

BEAR CULT AND MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTHERN OB-UGRIANS

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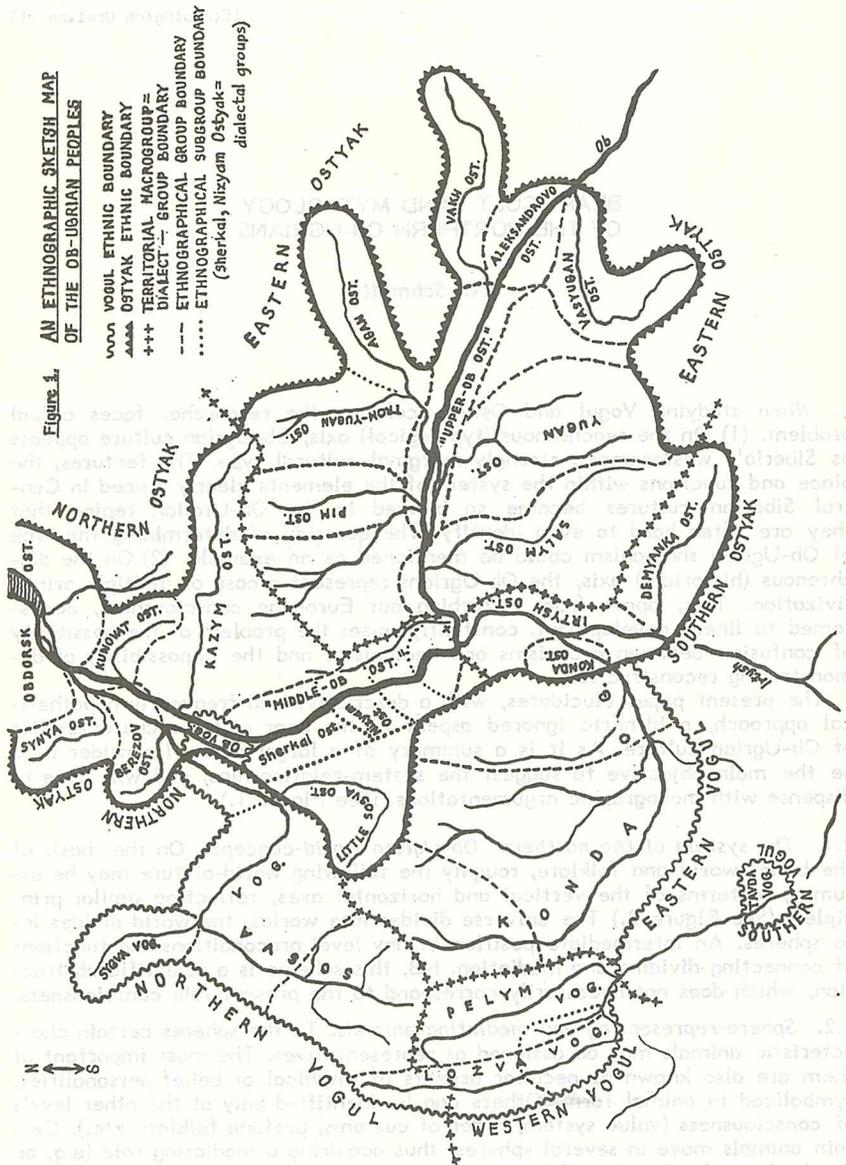
1. When studying Vogul and Ostyak culture, the researcher faces a dual problem. (1) On the synchronous (typological) axis, Ob-Ugrian culture appears as Siberia's westernmost, strongly marginal cultural type. The features, the place and functions within the system of the elements clearly traced in Central Siberian cultures become so blurred in the Ob-Uralian region that they are often hard to even identify. The question of determining the type of Ob-Ugrian shamanism could be mentioned as an example. (2) On the diachronous (historical) axis, the Ob-Ugrians represent a case of multiple primitivization. This, apart from disturbing our European consciousness, accustomed to linear development, constantly raises the problem of the possibility of confusion between archaisms and neologisms and the impossibility of demonstrating reconstructions.

The present paper elucidates, with a descriptive and frequently hypothetical approach, a hitherto ignored aspect of the bear cult, so characteristic of Ob-Ugrian culture. As it is a summary of a larger study, I consider it to be the main objective to suggest the system-relationships, and will have to dispense with monographic argumentations. (See Figure 1.)

2.1. *The system of the northern Ob-Ugrian world-concept.* On the basis of the belief-world and folklore, roughly the following world-picture may be assumed, in terms of the vertical and horizontal axes, reflecting similar principles. (See Figure 2.) The universe divides into worlds, the world divides into spheres. An intermediate position at any level preconditions the functions of connecting-dividing and mediation. NB, this scheme is a scientific abstraction, which does not necessarily correspond to the present folk consciousness.

2.2. *Sphere-representing and mediating animals.* To the spheres certain characteristic animals may be assigned as representatives. The most important of them are also known as peculiar aspects of mythical or belief personalities, symbolized in animal form. Others can be identified only at the other levels of consciousness (value system, order of customs, profane folklore etc.). Certain animals move in several spheres, thus acquiring a mediating role (e.g. on the horizontal axis, the wild goose migrating in a north-south direction is the animal aspect of the god World-Surveyor Man). On the vertical axis, there appear two "dark"-signed mediators, connecting all the worlds: the loon and small diver - the animal form of the Lord of Disease/the Lord of the Nether World - and the bear - the animal figure of the Sacred Town Elder guardian

Figure 1. AN ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH MAP OF THE OB-URSIAN PEOPLES



spirit associated with the *por* moiety. While the mediating role of the bird can be explained from its actual characteristics, the bear could only have been given such a wide-ranging function through an amalgamation of the historical layers of its cult. In mythology, both animals have, as their counter-possible "light" opposite, the human (or possibly the goose, horse) aspect of the World Surveyor Man.

2.3. *The system of animals mediating between the earth surface and the lower world.* The lowermost, but still "warm"-signed "thawed earth" sphere of the middle (human) world is a region of transition to the world which, situated beneath it and beginning with the "cold" layer, is alien to humans. Its representatives are characteristic, downward oriented mediators.

	terrestrial	aquatic
large	(1) BEAR	(2) beaver, otter
small	(3) MOUSE, vole, mole etc.	(4) water-rat etc.

Their shared characteristics - physical and behavioural similarity to man, dark colour, complete or partial withdrawal from the earth surface in winter etc. - sharply mark off this group from the other mammals. Because of the ambiguity of their dwelling place, their inclusion in the sphere of the forest and the earth is ambivalent. Members of the "large" category have the signs of "sacred" and "clean", while the "small" ones have opposite properties. Category (1) is the most strongly marked, (4) is the least marked. Within a particular category, the animals may be conceived of as variants of the same archetype; for instance, (3) = MOUSE. In reducing the oppositions, first "terrestrial"/"aquatic" (4) → (3) and then (2) → (1) may be converted into one: for example, in the Pelym Vogul bear songs the taboo name for bear is "... otter" (Munkácsi 1893:521; Kannisto-Liimola 1958:279, 291). In the "small"/"large" opposition, the amalgamation of the remaining (3) → (1) can be justified on the grounds that the soul of the bear - that is, the more subtle manifestation of its principle - is generally held to be mouse- or mole-shaped. Therefore the entire system can be traced back to a single archetype and principle, namely, the BEAR. In bear cult this is the basis of "lower", "earth"-signed bear-concepts.

3.1. *Bear cult and the system of bear-concepts.* Elements of the "bear" concept range pervade the entire Ob-Ugrian culture, creating one of the world's richest bear cults. The often-mentioned bear-feast, bear-oath etc. are only partial manifestations of this. Why has the bear, of all animals, become one of the main organizing principle of the culture, and thus of the individuals' inner, emotional life as well?

The elements of the "bear" concept range and the related custom-acts stem from the component systems of the most diverse historical layers, each possessing a different context. In reality, they are syncretistic, they do not make up a coherent system. In the traditional literature, it was chiefly the versions of the bear's origin and of the first hero to kill it that provided the typological points of orientation (e.g. Munkácsi & Kálmán 1952:19-33, 117-120). The most detailed review of Ob-Ugrian bear cult is the work of Béla Kálmán (1952:15-164). A lead was taken in the direction of wider system-relations by Černecov (1939, 1965, 1974 etc.), Haekel (1946), K8halmi (1981).

In the theoretical systematization of the mass of concepts we can resort to the following scheme. Certain traits and the functions based upon them constitute motifs; arranging themselves according to certain aspects, the motifs constitute concepts, which thereafter become components of the constituent systems of the conceptual range. A sketchy representation of the concepts according to the horizontal and vertical axes and the spheres (see Figure 3). NB, given that the concepts themselves lack the logical requirement of a coherent basis of classification, their interrelationships and overlaps are hardly amenable to graphic representation. This maximum concept mass is not ideated in its entirety in the consciousness of the collectives, but its concrete reflections can be arranged according to similar principles.

The concepts of the component systems can briefly be summarized under the name "bear", signed "upper (sky)", "lower (earth)", "intermediate (forest-, human-)", "spiritual" etc. The bear vertically connecting all three worlds is a blending of two mediators - namely, (1) of the mediator between the upper and the intermediate worlds and (2) the mediator between the intermediate and the lower worlds. In what follows, we shall concentrate on the latter.

3.2. *The interrelationships between the bear cult and shamanism.* East of the Ob-Ugrians, the notion of what is called the "bear-shaman" is widely known. In this, the bear is generally a representative of the lower, the "earth" principle. With the Ob-Ugrians, it is Karjalainen's data on the eastern Ostyaks that have the closest bearing on the relationships between the bear and the shaman. This refers to the bear-shaped helping spirits of the shamans of the easternmost groups (cf. 5.5.3.), and it can also be expressed in the attributes of the shaman (Kulemzin 1976:78). Karjalainen's most intriguing reference tries to convey that those capable of magic can, on occasion, themselves turn into bears (1927:36). But Karjalainen also remarks about the northern Ostyak shamans that, similarly to their eastern counterparts, they appeal to a bear-shaped spirit in order to save a sick man's soul (1921:73, 84; 1927: 283-284).

On the basis of the monographic literature, northern Ob-Ugrian shamanism belongs to the "possession" type: the function of the spiritual journey is transferred onto the possessing guardian spirit. That is probably the reason why - as Haekel noted with surprise (1946:152) - the characteristics of guardian spirits are, in many respects, reminiscent of the traits of the shamans of Siberian peoples living further to the east. In such cases, the aspect of the bear-shaman is to be sought in the guardian spirits possessing the shape of a bear. The most significant among them is the "lower"-signed, Sacred Town Elder, belonging to the *por* moiety.

4. *The BEAR and the MOUSE.*¹ Prior to reviewing the bear concepts, let us briefly look at the concepts relating to the MOUSE and the special relationship of these to the bear. It is clear from the terminology that (1) there are frequent overlaps in the names of small rodents (Kálmán 1938:25); (2) the descriptive names suggest that their names may have been taboo. The negative, "unclean" aspect of the earth is expressed in several, e.g. Kazym Ostyak 'mouse' *nampər/təpər wəj*, 'dust/dirt animal' (collected by the author, 1980), Middle Lozva Vogul *l'ül'-uj* 'bad animal' (Munkácsi & Kálmán 1986:286) etc. The mole, also because of its partial terminological and functional similarity, can be discussed together with the mouse.

4.1. *General concepts.* Beliefs are polar manifestations of the "lower" sign. A Konda Vogul deluge myth mentions the mouse as part of the genesis of lower-world animals (Kannisto & Liimola 1951:17); eating of its meat makes man unclean (ibid. 97; Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:181). The mole can be a herald of death (Kazym Ostyak: Karjalainen 1921:87-88), but elsewhere

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE
NORTHERN OB-UGRIAN WORLD-PICTURE

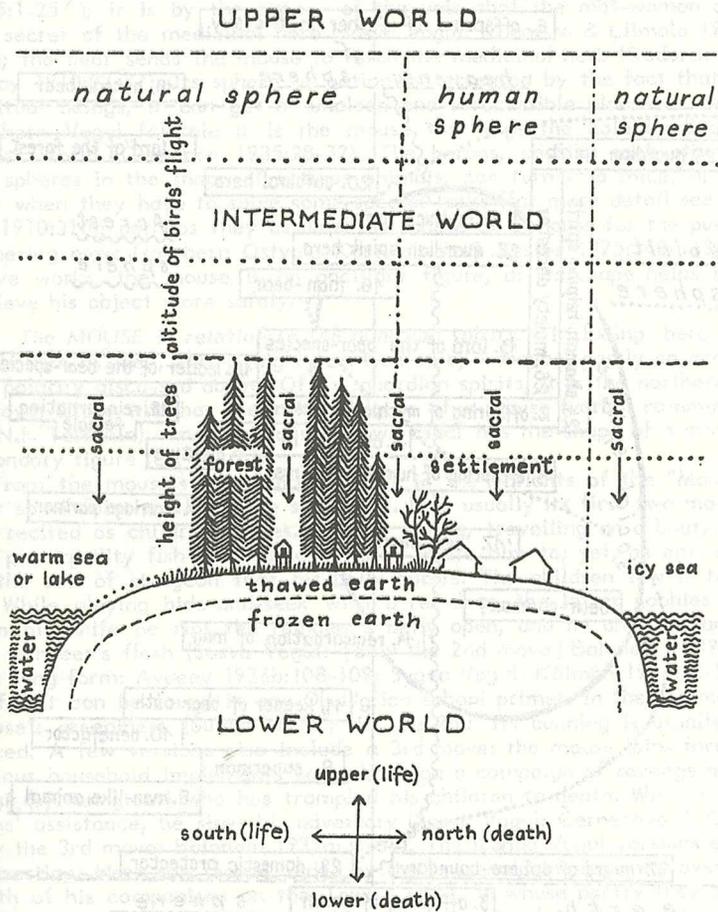
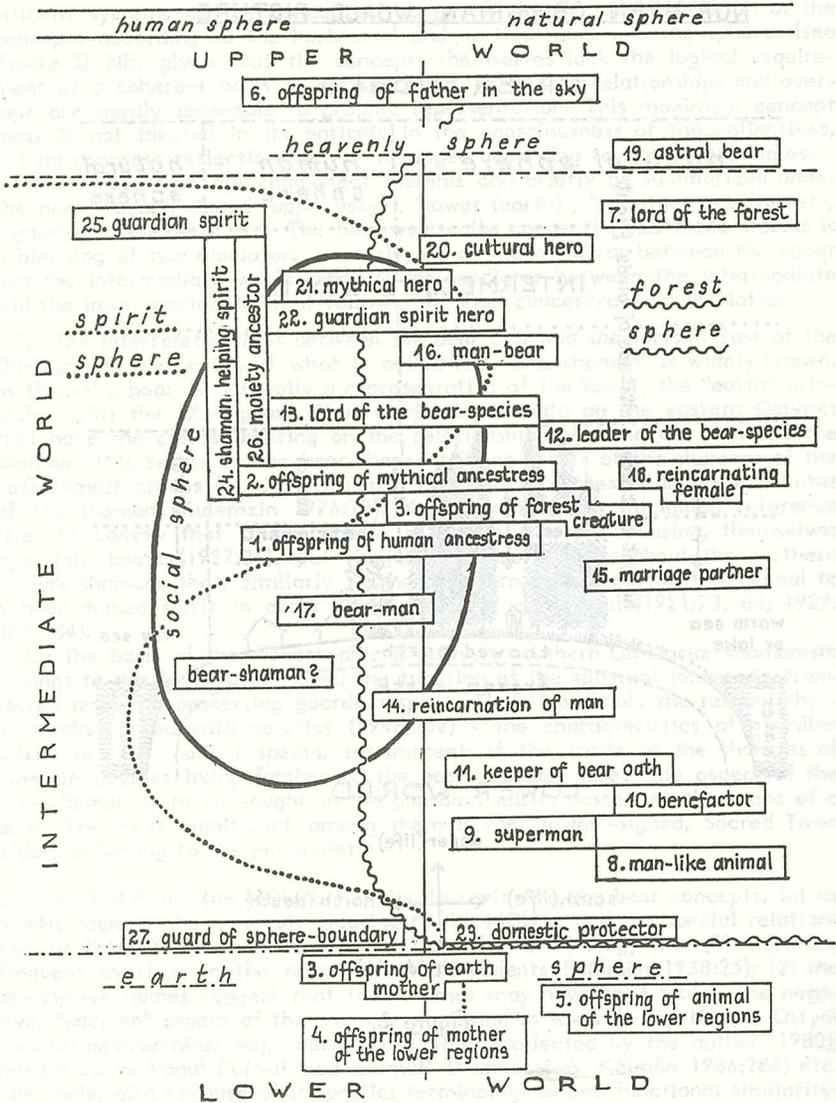


Figure 2.

Figure 3. THE SYSTEM OF BEAR-CONCEPTS



its skin has the function of driving away disease (Sygva Vogul: Gemuev & Saggalaev 1986:24).

