

Doctoral School in Humanities and Social Sciences
Doctoral Programme of History and Cultural Heritage

The Forestland's Guests
Mythical Landscapes, Personhood, and Gender
in the Finno-Karelian Bear Ceremonialism

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Abstract

The goal of the thesis is to provide new approaches for the interpretation of the elaborate Finnish and Karelian bear ceremonial's songs, which were intensively collected in the 19th Century and in the early 20th Century. The study aims to furnish a better understanding of the meanings of the ceremonial taking in consideration the context of folk beliefs at the time. The chapters will cover all the ritual phases, adapting the classic Hallowell's typology to the Finno-Karelian case. However, each chapter aims to provide some answers to the main research questions. Why did the bear hunt require such a complex ritualized reciprocity? How were the passages of borders between the village and the forest ritualized? How and why were the forest, its spirits and the bruin personalized? Why do many *Bear Songs* contain references to wedding songs? How did the Christian faith and the rich cattle holders' beliefs communicate with the hunter's rituals, forming a historically stratified tradition? The study reveals that the vernacular definitions of the bear's personhood changed often in the ritual phases: it was the offspring of the forest spirits or a hunter's relative; a bride or a groom; a boy or a respected elder. On a general level, the bear had a shifting double identity: it was strictly bounded to the family of the forest spirits, but at the same time the hunter emphasized its human features to make the ritual communication easier and to transform the bruin into the guest of honor of the village feast, in which the bear meat was consumed. The hunter's self could also change in the ritual: in the songs, he presented himself as a mighty man protected by mythic iron belts and shirts; as a handsome and mimetic seducer of female forest spirits, or as a humble orphan who needed their guidance. During the feast, the roles of the women toward the bear also varied: the mistress warmly welcomed the bruin as a guest or groom, but the women were also guided to protect the cattle. The landscapes acquired mythic features and they could be presented as welcoming or dangerous. These apparently kaleidoscopic changes followed a precise ritual logic: they were elaborate rhetorical devices to make the 'guests' – the bruin and the forest spirits – behave or react in certain ways in different ritual phases and to influence their perception of the hunters' actions.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The research object, problems and goals

1.1.1 The definitions of ceremonialism and bear ceremonialism

The object of this study is Finnish and Karelian bear ceremonialism, which consisted of different rituals and songs. The terms ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonials’ are used in both scientific and vernacular languages for lengthy rituals, such as weddings and funerals, divided into many specific phases. In my research, following the terminology adopted by Spyro and Rydving, I will define ‘ritual’ as “a generic term for any kind of cult behaviour, regardless of its degree of elaboration,”¹ ‘rite’ as “the minimum significant unit of ritual behaviour,”² ‘ceremony’ as “the smallest configuration of rites constituting a meaningful whole,”³ and ‘ceremonial’ as “the total configuration of ceremonies constituting a meaningful whole.”⁴

In his monograph *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere* (1926), the cultural anthropologist Irving Hallowell developed the concept of bear ceremonialism: it indicates the whole system of rites, rituals and ceremonies dealing with the hunt of the bear among several circumboreal peoples in Northern Europe, Asia and North America.⁵ Some of the most studied bear ceremonials were performed by the Sámi,⁶ the Finns and Karelians, the Khanty, the Mansi,⁷ several Siberian, Asian and Tungus

¹ Spyro 1982: 199; cited in Rydving 2010: 37.

² Spyro 1982: 199; cited in Rydving 2010: 37.

³ Spyro 1982: 199; cited in Rydving 2010: 37.

⁴ Spyro 1982: 199; cited in Rydving 2010: 37.

⁵ Hallowell 1926.

⁶ See Schefferus 1963 and 1971; Fjellström 1755; Laestadius [1838–1845] 2002: 180–196; Holmberg 1915: 43–52; Itkonen 1937; Itkonen 1948; Edsman 1960, Edsman 1965; Pentikäinen 2007: 43–62; Rydving 2010.

⁷ Ahlqvist 1881; Patkanov 1999; Kannisto 1906a; 1906b; 1907; 1938a; 1938b; 1939a; 1939b; Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen E. A. 1958; Karjalainen 1914; 1918: 512–545; Sirelius 1929; Kálmán 1968; Cushing 1977; Schmidt 1989; Lindrop 1998; Juslin 2007; Pentikäinen 2007: 31–

peoples,⁸ and many Native American peoples, such as the Eastern and Mistassini Cree of Canada and the Koyukon of Alaska.⁹

There were meaningful differences among these bear ceremonials. Among certain ethnic groups of Eastern Asia and Siberia—in particular, the Ainu of the island of Hokkaido,¹⁰ the peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin regions¹¹ and the Ket of the Yenisei basin¹²—bear cubs were not killed in the forest but “adopted” by the village and killed during an elaborate feast when they grew up.

Hallowell sought to find common features in almost all of the bear ceremonials, but remarked that each people developed culturally specific rituals to deal with these respective features, and he dedicated several sections to the traditions of different peoples. At first, Hallowell wrote about conceptions of the bear, taking into account the complexity of the relationship between humans and animals in several northern indigenous cultures. He stressed five fundamental points:

- 1) animals are believed to have “the same sort of animating agency which man possesses,”¹³ have linguistic abilities, understand human speech and actions, and have specific forms of family or social organization;¹⁴
- 2) the mythological and ritual roles of animals vary, and these are complex: for example, they can be helping spirits of humans, cultural heroes, demiurges or ancestral spirits;¹⁵
- 3) the hunters of different peoples have a variety of different conceptions about the origin, characteristics, capacities and social or family relations of each species;¹⁶
- 4) the animals are not all equal: some beings—such as the bear—had a higher status or rank, because they have stronger magical powers or they have a deep relationship with stronger forces or spirits;¹⁷ and

42; Rydving 2010; Wiget & Balalaeva 2010: 133–140.

⁸ Dyrenkova 1930; Zolotarev 1937; Paproth 1976; Kwon 1999; Janhunen 2003.

⁹ Hallowell 1926; Tanner 1979; Nelson 1983; Brightman 1993; Rockwell 1991.

¹⁰ Batchelor 1901: 383–496; Batchelor 1932: 37–44; Irimoto 1996; Akino 1999: 248–255.

¹¹ Paproth 1976: 219–330.

¹² Aleeksenko 1968: 177–178.

¹³ Hallowell 1926: 7.

¹⁴ Hallowell 1926: 7.

¹⁵ Hallowell 1926: 8–9.

¹⁶ Hallowell 1926: 7.

¹⁷ Hallowell 1926: 8, 17.

- 5) the high status of the bear is also related to vernacular speculations about how the bear is able to survive during hibernation.¹⁸

The peculiar status of the bear made necessary a complex ceremonial when it was hunted, and Hallowell remarked on the presence of nine common features in the rituals:

- 1) the season of the hunt—the end of winter—is connected with hibernation;¹⁹
- 2) the use of particular weapons for the bear hunt;²⁰
- 3) the custom of talking or singing to the bear;²¹
- 4) the use of ritual circumlocutions and euphemisms to honour the bear and avoid its revenge;²²
- 5) the rite of awakening the bear and calling it out of the den before the kill;²³
- 6) the use of conciliatory speeches;²⁴
- 7) the hunters' justifications or apologies for the bear's death;²⁵
- 8) the presence of elaborate ceremonies after the kill,²⁶ including the bear feast,²⁷ and
- 9) the ritual disposal of the bones—in particular, the bear skull.²⁸

Hallowell created a basic model to analyze the bear ceremonials: he divided them into meaningful ritual phases—following their chronologic order—and dedicated specific chapters of his monograph to each phase.²⁹

¹⁸ Hallowell 1926: 27–31; see Sections 1.1.3 and 3.7.

¹⁹ Hallowell 1926: 31–33; see Section 4.4.

²⁰ Hallowell 1926: 33–43; see Sections 4.5 and 7.6.

²¹ Hallowell 1926: 53–61; see Section 3.10.

²² Hallowell 1926: 43–51; see Section 3.11.

²³ Hallowell 1926: 53–54; see Section 7.1.

²⁴ Hallowell 1926: 54–55; see Sections 3.10, 7.6, 7.9.

²⁵ Hallowell 1926: 55–57; see Section 7.6.

²⁶ Hallowell 1926: 61–135.

²⁷ See Chapter 8.

²⁸ Hallowell 1926: 135–148; see Chapter 9.

²⁹ On Hallowell's monograph and theories, see Section 2.10.

1.1.2 The ritual phases

The present study will proceed to an analysis of all the rites and rituals of the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonial³⁰ and all the songs performed in the ritual in their chronological order of appearance. Methodologically, one of the most common ways to analyze rituals and ceremonials is to “break them in to elements,”³¹ as Anna-Leena Siikala has done in her study of shamanic rituals in Siberia³² and in her monograph on the healing incantations of the Finno-Karelian *tietäjäs*.³³ Marja-Liisa Heikinmäki analyzed the Finnish wedding ceremonials, describing with great care all the details of their phases, in her extensive monography.³⁴ Matti Sarmela and Siikala analyzed the Finnish bear ceremonialism following the main chronological order of the phases and so-called *Bear Songs*.³⁵ I added several relevant phases that are not included in their typology, such as preparative rituals. Previous scholars have analyzed only a few lines of songs from each phase, generally the ones that they considered to be more ancient or meaningful.³⁶ By contrast, in this study I will systematically analyze all of the motifs of the songs and each rite of the ceremonial. Displaying the structure of the ceremonial by analyzing all its elements gives the opportunity to interpret their specific meanings and functions, and at the same time it allows a better understanding of the ceremonial as a whole.³⁷

Like Hallowell, I will dedicate separate chapters of my monograph to each phase. However, I have elaborated a specific typology that takes into account the Finno-Karelian sources and cultural context, as well as the relevance of ritual spatialization and movement:

³⁰ The Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism had several vernacular names: the most common name is *karhunpeijaiset* (also *paijahaiset*, *peijaat*, *peijaahaiset*). The vernacular term means the feast and ceremonies performed in the village after the hunt of the bear. The name *peijaiset* alone also means a human’s funeral and the funeral’s feast and ceremony. Alternative names are *karhun hautajaiset* (the funeral of the bear), *kouvon häät* (the marriage of the bear, or of the deceased ancestor), *karhun vakkat* (a name probably connected with ritual drinking parties or drinking bowls).

³¹ Rydving 2010: 37.

³² Siikala 1978.

³³ On the *tietäjä* (‘healer’, sage, seer’), see Siikala 2002; see Sections 3.12, 3.13.

³⁴ Heikinmäki 1981.

³⁵ Sarmela 1991: 216, Siikala 2008: 142; Siikala 2016: 386.

³⁶ See Chapter 2.

³⁷ See Chapter 10, Conclusions.

- a. Preparative rituals in the forest³⁸
 1. The “circling” of the bear den: a set of rituals and incantations performed in late autumn or early winter, when the bear entered into its den for hibernation but could still leave for another place

- b. Preparative and protective rituals in the village³⁹
 2. Rituals and incantations to ensure the magical empowering of weapons, dogs and the hunters themselves;
 3. Departure from the village: rituals of territorial passages and the performance of protective rites and incantations to avoid the bear’s bites and protect against curses uttered by envious people and sorcerers

- c. On the border of the forest
 4. Singing the incantation *Birth of the Bear* to gain magical control over the bruin⁴⁰

- d. Entering the forest or traveling in the woods
 5. Offerings and seductive songs for the forest spirits⁴¹
 6. Songs to persuade the forest spirits to guide the hunters towards the prey or the den⁴²

- e. At the bear’s den
 7. The ritual killing of the bear: the awakening of the bruin from the den and incantations to prevent its attack⁴³
 8. Songs that negated the hunter’s responsibility in the killing of the bear⁴⁴
 9. Songs performed while skinning the bruin⁴⁵

³⁸ See Sections 4.3, 4.4.

³⁹ See Sections 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.8, 4.9.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 5.

⁴¹ See Chapter 6.

⁴² See Chapter 6.

⁴³ See Sections 7.1, 7.4.

⁴⁴ See Section 7.6.

⁴⁵ See Section 7.9.

f. Returning to the village: the bear feast⁴⁶

10. The ritual entrance of the slain bear into the village and the household as a guest of honor or a groom: welcoming songs by the village mistress and dialogues sung between the mistress and the hunters

11. The hunters request the women to protect the cattle and themselves when the bear enters the village; the women sing protective incantations

12. The hunters cook the bear meat or a soup with bear meat in the separate *kota* building

13. The bear feast⁴⁷ in the cabin, the ritual consumption of all the meat, fat, internal organs, and the eyes, ears and tongue of the bear; rites to avoid supernatural contagion from eating the bear meat; the detaching of the bear's teeth and fangs; dances and ritual drinking

g. Bringing the guest home: the rituals of the bear skull⁴⁸

14. The procession with the bear's skull and bones to a sacred pine in the forest, the attachment of the bear's skull on a branch, the burying of the bones under the roots of the pine, the drinking of ale from the skull and the performance of songs for the bear's skull and its soul, in order to achieve the regeneration of the animal in his mythical homeland.

A peculiarity of the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism is that songs in Kalevala meter⁴⁹ accompanied all the ritual phases: Finnish scholars called these *Bear Songs*.⁵⁰ The exact order of certain lines or motifs of the *Bear Songs* could change from singer to singer, but it is always possible to find a chronological framework, which is quite similar in all versions. This ordered structure is grounded on the general function of the ritual complex.⁵¹

1.1.3 The research questions and objectives

This study aims to provide new approaches for the interpretation of the elaborate Finnish and Karelian bear ceremonialism and *Bear Songs*. My research will start with

⁴⁶ See Chapter 8.

⁴⁷ *Karhun peijäiset* or *kouvon häät*. See Chapter 8.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 9.

⁴⁹ For a description of Kalevala meter, see Section 1.3.3.

⁵⁰ *Karhuvirret* or *karhulaulut*.

⁵¹ Siikala 2002: 99–104.

an analysis of previous Finnish scholarship on the topic. Many Finnish scholars focused on hypothetical reconstructions of prehistoric Finnish bear ceremonials, using comparisons as a tool to emphasize the archaic features of the rituals. The anthropologist Matti Sarmela created an influential theory with a reconstruction of three historic eras that could have influenced vernacular conceptions of the bear.⁵²

By contrast, the goal of this study is to furnish a better understanding of the meanings of the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonial and its phases, taking into consideration the religious, ritual, cultural and social-economic contexts of the 19th century,⁵³ and examining the *Bear Songs* as a fusion of historically stratified traditions that acquired specific contextual meanings in each ritual phase.⁵⁴ I will study how the *tietäjät* tradition,⁵⁵ the Christian faith and cattle-herders' incantations influenced—and not only in a negative way—the hunters' rituals and songs.⁵⁶

Elaborating on theories of the folklorist Lotte Tarkka, I started to analyze how the mixed economy of small villages and a gendered division of labor influenced bear ceremonialism and the vernacular conception of the forest.⁵⁷ In folklore, the forest is conceptualized simultaneously as a mythic and sosiomorphic landscape: the society and family of the forest spirits resemble the structure of the human household.⁵⁸ As labor and social spaces were gendered, the ritual relations with the forest beings were also gendered.

A theoretical focus of the present study is personhood: Karelians and Eastern Finns considered the forest to be a sacred environment inhabited by non-human persons: the bear and powerful forest spirits protecting game animals and providing them only to hunters who performed respectful rituals.⁵⁹

The forest was considered a sentient and perceptive environment: the spirits and the bear could see, listen to and understand human speech and the hunter's actions.⁶⁰ Both the bruin and the forest spirits observed the hunt: if the hunter did not perform rituals, they took revenge. If the hunter correctly performed all the rituals and songs,

⁵² See Section 2.5.

⁵³ The majority of the sources and the *Bear Songs* were collected in the 19th century and early 20th century; see Sections 1.2.1, 12.2.

⁵⁴ See Section 1.3.3.

⁵⁵ On the *tietäjät*, see Sections 3.12, 4.6, 4.8.

⁵⁶ See Sections 3.2, 3.4, 5.1, 5.3, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.12.

⁵⁷ See Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4; Tarkka 1998; Tarkka 2005: 256–299; Tarkka 2013: 327–381.

⁵⁸ See Sections 3.5, 3.6.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ See Sections 3.3, 3.7, 3.10.

the woodland denizens were “pleased”: the forest spirits provided more bears or game animals, and the bear “returned” in a future feast.⁶¹

As a forest-dweller, the bear had a shifting double identity: it was strictly bound to the family of the forest spirits, but at the same time it had physical and behavioral characteristics suggesting that it could be a human which had transformed into a bruin.⁶² This situation made the bear anomalous, both as an animal and as a person.

Mary Douglas defined an anomaly as something that does not fit into normal categories.⁶³ An anomaly is something that has a “halfway” state⁶⁴ (e.g., the viscous is “a halfway state between solid and liquid”).⁶⁵ The bear was “in-between” humanity and the sacred forest. Douglas connected the notion of anomaly with ambiguity. Ambiguous is what is difficult to interpret, because two or more simultaneous interpretations are available.⁶⁶ In the case of the bear, even its origins were ambiguous; in the same incantation, the bear could be defined as born from a forest spirit or the human family of Adam and Eve, or even generated simultaneously in the sky and in the mythical forest.⁶⁷ The posthumous destiny of the bear after its kill was also open to several possibilities and vernacular interpretations.⁶⁸

One significant anomaly of the bear is its hibernation: the bear survived the winter by sleeping in its den, waking up at the end of the season. In Finland and Karelia, hibernation was strictly related to the idea that forest spirits fed the bear during this period.⁶⁹ The bear is an animal connected with the seasonal darkness of the winter and the rebirth of the environment and light in the early spring; it is not by chance that several of the main rituals of game animals’ regeneration focused on bears.⁷⁰

The behavior of the bear was ambiguous and anomalous, too: the bear was dangerous, attacking cattle during the grazing season, but it was also considered pure and innocent, since its aggressive behavior was believed to be provoked by human sorcerers.⁷¹

⁶¹ See Sections 3.10, 8.21, 10.1.

⁶² See Section 3.8.

⁶³ Douglas [1996] (2002): 47.

⁶⁴ Douglas [1996] (2002): 47.

⁶⁵ Douglas [1996] (2002): 47.

⁶⁶ Douglas [1996] (2002): 47.

⁶⁷ See Sections 5.10, 5.11 and 5.13.

⁶⁸ See Section 9.18.

⁶⁹ See Sections 1.1, 3.7; see Hallowell 1926: 27–31.

⁷⁰ See Sections 9.14 and 9.15.

⁷¹ See Section 3.9.

Douglas stressed that anomaly could provoke negative and positive forms of ritualization: the negative ones were condemnation, refusal or prohibition,⁷² and the positive ones a deliberate confrontation with the anomaly and the creation of a “new pattern of reality in which it has a place.”⁷³ The ritual was a framework that redefined the position of the anomalous animal in a ritualized context: anomaly could acquire a ritual status that made it more acceptable or comprehensible, at least during the rite. Ritual often helps to deal with anomaly, even if the ambiguity and the otherness of it is not erased.

The ritual can also be a stage to express disharmonic and crisis situations.⁷⁴ Victor Turner stressed that the ritual simultaneously deals with categories, contradictions and transgressions.⁷⁵ The bear’s “in-betweenness” also had positive ritual aspects. In the *Bear songs* the hunters stressed the bruin’s human features to make ritual exchange and communication easier,⁷⁶ and to gradually transform the bruin into the guest of honor of the village feast,⁷⁷ where the bear meat was consumed.⁷⁸ Most importantly, the social identity of the bear changed repeatedly in the songs of different ritual phases.

The main problem I will tackle in this study is the ritual meaning of the relationship between the personhood of the bear and the human community. This problem is formulated as three main research questions:

- Why did the hunters personalize and gender the bear, the forest and its spirits in bear ceremonialism? How did this happen? What relationships did the hunters establish with these non-human persons during different ritual phases?

In order to answer the questions above, I will also address the following sub-questions:

⁷² For example, the locals’ or women’s decision to avoid eating the bear meat; see Sections 8.17, 8.18.

⁷³ Douglas 2002 (1966): 48.

⁷⁴ Schechner 1977: 120–123; Turner 1992: 75.

⁷⁵ Turner 1992: 76.

⁷⁶ See Sections 3.8, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 7.1, 7.4, 8.2, 8.1.

⁷⁷ See Sections 8.1, 8.2, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.6, 8.20.

⁷⁸ See Section 8.9.

1. Why did the hunters consistently treat the bear as a sentient person but change its social identities and gender in the *Bear Songs* of different ritual phases?⁷⁹
2. Why did the *Bear Songs* resemble wedding songs and incantations and contain references to their motifs? Why was the bear feast portrayed or staged as the wedding of the bear? Why did the hunter perform protective rites resembling those of a wedding rite?⁸⁰
3. Why did the hunters often change their presentation in the *Bear Songs* of different ritual phases?⁸¹
4. How did the ritual roles and identities of the village women change in different phases and songs and what was their ritual relationship with the bruin?⁸²
5. How did the representation of the forest and its spirits change in the songs of different ritual phases?⁸³

Relevant to the discussion of this study is the concept of mimesis.⁸⁴ Michael Taussig made this concept known in anthropological studies and ritual theory, while Rane Willerslev, in his recent monograph, has analyzed animism, personhood and mimesis among the Siberian Yukaghirs.⁸⁵ I will elaborate Willerslev's concept of mimesis and adapt it to the context of Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism. I will suggest that both the bear's and the hunter's personhoods are mimetic in the *Bear Songs*. The bear acquired partial and temporary human identities without losing its alterity and forest-personhood.

As the sub-questions stress the dynamism and changeability in the presentation of personhood in each ritual phase, a precise analysis of each phase is necessary. For this reason, in each chapter I will also try to answer a set of specific questions dealing with:

⁷⁹ See Section 4.2, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 6.4, 7.1, 7.3, 7.4, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 9.2, 9.4, 9.6, 9.13, 9.18, 10.2.

⁸⁰ See Sections 6.5, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2, and 10.2.

⁸¹ See Sections 4.6, 4.8, 6.3, 6.5, 6.5, 6.7, 7.10, 7.11, 8.5, 8.18, 10.2.

⁸² See Sections 4.9, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 10.2.

⁸³ See Sections 6.2, 6.3, 6.6, 6.8, 6.9, 10.2.

⁸⁴ See Sections 3.7, 3.14, 6.5, 6.6, 8.2, 10.2.

⁸⁵ See Taussig 1993 and Willerslev 2007. Mimesis is a relevant theoretical concept in some studies on Ob-Ugrian bear ceremonialism (Juslin 2007) and Khanty and Komi storytelling (Leete 2017).

a) the context and goals of each ritual phase; and b) the emergence of the presentation of personhood, self and gender in the *Bear Songs*. These questions include:

1. Why and how did the hunters prepare and protect themselves before leaving for the hunt? How did they portray themselves in the protective incantations?⁸⁶
2. What were the ritual goals of the incantation the *Birth of the Bear*, generally uttered when leaving the village and approaching the forest? What information do such incantations provide about the personhood of the bear and the forest spirits?⁸⁷
3. How did the hunters present themselves to the forest spirits when they entered the woods? How was the forest personalized? Why did they describe the goal of their trip as an act of seduction or a wedding with the forest spirits?⁸⁸
4. Why did the hunters wake the bear from its hibernation in the den as if it were a bride or a relative? How did the hunters negate their responsibility for the killing of the bear?⁸⁹
5. How did the bear join the human community as a guest of honor or a groom? Why was the bear feast presented as the wedding of the bruin? What were the roles and attitudes of the women during the feast? How was the bear meat ritually eaten? What was the ritual and social significance of alcoholic beverages consumed during the feast and offered to the bruin?⁹⁰
6. Why was the bear skull carried in a procession and hung on a pine branch, oriented towards a specific direction? Did the *Bear Songs* contain references to the resurrection or regeneration of the bear? Did the ritual mark the return of the bear in one of its mythic homelands? What do the multiple posthumous destinies of the bear tell us about its personhood?⁹¹

In the following chapters of this study, I will not only stress the importance of the changes in the description of personhood and self, but I will interpret the meaning of the details of songs and rituals of each respective phase; only an understanding of the context and the specific goals of each phase makes it possible to decipher why the presentation of personhoods needed to transform.

⁸⁶ See Chapter 4.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 5.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 6.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 7.

⁹⁰ See Chapter 8.

⁹¹ See Chapter 9.

In the first part of the final and concluding chapter, I will analyze the ritual as a whole, explaining what ritual elements or motifs of the songs tended to be repeated over the course of the phases. In order to understand the meaning of repetition in the ceremonial, I will employ Catherine Bell's notion of repetition as an integral and fundamental part of the process of ritualization.⁹²

In the second part of the final chapter, I will evaluate the meaning of the elements that tended to change, focusing on changeable personhoods and on answering the main question and sub-questions of this study.⁹³

1.2 Sources

1.2.1 The archival corpus of the *Bear Songs*

In the 19th century, Finnish folklore collectors transcribed a large amount of *Bear Songs* in Finland and Karelia. At that time the bear ceremonial was a vanishing tradition, and the majority of the songs were collected in isolated villages in eastern and northern regions. The fieldwork continued at the beginning of the 20th century, but the collectors searched for old hunters as informants, people who were able to remember or still perform the rituals of the 19th century, recall the songs of their fathers and grandfathers, and describe the bear ceremonials done in the past. The materials of the 20th century are strictly connected with the tradition of the previous century. According to the folklorist Lotte Tarkka, the hunters' old systems of thought survived until the first decades of the 20th century.⁹⁴

The main corpus of sources I analyzed for this study are the 288 *Bear Songs* published in five different volumes of the collection *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (Ancient Poems of the Finnish People, henceforth SKVR), which are divided by old Finnish and Karelian regions and folklore genres:

- 1) North Ostrobothnia: 118 songs⁹⁵
- 2) Viena, Archangel or White Sea Karelia: 79 songs⁹⁶

⁹² Bell 1992: 92; see Section 10.1.

⁹³ See Section 10.2.

⁹⁴ Tarkka 2014a: 38.

⁹⁵ SKVR XII2/6458–6575. The SKVR's sources are indicated with the number of the volume (XII2), followed by the number of the song (6458).

⁹⁶ SKVR I4/1189–1267.

- 3) Savo or Savonia: 44 songs⁹⁷
 - 4) Border and Ladoga Karelia and Finnish North Karelia: 40 songs⁹⁸
 - 5) Area of the Forest Finns in Central Scandinavia: 5 songs⁹⁹
 - 6) Häme or Tavastia: 2 songs¹⁰⁰
- Total: 288 songs

All the songs of these and other SKVR volumes are digitized and readable on a public website.¹⁰¹ Analyzing the data geographically, I noticed that in the 19th century the *Bear Songs* were mostly collected in small villages from Eastern Finland and Karelia.¹⁰²

Comparing the Finnish and Karelian *Bear Songs*, I agree with the folklorist Kaarle Krohn, who did not find significant thematic or structural differences between the Viena Karelian and Finnish *Bear Songs*.¹⁰³ However, Krohn's theories about the

⁹⁷ SKVR VI2/4883–4926.

⁹⁸ SKVR VII5/3364–3403.

⁹⁹ SKVR VII5 Metsäsuomalaiset/346–350. These *Bear Songs* were collected in Central Scandinavia. From 1580 to 1640, rural Finns migrated from Savo and Central Finland to the forests of Western Sweden and South-Eastern Norway (Virtanen L. and DuBois 2000: 51; Metsäkylä 2014: 13). The Scandinavian Forest Finns lived in quite an isolated area and preserved their Savonian language and culture for a long time (Metsäkylä 2014: 13–17).

¹⁰⁰ SKVR IX4/1096 and IX4/1101. These two songs from the old region Häme (Tavastia) were collected in the 17th century in Rautalampi (in the actual region of North Savo), a parish in which the North Savonian dialect was spoken, and in the 18th century in Viitasaari (in the actual region of Central Finland), a parish in which the people spoke a Central Finnish dialect which is considered part of the Savonian and Eastern Finnish dialect group (Mielikäinen 2008: 62).

¹⁰¹ <https://skvr.fi/>.

¹⁰² In the 19th century, both Finland and Karelia were part of the Russian Empire, but Finland had the peculiar status of a partially Autonomous Grand Duchy (1808–1917) and became independent in 1917. Today Viena Karelia, also called Archangel Karelia or White Sea Karelia, is part of the Republic of Karelia in the Russian Federation. The southern Border or Ladoga Karelia was part of the Grand Duchy and independent Finland prior to World War II, but today is part of the Russian Republic of Karelia. By contrast, North Karelia and the smaller South Karelia are still Finnish regions.

¹⁰³ Krohn [1915] 2008: 157. Kaarle Krohn published one of the first scholarly analyses of the Finnish bear ceremonials in a chapter (Krohn [1915] 2008: 146–164) of his classic monograph *Suomalaisten runojen uskonto* [*The Religion of the Finnish Kalevalaic Songs, 1915*]. His text is short and lacking archival and bibliographic references, but it nonetheless furnishes a synthetic and clear description of almost all of the phases of the rituals.

Karelian *Bear Songs* were quite contradictory and he heavily stressed their Finnish origins.¹⁰⁴

The heartland of the *Bear Songs* was quite a large area around the actual border between Russia and Finland, extending westwards to Savo and Central Finland and northward until Kuusamo and southern Lapland. The old region of North Ostrobothnia included the Eastern region of Kainuu and the border parish of Suomussalmi, in which a large number of *Bear Songs* were collected.

The most evident division in the geographic distribution of the *Bear Songs* is that in the 19th century, almost no *Bear Songs* were collected in Western and Southern Finland and from Ingria, the Karelian Isthmus and Olonets Karelia.¹⁰⁵ In the 19th century in Western and Southern Finland, however, there were indeed bears and wolves: short or long incantations to protect the cattle from these predators have been collected in almost all the Finnish and Karelian regions. Bear ceremonialism seems to have disappeared more rapidly in the regions with a more advanced agricultural system, cattle breeding, infrastructures and churches. Kalevalaic singing, too, disappeared more rapidly in the southern and western areas, due to the multifaceted processes of modernization.

¹⁰⁴ According to Krohn, the Viena Karelian *Bear Songs* originated in Finland (Krohn [1915] 2008: 156–157, 161–162): this statement follows Krohn’s theories about the local diffusion of Kalevalaic songs or their themes from West to East and from South to North. This approach also had a nationalistic background: the scholar emphasized the Finnishness of the Karelian material. He augmented his hypothesis stating that in the Viena Karelian songs, the knife to skin the bear was made in Estonia, Germany or Stockholm (Krohn [1915] 2008: 156–157; see Section 7.9) and some words were loans from Western Finnish dialects. The explanation is not very convincing; in the 19th century, the Viena Karelians were not completely isolated and they were informed about the major cities and countries of the Baltic Sea. Krohn also wrote that the Greek Orthodox Karelians did not eat bear meat, and for the same reason in the eastern part of Finnish Karelia (in Ilomantsi) the people did not sing *Bear Songs* or perform bear ceremonials or rituals (Krohn [1915] 2008: 162). A few pages before, Krohn described in detail the Viena Karelian *Bear Songs* (Krohn [1915] 2008: 156–161), including Iivana Malinen’s song, performed while eating bear meat (Krohn [1915] 2008: 156; SKVR/1245a; see Section 8.18). He even admitted that Viena Karelian *Bear Songs* were often longer and richer than Finnish ones: the Karelians “borrowed” lines from wedding songs, other hunting songs and other genres, “embellishing” the *Bear Songs* (Krohn [1915] 2008: 161).

¹⁰⁵ An old administrative region of the southern Russian Karelia (called Aunus Karelia in Finnish), today part of the Russian Republic of Karelia.

Even if the archival material is abundant, the interpretation of the meaning of the *Bear Songs* and the magic rituals of bear ceremonials is challenging for contemporary researchers. As the bear ceremonials in Finland and Karelia disappeared in the late 19th century, the contemporary scholar has no possibility to participate in the rituals and ask informants for precise clarifications about the songs or rites. For this reason, the complete system of meanings of the bear ceremonials can never be perfectly reconstructed.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, analysis of the collectors' written reports about the informants' statements and descriptions of bear ceremonialism or a specific ritual phase offer fundamental and rich information about the emic meaning of the rituals.

1.2.2 The informants' descriptions of the rituals

Very few of the Finnish collectors of the 19th century participated in the bear ceremonials; the majority of them only transcribed *Bear Songs*, as remembered by informants. However, some of the most active and precise collectors—such as Kaarle Krohn, Heikki Meriläinen¹⁰⁷ and Samuli Paulaharhu—wrote down a considerable quantity of informant's accounts and descriptions of magical procedures or ritual actions done in previous bear ceremonials. Part of the vernacular descriptions of the magic procedures of the bear hunt were published in 1891 by Matti Varonen in his edited collection of hunting magic rites.¹⁰⁸ The majority of the descriptions of the rites of the bear ceremonials are unpublished, but it is possible to find them in the archives of the Finnish Literature Society.¹⁰⁹ At the beginning of the 20th century, the collector Iivo Marttinen wrote a detailed description of a Viena Karelian bear ceremonial performed in Vuokkiniemi in 1907, comprising an eyewitness testimony with interesting details about the feast.¹¹⁰

In some cases, the texts of the *Bear Songs* in the SKVR are followed by a description of the rituals of the bear ceremonialism. The informants connected the motives of the *Bear Songs* to some specific phase and gave precise information about the ritual actions performed while singing certain motifs. The most studied case is the *Text of Viitasaari*

¹⁰⁶ Tarkka 1993: 172; Stark 1998a: 66.

¹⁰⁷ In 1889, Meriläinen was personally present at a bear ceremonial, and he described it in a letter sent to Kaarle Krohn (see the English translation in Pentikäinen 2007: 91–92; Finnish text in Kurki 2002: 116–117).

¹⁰⁸ Varonen 1891.

¹⁰⁹ *Suomalainen Kirjallisuuden Seura* (SKS).

¹¹⁰ SKS Marttinen 1900–1901 E 83; MV: KTKKA Marttinen 1912: 965; see Tarkka 2005: 272.

(date unknown, probably after 1750),¹¹¹ but relevant information about the connections between songs and rituals had been furnished by such informants as Torvelainen from Sulkava (1815),¹¹² Miihkali Perttunen from Latvajärvi (1877)¹¹³ and Juho Eskelinen from Lapiniemi (parish of Sonkajärvi, 1913).¹¹⁴ The collector and writer Johannes Häyhä wrote an interesting description of a 19th-century bear ceremonial in the village of Niemelä (parish of Leppävirtä).¹¹⁵ Other informants explained in detail a specific rite and its songs or incantations.¹¹⁶

1.2.3 The early sources about bear ceremonialism

The sources about Finnish bear ceremonialism predating the 19th century are scarce and quite fragmentary, with the exception of the rich and long *Text of Viitasaari*.¹¹⁷ The first written document on the topic is a very brief description of the drinking from the bear skull, the last rite which closed the whole ceremonial. The account was included in the sermon given by the bishop of Finland Isaak Rothovius for the inauguration of the *Regia Academia Åboensis*, the first university in Finland, on July 15, 1640:

We know what rude paganism has existed in Sweden and here in Finland, from which by the mercy of God we have been freed [...]. Yet—may God rectify this in our midst there are rude traces of the heathens' paganism and witchcraft, so that many continue to pray to and serve devils. [...] When they catch a bear, a party is held in the dark, and they drink a toast for the bear out of its skull, and groan just as the bear does. Thus would they gain a greater good fortune!¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ SKVR IX4/1096.

¹¹² SKVR VI2/4895. Gottlund n. 814. 9 October 1815. Torvelainen. The SKS prosal archival sources could include the name of the collector (Gottlund), the number of the document or manuscript (814), the date when the document was collected, the complete name or family name of the informant (Torvelainen), and sometimes their gender, profession or age.

¹¹³ SKVR I4/1223.

¹¹⁴ SKVR VI2/4926: 50.

¹¹⁵ Häyhä 1982 (1893–1898): 377–386.

¹¹⁶ SKVR I4/1195; I4/1197; I4/1198; VI2/4908.

¹¹⁷ SKVR IX4/1096; date unknown, edited after 1750.

¹¹⁸ English translation by Clive Tolley in Pentikäinen 2007: 131. See also: Rothovius [1641] 1990; Haavio 1967: 15; Siikala 2016: 380; Pentikäinen 2005: 108–109; Pentikäinen 2014: 429.

Rothovius stressed that a fundamental goal of the first university in Finland was the extirpation of all pagan rituals and superstitions, such as bear ceremonialism.¹¹⁹

Many scholars of the *Academia Åboensis* paradoxically started to study and collect what Rothovius abhorred. The new generations of academic intellectuals became interested in the analysis of the “traces of the past,” including *Bear Songs*, which Rothovius only considered an unpleasant heritage of the pagan era.

The first transcription of a *Bear Song* is the *Cantio Ursina* (1675),¹²⁰ which was collected in the parish of Rautalampi. The song is a prayer to the female forest spirits Tapiatar and Hongas: after some seductive lines, the hunter asks them to give him gold (the bear) in exchange for an offering of poured silver from Germany and Russia.¹²¹ The text included a Swedish translation and some brief explanations in Latin. The document is valuable, because in the 19th century the hunters sang very similar motifs when entering the forest for the hunt.¹²²

The most studied early source is the *Text of Viitasaari* in Swedish (date unknown, circa 1750).¹²³ It contains an unknown collector’s short description of several phases of the ritual in their chronological order, as well as a selection of Finnish *Bear songs* of the different phases.¹²⁴

1.2.4 The impact of the *Kalevala* on the collection and study of *Bear songs*

In the 19th century, the publication of two different versions of the national epic poem, the *Old Kalevala* (1835) and the *New Kalevala* (1849) by Elias Lönnrot, had a significant impact on the collection of *Bear Songs* and on future studies of the Finnish bear ceremonials.

Elias Lönnrot himself collected *Bear songs* and dedicated the entirety of Rune 46 of the *New Kalevala* to the ritual songs of the bear. The *Kalevala* is a literary work based on folk songs, and Lönnrot edited and changed many fundamental elements of the original *Bear Songs*: he made the protagonist of the epic—the old sage and hero Väinämöinen—sing *Bear Songs* originally sung by hunters from different villages.

¹¹⁹ Haavio 1967: 15; Siikala 2016: 380.

¹²⁰ SKVR IX4/1101.

¹²¹ See the complete English translation by Clive Tolley in Pentikäinen 2007: 69–71.

¹²² See Chapter 6.

¹²³ The *Text of Viitasaari* was lost for a long time. Arno Rafael Cederberg and Väinö Salminen rediscovered it, and Salminen published it only in 1914.

¹²⁴ See the complete English translation by Clive Tolley in Pentikäinen 2007: 72–77; on the *Text of Viitasaari* see Sections 2.3, 2.2. 5.4, 5.11, 8.2, 9.4.

Lönnrot often made one of the three main heroes of the poem sing incantations performed by common people or *tietäjäs* in ritual contexts.¹²⁵ A selection of *Bear songs* was also included in the previous and shorter poem by Lönnrot, the *Old Kalevala* (1835); also in this case, the hero Väinämöinen sings *Bear Songs*.

In the *New Kalevala*, Väinämöinen goes hunting because his principal opponent, Louhi, the mistress of Pohjola, had summoned a bear against his people, the folk of Kalevala. By means of this editorial stratagem, Lönnrot connected the ritual songs with one of the most important narrative lines of the second part of the poem: the conflict between Pohjola and Kalevala.¹²⁶ In the vernacular tradition, however, the hero Väinämöinen was never mentioned as a famous bear hunter.

The topic of the bear ceremonials was covered also in Rune 28 of the previous shorter epic poem by Lönnrot, the *Old Kalevala* (1835); also in this case, the hero Väinämöinen sings the lines originally sung by many hunters in the rituals. In the *Old Kalevala*, Väinämöinen goes hunting for a normal bear, not the one bewitched by Louhi. In this case, the episode of the bear ceremonial was disconnected from the main topic of the epic struggle between Kalevala and Pohjola.

Elias Lönnrot also published in Swedish a third version of his literary reconstruction of the bear songs: *Björnfesten* [The Bear Ceremonial] for the Finnish newspaper *Helsingfors Morgonblad* (numbers 53-55 of the year 1835, published just after the *Old Kalevala*). It was an edited version of 548 lines from different Finnish and Karelian *Bear songs*, translated into Swedish. In his short presentation of these *Bear Songs*, Lönnrot stated that with these songs the ancient Finns almost reached the noble art of drama.¹²⁷ According to Kaukonen, this version is quite similar to the one published in Finnish in the *Old Kalevala*,¹²⁸ but it had a fundamental difference: Väinämöinen is not the singer. The songs are divided into the parts of some main “characters”: the hunters, the killers, the ones who carried the bear into the village, and the villagers who welcomed the bear. The Swedish publication is relevant to understand Lönnrot’s literary interest in the *Bear Songs*: in the *Kalevala* he adapted them to his epic plot, while in the *Helsingfors Morgonblad* he adjusted them to a form resembling a sort of theatrical play.

In the National Romantic vision of Lönnrot, the *New Kalevala* was not only an epic poem but also an ethnohistorical *summa* of the incantations of the prehistoric pagan rituals of the ancient Finnish people.¹²⁹ In this way, the bear ceremonial, which was still

¹²⁵ Hyvönen 2014: 481.

¹²⁶ Pentikäinen 2007: 134–140; see also Rebourcet 2006.

¹²⁷ Kaukonen 1956: 500; Kuusi 1963: 44.

¹²⁸ Kaukonen 1956: 500–501.

¹²⁹ Hyvönen 2014: 479.

remembered by informants at the time of Lönnrot, became in the mind of the readers of the poem one of the most important rituals representing the ancient Finnish past. The bear ceremonialism and the bear hunters were romanticized and became a symbol of Finnishness.

The interest of Lönnrot in the *Bear Songs* certainly inspired collectors of folklore. Long before being a topic of academic study, the *Bear Songs* were an important genre that the collectors sought to transcribe and save for future generations. The collectors, following the path of Lönnrot, concentrated their attention on collecting variations of songs published in the *Kalevala*.¹³⁰

As the *Kalevala* was rapidly translated into many languages, it made the Finnish bear ceremonials known abroad and in the international scientific community. This also created a problem: many influential foreign scholars and writers¹³¹ used translations of the *New Kalevala* or *Old Kalevala* to describe the vernacular Finnish and Karelian bear ceremonial. Literary reconstruction was used as an ethnographic source for comparative research on bear ceremonialism. The language barrier denied foreign scholars and writers access to the original sources published in the *SKVR* volumes, and the principal source of references for Finnish bear ceremonialism remained the translations of the *Kalevala*.

In the last decades, only Finnish scholars have published scientific texts or anthologies of folklore about bear ceremonialism with English translations of the original sources from the *SKVR* collections: Lauri Honko,¹³² Matti Sarmela,¹³³ Juha Pentikäinen¹³⁴ and Lotte Tarkka.¹³⁵ In a chapter of one of her monographs, Laura Stark also published translations of Karelian incantations to protect cattle from bears or to bewitch bears.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Tarkka 2013: 81.

¹³¹ Hallowell 1926: 95–96; Campbell 1988: 150–151; Rockwell 1991: 179–180; Lajoux 1996: 161–164.

¹³² Honko, Timonen and Branch 1993: 149–150; 183–189.

¹³³ Sarmela 1982, 1983, 2006, 2009: 79–106.

¹³⁴ Pentikäinen 2007.

¹³⁵ Tarkka 1994, 1998; Tarkka 2013: 327–382.

¹³⁶ Stark 2002: 111–137.

1.3 Methods

1.3.1 Contextualization and scholarly interpretations of bear ceremonialism

In this study, the contextualization of the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonial means first taking into consideration the cultural, religious, social and economic horizons in which the ritual performance took place. The contextualization aims to understand the cultural and social realities “around” the ritual event or ritual songs.¹³⁷

Tarkka noticed that in the study of archival documents, the context is largely a matter of interpretation: “a hypothetical relationship between the text and a set of meaningful environments perceived by the scholar.”¹³⁸ She also stressed that in the ritual performance, the text and the context are inseparably intertwined.¹³⁹ The researcher is actively involved in building up a deep and hermeneutic dialogue with the texts, gradually approaching a proper interpretation.¹⁴⁰ The expert of ritual theory Catherine Bell correctly stated, “A ritual never exists alone.”¹⁴¹ The scholar should take into consideration the “thick context” of social customs, everyday routines and other historical features that can influence ritual actions.¹⁴²

In the case of the study of complex rituals such as bear ceremonialism, it is fundamental to determine the proper balance between the scholar’s interpretations and the vernacular ones. Bell stressed the necessity to reduce the gaps between the intellectual activity of the theorist and the meaningfulness of the ritual for the actors; the “meaning” of a ritual could be grasped thanks to a balanced fusion between the conceptual categories of the theorist and the conceptions, disposition and performances of the ritual actors.¹⁴³ In order to maintain this equilibrium, I strongly took into account the informants’ and participants’ statements about the purposes of the respective rituals and the effectiveness of the ritual activities.¹⁴⁴

After analyzing the ethnographic data in detail, I noticed that many aspects of the bear ceremonialism and the songs’ motifs deal with the complex religious context of the vernacular interpretation of the forest as a sacred, mythic and gendered landscape

¹³⁷ Stark 1998a: 67; Tarkka 2013: 77.

¹³⁸ Tarkka 2013: 79.

¹³⁹ Tarkka 2013: 79.

¹⁴⁰ Haaparanta & Niiniluoto 1986; Tarkka 1993: 171; Stark 1998a: 67.

¹⁴¹ Bell 1997: 171.

¹⁴² Bell 1997: 171.

¹⁴³ Bell 1992: 26–28.

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter 3; Stark 1998a: 15.

inhabited by sentient beings: forest spirits, the bruin and the forest itself.¹⁴⁵ This observation led me to adapt a set of theories of Finnish and international scholars about the personalization of the forest and the ritual exchanges between humans and the forest to the problems of my analysis of bear ceremonialism.¹⁴⁶ My multidisciplinary approach is grounded on theories elaborated by scholars of several related fields: the study of religions, folkloristics, ethnology, cultural anthropology, and anthropology of religions and of the environment.

The method of analysis is a combination of inductive content analysis, in which interpretive categories are derived from sources, texts, data or informants' statements, and directed or theory-informed qualitative content analysis, in which an initial theory guides the interpretations of the sources.¹⁴⁷

The contexts that I will analyze in this research are multiple:¹⁴⁸ 1) the socio-economic context that influenced the rituals and beliefs; 2) the religious context, in particular the mythic conception and personalization of the forest and the bear; 3) a careful textual comparison between the variations in the motifs of the *Bear Songs*; 4) the intertextual context or a comparison of textual connections between the *Bear Songs*, wedding songs and other incantations; 5) the ritual context or a comparison between the rites of bear ceremonialism and the ones performed in wedding ceremonies or in incantations to protect cattle; and 6) a comparison between some phases of the Finno-Karelian and other circumboreal peoples' bear ceremonials, considering both ritual analogies and variations caused by different cultural contexts.

I also consider the ritual phases of the bear ceremonial's relevant contexts, as the ritual actors could have distinct goals in each phase.¹⁴⁹

In this study, it would be impossible to describe in detail the socio-economic history of each village, parish or region in which the different *Bear Songs* or ritual descriptions were collected. However, I include in my analysis the study of some general social and economic contextual features that had a significant impact on bear ceremonialism: the mixed economy and the gendered division of labor.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ See Sections 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 6.2.

¹⁴⁶ See Sections 3.13, 3.14.

¹⁴⁷ Hsieh & Shannon 2005: 1279–1281, 1281–1283.

¹⁴⁸ For a model of multiple contextualization, see Apo 2001: 30–32.

¹⁴⁹ See Sections 1.1.2, 1.1.3.

¹⁵⁰ See Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6.

1.3.2 The analysis of the variants of the *Bear songs*

A fundamental and classic method of contextualizing the *Bear Songs* is careful comparison between the lines and motifs of the abundant variants present in the archives.

The length of the *Bear Songs* varied from singer to singer: many songs are long, covering almost all of the motifs of the whole ceremonialism, but other songs are shorter (ten or fifteen lines, covering only the lines sung in one ritual phase). In the complex, the sources' material is extensive and covering thousands of lines. The *Bear Songs* are all variations of traditional songs: each singer sang similar motifs in the same ritual phase. However, each variation contains several differences in the choice of particular words or lines, omissions and the adding of some lines: the songs were transmitted from one person to another through oral language or the songs—often acquiring some local or individual nuances.¹⁵¹

Having a considerable amount of songs is a fundamental factor for the scholar. The *Bear Songs* could be considered part of a collective tradition if the scholar analyzes and compares several sources in order to make representative conclusions.¹⁵² A large body of archival data has another advantage: if some parts of a *Bear Song* are fragmentary or the religious meaning seems to be obscure, it is possible to compare the text with other variations to find possible missing lines or more comprehensible variations of the motif.

Analysis of variations can give surprising insights about the mythological or ritual background of songs, or it can reveal a set of different, but often complementary, rhetorical strategies to communicate with the forest spirits and the bear.

1.3.3 The *Bear songs* as a meaningful fusion of historically stratified layers

To understand my methodological choices for the textual analysis of the *Bear songs*, it is necessary to give some accounts about the basic characteristic of the kalevalaic songs or runosongs. The Kalevala meter was used in Finland, Karelia, Ingria and Estonia and by the Votes and Veps.¹⁵³ Pentti Leino described the Kalevala meter as a form of trochaic tetrameter: a line is generally comprised of four successive rising and falling units.¹⁵⁴ This classic metric model has a great quantity of variations, and lines with

¹⁵¹ On the variations in Kalevala meter, see Saarinen 1994.

¹⁵² Stark 1998a: 14.

¹⁵³ Kuusi 1994: 41.

¹⁵⁴ Leino 1994: 57.

more or less syllables or feet often appear.¹⁵⁵ The Kalevala meter has no stanza structure—and thus no rhyme. It is characterized by the use of alliteration: the repetition of initial syllables, consonants or vowels within the same line.¹⁵⁶ A relevant poetic device was parallelism: the second line of a line pair repeats the contents of the first line, but with different words.¹⁵⁷

What matters for this survey is that the Kalevala meter was a very powerful mnemonic device to remember long *Bear Songs*. Siikala stated that in Finland, mythological knowledge was preserved thanks to the Kalevala meter.¹⁵⁸ Matti Kuusi emphasized that Kalevala meter was a code for committing texts to memory and a form of vernacular knowledge expressed in poetic and formulaic forms.¹⁵⁹

Siikala stressed that kalevalaic songs transmitted different layers of myths and history until recent times.¹⁶⁰ Many scholars—such as Kuusi or Sarmela—tried to place the elements of these layers in a hypothetical historical order and study them as separate blocks.¹⁶¹

However, in the *Bear Songs* these layers are intertwined together. The songs could form a complicated historical puzzle, a kaleidoscope containing mythic images full of apparently conflicting concepts.¹⁶² Siikala reminded that in the songs, the fusion of different historical elements often acquired a contextual and ritual meaning.¹⁶³ The historical layers of the kalevalaic songs were slowly changing entities.¹⁶⁴ New historical layers rarely wiped away the old layers of meaning. Siikala emphasized that changes in tradition are not mechanical events but complex processes in which renewing and conserving tendencies can act at the same time, influencing each other.¹⁶⁵ The methodological impact of the notion of the fusion of historically stratified meanings is extremely relevant for this study. My analysis does not seek to differentiate various historical strata in the *Bear Songs* and organize them into hypothetical evolutionary

¹⁵⁵ Leino 1994: 59–66.

¹⁵⁶ Leino 1994: 58; Virtanen L. & DuBois 2000: 126; Stepanova & Frog 2011.

¹⁵⁷ Virtanen L. & Dubois 2000: 127; on parallelism and Kalevala meter, see Frog 2014b; Frog 2014c; Kallio 2014; Frog 2017a; Frog 2017b; Frog 2017c.

¹⁵⁸ Siikala 1994: 34, 37.

¹⁵⁹ Leino 1994: 57.

¹⁶⁰ Siikala 1994: 37.

¹⁶¹ Siikala 1994: 37.

¹⁶² Frog, Siikala & Stepanova 2012: 7.

¹⁶³ Siikala 1994: 37.

¹⁶⁴ Siikala 1994: 37.

¹⁶⁵ Siikala 1994: 38.

schemes. Instead, my interpretations take into account the complex interplay between different historical layers in the ritual contexts of the bear ceremonials. This interpretation does not deny the importance of historical elements; instead it emphasizes the importance of historical continuities and the cultural communication between distinct historical phases.

1.3.4 Intertextual connections between the *Bear Songs* and other traditional genres

The Kalevala meter was the dominant language of the epic and lyric songs and incantations, the wedding songs and the *Bear Songs*.¹⁶⁶ It included minimal texts such as one-line proverbs or short riddles and long epic songs of over 400 lines.¹⁶⁷ The fact that different genres had the same meter facilitated intertextual combinations between them.¹⁶⁸

Lotte Tarkka stresses that the songs' language is a context to take into consideration.¹⁶⁹ A way to contextualize the *Bear Songs* is to reflect on the fact that a hunter often sang lines or motifs which were also present in other genres: wedding songs, cattle incantations, healing incantations or epic songs. The singers used a formulaic technique,¹⁷⁰ an intertextual singing strategy or performance, enabling motifs from previous ritual or epic singing performances to be woven into the *Bear Songs*.

Tarkka emphasizes that the intertextual relations between different texts or songs were not casual, but "conditioned by the community's social and historical circumstances, and channeled according to the tendencies of tradition."¹⁷¹ If the hunters included in the *Bear Songs* words and lines present in the wedding songs or in protective incantations, they saw some analogies between these ritual situations. I also noticed the presence of regular similarities in the rites in some phases of the bear ceremonials and some phases of the wedding rituals or protective rituals. For this reason, I will often compare some poetic units (the use of certain meaningful words, lines or motifs) of *Bear Songs* with similar ones present in other genres.

¹⁶⁶ Kuusi 1994: 41.

¹⁶⁷ Leino 1994: 58; Virtanen L. & DuBois 2000: 126.

¹⁶⁸ Tarkka 2013: 90–97.

¹⁶⁹ Tarkka 2013: 78.

¹⁷⁰ Tarkka 2013: 89.

¹⁷¹ Tarkka 2013: 89.

1.3.5 Comparison with the bear ceremonials of other Northern peoples

Even if focusing on contextualization and intertextuality is the most relevant methodological approach to the material, I will not ideologically exclude comparisons with other bear ceremonials or hunting traditions performed by circumboreal peoples. However, the goal of my comparisons will not be to draft general theories about possible geographical or historical connections between these traditions, or to make statements about a common derivation of the different rituals from the “same” archaic ritual or myth. Comparisons are useful in order to understand if the hunters of different cultures performed similar or different rites in particular ritual situations. They can also reveal hidden differences: an apparently similar motif can have parallel, different or even opposite meanings in different cultures. In particular, I have compared the rituals of the bear skull and the concepts of animal regeneration,¹⁷² the awakening of the bear from his den,¹⁷³ justifications for the bear’s death,¹⁷⁴ and the celestial *Birth of the Bear*.¹⁷⁵ However, the number of comparisons will be limited, considering the practical difficulties in dealing with comparisons between the already abundant songs, variations and ritual descriptions available in the Finnish archives. I hope that my monograph will be useful for other scholars seeking to make more useful comparisons with the Finno-Karelian materials.

¹⁷² See Sections 9.12, 9.15, 9.12.

¹⁷³ See Section 7.1.

¹⁷⁴ See Section 7.6.

¹⁷⁵ See Section 5.8.

Chapter 2

Previous Studies on the Finnish Bear Ceremonialism

2.1 Bear ceremonialism and Finnish mythology: Searching for the original *Bear Song*

Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism is a central topic in the study of Finnish tradition and folk beliefs. Many experts in Finnish mythology, folk beliefs, ethnology or ethnography, folklore and Kalevalaic songs have written articles or chapters of their monographs on the topic.¹⁷⁶ However, very few authors have written entire monographs on the topic: the book by Juho Karhu covered only the *Births of the Bear*,¹⁷⁷ and the recent books by Juha Pentikäinen are comparative, covering not only the Finno-Karelian ceremonial but also Sámi and Ob-Ugrian ones, as well as Classical and German mythology concerning the bear.¹⁷⁸

In this chapter, I will critically assess the theories of Matti Kuusi, Martti Haavio and Matti Sarmela because of their considerable impact on the scientific and popular literature on the topic. They covered bear ceremonialism in the first chapters of their general monographs on Finnish mythology, Finnish folk poetry and Finnish folklore.¹⁷⁹ As these books are organized following a chronological arrangement of Finnish myths and rituals, the authors stressed that the bear ceremonial and *Bear Songs* were the most ancient historical layer of Finnish folklore. The theoretical background and goals of these authors are different from mine, so an evaluation of their theories is

¹⁷⁶ Appelgren 1885; Krohn [1915] 2008: 146–164; Sirelius 1919: 37–40; Nirvi 1944; Vilkuna K. 1946: 97–105; 1965; Karhu 1947; Virtaranta 1958: 308–328; Edsman 1953, 1958, 1965, 1975, 1994; Kuusi 1963: 41–55; Honko 1963: 285–288, 1993; Haavio 1967: 15–41; Sarmela 1972, 1982, 1983, 1991; 2007: 70–94, 2006, 2009: 79–107; Ilomäki 1986, 1989; 2002; 2014a: 84–89, 2014b; Tarkka 1994; 1998; 2005: 256–299, 2013: 327–381; 2014a; Uusitalo 1997; Klemettinen 2002; Pentikäinen 2005; 2006, 2007; 2014; Klemettinen 2002; Salo 2006; 2012: 33–73; Siikala 2008: 140–144, 2012a: 380–389; Kailo: 2008; Pulkkinen 2014: 212–239; Pulkkinen & Lindfors 2016: 106–115.

¹⁷⁷ Karhu 1947.

¹⁷⁸ Pentikäinen 2005; 2007.

¹⁷⁹ Kuusi 1963: 41–55; Haavio 1967: 15–41; Sarmela 2007: 70–94; Sarmela 2009: 79–107.

elementary for the grounding of a new interpretative framework for the Finno-Karelian ceremonials.¹⁸⁰

The Finnish scholarship on bear ceremonials seems to be marked by a paradox: even though the material of the 19th century is abundant and rich in detail, scholars have focused on the older sources, which are indeed relevant, but scarcer and often more fragmentary.¹⁸¹

The folklorist Martti Haavio studied in detail the ritual descriptions and songs of the *Text of Viitasaari*, focusing in particular on the ritual of the bear skull, the part he considered the most ancient.¹⁸² Sarmela considers the *Text of Viitasaari* the only coherent description of the Finnish bear ceremonial.¹⁸³

The folklorist Lotte Tarkka noted that for many decades the Finnish scholars focused on the “ultimate origins of the song,”¹⁸⁴ as the “true” and “authentic” text of a song was supposed to be the most ancient or archaic, while lines containing references to “less ancient” strata of folklore were evaluated as spurious or a degeneration of the “original” song.

2.2 The first religion of mankind?

For a long time, Finnish scholars stressed the archaic features of Finnish bear ceremonialism by using comparison as a tool to demonstrate its antiquity. The scholars supported the theory that bear ceremonialism represented very ancient strata of Finnish rituals by stressing the fact that other Finno-Ugric peoples, such as the Sámi and the Ob-Ugrians, also performed bear rituals.¹⁸⁵

This comparative method has a venerable tradition. The priest, lexicographer and writer Christfried Ganander wrote several entries on folk beliefs about the bear in his dictionary of Finnish mythology *Mythologia Fennica*, published in Swedish in 1789. The

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter 3.

¹⁸¹ See Sections 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3.

¹⁸² See Section 9.4.

¹⁸³ Sarmela 2009: 81.

¹⁸⁴ Tarkka 2013: 80.

¹⁸⁵ Some Finnish scholars focused on contextual analysis of the Finnish, Sámi, Khanty and Mansi bear ceremonials (Krohn [1915] 2008: 146–164; Holmberg 1914: 43–52; Karjalainen 1918: 512–545; Kannisto 1907; 1938a; 1938b; 1939a; 1938b). Other scholars, such as Kuusi, Haavio and Sarmela, used their texts as sources to build up comparative theories about Finno-Ugric bear ceremonials (see Sections 2.3, 2.4).

most detailed entry is *Kouuwon päälliset eller Häät*,¹⁸⁶ which contains a short description of a Finnish bear ceremonial and a Sámi one, referring briefly to Shefferus. The comparison was very simple, comprising almost a juxtaposition of the two ceremonies, as if they were the same tradition. The fact that the Sámi—considered a more “primitive” people—performed bear ceremonialism reinforced the antiquity and importance of the Finnish ceremonial.¹⁸⁷ Ganander also referred to some parts of the *Text of Viitasaari* in his entries.¹⁸⁸

In the late 19th century and 20th century, many Finnish scholars followed the path of the historical-comparative mythological method of the influential linguist Matthias Alexander Castrén: they emphasized linguistic or ethnographic similarities between the mythologies or the rituals of different Finno-Ugrian peoples in order to demonstrate the antiquity of certain Finnish beliefs.¹⁸⁹ Another typical method of demonstrating the archaic features of Finnish myths or rituals was comparison with Classical myths and archaeological findings in Finland or in the Finno-Ugrian areas.¹⁹⁰

Some international theories about the origins of bear ceremonialism were also based on archeology. From 1917 to 1923, the archaeologist Emil Bächler found cave bear bones and skulls apparently stored in some Paleolithic stone cist or boxes in different Swiss caves, as Drachenloch.¹⁹¹ Some archaeologists speculated about the possibility that Mousterian hunters ritually stored the bones in the boxes.¹⁹² These discoveries were a sensation, and they opened the way to a series of speculations about the existence of a Paleolithic bear ceremonial: after a century of academic discussion, scholars are still divided into skeptical and optimistic positions.¹⁹³

Hallowell cautiously supposed that the hypothesis about some form of continuity between Paleolithic findings and the Northern bear ceremonialism was “a possibility

¹⁸⁶ The *Kouuwon*'s (bear's) *päälliset* or weddings; Ganander [1789] 2003: 60–61.

¹⁸⁷ Haavio 1967: 16.

¹⁸⁸ Kaarle Krohn criticized K. B. Wilklund's theory about the Sámi origins of the Finnish bear ceremonial. Krohn stated that there were similarities only in some ritual phases, but the Sámi and Finnish *Bear Songs* were different. According to him, the ritual similarities could be the result of a common Finno-Ugrian heritage, but as a whole the Finnish *Bear Songs* and ceremonialism developed in an original and independent way. (Krohn [1915] 2008: 163–164).

¹⁸⁹ Ahola and Lukin 2016: 55.

¹⁹⁰ Ahola and Lukin 2016: 55.

¹⁹¹ Campbell 1988a: 54–56; Gaion 1996: 51.

¹⁹² Gaion 1996: 51.

¹⁹³ Narr 1959: 233–272; Eliade 1964: 503–504; Campbell 1988: 54–56; Gaion 1996; Miettinen 2006; Germonpré & Hämäläinen 2007.

worth of consideration.”¹⁹⁴ By contrast, Bächler stated with great enthusiasm: “we have here to do with some sort of Bear Cult, specifically a Bone-offering Cult, inspired by the mystical thoughts and feelings of an Old Paleolithic population.”¹⁹⁵ Bächler stressed the presence of “bone-offering cults” among Northern Eurasian peoples and postulated that his discoveries represented “the original offering cult, namely, of mankind.”¹⁹⁶

This statement was in line with many evolutionist theories present at the time: animal worship, totemism and animism were supposed to be the most “primitive” forms of religion; still carried on by “savage” and “primitive” indigenous peoples.¹⁹⁷ Even if Hallowell hardly criticized these theories and anthropologists frequently redefined the concept of totemism, many Finnish scholars used quite obsolete definitions of totemism and animal worship dealing with bear ceremonialism, which they often called “bear cult.”¹⁹⁸

In 1994, the discovery in the cave of Chauvet of a cave bear skull positioned on a rock surrounded by other bones and skulls from fifty bears—and fifteen rock paintings representing cave bears—reopened the archaeological discussions on prehistoric bear ceremonials.¹⁹⁹ However, bones and artistic representations of many other animals have been found in prehistoric caves, and the role of the bear is minor in Cro-Magnon rock paintings and carvings.²⁰⁰

Today Finnish scholars are more cautious in their statements on direct connections between prehistoric findings and ethnographic sources. The linguist Juha Janhunen remarks that, as we do not have any text from prehistory, “it is impossible to establish what was the exact mythological role of cave bears or to define with precision what kind of rituals were done at the time.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁴ Hallowell 1926: 162.

¹⁹⁵ Bächler 1940: 260; English translation in Campbell 1988a: 55.

¹⁹⁶ Bächler 1940: 260; English translation in Campbell 1988a: 55.

¹⁹⁷ McLennan 1869–70; Tylor 1871; Frazer 1910; Durkheim 1912.

¹⁹⁸ See Sections 2.3, 2.5, 2.9, 2.10.

¹⁹⁹ Miettinen 2006: 121; 122; 126; see also Clottes 2001.

²⁰⁰ Miettinen 2006: 126.

²⁰¹ Janhunen 2003: 2.

2.3 Totemistic theories: Bear as ancestor and resurrecting god

Matti Kuusi was the first scholar to elaborate a totemic theory for the ancient Finnish bear ceremonialism. Kuusi supposed that the archaeological discovery of fifteen prehistoric axes shaped with the head of a bear or elk²⁰² was proof that the ancient inhabitants of Finland were divided into two clans: one worshipped the bear, the other worshipped the elk.²⁰³ Furthermore, Kuusi hypothesized that the Ob-Ugrians were also divided into two totemic clans.²⁰⁴ He remarked that the Lutheran Sami told that the female ancestor of the Orthodox Skolt Sámi was a girl who had spent the whole winter in a bear den.²⁰⁵ According to Kuusi, these Northern totemic myths explained why the Finnish people presented the bear ceremonial as a wedding of the bear.²⁰⁶

Kuusi also noted that both the Finns and the Ob-Ugrians had a myth concerning the celestial origin of the bear.²⁰⁷ He compared the celestial *Birth of the Bear*, involving the ritual killing of the bear and its ascension into the sky after its death, with the resurrection of ritually killed and resurrected “sons of gods” of ancient cultures: Osiris, Dionysus and Jesus. He saw similarities between the consumption of the bear meat in the bear ceremonials, the Christian Holy Communion and the ritual eating of the god present in the rituals of the Indians of Central America.²⁰⁸

Martti Haavio elaborated on Kuusi’s totemic theories by adding comparative elements. He defined totemism as the belief that an important game animal is the ancestor of a people or a clan, because the structure of the clan’s livelihood is dependent on hunting. According to Haavio, the peoples of the circumboreal area often believed that their ancestor was a bear. Peoples of other latitudes had other animals as ancestors: the tiger, the jaguar or the crocodile.²⁰⁹ Haavio considered the fact that the Mansi, the Nanai and the Evenk had myths about the weddings between a bear and a woman as proof of the existence of an archaic Northern bear totemism.²¹⁰ Another survival of this ancient myth would be the story about a sexual relationship between a bear and a woman described in the *Historia Danica* or *Gesta Danorum*

²⁰² See Carpelan 1974; 1975.

²⁰³ Kuusi 1963: 43.

²⁰⁴ Kuusi 1963: 43.

²⁰⁵ Kuusi 1963: 42; see Sections 5.7, 5.8, 9.10.

²⁰⁶ Kuusi 1963: 50.

²⁰⁷ Kuusi 1963: 42.

²⁰⁸ Kuusi 1963: 42.

²⁰⁹ Haavio 1968:88.

²¹⁰ Haavio 1968: 70–72.

(approx. after 1208) by Saxo Grammaticus: a descendant of the strange union was the Danish king Cnut the Great.²¹¹

Like Kuusi, Haavio emphasized the similarities between the Finnish and Ob-Ugrian myths about the celestial origin of the bear, but he also stressed that in the Finnish version the bear was born in the constellation of the Big Dipper.²¹² He compared the Finnish descent of the bear from the Big Dipper with a multitude of astral myths from Siberia, Philippines, Borneo and North America: narratives about a woman who married a star but finally came back to earth, descending with a rope.²¹³ Haavio stressed that the Finnish *Birth of the Bear* should be connected with the Ancient Greek and Roman myths of Kallisto or Callisto, the Arcadian princess and nymph who was transformed into the constellation of the Great Bear (*Ursa Major*, or the Big Dipper). In some versions, Kallisto's son Arkas became another constellation, Arctophylax (Bear Watcher), which seems to follow behind the Great Bear.²¹⁴ Haavio concluded that the Finnish *Birth of the Bear*, the Ancient Greek myth of Arkas and the Mansi myth of *Mirsusne-xum* were all fragments of the same original myth about the son of a god who was killed and resurrected, and who became an ancestor and a constellation.²¹⁵ In reality, however, the myth of Kallisto was connected with a contemporary Athenian female initiation rite performed in the Brauron temple; the Ancient Greek ritual and mythological context was completely different from the Northern one.²¹⁶

The theories by Kuusi and Haavio have many points in common. Both supposed that a single prehistoric bear cult worked as a "model" for the various Finno-Ugrian bear ceremonials and that the bear cult was a kind of prehistoric religion, based on worship of the bear, considered as a god or son of a god, who suffered death and rebirth.

Recently, Rydving heavily criticized the scientific postulate that states that "all the different types of bear ceremonials found Northern Eurasia should be regarded as concrete forms, or representatives of the 'same' single ritual: 'the' bear ceremonial."²¹⁷ Haavio and Kuusi went even further in postulating that the whole ceremonial was a result of the "same" generic totemic myth or resurrection drama present in many

²¹¹ Haavio 1968: 66–67; on the bear in the German and Scandinavian legends and literature, see Tolley 2005 and Pentikäinen 2007: 24–30.

²¹² Haavio 1967: 28.

²¹³ Haavio 1967: 28.

²¹⁴ Haavio 1967: 29–30; on the bear in Greek mythology, see Athanassakis 2005.

²¹⁵ Haavio 1967: 28.

²¹⁶ Gentili & Perusino 2002; Sourvinou-Inwood 1988.

²¹⁷ Rydving 2010: 34.

religious cultures. Haavio and Kuusi collected all kind of parallels from different cultures and they did not pay sufficient attention to the considerable temporal or geographic differences of the sources they used.²¹⁸ As a result, the hypothetical prototypical bear ceremonial described by Kuusi and Haavio does not correspond precisely to any of the Finnish, Sámi or Ob-Ugrian ceremonials. It is a bizarre hybrid of different traditions and a confused amalgam of Classic and Finno-Ugric mythologies.

2.4 The totemistic theory of Sarmela: Bear and elk clans

Like Kuusi and Haavio, Matti Sarmela stressed the importance of the discovery of Stone Age bear-head axes and elk-head axes in a large area from Scandinavia to the Urals,²¹⁹ and he supposed that two totemic clans existed in Finland and Karelia.²²⁰ Sarmela added that in the text *Germania* (circa 98 CE), the Latin writer Cornelius Tacitus (AD 56-AD 120) wrote about two mysterious peoples living near the people of the Fenni. According to Tacitus, the *Hellusios* and *Oxionas* have the faces and expressions of men, but the bodies and limbs of wild beasts.²²¹ Sarmela elaborated a theory by the Latinist Tuomo Pekkanen: a) the name Oxiones may derive from the Finnish word *oksi* (*otso*, *ohito*), meaning 'bear'; and b) the name *Hellusios* may derive from the word *elg* ('elk'), found in many languages (Greek: *ellós*).²²²

Sarmela speculated that the *Hellusios* and *Oxionas* had been two large totemic clans wearing the skins of their animal ancestors.²²³ He defined the totem as an animal or plant ancestor of a large group of people. This "totemic alliance group" shared a myth about the origin of the animal and a prohibition of eating the meat of the totem animal.²²⁴ At this point, Sarmela theorized that in prehistory the Finns considered the

²¹⁸ Rydving 2010: 31.

²¹⁹ See Carpelan 1974; 1975.

²²⁰ Sarmela 2009: 93.

²²¹ Tacitus *Germania*, Book 1, Chapter 46: "*Cetera iam fabulosa: Hellusios et Oxionas ora hominum voltusque, corpora atque artus ferarum gerere: quod ego ut incompertum in medio relinquam.*" (<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/tacitus/tac.ger.shtml#1>). English translation by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb [1864–1877]: "All else is fabulous, as that the Hellusii and Oxiones have the faces and expressions of men, with the bodies and limbs of wild beasts. All this is unauthenticated, and I shall leave it open." (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/tac/g01040.htm>).

²²² Sarmela 2009: 94; Pekkanen 1983; Pekkanen 1984; Pentikäinen 2007: 23.

²²³ Sarmela 2009: 93.

²²⁴ Sarmela 2009: 94.

elk as their totemic ancestor and the Karelians had the bear as their ancestor.²²⁵ Finland and Karelia are large geographic areas and the assumption of a totemic bear alliance covering the whole of Karelia and an elk alliance covering the whole of Finland presupposes a belief in the existence of totemic “national consciousness” in Finnish and Karelian prehistory.

The term totemism²²⁶—like animism—is one of the most discussed in anthropological literature and it has been thoroughly analyzed and redefined in the last decades.²²⁷ However, two of the most renowned scholars on totemism, Lévi-Strauss²²⁸ and Descola, did not consider totemism as a peculiar way to distinguish entire peoples or large alliances of kinship groups, but a way to define clans, social groups or social identities inside the same—and often small—ethnic groups. In one of his articles, Descola defines totemism as a classificatory system to create distinctions in the same human society on the basis of the differences between species in nature.²²⁹ Totemism thus models society after nature.²³⁰

Sarmela stated that the prehistoric Karelians had a bear ancestor because, according to him, the people from Viena and Olonets Karelia did not perform any bear ritual or *Bear Songs*,²³¹ and they did not hunt the bear at all.²³² In Viena Karelia, however, the collectors transcribed a great number of *Bear Songs* (79 in all), and these are often the longest and most complete ones.²³³

Sarmela stated that Viena Karelians did not eat bear meat at all.²³⁴ Yet, the Karelian sources and songs contain several references to eating and cooking bear meat.²³⁵ In

²²⁵ Sarmela 2009: 93.

²²⁶ The evolutionary conception of the term totemism has been criticized by Goldenweiser (1910–1911) and by Hallowell (Hallowell 1926:14). See Section 2.10.

²²⁷ See Descola 1992, 1996 and 2005; Århem 1996, Århem 2016: 6–9; Brightman, Grotti & Ulturgasheva 2014: 16–19; Viveiros de Castro 2009; Willerslev and Ulturgasheva 2014.

²²⁸ Lévi-Strauss 1964; 1966.

²²⁹ Descola 1996: 88; Willerslev and Ulturgasheva 2014: 49.

²³⁰ Descola 1996: 88; Århem 2016: 7.

²³¹ Sarmela 1991: 224.

²³² Sarmela 1991: 225.

²³³ See Section 1.2.1.

²³⁴ Sarmela 1991: 225. This statement seems to be based on previous statements by Kaarle Krohn about the Orthodox Karelians’ prohibition against bear meat (Krohn [1915] 2008: 162; see note 103 in Section 1.2.1) and Virtaranta’s Karelian informants (Virtaranta 1952: 313; see Section 8.17).

²³⁵ See, for example, SKVR I4/1245: 10–16; I4/1242b: 10–16, and all the abundant SKVR I4 sources in Chapter 8.

Viena Karelia, there were persons—generally women, like in Finland²³⁶—who avoided eating bear meat due to their Christian faith or the anthropomorphic features of the bruin’s body,²³⁷ but this was generally a personal or local choice, not a general prohibition. This refusal seems to be connected to the anomaly of the bear and its humanlike features, not a totemic system of kinship.²³⁸

Sarmela mentioned that in Viena Karelia there was no information on the ritual of the bear skull.²³⁹ This statement is incorrect; for example, the famous Viena Karelian singer Iivana Malinen described the ritual of the bear skull and sang some of the most typical lines related to this ritual.²⁴⁰

2.5 The bear in three eras of Finnish folklore

Matti Sarmela built a historical reconstruction of the chronological development of Finnish bear ceremonialism.²⁴¹ According to him, the first era comprised the prehistoric Finnish culture, marked by shamanism and a hunter-gatherer economy. Sarmela argued that the Finnish ritual of the bear skull should be connected with the natural environment of the bear: the skull and all of the other bones should be returned to the forest to ensure the rebirth or regeneration of the animal.²⁴² He supposed that the ideology of rebirth was connected to the archaic cyclical worldview of the Northern cultures: each year, life returned with the spring after the darkness of the long winter.²⁴³ He speculated that the return of the skull to the forest was connected to the shamanic notion of the soul as an entity independent of the body. The shaman, being the spiritual leader of the prehistoric hunting communities, was able to recover the lost soul of an ill person or lead the soul of a killed bear towards the land of the dead and its future reincarnation.²⁴⁴

According to Sarmela, the similarities between the bear ceremonials of the Northern peoples are not connected because of a geographic diffusion of the rituals, but caused by the fact that all of these peoples lived in a similar ecological environment and they

²³⁶ See Section 8.17.

²³⁷ See Section 3.8.

²³⁸ See Sections 3.8, 8.17; Douglas 2002 (1966): 47–49.

²³⁹ Sarmela 1991: 224.

²⁴⁰ See SKVR I4/1245b, I4/1245c; SKVR I4/1253: 16–17; Sections 9.7, 9.8, 9.10.

²⁴¹ Sarmela 1991.

²⁴² Sarmela 1991: 221–222.

²⁴³ Sarmela 1991: 222.

²⁴⁴ Sarmela 1991: 222.

were concerned about the possibility that game animals could disappear. Sarmela argued that the Ob-Ugrians lived in the same ecosystem as the prehistoric Finnish people who hunted, and for this reason they better preserved the ritual hunt of the bear and the bear mythology.²⁴⁵

Sarmela stated that the Finnish bear ceremonial's second era evolved in a different direction: the old rites did not work anymore because the ecological environment changed when the Finnish people adopted agriculture.²⁴⁶ During the Iron Age, with the development of slash-and-burn agriculture, the bear became the "enemy" of the people, because it killed the cattle in the forest pastures or destroyed the farmland produced by means of the slash-and-burn technique.²⁴⁷ Sarmela stressed that the most important religious specialist of the Finnish archaic agrarian villages was no longer the shaman, but the *tietäjä*, a ritual specialist who did not travel to other worlds or dimensions in search of lost souls (like the shaman), but expelled magic arrows or sickness from the body of an ill person. The environment of the age of the *tietäjä* was divided into two worlds: the cultivated landscape and uncultivated nature, which represented a kind of anti-world.²⁴⁸ Sarmela stated that the most important goal of the *tietäjä* was to protect the cattle and the crops of the fields from bears.²⁴⁹

According to Sarmela, the third era was the "age of the countryman," which developed during the Middle Ages. This period was marked by the religious dominance of the Catholic and Orthodox—and, later, Lutheran—faiths. The Catholic and Orthodox cults of the saints influenced the rituals of the *tietäjäs*; in their incantations, the saints took the place of the earlier forest spirits protecting the bear.²⁵⁰ The cattle holders invoked the saints to protect the cattle from bears during the grazing season.²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ Sarmela 1991: 222.

²⁴⁶ Sarmela 1991: 224.

²⁴⁷ Sarmela 1991: 230.

²⁴⁸ Sarmela 1991: 229.

²⁴⁹ Sarmela 1991: 230; Sarmela 2006: 17.

²⁵⁰ Sarmela 1991: 236.

²⁵¹ Sarmela 1991: 236.

2.6 Critical assessments of Sarmela's theories

Sarmela's theories strongly influenced Lauri Honko's presentation of the Finnish bear ceremonials²⁵² and other scientific and popular literature on the Finnish bear ceremonials.²⁵³

Sarmela's theory could fit with a generic historical reconstruction of the changes in the rituals in Southern and Western Finland, where the bear ceremonials and *Bear Songs* disappeared more rapidly, being substituted by incantations to protect the cattle during the grazing season.²⁵⁴

However, his theory does not explain the complexity of the situation in the isolated villages of Eastern Finland and Karelia, where the memory of bear ceremonialism survived until the 19th and 20th centuries. Why did the people still perform the bear ceremonial several centuries after the introduction of agriculture, cattle breeding and Christianity? There are further points of Sarmela's theory that can be subjected to critique: 1) the sharp division of Finnish history into an ecologically responsible prehistory and an ecologically irresponsible agrarian culture; 2) his reference to the contemporary conception of the natural environment, not to the stratified sacred, mythic and sociomorphic interpretation of the forest, which seems to have been dominant in Eastern Finland and Karelia in the 19th century;²⁵⁵ and 3) the absence of relations or continuities between the three structural periods of his theory. Sarmela strongly remarked that "in every structural change, the structure breaks off, cultural continuity does not exist."²⁵⁶ This statement is quite incompatible with the historically stratified nature of the *Bear Songs*, the *Births of the Bear* and the kalevalaic songs in general.²⁵⁷

2.7 Were the ancient Finnish hunters conservationists?

Sarmela showed a tendency to romanticize the Finnish prehistoric hunting communities; according to him, the life of humans was safer if they modified the

²⁵² Honko 1993: 117–140.

²⁵³ Pulkkinen & Salmenkivi 2006; Salo 2012: 33–73; Lehikoinen 2007; Meriluoto-Jaakkola 2010.

²⁵⁴ See Section 1.2.1.

²⁵⁵ See Section 2.7 and Chapter 3.

²⁵⁶ Sarmela 2009: 104.

²⁵⁷ See Section 1.3.3.

environment as little as possible.²⁵⁸ He emphasized that the focus of the hunters' faith was the "eternal return" and the "restoration of nature to its former state,"²⁵⁹ and he stated that the hunting ritual prevented "hunting anarchy or the destruction of the bear to extinction."²⁶⁰ However, it is difficult to imagine that bears risked extinction in the sparsely populated prehistoric Finland.

Many scholars have noted that the efforts to avoid the extinction of game animals have not been equally present in all the ethnic groups performing ritual hunts and surviving by means off hunting and gathering. The anthropologist Rane Willerslev asserts that the Siberian Jukaghirs use their belief in the reincarnation of the elk as a way to justify their overhunting.²⁶¹ Krupnic stresses the existence of aggressive hunting among the Arctic peoples, leading to local extinctions of species of game animals.²⁶² Even if in the 19th century many Viena Karelian informants still remembered hundreds of lines of *Bear Songs*, their neighbors, the inhabitants of Kainuu, lamented that they irresponsibly wasted forest resources by performing slash-and-burn agriculture and overhunting.²⁶³

We do not really know if the ancient Finns overhunted or if they had ecological awareness, but these scholarly observations are relevant: sometimes a strict ritualization of the hunt is not necessarily accompanied by sensible ecological behavior.

2.8 The cultural histories of the bear: Pastoreau and Pentikäinen

Sarmela is not the only scholar to construct theories on the cultural history of the bear. The professor of medieval history Pastoreau divides his successful book on the cultural history of the bear in France into three main ages: 1) from the Paleolithic to the feudal era, the bear was venerated and respected;²⁶⁴ 2) from Charlemagne to King Saint Louis, the "cult of the bear" was attacked by the Church or the state;²⁶⁵ and 3) from the Late Middle Ages to the present, the bear was dethroned and humiliated.²⁶⁶ The main

²⁵⁸ Sarmela 1991: 222.

²⁵⁹ Sarmela 2009: 91.

²⁶⁰ Sarmela 2009: 102.

²⁶¹ Willerslev 2007: 31–32.

²⁶² Krupnik 1993: 231; Willerslev 2007: 29.

²⁶³ Tarkka 2014a: 39; Tarkka 2005: 333.

²⁶⁴ Pastoreau 2011: 1–85.

²⁶⁵ Pastoreau 2011: 87–156.

²⁶⁶ Pastoreau 2011: 157–246.

sources used by Pastoreu are historical, not ethnographic.²⁶⁷ He mentions that some Church Fathers—such as Saint Augustine—did not hesitate to include bears in hell.²⁶⁸ As a result, there are episodes in medieval religious literature in which monks have visions of the Devil in the form of a bear.²⁶⁹ Sarmela made similar conclusions about the radical transformation of the status of the bear in Finland: “the bear was placed at the same side as the devil, who everywhere preyed on and threatened the Christian man.”²⁷⁰ However, in Eastern Finland and Karelia the bear was not completely demonized or humiliated, like in France. The bruin maintained a particular status of sacredness and innocence among the people until the 19th century, even if the Lutheran Church had expressly condemned the ceremonials centuries before.²⁷¹

The historian Hannele Klemetilä, who had studied the history of animals in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, partially criticizes some statements of Pastoreau, noting that: 1) bears could also have positive connotations in the folk beliefs of the medieval bestiaries; 2) the bear was the coat-of-arms and favorite animal of some French noble families; and 3) in the Late Middle Ages in Northern Italy the nobles ate bear paws and legs even if the Church prohibited it in the 8th century.²⁷² Antero Järvinen and Timo Miettinen affirm that in the Middle Ages the people noticed that the she-bear tenderly takes care of its cubs, and for this reason she was metaphorically compared with the Virgin Mary.²⁷³

Juha Pentikäinen wrote a more comparative and ethnographic book on the “cultural history” of the bear, covering prehistory; classical mythology; Scandinavian sagas and legends; and the bear ceremonials of the Ob-Ugrians, Sámi, Finns and Karelians. The book ends with a chapter dedicated to the role of the bear as a national symbol in Finland.²⁷⁴ Compared with Sarmela, Pentikäinen stresses the concrete repressive measures of the Lutheran Church as the major key factor that provoked the

²⁶⁷ A French author who took into consideration archeological, historical and several ethnographic sources is Lajoux (1996). In his book, there are distinct chapters covering Paleolithic archaeological findings, several Northern bear ceremonials, French medieval literature and art on bears, and the rich tradition of bear masks in European carnivals.

²⁶⁸ Pastoreau 2011: 113.

²⁶⁹ Pastoreau 2011: 124–126.

²⁷⁰ Sarmela 2009: 103.

²⁷¹ See Sections 3.7, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11.

²⁷² Klemetilä 2013: 126–127, 133–139.

²⁷³ Järvinen A. 2000; Miettinen 2006: 120.

²⁷⁴ Pentikäinen 2007: 49–50

progressive disappearance of the bear ceremonials in Finland.²⁷⁵ Like Haavio, Pentikäinen is interested in the astral mythologies of the bear, but he adds to his analysis a comparison of the images of the bear and the elk in the celestial parts of the painted surfaces of Sámi shamanic drums.²⁷⁶ Pentikäinen accentuates the relevance of cultural contacts among these traditions, but he treats them in separate chapters containing an abundance of original sources, and the book also gives the possibility to understand the differences between the traditions.²⁷⁷

2.9 Hallowell: Historic theories and cultural contextualization

Hallowell is one of the most important members of the Boasian school.²⁷⁸ His monograph²⁷⁹ is fascinating because it includes both historical and comparative theories and contextual problems. According to Darnell, it is the last of the major Boasian distributional studies.²⁸⁰

Hallowell was fiercely polemical with the scholars who assumed a unilateral theory of religious evolution and considered “animal worships”—and the bear “cult” or “worship”—as an early stage in the religious development of mankind.²⁸¹ He openly criticized the evolutionist theories of Frazer and Tylor.²⁸² Hallowell joined

²⁷⁵ Pentikäinen 2007: 130–134; see Section 1.2.3.

²⁷⁶ Pentikäinen 2007: 130–148.

²⁷⁷ Pentikäinen also curated, organized or co-organized several exhibitions and seminars on bear mythology and ceremonials in Finland and abroad, and he inspired the publication of popular science books and museum catalogues on the topic; see Meriluoto-Jaakkola 2010.

²⁷⁸ The Boasian school should not be considered a monolithic entity. Boas’ most renowned students—including Sapir, Lowie, Wissler, Kroeber and Hallowell—“shared a disciplinary culture” (Darnell 1977: 15) and “certain assumptions about the nature of sociocultural anthropology” (Nash 1977: 7), but they “have often differed from their teacher and from each other” (Lowie 1963: 412). Nash stressed that defining Hallowell as simply or only a Boasian “would be to miss his special genius and his particular contribution to anthropology” (Nash 1977: 7). On the scholarly relevance of Hallowell, see Spiro 1965 and 1976.

²⁷⁹ Hallowell’s monographic PhD dissertation was taken very seriously and it was entirely published in a number of the Boasian-dominated *American Anthropologist* (Darnell 1977: 15; Hallowell 1926).

²⁸⁰ Darnell 1977: 14.

²⁸¹ Hallowell 1926: 14.

²⁸² Goldenweiser 1910–1911.

Goldenweiser²⁸³ in his firm critique of the confused abuse of the evolutionist use of the term 'totemism'²⁸⁴ "as a necessary stage in the development of religion."²⁸⁵ Hallowell considered animism to be valid as a general statement about attitudes towards the animal, but too general to clarify the differences existing in the folk beliefs and rituals relating to particular animal species, such as the bear.²⁸⁶ By contrast, Hallowell considered the bear ceremonialism as a concept grounded on ethnographic facts and rituals, and it is much more useful to grasp the native point of view.²⁸⁷

Hallowell's main problem and question was theoretical: how are human groups related to their environment?²⁸⁸ Hallowell stressed that the native peoples' relationship with animals was not only utilitarian²⁸⁹ but also "socio-psychological" and "magico-religious"; what fascinated him was "man's relation to the animals of his environment as he himself views it."²⁹⁰ Hallowell's basic premise was that in indigenous cultures, animals "are believed to have the same sort of animating agency which man possesses."²⁹¹ According to him, certain animals—and the bear in particular—were considered more sacred and powerful than others.²⁹² Hallowell stressed the relevance of the belief in the spirit masters²⁹³ in bear ceremonialism; he clearly considered it an absurdity to consider bear ceremonialism as a form of unique religion based only on the "cult" of the bear.²⁹⁴ In a paper written in 1966, Hallowell stressed that the peculiar

²⁸³ Hallowell 1926: 13–20.

²⁸⁴ Boas also praised Goldenweiser's critique of totemism (Darnell 1977: 18; Goldenweiser 1910–1911). Hallowell worked with Goldenweiser in New York (Darnell 1977: 14). Goldenweiser was considered a member of the American anthropological "superintelligentsia," which also included Benedict, Sapir and Radin (Lowie 1959: 133; Darnell 1977: 16).

²⁸⁵ Goldenweiser 1910–1911: 264; cited in Hallowell 1926: 14.

²⁸⁶ Hallowell 1926: 15–16.

²⁸⁷ Darnell 1977: 27.

²⁸⁸ Darnell 1977: 21.

²⁸⁹ Hallowell stressed that no ceremonialism existed for animals economically more valuable than the bear (Hallowell 1926: 152).

²⁹⁰ Hallowell 1926: 3; Darnell 1977: 21.

²⁹¹ Hallowell 1926: 7.

²⁹² Hallowell 1926: 8, 17.

²⁹³ "The bear was believed to represent or was under the spiritual control of some supernatural being or power which governed either the potential supply of certain game animal or the the bear species alone. It is the propitiation of this supernatural agent which is actually desired" (Hallowell 1926: 145).

