

## KHANTY BEAR-FEAST SONGS COLLECTED BY WOLFGANG STEINITZ

[Aado Lintrop](#)



The Ob-Ugrians distribute bear-feast songs into three categories: bear songs (*voiaare* in Steinitz publications, cf. *uieeryg* in the Mansi language), play songs (*tangetep* by Steinitz, *tulyglap* in Mansi), and songs for calling and presenting deities (Steinitz does not provide a common nomination; *kaastaneeryg*, *pupyg eeryg* in Mansi). The first volume of *Ostjakische Volksdichtung und Erzählungen aus Zwei Dialekten*, the repertoire collected by Wolfgang Steinitz and published in the Publication Series of the Estonian Learned Society in Tartu in 1939 (the second volume was never published in Estonia), includes thirty three song texts from Yamgort by the river Synya and from Lokhtogurt by the river Ob. Among them twenty two are definitely connected with the bear-ceremony, but also songs like *Little Afanasyev*, *the little master* and others probably belonged to the bear-feast repertoire. Among the published song texts are three bear songs (the song from Yamgort is actually a fragment), eight songs for calling and presenting deities, and six songs are directly referred to as play songs. Apparently also songs *Loon* and *Cuckoo woman* fall under the latter category. But it is not completely certain, because in the Mansi bear-ritual repertoire the song about the loon appears among the bear songs (*uieeryg*) (Kannisto, Liimola 1958: 86).

The majority of songs originate from Lokhtogurt village that is close by Sherkaly. All the songs were performed in 1936 by Kiril Maremyanin, an 18-year-old student of the Leningrad Institute of Nordic Peoples, whom Steinitz regarded to be an excellent connoisseur of the oral tradition. It should be mentioned that a great number of texts (seventeen) were written down according to the informant's singing, therefore there occur complementary syllables, performed in order to match the lyrics to the melody. Text number 25 is particularly rich in such syllables, and it has also been published with an Estonian translation in a collection *Leegajused* (pp. 11-16) in 1970. For example:

*wōjem taitija χūr jam nom'sema*  
*χotā tam vōχansijttata:*  
*tūntijen turije miyen posata,*  
*wāsijen turije miyen posata!*  
*tūs nāi ankem in jōntijtamā*  
*šoprijen woχije tūs jam χōpā,*  
*wōi tam tēf'f iyamen-šiyā,*  
*tūs nāi ankem in jōntijtamā*  
*kāmijen woχije tūs jam χōpā,*  
*wōi tam tēf'f iyijātmemā.*

The alert good sense of mine, of the beast's(1)  
 where to does it beckons:  
 to a winding creek (with) goose cries  
 to a winding creek (with) duck cries!  
 into a good boat of *syopr*-silver,  
 sown by dextrous women,  
 I sit, the beast  
 into a good boat of *kam*-silver(2)  
 sown by dextrous women  
 I sit, the beast.  
 (Steinitz 1939: 310-311, verses 28-37).

Judging by the notation printed in *Leegajused* (also in Rūütel 1977: 479), it is unfortunately apparent that the published text does not correspond to the actual song performed, because alterations of syllable length corresponding to the melody have not been taken into account. While singing, a long syllable may fall in a shorter position, and a short syllable (frequently even the complementary syllable) may be prolonged.

**Bear songs.** The songs called bear songs are performed during the first part of the day of the ceremony, they describe how the bear was let down on earth, its life in the forest, the arrival of a hunter and the killing of the bear. The hunters are usually various mythological beings. The songs are performed while standing in a line, holding hands and stooping, the singers wear special headgear, gloves and overalls. First, let's take a closer look at text no. 25, which describes the bear's life on earth. In this song, unlike several others, the bear does not violate prohibitions (does not destroy human sanctuaries or graves, nor eat the dead) but eats nicely berries and builds itself a lair in the autumn. He does not attack people either. Nevertheless, a hunter appears - the Tiny-elder-with-the-height-of-a-mouse. After the bear is killed, a text typical to bear songs follows, describing several rituals connected with bear hunting (a definite number of calls are shouted, the bear's buttons are opened(3)), how the bear is taken to the village and seated in a house, how it is offered food and drink, and how people dance and sing to honour it. The beginning of text no. 26 is rather similar, cf.:

25

My father, bright, with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge,  
has spelled me,  
my bright, with six roof trees, with openings under the ridge  
father has spelled me.  
A luminous summer, hot, long and good,  
Turem created,  
a summer, hot and causing sweat, long and good,  
Turem created,  
a summer, thick with mosquitoes, painful, good,  
Turem created,  
a summer, thick with horseflies, agonizing,  
Turem created.

In several swamps with crow beak  
tread I, the beast,  
in several swamps of magpie beaks  
tread I, the beast.  
(Steinitz 1939: 309-310, verses 1-16).

