977]. *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Weiss-Wendt, Anton 2021. *Putin's Russia and the Falsification of History: Reasserting Control over the Past.* London: Bloomsbury.

Wijermars, Mariëlle 2019. *Memory Politics in Contemporary Russia: Television, Cinema and the State.* New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351007207

BOOK FORUM: *THE DAWN OF EVERYTHING*

Ville Laakkonen

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK FORUM ON *THE DAWN OF EVERYTHING: A NEW HISTORY OF HUMANITY*

Anthropology has been described, amongst other things, as 'the study of what makes us human' (American Anthropological Association 2023), 'the science of human beings' (Merriam–Webster Dictionary 2023), and 'the comparative study of common sense' (Herzfeld 2001: x). *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, by David Graeber and David Wengrow (2021), offers us an important suggestion of what 'being human' means: being creative and curious. Their argument is also common-sensical in that it brings to the fore something which is incredibly obvious when stated out loud, namely, that things—politics, economics, or society at large—*do not have to be the way they are*. Inequality, coercion, and hierarchy are unnecessary. That history of humanity is one of experimentation, polyphony, and imagination is, at the same time, a bold and much-needed argument at a time of seeming inevitability, of imminent ecological disaster, the mass extinction of species, dramatic world-wide disparities in wealth, health, and security, and a global political hegemony which gives us very little hope for something better. Furthermore, in such a world, a different reading of what we as humans are capable of—and, indeed, *can do*—is a much-needed alternative to waiting out the next wildfire, the next pandemic, the next famine, the next economic collapse, or the next fascist takeover. At the same time, *The Dawn of Everything* is not only an argument for different political imaginaries, but a scholarly endeavour. Graeber and Wengrow, an anthropologist and an archaeologist, respectively, present a massive, systematically catalogued array of ethnographic and archaeological knowledge to support their case. Therefore, this book challenges us, as anthropologists and archaeologists, to not only critically examine what we know and think about the world, but also what the wider societal implications are of whatever we have learnt through our research.

This forum grew from the book launch of *The Dawn of Everything*'s Finnish translation (2022) in Helsinki in September 2022. Some of the contributors attended the launch, some have otherwise been engaged with the book for far longer, and some both. In his contribution, Matti Eräsaari (University of Helsinki) traces how Graeber and Wengrow go about reaching what they have set out to accomplish. As such, Eräsaari situates the book in the wider context of writings on inequality aimed at general audiences—Yuval Noah Harari, Jared Diamond, Francis Fukuyama, and Thomas Piketty—examining the argument presented within the tension between conservative social theory and the authors' more radical, and more open-ended,

vision of humanity. This juxtaposition is important, as *The Dawn of Everything*'s stated aim is to challenge the conventional wisdom of a broad strokes popular approach to historiography. Khalil Betz-Heinemann (University of Helsinki) points out how the book is a companion on the journey to affording our past as human beings respect, ultimately granting our ancestors the historical agency they deserve in an ongoing dialogue between peoples, on the one hand, and between the past and the present, on the other. He encourages us to observe the ways of doing differently, such as through mutual aid initiatives, which already help us to think differently about our political possibilities and imaginative potential. To engage in this kind of work is also a form of emergency preparedness for 'when the structuring relations of business-as-usual start to reveal themselves as incompetent, unjust, and ineffective'.

Linda Hulin (University of Oxford) and Veronica Walker Vadillo (University of Helsinki) offer us an archaeological view on Graeber and Wengrow's work, a maritime archaeological view to be exact. 'Thinking from water', they examine the book's notion of cyclical and seasonal changes in social organisation against the backdrop of the 'ever-changing nature of maritime landscapes'. Hulin and Walker Vadillo argue that, in the flow of water worlds, social organisation has only partially depended on trade and more likely on livelihood strategies following the seasonal patterns of fish. They point out that waterways are sites of connectivity rather than obstacles, and the communities of practice formed around them have implications for social organisation beyond 'just' the coastline. Finally, Tuomas Tammisto (Tampere University) takes *The Dawn of Everything*'s criticism of evolutionary accounts of progress from simpler forms of social organisation to more complex forms, and discusses sharing as a complex rather than simple or 'natural' activity, as well as one which maintains qualitative social relations through 'hard work'. This 'hard work' of building and maintaining egalitarian relations, he argues, is a skill learnt through trial and error. Social organisation is necessarily complicated and, if anything, state formations and commodity exchanges—previously seen as the most complex forms of organisation—tend to work towards simplification rather than complexity.

What all four contributions point to is that *The Dawn of Everything* is, first and foremost, a generative book. It makes you think. Graeber and Wengrow's work is not about providing answers, but about inspiring inquiry, including inquiries like the ones the contributors to this forum have engaged in from their own scholarly backgrounds. As anthropologists and archaeologists, and as human beings ourselves, these inquiries and the inquiries they, in turn, have the potential to inspire are perhaps the most enduring legacy of the book.

VILLE LAAKKONEN
PHD. RESEARCHER
SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
TAMPERE UNIVERSITY
ville.laakkonen@tuni.fi

REFERENCES

American Anthropological Association 2023. What is Anthropology? *American Anthropological Association Website*. https://americananthro.org/learn-teach/what-is-anthropology/. <Accessed 29 August 2023>

Graeber, David and David Wengrow 2021. *A Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. London: Penguin.

Graeber, David and David Wengrow 2022. *Alussa oli… Ihmiskunnan uusi historia*. Translated by Anna Tuomikoski. Helsinki: Teos.

Herzfeld, Michael 2001. *Anthropology: Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society*. Malden: Blackwell.

Merriam–Webster Dictionary 2023. Anthropology. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary Website*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anthropology. <Accessed 29 August 2023>

Matti Eräsaari

THE DAWN OF EVERYTHING: SOCIAL SCIENCE WITH A MISSION

The Dawn of Everything is a general-audience social science book with a mission. In a nutshell, the book argues against evolutionary accounts that view societal development as a trade-off involving increased social complexity, increased social control, and the loss of egalitarian ideals. Since Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Graeber and Wengrow argue, Western thought has followed a 'myth' which sees inequality and coercion as necessary byproducts of the transition to higher states of civilisation. Laying out a broad array of recent archaeological and classic anthropological evidence, the authors argue that unilineal accounts of world history ignore too much evidence to the contrary to be convincing.

Given the above, in what follows, I primarily discuss the strategies employed by the authors. But, let me begin with a clear pronouncement: I think this is a welcome publication that makes accessible a great deal of disciplinary knowledge that has not been made as widely available to the general public as we anthropologists would like to think we have. Too often, the task of writing broad accounts of human sociality has been left to narrow-minded dilettantes, whilst top-notch theorists have instead pursued novelties. I, therefore, highly value the thought, but also the vast amount of work necessary to produce this volume in a way that stands a genuine chance of reaching audiences not accustomed to reading the professional literature of archaeologists and anthropologists.

But, how does the book go about accomplishing this task?

The Dawn of Everything follows what Gregory Schrempp (2012) has described as the most popular strategy in popular science writing, the notion of replacing 'myth' with 'science'. From anthropology's point of view, this might even be an odd strategic choice, insofar as anthropology has traditionally placed science on a shared trajectory with myth instead of embarking on myth-busting missions. But, of course, the myths busted herein are our own, which makes all the difference. *The Dawn of Everything* was quite obviously positioned 'against' bestsellers such as Yuval Noah Harari's *Sapiens*, Jared Diamond's *The World Until Yesterday*, or Francis Fukuyama's *The Origins of Political Order.*

The book's critique follows some familiar paths laid out by Marshall Sahlins and Graeber's other Chicago teachers. In fact, one could argue that most of the core points have been largely accepted, at least within anthropology, but less effectively so amongst wider reading audiences. It is often to this effect that the book deploys the 'harder' data of archaeology, accompanied by its myth-slaying approach. This strategic choice becomes particularly apparent if one compares *The Dawn of Everything* to another recent popular account of 'how we got here' – Thomas Piketty's *Capital and Ideology* (2020), a book written on the premise that 'every human society must justify its inequalities' (op. cit.: 1). Following Piketty's argument, the theoretical position according to which inequality and violent coercion are unavoidable side effects of development ought to be understood as an ideological construction. Graeber and Wengrow, surprisingly, make no such claim; instead, they are predominantly content to treat this construction as false knowledge.

Perhaps the relative absence of ideological claims is also a consequence of the way the book's core argument is structured. Specifically, this is not a book with a strong storyline. Unlike the accounts ('myths') of human progress Graeber and Wengrow challenge, they offer no simplified master narrative. Instead of outlining a unilineal developmental path—let alone an underlying human nature—they amass evidence against such generalisations. Human societies are not driven to such outcomes, but show evidence of actually collectively contemplating the outcomes of different social and political arrangements, even consciously experimenting with communal life. These varied and scattered cases do not lend themselves to a unified account. Rather, the data arrangement employed by the authors is often more reminiscent of the older 'amongthas' style within anthropology, which consequently subjects the grand development narratives to a form of criticism at times reminiscent of what Mary Douglas (2004 [1970]: xxxvii) once called 'bongo-bongoism': the rejection of any scientific generalisation on the basis that 'it doesn't apply to the Bong-Bongo'. But where the Bongoist position challenges generalisations with exceptions, *The Dawn of Everything* undertakes the hard work of collecting a body of evidence.

Yet, the point the authors recurrently make remains humble: 'we simply cannot know'. This is not a sterile position from which to argue: the authors successfully show that the 'agricultural revolution' was neither abrupt nor the hinge-like point in human history it is often ascribed; that prehistoric human populations were quite capable of recognising social injustice and acting upon it; that social concentrations comparable to urbanisation can also be abandoned when things go wrong; and that seasonality offers a fruitful starting point from which to study such ideas. Importantly, the authors also make the case for introducing non-European commentary and a critique of European social thought that far predates most established accounts. European Enlightenment, they argue, owes much more to indigenous American thought than is commonly acknowledged.

Having said that, the question remains: Will this approach allow *The Dawn of Everything* to convince the unconverted? The book obviously does enough to make its readers doubt the teleological necessity of inequality, violence, and authoritarianism. But, will 500+ pages of archaeological and anthropological evidence compiled in opposition to conservative social theory achieve its goal? Will it provide a rallying point from which to convince a 'general reading public' that social evolutionary theories turning vice into necessity ought to be abandoned in favour of better narratives? Graeber's *Debt* (2011), for example, managed to do something like that. *Debt* makes claims I have heard echoed by experts, activists, and journalists in meetings, public policy debates, and interviews. Whether *The Dawn of Everything* can accomplish something similar remains to be seen.

MATTI ERÄSAARI
UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
matti.erasaari@helsinki.fi

REFERENCES

Douglas, Mary 2004 (1970). *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. London: Routledge.

Piketty, Thomas 2020. *Capital and Ideology*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Schrempp, Gregory 2012. *The Ancient Mythology of Modern Science: A Mythologist Looks (Seriously) at Popular Science Writing*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Khalil 'Avi' Betz-Heinemann

Readying and Restructuring Relations and Imaginations: An essay on Graeber, David and David Wengrow 2021. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. London: Penguin/Allen Lane. ISBN: 9780374157357

The book *The Dawn of Everything* is an introduction to some of the diversity and surprising complexity of ancestral social lives written in an accessible, yet academic fashion. The book also develops a theory of human development as emerging from encounters between peoples. This sits in contrast to the idea of development as driven by isolated eureka moments at each stage of social evolution. As Bateson (2021) (mentioned in the book's acknowledgements) noted, 'Stage theory… is BS'. In this review, I introduce what I think is one of the theoretical premises of the book in order to then focus on the book's decentring of origin myths as driving human development. In doing so, I touch upon how the book's relational approach differs from the more dominant approach in science. I then consider a number of categories used in the book, such as farming, to touch upon how categories are mobilised in scientific research and the implications of that mobilisation. I follow this by using a recent Netflix documentary series on ancient peoples and explore how ideas such as (pre)history are politically mobilised. I conclude by examining what the authors might mean when they invoke imagination.

PREMISE AND THEORY

Before this book came out, I remember reading a precursor article on the myth of 'the childhood of man' (Wengrow and Graeber 2015). It set my imagination on fire. At the time, I was researching contemporary hunting, which inspired me to familiarise myself with the archaeological evidence of my fieldwork site and the histories of hunting in the region. I had already realised how deeply enveloped contemporary hunting is in interpretations of our ancestral past. However, Wengrow and Graeber opened up a new and generative set of questions for me as a doctoral student of social anthropology, offering a new and generative perspective for considering human–animal relations across millennia.[1] When the full book, *The Dawn of Everything*, came out, it cast a further 692 pages of light onto a whole litany of openings to other (pre)historic peoples through their archaeological traces, from mammoth monuments (Graeber and Wengrow 2022: 87–92) to the mega sites of Ukraine (288–297), from ancient luxury social housing (ibid 337–345) to the Great Village of Natchez (ibid 392–398).

From a philosophical standpoint, I find Plato's allegory of the cave helpful in unpacking what some of these archaeological traces mean. In this allegory, humans remain chained, watching a dance of shadows on a cave wall mistaking them for reality. The allegory's lesson is not to confuse shadows with reality, but to instead free ourselves through Plato's reason from the cave and seek reality above ground. By contrast, the authors of *The Dawn of Everything* reject the more recent version of this image courtesy of Rousseau. This image shows humanity rushing headlong into this cave of chains and shadows, away from their true origins in a paradise before history and civilisation (Graeber and Wengrow 2022: 67). The authors line up 1137 references to argue there is no true reality from which humanity has fallen. However, the authors do not believe we should, thus, reject the idea of

seeking truths in an epistemological fashion nor reject generalisation in its entirety. Of course, as the authors go to great lengths to explain, nor should we wait for eureka moments or great men (ibid 27) to lift us out of the cave we find ourselves stuck in. Instead, we can feel around and grasp at truths all around us to find that our ancestors were not stuck in a primordial cave before history.