²⁹⁴ In this dissertation I emphasize the relevance of the forest spirits and of the personhood and agency of the bear in Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism. See Chapter 3.

status of the bear “would fall into place in the total picture of the animal world and man’s relation to it.”²⁹⁵

However, Hallowell himself tried to build a general historical and geographical theory to explain the presence of bear ceremonialism in the whole circumboreal region. According to him, bear ceremonialism was a common feature of an ancient boreal culture—associated with shamanism and the pursuit of reindeer—that originated in Eurasia and passed to North America across the Bering Strait.²⁹⁶ The Boasian school was strongly interested in the exploration of the cultural relations between the populations of Northern Asia and Siberia and North America.²⁹⁷ Kuusi and Haavio had a similar comparative goal; they tried to discover links between the different Finno-Ugrian bear ceremonials, but they often ignored the local differences.²⁹⁸

Willerslev notes that “Boas insisted that detailed historical reconstruction of specific cultures had to precede laws of general cultural development.”²⁹⁹ For this reason the researchers focused more on the informants’ memory of past customs than on contemporary habits.³⁰⁰ The Boasian school shared with the evolutionists a deep interest in the historic development of traditions, but it studied this by “focusing on cultural variability.”³⁰¹

Hallowell also wrote about processes of modification, differentiation and assimilation of the bear ceremonials caused by local cultures and social organizations.³⁰² In his monograph, the local variations of the phases of the bear ceremonials are treated in separate sections. Hallowell stressed, “Each culture exhibits its own peculiar combination of features which cannot be deduced from any general principle of association.”³⁰³ These questions are relevant for contemporary scholars analyzing the problems of the contextualization of the bear ceremonials.

Hallowell hoped for more detailed regional investigations of rituals related to the bear. The present monograph is a personal tentative answer to this call. Hallowell clearly emphasized the importance of a more precise contextualization of the beliefs surrounding animals: “It is only as we comprehend specific cultures in terms of their

²⁹⁵ Hallowell 1966: 2; cited in Darnell 1977: 28.

²⁹⁶ Hallowell 1926: 153163.

²⁹⁷ Birghtman, Grotti, Ulturgasheva 2014: 9; Fortescue 1998.

²⁹⁸ See Section 2.3.

²⁹⁹ Willerslev 2007: 146; Nash 1977: 4.

³⁰⁰ Willerslev 2007: 148.

³⁰¹ Willerslev 2007: 145; Miller and Mathé 1997.

³⁰² Hallowell 1926: 162–163.

³⁰³ Hallowell 1926: 18.

own range of values and concrete expressions that the role of animals in their life and thought becomes intelligible."³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴ Hallowell 1926: 18.

Chapter 3

Concepts and Contexts: Mythical Landscapes, Gender and Personhood

3.1 Balancing recent research and the statements of informants

After the analysis of the previous approaches towards bear ceremonials, in this chapter I will focus on my own approach. My theoretical and methodological point of departure has been an article by the folklorist Lotte Tarkka about the Viena Karelian forest imaginary, which included an innovative contextual analysis of the bear ceremonials and the incantations to protect the cattle from bears.³⁰⁵ This article evolved into a larger chapter of her PhD dissertation, which is available in a newly edited English version.³⁰⁶ However, many other recent studies also influenced my hypothesis about the relationship between the bear and the personalized and gendered sacred forest.

Having reflected on the relevance of the personalization of the bruin and the forest in bear ceremonialism,³⁰⁷ I adapted to the Finno-Karelian case and context concepts born in both classical and contemporary anthropological debates on animal and non-human personhood and on “new” animism.³⁰⁸ According to Kaj Århem, personhood is one of the key concepts of the new interpretations of animism, now “divested of its obsolete evolutionist connotations.”³⁰⁹ No more do scholars consider animism or totemism a primitive stage of religious evolution, leading to polytheism and monotheism.³¹⁰ Århem stresses that in animist ontologies and universes, “animals, plants and spirits are intentional subjects and persons, with will, intention and

³⁰⁵ Tarkka: 1994.

³⁰⁶ Tarkka 2005: 256–299; Tarkka 2013: 327–381.

³⁰⁷ See Sections 3.6, 3.7, 3.8.

³⁰⁸ See Descola 1996, 1996, 2005; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Willerslev 2007; Brightman, Grotti & Ulturgasheva 2014; Århem 2016.

³⁰⁹ Århem 2016: 3.

³¹⁰ Århem 2016: 5; Tylor 1881.

agency.”³¹¹ Humans performed rituals like bear ceremonials to create a web of social relations with non-human persons.

I found also useful the analysis by the ethnologist Laura Stark on the syncretic tradition of incantations and rituals to protect the cattle from bears in Orthodox Karelia,³¹² and her elaboration of the concepts of the “open body” and the “magical self” in Eastern Finland.³¹³

Considering the importance of contextualization in my method of analysis, in this chapter I will balance the inquiry of scholarly interpretations of folk beliefs and the most relevant vernacular concepts about the forest and the bear, as furnished by local informants. The aim of this chapter is to delineate an interpretative framework that is useful to analyze the religious and social background behind the various rites and songs of each ritual phase.

3.2 The socio-economic context

A *leitmotif* of Sarmela’s theory is that the development of a rural economy created a progressive degradation of the sacredness of the forest and the bear.³¹⁴ By contrast, I tend to agree with the scholar of folk religion Veikko Anttonen, who stresses that the significance of the forest for the Finnish spiritual culture did not vanish when agriculture and cattle-herding shifted the economic and religious “center” inside the areas where people dwelled, but the Finnish people continued to have a creative relationship with woodland.³¹⁵ Janhunen stresses that in the Northern boreal zone, respect towards the bear was not wiped out by the introduction of cattle or reindeer breeding, as wolves and wolverines were doing much more harm and were considered the real enemies.³¹⁶

To better understand the Finno-Karelians’ relationship with the environment, it is necessary to analyze the general economic background of the eastern regions. Due to the hard climate, the people in Eastern Finland and Karelia exploited multiple ways of subsistence, which included fishing, agriculture and cattle breeding, dairy production, hunting, forestry and seasonal wage labor.³¹⁷

³¹¹ Århem 2016: 3.

³¹² See Sections 3.9, 4.9, 5.5, 5.12.

³¹³ Stark 2002a: 111–133; Stark 2006; see Section 3.14.

³¹⁴ See Section 2.5.

³¹⁵ Anttonen 1994: 25.

³¹⁶ Janhunen 2003: 1.

³¹⁷ Tarkka 1998: 93; Stark 1998a: 80.

Stark notices that in Eastern Finland the economic differentiation was necessary to maintain the self-sufficiency of isolated villages and households and “to maximize the amount of resources obtained from the environment.”³¹⁸ Henni Ilomäki stressed that the forest offered people land for the slash-and-burn agriculture and cattle’s pastures, raw materials for building houses, working tools and every kind of implements, plants and herbs used in folk medicine, and food such as mushrooms and berries.³¹⁹

3.3 The forest as a “taskscape” and a source of imagery

Lotte Tarkka states that during the 19th century in Viena Karelia, the forest was not simply a hostile natural environment—the landscape acquired multiple mythic dimensions. The people did not perceive the forest as a “homogeneous natural environment,”³²⁰ as do contemporary urban dwellers.³²¹

The anthropologist Rane Willerslev stresses that a hunter’s understanding of the world is not based on an abstract contemplation of an objective “nature,” but “emerges from concrete context of practical engagement.”³²² The hunter’s myths and rituals are strictly bound with practical activities done in certain environments.³²³ Tim Ingold defines the environment of indigenous people as a “taskscape,” a place to accomplish a variety of different works: “as the activities that comprise the taskscape are unending, the landscape is never complete: neither “built” nor “unbuilt.” It is perpetually under construction.”³²⁴

These considerations are relevant for this study. As the Eastern Finns and Karelians performed different tasks in the woods or nearby, they did not consider the forest only “good to preserve” or a “negative” environment to be destroyed or spoiled; they had a complex vision of the woodland. The people had both positive and negative conceptions of the forest.³²⁵

Tarkka notes that the symbols, images and rituals associated with the woodland were strikingly varied, stratified and even contradictory.³²⁶ In all the genres of

³¹⁸ Stark 1998a: 82–83.

³¹⁹ Ilomäki 2014b: 120.

³²⁰ Tarkka 2013: 327.

³²¹ Stark 1998a: 82–83.

³²² Willerslev 2007: 94.

³²³ Willerslev 2007: 95.

³²⁴ Ingold 1993: 163.

³²⁵ Ilomäki 2014b: 27–37.

³²⁶ Tarkka 2013: 327, 328.

Kalevalaic songs, there is an impressive abundance of forest imagery.³²⁷ Henni Ilomäki states that the forest had generally positive connotations in the hunting incantations, but it held a negative aspect in certain healing incantations, because some illnesses could be banished in a gloomy, sterile and otherworldly forest. Thus, the positivity or negativity of the forest depended on the ritual context.³²⁸

3.4 The gendered division of labor and the bear hunt as proof of masculinity

Tarkka emphasizes that in Eastern Finland and Karelia, the division of labor was gendered.³²⁹ This also provoked a gendered separation of the “taskscape”: the work in the houses, the cattle sheds and around the farm were the dominion of women and the household’s mistress, while the forest and traveling outside the village were the environment of male activities.³³⁰

There were various exceptions in the general scheme. Young women or girls followed the cattle to the summer pastures, which were glades located in the forest or nearby it, or they went into the forest to pick berries and mushrooms; boys could also work as cattle herders in the summertime and do several agricultural tasks.

The people did not breed cattle mainly for meat production, as the cows owned by a family were few, especially when compared to other European regions. Dairy products were important foods and a source of fat, while cattle also produced manure for the fields.³³¹

In this economic context, the bear hunt was performed to protect the cattle, “since bears took a heavy toll on the cattle which were vital to the livelihood of small farms.”³³² Bears could also kill or injure horses, which were key for transportation, traveling and ploughing. Cattle and horses represented the wealth of the household.

The hunt was a marginal activity in the complex economic system, but the social values associated with it were particularly high. Tarkka stressed that the bear kill was “a proof of masculine prowess,”³³³ as well as courage and successful cooperation between the male members of the hunting group. The hunters acquired the honorable

³²⁷ Tarkka 2013: 330.

³²⁸ Ilomäki 2014b: 27–37.

³²⁹ Tarkka 2013: 330.

³³⁰ Tarkka 1998: 93.

³³¹ Tarkka 1998: 93.

³³² Tarkka 1998: 93.

³³³ Tarkka: 2013: 347.

title of “bear-killers.” In the wedding songs, the ideal husband was portrayed as a manly hunter and a brave traveler.³³⁴

In almost all hunting cultures, a particular kind of hunt is used as a measure of masculinity. Among the Koyukon of Alaska, for example, the ritual bear hunt represented a fundamental aspect of the masculine identity of the hunters, and the bear feast had great social value for men.³³⁵

The gendered division of labor influenced not only the roles of men and women in the bear ceremonials, but also the gendered conception of the mythical forest and the gendered and erotized relationships between the hunters and the forest beings.³³⁶

3.5 The forest as sacred and mythic landscape

In this study, I argue that the high social value of bear hunting should be related to the vernacular conception of both the forest and bruin as sacred. In Eastern Finland and Karelia, the forest was generally not inhabited by humans or owned by landlords or nobles, like in other parts of Europe. However, it was inhabited and owned by “other” beings: the forest guardian spirits, the *haltias*. The tree line formed a visible border between the household area and the otherworldly forest. It has been argued that the word *metsä* (‘forest’) in origin indicated a peripheral, distant, isolated or secluded place.³³⁷

The forest was considered a sacred otherworld or a mythic landscape: the forest and the forest spirits in general were defined with the adjective *pyhä* (‘sacred’)³³⁸ Stark stresses that in folk religion the sacred “is defined by the local community rather than by a religious institution.”³³⁹ It seems that the adjective *pyhä* did not have a Christian origin, even if the word was also used in a Christian sense.³⁴⁰ Veikko Anttonen and Henni Ilomäki stated that the *pyhä* category is generally connected with borders between “inside” and “outside” dimensions, or the “own” and “other” or “common” areas, stressing that *pyhä* could be concretely manifested in elements of landscapes.³⁴¹ The term *pyhä* is still present in a great quantity of Finnish and Estonian natural

³³⁴ Tarkka 2013: 337.

³³⁵ Nelson 1983: 176.

³³⁶ See Section 3.6 and Chapter 6.

³³⁷ Vilppula, Matti 1990: 287; Anttonen 1994: 27.

³³⁸ Tarkka 2013: 329.

³³⁹ Stark: 2002: 30:

³⁴⁰ Anttonen 1994: 26

³⁴¹ Anttonen 1994: 27; Anttonen 1996: 76–151; Ilomäki 2014b: 121.

toponyms: lands, hills, capes, rivers, springs and lakes.³⁴² However, the linguist Janne Saarikivi has recently criticized Anttonen's theories about the etymology of the word *pyhä*. Contesting the idea that the word had German origins and that its meaning was simply 'border',³⁴³ Saarikivi argues that the word *pyhä* should be connected to the entire semantic area covered by the word 'sacred'; the adjective had different meanings, which varied according to the context.³⁴⁴ Saarikivi stresses that in many vernacular explications, a *pyhä* place seems to be associated with the presence of spirits or sacred and healing waters.³⁴⁵

In the context of hunting incantations, the word *pyhä* marked the sacred status of the forest: a mythical world inhabited by supranormal beings, which was also the immediate and concrete hunting ground. Frog noticed that Finnish and Karelian sacred agents did not occupy an otherworld or a mythic world completely separate from the mundane world,³⁴⁶ as was the Christian Heaven or Hell. They inhabited other parallel worlds also located in the physical environment: "the seen world was animated and affected by the unseen world and its inhabitants."³⁴⁷

Siikala explained that in the Finno-Karelian imaginary, the separation between the otherworld and "this" world was not radical.³⁴⁸ And earlier, Elli Köngäs-Maranda had asserted that the otherworld in the Finnish and Karelian folk belief was not really *supra naturam*, above or outside the everyday reality, but rather *extra societatem*, outside of the control the human society.³⁴⁹

3.6 The forest as sociomorphic world

In this study, I seek to develop Tarkka's theory, focusing on the fact that the forest world was not completely alien: it was a separate but similar reality.³⁵⁰ Tarkka, Köngäs-Maranda and Stark noted that the otherworldly forest was conceived of as a family, village and society that resembled the human world: it was like an approximate

³⁴² Anttonen 1994: 27.

³⁴³ Saarikivi 2017: 9–10.

³⁴⁴ Saarikivi 2017: 8–9.

³⁴⁵ Saarikivi 2017: 9.

³⁴⁶ Frog 2009: 9–10.

³⁴⁷ Frog 2009: 9.

³⁴⁸ Siikala 1992: 145; Tarkka 2013: 300; Stark: 2002: 30.

³⁴⁹ Köngäs-Maranda 1967: 91; Tarkka 2013: 367; Stark: 2002: 30.

³⁵⁰ Tarkka 1998: 96.

mirror-image of “our” world.³⁵¹ The forest spirits were anthropomorphic beings, carrying on a life that was similar to that of humans. The forest had a basic, familiar and hierarchic structure, which resembled that of the human household. Moreover, the spirits had epithets that indicated their gender, age and social status.³⁵²

The most important male woodland *haltia* was Tapio, the master of the forest who had the power to provide game animals to the hunter or to decline the quarry.³⁵³ Tapio was both an anthropomorphic spirit and a name for the forest.³⁵⁴ This partial homology between the master and his dominion signified that the forest itself could be considered an intentional agent.³⁵⁵ Tapio had a wife, the mistress of the forest, whose name varied in the hunting songs: Mielikki, Mielus, Hongotar, Tapiotar and Katajatar.³⁵⁶ The name of Tapio’s daughter also varied: Annikki (sometimes associated with Saint Anna), Tuulikki or Tellervo (the shepherd or maiden of Tapio).³⁵⁷ Annikki or the forest mistress was described as having several maids in her service,³⁵⁸ “a hundred maids” or “a thousand other servants.”³⁵⁹ The forest world was strongly feminine: Tapio was a lonesome male figure among several female agents who actively governed the household of the forest, just as the human women took care of their houses. For this reason, the hunters sang seductive songs to the female forest spirits in order to succeed in their pursuits.³⁶⁰

However, the forest spirits were not completely identical with humans. Although generally described as anthropomorphic, they were shape-shifters, able to transform themselves into forest animals like bears, but also birds, dogs and cats.³⁶¹ The forest master could become as tall as the trees or be completely invisible. He turned visible only after certain ritual performances.³⁶² The forest maidens were generally portrayed

³⁵¹ Tarkka 2013: 330.

³⁵² Stark 2002: 51; Tarkka 1998: 96–97.

³⁵³ Siikala 2016: 376.

³⁵⁴ SKVR I4/1266: 15; Krohn [1915] 2008: 107.

³⁵⁵ Tarkka 2013: 330.

³⁵⁶ Siikala 2016: 380.

³⁵⁷ SKVR I4/1197: 2; VII5/3267: 2, I4/1421: 27; I4/1197: 4; XII3: 9684: 1.

³⁵⁸ SKVR VII5/3310: 2–3.

³⁵⁹ SKVR I4/1135: 21–22; cited in Tarkka 2005: 259; Tarkka 2013: 331; for a more detailed analysis of the forest spirits, see Sections 5.4, 5.5, 5.6.

³⁶⁰ See Sections 6.5 and 6.6; Tarkka 1998: 106–113; Siikala 2016: 378–379.

³⁶¹ Virtanen, P. 1988: 99–100.

³⁶² Virtanen, P. 1988: 42.

as beautiful and sensual, but in several Western Finnish folk stories they were described as having an unpleasant wooden back.³⁶³

Furthermore, the society of the forest was richer than that of the humans; here richness emphasized otherness and power. Tapio was depicted as “rich,” and he was called the “golden king of the forest,” “golden hat”³⁶⁴ or “golden beard.”³⁶⁵ In the *Bear Songs*, the bear was called “gold” or “silver.” In this context, richness or an abundance of gold signified successful hunting.³⁶⁶

Being a king, Tapio had his own realm³⁶⁷ and a “castle” or “city”³⁶⁸ full of wild animals. Siikala stated that these two definitions designated the forestland that was governed by him.³⁶⁹ Kaarle Krohn notes that the expression “castle/city of the forest” could be associated with the “granary of Tapio”³⁷⁰ or “grain-lock,”³⁷¹ a place in the forest that was full of game.³⁷² In this case, animals could be conceived as “grain,”³⁷³ and one circumlocution for the bear is “grain of God.”³⁷⁴ The idea of “grain” was not only connected to the fields, but used to indicate richness, luck and abundance.³⁷⁵ The forest mistress and forest maids took care of the “cattle of the forest”: bears, wolves and game animals.³⁷⁶

The agricultural economy and even urban institutions (kingdoms, cities and castles) clearly had an impact on the hunter’s perception of the forest world. The archaic concept of the guardian of the forest was mixed with different concepts connected to the contemporary environment. This kind of historic syncretism is far from unique. In contemporary Amazonian indigenous cultures, for example, the master of the animals

³⁶³ Virtanen, P. 1988: 33.

³⁶⁴ Siikala 2016: 376; SKVR VII5/3834: 5, 2, 3, 4.

³⁶⁵ SKVR VII5 3298: 14.

³⁶⁶ See Sections 6.1, 6.9, 7.10; SKVR I4/1203.

³⁶⁷ Tapiola.

³⁶⁸ *Tapion linna*. The word *linna* could be translated as ‘castle’ or ‘city.’

³⁶⁹ SKVR I4/1135: 21–22; cited in Tarkka 2005: 259; Tarkka 2013: 331.

³⁷⁰ *Tapion aitta*.

³⁷¹ *Viljalukko* in SKVR I4/2451: 6.

³⁷² Krohn [1915] 2008: 107.

³⁷³ *Vilja*.

³⁷⁴ *Jumalanvilja*.

³⁷⁵ Tarkka 2014b: 371.

³⁷⁶ See Section 3.7.

has towns and *haciendas*,³⁷⁷ imagined as powerful *loci* of abundance and richness, in which master spirits walk around with jaguars as their dogs or pets.³⁷⁸

3.7 The forest spirits as parents, owners and protectors of the bear

The bear was particularly sacred because it had a deep relationship with the forest spirits.³⁷⁹ Belief in the existence of anthropomorphic forest spirits made possible the personification of the forest and the bear itself.³⁸⁰ On one hand, according to several *Births of the Bear*, the bruin was the offspring of a female forest spirit, and sometimes of Tapio.³⁸¹ One of the most typical circumlocutions for the bear was “forest,”³⁸² a metonymy or synecdoche that indicates the deep identification between the animal and its environment. The bear could even share with Tapio the honorable title of “king of the forest.”³⁸³ On the other hand, the bear was often considered the cattle or the dog of the forest mistress or forest maidens.³⁸⁴ The Viena Karelian informant Samppa Riiko emphasized that “the bear is the favorite cattle of the forest maids.”³⁸⁵ The term “favorite” stressed affection and tenderness. The bear was also considered the dog of the forest mistress. According to a folk belief legend collected in Sortavala, the forest guardian spirit was like an old grandmother:

[T]he grandmother shouted: “Hurmikse, Harmikse! Hurmikse, Harmikse!” Then the bear and the wolf came and licked that grandmother. They were the dogs of the forest guardian spirit.³⁸⁶

³⁷⁷ Large South American estates and plantations, sometimes with mines and factories.

³⁷⁸ Kohn 2007: 109–120; Fausto 2014: 40.

³⁷⁹ Kannisto stressed that, according the Mansi, certain animals—and the bear in particular—had a deep relationship with divine beings or master spirits; the animal could be a servant or the temporary manifestation of these spirits (Kannisto 1939a: 3).

³⁸⁰ Tarkka 2013: 330.

³⁸¹ See Section 5.4.

³⁸² *Metsä, tapio*.

³⁸³ *Metän kuningas* (SKVR XII2/6481: 1).

³⁸⁴ Tarkka 2005: 259.

³⁸⁵ *Karhu on metsän piikojen lempi karjaa* (SKVR I4/1490. Tuhkala. Meriläinen n. 98. 1888. Samppa Riiko).

³⁸⁶ *Sanoi mummo: ”Hurmikse, Harmikse! Hurmikse, Harmikse!” Silloin tuli karhu ja susi ja nuoleksivat sitä mummoa. Ne olivat metsänhaltiin koiria.* (SKS KRA Laine, Elli. KRK 144: 208. Sortavala).

The fact that the bear and the wolf licked the female forest guardian reveals a relationship of reciprocal affection between the mistress and her pets.

The concept of the master, being the guardian or owner of the animal, is very common in many Siberian and Native American cultures.³⁸⁷ In Amazonia, various native concepts denoting ownership of the animal³⁸⁸ are connected with ideas of wealth, prestige, power,³⁸⁹ leadership, responsibility, control over some domain,³⁹⁰ and paternal/maternal bonds.³⁹¹ The owner is also a parent because he/she cares for his/her children/wild pets, protecting and feeding them. In Shananahua, the term *ifo* connotes authority, genesis and feeding, qualities denoting the relationship between parents and children, a chief and his people, and an owner and animals.³⁹²

All these definitions joined the concept of control and authority with notions of care and parenthood.³⁹³ The masters kept “children”³⁹⁴ in an enclosure or box³⁹⁵ and released them “slowly,” and only to the humans who showed ritual respect and “care” for the animals before and after their death. Fausto noticed that in Amazonia the “mothers” of the animal are present, but they are not “as widely distributed as the male-master.”³⁹⁶ By contrast, in Finland and Karelia the female forest spirits were the principal interlocutors of the hunters.³⁹⁷

The Finno-Karelian female forest spirits also protected the bruins and cared for them, in particular during their hibernation. Hallowell noted that hibernation was one key factor in the understanding of the high status of the bear in the Northern cultures: the seasonal disappearing of the bear into an underground den and its rebirth during spring was considered a fascinating mystery.³⁹⁸ In Finland and Karelia, the bruin’s survival in the den had a supernatural explanation:

³⁸⁷ Hultkrantz 1961.

³⁸⁸ *Kande, kukoto, oto, *jar, ifo, warah-*.

³⁸⁹ Seeger 1981: 182; Fausto 2014: 30.

³⁹⁰ Viveiros de Castro 2002: 82–83; Fausto 2014: 30.

³⁹¹ Fausto 2014: 30.

³⁹² Fausto 2014: 30.

³⁹³ Daillant 2003: 317; Fausto 2014: 30.

³⁹⁴ The wild animals.

³⁹⁵ Daillant 2003: 317 and &Teixera Pinto 1997: 97; Fausto 2014: 30.

³⁹⁶ Fausto 2014: 42.

³⁹⁷ See Chapter 6.

³⁹⁸ See Hallowell 1926: 27–31; Section 1.1.1.

There was a belief that when the bear starts to sleep for the winter, every morning the honeyed old lady of the forest bring honey to the bear.³⁹⁹

The bear was fed with honey, one of its favorite foods. In the Finnish folk tradition, honey represented the sweetness, generosity, beauty and seductiveness of the “honeyed” forest maidens.⁴⁰⁰ The forest spirits fed the bear with a food connected to healing and regeneration; for example, the healer’s balm made with honey was frequently used in folk healing to cure wounds and illnesses.⁴⁰¹ In 1936, a similar narrative was collected in the parish of Mäntyharju:

When I was young, I heard that one time a man, circling the sleeping place of the bear,⁴⁰² fell into the bear’s den. He stayed there a long time. The man saw that every night a *haltia*⁴⁰³ brought a white beverage. The man himself was fed with the same drink. But one time the *haltia* brought a red beverage and the bear gave a loud growl. In the morning, the hunters reached the den. Then the bear threw the man out of the den, and after that rose out of it itself.⁴⁰⁴

The white beverage could have been milk. The guardian spirit also demonstrated a maternal attitude towards the unfortunate hunter, and she fed him with the same beverage. The hunter stayed a long time in the den, becoming a kind of brother of the bear for a certain period. The forest guardian spirit gave the bruin a red beverage, maybe blood, when a group of hunters was approaching. Maybe the guardian spirit helped the bruin to face the approaching hunters, or she sent a sorrowful sign to the bear about its imminent fate.

³⁹⁹ *Oli luuloo että kun karhu rupee maata talveksi, niin metsän metinen muori kantaa, joka aamu karhulle pesään mettä* (SKS KRA K. Jalkanen 302. 1890. The old lady of Ivako).

⁴⁰⁰ SKVR I4/1214: 6; I4/1080.

⁴⁰¹ SKVR I4/72: 30.

⁴⁰² See Section 4.4.

⁴⁰³ Guardian spirit.

⁴⁰⁴ *Kuuli nuorena ollessaan, että kerran mies kiertäessään karhun makuupaikkaa, putosikin karhun pesään. Mies jäi pesään pitemmäksi. Mies näki, että haltia toi karhulle joka yö valkoista juotavaa. Mies sai ravinnokseen samaa juomaa. Mutta kerran haltia toikin karhulle punasta juomaa. Silloin karhu kovasti mörähti. Aamulla tulivatkin metsästäjät pesälle. Karhu viskasi silloin miehen ensin pesästä pois ja sitten vasta nousi sieltä itse.* (SKR KRA J. Karhu 3271. 1936. Juho Hälikkä, 75-year-old man, Mäntyharju).

This narrative is relatively recent, but the content resembles other stories about boys, hunters or girls who fell into the bear's den, which are very common in Northern Eurasian and Amerindian hunting traditions.⁴⁰⁵ In a Sámi aetiological myth explaining why the bear ceremonial was performed, a girl became pregnant and the bruin informed her about the rules to perform the bear ceremonial, because it knew that the girl's brother was coming to kill it.⁴⁰⁶ Variations of these stories are found in other Northern cultures. Fienup-Riordan refers to a Yup'ik myth about a shaman who threw a boy into an ice hole and the boy spent some time living with the seals. Watching from the ice hole the boy saw the hunting rituals done by humans. He viewed the hunters from the animal perspective, understood how the seals see the hunters and how humans must act to please them. After this experience, he returned to the human world and became a great hunter.⁴⁰⁷

While the Finnish narrative was not as articulate as these other myths, the man lived like a bear for a winter and experienced the drama of the hunters approaching from the bear's perspective. The man did not learn the details of bear ceremonialism, but he discovered that a guardian spirit protected the bear.

The anthropologist Viveiros de Castro argues that animals and spirits are subjects with a point of view.⁴⁰⁸ The person who fell into the den learned something about the perspectives of the bruin and the forest spirits: he saw the hibernation and the hunt from their point of view. Willerslev defined mimetic empathy as the hunter's capacity to be able to put himself in the place of the animal and reproduce the animal's perspective and imagination.⁴⁰⁹ The hunters who performed the bear hunt would have benefitted by being familiar with the perspectives of the bear and the forest spirits; only by knowing their attitudes and desires and how to please them could the hunter build a reciprocal social relationship that ended in a successful hunt and ceremonial.

3.8 The human origins of the bear

What made the vernacular conception of the bear even more complex is that the animal was also considered to be a humanlike being with human origins. These beliefs were

⁴⁰⁵ Spagna 1998; Edsman 1956; McClellan 1970.

⁴⁰⁶ Edsman 1956: 124; Spagna 1998: 124–125.

⁴⁰⁷ Fienup-Riordan 1994: 3–4.

⁴⁰⁸ Viveiros de Castro 1998; cited in Århem 2016: 7.

⁴⁰⁹ Willerslev 2007:106.

often based on observations of the bruin's anatomy and behavior.⁴¹⁰ In 1937, Ale Alariesto from Riesto (Sompio) told: "The skinned bear is in all aspects like a human being. It has all the bones of the human. [...] Its paw is like the hand of a human and the fingers are like the ones of a human."⁴¹¹ In 1891, the Ingrian informant Pietari Lallo explained: "When we skin the furs and notice that he has nannies like people, we say that it came out of a human being."⁴¹² Folk from Kivijärvi told a story about a primeval brotherhood between a human, a bear and a frog: "There were three brothers. One of them went to the forest, and he became a bear. The second went to the lake, and he became a frog. The third stayed at home, and he became a human."⁴¹³ The fact that two brothers choose to live in nature determined their transformation into animals.

In 1890, an informant from Kinnula related that an old man disappeared for the whole summer: he was able to transform himself into to a bear by doing a somersault behind the forge. One summer the daughter-in-law came after him and she did a somersault and turned herself into a bear. But this time they were not able to transform themselves back into humans and the daughter-in-law gave birth to bear cubs. Only when someone killed the male bear was the daughter-in-law able to turn herself into a woman, but the cubs remained bears.⁴¹⁴

The narrative seems to advise people to abstain from these magic procedures: metamorphosis into a bear seems to have been easy, but it was more complicated to reassume human form. The theme of incest in the story shows that the metamorphosis includes abandoning of the human moral rules. In Jyskyjärvi (Viena Karelia), the people believed that the similarity of the bone structures of the bear paw and the human hand demonstrated that the bear was a bewitched person.⁴¹⁵ All these narratives have some points in common. The humans that have transformed into bears

⁴¹⁰ According to Sirelius, the Khanti believed that the bear has human origins, because it has no tail and is particularly wise (Sirelius 1929: 193). According to Kannisto, the Mansi believed that the bear was a rational and thinking being, because it is wise (Kannisto 1939a: 346; Kannisto 1933: 170).

⁴¹¹ *Karhu on kaikkiin sorttiin nyljettynä niinkun ihminen. Siina on kaikki ihmisten luut. [...] Sen käpälä on kun ihmisen käsi, ja varpaat on kun ihmisellä.* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 39768. Ale Alariesto, 70-year-old man. Riesto (Sompio). 1937).

⁴¹² *Hään kun näät nyljetään ja on nännät niin kuin ihmisellä, niin sanotaan että hään on ihmisest tullut.* (SKS KRA Arsiansaari, Alava, V. VI A 234. 1891. Pietari Lallo).

⁴¹³ *Oli kolme veljestä. Ja yksi meni metsään, ja siitä tuli karhu. Ja toinen meni järveen, ja siitä tuli sammakko. Ja kolme jäi kotiin, ja se tuli ihminen.* (SKS KRA Krohn 1885. E. n 274. Kivijärvi).

⁴¹⁴ SKS KRA K. Jalkanen 327. 1890 e u 5. Kinnula.

⁴¹⁵ SKS KRA Niemi, O. 532. 1936. Jyskyjärvi.

are special: sorcerers, bewitched persons or people choosing to live in the wilderness, losing contact with the human community. However, the bear had a double identity; on the one hand it was connected to the forest spirits, while on the other it had human features.

The anthropologist Enrico Comba observes that in Amerindian cultures, too, the bear simultaneously represented the wilderness, the mysterious power of the forestland and the animal, which shared characteristics with humans.⁴¹⁶ The Native Americans noticed that humans and bears walked the same trails and they ate the same food (fishes, game animals, berries, nuts).⁴¹⁷ The tracks of the bear reminded of human ones,⁴¹⁸ and the Yavapai of Arizona were convinced that “bear are like people except they can’t make fire.”⁴¹⁹

In the Finno-Karelian *Birth of the Bear*, the same incantation could stress that the bear had both human and supernatural origins.⁴²⁰ However, these incantations never spoke about the bear as an ancestor of the whole of humankind or of a particular family, clan or alliance of clans, as described in the theories of Kuusi, Haavio and Sarmela.⁴²¹ By contrast, the bear came from humans or was born from a humanlike forest spirit. The possible human origin of the bear created moral problems in eating bear meat: some women and Karelians, but not all of them, refused to eat bear meat because the bear had humanlike features or was a bewitched person.⁴²²

3.9 The innocence of the forest and the bear

Sarmela stressed that with the development of the rural economy, the bear became an enemy of humankind and a constant menace for cattle.⁴²³ This interpretation is quite simplistic and the ethnographic data does not fully support it. Stark notes that in Orthodox Karelia, the Christian faith influenced folk beliefs about the forest spirits. On the one hand, there was a tendency to see the forest as “non-Christian” or even “anti-Christian”: the forest spirits could be called *piru*, a term associated with the Devil. On the other hand, there was a strong opposing tendency to portray the forest as partially

⁴¹⁶ Comba 1996: 32.

⁴¹⁷ Rockwell 1991: 1.

⁴¹⁸ Rockwell 1991: 2.

⁴¹⁹ Rockwell 1991: 3; Gifford 1933: 241.

⁴²⁰ See Sections 5.10 and 5.11.

⁴²¹ See Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

⁴²² See Sections 8.16, 8.17, 1.1.3.

⁴²³ Sarmela 1991: 231; Section 2.5.

Christian: certain saints (especially Saint George, Saint Anna and the Virgin Mary) tended to be included in the group of forest spirits.⁴²⁴

The forest had an ambivalent position in folk beliefs. In some Viena Karelian incantations, both God and the Devil created the trees.⁴²⁵ Anttonen and Stark emphasize the ambiguous doubleness of the sacred: its “right-hand” aspect (purity) is associated with growth, life and prosperity, and the “left-hand” aspect (impurity) with decline, death and destruction.⁴²⁶

Tarkka noticed that in Viena Karelia the sacredness of the forest often had moral connotations: the innocence of the forest formed a contrast with the sinfulness of the human world.⁴²⁷ Pre-Christian beliefs about the sacredness of the forest probably blended with Christian concepts of the sinful humanity and the holy creation of God. In the incantations, the female forest spirit was called “clean mother”⁴²⁸ and even “clean without washing,”⁴²⁹ an expression used to indicate the purity of the Christian God, Jesus as the son of God, or Mary.⁴³⁰

As the bears were strictly related with the innocent forest, they were also considered innocent or “clean.”⁴³¹ Thus, a bear who attacked cattle or a person must have been “roused” (i.e. “conjured,” being a bewitched bear).⁴³² These beliefs were common in Savo. Anterus Kousa of Pärnämäki (Mäntyharju) related: “The bear didn’t do wrong unless he was conjured.”⁴³³ Another informant, G. V. Karhu of Outila (Mäntyharhu), stated:

The people usually believed that the bear was a jolly and playful animal of the forest, if sorcerers or malevolent men didn’t enrage it with magic. Bears had been seen eating hay from the same hummock as the cows, and also tinkling the bells hanging from the cows’ throats with their paws and such like without hurting the cows. But if some sorcerer or grudge-bearer became angry with his neighbors, he

⁴²⁴ Stark 2002: 125–126.

⁴²⁵ SKVR I4/104: 12–13.

⁴²⁶ Anttonen 1996: 77–78; Stark 2002: 22.

⁴²⁷ Tarkka 1998: 97.

⁴²⁸ SKVR I4/104: 12–13.

⁴²⁹ *Pesemättä puhtukainen* (SKVR I4/1384: 30).

⁴³⁰ SKVR VIII/695: 29–32.

⁴³¹ *Puhdas* could also be translated as ‘pure.’

⁴³² *Nostettu karhu*.

⁴³³ *Karhu ei tehnyt pahaa muuten kuin, että se oli nostettava* (SKS KRA Karhu J. 1936, 3254).

could send the bear to do some harm, and even destroy all the cattle of the neighboring village.⁴³⁴

The real responsible party, and the hidden wrong-doer, was another human being: an execrable or envious person or sorcerer concealed somewhere, probably in the nearest household or village. The folk considered that cattle luck,⁴³⁵ like other forms of “luck,” was present only in finite quantity: someone’s luck could increase only by diminishing the luck of their neighbors through sorcery.⁴³⁶ Tarkka stresses that conflict between people and the bear reflected an internal struggle present in the human society: the contradiction between the bear’s innocence and havoc was resolved by framing it in terms of “aggression within the human sphere.”⁴³⁷

Cattle herders obviously feared bewitched bears, but they did not completely demonize the forest spirits and the bruin. A bewitched bear could be calmed by uttering the incantation *Birth of the Bear*. In this way, the cattle herder reminded the bear that it had a positive mythical origin and should behave properly.⁴³⁸

Stark and Tarkka remark that in Karelia the cattle herders tried to make seasonal truces with the forest spirits, so that humans and cattle could exploit forest resources during the late spring, summer and autumn, following certain dates of the Christian calendar.⁴³⁹ During this period, the forest spirit, after receiving an offering, was requested to chain up the bears or send them away from the cattle and pasture.⁴⁴⁰ The forest spirits that protected the bear could also protect the cattle in the forest: they controlled almost everything in their environment.

⁴³⁴ *Kansassa oli yleensä se käsitys, että karhu on leikkisä metsäneläin, ellei sitä noidat ja pahansuovat ihmiset saa villiintymään. Karhujenhan oli nähty lehmän kanssa syövän samasta mättäystä heinää, sekä soittavan kämmäkällään lehmän kaulassa olevaa kelloa y.m. tekemättä pahaa lehmälle. Mutta jos joku noita tahi kadehtija vihastui naapuriinsa, niin se sai karhun tekemään tuhoa, jopa niinkin paljon, että se voi tuhota koko kylän karjan.* (SKS KRA Karhu J. 1936, 3254).

⁴³⁵ *Karjan onni.*

⁴³⁶ Stark 2006: 46.

⁴³⁷ Tarkka 2013: 332.

⁴³⁸ Tarkka 2013: 331–332.

⁴³⁹ Stark 2002: 118–128.

⁴⁴⁰ Stark 2002: 121; Tarkka 1998: 119–120.

3.10 The goal of ritualization: Pleasing the bear and forest spirits

If a bear continued to kill cattle, it was necessary to organize a bear hunt. Yet the hunt was problematic in many ways. The bruin was a humanlike being and a sacred animal protected by powerful forest spirits, an innocent creature that was not really responsible for having killed cows. To avoid the revenge of forest spirits and bears, in the case of a bear hunt it was mandatory to perform rituals and songs.

The bear ceremonials were based on communication and reciprocity with the animals and the spirits of the forest.⁴⁴¹ The Finno-Karelian hunters developed a ritual relationship with the bear, the forest and the spirits as independent and competent persons. Viveiros De Castro stressed that in Amazonia, non-human persons—animals and spirits—had a soul and perceptive, appetitive and cognitive dispositions. They saw themselves as persons, and they had social relations that could be both reflexive and reciprocal.⁴⁴²

In the Finno-Karelian hunting cultures, there were similar ideas about the non-human persons of the forestland: bears and spirits were agents with will, intentions and desires, and they interpreted the actions and the words of the hunters from their own point of view. They were sentient beings with emotions, agency, a moral code, and expectations.⁴⁴³ The hunters were expected to take the forest persons into consideration in order to build with them a ritual relationship of reciprocity.

Wild animals were even considered superior to humans. In the region of Satakunta, people told that the bear was nine times stronger and two times more intelligent than humans, or as intelligent as a human. The wolf was the opposite, being nine times more intelligent and two times stronger than a human.⁴⁴⁴ The paragons regarding powerful predators are typical of hunting cultures. Schirokorogoff reported that the Evenki considered the bear to be intelligent and possessing a sentient soul, because it was able to carry and store food in the earth, but the tiger was more intelligent because it was more difficult to hunt and it could lead the hunters on a false track.⁴⁴⁵

The bear and forest spirits were powerful beings with extraordinary senses of sight and hearing. They could see from a distance the actions of the hunters or women, and they could hear human speech and songs from the den or the forest. Even when the

⁴⁴¹ Tarkka 2013: 71.

⁴⁴² Viveiros de Castro 2009; Brightman, Grotti and Ulturgasheva 2014: 2.

⁴⁴³ Stark 2002: 23.

⁴⁴⁴ SKS KRA Toivonen, August. KT 57:165. 1938. Längelmäki; SKS KRA Soini, Kalle. KT 31:17. 1938. Kullaa.

⁴⁴⁵ Schirokorogoff 1935: 77, 79–82.

bruin was killed, it was believed to understand the songs and the meaning of the ritual actions performed during the feast. Last but not least, the bear was able to speak and tell the forest spirits about the ritual honors it received.⁴⁴⁶

Anderson defines the interrelationship of persons and places as sentient ecology: the hunter moves and acts in the environment knowing that the animal and the environment itself are reacting to him.⁴⁴⁷ Furthermore, he notes that when the hunter “tries to know about the animal and the land, the animals and the land also come to know the hunter.”⁴⁴⁸

Veikko Anttonen stresses that Finnish folk rituals were often based on a relationship of exchange between the inhabited land and the forestland. Sacred animals, such as the bear, were a concrete sign of this exchange. With the ritualized hunt, the human community demonstrated its capacity of governing an equilibrium of forces between these two areas.⁴⁴⁹

The singer Iivana Malinen from Vuonninen said that bear songs should be performed in all the phases of the rituals “to please the forest maidens”⁴⁵⁰ and to please the master of the forest, “so that Tapio would not get angry if a beast disappears from his cattle.”⁴⁵¹

The enraging or angering of forest spirits was a dangerous affair. An offense to the forest could lead to bad luck in the hunt, to a bear attack or to the “*nenä* illness” caused by the forest’s dynamistic force. The word *nenä*, which literally means ‘nose,’ is connected with becoming angered.⁴⁵²

The Viena Karelian singer Asarias Kyrsöni told that the act of killing a bear close to a robbery and, for this reason, it was necessary to commit it with honor and perform a feast with joy to please the master of the forest.⁴⁵³ The bear hunter and *tietäjä* Jeremias Seppänen stressed that the hunters sang in each phase of the ritual: “And all that is

⁴⁴⁶ See Section 9.16.

⁴⁴⁷ Anderson 2000: 116; Århem 2016: 5.

⁴⁴⁸ Anderson 2000: 130.

⁴⁴⁹ Anttonen, Veikko 1994: 24.

⁴⁵⁰ *koko matka lauletaan karhun virsiä metsän piijoille mieliksi.* (SKVR I4/1191, Meriläinen. Vuonninen. Iivana Malinen, heard from his grandfather Ontrei, 1888).

⁴⁵¹ *Se kaikki tehään metsän haltijan mieliksi, ettei Tapio vihastuisi, jos on elukka karjasta katonnut.* (SKVR I4/1244. Vuonninen, Meriläinen n. 245. 1888. Iivana Malinen).

⁴⁵² Stark 2006: 269–270.

⁴⁵³ SKVR I4/1215.

pleasing for the forest maidens, as if [it was] respect for a noble deceased and funeral songs.”⁴⁵⁴

The bear ceremonial should not only appease the forest spirits and the bear, but also delight them. Offerings of ale, spirits and small quantities of gold “pleased” the forest beings.⁴⁵⁵ The gratification of the spirits was a fundamental part of the ritual exchange;⁴⁵⁶ to obtain game animals, which was the result of an exchange and ritual negotiations, the forest spirits should be pleased and honored. The sociologist Helmuth Berking remarked that reciprocity is the cornerstone for good relations between humans and spirits,⁴⁵⁷ while Sarmela emphasized the relevance of reciprocity in the everyday social relations of rural Finland.⁴⁵⁸

By performing a reciprocal ritual and showing respect, the humans could even gain more. Thus, the hunter often offered a little (ale, spirits or a little bit of poured silver) in order to receive a lot (an entire bear, which would be consumed by the whole community). The hunters’ ceremonial was not only performed to cancel the offense of the bear kill, but to transform the hunt into something agreeable for the master of the forest and the bear itself.

The hunters pleased the female forest spirits by singing seductive songs when they entered the forest.⁴⁵⁹ One way to pay respect to the bear was the tradition of awakening it from the den before the kill, which presented a fair fight. The killed bear was first calmed by giving it a false explanation about its demise.⁴⁶⁰ After that, the killed bear was pleased by inviting it as a guest of honor to a feast organized in the village. It was welcomed there as a groom or a respected old man, and ale and spirits were offered to it.⁴⁶¹

Singing agreeable songs was an integral part of the exchange. The hunters from Savo specified that they would not eat the bear meat “without singing, / without raising the head on the tree.”⁴⁶² Singing and performing the final rite of the bear skull was a prerequisite to finally obtaining the bear from the forest spirit.

⁴⁵⁴ *Tämä kaikki on mieliksi metsän piijoille, kuten jalon vainajan kunnioitus ja hautalaulut ainakin* (SKVR XII2/6554).

⁴⁵⁵ See Section 6.1.

⁴⁵⁶ Tarkka 1998: 97.

⁴⁵⁷ Berking 1999: 34; Stark 2002: 21.

⁴⁵⁸ Sarmela 1969.

⁴⁵⁹ See Chapter 6.

⁴⁶⁰ See Section 7.6.

⁴⁶¹ See Chapter 8.

⁴⁶² SKVR VI2/4909: 9–10, VI2/4913, VI2/7406 α, VII5/3398.

Juho Eskelinen from Lapinniemi told that in the hunting group at least one real singer should be present, but the presence of two singers was recommended.⁴⁶³ High quality and the traditional features of the songs were fundamental for a successful ceremonial.⁴⁶⁴ The famous singer Arhippa Perttunen from Latvajärvi emphasized the traditionalism of *Bear Songs* as “songs obtained before, / charms taken [before].”⁴⁶⁵ Loasari Lesoñi from Venehjärvi sang: “Now I open the chest of words, / tune the case of verse, / across my knees, / to sing good [songs].”⁴⁶⁶ In some Viena Karelian kalevalaic songs, the image of the “chest of words” could refer to the abundance of songs contained in a mythical object, the *sampo*.⁴⁶⁷ In epic songs the old proto-sage Vipunen opened the “chest of words” when he shared his incantations with the hero Väinämöinen.⁴⁶⁸ To open a chest is to reveal something valuable and previously hidden. The chest was a shared reservoir of songs, incantations and mythical images that was comprehensible only if related to a certain tradition.⁴⁶⁹ The hunters stressed the wisdom of the “olden times”; unlike “the folk of today,” the “ancient folk” uttered appropriate songs upon leaving for the forest.⁴⁷⁰

3.11 The honorary names and circumlocutions for the bear

The *Bear Songs* were characterized by a particular language, with a strict ritual etiquette.⁴⁷¹ The bear did not like people uttering its real names (*karhu* or *kontio*) and it got angry if someone pronounced these; the result was a bear attack against humans or cattle. The bear’s name should be avoided especially from the “day of Matti” or “Midwinter,” the 24th of February, when the bear was supposed to turn around and sleep with its head towards the entrance of the den, and in the summer, during the

⁴⁶³ SKVR VI2/4926.

⁴⁶⁴ The bear and forest spirits should be both honored and entertained with songs. The Mansi also entertained the bear, the spirits and the human guest present at the bear ceremonial with a great amount of comical “sketches” interpreted by masked men (Kannisto 1907; Kannisto 1939a: 199).

⁴⁶⁵ *ennen saatu[ja] san[oja], / otetuita luottehia* (SKVR I4/1095 a: 8–9. Latvajärvi. Cajan n. 160. 1836: Arhippa Perttunen).

⁴⁶⁶ *Jo ma avoan sanasen arkun, / virsipä lippahan viritän, / poikki puolin polvillani, / Laulovakseni hyviä* (SKVR I4/1233: 8–11).

⁴⁶⁷ Tarkka 2013: 161; SKVR I4/935; I4/1160.

⁴⁶⁸ Tarkka 2013: 162; SKVR I4/935; I4/1160.

⁴⁶⁹ Tarkka 2013: 162.

⁴⁷⁰ SKVR I4/1094a; Tarkka 1998: 105.

⁴⁷¹ Tarkka 2013: 71.

grazing season. Only sorcerers dared to use its real name to summon it against their neighbor's cattle.⁴⁷²

By contrast, the bear was pleased if the hunters called him by circumlocutions, which in reality were honorary names. The hunters from Juukka told:

Until the final fight the hunter tried to keep a friendly agreement with the bear. It is evident in the use of several "cuddle-names"⁴⁷³ when the hunter spoke to the bear, and when he finally met it he even shook hands with it.⁴⁷⁴

The use of a multitude of honorary names involved the ritual strategy of gratification of the bear and the forest spirits. The most common honorary names for the bear were *otso*, *ohto*, *mesikämmen* ('honey-paw'), *jumalanvilja* or *metsän vilja* ('grain of God, grain of the forest'), *kulta* ('gold') or *hopea* ('silver'). The people from Uusikirkko reported that one of the favorite names for the bear was *kultane kuningas* ("golden king"): "He really likes that name and the forest guardian spirit was pleased when it was honored with that name."⁴⁷⁵ The circumlocution "golden king" was also used for Tapio, the master spirit of the forest, and the forest spirits seemed to be gratified if the people used it to pay homage to the bear.⁴⁷⁶

3.12 The roles of the *tietäjäs* and bear ceremonialism

Sarmela is right in stressing the importance of the impact of the *tietäjäs'* rituals on Finnish Karelian bear ceremonialism,⁴⁷⁷ but contrary to Sarmela's view, the influence of the *tietäjäs'* rites was not purely negative. All the *Bear Songs* were collected in a period in which the *tietäjäs* had great authority in folk rituals, and the incantations

⁴⁷² SKS KRA Martti Haavio 557. 1933. Ahponen's widow, 80-year-old woman. Korpiselkä.

⁴⁷³ "Terms of endearment".

⁴⁷⁴ *Aina viimeiseen otteluun asti koetti metsämies pysyä ystävällisessä sovussa karhun kanssa. Sen voi päättää niistä useista hyöäily-nimistä, joilla hän karhua puhutteli, vieläpä hän karhun tavattuansa sille kätteli ensimmäiseksi.* (SKS KRA Krohn 11787, Juukka; see Varonen 1891: 77).

⁴⁷⁵ *Sitä nimmee se oikei tykkäs ja se ol metsänhaltiaksi mielee ku sitä kunniotti sil nimel* (SKS KRA Paulaharju, S. 2118. Uusikirkko 1904).

⁴⁷⁶ Nirvi analyzed the etymology and meanings of the circumlocutions for bears and other predators. Ilomäki investigated the ritual use of circumlocutions and names for the bear, as well as the wolf and the fox in hunting songs, wedding songs, healing incantations and incantations to protect the bear, demonstrating that certain names were used in particular ritual situations. (Nirvi 1944, Ilomäki 1986).

⁴⁷⁷ See Section 2.5.

uttered by common people often followed the models or structure of the *tietäjäs'* incantations. However, Sarmela simplified the role of the *tietäjäs*, accentuating a sharp dualism between them and shamans. Sarmela stated that the main goal of the *tietäjä* was to protect the cattle from bears and the villagers from dangers or illnesses coming from all that was outside the village.⁴⁷⁸ Thus, the *tietäjä* seems to have only been a “defender” of the human community against a hostile environment.

By contrast, Anna-Leena Siikala and Lotte Tarkka stress the complexity of the *tietäjäs'* roles. Tarkka asserts that the *tietäjä* was a ritual specialist whose practice was based on direct communication with the otherworld.⁴⁷⁹ Siikala stated that the *tietäjä* inherited the shaman's role as a mediator between this world and other worlds, but the communication between these dimensions was based on incantations and rites. Even though the *tietäjä* did not perform a shamanistic journey to the otherworld,⁴⁸⁰ like the shaman, the *tietäjä* should have “a clear knowledge of the structure of the universe, its topography, its roads and passages, as well as the beings capable of good or evil which dwelled in it.”⁴⁸¹

In his analysis, Sarmela did not consider this a fundamental problem: many *tietäjäs*—like Antti Vartiainen and Juhana Kainulainen, for example—were bear hunters who knew *Bear Songs* and performed the bear ceremonial.⁴⁸² Their mythic knowledge about the other worlds was fundamental in a ritual focused on communication with the forest spirits and the bear. Antti Junttunen from Vuolijoki told that an old *tietäjä* should be present when the bear was shot in order to assure that all went in accordance with the rules⁴⁸³ and that the most important *tietäjä* of the village welcomed the killed bear in the house for the feast.⁴⁸⁴ In Ostrobothnia, the bear itself was considered a *tietäjä* able to enchant the hunters' rifles;⁴⁸⁵ the hunt thus became a magic battle between a *tietäjä*-bear and a *tietäjä*-hunter.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁷⁸ Sarmela 1991:229-230.

⁴⁷⁹ Tarkka 2013: 43.

⁴⁸⁰ Siikala 2002: 330.

⁴⁸¹ Siikala 2002: 330.

⁴⁸² Siikala 2016: 304–309.

⁴⁸³ *Karhunammunnassa kulki vanha tietäjä muiden kumppalina, jotta kaikki meni sääntöjen mukaan.* (SKVR XII2/6540a; Vuolijoki. Liljeblad, T. private collection. 1833. Antti Junttunen, 49-year-old man).

⁴⁸⁴ SKVR XII2/6540 α. Vuolijoki. Liljeblad, T. 1833.

⁴⁸⁵ SKS KRA Meriläinen I 16 b, Ostrobothnia cited in Varonen 1891: 83.

⁴⁸⁶ SKS KRA Meriläinen I 16 b, Ostrobothnia. cited in Varonen 1891: 83.

3.13 Unstable borders and personhoods

Sarmela stated that the key symbol of the *tietäjät*'s incantations was a magical iron fence, which he raised in defense of himself, ill persons, pastures, fields, the bridal couple or the people participating in a wedding. By raising this fence between the human and the surrounding environment, the border between the two worlds was made impassable.⁴⁸⁷ Sarmela asserted that this ritual symbolized the final separation between the human and the natural world.

In reality, the *tietäjät* erected the fence because the borders between the human world, the forest and the other worlds were fragile and thin. Even the borders between human bodies and the environment were unstable. Stark defines the human body as "open," since its boundaries were often vulnerable to the environment.⁴⁸⁸ The human body was seen as easily permeable: the dynamistic force of the forest⁴⁸⁹ could invade the human body, causing a supernatural illnesses called "forest *nenä*,"⁴⁹⁰ "forest *viha*"⁴⁹¹ or, more generally, "forest contagion."

The bear hunt was full of hazards. A bear's bite could cause the forest *vihä*.⁴⁹² Hunting without observing precise ritual norms provoked the forest *nenä*, which could also be considered the result of the agency of the angered forest.⁴⁹³ The forest *nenä* could also attack a person startled by a bear in the forest.⁴⁹⁴ To avoid illnesses, therefore, hunters were supposed to be fearless. The forest contagion could also be caused by a curse uttered by a hostile sorcerer or envious person.⁴⁹⁵ The expression "the forest is on the move"⁴⁹⁶ was used to describe a bear attack as well as forest contagion.⁴⁹⁷

Tarkka noticed that situations of impurity arose when the boundaries between the forest and village were crossed without rituals or the borders were blurred.⁴⁹⁸ Stark stresses that the boundaries between the forest and village were not solid but rather

⁴⁸⁷ Sarmela 1991: 230.

⁴⁸⁸ Stark 2006: 182.

⁴⁸⁹ *Metsän väki*.

⁴⁹⁰ *Metsän nenä*.

⁴⁹¹ *Metsän viha*.

⁴⁹² Stark 2006: 276.

⁴⁹³ Stark 2002: 49; Tarkka 2013: 377.

⁴⁹⁴ Stark 2006: 269.

⁴⁹⁵ Tarkka 2013: 378.

⁴⁹⁶ *Metsä liikkuu*.

⁴⁹⁷ Tarkka 1998: 97, 100.

⁴⁹⁸ Tarkka 2013: 331.

“gates,” which could be opened or closed. Thus, traffic between the two spheres could be facilitated or obstructed. The forest could be useful for the community, but only if contact was ritually managed.⁴⁹⁹

Tarkka notes that the hunters crossed several boundaries on their journey: the room, the house, the yard, neighbors’ houses, the village and the forest. The supernatural risk rose in proportion to the hunters’ distance from home.⁵⁰⁰

The problem of opening and closing shifting and permeable boundaries with the external environment exists in other hunting traditions. Hallowell assumed that in Ojibwa ontology humans and animals are analogically related as human and nonhuman persons, but the Ojibwas draw some differences between the two forms of personhood.⁵⁰¹ A fundamental problem was keeping a certain distance with animal persons entering the village after the hunt.

Fienup-Riordan stated that according to Yup’ik Eskimo seal hunters, both humans and animals are both characterized by personhood, but there is a clear distinction between human and nonhuman persons.⁵⁰² Wagner and Fienup-Riordan defined the human-animal relationship as a “deliberate controlled analogy,”⁵⁰³ which made possible a carefully regulated ritual interaction between the two communities. Yup’ik ritual activities focused on the construction of boundaries and passages to circumscribe the flow of different persons, actions and forces within an otherwise undifferentiated world.⁵⁰⁴ Interactions between human and animal persons were supposed to follow innumerable rules to create boundaries, but at the same time enable ceremonial exchanges between the human and animal worlds.⁵⁰⁵

In the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonial, these questions were extremely important. In the bear feast the killed bear was treated as an honored person and guest of honor: the hunter stressed the humanlike features of the bear in order to accomplish a successful ritual exchange. The introduction of the killed bear into the village was even presented as the bear’s wedding, representing a partial unification of the forest with the human community.⁵⁰⁶ However, the people never forgot the potential supernatural dangerousness of the entrance of the bear into the village. The arrival of the killed bear

⁴⁹⁹ Stark 2002: 192.

⁵⁰⁰ Tarkka 2017: 374.

⁵⁰¹ Hallowell 1960; Fienup-Riordan 1994: 48.

⁵⁰² Fienup-Riordan 1994: 48.

⁵⁰³ Fienup-Riordan 1994: 48; Wagner 1977: 361.

⁵⁰⁴ Fienup-Riordan 1994: 49.

⁵⁰⁵ Fienup-Riordan 1994: 48–51.

⁵⁰⁶ Tarkka 2013: 348.

in the village also resembled its attack on cattle, so the hunters encouraged young women to protect those livestock.⁵⁰⁷

Bringing home killed game animals, and in particular the powerful bear, could provoke a forest contagion. Eating bear meat without proper rituals also caused a contagion.⁵⁰⁸ The marriage and period of unification of the bear with the village was brief; just after the end of the feast, the skull and soul of the bear were supposed to return to their mythic homeland.⁵⁰⁹

3.14 Mimesis and the risks of dissolution of the self in the forest

Rane Willerslev states that Yukaghir hunters build a concept of animal personhood based on “dissimilar similarity.”⁵¹⁰ According to Pedersen, there is not complete identification between the hunters and animals, but only partial ones: “analogous identifications.”⁵¹¹ Willerslev notes that Yukaghir hunting rituals are often based on mimetic imitation: the hunter sensually imitates the physical aspects and movements of elk to capture them. The hunter’s mimesis tends towards similarity, but it depends on recognizing the existence of meaningful differences between animals and humans.⁵¹² If the mimesis becomes complete, the imitator loses himself in what he imitates and the result is a dangerous metamorphosis. The life of the hunter demands deep reflexivity as a form of defense against the dissolution of the self in the woodland or animal world.⁵¹³ An element of self-awareness is crucial for protecting oneself against being carried away by the entities and forces present in the forest.⁵¹⁴

Several mimetic strategies were present in the *Bear Songs*. The hunters tried to please the forest spirits by wooing, seducing and marrying them. Doing so, they described sexual intercourse with female forest spirits as a type of sensual bodily fusion with the forest.⁵¹⁵ However, the hunter did not lose his human identity, because the seductive

⁵⁰⁷ Tarkka 2013: 356, 354; See Section 8.3.

⁵⁰⁸ See Section 8.14.

⁵⁰⁹ See Chapter 9 and Sections 9.1, 9.2.

⁵¹⁰ Willerslev 2007: 25.

⁵¹¹ Pedersen 2001: 24.

⁵¹² Willerslev 2007: 11, 107.

⁵¹³ Willerslev 2007: 25.

⁵¹⁴ Willerslev 2007: 95.

⁵¹⁵ Tarkka 1998: 107–108; see Section 6.5.

lines were followed by songs in which the hunter asked the seduced forest spirit to guide him to the den.⁵¹⁶

The risk and the fear of the human self being dissolved in the forest were present in the Finno-Karelian hunting tradition. Pervasion of the forest force could create a dangerous blending of one's body with the otherness, which caused a supernatural disease.⁵¹⁷ Another form of dissolution was complete metamorphosis into a bear. In folk belief, bewitched persons, sorcerers and individuals who chose to live in isolation in the wilderness could transform themselves into a bear, but it was difficult to assume human form again.⁵¹⁸

A particularly dangerous situation was "forest cover": a person walking in the forest could be seized and trapped in an alternate dimension, unable to communicate with other people.⁵¹⁹ The forest was able to capture herders, women, children, berry pickers and cows.⁵²⁰ The people engaged in negotiations and performed more coercive rituals to persuade the forest spirits to release their victims.⁵²¹ Just as in the case of the attack of a bewitched bear, the forest cover could be caused by the aggressive magic of envious neighbors.⁵²²

Expert hunters were said to be able to avoid the forest cover,⁵²³ but this immunity was probably gained through incantations and offerings. Bear hunters often asked the forest spirits to guide them towards their prey⁵²⁴ or to mark trees and rocks with recognizable signs in order to help them find game.⁵²⁵ Many *Bear Songs* contain references to the hunters' efforts to orient themselves in an otherworldly forest filled with mythic features.⁵²⁶ The bear hunters sang by presenting themselves as typical Finno-Karelian epic heroes, traveling into the otherworlds (Pohjola, Tuonela) to obtain a prize, a powerful incantation, a bride or a mythic object producing wealth and

⁵¹⁶ See Section 6.11.

⁵¹⁷ Tarkka 1998: 374.

⁵¹⁸ See Section 3.8.

⁵¹⁹ Tarkka 2013: 374.

⁵²⁰ Tarkka 2013: 374.

⁵²¹ Tarkka 2013: 374–373.

⁵²² Tarkka 2013: 376.

⁵²³ Tarkka 2013: 374.

⁵²⁴ Ilomäki 2014: 129; SKVR I4/1196.

⁵²⁵ Ilomäki 2014: 125; SKVR VII5/3235.

⁵²⁶ Ilomäki 2014: 128.

knowledge (the *sampo*).⁵²⁷ In the *Bear Songs*, the objective, the prize or the “bride” of the “dangerous journey” was the bear.

The hunters tried to avoid dissolution of their self in the forest by means of several strategies. They continuously communicated with forest spirits and the bear, making their presence acceptable and agreeable. However, they also reinforced their body and soul, making it “harder” or less penetrable by the magical dangers caused by a bear bite, forest contagion or the curses of envious neighbors. This was done by increasing the hunters’ *luonto*, a force present in the human body and mind; not only did this strengthen the body, but it also had several effects on its surroundings.⁵²⁸ People with weak *luonto* were easily infected by forest forces. The concept of the “hardened” *luonto* was also connected to a strong will, a necessary quality to gain magical control of the external world.⁵²⁹ The *tietäjäs* increased their *luonto* to protect themselves or other people from diseases and supernatural menaces, and the hunters accordingly adapted a precise set of *tietäjä* rituals to the context of their hunting rituals.⁵³⁰ A hunter with strong *luonto* could easily manipulate dynamistic forces, such as “iron force” and “fire forces,” against the forest force.⁵³¹

To conclude the reflections of this chapter, it could be argued that bear ceremonialism was much more than a ritual to ensure the regeneration of the killed bear, even if this could be regarded as one of the main goals of the whole ceremonial. It was a collective ritual to deal with a complex forest imaginary, notions of society and collectivity, the gendered division of labor, conceptions of the body and soul, and a system of exchanges and relations between humans and the forest world.⁵³²

⁵²⁷ Tarkka 2013: 337.

⁵²⁸ Stark 2006: 262; see Section 4.6.

⁵²⁹ Stark 2006: 263, 289; see Sections 4.6, 4.7, 4.8.

⁵³⁰ See Siikala 2002: 100–107.

⁵³¹ Stark 2006: 265; see Sections 4.4, 4.6.

⁵³² See Tarkka 2013: 327.

Chapter 4

In the Forest and in the Village: Preparative and Protective Rituals

4.1 Previous scholarship on preparatory rituals

The rituals and incantations performed before the bear hunt have been almost ignored by Finnish scholars. Krohn and Sarmela wrote few lines about this topic.⁵³³ One possible explanation for the lack of interest about the preparatory rituals is that the majority of the sources on these rituals were informants' reports about magic rites, not songs or incantations, which were quite few in number and short in length. However, Kaarle Krohn collected a lot of information in the field about preparatory rituals. Varonen also dedicated particular attention to the preparatory rituals. He collected and published interesting ethnographic information, but he furnished very cursory scholarly analyses of the materials.⁵³⁴

These rites cannot be ignored, as they were of fundamental importance for the hunters who believed that the whole hunt would be unsuccessful if they were not performed. Indeed, the protective rituals give an idea of the relevance of the *tietäjä*'s rites in the bear ceremonials, the conceptions of the hunter's self and body, and the structural similarities between the protective rituals done for weddings and the bear hunt.⁵³⁵

4.2 Premonitory dreams

In many traditions around the world, people believed that premonitory dreams favored luck in hunting. The same was also true in Finland. For example, if a hunter of Pihtipudas attained the friendship and favor of the forest spirits, a spirit called Metsänkakkainen appeared in his dreams and showed him where the prey was.⁵³⁶

⁵³³ Krohn [1915] 2008: 147; Sarmela 1991: 210–211.

⁵³⁴ Varonen 1891.

⁵³⁵ See Sections 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, 10.1, 10.2.

⁵³⁶ *Jos metsästäjä oli saavuttanut Metsänhaltijan ystävyuden ja suosion, niin ilmestyi Metsänkakkainen unessa ja näytti, missä saalista on. Sinne piti mennä sanomatta kellekään mitään, niin sen sai.* (SKS)

However, the name or identity of the spirit of the premonitory dream varied from one village to the next. In Pihtipudas, it was believed that if a hunter searched for a bear without any luck, he could put already cooked meat into a cauldron and set it on top of an anthill, pretending to boil it without fire. After that, the meat was eaten and the hunter would see the bear in his dreams. The Unikeko, a particular spirit of dreams, would bring him to the place of the bear's den.⁵³⁷ The anthill was considered a possible living place of the forest spirits, and a hunter usually put his offerings on top of it.⁵³⁸ According to Kaarle Krohn, the spirit responsible for sending such dreams was that very forest spirit.⁵³⁹

In Kinnula, if a hunter took moss from a "table of Tapio"⁵⁴⁰ and put it on his head, he was supposed to see in his dreams the location of his prey.⁵⁴¹ The "table" or "palm of Tapio"⁵⁴² was a young spruce with an unusual shape, having a very flat top whose branches sloped downwards, so that it resembled a natural desk. The food or silver offerings for Tapio⁵⁴³ were generally put on the top of it.⁵⁴⁴ The moss growing on the top of the "table" was regarded as powerful, and it was used in different rituals.⁵⁴⁵ The deceased, too, could send a "bear dream."⁵⁴⁶ To obtain one, the hunter should take a skull from a church's graveyard and sleep with it, putting it behind him.⁵⁴⁷

Premonitory dreams were particularly relevant in North American bear ceremonials: however, their rituals were more elaborate than the Finno-Karelian ones. Eastern Cree hunters and their wives offered a bear skull some tobacco and asked it to

KRA Gummerus ja Ranni 129. A 60-year-old man from Pihtipudas; cited in Varonen 1891: 1).

⁵³⁷ *Karhua kun on hakenut, eikä löydetty, niin liha lyöty pataan ja viety kusiais-pesän päälle kiehumaan, ei ollut valkeata, mutta siinä keitetty niin kuin ainakin. Siitä sitte syöty padasta niin kuin keitettyä lihaa, ennestään kypsytetty lihaa ollut. Sitte ne ovat nähneet karhun unissaan ja löytäneet sen unissaan ja menneet suoran sen luo, Unikeko vei.* (SKS KRA Krohn 15550. Pihtipudas, cr. in Varonen 1891: 69).

⁵³⁸ See SKS KRA KROHN 12554. Kaavi. Cited in Varonen 1891: 2.

⁵³⁹ *Metsänhaltia*, see Krohn [1915] 2008: 146.

⁵⁴⁰ *Tapion pöytä*, see Sections 4.4, 6.1.

⁵⁴¹ SKS KRA Otto Harju 3697. 1946. Kinnula. Toivo Turpeiden, born in 1889.

⁵⁴² *Tapion kämmen*.

⁵⁴³ The master spirit of the forest.

⁵⁴⁴ SKS KRA Ollikainen 46. Sotkamo. 25-year-old man. Cited in Varonen 1891: 3. See Section 6.1.

⁵⁴⁵ Krohn [1915] 2008: 108.

⁵⁴⁶ *Karhu-unta*.

⁵⁴⁷ Krohn [1915] 2008: 146.

send a dream about its “relatives.”⁵⁴⁸ As an alternative, they obtained a “bear dream” by putting bear grease on their head and a bear’s patella where they laid their heads when they slept.⁵⁴⁹

The Finno-Karelian hunter was also supposed to be able to interpret premonitory signs in normal dreams: seeing a married woman sleeping in a bed with one or two children meant that he would find a bear den with cubs.⁵⁵⁰ This belief has some counterparts in North America. Among the Mistassini Cree, the appearance of any kind of unknown woman in dreams referred to game animals in general.⁵⁵¹ The James Bay Cree informant Charlie Kanatiwat told how he once dreamed of an old woman with two children and a month later killed a mother bear.⁵⁵² Among the Mistassini Cree, dreams of small animals referred to bears and large game animals.⁵⁵³

Conversely, in Ladoga Karelia seeing forest predators in dreams was a premonition of an upcoming wedding. In Sortavala, the people believed that if a young and unmarried woman saw wolves, bears and angry dogs in her dreams, grooms or suitors would soon knock at her door.⁵⁵⁴ Wedding symbolism accompanied almost all the phases of the bear ceremonial.⁵⁵⁵

4.3 Rituals related to old bear dens

The bear ceremonial was traditionally performed in the wintertime, when the bear was in hibernation, but some rituals were performed months before. In the summer, hunters from Juukka built a “bear figure”⁵⁵⁶ with flour made from stolen and ritually treated grain and rye kernels, and afterwards they brought it into an old bear den. Doing that, they believed that the bear would return to the den for its hibernation and it would be possible to kill it there.⁵⁵⁷ The use of cereals to make the “bear figure” was

⁵⁴⁸ Rockwell 1991: 25.

⁵⁴⁹ Rockwell 1991: 29.

⁵⁵⁰ SKS KRA Gummerus and Ranni 131. 30-year-old man. Pihtipudas; cited in Varonen 1891: 74.

⁵⁵¹ Tanner 1979: 125.

⁵⁵² Tanner 1979: 125.

⁵⁵³ Tanner 1979: 125.

⁵⁵⁴ *Sudet ja karhut ja vihaiset koirat tietäisivät sulhasia unessa* (Aalto, Sanni. KRK 140: 153. Sortavala).

⁵⁵⁵ See Sections 4.4, 4.7, 4.8, 6.5, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 10.2.

⁵⁵⁶ Probably it was bread shaped as a bear.

⁵⁵⁷ *Kun vanhaan aikaan metsämiehet karhuja pyysivät, niin pappilan ja herrastalon pellosta piti vehnäntähkiä vetää läpi aidan koukulla; samoin rukiin-tähkiä. Niistä hierottiin jyoät ja jauhettiin ja*

meaningful, as bears and other forest animals were called “grain of the forest”⁵⁵⁸ and Tapio⁵⁵⁹ was supposed to own a “granary”⁵⁶⁰ full of animals.⁵⁶¹ Here we can see how agriculture deeply influenced hunting traditions. The rite clearly followed the logic of sympathetic magic: the real bear was supposed to act as its “figure.”

Irini Paramoona from Uuksujärvi referred to another ritual related to the den: hunters circled the den with an axe and put some bear fat into the embers,⁵⁶² uttering: “As these embers smolder, / so his heart will burn.”⁵⁶³

As another ritual involving sympathetic magic, burning bear fat (a part of the bear) ensured the future kill of a bruin. Irini Paramoona uttered similar lines in an incantation to prevent a cow that had been purchased from missing its old barn.⁵⁶⁴ The same motif appears in love spells⁵⁶⁵ to make a boy’s mind start “burning” for a girl.⁵⁶⁶ The connection between the hunt and courting was a recurring theme in the *Bear Songs*, sexual incantations and wedding songs.⁵⁶⁷

Circling the den with a metal blade was one way to attain magical power over it and, in particular, its ursine inhabitant. The performance of the “magic circle” was one of the most common Finnish and Karelian rituals. In bear ceremonialism, the “magic circle” appeared in relation to “bear circling” and in many protective rituals and incantations.⁵⁶⁸

tehtiin sitte sen karhun kuva ja se viettiin siihen vanhaan karhun-pesään, niin se siihen sitte tuli talveksi makamaan ja siitä tapettiin. (SKS KRA Krohn 11868 a. 58-year-old man. Juukka. cited in Varonen 1891: 74).

⁵⁵⁸ *Metsänvilja.*

⁵⁵⁹ The forest master spirit.

⁵⁶⁰ *Tapion aitta.*

⁵⁶¹ See Section 6.13.

⁵⁶² *Tietohuolla kierretään karhun pesä kesällä – kirvehen kanssa. Rasvat panna hiilostaan, kun kierretään, teihele ne rasvat saa (ta hiiloksel vähän verran)* (SKVR VII5/3373).

⁵⁶³ *Kuin tämä hiillos kytö, / siin hänen sydämmensä kydekkäh* (SKVR VII5/3373. Krohn K. 5531. 1884. Uuksujärvi (Suistamo); cited in Varonen 1891: 74).

⁵⁶⁴ SKVR VII5/4015.

⁵⁶⁵ *Lemmenloitsut* or *lemmennosto*. The same informant, Irini Pamoona, uttered the same lines for a love spell; see SKVR VII5/4015.

⁵⁶⁶ See, for example, SKVR XIII3/9965.

⁵⁶⁷ See Sections 6.6, 10.2.

⁵⁶⁸ See Sections 4.4, 4.7.

4.4 The bear's circling in autumn

In autumn, before the proper winter hunt, a ritual called the "bear's circling"⁵⁶⁹ was organized. After the first autumnal snow, the bear moved around the forest and the hunters could easily find its tracks in the snow. Later in autumn, when there was more snow, the bear started to spend more time in its den. At this point, the hunters circled the bear; when they discovered the location of the den, they circumambulated it in the forest for a diameter of a verst.⁵⁷⁰ They did this to control if the bear was staying there for the whole period of hibernation or if it was still walking around. It was necessary to control if the bear remained in the circle: after every snowfall the hunters turned around the den again, but doing a smaller circle around it. Diminishing the circles, the hunters should avoid to be noticed by the bear: if it was still wandering around, it could flee from the circle.⁵⁷¹

Furthermore, whoever found the den or living place of game animals had the right of possession over the prey, but he had to inform the other villagers. In Salmi, the discoverer of the den also maintained the right of possession over the bear when it fled from the den, but only if he chased the bruin. In Uhtua and Voijärvi, if another hunter killed the bear on the second or third day after it fled from the den, the prey was divided between the killer and the discoverer of the den.⁵⁷²

The circling had practical goals, but it included rituals and incantations to block the animal in its den and keep it inside the circle. According to Hästesko, circling someone or something had a binding function:⁵⁷³ if someone turned around something he gained control over it. The magic circle could protect someone from external dangers or stop something coming from inside the circle. Generally the bear's circling had an effect only if the performer had strong *luonto* force⁵⁷⁴ and was able to manipulate the *väki* force present in certain powerful objects. For example, to stop a fire it was necessary to circle it with a thunderstone, an object considered to be extremely powerful which was used in several rituals.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁶⁹ *Karhun kierronta.*

⁵⁷⁰ An old Russian unit of distance (*virsta* in Finnish). One verst is 1.0668 kilometer.

⁵⁷¹ Varonen 1891: 69.

⁵⁷² Virtanen E. A. 1949: 5–6. Among the Ob-Ugrians, the discoverer of the den obtained the bear fur.

⁵⁷³ Hästesko 1918: 148.

⁵⁷⁴ Personal force; see Section 4.6.

⁵⁷⁵ Hästesko 1918: 39.

Samppa Riikko from Tuhkala precisely described the rites and incantations performed during the “bear’s circling”:

When you start to circle the bear, you take with you a burr from a living tree and a sword used in war. When you reach the footprints, you turn upside down⁵⁷⁶ three of them and sing the *Birth of the Bear*.⁵⁷⁷ Then you draw with the point of the sword three pentacles on the footprints.⁵⁷⁸ They should be drawn without raising the point of the sword from the ground before the pentacle is complete. Then you light a fire in the burr and start circling with the burning burr.⁵⁷⁹

The burning burr had both a protective and an aggressive function: the bear and the forest spirit feared the “fire’s force.”⁵⁸⁰ The “fire’s force” was considered stronger and opposed to the “forest’s force,”⁵⁸¹ probably for the obvious reason that fire is able to burn wood. Fire was also considered the youngest and most powerful of the elemental forces.⁵⁸²

More generally, fire was considered particularly sacred because of its mythic heavenly origins and its connection with thunder.⁵⁸³ Like “iron’s force”, the “fire’s force” was protective, and it was used to drive away every kind of evil power: diseases, evil spirits and sorcerers.⁵⁸⁴ A burning burr was particularly effective against forest

⁵⁷⁶ Here the meaning of the sentence could also be “turn backward” the footprint in the opposite direction (making the bear walk back towards the hunters).

⁵⁷⁷ On the *Birth of the Bear*, see Chapter 5.

⁵⁷⁸ The tree footprints previously turned upside-down.

⁵⁷⁹ *Karhua kuin lähetään kiertämään, otetaan mukaan elävän puun pakkulata ja vanha, sotassa ollut miekka. Kuin päästään jälille, niin käännetään nurin kolme jälkeä, luvetaan karhun synty. Sittä sillä miekan kärellä piirretään jälille kolme viisi kantaa. Ne pitää niin piirtää, ettei nosta miekan kärkeä maasta, ennenkuin on aina viisikanta valmis. Sittä sytytetään tuli siihen pakkulaan ja sen palavan pakkulan kanssa lähetään kiertämään* (SKVR I4/1198. Tuhkala (Pistojärvi). Meriläinen n. 90. 1888. Samppa Riiko).

⁵⁸⁰ *Tulen väki*.

⁵⁸¹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 93.

⁵⁸² Stark 2006: 358; SKS KRA Paulaharju 18294, Suomussalmi 1915.

⁵⁸³ Hästesko 1918: 32–33.

⁵⁸⁴ Hästesko 1918: 33.

spirits: when a cow or animal fell under the power of the “forest cover,”⁵⁸⁵ it could be recovered by leaving a burning burr on a forest track.⁵⁸⁶

A sword used in war was considered particularly powerful because it contained both the “force of death”⁵⁸⁷ and the “force of iron.”⁵⁸⁸ It was also used in the protective rituals performed before leaving for the hunt.⁵⁸⁹ As an alternative for the sword, Viena Karelian hunters could circle the den with other artifacts made in a forge, because the “force of the forge”⁵⁹⁰ was considered to be stronger than the “force of the forest.”⁵⁹¹

The pentacle was common in Finno-Karelian folk magic rituals, as it could “close a space” or “block something or someone”: it had a strong protective and binding power.⁵⁹² It gave hunters additional magic power to control the footprint of the bear (blocking its capacity to go far away), ensuring that it remained on the spot.⁵⁹³

Rites dealing with the bear’s tracks were common during the bear’s circling. Some of these went into meticulous detail. Mikko Vasilius from Katoslampi told that the three pentacles should be drawn on the bear’s tracks with a branch from a young “spruce of Tapio.”⁵⁹⁴ Three footprints should be turned backwards and fastened with an alder nail. Finally a branch from the “spruce of Tapio” was inserted into the last of the tree footprints.⁵⁹⁵

Hunters from Reisjärvi (Kivijärvi) made a cross of alder twigs on the third track.⁵⁹⁶ The alder tree was considered to be powerful and a good protection against the bear’s force; it was also used to drive away the “contagious force” present in bear meat.⁵⁹⁷ However, all of these complicated procedures were related to magic manipulation of

⁵⁸⁵ *Metsän peitto* described a supernatural state in which cows were lost in the forest and therefore invisible. See Section 3.14.

⁵⁸⁶ Krohn [1915] 2008: 93; Hästesko 1918: 33.

⁵⁸⁷ *Kalman väki*.

⁵⁸⁸ *Raudan väki*.

⁵⁸⁹ SKVR I4/1195; see Sections 4.6, 4.7.

⁵⁹⁰ *Pajan väki*.

⁵⁹¹ *Tulen väki*. See SKVR I4/1197.

⁵⁹² On the use of pentacles in bear ceremonialism, see Sections 4.5, 7.1, 7.4.

⁵⁹³ See Chapter 5.

⁵⁹⁴ For the “table of Tapio,” see Sections 4.2, 6.1.

⁵⁹⁵ SKVR I4/1197. Katoslampi. Meriläinen n. 76. 1888.

⁵⁹⁶ *Karhua kun etsivät, niin käänsvät kolme askelta takaisin päin ja leppäristin tekivät sitte sen kolmannen askeleen päälle* (Krohn 3444 b. Informant: 68-year-old man. Reisjärvi I. (Kivijärvi); cited in Varonen 1891: 215).

⁵⁹⁷ See Section 8.14.

the footprints: by “blocking” the tracks—making pentacles or an alder cross, or fixing an alder nail—the hunter prevented the bear from fleeing from the den or the “circle.”

Samppa Riiko sang an incantation related to the rituals to fix the bear in its den:

Languish, *rieska*⁵⁹⁸ mouth,
loaf, milk mouth
in the pine room,
inside the oaken⁵⁹⁹ cattle yard,
around the coniferous castle,⁶⁰⁰
at the foot of a handsome spruce,
beside the daughters of the Nature,⁶⁰¹
in the yard of the forest maids!⁶⁰²

The addressee of this incantation was the bear, called by the rare circumlocution of “milk mouth,”⁶⁰³ which in lullabies indicated an infant.⁶⁰⁴ The singer wanted the bear to fall asleep in its winter hibernation, just as a mother desires to put her infant to sleep. The hunter described the den as a comfortable pine room⁶⁰⁵ inhabited by young—and probably beautiful—female forest spirits, which were supposed to feed the bear during hibernation.⁶⁰⁶ Samppa Rikko emphasized that the bear was in a lovely and safe place. Around it was a robust oaken cattle yard, an image that highlighted how the bear was considered to be the cattle of the forest spirits. The image could also be connected with the “closing” magic of the “bear’s circling.”⁶⁰⁷ Nearby the den was a “coniferous castle” or fortified “city”: a rich, populated and fabulous place, compared to cottages and cabins of the hunters’ village. The concept emphasized the majesty of

⁵⁹⁸ *Rieska* could mean ‘fresh milk’ or ‘unleavened bread.’

⁵⁹⁹ The adjective ‘oaken’ (*tamminen*) in the songs is sometimes connected with the forest master Tapio (*tamminen Tapio*).

⁶⁰⁰ *Linna* could mean “castle” or a “[fortified] city”: see Section 3.6.

⁶⁰¹ *Luonto* in this peculiar case could be translated as ‘Nature.’

⁶⁰² *Rieskasuu riuvottele, / maitosuu mallottele, / honkaisessa huonehessa, / tammisessa tanhuassa, / havulinna liepehellä, / kenkällä komean kuusen, / luona Luonnon-tyttären, / metsänpiikojen piholla!* (SKVR I4/1198. Tuhkala. Meriläinen II n. 90.1888. Samppa Riiko); cited in Varonen 1891: 70–71.

⁶⁰³ *Maitosuu*.

⁶⁰⁴ SKVR VI1/1191: 2; XIII2/5173: 5.

⁶⁰⁵ See Section 7.2.

⁶⁰⁶ See Sections 3.7, 7.1.

⁶⁰⁷ Krohn [1915] 2008: 110.

the forest masters and spirits. References to a forest castle or city⁶⁰⁸ are present in some *Births of the Bear*,⁶⁰⁹ while in hunting incantations there often appeared the “castle” or “city of Tapio,”⁶¹⁰ which could be the dwelling place of the master of the forest and a circumlocution for the “granary of Tapio,”⁶¹¹ a spot that was full of “grain of the forest”⁶¹² (game animals).⁶¹³ The bear’s den was also called “castle” or “city” in certain incantations.

The den was almost always described as a kind of “house” for the bear, but its representation was not always so positive: when the hunters woke up the bear from its hibernation before the kill, their song could describe the den as a very uncomfortable place.⁶¹⁴ The hunter could thus manipulate the positivity or negativity of the den in order to fulfill his goal: the den was lovely when the bear should stay in it, but “rotting” when the bear was supposed to leave it.

The set of rituals described by Samppa Riiko did not end with the incantation. When making the perimeter was done, the hunter drew a cross on the ground with the sword and then left the place with his eyes shut, so that other hunters would not be able to find the bear and other animals or beings living in the forest⁶¹⁵ would not disturb it.⁶¹⁶ The ritual seems to have included an act of sympathetic magic: by closing his own eyes, the hunter also magically closed those of other hunters and animals.

Secrecy was an important feature of the “bear’s circling,” which was supposed to remain unseen by the forest spirit. In Kiimasjärvi (Kontokki), when the hunters circled the den, the circle should not be completely “closed”; coming back to the area of their starting point, the hunters were not supposed to see the spot where they began to make the circle. If the hunter reached or saw the starting point, the forest spirit noticed him and requested the bear to flee from the circle. If the forest spirit did not recognize the activity of the hunters, the bear would remain in its den until the day when it was killed, when the forest spirit gave the bear a blood cup instead of the normal cup of honey to feed it.⁶¹⁷ By means of this ritual, the hunters deceived both the bear and the

⁶⁰⁸ *Metsän linna*, see Section 3.6.

⁶⁰⁹ SKVR I4/1355: 13; SKVR I4/1407: 15; for the *Birth of the Bear*, see Chapter 5.

⁶¹⁰ *Tapion linna*.

⁶¹¹ *Tapion aitta*.

⁶¹² *Metsänvilja*.

⁶¹³ Krohn [1915] 2008: 107.

⁶¹⁴ See Sections 7.2, 10.2.

⁶¹⁵ *Metsä-elävät*.

⁶¹⁶ SKVR I4/1198; SKS KRA Meriläinen II 90 a; see Varonen 1891: 70–71.

⁶¹⁷ SKVR I4/1198; SKS KRA Meriläinen II 632. Kiimasjärvi (Kontokki).

forest spirit. They should be very cautious, because the forest spirit would get upset if it understood that it was being cheated.⁶¹⁸

The hunters of Katoslampi (Pistojärvi) used another deceptive strategy: they circumambulated the den with three black woodpecker heads. The hunters believed this would keep the bear from leaving, as illustrated by the following informant's explanation :

The black woodpecker is the bear's pet and it belongs to the same guardian spirit as the bear, so the bear believes itself to be safe when the black woodpecker circles around it. The black woodpecker belongs to the human family, just like the bear.⁶¹⁹

In Rautavaara, the hunters circled the den three times, but the third time not completely, and a small offering of poured silver was made in front of the "gate."⁶²⁰ Repeating the act three times assured the efficiency of the rite. In this case, the offering of silver, performed also before or during the bear hunt, marked a direct exchange with the forest spirit: the hunters did not cheat, but instead they made a deal with it.⁶²¹

In Pihtipudas, the hunters circled the den three times: two times clockwise and the third time counterclockwise.⁶²² A similar rite was performed in rituals to protect the cattle from bears during the grazing season: here the cattle's mistress walked around the cows two times clockwise and the third time counterclockwise with an axe or sickle in her hand.⁶²³

Maxima Borizov from Suojärvi told that the hunters circled the den three times and uttered the following incantation:

I put here a fence
with stakes of iron,
from poles of steel.

⁶¹⁸ SKVR I4/1198; SKS KRA Meriläinen II 632. Kiimasjärvi (Kontokki).

⁶¹⁹ *Palokärki on karhun lemmikki ja saman haltiaan joukkoon kuuluva kuin karhukin, niin karhu tietää olevansa turvassa, kuin on palokärki kiertänyt. Palokärki on ihmisen sukua samoin kuin karhu* (SKS KRA Meriläinen II 1134. Katoslampi (Pistojärvi). 68-year-old man; see Varonen 1891: 70).

⁶²⁰ The gate was probably the space left open during in making of the circle (SKS KRA Krohn 10261: 40-year-old man. Rautavaara; see Varonen 1891: 214–215).

⁶²¹ On offerings, see Section 6.1.

⁶²² SKS KRA Krohn 15984 d. 66-year-old man. Pihtipudas; see Varonen 1891: 71.

⁶²³ SKVR I4/1383; I4/1415.

[I put] Saint Kusmoi Jimjana
to watch and guard
this circle of mine.⁶²⁴

The fence of steel or iron is a *leitmotif* of protective incantations.⁶²⁵ In this case, the fence closed the bear into the circle and a saint assumed the guardian role of the forest spirit. The incantations to convince or force the bear to stay in the “circle” were as varied as the magical procedures. Matti Kipeläinen asked the bear, which was maybe still moving around its den, to come into his “circle” or hunting ground:

Old lady of the forest, beautiful fur,⁶²⁶
that Tapio of the forest itself⁶²⁷
come as red fire,
roll as a whirl of water,
my ring of gold,⁶²⁸
into my open fishing water⁶²⁹!⁶³⁰

Kipeläinen was very respectful and called the bear Tapio, the name of the master spirit of the forest. Juhana Tuovinen from Rautavaara uttered a more authoritative incantation, shouting: “I make the forest⁶³¹ lay down, / I exhaust [it] under the sleep.”⁶³² While saying this, the hunter should push into the ground the beak of a black-throated loon⁶³³ as an act of sympathetic magic: the bear was supposed to fall asleep in its den when the beak sank into the soil.

