

3. Comparative and Contextual Approaches to the Study of Finno-Karelian and Ob-Ugrian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* Incantations and Songs

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Sources and Scholarship about the Finno-Karelian Bear Ceremonialism

This chapter deals with comparative and contextual analyses of Finno-Karelian and Ob-Ugrian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations and songs, which told the mythic origin of the bear. In Finland and Karelia, the knowledge of *The Birth of the Bear* (*ohthon synty*, *kontion synty* or *karhun synty*) incantation gave the utterer the power to control the actions of the bear in dangerous situations, asking the bear to avoid aggressive behavior. These incantations were performed (a) before leaving for the carefully ritualized bear hunt (or during the bear hunt); and (b) to protect the cattle from bears during the grazing season, because the pastures were situated in narrow meadows in the forest. I focus on the Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations, which has been compared by some of the most influential Finnish scholars (Kuusi, Haavio, and Sarmela) with the Ob-Ugrian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* songs. These comparisons stressed the analogies between different Finno-Ugric traditions in support of theories about the archaic origins of the Finnish bear ceremonial itself. In this chapter, I will criticize the methods and results of these classic researches. My approach suggests that the comparison between the Finno-Karelian and Ob-Ugrian traditions is

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indeed useful, but only if the researcher pays necessary attention to the existence of meaningful contextual, ritual and communicative differences between the two traditions. My contextual comparison of the material gave some new results: the lore of cattle herders, the tradition of the *tietäjäs* (sages and trance healers) as well as syncretic beliefs with vernacular interpretations of saints deeply influenced the Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations. In the past, these influences were negated or considered degenerations of the original and archaic versions. I suggest that the historical stratification of these incantations is complex and, for this reason, it is both fascinating and challenging for contemporary scholars.

The Ob-Ugrian and the Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* songs and incantations also reveal different forms of human-animal communication. In the Ob-Ugrian songs the bear – i.e. a human interpreting the bear – told its myth in first person and from the bear's perspective to humans. In the Finno-Karelian incantations the utterer was human and the listeners were the bear and the forest spirits, and the main perspective therefore the human one. As we will see in the following sections, this difference is of fundamental importance. The chapter also deals also with ontological problems, as the personhood of the bear and forest spirits, and the Finno-Karelian and Ob-Ugrian ways to communicate with these 'forest persons'.

In the first part of the article, I will introduce the sources of Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism and provide a critical analysis of the traditional Finnish theories and studies on the topic, taking into consideration the importance of *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations in the important scientific debate on bear ceremonialism.¹

I will start with a brief description of the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonial. It was performed in the winter, during the hibernation time, and it included several rituals: (1) preparative and protecting rituals and incantations, performed in the village before leaving for the hunt; (2) singing *The Birth of the Bear* incantation on the border of the forest; (3) songs to persuade the forest spirits to guide the hunters towards the prey or the den; (4) the ritual killing of the bear, including the awakening of the bruin from the den; (5) songs to persuade the forest spirits to guide the hunters

towards the prey or the den; (6) the bear feast in the village, the ritual consumption of all the meat, fat and organs of the bear; and (7) the procession with the bear's skull and bones to a sacred pine in the forest, the attachment of the bear's skull on a branch and the performance of songs for the bear's skull and its soul, in order to achieve the regeneration of the animal in its mythical homeland (the forest or the sky).² In Finland and Karelia, the bear hunt and ceremonial was performed when a bear had attacked the cattle; the hunting and cattle breeding lore were closely intertwined.

Karelians and Eastern Finns considered the forest to be a sacred, otherworldly and sociomorphic environment,³ where the bear and the spirits were the non-human or more-than-human persons; the powerful forest spirits (*metsän haltiat*) protected bears and game animals and provided them to the hunters who respectfully performed the rituals, ensuring the regeneration of the animal. The forest was considered a sentient and perceptive environment;⁴ the spirits and the bear could see, listen to and understand human speech and the hunter's actions. Both the bruin and the forest spirits observed the hunt; if the hunter did not perform rituals, they took revenge attacking people or cattle. The ethnologist Laura Stark stresses that guardian spirits were sentient beings with emotions, agency, a moral code, and expectations.⁵ The same statement could be considered valid for the bear. The bear had a shifting double identity: it was strictly bound to the families of the forest and sky haltias, but at the same time it had physical and behavioral humanlike characteristics suggesting that it could be a human – a *tietäjä*, a sorcerer (*noita*), a bewitched human, or a human choosing to live in the wilderness – who had been transformed into a bruin.⁶ This situation made the bear extremely anomalous and difficult to categorize. The anomaly⁷ and personhood of the bear required a ritualization of the hunt and of all the relations with bears. If the hunter correctly performed all the rituals and songs, the woodland denizens were 'pleased'; the forest haltias provided more bears or game animals, and the bear would return in a future feast.⁸

These ontological premises about the personhood of the bear and the forest are very important for the analysis of *The Birth of the Bear* incantations; the bear and the forest spirits were

considered persons able to understand *The Birth of the Bear* incantations and they were supposed to react in a precise way to the exhortations or requests of the human utterers.

In the nineteenth century, Finnish folklore collectors transcribed a large amount of *Bear Songs* (*karhuvirret*, songs for the bear hunt and ceremonials) in Finland and Karelia. At that time, the bear ceremonial was a vanishing tradition, and the majority of the songs were collected in isolated villages in eastern and northern regions. The fieldwork continued at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the collectors searched for old hunters as informants, people who were able to remember the rituals of the nineteenth century, recall the songs of their fathers and grandfathers, and describe the bear ceremonials done in the past. The material of the twentieth century is therefore strictly connected with the tradition of the previous century.

The main corpus of sources I analyzed for my PhD dissertation were 288 *Bear Songs* published in six different volumes of the collection *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (Ancient Poems of the Finnish People, henceforth SKVR), which are divided by old Finnish and Karelian regions and folklore genres:

1. North Ostrobothnia (including the eastern region Kainuu): 118 songs
2. Viena, Archangel or White Sea Karelia: 79 songs
3. Savo or Savonia: 44 songs
4. Border and Ladoga Karelia and Finnish North Karelia: 40 songs
5. Area of the Forest Finns in Central Scandinavia: 5 songs
6. Häme or Tavastia (including Central Finland): 2 songs
7. Total: 288 songs

All the songs of these and other SKVR volumes are digitalized and readable on a public website.⁹ Analyzing the data geographically, I noticed that in the nineteenth century the *Bear Songs* were mostly collected from small villages in Eastern Finland and Karelia.

