

Ngesiko' Laptander's *Pi' sarma khnytabts*

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Background

A Nenets fairy tale, performed as a song on behalf of *Pi sarma* 'An Eagle-Owl' was collected by Tapani Salminen in the Laborovskaya tundra. The story is about how the seagulls asked an old eagle to treat a wounded young bird. The eagle advised to make a tent and warned not to enter inside during his treatment. Then the eagle ate the young seagull and tried to escape from angry seagulls. Since that time the seagulls and the eagles have been enemies.

The Tundra Nenets *Pi sarma* was collected by Tapani Salminen from Ngesiko (Ivan) Ngevaserovich Laptander in Laborovaya village, Western Siberia, Russia¹.

Key words: Uralic languages, Nenets language, khnytabts, oral history, sacred myth, tundra birds

The Interview:

- | | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|
| 1 Tapani: | ' | , | I will write down, what is your name? |
| | ? | | |
| 2 Ngesiko: | , | ? | My name? My Nenets name is Ngesiko. In Russian I am Ivan. |
| | , | - | |
| 3 Tapani: | | ? | What is your surname? |
| 4 Ngesiko: | | . | Laptander. |
| 5 Tapani: | | . | Laptander. |
| 6 Ngesiko: | | ' | Right! |
| 7 Tapani: | ' | ? | How old are you? |

¹ Archive number of the recording: Labtander_Ngesiko_01A0102
 Duration of the record: 00:09:33
 Digitalisation of the record: Jarkko Niemi
 Name and surname of transcriber: Roza Laptander
 Name and surname of translator: Roza Laptander
 Archive number of transcribing and translation: TX_Labtander_Ngesiko_01A0102
 Comments about narration: The Nenets legend told by Nesiko Laptander. It is a night owl song about seagulls and an eagle.

- 8 Ngesiko: ' ''? " ' How old? I am very old,
you will not believe how old!
- 9 Tapani: ' . ''! Very old, yes.
- 10 Ngesiko: ' " ? How old I am?
- 11 Irina [daughter]: " , On the documents you are
eighty eight.
- 12 [Son]: " ! Your age is 88 in the documents!
- 13 Ngesiko: " . I am 88 in the documents.
' " " . Yes, ninety on the documents.
" " . Soon I will be ninety.
- 14 Tapani: ? Where were you born?
- 15 Ngesiko: ? . Where? In this land. This land.
- 16 Tapani: . Right.'

The Sung Poem with a Free Translation

The Nenets text and its translation was checked by Vasili (Sandya) Laptander, the son of Ngesiko Laptander in the 7th of August 2021 in the village of Laborovaya. He said that his father performed it as a chant for voice before performing a long *yarabts* or *suydbyabts*.

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to Jarkko Niemi for sharing the audio recording and Anna-Meretja Laptander for correcting the English text.

- 17 A-a-a " Made from one hundred mice skins
- 18 - - " His shamanic drum
- 19 - - He started to beat.
- 20 " And they listened quietly how
- 21 , - . an old eagle-owl
- 22 . began his song
- 23 - " – One hundred seagulls sat
- 24 ' Around a lake
- 25 ' " Near the sea
- 26 ' On the sea side
- -

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27 ' - I looked at the direction
 28 ' of a sandy beach
 - -
 29 in the direction of a bay.
 - -
 30 p'' There were one hundred chums covered
 - - by birch bark,
 31 p'' one hundred chums with birch bark.
 - -
 32 '' These chums
 33 were like white clouds in the sea
 - -
 34 Maybe they came here to make a sacrifice.
 O-o-
 35 ' As for me —
 - -
 36 ' I looked at the cape:
 - -
 37 a'' '' '' There was water on the shore
 - -
 38 ' '' from the Willow River.
 - -
 39 ' ' On the hillside
 40 '' '' there were one hundred dead people,
 - -
 41 ' '' on the hillside with willows.
 - -
 42 '' Only their teeth were shining,
 - -
 43 '' '' only the teeth were shining.
 44 As for me —
 - -
 45 ' ' '' I started to walk to the willows' hill
 - - to the direction of the willow hill.
 46 ' '' Only these words
 - -
 47 '' I heard:
 - -
 48 '' There were one hundred seagulls,
 - -
 49. e '' only their shouting,
 - -
 50 ' '' there was only their shouting,
 - -
 51 ' [so] that even the earth was trembling,
 - -