⁶²⁴ *Mie panen tähän ai'an, / rautasilla seipähillä, / teräksisistä ai'aksista./Pyhä Kusmoi Jimjana, / katsomaan ja vartiomaan, / tätä minun kierrostani.*⁶²⁴ (SKVR VII5/3364. Suojärvi. Krohn n. 6143 a. 1884. Kaitajärvi. Maxima Borizov, brother of Onton Borizov; see Varonen 1891: 214).

⁶²⁵ SKVR I4/1383; I4/1415; see Sections 4.7, 4.8.

⁶²⁶ The bear.

⁶²⁷ The bear.

⁶²⁸ The bear.

⁶²⁹ Hunting ground and the “circling.”

⁶³⁰ *Metsän eukko, kaunis karoa, / tuo itse metsän Tapio, / tule kun tuli punainen, viere kun vesikeränen, / minun kulta-sormukseni, / avoimen apajaani!* (SKVR XII2/6472. Sotkamo. Ollilainen, P. 14. 1888. Matti Kipeläinen, 51 years old, born in Kuhmoniemi).

⁶³¹ The bear.

⁶³² *Maata minä metän painan, / alle unen uuvutan* (SKVR VII5/3365. Rautavaara. Krohn n. 10613. 1885. Puumala. Juhana Tuovinen).

⁶³³ *Gavia artica*, *kuikka* in Finnish.

Samuli Hentiläinen from Tuusuniemi asked the bear to remain in its den until the hunter came back:

Do not move from your castle,
from your cabin, honey-paw
before we are coming to get [you]
with the consent of young men.⁶³⁴

Here the use of the terms “castle” or “fortified city”⁶³⁵ for the den is meaningful: in hunting incantations, the forest or the hunting ground could be called “the castle” or “city” of Tapio.⁶³⁶ By defining the bear den as a castle or city, the status of the bear was elevated to that of the higher forest master. Additionally, a castle—being encircled by walls—is a “closed” and protected space; feeling itself to be safe in such a fortification, the bear would not flee from it.

4.5 Magic empowerment of weapons and dogs

Other magic preparations involved the empowering of weapons and dogs. Some rituals were performed long before the hunt, others just before leaving for the forest. Spears were supposed to be magically empowered when forged by the smith.⁶³⁷ In Juukka, a spear was believed to be “effective”⁶³⁸ only if the smith sharpened its blade by moving his hand from the top to the base.⁶³⁹ This movement reinforced the capacity of the blade to pierce the meat of the bear. In Heinävesi, the hunters empowered their spears just before the hunt, sticking them into an anthill, circumambulating them in a clockwise direction, and uttering:

Take steel, your enchantment,
suck the venoms of the ants,
strong, angry

⁶³⁴ *Eläpä liikul linnastaś, meškämmem majastaś, / ennenkun tullaan noutamaan, / nuortem miesten suosiolla* (SKVR VI2/4887. Tuusniemi. Manninen, I. n. 297. 1914. Kiukoonniemi. Samuli Hentiläinen).

⁶³⁵ *Linna*.

⁶³⁶ *Tapion linna*, as in SKVR I4/1187: 3; see Section 3.6.

⁶³⁷ On the weapons and their empowerment, see Sections 7.5, 7.6; Hallowell 1926: 1926: 33–43.

⁶³⁸ *Pystyvää* means to be able to kill the bear.

⁶³⁹ SKS KRA Krohn 11787b. Juukka. 58-year-old man; cf. Varonen 1891: 82.

poisonous fluids on your tip,
I hit one time with the steel,
I split the skin open,
I pierce the veins through,
so that when once you drop down
on the snow blanket, dead.⁶⁴⁰

Anthills were related to the forest master or spirits. Hunters made offerings by pouring silver, gold or blood on the top of an anthill to please the forest spirits. It was believed that after the performance of these offerings, the forest master spirit could appear and tell relevant information about game animals.⁶⁴¹ By contrast, anthills in the courtyard of the village were linked with the earth's force,⁶⁴² the guardian spirit of the earth,⁶⁴³ and the deceased.⁶⁴⁴

The empowerment of the spear seems to be also related to the "force of death,"⁶⁴⁵ because the singer sang that the "venom" of the ants was particularly effective.

Other rituals empowered firearms. In Rautavaara, the hunters put barley grains into their rifles so that they were capable of killing the bear.⁶⁴⁶ In Ostrobothnia, the bear was considered a kind of *tietäjä*, able to enchant the gunfire of the rifle and make the bullet completely ineffective.⁶⁴⁷ While proceeding towards the den, the hunters made a fire from pitchy stumps and fumigated both their firearms and themselves. Afterwards, they carved a pentacle⁶⁴⁸ on their bullets and put them into the rifle while paying attention that the top angle of the pentacle was pointed towards the muzzle. In addition, they put bread crumbs and wax from their left ear into the barrel or the

⁶⁴⁰ *Otat teräs tenhojasi, / imem muuraisen mumuja, / väkeviä, vihaviija, / myrkkynesteitä nenähäs, / kerta kuopasen terälä, / iho auki irtahuutan, / verisuonet puhki pistän, / silloin kun kerran kellahtanet, / hangem piäle hengetönnä.* (SKS KRA Tauno Mäkipalo (Mohell) 40. 1933. Heinävesi. Jussi Räsänen).

⁶⁴¹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 72.

⁶⁴² *Maanväki.*

⁶⁴³ *Maanhaltia.*

⁶⁴⁴ Krohn [1915] 2008: 142.

⁶⁴⁵ *Kalman väki.*

⁶⁴⁶ SKS KRA Krohn 10614 b.

⁶⁴⁷ On the *tietäjäs*, see Section 3.12.

⁶⁴⁸ On the pentacle, see Sections 4.4, 7.1, 7.4.

magazine.⁶⁴⁹ In Rautavaara and Ostrobothnia, grain or bread—two agricultural products—was used to empower rifles.

One thing that made necessary the magical empowering of the weapons was the fear of envious people⁶⁵⁰ who could bewitch them with their “evil eye.” The malevolent gaze of such people could “ruin”⁶⁵¹ rifles, so that they could not kill animals. Thus, the empowerment of the weapons was a way to remove the effect of the evil eye. Other means of avoiding the evil eye included keeping the hunting trip secret and singing incantations against those who might be envious.⁶⁵²

4.6 Protection with steel belts and iron shirts

Leaving for the hunt, the hunters performed several rituals and incantations to protect themselves against a concrete danger that could come from the forest: a bear attack.

After the empowerment of the hunting equipment, it was necessary to neutralize the “weapons of the bear,” namely, its teeth and claws. In Pielisjärvi, the hunters greased themselves with the bile of the bear, so it would not be able to bite them.⁶⁵³ In Juukka, the hunters greased their rifles, spears and dogs with bear fat and a rag used to cover the eyes of a dead person.⁶⁵⁴ These rites followed a belief that the bear’s force contained in the bile⁶⁵⁵ and the fat could be manipulated and used against the bruin itself. The hunters also used the fearsome “force of death”⁶⁵⁶ to make their magical defenses even stronger.

In several Finnish villages, the hunting dogs were protected from bear bites by circling them with an edged weapon.⁶⁵⁷ In Viena Karelia, the hunter protected himself by rotating with an old sword which had rusted in war, meanwhile uttering: “In

⁶⁴⁹ SKS KRA Meriläinen I 16 b. Ostrobothnia; cited in Varonen 1891: 83.

⁶⁵⁰ *Kateet* or *silmääjät*.

⁶⁵¹ *Pilata*.

⁶⁵² See Section 4.8.

⁶⁵³ SKS KRA Krohn 9266 b. Informant: 80-year-old man. Pielisjärvi. cited in Varonen 1891: 80.

⁶⁵⁴ SKS KRA Krohn 11454. 22-year-old man. Juukka, cited in Varonen 1891: 81.

⁶⁵⁵ The hunter could also drink the bile during the bear feast (See Section 8.11). Among the Ob-Ugrians, the bear’s bile and grease was used in folk medicine (Sirelius 1929: 196).

⁶⁵⁶ *Kalman väki*.

⁶⁵⁷ Krohn 2008: 147.

chainmail armor the man is stronger, / with steel belts [he is] more effective, / in iron shirts⁶⁵⁸ [he is] better.”⁶⁵⁹

Both the rite and the incantation summoned the iron’s protective force. The sword rusted in war could also contain the force of death of the soldiers it had killed. The hunter literally wrapped himself in several steel belts, sets of chainmail armor, and steel belts, thereby building around himself an impenetrable field of mythical protection. The informant added that this incantation should be performed with a hardened *luonto*, a personal dynamistic force influencing the hardness of the body and the soul.⁶⁶⁰

Similar protective incantations were used elsewhere in Finland. Yrjö-Sorsa from Niinivaara (Kaavi) uttered:

In chainmail armor the man is harder,
made of pure steel.
Let my blood be the hardest
of all the beings of the forest,
[let] my courage [be] the hardest.⁶⁶¹

Here the mention of the chainmail positively affected the hunter’s body and soul. An “open body,” permeable by the forest force,⁶⁶² became “closed.”⁶⁶³ His blood, which was closely associated with the *luonto* force, became harder. Having “hard blood” also signified having “strong nerves.”⁶⁶⁴ If the hunter was “hard” and he was not frightened by the bear, he was protected from its bite and *nenä* or *viha* infections.⁶⁶⁵ The lines above seem to be both defensive and aggressive: by having the “hardest blood,” the hunter could more easily defeat a bear with “softer” blood.

⁶⁵⁸ Chainmail armor.

⁶⁵⁹ *Lustuissa on mies lujempi, / teräs vöissä tenhosampi, / rauta paijoissa parempi* (SKVR I4/1195. Meriläinen, *Matkamuistelmia*. 1889).

⁶⁶⁰ Stark 2006: 262.

⁶⁶¹ *Lustuiss’ on mies lujempi, / teräksestä aivan tehty. / Minun vereni lujin olkaan, / kaikista metän elävistä, / uskallukseni kaikkiin kovin* (SKVR VII5/3378: 10–14. Kaavi. Krohn n. 9924. 1885. Niinivaara. Yrjö Sorsa).

⁶⁶² Stark 2006: 267.

⁶⁶³ Stark 2006: 182; see Section 3.13.

⁶⁶⁴ Stark 2006: 267.

⁶⁶⁵ On the *nenä*, *viha*, *luonto* and the hunter’s self, see Section 3.10, 3.13, 10.2.

The hunters removed their armor after a successful hunt. Furthermore, in the part of the *Bear Songs* related with the skinning of the fur, one finds a generous act of exchange, with the hunters giving their protective “iron shirt” to the bruin.⁶⁶⁶

In Korpiselkä, the hunters also sang about chainmail armor to safeguard themselves against the magical attack of envious people and sorcerers, who wished to “ruin” the luck of their hunt. In this way, they became harder than their opponents.⁶⁶⁷ Chainmail protected the hunter against dangers coming both from the forest and from his village or neighbors.

In the standard incantations of the *tietäjäs*, they asked the thunder-god Ukko to provide them with iron chainmail armor or belts to protect themselves during magic battles against sorcerers.⁶⁶⁸ Siikala argued that the imaginary of chainmail armor should be rooted in the Middle Ages.⁶⁶⁹ According to Haavio, the “steel belt” could be a reference to the “force belt,”⁶⁷⁰ which was really worn by the *tietäjäs*. This belt had, in addition to other magical objects, a powerful metal tube⁶⁷¹ hanging from it.⁶⁷² Through these protections, the *tietäjä* became harder and impenetrable to the attacks, arrows or blades of sorcerers,⁶⁷³ envious people or “spoilers,”⁶⁷⁴ who sought to ruin someone’s “luck.”⁶⁷⁵ With armor or iron shirts, the *tietäjä* was also “better”⁶⁷⁶ and “more efficient.”⁶⁷⁷ The armor was not only protective, but it strengthened the aggressive force of the *tietäjä*, who sang “I’m like a great wolf / like a bear [but] twice as dreadful.”⁶⁷⁸ By becoming as dreadful as these predators, the *tietäjä* believed he could overcome and frighten his opponents.

The *tietäjä* boasted of being able to put a bridle in the mouth of wolves and enchain bears with iron shackles: the predators in this case could be the defeated opponents

⁶⁶⁶ See Sections 7.9 and 10.1.

⁶⁶⁷ SKVR VII5/3222: 1–10. Korpiselkä. Palviainen n. 4. 1914. Haukivaara. Levo Vornanen.

⁶⁶⁸ Haavio 1967: 331–333.

⁶⁶⁹ Siikala 1992: 250.

⁶⁷⁰ *Voimavyö*.

⁶⁷¹ *Umpiputki*.

⁶⁷² Haavio 1967: 331–333.

⁶⁷³ SKVR VII3/112. Kiihtelysvara. Roschier n. 30. 1854. Niilo Törrönen.

⁶⁷⁴ *Pilajaat*.

⁶⁷⁵ Siikala 1992: 246.

⁶⁷⁶ SKVR VII3/17: 6–7. Ilomantsi. Tiitinen n. 58. 1884.

⁶⁷⁷ SKVR VII3/ 33: 6–8. Kitee. Lönnrot S, n. 194 a. 1828.

⁶⁷⁸ *Itse olen suurena sutena, / karhuna kahta kauheempana* (SKVR VII3/17: 13–14. Ilomantsi. Tiitinen n. 58. 1884).

(sorcerers and enviouses).⁶⁷⁹ The binding of “bears” made the *tietäjä* as powerful as the forest spirits, because in the *Bear Songs* the hunter asked the forest spirits to block and enchain the bruin using similar lines.⁶⁸⁰

The motif was also present in the protective incantations⁶⁸¹ for wedding travel. For example, the *patvaska*⁶⁸² pronounced that he protected with iron belts, skirts or chainmail armor himself, the groom, the bride and all the persons involved in wedding travel against the curses of sorcerers and envious ones.⁶⁸³ The iron belt also protected against the ghosts of evil dead persons, which had been bewitched by sorcerers.⁶⁸⁴ The *patvaska* also claimed that he was able to “put the bear in iron shackles.”⁶⁸⁵ Here the bear could be also a circumlocution for envious people or sorcerers, as they were dangerous “outsiders” like the bear.

The similarities between these protective rituals, which were both performed when leaving the village, demonstrate that all travel, and journeys in general, were considered to be magically dangerous.⁶⁸⁶ Envious people wanted to ruin with black magic the wedding or hunting luck of other people. Both of these occasions, the wedding and the hunt, involved departures that put in motion magical forces; thus, travelers needed to protect themselves with almost identical rituals and spells.

Steel or iron belts were often mentioned in incantations to protect cattle from bears during the grazing season. In Kankaanpää, the mistress circled her cows with a metal object while repeating:

I let my cattle outside,
and I cinch it with iron belts!
The forest⁶⁸⁷ does not have anything to waste there,
and the wolf nothing to violate.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁷⁹ *Sudet panen suihti suihin / karhut rautakahlehisin* (SKVR VII3/17: 11–12 VII3/33: 11–12).

⁶⁸⁰ SKVR VII5/3218: 25–27. Korpiselkä. Basilier n. 141. 1884.

⁶⁸¹ *Varaussanat*.

⁶⁸² A *tietäjä* who acted as a speaker at wedding rituals.

⁶⁸³ See SKVR II/1058, 1061, 1062, 1064, 1066, 1071, 1075 a), 1078. Heikinmäki 1981: 451, 455.

⁶⁸⁴ Heikinmäki 1981: 455.

⁶⁸⁵ See SKVR II/1058, 1061, 1062, 1064, 1066, 1071, 1075 a), 1078.

⁶⁸⁶ Tarkka 2013: 411–412.

⁶⁸⁷ The bear.

⁶⁸⁸ *Minä lasken karjani ulos, / ja rautasilla vöillä vyötän! / ei siinä ole metsän haaskaamista, / eikä suden raiskaamista!* (SKVR X4266: 1–2 Kankaanpää Palonen L. A. 22. 1859 cited in Hästeskö 1918: 148).

Here the analogy between cattle herders' and hunters' rituals is evident: identical rites protected "travelers"⁶⁸⁹ in the forest from bears.

The motif was also present in epic songs: the smith-hero Ilmarinen wore iron chainmail armor⁶⁹⁰ before forging the *sampo*, a mysterious object that supplied wealth, fertility, magic powers and knowledge. When the hunters, *tietäjäs* or *patvoaskas* used metal protection, they imitated the mighty "eternal smith." In the *Song of the Sampo*, Ilmarinen often travels to the dreadful land of Pohjola. As the bear hunt was considered like travel in Pohjola or Tapiola,⁶⁹¹ it is not surprising that hunters empowered themselves in the same way as the mighty smith. Ilmarinen was also considered a protector of travelers.⁶⁹² In the epic song *The Great Oak*, a steel belt was worn by a mysterious black man who emerged from the sea to cut down the tree with a steel axe.⁶⁹³ Maybe the black man falling the gigantic tree was a mythic model for the hunter seeking to kill the bear.

4.7 The protective magic circle

In this section, I will analyze in more detail the ritual acts performed while uttering the protective incantation about chainmail armor. In Viena Karelia, the hunters rotated with a sword which had rusted in war.⁶⁹⁴ The sword seems to have had a mythic counterpart. When *tietäjäs* prepared themselves for a spiritual battle against sorcerers or envious people, they requested from the thunder-god Ukko⁶⁹⁵ a "fire sword."⁶⁹⁶ The sword had protective power, and it was often mentioned in incantations against the curses of sorcerers and envious people.⁶⁹⁷ Sometimes *tietäjäs* asked for another mythical weapon: a bow, a golden mallet,⁶⁹⁸ an axe, a club or an arrow.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁸⁹ Hunters or cows.

⁶⁹⁰ See SKVR I1/63b: 28–38 and 28–32. Tsena. Topelius, the Older. R. II, ss. 15–18. 1821.

⁶⁹¹ See Sections 6.13, 6.2.

⁶⁹² Haavio 1967: 127.

⁶⁹³ SKVR VIII1/ 565. Suistamo. Basilier n. 168. 9/4/1884. Shemeikka. Pedri Joakonpoika Shemeikka, approximately 100-year-old man. Part of the text was published in Vartiainen's text "Shemeikka," as it was sung by Jehkin Iivana (pages 90–91).

⁶⁹⁴ SKVR I4/1195.

⁶⁹⁵ Or Jesus, Hiisi or another powerful supernatural being (Siikala 1992: 247).

⁶⁹⁶ *Tulinen miekka*. See Haavio 1967: 332; Siikala 2002: 105.

⁶⁹⁷ Heikinmäki 1981: 455.

⁶⁹⁸ Siikala 1992: 247.

⁶⁹⁹ Siikala 2002: 204.

In the bear ceremonials, too, something else could be substituted for the sword. In Pielävesi, the hunters wore a clean soldier's uniform and rotated three times counterclockwise and clockwise with a pouch of flaxseeds, saying:

Be my helper,
guardian of the forest, still watchful,
here should be a quarry, available
the honey-paw in these lands,
so that you would lead me,
with luck, to catch it,
so that disasters will not happen
in these playgrounds.⁷⁰⁰

In the incantation, the hunter asks for the help of the forest guardian spirit, but at the same time he made a self-protective magic circle. The modern soldier's uniform could be considered an updated and physically concrete version of the "iron chainmail" mentioned in several incantations.⁷⁰¹ The ritual use of a military uniform or a sword rusted in war suggests that the hunter saw a concrete analogy between leaving for the bear hunt and departing for war.⁷⁰²

Haavio argued that rotating or circling with a sword or another powerful metal object could be linked to the international magical concept of the "magical circle": in many European magic rituals, sorcerers drew a circle a blade on the floor to prevent demons from passing across the borderline just drawn on the floor.⁷⁰³

In Finland, the magic circle protected the ritual actor from any sort of danger or malevolent force. In Kuusamo, whoever rotated two times clockwise and one time counterclockwise with a knife held at the level of the waist was protected from sorcerers and envious people.⁷⁰⁴ The invisible "circle" drawn in the air with the blade protected him or her during travels.

In Suojärvi, before wedding travel someone circled all of the people involved with a protective sickle to ward off magical attacks by envious persons intending to hurt

⁷⁰⁰ *Ole sä apuna mulla, / metsän vartija valpas vielä, / tässä ois saalis sataovissa, / mesikämmen mailla näillä, / jotta johtaisit minuva, / onellisna ottamahan, / ettei tapahu tuhoja, / näillä leikki tanterilla* (SKVR VI2/4888: 1–8. Tikkanen, Fr. n. 407. 1902. Pielavesi).

⁷⁰¹ See Section 4.6.

⁷⁰² Tarkka 1998: 100.

⁷⁰³ Haavio 1967: 332.

⁷⁰⁴ Haavio 1967: 332.

the bridal couple or ruin the wedding.⁷⁰⁵ In Vaaraslahti, the *patvaska* walked three times around all the people and horses leaving for the wedding ceremony.⁷⁰⁶

A magic circle could be made by circling someone else or rotating. It was used for a great variety of situations, and it was combined with several rites:

- circling or rotating while holding a metal object, sword, blade, or something burning, or wearing a military uniform, charged an object with iron, fire or death force
- uttering incantations mentioning protective iron shirts or fences, steel belts, chainmail armor

In Finno-Karelian folk beliefs, a strong force was held to be hidden in the iron itself, which was considered both a dangerous and useful metal. The protective force of iron was used against a great variety of menaces.

Objects of iron were used to protect someone who was swimming from evil water spirits. Metal tools were put on thresholds when cattle were leaving for the pastures. Parents or relatives put objects or blades in the cradles of newborns to protect them from devils and evil spirits. Knives, scissors and sickles were useful for driving away spirits responsible for nightmares,⁷⁰⁷ as well as the magical darts of sorcerers.⁷⁰⁸ Iron objects could be also used to hurt opponents. The protective power of metals was employed in some critical phases of the bear hunt: the circling of the den, during the performance of protective rituals before leaving the village, and in rites to prevent a bear attack.

Magic circles were used to protect from envious people and from bear attacks: the protection worked against threats coming from the human world or from the forest.

Leaving for the bear hunt was considered to be as dangerous as leaving for wedding travel, because on the borders of villages envious people and sorcerers were more active.⁷⁰⁹ Such malevolent persons could envy a groom marrying a good wife or a hunter catching prey as socially valuable as the bear.

In Kontokki, when a hunter was going hunting for a bear, he should put on his breast three needles which had been used for “circling” in a previous wedding. After that the bear would not attack him and the forest mistress was pleased. The same

⁷⁰⁵ Haavio 1967: 333.

⁷⁰⁶ SKVR II/1073. Omelie. Borenus III, n. 151. 1877. Ol'ekseine Simana.

⁷⁰⁷ *Painajaset*.

⁷⁰⁸ Hästesko 1918: 44–45.

⁷⁰⁹ See Section 4.8.

needles could also be used as a protective amulet for hunting other animals.⁷¹⁰ It seems that the needles that protected people against envious people's curses during a wedding trip did not lose their defensive power at the end of the occasion, but could be used to protect hunters from bears or envious persons interested in "ruining" the hunt.

4.8 Protective incantations and rituals

The departure from the village was considered a very delicate phase. Walking through the liminal territory between the profane space of the village and the sacred one of the forest was particularly dangerous. Passing through this borderland put into motion several dynamic forces that were both aggressive and invasive. At the same time, the hunter stepped out of his normal role in the everyday reality of the village.⁷¹¹ To defend themselves, the hunters performed a "ritualized crossing of boundaries,"⁷¹² which recalls some aspects of the rituals of passage.⁷¹³ Tarkka stated that the hunter "guarded against human envy and various forms of supernatural intervention by keeping his departure secret and performing precautionary rituals."⁷¹⁴

The Viena Karelian hunters sang protective incantations⁷¹⁵ at every step of a very slow departure:

So we guard ourselves,
at the last gate,
at the outermost doors,
at the doorways, below the beam.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁰ SKS KRA Meriläinen II 704. Informant: 80-year-old man from Kontokki, village of Akonlahti in Viena Karelia; see Varonen 1891: 80.

⁷¹¹ Tarkka 1998: 100; Ilomäki 1988: 8–9, 14.

⁷¹² Tarkka 2013: 338.

⁷¹³ Tarkka 1998: 100.

⁷¹⁴ Tarkka 2013: 338; SKR KRA Paulaharju 56:b 18552, 18545. 1932 (1916).

⁷¹⁵ *Varoitussanat*.

⁷¹⁶ *Se vai varottelemme, / veräjellä viimesillä, / uksilla ulommaisilla, / oven suissa, alla orren* (SKVR I4/1206, 13–16. Ponkalaksi. Borenius. III, n. 93. 8/9/1877. Lukkañi Huotari).

Beside the doorjamb of the cabin,
beside the place of two kettles,
beside the holders of tree hooks.⁷¹⁷

The hunters' song underscores the importance of borders: protective incantations were necessary at the "last gate" and the "outermost" door. The lines are dramatic and the singers expressed the feeling that the hunting group was really "on the edge," entering slowly into the powerful forest realm. Tarkka noted the importance of certain concrete details: "the precautionary passages in the hunting incantation depict the hunter's separation from the home sphere by describing the concrete stages of the transition from the door frame of the cottage to the last outer gates and the forest."⁷¹⁸ The hunters proceeded cautiously through the dangerous thresholds between the home's sphere and the forest: the kitchen and other parts of the house are meticulously described.⁷¹⁹ When the hunters reached the woodland, the danger was not over. Lukkañi Huotari from Ponkalaksi continued to sing protective incantations under the first trees of the forest: "below the aspen with a split top, / below the only pine tree/ below the spruce's flower top."⁷²⁰

According to *Births of the Bear*, the bruin was born "below the spruce's flower top."⁷²¹ The description of the hunting ground tended to coincide with that of the mythic homeland of the bear. Trees were also portrayed with words indicating the growth and beauty of springtime, while the singer described a welcoming, abundant world. This was probably a strategy to please the forest, emphasizing its growing powers, and to neutralize the aggressive dynamic powers that could cause the supernatural illness known as "forest contagion" or "forest *nenä*."⁷²²

Why were protective spells necessary at every step? By walking on the short trail from the house to the forest, the hunter could involuntarily put potentially negative forces into motion. Liminal places were considered potentially "impure" or "contagious" in many traditions. According to Finnic folk beliefs, when stepping into

⁷¹⁷ *Pirtin pihtipuolisissa, / kahan kattilan sijalla, / kolmen koukun keäntimillä* (SKVR I4/1236: 7–10. Ponkalahti. Paulaharju n. 6032. 1915. Kauro Lipponi).

⁷¹⁸ Tarkka 2013: 338; Tarkka 1998: 100.

⁷¹⁹ The killed bear entered the village very slowly, too, and the hunter described each detail of the village and cabin. See Chapter 8.

⁷²⁰ *Alla hoavan hoaralatvan, / al[la] ainosen petäjän, / [alla] kuusen kukkalatvan* (SKVR I4 1206, 13–21. Ponkalaksi. Borenius. III, n. 93. 1877. Lukkañi Huotari, Prokkosia).

⁷²¹ SKVR VII5/3950: 13; see Section 5.2.

⁷²² *Metsän nenä*. See Tarkka 2013: 377–380; Sections 3.13, 3.4, 6.3, 6.9.

the borderland the hunter should protect himself from dangers coming from two directions, the forest and the human world.

The dangers from the forest included a bear attack or disease caused by the forest force. The woodsman who neglected to wash up before going hunting was especially vulnerable to forest contagion.⁷²³

The menaces coming from the human world included “curses” and the “evil eye”: black magic caused bad luck in hunting, ruined weapons or brought “forest contagion.”⁷²⁴ The *tietäjä* Riiko Kallio stated that “forest contagion” and curses by malevolent people would “usually appear in the same company.”⁷²⁵ Thus, “forest contagion” could also be caused by human magical agency. The “forest contagion” was marked by something scary, out of the ordinary and strange happening in the forest, as well as by bizarre animal behavior, such as when a sorcerer had put the forest “on the move.”⁷²⁶

Ritual washing in the sauna was a typical rite to avoid “forest contagion” and defuse curses. Petri Šemeikkäne sang: “I woke up early in the morning / we washed, we cleansed”⁷²⁷ and “I wash my small rifle.”⁷²⁸ Lines about ritual washing are often followed by mentions of the protective motifs, such as iron chainmail.⁷²⁹ The line “we washed, we cleansed” also appears in incantations to prevent the rifle from the “spoiling”⁷³⁰ of black magic that would make weapons ineffective.⁷³¹ A similar washing motif could be uttered by a *patvaska* or by someone else who protected a groom taking his bride from her village.⁷³²

Trohkimaiñi Soava from Akonlahti sang the protective incantation:

There are bewitchers at every gate,
envious ones are everywhere.

⁷²³ Tarkka 2013: 378.

⁷²⁴ Tarkka 2013: 378.

⁷²⁵ SKVR I4/750; see Tarkka 2013: 379.

⁷²⁶ Tarkka 2013: 378–379; the term “the forest is on the move” (*metsä liikku*) also indicated the attack of a bewitched bear; see Section 3.9.

⁷²⁷ *Nousin ajoin aamusessa, / pesimmo, puhastelimmo* (SKVR VII5/3219: 1–2. Korpiselkä. Basilier n. 128. 1884; see also SKVR VII5/3218: 1–2).

⁷²⁸ *Pesen pieni pyssyseni* (SKVR VII5/3218: 10 and SKVR VII5/3219: 4).

⁷²⁹ SKVR VII5/3218, 3219 and 3120.

⁷³⁰ *Pilaus*.

⁷³¹ SKVR VII5/3650.

⁷³² SKVR VII5/2819: 1–4; SKVR VII5/2820: 1–4.

If the sorcerer casts a spell,
let the sorcerer be ensorcelled himself.⁷³³

Agents performing black magic were considered particularly active nearby gates. In Latvajärvi, the hunters sang that sorcerers and envious ones were “watching for the one who comes, / looking at the catcher.”⁷³⁴ The lines tell about the fear of *silmääjät*, the watchers or senders of the “evil eye,” people that could “ruin” the hunt or weapons by only looking at the hunters or their rifles. To avoid them, hunters tried to keep secret the day of their departure. To protect themselves from the “evil eye,” Viena Karelian hunters asked help of the Creator, “whose eyes rain with honey.”⁷³⁵ The Finno-Karelians believed that honey had curative powers,⁷³⁶ so the honey that came from the eyes of God was probably considered the most powerful antidote against the magic of senders of the evil eye.

The envious person was one of the most typical adversaries of the *tietäjä*: he was a powerful sorcerer, able to provoke every kind of disaster by uttering a curse or gazing with his evil eye.⁷³⁷

According to Siikala, envious people were more powerful at gates and borders, where it was easier to make contact with the forces of the otherworld.⁷³⁸ Not by chance during wedding rituals did the *patvoaska* make the sign of the cross with his whip on the gates, doorjambs and other critical places.⁷³⁹

To neutralize the dangers that were present at the gates, the Border Karelian hunter Mikki Ivanov Šemeikkäne sang that he raised a magical fence made of iron and snakes against the attacks of envious ones and sorcerers.⁷⁴⁰ The motif of the fence was very common in the standard protective incantations uttered by *tietäjäs* against sorcerers and envious persons.⁷⁴¹ The iron and snake fence was mythical, being one of the

⁷³³ *Velhoj[a] on joka veräjä, / kat[eita] on k[aiikki] p[aiikat]. / Kun noita noitunoo, / itse noita noivoukoon* (SKVR I4/1085: 75–78. Akonlahti. Lönnrot A II 2, n. 5. 1832. Trohkimairni Soava).

⁷³⁴ *tuljoa katsomassa, / sajoa[!] tähyämässä* (SKVR I4/1098. 44–45. Latvajärvi. Castrén n. 140. 1839).

⁷³⁵ SKVR I4/1206: 40–41.

⁷³⁶ See Sections 3.7, 5.8, 6.4.

⁷³⁷ Haavio 1967: 335.

⁷³⁸ Siikala 1992: 248.

⁷³⁹ Siikala 1992: 249.

⁷⁴⁰ SKVR VII5/3218: 30–54 Korpiselkä. Basilier n. 141. 1884. Hoilola. Mikki Ivanov Šemeikkäne, from the Šemeikkä family of Suistamo.

⁷⁴¹ Siikala 1992: 149–150.

magical obstacles that heroes had to pass through on the road to Päivolä.⁷⁴² The *tietäjä* could also ask the thunder- and sky-god Ukko to provide a supernatural fence.⁷⁴³

Vuokkiniemi's hunters believed they were involved in a magical struggle against male or female envious sorcerers :

Who tried to harm me,
[the ones] from the male folks,
harm their own dogs,
ask for their own rifles!
Who tried to hit me hard,
[the ones] from the female folk,
harm their own wombs,
watch for their own bellies!⁷⁴⁴

Male conjurers who tried to “spoil” or ruin the hunters’ rifles or dogs were paid back with the same medicine. Lukkañi Huotari cursed the weapons of male bewitchers so that their bows would break into pieces.⁷⁴⁵ These details indicate that the male sorcerers were other hunters competing for the same game animals. In the case of female conjurers, the revenge invoked in the hunter’s incantation was the cruelest. Lukkañi Huotari uttered a terrible curse against witches, targeting their offspring: “have clay babies, / otherwise, weirdkids.”⁷⁴⁶ The brutality of the motif emphasizes that witches were probably considered more dangerous than male conjurers. The magical revenge of the hunters was more frightening, affecting body, womb and offspring: their countermagic was directed at the very source of procreation. Tarkka stated that the hunter guarded against the force of female sexuality⁷⁴⁷ by bewitching its source, “the wombs and bellies,” and by threatening the women with the menace of having “odd” or deformed children.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴² The Land of the Sun or the Sky. See SKVR VII1/780.

⁷⁴³ Siikala 2002: 204.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ken mua kovin kokevi, / urohisesta väestä, / kokekohot koiriaan, / pyytäkööt pyssy[jään]! /Ken mua kovin kokevi / vaimoisestaki väestä, / kokekoon kohtujansa, /varotkoon vatsojansa!* (SKVR I4/1229: 3–11. Vuokkiniemi. Lönnrot. R, n. 586. 1837).

⁷⁴⁵ SKVR I4/1206: 34–35.

⁷⁴⁶ *Soakahan saviset lapset, / muutos kummaset mukulat* (SKVR I4/1206. 28–29. Ponkalaksi. Borenius III, n. 93. 1877. Lukkañi Huotari).

⁷⁴⁷ *Naisten väki.*

⁷⁴⁸ Tarkka 2013: 353.

As the incantations were protective and preventive, it seems that the hunter sought to threaten and terrorize female bewitchers even before they could utter a curse. In Kivijärvi, similar threats were uttered when the “forest cover”⁷⁴⁹ was caused by an envious female neighbor: “If you won’t let my ones⁷⁵⁰ go, / you’ll bear a big belly for the rest of your days / if you let go, you’ll be free of your belly.”⁷⁵¹ This threat was equally dreadful, as it condemned the witch to a painful lifelong pregnancy.⁷⁵²

The hunters of Latvajärvi threatened bewitchers with a heavy curse on their body:

The one who says bad [words] with his mouth,
will have a tongue growing in his mouth
like an iron mallet;
it will hit the mouth, [spilling] blood,
with steel-tipped needles, hail of iron.⁷⁵³

The hunter struck back at the very source of the curse: the mouth of the bewitcher. In a similar manner, the eyes of the *silmääjät*, the senders of the “evil-eye,” should be “hit with magic words” until they bleed.⁷⁵⁴ All of the incantations against envious sorcerers had violent and dreadful contents, because if the hunter was able to scare or hurt the envious person, he was able to ward off the effect of their magic.⁷⁵⁵ Conversely, the hunter defended his forest luck by building a reputation for his ability to effect supernatural revenge.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁴⁹ The supernatural disappearance of cows in the forest.

⁷⁵⁰ Cows.

⁷⁵¹ *Kun et päästäne miun omie, / ikäs paksuo vattua kannat; / kun päästänet, pääset vatastaš* (SKVR I4/1468: 1–3. Kivijärvi. Marttiini n. 1208. 1911).

⁷⁵² Tarkka 2013: 376.

⁷⁵³ *Ken suulla pahoja sanoo, / kieli suuhun kasvanuo, / kun rautanen kurikka, / kun suu verille lyöpi / niekloilla terisenenillä, / rakeilla rautasilla* (SKVR I4/1098: 54–59. Latvajärvi. Castrén n. 140. 1839).

⁷⁵⁴ SKVR VII3/91; Hästesko 1918: 140.

⁷⁵⁵ Hästesko 1918: 140.

⁷⁵⁶ Stark 2006: 211.

4.9 Protective *harakoiminen*

In Nilsjä, the women played an important role in protective rituals before the bear hunt. The hunter should leave for the bear hunt by passing below and between the legs and under the sex of his wife. If in the village there was a smithy, the wife stood on top of the anvil.⁷⁵⁷ According to Laura Stark, the wife protected the hunter by means of her women's force,⁷⁵⁸ a dynamistic power released by women through their sexual organs or by exposing their genitalia.⁷⁵⁹ As the setting included an anvil, iron force and forge force also protected the hunter. In Rautavaara, the *harakoiminen* ritual in a smithy was performed to protect trapping gear: "the men drew their traps through the wife's legs three times."⁷⁶⁰ Women in Finnish-Karelian villages did not wear underwear beneath their skirt until the 1870s–1880s,⁷⁶¹ so the women's force protected the husband or traps that passed between the wife's legs. As an alternative, the woman could get her husband on the floor and jump over him.⁷⁶² A woman protected what belonged to her house (cows, children and husband) and what moved from the "inside" dimension of the home to the "outside" forestland.⁷⁶³

Stark notes that in this case the husbands "took advantage" of the women's force, and they probably requested and controlled the performance of the *harakoiminen*.⁷⁶⁴

The women's force was considered particularly effective against bears. People believed that a bruin ran away when a woman exposed her sex or her "ass" in front of them. In Sodankylä, this type of "exposure" was followed by a short incantation: "Look at that, and shame, rascal!"⁷⁶⁵

The women's force was also effective if the woman embarrassed the bear with rough and harsh words. In Alaska, we can find a quite similar belief: the Koyukon women frightened bears by exposing their genitals and embarrassing them, saying: "My husband, it's me."⁷⁶⁶ In both Finno-Karelian and Koyukon traditions, the bear was

⁷⁵⁷ SKS SKRA Krohn 10531. Informant: 60-year-old man. Nilsjä; see Varonen 1891: 80, No 330.

English translation of the original text in Stark 1998: 40–41.

⁷⁵⁸ *Naisten väki*.

⁷⁵⁹ Stark 1998b: 37–8 and Apo 1998: 72–73.

⁷⁶⁰ SKS KRA Krohn 10315. Rautavaara. Male informant; see Varonen 1891 (Vol. I): 66. N. 287.

⁷⁶¹ Heikinmäki 1967 and Stark 1998b: 39.

⁷⁶² Apo 1998: 72–73.

⁷⁶³ Stark 1998b: 39–40.

⁷⁶⁴ Stark 1998b: 49.

⁷⁶⁵ *Katto tuohon ja häpiä, koranus* (SKVR XII2/6512: 1. Sodankylä. Paulaharju 8631. 1920).

⁷⁶⁶ Nelson 1983: 179; Rockwell 1991: 123.

surprised and ashamed by the exposure. In many other cases, however, Alaskan and Yukon native women were afraid of being abducted and married by a bear, and so they addressed the beast as a brother, a relative who was too near to be in danger of wedding.⁷⁶⁷

In Finland and Karelia the *harakoiminen* was usually performed to protect cattle during the grazing season: in this case a woman climbed on the gate and the cattle passed below the legs and the sex of the mistress. It was a preventive protection: after the ritual the women's force remained attached to the cattle, protecting from bears for the entire summer.

Female *harakoiminen* was also used to drive away the effects of the "evil eye" or the curses of "envious" ones: mothers performed it to protect small children or marriageable daughters going to the village or the church.⁷⁶⁸ Milking women also exposed their sex to envious people in order to protect their cows or to ensure that the quality or quantity of the cow's milk did not decrease.⁷⁶⁹

However, female *harakoiminen* could be also useful to ensure good "rabbit-luck" for trappers.⁷⁷⁰ Varonen collected information about rituals in which female *harakoiminen*, always on the initiative of men, was used to protect hunting or trapping equipment, such as guns, trip wires or snares.⁷⁷¹

However, the involuntary⁷⁷² or voluntary female *harakoiminen* of horses, riding gear, carts, sleds, boats, shoes or men's legs had negative influences on hunting or traveling.⁷⁷³ All these objects were strictly related to transport and traveling, spheres of activities that were considered absolutely masculine.⁷⁷⁴ While hunting was also a male activity,⁷⁷⁵ a ritually controlled *harakoiminen* of guns and traps had positive effects on the hunt.

⁷⁶⁷ McCellan 1975: 128; Rockwell 1991: 123.

⁷⁶⁸ Apo 1998: 73.

⁷⁶⁹ Stark 1998b: 56, note 18.

⁷⁷⁰ SKS KRA Gummerus and Ranni 149. Pihtipudas. Male informant; see Varonen 1981 (Vol. I). 219, no 422e and in Stark 1998b: 41.

⁷⁷¹ See Varonen 1891, vol. I: 58 (no. 253); 66 (no. 287); 108 (no. 422), 114 (no. 445) and the English translations of the ritual procedures in Stark 1998b: 60, footnote 30.

⁷⁷² A case of involuntary and negative *harakoiminen* could be a woman walking, stepping on or falling with her "ass" on a very "masculine" object as riding gears.

⁷⁷³ See Stark 1998b: 47–48.

⁷⁷⁴ Tarkka 1998: 93.

⁷⁷⁵ Tarkk 1998: 99.

The women's force was considered to be bound with the house and the cattle, and it was opposed to the forest's force; for this reason, it repelled the bear. By "marking" cattle, husbands and their weapons, and children with women's force, wives protected what was "theirs" from external dangers or the otherworldly forest. Stark even notes the existence of some cases of male *harakoiminen* which were performed in the forest: hunting or trapping equipment was passed through the legs of the hunters. Male *harakoiminen* was performed in response to some crisis, such as if the dogs, guns or traps did not work properly or the hunter was not able to shoot and kill animals.⁷⁷⁶ Regarding the "bad luck" caused by envious hunters or other villagers,⁷⁷⁷ both female and male *harakoiminen* canceled the effects of "evil eyes" and curses.

⁷⁷⁶ Stark 1998b: 48.

⁷⁷⁷ Stark 1998b: 48.

Chapter 5

On the Border: *Births of the Bear*

5.1 The *Births* incantations and *Births of the Bear*

The *Birth of the Bear*⁷⁷⁸ was an incantation performed in different phases of bear ceremonialism. It was often sung on the border of the village, just before entering the forest, and during other critical situations. Having both protective and reinforcing effects, it was one of the many precautionary rituals performed before leaving for the hunt,⁷⁷⁹ and it was also a myth or *historiola* preceding orders to the bear and exhortations to the forest spirits.⁷⁸⁰

The *Births*⁷⁸¹ were standard incantations in Finno-Karelian healing rituals: only after the *tietäjä* sang about the mythic origin of the illness did he have the power to expulse or exorcise it into the otherworld. According to Siikala, the tradition of the *Birth* incantations was rooted in North Eurasian shamanism.⁷⁸² The *tietäjäs* and the common folk sung or recited the *Births* in a wide variety of situations, since it was believed that knowing the mythic origin of an entity translated into power over it.⁷⁸³

Siikala and Haavio emphasized that there are practically no examples of a *Birth* appearing as an independent mythic narrative. The *Births* were part of a larger incantation complex which includes, for example, precautionary motifs, supplications and invocations,⁷⁸⁴ as well as orders and commands.

In the bear hunt, the *Birth* was followed by orders to the bruin or exhortations to the beings who generated the bear. After hearing about its mythical origins, the bear was expected to obey the commands of the singer. By singing the *Birth of the Bear*, the hunter

⁷⁷⁸ *Ohton synty, kontion synty* or *karhun synty*.

⁷⁷⁹ See Chapter 4.

⁷⁸⁰ See Chapter 6.

⁷⁸¹ *Synnyt*. Singular: *synty*.

⁷⁸² Siikala 2002: 89.

⁷⁸³ Siikala 2002: 90.

⁷⁸⁴ Siikala 2002: 86; Haavio 1967: 343.

gained magical control over the animal; acting in relation to the origin or progenitor of the bruin, he controlled other members of its race.

The *Birth* was believed to prevent bear attacks and neutralize the forest illness or potential contagion that could be contracted when the hunters touched the bruin's meat, skin or skull. The incantation also reinforced the hunter. Samuel Kokkomäki from Pitäjänmäki (Pyhäjärvi) told that when a hunter uttered it, he alone was able to kill the bear without any help of other hunters, and he could do it with only a knife.⁷⁸⁵

The *Births of the Bear* varied significantly from singer to singer, and they often were historically stratified,⁷⁸⁶ containing references to pre-Christians and syncretic Christian beings. The *Births of the Bear* were also sung in the rituals to protect the cattle from bruins during the grazing season, or to heal the wounds of cows, horses or persons injured by a bear.⁷⁸⁷ Kaarle Krohn briefly covered the *Births of the Bear* in his monography about all the *Births* of the Finno-Karelian tradition.⁷⁸⁸ The only Finnish scholar to write an entire monography on the *Births of the Bear* was Juho Karhu, who divided them in three basic categories: *Birth on the Earth*, *Birth in the Sky*, and *Birth from Wool*.⁷⁸⁹ This classification is a rough simplification of the complexity of the mythic origins of the bear. The category *Birth on the Earth* is particularly poor, because in these versions the bear was not really born on the Earth in the modern geographic sense of the word, but in a mythical and otherworldly forest. However, Karhu was precise in his analysis of the different kinds of linguistic and poetic variations present in almost all of the lines of the three categories. I propose a more precise classification:

- 1) *Births* in the otherworldly forest and Pohjola
- 2) *Births* in the otherworldly forest and Pohjola with details about the supernatural beings who generated the bear
- 3) *Births* with the crone of Pohjola as the mother of the bear
- 4) *Births* in the sky
- 5) *Births* from wool thrown by a supernatural being or a saint
- 6) *Births* that joined two or more versions together or presented additional versions without clear narrative links between each other

⁷⁸⁵ *Kerran vanahaan aikaan, kun vanahat miehet menivät karhun tappuun, niin ne loihdemalla lumovat karhun, että hyvästi voivat yksinään tappa; he sitte työntivät puukon karhun kulukkuun ja sillä lailla tappoivat* (SKVR XII2/6462).

⁷⁸⁶ See Section 1.3.3.

⁷⁸⁷ See SKVR VII5/3925. Suojärvi. Eur. H, n. 32. 1845.

⁷⁸⁸ Krohn 1917: 207–214.

⁷⁸⁹ Karhu 1947.

Kuusi and Haavio focused their attention especially on the *Births in the Sky*, considered to be the most ancient versions related with the archaic hunting culture.⁷⁹⁰ Sarmela also paid attention to the *Birth from the Crone of Pohjola* and the *Birth from the Wool*, but he considered them a product of agricultural cultures and a strong degeneration of the ancient *Births in the Sky*.⁷⁹¹

Analyzing the incantations in detail, the situation seems to be more complex. The *Births* involving otherworldly forests and Pohjola were more common in the tradition of the hunters. The *Births in the Sky* generally appeared in the tradition of the cattle herders, which is supposed to be more recent than that of the hunters. The *Births from the Wool* were peculiar to the cattle herders' incantations.

It would be misleading to consider the traditions of the cattle herders and the hunters as two completely different worlds or historic phases. Different *Births of the Bear* shared some lines and motifs. Similar commands and exhortations could shift from one category to the other. The hunters were probably informed about the incantations and ritual songs by cattle herders, but also vice versa. Sometimes the hunters were cattle herders themselves. Skilled singers could remember, join and chant versions of fragments sung in different ritual contexts.⁷⁹²

However, there were some evident stylistic differences between the two main traditions. The *Births of the Bear* of the cattle herders were generally longer and more articulate than the ones sung during the bear ceremonies. It is difficult to explain the exact reason for this. Maybe the *Births* of the hunters were repeated more often as brief incantations to be quickly sung in critical situations, such as an unexpected attack by the bear. The cattle herders sang or uttered their *Births* before the cattle left from the cowshed, and thus they had more time to sing longer incantations. Other hypotheses are also possible: maybe certain hunters did not want to share their entire mythic knowledge with collectors, and maybe some collectors wrote uncomplete versions of the *Births of the Bear* of the hunters if in the same area abundant material about the *Births of the Bear* was collected in the incantations of the cattle herders. However, some hunters did also sing long and articulate versions of *Births of the Bear*.⁷⁹³

⁷⁹⁰ Kuusi 1963; Haavio 1967; see Section 2.3.

⁷⁹¹ Sarmela 1991: 230–231.

⁷⁹² See Section 1.3.4.

⁷⁹³ See Sections 5.3, 5.6.

5.2 The Births of the Bear in the mythic forest

The hunters often opened the *Birth of the Bear* with a question. Jaakko Myllykangas from Pyhäntä asked: “Where was Ohto given birth, / the sparse fur grown up?”⁷⁹⁴ A similar introductory question was present also in the *Births of the Bear* sung by cattle herders.⁷⁹⁵ The answer in the *Bear Songs* was often short: “in the dark Pohjola, / in the rigorous Tapiola,”⁷⁹⁶ “in the honeyed Mehtola,”⁷⁹⁷ or “in the heart of the mead wild woods.”⁷⁹⁸

According to Sarmela, the *Births of the Bear in Pohjola* were representative of the age of slash-and-burn agriculture and the *tietäjäs*. Sarmela observed that Pohjola was the nest of evil and the land of banishment of illness, and that the mother of the bear was the crone or the maiden of Pohjola, often labeled as a whore.⁷⁹⁹ The bear had become an enemy of the people because it killed the cattle in the forest pasture or destroyed the farmland produced with the slash-and-burn technique.⁸⁰⁰ The problem is that Sarmela selected only a particular *Birth of the Bear* and made it representative for a whole era. In reality, many cattle herders sang positive *Births of the Bear*, such as the celestial one. The Karelian singer Ilvana Malinen sang a *Birth of the Bear in Pohjola* that had negative connotations, as well as reference to the *Birth of the Illnesses*. However, this particular version was sung by hunters, and it did not completely idealize the bear.⁸⁰¹ In many cases, the status of the bear was neither good nor evil, but ambivalent; it was a sacred and powerful animal, and both the hunters and the cattle herders knew that it represented potential danger.

Sarmela did not consider that the *Births of the Bear in Pohjola* were very popular among the hunters. Often the Pohjola of the hunters was not necessarily an evil landscape, however, but a powerful and ambivalent otherworld. In epic and hunting

⁷⁹⁴ *Missä on Ohto syntynynnä, / harvakarva kasvanunna?* (SKVR XII2/6466: 1–2: *Missä on Ohto syntynynnä, / harvakarva kasvanunna?* Pyhäntä. Krohn 1113. 1884. Jaakko Myllykangas). See also: SKVR VII5/3403, 3385, 3386.

⁷⁹⁵ SKVR VII5/3932: 1–2.

⁷⁹⁶ *Pimeessä Pohjolassa, / tarkassa Tapiolassa* (SKVR VII5/3386: 2–3. Ilomantsi. Krohn n. 8579. 1885. Kivilahti, Kauvonniemi. Heikki Romppainen, 68-year-old male). See also: SKVR XII2/6466: 4–5.

⁷⁹⁷ *Metisessä Mehtolassa* (SKVR 3385: 9. Nurmes. Lönnrot A II 3, n. 1. 1832).

⁷⁹⁸ *Syämessä salon simasen* (SKVR 3385: 11. Nurmes. Lönnrot A II 3, n. 1. 1832).

⁷⁹⁹ Sarmela 1991: 231.

⁸⁰⁰ Sarmela 1991: 230.

⁸⁰¹ See Section 5.6.

songs, when Pohjola, Tapiola and Metsola/Mehtola were combined through parallelism, they were names for an otherworldly forest.⁸⁰² The forestland where the bear was born was not a natural place in the modern sense: it was a mythic environment inhabited by supernatural beings. The bear hunt was supposed to be performed in the same mythic environment where the bear was born: Tapiola, Metsola or Pohjola.⁸⁰³ In this way, the mythic time was directly connected with the actual time of the hunt. These three names could indicate different aspects of the mythic woodland.

Pohjola could be a dark forest in the far north. As such, it was a place akin to the world of the dead, often dark and gloomy. Mehtola/Metsola often had positive connotations: its descriptive adjective ‘honeyed’⁸⁰⁴ seems to have been interrelated with ideas of growth, protection, purification, health, love and abundance.⁸⁰⁵ The hunters additionally called the forest mistress “honeyed,” hoping that she would be propitious and help them.⁸⁰⁶ Also called “honeyed” by the *patvaska* was the sauna whisk and the sauna bath used to purify and protect the groom.⁸⁰⁷

Being the realm of the forest master Tapio, Tapiola was full of game animals. According to Karhu, Tapiola was called “meticulous”⁸⁰⁸ because in the forest the hunter should behave meticulously, following ritual rules related with the forest spirits.⁸⁰⁹

Many singers sang that the bear was born “under a small pine,”⁸¹⁰ “the spruce’s flower-top,”⁸¹¹ “under a beautiful juniper,”⁸¹² “on the root of a wrenched young spruce, / alongside the verdant wilderness, / nearby a rough dry spruce.”⁸¹³

⁸⁰² Karhu 1947: 115; Franssila 1900: 383.

⁸⁰³ See Sections 6.2, 6.3.

⁸⁰⁴ *Metinen*.

⁸⁰⁵ See Sections 6.2, 6.3. “Honey of the forest” was a circumlocution for the bear; see Section 6.4.

⁸⁰⁶ SKVR I4/1080: 1; I4/1214: 6.

⁸⁰⁷ SKVR VII2/2818: 9–10. 2818. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 211. 1846.

⁸⁰⁸ *Tarkka*.

⁸⁰⁹ Karhu 1947: 115; see Section 6.2.

⁸¹⁰ *Pienehen petäjän alla* (SKVR VI2/4886: 13. Rantasalmi. A. Westerlund, XXVII. n. 1. 1887. Ulla Maria Eronen, 60-year-old woman).

⁸¹¹ *Alla kuusen kukkalatvan* (SKVR VII5/3950: 11).

⁸¹² *Alla kaunosen katajan* (SKVR VII5/3950: 13).

⁸¹³ *Juuressa nyryn närien / vieressä vihannan viian / luona karkean karahkan* (SKVR XII2/6480: 11–13). See also: SKVR XII2/6825: 2–4; SKVR XII2/6843: 7–8.

Roots of trees were considered powerful magical places and borders with the otherworld.⁸¹⁴ In a protective incantation uttered before weddings, the *patvaska* sang that the groom was born “under the root of three birches”⁸¹⁵ and that the darts of the sorcerers were unable to hurt him. Considering the analogies between the *Bear Songs* and wedding songs, it is significant that the bear and the groom were related to similar mythical environments.⁸¹⁶

Similar descriptions of a beautiful and mythic forest landscape were present in the songs of departure for the forest and in the songs of the bear skull ritual.⁸¹⁷ The songs seem to confirm a strong analogy between the birth land of the bear, the hunting ground and ritual landscapes. The singers probably fused the otherworldly landscape of the origins with the “actual” time of the hunt and the concrete environmental context of the hunting ground. For example, Heikki Rautiainen from Ristijärvi asked the forest spirit to guide him to a hill⁸¹⁸ situated “on the root of a wrenched young spruce.”⁸¹⁹

Some singers added other interesting details. T. Honkanen from Nurmes sang that the bear was born on a border: “between two rocks, / at the split of the wet land.”⁸²⁰ Borders were powerful places, and according to some cattle herders’ *Births of the Bear* the bear swore to refrain from attacking cattle on a border stone.⁸²¹ A crack or hole between two rocks was a border with the otherworld. There the *tietäjäs* could make contact with spirits or banish illnesses.⁸²² In healing incantations, the vernacular Saint Anna was requested to spin a red thread between two rocks: her thread healed legs and arms.⁸²³ Anna or Anniki was one of the various protector spirits of the bear.⁸²⁴ The red thread appears in *Bear Songs* as well: the hunter requested the forest spirits to transform it into the stairs of the bridge of Pohjola, through which the bears could

⁸¹⁴ Siikala 2002: 292.

⁸¹⁵ *Kolmeñ koivun juuren alla* (SKVR I4/1877: 12).

⁸¹⁶ The bear was welcomed as a groom by the mistress of the household; see Section 8.1.

⁸¹⁷ See Sections 6.9, 9.5; SKVR VII5/3396: 9–14.

⁸¹⁸ The bear den.

⁸¹⁹ SKVR XII2/6846: 11 Ristijärvi. Krohn 0245. 1882. Nykyri. Heikki Rautiainen, 67-year-old man.

⁸²⁰ *Kahen kallion välissä, / maan määrän jakaimessa* (SKVR VII5/3386: 4–5. Nurmes. Nurmio n. 1211. 1891. T. Honkanen, 97-year-old man).

⁸²¹ SKVR VII5/3403: 28–31.

⁸²² Siikala 2002: 179, 262.

⁸²³ SKVR VI2/4592.

⁸²⁴ See Section 5.5.

reach the hunting ground.⁸²⁵ Honkanen also sang that the bear was born “under the wooly hem of a cloak.”⁸²⁶ This line could refer to the fact that the bear had a supernatural mother: “Moanotar, the crone of the North,” who gave birth to the nine illnesses under a wooly hem.⁸²⁷

Ulla Maria Eronen from Rantasalmi sang that the bear was born “at the end of an iron stool.”⁸²⁸ The iron stool was a mighty mythical object. Karhu noted that in some songs and incantations, Saint Anni⁸²⁹ spins her thread while seated on an iron stool and that in the *Births of Fire*, the heroes Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen lit the first fire while sitting on an iron stool, or Ilmarinen alone sat on it, making “iron seeds.”⁸³⁰ Väinämöinen could sit on an iron stool when he started playing the first *kantele*.⁸³¹ If heroes and saints sat on an iron stool, it was indeed an honorable birthplace for the bear. In the songs of the bear feast, the place of honor at the table reserved for the bear could be an iron stool.⁸³²

What really mattered, however, was that the mythical forestland where the bear was born was governed by female forest spirits: the *Birth* was often an introduction to several prayers and exhortations to them.

5.3 Carle Saxa’s text: Mielikki as the mother of the bear

In some *Bear Songs*, a particular spirit was mentioned as the mother of the bear. In a long *Bear Song* transcribed by Carle Saxa in Suomussalmi at the beginning of the 19th century (circa 1820) and published in 1829 by Zacharias Topelius the Older,⁸³³ an anonymous hunter sang a long version of the *Birth of the Bear* followed by exhortations addressed to several forest spirits. This elaborate version was not a compilation by Topelius or Saxa, because Tapani Portimo from Simojoki sang a similar variation in 1893.⁸³⁴

⁸²⁵ SKVR VI2/4592.

⁸²⁶ *Alla vaiipan villa helman* (SKVR VII/5: 3950, 14).

⁸²⁷ SKVR VI2/4011: 5; see Section 5.6.

⁸²⁸ *Rahin rautasen nenällä* (SKVR VI2/4886: 14; Rantasalmi. A. Westerlund, XXVII. n. 1. 1887.

Ulla Maria Eronen, 60-year-old woman); see also: SKVR VI2/4822: 54; SKVR VI2/4884.

⁸²⁹ Saint Anne. See Section 5.5.

⁸³⁰ Karhu 1947: 71.

⁸³¹ SKVR XIII1/576: 28. The *kantele* is a traditional string instrument.

⁸³² SKVR XIII1/576: 28.

⁸³³ In *Wanjoja Runoja. Neljäs osa*. See also SKVR XII2/6481 and SKVR XII2/6479.

⁸³⁴ SKVR XII2/6489.

First, the anonymous hunter from Suomussalmi revealed who was the mother of the bear:

Mielikki, the Forest Mistress,
she conceived Ohtonen,⁸³⁵
bred the sparse fur,
under the spruce's flower-top,
the flower top, the golden sprig.⁸³⁶

After this revelation, the hunter prayed for the mother of the bear to control her offspring. The hunter asked this of the forest spirits "Annikki,⁸³⁷ daughter of Tapio" and "Mielikki,⁸³⁸ mistress of the forest":

Fasten your dog,
bind your mongrel
to a cattle shelter made of spruce,
to a hay pole made of oak,
when I'm coming to the courtyard,
to the doors of the mighty *ohtonen*.⁸³⁹

The name of the mother of the bear could vary in other *Bear Songs* or *Births of the Bear*.⁸⁴⁰ This *Birth of the Bear* continued with a long set of requests not only addressed to the mother of the bear (Mielikki), but to other forest spirits strictly connected with her. The hunter seems to ask them to bind the bear to the den or in a trap. In this way, the bear was made unable to flee or to attack the hunters. Here the bruin has a double identity: it is the son of the forest spirit Mielikki and at the same time it is her dog. Thus, Mielikki was both its mother and owner.⁸⁴¹

⁸³⁵ *Ohtonen* is the diminutive name of *ohto*, the most common ritual name for bear.

⁸³⁶ *Mielikki, Metän Emäntä, / sepä Ohtosen sukesi, / harva karvan kasvatteli, / alla kuusen kukka latvan, / kukka latvan, kulta lehvän* (SKVR XII2/6480: 30–36).

⁸³⁷ On Annikki, see Section 5.5.

⁸³⁸ On Mielikki, see Section 5.4.

⁸³⁹ *Kitke kiini koiriasi, / rakentele rakkiasi, / kuusamisehen kujahan, / talasehen tammisehen, / tul[[l]essani tanhuville/ jalon ohtosen oville* (SKVR XII2/6480: 25–29). See also: SKVR XII2/6482.

⁸⁴⁰ See Sections 5.4, 5.5.

⁸⁴¹ See Section 3.7.

After that, the hunter asked the forest spirits and the syncretic saints to protect his cattle from a bear attack. He prayed to Mielikki and “Tuometar, Maiden of Tapio”:⁸⁴² “smear the claws with wort / bathe the teeth with honey.”⁸⁴³ After that procedure, the bear was unable to attack the cattle.⁸⁴⁴

The hunter prayed to the Virgin Mary⁸⁴⁵ to weave a golden cloth and a copper cloak,⁸⁴⁶ with which he might wrap and protect the cattle when the bear was walking around in the forest.⁸⁴⁷ In wedding songs, the *patvaska* asked Mary to use her cloak to protect the wedding couple and guests from sorcerers’ darts.⁸⁴⁸

The hunter requested Annikki, the daughter of Tapio, to “carve signs across the lands”⁸⁴⁹ and “to let the grain⁸⁵⁰ go unharmed.”⁸⁵¹ With a similar motif, the hunters asked the forest spirit to make signs in the forest to help them to find their way to the den of the bear.⁸⁵² After that, the cows were transformed into stones and stumps,⁸⁵³ probably to hide them from the bear.⁸⁵⁴

The hunter also asked Annikki, now called the “Mistress of the Forest,” to put a collar made of rowan, bird cherry tree, copper or iron on the snout of the bear, making it unable to bite the hunters or cattle.⁸⁵⁵ The motif of the magical collar appears often in the *Bear Songs* and cattle herders’ incantations.⁸⁵⁶

The songs reveal that the hunting songs and the incantations to protect the cattle could be interwoven. The singer from Suomussalmi pursued several goals: to avoid being wounded by a bear, to prevent the bear from fleeing from the den, and to forestall the bruin’s revenge as an attack on the hunter’s cattle. In other *Births of the Bear* sung by hunters, the singer asked the bear to stay away from the cattle, telling the

⁸⁴² *Tuometar, Tapion Neiti* (XII2/6480: 40), see Section 5.4.

⁸⁴³ *Veäs kynnet viertehellä / hampahat meellä hauvo* (SKVR XII2/6480: 42–43).

⁸⁴⁴ SKVR XII2/6480: 44–46.

⁸⁴⁵ See Section 5.5.

⁸⁴⁶ On Mary’s cloak, see Timonen 2013: 391.

⁸⁴⁷ SKVR XII2/6480: 51–52.

⁸⁴⁸ Hekinmäki 1981: 455.

⁸⁴⁹ *Vestä pilkat pitkin maita* (SKVR XII2/6480: 57).

⁸⁵⁰ The cattle.

⁸⁵¹ *Vikomata mennä viljan* (SKVR XII2/6480: 59).

⁸⁵² See Sections 6.12, 7.10.

⁸⁵³ SKVR XII2/6480: 61–62.

⁸⁵⁴ A case of protective “forest cover.”

⁸⁵⁵ SKVR I4/1361: 59–65.

⁸⁵⁶ See SKVR I4/1197: 9–13, I4/1286: 57–64.

bruin that there was plenty of other land elsewhere.⁸⁵⁷ These lines probably sought to prevent a bear attack on the cattle as an act of revenge for the bear hunt.

5.4 The pre-Christian parents of the bear

In the *Bear Song* transcribed by Saxa,⁸⁵⁸ Mielikki was the mother of the bear, but the singer also mentioned other spirits who governed the bear. Other possible parents of the bear are mentioned in other incantations. In this section and the following one, I will try to analyze their roles.

Mielikki (also Mielus, Mielutar, Mieluutar) frequently appears in the *Bear Songs* as one of the female rulers of the forest, and she is often called “generous mistress of the forest.”⁸⁵⁹ In other songs, however, the forest mistress has no name or she can be called by other names. Mielikki is often described as “pleasant.”⁸⁶⁰ Thus, the hunters asked her to gratify them with prey.⁸⁶¹ The hunters prayed to Mielikki to lead them towards bears or other game,⁸⁶² or to send a potential catch towards them. Cattle herders invoked her in incantations to protect their cows from bears.⁸⁶³ Healers asked her to undo “her work,” namely, to remove an illness caused by forest contagion.⁸⁶⁴ Mielikki not only governed the bear, but was more generally in charge of all the forest and its animals.

Haavio considered Hongotar⁸⁶⁵ (also Hongatar, Honkatar, Hongas) to be the original mother of the bear, because her name is connected with the pine tree⁸⁶⁶ where the bear skull was hung. She is mentioned in some of the oldest *Bear Songs*: the *Cantio Ursina* (1675)⁸⁶⁷ and the *Text of Viitasaari* (after 1750). In the latter song, the hunter uttered: “Your family is of the pine grove, / Hongotar is of your family.”⁸⁶⁸ Haavio

⁸⁵⁷ SKVR XII2/6464: 52–57.

⁸⁵⁸ SKVR XII2/6464.

⁸⁵⁹ *Metsän ehtosa emäntä*: (SKVR VII5/3298: 24).

⁸⁶⁰ *Mieluisa*; see Section 6.2.

⁸⁶¹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 178; SKVR VII5/3297: 16–19.

⁸⁶² Krohn [1915] 2008: 178; SKVR XII2/6396, VII5/3297: 16–19.

⁸⁶³ SKVR I4/1386, Kivijärvi. Marttiini n. 15. 1892.

⁸⁶⁴ SKVR I4/749; I4/752.

⁸⁶⁵ The “Pine Lady.”

⁸⁶⁶ Haavio 1967: 25.

⁸⁶⁷ SKVR IX4/1101:6. Rautalampi. 1675.

⁸⁶⁸ *Hongincosta sinun sucusi / Hongotar sinun sugusi* (SKVR IX4/1096: 37–38).

considered Hongotar a personification of the first pine tree, where the first bear skull was hung.⁸⁶⁹

In the incantations, however, Hongotar or Hongatar was a typical forest spirit, not only the protector of the pine of the bear skulls. Hongatar was called “good mistress”⁸⁷⁰ and “forest mistress,”⁸⁷¹ and she was often associated by means of parallelism with “Tapiotar, beautiful wife”⁸⁷² or Katajatar.⁸⁷³ Tapiotar⁸⁷⁴ was the female counterpart of the forest master Tapio, being his wife and the “Mistress of the Forest.” The hunters prayed to Hongatar to carve signs on the trees to mark the place where game animals could be found.⁸⁷⁵ Furthermore, after the bear kill, the hunter asked Hongatar to carve signs on the trees to help the bear find its way to the village.⁸⁷⁶ Krohn noticed that Hongatar could also be connected with the bear den.⁸⁷⁷ In a *Birth of the Bear* from Kuusamo, the bruin was born “from the den of Petäjätär, / the room of Hongatar.”⁸⁷⁸ This idea could be related to an actual situation: bears often build their den inside a fallen pine or in a hole inside the roots of a pine, and she-bears often give birth in the den itself. The songs added a mythical dimension to a natural phenomenon, defining the den as the dwelling place of the forest spirit and that spirit as the mythic mother of the bear.

Hongatar was often invoked in incantations to protect the cattle from bears during the grazing season.⁸⁷⁹ Sometimes she sowed spruces in the *Birth of the Tree*.⁸⁸⁰ In an incantation to heal the wounds caused a bear, a *tietäjä* asked Hongatar to heal with mead the wound caused by her “boy.”⁸⁸¹ In some *Songs of the Hare*,⁸⁸² she was called

⁸⁶⁹ Haavio 1967: 25–26; see Section 9.4.

⁸⁷⁰ SKVR VII5/3312: 4–10; VII5/3313: 7–12.

⁸⁷¹ *Metän emäntä* (SKVR VI2/4901: 1).

⁸⁷² SKVR VII3/316: 4–6; see Karhu 1947: 110; SKVR VI2/5350. 3–4; VI2/5352:4.

⁸⁷³ “Juniper Lady”; see SKVR I4/1199: 36–37.

⁸⁷⁴ “Tapio Lady.”

⁸⁷⁵ SKVR VII5/3312: 4–10; VII5/3313: 7–12.

⁸⁷⁶ SKVR I4/1199: 36–41

⁸⁷⁷ Krohn [1915] 2008: 131.

⁸⁷⁸ *Petäjättären pesästä, / hongattaren huonehesta* (SKVR XII2/6867, 3–4). Petäjätär means “Pine Lady.”

⁸⁷⁹ SKVR VI2/5350: 4–6; VI2/5352: 4–6; VII5/3849: 19–23; VII5 Metsäsuomalaiset 314: 1; XII 2/6740: 37–39.

⁸⁸⁰ SKVR VII3/316: 4–6.

⁸⁸¹ The bear. SKVR VII5/3943: 65–69.

⁸⁸² *Janiksen laulu*.

the mother of the hare.⁸⁸³ In healing incantations, Hongotar could have negative connotations and, as the Crone of Pohjola and Loviatar, she gave birth to nine illnesses.⁸⁸⁴ The Crone or Mistress of Pohjola is another of the possible mothers of the bear. Ganander identified Hongas with the Mistress of Pohjola.⁸⁸⁵

Among the possible mothers of the bear are Tuometar⁸⁸⁶ and Katajatar. Olli Olsson from Kainulasjärvi sang the following lines of a *Birth of the Bear* to protect the cattle from bears: “Tuometar is your mother, / Katajatar your bearer.”⁸⁸⁷ Juhana Korpelainen from Kiuruvesi prayed to both of them to lead him to the spot where they could find the bear.⁸⁸⁸ Maria Märsy from Kiiminki mentioned Tuometar alone as the mother of the bear.⁸⁸⁹

Quite often in the songs only the mother of the bear was mentioned. Heikki Kylmäniemi from Kuusamo revealed the name of the father of the bear: “Tapio is the elder of your house.”⁸⁹⁰ Teñesseiñi Kauro from Tollonjoki sang that the forest master, “The old man of the forest, frost beard,”⁸⁹¹ brought up the bear.⁸⁹² Ganander mentioned Hongonen, the male counterpart of Hongotar, as the father of the bear.⁸⁹³ In *Bear Songs*, the hunt was often presented as an act of flirting with, courting or marrying the female forest spirits that gave the prey to the hunters.⁸⁹⁴ The importance of the eroticization of the relationship between the hunter and forest could explain why the hunter rarely mentioned the bear’s father.

⁸⁸³ SKVR I2/1063: 16–17, VII2/958: 5–6; the *Songs of the Hare* are so-called fable songs in which the hare mother gives advice to its offspring.

⁸⁸⁴ SKVR VII4/2100.

⁸⁸⁵ Ganander [1789] 2003: 36–37.

⁸⁸⁶ The “Bird Cherry Lady.”

⁸⁸⁷ *Tuometar sinun emosi, / Katajatar kantajasi* (SKVR XII2/6896, 1–2).

⁸⁸⁸ SKVR VI2/4889: 48–52.

⁸⁸⁹ SKVR XII2/6856.

⁸⁹⁰ *Tapio talosi vanhin* (SKVR XII2/6867: 6).

⁸⁹¹ *Metsän ukko, hallaparta* (SKVR XII2/6867: 6).

⁸⁹² SKVR I4/1407: 1–8. Tollonjoki. Genetz II, n. 13. 1872. Teñesseiñi Kauro.

⁸⁹³ Ganander [1789] 2003: 37.

⁸⁹⁴ See Sections 6.5, 6.6.

5.5 Syncretic saints and forest spirits as guardians of the bear

Hunters and cattle herders also prayed to syncretic saints. The more common were Annikki and Maria, mentioned also in the long *Bear Song* collected by Saxa.⁸⁹⁵

Irma-Riitta Järvinen notes that Eastern Finland and Karelia, Annikki (also Annikka, Anni) was a vernacular and syncretic version of Saint Anne, the grandmother of Jesus and the mother of the Virgin Mary. Saint Anne was revered as a rich and generous mistress, and the protector of the work and wealth of the house.⁸⁹⁶

In Eastern Finland, the Day of Saint Anne (November 9) was a festivity marked by a cornucopia of food and by the women's work in preparation for Christmas, including brewing beer.⁸⁹⁷ Saint Anne became a female model who took care of the household and fed the relatives, preparing for the festival season.⁸⁹⁸

The syncretic Annikki of Eastern Finland combined some characteristics of Saint Anne with the most typical ones of the mistress of the forest: she took care of the "forest cottage" just as Saint Anne took care of the household. A request to Annikki could be easily followed by a request to his "daughter," Maria (the Virgin Mary), who also appeared often in *Bear Songs* as a syncretic forest being.⁸⁹⁹ Annikki held the keys of the "granary" of Tapio, the master of the forest, and the hunters requested her to open the "granary of money" of the forest.⁹⁰⁰ As mistress, she governed the game animals and decided to give a number of them to the hunters.⁹⁰¹

As Saint Anne, Annikki was also represented as a richly dressed mistress: her gold and silver jewelry probably referred to the plenty of game and fur animals in the forest.⁹⁰² Anni was considered to be the mistress of bees, and a bee itself could be called "bird of Anni."⁹⁰³ As a mistress of the forest, Anniki could have servants.⁹⁰⁴

⁸⁹⁵ See Section 5.3.

⁸⁹⁶ Siikala 2016: 378; Krohn [1915] 2008: 177.

⁸⁹⁷ Järvinen I.-R. 2013: 282–283.

⁸⁹⁸ Järvinen 2013: 282.

⁸⁹⁹ Siikala 2016: 378.

⁹⁰⁰ SKVR VII5 3297 43–47; Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 145–146.

⁹⁰¹ Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen & Leskelä 2017: 148.

⁹⁰² Järvinen 2013: 285; Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 145.

⁹⁰³ *Annin lintu*; see Krohn [1915] 2008: 179.

⁹⁰⁴ SKVR XII2/6843: 11–12.

The hunters called Annikki the daughter of Tapio or his mistress, wife or crone.⁹⁰⁵ Annikki was most often represented as a daughter, girl or young woman.⁹⁰⁶

In the *Births of the Bear*, the vernacular Virgin Mary was syncretized with the forest spirits⁹⁰⁷ as her mother Anne. In hunting songs, Maria could be called “forest mistress”⁹⁰⁸ or “honeyed maiden,”⁹⁰⁹ and she was often requested to help the hunters. The adjective ‘honeyed’—being a bit too erotic for a canonical Virgin Mary—was characteristic of forest spirits and their environment.⁹¹⁰ The Virgin Mary also had an active role in the *Births of the Bear* from the wool.⁹¹¹ Senni Timonen emphasized how dynamic and heroic Mary could be in epic songs: she went into the smith of the devilish Hiisi and she captured that demonic being. Even if the background of the *Songs of Mary* was biblical, the epic songs were quite distant from Bible’s stories.⁹¹² The *tietäjäs* often prayed to Mary in their healing incantations.⁹¹³

In a *Birth of the Bear* from the area of Norwegian Forest Finns,⁹¹⁴ a cattle herder revealed the identity of another mother of the bruin: “Kati, beautiful girl of the air, / in your womb you carried *kouvo*.”^{915,916} The vernacular Kaisa or Kati could be one of the saints who lulled the fire in the sky to sleep by rocking a golden cradle.⁹¹⁷ At the end of this *Birth*, the cattle herder conjures the bear and sends it far away from the cows: “There I expel you, / on the edge of a long cloud.”⁹¹⁸ The bear was sent back to the land of his birth, the sky where Kati lived. The cattle herder added that on this cloud a horse gave birth to some foals and the bear had boneless meat to eat, following the motif of the expulsion of illness in healing incantations.⁹¹⁹

⁹⁰⁵ Krohn [1915] 2008: 178; Järvinen I.-R. 2013: 284.

⁹⁰⁶ Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 145.

⁹⁰⁷ Karhu 1947: 88.

⁹⁰⁸ SKVR VI2/4884: 52, VI2/5034: 6.

⁹⁰⁹ *Maria, metinen neity* (SKVR VI2/4889: 8, 42).

⁹¹⁰ See Sections 5.2, 6.2. “Honey of the forest” was a circumlocution for the bear; see Section 6.4.

⁹¹¹ See Section 5.9.

⁹¹² Timonen 2013: 391.

⁹¹³ Krohn [1915] 2008:218–220.

⁹¹⁴ *Metsäsuomalaiset*; see Section 1.2.1.

⁹¹⁵ *Kouvo*: the bear.

⁹¹⁶ *Kati kaunis ilman tyttö, / kohussais kouvon kannoit* (SKVR VII5 metsäsuomalaiset 315: 1–2. Norway, Grue, Räisälä. Gottlund 775. 25/11 1821).

⁹¹⁷ SKVR VI1/3219: 7–13, VI1/3219: 1–4.

⁹¹⁸ *Tuone ma sinun manoaan / pilven pitkän reunaan* (SKVR VII5 Metsäsuomalaiset 315: 30–31).

⁹¹⁹ SKVR VII5 Metsäsuomalaiset 315: 32–35.

In an incantation of Swedish Forest Finns, Kati is mentioned as the mother of the wolf.⁹²⁰ According to Ganander, Kati was a forest goddess who gave birth to the trees.⁹²¹ In Finnish incantations, Kati was mentioned on one occasion as the being responsible for the birth of the trees⁹²² and more often as the one who lulled the winds.⁹²³ Kati also was a folk version of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, who was syncretized with a female forest spirit and a cattle's guardian spirit. Järvinen notes that Finland and Karelia, the vernacular Saint Catherine (Kati, Kaisa, Katri, Kateriina, Katrina, Katrinatar, Kaio) became a protector of the cattle herd and sheep flock.⁹²⁴ The people invoked her to keep bears away from their pastures during the grazing season.⁹²⁵

According to the *Legenda Aurea*, the Great Martyr Catherine was condemned to death on a spiked breaking wheel, but an angel shattered it. The pagan emperor Maxentius then ordered that she be beheaded, but from her neck did not bleed common blood but pure milk.⁹²⁶ In the folk imaginary, the legend of the breaking wheel became associated with the common spinning wheel: the saint became a protector of wool or textile workers and the sheep.⁹²⁷ In German countries, Saint Catherine protected those in all kinds of professions related with wheels: textile workers, millers, knife grinders and carriage builders.⁹²⁸ The connection between Catherine and the cattle could also be linked with the Christian legend of the transformation of her blood into milk.⁹²⁹ In Estonia and Germany, too, Catherine became a protector of sheep and cattle.⁹³⁰ In Ingria she was called the "female guardian spirit of the cows,"⁹³¹ and butter and *kissel* (custard) were offered to her in exchange

⁹²⁰ SKVR VII5 Metsäsuomalaiset 206: 3–4. Sweden, Värmland, Fryksände, Lekvattnet. Gottlund. 766. 13/10 1821. Matti Olson Hämmäläinen.

⁹²¹ Ganander [1789] 2003: 52.

⁹²² SKVR XIII/3968.

⁹²³ Ganander [1789] 2003: 52; Ganander 1789: 82.

⁹²⁴ Karhu 1947: 98; Järvinen I.-R. 2016: 434, 444.

⁹²⁵ Ganander [1789] 2003: 52; Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 200–202, Järvinen 2016: 139, Järvinen 2016: 434, 444.

⁹²⁶ Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 188–189; Järvinen 2016 I.-R.: 435; Vilkkuna K [1950] 2010: 310.

⁹²⁷ Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 202; Järvinen I.-R. 2016: 436; Vilkkuna K. [1950] 2010: 310.

⁹²⁸ Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 186; Järvinen I.-R. 2016: 436.

⁹²⁹ Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 203; Järvinen I.-R. 2016: 436.

⁹³⁰ Krohn [1915] 2008: 195–196; Järvinen I.-R. 2016: 436.

⁹³¹ *Lehmien Haltiattaren*.

for her care in keeping the cattle beautiful.⁹³² Katariina (or Kairina) was invoked to obtain “sheep luck” and “cattle luck” during the day of Catherine (November 25).⁹³³ On this day, the flock was closed in the sheepfold and the cattle in the barn,⁹³⁴ and the mistresses of the house cooked a cow’s head and ate its tongue in the cowshed.⁹³⁵ This was a female ritual meal to promote the welfare of the cattle.⁹³⁶

In a *Birth of the Bear* from Dalecarlia (Dalarna, Sweden), an area inhabited by the Forest Finns of Sweden, two saints are the parents of the bear: “Saint George is your father, / Catherine your mother.”⁹³⁷ A sexual act between these two saints would be completely absurd, considering the standard Christian faith, and even stranger would be a bear cub as result. If the two saints were identified with forest spirits, however, their intercourse would be more comprehensible. We should also consider that the words ‘father’ and ‘mother’ in these incantations could also mean “guardian spirits,” not only the parents—the two concepts are often intertwined. According to Karhu, Saint George (Jörän in Sweden; Yrjänä, Yrjö or Jyrki in Finland; and Jyrki, Jyri or Griska in Karelia) was syncretized with the forest spirit Tapio and Saint Catherine was syncretized with his mistress of the forest.⁹³⁸ Saint George was a dragon-slayer and his adventure was well known throughout the Finno-Karelian area, including Estonian Ingria.⁹³⁹ According to some vernacular legends, the dragon devoured not only people but cattle and for this reason the Finnish and Karelian people considered George a protector of cattle from wild predators.⁹⁴⁰ On the day of Yrjö (April 23), the cattle herders let the cows go to the pasture and asked Yrjö to protect them from bears and wolves.⁹⁴¹

The fusion between George and a male forest spirit is also evident in other incantations to protect the cattle, such as the following from Salmi, which starts with

⁹³² Krohn [1915] 2008: 195–196.

⁹³³ *Kaisan päivä*, 25 of November (see SKVR VI2/5662; VI2/7547).

⁹³⁴ Krohn [1915] 2008: 195.

⁹³⁵ Krohn [1915] 2008: 195.

⁹³⁶ Järvinen I.-R. 2016: 436.

⁹³⁷ *Sante Jöran on sun isons, / Kat[rin]a on sun emons* (SKVR VII5 Metsäsuomalaiset 381. Sweden, Dalarna Äppelbo. Between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century).

⁹³⁸ Karhu 1947: 100.

⁹³⁹ See Järvinen I.-R. (ed.) 1981: 88.

⁹⁴⁰ Krohn [1915] 2008: 190.

⁹⁴¹ Vilkuna K. [1950] 2010: 106–110; Järvinen I.-R. 2016: 438.

the lines: "Mistresses of the forest, masters of the forest, / Griška of the forest, Griška of the forest."⁹⁴²

In Karelia, the cult of saints was an integral part of the Orthodox faith. In Finland after the Lutheran Reformation, the Roman Catholic saint's cult was denounced as superstition, but in the countryside the people continued to venerate vernacular versions of the saints.⁹⁴³

Sarmela stated that with the development of agriculture and the introduction of Christianity, Saint Brigit, Saint George or Blaise became the new guardians of the bear.⁹⁴⁴ Peasants invoked these holy figures to ensure that they protected the cattle from bears during the grazing season.⁹⁴⁵

By contrast, Irma-Riitta Järvinen stresses that Saint Anne did not obviate the existence of the earlier forest spirits. In fact, she became the forest spirit Annikki, who behaved as a forest mistress and was invoked, among other pre-Christian forest spirits, thereby herself becoming a member of the group or family of forest spirits.⁹⁴⁶ There was not a complete substitution of previous forest spirits by saints, but rather a process of inclusion of certain saints in the forest spirits' community.

Stark points out that as the forest spirits were syncretized with saints, they were supposed to follow certain Christian ethical and behavioral rules, and humans used Christian concepts to convince forest spirits "to maintain harmony and fair play."⁹⁴⁷

The inclusion of saints in the group of the bear's protectors demonstrates that the bear maintained a high level of sacredness for many centuries after the development of slash-and-burn agriculture and Christianization. If the bear was simply considered an enemy, it would have been heavily demonized, and we would find the Devil or demons as the bear's protectors. Stark stresses that the partial Christianization of forest spirits was a way of making them "more intuitively anthropomorphic, humanlike."⁹⁴⁸ The attribution of elements of "Christianity" to the forest spirits assured "a common ground for negotiations."⁹⁴⁹ Thus, both the humans and the forest spirits were

⁹⁴² *Metsän emändät, metsän isändä[t], / metsän yrjö, metsän Griška, metsän Griška* (SKVR VII/3793, 2: Salmi. Krohn n. 8053. 1884. Miinala. Vasslei Ivanov, more than 50 years old, born in Rajaselkä).

⁹⁴³ Järvinen I.-R. 2016: 437.

⁹⁴⁴ Sarmela 1991: 231.

⁹⁴⁵ Sarmela 1991: 236.

⁹⁴⁶ Järvinen I.-R. 2013: 285; Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, I.-R. Järvinen & Leskelä 2017: 148.

⁹⁴⁷ Stark 2002: 127.

⁹⁴⁸ Stark 2002: 127.

⁹⁴⁹ Stark 2002: 127.

supposed to follow “the norms and concepts of justice, sin forgiveness and mercy emphasized in Christian teaching.”⁹⁵⁰

The names of the forest spirits and saints were often changed in the songs and incantations, but the impression is that all the beings retained the same functions: they nurtured or protected the bear, protected hunters and cattle from bears, and healed the wounds caused by bears or illness coming from the forest. The exact identity of the supernatural agent was not really relevant; the people were more concerned about the efficiency of their agency and power.⁹⁵¹ For this reason, their names, epithets and powers tend to be confused and mixed. Forest spirits with different names could have the same epithets. Mielikki, Annikki, Himmerki, Mimerki, Mielotar, Juonitar, Hongatar, Siiliki and Tinatti were called “Mistress of the Forest.”⁹⁵² The epithet “daughter of Tapio” was shared by Annikki, Tuometar, Tellervo, Killervö, Hongatar, Lemmitar, Tyytikki, Tyylikki, Tynikkii and Lumikki.⁹⁵³

Stark stresses that in the Karelian and Finnish folk beliefs, categories of spirits, divine figures or supernatural beings “were often hazy”;⁹⁵⁴ the pre-Christian and Christian sacred agents “were only vaguely identified”⁹⁵⁵ and often represented “fusions of two categories of sacred agents.”⁹⁵⁶

In the *Births of the Bear* or in the *Bear Songs*, two or three forest spirits or syncretic saints were joined together through parallelism. In these cases, it is somewhat difficult to understand if the singer sang to two separate entities or to one entity with many names. However, the hunter tended to sing different requests to different forest beings that had similar powers.

Stark states that the vernacular “fuzzy categories” were not caused by ignorance.⁹⁵⁷ Thus, the form of the syncretism was not casual, but appropriate to a ritual system serving the interest of the community. Folk were not interested in a precise classification of the supranormal beings, but in what the spirits could do in concrete situations.⁹⁵⁸ In the *Births of the Bear*, the original features of the saints were heavily modified: they became forest spirits which were able to recognize the Christian basic

⁹⁵⁰ Stark 2002: 127.

⁹⁵¹ Stark 2002: 63.

⁹⁵² Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 148.

⁹⁵³ Kallio, Lehtonen, Timonen, Järvinen I.-R. & Leskelä 2017: 148.

⁹⁵⁴ Stark 2002: 63.

⁹⁵⁵ Stark 2002: 63.

⁹⁵⁶ Stark 2002: 63.

⁹⁵⁷ Stark 2002: 63.

⁹⁵⁸ Stark 2002: 64–66.

moral issues. In addition to that, hunters and cattle helpers probably sought to accumulate as many supernatural helpers as possible in order to deal with such a powerful being as the bear.

5.6 The Crone of Pohja as the mother of the bear

Compared to the standard of brevity of the *Bear Songs*, Iivana Malinen from Vuonninen sang a *Birth of the Bear* of exceptional length. He had heard it from his grandfather Ontrei. Iivana sang that the Crone of Pohja—the Mistress of Pohjola—generated the bear:

Crone of Pohja, gap-toothed,
walked around, ambled around,
in the shade of the copper mountain,
on the heels of the Hill of Pain,
in the deep woods of Lapland,
beside the fiery rapids,
on the edge of the evil stream.
She knew her womb was swollen,
her belly in dire straits,
the waves of pain already coming:
a great trouble fell her,
on the root of a wrenched young spruce,⁹⁵⁹
under the spruce's flower-top.⁹⁶⁰

In the *Bear Songs*, the hunters often sang that the bear was born in Pohjola, but Malinen specified that the Crone of Pohjola gave birth to the bruin. A *tietäjä* from Ilomantsi mentioned the wife of Pohjola as the mother of the bear in an incantation to heal the wounds caused by a bear.⁹⁶¹

⁹⁵⁹ Or "dwarf spruce".

⁹⁶⁰ *Pohjan akka, harva hammas, / kävelevi kässehtivi, / varjossa vaskisen vaaran, / Kipuvaaran kinterillä, Lapin laajassa salossa, / luona tulisen kosken, / pahan virran partahalla. / Tunsipa kohtunsa kovaksi, / vatsansa pahoin pakoksi, / jopa tuli tuskan soutu, / vaivouttipa vaivoa suuri / juurelle nyry närehen, / alle kuusen kukka latvan.* (SKVR I4/1191, 1–13. H. Meriläinen n. 245. Vuonninen. Iivana Malinen, heard from his grandfather Ontrei, 1888). English translation partially based on the one by Tolley in Pentikäinen 2007: 67.

⁹⁶¹ SKVR VII5/3943: 18–19 Ilomantsi. Europaeus H, n. 169. 1845.

