

## THE BEAR FESTIVAL OF THE OLCHA

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE FESTIVAL

THE Olcha are a small tribe dwelling on the lower part of the Amur River between Sophiysk and Bogorodsk. Their entire number does not exceed seven hundred men. Their language stands in close relationship with those of the Goldi and Orochi, and their culture with that of the Gilyak and Goldi. The Olcha are divided into a number of patrilineal exogamic clans representing social as well as religious units.

Like the Gilyak, Orochi, Ainu, and Negidals,<sup>1</sup> the Olcha arrange a bear festival following the rearing of the bear. Like the Gilyak, the Olcha connect the bear festival with commemoration of their dead kinsmen. After the death of a relative a dog was selected to be his panjau, that is, the embodiment of the deceased soul.<sup>2</sup> During the funeral the dog was led close to the coffin and its halter laid in the hands of the dead. Afterwards the halter was forcibly "torn out of the hands of the dead," the dog led into the house and tied to the plank-bed just at the place where the deceased used to lie. It is supposed that the soul of the dead person passed into the dog. If it is possible, a bear is captured or bought. He becomes a panjau, and the dog is given to the gusisel, that is, the men of the wife's clan (the clan from which spring the sisters' husbands).

For regularizing the passing of the panja the dog is untied from the plank-bed and the bear is tied for some time in its stead. This is why the bear festival is considered to be a commemorative act, notwithstanding that the Olcha arrange a real commemoration (*kasa*) with the assistance of a shaman. The existence of these two types of commemorative ceremony can evidently be explained as a mixture of the Gilyak ceremony (bear festival) with that of the Goldi (*kasa*).

Suppose a bear has been bought and has attained the requisite size. The time of the festival is near. In the autumn, just when it begins to freeze, the clansmen assemble, decide the question of the festival organization in winter, and arrange meanwhile "the small festival." They lead the bear out of the cage into the house, feed him there, and regale casual guests. Then the bear is led back into the cage. This is the end of "the small festival." At the beginning of January the old clansmen meet to confer where and when the bear festival is to take place. They usually decide to begin

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<sup>1</sup> The Goldi do not arrange a festival with rearing of the bear.

<sup>2</sup> Panja, soul, is equivalent to fanja of the Goldi. The Gilyak call the selected dog presku. See Kreinowitch, *The Dog-Breeding of the Giliak*.

at the end of January with the intention of finishing in the first fortnight of February. The duration of the bear festival varies greatly. It depends on the wealth of the host and the abundance of the provision supply. The shortest festival is seven days, the average nine, and the longest fifteen to seventeen days.

The festival organization of every clan has certain peculiarities, but its general outlines are the same in all Olcha clans. We shall describe the festi-

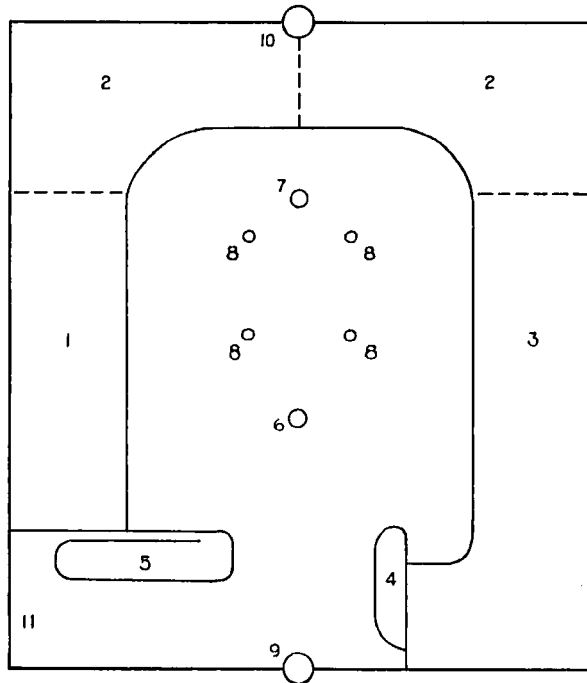


FIG. 1. Plan of an old-style Olcha house. 1, Pusku, 2, Malu, 3, Goči, respectively the left, middle, and right parts of the plank-beds; 4, Duantetawa, "the hearth of the forest"; 5, Temutawa, "the hearth of the water"; 6, Bahsaturani, 7, Gočiturani, 9, Čonkoditurani, 10, Maluditurani, posts supporting the roof; 8, Kada, small posts to which the bear is tied; 11, Uca, the door.

val of the Valzu clan, indicating in some places the different order of various parts of the ceremony in other clans.

