

bear cult

bear hunting

bear ritualism

bear totemism

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# The Bear in the Finnish Environment

## Discontinuity of Cultural Existence

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# 1. Northern bear cult

## Ritual bear hunting

The ancient bear rites and beliefs of European, Asian and North American hunter peoples share so many similarities - as already A. I. Hallowell (1926) showed in his writing *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere* - that there must be a common heritage on the background, perhaps the oldest known religion in Euro-Asia (sources: Batchelor 1931; Edsman 1958; Ewers 1955; Hallowell 1926; Janhunen 2003; Kohn 1986; Kwon 1999; Larsen 1969-1970; Paproth 1976; Paulson 1959; 1961; 1965a; b; 1968; Rockwell 1991; Soby 1969-1970; Suffern 1938; Zolotarev 1937). Bear skulls and rock drawings found in Southern European caves, with roots reaching to the Palaeolithic era, have in its time been thought to refer to this same bear cult (e.g. Koppers 1933; Edsman 1953: 42-45; 1958; James 1960). The nearest equivalents to the Finnish bear rite and birth myth are found in the tradition of Obi-Ugric linguistic relatives, Khanty and Mansi (Ostyaks and Voguls) in the North-West Siberia, as if they were relics of Uralian connections of millennia ago (note).

In Finland, ritual bear hunting took place in three main stages: 1. *Slaying of the bear*, 2. *Feast in honour of the dead bear* (Fin. *peijaiset*), and 3. *Reincarnation of the bear*, returning the bear skull and bones back into the forest (skull rite).

One of the oldest and only coherent descriptions of the Finnish bear rite is the so-called Viitasaari text. It was probably written by a clergyman staying in the parish of Viitasaari at the end of the 1600s or the beginning of the 1700s (the orig. text: SKVR IX, 4: 1096; Salminen 1914a; b). The manuscript contains an account of how the hunters prepared for slaying the bear and how a feast, bear's wedding was held for the slaughtered bear, during which the bear's teeth were detached and shared among the men; finally, the bear's skull and bones were carried in solemn procession to the forest and the skull suspended from a special tree, a bear skull pine. Each stage of the Finnish hunting drama has had its dedicated songs in the old, so-called Kalevala metre, and its plot may also be construed on their basis (Sarmela 1972; 1982; 1983; 1991a; 1994; 2000: 46-, map 1). Bear songs progress as dialogue, in common with old wedding songs. The course of events is described through dialogue of question and answer. The recorded bear verses are principally folklore of the swidden community, but the songs contain numerous details connecting them with the cultures of other Nordic hunting peoples.

## Slaying of the bear

The song on leaving for the den describes the hunters' progress skiing to a forest islet or hillock where the bear is hibernating (appendix). Ancient pines with red trunks and silver branches glow there. The leaving songs often refer to *Hongotar* ('mistress of the pine'), the bear's supernatural guardian or protector, who is beseeched to grant the hunters a catch. The bear has a mythical bond with the pine in particular, and Martti Haavio (1967: 31-; 1968) has thought *Hongotar* to be the name of the bear's progenitrix or supernatural guardian, referring to the first mythical skull tree. It is the original (mythical) tree in which the bear skull has been placed at the dawn of time during the first hunting drama.

In the wakening song, the bear is encouraged to rise, and it is shown the way in celebratory procession to the hunters' home. A hibernating bear must not be killed in its den, but it had to be woken (Kujanen 1977; Hallowell 1926: 53-; Drake 1918: 331; Harva 1933: 281; 1938a). This is apparently founded on a shamanistic concept of soul. While asleep, the bear's soul may have been on a journey outside the body; at such times, rites would be ineffective, and the bear's soul would become an evil or restless spirit seeking reincarnation. The soul-concept is likely also to be behind the rule that when

marking the bear's den in the autumn, the circle could not be closed fully, but a gap had to be left at some point, as if the soul shouldn't be imprisoned inside the circle. The refrain of the attached leaving song (appendix) requests an orphaned girl to guide the hunters. There is information from Kainuu (North-East Finland) that a young girl, evidently symbolizing the bear's bride, would accompany the hunters or the function of the girl was to entice the bear's soul to return into the bear sleeping in its den.

When the bear was killed, or possibly not until the feast, the bear's death hymn was performed. In it, the slayers say that the bear has died after falling from a tree, it has caused its death itself, or the death is labelled an accident, for which the hunters are not responsible. Explanations of the death are found also in the lore of other Arctic hunting peoples. Some Siberian peoples have blamed the killing on strangers, usually Russians (Hallowell 1926: 55-; Harva 1925; 1927; 1933: 282; 1938a; Kannisto 1939: 18; 1938a; b). Killing a bear was like a deed that would bring a blood feud on the hunters, in the same way as when killing a human being, and perhaps brought about the revenge of the bears' kin.

### The bear feast

The slain bear was carried from the den accompanied by singing, and according to some records, marking the route by slicing off slivers of tree bark. The songs for carrying the bear contain similar verses to wedding reception songs, sung when the wedding procession arrived at the house of the groom. In the yard, the hunters announce the arrival of a great guest, and boys and girls are asked to make way. There are records that women (of childbearing age) had to flee out of sight when the bear was brought home. In a version of the arrival hymn, the hunters ask where they should take the guest, and reply that they will accompany the bear to the furthest corner of the main room of the house. The furthest corner of the room, opposite the door and at the top of the table, where the benches along the side and back walls met ("at the join of two boards") was the place of honour, and there were placed the family's sacred objects, in Orthodox houses the icon. Like any specially honoured guests, the bear was taken to the place of honour under the family altar. According to some variants, the mistress of the house, the matriarch, received the bear slayers in the same way as in the wedding drama; women ruled the extended family of the swidden era. There are variants of the dialogic verses between hunters and people (mistress) of the house, where the latter greet the slain bear and inform him that a feast has long been prepared for the guest: beer brewed, the benches washed down with *sima* [sweet mead], and that the guest had been eagerly awaited, like a maid waits for his groom.

The Viitasaari text describes the *kouko*'s funeral or wedding that was held in the bear's honour. *Kouko* means 'ancestor, elderly person' (Nirvi 1944: 37-). Thus, the feast means ancestor's funeral, or wedding, where the bear was feasted like a bride or groom who had joined the kinship group. The word *peijaiset*, which has been absorbed into common Finnish language, means 'funeral'. Another expression used has been the bear's *vakat*. The *vakka*-feast or *vakkove* meant a feast of the rite circle (local community or kin), for which beer and food provisions were assembled jointly. The name of the feast comes from *vakka*, the basket in which shared sacred objects were kept (e.g. Haavio 1967: 148-; Finnische Volksüberlieferung, map 4). In honour of the bear, a boy was designated the groom, a young girl was chosen as bride and dressed in local bridal attire. The main meal was a pea soup made of the "own flesh of the deceased". First to be carried out of the cooking hut was the bear's head placed on a dish and then the rest of the meat. When the bearer of the head reached the threshold of the anteroom, he had to say the words: "Boys must leave the anteroom, girls from the doorway, as the good enters the house, the blessed steps inside!" The comments to the text explain that this was to emphasize the sacredness of the bear head and the solemnity of the rite. There are also records that the soup for the *peijaiset* was made from the bear's head and paws, as they were the body parts containing the bear's power (cf. Edsman 1965; 1970; 1994).

At the meal, the skull dish was placed at the top of the table, and then other dishes of meat in order. Then people sat down at the table, with the bride and groom at the end of the table. The wedding guests feasted on the special dishes until they were sated. Not one bone was permitted to be discarded, but they were collected in a dish. The bear's head was picked clean during the peijaiset, and its teeth detached to be shared between the slayers. After the meal, people rested a while and sang verses, according to the Viitasaari description, and then began the breaking off of the teeth. Two or more men went up to the clean-picked skull, still lying in its dish on the table, and began to loosen the bear teeth by hand, and recited while yanking out its incisor: "Am I taking my bear, setting upon my catch, tearing at his jaw?" Powerful sorcerers are said to have broken up the skull bones with the power of their word, untouched by hand, with the bear's teeth clattering down onto the dish.

There are two versions of the head-eating verse (appendix). The original is likely to have been the idea that the skull-eaters took the bear's sense of smell, sight and hearing for themselves, in order to possess the bear's senses, and the power of his paws and sharpness of his claws in addition. Thus, the slayers assumed the bear's power in the natural environment surrounding the hunter. In the eating verse of the swidden community, the bear is deprived of its sense of smell, sight, hearing and sharpness of its claws, so it could no longer pose a threat to cattle. The bear was rendered harmless. Consuming of the bear's head has been a special part of the shared meal. It is possible that eating the bear's brain and drinking of beer from the bear's skull have been rights assigned to men and served to reinforce the unity of hunters; at the bear's feast, the mutual hierarchy of the hunters was renewed. Detaching of the teeth, on the other hand, recounts how tooth-amulets were divided evidently already in the hunting communities of the hunting era. The slayers or revered men who were present detached the teeth, but they may have also distributed them to their family members. Eating the bear was a so-called sacrificial meal, *convivium*, during which the community members shared the bear meat, but also its power; the bear's teeth remained as a sign of unity among those who had participated in the feast.

The models of bear peijaiset that have been preserved in Finland are thus from rites of passage, funerals and weddings, or from rite celebrations of the local community, characterized by collectivity and symbolic dramas. In villages of inland Finland, peijaiset were feasts at which villagers gathered to eat and drink together. The fare consisted of abundant quantities of bear meat and other foods, too, and copious amounts of beer and spirits were drunk. It is also known that the participants sang and took part in various amusements. They are founded on celebrations similar to the bear peijaiset of Obi-Ugrians, described by A. Kannisto (1939: 8; 1958: 115, 380-; cf. Patkanov 1897 I: 125-; II: 193-; Karjalainen 1914; 1918: 386-; 1928; Sirelius 1929; Cushing 1977: 147-). At the feast lasting several days, the bear was the guest of honour, seated in a place of honour wearing festive clothing. Every participant had to perform a party piece for him: a song, story or joke, whatever he knew; the number of turns may have been dozens, even hundreds. At peijaiset of Nordic peoples, many kinds of symbolic dramas have been performed in honour of the bear, a bride may have been chosen for him and a wedding held. In Finland, such imitation dramas were apparently referred to by the well-known observation by the Bishop Rothovius in 1640, that at the peijaiset, men drank beer from the bear skull and growled like bears, believing that this would bring them luck in hunting (the orig. text e.g. Haavio 1967:15).

### Return of the bear

The Viitasaari text describes the burial of the bear's bones and the skull rite as follows: When the final scene began and the bear skull was taken outside, all guests rose. At the head of the procession were the groom and bride side by side, then a man bearing a tankard of ale, next a singer of verse and following him the person carrying the head and bones on a dish; they were followed by the rest of the folk who wanted to join in. When they arrived at the skull place, whence the skulls were always taken, the skull

was suspended from a branch of a pine tree and the bones buried at the roots. To bid farewell, the ale brought along in the procession was drunk, and then everyone returned in the same order, but silently this time.