26

The bright, with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge,(4)  
my father,  
the bright, with six roof trees, with openings under the ridge,  
my father;  
a luminous summer, hot, long and good,  
Turem created,  
a summer, sweating sweat, long and good,  
Turem created,  
a summer, thick with mosquitoes, painful, good,  
Turem created,  
a summer, thick with horseflies, painful,  
Turem created.

The younger brother of the swamp-beast,(5)  
little brother,  
in several swamps of crow beak  
tread I, the beast,  
in several swamps of magpie beak  
tread I, the beast.  
(Ibid.: 320-321, verses 1-18).

Then, after the stereotype verses about the bear sitting *in the syopyr-silver, kam-silver boat*, follows a different turn. At first, it appears to be a she-bear with two cubs. The bears meet some fishermen who start to chase them, and finally kill them. Again the appropriate calls are shouted. Then it turns out that the hunters come from the summer-village Alyoshkino, where to they take the bears. They are greeted with "hands covered in tinder-smoke and grease", the feast lasts for a proper number of days, and the stomachs of the bear cubs are filled to the edge. The mentioning of a concrete village and some other details suggest that some of the verses in the text no. 26 originate from a song performed at a bear ritual in the summer-village Alyoshkino, to celebrate the killing of a she-bear and two cubs. Perhaps the informant had himself participated at that festival, and performed as many songs sung there as he could recall.

**Songs for calling spirits and deities** are performed in the latter part of the festival day and usually alone, with the singer's face partly covered. The first song is number 29, *The song of the Lord-with-tributes-of-spring-squirrel-skin*, where the World Surveyor Man is introduced. His abode is described with the following words:

Grown in the morning  
 on the headland grown by golden lawn,  
 grown in the evening  
 on the headland grown by golden lawn;  
 on hills covered with the feathers of spring grouse rooster,  
 on hills covered with the feathers of autumn grouse rooster;  
 in the height of a running cloud,  
 in the height of a striding cloud,  
 my sacred house in moon colours,  
 my sacred house in sun colours  
 on a golden chain's dear end  
 hangs there,  
 on a golden silver's dear end  
 it hangs there.

When from the southern throat a throatly wind  
 starts to blow,  
 with the clinking sound of a little silver,  
 towards the dear waters of the northern Ob  
 it moves there.

When from the northern throat a throatly wind  
 starts to blow,  
 with the banging sound of a big silver,  
 towards the dear waters of the southern Ob  
 it moves there.

In the inside  
 of the sacred house in moon colours,  
 of the sacred house in sun colours,  
 close by  
 the hoofly table with golden hooves,  
 upon  
 the hoofly table with golden hooves  
 into the sacred book of spring squirrel hide,  
 into the sacred book of autumn squirrel hide  
 seven golden letters  
 the master is writing,  
 six golden letters  
 he is writing there.

(Ibid.: 339-341, verses 1-37).

The south and the north are connected with the river Ob in this text, the word *numen* 'upper' signifies the former, and *owsen* 'mouthward' signifies the latter. As we can see later on, the silver chain is referred to also in several other calling songs, but always in connection with the cradle in which one or the other deity claims to have descended from the sky. A house is hanging from the chain only in the songs of the World Surveyor Man and of the younger son of *Kaltash*. In the texts by Steinitz,

the epithets *in moon colours* and *in sun colours* are associated with various things belonging to different deities. But the house in sun colours appears also in Mansi songs as the abode of the sky god and his children (Great Bear: 109). The tables in the house of the World Surveyor Man are either *with golden hooves*, *with golden legs* (in texts by Steinitz), or *one-legged* (Kannisto, Liimola 1959: 37). It remains unclear, why does Steinitz translate the word *wokhe* in verse 13 as 'copper', while everywhere else it denotes silver. In verses 17 and 22 he has translated the same word even as 'pieces of silver'. The alternating words *running* and *striding* in parallel verses 7 and 8 stand for movement. The same word-pair is used to describe the abode of the the Sacred Town Elder - a town in the shape of a running horse, a town in the shape of a striding horse.

The song continues with a description of the Lord-with-tributes-of-spring-squirrel-skin hearing about the bear feast and preparing himself for the road. As the same verses occur in other songs for calling deities, the song of the mistress of the Kazym river (text no. 32) may serve as a comparison:

29

With the good ear of the alert long-tailed duck  
I am hearing now:  
by the dear waters of the northern Ob  
by the fine waters of the northern Ob;  
by the three forking waters,  
by the four forking waters;  
by the diving? waters of the goosefeather man,  
by the diving? waters of the duckfeather man  
it is rumoured, the jolly house  
of the wide-waisted wild beast of the swamp is  
celebrated.

Two good boots made of reindeer bull's heel skin  
I, the master, put on  
my toely foot with five toes,  
on my toely foot with six toes  
I, the master, put.