This *Birth of the Bear* is full of mythic anomalies.⁹⁶² The location is clearly otherworldly, and a very old woman is giving birth to the bear, an impossible situation in normal life. It is unclear if there was an unmentioned anthropomorphic father or if the Crone generated the bear alone, being impregnated by the mythic environment or the winds, as happened in the *Births of illnesses*. Pregnancy without a man was a motif in which illegitimate or female sexuality was covered in “a mythical frame of reference.”⁹⁶³

In Viena Karelian *Births of the Dog*, the hunters often mentioned the Mistress or Crone of Pohjola as the mother of the dogs.⁹⁶⁴ As the bear and the wolves were the dogs of the forest spirits, it seems logical that the Crone of Pohjola was chosen as their mother.

In the incantations to protect the cattle from bears, the Crone or Mistress of Pohjola was often invoked as a kind of forest spirit, and she was often associated with Hongotar.⁹⁶⁵ The cattle herder from Ilomantsi asked “Hongas, the mistress of Pohjola,” to act as a shepherd and watch over the cattle.⁹⁶⁶ The healers from Suojärvi asked “Hongas, the mistress of Pohjola,” to heal with balm the “bad works” of her “boy,” the wounds caused by the bear.⁹⁶⁷

By contrast, healers considered her the mother of the nine illnesses or of a particular illness; in this case, she had negative connotations. Even so, as the mother of illnesses she could be beseeched to heal disease.⁹⁶⁸

Malinen’s *Birth of the Bear* could be influenced by the *Births of the Illnesses*. The landscape mixed elements from mythic places that appeared often in the incantations of *tietäjäs* or in epic songs. In healing incantations, the Hill of Pain⁹⁶⁹ was a place for banishing illnesses, and it was also a birthplace of illness.⁹⁷⁰ The *tietäjäs* sent illnesses back to the otherworld in which they were supposed to be born. In incantations, the Maiden of Pain⁹⁷¹ or Pain-Girl⁹⁷² is described as sitting on the Hill of Pain, where she

⁹⁶² On mythic anomalies, see Apo 2001: 56.

⁹⁶³ Tarkka 2005: 452; cited in Timonen 2016: 416.

⁹⁶⁴ SKVR I4/1085: 30–47; 1104; 1172; 1163.

⁹⁶⁵ On Hongotar, see Section 5.4.

⁹⁶⁶ SKVR VII5/3850: 18–14. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 173. 1845.

⁹⁶⁷ SKVR VII5/3925, 1–28. Suojärvi. Eur. H, n. 32. 1845.

⁹⁶⁸ Krohn [1915] 2008: 285.

⁹⁶⁹ *Kipuvaara*.

⁹⁷⁰ Siikala 2002: 179, 192; SKVR VII4/1881.

⁹⁷¹ Kivutar.

⁹⁷² Kipu-tyttö.

gathers, molds or cooks pains.⁹⁷³ According to Siikala, the concept of the Hill of Pain or the copper mountain could be associated with the Hill of Pohjola and the cosmic mountain of the Eurasian shamanic traditions.⁹⁷⁴

As the Crone of Pohjola, Kivutar was not completely evil. The healer requested her to take back pains into her hearth and to remove the dolor to help those who were ill to rest and sleep.⁹⁷⁵ She also gathered the pains and diseases expelled by the *tietäjäs* who called for her help in relieving the travails of women during childbirth.⁹⁷⁶

The place where the Crone of Pohja wandered before giving birth to the bear was a birthplace of illnesses. Here there were “fiery rapids,”⁹⁷⁷ as in the otherworlds of epic songs. The hero Lemminkäinen would pass through such “fiery rapids” on the road to the otherworld.⁹⁷⁸ According to Siikala, fiery rapids or a river marked the boundary of the Finno-Karelian “Land of Death”⁹⁷⁹ and the Scandinavian netherworld of Hel.⁹⁸⁰

A healing incantation recounts a young maiden brushing her hair and washing her teeth beside the fiery rapids.⁹⁸¹ At this spot grew an enormous oak, from whose splinters were made the arrows of the sorcerers that caused the illness called “the bite” (*pistos*).⁹⁸² In this incantation, the “fire rapids” were associated with the “sacred stream,”⁹⁸³ often used as the epithet for the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized.⁹⁸⁴ In his *Birth of the Bear*, Malinen substituted “sacred stream”⁹⁸⁵ with “evil stream,”⁹⁸⁶ thus making clear that the otherworldly rapids were outside the sphere of the Christian world.

Malinen’s song continued by describing the birth and the baptism of the “children”:

There she bore her children,
gave birth to her offspring,

⁹⁷³ SKVR VII/412: 38–41; SKVR XII/5281: 4.

⁹⁷⁴ Siikala 2002: 92.

⁹⁷⁵ SKVR VI/4075.

⁹⁷⁶ SKVR VI/3014, 23–29.

⁹⁷⁷ *Tulinen koski*.

⁹⁷⁸ Siikala 2002: 189.

⁹⁷⁹ Tuonela.

⁹⁸⁰ Siikala 2002: 216.

⁹⁸¹ SKVR I4/844, 1–4.

⁹⁸² Karhu 47: 188.

⁹⁸³ *Pyhä virta* (SKVR I4/864: 6).

⁹⁸⁴ Karhu 1947: 189.

⁹⁸⁵ *Pyhä virta*.

⁹⁸⁶ *Paha virta*.

got three boys,
 hairy brats.
 She looked, she turned them over,
 she thought, she considered:
 what will come of these,
 what will these hairy ones grow into?
 There she christened her [children]⁹⁸⁷
 figured out her own ones,
 learned about her offspring.
 One she christened a lynx,
 the second made into a wolf,
 the third a wild wood's bear of the woods,
 hardened it into a deep wood's bear.⁹⁸⁸

Even the dangerous Crone of Pohjola baptized her "children." In the two last lines, Malinen dared to use the taboo names of the bear: *kontio* and *karhu*. The impression is that the singer wanted to demonstrate that he was not afraid to utter names that were generally prohibited. The baptism could be connected with the necessity of knowing the exact names of the animals or phenomena to activate the power of the *Birth* incantations.

The baptism of forest animals was a way to personalize beasts and make ritual communication easier. Thus, even if the bear was a representative of the forest beings, it was baptized as a member of the human community.⁹⁸⁹ Through sharing the experience of baptism, the bear was considered to be humanlike, and it was supposed to be able to understand the requests and commands sung after the *Birth*.

However, the fact that the Crone of Pohjola baptized the bear made the situation particularly ambiguous: the bear was baptized, but by a non-Christian and potentially evil being. This presented a mythical anomaly, since she was able to alone perform a Christian baptism without the help of any official Christian priest. The bear was Christianized, but by one of the most powerful members of the pre-Christian mythic

⁹⁸⁷ Unclear word: *riimijänsä*.

⁹⁸⁸ *Siinä laativi lapsiansa, / synnytti sikijöitänsä, / saip' on poikoa kolme, / kakarata karvallista. / Katselevi, kääntelevi, / miettielevi, mittelevi: / mipä noistaki tulisi, / kasvaneisi karvasista? / Siinä hään risti riimijänsä / opetteli omijansa / tunnusteli tuomijansa. / Yhen se risti ilvekseksi, / yoisen suveksi sukasi, / kolmannen korven kontijoksi, / salon karhuksi karasi* (SKVR I4/1191: 14–27). English translation partially based on the one by Tolley in Pentikäinen 2007: 67.

⁹⁸⁹ Stark 2002: 126.

otherness. Indeed, the singers stressed the otherness of Pohjola, defining it as an unbaptized, “unchristened” and “priestless” land.⁹⁹⁰ The bear was very much a being “in between” two universes: it was baptized like a human, but in the otherworld and by a dangerous mother. The bruin was humanlike, but not fully humanized.

A similar motif was present in healing incantations: “the bitch, the mistress of Pohjola” gave birth to nine diseases, but she did not find anyone who wanted to baptize them,⁹⁹¹ so she baptized the illnesses herself.⁹⁹² The baptism of the bear described by Iivana was a very uncommon one, being performed by a “pagan” figure. The bear, the wolf and the lynx became akin to the illnesses baptized by the Crone.

The long song by Malinen continued by telling that the bear has no teeth or claws and the Crone of Pohjola went searching for them:

She left to search for teeth,
to ask for claws
from the taut rowans,
from the rugged junipers,
from the barred rootstock,
from hard pitchy stumps.
From these she made the claws
and threw together the teeth.⁹⁹³

Malinen revealed that the bear in origin did not have teeth and claws and it was not dangerous. The *tietäjäs* uttered the *Birth of Iron* to tell the blade which caused an injury that in a remote past it was not dangerous at all.⁹⁹⁴ In Viena Karelia, a similar motif was present in the *Births of the Bear* of the cattle herders: when the bruin was born, “he doesn’t have teeth, / he asks for teeth.”⁹⁹⁵

Apo observed that many Finnic *Births* followed the narrative schema of an initial situation characterized by the lack of an object followed by a final situation where the

⁹⁹⁰ Tarkka 2013: 412–413.

⁹⁹¹ SKVR VI2 4628: 18–25.

⁹⁹² SKVR VI2/4628: 31–21.

⁹⁹³ *Läksi hammasten hakuhun, / kysymähän kyntösiä, / pihlajilta piukkehilta, / katajilta karkehilta, / jurmusilta juurikoilta, / kesuen kannoilta kovilta; / Niistä kynsiä kyhäsi, / sekä hatsi hampahia.* (SKVR I4 1191: 30–38).

⁹⁹⁴ SKVR IV3/4315: 1–6; VII:3318: 5–9.

⁹⁹⁵ *Hän on hampahia vajalla; / hän hampahia anoo* (SKVR I4/1419: 13–14).

object is found or created.⁹⁹⁶ In this case, the lacking elements were teeth and claws, the bear's weapons. The importance of the teeth in the incantation help us to understand the similitudes between Malinen's *Birth of the Bear* and the *Births of the Illnesses*: a bear bite could provoke the supernatural infectious illness called "forest *viha*."⁹⁹⁷

The Crone of Pohjola used natural materials to make the claws and teeth, but she obtained the wood by means of a magical request addressed to the trees. She was an active agent; she asked different trees for wood and thus constructed the feared and hard "weapons" of the bear. She fits well in two models of mythic action elaborated by Satu Apo: the Crone was a supernatural being able to perform transformations (animal teeth/claws from wood) and create new objects out of different and uncommon materials (she used different trees).⁹⁹⁸

After these narrative segments, Malinen announced: "There, *sykkö*, is your birth, / horrible one of the earth, your growth."⁹⁹⁹ He used derogatory names generally related to snakes¹⁰⁰⁰ and mentioned in the *Births of the Snake*.¹⁰⁰¹ By calling the bear a smaller and less respected, polluting animal, the singer perhaps wanted to make the bear feel ashamed. The snake and the bear were both born in the forest, and both were feared for their bites, which could infect humans with *viha* illness.¹⁰⁰² The derogatory name *sykkö* could also refer to fire in some Karelian *Births of the Fire*,¹⁰⁰³ and burns were sources of *viha* illness, too.¹⁰⁰⁴

Malinen seems to have revealed a secret *Birth*, which was unknown to the bear himself. Iivana intimidated and embarrassed the bear by revealing its true nature: it was generated by a potentially evil being in the same way as the illnesses, wolves, dogs and snakes. If the bear was shocked, embarrassed or surprised, it became "softer" and magically vulnerable. Fear made the bear's *luonto* force weaker,¹⁰⁰⁵ so that the

⁹⁹⁶ Apo 2001: 62.

⁹⁹⁷ Stark 2006: 276; see Sections 3.13, 3.14.

⁹⁹⁸ Apo 2001: 32, 63.

⁹⁹⁹ *Siinä on, sykkö, synnyntäsi, / maan kamala, kasvantasi!* (SKVR I4/1191: 39–40).

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Sykkö, maan kamala.*

¹⁰⁰¹ SKVR I4/429: 23; VI1/3832: 3–4.

¹⁰⁰² Stark 2006: 275–276.

¹⁰⁰³ SKVR I4/290. Latvajärvi. Karjalainen n. 104.1894. Moisésieiri Kuśma, from the Ahonen family, whose origins are from Oulujoki. Learned from his father.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Stark 2006: 276.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Stark 2006: 283.

hunter's incantations could have a greater effect on the bruin. When the bear suffered a moment of weakness, the singer sang the command:

Hide your claws in your fur,
your teeth in your gums,
without clattering your bones,
without stretching your jaws!¹⁰⁰⁶

The *Birth* of the teeth and claws were sung just before the command since the singers wanted to enchant exactly these parts of the bear. The *Birth* told about a time when the bear did not have any teeth or claws. The final command almost recreated the mythic situation: the bear's teeth and claws did not disappear completely, but they were well hidden in its fur and gums.

Both animal and human teeth were considered to be magically charged because they were the hardest and sharpest part of the body. Only when he had all his teeth was the *tietäjä's luonto* force hard enough to realize the goal of his magic procedures. When an old *tietäjä* lost his teeth, his power vanished.¹⁰⁰⁷

By making the bear hide its teeth in the soft part of its body, the hunter likely also weakened all of the bear's *luonto*, not only its physical capacity to bite. The whole bear became "softer," magically and physically weaker.¹⁰⁰⁸

Ending the long complex of his *Birth of the Bear*, Malinen emphasized the secrecy of his knowledge about the bear's origins:

There is the deepest origin,
half the lads do not know it,
nine heroes cannot guess it.¹⁰⁰⁹

Here the singer probably proved that his knowledge of the *Birth of the Bear* was older and thus more powerful than the bear itself.¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Kytke kynnet karvohisi, / hampahat ikenihisi, / ilman lujien l[o]nsumata, / leukojen leviemätä!* (SKVR I4/1191: 39–44).

¹⁰⁰⁷ Stark 2006: 306–307.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Stark 2006: 277–281.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Siinä on syvin synty, / sitä ei tiijä poijat puoletkaan, / arvoa yheksät urohot.* (SKVR I4 1191: 45–47).

¹⁰¹⁰ On the old magical knowledge of the *Births*, see Stark 2006: 307.

Ontrei and Iivana Malinen mastered several genres of epic songs and incantations and they were brave enough to use the bruin's taboo names, singing a *Birth of the Bear* with negative and embarrassing connotations.

However, the *Birth of the Bear* of the Malinens was not completely negative for the bear: as the Crone of Pohjola had made its teeth and claws in the mythic past, she would be able to make them again to regenerate the killed beast. Iivana Malinen also sang the lines with which the hunter who was skinning the bear encouraged the bruin to reach Pohjola and take from there new teeth and new claws made by the Crone.¹⁰¹¹

The Crone of Pohjola was not only a destructive mother of illnesses, she acted as a forest spirit, a "bear mother" who had a role in the mythic past and in each ritual hunt. Accordingly, the Pohjola of the *Bear Songs* was not only a dreadful and dark otherworld, but a place of birth and regeneration. The scary landscapes described by Malinen revealed surprising generative powers.

5.7 The Births in the Sky in the Bear Songs

The *Births in the sky* were quite rare in the corpus of the *Bear Songs*. Jussi Pakkanen from Piippola sang that the bear was born:

in a woolly basket,
in an iron basket.
[...]
On the nail¹⁰¹² of a small cloud.
How was it lowered to the ground?
With a nameless string,
totally unknown.¹⁰¹³

In the first six weeks of its life, a newborn baby slept in a basket (*vakka*) made of intertwined thin, wooden strips.¹⁰¹⁴ The bear's basket was mythical, made of strange and uncommon materials. Antti Huttunen sang that the bear skull, too, was carried in

¹⁰¹¹ SKVR I4/1244e; see Section 9.14.

¹⁰¹² The edge of a cloud or a mythological sky pillar; see Siikala 2016: 168.

¹⁰¹³ *Villasessa vakkasessa, / rautasessa vakkasessa. [...] Päällä pienen pilven naulan. / millä se maahan laskettiin? / nuoralla nimettömällä, / aivan tutkimattomalla* (SKVR XII2/6464: 44–43 and 46–47. Keränen, E. 295. 1884? Piippola. Jussi Paakkinen).

¹⁰¹⁴ Paulaharju 1995 (1925): 55–56.

a copper basket towards the pine where the skull ritual was held.¹⁰¹⁵ The basket was mentioned also in the *Births of the Fire*. The fire was not born in the basket, but it was rocked or cradled in it.¹⁰¹⁶ Kaisa¹⁰¹⁷ or Lispettä¹⁰¹⁸ rocked fire in a basket. The fire was rocked in the sky on the edge of a long cloud,¹⁰¹⁹ and it was not lowered down like the bear but fell down.¹⁰²⁰ However, both the fire and the bear were considered particularly sacred, and they both had a noble birth in the sky.

The *Birth of the bear* by Jussi Pakkanen ended with a typical magic command to make the bear unable to bite:

I placed a hoop made of willow.
If the willow breaks,
I will build one with iron;
If the iron tears,
I mold one of copper.
If the copper cracks,
the Creator's lock will bar,
the Lord's block will govern
your jaws from opening wide,
your teeth from parting.¹⁰²¹

If the bear was born in the sky, it could be controlled by the help of a powerful supernatural or celestial being: God, a saint, or the thunder-god Ukko. This motif was present in the *Births of the Bear* of the cattle herders.

¹⁰¹⁵ SKVR VI2/4919: 7–8; see Section 9.1.

¹⁰¹⁶ SKVR VII1/3207: 5–6.

¹⁰¹⁷ Saint Catherine (SKVR VII1/3262: 1–3).

¹⁰¹⁸ Saint Elizabeth (SKVR VII3/609: 105–106).

¹⁰¹⁹ SKVR VII3/607, 43.

¹⁰²⁰ SKVR VII3/607, 44–47.

¹⁰²¹ *Minä vantehen pajusta pannen. / Jos paju pettänevi, / minäpä rauvasta rakennan; / jospa rauta ratkennevi, / minäpä vaskesta valatan; jos vaski katkennovi, / lukitkoompa luojan lukko, / Herran haitta hallitkoon, / leukasi leveämästä, / hampaasi hajoamasta.* (SKVR XII2/6464: 30–39).

5.8 The Births in the Sky in the incantations to protect the cattle

The *Births in the Sky* were quite common in the incantations of cattle herders.¹⁰²² Ukko Timonen from Kiteenlahti sang:

There was *ohto* given birth to,
the honey-paw turned around;
high up in the sky,
on the shoulders of the Big Dipper.
How was it brought down?
With a thread it was brought down,
with a silver thong,
in a golden cradle,
then it left roaming the woodlands,
striding the Northland.¹⁰²³

Timonen did not mention who the parents of the bruin were, but it seems that they were celestial pre-Christian or Christian beings and deities. A variation of this *Birth in the Sky* was published in 1789 by Ganander in his *Mythologia Fennica*,¹⁰²⁴ where an unknown singer added that the bear was born “beside the moon, by the sun.”¹⁰²⁵

Haavio and Sarmela stated that the Finnish *Birth in the Sky* was the most ancient version of the *Bear Births* and a part of a larger international mythic complex, while the versions that shared more similarities with the Finnish ones were Ob-Ugrian.¹⁰²⁶ A Khanty song from Shumilovo begins with the bear’s descent from the sky:

When I was let down from my father God
the seven-throated, on an iron chain’s end
to the small wooded island with the thick

¹⁰²² SKVR VI2/5405: 1–7, VI2/5408: 1–5, VII5/3869: 1–8, VII5/3930: 1–7, XII2/6858:1–7.

¹⁰²³ *Tuolla ohto synnytelty, / mesikämmen kiännätelty: / ylähällä taivoosessa, / Otavaisen olkapäillä. / Missä se alas laskettiin? / Hihnassa alas laskettiin, / hihnassa hopiisessa, / kultaisessa kätkyyssä, / sitte läks saloja samuumaan, / pohjanmoata polokemaan* (SKVR VII5/3932: 3–12).

¹⁰²⁴ SKVR VI2/ 5408: 1–7. Ganander 1789: 63–64.

¹⁰²⁵ *Kuun luona, tykönä päivän* (SKVR VI2/5408: 3).

¹⁰²⁶ Haavio 1967: 28; Sarmela 1991: 213.

birch grove out in the long and narrow lake¹⁰²⁷

In a Mansi version, the father of the bear was the sky-god Kores. The bear prayed to him to be lowered to the land of the people below. Kores forged a cradle made of silver and gold coins, fixed on an iron chain.¹⁰²⁸

The Ob-Ugrian songs continued with descriptions of some faults committed by the bear. Its father gave it instructions about how it should behave on earth: the bear should not touch the sacrificial huts of guardian spirits, disturb human bodies buried in the ice and snow, steal the meat of animals in the hunter's traps, stocks and warehouses, or harm humans unless they had uttered falsehoods in their oaths. However, the bear did not follow its father's instructions.¹⁰²⁹ The songs gave a mythic justification for the ritual hunt: if the bear broke some prohibitions, the humans could hunt and kill it.¹⁰³⁰ According to Honko, the meaning of the myth was the cyclic return of the bear from and to the sky: "the bear's real homeland is the sky, from which it descends from time to time but where it must always return."¹⁰³¹ In the Khanty song from Shumilovo, the bear came back to the sky in the same way it descended to the earth: with an iron chain.

I raised myself to heaven again, up to my father God,
the seven-throated, upon an iron chain's end that clinked like silver.¹⁰³²

Considering the analogies with the Ob-Ugrian songs, Sarmela stated that the celestial *Birth of the Bear* was the most ancient of the Finno-Karelian versions; thus, it was the mythic justification of the whole plot of the ritual actions of Finno-Karelian

¹⁰²⁷ Cited in Honko, Timomen & Branch: 1993: 152. Poem 27, 1–8; English translation by Branch, Keith. Anonymous singer from Shumilovo, Kondiskoe raion, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia. 1888. Collector: Patkanov; originally published in Patkanov 1900: 192–203; cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 37.

¹⁰²⁸ Cited in Honko, Timomen & Branch 1993: 157–158; Poem 29. Singer: Jakov Tasmanov. Chalpaul, Sartyn'ia Region, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia. 1906. Collector: Kannisto, A. Originally published in Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958: 9: 14–20.

¹⁰²⁹ Honko 1993: 125 in Honko, Timomen & Branch 1993; Kannisto 1939a: 8.

¹⁰³⁰ Sarmela 1991: 213; Kannisto 1939a: 8.

¹⁰³¹ Honko 1993: 125.

¹⁰³² Cited in Honko, Timomen & Branch: 1993: 152. Poem 27, 1–8; English translation by Branch, Keith. Anonymous singer from Shumilovo, Kondiskoe raion, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia. 1888. Collector: Patkanov; originally published in Patkanov 1900: 192–203.

bear ceremonialism.¹⁰³³ In some Finno-Karelian *Bear Songs*, at the end of the ceremonial the hunters put the bear's skull on the pine's branch "to learn the stars of the Big Dipper."¹⁰³⁴ The impression is that the bear went back to its land of birth as a prelude to its new birth or regeneration in the sky. Sarmela stressed that the hunters gave back the bear skull to the pine on which, according to some *Births of the Bear*, the bruin descended from the sky.¹⁰³⁵ With that ritual action the bear returned to its homeland in the heavens.¹⁰³⁶

Even if there are several mythic themes in common (the birth in the sky, the cradle and the silver thread and iron chains, the possibility of the bear's return to the sky), the Ob-Ugrian and the Finno-Karelian *Births in the Sky* had many differences. Kuusi, Haavio and Sarmela emphasized only the similarities. Thus, while the comparisons these scholars made are useful, many details should be analyzed in greater detail.

The Ob-Ugrian songs had a key differing characteristic: the place of the bear sung in the first person. Someone interpreted the bruin's role in the bear ceremony. The singer described the events from the point of view and the perspective of the bear itself. The bruin sang and the human beings listened to its myth, and the bruin explained to the people why they had the right to kill it.

The singer of the Finno-Karelian *Births in the Sky* was usually a cattle herder, more rarely a hunter, who sang this *Birth of the Bear* in order to gain magic control over the animal. The listeners were supposed to be the bear itself, which was supposed to obey the following commands, and its supernatural protectors.

The Ob-Ugrian songs about the birth of the bear were not incantations like the Finnish ones. Instead they contained many details about the life of the bear in the sky, the adventurous descent from the sky and the problematic life of the bear on earth: they were an integral part of the bear ceremonialism, while the Finno-Karelian *Births in the Sky* were part of a cycle of incantations to protect cattle from the bear. The Ob-Ugrian songs had a clear narrative and epic structure, and the singers wanted to entertain the listeners by telling detailed myths about the legendary past of bear. The songs also had a meaningful ritual function: to explain why the bear could be killed and why it should return to the sidereal fatherland.

The Finno-Karelians uttered or sang the *Birth of the Bear* before sending the cattle to pasture or before and during the hunt. The Finno-Karelian bear mythology was more

¹⁰³³ Sarmela 1991: 213.

¹⁰³⁴ *Otava oppimahan* (SKVR VII5/3396: 13); see Section 9.9.

¹⁰³⁵ Sarmela 1991: 220.

¹⁰³⁶ Sarmela 1982: 64.

linked to magical procedures. The goal was to gain complete magical control over the powerful animal, not to tell the details about all its mythical adventures.

Despite all these differences, the Ob-Ugrian and Finno-Karelian versions had a fundamental element in common: the bear was linked with the powers of the divinities of the sky.

The Ob-Ugrians explicitly called the bruin the son of the higher sky god.¹⁰³⁷ However, the bear's status is not exactly divine in the Ob-Ugrian versions either, as Sarmela stated:¹⁰³⁸ the bear could be punished by its divine father and killed by humans. The bruin was not immortal, as the real gods were, nor untouchable.

Last but not least, the Ob-Ugrians often did not mention the Big Dipper, an important detail in the Finno-Karelian incantations. The Big Dipper was situated at the very edge of the universe, where the highest pre-Christian and Christian divinities and saints dwelled. In Finno-Karelian incantations to heal burnings, the healer asked the bee to find the honey to heal them. The healer commanded the bee with these words: "[fly] over the shoulders of the Big Dipper, / fly into the cellar of the Creator, / into the chamber of the Omnipotent."¹⁰³⁹ This motif was present in many healing incantations, such as the *Words of the Balm*¹⁰⁴⁰ and the *Birth of Fire*, uttered to heal burns. The *tietäjä* sang that fire was born in the sky and it was rocked in the sky "in a golden cradle, / with a silver thong."¹⁰⁴¹ The fire was rocked or it was made "on the shoulders of the Bid Dipper."¹⁰⁴²

The fact that the bear and the fire shared a similar birth is meaningful. Fire was considered particularly sacred: its force¹⁰⁴³ was apotropaic and able to drive away misfortunes, illnesses, witches and evil beings.¹⁰⁴⁴ Fire was also deeply respected. It was absolutely prohibited to spit into it, and it was not allowed to move pieces of wood in the fire of an oven or sauna or in the barn. Otherwise, the fire could seek revenge, causing cuts in the mouth or eczema on the skin.¹⁰⁴⁵

¹⁰³⁷ Sarmela 1991: 213.

¹⁰³⁸ Sarmela 1991: 213.

¹⁰³⁹ *Otavaisen olkapäite; / lennä Luojan kellarihin, / kamarihin kaikkivallan* (SKVR XIII/4586: 40–42).

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Voiteen luku*, see SKVR XII2/5370, XII2/5375, XII2/5388.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Kätkyessä kultasessa, hihloissa hopiaisessa* (SKVR VII3/607, 39–40) see also VII3/609: 101–103, VII3/695: 6–7).

¹⁰⁴² SKVR XII1/4598: 6; VII3/1400: 8; VII3/1412: 3.

¹⁰⁴³ *Tulen väki*.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Hästesko 1918: 33–34.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Hästesko 1918: 33–35.

The *Births in the Sky* were related with some of the mightiest powers of the Finnish cosmos. The sacredness and power of fire was connected with the purifying force of the sky-god Ukko:¹⁰⁴⁶ his thunder terrorized devils¹⁰⁴⁷ and evil beings¹⁰⁴⁸ and drove them away. In the *Births of Fire*, the heroes Ilmarinen and Väinämöinen stroke down the fire from the sky, and sometimes Jesus substituted them.¹⁰⁴⁹ The *Births in the Sky* reveal two aspects of the status and sacredness of the bruin:

- a) like fire, the bear was connected with celestial powers and divinities;
- b) like fire, the bruin was supposed to be treated with special respect.

The cattle herders requested the celestial beings who created and protected the bear to control it. After the *Birth*, Ukko Timonen uttered a command to the bear:

Don't bring down the dung-thigh,¹⁰⁵⁰
don't fell the milk-bearer.¹⁰⁵¹

There will be more work for the mother,
a great effort for the parent,
if the little boy does wrong.¹⁰⁵²

Timonen called the bear with a name that recalls the purity and innocence of childhood: a "little boy,"¹⁰⁵³ who should not create problems for his mother. By contrast, the cows were called "dung-thighs," creatures better left untouched because of the impurity and force contained in their excrement.

The "mother" or "parent" was the supernatural being responsible for the behavior of her "boy," the bear. This motif was common in healing incantations, where the word 'mother'¹⁰⁵⁴ tended to be a synonym for 'guardian spirit.'¹⁰⁵⁵ If iron did not heal the

¹⁰⁴⁶ Hästesko 1918: 34–35.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Pirut*.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Hiidet*.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Hästesko 1918: 34–35.

¹⁰⁵⁰ The cows.

¹⁰⁵¹ The cows.

¹⁰⁵² *Elä sorra sontareittä, / koa maion kantajoa, / enemp' on emo'lla työtä, / suur(i) vaivoa vanhemmalla, / jos poikonen pahan teköö.* (SKVR VII5/3932: 13–17).

¹⁰⁵³ *Poikonen*.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Emo*.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Haltia*.

wound it provoked, the *tietäjä* intimidated it, saying that it should do that before his mother or his parent was called and became upset at having to do “more work.”¹⁰⁵⁶

But who, in this particular case, were the parents of the bear? Often they were forest spirits. However, if the bear was born in the sky, it would be logical to suppose that his father was Ukko, the god of thunder and the sky, or the Christian God. Juho Turunen from Kitee uttered a *Birth in the Sky*, followed by a prayer to the forest mistress and another to Ukkonen.¹⁰⁵⁷

Ukkonen, superior Lord,
God on the top of the cloud,
take care in the pine wood
as you took care inside the room.¹⁰⁵⁸

Turunen asked Ukkonen to look after the cows in the forest during the spring as he had previously guarded them when they were in the cowshed during the winter. In an incantation from Kerimäki, a *Birth in the Sky* was followed by nearly the same request to Ukko.¹⁰⁵⁹ In other incantations, a similar prayer could be addressed to Jesus.¹⁰⁶⁰ In the syncretic vernacular folk beliefs, if the bear was born in the sky, the Christian beings “dwelling” in Heaven also were its guardians. Sometimes the cattle herder prayed to Jesus or Mary to put a golden spear into the jaw of the bear if it dared to attack the cattle.¹⁰⁶¹ Such acts of force, typical of vernacular Christian legends, are in contrast with the non-violent behavior of Jesus or Mary of the Gospels. In the *Births in the Sky*, the Christian beings were fused with the pre-Christian sky-god Ukko. In other incantations to protect the cattle or hunters from the bear, almost the same prayer was addressed to the old god of thunder.¹⁰⁶² Antti Multanen from Kitee uttered a *Birth in the Sky* followed by a prayer to Ukko: the god should put a collar around the muzzle of the bruin to control it.¹⁰⁶³

¹⁰⁵⁶ SKVR I4/153a: 8–17

¹⁰⁵⁷ Diminutive of Ukko. It means also “Thunder.”

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ukkonen, ylinen Herra, / pilven päällinen Jumala, / hoia niin hongikossa, / kuin sä hoi'it huonehessa* (SKVR VII5/3931: 21–24. Kitee. Havukainen n. 40. 1896)-

¹⁰⁵⁹ SKVR VI2/5405: 20–24.

¹⁰⁶⁰ SKVR VII5/3850: 10–11.

¹⁰⁶¹ SKVR VII5/3850: 152–155.

¹⁰⁶² SKVR I4/1442: 23–29, I4/1439: 78–81, XII2/6488: 5–6.

¹⁰⁶³ SKVR VII5/3930. Kitee. Pennanen n. 66. 1896. Haarajärvi. Antti Multanen.

In many incantations of the cattle herders, however, the forest spirits were not forgotten; some of these contained the *Birth in the Sky* and exhortations to Jesus¹⁰⁶⁴ and the forest spirits.¹⁰⁶⁵

5.9 The *Birth of the Bear from wool*

In some *Births of the bear* of the cattle herders, the bruin was born from wool. In the version by Juhana Korpelainen from Kiuruvesi, Ukko “throws wool in the waters.”¹⁰⁶⁶ The wool ended up “on the wide-open sea,”¹⁰⁶⁷ and “there [they] drifted for six years.”¹⁰⁶⁸

This plot resembles relevant motifs of Finno-Karelian mythology: at the beginning of time, the hero Väinämöinen was shot by the son of Pohja (or Jougamoini, or a Laplander) and wandered “on the wide-open sea” for six years.¹⁰⁶⁹

The identity of who threw the wool varied from village to village: it could be Ukko, the god of thunder;¹⁰⁷⁰ “Lo(v)viitar, the old wife”,¹⁰⁷¹ “Tuonetar, the bad mistress;”¹⁰⁷² Saint George;¹⁰⁷³ the Virgin Mary,¹⁰⁷⁴ or Pirjotar,¹⁰⁷⁵ a vernacular Saint Brigit, who did not know how to sew.¹⁰⁷⁶

The wool reached an unknown spot: “from there the wind lulled [it]”¹⁰⁷⁷ and “a wave drove [it] to the shore”¹⁰⁷⁸ “to a nameless cape.”¹⁰⁷⁹ Tarkka notes that the word ‘nameless’ could be connected to the vernacular concepts of an unknown, non-Christian, unbaptized, otherworldly place, such as, Pohjola, for example.¹⁰⁸⁰

¹⁰⁶⁴ SKVR VII5/3850: 4–16.

¹⁰⁶⁵ SKVR VII5/3850: 17–24, 39–48, 49–59.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Visko villoja vesillen* (SKVR VI2/5413: 6).

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Selvälle meren selälle* (SKVR VI2/5413: 8).

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Tuolla kulki kuusi vuotta* (SKVR VI2/5413: 8).

¹⁰⁶⁹ SKVR I1/1: 28; I1/9: 32; I1/11: 41; see Siikala 2016: 163.

¹⁰⁷⁰ SKVR VI2/5413:5.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Lo(v)viitar, vaimo vanha* (SKVR VII5/3942: 1).

¹⁰⁷² *Tuonetar, paha emäntä* (SKVR VII5/3949: 1).

¹⁰⁷³ *Yrjänä* (SKVR VI2 5411: 1).

¹⁰⁷⁴ SKVR VI2/5408: 9.

¹⁰⁷⁵ SKVR VII5/3936: 1–10. Kaavi? Gottlund n. 579. 1830.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Sarmela 1991: 237.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Tuolt’ on tuuli tuuvittanna* (SKVR VI2/5413: 15).

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Aalto rannallen ajanna* (SKVR VI2/5413: 18).

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Niemeen nimettömään* (SKVR VI2/5413: 20).

¹⁰⁸⁰ Tarkka 2013: 416.

The wool reached the unknown cape, where “Maria, the honeyed maiden / [and] Kuihkamo,¹⁰⁸¹ the king of the forest, / ran into the water until it reached their waist.”¹⁰⁸²

Maria “turned the wool in her hems”¹⁰⁸³ or “took the boy with her hems,”¹⁰⁸⁴ and she went “inside the blue backwoods, / beside the golden hill, / under the mountain with a copper slope.”¹⁰⁸⁵ She went into an otherworldly forest characterized by a mythic anomaly of metallic hills.¹⁰⁸⁶ There she “lulled her boy, / molded the head from a hummock, / struck the backbone from a pine, / the hands from a tuft of wool.”¹⁰⁸⁷ Maria made the bear by using different materials.¹⁰⁸⁸

When the narrative part of the *Birth* ended, Juhana Korpelainen uttered the incantation: “Wool is the mouth, wool is the head, / of wool are its five teeth.”¹⁰⁸⁹ The teeth of the bear became wool, the original material that created the bear. The mythic situation of the *Birth* was partially restored, as only some parts of the bruin were transformed. The hardest and sharpest weapons of the bruin became soft, and the whole *luonto* force of the bear was weakened.¹⁰⁹⁰

The motif of the transformation of the teeth into wool was present in the *Bear Songs* as a short, independent incantation.¹⁰⁹¹ It appears quite often in the *Births of the Snake* as an incantation to make the snake harmless.¹⁰⁹²

Sarmela stressed that in the *Birth from the Wool*, the bear’s status was marginalized: the bruin was born from the incapacity of a woman to spin the wool.¹⁰⁹³ The bear was not anymore the forest incarnated, but an insignificant creature.¹⁰⁹⁴ Sarmela oversimplified the plot of these *Births*, however. It was not a common woman who

¹⁰⁸¹ Kuihkamo is probably a local version of Kuippana, a male forest spirit or master.

¹⁰⁸² *Maria metinen neity, / kuihkamo, metän kuningas, / juoxi vyöstään veteen* (SKVR VI2/5413: 21–24).

¹⁰⁸³ *Kaari villat helmöihänsä* (SKVR VI2/5413: 24).

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Otti pojan helmahans* (SKVR VI2/5411:14).

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Sininen salon sisälle, / kummun kultaisen sivulle, / alle vuoren vaski rinnan* (SKVR VI2/5413: 28–30).

¹⁰⁸⁶ On the meaning of gold in the forest, see Section 6.9.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Tuuvitteli poikoansa / pään mäkäsi mättähästä, / selän honggasta hotasi, / käet on villa kuontalosta* (SKVR VI2/5413: 30–34).

¹⁰⁸⁸ Maria acted as the Crone of Pohjola; see Section 5.6.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Vill’ on suunna, vill’ on päänä / viill’ on viisi hammastaan* (SKVR VI2/5413: 35–36).

¹⁰⁹⁰ On the teeth and magical hardness, see Stark 2006: 306–307 and Section 5.5.

¹⁰⁹¹ SKVR I4/2467: 31–32.

¹⁰⁹² SKVR VII1/3860: 17–18, VII3/1015: 20, 24.

¹⁰⁹³ Sarmela refers to Saint Brigit (*Pirjotar*), who refused to spin wool.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Sarmela 1991: 238.

threw the wool into the sea, but a powerful female spirit or saint, and sometimes a male figure, such as Ukko or Saint George. By throwing the wool into the water, the supernatural agent put into motion a set of transformations. When the wool reached the otherworldly forest, the Virgin Mary actively built a bear out of it; the creature was thus the result of an intentional act of creation.

5.10 Multiple Births of the Bear in the same incantations

In some incantations to protect the cattle, the singer uttered many *Births of the Bear*. Antti Vartiainen from Kiuruvesi sang the *Birth from the Wool*,¹⁰⁹⁵ but a few lines after that he added that the bruin was born “on the shoulders of the Big Dipper, / on the back of the seven stars.”¹⁰⁹⁶ The bruin was brought down to earth “with a silver thong”¹⁰⁹⁷ and “inside a golden cradle.”¹⁰⁹⁸

At this point the bear did not have any teeth, but on the spot “a pine grows from the forest, / a silver branch [grows] on the pine, / from there is the first tooth, / the first one, the last one, / the biggest one, the smallest one.”¹⁰⁹⁹ The growth of a mythic tree resembles the songs of the *Great Oak*.¹¹⁰⁰

Vartiainen gave precise information about the creation of some body parts of the bear: “Where were the claws baked, / the palms patted? / On the top of a bushy pine, / on the mound of an anthill.”^{1101,1102}

Because the claws were baked, they were considered like bread, the result of agricultural activity and handiwork. In the mythic time, therefore, the bear’s hard and dangerous claws were as soft as flour. Vartiainen did not mention who was the supernatural agent performing the baking. Fire ants, and ants in general, were considered, like the bear, to be part of the “cattle” of the forest spirits. Accordingly,

¹⁰⁹⁵ SKVR VI2/5411: 1–22.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Otavitten olkapäällä, / seihteen tähtien selällä.* (SKVR VI2/5411: 25–26, Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486:6 E).

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Hihnoissa hopeisissa* (SKVR VI2/5411: 38).

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Kehon kultainen sisässä* (SKVR VI2/5411: 39).

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Hongka kasvo kangkahalle, / hongassa hopea oxa, / siit on hammas ensimmäinen, / ensimmäinen, viimenenkin, / suurinmainen, pienimmäinen* (SKVR VI2/5411: 33–37).

¹¹⁰⁰ *Iso tammi* (SKVR I2/1217, 1218, 1219, 1225, 1231; I4/849).

¹¹⁰¹ An anthill of aggressive fire ants or red ants (*Myrmica rubra*), renowned for their painful bites.

¹¹⁰² *Missä kynnet leivottiin, / kämmenet taputeltiin? / Päällä pensevän petäjän, / kusiaispesän kukuralla* (SKVR VI2/5411: 39–41).

they were regarded as one of the most important food sources of the bear. The anthill was also a source of magic power, and the hunters empowered their hunting weapons by putting them on top of it.¹¹⁰³

Vartiainen added the *Birth of the Teeth and Claws* because he sought to neutralize them. He gently commanded the bear:

My *ohtonen*, my little bird,
Honey-paw, my beautiful one,
hide the claws in your fur
the teeth in your gums
as into a dumpling made of flour.^{1104,1105}

The bear was told to hide its hard weapons in soft body parts, so that they would become as soft as dumplings. As the claws were previously baked, the reference to dumplings and flour connected the mythic time with the ritual one. The circumlocutions for the bear were respectful and romantic (“my little bird,” “my beautiful one”); the singer sought to calm the bear, and a gentle register was suitable to achieve this goal. Bear hunters sang similar commands when entering the forest¹¹⁰⁶ or before shooting the bear.¹¹⁰⁷

There are many other incantations presenting several versions of the *Birth of the bear*. A cattle herder from North Karelia sang that the bear was born in the forest, but the sexual act that caused its birth was performed in the sky: “Where was the passion¹¹⁰⁸ given? / Among the stars in the sky, / on the shoulders of the Big Dipper.”¹¹⁰⁹

A cattle herder from Lonkka sang that the bear was born on the roots of a young spruce and “on the top of a silver pine,”¹¹¹⁰ but a few lines afterwards he added that the bruin was born “on the top of nine skies, / on the top of six colored lids.”¹¹¹¹ The

¹¹⁰³ Karhu 1947: 83; see Section 4.5.

¹¹⁰⁴ Flour made of oats, barley and peas.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Ohtoseni, lintuseni, / Mesikämmen, kaunoseni, / kätke kynnet karvois, / hampaat ikenihiis, / kuin on talkuna mykyyn* (SKVR VI2/5411: 45–47).

¹¹⁰⁶ SKVR I4/1191.

¹¹⁰⁷ SKVR I4/1217.

¹¹⁰⁸ Or “vitality” or “life force.”

¹¹⁰⁹ SKVR VII5/3928, 10–12. Pohjois-Karjala? Polén n. 82 a. 1847.

¹¹¹⁰ *Latvalla hopian hongan* (SKVR I4/1419: 7. Lonkka. Castrén n. 150. 1839).

¹¹¹¹ *Päällä taivos[en] 9, / p[äällä] 6 kirjok[annen]* (SKVR I4/1419: 10–11).

importance of the mythic birth gradually grew, and at the end it happened in the higher levels of the universe. The fire was also rocked “from the top of nine skies.”¹¹¹²

Other important forest animals, such as the ordinary elk and the mythic “Elk of Hiisi,” had similar multiple births: the elk was born “on the shoulders of the Big Dipper,”¹¹¹³ but the rest of its body was made in the forest and from different trees.¹¹¹⁴

5.11 Between Eve and Hongatar

Sometime the *Births of Bear* charged the bruin with a double status; the singer told that the bear had a Christian/human and a pre-Christian supernatural origin. A hunter from Nurmes sang that the bruin was born from both: “From the family of Eve and Adam, / from the father Imitär, / from the mother Hongatar.”¹¹¹⁵ The hunter referred to the bear descending from human kin and linked the bruin with the Biblical Genesis, giving it a strong Christian identity.

At the same time, the bear had pre-Christian parents: Hongatar and Imitär. According to Karhu, the name Imitär can be interpreted as the hero Ilmarinen.¹¹¹⁶ Sometimes Ilmarinen was connected with the birth of wind: air,¹¹¹⁷ and in particular the wind, had a particular role in the mythic *Births of the Hare*, the bear¹¹¹⁸ and illnesses.¹¹¹⁹ In some incantations, Ilmarinen was the father of the hare.¹¹²⁰ On the other hand, Imitär could also refer to Immetär, a young female spirit or a virgin who was called to ease the pain of being burned.¹¹²¹

The *Birth of the Bear* ended with an and exhortation to the Virgin Mary. The hunter asked her “to make *ohto* heavy, / a stone burden under the breast, / an iron bar on the shoulders.”¹¹²² If the bear came from Adam’s family, it is understandable that the

¹¹¹² *Päältä taivoen yheksän* (SKVR VII3/607: 56).

¹¹¹³ *Otavaisen olka päällä* (SKVR XII2/4876: 7. North Ostrobothnia. Ganander ? 18th Century).

¹¹¹⁴ SKVR XII2/4876: 10–16.

¹¹¹⁵ *Evan, Atamin su’usta, / isältä Imitärtä, emältä Hongatarta* (SKVR VII5/3385: 2–4 Nurmes. Lönnrot A II 3, n. 1. 1832).

¹¹¹⁶ Karhu 1947: 105.

¹¹¹⁷ *Ilma*.

¹¹¹⁸ See Section 5.9.

¹¹¹⁹ Karhu 1947: 105.

¹¹²⁰ SKVR VII5/961; cited in Karhu 1947: 105.

¹¹²¹ SKVR SKVR I4/285: 116, SKVR I4/290: 47.

¹¹²² *Ohtoa jyvntämään: / kivi riippa rinnan alla, / rauta harkko hartioilla.* (SKVR VII5/3385: 18–20 Nurmes. Lönnrot A II 3, n. 1. 1832).

Christian Virgin Mary had the power to subjugate it. However, the and exhortation about the heavy stone burden and the iron bar is not a canonical Christian topic. With these lines, the hunters generally asked the forest spirits to block the game animal,¹¹²³ and the *tietäjäs* and hunters defeated envious ones, making them sink with these two objects.¹¹²⁴

In the *Text of Viitasaari*, we find a similar situation. The hunter sings that the bear comes from the family of Hongotar, but a few lines later he emphasizes that he is the nephew of the bear.¹¹²⁵

5.12 The Baptisms and the Oaths of the Bear

Many *Births of the Bears* included episodes of the *Baptism of the Bear* and the *Oath of the Bear*. In a *Birth of the Bear* used to heal the wounds caused by a bruin, the bear was born in Pohjola but baptized elsewhere:

There, on the river Jordan
by the whirl of the holy stream,
John, the priest of the gods,
aimed to do the christening.
What was the name given to you?
Lullokki, Lallokki.¹¹²⁶

The baptism could have multiple functions. For one, the singer should know the right names to call the bear. Lullokki and Lallokki were endearing names for it: the singer probably chose them to calm and please it. Being nameless was a dangerous and impure situation. A nameless human child who did not have a guardian spirit or protective saint was magically vulnerable.¹¹²⁷ A baptized and named bear acquired personhood and probably a connection with a guardian spirit, a forest spirit or a vernacular saint.

¹¹²³ SKVR I4/3598: 45–49.

¹¹²⁴ SKVR VII1/31–51: 3–4; VII5/3212: 10–11. On the incantation against envious people, see Section 4.8.

¹¹²⁵ SKVR IX4/1096: 37–40.

¹¹²⁶ *Tuolla ohto ristittynä, / kas[tettuna karvajalka]: / Johannes, / jumalten p[appi, /ristiäksehen käkesi. / Mikäs on pantuna nimeksi? / Lullokiksi, lallokiksi.* (SKVR VII5/3943: 24–31. Ilomantsi. Eur. H, n. 169. 1845).

¹¹²⁷ Ilomäki 2014: 112.

In this incantation, we have a real Christian baptism, performed by Saint John and on the same river where Jesus was baptized. This situation was quite different from the uncommon baptism in the song by Iivana Malinen, in which the bear was baptized by the non-Christian Crone of Pohjola in the otherworld.¹¹²⁸

In another *Birth of the Bear* to protect the cattle from bears, Jesus himself baptized the bear.¹¹²⁹ Jehkimä Putune from Lupasalmi sang that he was the bruin's godfather.¹¹³⁰ Here baptism established a deep social and familiar relationship between the bear and the singer.

The Christianization of the bear was a way of making it more anthropomorphic and humanlike.¹¹³¹ If the bear was baptized, it was more similar to the human community.

Karelians defined themselves as “people of the cross,”¹¹³² an expression which could be considered as equivalent to “human being.”¹¹³³ The baptism of the bear was a way to personalize it and to transform it into an agent able to make choices. The bruin also shared the Christian moral code with humans.¹¹³⁴ Just after mentioning the baptism of the bear, a healer from Ilomantsi reminded the bear that it had pronounced an oath “on the knees of the sacred God”¹¹³⁵ and had promised to avoid doing any harm.¹¹³⁶ After that, the healer declared that the bear was allowed go to hear the bell of the cattle three times in the summer, but the bear should not attack the cows¹¹³⁷ or “meddle in shameful things.”¹¹³⁸ The healer commanded the bruin to hide its claws in its fur and its teeth in its gums each time it heard the bell of the cattle.¹¹³⁹ He also accused the bear of perjury: “You, poor one, broke your oath, / you ate, wretched, your honor.”¹¹⁴⁰ The

¹¹²⁸ SKVR I4/1191: 14–27. See Section 5.6.

¹¹²⁹ *Itse Ristus ristimässä* (SKVR II/974: 25. 1845).

¹¹³⁰ *Mie kummina olova* (SKVR II 983: 23. Lupasalmi. 1871).

¹¹³¹ Stark 2002: 126.

¹¹³² *Ristikansa*.

¹¹³³ Stark 2002: 127.

¹¹³⁴ See Section 5.5.

¹¹³⁵ *Polvilla pyhän Jumalan* (SKVR VII5/3943: 33).

¹¹³⁶ SKVR VII5/3943: 32–36. Ilomantsi. Europaeus H, n. 169. 1845.

¹¹³⁷ SKVR VII5/3943: 50–54. Ilomantsi. Europaeus H, n. 169. 1845.

¹¹³⁸ *Häpehieh hämmentyä!* (SKVR VII5/3943: 54).

¹¹³⁹ SKVR VII5 3943: 55–62.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Petit, vaivanen, val[asi], / söit on, kurja, k[unniasi]*. (SKVR VII5/3943: 63–64. Ilomantsi. Europaeus H, n. 169. 1845).

bear was supposed to be ashamed by this revelation, thus becoming magically vulnerable.¹¹⁴¹

At the end of the incantation, the healer asked the forest spirit Hongotar¹¹⁴² to heal the wounds caused by her boy, the bear.¹¹⁴³

The bear hunters from Pielisjärvi sang a version of the *Oath of the Bear*, reminding the bruin: “there you swore steadily / on the famous rock of Sweden, / on the anvil of Karelia / not to do bad [things].”¹¹⁴⁴ The “rock of Sweden” could be a border stone, a powerful place, suitable for uttering oaths. Karhu argued that it was the border stone of Viertelä in Salmi.¹¹⁴⁵ However, the references to Sweden and Karelia could be considered a general remark that the bear was born somewhere far away, at the edge of the world. A reference to swearing on an anvil was present in the *Oath of the Iron* as part of some *Births of the Iron*.¹¹⁴⁶

In healing incantations, fire, iron, the nine illnesses and the rickets could also be baptized.¹¹⁴⁷ A *tietäjä* from Iisalmi uttered a *Birth of the Fire* in which Virgin Mary baptized the fire.¹¹⁴⁸ The motif of baptism was useful in making objects, animals, entities or illnesses more personal, in order to communicate with them and force them to undo “their work,” namely, damage caused to a human being. In a *Birth of the Iron* collected in Nilsjä, the metal was baptized on the Jordan River,¹¹⁴⁹ where it made an oath. The *tietäjä* lamented that the iron did not keep its promise to be harmless.¹¹⁵⁰ The bear and the iron, both considered extremely sacred and powerful, were often baptized with the pure waters of the Jordan River. By contrast, an illness like rickets was baptized with polluted water mixed with blood.¹¹⁵¹

¹¹⁴¹ By contrast, in the Mansi and Khanti tradition the bear is a guardian of human oaths. When the people uttered an oath, they asked the bear to punish and kill them if they perjured. (Sirelius 1929: 193; Kannisto 1933: 170–171).

¹¹⁴² On the “Pine Lady,” see Section 5.4.

¹¹⁴³ SKVR VII5 3943: 65–69.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Siellä vannoit vaikiasti, / ruotsin kuululla kivellä, / Karjalan alasimella, / tekemättäsi pahoa.* (SKVR VII5/3403, 28–31: Pielisjärvi. Lönnrot Q, n. 136. 1838).

¹¹⁴⁵ Karhu 1947: 109–110.

¹¹⁴⁶ SKVR I4/202: 51–55.

¹¹⁴⁷ Karhu 1947: 91.

¹¹⁴⁸ SKVR VI1/3217: 14–17.

¹¹⁴⁹ SKVR VI1/3320: 34–40.

¹¹⁵⁰ SKVR VI1/3320:15.

¹¹⁵¹ SKVR VI2/4429: 74–76; VI2/4434.

5.13 The complexity of the *Births of the Bear* and the bruin's multiple personhood

The complexity of the *Births of the Bear* analyzed in this chapter challenges many of the simplifications of the historical reconstructions made by Sarmela. According to his theory, a certain *Birth* fit perfectly in a certain historical age, meaning that it is possible to logically proceed from a positive *Birth* to more negative ones. However, as Siikala often noticed, the Finno-Karelian mythological world was historically stratified.¹¹⁵² The apparently archaic *Birth in the Sky* could be connected with a prayer to Jesus, and the *Birth of the Bear from Mielikki* could be followed by an exhortation to a syncretic Virgin Mary. The bruin was born as kin of Adam and Eve, but also from Hongotar, while the pre-Christian and dreadful Crone of Pohjola performed a baptism. The *Births* are proof of the mythological complexity of the personhood of the bear, which simultaneously was an otherworldly and a humanlike person. The bear seems to have been connected to several mythic layers of the universe: the sky, the otherworldly forest, Pohjola, the illnesses, and the sea. On the other hand, the *Birth* from the family of Adam or Eve, the parenthood of hunters, baptism and oaths emphasized the human features of the bruin. The bear was particularly sacred because it was a being "in between" and, as Apo correctly stated, a kind of mediator between humanity, the otherworld and the animal world.¹¹⁵³ The bear could have multiple mythical origins in the Ob-Ugrian tradition as well. Schmidt noted that the bruin could be an offspring of the father in the sky, the forest spirits or the mother of the lower regions.¹¹⁵⁴ Schmidt emphasized that the bear's supernatural parents often belonged to two opposite spheres (the human world and the forest world), producing a "third kind of being," a mediator which belonged to an intermediate sphere. Sometimes one of the parents had more negative features, and the offspring became unruly and assumed the shape of a bear.¹¹⁵⁵ The bear in the Ob-Ugrian tradition was not only celestial and positive, as Sarmela suggested. Rather, the multiplicity of myths suggests that the Ob-Ugrian bear's identity was as complex and ambivalent as in the Finno-Karelian tradition.

In Finland and Karelia, the accumulation of several *Births* was a mark of a high status of sacredness: iron, fire and ale were also considered sacred and powerful, and they often had long and multiple *Births*.

¹¹⁵² Siikala 1994: 37; see Section 1.3.3.

¹¹⁵³ Apo 2001: 73; see Sections 3.7 and 3.8.

¹¹⁵⁴ Schmidt 1989: 192.

¹¹⁵⁵ Schmidt 1989: 194.

The holiness of the bear never overcame the consciousness of its being dangerous. The incantations often ended by requesting the forest spirit or saint to block, prevent or stop a bear attack. The most common alternative was to make the bear's teeth and force "soft." The power of the singers' words was believed to change the body of the bruin. Multiple *Births* were useful in order to obtain supernatural help from a great number of supernatural helpers: the sky-god Ukko, the Creator, the forest spirits or some saint syncretized with pre-Christian beings, and the Crone of Pohjola. The hunters sang and addressed their requests to all these beings when they entered the forest. The hunter asked for the help of all those beings that could help him in preventing a bear attack and in finding its den. The humans mobilized a variegated group of supernatural helpers, which belonged to a historically stratified tradition.

Chapter 6

Entering the Forest: Seductive Songs and Prayers for the Forest Spirits

6.1 Communication and exchange with the forest spirits: Offerings

In this chapter, I will examine the rituals and songs performed when entering the forest. They consist of offerings, seductive songs for spirits and the forest, and prayers and exhortations to forest spirits, requesting them to act as providers of game animals and as guides to find the location of prey. The addressees also include the thunder-god Ukko. These songs have been almost ignored by Kuusi, Haavio, Sarmela and the majority of the Finnish scholars, as the tendency has been to treat the *Births of the Bear* and to jump to the songs for the awakening of the bear from the den and the hunters' explanations for the bear's death.¹¹⁵⁶ Only Lotte Tarkka has paid great attention to the seductive songs addressed to the female forest spirits.¹¹⁵⁷ The songs analyzed in this chapter are fundamental to fully understand how the forest was personalized and how the hunters presented themselves and built intimate relationships with the persons of the woodland.¹¹⁵⁸

To begin, it was mandatory to give offerings. Otto Jussila from Joutsa told that the hunters took three spruces, bound them together and put them on a hummock. After that they tied a board on the branches of the spruces. In Joutsa, this was the "table of Tapio."¹¹⁵⁹ The hunters offered a bottle of spirits and a bottle of ale on the top of the board, and some drops of the alcoholic drinks were poured on the roots of the spruces.¹¹⁶⁰ The hunters thereby offered alcoholic drinks to the master spirit Tapio. As

¹¹⁵⁶ Kuusi 1963: 41–55; Haavio 1967: 15–41; Sarmela 1991; Sarmela 2007: 70–94; Sarmela 2009: 79–107.

¹¹⁵⁷ Tarkka 1998: 106–108.

¹¹⁵⁸ On the personalization of the bear and the forest, see Sections 3.6, 3.10, 3:13 and 3:14.

¹¹⁵⁹ *Tapion pöytä*. Elsewhere the "table of Tapio" could be a young spruce with an unusual shape; see Sections 4.2, 4.4.

¹¹⁶⁰ SKS KRA Lilli Lilius b 181. 1888. Joutsa. Otto Jussila.

the forest spirit was conceived as an anthropomorphic and humanlike being, he was supposed to enjoy the alcoholic beverages that humans loved.

The offering had a preventive goal, being a ritual way to avoid the anger of the forest spirits and the contagion provoked by their rage. In Olonets Karelia, for example, an offering of coffee neutralized the anger of water spirits when people chipped ice from a well after sunset.¹¹⁶¹ The offering of ale pleased the forest spirit, making it favorable towards the hunter. The Finno-Karelians always offered the forest spirits an enjoyable and socially valuable product, such as ale, spirits, coffee or bread.

The offering of alcoholic drinks was part of an exchange ritual: the hunter offered ale and spirits in order to receive a bear in the future. The Finno-Karelian folk beliefs were strongly based on reciprocity and exchange.¹¹⁶² If the hunters had the intention to kill a bear, they should offer something in exchange. Offerings regulated the balance between “this world” and the “other side” represented by the forest spirits.

The reciprocity between humans and sacred agents operated following moral principles recognized by both parties.¹¹⁶³ Stark stresses that “agreement upon shared ‘rules of the game’ and submission to a system of mutual moral obligation were expressed through collective symbols.”¹¹⁶⁴ Ale was much more than an intoxicating beverage. It was a collective symbol with great relevance in almost all the rituals of the village communities, from agricultural spring rituals¹¹⁶⁵ to Christmas.¹¹⁶⁶ Ale and spirits were cultural products of the fields, and drinking ale in ritual situations was associated with the fertility of the crops. As the bear was also considered the “grain of the forest,”¹¹⁶⁷ the exchange of ale and spirits could be related to a shared code: an offering of ale and spirits (the product of the barley owned by humans) should precede the offering of the bear (the “grain” owned by the forest spirits).

If one of the parties failed to meet its obligation, it could be punished. If a sacred agent failed to fulfil its part of the bargain, the humans could punish him. In Orthodox Karelia, even some Christian saints or icons that were supposed to act as pre-Christian forest spirits could be punished by the believers.¹¹⁶⁸ An old man from Suojärvi prayed

¹¹⁶¹ SKS KRA Helmi Helminen 2314. Tulomanjärvi 1943. Solomanda Petrov b. 1862; cited in Stark 2006: 271.

¹¹⁶² Stark 2002: 40; Tarkka 1988: 102; Sarmela 1969.

¹¹⁶³ Stark 2002: 41.

¹¹⁶⁴ Stark 2002: 41.

¹¹⁶⁵ *Ukon vakat*.

¹¹⁶⁶ Apo 2001: 369.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Metsän vilja*; see Section 6.13.

¹¹⁶⁸ Stark 2002: 41.

to Saint Ilja (Elijah), offered pastries and alcohol to his icon, and told him, “Saint Ilja, watch over my cows so that bears don’t get them.”¹¹⁶⁹ But when a bear killed his cow, he got mad and broke the icon with an axe, saying, “I fed you my best pieces and gave you my best liquor and this is the miracle you gave me.”¹¹⁷⁰

If the hunter did not make offerings to the forest spirits, they could be punished with bad luck in hunting. However, when the hunters made offerings, they believed that the forest spirit was, in one way or another, “obliged” to give the desired quarry.

The hunters also offered small quantities of gold or silver, pouring it on a tree or on its roots. The hunters from Latvajärvi sang to the forest spirit:

Come, Ahti,¹¹⁷¹ for the division of money,
kumpu,¹¹⁷² for sharing the gold.
I have the most famous of the gold;
I have good silver
brought from the war by my father;¹¹⁷³
they are clinking in the purse.¹¹⁷⁴

The song presents the hunt as a mutual transaction, a true “division”: the hunter offered money, silver and gold, and he received in exchange a bear, called “money” or “gold” or “silver” in some *Bear Songs*.¹¹⁷⁵ In Uhtua, the hunter lamented that the present forest spirits were not interested in this exchange, as the old forest spirits had been:

Although the old dwellers
came clinking in gold
swinging in silver,

¹¹⁶⁹ SKS KRA Santeri Huovinen 105. Ruskeala 1936; cited in Stark 2002: 41. English translation by Laura Stark.

¹¹⁷⁰ SKS KRA Santeri Huovinen 105. Ruskeala 1936; cited in Stark 2002: 41. English translation by Laura Stark.

¹¹⁷¹ Rare variation for the forest spirit. Generally Ahti is the master of the water.

¹¹⁷² Rare variation for the forest or the earth spirit, identified with a hill (*kumpu*).

¹¹⁷³ The money offered could be fulfilled with the “death force” (*kalman väki*) present in the war fields.

¹¹⁷⁴ *Tule, Ahti, rahan jaolle, / kumpu, kullan muuttelohon. / miun on kullat kuulusimmat, / miulla on huolovat hopiat, / isoni soasta tuomat, / ne kuluo kukkaroissa* (SKVR I4/1098: 36–41. Latvajärvi. Castrén n. 140. 39).

¹¹⁷⁵ See Sections 6.2, 7.10.

not the present people;
they don't bother with my silver,
they don't listen to my gold.¹¹⁷⁶

The hunter was probably trying to convince the forest spirits to accept the deal, stressing that the old ones were much more generous and beautiful, clinking in their gold and silver. He smartly took advantage of the vanity of male and female forest spirits.

The offerings could be made during the hunt as well. The *tietäjä* and hunter Jeremias Seppänen from Ruhtinansalmi told that he poured silver or offered coins on trees nearby bear dens.¹¹⁷⁷ After that, the hunter sang: "Give, forest, in in the future too, / roll your grains, / mercifully, your presents."¹¹⁷⁸

These lines stressed the nature of the deal. The hunter offered silver, but he expected that the forest spirits would give gifts and grains (bears and other prey) in exchange in the future. For this reason, offerings were an indispensable ritual device to obtain game animals.

6.2 Personalizing Mehtola and Tapiola

As a rule, hunters did not sing about the real goal of their hunt. Jyrki Malinen from Vuonninen sang: "What are we going to sing, / when we go towards the doors of *ohio*,¹¹⁷⁹ / the yards of the blue-piper?"^{1180,1181} Jyrki Malinen presented the hunt as a friendly visit to the house of the bear: the den. According to Tarkka, the den represented both nature and culture, it was "a mediator between the two that enabled the ritual exchange between the two worlds."¹¹⁸²

¹¹⁷⁶ *Toisin entiset eläjät, / kävi kullassa kulaten, / hoiassa heilahuien, / ei kun nyt nykyinen kansa, / ei huoli hopeistani, / eikä kuule kullist[ani]* (SKVR I4/1127: 1–6. Uhtua. Lönnrot A II 9, n. 53. 1835).

¹¹⁷⁷ *Karhunpesän luo vuolaistiin hopeaa tai pantiin raha uhriksi puuhun* (SKVR XII2/6534).

¹¹⁷⁸ *Anna mehta vastakin, / viljojasi vierettele, / lahjojasi laupiaasti!* (SKVR XII2/6534: 1–3. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6265. 1917. Ruhtinansalmi. Jeremias Seppänen).

¹¹⁷⁹ The bear.

¹¹⁸⁰ The bear.

¹¹⁸¹ *Mitä siitä lauletaan, / kuim männäh ohon ovilla, / sini-piiparin pihoilla?* (SKVR I4/1207.1a: 1–3. Vuonninen. Borenius II. Jyrki Malinen).

¹¹⁸² Tarkka 2013: 338–339.

In Viena Karelia, a similar introductory motif was sung in wedding songs when the groom started his travel towards the bride's house.¹¹⁸³ The question "What are we going to sing?" was asked in the Viena Karelian *Singer's Words*,¹¹⁸⁴ in which the singers sang about how they start to sing and why: the act of singing was often presented as traveling or following a path, and sometimes even as a departure for a bear hunt.¹¹⁸⁵

A rare song in which the hunters mentioned the real goal of the hunt was transcribed by Lönnrot in the parish of Kajaani: "It is time to get Ohto, / to shoot down the money-fur, / in the pleasing Metsola, in the rigorous Tapiola."¹¹⁸⁶

The location of the bear hunt was perceived as another world: Metsola or Tapiola, the kingdom of the forest master Tapio and the forest mistress.¹¹⁸⁷ The mythic forestland was described in an ambiguous way, defined both as *mieluisa* ('pleasing, charming, agreeable, adorable, lovely, and benevolent, favorable, propitious')¹¹⁸⁸ and *tarkka* ('meticulous, diligent, wise, skilled, accurate, severe').¹¹⁸⁹ With these adjectives, the forestland acquired psychological or behavioral qualities that were generally the same as its mistress. The environment itself was personalized and feminized.

In the ritual songs, the forest mistress was described as the rigorous maiden or wife of Tapiola¹¹⁹⁰ and the "lovely mistress of Mehtola."¹¹⁹¹ One of the names of the forest mistress, Mielikki, is semantically connected with the adjective *mieluisa*,¹¹⁹² while the noun *mieli* refers to 'desire' and 'being favored.'¹¹⁹³

The adjective *tarkka* had different meanings, but many of these seem to have been related to the best qualities of a mistress, wife or a girl: being skilled, intelligent, meticulous, fast, parsimonious, precise, good and wise in all her works and duties. On the other hand, the ideal beauty and femininity of the forest spirits clearly included attractiveness, as captured in the term *mieluisa*. Furthermore, the word *tarkka* had

¹¹⁸³ Virtanen E. A. 1949: 7.

¹¹⁸⁴ SKVR I3/1281: 1–3.

¹¹⁸⁵ Tarkka 2013: 148–149 and 158–159.

¹¹⁸⁶ *Nyt on Ohto otettavana, / rahakarva kaattavana / mielusassa Metsolassa, / tarkassa Tapiolassa.* (SKVR XII2/6467, 1–4. [Kajaanin kihlak.] Lönnrot, Lönnrotiana 79, s. 1–2. *Kirjekonsepteja.* 1835–1837. 1–4).

¹¹⁸⁷ *Metsän emäntä, Metsolan emäntä* or Mielikki.

¹¹⁸⁸ Turunen Aimo 1949: 180.

¹¹⁸⁹ Turunen Aimo 1949: 291; Turunen Aimo 1979: 331.

¹¹⁹⁰ *Tapiolan tarkka neito* (SKVR XII2/6620: 5), *Tapiolan tarkka vaimo* (SKVR XII2/6398: 1).

¹¹⁹¹ *Mielus mehtolan emäntä* (SKVR XII2/6396).

¹¹⁹² Turunen Aimo 1949: 180; Turunen Aimo 1979: 210.

¹¹⁹³ Tarkka 2013: 342.

economic connotations. The forest mistress and Tapio were very meticulous and precise in managing their cattle (the bears and the wild animals). Thus, if a beast of their cattle were to disappear, the hunter should please them with songs to appease their anger.¹¹⁹⁴ The adjective *tarkka* was also related to hunting,¹¹⁹⁵ and precision was a quality of hunters, who should act wisely and precisely in all of their ritual actions connected with the forest and “forest cattle” in particular.

Returning to the song, it is evident that the bear is located in another world (Tapiola or Metsola). In the *Bear Songs*, Tapiola, Metsola and Pohjola were different names for the mythical forestland, the hunting ground, and the mythical birthplace of the bear.¹¹⁹⁶ The names and related adjectives stress the different aspects of the woodland.

Lotte Tarkka argues that the description of the hunt journey corresponds to the story of “the journey to the otherworld, from which the hero obtains a valuable prize, a fantastic wealth-producing object¹¹⁹⁷ or a bride.”^{1198,1199} In the case of the bear songs, the prize or the goal was the bruin itself, which not by chance was presented in the songs as a bride or a groom.¹²⁰⁰

6.3 The masculine hero in the wilderness

The mythical forest was described in an ambiguous way: it was a lovely place, but also a “rigorous” environment in which the hunter should move carefully. The ambiguity of the hunting ground was expressed with visual descriptions: the woodland was portrayed as both “somber” and as “shining.”

The hunters of Ilomantsi emphasized the gloomy aspect of the forest: “I’m the man, the traveler of the forest, / the manly hero, the wild woods’ walker, / who treads in the somber wild woods.”¹²⁰¹

The word ‘somber’ (*synkkä*) had an emotional connotation: the forest was a dark, sad, grim and gloomy place, and thus potentially a dreadful other world. The somberness put the hunter under a certain spotlight, and the lines stress his brave and

¹¹⁹⁴ SKVR I4/1244.

¹¹⁹⁵ Turunen Aimo 1949: 291.

¹¹⁹⁶ See Section 5.2.

¹¹⁹⁷ The *sampo*.

¹¹⁹⁸ The maiden of Pohjola.

¹¹⁹⁹ Tarkka 2013: 337.

¹²⁰⁰ See Sections 7.1, 8.1, 8.2.

¹²⁰¹ *Miepä miesi metsän käyjä, / uros korven kolkuttaja, / salon synkän sylkyttäjä.* (SKVR VII5/3298. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 284. 1846).

manly attitude as he dared to enter such a place. The bold act of traveling in a gloomy and otherworldly space stressed the male ego and the ritual identity of the hunter, who sang that he was a very masculine man and a hero.¹²⁰² It is worth mentioning that the same motif could be used to describe the walking of a female forest spirit through the woodland.¹²⁰³ Maybe the hunter remarked that he walked in the forest with the same confidence as a forest spirit and master of the domain.

This motif was very common in Viena Karelian wedding songs. When the bride was instructed by an elder person, her husband was idealized by almost the same lines: “Your man is a traveler of the forest, / a manly hero, a wild woods’ walker, / his dogs are not sleeping at home.”¹²⁰⁴ Thus, the perfect husband was an efficient and brave hunter, a man who often brought meat to the household. The hunting ground, and the bear hunt in particular, was a way to measure the value of men.¹²⁰⁵ However, the forest seems to have been considered “somber” only at the beginning of the travel, because the Viena Karelian hunters passed through it, singing: “I skied past the somber forest.”¹²⁰⁶ Sometimes the “somber” woods indicated a forest that was empty of game.¹²⁰⁷

The forest landscape was also marked by male activities. The hunters from Rantasalmi sang: “I set my mind to go there, / I’m thinking in my brain, / to go in the forestland of other men, / in the deep woods of the male heroes.”¹²⁰⁸ The lines stressed the strong will, intention and desire of the hunter. *Mieli*, the Finnish word for ‘mind’ and ‘reason,’ refers also to ‘desire’ and ‘intention.’¹²⁰⁹ Will and determination were masculine qualities, useful for reinforcing the magic force of individuals and *tietäjäs*.¹²¹⁰

In Rantasalmi’s song, the forest was not “somber,” but attractive, shining and scented: “There the wild woods shines, / the blue forest looms,”¹²¹¹ “the forest smells

¹²⁰² *Uros*. See Turunen Aimo 1979: 359.

¹²⁰³ SKVR I4/1099: 5–8. Latvajärvi Bor. III, n. 42. 1877. Arhippariini Miihkali.

¹²⁰⁴ *Miehes’ on metsän kävijä, / uro korven kolkuttaja / eipä sen koirat koissa moata* (SKVR I3/1700: 110–113. Jyvöälaksi. Bern. n. 74 d). 1872).

¹²⁰⁵ Tarkka: 2013: 347.

¹²⁰⁶ *Syrjin hiihen synkät metsät* (SKVR I4/1233: 40. Venehjärvi. Berner n. 77. 1872. Loasari Lesoñi).

¹²⁰⁷ Tarkka 1998: 105.

¹²⁰⁸ *Tuonne mieleeni tekepi, / aivuni ajattelepi, / mui ten miesten mehtimaille, / urosten eri saloille* (SKVR VI2/4886. 3–6. Rantasalmi. A. Westerlund, XXVII. n. 1. 10–11 1887. Ulla Maria Eronen, 60-year-old woman).

¹²⁰⁹ Turunen Aimo 1979: 209; Tarkka 2013: 342.

¹²¹⁰ Stark 2006: 286, 289.

¹²¹¹ *Tuolla korpi kuumottaapi, / mehtä siintääpi sininen* (SKVR VI2/4886. 1–2).

good, / steams of honey, / stinks of juniper.”¹²¹² Here the attractiveness of the environment stimulated the will of the hunter traveling into it. The transformation of the forest from somber into a shining, perfumed and resonating place generally indicated that the forest spirits had an intention to give prey to the hunters.¹²¹³ The forest was also defined as blue, a color expressing beauty and magical power. The forestland thereby seemed to become enchanted, turning into a welcoming, beautiful landscape.

The hunting ground was a masculine place, because male human activities such as hunting were performed in the forest.¹²¹⁴ The hunter went “as a manly hero, to the works outside.”¹²¹⁵ Outdoor jobs were supposed to be masculine, as opposed to feminine indoor or domestic work.¹²¹⁶ Even so, since female forest spirits inhabited the mythic woodland, male activities were performed in a highly feminine and attractive environment.¹²¹⁷

Some songs stressed the purity, freshness and isolation of the winter landscapes. Lukkañi Huotari from Ponkalaksi sang a prayer to the sky and thunder god: “Send, Ukko, new snow / throw, Palvañe, fresh snow.”¹²¹⁸ After that, he expressed his desire to go as a man “on the new snow of Ukko, / on the top of the fresh snow of Palvane, / where the mouse had not skied, / where the hares did not leave tracks.”¹²¹⁹ Here Ukko made the landscape sacred and cleared away every trace of human and animal presence. The place acquired mythical qualities and was extremely clean, marvelous and attractive.

Samppa Riiko from Tuhkala equated the hunter’s desire to ski with the bride’s wait for her wedding and her sexual desire for the groom: “The ski waited for the snow / as a maiden waits for a young man, / a charming virgin his groom, / a red cheek in her trepidation.”¹²²⁰ The style is both romantic and erotic. Like many other objects related

¹²¹² *Mehtä haiseepi hyvälle, / hunajalle höyryääpi, / katajalle katkuaapi* (SKVR VI2/4886. 7–10).

¹²¹³ Tarkka 1998: 105.

¹²¹⁴ See SKVR VI2/4886. 3–6.

¹²¹⁵ *Urohosta ulkotöillä* (SKVR I4/1206: 5. Ponkalaksi. Borenius III, n. 93. 8/9/1877).

¹²¹⁶ Tarkka 1998: 93.

¹²¹⁷ Tarkka 1998: 107.

¹²¹⁸ SKVR I4 1206: Ponkalaksi. Borenius III, n. 93. 1877. Lukkañi Huotari.

¹²¹⁹ *Ukon uuvella lumella, / palvo[a]sen vijin selällä, / hiiren hiihtamattomalla, / bjäniksen jälettömällä.* (SKVR I4/1206. Ponkalaksi. Borenius III, n. 93. 1877. Lukkañi Huotari).

¹²²⁰ *Suksi vuotti uutta lunta, / niinkuin neiti nuorta miestä, / sulo impi sulhastansa, / puna poski huolissansa* (SKVR I4/1199: 1–4. Tuhkala. Meriläinen n. 541. 1888. Samppa Riiko).

to hunting and traveling,¹²²¹ skis were symbols of masculinity, and the delight provoked by skiing was compared to the passion of new love. Here the skis were personalized, and they even had a “female sensibility,” as they waited for the snow like a bride for her groom.

6.4 The bear portrayed as honey, ale, meat or grease

In the songs, the hunt or the prey was not clearly described. The hunters of Kiuruvesi expressed their desire to go to Mehtola or Tapiola “to drink the ale of the forest, / to taste the honey of the forest, / grease from the spruce roots, / fat which slept through the winter.”¹²²² The hunters described the bear with gastronomic words implying something tasty, as they imagined in advance the result of the hunt: if they got their prey, they would organize a feast with an abundance of ale and the bear’s fatty meat.

Honey, grease and ale were valuable and tasty food and drink. Honey was not only one of the favorite foods of the bear, but also something very sweet, sensual and highly desirable. The beautiful forest mistress was often called “honeyed maiden.” Honey was an ingredient to make mead, and the fascinating female forest spirit Tapiotar was called “mead-mouth.”¹²²³ Calling the bear “fat” and “grease” emphasized the nutritional and gastronomic qualities of its meat, which were esteemed by hunters.¹²²⁴ Ale was a cultural product, the result of a cultural and agricultural work. The definition of the bear as “ale of the forest” could be connected to the idea that bears were called “grain of the forest,” as ale is made with barley.¹²²⁵ The forest spirits “cultivated” bears, stored them in a “granary,” and maybe were even seen to produce ale as the humans did. Ale had a clear religious and social value, as drinking it was common in rituals and it was a good reason for male gatherings.

The bear was something desirable and valuable. It evoked the desire of the hunter, who would take the risk to undergo dangerous travel into mythic places in order to obtain it. The singer also emphasized the positive aspects of Metsola and Tapiola as being not only “somber” forest realms, but places able to furnish lovely and tasty food. The definitions of the bear as tasty show that the hunter should have strong motivation to hunt; indeed, his “desire” for the prey was a prerequisite for a successful hunt.

¹²²¹ Tarkka 1998: 93; Stark 1998: 48.

¹²²² *Juovani metän olutta, / metän mettää maistaaxeni, / kuuta kuusen juurihista, / talven maanutta talia!* (SKVR VI2/4913: 40–46. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 1819).

¹²²³ *Sima suu Tapiotar* (SKVR VII5 loitsut 3298: 15. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 284. 1846).

¹²²⁴ See Section 8.9.

¹²²⁵ *Metsän vilja*; see Section 6.13.

6.5 Seduction, sex and weddings with the forest spirits

The hunter's poetic language often presented the capture of the bear as the eating of delicacies, but almost the same words were used to describe the hunt as a form of sexual intercourse with the forest spirits.¹²²⁶ Lotte Tarkka notes that in a *Bear Song* by the famous Viena Karelian singer Arhippa Perttunen, the bear hunt was portrayed as a sexual act or an erotic flirting with a female forest spirit:¹²²⁷

My mind is set,
set on visiting Metsola,
to make love to the forest maiden,
to drink the forest honey,
flesh from under the leaves,
grease from the spruce's roots.¹²²⁸

In this case, the “gastronomic” names¹²²⁹ for the bear are connected with an explicit description of sexual intercourse or a wedding proposal with a strong erotic content. However, the meaning of the verb ‘to make love’ (*naida*) also means ‘to marry.’ The bear hunt was poetically transformed into a sexual or wedding proposal directed at the female guardians of bears. The hunter tried to appeal to and seduce the female spirits who could provide game.

With symbols of sex and a wedding, the process of identification between the hunter and the forest reached a high level of mimesis. Tarkka stresses that the communication became a real blending or bodily fusion with the forest. The wooing hunter created a state of ritual communion, by means of which he became akin to the forest or merged with it physically.¹²³⁰

Willerslev observes that imitating something—the mimetic faculty—is to be “sensuously filled with that which is imitated, yielding to it, mirroring it, and hence

¹²²⁶ Tarkka 2013: 344.

¹²²⁷ Tarkka 2013: 343–344.

¹²²⁸ *Mieleni minun tekisi, / mieli käyä metsolassa, / metsän nettä naiakseni, / metsän mettä juoakseni, / lihoa lehen alaista, / kuuta kuusen juurehista* (SKVR I4/1095: 1–6). English translation partially based on the one by Lotte Tarkka (Tarkka 2017: 343).

¹²²⁹ See Section 6.4.

¹²³⁰ Tarkka 2013: 344.

imitating it bodily.”¹²³¹ According to Taussig, mimesis has a corporeal aspect, the sensuous contact between the imitator and the original.¹²³²

To seduce the forest spirits, Arhippa Perttunen also sang that “the man smells of the taste of honey.”¹²³³ The hunter was perfumed with honey, the most sweet and sensual of the products of the woodland, the favorite food of the bear and a circumlocution for the bear itself.

According to Tarkka, the sensual melting with the forest could also be interpreted as a form of camouflage.¹²³⁴ The hunter thus lost his human smell and acquired the scents of the forestland, and the human scent could no longer be detected by animals.

The ritual connection between sexuality, seduction, weddings and the hunt is almost universal. Kwong notes that among the Orochons of Eastern Siberia, the word *geleni* means both ‘to look for game animals’ and ‘to desire,’ and that it is “applied to the content of hunting and sexual activities alike.”¹²³⁵ Kwon stressed that the hunter’s violence and killing was portrayed as sexual intercourse from the perspective of the animal.¹²³⁶ The hunters decorated the knives used to skin the bear with the animal’s pubic hair,¹²³⁷ and they brought with them on the hunt a bruin’s penis, which was a “decoy” for the prey.¹²³⁸ These details indicate that the real goal of the hunt, the kill, was concealed as a sexual act with the prey, which was seduced in order to be caught. Among the Yukaghirs, the seduced animal “gives itself up” to hunters like an infatuated maiden to her lover.¹²³⁹

Among the Mistassini Cree, the relationship between the hunter and the caribou was analogous to a sexual affair between a man and a lover, while the human-bear relationship was modeled on the love of a man for his son or grandfather.¹²⁴⁰ Ilomäki states that among the Kluane people of Northwest Yukon, the expression “to do some trapping” is also related to erotic relations.¹²⁴¹

¹²³¹ Willerslev 2007: 96.

¹²³² Taussig 1993: 10; see Willerslev 2007: 12.

¹²³³ *Mies haisee meen maulta* (SKVR I4/1095: 13).

¹²³⁴ Tarkka 2013: 344.

¹²³⁵ Kwong 1999: 385–386.

¹²³⁶ Kwon 1999: 386.

¹²³⁷ Kwon 1999: 385.

¹²³⁸ Kwon 1999: 386.

¹²³⁹ Willerslev 2007: 101.

¹²⁴⁰ Tanner 1979: 138.

¹²⁴¹ Ilomäki 2014: 83.

In Finland and Karelia, the concept of hunting and trapping game was strongly related with seducing or marrying a girl, as is evident in this wedding song:

On the road I did a trap for the black grouse,
on the glade a trap for the hare,
at the end of the village a trap for maidens.
The virgin came into my trap,
the red cheek into my trap.¹²⁴²

In Viena Karelia, hunting imagery dominated wedding songs.¹²⁴³ The bride to be courted is referred as a game animal: a “red furred one, a summer fox.”¹²⁴⁴ The peculiarity of the Finnish and Karelian *Bear Songs* is that the sexual proposal was not directed at the bear, but the female spirits protecting the bear.

Among the Siberian Yukaghirs, the hunter seduced and had sex with the elk’s protector spirit in a dream before the hunt. However, these flirtations were dangerous: if the spirit fell in love with hunters, she tried to kill them in order to live with them in the otherworld.¹²⁴⁵

Arhippa Perttunen not only declared his desire to have a casual sexual adventure with the forest maiden, but proposed himself to be her husband:

I spur my dogs,
I stretch my bow.
Take me, forest, as your man,
as your hero, Tapijo,
as your arrow boy, wild wood.¹²⁴⁶

These verses are very intriguing because they can be interpreted as a wedding proposal or as a request to be accepted as a “forest man,” a hunter (an “arrow boy”) performing hunting activities (stretching the bow and spurring the dogs).

¹²⁴² *Tein ma tielle tetren ansan, / Aholl jäniksen ansan, / kylän päähän neien ansan. / Tuli neito ansahani, / punaposki pyytöhöni* (SKVR VI2/1200: 1–5 [Toksova]. Europæus J 143. 1847).

¹²⁴³ Ilomäki 1988: 151–152.

¹²⁴⁴ SKVR I4/1664.

¹²⁴⁵ Willerslev 2007: 101, 177.

¹²⁴⁶ *Kohottelen koiriani, / jousieni[!] jouuttelen: / ota, metsä, mieheksesi, / urohiksesi, Tapijo, / korpi kolkkipoijkesi!* (SKVR I4/1095: 7–11).

Juhana Korpelainen from Kiuruvesi clearly sang about a wedding proposal, declaring his desire to make love with the forest maiden (or to marry her), “so I could bustle at a wedding / twirl at the table’s end.”¹²⁴⁷ Korpelainen also lamented: “Woe, I am indeed a poor boy, / as I was not married / with the favorite¹²⁴⁸ maidens of the forest, / with the girl with fur breast.”¹²⁴⁹

The forest maidens were clearly defined as attractive, but the fact that they have a “fur breast” reveals their proximity with the game animals.

Korpelainen did not sing about occasional sexual intercourse but of a wedding, a ritual that created a kinship relation with forest spirits which could safeguard game animals in the future. Matti Waljakka from Mäntyharju asked of the forest mistress Annika: “Marry us, our men, / regenerate our heroes / with the favorite¹²⁵⁰ daughters of the forest.”¹²⁵¹ Here the forest mistress is an authoritative mother-in-law.¹²⁵²

Among the Makuna of Amazonia, the hunter explicitly declared a wish to attract and seduce his prey, and the relation between the Spirit Owner and its animals was equated to that between a father and his marriageable daughters, which could be allocated to human beings if they properly performed all the rituals.¹²⁵³

In Finland and Karelia, sexual intercourse or wedding proposals in the *Bear Songs* were strategies to become a relative of the forest, part of the “kin” of the forest mistress. However, flirting or even the wedding with the forest spirit was temporary; the hunter became a lover or husband of the forest, but only for the short period of the hunt. After that, he returned to the village and his wife.

If during the hunt the hunter became a sexual partner or a “relative” of the forest spirits, he could ask of them the desired prey. In the song by Arhippa Perttunen, the seductive lines were followed by requests. He asked the Forest Mistress to send the

¹²⁴⁷ *Saisin häisiä häärestellä, / pöydän pääsä pyörästellä* (SKVR VI2/4889: 30–31. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 12 n. 10. 15 August 1819. Kiuruvesi. Juhana Korpelainen).

¹²⁴⁸ Or “lovely.”

¹²⁴⁹ *Voi minun polosen poiijan, / kuin ei naitettu minua, / metän mieli tyttärillä / karva rinnoille kavolle* (SKVR VI2/4889: 32–35).

¹²⁵⁰ Or “lovely.”

¹²⁵¹ *Uuista urohitamme, / metsän mieli-tyttärille, / karvoarinta rakkahille* (SKVR VI2/4822, 31–35. Mäntyharju. Ahlman, F. F. n. 7. 1858. Matti Waljakka).

¹²⁵² In the epic songs, the Crone of Pohjola is a hard-tempered mother-in-law who decided to give her daughter to the hero who was able to forge her the *sampo* (SKVR I1/440). Not by chance could the Crone of Pohjola be both a forest spirit and the mother of the bear; see Section 5.6.

¹²⁵³ Århem 1996: 192.

scent of the bear towards the hound: “slash the smell as an arc, / let it go into the dog’s nostrils.”¹²⁵⁴ Afterwards, he asked her to set the hound to discover the location of the bear or its den.¹²⁵⁵

The last lines reveal that the hunter did not perform a complete metamorphosis. By marrying the forest spirit or making love with her, he became mimetically similar to the forest, but he maintained his consciousness and identity.¹²⁵⁶ Taussig stresses that mimesis is like “dancing between the very same and the very different.”¹²⁵⁷ While the hunter emphatically played “the role of the harmless lover,”¹²⁵⁸ he never forgot the main goal of his hunt. If the hunter completely became a forest being, he lost his agency and capacity to hunt.

Mimesis requires profound reflexivity: the hunter, sensuously melting with the forest, should pay attention to avoid complete absorption into it. The imitator is conscious that the original is different. If there is complete homogenization, there is nothing different to imitate. Mimesis depends on the existence of difference, and the imitator remains a being “in between” the identities.¹²⁵⁹ The imitator voluntarily remains an imperfect copy, “a poorly executed ideogram”¹²⁶⁰ of the original.

Mimesis and seduction are sophisticated games of power. Taussig argued that the copy or the imitator, “drawing on the character and power of the original, may even assume that character and power.”¹²⁶¹ In the case of Arhippa’s song, the hunter’s mimetic body melting was completed in order to assume seductive power over the female forest spirit, who had the power to give the bear to the hunter. Willerslev stressed that hunters did not imitate to represent something, but to manipulate the power relations in the environment around them.¹²⁶²

6.6 Seducing the personalized forest

The wooing strategy was very common in the *Bear Songs*. Quite often the hunters sang to female forest spirits or to the forest, considered as a female entity:

¹²⁵⁴ *Tuhku kaarelle sivalla / tulla koiran sieramihin* (SKVR I4/1095: 16–17).

¹²⁵⁵ SKVR I4/1095: 21–13.

¹²⁵⁶ Willerlsev 2007: 107.

¹²⁵⁷ Taussig 1993: 129.

¹²⁵⁸ Willerlsev 2007: 104.

¹²⁵⁹ Willerlsev 2007: 12.

¹²⁶⁰ Taussig 1993: 17.