In folklore, the MOUSE (or the hero turned into MOUSE) is generally successful. From our viewpoint, the first thing to mention is its association with healing; for instance, the woman turned into a mole gets between the skin and the flesh of the wounded hero in order to extract the pieces of armour that have lodged themselves there (Demyanka Ostyak: Karjalainen & Vértes 1975:1-25²); it is by the agency of the vole that the *mõs*-woman acquires the secret of the medicinal herb (Sosva Vogul: Kannisto & Liimola 1951:221-227); the bear sends the mouse to fetch the medicinal herb (Obdorsk Ostyak: Pápáy 1910:72-77). Its sphere of action is increased by the fact that, unlike spiritual beings, it can get at unclean and inaccessible places as well. In a northern Vogul folktale it is the mouse that digs the hole leading to the Lower World (Černecov 1935:28-32). The heroes, chasing each other across the spheres in the shape of various animals, can turn into mice; or they do that when they have to solve some special tasks (for more detail see Munkácsi 1910:310); perhaps they assume the shape of a mouse for the purpose of gathering news (southern Ostyak: Karjalainen & Vértes 1975:140-163). In the above works, the mouse is an ancillary figure, or its shape helps the hero achieve his object more safely.

4.2. *The MOUSE in relation to the guardian spirits.* Including here moiety symbolism as well, this is highly contradictory - maybe, partly on account of the polarity discussed above. Of the guardian spirits, it is the northern Ostyak Kunovat Elder who has the animal figure of a mouse (verbal communication by N.I. Tereškin) and the Sacred Town Elder has the shape of a mouse as a secondary figure (cf. 6.1.3.).

From the mouse's own folklore, it is in the variants of the "Mouse tale" that some faint myth can be suspected. It is usually its first two moves that are recited as children's tales. (1) The mouse, travelling on a boat, declines the poor-quality fish that some children invite him to; yet, he eats so much of the roe of sturgeon that his belly bursts. The children sew it together. (2) While playing hide-and-seek with a reindeer, the latter gobbles him up. With his knife he rips the reindeer's belly open, and he and his family eat the reindeer's flesh (Sosva Vogul: [only the 2nd move] Balandin 1939a:26-27; in a sung form: Avdeev 1936b:108-109; Sygva Vogul: Kálmán 1976:52-56 etc.). So far it can be found in any Ob-Ugrian school primer. In the 1st move, the mouse's greediness (Šulgin 1969), in the 2nd, its cunning is usually underscored. A few versions also include a 3rd move: the mouse joins forces with various household implements to embark on a campaign of revenge against a *mēnj* (sylvan giant) who has trampled his children to death. With his companions' assistance, he slays his adversary (Sosva Vogul: Černecova & Černecov only the 3rd move: Balandin 1939a:31-34). The Konda Vogul versions are most interesting. Here the mouse, aided by the household implements, avenges the death of his companions on the Town Lord,³ in whose pantry they had been working havoc. Yet, the mouse himself gets killed in the battle too. The new mouse-husband of his widow is sent for food by his (the husband's) aunt. Setting out on a bear hunt, in a parallel story with the 1st move, he does not eat; in an episode echoing the 2nd move, he is attacked by a bear, from whose belly he escapes by means of the trick described there; then there follows a feast and a bear song (Kannisto & Liimola 1956:113-117). Černecov's Konda version contains the 1st and 2nd moves corresponding to the Sosva version, yet with the bear instead of the reindeer (No. 1466, text 7).⁴ Tereškin's Nizyam Ostyak manuscript variant classes the story with the heroic epics of the guardian spirits. After moves 1-2, the mouse proposes to the Town Lord's daughter. Refused, he takes revenge by destroy-

ing the Town Lord's pantries with his army of mice. The war is ended when it is revealed that the mouse is the Sacred Town Elder in animal shape. The bride turns him into a man by her kiss. In a Sherkal Ostyak heroic saga too the Sacred Town Elder outwits his opponents in the shape of a mouse (collected by the author, 1982).

In these stories, the mouse is a dangerous, one might say, consuming creature. If we tried to apply the moiety principle to his opponents, arranged in a chain sequence (*mēŋk* - Town Lord - bear), they would belong to the *por* moiety, like the Sacred Town Elder. It may be the case that, as with the bear, the range of ideas of the MOUSE breaks down into a few fundamental concepts, which is what makes it contradictory.

4.3. *The MOUSE in relation to the bear.* On the basis of its physical appearance and movements, the MOUSE may be conceived of as a miniaturized version of the bear. In the case of the mouse, it is more its native environment (moving underground, on the surface, and on high objects) - i.e. its sphere-references -, whereas in the case of the mole it is more its exterior, its colour and its sluggish movement that can be identified with the bear. Bán (1913:219-220) explained the mole-shaped soul of the bear from the physical resemblance and the soul-carrying function. The MOUSE stands for the more subtle and "lower" aspect of the bear.

As attested by the northern bear-songs, the function of the MOUSE-shaped soul of the bear is to enable him, after the feast, make his way from the house through the forest back to the Sky God, by a ladder. In some places, the receding of the bear is imagined in the shape of animals of increasing size (mouse, ermine, wolverine - e.g. Sosva Vogul: Kannisto & Liimola 1958: 372-373).

With that in mind, we may discover some symbolic significance in a humorous scene - featuring among the dramatic performances of the bear-feast - in which a hunger, bragging of his bravery and insulting the bear, panics and even faints on seeing a mouse that has suddenly appeared (Gondatti 1886b:81; Karjalainen 1927:217; Avdeev 1936a:172; 1936b:33; Rédei 1968:42 etc.).

5. *The system-relationships of the more important bear-concepts.* Owing to lack of space, I here touch upon only those aspects that enable the discovery of a new concept, interrelationship or reconstruction. The concept of the astral bear is not important from the standpoint of our topic, for its mention see 5.3.4.

5.1. *The origin of bears and the typology of their mediation.* The majority of the myths relating to the origin of the bear can be traced back to an archetypal scheme where two, generally supernatural parents belonging to opposite spheres produce a third kind of being, who will then belong to the intermediate sphere. The change of sphere denotes, at the same time, mediation. This shows two kinds of dynamics: (1) a change of spheres horizontally, from society to nature ("forest"), and (2) a transition between worlds vertically, from the sky to (the interior of) the earth.

The legends vary in whether or not they name both parents. The majority of them keep the identity of the parent with the more negative sign a secret from both the offspring and his environment. The initial, dominant trait of the offspring can be determined according to the sphere rearing him. It is an obligatory motif that, owing to the properties inherited from the more negative parent, the offspring becomes unruly and assumes the shape of a bear - if, that is, he has not been one already. He is compelled to leave the environment that has nurtured him, yet, he cannot make it to the other parent, but becomes instead an inhabitant of an intermediate sphere/world.

5.1.1. *Bears with horizontal dynamics.* Theoretically, these could be the purest representatives of totemic relationships, though that is difficult to prove. Their mother, with human traits, is a representative of the mythical or legendary ancestors; still, she cannot really be identified with any concrete female guardian spirit. She it is who rears the offspring. His father is a sylvan being. The typology of these mother-dominated human-bears:

(1) *Mother: a lord's daughter; father: mēṅk* (supernatural sylvan creature): 1st, 3rd concepts. A legend for which there exist concrete local data from the southern, Irtyš Ostyaks. The daughter of the lord of the old fortress by the village of Kulpohovo - with her hairy face, she already anticipates some bear-like features - takes up with a forest *mēṅk*. Their son slays his playmates, and the villagers drive him into the forest together with his mother where he stays to live as a bear. That sort of relationship between the human ancestors and *mēṅks* was no rare phenomenon (Patkanov 1897:125). It is mostly explained in totemic terms: Haruzin 1898, II:7; Pavlovsky 1907:181; Bán 1913:210, see moreover Munkácsi & Kálmán 1952:30-31.

(2) *"The boy who has departed into the forest I":* 2nd concept. Versions according to the mother:

(a) *Mother: mōś woman; father: unknown.* According to its Sygva Vogul variant, a lonely mother forbids her son to venture too far to play. When he disobeys her, the village children run away from him, shouting "the *mōś* woman's son is coming". He realizes that he has turned into a bear. He turns on his mother, who tries to hold him back, forbidding her to cross the forest boundary, and goes into the forest for good (Černecov's file, No. 1472, text 2). The *mōś* woman's son is mentioned by Avdeev (1936b:29) and Sokolova (1972:73). Nor can it be ruled out that Gondatti's variant, with the unidentified heroine (1886a:72; 1886b:79), also applies to her. The *mōś* woman mother motif also occurs among the formulas of the Sosva Vogul bear-songs: the bear's paw is compared to a cushion sewn by his *mōś* woman mother (Kannisto & Liimola 1958:150).

The advantage of this legend is that the mother's moiety is known. The father is believed by Černecov to be a *por* man (1974:288). In this, however, there would be nothing strange, nothing to hide; the hostility of the community and the boy's aggressiveness would remain unexplained. A *mēṅk* father, as suggested by the previous type, would sound more convincing. Marriage between a human and a *mēṅk* is held to be possible by popular belief. The northern Voguls associate the *mēṅks*, like the bear, with the *por* moiety. Their shared characteristics: large body size, dangerousness (feeding on humans), relative clumsiness etc.; for their identification on other grounds see Bán 1913:215. In bear folklore, "bear" and "*mēṅk*" are sometimes used as parallel words (Munkácsi 1896:254). Černecov's two records also mention that, in the Sygva Vogul village of Munkes, belonging to the *por* moiety, and in the Ob-Vogul Vezhakori, players wearing *mēṅk* masks perform, in front of the bear, a dance that those belonging to the *mōś* moiety are not supposed to see (No. 1467, texts 15 and 17). Thus the legend could be taken to mean that the *mōś* woman's marriage was correct from the standpoint of moiety, but not from the standpoint of sphere.

(b) *Mother: šopar woman; father: unknown.* The story of the northern Ostyak "Song of my *šopar* mother" is similar, but the initial prohibition is missing, and, when the departure to the forest takes place, the mother prescribes for her son the laws of life in the forest, his return to the house of men, and the ritual of the bear-feast (Pápay 1905b:106-116). The song was clearly interpreted as the origin of the first bear. The northern Ob-ugrians may have taken the two kinds of mother to be the same; that is supported by the fact that the bear-song formula referring to the *mōś* woman as a mother,

quoted above, also exists in a version containing a *šopar* woman (Kannisto & Liimola 1958:48, 112).

The cult of the *šopar/kami* woman - and frequent mention of her as the mother of the bear - is characteristic of the southwestern groups; but here the moieties are so blurred that it is not worth even trying to guess concerning them. Towards the north, a latent '*šopar/kami* woman ~ *mōš* woman ~ the Goddess Kaltesh' identification at the centre of the "bear" concept complex allows the axis of mediation to be inverted.

5.1.2. *Bears with vertical dynamics.* The power of mediating between worlds presupposes parents of a god-like order. Their offspring is an instrument of mythological modelling, rather than one of concrete moiety relationships. It reflects a more advanced, later concept-world. Of its laws it should be pointed out already at this early stage that bears with a "lower", "earth" sign have a maternal dominance, while those with an "upper", "sky" sign have a paternal dominance. In the eastern Ostyaks' world of beliefs, based on impersonal sphere-spirits, the above thesis does not apply: here the bear, conceived of as the offspring of the Earth-Spirit, has a paternal dominance (e.g. Vasyugan Ostyak: Karjalainen 1927:10, 23).

5.1.2.1. "Lower" bears with a maternal dominance. Lower → intermediate world mediator "hero" bear. "The boy who has departed into the forest II." The most elaborate system of concepts is to be found in the Voguls with a culture southwestern in character, at the upper reaches of the Konda, Pelym, Lozva, and the Northern Sosva, which have a strong relationship with each other. Here the song of the origin of the bear was begun with the myth of the creation of the world, whose culmination is the rise of the bear. One of its structural features is the fact that it portrays all three worlds, in such a way that it divides the "lower" member of the "lower" /"terrestrial"/ "female" and "upper"/"celestial"/"male" opposition into a pair of opposites - i.e. the "subterranean" and the "supraterranean" - represented by two ancestresses. A similar division of the "upper" member results in two men, the Sky God and his mediator, the winged Kalm. After the world has been brought into its final shape, one of the women gives birth to seven boys, who gradually acquire the world order. As a last stage of this, they come into conflict with the underworld, which now means death, rather than birth. After an unsuccessful attempt at gaining the upper hand, the eldest "hero" boy turns into a bear and departs into the forest (cf. 5.4.2.).

The world-picture of these myths is so well-elaborated that its characters can, without difficulty, be interpreted as representatives of the primordial elements: Sky God = ether; winged Kalm = air; *šopar/kami* woman = earth; Princess of Disease = water; eldest son (bear) = fire. This myth is characterized by the female characters taking the initiative. Its types according to the mother:

(a) Mother: (*šopar*)*kami* woman; father: Sky God; offspring: with an "earth" dominance: concepts 3, 6. The crusty Earth Mother is created to be the size of the spindle of the Princess of Disease (= underworld). The Sky God, by the agency of the winged Kalm, has her lashed with a whip; from her interior the human ancestress: the *Kami* mother (= earth) rises. The eldest of her sons will be the bear (Lozva Vogul: Munkácsi 1892-1902:100-127).

(b) Mother: Princess of Disease; father: (Sky God); offspring: with an "underworld" dominance: concepts 4, 6. The Princess of Disease (= underworld) and the *šopar/kami* mother are created simultaneously by the Sky God. The latter he encircles with mountains etc. to prevent her from turning too fast (= earth!). The former he teaches - by the intermediary of the winged

Kalm - to multiply. The eldest of her sons will be the bear (Upper-Sosva Vogul: Munkácsi 1892-1902:77-99).

These variants of the myth come from the northern part of the area; their archetype may have originated more to the south. They consistently conceive of the bear in "lower" and "female" terms, which corresponds to the cult of the *šopar/kami* ancestress, practised in the area. The "hero"-bears featuring in it are the purest manifestations of the healing ancestor who establishes the world order and at the same time mediates in the direction of the underworld. From the standpoint of the reconstructions, they are key personages. Theoretically, as two aspects of the "earth" sign, they could be regarded as one, were it not for the presence, in the northern Ob-Ugrians, of a separate "underworld" bear-concept.

5.1.2.2. "Forest" bear born of a small diver (bird) mother: concept 5. In a song about the bear's origin, which shows the influence of bird-songs for the bear-feast, out of one of the diver's three eggs a bear hatches. It hibernates, is later killed by men and then a feast is held (Sosva Vogul: Kannisto & Liimola 1958:86-94). The featuring of the small diver (Vog. *lilly*) corresponds to the image of the Princess of Disease as mother, yet without involving the human sphere.

The concept of descent from an underworld parent may be a residue of the bear's association with the "other world" of the archaic, bipartite world-view. This accounts for the bear's links with everything that pertains to the other half - the dead, the ancestors, spirits, hidden fecundity and rebirth, other-worldly possessions and knowledge, heroes and healers descending to the underworld, - in brief, the totemic world-picture. Its psychological equivalent is the world of the unconscious.

5.1.3. "Upper" bears with a paternal dominance: concept 6. At present, this is the most widespread type at the surface of consciousness. The amount of research carried out into it (summary: Munkácsi & Kálmán 1952:19-28) allows us to treat it only briefly here. It represents a more advanced historical layer, containing elements of the steppe. It is highly popular with the northern Ob-Ugrians. Actually, it is a type that can be traced back to a single invariant.

Father: Sky God; mother: mostly unknown. Since, of the three worlds, the opposition of only two is present, the bear is a first-generation upper → intermediate world mediator. The types according to the narrative invariant:

(a) One-move version. The female or male bear - perhaps as yet in human form - is being raised in the rich house of the Sky God. His father, about to go hunting, imposes a prohibition on his charge to make sure that, in his absence, he (or she) does not learn about the lower world. The latter breaks the prohibition, and through a hole it catches a glimpse of the seductive earth. At his request, his father lowers him by a chain, in a cradle, forbidding him to destroy man and his possessions and prescribing the principles of correct conduct. Down there, the bear is disappointed in the riches of the earth and violates the injunction. The hunger afflicting him turns out to be his father's punishment. He picks himself up and prepares for the winter sleep (e.g. Munkácsi 1893:1-33; Pápay & Fazekas 1934:24-34; Schmidt 1983b). His killing by the mythical hero is thereafter discussed in a separate song.

(b) Two-move version. As a continuation of the above, the hibernating bear is bagged by the sons of the Town Lord or some hunters whose identity is impossible to establish and a ceremonial is held in the standard fashion (e.g. Kannisto & Liimola 1958:9-28, 52-85; Senkevič-Gudkova 1980:250-254; Cernecov estate, No. 1468, text 27).

(c) Other, incomplete or mixed variants (e.g. Munkácsi 1893:34-58, 109-125; Kannisto & Liimola 1958:52-71; Pápay 1905b:248-259; Karjalainen & Vértés 1975:113-114).

The northern songs never name the other parent - this is analogous with the type of horizontal dynamics. On the basis of the vertical type with maternal dominance and a distant Konda Vogul version naming the mother (Kannisto & Liimola 1958:52-85), we may regard the "earth"-signed *šopær/kami* woman as the mother - she it is who attracts her offspring down. A creature of this kind does not mediate in the direction of the underworld. The dominance of father/god/sky manifests itself in rules concerning food: the taboo of destroying man, his spoils and cattle, and the dead and the idols; the precept of eating plant food. To this can be added the charge of destroying sinners, those breaching the bear oath. Its psychological equivalent is the world of consciousness and morality.