*First day.* On the first day people are called to drag the bear out. They come to the cage, open it, and drag the bear out with nooses previously prepared. After binding the bear, they lead him to the house of the host and tie him to the post (see the plan of the house, Figure 1). When this is

done some one of the bystanders jumps from behind on the shoulders of the bear, catches his ears, and presses his head to the ground. Instantly some of the men fall on the bear, grasp him, and tie his paws. When the tying is finished, all the men are ordered to jump off. After that the bear is fed with mosi (a preparation of boiled fish), red bilberries, and some roots. When the bear has eaten, all the men begin to pull the cords tied to his paws till the animal lies with his belly on the earth and with his paws widespread. Then water is thrown over him, a collar with chains put on his neck, and all the nooses taken off. Then the bear is turned in such a way that the halter that was at the malu turns towards the entrance and the one that was at the goci comes to the malu. When this circuit is accomplished the bear is dragged out into the street, beaten with sticks, and teased. The bear is thrice dragged out into the street and back into the house, and the whole ceremony repeated thrice. After that the bear is tied to the post and left so during the night. The same evening nine men make a road for dog racing. This is the end of the first day.

*Second to seventh days.* Relatives and friends arrive in the morning to take part in the dog racing. The dogs are fetched, and all go to the house where the bear has passed the night. There the dogs are counted and the number of dogs to a sledge settled. This depends upon the entire number of dogs and the number of days during which it is proposed to continue the races. The harness is prepared and adjusted, and the dogs divided into teams. The dogs are then fed, smoked with the smoke of fir tree branches, and put to the sledges. Those men who are not taking part in the race run to the finish. When they have attained it, the race is started. The races continue during the second to sixth days. At first nineteen or twenty dogs are harnessed and a man drives the sledge. Later the poorer dogs are taken out of the harness and the burden in the sledge is made accordingly lighter. A boy of ten years replaces the man in the sledge; after that the dogs run with an empty sledge, and on the last day the dogs run only with the harness without any sledge at all. Their number is usually not more than one or two. The dog that has won the race is rated very highly and its fame spreads far through the neighboring villages. The guests are not yet numerous. On the fifth day messengers are sent up and down the river to call for the guests "to come all on the eighth day."

During the racing days the relatives in the host's village regale the bear. One of the clansmen says to the host, "Let the bear be our guest." The bear is led to his home and sleeps there one night. The bear and the guests that have arrived for the festival are also regaled in this house. Often the bear is driven to the agnates (doha) in a neighboring village in a sledge

drawn by twenty dogs. When the races are finished, all present assemble in the house of the bear owner, where entertainment is waiting them. This is the end of the first part of the festival, which is attended only by inhabitants of the host's village, the nearest doha, and a few guests.

*Seventh day.* The mosi is made on the seventh day. For that purpose skins of beluga (*Acipenser huso*), trout, and Siberian salmon are soaked in a wooden trough and scaled. The skins are then boiled and rubbed with berries in a small trough. When all this is cooled it forms a jelly-like substance, the most delicious part of the Olcha meal. The preparation of mosi requires a whole day's work of twenty persons under the supervision of one of the old men. Others go to the forest to bring branches and young trees for decoration and preparation of ritual shavings. The house and playground (araču), where the bear is to be shot afterwards, are decorated with fir trees, covered with shavings, and fenced with bushy willow sticks thrust into the earth. This is the day of the sengisel arrival. Sengisel are the relatives on the mother's and wife's sides. They are considered honored guests and partners of the festival. In the evening the owner of the bear arranges an entertainment and regales the sengisel with mosi.

*Eighth day.* The host, together, with his guests, makes shavings of the bushy willow sticks cut in the forest. Such a stick is pressed with an end against the abdomen and shaved with a thin curved knife. A thin shaving curls from under the knife. The shavings are ready early in the afternoon. By that time all the guests have arrived. The bear is then dragged out "to look at the shavings." This is the time for all the gamasun (father's sister's sons, mother's brother's sons) "to take hold" of the bear. Running from behind, they jump on the bear's back. The animal cowers in confusion under its burden and instantly several arms pull the daredevil from its back. All whom the host's clan call gamasun and gusi (mother's brother) must perform this leap to prove their courage and dexterity. After the "taking hold" of the bear is finished, he is led round the village. Meanwhile a feast takes place in the house of the host, continuing until dawn. This feast (toje) plays a great role, being the central event of the second part of the festival.

The amount of food consumed during a bear festival is immense; of fish alone the supply is about a ton. The toje used to begin at daybreak and continue through the night until dawn of the next day. Here the guests had also to keep up to the mark. The guest who fell asleep early, saying, "My belly is full," was considered a weak creature. It was necessary to sit up the whole time, and to eat, eat without end. A host who gave a poor repast was considered a bad host. It was a matter of honor to hear the guest say, "Oh, there was much food."

*Ninth day.* In the morning dogs are led into the house of the bear's owner. One or two of the best are selected to be tied to the plank-bed. The bear is then dragged out of the house, taken round the village, and led back to the house of the owner. Here the bear is fed with different kinds of fish. Then the implements of the bear festival are brought in from the sildi where they are always kept.<sup>3</sup> The clan flints, two knives for cutting the meat, an axe for hacking the bones, a vessel for water, a kettle for grease, are all brought in and hung up on the malu wall. Then the bear is turned round in such a way that the halter on the malu side faces the door and vice versa.