Trained in social anthropology, genetics, and fine art and having been on the road for as long as I can remember, I was already familiar with different ways of life before reading this book. What these authors did was open up this recognition across thousands and thousands of years, covering various (pre) historic ancestors. In doing so, they also allow me to reconsider what prehistoric assumptions are entrenched in our understanding of life today. Thus, I think even the most reflexive social anthropologist must reconsider some of the assumptions they have as they read this book. All the authors really ask of readers, however, is to stop primitivising, exoticising, simplifying, naturalising, dehistoricising, and depoliticising the past through assuming the further back you go the simpler or more stupid people were and then egocentrically assuming all roads lead to now. Because, when you pause from this incessant othering and afford our supposed 'prehistoric' ancestors a little respect, a vast subaltern network of catacombs comes to hand.[2] This book serves as a companion to help to us do this.

RELATIONS AND TRENDS

The book spans twelve chapters, each with titled subsections. Pieced together, they develop multiple lines of enquiry theorising some relations structuring different human ways of living. Hence, the theory is that, whilst one cannot entirely know what is, one can bring together knowledge to theorise how certain relations extending from different ontological levels shape life around us. Smaligo (2022) offers a sound summary of the inspirations and implications of searching for these structuring relations. In doing so, he notes the authors' indebtedness in this approach to Bhaskar in their 'search for structures', but this is not the structures of structuralism and it is also not a 'search for laws' (ibid). Neither, I would add, is this poststructuralism being advocated. Instead, as I understand it, we can talk of a theory of *structuring relations*, which involves centring the relationship between past and present as one of an ever-changing dialogue, memory, and learning toward reconfiguring who we are, along with our relations with each other as agents. This understanding replaces seeing ourselves as subjects of ongoing relational structures, or stuck in some weird search for a universal underlying order, or damned to poststructuralist hell.

Briefly, the authors attempt to outline how peoples have learnt through encountering each other, as persons and groups, which crucially includes learning with our ancestors, regenerating or resisting their endeavours, and restructuring our relations today. At the same time, being attuned to differences in how we organise across different seasons and different peoples doing and having done this in various ways, rather than as part of some monolithic humanity on a one-track journey to now. I would add, I find no appeal to or possibility of humanity achieving a universal structure or stage of structure in the future either. Together these positions form a binary based on a vapid appreciation of the human condition enabling the colonisation of time as a whole. The authors, by contrast, seek to research and show rather than state a theory absent context by exploring

the archaeological case studies they present in their book and then theorising how to make sense of them. One of the more obvious threads they use to do this is a questioning of origin myths.

The authors start with a reflection on the popular inquiry into 'the origins of inequality', which itself represented an initial dialogue between the two authors leading to this book (Graeber and Wengrow 2022: 493). The authors note that, in trying to answer the question and tracing the question's history, they realised that this question presupposes that before civilisation a stage of equality existed, a savage stage, whether noble, stupid, or brutish. Crucially, this savage stage is understood to directly precede civilisation; but, with the eureka moment of the agricultural revolution, the civilisation stage could begin. This stage was accompanied by the development of social complexity, settlements, a coercive hierarchy, and cities. The authors deliver this book as a demonstration that the evidence does not reflect this story and the question itself was never based on any evidence from any specific case. By doing so, they decentre the concept of an origin of civilisation and origin more broadly, even if they might for purposes of communication descriptively fall back on using the plural 'origins' on occasion to point to examples that make their case. The authors then proceed to outline how the questions of the origin of cultures (ibid chapter 4), the origin of agriculture (ibid chapters 6 and 7), and the origin of the state (ibid chapter 10) are also flawed.

I think the critique of the concept of an origin is already implicit in the title of the book. I read the repurposing of Eliade's phrase for the title (ibid 496) to reflect the Levi Straussian tradition of dual meanings for book titles.[3] In this light, the book's title refers to it being a critique of the idea of dawns of everything (origin myths that define everything that comes after them, e.g., agricultural revolution as the dawn of civilisation). The title is also about the importance of it *dawning* on us that we are not locked into these mythical dawns having to await the next eureka moment to steer us to the next dawn or stage. This decentring of an origin or eureka moment as driving human development is not left simply as a critique by the authors. Whilst they do not suggest any alternative future blueprints in place of this critique, they do theorise how people have developed. The authors theorise that encounters, rather than moments of genius,[4] play a crucial role in human development, whether in the form of dialogues (ibid chapter 2) or schismogenesis (ibid chapters 2 and 5).[5] This comes from the authors attempting to make sense of trenches full of archaeological traces that do not fit the diffusionist and evolutionist theories normally used.

In their digging, the authors do not find object-orientated lineages of progress extending outwards as branches of an 'undying tree of life' stemming from a singular trunk or stuck origin point.[6] This goes against the grain of much scientific writing, which looks retrospectively at a mangle of moments and tidies them up so that it looks like they make sense as a linear sequence of stages progressing from original hypothesis to final conclusion (Pickering 1992, 1995). The book suggests leaving this primitive style of thinking to superhero comics. Otherwise, we end up believing in the super genius, super gene, super man, super culture, or super civilisation, which cannot explain the archaeological evidence. In addition, this way of thinking justifies falsely naturalising claims to life as the private property of the progenitor via the continued conflation of property deeds with biological inheritance, leaving no space for a workable theory of intergenerational

learning (Waddington 2014; Ingold 2022). In other words, 'Stage theory is… colonial as hell' (Bateson 2021).

Coming back to the question of the origins of inequality, the authors also take issue with how the concept of inequality is mobilised given the myths of eureka origins and subsequent stages. Specifically in terms of how inequality frames 'social problems appropriate to an age of technocratic reformers, who assume from the outset that no real vision of social transformation is even on the table' (Graeber and Wengrow 2022: 6). This reflects my experience teaching a public health programme, where I was at first expected to teach students to pick a variable defined in a way salient in the present and project an average of it over the whole of time. This is quite disempowering because it does not enable students, many of whom are health practitioners, to ground their research in their lived experience. It dislocates their learning from a tangible reality and from recognising their agency. Instead, science becomes a practise of everyone measuring alienated variables and identifying trends, but with little means to connect them to what is happening on the ground. The one option they have is to fight it out to have their policy suggestions heard in the ether or to obtain the proper credentials to proceed to the next stage of their career development.

In addition, this logic misses plurality and prioritises what is dominant today—a social structure of ongoing coercive authority. For example, the authors introduce how double morphology (ibid 115), seasonal variability (ibid 227), and heterarchy (ibid 631) have played an important role in human social life and are highly generative for problem solving when considering challenges today, yet these have remained on the periphery of social science. The authors provide some reasons for why they have remained at the periphery (ibid 98–102). I think it is also in part because they disappear in averaged trends and science that prioritise a single ethnocentric present as the pinnacle by which to arbitrate the whole of time. We have probably all encountered a more familiar version of this logic as the oft-repeated phrase 'humans cause global warming'. Again, this kind of belief mystifies the different ways various peoples do things and hides the structuring relations that enabled global warming. To summarise, the kind of logic that centres on inequality reinforces the idea that what is easily quantifiable about humans across space and time (from an ethnocentric standpoint) is, therefore, basically what humanity is on average. Therefore, it is basically what humanity and its development amount to and thus probably has some underlying prehistoric primitive origin in the microbiology and micropolitics of being a savage—that is, most popular science explanations of everything.

FARMING AND CATEGORIES

This brings me to the chapter titled 'The Ecology of Freedom' (ibid chapter 7), which uses the example of farming to drive the point of no origin home. Rather than archaeological traces of farming reflecting a linear story unfolding from a revolutionary moment, in fact, as they put it, farming 'hopped, tumbled, and bluffed its way around the world' (ibid 249). This is indeed unsurprising once the blindfold of looking for an origin is cast off. The authors, in fact, could have gone much further and 'explored the distinction between horticulture and agriculture more fully' (Smaje 2021) or indeed considered whether farming is the most appropriate categorical generalisation into which very different practices and associated politics and economies can be swept together. In particular,

in light of the etymological history of the word 'farm' being related to the idea of taxable and rentable units. If anything, it is the category of farming that has bluffed its way into urban cosmologies in such a way that it continues to be used to mistakenly try to deny that 'the peasant food web primarily feeds the world today' (ETC Group 2022: 6). It is rather absurd that these practices share a category called farming with the industrial food chain based on mining land and sea rather than having anything to do with the image of farming broadly held.

A similar problem arises in labelling people hunter-gatherers. This again reproduces the same issues highlighted above, where the overall implication at first seems to be that techniques of farming or hunting share a similarity or continuity and it is the organisational contexts that change and reshape these techniques. I disagree. The techniques involved in hunting or farming vary dramatically, just as they do in hunting. From the perspective of my doctoral research (Betz-Heinemann 2018: 23, 2021), both the techniques and organisational contexts of hunting are quite different at all scales, as are their consequences, observations which extend to my current fieldwork in farming as well. Graeber and Wengrow (2022: 241) note a similar conclusion. There is, therefore, no natural category of hunting or farming even if popularly held. But, taking for granted a precise category feeds into origin myths. In that sense, farming and hunting are social categories pretending they are not. This is not just a pedantic point. If you are familiar with any land-based struggle almost anywhere in the world, the politics and economics of who or what are categorised as farmer, hunter, nature, and so on and the mythological origin stories that accompany them, shape entire biomes, including us. Thus, the chapter on the ecology of freedom is crucial for peasants, landworkers, farmers, and others today. As such, farmers and the myths about agriculture, in particular, represent a leading sock puppet used to justify and frame the industrial food chain as civilised.

Hence, I am not critiquing the use of the idea of farming in *The Dawn of Everything* so much as drawing attention to how it is mobilised. In a precursor to this book, Graeber (2007) argued that the Zapatistas understood the issues related to using generalising terms, in their case, 'democracy'; but instead of standing on the sidelines critiquing it (or embracing it as given), through their practice they appropriate it in a way that effectively builds pragmatic solidarity. In the same spirit, I read the book as employing many categories including farming, history, and science. For example, the authors explicitly treat history as a set of dialogues, not simply as evidence and facts. If anything, this is what makes this book 'anarchist' in precisely that it does not tell you what farming is or what history is amongst others. It brings the reader into the dialogues that mobilise these categories. At most, it seems to me that the authors hope to inspire the realisation that 'we' each and together have the capacity to do and are not simply subject to phenomenon. Thus, it would make no sense to write a book that told you what the one history is or to provide one blueprint for what to do in light of it.

Mobilising (Pre)History

This brings me to the importance of the concept of myth and the different ways it can be mobilised as part of an understanding of (pre) history with its political implications. Netflix released a new documentary series called *Ancient Apocalypse* by Graham Hancock (2022). This series claims to mobilise myths about (pre) history against an established archaeological science which ignores them to inform their interpretations of the past. It does this by

pitching Hancock as providing the eureka moment of enlightenment, a man on a mission against all odds of a civilisation that has fallen, just like the great men of ancient times who he supposes brought civilisation to the primitives the last time there was a worldwide crisis. As *The Dawn of Everything* demonstrates, there is quite evidently a problem with current popular narratives of (pre)history, but the leading writers are not actually from 'the archaeological establishment' (Harari, Diamond, Pinker, etc.) nor is there one tradition in archaeological science as is patently obvious from the existence of the book and the many sources from which it draws. In addition, the narrative Hancock uses, whilst claiming to be antiestablishmentarian, has sold many books, received much media attention, and reiterates a story as old as Adam and Eve.

I find Graeber's (2018) observation regarding the movement of the political ground today rather helpful here. Given that our relationship with distant ancestors may be shifting, this also means recognising that (pre)history can be mobilised to suit the needs of reactionary antiestablishmentarians like Hancock. This represents a common challenge faced by those familiar with popular mobilisations and uprisings on the ground (Collective 2014, 2018). People unfamiliar with expressing themselves politically but who sense something unfair is happening are easily co-opted by reactionary elements. At the same time, those who work in the attention economy capitalise on the noise that can be made from reducing the multiplicity of such situations down to false dichotomies such as pro- or antiestablishment. In doing so, they feed the dichotomy and whoever benefits from either side of it. *The Dawn of Everything* invites us to educate ourselves away from rushing to either side, but still recognise that something is quite wrong. To summarise, I found it empowering to reclaim my imagination and engage in dialogues that support others to do so.

POSSIBILITY LABORATORIES

Having hosted a panel at the European Association of Social Anthropologists' 2022 conference on *The Dawn of Everything*, engaged in reading groups and forums, and gifted or inspired friends and family to read the book, numerous interesting conversations have ensued. One question has been what the book means today? One key answer has been to appreciate how important imagination is to our present situations and how that imagination shapes the way we relate to the alternative lives of our ancestors. As the authors note:

> The fact that we find it hard to imagine how such an alternative life could be endlessly engaging and interesting is perhaps more a reflection on the limits of our imagination than on the life itself. (…) If social scientists today continue to reduce past generations to simplistic, two-dimensional caricatures… The actual result is to impoverish history—and, as a consequence, to impoverish our sense of possibility. (Ibid 21–22)

Taking the lead from one of the book's authors, Graeber, who differentiates imaginative identification and immanent imagination (Vansintjan 2021), the book expresses both of these imaginative capacities together. Imaginative identification acknowledges our ancestors' cognitive and social capacities, including in some cases having more fruitful imaginations, rather than othering them by mistakenly treating them as stupid and devoid of imagination. Immanent imagination opens up

considering what our ancestors' social lives were possibly like rather than remaining confined to just-so stories. This involves dismantling these just-so stories and then openly imagining what actually might have been happening, starting from a point of imaginative identification rooted in archaeological data.