The sources about Finnish bear ceremonialism predating the nineteenth century (the golden age of folklore collection in Finland and Karelia) are scarce and quite fragmentary, with the exception

of a rich and long *Bear Song* with texts describing the phases of the ceremonial: *The Text of Viitasaari*.¹⁰ The first written document on the topic is a very brief description of the drinking from the bear skull, the last rite that closed the whole ceremonial. The account was included in a sermon given by the bishop of Finland Isaak Rothovius for the inauguration of the *Regia Academia Åboensis*, the first university in Finland, on July 15, 1640. The Bishop hoped that the Academia could be an instrument to erase these 'rude' and 'pagan' rituals from the country. The oldest sources are from Central Finland and Southern Finland (Åbo) but the Bishop refers to bear ceremonials performed in the whole country.

The most evident division in the geographic distribution of the *Bear Songs* is that in the nineteenth century, almost no *Bear Songs* were collected in Western and Southern Finland or from Ingria, the Karelian Isthmus and Olonets Karelia. Bear ceremonialism seems to have disappeared more rapidly in the western and southern regions with a more advanced agricultural system, cattle breeding, infrastructures and churches. Kalevalaic singing, too, disappeared more rapidly in the southern and western areas, due to the multifaceted processes of modernization.

In the nineteenth century, the heartland of the *Bear Songs* was quite a large area around the actual border between Russia and Finland, extending westwards to Savo and Central Finland and northwards until Suomussalmi, Kuusamo and southern Lapland. These areas were more isolated from cities and covered by huge forests; there, hunting traditions survived for a long time.

The *Bear Songs* from Viena Karelia are generally longer and rich of details, because some of the best singers and hunters knew them. However, meaningful and long *Bear Songs* were collected in all the six areas.

The old region of North Ostrobothnia included the actual eastern region of Kainuu and the eastern parish of Suomussalmi, in which a good number of *Bear Songs* were collected. In the Ostrobotnian material, too, there is a preminence of songs from the eastern and northern parts of the region.

In the nineteenth century in Western and Southern Finland, there were indeed bears, woods and forests; short or long incantations to protect the cattle from bears have been collected in almost

all the Finnish and Karelian regions. Longer and detailed incantations were collected in Savo and Karelia. In other words, in the nineteenth century information about rituals to protect the cattle – which were less elaborated than the bear ceremonials but extremely meaningful for the communities – was collected everywhere, also in the southern and the western rural areas. These rituals often included the performance of *The Birth of the Bear* incantation.

For a long time, Finnish scholars stressed the archaic features of Finnish bear ceremonialism by using comparison as a tool to demonstrate its antiquity. This comparative method has a venerable tradition, which predates the so-called phenomenological school of comparative religion. The clergyman, lexicographer and writer Christfried Ganander wrote several entries on folk beliefs about the bear in his dictionary of Finnish mythology *Mythologia Fennica*, published in Swedish in 1789. The most detailed entry is *Kouuwwon päälliset eller Häät*,¹¹ which contains a short description of a Finnish bear ceremonial and a Sámi one, referring briefly to Schefferus. The comparison was very simple, comprising almost a juxtaposition of the two ceremonies, as if they were the same tradition. The fact that the Sámi—considered a more ‘primitive’ people—performed bear ceremonialism reinforced the antiquity and importance of the Finnish ceremonial.

In the late nineteenth century and in the twentieth century, many Finnish scholars followed the path of the historical-comparative mythological method of the influential linguist Matthias Alexander Castrén. They emphasized linguistic or ethnographic similarities between the mythologies or the rituals of different Finno-Ugrian peoples in order to demonstrate the antiquity of certain Finnish beliefs and rituals.¹² Another typical method of demonstrating the archaic features of Finnish myths or rituals was comparison with Ancient Greek and Roman myths and archaeological findings in Finland or in other Finno-Ugric areas.

Not everybody was fully convinced by these methods. In 1915, the folklorist Kaarle Krohn criticized the theory about the Sámi origins of the Finnish bear ceremonial, stating that there were similarities only in some ritual phases, but the Sámi and Finnish *Bear Songs* were different. According to him, the ritual similarities could be the result of a common Finno-Ugrian heritage, but as a whole the Finnish *Bear Songs* and ceremonialism developed in an

original and independent way.¹³ Some renowned Finnish scholars focused on contextual analysis of the Finnish, Sámi, Khanty and Mansi bear ceremonials, avoiding general comparative theories.¹⁴

In 1963, the folklorist Matti Kuusi was the first scholar to elaborate a totemic theory for the ancient Finnish bear ceremonialism. Kuusi supposed that the archaeological discovery of fifteen prehistoric axes shaped with the head of a bear or elk¹⁵ was proof that the ancient inhabitants of Finland were divided into two clans, one worshipping the bear, the other worshipping the elk. Furthermore, Kuusi hypothesized that the Ob-Ugrians were also divided into two totemic clans.¹⁶ He remarked that the Lutheran Sámi told that the female ancestor of the Orthodox Skolt Sámi was a girl who had spent the whole winter in a bear den.¹⁷ According to Kuusi, these Sámi totemic myths explained why the Finnish people presented the bear ceremonial as a wedding of the bear.¹⁸

Kuusi also noted that both the Finns and the Ob-Ugrians had a myth concerning the celestial origin of the bear. He compared the Finnish *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations, involving the ritual killing of the bear and its ascension into the sky after its death, with the resurrection of ritually killed and resurrected ‘sons of gods’ of ancient cultures: Osiris, Dionysus, and Jesus. He saw similarities between the consumption of the bear meat in the bear ceremonials, the Christian Holy Communion and the ritual eating of the god present in the rituals of the indigenous peoples of Central America.¹⁹

In 1967, the folklorist and scholar of Finnish folk beliefs and mythology Martti Haavio also emphasized the similarities between the Finnish and Ob-Ugrian myths about the celestial origin of the bear, but he also stressed that in the Finnish version the bear was born in the constellation of Otava (the Big Dipper, the Plough, or *Ursa Major*). He compared the Finnish descent of the bear from Otava (the Big Dipper) with a multitude of astral myths from Siberia, Philippines, Borneo and North America; narratives about a woman who married a star but finally came back to earth, descending with a rope.²⁰

Haavio stressed that the Finnish *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations should be connected with the Ancient Greek and Roman myths of Kallisto or Callisto, the Arcadian princess

and nymph who was transformed into the constellation of the Great Bear (*Ursa Major*, or the Big Dipper; Otava in Finnish). In some versions, Kallisto's son Arkas became another constellation, Arctophylax (Bear Watcher), which seems to follow behind the Great Bear.²¹ Haavio concluded that the Finnish *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations, the Ancient Greek myth of Arkas and the Ob-Ugrian myth of Mir-Susne-Xum were all fragments of the same original myth about the son of a god who was killed and resurrected, and who became an ancestor and a constellation in the sky.²² However, the myth of Kallisto was connected with an Athenian female initiation rite performed in the Brauron temple; the Ancient Greek ritual and mythological context was completely different from the Northern ones.²³ The Finnish words Otava and Otavainen (Big Dipper, the Plough, *Ursa Major*) and its root *ota* have Uralic or Finno-Ugrian roots, but the meaning of the word seems to be connected to a salmon fishing net, not to the bear itself, as in the case of the Greek myth.²⁴ However, Otava was often mentioned as one of the birthplaces of the bear.

