

The Authenticity of Cultural Properties in the Russian Far East

ALEXANDER D. KING

Ethnic dances are one of the most visible “cultural properties” in Kamchatka, Russia. People perform and observe dances which are associated with a particular ethnic group (*natsional'nost'*) or cultural style for many reasons: entertainment, ethnic pride, cultural and political statements, profit, and pure pleasure of the performing arts. I have found that nearly everyone who is physically able enjoys dancing and watching others dance in sundry venues. Ethnic dance ensembles provide some of the best opportunities for indigenous Kamchatkans to supplement their income, travel widely, and even secure a full-time job in an economic environment still suffering from the post-Soviet collapse. The commodity value of ethnic dance, or the earning potential of particular ensembles and dancers, is dependent on performances being deemed as authentically native by the audience. People I talked to in Kamchatka readily identify dances, dance moves, and dance rhythms in terms of cultural styles. There are no generic dances. Discotheque dancing is classed as “Western,” or “European,” or (when talking to the ethnographer) as “your style.” Indigenous, or more commonly, “local,” dances and moves are classed as being associated with one of the many cultural styles in Kamchatka, which include Itel'men, Even, Chukchi, Nymylan, Chauwchu, and Koryak. A whole host of regional and village styles can be enumerated by artists, local folklorists, and ethnographers (Zhornitskaia 1994), but this essay is not about the kinds of dances. It is about the value of dances. Kamchatkans evaluate performances along two dimensions, beauty and authenticity, which are interdependent. Comments by people from all walks of life in Koryakia make clear that beauty is largely a function of authenticity.

This essay is an investigation of authenticity as a local, socially real category as it operates in Kamchatka. Much work in anthropology and cultural studies has demolished the category of the authentic as something which is “really real,” existing independently of the social and cultural contexts in which representations of authenticity are created (Baudrillard 1983, Eco 1986, Gable and Handler 1996, Handler 1986). When people in Kamchatka describe a dance as being authentically Koryak or Even, it is a simple affair to demonstrate how the referent of such a statement – Koryak or Even culture – does not exist as an independent, bounded, and neatly configured entity, let alone a real Koryak dance or real Even dance. My aim is not to defend the ontological reality of real Koryak

dances or their authenticity (cf. Bruner 1993, 1994). Nor am I interested in deconstructing local discourses of authenticity. Rather, I aim to describe the social and psychological reality of authentic representations, which are emic categories. Just as phonemes are psychologically more real to the native speaker than the putatively objective phonetics (Sapir 1949a), authenticity is part of a social reality, the power of which cannot be denied. And as the phonemics of a language describe the meaningful differences in sound, this analysis describes the meaningful differences of a key symbol of culture and identity in a particular socio-cultural milieu.

My discussion here is spatially located in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug in the northern part of the Kamchatka peninsula, and temporally in the years 1995-98. Every village has a house of culture (or at least a “club”) with staff responsible for organizing activities in music, dance, theater, and celebrations marking many of the national holidays. As the *okrug* capital, Palana has both a town club and the *okrug* house of culture, which is comparatively well funded. It stages plays and concerts, and supports two or three dance groups, including Weyem, a Kamchatkan ethnic dance group founded by Valerii and Liza Yetneut. Palana is also home to the only professional dance ensemble in the *okrug*, Mengo, which is known for its ethnic dances and travels abroad for ethnic dance festivals and commercial tours.¹



map by Gert-Roland Müller

Underlying all this artistic activity are some interesting notions of Culture (a universal attribute of humanity) and cultures (specific patterns which vary from one to another). It is no coincidence that the people working in the *okrug* house of culture (officially, The House of People's Arts), which is a division of the Okrug Department of Culture, are called "culturites" (*kul'turovtsy*). Artists are specialists in Culture, and they work in a global context of cultural production, following world-wide trends from African rhythms to Irish "Riverdance" to Mayan harmonies, all of which have been consciously incorporated into performances staged by the Palana house of culture. People in Kamchatka often talk about art, music, and other creative traditions with an implicitly universalist theory of Culture, thought of as the uneven distribution of creative assets or civilization, whereby some individuals have more Culture than others. However, conversations on ethnic dances and other cultural traditions include an implicit anthropological notion of cultures, where different peoples have different cultures, and where a preference for this or that culture is more a question of individual taste than a universal hierarchy of human civilization. "We have our dances, they have theirs, and you have yours," I was often told.

