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ROCK ART ANIMISM IN SIBERIAN TAIGA: CONTEMPORARY RITUALITY AND MATERIALITY OF EVENKI HUNTERS AND REINDEER HERDERS

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Abstract. This article is based on my ethnographic fieldwork research among indigenous Evenki reindeer herders and hunters in the Yakutiia and Amurskaia Oblast' in 2016–2017 as well as on my long-term field research in the northern part of the Zabaikalskii Krai and the Buriatiia Republics. Here, this research aims to elaborate on contemporary indigenous perceptions of and engagements with the rock art sites in east Siberia. It demonstrates how so-called archaeological monuments have been serving as significant landscape features as well as a source of ritual and cosmological inspiration for local inhabitants for centuries. Thereby, it demonstrates some ethnographic evidence and interpretations proposing that different landscape features were used in creating permanent ritual sites and are standing as important monumental objects conveying cosmological ideas of the Evenki. This article also reflects on some practical aspects of how these ritual monuments were created, modified and used for centuries. It will also demonstrate how experiences of engagements with rock art sites play an important role in humans' interactions with non-human beings and land use.

Introduction

The sub-boreal region that embraces the large river basins of Lena, Oliokma, Aldan and Amur is considered as one of the densest rock art paintings area in East Siberia dating from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages. Numerous red ochre images, symbols and compositions of rock art paintings found in that region have triggered the imaginations of explorers, naturalists, political and religious activists, as well as early academics for a few centuries (Miller 1937 [1750]; Georgi 1799; Vitashevskii 1897; Klements 1895: 33). As explorer Johahn Gotlieb Georgi documented, rock art served multiple social and religious roles for local communities for ages in east Siberia (1799: 38). Early researchers also documented how offerings of tea, bullets, coins, matches or other items were always left near outstanding rocks or rock art sites by Tungus (Evenki) to local spirits (see Mainov 1898: 206; Georgi 1779: 13, 38; Vitashevskii 1897). In the 1930s, the ethnographer Alexey Anisimov noted that the Evenki of Tunguska river left offerings at rocks seen as important clan sites also associating it with ancestors and calling it *bugady* (see Anisimov 1949). Similar interactions with spirits embodied by rock art sites were also documented during the later Soviet times (see Arbatskii 1978, 1981). For most Soviet scientists, rock art sites were the source of knowledge about archaeological artefacts, while the red ochre

paintings represented creativity, aspirations and artistic expressions of ancient humans (Fig. 1) (see Okladnikov 1969).

My article aims to elaborate on contemporary indigenous Evenki perceptions of and engagements with the rock art sites as non-human beings. I also demonstrate how these places have been serving as a source of knowledge and a persistent ritual enactment for indigenous people for at least a few centuries. Thereby, I aim to show how indigenous Evenki herders perceive, use, modify and maintain their relations with rock art as a source of economic, individual and communal empowerment. Indigenous perceptions and use of rock art can be important not only in revealing animistic perceptions of the environment but also in understanding contemporary indigenous subsistence strategies as well as self-consciousness. Though shamans as cosmological and ritual leaders were repressed in most Evenki communities up to the 1960s, nevertheless animism continually stands as a worldview shaping humans' daily activities in the context of their continuing nomadic lifestyles and active engagement with the landscape and non-human persons inhabiting it, whether it be to animals or spirits. In the unpredictable economic environment that most people were living in, remote taiga villages can hardly rely on state support, and thereby they aim to live from all available taiga resources, also



Figure 1. Open rock art site in Amur region (photographs by DB unless noted otherwise).

empowering themselves from sites inhabited by master-spirits. Such a search for empowerment became even more important in the context of shifting land-use regulations, morality and climate, expansion of extractive industry, pollutions and an increasing number of predators affecting the wellbeing of humans and their domestic animals.

Evenki are known as descendants of the most scattered and highly nomadic reindeer herders and hunters that lived in different regions starting from the Manchuria and Khabarovskii Krai in the south and reaching the polar districts of the Republic of Yakutiia and Krasnoiarskii Krai in the North. Evenki living in different regions speak varied dialects of the Tungus-Manchu language group (the Altaic language

continue their traditional subsistence activities and lead nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles though most of them live in villages established by the Soviet state to render them sedentary in the early Soviet period. After the collapse of the Soviet system, the Evenki privatised reindeer herds from liquidated collective state farms and established clan enterprises that also are in charge of large territories used for hunting and herding. Some members of different communities, as well as families, still spend all year migrating in the taiga with reindeer herds that can vary from 10 to 700 members in size. The use of reindeer also allows Evenki to subsist in remote and hardly accessible places and environments, being autonomous from gasoline supplies.

With a collapse of Soviet centrally funded economic activities, most of the Evenki men and some women based in taiga and villages were highly dependent on hunting for fur animals as the primary source for cash income and large game animals for diet. Hunters and herders believe that reclaiming taiga territories from the state also is obliging them to establish negotiation and cooperation with the local master-spirits. Thereby, today Evenki en-

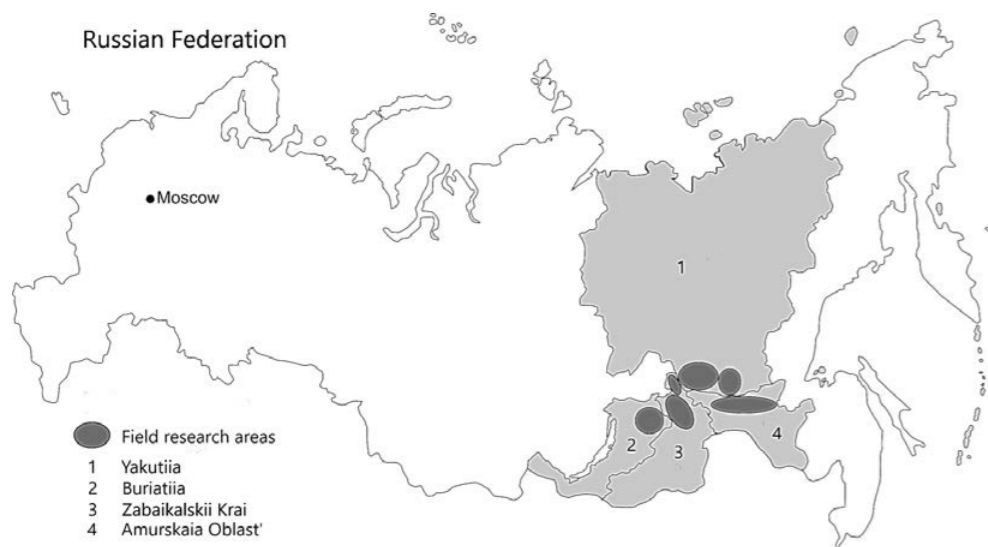


Figure 2. Map of the field research areas, created by Viktoriia Filipova and Donatas Brandišauskas.

family). They can be regarded as people who combine a mixed economy relying on a combination of hunting and reindeer herding, including activities of fishing, dog and horse breeding. Since most of the Evenki live in sub-boreal mountainous taiga, domestic and trained reindeer is a vital transportation animal that can be ridden as well as loaded with heavy packs or settled into sledges when transporting camping gear and hunted animals (moose, elk, wild reindeer, roe deer, wild boar and bear). Today the Evenki I worked with

engage with different ritual sites aiming to achieve wellbeing and obtain luck (Ru. *dobyti' udachiul/fart/talan*) through their maintenance of successful relations of cooperation with the master-spirit (Brandišauskas 2017). In recent years, rock art sites as the 'most powerful places' started to attract not only local hunters and herders, but also most inhabitants of nearby located villages, indigenous intelligentsia, leaders of communities and shamans.

