

# Animal Rituals of Indigenous People (Koryak) in Kamchatka

OSHIMA, Minoru

Otaru University of Commerce

## カムチャツカ先住民（コリヤーク）の動物送り儀礼

大 島 稔

小樽商科大学言語センター

コリヤークの人々は、丘や川、崖、岩などの自然物にも霊魂が宿り、野生の動植物にも霊魂が宿り、人間の霊魂と同様に不滅であり、獲物の霊魂が人間の世界に戻って来るというアニミズムと、人間と動物は同等で互いに入れ替わることができ、トナカイやオオカミやクマやオオガラスが自分達の先祖であるというトーテミズムを信仰の基礎にしている。

狩猟対象獣が人間の世界に再び戻ってくることを確実にするために、獲物を丁重に迎えて送り返す儀礼が伴うのである。この儀礼をしなければ、狩猟者とその家族は、獲物、すなわち食料を手に入れることができないという強い信念がある。だからこそ、海岸定住コリヤークでは現在でも迎えと送りの儀礼が行われているのである。狩猟シーズン前の共同の儀礼、狩猟直後の家族による儀礼、狩猟シーズン終わりの共同の儀礼であるホロロ祭りがそれである。トナカイを飼育するチャウチュウエンでもクマなどの陸獣を狩猟した時、家畜のトナカイを屠殺した時、葬儀の際に、さらにさまざまな精霊、悪霊に対してトナカイの供儀が行われる。

また、儀礼には必ず火に食べ物を捧げる儀式が伴うことも重要である。海岸定住コリヤークもトナカイ飼育コリヤークもともにこの火への供物を大切な日常的な儀礼としている。火は神々のことを何でも知っているからである。

コリヤークにおける動物送り儀礼は、狩猟・漁労・採集・トナカイ飼育という伝統的な生業活動において、道具や技術、生態的知識、分業・交易などの社会組織などでは解決できない問題を解決する精神的な生業活動といえる。

### INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples in Kamchatka have been making most use of natural resources. In the long history, they have developed hunting, fishing and reindeer breeding techniques, handed their rich ecological knowledge down generation to generation, and also socially adapted themselves to their environment by developing division of work between opposite sexes and trading relationships with different local/ethnic groups. However, people still have strong fear of unpredictable famine. The fear of famine in this world also means the fear in another world they will go after death, where they would wait for their descendants to send food to them. Many of oral traditions of a cultural hero *Kuykin'aqu* / *Kutkin'aqu* in Koryak often told a lot about the famine of his family and other animals' families in the stories.

Koryak people's view of the world is effective to avoid the fear of famine in that they believe in everlasting existence of spirits, good or evil, and souls in animals, plants, and even nature things such as rivers, stones, hills and capes, and natural phenomena such as sun, moon, rain, thunder etc. This view of world is called animism. The souls of different species are thought to be interchangeable. Some people think that their ancestors are animals such as reindeer, bears, wolves and ravens, which view is called totemism. In their thought, animals wear the animals skins and visit the human world in order to give meat and skins to human beings, by which human beings can live and avoid the famine so that they

feel obliged to welcome and send off the guest animals to the original world by holding a joyful festival in this world.

### PRE-HUNTING-SEASON RITUALS

Hunters in Lesnaya (about hunting practice itself, see OSHIMA 1997) used to practice pre-season bear hunting rituals two times a year in spring and autumn on the east side of the mountain of *Kamakran* (place of *kamak* 'land spirit'), because bears are hunted twice a year in spring (in April) and autumn (August). Spring bears, still living in the den, are preferably hunted because of their thick fur and rich fat.

Every hunter in the village, except women and children, can participate in the bear ritual. Even younger hunters, though they have not yet hunted a bear, can participate the bear ritual.

Each hunter made a small spear (*pojgEpoj* in Koryak) out of birch. The small spear is some 30 cm long, far shorter than real ones, which are 2 m long. A special sacred grass called *la?uteng*, a cloth and a necklace are tied onto the spear. Hunters carry their small spears to the sacred place in the east side of *Kamakran*. The hunters stand the spears aslant into the swampy place behind the peak so that the tip of the spear can point toward the east, which is thought to be the sacred direction. Hunters say prayers for good luck for hunting. Hunters leave the spears there.

