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The Revival of Reindeer Herding in the North Baikal Highlands, Republic of Buryatia

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Abstract: This paper summarizes work with two Evenki reindeer herding collectives in the Severo-Baikal'skoe nagor'e in July, 2010. Ethnographic work with reindeer herder groups Oron and Uluki, both established in the early 1990s in the Kholodnoe community, highlighted two variations on the traditional Evenki approach to reindeer herding evincing numerous commonalities. Both groups relied on natural and human-made features of the landscape to habituate reindeer to areas where reindeer herding had been abandoned for close to 20 years. Reindeer herders and reindeer mutually determine seasonal and daily mobility patterns, and reindeer herding activities are leveraged to conduct big-game hunting and furbearer trapping activities in fall and winter. Hunting and trapping provides reindeer herding personnel with important sources of cash. The Uluki obshchina had grown their reindeer herd to a point by 2010 where they were able to slaughter some reindeer for meat sales, while the Oron obshchina kept a small reindeer herd. This paper presents some of the traces uncovered on the landscape relating to reindeer herding and discusses the rationale behind the revival of reindeer herding in modern times and the sustainability of this traditional Evenki activity. Confirmation of identity and land claims in addition to the material benefits of reindeer herding and hunting may be among the reasons for the reestablishment of reindeer herding in the 1990s.

Keywords: Evenki, ethnoarchaeology, sustainable development, indigenous rights, land claims, mixed economy, mobility, obshchina, reindeer husbandry

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Возрождение оленеводства в Северо-Байкальском нагорье, Республика Бурятия

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Аннотация: В данной статье обобщается работа с двумя эвенкийскими оленеводческими коллективами в Северо-Байкальском нагорье в июле 2010 года. Этнографическая работа с оленеводческими группами Орон и Улуки, основанными в начале 1990-х годов в поселке Холодное, позволила выделить две вариации традиционного эвенкийского подхода к оленеводству, обнаруживающие множество общих черт. Обе группы полагались на природные и антропогенные особенности ландшафта, чтобы приучить оленей к местам, где оленеводство было оставлено почти на 20 лет. Оленеводы и олени взаимно определяют сезонные и ежедневные модели передвижения, а оленеводческая деятельность используется для проведения охоты на крупную дичь и отлова пушных зверей осенью и зимой. Охота и отлов рыбы являются важным источником дохода для оленеводов. Улукская община к 2010 году вырастила свое стадо оленей до такой степени, что они смогли зарезать несколько оленей для продажи мяса, в то время как Оронская община держала небольшое стадо оленей. В данной статье представлены некоторые из обнаруженных в ландшафте следов оленеводства и

обсуждаются причины возрождения оленеводства в наше время и устойчивость этого традиционного вида деятельности эвенков. Подтверждение личности и притязания на землю в дополнение к материальным благам оленеводства и охоты могли быть вескими причинами для восстановления оленеводства в 1990-х годах.

Ключевые слова: эвенки, этноархеология, устойчивое развитие, права коренных народов, земельные претензии, смешанная экономика, мобильность, община, оленеводство

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Introduction

This paper considers the reestablishment of reindeer herding in an Evenki community near the northern shore of Lake Baikal in eastern Russia's Republic of Buryatia. Evenki people are known for their small-scale reindeer herding in taiga environments across central and eastern Siberia (Anderson, Ineshin, and Ziker, 2011; Mertens, 2016; Sirina, 2006; Turov, 2010). This style of herding is well suited to the environment and complements other traditional subsistence activities, such as big-game hunting and hunting and trapping of furbearers. Reindeer herding in the taiga requires frequent seasonal and daily movement, and the technologies herders use for living alongside reindeer are readily accessible. Evenki make use of natural features in the landscape and vernacular elements of the built environment as they establish pastures and seasonal migration routes jointly with the reindeer. Evenki herders also make use of the relics of Soviet industrial exploration and rural economic development, as well as modern technology as it becomes available to them.