¹²⁶¹ Taussig 1993: 13.

¹²⁶² Willerslev 2007: 95.

Become fond, forest, fall in love, wild wood,
give in, the only Tapio!
Become fond of my men, you forest,
fall in love, you wild wood, with my dogs¹²⁶³

According to the Finnish Etymological Dictionary, the Finnish verb ‘to become fond’ (*mieltyä*, lines 19, 21) also means ‘to fall in love’ (*ihastua*), ‘to become attached’ (*kiintyä*), ‘to give in’ (*taipua*), ‘to relent,’ ‘to calm down’ (*leppyä*) and also ‘to agree,’ ‘to consent’ and ‘to grant’ (*suostua*). The verb includes both a register of love and affection and one of persuasion, favor and acceptance. It is semantically connected to a frequent name of the forest mistress (Mielikki)¹²⁶⁴ and to the ‘lovely’ or ‘favorite’ (*mieluisa*) forest maiden or Metsola. Henni Ilomäki translates the verb *kostua* (line 22) into the modern Finnish *ihastua* ‘to fall in love.’¹²⁶⁵ Passionate words and verbs affirmed the deep, intimate relationship between the hunter and the forest, and they were a model of emotion and action.¹²⁶⁶ The hunting songs shared many similarities with sexual incantations, lyrics and wedding songs.¹²⁶⁷

The infatuation of the forest with the hunter was functional when it came to reaching his objective. Falling in love with the hunters, the forest accepted them as a members of her kin or people, so they could enter and finally obtain the bear.

In a song from Sulkava, the hunter exhorted the forest to fall in love in the very moment when he entered the forest: “When the man is going into the forest / in the days of my hunt.”¹²⁶⁸ The forest, considered a feminine being, was supposed to become infatuated when the hunter was hunting.

What is peculiar is that the hunters requested the forest or the spirits to fall in love with them, but they never sang to the forest or a female spirit that they loved her. Here, seduction was almost the opposite of love. The hunter/seducer remained emotionally unavailable, because seduction is a game of power.¹²⁶⁹ Love involved self-surrender. If

¹²⁶³ *Miellys metsä, kostu korpi, / taivu, ainoinen Tapio! / Mielly, sä metsä, miehihini, / kostu, sä korpi, koirihini!* (SKVR I4/1194: 19–22. Kieretti. Inha n. 261 m. 1894).

¹²⁶⁴ Tarkka 2017: 342.

¹²⁶⁵ Ilomäki 2014: 8.

¹²⁶⁶ Tarkka 2017: 343.

¹²⁶⁷ Tarkka 2017: 343; see Sections 8.2, 10.2.

¹²⁶⁸ *Miehen mänäsen mätelle / minun pyytö-päivineini* (SKVR VI2/4883 Sulkava. Gottlund n. 4. 1815).

¹²⁶⁹ Willerslev 2007: 105.

the forest fell in love, it gave the hunter whatever he wanted. But if the hunter fell in love, he would assume the role of the giver, the person controlled by the forest. By being a seducer, the hunter maintained his capacity to reflect and act in a rational manner and manipulate the feelings of the forest.

Songs from Savo testify that different groups of hunters competed in order to woo or seduce the forest maidens. The hunters from Sulkava stressed their handsomeness:

The other men do not have
the bluest eyelashes,
brighter eyebrows,
like my men [do].¹²⁷⁰

Senni Timonen points out that in the hunting songs the singers stressed their masculinity: according to his own words, the hunter is a graceful apparition.¹²⁷¹ The hunter's "bluest eyelashes" remind that blue eyes in Finland were an ideal of beauty. On the other hand, the welcoming forest that accepted the hunters could beautifully shine blue.

In a variation by Pekka Kärkkäinen from Juva, the hunter's face was the "most beautiful."¹²⁷² Juhana Korpelainen from Kiuruvesi stated that other hunters do not have "smoother eyelashes, / a faster twist of feet."¹²⁷³ The last line was related to the masculine ideal of the strong traveler in the woods.¹²⁷⁴ Almost all the songs emphasized the attractiveness of the eyes, eyebrows and eyelashes, all being essential for the body language of seduction and to create the right atmosphere with the opposite sex.

Paavo Kiiskinen asked why the forest did not fall in love with him, and if "other men" have "smoother eyelashes, fairest eyebrows."¹²⁷⁵ Maybe this hunter had not been successful for some time. The lines present the competition between hunters as a match of seducers. The hunting songs negated the existence of competition between forest

¹²⁷⁰ *Ei ole mieste muidenkaani, / sinisimet silmi ripset, / kuliamat kulman karvat, / kuin on miehele minulla* (SKVR VI2/4883, 5–8. Sulkava. Gottlund n. 4. 1815).

¹²⁷¹ Timonen 2008: 5–6.

¹²⁷² *Kell on kasvot kaunihimpa / sinisämät silmän ripset / kuin on miehellä minulla?* (SKVR VI2/4900 9–13. Juva. Gottlund n. 126. 3/3 1816. Härkälänniemi. Pekka Kärkkäinen).

¹²⁷³ *Siliämmät silmän ripset, / jalan käänne kerkiämpi,* (SKVR VI2/4889: 54–55).

¹²⁷⁴ Tarkka 1998: 93, 99.

¹²⁷⁵ *Onko heile siliemät silmikarvat / kuliamat kulma karvat?* (SKVR VI2/4884: 57–58. Kiiskilänniemi. Paavo Kiiskinen I. Köppö).

and humans, but the internal rivalry and envy between hunters—or humans in general—was an important issue.

Antti Varttinen from Kiuruvesi sang that other hunters do not have “socks made by silk thread / a silver ribbon for the pants.”¹²⁷⁶ The hunter ought to put on clean or church clothes in order to please the forest spirits, but the singer hyperbolically boosted himself even further by claiming to wear expensive clothes, presenting himself as rich as the female forest spirits with their clothes made of fancy materials. Willerslev noted that seduction is a strategy in which the seducer can heavily play on the victim’s narcissistic inclinations: the mimetic imitation of some features of the victim is a way of pleasing her and satisfying her.¹²⁷⁷ The hunter presented himself in a way that could satisfy the expectations and the tastes of the forest spirits. Not only should he be handsome and well-dressed, as the spirits generally were, but he also stressed how he “smells of forest land” and of “honey.”¹²⁷⁸ In Arhippa Perttunen’s song, the sexual act with the forest spirits was represented as a mimetic body fused with the forest; the hunter performed a partial dehumanization filled with sensual elements.¹²⁷⁹

In the songs, the hunter/seducer became a mimetic counterpart of the forest spirit, but he was supposed to still firmly maintain his identity and “strong will.” The forest fell in love, but the hunter did not. The seductive songs were always followed by precise requests to the forest spirit, and being pleased and satisfied, the forest spirit became the guide of the hunter and the giver of prey.

6.7 Declarations of self-pity, poverty and humility

The hunters did not always present themselves as handsome and seductive. Hunters from Latvajärvi instead emphasized their weakness:

I push my men to the forest,
my manly heroes, for an outdoor work;

¹²⁷⁶ *Ole sulkku sukkarihma, / hopeesta housun nauhat* (SKVR VI2/4913: 15–16. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 1819. Antti Vartiainen).

¹²⁷⁷ Tarkka 2017: 344.

¹²⁷⁸ *Onko heile siliemät silmikärvät / kuliamät kulma kärvät?* (SKVR VI2/4884: 57–58. Kiiskilänniemi. Paavo Kiiskinen I. Köppö).

¹²⁷⁹ See Section 6.5.

the men are young, the dogs are puppies,
the heroes aged one summer.¹²⁸⁰

The formulation of the last line was a hyperbole to express that the hunters were no more than unexperienced children. The *tietäjä* and bear-hunter Jeremias Seppänen from Ruhtinansalmi sang that he was leaving for the hunt with poor clothes: “with a shabby coat, / with a patched cap, / with a faded dress.”¹²⁸¹ In the ritual language of the hunt, having poor clothes could also mean not having any luck in hunting. Pekka Ronkainen from Sotkamo also emphasized his poverty when the dogs were unable to find any bears:

Woe, I’m a poor boy,
a boy of poor fate,
as I did not hear the dogs,
wheezing in the bush,
barking under the sprig.¹²⁸²

Arhippa Perttunen from Latvajärvi also lamented to the forest spirits about the scarcity of bears:

On these roads, seldom [the prey] was seen,
by these ugly fires,
on these miserable campfires,
the catch is taken as a wonder.¹²⁸³

Arhippa clearly associated the scarcity of game animals with the poverty of the hunters’ campfires.

¹²⁸⁰ *Työnnän mieheni metsälle, / urohoni ulko-töille: / Miehet nuoret, koirat pennut, / suvikuntaset urohot.* (SKVR I4/1098: 1–4. Latvajärvi. Castrén n. 140. 1839).

¹²⁸¹ *Nukkavierulla nutulla, / paikkalajalla lakilla, / hamehella hallakalla* (SKVR XII2/6485: 2–4. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6259. 1917).

¹²⁸² *Voi minua poloinen poika, / poikoa polon alaista, / kuin ei kuulu koiriana, / viiassa vitiseväksi, / havon alle haukkuvaksi!* (SKVR XII2/6468: 1–5. Sotkamo. Krohn 018. 1882. Pekka Ronkainen).

¹²⁸³ *Harvon on nähty näillä teillä, / näillä tuhmilla tulilla, / vaivasilla valkioilla, / ihmeheks’ on saalis saatu* (SKVR I4/1095: 64–67 Latvajärvi. Lönnrot A II 6, n. 84. 1834. Arhippa Perttuine).

The hunters from Latvajärvi lamented that other hunters were “holier catchers,”¹²⁸⁴ because they were preferred and blessed by the forest spirits and got bigger gifts from them: “[their] bread bags [are] broader, / wider the butter boxes.”¹²⁸⁵ The motif of the competition between hunters was related here to the favors they received from the forest.

In all these songs, the strategy of the singers was to make the forest and its spirits feel compassion for the unsuccessful and poor hunters. Similarly, hunters from Piippola presented themselves as “absolutely weak heroes,”¹²⁸⁶ who asked the woodland for mercy: “Do not take away, forest, / the money¹²⁸⁷ seen with [our] eyes.”¹²⁸⁸

The hunters exhibited a humble attitude during the hunt. With this strategy they avoided the risk of being punished for hubris or arrogance towards the forest spirits. Without the help of the forest spirits, they were like children lost in the woods. A common belief in many hunting traditions is that the hunter should not boast before having killed the game, and possibly also avoiding displays of pride after the kill. In the *Bear Songs*, the singers could vaunt their physical appearance in order to seduce the forest and its spirits, but they rarely praised their hunting skills. By contrast, lines evidencing the limitations (young or old age, poverty, weakness) of the hunting group were very common,¹²⁸⁹ and generally these were followed by specific prayers or requests to the forest spirits. Thus, the hunter presented himself as a handsome but absolutely harmless lover.

6.8 Forest spirits as “Christian” or syncretic providers

The motif of the hunter’s poverty is often related to their hunger. In Impilahti, the hunters sang to the “good mistress” Helena:

If you would see my hunger
you will go, running, into your granary
swinging, in your cellar,

¹²⁸⁴ *Pyytäjät pyhemmät.*

¹²⁸⁵ *Leviämmät leipälaukut, / laviammat voi-rasiat* (SKVR I4/1098: 12–13. Latvajärvi. Castrén n. 140. 1839)

¹²⁸⁶ *Aivan untelot urroot.*

¹²⁸⁷ The bear.

¹²⁸⁸ The bear.

¹²⁸⁹ See SKVR XII2/6465 18–21; SKVR XII2/6466 18–20; SKVR I4/1192. SKVR VI2/4885.

from there you will cut butter.¹²⁹⁰

Here the forest mistress was probably syncretized with a vernacular version of Saint Helena, who was mentioned in the incantations as one of the spirits who sowed the trees.¹²⁹¹ The hunter probably called the forest mistress by a Christian name for a specific purpose, to compel her to act in accord with the Christian moral duty of helping and feeding the poor and hungry people. The Christianization of forest spirits ensured agreements based on shared common principles.¹²⁹² The forest spirits were supposed to follow a Christian behavioral code.¹²⁹³ Arhippa Perttunen even dared to sing to the Creator:

You fed the family line, you fed the ancestors,
you nourished the forefathers,
so why not feed me,
with the big bites of the family line,
the delicacies of the tribesmen?¹²⁹⁴

Arhippa lamented that God, here clearly syncretized with the forest master, had fed the previous generation of hunters better and that He should be equally generous with the present generation. Arhippa was also concerned about whether God was upset with the hunters:

Why did the great Creator get angry,
the grain provider enraged?
Do not be angry, God,
guardian of the land, do not bolt!
Really give in your time,
during my life, in my time,
in the days of [this] boy's generation

¹²⁹⁰ *Kuin nälkäni näkisit, / juosten aitasit[!] menisit, / keikutellen kellarisi, / tuolta voita vuolaseisit* (SKVR VII5/3367: 19–22. Impilahti? Sirelius n. 165. 1847).

¹²⁹¹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 199.

¹²⁹² Stark 2000: 124.

¹²⁹³ Stark 2000: 127.

¹²⁹⁴ *Suun syötit, synnyn syötit, / esivanhemāt elätit, / ni[i]n mikset m[inua] syötä, / suun suurilla paloilla, / herkkuloilla heimokunān* (SKVR I4/1095: 74–78 Latvajärvi. Lönnrot A II 6, n. 84. 1834. Arhippa Perttunen).

[give] enough to eat, enough to drink,
enough to be given to the villagers.¹²⁹⁵

Arhippa believed that the Creator would act similarly to a forest spirit. The Creator was called “grain provider” and “guardian of the land,” common epithets for forest spirits. Arhippa feared that God would be offended by the bear hunt, and to avoid that risk, he stressed the fact he was starving.

The hunter often hunted the bear in order to protect cattle, but Arhippa simplified the question by presenting the justification of the bear hunt in terms of the necessity to feed his village. Even so, we have to consider that, at the time, cattle and sheep meat consumption was minimal; people mostly enjoyed meat when hunters returned home with prey. Bear meat was considered a delicacy, and the animal was big enough to feed the entire village. The request “[give] enough to drink” referred to the fact that the bear could be called “ale of the forest,” but also that in the bear feast the people consumed a great deal of ale and spirits.¹²⁹⁶ Arhippa stressed that his hunt did not have merely a personal goal, but a collective one. Arhippa used sophisticated rhetorical devices to convince the Creator about the justness of his request, and he spoke to God in a personal and direct way.

A hunter from Impilahti dared to speak to God in a rude way. If God refused to give him the bear, the hunter sang that the “man beyond the hill”¹²⁹⁷ would give it, and the hunter would sell his soul to him.¹²⁹⁸ This mysterious being seems to be a forest spirit syncretized with the Devil. Here the hunter manipulated the Christian motif of the competition for the human souls between God and the Devil in order to convince God to behave in a certain manner. The hunter openly threatened to sell his soul “to the other side” if his request were not fulfilled.

¹²⁹⁵ *Mistä suuttu suuri luoja, / villan antaja vihastu? / ellös suuttuo, [luma]la, / maanpitäjä, pillastuo!
/ Toki anna ajallasi, / iällän[i], ajallani, pojan polvi päiroänäni, / kyllin syöä, k[yllin] juoa, / [kyllin]
antoa kylään!* (SKVR I4/1095: 79–88 Latvajärvi. Lönnrot A II 6, n. 84. 1834. Arhippa Perttué).

¹²⁹⁶ See Sections 6.4, 8.10.

¹²⁹⁷ *Mies mäen takanen* (SKVR VII5/3367: 51).

¹²⁹⁸ SKVR VII5/3367: 49–54. Impilahti? Sirelius n. 165. 1847.

6.9 Enchanting the forest: The magical transformation of the hunting ground

Both the seductive lines and the pitiful descriptions of the hunters' weak condition were rhetorical strategies to achieve the same goal: convincing the forest spirits to accept the hunting group in their realm, help them and finally to give them the bear.

The requests and prayers to the forest spirits or the woodland itself were quite many. The humbleness of the hunter was emphasized by the verbs and actions of the songs, in which he asks, requests, gives sacrifices and offerings, and expresses gratitude.¹²⁹⁹

A common motif is the request to enchant the forest¹³⁰⁰ when the hunter entered the woodland. As a sign of agreement, the forest should shine: "Let the groves shine like the sun, / the wild woods shine like the moon."¹³⁰¹

The shining of the forest was the visual signal the hunter expected. The light, the sun and the moon represented life and birth¹³⁰² when the woodland was rich with game. By contrast, darkness and the cold were related to the abode of the dead¹³⁰³ and a forest without animals.

If the request was accepted, the somber backwoods changed into a marvelous place. The hunters asked the personalized forest to "wrap¹³⁰⁴ the thickets in a broadcloth, / the deep woods in German linen."¹³⁰⁵ Expensive textiles and clothes were related to the abundance of prey. If the forest spirits wore expensive or golden clothes, the woodland would be rich with animals. If they wore poor gowns, they would not send any catch to the hunter.¹³⁰⁶ This motif could be connected with wedding songs, where the ideal bride was portrayed in a wonderful dress, with rings and golden jewelry.¹³⁰⁷ The hunters from Kierretti asked the forest to play music and make noise:

Deep woods, make the cuckoo sing,

¹²⁹⁹ Tarkka 2013: 333.

¹³⁰⁰ *Metsän lumous*.

¹³⁰¹ *Lehdot paistaa päiväsenyy, / korvet paistaa kuutamannu* (SKVR VII5/ 3370. Salmi. Krohn n. 7871. 1884. Hanhivaara. Stopa Jakoljov. Heard in Miinala from Vasslei Ivanova (from Rajaselkä). See also: SKVR VII5/3372: 9–12.

¹³⁰² Tarkka 2013: 393.

¹³⁰³ Tarkka 2013: 390.

¹³⁰⁴ Or "dress."

¹³⁰⁵ *Viiat verkohon[!] vetele, / salot saksan paltinoihin* (SKVR VII5/3367: 5–6).

¹³⁰⁶ Tarkka 2013: 331.

¹³⁰⁷ SKVR 3245: 64–69. Suistamo. Kemppainen n. 133. 1923. Koitto. Timo Jyrinpoika Lipitsä.

during my time in the forest,
when I'm searching for the prey!
Play, forest, the *kantele*,
make the cuckoo sing!
Sad is the time without happiness,
the day without the prey is long.
Bark, dog, at the bears.¹³⁰⁸

The *kantele* is a traditional Finno-Karelian string instrument. According to the epic songs it was created by the old hero and sage Väinämöinen, who was able to attract all the animals and the nature spirits by playing it.¹³⁰⁹

Music was a musical sign, indicating the presence of harmony, agreement and conciliatory relations between the hunter and the forest spirits.¹³¹⁰ A “musical”, sonorous or resonant forest was full of life, while a silent one was clearly deserted. The world of the dead was also marked by silence. The singing of the cuckoo, being natural music, was probably a signal indicating the presence of the bear. In the song there is an association between the music made by the forest and the dogs barking at the prey.

Lukkañi Huotari from Ponkalaksi requested the forest spirit to change the landscape to make the hunting trip easier: “waste away the slopes, / flatten the high lands, / uplift the low lands, / make the grounds flat.”¹³¹¹ All was supposed to change during the ritual hunt: the hunters became relatives or lovers of the forest spirit, and the forest accepted the hunter by becoming more beautiful and welcoming. The rituals requested a partial transformation of the hunters and a radical metamorphosis of the whole landscape.

¹³⁰⁸ *Kukuta, salo, käköstä / minun metši päivinäni, / erän etšo aikoinani! / Soita, metsä, kanteletta, / kukuta, salo, käköstä! / Ikäo' on iloton aika, / päivä on pitkä saalihiton. / Haukupa, koira, kontiefi/ta* (SKVR I4/1194: 1–8 Kieretti. Inha n. 261. Manuscript 1894).

¹³⁰⁹ Siikala 2016: 357; Haavio 1952: 140–173.

¹³¹⁰ Tarkka 2013: 332.

¹³¹¹ *Rinnemaita riuskutella, / yläväiset moat alenna, / alavaiset [moat] ylennä, / tanteret tasaiset laita* (SKVR I4 1206: 51–54. Ponkalaksi. Borenius III, n. 93. 1877. Lukkañi Huotari, Prokkonen family).

6.10 Empowering the dogs and skis

During the ritual hunt, ritual changes concerned the dogs and skis, too. Lukkañi Huotari requested the forest spirits to make the dogs faster and able to guide them towards the den or the bear:

Make my dogs run
towards the open meadowlands,
the widest ridges of the marsh.¹³¹²

Huotari continued with details about the magic empowering of the hounds:

The eyes of my dogs would be
like a snaffle ring of Finland,
the ears of my dogs would be
like a water lily of a closed pond;
the mouths of my dogs would be
like shuttles from Finland.¹³¹³

The hunter believed that the forest spirits had power not only over wild animals, but also over the hunters' hounds running in the forest. They were even able to change the physical form of the dogs, making their organs bigger and empowering their sight and hearing.

The hunters from Impilahti requested the sky-god Ukko to make their skis:

Make me straight skis,
light pieces of wood;
with these I will ski, sliding
through swamp and lands,
through the largest forests.¹³¹⁴

¹³¹² *Juoksuttele koiriañi, / ahomaita aukejita, / suurimmilla suon selillä* (SKVR I4/1206: 46–50).

¹³¹³ *Niin ois' silmät koirillañi, / Kuin on Suomen suittsirenkas, / Niin on korvat koir[illañi], / Kuin on umpilammin lumme, / niin on suuhut koir[illañi], / kuin on Suomen sukkulaine.* (SKVR I4/1206: 73–78).

¹³¹⁴ *Tie sie mulle suorat sukset, / keviäiset kalhottimet, / jolla hiihtoa hivellen, / läpi suoten, läpi muaten, / Läpi suuret viiakotkin* (SKVR VII5/3366: 1–5 Sirelius 1847. Impilahti).

They also demanded Ukko to make the skis and dogs faster:

Push the longer skis on the snow,
roll my dogs like a ball of wool;
my skis crawl like a snake.¹³¹⁵

Ukko was the god responsible for snowfall, so he also empowered skis, an important means of transport on the snow. If the skis were made by the thunder god and pushed by him, they became as fast as lightning. The dogs ran so fast that they hyperbolically started to roll. Stopa Jakoljov from Hanhivaara (Salmi) described what was supposed to happen when the skis were empowered:

The other [hunters] ski, sweating.
I just ski slowly;
a fire starts from my skis,
smoke from the tip of my ski pole.¹³¹⁶

The lines present a hyperbole: the skier emphasizes that he did not sweat or make painful efforts like his competitors, but he proceeds at full speed thanks to his magically enhanced skis. The hyperbole emphasizes the uncommon velocity of the skier. If the skis were empowered by Ukko's force, the skier himself did not need much personal effort to go fast.

In some variations, the hunters added other hyperbolic details: he moves so fast that "embers [comes] from the shoes,"¹³¹⁷ "the soles of his shoes wear out,"¹³¹⁸ or "the socks slip off the legs."¹³¹⁹ These exaggerations or *adynata* made the ritual situation similar to a mythic one. The hunter declared that though the help of supernatural beings, he could acquire an anomalous speed, breaking normal expectations.¹³²⁰

The necessity to ski rapidly seems to have been influenced by competition in hunting: the singer wanted to reach the prey before other hunters. The speed tempo of

¹³¹⁵ *Lykkäte lylyt lumelle, / koirani keränä vierrä, / sukseni mato matona* (SKVR VII5/3366: 12–14).

¹³¹⁶ *Muut vaan hiihdetään hikeen, / mie vaan hiihdän hiljalleen; / tuli tšuiskaa suksistani, / savuu sauvani nenästä* (SKVR VII5/3370: 10–14. Salmi. Krohn n. 7871. 1884. Hanhivaara. Stopa Jakoljov).

¹³¹⁷ *Kekäleitä kenkäsistä* (SVRK VII5/3392: 10; VII5/ 3376: 8).

¹³¹⁸ *Kengät kauvolta kuuluu* (SKVR VII5/3376: 3).

¹³¹⁹ *Sukat siärlitä valuvat* (SKVR VII5/3392: 11).

¹³²⁰ Apo 2001: 56.

the *Skiing Songs* forms a strong contrast with the slow one of the protective incantations against envious people; in the latter case, the hunter stopped at each step to pronounce a spell.¹³²¹ The extraordinary ritual situation influenced the uncommon rhythm of the actions, as by means of his songs the hunter manipulated the timing of the events.

6.11 Prayers to the forest maidens for guidance

Presenting themselves as orphans, the hunters requested the forest maidens to act as a guide for them. Simanaiñi Sohvonja from Koljola asked:

Come, maiden, and advise me,
to guide the orphan,
for I am slow in skiing.¹³²²

The same singer prayed to the forest spirits:

Drive from the basket of the ski pole,
lead from the sleeve of the coat.¹³²³

Matti Sarmela misinterpreted the identity and the role of the “orphan” in these *Songs of the Departure*. He remarked that in the *Bear Songs* from Kainuu, the hunter asked an orphan maiden to lead the hunter.¹³²⁴ Yet, I find only one song by Jeremias Seppänen where the maiden was defined as an orphan.¹³²⁵ Sarmela supposed that that the orphan maiden symbolized the bride of the bear¹³²⁶ described in the *Text of Viitasaari*.¹³²⁷ Sarmela did not explain why the bride of the bear should guide the hunters during the hunt or why she was an orphan.

Comparing the texts of several *Bear Songs*, the maiden mentioned therein seems to be a female forest spirit, often called the “maiden of the forest” or “maiden of

¹³²¹ See Section 4.8.

¹³²² *Lähe nyt, neiti, neuvojaksi, / orpoa opastamaan, / mie kun olen hilja hii[h]tämää[n]* (SKVR I4/1193: 11–13. Koljola. Inha n. 261 a-b. 1894. Simanaiñi Sohvonja).

¹³²³ *Soata nyt sauvan suoverosta, / taluta takin hiasta* (SKVR I4/1193: 11–13).

¹³²⁴ Sarmela 2009: 82.

¹³²⁵ SKVR XII2/6554: 15–16 and 19–20.

¹³²⁶ Sarmela 1991: 214, Sarmela 2009: 82.

¹³²⁷ See Section 8.2.

Tapio.”¹³²⁸ The orphan generally was not the forest maiden, but the hunter, who presented himself as a poor person lost in the woods and needing the help and guidance of the forest spirits. Thus, the guide was the maiden and the orphan was the hunter. The hunter Jeremias Seppänen sang about this motif, taking in his hands a dead Siberian jay¹³²⁹ from his jacket.¹³³⁰ This bird was closely associated with the forest spirits and the luck of the hunt.

A variant of this motif, the line “to teach an orphan,” was present in an incantation uttered by Mihhei Vasiljeff: “Come to hear my words, / to teach an orphan, / to protect the unprotected.”¹³³¹ The incantations summoned the “lord of the wild wood”¹³³² so that the “orphan” and “unprotected” hunter could ask him for advice about the hunt.

The line “to teach an orphan” was common in wedding songs. Before the wedding, an old lady would give advice to the bride or to the couple. In Soikkola, a person in that role could start his speech with the introductory lines: “Hear, maiden, when I utter, / when I utter, when I speak, / how to advise a maiden, / how to teach an orphan.”¹³³³

A similar motif—involving a line “to guide a stranger”¹³³⁴—was present in healing incantations. Okkulia Johorjovna asked the water spirit Ahti: “Merciful Ahti of the waters, / come to give advice about the road, / to guide the stranger.”¹³³⁵ Here the healer as “stranger” sought to discover if a specific disease came from the waters, asking Ahti what about the road taken by the sickness.

Last but not least, the motif of a hero lamenting his fate as a stranger lost in a strange place (Pohjola) is present in many epic songs, as *Väinämöinen’s Lament*.¹³³⁶ In lyric songs, the singer, a “poor boy” who is lost and unhappy in a foreign land asks the sun, the moon and the Big Dipper to help him to find his way home.¹³³⁷ Similarly, a hunter

¹³²⁸ *Metsän neiti, Tapion neiti.*

¹³²⁹ *Kuuskilainen (Perisoreus infaustus).*

¹³³⁰ SKVR XII2/6554. Suomussalmi. Meriläinen, H. II. 377. 1888. Kovavaara. Jeremias Seppänen, 46-year-old man. Learned from his grandfather, who was a great *tietäjä*.

¹³³¹ *Tule sanani kuulemahan, / orpoa opettamahan, / turvatonta turvimahahan* (SKVR I4 21: 4–6. Katoslampi. Meriläinen n. 1167. 1889).

¹³³² *salon herra* (SKVR I4/21: 1).

¹³³³ *Kuules neito ku sanelen, / ku sanelen, ku puhelen, / millä neittä nevvotaa, / orpoa opetettaa!* (SKVR III2/1666: 1–4 Soikkola, Venakontsa. Volmari Porkka. Häärunoja, n. 88. 1881–1883).

¹³³⁴ *Outoa opastamaan.*

¹³³⁵ *Veen Ahti armollinen, / tule tietä neuvomaan, / outoa opastamaan!* (SKVR I4/545: 2–4. Vuokkiniemi. Meriläinen n. 901. 1889. Okkulia Johorjovna).

¹³³⁶ Tarkka 2013: 405–409.

¹³³⁷ SKVR I3/1377: 1–18; Tarkka 2013: 409–410.

from Lonkka asked Mielikki to teach him orientation by means of the stars: "Take me to learn, / to watch the arc of the sky."¹³³⁸

All these situations have something in common: the hunter considered himself an "orphan" or a stranger lost in the woods, and he needed advice from the forest spirit to catch game. The *tietäjä* was an "orphan" and a foreigner in relation to the dangerous watery world of Ahti; the bride was an "orphan" in the new house of her husband, mother-in-law and father-in-law, and she needed the advice of an older woman to understand how to behave. Being an orphan or a stranger was a common metaphor for being in an unsure and uncomfortable situation which required the help and assistance of the spirits or elders.

6.12 Forest spirits and bears carving signs on the trees

Jeremias Seppänen from Kovavaara requested the forest maiden to fashion the trees in a particular way: "prune the branches, / break the treetops, / for me to know the way to go."¹³³⁹ These lines were probably referring to the tradition of the *karsikko*, where a particular tree was chosen on the road between the village and the graveyard or the burial ground in the forest.¹³⁴⁰

The people trimmed off almost all the branches of a big pine or spruce, but the treetop was not cut. A small section of bark was removed with a knife or axe, and generally on the wood underneath the bark were made some carvings¹³⁴¹ with the name and the dates of birth and death of the deceased.¹³⁴² This was a message to the soul of the deceased, as when he saw the carving he understood that he was dead. Thus, potential ghost-haunting was resolved before its manifestation.¹³⁴³ A *karsikko* tree could also be made for living people, such as the bride leaving her maternal home. In addition, if a guest was coming to a house, a *karsikko* was done in his honor by leaving a branch indicating the direction of the house where he would be staying. The hunters could also mark the trail leading to their traps with *karsikko* trees, and travelers used

¹³³⁸ *Ota mua oppim[ahan], / Taivon kaarta katsom[ahan]* (SKVR I4/1253: 17–18. Lonkka. Lönnrot. A II 5, n. 32. 1834).

¹³³⁹ *Oksat karsi, / latvat taita, / että tiejän tietä käyvä* (SKVR XII2/6554: 15–16. Suomussalmi. Meriläinen, H. II. 377. 1888. Kovavaara. Jeremias Seppänen. Learned from his grandfather, who was a great *tietäjä*).

¹³⁴⁰ *Kalmisto*.

¹³⁴¹ *Pilkat*.

¹³⁴² Vilkuna J. 1992: 204; Konkka 1999: 112–113.

¹³⁴³ Vilkuna J. 1992: 206.

karsikko trees to help other fellow travelers find their way through unknown forestlands.¹³⁴⁴

The *karsikko* could signal a bear kill, as it was done nearby the place where the bear was killed, or the tree with the bear skull could be pruned as a *karsikko*.¹³⁴⁵ Jeremias Seppänen asked the forest maiden to trim and carve a *karsikko* tree to help hunters to find the den; the *karsikko* thus had an orienting function. The influence of the tradition of the *karsikko* trees is evident in other songs from Border Karelia. Jussi Paakkinen from Piippola asked “the honeyed mistress of the forest”:

Did you carve signs on the trees,
on the land, traveling,
so that I will be able to reach the door of den of the being?¹³⁴⁶

The motif of “signs on the trees” was quite common in the *Bear Songs*,¹³⁴⁷ and it was also mentioned when the hunters traveled back with the killed bear to the village.¹³⁴⁸ It is difficult to prove if the hunters really made signs to help their fellows find the den, or if these were claw marks done by bears, or if these carvings were imaginary, present only in the songs. Similar carvings or signs were mentioned in the incantations to protect the cattle from bears during the grazing season.¹³⁴⁹

Jaakko Päivinen from Jaama (Rääkkylä) sang a rare dialogue in which the bear itself participated: “The bear answered him: / ‘How did you know how to come, you dumb one?’”¹³⁵⁰ The hunter answered that the bruin itself had carved signs on the trees, so he was able to reach its den.¹³⁵¹ These signs might have been imaginary, but bears do effectively mark trees with bite and claw marks in the bark. However, the hunter considered the marks a signal that the bear was purposefully indicating its presence to the hunters.

¹³⁴⁴ Aspelin 1882: 308–312; Konkka 1999: 113.

¹³⁴⁵ See Sections 7.8 and 9.7

¹³⁴⁶ *Vestitköt pilkat pitkin puita, / maalle matkasi mukkaan, / että osattaisiin otukseu pesän ovelle* (SKVR XII2/6464: 9–11. Piippola. Keränen, E. 295. 1884? Vähä-Lamu. Jussi Paakkinen).

¹³⁴⁷ See SKVR VI2/ 4891 1–4; SKVR VI2/4889: 13–19.

¹³⁴⁸ See Section 7.10.

¹³⁴⁹ SKVR I4/1407: 62–65.

¹³⁵⁰ *Ohto vastasi hänelle: “Mistä tiesit, tuhma, tulla?”* (SKVR VII5/3392: 17–18. Rääkkylä. Pennanen n. 95. 1896. Jaama. Jaakko Päivinen, 75-year-old man).

¹³⁵¹ SKVR VII5/3392: 20–23.

In wedding songs, the members of the bride's family asked the groom the same question when he arrived.¹³⁵² In Terijoki, the family mischievously asked the groom if a pig had guided him.¹³⁵³ According to Ilomäki in the vernacular tradition, the groom was like a hunter who came to the den or into the forest to catch a bear.¹³⁵⁴ Before the kill the hunter could wake up the bear, addressing it like a bride that had overslept.¹³⁵⁵

In other songs, forest spirits carved the signs. Pekka Päivinen from Jaama (Rääkkylä) sang a dialogue in which the Mistress of the Forest asked the hunter how he was able to come, and the hunter answered: "You carved signs on the trees."¹³⁵⁶

6.13 The den as a granary of the forest, Pohjola and *sampo*

In the standard songs to the forest spirits, the hunter asked the spirits to bring them to the specific place where the prey was dwelling: the bear den. In the case of a hunt during the summer, the location could also be a bear trap. Juhana Korpelainen from Kiuruvesi prayed to Kataatar¹³⁵⁷ and Tuometar:

Bring [me] to that hill,
carry me on that mound,
where I could get the prey,
my job will bring a catch.¹³⁵⁸

The hunters described the place around the hill or den as shining with gold or expensive materials.

Carry me on that mound,
where the spruces are in golden belts,
the pines are in silver cover,

¹³⁵² SKVR VII5/2838; 2843.

¹³⁵³ SKVR XIII2/3578.

¹³⁵⁴ Ilomäki 1986: 128.

¹³⁵⁵ SKVR I4/1201: 1; I4/1206b: 1; I4/1231: 41; I4/1234c: 1; see Section 7.1.

¹³⁵⁶ *Vestit pilkat pitkin puita* (SKVR VII5/3376: 14. Rääkkylä. Pennanen n. 77. 1896. Jaama. Pekka Päivinen, 67-year-old man).

¹³⁵⁷ The "Juniper Lady."

¹³⁵⁸ *Saata sillen saarexellen, / sille kummullen kuleta, / josta saalis saatasiin, / eron toimi tuotasiin.* (SKVR VI2/4889: 49–52. *Kiuruvesi*. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 12 n. 10. 15 August 1819. Juhana Korpelainen).

the branches of the aspen in baize!¹³⁵⁹

This motif could be linked with the ritual of pouring gold and silver on the trees as a sacrifice to the forest spirits.¹³⁶⁰ However, the concept of the shining forest and the presence of expensive clothes conveyed the presence of game animals. The bear could be called also “money,” “gold” and “silver” in the *Bear Songs*.¹³⁶¹ Gold was also frequently associated with the forest spirits, so golden trees could be a signal of their manifestation.

The hunters from Ilomantsi prayed to the “old man of the forest, golden beard,”¹³⁶² and to the “mead-mouth Tapio’s maiden.”¹³⁶³

Step into the granary on the hill,
rock yourself into the cellar,
open the granary of money
slam the colorful lid.¹³⁶⁴

The line “opens the granary of money” can be translated as “give us your bears/prey.” In hunting songs, ‘grain’ was a word used to indicate game animals, and the bear could be called “grain of the forest”¹³⁶⁵ or “grain of god.”¹³⁶⁶ Grain was also a term to indicate wealth or luck,¹³⁶⁷ which in the hunters’ world meant an abundance of catches.

The granary of Tapio was a place in the forest that was full of game.¹³⁶⁸ In the sociomorphic vision of the forest otherworld, the spirits were landlords involved in agriculture and the products of their fields were wild animals. The fact that game animals could be “cultivated” transformed the hunt—which often depended on luck,

¹³⁵⁹ *Tuolla kummulla kuleta, / kussa ois’ kuuset kultavöissä, / petäjät hopeisiloissa, / hoavan oksat hal’l’akoissa!* (SKVR I4/1193: 23–26. Koljola. Inha n. 261 a-b. 1894. Simanaiini Sohvonja).

¹³⁶⁰ See SKVR I4/1098: 36–41; see Section 6.1.

¹³⁶¹ See Sections 6.2, 7.11.

¹³⁶² *Metsän ukko, kultaparta* (SKVR VII5/3297).

¹³⁶³ *Simasuu Tap[io]n neiti* (SKVR VII5/3297).

¹³⁶⁴ *Astu aittahan mäellä, / keikuttele kellarihin, / aukoa rahanen aitta, / kimahuta kirjakensi* (SKVR VII5/3297: 28–33. Ilomantsi. Europaeus. H, n. 193. 1845. Kuolismaa).

¹³⁶⁵ *Metsän vilja*.

¹³⁶⁶ *Jumalan vilja*.

¹³⁶⁷ Tarkka 2014b: 361.

¹³⁶⁸ Krohn [1915] 2008: 107.

not only on the hunters' skills—into a more predictable activity; the crop of the forest spirit was ideally productive. If animals had been “stored” somewhere by the spirits, it would be easier for the hunters who gained their blessings to find the prey.

The “granary of money” had a “colorful lid,”¹³⁶⁹ a metonymic name for the *sampo*, the mysterious object, mill or being that produces every kind of “grains”¹³⁷⁰ (goods), including game animals. According to the singer Jeremie Malinen, the *sampo* produced valuable catches: “as it grinds pine martens, the *sampo*.”¹³⁷¹

In the epic songs, the *sampo* was located in distant Pohjola. In the hunting incantations and Bear Songs, Tapiola, Metsola and Pohjola were strictly associated, and the forest master or mistress owned a *sampo* that was able to produce and store animals and bears.

In the *Bear Songs*, the hunters described the hunt as an epic travel to another world which was considered potentially dark and dreadful (Pohjola), but also rich in game animals. This was a place where Tapio had a *sampo* and a “granary” on a hill.

Considering the importance of the meanings of the *sampo*, we may better understand why in the *Birth of the Bear* by Iivana Malinen the mother of the bear was the Crone of Pohjola.¹³⁷² In epic songs, she is not only a sinister character, but also an owner of riches and the *sampo*, the object that the heroes try to obtain. She is also the mother of the Maiden of Pohjola, the girl that the heroes want to marry. Accordingly, in the *Bear Songs*, the Crone of Pohjola could be the mother and the owner of the bear, the valuable object/person/bride that the hunter sought to attain. In the *Bear Songs*, the concept of the Mistress of the Forest and the Mistress of Pohjola was blended, and this fusion enriched the complexity of the otherworldly forest.

In some *Bear Songs*, Pohjola seems to be a mythic storage place of bears. The hunters from Lonkka asked the forest spirit to bring the bears from Pohjola to the hunting ground. The forest spirit or the daughter of Pohjola¹³⁷³ was requested to build up a bridge for bears: “through the river of Pohjola / slash a bridge from silk.”¹³⁷⁴ In Ilomantsi, the hunters sang a short *historiola* about a boy who went to Pohjola, Tapiola and Metsola after having built a bridge of silk; thus, the hunters probably identified

¹³⁶⁹ *Kirjokansi*.

¹³⁷⁰ Tarkka 2014b: 360–361.

¹³⁷¹ *Kun se jauho neitätsie, sampo* (SKVR I4/2134: 13) See Tarkka 2014b: 360–361.

¹³⁷² See Section 5.6

¹³⁷³ *Pohj[an] tyttö* (SKVR I4/1211:1).

¹³⁷⁴ *Poikki Pohjolan joesta, / silkki sillaksi sivalla* (SKVR I4/1211: 5–6. Lonkka. Lönnrot. A II 5, n. 14. 1834. Martiska Karjalaine).

themselves with the mythic boy who reached Pohjola.¹³⁷⁵ The river is a typical border with the otherworld. Reaching the den, Pekka Päivinen from Jaama (Rääkkylä) sang:

The portals of Pohjola were seen,
the evil doors loomed.¹³⁷⁶

Here the hunter identifies the bear's den as Pohjola. Both places were dangerous, yet they contained a valuable prize: the bear or *sampo*.

¹³⁷⁵ SKVR VII5/3298: 4–14. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 284. 1846.

¹³⁷⁶ *Portit Pohjolan näkyivät / pahat ukset ulvohtivat* (SKVR VII5/3376: 15–16. Rääkkylä. Pennanen n. 77. 1896. Jaama. Pekka Päivinen, 67-year-old man).

Chapter 7

At the Bear's Den: The Ritual Kill and the Explanation for the Death of the Bear

7.1 Calling the bear out of its den: The bruin as a bride who overslept

When the hunters reached the bear's den, it was forbidden to kill the creature while it still slept in hibernation. It should be awakened for a fight, which was supposed to be fair. In reality, however, the bear was sleepy and weak, alone it faced a group of hunters, and it could be blinded by sunlight when it arose.¹³⁷⁷ The Viena Karelian Lukkañi Huotari from Ponkalaksi awakened the bear as it was a maiden: "Rise now, sooty maiden,¹³⁷⁸ / from the sooty fireplace."¹³⁷⁹ This motif was common in the Viena Karelian *Bear Songs*.¹³⁸⁰ These lines were also a motif of the wedding songs to wake up a bride who overslept on her wedding day.¹³⁸¹

The bruin, which in several *Bear Songs* is addressed as a male,¹³⁸² is here a maiden. Tarkka stresses that the bear's symbolic change of gender was meaningful, as the Karelian hunter saw a similitude between the bear and the maiden,¹³⁸³ with both being important "catches." The bear was probably considered a score both as sweet and desirable as a young bride sleeping in her bed. Sometimes the hunters presented themselves by singing: "The takers are at the doors, / the ones who bring you away,

¹³⁷⁷ Sarmela 1991: 211.

¹³⁷⁸ The bear.

¹³⁷⁹ *Nousep' pois, nokiñe(n) neit'[i], / nokiselta nuotiolta* (SKVR I4/1206b: 1–2 Ponkalaksi. Borenius III, n. 93. 8/9/1877. Lukkañi Huotari, Prokkosia).

¹³⁸⁰ SKVR I4/1201: 1; /1231: 41; I4/1234c: 1.

¹³⁸¹ SKVR I4/2265: 1–2 Tollonj. Salmi. V., n. 2145. 1918. Añni Bogdanoff; cited in Tarkka 2013: 334; SKVR 3245: 64–65. Suistamo. Kempainen n. 133. 1923. Koitto. Timo Jyrinpoika Lipitsä.

¹³⁸² Tarkka 2013: 351554 (note 158).

¹³⁸³ Tarkka 2013: 351.

[are] at the gates.”¹³⁸⁴ The word ‘takers’¹³⁸⁵ was indeed a suitable name for the hunters, while in wedding songs it indicated the suitors or wooers,¹³⁸⁶ or the “groom’s people,”¹³⁸⁷ following the groom when he visited the house of the betrothed “to take away” the bride.¹³⁸⁸

Pekka Päivinen from Jaama (Rääkkylä) sang that the bruin himself asked the hunter: “How did you know how to come here, fool? / How could you, squirrel-tooth?”¹³⁸⁹ In a variation by the same singer, the mistress of the forest asked almost the same question.¹³⁹⁰ The hunter answered that he was able to reach the bruin because the bear (or the mistress) had carved signs on the trees.¹³⁹¹ Thus, the bear or its protector guided the hunter to the den. In North and Border Karelian wedding songs, the bride’s family posed almost the same question to the future groom.¹³⁹² Meanwhile, the bear or the forest mistress addressed the hunters as grooms.

In the awakening songs, the sleeping bear could be considered as an otherworldly “bride” and the hunters could portray themselves as suitors or grooms. A similar idea was present in other bear ceremonials: Nivkh (Gyliak) hunters or shamans sang “love songs” in front of the den to wake up the bear, asking the beast to come forth from its hiding place.¹³⁹³

However, the bear could also be awakened as a male relative. The Viena Karelian Nikolai Kallio awakened the bear as if it were a cousin: “Rise now, son of my aunt.”¹³⁹⁴ Similar lines were used to wake up a family member who was sleeping when a guest

¹³⁸⁴ *Nyt on ottajat ovilla, /veräjillä pojes-viejät* (SKVR I4/1204: 4–5. Pirttilaksi. Meril. n. 834. 1889? Nikolai Kallio).

¹³⁸⁵ *Ottajat*.

¹³⁸⁶ SKVR III3/3442: 11; III3/3927: 22.

¹³⁸⁷ *Sulhasväki*.

¹³⁸⁸ SKVR III/3266: 4.

¹³⁸⁹ *Mistä tiesit, tuhma, tulla, / osait, oravahammas* (SKVR VII5/3392: 18–19. 3392. Rääkkylä. Pennanen n. 95. 1896. Jaama. Jaakko Päivinen, 75-year-old man).

¹³⁹⁰ SKVR VII5 3376: 12–13. Rääkkylä. Pennanen n. 77. 1896. Jaama. Pekka Päivinen, 67-year-old man).

¹³⁹¹ SKVR VII5/3392: 23.

¹³⁹² SKVR VII2/2838: 1–2. Liperi. Borenius n. 401. (L. 632). 1877. Taipale. Middle-aged wife, born in Käsämä. Cited in Ilomäki 1994: 245; see also SKVR VII2/2835: 1–2; VII2/2897: 1–2; VII2/2897a: 1–2.

¹³⁹³ Hallowell 1926: 54.

¹³⁹⁴ *Nouse pois tätini poika* (SKVR I4/1204: 1. Pirttilaksi. Meriläinen. n. 834. 1889? Nikolai Kallio).

arrived.¹³⁹⁵ The singer Anni Lehtonen used the same line to capture the attention of a sleepy singing companion.¹³⁹⁶

In Kainuu, the hunters awakened the bear with the line: “Rise now, sooty boy.”¹³⁹⁷ In Suistamo, the same line was used to awake other hunters in order to leave for the hunt early in the morning.¹³⁹⁸ In Finland, the line was commonly used in incantations to light a fire,¹³⁹⁹ to start a clearing for the slash-and-burn agriculture,¹⁴⁰⁰ to light a fire in the oven of a new house,¹⁴⁰¹ and to make childbirth easier. The hunters saw some poetic magical analogy between the awakening of the bear from the den and the lighting of a fire. The bear and the fire had similar mythic births in the sky and a high status of sacredness.¹⁴⁰²

According to Kuusi, the tradition of the awakening the bear before the kill was a rule that applied across the whole circumboreal region.¹⁴⁰³ Hallowell noted that the ritual to call the bear out of his den was common in both North America and Siberia: the Innu (Montagnais-Naskapi), the Atikamekw (Têtes-de-Boules) and Lamut¹⁴⁰⁴ called the bear “grandfather” or “grandmother.”¹⁴⁰⁵ As a general rule, the hunters called the bear out of the den as if it were a relative, but among these peoples of North America and Siberia it was often treated as a respected member of the older generation and a possible ancestor. In Finland and Karelia, however, the bear was called cousin or a maiden/bride, so it belonged to the same generation of the hunter.

¹³⁹⁵ SKVR I3/2265: 1–2; Tarkka 2013: 334.

¹³⁹⁶ SKVR I3/300: 1–2; I3 2087. Vuonninen. Paulaharju n. 2823. 11. Aríni Lehtoíni; Tarkka 2013: 334.

¹³⁹⁷ *Nouse pois nokinen poika* (SKVR XII2/6525. Ristijärvi. Paulaharju 6261 = 25011. 1917 (1923); (SKVR XII2/6532. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6262. 1917. Ruhtinansalmi. Jeremias Seppänen, Kovan Jeru, bear killer, *tietäjä*).

¹³⁹⁸ SKVR VII5/3245: 1. Suistamo. Kempainen n. 133. 22 February 1923. Koitto. Timo Jyrinpoika Lipitsä.

¹³⁹⁹ SKVR VII3/1397: 1–2.

¹⁴⁰⁰ SKVR IX4/1436, 3–4.

¹⁴⁰¹ SKVR XII2/7734.

¹⁴⁰² See Section 5.8.

¹⁴⁰³ Kuusi 1963: 48.

¹⁴⁰⁴ The Lamut are a Tungusic maritime people dwelling nearby the Sea of Okhotsk.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Hallowell 1926: 53–54.

7.2 The den as an otherworldly and dangerous house

The awakening songs provide valuable information about the representations of the den, often described as a “house” with doors and gates.¹⁴⁰⁶ Lukkarí Huotari requested the bear to rise “from the pine needle bed / from the pillow of twigs.”¹⁴⁰⁷ The den was described in terms of image frames of both nature and culture.¹⁴⁰⁸ Tarkka stresses that the whole hunting ground represented a liminal and ritual space in which the categories of nature and culture were often fused and transformed into each other.¹⁴⁰⁹ The den here was an important ritual location: it was the first meeting place for the human and the bear, and it shared elements of both the parties. The fusion of nature and culture enabled ritual exchange and communication:¹⁴¹⁰ the hunter could gently wake up the bear, as if it were a human being sleeping in bed. Cultural and natural images overlapped, emphasizing how the bear used furniture just like humans (a bed, pillows, etc.), but its furniture was different than normal (e.g., made out of tree branches). Tarkka notes that when the slain bear was introduced in the house of the villagers, the house was described as “a room of pinewood, a lair of pine.”¹⁴¹¹ The household reminded of the bear’s den:¹⁴¹² the hunter probably stressed that the bear should “feel at home.” However, both the places of contact and transition between the forest and the human world acquired mimetic and liminal characteristics.

The hunters clearly rejected the idea of an absolute difference between themselves and the bear. In the ritual they emphasized similarities, but at the same time they needed to draw out differences between them and animals.¹⁴¹³ Hunting songs and rituals constantly evidenced both homologies and differences between humans and the bear: the homologies enabled communication, while differences prevented dangerous ontological confusions.¹⁴¹⁴

¹⁴⁰⁶ SKVR I4/1204: 4–5.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Kuusi 1963: 48.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Tarkka 2013: 338; Ilomäki 1986: 58.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Tarkka 2013: 338; Anttonen 1992b: 72–73; Anttonen 1994: 27; Ilomäki 1986: 56–63.

¹⁴¹⁰ Tarkka 2013: 338.

¹⁴¹¹ SKVR I4/1253.

¹⁴¹² Tarkka 2013: 338.

¹⁴¹³ Willerslev 2007: 11, 25.

¹⁴¹⁴ Tarkka 2013: 339; Willerslev 2007: 95.

Nikolai Kallio encouraged the bear to abandon his den by singing: “turn down your silky bed, / overturn the golden mattresses.”¹⁴¹⁵ Again, both the hunters and the bear had a bed, but the bear’s was not a common one, instead being made of expensive and precious materials. On one hand, the hunter adulated the bear, but on the other, the richness of the bear was fabulous and otherworldly; the bear was rich like the forest spirits.¹⁴¹⁶

Markkeiñi Huotari stressed the “otherness” of the bear den when he sang: “I’m at alien doors, / at strange gates!”¹⁴¹⁷ In epic songs, the hero Väinämöinen lamented at finding himself at “alien doors” when he reached the dreadful and dark land of Pohjola.¹⁴¹⁸

When hunters reached the den, an alien home, they needed magical protection, so they drew a protective pentacle on the snow nearby the den.¹⁴¹⁹ The den was considered a rich but dark and otherworldly house.

Tarkka argues that Pohjola is often described as a place where “the moon doesn’t glow there, / the sun doesn’t shine.”¹⁴²⁰ More generally, the world of the dead or the otherworld could be characterized by the absence of light and warmth.¹⁴²¹ The den was also a dark, otherworldly hole, and the hunters convinced the bear to leave the den by singing: “Wake up, you, to see the moon, / to watch the sun!”¹⁴²² Similar lines were sung during the ritual of the bear skull, which was hung on a tree to observe the moon and the sun.¹⁴²³ When the cattle herders freed the cattle from the dark cowshed for the grazing season, they exhorted the cattle to “get up” to see the moon and the stars.¹⁴²⁴ The cattle stayed inside the cowshed for the whole winter, as the bear did in its den.

The moon, the sun and the Big Dipper were invoked in childbirth incantations to release a newborn from the “alien doors,” which in this case were the uterus and

¹⁴¹⁵ *Säterinen sänkys käännä, / perinät kultaiset kumoa* (SKVR I4/1204: 6–7. Pirttilaksi. Meriläinen. n. 834. 1889? Nikolai Kallio).

¹⁴¹⁶ See Sections 3.6, 6.6, 6.9.

¹⁴¹⁷ *Olen ouvoilla ovilla, / veräjillä vieröillä!* (SKVR I4/1243: 1–2. Vuonninen. Borenius II, n. 112. 1872. Markkeiñi Huotari).

¹⁴¹⁸ SKVR I1/I58a: 84–88; cited in Tarkka 2013: 409.

¹⁴¹⁹ SKVR I4/1213.

¹⁴²⁰ *Eip’ oñ sinne kuu kumota, / eip’ om päivüt paissakkana* (SKVR I1/93: 79–80); cited in Tarkka 2013: 387.

¹⁴²¹ Tarkka 2013: 390; Tarkka 1994.

¹⁴²² SKVR XII2/6542: 1–5. Piippola. Keränen, E. 232. 1884. Rikkos-Jussi.

¹⁴²³ See Section 9.10.

¹⁴²⁴ SKVR XII2/6826: 12–15.

vagina of the mother.¹⁴²⁵ The human baby was encouraged to “leave” the uterus with almost the same formula used to wake up the bear (or to light a fire): “Rise now, sooty boy, / from the sooty fireplace / make the fleshy castle move.”¹⁴²⁶ The lines of some of the *Births of the Lizard* were almost identical to the bear awakening’s songs.¹⁴²⁷

The bear sleeping in the den could remind of the baby in the womb, a body part which was strongly connected with the otherworld.¹⁴²⁸ Maybe the bear’s awakening from the den was portrayed in the bear songs as a kind of birth, or at least a return to “this” world. The paradox was that the bear woke up only to be killed; it enjoyed the sunlight but for a brief moment.

The hunters stressed the otherworldly connotations of the den in order to convince the bear to leave it rapidly. Nikolai Kallio emphasized that sleeping too long in the den represented a deadly danger for the bear: “the bed below you rotted, / the roof upon you fell down.”¹⁴²⁹ The motif of dangerous oversleeping was also present, although in a more ironic way, in the corpus of wedding songs. In Joroinen, a *patvaska* woke up the bridal couple by wielding a whip and maliciously asking them if they were still alive after their first night together.¹⁴³⁰ The motif also resembles metaphors about women who did not marry in time. Tarkka notes that in Viena Karelia an unmarried daughter or an old spinster could be defined as someone who rots the top of the bench,¹⁴³¹ which was also a sleeping place in Karelian houses; an infertile woman was like someone rotting her own house and provoking the destruction of her family line.¹⁴³²

Jeremias Seppänen, a bear-slayer and a *tietäjä* from the parish of Suomussalmi, woke up the bear by advising of the risk of dying or decomposing in the den, like a corpse in the graveyard: “The feet rot, below you, / your head decays, upon you!”¹⁴³³ The same lines were sung when the villagers took the bear meat from the cauldron in the bear feast. In both cases, the bear was requested to leave dangerous places: a rotting “bed”

¹⁴²⁵ SKVR I4/976b. Uhtua. Jehkima Ohvonašeff, 1889; cited in Tarkka 2017: 393–394.

¹⁴²⁶ *Nouse pois, nokinen poika, / nokiselta vuotehelta, / liikahuta lihainen linna* (SKVR VII5/4957: 14–16)

¹⁴²⁷ SKVR XII2/5222: 1–4; cited in Karhu 1947: 166.

¹⁴²⁸ Rockwell 1991: 4; Tarkka 2013: 392.

¹⁴²⁹ *Late altaisi lahovi, / laki päälles lankiavi.* (SKVR I4/1204: 8–9. Pirttilaksi. Meriläinen n. 834. 1889? Nikolai Kallio).

¹⁴³⁰ Heikinmäki 1981: 515.

¹⁴³¹ *Lautsan päättä lahottava* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 31:c 8473–8476. 1915).

¹⁴³² Tarkka 2005: 228.

¹⁴³³ *Jalat altasi laho, / pääsi päältä märkänöö!* (SKVR XII/2 6532: 8–9. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6262. 1917. Ruhtinansalmi. Jeremias Seppänen, Kovan Jeru, bear man, *tietäjä*).

or a hot cauldron. The negative description suited the goal of the hunters, who wanted the bear to leave the den to be able to shoot it according to the ritual rules. Both the lines by Kallio and Seppänen reveal that the den was a potential afterworld, a rotting place similar to a tomb, and that the bear should rapidly go away from there. But the reality was the opposite: the bear was killed as soon as it came out of the den.

The description of the den was quite ambiguous; it was both familiar and very unfamiliar. It was a humanlike “house” and a “bed,” with a “bride” or a young “relative” sleeping in it. But at the same time it was strange, otherworldly place; it had “alien doors,” and it was a deadly place if the bear did not flee from there.

7.3 The handshake before the fight

The den was the place where the hunters and the bear met and fought. In the songs, the encounter started with an imaginary cordial handshake. Lukkañi Huotari sang to the bear: “Give your hand to the pine branch, / towards the people of heroes, / the crowd of men!”¹⁴³⁴

The handshake emphasizes physical contact, agreement, harmony, friendship, exchange and negotiation. In Finland, Karelia and Russia, the handshake was an everyday ritual often performed between men. The Karelian hunter stated that after the kill of the bear, the hunters shook hands with each other.¹⁴³⁵

After a few lines of his song, Lukkañi Huotari no longer considered the bear a “maiden,”¹⁴³⁶ but as a man whose hand he could shake. It seems that the hunters and the bear were supposed to approach their fight as male gentlemen. Handshaking is a topos of the bear songs. Nikolai Kallio sang to the bear to turn its hairy hand “towards the searching man,”¹⁴³⁷ but he stated: “If it does not wake up, we shoot on the opening of the den, and it awakes for sure.”¹⁴³⁸

In actuality, the actions performed by the hunters could diverge from the ideal of the harmonic handshake expressed in the song. However, Tarkka notes that the poetic atmosphere of the songs was conciliatory: “the imagined handshake between bear and

¹⁴³⁴ *Honkan oksalla ojenna / urohoisehe väkehe, / miehisehen joukkioho!* (SKVR I4/1206: 13–16. Ponkalaksi. Borenius. III, n. 93. 8/9 77. Lukkañi Huotari, Prokkonen family).

¹⁴³⁵ SKVR I4/1213

¹⁴³⁶ SKVR I4/1206b: 2. See Section 7.1.

¹⁴³⁷ *Miehen etsivän etehen* (SKVR I4/1204: 12).

¹⁴³⁸ *Sitte jos ei herää, niin ammutaan pesän suulle, kyllä nousee* (SKVR I4/1204).

hunter preceding the kill emphasized the exceptional nature of the ritual harmony in a reality which was actually a bloody struggle between man and beast."¹⁴³⁹

Jussi Paakkinen from Nurmes called the bear "my brother, my fellow"¹⁴⁴⁰ and sang to it: "stretch your hand towards the palm, / place it on the finger / before separation comes."¹⁴⁴¹ Paakkinen expressed well a movement that symbolized familiarity, union and friendship. For a short moment, "the cultural categories constructing difference are dismantled."¹⁴⁴² But the separation was near. Markkeiri Huotari told that just after the handshake there occurred a true fight:

Give me now your cuckoo's hand,
your fingers, my sweet companion!
Seldom we join together;
when we do so, we abuse and fight,
living a warlike life
with arrows of ill will.¹⁴⁴³

Tarkka observes that the handshake was present in the *Words of the Singer*, songs in which a singer described the act of singing.¹⁴⁴⁴ Meeting another singer, Matti Kemppaä addressed him as "dear brother"¹⁴⁴⁵ and sang: "We put the hand in the hand / the flesh in another flesh."¹⁴⁴⁶

In both the *Bear Songs* and in the *Words of the Singer*, the exchange and the communication were symbolically represented by lines stressing the strong physical nature of the contact.¹⁴⁴⁷ In the case of the *Bear Songs*, the poetic interlocutor of the hunter was the bear itself, presented as a kind of brother and a companion in the singing.

¹⁴³⁹ Tarkka 2013: 334.

¹⁴⁴⁰ *Veliseni, veitoseni* (SKVR XII2/6464: 1).

¹⁴⁴¹ *Anna kättä kämmenelle, / tällä sormelle soвите, / ennen kuin ero tuloopi* (SKVR XII2/6464: 3–5).

¹⁴⁴² Tarkka 2013: 334.

¹⁴⁴³ *Anna nüt käkösen kättä, / sörmie šulo-šöpuñi! / Harvoin ühtehe ühümme, / šen torumma, tappelemma, / elämmä šövan tavalla, / viholaiseñ vint'ießä* (SKVR I4/1243: 13–18. Vuonninen. Borenus II, n. 112. 4/8/1872. Markkeiri Huotari).

¹⁴⁴⁴ Tarkka 2013: 334.

¹⁴⁴⁵ *Veli kulta*.

¹⁴⁴⁶ *Pannemma käten kätehen, / lihan toisehen lihahan* (SKVR I4/1274: 6–7. Nokeus. Genetz II, n. 68. 15 August 1872. Matti Kemppaä).

¹⁴⁴⁷ Tarkka 2013: 334 and 132.

7.4 Incantations to stop a bear attack

After the awakening and handshake, it was time to kill the bear. In the cases where the bear was able to attack, the rituals performed to stop it needed to be very quick. The hunters sang some short songs or uttered or shouted succinct incantations. The oldest lines to avert a bear attack are found in the *Text of Viitasaari* (after 1750), where the hunter sings to the bear that he should stop: “Stand like a wall by the man.”¹⁴⁴⁸ To make the command more effective, the hunter could also sing a short *Birth of the Bear*: “your family is of the pine grove, / Hongotar is of your family.”¹⁴⁴⁹ Hongotar was one of the many supernatural mothers and protectors of the bear.¹⁴⁵⁰ But just after that, the hunter revealed: “I am a man, the son of your brother.”¹⁴⁵¹ The bear, a liminal being *par excellence*, was both related to the forest spirits and the hunter’s family. The hunter stressed the existence of a kinship relation with the bear to avoid its attack, as a relative should not attack a fellow relative. The bear was seen as the uncle of the hunter, who was younger and thus hierarchically “weaker” than his older relative.

In 1915, Mikko Piirainen from the parish of Kuhmoniemi (Kuhmo) shouted the following incantation to stop the bear: “a man does not touch a man.”¹⁴⁵² Here the bear and the hunter were not strictly relatives, but Piirainen emphasized the humanity of the bear in order to convince him to halt. The bear was supposed to act morally and not commit homicide.

However, there were various ritual strategies to stop the bear. The *tietäjä* and bear hunter Jeremias Seppänen presented himself as weaker than the bear: “I am not strong enough to confront you.”¹⁴⁵³ Seppänen wisely declared that he did not represent any threat to the bear, so it should spare his life. By contrast, Asarias Kyrstöni shouted: “you are younger than me, / yield, as I’m older!”¹⁴⁵⁴ Kyrstöni added: “It is embarrassed about that, and at this point you can shoot it.”¹⁴⁵⁵ Incantations were associated with the hierarchies present in Finno-Karelian society and families: older persons and singers

¹⁴⁴⁸ *Seiso miestä rinnoin kuin seinä* (SKVR IX4/1096: 35).

¹⁴⁴⁹ *Hongincosta sinun sucusi / hongotar sinun sugusi* (SKVR IX4/1096: 37–38).

¹⁴⁵⁰ See Sections 5.4, 5.11.

¹⁴⁵¹ *Minä mies veljes poica* (SKVR IX4/1096: 40).

¹⁴⁵² *Ei mies miestä koske!* (SKVR XII/2 6493. Kuhmoniemi. Paulaharju 26281. 1915. Jonkeri. Mikko Piirainen).

¹⁴⁵³ *Ei minussa ole sinun vastustasi* (SKVR XII2/6501).

¹⁴⁵⁴ *Sie oot nuorempi minua, / anna tietä vanhemmalle!* (SKVR I4/1215. Kiimasjärvi. Meriläinen n. 1345. 1889. Asarias Kyrstöni).

¹⁴⁵⁵ *Niin sitä se häpijää, silloin saa ampua* (SKVR I4/1215).

represented authority and younger ones were supposed to obey and respect them.¹⁴⁵⁶ Siikala stated that the mythic representations of this notion were the songs about the *Singing Contest* between the older hero Väinämöinen and the defeated Joukahainen, who was younger.¹⁴⁵⁷ The bear was supposed to adhere to the same rules followed by the human community. The fact that the bear should be embarrassed is related to the magical notion that scaring someone, hurting his feeling, or even surprising him was a way to make him “softer” (weaker), to gain magical control over him and to subvert his intentions.¹⁴⁵⁸ Embarrassing the bear was a way to make it vulnerable. Only in this way would the gunshot be deadly.

Airis-äijä from Sodankylä avoided the bears’ bites and scratches by shouting: “It is the dog who shows its teeth!” and “it is the cat who shows its claws.”¹⁴⁵⁹ The bear was embarrassed by the likening of its behavior to that of other animals. Another way to embarrass the bear was by uttering an unexpected and secret name. An unknown hunter from Reisjärvi shouted: “Pine of Hiisi, do not touch the man!”¹⁴⁶⁰ According to the informant, this epithet was the bruin’s birth name. The circumlocution is almost unique for the bear. The name may be an abbreviated form of the *Birth of the Bear*, telling that the bear was born from a pine of Hiisi, who was an ugly and malevolent forest spirit.¹⁴⁶¹ As Hiisi had created a supernatural and dangerous elk from natural materials,¹⁴⁶² so the shouting made the bear similar to that mythical creature.¹⁴⁶³ Here the hunter did not stress the humanity of the bear, but his alterity. The revelation that the bear was related with the evil Hiisi could be conceived as a profound embarrassment for the bear, which the hunter took advantage of. Another explanation is that the hunter reduced the bear to a mythic tree, which was not able to move and attack the opponent.

More often the names used to stop the bear were honorable and agreeable. The seer Matti Kyllönen from the parish of Kuhmo held the bear by shouting: “Do not, grain of

¹⁴⁵⁶ Siikala 2016: 101–102.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Siikala 2016: 254.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Hästesko 1918: 140, Stark 2007: 284.

¹⁴⁵⁹ *Koira se hampahansa näyttää! / Kissa se kyntensä näyttää!* (SKVR XII/6511. Sodankylä. Paulaharju 8599. 1920). See also the variation: SKVR XII/2 6508.

¹⁴⁶⁰ *Hiien honka, elä mieheen koske!* (SKVR XII/6491. Reisjärvi. Krohn 3444. 1834. 68-year-old man).

¹⁴⁶¹ Ganander [1789] 2003: 33.

¹⁴⁶² Siikala 2016: 391.

¹⁴⁶³ Identification between the killed bear and a killed elk is present also in SKVR VI/4924; see Section 7.7.

God, come against me!”¹⁴⁶⁴ He commented that “it is pleased when it is called ‘grain of God.’ Damn it, it is still a creature that understands speech.”¹⁴⁶⁵ Here the main point is that the bear calmed down upon hearing itself called by a pleasant name. Juho Karhu considered these rapid exclamations as shorter and emergency versions of a *Birth of the Bear*, uttered in a critical situation: in this case, taking control over the bear only involved uttering its favorite names.¹⁴⁶⁶ The name “grain of God” was probably connected to the idea that the spirits of the forest were farmers also and their “grain” was the wild animals.¹⁴⁶⁷ Kyllönen also stopped bears by exclaiming another incantation: “Man, do not come against the man, / clean forest,¹⁴⁶⁸ [do not come] against the tree!”¹⁴⁶⁹ In this case Kyllönen called the bear both “man” and “clean forest,” a honorable name used to emphasize the innocence of the bear:¹⁴⁷⁰ the bruin was both a human and a part of the forest, and it should not cause any harm to its human kin.

Often the hunters stressed both the similarities and the differences between themselves and the bear. Pekka Pulkkinen from Nurmes held the bear by shouting: “Lands in common, / foods apart, / get by with your own food.”¹⁴⁷¹ The incantation emphasized an ideal agreement between the humans and the bears about the resources of the forest. This motif was generally used to protect the cattle or the horses leaving for the pastures cleared in the forest.¹⁴⁷²

The Viena Karelian Mikko Vasiljus stopped the bear by drawing with his left heel three pentacles on the ground “with a very hard *luonto*”¹⁴⁷³ and uttering the following formula: “Wool is your mouth, wool is your head.”¹⁴⁷⁴ This motif was present in the *Births of the Bear*: as the bear was born from wool, his fangs could be bewitched into

¹⁴⁶⁴ *Elä, jumalanvilja, päälle tule!* (SKVR XII2/6494).

¹⁴⁶⁵ *Sitä se on hyvillään, kun sitä sanoo jumalanviljaksi. Se on vielä, pakana, semmonen, että se ymmärtää puheen* (SKVR XII2/6494).

¹⁴⁶⁶ Karhu 1947: 45.

¹⁴⁶⁷ See Sections 3.6, 6.13.

¹⁴⁶⁸ SKVR I4/1210 b Paulaharju. n. 3636. 1937 (1908). Mikko Kossini.

¹⁴⁶⁹ *Elä mies miehen päälle tule, / Puhas metsä puuta vasten!* (SKVR XII2/6493. Kuhmoniemi. Paulaharju 6251. 1917. Saunajärvi. Matti Kyllönen, The old man of Lehmivaara, *tietäjä*, 78-year-old man).

¹⁴⁷⁰ On the clean, innocent and pure forest, see Section 3.9.

¹⁴⁷¹ *Yhet maat, / eri evvääät, / elä evvääilläsi!* (SKVR VII5/3387. Nurmes. Paulaharju n. 3433. 1908. Mujejärvi. Pekka Pulkkinen).

¹⁴⁷² see SKVR I4/1676: 14; SKVR I4/1397: 60.

¹⁴⁷³ *Hyvin karaistuilla luonnolla.*

¹⁴⁷⁴ SKVR I4/1217. Katoslampi. Meriläinen. 75. 1888. Mikko Vasiljus.

wool.¹⁴⁷⁵ Drawing a pentacle was broadly used in Finno-Karelian magic to stop something dangerous or to protect against something by magically closing a space. Pentacles were drawn also during the circling of the bear to prevent it from fleeing from the den.¹⁴⁷⁶ The information by Vasiljus is useful for an understanding of how the magical formulas were strictly connected with bodily actions, and *vice versa*. The whole ritual worked only if the hunter had a hard *luonto*, harder than the softened “woolly” bear.¹⁴⁷⁷

Vasiljus told that that the hunters could stop a bear by bringing with them an object that came from a forge, because the force of the forge¹⁴⁷⁸ was considered stronger than the force of the forest: at this point the hunter could block the bear by shouting only a word.¹⁴⁷⁹ The forge was connected with the force of iron,¹⁴⁸⁰ which was considered stronger than the force of the forest.

An informant from Uhtua told that the hunters put in their caps an old tinderbox and if the bear attacked them, they threw the cap on the ground: the animal was not able to pass over it, because the force of the fire stopped it and it was fearful of fire.¹⁴⁸¹ The tinderbox was also a powerful instrument against the forest cover. If someone made fire with it, the forest spirits fled and the cows were freed from the forest cover to come back to their owner.¹⁴⁸² Many of the short incantations analyzed in this paragraph were probably reinforced by the use of some object containing a force considered to be stronger or opposed to the force of the forest.

7.5 Shooting the bear with the help of Ukko and the forest spirits

The collectors transcribed a few songs that were performed just before shooting or killing the bear. Johan Soikko from Simo asked the thunder-god Ukko to “push a golden stick / through the bony bones of the jaw!”¹⁴⁸³ This motif also appeared in the

¹⁴⁷⁵ See Section 5.9.

¹⁴⁷⁶ See Section 4.4.

¹⁴⁷⁷ On magical hardness and softness, see Stark 2007: 284–288.

¹⁴⁷⁸ *Pajan väki*.

¹⁴⁷⁹ SKVR I4/1197.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Sarmela 1991: 230.

¹⁴⁸¹ SKS KRA Meriläinen II 81. Informant: 42-year-old man from Uhtua, Viena Karelia; cited in Varonen 1891: 74.

¹⁴⁸² Hästesko 1918: 148.

¹⁴⁸³ *Syökse kultanen korento, / läpi luisten leukaluitten!* (SKVR XII2/6488: 5–6. Simo. Auer, K. 66. 1891. Johan Soikko).

incantations to protect the cattle from bears. In both cases, Ukko was requested to prevent the bear from biting with his golden stick or spear.¹⁴⁸⁴ Later, Soikko asked Ukko to “[throw] the sturdiest of your waistcoats, / the best of your shirts, / throw your wad of wool,”¹⁴⁸⁵ “so that that my *luonto* will not fall, / so that my *haltia* will not fade!”¹⁴⁸⁶ The *luonto* or the *haltia* was the “personal force” or spirit that generally was “raised” by the *tietäjäs* at the beginning of their healing rituals to obtain the spiritual force necessary to expel the illness or to fight sorcerers. Hunters like Soikko were supposed to have *luonto* that was strong enough to kill the bear.¹⁴⁸⁷ These lines reveal the presence of strong links between the beliefs and incantations of the *tietäjäs* and the hunters. Antti Junttunen from Vuolijoki told that when the bear was shot, an old *tietäjä* should be present, ensuring that all went according to the rules.¹⁴⁸⁸

Jeremie Malinen from Vuonninen asked the forest mistress to make the bear unable to see him when he was shooting his bow or rifle: “Sift the mist with a sieve, / wave the dusk, / in front of the forehead of the creature.”¹⁴⁸⁹ The motif of the enchantment of mist is present also in the shooting songs performed when hunting squirrels¹⁴⁹⁰ or in the general hunting songs performed by hunters leaving for the forest.¹⁴⁹¹ The two motifs have something in common: in both cases, the intervention of a supernatural spirit was considered necessary for a successful kill. The obstruction of the bear’s sight was also fundamental to conceive the identity of the hunter and to avoid the posthumous revenge of the bear.

¹⁴⁸⁴ SKVR I4/1413: 18–25; SKVR I4/1418: 20–21; SKVR I4/1442: 23–29.

¹⁴⁸⁵ *Lihavinta liivistäsi, / parahinta paijastasi, / visko villavihkojasi* (SKVR XII2/6488: 8–10); see also SKVR VII5/3504: 32–38.

¹⁴⁸⁶ *Ett’ei luontoni lovestu, / haltiani haavestuisi!* (SKVR XII2/6488: 13–14).

¹⁴⁸⁷ All persons and beings had *luonto*, including the bear. Whoever had stronger and harder *luonto* was able to win their opponents.

¹⁴⁸⁸ *Karhunammunmassa kulki vanha tietäjä muiden kumppalina, jotta kaikki meni sääntöjen mukaan* (SKVR XII2/6540a. Vuolijoki. Liljeblad, private collection. 1833. Antti Juntunen, 49-year-old man).

¹⁴⁸⁹ *Seulo seulalla utuo, / hämäräistä häilyttele, / otuksen otsan e’essä* (SKVR I4/1249: 115–117 Vuonninen. Paulaharju. n. 6031. 7 July 1915. Jeremie Maliné). The same formula is present in SKVR I4/1234: 6–10.

¹⁴⁹⁰ SKVR I4/1109: 12–16.

¹⁴⁹¹ SKVR I4/1112: 24: 28.

7.6 Negation of the responsibility for the bear kill

After the kill the hunters continued to sing songs to the bear as if it was still alive and able to listen to the lines. At first, the responsibility for the bear kill was totally denied; in the songs, the hunters invented a false version of the facts in order to vindicate themselves. Taavetti Kainulainen from Villala (Kesälähti) sang that he had not killed the bear: “Do not, Ohto, get angry for that, / it was not my fault, / nor that of my fellow.”¹⁴⁹² A hunter of Suomussalmi added that his weapons were not a threat: “The bow is splinters, the arrow a stick.”¹⁴⁹³ A hunter from Uhtua sang: “Do not do me harm! / I do not fight with axes, / nor did I chase with spears.”¹⁴⁹⁴

Jyrki Malinen portrayed the kill as an accident; for example, the bear killed itself by falling from a tree:

You slipped by yourself from the branch,
you rolled down by yourself from the bough,
over your berry-filled belly,
broken is your golden stomach.¹⁴⁹⁵

This motif, which was very common in the *Bear Songs*, was the explanation furnished in Karelia and Finland for the bear’s death. In this way, the bear brought about its own death and the hunter was blameless for the killing of his quarry.¹⁴⁹⁶ The motif is also present in some incantations to protect the cattle, but there it includes a threat: In Akonlahti, the cattle herder sang to the bear that if it dared to attack the cows its golden belly would blow out.¹⁴⁹⁷

A hunter from Ilomantsi sang that he was not even personally responsible for being on the spot, having been driven there by his skis: “I would not even have come here, / to the doors of *ohtonen’s* den, / the rowan staff drove me / the bird-cherry stick

¹⁴⁹² *Elä, ohto, siitä suutu, / ei siihen ollut miun syytä, / eikä toisen kumppalini.* (SKVR VII5/3391: 1–3. Kesälähti. Pennanen n. 23. 1896. Villala. Taavetti Kainulainen).

¹⁴⁹³ *Päret jousi, puikko nuoli* (SKVR XII2/6480: 175. Suomussalmi. Topelius 1222 a) 15 n. 2. 1800).

¹⁴⁹⁴ *Ellös vioilla viiö! / en mie tapparin tapellunt, / enkä keihähin ajellunt* (SKVR I4/1256: 26–28. Uhtua. Cajan n. 107. 1836).

¹⁴⁹⁵ *Itsē hairahit havolta, / itsē vierit vempeltä, / läpi marjaisem mahasi / rikki kultaisen kupusi* (SKVR I4/1207: 9–12. Vuonninen. Borenus. II, n. 109. 1872).

¹⁴⁹⁶ Tarkka 1998: 99.

¹⁴⁹⁷ SKVR I4/1362: 38–41. Akonlahti. Castren 30b. 1839.

conveyed.”¹⁴⁹⁸ In Sonkajärvi, the hunters sang about the bear kill, telling that they had slain an elk or lion.¹⁴⁹⁹

The bear was considered an innocent animal of the forest. If it attacked the cattle, a sorcerer who had bewitched the animal was held to be culpable.¹⁵⁰⁰ In the *Bear Songs*, the hunter sang to the bear that he was not responsible for its death. Tarkka states, “In the context of hunting, the perceived innocence of both parties points to approved forms of human-forest relations, to the normal regulation of the boundary between them, and to the ritual purity linked up with this regulation.”¹⁵⁰¹ The lines that negated human responsibility for the bear kill could also be used in healing rituals. For example, the *tietäjä* Matti Kyllönen included them in a spell to heal the wounds and the supernatural illness¹⁵⁰² caused by a bear scratch.¹⁵⁰³

Matti Kuusi noted that the Shor people of South Siberia explained to the bear that its death was caused by a similar incident: “climbing on the bird cherry you swayed and died, you ate berries, you rolled rocks and died / you ate rowan berries, you swayed and died, you ate currant berries, sunk in the swamp and died.”¹⁵⁰⁴

However, different explanations were possible among the various ethnic groups who performed bear ceremonials. One of the commonest explanations given to the bear was that some other set of people or animals were behind the killing. The Yakut blamed the Russians or the Tungus; the Khanty could accuse the Russians; the Sámi told the bear that the hunters were Russian, German or English;¹⁵⁰⁵ the Objiwa accused the English or Angloamerican;¹⁵⁰⁶ and the Finno-Karelians told the bear that their knives had been made in Estonia and Germany.

Kuusi further mentioned that some Eurasian peoples made the bear believe that its death was caused by birds of prey.¹⁵⁰⁷ Willerslev points out that the Yukaghirs who still performed bear ceremonials at the end of the 20th century poke out the dead bear’s eyes and croak like a raven, making the bear believe that a bird blinded it. After that

¹⁴⁹⁸ *Emp ois tänne tullutkana, / ohtosen pesän oville, / saatto sauva pihlajainen, / keppi tuominen totutti.* (SKVR VII/3394: 3–7. Ilomantsi. Europaeus G, n. 104. 1846).

¹⁴⁹⁹ SKVR VI/2/4924. Sonkajärvi. Krohn n. 17401. 1888. Sukeuskylä. Tahvana Karvonen.

¹⁵⁰⁰ See Section 3.9.

¹⁵⁰¹ Tarkka 2013: 332.

¹⁵⁰² The illness was called “the hate of the bear” (*karhun vihat*).

¹⁵⁰³ SKVR XII/2 6521: 5–8.

¹⁵⁰⁴ See the Finnish translation in Kuusi 1963: 47.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Kuusi 1963: 47.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Hallowell 1926: 57, 58.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Kuusi 1963: 47.

they say to the bear: “Big man, who did it to you? The one who eats of the willow bushes [the elk] was here.” Thus, they blamed the elk for the bear kill. And the Yukaghirs could also accuse the Russians or Sakha for the bear death.¹⁵⁰⁸ The main strategy was to shift the responsibility to some other animal or a foreign hunter.¹⁵⁰⁹

In North America, many native hunters simply apologized, telling the truth to the bear. The St. Francis Abenaki hunters explained that they needed fur for their coats and meat to eat. The Menomini reminded the bear that it was intelligent and that it knew their children were starving.¹⁵¹⁰

Juho Seppänen was one of the few Finnish hunters who proudly sang that he killed the bear, but he stressed that he did not use firearms:

I did not catch with a rifle,
I did not chase shooting,¹⁵¹¹
I threw one time with the spear,
I struck with the spike pole;
you came in front of the hero,
came across the tall man.¹⁵¹²

We do not know if Seppänen told the truth or if he deluded the bear with a fictional story, which was based on the ideal of a fair fight with the bear. Among many North American and Siberian peoples who performed bear ceremonialism, the bear should not be killed with firearms but preferably with a spear, a club, an axe or a knife.¹⁵¹³ The low Amur peoples preferred a fair fight with the bear to avoid the bear’s posthumous revenge.¹⁵¹⁴ The Ainu stressed that a face-to-face fight with older weapons required skill and courage, and that whoever undertook to catch a bear must not cry over their

¹⁵⁰⁸ Willerslev 2007: 130.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Hallowell 1926: 57.

¹⁵¹⁰ Hallowell 1926: 55.

¹⁵¹¹ See also SKVR I4/1236: 27–28.

¹⁵¹² *En ole pyssyn pyytänynnä, / enkä ampuen ajellu, / syöstin kerran keihähällä, / savahutin sauvvanpiällä, / tulit vastahan urosta, / saatut miestä korkiata* (SKVR XII/2 6553: 70–75. Suomussalmi. Komulainen, A. V. 13. 92. Ruhtinansalmi. Juho Seppänen, 58-year-old man).

¹⁵¹³ Hallowell 1926: 33.

¹⁵¹⁴ Hallowell 1926: 33.

wounds.¹⁵¹⁵ The Menomini considered engaging a bear singlehandedly to be as brave as slaying an enemy.¹⁵¹⁶

7.7 Rituals performed just after the kill: Defining ownership and leadership

Hunters rarely boasted about killing the bear. In Sonkajärvi, the hunters sang about the taking of an elk by using circumlocutions: “And now the elk has been skied down, / the great deer¹⁵¹⁷ overtaken / the mighty of the forest won.”¹⁵¹⁸ Similar lines were sung in ritual songs while leaving to go hunting,¹⁵¹⁹ as well as in children’s songs for “hide-and-see” games.¹⁵²⁰ In Viena Karelian curative incantations, the healer announced that she had made some skis for illness spirits,¹⁵²¹ and she invited them to go skiing in Pohjola, where the elk would be overtaken and hung,¹⁵²² so there would be meat to consume. However, what mattered most was that the hunters did not sing too explicitly about the bear kill after its slaying: they referred to some other mythic hunt that had happened earlier in the otherworldly Pohjola or Tapiola.

Just after the kill, the hunters cut off the lips and the nose of the bear with a knife, making a “lip-collar”¹⁵²³ which was put around the cap of the leader of the hunt or the bear’s killer.¹⁵²⁴ In Hyrynsalmi, the bear’s killer put the beast’s lips on his ski pole and in Ristijärvi he put them around his neck as a collar.¹⁵²⁵

The “lip-collar” was useful for several reasons. It forestalled the revenge of the bear’s soul, removing its nose and sense of smell. Sometimes the hunters lit a fire,

¹⁵¹⁵ Hallowell 1926: 38.

¹⁵¹⁶ Hallowell 1926: 35.

¹⁵¹⁷ Here ‘great deer’ (*jalopeura*) is a circumlocution for the elk. In some other incantations *jalopeura* means lion (SKVR XII/6513).

¹⁵¹⁸ *Jo nyt on hirvi hiihettuna, / jalopeura jaksettuna, / voitettuna metän väkövä.* (SKVR VI2/4924: 1–3. Sonkajärvi. Krohn n. 17401. 1888. Sukeuskylä. Tahvana Karvonen, 43 years old. Learned from his father Jopi).

¹⁵¹⁹ SKVR I4/1106: 1–2; VII5/3297: 7–8; VII5/3298: 18–19.

¹⁵²⁰ See SKVR V1/1236, VII3/4266a; VII3/4267; VII3/4268.

¹⁵²¹ The *hiidet*.

¹⁵²² SKVR I4/897: 22.

¹⁵²³ *Huulipanta, huuliparta, or turparengas.*

¹⁵²⁴ SKS KRA Meriläinen II 90 c. 67-year-old man from Pistojärvi, Tuhkala village in Viena Karelia; cited in Varonen 1891: 85.

¹⁵²⁵ Virtanen E. A. 1949: 7.

believing that the bear feared it.¹⁵²⁶ Ownership of the lip-collar ensured the entire bear's meat. Antti Junttunen from Vuolijoki told that if by chance some outsiders arrived on the spot and the "lip-collar" had not been cut in time, they could ask for a share of the meat.¹⁵²⁷ In Suomussalmi, the hunters followed the same custom: if outsiders were able to prick the dead bear with a ski pole before the lip-collar was cut, they could get some meat.¹⁵²⁸ The bear's meat was generally distributed within the village of the hunters, but they did not like sharing it with outsiders. The same rule was followed in Iisalmi¹⁵²⁹ and in the backwoods of Sompio,¹⁵³⁰ where the hunter was supposed to immediately cut the whole muzzle of the bear, down to the eyes.¹⁵³¹

The lip-collar also signified leadership. Iivana Malinen told that a hunter with a lip-collar on his hat enjoyed special status at the next bear feast: he was the first one to enter the cabin and he had the right to lead in giving thanks to God for the prey.¹⁵³²

Jeremias Seppänen from Ruhtinansalmi told that the lip-collar was put on the tree of the bear skull.¹⁵³³ Ville Tauriainen from Pudasjärvi reported that if a bear killed cows and was shot, one tooth and the lip-collar were put on three different ant hills in the forest and then boiled in a cauldron, uttering the typical incantation about the transformation of the bruin's teeth into wool: in this way the people avoided the posthumous revenge of the bear.¹⁵³⁴ Like the bear's pharynx, the lip-collar was also used for folk healing: water poured through it was used to heal animal and human wounds.¹⁵³⁵

Hunters also performed some acts to demonstrate their courage and fortitude. Aksel Kääpä from the parish of Mäntyharju told that the hunter Kuisma cut some bear meat and ate it raw just after the kill.¹⁵³⁶ Kuisma thus demonstrated bravery and toughness: eating bear meat was considered dangerous or even poisonous if it was not ritually smoked on a fire made with alder wood.¹⁵³⁷ However, eating raw meat could

¹⁵²⁶ Virtanen E. A. 1949: 9.

¹⁵²⁷ SKVR XII2/6540a. Vuolijoki. Liljeblad. 1833. Antti Juntunen, 49-year-old man.

¹⁵²⁸ Virtanen E. A. 1949: 6.

¹⁵²⁹ SKVR VI2/7407a. Iisalmi. K. Krohn. Year unknown. 19th century.

¹⁵³⁰ SKS KRA Paulaharju 39764. 1937. Kustu Korvanen, 75-year-old man.

¹⁵³¹ KRA SKS Paulaharju 39762. 1937. Riesto (Sompio). Ale Alariesto.

¹⁵³² SKVR I4/1244.

¹⁵³³ SKVR XII2/6574.

¹⁵³⁴ SKVR XII2/6860.

¹⁵³⁵ SKVR VI2/7407a. Iisalmi. Krohn. Year unknown. 19th century.

¹⁵³⁶ SKS KRA J. Karhu 3288. 1936. Aksel Kääpä, 75-year-old male. Käävänkylä, Mäntyharju.

¹⁵³⁷ See Section 8.14.

had been an intentional way to absorb the force of the bear. Kuisma acted like a wild animal in the wilderness; eating raw meat was not mediated by the cultural acts of fire making and cooking.¹⁵³⁸ Probably it was also a way to emphasize his bravery and leadership in front of the hunting group, as he was the only hunter who dared to eat raw meat.