5.2. *The interrelationships of the bear and the "forest" sign.* Since part of the inner essence of beast and man is the same, social relationships can be projected onto the system of the animal world, divided into species, and onto the hierarchical organization within the particular species. The more objective basis of these projections is the animals' hierarchy and the symbiosis between man and beast, while its more subjective basis is psychological animal symbolism.

5.2.1. *The role of the bear species in the world of the forest.* According to concept 7, the bear is lord of the animals of the forest. This notion, widespread in Siberia and among the Russians too, is conspicuously weakly represented in Ob-Ugrian culture. Sporadic expressions of it can be found in beliefs (Kazym Ostyak: Rédei 1968:38) or in folktales (e.g. Obdorsk Ostyak: Pápay 1910:78). On the subject see Karjalainen 1927:9; Kõhalmi 1981:136 etc.

It is characteristic of the Ob-Ugrians that, while at least twenty of the taboo names of the living bear reflect a relationship to a senior person of authority (Bakró-Nagy 1979), their attitude towards the killed bear, at the bear-feast, is of the sort one adopts towards a younger person. They teach it its place in the world order as a child newly reincarnated in the human sphere. Thus the bear-feast's folklore, and often the belief as well, portrays the bear as an inferior relative of animals that are insignificant compared to it (Munkácsi & Kálmán 1952:46-51). At the same time the killed bear functions as a special kind of spirit at the bear-feast.

The bear's power over other animals is seen most clearly in the eastern Ostyaks, where it is also revered as the ordainer of hunting spoils (Kulemzin 1984:85). With the northerners, that is more the function of the local guardian spirit, but bear songs do contain references to the killed bear as "lucky (i.e. spoils-giving) lord of the game of the forests/ fish of the waters" (Pápay & Fazekas 1934:131). In the earliest cult layer, comprising fertility magic and the notion of the animal rising from the dead, as well as in the totemic ancestor cult, it could indeed have been regarded as a power influencing the life of the animal kingdom (Černecov 1974:311). In the latter respect, it is worth noting Avdeev's interpretation, according to which numerous acts of magic aimed at producing animal fertility and spoils and numerous acts of prophesying, performed at the bear-feast, only acquire validity for the future due to the presence of the bear (1936a:173; 1936b:36). The "lord of the forest" concept seems to be attached to killed and celebrated individuals.

5.2.2. *The system-relationships of the concepts within the society of bears.*

5.2.2.1. *The bear populace.* The average bear individual is characterized by

the following concepts in its relation to the average human individual. Its human and superhuman qualities (cf. 5.3.1.) have continuations on two lines. First line: concept 10, whose motifs could be summed up under the phrase "benefactor". Here belong the notions which, by the intermediary of parts of the bear's body, transform its power into a healing power (remedies made from the bear) and a protecting power, one that brings good fortune (amulets from parts of the bear's body) - and also the belief that the bear can help men who have strayed into its sphere (the forest).

The second line leads to concept 11, that of the "guard of the bear oath". The bear oath is one of the fundamental institutions of Ob-Ugrian law. The suspect physically insults an object symbolizing the bear (a part of the bear's body), saying, "the bear tear me apart in requital if the charge is true". The motif of the oath being watched may be contained in the description of the hibernation by any northern bear song, since the bear is watchful even in its sleep. This function is held to have been ordained by the Sky God, which is expressed in its purest form in songs on the bear's celestial origin which come from the region of the river Sygva (Vogul: Munkácsi 1893:34-58; Ostyak: Pápay 1905b:223-238; see moreover Karjalainen 1927:8-9). In the Lozva Vogul song on the "hero" bear - reflecting the southwestern traditions and, on the maternal line, bearing the "earth" sign - (cf. 5.1.2.1.; 5.4.2), the ordainer of the function is not mentioned (Munkácsi 1892-1902:100-127). Departing into the forest, the first god-son, turned into a bear, calls on men not to swear falsely by him or else he will tear them apart. The Sky God can be suspected, even here, as the initiator, because, under the influence of northern songs, the motif of the god-sons swinging in the air appears inorganically in the story. In the north, this is a symbol of the father-principle and of being subjected to the law, occasionally simultaneously with the receiving of the function of the guard of oaths.

Through the institution of the bear oath, bears form, as it were, a controlling super society, sent down from the divine sphere, over human society.

5.2.2.2. *The leader of the bear species:* concept 12. In the Ob-Ugrians - with the exception of the eastern Ostyaks -, the notion of animal species having a leader is not a marked feature. From the Pelym Voguls, there are data on species-leaders among bears and moose (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:384). In the northern Voguls and Ostyaks, the leader-bear identifiable from variants of a single bear song can only be regarded as a species-leader insofar as belief holds it to be an animal existing in reality.

According to the first, prose version presented by Gondatti, the bear lowered from the sky is killed by the Town Lord's son. Since they violate the rules, the bear's soul cannot get back into heaven; instead, he gathers together an army of bears in the forest. After a few attacks, to prove his divinity, he tears the hero to pieces. The giant, spotted male bear lives in the Ural to this very day (Gondatti 1886b:79). This communication has been used by many people (Haruzin 1898, II:1-2; Pavlovskij 1907:177; Veselovskij 1913:357-358; Munkácsi & Kálmán 1952:22; Sokolova 1972:46 etc.).

Reguly recorded the Sygva Ostyak version as far back as 1844/1845; in it, the bear is helped by a special leader-bear in the campaign of revenge, and the Town Lord's son recognizes the bear's superiority (Pápay 1905b:223-238). In Avdeev's Sosva Vogul version the celestial origin is missing - though the bear, who again is helped by a leader with a celestial mission, is interpreted as the first bear lowered. The Town Lord, appearing as a hunter, gets killed (Avdeev 1936b:45-50). Distant parallels of the motifs of this version: Kannisto & Liimola 1958:328-339. It seems that the bear-leader can be substantiated with data only in relation to the Town Lord (the Town Lord's son) and in the function of avenger of the breaking of taboos (cf. 5.3.4.).

5.2.2.3. *The problem of the lord of the bear species and the bear-killing, bear-shaped spirit-ancestors: concept 13.* The bear leader performs only organizational functions, and has no power over the life and death of his fellow-bears. Those who have that power must belong in the category of superior guardian spirits.

It should be noted that among the traditions relating to the bear and the guardian spirits there are so many shared motifs that we may, indeed, regard the bear cult as a special variety of the cult of spirits. It could be proved about the guardian spirits as well - those of them that had the shape of the bear as their animal form - that in almost every regional macrogroup at least one of them was revered (cf. 5.5.4.). The motifs of the complex of concepts of the bear-killing spirit: the spirit is the central cult person of a given area; its animal form is the bear; it can be assumed to belong to the *por moiety* (??); according to its sung folklore, it kills a bear, thereby founding the bear-feast. Its representatives are the following.

(1) *The Pelym god.* In the north, he is considered to be the Sky God's eldest son. Černecov mentions him as being of the *por moiety* (1939:24). In contrast with the northerners, who give preference to the youngest son (the World-Surveyor Man), those groups of the Voguls with a southwestern culture venerate the eldest son, though under a different name (Munkácsi 1892-1902: ccxx). In their myths of the origin of the bear, which start with the creation of the world, it is God's eldest son that becomes the first bear (cf. 5.5.4.1.). In the north, in a Kazym Ostyak bear-song of the Pelym god, the Sky God lowers to him the bear cub, conspicuously slow to grow, to be nurtured. On a boat journey, the latter escapes into the forest and grows into a terror-inspiring creature. Seeking to frighten him off, his nurturer shoots an arrow at him and kills him by accident. Thereafter he founds the bear feast (Pápay 1905b:248-259). In the Sosva Vogul version, the Pelym god himself is the slowly growing charge of the Sky God. Lowered to the earth, he becomes a famous guardian spirit. On his boat journey he shoots an unknown animal; this is followed by a description of the bear feast (Kannisto & Liimola 1958:138-149).

The bear animal form of the Pelym god is just as obscure (cf. 5.5.4.1.) as the real reason for its bear-killing function. The motif of unintended murder clearly serves to hide the action. The story-lines outlined above have three important elements: the close, all but consanguineous relationship between the guardian spirit and the bear, the murder, and the founding of the bear feast. Analogues of the latter two may be found in the tradition of the two guardian spirits to be analysed in what follows, - a tradition which, compared to that of the Pelym god, represents a clearer type.

(2) According to a verbal communication by N.I. Tereškin, among the Šerkal Ostyaks there is a known bear-feast song of a certain "Forest Lord" (an unidentified guardian spirit?). The hero is forbidden by his parents to seek out far-off hunting-places; he breaks the prohibition and is attacked by a bear. Grabbing it by its ears, he smashes the bear against a tree and kills it. He takes it home, and his father berates him for having destroyed, out of ignorance, a sacred animal. They found the bear-feast. As the person of the guardian spirit is unknown, we can have no information about its bear form. But the formulas of the song show a conspicuous homology with the song of the Sacred Town Elder, whose animal form is known to have been that of the bear (cf. 5.5.4.4.). It cannot be ruled out that this and the text collected by Tereškin really reflect the same tradition.

(3) *The Sacred Town Elder.* After the above, the relationship between the bear shape and bear-killing function of the guardian spirits, which would support the "lord of the species" concept, may still be in doubt. In the person

of the Sacred Town Elder, however, all the requisite motifs are present: the animal form of the bear, the killing of an individual belonging to the same species - according to the beliefs, as well as the cultic songs -, the founding of the bear-feast, and membership of the *por* moiety. For a more detailed analysis see 5.5.4.4.

The interpretation of bear-songs is rendered difficult by the fact that their sacral language rarely, if at all, allows the real name of the bear-killing hunter to be used. Even in the histories of real hunting expeditions, the participants are mentioned under their clan names or occasional heroes' names. The majority of the heroes of the songs, featuring under taboo names (e.g. two or three men with bows and arrows, two or three men who shot a wild goose etc.) cannot be identified. Having said that, it can be stated that the folklore contradicts the view held by Soviet researchers that the ancestors belonging to the *por* moiety cannot have been bear-killers. The fact of the matter is that *por* bear-killers - including the sons of the Town Lord - are far more frequent than those belonging to the *mōs* moiety, where the World-Surveyor Man is the only figure with reliable data pointing in that direction. Totemic cults do not preclude that possibility, as all the rituals - including the killing, which is not murder, but the first, indispensable phase of rejuvenation/rebirth - were founded by the ancestors. These ideas are perhaps supported by a hitherto uninterpreted element of the Sosva Vogul bear-feast ritual. During the eating of the bear's flesh, the bear-killing hunter and another participant insert their fingers into the ring-shaped skin cut from round the mouth and nose of the animal and, imitating the bear's sound, each pulls it towards himself until it snaps. During the occasion, the bear-killer is interpreted as a *por* man, and his partner as a *mōs* man (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:375).

5.3. *The interconnections of the bear and the "human" signs.*

5.3.1. *An "esoteric" significance of the bear-principle?* In Ob-Ugrian culture, of all the animals it is the bear that is identified most closely with man, which is probably one of the bases of its widespread cult. Concept 8 is a projection of the human-like qualities of "forest" (= real) bears. It can be traced back to the ancient idea that man and beast are two different forms of realization of some common principle or system. Consequently, members of human and animal societies can be equal partners of one another. Concept 9 is a hyperbolized form of the former. By virtue of its superhuman powers, the bear to a certain extent dominates the human sphere, and with these features it approaches the sphere of supernatural, "spiritual" beings. Psychologically, systems based upon such concepts are usually modes of symbolizing unconscious (instinctual) factors. We may venture the hypothesis that, in Ob-Ugrian culture, the bear-principle is one of the main areas of projection for the unconscious regions of the personality; which is why it appears in the same way in the natural (animal), human, and spiritual spheres. It was probably on this basis that, in the eastern, Vakh Ostyaks, the ethnic cultural "filter" allowed in the borrowed concept of the human soul's reincarnation in bear shape (concept 14 - Kulemzin 1972:97).

5.3.2. *Direct relationships between man and "forest" bear.* Of these, sexual relationships have the greatest significance, in relation to both the ancestor and the offspring. Concept 15 summarizes specific instances of marriage between woman and bear. Its typical manifestation, the conflict between the bear-husband and his human brothers-in-law, is not very important in the Ob-Ugrians. It is contained in the purest form in the "inverted" bear songs - characterized by the oath motif - of the Pelym Voguls (the bear oath song is a story of the retribution for a false oath sworn on the bear). Certain

Pelym songs transfer this action into the society of bears: the cub born of a human mother swears falsely by his human uncle, whereupon the latter kills the bear-father (Kannisto & Liimola 1958:348-349, 350-353, 354-357; Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:334).

The logical extension of the motif of marriage between bear and man - through the totemic ancestor cult, which represents a link with both the animal kingdom and the afterworld - would lead to the person of a moiety-ancestor spirit (cf. Tschernjetzow 1974:311). However, the bear shape of the Sacred Town Elder, of the *por* moiety, identified by Černecov, is not a "forest" bear; instead, it reflects the concept of a mythologically coded "earth" bear. See furthermore 6.2.1.1.

5.3.3. *Man ↔ bear metamorphoses.* Concept 16 embraces folklore personages who, shedding their animal skin like a garment, turn into humans. Their appearance on the scene presupposes a previous "society → nature (forest)"-type switching of spheres in the narrative. The metamorphosing personages are men, who are agnate or cognate relatives of the principal hero. As relatives of the heroine of the *mōš* moiety, they show a strong affinity with legends centered on issues of moiety. They have two types: (a) solitary bear-men (Obdorsk Ostyak: Pápav 1910:79-92; Synya Ostyak: Steinitz 1975:80-89; 1976: 141 - "earth" bear!; an attempt at interpretation: Lükš 1965:37) and (b) bear-men representing the strongest of several animal heroes belonging to various species (Upper Sosva Vogul: Munkácsi 1892-1902:38-67; Upper Lozva Vogul: Černecov, No. 1478, text 1). The motif of changing the garment and the other attributes (claws, teeth) is interesting because, on the evidence of my own collecting trips among the northern Ostyaks, the man → bear metamorphosis of the Sacred Town Elder guardian spirit is imagined partly along these lines (cf. 6.2.2.5.).

Concept 17 refers to instances of man → bear metamorphosis held to be real. Its typical manifestation is a myth of origin: the bear rises from the final metamorphosis of the hero who has lost his way in the forest (Konda Vogul: Kannisto & Liimola 1958:96-98; Vasyugan Ostyak: Kulemzin & Lukina 1977:19-20). In the northern Ob-Ugrians there are no data on it, but they know of temporary metamorphosis. With the help of the Sacred Town Elder, man can, on occasion, turn into a bear (Ostyak, of the mouth of the Kazym: Domokos 1984, II:94-98). It is an obligatory motif of these narratives that the means of the change of sphere and form is the symbol of the forest: the tree (slipping through beneath it, sitting astride it, jumping down from it), which proves the "forest" character of the arising bears.

5.3.4. *The problem of the reincarnating female bear and the moiety ancestors:* concept 18. The moiety myth called the "Small *mōš* woman" was assigned by Černecov to the most ancient stratum of the bear folklore (1974: 289); he evaluated as a key figure the female bear featuring in it (1939:29; 1965:108-109; 1964:28). Because of its associations with the moiety cults, I discuss this topic in some detail.

Černecov's narrative variant is as follows: Move (1): The *mōš* woman, by false pretences, contracts an incestuous marriage with her own brother. A son is born to them, and the latter, on learning the secret, divulges it to his father. The *mōš* man slays his sister and his son. Move (2): From the heroine's blood there grows a plant called *porij*. It is eaten by a female bear, which gives birth to two cubs and a human girl. She enjoins on her daughter the taboo of eating bear's flesh. The three bears are killed by hunters, who take the girl with them. She observes the rules at the feast, and as a result her ursine relatives turn into constellations and ascend to the sky. In Černecov's view, the reincarnated heroine is the first representative of the *por* moiety (1965:108-109). According to Rombandeeva's interpretation of the

story, out of the marriage of the reborn *mōš* woman and the ethnically alien hunter, the son of the Town Lord, arose the *por* people (1984:107, 110).

For the folklore analysis we need (a) a survey of the plot and motif variants; (b) an examination of the traits and functions of the heroes in other works of art comprising their persons. The result of the analysis is briefly as follows. (a) Move 1 of the "small *mōš* woman" narrative can be of two kinds: (1) the above incest between siblings (Upper Sosva Vogul: Kannisto & Liimola 1951:250-263; Ob Vogul: Černecov, No. 1480, text 1; Šerkal and Little Sosva Ostyak: the author's collection 1980, 1982). In an atypical but interesting version, the first wife, whom the *mōš* woman destroyed by guile, is not a wooden puppet, as is ordinarily the case, but the youngest daughter of the Town Lord (Ob Vogul: the estate of Černecov, No. 1474, text 1.) (2) Without incest: the solitary *mōš* woman has to retrieve a lost garment of hers from a sky-stretching larch. She makes a mistake; she is torn apart by the wild beasts guarding the tree (Obdorsk Ostyak: Pápay 1910:79-92; Kazym Ostyak: Rédei 1968:64-70; Šerkal Ostyak: the author's collection, 1980). After these, Move 2 is uniform: one of the sons of the Town Lord kills the bears and receives the *mōš* woman into his house. There is, in most instances, no overt reference to their marriage, but the functions described below of the Town Lord's son leave no doubt as to this. The constellation motif appears independently of the versions of Move 1, and it may be absent in the more recent records. (b) An analysis of the epic plots comprising representatives of the *mōš* and the *por* moieties shows the following occurrence of the characters.