In July, 2010 Artur Kharinsky and I completed a joint ethnographic and ethno-archaeological expedition to the reindeer herders of the north Baikal highlands. We visited the community of Kholodnoe in proximity to the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM), near the northwest shore of Lake Baikal. We worked with Volodya Zhigun, a local hunter/driver from Kholodnoe (*selo*), and Andrei Panfilov, a videographer from Irkutsk. We traveled up a dirt road that runs alongside the Kholodnaya River (*reka*), and we spent a week with two reindeer herding groups in the mountains northeast of the village. Our main focus for the expedition was to conduct an ethnoarchaeological survey of reindeer herding. What were natural and human-made markers of reindeer herding, the technologies and management strategies involved in reindeer herding, and overall the role of reindeer herding in the modern mixed economy of Evenki in this community? Another research question had to do with the reasons for the revival of reindeer herding in this community. Why, following a twenty-odd year break after the loss of reindeer herding in the 1970s, did people in this community reestablish reindeer herding? We set out with the recognition that reindeer domestication is a long-duration process and with an interest in how Evenki reindeer pastoralists and hunter/trappers sustainably develop and maintain reindeer herding in modern times.

After a brief introduction to the development of indigenous rights in Siberia in the 1990s, I introduce the reindeer herding collectives (*obshchina*) in the highlands (*nagor'e*) north of Kholodnoe. Next, I discuss the movements, overall economic activities, personnel, and technologies involved in reindeer herding by two obshchinas in Kholodnoe. Partly, this survey is presented to understand what might be expected in terms of the traces of reindeer herding that remain on the landscape. Finally, I discuss the multiplicity of reasons for the revival of reindeer herding in this region and issues relating to sustainability.

Reviving reindeer herding in the 1990s

Early in the 1990s, an edict issued by then President Boris Yeltsin set the stage for land claims and revitalization of traditional economic activities by indigenous peoples across Siberia. Much has been written about the Russian federal legislation and the implementation of that legislation across regions, including the Republic of Buryatia (Fondahl, 1998; Fondahl, 2018), which had one of the first regional programs. That program enabled Evenkis from Kholodnoe to establish obshchinas which could apply for a land allotment on which to pursue traditional activities. The regional laws and institutional frameworks in Buryatia were similar to those found in other regions, such as Taimyr (Ziker, 1996; Ziker, 1999; Ziker, 2002a; Ziker, 2002b; Ziker, 2003), Chukotka (Gray, 2005), and Yamal (Stammler, 2005).

In Kholodnoe, two groups formed in the early 1990s – obshchina Uluki' and obshchina Oron – which were both still active during our visit in 2010. A number of anthropologists have worked in the Kholodnoe community in recent years and have reported on human-animal relations and mobility (Davydov, 2014a), identity and place-based identity (Fondahl, 2018; Simonova, 2012), and fishing practices (Davydov, 2014b). When considering the revival of reindeer herding here, this paper takes into account the cultural landscape and the traces of reindeer herding on the landscape.

Oron, with its main base at Pereval (meaning "pass"), utilized a partially-abandoned geological expedition station in proximity to the Tyia River, about 50 km northeast of Kholodnoe. At the time of our visit Oron had around 30 reindeer and one full-time herder. Pereval is located on a relatively gentle ridge separating the Kholodnoe and Tyia river drainages, both of which empty into Lake Baikal to the southwest. One of the brothers heading up the Oron obshchina, Aleksei Ganyugin, told us during a meeting in Kholodnoe how reindeer herding had pretty much died out in the area around the time of the construction of the BAM in the 1970s. However, big-game and fur-bearear hunting continued. Interestingly, Oron obtained their herd by capturing feral domestic reindeer in one of the nearby valleys. The identification of these reindeer no doubt occurred during fall and wintertime hunting activities. While we had limited interaction with the head of Oron, we did visit Pereval, and spent a day with Georgiy Lekarev, the herder looking after the reindeer. Georgiy was spending most of the year in Pereval, and in winters focusses on hunting big game and furbearers along the Tyia River and more than a half dozen lateral tributaries on both sides. He sketched out the trails he set up and checked traplines, along with were 3 "bases" (*baza*) and 4 "winter huts" (*zimov'e*).