During my ethnographic research among reindeer herders and hunters the Evenki of the Zabaikalskii Krai region and Buriatia in 2004–2012, I analysed how vernacular ideas of luck, health and wellbeing are connected to the daily practices of subsistence and use of the 'living landscape' (see Brandišauskas 2011, 2017). I also demonstrated that various old (such as rock art sites) and newly established ritual sites had become essential sources of knowledge, exchange and luck in the context of the absence of shamans as intermediaries between spirits and humans (see Brandišauskas 2011, 2012). This article is based on field research among Evenki communities in the Republic of Yakutiia, the Zabaikalskii Krai and the Amurskaia Oblast' in 2016–2017 (Fig. 2). It will explore animistic Evenki worldviews linked to the rock art sites and will show how rock art sites have been continuously serving as monumental expressions of Evenki cosmology as well as sources of communication, knowledge and ritual inspiration for local communities of reindeer herders and hunters.

Non-human rocks and ancestors

Many rock drawings are located on the most spectacular, impressive and outstanding rocks that can be well observed from a distance. The unusual shape of the rock, its location, size, and form was an essential factor to decorate it with paintings and leave offerings that served to connote, enhance and communicate the powerfulness of the place and non-human persons representing it.¹ The permanence of such drawings was also ensured by grottos protecting the drawings and offerings from weather's influence; thereby, red paint also remained bright for

¹ Evenki often guess that paintings were most probably made by spirits or maybe powerful shamans and ancestors but can also be attributed to powerful non-human beings (see Zabyako et al. 2002; see for Yakuts Ksenofontov 1927). Even though people say that powerful humans accomplished the act of painting, such fact does not underestimate the agency of the rock inhabited by non-human beings that probably facilitated such painting act. Such painting could also become a property or placing of spirit as soon as it was created.



Figure 3. Krestiakh rock art site on Olekma river in South Yakutia.

ages.² Indeed, different landscape features such as flat rock surfaces located under cornices, large cracks, as well as caves, or special gates or arches can also be infused with cosmological or ritual meanings and have been suitable places to perform different rituals and embodied ritual practices.

Seeing paintings and an animal's figure located on the rocks from a distance can leave a large impression to anybody moving by the route or boat by the river (Fig. 3). Thereby, many Evenki would stress that hunters and herders are very curious to visit such sites and their awareness is usually driven by their ability to see small changes in the environment and they always notice unusual things. Many communities of Evenki in south Yakutiia and Amurskaia Oblast' call rock art paintings *onion*, *anian* and translate it as 'beautiful one' or 'decoration' as well as refer in Yakut language to *aiulakh* (Yak. beautiful painting), and they believe that any beautiful objects generate power as it attracts spirits.

Evenki believe that rock paintings appeared when 'nobody was there and only Evenki lived here' (*Nikit achin bin, evenkil' ngy bichal'*), or in other words, it appeared from the time of the creation of sky and land when Evenki started to dwell there (see also Savvin 1939). As Evenki told archaeologist Savvin, a 'mighty spirit' inhabited a spectacular rock and started to show his paintings (ibid.). Such a spirit could even appear to Evenki in the shape of 'women-spirit' or as a 'man-master' of a river basin or as a 'master-spirit' providing animals Bai-Baianai (Sakha), or as the animal itself.

For Evenki certain locales in the landscape have been seen as specific dwelling sites of non-human beings called master-spirits (Ev. *odzen* in

² Such drawings could be made by using tough crayons made from ochre and glue. Indeed, up to these days, hunters know well local technologies of how to produce long-lasting glue from boiled fish parts or the inner layer of animal skins. Paint mixed with glue and milk fat remained on the buckskin clothing and wooden items even after half a century of heavy use and exposure to temperature extremes, sun and rain.

Zabaikalskii Krai and Buriatiia, *baianai* (Yakutiia), *barylakh* in south Yakutiia and Amurskaia Oblast'), ruling large geographical areas such as river basins.³ In comparative studies of Tungus, Manchu, Turkic and Mongol-speaking groups of Siberia and Inner Asia, the 'master' (Ru. *khoziain*) is described as a spirit (Ru. *dukh*) or an animal (as a bear) that rules over certain places or territories, or a spirit that manifests through manufactured objects (Mikhailov 1987; Alekseev 1975; Gurvich 1977; Zelenin 1929; Petri 1930). Such a master-spirit (Ru. *dukh-khoziain*) could be in charge of different geographical locations such as a watershed, a hill, a lake, which influence both wild and domestic animals and even the destiny of humans. The place ruled by the master-spirit is viewed as his household where he can control the animals' procreation and rebirth as well as influence almost all spheres of human life, including travelling, dwelling, storytelling, or humans' interaction with animals (see Brandišauskas 2017: 3–4).

For Evenki, different spirits could move in the landscape along 'roads' and emplace (or leave) certain objects or rocks mastering it and influencing the wellbeing of humans and the procreation of animals (see Shirokogoroff 1935: 149–150, 160, 191–197). Any geographical location, tree, animal, human, artefact or part of an organ could become such a 'placing' for the spirit (ibid.). According to anthropologist Sergei Shirokogoroff (ibid.), placing (Ru. *vmestilishcha*) a Tungus (Evenki) notion, which means a 'living object' (idol, crafted item, place) or a living being (tree, human or animal) inhabited by a spirit or a human's soul. Spirits can be enticed on purpose for the best use in magic by humans into different natural objects, stones, rocks or nicely carved or hand-made objects.

Different placings of spirits such as rocks, carved objects or drawings can expose the power *musun* (living energy, power of movement and power to act). Such agency of non-human beings can manifest itself through various sounds, visual representations, weather conditions shifting and influencing dreams, and emotional states of humans. Non-human beings can provide hunting luck, knowledge of future and physical and emotional empowerment. Ethnographers Vasilevich (1969) and Varlamova (2004) described how some Evenki groups saw different places, material objects, phenomena and non-human beings as well as spoken words as potentially having *musun*, which is referred to as 'power' (Ru. *sila*), 'energy' (Ru. *energiia*) and 'movement' (Ru. *dvizhenie*). According to Vasilevich (1969: 227–228), the oldest meaning of *musun* was 'strength of movement', a quality intrinsic to all environmental phenomena. We know from her descriptions that rain, wind, clouds,

³ See for 'master of place' among Evenki of Zabaikalskii Krai Arbatskii (1978); and among Evenki of south Yakutiia 'evil spirit' *abaagi* (Yak.) in Stefanovich (1895); 'evil spirit' *abasaa* (Yak.) or *abasy* (Yak.) and 'spirit of rock' *haia ichime* (Yak.) in Vitashevskii (1897).

and all other objects that were seen in motion can be referred to as *mususchi* — that is, possessing and exercising *musun*. Vasilevich adds that the Evenki perceived even geographical features like mountains as moving (as in the case of falling rocks) and therefore called them *mususchi* (ibid.). In Evenki experiences, any painting or decoration can become *musuchi* as soon as it has been created by the human and can become an actor of itself.⁴ Hence, for Evenki, even though humans left rock drawings in the past, such ancestors and their drawings are experienced as powerful agents affecting the life of alive beings.