The bear skull and bones were carried to the burial site in a rite procession resembling a funeral procession or also a wedding procession. The manuscript adds that in the 1600s, the custom at the Viitasaari chapel parish in Kivijärvi had been to ring the church bells when the bear skull was carried away. One parish report from 1754 gives an account of the skull being hung from a tree, filled with ale, and the hangers would bow, greet it, and make merry while the ale ran out of the small holes left in the skull (the orig. text e.g. Sarajas 1956: 173). Thus, the Finns have also feasted and appeased the bear's soul while accompanying it to the hereafter.

The skull tree was a pine or spruce. Nordic hunter peoples have hung up the skull to a tree or the end of a pole in the same way (e.g. Hallowell 1926; Paulson 1959; 1965a; b; 1968). In Finland, information on skull trees has been preserved in Häme province (Western Finland), and even up to Varsinais-Suomi, the Southwest part of the country (map). In the region of Lake Päijänne, historical sources also mention bone graves. On the island of Pääsaari ('head island') of Jääsjärvi lake in Hartola parish, it is said that there was a bone grave at the foot of an old skull tree, containing a lot of bones and dozens of bear skulls. In Varsinais-Suomi, e.g. Ohensaari ('bear island') in the parish of Masku would appear to have been a site of bear worship, according to historical sources (Pekkanen 1983a; b). Similar oral tradition about rocky promontories and islands also exists in Sweden, from areas where swidden farmers from Savo (East-Finland) had settled (Edsman 1953: 50-; 1958; sources of the Finnish folklore atlas). Bone graves have also been discovered in the Sami areas of Northern Sweden (Zachrisson - Iregren 1974; Manker 1953). At digs, bones of dozens of bears have been found in the graves. The finds are dated mainly in the 1600s, but it is natural that particularly further south, graves have decomposed over the centuries.

The verses of the skull rite progress as dialogue, in common with other bear verses. First, the bear is urged to set off "along a golden lane and silver road". This initiation has been performed also in other situations where the bear has been carried, such as when leaving the den. The attached (appendix) version of a skull verse (Lönnrot 1828) finally describes the bear's new abode: it is taken near water and salmon grounds. This poetic image is also apparently part of ancient Arctic tradition. In the same way, Obi-Ugric (Khanty-Mansi) peoples have described the slain bear's new domains, to which the hunters guide it (Karjalainen 1928: 14-; Paulson 1965: 153-; 1965b; 1968). The second redaction (Ahlqvist 1846) is more archaic in its metaphors and also more common in Finnish folklore. It begins with the question: where has the hunter taken his catch? According to Haavio (1967: 20; 1968) and other scholars (Edsman e.g. 1953: 100-), the dialogue is between the bear's female guardian spirit and the bringers of the skull; the bear was returned to its guardian spirit. The response repeats the question; the hunters assure that they have not forgotten the slain bear at the roadside, nor left him on the frozen lake or sunk him in the swamp. Thus, the hunters gave an assurance that they had treated the bear they had caught honourably. The catch has been brought into the forest and placed in a pine tree to look towards the moon and the Plough. The bear's skull had been returned to the pine tree, into which it had been lowered from the heavens according to the myth of the birth of the bear.

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## Appendix

Schema of the Finnish bear-hunting drama  
Verses:

***I. The death of the bear***

***II. The bear feast***

***III. The skull rite***

- |                                       |                         |                      |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. The birth of the bear skull        | 6. Escorting the bear   | 11. Carrying the     |
| 2. To the guardian spirit of the bear | 7. Bringing the meat    | 12. Skull tree verse |
| 3. Leaving for the den                | 8. Eating the head      |                      |
| 4. Awakening of the bear              | 9. Taking out the teeth |                      |
| 5. Death of the bear                  | 10. Hunter's praise     |                      |

### **Fragments of the Viitasaari Text, 1600-century**

"A day was set, for Kouko's ('the ancient forefather's') feast or wedding to be held. The grain to prepare beer and liquor for this important festival was gathered communally... On the appointed day the people gathered in the house dressed in their church-going clothes. And there, in honor of the slain bear, a boy was chosen as groom and a girl chosen as bride and dressed in the bride's costume of the region. Among the foods, pea soup was prepared from the dead one's own meat. First the head of the bear was brought to the dish set at the head of the table and after that the rest of the meat. When the one carrying the head came to the threshold of the hall, he had to say the following words "Boys be out of the hallway, girls away from the doorframe, the good one enters the room, the happy one steps inside!"

...

The skull dish was set at the head of the table and then the meat dishes were placed in order. After this the people took their seats at the table, the bride and groom at its head. During the meal the wedding guests sated themselves on various kinds of foods. Not a bone could be thrown away; they were all collected into a bowl. After the meal they rested a while and sang poems. Then two or more men stepped over to the skull, which was now gnawed clean. They tried to pry loose a tooth called the fang tooth with their fingers. While wrenching, one of them said: "Shall I grab the bear, begin with our booty, tear apart its jawbone?"

...

When the last act began and the bear's skull was taken out, all the guests stood up. The first to begin walking were the bride and groom side by side. Then came a man carrying a beer tankard, following him the lead singer and then the person carrying the head and bones in a dish. The rest of the people who wanted to join followed them. When they came to the "skull place", where the skulls were always taken, they hung the skull on a pine branch and buried the bones at the roots of the tree. Beer brought along on the procession was drunk as a farewell and then they went back in the same order, still in silence."

### ***Ritual songs***

#### **The Origins of the Bear**

– Where was Bruin born  
honeypaw turned around?  
– That's where Bruin was born  
honeypaw turned around.  
High up in the heavens  
on the Great Bear's shoulders.  
– How was he let down?  
– By a silver chain  
in a golden cradle.

SKVR VII, 5:3932 Kitee.  
O. Lönnbohm 1894

#### **Leaving for the Den**

I shove my left ski in the snow  
set my ski pole in the drift.

Come, Maiden, be the tip of the road  
orphan be the journey's guide!  
Orphan, you come lead the way  
pitiful one be our companion.  
Take us to that hillock  
where the pines gleam red  
silver the fir tree branches.  
See us to that small island  
take us to that hillock  
where fortune plays  
where silver frolics.  
See us to that small island  
take us to that hillock  
where we could catch our prey.  
Forest, favor your hunters  
fetch our wild booty.  
foster your backwoods men!

SKVR XII, 2:6553 Suomussalmi  
A. V. Komulainen 1892.

### **Awakening the Bear**

Forest, favor your hunters!  
Get up, get out sooty fellow  
get up from the sooty fire  
your fir branched bed  
the tar pitch place  
you rest your head.  
Get up to go golden one  
silver one to wander  
money to circle the shore  
along a golden lane  
along a silver road  
on liver-colored ground!

Hongatar, good pine mistress  
juniper, beautiful wife  
hew the trees with marks  
strike signs on the hill  
so a stranger could see his way  
even a hero new here would know!

SKVR I, 4:1199 Tuhkala.  
H. Meriläinen 1888.

### **The Death of the Bear**

Greetings, Bruin, welcome!  
Reach out your hand, gnarled one's son  
give your hand to the crooked bough  
slap at the pine tree branch!  
It wasn't I who met the bear  
or any the rest of my mates.  
You, yourself, fell off the spruce  
slipped from the bent bough yourself  
pierced your berry-filled belly

shattered your golden maw.

SKVR I, 4:1207 Vuonninen.  
A. Borenius 1872.

### **Eating the Bear's Head**

I drew the knife from my waist  
the sharp blade from my sheath  
with which I'll take old Bruin.  
I'll take old Bruin's snout  
for my own snout  
along with the snout before  
but not to be the only one.

I'll take old Bruin's ear  
for my own ear  
along with the ear before  
to sharpen my own hearing.

I'll take old Bruin's eyes  
along with the eye before  
but not to be the only one.

SKVR VII, 5:3403 Pielisjärvi.  
Elias Lönnrot 1838.

I'll take old Bruin's nose  
and leave him with no scent.  
I'll take old Bruin's ear  
and leave him with no hearing.  
I'll take old Bruin's eye  
and leave him with no sight.

SKVR VII, 5:3390 Kesälahti.  
Elias Lönnrot 1826.

### **Carrying the Skull**

Golden one, get on your way  
money precious get moving  
along the golden lane  
along the silver road!  
You'll not be taken far from here  
just to a pine tree on a hill  
a juniper at the field's far edge.  
There the wind will meet your needs  
the wave will drive you perch  
on one side a whitefish strait  
nearby the sweep of a salmon sein.

SKVR VII, 5:3390 Kesälahti.  
Elias Lönnrot 1828.

### **Skull Tree Verse**

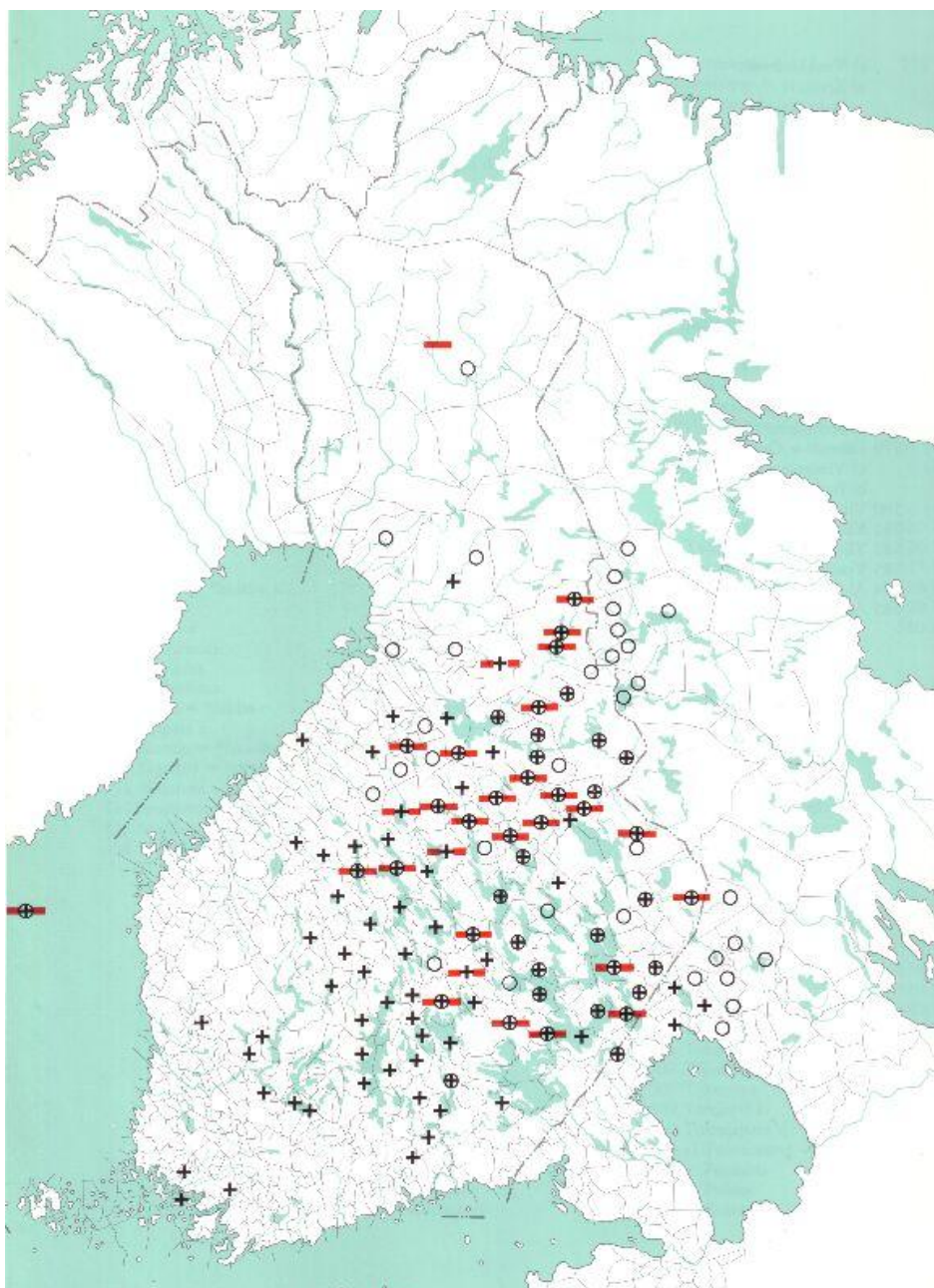
– Where did you send your catch  
take your fine booty?  
Have you left it on the ice