The Oron reindeer were very tame, allowing us to approach and make physical contact. Georgiy had a small, semi-open barn, where he had a small smoke-fire (*dymokur*) and the reindeer congregated. The facilities at Oron included some structures and artifacts demonstrating traditional lifeways, including a bark-covered *chum* (conical dwelling), that could be used for educational purposes. Georgiy also showed us his reindeer sledge and equipment. He made the sleigh runners from larch, the verticals and handles from birch, and the cross bars from *talnik* (willow). His backpack was also a traditional hand-made design called a *poniaga*.

We spent most of our time with obshchina Uluki, managed by the Chernoyev brothers Yuri, Yasha, and Pavel. The brothers' father established Uluki, having received a loan and purchased reindeer in the village of Chara, Chita oblast' in 1992. He transported the deer to Kholodnoe by rail and then by truck up to the area near the old village Chaya. Uluki herders spent years acclimatizing their reindeer to their new surroundings, and by 2010 had a large herd of approximately 600-700 deer (Davydov, 2014a; Davydov, 2014b). The technologies they used for this acclimatization were still visible on the landscape. With such a large herd, there was considerable work involved in keeping the deer from wandering and protecting them from harm by predators.

Reindeer herding at obshchina Uluki

The reindeer pastures of the Uluki community are located in a wide montane valley that contributes to two watersheds: the Kholodnaya and Chaya Rivers. In the western part of the Uluki territory, Lake

Kholodnoe drains north and turns west and then south near Pereval before running south ~50 km to join Lake Baikal. In the center of the Uluki territory the Asektamur flows out of two small lakes just below Mt. Inyaptuk (Fig. 1), which forms the northern boundary of the territory. The territory also includes the Nomama River, which flows north out of the picturesque and fjord-like Lake Nomama in the southern part of the territory (Fig. 2). The Nomama River joins the Asektamur River, which flows east and joins the Chaya River. In the eastern part of the valley, the Chaya River flows northwest and eventually joins the Lena. The Uluki community leased their parcel of 206,236 hectares for a period of 25 years. Previously, these lands were used by the Kholodnensky branch of koopzveropromkhoz (KZPH), and prior to that, the area was part of the "2nd Five Year Plan" kolkhoz (Fondahl, 2018). Prior to the construction of the BAM, the kolkhoz reportedly had approximately 2000 reindeer.

The sites of reindeer herding

There is an all-season base with two log cabins and several outbuildings on the right bank of the Nomama River, a summer mustering ground and smudging area (*dymokur*) located on the left bank of the northern channel of the Nomama, winter huts Ban'ka and Buldushkit (also called "Airport" or "Fazenda") on the left bank of the Chaya River, and winter base at the location of a former geological expedition on the right bank of the Chaya River. The territory also had a number of *zimov'e* where they might spend a night or two while hunting or trapping in the fall and winter. The *dymokur* is located 1.4 km west of the all-season base, and it had not changed location since 2003. The area where it is located is also called Dymokur (Fig. 1). Initially, the reindeer herders lived at Dymokur in a tent, then in 2006 they built a yurt, and in 2009, they built a zimov'e. The logs of that zimov'e were obviously still fresh in 2010.

The number of resident reindeer herders varies. During summer 2010, two people were living at Dymokur and two people lived at the Nomama base. Typically, the group is led by one of the representatives of the Chernoev family which manages the obshchina. In July 2010 Yakov Chernoev

Fig. 1. The summer mustering area at Dymokur with Mt. Inyaptuk in the background
Рис. 1. Летний сбор возле дымокура на фоне горы Иняптук