Experiencing rock art sentiency

Many rock art sites are located near important routes leading to subsistence sites, animals' migrations paths, herding grounds, salted areas that attracted large game animals, fishing spots and confluences of rivers important for hunting and fishing. Thereby, most hunters say that they usually visit such rock art sites on the road when travelling to their hunting territories (see for Evenki of Zabaikalskii Krai in Brandišauskas 2017; and Evenki of Amurskaia Oblast' in Zabiako et al. 2012: 178). This might mean taking a 7–10 km detour from the main route or in some cases people go there in the case of misfortunes or having different quests. Usually, visiting hunters build a fire first some distance from the rock art site and make tea which is sprinkled in the direction of the paintings.⁵ Thereby, often such a stop is planned, and people stop at the base camp and take readymade offerings as well as a kettle, tea, sugar, bread and some things to eat. Only after starting a fire, eating and feeding the fire, Evenki approach rock art sites to observe them and leave some offerings (Fig. 4). If they have some food, then the fire is always fed first before they eat it. Then they approach and leave some offerings, usually bullets, cigarettes, coins, candies, and ask for good luck or success in hunting (Fig. 5). There might be a short request when leaving offerings as *boridiakal* (please, reciprocate). Only after hunters and herders examine paintings from some distance, trying to see what the rock is showing to them (Ru. *chto ona pokazhet*). Sometimes hunters share what they had seen with each other, share their expectations as well as enjoy seeing pictures. If there are more rocks with drawings in some distance, then such a rock is also visited with additional offerings. Evenki

⁴ Lavrillier (2013) propose another emic concept *omir* revealing Evenki and Eveny perception of power as holding the meaning of 'spirit charge' and 'active imprint' persisting in humans, animals and crafted objects.

⁵ Student of archeology Aleksandr Arbatskii (1978) visited a Muishin rock art site called Dukuvuchi together with a reindeer herding family Zhumaneev in the 1960s and 70s in river Vitim basin. He documented that Evenki used to leave offerings near rock art sites during Soviet and pre-Soviet times and they used to come to observe changing paintings since it was believed that such practice used to provide hunters with luck (ibid.).



Figure 4. Food offerings for rock art site in northern Buryatia (photograph by Svetlana Diuruevna).

of Zabaikalskii Krai and Buriatiia say if one expects rock art to perform 'writing' (Ev. *dukuvu*), then one has to come with good thoughts, strong intentions, respect and offerings.

Evenki from Zabaikalskii Krai, Buriatiia, south Yakutiia and Amurskaia Oblast' still have a belief that rock paintings are changing all the time and can hide, show up and write different messages to visit people.⁶ It is believed that the spirit inhabiting the rock can communicate with humans through different images shown, such as paintings. Thereby, Evenki of Buriatiia and Zabaikalskii Krai call different rock art sites *Dukuvuchi* ('writing one', see Sali river in Buriatiia and Muishin river in Zabaikalskii Krai), Evenki and Yakut of south Yakutiia call it *Suruktakh Khaia* (Yak. 'beautiful writing', see Tokko and Marha rivers). Every member of the nomadic reindeer herding family can tell his or her own stories about their interactions with different paintings, relating them to different events of their life. Olga Zhumaneeva told me how once she saw a burning cross when approaching the Dukuvuchi rock art site near the Muishin river. Such a burning cross was interpreted as a sure sign of death, and indeed her relative died soon. The elder female hunter Nadia Mordonova from Rossoshino village (Buriatiia) told me that as a teenager she went to the rock art of Dukuvuchi located near Sali river and she was shown pictures with many children standing in a row. Later, she became the mother of nine children maintaining the belief that the rock art site empowered her to bear so many offspring.⁷ Tamara Zhumaneeva saw the same pictures in her young age at the rock art of Muishin that also influenced her life. Hunters and herders also believe that it is important

⁶ For similar documentations in Krestiakh river, south Yakutiia, see Vitashevskii (1897: 287), for Evenki river Maia of Yakutiia perceptions of how masters of rock could refresh old painting see Vasil'ev (1930).

⁷ See about healing features of rocks among Ust' Niukzha Evenki in Zabiako et al. (2012: 184–185).

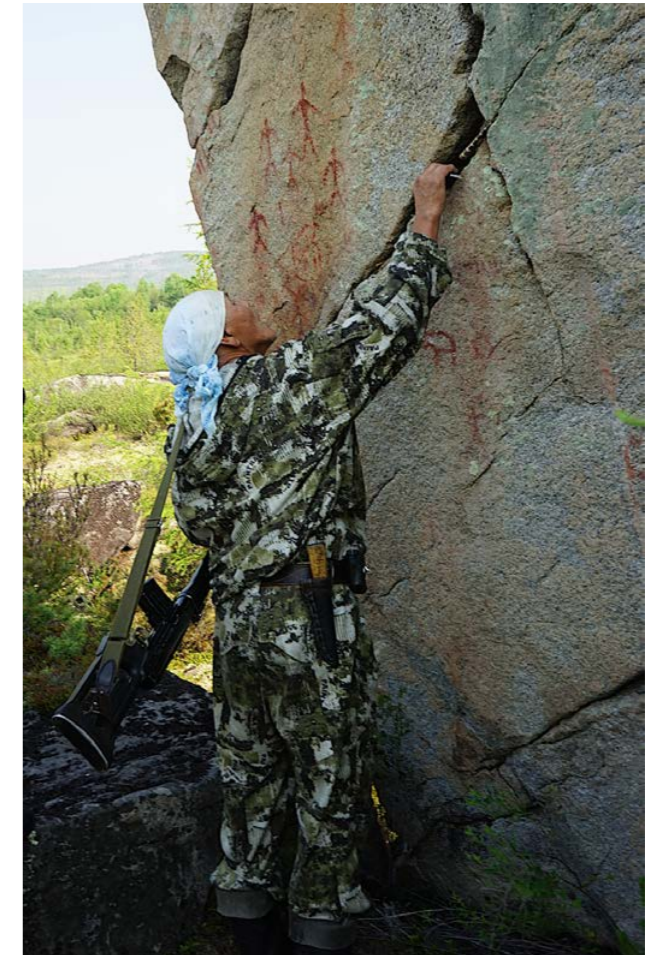


Figure 5. Mikhail Makarov is leaving a cigarette.

to observe rock art as it might show something, or saying something about predicting the future or even warning one about misfortunes. Hence, if one saw drawings of a human being, it was meant to predict a meeting with other people; if an animal, then it was interpreted as a lucky omen. Indeed, most often, hunters see different animals and associate it with hunting luck or facilitating a way for hunting luck to be realised (Brandišauskas 2017).⁸ As most hunters believe that leaving offerings in such sites in most cases resulted in a successful hunt or as hunters might state: 'the animal was sent as a reward for his offerings' (see also Tugolukov 1963a). As the elderly Anna Semirekonova told me 'if you pray [Ru. *molitsa*] well, then the rocks always show or give something to you [...] it is as good to you as your parents and always giving'.

