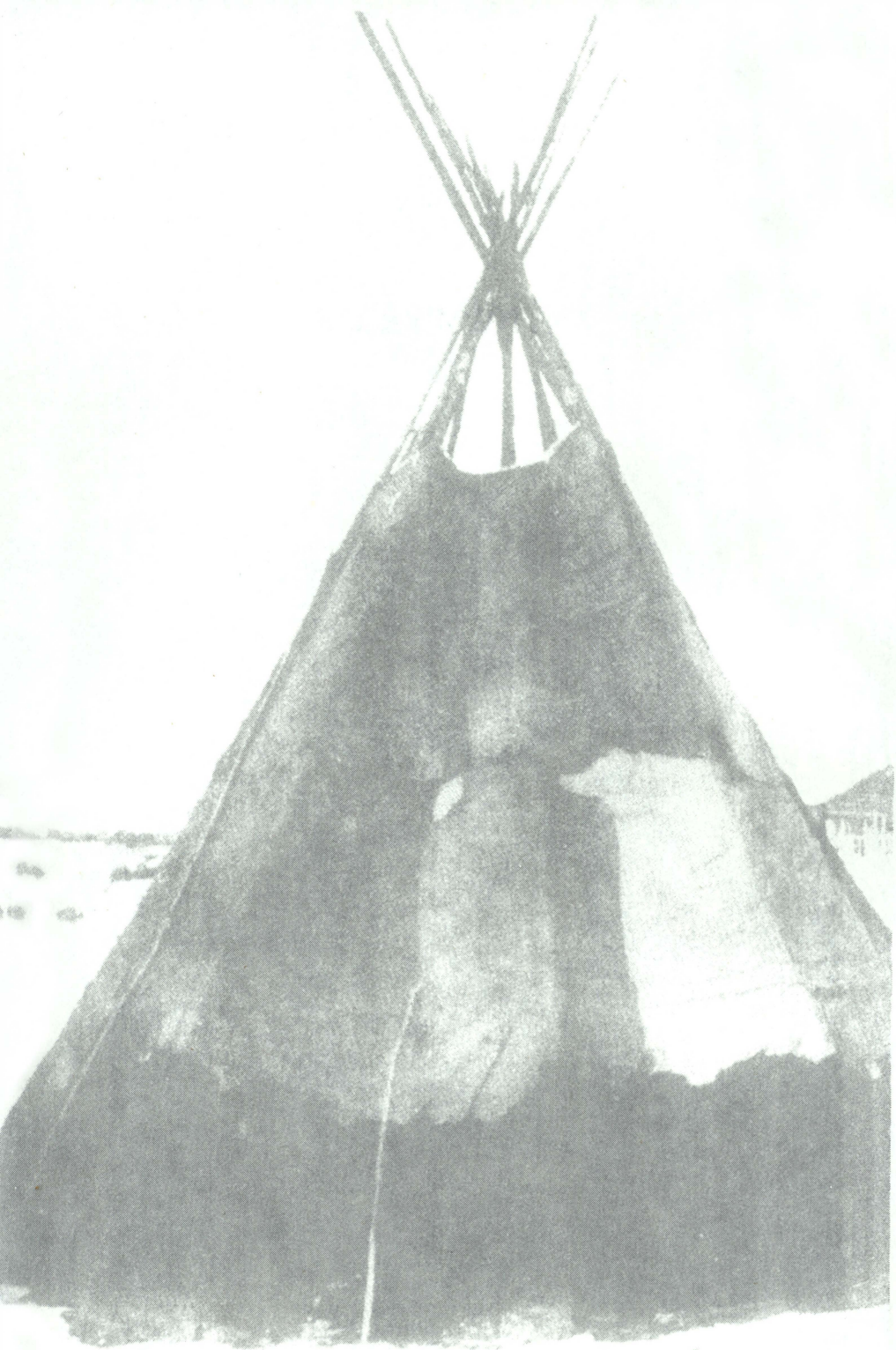


ARCTIC MIRRORS



ARCTIC MIRRORS

RUSSIA AND THE SMALL PEOPLES
OF THE NORTH

A black and white photograph of two people in traditional Arctic clothing standing in front of a building with a dome. The person on the left is wearing a dark, patterned parka with a wide fur collar. The person on the right is wearing a dark, patterned parka with a wide fur collar. They are standing in a snowy environment. The building in the background has a large dome and a portico with columns.

Yuri Slezkine

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TO MY PARENTS

Resemblances are the shadows of differences. Different people see different similarities and similar differences.

—Vladimir Nabokov

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Preface

Over the last one thousand years, East Slavic agrarian society with its increasingly elaborate social and legal institutions has expanded to include and partially absorb numerous hunting and pastoral groups. No longer “foreigners” but still alien insofar as they remained “unsettled,” these peoples have repeatedly posed a challenge to government officials, Orthodox missionaries, and assorted intellectuals seeking to define Russianness and otherness to both Russians and others. The two flanks of the eastern frontier as delineated by the eventual victors have had very different fates: whereas the steppe nomads of the south have provided the Russian imagination, both popular and official, with some of its most enduring myths, the foragers of the “northern borderlands” have rarely threatened the settled/Christian/civilized world and have remained invisible in most versions of its past. Yet of all the non-Russian subjects of the Russian state and of all the non-Russian objects of Russian concern, it is the circumpolar hunters and gatherers who have proved the most difficult to reform and conceptualize. From the birth of the irrational savage in the early eighteenth century to the repeated resurrection of the natural man at the end of the twentieth, they have been the most consistent antipodes of whatever it meant to be Russian. Seen as an extreme case of backwardness-as-beastliness or backwardness-as-innocence, they have provided a remote but crucial point of reference for speculations on human and Russian identity, while at the same time serving as a convenient testing ground for policies and images that grew out of those speculations. This book is a history of that relationship, a story of Rus-

sia's confrontation with its remotest "living ancestors," a study of the place of the "small peoples" in the Russian empire and in the Russian mind.

This approach has two important implications. First, both the empire and the mind discussed here are indeed Russian, and this means that I will present the native northerners indirectly through the eyes of the Russian protagonists. Second, the book's main focus is on the interaction of policies and perceptions (the empire and the mind), and this means that most of these protagonists are literate outsiders who had some claim to the "public" or bureaucratic ear. "Indirect" does not necessarily mean insular, however. A study of self's images of the other presupposes the existence of the other's images of self (in both senses) and allows for the possibility of a reciprocal—albeit unequal—relationship. I assume, in other words, that Russian "Hyperboreanism" may have been shaped, modified, and circumscribed by real-life northerners, both Russian and non-Russian.

Finally, the story that follows is based on the hypothesis that cross-cultural encounters cannot be fully described in terms of domination, that colonial representations cannot be wholly reduced to the "gross political fact" of colonialism; that there are meaningful differences between various colonial voices, and that it really matters to everyone concerned (including historians) whether a hunting band is to be "protected" or "developed," and whether one enters a tundra encampment expecting a demand for alcohol or an interest in world revolution. All the images traced in this book are in some ways informed by Russia's imperial ascendancy in northern Eurasia, but insofar as these images reflect a reality other than their own, it is important to distinguish among them and to explore their relationships with one another as well as with the world they confront, distort, and represent.

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I also thank the Social Science Research Council's Joint Committee on Soviet Studies, the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies,

Wake Forest University, and the University of Texas at Austin for financial support; Sheila Fitzpatrick, for generous help on countless occasions; Sidney Monas, for constant guidance; Caroline Boyd and Robert Fernea, for early encouragement; Marjorie Balzer, Bruce Grant, Igor Krupnik, Johanna Nichols, Aleksandr Pika, Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, Peter Rutland, and Reggie Zelnik, for useful suggestions; Kevin Doak, Michael Hughes, Alan Williams, the University of Chicago Human Sciences Workshop, and the Berkeley Colloquium on Theory and Method in Comparative Studies, for stimulating discussions; Konstantin Gurevich, Sarah Hepler, Brian Kassof, Molly Molloy, Patricia Polansky, Allan Urbanic, and the University of Illinois Slavic Reference Service, for bibliographic assistance; Michael Younger, for computer expertise; and Lisa Little, for all of the above. Whatever errors remain in the text are entirely her fault.

YURI SLEZKINE

Berkeley, California

Sources and Abbreviations

Sources cited as “unpublished” in notes and bibliography are materials provided to me by their authors or by other persons who cooperated in my research. All such papers are in my possession.