The coat with the black beast luck,  
the coat with the red beast luck  
on my dear sable shoulders  
I, the master, put.  
The belt with waterfish luck,  
the belt with wild beast luck  
I, the master, put on my waist.

The cap with the autumn fox edge,  
the cap with the spring fox edge  
on his fair? head with hundred hairs  
he raises there.

(Steinitz 1939: 342-343, verses 60-85).

32

With the good ear of the alert long-tailed duck  
I, the mistress, am hearing:  
by the dear waters of the southern Ob

it is rumoured, the jolly house  
of the wide-waisted wild beast of the swamp is  
celebrated.

In the black beast's affluent lair,  
in the red beast's affluent lair  
my fair head with hundred hairs  
I, the mistress, raise.

On my toely foot with five toes,  
two good boots made of reindeer bull's heel skin  
I, the mistress, put,  
on my toely foot with six toes  
two good boots made of reindeer bull's heel skin  
I, the mistress, put.

The coat with the black beast luck,  
the coat with the red beast luck  
on my dear hundred shoulder-ends  
I, the mistress, put.

The belt with the black beast luck,  
I, the mistress, put,  
the belt with the red beast luck  
I, the mistress, put.

The sacred scarf in moon colours  
on my fair head with hundred hairs  
I, the mistress, put,  
the sacred scarf in sun colours,  
I, the mistress, put.

(Ibid.: 364-366, verses 25-53).

One aspect worth mentioning is that the festival house is situated to the north of the abode of the World Surveyor Man, but to the south of the Kazym river mistress. If we happen to deal here with the repertoire of a concrete bear feast, that must have taken place between the estuaries of Belogorye and Kazym, where Lokhtotgurt, the native village of the singer is actually situated.

The texts begin to differ substantially when telling about the different ways one or the other deity moves about. It is quite understandable, as the only one who rides the sacred horse in moon colours and in sun colours is the World Surveyor Man.

The sacred beast in moon colours,  
the sacred beast in sun colours  
with the dear end of the golden saddle  
he saddles there,  
with the dear end of the golden bridle  
he bridles there.  
(Ibid.: 343-344, verses 86-91).

The bully herd with a hundred reindeer bulls  
I do have,  
the beastly herd with a hundred animals  
I do have.  
Two year-old reindeers born by the same mother  
I do not need:  
the little mistress with braids as a forest-spirit girl,  
three long steps of the forest-spirit girl  
I, the mistress, take,  
four long steps of the forest-spirit girl  
I, the mistress, take.  
(Ibid.: 366, verses 58-68).

The song ends with describing the deity's arrival at the feast house. For the sake of comparison, in the following is presented also a similar fragment from the song of the Kazym mistress.

(Around) the house made by the son of the  
primeval man  
the house with seven rafters,  
the house with six rafters  
with seven times like the day makes its rounds,  
with six times like the day makes its rounds  
I, the master, walk around.

Built by the son of the primeval man  
the door made of larchwood

with my fingerly hand of five fingers,  
with my fingerly hand of six fingers  
I, the master, open.

With the hands covered in tinder-fire and  
beaver-grease  
the master walks around,  
with the hands covered in beaver-grease fire  
the master walks around.  
In shabby footwear a lot of men,  
in shabby fur-coats a lot of women  
heads without caps with seven ends,  
heads without caps with six ends,  
they do stand there.

(Around) the house made by the son of the  
primeval man  
the house with seven rafters,  
the house with six rafters  
with seven times like the day makes its rounds,  
I, the mistress, walk around,  
with six times like the day makes its rounds  
I, the mistress, walk around.  
Built by the son of the primeval man  
the door made of larchwood,  
the door made of sprucewood  
with my fingerly hand of five fingers,  
I, the mistress, open.  
Into the noisy house of little boys,  
into the jolly house of little girls,  
I, the mistress, enter.  
With the hands covered in tinder-fire and beaver-  
grease(6)  
I, the mistress, was greeted.

"My several women sitting in the house,  
my several men sitting in the house!  
To the health of the life of little girls  
you are sitting now,  
to the health of the life of little boys

When the five-stringed string-tree's  
lowest string is resounded,  
the melody voice of the lowest spirits  
may sound there;  
when the upper string is resounded,  
the melody voice of the upper-most spirits  
might have sounded there.

My several women sitting in the house,  
what can I order you to do now?

The dance of the waterfish-luck,  
my dance I order you (to dance),  
the dance of the wild-beast luck  
I order you (to dance).

After my coming  
when the disastrous, great and sacred womb (= disease)

rises onto the surface,  
when the black, great and sacred womb  
rises onto the surface,  
in the sleeve of the sleevey fur-coat  
may you get shelter,  
in the lap of the laply fur-coat  
may you find shelter.

(Ibid.: 344-347, verses 104-109).