52 [so] that even the air was trembling,
 53 they made uproar like the drunken people.
 54 They were all together,
 55 one hundred seagulls,
 56 near the hillside.
 57 Something long was stuck on the ground
 58 and their noise went there
 59 in the direction of the seashore,
 60 to be exact, near the river's high bank,
 61 at the sandy cape,
 62 on the top of the cape.
 63 There were one hundred reindeer heads,
 64 they were so white
 65 that one could see them shine there.
 66 The people from one hundred tents
 67 scared away one hundred seagulls.
 68 People came here on reindeer sledges
 69 like clouds on the sky.
 70 There were one hundred seagulls.
 71 It's been three days.
 72 They were shouting there
 73 all night and all day.
 74 There was only their noise,
 75 how loud were their voices!
 76 In the day time in those tents
 77 — to be exact—

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78	”	”	they were probably Khanty.
	- -		
79	,	”	,
		”	
80	”	-	After three days
81	,	”	under the door of the nearest tent
		”	a shooter appeared.
	- -		
82		”	After that
83	”-	”	one hundred seagulls
	- -		
84		”	with noise,
	- -		
85	,	”	they all flew now away.
	- -		
86	,		Only one of them,
	- -		
87	,	-	one of them was wounded.
88			He wanted to fly
	- -		
89	-	-	but could not.
90	-	”	It was difficult for him.
91	,	,	He tried to climb up to the bank,
	- -		
92		-	he was on the bank,
93		”	on the bank.
94	”	”	One hundred seagulls circled [him].
95	,	- -	When they saw that one of them was wounded,
96	”	-	wounded on his leg,
97	,	”	shot on his leg ,
98	,	,	” therefore, he could not fly,
	- -		
99	”	,	even he tried, but could not.
100	,	,	” But he did not want to stay alone,
101	”		he did not want.
	- -		
102	”		For three days
	- - -		
103	,	”	this wounded seagull was crying.
	- - -		
104	”		One hundred seagulls discussed.
	- -		
105	”: «X	”	They said: “He does not want to die,
	- -		
106	,		we need a shaman,
	- -		

107 ”!“» we need to find a shaman!”

108 ”- ” One hundred seagulls

109 ’ went to the tundra,

110 ’ they flew screaming to the tundra,

111 ’ ’ they left one bird to look after the
 - ” deseaced one.

112 ’ ” After a short time

113 ’ - ” they found a shaman — an old eagle.

114 ’ ’ They took this old eagle with them

115 ’ ’ ”: The old eagle said:

116 « ’ “Make [me] a tent!

117 ’ ’ Make it now,

118 ’ a”!“» I need a tent!”

119 ” ’ ’ One hundred seagulls quickly made a tent,
 ” ’ ’ ” of course, they made a tent.

120 ’ - ’ When they completed the tent

121 ” the old eagle said:

122 « ’ ’ ” . ’ “Do not enter the tent. I need to be there
 ’ ’ alone. I will treat the young seagull alone.
 ’ ’» I will enter now the tent”.

123 ’ - ” They let him enter the tent.

124 ” Old Eagle said:

125 « ’ ’ “I will let you know
 - - ’» when I am ready.”

126 ’ ’ Old Eagle entered the tent,

127 ’ ” he entered the tent.

128 ’ ’ As soon as he went inside,
 - - he ate the wounded seagull.

129 ’ ’ He left only his poor bones

130 ’ ” without flesh.