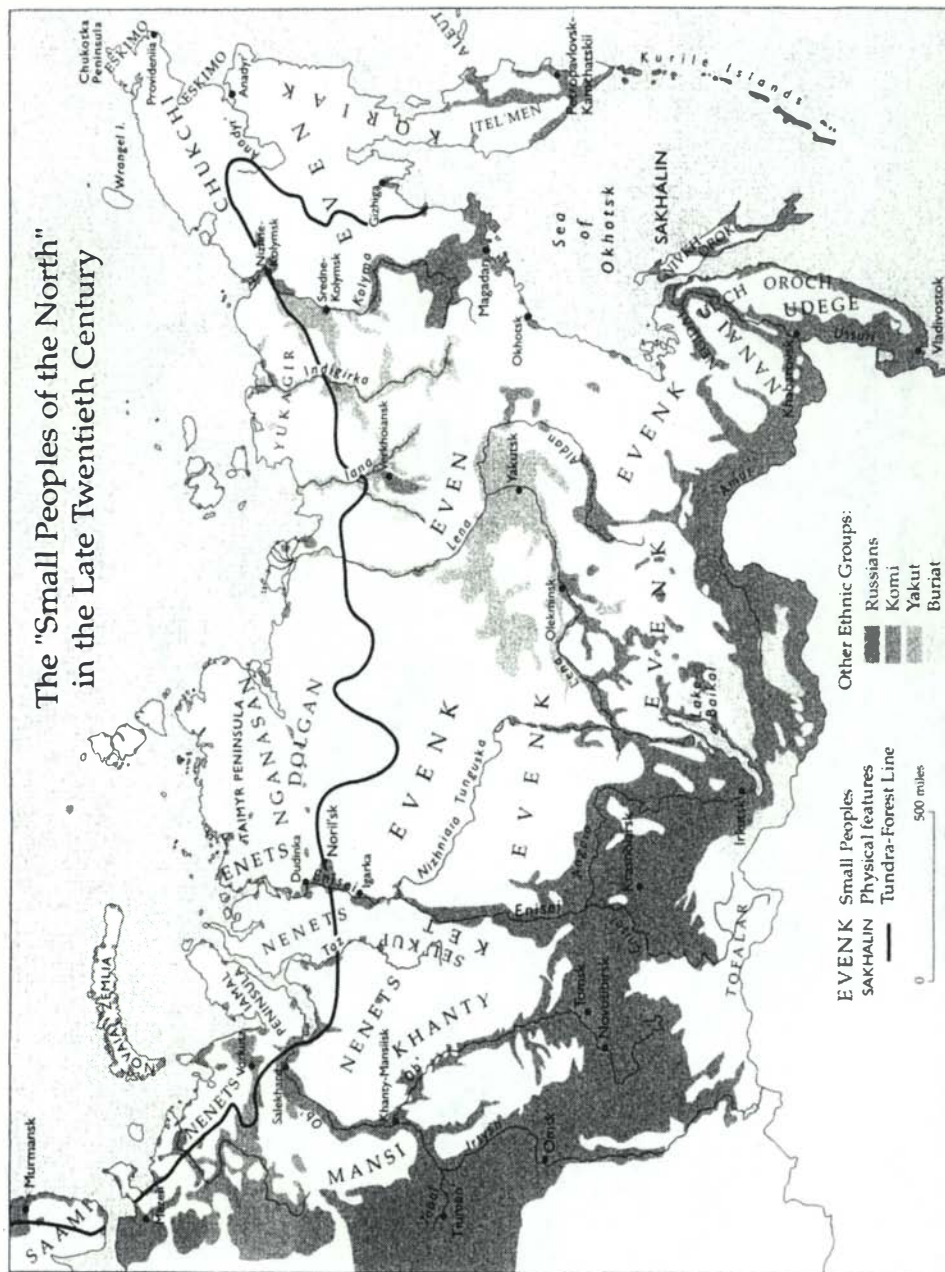
AA	<i>American Anthropologist</i>
AI	<i>Akty istoricheskie</i>
ArA	<i>Arctic Anthropology</i>
DAI	<i>Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim</i>
E	<i>Etnografiia</i>
HRAF	<i>Human Relations Area File</i>
IG	<i>Izvestiia GAIMK</i>
IM	<i>Istorik-marksist</i>
IRGO	<i>Imperatorskoe russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo</i>
IV	<i>Istoricheskii viestnik</i>
MS	<i>Morskoi sbornik</i>
OPS	<i>Okhotnik i pushnik Sibiri</i>
ORS	<i>Okhotnik i rybak Sibiri</i>
OS	<i>Okhotnik Sibiri</i>
P	<i>Pedologiia</i>
PB	<i>Pravoslavnyi blagoviestnik</i>
PN	<i>Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei</i>
PS	<i>Partiinoe stroitel'stvo</i>
PSI	<i>Pamiatniki sibirskoi istorii</i>
PSRL	<i>Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei, 1962–</i>
PSZ	<i>Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii</i>
RA	<i>Russkii arkhiv</i>
RIB	<i>Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka</i>
RN	<i>Revoliutsiia i natsional'nosti</i>
RV	<i>Russkii viestnik</i>

SA	<i>Sovetskaia (Severnaia) Aziia</i>
SAr	<i>Sovetskaia Arktika</i>
SE	<i>Sovetskaia etnografiia</i>
SEER	<i>Slavonic and East European Review</i>
SO	<i>Sibirskie ogni</i>
SP	<i>Severnye prostory</i>
SR	<i>Slavic Review</i>
SS	<i>Sovetskii sever</i>
SSb	<i>Sibirskii sbornik</i>
TsGAOR	<i>Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii, Moscow, Russia</i>
TT	<i>Taiga i tundra</i>
VK	<i>Voprosy kolonizatsii</i>
ZhMNP	<i>Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia</i>
ZhN	<i>Zhizn' natsional'nostei</i>
ZhS	<i>Zhivaia starina</i>

[illegible]

TURKIC Languages
SAKHALIN Physical features
Tundra-Forest Line
0 500 miles

The "Small Peoples of the North" in the Late Twentieth Century



ARCTIC MIRRORS

INTRODUCTION

The Small Peoples of the North

In Russia, the “peoples of the north,” “small peoples (of the north),” or “indigenous northerners” usually include twenty-six ethnic groups whose traditional occupations are hunting, trapping, fishing, and reindeer herding. They are the Saami (Lapps), Khanty (Ostiak), Mansi (Vogul), Nenets (Samoed, Iurak), Enets (Enisei Samoed), Sel’kup (Ostiako-Samoed), Nganasan (Tavgi Samoed), Dolgan, Ket (Enisei Ostiak), Evenk (Tungus), Even (Lamut), Yukagir, Chuvan, Chukchi, Koriak, Itel’men (Kamchadal), Eskimo, Aleut, Nivkh (Giliak), Negidal, Nanai (Gol’d), Ul’ch (Mangun), Oroch, Orok, Udege (Tazy), and Tofalar (Karagas).¹

When the current classification was established in the 1920s, the “national affiliations” of the newly defined small peoples were determined by government agents on the basis of tradition, political exigencies, and contemporary linguistic and ethnographic data. None of these criteria was fully articulated or consistently applied, but the imperial practice of placing the circumpolar hunters and gatherers in a separate category was never questioned.² Whether they were characterized as “wanderers and foragers who move from one place to another,” “primitive tribes,” “native peoples of the northern borderlands,” or “small peoples of the north,” they were always seen as distinct from

¹ All names are Library of Congress transliterations of the contemporary Russian singular forms, with the exception of Chukchi, “Siberian Eskimo,” Yukagir, and Yakut, for whom the traditional English names have been used (the most common old names are given in parentheses). For the earlier periods, when many of today’s groups did not exist as such, I use broader geographic, economic, and linguistic descriptors or contemporary administrative designations.

² Reindeer breeders, as opposed to horse and cattle pastoralists, are invariably included in the hunter-gatherer, and therefore “small,” category.

their more "developed" neighbors.³ The Komi (Zyrian), the Sakha (Yakut), and the Russian "old settlers" might be both circumpolar and "indigenous" in strictly geographical terms, but according to the Russian scholars and officials who formulated and enforced such classifications, their "traditional" economies were not exclusively associated with foraging, their cultures were not fully associated with "tradition," and hence their societies did not always qualify as primitive, traditional, small, native, or indeed indigenous and circumpolar.⁴

Linguistically, the hunter-gatherers of northern Eurasia belong to the Uralic (Finno-Ugric and Samoedic) and Altaic (Turkic and Tungusic) families, as well as to smaller groupings usually subsumed under the nongenetic "Paleoasiatic" category.⁵ The Saami of the Kola Peninsula speak a Finnic language (closest to Balto-Finnic but usually described as a separate branch) and are related to their namesakes in northern Scandinavia, whereas the Khanty and Mansi from the lower Ob' and northern Urals share the Ugrian subgroup with the Hungarians (Mansi is a cognate of Magyar.) The distant cousin of Finno-Ugric is Samoed, which is believed to have split off from Proto-Uralic around the fourth millennium B.C. Today's Samoed speakers include the Nenets, Enets, and Nganasan, who live along the Arctic coast between the Mezen' and the Khatanga, and the Sel'kup, who inhabit the Tym and the upper Taz. At the time of the Russian conquest, Samoedic languages were also spoken in the Saian area by the Kamasin, Mator, Koibal, and other now-extinct groups.

The Tungusic languages are spoken all over northern Asia. The Tungus proper (today's Evenk, Even, and Negidal) are widely dispersed throughout Siberia east of the Ob'-Irtys' watershed, whereas on the lower Amur and on Sakhalin the Nanai, Ul'ch, Oroch, Orok, and Udege

³ See, for example, "Ustav ob upravlenii inorodtsev (1822)," in PSZ, vol. 38, no. 29.126, sec. 1; V. G. Bogoraz(-Tan), "O pervobytnykh plemenakh," ZhN, no. 1 (1922); and "Vremennoe polozenie ob upravlenii tuzemnykh narodnostei i plemen Severnykh okrain RSFSR," SA, no. 2 (1927): 85-91.

⁴ All "native northerners" except for certain Nenets groups and the Saami live in Asia, and are therefore "native Siberians." Not all native Siberians are either "small" or northern, however.

⁵ Altaic is not universally accepted as a genetic family. Besides Turkic and Tungusic, it includes the Mongolian languages, which are not spoken in the circumpolar zone. For a general introduction to the languages of Northern Eurasia, see Bernard Comry, *The Languages of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, 1981); Michael E. Krauss, "Many Tongues—Ancient Tales," in *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska*, ed. William W. Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell (Washington, D.C., 1988), pp. 145-50; N. A. Baskakov, *Vvedenie v izuchenie tiurkskikh iazykov* (Moscow, 1969); Peter Hajdu, *Finno-Ugrian Languages and Peoples* (London, 1975) and *The Samoed Peoples and Languages*

represent the closely related Manchu subgroup, which extends south of the Amur to include Solon, Juchen, and Manchu proper. Of the Turkic speakers, the Taimyr Dolgan are the descendants of four Tungus clans that adopted a Yakut dialect during the eighteenth century, and the Tofalar (Tofa) are usually distinguished from the Tuva pastoralists on cultural rather than linguistic grounds.

The speakers of the Siberian languages that predate Uralic and Altaic are known as Paleoasiatics or Paleosiberians. They include the Yukagir, Chukchi, Koriak, and Eskimo from the northeastern corner of the Asiatic mainland; the Aleut, transported from Atka and Attu to the Commander Islands in 1825 or 1826; the Kamchatka Itel'men; the Nivkh from the lower Amur and Sakhalin; and the Eniseians, who in the seventeenth century lived on the upper Enisei above the Elogui and of whom only the northernmost group, the Ket, have survived into the twentieth century.

Chukchi, Koriak, and Itel'men are genetically related members of the Chukotko-Kamchatkan family (with Chukchi and Koriak very close to one another). Eskimo and Aleut are representatives of a large family found mostly outside the Russian sphere of influence; Yukagir has been inconclusively linked to the Uralic languages; Nivkh is not clearly related to any known family; and Ket (Eniseian) is a linguistic isolate both genetically and typologically.