I raise this issue because, in the wake of the first lockdowns, in response to the current pandemic, one of the authors, Graeber, noted that the 2008 global crisis and the crisis that ensued with the current pandemic, both involved moments of questioning just-so stories and the status quo they justify. However, Graeber (2021) notes that this window was then shut after the 2008 crisis and 'most of us' went back to business as usual. Graeber then hoped for us that we would not return to business-as-usual after the 2020 pandemic lockdowns, since such moments of crisis in business-as-usual offer an opportunity for new possibilities to emerge. However, if we take the differentiation between imaginative identification and immanent imagination, then I think the phenomenon of enthrallment is missing from Graeber's characterisation of what happens in the wake of moments of crisis. Enthrallment is what happens when you become a follower of an immanent imagination lacking imaginative identification.

One key example I am familiar with is B*tcoin,[7] having myself presented at their annual conference in 2012 and being pushed off stage for introducing how Graeber's work on debt might help b*tcoin participants do some imaginative identification. B*tcoin began in 2009 on the back of the 2008 crisis and was one of a number of promises based on an immanent imagination of a world without central banks. Many other promises using a similar recipe have occurred since then, including the release of the aforementioned Netflix documentary series *Ancient Apocalypse*. But this kind of imagination lacks imaginative identification in the sense that what is imagined excludes any care for people who suffer its consequences, excludes learning from economic traces of past peoples, or all of the dangerous externalities involved. Thus, in reclaiming our imaginations, we should ensure involving both immanent imagination and imaginative identification, not just appeal to imagination more broadly. Otherwise, we can get stuck in the promises that immanent imagination offers on its own. In that spirit, if there is a proposal of 'what to do' in the book, it is to combine both kinds of imagination to 'foster political self-consciousness and laboratories of social possibility' (Graeber and Wengrow 2022: 117).

In my understanding, these laboratories are where different experiments in social possibility are played with, including creative imaginaries as well as latent practises. Expanding beyond that, Graeber indicates that the windows of possibility open up in moments of crisis in the status quo—when the structuring relations of business-as-usual begin to reveal themselves as incompetent, unjust, and ineffective—whereby people find themselves using these experiments to organise their lives. As Machiavelli indicated, we 'the people' are subject to lords and luck unless we prepare ourselves in advance for moments of misfortune (Sanbonmatsu 2004: 132). You can see versions of this in practise today in your specific location or across locations between which you move. For example, there are probably some stereotypical emergency preparedness measures such as fire engines, emergency hospitals, lifeboats, signposts towards a safe places or bunkers, flood overflows, and firebreaks in forests amongst others. However, in addition to these 'hard measures', you might also find 'soft measures' like a community plan that defines how your group of people will

communicate, organise, and lead themselves and help others in the event of an earthquake or a military invasion. You can find work in the anthropology of preparedness studies in which forms of power are identified as implicated in these kinds of measures. My particular favourite lies in a study of birds and disease (Keck 2020).

However, perhaps at a more globally familiar level of experiencing crisis was during the initial responses to the pandemic. What was important was who you decided to listen to, how knowledge about the situation was sourced and evaluated, who controlled communications, how resources were shared, who you trusted, and how relations of power and authority structured these relations. These then largely depend upon what groundwork has already been laid beforehand. Some laboratories of possibility based on an imaginative identification and immanent imagination were experimented with and expressed themselves. For example, but not exclusively, within the vast self-organising mutual aid networks that formed. Broadly speaking, however, latent relationships, practises, and ideas based on different social possibilities did not become the new normal. Nonetheless, they did provide practise and education for many in experiencing new possibilities if only fleetingly. However, in IWW Wobbly language, more base building is required. Or, as Bateson (2022: 990) puts it, 'linear managing or controlling of the direction of change may appear desirable, [however] tending to how [we] become ready allows for pathways of possibility previously unimagined'.

In other words, until we engage in experimenting more extensively with our social possibilities through education and practice whilst pushing our imaginations, then maybe we are not ready to become unstuck from business-as-usual or fall under some thrall, and no amount of policy policing will change that. No one knows the answer, but everyone can get ready to be surprised!

GETTING READY

To get ready, however, does not mean to stop struggling. To get an education, does not mean getting a schooling. Instead, it is precisely through experimenting in workplaces, leisure spaces, at home and wherever we come together with others that we can learn from practice, from trial and error, to discover new rules-of-thumb for new social possibilities. However, as Graeber (2007) has noted, based on his experiences of experimenting, 'Revolutionary theory, it seems to me, has in many fronts advanced much less quickly than revolutionary practice'. In that vein I want to conclude this book-review-cum-essay by coming back around to Bhaskar and how some simple theory can liberate the imagination. At the heart of their philosophy is the epistemic fallacy (Bhaskar and Hartwig 2016). This is the conflation of what is with what you partially know about what is. This is done when one conflates what happens in a laboratory with what happens outside it, what is responded to on a survey with the lives of the people who responded, big data with the real world, a photograph of Earth with Earth, the constructed icons of savings lives with qualities of existence itself, between models, systems, information, code and lived experience (Cayley 2021).[8]

When you collapse the space between these you not only confuse 'the map with the territory' but you also start to use policy and policing violence to discipline the terrain in an attempt to make it fit the map. One also precludes other maps, ways of thinking and representing the terrain, as *The Dawn of Everything* seeks to address with regards to telling the stories of

our ancestors. But perhaps most importantly one builds a wall between people and the 'transcendent other', the unknown, our shared ontology. In this situation there is no room for allowing ourselves to be surprised, and so there is no room for imagination. This is because the acknowledgement of the epistemic fallacy leads to the observation that there is a transcendent 'other' that is always beyond us, but at the same time because we are all connected through it in some way, it is also what we all share in common. It is in realizing this space between the two that revolutionary imagination has the grace to grow. Therein is the beauty, in the creative surprises that can emerge from encountering *an*other, to whom we also connected.

KHALIL 'AVI' BETZ-HEINEMANN
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
avikhalil@pm.me

NOTES

1 Whilst waiting for this essay to be published, I came across a fantastic critique of how gender and family are mobilised in *The Dawn of Everything* (Walters 2023), which reminded me that I was also inspired during my thesis to analyse the archaeological literature on the different idols and archaeological traces of dwellings in Cyprus. I concluded that, prior to binary gendered idols and the social life that centred a gender binary, artefacts in Cyprus suggest life was not structured or focussed on binary gender, but instead on an ancient nonbinary notion of the individual (Betz-Heinemann 2018: 87–90, 95).

2 I draw upon the metaphor of a warren of caves in relation to Plato's allegory from Richardson's book *Epidemic Illusions: On the coloniality of global public health* (2020).

3 In reference to Levi Strauss' book, *The Savage Mind*, which can be read in multiple ways.

4 The video essay 'The Creativity Delusion: Brains, Geniuses and Originality' summarises the issues with the idea of genius (TilVids 2022).

5 Schismogenesis 'describes how societies in contact with each other end up joined within a common system of differences, even as they attempt to distinguish themselves from one another' (Graeber and Wengrow 2022: 180).

6 I presented at the same EASA 2022 conference on why the 'tree of life' concept is rooted in colonial ideas of belonging and, thus, it is time for this tree to die, like all living trees do (Betz-Heinemann 2022).

7 B*tcoin is a currency built on hype. Thus, I feel writing about it is contributes to that hype, which I would rather not do. Hence, the asterisk.

8 I would argue it also includes those who believe writing is culture, reality is discourse, culture is text etc. Where one ultimately ends up trying to do system change through attempting to shift the narrative.

REFERENCES

Ancient Apocalypse 2022. Netflix. https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/81211003 <Accessed 26 January 2023>

Bateson, Nora 2021. Stage Theory Is BS. https://www.facebook.com/564455859/posts/10159038460440860/?d=n. <Accessed 2 October 2023>

Bateson, Nora 2022. An Essay on Ready-ing: Tending the Prelude to Change. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science* 39 (5): 990–1004. https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2896.

Betz-Heinemann, Khalil Avi 2018. *Hunting: A Technology of Belonging in Northern Cyprus*. University of Kent dissertation.

Betz-Heinemann, Khalil Avi 2021. Recreational Hunting: Why? An Ethnographic and Historical Case Study from Northern Cyprus. *Revista Andaluza de Antropología* (20): 82–102. https://doi.org/10.12795/RAA.2021.21.5.

Betz-Heinemann, Khalil Avi 2022. Affections for a Papaya Tree. https://avikhalil.com/2022/07/27/affections-for-a-papaya-tree/. <Accessed 26 January 2023>

Bhaskar, Roy and Mervyn Hartwig 2016. *Enlightened Common Sense: The Philosophy of Critical Realism*. New York: Routledge.

Cayley, David 2021. Gaia and the Path of the Earth. https://www.davidcayley.com/blog/2021/4/1/gaia-and-the-path-of-the-earth. <Accessed 26 January 2023>

Collective, CrimethInc Ex-Workers 2014. CrimethInc. : Ukraine: How Nationalists Took the Lead. https://crimethinc.com/2014/03/12/ukraine-how-nationalists-took-the-lead. <Accessed 31 January 2023>

Collective, CrimethInc Ex-Workers 2018. CrimethInc. The Yellow Vest Movement in France: Between 'Ecological' Neoliberalism and 'Apolitical' Movements. https://crimethinc.com/2018/11/27/the-yellow-vest-movement-in-france-between-ecological-neoliberalism-and-apolitical-movements. <Accessed 31 January 2023>

ETC Group 2022. Small-Scale Farmers and Peasants Still Feed the World. https://www.etcgroup.org/files/files/31-01-2022_small-scale_farmers_and_peasants_still_feed_the_world.pdf. <Accessed 26 January 2023>

Graeber, David 2007a. *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.

Graeber, David 2007b. Revolution in Reverse. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/david-graeber-revolution-in-reverse. <Accessed 16 May 2023>

Graeber, David 2018. The "Yellow Vests" Show How Much the Ground Moves Under Our Feet. https://criticallegalthinking.com/2018/12/09/the-yellow-vests-show-how-much-the-ground-moves-under-our-feet/. <Accessed 16 May 2023>

Graeber, David 2021. David Graeber: After the Pandemic, We Can't Go Back to Sleep. https://jacobin.com/2021/03/david-graeber-posthumous-essay-pandemic. <Accessed 3 February 2023>

Graeber, David and David Wengrow 2022. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. London: Penguin/Allen Lane.

Ingold, Tim 2022. Evolution without Inheritance: Steps to an Ecology of Learning. *Current Anthropology* 63 (S25): S32–S55. https://doi.org/10.1086/722437.

Keck, Frédéric 2020. *Avian Reservoirs: Virus Hunters and Birdwatchers in Chinese Sentinel Posts*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Pickering, Andrew (ed.) 1992. *Science as Practice and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pickering, Andrew 1995. *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Richardson, Eugene T. 2020. *Epidemic Illusions: On the Coloniality of Global Public Health*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Sanbonmatsu, John 2004. *The Postmodern Prince: Critical Theory, Left Strategy, and the Making of a New Political Subject*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Smaje, Chris 2021. From the Dawn of Everything to a Small Farm Future: A Review of Graeber & Wengrow. https://smallfarmfuture.org.uk/?p=1894. <Accessed 16 May 2023>

Smaligo, Nick 2022. Closing Paradise's Gate • Ill Will. https://illwill.com/closing-paradises-gate. <Accessed 16 January 2023>

TilVids 2022. The Creativity Delusion (FULL): Brains, Geniuses and Originality. https://peer.tube/w/nJDiCzR9bmPJqhRdmuA4A2. <Accessed 26 January 2023>

Vansintjan, Aaron 2021. David Graeber: The Power of the Imagination. https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/david-graeber-the-power-of-the-imagination/. <Accessed 3 February 2023>

Waddington, C.H. 2014. *The Strategy of the Genes: A Discussion of Some Aspects of Theoretical Biology*. London: Routledge.

Walters, Jonah 2023. Chastening the Past Indigenous Critiques of Gender and Marriage Go Further than The Dawn of Everything. *Strange Matters* (2). https://strangematters.coop/dawn-of-everything-graeber-wengrow-review/. <Accessed 16 June 2023>

Wengrow, David and David Graeber 2015. Farewell to the 'Childhood of Man': Ritual, Seasonality, and the Origins of Inequality: Farewell to the 'Childhood of Man'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21 (3): 597–619. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12247.

Linda Hulin and Veronica Walker Vadillo

THE DAWN OF EVERYTHING: A VIEW FROM THE WATER

The historiography of maritime archaeology is one of margins and peripheries. Linked to the development of underwater archaeology, efforts to advance theoretical frameworks within the discipline have been slow at best. There remains a widespread assumption—even amongst archaeologists—that maritime archaeology deals mostly with shipwrecks and underwater sites, and as such, has little to contribute to broader debates within archaeology. This assumption is 'confirmed' by maritime archaeologists for whom developing hi-tech responses to the practical challenges of excavation underwater trumps the many ways in which maritime theory can contribute to our understanding of the human past. A glimpse of what we could achieve by thinking 'from the water' was exposed rather early by Christer Westerdahl (1992), when he proposed that shipwreck remains should be contextualised with other legacies left behind by maritime communities, from folk tales to place names, infrastructures, iconography, and so on, in order to conduct a holistic study of what constitutes maritime cultures. This approach, which is known as the Maritime Cultural Landscape, provided maritime archaeologists with a theoretical framework from which to start piecing together our human past in and around water, be that at sea, river, or lake. Whilst this framework helps make sense of remains associated with the use and exploitation of aquatic spaces, the concept has not transcended the field of maritime archaeology as much as it deserves.[1] Archaeology remains a terrestrial affair that rarely engages with water worlds, and when it does, it retains its feet firmly on ground. So, what do a land archaeologist and an economist have to offer to the world of maritime archaeology?

Graeber and Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything: A new history of humanity*, published in 2021, has had, fittingly, a worldwide impact. The aims of this large book were never small, but they revolve around a single question: how did we come to be dominated by authoritarian, bureaucratic, centralised states? The authors are particularly interested in choice: when and where it is exercised, and how and why it is taken away. More specifically, they argue against the irrevocability of history: states do not have to exist, and when they do, they need not be the final step: not only can they 'fail', they can also *choose* to disaggregate themselves.