7.8 Use of the *karsikko* tree to mark the place where the bear was killed

The informant Ale Ariesto from Riesto explained that after the bear kill, a *karsikko* tree was made on the spot: cutting almost all its branches,¹⁵³⁹ leaving the treetop, and carving the date of the day on a small part of the trunk where the bark had been removed. Alariesto defined this ritual tree, which the collector Paulaharju defined as a *saaliskarsikko* ('a *karsikko* for game animals'), like a *muistopattas* ('memorial carved pillar'), something that was carved in memory of "some kind of event."¹⁵⁴⁰ In Iisalmi, the tree where the bear skull was hung could also be fashioned as a *karsikko*.¹⁵⁴¹ In Finland, *karsikkos* were made to celebrate different kinds of important events: weddings, the first fair held in a village, or the first travel to a city done by someone.¹⁵⁴² The bear kill, too, was considered a very important occurrence.

In Eastern Finland, *karsikkos* were also made on the road to the graveyard in memory of human funerals and the deceased and to prevent the dead's return to haunt the village. In these cases the carvings included a cross and the name, date of birth and date of death of the deceased; reading these, the spirit fully understood itself to be dead and thus refrained from wandering like a ghost or disturbing the living.¹⁵⁴³ According to Janne Vilkkuna, the *karsikko* was a boundary mark of the otherworld that "removed the deceased from the community of the living."¹⁵⁴⁴

On one hand, this tradition indicated that the killed bear was considered as important as a deceased human. On the other hand, the *karsikko* was a powerful way to prevent the posthumous revenge of the killed bear against hunters or cattle.

¹⁵³⁸ Levi-Strauss 1970.

¹⁵³⁹ SKS KRA Paulaharju 39766: Ale Alariesto. Riesto (Sompio). 1937.

¹⁵⁴⁰ SKS KRA Paulaharju 39766: Ale Alariesto. Riesto (Sompio). 1937.

¹⁵⁴¹ SKVR VI2/7407a. Iisalmi. Krohn. Year unknown. 19th century.

¹⁵⁴² Vuorela 1979: 144; Vilkkuna J. 1992: 204, 206; see also Konkka 2013: 254; Paulaharju 1937: 131.

¹⁵⁴³ Vuorela 1979: 144–145.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Vilkkuna J. 1992: 206.

7.9 Skinning of the fur as ritual exchange

Skinning of the bear was done either in the forest or in the village. In the case that the bear was killed far away from the village and transportation of the whole corpse would be exhausting, it was skinned in the forest.¹⁵⁴⁵ However, the songs about skinning in the forest or in the village were almost identical. Iivana Malinen presented the skinning of the bear as a useful exchange, providing a clear advantage for the bear:¹⁵⁴⁶

Let's trade our shirts,
let's swap our jackets.
Give me the wool shirt,
take from me an iron shirt,
the iron one is firmer in the underbrush,
it lasts longer in the spruce forest.¹⁵⁴⁷

According to Tarkka, the hunter at this point removed the imaginary protective armor that he had summoned against bear bites and envious people and gave it to the bear.¹⁵⁴⁸ In exchange, he received a "wool shirt," probably the fur. In the language of the incantations, the wool shirt denotes something softer and magically more vulnerable than the iron one. The iron shirt offered to the bear could also be a hidden reference to the knife used to skin it. The exchange redefined the identities and the power relations between the hunter and the bear, which now became stronger and more protected. This ritual exchange was possible only during a particular ritual state where the boundaries between the human and the bear were partially dissolved.¹⁵⁴⁹

In ritual fishing songs from Hyrynsalmi and Suomussalmi, a similar exchange was proposed to the water master spirit Ahti or the mistress Vellinys (Vellamo): the fishermen offered a linen shirt and the water spirit gave a shirt made of common reeds.¹⁵⁵⁰

¹⁵⁴⁵ SKS KRA Samuli Paulaharju 25984. 1934. Verra Homanen, 43-year-old man. Kivijärvi.

¹⁵⁴⁶ In this case, the skinning was performed in the village.

¹⁵⁴⁷ *Vaihtakaamme paitojamme, / nurikaamme nuttujamm., / anna mulle villa paita, /ota multa rauta paita, / rautanen risuissa lujempi, / kuusikossa kestävämpi* (SKVR I4/1244 c. Vuonninen. Meriläinen n. 245. 1888. Iivana Malinen).

¹⁵⁴⁸ Tarkka 2013: 339; see Section 4.6.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Tarkka 2013: 339.

¹⁵⁵⁰ SKVR XII2: 6707: 8–10, 6708: 7–9, 6709: 3–5, 6710: 2–4. Siikala 2016: 374.

Iivana Malinen added that it was necessary to use a knife “whose maker is unknown” and to sing:

The knife isn't a work of mine,
nor of the other fellow.
The knife was made in Estonia,
obtained from a German city,
traded for baize money
through the famous villages,
through the salty straits.¹⁵⁵¹

The reference to money and trade routes indicated that the knife had been bought and had a certain economic value. Iivana Malinen informed the bruin that the knife was not cheap and that it had passed through famous cities. In the version by Markkeiri Huotari, the knife was made in Stockholm, a rich, distant and mighty harbor.¹⁵⁵² Malinen ended this song by inviting the bear to reach its birthplace (Pohjola), where it could regenerate its claws and teeth.¹⁵⁵³

Because the knife had passed from hand to hand in various trade centers, it would be impossible to know exactly its maker. To begin with, Malinen sang that he himself had not made the knife. Maybe the lines were also an attempt to delude the soul of the bear, inciting it to search for revenge far away, abroad. According to Kuusi, a similar deluding strategy was common among the Khanty, who sang to the bear that an arrow, spear, axe or knife made by a Russian had killed it and for this reason Russians were to blame.¹⁵⁵⁴

Germany and Estonia represented the very edge of the world known by a Viena Karelian, and Estonia often had otherworldly connotation in songs and incantations. In childbirth incantations, Estonia seems to have been considered a distant otherworldly land: “Bring me a scythe from Estonia, / a hayfork from hell.”¹⁵⁵⁵ A knife

¹⁵⁵¹ *Ei ole veitsi minun tekema / eikä toisi kumppailini, / Virossa on veitsi tehty, / saatu Saksan kaupungissa, / verka pankossa vejetty, / läpi kuulujen kylien / läpi suola salmeksien* (SKVR I4/1244d).

¹⁵⁵² SKVR I4/1243: 21–24.

¹⁵⁵³ SKVR I4/1244e; see Sections 5.6 and 9.14.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Kuusi 1963: 47; see also Hallowell 1926: 58.

¹⁵⁵⁵ *Tuo sie viikateh Virosta, / heinärauta helvetistä* (SKVR I4/960, 136–137); cited in Tarkka 2013: 394.

from the otherworldly land of Estonia was probably considered to be magically strong and suitable for skinning a bear.

Estonia is also mentioned in other parts of the *Bear Songs*. Jeremie Malinen sang “I walked for a week in Estonia”¹⁵⁵⁶ when he was searching for his prey. When the hunters asked the bear to leave the den, they sang that it had traveled for a week in Estonia.¹⁵⁵⁷ These lines could be interpreted in two ways, as a definition of the places as otherworldly or as an attempt to trick the bear to search for his revenge far away.

A different topic was presented by Oleksei from Koljola, who dared to ask the forest spirits to participate in the skinning: “Come now, Nyrkys¹⁵⁵⁸ to skin, / Tapio, to make money!”¹⁵⁵⁹ As the bear’s fur had economic value, here the forest spirits were exhorted to accept a share of the profits.

After the skinning, the hunters purified their hands and their whole skin with smoke.¹⁵⁶⁰ The hunters also cleansed themselves before starting their travel back to the village. They had had direct contact with the force of the forest and the death force present in the corpse of the dead bear, and the fumigation was a magic device to prevent the hunters or other villagers from being polluted by these forces.

7.10 Departure from the den

After the kill, the hunters transported the bear corpse on a pole. The bruin passed from the forest’s mythical landscape into the human and profane village. Even if the bear was dead, the people believed that it preserved its consciousness and the hunters continued to sing to it, as it was alive. The bear’s soul was considered able to understand the songs and to see what the people did during the rituals, and its carcass was still impregnated with the dynamic force of the forest.

This belief had counterparts in the vernacular ideas about human death. In Viena Karelia, the spirit of the deceased was considered to be present in his house for three days, observing all the rituals and listening to all the things the people spoke about.

¹⁵⁵⁶ *Kävelin Virossa viikon* (SKVR I4/1249: 78. Vuonninen. Paulaharju 6031. 1915. Jeremie Malinen (“Pissonsuun Jeremie”).

¹⁵⁵⁷ See Section 7.10.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Probably Nyyrikki, the “son of Tapio.” (SKVR VII5/3308: 40).

¹⁵⁵⁹ *Tuleppa nyt nyrkys’ nylkemähän, / Tapio, rahan tekohon!* (SKVR I4/1216b).

¹⁵⁶⁰ *Miehet kun ovat karhun nylkeneet, savustavat kätensä ja iiensä kokonah* (SKS KRA Samuli ja Jenni Paulaharju 18553. 1932. Vuonninen. Anni Lehtonen, born in 1868. Manuscript 1916).

Thus, people behaved properly and refrained from speaking badly about the deceased.¹⁵⁶¹

These songs resemble those sung by the hunters when leaving the village, but this time the main traveler and guest was the bear and the journey was in the opposite direction. The bruin's entry into the village was considered a liminal and potentially dangerous event; little mistakes could provoke the posthumous revenges of the bear or the invasion of a forest illness. Each place reached by the bear on its way towards the main house was described with an abundance of poetic detail. The actions happened following a slow tempo, signaling the extraordinary nature of the event; a similarly slow motion characterized the hunter's leaving from the village.¹⁵⁶²

At the beginning, the hunters requested the bear to leave the den. Moiséiñi Kuśma from Latvajärvi sang:

Now you, *oh*to, turn,
like a hazel grouse¹⁵⁶³ on the top of your den,
like a thrush on your wreckage!¹⁵⁶⁴
Leave now your home cold¹⁵⁶⁵,
[leave] your homeland uninhabited!¹⁵⁶⁶

As in the awakening songs, the den was described as a home.¹⁵⁶⁷ The bear was exhorted to turn on its den like a forest bird, and this same motif appears in the song for taking the bear meat from the cauldron.¹⁵⁶⁸ In Viena and North Karelian wedding songs, gamebirds were circumlocutions for the bride.¹⁵⁶⁹ Maybe, as in the case of the awakening songs, the bear was described as a bride that needed to be convinced to leave her home.¹⁵⁷⁰ The hazel grouse was hunted and appreciated for the good taste of

¹⁵⁶¹ Paulaharju 1995 (1924): 205–206.

¹⁵⁶² See Section 4.8.

¹⁵⁶³ *Tetrastes bonasia*.

¹⁵⁶⁴ The den.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Here "cold" means empty.

¹⁵⁶⁶ *Niin sie, ohto, keäntelete, / niinkuin pyy pesäsi peällä, / rassas raunivoisellasi! / Heitä nyt kylmillä kotisi, / asunmoasi autieksi!* (SKVR I4/1203: 1–5. Latvajärvi. Karjalainen n. 106. 1894. Moiséiñi Kuśma).

¹⁵⁶⁷ See Section 7.2.

¹⁵⁶⁸ See Section 8.8, 8.9.

¹⁵⁶⁹ See Ilomaki 1994: 246–247; Ilomaki 1988: 151–152.

¹⁵⁷⁰ See Section 7.1, 7.2.

its meat. It is also possible that the hunter wanted the bear to behave in a quiet and harmless way, as the hazel grouse is a very shy bird and not commonly seen in the forest. The thrush builds a cup-shaped nest, sometimes lining it with mud. Maybe the hunters saw some sort of similarity between the nest and the shape of the bear den.

Markkeiñi Huotari from Vuonninen encouraged the bear to leave the den:

You have walked for a week in Estonia,
a long time in narrow places,
in the rooms of Hongatar,¹⁵⁷¹
in the dens of Pihlajatar.^{1572,1573}

The den was identified with Estonia, a land in the *Bear Songs* which had otherworldly connotations.¹⁵⁷⁴ Huotari described the den as an uncomfortable and narrow spot in order to convince the bear to leave it.¹⁵⁷⁵ The mythical features of the den are evident: it is called the room of the female forest spirits who were the mothers and protectors of bears in the *Births of the Bear*, *Bear Songs* and cattle incantations.¹⁵⁷⁶ Sometimes the strict relationship between the bear and the female forest spirits became a sort of identification. Vasilius Lesonen from Venehjärvi addressed the bear as it was also a forest spirit:

Mielikki,¹⁵⁷⁷ daughter-in-law of the forest,
Tyynikki,¹⁵⁷⁸ daughter of Tapio,
leave your cold home,
your forlorn dwelling place.¹⁵⁷⁹

The bear gained the femininity of the forest spirit. In this song, Mielikki was not called

¹⁵⁷¹ "Pine-Lady"; see Section 5.4.

¹⁵⁷² "Rowan-Lady"; see Section 5.4.

¹⁵⁷³ *Jo viikoñ Viroššä kuljet, / kauvon kaijoissa t'iloissa, / honkattaren huonehissa, / pihlajattarem pesissä* (SKVR I4/1243: 39–40. Vuonninen. Borenius. II, n. 112. 4/8/1872. Markkeiñi Huotari).

¹⁵⁷⁴ See Section 7.9.

¹⁵⁷⁵ See Section 7.2, 9.1.

¹⁵⁷⁶ See Section 5.4.

¹⁵⁷⁷ A forest spirit; see Section 5.4.

¹⁵⁷⁸ *Tyynikki* is a rare name of a female forest spirit; see also SKVR I4/1449: 2.

¹⁵⁷⁹ *Mielikki metän miniä, / Tyynikki Tapion tyttö, / heitä kylmille kotis', / asunmaas' autioksi!* (SKVR I4/1231: 49–52. Venehjärvi. Fellman n. 43. 1829? Vasilius Lesonen).

“mistress” as usual, but “daughter-in-law,” a name that was suitable for a bride or a young wife.

By contrast, a hunter from North Karelia addressed the bear as “golden king of the forest,”¹⁵⁸⁰ an epithet given to both the bear and Tapio, the master spirit of the forest.¹⁵⁸¹ Afterwards he sang: “I, myself, carry my bear, / I convey the small cock of the forest.”¹⁵⁸² The bear is presented like a king on a litter and the hunter but a humble servant carrying him.

7.11 Joining the manly company of the hunters

Moiśseiñi Kuśma from Latvajarvi requested the bruin to join the group of hunters:

Leave now, *ohto*, to roam,
silver,¹⁵⁸³ to wander,
money fur,¹⁵⁸⁴ to ramble
to the heroic people,
to the manly company,
along a golden path,
along a silver way.¹⁵⁸⁵

Here Kuśma does not address the bear as a feminine bird of prey, as he did a few lines before.¹⁵⁸⁶ Instead the bruin is a male adult, requested to join the manly hunting group. With a sort of rite of passage, the killed bear was thus incorporated into the group of its killers. The bruin should share their masculine vision of the world and enjoy their adventurous pleasure of traveling. Jyrki Malinen exhorted the bear to discover new paths: “Leave to see the roads, / to master the travels.”¹⁵⁸⁷

¹⁵⁸⁰ *Metsän kultanen kuningas* (SKVR VII5/3389: 2).

¹⁵⁸¹ See Sections 3.6, 3.11.

¹⁵⁸² *Itse kannan karhuani, / metsäkukkoista kuletan.* (SKVR VII5/3389: 2–4. From *Uusi Suometar 1878 n. 138. Taikatapoja Savossa ja Karjalassa* [1878]).

¹⁵⁸³ Bear.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Bear.

¹⁵⁸⁵ *Lähe nyt, ohto, kulkomah, / hopie, vajeltamah, rahakarva, koalamah. / uroisehe väkeh, / miehisehe joukijoh / kullaista kujoa myöti, / hopijeista tietä myöti* (SKVR I4/1203: 26–27).

¹⁵⁸⁶ See Section 7.10; SKVR I4/1203: 1–5.

¹⁵⁸⁷ *Lähes teitä kattšomaha, / matkoja osoamaha!* (SKVR I4/1207: 6–7. Vuonninen. Borenium II, n. 109. 1872).

Moiśseiini Kuśma exhorted the bruin to wander and roam, activities that defined the masculine identities of hunters and the heroes of Finnish-Karelian epics.¹⁵⁸⁸ The bruin was called “silver” and “money fur,” names that emphasized the economic value of the beast’s hide. The road was “golden” and “silver,” a wonderful place to move on and a proper path for a guest of honor. Hovatta Teronpoika Lesoni from Niskajärvi sang that the spruces, the aspens and the pines also shine with gold and silver.¹⁵⁸⁹ These trees were seen as enchanted, like in the lines of the songs to enter the forest.¹⁵⁹⁰ A shining environment was proof that the hunt had been successful.¹⁵⁹¹

Iivana Malinen from Vuonninen addressed the bear joining the male group as “famous”¹⁵⁹² and “*auvo* of the deep woods.”¹⁵⁹³ The term *auvo* is particularly difficult to translate, as it can mean ‘beloved one’ or ‘luck,’ ‘honor’ or ‘worth.’ According to Tarkka, its meaning could be akin to ‘loved one’ or ‘relative,’ as the bear was often presented as a kinsman, bride or groom.¹⁵⁹⁴ The bear kill was a test of masculinity, so the phrase above could also be interpreted as “honor of the deep woods.”¹⁵⁹⁵ Women gained “honor”¹⁵⁹⁶ by being honorably married, while men achieved honor through a successful bear hunt.¹⁵⁹⁷

In this ritual phase, the singers sang motifs stressing the assimilation of the bruin into the group of its killers. Moiśseiini Kuśma prayed to God to give another bear to the hunters in the future and to let it come again to “our family.”¹⁵⁹⁸ Here the bruin not only joined the hunters’ group, but became a member of their kin. The expression clearly resembles the motifs of wedding songs.¹⁵⁹⁹ On the other hand, the hunters could present themselves as a kind of new family for the bear.

According to the singers, the killed bear did not cease to exist. Instead, it changed its social status, becoming a member of the human group during the bear feast. The

¹⁵⁸⁸ Tarkka 1998: 93, 99–100.

¹⁵⁸⁹ SKVR I4/1219a: 38–40.

¹⁵⁹⁰ See Sections 6.3 and 6.9.

¹⁵⁹¹ Tarkka 1998: 105.

¹⁵⁹² *Kuulu*.

¹⁵⁹³ *Salon auvo* (SKVR I4/1209: 1–2).

¹⁵⁹⁴ Tarkka 1998: 111.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Tarkka 1998: 111.

¹⁵⁹⁶ *Auvo, arvo*.

¹⁵⁹⁷ The name *auvo* is present also in the *Thanksgiving Songs* at the end of the feast; see Section 8.21.

¹⁵⁹⁸ *Meän sukuhu* (SKVR I4/1203: 14. Latvajärvi. Karjalainen n. 106. 1894); see also SKVR I4/1202: 23 and I4/1222b: 18.

¹⁵⁹⁹ *Meijä suurehe sukuhu* (SKVR XIII2/3578: 4).

bruin's gender changes represented a set of social changes:¹⁶⁰⁰ when the bear was about to leave the den it was addressed as a female game bird or even as a female forest spirit, but after a few lines it was encouraged to join the male group as a male member.¹⁶⁰¹ The places, too, were gendered: the den of the bear had feminine connotations, as it was governed or inhabited by female forest spirits and the bear/bride. But when the bruin traveled from the den to the village, it became the member of a masculine hunting group; the very act of traveling seems to have made it a manly man.¹⁶⁰²

The hunter stressed that when the bear became a male hunter, it should forget its intention to take revenge on the human community. The hunters of Vuokkiniemi emphasized: "do not hate for a week, / do not scare the Christian people"¹⁶⁰³

The songs to leave for the village remind of the ones to enter the forest. Earlier the hunters called themselves strangers or orphans going in the otherworldly forestland, and they asked the forest master to carve signs on trees to guide them towards the den or their prey.¹⁶⁰⁴ But now the bruin was the foreigner, the orphan or the groom to be guided, and the hunters were the guides. Because the bruin needed help to find the road to the village, Moíśseińi Kuśma sang:

I carve signs along the lands,
crosses on the slopes of the hills,
so that *ohto* would be able to come.¹⁶⁰⁵

The cross, like the pentacle, had a protective force, and its power was used in wedding rites. The *patvaska* made the sign of the cross with his whip on "critical" or liminal places (e.g., thresholds, doorjambs) when someone left for a wedding travel.¹⁶⁰⁶ Crosses set on slopes could be useful for orientation and for magically protecting the

¹⁶⁰⁰ Tarkka 2013: 351.

¹⁶⁰¹ By contrast, in the Ob-Ugrian bear ceremonials the gender of the bear did not change. It was ritually fixed and recognized: the people gave a male bear's fur a hat, and the female bear's fur a headscarf, rings and earrings (Sirelius 1929: 199–200). The sex of the bear also influenced the number of the songs and the duration of the whole festival.

¹⁶⁰² On the relation between travel and masculinity, see Section 3.4.

¹⁶⁰³ *Elkähä viikon vihoko, / kamaloiko ristikansa* (SKVR I4/1229: 16–17. Vuokkiniemi. Lönnrot R, n. 586. 1837).

¹⁶⁰⁴ See Section 6.12

¹⁶⁰⁵ *Vessäm mie pilkat pitkin maita, / rastit voarojen lomija, / jotta ohto tulla osais'* (SKVR I4/1203: 18–20).

¹⁶⁰⁶ Siikala 1992: 249.

paths of the hunters. Protective crosses and signs on slopes were also carved to protect the cattle going to pasture in the forest.¹⁶⁰⁷

Ont'ippa from Suolahti (Venehjärvi) told that three signs were carved on the bark of pines just after the bear kill,¹⁶⁰⁸ "in honor of the forest spirit."¹⁶⁰⁹ Iivana Malinen explained that the hunters split into two groups: "guides"¹⁶¹⁰ walked ahead, making signs in the woods, and the group carrying the bear followed the signs leading back home.¹⁶¹¹

Samppa Riiko from Tuhkala asked the forest spirits Hongatar¹⁶¹² and Katajatar¹⁶¹³ to carve signs on the trees, "so that the guest would see his road, / the foreign hero would be able [to find its road]."¹⁶¹⁴

Jyrkiñi Huotari from Latvajärvi prayed to the forest spirit to build a magic bridge to allow the bear to reach the village:

Beautiful wife of the forest vault,
slash some silk into a bridge,
a golden thread into a step,
over the river of Pohjola,
so that Ohto would be able to come.¹⁶¹⁵

The hunter sang that the bruin came from the otherworldly land of Pohjola, which was also a possible birthplace of the bear and the mythical place where the bear hunt happened, according to the *Bear Songs*. The forest spirit should help the bear to reach the village; it was a signal that she was pleased about the upcoming rituals there. When entering the forest, the hunters prayed to the forest spirit in order to give them game

¹⁶⁰⁷ SKVR I4/1365: 25–29; XII2/6746: 12–13.

¹⁶⁰⁸ *Kun on karhu kaadettu, veistet[ään] 3 pilkkaa petäjiin* (SKVR I4/1205. Venehjärvi Paulaharju. n. 6033. 10 July 1915).

¹⁶⁰⁹ *Metsän kummun kunnivoksi* (SKVR I4/1205: 4).

¹⁶¹⁰ *Tienviittajat*.

¹⁶¹¹ SKVR I4/1208. Vuonninen. Meriläinen. n. 245. 1988. Iivana Maliñen; learned from his father.

¹⁶¹² "Pine-lady"; see Section 5.4.

¹⁶¹³ "Juniper-lady"; see Section 5.4.

¹⁶¹⁴ *Josta näkis' vieras tiensä, / uros outokin osaisi!* (SKVR I4/1199: 40–41. Tuhkala. Meriläinen. n. 541. 1888).

¹⁶¹⁵ *Salo-koarteñ vaimo kauñis! / šilkki šillakše šivalla, / kulta-lanka portahakše, / poikki Pohjol'añ jovešta, / jotta Ohto tulla šaise* (SKVR I4/1202: 10–14. Latvajärvi. Borenus II, n. 20. 1872).

passing across the bridge of Pohjola.¹⁶¹⁶ During the bear skull's procession, however, the bear returned to Pohjola,¹⁶¹⁷ which was the mythical homeland of the bear and animals, as well as the diseases.¹⁶¹⁸ When a *tietäjä* from Kivijärvi expelled the diseases, he uttered: "There I expel the evil, / over the river of Pohjola, / I built a bridge from silk."¹⁶¹⁹ The silk bridge across the river of Pohjola could be crossed in both directions, but for different ritual goals.

¹⁶¹⁶ See SKVR I4/1115: 6–14.

¹⁶¹⁷ See Section 9.2.

¹⁶¹⁸ See Section 5.6.

¹⁶¹⁹ *Tuonne /h / ma /h / pahan m[anoan], / poikki Pohjolan joesta, / sillan silkistä rakenän* (SKVR I4/510: 25–27. Kivijärvi. Lönnrot A II 7, n. 1. 1834).

Chapter 8

Returning to the Village: The Bruin as a Guest of Honor and the Bear Feast

8.1 The mistress welcoming the bear in the village

The entrance of the bear in the village marked a change in the communicative form of the *Bear Songs*. When the hunters approached the yard of their village or home, a singing dialogue started between the hunters and the mistress of the house or village,¹⁶²⁰ or even a group of wives¹⁶²¹ or mistresses. The conversation was divided into answers and questions.¹⁶²² In the middle of this dialogue, both the hunters and the wives sang some lines to the silent “guest,” the bear. In Heinävesi, the women stood in a line on two sides of the stairs in front of the house’s outdoors with torches made of birch bark, forming a festive and solemn “alley of honor” for the bear, which arrived at sunset.¹⁶²³

In Viena Karelia, if the whole bear ceremonial was done in the forest, the hunters also performed the roles of the women.¹⁶²⁴ In Vuonninen, sometimes the dialogue was between the “carriers of the bear” and the “guides.”¹⁶²⁵ In Vuolijoki, it could be between the hunters and a *tietäjä*.¹⁶²⁶ In Viena Karelia, a woman could sing the parts traditionally belonging to men if she was considered the best singer present at the

¹⁶²⁰ *Emäntä* in SKVR I4/1220 b.

¹⁶²¹ *Akat, emännät* in SKVR I4/1225 b and I4/1227.

¹⁶²² Reconstruction of the singing dialogues is not always easy: sometimes a male singer sang to the collector the lines of the wives, too, or a female singer sang the lines of the male hunters. Some collectors or singers indicated with precision which parts were sung by hunters and women, while others did not mention any division of roles. Several versions are fragmented, as the collector wrote down only the male or female parts, or the singer remembered only some parts.

¹⁶²³ SKS KRA Tauno Mäkipalo (Mohell) 485. 1933. Heinävesi. Jussi Räsänen, 45-year-old fisherman.

¹⁶²⁴ SKS KRA Paulaharju 1917 6452. SKVR I4/1222a.

¹⁶²⁵ *Tienviittajat*; see SKVR I4/1244.

¹⁶²⁶ SKVR XII2/6540a.

feast.¹⁶²⁷ Krohn considered the women's participation in the bear feast to be a late phenomenon, but he did not provide argumentation for his statement.¹⁶²⁸ By contrast, the ritual role of the mistress should not be underestimated, as she stood on the border of the household and the forest, behaving as a guardian and a mediator when the guest from the forestland came inside. At the beginning of the hunt, a wife performed the *harakoiminen* ritual in order to protect her husband from the bear,¹⁶²⁹ and later the mistress welcomed the bear and the hunters entering the village. The welcome songs were significant because they informed the people about the arrival of the bruin. In Viena Karelia, if someone was surprised and felt frightened by the bruin's corpse, it was believed that the forest contagion had infected him.¹⁶³⁰

The arrival revealed the presence of social hierarchies. In Viena Karelia, the hunter who sang during the arrival was often the killer of the bear¹⁶³¹ or the hunter with the lip-collar¹⁶³² on his hat. In Eastern Finland and Karelia, the mistress was generally a mature wife who held a particular authority in the household and the village.¹⁶³³

The lines performed by the women added an emotive aspect to the entrance of the bear into the village. The bruin was treated as a guest who had been awaited for a long time. The song lines evidence the female point of view of the bear hunt: the lengthy wait for the bear and concern for the men. The women's waiting was not passive, but filled with expectations, emotion, pain and uncertainty. The bear hunter Jeremias Seppänen remembered that in Ruhtinansalmi the women sang about the wandering of the men:

The maidens from home do not know,
nor do the married women know
where the men riot,
where the heroes bluster.¹⁶³⁴

¹⁶²⁷ KM: KTKKA 965: *Kontion kunnioitus sekä siihen liittyviä taika – ynnä mynnä muita temppuja Vienan Karjalassa*: 8–14.

¹⁶²⁸ Krohn [1915] 2008: 151–152.

¹⁶²⁹ See Section 4.9.

¹⁶³⁰ Paulajarju 1999: 80.

¹⁶³¹ SKVR I4/1220.

¹⁶³² SKVR I4/1244a; for the lip-collar, see Section 7.7.

¹⁶³³ Stark 1998a: 100–106.

¹⁶³⁴ *Eipä tiejä kotoiset neijet / eikä tiejä naijut naiset, / missä miehet mengastavat, / kussa uhmovat urohot* (SKRV XII2/6554: 50–53. Meriläinen, H. II. 377. 1888. Jeremias Seppänen, 46-year-old man. Learned from his grandfather, who was a great *tietäjä*).

These lines are a rare poetic representation of the female point of view about the hunt and of the women's preoccupations about what could happen to the hunters. In Latvajärvi, the hunters approaching the village sang to the waiting women: "Listen to this rumble/ the rolling of this song."¹⁶³⁵

Maura Marttiini from Kivijärvi sang the question of the mistress: "From where my man comes, / as he comes singing, / he skis humming?"¹⁶³⁶ In Latvajärvi, the bear's killer answered vaguely, avoiding any mention the bear hunt: "I skied from one swamp to another, / bouncing in the forests."¹⁶³⁷

Moišseiini Kuśma from Latvajärvi told that the wives welcomed the hunters by singing: "So you feel like singing, / like someone who has drunk ale, / someone who has distilled spirits for a week."¹⁶³⁸ The wives seemed to describe the upcoming successful hunter as intoxicated by the joy of singing. They could also humorously refer to the upcoming drinking party of the bear feast.

In Viena Karelia, the hunter sang lines that made clear that the hunting trip had ended:

When we come to the yards of the cabin,
I raise my skis to dry;¹⁶³⁹
I put my spears¹⁶⁴⁰ one upon the other,

¹⁶³⁵ *Kuunnelkoas' tätä kumuo, / tätä virreñ vierretüstä* (SKVR I4/1222. Latvajärvi. Borenius II, n. 20. 1872. Jyrkiini Huotari, from the Perttunen family).. Singing was the signal that the hunters were coming with a killed bear. The Ob-Ugrian hunters shot their rifles and shouted "uij-uj-uj" to inform the village's people of their arrival (Sirelius 1929: 196).

¹⁶³⁶ *Mistä mieheñi tulou, / kun hiän lauluan tulou, / hyreäl'l'en hiihtelöy?* (SKVR I4/1220b: 1–3. Kivijärvi. Martt. n. 913. 1910. Maura Marttiini). See also SKVR I4/1227: 1–3.

¹⁶³⁷ *Hiihoin söittain söita myöt'en, / hypähellen kankahie:* (SKVR I4/1220a: 1–2).

¹⁶³⁸ *Ñiimpä teitä laulattauve, / niin kuin juonutta oluon, / viikoñ viinañ keittänyttä.* (SKVR I4/1225: 1–3. Latvajärvi Karjalainen n. 107. 94. Moišseiini Kuśma, from the Ahonen family, originally from Oulunjoki. Learned from his father). See also SKVR I4/1222b: 1–3.

¹⁶³⁹ Literally 'to melt [the snow on the skis].'

¹⁶⁴⁰ Or the tips of the ski poles.

my handles¹⁶⁴¹ hanging from the top of the *orsi*.^{1642,1643}

The bear hunter and *tietäjä* Jeremias Seppänen from Ruhtinansalmi mentioned that the wives asked the hunters: “What did the forest give you?”¹⁶⁴⁴ The hunters answered with a list of circumlocutions indicating the bear:

The forest gave us a wood grouse,
the forest master a lynx,
a small servant of the wood,
a honey-paw, a *källeröinen*.^{1645,1646}

The answer “a small servant of the wood” is interesting because it likens the bear to a female forest spirit. The hunters described the bear as something “given” by the forest, not “taken” from it; thus, the forest was an agent, not a passive environment. It seems that the main actor was the woodland itself or its master spirit, not the bear’s killer or the other hunters. In Lonkka, the mistress welcomed the bear very warmly:

Welcome, God, from there to here,
from these small yards,
from these narrow houses.
Welcome, *ohto*, upon your arrival,
honey paw, as you came by.¹⁶⁴⁷

¹⁶⁴¹ Probably the handles of the ski poles.

¹⁶⁴² The *orsi* was a beam or thin horizontal pole often used for drying or hanging different objects. Some *tupa* rooms had several *orsi*.

¹⁶⁴³ *Kun tullaan tuon piholla, / nostan sukseni sulahe, / panen piikkini pinoihe, / otimeni orren peähä.* (SKVR I4/1219a: 41–44. Niskajärvi. Karjalainen. n. 114. 1894. Hovatta Teronpoika Lesonen. Brother of Varahvontta Lesoni; born in Venehjärvi).

¹⁶⁴⁴ *Minkäs teille mehtä anto?* (SKVR XII2/6558: 1. Paulaharju 6270. 1917). See also SKVR I4/1227: 4–5.

¹⁶⁴⁵ *Källeröinen* is an affectionate name that refers to the round shape of the bear.

¹⁶⁴⁶ *Meton meille mehtä anto, / ilveksen metän isäntä, / metän piijan pikkaraisen, / mesikämmen källeröisen* (SKVR XII/6558: 2–5).

¹⁶⁴⁷ *Terve täältä tän[ne] J[uma]lla, / näiltä p[ieniltä] pihoilta, / k[apehilta] kartan[oilta]! / Tervet, ohto, tultuosi, / mesi kämēn, käytyösi!* (SKVR I4/1253: 1–5. Lonkka. Lönnrot A II 5, n. 32. 1834).

The Viena Karelian hunters used the last two lines to welcome the bear into their male group when they left from the den.¹⁶⁴⁸ The first line contains a rarity. This is one of the few songs where the bear seems to be called God (*Jumala*), a term used not only for the Christian deity but also for other folk supernatural agents, such as Ukko or the forest spirits.¹⁶⁴⁹ However, the line “Welcome, God, from there to here” was also a formula to consecrate a location as a ritual place blessed by God or a supernatural agent.

In Kivijärvi, the mistress welcomed the bear as a groom:

For that I waited for all my life,
I wanted for my lifetime
the play of the sacred Tapio,
the sound of the pipe of the sacred servant.¹⁶⁵⁰

The last two lines followed the *topoi* of the *Bear Songs*: when the forest gave prey, the spirits started to play music and instruments.¹⁶⁵¹ The bear hunter Jeremias Seppänen remembered that almost the same motif was sung by the women of Ruhtinasalmi.¹⁶⁵² The first two lines, which were common in the Viena Karelian epic songs, remind of the wedding songs for the arrival of the bride or groom.¹⁶⁵³ The mistress waited for the bear as long as a bride or future mother-in-law waited for the groom. Tarkka notes that the motif was present in some epic songs referring to weddings.¹⁶⁵⁴ For example, Jyrki Malinen sang that the mother of Joukahainen was extremely happy that the old hero Väinämöinen would become her future son-in-law: “The mother answered: ‘That I waited for all my life, / Väinämöinen as my son-in-law, / a singer as my brother-in-law, / a great man for my family.’”¹⁶⁵⁵ The bear was welcomed as it were a heroic and highly respected groom or future son-in-law.

¹⁶⁴⁸ SKVR I4/1203: 8–11; 1226: 1–3.

¹⁶⁴⁹ See SKVR I4/1095: 83–84.

¹⁶⁵⁰ *Tuota vuotin tuon ikäni, / puhki polveni halusin: / soittuo pyhän tapivon, / pyhän piijan pil’l’in iäntä.* (SKVR I4/1220b: 5–8. Kivijärvi. Marttinen. n. 913. 10. Maura Marttiini).

¹⁶⁵¹ See Section 6.9.

¹⁶⁵² SKVR XII2/6554:44–49.

¹⁶⁵³ SKVR I3/1669: 1–4.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Tarkka 1998: 115.

¹⁶⁵⁵ *Tuota toivoin tuon ikäni, / vävükseni Väinämöistä, / laulajoa lankokseni, / suvukseni miestä suurta.* (SKVR I1/186: 87–91. Vuonninen. Borenus I, n. 73. 1871. Jyrki Malinen).

In Viena Karelia, the bear was portrayed as a son-in-law or groom awaited by the mistress or other women.¹⁶⁵⁶ In Vuonninen, the wives welcomed the bear as a groom:

So I waited for you,
as a maiden for a young man,
the red-cheeked one for a spouse,
or the ski for new snow.¹⁶⁵⁷

Similar lines were sung by Liisa Juntunen from Röntylä.¹⁶⁵⁸ In Latvajärvi, Maura Marttini sang:

I sat all the evenings by the window,
I stayed awake at the edge of the huts,
I stood so long that the swamps melted,
the swamp melted, the ground melted,
the ground melted into gravel.¹⁶⁵⁹

Marttini here describes a hyperbole of what happened in the natural environment around her during the lengthy wait for the bear: winter changed to spring. A similar motif was present in some songs performed during the hunt. Varahvontta Lesoñi from Venehjärvi sang that he waited for the bear until the ice melted under his feet and he walked until his shoes were broken.¹⁶⁶⁰ In Vuokkiniemi, the mistress ended the welcoming song by asking God to send in the future another bruin to “my family.”¹⁶⁶¹

8.2 The feast presented as a wedding of the bear

The welcome songs referring to the bear as a groom or son-in-law are particularly interesting because in one of the oldest documents about Finnish bear ceremonialism,

¹⁶⁵⁶ Tarkka 1998: 115.

¹⁶⁵⁷ *Niimpä mie sinuo vuotin, / niinkuin neiti nuorta miestä, / puna-poski puolisuo, / eli suksi uutta lunta* (SKVR I4/1241: 21–24. Vuoninen. Borenius. II, n. 109. 1872. Jyrki Malinen).

¹⁶⁵⁸ SKVR XII/2 6531: 1–3. Suomussalmi. Krohn 0440. Röntylä. Learned from the father.

¹⁶⁵⁹ *Illat issuin ikkunasšā, / valvatin vajojen päissä, / seisoin kaikki šuot šulaksī, / šuot šulaksī, muat šulaksī, / šulat muat šömerikoksī* (SKVR I4/ 1220b: 9–13. Latvajärvi. Marttini n. 1018. 1911. Maura Marttini).

¹⁶⁶⁰ SKVR I4/1235: 8–9; learned from the father Tero, a good hunter and singer.

¹⁶⁶¹ SKVR I4/1229. Vuokkiniemi, Lönnrot R, n. 586. 1837.

the *Text of Viitasaari* (circa 1750), the whole bear feast was called “The wedding of the bear” and it included a staged wedding:

When the bear had been successfully killed and flayed in the forest, and also the flesh with skin was fetched back home to the settlement, a day was settled upon when the so-called *Couvon pääliset* or *hää*¹⁶⁶² would be celebrated. For this important celebration, some barley was gathered to brew beer and spirits. When the arranged day arrived, people gathered in church clothes at some house. Here a boy was chosen in honor of the bear as a bridegroom and following the custom of the land a girl clad in bridal costume was chosen as bride.¹⁶⁶³

Pentikäinen states that the word *Couvo* (*kouvo*) refers to the bear and the etymology of the word seems to be related to concepts like ‘a deceased person,’ ‘ancestor of the family,’ or ‘forefather.’¹⁶⁶⁴

The presence of the bridal couple is particularly fascinating, but the *Text of Viitasaari* has very little information about it: the source mentions only that the couple had a place of honor at the banquet and during the procession of the bear skull. The relationship between the bear and the couple remains uncertain. It seems that in *Viitasaari* the people performed a staged wedding between two young people. The bear thus seems to have been a guest of honor at a wedding between two inhabitants of the village, but the bear itself was not married to a young bride or groom. The source specifically mentions a bridal couple, not just a bride or a groom who is married with the bear. Even so, the whole event was called the “Wedding of the bear”¹⁶⁶⁵ by the unknown writer.

According to Kaarle Krohn, it was possible that only one girl was chosen as the bride of the bear if the bear was a male, or that only one boy was chosen as the groom

¹⁶⁶² The wedding of Couvo.

¹⁶⁶³ *Sedan biörn blifwit lyckel, slagen och flädd i skogen, hemtades tillika med huden Kiöttet hem til bys, och utnämndes en wiss dag, när de, så kallade Couvon pää-liset, eller Häät skulle siras. Til detta hederwärda gelag sammanskiöts något spanmå l at redas til öhl och brännwin. Då den bestämde dagen kommit, harfolket som tilförene klädt sig i deras Kyrko Kläder samlat sig på et hemman; och där förordnades den felndne biörn til äreminnen, en gässe til brudgumme, och en flicka til brud [hwil]ken varit klädd efter landsens sed i brudaskrud. (SKVR IX4/1096). [...] Cited in Pentikäinen 2014: 424. English Translation by Clive Tolley. Cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 74.*

¹⁶⁶⁴ Pentikäinen 2014: 424.

¹⁶⁶⁵ *Couvon hää*.

if the bear was female.¹⁶⁶⁶ But the scholar does not furnish any sources or references for this information, so it is unclear if this is a hypothesis based on some sources or mere speculation. Krohn added that the bride was supposed to be 15 or 16 years old and absolutely pure.¹⁶⁶⁷

However, the bridal couple was almost never mentioned in the sources of the 19th century or 20th century. Was the presence of the bridal couple in Viitasaari a local tradition, restricted to certain villages or areas? Or was it a common tradition that disappeared before the 19th century?

The only reference to the presence of a bear bride in a 19th-century bear feast was collected before 1894 in the parish of Kangasniemi: "In the village of Makkola was celebrated the bear wedding, where there was the Elk-mistress and Eva the Bride, when the head was brought on the pine."¹⁶⁶⁸ The text is quite obscure, but it seems that a woman called Eva was chosen as the bear's bride at the wedding.¹⁶⁶⁹ Also present was a mysterious "Elk-mistress," who is never mentioned in other sources. However, the wedding did not end very well: "This Eva, the bride, got an injury,¹⁶⁷⁰ and from that point on she started farting."¹⁶⁷¹ This grotesque version contained a warning that marrying a bear was polluting for women and it would be better not to be involved in such things. Here the old tradition of the bear wedding was condemned or ridiculed. Perhaps the cattle-breeding tradition, in which women as protectors of cattle should avoid contacts with bears, marginalized and displaced an older hunting tradition, which included the ritual representation of a wedding between a bear and a maiden.

However, even if we do not have other sources about the presence of a bridal couple or a bride, in some North and Viena Karelian *Bear Songs* of the 19th century, the singers referred to the bear feast as a wedding of the bear. The singer and *tietäjä* Juhana Kainulainen from Villala (Kesälahti) invited the forest masters to the feast by singing:

Honeyed matron of Mehtola,
golden king of the forest,

¹⁶⁶⁶ Krohn [1915] 2008: 148.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Krohn [1915] 2008: 149.

¹⁶⁶⁸ *Makkolan kylässä pidettiin karhun häitä, jossa oli Hirvi-emäntä ja Eva Morsian kuin päätä honkaan vietiin* (SKVR VI2/4897. Kangasniemi. Laitinen, H. n. 236. Before 1894). Cited in Siikala: 2014: 318.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 149.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Or "developed a condition."

¹⁶⁷¹ *Siitä morsian Eva sai sen vamman, että rupesi siitä paivin p-remään* (SKVR VI2/4897. Kangasniemi. Laitinen, H. n. 236. Before 1894).

come now to the wedding of your ox,
to the feast of your long wool.¹⁶⁷²

The feast was presented to the forest spirits as the wedding of an ox, for the bear was often mentioned as the cattle of the forest spirits. Toarie Sirkeiñi from Tetriniemi sang by inviting the honeyed maiden of Metsola to the feast: “Come to the feasts of your maid, / Come to the weddings of your ox, / the wool head’s wedding!”¹⁶⁷³ In this song, the bear is both female (maid, like a female forest spirit) and male (ox).

Even if the tradition of the bear couple or bride disappeared or was no longer present, in the *Bear Songs* there are several references to wedding songs and rituals:¹⁶⁷⁴ the bruin was often described with names or lines referring to a bride or groom. These references reveal that the wedding was a way to humanize and personalize the bear and make it a member of the village community. However, the bear was a bride or groom only during the feast. Otherwise the bruin’s identity was mimetic, as the bear did not become completely human, and its soul was supposed to return to the forest. The bear also maintained a potentially dangerous part of its alterity when it entered the village.¹⁶⁷⁵

8.3 Protection of cattle and women

After the welcoming songs, the hunters brought the bear skin into the cabin and, more specifically, into the *tupa*: a living room with a kitchen, a masonry or brick oven, and a table. In Finland and Karelia, the *tupa* was the center of all the indoor activities engaged in by the members of the family. In Eastern Finland, it was also a bedroom.¹⁶⁷⁶ The bear’s entrance there was a very delicate situation, as an otherworldly visitor from the forest was entering at that moment into the innermost part of the household.

¹⁶⁷² *Mehtolan metinen muori, / metän kultanen kuningas, / tule nyt häihin härköisiis, / pitkän villaisi pitohon!* (SKVR VII5/3390. Kesälahti. Lönnrot S, n. 169. 1828. Villala. Humuvaara. Juhana Kainulainen).

¹⁶⁷³ *Tule piikasi pitoihin, / tule häihen häkkösesi, / villapään vihkiäisiin!* (SKVR I4/1201: 11–13. Tetriniemi. Meriläinen. 2065. 1889. Toarie Sirkeiñi).

¹⁶⁷⁴ Ilomäki 1994: 245–246; Ilomäki 1998; Sarmela 1978.

¹⁶⁷⁵ See Sections 3.14, 10.2.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Räsänen M. and Räsänen R. 2008: 335.

Jeremie Malinen from Vuonninen asked to open the doors of the cabin and the *tupa*: “Let the doors be opened, / let the gates be turned.”¹⁶⁷⁷ In Nurmes, the hunter asked a curious rhetorical question of the people to let the bear enter the cabin: “Could *ohto* enter the cabin / without removing the ceiling beams, / without raising the casing, / without lowering the threshold?”¹⁶⁷⁸ A similar question was asked in the wedding rituals when the groom arrived.¹⁶⁷⁹

Antti Huttunen from Iisalmi sang the following hunter’s order: “Let the casing be raised!”¹⁶⁸⁰ and “Let the threshold be lowered!”¹⁶⁸¹ Moilanen from Pesiö sang the same motif.¹⁶⁸² The impossible enlargement of the doors emphasized the huge dimensions and the social relevance of the guest, the bear.¹⁶⁸³

In a similar way, during the bear hunt, the hunters requested the forest spirits to modify the hunting ground, to flatten the hills and upraise the hollows, to make their travel easier.¹⁶⁸⁴

In both the cases, the hunter sang about a magic manipulation of the environment that emphasized that the guests were welcome. The motif resembles the protective incantations: the hunter raised and lowered a magic iron fence to stop the teeth of the bear or the weapons of envious people and sorcerers.¹⁶⁸⁵ At this time it was necessary to enlarge the door to let the bruin in, and the being of the otherworldly forest was made welcome to enter. The song to open the gates by Antti Huttunen was hyperbolic and dramatic:

Let the doors be opened,
the hatches be ripped

¹⁶⁷⁷ *Ovuot avautukkohot, / veräjäiset vierykköhöt* (SKVR I4/1249: 35–38. Vuonninen. Paulaharju n. 6031. 7/7 1915. Jeremie Malinen).

¹⁶⁷⁸ *Sopineepo[!] ohto pirttiin, / pihtipuolen päästämätä, / kamanan korottamata, / kynnyksen alentamata?* (SKVR VII5/3399. Nurmes. Lönnrot A II 3, n. 5–6. 1832). Cited in Ilomaki 1994: 246).

¹⁶⁷⁹ SKVR VI2/3012; cited in Ilomaki 1994: 246.

¹⁶⁸⁰ *Kamanat ylettäköhön* (SKVR VI2/4916: 5. Böök, D. n. 6. 1876. Iisalmi. Antti Huttunen).

¹⁶⁸¹ *Kynnykset alettakohon* (SKVR VI2/4916: 7. Böök, D. n. 6. 1876. Iisalmi. Antti Huttunen).

¹⁶⁸² SKVR XII2/6559. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6271. 1917. Pesiö. Moilanen, The old man of Kylänmäki, 82-year-old man.

¹⁶⁸³ The entrance of the bear in the human dwelling was a delicate matter in other bear ceremonials, too. Among the Mansi, the bruin entered through a smoke hole, hatch or small window, like the human corpse in funerals (Sirelius 1929: 197–198).

¹⁶⁸⁴ See Section 6.9.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Räsänen M. and Räsänen R. 2008: 335.

from seven hinges,
from nine doors.¹⁶⁸⁶

In Viena Karelia and in Finland, the boys and girls were generally exhorted by the bear killer to stay away from the doors when the bear was brought inside: “Go away, boys, from the porch, / maids, from the doorjamb, / when *oh*to is entering the *tupa*!”¹⁶⁸⁷ Because the bear was considered an older male guest of honor, the young members of the village were expected to show their respect, leaving free the places around the door. The elders represented authority, so young people were supposed to give them precedence on the road and at the door.¹⁶⁸⁸

Juha Kemppainen from Ristijärvi stressed that the *tupa* was first and foremost a place for adult males: “the *tupa* is made for men to come in, / the stable for horses to stand in.”¹⁶⁸⁹ The bear was considered “a man among men” and an adult, manly guest. It seems that the moment when the bear entered the cabin was particularly delicate and dangerous for women. In Viena Karelia, for example, the women had to turn their backs to the door when it was brought in.¹⁶⁹⁰ In everyday situations, too, doorways were considered to be magically dangerous, and Karelian women avoided standing or sitting there.¹⁶⁹¹ In Viena Karelia, the pregnant woman would not sit on a threshold, lest her child became “evil-blooded” or envious.¹⁶⁹²

These ritual precautions had some counterparts in the bear ceremonials of northern peoples. Sámi women ate their share of bear meat in separate tents and considered the entrance of the killed bear and hunters into their tents to be dangerous for them: they protected themselves by watching the hunters with the bear through a brass ring and sprinkling chewed alder-tree bark on the hunters and on the bear meat.¹⁶⁹³ In Finland and Karelia, alder was used to neutralize the potential illness that could result from

¹⁶⁸⁶ *Ovet avasta /kohon, / reppänät revästäköhön, / saranalta seihtemältä, / ukselta yheksiseltä* (SKVR VI2/4916. Iisalmi. Böök, D. n. 6. 1876. Antti Huttunen).

¹⁶⁸⁷ *Pois, pojat, porstuosta, / piijat, piht'ipuol'isesä, / ohon tullesä tupah!* (SKVR I4/1220a: 6–7. Kivijärvi. Marttinen n. 913. 1910. Maura Marttiini).

¹⁶⁸⁸ Siikala 2016: 101–102.

¹⁶⁸⁹ *Tupa on tehty miesten tulla, / Talli seisoa hevosten* (SKVR XII2/6544: 11–12. Ristijärvi. Krohn 0271. 1882. Kemppaala).

¹⁶⁹⁰ Tarkka 2013: 354.

¹⁶⁹¹ Stark 1998: 41, Heikkinen 1990: 39.

¹⁶⁹² SKS KRA Samuli Paulaharhu 18771. 1932. Anni Lehtonen; cited in Stark 1998: 56.

¹⁶⁹³ Laestadius [1838–1845] 1997: 186.

eating bear meat.¹⁶⁹⁴ Among the Sámi, brass had the same power as the alder, so the women dropped their first piece of bear meat through a brass ring before eating it.

In Finland and Karelia, the boys and girls were supposed to leave from liminal places (e.g., the doorway, porch) when the hunters were carrying the bear inside. The presence of the mistress, a mature and authoritative woman, was allowed in the cabin and the *tupa* during the feast; she continued her singing dialogue, as she represented the household and its ownership.¹⁶⁹⁵ Some women ate bear meat, too, in the same cabin and *tupa*.¹⁶⁹⁶

However, the women also needed to protect the cattle or their genitals when the bear passed across the thresholds. Hovatta Lesoñi from Niskajärvi sang to the women:

Beware now, poor wives,
that the cattle won't vanish,
that the grain of the mistress¹⁶⁹⁷ won't disappear,
when *oh*to is coming into the *tupa*.¹⁶⁹⁸

The same motif has been collected in Lonkka, Latvajärvi and Koljola (Pistojärvi).¹⁶⁹⁹ A dead bear was considered to be as dangerous as a living one, and the hunters exhorted the bruin to stay away from the cattle. Aukusti Väisänen from Sotkamo sang to it:

Lands in common, foods apart!
When you hear the bell of the cattle,
the jiggling bell of the horse,
lay down on a tussock;
to sleep on the grass,
put your two palms
on two sides of your face

¹⁶⁹⁴ See Section 8.14.

¹⁶⁹⁵ See Section 3.4.

¹⁶⁹⁶ See Section 8.15.

¹⁶⁹⁷ The cattle.

¹⁶⁹⁸ *Varokaatte nyt, raukat vaimot, / ett'ei karja kaipastuisi, / viipastuisi emännän viljat, / ohon tullessa tupahan* (SKVR I4/1219b: 32–35. Niskajärvi. Paulaharju. n. 6035. 1915. Hovatta Lesoñi).

¹⁶⁹⁹ SKVR I4/1225: 4–8; 1248: 41–44; 1253: 55–58; I4/1266a: 1–4.

so that you will not hear the rumble,
the thumping of the cattle's hoof!¹⁷⁰⁰

The cattle herders sang similar motifs when the herd left for the summer pastures in the woods.¹⁷⁰¹ The appearance of the bear corpse in the yard was considered a potential danger for the cattle, as the people feared a bear attack as a revenge for the bruin's kill.

In Viena Karelia, when the bear entered the women's sphere at the beginning of the bear feast, normal respect could become anger: the women "cursed and clutched the bear."¹⁷⁰² In this contest, the women acted as protectors of cattle and answered the potential menace with a set of protective spells to make the bear harmless and to safeguard the cattle.¹⁷⁰³

For example, Maura Marttiini from Kivijärvi sang to the bear the same misleading story about its death that was sung by the hunters,¹⁷⁰⁴ and afterwards she added a typical protective spell to make the bear innocuous: "Woolly is your mouth, / woolly is your head, / woolly are your five teeth, / woolly is the creature itself."¹⁷⁰⁵ The women knew the songs sung by the men in the forest and they could repeat key parts in the village to protect the cattle.

Sometimes the hunters exhorted their wives to also guard their genitals, belly or uterus when the bear entered the village. Lukkañi Huotari from Ponkalaksi sang about the risk of a bear's sexual assault:

Beware, you poor wives,
when I move my golden one
so that the hair¹⁷⁰⁶ won't vanish,

¹⁷⁰⁰ *Yhet maat, eri evähät! / Kuin sa kuulet karjan kellon, / hilkkavan hevosen k[ellon], / mene maata mättähälle, / nurmelle nukahtamahan! / Pane kaksi kämmentäsi / kahen puolen kasvostasi, / ettet kuulisi kumua, / karjan kynnen kapsutusta!* (SKVR XII2/6469: 25–33. Sotkamo. Krohn K 040. 1882. Nissilä. Aukusti Väisänen, 52-year-old male).

¹⁷⁰¹ See SKVR I4/1362: 42–46.

¹⁷⁰² MV: KTKKA Marttinen 1912: 965, p. 10–12, cited in Tarkka 1998: 119.

¹⁷⁰³ Tarkka 1998: 119.

¹⁷⁰⁴ See Section 7.6.

¹⁷⁰⁵ *Vil' oin süusi, vil' oin piäsi, / vil' oin viisi hammasšasi, / vil' oin otus' iteki!* (SKVR I4/1220b: 29–31. Kivijärvi. Marttini n. 913. 1910. Maura Marttiini); see Sections 5.9 and 7.4.

¹⁷⁰⁶ This could refer to the pubic hair or the cattle.

the mistress' wool¹⁷⁰⁷ won't fail
when *oh*to is coming to the fireplaces,
the honeyed dick¹⁷⁰⁸ to the estate.¹⁷⁰⁹

In the forest, a woman could expose her sex to embarrass and startle a bear.¹⁷¹⁰ But when the bruin itself entered in the village, it could be sexually aggressive. According to Tarkka, in Huotari's song the arrival of the bear in the household could be described as including a potential danger of sexual penetration.¹⁷¹¹

In Karelia and Finland, an intimate relationship existed between the cattle, femininity and female sexuality.¹⁷¹² Both cattle and hunters could be protected from bears by the force of the women's genitalia.¹⁷¹³ In Huotari's song, the circumlocutions 'mistress's wool' and 'hair' could signify both 'vagina' and 'cattle.' What made clear that the bear had aggressive sexual intentions is the fact that the singer called it "honeyed dick."

The motif suggests the presence of a connection between the bear attack on the cattle and sexual harassment. In Karelia, the topic was present in other genres. In Vuokkiniemi's song *The Bartered Maiden*, a bear attacking the cattle of a young maiden in the forest during the grazing season is called *yrjä* ('groom'). According to the translation and interpretation by Tarkka, the song suggests that the biggest dangers for a girl herding cattle in the forest were bears or harassing men.¹⁷¹⁴ In Lukkañi Huotari's *Bear Song*, the bear and the molesting "groom" became interrelated and interchangeable.¹⁷¹⁵

However, the deep connection between women and cattle could be present in *Bear Songs* without evident sexual allusions. In Kestilä, the hunter simply exhorted the bruin to avoid the women's way, the steps of the "ones always walking" and the alleys

¹⁷⁰⁷ According to Tarkka (1998: 122) in this particular line the word *vil'l'a* could be understood as *vilja* ('cattle') or *villa* ('wool,' signifying pubic hair or cattle).

¹⁷⁰⁸ *Kalu* means 'tool' and 'dick' or 'prick' (penis).

¹⁷⁰⁹ *Varokate vaimo raukat, / kuin ma kultañi kuletan, / jott' ei karva kaipastuise, / epeä emännän vil'l'a, / ohon tullessa tulilla, / kartanoh kalun met'isen* (SKVR I4/1206c: 9–14. Ponkalaksi. Borenius. III, n. 93. 1877. Lukkañi Huotari).

¹⁷¹⁰ See Section 4.9.

¹⁷¹¹ Tarkka 1998: 122.

¹⁷¹² Tarkka 1998: 122; see Section 4.9.

¹⁷¹³ See Section 4.9.

¹⁷¹⁴ SKVR I2/1151: 1–9; cited in Tarkka 2013: 364.

¹⁷¹⁵ Tarkka 2013: 365.

of the “piss-legs,” a derogatory term that could signify both cows and the women taking care of them.¹⁷¹⁶ In the spells against envious people, the term “piss-legs” was used to define dangerous witches.¹⁷¹⁷ The derogatory expression was surely used to make both the cattle and the women less appealing for the bear. In Muujärvi, the motif appeared in an incantation to drive the bear away from pastures during the grazing season.¹⁷¹⁸

Matti Karjalainen from Lonkka called upon the wives to watch out for their “womb” when the bear entered the cabin:

Guard, poor wives,
protect your wombs
when *Ohto* comes to the fireplaces
the furry muzzle forces his way!¹⁷¹⁹

The advice was probably intended to protect against the menace of a bear’s sexual assault, but a different explanation is also possible. Anni Lehtonen from Vuonninen explained:

...when the bear was brought into the cabin, a pregnant woman should not even be in the room. It is not so contagious¹⁷²⁰ to other women, only to pregnant ones.¹⁷²¹

A forest infection coming from the meat or fur of the bear could be particularly contagious for pregnant women. Tarkka stresses that in Viena Karelia, the bear was dangerous for child-bearing women, and a pregnant woman was more susceptible to being infected by the bear’s force.¹⁷²² In Viena Karelia, a pregnant woman walking in

¹⁷¹⁶ SKVR XII2/6474: 5–10. Kestilä. Krohn 1259. 1884. Pihkalanranta.

¹⁷¹⁷ SKVR I4/668: 6; II/917: 6; VI2/5398: 2; VII3/112: 6, VII4/1617: 18; VII4/2124: 5; VII5/3971: 2; XII2/5426: 4.

¹⁷¹⁸ SKVR II/996 Muujärvi. Meriläinen n. 2148. 1889. Iro Nesterine, 76-year-old man; learned from the father.

¹⁷¹⁹ *Varuotos, vaimo raukat, / kokuotos kohtuon, / Ohon tullessa tulille, / karvaturvan tungetessa!* (SKVR I4/1254: 22–25. Lonkka. Rautell n. 964.1892. Matti Karjalainen).

¹⁷²⁰ Or “the bear does not seize, grip, attack.”

¹⁷²¹ *Kun karhua tuuvoh pirttih, niin ei pie olla paksun naisen huonehessakaan. Ei muihin naisih niin tartu, kuin paksuh* (SKS KRA Samuli ja Jenny Paulaharju 18553. 1932. Vuonninen. Anni Lehtonen, born in 1868. Notes done in 1916).

¹⁷²² Tarkka 2013: 354.

the forest also could lose her unborn male children to the bear if it identified the fetus as a potential hunter.¹⁷²³ During a wedding in the village, when the forces of forest and water were considered “on the move,” pregnant women were not supposed to go to the forest.¹⁷²⁴ Anni Lehtonen sang a variation of the advice sung by the hunters, in which the wives were exhorted to guard their wombs when a hunter lifted his skis to dry.¹⁷²⁵ Maybe the hunter coming from the forest carried the dangerous “forest force” with him or on his skis. With this line, wives were possibly warned to be very careful to avoid the possible sexual harassment of the hunters entering into their homes.

8.4 The cleaning of the cabin and preparation of ale

Before entering the *tupa*, the hunters stopped on the threshold or on the porch and asked a set of questions, while a mistress, the wives, the master, other men in the room or a *tietäj* answered positively, repeating more or less the same lines.

In Nurmes, the hunter started by asking: “Are there men in the room?”¹⁷²⁶ The people answered: “The masters are all at the end of the table.”¹⁷²⁷ When the hunter asked about the presence of women, the answer was: “The women are all in the *karsina*.”¹⁷²⁸ In Eastern Finland, the *karsina* was the corner near the oven where the women did their everyday work.¹⁷²⁹

The dialogue described in detail all of the parts of the cabin or household and revealed the gendered division of spaces and activities. Maura Marttini from Kivijärvi sang some men’s lines, in which they asked the wives: “Have the maids washed the cabins, / have they swept the floors with water, / for the upcoming guest?”¹⁷³⁰ The mistress responded affirmatively,¹⁷³¹ emphasizing that she was in charge of the household before and during the feast. The fact that the place had been cleaned was a sign of hospitality.

¹⁷²³ Tarkka 2013: 354, Virtaranta 1958: 309, 322, Paulaharju 1995 (1924): 29.

¹⁷²⁴ Tarkka 2013: 354; SKS KRA Paulaharju 1911: 4945: 55–57.

¹⁷²⁵ SKVR I4/1247: 19–23. Vuonninen. Paulaharju 4371 a. 1911. Aríri Lehtoíi.

¹⁷²⁶ *Onko miehi* tuvassa? (SKVR VII5/3402: 1. Nurmes. Ollilainen, P. n. 15. 1889). Sivakkavaara. Matti Lipponen, 77-year-old male).

¹⁷²⁷ *Isännät on kaikki pöyön peässä* (SKVR VII5/3402: 1).

¹⁷²⁸ *Naiset on kaikki karsinassa* (SKVR VII5/3402: 19).

¹⁷²⁹ Räsänen M. and Räsänen R. 2008: 336.

¹⁷³⁰ *Onko piijat pirtit pesy, / lattiet vesin lakaistu, / tulovalla vierahalla?* (SKVR I4/1220a: 8–11).

¹⁷³¹ SKVR I4: 1220b: 17–19.

Jeremie Malinen from Vuonninen reassured the bear: "There you will not be treated badly, / there you have been treated well, / the porches have been already washed well."¹⁷³²

The role of the women cleaning cabins or the village was a vital feature of many bear ceremonials.¹⁷³³ Tanner stressed that among the Mistassini Cree, the women were supposed to keep the camp clean during the bear hunt, "since it was believed that the animal will not allow to be caught otherwise."¹⁷³⁴

In Vuonninen, the hunter asked about the preparation of the drinks:

Where do the givers dwell,
the wives, the mistresses, live?
Are the spirits made for a week,
the barley ales, for a long time?
Are the tables laid here yet?¹⁷³⁵

It is worth mentioning that here the wives were called "givers," as they prepared the drinks. "Givers" was also one of the many names or attributes of the female forest spirits and mistresses who "gave" the hunters their quarry and bears.¹⁷³⁶ "Milk givers"¹⁷³⁷ was one of the most common circumlocutions for cattle, which was often connected with femininity, as the cow offered a beverage with nutritive and cultural values.

In Vuonninen, the wife at first welcomed the bear inside: "Welcome, *ohto*, upon your arrival, / honey paw, as you came by."¹⁷³⁸ After that, she answered that the ale was prepared "for a week,"¹⁷³⁹ and that she had waited at the window for the music of the

¹⁷³² *Ei siellä pahoin pietä, / siivoin on siellä piety: / jo on pesty siivoin sintset* (SKVR I4/1249. Vuonninen. Paulaharju. n. 6031. 1915. Jeremie Malinen ("Pissonsuu Jeremie").

¹⁷³³ Ob-Ugrian mistresses purified the yurt or house by fumigating it (Sirelius 1929: 197).

¹⁷³⁴ Tanner 1979: 146.

¹⁷³⁵ *Missä nyt antajat asuvi, / elävi emäntä vaimot? / Onko tehty viikon viinat, / kauvon ostraset oluot? / Joko on teälä pantu pöyväät?* (SKVR I4/1249: 54–58. Vuonninen Paulaharju n. 6031. 1915. Jeremie Malinen).

¹⁷³⁶ SKVR I4/1116: 4, XII2/ 6484: 8, XII2/6485: 8, XII2/6606a: 27; VII5/3234: 15; VII5/3325: 16; VII5/3405: 6; VII5/3502: 27; VII5/3600: 5.

¹⁷³⁷ *Maijon antajat* in SKVR XII2: 6770: 3.

¹⁷³⁸ *Terve, ohto, tultuosi, / mesikämmen, käytyösi!* (SKVR I4/1249: 60–61).

¹⁷³⁹ SKVR I4/1249: 62–64.

forest mistress.¹⁷⁴⁰ She emphasized that the feast was neither improvised nor occasional; instead, it was organized with care and attention and the bear was a guest impatiently waited for in the house. Offering and the sharing of ale and spirits were a symbol of hospitality.

In Viena Karelia, the motifs of the ale “prepared for a week” and the cleaning of the house were very common in wedding songs.¹⁷⁴¹ The bear feast was well organized, like a wedding.

During the long “dialogue on the porch” sung by Jeremie Malinen, the wife asked the bear if it had been shot. A singer performing the role of the bruin answered: “I fell from the pine sprig, / tumbled from the crooked alder, / in front of the searching men.”¹⁷⁴² This variation is one of the very few cases in which the singer impersonated the bear,¹⁷⁴³ as usually the guest remained silent. The bruin thus confirmed the version which had been sung by the hunters to exonerate themselves,¹⁷⁴⁴ proving that it was not angry and that the party and feast could start.

8.5 Approaching the place of honor

After the dialogue on the threshold, the hunters from Iisalmi described the entrance in the room as a slow and dramatic passage: “I step on with a leg, / I step on with another, / on the top of the small pine, / under the famous ridge beam.”¹⁷⁴⁵

In Lonkka, the hunter welcomed the bear into a “forest” room whose description reminded of its den:¹⁷⁴⁶ “Come here, God, / into a pine room, / into a pine den.”¹⁷⁴⁷ This is one of the few songs in which the bear was called by the name God,¹⁷⁴⁸ which was sometimes used for the forest master. Anni Lehtonen told that in Vuonninen, this room was fashioned as a kind of “forest” house:

¹⁷⁴⁰ SKVR I4/1249: 65–69.

¹⁷⁴¹ SKVR I3/1552: 24–36; I3/1540: 10–15; I3/1547: 8–13; I3/1550: 5–6.

¹⁷⁴² *Itse hairahin havolta, / lepän lenkolta putosin, / miehen etsijän etehen.* (SKVR I4/1249: 85–87).

¹⁷⁴³ See other variations in Section 6.12.

¹⁷⁴⁴ See Section 7.6.

¹⁷⁴⁵ *Astun jalan, astun toisen, / päälle pienatun petäjän, / alle kuulun kurkihirren* (SKVR VI2/4916: 16–18 Iisalmi. Böök, D. n. 6. 1876. Antti Huttunen).

¹⁷⁴⁶ See Section 7.2.

¹⁷⁴⁷ *Terve tänne[kin],][uma]la, / honkasehen huonehesen, / petäjäisehen pesähän* (SKVR I4/1253. Lonkka. Lönnrot. A II 5, n. 32. 34); see also SKVR I4 1231: 82–83. Venehjärvi. Fellman n. 43. 1829?).

¹⁷⁴⁸ Jumala.

First you put sprigs in every corner, the men put [them], and only then do you bring [the bear] in. One must not look towards the door, one has to turn his back to the door.¹⁷⁴⁹

In Vuonninen, the prohibition against watching the bear entering the room appears to have applied to both sexes. Such sprigs were used in human funerals, too, where they were put on the coffin. The bear feast thus shared analogies with funerals, and in Mäntyharju the bear feast could even be called “bear funeral.”¹⁷⁵⁰

After the entrance of the bruin, Jeremie Malinen asked himself rhetorical questions about the place of honor reserved for the bear:

Where do I take my guest now?
Where do I carry my famous one?
Will we already leave him
on the perch of the pot?
No, I will not leave him there yet.
At the doorway, under the beam?
No, I will not leave him there yet.
I will take him to the end of the rear bench.¹⁷⁵¹

Jeremie emphasized that he would not give the bear an improper place: “the corner of the pot” was the “place for the wives,” and thus it was unsuitable for a “manly” guest of honor, such as the bruin. The places near the doorway were often considered the worst ones, being magically dangerous, cold and often inhabited by parasites.¹⁷⁵²

The hunter also presented the bear—considered “a stranger in a strange place”—with details about the interior of the household and the social relevance of each place

¹⁷⁴⁹ *Pannah joka nurkkah havuo ensin, miehet panevat sitten vasta tuuvah. Oveh päin ei pie katsuo, pitää olla selin oveh* (SKS KRA Samuli ja Jenny Paulaharju 18553. 1932. Vuonninen. Anni Lehtonen, born in 1868, manuscript 1916).

¹⁷⁵⁰ *Karhunpeijaisia sanoi karhunhautajaisiksi.* (KRA SKS J. Karhu 3286. 1936. Anna Maria Mattila, 70-year-old woman. Mäntyharju, Päistjärvi).

¹⁷⁵¹ *Mihin nyt vienen vierahani, / kuhun kuuluni kuletan? / joko tuohon heittäenmä, / kattilan katsasijalla. / Enpä vielä siihen heitä. / oven suuhun alla orren? / Enpä vielä siihen heitä. / Vien perähän penkin peähän.* (SKVR I4/1249: 46–53 Vuonninen. Paulaharju. n. 6031. 1915. Jeremie Malinen (“Pissonsuun Jeremie”).

¹⁷⁵² Räsänen R. & Räsänen M. 2008: 336.

and corner. In Viena Karelia, the slow entrance of the bear followed a ritual path, which was precisely described by Suolahen Ontippa from Venehjärvi:

The bear fur is brought inside singing; first it is taken into the granary, then to the cabin *by the doorway, under the beam, / on the places where the pot is hung* and then on the rear bench¹⁷⁵³ on the rear corner.¹⁷⁵⁴ We drink spirits and we shake the hand of the bear.¹⁷⁵⁵

In this testimony the informant spoke about friendly handshaking, an important detail in the songs performed before the bear kill.¹⁷⁵⁶ The rear corner¹⁷⁵⁷ was the place reserved for the male head of the family or the most important guests; this place was also at the head of the table.¹⁷⁵⁸ Hovatta Lesonen added some important details:

The fur was brought to the rear bench¹⁷⁵⁹ under the icons. It was rolled on a birchbark knapsack¹⁷⁶⁰ or inside it. It was carried into the yard with a rescue toboggan.^{1761,1762}

In Viena Karelia, the rear corner¹⁷⁶³ was the holiest place of the *tupa* room, as the Orthodox icons were hung there. During the Karelian funerary ceremonies the deceased was carried on the “board of the corpse”¹⁷⁶⁴ under this corner and in front of the icons. The relatives lit some candles, stayed up and watched the corpse for three

¹⁷⁵³ *Peripenkki.*

¹⁷⁵⁴ *Peritsuppu.*

¹⁷⁵⁵ *Sisään tuuvaan karhun talja laulaen, viijään ensi aitaan, sitten pirttiin oven suuhun orren alle, kattilan pitosijoille, sitten peripenkille peritsuppuun. Juuvaan viinaa ja annetaan kättä karhun kämmenelle.* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulaharju 6451. Vuonninen (Venehjärvi) 1917. Suolahen Ontippa).

¹⁷⁵⁶ See Section 7.3.

¹⁷⁵⁷ *Peritsuppu* (or *peränurkka*).

¹⁷⁵⁸ Kemppinen 1978: 228.

¹⁷⁵⁹ *Peripenkki.*

¹⁷⁶⁰ *Kontti.*

¹⁷⁶¹ *Ahkivo* or *ahkio.*

¹⁷⁶² *Nahka vietih peripenkille obrezain alle. Kääryllä se oli kontin peällä tai kontissa. Ahkivoossa myös se vejettih pihah.* (SKS KRA Samuli paulaharju 6453. 1917. Vuonninen (Niskajärvi). Hovatta Lesonen).

¹⁷⁶³ *Peritsuppu.*

¹⁷⁶⁴ *Ruumislauta.*

nights of praying, crying and singing traditional funerary laments. The icons and the relatives thus protected the soul of the dead from the Devil.¹⁷⁶⁵ Putting the bear's fur under the icons, the Karelian folk honored it as a deceased human and—at the same time—as the most revered of the guests of honor.¹⁷⁶⁶

The people continuously promised the bear that he would not be mistreated in any way. Martiska Karjalainie from Lonkka sang to the bruin: “There you will not be treated badly, / we will not give your fur, / to make fancy dresses for the lords, / clothes for powerful men.”¹⁷⁶⁷

In Viena Karelia, the hunter stressed that the place of honor was reserved for the bruin: “We will not put you down badly, / I will put you in a good place,”¹⁷⁶⁸ “on the top of a golden chair,”¹⁷⁶⁹ “on the top of the golden table,”¹⁷⁷⁰ “on the top of an iron stool.”¹⁷⁷¹ The iron stool had a strong mythical aura, because it was mentioned both in the *Births of the Bear* and in the *Births of the Fire*.¹⁷⁷²

The importance of the place of honor at the table and the offering of ale is a central topic in the *Song of Lemminkäinen*. In this epic song, the hero enters the drinking party of the mythical realm of Päivölä (the land of the Sun) without an invitation and requests to sit at the place of honor and taste the ale. The master of Päivölä at first refuses, but then offers Lemminkäinen a poisoned brew full of snakes or frogs. The result is a magic struggle and a duel of swords that ends with the murdering of the hero (in some variants, Lemminkäinen kills the master).¹⁷⁷³ The fact that the arrogant guest came uninvited, as well as the ungenerous reception by the host, transformed the party into a tragedy. The master broke the holy laws of hospitality; by offending the honor of the hero, he provoked a spiral of revenge and violence.¹⁷⁷⁴ At the bear feast, all should be the opposite of that: the hosts remarked that the bruin was a long-

¹⁷⁶⁵ Kemppinen 1978: 266.

¹⁷⁶⁶ The Mansi hunters also put the killed bear below the sacred rear wall of the house, below the sacrificial chests for the master spirits (Kannisto 1907: 346).

¹⁷⁶⁷ *Ei siinä pahoin pietä, / ei anneta karvoisi, / herrojen hetaleiksi, / valtamiehen voatteiksi* (SKVR I4/1251: 43–46. Lonkka. Lönnr. A II 5, n.15. 34. Martiska Karjalainie).

¹⁷⁶⁸ *Ei sua pahoin panna, / pannaan paikkah[an] hyvään* (SKVR I4/1228: 19–20. Tsena. Lönnrot R, n. 574. 1837).

¹⁷⁶⁹ *Tuolin kult[aisen] kukulle* (SKVR I4/1251: 42. Lonkka. Lönnrot. A II 5, n.15. 1834. Martiska Karjalainie).

¹⁷⁷⁰ *Pöyän kultasen nokalla* (SKVR I4/1254: 8. Lonkka. Rautell n. 964. 1892. Matti Karjalainie).

¹⁷⁷¹ *Rautasen rahin nenälle* (SKVR I4/1231: 84 Venehjärvi. Fellman n. 43. 1829?).

¹⁷⁷² See Section 5.2.

¹⁷⁷³ Frog 2014a: 386–388.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Frog 2014a: 386–388.

awaited guest, and they offered it the place of honor and ale and spirits, stressing that there was sufficient drink for an entire week. The feast was intended to please the bear, in order to avoid its revenge.

However, there were variations about the place of honor: the *Text of Viitasaari* (circa 1750) reported that it was reserved for the bridal couple involved in a staged wedding:

The people then sat down, and the bridal pair at the end of the table. After the meal the bridal company dined on special dishes.¹⁷⁷⁵

In Lapinniemi, “it was not so important who sat at the end of the table, but it was common that the place of honor was reserved for the best singer.”¹⁷⁷⁶ This information is quite surprising: the best place was not reserved for the killer of the bear, but the best singer. This detail gives a very good idea of how critical the quality of the ritual songs performed during the feast was considered to be.

8.6 The “singing” room of ale

Vasilius Lesonen from Venehjärvi exhorted the bear to sit in its place of honor “to taste the malt-drinks,”¹⁷⁷⁷ namely, to drink ale. The people actually offered some drops of spirits or ale to the bear’s fur.¹⁷⁷⁸ In Heinävesi, spirits were offered before its entrance into the room:

When the bear was carried into the house, beside the field the dead bear was arranged sitting on the sledge and a glass of spirits was put in its hand, as if serving the bear a shot before the bear-killers themselves drank one.¹⁷⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷⁵ *Härefter satt sig folket til bords, men brudgummen och bruden i bordsändan. Efter måltiden sedan bröllopsfolket mättat sig af de besynnerla rätter. [...]* (Original Swedish text: SKVR IX4/1096 cited in Pentikäinen 2014: 426. English Translation by Clive Tolley. Cft. in Pentikäinen 2007: 74).

¹⁷⁷⁶ *Peijaisateria syötiin pirtissä pitkän pöydän ympärillä. Kuka istui pöydän päässä, sillä ei pidetty erityistä väliä, mutta tavallista oli, että kunniapaikka annettiin parhaalle laulajalle.* (SKVR VI2/4926).

¹⁷⁷⁷ *Maltasia maistamahan* (SKVR I4/1231: 90 Venehjärvi. Fellman n. 43. 1829? Vasilius Lesonen).

¹⁷⁷⁸ The Mansi not only offered vodka to the bear, but also food (Kannisto 1939a: 6–7).

¹⁷⁷⁹ *Kun karhu tuotii talloo ni pellov verräälä asetettii kuolluk karhu rekkee istumaa ja asetettii viivalasj karhule kättee ikkäänku tarjottiin karhuler ryyppy ennenku kuatajat ihe ottivat ryyppy* (SKS KRA Tauno Mäkipalo (Mohell) 523. Heinävesi. Heikki Sallinen, 63-year-old male. 1933).

It would be an error to consider the emphasis on alcoholic drinks as something purely trivial. Spirits and ale were symbolically connected to singing, and the best singers refused to start singing if ale was not offered.¹⁷⁸⁰ Ale made the best singers sing and a feast was not a feast without ale. Loasari Lesoñi from Venehjärvi sang that ale transformed the whole room into a merry “singing band”:

I take [you] to my room of the spirits,
I carry [you] to the *tupa* of the ale.
There even the boards sing,
even the windows [are] happy.¹⁷⁸¹

Antti Vartiainen from Kiuruvesi sang a similar motif:

I put [you] on a clean wood,
I lay [you] on a good board;
all the boards [start] to sing,
the windows [start] to rejoice
when the good one had come into the room,
when the old man had stepped in.¹⁷⁸²

The circumlocution “old man” was a way to stress the high status of the bear in a community in which elders represented authority. The feast was not only portrayed as the wedding of the bear, but also like a drinking party full of singing. However, weddings were also marked by an abundance of ale and singing. In Lonkka, the feast was presented as the revels of the forest spirits:

Now there are the feasts of the rowan,
the drinking parties of Tuometar.¹⁷⁸³

¹⁷⁸⁰ Tarkka 2013: 199–200.

¹⁷⁸¹ *Viene[n] viinahuoneheni, / kantane[n] oluen tupahan. / Jopa siellä laulo lautsat, / jopa ikkunat iloiset* (SKVR I4/1233: 110–113 Venehjärvi Berner n. 77. 1872. Loasari Lesoñi).

¹⁷⁸² *Panen puulle puhtaalle, / lasken lauvalen hyvällen: / laudat kaikki laulamaan, / ickunat ilohtemaan, / hyvän tultua tupaan, / astuuta aika miehen* (SKVR VI2/4913: 103–108. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 1819. Antti Vartiainen).

¹⁷⁸³ *Nyt on pihlajan pitoja, / Tuomettaren juominkia* (SKVR I4/1253: 40–41. Lonkka. Lönnrot A II 5, n. 32. 1834).

The bear feast transformed the *tupa* into a mythical place where the boards and the windows sang and forest spirits participated.¹⁷⁸⁴ The songs and rituals continuously emphasized the abundance of drinks, songs, joy, food and fat. A great number of villagers and neighbors were welcomed to the feast to eat and drink.

8.7 Cooking bear meat in the *kota*

When the people had properly welcomed the skin in the room, the preparations for the feast started. The hunters, sometimes the ones who skinned the bear,¹⁷⁸⁵ cooked the bruin's meat in a place outside the house. Juho Eskelinen from Lapinniemi told that the hunters made stew in a big cauldron in a *kota*,¹⁷⁸⁶ a wooden conical hut, which was used to boil water for the sauna, to wash clothes and to make food during big celebrations such as weddings or bear feasts.¹⁷⁸⁷ The cooking place was ritually separated by the *tupa*, the everyday place for cooking, and the cooks were men, not the women.

Antti Varttiainen stressed that the entire bear head should be put into the cauldron.¹⁷⁸⁸ The hunter cooked stew with the bear meat and peas or beans. The "bear-stew"¹⁷⁸⁹ was a dish resembling the "soup of the corpse"¹⁷⁹⁰ cooked at feasts at human funerals, containing peas or preferably beans, if they were available.¹⁷⁹¹

Antti Varttiainen from Kiuruvesi described the short travel of the raw bear meat towards the *kota* as a return to the forest world: "we go to the fire of the black woodpecker, / to the campfire of the beak-bird."¹⁷⁹² Rikkos-Jussi from Piipola described

¹⁷⁸⁴ Among the Mansi, too, the master spirits were invited to participate in the bear ceremonial.

They concretely appeared, being impersonated by masked villagers. The presence of the master spirits was a great tribute of honor for the bear (Kannisto 1939a: 11).

¹⁷⁸⁵ SKS KRA J. Karhu 3285. 1936. Mäntyharju, Halmenniemi. Antti Kustaa Vanonen, 83-year-old male.

¹⁷⁸⁶ Also *pistekota* or *kokko*.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Kemppinen 1978: 1978; Manninen 1934: 245.

¹⁷⁸⁸ SKVR VI2/4926.

¹⁷⁸⁹ *Karhunrokka*.

¹⁷⁹⁰ *Ruuminrokka*.

¹⁷⁹¹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 149.

¹⁷⁹² *Käukämme kären tulille, / nocka-linnun nuotiolle* (SKVR VI2/4913: 56–57. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 30/8 1819. Antti Varttiainen).

the *kota* as a bear den, singing: “Are the cooks in the *kota*? / In the pine-room? / In the pine den?”¹⁷⁹³

The singing dialogue followed the dialogical model of the songs for welcoming the bear skin in the dining room. Someone asked if the right people were in the right place when the hunters brought the bear meat inside. Rikkos-Jussi described the interior of the *kota*:

Three are the hooks in the *kota*:
one hook is a wooden hook,
the second is an iron hook,
the third a copper hook.¹⁷⁹⁴

Antti Vartiainen from Kiuruvesi stressed that the third hook was made of precious metal, so the cauldron hanging from it was the most honorable place for the bear to be: “The third is a silver hook, / go soon to the third one, / the good silver one.”¹⁷⁹⁵

The dialogue also seems to follow a deceptive logic: the *kota* was presented to the bear as a kind of den where the bear was supposed to go “to rest on a tree fallen on another tree.”¹⁷⁹⁶ However, all was rich and shining inside of it and the hook reserved for the bear’s pot was not a common one; it was made from valuable metals. As before, the hunters sang to the bear that they carried it towards the most honorable place.

In Suomussalmi, when the meat was put into the pot a hunter sang: “here I bring my bird,”¹⁷⁹⁷ “into a cauldron with a copper bottom.”¹⁷⁹⁸ When the bear meat boiled, Aukusti Väisänen from Sotkamo asked: “Are now the furs in the pots, / the claws on the tips of the hooks?”¹⁷⁹⁹ A hunter from Saaresmäki (Vuolijoki) sang: “We have a

¹⁷⁹³ *Onkos kokkia kovassa, / honkasessa huonehessa, / petäjäsessä pesässä?* (SKVR XII2/6442: 21–23. Piippola. Keränen, E. 232. 1884. Rikkos-Jussi, 55-year-old male).

¹⁷⁹⁴ *Kolme on koukkuva kovassa: / yksi koukku puinen koukku, / toinen koukku rautakoukku, / kolmasi vaskinen koukku* (SKVR XII2/6442: 24–29. Piippola. Keränen, E. 232. 1884. Rikkos-Jussi)

¹⁷⁹⁵ *Kolmasi hopea koukku. / käu kohta kolmanteen, / hopeaiseen hyvään* (SKVR VI2/4913: 61–63. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 30/8 1819. Antti Vartiainen).

¹⁷⁹⁶ *Lengolle lepäämään* (SKVR VI2/4913: 61–63. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 30/8 1819. Antti Vartiainen).

¹⁷⁹⁷ *Tuohon leiteän lintuseni* (SKVR XII2/6549: 57. [Suomussalmi.] Lönnrot A II 5 n. 3. 1834. [Kylmäsalmi])

¹⁷⁹⁸ *Vaskipohjahan patahan* (SKVR XII2/6549: 59. [Suomussalmi.] Lönnrot A II 5 n. 3. 1834. [Kylmäsalmi])

¹⁷⁹⁹ *Joko nyt on karvat kattiloien, / kynnet koukkuin nenissä?* (SKVR XII2/6469: 21–22. Sotkamo. Krohn 040. 1882. Nissilä. Aukusti Väisänen).

wood grouse cooking, / a twig-bird stewing.”¹⁸⁰⁰ In the songs for cooking bear meat, the bruin was often called with birds’ names which were circumlocutions for the bride in wedding songs.¹⁸⁰¹

Rikkos-Jussi from Piipola confirmed: “now the bear is in the cauldron, / the summer-bird in the cooker.”¹⁸⁰² The hunters sang all the time while cooking, and the collector Heikki Meriläinen reported that singing was also important for culinary reasons: “The sour taste wouldn’t go if there was no singing while cooking.”¹⁸⁰³

The hunters of Saaresmäki (Vuolijoki) sang: “the salts are brought from Stockholm.”¹⁸⁰⁴ They stressed that expensive foreign ingredients were used for the stew. Some Viena Karelian bear hunters sang that the knife used for skinning the bear was brought from the capital of Sweden.¹⁸⁰⁵

8.8 Bringing bear meat into the *tupa*

In Vuolijoki, the hunters carrying the meat stopped at the threshold and asked almost the same questions sung at the arrival of the bear skin in the *tupa*, namely, if the room had been cleaned and the tables were all set and in order. The best *tietäjä*¹⁸⁰⁶ of the village, sitting in the place of honor at the table, answered affirmatively to all the questions.¹⁸⁰⁷ Here the *tietäjä* played the role of the host, which was more often the mistress of the house.

Rikkos-Jussi from Piippola sang: “The cook is dead in the *kota*, / the sons of the cook [are dead] on the porch.”¹⁸⁰⁸ These lines seem to emphasize how the *kota* and the *tupa* were supposed to be two completely separate spaces; for instance, the bear meat should not be cooked at home, but in the *kota* of the yard. Maybe hunters told the bear that those who had cooked the meat died before the feast started, and there was no

¹⁸⁰⁰ *Meill’ on mehto kiehumassa, / havulintu hautumassa* (SKVR XII2/6539: 1–2. Vuolijoki. Paulaharju 6277. 1917. Heikki Suorsa, Saaresmäki).

¹⁸⁰¹ See Section 8.5.

¹⁸⁰² *Nyt on karhu kattilassa, kesälintu keittimessä* (SKVR XII2/6542: 10–11).

¹⁸⁰³ Cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 92.

¹⁸⁰⁴ *Tukhulmista suolat tuotu* (SKVR XII2/6549: 60).

¹⁸⁰⁵ SKVR I4/1243: 23. Vuonninen. Borenius. II, n. 112. 1872. Markkeiri Huotari.

¹⁸⁰⁶ *Pääveleho*.

¹⁸⁰⁷ SKVR XII2/6540. Vuolijoki. Liljeblad, T. private collection. 1933. Antti Juntunen, 49-year-old man.

¹⁸⁰⁸ *Kokki on kuollunna kottaan, / kokin pojat porstuvaan*. (SKVR XII2/6442: 17–20. Piippola. Keränen, E. 232. 1884. Rikkos-Jussi).

need for the bruin to be seeking revenge against the joyful people in the *tupa*.

Antti Varttiainen from Kiuruvesi exhorted the bear meat, always considered as a guest, to enter the room: “come here with light shoes,”¹⁸⁰⁹ “you have been in cold weather for a week,”¹⁸¹⁰ and “we are going under the roof.”¹⁸¹¹ The bear was requested to rapidly enter the room and to take shelter from the cold weather. Varttiainen described the the bear as a chilled wanderer who should quickly enter into a warm cabin. The hunter tried to manipulate the bruin’s perception of the environment: the place the bear should leave was negatively described as cold and inhospitable, in order to convince the guest to enter the room.¹⁸¹²

8.9 Collective eating of bear meat, fat and innards

When the bear meat was taken from the pot and distributed, Moilanen from Kylänmäki (Pesiö) sang: “Rise up, sooty boy, / the feet below rot, / the head above decays.”¹⁸¹³ The motif resembles the awakening songs, when the hunters exhorted the bear to wake up and leave its rotting den.¹⁸¹⁴ In the feast also, the bruin was urged to leave another dangerous place, that is, the pot.