The area inhabited by the small peoples is divided into two principal ecozones, the Arctic tundra and the subarctic taiga. The tundra runs along the Arctic Ocean and is characterized by sparse ground cover of shrubs, lichens, and mosses and a low animal population density. The taiga consists of coniferous boreal forest dominated by pine, larch, and spruce. The border between the two is an important ecological and cultural divide known as the tree line or the "edge of the forest." Permafrost is continuous in the tundra and sporadic in the taiga. In addition to retarding the growth of vegetation, these layers of perennially frozen soil prevent the drainage of meltwater, in which enormous quantities of mosquitoes breed every summer.⁶

Modes of human subsistence vary according to the environment.⁷

(Bloomington, Ind., 1963), and V. Vs. Ivanov, V. N. Toporov, and B. A. Uspenskii, eds., *Ketskii sbornik* (Moscow, 1969), vol. 1 (*Lingvistika*).

⁶ Moira Dunbar, "The Arctic Setting," in *The Arctic Frontier*, ed. R. St. J. Macdonald (Toronto, 1966), pp. 3-25; Nelson H.H. Graburn and B. Stephen Strong, *Circumpolar Peoples: An Anthropological Perspective* (Pacific Palisades, Calif., 1973), pp. 1-4.

⁷ For an introduction to circumpolar modes of subsistence, see Graburn and Strong, *Circumpolar Peoples*; Tim Ingold, *Hunters, Pastoralists, and Ranchers: Reindeer Econo-*

In the tundra the only mammal capable of supporting large predatory populations is the reindeer (known in North America as the caribou), and it is around reindeer—as prey and property—that most of the traditional economic activity of the Arctic is centered. At the time of the mass Russian invasion tundra populations tended to combine hunting and pastoralism. The reindeer wintered at the edge of the forest or in protected river valleys, and in the summer headed for the seashore or mountains to escape the gadflies and mosquitoes; humans followed their own animals or tried to intercept the migrating wild herds at river crossings. In the eighteenth century, as wild reindeer populations diminished, pastoralism became the prevalent form of inland tundra economy, and the majority of the Nenets, tundra Chukchi, Even, and tundra Koriak became full-time herders. The main economic unit was the camp, which usually consisted of several nuclear families, their dependents (including invalids, widows, and orphans from less successful camps), and the so-called assistants, who tended to be ruined herd masters or young men at the beginning of their herd-building careers. All animals were privately owned, and individual herders or households could attach themselves to other camps or start their own, always in pursuit of the “reindeer man’s” overriding economic goal, the maximization of the herd.⁸

Another important source of subsistence was the sea, and in many coastal areas the native northerners hunted seal, whale, and walrus. Two groups in particular—the Eskimo and the “settled Chukchi”—lived almost exclusively off marine hunting. Their “boatfuls,” or *baidaras*, were kinship units largely analogous to pastoral camps, but

mies and Their Transformations (Cambridge, 1980); and I. I. Krupnik, *Arkticheskaia etnoekologiya* (Moscow, 1989). For the most recent and most comprehensive “ethnic history” of most northern peoples (which, unfortunately, came out too late to be considered here), see James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony, 1581–1990* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁸ The most important general ethnographies of the tundra peoples are V. V. Antropova, *Kul'tura i byt koriakov* (Leningrad, 1971); Waldemar G. Bogoras, *The Chukchee* (New York, 1904); I. S. Gurvich, *Etnicheskaya istoriya Severo-Vostoka Sibiri* (Moscow, 1966); I. S. Gurvich and B. O. Dolgikh, eds., *Obshchestvennyi stroi i narodov severnoi Sibiri XVII-nachala XX v.* (Moscow, 1970); Peter Hajdu, *The Samoed Peoples and Languages* (Bloomington, 1963); Waldemar Jochelson, *The Koryak* (New York, 1913); idem, *The Yukaghir and the Yukaghirized Tungus* (New York, 1910); L. V. Khomich, *Nentsy: Istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki* (Leningrad, 1966); A. A. Kiselev and T. A. Kiseleva, *Sovetskie saamy: Istorika, ekonomika, kul'tura* (Murmansk, 1979); M. G. Levin and L. P. Potapov, eds., *Narody Sibiri* (Moscow, 1956); A. A. Popov, *The Nganasan: The Material Culture of the Tavgi Samoeds* (Bloomington, 1966); idem, *Nganasany: Sotsial'noe ustroistvo i verovaniia* (Leningrad, 1984); I. S. Vdovin, *Ocherki istorii i etnografii chukchei* (Moscow, 1965); idem, *Ocherki etnicheskoi istorii koriakov* (Leningrad, 1973).

varied in size according to the season and the task at hand: seal hunting was often done by individual hunters, whereas whaling expeditions required the labor of a large number of people. Farther south along the Pacific coast the settled Koriak complemented sea-mammal hunting with fishing, and the Itel'men relied almost exclusively on the annual salmon runs. Most peoples of the Pacific coast, including those of the Amur, used dogs for transportation.⁹

The foragers of the taiga zone (most Ob' Ugrians, the Forest Samoed, the Ket, Evenk, Tofalar, and the Amur peoples) engaged in various combinations of fishing and hunting.¹⁰ In the summer most of them lived in temporary settlements along lakes and rivers; in the winter small bands or solitary hunters pursued bear, moose, wild reindeer, and fur-bearing animals.

None of the native northerners were "settled" in the Russian (agricultural) sense of the term. The nature of their subsistence activities required periodic movement, and even sea-mammal hunters and salmon fishermen had different summer and winter quarters. Economic associations were relatively unstable, fluctuating in size and composition according to the season, the availability of resources, and the political choices of individual conjugal pairs. Larger descent groups bound their members with mutual social and spiritual obligations but

⁹The most important general ethnographies of the Siberian sea-mammal hunters and coastal fishermen are Bogoras, *The Chukchee and The Eskimo of Siberia* (New York, 1913); Chester S. Chard, "Kamchadal Culture and Its Relationships in the Old and New Worlds," *Archives of Archaeology*, no. 15 (Madison, 1961); Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*; Gurvich and Dolgikh, *Obshchestvennyi stroi*; *Istoriia i kul'tura itel'menov* (Leningrad, 1990); Jochelson, *The Koryak*; S. P. Krasheninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki. Sprilozheniem raportov, donesenii i drugikh neopublikovannykh materialov* (Moscow, 1949); Levin and Potapov, *Narody Sibiri*; R. G. Liapunova, *Ocherki po etnografii aleutov* (Leningrad, 1975); G. A. Menovshchikov, *Eskimosy* (Magadan, 1959); and Vdovin, *Ocherki etnicheskoi istorii koriakov*.

¹⁰The most important general ethnographies of the Siberian taiga foragers are E. A. Alekseenko, *Kety: Istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki* (Leningrad, 1967); Lydia Black, "The Nivkh (Gilyak) of Sakhalin and the Lower Amur," *ArA*, no. 10 (1973): 1-110; Gurvich and Dolgikh, eds., *Obshchestvennyi stroi*; E. A. Kreinovich, *Nivkhu: Zagadochnye obitateli Sakhalina i Amura* (Moscow, 1973); V. G. Lar'kin, *Orochi: Istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki s serediny XIX v. do nashikh dnei* (Moscow, 1964); Levin and Potapov, *Narody Sibiri*; S. M. Shirokogoroff, *Social Organization of the Northern Tungus* (Shanghai, 1933); idem., *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (London, 1935); L. Ia. Shternberg, *Giliaki, orochoi, gol'dy, negidal'tsy, ainy* (Khabarovsk, 1933); A. V. Smoliak, *Traditsionnoe khoziaistvo i material'naia kul'tura narodov Nizhnego Amura i Sakhalina: Etnograficheskie aspekty* (Moscow, 1984); idem, *Ul'chi: Khoziaistvo, kul'tura i byt v proshlom i nastoiashchem* (Moscow, 1966); Ch. M. Taksami, *Nivkhi: Sovremennoe khoziaistvo, kul'tura i byt* (Leningrad, 1967); G. M. Vasilevich, *Evenki. Istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki (XVIII-nachalo XX)* (Leningrad, 1969).

rarely functioned as stable economic or military units. Among reindeer pastoralists in particular, constant herd accumulation and the concomitant tendency toward family autonomy resulted in minimal socialization outside the camp. Chukchi patrilineal lineages were rather loose (adoption was easy and multiform), consisted of few generations, did not have proper names, and were not exogamous, so that the authority of the "camp master" did not extend beyond his own camp. Moreover, as leadership status was based primarily on reindeer wealth, frequent epizootics and family realignments produced regular changes in the power structure.

Among less autonomous hunters and fishers, descent groups played a more significant role (particularly in the marriage politics of the taiga peoples), but communal prestige tended to be just as transient. Given the impossibility of accumulating wealth, the forager's insurance against the vicissitudes of a predatory economy was food sharing, so that political power depended on one's ability to distribute the kill and, eventually, on physical strength and "hunting luck" (understood as the favor of the spirits). The "strong men" were challenged, and sooner or later unseated, during races, wrestling matches, wars, or hunting expeditions.¹¹

The division of labor was based on age and gender, with men generally responsible for food procurement, and women for processing, transportation, and household management. In the taiga zone most marriages represented long-term economic alliances between two exogamous lineages, whereby labor (and a source of future labor) was exchanged for property in the form of bridewealth; in case of divorce bridewealth had to be returned. In the tundra, particularly in the northeast, marriages were contracted by two individuals after the successful completion of bride-service by the groom.

Polygamy was both a sign of success and an investment for the future, but as few male northerners could afford more than one wife, raiding for women (as well as for children, dogs, and reindeer) was a frequent occurrence. Male captives were of little use and were put to death unless they forestalled defeat by killing their families and committing suicide. Some engagements, particularly those prompted by revenge, were carefully staged and regulated, with special representatives from both sides agreeing on the time, place, and strategy of the encounter.¹²

¹¹ Ingold, *Hunters, Pastoralists, and Ranchers*, pp. 264–81.

¹² S. V. Bakhrushin, "Ostiatskie i vogul'skie kniazhestva v XVI i XVII vv.," in *Nauchnye trudy* (Moscow, 1965), vol. 3, part 2, p. 95; V. V. Antropova, "Voprosy voennoi organizatsii

Another form of redistribution of property was barter, which usually involved exchange among the tundra, taiga, and coastal populations as well as tributary/commercial relations with southern and western merchants and tax collectors. Most of the trading was done by men in predetermined locations, although some transactions could be performed by deputations of female slaves or through "silent trade," whereby the two sides took turns leaving their goods in a particular spot until everyone was satisfied that the deal was fair.¹³ Long-term commercial alliances commonly known as "friendships" were fairly widespread and involved rights of preferential (and sometimes exclusive) exchange as well as certain social privileges.