As we can see, in the texts are mainly varying the number of parallel verses, their manner of alternating, their sequence, and the differences caused by the sex and the role of both supranormal beings. The differences in wording are minute. In addition to different abodes, in the texts present another important divergence: in the song of the Lord-with-tributes-of-spring-squirrel-skin the hero is not referred to directly under that name, but in the song of the Kazym river mistress there occur the following lines:

One of my names is called:  
the Little Black-cat-shaped Mistress,  
the Little White-cat-shaped Mistress -  
my name is known;  
the Little Mistress of the Sable-bitch Hiss,  
the Little Mistress of the Sable-dog Hiss -  
my name is known.

(Ibid.: 366-367, verses 69-76).

It is followed by a song by *Kaltash-imi* (no. 30), which begins with a similar description of the abode:

By the nutritive Ob of the running of male sturgeon  
by the nutritive Ob,  
by the nutritive Ob of the running male white salmon,  
by the nutritive Ob,  
there begins  
the winding creek (with) goose cries,

you are sitting now!

When the five-stringed string-tree's  
lowest string is resounded,  
the melody voice of the lowest spirits  
may sound there;  
when the upper string is resounded,  
the melody voice of the upper-most spirits  
might have sounded there!(7)

What can I order you to do?

The dance of the waterfish-luck,  
I order you (to dance),  
the dance of the wild-beast luck  
I order you (to dance).(8)

After my departure,

may there not come  
the disastrous, great and sacred womb that attacks  
you.

In the lap of the laply fur-coat  
may you protect yourself,  
in the sleeve of the sleevey fur-coat  
may you protect yourself.(9)

(Ibid.: 368-369, verses 90-131).

the winding creek (with) duck cries  
 begins there.  
 The creek shouted by the goose cries,  
 the creek shouted by the duck cries,  
 by the winding creek,  
 on the currently bank struck by the current,  
 on the windy bank struck by the wind  
 I, the mistress, reside.  
 With the little loon's nest that has risen to the surface on its own,  
 in the place of a hummock with the little loon's nest,  
 with the big loon's nest that has risen to the surface on its own,  
 in the place of a hummock with the big loon's nest  
 I, the mistress, reside.  
 In the place where seven spruces stand,  
 in the place where six spruces stand  
 I, the mistress, reside.  
 In the house covered with bearskin,  
 in the house covered with animal-skin  
 I, the mistress, reside.  
 The Little Angry Mistress-dispatching-girls,  
 the Little Angry Mistress-dispatching-boys -  
 my name is known.  
 To little girls, long years of life  
 I, the mistress, ordain;  
 to little boys, long and good years of life  
 I, the mistress, ordain.  
 (Ibid.: 347-348, verses 1-33).

Again one of the euphemistic names of the hero is mentioned here. In the Ob-Ugric mythology, namely *Kaltash* is the deity who keeps account of the length of people's lives and dispatches the souls of the children to be born. She is often characterized as *dispatching girls* and *the little angry mistress* (cf.: in Khanty *eewien kitte n'erang ai nai* 'the little angry mistress dispatching girls', in Mansi *saatkalts n'erang ai shan'in* 'angry mistress Sevenkaltesh, my mother'). In his translation, Steinitz has given the word *khoor* an insufficiently narrow meaning. Why else does his German translation of the song begin with the following words: *An der Seite des nahrungsreichen Ob, des von Stör und Elch durchschwommenen...* In my opinion, in addition to the meaning of reindeer bull, the word *khoor* in Khanty stands also for a male animal (cf. Mansi *khaar amp* 'he-dog', *khaar kat* 'tomcat', *khaar luv* 'stallion'). The hummock with the loon nest that has risen onto the surface on its own refers to the myth of the genesis of the world, and is particularly connected with the abode of *Kaltash*.<sup>(10)</sup>

In the song *Kaltash* hears that the bear feast is celebrated by *the dear water of the southern Ob*. Again the abode of the deity is placed in the right quarter of the horizon in relation to the native village of the singer. As in all other calling songs, the hero of the song prepares for the journey. The description of getting dressed is similar to the *Song of the Lord-with-tributes-of-spring-squirrel-skin*, though *a large scarf in moon colours, a large scarf in sun colours* is added here. To the contrary of other deities, *Kaltash* and his youngest son (the latter in text no. 31) harness *two good reindeer calves born by the same mother*. Verses 95-155 describe *Kaltash-imi's* arrival and stay at the feast house similarly to the corresponding verses in other calling songs.

Text no. 31 is the song of the younger son of *Kaltash-imi*. It begins as follows:

The winding creek (with) goose cries,  
 the winding creek (with) duck cries  
 begins there;  
 seven lakes with one mouth,  
 six lakes with one mouth  
 begin there;  
 in the end of the endly lake,  
 by Turem, with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge,<sup>(11)</sup>  
 by my father, now,  
 in the height of a running cloud,  
 in the height of a striding cloud,  
 on a golden chain's dear end  
 the sacred house in moon colours,  
 is lowered down there,  
 the sacred house in sun colours  
 is lowered down there.  
 (Ibid.: 354-355, verses 1-16).