The theories by Kuusi and Haavio have many points in common. Both supposed that a single prehistoric bear 'cult' worked as a 'model' for the various Finno-Ugrian bear ceremonials and that the bear cult was a kind of prehistoric religion, based on worship of the bear, considered as a god or son of a god, who suffered death and rebirth. Both authors analyzed the bear ceremonialism at the very beginning of their influential books on Finnish 'unwritten literature' and Finnish mythology. The readers understand at the very beginning that the authors consider the 'bear cult' as the most ancient stratum of Finnish folk religion and oral literature. However, in contrast to Haavio's book, which includes bibliographic references, the one by Kuusi does not include any precise archival or bibliographic references.

Recently, Håkan Rydving heavily criticized the scientific postulate that states that 'all the different types of bear ceremonials found in Northern Eurasia should be regarded as concrete forms, or representatives of the "same" single ritual: "the" bear ceremonial'.²⁵ Haavio and Kuusi went even further in postulating that the whole ceremonial was a result of the 'same' generic totemic myth or resurrection drama present in many religious cultures. Haavio and Kuusi collected all kind of parallels from

different cultures and they did not pay sufficient attention to the considerable temporal or geographic differences of the sources they used.

As a result, the hypothetical and prototypical bear ceremonials described by Kuusi and Haavio do not correspond precisely to any of the Finnish, Sámi or Ob-Ugrian ceremonials. They are bizarre hybrids of different traditions and a confused amalgam of Classic and Finno-Ugrian mythologies.

Emphasizing the archaic origins of the bear ceremonialism, Kuusi and Haavio negated the impact of cattle herding, agriculture and syncretic Christian popular beliefs on the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism, and they almost did not cover the incantations to protect cattle from bears in their most important books.

Even so, the impact of their theories was huge, and they partially influenced the anthropologist Matti Sarmela, who has built a historical reconstruction of the chronological development of the Finnish bear ceremonialism in three eras. According to him, the first era comprised the prehistoric Finnish culture, marked by shamanism and a hunter-gatherer economy. Sarmela argues that the Finnish ritual of the bear skull should be connected with the natural environment of the bear; the skull and all of the other bones should be returned to the forest to ensure the rebirth or regeneration of the animal in the original birthland.²⁶ According to Sarmela, the myth of *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* (which emphasises the regeneration or resurrection of the animal) is connected to this era.

However, the theoretic background of Sarmela's historical theory is different. Kuusi and Haavio stressed the importance of cultural and linguistic contacts between the Finno-Ugrian peoples, and proposed bold diffusionist theories. According to Sarmela, the similarities between the bear ceremonials of the Northern peoples are not explained by the geographical diffusion of the rituals, but they were caused by the fact that all of these peoples lived in a similar ecological environment and they were concerned about the possibility that game animals could go extinct by overhunting them. Sarmela argued that the Ob-Ugrians lived for centuries in the same ecosystem as the prehistoric Finnish people, and for this reason, they better preserved the ritual hunt of the bear and the bear mythology.²⁷

Sarmela stated that the Finnish bear ceremonial's second era evolved in a different direction: the old rites did not work anymore because the ecological environment changed when the Finnish people adopted agriculture.²⁸ During the Iron Age, with the development of slash-and-burn agriculture, the bear became the 'enemy' of the people, because it killed the cattle in the forest pastures or destroyed the farmland produced by means of the slash-and-burn technique.²⁹

Sarmela stressed that the most important religious specialist of the Finnish archaic agrarian cultures was no longer the shaman, but the *tietäjä*, a sage who did not travel to other worlds or dimensions in search of lost souls (like the shaman), but expelled 'the sorcerer's arrows or darts' (*noidan nuolet*) or sickness from the body of an ill person. The environment of the age of the *tietäjä* was divided into two worlds, the cultivated landscape and uncultivated nature, which represented a kind of anti-world.³⁰ Sarmela stated that the most important goal of the *tietäjä* was to protect the cattle and the crops of the fields from bears.³¹ According to him, *The Birth of the Bear* from the evil and dreadful Crone or Mistress of Pohjola, is connected to this era, marked by the the degeneration of the sacredness of the bear.³²

It is indeed true that there are negative and dreadful details in some *The Birth of the Bear* incantations of the cattle herders. However, *The Birth of the Bear from the Crone of Pohjola* was also present in some songs of the hunters; the bear was not fully idealized in the *Bear Songs*, but it often had ambiguous features. In the songs of the hunters, Pohjola (the Northland) was not only the birthland of illnesses, but a name for the mythic, otherworldly and dangerous forest (Pohjola, Tapiola, Metsola) where the bear was born. In general, the Crone or Mistress of Pohjola was not only a negative being, a 'whore', and the mother of the illnesses, as Sarmela stated. She was also considered a dreadful guardian haltia and a mother of bears, wolves and wild animals. In a song by Ivana Malinen she is involved in the regeneration of bears. Her name is often connected to Hongas or Hongotar (the Pine Lady), a forest haltia and mother of the bears. The Crone of Pohjola was not the personification of evil, but a very ambiguous and powerful being; cattle herders tried to communicate with her in order to convince her to stop bear attacks.³³

In the theory of Sarmela, the third era was the ‘age of the countryman,’ which developed during the Middle Ages. This period was marked by the religious dominance of the Christian faith. The Catholic and Orthodox cults of the saints influenced the rituals of the *tietäjäs*; in their incantations, the saints took the place of the earlier haltias protecting the bear.³⁴ *The Birth of the Bear* from wool thrown by a saint in water (river or sea) represented the main myth of this era; according to Sarmela the bear was not sacred any more, but it became a puppet fully dominated by the saints.

Although Sarmela’s reconstruction contains many useful observations and interpretations, the differences between the three eras are made too sharp. Sarmela does not negate the influence of agriculture or Christian beliefs on the Finnish bear lore. However, he has the tendency to idealize the hunter-gather traditions (as a model of ecological sustainability) and to consider the influence of agriculture, Christianity and cattle herding on the bear lore as a negative degeneration of the original bear ceremonial.