	<i>mōš</i>	<i>por</i>
woman	+	+
man	+	-

Thus we find no character under the name of poor man! It is generally the narratives featuring the pair of female characters with the animal figures (hare and fox) that are held to be the most archaic. The ultimate aim of these is the securing of the suitable husband. It is characteristic of the *mōš* - *por* narratives that if the heroines figure under their moiety names, the moiety is never indicated in their male partners. The positive *mōš* woman's husband is the positive Town Lord's son; the husband of the negative *por* woman is the son of the Elder called *tōntəŋ*, *tantal*, *tōn-tōn* etc. The meaning of this name is not clear (concerning its origin see Kannisto 1908:179; for its versions see Steinitz 1976:140). According to one of Reguly's notes, Vogul *mōš xum* 'mōš man' is the same as *tōnt-xum* 'tōnt man' (Munkácsi 1910:226). On the basis of all these it is logical that the Town Lord and his sons represent the *por* moiety. The Town Lord (or his appropriate son - depending on the age of the character required by the plot) is one of the most widespread figures of Ob-Ugrian folklore. His popularity is surpassed only by the World Surveyor Man = Woman's Nephew, belonging to the *mōš* moiety. He differs from the latter in that he is not an active guardian spirit: he has no sacred place, idol, preserving social group, ritual etc., thus he does not feature in the "high" mythology treating of the deeds of the children of the Sky-God. His person is known among all the present groups of the Ob-Ugrians, and presumably even among the eastern Ostyaks. Accordingly, the Ostyak (Steinitz 1976:139) and Vogul (Kannisto, Liimola & Eiras 1982:51) versions of his name have wide-ranging variations. The genre- and functional relationships of the person of the Town Lord: the epic cycle of

the *mōs-por* moiety ancestors is the most archaic - here, featuring in a polarity with the hero showing the *tōnt* element in his name, his son is the positive partner of the *mōs* woman. In the "Small *mōs* woman" narrative, discussed earlier, the son of the Town Lord is a bear-killing hero with no opposite; yet, here too he is the husband of the *mōs* woman. In what follows, we see three lines of development.

Line 1: as the second member of the 'Town Lord (Town Lord's son)'- *tōnt* Elder (*tōnt* Elder's son)' opposition, the mythical World Surveyor Man = Nephew of the Woman appears, finally supplanting from the folklore the *tōnt* hero. In the meantime, the Town Lord (his son) is reevaluated into someone negative. In the narratives reflecting the transition, the opposition in moiety and in evaluation between him and the characters bearing the adjectives *tōnt*, *por* - characters that remain as relics of the old conditions - is resolved because of the new, still more positive principal hero. A case in point among the myths is the narrative of the type "The World Surveyor Man or Woman's Nephew's Descent to the Lower World", known from the northern Voguls and Ostyaks and the southern Ostyaks (Munkácsi 1982:294-310; Černecov 1935: 62-68; Rédei 1968:74-83; Karjalainen & Vértes 1975:163-172). In this shamanistic story, the main hero, going after a person beckoning him to follow, reaches the lower or underwater world. After passing the tests, he wins the daughter of the Master of the World, and brings her up to the earth. The Town Lord's son repeats the journey after him, but in the wrong way; he wins a woman with negative characteristics and perishes on the earth. The neological northern Ostyak version (Rédei 1968:74-83) describes the latter woman as a *por* woman. This is probably a secondary infiltration into the narrative of the *por* woman, as the independent negative female representative of the nether world. In this historical layer, the Town Lord has already lost his original identity. A similar transformation can be observed, for instance, in the parallel featuring in a mythological folk tale of the Obdorsk Ostyaks of the Town Lord and the *tandal* Elder, as adversaries of the main hero, that is, as allies of the *mēṅk* girls, likewise adversaries (Pápay 1910: 51-78). In the latest layer, the "Nephew of the Woman" folk tale cycle, the Town Lord (his son) is unequivocally the negative opposite to the principal hero.

Line 2 treats of the Town Lord's - and his son's - special relationship to the bear, also showing itself in the "Small *mōs* woman" narrative. It should be noted that in bear folklore the openly expressed opposition of the two moiety heroes is not typical. Its purest manifestation is the late Sosva Vogul song called "The Bear Song of the Woman's Nephew" (Kannisto & Liimola 1958:186-192). Here the bear is killed by the main hero who is competing with the two sons of the Town Lord. The latter run away from the bear. In the bear songs - in contrast with the World Surveyor Man, who always hunts successfully - the Town Lord and his sons are assigned two kinds of roles. Without any difficulty, they kill the bear of heavenly origin, which breaks the laws, and they stage a feast according to the ritual. This is particularly typical among the Voguls of the Upper Sosva (Munkácsi 1893:59-108; Černecov's estate, No. 1468, text 27; No. 1469, text 3). In the rest of the cases it is the bear that prevails. In its most easily interpretable type, the bear, even after it has been killed, obtains revenge on the heroes who have broken the ordinances of his cult. This narrative is substantiated with data from the northern Voguls and Ostyaks (cf. 5.2.2.2.). More difficult to interpret are the songs where the bear attacks the Town Lord, who is saved by a hero impossible to identify on the basis of his name (e.g. Pelym Vogul: Kannisto & Liimola 1958:240-243, 244-249). In the above respects, the Town Lord and his sons play the role of authenticating, as it were, the prescriptions of the

bear cult. According to my own observations, their affinity with bear folklore - especially among the Ostyaks - is so great that, as relatives of the principal hero, they can even receive the insignificant, ancillary roles of the legend-like songs. It is also of some interest that the nickname of the bear in Vogul songs is "the (tailless) dog of the Town Lord" (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:335). Line 3 of the folklore roles of the Town Lord, his occurrence in heroic epics and legends, is negligible from the standpoint of our topic.

Avdeev considered the person of the Town Lord (1936a:123) - as did Černecov the hunters of the "Small *mōš* woman" narrative (1964:28) - to be a representative of the *mōš* moiety on the grounds that this moiety did not have the bear as its ancestor and the totemistic taboos could not apply to it. The Ob-Ugrians of today do not identify the Town Lord with any particular cult personage, though the trend for such a conception of folklore heroes is so strong that they are apt to interpret even the Russian folk tales as guardian spirit legends. Secondly, they sometimes identify it with the guardian spirits residing in the settlements of the regional cult centres (later administrative centres) - called, in everyday language, simply "Towns". The most intriguing thing that has ever been said about the Town Lord comes from Kannisto's Sosva Vogul informant. According to the commentary on one of the most widely popular folk tales on The Nephew of the Woman (= son of the *masmas* woman), the Town Lord is none other than the *Sacred Town Elder* - though another informant denied this (Kannisto & Liimola 1956:210). The fact of the matter is that if we project the opposition of the World Surveyor Man and the Sacred Town Elder - an opposition possible to identify but hard to substantiate in the dual social organization and in the ideology - (on the basis of Černecov, in the greatest detail, see Haekel 1946) onto the folk tales of the Woman's Nephew and the Town Lord, we indeed arrive at that same result. In cultic life, however, the Sacred Town Elder is a personage with formidable power. No wonder, then, that the folklore works created in the wake of the dominance of the World Surveyor Man show a reluctance to identify the negative Town Lord with him.

Černecov's theory does not seem plausible for two additional reasons. First, the connection between the Vogul plant name *poriŷ* 'Heracleum sibiricum' and the moiety name *por* cannot be proved. Secondly, the name of the constellation arising out of the bears is given only in the Obdorsk Ostyak text - in a form that can be traced back to the meaning "the *mōš* woman's home folks" (Pápay 1910:91); - which again does not refer to the *por* moiety. Having said that, it is possible that in the cult centre of the Sacred Town Elder, the village of Vezhakori, the "Small *mōš* woman" narrative was interpreted as the myth of a female bear ancestor and the *por* moiety. In the moiety respect, however, it is more likely to portray the Town Lord ancestor son's bear hunt and first lawful marriage. Moreover, somewhere among the historical layers of the bear cult there is, indeed, a "female" sign present. To prove this, the four-day initial phase (four is a female number) of the periodic feasts of the Sacred Town Elder and the songs of the female bear lowered from the sky are usually cited (Černecov 1939:40; Munkácsi & Kálmán 1952:95).

5.4. *The relationships of the bear and the "hero" sign.* The bear shares many of the traits of the Ob-Ugrian ideal of the hero: it has physical strength and a placid (indeed, passive), benign, brave, but patently undocile nature, which at a certain point can flare up in uncontrollable aggression. The bear has invariably played an important role in Ob-Ugrian culture, thus it may have been influenced by the cults of two types of heroes. According to historical criteria, the worship (transmitted through the cult of the dead and of the an-

cestors) of the early, tribal and moiety sacral leaders and of the later war lords of the age of the principality can be assumed. That is crossed with the categories of the mythical god-son heroes, as defined according to the ideological code, and the later guardian spirit heroes. Among the northern groups, the majority of the mythical personages were reclassified among the guardian spirits bound to particular geographical locations and social groups, which were covered with a uniform gloss by the hero cult of the age of the principality. In view of the similar features of the guardian spirit cult and the bear cult, it is little wonder that there is an absolute cross section of ideas attaching to the "bear" concept that display analogies of the heroic traits and epic motifs. We can mention as an example the abuse and scaring of the children playing in the village square, and the obtaining of information from them as to the identity of the hero, which is present in both the heroic songs of the vendetta type and the myths concerning the origin of the bear, where one of the parents is left unknown.

In our case, the criterion of the "hero" sign is a genuine feat of arms or culture-hero's exploit. Thus we can isolate those personages described with the adjective "hero" (Vogul *ōtər*, Šerkal Ostyak *urt*) who bear this name not by virtue of their function, but to convey that they date from prior to the present human era. Bear folklore shows two types of "hero" bears.

5.4.1. *Culture-hero bear: concept 20.* Substantiated with data mostly in paraphrases, in association with bears representing various conceptions. It was through the agency of a bear that mankind obtained fire, the how, and the domestic reindeer (Munkácsi & Kálmán 1952:22-23; Kõhalmi 1981:136, etc.).

The fire-obtaining bear of the Vogul world of beliefs is mentioned by Gondatti (1886b:75). It is discussed in greater detail by Infantev: the Sky-God gives fire and a bow to his son, about to be lowered to the earth, so that he may provide for himself. At the same time, he invests him with the office of judge. The bear, in his presumption, unleashes great havoc on the beasts of the forest, until the youngest of seven brothers defeats him, taking away from him the cultural goods (1910:76-79). Haruzin (1898, lib. 4, 3) and Pavlovskij (1907:181) interpret on a totemistic basis the civilizational act of the "sky" mediator bear.

The reindeer originate from a folklore person turned into an "earth"- or "underworld"-signed bear. In one variant of the "Hare (*mōš*) woman and the Fox (*por*) woman" type narrative, it is the *mōš* woman's younger brother - who, having sunk in the marsh, married there and turned into a bear - presents them to his sister as a dowry (Synya Ostyak: Steinitz 1975:80-89) - cf. 5.3.3.

The overtly culture-hero-type activity of the bear is weakly expressed in the Ob-Ugrians. That is partly to be explained by the fact that this function was absorbed by the cult of guardian spirits with a bear reference. If we looked at the civilizational acts of the Pelym god, who may have the bear as his animal form, and the Sacred Town Elder, it would turn out that half the world was furnished by the bear.

5.4.2. *Mythical god-son "hero" bear: concept 21.* It is invariably bound to the person of the "lower"-signed "boy who has gone into the forest II", with a maternal dominance; it can be demonstrated from the "creation of the world"-type bear songs of the Voguls with a southeastern culture (cf. 5.1.2.1, 5.2.2.1.).

The relevant episodes of the narratives: (1) having appropriated the world-order, the seven god's sons arrive at the lake of the country of the dead, on which 7 loons/small divers are swimming. The eldest boy warns his brothers not to shoot before he has shot. The youngest does not listen to him; it is the fleeing birds wounded by his arrow that spread the diseases on

the earth. The eldest brother grows incensed against his brother. (2) Returning home, they get drunk on beer. Awaking from his sleep, the eldest boy goes mad; he gnaws asunder his armour and his weapons and, turning them into the body-parts of a bear, spits them onto himself. He goes into the forest as a bear (Upper Sosva Vogul: Munkácsi 1892-1902:77-99). In the more complete Lozva version, the boy turning into a bear displays even more heroic signs. Returning home to their castle after Episode 1, he cannot get drunk from his mother's beer; yet, he does fall into a trance from the fly agaric received from his wife. He is called to repulse an enemy attack; he mounts his horse and, with a frenzied brain, he hacks and hews the enemy. He cannot be pacified even after his victory. He gnaws his armour into bits etc. and goes into the forest, saying he has found no worthy adversary among men (ibid.: 100-127). This latter is the "most heroic" of all the bears.

The traits of these heroes originate from the later period. Their primary heroic task is to combat the powers from underneath, to defend mankind against disease and death, which the annihilation of the birds might have represented.

5.4.3. *Guardian spirit/war lord bears: concept 22.* This category includes the heroic epics of the guardian spirits that have the bear as their animal figure (cf. 5.5.4.). In fact, it is from here that their ursine character can be substantiated. They would appear to be "forest" bears, rather than anything else. They have two kinds of occurrence.

The "pure" type is represented by the Sygva Vogul war-god of Munkes. According to one of the heroic songs about him, he slips through a bent tree and turns into a bear, so as to escape the attention of his adversaries. Still, his bow, sticking out, betrays him - but he defeats them all the same (Sygva Ostyak: Pápay 1905b:3-68). The other version was formulated later: the hero puts on a suit of armour with bear's claws, so that, pursuing his enemies, he might swim across a lake (Sosva Vogul: Munkácsi 1892:180-203).

The mixed - and therefore uncertain - type occurs in the heroic epics of mainly the southern groups. Here, to solve their tasks, the heroes frequently perform a series of metamorphoses into animals, leaving the most significant deed to the bear form. We could regard this as a simple folklore motif, were it not for the fact that there are three epic works binding it to a single personage - i.e. the Lower Konda Vogul war lord of Nakhrači (Munkácsi 1892: 222-234; Černecov 1935:128-137; Vêrtes 1975:140-147). Thus this hero too enters the line of guardian spirits with strong associations with the bear.

5.5. *The relationships of the bear and the "spirit" signs.* Cultic beings with a protective function which possess "spirit" signs (idols) can be assumed to have individual, shamanistic, domestic/familial, village, lineage and group, macro-territorial, moiety, and all-ethnic categories. In what follows, we shall examine the relevant concepts of the bear, in the order of their hierarchy.

5.5.1. *Individual cult-being.* It is difficult to identify, because of the individual interpretations of the bear cult and the variety of the individual cult objects. I encountered its purest form in a concept of the "forest" bear resembling the individual totem. A male inhabitant of the Šerkal Ostyak Muli-gort could not hunt bears because, many years before, his father had prayed for his birth to a mummified bear-cub found in the forest.

5.5.2. *Domestic/familial protector: concept 23.* Domestic idols are kept in boxes in the sacred corner or in the loft. We have data from various places on this kind of occurrence of bear figures among the casts of sphere-representing animals (eastern Ostyak: Karjalainen 1922:25; possibly Obdrosk Ostyak: Castrén 1860:189; etc.).

Recently we have a growing number of reports showing that the representative parts of the bear are kept as family cult objects. The bear's skull gives protection against the beings of the world below (Vakh and Vasyugan Ostyak: Kulemzin 1984:84). During my collecting trip in the field in 1982, in Vanzevat, of the Ostyaks of the mouth of the Kazym, I encountered bear-cub's hides which, curled up in the posture of embryos and wrapped up in cloth, were kept in idol's boxes in the loft. Their function was to ensure the health and good luck of the household. We have references to this kind of thing, as practised by the northern Voguls, from Gemuev, who also sets forth the rituals to be performed in the case of illness (1986:24). All of which seems to point to a "lower" bear protecting against spirits of sickness from the underworld. Their relationship with the community guardian spirits has not been explored.

5.5.3. *Shaman helping spirit: concept 24.* We have very few and inaccurate data on it in the literature. It is most characteristic in the marginal eastern Ostyak groups. The shamans use a special bear-shaped spirit for their voyage to the nether regions (Vasyugan Ostyak: Karjalainen 1927:282), and they likewise use a spirit having the form of a bear to frighten off the malignant souls of the dead when retrieving the soul of a sick person (Karjalainen 1921:84). This, as well as the bearlike attributes identified by Kulemzin in the dress of the shamans of Vakh and Aleksandrovo Ostyaks (1976:78), might be attributed to the influence of the eastern neighbouring peoples.

In the north, there are fewer data amenable to evaluation, especially because it is not clear what category (individual or general shaman helping spirit, community guardian spirit) bear-spirits belong in. It is an interesting piece of information that, when healing a person who had been bewitched, the contest between two shamans was decided by the battle of their spirits, appearing in the shape of respectively a moose and a bear (northern Vogul: Munkácsi 1892:375). The best known data comes from Karjalainen: the shaman appeals to a bear-shaped spirit to save the soul of the sick person (1921:73, 84; 1927:283-284 - cf. 3.2, 6.2.2.6.). As the above too all seem to be "lower" bears, we shall, in what follows, attempt to define the identity of the latter spirit.