While some are turning the bear, others bring in water and give the bear to drink. After that an old man beats the bear with a stick with shavings on the end, repeating the words: "I clean the dirt from You-man (husugdeni); walk along our way; walk there. You shall come near a lake—wash there. Man, wash the dirt away. Wash your muzzle according to our rules. Pass over a hundred places, jump over three hundred feet, turn around fifty times, pass ten mounds, cross forty mountain ranges, roll down our slope: there will be men of the tayga (duanteni)." This beating is called a "cleansing" of the bear. The significance of this procedure is to compel the bear to go from the festival to the men of the tayga. When the "cleansing" is finished, the bear is drawn out into the street and led towards a hole in the ice. If the bear is male he is led thrice around the hole; if female, twice.<sup>4</sup> After that the bear is led again to the house of his owner, the door of which is opened beforehand. When his forepaws have passed the doorway he is pulled back in such a way as to prevent his hindpaws passing it. Then he is again drawn in and pulled back again just as he passes the doorway with his front paws. This ceremony is called docpočambau. With a male bear it is repeated thrice; with a female, twice. When the bear is drawn to the doorway an old man beats him with a fair-sized tree. The bear is not led into the house at all, but at the end of the docpočambau he is tied near it with a chain. By this time the women, dressed in their richest garments, gay with rich patterns, complicated ornaments, and various furs, come out of the houses. Three of the women beat with sticks against a dry trunk about nine feet long and six inches thick, hung up horizontally on two ropes. A bear head is roughly hewn with an axe on one end of the trunk. Skillful strokes make the trunk sound like a drum.

Meantime all the contents of the sildi are loaded on a special sledge. The victuals are laid on it and the bear tied to its rear edge. As several men

<sup>3</sup> The sildi is a small barn usually situated near the outskirts of a forest. The implements of the bear festival and the skins from the heads and paws of the slain bears are kept there.

<sup>4</sup> The Gilyak also lead the bear around a hole in the ice. Not all the Olcha clans follow this custom.

pull the sledge, the whole procession takes its course to the araču. The araču is usually situated not farther than two to three hundred paces from the village, but it is supposed that the way to it is very long. On the way a stop of some minutes is made to symbolize the passing of a night in the forest. When the araču is reached, the bear is turned in the same way as at the house. Then men are selected to "clean the playground for the shooting," to remove branches and bushes that might interfere.

When this is accomplished, the host takes the man he has chosen (who must be one of the gusi or gamasun) by the hand and leads him to the place from which the bear is to be shot. The host gives him a bow<sup>5</sup> and arrows. The onlookers retire, forming a vast circle. The host and his family stand behind the bowman. The bowman strains the bow, tries the string, adjusts the arrow, and then lets it fly toward the bear high over the tops of the trees. This is a symbolic performance called "the cleaning of the way." Then the bowman comes up close to the bear, and having watched a favorable moment, shoots the arrow into the bear's heart. If the bear is not killed with three arrows, the host becomes angry because of "the tortures caused to his relative" (the bear), and fines the bowman, who must give him a dog. When the bear falls, the host and his relatives shoot at him, "finishing" the dying or even dead animal. After that, three or four men, relatives or strangers, take bushy willow sticks and by means of these press the corpse to the earth. Then the chains are taken off and the host cries, "E-is, e-is."

The chains are carried away, the bear laid on a mat of bushy willow sticks with shavings, and a fire lighted on the araču. The sledge is emptied of its contents, which are laid near the posts to which the bear was tied. All present sit down directly on the spot despite the frost and eat various kinds of fish and porridge. While the guests are eating, the host and his clansmen eviscerate the bear. When the meal is ended, the eviscerated bear is loaded on a sledge and driven home. If the bear was male, one circuit of the house is made; if female, two. The bear is then brought into the house. Boys of three to ten years of age meet the procession at the door, and as the head of the bear appears in the doorway, attack it, catching hold of the fur. The house is entered only by the clansmen of the host. They build a dais on the malu where they lay the skin of the bear, taken off together with the head.

A meal is then served, consisting of the remainders of fish from earlier meals. Toward the end of the evening the guests are called into the house

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<sup>5</sup> The bow of the Olcha belongs to the "simple" type that differs essentially from the complicated glued bow of the Gilyak. The Orochi also use a simple bow.

and seated on the plank-beds. A feast is begun, which ends only toward sunrise. Raw fresh fish (usually carp) hacked to small pieces is served at first. When the fish is eaten, soup is served, followed by brandy. After all the brandy is drunk the guests go home, but at the doorway each of them receives from the host a piece of frozen mosi and porridge, which they take with them.

*Tenth to fourteenth days.* These are days of tranquility. The guests are departing. Only the sisters and clansmen remain. The meat of the bear is boiled. On the twelfth day brandy is drunk again. On the thirteenth day the whole bear is boiled, except the forequarters, which are boiled on the fourteenth day.