The idea of exchange lay at the very core of the traditional Arctic world: for life to continue, one had to give some of one's own and receive something else in return.¹⁴ The Master of the Waters brought his riches and was fed the fruits of the Earth; the animals who came to be killed received food for their souls; and a lineage that married off a woman obtained bridewealth or labor. All things had their spiritual owners or counterparts who needed to be placated, propitiated, or bribed (usually by a shaman). Every successful kill or catch was a gift, and every slaughter a sacrifice.

By the late sixteenth century, when the Russians started arriving in northern Eurasia in large numbers and with serious intentions, some tundra and taiga dwellers had met humans whose terms of exchange were novel and sometimes confusing. The Chinese on the Amur, the Tatars and Mongols in southern Siberia, and the Novgorodians and then the Muscovites in the northwest insisted on regular deliveries of fur tribute in return for "protection." The trappers probably saw tribute as a kind of exchange, but one that involved new goods, new rules, and new obligations.

i voennogo dela u narodov krainego Severo-Vostoka Sibiri," in *Sibirskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1957); Khomich, *Nentsy*, pp. 145–46; Krashenninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki*, p. 403; V. I. Ogorodnikov, *Ocherk Istorii Sibiri do nachala XIX stol.* (Irkutsk, 1920), 1:205; A. P. Okladnikov et al., eds., *Istoriia Sibiri s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (Leningrad, 1968), 1:399.

¹³ Antropova, "Voprosy," p. 168; Menovshchikov, *Eskimosy*, pp. 27–29; Bogoras, *The Chukchee*, p. 53.

¹⁴ L. Black, "The Nivkh," pp. 49–50.

I

**SUBJECTS OF
THE TSAR**



"The delivery of iasak in Tiumen'," from S. U. Remizov, "Sluzhebnaia chertezhnaia kniga". Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society.

1

The Unbaptized

If on some nameless island Captain Schmidt
Sees a new animal and captures it,
And if, a little later, Captain Smith
Brings back a skin, that island is no myth.

—John Shade, *Pale Fire*

The Sovereign's Profit

One of the main reasons for the emergence of the Rus principalities was the fur trade, and some of the best furs came from the northern frontier. In an entry dated 1096, the Russian Primary Chronicle recounts a Novgorodian story about peculiar people who lived beyond high mountains “far in the midnight land” and spoke an unintelligible language. The annalist identifies them as belonging to one of the unclean tribes banished by Alexander the Great, but the Novgorodian scouts were probably more impressed by the fact that the captives “made gestures asking for iron . . . and gave furs in return.”¹ Novgorod’s wealth was based on the export of furs (to Bulgar, Kiev, and Byzantium, and later to the Hansa), and the most common way of obtaining them was through tribute. As the fur-bearing animals retreated, the Novgorodians moved from the Dvina to the Mezen’ to the Pechora in search of new pelts and new trappers. By the late 1200s they routinely claimed the “Ugrian lands” of the northern Urals as their own.²

¹ PSRL, 1:235. The story of Alexander and the captive tribes dates back to the Arabic legends of Gog and Magog, known to the annalist in the Greek version attributed to St. Methodius of Patara. See M. P. Alekseev, *Sibir’ v izvestiakh zapadno-evropeiskikh puteshestvennikov i pisatelei, XIII–XVII vv.* (Irkutsk, 1941), vol. 1, part 2, p. 45, and Leonid S. Chekin, “The Godless Ishmaelites: Image of the Steppe in Pre-Muscovite Rus” (Paper delivered at the International Conference on the Role of the Frontier in Russian History, 800–1800, University of Chicago, May 1992).

² Janet Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness: The Fur Trade and Its Significance for Medieval Russia* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 9–11, 44, 52, 54, 61–67, and “Russian Expan-

In the fourteenth century Novgorod's ascendancy along the Arctic seaboard was challenged by Moscow's grand princes, who had become important suppliers of furs to their southern neighbors, and by Moscow's monastic reformers, who sought solitude, "community life," new cloisters, and new converts in the forests of the northeast.³ In 1383 Stefan, "the teacher of the Zyrian," was appointed the first bishop of Perm'; within the next century Novgorod was ousted from the Dvina; and in 1499 the forces of Ivan III founded the town of Pustozersk near the mouth of the Pechora and mounted a large expedition "into the Ugrian land and against the Gogul."⁴

The breakthrough came in the mid-sixteenth century. The capture of Smolensk resulted in increased trade with Poland-Lithuania and Leipzig; the English discovery of a northern route to Russia led to the founding of Arkhangel'sk; and the conquests of Kazan' (1552) and Astrakhan' (1555) opened up the markets of Central Asia and made vulnerable the Khanate of Sibir, a small remnant of the Golden Horde on the Tobol River and an important transit center for southbound Arctic pelts. The subsequent expansion of Moscow's trading interests coincided with the spread of fur fashions in Western Europe and at the Ottoman court. According to Giles Fletcher, "fures" were "transported out of the Countrey some yeers by the merchants of Turkie, Persia, Bougharia, Georgia, Armenia, and some other of Christendom, to the value of foure or five thousand rubbles."⁵

In the last quarter of the sixteenth century, access to the "treasure of the land of darkness" was being contested by the Chingiside Khan

sion in the Far North," in *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917*, ed. Michael Rywkin (London, 1988), pp. 23–34; Raymond H. Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade, 1550–1700* (Berkeley, Calif., 1943), pp. 3–7; PSRL, 10:22; S. V. Bakhrushin, "Ocherki po istorii kolonizatsii Sibiri v XVI i XVII vv.," in *Nauchnye trudy*, vol. 3, part 1, p. 138; A. V. Oksenov, "Snosheniia Novgoroda Velikago s Iugorskoï zemlei (istoriko-geograficheskii ocherk po drevneishei istorii Sibiri)," in *Literaturnyi sbornik "Vostochnago Obozreniia,"* ed. N. M. Iadrintsev (St. Petersburg, 1885), pp. 442–44.

³ Martin, *Treasure*, pp. 90–92, 102; A. N. Murav'ev, *Russkaia Fivaida na Severe* (St. Petersburg, 1894).

⁴ PSRL, 12:249; Janet Martin, "Muscovy's Northeastern Expansion: The Context and a Cause," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 24, no. 4 (1983): 459–70; R. G. Skrynnikov, *Sibirskaia ekspeditsiia Ermaka* (Novosibirsk, 1982), pp. 99–104; A. V. Oksenov, "Politicheskiiia otnosheniia Moskovskogo gosudarstva k Iugorskoï zemle," *ZhMNP* 273 (1891): 257–64.

⁵ Quotation from Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (Glasgow, 1903), p. 365. See also Bakhrushin, "Ocherki," p. 140; Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade*, p. 21; Mark Bassin, "Expansion and Colonialism on the Eastern Frontier: Views of Siberia and the Far East in the Pre-Petrine Russia," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 14, no. 1 (1988): 11; Martin, *Treasure*, 109.

Kuchum, who collected fur tribute from the hunters and fishermen of the lower Ob', and the merchant family of the Stroganovs, which had the tsar's charter to mine, trade, and tax the local trappers, as well as to make sure that "the Siberian Sultan" did not "prevent our Ostiaks and Voguls and Ugrians from sending tribute to our treasury".⁶ Around 1581–1582, a Cossack army of several hundred men, hired by the Stroganovs, aided by local "volunteers," and led by a certain Ermak Timofeevich, crossed the Urals and after a year-long campaign sacked the capital of the khanate. The power of Cossack firearms and the lack of enthusiasm on the part of Kuchum's tribute-paying allies decided the matter, and "precious foxes, black sables, and beavers" were sent to Moscow.⁷ Deprived of the center that had held together the complex structure of local alliances, the Siberian khanate quickly disintegrated. The gates to northern Asia were open, and hundreds and later thousands of the tsar's subjects rushed eastward in search of furs.

Independent trappers and traders led the way.⁸ Then, "jealous for the sovereign's profit" and not forgetting their own, came soldiers, mercenaries, and Cossacks led by Moscow-appointed administrators (*voevody*).⁹ Traveling along interconnected Siberian waterways, they found "new lands," built new forts (*ostrogi*), and imposed fur tribute (*iasak*) on the new "foreigners." When the fur resources were exhausted or the *iasak*-paying population became too large to be administered from one *ostrog*, a new one would be built and the whole process would be repeated.¹⁰ About sixty years after Ermak's campaign, Ivan Moskvitin

⁶ Quotation from G. F. Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri* (Moscow, 1937), 1:339. See also A. A. Vvedenskii, *Dom Stroganovykh v XVI-XVII vekakh* (Moscow, 1962), p. 79; Skrynnikov, *Sibirskaiia ekspeditsiia Ermaka*, pp. 113–18; *Sibirskii lietopisi*, Russia, *Arkheograficheskaiia kommissiia* (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 5–6, 53.

⁷ *Sibirskii lietopisi*, pp. 24, 70, 131, 201, 208, 331; Skrynnikov, *Sibirskaiia ekspeditsiia Ermaka*, pp. 142–222; Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 1:236.

⁸ S. V. Bakhrushin, "Pokruta na sobolinykh promyslakh XVII v.," in *Nauchnye trudy*, vol. 3, part 1, pp. 200–210.

⁹ The Cossacks received a salary or a plot of land and served the state when called on to do so. They were by far the most numerous group among Siberian servitors, and by the end of the seventeenth century most of the other units had been absorbed into their ranks. George V. Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century: A Study of the Colonial Administration* (Berkeley, Calif., 1943), pp. 63–69; Terence Armstrong, *Russian Settlement in the North* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 65–68; Basil Dmytryshin, "The Administrative Apparatus of the Russian Colony in Siberia and Northern Asia, 1581–1700," in *The History of Siberia from Russian Conquest to Revolution*, ed. Alan Wood (London, 1991), p. 22; F. G. Safronov, *Russkie na severo-vostoke Azii v XVII-seredine XIX v.: Upravlenie, sluzhilye liudi, krest'iane, gorodskoe naselenie* (Moscow, 1978), p. 68; Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade*, p. 32.