5.5.4. *Community guardian spirits whose animal form is that of the bear: concept 25.* The significance and interrelationships of their system require a more detailed discussion. The similar features of the guardian spirit cult and the bear cult have been noted by many, especially by those who conceived of them on the common ideological basis of the totemistic ancestor cult. Very briefly, picking out just the main points and without bibliographical references, we can mention the following features. (1) Terminological identification: calling the living bear a divine being and the dead bear a spirit. (2) The conception of the guardian spirit and the bear as alternatively identical cult-beings in the literature: the worship of animals as idols in historical reports; the veneration of the animal-(bear)-shaped manifestations and portrayals of spirits in the later monographic literature. (3) the ideologizing of the identification on the basis of the cult of the dead and the ancestor cult: the worship of the totemic animal ancestor and later of a human ancestor who was a leading personality, and the merging of these layers. A more distant analogy of the presentation of the bear (and the horse) as sacrificial animals to the spirit-ancestors and to the deceased at the funeral feast, in Witsen's description. (4) Attributes and behavioural norms characteristic of the "sacral" category in the case of the guardian spirits and the bear: place of safekeeping, metal ornaments, textiles, animal statuettes, with the purpose of obtaining, by magic, fertility and hunting spoils; the forms of making obeisance, procedures of purification, taboos prescribed for

women, rules of eating, the mode of taking out. (5) Community festivals containing identical elements. Those elements of the periodic feasts of the guardian spirits (an enumeration of the Russian descriptions: Sokolova 1983: 108-110) that are identical with the bear feast: epic songs, theatricals and dancing with masks, competitive games; the giving of metal ornaments and coins, the offering of food and animal sacrifice; fertility and good-luck ritual etc. (6) The "progress" of idols and bears killed, their celebration in several villages along the way. (7) The mutual exchange of places of the respective festivals of the bear and the guardian spirit; local idols carried in for the bear feast, the invocation by song of guardian spirits personified by actors wearing costumes and their dance bringing prosperity at the bear feast, in recent descriptions. (8) The mutual exchange of places of the material expressions of the cult: bear's skins and skulls, the accessories of the bear feast stored in the sacred places of the guardian spirits; the textiles, furs, and boxes pertaining to the guardian spirits and used in the bear-feast house; the garments and other attributes of idols on the performers. (9) In the folklore, creation myths connected with the guardian spirits showing motifs of the heavenly origin of the bear: how he is raised by the Sky-God, how he longs to be on the earth, how he is lowered in a cradle by a chain on the earth to perform a special task. The tradition of the mythical god-sons may contain even more homologies, e.g. a Sosva Vogul story of the World Surveyor Man, which is almost a paraphrase of the "celestial" bear's myth of origin (Kannisto & Liimola 1955:97-108) or the Vogul Lord of Disease myth, singled out as a parallel by Munkácsi too (1892-1902, cd-cdi). (10) perhaps: the mention by Pallas of an idol-oath, similar to the bear-oath.

The correspondences in the older sources tend to point in the direction of the guardian spirits (e.g. the sacrificing of a bear/skin to the idol, bear feasts held in its sacred place); more recently, it is the other way round. It would be a fair assumption that earlier the two cults were nearer to each other and, after the decline of the "heroic age", many of the features that had disappeared from the rituals of the guardian spirits were preserved in the bear feast. The social conditioning of cults, their moiety-, lineage- and group-bound features faded considerably. After this aperçu, it does not come as a surprise that the periodic festivals of the Sacred Town Elder whose animal form is that of the bear show the features of the later sporadic⁵ bear feasts.

In trying to define the bearlike guardian spirits one is hampered by the fact that only with regard to their cult centres do we have dependable data; concerning their social-organizational aspects, we have less evidence to go on. The impact of migrations and cultural changes frequently renders the original characteristics of the specific spirits unrecognizable. There are data on the use of the bear image as tamga (property label) in the 17th century, on the Middle Sosva, at the Ob, in the Volost' of Koda, and near the Demyanka (Simčenko 1965:170). Sokolova treated in detail the bear references, which crop up as the names of particular social units or as cultic beings in virtually all the macrogroups (1983:112-115, 128-133), and which, in her opinion, are connected with the moiety system or, more exactly, with the *por moiety* (ibid. 138-143).

The connections of the guardian spirits and the bear appear in each case with a different quality and quantity. In the north, they can be observed in four guardian spirits.

5.5.4.1. *The Pelym god*. His relationship to the bear is as difficult to interpret as his own person is complex. He is one of the macro-territorial spirits of the highest order. Being the eldest son of the Sky-God, his person is also an instrument of mythological modelling, especially in the southwest. Hence

his traits cannot be projected directly onto the social sphere. Outside his central, Pelym Vogul area, his cult has two kinds of irradiations (for more detail see Munkácsi 1892-1902:259-260; 1910:13). (a) In the southwest, among the Voguls of the Vaglya, Lozva, Tapsuy, Upper Konda, he is the highest-ranking god's son. (b) He is worshipped by all the northern Ob-Ugrians, but only as one subordinated to the World Surveyor Man (e.g. Gondatti 1886a:62), and sometimes even to the lower-ranking guardian spirits, e.g. the war god of Munkes, of the Voguls of the Sygva (Rombandeeva 1984:104). Its seat was changed several times even in the recent past (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:118). Černecov classes the Pelym god with the *por* moiety (1939:24). For a reconstruction of the breakdown by moiety of the Voguls of Pelym see Sokolova 1983:88-89. In a communication by Munkácsi from the Upper Sosva - which is the first authentic vernacular utterance revealing that the guardian spirits are also kept in evidence according to moiety (!) - we find that the Pelym god is called "a god of the raw flesh kind" (Munkácsi & Kálmán 1952:282-283). His famous sacred birch and white dress refer to the *mōš* moiety (Munkácsi 1910:03-07).

The connection of the Pelym god with the bear can be demonstrated only from largely sporadic motifs, which, however, confirm each other. (1) In the Sosva Vogul (Kannisto & Liimola 1958:138-149) and Kazym Ostyak (Pápay 1905b:248-259) song of the bear's origin, he is the one who nurtures and kills the bear. The Vogul version begins as a first-person-singular song of the Pelym god, to whom it ascribes features of the kind that the Ostyak version ascribes to the bear (cf. 5.2.2.3.). (2) In the Upper Sosva Vogul mythology, influenced by the southwestern culture, the Pelym god - the world-ordering hero - is born of the plant called *pori*, the same plant that features in the story of the moiety's reincarnating female bear (cf. 5.3.4.) (Munkácsi 1892-1902:33-37; Černecov 1939:24). (3) Kannisto comes up with the surprising communication that the Pelym god walks about in likeness of a small diver (1958:119); in the bear too there is a demonstrable association with that bird and with the lord of the nether regions as well (cf. 5.1.2.1. and 5.1.2.2.). (4) In the southwestern bear songs, beginning with the creation of the world, the eldest son of the primeval mother turns into a bear (cf. 5.1.2.1.). Motifs 2-4 refer to a "lower"-signed bear - and to the *por* moiety (?).

5.5.4.2. *The war god of Munkes.* A high-ranking Sygva Vogul guardian spirit. For a description of his sacred place in the most recent literature and a reconstruction of it as a princely cult-centre see Gemuev & Sagalaev 1986:57-78, 129-130. Černecov considers him to belong to the *por* moiety (1939:25), with Sokolova too demonstrating that this moiety has a majority in the village of Munkes (1983:169).

In his person, the animal form of the bear can be demonstrated unequivocally from the following motifs. (1) In a Sygva Ostyak heroic song noted down by Reguly (Pápay 1905b:3-68) and in a Sosva Vogul heroic song presented by Munkácsi (1892:180-203) he assumes ursine characteristics (cf. 5.4.3.). In Munkácsi's view, this is related not to his animal form, but to his heroic task (1910:145-146; 1921:646). That is refuted by the remarkable fact that, (2) as rendered by Reguly's Sigva Ostyak singer, Maksim Nikilov (= Нигилев), of the village of Horumpaul, the principal hero of the heroic song of the Munkes god bears the name *v^gs/kort-neŋ-xo āktilam tārāw/vuj-oχ-taj xoləŋ un̄tər ort* 'Warlord rich-stomach-in-the-crown-of-the-head-of-the-bear/beast-picked-by-the-man-from-the-town/village' (Pápay 1905b:14). The same singer, in the song of the bear's origin (Pápay & Fazekas 1934:106-116 - cf. 5.1.1.), calls the *sopər* woman's son, who subsequently goes into the forest and turns into a bear, *μās/kdr't-nēpxò āktəm tār/μ^gi-ōχ t̄ai xoləŋ òntər òrt* 'Warlord rich stomach in the crown of the head of the crane/animal (?)

picked by the man from the town/village' (ibid. 107). The parallelism was noticed by Fazekas too (ibid. 4). The bear ~ crane reinterpretation originates from Pápay, and it seems more correct. Thus the singer must have somehow identified the war god of Munkes and the first bear! In this guardian spirit it is not possible to demonstrate the bear-killing function, present in the ones discussed earlier on.

5.5.4.3. *Elder of the Town of Yeli?* It was in the neighbourhood of the afore-said locality (Vog. *jali ūs*, Ost. *jeli woš*, Rus. *Люликарские*) that the Voguls of the Lower Sosva had their famous fortress centre. Its population is described by Sokolova as having a *mōš* majority (1938:194). Its guardian spirit is well-known in the heroic epics.

His person emerges on the basis of a single communication by Rombandeeva. In it, he essentially displays the features of the Sacred Town Elder: at the bear feasts, he is personified in bear form, and, as a physician-specialist, he cures grave illnesses (1984:107). The two guardian spirits whose names sound similar in Vogul (*jali ūs ōjka* 'Elder of the Town of Yeli' and *jalp ūs ōjka* 'Elder of the Sacred Town') were confused by Balandin too: *Хлыс Ойка* = старик (божок) поселка Люликар (!) mouse-shaped (1939b:38) - which is characteristic of the Sacred Town Elder. The Ostyak heroic song of the Elder of the Town of Yeli (Reguly, Pápay & Zsirai 1944:166-487) contains no reference to the form of a bear, but it does contain references to a war alliance with a hero from the Sygva (the provenance of Rombandeeva's data). Černecov mentions a guardian spirit with the form of a waterbird from this village (1927:22).

Connected with the district of the Elder of the Town of Yeli - maybe, purely by accident - is the most interesting mention, from the early part of the century, of the periodic bear feasts - a mention which has so far not been given due attention. In 1913, from the village of Russujskie yurty (*rus-sūj pāwəl*), of the Lower Sosva, V. Novickij reports the following, partly on the basis of the interpretation of the Russian inhabitants of nearby Komratki (*χomrat pāχəl*). According to his Russian guides, the local Voguls hold regular periodic festivals in front of old bearskins. A male bear's skin must be celebrated every two years, a female's skin every four years. Novickij personally observed the feast held in Russujskie and he confirms that these feasts are not bound to some bear killed on a particular occasion, for there are two old, damaged skins on display in one of the biggest houses. On the neck of the larger one there is a metal plate to be seen, with a portrayal of a bird, a sable, and a hunting scene - presumably a permanent feature, as the bear may be regarded as the giver of good fortune in hunting. The attributes are reminiscent of the textiles and votive objects of the idols. There is mention of the calf sacrificed to the bears - with, on its back, a cloth decorated with a portrayal of the World Surveyor Man mounted on a horse - and of dances and epic songs (Novickij 1925:16-20). The festival, in all conscience, gives the impression of a permanent institution. In the old days, Russujskie used to belong to the district the town of Yeli.

From 1906, Kannisto reports on the sporadic bear feast of the same district of the Lower Sosva. The bear killed with the participation of the hunters of Lyulyikari was celebrated partly in the village of Šajtanskie (*jalpəŋ hoi*) and partly in the village of Lyulyikary (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:350 ff.). The highly interesting data could be evaluated only on the basis of the regional variants of the bear cult, which have not been studied so far.

5.5.4.4. *The Sacred Town Elder.* He is the key figure among the guardian spirits that have the bear as their animal form. In the following pages, I shall try and give a more detailed description of his person.

From the above it can be assumed that the bear-shaped guardian spirits - one of whom can be supposed to feature in the south, at the Konda river too - are not isolated phenomena, but, along with their periodic cults, may, at some point in the past, have constituted an entire system!

6. The Sacred Town Elder

6.1. *Moiety-ancestor (?) guardian spirit bear*. He is one of the most mysterious northern Ob-Ugrian guardian spirits. In spite of his significance, he was unknown in the traditional ethnographic literature. His seat, Vezhakhori, is unmarked on the detailed maps of K. Pápay and B. Munkácsi, and also that of Kannisto (1969), as has been noted by Béla Kálmán (1976:14). All that is presumably partly to be explained by the fact that the old expedition route led along the Little Ob towards Berezyov: before Steinitz (1935), researchers did not pay much attention to the Šerkal Ostyaks and Ob Voguls of the neighbourhood. Moreover, certain taboos might also have prevented them from learning about him. To the best of my knowledge, the first identifiable mention of the Sacred Town Elder is to be found in Károly Pápay's notes of the years 1888-1889: in the region of the Ob, one of the three sons of the goddess Kalthesh is *jem-vas-ige* ('Sacred Town Elder' in Ostyak), who has the form of a bear; another one is *urt* ('Lord' = World Surveyor Man) (Munkácsi 1910:046). The next data appears in a Kazym Ostyak bear song of József Pápay's 1898-1899 expedition; here the bear killed is carried across the village of *jam-ušš töräm* 'Sacred Town god' (Pápay & Fazekas 1934:58). Although there is a reference to Károly Pápay's data, the settlement is mistakenly identified with Belogore (*ġēməŋ ušš*) (ibid. 137; cf. Steinitz 1976:287).

In the middle of the 1930s, the Sacred Town Elder was discovered almost simultaneously among the Ob Voguls by Avdeev (1936b:27-28) and Černecov (1937:209; 1939:29, 36, 38 and his other works), with the evidently common information of the moiety connection. Among the Šerkal Ostyaks, the discovery was made by Steinitz (1976:287-289; 1980:398-399, 410), without social implications. Following in their footsteps, several Soviet researchers visited the area: Zolotarev 1964:227-228), Sokolova (1971:214-216 and her other works). His person became known especially through Černecov's epoch-making works reconstructing the relationship between totemistic, moiety cults, the bear cult and the Sacred Town Elder (1939, 1947, 1965, 1971, etc. and particularly 1974). Without their impact, modern Ob-Ugrian studies would be inconceivable. (See Figure 4.)

6.1.1. *The appellations of the Sacred Town Elder*. They fall into two types. (1) Commonly used, shorter forms. According to his seat: Sacred Town Elder Vog. *jalp-us oĵka*⁶ (Černecov 1939:29), Ost. šer. *jem-wəš ŷka* (Steinitz 1975:384; 1976:287) and the variants of these. According to his animal form: "Clawed Elder" Vog. *konsəŋ əš* 'Clawed Father' (Černecov 1939:29; Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:147), Ost. šer. *künšəŋ ŷka* (the author's collection, 1980).

(2) Sacral appellations, that is, periphrastic formulas used in the cultic folklore. According to the exterior of his person: "Moon/sun big-eyed ruler" Ost. šer. *tšlās/xətl unə sempə xən* (Zolotarev 1964:227; author's collection, 1982). According to his animal form: "Marsh/forest animal (= bear) shaped ruler" Ost. šer. *hürəm/unt wəj xəpəp xən* (N. I. Tereškin's communication); "March/forest animal clawed ruler" Ost. šer. *hürəm/unt wəj künšep xən* (Steinitz 1975:385). According to his function: "Girl/boy soul adding ruler" Vog. So. *əxi/piy lili oltməŋ xən* (Kannisto & Liimola 1951:356); "Ruler carrying a panner (full) of little girl's/boy's soul" Ost. šer. *əj ewə/pəx ŷəŋ xġnt atməŋ xən* (N.I. Tereškin's communication).

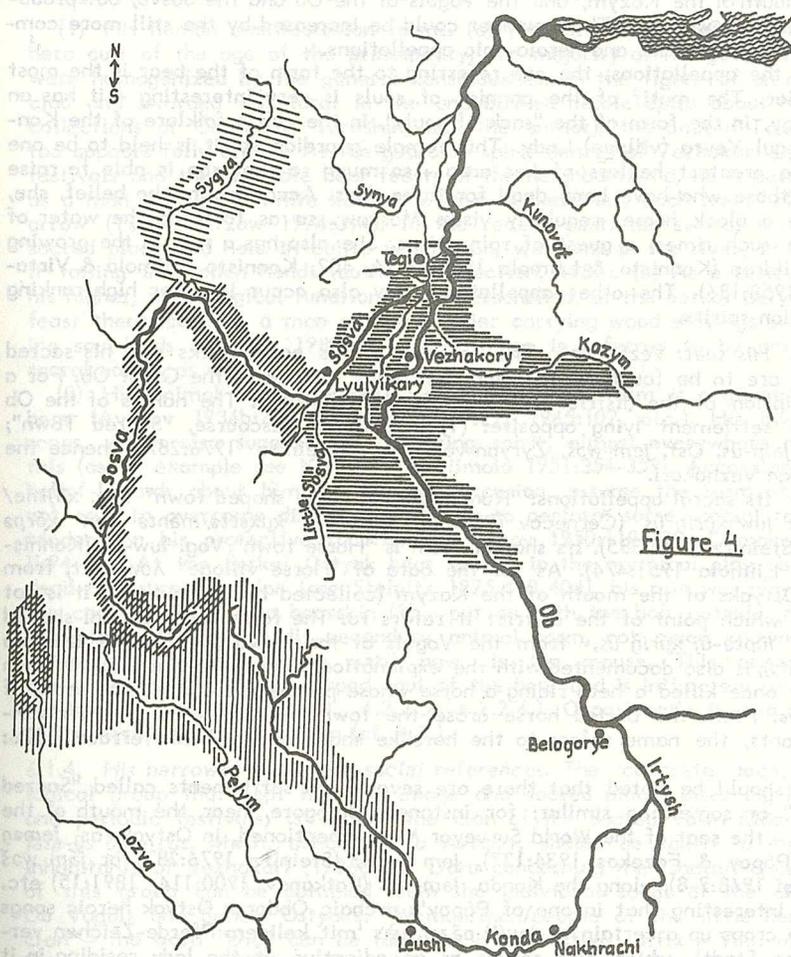


Figure 4.