or tossed it on the road  
 or drowned it in an ice pool?  
 – I didn't leave it on the ice  
 or drown it in an ice pool  
 or toss it on the road.  
 I set it in a pure clean tree  
 right in the smallest pine  
 a fir tree with a hundred sprigs.  
 Set it there to watch the moon  
 to know Otava, the Great Bear  
 to fix its eyes on the sun.

SKVR VII, 5:3396 Ilomantsi.  
 A. Ahlqvist 1846.

***Archive map of Ritual Bear Hunting in the Finnish-Karelian area***



1. Ritual killing the bear
- variants of hunting and feast songs:

The Birth of the Bear, Leaving for the Den, Awakening the Bear, Death of the Bear, Escorting the Bear, Welcoming songs, Beginning the Meal, Hunters Praise.

## 2. Returning the bear

= variants of returning songs

Eating the Bears Head, Carrying the Skull, Skull Tree Verse

## 3. Bear skull trees

+ records of skull trees and/or memories of skulls placed in a tree

(Finnische Volksüberlieferung, map 1; Finnish Folklore atlas, map 1)

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## The bear's time

In communities of the hunting era, the bear was slain at its winter nest. The bear searching for a den in which to hibernate was tracked in the autumn at the time of the first snows, and the den or bear round was marked by slivers of bark sliced from trees (e.g. Sirelius 1919; 1934; Virtanen 1939: 2, 10-; Leskinen 1939: 87-; Paulaharju 1927; Hallowell 1926: 33-). Marked in this way, the hibernating bear became kind of the property of the man who had rounded it up, in his possession. When hunting from the winter nest, bear slaying may have become formalized a uniform hunting rite, performed at a certain time. Bear slaying was embarked upon in the late winter when the snow surface was hard and a man on skis able to move around easily; at the same time, hunters also began to drive or ski after deer.

Before setting out, Finnish bear hunters had to gather their strength and cleanse themselves: they had to take a sauna and dress in clean clothing. Sexual intercourse was forbidden and women had to be avoided in general. According to preserved records, hunters leaving for the bear-slaying usually gathered in the house of the person who had found the den, and a plentiful meal was taken there, particularly of meat. There are also some references indicating that the meal was taken at the bear's den before rousing him. Cleansing rituals may also have been performed at the bear's den, such as leaping through fire. The preparations have also contained sorcerer traditions: the iron of spear was ritually hardened through incantations, to make it effective against the bear, and the hunters took along "the power of iron", e.g. an old sword used in war.

Bear verses include references indicating that only a group of a few men would go to the bear's den, two or three men, who in the hunting drama were named as the slayers. The bear was usually killed by stabbing with a heavy bear spear, while Sami people have also killed bear with poles and an axe (Fellman. J. 1906 I: 620; IV: 23-; Itkonen 1937: 21-; 1948: 14-). In such instances, the slayers would include two experienced pole men, who positioned themselves on either side of the den entrance and pushed their heavy poles across each other above the entrance; the ends of the poles were sharpened, and they were pushed into the ground at an angle. A beam or tree trunk was placed under the entrance to the den, and when the bear emerged, the pole men pressed its head against the beam and a third man killed the bear with an axe. Wooden poles may have been used when the bear had dug a den in the earth. According to the Viitasaari text, the bear was skinned in the forest, the pelt (with head) and meat were taken into the village and at the same time the day of the peijaiset was named. Due to the distance of the nest, the bear was often skinned in the forest, and only the bear's head, pelt, claws and fat or bile, used to cure disease, were taken along.

Once the bear had been speared, its muzzle ring or claws were cut off. The bear's soul was removed, rendering it finally dead and in the possession of the hunters. Certain customs related to bear slaying have also remained that stem from hunting community norms of dividing the catch (Virtanen 1939: 1-; 1949: 5-; Harva 1925; 1933: 282-; 1938a; Kannisto 1939: 18; 1958: 338-). If some bystander came to the nest before the

muzzle ring was detached or before the slayers had time to light a campfire, he had an equal share to the catch. Detaching of the muzzle ring has been a visible sign of ownership and had its roots in the conceptual world of the hunters; it gave the right to own the bear's soul.

It seems that slaying a bear at a winter nest was not considered particularly dangerous, more so was skiing after deer or elk (moose); also the deer would often attack its persecutors once the hunters finally caught up with it (e.g. Virtaranta 1958: 329-; Leskinen 1939: 88-; Virtanen 1939: 11-). Bear meat was not generally considered as delicious, it was perhaps not hunted for meat like deer or elk. Bear eating has been more ritual. Skull trees and bone graves prove that both among Samic and Finnish peoples, bear rites have been performed at certain sites for decades. The bear has been a cult animal that was slain every winter; the bear was not hunted, it was "slain". Late winter was the bear's time; it was the start of a new fishing and hunting season, the new beginning. Nature was gradually coming back to life, families left the common winter village and scattered their spring fishing places.

### Religion of bear rites

In the mythologies of many Nordic peoples, the bear was believed to be of celestial origin, even the son of a god, who because of a breach of taboo was sent down to earth. The bear appears as the original hero of nature, with kind of a special position among other animals, or it has been the embodiment of the supernatural guardian spirits of the forest, the forest itself, as the Finns have said. Ritual bear hunting is likely to have begun from a myth of the bear's birth, which in Finland has survived as a verse in old metre. The birth myth justifies the plot of the rite, returning of the bear back on high, but it also gives the hunters power over the bear. Recorded Finnish birth poems are usually brief, but contain the most fundamental motifs of the narrative: the bear was born in the heavens, in the Plough, and was sent down to earth. Some variants describe how the bear was lowered to the top of a pine or spruce tree in a cradle suspended from golden chains (appendix).

The Finnish birth of the bear belongs to a widespread transnational myth complex. Narratives of the bear descended or evicted from heaven are also found with Siberian hunting peoples. One of the closest equivalents of the Finnish bear birth poem is the Khanty myth narrative. In the beginning of time, the bear lived in the heavens. Defying the orders of the master of heaven or supreme god *To'rom*, it wanted to take a peek at earth and was enchanted by the land of the Khanty. By defying the order, the bear committed a "deadly sin" and as punishment, the supreme god ordered that it should be lowered in a cradle by golden chains onto earth (Patkanov 1897 I: 125; II: 193; Karjalainen 1918: 386-; 1928: 518-; Sirelius 1929; Speck 1945; Cushing 1977: 147-). In accordance with shamanistic world order, gods inhabited the heavens, and great souls were also admitted there. In birth myths, the bear is made equal to gods or even the son of the supreme god, who has breached a taboo and as punishment was condemned to be killed by humans. At Khanty and Mansi *peijaiset*, performance of the birth myth was a solemn act, performed by the shaman, if one was still available, and the performance was different from all the improvised songs and comic plays otherwise performed at *peijaiset* in order to "amuse the gods" (Kannisto 1939: 5; 1958: 115, 380-; 1938b). The myth was a sacred text that explained why man was permitted to slay a bear, to fulfill the bear's destiny.

The ritually slain and resurrecting bear has been compared to the slain and resurrecting sons of gods of the southernmost cultures: Osiris, Dionysus or Jesus (Hallowell 1926: 44-; Harva 1915: 47-; 1933: 290-; Haavio 1967:26). According to Matti Kuusi (1963: 44-), consumption of the bear may be compared to the sacrament of the Eucharist or rituals of god-eating. Hunters would have invested their hopes in the bear who was born high in the heavens, descended to earth, died and was buried, but would be resurrected to live again as the first among all game animals or perhaps of all creation.

The bear living in heaven had to descend and die, like people and all creatures on earth.

Return of the skull and bones is undoubtedly a part of the earliest strata of the bear rite. Return of the catch is a rite of hunter communities. As a large predatory animal, the bear has perhaps been assigned the importance of the firstborn. In the death and resurrection of the bear, the reincarnation of all game animals killed by man is executed (e.g. Hallowell 1926: 144-; Harva 1915: 47-; 1925; 1933: 290-; 1938a; Paulson 1959; 1961; 1965a: 26; 1965b; 1968). The bear skull tree is associated with fundamental events in the destiny of the bear, it is the tree via which the bear steps down to join the natural environment on earth, and returns back to the world on the other side.

The bear cult would thus manifest early hunters' ideas of immortality, the continuation of eternal life. Each bear hunting drama would recreate the primeval mythical event and reinforce the order of life determined at that time, the natural cycle of life. Bear rites would also reinforce again and again the fate of forest game, and man's right to act as perpetrators of game animals' resurrection and maintainers of the eternal cycle. As a totem and man's relation, the bear would also represent man, or maybe we may think like evolutionists that among hunter peoples, there was no great distinction drawn between man and animals. The bear may have also been the redeemer of man's resurrection. The hunt drama would reflect man's struggle to solve the mystery of life and death. Anyway, from the shamanistic worldview of the hunters the idea of reincarnation and salvation of the soul has probably passed to later religions.

### **Shamanistic order of hunting culture**

It is possible that bear rites have also been significant in ecological terms. Rituals serve to reinforce something that is fundamental to the functionality of the ecosystem, and religion must also fit in with the experiences of man of the time in his own environment. For Nordic hunters, the bear was one of the nutritional resources of late winter. A known bear's den was a living meat store and one of the alternative sources of nutrition that hunting communities always had in reserve in their own living environments. But in the hunters' eco-system, the bear was a critical natural resource, the slaying of which would easily have become anarchy. To experienced hunters, bear slaying was easy, and bear dens were common knowledge in the community from the autumn. By ritualization of bear slaying, resources important to the hunting community were taken under religious control; the bear was transformed from a private entity into a public one (Sarmela 1991a; 2000: 53).