These two ideas of culture work at different levels, thus allowing for the contradictions of simultaneous relativism and universalism. Culture is relative at the group level – different groups have different cultures – while individuals have varying commands of particular cultures, different amounts of cultural capital. People in Kamchatka also order different cultures into a universal scale of Culture, from primitive (e.g., Koryaks) to civilized (e.g., Americans). This contradiction allows for local natives to be denied modernity in some ways of talking about native people, but it does allow them a separate place. Thus, as "primitives", they are in a position to counter and critique aspects of modernity that one may find bad or detrimental to humanity.²

Native ethnicity and native cultures are in the background of nearly everything the *okrug* house of culture does, but most of the artists in Palana are interested in transcending the local and engaging in the global exchange of performance, creativity, and beauty. All the world is a stage indeed. Dance ensembles in Kamchatka are interesting because they provide a single venue for examining both Soviet and post-Soviet cultural configurations, as well as a discourse through which native culture is described and defined, both consciously and unconsciously. Native people in northern Kamchatka locate sources of authenticity in performance. This evaluation disconnects the ethnic identity of the performer from the performance. Someone who masters the forms attributed to elders – the keepers of traditional culture – controls the associated patterns of native culture,

whether they be dance, language, rituals, or economic practices. Thus, the authenticity of a performance is not based on an essential identity of the performer, but on the qualities of the performance, making it possible for non-natives to produce “authentic” representations of native traditional culture. Judgments and other discourse about Mengo and Weyem, two popular dance ensembles in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug, illustrate how the ethnic identity of individuals is not addressed in evaluations of authentic manifestations of cultural property.

Professional Natives?

The first, and to date only, wholly professional ensemble is “Mengo,” named after a hero of Koryak mythology. Mengo started in the 1960s as an informal gathering of native artists and intelligentsia in Palana, the administrative center of the Koryak Autonomous Okrug. The amateur group performed in Moscow in 1967 as part of a Union-wide festival marking the 50th anniversary of the October revolution (Kravchenko 1995). Soon afterward, Mengo was organized as a professional ensemble under the auspices of the Okrug Department of Culture and directed by the professionally-trained ballet master Alexander Gil’ (1943-89). Originally from Ukraine, Gil’ arrived in Kamchatka soon after finishing his formal training and started working in the *okrug* House of Culture with notable culturites such as Vladimir Kosygin, Grigori Porotov, and others. Gil’ married a local native woman, Yekaterina Urkachan, who also danced in Mengo and played an important role in its success. Yekaterina Gil’ continues to play an important role in the Kamchatkan ethnic dance scene to this day. Several other native Kamchatkans, including Yosef Zhukov and Piotr Yaganov, were also key people in developing Mengo’s repertoire (Kravchenko 1995). However, Gil’ placed his own artistic stamp on Mengo, so that more than ten years after his death, his name is still synonymous with Mengo’s art. People who remember him well described how he visited native elders at fishing camps and reindeer herds, especially when he was first developing Mengo’s now famous repertoire. Such direct experience of native life and native dance is the only way to acquire knowledge of authentic native culture, as I elaborate below.

My first encounter with Mengo’s art was in November 1995, when they performed to a packed house in Palana. The occasion was the fifth anniversary of the local teacher’s college, and most people were there to see the dance ensembles that were performing. Mengo has over twenty performers, and they filled the stage with dazzling numbers. Energetic leaps, virtuosic drumming, and other native dance motifs were enthusiastically received by the ethnically mixed audience.

Mengo has been the main cultural representative of the Koryak Autonomous Okrug for a generation. By the mid-1980s, it had traveled to France and Japan and had made several tours across the Soviet Union (Kravchenko 1995). It was invited to Moscow for a series of performances in the parallel festivals that marked 300 Years of Kamchatkan Unity with Russia and Moscow's 850th anniversary. In the 1990s, Mengo traveled twice to Israel and Egypt to perform in world folk dance festivals, as well as all over Western Europe. Mengo is Soviet in many ways. As employees of the Okrug Department of Culture, Gil' and the performers were performing official, state-approved, culture, which was often taken as representations of the native cultures of northeast Asia. Dances like "Seagulls" or "Drummers" are readily identified as "Nymylan" or "Koryak," while dances like "Little Aleut Girl" are iconic of Kamchatkan Aleuts.