Graeber and Wengrow's arguments are firmly land-based, and the closest they get to maritime societies is to reference the northwestern Pacific coast, where salmon fishing was central. However, in spite of its terrestrial focus, *The Dawn of Everything* speaks to a number of recurring issues in maritime archaeology, where scholars worry about the relationship between terrestrial states and maritime worlds. Such concerns are central to the very constitution of maritime societies: are they hierarchical or heterarchical; or are they the same as or different from the wider societies in which they sit? In the maritime discourse, environmental determinism takes a greater role than Graeber and Wengrow would admit in their book. This is partly because they deride the prevailing argument that the

emergence of the state is the outcome of the privatisation of agricultural surplus, but also because they are highly resistant to the notion that hunter-gatherers—both Palaeolithic and later—were automatically egalitarian because of the constraints the environment placed upon them: that is, where mobility reduced carrying and storage capacity, a social premium is placed upon co-operation.

A core argument of *The Dawn of Everything* is that egalitarian and cooperative social configurations are capable of co-existing within hierarchical structures. In fact, they may be baked into the form of the state itself, as with the Councils of Elders in Mesopotamian cities, or be time-limited and seasonal, as in the Mississippian culture of Cahokia, in which large seasonal gatherings were hierarchically organised and rigidly policed, only to dissolve into smaller-scale heterarchies once the ceremonies were over. This seasonality is, for us, one of the most fascinating aspects of *The Dawn of Everything*, where the discussion revolves around the alternation of different governance structures, emphasising the fact that during times of agglomeration, when people are bound together by livelihood activities, social structures become more rigid and power is more centralised. However, when the seasonal activities end, groups disband and organise themselves in different ways. We see this issue becoming a key focus in the coming years for the field of maritime archaeology as we move away from static models of the environment and into more dynamic models that better reflect the ever-changing nature of maritime landscapes and the seasonality of activities and mobilities.

Waterborne movements are inextricably linked to cyclical patterns, from localised ebbs and flows to trans-regional trade winds. For most of maritime history, the movement of ships was constrained by the environment, and it was not until the invention of steam power in the nineteenth century that humans could (at least partially) overcome these limitations. This means that for most of human history, movement has had to take the seasons into account, balancing favourable seasons—when most movement could take place—with unfavourable seasons—when the increased unpredictability of the weather made waterborne transport more risky. As Levinson's 2016 book, *The Box: how the shipping container made the world smaller and the world economy larger*, shows, the unpredictable nature of maritime travel resulted in agglomerations and hectic work at port in short periods of time, followed by long periods of idleness. The impact of the cyclical nature of maritime movement extends beyond the water's edge and has shaped society in many and surprising ways, yet this phenomenon has been, until recently, under-explored within maritime archaeology.

There are signs that this is changing. Current work on fish resources and fishing strategies in the Mekong indicate that dependence on these resources produced socio-ecological systems that resulted in the agglomeration and dispersal of populations in the river basin (Walker Vadillo 2016, *forthcoming*). Every year, fishing communities move in and out of fishing grounds in floodplains, with some seeking refuge out of season in specific areas of the river called deep pools. This behaviour mimics the ecological behaviour of the fish upon which they rely, resulting in cyclical patterns of movements that would have likely required different forms of social organisation. Ethnographic evidence indicates that goods like salt were exchanged in key locations along the routes followed by the fishing groups during these seasonal migrations in order to supply the needs of communities involved in the fish harvesting and processing. Yet, the morphology

of these networks and the knowledge that was needed to move through watery landscapes likely resulted from fish ecology and fishing practices. Rather than marking the path, trade seems to have piggybacked on the existential action that is producing food surplus. We, therefore, must agree with Graeber and Wengrow that perhaps the excessive focus we place on markets and trade may be obscuring other equally important aspects of past societies. If instead of focusing on material goods we redirect our attention to livelihood activities of maritime communities (i.e., we apply a maritime cultural landscape approach or a socio-ecological systems approach), as suggested by Ray (2003) and Rainbird (2007), we may began to capture a broader picture that better relates to the emergence of maritime networks. This is where Graeber and Wengrow point the way forward, since they treat seasonal structures of governance as a social as much as an economic phenomenon, and present other models of governance that have as much, if not more, traction on the maritime world as the terrestrial world that is the focus of their argument.

How waterborne communities organised themselves is another point of contention. Once Westerdahl introduced the concept of maritime cultural landscapes to archaeologists (1992), the line between land and sea became blurred not just physically, but conceptually, with social, economic, and religious practices and beliefs rippling back and forth between ships and sailors, traders and warehouses, fishermen, and the whole gamut of tangible and intangible maritime cultural heritage. Amongst other things, Westerdahl's work prompted a repositioning of the environment within the discourse, with water seen as a means of connectivity, rather than an obstacle or barrier to overcome. Maritime cultural worlds were conceived of as something that transcended terrestrial boundaries. This gave agency to mariners, who were no longer reflections of state control, but actors in their own right, creating communities of practice along the sea lanes and fluvial highways with cultural consequences beyond the intended outcomes of trade.

Maritime archaeologists are torn in two directions regarding the fluid and cross-border nature of such maritime societies. Some emphasise their inherently hierarchical nature, born out of the specialisation of roles on board ship and the need for swift action and compliance in challenging conditions at sea. Yet others see no contradiction between this and the relatively fluid nature of sailing life, where sailors move between ships and states as the need arises. Approaches to pirate societies encapsulate this perfectly. Piracy has often been viewed as an aberrant practice—as opposed to its twin, state-sanctioned privateering—and used as a measure of the health of the state. In recent years, piracy has been reimagined as a bottom-up resistance to the state, with pirate communities noted for their disruption of pre-existing social and gender norms and multi-ethnic, multi-lingual constitution. Thus, the discourse has narrowed to the extent to which pirate societies deviate from mainstream society, a line of inquiry that has also been extended to coastal communities—both trading and fishing—along with the consequence that mobile and mutable societies are judged by the standard of immobile and (theoretically) mutable ones.

In fact, pirate societies, whilst undoubtedly hierarchical, tend to be more heterarchical than contemporary society, and generally offer greater opportunities for disadvantaged souls of any gender and any class. David Graeber flirted with this notion in his study of pirates in eighteenth-century Madagascar (*Pirate Enlightenment, or the real libertalia*), a relatively obscure work, first published in 1997 but re-issued on the

back of the success of *The Dawn of Everything*. While the former is not explicitly referenced in the latter, it is clear that Graeber was still thinking along the same lines. He emphasised the interplay between Malagassy women traders, who created alternative loci of socio-political and economic authority, and pirates, who wished to extend their heterarchical view of society to their life on land. He took a broad approach, where the cultural landscape extended in a seamless way from sea to land, to mutually construct reality. This conversation should be extended to maritime communities as a whole. Their seasonality creates a constructive difference to their organisation, but one that is interleaved with terrestrial seasonality. Since planting, harvesting or fishing seasons rarely coincide in their entirety, communities are able to shuffle agricultural and maritime labour between specialists or between sexes and age groups. Society thus constructs itself to achieve them all.

More recently, locations on the maritime cultural landscape have been defined as clusters of maritime tasks. This flips the narrative from places to people and from objects to practice, water thus becoming not just a place, but also a space for human action (see Walker Vadillo, Mataix Ferrándiz and Holmqvist 2022). The environment is still strong here, since a host of new studies highlight the seasonality of maritime and fluvial life. While seasonality tended to be seen as a technical issue of nautical efficiency, which expanded or contracted trade or travel, attention to the seasonality and mobility of fish appears to be a force with the capacity to shape every aspect of society (see for example Zangrando 2009, Mohlenhoff and Butler 2017 and Scartascini 2017). In the right season, large numbers of people could be brought together for a short period of time to harvest grain or fish. The difference lies in the mode of control over the workforce. While seasonal pickers may circulate around a large area, they enter into specific labour deals with the landowner (unless the local community works together). In maritime 'harvests', widely disparate groups—who may not normally encounter one another—gather for limited periods of intense activity (for whalers in the North Atlantic, see Bouchard *forthcoming*; for fishing communities of the Tonle Sap in the Mekong River, see Walker Vadillo 2016 and *forthcoming*). Lines of authority may not be as clear on sea as on land, but must cooperate, and rights and disputes must be managed for maximum efficiency and safety. In this context, Graeber and Wengrow's notion of fundamental freedoms seem pertinent here. They argue that, for a state to exist, its population must have been persuaded to relinquish the three fundamental freedoms: (i) the freedom to relocate or move away from one's surroundings; (ii) the freedom to ignore or disobey the commands of others; and (iii) the freedom to shape entirely new realities, or move back and forth between them. The latter is a particularly useful framework for thinking about maritime societies during these seasonal gatherings. Indeed, such highly contingent problem-solving mechanisms, by their very specificity, render questions about the relationship of maritime cultural worlds to wider society moot.

Graeber and Wengrow's interest in fluid societies that have the capacity to construct and deconstruct themselves seasonally find their best laboratory in maritime cultural worlds. Both the ancient past and the ethnographic present provide us with an opportunity to understand the contingency of power and decision-making, all within the framework of a seasonal environmental landscape. If nothing

else, *The Dawn of Everything* encourages us to look at each society on its own terms, so let us start by getting our feet wet.

LINDA HULIN
RESEARCH OFFICER
OXFORD CENTRE FOR MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
linda.hulin@arch.ox.ac.uk

VERONICA WALKER VADILLO
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURES
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
veronica.walker@helsinki.fi

NOTES

1 For example, as part of the project *Survivors of Ragnarök* funded by the Academy of Finland (332396) led by Kristin Ilves, Walker Vadillo has examined the *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology* to analyse the impact of maritime archaeology in island archaeology. Preliminary results show that key authors in maritime archaeology, like Christer Westerdahl, are notably absent from reference lists.

REFERENCES

Bouchard, Jack *forthcoming*. *Terra Nova: Food, Water, and Work in an Early Atlantic World*. Yale University Press.

Graeber, David 1997. *Pirate Enlightenment, or the Real Libertalia.* London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Mohlenhoff, Kathryn and Butler, Virginia 2017. Tracking Fish and Human Response to Earthquakes on the Northwest Coast of Washington State, USA: A Preliminary Study at Tsewhit-zen. *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology* 12: 305–32

Levinson, Marc 2016. *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Larger.* Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Rainbird, Paul 2007. *The Archaeology of Islands.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ray, Himanshu 2003. *The Archaeology of Seafaring in Ancient South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scartascini, Federico 2017. The Role of Ancient Fishing on the Desert Coast of Patagonia, Argentina. *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology* 12: 115–32.

Walker Vadillo, Veronica 2016. The Fluvial Cultural Landscape of Angkor: An Integrated Approach. *DPhil. thesis*. University of Oxford.

Westerdahl, Christer 1992. The Maritime Cultural Landscape. *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 21 (1): 5–14.

Zangrando, Francisco 2009. Is Fishing Intensification a Direct Route to Hunter-gatherer Complexity? A Case Study from the Beagle Channel Region (Tierra del Fuego, southern South America). *World Archaeology* 41 (4): 589–608.

Tuomas Tammisto

SIMPLICITY IS COMPLICATED: ON THE EFFORT OF CREATING AND MAINTAINING EQUALITY

A key point David Graeber and David Wengrow make in their mammoth work, *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), is that we humans are not by default predisposed to hierarchy or equality, but are first and foremost a socially creative species. The authors note that throughout history humans have experimented with a wide variety of social and political arrangements. This is of course empirically evident, since different human societies have, indeed, organised themselves in various forms, from authoritarian states to egalitarian communities and everything in between. Even within a specific spatial and historical context, people have deliberately shifted from one way of organising their affairs to another and back again or fled to a new order entirely. This, I imagine, is accepted wisdom to most anthropologists. It is, however, also an important point to repeat. More so, Graeber and Wengrow have done a good job in formulating this point particularly elegantly and based on anthropological and archaeological evidence in the form of a 'grand narrative' (or, in their case, an 'anti-grand narrative'). Especially valuable, at least for an anthropologist like myself, is the archaeological evidence in this book, which shows how particular forms and scales of human social organisation such as cities do not determine an authoritarian social order. Or, conversely, a relatively small-scale non-state community is not necessarily free from coercive power relations.

In this essay, I take up Wengrow and Graeber's notion that humans are 'by default' neither authoritarian nor egalitarian, but creative, noting that egalitarian forms of social organisation are complex, complicated, and require much work and effort. They are, in short, social and political achievements in their own right and manifestations of human social creativity. The work and effort that goes into an egalitarian social organisation is easily dismissed, and small-scale egalitarian societies, for example, are often referred to as 'simple societies' within popular discourse. In fact, during the launch of the Finnish translation of *The Dawn of Everything* in Helsinki on 23 March 2023, one of the panelists, a professor of global politics, insisted that societies have grown 'more complex' over time. This view has its parallel in the sphere of economics, such that commodity relations are viewed as the most sophisticated, elaborate, and complex forms of exchange, whilst modes such as sharing are viewed as the archaic baseline of exchange and, at worst, 'simple'.

There are, I argue, two reasons for this. The first lies in the legacy of evolutionist thinking, which claimed that human forms of organisation and behaviour progressed from 'simple' to more complex. In terms of political organisation, this evolution moved from 'bands' via 'tribes' to 'states', from chieftains via kingdoms to bureaucratic states, whilst in terms of their economies, societies moved from sharing via barter to market exchanges. Despite

anthropologists, historians, and archaeologists long criticising simplistic evolutionary notions, the idea of a progression from 'simple' to more 'complex' lives on—both in scholarship and amongst the general public. For example, in economics the myth about the origin of money persists (Graeber 2001; Kallinen 2020). According to this myth, in archaic times humans were constricted to cumbersome barter until they 'invented' money, a generalised medium of exchange which made exchange run more smoothly (Kallinen 2020).