The folklorist Lotte Tarkka has noted that for many decades the Finnish scholars focused on the ‘ultimate origins of the song,’³⁵ and that for them the ‘true’ and ‘authentic’ text of a song was supposed to be the most ancient or archaic part of it. Another problem of Sarmela’s interpretation is that he considers each era as completely separated from the other, denying the possibility of communication and syncretism between the traditions of hunters and cattle herders. The folklorist and scholar of religion Lauri Honko also followed a traditional Finnish comparative-historical approach in his analysis of Finno-Ugrian bear ceremonials.³⁶

Kuusi, Haavio, Honko, and Sarmela influenced the scholar of religions Juha Pentikäinen who wrote a comparative book on the ‘cultural history’ of the bear, covering prehistory, classical mythology, Scandinavian sagas and legends, and the bear ceremonials of the Ob-Ugrians, Sámi, Finns, and Karelians. Like Haavio, Pentikäinen is interested in the astral mythologies of the bear, but he adds to his analysis a comparison of the images of the bear and the elk in the celestial parts of the painted surfaces of Sámi shamanic drums.³⁷ Pentikäinen accentuates the relevance of cultural contacts among these traditions, but he treats them in separate chapters containing an abundance of original sources, and the book also gives the possibility to understand the differences between the traditions.³⁸

In the last decades, different contextual approaches flourished. The folklorist Lotte Tarkka wrote innovative articles and book chapters about the bear ceremonials, the meaning of the forest, and the incantations to protect the cattle from bears in the tradition of the parish of Vuokkiniemi in Viena or White Sea Karelia.³⁹ The ethnologist Laura Stark wrote on the syncretic tradition of incantations and rituals to protect the cattle from bears in Orthodox Karelia.⁴⁰ The folklorist Anna-Leena Siikala briefly covered the Finnish bear ceremonial in her last monograph on Finnic mythology.⁴¹

***The Birth of the Bear* Incantations in the Finno-Karelian Traditions**

What kind of incantations were *The Birth of the Bear*? In order to understand the meaning of these incantations, it is necessary to analyze the ritual context in which they were performed. *The Birth of the Bear* was an incantation sung by hunters in the Finno-Karelian bear ritual hunt and ceremonialism. The herders also sung or uttered *The Birth of the Bear* incantations in the rituals to protect the cattle from bruins during the grazing season, and the *tietäjäs*⁴² uttered them to heal the wounds of cows, horses or persons injured by a bear. In the nineteenth century, many Finnish folklorists collected hundreds of *The Birth of the Bear* incantations in almost all the Finnish and Karelian regions.⁴³ Other *Birth* incantations (as the *The Birth of Fire*, used to cure burnings) were fundamental parts of the repertoires of *tietäjäs*.

The narrative part of *The Birth of the Bear* was followed by orders to the bruin or exhortations to the haltias who generated the bear. After hearing about its mythical origins, the bear was expected to change its aggressive behavior, following the commands or requests of the singer. By singing the *Birth of the Bear*, the hunter gained control over the animal or its haltias; acting in relation to the origin or progenitor of the bruin, he controlled other members of its species. *The Birth of the Bear* incantations varied significantly from singer to singer, and they often were historically stratified, containing references to pre-Christian and syncretic Christian beings who controlled the bear. Considering the importance of *The Birth of the Bear* incantations in the folk rituals and

beliefs, it is surprising that Finnish scholars have studied them in quite a superficial way.

The folklorist Kaarle Krohn briefly covered *The Birth of the Bear* incantations in his monograph about all *The Birth* incantations of the Finno-Karelian tradition.⁴⁴ The only Finnish scholar to write an entire monograph on the Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear* incantations was Juho Karhu, who divided them in three basic categories: *The Birth on the Earth*, *The Birth in the Sky*, and *The Birth from Wool*.⁴⁵ This classification is a rough simplification of the complexity of *The Birth of the Bear* incantations. The category *The Birth on the Earth* is particularly poor, because in these versions the bear was not really born on the Earth in the modern geographic sense of the word, but in a mythical and otherworldly forest called Metsola, Tapiola or Pohjola.

In my PhD dissertation, I presented a more precise classification:⁴⁶

1. *The Birth* in the otherworldly forest and Pohjola (Mythical Northland)
2. *The Birth* in the otherworldly forest and/or Pohjola with details about the haltias who generated the bear
3. *The Birth* with the crone of Pohjola as the mother of the bear
4. *The Birth* in the sky
5. *The Birth* from wool thrown by a haltia, a saint, or the Virgin Mary
6. *The Birth* that joined two or more versions together or presented additional versions with or without narrative links between each other.⁴⁷

Comparing the Finno-Karelian and Ob-Ugrian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky*: The Analogies and Differences

As we have seen in the previous sections, Kuusi, Haavio and Sarmela focused their attention especially on *The Birth in the Sky* type, considered to be the most ancient version related to the archaic hunting culture.⁴⁸ However, they did not consider a fundamental problem: *The Birth in the Sky* types were quite common in the incantations of cattle herders, and rare in the songs of the hunters.⁴⁹ The general explanation was that the archaic *The*

Birth of the Bear type ‘shifted’ from the hunters’ tradition to the cattle herders’ one. My opinion is that as the hunters and the cattle herders were members of the same villages and the hunters were often involved in cattle and horse herding, the tendency to fuse the two traditions has been both diachronic and synchronic. At first, let us analyze a typical cattle herder’s *The Birth in the Sky* type. In 1894, the singer Ukko Timonen from Kiteenlahti (Kitee, Finnish North Karelia) sang:

There was *ohto* given birth to,
 the honey-paw turned around;
 high up in the sky,
 on the shoulders of Otavavainen (Big Dipper).
 How was it brought down?
 With a thread it was brought down,
 with a silver thong,
 in a golden cradle,
 then it left roaming the woodlands,
 striding the Northland.⁵⁰

Ukko Timonen did not mention who the parents of the bruin were, but it seems that they were celestial pre-Christian (Ukko) or Christian beings and deities (God, Jesus, a Saint). In this incantation, the sacred status of the bear was still very high, as the bruin was connected with some of the most powerful Sky deities and his cradle is golden.

The sky was an Afterworld for human souls and it was also the place where newborn humans came from; the status of the birth of the bear was here similar to the human one. This detail demonstrates that the cattle herders did not fully demonize the bear, and they did not consider it as the absolute ‘enemy’ of the people and their cattle, as Sarmela states. The bears were feared but they were still considered sacred (*pyhä*), innocent or ‘clean’ or ‘pure’ (*puhdas*) beings by cattle herders, too. Thus, a bear who attacked cattle or a person must have been ‘roused’ (i.e. ‘conjured,’ being a bewitched bear). The real responsible party, and the hidden wrong-doer, was another human being: an envious person, a *tietäjä* or sorcerer (*noita*) concealed somewhere, probably in the nearest household or village. Lotte Tarkka stresses that conflicts between people and the bear reflected an internal struggle present in human society; the contradiction between the bear’s innocence

and havoc was resolved by framing it in terms of ‘aggression within the human sphere.’⁵¹ A bewitched bear could be calmed by the uttering of the incantation *The Birth of the Bear*.