Indeed, as Evenki believe paintings are in the constant process of change, thereby paintings can suddenly appear and disappear for one who is observing them. Similarly, Tungus of the Maia river believe that paintings can disappear for some periods, or become less visible and appear again in

⁸ For Evenki, to see animals in dreams or visions means master-spirits goodwill and meaning a lucky period.

a very bright mode (see Vasil'ev on Tungus 1930).⁹ Local people also told the archaeologist Savvin (1939) that paintings in Suruktakh Khaia rock art site on the Markha river always shift and new paintings change the old ones. Hence, local people noticed that painting of moose that recently appeared on the rock surface also meant the rapid procreation of these animals in the region (ibid.). Local hunters also believed that if a person walking by the Suruktakh Khaia rock saw a moose, then he kills a moose; if a fox is seen then he kills a fox; a whole cross would mean an impending death (see also Okladnikov and Zaporozhskaia 1972: 79). While in other cases, as at the rock art site of the Sredniaia Niukzha river, elders of the Kindigyr clan believed that several paintings appeared recently (see Kiaksho 1931: 29–30). Generations of hunters in Zabaikalskii Krai and Buriatia also believed that rock art did not show up every time and could hide from people, thereby a photo camera did not catch images because of the magic of these paintings and sometimes it was hard to find the site.

The most spectacular rock art sites face south, southeast and southwest and are exposed to the shifting sunlight also providing different impressions of the rock paintings. Furthermore, the rock locations, as well as specific formations such as caves, are also enhancing humans' audible perception creating wind sounds or unusual echoes, strengthening their perception of master-spirit communication. Indeed, many of these sites had some different natural properties that could strengthen human multisensory perception of the place and facilitate their experience of the manifestation of non-human being's agency. It is a ubiquitous storytelling trope among hunters and herders linked to audible experiences, and often visiting people used to hearing voices of non-human beings and the sounds of non-existing domestic animals associate it with evil and tragic spirits *arenki* that could potentially do harm to people (see more in Brandišauskas forthcoming). Many hunters describe the extraordinary feelings that they had when visiting rock art sites.

In some cases, a master-spirit may meet hunters with a strong gust of wind, and sometimes people hear voices when approaching the site. Others can feel a strong 'inflow of energy' (Ru. *pritok energii*). Once, hunters of the Vitim river basin told me how they were met with the sound of a rifle shot. Elders advised that if one is afraid, one must continue approaching the site and try bringing offerings. Also, one must know that the master-spirit might try to play with a human by sending him or her animals and luring him or her away from the site with fresh tracks of animals. This is how the master-spirits test the visitor's intentions; thereby, one must continue

⁹ Similarly, a Tungus guide of Vitashevskii (1898) explained to him that some of the rock art paintings of Krestiakh river were produced by spirits last year, while others had disappeared by the time of their visit.

approaching the rock art site without distractions. Evenki of the Vitim river basin say that they often feel tension when going there as they might be shown drawings that predict trouble, misfortune or even death. Other hunters told me of how the master-spirits refused to accept them for their sins (Ev. *ngelomel*), and one was attacked by a hawk or pelted with stones. Others, when approaching could feel calmness or wind that would blow stronger. Hunters and herders say that even animals can feel spirits as some of them get crazy when approaching the site; dogs bark a lot and chase after invisible things, while reindeer or horses become uncontrollable. Evenki generally take the unusual behaviour of animals as an indicator of the presence of spirits in the area.

Many caves, rock cracks or split rocks served as good examples where Evenki cosmology could be enacted through embodied experiences and practices. Hence, Evenki believe that caves or large cracks could be points where live beings and the dead can interact and where spirits or ancestors are travelling to the lower world *buny*, or where animals come to this world in the process of rebirth. Thereby, hunters from the Amur Oblast' say that if one put offering into rock crack, it goes directly to the lower world. A storyteller from the Mongoi village, Ania Semirekonova (Buriatia), told how some Dolgan caves served as hunting luck predictions for Evenki in the past as one could observe the hole of the cave and might see different moving animals there. During my research, many Evenki elders remembered how in the past different split woods, arches or tunnels between rocks were used for special transition rituals. One had to go through such natural holes in order to escape illness, evil spirits and perform a transition to another state. Thereby, Kagarov (1929) stressed the importance of such a transition through different objects and also described how Tungus shamans used to build different contraptions into the entrance made from split sticks or poles to get ill people to go through in healing ceremonies (ibid.). The same rituals could be used before the hunting season, when hunters used to make similar constructions that were used to bring offerings, smearing the entrance with blood and walking through the hole with all of one's gear and dogs. After the passage, they used to close the entrance, covering it with branches (ibid.). One elder remembered how hunters used to make small dolls that were taken through such a split pole and then the entrance or legs were closed and tied. In other cases, the evil being representing by the doll was stuck in between of split pole and tied firmly.

Similar strong cleansing or empowering functions were placed on some rocks containing passages, entrances or arches. A reindeer herder from Tungokochen village (Zabaikalskii Krai) discussed how, while visiting a Muishin river rock art site, one should go through rocks forming a tunnel in the Uluktalni river rock art site. Indeed, many of the rock art sites

had such features that were possibly used for such ritual purposes. Today, Evenki of east Siberia also perform the ceremony called *chipikan*. This is a two-legged wooden ritual structure that was widely used in different ceremonies, including hunting rituals, among most Evenki communities of east Siberia. *Chipikan* was used for cleansing purposes or for escaping evil beings. Therefore, the Evenki rarely go through power poles in villages believing that this is similar to a *chipikan* structure and function.¹⁰ Today, such a ceremony is widely adopted in different Evenki public celebrations as Bakaldyn and Day of Reindeer herder. Even in the areas where the indigenous interactions with rock art are largely lost, indigenous teachers and Evenki summer school leaders visit rock art sites to teach indigenous children about Evenki worldviews, rituality, the culture of respect and exchange.

Morality and economy of exchange

Today, offerings are also continuously left in cracks and crevices of rocks, placed on the ledges of the rock cliffs or below the rock paintings, or displayed near-flat stones or surfaces of rocks. Indeed, leaving offerings in cracks is known for many Evenki groups, including those living in China and the north (for Khantaisk Evenki see Bolina-Ukoher 2011: 85, for Evenki in China see Zabayako and Tszian'lin' 2015).¹¹ Any valuable item that one has in the pocket, such as cigarettes, matches, bullets, a button, a coin or a piece cut from the fabric of footwear puttee, as well as candy, can be left as an offering and as an exchange for luck. In Zabaikalskii Krai as well as south Yakutia I saw various old items left as offerings such as musket bullets, coins with Russian Tsar Nikolai's face or Soviet rubles with Lenin as well as more modern things such as fishing tools, watches or plastic lighters. Indeed, the persistence of leaving essential hunting tools can illustrate the fact that there were found tools representing different epochs for the same practice (e.g. flint tools to produce fire, matches as well as a plastic gas lighter) in the crack of Suruktakh Khaia rock art (Okladnikov 1943: 35–36). Many rock art sites encountered by a hunter, reindeer herder or explorer during the entire 20th century contained or still contain well-seen valuable material objects left as offerings during different epochs. Also, in many cases, nearby standing trees have been used for decoration with colourful racks also left as offerings.¹² In some cases, trees standing near offering

¹⁰ See the description of the Evenki ritual *chipikan* in Kagarov (1929) and Mazin (1984: 30–33).