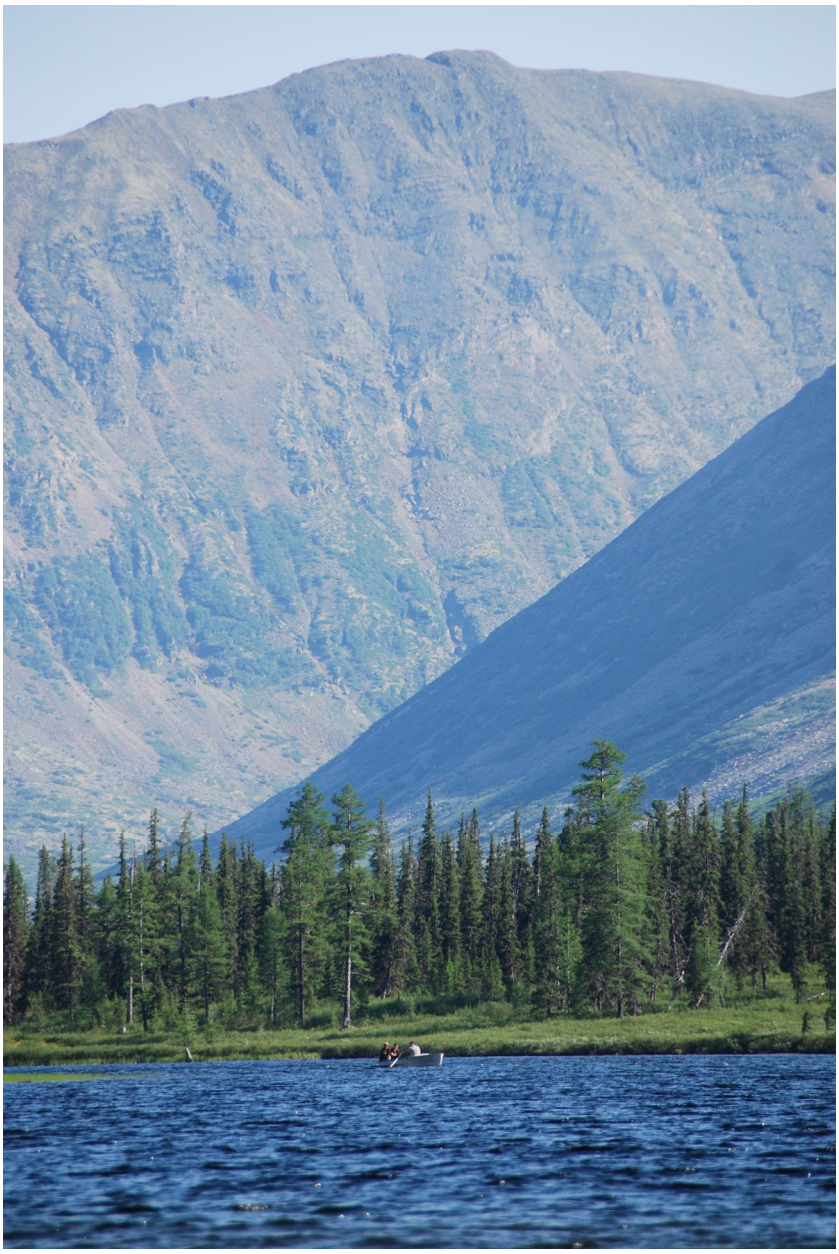

Fig. 2. Reindeer herders taking a fishing break on Lake Nomama
Рис. 2. Оленеводы на рыбалке на озере Номама

lived in the base with helper Vladimir Agdyreev. At Dymokur were Alexei Tulbukonov and Valera Tulbukonov.

Dymokur is dominated by Mt. Inyaptuk, located directly opposite the Asektamur on the northern part of the Uluki territory. Inyaptuk is the highest mountain peak in the system of the North Baikal highlands, reaching a height of 2578 m at the summit. The mountain is legendary among the Evenki, and is associated with supernaturally-caused (mis-)fortune. Inyaptuk is symbolically important and part of the cultural landscape for the Evenki.

Seasonal and daily movements of reindeer

The reindeer pasture area of the Uluki community covers the area surrounding Dymokur, where they spend most of their time in the summer, as well as areas where the herd ruts, calves, and winter pastures. Since 1992, when the reindeer were first released in the Nomama area, the herd has

mastered the grazing lands nearest to the human bases, and developed a seasonal migration route. Like other reindeer in the region, they tend to move in the same way from year to year using the same seasonal pastures (Kharinsky and Ziker, 2013).