1. THE SACRED TOWN ELDER'S CULT AREA
COVERED BY THE DATA

-  central area
-  secondary area
-  area with uncertain data

2. ||||| CULT AREA OF THE ELDEST GOD-SON
 WHO TURNED INTO A BEAR

Variants of these appellations occur in the cultic folklore in a fairly large area: according to my data, among the Ostyaks of Nizyam, Šerkal, and the mouth of the Kazym, and the Voguls of the Ob and the Sosva, but probably further away too. Their number could be increased by the still more complicated periphrases and heroic-epic appellations.

Of the appellations, the one referring to the form of the bear is the most peculiar. The motif of the pannier of souls is very interesting - it has an analogy, in the form of the "sack of souls", in the cultic folklore of the Konda Vogul Yevra (village) Lady. This female guardian spirit is held to be one of the greatest healers of her area - so much so that she is able to raise even those who have been dead for three days. According to the belief, she, riding a black horse, regularly visits Moscow, so as to bring the water of life; at such times, a guest of rain arises. She also has a role in the growing of children (Kannisto & Liimola 1951:93-96, 402; Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:186). The other appellations may also occur in other high-ranking guardian spirits.

6.1.2. *His seat: Vezhakori.* The remains of his earth-works and his sacred place are to be found on the high right-bank terrace of the Great Ob. For a description of the district see Sokolova 1971:214-215. The names of the Ob Vogul settlement lying opposite: (1) in common discourse, "Sacred Town"; Vog. *jalp-ūs*, Ost. *jem-voš*, Zyryan *veža kar* (Steinitz 1976:287); hence the Russian Vezhakori.

(2) Its sacral appellations: "Running/going horse shaped town" Vog. *xājtne/minne luw xuriŋ ūs* (Černecov 1939:36), Ost. šer. *xuxatta/mānta tow xōrpə woš* (Steinitz 1975:385). Its shorter form is "Horse town" Vog. *luw-ūs* (Kannisto & Liimola 1951:474). As for the data of "Horse village" *λωω-κорт*, from the Ostyaks of the mouth of the Kazym (collected by the author), it is not clear which point of the district it refers to. The form "Leaf-animal shaped town" *lūpta-ūj xuriŋ ūs*, from the Voguls of the Sosva (Kannisto & Liimola loc.cit.), is also documented with the explanation that there the Sacred Town Elder once killed a hero riding a horse whose patches resembled the spots of leaves. From the buried horse arose the town. According to Steinitz's informants, the name refers to the horselike shape of the bank terrace (1976:288).

It should be noted that there are several old settlements called "Sacred town" or something similar; for instance, Belogore, near the mouth of the Irtis, - the seat of the World Surveyor Man - mentioned, in Ostyak, as *jeməŋ woš* (Pápay & Fazekas 1934:137), *jem* (woš) (Steinitz 1976:287) or *jam woš* (Rédei 1968:7-8); along the Konda, *jam-voš* (Patkanov 1900:114; 1891:15) etc. It is interesting that in one of Pápay's archaic Obdorsk Ostyak heroic songs there crops up a certain *aļ laŋ(i) pāzəŋ ūàs* 'mit kelinem Pferde-Zeichen versehene Stadt', which also serves as an adjective of the lady residing in it (Pápay & Erdélyi 1972:392, 426, 436, 464 - see also Radomski 1985:16). The town cannot be located concretely.

The Sacred Town Elder is not the only idol of Vezhakori, though he is the most famous one. Belonging in this class is the Knife Elder, whose idol kindred, through his six "brothers" bearing similar names, extends as far as the Ural. For a description of his holy place see Sokolova 1971:220-221. Located further away is the lower ranking group of idols of the "Seven Elders of the Sacred Town", and in a separate place the female idol called the Lady of the Sacred Town or Horse Village Woman (Schmidt 1984:1221).

6.1.3. *The manifestation forms of the Sacred Town Elder.* The typical northern representatives of the category which, as person, is called "warlord" - Vog. *ōtar*, Ost. šer. *urt* - and, as cult person and materially represented cult object, "guardian spirit" - Vog. *pupij*, Ost. šer. *tuŋx* - have two forms of ma-

nifestation: (1) dominant human, and (2) latent animal, into which he can transform himself, if the occasion calls for it. Historically, the animal form is regarded by the literature as a relic of the earlier, totemistic layer.

(1) His human manifestation forms. (a) Warrior. Under the impact of the hero cult of the age of the principality, the majority of the guardian spirits were homogenized by the general consciousness in the figure of an armour-clad and sworded war lord. In the unpublished heroic epics about him (the collections of Černecov, Tereškin, and the author), the Sacred Town Elder too appears fully armed. At the guardian spirit dances of Vezhakori's periodic festivals and the sporadic bear feasts of the neighbourhood, he is personified as a man wearing a white kaftan, with a neckerchief, each hand holding an arrow (Tschernjetzow 1974:314). In the recent past, his sword, kept in his sacred place and held in cultic veneration, was sunk in the river, to prevent it falling into alien hands (author's collection, 1982). (b) As a reflection of his higher, mythological function, he is personified, at the Šerkal Ostyak bear feast theatricals, as a man with a pannier carrying wood shavings symbolizing soul-birds (Steinitz 1980:399). This image is referred to by one of his sacral names as well.

(2) His animal forms. (a) His well-known main form is a gigantic male bear (Avdeev 1936b:27; Černecov 1939:29; 1965:107, etc.). His invocation songs, which also suggest the appearing spirit, almost everywhere mention this (as an example see Kannisto & Liimola 1951:354-359). According to the belief-legends about him, he can, on occasion, assume the form of a bear not only to overcome distances, but also to perform some special tasks attendant on his protective function (Černecov 1950:119-120; Domokos 1984, II:94-98). At the Šerkal Ostyak bear feasts, in the mythical play about the dead man's resurrection (see Steinitz 1975:400-404), his role was played in a fur coat - earlier in a bearskin (?) - put on with the hair outside (author's collection, 1982). (b) His secondary animal form, not much known in the monographic literature up until now, is the mouse. This arises from the notion of the mouse-shaped soul of the bear and is intimately related to his healing function (cf. 4.1., 6.2.2.5., 6.2.2.6.). Occasionally it also appears in the heroic epics about him (cf. 4.2.).

6.1.4. *His narrower and wider social references.* The concrete local genealogical group that kept his idol image and sacred place, directing his cult and periodic festivals, is called "the clan of the Sacred Town Elder", Vog. *jalp-ūs ōjka rūt*, which, according to Avdeev, should be taken to mean the inhabitants of Vezhakori (1936b:27). Data concerning the "sacral" appellation of this group can be obtained from the individual songs of the district's Ob Voguls and Šerkal Ostyaks: "Woman/man/people of the little horse end clan" - the word "end" can be taken as a diminutive suffix - Vog. *māh luw ōwəl sirəŋ nē/χum/māχum*; Ost. *aj taw ɔtan sirəŋ ne/χu/mŷr*. With respect to the social group, Vezhakori is mentioned, in the songs, under the sacral name "Land of the little horse_end clan" Vog. *māh luw ōwəl sirəŋ mā*; Ost. šer. *aj taw ɔtan sirəŋ mŷ* (Schmidt 1983a:358-359). The local group consists of representatives of the Ob Vogul family name Kostin, and it belongs to the *por moiety* (Sokolova 1983:130, 199).

Černecov emphasized that, in general, members of the *por moiety* referred to themselves as the "People of the clawed elder (= bear) moiety" Vog. *konsəŋ akit sir māχum* (1939:23), the "People of the Sacred Town Elder" (1965:107), calling their group the "Bear moiety" Vog. *pupix sir* (1939:23).

On the basis of this, he concluded that Vezhakori had been the cultic centre of the *por moiety*. Historically, however, neither the place nor the

Ob, from various western groups - including those of the Pelym region - settled in this district.

6.1.5. *The Sacred Town Elder's ties of kindred.* As with the generality of mythical personalities with a long historical development, these are multi-layered and multi-meaning in character. Given the lack of data regarding the "high mythology" of his area, we are deprived of the principal source.

(1) "High-mythological" agnatic kinship: it shapes as a function of the conception of the goddess Kaltēs. (a) Where Kaltēs is held to be the wife of the Sky-God, roughly the following scheme could be reconstructed in the case of the Voguls, according to Černecov (1939:36):

Kaltēs (earth)	Numi tōrām (sky)
female rabbit, goose totem of primary clan	female bear, bear totem of primary clan
<i>mir-susne-χum</i> (<i>'World Surveyor Man'</i>)	<i>jem-wōš-ōjka</i> (Ostyak name) (<i>'Sacred Town Elder'</i>)
goose	bear
totem of the <i>mōš</i> moiety	totem of the <i>por</i> moiety

NB. Černecov has no proof whatsoever of his hypothesis - often quoted in the Soviet literature - that the Sky-God once had the form of a bear. The sun/moon analogies, showing the periodicity of summer/winter, as well as the astral connections, pertain to a different complex of ideas.

Károly Pápay's Ob Ostyak data too present the Sacred Town Elder as the son of the goddess Kaltēs (Munkácsi 1910:046). The two brothers, the World Surveyor Man and the Sacred Town Elder, arising from this lineage, appear significant particularly from the standpoint of shamanism; in respect of moiety, the pair is secondary and later than the myth of the zoomorphic *mōš/por* female ancestors (Tolstov 1948:296). Among the Ostyaks of the mouth of the Kazym, the Kaltēs mother motif serves, in some places, to invert the mediational axis of the bear: the mother character in the "Boy gone into the forest I." narrative may be interpreted as Kaltēs, with the boy character interpreted as the Sacred Town Elder (author's collection, Vanzevat, 1982) - cf. 5.1.1.

(b) Where Kaltēs belongs to the older generation of the supreme deities, but is not the wife of the Sky-God, the Sacred Town Elder is considered to be her brother and the World Surveyor Man, her nephew. This is characteristic of the "Woman's Nephew" folk tales of the neighbouring Voguls and Šerkal Ostyaks (Steinitz 1975:200-302, 302-308; 1976:257) and is late in origin.

(c) Where Kaltēs is kept in evidence in her position as guardian spirit, she ranks among the children of the Sky-God, as the sister of the Sacred Town Elder and the World Surveyor Man. Such a secondary genealogy is displayed by the only creation myth recorded from the Šerkal Ostyaks (author's collection, 1982).

(2) Other kinship. Among the neighbouring groups, he is mentioned as "the man who has got himself many wives"; yet, his wives of various origins crop up only as ancillary characters in the local legends. According to the most interesting data, he also married the daughter of the Vanzevat Elder = Lord of the Nether Regions (author's collection, Tugiyani, 1980). His nephew, known further afield as well, is the "Little Lord of the Sacred Town" Vog.

jalp-ūs māh ōtar, Ost. šer. *jem-woš aj urt* (Kannisto & Liimola 1955:52-59, 693; Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1950:211; Steinitz 1980:398). The Sacred Town Elder is so popular in Šerkal Ostyak epics that he is sometimes regarded as the uncle of other, lower-ranking guardian spirits, e.g. the Lord of Nazym (Steinitz 1975:244-263; 1976:245).

In József Pápay's collection there is a northern Ostyak heroic song which might possibly be presumed to refer to the seat and ties of kindred of the Sacred Town Elder. Notably, in the "Song of the Elder of Tegi", noted down from Grigory Torikoptin, of the village of *às-kòr't* (Pápay & Erdélyi 1972: 12-163), the main hero's bride-to-be is the daughter of a certain "Horse end man" *lšy šlən-xō*, who has seven warlord brothers. There is mention, too, of his castle and brook, similarly named (Radomski 1985:119). We get a description of the journey there from the village of Tegi: towards the south, they first proceed along the Little Ob and then, touching a section of the Sosva (roughly towards Berezov ? - E. Sch.), they once again reach the Ob. They row along it until they reach the source, and, crossing the sea there, they find the town (op.cit. 48-50, 72-80). The extreme southern location is an exaggeration, but the first half of the voyage may correspond to the journey to Vezhakori, where, beside the castle hill, there is indeed a brook entering the Ob. The Elder of Tegi may be a relative of the Sacred Town Elder; however, there are no data on the degree of relationship. It is clearly no mere accident that the periodic festivals of the latter were customarily held alternately in Vezhakori and in Tegi. The Elder of Tegi is a guardian spirit whose primary animal form is that of the fox and secondary animal form is that of the dog. Sokolova describes the village as being of mixed moiety (1983:197).

The members of the Sacred Town Elder's household impersonated at the Šerkal Ostyak bear feasts include his tax-collecting clowns (Steinitz 1975: 389-396), his two female servants playing on the Jew's harp (author's collection, 1982) and, among the Voguls of the Sosva, his old serving woman (Kannisto & Liimola 1959:285). The *mēnks* featuring at the periodic feasts of Vezhakori likewise belong to his folks.

6.1.6. *The Sacred Town Elder's system of rites.* Theoretically, it should come after a description of the functions of the spirit, but, as these have been explored to a lesser degree, I discuss it first. It can be assumed to have several types.

(1) General rites: occasional sacrifices of food/animals, with prayer, textile and metal votive objects, in the sacred place or elsewhere. Based on the guardian spirits' usual functions of protecting health, bringing hunters a good bag and fishermen a good haul, and averting danger, they clearly do not differ much from the similar rituals of the other spirits. In this respect, the neighbouring Ob Ugrians describe the Sacred Town Elder as "good-hearted", which suggests that the rituals of high-ranking spirits worshipped in a wide circle contain fewer special rules and, according to belief, they bring surer results than those of certain local spirits.

(2) Periodic feast (cf. 5.5.). Its special feature is that, because of the bear-shaped animal form of the spirit, it is reminiscent of a gigantic bear feast. The most detailed description of it comes from Černecov (1965:108-110). Accordingly, Vezhakori and Tegi - the Ostyak village on the bank of the Little Ob, lying north of Berezov - took seven-year turns in hosting the feast, which lasted from the full moon in December almost until the vernal equinox. The proceedings were divided into four sections. The first, which took place during four nights (the number prescribed for the female bear!), contained epic songs, the "Small *mōš* woman" myth - interpreted as the

origin of the *por* moiety - (cf. 5.3.4.), sword-dances, guardian spirit dances, and other men's and women's dances. The second stage, held after 5 to 7 days throughout January and February, consisted - depending on the number of participants arriving there - mainly of occasional performances of bear feast plays. The third stage embraced the seven nights preceding the new moon in March and had a similar programme. The final stage, after a slight break, lasted quite until the full moon, and it involved a greater amount of frightening mummery than the ordinary bear feasts. Finally, performers wearing masks raised in height and covered with horse-tail hair and impersonating *mēnks* took with them the diminutive wooden figures of a woman and a man - for scapegoats, as it were - to the secret sacred place beyond the river and "executed" them. The festivals were attended by large numbers of Voguls and Ostyaks arriving from relatively distant areas.

Among the characteristics of the moiety, Černecov shows how certain parts of the sacral epics and ritual are kept secret, adducing, as an example, precisely the sacred dances of the feasts of Vezhakori (1965:108). Zolotarev (1964:228), who followed in the footsteps of Černecov during his collecting trip, did not obtain such information - but then, he had not been received by the Voguls as one of them. From a one-time "mistress" of the festivals and from some frequent participants in them I managed to learn this much, that certain prohibitions covered the performance and watching of the sacred songs and dances of the first portion. These prohibitions again came into force in the final portion, although most participants tried to be present precisely in this days. Certain of the spirit dances called "high dance" Ost. Kaz. *kāras jak* could be performed only by locals. In Vezhakori too there were certain songs that it was desirable to sing in Ostyak, while in Tegi the greater part of the festival was conducted in Ostyak. Those questioned are reluctant to give information on aspects to do with moiety. According to Černecov, the local organizers of the festivals too were approved on the basis of rules relating to age and status (loc. cit.). The most interesting data in my field material is that originally the festivals would have been held in seven villages; as, indeed, also in the case of the brother-spirits, seated in various places, seven is the typical number. From Tegi, though it lay along the way and was well-known, there is no reference in the literature to similar feasts. The people of that place abandoned the custom before 1945.