*Fifteenth day.* The head is cut from the skin and boiled. A ngarka is then arranged, but only if the bear was captured in the forest by the host of the festival or his clansmen, never if it was purchased.<sup>6</sup>

The chief act takes place in the house of the host. Twelve clans, each represented by several individuals, take part. They are divided into two moieties, six clans in each, this division being retained at all the festivals. The partners sit down on the plank-beds in a definite order. One moiety is seated on the pusku, the other on the goči, with one elder clan of each moiety at the back of these sections of the plank-beds. The moiety that sits on the goči is called duanteni, "men of the forest." They are considered to be the clans of the best hunters. The other is called temuni, "men of the water." Seated thus, they vie with each other in eating. When all is eaten, the partners of the ngarka go out into the street, where the other partners of the festival pelt them with snow. Then they return to the house, sit down in the same order, and the rivalry continues. This is repeated thrice. All this is in the nature of a competition—to see which moiety is able to eat its portion in shorter time.<sup>7</sup> But at last the ngarka is finished. Red bilberries are served then in wooden troughs. After that, all dishes and crockery of Chinese origin are taken away, the floor covered with fir branches, and the bear meat served. The gusi are served first. The eldest gusi receives the upper jaw. The elder brothers of the wife and fathers of the wives receive

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<sup>6</sup> The following is the first description of the ngarka to be published.

<sup>7</sup> The Olcha compare the rivalry of moieties with the race of two sledges, each drawn by six dogs. By this analogy they explain the number of the clans in each moiety. But the participation of six clans in each of the competing moieties finds, in fact, another explanation. Twelve clans were evidently originally divided in two exogamic moieties. Afterwards through merging, migration, influx of new clans, and division of the old ones the number of the Olcha clans increased more than twice, but the conservative ritual of the festival has maintained the original number of six in each moiety, which has acquired a sacred character.

the mandible. Afterwards the head, the grease from the intestines, and that from the back are served. Then begins the eating of the bear meat, served adhering to large bones. The host personally offers to every one present a large slice of bear meat, but cuts from every slice a small bit for himself.

The host, his clan, and all the numerous guests regardless of age and sex take part in devouring the bear. But in the distribution of meat a number of rules must be maintained. The women and children are not permitted to eat the bear's tongue. But women eat the paws, which are forbidden to men. If a man eats a paw he will be devoured by a bear in the forest. The biceps and the genitals of the bear are eaten by the oldest man present. During the meal, the men, women, and children all sit apart from one another.

While the head is being eaten, a dog is led into the house and tied to the post. The bare bones of the bear are accurately laid together, none of them being lost. The eaters take care not to drop grease on the plank-beds, else it must be burned out. The bones are gnawed clean. A mash of various sorts of frozen fish hacked to small pieces is served. When all the meat is eaten, women give water to everyone. Following this, the host takes the dog by the ears and pushes it with its nose against the post, then against the edge of the plank-bed, then the side of the hearth, and finally against two thin fir trees thrust into the snow in front of the house out of doors. After that the dog is let free. Then all the bones are gathered. Every partner of the festival returns them to the host safely wrapped in a piece of bark. The bones are put into a trough and carried away to the *araču*, where they are kept in a receptacle.

The bone collection finished, the guests begin to drive away to their houses. The host and his family go out to accompany them. Before their departure the host gives them a slice of bear meat of a strictly determined size. This slice (*jali*) must be given to the whole clan without regard to the number of its members present. It is carried home and there eaten by the whole clan.

The host gives his dogs to the guests—those who took part in the *ngarka*—to drive home. When they are already some hundred yards from the village, the host takes a sledge, overtakes the guests, makes a tour around their sledge, and returns home without saying a word. This he does with each partner of the *ngarka*.

This is the end of the fifteenth day and virtually the end of the festival. But before passing to the sixteenth day, in which only the inhabitants of the host's village take part, one very curious custom must be described which occasionally occurs during the eating of the bear meat. The source

of such episodes are in mocking that may have taken place some years before the bear festival. An Olcha may have mocked some member of another clan, "You are beggars," or at a bear festival during the meal some one of the guests might have said, "The bear has eaten grass. He is dry. Why have the guests been called?" The offended one conceals the hurt and complains only to his relatives. The relatives decide to take revenge. They buy one or several bears and feed them for several years. When the bears are grown large and fat, a festival is arranged. The long-awaited revenge takes place on the sixteenth day. Especially immense bits of grease are served to the offender and all his relatives. "Glut and guzzle for your mockery!" Custom forces the guest to eat the whole portion. But when the guest-offender, quite tired of eating his huge portion, asks for water, he is served with a bailer full of melted grease, and all begin to mock and laugh at him. The offender, who has now taken the place of the offended, says nothing but "Look what is to be done," and drinks the grease. If he declines to do so, it is a disgrace to him. It is a sign of capitulation, of defeat, and he drinks the grease. But this is not yet the end of the revenge. When the time comes to go home and all the clans receive the jali, an immense bit of meat—a whole bear carcass—is loaded on the sledge of the offender, so that it breaks to pieces to the great joy of the host and confusion of the offender. He is forced to borrow a sledge to carry the carcass home. All his relatives of the paternal clan are considered insulted: "Our brother is offended," they say. They meet, arrange a still more luxurious festival, invite their offenders, and so on without end. This rivalry of clans lasts for many years, and in earlier days used to end in some cases with armed combat.