The respectful tone present in Timonen’s incantation was useful to convince the bear to avoid to attack the cattle; the respect would calm the enraged bear. The bear was considered a person with emotions, and the humans tried to influence its emotive state.

The utterer reminded the bear that it had a noble, ‘hight’ origin, and in the second part of the incantation,⁵² Timonen stressed that it should behave properly, avoiding to attack the cattle. The noble origin seems to be connected to a proper moral code. The myth of *The Birth of the Bear* seems to be fully integrated in the rhetoric of the incantation, considering its objective.

An older variant of *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantation was published in 1789 by Ganander in his *Mythologia Fennica*.⁵³ In this variant, the bear was born ‘beside the moon, by the sun.’⁵⁴

Haavio and Sarmela stated that the Finnish *The Birth in the Sky* type was the most ancient version of the *The Birth of the Bear* incantations and a part of a larger international mythic complex, while the versions that shared more similarities with the Finnish ones were Ob-Ugrian.⁵⁵ However, they did not give precise accounts of the Ob-Ugrian sources or songs they referred to. In the anthology of Finno-Ugric folk poetry by Honko, Timonen and Branch there are some examples of typical Ob-Ugrian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* songs. A Khanty song from Shumilovo begins with the bear’s descent from the sky, told in first person by a human interpreting the role of the bear:

When I was let down from my father God
the seven-throated, on an iron chain’s end
to the small wooded island with the thick
birch grove out in the long and narrow lake⁵⁶

In a Mansi version of *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* song, the father of the bear was the sky-god Kores. The bear prayed to him to be lowered to the land of the people below. Kores forged a cradle made of silver and gold coins, fixed on an iron chain.⁵⁷ In the Finno-Karelian versions, too, the cradle was made of gold.

The Ob-Ugrian songs continued with descriptions of some faults committed by the bear. Its father gave it instructions about

how it should behave on earth; the bear should not touch the sacrificial huts of guardian spirits, eat human corpses buried in the ice and snow, steal the meat of animals in the hunters' traps, stocks and warehouses, or harm humans unless they had uttered lies in their oaths. However, the bear did not follow its father's instructions.⁵⁸ The songs gave a mythic justification for the ritual hunt; if the bear broke some prohibitions, the humans could hunt and kill it.⁵⁹ According to Honko, the meaning of the myth was the cyclic return of the bear from and to the sky: 'the bear's real homeland is the sky, from which it descends from time to time but where it must always return.'⁶⁰ In the Khanty song from Shumilovo, the bear came back to the sky in the same way it descended to the earth: with an iron chain.

I raised myself to heaven again, up to my father God,
the seven-throated, upon an iron chain's end that clinked like silver.⁶¹

These songs were sung during the Ob-Ugrian bear ceremonial, so the return of the bear to the sky and its father seems to be connected to the regeneration of the killed animal, a typical goal of the ceremonials themselves.

Considering the analogies with the Ob-Ugrian songs, Sarmela stated that *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantation was the most ancient of the Finno-Karelian versions; thus, it was the mythic justification of the whole plot of the ritual actions of Finno-Karelian bear ceremonialism.⁶² In some Finno-Karelian *Bear Songs*, at the end of the ceremonial the hunters put the bear's skull on the branch of a pine in the forest, singing: 'I set [it] up to watch the moon, / to learn the stars of Otava (the Big Dipper) / to observe the sun.'⁶³ The invitation to watch the moon, the sun and Otava (the Big Dipper) was also present in childbirth incantations, thus it is deeply connected with a rich imaginary of birth and travel in general.⁶⁴

The impression is that the soul of the bear went back to its land of birth as a prelude to its new birth or regeneration in the sky. Ensuring the regeneration of the killed bear, the hunters avoided the revenge of other bears and the forest haltias.

Sarmela stressed that the hunters gave back the bear skull to the pine on which, according to some *The Birth of the Bear*

incantations, the bruin descended from the sky.⁶⁵ The pine is also connected to the mythical forest and Hongotar (the Pine-Lady), a ‘mother of the bear (*karhun emuu*)’ and a forest haltia protecting and generating bears.⁶⁶

With this ritual action, the bear returned to its homeland in the heavens and in the forest, ready for its regeneration.⁶⁷ Having analyzed different variations of the *Bear Songs*, I reach the conclusion that this interpretation of the bear skull ritual and its songs is substantially correct.⁶⁸

Contextual Differences between the Finno-Karelian and the Ob-Ugrian Versions

Even if several mythic themes are common (the birth in the sky, the cradle and the silver thread and iron chains, the possibility of the bear’s return to the sky), the Ob-Ugrian songs and the Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations had many differences. Kuusi, Haavio and Sarmela emphasized only the similarities, though. Thus, while the comparisons these scholars made are useful, the differences should be analyzed in greater detail.

The Ob-Ugrian songs had a key differing characteristic: the bear sung in the first person. Someone interpreted the bruin’s role in the bear ceremony. The singer described the events from the point of view and the perspective of the bear itself. The bruin sang and the human beings listened to its myth, and the bruin explained to the people why they had the right to kill it.

The singer of the Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations was usually a cattle herder, more rarely a hunter, who sang the incantation in order to stop a bear attack. The whole story is told from the perspective of the humans, for their self-defence or to protect their cattle.

The singers believed that the listener was the bear itself, which was supposed to react to the following exhortation and commands. Other listeners were its supernatural protectors (haltias), which were invited to control the actions of the bear. The bear and the spirits were considered persons with perceptive, appetitive and cognitive dispositions.⁶⁹

The bear and the spirits had attributes of personhood in the sense that they understood the human language and they reacted to the lines of the incantations. They were indeed the object of the communication, but they were also agents, because they were supposed to change their behaviour.

The Ob-Ugrian songs about the birth of the bear were not incantations like the Finnish ones. Instead they contained many details about the life of the bear in the sky, the adventurous descent from the sky and the problematic life of the bear on earth; they were an integral part of the bear ceremonialism, while the Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations protected cattle and humans from bears during the grazing season and the bear hunt. The Ob-Ugrian songs had a clear narrative and epic structure, and the singers wanted to entertain the listeners by telling detailed myths about the legendary past of the bear from the point of view of the bruin itself. *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* songs also had another meaningful ritual function: to explain why the bear could be killed and why it should return to the sidereal fatherland. The bear admitted it had committed faults; it had broken the moral rules shared with humans – so it had been killed in the mythical past as well as in the present hunt. The story worked as a narrative that was accepted and told by the bear itself.