¹⁰ On the Russian conquest of Siberia, see, in particular, V. A. Aleksandrov, *Rossiia na dal'nevostochnykh rubezhakh (vtoraiia polovina XVII v.)* (Moscow, 1969); Bakhrushin,

reached the Sea of Okhotsk and Semen Dezhnev circled the cape that now bears his name. Farther south, Moscow's advance into the southern Urals, the upper Enisei, and the Amur basin was blocked by the steppe pastoralists and the frontier outposts of the Manchu empire. It was the Northeast, therefore—with its thicker pelts and “smaller” peoples—that attracted most of the Europeans.¹¹

The instructions they received from the Siberian Chancellery in Moscow were fairly consistent and unambiguous:

The serving and the trading men should be ordered to bring under the sovereign's exalted hand the non-tribute-paying Yukagir and the Tungus and diverse foreigners of various tongues who live on those and other rivers in new and hostile lands. And the iasak for the sovereign should be taken with kindness and not with cruelty [*laskoiu a ne zhestoch'iu*], and the people of those lands should be placed, from now on, under the tsar's exalted hand in direct slavery [*v priamom kholopstve*] as iasak people for ever and ever.¹²

“Kindness” (trade) was preferable to “cruelty” (war) because it seemed to assure a “steady and durable profit” for the sovereign (*pribyl' prochna i stoiatel'na*). According to one oral tradition, the Ket warriors were sapped of their courage by Russian bread.¹³ For two heroes of a Tungus tale, it was bread and sugar: “[One of them] chewed some bread for a while—and liked it. He said in Evenk: ‘Good.’ Then he took a cracker, ate it, and said: ‘Delicious.’ Then he ate some sugar. ‘Don’t even think about killing these good men,’ he said [to the other]. So they threw away their bows and began to eat.”¹⁴ Other popular items included knives, axes, cloth, tea, and colored beads, but it was tobacco and alcohol that enjoyed the greatest and most consistent demand. Ac-

“Ocherki”; Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade*; James R. Gibson, *Feeding the Russian Fur Trade: Provisionment of the Okhotsk Seaboard and the Kamchatka Peninsula, 1639–1856* (Madison, 1969); Robert J. Kerner, *The Urge to the Sea: The Course of Russian History: The Role of Rivers, Portages, Ostrogs, Monasteries, and Furs* (Berkeley, Calif., 1946); Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*; George V. Lantzeff and Richard A. Pierce, *Eastward to Empire: Exploration and Conquest on the Russian Open Frontier to 1750* (Montreal, 1973); and Safronov, *Russkie na severo-vostoke Azii*.

¹¹ In seventeenth-century Russian vernacular, *nebol'shie* meant “few in number.”

¹² N. S. Orlova, ed., *Otkrytiia russkikh zemleprokhodtsev i poliarnykh morekhodov XVII veka na severo-vostoke Azii: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 1951), pp. 236–37. See also pp. 135, 420, 423, and 426; and DAI, 2:263, 269, and 7:137.

¹³ B. O. Dolgikh, *Kety* (Irkutsk, 1934), p. 14.

¹⁴ G. M. Vasilevich, ed., *Istoricheskii fol'klor evenkov: Skazaniia i predaniia* (Moscow, 1966), p. 294.

According to one Yukagir account, a small hunting band met a man with hair around his mouth and followed him to his house. There, the host offered them some food, which the Yukagir found to their liking, and some very special water, which the oldest of them, after serious deliberation, agreed to taste.

He drank it and said: "Fellows, do not have any bad thoughts at all. In all my life, I have never tasted such water anywhere."

Then he drank some water again and put it in front of us.

Another old man drank it and said: "No, fellows, it seems that the old man has told us the truth—this water really is delicious."

That old man drank some again and put it in front of us.

"Now, young men," he said, "you taste it."

We tasted it, too, and said:

"Yes, our old men have told us the truth."

Then one of the old men said:

"I knew it right away and told you not to have any bad thoughts."

Then we all got some more food and water. Our friends started telling us something, but we did not understand anything and pointed to our ears.

They showed us something curved and shiny. We took it, looked at it, something was cut out in the middle. They put something in there, then brought some fire. Then they put that thing to our mouths. Then everyone took that thing and started sucking on it. We sat and talked by gestures. They told us:

"Next summer come back again. We will bring you various things."

Then we got up and started to leave. Our friends gave us some axes and knives and, in addition to that, gave us all kinds of clothes.¹⁵

If the hunters did come back the next summer, they would be asked for furs, and an attempt would be made to register them as fur suppliers "for ever and ever." If they accepted the deal as fair, they would become, in the eyes of the Russians, the tribute-paying "iasak people" (*iasachnye liudi*). If they did not, the Cossacks were under strict instructions "to beat them a little bit" and, if that did not help, "to wage war and to capture their wives and children."¹⁶

Not that they needed instructions: war was their profession, and local women the only ones around. According to a Yakut tradition,

¹⁵ L. N. Stebakova, ed., *Tvorchestvo narodov Dal'nego Severa* (Magadan, 1958), pp. 129–31.

¹⁶ DAI, 3:310. See also DAI, 2:272–73 and 3:222; G. F. Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri* (Moscow, 1941), 2:176; and V. A. Kuleshov, *Nakazy sibirskim voevodam v XVII veke: Istoricheskii ocherk* (Bolgrad, 1894), p. 21.

The arriving Russians built high wooden towers . . . Marveling at that, both children and grown-ups approached the towers and started looking at them carefully. Then they saw that the Russians had scattered sweets, gingerbread cookies, and beads all around the houses. Many children, women, and men came and started picking them up. While they were picking them up, [the Russians] dropped logs that crushed and killed them. After that they started killing with flintlocks that shot powder fire.¹⁷

The Enets, too, have preserved an old account of the Russian arrival: "There is bad news. Somewhere people are on the march, killing people. They say that where there is the Pechora river, they have already crossed it. When they find people, they start beating them right away, and beat them all the time."¹⁸

Military resistance was common and occasionally successful, as various "foreigners" "brag[ged] that they would kill every single man and call the land and the rivers their own"; threatened to "destroy . . . the tsar's bread, and to kill the Russian people, and to make war on the town . . . , and to burn the town, and to kill the Russian people on the roads and in the fields"; or simply refused to pay iasak, claiming, as did one Chukchi encampment, that they had never paid tribute to the Russians, and "are not going to now." On the Ob', one Ugrian settlement fell to the Cossacks after a three-day assault, and another one capitulated only when cannon were used against it; in the northwestern tundra, according to Cossack reports, the reindeer hunters habitually raided Russian sled caravans and portage parties, "not letting [them] through and taking away [their] provisions;" and on the Pacific coast the fort of Okhotsk was continuously besieged for over thirty years, with about 230 Russians killed between 1662 and 1678.¹⁹

In the far northeastern portion of the continent, where tributary relations were unknown, Russian pacification campaigns lasted well into the eighteenth century. Most Kamchatka settlements were protected by ramparts, "and from those forts they fight, and throw stones from their

¹⁷G. U. Ergis, ed., *Istoricheskie predaniia i rasskazy iakutov* (Moscow, 1960), 2:9.

¹⁸B. O. Dolgikh, *Mifologicheskie skazki i istoricheskie predaniia entsev* (Moscow, 1961), p. 200. Cf. p. 206, and *RIB*, 2:854.

¹⁹*RIB*, 2:850; Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 2:184; *PSI*, 1:457; *Sibirskii lietopisi*, pp. 333-34; Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 1:242, 287; N. S. Orlova, ed., *Otkrytiia*, p. 81; N. V. Sliunin, *Okhotsko-Kamchatskii krai: Estestvenno-istoricheskoe opisaniie* (St. Petersburg, 1900), 2:12-13; N. N. Stepanov, "Prisoedinenie Vostochnoi Sibiri v XVII v. i tungusskie plemena," in *Russkoe naselenie Pomor'ia i Sibiri (Period feodalizma)*, ed. A. P. Okladnikov (Moscow, 1973).

slings, and big stones by hand, and hit with sharp stakes and sticks."²⁰ When they had no cannon, the Russians either starved the enemy or set fire to the settlements, killing those who tried to escape.²¹ Sometimes the defenders themselves did the killing: "And when those dugouts were set on fire, some people started coming out of the dugouts . . . , and many of them killed each other, and stabbed their wives and children and, because of their cruelty, did not leave the dugouts, and all burned in the fire, to the last person."²²

On the Chukotka peninsula, where sables were few and the trappers particularly unaccommodating, the fur rush ran out of steam. As the wild reindeer population diminished and traditional tundra hunting became less productive, the Chukchi increasingly turned to raiding.²³ In 1747 a large punitive force under Major Dmitrii Pavlutsii set out, according to the Senate's instruction, "not only to bring back what was unjustly taken from her imperial majesty's loyal subjects the Koriak, but to ruin the Chukchi themselves completely."²⁴ The expedition was defeated, and Major Pavlutsii, who had spent almost all of his military career trying to pacify the Koriak and the Chukchi, was killed in battle.²⁵ In 1769 the fort of Anadyrsk, founded over a century before by Dezhnev and used as a military base against the Chukchi, was abandoned by the Russians. It would take a century and a half of trade and two decades of collectivization to turn the Chukchi into Russian subjects.

Chukotka was uniquely inaccessible and undesirable. Elsewhere in northern Eurasia most of the tundra and taiga dwellers had become "iasak men" by the end of the seventeenth century. In the European tundra, in the Ob' basin, and in southern Siberia most people had known tribute before and were obliged simply to switch their allegiance to a new overlord, often within the same administrative unit.²⁶ The presumed "best men" (*luchshie liudi*) were offered tribute exemp-

²⁰ A. V. Efimov, *Iz istorii velikikh russkikh geograficheskikh otkrytii* (Moscow, 1949), p. 101.

²¹ PSI, 2:44; Efimov, *Iz istorii*, p. 101.

²² PSI, 2:513.

²³ Vdovin, *Ocherki istorii i etnografii chukchei*, pp. 18, 68; Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*, p. 115. According to a nineteenth-century Cossack tradition, "in those days they were afraid of the very name of the Chukchee." See Bogoras, *The Chukchee*, p. 691.

²⁴ Vdovin, *Ocherki istorii i etnografii chukchei*, p. 119.

²⁵ Ia. P. Al'kor and A. K. Drezen, *Kolonial'naia politika tsarizma na Kamchatke i Chukotke: Sbornik arkhivnykh materialov* (Leningrad, 1935), pp. 170-71; Sliunin, *Okhotsko-Kamchatskii krai*, pp. 38-47.