In the following, it is described how the deity sits at his *sacred desk with golden hooves*, and reads the *sacred book in moon colours, in sun colours*, and how the house swings on the chain with the sound of jingling silver. This description concurs with *the Song of the Lord-with-tributes-of-spring-squirrel-skin* under no. 29, but it is continued by an elaboration:

With the good ear of the alert long-tailed duck  
 from the dear water of the northern Ob  
 I may hear,  
 the short and good soul of the little boy  
 has become short, it is rumoured,  
 the short and good soul of the little girl  
 has become short, it is rumoured.  
 The Master-having-mercy-on-little-boys -  
 my name is known,  
 the Master-having-mercy-on-little-girls -  
 my name is known.  
 To Kaltash who dispatches girls,  
 to my mother, to my mother  
 in a soft prayer as the man in sable fur  
 I turn to now,  
 in a soft prayer as the man in fur animal fur  
 I turn to now:  
 "Little Angry Woman-dispatching-girls,  
 listen to me now!  
 To the soft prayer as the man in sable fur  
 recited by me  
 listen to now!  
 From the lap of your laply fur-coat  
 you have to take out (the prayer),



from the sleeve of your sleeveily fur-coat  
 you have to take out (the prayer)!  
 On the dear water of the northern Ob  
 the short and good soul of the little boy  
 has become short,  
 the short and good soul of the little girl  
 has become short.  
 To the end of the ordained age add,  
 ordain it to be continued,  
 to the end of the lived life add,  
 continue writing it!"  
 (Ibid.: 356-358, verses 37-71).

Again the following part describes the process of getting dressed and the road to the feast house, an in the performance stereotype verses are used. In this text the majority of details refer to the World Surveyor Man, who is believed to be the mediator between the sky god, *Kaltash*, and the people, and in several places he is even regarded to be the youngest son of *Kaltash*. The only circumstance that makes it uncertain whether it can be regarded as the song for calling the World Surveyor Man is the absence of the horse, his usual unseparable roadster.

The next song is of the mistress of the Kazym river (32), which begins with the announcement that the heroine of the song is ordained (spelled) by Torum - *bright, with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge*, and she is lowered above the lake *in a cradle with a golden bow, on the golden chain's dear end*, and the lake is *round like a grouse's crop, round like a duck's crop*, and she is lowered *on a floating hummock with the little loon's nest, with the big loon's nest*. The verses 25 to 53, and 58 to 68, presented above for comparison, describe in an already familiar way the mistress who is getting dressed and preparing for the journey. The verses 90 to 131 describe the arrival at the house *with seven rafters, with six rafters*, and so on. To other elements is added also *the sacred scarf in moon colours, the sacred scarf in sun colours*.

Also the heroine of *the Song of the Little-golden-crossbill-shaped Mistress* (33) has been lowered down by her father, Torum - *bright, with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge, in a cradle with a golden bow, on the golden chain's dear end*, but her abode is the bank of *the river affluent in herring, the river affluent in wild beasts, of the seven lakes with one mouth, the six lakes with one mouth*, where she resides in *the affluent lair of the black beast, in the affluent lair of the red beast*.<sup>(12)</sup> The only difference in the verses 30-71 in describing the process of dressing and preparing for the road appears to be the mistress's turning herself into a golden crossbill and heading for the feast house while flying from tree to tree. Besides the hands *with five fingers, with six fingers*, there are parallel verses about *soft hands of sable fur, soft hands of fur animal fur*. The song ends with a declaration:

The long and good life of little girls  
 you may live,  
 the long and good life of little boys  
 you may live!  
 (Ibid.: 377, verses 154-157).

The following text (no. 34) is *the Song of the Lord-devouring-little-girls*, and here the hero, the Lord residing *on the sacred sea with dark water* is undoubtedly the master of the underworld, *Kul'*. Like the Little-golden-crossbill-shaped Mistress, he also resides *in the affluent lair of the black*

*beast, in the affluent lair of the red beast.* Although his setting forth is described similarly to the text cited above, he actually travels to the feast house in a different way:

to the seven boats with birchbark boards,  
 to the six boats with birchbark boards  
 I, the master, sit.  
 From the seven towns by the river Ob,  
 from the six towns by the river Ob  
 little boys,  
 little girls, taking and devouring them  
 I, the master, pass (through).  
 (Ibid.: 381, verses 80-87).

As a matter of fact, he arrives also from the north, which is quite natural as his abode is the sea into which Ob flows. The following text does not differ greatly from the other calling songs. Although he happens to be the master of the underworld, he nevertheless promises good hunting and fishing luck, and protection against diseases:

After my coming  
 the affluent path of waterfish,  
 of wild beast  
 you must walk,  
 you must tread,  
 you must live!  
 The long life of little boys,  
 the long life of little girls  
 you must live,  
 you must be!  
 After my coming  
 if the disastrous, great and sacred womb (= disease)  
 rises onto the surface,  
 if the terrifying, great and sacred womb  
 rises onto the surface,  
 in the lap of the laply fur-coat  
 may you get shelter,  
 in the sleeve of the sleevey fur-coat  
 may you find shelter.  
 (Ibid.: 383-384, verses 132-150).