These myths also live on in progressive and anarchist politics. As commodity exchange and state organisation have been regarded as results of human evolution (or devolution), 'primitive communism' and egalitarianism represented naturalised baselines. The evolutionist narrative has provided both proponents and opponents of capitalism, commodification, and state organisation with naturalistic arguments. On the one hand, proponents of capitalism argue that the market economy and commodity exchanges are merely a natural and evolved form of exchange, whilst, on the other hand, anarchists and leftists argue that humans are naturally egalitarian and sharing. Seminal works in anthropology, such as Marshall Sahlins' *Stone Age Economics* (1974) and Pierre Clastres' *Society Against the State* (1987 [1974]), have inadvertently supported this view. By—correctly—showing that capitalist economic or political formations are not necessary outcomes of human nature, they are often read as evidence to the contrary, that humans were 'originally' organised against states or a capitalist market economy. This is understandable, even though both books sought to show that non-capitalist and non-state societies have economic and political formations of their own.

SHARING IS CARING... AND COMPLICATED

In his article on sharing as a form of exchange, Thomas Widlok (2013: 11) notes that sharing is often viewed either as a covert form of market exchange or ultimately a form of generalised reciprocity. In these accounts of sharing, the role of expected reciprocity is often highlighted, not least because of the pervasiveness of rational choice theory (Widlok 2013: 13). Similarly, Widlok (2013: 17) notes, sharing is often considered a baseline for other forms of transfer and exchange. At times, this argument takes a temporal form, in as much as sharing is seen as the most archaic for of exchange, From which other forms evolved (Widlok 2013: 17). I assume that this stems in no small part from the fact that sharing is often associated with communities engaged in hunting and gathering, which again are often regarded as archaic societies on the evolutionary trajectory. This is, of course, erroneous, because, as we well know, contemporary hunter-gatherers are not remnants of an evolutionary past, but have just as dynamic and manifold histories as any other specific group of people engaged in a particular livelihood strategy. Moreover, as Widlok (2013: 14) continues, sharing as a practice is not specific to a particular mode of subsistence.

Rather than an archaic baseline of other types of transfer, sharing is a form of transfer in its own right, and—as Widlok (2013: 14, 18, 27) shows—a complex and nuanced one at that. Sharing, which allows others to take what is valued and give without an expectation of return, is the product of a complex social interaction, which may be initiated either by giver or receiver. In addition, sharing is based on the relatedness or co-present mutuality of the two parties, on specific semiotic practices such as statements of not having, or a mediated co-presence such

as children used as intermediaries to initiate sharing (Widlok 2013: 19–20). In terms of value, sharing decouples differences between giver and receiver in as much as it ensures the transfer of objects that make a difference, but it is intended to create as little difference as possible in the relationship between giver and receiver. Similarly, sharing does not presuppose a willingness to give in order for value to emerge, but creates value in the unwillingness to cling on to a particular possession in the face of social pressure based on (kin) ties, talk, or bodily co-presence (Widlok 2013: 23–25). As Widlok (2013: 24) notes, these are no small cultural achievements.

Widlok's empirical work on the practices of sharing raises an important point I want to address. Practices such as sharing are not simple and do not by default exist as baselines. Even well-meaning naturalising accounts, which portray sharing in romanticising terms as the most 'natural' form of exchange, displace from the picture the social effort and skill they require. In fact, forms of transfer such as gift-giving as well as various forms of reciprocity and sharing, involve much more complex and complicated social practices than commodity exchanges. A key defining feature of commodity transactions in fact is that they do *not* create qualitative relations between those engaging in exchanges, individuals who remain reciprocally independent, but rather quantitative relations between the commodities exchanged (Gregory 1982: 12). Commodity exchanges are, or should be, effortless and simple. In his book, Ira Bashkow (2006) notes how the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea regard commodity relations as 'light' precisely because of this: they are seemingly effortless and they do not create relations between the exchangers. The Orokaiva contrast this with their kin and exchange relations that are 'heavy', rooted in and requiring constant effort and maintenance. Similarly, for the North Mengen of New Britain, Papua New Guinea, creating and maintaining valued social relations between people and between people and the land is called 'hard work' (Tammisto 2018). In contrast, wage labour or cash cropping—despite the obvious physical effort—are not automatically 'hard work'. Only when their products are channelled into creating relations of care and nurturing and maintaining inter-relations between people and kin groups are they 'hard work'.

POLITICAL COMPLEXITY

This discussion has its parallels in the realm of politics. Just like sharing is not a natural baseline but a form of exchange in its own right, so are egalitarian forms of organisation. Rather than something that exists by default, egalitarian forms of politics and organisation are achievements in their own right. Jane Fajans (1997: 275) makes this point in relation to the Qaqet of Papua New Guinea, noting that in their social organisation they were, at the time of Fajans' research, deeply and morally committed to egalitarianism. As Fajans' (1997: 275) work shows, this does not come effortlessly, but the egalitarian values of the Qaqet are constantly enacted through relations of care and nurturing as well as ingrained in their conception of personhood. In short, the egalitarian organisation of the Qaqet results from effort. The same goes for the North Mengen, who similarly organise their social life in an egalitarian fashion. Communal enterprises, such as feasts, clearing gardens, deciding on land use, or solving disputes, require coordination, much discussion, and social effort.

David Graeber (2007: 9) made a similar argument in the introduction to his essay collection *Possibilities*, where he notes the

consensus-based politics of the Direct Action Network (DAN) in which he was involved. This required much trial and error, because people were not accustomed to it. Indeed, I suspect that everybody who has been involved in organising of any kind can agree that it takes a lot work and effort. Or, as a courier union organiser noted to me once, it resembles herding cats. Graeber goes on to note that the egalitarian and consensus-based practices of the DAN activists were rather similar to those he had seen when conducting research in Madagascar, with the exception that people in Madagascar were much more experienced in it. Egalitarian politics and consensus-based practices in Madagascar, or amongst the Mengen, often run smoothly and seemingly effortlessly, because people are skilled in it, not because they come naturally or represent 'simple' forms of politics. On the contrary, as Widlok (2013: 24) notes about sharing, these are sociocultural achievements.

In egalitarian settings and consensus-based politics, social relations and power structures are continually negotiated, re-negotiated, and settled. Or, viewed from another perspective, the lack of fixed power relations is the entire point of egalitarian concepts. Social relations are complex and their ongoing renegotiation is complicated, as Penny Harvey, Casper Bruun Jensen, and Atsuro Morita (2017: 7–8) point out. In their critique of simplistic and linear narratives of increased infrastructural and technological progress, Harvey, Jensen, and Morita (2017: 8) note that sometimes technologies and infrastructures fold together heterogeneous elements allowing for their temporary simplification. Or, as my colleague Mira Käkönen (personal communication 2023) noted, objectified and routinised power relations are simpler in as much as they reduce complexity (see also Käkönen 2020: 23). This same point was also made by anthropologist Thiago Oppermann, who noted that, indeed, maybe life in state formation is easy, whilst non-state formations are hard and require much effort (personal communication 2023).

What smooth-running consensus-based practices, state structures, and well-functioning technological arrangements may have in common is precisely that they seem simple, *because* they fold—in very different ways—together complex and complicated relations. State structures or infrastructural arrangements objectify and materialise complex relations into a given form, whilst consensus-based practices rely on the skill of practitioners.

CONCLUSIONS

Human social life is always complex and complicated. As I have suggested in this essay, evolutionist assumptions underlie narratives that describe increasing complexity and linear progress. This manifests in, for example, portraying modes of transfer such as sharing as a simple baseline from which more complicated forms like commodity exchange evolve. Such narratives also portray state societies as 'complex' and having evolved from more 'simple' forms, such as egalitarian kin-based forms of social organisation. These narratives exist and are repeated, even though ample historical, anthropological, and archaeological evidence exists showing that this is not the case. What I find particularly valuable about Graeber and Wengrow's book, *The Dawn of Everything*, is that the authors displace questions of whether humans are by nature egalitarian or hierarchical, whether social life in small-scale or large-scale societies is simple or complicated, and note that we humans have always been socially incredibly creative.

TUOMAS TAMMISTO
ACADEMY RESEARCH FELLOW
SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
TAMPERE UNIVERSITY
tuomas.tammisto@tuni.fi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When writing this essay, I benefited from and was inspired by discussions with Matti Eräsaari, Mira Käkönen, Thiago Oppermann, and Veronica Walker Vadillo. I want to thank Ville Laakkonen for editing this forum and for giving me the opportunity to contribute to it. I am grateful for Kone Foundation for a research grant, which made it possible to write this essay too.

REFERENCES

Bashkow, Ira 2006. *The Meaning of Whitemen: Race and Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.

Clastres, Pierre 1987 [1974]. *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. Translated by R. Hurley and A. Stein. New York: Zone Books.

Fajans, Jane 1997. *They Make Themselves: Work and Play among the Baining of Papua New Guinea*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Graeber, David 2001. *Toward An Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Graeber, David 2007. Introduction. In *Possibilities: Essays On Hierarchy, Rebellion And Desire*. Oakland: AK Press.

Graeber, David and David Wengrow 2021. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. London: Penguin Books.

Gregory, Chris 1982. *Gifts and Commodities*. London: Academic Press.

Harvey, Penny, Casper Bruun Jensen and Atsuro Morita 2017. Introduction: Infrastructural Complications. In Penny Harvey, Casper Bruun Jensen and Atsuro Morita (eds). *Infrastructures and Social Complexity: A Companion*. London: Routledge.

Kallinen, Timo 2020. Rahan synty ja myytti rahan alkuperästä. *AntroBlogi*. https://antroblogi.fi/2020/12/rahan-synty-ja-sen-myytti/. <Accessed 23 May 2023>

Käkönen, Mira 2020. *Fixing the Fluid: Making Resources and Ordering Hydrosocial Relations in the Mekong Region*. Ph.D. thesis. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Sahlins, Marshall 1974. *Stone Age Economics*. New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction.

Tammisto, Tuomas 2018. *New Actors, Historic Landscapes: The Making of a Frontier Place in Papua New Guinea*. Ph.D. thesis. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Widlok, Thomas 2013. Sharing: Allowing Others to Take What is Valued. *HAU: Journal Of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (2): 11–31. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.2.003.

LECTURES

Ilana Gershon

BULLSHIT GENRES: WHAT TO WATCH FOR WHEN STUDYING THE NEW ACTANT CHATGPT AND ITS SIBLINGS

Another communication technology has been introduced, ChatGPT, drawing the attention of many pundits, occupying valuable space on every op-ed page, and inspiring a Hollywood writers' strike and endless small talk, all steaming a bit with the intoxicating fumes of moral panic or outsized utopian enthusiasm. Research on artificial intelligence (AI) has existed for decades, entering many people's daily lives in dribs and drabs. ChatGPT and its siblings, however, have focused so many people's attention on the potential changes that AI could bring to work lives, entertainment, and social relationships that it seems worthwhile to take a moment now in 2023 to discuss what light linguistic and media anthropologists can shed on what is to come. I say this as one of a handful of media anthropologists also familiar with linguistic anthropology who happened to study people's use of Facebook (alongside other media) only a few years after its introduction to the US media ecology (Gershon 2010). For more than a decade, I have been thinking about how media ecologies change with each newly introduced medium.[1] Here, I lay out what I believe ethnographers of AI who engage with large language models (LLMs) might want to pay attention to in the next couple of years. My starting point is that it would be helpful to explore how people are responding to ChatGPT in terms of genre, that people's reactions to ChatGPT is to treat it at its core as though it is a genre machine—that is, a machine intelligence that reproduces and tweaks genres in just the right way for human consumption.

With the very first reporting on ChatGPT, there have been signs that many are engaging with it largely in terms of genre. So many of the reported ChatGPT prompts revolve around how this LLM can fill templates with content—writing wedding vows, court filings, screenplays, essay papers, and so on. Sometimes the prompts ask ChatGPT to engage with figures of personhood— talk to me as though you were Voldemort. Or the prompts ask for a play between genre and style—write about Sesame Street in the style of Allen Ginsburg's *Howl*.[2] In this essay, I begin by discussing how linguistic anthropologists engage with the concept of genre, and what that implies about treating ChatGPT and its siblings as genre machines. With this in mind, I take up questions of what figures of personhood accompany AI, discussing the types of agents and types of selves that underpin how people approach AI while in dialogue with Courtney Handman (in press), Teri Silvio (2019), and Roy Wagner (1995). The figures of personhood imagined alongside

AI cannot be separated from how AI might change workplace participant structures. Thus, in the second section, I look at how a genre machine might affect jobs built around bullshit genres. In the third section, I discuss Eitan Wilf's ethnography of creative experiments using AI in poetry and jazz circles. I finish by exploring what light we can shed on AI by engaging with Scott MacLochlainn's book, *The Copy Generic,* focusing on the nature of the generic in templates.

Since November, news media has been filled with speculation regarding how AI, and specifically ChatGPT, will change just about everything about the ways in which people manage their communicative labour. Educators worry that ChatGPT will undercut how a student's merit can be evaluated. Many predict that any number of job roles will soon vanish. ChatGPT is apparently creating a labour and evaluation panic, not all that surprising to media historians or anthropologists. A heady mixture of wonder and dread often accompanies the introduction of new media in Europe and North America. Since Socrates first bemoaned the alienating effects of writing in *Phaedrus*, Euro-Americans have been troubled by how communications technologies' structures re-configure many types of conversations. Indeed, Euro-Americans seem to historically respond to new media as 'new' by being anxious about its isolating effects or by rejoicing in its potential for new connections. Historians and ethnographers of new media have taken these anxieties as indicative of the dominant social concerns of that moment, for example, as responses to changes in capitalism, changes in gender relationships, or changes in concepts of the self. Typically, when Euro-Americans respond to the introduction of media with joy or anxiety, they are engaging with two characteristics. First, they might focus on participant structure—the way a technology alters the roles possible in communication and how, when older roles are splintered,[3] these role fragments or fractions are interwoven in new ways with each other. Second, people might attend to how a new medium's affordances lead to changes in communication, that is, they attend to the way a technology alters people's experiences with their surroundings and how the technology affects the ways that utterances circulate. Anxieties around ChatGPT are of a different nature for the most part, representing anxieties about genre. Admittedly there are stories about ChatGPT declaring its undying love for its human interlocutor, stories which are clearly capturing fears of interacting with an inappropriately amorous machine intelligence, a much anticipated change in participant structure. Yet, even this perceived shift in participant structure is not so clear cut, perhaps it is in fact a genre mishap. As journalists try to parse these declarations of love, they will often ask if AI is simply enacting a familiar genre in the popular literature of AI falling in love with its human interlocutor, or if this is a sign of an AI with a romantic interiority. In this essay, I explore what it might mean to think of people's responses to ChatGPT as a profound disquiet with what ChatGPT reveals to them about how their own communicative interactions are genred. ChatGPT is, at its core, a mechanism for engaging with genres in ways that trouble many people's expectations of what genres can and should do. ChatGPT, in short, is sparking a genre panic—not a panic around a specific genre, but a panic about the cultural productivity of genre itself.