²⁶ S. V. Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri v XVII v.," in *Nauchnye trudy*, vol. 3, part 2, pp. 52-54.

tion and military protection in exchange for the service of collecting iasak.²⁷ Successful "princes" were expected to move up in the Russian aristocratic hierarchy.²⁸

Some Ugrian elders took advantage of the new opportunities. They caused "much violence and offense" in the exercise of their princely powers and called on the Russian servitors when in trouble. A few became Christians, built churches, and expressed a distaste for "pagan" practices.²⁹ Overall, however, the experiment in creating "Ostiak" and "Vogul" princedoms under baptized elites proved a failure. Lacking a comparable institution in their own societies, the hunters and fishermen of the Ob' basin showed little appreciation for an aristocracy imposed by Moscow. In 1636 the Koda Khanty rebelled against their ruler and begged the tsar to take them under his exalted hand. "It is impossible for us to pay iasak to prince Dmitrii Alachev," they declared, "and we do not want to do it."³⁰ Eventually, prince Dmitrii was packed off to Moscow to become a Russian nobleman, and within a few years the active search for local elites was abandoned. As one servitor pointed out in his report, the Tungus did have "princelings and elders," but "they listen to them when they want to, and if they find any fault with them, they depose and kill them."³¹

Whether directly or through Russian-approved representatives, all "newly tributized foreigners" (*ob'iasachennye inozemtsy*) were required to take a solemn oath of allegiance (*shert'*). Russian tribute-collectors assumed that every people had its own "faith" and that each faith had a sacred formula that was binding on all believers. Some Khanty trappers, for example, were forced to take their oaths in front of a bearskin, on which a knife, an axe, and other "frightening weapons" were laid out. While chewing on a piece of bread, they listened as an interpreter said: "If you do not take this oath in truth and do not serve loyally and do not bring the iasak dutifully, let this bear take vengeance on you and let him maul you to death. And let this bread and

²⁷ Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 92; Bakhrushin, "Ostiatskie i vogul'skie kniazhestva," pp. 121, 134–35, 137; Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 1:361.

²⁸ Some of the Ugrian elders and military leaders went on to found Russian noble dynasties. See Bakhrushin, "Ostiatskie i vogul'skie kniazhestva," pp. 132, 145, 149, 150–51.

²⁹ Bakhrushin, "Ostiatskie i vogul'skie kniazhestva," pp. 128–30.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³¹ Stepanov, "Prisoedinenie Vostochnoi Sibiri," p. 112.

this knife kill you."³² Few such pledges appear to have been effective, however, and the servitors were constantly encouraged to apply themselves to discovering the "real oath."³³ In the far northeast, where the Chukchi, Koriak, and Itel'men seemed to have "no faith at all,"³⁴ the tribute collectors "used the barrel of a gun . . . , declaring that whoever swears insincerely will not avoid the bullet."³⁵

The "traitors" could be "besieged by many strong sieges"³⁶ and eventually beaten into submission, but the majority of the tribute payers were nomads who "wandered around every year, lived of their own free will, and beat the Russian people" before moving on to another jurisdiction or beyond the Russian reach altogether.³⁷ Chasing them in the tundra was a dangerous and generally thankless task. (On the Taz, for example, the servitors "[did] not follow them to collect the iasak . . . and [did] not dare leave their winter blockhouses, being scared of those foreigners.")³⁸ One possible solution was to recognize the reciprocal nature of the trapper-Cossack relationship and exchange sought-after commodities for tribute. The Tungus, for example, "ask for gifts—tin and beads, and food for themselves, and flour, and butter, and fat, and when they are given those gifts, tin and beads, and are fed, they give, in exchange for that and when asked, one sable from every one or two families. But without gifts they do not want to give anything. . . . And when they are told to . . . give the iasak . . . they kill [the iasak collectors]."³⁹ Some of the early transactions were carried out in accordance with local practices, with "tribute payers" leaving their furs on the snow while waiting at a distance in large armed bands to see what would be offered in exchange.⁴⁰ Another traditional procedure was gift-giving in return for hospitality. The Cossacks received their guests in full military formation, garbed in their best "colored" attire. Cannons (if available) and muskets were discharged, and bread and liquor

³² Grigorii Novitskii, "Kratkoe opisanie o narode ostiatskom, sochinennoe Grigoriem Novitskim v 1715 godu," in *Pamiatniki drevnei pis'mennosti i iskusstva* (St. Petersburg, 1884), vol. 21, no. 53, p. 54.

³³ Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," p. 66.

³⁴ Efimov, *Iz istorii*, p. 100.

³⁵ Krashenninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki*, p. 457.

³⁶ PSI, vol. 1, p. 461.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 426.

³⁸ Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," p. 62.

³⁹ Stepanov, "Prisoedinenie Vostochnoi Sibiri," p. 108.

⁴⁰ Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," pp. 76–77.

were served.⁴¹ "And without the sovereign's reward," complained one iasak collector, "the Tungus do not give the sovereign's iasak."⁴² Clearly, however, what the Tungus saw as trade the Russians called tribute. Frightened and hard-pressed for merchandise as they were, the tsar's servitors referred to the furs as "iasak" and to the goods they gave in exchange, as "presents." One reason was a series of reminders to that effect emanating from Moscow ("Do not let those foreigners cheat—they give the iasak to the sovereign, not sell it"),⁴³ but it was probably the difference between the (Russian) market price of the furs and that of the gifts that made the distinction meaningful to the Cossacks.

In spite of the popularity of Russian goods, the behavior of the northerners remained "fearless and willful" (*besstrashnoe i samovol'noe*) and the supply of furs unreliable. By far the most effective remedy was hostage taking, a method common on the southern frontier and probably related to the old steppe practice of keeping captives for ransom. In most parts of northern Eurasia kinship ties were strong enough to be used as leverage over the prisoner's clansmen. Taken in battle or lured by food and drink and then overpowered, the hostages (*amanaty*) were locked inside Russian blockhouses and shown periodically to their relatives in exchange for iasak.⁴⁴ Occasionally they could be released "home to their wives and their children" and replaced by volunteers from among their kinsmen ("every year or half a year, or every month"), so that in some areas being a hostage became a sort of family obligation.⁴⁵

Not all family members were worth the tribute. Effective hostages had to be lineage members in good standing (shamans, elders, or military leaders were preferred) and had to look well-fed and contented, "so that the iasak people did not have any doubts on account of [their treatment]."⁴⁶ Even if that was the case (and sometimes it was not),⁴⁷ the payment of tribute was not assured. As one Samoed hostage, abandoned by his kinsmen, explained to the Russian tsar: "We, your or-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73; DAI, 2:267–68, 4:219, 347, and 7:137; Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 2:174; Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 93; N. S. Orlova, ed., *Otkrytiia*, p. 426.

⁴² Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," p. 74.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67; DAI, 2:270–73, and 7:138, 142; Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 96; Safronov, *Russkie na severo-vostoke Azii*, p. 87; N. S. Orlova, ed., *Otkrytiia*, pp. 131–32; Kuleshov, *Nakazy*, p. 23.

⁴⁵ DAI, 2:270 and 4:21; Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 1:399.

⁴⁶ DAI, 2:273. See also RIB, 2:856.

⁴⁷ Some hostages were fed on dog food or starved to death. See Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 96.

phans, sovereign, are wild and nomadic people, and it is impossible for us to live in one place."⁴⁸ In other words, the members of his encampment had migrated from the area and were, for the time being, unable to return. In such cases, the iasak collectors had to tour the tundra, showing the hostages around and demanding furs in exchange for their well-being.⁴⁹ Useless hostages (most of them Chukchi and Koriak "reindeer people") were hanged, starved, or tortured by their captors, but others escaped, "stabbed themselves to death," or served the Russians.⁵⁰ A young man named Apa chose the last course:

In the last year of 156 [1647] I, Apa, was caught by the mouth of the Kolyma river by the boiar son of the Yakutsk fort, Vasilei Vlas'ev. And since then, sovereign, my father and my mother, and all my kinsmen have abandoned me, and do not pay your, sovereign, iasak for me. And now, sovereign, I, your orphan, want to serve you, the righteous sovereign, and be honest in everything, and bring my relatives the Chukchi under your, tsar, exalted hand.⁵¹

The proper registration of iasak-paying foreigners was relatively easy in the coastal settlements but proved exceedingly complicated in the case of the reindeer breeders and taiga foragers. One servitor, exasperated by the foreigners' "trickery," complained that "they change their names at the time of payment almost every year and cause great confusion in the books, and few people bring the iasak, and the collectors write down whatever names they tell them, but they do not tell them their real names." In the early stages, the accountant's nightmare was made worse by the sheer lack of familiarity with the foreigners: "Whether they paid or not is not known, because they, the iasak collectors, cannot tell them [the Samoed] apart."⁵²

Problems and temporary reverses notwithstanding, the "tributizing" effort was clearly worth it as far as the Russian state was concerned. Between 1589 and 1605 (when most of western Siberia was brought under Russian control) the state's fur revenue tripled, and by the 1680s its value rose to about 125,000 rubles (as compared to about 15,000 in

⁴⁸ Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," p. 67.

⁴⁹ DAI, 2:268 and 4:103-4.

⁵⁰ DAI, 7:139, 297-98; Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*, p. 35; PSI, 2:525.

⁵¹ N. S. Orlova, ed., *Otkrytiia*, pp. 254-55; see also Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*, p. 49.

⁵² Stepanov, "Prisoedinenie Vostochnoi Sibiri," p. 112; Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," p. 64.

1589).⁵³ In the first years after the conquest the tribute was not fixed ("as much as can be gotten") and was usually levied on a territorial unit as a whole. Later, as the bookkeeping was deemed adequate, a set annual tax was imposed on every man between eighteen and fifty years old. The quotas were fixed according to number of pelts but in some areas cash equivalents were introduced in order to account for the differences in quality.⁵⁴ The value of the pelts brought by the hunters was to be determined by the local collectors. Policies toward slaves, dependents, and adolescents varied over the years, but "the poor, the sick, and the maimed" were exempt.⁵⁵

Such was Moscow's official policy. In practice, it was hardly possible for the servitors to combine "kindness" with the "sovereign's profit." On the one hand, the success of a voevoda was measured by the number of furs he procured—and so, naturally, was his personal fortune. On the other hand, the size of the iasak that the native northerners delivered depended on their hunting luck, need for Russian goods, and migration routes. This divergence of interests did not augur well for a fixed or uniform tax, let alone kindness. Year after year, the collectors forged the books, undervalued the furs, and demanded "gifts" (*pominki*) from the iasak people, while the latter paid "for last year" and for their dead relatives.⁵⁶ Every voevoda had to deliver at least as much iasak as his predecessor. If somebody in his district died or fled, he was supposed to report it to Moscow. An investigation was held, and if the voevoda's claim was found to be correct, the tsar issued a special ukaz relieving his iasak people of excess obligations. (In the meantime, the hunters had to pay for the dead and the missing.)⁵⁷ Perhaps most important, the treasury demanded a guaranteed profit: that is, the Moscow price of every pelt had to be higher than the Siberian price. If this was not the case, the voevoda paid the difference—something that clearly did not happen very often.⁵⁸

Sometimes the tribute payers and tribute collectors joined forces in sabotaging the official policy. The individual tax on all adult males

⁵³ Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade*, pp. 114, 119; Bassin, "Expansion and Colonialism," p. 11; James R. Gibson, "The Significance of Siberia to Tsarist Russia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 14, no. 3 (1972): 443.