*Sixteenth day.* Early in the morning all the inhabitants of the village are invited into the house of the host, where they sit down on the plank-beds. The remaining meat is served. When the rest of the meat is eaten, the guests go home. Only the host and his clan remain. The bones of the bear are wrapped in ritual shavings. The mat of fir trees, all the implements of the bear festival, and all the bones are loaded on the sledge and drawn to the araču. The kettle, the axe, knife, and other articles are placed in the sildi together with the remnants of the meal. The bones of the bear are placed not far off in a receptacle. A fire is lighted on the araču; food is placed beside the posts to which the bear was tied. The skull of the bear is smoked in the fire. Meanwhile an old man sings:

"Smoke, smoke, the body will change.

If you run away I will catch you with a hook.

If you try to attack me, I will kill you with a spear."

Then the skull is fastened in a split trunk of a young birch tree, the remains of the food are thrown into the fire, and fish is eaten. The rest of the fish is brought home. In the evening some old men and women, relatives of the host, drink brandy. Fish is eaten afterwards. This concludes the bear festival.

#### "THE PEOPLE OF THE FOREST"

The bear festival of the Olcha, Gilyak, and Ainu is a ceremony of extremely complicated construction, in which numerous heterogeneous elements are involved. We shall try to examine them, first, from the native point of view, to gain a knowledge of their comprehension by the Olcha themselves.

The Olcha are inclined to minimize the religious importance of the bear festival; they move other aspects into the foreground. They usually are opposed to the Russian name of the ceremony, "bear festival," and call it, when they speak Russian, "play with the bear," which is a literal translation of the Olcha's *bojum hupu*. If an Olcha is asked, "Why do you play with the bear?" he usually answers, "There is such a law;" that it was done from ancient times; and why and for what he does not know at all. But if the inquiry is continued, it is possible to receive more detailed answers. It may be answered that "the bear is played:" (1) for meat; (2) as a reason for the relatives to come together; (3) the clan who often "plays the bear" has good fortune in hunting and fishing; (4) the bear is fed and brought up as *panja* in commemoration of a dead person.

Two features have thus a profane and two a sacred significance. And in fact the bear festival is not a homogeneous unit but a combination of these two principles. The third point is the most essential in the complex of ideas connected with the bear festival. For the Olcha this is virtually an universally acknowledged explanation of the indispensability of the festival. This is the very point that reveals the connection of the bear festival with the belief in the "forest men."

For the Olcha, the bear is not a god, nor "a dog of the forest men" (as Sternberg has it), but a forest man himself who has changed his appearance. The Olcha and Goldi believe that the forest is inhabited by forest men (*duanteni*) who live there in villages like ordinary humans. But they are more powerful, are masters of the *tayga* and its beasts, and require sacrifices. They very often take the form of a bear, and a bear is nothing other than a *duanteni* in a fur dress. This is evident from the fact that the bear, who receives such tokens of honor during the festival, is treated quite otherwise if he kills a man. In such a case revenge overtakes the bear—repre-

sentative of the forest men—just in the same way and manner as it would a strange clan of common men. If they succeed in killing the bear soon—the Olcha attack him fiercely—they cut him to small pieces, throw them far apart, and mock at him in every way. The traditions of the Olcha relate how common men fell among the forest men; how they saw the bears turn to forest men and the forest men to bears. The bear killed in the festival does not die; he returns to his relatives, the forest men. He passes nine mounds, forty mountain ranges, cleaning the dirt off himself by the way, changing his body, and comes to his relatives, the men of the tayga. Just this sending away of the bear to his relatives is considered by the Olchas to be the chief point of the bear festival.

The Ainu, when they kill the bear at the festival, also do not say that he is killed, but that he is “sent away.” Before the bear is killed, a man sits down opposite him, and says that he is going to send him to his relatives in the mountains. He prays him not to be angry. If he is a real bear, he will return again.<sup>8</sup> In their invocations the Gilyak also send the bear to the master of the mountains.<sup>9</sup> The Orochi, finally, on killing the bear, say to him, “Go fast; go to your master; put a new fur on, and come again next year that I may look at you.”<sup>10</sup>

It is evident that the bear is sent away to his relatives, to the forest men, the masters of the mounds, and brings them the sacrifices of the bear festival. On the way he cleans away the dirt, changes his body, and becomes a forest man. When he comes to his relatives he relates how the festival was arranged. If all was arranged correctly, the men of the forest will be contented and will send to the common men happy hunting. There exists a long tradition which relates in detail why and how the ritual of the bear festival must be maintained. From this tradition it follows that the sacrifices made for the bear are intended for the forest men and reach them through the bear killed on the festival. That is why the Olcha say of the bear festival that the bear has visited them to take the provisions. It is furthermore supposed that all the provisions eaten by the guests at the festival go to the men of the forest. Hence all the provisions must be of the highest quality. The bear festival can be represented from this point of view as a powerful prayer for good luck.

The tradition mentioned above provides the reason and order of the bear festival organization. It narrates that once a common, mortal woman,

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<sup>8</sup> Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-Lore*, pp. 206–207; Batchelor, *Ainu Life and Lore*, pp. 492–93.