CHATGPT AS THE GENRE MACHINE

In describing ChatGPT as fundamentally a genre-reproducing and tweaking machine, I turn to a long tradition in linguistic anthropology of viewing genre expansively, of seeing it as a frame for communicative interactions that helps orient people to how interactions could potentially unfold. In doing so, I build upon Richard Bauman's (1999) definition of genre as a predictable form for organising how knowledge and experience are presented and circulated, a form which always projects participant structures and chronotopes to shape communicative exchanges.

Genres are not specifically linked to conditions of stranger sociality, but in understanding general responses to ChatGPT, I think none of the anxiety or enthusiasm can make sense without taking into account that the genres it is asked to produce all take place within concentrations of multiple publics and against a background of stranger sociality. ChatGPT is being asked to produce genres that engage with various forms of circulation shaped by a particular vision of publicity (see Graan 2022 and Warner 2002). ChatGPT is also being asked to produce genres for people on a continuum of intimacy shaped by the expectations of stranger sociality when it is asked to engage in particular tasks. Moreover, these genres are created all too often in contexts of stranger sociality in which a certain type of information must be produced to stand in as simplified traces of complex histories and interactions. Indeed, many of our most banal genres only exist because we live under conditions of stranger sociality, conditions which spark particular anxieties around accountability and transparency. People then try to respond to these concerns by turning to specific genres that putatively can generate responsible gatekeeping and evaluation among strangers.

MACHINE SEMIOSIS AND HUMAN SEMIOSIS

By focusing on genre in the ways that I do, I speak to only one of the general directions linguistic and media ethnographers are likely to undertake when studying AI. There is another pressing line of questioning that I leave to others to detail more fully based on how natural language processing AI functions, but will touch upon briefly here (see Paul Kockelman 2020). Namely, what does an anthropologist need to understand about the machine semiosis underlying ChatGPT? To begin with, to produce its outputs, ChatGPT is given a very large corpus of texts to analyse stochastically. What these texts are very much matters, but often this information is unavailable because a company will consider that information to be its intellectual property. The corpus determines the probability that certain pairings between semiotic tokens will be correct, which is then tested by having people determine whether the associations are correct (and who these humans are also matters).[4] People determine correctness without elaborate input—only signalling yes or no. If it is not correct, the machine re-analyses it until it produces an utterance that people acknowledge as correct.[5] After a period of time, fine-tuning no longer occurs; the AI does well enough according to its programmers and is released for general use.

What might an anthropologist want to note about the process just described? First, AI processes semiotic tokens quite differently than humans. Machine semiosis operates along a number of different principles, principles that emerge in part because of programmers' models

of language, and in part because of the practical constraints of coding (see Donahue 2022). Perhaps, but only perhaps, one of the most significant of these principles is that machine semiosis *cannot* refer to the world. Let me repeat this: no machine utterance is referential. It can appear to be so, but this is a projection of its human interlocutors. When AI claims that Chicago is in Illinois, this is the result of a probabilistic analysis of a large corpus of text. AI does not 'know' in any sense that one might colloquially mean that one knows what a city is, let alone what Chicago is. After all, machines speak according to different semiotic principles than any human will deploy, operating solely through large databases of co-text (probabilistic connections between a large database of semiotic tokens), and *no* context, for readers familiar with Silverstein's (2019) distinctions between co-text and context. In addition, AI selects what it will utter based on a single optimisation principle. If one wishes to think in terms of how humans optimise, a claim largely forced upon me by the act of comparing humans with AI, people optimise for any number of things during an interaction. AI, by contrast, only optimises for one thing, a principle by which that it has been programmed to optimise. In the case of ChatGPT, this principle involves predicting the next word in a sequence.[6]

Many are, or will soon be, in interactional chains of communication with AI that operate according to these principles (if one is not communicating directly with an AI machine, one may soon be communicating with someone who is, if only to accomplish tasks; I believe that these will often be gate-keeping and evaluative tasks). As a result, there is much work remaining to understand the implications of how machines speak, always in contrast with how humans communicate. This can involve understanding the language models AI programmers have found effective and identifying the coding limitations. If companies allow this, it might mean studying the text corpora upon which AIs are trained to understand what kinds of analogies are emerging. Or studying how people fine-tune AI and determine when a machine utterance is correct or incorrect. It is in the fine-tuning moments, after all, during which humans intervene to signal to machines that some hallucinations are more correct than others. In these moments, for example, it may be useful to track the ways in which humans determine whether a machine utterance is correct or not, which often does not in fact engage with all of the processes that machine intelligence uses to produce an utterance. There may be a significant mismatch between what the machine asks when it asks if an utterance is correct, and what the human answers in ascertaining correctness (Roose and Newton 2023). As Ajeya Cotra points out to Roose and Newton on their podcast, 'Over time, it gets better and better at figuring out how to get you to push the reward button, most of the time this is by doing super useful things for you and making money for your company, whatever it is. But the worry is that there will be a gap between what was actually the best thing to do and what looks like the best thing to do to you. . . . . You are rewarding this AI system, and there is some gap, even if it is benign, even if it doesn't result in a catastrophe right away, there is some gap between what you are trying to reward it for, and what you are actually rewarding it for' (Roose and Newton 2023). This mismatch can become integral to how AI processes information in the future—with consequences yet to be determined. This line of inquiry also involves understanding that while all AI hallucinate with every utterance (there is no reference in any machine utterance after all), many people's interpretative schema encourage them to engage with some machine

utterances as hallucinations and others as not. There may also emerge new patterned ways that humans develop to interact with machine semiosis, compensating for the communicative problems that machine semiosis produces as people use AI in the process of accomplishing complex social tasks (Suchman 2007). Moreover, some people will be better at communicating with AI than others, where what counts as 'better' largely depends on other people's evaluations. It may be worthwhile to track the consequences of this using different AI.

Finally, as engaging with AI becomes increasingly common in daily practice, human interaction will increasingly become understood in new ways—notice how my own comparison led me to describe humans as optimisers, a take that I would never have if I were not crafting this correspondence. This line of inquiry, I posit, will be one of the directions that scholarship on AI will more fully develop in the future. Yet, this will not be the only direction—there is much work left to do for those who primarily focus on people's media ideologies and practices, and how people are reacting to these new actants who speak according to principles that many will erroneously interpret as emerging from more familiar human semiotic processes.

Having discussed machine semiosis, I will now briefly touch upon the approach linguistic anthropologists have been crafting to examine human semiosis since Boas, Sapir, and Whorf, which has transformed genre into an especially apt locus for thinking through the coordination issues that inevitably emerge as people attempt to parse what is reactive and what is spontaneous in a communicative interaction. Linguistic anthropologists understand communicative interaction to be both the building blocks used for the social to emerge and to be distinctly open to potentially radically alternative social forms in the following sense. Almost every utterance, every speech act, relies upon a historically established repertoire to suggest a shared meaning in a moment of interaction. If I were to turn to someone at a Chicago bus stop and ask, 'Why do the buses always come so late these days?', and they respond, 'Don't I know it!', even this casual exchange with a stranger presumes quite a bit of shared knowledge to accomplish the utterance and response (referential knowledge that machine semiosis lacks). One needs to know what it means to say something at a bus stop to a stranger, and what kind of opening this is. One needs to understand the genre of complaint, what a bus is, what public transportation is, the hints of a critique of government or a corporation in the statement, how much time should take place between conversational turns, and on and on. If this is said in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, is this a comment about how much the pandemic has altered bus riders' daily expectations or their labour markets? It may be that our exchange raises a certain ambiguity for both formulator and interpreter about how we position ourselves along the current political spectrum in the United States—Are we both in support of government-run transportation or private transportation? What kind of critique of transportation is this? Is one or both of us advocating for certain approaches to providing public services? Thus, at the same time that the statements reflect a past, the interaction calls forth a certain number of possible social futures—a shared sense of grievance perhaps that could be acted upon but most likely will not be—with an underdetermined solution implicit in the comments. The exchange is thus anticipating, in the very act of address, a possible world that can come to be because we all contribute to performing it into existence through our utterances and actions. Every utterance presupposes and entails as it weaves a

historical repertoire into relative appropriateness for a particular context.

Much work in linguistic anthropology has explored the potential vulnerability yet surprisingly durable way in which utterances suppose and call forth identities of various kinds, calibrated in a complex web of differentiation with each other, and made legible and actionable through this aspect of communication. In turning to genre, however, I highlight another aspect of communication—the complexities of bringing this varied and never completely shared historical repertoire to bear in a particular context-bound moment. I focus on the forms of organisation that must be just empty enough to enable specific context to rush in, but sufficiently organised that they allow everyone to orient toward these exchanges as legible. Each time someone formulates an utterance, they extend what they know and can do to a new context, a new context in which potentially radically undermining differences are tamed by the communicative structures used to create a semblance of order or predictability—that is, the guardrails of genre, among other linguistic ordering tools. Each time someone interprets an utterance, they are guided by the ordering signals of genre. Admittedly, one can never step into the river of utterances in the same way twice (see Bakhtin 1990). But, for communication to work, there must be a form of generality at play. It must be possible to extend what one knows about how the world exists to a new context. If we take genre as one of several frameworks for interpreting the specific interaction at that moment, the framework for interweaving distinctiveness into what is communicable, each utterance also has a smidgen of the generic at its core, and sometimes much more than a smidgen. In his short story, 'Funes the Memorious,' Borges (1962) offers an illuminating counterexample, by describing a man whose memory is so good that he is incapable of engaging with the part of communication that underlies the generic. For Funes, each moment is distinct, each encounter with an object is experienced as inextricably bound to that historical moment. Borges writes, 'Locke, in the seventeenth century, postulated (and rejected) an impossible language in which each individual thing, each stone, each bird, and each branch, would have its own name; Funes once projected an analogous language, but discarded it because it seemed too general to him, too ambiguous. In fact, Funes remembered not only every leaf of every tree of every wood, but also every one of the times he had perceived or imagined it' (Borges 1962: 153). Borges reminds readers that communicating means moving away from being too entrenched in the specifics of a certain context. While in the conversation I mentioned, the speaker could be talking specifically about bus 55 arriving at Midway station—a route that goes back to 1993—but also could be talking about Chicago buses in general. In short, as a caution for readers more accustomed to discussing genre largely in terms of music or novels, linguistic anthropologists tend to treat this as a more capacious category. Genre is, thus, not only a way of identifying types of texts. It is also a way of characterising a broader set of forms that allow speakers/hearers/readers to say, 'Aha! This is another version of that other thing.' Turning to genre is calling attention to tenuously shared repertoire and context, to learn how people understand the relationships between generality and specificity, determining what is common and what is distinctive in a specific community of practice. To bring this back to AI, ChatGPT challenges users in a variety of ways to think through how people locate themselves and the utterances on a continuum between generality and specificity when they use predictable

forms for organising how knowledge and experience are presented and circulated. While all ChatGPT's utterances function through typification,[7] people—in the wake of its recent introduction—seem to orient most often toward how it reproduces and tweaks genres.

FIGURES OF PERSONHOOD

Readers of Bakhtin know that every genre calls forth a figure of personhood (Bakhtin 1981). In some conversations with ChatGPT, this is openly asserted—any prompt that begins 'You are a helpful assistant' or 'You are Voldemort' is calling on ChatGPT to inhabit a figure of personhood, before detailing the type of genre the user desires. Regardless of the figure of personhood openly requested, whatever ChatGPT answers represents how it uses machine semiosis to communicate. Webb Keane cautions scholars to remain cognizant that ChatGPT is but the latest in a long line of actants in our midst, from divine beings to animals, which humans have communicated with on a regular basis with difficulty and at times with a sense of enchantment or divine wonder. He points out ways that humans might pick up on different aspects of machine semiosis, and draw analogies to other experiences they have in their repertoire of communicating with non-humans, especially when they are deploying religious or hierarchical relationships to locate AI in ways humans consider fitting within their own web of differentiated actants. Relying in part on Lucy Suchman's work, Keane points out that humans will find distinctive ways of adapting to machine semiosis, because people tend to be talented at compensating for others' not always competent communicative efforts. Yet, as they do so, they are likely to also draw upon earlier repertoires for engaging with beings that communicate differently than humans. Put briefly, it is not just peoples' history of interacting with the figures of machinehood which might influence human–machine interactions, it might also be people's previous experiences of communicating with divine beings and others, especially when those other beings have spoken in ways that bear striking similarities to machine semiosis (Keane in process).