NB. The village of Tegi too raises some interesting points. Near Vezhakori there was a settlement called Tegi in Ostyak, *сот-рājal* in Vogul, and mentioned, in Russian, under the name Тегинския (юрти) or Зашика (Kálmán 1976:14). According to those questioned, the periodic feasts took place in the Tegi beyond Berezov, and the cause of the identity of the two village names is not known.

The village of Vezhakori is, by now, uninhabited. In 1982, the community house serving as the venue of the celebrations was, though damaged, still standing. From the middle of the 1960s onwards, the holding of the periodic festivals has been coming up against insoluble difficulties. Quite a few of the male inhabitants of the district over 50 are able to perform the simple dances, plays and short songs, but with the death of the older generation the people who possess knowledge of the epic songs and special rituals are finally disappearing.

Starting from the types of the dances, Černecov reconstructs four historical layers: periodic hunting magic aimed at animal fertility, totemistic tribal rites, totemistic moiety rites and apologetic-protective rites (Tschernetzow 1974:311-312). The moiety festivals of Vezhakori are more archaic than the sporadic bear feast (1965:110).

6.2. *The functions of the Sacred Town Elder.* They can be deduced from two images - i.e. from the later human-shaped warrior and from the earlier bear. In respect of the former, he cannot differ much from the other high-ranking guardian spirits, but his functions arising from the latter - as well as his rituals - do raise him from the ranks of the cult personages. In the analysis, we shall return to the system of bear-concepts according to the horizontal and vertical axes, from where the complex of ideas of the totem-ancestor-mediator and of the shamanistic soul-saver-mediator originates. It should be noted that, with regard to the functions, at present only regional differences can be substantiated with data - those of moiety are not covered by them. The functions of the average guardian spirit: (a) ancestor and protector of social group, (b) lord of the natural treasures of his region, hence also the sender of the hungers' good luck, (c) protector of health, (d) protector of his followers in dangerous situations.

6.2.1. *Horizontal axis*

6.2.1.1. *Ancestor of social group?:* concept 26. On the basis of the theory of Avdeev (1936b:27) and Černecov (1939:29 etc.) - according to which the bear was the ancestor of a primary clan, and later, moiety - it would be logical to look for a "marriage partner" concept among the functions of the Sacred Town Elder (15.). But Černecov has in mind the reincarnating bear-ancestor, and the initial four-night portion of the festivals of Vezhakori too suggests a female bear. As for the male bear corresponding to the animal form of the spirit, we have, for the time being, no data that would interpret it as the ancestor of human descendants. We do not know, either, whether all those belonging to the *por* moiety indeed regard the Sacred Town Elder, in particular, or the bear, in general, as their ancestor. The only thing that the reports allow us to infer is that, in the more remote groups, those of his functions connected with the vertical axis are more significant.

The thesis of moiety ancestor would be definitively proved if it turned out that the person of the Sacred Town Elder indeed historically contained the Town Lord of the folklore. That would explain the association of the "Small *mōš* woman" narrative with the *por* moiety and the bear cult (cf. 5.3.4.).

6.2.1.2. *Ancestor of the bear species?* From the Ostyaks of the mouth of the Kazym we have already mentioned the trend linking the person of the Sacred Town Elder with the "Boy gone into the forest I" narrative (cf. 6.1.5.). It is characteristic of all the representatives of this type that, in contrast with the bear of celestial origin, they are of maternal dominance, "forest"- and "lower"-signed. At the end of the song they are not killed - they can multiply without hindrance. They give the impression of being not just simple ordinary members of the society of bears, but special ancestors of it, as guardian spirits are of human society. In accordance with this, when I put to the best singer of the Šerkal Ostyaks (of the Little Sosva), Grigory Smolin, the following question: if, in the song of origin known to him, the first bear lowered from the sky is joined by his sister, the goddess Kaltes, is the bear not the future Sacred Town Elder? - he answered me in the negative (Schmidt 1983b:29). To be sure, the Sacred Town Elder shows the least affinity with the bear of heavenly origin, killed during its first hibernation - he is clearly a representative of the opposite type.

6.2.1.3. *Lord of the bear species:* concept 13. Surprisingly enough, the Sacred Town Elder seems to be the clearest-cut representative of the guardian spirits who are at once bear-shaped and bear-killers (cf. 5.2.2.3.). Both in his human and animal form, he is master of the lives of bears.

According to a belief-legend of the Ostyaks of the mouth of the Kazym, he, in human form, joins a hunter and swears a false bear oath. He

forces his companion to leap down with him from a tall larch; they both turn into bears. They destroy a pack of bears which attack them because of the oath and, in the manner described above, they turn into humans once again. It was at the behest of the Sky-God that the sacred Town Elder was obliged to reduce the numbers of the bears, which had become too numerous (Domokos 1984, II:94-98). This notion is supported by one of Kannisto's Vogul informants of the Upper Lozva (the Ural region!), who says that "the Sacred Town Elder is not only bear-shaped, but is also the *master of bears*" (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:147).

Among Černecov's manuscript Ob Vogul collections, precisely from Vezhakori, there is a text entitled "Song of the Sacred Town Elder's killing of a bear" (No. 1480, text 2). In it, the spirit announces that, in the human era, they will not know how to hunt bears. He prepares to set off, and, with his bare hands, he defeats a bear by taking it by the ears and beating it against a tree. He takes the bear killed to Vezhakori and establishes the ritual of the periodic festivals to be held there. After each stage of the preparation and the establishment of the festivals he repeats that the same procedure is to be followed in the human era as well (cf. 5.2.2.3.).

All of which leaves little doubt that the Sacred town Elder, as well as being bear-shaped, is also master of the bears and their cult.

6.2.1.4. *Lord of natural goods: concept 7.* Černecov assumes that the fertility-magic and hunting-magic features of the bear feast partly stemmed from the unification of the reviving representatives of the various species in the image of the most powerful species - i.e. the bear; that is how we arrive at the concept of the lord of the forest. Later the bear became a moiety totem-ancestor (1974:306-308). In the case of the Sacred Town Elder, this function coincides with the guardian spirits' general right to dispose of the natural goods of their area. We have no evidence to suggest that, in addition to the local spirits distributing the goods of the forest (and the non-personified bear of the bear feasts), his person also plays a special role in controlling the beasts of more remote areas. This role is rendered unrecognizable by the crucial predominance and significance of the functions of the vertical axis.

6.2.2. *Vertical axis.* Whereas on the horizontal axis the supraterrrestrial totemistic ancestor concepts can be demonstrated, with associations with the bear form, - the vertical axis is dominated by the role of the mediator from underneath and the form of the mouse. Put in symbolic terms, the former axis tends to embody the objective, external aspects ("society", "body"), while the latter is the carrier of the subjective, inner ("individual", "soul") aspects.

6.2.2.1. *Soul-rescuer.* From the Ural to the mouth of the Irliš, the Sacred Town Elder is held to be one of the most important helpers in case of illness. The folklore text editions - whose material could not be reflected in the works of Černecov and his followers - furnish data almost exclusively on this function.

It was indicated already by Steinitz that the Šerkal Ostyaks believe his main task to be the protection of the soul of man. If someone falls gravely ill, his soul-bird, flying away, is caught by the Sacred Town Elder, who sends it back (1976:287). One of its purest expressions can be found in the ending of a local folk tale: the Sacred Town Elder charges the goddess Kaltes to determine the life-span of the children to be born, while he himself, "protecting the soul of the little girl/boy", settles in Vezhakori (1975:302). According to his Sosva Vogul song of invocation, he was given that office - along with the dual animal form serving the performing of it - by the Sky-

God. He proudly proclaims: "I am assigned to the ruler who lengthens the soul of the little girl." In this respect, he surpasses the other spirits: "A hundred gods with wings/with feet, however they may fly here, they cannot raise (= save) the soul of the little girl/boy" (Kannisto & Liimola 1951:355-356). His function is also expressed in his sacral names (cf. 6.1.1.).

A more detailed textual analysis indicates that the former statements apply not just to any disease and soul. According to an explanation of the expression "with five-fingered hand of fingers I caught the three little birds of the end of the boy's braid of hair", found in the above song of invocation (ibid. 358), it refers to the "dream-birds" Vog. *ūlm ūjrišat*, of which men have five and women have four (ibid. 475). The text indicates that he again attaches the soul-birds to the braid of hair and to the dream, whereby they are restored to man. Among the Voguls of the Sosva and the Upper Lozva, it was precisely in cases of sleeplessness and melancholia that the Sacred Town Elder was frequently appealed to (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958: 147). According to Černecov, the "dream-bird" Vog. *ūlam ūj* has the form of a grouse and lives outside man (Černecov 1959:134-136).

Despite the Vogul terms, however, here we are probably dealing with another bird-shaped soul. Černecov describes the end-of-the-braid-of-hair soul-birds under the name "(breath) soul" Vog. *lilī* or "small (shadow) soul" Vog. *māh is*, and he identifies them with the reincarnating clan-souls, signalling that their 5 or 4 figure refers to the number of rebirths in the case of a man and a woman, respectively (Černecov 1959:137-139). In the neighbourhood of Vezhakori, those questioned invariably responded to me as well in the categories of large and small soul, mentioning a grave psychosomatic condition and sleep disorders. According to the Šerkal Ostyaks, the "little birds" are located in the region of the heart, roughly where the collar of one's garment end (Steinitz 1976:289). At their bear feasts, the Sacred Town Elder showers wood shavings, symbolizing souls, onto the participants, who try to catch them and hide them under their left armpits in order to protect their health (ibid. 287; 1980:399).

In view of the syncretism of the Ob-Ugrians' concepts of the soul and the plurality of their bird-shaped manifestations, the question of the soul-birds pertaining to the reference of the Sacred Town Elder requires more precise collecting. It should be pointed out that most shamanistic healing procedures are aimed at retrieving some soul that has removed itself, and the soul-protecting function of the high-ranking guardian spirits (e.g. the World Surveyor Man, the Pelym god etc.) is no less significant. Having said that, in the folklore of none of them is the specialization in retrieving the soul-bird expressed as graphically as in that of the Sacred Town Elder.

The "flying away" of the soul-birds may be due to several causes, such as terror, the spell of a shaman or a malign dead person, ravishment by spirits from the underworld.

6.2.2.2. *Protector against malign supernatural beings.* The terror occasioning the flying away of the soul-bird can arise from various causes. Its most dangerous cases are caused by low-ranking, malign supernatural beings whose power is based mainly on fear. A scene of this kind is portrayed, for instance, by a Šerkal Ostyak bear-feast play of the two-faced forest spirit/*mēṅk*, signalling that on glimpsing him the soul-birds of the spectators fly in all directions (Steinitz 1975:396-400). To combat these beings, it is not always sufficient to have an acquaintance with the warding-off tricks. The desired intervention of the upper world of spirits is frequently accomplished by the Sacred Town Elder against the following destructive agents.

(a) Endangerer: *mēṅk*. In a belief-legend of the Voguls of the Upper Lozva, two hunters and a forest *mis* man (a human-like forest being opposite in

character to the *mēṅk*) are forced to spend the night in the house of the *mēṅks*. When the latter want to eat the hunters the *mis* man invokes their protecting spirit, the Sacred Town Elder, who saves them (Černecov's estate, No. 1477, text 2). (b) Endangerer: "creature who frightens people" Vog. *pil-taptaxṭan ut*, Ost. Kaz. *pāataptijāiti ōt* (a being of varied exterior, often haunting in groups). According to a belief-legend of the Ostyaks of the Kazym, these beings keep frightening with fearful sounds two hunters in the forest. One of them invokes the guardian spirits one by one, until finally the Sacred Town Elder appears, destroying the haunters. He demands a reindeer sacrifice for his help. When the other hunter fails to offer the sacrifice, he gets a man-eating ghost to destroy the ungrateful person (author's collection, Tugiyani, 1982). The Voguls of the Sosva have the notion that, at the shaman's invocation, the Sacred Town Elder appears from underneath the floor, driving out of their unclean hiding-places the "creatures who keep frightening people" (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:148).

In the above instances, the Sacred Town Elder removes preventively, as it were, the supernatural danger before the soul-birds could fly away. Although other high-ranking spirits can also perform similar actions - e.g. the Elder of Teġi (Kannisto & Liimola 1951:79-81) -, the Sacred Town Elder is a protector with a wider sphere of action, by virtue of his connection with the unclean places of the world below.

6.2.2.3. *Neutralizer of illness arising from a malign spell.* There is only one piece of information on it, but that comes from a fairly distant group. Among the Voguls of the Sosva, if the shaman concludes that the illness has been caused by a malign spell from another shaman and it seems too dangerous to send it back to the person concerned, he directs it to the Ob, to the Sacred Town Elder. The illness remains there and is neutralized (Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:408). Elsewhere too it is customary for the malign spell to be sent to a guardian spirit (e.g. northern Ostyak: Pápay 1905b: 272-276). On the Sosva there are several guardian spirits who would be suitable for this purpose - we do not know why the Sacred Town Elder is preferred, and in which villages specifically.

6.2.2.4. *Protector against the dead.* In the north, the range of beliefs concerning malign dead persons has two particularly popular types: (a) the aggressive living dead persons; (b) the dead person who takes the soul of the living with him/her. When faced with either, the guardian spirits can be of help.

(a) The hero of a Sova Vogul belief-legend, while on travel, is forced to spend the night, as it happens, near a dead female relative of his. Attacked by the corpse, he is saved only when the Sacred Town Elder, appearing in the form of a bear, tears apart the assailant (Černecov 1959:119-120). Among the Šerkal Ostyaks, a similar narrative was noted down by Tereškin, but there the spirit was not named. (b) If the dead person takes with him the soul of someone, it is customary to turn to a shaman. He, in turn, dispatches a guardian spirit to retrieve from the grave the object containing the soul (ibid. 118-119). The Ostyaks of the mouth of the Kazym understand that the spirit best suited for that purpose is the Sacred Town Elder because, in the form of a bear, he can dig out the corpse from its grave more easily. As an example, they related such a case.

In these stories the succession of incidents can be assumed to be more stable than the identity of the characters. Having said that, the Sacred Town Elder acting in the form of a bear is no accident. As we shall see below, in other respects too the bear has a fairly great deal to do with graves and the dead.

6.2.2.5. *Guard of the boundary between the respective spheres of the living and the dead: concept 27.* In the northern Ob-Ugrian belief-world, the number of days that a person can live is determined at his birth by the goddess Kaltes, who notches it on a tally or writes it in her sacred book. She does not change her decision later on. Due to various causes (malign spell, violation of the sacred laws either through his own ignorance or that of relative of his or perhaps through selfishness etc.), a person can live less than the days allotted to him, but not more. The destructive ambition of the Lord of Disease - who is chiefly responsible for death - and of his host of demons from underneath, on the one hand, and the will of the life-giving goddess, on the other, are coordinated by the law of the Sky-God. Responsibility for enforcing it in practice is given to one of the high-ranking guardian spirit mediators of the Sky-God, primarily the World Surveyor Man, and secondarily perhaps the spirit of the cult-centre of an area. The shaman, with the assistance of the guardian spirits, can prevent the death of only those whose days ordained by Kaltes have not been completed yet. (See Figure 5.)

A former "mistress" of the Vezhakori festivals of the Sacred Town Elder - a woman who hailed from some 90 km further to the north from Tugiyani - reported the following hitherto undocumented belief. In the times of their grandfathers it was held that, prior to his death, a person's soul visits in succession the guardian spirits determining his destiny, in order to ask them for their intercession. The power of the spirits is subordinated to the decision of the goddess Kaltes, but they can prolong life with a specified small number (3-7) of days. If the life-span ordained has not yet been completed, any of them can "hold back" the soul and hence the process of death. First of all, the soul starts towards the south, to Kaltysyani, the sacred place of the goddess Kaltesh, and asks if his days have indeed been completed. If so, the goddess "allows him to move on", after which he turns to the World Surveyor Man. According to the informant, this also happens in Kaltysyani, but in the old days it was presumably located in the sacred place of the World Surveyor Man, in the district of the mouth of the Irtyš (between the villages of Belogore and Troickoe).⁷ If he too allows the soul to move on, it turns towards the north, weeping and crying, and goes to Vezhakori, to the Sacred Town Elder. The latter's decision is particularly important, as the next stage is already Vanzevat, lying north of the mouth of the Kazym, - the village of the Lord of Disease, Ost. Kaz. *χῆν wopt* and the "Lower-World Elder", *Ἰ μῦν ἴκι* or "Underfoot Elder", *kūr Ἰπι ἴκι*. The two spirits, kept in evidence as brothers, are seated in neighbouring Little Vanzevat (*aj wańśawət = sūmät hōi*) and in (Great) Vanzevat (*/wɔn/ wańśawət*) (Schmidt 1983a:355-356). If they refuse to allow the soul to proceed, then the person cannot die, however grave his condition might be. If they do let it proceed, the soul finally sets off for the north, the land of the dead, near the mouth of the Ob.

Consequently, the seat of the Sacred Town Elder was probably regarded as the last station on the boundary between life and death. It may be presumed that the territory between Vezhakori and Vanzevat was a transitional zone, as it were, from where the benevolence of the Sacred Town Elder could still get a person back into real life.