Bear feasts meant more than sharing the meat or teeth among members of the community. Collective bear-eating reinforced over and over again the norms of sharing the catch, ecologically essential in the hunter-gatherer culture, and at the same time, communality was renewed among those who shared the slain bears. On the other hand, bear rites were kept alive by uncertainty as to what would happen if communality were to end, as was to happen later in the era of commercial hunting. Slaying a bear without shared celebrations and public restoration rites threatened the order of the culture, the future of the community. Rituals served to deter disorder and to reinforce the game rules which man had to observe in nature.

The basis of everyday faith in the coping thinking of hunting cultures was the eternal return, restoration of nature to its former state, transformation of all that exists from one form of existence to another. Human life was the more secure, the more unchanged nature re-awoke. One of the key structures of the faith in the future of the time was the immortal, constantly reincarnating soul, the engine of life. It symbolized the eternal cycle of nature. The concept of the soul is seen e.g. in explanations of disease, religious rites of the time and in shamanism. A person became sick when his soul left the body; in death, the soul removed altogether to the world hereafter. The heart of shamanism is not trance technique, but the shaman's believable ability to deal with souls and to dispatch his own soul from the world of human beings to the domain of the souls.

The journey of the soul is central to shamanistic narrative. The souls of great shamans wandered in different guises on the invisible side of existence, met with various dangers there, fought among themselves by constantly altering the form of their souls. The silver screen of hunting communities was the night sky, where great narratives, birth of the bear, the virtual reality of the time were placed. Apparent derivatives of shamanistic narrative are stories where visible life – the soul of beings – may be transformed into a different form altogether, where heroes are transformed into a great eagle, as in the chase scene of the theft of Sampo in Sampo-epos in the Finnish folklore, or in stories of how a human being turns into a bear or a werewolf (Finnische Volksüberlieferung: 248-, maps 92-93). The narratives take place in the world of souls, where different laws prevail from those of reality on this side.

Through the soul technique, the shaman was able to obtain information on matters significant to hunting communities, on nature and the future, which were controlled by inhabitants of the world in the hereafter, the deceased, supernatural guardians of animals, “gods”. In his own religious environment, the shaman was able to release the believers of his time of the fear of losing their souls, from the threat of lost souls, and the worry that the soul of the deceased may not find its rightful place in the world order. The shamanistic drama has influenced those present by suggestion, provided them with assurance that the shaman is capable of his task, capable of capturing the bear’s soul, its mind, and subjugating it in death. As cultural influencer of his time, the shaman ritualized reality, took into his possession the imagined bear knowledge behind the everyday environment. Each time the ritual bear hunt was performed, the shamanistic interpretation of the environment was reinforced and the belief to reincarnation, the secure future renewed.

## 2. Kin of the bear and man

### **Bear’s woman**

C. M. Edsman (1953: 60-; 1956: 46-; 1965) has examined a narrative recorded from Sami people in the 1750s about the bear’s bride and its relationship with the protocol of the peijaiset (Fjellström 1755: 13-). The main schema of the narrative are: A girl had three brothers who treated their sister so ill that she fled into the wilderness and, exhausted, happened on a bear’s den. The bear took the girl as his wife and she gave birth to a son. When the son had grown up and left home, the bear one day told his wife that his lifetime was spent and that in the autumn, he would allow his wife’s brothers to round up the den and to slay him. So it happened, although the wife tried every means of stopping the bear. Before the brothers arrived at the den, the bear bid his wife to fasten a piece of brass on his forehead, to distinguish him from other bears and so the son would not kill his father by mistake. The bear also laid down how he should be treated after death, and finally asked his wife if all the brothers had been equally evil towards her. The girl replied that the youngest had had more pity than the others. When the brothers arrived at the den, the bear bit the two elder brothers, but allowed the youngest to shoot him.

The narrative continues with many twists and turns. When the girl saw that the bear was dead, she sat down on the ground and covered her face, not to have to see her dead spouse, but yet peeped through one eye. In the same fashion, at Sami peijaiset women were only allowed to look at the bear through a brass ring. When the bear meat was being cooked, the girl’s son came along and demanded his share of the catch, be-

cause the piece of brass on the bear's forehead proved that it was his father. If not, the son threatened to bring his father back to life by beating his pelt with a switch. Around a hundred years before (1673), Schefferus's *Lapponia* (1956; 1963: 319-) recounts that as the slayers went to the bear's den, the band was led by the man who had rounded up the den, with a stick in his hand and a brass ring on it, followed by a person beating the shaman's drum and then the bear slayer. When the bear had been killed and the thanksgiving song performed, the bear was beaten with switches (Rheen 1671). Thus, the narrative and hunting rites are closely interconnected. The hunters fulfilled the bear's wish, but the narrative also includes the prohibition that the bear's descendants were not permitted to kill it. The narrative is, in effect, a text explaining the significance of brass rings, switches and other rite objects, and why women and men had to follow the game rules of the *peijaiset* drama. But the background may be an even older narrative on how the bear became the clan's ancestor.

Among Koltta Samic people, the idea has persisted that the Kolttas are descended from a girl who spent a winter in a bear's den (Itkonen 1937: 21; 1948 II: 15; Heyne 1987). The story of the bear's woman and her brothers also belongs to a transnational complex of myths, with corresponding narratives found even in the lore of peoples of the Antiquity (Edsman 1956: 50-; Haavio 1968; Oinas 1999; McClellan 1970; Kwon 1999; Janhunen 2003, 6-). Such a narrative is an origination myth of a totemistic kinship connection. The bear has been one of the totem animals of the Obi-Ugrians (Steinitz 1980; Tsernetzov 1974: 285-; Alekseenko 1968: 189; Cushing 1977: 158; Sz Bakro-Nagy 1979; Schmidt 1988; Janhunen 2003); in fact, traces of bear totemism are also found in ancient Scandinavian sagas and kinship narratives. Among Arctic peoples, the myth explains how the bear's kin has originated, but also how the bear itself has given people the right to kill it and determined how the *peijaiset* must be conducted, in order for the bear to return to life. The myth may also have changed its meanings. On the one hand, it may justify the connection between certain kinship groups, but on the other give the right of ritual killing of a totemistic ancestor, when the bear was becoming seen as a harmful animal.

In recorded Finnish bear folklore, too, women have a special relationship with the bear. At bear *peijaiset*, women and especially pregnant women had to avoid the dead bear. They had to move aside as the bear was carried from the forest into the house, and as the bear meat was carried to the table. Such prohibitions are probably based on belief in reincarnation. In the same way, women of childbearing age had in certain situations to avoid dead people and burial grounds, where the souls of the deceased were believed to reside. Prohibitions concerning women would be necessary in order to prevent the bear's soul from seeking an opportunity of reincarnation in them (e.g. Harva 1915: 47; 1933: 290-; Paulson 1959; 1965a; b; 1968). Thus, the bear has been believed to be capable of embodiment in human form, too, like gods descended from heavens.

In Finland, the idea that the bear would not attack a woman, provided that it recognized her as a woman, has been fairly common. For that reason, when meeting a bear, women had to show their genitals, stick out their bottoms or raise their skirts; then the bear turned away. The exception was pregnant women carrying a male child in their wombs. The bear wanted to tear apart an unborn male child, because it knew it would grow into a new hunter. Thus, the bear was believed to spare women. Was this because in totemistic myths, a sexual bond has existed between the bear and women? The beliefs may have a different foundation. In hunting incantations, the supernatural guardian of the bear, and also of other game animals, is female, as is the mistress of the forest itself. Women ruled the natural environment of hunters.

### **Elk and bear people**

The Roman historian, Tacitus, at the end of his work, *Germania* of AD 98, describes peoples living to the north of Germanic people; in the final paragraph, he mentions Fennis among others, at that time still meaning Lapps. The work ends in an enigmatic sentence about *hellusios* and *oxinas* (*helluseios et oxinas*). Tacitus considers infor-

mation about them to be lore, but mentions that they are said to have human faces and features, but the body and feet of a wild animal. Tuomo Pekkanen (1983a; b) has proposed a new explanation for the mysterious terms. Oxinas may derive from the term *oksi* (*otso*, *oheto*) meaning 'bear', which has been preserved in various parts of Finland and Karelia in e.g. place names (Oksjärvi, -lahti, Ohensaari, Estonia's Ohesaar etc. 'lake, cove, island of bear'). The word may be traced at least to Permic languages. Hellusios on the other hand would be rooted in the word elg, elk, (Greek *ellós*), still found in many languages (Lithuanian *ėlnis* etc.). The oldest written record of Finland would mean that in addition to Fennic or Samic people, a people of bears and elks, of whom only fabled information was available to the author, inhabited the North. The human head, but with an animal body and feet would describe certain rites, during which the clan members would dress in the skin of the animal in whose kinship group they belonged. Transformation into an animal has been common also in imitation dramas of Obi-Ugric (shamanistic) peoples.

In an area from Scandinavia right up to the Urals – the area where Nordic Finno-Ugric peoples have moved around – Stone Age artefacts depicting bear and elk heads have been found. Of them, of particular note have been stone bear and elk head clubs (axes), which have been recovered especially in Finland and Karelia. With reference to the bear and elk head axes, Kuusi (1963: 43) has put forward the idea that the population living in Finland at the time may have been divided into two clans, one of which worshipped the bear as its ancestor, the other the elk. In his view, bear *peijaiset* would be a remnant of the times when the unity of the destiny of man and beast was conceptualised as so close that the bear was seen not only as son of the heavenly god, but also as primordial ancestor of the human race.

Researchers have been confused by the fact that no regional differences exist between finds of bear and elk artefacts, although bear head clubs have primarily been made from stone from the Onega region, or Karelia (Carpelan 1974; 1975). It is however possible, that the artefacts have been rite objects or gifts exchanged between trading partners and insignia of alliances, maybe similar to the ritual gifts circulated in the well-known Kula circle. If they are reciprocal contractual gifts, regional differences would not be found, but it must also be remembered that hunting communities did not inhabit specified areas in the same way as agrarian peoples. The totem has served to distinguish kinship groups that have moved within the same regions.

In Finnish bear lore, it is noteworthy that the Karelians have not known neither bear rites nor rite poetry associated with bear hunting. Nor is there any knowledge of Viena and Aunus (East-Karelia) having had bear skull trees, which after all have preserved the last memories of bear rites as far as Western Finland (map). The birth of the bear has only been used in Karelia as an incantation on letting out the cattle. The knowledge of hunting collected from Viena has been obtained from singer and hunter kinship groups that have moved from Finland. On the other hand, the poem *The Hiisi-Elg skier* (*Hiiden hirven hiihdäntä* 'Skiing a deer of supernatural guardian') classed as belonging to deer and elk myths (Hautala 1945; 1947; *Finnische Volksüberlieferung*, map 88), has only spread across Karelian poetry region, starting from Ingria and ending in Viena. In Finland, scarcely any folklore on deer or elk hunting has been recorded. The bear and the deer/elk appear to divide Finland and Karelia into two cultural areas.

