

Environmental education theme in nomadic camp: Bear

Yuri Sleptsov^{1*}

¹Institute for Humanities Research and Indigenous Studies of the North of Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1, Petrovskogo street, 677027 Yakutsk, Russia

Abstract. The topics of environmental education in the nomadic camp, a temporary educational association for children of indigenous minorities of the North, are the study of the fauna of the environment, in our case the territory of the Moma National Nature Park. In environmental education, one of the topics is the knowledge of large predators, bears, which is one of the compulsory disciplines of education. This is due to the fact that the Evenes are one of the nomadic peoples of the North, who live in extreme conditions, where meeting bears is not new. The Moma Evens have developed a huge body of knowledge about the bear, which is passed on from generation to generation. Moma Evenes still strictly fulfil the customs and rituals related to the bear. The article presents various customs, rituals and legends related to this large predator, which children learn not only theoretically, but also in practice.

1 Introduction

The nomadic camp is one of the nomadic educational organisations that operate in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) for Even children (Sleptsov 2019: 6). The main territory of the nomadic camp is the Momsky District of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

Evenes are indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North and the Far East. Earlier in ethnographic literature they were known as Lamuts. According to the 2010 census, their number in the Russian Federation was more than 23 thousand people. - More than 15 thousands of them live in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The main places of residence are the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Kamchatka, the north of Khabarovsk Krai, Magadan, and Chukotka.

The nomadic camp operates during summer holidays in nomadic areas, most of them in the territory of the Moma National Nature Park. One of the large animals of the park is the brown bear, or common bear [1] (Latin *Ursus arctos*). Therefore, children will be sure to learn about this predatory animal, its habits, especially existing customs and rituals.

And so, the theme "Bear" opens with the familiarisation of the bibliography connected with the animal.

One of the first information on the cult of the bear among the Evenes was collected by the participants of the II Kamchatka expedition J.I. Lindenau, G.F. Miller, and S.P.

* Corresponding author: seva_may@mail.ru

Krashennnikov. V.I. Iokhelson, I.Y. Khudyakov, and others. The 20th century opens a new page in the study of the bear cult among the Even. In the Soviet period, E.Orlova, I.Gurvich, V.Tugolukov, etc. described bear festivals in their works, and V.Bogoraz, L.Khakhovskaya, and A.Frolova described bear-related games.

2 Main Part

The issue of safety affects all participants of the nomadic camp, because in recent years the bear has created many problems, let us consider the graphic "Bear encounter in the settlements of the Momsky district of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)" (fig. 1.).

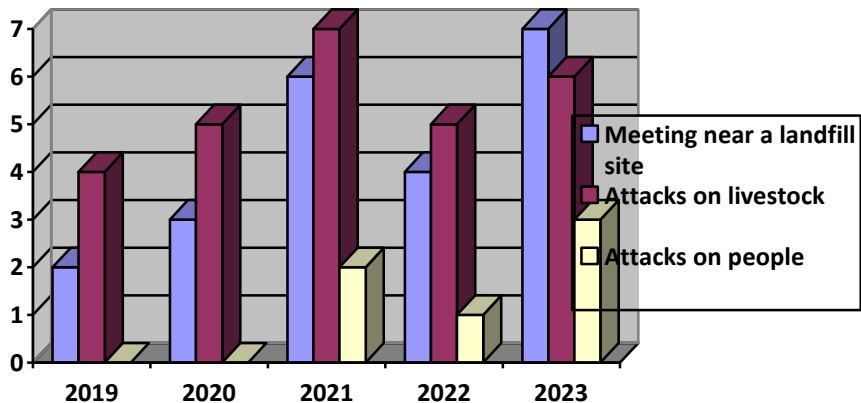


Fig. 1. Bear encounter in the settlements of the Momsky district of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

Respondents noted that in recent years, bears have been entering settlements more and more often. Such cases lead to unfortunate consequences: the bear attacks livestock, kills tied dogs. Bear attacks on people have been recorded in recent years. Older informants explain such excesses by the fact that in recent years, due to drought and fire, bears do not gain enough fat and do not hibernate. Attacks on people occur during bear rutting and berry picking. Frequent cases occur during the calving of reindeer. Bears run over the fawn and do not let anyone near it, so they attack reindeer herders. In this case the reindeer herders take extreme measures.