In the Ob-Ugrian tradition, the personhood of the bear is very active. The bruin is not only able to understand the human language, but it is able to speak and sing, presenting his myth from his perspective. The anthropologist Viveiros de Castro stresses that in Amazonian ontologies animals and spirits are subjects with a point of view, a perspective.⁷⁰ In the Ob-Ugrian case, the bear presented its own mythical origins from its own narrative perspective, and with abundance of *pathos* in telling the details of the adventures of its mythic life.

However, the role of the bear was interpreted by a human being, who demonstrated a high level of mimetic empathy for the bear. The anthropologist Rane Willerslev defined mimetic empathy as the capacity of hunters to be able to put themselves in the place of the animal and reproduce the animal's perspective and imagination.⁷¹

The hunters who performed the bear ceremonials and the role of the bear in them would have benefitted by being familiar

with the perspectives of the bear and the forest spirits; only by knowing their attitudes could the hunters build a reciprocal social relationship that ended in a successful set of rituals.

The Finno-Karelians uttered or sang *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations before sending the cattle to pasture or before and during the bear hunt. The Finno-Karelian bear mythology was connected to the protection of the cattle or of the group of hunters. The goal was to gain complete control over the powerful bruin, not to tell all the details of its mythical adventures.

Despite all these differences, the Ob-Ugrian and Finno-Karelian versions had a fundamental element in common: the bear was connected with the powers of the divinities of the sky.

The Ob-Ugrians explicitly called the bruin the son of the higher sky god.⁷² However, the bear's status is not exactly divine in the Ob-Ugrian versions either, as Sarmela stated: the bear could be punished by its divine father and killed by humans. The bruin was not immortal, as the real gods were, nor untouchable.

Last but not least, the Ob-Ugrians did not mention Otava (the Big Dipper), an important detail in the Finno-Karelian incantations. Otava (the Big Dipper) was situated at the very edge of the universe, where the highest pre-Christian and Christian divinities and saints dwelled. In Finno-Karelian incantations to heal burnings, the healer asked the bee to find the honey to heal them. The healer commanded the bee with these words: '[fly] over the shoulders of Otava (the Big Dipper), / fly into the cellar of the Creator, / into the chamber of the Omnipotent.'⁷³

This detail is of great importance, because the cattle herders requested the celestial beings who created and protected the bear to control it. After the narrative part of *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantation, Ukko Timonen uttered a command to the bear:

Don't bring down the dung-thigh (the cows),
 don't fell the milk-bearer (the cows).
 There will be more work for the mother,
 a great effort for the parent,
 if the little boy does wrong.⁷⁴

Timonen called the bear with a name that recalls the purity and innocence of childhood: a 'little boy' (*poikonen*), who should not create problems for his mother.⁷⁵ By contrast, the cows were

called ‘dung-thighs,’ creatures better left untouched because of the impurity and force contained in their excrement.

In this incantation, the bear is not addressed as the ‘enemy of the village’, as the behavior of an absolute evil being could not be easily modified. Instead, the bear is considered to be a young person, a ‘little boy’, not very conscious of his actions, and he could be convinced to avoid ‘doing wrong’ by the cattle herders. The bear should maintain humanlike features in order to communicate with humans; the behavior and the status of a ‘boy’, afraid of his parents, could be easily changed using the proper words. This incantation is not only coercitive, the utterer also explains why the bear-boy should avoid doing wrong. The moral code of a young person (a boy) included the respect for elders (the parents) and – probably – for the ‘older’ utterer of the incantations. The humans and bears shared a common moral code, based on age hierarchies.

The ‘mother’ or ‘parent’ was the guardian spirit (*haltia*) responsible for the behavior of her ‘boy,’ the bear. As parents of the bear, they generally protected the bears from hunters, but they could also protect the cattle and humans from bears.

The ‘parent’ motif was common in healing incantations, where the word ‘mother’ (*emo*) tended to be a synonym for ‘guardian spirit’ (*haltia*). If iron did not heal the wound it provoked, the *tietäjä* intimidated it, saying that it should do that before his mother or his parent was called and became upset at having to do ‘more work.’⁷⁶

But who, in this particular case, were the parents of the bear? Often, they were forest haltias. However, if the bear was born in the sky, it would be logical to suppose that his father was Ukko, the god of thunder and the sky, or the Christian God. Juho Turunen from Kitee (Finnish North Karelia) uttered a *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantation, followed by a prayer to the forest mistress and another to Ukkonen (Diminutive of Ukko; it also means ‘Thunder’).

Ukkonen, superior Lord,
 God on the top of the cloud,
 take care in the pine wood
 as you took care inside the room.⁷⁷

Turunen asked Ukkonen to look after the cows in the forest during the spring, as he had previously guarded them when they were in the cowshed during the winter. In a *Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantation from Kerimäki (South Savo) there was a similar request to Ukko.⁷⁸ In other incantations, a similar prayer could be addressed to Jesus.⁷⁹ In the syncretic vernacular folk beliefs, if the bear was born in the sky, the Christian beings ‘dwelling’ in Heaven were its guardians. Sometimes the cattle herder prayed to Jesus or Mary to put a golden spear into the jaw of the bear if it dared to attack the cattle.⁸⁰ Such acts of force, typical of vernacular Christian legends, are in contrast with the non-violent behavior of Jesus or Mary of the Gospels. In the *Birth in the Sky* type of incantations, the Christian beings were often syncretized with the pre-Christian sky-god Ukko. In other incantations to protect the cattle or hunters from the bear, almost the same prayer was addressed to the old god of thunder.⁸¹ Antti Multanen from Kitee (Finnish North Karelia) uttered a *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantation followed by a prayer to Ukko: the god should put a collar around the muzzle of the bruin to control it.⁸²

The Christian saints did not erase the memory of the pre-Christian beings, as Sarmela stresses in his historical reconstruction. The tendency was more the opposite: the Christian beings were ‘adapted’ to the context of the incantations. They were supposed to act as the pre-Christian beings did.

***The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* Incantations of the Hunters**

The Birth of the Bear in the Sky incantations were quite rare in the corpus of the *Bear Songs* performed during the Finno-Karelian bear ceremonials. However, these rare variations share similarities with the versions of the cattle herders, especially in the lines of the commands. In 1884, the hunter Jussi Pakkanen from Piippola (North Ostrobothnia) sang that the bear was born:

in a woolly basket,

in an iron basket.

[...]

On the nail⁸³ of a small cloud.

How was it lowered to the ground?
 With a nameless string,
 totally unknown.⁸⁴

In the first six weeks of its life, a newborn baby slept in a basket (*vakka*) made of intertwined thin, wooden strips.⁸⁵ The bear's basket was mythical, made of strange and uncommon materials (wool and iron). This time the bear is lowered with a string instead of a chain, and the string is 'nameless', an adjective linked with supernatural, 'unchristian' or 'pre-Christian' objects and places.