The bear meat, head or stew was put into a large bowl that the participants passed around the table, permitting everybody to have a share of it. Iivana Malinen sang to the bear: “You turn yourself as a hazel hen in its nest, / as a goose hatching [its eggs], / as a wood grouse by its home.”¹⁸¹⁵ A similar motif was sung when the hunters left the den, carrying the bear corpse or the skinned fur.¹⁸¹⁶ The poetic style was romantic, the bear being called with the names of birds often associated with brides. The words were refined, and Iivana Malinen told that the motif was sung “to please the forest

¹⁸⁰⁹ *Käu tänne käpeen kengin* (SKVR VI2/4913: 75. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 30/8 1819. Antti Varttiainen). The expression means: “Come here quickly.”

¹⁸¹⁰ *Jo o’ t viikon vilussa ollut* (SKVR VI2/4913: 77. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 30/8 1819. Antti Varttiainen).

¹⁸¹¹ *Käukämme ala katoxen* (SKVR VI2/4913: 80. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 30/8 1819. Antti Varttiainen).

¹⁸¹² On positive and negative aspects of the environment, see Sections 7.2, 8.5, 8.6, 9.1, 10.2.

¹⁸¹³ *Nouse pois nokinen poika, / jalat altasi lahoon, / pääsi päältä märkänäö!* (SKVR XII2/6563: 1–3. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6280. 1917. Moilanen, Kylänmäki. Pesiö).

¹⁸¹⁴ See Section 7.2.

¹⁸¹⁵ *Pyörit kuin pyy pesäsä päällä, / hanhi hautomaisillasi, / koppelo kotinsa kokalla* (SKVR I4/1245a. Vuoninen, Meriläinen n. 506. 1888. Iivana Malinen; heard from his father). See the variation: SKVR XII2/6564. Moilanen, old man of Kylänmäki, Suomussalmi.

¹⁸¹⁶ See Section 7.10.

maidens.”¹⁸¹⁷ The variation by Iivana’s father Jyrki Malinen was even more elegant: “I move my bird, / I turn the head of my cuckoo / towards the man, / towards the hero, / towards the one white as the birch.”¹⁸¹⁸ The share of bear meat on the table was presented as the light movements of a bird, with bridal connotations.¹⁸¹⁹

By contrast, descriptions of eating the bear meat could be quite rude and brutal, as seen in the song by Rikkos-Jussi from Piippola: “The bone in the mouth, / the meat in the jaws, / a lump of bread in the hand.”¹⁸²⁰ The participants seem to have been involved in a kind of eating battle, and the use of animal terms like “jaws” indicates the eaters’ bestial features: they ate the food with the appetite of a forest predator, such as a bear or a wolf. It was also portrayed as a predatory devouring because there was plenty to consume and the feast was a real “eat-it-all ritual”: all the meat and organs of the bear were eaten. Jalmari Tamminen from Karstula explained:

The bear paw was eaten and also the head was put in the stew with the innards and the kidneys. It was cooked in a big pot and all the village folk came to eat. At that time in Jylhä were made great parties and there should be spirits. The bigger the bear, the bigger the feast.¹⁸²¹

In Ristijärvi, other kinds of food were also eaten at the bear feast.¹⁸²² Torvelainen from Sulkava told: “Everyone brought bread, butter and fish into the house.”¹⁸²³ According to Hovatta Lesonen from Vuonninen, “the foodstuffs were nothing in particular; at the bear feast was eaten what foodstuff the people had by chance at the

¹⁸¹⁷ SKVR I4/1245a.

¹⁸¹⁸ *Liikuttelen lintuoni, / keäntelen käkeni peätä, / kohin miestä, päin urosta, / kohti koivun karvallista.* (SKVR I4/1242 b: 1–4. Vuonninen Borenius III, n. 113. 14/9 77. Jyrki Malinen).

¹⁸¹⁹ Tarkka 1998: 115.

¹⁸²⁰ *Luu suuhun, liha kittaen, / leipäkäntäle kätteen* (SKVR XII2/6442: 17–20. Piippola. Keränen, E. 232. 1884. Rikkos-Jussi).

¹⁸²¹ *Karhunkämmettä syöttiin ja pää pantiin myös keittoon ja syämykset ja munuaiset. Karjanpa’alla keitettiin ja koko kyläkunta tuli sitä syömään. Jylhällä piettiin suuret juhlat silloin ja viina piti olla. Mitä suurempi karhu oli, sitä suuremmat peijaiset piti pitää.* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulaharju 26091. 1934. Karstula. Jalmari tamminen, 50-year-old man).

¹⁸²² SKS KRA Paulaharju 6455. 1917. Oilingin Hermann. Ristijärvi.

¹⁸²³ *Joka tuop leipe, voita, kala kotona* (SKVR VI2/ 4895. Sulkava. Gottlund n. 814. 1815. Torvelainen).

moment, and spirits were drunk if available!”¹⁸²⁴ By contrast, Jeremie Malinen from Vuonninen emphasized that the best food was eaten at the bear feast.¹⁸²⁵ The villagers and neighbors participated in an active way in the bear feast, bringing the food and the spirits they had, making the feast a festival of sharing.

In Perho, the people remembered that at the bear funeral the roasted bear meat was so abundant that the table was overfull, while the other food was as abundant as at a human funeral.¹⁸²⁶ According to Erkki from Hosio (Simo), the bear meat was very tasty, and the bear paw was a real delicacy: “But the paw was so good that I do not know if there is a better meat of a living creature as good as the bear paw. The head and the paws were to be cooked first and these were the first to be eaten.”¹⁸²⁷ In Hyrynsalmi, the bear paws were put in the pot with the head: “The paw was very fatty, and therefore it was called ‘honey-paw.’”¹⁸²⁸ “Honey-paw” was one of the most common circumlocutions for the bear itself, and Ale Alariesto from Riesto explained: “It is true that the bear is the ‘honey-paw.’ As that kind of paw is cooked until it becomes soft, it is sweet—it is suitable to be lapped up.”¹⁸²⁹ In Vuolijoki, the hunters did not break or cut the bear head and paws before cooking them, but put them in the pot as whole pieces.¹⁸³⁰

In Sulkava, the bear head was generally cooked without salt, and the men prepared a pea stew with bear paws, innards and meat.¹⁸³¹ Ale Alariesto emphasized that it was

¹⁸²⁴ *Ruoka-aineet eivät olleet sen kummempia, mitä sattuu oleman kellä ruoka aineitä karhunpeijaisissa, sitä syöttiin ja juottiin viinaa jos oli! Lauloivat muitakin runoja ukot, jos osasivat.* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 6459. 1917. Vuonninen (Niskajärvi). Hovatta Lesoni).

¹⁸²⁵ *Parhaita ruokia peijaisissa syöttiin.* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 6460. 1917. Vuonninen. Jeremie Malinen).

¹⁸²⁶ SKS KRA Paulaharju 26089. Perho. 1928.

¹⁸²⁷ *Mutta se käpälä se onkin niin hyvää, jotta en minä ymmärrä, onko minkään elävän liha niin hyvää, kun karhun käpälä. Ensinnä keitettävä oli pää ja käpälät ja ensinnä ne oli syötävät. Peijaisissa, jolla oli niin kuin viinatilkka, niin pitivät karhunpeijaisia* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 6464. 1917. Simo. Hosion Erkki).

¹⁸²⁸ *Kämmen oli hyvin rasvainen, siitä sitä sanottiin mesikämmeneksi* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 6462. 1917. Hyrynsalmi).

¹⁸²⁹ *Kyllä se on tosi, että karhu on mesikämmen. Kun semmoisen kämmenen keittää pehmeäksi, niin se on makia – sitä kelpaa litkiä.* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 39732. Riesto. 1937. Ale Alariesto, 80-year-old man).

¹⁸³⁰ SKS KRA Samuli Paulaharju 6467. 1917. Vuolijoki.

¹⁸³¹ SKVR VI2/4895 Gottlund n. 814. 1815. Sulkava. Torvelainen.

necessary to use a pot that was big enough for the entire bear head.¹⁸³² According to Aapa Jylhä from Perho, a pea stew was prepared with the head and the paws, barley was stirred into it, and the result was good.¹⁸³³

In Kuhmo¹⁸³⁴ and Ristijärvi,¹⁸³⁵ the meat that was not eaten during the feast was preserved with salt or dried and eaten all winter long. In Riesto, sharing the meat was a fundamental element of the feast: “the bear meat was given to each house of the village.”¹⁸³⁶ In Vuolijoki, “the neighbors were invited, just as they were invited to the funerals of human beings.”¹⁸³⁷ Juho Eskelinen from Lapinniemi (Sonkajärvi) told that the feast started in the afternoon and “no one was invited, but a plentiful number of guests was highly desirable. The food of the feast was eaten in the house around a long table.”¹⁸³⁸ The feast in Lapinniemi lasted a long time: “normally the feast continued all night long until the next day.”¹⁸³⁹ Mikko from Matovaara (Kuhmo) told that once four bears were killed in Seppo, and the celebration of the bear feasts lasted an entire week.¹⁸⁴⁰

The feast was not limited to the hunters or their family. All the members of the village, especially the male ones, were invited. The ritual of passing the bowl around emphasized the communal, egalitarian feature of sharing the meat and stew. However, the women took many precautions during the feast. Sometimes they refused to eat the bear meat, or they ate after the men.¹⁸⁴¹

¹⁸³² *Pää keitettiin, ja piti olla niin iso pata, että karhun pää kokonaan sopii.* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 39768. Riesto. 1937. Ale Alariesto).

¹⁸³³ *Karhun maahanpaniaisissa pää ja jalat keitettiin ja hyvää rokka niistä tuli. Ohria survoittiin siihen ryynirokkaan* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 26087. 1928. Aapa Jylhä. 86-year-old man. Perho).

¹⁸³⁴ SKS KRA Paulaharju 6454. 1917. Kuhmo. Mikko of Matovaara.

¹⁸³⁵ SKS KRA Paulaharju 6455. 1917. Ristijärvi, Oilingin Hermannin.

¹⁸³⁶ *Kylän joka talon annettiin karhunlihaa* (KRA SKS Paulaharju 39768. Riesto 1937. Ale Alariesto).

¹⁸³⁷ *Karhunpeijaisiin kututtiin naapureita, aivan niinkuin ihmisen niin kuin ihmisen peijaisiin kututtiin* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulaharju 6467. 1917. Vuolijoki).

¹⁸³⁸ *Ketään ei niihin kutsuttu, mutta hyvin suotavaa oli, että vieraita saapui lukuisasti* (SKVR VI2/4926. Sonkajärvi. Karvonen, Viljo n. 1. N. 1913? Lapinniemi (Sukeva). Juho Eskelinen, born in 1839).

¹⁸³⁹ *Tavallisesti jatkui juhlaa läpi yön seuraavaan päivään* (SKVR VI2/4926).

¹⁸⁴⁰ SKS KRA Paulaharju 6454. 1917. Kuhmo. Mikko from Matovaara.

¹⁸⁴¹ See Sections 8.15, 8.17.

A. Ruokki from Suonejoki told: “the neighbors were assembled to eat the head soup, and it was very festive.”¹⁸⁴² Salmo from Sieppijärvi (Kolari) emphasized that “all the men of the village came to hang around and eat the bear meat.”¹⁸⁴³ In Jormaskylä (Sotkamo), the villagers celebrated the quantity of food and drink: “Now there is food, food / enough to eat, enough to drink, / enough to be given to the village, / enough to be kept for ourselves.”¹⁸⁴⁴

In Kolari, the men purposefully exaggerated eating too much meat and grease:

The men ate bear meat so that they would vomit badly. The bear grease is so heavy that it deceives you. First the men drank it gladly from the top of the pot, but then they threw it up.¹⁸⁴⁵

According to Aapa Jylho from Perho, the bear meat was not so tasty, but the salted grease of the bear’s back was excellent.¹⁸⁴⁶ He stressed: “Who did not get it does not know anything about what is good. [...] It was salted and it was eaten on its own like pig grease.”¹⁸⁴⁷

8.10 A hard drinking party

The quantity of alcoholic drinks offered to the guests was an important issue. Anterus Kousa from Pärnämäki (Mäntyharju) told that during the funeral of the bear, the people drank heavily and everybody could drink as much they wanted.¹⁸⁴⁸

¹⁸⁴² *Pääkeittoa syömään kouttiin naapurit, ja oli erittäin juhlallista* (SKVR VI2/4909. Suonenjoki. Laitinen, G. n. 259. 1886. A. Ruokki, 62-year-old man).

¹⁸⁴³ *Koko kylän miehet tulivat pyörimään ja syömään karhunlihaa* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulajarhu 26039–40. 1934. Kolari. Salmo, 77-year-old man, Sieppijärvi, manuscript 1921).

¹⁸⁴⁴ *On nyt kystä, kystä, / kyllin syyä, kyllin juua, / kyllin antoo kylään, / kyllin ihtesäkin pitöö.* (SKVR XII2/6543: 3–6. Sotkamo. Krohn 11231 d. 1885. Jormaskylä. Paavo Paulin, 28-year-old man).

¹⁸⁴⁵ *Se on karhunrasua niin räykeää, että se pettää. Miehet joivat sitä pa’an päältä ensin hyvin mielellään, mutta takisin se tuli* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulajarhu 26039–40. 1934. Kolari. Salmo, Sieppijärvi, manuscript 1921).

¹⁸⁴⁶ *Karhunliha on musta ha paha ja väkevää mutta yly on hyvää, se on hyvää ja paljon makiampaa kun sianrasvaa.* (SKS KRA Paulajarhu 26087. 1928. Aapa Jylhä. 86-year-old man. Perho).

¹⁸⁴⁷ *Joka ei sitä ole saanut, se ei tiijä mitään hyvästä. [...] Se suolattiin ja syöttiin semmoisenaan niinkuin läski* (SKS KRA Paulajarhu 26087. 1928. Aapa Jylhä).

¹⁸⁴⁸ *Karhunhautajaisissa oli juotu kovasti. Viina oli saavissa ja kousissa saavin laidalla. Kukin sai ottaa niin paljon kuin halusi* (SKS KRA J. Karhu 3290. 1936. Mäntyharju, Pärnämäki. Anterus Kousa, 65–66 years old).

The drinking also revealed the presence of some social hierarchies. Heikki Sallinen from Heinävesi told that the bear's killers drank before the others:

The old men said that the *tupa* should be washed clean when the bears were carried in the *tupa*. And the cups for the spirits were on the table, and the bear's killers drank the first shots and after that all the others.¹⁸⁴⁹

Drinking the first glass was socially significant, but many sources stressed that there were plenty of spirits and ale for everybody. This abundance created a situation of social sharing between the male drinkers. Mikko Kossiini from Vuonninen sang that even the humblest of the participants got a share: "from that even the slaves¹⁸⁵⁰ get ale, / the farmhands the ale-water."¹⁸⁵¹ It is difficult to say if ale was really offered to farmhands or other humble workers; the lines could also be interpreted as a hyperbole stressing that there was plenty of ale to drink for everybody. Heikki Möttönen told that in Perho a singular ritual marked the limits for the hard drinkers:

We drank a lot, just from a copper shot glass ... But [what was impressive] was the quantity, so when someone got so drunk that he was not able to lift up the bear, he was not allowed to drink any more.¹⁸⁵²

Kaarle Krohn noted that at bear feasts, drinking was as important as eating the bear meat, and the people drank as much as at funerals and even more than at a wedding feast.¹⁸⁵³ At feasts, drinking ale represented collective exchange, happiness and the source of singing,¹⁸⁵⁴ as well as the possibility to behave in a transgressive way. Being drunk was a liminal state, as one was seized by the "spirit of the alcohol," and it was

¹⁸⁴⁹ *Vanhat miehet kertovat, jotta tupa pit' ollap puhtaak pesty, kun karhut tuottiin tuppaa. Ja pöyvässä ol' olluv viinapikarit ja karhuntappajat ottivat ensimmäiset ryyppyt ja siittem muut.* (SKS KRA Tauno Mäkipalo (Mohell) 1064. Heinävesi. 1934. Heikki Sallinen, 63-year-old man).

¹⁸⁵⁰ Farmhands, or 'humble workers' (*palkollinen*).

¹⁸⁵¹ *Siitä soa orjatki olutta, / kasakatki kaljavettä* (SKVR I4/1246: 24–25. Vuonninen Paulaharju. n. 3635. 1908. Mikko Kossiini).

¹⁸⁵² *Juottiin paljon, kupariastiasta napulla vain. Mutta se oli määrä, että kuin tuli niin juovuksiin, ettei enää jaksanut karhua nostaa, niin ei enää saanut juuoa.* (SKVR KRA Samuli Paulaharju 26093. 1934. Perho. Heikki Möttönen, 53-year-old man).

¹⁸⁵³ Krohn [1915] 2008: 149.

¹⁸⁵⁴ See Sections 8.6.

only permitted on ritual occasions.¹⁸⁵⁵ The hard drinking of the bear feast was also a proof of masculinity.

Bear feasts could be called *karhunvoakat*,¹⁸⁵⁶ a name derived from *vakka*, a word that indicated a large wooden cup used in the seasonal drinking rituals in honor of the sky-god Ukko (*Ukonvoakat*).¹⁸⁵⁷ Drinking ale and spirits was one of the many elements that the bear feast shared with weddings and seasonal festivities.¹⁸⁵⁸ Alcohol also played an important role in small-scale rituals, and hunters often offered ale to the forest spirits.¹⁸⁵⁹

8.11 Drinking spirits mixed with bear bile

Drinking spirits was also related with serious rituals. Johannes Häyhä wrote that in Niemelä, the *jahtivuoti*, a public officer—but generally a common peasant—who was involved in the organization of the hunt of large game animals such as bears or elk, was in charge of a peculiar ritual. He ordered spirits and the bile of the killed bear to be poured into a large clay bowl. After that the hunters and other adult men would sit around the table, and the *jahtivuoti* sang the hunters' song to deny responsibility for the bear kill and to effect a typical protective spell to make the bear's teeth and claws inoffensive. Then "the bowl was swapped from one man to the next around the table, until all the men drank. When the spirits from one bowl ended, the householder of other houses brought more spirits."¹⁸⁶⁰

The bodily liquid bile was believed to contain the essence of the bear's force, considered the equivalent of the strength of nine men. It was mixed with spirits to make a beverage with a strong social and ritual importance, created by human agriculture, culture and craft. Mixing bile and spirits, the hunter joined the forest force with the force of alcohol. Alcoholic drinks contained a spirit that had a force, which was able to make the people behave in an uncommon way.¹⁸⁶¹ Part of the bear force

¹⁸⁵⁵ Apo 2001: 67–68.

¹⁸⁵⁶ Krohn [1915] 2008: 149.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Harva 1948: 103–121; Apo 70–71.

¹⁸⁵⁸ Apo 2001: 72.

¹⁸⁵⁹ See Section 6.21.

¹⁸⁶⁰ SKVR VI2/4908. Leppävirta. From Häyhä, J., *Kesäaskareet*, pp. 130–131. 1898. Lauri Kieman. See Häyhä 1982: 385–384 and Apo 2001: 73–74.

¹⁸⁶¹ See Apo 2001: 68.

could be absorbed by humans,¹⁸⁶² but the dangerous and contagious part needed to be neutralized.¹⁸⁶³

Spirits made drinking bile more acceptable and enjoyable. The ritual was collective and masculine: each male was supposed to drink the alcoholic bile cocktail. The ritual thus resulted in an equal sharing of the bear force between the male villagers. In other villages, the bile was dried and used in healing rituals to cure the wounds caused by a bear.¹⁸⁶⁴

8.12 Exalting the masculinity of the hunters

When spirits were offered, the villagers could become more relaxed and self-confident. Maura Marttiñi from Kivijärvi sang a motif that the hunters sang just after drinking:

Not all the males are fit,
not even half of the boys,
only males are trusted,
only men are chosen,
to ski after the forest elk,
to slay the forest bear.¹⁸⁶⁵

The word 'male'¹⁸⁶⁶ also stands for 'real man' and 'hero.' These lines are quite unique in the corpus of the bear songs, but they are quite important. It is one of the few situations in which the hunters boasted and called the bear with his real name¹⁸⁶⁷ and even sang a line about its killing. The motif indicates that the bear killer gained the social status of a manly man,¹⁸⁶⁸ and the song stresses the relevance of the age and the experience of the hunters: boys were not accepted among the group of bear killers.

¹⁸⁶² Apo 2001: 73; see Section 8.18.

¹⁸⁶³ Apo 2001: 73 see Section 8.14.

¹⁸⁶⁴ See Section 8.20.

¹⁸⁶⁵ *Ei ole kaikista urohista, / ei pojista puol'istana, / siihi uroja usõtah, / šihi miehijä val'itah, / mejän hirven hiihantah, / korven karhun kuantah* (SKVR I4/1220 c: 1–6. Kivijärvi. Marttinen n. 913. 1910. Maura Marttiñi).

¹⁸⁶⁶ *Uros*

¹⁸⁶⁷ *Karhu*

¹⁸⁶⁸ See Section 3.4.

8.13 Spontaneous and ritual dances

Hard drinking at the bear feast was often connected with having fun. Ollan Feeti, a Finnish speaker from Vittangi (or Vittanki, in North Sweden, Kiruna province), stressed that when a bear was killed, spirits were drunk “and the people partied.”¹⁸⁶⁹ In some villages of Savo and Finnish Karelia, the people danced during the bear feast. Askel Käpä from Käävänkylä (Mäntyharju) told that at the bear feast the people drank all night long, played music and danced. The bear killers deserved a lot of spirits.¹⁸⁷⁰ By contrast, in Halmenniemi (Mäntyharju) the people drank spirits but did not dance.¹⁸⁷¹ Juho Eskelinen told about the custom in Lapinniemi (Sonkajärvi):

As there was no prohibition, the young folks could dance. But that was rare, however. The party was “a serious kind of celebration.” There was no “quarrelsome drunkenness.”¹⁸⁷²

Rarely did the informants described dances. In most cases, dancing was an informal and optional part of the feast, and often the people performed common folkdances. But there are two sources that described dances with ritual connotations. An informant from Heinävesi told:

I have heard from the old people that the killed bear was lifted on a pole and circle dances were danced around it, the people drank coffee or spirits, and so on.¹⁸⁷³

The bear was located at the center of the dance and the room, and the ritual seems to have honored it as a special guest. Manne Ollikainen from Valtola (Mäntyharju) related that during a bear feast in 1891, the killer of the bear Kolsoppi, who covered the costs of the whole feast, performed the “bear dance” with a commander of the

¹⁸⁶⁹ *Kun karhu oli tapettu, niin viinaa juottiin ja piettiin juhlaa.* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulajarhu 26022. 1934. Ollan Feeti, 52 years old. Vittanki. North Sweden.

¹⁸⁷⁰ SKS KRA J. Karhu 3288. 1936. Askel Käpä, 75-year-old man. Käävänkylä.

¹⁸⁷¹ SKS KRA J. Karhu 3287. 1936. Mäntyharju, Halmenniemi. Juhannes Haapio, 91-year-old man.

¹⁸⁷² *Koska kieltoa ei ollut, voi sattua, että nuori väki tanssi. Tämä oli kuitenkin harvinaista. Juhla oli ”paremmin totinen juhla”. Mitään ”rettelöhumalata” ei ollut.* (SKVR VI2/4926).

¹⁸⁷³ *Mie own kuulluv vanholta immesiltä, jotta ammuttu karhu nostettiin pilariir ja se ympärilä tansittiin piirtanssija, juottiin kahvii tahiv viinoo ja nii eispäi.* (SKS KRA Tauno Mäkipalo (Mohell) 1061. 1934. Heinävesi).

army. They imitated different movements of the bear, stomping their feet like a drunk person, putting their hands near their ears, turning around. This bear dance was then followed by a lot of people from the village.¹⁸⁷⁴ The latter case indicates that the dance was a carnival imitation of the movements of the bear. The dancers were not the youngsters of the village, but the persons with the higher status at the feast; the other villagers were watching their dance. Dances imitating the movements of the bear were performed also in the bear feast of the Khanty and Mansi, but in more complex ways.¹⁸⁷⁵

8.14 Rituals to neutralize the “poison” of the bear meat

The folk believed that alder had the power to neutralize poison or the contagious force present in the bear meat. Torvelainen from Sulkava told that the bear meat should be smoked with alder branches “so that the meat was not poisonous, but like sheep meat.”¹⁸⁷⁶ Mikko from Matovaara (Kuhmo) told that in Sepponen the people put alder branches on the table and it was mandatory to gnaw on them before eating the bear meat.¹⁸⁷⁷ In Kuhmo, the hunters made whisks of alder branches and everyone who ate the bear stew should bite them.¹⁸⁷⁸ In Suomussalmi, a bundle of alder branches was put on the corner of the stone bench¹⁸⁷⁹ in front of the oven, where it was supposed to remain the entire time the bear meat or stew was being consumed. Afterwards, it was brought with the skull bones to the forest, so that the “forest did not ruin, so that it gave [a catch] back again.”¹⁸⁸⁰

¹⁸⁷⁴ *Kun karhu tapettiin Ukkolan maalle ja sen saivat sotilaat ammetuksi, niin Ukkolassa pidettiin peijaiset. Peijaisista jäi erityisesti mieleeni karhutanssi, jota tanssivat suomenniemeläinen Kolmsoppi, jota sanottiin oikein karhuntappajaksi ja sotilaitten komentaja ja kahden kesken. Tanssi oli sellaista juopuneitten jalkojen tömistämistä, käsien korvalle nostamista, pyörimistä, j.n.e. karhun erilaisten liikkeiden matkimista. Kaadettu karhu oli eteisessä. Myöhemmin kantoivat sen pöydän taa istumaan. Kylän kanssa oli paljon katsomassa. Karhuntappajat kustansivat kestit. (Tämä tapahtui v. 45 vuotta sitten). (SKS KRA J. Karhu 3291. 1936. Mäntyharju, Valtola, Manne Ollikainen, 65-year-old man).*

¹⁸⁷⁵ See Juslin 2007.

¹⁸⁷⁶ SKS KRA Paulaharhu 39755 and Paulaharju 1953: 205.

¹⁸⁷⁷ *Oli Sepposessa lepänoksia pöyvällä. Piti jyrsiä niitä ensin, kun karhunlihaa söi. (SKS KRA Paulaharju 6471. 1917. Kuhmo, m. Matovaaran Mikko).*

¹⁸⁷⁸ *Jokaisen piti purra, joka vain lihakeittoa soi (SKS KRA Paulaharju 6470. 1917).*

¹⁸⁷⁹ *Pankko.*

¹⁸⁸⁰ *Jotta “ei metsä silloin pilaa, jotta se antaa vastakin.” (SKS KRA Paulaharju 6473. 1917 Suomussalmi).*

Kaarle Krohn noted that if the bear meat or corpse was carried to the village in a sledge carried by a horse, it was necessary to put some alder branches on the sledge to prevent the meat from being poisonous, “but like sheep meat.”¹⁸⁸¹ For the same reason, the bear stew was stirred with alder.¹⁸⁸² The people considered the alder a mellow or benevolent tree,¹⁸⁸³ which was able to neutralize the forest’s wrath.¹⁸⁸⁴

In Finland, however, alder was also considered a “bad tree.” In the birth incantations, it is described as being created by the devil. In Western Finland and in Germany, the people believed that the cross of Jesus had been made of alder.¹⁸⁸⁵ Even so, the alder was considered magically valuable for its red fluid. In Finland, Germany, Sweden and Lapland, it was associated with blood.¹⁸⁸⁶ The evil forces contained in the alder could also be used for useful and protective purposes; for example, they could be apotropaic and able to drive away other evil forces.¹⁸⁸⁷ Aaltonen noted that in Finland alder was used in a great number of magic rituals associated with healing, agriculture, cattle breeding, hunting and fishing:

It seems that the fundamental feature in the use of alder is that it works as a kind of fastener, something that accurately locks up, ties and rules its bad spiritual power, which could be used at any given time.¹⁸⁸⁸

In Germany and Finland, alder was also used to drive away bad spirits or the souls of the dead.¹⁸⁸⁹ It is not surprising that alder was also used to expel the supernatural poison in the meat of the bear.

Antti Utriainen from Heinävesi spoke about an interesting variation of the protective rites to make the bear meat edible: the heel of a skinned bear was put on the table when the people started to eat the pea stew with the bear meat.¹⁸⁹⁰ This body part

¹⁸⁸¹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 148.

¹⁸⁸² Krohn [1915] 2008: 149.

¹⁸⁸³ *Lempeä puu.*

¹⁸⁸⁴ Krohn [1915] 2008: 149.

¹⁸⁸⁵ Guenat 1994: 129 and Krohn 1917: 50.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Guenat 1994: 129 and 130; Aaltonen 1918: 130.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Guenat 1994: 130.

¹⁸⁸⁸ Aaltonen 1918: 121, cited in Guenat 1991: 130.

¹⁸⁸⁹ Guenat 1994: 130.

¹⁸⁹⁰ *Karhul lihasta keitetii rokka ja ku nostettii rokka kiehumasta pois ni pankolla pankkopahtaa vieressä olj nyletty karhun takajalaka, kantapiä. Se pantii pyötäännik ku ruvettiir rokkoo syömää* (SKS KRA Tauno Mäkipalo (Mohell) 523. 1933. Heinävesi. Antti Uriainen, 69-year-old man).

was used as an amulet to protect people from the poison of the bear meat. A bear fang could also be used for the same purpose. In Puolanka, the hunters put it near the table before they started to eat the bear head.¹⁸⁹¹ The force of the bear, particularly condensed in the heels or claws, could be used to protect the people eating the meat.

8.15 The women's refusal to eat bear meat

The information about women eating bear meat or not varied from village to village. It seems that in some villages the women almost categorically refused to eat bear meat, while in other villages they ate it, albeit after the men. Juho Eskelinen from Lapinniemi (Sonkajärvi) explained:

The women were allowed to be present. But they were lesser, if compared to the men, and they did not eat the festive meal, because they did not "like" eating the bear stew.¹⁸⁹²

In Kolari, the wives left the cabin when the bear was carried inside:

They tend to do it. They consider even the smell bad. It stinks so heavily in the room. And when it is skinned, the bear is like a wife. It has a breast like a wife and the carcass and the hind legs, and its hands are like human hands.¹⁸⁹³

¹⁸⁹¹ SKVR XII2/6571.

¹⁸⁹² *Naisetkin saivat olla juhlassa vieressä olj nyletty karhun takajalaka, kantapiä. Se pantii pyötäännik ku ruvvetiir rokkoo syömää.* (SKS KRA Tauno Mäkipalo (Mohell) 523. 1933. Heinävesi. Antti Uriainen).

¹⁸⁹² SKVR XII2/6571.

¹⁸⁹² *Naisetkin saivat olla juhlassa läsnä. Heitä oli siellä kuitenkin miehiin verraten vähän eivätkä he ottaneet osaa juhla-ateriaan, he kun näet eivöt "tykänneet" syödä karhukeitto.a* (SKVR VI2/4926).

¹⁸⁹³ *Ne pruukaavat niin tehä. Hajuakin ne pitävät pahana. Se haisee huonee niin räykeälle. Ja karhu on nyljettynä niin kuin vaimoihimen. Sillä on rinta niin kuin vaimolla ja raato ja taka jalat, ja käet on sillä niinkuin ihmisen käet.* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulajarhu 26041. 1934. Kolari).

In Karstula, the women did not participate in the bear feast.¹⁸⁹⁴ Verra Homane from Kivijärvi told that “the women did not eat bear meat, [and] they did not want to eat it.”¹⁸⁹⁵

In other villages, however, the collectors transcribed songs or information about women eating bear meat or stew. Anni Lehtonen told that in Vuonninen the women ate the meat: “In the bear ritual the men eat first, and the women only after that.”¹⁸⁹⁶ Ale Alariesto from Riesto (Sompio) confirmed: “The women surely ate bear meat.”¹⁸⁹⁷ In Sonkajärvi, the women ate a little share of bear meat.¹⁸⁹⁸ In Ristijärvi, the hunter sang by offering the bear meat to women:

This is that kind of grain,¹⁸⁹⁹
let’s give that
to the hands of their commanders,¹⁹⁰⁰
to the ones fingering their hems.¹⁹⁰¹

After that the women, too, came to eat.¹⁹⁰²

The bear meat was called with the circumlocution “grain,” because the bear was the grain of the forest spirit. The men did not sing too loudly about eating bear meat in front of the bear skin. The degree of the participation of the women in the feast varied from voluntary exclusion from the ceremony to eating the bear meat in the feast. If the women did participate in the feast, it was not in the same way as the men, and several precautions were made to avoid forest contagion or a bear attack on pregnant women

¹⁸⁹⁴ *Kun karhu ennen oli saatu niin silleen pidettiin peijaiset, ja naiset ei peijaisiin ottaneet ossaa karhun.* (SKS KRA Albert Rautiainen 5302. Karstula. 1962).

¹⁸⁹⁵ *Karhunlihaa eivät naiset syöneet, eivät halunneet syövä.* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulaharju 25984. 1934. Verra Homanen, Kivijärvi).

¹⁸⁹⁶ *Karhun peijaisissa miehet syövät ensin, sitten vasta jälestä naiset.* (SKS KRA Samuli ja Jenny Paulaharju 18553. 1932. Vuonninen. Anni Lehtonen, born in 1868, manuscript 1916).

¹⁸⁹⁷ *Naiset kyllä söivät karhunlihaa.* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 39768. Riesto 15.7.37. Ale Alariesto).

¹⁸⁹⁸ SKS KRA Kaarle Krohn 14044. Sonkajärvi 1884.

¹⁸⁹⁹ The bear meat or stew.

¹⁹⁰⁰ The women.

¹⁹⁰¹ The women.

¹⁹⁰² *Täm’ on vilja tämmöinen, / annetaanpa tästä, / käskijänsä kämmenillek, / helmojensa hypistäjillek. Sitten naisetkin menivät syömään.* (SKVR XII2/6546. Ristijärvi. Paulaharju 6286. 1917. Herman Oikarinen, Oilingin Hermanni, 78-year-old man). The last sentence is a statement.

or the cattle protected by women.¹⁹⁰³ Even cooking, one of the most common of the women's tasks, was reserved for the men who boiled or roasted the bear.¹⁹⁰⁴ However, the role of the mistress in welcoming the bruin was extremely important and the women's roles in the whole ceremonial were complex.¹⁹⁰⁵

8.16 Refusals to eat bear meat in Viena Karelia

In 1952, Virtaranta published his interviews with some renowned Viena Karelian women about the prohibition to eat bear meat. Oksenia Nykänen from Akonlahti told:

About the bear, it was told that the bear is a bewitched person. The bear, when it is skinned, is like the people. For this reason, bear meat was not eaten."¹⁹⁰⁶

Domna Huovinen from Vuokinsalmi (Kontokki) was convinced that the bear originated from humans because when it was skinned its body resembled a human one and its "toes are like human toes."¹⁹⁰⁷ Domna told that the men offered her bear meat, but she refused to eat it because "it is so black and bad-looking."¹⁹⁰⁸ She added: "before it was not eaten—it was a sin!"¹⁹⁰⁹ According to Domna, the bear meat or corpse was buried in a hole in the swamp.¹⁹¹⁰

According to Tarkka, the concept of sin,¹⁹¹¹ which also refers to impurity, does not play a significant role in Viena Karelian forest folklore.¹⁹¹² Exceptions apply to the consumption of bear meat, which could be considered sinful.¹⁹¹³ Mari Kyrönen from

¹⁹⁰³ Several precautions were also followed by other peoples. Among the Mansi, the front parts of the bear (including the most powerful parts, the head and the heart) were eaten by men and the back parts by the women in a separate building (Kannisto 1939a: 12, 18).

¹⁹⁰⁴ SKS KRA Kaarle Krohn 14044. Sonkajärvi, g. 1884; see Section 8.7.

¹⁹⁰⁵ See Section 10.2.

¹⁹⁰⁶ *Kontiesta sanottiin jotta kontie on kirottu rahvahasta. Se kontie kun nyletah ni se on niinkur rahvoas. Sentäh ei kontiel lihoa syöty.* (Virtaranta 1958: 313).

¹⁹⁰⁷ *Ne varpapat, nin niin on kuin imehnisev varpapat* (Virtaranta 1958: 313).

¹⁹⁰⁸ *On niin mustoa ta pahan nävöistä* (Virtaranta 1958: 313).

¹⁹⁰⁹ *Ei syöty ennenin – siitä tuli reahkä.* (Virtaranta 1958: 313).

¹⁹¹⁰ Virtaranta 1958: 313.

¹⁹¹¹ *Räähkä.*

¹⁹¹² Tarkka 1998: 136, note 8.

¹⁹¹³ Tarkka 1998: 136, note 8; Virtaranta 1958: 313, 325, 719–721; Inha 1921: 54–55.

Venetjärvi affirmed that in the old days, bear meat was not eaten, nor was any blood of animals consumed, because “it is a sin (*reähkä*), when someone eats blood.”¹⁹¹⁴

The informants mixed old beliefs about the humanity of the bear with the Christian concept of sin. Because the bear is a humanlike creature, eating it was an abominable sin, akin to anthropophagy.¹⁹¹⁵ This belief was not limited to Karelia. In Finland, too, the women avoided eating bear meat for the same reasons.¹⁹¹⁶

It is plausible that in some Karelian villages, probably those with a stronger Orthodox faith, the people—or the women in particular—avoided eating bear meat. However, these attitudes cannot be considered a general prohibition that was followed in the whole of Viena or Orthodox Karelia.¹⁹¹⁷ As seen in the previous paragraphs of this chapter, several Viena Karelian songs mentioned the ritual cooking and eating of bear meat.¹⁹¹⁸ Anni Lehtonen told that in Vuonninen the women ate the bear meat, too.¹⁹¹⁹ The folklorist Terttu Kaivola referred to a short vernacular description of a late Karelian bear hunt (1890) in one of her publications. The Karelian informant told: “The peasants eat bear meat with pleasure.”¹⁹²⁰

The local tendency or women’s decision to avoid eating bear meat was not based on membership in totemic clans, as Sarmela stated.¹⁹²¹ The actual reason was the anomalous nature and ambiguity of the bear’s identity as a wild animal that had human features and human origins. Mary Douglas emphasized that what is anomalous and ambiguous is also potentially disturbing, dangerous and polluting.¹⁹²² In some cases, the ritual answer to the bear’s being anomalous was negative, resulting in the refusal to eat its meat.¹⁹²³

¹⁹¹⁴ Virtaranta 1958: 324–325.

¹⁹¹⁵ See Section 3.8.

¹⁹¹⁶ See Section 8.15.

¹⁹¹⁷ Krohn [1915] 2008: 162; Sarmela 1991: 225; see Section 2.4 and note 103 in Section 1.2.1.

¹⁹¹⁸ See all the SKVR/I4 sources in this chapter referring to eating and cooking bear meat, including the preparation of the bear feast.

¹⁹¹⁹ SKS KRA Samuli ja Jenny Paulaharju 18553. 1932. Vuonninen. Anni Lehtonen, born in 1868. Manuscript: 1916).

¹⁹²⁰ *Talonpojat syövät hyvin mielellään karhun lihaa* (cited in Kaivola 1979: 174).

¹⁹²¹ Sarmela 1991: 225; see Section 2.4.

¹⁹²² Douglas 2002 (1966): 49

¹⁹²³ Douglas 2002 (1966): 48; on anomaly and negative ritual answers to it, see also Section 1.1.3.

8.17 Prohibition of dairy products at the bear feast

Juho Eskelinen described precisely the food eaten at the feast in Lapinniemi:

The main course was the bear stew. In addition to that, the meal included rye bread, beer and spirits made at home. On the table was not served any gift from the cow, nor milk, nor cheese.¹⁹²⁴

Salmo told that Sieppijärvi (Kolari) the same prohibition was followed against dairy products: "The people did not consume cattle-grain.¹⁹²⁵ The meat was only dipped in the grease and eaten."¹⁹²⁶ Topi Huttunen from Sonkajärvi told that no milk, nor sour milk, nor any kind of "gifts from the cow" were put into the bear stew.¹⁹²⁷ In Hyrynsälmi¹⁹²⁸ and Suomussalmi,¹⁹²⁹ too, eating butter or any kind of "milk-grain"¹⁹³⁰ was strictly prohibited at the bear feast.

The reason beyond this prohibition was not explained by any informant; the impression is that they considered it an obvious custom. The prohibition seems to have followed the belief about a general opposition of forces between the forest and the cattle yard.¹⁹³¹ The two environments were not supposed to be mixed, and each contact should be ritually managed. Mixing "milk-grain" with "forest grain" in the same dish was considered dangerous: it combined two opposite forces, it could be offensive for the bear, and maybe it could even provoke a bear attack on the cattle.

In other villages butter was eaten at the bear feast, sometimes following a particular custom. In Vuolijoki, a Christmas porridge was prepared and a slab of butter was put

¹⁹²⁴ *Pääruokana oli karhukeitto. Sen ohessa kuului ateriaan ruisleipä, olut ja kotikeittoviina. Mitään lehmänanninta ei pöydässä ollut, ei maitoa eikä voita* (SKVR VI2/4926).

¹⁹²⁵ Dairy products.

¹⁹²⁶ *Karjanviljaa ei nautittu. Lihaa vain kastettiin rasuaan ja syöttiin.* (SKS KRA Samuli Paulaharju 26039–40. Kolari. 1934 (manuscript: 1921) Salmo, Sieppijärvi).

¹⁹²⁷ *Siinä ei pantu ei pietä maitoo eikä piime eikä mitään lehmän annetta. Ei muuta kuin olutta tehtiin ennen ja viinoo juottiin ja miehet oli kokkina, ei akat ja miehet pani sen kuppiin (ja söivät ja antovat vähä akoilleki) ja miehet laulo ja käsikkään käveli.* (SKR KRA Kaarle Krohn 14044. Sonkajärvi 1884. Topi Huttunen, 53-year-old man. Jumiskylä, (Mustamäki). Born in Rutakko (Oinajärvi).

¹⁹²⁸ SKR KRA Samuli Paulaharju 6462. 1917. Hyrynsalmi.

¹⁹²⁹ SKR KRA Samuli Paulaharju 6457. 1917. Suomussalmi.

¹⁹³⁰ Dairy products.

¹⁹³¹ See Section 3.4.

in the center of it, and the people started to eat from the center to the edge of the bowl.¹⁹³² In Sulkava, the people ate butter at the feast.¹⁹³³

8.18 Eating the organs of the bear's head

Eating the organs of the muzzle was one of the most delicate moments of the whole feast. Iivana Malinen from Vuonninen sang:

I take from *oh*to his tongue
to be my tongue, to be my mind,
for me to sing the kindred song,
[to be] joy for the sitting places;
singing I eat the eye from *oh*to,
lilting, I dig out the ear,
rejoicing, I dismember.¹⁹³⁴

Sarmela emphasized that by eating the ears and eyes of the bear, its powerful senses were transferred to humans.¹⁹³⁵ By contrast, Tarkka stresses that this motif emphasized a deep level of communion and physical fusion between the singer and the bear.¹⁹³⁶ Iivana placed special importance on the tongue: by eating it the hunter acquired a shared language expressed in the form of a “kindred song,” which was considered part of a long tradition, passing from a generation to another.¹⁹³⁷ If the bear tongue was used in the singing of a “kindred song,” the bear itself was considered a skilled singer. Tarkka observes that ‘tongue’ (*kieli*) in Finnish and Karelian¹⁹³⁸ also means ‘language’; it was eaten in order to find an agreement with the bruin, or a common ‘mind’

¹⁹³² *Joulupuuro keitettiin "voisilmä" pantiin keskelle ja silmästä päin ruvettiin syömään* (SKR KRA Samuli Paulaharju 6467. 1917. Vuolijoki). See also SKR KRA Samuli Paulaharju 6465. 1917. Vuolijoki. Heikki Suorsa, 45-year-old man.

¹⁹³³ SKVR VI2/4895. Sulkava. Gottlund n. 814. 9/10 1815. Torvelainen.

¹⁹³⁴ *Kielenpä otan oholta, / kielekseni, mielekseni, / laji virttä laulaakseni, / hoksi istuma sijoille, / laulellen syön silmän oholta, / koikaten korvan koverran, / ilon lyöen irtauttelen* (SKVR I4/1245: 10–16. Vuonninen Meriläinen. n. 506. 1888. Iivana Malinen; heard from his father).

¹⁹³⁵ Sarmela 1991: 218, 232.

¹⁹³⁶ Tarkka 1998: 103.

¹⁹³⁷ Tarkka 1998: 103, 104.

¹⁹³⁸ *Kieli*.

(expressed by the Finno-Karelian word *mieli*).¹⁹³⁹ The word ‘mind’ (*mieli*) refers to ‘sense’ or ‘meaning’ as well as the “mind, mood, sensibility, aspiration, desires and even memory of the person.”¹⁹⁴⁰

Jyrki Malinen from Vuonninen sang a fascinating variation of this motif: “I take the ear from *ohto*, / myself, to hear with ears, / I take the eye from *ohto*, / myself, to see with eyes.”¹⁹⁴¹ Here, the ritual communion with the bruin reached such a level that the singer heard and saw with the ears and eyes of the bear. In the Karelian songs, the singer achieved a high degree of mimetic empathy,¹⁹⁴² perceiving with the organs of the bear and sharing a common mind and language.

Moilanen from Kylänmäki (Suomussalmi) sang similar motifs, adding these lines: “to make [me] unheard by *ohto*”¹⁹⁴³ and “to make [me] invisible by *ohto*.”¹⁹⁴⁴ In this version, eating the bear’s organs was followed by a subtraction of its power; the act made the bear weaker, unable to recognize the hunter or the eaters of its flesh.¹⁹⁴⁵

8.19 Removing the teeth of the bear

The ritual of removing the bear’s teeth followed the ritual eating of its facial organs. In both cases we find a ritual transfer of the bear’s powers, but the teeth contained an especially dangerous force, as they were the weapons of the bear. Even if in the previous songs the hunters emphasized mimetic empathy with the bear, they maintained their human identity and remained conscious of the alterity and potential dangerousness of the bear.¹⁹⁴⁶ By tearing out its teeth, the hunter deprived the bear of its capacity to damage the community. The teeth were stored and used as powerful amulets.

¹⁹³⁹ Tarkka 1998: 103.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Tarkka 1998: 136.

¹⁹⁴¹ *Koroampa otan Oholta, / itse korvin kuullakseñi, / silmänpä otan oh[olta], / itse silmin nähäksëni* (SKVR I4/1242b: 10–16 . Vuonninen. Borerius III, n. 113. 14/9 1877).

¹⁹⁴² See Willerslev 2007: 105–107; see Sections 3.7, 3.14, 10.2.

¹⁹⁴³ *Ohon kuulumattomaksi* (SKVR XII2/6565: 3).

¹⁹⁴⁴ *Ohon näkemättömäksi* (SKVR XII2/6566: 3).

¹⁹⁴⁵ A similar concern was present in other bear ceremonials. Among the Ob-Ugrians, the eyes, ears and nostrils of the bear were covered with buttons, coins or small chips or disks of birchbark. The ritual actors were often masked to prevent the bear from being able to recognize them (Kannisto 1939a: 6; Sirelius 1929: 199).

¹⁹⁴⁶ Mimetic empathy recognizes differences and does not include the dissolution of the self; see Willerslev 2007: 108 and Section 10.2.

For those who dared to directly confront the bear and its skull, removing the teeth was a test of masculinity, strength and magical power. The men should remove the teeth with their bare hands,¹⁹⁴⁷ without using a knife. Tahvana Karvonen from Sukeuskylä (Sonkajärvi) sang: “Now comes the breaking of the bones, / the breaking of the bones, / the cracking of the heads, / the time for pulling out the teeth.”¹⁹⁴⁸

The mistress of Lomajärvi (Kittilä) told that if a powerful *tietäjä* sang this, the teeth would start to fall apart by themselves.¹⁹⁴⁹ In Ristijärvi, a variation of the motif was sung when the bear skull was hung on the tree.¹⁹⁵⁰

In Kylänmäki (Suomussalmi), the best hunters pulled out the bear’s teeth, while all the others sang: “Give me your only ones, / throw your sweet ones, / bring me your fang-weapons.”¹⁹⁵¹ They believed that the teeth became loose only if they sang this motif.¹⁹⁵²

8.20 The ritual use of bear fangs, claws, fur and dried organs

The bear’s fangs, claws, small dried organs and bile were usually preserved and used for a wide range of ritual purposes. Jaakko Lesonen from Puolanka told that when eating the bear’s muzzle, a fang should be put in a closet near the table.¹⁹⁵³ The bear force contained in the fang neutralized the potentially dangerous and polluting bear force contained in the meat or the organs of the bear muzzle. Lesonen also used a fang to protect his horse from the *viha* illnesses¹⁹⁵⁴ provoked by forest predators.¹⁹⁵⁵

¹⁹⁴⁷ *Karhut kannettiin ulos, jossa nahka nyllettiin ja lihat korjattiin vartaalle. Lähteissään jakoivat isäntämiehet keskenään karhun lihat ja veivät kotiinsa. Nahkat laitettiin venytykseen kuivumaan, ja sitte myytiin; niistä saaduilla rahoilla osti jahtivouti ruutia, jolla ammuttiin yhteisessä jahdissa.* (SKVR VI2/4908. Leppävirta. Häyhä, J., *Kesäaskareet*, 130–131. 1898. Lauri Kieman).

¹⁹⁴⁸ *Nyt tuleepi luihen luiske, / luihen luiske, päihen pauke, / hammasten hajotus vuoro* (SKVR VI2/4924: 25–27. Sonkajärvi. Krohn n. 17401. 1888. Sukeuskylä. Tahvana Karvonen, 43-year-old man. Learned from the father Jopi).

¹⁹⁴⁹ SKVR XII2/6569a. Kittilä. Paulaharju 8605 = 25979. 1920. Lomajärvi. Mistress of Lomajärvi emäntä, 50-year-old woman. Born in Petkula (Sodankylä).

¹⁹⁵⁰ SKVR XII2/6523. Ristijärvi. Krohn 0272. 1882. Kemppaala. Juhana Kemppainen.

¹⁹⁵¹ *Anna mulle ainoasi, / heitä hempiät omasi, / tuo mulle tora-aseesi* (SKVR XII2/6568: 1–5. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6285. 1917. Pesiö. Moilanen)

¹⁹⁵² SKVR XII2/6568. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6285. 1917. Pesiö.

¹⁹⁵³ SKVR XII2/6571.

¹⁹⁵⁴ *Metsän nenä.*

¹⁹⁵⁵ SKVR XII2/6571.

The fang was considered a powerful amulet or charm, which the hunters took with them in their bags during the hunt.¹⁹⁵⁶ Ale Alariesto from Riesto (Sompio) told that local bear hunters hung bear fangs on their belts, with each fang representing a killed bear.¹⁹⁵⁷ In this case, the belt was a sign of masculinity and a visible status symbol, which showed how many bears the hunter had killed. It was worn during mass at church.¹⁹⁵⁸

Bear fangs were also used to cure an aching tooth, just as a dried bear throat was used to heal a painful throat.¹⁹⁵⁹ The folk believed that with a bear fang the healer was able to scratch illness away from a sick person. The bear force was considered to be stronger than the force of the illness.¹⁹⁶⁰

Bear claws were preserved and used in many rituals. The claw was the “weapon” of the bear and a personification of the bear force. Like bear teeth, the claw had apotropaic and protective powers that could be used in a great number of situations. The use of bear claws in love and sexual magic is well documented. Girls that wanted to be more attractive kept a bear claw in their pocket.¹⁹⁶¹

Veera Homanen from Kivijärvi told Paulaharju that the *patvaska* stashed a bear claw in a bag hanging from his belt during wedding travel and, upon entering the home, circumambulated the wedding couple to protect the pair from evil magic.¹⁹⁶² Women believed that bear claws helped them to endure the pains or maladies of childbirth.¹⁹⁶³

¹⁹⁵⁶ *Karhun torahammas oli hyvää kappale. Se oli monella mettämiehellä matkassa ja myös karhun jorvakonttia. Hyviä taikakaluja ne olivat laukussa* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 39768. Riesto 1937. Ale Alariesto).

¹⁹⁵⁷ *Karhun torahampaat otettiin. Niitä pantiin vyöhön tästä lähtien. Tehtiin hampaaseen reikä ja nahkanauhalla se siotiin kirkkovyön alareunaan taakse. Isolla tappajalla, Erkin Jaakolla, taisi olla monta hammasta – yksi joka karhusta, että näki, montako on tappanut. Karhun torahammas oli hyvää kappale. Se oli monella mettämiehellä matkassa ja myös karhun jorvakonttia. Hyviä taikakaluja ne olivat laukussa. (sappi ja käärmeenkuu). Sattoi karhunhampaalla ja jorvakontilla mettässä painella pakottava hammastakin.* (SKS KRA Paulaharju 39768. Riesto 15.7.37. Ale Alariesto).

¹⁹⁵⁸ SKS KRA Paulaharju 39768; Paulaharju 1953: 206.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Sihvo 1986: 35.

¹⁹⁶⁰ Tuovinen 1984: 36.

¹⁹⁶¹ Sihvo 1986: 44.

¹⁹⁶² KRA SKS Paulaharju 25985. 1932.

¹⁹⁶³ KRA SKS Paulaharju 25985. 1932.

A bear claw was put on the cradle to protect newborns and infants from diseases sent by the words of evil persons.¹⁹⁶⁴ If a child could not sleep or had nightmares, the parents could put a bear claw under his pillow or inside it.¹⁹⁶⁵

Folk healers warmed a dried bear paw and pushed it against bites in order to cure them, and the bear's bile was used to heal several diseases. Part of the bear paw's fur with claws was tied to the collar or shaft bow of a horse, so that bears would not attack it in pastures near the forest.¹⁹⁶⁶

In Riesto (Sompio), the bear's fur was skinned in the village and then dried on the north side of the house or nailed on a wall facing north.¹⁹⁶⁷ This choice is not surprising, considering that Pohjola (the Northland) was the northern mythic land where the bear was supposed to have been born. Generally, however, the bear fur was kept at home. In medieval Finland, bear fur was often given as a present to a church and as an offering to a specific saint.¹⁹⁶⁸ In Leppävirtä (Niemelä), the "hunt leader"¹⁹⁶⁹ used the money from sold bear furs to buy gunpowder that would be used on communal hunt trips.¹⁹⁷⁰

8.21 Final thanksgiving songs

The bear feast often ended with some songs of thanksgiving to God. The Christian tradition of the "Blessing of Food" could have influenced these. Liisa Juntunen from Röntylä (Suomussalmi) sang: "Many thanks, God bless, / for giving good luck, / for endeavoring the best!"¹⁹⁷¹ The thanksgiving song by Jyrkki Malinen contains clear syncretic elements: "Many thanks, God bless, / as you gave your beloved, / scattered your family."¹⁹⁷² Here God was supposed to act exactly like a forest spirit, who gave a

¹⁹⁶⁴ Sihvo 1986: 35.

¹⁹⁶⁵ Vilkuna K. 1940; Sihvo 1986: 11.

¹⁹⁶⁶ Sihvo 1986: 11, 36.

¹⁹⁶⁷ KRA SKS Paulaharju 39768. Ale Alariesto. Riesto. 1937.

¹⁹⁶⁸ Korhonen 1982; Sihvo 1986: 30.

¹⁹⁶⁹ *Jahtivuoti*.

¹⁹⁷⁰ *Karhut kannettiin ulos, jossa nahka nyllettiin ja lihat korjattiin vartaalle. Lähteissään jakoivat isäntämiehet keskenään karhun lihat ja veivöt kotiinsa. Nahkat laitettiin venytykseen kuivumaan, ja sitte myytiin; niistä saaduilla rahoilla osti jahtivuoti ruutia, jolla ammuttiin yhteisessä jahdissa.* (SKVR VI2 4908. Leppävirtä. Häyhä, J., *Kesäaskareet*, pp. 130–131. 1898. Lauri Kieman).

¹⁹⁷¹ *Suuri kiitos, kost' Jumala, / hyvä onni antamasta, / parempi käkeämästä!* (SKVR XII2/6550: 5–8. Suomussalmi. Krohn 0439. 1882. Röntylä. Liisa Juntunen, 80-year-old woman).

¹⁹⁷² *Suuri kiitos, kost' Jumala, / koska annoit ainostasi, / hajottelit h[eim]oasi* (SKVR I4/1242: 17–19 Vuoninen. Borenius III, n. 113. 14/9/1877. Jyrkki Malinen)

beloved member of his family—namely, the bear—as a catch. Jyrkki Malinen also thanked a female forest spirit, “the giver [or] the forest mistress,”¹⁹⁷³ “for the wide granary, / and the fat castle.”¹⁹⁷⁴ In Venehjärvi, the thanksgiving to the mistress contained a request to send another bear in the future:

Let again, God,
another time, true God,
during the life of this mistress
this *auvo* enter!¹⁹⁷⁵

The polyvalent term *auvo*¹⁹⁷⁶ means ‘bear,’ but it also has additional meanings of ‘groom,’ ‘beloved or desired person,’ ‘relative’ and ‘kinsman.’ In wedding or sexual magic, the word also means ‘luck,’ ‘honor,’ ‘desire’ and ‘intention.’¹⁹⁷⁷

In Latvajärvi, the women asked God to let the bear again “join in our family.”¹⁹⁷⁸

These Karelian songs confirm that the bear was accepted, at least during the feast, as a groom or beloved family member.¹⁹⁷⁹ The mistress hoped that such a beloved guest would return in the future. A successful bear ceremonial was the prerequisite for a successful bear hunt and feast in the future.¹⁹⁸⁰

By contrast, the men hoped for a new drinking party to honor the bear, as seen in the variant of Antti Huttunen from Iisalmi:

Yeast below, the foam up
in the middle, the red ale.
Bring the ale with the tankard,

¹⁹⁷³ *Antaja [ta] metsän emäntä* (SKVR I4/1242: 21).

¹⁹⁷⁴ *Avarasta aitaštaha, lihavasta linnasštaha* (SKVR I4/1242: 21–23).

¹⁹⁷⁵ *Annappa on vastaki, Jumala, / toitsiki, totini Luoja, / eleässä tämän emännän, / tämän auvon astuossa!* (SKVR I4/1235: 75–79. Venehjärvi. Karjalainen n. 12. 94. Varahvontta Lesoñi)

¹⁹⁷⁶ The name *auvo* was also used to invite the bear to join a male group of hunters; see Section 7.11.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Tarkka 2013: 346.

¹⁹⁷⁸ *Tulla meäñ šukuhu* (SKVR I4/1222: 23. Latvajärvi Borenius II, n. 20. 30/6 1872. Jyrkiñi Huotari).

¹⁹⁷⁹ On thanksgiving songs and the connection between weddings and bear ceremonialism, see Sections 10.1 and 10.2.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Kannisto stressed that the goal of Mansi bear ceremonialism was to appease the bruiñ’s soul in such a way that the guest would like to “come back” in the future (Kannisto 1929: 4, 20).

carry with two hoops!
Full is the tankard, full is the birch bark,
full is what God gave.
Let in the future, God,
another time, true God,
the tankard be filled with beer,
the cups get wet with milk
when I am a man,
a man and a good one.¹⁹⁸¹

Abundance of ale was often celebrated in wedding songs as a sign of richness and wealth. The wedding songs *Words of Handsel*¹⁹⁸² (for the bride)¹⁹⁸³ collected in North Savo and Ilomantsi included the lines “Give luck, grant [it], God, / the tankard be filled with ale, / cups get wet with milk.”¹⁹⁸⁴ These songs wished for the best luck for the bride and her household, including an abundance of ale and milk. The request for an abundance of ale at a future bear feast was probably connected with a more general hope for luck and richness for the entire house.

¹⁹⁸¹ *Hiiro alla, vaahti päällä, / keskellä olut punanen. / Tuoppa tuopilla olutta, / kanno kaksivantehella! / Täys’ on tuoppi, täys’ on tuohi, / täyven on antanna Jumala. / Anna vastaki, Jumala, / toistekki, totinen Luoja, / olla tuopin oluessa, / maljat maijossa määrätä, / minun miessä ollessani, / minun miessä ja hyvänä.* (SKVR VI2/4918: 1–12. Iisalmi. Böök, D. n. 8. 1876. Antti Huttunen).

¹⁹⁸² *Onnentoivotussanat.*

¹⁹⁸³ SKVR VII/773: 6–7.

¹⁹⁸⁴ *Anna onni, suo jumala, / oluessa olla tuopit, / maljat maijossa määrätä!* (SKVR VII/773: 5–7 North Savo. Räihä, A. n. 14. 1880); SKVR VII2/2406: 1–3. Ilomantsi. Lönnrot Ub, n. 22. 1838).

Chapter 9

Bringing the Guest Home: Rituals of the Bear Skull

9.1 Separation from the human world

In the last part of the Finnish-Karelian bear ceremonial, in a solemn procession the hunters carried the bear's skull and bones to a sacred pine. The hunters from Ilomantsi left the *tupa*,¹⁹⁸⁵ singing: "I leave now from here, I leave indeed, / it is hard to be in the *tupa* / painful [to be] in the warmth of the children, / an ailment [to be] among the wives."¹⁹⁸⁶ The motif resembles the songs in which the hunter exhorted the bear to leave the den, when the place that the bear should leave was depicted as uncomfortable.¹⁹⁸⁷ The hunters adjusted the descriptions of the places to incite the bear to move in certain directions: when the bear was supposed to enter the *tupa*, it was depicted as a hospitable place full of drink, songs and jolly male companions;¹⁹⁸⁸ when the bear was exhorted to leave it, the place was described as too crowded.¹⁹⁸⁹ An element of negativity is represented in the song by the presence of children and women; the lines accentuate that remaining among the wives would be a real pain for the bear. In the feast, the *tupa* was described as place for drinking men,¹⁹⁹⁰ but after the feast it became a women's place. Now the bruin seems to be considered as a male human adult who loves to roam and travel in the forest and abhors staying at home with children and wives; thus, the hunters' ideal lifestyle was projected onto the bear. The motif is probably connected with the typical opposition between the bear—representing the forest—and the wives, often conceived as the guardians of the

¹⁹⁸⁵ The living, dining and sleeping room in the cabin.

¹⁹⁸⁶ *Lähen nyt tästä, kun lähenük, / tupal' on tuvassa olla, / läyli lasten lämpimässä, / vaiva vaimoin seassa* (SKVR VII5/3397: 23–26 Ilomantsi. Laitinen, H. n. 14. 1865).

¹⁹⁸⁷ See Section 7.2.

¹⁹⁸⁸ See Sections 8.4, 8.5, 8.6.

¹⁹⁸⁹ Ob-Ugrian peoples had different strategies to make the bear leave the cabin. Some Mansi villagers masked like terrifying beings (like the Crane, the Owl, the Fire-Fox, the Crows) behaved aggressively towards the bear and the other villagers, who tried to defend themselves and the bruin (Kannisto 1939a: 15–17).

¹⁹⁹⁰ See Section 8.5.

cattle.¹⁹⁹¹ The bear was warmly welcomed in the village for the feast. But when that ended, the normal boundaries between the bear/forest and the household/cattle yard needed to rapidly be restored.

Leaving the room involved a spatial and social separation between the humans and the bear. In Pielisjärvi, the hunters emphasized this rupture, singing: “Now we will have to part, / both to one’s own home.”¹⁹⁹²

9.2 The return to the mythical birth land of the bear

The songs performed at the beginning of the procession of the bear skull included a description of the boundary between the profane village and the sacred forest. Antti Huttunen from Iisalmi exhorted the bear to wander “along that golden alley, / a silver street, / in a golden cup, / in a copper basket, / across the hill of Pohjola.”¹⁹⁹³ In a hunters’ *Birth of the Bear* transcribed in Piippola, the bruin was born in the sky “in a wooly basket, / in an iron basket.”¹⁹⁹⁴ In a *Birth of the Fire* transcribed in Nilsiiä, the fire was lulled “in a golden basket, / in a copper basket” and lowered from the sky into a crack in the rock in the middle of rapids.¹⁹⁹⁵

The “funeral” of the bear was somewhat similar to its mythic birth: by passing over the hill, being carried in a newborn’s basket, the bruin was returned to the mythical land of its birth (Pohjola). The motif gives the impression that the bear’s death could be followed by rebirth. The hill of Pohjola was a boundary mark between the human village and the otherworld and a variation of the bridge of Pohjola, which the bear was supposed to cross when entering the village.¹⁹⁹⁶

According to Siikala, the landscapes of Pohjola and Tuonela, the Land of Death, are both marked by a river, a rocky hill¹⁹⁹⁷ or a mountain situated at the edge of the world.¹⁹⁹⁸ Passing over the hill of Pohjola, the bear returned to a mythical landscape:

¹⁹⁹¹ See Section 3.4.

¹⁹⁹² *Nyt meillä ero tulepi, kotihinsa kumpasenki* (SKVR VII5/3403: 38–39. Pielisjärvi? Lönnrot Q, n. 136. 1838).

¹⁹⁹³ *Tätä kultaista kujoa, / hopeaista tietä myöten, / kultaisessa kuppisessa, / vaskisessa vakkasessa, / poikki Pohjolan mäkien* (SKVR VI2/4919: 5–9 Iisalmi. Böök, D. n. 10. 1876. Antti Huttunen).

¹⁹⁹⁴ *Villasessa vakkasessa, / rautasessa vakkasessa* (SKVR XII2/6464: 42–43. Piippola. Keränen, E. 295. 1884? Vähä-Lamu. Jussi Paakkinen).

¹⁹⁹⁵ SKVR VI1/3207: 5–6; see Karhu 1947: 82.

¹⁹⁹⁶ SKVR I4/1202; see Section 7.11.

¹⁹⁹⁷ *Kivimäki*.

¹⁹⁹⁸ Siikala 1992: 138; see Section 5.6.

its otherworldly forest, often called Pohjola in the songs, the mythic northland where the bear had been born¹⁹⁹⁹ and where the bear hunt was supposed to be performed.

In epic songs, Pohjola's gates shine with gold, which was one sign that marked this otherworldly but rich land.²⁰⁰⁰ Antti Huttunen from Iisalmi described the path to Pohjola as golden and silver. The bear hunters sang about the forest's golden and silver landscapes when they reached the den or found their prey, and when the bear was carried towards the village it also traveled on a golden and silver road.²⁰⁰¹ The *Bear Songs* usually describe the path that the bear should follow as shining like gold. The hunters carefully avoided any mention of the negative connotations—such as cold, dark and dangers—that Pohjola often had in healing incantations; in those, the mythic land was the dreadful place of origin of illnesses and where they should be banished.²⁰⁰²

9.3 The procession and rituals of the bear skull

The environment around the procession was clearly described as mythical and otherworldly in *Bear Songs*. Yet, documents with descriptions of the procession and its rituals are scarce. The *Text of Viitasaari* mentions that the bridal couple had a place of honor not only at the table of the feast,²⁰⁰³ but also during the procession:

Finally the procession started, when the decapitated head and the bones were carried out, and all the guests rose from the table. The “bridegroom” and “bride” placed themselves at the head of the procession; a man followed carrying a tankard of ale, then the singer who sang the poem given below, and behind him the carrier of the head and bones in a vessel. The rest of the people who wished to join in walked behind.²⁰⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹⁹ See Sections 5.2, 5.6.

²⁰⁰⁰ Siikala 1992: 138.

²⁰⁰¹ See Sections 6.9, 7.11.

²⁰⁰² Siikala 2002: 179.

²⁰⁰³ SKVR IX4/1096; see Sections 8.2, 8.5.

²⁰⁰⁴ *Entel. har processen börjadt, när det utgnagade biörnhufvskräfwet med benen skulle utbäras, då stodo alla gäfterna up. Först börja brudgummen och bruden gick efterst gå i brädd sedan gick en Karl, bärande et Käril med öhl uti; thärnäft fölgde fångaren, som fang den här nedanföre skrefne Runo, och efter honom then som bar hufvudet med benen i et fat, annat folk som wille giöra fäljkap. [...]* (SKVR IX4/1096; circa 1750). English Translation partly based on the one by Clive Tolley, cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 74.

Kaarle Krohn noticed similarities between wedding processions and the one for the bear skull,²⁰⁰⁵ and later Sarmela stated that the rites of the skull included a ritual march similar to a human funeral or wedding procession.²⁰⁰⁶ Both observations are correct: in these rituals the procession had at its head a bridal couple or by the deceased (the skull or the coffin).

The order of the skull's procession emphasized the importance of ale and the singer. Later the ale would be drunk from the nostrils of the bear skull:

When the procession arrived at the place of the skull, the place where the bear's skull is always taken, the skull was hung on the branches of a pine tree and the bones buried at its foot. As a farewell the ale was drunk [from the skull]... which was brought in the procession and after that they returned in the same order as they had come, but silently."²⁰⁰⁷

One of the oldest (albeit a short) description of the ritual of drinking from the bear skull was included in the sermon given by Bishop of Finland Isaak Rothovius for the inauguration of Academia Åboensis (July 15, 1640).²⁰⁰⁸

When they catch a bear, a party is held in the dark, and they drink a toast for the bear out of its skull, and groan just as the bear does. Thus would they gain a greater good fortune!²⁰⁰⁹

The hunters apparently performed a mimetic and ritual imitation of the bear's groaning, a detail that other sources have omitted. The bishop mentioned that the hunters believed that by doing this they would gain greater luck in performing the

²⁰⁰⁵ Krohn [1915] 2008: 150.

²⁰⁰⁶ Sarmela 1991: 219.

²⁰⁰⁷ *När de kommit til hufwudskalle platzen, det har warit wift ställe dijt altid hufwouden blif afförde, satt det at hänga på en quift af talträd, och benen öfrige thär i roten. Til et valete draks ölet som i procesfen dijt blef burit, och ledan haf^a de kommit i samma ordning tillbaka, som de dijt farit, doch tyft.* (SKVR IX4/1096).

²⁰⁰⁸ See Section 1.2.3.

²⁰⁰⁹ *Karhua pyytäessä he kuuluvat pimeydessä panevan pystyyn pidot, juoan karhun pääkallosta, murisevan niin kuin karhu murisee, ja niin ne kuuluvat hankkivan lisää pyyntionnea* (Rothovius 1990 [1641]. Cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 131 and Pentikäinen 2014: 429; English translation by Clive Tolley; Finnish translation in Siikala 2016: 380.

rituals. Haavio argued that the “greater fortune” mentioned in this sermon was luck in hunting.²⁰¹⁰ The bear ceremonial could have been a ritual to obtain the favor of the forest spirits for the hunt in general, not only for the bear hunt. Another old source about the ritual of the bear skull is present in the text *Historisk och æconomisk beskrifning öfver Calajoki sock uti Österbotn* (1754) by Christian Salmenius:

In ancient times, the inhabitants had this superstitious custom: when they killed a bear, they filled the skull with ale and they hung it on some tree branch. As the skull hung there and some drops trickled from some holes made in it, they had fun; they bowed towards the skull of the bear and addressed it. The custom of honoring the bear head detached from the body and afterwards burying it with the greatest and most beautiful of ceremonies was also abolished by the acts of the clergymen.²⁰¹¹

In Eastern Finland, the rite of drinking from the skull was still alive in the 19th century. The hunters of Kangasniemi drank ale from the skull of the bear and sang: “God be thanked, / as you gave, God, / a table bird on the end of the table, / a singing bird on the end of the board.”²⁰¹² The motif seems to be a thanksgiving to God for the bear feast earlier—where the end of the table was the place of honor for the bear, and the bruin was called “bird,” one of the typical circumlocutions for a bride.²⁰¹³ In the 20th century, some informants still remembered that in the past people drank from the skull. In 1912, Mikko Laitinen from Ohensalo (Kangasniemi) told that:

²⁰¹⁰ Haavio 1967: 15.

²⁰¹¹ *Tämä taikauskonen tapa oli asukkailla muinoin, kun ne olivat kaataneet jonkun karhun; he täyttivät karhun kallon oluella, ripustivat sen johonkin puunoksaan, ja koko ajan kallon siellä riipussa ja muutaman juomatipan noruessa siihen jätetyistä pienistä aukoista, he pitivät hauskaa, kumartelivat karhun päätä tai puhuttelivat siitä. Tapa kunnioittaa ruumista irrotettua karhunpäätä ja sitten haudata se suurin ja komein menoin on sekin pappien toimenpitein lopetettu.* Finnish translation in Haavio 1967: 16.

²⁰¹² *Kiitos olkoon, Jumala, / koska annoit, Jumala, / pöytä linnun pöyän päähän, / laululinnun lauvan päähän* (SKVR VI2/4896. Kangasniemi. Laitinen, H. n. 235. Before 1894).

²⁰¹³ See Section 8.10.

When a bear was killed, it was brought to the roots of a sacred tree, where the funerals were held. For this reason ale was made, and it was drunk from the holes of the nostrils of the skull of the bear.²⁰¹⁴

In the skull rite, the ale acted as an instrument to have a direct, physical connection with the bear skull and bear force. The ale was offered to the bear, but at the same time the hunter also drank it; it was a shared drinking. By offering ale to the bear skull, its soul was pleased and it happily transmigrated to the sky or its protecting spirits.²⁰¹⁵

The ale passed from the skull, a powerful container of bear force, and ended up in the mouth, stomach and veins of the hunter. According to Ari Turunen, drinking ale from the skull strengthened the sense of community of the hunters.²⁰¹⁶ Turunen also notes that drinking from a human skull was a rite present in several war rituals in different parts of the world: the people believed that by drinking from a skull the soul or force of an enemy was transferred to the man who killed him. According to the Celts, the human skull was the container of a sacred force.²⁰¹⁷ The Vikings drank a strong mead from the skull of a killed enemy.²⁰¹⁸ In the case of the bear ceremonials, the skull was considered to be the container of the bear soul by several Eurasian peoples.²⁰¹⁹ Part of the force of a deceased person was rapidly “assimilated” by drinking from their skull. By drinking a liquid, nutritive substances pass faster into the blood circulation than by digesting food. Alcoholic drinks also contain an internal magic power or spirit able to change the state of mind of the drinkers.²⁰²⁰ The methods of assimilating the bear force were various; for example, during the feast the hunter drank the bile of the bear mixed with spirits.²⁰²¹

The hunter also offered ale to the bear skull. The rite thus continued the offering of ale to the dead bruin which had started during the feast. Drinking ale marked social gatherings,²⁰²² and drinking it from the skull ideally joined the bear and the hunter in

²⁰¹⁴ *Kun tapettiin karhu, viettiin se pyhän puun juurelle, jossa pidettiin peijaiset. Tätä varten oli tehty olutta, jota juotiin karhun pääkallon sieramen reijistä.* (SKS KRA Oskari Nousiainen 85. 1912. Kangasniemi, Ohensalo. Mikko Laitinen, 75-year-old man).

²⁰¹⁵ Apo 2001: 74.

²⁰¹⁶ Turunen Ari 1999: 81.

²⁰¹⁷ Eliade 1982: 139; Turunen Ari 1999: 81.

²⁰¹⁸ Thomson 1993: 170; Suuronen 1969: 120; Turunen Ari 1999: 81.

²⁰¹⁹ See Sections 9.15, 9.16.

²⁰²⁰ Falk 1960: 6–7; Turunen Ari 1999: 81; Apo 2001: 67–68.

²⁰²¹ See Section 8.11.

²⁰²² See Section 8.10 and Apo 2001: 67.

an act in which the distance between the hunter's mouth and the bear skull was very minimal.

The hunters did not offer the skull ale in all the circumboreal bear ceremonials, but often they chose to donate a product with religious, cultural, social and economic value. The Cree hunters put tobacco in the bear's mouth or in its jaw.²⁰²³ Among other Native Americans, tobacco was used in pipe ceremonies for religious rituals or to seal a covenant or treaty. It was considered a gift from the Creator and its smoke carried thoughts and prayers to the spirits.²⁰²⁴

9.4 Interpretations of the song of the bear skull ritual in the *Text of Viitasaari*

The meaning of the songs of the *Text of Viitasaari* related to the rite of the bear skull have puzzled Finnish scholars. Haavio interpreted part of these songs as a dialogue between a hunter and an old bear skull hung on the tree and the new bear skull, which belonged to the bear just killed.²⁰²⁵ However, the *Text of Viitasaari* does not contain any information about this kind of dialogue. It presents only the text of the song as it would be sung by the same hunter:

80 I would take to the forest
my golden king,
to the pine's boughs, in a pine grove.
Here is my son's head,
from the belly of my golden one,
85 here is the eldest boy, [the eldest] of the brothers.
My sons are wretched,
even though they are exhausted in the sludge,
nor there is any man in me.
I came here to the good celebration,
90 here to the bad den,
here to the luckless bough.
Do not look at the man with skewed eyes;
look at the man beneath the coat.

²⁰²³ Rockwell 1991: 40.

²⁰²⁴ Gottsegen 1940: 107.

²⁰²⁵ Haavio 1967: 20.

I have a small waistcoat, a little one.²⁰²⁶

My impression here is that all these lines should be sung by the same hunter who sang for a skull only, namely, the one of the bruin that was just killed. Thus, my interpretation is considerably different from Haavio's.

I argue that in lines 83–84, the hunter describes the bear's skull as his son: "here is my son's head," "from the belly of my golden one." The interpretation of line 85 is more challenging. The "eldest son" should be the bear's skull, but who were its brothers? Maybe they were other bear skulls, as sometimes it was customary to hang several bears' skulls on the same tree. In this case, some skulls could have fallen down from the branches and sunk into the sludge (lines 86–88).

Why did the hunter describe the bear skull as the head of his son? I would argue that the hunter tried to avoid the revenge of the bear skull by singing about the existence of familiar links between the hunters and the bear, as this was a strategy that the hunter often used in bear ceremonies.²⁰²⁷

Before, in verses connected to the hunt, the singer of the *Text of Viitasaari* asked the bear to avoid attacking him, singing: "do not grow prouder than the man, / I am a man, the son of your brother."²⁰²⁸ The kin relationship between the hunter and the bear seems to have been interchangeable; in the same song the hunter called the bear both his son and his uncle. The exact status of the bear in the hunter's family tended to change, but what was essential was that the bruin recognized the existence of some kind of kin relationship with the hunter, because it should refrain from harming a relative.²⁰²⁹

Furthermore, in a song collected in Iisalmi in 1885, the hunter welcomed the bear skull by addressing it as his son: "Come, my wretched²⁰³⁰ boy, / you have been there

²⁰²⁶ *Minä veisin metzäähän; / culdaisen cuningani, / petajan oxaan menningössä. / Tälä minun poicani pä / minun culdani cuvusta, / täällä vanhin poica veljexiä. / On minun poicani poloiset / jopa ne uhusa uvutettin, / eipä minusa miestä ensingähän / tulin tänne cuhtuhin hyvin / tälle pesälle pahalle / tälle oxalle onnettomalle. / Elä miestä nurin silimin cato. / catzo miestä nuttuhin ala, / mull on pieni Livi pickaruinen.* (SKVR IX4/1096: 80–94. English translation partially based on the one by Clive Tolley in Pentikäinen 2007: 75–76).

²⁰²⁷ See Sections 5.11 and 7.4.

²⁰²⁸ *Elä käy miestä ylpiämästi / mina mies veljes poika* (SKVR IX4/1096: 39–40).

²⁰²⁹ On the strategic use of the humanity of the bruin to stop a bear attack, see Sections 5.11 and 7.4.

²⁰³⁰ The singer used the adjective 'wretched,' mentioned in line 86 of the *Text of Viitasaari*.

on the edge of the great swamp.”²⁰³¹ In this case, the hunter stressed that the bruin was in a very uncomfortable place, and he offered the bear shelter.²⁰³²

The hunter of the *Text of Viitasaari* further stressed that “nor there is any man in me” (line 88); thus, he noted, he was not manly and strong, but weak and feeble. Depicting himself as spineless, the hunter denied that he could ever be a menace for the bear. The hunters sometimes used the rhetorical strategy of depicting themselves as poor or weak during the hunt. Being weak also justified the request for help addressed to a forest spirit.²⁰³³

The hunter sang variations of the motif “nor is there any man in me” two times in the same text: for example, in line 26 (“Am I not a man enough?”)²⁰³⁴ and in line 54 (“Am I not a man?”).²⁰³⁵ It is logical to argue that also in this case, the singer was the hunter. By contrast, Haavio considered this line to be part of the song sung by the old skull. But why should a skull sing about the fact that it lacks masculinity or strength?

The singer of the *Text of Viitasaari* seems to stress that he came to the bear den and pine branch not by his own strength of will or thanks to his masculinity, but by chance, invited by someone else (“I came here to the good invitations,” in line 88). The hunter describes the bear den as “bad” in line 90 and the branch of the pine as “luckless” in line 91: he seems to be saying that he did not really want to reach these places.

Just having described himself as spineless, the hunter implored the bear skull: “Do not look at the man with skewed eyes” (line 92). The hunter seems to have been scared by the skull’s curse or the evil eye, and he begged the skull to regard him as a simple man (“look at the man beneath the coat,” line 93) dressed in light and simple clothes (“I have a small waistcoat, a little one,” line 94). Maybe it was a way of saying that he did not have any “heavy” magical protection made by “iron belts” or “iron shirts,”²⁰³⁶ so he was vulnerable and the bear skull should feel pity for him. In the following lines, the hunter stresses how unfortunate his condition was:

95 When I set out, God,

²⁰³¹ *Tule, poikani poloinen, / tuolla oot ollu suuren suon sivulla* (SKVR VI2/4922: 28–29. Iisalmi. Snellman, Sofia n. 24. 1885. Oinasjärvi. Olli Huttunen).

²⁰³² The places that the bear was supposed to leave were often described as being uncomfortable; see Sections 7.2 and 9.1.

²⁰³³ See Section 6.7.

²⁰³⁴ *Eikö miestä meilkiätä minusa?*

²⁰³⁵ *Eikö miestä miesä ole?*

²⁰³⁶ See Section 4.6.

in this luckless situation,²⁰³⁷
this difficult trouble,
I even ended up in an odd place.²⁰³⁸

In my view, the hunter continued to lament that he reached a “luckless situation” (line 96) and “ended up in odd place,” (98) and maybe he even asked God help to leave the place soon (line 95). The verb “to end up”²⁰³⁹ in line 98 indicates precisely that the hunter came to the “luckless” place by chance; in other words, it was neither his fault nor his intention. In some songs, to explain the cause of the bear’s death, the hunter lamented reaching the spot by chance.²⁰⁴⁰

Afterwards, the hunter sang about the ritual drinking from the skull:

I, a man, am a traveler of the forest.
100 If I would drink from your skull
put your head in a crevice,
put silver where you are,
gold under your arms,
so that you need not flutter about
105 nor fall from the branches of the pine,
nor be eaten by every dog.
I already toasted for your feast,
come to my protection, homely staff.²⁰⁴¹

Now the hunter showed more self-confidence and stressed his courage and masculinity. The act of drinking from the skull was considered a demonstration of courage, because direct contact with the bear skull was seen as potentially dangerous.

²⁰³⁷ Or “place.”

²⁰³⁸ *Cumma [l]ähtisin Jumala / täsä onnettomasa tilasa / täsä vaivas vaikiasa, / jopa jouduihin outoon tilahan* (SKVR IX4/1096: 95–98). English translation partially based on the one by Clive Tolley, cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 75–76.

²⁰³⁹ *Joutua*.

²⁰⁴⁰ See Section 7.6.

²⁰⁴¹ *Minä mies olen metän käviä; / kuin jaisin pääs calloisa, / pääsi raolle rakennaisin, / panisimba hopia siasi, / celda cainalosi, / jotteipä sinun pidäis liehuaman, / ei männyn oxasta putoman, / eikä joca coira syömän, / jopa minä join päälisesi, / tule turvaxi cotinen sauva* (SKVR IX4/1096: 99–108).. English translation partially based on the one by Clive Tolley, cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 75–76).

The “homely staff” was one of the magic objects mentioned by the *tietäjäs* in their protective rituals. Lines 102–106 could contain a reference to some offering of melted gold and silver for the bear skull. The sacrifice was intended to prevent that the bear “fluttered around” (line 103), probably to seek revenge against the hunters, or that the bear skull would fall from the tree. A more practical interpretation could be that precious melted metals were used to attach the bear skull on the tree, but that does not seem very realistic, since generally the quantity of silver and gold poured as a sacrifice were just a few drops from a coin. In line 106, the hunter remembered that he hung the bear skull on a branch to keep the dogs from eating it. It was a demonstration that the bear’s bones had been respected.²⁰⁴² In the following lines, the hunter repeated that he had reached a bad place:

I have a betrothed bride,
110 I came here, a poor man
to this bad place,
which is endowed with bad luck,
on an austere, unknown road.²⁰⁴³

The hunter tried to escape the revenge of the bear skull by telling that he had a betrothed bride (line 109) and that he was a poor man reaching by chance a bad place (lines 110–113). The hunter stressed that his arrival was unintentional, and the road was defined as “unknown.”

In the following verses, the hunter again shows self-confidence and his knowledge of protective magic:

I unraveled the matter
115 so that you would do no evil.
I fastened my spear
with powerful nails,
and I took my rifle there
when I left here to go skiing.
120 Do you have bone skis?
I have an iron knife,
my own dagger in a man’s sheath,

²⁰⁴² On respect for the bones, see Sections 9.6, 9.7, 9.8, 9.15, 9.16.

²⁰⁴³ *Minulla on kihlattu morsian, / minä menin tänne köyhä miesi, / tähän paicahan pahaan, / joc on covalla onnella coettu, / tielle tuimalle tundemattomalle* (SKVR IX4/1096: 109–113).

skis made of wood,
skis made of thick-set spruce;
125 I have skis for my feet.²⁰⁴⁴

The hunter informed the skull about the magic preparations made before the hunt. The fact that the hunter described the spear's nails as powerful indicates that they were strengthened with iron force.

Haavio's interpretation of all these lines was completely different from mine. According to him, the hunter sang lines 80–82; someone interpreting the role of the “old bear skull” sang lines 83–91; the hunter sang lines 92–94; the new bear skull sang lines 95–99, the hunter sang lines 99–108; the new bear skull sang lines 109–113;²⁰⁴⁵ and the hunter sang lines 114–125.²⁰⁴⁶ Haavio based this reconstruction on the opinion of the anonymous commentator who wrote notes of explanation for the song lines of the *Text of Viitasaari*:

It feels that the oldest skull hanging from the tree is welcoming the participants, deploring that the most important member of his family, the relative coming, has just fallen from the womb of the beloved.²⁰⁴⁷

This comment seems to refer to lines 80–85. But could the interpretation of the anonymous commentator of the *Text of Viitasaari* be reliable? The comment is quite obscure, and Haavio argued that the writer intended to say that the old skull lamented to the hunters that it was a disgrace that the poor killed bear had been born, as its destiny was so unfortunate.²⁰⁴⁸

According to Haavio, both the new skull and the oldest one ended in a bad place: the evil den and the luckless bough (lines 90–91). He stated that the old skull was the “*emuu* of the bear,” a term that in Haavio's opinion signified the mythical ancestor

²⁰⁴⁴ *Minä asian arvelin, ettet pahoja tekisi, / säyläisin minä keihäni, / vielä väki nauloilla kini, / ja vietin sinne geveri, / koska tästä lähdin hihtämähän. / Ongo sulla luidet suxet, / mulla on rautainen veitzi / oma puuko miehen tupesa / suxet tehdyt puusta / suxet tehdyt janhoxesta / mulla on jalcainen lylyinen* (SKVR IX4/1096: 114–125. English translation partially based on the one by Clive Tolley, cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 75–76).

²⁰⁴⁵ According to Haavio, the new bear skull declared that he had a betrothed: the girl married in the feast of the *Text of Viitasaari*. See Section 8.2.

²⁰⁴⁶ Haavio 1967: 20.

²⁰⁴⁷ Haavio 1967: 20.

²⁰⁴⁸ Haavio 1967: 20.

mother of the animal species.²⁰⁴⁹ He stressed that the *emuu* of the bear was the forest spirit Hongotar (the Pine Lady). In a line of the *Text of Viitasaari*, the hunter sang that the bear came from Hongotar's family.²⁰⁵⁰

Haavio argued that the word 'Hongotar' came from the word *honka* ('pine tree'),²⁰⁵¹ and he mentioned that Castrén believed that Hongotar was the guardian spirit or the goddess of the pine tree.²⁰⁵² Haavio was convinced that Hongotar was the first, mythic bear pine on whose branch was hung the skull of the first bear, the ancestor mother of the family of the bear.²⁰⁵³ Haavio compared Hongotar with the dryads of Greek mythology.

According to Haavio, all bears should descend from this ancestor mother. However, the identification between Hongotar, the pine tree, the older bear skull, the first bear and the ancestor mother of the bear is not really supported by any ethnographic data. In the songs, the skull is generally identified with the killed bear or its soul, not with the female forest spirit protecting the bear. The hunters and the collectors never mentioned that the old bear skull or a new bear skull sang specific lines during the bear skull ritual.

The hunters simply sang for the bear or for the forest spirits. The bear and the forest spirits remained silent listeners. Only in very few *Bear Songs* did the hunters sing that the bear or the forest spirit asked the hunter how they were able to reach the den.²⁰⁵⁴

The only data supporting part of Haavio's interpretation seems to be a short writing by the anonymous commentator of the *Text of Viitasaari*. But this commentator was not a professional ethnographer, nor an expert collector of folklore. He was a Swedish speaker who was not fluent in Finnish, and he interpreted the contents of the lines thanks to a Finnish informant. It is thus possible that he misunderstood parts of the contents of the songs.

My hypothesis is that the editorial interpretation of Haavio is not very reliable and that the same hunter sang all these lines (80–125) for the same bear skull. The hunter tried to avoid the bear skull's revenge or its "evil eye," telling it that:

1. they are relatives,

²⁰⁴⁹ Haavio 1967: 21.

²⁰⁵⁰ SKVR IX4/1096: 37–38; see Section 5.11.

²⁰⁵¹ Haavio 1967: 25.

²⁰⁵² Haavio 1967: 24.

²⁰⁵³ Haavio 1967: 26.

²⁰⁵⁴ See Section 7.1.

2. the hunter is engaged and from a poor family, and
3. the hunter is a weak, poor man, who came by accident to a “bad,” “unknown” place, the place around the pine of the bear skull.

Similar deluding strategies were commonly used by hunters who moved the skull, presenting themselves as weak and giving an account of their “casual” presence in the place where the bear was killed. The hunter also informed the skull that:

4. he had performed the skull ritual correctly, doing sacrifices of silver and gold, and protecting the skull from dogs.

If the bear and the forest spirit were aware of the respectful performance of the ritual, they were pleased and did not seek revenge. If the respectful rites were not enough to protect the hunter, he informed the skull that he would be a mighty opponent, because:

5. he dared to drink the beer from the skull, and
6. he had a powerful spear, an iron knife and strong skis.