The aim of the lesson is to show the role of the bear in the life of the man of the North, the nature of the relationship between man and bear, to show the "secret" language of communication between the northern man and the bear (natural) world on the example of the Moma Evens of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The source base for teaching is ethnographic literature, folklore texts, archival sources, as well as field materials of the authors, recorded during expeditions conducted in the places of settlement of local groups of the Moma Evens.

What do we tell children about?

For the most part, the Moma Evens continue to preserve the reindeer herding and fishing model of economic activity. The cyclical alternation of the natural rhythms of the North (change of seasons), the needs of hunting and reindeer husbandry, and the migrations of taiga animals have determined the life strategies and behavioural patterns of northern nomads, adapted to the system of annual seasonal nomadism in the taiga and forest tundra.

The brown bear was one of the objects of the traditional beliefs of the indigenous peoples of the North and of the hunting trade, which was spontaneous until the end of the 19th

century. In Yakutia, it inhabits the entire forest and forest-tundra zone. The brown bear is also a typical representative of the fauna of Yakutia. This region can be rightfully recognised as a bear corner.

The bear has a special sacral meaning among the Moma Evenes, they considered it an ancestor or a blood relation with them. They necessarily fulfilled customs when hunting it.

Hunting a bear, as a large mammal, is fraught with danger and caution. The Evenes always treated the beast with reverence, that is why they never called the word «medved» in Russian, which is «rolling» in Even, but called "упака" - (grandmother from Even) (PMA 2022: Sadovnikova) with respect to the bear and "абуҕа" - (grandfather from Even) (Lebedev 1979: 146). U.G. Popova notes in her work that the bear was called by numerous allegorical terms: et'ki - "father-in-law", amika - "aunt", khigimnъ - "forest", "taiga", etc. (Popova 1981: 67).

The researcher of northern peoples V. I. Iokhelson in the 19th century noted that Yakut, in particular Kolyma Evens, experienced fear, both superstitious and physical, before the bear so great that there was almost no special bear hunting (Iokhelson 1898: 76). The Moma Evenes were never afraid of the bear, considering it to co-exist in the nomadic community. When leaving the camp, the Even son-in-law always says: "We do not touch you and you do not touch our dwelling! Otherwise, the conversation will be bad, respect us!".

Bear hunting was strictly regulated by special ancient rules, rituals, household taboos, etc. I.S. Gurvich notes that many old people and even young people seriously believe that a bear is able to take out a "muzzle" with fish, take out the spigot, eat the fish, load the "muzzle" again and put it in its former place (Gurvich 1948: 89). Participants of the nomadic camp witnessed when their nets for fish were touched by a bear, and there were also cases when the bear dragged away some of the prey.

Bears are endowed with the supernatural ability to hear everything that is said about them. The Evenes have preserved the belief that bears were once human beings and retained some human qualities under their skins, so considering them their distant kin, they did not hunt them on purpose. The Moma Evenes killed bears only in exceptional cases, for example, when the predator approached a dwelling and destroyed it; during calving, when it attacked calves that had just been born; when the den was on the path of the main herd; and in winter, when it attacked chatuns. Therefore, at lessons we teach that children do not shout, do not engage in self-glorification, listen to their elders.

We tell children about different cases, which has a positive effect on children. V.I. Iokhelson noted in his work: "But real hunters, hunters 'with a strong heart', pursuing a bear and searching for it, can be found only among the Yukaghirs and Lamuts" (Iokhelson 1898: 78). Timofei Golikov, a familiar Even man, had two encounters with a bear where he received many wounds, and yet he had no fear of the bear. He believes that the bear attacks men, women are not touched unless they throw things, such as pads. The bear, when it finds such a thing, to feel the blood decides that it has encroached on his territory, is sure to find and kill the victim. A similar case happens with men who put a mark on a tree where a bear leaves a mark.

In case of bear attacks on people, the custom was not observed, as such a situation was equated to a declared war. There is a legend in the Moma District that a 9-year-old hunter, Saltakha, destroyed an ogre bear with an axe (Archive: 84). The boy Saltakha was left without parents early. He was brought up by his native uncle - blacksmith Khalaadia Aleksey. A huge bear began to terrorise the local population. The predator mauled a lot of livestock and 5 people. Since that time the locals stopped going to the forest and did not pay attention to the fallen livestock. Two years passed like that. One day a boy asked his uncle to make an axe and a sharp knife for him. The uncle told the boy that one experienced hunter - bear hunter was found killed with a knife in his hands. And that later people saw a huge one-eyed bear." A 9-year-old boy decided to kill this bear at all costs. In autumn he started stalking and found