The text no. 36 has the heading *the Song of the Sacred Town Elder*. It begins as follows:

By my bright, with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge  
 father,  
 in a winding cradle with an iron bow  
 I have been lowered down,  
 in a winding cradle with a silver bow  
 I have been lowered down,  
 on the iron chain's dear end,  
 on the copper chain's dear end  
 I have been lowered down,

the Lord-with-swamp-beast-claws,  
 the Lord-with-wild-beast-claws,  
 I, the master, have been lowered down.  
 By my bright, with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge,  
 by my bright, with six roof trees, with openings under the ridge  
 father,  
 I have been lowered down,  
 in the town with the shape of a running horse,  
 in the town with the shape of a striding horse,  
 I, the master, reside.  
 (Ibid.: 384-385, verses 1-21).

It must be pointed out, that the Sacred Town Elder often appears in song texts as the bear.<sup>(13)</sup> Therefore he is called *the Lord-with-swamp-beast-claws*, *the Lord-with-wild-beast-claws*. Starting from verse 30, the story is already familiar - the hero hears people celebrating the bear feast *by the dear water of upper Ob, by the three forking waters*. The Sacred Town Elder has his abode in the Sacred Town, which has been included among the official village names as Vezhakary, the equivalent in the Komi language. And it is actually situated to the north of Lokhtogurt. The dressing process is described in a stereotype way, but the Sacred Town Elder sets forth in the following manner:

The sacred form of the swamp-beast  
 I will obtain,  
 the sacred form of the wild beast  
 I will obtain.  
 In the seven cracks of the frozen soil,  
 in the six cracks of the frozen soil  
 I will walk on all fours.  
 Accompanied by a resounding sound,  
 by a cracking sound  
 like a burst of rain coming from afar,  
 like a burst of wind coming from afar  
 I will fall  
 on a ridge  
 of the size of one running reindeer bull.  
 (Ibid.: 387-388, verses 61-73).

After that follow familiar verses about opening the door of larchwood, and so on.

The last calling song among the published texts is no. 36 - *the song of the Joker of the Sacred Town*. It begins with the following words:

In the town of the shape of a running horse,  
 in the town of the shape of a striding horse,  
 where the Lord with wild-beast claws  
 resides,  
 by the seven hundred furry-eyed men,  
 by the six hundred furry-eyed men,

in the town roamed through by six hundred men, there,  
we live there.  
(Ibid.: 389-390, verses 1-8).

The main divergence from other songs is the extensive use of the first person plural form. For example:

In the back corner of the back-cornerly house,  
under the roof of the roofly house  
what are we ransacking for,  
what are we looking for?  
Boards covered with five skins (= skis)  
we are ransacking for there,  
boards covered with six skins  
we are looking for there.  
(Ibid.: 392, verses 57-64).

It is quite obvious that the joker uses skis to move about. There occur no other divergencies from the rest of the calling songs.

The next in turn are the so-called **play songs** *The forest spirit with two faces*, *Bringing the dead back to life*, *The boasting hunter and the menki-youth*, *Three hunters and the mish-woman*, and *The tribute collector*. Play songs are performed during the middle of the festival day, and the performers wear masks. A part of the activity is presented as dialogues in prose, with mime and dancing - that is, as a dramatic sketch. Only in the song about the boasting hunter the dramatic element is described to a certain extent, therefore it remains unknown what were the activities like during the rest of the songs.

In the song of the two-faced forest spirit (text no. 37), the arrival at the feast house, familiar from the calling songs, is repeated. Repeated are also the lines telling that while resounding the lower string, the melody of the lower spirits sounds, etc. And it is said that people dance for fishing and hunting luck.

*Bringing the dead back to life* (text no. 38) starts with the deceased telling the story about how he was killed by a severe illness and how he was placed in the coffin. Then the song continues:

When I shake my little bones,  
little beasts carry them away,  
when I shake my big bones,  
big beasts carry them away.  
After that,  
my soft prayer of the size of a sable  
where should I spread now,  
my soft prayer of the size of a fur animal  
where should I spread?  
(Ibid.: 400-401, verses 13-21).

Then follows a literal match to *the Song of the Lord-with-tributes-of-spring-squirrel-skin*:

Grown in the morning  
 on the headland grown by golden lawn,  
 grown in the evening  
 on the headland grown by golden lawn;  
 on hills covered with the feathers of spring grouse rooster,  
 on hills covered with the feathers of autumn grouse rooster,  
 there you reside,  
 the Lord-with-tributes-of-spring-squirrel-skin,  
 the Lord-with-tributes-of-autumn-squirrel-skin,  
 listen to me at last!  
 (Ibid.: 401, verses 22-31).