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- 131 ' ' " He ate him all,
 - -
 132 ate all of his flesh.
 - -
 133 - - "': Then he said:
 134 « ' ' "!' » " I am ready now!"
 - -
 135 ' " When one hundred seagulls
 136 ' " looked inside of the tent:
 - -
 137 « ' », - " - " - "Instead of treating", - they said –
 138 « ' , "he left nothing behind from our
 poor boy.
 139 ' ' He ate him all,
 140 "!'» He left only his bones!"
 141 ' ' - - - When they saw this crime,
 - -
 142 " - - those one hundred seagulls,
 143 " after these words,
 144 ' ' ' flew after the old eagle.
 - -
 145 " Old Eagle drooped and could not fly
 - - any longer.
 146 ' Near [is] the seaside.
 - -
 147 ' ' ' Old Eagle came now to the seaside,
 148 ' ' he was surrounded on both sides,
 - -
 149 " " This old eagle.
 - -
 150 ' Near the river
 151 ' ' ' they killed Old Eagle there.
 152 That is all.
 - -
 153 ! That is all.
 154 ' ' Until now,
 155 " ' , " if an eagle sees seagulls, it goes higher
 " , " it goes higher to the sky. So it is.
 156 " ' ; When seagulls see an eagle, they try to
 scare it away
 157 . . My *khynabts* is closed.
 158 . This bird ate the little seagull. Yes!
 159 [Tapani:] '!' Right!
 160 . Yeah!
 161 [Irina:] ' " Tell him one more!

- 162 ? , ". More stories? But that is all for now. You only
, " , asked for one story. It is not a *yarabts*, it is not a
 " , " , life story, it is not a *suydbyabts*. Nothing special.
 " , " , " , This story is about birds. There is one bird,
 " " . , which is like the buzzard. It is smaller than the
 e . *e* ' buzzard. It is the eagle-owl.
- 163 – . The eagle-owl.
- 164 – . Right.
- 165 – . A night bird.
- 166 – , If you know this bird, then it is it.
- 167 – . Yes, I know this bird.
- 168 – , . Then it is it.
- 169 – , ' Yes, I know what is the eagle-owl.
- 170 – - . ' " " That is right. Pity that you cannot record
 . ' more. I also have a long story. I can tell you
 . , " one more life story.
 :

**Interview with Vasili, son of Esiko Laptander, recoded by Roza Laptander in
January 23, 2012, Aksarka**

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23 2012 , .²
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² AU_RL_20120123 LaptanderVasEsik

Ngesiko' Laptander's *Pi' sarma* khynabts

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Ngesiko' Laptander's *Pi' sarma* khynabts

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Summary

An interview with Esiko's son Vasilii Laptander (1962). The place of the interview was Aksarka, Yamal in January 23rd, 2012. Vasilii was born in the trading post Yari, near the Baydaratskaia Bay. He attended a boarding school in Beloyarsk and later studied for a profession in Salekhard. Vasilii did his military service in Khabarovsk and later in the Sakhalin Island. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he was a collector of reindeer antlers but later worked as a teacher in Laborovaya. After several conflicts with Anna Nerkagi, he quitted this job.

His father's grand-grandfathers came to Yamal from the Vaygach Island (NAO). Vasilii said that many Laptanders came from this island. Father's relatives lived near the Laborovskaya Tundra. Most of them died during the epidemic at the beginning of the XX century on the tundra.

His father, Esiko Laptander (1902-2002) was handicapped, he could not walk and moved sitting on a piece of a reindeer skin. He worked in a kolkhoz and later in the Baydaratskii Sovkhoz. Working with reindeer, he traveled with Otto Khorolia to the Yuribei River on the Yamal peninsula. When Esiko worked in the kolkhoz, there were still reindeer thieves in the tundra. Once they had stolen some reindeers from the kolkhoz herd. Because it happened during the daytime when Esiko and his brother Khuliu were in duty, they were sent to prison in Salekhard.

After many years, in 1990's together with many other Nenets reindeer herders and polar fox hunters, Esiko was fired from the Baydaratskii Sovkhoz by Nikolai Babin. The reason: "Due to the absence from the workplace in the Beloyarsk village office".