⁵⁴ P. N. Butskinskii, *Zaselenie Sibiri i byt pervykh ee nasel'nikov* (Khar'kov, 1889), p. 313; Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," p. 58.

⁵⁵ Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 2:170.

⁵⁶ Butskinskii, *Zaselenie Sibiri*, pp. 314–18; Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 105–6; Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," p. 83.

⁵⁷ Butskinskii, *Zaselenie Sibiri*, p. 315.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 316; Kuleshov, *Nakazy*, pp. 26, 46.

remained largely a fiction until the second half of the eighteenth century, when it was officially abolished. After the first census in the Tomsk uезд in 1720, for example, it was discovered that in all the previous years the iasak had been levied from whole districts (*volost'*), often through a local representative. It was also discovered that the state treasury had been receiving only one half of all the iasak. The person found responsible was sentenced to the galleys but received royal clemency and was "beaten unmercifully with a knout" instead.⁵⁹ Soon afterward, the practice of taxing whole settlements or encampments was legitimized.

Iasak was not the only obligation of the iasak men. Having been brought under the sovereign's exalted hand, they had to take part in Moscow's campaigns against the "non-iasak men" ("unpeaceful foreigners"). From the White Sea to the Pacific, Russian conquest was made possible through the assistance of local warriors, many of whom were eager to take a hand in destroying their rivals. The Koda Khanty, for example, could boast a very impressive service record: "Like our fathers and our brothers, we built towns and forts all over Siberia and, together with the Tobol'sk and Berezov Cossacks, we fought against your, sovereign, traitors and rebels, the Kalmyk people and the Tatars, and the Ostiak, and the Samoed, and the Tungus and the Buliash people, and all kinds of rebels."⁶⁰ In the process, they "killed disobedient foreign people and captured their wives and children and shared those prisoners among themselves."⁶¹ Farther east, Russian reliance on local allies was even greater. The Koriak and Chukchi wars were as much a Yukagir and Evenk effort as they were a Russian conquest. Some of the Cossacks' allies did not have to pay iasak and were allowed to keep their prisoners.⁶²

Other colonial obligations included serving as guides and interpreters, building forts, and providing transportation. Cart duty (*podvodnaia povinnost'*) was especially onerous and provoked numerous complaints. Waiting in one place for Russian officials and then leading them about on unpredictable errands interfered greatly with the hunting and herding routine. Some of the drivers were willing to pay three

⁵⁹ A. N. Kopylov, "K voprosu o printsipe iasachnogo oblozheniia i poriadke sbora iasaka v Sibiri," *Izvestiia Sibirskogo otdeleniia Akademii nauk SSSR: Seriiia obshchestvennykh nauk*, no. 1 (1969): 64–65.

⁶⁰ Bakhrushin, "Ostiatskie i vogul'skie kniazhestva," pp. 122–23. The Buliash people are the Eniseians.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶² Al'kor and Drezen, *Kolonial'naia politika tsarizma*, p. 114.

times the usual tribute quota in order to avoid the disruption.⁶³ They were rarely successful, however: the needs of imperial administrators and the sorry state of the transportation system in the north ensured the survival of cart duty well into the twentieth century.

No less unpopular but much less persistent was the government attempt to use native labor in agriculture. Through the years, one of the main concerns of the Siberian administration was the provision of new forts, and later towns and mines, with food. Importing grain from Russia was very expensive, and the creation, where possible, of local agriculture was constantly and vigorously encouraged. Russian peasants were forced or lured into Siberia, and Siberian vagrants and exiles were declared peasants and settled on the land.⁶⁴ In the early years some Ob' Ugrians were also attached to the "sovereign's field" (*gosudareva pashnia*), with dire consequences for both.⁶⁵ "And from now on, sovereign," reported a group of Mansi in 1598, "it is impossible for us, your orphans, to plough your, sovereign, field, because, sovereign, we have lost all our property, sold our wives and children, and are now starving to death."⁶⁶ Moscow tended to be responsive to such pleas, less perhaps from any sense of compassion than from a continuing interest in the fur tribute. The same Mansi, for example, offered to pay as much sable *iasak* as the tsar "would see fit to exact from his orphans."⁶⁷ Skillful trappers were much more profitable than unproductive peasants, and given the presumed alternative of Russian colonization, the policy of employing forced native labor never took root in the north.

The continuation of the fur trade required more peasant settlement, but the spread of peasant settlement undermined the fur trade. The arriving peasants ploughed, hunted, and fished on land that was being used by the "tributized" trappers. More significant, they cleared the fields by burning down the forest, which drove away the animals. Some servitors, settlers, and monasteries leased the land from the local hunters, who claimed to agree to such deals "for our own needs and to be able to pay *iasak* and to pay back our old debts, and not because of any dishonest intention." Dishonest or not, the government strongly

⁶³ Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 105; RIB, 2:146–47; Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 1:307, 380, and 2:152; Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*, p. 21.

⁶⁴ James R. Gibson, "Russia on the Pacific: The Role of the Amur," *Canadian Geographer* 12, no. 1 (1968): 17; idem, *Feeding the Russian Fur Trade*, pp. 46–47; Safronov, *Russkie na severo-vostoke Azii*, pp. 107–9; V. I. Shunkov, *Ocherki po istorii kolonizatsii Sibiri v XVII-nachale XVIII vekov* (Moscow, 1946), pp. 11–56.

⁶⁵ Butskinskii, *Zaselenie Sibiri*, pp. 311–12.

⁶⁶ Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 2:512; RIB, 2:146–48.

⁶⁷ RIB, 2:146–48.

disapproved of any alienation of "iasak lands" and often demanded their return, as well as the punishment of those involved. The founding of new peasant settlements had to be preceded by a determination "whether it is an empty place or whether it belongs to the iasak people." In the latter case, permission was not given, and "the people who ravage the land of the iasak people [were] . . . , for such thievery . . . , to be beaten unmercifully with a knout, so that others would not get the idea to . . . cause ruin to the iasak people in their hunting." Caught between the demands for more furs and the insistence that the Siberians feed themselves, the voevody tried their best to do both—a task made easier by the fact that one voevoda's peasants often lived among another voevoda's iasak people. The resulting conflicts caused much animosity among different uezdy, much complaint writing on the part of the voevody, and ultimately the creeping takeover of the local hunting and fishing grounds by the Russian settlers.⁶⁸

Even where Russians did not settle permanently (and that meant most of circumpolar Eurasia outside of a few areas along the great rivers), they seriously affected the local economic life. In the early years, Cossacks and traders in search of food and women often raided the encampments of the iasak people and "tortured them with various tortures and took great gifts of furs from them, and robbed them, and took from them by force their foxes and dogs, and fish and oil, and whatever they needed to eat."⁶⁹

In the last year of 164 [1654] a boiar son Kirilo Vaniukov, having assembled on the Indigirka river many serving and trading and hunting men from all the blockhouses for the sake of his own idle self-interest, accused the iasak Yukagir of betrayal and, after the iasak collection, sent against them more than one hundred serving and trading and hunting men . . . with orders to rout them. And according to his, Kirilo's, order, the serving, trading, and hunting men routed those Indigirka iasak people, taking, during that rout, their wives and children and about three hundred reindeer and various other Yukagir possessions. And because of that rout the Indigirka Yukagir became poor.⁷⁰

As the frontier moved on, raiding stopped, but the relentless demand for furs continued to clash with the other economic pursuits. The win-

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 330, 766; Shunkov, *Ocherki*, pp. 64–75; Butsinskii, *Zaselenie Sibiri*, pp. 331–32.

⁶⁹ RIB, 2:182.

⁷⁰ Gurvich, *Etnicheskaia istoriia*, p. 18. See also DAI, 4:18, 20.

ter tracks of the best polar foxes lay far north of the reindeer migration routes; the taiga sable took many fishermen away from their rivers; and the settled sea hunters had to exchange much of their catch for the furs brought by their inland "friends." "We, the walking and the settled little Tungus [Tungusishka]," complained the iasak men of the Okhotsk coast, "are not used to hunting sable, and we do not know how to do it. . . . We live by the sea . . . and we catch fish for the reindeer Tungus, and for those fish we buy, from those reindeer Tungus, sable for the . . . iasak." Some taiga hunters had to buy furs from the Russians for elk and reindeer skins, pay 10 percent tax to the treasury, and then take the same furs to the same treasury as iasak (the tithe was designed as a tax on Russian traders).⁷¹

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the supply of fur-bearing animals began to drop.⁷² (Some of the goods that the native trappers received in exchange for pelts—particularly firearms and metal traps—greatly contributed to this decline.) As the iasak quotas changed much more slowly, the native economy found itself under severe strain. Constant arrears in iasak payments and the growing dependence on iron tools, clothing, flour, tea, and liquor led to the deterioration of the tribute payers' economic and social position vis-à-vis the Russians. In the words of the Pelym Mansi, "In our heathen faith, sovereign, we do not have any artisans, so that we do not have anything, sovereign, with which to cut our wood; and without an axe, sovereign, it is impossible to make traps for animals; and to make shoes without knives is also impossible. So that we, your orphans, sovereign, are going to die from hunger, from cold, and from barefootedness [s bosoty]."⁷³

The economic changes, however, were neither the most immediate nor the most dramatic effects of the Russian conquest. In 1633, the servitors from Mangazeia failed to collect iasak at Khantaiskii and Inbatskii blockhouses because "the foreigners who used to pay the sovereign's iasak in those two blockhouses had died in the last year of 140 [1632], and the others, who had survived, had migrated it is not known where, also fearing death."⁷⁴ According to one calculation, about one

⁷¹ M. A. Sergeev, *Nekapitalisticheskii put' razvitiia malykh narodov Severa* (Moscow, 1955), p. 33; N. N. Stepanov, "Peshie Tungusy Okhotskogo poberezh'ia v XVI–XIX vv.," in *Ekonomika, upravlenie i kul'tura Sibiri XVI–XIX vv.*, ed. V. I. Shunkov (Novosibirsk, 1965), p. 133; Butskinskii, *Zaselenie Sibiri*, pp. 317–18.