¹¹ As one reindeer herder from Amurskaia Oblast' region told me, if you put an offering into a deep crack, then it might go directly to the lower world, reaching spirits.

¹² Hence, the geologist Gaiduk (1915: 104–106) found material racks on the trees standing near rock art sites of Oiulakh river (Oliokma river basin) and the route to hunting, while the geologist Frolov (1967), besides colourful racks, also found bullets and buttons at the rock art site of

sites or rock art sites could be also marked by special cuts to refer to an offering site in the same way as are marked mortuary sites or other important places (see also Kochmar 1994: 85). Archaeologists also indicated different rock art sites also contained items used by Evenki during the 19th to 20th centuries such as different hunting, fishing, blacksmithing and sewing tools including traps, fur tools, self-shooting bows, awls, thimble, wattle fish-traps as well as fire tools, drill, backpacks and shamanic ritual items or pieces of traded porcelain from China.

Well-visible old offerings, preserved by rock-shelters and cornices, invoked a continuation of ritual acts in the context when Evenki lived extremely nomadic lifestyles covering large areas of migration in their life.¹³ In the past, such migration was not only due to the search for convenient hunting and herding grounds but also due to the warfare with neighbouring groups, illnesses or when escaping from army service, tribute-*yasak* or tax payments of the Russian or Chinese Empires. In Soviet times, rock art sites with offerings encountered by Evenki were one way of how migrating Evenki learned about the 'power' of the site, returning there to leave offerings in the context of misfortune. Elders remember that in difficult historical periods, Evenki specially used to travel to rock art sites to perform rituals aiming to ensure wellbeing. Hence, as the female hunter Nadia Taskerova from Ust' Karenga village in Zabaikalskii Krai remembers, a shaman led her male relatives to the Kadarichi river rock art site and to the rock arch located there before leaving as army recruits to the Second World war. Since many rock art sites were continuously attended by generations of reindeer herders and hunters with offerings, one could and still can see old camping sites and fireplaces located near the rock art sites as well as other imprints on the landscape as a tent site, tent poles as well as trees cut for firewood and tent poles.

Such rock art sites are not only 'beautiful' and generous to humans but also are seen as places of prohibition (Ev. *odiokit*) requiring certain norms of behaviour. Young hunters are advised to show respect and refrain from speaking in a loud voice or otherwise polluting a ritual site. It is also dangerous to cut down trees; quarrel with dogs, horses or reindeer; or hunt before performing the ritual. It is not recommended for children to go there because 'rock art can drive them crazy', so only adults should visit these places (see also Arbatskii 1978: 179). As Arbatskii noticed, in the past, Evenki also remembered that elders used to guide younger members of a family, especially recently married couples to that place to gain knowledge about the hunting or reproduction the Oliokma river.

¹³ Archeologist Kochmar (1994) proposed that most rock art of south Yakutia can be treated as ritual sites. This can be confirmed by rich archeological offerings as well as so-called 'ethnographic remnants' such as left idols *shenkens* (ibid.).

success. I was forbidden to touch offerings and was told that Arbatskii's attempts to excavate the site caused many troubles for him and his people; even his mother died soon. For all Evenki, it is a strict law (Ev. *ode*) forbidding taking anything left by other people in the taiga, while taking something from the storage platforms or offering sites can have lethal outcomes. At the same time, I witnessed how some hunters used to borrow something in the case of extreme need, also leaving something in exchange.¹⁴

Thereby, many stories about rock art also interlink subsistence and land use with morality, sharing and exchange. The most common trope is about the hunter that refused to leave offerings, thereby he had had a very bad hunting season compared to those who left offerings. The tragic stories that occurred because of mistreating of such sites always point to the still seen material remains. Hence, herder Nikolai Aruneev pointed to the remains of a plane and a burned all-terrain vehicle attributing these accidents to spirits' anger exposed during the Soviet time. He also showed me a large stone lying below that rock art site that, according to him, fell from the rock on the sinful hunters' overnight camping place. A similar trope can be found in Mazin's book (1986: 129), where the hunter Trofim Pavlov told about the large stone that killed a flawed human who aimed to collect offerings. According to Pavlov, a master-spirit even left such a rock art site and thereby it ceased to act (Ru. *ne deistvuet*).

Similarly, his nephew Mikhail Pavlov showed us Onion river rock art sites located next to Ust' Urkima, also pointing to the gold miners who tragically died in a burned log house located close to rock art sites. Goldminers had left some writings of their names on the rock art sites, and local people believe spirits punished them by being burned alive. As elders told me, some reindeer herders who did not leave offerings and even showed disrespect also injured a leg or lost their harvested fish, or even their rifle was hidden, while others encountered difficulties to control their riding reindeer (Ev. *wouchak*) or horse.

Many Evenki would complain that various offering sites and shamanic mortuary platforms were excavated by archaeologists or destroyed by development activities. Thereby, humans can also link their contemporary hardships with the disrespect shown to spirits in the recent past. Such a mistreated spirit can also harm people and cause revenge to anyone travelling in the area (see also Savvin 1939; Okladnikov 1972: 78). Recently, I was told that the rock had started to flake because humans abused many of the *ode* taiga laws. Indeed, such flaking of rocks or narratives of falling rocks can also be seen as substantial proof of misbalanced relations between human and non-human persons that also has effects

14 Okladnikov's guide leading him to Suruktakh Khaia rock art also took some shots from there, also promising to return them on the first occasion (see Okladnikov and Zaporozhskaya 1972: 25).

on ecology and all living beings.

Generating power, cosmology and modifications

Different rock art sites have their biographies and have been modified continuously by people that attended them in different epochs. Starting from the Neolithic period, people added new drawings and new writings to existing rock art. They used drawings for hunting magic and used paint from rock art for medicine. Different ethnic groups also left their writings such as Turkic runes, Chinese hieroglyphs as well as during the 19th century explorers' writings. Furthermore, during the entire 20th century there were also many initials left as well as names written near such rock art sites or, in the 21st century in the worst case, right on ancient drawings, attributed mainly to tourists or touristic expeditions. Archaeologists also left their traces of chalk paper and excavations. In many archaeological projects, offerings were removed from ritual sites as 'scientific artefacts' and later displayed in museums.