<sup>9</sup> Hawes, *In the Uttermost East*, p. 199.

<sup>10</sup> Sternberg, *Gilyaks*, p. 439.

who lived with two brothers, dreamed that she was called by the men of the forest. She went to them, lived with them, and gave birth to bears. When the children grew up, she made her way with them to the forest "to get provisions from her brothers." Her brothers indeed soon found her tracks, which led them to the lair, stabbed their sister, the she-bear, and took with them her cubs which they began to feed for a festival. But the wife of the elder brother did not keep all the laws, and the insulted elder bear-cub died, that is, he went to the men of the forest. When he reached them he complained that the common men did not keep the law, and made his way to the master of the mountains to seek satisfaction. On the way he took part in all the ceremonies of the festival, and having erased his dishonor, returned to his mother. This tradition gives a detailed account of all the principal rules of the bear festival and the laws that must regulate its arrangement so that the men of the forest may send good luck to the common men. This tradition shows even more definitely than the invocations that the Olcha consider the killing of the bear an act of reincarnation, an act which causes the bear, killed on the festival, to go to his parents, the forest men, and bring them the sacrifices of common men.

The Ainu believe likewise that besides the land of men (Ainu) exists a land of gods (kamui moshiri), which is inhabited by gods in human form. They build houses, light fires, and live on the whole as mortals do. When these gods go to the land of men, they are clad in bear, wolf, and other garments. The Ainu consider their meat and furs as gifts from the gods, and sacrifice brandy, gruel, etc., in acknowledgement of their goodness. The slain animal is called shumanan, returning, according to the Ainu, to its original divine form.<sup>11</sup> The Ainu call the bear killed at the festival "son of a mountain man."<sup>12</sup>

Frazer, not without reason, compares the bear festival with the custom of killing a sacred animal, which is widely spread among agricultural and pastoral peoples. Common to both is the idea of reincarnation, the idea of the annual return of the divinity, and a yearly occurrence of the festival in connection with it. The bear festival of Gilyak, Olcha, and Ainu can be considered a link in a widespread cycle of killing a worshipped animal with which is associated a belief in reincarnation. This belief explains the rule that forbids the breaking and hacking of the bones of the bear. This rule is strictly maintained, not only by the peoples of the Far East, but also by the Ostyak.<sup>13</sup> The bones of the bear must all be gathered together and buried

<sup>11</sup> Masao, *Das Bärenfest bei den Ainu*.

<sup>12</sup> Dobrotvorsky, *Ainu-Russian Vocabulary*, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Gondatti, *The Cult of the Bear*, etc.

in a special receptacle. The loss or injury to a bone can evidently do an injury to the forest man into which the bear is to be transformed.

Finally, the manner of killing the bear is connected with the idea of reincarnation. The Ainu of Yesso tie the cub and drag him towards two poles called "the throttling poles." One is laid on his neck, and the other under his throat.<sup>14</sup> Some one then shoots an arrow at him or pierces his heart with a knife. The blood must be carefully gathered into a vessel; not a drop may be spilt. If even one drop falls to the earth, the forest men take vengeance.<sup>15</sup> The Ainu of Sakhalin, the Gilyak, and the Olcha kill the bear with an arrow. But in early times they used to choke him in the same way. Sternberg writes: "Although the death is usually immediate, several men attack the killed animal and begin to throttle it as though to precipitate the death and to stop its torment."<sup>16</sup> It is quite evident that this symbolic throttling of the slain bear is nothing but a survival of an ancient custom of real throttling which was once practiced. This ritual throttling is still more strikingly expressed in the custom of the Olcha of "pressing" the dead bear with bushy willow sticks. This is also the reason why the Gilyak throw snow over the blood from the bear's wound, for fear some one might tread on it. The Ainu of Sakhalin also "press" the slain bear with a stick.<sup>17</sup> Once they also had a fox and eagle festival besides the bear festival. The fox and eagle were killed by throttling.<sup>18</sup> The Gilyak kill their dogs in a number of cases by throttling them with a leather loop.<sup>19</sup> If in the course of the Sakhalin Ainu bear festival the bear is not killed in the required time, the host becomes furious and fines the bowman, taking one of his dogs, which is throttled on the spot and sent after the insulted bear with the aim of deprecating his anger.<sup>20</sup> The Vogul often throttle the sacrificial animal.<sup>21</sup> The throttling of the sacrificial animal is evidently an ancient rite, connected with the idea of reincarnation of the animal, not a drop of whose blood may be shed.

#### THE TOTEMISTIC BASIS OF THE BEAR FESTIVAL

It would be wrong to satisfy oneself with the conclusion that the bear festival originated with the animistic idea of "the forest men" and the idea

<sup>14</sup> After that some men press on the upper pole with the weight of their bodies and thus choke him.

<sup>15</sup> Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-Lore*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>16</sup> Sternberg, *Gilyaks*, p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> Pilsudsky, *At the Bear Festival of the Ainu*.

<sup>18</sup> Dobrotvorsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Kreinowitch, *The Dog-Breeding of the Giliak*.