a den. When he found the entrance, he sat on top of it and started to put a stick down and poke the bear with it to wake it up. As soon as the bear stuck its head out, the boy killed the predator with an axe blow to the head. When he pulled out the carcass, he saw that the prey bear had one eye. Thus, he rid his kin of the predator. Next, the boy began hunting bears with a knife. He found a bear, then ran away, the enraged predator chased the boy, approaching the dwelling he stopped abruptly and lay down under the running bear with a knife, so he cut the belly of the animal. In this way people began to hunt bears before the firearms appeared. Until the end of the twentieth century, some residents of the Moma District hunted bears with a spear or a palm tree (a type of cold weapon among Yakuts).

There is a legend among the Moma Even people of the Ulakhan-Chistai area that a bear once cohabited with a hunter's sister, who once went to the forest for berries and disappeared. Her brother searched for her for a long time, but did not find her anywhere. Three years later the sister came with a three-year-old son. Soon she died and her son stayed with his uncle. The child as he grew up gradually began to lose the appearance of a man, finally turned into a bear and went into the forest. There were many such legends. At the end of the 70s of the twentieth century one woman was lost and lived with a bear for two years. She has been alive to this day.

A woman was considered more closely related to the bear than a man (History 1967: 121). In case of an attack on a woman, the Moma Evenes bare their breasts before him and address the bear with the words, "Shame on you for attacking a defenceless woman." This is said to work and the bear moves away. This incident occurs when a woman wears men's clothes (trousers) so that it is convenient to migrate. If a woman is dressed in women's clothes, the bear moves far away seeing a woman with children (PMA 2022: Sorkomova). Probably, the result of this is the prohibition to eat bear meat by girls and women among the Moma Even people.

Children must be told why they hunt and cite cases from their personal life. For example, my case, when surveying the reindeer route a den was discovered, so the reindeer herders decided to eliminate the future danger, as the reindeer could wake up the bear, and in winter the jackass bear is a special danger. The jackass is covered with a layer of ice and mud that other weapons cannot penetrate and kill the beast.

Before the hunt no conversation is held about the object of the prey. All preparations take place in complete silence and silence. On the way to the den, the reindeer herders began to speak in a low voice, saying that they were looking for straggling reindeer and that they were following their trail.

When they came to the den, the older brothers sat down on top of the den and started talking to the bear, saying that it was time to camp, because a Yakut had come for you from far away. At the same time, the hunters listened to the rustles inside the den to determine how many bears were inside the den.

After some obligatory rules, they extracted a bear. According to custom, the youngest in age of the hunters must climb into the den and tie the bear with a rope to pull the carcass to the top. This custom educates the young man to overcome his fear.

When cutting up the carcass, there is no talk about the prey, they say that someone else got it (Degtyarev, Degtyareva, Sleptsov 2004: 26). In the hunt, which I witnessed, the Evenes said that the "nyokho" ("Yakut") had come for him, implying me and thus emphasising that they were not involved in the killing. In response to my indignation, they explained that they lived and roamed here, and that I was an outsider, and the spirit of the bear would forgive me. In Chukotka the coastal Chukchis used to say, when a bear was killed, that you were killed by a Russian, and the latter might not be an eyewitness of the hunt.

The Evenes used to say in a low voice: "Don't be angry, Abaga, you were killed by a nyokho (Yakut. from Even), who came from far away, that's why we take off the duck, as it has become lousy". The Evenes of Kamchatka, when extracting a bear, also say that it was

not they who killed it, but someone else, for example, a Russian (PMA 2022: Adukanov). In the process of skinning the killed bear the Evenes showed me the back of the bear, which was very similar to the figure of a woman, thus proving their kinship with it.

The Even word for "killed" is "marym", but the word "marym" is not used in relation to the bear, and they say "uremrem" (PMA 2011: Bokova).

The first thing they did was to take out the eyes of the prey bear, which was the rule for all Evenes, while the Moma Evenes put round stones in the eye socket after taking out the eyes, and also filled the nasal and ear bores with moss. Kamchatka Evenes pierce the eyes, having taken it out they push it back in by turning it upside down, and the ears having cut them they turn them upside down and close the ear bores. The Evenes believe that a killed bear can remember the faces and odour of hunters and later pursue them or put spoil on them.