During my field research in Amurskaia Oblast', we saw that Onion rock art images (mainly representations of hunted animals) had marks of bullets. Tugolukov (1963a), who visited the same site, also explained that Evenki of Sredniaia Niukzha river believed that the creator of the rock art also shot at the images himself. Hence, he was told that if an attending hunter saw such marks of bullets, then it meant he would kill an animal.¹⁵ Furthermore, archaeologists also found broken arrowheads near the rock art sites that had hit the hard rock and were probably used to shoot at images.¹⁶ Shooting at the drawings of animals also could enable people to participate in gaining hunting luck. As I was told by contemporary hunters and herders from Zabaikalskii Krai and the Amurskaia Oblast', in extreme cases when one lost his hunting luck and could not kill any animals for long periods, then he can try shooting at the grass or birch bark image of an animal with a gun.¹⁷ Indeed, various images of animals made from branches and straw were widely used in magic hunting rituals in the case of misfortune. Mazin also describes the 'interesting ritual that survived up to our days among aborigines of Oliokma and Aldan' (see Okladnikov and Mazin 1979: 74-75). I was told of such a ritual by many Evenki elders living in different regions. According to Mazin (1984: 50-52), Evenki elders used to cut a figure of an animal, such as a male, female and calf moose, from the birch bark or rotten wood before they went on a hunting trip. Also, there was a carved a bird (Ru. *dikusha*)

15 In his essay describing a visit to rock art at Getkan, Tugolukov explains that Evenki used to shoot to the images, this way obtaining hunting luck (see Tugolukov 1963b).

16 See for excavations of offerings site of Shaman rock (Zabaikalskii Krai) in M. Konstantinov (2002: 35).

17 See *sinkelavun*, Anisimov (1958: 29-32); for similar rituals see Okladnikov and Mazin (1979: 74-75), and Vasilevich (1957: 151-163).

that was made for its calm character, and it was believed that the bird could calm a moose family, meant to be hunted. Then he used to make a simple bow and arrow and used to go to the taiga. Next, he used to find an appropriate field and placed the animals and bird to graze and then shot the male moose. When he hit the target, he used to take the male moose, leaving the other animals to graze. Female moose and its offspring were left for the regeneration of animals and the continuation of procreation. Then he used to sit near the fire asking for good luck and putting pieces of birch bark moose to the fire asking for good luck and also persuading the master spirit to send him an animal for food also promising to share it with him (ibid.). Then he used to leave some part of the birch bark moose (chest and back leg) and used to sleep for some time and then leave for hunting early in the morning. The hunter used to go to the place that he saw in the dream and used to continue hunting until he was successful. The dream was important to start a successful hunting period; otherwise, such a ritual had to be repeated.

Archaeologist Savvin (1939) describes how local people living close to the famous rock art site of Suruktakh Khaia near Markha river in Yakutiia also strived to collect rock art paint, believing that such 'magic medicine' might help to cure different diseases. Savvin (ibid.) believed that some of the images were heavily damaged or even disappeared because of such beliefs. Local people thought that such rock drawings used to appear again and again with shifting seasons. The influence of Suruktakh Khaia on the local population was so significant that it inspired local enthusiasts and atheist Soviet antireligious activists to fight to remove some paintings from the rock art for the sake of an experiment to see if the master-spirit will recreate the rock art (see Savvin 1939).

Evenki of south Yakutiia and Amurskaia Oblast' region believe, the more offerings left at the rock art site, the more power the site accumulates and can enact. Some elders from the Ust' Urkima village remember that some powerful (Ev. *musuchi*) rock art at the Onion river contained a pile of different offerings, including bullets, toys and wooden figures of animals.¹⁸ Thereby, some Evenki living in Tiania and travelling by the Tokko river to the large village of Oliokminsk also believe that one should better not leave offerings at the rock art site of Tokko that contains many rock art areas, as this can attract spirits that start giving hard times performing mischief (Ru. *mozhet khuliganit'*) to humans travelling by boat.¹⁹

18 Archeologist Kochmar also found a wooden animal attached to the pole, similar to the one used in Evenki shamanic ceremony in the rock art site (1994: 216).

19 While many people in Tiania uttered that they avoid



Figure 6. Shenkens left some distance from Krestiakh rock art site.

Indeed, in Evenki beliefs, some material objects can be entered by moving spirits and in this way have an influence on people's life (see Brandišauskas 2017; Shirokogoroff 1935). Hence, when visitors (geologists, tourists, archaeologists) started to collect or remove these offerings, different groups of Evenki witnessed that the rock art sites started to get weaker, ceased to act, or even attacked people travelling to the site.

During our field research near the Oliokma and Krestiakh rivers, we also encountered seven sharpened sticks stuck into rocks, known in the literature as anthropomorphic idol *shenken* (see also Ev. *shinken, shingkens, sinken*).²⁰ These *shenkens* were left at a spectacular separate rock with some small rock shelters about 170 m from the famous Krestiakh rock art site (see also nine *shenkens* found in Krestiakh I in 1977 by Kochmar 1994: 89, 93). These items were left with respect and significantly with their ends pointed towards the rock art site. This was the common feature of other rock art sites with *shenkens* that were left at some distance from the rock art. Indeed, in many other rock art sites, such *shenkens* were placed in shelters and separate rocks located up to 200 m from rock art sites. Some *shenkens* could even be stuck into rock cracks up to 15 m above the land surface and were well seen from distant places (Fig. 6).²¹ Such leaving of *shenkens* in rock cracks, shelters or under the cornices was used to create new ritual sites with piles of idols and other offerings that were well preserved. In different grottos or under rock cornices,

creating ritual sites around the village, nevertheless, the majority of elders still stop at these sites to drink tea, observe rock art drawings and some of them leave very small offerings. They also own personal and family wooden carved idols called *barylakh* used for hunting requests.

20 *Shenken* is an Evenki word used to refer to luck or lucky omen (see also Anisimov 1949: 160-194).

21 Similar *shenkens* were found stuck in the rock 10-15 m next to the Tas Mele rock art site (inflow of Oliokma), which was recently found by Oliokma Zapovednik workers.

there were made special wooden constructions used as support of idols left in great number (ibid.: 200). In other cases, idols were leaned against the rock surfaces, or placed in empty spaces between rocks.

As historical documents show, bringing sticks to the rock art site by Tungus has been documented in the 18th century (see Georgi 1799). Archeologists Kochmar (1994) also paid special attention in his extensive field expeditions to the *shenken* idols that he found in a great number in many rock art sites of Amga river and some rock art sites of Oliokma river (see Kochmar 2002: 52–55).²² Okladnikov witnessed that such *shenkens* were also found at rock art sites of the Zabaikalskii Krai and Buriatiia (see Sali river Dukuvuchi; Okladnikov and Zaporozhskaia 1970: 42), as well as in the middle Lena river basin (see especially Markha river Okladnikov 1972: 78). With every monumental book dedicated to rock art, archaeologists also aimed to interpret many anthropomorphic idols found near rock art sites or stuck in rock cracks as well as found in excavated cultural layers in east Siberia. Mazin, referring to Anisimov, also elaborated that Evenki called ‘master-spirits’ *bugady* and approached them with offerings as well as with wooden idol *shenken*, made from larch, pine or spruce trees (Okladnikov and Mazin 1976: 106). He saw such an idol as a mediator between master-spirits and unique hunting idols called *barylakh*, owned and fed by families and individuals (ibid.). Hence, Evenki used to leave such *shenken* after saying their wish and aspirations and such idols served as mediators between *barylakh*, owned by people, and the master spirit-*bugady* that owned rivers, taiga and animals (see Okladnikov and Mazin 1979: 76).