Rituals before hunting trip are performed only

near or in the house, unlike the bear rituals which are practiced on *Kamakran*. A hunter, praying for good luck for hunting, offers seal blubber and meat, tobacco, tea, and sugar as *inelvet/invalvat* (food offering) to the fire praying for good luck for hunting. Fire is thought to be a living being and knows everything so that the hunter feeds fire first of all. Just before leaving a hut for hunting, he also feeds the fire. When he speaks to the fire and the fire flame goes up, it is interpreted as if the fire speaks back to him so that his hunt will be successful.

## RITUALS JUST AFTER THE HUNT

After a successful hunt and flensing game, a hunter expresses his gratitude to the fire. This ritual is also practiced for small fur animals as well as bears. When a hunter traps a sable, for instance, he inserts the hide under the belt and walks around the fireplace and then shows it in front of fire and offers a lower lip to the fire as sacrifices together sugar and bread and so on.

A hunter in Lesnaya prepares a special food called *tektek* in Koryak for good fortune for next hunting. They boil a bear's head with jaw bones and eat brain. The hunter who is so scared of bears should eat the bear's eyes and uvular ('small tongues' in Koryak) raw.

The hunters in Lesnaya, when coming back home with their hunted game, give a celebration with their family at home, burning the sacred grass (*la?uteng*) and a cloth at the fireplace and tell their prayers to the god (*engen* in Koryak). After they eat the dish, they stuff the skull with sacred grass (*la?uteng*) and wrap it with a strap to attach a lower jaw to it. They bring it to *Kamakran* where pre-season rituals are held and leave it tied to the tree with a piece of sacred grass on the east side of the mountain. The fur is not brought to the mountain, but it should be kept in the house until the Hololo festival in autumn.

In Penzhina area, according to the information from people originally from Mikina, Koryak people used to give a celebration for the hunted bear at home and bring the skull to the sacred island or hill (called *apapil'* 'grandfather' in Koryak) near the coast. The whale bones used to be brought to the sacred island, too. The bones of other small game, such as small fur animals, were placed on tundra. After the family celebration, the man and woman go into the forest, the man wearing the male bear fur and the woman wearing the female bear fur. At the end of hunting season, people hold sending-off rituals at the sacred island or hill (JOCHELSON (1975:14) mentioned the *apapel* (meaning 'grandfather') is a term given to a good spirit and it is every place such as sacred rocks, hills and capes where sacrifices are offered).

## HOLOLO FESTIVAL AS A POST-HUNTING-SEASON RITUAL

The autumn hunting season ends when the rivers and bays are frozen and they cannot use any more water vessels such as a dug-out boat made of poplar (*bat* in Russian) or a skin boat, but it is too early to start using a

dog sledge. This means that the festival season will start, expressing gratitude to and entertaining animal guests with the food they have prepared for the occasion. The sending-off rituals of whales, seals and land animals in which humans send the souls back to their another world or god world, are very important in order that they can ensure the visit of animals to their dwelling places to be willingly hunted the next year. The hunters and their family believe that the hunters have experience and skills to hunt animals but they also admit that the animals should be eager to visit their hunting grounds to be hunted. Otherwise their hunting skills and knowledge would be nothing.

There is no more ritual for whales by Maritime Koryak as JOCHELSON (1975:65) described in detail. Nevertheless seal festivals called *Hol'ol'o* (or *Ol'ol'o* in Lesnaya in West Coast) are still practiced by Maritime Koryak in Lesnaya, Tymlat, Vyvenka, Il'pyrskii (about Karaga's Hololo, see MALYUKOVICH 1999:23-24) In some places, at least in Lesnaya and Tymlat, this festival includes rituals for land mammals, too.

In Lesnaya (see OSHIMA 1997), any hunter who is successful in even one game animal should hold the festival in order to send the animal souls back into another world. Each hunter invites guests to his home. The festival continues until all hunters finish giving their feasts to the guests. The order of the sponsors to give a feast is not fixed. The rule is that the first hunter who has finished preparation for the festival will start first. Each family has to prepare seal skin thongs, seal blubber, dry fireweed, berries, dry fish and dry fish roe, fly agaric and so on. Usually the rich family, which consists of good hunters and good gatherers, finish their preparation earlier than others so they can start the feast sooner.

On the first day, in advance of the festival inside the house, people, including guests, participate a dog/reindeer sledge race. At 7:00 p.m. the guests, from other families in the same village and relatives from the neighbor villages, get together at a hunter's home and begin to eat festival dishes. One of the Hololo dishes is the mixture of a grass called *nunun* 'fireweed' and dry salmon roe. After its outer hard skin is removed, fireweed is boiled and pounded together with dry salmon roe and then seal oil and many kinds of berries are added to the mixture, which is called *tilqEtil*. This festival dish is sacrificed to the animal souls as a farewell gift and is served on the plate for the guests.