In Viena Karelia, even at the beginning of the 1900s, it was generally believed that the bear was "human kin", and its meat was not eaten. When using expressions of Christianity, the bear was said to be a human being cursed because of his sins, and consuming its flesh resulted in *räähkä*, pollution or sin; a similar legend is found with *Komis* (Zyrians). Thus, eating bear meat polluted a human being. According to folk explanation, bear meat was not eaten because when skinned, the bear resembled a man, missing only the thumbs; bear meat was also considered to be poor quality, black and unpalatable. However, it is likely that prohibition of consumption date back to pre-Christianity. During last century, travel writers who visited Viena appear to have been surprised by the reluctance of local hunters to kill bears, even though they often sav-



aged cattle. Viena people would rather rely on sorcerers (Virtaranta 1958: 313-; Sarmela 1972: 168). Viena and Aunus Karelians appear not to have hunted bear. At some point in ancient times, slaying of a bear and eating its meat may have been prohibited at least among some kinship groups living in Karelia. It was a breach of taboo.

Thus, it would seem that the people of ancient Häme or Finns have been elk people, while the totem of Karelians was the bear. What, then, is a totem? Totemism has been deemed to be a religious phenomenon, reflecting the thinking of primitive man, according to the evolutionist view. Today, the social and symbolistic nature of totemism is emphasized (e.g. Wagner 1987). The totem is a symbol, which apparently helped members of a community to identify with some larger group than that defined by genetic kinship lineage and kinship terminology. Characteristics of a totemistic kinship alliance are a shared ancestor myth and shared taboo prohibitions, most commonly in fact prohibitions of consumption. Descendants of the bear were unlikely to literally believe in their shared origin any more than in the myths about the birth of the bear. But prohibitions of consumption distinguished bear kinship groups from those who hunted bear and consumed its meat. The totem tradition defined social groups in the same way as land ownership, occupation or some other shared interest in later societies.

### **The bear as relation**

Among a number of Nordic peoples, the bear has been called by names that denote kinship (Nirvi 1944: 26-, 43-44; Hallowell 1926: 43-; Sz Bakro-Nagy 1979). As well as a totemistic ancestor, the bear has also been seen as a relation whom people wanted to include in their own kinship group. A slain bear was addressed at *peijaiset* using honorary names; it was an ancestor or patriarch whom the slayers wanted as their relation. At Kouko's weddings, the kinship bond between bear and man has been symbolically renewed by entering into a marriage, by bonding the bear as a relative through marriage. Use of kinship terminology is a means typical of kinship communities of categorizing members of the community and expressing social relationships; hierarchy of gods and their relations with people were also expressed through kinship concepts, such as god the father or son of god. A greater name of honour could not be bestowed on the bear than patriarch or ancestor; there scarcely existed any other concepts denoting social hierarchy.

Particularly in societies of the swidden era, creation of kinship bonds through the ritual or marriage has been a means of creating legal alliance relationships in Finland, too. For example, in Savo it was common for problems of making a living and manpower to be solved by admitting outsiders into the kinship group, as foster children and members of the extended family. The social models that secured the living and worked in the ecosystem were also transposed to symbolic level, to the institutions through which man organized his relations with the world hereafter.

When the bear was married into the kinship group or adopted as its member at *peijaiset*, it signified that the community wanted to take as good care of its soul as of its own deceased. As relatives of the bear, hunters would obtain the bear's knowledge and gain a special position in surrounding nature; the bear rites served to obtain the benevolence of "the forest"; living nature was not hostile towards huntsmen.

The totemistic clan was unilinear kinship group (lineage), and it has been thought that during the hunting era the kinship system of Finno-Ugric peoples has been unilinear, possibly matrilineal (Harva 1938b; Steinitz 1974). Along with kinship descendancy becoming bilinear, totemism would have disappeared for the simple reason that a bilateral kinship group cannot trace its descendancy from a specific common ancestor. However, family names based on animal names are typical in Savo and Karelia, among them *Karhu*, *Karhunen* ('bear'), *Peura* ('deer'), or *Hirvi*, *Hirvonen* ('elk'). They are found in the earliest historical sources on Karelia. *Karhunen* was also the name of the head of a kinship group, which according to a document from the 1400s ruled extensive hunting, fishing and swidden grounds in Viena, right up to "Wild Lapland" (Kirkinen 1970: 35-). The *Karhunen* clan was one of Karelia's founding families.



### 3. The bear in the environment of swidden cultivators

#### Environment of sorcerers

The relationship of the swidden farmers with the bear transformed totally from that in hunter-gatherer communities. Swidden cultivation survived the longest in Eastern Finland and Karelia (in Finnish and Eastern Karelia), as well as poetry in old metre: heroic epics, wedding verses, and archaic incantations. In Savo-Karelian swidden culture, the basic religious structures were the ancestor cult and sorcery (swidden vs. peasant cultures in Finland, see Sarmela 1987; 1989a; 1995; 1994: 21-, 118-; 2000:18-, 140-). As occupant of a religious role, the sorcerer dealt with forces that work in the environment of the cultivators, the energy of growth and fertility. In Finland, sorcery has above all been about repelling dangers threatening the diversified swidden economy, where sources of livelihood were small-scaled, multiple and “shattered in the forest”. In addition to clearances, the livelihood was based on cattle keeping, fishing, hunting, trapping and gathering.

The sorcerer’s fundamental tasks were to protect livestock from beasts of prey, swidden crops from bears, and fishnets or trap tracks from outsiders. The sorcerer prevented the fire from spreading at swidden-burning, raised the rain and wind, released the cattle from “the forest cover” (Finnische Volksüberlieferung: 169-, maps 53-54). In the swidden economy, man’s greatest threat was the bear who killed cattle in forest pastures and destroyed distant swidden crops. The sorcerer no longer operated in the world of souls, but within a community of people competing among themselves, where kinship groups and extended families built their own living environment.

The sorcerer knew the correct technique of making an impact: the rites and associated incantations. One of the key concepts of sorcery was power, which was meant by the Fin. term *väki* (mana). Belief to the supernatural power of the bear’s body, power of organs (gallbladder) of large beasts of prey such as the bear, belong to the sorcery. In preserved oral tradition, proofs of the sorcerer’s power are from swidden culture. Supernatural power resided in various substances, but especially in iron and iron implements, the adoption of which transformed the living environment of swidden communities of the Iron Age. Sorcerer tradition has employed also symbols and images that arise from the swidden farmer’s environment. The basic configuration of repelling rites is the magic fence, the iron fence of incantations, erected to surround man’s niche, the environment of man living in a diversified economy dependent on nature. The vision of the fence is the key symbol. It arose from swidden fences, perhaps even from battlements of ancient castles of the Iron Age. The sorcerer walked around, enclosing in a protective circle swiddens to be burned, cattle pastures, wedding processions.

Fence symbolism and dealing with natural elements have impinged in all bear rites, even rounding up the bear’s winter den. The hunter tracking the bear made it “settle” or lie down for the winter, if he circled the den with a hunting knife or sword in his teeth, or with the beak of a black woodpecker in his pocket; the woodpecker and bear have been associated with each other and the woodpecker has also been said to be related to humans. If the hunter had a bat in his pocket, the bear became comatose like the bat. The bear has been settled by magic treatment of its tracks or faeces, e.g. by cutting the tracks out of the ground and turning them over. By turning the bear tracks around, it was also induced to return to the forest, to its own domain. Treatment of the tracks of bears and game beasts is symbolic control of the animal’s movement and the “personal” traces it has left.

In the thinking of Finns, in common with Asian peoples, the core elements of world order were powers of the earth, water, fire and air (wind). The same basic elements also appear in ancient European magic literature. Active substances were classified under one of the basic dimensions of the universe. Aquatic creatures, such as frogs, possessed waterpower and could be used to counteract force of fire, e.g. on burn injuries. In rites of destruction, one of the most effective elements was the force of death: corpse earth and other substances originating from the de-ceased. Power of death could be used to cause a prolonged disease or lingering death to befall the victim, or he could be fed to become mentally ill. However, it seems likely that the force of death became total power of death only in the Christian era, when all that was connected with the cult of the deceased was labeled evil and dangerous, downright horrific. The force of death has been particularly associated with witches, servants of the Antichrist, whose insignia was the witching pouch.

The remit of the sorcerer was to provide answers, to create security and to maintain equilibrium in the community of "forest-farmers", swidden cultivators. Fear of magic revenge has maintained social order in wilderness conditions lacking legal authorities, or where swidden farmers were surrounded by hostile society, as in forests settled by Finns in Sweden. Sorcery was knowledge of the elements of world order and behaviour of their forces, which impinged on surrounding nature. As a religious influencer, the sorcerer was capable of disturbing the equilibrium of active elements and of utilizing supernatural force, energy, bound up with the visible world, but on the other hand also of returning it, restoring order; in Finnish sorcery language, settling down.

### **The ill-born bear**

In Finnish folklore, the incantation is a salient part of sorcery rites; the sorcerer had to know the correct words of possession. Incantations belong to a different cultural system from the dialogue songs performed at ritual bear slaying. Recorded bear verses already juxtapose the hunter's and settler's worldviews. In the 1800s, when peijaiset verses were recorded, they were used mainly to protect livestock from bears. The peijaiset also gradually acquired new content: the bear was rendered incapable of killing cattle.

In accordance with sorcerer thinking, an extraneous danger had to be annulled, stopped and turned back; the origin of evil and its influence were also reversed. In the birth incantation, the bear would have been born in dark Pohjola (Far North), its dam would be the wife or girl of the North, often labelled a slut for good measure. The Pohjola of the incantations meant the cradle of evil, the place to which diseases were banished. The attached sample incantation (J. Murman 1854) includes many elements of the hunting era, even a schema of setlines, but the metaphors have acquired an entirely new content.

### **Origins of the Bear**

The swidden era

- I know your origins, I know your kin!
- Where was Bruin born?
- On the sheltered side of the stone  
on the north side of the slope  
in the Northland daughter's lap  
beneath the old North woman's skirt.

Forest girl, forest maiden  
famous forest king!  
Hide your claws in your fur  
still your nasty teeth!

Wool your mouth, wool your head  
wool your five claws too.

SKVR XII, 2:6890 Sodankylä.  
J. Murman 1854.

Many incantations of the sorcerer era also mention the bear's supernatural guardian, *Mielikki*, the mistress of the forest, or *Hongotar*, occasionally also the old man of the forest. The bear is still associated with the pine tree, the skull tree, but also with an ant-hill or deep forest in general. The bear's supernatural guardian or female ancestor also appears in incantations in which they are beseeched to keep the bear away from the cattle "*Hongotar, kind mistress, Tapiotar, pretty woman! Come, look after your livestock, your son is in bad ways, your child quite spoiled...*".

In the swidden farmer's society, the message of the poetry is contrary to the message of songs belonged to the shamanistic hunting ritual. In birth incantations of the sorcerers the bear is no more celestial being. Its dam is a mother of malevolence and its place of birth is removed to an extraneous world, to some other place, as far as possible from the human environment, to the end of earth, where there is no return from.