The above communication would remain a one-off curiosity, were it not authenticated by the play "The Sacred Town Elder and the dead person", of the bear feast repertory of the Šerkal Ostyaks, further to the south. In a version of it collected by Steinitz (1975:400-404; 1976:287, 289), a man lies down on the ground, singing that, after his illness, he has already been put in the grave. Offering a horse in sacrifice, he invokes the World Surveyor Man and then the goddess Kaltes, but they fail to come to save him. In the depths of despair, he appeals to the Sacred Town Elder, who appears and, digging him out of the grave with his stick, revives him. According to

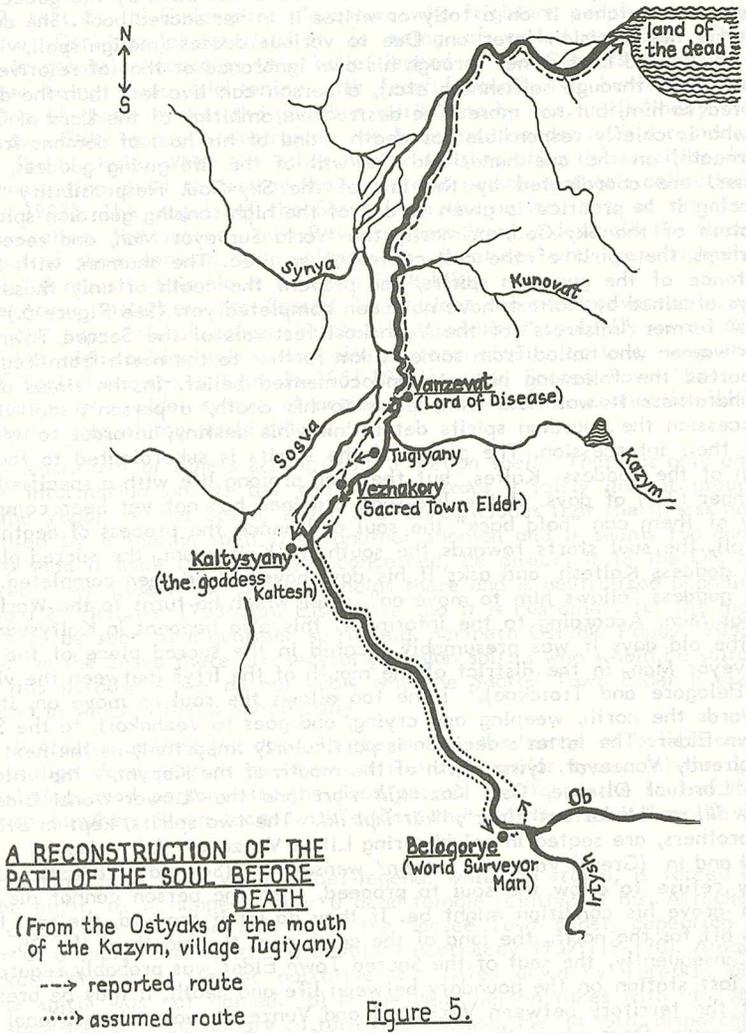


Figure 5.

...digging him out of the grove with his stick, revealing that, according to
 Meid and the goddess Kaltesh, but the fall to come to save him in the
 in the grove. Offering a horse to the fall, he traveled the World Surveyor
 down to the ground, finding that, after his illness, he has already been hit
 the path leads, especially in the central Ostyaks, further to the south, the
 undertaken by the World Surveyor Elder and the dead person. The
 version of it collected by Zhukovskiy (1872-1900-1901) in 1872-1873, in a
 the path leads, especially in the central Ostyaks, further to the south, the

Tereškin's communication, he was "dug out" of the grave by a player dressed as a bear. A version from the Little Sosva noted down by me has a humorous ultimate tone. The dead person appeals directly to the Sacred Town Elder to hurry to his aid "in the sacred form of mouse and bear". The latter puts on his bear's claws and, turning into a mouse, he approaches the grave and, as a bear, he digs him out. The resurrected person returning home is thought to be a ghost by his family, who run away from him in panic. According to the informant, G.P. Smolin, the serious version was also known in his group. The play has so far been documented with data only from the Šerkal Ostyaks belonging in the immediate cult district of the Sacred Town Elder.

The horizontal journey of the soul outlined above is actually a transformation of the vertical scheme of passing to the next world. Of such a cartographic representation of the vertical world-picture we have examples from other Ob-Ugrian groups as well (cf. 7.). In the central area of the Ob, where, in the course of history, the cult-centres of the guardian spirits of the highest order were located, the bear's relationship with disease, death, and the afterworld is expressed in precisely the person of the Sacred Town Elder. Its relationship with life and death, the "thawed" layer between the earth surface and the frozen earth is - as has been seen earlier on - supported by a whole range of conceptions. The concretized "sepulchral" aspect may be based, amongst other things, on the fact that, because of the perennially frozen layer, graves were dug in this relatively thin, soft layer. The graves, protected by beam-structures, but previously probably lacking them, were chiefly accessible to two animals - i.e. the bear and the mouse. As for the former, in the bear-songs the Sky-God specially forbids it to disturb the graves and the corpses; for the latter, in many places fine pearls are strewn into the grave, so that it should busy itself with collecting these, rather than with damaging the corpse, its outfit and sacrificial foods.

6.2.2.6. *Shaman helping spirit: concept 24.* While functions 2-3-4 contain motifs that may appear in connection with other guardian spirits too, in the field of shamanism the Sacred Town Elder very clearly stands out among the other spirits. Kannisto's records from the most diverse northern Vogul groups are, in fact, all connected with the shaman ritual.

When healing, the shaman usually invokes several guardian spirits so as to learn the cause of the disease and the person of the spirit competent to eliminate it. If it is the Sacred Town Elder, he invariably appears in the form of a bear, from underneath - in contrast with the other spirits, which arrive through the roof (Upper Lozva Vogul: Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958:428; Sosva Vogul: Kannisto & Liimola 1951:357). The healing function of the bear is so characteristic that, of all the protecting spirits, Rombandeeva singles out the bear-shaped spirit that she calls Elder of Yeli Town as something of a physician-specialist (1984:107). Such a role of the bear conceived of as the lord = mediator of the transitional zone between the middle and the lower worlds is indeed quite obvious.

His power is further increased by his mouse form. Through it, even the unclean places on the earth surface become accessible, as is expressed in a song of invocation of the Sacred Town Elder, accompanied by the shaman's drum: "My father the Sky-God has set me to visit the unclean places visited by woman/man" (Sosva Vogul: Kannisto & Liimola 1951:357). A still greater advantage is his ability to penetrate between the layers of the earth. In the folklore of the Šerkal Ostyaks there is a special formula to suggest this: "I went into 7/8 crannies of two frozen earth (-layers)" (Steinitz 1975:387); - it is also known with the anterior constituent "thawed and frozen (earth)".

By this, we are to understand the transitional sphere of the thawed earth, which, in the play of the dead person resurrected, is symbolized by the

grave. The soul that has arrived at this place has already crossed the frontier of real life - i.e. the surface of the earth - but has not got down to the kingdom of death, the real nether world. He cannot, single-handedly, get out on either side. At this point, a person is neither alive nor dead, irrespective of his actual state of health, for his soul-bird may have broken loose for the most diverse reasons. He can be saved only by the lord of the sphere, i.e. the bear/mouse. On the horizontal plane, he is embodied by the Sacred Town Elder, in the central Ob region; but, when one stops to think of it, the "lower"-signed eldest god-son of the southwestern Voguls - who turns into a "hero" bear - is also attached to the boundary between the underworld's lake and the human sphere. *It is the bear that turns the soul back at the boundary of the two worlds.* If there existed, in Ob-Ugrian culture, a "lower"-signed psychopomp animal, it too would probably be the bear.

Up until now, it has seemed as though the zone of prevalence of Siberian bear shamanism, built on the concept of the "lower" bear, ends precisely on the Ob-Ugrian tribal area. In the northern portion of it, it was the predominance of the concept of the "celestial" bear, while in the southern section it was the changing of the ethnic culture that prevented it being identified. With the above in mind, it may fairly be assumed that, in the north, this complex of ideas was coded among the historical layers of the cult of the guardian spirit the Sacred Town Elder. If there were a shamanism with journey of the soul and a shaman belonging to a given community guardian spirit, then his shamans could be the bear shamans. For the time being, all we can assume with some probability is that the northern bear-shaped spirit - mentioned by Karjalainen - that the shamans appealed to when doing their healing is presumably to be taken to mean the Sacred Town Elder.

7. *Ideas for a historical reconstruction of the bear cult.* The interrelationships demonstrated in the paper suggest that the Ob-Ugrian bear cult is of a wider reference than the "most powerful animal of the forest" concept, to be encountered in the traditional literature, and Černecov's thesis of "the ancestor of the moiety". Its roles as mediator tie in with cardinal points in the world-picture and are to be treated in that context.

The regional (tribal?) world-image variants are scarcely possible to extrapolate from the stock of data available at present. One trend, however, can be demonstrated - namely, that at some stage of historical development the regional world-concepts were projected horizontally onto specific geographical locations - and they clearly constituted a system of specified cult centres. During the reconstructions, two contrasting principles of the changes caused by the migrations are to be taken into account. On the one hand, the migrating sections of the people took with them their guardian spirits; on the other hand, the geographically outstanding sacred places remained, with only the character of the spirits residing over them changing in the course of the migrations. As regards the bear cult, we must not lose sight of the fact that the concept complexes reflected by its regional variants are not identical - e.g. the northern system and ritual differed from the southern, Konda variant and probably from the eastern Ostyak variant too.

In the north, the cartographic aspect of the world-picture may have been influenced by the later trend - productive right until recently - of linking the mythical personages to some particular villages. The ideological grounds for including the mythical personages significant for the whole society (and their cult centres) in the highly heterogeneous, locally-socially determined category of "guardian spirits" may be that they are all subordinated to the Sky-God, who can be assigned to no single location. The character of the beings with a positive function is not substantially altered by their be-

coming local guardian spirits. In the case of the negative Lord of Disease and the Lord of the Underworld, however, we can observe a differentiation of their original, ambivalent role. They are not only the masters of death, but, by withholding it, the masters of life as well. Based on their latter aspect is the protection of a local social unit, in the course of which - according to formal logic - they actually limit the forces of their own sphere. It is interesting that up until now it was largely the subordinates - the sons and daughters - of the Lord of Disease that tended to be substantiated with data from a few villages (e.g. Obdorsk Ostyak: Pápay 1905a:27); recently, both Gemuev and myself have been hearing expressly about the guardian spirit of the Lord of Disease. The word "son", standing after the name of the spirit, sometimes refers not to a genuine descendant, but is a term of endearment.

From the Voguls of the Sosva-Sygva too we have data on a phenomenon similar to the cartographic projection of the world-picture in the central Ob region, discussed earlier on. In this region, the Lord of the Underworld ("Куль о́тцъ") resides in the neighbourhood of the northernmost village, Yasunt, on the Upper Sygva. According to belief, he carries down the Sygva and the Sosva the souls he has seized - presumably to the land of the dead, near the mouth of the Ob. When he reaches the Sosva, the most powerful guardian spirit of the region, the Elder of the Middle Sosva (near the village of Sartinya) may command him to take it back. If, on the other hand, he "lets it move on", the person dies (Gemuev & Sagalaev 1986:45). Gemuev was struck by the similarity of the idol's attributes and ritual to those of the eastern, Yugan Ostyak local Spirit of Disease (Kulemzin 1984:118). He indicates that the mythological status of the Lord of the Nether World has recently transformed in the cultic life: his function of causing death has been replaced by the positive role of local protecting spirit (ibid. 142-143). The seat of the guardian spirit of the region, who, I suspect, possesses the character of a bear - the War God of Munkes - can be found on the Sygva, about four villages away from Yasunt downstream. Gemuev thinks it may have been the cult-centre of the medieval Lyapin principality (128-129). Though in a different context, he does mention that the totem-ancestors of the Voguls of the Sygva (= Lyapin) included the bear (175). For the moment, we have no data on the soul-saving function of the War God of Munkes. His person seems to be later in origin than that of the Sacred Town Elder.

The best clue to the cartographic world-picture of the Voguls of the Upper Konda, Pelym, Lozva, Upper Sosva region - who have a southwestern-type culture - is the myth of the eldest god-son turning into a "hero" bear (cf. 5.1.2.2., 5.4.2.). The Lozva version assigns the lake of the country of the dead an entirely concrete location, namely, the neighbourhood of the central settlement of the Upper Konda, Leushi (Munkácsi 1892-1902:ccclxii). The fortress of the god-son is a certain *jäx-tumên*-town, which Munkácsi does not consider to be a concrete place-name, since its anterior constituent has the general meaning of 'lake formed by a river' (ibid.). In the Upper Sosva version, however, the lake of the land of the dead is called *jäx-tumên*. Whether or not it can be bound to a specific location, the mythological scheme itself is close to the concept held near the Ob: the "hero" bear defying the destructive forces is located on the boundary of the nether world. On the basis of the texts, its person cannot be regarded as identical with some high-ranking local guardian spirit. If we project onto it the analogy of the Pelym god - whether by identifying him with it or regarding him in his role as the controlling archspirit of the region - we obtain a system different in orientation from the northern one.

The most uncertain element of the reconstruction of ancient cultic life is the reference system of the social organization. At present, we have so

little concrete evidence as to the question of tribes, moieties, clans etc. that their character, hierarchic system and historical-geographical boundaries are very difficult to define contentually (e.g. by Sokolova's method of analysing marriage trends). In any case, something we can be certain of is that the material of the last couple of centuries reflects the final disintegration of a system that was once for more complete and far clearer. On the basis of the interrelationships indicated in the paper, several tempting ideas for reconstruction might arise - for instance, that, in the old days, cult leaders of the *por* moiety, with the help of the bear, mediated towards the underworld, while those of the *mōš* moiety, through the forces symbolized in the present-day World Surveyor Man, did the same towards the upper world; that, in the tradition of the bear-killing mythical heroes, the representatives of the moieties kill bears with signs opposite to their own - the sons of the Town Lord killing an "upper" bear, the World Surveyor Man a "lower" one etc. However, given the amount of data we possess at present on Vogul-Ostyak language, culture, and history, such hypotheses would bear all the marks of scientific adventurousness.

The community bear ritual shows three types of feast, if we take seriously V. Novickij's communication. The most archaic one - also judged by Černecov to be as such - is the septennial periodic festival of Vezhakori. A halfway house is represented by Novickij's version, which is periodic, but the number of years is dependent on the sex of the bears (were there female bear's skins too?), as is the case at the bear feasts that Černecov called sporadic. Sporadic bear feasts are to be taken to mean the more recently created feasts held to honour each single bear killed.

The investigation of the relationships of the bear cult and shamanism is hampered by the fact that the character, system, and historical evolution of Ob-Ugrian shamanism have not been explored. It is customary to regard shamanism in these peoples as a late arrival, and therefore not very much advanced. If, in the past half a millennium, their culture has continuously shown signs of disintegration and retrogression, it is worth pondering why shamanism, of all its elements, should represent a contrary trend - one, moreover, that is only just beginning to develop. It is possible that, at some point in the past, other, no less highly developed varieties of trance techniques and religious mediation were known as well. In the field of healing, it would be of prime importance to clarify which are the types of soul-birds that the guardian spirits designated with the attribute of "soul-pannier" and held to be outstanding healers are competent to retrieve, and in which cases they can do that. When a "loss of soul" or illness arises, Ob-Ugrian culture does not draw a sharp distinction between somatic and psychic causes. It is to be suspected that the mediative activity of the Sacred Town Elder and guardian spirits like him serve, in part, psychiatric healing; nor is the motif of the resurrection of the dead to be understood necessarily in the physical sense.

The hitherto unstudied "esoteric", psychological side of the Ob-Ugrian bear cult requires more detailed research. At first impression, it seems that psychological archetypal schemes are embodied chiefly in two cultic beings: the World Surveyor Man and the bear. The latter - along with the guardian spirit attaching to it - seems more suitable than the other mythical beings for symbolizing several important motifs, e.g. the rebirth of the soul from the earth, the deity sacrificing his own animal form etc. In identifying the cause of the high level of development of the Ob-Ugrian bear cult, Katalin U. Kálhalmi points, with full justification, to the intertwining of the early hunting culture's complex of ideas about the animal reborn and the quasi-totemic ancestor- and hero-cult of the steppes (1981:146). To this we might add

that the "esoteric side" was clearly instrumental in lending the bear motif a far greater than average cultural loading.

Notes

1. The capital letters signal the invariants of the different animals.
2. In the folklore references the page number of the whole narrative is given.
3. 'Lord, War-Lord' - Ost. *urt*, Vog. *ṣtar*, term for a guardian spirit as a real human leader.
4. On the basis of an international agreement, the copies of the Vogul-language folklore texts of Černecov's estate are kept in the documentation department of the Ethnographical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. I refer to them by the accession numbers under which they can be found there.
5. "Sporadic bear feast" is a term applied by Černecov to describe the 1 to 10-day feast of the bear killed during the hunt. It is contradistinguished with the "periodic bear feast", by which we understand the festivals of the Sacred Town Elder guardian spirit, held at seven-year intervals and lasting for several months in Vezhakory.
6. The Ob-Ugrian terms are given in a standardized phonematic transcription, from the northern dialects closest to Vezhakori.
7. The concrete regional world-image, as conceived by the Ostyaks of the mouth of the Kazym (cf. 7.), probably extended, towards the south, to about Kaltysyani.

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