Usually, the calving area for the reindeer of the Uluki community is in the vicinity of the winter hut at Buldushkit, (the "Airport"), a flat and relatively bare area, on the left bank of the Chaya River. In 2010, however, calving took place further east, near the winter base on the right bank of the Chaya River. When the fawns are born, the herders catch and tie them to short posts, so their mothers do not go far. Many posts were visible at the Buldushkit site. The fawns are fed salt, birch twigs, and moss. Thus, they gradually get acclimatized to people. The herd stays at the calving site until the warble fly (*Hypodermatidae oestridae*) appears.

When the herd migrates to Dymokur, the fawns are no longer tied. However, care is taken so that the reindeer do not trample the smudge fires, which can cause fatal sores on the soft part of the hoof. In some years, the herd begins to move down the Chaya River even before the onset of heat, and then climbs up the Asektamur River. In that case the herd is accompanied by herders, who spend nights near them in a tent. In the Asektamur drainage ice patches remain into July and are large enough for the whole herd to muster. The deer love to lie on them, fleeing from the summer heat. We observed the herd mustering on one of these large ice patches as part of their daily round. Some of the reindeer reportedly become overcooled when they do this, and fall ill with pneumonia. As a rule, such deer are no longer recoverable, and they are slaughtered for meat.

During the summer, the deer otherwise keep fairly close to Dymokur. Their movements cover the broad lower reaches of the Asektamur River and the lower reaches of the Nomama River. On a sunny day they hide from the warble flies at the smudging area, and at night they go to graze, climbing the Nomama. When it rains, there are no warble flies, and the deer leave the smudge fires, scattering through the pastures (Fig. 3).

Early in July 2010 the herd went to the Baldushkit area (Airport) and stayed there for about a week until

Fig. 3. Reindeer leaving the smudge fires at Dymokur
Рис. 3. Олени выходят из под едкого дыма костров дымокура

they were driven by the herders to Dymokur. The herd is usually driven by three people. One goes behind and two on the sides so that the deer do not scatter. Sometimes, after being scared by a predator, deer can run far.

On July 24, 2010, we tracked the movement of the reindeer throughout one day. At night, reindeer grazed in the Nomama valley. At 7.30 a.m. they crossed the eastern channel of the Nomama 300 m northeast of the base and descended to Asectamur river. At 8.00 am Aleksei Tulbukonov set up three smokers, and the deer began to assemble at the smudging area. Soon the sky was overcast with clouds, and a breeze blew, there were fewer warble flies. By 14.00 most of the deer were laying down at the smoker, and only 20 of them stood. Aleksei spread salt in hand-cut troughs adjacent to the smudging area. One by one they came to lick the salt. At 14.05 it started to rain, at 14.15 it intensified. The deer started to diverge from the smudging area. A third of the deer went to graze on a hill 300 m west of smokers, and two-thirds went down to the mouth of the Nomama. At 14.45 the rain stopped. About 15.00 Aleksei went to add fuel to the smudge fire. About half the herd (194 deer) approached the smudge fire, while the other part remained on the banks of the Nomama. At 15.25 Aleksei again went to throw firewood into the smudge fires. After about 10 minutes, the second part of the herd, which in total consisted of about 400 deer, came to the smudge area. At 16.00 it started raining again. The deer lay down. At 16:20 the rain intensified and almost all the animals left from the smokers to the western hill. At 16.35, 6 deer were left at the smudge fire. At 16:40 there were two deer left, at 16:50 they all left. It rained until evening, and the deer on this day did not return to the smokers.

Usually, the rut of the Uluki reindeer takes place on the Chaya River in the Baldushkit area. Fawns are again tied to posts driven into the ground to prevent the herd from scattering. The does do not abandon their fawns, and the remaining deer do not go far. In 2009, the rut took place near the Dymokur. It began in mid-September and lasted two weeks. After about a week, wild reindeer bulls began to approach the herd. The reindeer herders tried to shoot them. Usually, during the rut, wild reindeer let you get close enough, sometimes up to 30 m. Wild reindeer are distinguished from domestic reindeer, according to their habits. In addition, they are larger than domestic deer, and their horns are not cut off. The herders say that before the deer mates with a female, they do not shoot, because his meat has the smell of the semen.