<sup>20</sup> Pilsudsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Gondatti, *op. cit.*

of the reincarnation—the idea of a dying and reviving god. It is easy to show that this latter and best preserved layer of notions was preceded by another more ancient complex of ideas.

The Gilyak host and his clan do not eat the meat of the reared bear, which is all served to the guests, mainly to the narhi (sister's husbands), but instead kill a special dog and eat it at the conclusion of the festival. The Ainu have no such prohibition, as they have no clan organization, but the women that have suckled the bear do not eat his meat. This is evidently a survival of an ancient totemic clan tabu, which prohibits not only killing the bear, but also eating him. He is served to regale another clan—a clan of which wives are taken and to which wives are given. The Olcha host, together with his kinsmen—and this is the principle difference between the Olcha and the Gilyak festivals—eats the bear, but he has no right to kill it. Totemistic prohibition of eating the bear has evidently disappeared among the Olcha. The Olcha have kept up to now some totemic names of the clans (the clans of the hare, the fox clan). The problem, consequently, lies in showing why the bear has become a cult object of the whole tribe, and how the totemism is to be linked with the ritual killing of the bear.

It may be supposed that a process of selection and substitution of the totemic animal had taken place here, connected with the dying out of the totemic ideas, but with the retention of the formal ritual. N. Harusin,<sup>22</sup> who has devoted a special study to the totemistic basis of the bear oaths of the Vogul and Ostyak, has already shown that the process of totem selection, of the forcing out of many totems by one and its transformation into a cult object of the whole tribe, is a common phenomenon in the religious history of primitive society.

Facts support this theory. The Ainu reared for their festival not only a bear but a fox and civet dog, both killed and eaten with the same ceremonies as the bear.<sup>23</sup> The Ainu also kept eagles which they considered good divinities. On a certain day they were throttled to make them “fly” to the god, and the same parting words were addressed to them as addressed to the bear. The Ainu performed the same ceremonies with a falcon and a kite.<sup>24</sup> So we know altogether of six animals which were worshipped by the Ainu in the same manner as the bear. This supports our supposition that in ancient times the Ainu had as many totems as there were clans. When the totemistic ideology of the Ainu was destroyed under the influence of migrations and contact with the Japanese, only the ritual killing of the animals

<sup>22</sup> Harusin, *Bear Oaths, etc.*

<sup>23</sup> Dobrotvorsky, *op. cit.*, Pilsudsky, *op. cit.*; Zolotarev, *Survivals of Totemism, etc.*

<sup>24</sup> Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-Lore*, pp. 410–15.

and a festival connected with it remained. It is natural that only those animals most convenient for the arrangement of the festival, which were able to give an occasion for games and meat for the repast, have survived this cataclysm. In short, the animals most convenient for the cult, which before were totems of individual clans, turned into objects of tribal cult in proportion to the decay of totemistic culture. New ideological requirements, besides the acquisition of a meat resource, played a certain role in this selection. If to a totemistic minded man the whole of nature was anthropomorphic, to an animistic minded man the anthropomorphic particularities are left only to those animals most reminiscent of man by their conduct or appearance, the bear and the fox.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Olcha and Gilyak still kept eagles in cages and sold their feathers to the Japanese and Chinese. But it is possible that, as with the Ainu, the keeping of these birds had also another significance not noted by the first explorers and forgotten by the present generation of Olcha. At any rate it is quite certain that the fox, hare, tiger, and wolf were totemic animals of the Olcha. It is interesting to note that the Gilyak bury the bones of the grampus and tiger in special containers similar to those used for bear bones and make sacrifices to them.<sup>25</sup> The Ainu and Orochi do the same with the bones of the grampus, and the Orochi (Sakhalin) with the bones of the seal.<sup>26</sup> The Olcha and Goldi bury the bones of the tiger in special receptacles. The Tungus and Samagir consider the kite a sacred bird. The Samagir believe that their genealogy takes origin from a kite. If they find a dead kite they bow to the earth before him, take him up, and put him on a tree.<sup>27</sup> All these tokens of respect are paid to the remains of animals who earlier were undoubtedly totems of separate clans. They are similar to the ritual of the burying of bear bones.

A further support for our hypothesis is the Olcha name of the bear festival, bujum hupu. Bojo, buju in Olcha, is not only a bear but also an animal in general. The Transbaikal Tungus call a wild reindeer and an elk bojun.<sup>28</sup> The Tungus of the lower Tunguska call bojun every wild hoofed animal.<sup>29</sup> The Orochi call boju an animal in general.<sup>30</sup> The meaning given the word by Olcha and Orochi is evidently the most ancient. The exact translation of bujum hupu is thus "play the animal." Hence the original meaning con-

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<sup>25</sup> Zolotarev, *The Survivals of Totemism*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>26</sup> Vasilieff, *The Chief Traits of Orochi Ethnography*.

<sup>27</sup> Lipsky, *Mandchur-Tungustian Peoples*, p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Titov, *Tungusian-Russian Vocabulary*, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Vasilievich, *Tungusian-Russian Vocabulary*, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Leontovich, *Russian-Orochi Vocabulary*, p. 71.

cerned not only the bear but various animals, animals in general. Our supposition is proved again: the bear is only a later substitute of the originally numerous totemic animals.