### Raising the bear

In the swidden farmer's culture, evil was caused by an outsider: some malevolent person, a hostile soul of a deceased or an angry guardian spirit of the place. The hostile sorcerer shot arrows of illness, dried up cows' milking or stole the vitality of animals, spoiled traps and fishnets. A bear that had attacked cattle near houses was a so-called raised bear, sent by some envious person. The sorcerer and everyone with the rite skills were also able to prevent the malevolence and wreak revenge on outsiders who harmed his life or livelihood. The sorcerer no longer dealt with the soul of the sick person, but sought traces and touches of the mortal arrow, traces of an external threat, and sent a raised snake or raised bear back into the cattle of his enemy. The environment is split in two. There was the cultivated and uncultivated nature, that which belonged to man and the counter-world, causing and repelling, its black and white mechanisms of impact.

Of shamanistic origin in Finnish sorcerer belief, too, is possibly the idea that a powerful sorcerer was able to rise to his supernatural guardian spirits, to concentrate his spiritual powers and to impact on nature, particularly on animals. A powerful sorcerer was believed to be able to lift a bear one on top of another, or to dispatch it to maul his enemies' cattle. A bear that had turned up suddenly or rampaged in a herd of cattle uncommonly ferociously was interpreted as "raised", sent by someone; a raised bear was "under a spell", as if its soul was in the power of a malevolent person. By the strength of his spirit, a powerful sorcerer could whip up his powers and stop a raised bear or snake in its tracks and dispatch it back to attack its sender.

The cognitive structures of sorcery are dominant in the raised bear narratives recorded in the folklore archives of the Finnish Literature Society. The bear may have been raised by imitating a mauling beast or by "torturing" the bear's mind (soul) until it became enraged. In the course of the dispatching rites, the sorcerer has gone (naked) in among the cattle of the neighbour whom he has wanted to harm, and growling like a bear, torn at the earth with his nails or with a "dead hand", a hand bone collected from the burial ground. The torturing technique consisted of dealing with a bear's or cow's tracks or secretions in such a way that the bear was irritated. The sorcerer has mixed up his victim's cows' and a bear's cut-out tracks, or hair (dung) of the cow and bear etc. was placed inside a bear's thighbone or in an alder box into an anthill. This would cause the bear's character to be confused, or it would be finally tortured to become so angry that it attacks the cows, blinded of rage. Raising the bear has also been done using the appropriate "words", incantations, the commonest beginning with the curse: "Rise up, bear from the wilderness, devil from the fire of hell, long-tooth from the fir trees..."

Through repelling rites, the bear was turned back against his sender or into his cattle. The raiser was revenged in equal measure or better still, in double measure; the saviour became a greater sorcerer than the sender of the bear, and beat his adversary. In counter-rites, the sorcerer may have remodelled the bear's character e.g. by taking meat from a cow it has killed and putting it in an anthill, wrapped in birch bark under a camp fire, in a cavity in a tree etc. Then the bear has returned to tear its sender or maul his cattle. The piece of meat had to have traces of the bear's teeth; the idea is that when something belonging to the bear, such as its secretion, are handled in a "place of torture", it is caused to turn against its sender, maddened with rage. Powerful sorcerers, whose characters were tougher than that of the bear-sender, might bite at the meat killed by the bear – like beasts – and cast a spell to turn back the raised bear, "the dog back to its home".

In shaman narratives, the shaman was capable of controlling animal souls, to assume the form of various animals, such as the snake. In sorcerers' hegemony tradition, a powerful sorcerer deals with animals using a rite technique, but also through his own spirit. He was able to concentrate his powers, to whip himself "up into a frenzy of anger" and cast a spell to remove the bear in the same way as when exorcizing forces of evil, illnesses, or when stopping a haemorrhage. However, the cognitive models are different, and the conceptual world of the shaman no longer worked in sorcerers' traditional environment.

### **The domain of man and bear**

The bear lore recorded in Finnish folklore archives is mostly sorcery related to "releasing cattle", to the situation, when the cows were first let outdoors in spring. Protecting the pasture has repelled damage done by the bear. The pasture may have been "locked" or fenced from bears by circling the forest pasture and by marking it by slivers cut from trees in the same way as when rounding up a bear's den. The person rounding up the cow pasture may have carried a bear skull, reserved at the peijaiset for the purpose. In driving away beasts of prey, e.g. the power of water, fire and iron were used. Seal blubber was smeared on trees, markings burned with substances such as burning tinder, or by affixing iron onto trees, particularly "corpse nails" or nails taken from a coffin. Finally, repelling rites have included various chemical substances that beasts were thought to avoid, such as devil shit and bear bile.

The bear has been kept away from pastures by turning its tracks in the same way as in various hunting rites. The tracks have been cut out of the earth and turned away or towards the north; the tracks may have been burned with tinder, and in an exorcism incantation the bear was told to go to Far North (Pohjola) or to some other region where there was no cattle, and that was outside man's living environment.

The basic elements affecting nature were also present in rites of letting out cattle. The most effective means against beasts of prey have been thought to be iron or bladed implements. On letting out the cows from the byre, a bladed implement, such as a scythe, knife or sheep shears were placed below the threshold. A bladed implement is a common object in repelling rites, as it has been capable of repelling all evil forces surrounding man. In usage of water or substances associated with water, such as aquatic creatures, the background is evidently the idea that the power of water is a counterforce to the power of the forest. The most potent substance in protecting cattle, too, has been the power of death, corpse-washing water or earth from burial grounds.

The rites of letting out cattle also show the association between the bear and woman. Cattle have been let out of the cowshed through the legs of the mistress of the house. The mistress or some other woman has been positioned above the door, legs apart, and the cows driven out beneath her. The mistress had to have her skirts hitched up, or be naked, and the rite was most effective if the cows touched her sexual organ as they passed under her. On letting out, cattle has been wiped with a substance that was in some way associated with woman's gender or genital power, such as a rag the mistress had used to wipe her genitals, e.g. after coitus, menstrual blood, a bunch of leafy birch

used in bathing a woman while giving birth; or the pasture may have been circled with a bunch used to bathe a new-born female child. The woman's power has repelled the bear.

The Savo-Karelian sorcerer possessed knowledge, a birth incantation on all dangers threatening man. It was precisely the incantations and sorcerer rites that were the folklore of swidden farmers, collected in Finland more than anywhere else in the world, and they paint a picture of the sorcerer as the actor of his time. The sorcerers' symbolic language, iron fences, iron axes, the alder tree (sign of a fertile swidden) originate from the swidden cultures of the Iron Age. At that time, the deceased were buried near swidden and field clearings in designated burial woods. Offerings of the first portion of everything produced by the field or cattle, the first grains harvested, first drops from beestings, etc. were taken to the deceased of the kinship group. Graves of ancestors, local burial grounds and sacred trees of the dead provided the right to cultivated land, maintained the social order of kinship society, distribution of resources. Cultivated land belonged to ancestors, and no longer to the bear or its supernatural guardian. In the swidden culture, women's lot was the homestead, as well as taking care of rites of passage, weddings and burials. Evidently, they also took charge of the bear feasts; sorcerers and women crushed the structures of the hunting culture and shamanism.

## 4. The bear in the world of the peasants

### **Environment of the village community**

In Finland, a peasant society arose in the Western and Southern plains, where plowing cultivation was a natural technique, and where the Catholic and later Lutheran churches rooted a new religious culture. The farmer living in his village began to permanently alter his environment, to clear land, organize his living environment and his future. The village, later the farmhouse with its arable land was the focus of the peasant's life, with the rest of the world, wilderness, wild nature outside. In the peasant's society, forms of local co-operation were born, such as reciprocal working parties, neighbourly assistance; the house and the neighbours replaced the kinship group and extended family. In agrarian communities, man worked in the new meaning of the word; ecologically secure life consisted of work, saving, building a future. In the field cultivation area, use of forest pastures was also abandoned much earlier than in Eastern Finland, and cattle was grazed on pastureland near the house. The changes were reflected in the position of the bear: it was marginalized, displaced from man's cultural environment.

So-called high religions belong to the agrarian cultures, and maintained the moral values on neighbour community. In the agrarian cultures gave rise to thinking that from the 1600s has ever more strongly dominated Western worldview. The peasant created the era of utility (1700-) and the so-called puritanical view of life. In Christian village communities, man with the help of God took nature under his control, he had the right to clear fields, drain swamps, enclose in the human living environment the whole nature and all that was beneficial to man. In agrarian cultures, man was no longer a part of nature, but an exploiter of nature, and environment was more and more seen from the perspective of benefit. The supreme goal of human endeavour was conquering of nature for human culture, the victorious battle against nature.

As a centralized organization, the Christian Church defined its own boundaries and those of the opposite side, right and wrong. The world was divided into two opposing realities, the Christian and antichristian. In everyday life, the boundary between Christi-

anity and Anti-Christianity was blurred. In the Middle Age, catholic folk religion was in many ways just christianised sorcery. Supernatural guardian spirits were replaced by saints and incantations by prayers or prayer incantations; the rites of letting out cattle began to employ Christian symbols. The new Christian elements of sorcery were accepted within the Church, as they expressed belief in the power of the cross, or the omnipotence of so-called instruments of mercy.

In common with all centralized systems, an internal power struggle began before long also within the Church, as well as a reformation movement and witch hunts. The witch – in the Christian era meaning of the word – was a practitioner of magic, who in order to gain earthly benefits had entered the service of the Antichrist and promised his or her soul, his share of heaven, to the devil. The witch relied on the powers of the Antichrist, the black Bible; sorcery became marginalized and turned into witchcraft. In Christianity-based magic, also when protecting cows from bears, the most effective substances and rite implements in addition to the power of death were the power of the church: the hymn book, pages of the Bible, the Catechism and the communion wafer. In villages of Western and Southern Finland, rites of letting out the cattle became more and more contradictory. On one hand, masters and mistresses of homesteads took refuge in the Church, the Bible, and prayers in the Christian spirit, and protected their cows by drawing crosses of tar on their backs or on the byre doorjambs. On the other, all “magic” was seen more and more categorically as witchcraft and misuse of Christian symbols, obtaining of fortune with hunting or cattle or for procuring other worldly good with the power of the Antichrist.

### **The bear given to saints**

During the Catholic era, pagan supernatural guardian spirits were replaced by Christian saints, and in recorded folklore, behind the names of guardian spirits of most game animals, in common with those of other deities, is a Catholic saint. The bear’s new supernatural guardian became Saint Bridget, but other saints also had power over the bear. Both in Finland and in Karelia, the protector of cattle was St George (Georgios the Victor), in the Greek Orthodox area also Blasios. Among Slavic peoples, Blasios has been one of the oldest folk guardian saints, with offerings made to safeguard cattle and to ensure its success on his memorial day (*praasniekka*) in July. Rites of letting out the cattle were being performed as early as St George’s Day (23 April), although in Finnish conditions it was often too early to let out the cattle.

In a birth incantation of a mediaeval peasant community, the bear has become governed by saints. According to the incantation, the bear was born from wool thrown into the water by *Tuonetar* ('mistress of Hades'), *Pirjotar* (St Bridget), the Virgin Mary or some other saint. The wool drifts to Pohjola (Far North) with the wind, and there the bear is born or created from them. The birth incantation follows the structural format of the European Christian incantations. It comprises two parts: the so-called *historiola* or the narrative of the initial event or the origin of evil, and the curse or healing part, in which the threat is repelled or cursed to render it powerless. Incantations follow the formula of the initial incident (origin of the bear), but the *historiola* is from Christian world, and as the first healer of helper, the original hero was the Virgin Mary, a saint or Jesus Christ himself.