In his latest book on Amur river rock art, Mazin (1986: 137, 1984: 33) continues his attempts to explain wooden sticks found in great number near the Amur rock art sites, explaining that these were mistakenly called *shinken* in his previous publications and should be referred as *mentai* — an idol made from a larch stick with a stylised anthropomorphous head with two small incisions and with a sharp opposite end. Mazin (ibid.) also elaborates that such *mentai* could be put into a child’s cradle or could be stabbed into the ground next to a tent and served as protector of a home from evil spirits and shamans. It was also formerly used in Evenki shamanic ceremonies. According to

²² As Kochmar notices such idols could vary significantly from 3–4 cm and up to 5 cm in diameter and starting from 3–4 cm up to 1.5 m length. Some of the rock art sites near Amga river also contained large idols that could reach 15–20 cm in diameter and 2–3.5 m length (Kochmar 2002: 54). For him, such ethnographic data shows how these sites were functioning as cult objects during the Middle Ages and up to our days. Hence, *shenkens* were produced from mainly young larch tree that was cleaned from branches, and by sidelong cuts, it was made a stylised anthropomorphous head that had neck (or without it), and most of the heads of *shenkens* were burned on fire while the other side was split as two legs (ibid: 52).

Mazin, in many cases, such heads of *mentai* were painted in red with ochre and were fed with blood (ibid.). Such stick-idol *mentai* could also be brought to the rock art site and left as an offering, believing in his mediation between master-spirits of place and family-owned idol *barylakh* used for hunting magic. For archeologist Anatolii Alekseev (1978) rocks with displayed *shenkens* can be seen as the earliest objects of worship of the deity *bugady* (see also Anisimov).

Kochmar (1994: 145, 2002) also stated that though material traces of *shenken* offerings were still seen, people did not tell much about this and thereby, this issue remains unexplored in the literature.²³ Religion historian and Amurskaia Oblast’ rock art specialist Anatolii Zabyiako also gave us another explanation, saying that some Evenki in the area of Soun Tit village explained that such a stick was sharpened, to be put into meat and get blooded and in such a way were delivered to the ritual sites as offerings of animal’s flesh or blood.²⁴ According to Kochmar’s (1994) observations, some of such sharp ends of *shenkens* were also probably burned.²⁵

However, as my long-term research among Evenki shows, specific sites of master-spirit manifestation or dwelling are not limited to one spot or rock. They can be seen as a wider locale, uniting different spots and embracing the larger territory of spirits’ activity, including a river’s confluence, mountain ridge or even a whole river basin (Brandišauskas 2017). In such cases, certain spots as rock art sites, caves or a single rock with large cracks can be seen as points where one can interact with non-human beings more profoundly. Thereby, such area of ritual activity included not only scattered offering sites but also elevated ritual platforms (*delkens*) containing respectfully displayed bones of large hunted animals as well as other, more elaborate offering structures (see Kochmar 1994: 99). It is evident that wooden sticks are spontaneously made items with some minimal carving and most often with sharpened ends, and some of these can hardly be called anthropomorphous shapes. By producing such offerings, Evenki indeed were used to emplace different requests. Many people in different villages explained to us that such a wooden stick was an offering or gift to the master-spirit left with some outspoken requests. For the Evenki, any crafted item and even words can display power *musun*, thereby affect master-spirits to whom such offerings or requests are left. The Evenki view not only different

²³ As other members of expedition witness that archeologists led by Alekseev and Kochmar usually used to spend just short times when visiting near located villages and even in such cases people were probably not willing to tell about this (see about the same experience in Okladnikov 1970: 42).

²⁴ Indeed, offerings given with blood are one of the most important daily ritual practices of feeding wooden idols when blood is used for smearing the face of the idol.

²⁵ Evenki still burn the sharp end of any wooden stick or pole to secure it from rotting.

objects or spirits can be *musuchi* (enact power), but also words could be emplaced into items and in this way, influence master spirits’ generosity.

In Buriatiia, Evenki elders explained to me that such a wooden carved and decorated stick is an offering in the case when people have nothing to leave that is used in the context of shortage. There are also other examples of spontaneous wooden offerings existing among the Evenki of the Amurskaia Oblast’ of south Yakutiia such as leaving young cut larch trees in mountain passages or leaving such trees near sacred rocks or old and single mortuary sites. Indeed, elders of Buriatiia also remember that people used to leave, among other offerings some personal hair when visiting rock art sites in the region. Evenki of Pervomaisk village, when travelling to Yakutiia, and encountering rock art sites, and among other offerings, people used to leave horsehair locks. Thereby, in various ceremonies when visiting rock art sites or other sacred landscape sites, there are left miniature figures of animals such as reindeer made from a tree branch (Fig. 7). A similar image of a game animal cut from birch bark can also be left on the trees as an offering.²⁶

Specially carved and dressed wooden idols are still used by some Evenki families in Zabaikalskii Krai, Amurskaia Oblast’ as well as south Yakutiia. During the Soviet times, Evenki of Buriatiia remember that richly decorated wooden idols, *seveki* or *barylakh* belonging to families, were left in remote storing caches or mountain passes called *dovan* and attended during the season (see idol *barylakh* in Arbatskii 1982).²⁷ Today, rock art often called shamanic also started to attract newly evolved shamans and ritual leaders. Some shamans and ritual specialists are believed to derive their power from these places. As Evenki elders of Zabaikalskii Krai remember, rock art sites were visited by Buriat lama or shaman in the past who spent a week fasting, ‘surviving without food and kettle’ at the site, leaving many rag offerings there. The Onion river rock art site called ‘shaman stone’ was also recently visited by a group of Evenki shamans from Buriatiia who performed rituals spiritually cleaning the place and ‘opening the road’ for people to attend it safely. There were ritual

²⁶ Furthermore, Okladnikov and Mazin (1979: 12, 74) also found very realistic and skillfully made reindeer made from birch bark as well as animal parts of such birch bark figures in the second layer of the Soun Tit rock art site’s excavations. In an offering site located next to Onion rock art site, there was also found a figure of animal made from flint as well as a painting made on a flat piece of basalt rock (Okladnikov and Mazin 1976: 34, 88).

²⁷ For similar carved hunting idol *bellei* among Enisei Evenki, see Vasilevich (1930: 58).



Figure 7. Vladimir Torgonov produces reindeer image to be left as an offering (photograph by Svetlana Diuruevna).

fires and many offerings left at the place, and people believe that Onion started to gain power again. Hence, Evenki believe that spirits can be tamed (Ru. *priruchenie*), come back, and exercise power this way, empowering Evenki life.

Conclusions

In this article, I demonstrated the persistence of many Evenki ideas and associations of rock art sites outlined in the works of explorers and early ethnographers. Contemporary indigenous perception, engagement and ritual practices with the rock art sites are continuously based on their experience of the importance of non-human beings in their life. Evenki believe that their engagement with a rock art site is a mutual interaction with a master-spirit that can affect both interactors, human and non-human persons (spirits and animals), physically as well as emotionally. In such a context, rock art is not a static natural rock surface with displayed artistic representations, but rock paintings can be seen as property and manifestation of non-human beings, whether it was painted by humans or, as it is believed, by non-humans.