Furthermore, just after line 125, the singer of the *Text of Viitasaari* added a short incantation:

Go to flaming Helfwetti (Hell)! Don't you think that I am a man, a man in the first place, a man in the bygone days?²⁰⁵⁵

The incantation followed the model of a short *Banishing Spell*.²⁰⁵⁶ The hunter brutally sent the bruin's soul to Helveti, a Finnish equivalent of the Christian Hell. This is the probably the roughest incantation in the whole corpus of the Finnish *Bear Songs*, being the only case where the bear's soul was definitively banished to Hell.

Haavio did not mention at all the incantation,²⁰⁵⁷ maybe because it did not fit very well with his interpretation of the *Text of Viitasaari* as the most archaic of the *Bear Songs*.

²⁰⁵⁵ *Mene sinä tuli Helfwetin, etkö sinä minussa miestä lule olewan, ensingän, ennengän?* (SKVR IX4/1096: 80–125). English translation partially based on the one by Clive Tolley, cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 75–76.

²⁰⁵⁶ *Manaus*.

²⁰⁵⁷ Haavio 1967: 20.

The incantation was clearly influenced by the Christian faith and the *tietäjäs'* belief system.

The dramatic development of the lines of the *Text of Viitasaari* resemble a pattern found in healing incantations. The *tietäjä* could start the incantations by asking for the help of some supernatural being (often Ukko or the Virgin Mary), since they were not able to face the illness spirit alone. Later, the *tietäjä* became more and more threatening, frightful and fierce; he spoke directly to the illness, using imperatives that stressed how mighty was his force and how powerful were his garments, and finally he expelled the supernatural being to another world with a set of lines which scholars²⁰⁵⁸ have called *Banishing Spells*.²⁰⁵⁹

A similar dramatic climax seems to be present also in the *Text of Viitasaari*. At first the hunter humbly declares how weak he was to ask for pity, but step by step he stresses that the mighty force of his hunting garment prevented the skull from doing any harm, and at the end he dares to send the skull's soul to Hell. When the hunter utters the banishing spell, he emphasizes he is a real man, even if he has completely denied his masculinity some lines before.

The "fire of Helveti"²⁰⁶⁰ was one of the possible places of banishment for illnesses.²⁰⁶¹ The hunter probably tried to banish the dangerous soul of the bear to the fires of Hell by using the model of a banishing spell. The *Text of Viitasaari*, considered by Haavio to be a relic of a prehistoric worldview, seems to be filled with elements of the *tietäjäs'* folk beliefs.

9.5 The revenge of the bear skull's tree

The song of the "Text of Viitasaari" reveals that the hunters feared the soul and the force still present in the bear skull. Drinking from the skull was an act of bravery because the force of the bear was still active there and in the pine. Furthermore, the people believed that the skull and its pine continued to be powerful and dangerous many years after the skull ritual. In Kangasniemi, it was believed that a man who dared to hit the bear skull's pine with an axe would become crazy.²⁰⁶² In Haukivuori, the one dared to cut down a bear skull's tree was hardly punished:

²⁰⁵⁸ See Siikala 2002: 93–111.

²⁰⁵⁹ *Manaus*.

²⁰⁶⁰ *Helvetin tuli*.

²⁰⁶¹ Siikala 1992: 154; Siikala 2002: 179.

²⁰⁶² SKVR VI2/4898. Kangasniemi. Laitinen, H. n. 237. Before 1894.

At the end of Nykylänniemi there was a great sacrificial pine for the bear. Every time that a bear was killed, its skull was brought there and it was hung from a severed branch. Nevertheless, some men were envious of the lucky bear slayer and decided to cut down the tree, because they were convinced that the forest spirit favored it too much. As they did not dare to cut it down by themselves, they made the retarded Pirta-Kalle drink so much that he became drunk and they also gave him spirits as a remuneration. Pirta-Kalle cut down the sacrificial pine, but a short time after his knee became bent and it remained like that until the end of his life. During a trip in the forest a bear tore up so badly the people who instigated the act that they did not have any more luck killing bears.²⁰⁶³

Haavio noted that it was prohibited to touch the skull or take it away from the tree.²⁰⁶⁴ In Iisalmi, the hunter who hung the skull on the branch sang curses against those who would dare to remove the skull: “twist his head, / wind his nose aside!”²⁰⁶⁵ or “wrench his hand into a hook.”²⁰⁶⁶ In Viena Karelia, the line “twist his head” was uttered in incantations to frighten thieves and force them to give back stolen goods.²⁰⁶⁷

Several Northern peoples believed that the bear skull had powers. Cree hunters could use the bear skull for divinations, but generally before hanging it on the pole. The skull was put nearby the place where the hunter slept in the lodge, because the people believed that the spirit of the slain bear would help him to have “bear dreams” to catch more bears in the future. After that, they hung the skull on the pole.²⁰⁶⁸

²⁰⁶³ *Nykyälänniemeen nenässä oli suuri karhunuhripetäjä. Aina kun karhu kadettiin, tuotiin sen kallo ja ripustettiin petäjän katkaistuun oksaan. Muutamat miehet olivat kuitenkin kateellisia hyöäonniselle karhunkaatajalle ja päättivät kaataa puun, koska arvelivat haltijan tätä liiaksi suosivan. Kun he eivät kuitenkaan itse uskaltaneet puuta kaataa, juottivat he vähä-älyisen Pirta-Kallen humalaan ja antoivat vielä palkaksikin viinaa. Pirta-Kalle kaatoikin uhripetäjän, mutta tuli pian tämän jälkeen koukkupolveksi, jollaisena pysyi elämänsä loppuun asti. Tekoon yllyttäneitä repi karhu eräällä metsäretkellä pahoin, eikä näillä enää ollut mitään onnea karhunkaadossa (cfr. in Simonsuuri 1984: 76).*

²⁰⁶⁴ Haavio 1967: 32.

²⁰⁶⁵ *Väänä päättä vääärälleen, / nokka syrjähän syseä!* (SKVR VI2/4920: 5–8. Iisalmi. Böök, D. n. 11. 1876. Antti Huttunen).

²⁰⁶⁶ *Kättä koukkuun kokkoo* (SKVR VI2/7407 a).

²⁰⁶⁷ SKVR I4/1215: 10. Kiestinki. Meriläinen n. 104. 1888. Teppana Kananaiä.

²⁰⁶⁸ Rockwell 1991: 40, 25.

9.6 Paying respect to the bear's skull and bones

The songs for the bear skull collected in the 19th century contain some differences if compared with that in the *Text of Viitasaari*, where the singer describes how he reached the pine—described as a bad place—by chance. In the 19th-century sources, the hunters emphasized their intention to carry the bear skull to a good and safe place; the bear's soul was not banished to Hell but often exhorted to reach the mythic land of its birth in the sky or in the forest. Generally, a hunter asked where the other hunters were carrying the bear, and the latter ones answered, giving details. The dialogic style of the songs of the skull's rite was structurally similar to one of the bear feast songs.²⁰⁶⁹ At first, the hunters sang about the places where the bear skull should not be left. The hunters of Ilomantsi sang a dialogue that emphasized that they did not discard the skull on the road:

[One hunter asked to another hunter:]

Where did you escort your prey
convoy your good quarry?
Have you left [it] on the ice?
Have you chucked [it] on the path?
Have you sunk [it] in the slushy snow?

[The other hunter answered:]

I haven't left [it] on the ice,
I haven't sunk [it] in the slushy snow,
I haven't chucked [it] on the road."²⁰⁷⁰

The hunters constantly informed the deceased bear and the forest spirits about the details of the ritual, stressing that they were performing it in accord with the rules; the skull should not be offended, compared to if it had been left on the road or in the snow.

According to Haavio, the ancestor spirit of the bear and the oldest bear skull on the pine tree²⁰⁷¹ asked these questions²⁰⁷² and a hunter answered, but in the ethnographic sources the hunters did not mention that someone of their group took the role of the

²⁰⁶⁹ See Sections 8.1, 8.4, 8.5.

²⁰⁷⁰ *Minne saatit saalihisi, / ennätit hyvän eräsi, / ootko jäälle jättänynnä, / vaanko tiehen tellänynnä, / uhkuhun upottanunna? / En oo jäälle jättänynnä, / uhkuhun upottanunna, / enk' oo tiehen tellänynnä* (SKVR VII2/3396: 1–8. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 50 b. 1846).

²⁰⁷¹ *Karhun emuu*.

²⁰⁷² Haavio 1967: 22; Sarmela 1991: 220.

bear skull. The dialogue was between two hunters, and the forest spirit was supposed to listen carefully to their dialogue.

In Ilomantsi, a similar motif was present also in wedding songs. The groom arriving home with the bride was greeted with the song: “Where did you escort your prey, / take the good catch? / maybe you dropped [it] on the road, / or left [it] on the ice, / sunk [it] in the slushy snow.”²⁰⁷³ The groom answered that he put the prey (the bride) “in the sleeve of the one who skied down the elk, / in the armpit of the bear-slayer.”²⁰⁷⁴ Thus, in both the skull rite’s songs and wedding songs are found the motif of the identification between the prey and the bride and the groom and the hunter. In the wedding songs, the ideal groom should be as successful in taking the bride home as in hunting down elk and bears.

Iivana Malinen from Vuonninen sang that the skull was not offended, as it had not been left in any dishonorable spots: “I did not trample [it] in the swamp, / I did not throw [it] on the heath, / nor I did crack [it] in the thicket, / and I did not place [it] badly.”²⁰⁷⁵ The skull could easily be dissolved or broken in the swamp or in the ice. One of the main goals of the skull ritual was the careful preservation of the skull itself.²⁰⁷⁶

9.7 Choosing a pine tree for the bear skull

In almost all of the songs of the skull ritual, the hunters reassured the bear skull that they had hung it in an honorable and safe place. In Ilomantsi, they sang that they put the skull on a branch of a specific type of tree:

I do not stick [it] on a rowan
nor poke it on a goat willow,
but on the top of a pine, the good tree.
I hung [it] up on a pure tree,

²⁰⁷³ *Minne saatit saalihisi, / ehätit hyvän eräsi, / jos lienet tielle tellännyssä, / eli jäälle jättännyssä, / uhkuhun upottanunna?* (SKVR VII2/3034: 1–5. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 187. 1846; cited in Ilomäki 1994: 245–246).

²⁰⁷⁴ *Hirven hiihtajan hihahan, / karhun tappajan kinalohon* (SKVR VII2/3034: 11–12; cited in Ilomäki 1994: 245–246).

²⁰⁷⁵ *En ole suohon sortanunna, / en kaatanut kanerovihiin, / risukoihen ritistännä, / en ole pannunna pahoin* (SKVR I4/1245 c.: 1–4. Vuonninen Meriläinen n. 506. 88. Iivana Malinen, learned from his father).

²⁰⁷⁶ See Sections 9.8, 9.15, 9.16.

on the smallest of the pines,
on an old pine of hundred sprigs.²⁰⁷⁷

Antti Huttunen from Iisalmi sang to the bear that it was not hung on a willow, but “rather on an old pine, the good tree.”²⁰⁷⁸ Maybe the rowan was not suitable because it is a tree with thin branches and the bear skull could easily fall from them. In the folk tradition, the willow also was a very ambiguous tree. In some *Births of the Trees*, the willow was created by the devil.²⁰⁷⁹ In vernacular Christian legends, the rowan accepted to be cut to make the cross of Jesus, and for this reason its berries became red.²⁰⁸⁰ According to Krohn, the rowan was originally a tree sacred to the thunder-god Ukko, but exactly for that reason the popular Christian faith associated it with the devil.²⁰⁸¹ By contrast, Harva, Koivusalo and Apo associated the rowan with Rauni, the wife of Ukko.²⁰⁸² According to Apo, a flourishing rowan represented female sexuality, which activated the masculine rain represented by Ukko.²⁰⁸³ The rowan was used in rituals to increase women’s sexual attractiveness.²⁰⁸⁴ As female sexuality and force sometimes scared the bear,²⁰⁸⁵ perhaps this was the reason why the rowan was not suitable for its skull. A branch of the rowan tree could be used in the ritual of *harakoiminen*, during which the cattle passed under the legs of a woman before leaving for the summer pasture.²⁰⁸⁶ In this way, the cattle was protected from bears and wolves. Harva noted that the rowan could drive evil spirits away and supposed that its sacredness was connected with its peculiar red berries.²⁰⁸⁷ Haavio stressed that contact with the sacredness of this tree could be dangerous for a bride, who should be dressed with a shirt, socks and shoes when passing near a rowan.²⁰⁸⁸ As the hunters sometimes

²⁰⁷⁷ *En minä pistä pihlajaan, / enkä raitaan rakenna, / vaan honkaan hyvään puuhu paan, / panin puuhun puhtahasen, / petäjähän pienimmähän, / honkahan havusatahan* (SKVR VII/3396: 9–14. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 50 b. 1846).

²⁰⁷⁸ *Vaan honkahan hyvähän puuhun* (SKVR VI/4919: 12).

²⁰⁷⁹ Anttonen 1992: 142.

²⁰⁸⁰ SKVR I4/90:3. Akonlaksi. Niemi n. 178.1904; I4/93: 14. Hietajärvi. P. Lesojeff n. 36. 1908. Miina Huovinen.

²⁰⁸¹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 50; Guenat 1994: 127.

²⁰⁸² Harva 1948: 125; Koivusalo 1995: 26–27; Apo 1995b; Anttonen 1998: 139, 146.

²⁰⁸³ Apo 1995b: 41; Anttonen 1998: 139.

²⁰⁸⁴ Anttonen 1998: 144.

²⁰⁸⁵ See Section 4.9.

²⁰⁸⁶ Apo 1995a: 22; Anttonen 1998: 144; see Section 4.9.

²⁰⁸⁷ Harva 1938a: 86; Anttonen 1998: 140.

²⁰⁸⁸ Haavio 1938: 110; Anttonen 1998: 140.

described the bear as a bride, this perhaps explains why its skull was not supposed to have any contact with the rowan.

The willow generally has thin branches that tend downwards. In addition, it grows near moist places, often on the shores of rivers or lakes. Here the moisture is not good for the preservation of bones, and the skull could also fall into water. The willow also had ambiguous connotations. In some *Births of the Trees*, the willow is described as a bad tree, created from evil or from a pagan.²⁰⁸⁹ In some *Words of the Tree*, it is said to be able to heal a disease provoked by the “hate of the tree;” thus, the healer defines the willow as a tree that does evil things.²⁰⁹⁰

The pine was generally considered to be a good tree. In the *Births of the Bear* sung by hunters, the bruin is often born under a small pine or on its roots.²⁰⁹¹ The hunter seemed to send the bear’s bones back to their birth place, so that they were in place for the regeneration of the animal.

According to the *Text of Viitasaari*, the bear’s bones were buried at the foot of the pine and the skull was hung in its branches. One of the typical spirits protecting the bear was Hongotar,²⁰⁹² and perhaps the hunters gave back the bones to this spirit. Guenat stressed that the sacredness of the bear gave the tree a special worth in the folk beliefs.²⁰⁹³ Syncretic beliefs could have influenced the sacredness of the pine, as the tree was alternately held to have been born from the blood of Jesus, from the milk of Mary or from the teeth of a mythic pike.²⁰⁹⁴

Spagna noted that the pine, being a tall evergreen tree, is deeply connected in many cultures with concepts of immortality or regeneration.²⁰⁹⁵ In Siberia, for example, the pine could be the shamanic *axis mundi* that joins different levels of the universe: the underworld, the middle world and the heavens.²⁰⁹⁶ It remained a beautiful tree even at the end of winter, when the skull rite was performed. The rowan and the willow are not evergreen, and they can be sad-looking in the wintertime.

²⁰⁸⁹ SKVR VII3/235: 2. Impilahti. Salminen V, n. 2791. 1911. Hippola. Matrona Kyyrönen; Krohn K. 1917: 51.

²⁰⁹⁰ SKVR IX4/811. Kivijärvi Krohn 4117.1884 / SKVR XII2: 8472: 3. Kiiminki. Paulaharju 6606. 1917.

²⁰⁹¹ SKVR VI2/4886: 13; see Section 5.2

²⁰⁹² The “Pine Lady”; see Sections 5.4, 5.11 and 9.4.

²⁰⁹³ Guenat 1994: 124.

²⁰⁹⁴ Krohn 1917: 53–58; Guenat 1994: 124.

²⁰⁹⁵ Spagna 1998: 185.

²⁰⁹⁶ Spagna 1998: 185.

However, only certain pines were suitable for the bear skull. Kaarle Krohn observed that the chosen pine was generally a large one, and it was measured by being hugged.²⁰⁹⁷ Haavio mentioned that the bear skull's tree should be huge.²⁰⁹⁸ Sometimes the tree was situated near the house of the hunter that had performed the circling of the bear, but more often the tree was located in the deep forest, possibly in a place where the people had not come before.²⁰⁹⁹

The latter tradition indicates the necessity of a spatial separation between the skull's tree and the human sphere. Sometimes the pine tree was even more isolated from the villages, being on a small island on a lake. Such was the case of Karhunpäsaari (Bear's Head Island) in Kangasniemi.²¹⁰⁰ Haavio noted that some Swedish place names, such as Björntallar (Bear Pines) and Björnskallholmen (Bear's Skull Island), demonstrated that the Forest Finns in Central Scandinavia maintained the custom of performing the bear ceremonies.²¹⁰¹

The people could prune the tree to make a *karsikko* tree,²¹⁰² following a tradition used for human funerals or certain important events.²¹⁰³ One branch was saved to hang the skull. Otherwise the skull was hung on a nail or with a ribbon. Often the people did not prune the upper part of the tree, which resembled a tuft.²¹⁰⁴

This tradition had a surprising counterpart in an Amerindian tradition. The Cree stripped most of the branches of the bear skull's tree, leaving a small tuft at the top. However, they also stripped off most of its bark and painted horizontal red stripes on it; the skull, too, was painted. A meaningful difference in the Cree custom was that the tree was cut down and stuck in the ground at the edge of camp.²¹⁰⁵

The Finno-Karelians did not fall the tree, and the tendency was to choose a tree as far as possible from human dwellings. In some villages, a new tree was selected for each skull, while in other ones the skulls of different bears were hung on the same

²⁰⁹⁷ Krohn [1915] 2008: 150.

²⁰⁹⁸ Haavio 1967: 31.

²⁰⁹⁹ Krohn [1915] 2008: 150.

²¹⁰⁰ Haavio 1967: 31.

²¹⁰¹ Haavio 1967: 31; Keihänen 2014: 72–73; on the Forest Finns, see Section 1.2.1 and Metsäkylä 2014.

²¹⁰² SKVR VI2/4926. Sonkajärvi. Karvonen, Viljo n. 1. 1913?

²¹⁰³ See Sections 7.8, 9.17.

²¹⁰⁴ Krohn [1915] 2008: 151.

²¹⁰⁵ Rockwell 1991: 40.

tree.²¹⁰⁶ Jonkeri from Kuhmo told that in Seppo there was a big pine with five skulls, and in Kähkölä (Saunajärvi) there was a “bear spruce” with forty bear skulls.²¹⁰⁷

In Sulkava, the men who climbed the tree threw down the bowl in which the skull had been lifted up and if the bowl landed with the bottom upward, it was considered a bad omen. If it landed with the interior upward, the hunters believed they would catch another bear in the future.²¹⁰⁸

9.8 Ensuring the preservation of the skull

Iivana Malinen sang about the height of the branch on which the skull was hung:

I hung [it] on the middle of the tree,
I straightened [it] to the branches of the pine.
If I placed [it] low,
the black ant would eat [it];
if I set [it] high,
the sun would burn [it] badly.²¹⁰⁹

Jaakko Lesonen from Puolanka sang about almost the same motifs.²¹¹⁰ In Kylmäsalmi (Suomussalmi), the hunter’s song questioned why a middle height was preferable: “If I would put [it] in the tree top, / the wind would dry [it], / the cold wind will harm [it].”²¹¹¹ According to the *tietäjä* and hunter Jeremias Seppänen from Ruhtinansalmi, the south wind should dry the skull, not the north wind, and the skull should remain “in peace.”²¹¹² The skull should not only be protected, but preferably have a “comfortable” position. The hunters stressed that they cared that the skull would not be ruined by animals or by the sun.

²¹⁰⁶ Krohn [1915] 2008: 151.

²¹⁰⁷ Haavio 1967: 32.

²¹⁰⁸ SKVR VI2/4895. Sulkava. Gottlund n. 814. 1815. Torvelainen.

²¹⁰⁹ *Nostin puille puoli teihen, / hongan oksille ojennin. / Kuin panisin alas, / söisi musta muurahainen, / kuinp’ on panisin ylös, / päivä ois’ paistanut pahoin* (SKVR I4/1245c: 5–10 Vuonniinen. Meriläinen. n. 506. 1888. Iivana Malinen).

²¹¹⁰ SKVR XII2/6571: 1–6). Puolanka. Ollilainen, P. 268. 1890.

²¹¹¹ *Jos ma latvahan panisin, / siinä tuuli kuivoaisi, / ahava pahon panisi.* (SKVR XII2/6572. [Suomussalmi] Lönnrot A II 5 n. 1 a). 1834 [Kylmäsalmi.]

²¹¹² SKVR XII2/6574. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6289. 1917. Ruhtinansalmi. Jeremias Seppänen.

The care for the preservation of the bruin's bones is present in all bear ceremonials. The Sámi buried the bear's bones in a sandy hill or in a hidden mountain gorge. The bones were buried vertically, as if the bear skeleton was standing, carefully following their anatomic order, and at the end the grave was covered with spruce branches.²¹¹³ The Sámi ritual differs in the details, but its goal was the same: to protect the bones from animals, predators and dogs in particular.²¹¹⁴ In indigenous cultures, the ritual preservation of animal bones is attested for many other animals: the Mistassini Cree elevated the bones of land animals on a platform to protect them from animals,²¹¹⁵ and the Sámi buried the bones of the lynx and hare, too.²¹¹⁶

9.9 Orientation of the bear skull towards the northeast or northwest

The place nearby the pine of the bear skull should also have other qualities. In some lines collected by Lönnrot in Pielisjärvi, the hunter sang that the skull was situated nearby a lake full of fish:

I put [it] on the oldest of the pines,
by its side a shore of whitefish,
beside it, a salmon fishery;
by your side the whitefish swim,
beside you the salmons spawn.²¹¹⁷

The hunter denied that the bear had just been killed: the bruin's life was described as continuing in a place rich with fish. Olli Huttunen from Iisalmi sang that the skull was hung on a well-ventilated pine: "where the wind comes, / from north and south, / and from all the winds."²¹¹⁸ Antti Huttunen from Iisalmi mentioned that the skull should be positioned hanging on branches facing east,²¹¹⁹ and he sang:

²¹¹³ Laestadius [1838–1845] 2002: 194; Pentikäinen 2007: 59.

²¹¹⁴ Holmberg 1915:52; Laestadius [1838–1845] 2002: 194; Pentikäinen 2007: 59.

²¹¹⁵ Tanner 1979: 172.

²¹¹⁶ Holmberg 1915: 52.

²¹¹⁷ *Panen puuhun vanhimpaan, / sivullaan siikaranta, / luonahan lohiapaja, / sivullasi siiat uipi, / luonasi lohet kutee* (SKVR VII5/3403: 40–44 Pielisjärvi? Lönnrot Q, n. 136. 1838).

²¹¹⁸ *Johon tuuli käypi, / pohjosesta ja etelästä, / ja kaikilta tuulilta.* (SKVR/VI2 4922: 27–29. Iisalmi. Snellman, Sofia n. 24. 1885. Oinasjärvi. Olli Huttunen, 63-year-old man).

²¹¹⁹ SKVR VI2/4920.

Sit towards the east
facing north;
there the wind lulls you,
the breath of the air sways [you].²¹²⁰

Manne Lyytikäinen from Valtolankylä (Mäntyharju) remembered that the bear skull was fastened to watch towards the northeast.²¹²¹ North could also be considered a reference to northern Pohjola, one of the mythical birthplaces of the bear, while the east could be connected with the idea of birth and growth.

The orientation of the skull was a very important issue in almost all of the bear ceremonials. Karjalainen noted that the Ob-Ugrians positioned the bear skull on a bird cherry tree, in the direction of the dawn.²¹²² The Mistassini Cree oriented the skull towards the rising sun.²¹²³ However, in other places in Siberia the skulls of the bears could be oriented in the opposite direction: the west or the “land of the ancestors,” which the bruin’s soul was supposed to reach after its death.²¹²⁴ The Siberian Yukaghir hunters put the bear’s bones on a platform or in the cleft trunk of a tree, with the animal’s skull looking towards the setting sun and the “Land of the Shadows.”²¹²⁵ The Eastern and North Siberian Tungusic peoples sent the souls of the game animals towards the West, the abode of the wild animals.²¹²⁶ Some Finnish and Karelian hunters sang that the bear skull was oriented towards the Big Dipper in the north-west. Haavio also stressed that in Finland and Karelia, the skull of the bear was oriented towards the “house” of its ancestors.²¹²⁷

9.10 The return of the bear’s soul in the sky

The hunters reassured the bear that they hung its skull in a special place of honor. Moilanen from Pesjö (Suomussalmi) sang a dialogue between hunters, emphasizing that they hung the skull at the right height and in the right direction:

²¹²⁰*Istuppa itähän rinnoin, / kalten koarna pohjosehen, / Siellä sun tuuli tuuvittaapi, / ilman-henki heiluttaapi.* (SKVR VI2/4920: 1–8. Iisalmi. Böök, D. n. 11. 1876. Antti Huttunen).

²¹²¹ SKS KRA J. Karhu 3294. 1936. Valtolankylä (Mäntyharju). Manne Lyytikäinen.

²¹²² Karjalainen 1918: 391; cited in Paulson 1965: 125.

²¹²³ Tanner 2017: 171.

²¹²⁴ Lot-Falck 1961: 226.

²¹²⁵ Willerslev 2007: 130.

²¹²⁶ Paulson 1968: 453.

²¹²⁷ Haavio 1967: 37.

Haven't you put [it] badly?
We did not put [it] badly,
we put [it] on the thickest of the trees,
on the lower of the branches,
on the broadest of the sprigs,
not too high,
to marvel at the Big Dipper,
to observe the stars.²¹²⁸

Many Finnish scholars considered the Big Dipper to be significant, as the constellation was mentioned in several *Births of the Bear*.²¹²⁹ In Ilomantsi, the hunter hung the skull towards the Big Dipper: "I set [it] up to watch the moon, / to learn the stars of the Big Dipper, / to observe the sun."²¹³⁰ Antti Vartiainen from Kiuruvesi sang a variation without the Big Dipper: "I left [it] up to watch the moon, / to admire the sun."²¹³¹

The invitation to watch the moon, the sun and the Big Dipper was often present in childbirth incantations and in the song for the bear's awakening.²¹³² The shining of the sun and the moon indicated that the bear "continued its life" in the world of living beings, because the world of the dead was characterized by darkness or the absence of sunlight and moonlight.²¹³³ The motif could be connected to the idea of the regeneration of the bear, rarely described in the songs. However, if the bear was able to see the stars and the moon, it was in the world of the living.

The call to learn the stars comprising the Big Dipper was also connected with the idea of traveling somewhere, as the constellation was important for orientation during the night. Leaving for the forest, the Viena Karelian hunters asked the forest spirits to

²¹²⁸ *Ettehän panneet pahasti? / Emmä panneet pahasti, / panimma puuta paksummalle, / oksia alovimmalle, / lehviä levehimmalle, / emmäkä kovin yläälle, / otavien ouvostella, / tähtien tähystellä* (SKVR XII2/6573: 1–8. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6288. 1917. Pesio. Moilanen).

²¹²⁹ SKVR VII5/3932, SKVR XII2/6464.

²¹³⁰ *Panin kuuta kahtomahan, / otavia oppimahan, / päiveä tähystämähän* (SKVR VII5/3396: 12–14. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 50 b. 1846).

²¹³¹ *Heitin kuuta kahtomaan, / päjvää ihaamaan* (SKVR VI2/4913: 128–129. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson ja Crohns 486: 6 F. 30/8 1819. Antti Vartiainen).

²¹³² See Section 7.2.

²¹³³ Tarkka 303–304.

teach them to travel observing the stars and the arc of sky.²¹³⁴ In Ladoga Karelia, the bride was advised to be very laborious and wake up before dawn “to learn the stars of the Big Dipper.”²¹³⁵ The impression is that the travel of the bear did not end on the tree, and therefore it should recognize the constellation in order to travel somewhere.

Sarmela connected the bear skull rites with the celestial *Birth of the Bear*: “The bear skull was returned to the pine, where according to the myth of the bear origin it was brought down from the sky.”²¹³⁶ According to him, the bear returned to its original home in the sky.²¹³⁷

However, the most precise source about the return of the bear to the sky after the ceremonial is a Khanty *Bear Song*:

I raised myself to heaven again, up to my father God, the seven-throated,
upon an iron chain’s end that clinked like silver.²¹³⁸

In 1888, Patkanov collected these verses in Shumilovo. A Khanty hunter or villager interpreted the role of the bear, who sang in the first person. In the Khanty tradition, the bear was born in the sky and its father was the god of the sky, Num Torum.²¹³⁹ However, the future resurrection of the bear was not clearly mentioned in the Khanty ritual songs; this song refers only to his return to the sky climbing on the iron chain. In the Khanty *Bear Songs*, the bruin was raised into the sky in the same way that it was lowered down to earth: with a string.²¹⁴⁰ In the Mansi tradition, after the bear ritual the bear ended up back in the sky, where the father-god asked how it had been treated, and the bear answered that it was satisfied.²¹⁴¹ According to Haavio, the Ob-Ugrian ritual followed a mythic model: the first and “primordial” bear was born in the sky near his father, was brought down to earth, where it was killed; it was then resurrected, and finally it rose up to its father in the sky. Each bear, being the descendent of the primordial bear, had the same right of the “forefather” bear, and the mythical model was followed or repeated in each Ob-Ugrian bear ceremonial. Haavio argued that a

²¹³⁴ SKVR I4/1107:6–7. Pirttilaksi. Meriläinen n. 855 a). 1889. Nikolai Kallio; learned from his father; SKVR I4/1253: 16–17. Lonkka. Lönnrot. A II 5, n. 32. 1834.

²¹³⁵ SKVR XII2/4358: 6. Jaakkima, Kumola. Hultin, T. 20. 1890. Katri Koppinen.

²¹³⁶ Sarmela 1991: 220.

²¹³⁷ Sarmela 1982: 64.

²¹³⁸ Honko et al. 1993: 156, poem 27.

²¹³⁹ Siikala 2008: 142; Sarmela 1991: 213.

²¹⁴⁰ Harva 1933a: 298; cited in Haavio 1967: 36.

²¹⁴¹ Haavio 1967: 36.

similar model should be present also in the Finnish tradition, but the singers did not sing lines clearly referring to the return of the bruin in the sky.²¹⁴² It is true that a precise return to the sky is not mentioned in the Finno-Karelian songs, as the bruin is only exhorted to look towards the Big Dipper, not to climb back to the constellation on a rope or a chain.

Another problem is that hunters rarely sang the *Birth of the Bear in the Sky*. Instead, they sang more often about the *Birth* in Metsola or Pohjola. Maybe the hunters learned about the celestial *Birth of the Bear* by listening to the incantations of the cattle herders. Some hunters worked as cattle holders in the spring and they uttered incantations for cattle protection including the *Birth of the Bear in the Sky*. It is also possible that the *Birth in the Sky* in a remote past was more popular among the hunters than in the 19th century. However, the fact that the constellation of the Big Dipper was mentioned in the skull rite's songs and in some *Births of the Bear* cannot be considered a coincidence.

In any case, the meaning of the skull rite's songs seems to be quite clear: the hunter should "bring back" the bear skull to its "land of birth," respectively, to the otherworldly forest (Pohjola, Tapiola or Metsola), the pine on whose roots the bear had been born, or the constellation towards which the skull was oriented. The return to its land of birth could be interpreted as the prelude of the regeneration of the bear from its bones.

9.11 Injunctions against mentioning the bear's resurrection

Why did the hunters never speak explicitly about the rebirth of the bear? Haavio admitted that in the Finnish songs there are not clear references to the bear really returning to the sky and that they did not contain sufficient elements to suppose that Finns believed that the bear would be resurrected. Even so, he was convinced that the resurrection of the bear was the most ancient and important reason to perform the bear ceremonial.²¹⁴³

Maybe the Christian faith could have modified the archaic beliefs about the resurrection of the bear. For instance, singing about the rebirth of the bear in the Sky could give the idea that it was equal to Jesus.

Another hypothesis is that the rebirth was not clearly mentioned because it presupposed the acknowledgment of the previous death of the bear, but in the bear feast and in the skull rite the killing of the bear was negated or omitted in many ways. The only song in which the hunters mentioned the bruin's death was when they denied

²¹⁴² Haavio 1967: 36.

²¹⁴³ Haavio 1967: 37.

their responsibility. After that, the issue was rapidly put aside. The bear was supposed to participate in the feast in the village, as it was still alive, while the hunters sang to the bear skull as if it was still a living bear. During the skull rite, they tried to avoid any reference to the bear's death.

A similar attitude towards the death of the game animal was present in the tradition of many Siberian hunters. Haavio did not consider that Siberians also spoke clearly about the resurrection of animals. By contrast, Paulson noted that in Eurasia most of the ethnographic data "say nothing about the reason or motives underling bone preservation, but merely describe the ritual proceeding."²¹⁴⁴ The scholars have made clear statements about the resurrection of animals from bones, but the hunters tried to avoid speaking about the issue. However, we have to consider that Siberians had a different conception of death, compared to the modern one. Lot-Falck writes:

Death is not a break. It does not have an irrevocable nature, and it remains a transitory state. A passage between one world to another often leaves the possibility of a return, so the absence of the soul could be temporary.²¹⁴⁵

This statement fits well with the Finno-Karelian folk beliefs, in which the death of the bear did not signify the complete absence of life and the dissolution of the bruin's self, but involved the bruin's immediate participation in the bear feast and the continuation of the bear's life after the skull ritual.

In Viena Karelia, the human's afterlife, too, could imply a possible "continuation" of the existence of the dead in the local village graveyard, where house-like wooden structures were built on top of the graves.²¹⁴⁶

9.12 The preservation of the animal bones in the Eurasian traditions

Even if the resurrection of the bear was not clearly mentioned in the songs, the bear skull was hung with care on the pine branches and oriented towards its constellation. Several scholars argued that this rite was rooted in archaic Eurasian hunting beliefs. Paulson stated that the Northern Eurasian people ritually preserved the bones of bears, reindeer, elk, deer, foxes, hares, sables, wolves, lynxes, wolverines, walruses, seals, swordfish, and various species of birds and fish. Paulson added that scholars collected more ethnographic data about the preservation of bear's bones, "but the rituals

²¹⁴⁴ Paulson 1968: 453.

²¹⁴⁵ Lot-Falck 1961: 211; my English translation from the Italian version.

²¹⁴⁶ The *kropnittä*. See Tarkka 2013: 392; 396 and Paulaharju 1995 (1924): 194–207.

performed with them are not fundamentally different from those where other animal bones were involved."²¹⁴⁷

The main difference is that among the Finno-Karelians, the Sami, the Mansi, the Khanty, the Nivkhi, the Ainu or the Cree, the skull ritual was an integral part of the bear ceremonials and feast. In the circumboreal area, however, the hunting of big sea mammals (whales, walruses and seals), elk or great quantities of salmon included feasts and ceremonials.²¹⁴⁸ Watanabe identified these as "sending-off" rituals, performed before the animal spirits entered the village as guest of honors of the festival and then afterwards, when they were sent back to their environments, in order to ensure that they would reappear the next hunting or fishing season.²¹⁴⁹

Paulson classified the Eurasian rituals related with the preservation of the animal bones in four categories: a) burial in the ground, used by the Sámi for the bear; b) burial in trees or on platforms, used in Siberia for bear skulls and other animals; c) bones laid on the earth with or without a cover of stones or wood; and d) burial in the water, used for animals living in the waters.²¹⁵⁰

Generally what the hunters did not want to eat or keep for themselves was saved.²¹⁵¹ Several Northern peoples stated that the rites were necessary to preserve the bones from dogs, wolves or wild animals. Alternatively, they believed that the killed animal—the bear or its soul—was concerned about the conservation of its bones and thus requested that they would be treated with specific rites.²¹⁵²

According to Haavio, the Finnish bear skull rite was a relic of the time when human corpses or bones were hung on trees or on a wooden platform below the trees. He argued that the preservation of the bear's bones reminded of the mummification of human corpses: the bones or the body should be preserved as perfectly as possible, so that the soul would be able to go back into it and the deceased would be able to be reborn.²¹⁵³

Haavio pointed out the Sámi understanding that if the bones of the bear were correctly buried, the bruin could rise again and give itself up to be shot once more.²¹⁵⁴ Paulson stressed that Eurasian peoples believed that while a bear permitted itself to be

²¹⁴⁷ Paulson 1968: 451.

²¹⁴⁸ Lantis 1938; Fienup-Riordan 1994: 88–142; Watanabe 1994.

²¹⁴⁹ Watanabe 1994: 67; see Wiget and Balalaeva 139–140.

²¹⁵⁰ Paulson 1968: 452.

²¹⁵¹ Paulson 1968: 453.

²¹⁵² Paulson 1968: 453–454.

²¹⁵³ Haavio 1967: 34.

²¹⁵⁴ Haavio 1967: 34; Harva 1933: 295.

hunted easily by a hunter who had ritually treated its bones, “it will attack the hunters who had omitted to pay these honors.”²¹⁵⁵

9.13 The bear’s testimony about its treatment

Can we find in Finland or Karelia some accounts of the continuation of the bear’s life after its death? In Suomussalmi, the travel of the bear did not end in the branches of the pine. After the skull ritual, the hunter exhorted the bear to go to Mehtola (Metsola) to tell that it had been kindly treated during the feast:

Tell, after having left from here,
after having gone to Mehtola[:]
[“]Here I was not treated badly,
they fed me with mead,
they let me drink honey-drinks.[“]²¹⁵⁶

According to Krohn, the bear that came back to Metsola would persuade other bears to participate in similar feasts in the village.²¹⁵⁷ The bear probably told them and the forest spirits about the nice treatment in the human village.. The song is interesting because it reveals that the bear was believed to be able to speak.

Paulson stated that among the Sámi, Khanty, Nivkh and Ainu, after the hunters ritually treated the bear’s bones the bruin was requested to tell other bears about the good treatment and the honors it had received among the humans.²¹⁵⁸ Sometimes the bear was supposed to tell other bears to let themselves be caught by the hunters that had treated them so nicely. Lot-Falck stated that Siberian hunters believed that the killed animal told to other animals of their species all the ritual procedures used in dealing with them. The animal individual, like the human individual, was not a unit that could be separated from the group.²¹⁵⁹ Thus, an offense to one animal reached the

²¹⁵⁵ Paulson 1968: 453.

²¹⁵⁶ *Sano täältä saatuasi, / mehtolahan mentyäsi: / ei täällä pahoin pietty, / simoa täällä syötettiin, / mesijuomat juotettiin* (SKVR XII2/6572: 11–15 [Suomussalmi] Lönnrot A II 5 n. 1 a). 1834. [Kylmäsalmi).

²¹⁵⁷ Krohn [1915] 2008: 157.

²¹⁵⁸ Paulson 1965: 12.

²¹⁵⁹ Lot-Falck 1961: 205.

community of the whole animal species, which would then avenge the mistreated member.²¹⁶⁰

The Nivki of the Sakhalin and Amur rivers exhorted the bear's soul to go to the Master of the Forest or the Master of the Mountain.²¹⁶¹ The Eastern Cree told the bear to go to the Bear Master²¹⁶² and tell him how nicely the hunters treated it.²¹⁶³

In Finland and Karelia, the alcoholic drinks offered to the bear during the feast and the ritual of the bear skull acquired special importance: the bear was seen as treated well because the humans offered mead. Among the Eastern Cree, the offering of tobacco to the bear skull had the same function.²¹⁶⁴

Among the Tungusic Olcha, the bear was sent back to its relatives, the forest men or the masters of the mounds, and it related the details of the ceremonial. If that was arranged properly, the men of the forest would be satisfied and they would send "happy hunting" to the humans.²¹⁶⁵

A correct bear ceremonial assured general luck in the hunt. In 1640, Bishop of Finland Isaak Rothovius mocked the Finns who performed the bear ceremonials, saying: "Thus would they gain a greater good fortune!"²¹⁶⁶ Maybe in Finland, too, correct performance of the bear ceremonials was a way to gain greater luck in hunting.

9.14 The regeneration of the bear in the *Bear Song* by Iivana Malinen

Even if the Finno-Karelian hunters described the "life" of the bruin after the bear skull with a certain degree of ambiguity, a song by Iivana Malinen demonstrates the presence of vernacular conceptions about the regeneration of the bear in the Karelian tradition:

The crooked-claw of Pohja,
crooked-claw, bone-hunch,
felt about ten claws,
felt ten claws,

²¹⁶⁰ Lot-Falck 1961: 205.

²¹⁶¹ Paulson 1968: 453.

²¹⁶² *Memekwesiw*.

²¹⁶³ Rockwell 1991: 36.

²¹⁶⁴ Rockwell 1991: 36.

²¹⁶⁵ Zolotarev 1937: 123.

²¹⁶⁶ See Haavio 1967: 15; Pentikäinen 2007: 131; Pentikäinen 2014: 429; Siikala 2016: 380. English translation by Clive Tolley.

on the north side of the river,
 on the sunny²¹⁶⁷ side of the hill,
 on the root of a wrenched young spruce.
 Take from there, my bruin,
 claws to replace your claws,
 the best shirt from the bundle,
 the most desired of the teeth.²¹⁶⁸

These lines were sung after the skinning of the bear, not during the skull rituals. However, the text is probably the most precise Finno-Karelian description of how a dead bear would be able to regenerate himself. “Crooked-claw” and “bone-hunch” were epithets for the crone of Pohjola,²¹⁶⁹ who felt new claws in Pohjola “on the root of a young spruce.” In Iivana Malinen’s *Birth of the Bear*, the mother of the bear was the Crone of Pohjola. She gave birth to the bear “on the root of a wrenched young spruce.”²¹⁷⁰ Thus, the regeneration of the bear happened at the same spot where the bruin had been born, and it seems that it was put in motion by the mother of the bear. The killed bruin was requested to reach back to its birthplace and take new claws, teeth and the best “shirt,” probably a new fur.

The word ‘rebirth’ was never mentioned in the song of Iivana Malinen, who, like all the hunters, sang about the death of the bear as little as possible. The procedure in which the bear was involved seemed to be more of a regeneration, an “exchange” of body parts or the healing of them, than a resurrection. In Iivana’s song, the killed bruin is described as a living being able to travel back to the land of its birth. Malinen apparently sang about partial regenerations: new claws for old claws, new teeth for old teeth. However, the claws and the teeth of the bear in the Finno-Karelian tradition represented the force of the whole animal; they were often preserved by hunters and used as protective amulets in many rituals.²¹⁷¹ By taking new claws and teeth from Pohjola, the force of the bear was fully restored. They were “hard” body parts and the “weapons” of the bear; like swords or knives, they could be “changed.” In hunting

²¹⁶⁷ Or “southern.”

²¹⁶⁸ *Pohjan on kyttö kynsi, / kyttö kynsi, luu hamura, / vanu kynttä kymmenisen, vanu kynttä kymmenkunnan, / pohjois-puolella jokea, / päivän-puolella mäkeä, / juuressa nyry-närehen. / Ota sieltä otsoseni, / kynsiä kynsien sijahan, / paita pakasta parahin, haluisimmat hampahista* (SKVR I4/1244 e: 1–11. Vuonninen. Meriläinen n. 245. 1888).

²¹⁶⁹ SKVR I1/90: 1; I4/1112: 3–4; I4/1413: 1–2.

²¹⁷⁰ See Section 5.6; SKVR I4/1191: 12.

²¹⁷¹ See Section 8.20.

rituals, the regeneration of animals was believed to start from hard body parts, like claws, teeth, bones or skulls, not from meat or other organs that decomposed.

Matti Kuusi considered the bear skull ritual as directly connected to the idea of regeneration from the bones:

The bones were given back to the forest mistress or a divine being living near the copper mountain of the sky mountain, who was able to make with them the building material of the new bears.²¹⁷²

Kuusi made a hypothetical reconstruction, but his general theory seems to be based on Malinen's songs. Siberian peoples had similar beliefs about the necessity of avoiding mention of the bear's death or rebirth. The Ainu did not say to the bear that it had been killed, but that it was being "sent away" to its relatives in the mountains.²¹⁷³

The Tungusic Orochs (Nani) people said to the killed bear: "Go fast, go to your masters, put on a new fur, and come back the next year so that I may look at you."²¹⁷⁴ In the Finno-Karelian and Oroch traditions, the hunters refrained from speaking about the bear's death and resurrection; they instead presented the bear's destiny as a travel back to its birth land for the acquisition of new body parts (fur, teeth and claws). They emphasized the positivity of this bodily regeneration, glossing over the violent death.

9.15 The regeneration of animals from bones in the Siberian and Eurasian traditions

The song by Iivana Malinen suggests that regeneration of the bear was present in the Karelian hunting traditions and folk beliefs. This song is particularly important, because it helps us to understand why the preservation of all the bones and the skull was so important. In some Eurasian traditions, a forest spirit or a master of the animals had an active role in creating new animals from the bones, while in other traditions the regeneration of the meat seems to have been spontaneous: the animal simply regained its life from the bones. The song by Malinen had elements of both traditions: the new claws and teeth were made by the Crone of Pohjola, but the bear was encouraged to go to Pohjola and take the claws and teeth by itself.

²¹⁷² Kuusi 1963: 49; Kuusi did not furnish references or sources supporting his statement.

²¹⁷³ Zolotarev 1937: 123; Batchelor 1901: 206–207.

²¹⁷⁴ Zolotarev 1937: 123; Shternberg 1933: 439.

Belief in the regeneration of flesh from the bones was common in the whole Eurasian area. Paulson noted that among the Nivkh, the Master of the Forest requested that the bones of animals were ritually treated and carefully preserved.²¹⁷⁵ According to Paulson, in the Eurasian hunting rituals there is consistent ethnographic data demonstrating that the life of killed animals was not only supposed “to continue in some simple, unspecified form, but also believed to be concretely revived and resurrected.”²¹⁷⁶

Lot-Falck stated that the Siberians believed that life continued to inhabit the bones, in different parts of the skeleton, which, at a certain point, could cover itself again with flesh. Life remained and was always potentially present in ritually preserved bones. As every part potentially represented the whole, a single but powerful bone—such as the skull—was able to generate an entire new body.²¹⁷⁷

The Ket hunters of Central Siberia carefully gathered the bones of the bear, and the ribs were bound together with strips of bird cherry-bark. All the bones were wrapped in birch bark, carried into the taiga and put in the hollow of a cedar. The Ket believed that when the birch bark straightened and fell to the ground, the bear began a new life.²¹⁷⁸

The Siberian peoples held that the spirit masters created wild animals or fish from a tuft of fur or from a scale.²¹⁷⁹ The ritual treatment, accumulation and preservation of bones was performed not only to preserve the species, but also to multiply it.²¹⁸⁰ The bones or the remains of a seal, ritually returned to the sea, could produce many seals. The multiplication procedure seems to have been particularly common for water animals. Both the Sámi and the Yukaghirs threw fish bones into the water, believing that they would generate new fish.²¹⁸¹

If this belief held also for the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonial, the preservation of the bear’s bones could lead to the generation of a new bear or several bears.

In the Siberian bear ceremonials, some other ritual was necessary to guarantee the regeneration of the bear. The Nanai fumigated the bones of the bear to ensure that they would be covered again with meat.²¹⁸² Among the Sámi and the Orochs, the bones of

²¹⁷⁵ Paulson 1968: 455.

²¹⁷⁶ Paulson 1968: 453.

²¹⁷⁷ Lot-Falck 1961: 212.

²¹⁷⁸ Aleeksenko 1968: 188.

²¹⁷⁹ Lot-Falck 1961: 212.

²¹⁸⁰ Lot-Falck 1961: 213.

²¹⁸¹ Lot-Falck 1961: 213.

²¹⁸² Lot-Falck 1961: 213.

the bear were arranged in their anatomical order, either by putting them on willow branches or by burying them.²¹⁸³

By contrast, burning the bones denied the possibility of any future resurrection. Through this procedure, the hunter was able to destroy not only the body of the animal, but its soul, too. The Mansi and Altaic peoples burned the bear corpse with bones only if the bruin killed a human, while the Samoyeds burned a wolf if it had killed reindeer.²¹⁸⁴ Several African peoples used to burn the bones of deceased persons whom they feared would become malevolent ghosts.²¹⁸⁵ We could thus conclude that the burning of the bones of a dangerous bear was believed to prevent the reincarnation of its soul. The Siberian hunters generally avoided burning animal bones, because the relatives of the victim would become angered.²¹⁸⁶

There are some exceptions to this rule. Among the Khanty it was possible to preserve only the bear skull and to burn the other bones, in order to ensure the continuation of the life of the animal.²¹⁸⁷ In North America and Siberia, there were also rituals in which animal bones were burned to make a future hunt more successful, but these were not as common as the preservation of bones.²¹⁸⁸

The most common rule in the circumboreal area was that the regeneration of a living being was possible only if its bones were ritually preserved intact. The prescription to keep the bones intact was strictly followed by Finno-Karelian bear hunters, and its importance was clearly emphasized in ritual songs.

9.16 The relevance of the skull in bear ceremonials

It remains to explain why the skull was separated from the other bones and hung on tree branches. Haavio stressed the importance of the return of the bear to the sky, and so he argued that the orientation of the skull towards the constellation of the Big Dipper was the core of the skull rite.²¹⁸⁹

The skull was extremely significant for all the Eurasian peoples who performed bear ceremonials. It was considered the abode of the animal's life or soul, or a part

²¹⁸³ Lot-Falck 1961: 217; Harva 1938: 435; Vasilev 1929.

²¹⁸⁴ Lot-Falck 1961: 214.

²¹⁸⁵ Lot-Falck 1961: 228.

²¹⁸⁶ Lot-Falck 1961: 215.

²¹⁸⁷ Paulson 1968: 452.

²¹⁸⁸ Lot-Falck 1961: 215.

²¹⁸⁹ Haavio 1967: 37.

representing the whole animal.²¹⁹⁰ The personal identity of the bear persisted after its death: dead animals, as well as humans, were still present in this world after their death, either as corpses, bones, or souls or spirits. For this reason, an injury done to bones was believed to cause damage to the soul.²¹⁹¹

Among the Ob-Ugrians, if a man destroyed a bear's skull, the animal was killed in a definitive way and its soul would disappear into the void. Such an offense would surely be followed by the revenge of other bears.²¹⁹² In Finland and Karelia, an immediate punishment was held to befall those who dared to cut down the bear skull's tree or take down the skull.²¹⁹³

Sometimes the Ob-Ugrians hung the arm bones on the lower jaw of the skull of the bear.²¹⁹⁴ In some Eurasian hunting traditions, long bones were also important to achieve the regeneration of the animal. Ob-Ugrian rituals generally focused on the skull, while less important and smaller bones could be thrown away or buried in the forest, albeit in a place where dogs would not be able to reach them. Alternatively, they were put under spruce twigs on a beach, protected from flood water, or sunk in a lake.²¹⁹⁵

When the bear ceremonial ended, the Khanty believed that the "shadow soul" of the bear would be able to climb on a string that the sky-god had used before to lower the bear to the earth.²¹⁹⁶ By raising the skull on the tree, the shadow soul was sent back to its heavenly home.²¹⁹⁷ According to the Ainu, the resurrection of the bear was possible if the skull was not lost or broken.²¹⁹⁸ In Siberia, the skulls of game animals were generally hung on tree branches, or they were inserted into tree trunks.²¹⁹⁹ All the flesh was stripped from the skull in advance. The Western and Eastern Inuit followed analogous customs, preserving intact the skulls of sea mammals.²²⁰⁰

²¹⁹⁰ Paulson 1968: 455.

²¹⁹¹ Paulson 1968: 456.

²¹⁹² Karjalainen 1918: 390; Paulson 1965: 124.

²¹⁹³ See Section 9.5.

²¹⁹⁴ Karjalainen 1918: 390.

²¹⁹⁵ Sirelius 1929: 206–207; Paulson 1965: 126.

²¹⁹⁶ Patkanov 1897–1900: 127 and 131; Paulson 1965: 125; Paulson 1968: 454; Karjalainen 1921: 14.

²¹⁹⁷ Paulson 1968: 454.

²¹⁹⁸ Lot-Falck 1961: 216.

²¹⁹⁹ Paulson 1968: 452.

²²⁰⁰ Lot-Falck 1961: 216.

The Sámi from Inari and the Finno-Karelians preserved the bones of the bear by means of two parallel rituals: the bones were buried and the skull was hung on a tree or on a pole.²²⁰¹ The bear skull had a clearly prominent position, and the Finno-Karelian songs focused on the skull ritual.

According to Lot-Falck, the rituals concerning the bones or skulls of killed animals were not sacrifices because the meat—the perishable and nutritious part of the animal—was not set apart for spirits or gods, but it was previously consumed by humans.²²⁰² In the case of the Finno-Karelian rituals, all the bear meat and all the organs of its snout were consumed in the earlier feast. By contrast, the hunters gave back to the forest spirits the bones, or the “hard support” of the soul of the animal. In this way, the hunter tried to return the entire animal to the spirit, who would be able to give it a new life or regenerate it. Lot-Falck argued that if the bones were an offering to the forest spirit, the goal was to stimulate the spirits in creating new animals and in guaranteeing future abundant catches for the hunters.²²⁰³

Lot-Falck criticized the theory of Kharuzin, who did not understand why a harmful animal as the bear should be resurrected by the Ob-Ugrians and justified the rituals as a survival of an ancient form of totemism.²²⁰⁴ Kharuzin also argued that the killed bear was considered the incarnation of a protector spirit.²²⁰⁵ According to Lot-Falck, vague totemic explanations did not help scholars to understand the meaning of the ritual and Kharuzin did not realize that the Ob-Ugrians did not consider the bear as a harmful beast, such as the wolf. Kharuzin did note, however, that normally the bear did not attack humans and herds and that the people believed that they could achieve peaceful cohabitation with bears if they strictly followed ritual rules. Lot-Falck emphasized that the intention to achieve the regeneration of the bear was justified by its positive qualities: bear meat was appreciated, and some parts of its body were used as medicine or amulets in folk healing.²²⁰⁶ In Finland and Karelia, too, the meat was considered a delicacy and several parts of the bear’s body were used in a wide range of rituals.²²⁰⁷

²²⁰¹ Paulson 1965: 124.

²²⁰² Lot-Falck 1961: 221–222.

²²⁰³ Lot-Falck 1961: 221–222.

²²⁰⁴ Lot-Falck 1961: 218.

²²⁰⁵ Kharuzin 1898: 28–29.

²²⁰⁶ Lot-Falck 1961: 218.

²²⁰⁷ See Sections 8.9, 8.20.

9.17 The bear's soul remaining on the pine tree

Even if the bear skull ritual could be connected to the original idea of the return of the bear in its birth land and regeneration, some songs reveal other possibilities as well. In Suomussalmi, the hunters requested the bear to remain on the tree: "be there in good health, / stand on the tree, rot in the earth".²²⁰⁸ This short song is unique and it does not have any counterpart in Finland or Karelia. Perhaps the hunters of Suomussalmi feared that the bear would return to the village and take revenge on the cattle, and thus they encouraged the bear to remain where its bones were preserved. Not by chance were trees with bear skulls often fashioned and pruned as *karsikko* trees, which also defended the villagers from ghosts and spirits.²²⁰⁹ The verses contained an obvious contrast: the bear was requested to remain in good health, but the hunter also ordered the bear to rot in the earth. The people believed that some active spirit was present in the skull tree, because it was able to seek revenge if someone dared to cut it or remove the skull.²²¹⁰

9.18 The posthumous destinies of the bear

The most interesting results of the comparison between the Finno-Karelian and the Siberian hunting traditions are not the analogies about the preservation of bones, but the existence of similar concepts about the continuation of the life of the animal after its death.

Paulson stated that the general concept of the revival of the bones can be found in many places in Eurasia, but the people itself "think rather of the animal's continued existence than a resurrection in the proper sense of the word."²²¹¹

The scholarly obsession with discussing the resurrection of the animals could also be influenced by their background. Resurrection is a concept influenced by centuries of Christian theology, and it implies that the animal experienced a socially recognized death. The problem here is that the bear's death was almost negated during the ritual, and it was transformed into the visit of a guest to the village. Both the Finno-Karelians and Siberians did not appreciate anyone speaking or singing about the kill or the

²²⁰⁸ *Ole siellä tervehenä, / seiso puussa, mätäne maassa!* (SKVR XXII2/6575. Suomussalmi. Paulaharju 6297. 1917).

²²⁰⁹ Vilkkuna 1992: 206; Section 6.12.

²²¹⁰ See Sections 7.8, 9.5.

²²¹¹ Paulson 1968: 455.

resurrection of the game animals. Lot-Falck explained that the Siberians as well did not offer clear explanations about the destiny of the animal:

What happened to the animals killed during the hunt? The animal came, it left, so it will come back. Where it goes? How it will come back? No clarification about that. Certainly, in our times, if the word death is never pronounced, it is to continue the fictional tale of the voluntary visit.²²¹²

Lot-Falck's statement is useful for an understanding of some of the central problems of the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonials, in which the destiny of the bear after its death was not precisely described. There were many possibilities surrounding the "posthumous life" of the bear:

- its skull and soul were oriented towards the Big Dipper, the east or the north
- the bear was requested to go to Metsola to speak about the good treatment and the drinks the humans had offered it
- the bear was exhorted to go back to Pohjola to take new claws and teeth made by its mother, the Crone of Pohjola
- its force remained active in the skull and in the tree
- its life could continue near the pine
- in the most aggressive of the songs, the hunter commanded the bruin to rot under the roots of the trees or its soul was banished to Hell

The multiplicity of the *Births of the Bear*²²¹³ clearly influenced the complexity of the posthumous destinies of the bear. Furthermore, in the Karelian and Finnish vernacular traditions the destiny of human beings after their death had multiple options: the coexistence of distant and local abodes of the dead involved the concept of several worlds of the dead²²¹⁴ existing in parallel.²²¹⁵ In Vuonninen, distinct families could have their own abodes below their lots of land in the same village's graveyard.²²¹⁶ These concepts sometimes overlapped. In Viena Karelia, Tuonela could be a local underground abode, just beyond the local graveyard, or a distant abode, reachable by

²²¹² Lot-Falck 1961: 211.

²²¹³ See Chapter 5, Sections 5.10 and 5.13.

²²¹⁴ Lot-Falck 1961: 211.

²²¹⁵ Tuonela, Manala, the graveyard (*kalmisto*).

²²¹⁶ Paulaharju 1995: 199–201.

passing across a river by boat or by using expensive thread.²²¹⁷ The deceased were far away, but also nearby: in the graveyard, ritual communication was possible.

What is certain is that in the majority of the cases the bear should go back in one of his mythic homeland and that his life “continued” there. What was really relevant for the people was not the precise definition of where the bear’s soul went, but the fact that the bruin and forest spirits understood and remembered how respectfully the guest had been treated during the whole ceremonial, along with its bones in the last phase of the ritual.²²¹⁸

²²¹⁷ Paulaharju 1995: 207–208.

²²¹⁸ See Chapter 10.

Chapter 10

Conclusions

10.1 The repetition of motifs and the circular structure of Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism

Catherine Bell considered repetition and formality as “central to the communicative function of the ritual” and linked them with “the authoritative model of the ritual.”²²¹⁹ Repetitions mark ritualization; they also help participants to recognize certain actions or songs as ritual.²²²⁰ Analyzing Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism as a whole, I found meaningful the presence of a set of repeating elements and motifs in the phases, as well as a circular or mirror structure. There are two types of visits and guests: the hunter visited the mythically perceived forest and the bear visited the human village.²²²¹ Both visits could be presented as uncommon weddings: the hunters could seduce and marry the forest spirits and the bear could marry a member of the village.²²²² These marriages did not last a long time. After the hunt, the hunters returned to their village and their human wives, while after the feast the bear returned to the mythical forest or the constellation where it was born.²²²³

The crossing of the borders between the forest and the village was dangerous and it required a set of protective rituals that were repetitions or adaptations of some of the most typical rites of the *tietäjäs*, *patvaskas* and cattle herders: leaving the village, the hunters sang incantations to raise their *luonto* force, mentioning the wrapping of their bodies in iron belts and shirts to defend themselves from envious people, sorcerers and the bear’s bites.²²²⁴ The hunters believed that these protective rituals made their blood “harder”; thus, they obtained an empowered and highly ritualized body,²²²⁵ which was believed to be “closed,” invulnerable and stronger than the external forces.

²²¹⁹ Bell 1992: 92.

²²²⁰ Bell 1992: 91.

²²²¹ See Sections 6.2, 6.3, 7.11, 8.1.

²²²² See Sections 6.5, 6.6, 8.2.

²²²³ See Chapter 8 and 9.

²²²⁴ See Chapter 4.

²²²⁵ On the ritualized body, see Bell 1993: 93.

When the hunter skinned the bear, he offered the iron shirt to the bear in exchange for its fur, as the bear would need it before passing over border with the village.²²²⁶

The construction of magic circles and the manipulation of the force of iron or fire to neutralize the forest force, predators or sorcerers were ritual devices consistently used by hunters, *tietäjäs*, cattle herders and *patvaskas*.²²²⁷ The classic scholarly division of these traditions into completely separate historical blocks is not very useful in the interpretation of rites which in the ritual contexts were deeply intertwined.²²²⁸

The *Births of the Bear* could be repeated several times in the ceremonial, and they reveal the existence of different forms of intertextuality vis-à-vis the cattle herders' versions. The hunters were concerned about the possibility of a bear attack on the cattle or a forest contagion, both when they left for the forest and when the bear entered the village.²²²⁹

In the *Bear Songs*, the border crossing was often represented by the passage of the mythic river and bridge of the otherworldly Pohjola,²²³⁰ which was alternately described as one of the lands where the bear was born, as the hunting ground, the granary of the forest spirits, or the place where the bear skull was brought.²²³¹

The ceremonialism was characterized by several exchanges, often performed when crossing the borders. On entering the forest, the hunter poured a small quantity of silver or gold or offered alcoholic beverages to the forest spirits in order to obtain the forest's gold or forest's ale or mead, namely, the bear.²²³² The hunters offered ale and spirits: 1) to the bear before entering the cabin or the *tupa*,²²³³ or 2) to the bear skull after hanging it in the branches.²²³⁴ Both the hunters and the bear were "strangers in a strange place" and "guests" in their traveling, and the forest spirits helped both of them find the way by carving signs on trees or cliffs.²²³⁵ The hunters described in detail the mythical features of the forest in their visits and presented in detail for the bear all the important places of the village. The visits and the returns were intended to reach specific places imbued with sacred and social relevance: the den, presented as the

²²²⁶ See Chapters 8 and 9.

²²²⁷ See Sections 4.6, 4.7, 4.8.

²²²⁸ See Sections 2.5, 2.6, 1.3.3, 1.3.4.

²²²⁹ See Sections 5.3 and 8.3.

²²³⁰ See Sections 6.13, 7.10 and 9.1.

²²³¹ See Sections 5.2, 6.2, 6.13, 9.2.

²²³² See Sections 6.1 and 6.4.

²²³³ The dining and social room.

²²³⁴ See Sections 7.10 and 9.1.

²²³⁵ See Sections 6.12 and 7.10.

house of the bear;²²³⁶ the *tupa*, which was the “heart” of the human community, connected with cooking, living and sleeping;²²³⁷ and the bear’s skull pine.²²³⁸ Both the skull tree and a tree nearby the place of the bear’s kill could be fashioned as *karsikko* trees, trimmed to mark both a meaningful event and a visible border for the spirits of the dead.²²³⁹

The repetition of the strategy of pleasing the bear was strongly connected to the ritual and sacred definition of the spaces. The hunter often explained that he did not leave the bear in dishonorable places, but in the most honorable ones: the head of the table and the sacred corner of the *tupa*;²²⁴⁰ on the purest of the pines; or on a branch oriented towards the dawn or the Big Dipper.²²⁴¹

Other repeating elements include strategies of tricking: the hunters deluded the forest spirits and the bear by refraining from “closing” their “circling” of the den,²²⁴² presenting the killing of the bear as an accident, and skinning the bear fur as an exchange.²²⁴³ The staging of the feast as a wedding of the bear or a drinking party to honor the bruin could also be considered an elaborate delusion, because in reality the guest was eaten by the human community.²²⁴⁴

Bear ceremonialism negated violence and competition and celebrated innocence. It is very meaningful that the only representation of violence involves the counter-incantations against the envious ones and sorcerers, who were human competitors.²²⁴⁵ In the *Bear Songs*, the singers stressed the competition between different groups of hunters for the seduction of female forest spirits and luck in hunting,²²⁴⁶ as the stories about bewitched bears emphasized the unfair human competition for the “cattle luck.”²²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, violence and competition seem to have been carefully limited to struggles within the human community. In the *Bear Songs*, we find only short references to the struggles between the hunters and bear, but even in these cases, the

²²³⁶ See Section 7.2.

²²³⁷ See Section 8.3, 8.4.

²²³⁸ See Section 9.7.

²²³⁹ See Sections 6.12, 7.8 and 9.7; Vilkuna J. 1992: 207.

²²⁴⁰ See Section 8.5.

²²⁴¹ See Sections 9.7 and 9.9.

²²⁴² The forest spirit did not notice that the bear was encircled. See Section 4.4.

²²⁴³ See Sections 7.6 and 7.9.

²²⁴⁴ See Sections 8.2 and 8.9.

²²⁴⁵ See Section 4.8.

²²⁴⁶ See Section 6.6.

²²⁴⁷ See Section 3.9.

hunters always stressed that the fight was fair.²²⁴⁸ After that, the hunter rapidly declared his innocence regarding the bear kill, which was presented as an accident provoked by the bear itself.²²⁴⁹ However, the bear, too, was considered innocent when it killed cattle, as it was believed to have been bewitched by an envious sorcerer.²²⁵⁰ The “real” killers were exonerated, and the only villains were human outsiders: envious people, sorcerers and competitors.

Analyzing the *Bear Songs* as a whole, I noticed that the hunters sang as little as possible about the death of the bear, giving a brief deluding justification.²²⁵¹ Instead, they sang long and precise songs several times that reminded of all the honors reserved for the bruin: how it was received in a cleaned and well-ordered *tupa*, the abundance of the alcoholic drinks and songs offered by the community, the place of honor reserved for it at the table,²²⁵² and the careful disposition of the skull and bones in the pine’s branches with a scrupulous following of all the rules.²²⁵³

The hunters believed that the killed bear would “come back” one way or another, but only if they reminded it of all the honors it had received during the hunt and the feast would it gladly return to the village as a guest. If bears were mistreated, they returned as enraged enemies, attacking the cattle or causing forest contagion. The Finno-Karelian vernacular concept of the bear’s ideal “return” in the human sphere was concretely expressed by the hope of the mistress of the village that it would be again the guest of honor of the house or family in a future feast.²²⁵⁴

All the intricate rituals emphasized balanced reciprocity between the forest and the human community; possible offenses were repaired, and all the proper honors were bestowed. The hunters were ideally in peace with the animals and the forest spirits. An equal ritual rhythm maintained the delicate equilibrium between the death and the regeneration of the animal.²²⁵⁵

The ritual observances ensured both the continuation of the life of the bear after its death and its return for another joyful feast in the future, during the lifespan of the

²²⁴⁸ See Sections 7.3 and 7.6.

²²⁴⁹ See Section 7.6.

²²⁵⁰ See Section 3.9.

²²⁵¹ See Section 7.6.

²²⁵² See Sections 8.4, 8.5, 8.6.

²²⁵³ See Sections 9.6, 9.7, 9.9, 9.10.

²²⁵⁴ See Sections 8.21.

²²⁵⁵ See Lot-Falck 1961: 227.

mistress and the master of the house.²²⁵⁶ In fact, a successful bear ceremonial was the prelude to future successful hunts in the future.

10.2 The ritualized changes of personhoods, gender and landscapes

Bear ceremonialism was not only characterized by ritual repetitions, but also by ritual transformations. In this study, I have stressed the importance of the changes in the presentations of personhoods. In this final section, I will answer the main question and all the sub-questions of this study.²²⁵⁷ Why did the presentations of the bear's personhood, the hunter's self, and the women's roles change in the *Bear Songs* of the different ritual phases?

One of the main problems of the classic studies on Finnish bear ceremonialism is that the ritual identity of the bear was perceived as quite static and dualistic. In terms of the archaic ritual, the bruin was considered a totem or ancestor of humankind or of a clan, as well as an animal-god that is resurrected.²²⁵⁸ After the introduction of agriculture and Christianity, it abruptly became the enemy of humanity and the representative of a hostile environment.²²⁵⁹

This study demonstrates that the ritual personhood of the bear and the forest were more complex and dynamic. In several hunting traditions, animals not only had personhood but a changing one. Willerslev stresses that the concept of person could take various forms²²⁶⁰ and that hunters' concepts and beliefs are always related to a particular context of relational activity, such as the encounter between hunter and prey.²²⁶¹ Among the Yukaghir, the same moose acquired different meanings in different contexts.²²⁶² They considered the moose an entity to be consumed and killed when buying hunting licenses from Russians, but during the hunt they carefully relate to it as a person with a temperament and intentionality.²²⁶³

In the the Finno-Karelian *Bear Songs*, the personhood of the bear clearly depends on context, but in a different way. During the whole bear ceremonial, hunters always considered the bear as a person, but they continuously changed its personal identity

²²⁵⁶ See Section 8.21.

²²⁵⁷ See Section 1.1.3.

²²⁵⁸ See Sections 2.3 and 2.4

²²⁵⁹ See Sections 2.5 and 2.6.

²²⁶⁰ Willerslev 2007: 2.

²²⁶¹ Willerslev 2013: 49.

²²⁶² Willerslev 2013: 115.

²²⁶³ Willerslev 2013: 49.

according to the contexts represented by different ritual phases. Several scholars have noted that in modern Western societies, personhood above all means individual consciousness, while in folk or indigenous societies a person is essentially a social being.²²⁶⁴ In bear ceremonialism, the bruin changes not only its gender, but also its age or role. These transformations were not superficial, since the bear acquired a different social status.

In the ritual called the “circling of the bear,” the hunters sang by defining the bruin as an infant who fell asleep while listening to an incantation lullaby, because the hunters wanted the bear to remain in the same den for the whole winter.²²⁶⁵ In the *Births of the Bear*, the bear’s identity is the most complex and mutable: the hunters described the bruin as the offspring of forest spirits, in order to mobilize them to control the bear,²²⁶⁶ but they also stressed its human origin, its baptism and the oath of the bear, in order to convince it to behave properly, following Christian and human moral rules.²²⁶⁷ Before the kill, the bear was kindly awakened as a bride or a relative that had overslept,²²⁶⁸ in order to persuade the bear to leave the den, to avoid the bear’s attack and to gradually transform it into a more humanlike being, the guest of honor of the village.²²⁶⁹ When approaching the village, the bear became a male guest of the manly group of killers, a foreigner who would be guided by the hunters to their home and accepted in the manly company of the hunting group.²²⁷⁰ The mistress of the house welcomed the bear as a long-awaited groom,²²⁷¹ while the hunters often stressed that the bear was a respected male and adult guest. The place of honor was reserved for the bear,²²⁷² and the house offered ale, spirits and communal singing in abundance.²²⁷³ Later the hunters presented the bear skull as prey or a bride that should not be left on the snow, but accompanied to a specific place. In this way, the tree of the bear skull

²²⁶⁴ Mauss 1985; Carriters, Collings & Lukes 1985; Brightman, Grotti & Ulturgasheva 2014.

²²⁶⁵ See Section 4.4.

²²⁶⁶ See Sections 5.3, 5.4, 5.5.

²²⁶⁷ See Sections 5.3, 5.4, 5.5.

²²⁶⁸ See Section 7.1.

²²⁶⁹ See Chapter 9.

²²⁷⁰ See Section 7.11.

²²⁷¹ See Section 8.1.

²²⁷² See Sections 8.4 and 8.5.

²²⁷³ See Section 8.6.

was connected with the new house of the bride.²²⁷⁴ In other songs, the bear was called by names for game birds often associated with the bride in the wedding songs.²²⁷⁵

The identity of the bear was mimetic. It should behave as a bride, a groom or an infant or male adult was supposed to behave in certain situations. At the same time, these social identities required specific attention: the hunters were supposed to treat the bride/bear with proper care. Nevertheless, the bear did not acquire a permanent human identity, but it rapidly shifted from one identity to another. The mimetic bear became very similar but not identical to humans. These shifting identities helped to prevent the risk of its permanent metamorphosis into a human, as the bear needed to return to the forest to ensure its regeneration and the continuation of its life. Particularly meaningful is that the gender and the “wedding” identities of the bear also depended on the gender of the singers: the bear was the desired bride for hunters and the long-awaited groom or son-in-law for the mistress. In the Finno-Karelian magical tradition, a strong will and desire were key elements to make the ritual fully effective.²²⁷⁶

The bear acquired a mimetic identity, but it was not completely transformed into a human. Humans tried to make the bear a member of their community, but they were conscious of the bear’s ontological difference and potential danger. The betrothal of women and the bear was “accepted” in the *Bear Songs* or in the staged wedding of the *Text of Viitasaari*,²²⁷⁷ but the hunters also exhorted the women to be careful to avoid the sexual harassments of the guest and to protect their wombs, genitals and the cattle.²²⁷⁸

This study reveals that the connection between bear ceremonialism and weddings was complex and multilayered. The wedding is much more than a sexual adventure; it is a ritual connected with the building and rebuilding of social ties, and it is a ritual of transformation. By means of a wedding it is possible to unite what was previously separate, such as two distinct families or the bear and a member of the village. According to Stark, the wedding is a moment of social fabric, which has the potential to alter the division of labor, power dynamics, and the relations between the social classes.²²⁷⁹ Sometimes farmhands and humble serving maids were able to “marry up” into the landowning class.²²⁸⁰ Weddings could thus enrich or empower the weaker or

²²⁷⁴ See Section 9.6.

²²⁷⁵ See Sections 7.10 and 8.11.

²²⁷⁶ Stark 2006: 288–289.

²²⁷⁷ See Section 8.2.

²²⁷⁸ See Section 8.3.

²²⁷⁹ Stark 2007: 170–171.

²²⁸⁰ Stark 2007: 171.

poorer members of society. The hunter who married a forest spirit for the duration of the hunt was believed to be able to influence the decisions of his powerful wife.

Tarkka stresses that the bear ceremonial recalls both rituals of passage and rituals of territorial mobility.²²⁸¹ In Karelia and Finland, the wedding blended both concepts. Like the bear ceremonial, the wedding included several crossings of boundaries between the groom's village, the bride's village and the forest in between. It was not by chance that both rituals had almost identical rites of protection when crossing the borders.²²⁸²

Ilomäki notes that both bear ceremonialism and the wedding were finalized with a change of social status. In the wedding, the groom and the bride switched their social positions and became husband and wife. The groom took the bride from her house; she left her family to become a member of the groom's family.²²⁸³ In a similar way, the hunter took the bruin from its homeland and its parents (the woodland and the forest spirits) and joined it to the community of his village. The difference is that the bride became a wife for her whole life and did not return to her previous home; thus, she passed through a definitive social metamorphosis. By contrast, the bear was married only for the brief time of the feast and, even in this situation, it maintained part of its original alterity and dangerousness. After the feast, the bruin was supposed to go back to its homeland and parents to ensure its regeneration.

However, few Finnish studies on the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonial have emphasized that the traditional wedding was also presented as a "death" and a prelude to childbirth. In traditional wedding rituals, the bride underwent a symbolic death of her previous status of daughter and girl, as well as a rebirth into her new status of wife and future mother. Both funerals and the departure of the bride from her parents' house were marked by ritual laments.²²⁸⁴ The bear underwent a more concrete death, followed by a symbolic wedding, which was the prelude for the bear's regeneration after the ritual of the bear skull. Both the lines to awaken the bear from the den and those for the bear skull contained references to the observation of the sun and the moon, one of the most typical motifs of the childbirth incantations.²²⁸⁵

Bear ceremonialism, weddings and funerals had other important shared elements and analogies in common: they were carefully divided into different phases, including

²²⁸¹ Tarkka 2013: 338.

²²⁸² Tarkka 2013: 350.

²²⁸³ Ilomäki 1986: 131.

²²⁸⁴ Heikinmäki 1981: 445; Sarmela 1981: 71–72.

²²⁸⁵ See Sections 7.2 and 9.10.

a procession²²⁸⁶ and a communal feast with an abundance of food, drink and collective singing. Nevertheless, weddings and funerals were rituals of passage that marked a very definitive social transformation for members of new families or in the world of the dead. In bear ceremonials, the marriage and even the death of the animal were not definitive situations. Instead, the ritual seems to have emphasized a circular flow of changes and passages that stressed the importance of the continuation of the circle of life.

The hunters' self, identity and age also changed in the songs of different ritual phases. Leaving the village, the hunters presented themselves as mighty men protected by mythical iron belts and shirts, who raised their *luonto* force to make their minds and bodies harder²²⁸⁷ than those of the sorcerers and envious ones. Entering the forest, they acted as handsome seducers of female forest spirits and the feminized woodland,²²⁸⁸ but when they required the help of forest spirits to find the den they could humbly redefine themselves as orphans, poor and hungry foreigners, or young boys who absolutely needed guidance.²²⁸⁹ Later, they described themselves as adult, manly guides and hosts when they led the bear to the village feast.²²⁹⁰ The identity of the hunters changed, depending on the addressee of their song. The hunters were mimetic because in the songs they represented their acts of seduction of the forest spirits as a kind of bodily fusion with the forest. The hunters did not completely transform themselves into forest beings; they maintained their human identity, as their brief seduction and wedding were aimed at convincing the forest spirits to give them prey.²²⁹¹

The hunters' mimesis resulted as an emphatic and sensual but strategic and voluntary manipulation of the process and degree of identification with alterity, a partial transformation and imitation, an "incomplete coping" characterized by a state of "in-betweenness" that included a defense of self-consciousness and independent agency.²²⁹²

The hunters sang about another highly mimetic situation when they ate the sense organs of the bear head, and they sang that they saw with the eyes of the bear and heard with the ear of the bruin, or that they acquired a common "kindred song and

²²⁸⁶ See Section 9.3.

²²⁸⁷ See Section 4.6.

²²⁸⁸ See Sections 6.5 and 6.6.

²²⁸⁹ See Sections 6.7 and 6.11.

²²⁹⁰ See Section 7.11.

²²⁹¹ See Sections 6.5 and 6.6.

²²⁹² Willerslev 2007: 105–108.

mind” when they ate the tongue of the bear.²²⁹³ Nevertheless, they maintained the consciousness of the alterity of the bear and of their human identity, because in the following phase they detached the bear’s fangs and claws, depriving it of its weapons and using the bear force contained in them for many rituals, including self-protection from other bruins.²²⁹⁴ The hunters partly absorbed the force of the bear to make them stronger or wiser, but they also repelled the contagious bear force contained in the meat.²²⁹⁵

The women of the village also changed their roles and identities in the different ritual phases. Women were very active on the borders of the forest and in the village. At first, the wife protected the hunter leaving for the forest with the ritual of the *harakoiminen*.²²⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the magic actions of female outsiders were considered damaging. The hunters were concerned about curses uttered by neighbor women or witches, lest they ruin their hunt.²²⁹⁷ Later, the mistress of the village was in charge of welcoming the bear into the village and the cabin.²²⁹⁸ According to Satu Apo, the women ensured the integrity of the farm household, and they acted as guardians and gatekeepers of the human habitat, the village and the house.²²⁹⁹ This role not only included defending the household, but also the proper welcoming of foreigners and the official acceptance of the guest, hosts and grooms, such as the bear. The women carefully controlled who and what entered and left the village. As the representative of the village, a woman could even marry the bear to ensure its effective social inclusion in the village during the feast. It should be noted that in an analogous way, the mistress of the forest was supposed to accept the hunters in the forest, and that this acceptance was often marked by a temporary marriage.²³⁰⁰

The mistress of the village was often a mother and a mature woman with a certain degree of authority. Young girls and boys had a lower social status, and they were simply requested to leave the door and porch when the bruin was entering the cabin.²³⁰¹ The bear ceremonial reveals the relevance of age hierarchies. The mature

²²⁹³ See Section 8.18.

²²⁹⁴ See Section 8.19.

²²⁹⁵ See Sections 8.11, 8.14, 8.18.

²²⁹⁶ See Section 4.9.

²²⁹⁷ See Section 4.8.

²²⁹⁸ See Section 8.1.

²²⁹⁹ Apo 1998: 72–73; Stark (Stark-Arola) 1998: 39.

²³⁰⁰ See Sections 6.5 and 6.6.

²³⁰¹ See Section 8.3.

mistress was clearly responsible for the order and cleanliness of the *tupa*,²³⁰² but she sang that the young maids had washed it properly.²³⁰³

Last but not least, the women produced ale and spirits, the drinks constantly offered to the bear and the forest spirits. Thus, they were properly called “the givers” in the bear feast²³⁰⁴ and they played an important role in the exchange relations with the forest. The mistress also sang the important thanksgiving song, where she hoped for a future visit of the bear/groom while she was still alive. By means of this motif, the mistress tried to ensure both the concrete return of the bear in this world and the future hunting luck of the men of the village.²³⁰⁵

The women were also in charge of the protection of the cattle, so the hunters exhorted them to guard these when the bear entered the yard.²³⁰⁶ This double role of the women could explain the apparently ambivalent positions and attitudes of the women towards the bear. The women could participate in the banquet where bear meat was eaten, and only pregnant women should avoid any contact with the bear.²³⁰⁷ Some women ate the meat, but many voluntarily refrained from doing so, because of the bear’s human features.²³⁰⁸ This could be also a form of wise self-protection, because bear meat was considered contagious if the hunters did not perform specific rituals before eating it.²³⁰⁹ The bear also had quite an ambiguous relationship with the female sex. The bruin could be ashamed and startled if a woman aggressively and abruptly showed her genitals in the woods, but in the village it was interested in women, both as a groom and as a potential sexual harasser.²³¹⁰

The female forest spirits changed their roles, too, and in very dramatic ways: the careful mothers and protectors of the bears became protectors of the cattle and hunters from bears when the hunters uttered the proper *Birth of the Bear*.²³¹¹ The jealous owners of the bears became lovers, brides, guides, generous hosts and providers of bruins after the seduction of the hunters or their humble requests for help.²³¹² Both the mistress of

²³⁰² Living room; see Section 8.3.

²³⁰³ See Section 8.4.

²³⁰⁴ See Section 8.4.

²³⁰⁵ See Section 8.21.

²³⁰⁶ See Section 8.3.

²³⁰⁷ See Section 8.3.

²³⁰⁸ See Sections 8.15, 8.16.

²³⁰⁹ See Section 8.14.

²³¹⁰ See Sections 8.1 and 8.3.

²³¹¹ See Sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.

²³¹² See Sections 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.11.

the forest and the one of the village were potential guardians, givers/providers and wives in the complex ritual exchanges with the members of the other worlds. During the feast, the forest mistresses were invited as guests to the village feast, which was presented as a wedding of their “ox”.²³¹³ The identities and the attitudes of the forest spirits strictly depended on what kind of song was sung for them. The transformations of the forest spirits were expressed by changes in their mood (from angry to pleased) and by their clothes (from poor to rich).

The landscapes, which were personalized like the bear, were subject to the most striking metamorphosis. When the hunters entered the forest, they often sang about traveling in a “somber” woodland, in dark Pohjola or in an ambiguous mythic forestland both dreadful and fascinating.²³¹⁴ But after they had sung the ritual songs for the forest spirits, the forest was seen as shining with bright colors, gold and silver, and it was wrapped in precious clothes or textiles; it was perfumed, played music for and fell in love with the hunters.²³¹⁵ The personalization of the forest is well expressed by the notion that it had feelings and that the hunters tried to emotionally involve the forest. The hunters also asked the forest spirits to modify their environment—flattening the hills, for example—to make the hunters’ travel in the forest easier and faster.²³¹⁶

In the *Bear Songs*, the *kota*²³¹⁷ where the bear meat was cooked had gold and silver hooks; the place is described as rich and mythic, like the forest that accepted the hunters.²³¹⁸ The cabin and the *tupa* were transformed, too: the doors become bigger when the bear stepped in and the even the boards and the windows started to sing and rejoice.²³¹⁹ The *tupa* became personalized like the forest and, like the woodland, it resonated with music to mark the acceptance of the guest.

The negative or positive connotations of the respective environments depended on the ritual phases and the movements of the ritual actors. When the hunter left the village, he stressed that envious people and sorcerers were watching at every door and gate, highlighting the antisocial behavior of neighbors, yet the hunters presented the village as a warm and welcoming place when the bear arrived.²³²⁰ The cabin and the

²³¹³ The bear; see Section 8.2.

²³¹⁴ See Sections 6.2, 6.3.

²³¹⁵ See Sections 6.6, 6.9.

²³¹⁶ See Section 6.9.

²³¹⁷ Outdoor building used to cook or boil water.

²³¹⁸ See Section 8.7.

²³¹⁹ See Sections 8.3, 8.6.

²³²⁰ See Sections 4.8, 8.1, 8.6.

tupa were presented as most comfortable when the bear stepped in, but too crowded with women and children when the bear should leave the village after the feast.²³²¹ In a similar way, when the hunter performed the circling of the bear, the den was described as a secure place to sleep, but when the bear was supposed to leave it, it became a rotting and dangerous place.²³²²

In the songs, the rhythm or tempo of the actions changed, too. The dangerous passages across borders were often characterized by a slow tempo; leaving the village, the hunter exited the cabin slowly, pronouncing protective incantations at almost every step.²³²³ The entrance of the hunter into the forest was also slow and careful: he pronounced the *Birth of the Bear*, performed offerings, and sang long songs full of requests for the forest spirits.²³²⁴ Nevertheless, when the hunters had asked Ukko to empower their skis and dogs, and had prayed to the forest spirits to flatten the hills or guide them, they stressed that they would proceed with a supernatural rapidity to beat the competition of other hunters.²³²⁵ When the bear entered the village and the *tupa*, the hunters gradually introduced the bruin to the hunting group, the yard, the *kota*, the cabin, the porch and the *tupa*. The bear thus passed through a set of internal borders.²³²⁶ However, the bear was requested to quickly leave its “rotting” den before the bear kill and the crowded *tupa* after the bear feast.²³²⁷

All these apparently kaleidoscopic changes of social personhood, gender, space and time were an integral part of the ritual strategy as a whole. The changing landscapes, identities and rhythms underline a holistic ritual transformation that took place in the ceremonialism: the elimination of the potential dangers of the hunt necessitated the total unraveling of the common environments and expectations. The ritual changes also followed a precise logic: they were elaborate rhetorical devices to make the bear, the forest spirits and the personalized forest behave and act in certain ways in different ritual phases. However, bear ceremonialism also offered a very precise set of identities and behavioral models for the hunters and the women, who were supposed to assume different roles during the ritual. The identities and the attitudes of the different persons involved in the ceremonials were deeply relational: the positive behavioral reaction of

²³²¹ See Sections 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 9.1.

²³²² See Sections 4.4, 7.2.

²³²³ See Section 4.8.

²³²⁴ See Sections 5 and 6.

²³²⁵ See Sections 6.10, 6.9.

²³²⁶ See Chapter 8.

²³²⁷ See Sections 7.2, 9.1.

the bear and the forest spirits depended on the proper ritual behavior of the humans, who assumed a precise set of roles.

The poetic language of the *Bear Songs* also transformed the hunters' elaborate tricks into ways to honor and to please the bear and the forest master: the hunt was portrayed as a seduction and a wedding, while the feast where bear meat was eaten became a wedding and a jolly drinking and singing party. In its totality, the ceremonial transformed the hunt's violence and death into its exact opposite: a celebration of the continuation of life.

The complexity and dynamism of bear ceremonialism also challenges several classical categories of ritual theory, which makes it a relevant topic for future research in the fields of ritual studies and scholarship on human-animal relations.

Several scholars have noted the importance of animal or environmental personhood in rituals, but too often the concept of the animal person has remained abstract and static. Research has not paid full attention to the changing of presentations of animal personhood in the same ritual or in non-ritual contexts. Sometimes the idea of personhood has not been clearly separated from the concept of soul.

Ritual emphasis on territorial passages and weddings could suggest that bear ceremonialism followed the pattern of a classic "ritual of passage."²³²⁸ Following the theory of Mary Douglas, it is possible to conclude that the bear ceremonialism created "a new pattern of reality," a ritual situation in which the anomalousness of the bear was resolved as the bear acquired "a place" in the social and epistemic order of things.²³²⁹

However, the new order was transient. The bear never obtained a definitive new status, a fixed "place" or "re-aggregation"²³³⁰ in the human village, and the hunter did not acquire a definitive position in the community of the forest spirits. New positions were transitional, often valid only in a specific phase of the ceremonial or in the motif of a song; thus, the hunters sought to avoid complete metamorphosis. Bear ceremonialism was an "incomplete" or mimetic ritual of passage. After the hunt, the hunter assumed his previous social role again, and after the visit to the village and the wedding the bear went back to the mythical land of its birth. During each new hunt, the circular flurry of identities, visits, territorial passages and weddings started anew.

The bear passed through a whirl of liminal situations and acquisitions of short-lasting and incomplete social identities, and the bruin's mimetic or liminal

²³²⁸ On territorial passages, see Van Gennep 1960: 15–25; on weddings as rituals of passages, see Van Gennep 1960: 116–145.

²³²⁹ Douglas 2002: 48; on Douglas and anomalousness, see Section 1.1.3.

²³³⁰ On re-aggregation after the liminal phase, see Turner 1992: 9.

personhood²³³¹ continued to oscillate between humanity and the forest. Bear ceremonialism did not completely resolve the contradictions of the bruin's plural identities, but it offered a set of temporary redefinitions that were suitable for the goals of the ritual phases and the ceremonialism as a whole.²³³²

Complex ceremonials fascinate scholars because they often elude the rigidity of existing scholarly categories. The scholar should elaborate on them, furnishing new interpretative approaches for the scientific community.²³³³ Following the tracks of the bear rituals, the scholar is engaged in a challenging dialogue with the limits of previous scholarship and the categories at his or her disposal. Hunting for the meaning of the ceremonial, the researcher follows new paths of learning and innovatively calls into question the apparent certainties of his or her discipline.

²³³¹ On the liminal *personae*, see Turner 1969: 95.

²³³² On the temporary ritual redefinition of crisis and contradictions, see Bourdieu 1977; Bell 1992: 110; Stark 1998a: 33.

²³³³ Classic examples of ritual analyses that have provoked intense epistemological, conceptual and methodological debates are Gregory Bateson's *Naven* (1936, new expanded editions 1958, 1976) and Victor Turner's monograph on the Ndembu rituals (1967).

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