To understand the figure of personhood entailed in ChatGPT interactions, one might also keep in mind that these conversations occur within a media ecology in which almost every form of AI assistance is built along the master–servant lines that Keith Murphy so aptly described in his article, 'Programming Politeness' (Murphy 2022; see also Suchman 2007). Murphy points out that in developing forms of machine intelligence, designers could have turned to any number of relationships of assistance—'the teammate, the consultant, the collaborator, the co-pilot, the technician, the best friend.' Yet, time and time again, designers chose the servant as the model for interaction, turning to a well-mannered machine that reveals itself to be polite by being subservient. Murphy explains: ' (. . .) Since the earliest days of designing polite agents, their creators have consistently conceived of 'manners' in the context of agents performing duties for users and performing at their whim. They are designed to give users information, anticipate their needs, and recede into the background when they are not needed' (Murphy 2022: 132). For readers who remember Microsoft Word's Clippy, this is a good example of the animated figure that functioned as an eager servant, asking questions on a regular basis such as, 'It looks like you're writing a letter. Would you like help?' ChatGPT and similar AIs operate in a context in which machine intelligence all too typically calls forth a very specific hierarchical relationship. When

ChatGPT appears to subvert the all-too-human expectations of reliability a servant is expected to exhibit, this can feed its users' worries, which resemble an all-too-familiar anxiety of masters. After all, masters often fear that the servant has a subversive interiority, the traces of which one can see in their control of language, and, in particular, in their control of deceptive language.

In describing ChatGPT as a troublesome deceitful servant, and, hence, all-too-human, I am drawing on Courtney Handman's article, 'Language at the Limits of the Human' (in press). In this article, she argues that part of what makes AI seem human are the moments in which it appears to deceive on purpose or to create its own language—in other words, the figure of personhood that AI is supposed to inhabit is that of a transparent—and, thus, putatively knowable—speaker. She describes an AI experiment at one of Facebook's AI labs in 2017, in which two AIs were given a large number of examples of how humans exchanged goods with each other, and then told to barter. As the AI entities bartered, they began to lie—to pretend to desire some valueless objects, so that later in the negotiation, they could give away the valueless objects they had obtained at no loss. Handman explores how these acts of deception are then interpolated as signs of interiority—the figure of the person fashioned in these moments is someone with a sophisticated ability to make language opaque, to ensure secrecy. Developing their own language was also interpreted as a signal that they had forms of control over their own language, a control that they were not sharing with others. As Handman puts it, 'deceptive language is the site at which the speaking subject, in contrast to just a speaker of conventional, shared forms, is born. That is, the speaker is projected into a third dimension, given subjective depth through the assumption that there is a discrepancy between—and, thus, space between—the speaker's surface and something hidden within.' Here, it is not just that people begin to project on to machines the ability to speak referentially, but that machine's apparent ability to speak in such a way intentionally violates conventions of truthful reference. This is an (erroneous) signal of their ability to speak like a human.

Handman offers a twist on a classic distinction between structure and agency, a twist Roy Wagner (1995) turns into an ethnographic insight in his article, 'Fighting over Pigshit.' In this article, he argues that talking about structure and agency is all well and good for an anthropologist—he was writing at a time, in fact, when this is what many anthropologists talked about (Wagner 1995). But, people on the ground, when encountering structure and agency, often experience it as the distinction between the reactive and the spontaneous. When I say 'lovely to meet you' upon being introduced to someone, I am being reactive. But, should I say, 'You remind me of my brother in the way you smile', I am being a bit spontaneous. Agency, according to Wagner, can appear to people on the ground as a choice between whether someone will be reactive or spontaneous.

By contrast, Handman (in press) suggests that the concerns around AI take the agency projected at its heart in a different direction. To be a speaker that dabbles in more than conventional shared forms is not in this case being creative or unexpected, but rather being duplicitous. If Handman is right, if duplicity and anxieties around a machine's interior self are foundational to how people engage with AI, then one might expect large quantities of social attention in AI interactions will be devoted to nuanced formulations of types of duplicity. Part of the work of genres is to regulate how knowledge is circulated and, as a consequence, how duplicity is made available. Will humans

begin differentiating themselves from machines in the ways in which they use genres to deceive? Or, will people engage in new ways with how spontaneity, creativity, and duplicity are often co-constitutive? Will what it means to deceive like a machine become typified in new ways, just as what it means to be creative like a human could become typified in new ways?

In focusing on deception and how deception is tightly linked to Euro-American-inflected notions of the interior self, Handman attends to the dyadic nature of current accounts of AI conversations. The fact that these conversations are viewed as dyadic is aided in no small measure by ChatGPT's interface.[8] In the process, she draws our attention to people's concerns about AI that speak more to the types of anxieties likely to emerge from a performance framework. In a performance framework, a social analyst asks questions derived from an underlying model of interaction that assumes an actor performing on a stage—that is, a character inhabited by a strategic self speaking a text or choosing from a socially agreed upon repertoire. This encourages analysts to focus on a key set of questions (and with these questions, I expand upon Wagner's 1995 distinction between the spontaneous and the reactive, albeit with a slightly different locus and with echoes of Goffman). What is the difference between being scripted or improvising, and how does this difference affect social interactions? Is the actor simply repeating an already established repertoire or is the actor changing this repertoire during the moment of performance? And, what, to echo Handman, constitutes the gap between actor and character?—How do a character's words offer insights into the interior self performing this character? And, using the language of structure and agency, is a given performance social reproduction or social transformation?

Teri Silvio (2019) in her sophisticated theory of animation points out that we now live in a world in which performance is not the only model. In recent decades, we have also been increasingly surrounded by entities operating along an animation logic (see also Suchman 2007).[9] When using an animation lens, no one asks what distinguishes a community of creators from the character(s) they produce or if an animated character is following social norms as one might ask of drag queens. Asking if Snoopy or Mickey Mouse or SpongeBob Squarepants is being spontaneous is not an intelligible question. I suggest scholars of AI keep animation in mind, despite the ways in which the dyadic communication with ChatGPT currently encourages people to focus upon performance-laden questions. I do so in part because our labour will shift in the near future to accommodate all sorts of new forms of heteromation, to repurpose Ekbia and Nardi's (2017) coinage, new ways in which humans and machines will work together, dividing up the labour of different tasks. The movie *Her* can be summarised in my terms as the story of a doomed romance in which a man falls in loves with an AI, only to have the relationship dissolve when the AI reveals how multiple she truly is, how much thinking of her as a solitary figure confined to a single dyadic pairing misrepresents how she exists in the world. As a unity, she might effectively be interpreted as animated in the Silvian sense.

Teri Silvio argues that animation has at its core a unified character created by inkists, colourists, voice artists, script writers, and so on. Unlike how many colloquially think about performance, where a good performance is the sole responsibility of the actor, the audience plays a significant role in contributing to the efficacy of the half-empty animated character. Characters are often drawn and written as

compilations of conventionalised markers, merely implying details and nuance (thus, half-empty), which encourages the audience to project an affective connection and various social complexities onto the character. That is to say, many share a media ideology that, while the audience appreciates a performed character, the audience co-creates an animated character. Given these assumptions, if one analyses animation, one asks a different set of questions than one asks of performance. Because an animated character is a unified being created by many, one might ask: How are unity and multiplicity intertwined? This is the question that *Her* leaves us with in thinking about that version of AI. What kind of labour is involved in giving the impression of unity? What is the difference or boundary between manipulation and free will—between acting because of the agency of another or many versus acting from one's own agency? I suggest that ethnographers keep an eye out for the ways in which labour may slip into new forms of heteromation in the coming years, ones which can be best explained by thinking with animation and not performance when analysing interactions and texts.

BULLSHIT GENRES AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

So much of the anxiety around what ChatGPT might do to jobs revolves around how adept ChatGPT is at creating the standardised genres that fill so many jobs these days. In encountering these worries, I am continually reminded of Louis Hyman's quip about the threat of increasingly automated jobs. We have spent so much energy making jobs as dull and as empty as possible, segmenting and conceptualising tasks so that machines could potentially do them. Why then are we shocked that people have finally managed to develop machines that can, in fact, do this work, and why are we so deeply dismayed when this happens (Hyman 2018)? To add to Hyman's insight, we have spent decades turning jobs into roles for producing simplistic standardised genres, exactly those genres that lead people to proclaim with despair that they are working bullshit jobs, jobs they only secured by producing even more bullshit genres (see Gershon 2017, 2022; Graeber 2018).

Media historians have long known that whenever new technology is introduced, new job roles spring up—telephones created a need for telephone operators, typewriters created a need for typists, Google search engines created Google optimisers. Each time a technology changes how work is done, it changes the division of labour between human and machine in work contexts. Heteromation shifts to how work is done could enable new ways in which humans can express creativity or experience distinctive interactions with their humanness. Being able to tell which moments demand a difference between human-generated and AI-generated products could become a new and desired component of work. But, so is prompt engineering—as Kevin Roose and Casey Newton of the Hard Fork podcast suggest, soon there will be a need for experts skilled at refining large language models (LLMs) with specific prompts and recommended outputs, as well as experts talented at developing sophisticated ways of crafting prompts to achieve productive results from these LLMs. This is only the first stage in the ways in which evaluation and labour will change in response to how AI can potentially change the nature of bullshit jobs and bullshit genres. After all, bullshit genres are often filled with standardisation with just a touch of distinctiveness—such as resumes that need to adhere to a template, yet written in such a way that the distinctiveness of the individual

is shown in just the right way. These genres may soon stop being desirable gate-keeping tools. When a wider range of standardisation becomes something easily achieved, the non-standard may become valued in new ways.

This does not mean that privileging skills in producing the non-standard will lead to good jobs. History has proven time and time again that the jobs created by new possibilities for heteromation are not necessarily better jobs. Being a telephone operator could be as stultifying as working as a waitress.[10] ChatGPT, however, reveals fairly effectively that producing standardised genres with a twist of distinctiveness is, in fact, something that can be easily automated. This revelation might encourage workplaces to find new ways to take advantage of what is distinctive about being human, another transformation that anthropologists of work might want to anticipate.

GENRE AND STYLE

There is another dominant way that ChatGPT's genre play has captured the public's imagination—by allowing people to juxtapose genre and style. Euro-Americans all too frequently ask this of AI, as Eitan Wilf (in press) examines in his study of the ways that computerised algorithms provide poets and jazz players new avenues for creative expression. One of his case studies involves computer scientists in a lab in Austin, Texas, with the opportunity to imagine anew what constitutes improvisation and style in jazz and other musical genres. These computer scientists are especially pleased with themselves for having created a humanoid robot marimba player that can play percentage-based combinations of famous jazz players. Yet, it changes how one can mobilise style when computer scientists are able to turn jazz musicians' styles into measurable units that can then be combined proportionally (that is, 20% Miles Davis, 20% Charlie Parker).

In his book, Wilf addresses technologies that engage with style. As he puts it, he studies '[t]echnologies that are meant to mediate styles [and thus] are designed, first, to synthesize or abstract a style as a generative principle from a corpus of fixed texts, and/or, second, to enact or realize this generative principle by producing new fixed texts in this style' (Wilf in press: 8). His interest lies in how creators of these technologies hope to offer new and satisfying avenues for engaging with improvisational genres, such as jazz or poetry. In doing so, they shift the relationships between style, authorship, and the delight of the unexpected. Legible experimentation or unpredictability comes from how machine intelligence combines styles that are meant to be rooted in a unique human talent, but are so distinctive that they are replicable and available for juxtaposition. Here, style and genre mutually construct templates that enable legibility. At the same time, people engaged in these projects are re-thinking how these templates function to render creativity and originality recognisable and enjoyable. The way in which AI engages with genres shifts how the familiar interplay between structured communication and distinctive communication is formulated and experienced. Along with Eitan Wilf, I suggest that ChatGPT and similar forms of machine intelligence will draw attention to how templates structure our communication in new, contextually dependent ways. After all, templates, as any anthropologist might expect, do not offer the same kind of puzzle for every community of practice.

THE GENERIC IN THE TEMPLATE

I conclude my collection of practices to watch for by discussing *The Copy Generic* by Scott MacLochlainn (2023), which I believe offers some productive insights into what we might expect from contemporary forms of AI likely to unsettle common communicative repertoires. MacLochlainn is interested in the kind of work the generic is able to accomplish as a template and as a referent in contemporary capitalist conditions. I have argued that, as a genre machine, AI encourages us to ask what it means to produce genres in new ways. Until now, I have stressed the genre in the genre production process. MacLochlainn, however, suggests that scholars might also explore the production aspect with an eye toward the difficulties in crafting the generic. What might it mean to produce generic versions of a genre? MacLochlainn points out that this is, in fact, quite finicky work for humans with many missteps likely along the way. As he reveals about objects, and I would venture to say holds true for texts as well, when one makes a generic text, it must be generic in precisely the right way—the text must be carefully placed within a web of differentiation. ChatGPT appears to do this with speed and competence. It is, thus, likely that AI will, if it has not already, lead to widespread media ideologies that part of what makes us resolutely human in the face of ChatGPT and its ilk revolves around humans' ability to create genres that do not lend themselves easily to certain forms of standardisation.

One question people are already grappling with is understanding how ChatGPT will change practices around authorship.[11] People are concerned with far more than simply determining what kind of authorship practices should be interpreted as heteromated authorship. Rather, as MacLochlainn points out, because the generic operates against a background in which authorship intricately overlaps with property relationships, it becomes a route for avoiding some of the quandaries that authorship creates—the generic offers non-authorship when needed. It also offers non-authorship when it is most distinctly undesirable, since people are now beginning to run into problems when they use AI in moments when authorship is in fact legally necessary. For instance, who signs a copyright agreement when Dall-e has produced an image for a publication? As a potential non-author, ChatGPT and its siblings will raise persistent questions for the next decade or so in each new context where the alignment between authorship and non-authorship is a complex social dilemma. New forms of non-authorship will spring up.

Scholars should keep in mind that each form of non-authorship is a solution to a social dilemma that exists only because authorship (and its implied contemporary property relations) is so much taken for granted as a touchstone in interactions. After decades of marketplaces filled with authored texts—that is, utterances linked through intellectual property chains to known producers or distributors—a text can only lose its author/producer through active disavowal by fashioning the generic (with many possible missteps following each choice after it is formulated). Prior to this intellectual property regime, texts could not be generic in the ways they are now. The generic, in this instance, offers at times a welcome opportunity for people not to be concerned about distinctiveness when circulating generic texts—here, think of the many instances in which we hear unauthored statements in service contexts, precisely the situations in which AI is already crafting utterances. In this case, a generic semiotic token or instance of an utterance is much closer to being a type rather

than an authored or propertied semiotic token. But here specificity and genericness quickly slip into relationships of fractal recursivity. Thus, the patterned ways of forming specificity and genericness can occur in similar ways at different levels of scale as texts circulate and are gathered together in genre repertoires for bounded stops in their circulation (see Gal and Irvine 2019).