For some time, Uluki reindeer have not been specially driven to winter grazing areas. The deer chose where they wanted to graze. In the first years, the reindeer of the Uluki community went to graze on Lake Nomama in the winter. The reindeer herders lived at the base at Nomama, sometimes looking after animals. Beginning in 2000, the herders started to drive the reindeer east to the Chaya River (Fig. 4). For two years, the reindeer were accompanied by people. Five or six castrated males were led ahead, so that others could see them, and the remaining deer followed. After that, the reindeer began to walk on their own to winter pastures along the Chaya River.

Bears are the most troublesome in the summer, when they harass and kill fawns and yearlings. Therefore, the herders have set up a series of large snare traps distributed throughout their territory. The snares are typically set up at the base of a tree and covered with a small hutch made from spruce limbs (Fig. 5). Bait is placed inside the hutch and the bear must enter on one or the other end where snares are set up. Uluki was losing deer almost every day during the summer of 2010 due to predators. This trend continued for several years and Davydov (Davydov, 2014a; Davydov, 2014b) reported that the herd had dwindled 7-fold by 2013 due to predation.

Life-activities of reindeer herding and hunting

Reindeer herders spent most of their summer watching after the reindeer mitigating predators. In fall, as the rut begins, hunters can also start to focus on hunting wild reindeer attracted by domestic females, as well as elk (*izubr'*), moose, and bear. Georgiy Lekarev at Oron treated our party to dried, smoked bear meat. At Uluki they hunt big game to eat and to sell for meat. In 2010 the Chernoyev brothers decided how many reindeer they would slaughter depending on how many wild animals they kill, and

Fig. 4. Reindeer herding base at the Chaya River
Рис. 4. Оленеводческая база на реке Чая

Fig. 5. A bear trap near the lower Nomama river
Рис. 5. Медвежья ловушка в нижнем течении реки Номама

considering the success of the herd in reproduction. In addition to big game hunting, the Ululi herders trap sable and squirrel during the winter. They keep several dogs that they use for this purpose. During the summer of 2010 the dogs were tied up to stakes and held in an enclosed area adjacent to the buildings at the Nomama base camp. Purchased food and winter supplies are kept in raised storage sheds (labaz). These sheds provide some protection of supplies from bears and other predators (Fig. 6).

Personnel of reindeer herding

In July 2010 at Uluki Yakov Chernoev lived in the base and Vladimir Agdyreev helped him. At Dymokur Alexey and Valera Tulbukonov were working actively with the reindeer herd, keeping the smoke fires going, spreading salt, and investigating missing reindeer. Alexey and Valera did not own any deer. They received payments and food for their work. Similarly, at Oron, Georgiy Lekarev spent most of the winter hunting and trapping, and these hunting and trapping activities are the main source of his income (Fig. 7).

Technologies

The technologies of reindeer herding rely on both human-made and natural features. For example, the smudging area at Dymokur contained several smoke-fires that were protected by log tripods, so that reindeer would stay away from the fires. The smudging area also had long logs with troughs cut to be used as salt licks. The posts used to tie reindeer fawns are of local manufacture.

Uluki herders often used salt to attract reindeer back to the smudging fires at Dymokur during summer 2010. In fact, Uluki had recently purchased three tons of salt in 2010, and it was being stored at Yuri Chernoyev's house in Kholodnoe.

Features of the landscape, such as ice patches, are utilized in the technologies of reindeer herding. The seasonal migration that the herders and reindeer have mutually determined over the years sets the reindeer to pasture at a lower elevation and more protected part of the valley in wintertime and a higher, more open areas nearer to Mt. Inyaptuk in the summer. Mt. Inyaptuk is an important feature of the landscape that imbues this area with a cultural

Fig. 6. An elevated storage room (labaz) needed to keep bears out
Рис. 6. Надземное хранилище (лабаз), необходимое для защиты от медведей

Fig. 7. Hunter Vladimir Agdyreev with a poniaga backpack leaning against the tree
Рис. 7. Охотник Владимир Агдыреев с рюкзаком-понягой, прислонившийся к дереву

and spiritual importance.