⁷² Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade*, pp. 94–107; *DAI*, 3:214 and 7:193–94.

⁷³ Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 2:152.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 403; see also p. 387.

half of the Inbak Ket and more than two-thirds of the Khantaika Enets had died of smallpox in the previous two years.⁷⁵ Especially hard hit were the Yukagir: in 1694, the Omolon collection point was closed permanently because the local iasak people "by God's will, all died in the smallpox pestilence. And from now on there are no great sovereign's Omolon Yukagir from whom to take iasak, and the said Omolon winter blockhouse has been taken off the lists."⁷⁶ In the first century of Russian rule the overall Yukagir population dropped from around 4,500 to 1,450. Although smallpox was probably the main cause, it was not the only one: in the 1670s and 1680s at least 10 per cent of all Yukagir women were living outside of the Yukagir settlements (as wives, slaves, or concubines), and at any one time about 6 percent of all adult males were being kept as hostages by the Russians. Many died in the Russian raids and in the wars with the Chukchi, Koriak, and Tungus, and some starved as a result of bartering their staple foods for furs (the Yukagir tundra was poor in sable).⁷⁷

The unequal distribution of Russian forces, goods, and diseases altered the local balance of power. Closeness to the Cossacks could be a military advantage, as in the case of the Koda Khanty, or it could lead to economic and demographic catastrophe, as in the case of the Yukagir. One thing was fairly constant, however: the presence of the Russians invariably resulted in severe clashes between the "iasak foreigners" and the as yet "unpeaceful" ones. Thus, while the Koda Khanty (Ostiak) bragged about "killing disobedient foreign people and capturing their wives and children and sharing those prisoners among themselves," their neighbors the "thievish" Evenk wanted "to beat the sovereign's iasak Ostiak . . . so that they would not give iasak to the sovereign."⁷⁸ Moved by revenge and new military opportunities, driven away by Russian competitors and their native allies, fleeing from raiders and tribute collectors, or looking for more and better furs, the iasak men often encroached on their neighbors' territory.⁷⁹ "In this year of 196 [1688]," related the Okhotsk Tungus, "we went to the Koriak land

⁷⁵ Dolgikh, *Rodovoi i plemennoi sostav*, pp. 128–29, 143–44. See also pp. 88, 92–93, 141, 155, 158, 169, 187, 306, 451–521, 561, and 571, and Stepanov, "Prisoedinenie Vostochnoi Sibiri," p. 115.

⁷⁶ Dolgikh, *Rodovoi i plemennoi sostav*, p. 410.

⁷⁷ Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*, pp. 69, 19–23; Dolgikh, *Rodovoi i plemennoi sostav*, p. 440.

⁷⁸ Bakhrushin, "Ostiatskie i vogul'skie kniazhestva," p. 119; Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 2:215.

⁷⁹ Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*, p. 43; Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 89–90.

to hunt for sable, but the Koriak did not let us hunt sable on their hunting grounds and drove us away, and they, the Koriak, beat our kinsmen the best men and killed six people, but around here there is no place besides the Koriak land to hunt the sable."⁸⁰ The Russians, of course, proceeded to wage war against the Koriak, who were then raided by the Chukchi, who were then attacked by the Russians. Such developments caused major population shifts all over the north. Following in the footsteps of the Cossacks, the reindeer-herding Nenets continued their march eastward along the Arctic coast. In southern Siberia, the expansion of the Turkic-speaking population led to the disappearance of the Saian-Altai branches of the Samoedic and the Eniseian languages, as well as the migration of the Ket (northern Eniseians) deeper into the taiga. On the Lena the Yakut pastoralists continued their expansion, pressuring the Evenk in the west and the Yukagir in the east.⁸¹ And in the northeast, as one Chukchi detachment explained, the Chukchi "searched for the reindeer Koriak in order to ruin them, kill them to death, and take their reindeer herds away from them."⁸² By the 1770s, when the Russians admitted their defeat at the hands of the Chukchi, over 50 percent of the Koriak had been killed and 240,000 head of Koriak reindeer had been captured by the Chukchi. The Chukchi, meanwhile, had expanded far beyond their seventeenth-century borders, moving to the Omolon and the Aniui in Yukagir territory and reaching the Penzhina and Oliutora Koriak lands in the south.⁸³

Most serious clashes were over tribute, and the most frequent targets were the tribute collectors. In 1607, about two thousand "foreigners" besieged the Russian fort of Berezov for two months. After their defeat the body of the Obdorsk "prince" Vasilii hung for three years on the Berezov gallows, "so that there would be no stealing in the future and for the others to see."⁸⁴ The others saw but did not listen: in 1609 Vasilii's son attempted to attack Tobol'sk, and half a century later Vasilii's grandson was hanged for inciting "treachery."⁸⁵ Such treachery, or attempts to renegotiate the terms of tribute payment by force of arms, were fairly frequent in the first hundred years of Russian rule. In 1649

⁸⁰ Stepanov, "Peshie Tungusy," p. 135. See also DAI, 4:22; N. S. Orlova, ed., *Otkrytiia*, p. 130.

⁸¹ Okladnikov, et al., eds., *Istoriia Sibiri*, 2:56–58.

⁸² Vdovin, *Ocherki istorii i etnografii chukchei*, p. 68.

⁸³ Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*, pp. 108, 112; Dolgikh, *Rodovoi i plemennoi sostav*, p. 561. The almost certainly exaggerated estimate of reindeer losses was made by the Anadyr' authorities. See Vdovin, *Ocherki istorii i etnografii chukchei*, p. 65.

⁸⁴ Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, 2:202–5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 212; Bakhrushin, "Ostiatskie i vogul'skie kniazhestva," p. 136.

the kinsmen of a murdered Tungus hostage embarked on a war that lasted until the end of the century and led to the sacking of the fort of Okhotsk; in 1679 a Samoed band made an unsuccessful attempt to capture the town of Obdorsk; and in 1714 a large group of Yukagir mercenaries rebelled against the Cossacks, killing fifty-seven and imprisoning fifty.⁸⁶ The tribute payers of the fur-rich Kamchatka "were in an almost constant state of treason," and in 1730 they succeeded in taking over most of the peninsula. It took the Russians over two years to suppress the uprising, and in Nizhnekamchatsk "the Cossacks, saddened by the violence done to their wives and by the loss of their property, killed them all to the last man."⁸⁷

There were many more uprisings, as well as mass suicides and mass destruction of furs,⁸⁸ but the superiority of the tsar's arms and the allure of his merchandise made accommodation inevitable. As foreigners became the sovereign's, they had to recognize the authority of the Russian state over tribute payment, trade, war, and all social interaction with the Orthodox Christians. Submission implied protection, however, and the new Russian subjects routinely petitioned the tsar for "mercy" and assistance. Sometimes they skillfully took advantage of the tensions within the Russian administration, as in the case of a Tungus hostage who justified his escape by the fact that his captor

moved along hesitantly and spent much time in one place because of his own idle profit. And I appealed to him that it was time to proceed with the sovereign's business and that he should move faster, because the blockhouse was far away. But he told me that Russian holidays were many and did not apply himself to the business of the sovereign's iasak, and I had the fear of God and of the sovereign and . . . ran away.⁸⁹

Such petitions were translated, written down, and perhaps inspired by Russian "profit-seekers," but the obligations of tribute and tradition became so intertwined that eventually most of the "sovereign's for-

⁸⁶ DAI, 3:176 and 7:277-304; Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 113; PSI, 2:92-93.

⁸⁷ Krasheninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki*, pp. 479, 796. The job begun by the Cossacks was all but completed by smallpox, and by the 1780s the overall Itel'men population had fallen to about 3,000 (compared to almost 13,000 at the turn of the century). See Gurvich, *Etnicheskaiia istoriia*, pp. 101-3; Dolgikh, *Rodovoi i plemennoi sostav*, p. 571.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Dolgikh, *Kety*, p. 14; DAI, 3:322; Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 110; S. B. Okun', *Ocherki po istorii kolonial'noi politiki tsarizma v Kamchatskom krae* (Leningrad, 1935), p. 39; and Stepanov, "Prisoedinenie Vostochnoi Sibiri," p. 115.

⁸⁹ Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri," p. 69.

eigners" were forced to master some bureaucratic procedures and learn how to manipulate them in a variety of settings (including the most traditional and apparently unrelated to tribute). It was extremely important, for instance, to prove to the voevoda that a certain kinsman was murdered by outsiders and that the missing pelts should be supplied by the offending family (and not by the petitioner). Conversely, a promise to pay more iasak could ensure Russian help in resolving a family dispute, preventing a blood feud, or repossessing an unlawfully abducted wife.⁹⁰

All of these cases were based on the understanding that the Russians would uphold the local customs. And they did. As long as the iasak kept coming in, the voevody were willing to enforce levirate, bride-wealth, and other norms that were taboo in their own society but were recognized as legitimate among the "foreigners." Except for the cases involving murder and large sums of money, all native disputes brought to the attention of the Russians were to be resolved jointly by the iasak collectors and the local elders ("And without them and in small matters do not try them, lest [they] suffer losses and offences and taxes from you").⁹¹ The great majority of conflicts, however, were taken care of by the native "foreigners" themselves—to the perfect satisfaction of the conquerors.

Thus, although providing an alternative source of authority, the seventeenth-century Russian administrators did not establish an alternative law. A Tungus iasak man could expect a sympathetic reaction when he complained that an ill-intentioned shaman had caused disease and death in his family.⁹² Even in mixed cases, decisions were often justified with reference to traditional law. When another Tungus family demanded the extradition of the Russian hunter Feodulka who had murdered their father, the Yakutsk authorities refused, but only after the killer repeated under torture that he had done it by accident, whereupon he was "beaten unmercifully with a knout" in the presence of the plaintiffs. "And let the foreigners not get offended that the said Feodulka was not given to them . . . , because among them, the Tungus, involuntary deadly killings also take place, and they do not send such killers from one clan to another, do they?"⁹³ An important exception

⁹⁰ Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 100; RIB, 2:157; Butsinskii, *Zasele-nie Sibiri*, p. 306; Stepanov, "Prisoedinenie Vostochnoi Sibiri," p. 122.

⁹¹ DAI, 7:147, 154.

⁹² A. P. Okladnikov, "Kureiskie tungusy v XVIII v.," in *Osvoenie Sibiri v epokhu feo-dalizma*, ed. V. I. Shunkov (Novosibirsk, 1968), p. 109.

⁹³ DAI, 3:176.