The deceased turns to *Kaltash-imi* in a similar manner:

The Little Angry Mistress-dispatching-girls,  
 the Little Angry Mistress-dispatching-boys -  
 listen to me at last!  
 (Ibid.: 402, verses 55-57).

After that, the deceased prays to the Sacred Town Elder:

The town of the shape of a running horse,  
 the town of the shape of a striding horse,  
 my soft prayer of the size of a sable  
 I spread in front of you,  
 my soft prayer of the size of a fur animal  
 I spread in front of you.  
 the Lord-with-swamp-beast-claws,  
 the Lord-with-wild-beast-claws,  
 from the womb-deep hole of the arctic fox,  
 from the knee-deep hole of the arctic fox,  
 if you will take me out,  
 seven black ones tied with one rope,  
 six black ones tied with one rope  
 I will sacrifice to you.  
 After that  
 the Lord-with-swamp-beast-claws,  
 the Lord-with-wild-beast-claws,  
 like a burst of rain coming from afar,  
 may you now fall down here,  
 like a burst of wind coming from afar  
 may you fall down here.  
 (Ibid.: 403-404, verses 77-97).

The Khantys living by the Ob river believed that the soul of the dying visited the abodes of *Kaltash* and the World Surveyor Man, before descending to the underworld. If they did not hold him back, the soul reached the Sacred Town Elder - the last one who could have stopped him from going to the domain of the deceased. (É. Schmidt 1989: 223).

In the German translation of the verses 94 and 96, the word *wie* is in brackets, as if it were missing in the original text. But the word *takhte* in the end of both verses means, in fact, 'like smb.' or 'in a way', cf. Mansi *takhol't* In the songs published by Steinitz, the Sacred Town Elder is the only one who moves (falls down) like a burst of rain or wind.[\(14\)](#)

*The boasting hunter and the menki-youth* (39) and *Three hunters and the mish-woman* are not that closely connected with other song texts. In the latter it is described how three hunters go hunting in a little boat, loaded with food. In the forest they see the following:

on the sandbank, white as snow  
 on it, on it,  
 the woman of waterfish-luck  
 is standing,  
 the woman of wild-beast-luck  
 is standing.  
 With her toothed mouth with ten teeth  
 she sings there,  
 with her toothed mouth with twenty teeth  
 she sings there:  
 "Three men travelling in spring,  
 for the luck of the waterfish  
 put me in (your boat),  
 for the luck of the wild beast  
 put me in (your boat)!"  
 (Steinitz 1939: 409, verses 27-41).

The men respond:

"The girl worth an unclean mistress,  
 what should we do with you?  
 Women bringing waterfish-luck  
 we do have already,  
 women bringing wild-beast-luck  
 we do have already.  
 One of your legs is the reindeer's hind leg,  
 one of your hands is the reindeer's fore leg,  
 you would fall through  
 the little four-arched boat (loaded) with the food,  
 you would fall through  
 the little three-arched boat with the food."  
 (Ibid.: 409-410, verses 42-53).

The men continue their journey. Everything is repeated twice. Then the *mish*-woman says:

"The three men travelling in spring,  
 listen to me now!  
 When you get into the middle  
 of the lake as round as the grouse crop,  
 when you get into the middle

of the lake as round as the duck crop,  
 may there come then  
 a little cloud of the size of whitefish,  
 may there hang  
 a little cloud of the size of whitefish.  
 The huge storm, coming from the sky -  
 may it blow up,  
 the bottom of the bottomly boat -  
 may it turn upwards.  
 May your song come to an end,  
 may your tale come to an end."  
 (Ibid.: 414-415, verses 136-151).

And so it happens. In the middle of the lake blows up a fierce storm and the boat keels over. The song ends with the words *pul' ,pul' ,pul' ,pul'* (glug, glug, glug, glug), the meaning of which should be quite clear. The song has a didactic undertone - the *mish*-woman, who appears in the form of an animal, often as a silver fox or a sable, is regarded to be the source of hunting luck, therefore the hunters should not have despised her.

The text no. 39 is didactic too. The hunter boasts in the forest that if he came across a three-year-old forest-giant boy, he would crush him *against the barkly tree with green bark, against the barkly tree with red bark*. Suddenly a three-year-old *menki*-boy is standing on the bank, whistling through his teeth. In the boat sits *the man cut from the navel, with the pale face, bitten by lice, with the pale face bitten by fleas*. The last line is once again *pul' ,pul' ,pul' ,pul'*.