The Birth of the Bear in the Sky incantation by Jussi Pakkanen ended with a typical command to make the bear unable to bite:

I placed a hoop made of willow.
 If the willow breaks,
 I will build one with iron;
 If the iron tears,
 I mold one of copper.
 If the copper cracks,
 the Creator's lock will bar,
 the Lord's block will govern
 your jaws from opening wide,
 your teeth from parting.⁸⁶

If the bear was born in the sky, it could be controlled by the help of a powerful supernatural or celestial being: God, a saint, or the thunder-god Ukko. The hunter's motif was present in *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations of the cattle herders.

The structure of the motif of this incantation is almost identical to the one of the cattle-herders; after the description of the bear's birth in the sky, the celestial protector or 'father' is called to stop a potential bear attack. The main differences are that in Pakkanen's version the protector is Christian (the Creator, not Ukkonen) and that the incantation was uttered for self-defense. The incantation does not invite the bear to modify its aggressive behavior, but it urges the Creator to defend the hunter.

The similarities between the cattle holder's and hunter's versions are indicators of communication between the two traditions; the hunters were men involved in many rural activities in the spring and in the summer, and they were often skilled *tietäjäs*, experts

of the incantations which include many requests and prayers to guardian spirits and syncretic saints.

In the most common of *The Birth of the Bear* incantations of the hunters, the bruin was born in a mythical forest, Tapiola or Metsola, the realm of the forest spirits or Pohjola (the Northland), the dangerous otherworldly forestland governed by the ambiguous Crone or Mistress of Pohjola. However, these variants had a similar logic; after the description of the birth in the forest, a haltia, the Mistress of Pohjola, or a saint associated with them (St. George, St. Anne, the Virgin Mary) was requested to stop a bear attack against the hunters.⁸⁷

The bear could have multiple mythical origins in the Ob-Ugrian tradition as well. Schmidt noted that the bruin could be an offspring of the father of the sky, the forest spirits or the mother of the 'lower regions' or underground.⁸⁸

Conclusions

In this chapter, I criticize some of the classic methods, theories and research results of the Finnish traditional scholarship on the bear ceremonialism and *The Birth of the Bear* incantations. However, I propose a more contextual way to compare *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* type of incantations that takes into consideration (a) the historical, geographic, and ritual contexts, and (b) not only the similarities, but also the differences between the Ob-Ugrian and Finno-Karelian cultures. The contextual method also includes comparisons 'inside' the Finno-Karelian culture, the comparison between different types of Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear* incantations, and the analysis of intertextual connections between different genres, as the incantations of cattle-herders, hunters and *tietäjäs*.

The contextual comparison is not only finalized to find out the 'most ancient', 'authentic' or 'original' of *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations; it also gives the possibility to analyse the influence of historical changes, historical stratification, and syncretism present in the same songs.

The contextual comparison between the Ob-Ugrian songs and Finno-Karelian incantations of *The Birth of the Bear in the*

Sky type gave surprising results, and it furnished rich, complex and challenging information.

In the Ob-Ugrian version, the ritual context is the bear ceremonial, and *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* song gives a mythic justification of the killing of the bear, telling what moral faults the bear has committed. The bear, interpreted by a human, is the ‘performer’ of the song and the humans – the villagers presents in the ceremonial – the listeners. The origin of the bear is told from the bruin’s perspective and with abundance of entertaining and emotional details to reach a feeling of mimetic empathy with the bruin itself.

The Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations had two ritual contexts: the hunter’s and the cattle herder’s rituals. In both cases, the human ritual actor is the narrator, and the addressees are the bruin and its guardian spirits. *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations follow the human perspective and the human need to protect themselves and the cattle.

However, in the songs for the bear skull rituals, the references to the bruin’s birth in the sky were connected to the idea of its regeneration in its mythical birthland, a concept that was much emphasized in the Ob-Ugrian tradition.

The contextual analysis of Finno-Karelian *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations shows that they were not only ‘purely’ archaic myths but incantations full of fascinating and meaningful historical layers; alongside the older strata represented by motives about the bear’s regeneration in its celestial birthland, we found several motives related to the *tietäjä*’s tradition and many calls and requests to Christian and Pre-Christian spirits.

The agriculture, the cattle herding and the Christian faith probably reduced the areas where the bear ceremonialism was performed, but they did not completely or abruptly erase or degenerate the sacred status of the bear and its haltias, nor their complex attributes of personhood.

The folklorist Anna-Leena Siikala has pointed out that in the Finnic Kalavalaic songs and incantations, the fusion of different historical elements often acquired a relevant contextual and ritual meaning.⁸⁹ New historical layers rarely wiped away the old layers

of meaning. I agree with her theory which stresses that changes in tradition were not mechanical events, but complex processes in which renewing and conserving tendencies could act at the same time, influencing each other.⁹⁰

In the Finno-Karelian folk tradition, ritual actors had the tendency to ‘accumulate’ supernatural helpers, mobilizing quite a variegated group of beings, which belonged to a historically stratified tradition. The hunters and cattle herders asked for the help of all the powerful haltias, divinities and saints that could help them in preventing a bear attack.

Notes

1. On other international studies and sources on bear ceremonials, and the classic study of Irwing Hallowell about bear ceremonialism, see Piludu 2019: 13–15, 39–41, 49–54 and Rydving 2010.
2. For a more detailed description of the phases, see Piludu 2019: 16–18.
3. Tarkka 2013: 330; Tarkka 1998: 96.
4. On sentient ecology, see Anderson 2000: 116, 130; Århem 2016: 5.
5. Stark 2002: 23.
6. Piludu 2019: 66–68.
7. On anomaly, see also Douglas 2002 (1966): 48.
8. Piludu 2019: 19–20.
9. <https://skvr.fi/>.
10. SKVR IX4/1096; date unknown, edited after 1750. The SKVR’s sources (Ancient Poems of The Finnish People) are indicated with the number of the volume, followed by the number of the song.
11. Ganander (1789) 2003: 60–61.
12. Ahola and Lukin 2016: 55.
13. Krohn (1915) 2008: 163–164.
14. Krohn (1915) 2008: 146–164; Holmberg (Harva) 1915: 43–52; Karjalainen 1914; Karjalainen 1918: 512–545; Kannisto 1906a;

Kannisto 1906b; Kannisto 1907; Kannisto 1933; Kannisto 1938a; Kannisto 1938b; Kannisto 1939a; Kannisto 1939b.