A special festival drink called *cerema* in Koryak for intoxication is served. The drink is prepared by mixing cooked berry juice and fly agaric (*mukhomor* in Russian, and *wapaq* in Koryak).

At 9:00 p.m., while several people are beating a drum and singing a song, fortune tree of alder is brought in. Then people in the hunter's house start singing their own songs. When the tree is erected near the fireplace or stove, hunters began tying with a sacred grass called *la?uteng* tiny wooden cross figurines onto a branch as symbols of hunted sea mammals, and straws of grass as symbol of land mammals, each representing one animal each hunter has hunted.

In Tymlat, the wooden figurines are made of alder. This tree has a very special power to protect humans from evil spirits so that people place the branch nearby in the bed when they are sleeping out on tundra. The sacred sage grass is used for rituals because the grass makes it possible to keep the animal symbolically attached to their local place. The use of sacred grass means the hunters' prayers that the animals should come back to their local place the next year.

Hunters sing their own songs. The hunter who has hunted a bear sings and dances wearing a bear hide over his body. All the participants, sitting around the singers, shout 'hol'ol'ol'ol'ol'o' during the songs. Hunters' widows in case their husbands were killed while hunting, sing their own songs in a slow tempo. These songs represent the singers' grief and merry songs follow the sad ones. People keep singing merry songs in turn all through the night until next morning.

On the second day, at 7:00 am, men start for the forest carrying a plate full of grass straws gathered from the fortune tree. In the forest the men, throwing away grass straws back to the wilderness, pray for next fortunate hunt, saying "Go back to the wilderness, and come back next year."

While men are out to the forest, women gather wooden figurines from the fortune tree and put them into fire. The sponsor-hunter's wife takes out the pieces of burning charcoal of figurines and brings them to the four corners of the room to fill the room with smoke. After the feast, a fortune tree is carried into another hunter's house.

Each sponsor family follows the same process. The festival sometimes, if there are many successful hunters included, lasts even two weeks.

When all the hunters finished their feasts, the biggest and last feast practiced by the whole village people starts at the Culture House. This time a fortune alder tree, which is some 2 m tall, is taller than the one used in each hunter's ritual. The festival goes like the one practiced in each house except that at the last stage, there is a competition of huge twisted strap propeller called *telitel*. Everyone, including children, ties a straw onto the strap for their own luck. In this game, teams of four or five contestants compete in revolving twisted strap propeller making the sound of snowstorm the hunters have encountered on their hunting trips until the strap is broken apart. The hunter who breaks the strap can cut into the pieces and give each piece to around him for the use of belts, mittens or a dog harness.

## CONCLUSION

Koryak people believe in ever-lasting existence of spirits and souls in wild animals, wild plants, and even nature things such as rivers, stones, hills and capes, and natural phenomena such as sun, moon, rain, thunder etc. This view is called animism. The souls of different species are thought to be immortal and interchangeable. Animals wear the animal skins and visit the human world in order to give meat and skins to human beings so that

they feel obliged to welcome and send off the guests to the original world by giving a joyful festival in this world. If they failed to practice a festival, that would mean a famine of the village. So people in Tymlat, Vyvenka, Il'pyrskii, Lesnaya still keep this welcoming and sending-off tradition.

In Ol'utorskii district, people used to hold a taboo to kill wolves (ANTROPOVA 1956: 868). They breed a small group of reindeer and wolves are the enemies of reindeer they live on. The increasing number of wolves in their breeding ground means the increasing of the victim reindeer. Nevertheless they had kept the taboo.

The last point interesting to point out is that in any ritual people offer food sacrifices to the fire first. This offering practice, called *inelvet* or *enalvat* in Koryak, is practiced even nowadays in the daily life by maritime hunters and reindeer breeders (see USHAKOVA 1999: 61-63). When we visit a house (*yaranga* in Koryak), we are asked to wait in front of the house entrance and to offer a small bit of the texture of our clothes into the charcoal the house wife brought in front of the guest. Fire is respected very much because fire is thought to know everything about other gods.

The above mentioned animal rituals can be safely said to be a spiritual activity to complement to resolve the problem which still remains after accomplishment of hunting implements, skills, use of ecological knowledge and social adaptation through division of work by sex and division of trade between villages and ethnic groups in their traditional subsistence system of hunting, fishing, gathering and reindeer breeding.

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