**Conclusion.** The Khanty bear-feast songs collected and published by Steinitz are undoubtedly a valuable material to be studied, the more so as a number of texts have been written down while performed in singing. But when analysing the texts, one should not forget that all the songs have been performed by the same man (who was young and artistically minded at that). The frequent repetition of the same passages in different songs might be caused by the same factor. However, stereotype parallel groups of verses are a common feature in Ob-Ugric folk songs. Often the same formulae occur in stories too. I may confirm, that several stereotype formulae in the songs published by Steinitz may be found also in Mansi songs. To sum up, I would like to draw attention to the fact that although the texts of calling songs coincide to a great deal, the descriptions of the abodes of the deities are still always different. All the calling songs are correctly oriented in relation to the performer's native village - the deities residing in the north come from the north, those residing in the south come from there. The deities use characteristic manners of moving about. By juxtaposing the texts, we may guess how the singer builds up a particular song and which are the elements used in the process.

Translated by Kristin Kuutma

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## Notes

1. Beast - in Khanty *woi*, in Mansi *ui* - is one of the euphemisms for bear.
2. In Ob-Ugriic folklore, silver is combined with various adjectives, e.g., pure, genuine, golden. *s'oper* and *kaam* occurring in parallel verses have not been translated by Munkácsi, by Kannisto-Liimola, or by Steinitz.
3. Before skinning the bear, five or four buttons were symbolically opened for it, depending on whether it was a male or a female bear.
4. *taapet wees'pa huneng nowe* - epithets characterizing the sky god (and the sky), literally 'bright (or white), with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge'. The seven roof trees symbolize the seven floors of the sky, openings under the ridge symbolize passages between different skies. See also note 11.
5. Swamp-beast - one of the main euphemisms for bear in Ob-Ugriic folklore. Usually in a parallel verse occurs a similarly common name - wild beast or forest beast.
6. During the bear feast the whole house and people in it were cleaned with tinder-smoke. Beaver grease symbolizes apparently hands covered with grease because of the abundant food, cf. the verses in the Mansi song: With hands covered in tinder-smoke / people come to me at night, people come to me during daytime. - - With the good hand covered in lake-grease, / with the good hand covered in Ob-grease / is my ruffled fur / stroked backwards... (Kannisto, Liimola 1958: 366-367, verses 6-7, 12-13).
7. In the Mansi bear-feast song combined into a legend are the following verses: The five-stringed string-tree / the Town Elder took in hand. / By resounding the lowest string / all the winged gods who are everywhere / he summoned. / By resounding the upper string / all the footly gods who are everywhere / he summoned. (Kannisto, Liimola 1951: 260).
8. These verses express an objective of the bear feast - to secure luck for hunting and fishing.



9. And these verses express the aim to secure godly protection against diseases. It should be mentioned, that the bear feast is to a certain extent similar to the shaman ritual - various supranormal beings are summoned, to procure their protection and custody in vital matters concerning the community's well-being. In addition, the whole process of the ceremony must testify to the people being well versed in the world order and rules ordained by the deities. The bear who returns to its heavenly father must tell in detail how it was treated by people, and whether they behaved correctly, cf. the verses from a Mansi song: My father said: / "You descended / into the corner of the human house. / How did they treat you?" (Kannisto, Liimola 1958: 383, verses 272-275).

10. Cf. with the verses from a Mansi song: On a moss-mound, grown of its own, in their town, / on a tundra-mound, grown of its own, in their town / live an old woman and an old man / *Sis'* the Golden and *Kwores* the Golden./ They have a daughter and a son - / *Kaltesh* the Golden and *Ooter* the Golden (Great Bear: 109, Mansi text. My translation differ from English text put on there).

11. *taaptien wees'pa huuneng tuurem* - 'Turem, with seven roof trees, with openings under the ridge' - a verseline to confirm that Torum-Turem the deity is sometimes simply the personified sky. In the Mansi language the word *toorum* refers both to god and to the sky and the world. We may find in the Ob-Ugric sky god some features common to the sky-cult of the ancient Mongols.

12. i.e., the lair covered with hides.

13. cf. the Mansi song: In the leaf-animal-shaped town, / in the leaflet-animal-shaped town, / in the town unraveled by the running horse, / in the middle of the town, unraveled by the striding horse, I sit. / Among seven furry-eyed forest-spirits, / among six furry-eyed masters / has my father, Numi-Torum, spelled me / in the two forms of the swamp-beast, the wild beast. (Kannisto, Liimola 1951: 349-350, verses 1-8).

14. Among the texts collected by Kannisto is the song of the son of the World Surveyor Man (*joovtimsoos ooterpyg* 'Jovtimsoos-elder's-son'), with the following lines: the raindrop falling quickly, / do fall quickly down here, / the wind-drop falling quickly, / do fall quickly down here (Kannisto, Liimola 1951: 324, verses 8-11). In the play song of the Man-who-watches-over-the-world stand the lines: the raindrop-man who fell from above, / the wind-drop-man who fell from above, / may you fall down here! (Kannisto, Liimola 1959: 38, verses 36-38).