15. See Carpelan 1974.

16. Kuusi 1963: 43.

17. Kuusi 1963: 42.

18. Kuusi 1963: 50.

19. Kuusi 1963: 42.

20. Haavio 1967: 28.

21. Haavio 1967: 29–30. On the bear in Greek mythology, see Athanassakis 2005.

22. Haavio 1967: 28.

23. Gentili & Perusino 2002; Sourvinou-Inwood 1988.

24. Turunen 1981: 235.

25. Rydving 2010: 34.

26. Sarmela 1991: 221–222.

27. Sarmela 1991: 222.

28. Sarmela 1991: 224.

29. Sarmela 1991: 230.

30. Sarmela 1991: 229.

31. Sarmela 1991: 230; Sarmela 2006: 17; on a different interpretation of the *tietäjä*'s roles, see Siikala 2002.

32. Sarmela 1991: 230–231.

33. On the Crone or Mistress of Pohjola see: Piludu 2019: 129–136, 295–296.

34. Sarmela 1991: 236.

35. Tarkka 2013: 80.

36. Honko 1993.

37. Pentikäinen 2007: 130–148.

38. Pentikäinen 2007: 130–148.

39. Tarkka 1994; Tarkka 1998; Tarkka 2005: 256–299; Tarkka 2013: 327–381, Tarkka 2014.
40. Stark-Arola 2002: 111–133.
41. Siikala 2012: 380–389.
42. The *tietäjä* (the one-who-knows, sage) was a Finnish folk healer and an expert of a multitude of incantations and rituals, able to enter in a state of trance. See Siikala 2002.
43. Almost all the collected *The Birth of the Bear* incantations has been published in the volumes SKVR (*Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot*), which are now entirely digitalized (see: <https://skvr.fi/>).
44. Krohn 1917: 207–214.
45. Karhu 1947.
46. Piludu 2019: 112.
47. In my dissertation, I analyzed in detail the all these variations (Piludu 2019: 111–153), focusing on the birth of the bears in the otherworldly forest, which was the most common in the hunting traditions (Piludu 2019: 114–129). In the second part of this article, I focus on *The Birth of the Bear in the Sky* incantations, which have a great importance in the Finnish scholarly debate on bear ceremonialism.
48. Kuusi 1963; Haavio 1967.
49. SKVR VI2/5405: 1–7, VI2/5408: 1–5, VII5/3869: 1–8, VII5/3930: 1–7, XII2/6858:1–7.
50. *Tuolla ohto synnytelty, / mesikämmen kiännätelty: / ylähällä taivossa, / Otavaisen olkapäillä. / Missä se alas laskettiin? / Hihnassa alas laskettiin, / hihnassa hopiisessa, / kultaisessa kätkyyssä, / sitte läks saloja samuumaan, / pohjanmoata polokemaan* (SKVR VII5/3932: 3–12. 1894; English translation by Vesa Matteo Piludu).
51. Tarkka 2013: 332; Piludu 2019: 68–70.
52. See the next section.
53. Ganander 1789: 63–64.
54. *Kuun luona, tykönä päivän* (SKVR VI2/5408: 3).

55. Haavio 1967: 28; Sarmela 1991: 213.

56. Cited in *The Great Bear* 1993: 152. Poem 27, 1–8; English translation by Branch. Anonymous singer from Shumilovo, Kondiskoe raion, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia. 1888. Collector: Patkanov; originally published in Patkanov 1900: 192–203; cited in Pentikäinen 2007: 37.

57. Cited in *The Great Bear* 1993: 157–159; Poem 29. Singer: Jakov Tasmanov. Chalpaul, Sartyn'ia Region, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia. 1906. Collector: Kannisto, A. Originally published in Kannisto, Liimola & Virtanen 1958: 9: 14–20.

58. Honko 1993: 125; Kannisto 1939a: 8.

59. Sarmela 1991: 213; Kannisto 1939a: 8.

60. Honko 1993: 125.

61. Cited in *The Great Bear* 1993: 152. Poem 27, 1–8; English translation by Branch. Anonymous singer from Shumilovo, Kondiskoe raion, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia. 1888. Collector: Patkanov; originally published in Patkanov 1900: 192–203.

62. Sarmela 1991: 213.

63. *Panin kuuta kahtomahan, / otavia oppimahan, / päiveä tähystämähän* (SKVR VII5/3396: 12–14. Ilomantsi. Ahlqvist B, n. 50 b. 1846).

64. Piludu 2019: 289.

65. Sarmela 1991: 220.

66. On Hogotar, see Piludu 2019: 120–122, 130, 195, 276–277.

67. Sarmela 1982: 64.

68. Piludu 2019: 265–304.

69. On personhood of animals and spirits, see Viveiros de Castro 2009; Brightman, Grotti and Ulturgasheva 2014: 2.

70. Viveiros de Castro 1998; Århem 2016: 7.

71. Willerslev 2007: 106.

72. Sarmela 1991: 213.

73. *Otavaisen olkapäite; / lennä Luojan kellarihin, / kamarihin kaikkivallan* (SKVR XII1/4586: 40–42).

74. *Elä sorra sontareittä, / koa maion kantajoa, / enemp' on emoilla työtä, / suur(i) vaiva vanhemmalla, / jos poikonen pahan teköö* (SKVR VII5/3932: 13–17).

75. It should be noticed that the social status of the bear often changes in Finno-Karelian *Bear Songs* and incantations; it could be addressed as a young boy, the offspring or cattle of guardian spirits, an old man, a bride, a groom, or a guest of honour. These changes are never casual. See Piludu 2019.

76. SKVR I4/I53a: 8–17.

77. *Ukkonen, ylinen Herra, / pilven päällinen Jumala, / hoia niin bongikossa, / kuin sä hoi'it huonehessa* (SKVR VII5/3931: 21–24. Kitee. Havukainen n. 40, 1896).

78. SKVR VI2/5405: 20–24.

79. SKVR VII5/3850: 10–11.

80. SKVR VII5/3850: 152–155.

81. SKVR I4/I442: 23–29, I4/I439: 78–81, XII2/6488: 5–6.

82. SKVR VII5/3930. Kitee. Pennanen n. 66, 1896. Haarajärvi.

83. The edge of a cloud or a mythological sky pillar; see Siikala 2012: 168.

84. *Villasessa vakkasessa, / rautasessa vakkasessa. [...] Päällä pienen pilven naulan. / millä se maahan laskettiin? / nuoralla nimettömällä, / aivan tutkimattomalla* (SKVR XII2/6464: 44–43 and 46–47. Keränen, E. 295. 1884? Piippola. Jussi Paakkinen).

85. Paulaharju 1995 (1925): 55–56.

86. *Minä vantehen pajusta pannen. / Jos paju pettänevi, / minäpä rauvasta rakenman; / jospa rauta ratkennevi, / minäpä vaskesta valatan; jos vaski katkennovi, / lukitkoompa luojan lukko, / Herran haitta hallitkoon, / leukasi leveämstä, / hampaasi hajoamasta.* (SKVR XII2/6464: 30–39).

87. Piludu 2019: 114–136.

88. Schmidt 1989: 192.

89. Siikala 1994: 37.

90. Siikala 1994: 38.

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