If the carcass was not cut up, the belly was simply cut open and then buried, covered with branches (PMA 2010: Zakharov). In such cases, only the inner fat "imse" and bile "deo" were taken, which were valued as medicines (PIA 2022: Sadovnikova). The Evenes believe that a dead bear is buried by another bear in another place, as each bear has its own companion - a friend (PMA 2010: Sleptsov). A similar case was described in his work by the Far East explorer V.K.Arseniev (Arseniev 1977: 236).

In the nomadic camp "Neltenke", children tasted boiled bear meat, for which they were punished. The mentors explained why. Most of the Moma Even people do not eat bear meat, but if they do, when eating bear meat, each participant in the meal must shout cuckoo or crow. Pregnant women and children were forbidden to eat bear meat. During the meal there is a custom, "to eat" in Evenki "debday", and while eating bear meat they say "кунамрудai". Before taking a piece, rings of twigs were placed on the meat (PMA 2011: Bokova).

When the meal was over, all the bones were collected and arranged strictly in anatomical order and buried in this way. The Evenes believed that when he went to the other world, he returned again, i.e., the legend says that he visited the afterlife and returned from there (Krinichnaya 2011: 9) (PMA 2010: Sleptsov).

The bear's bones after cutting were placed on a high platform - dalburga or buried in the ground, with the direction of the skull always to the east. The beast was regarded as a reasonable creature that did not tolerate insults and understood human speech. The beast voluntarily or under the influence of the patron spirit let the hunter kill itself, because after death it did not cease to exist. Words, incantations addressed to the killed beast, air burial of bones - obviously testify to it.

Unlike the Moma Evenes, the Evenes living in Kamchatka and Magadan, there was a custom of collective eating of the meat of a killed bear, accompanied by a special ritual of treating - urkachak among Magadan Evenes, urkachan among Kamchatka Evenes). In everyday life it is known as the bear feast, which is allegorically called "old man's (old woman's) wedding" (Sleptsov 2014: 149). The whole ritual of the bear festival is permeated by primitive hunting magic. It is reflected in the address-spell to the bear in order not to harm it and not to kill it at the wrong time. Hunting a bear, cutting the carcass of the killed animal, feasting ritual and so on - all this is accompanied by magical actions and allegories aimed at taking away from the hunters the responsibility for killing a magical animal - a relative. The peculiarity of this holiday was that the participation of women in its main actions was excluded, such as the ritual eating of the head and the sacred front part of the bear carcass, the burial of the skull and bones of the bear, which took place in secret from women, away from the camp.

If the carcass was not cut up, then the belly was simply cut open and then it was buried, covered with branches. In such cases, only the inner fat "imse" and bile "deo" were taken, which were valued as medicines. The Evenes believe that a dead bear is buried by another bear in another place, as every bear has a companion - a mate. A similar case was described by the researcher of the Far East V.K.Arseniev in his work "Дерсу Узала" wrote: "...I

remembered the stories of hunters that a bear, having found some dead animal. But I did not know that a bear buries a bear" (Arseniev 1977: 236).

3 Conclusions

In conclusion, we note that children approach this topic with pleasure and with all responsibility. Because the folklore and world outlook image of the bear among the Moma Evenes was conditioned, first of all, with the idea of the bear as a totem animal. Later, the bear is defined in the worldview of the peoples under study as an ancestor. In mythical stories, legends, epic and fairy tales of the Even, the story of the kinship of man and bear is widespread. The educational material allows us to say that ritual dialogues with the animal reflect the behavioural strategies of nomads. This is, first of all, a special attitude to the bear as a blood relative, and finally, as the master of the forest and taiga, a strong and intelligent animal that understands human speech. All this was based on the millennial history of co-existence of man and bear in the space of northern nature. It should be noted that modern reindeer herders and hunters take the customs and rules of hunting very seriously, passing them on from generation to generation, which is primarily due not to adherence to world outlook archaism, but to exceptionally stable beliefs based on the practice of living in peaceful coexistence.

It is necessary to pay special attention to the observance of customs and rituals of their ancestors during the training, it gives a huge layer of knowledge in the field of ecology of the environment. When travelling along the route, children begin to behave like adults, when meeting a bear, they do not run away, do not shout and follow all instructions. Having already become adults, having received higher education, when they meet each other, they remember the bear theme, that it was useful to them in their lives. Some of the children have become specialists in nature conservation, where the knowledge gained in the nomadic camp helped them choose their profession.

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