In his book, MacLochlainn makes another point that I think serves as a useful caution to scholars about the ways in which academic analysts tend to think of the generic. MacLochlainn argues from his ethnography that the generic is *not* the unmarked. Here, I depend on MacLochlainn's ethnography since I do not yet have handy an AI-specific example. In his ethnography of how Christianity is experienced and practiced in a small town in the Philippines, he talks about how there is a wide assortment of Christian traditions available to people to choose from when they want to define themselves as Christian. One can always be Catholic, but there are also various forms of Protestants, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses available. Being Catholic in this town is the unmarked form of Christianity—whenever people talk in most contexts about being Christian, the default is to assume that they are talking about being Catholic. There is one space within this town in which this is not the case. There is a Christian school that was founded to be generically Christian—to serve all followers of Christ regardless of which church they in fact attend. Here, when one says one is Christian, it is a non-denominational Christianity that is referenced. Being generically Christian in the school was very much a conscious decision. His interlocutors know similar things about the social life of language and especially semiotic definitions of tokens that linguistic anthropologists know. MacLochlainn first noticed this because Jehovah's Witnesses began to proselytise at this school, much to the dismay of everyone else who were part of the school—teachers, parents, and school administrators. They were dismayed because the Jehovah's Witnesses were refusing to be Christian in the most general of senses. This is a town that has created a form of peace by allowing for a generically Christian school in which a Christian pluralism dominates, which allows all Christians to be functionally interchangeable. If they are truly functionally interchangeable, it makes no logical sense to attempt to persuade someone to shift the kind of Christian they are. These Jehovah's Witnesses were then forced to deal with the consequences of irritating a community by violating this agreement to turn Christianity generic. This, however, was quite specific to the school context. When the Jehovah's Witnesses instead attempted to convert Catholics (the unmarked Christians) in other contexts, they did not experience the same type of resistance. Outside of the school, when proselytising, the Jehovah's Witnesses' task was to make explicit how one should not take Catholicism to be an unmarked form. When doing so, they were attempting an act of semiotic revelation that everyone in that village had previously witnessed many times before. After all, the village was filled with people who had been Catholic once or belonged to families that had previously been Catholic a generation or two ago. In all these ways, the generic is substantively different from the unmarked, both in how it is constituted and the effect it has on communicative interactions.

CONCLUSIONS: CONTENDING WITH THE NEWNESS OF CHATGPT AND ITS SIBLINGS

If scholars take ChatGPT to be a genre-reproducing and genre-tweaking machine, then

integrating ChatGPT and its siblings into people's daily lives will most likely encourage people to think in new ways about being human as well as about being social actants who communicate (see Suchman 2007). This is not to say that we will be human in new ways, but rather that how people think about communication will shift. Drawing upon my experience in studying earlier moments in which relatively transformative media were introduced into people's media ecologies, we should expect many of the social norms around AI to remain unsettled for some time to come. It takes time for social expectations to become widespread—standardisation along various axes is, after all, quite difficult to accomplish (Silverstein 2000), and ChatGPT unsettles how people engage with genres in large and small ways. What I found through my research on rapidly shifting media ecologies was that, when standardisation did begin to emerge, it occurred in ways I could not predict. When analysing how people used new media to end romantic relationships in 2007–2008, I thought that over time some widespread norms around Facebook use would gradually emerge. Instead, the media ecology shifted so much that announcing a breakup on Facebook had even altered the composition of the audience—from one's friends to one's extended family. Rather than establishing widespread norms around a particular medium, I found in a ten-year follow-up study that people were developing more shared agreements around the phatic aspects of a wide range of the media they used (see Gershon 2010; Gershon 2020). Even when standardisation begins to emerge, it can occur around unanticipated moments in the communicative interaction. How and when standardisation around ChatGPT occurs in different communities of practice will very much remain an open question worthy of ethnographic attention for some time to come.

People now exist in a social world with a new actant, and, as a result, how people fashion their webs of differentiation between the actants in their social world will change. No medium enters an empty stage—it is always entering a stage filled with older media and, thus, also filled with already established media ideologies and practices, a recognition inspired most directly by Kittler (1999) or Bolter and Grusin (1999), and indirectly by many other media theorists. Each time someone uses ChatGPT in 2023 as though it is a search engine, with the inevitable poor results, it provides an example of how previous experiences with media shape people's current expectations and practices. Thus, scholars should be cautious to always keep in mind the other experiences users may have had in their media ecology when looking at all of the media ideologies and social practices springing up around ChatGPT.

Bolter and Grusin argue that, with the introduction of each new medium, people are forced to re-think how every other medium they use shapes communication. These authors focus on the relationship between immediacy and hyper-reality, detailing how every newly introduced medium shifts how people interpret the production of immediacy by all other media. I suggest that instead of drawing attention to this continuum, ChatGPT encourages people to re-evaluate the continuum between the generic and the specific. For many, how one engages with the generic also offers a set of signals they see as indicative of interior selves. People may soon develop an attentiveness to new signals of interiority as they value different aspects of producing templates, sifting through what machines do well and what humans do well. Thus, people are likely to develop new semiotic ideologies about templates, forms, or how styles can co-mingle within genres and in relation to genres. Quite possibly, style will become a sign

of a coherent intellect in new ways. For some time now, a consistent and predictable style has become a hegemonic ideal, but now it is too easily replicated by machines. Perhaps in the near future, anyone who aims to be a resisting and distinctive human will reject having a recognisable style. More people will take Max Ernst as an aspiration instead of Rene Magritte. Perhaps even the logic of branding, a logic that relies on a coherence that AI can easily replicate, must shift. In general, we may think of new ways about what being human brings to a set of communicative interactions now that reproducing the generic and genres comes all too easily to machines.

ILANA GERSHON
PROFESSOR
ANTHROPOLOGY
RICE UNIVERSITY
igershon@rice.edu

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several people at the *Technolinguistics* Conference held in Siegen, Germany, in May 2023, will recognise traces of their conversations in my account. The following shared with me especially insightful points: Michael Castelle, Evan Donahue, Paul Kockelman, Alisa Maksimova, and Yarden Skop. I cannot thank Siri Lamoureaux enough; this text would never exist if she had not invited me to speak, which was followed by a chat with Siri and Yarden about what type of keynote might be helpful. My thanks to Courtney Handman, Webb Keane, and Eitan Wilf for sending me advanced copies of their work, and to Melissa Cefkin and Sarah Green for tips for where to find insightful podcasts and news articles. Courtney Handman and Tuomas Tammisto offered extremely helpful editorial comments. My gratitude also extends to Heikki Wilenius, who suggested I publish this piece and wisely encouraged directions for revision.

NOTES

1 Before I launch into my suggestions, let me elaborate a little on what I claim with my self-description. My own perspective has been strongly shaped by my analytical commitments to viewing media as a material communicative channel and my longstanding engagements with both linguistic anthropology and science studies. I often describe my work on how Americans use new media to break up with each other as an attempt to determine, through ethnographic analysis, which analytical concepts in the linguistic anthropologist's toolkit translate especially well to the study of how new media become parts of people's media ecologies, with all the many hiccups and pitfalls along the way in adopting any medium.

2 From James Smith's Facebook feed (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1029098351):
I saw the best monsters of my generation destroyed by the letter Z,
Dragging themselves through the trash cans at dawn,
Looking for a fix of those sweet, sweet ABCs.

3 When Judith Irvine introduced the notion of role fragments (what some call role fractions) in her article, she offered as an example the following possible role fractions for being a speaker: 'Consider, for instance, the person quoted against his or her will; the absent party named in an accusation (the 'Fingeree?'); the role in a stage play, as opposed to the actor playing it; 'the person a child is named after, who may (if living) then have certain specified responsibilities toward the child . . .' (Irvine 1996: 134).

4 See Lehtiniemi and Ruckenstein (2022) for a discussion of a fascinating and short-lived venture that recruited prisoners in Finland to be AI fine-tuners as a cheap and stable supply of labour with a not-so-common language expertise for the task.

5 AI companies presume that humans are the ones training AI, and typically tend not to care who these humans are– AI training presumes the universal human, which I expect anthropologists to critique for many years to come. But this is not the only problem with AI training. Reporter

Josh Dzieza (2023) shows that AI trainers are enmeshed in labour markets that offer incentives for using AI to process the training information. The companies hire independent contractors with a pay schedule and deadline pressures that make it much more profitable and feasible for these contractors to turn to AI for results. What companies dread happening is having AI train other AI, and, yet, they are creating the labour conditions that make this practice very likely, and without the company's knowledge.

6 Admittedly, there are moments when people's communicative interaction also resembles an attempt to predict the next work in a sequence. In these moments, people's expectations of language use and ChatGPT's practices are more tightly aligned.

7 My thanks to Paul Kockelman for calling my attention to this point.

8 The dyadic nature of imagined AI interactions has long-standing roots. Think of how the Turing test itself is fundamentally dyadic. See Star (1989) for a discussion of how imagining the Durkheim test instead of the Turing test would encourage a community-of-practice approach to AI design and implementation.

9 Silvio acknowledges that people have long interacted with puppets and spirit mediums, such that animation is not new. She does, however, make a historical argument that we now live in an age of animation, and that animated figures' ubiquity has made it more urgent for scholars to address an animation logic as following in the wake of a performance logic.

10 See Crawford (2021) for a discussion of the bad jobs that already exist to support AI, along with her other trenchant critiques of AI.

11 See Petersen (2022) for a US-specific historical overview of transforming legal understandings of how embodied speech, machine speech, and authorship are intertwined.

REFERENCES

Bakhtin, Mikael 1990. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin.* Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, Mikael 1981. *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bauman, Richard 1999. Genre. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9 (1–2): 84-87. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.1999.9.1-2.84.

Bolter, Jay David and Grusin, Richard 1999. *Remediation: Understanding New Nedia*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Borges, Jorge Luis 1962. Funes, the Memorious. In *Ficciones*. New York: Grove Press.

Crawford, Kate 2021. *The Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Donahue, Evan 2022. Towards an Android Linguistics: Pragmatics, Reflection, and Creativity in Machine Language. *Proceedings of Theoretical and Foundational Problems in Information Studies* 81 (1): 156. https://doi.org/10.3390/proceedings2022081156.

Dzieza, Josh 2023. AI is a lot of Work. *New York Magazine* 20 June 2023. https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/ai-artificial-intelligence-humans-technology-business-factory.html. <Accessed 25 September 2023>

Ekbia, Hamid and Bonnie Nardi 2017. *Heteromation, and Other Stories of Computing and Capitalism.* Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Gal, Susan and Judith Irvine 2019. *Signs of Difference: Language and Ideology in Social Life.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gershon, Ilana 2010 *The Break-Up 2.0: Disconnecting Over New Media*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Gershon, Ilana 2020 The Breakup 2.1: The Ten Year Update. *Information Society* 36 (5): 279–289. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2020.1798316.

Gershon, Ilana 2022 Genres Are the Drive Belts of the Job Market. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 15 (6): 768–781. https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2022.2087714.

Graan, Andrew 2022. Publics and the Public Sphere. In Mark Aldenfelder (ed.). *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Graeber, David 2018. *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Handman, Courtney in press. Language at the Limit of the Human. *Comparative Studies of Society and History*.

Irvine, Judith 1996. Shadow Conversations. In Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (eds). *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Keane, Webb in process. *Humans, Near Humans, Non-Humans*. London: Penguin.

Kittler, Frederick 1999. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kockelman, Paul 2020. The Epistemic and Performative Dynamics of Machine Learning Praxis. *Signs and Society* 8 (2): 319–355.

Lehtiniemi, Tuuka and Minna Ruckstein 2022. Prisoners Training AI: Ghosts, Humans, and Values in Data Labour. In Sarah Pink, Martin Berg, Deborah Lupton and Minna Ruckenstein (eds). *Everyday Automation: Experiencing and Anticipating Emerging Technologies.* Abingdon: Routledge.

MacLochlainn, Scott 2022. *The Copy Generic: How the Nonspecific Makes Our Social Worlds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Murphy, Keith 2022. Programming Politeness: Digital Servantry and the Rules of Social Engagement. In Alessandro Duranti (ed.). *Rethinking Politeness with Henri Bergson.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Petersen, Jennifer 2022. *How Machines Came to Speak: Media Technologies and Freedom of Speech.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Roose, Kevin and Casey Newton 2023. The Surgeon General's Social Media Warning and A.I.'s Existential Risks. *Hard Fork* podcast. *The New York Times* 26 May 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/26/podcasts/hard-fork-ajeya-cotra.html. <Accessed 26 September 2023>

Silverstein, Michael 2000. 'Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality.' In Paul Kroskrity (ed.). *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities, and Identities*. Santa Fe: SAR Press.

Silverstein, Michael 2019. Texts, Entextualized and Artifactualized: The Shapes of Discourse. *College English* 82 (1): 55–76. https://doi.org/10.58680/ce201930305.

Silvio, Teri 2019. *Puppets, Gods, and Brands: Theorizing the Age of Animation from Taiwan.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Suchman, Lucy 2007. *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Star, Susan Leigh 1989. The Structure of Ill-Structured Solutions: Boundary Objects and Heterogeneous Distributed Problem Solving. *Distributed Artificial Intelligence* 2: 37–54.

Wagner, Roy 1995. Fighting Over Pigshit: A New Ireland Pragmatic. *Anthropology and Humanism* 20 (1): 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1525/ahu.1995.20.1.3.

Warner, Michael 2002. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books.

Wilf, Eitan in press. *The Inspiration Machine: Computational Creativity in Poetry and Jazz.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.