The original saint of the Christian bear birth incantation is St Bridget, whose youth history includes a sewing miracle, among others (Karhu 1947: 230-; Haavio 1967: 15, 21-, 461-). Bridget never learned to sew, but the Virgin Mary helped her make a preternaturally beautiful piece of needlework. In the incantation, the Bridget of common folk is a woman who couldn’t spin or sew, and consequently throws the wool in the water. In the curse section, the bear is rendered harmless; its teeth and claws are wool, and the bear is incapable of harming livestock. Saint Bridget became the guardian of bears, to whom hunters turned or who had to be appeased so that she would keep her bears under control.

In the peasant incantation, the bear is born as if by accident, and it does not belong in Christian culture. The bear is born outside Christianity, from lack of skill of a poor girl or woman, from harmless materials carried by the winds. The incantation creates mental images that nature is distant, powerless, and haphazard. In new incantations, the bear is no longer the forest itself, but an increasingly less important creature that the Creator has subjugated under the power of people.

### **The extinct bear**

The peasant community also organized the death of the bear in co-operation. From the end of the 1600s, parishes in Western Finland began to employ hunt masters, who under the local bailiff organized the hunting of predatory animals. Every peasant house was ordered to obtain a wolf net, a high net knotted from strong twine, or a sealing-off line, and when a wolf or bear had mauled cattle in some corner of the parish, or been spotted on the move in general, the hunt master alerted the inhabitants of nearby villages to join a common hunt. The beast was rounded up with nets and killed by the gang of men, using spears and guns.

Once hunt weapons had improved, bears and wolves were hunted with dogs, particularly in autumn at first snow or frost. Bears chased by dogs were rounded up with nets or sealing-off lines and shot. Bear hunting rites lost their significance, only the *peijaiset* proceedings might have survived in some form. The bearskin, which was not much use, was donated to the parish church and hung on the vestry wall (Melander 1920; Oja 1938). During the 1800s, the bear and wolf were destroyed in Western and Southern Finland to become almost extinct, and the bear folklore of prosperous Western areas comprises mainly only memories of where and when the last bear of the parish was shot.

Western Finland was also the first to have professional hunters, who with their trained dogs drove wolves and bears across wide areas. Professional wolf hunters also came from Russia and Karelia, for example, the men of the Vornanen family, renowned as hunters and singers of old verses, did the rounds in Finland, too, hunting for predatory animals. Many professional hunters shot dozens of bears and wolves, the most famous of them Martti Kitunen, famed as a national hero, who with his trained dogs killed almost 200 bears in Virrat and adjoining parishes at the turn of the 1700s and 1800s (Rissanen 1988; Korhos-Heikki 2002; Museum of Martti Kitunen, Virrat). By the end of the last century, only remaining bear country was in Ladoga Karelia, Viena and Aunus. Finnish Karelia also produced the great folk legends, bear hunters and *kantele* players; in romantic hunting literature of the 1900s, they were gilded as the last heroes and bear-slayers of Kalevala (Wartiainen 1907; 1923). The Karelian professional hunter and the bear-baiting dog (Karelian bear dog) became symbols of national hunting culture.

## **5. The bear in the scientific-technological world**

### **The bear in the technosystem of nature management**

Along with technological development, the position of the bear in the human environment has once again changed. In an industrializing society, culture is governed by technosystems of various fields, which have gradually taken control of man and nature, including the existence and future of the bear. The actor of modern culture is the scientific-technological organizer, meritocrat, whose real operational ideology is the cult of development. The bear lives within the transnational technosystem of natural science

and the hunting industry, it has been included in commercial and scientific-technological development rituals; it has been subjugated by the triumph of weapons technology.

The military rifle, instrument of new technology of its time, changed the environment of hunters and the entire hunting culture. Hunting of big game became entertainment purchased with cash, safari hunting, engaged in by the elite class in different parts of the world. Bear hunting became sport, amusement, a hobby of modern man. Safari hunting was apparently brought to Finland by Russian aristocracy and officers of the Czar's army, buying bear rounds from local inhabitants, particularly in Karelia, in the 1800s. At aristocratic officers' bear hunts, large numbers of soldiers were often commandeered to the den, surrounding the area and ensuring that the bear and its cubs could not escape. Sporting hunters who had bought bear dens also employed local hunters with their dogs to accompany them (Levander 1918).

The First World War spread military rifles to all corners of the world, also among local people or indigenous peoples. Hunting of big game was "popularised" and it was killed everywhere, the animals no longer found refuge even in remotest corners of the world. After the Second World War, many animal species were threatened with extinction.

In the 1800s, bear hunting from carrion also began. A platform was built in a tree near a carcass of an animal killed by the bear or a cow carcass specially taken into the forest for the purpose, and the hunters would wait there night after night for the bear to come. Bear slaying had turned into shooting from ambush. On the other hand, the bear hunting drama became organization culture, a technical operation performed by a trained gang of hunters, under orders of a leader. In the performance dramas of Western culture, most important is organizational and technological security – certainty of the bear's death.

In the hierarchy of development faith, the bear was still a predatory animal, enemy of the inhabitants of rural areas or a useless beast of prey, for whom it was hard to find a place in the human environment. As a wild animal, the bear still posed a threat that had to be at least monitored by scientific-technological means. In recent decades, nature conservation movements have started fighting for the bear's living space, but hunters still stick to man's right to protect his living area from predatory animals, which would otherwise increase excessively and pose a danger to man. The bear has a right to exist, if it benefits local tourist industry; on the other hand it is encompassed within the global technosystem of nature management, which ever more closely protects the preservation of the bear, its life and genetic heritage. The bear lives in the scientific environment and in the scholarly literature of researchers, conservationist and nature writers (in Finland, e.g. Lyytikäinen 2004. Järvinen 2000).

### **Literary bear folklore**

In an urbanizing culture, people's experiences of the bear were produced by the sporting hunter and hunting writers. The bear slayer became the heroic hunter who experienced something different, exciting and dangerous. Before the Second World War, the idol of hunters appears to have been the soldier, a tough man's man who was physically very fit and a good shot. Military and hunting rifles were symbols of masculinity.

Finnish hunting literature of the early 1900s is typical "prey mythology". The bear, rising from his den or driven by dogs, is always a ferocious, wild and mauling beast who attacks man, but the hero cuts it down with his weapon. According to the formula of heroic epics, the evil or the bear first manages to surprise his adversary or it gets away, but through superhuman struggle, the hunters catch up with it and shoot it dead. The bear is the personal adversary of the hunter, and like in a duel, one or the other must die. The hero's victory is final. People writing hunting memoirs also had a certain formula in relation to local population, peoples in remote Eastern border and Karelia, where bears still were left. Villagers were seen either as hunter heroes of bygone days, codgers of the old school, or useless scoundrels who lived a life of laziness, poverty and ignorance. Developers, who measured their environment from the perspective of their own ideology, did the hunting. As travel writers, they took possession of folk culture,



development of rural areas, and protection of the Finnish fatherland from beasts of the forest (e.g. Warttinen 1928; Paasilinna 2001; Tiainen 2002; c.f. Baker 1993).

Scientific-technological killing produced mysticism of weaponry. The more effective firearms were developed, the more dangerous was the bear, wolf or lynx deemed to be, and the more colourful the hunters' stories of heroism. Hunting literature create the image of the individual hunter, the writer. The bear is an instrument of human heroic deed, a victim of heroic romanticism. In Finland, bear slaying – using automatic weaponry – became the supreme achievement of the hunting hierarchy, a special manly feat, a masculine rite of potency. Or an adventure not within reach of all people of a mass society.

Many hunting writers are today thought of as great nature lovers, great describers of wilderness, who exulted in the beauty of nature and its intrinsic value; created a mystic atmosphere for the hunter's campfire. The literary sensation in a way hides the reality. Many classic writers were in reality greedy hunters who never failed to shoot, and to whom the day's bag, the number of wood grouse, otters or wolverines was the epitome of their nature experiences. They began to measure their bear-hunting achievements, the largest bearskins were hung on the wall, the bear skull became a trophy, hunting memorabilia, the number of which afforded special glory. In bear-slaying contests, teachers of village schools in Eastern Finland did particularly well, as they had time in the summer to set carrion ambushes and to watch on their shooting platforms; many had a catch of dozens of bear skulls. The hunter's idol is other than in the society of shamans; the greatest hero is the man who has killed most bears.

### **The bear in the media environment**

In the postlocal world, man will maybe move entirely into international metropolis' and start to live more and more in the media environment. Living nature may be separated from the world of urban man and turned into media experiences. It is possible to produce the animal images and nature experiences of metropolitan people entirely through consciousness technology, multimedia, nature films and cyber-equipment. Mind engineers and consciousness technicians living within their own technosystems produce new global bear experiences, and bear researchers new institutionalised explanations (Sarmela 1991b; 2002; c.f. Kennedy 1992). Bioscience and media culture are again changing reality, man's experiential world and ideas of the bear.

The bear is involved as modern man adjusts to global market economy and unavoidability of universal development. Natural or wild animals are placed in carefully monitored reserves, in a global technosystem that supervises them from cradle to termination. They are animals that man has saved from extinction, from victimization of his own species, man's great invasion of nature. Bears serve biotechnological research, the tourist industry, and international culture of protection of predatory animals. In nature pictures, they are something primordial, older than the human species; they are exotic, "other" beings, strange animal cultures that no longer exist in man's living environment. Wild animals are displaced by pets, they determine ideas of a physical and psychological animal, and they are developed more and more to adapt to human living, to become like humans. New animal stories and heroic narratives describe man's own pets, a genre of animal fairy tales is created around them, used by urban man to erase everyday reality and to transport his life, soul, to some other, happy world.

Ever more technically perfect nature media provide much more intensive animal experiences than a personal visit to techno-nature or nature reserves. In the virtual reality created by consciousness industry, the fauna can be transformed to become scientific-technological myths and illusions, Donald Ducks, ever-happy animal clowns, amazing creatures of computer games, monsters that are beaten by the human hero. It is possible to transfer into virtual animals all the positive cultural communication used by the consciousness industry at any given time to control consumers. For metropolitan man, life of animals may ultimately be something similar to that in cartoons and animated films. They again become fairytale creatures, which think, act and live a life as happy for

the species as people, enjoying all services produced by new technology. Extinct animals may be recreated, like dinosaurs in films, and media animals are free, wild and happy like in beer advertisements, they are saved into a new good life, like in scientific documentaries.

In the burgeoning flood of multimedia mental images, the bear also provides a boundless resource. Everybody can resurrect all the nostalgia and natural romanticism he knows has gone, or by turning a switch shut off the unnaturality, the evil that in reality surrounds the lives of animals. Everybody can be the master of his own animal images, choose his pet animals and the nature myths he wants to experience; believe in his own bear stories or the explanations that are fashionable, useful, necessary in terms of believability of culture, at the time.