One day in Uluki we hiked with Yasha Chernoev in a large circle around the Nonoma camp to the Asektamur River and back to visit a number of old campsites and smudge camps. The first site we visited did not seem very recent but the Uluki group had used it a year ago in the fawning season (Fig. 8). We also saw two fenced in tent sites that were from the kolkhoz period. The arrangement of these sites was similar to the current site at Dymokur. Yasha told us that the fenced-in ground is necessary in summer to keep the deer out of the tent area because they gather so tightly. The last site we visited was a summer mustering area that was used by the Uluki group in 1996 and 1997 (Fig. 9). They had repaired the fence and made some other modifications to an earlier site. About 25 meters west of a fenced-in area was the actual smudging ground. They had numerous posts in the area to tie up fawns in the fall, so they would not wander.

Smudge fires require a significant amount of fuel. In summer 2010 we observed Yasha and his group and helped cut and load firewood on a large flatbed truck. The cutting was done with a chainsaw. The load was returned to Dymakur and unloaded. Other modern technologies in use by the Uluki group included a

Fig. 8. Tent site used the previous year
Рис. 8. Место для палатки, использованное в прошлом году

Fig. 9. Mustering ground from 1996-7 at the lower Nomama River
Рис. 9. Промежуточный полигон 1996–1997 гг. в нижнем течении реки Номама

satellite phone, so that the reindeer herders could call into their families in the village. Both Uluki and Oron use a road constructed during the Soviet period, and sometimes rely on truck drivers connected with mineral extractive industries to get back and forth between their parcels and the village.

Rationale and sustainability

We considered a number of reasons for the revival of reindeer herding among Severo-Baikalsky Evenki, ranging from more abstract reasons such as identity and status to more material reasons including strengthening or justifying land claims, transport, source of meat, government subsidies. In fact, the revival of reindeer herding was probably due to a combination of these, and possibly, other factors.

There was an initial conflict over the reindeer herding territory now occupied by the Uluki obshchina. The owners of the Oron obshchina were initially using this area and had a winter hut and underground freezer (Fig. 10) by the road at the turnoff to Dymokur and another camp at the old village Chaya. When Uluki was created the Oron founders were forced off this area and moved to the Tyia River valley to the northwest. Both groups had ancestors who had worked in kolkhoz which was centered near the Chaya River. Similarly, the Tulbukonov reindeer herders at Uluki were reportedly descended from the family of the well-off Evenk Tulbukonov, who had a large herd and mastered these lands prior to collectivization in the 1930s.

During a walking survey around the Nomama base camp north to the Asektumur River, we documented numerous relics of reindeer herding from earlier times including fences (Fig. 11), tent platforms, smudging areas, underground freezers (Fig. 12) and other features (Fig. 13). Thus, there was likely a family identity associated with being a reindeer herder, much akin to that of being a part of a family business in the West, for all these individuals.

Being a partner of an obshchina likely also has status benefits within the community. Kholodnoe is a community of hunters and fishermen. Partners and members of obshchina have direct access to lands where they hunt big game and furbearers in the fall and winter. It was apparent that most of the activity in

Fig. 10. An abandoned underground freezer (merzlotnik)
Рис. 10. Заброшенный подземный морозильник (мерзлотник)

Fig. 11. A section of old fence ostensibly from the kolkhoz period
Рис. 11. Участок старого забора, по-видимому, колхозного периода

the fall and wintertime was geared toward hunting big game and furbearers with numerous firearms and discussion of areas where each hunter sets up and checks traps. These hunting activities not only provide meat to the hunters and their families in the village, but also provide the identity of being a hunter alongside whatever status that identity confers within the community.

Reindeer are harnessed to sleds to move meat and supplies about, especially in wintertime. Not many deer are used in this fashion and the weight of supplies is limited to ~50 kg (Davydov, 2014a; Davydov, 2014b). However, the deer are self feeding and are advantageous for certain types of hunting because they are quiet (Mertens, 2016). Reindeer also provide meat in limited amounts for Uluki. Depending on the reproduction of the herd and predation pressure, some monetary benefit was likely gained by the obshchina from selling reindeer meat. After our visit to the area in 2010, Davydov (Davydov, 2014a) reported a significant increase in predation on the reindeer along with shifts in personnel in both obshchinas. Slaughtering reindeer for meat was no longer tenable at least until the herd numbers recovered.