The theory of the totemistic basis of the bear festival corresponds well with the fact of the killing of the totem. The members of the totem "witch-etigrub" of the Arunta tribe gather a great number of grubs during the magic ceremony for the multiplication of their totem, and eat them after a special ceremony. The eating of their totemic animal is ordinarily prohibited to them. Besides, they richly regale the members of the other moiety with grubs. The members of the kangaroo totem also arrange a ceremony for the multiplication of the kangaroo. At the conclusion of the ceremony young men of this totem go to hunt kangaroo. The animals killed are brought to the old men, who remain in the camp. The elders eat a small piece of each animal. After that the meat is distributed among all present. The members of the kangaroo totem have also the right to eat on that occasion some meat of kangaroo from certain parts of the animal's body, while other parts they dare not even touch.<sup>31</sup> The totemic tabu of the bear festival is even more strict. The bear of the Gilyak is killed by a sister's husband. All the meat of the totemic animal is given to the sisters' husbands and other guests. Only each of the old men of the host's clan receives a piece of the freshly killed bear's heart. Evidently the eating of bear meat was in early times forbidden to the host's clan among the Olcha. Instead of the bear they had to eat a dog. That is why a dog was brought into the house of the host on the day of the bear eating. Suppose that the bear is merely a substitute for numerous totemic animals and the resemblance with the Australian customs attains a degree of likeness.

#### THE DUAL ORGANIZATION

The foregoing description of the ngarka shows that this custom mirrors an ancient division into two exogamic moieties now vanished from everyday life. One of these moieties was called "Men of the Waters," and the other "Men of the Forest."

The Olcha house of ancient construction had two hearths. One, called "the fire of the forest," was devoted to the Men of the Forest. It was very strictly superintended. It was forbidden to stir this fire with a knife or to cook fish on it. Bear meat only was boiled there. "The fire of the water" on the contrary was not usually a sacred fire. It could be used for every purpose.

Each moiety consisted of six clans. The representatives of these clans

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<sup>31</sup> Frazer, *Totemism*, Vol. 1, p. 169.

sat on the plank-beds in a strictly determined order. Each moiety had its leading clan, whose representative sat on the plank-bed nearest to the malu, the honorable part of the house. When the representatives of the twelve clans had taken their places, they began a rivalry in eating.

The picture revealed here is well known to every ethnologist. The division into two exogamic moieties which are very often called, "Men of the Water," "Men of the Forest," like the Olcha, is widespread in Australia, Melanesia, and North America. It is everywhere accompanied by a kind of curious hostility or rivalry between the members of the moieties. This rivalry finds its expression in ball games, mutual mockery, and all kinds of competitions. There is no need to describe the well known facts of this order.

It can be supposed that the division into two moieties once was known not only to the Tungus-Manchurian peoples, but also to the Gilyak. The Amur Gilyak have in their houses, besides the central big hearth, a small hearth called "bear hearth." A perpetual fire is kept on this hearth and it is strictly prohibited to cook anything on it.<sup>32</sup> The keeping of a number of tabus is necessary while sitting on the plank-bed near the bear hearth. An origin of such a division of the house without any connection with the dual organization is improbable. But on the other hand it is possible that it is borrowed from the Olcha and Goldi together with the construction of the winter-dwelling, for the underground lodges of the Sakhalin Gilyak had but one hearth. In the works of L. Sternberg is found a desultory remark on the ngarka custom of the Amur Gilyak.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately Sternberg's records do not show the social significance of this custom. Such information would have made possible a closer examination and solution of the problem of

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<sup>32</sup> Schrenk, *Natives of the Amur*, Vol. 3, pp. 76, 82, 99-100; Derbek, *Bear Festival*.

<sup>33</sup> Sternberg, *Gilyaks*, p. 217.

In the course of fieldwork in 1936 I found the ngarka custom among the Gilyak essentially similar to that of the Olcha. But the number of men who took part in the rivalry was not determined. Some clans included five, others seven. In the party sitting at the forest side of the house was one man more.

One of the clans seated on the plank-bed was the one that took the women, the other gave the women to the host's clan. The word ngarka derives from Gilyak ngarka pud, "the entertainment of the sons-in-law." In old underground dwellings of the Gilyak the hearth was divided into two parts, sacred and profane. These data revealed the connection of the ngarka custom not only with dual organization but with a system of closed intermarriage [between—?] three clans also, making the problem very complicated. It seems to me that in early times the Gilyak also had a dual organization, which was forced out by the system of closed intermarriage of three clans. In consequence the ngarka custom was also adapted to the new condition.

survivals of dual organization among the Gilyak. A survival of the moiety rivalry remains in the bear festival of the Negidals,<sup>34</sup> who borrowed their bear festival from the Gilyak. This fact shows the existence of a dual organization among the Gilyak also. But at present the data are too few for a definite solution of this complicated problem.

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<sup>34</sup> Ivanoff, *Amur Tribes*.