## 6. Discontinuity of culture

### **The bear in human ecosystems**

The locus of the bear has changed along with turning of the history of the human ecosystems. (1) In the hunting era, the bear was an animal that was hunted or slain ritually, and the fundamental idea of the drama was recreation of the natural environment: continuing of the bear's life and the resurrection of nature every spring into a new life. In the ecosystem of Nordic hunters, one of the cultural basic structures was restoration: reincarnation of man and game animals, the protecting of the future of Nordic hunters and fishers. The hunting rite with its narratives supported the norms of the hunting community, or man's kinship with the bear, the unity of their destiny in nature. Through ritualization of hunting, the bear resource was adopted under religious control and used to prevent hunting anarchy, disorder of culture.

In agrarian cultures, the position of the bear became quite different. It became a predatory beast, potential danger, man's ecological competitor, who was gradually eliminated from nature controlled by man. (2) In the environment of swidden farmers, the bear moved a part of sorcerer culture. In charge of repelling the bear was the sorcerer, new religious role player, one of whose crucial tasks was to separate man's living environment from wild nature. Swidden farmers did not yet strive to destroy the bear to extinction, but to create a supernatural boundary between human environment and wilderness, between domestic animals and beasts of prey. The sorcerer's instruments were rites and incantations, which were used to possess the bear's power and "mind". (3) Agrarian peasant society already systematically destroyed beasts of prey from its environment. The Christian village community was an organization culture maintaining severe morality and cultural order. In the dualistic environment of the time, the bear was placed on the same side as the devil, which everywhere preyed on and threatened Christian man. In the hierarchy of agrarian cultures, "wild nature" was in its entirety removed to the opposite side of man, from the era of utility (1700s), man had the right and duty of refining nature, getting rid of uselessness; nature, too, had to correspond to the requirements of a good Christian human environment.

The worldviews of agrarian cultures are continued by (4) the tradition of technicized society. Nature was subjugated for technology, and the bear itself was one of the first victims of technological development. In Western so-called high culture, bear folklore was replaced by hunting literature or scientific-technological explanations, statistics of damage caused by the bear. Bear mythology served to reinforce structures of technological development society. (5) In postlocal world culture, the bear is transferred into

the global technosystem of nature management, it becomes an animal to protect and supply information, living in the media environment like man. The bear exists in nature films or lives as a bear mutant in the world narratives of consciousness industry. In the new environment, bear stories comply with the expectations of "information consumers"; culturally significant bear feast must be a media event. But there are no structural or functional connections between the cultures that created the celestial bear and the TV bear, and people's experiences of the environment are totally different. In every structural change, the bear has been placed in a new environment; the long structures break off, cultural continuity does not exist.

Finnish bear folklore reflects each era's religious and worldview system, starting from shamanism and ending with the development belief of Western society. In Arctic hunting societies, the shaman was the enactor of the social drama. He had to have a message of outlook to the listeners, people of his own time. The shaman controlled souls, reincarnation of the bear, and freed his community from fear of the unknown future. He made the myth, the bear's fate, reality, but led the bear's soul back to its original home, maintained the cycle of life. People still wanted to classify the bear with humans, include it in the kinship system. In cultivating and animal husbandry societies, the message of bear peijaiset is fear. The new provider of ecological explanations, the sorcerer, removed the fear of cattle owners; he was capable of repelling the bear, of chasing it away from the farmer's living environment.

After the advent of effective firearms, death of even the largest game animals became a mechanical performance. The keys of life and death were transferred to technology. Belief in technology displaced belief in man being a part of nature and accountable for killing the bear to gods of nature or to the primeval dam of all bears. Hunting industry has not needed explanations of the hereafter; in the culture it maintains, the bear is crucified on the wall of the hunting lodge. And people no longer needed to respect the bear's supernatural guardian, not the celestial bear's special privileges, nor to take care of continuation of its life, of the eternal cycle of all existence. Man has professed justifications for slaying the bear and exploiting nature. The myths of natural cultures do not talk about economic gain or development. Man of the scientific-technological development culture defines the bear's ecology, its natural value, assumes the right to monitor the bear's life in the carefully structured environment that can still be given over to the bear's species and its genetic heritage.

*Table 1*

### **The bear in the human environment**

<b><i>Culture</i></b>	<b><i>Meaning of rite</i></b>	<b><i>Symbolic technique</i></b>	<b><i>Bear image</i></b>	<b><i>Rite core</i></b>	<b><i>Actors</i></b>
<b>Nordic hunting culture</b>	reincarnation of bear	dealing with soul	celestial origin	ritualization of slaying	hunters (shaman)
<b>Bear's clan</b>	membership creation	dealing with kinship	man's ancestor	ritualization of kinship unity	clan
<b>Swidden culture</b>	repelling the bear	dealing with powers	evil origin	ritualization of repelling	sorcerer
<b>Peasant culture</b>	destruction of bear	dealing with fear	destructive animal	ritualization of human activity	hunt master community
<b>Industrial</b>	killing	dealing with	beast of	killing	heroic

<b>culture</b>	experience	firearm	prey	technology	hunter
<b>Postlocal culture</b>	bear experience (virtual)	dealing with man's consciousness	member of nature	ritualization of consciousness. technology	consciousn. technician, meritocrat

### Structural change into future

In the Finnish cultural ecosystems, the bear folklore does not continuously renew itself, as historically oriented evolutionists or reproductionists like to suggest. Under structural change of the human environment, the bear has wind up into a new position; it is analysed differently, both linguistically and in man's thinking and mental imagery. Man's cultural explanations, ideas and symbols are "Umwelt"-bound, they reinforce the ecological order, hierarchy of resources, or provide ultimate explanations on man's relationship with his environment. Bear resources must also adapt to the new environmental demands, acquire a new context, otherwise they will lose their cultural significance and cease to exist. Every ecosystem has its own great configurations, worldviews, texts or utopias on security of life and the purpose of man and nature.

I do not consider as fundamental the adaptation of human communities to surrounding nature, the habitat, but to reality, those economic, political and social conditions that the natural environment also impacts upon. The real environment of cultures has been continuous change, and man has not been able to adapt to some existing state, but to a future that is within sight. To me, culture does not consist of traditions maintained by societies, but of human activity, directed at creation and maintenance of a secure future in a constantly changing environment. Man has had his own position (niche), whence he views his environment and creates his life choices, his ecological strategy.

In my works I have distinguished local, delocal (centralized) and postlocal human environments. Local cultures adapted primarily to their own geographical environments, local natural resources and the local future. They created cultural responses, coping strategies that functioned within their own local sphere or domain. Thus were created ethnic cultures, their distinguishing features; the many thousands of human forms of living, village landscapes, different languages and dialects, different folk music, the whole diversity of local cultures that has existed on Earth. The Second World War was followed by a structural change that has reached people's life environments everywhere in the world. Industrializing nations began to assimilate into an external, delocalizing environment: demands of international trade, scientific-technological development, or a utopia of development. The environment was somewhere outside locality, and living conditions of individuals, too, were determined outside local communities, now even nation states. In the delocal era, national culture superseded local communities, and in international competition, national economies have been continually forced to grow and centralize; the basic technological and cultural model of society has been the production line, an endlessly rolling production process.

Delocal culture consists of centralizing organizations, technosystems controlling various areas of life, and that everywhere adapt to structurally uniform international development. Local people are replaced by developers, organizers, bureaucrats, technocrats, new ecological winners, in one word: meritocrats. Centralization has spread across all areas of culture. Local communities have been superseded by centralized production and administrative structures: central administration, central offices, central organizations, central stores, central schools, shopping centres, cultural centres, centres of excellence and centres of well-being. In Finland, for example, local structures have almost completely disappeared; culture is centralizing, fusing, integrating. Centralization is the cultural law of meritocracy.

Table 2

**Schema of structural change****A. Local culture**

Local environment - local resources and energy - local know-how and technology  
 Local means of production - ideology of self-sufficiency - local division of production - mutual neighbourly assistance - natural occupational years and work periods  
 Local communities - village administration – membership of family and neighbourhood - community control - local hierarchy  
 Local religion - village temples - family rites and rites of passage within village - ethics of fellow man - community morality  
 Community tradition - village festivals (shared meals) - temple festivals - village weddings - village funerals - housewarming parties  
 Local identity - local language (dialect) - local concepts, cognitions and categories  
 Folklore supporting community - localization of storytelling - moralistic narratives - local heroes - local history

**B. Delocal culture**

Non-local (national) environment - external resources and energy - scientific-technological skill and knowledge - uniform education  
 Mass industry - production line technology - national division of production - occupational differentiation - industrial concept of time, schedules  
 Centralizing national culture - metropolitan structures - central administration - central organizations (corporations) - municipal centres - operational centres - state control  
 National developmental ideology - national developmental ritualism - political sociodramas - state, national cultural hierarchy - ethics internal to technosystems - individualistic morality  
 National cultural industry - occupational culture - media culture (TV) - mass events (festivals) - cultural services  
 Meritocracy - organizational integration and identity - language of technosystems, official national language - political worldviews - national utopias  
 National media lore - national art and entertainment - consumer culture - national heroes and idols - national history

**C. Postlocal culture**

Global environment - urban techno nature - global resources - universal know-how and education  
 Transnational production structures - digital technology, space technology - automation, robotics, biotechnology  
 Continental states - universal technosystems - Internet, global networks - universal science - global databases (“World Brain”) - global hierarchy  
 Planetary developmental ideology - supernatural engineering, re-created flora and fauna, cyborgs, nano-machinery, chemical consciousness - scientific-technological ethics - biological morality  
 Universal consciousness industry - scientific-technological mind control - shared audio-visual world of experiences and symbols  
 Universal man - world language - global concepts and categories - universal utopias of the future  
 Representations of world culture - transnational heroes, world leaders - world history - finalization

(Sarmela e.g.1989b; 1991c; 2005.)

The structural change from locality to over-locality has affected all elements of culture, society, lives of individual people, religions, explanations of existence. The real religion of modern society is faith in development, which meritocracy has made a global church. In the postlocal environment, innovation and technological development equal utmost power and highest rationality, the global culture is directed by the miracles of development religion. Faith in development gives technosystems the right to define their own truth and morality, shared benefit and the right development. New technology and scientific development determine also bear knowledge and it's the position in the international technosystem of wildlife protection or consciousness industry.

In the postlocal world, centralization continues and nation states are replaced by continental states, enveloped by a global market economy and universal development. Universal technosystems take ever more total control of a certain living environment, its knowledge base, technology and future. Cultural diversity consists of ever more autonomous production, administrative and cultural technosystems that no longer adapt to a local or national environment. What is more, this development cannot stop until nature and man are totally under the control of technosystems. The latest great structural change was based on oil, technology of machine. Now the fossil fuels are running out, we will move on to the post-oil era, and societies will be faced possibly with even greater structural change than the post-war one. The postlocal cultural system becomes monopolized into a structurally uniform world culture of technosystems, the future of all nations is governed by the eschatology of development religion, the same illusions of the paradise of a technologically high-secure future, and development cannot end in anything other than perfection, finalization.

## Note

### Sources of the Finnish-Ugric bear rites

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Appendix: Ritva Poom 1982