Government subsidies are available to reindeer herders, based on the number of reindeer annually reported in the herd. The subsidies may result in

Fig. 12. An old merzlotnik, probably from kolkhoz times or earlier
Рис. 12. Старый мерзлотник, вероятно, из колхозных времен или ранее

overreporting. In any case, regional Buryat government subsidies are an important incentive to consider in understanding the revival of reindeer herding and maintenance of reindeer herds in modern times.

Reindeer herds may strengthen or justify land claims in an area that contains a large number of hunting parcels, some of which are assigned to non-Evenki hunters. The Oron and Uluki territories are relatively large, and they offer a lot of opportunities to set up trap lines for furbearers. Each member of Uluki reported that they hunt in particular areas within the obshchina. Sable pelts can generate relatively large amounts of cash, as can wolverine, wolf, and bear pelts. Participating in a reindeer herding obschina help secure access to these valued renewable resources, thus contributing to Evenki socio-ecological sustainability.

The reestablishment of reindeer herding among Evenki of Kholodnoe is an important aspect of socio-environmental sustainability in the region. Domestic reindeer and reindeer herders on the land have an important role in maintaining Evenki identity and respect for the environment. Evenki reindeer herders do leave traces on the landscape, but those traces are much lighter than those of industrial development. However, with rapidly increasing predation pressure and reliance on hired reindeer herders whose work was difficult in many respects, the long-term viability of reindeer herding is not without challenges which also include disease and pasture regeneration.

Conclusions

Ethnographic work with reindeer herder groups Oron and Uluki in the North Baikal highlands in 2010 highlighted two variations on the traditional Evenki approach to reindeer herding. There were many overarching commonalities and a few differences. Each herd was habituated to a large highland valley. The reindeer herders and their reindeer in each group had established migratory patterns that took advantage of human-made and natural features of the landscape over a 20-year period. Both groups spent a significant amount of effort on controlling and protecting the herd by tying up fawns, cutting antlers

Fig. 13. An old structure of unknown function in the lower Nomama area. The orientation of the structure is directly to the peak of Mt. Inyaptuk

Рис. 13. Старая структура неизвестного назначения в нижней части района Номама. Ориентация сооружения прямо на вершину горы Иняптук

which reduces potential for injury to human handlers and to other deer when fighting, trapping predators, as well as on subsistence activities that complemented reindeer herding, such as trapping and big game hunting. The income and status related to hunting and trapping was likely a significant benefit of being on the land as a reindeer herder. Both groups experienced significant predation pressure on reindeer from wolves and bears, and this pressure increased after our fieldwork in 2010. Both groups utilized traditional technologies to keep the reindeer within their protection. For example, snares, smudge fires, shelters, and locating summer grazing in more open areas or areas where the reindeer could cool themselves, all provide some benefit to the reindeer. Both groups utilized relics of Soviet development including abandoned facilities from geological expeditions and kolkhoz structures.

The differences between the two groups had to do mainly in the scale of the operation and the personnel needed to maintain that scale. The Oron obshchina had a small-scale operation and utilized deer for transport during the hunting and trapping season, which is the more traditional subsistence

pattern (Turov, 2010). The Uluki group had built their herd up to a size that was approaching the size of the former kolkhoz which required the work of four people. Uluki could afford to slaughter a number of reindeer each year to support sales of meat. Uluki also used substantial quantities of salt in order to keep reindeer close to human protection.

Both Oron and Uluki obshchinas reestablished reindeer herding as a traditional subsistence activity in the 1990s alongside receiving leases on lands from the government of the Buryat Republic, and both groups actively participated in a range of traditional activities on the land as are found in other Evenki communities. There were likely a combination of reasons for their pursuing reindeer herding as a traditional activity including identity, status, production of traditional foods, and other monetary benefits.

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