Indeed, in Evenki animistic views, there are no distinctions between natural and cultural meanings as well as between human persons and non-human persons. In such an experience of reality, all beings are enmeshed in mutual social, kin and reciprocal relations, while any human actions have their effects and responses from other interactors. In this experience, rock art is a powerful master-spirit that can see and interact with humans from their perspectives. Thereby, people interconnect with rock art not only through visual perceptions of rock paintings, that in Evenki experiences are relational and in the process of change but also through their multisensory experiences of mutual communication

through their embodied, moral and physical interactions with non-human beings as well as their success of subsistence. Such non-human beings can be both beneficial as well as dangerous entities to those who break taiga laws and show disrespect or cease to enact sharing through offerings.

Many physical features and multisensory characteristics of rock art sites also serve as good conduits for the manifestation of Evenki cosmological and religious ideas and practices. In Evenki experiences, master-spirits communicate with people through rock paintings, sounds, fire sparks, wind, exchanges with animals and moral teachings. Thereby, these rock art sites were an essential source of knowledge in the context when shamans almost ceased to exist in many communities. Master-spirits dwelling in these sites control the rebirth of animals and humans and can show, send, present animals to hunters and foretell hunting luck. Thereby, rock art sites are important economic sites where humans can participate in the cosmological orders of the rebirth of animals as well as enact morality of exchange and gain power for the future. Different individual meanings can be extracted from identified paintings and incorporated into personal experiences, histories and narratives. Such spectacular rocks, shapes, vistas, as well as extraordinary experiences, are also more memorable and effective for humans since one can experience them with the whole body and connect stories or different events in one's life with these experiences.

The rock itself has monumental and durable features connoting permanence and linkage to the ancient time of creation or the time of nomadic life. Such time is well remembered as a 'golden age' of taiga life with many nomadic Evenki met in taiga, good pastures for reindeer when all Evenki lived friendly and happy lives, celebrating their rites. It was a time when shamans helped people to fight diseases when people could predict the weather as well as the behaviour of predators. Today, social and economic challenges also call for human attempts to put some effort towards the control of their complicated destinies, feeling of disempowerment as well as sustaining their nomadic life. Thereby, such rock drawings are also seen as a gift and duty given by non-human beings and powerful ancestors to contemporary humans where paintings of animals can have the power to sustain cycles of the rebirth of animals in the taiga. Thereby the indigenous rock art perception and interaction could not be understood without the ethos of relationships with humans, animals and spirits, which kept people connected to the land on which they dwell. In this context, different river basins could not be perceived as 'owned' by humans, since humans are dwelling in the household of master-spirits controlling the animals and humans life. Rituals of respect and exchange, as well as ceremonially left offerings, have been important to

create relations of cooperation with master-spirits and ensure hunting luck and wellbeing. It also helped to create bonds with hunting territories or river basins that were ruled by master spirits creating their own 'living territories' among Evenki of Zabaikal'ia, called *bikit* (Brandišauskas 2017).

The power of rock art is also associated with some physical modifications of the place such as leaving offerings in rock cracks that preserve them for ages as well as leaving piles of idols, or carving trees and decorating them with images of animals and tracks. In the past Evenki also used to collect rock paint as medicine or shoot at images aiming to gain hunting luck. All these material imprints together with marks of archaeologists can be well seen even after half a century. The rocks' natural features also serve for embodied rituals such as a passing rite through an entrance aiming to escape misfortune, illness, and to cleanse oneself of all which has a direct link to existing rituals in Evenki communities. The importance of such rituals could also be acknowledged through intangible means such as a recounting of personal experiences, oral histories or pointing to certain well-known tragic or positive events. These stories can be connected to personal behaviour, morality, collective identity, the reinvention of traditions and spirituality as well as searches for sources of empowerment in the shifting social and political environment. As in the past, such sites are linked to the shamanic or teaching powers to heal, predict and provide luck, and therefore some rock art sites are visited by modern shamans, spiritual leaders as well as new generations of hunters and herders as well as indigenous villagers or large city dwellers. Certain rock art sites enter the collective memory of a group through the constant visits on the way, narratives and experiences associated with them or through repeated ritual activities and personal offerings left at these places. In turn, these local practices and realities further shape particular communal and individual worldviews.

Thereby, rock art can also be studied as a cosmological and spiritual actor-shaping subsistence, movements, and human/non-human interactions as well as the social life and sense of wellbeing of indigenous people. In such a context, rock art rituals can also be seen as a way for Evenki people to control their destinies as well as the destiny of their clan and its individuals. In the context of Soviet persecution of religious practices as well as shamans, the landscape is perceived as emplaced with angry spirits dwelling in different landscape places, hence, in such a context, rock art sites stand as balancing places of empowerment, knowledge and control of different spirits. Thereby, rock art sites also represent humans' temporality of dwelling on the land by bounding present experiences of encounters with past events and activities of ancestors as well as future opportunities. Thereby, rock art is not a

passive expression of a human's needs and passions as it was outlined by the famous archaeologist Aleksei Okladnikov (1967). However, it can be understood in the context of ongoing exchange where both human person's and non-human persons are both producers and givers as well as recipients and consumers. At the same time, different offerings left in such sites manifest not only accumulated agency of master-spirits but also embrace and manifest the powers of deceased people that could be called as ancestors.

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In Memoriam

Benjamin K. Swartz Jr.

1931 – 2020

Prof. Ben K. Swartz Jr. was an eminent scholar and rock art specialist. He was the IFRAO Representative of the American

Committee to Advance the Study of Petroglyphs and Pictographs (ACASPP) of the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations. He was responsible for the drafting of the Constitution of the Federation, which was approved in the General Session of the IFRAO in Turin, in the Royal Castle of Valentino, in 1995, on the occasion of the Congress organised by CeSMAP. This was the first time the IFRAO Congress was held in Europe, with the IFRAO Presidency of Dario Seglie.

Benjamin Kinsell Swartz, Jr., left this life in the early hours of Saturday, 31 October 2020, at The Woodlands care facility, where he was receiving rehab following recent surgery. He was 89 years old.

Ben was a native of Los Angeles, California, born 1931. He attended North Hollywood High School and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), where he received BA and MA degrees.

He enlisted in the United States Navy during the Korean War and served on the aircraft carrier *USS Princeton*. Later, he worked as curator and research associate at Klamath County Museum in Klamath

Falls, Oregon. He completed a PhD degree in anthropology (archaeology) at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, in 1964.

That same year, Ben joined the faculty at Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana (renamed Ball State University the following year), where he would serve as a professor for 37 years, finally retiring in 2001. His interest in African pre-History led to periods of teaching and research in Ghana (University of Ghana), rural Togo and Cameroon (University of Yaoundé). Another area of research was pre-Historic rock art. He spent eight summers in the Nevada desert, documenting the rock art of the White River Narrows region.

Genealogy was a major enthusiasm for Ben. Over many years, he compiled an extensive, voluminous record of his family ancestry. He was able to discover the identity of his great-great-great-great grandfather, Martin Swartz, who immigrated to Virginia in the 18th century from (what is today) southern Germany.

Another enthusiasm was mountain climbing, which spanned decades. Ben attained the summits of some thirty mountains throughout the United States and abroad, including Japan's Mount Fuji, Mount Shasta in northern California and Mount Cameroon, near Buea, Cameroon.

Ben and his wife China were married in 1966. Their fifty-fourth wedding anniversary came up just days before Ben's passing.

Dario Seglie