This standardization of an ethnic group by associating it with a particular dance move is consistent with Soviet understandings of ethnic groups. Long before Gil' arrived, dance groups operating within the Soviet House of Culture organization were adapting native dance to the stage based on stereotypes; they reinforced those stereotypes, which are now part of the ethnographic canon in Kamchatka. The population of Palana includes native people from all over the *okrug*, and they have been presenting "the way we dance/sing/make hats" to ethnographers and one another for over two generations. These examples of indigenous culture have been emptied of most power that might pose any resistance to Soviet ideology. Before native dances were performed on stages, they were primarily performed in ritual contexts imbued with sacred power. In these contexts, as people, animals, and spirits interacted in a sphere where everyone was a participant, there were no "spectators," save for the occasional ethnographer (see Jochelson 1908).³ Emptied of sacred power, native Kamchatkan dances on the stage were "safe" in the Soviet context, and they were aestheticized by Mengo and other professionals.

While Mengo's repertoire includes modern dance not identifiably ethnic, they are most famous for the native dances discussed here. These ethnic performances provide the core of Mengo's identity as an ethnic ensemble. The current director of Mengo, Mark Niumen, explained the Soviet logic behind such ethnic dance groups,

Earlier, under the Soviet Union, Mengo and the Chukotkan ensemble were unique as special ethnic [*natsional'nye*] ensembles, and we traveled everywhere, to twenty-six different countries, and that doesn't even count the Soviet Union. Mengo had three separate Union-wide tours. Koryaks were considered a dying people, and

the ethnic politics of the time were such that it was good that they had their own ethnic ensemble. Then the people in Moscow could point to it and say, “See, the Koryak people are not dying.”

Mengo represented the continuing vitality of the Koryak and, by analogy, justified the continued existence of the Koryak Autonomous Okrug through its artistic performances across the Soviet Union and around the world. Niumen expressed above the same rationale for developing a Koryak professional dance ensemble as I have found is used to justify government support for Koryak language education. Much of Mengo’s success, and certainly most of their travel abroad, is based first and foremost on their status as an ethnic Koryak ensemble.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Mengo continues to act as an official world-wide cultural ambassador of the Koryak Okrug and the Koryak people. Judging from videotapes of foreign performances and the many invitations they continue to receive to folk festivals, cultural exchanges, and even commercial tours abroad, foreigners typically react with delight to Mengo’s performances, just as my wife and I did that first evening in 1995 and continue to do every time we watch them perform. They perform at folk festivals and other venues in the capacity of *Koryak* cultural performers.

Back home in Palana, however, Mengo is sometimes criticized as being old and stale. A common complaint is that their program has not changed in fifteen years. When I asked an acquaintance I will call Vania if he were going to the special Mengo concert posthumously marking Gil’s 55th birthday, he made a face, as if I had invited him to a tedious lecture, and said:

They lost whatever “folk” content they had a long time ago, Alex, and haven’t even changed their routine in fifteen years. They just sit around and think up moves that will dazzle, and they never pay any attention to the old people and how they dance. Not like Valerii [Yetneut]; he has done some research, although you can argue with him, too. Masha [Vania’s wife] looks at some of the stuff he does and wonders where he got that. Mengo is a government affair, and that means, right away, that there is not going to be a lot of artistic creativity (*tvorchestvo*). They suffer from star syndrome – you know – elites. They are far from the people (*narod*).

Mengo’s fans (of which there are many, including the author) would dispute Vania’s evaluation of Mengo’s artistic creativity. More importantly, Mengo performers discount the importance of presenting authentic ethnic

content in their dances. When I talked to dancers in Mengo, they were unanimous in the opinion that their primary goal is giving the audience a great show. When people in Mengo point out that they are *the* professional dance ensemble in the *okrug*, they emphasize that their mission is first and last artistic. Mengo performers are professional dancers and, as such, do not feel themselves bound to a tradition.

Weyem – Palana’s Riverdance

Valerii Yetneut (1961-97) started as a dancer in Mengo, where he met his wife Liza, who had advanced training in classical choreography. He left Mengo, studied in a Kamchatkan art school for a while, and then worked with the professional ensemble of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug before setting up his own ensemble, Weyem, named for the Koryak word for river. Both Mengo and Weyem adapt native dances to the stage, incorporating classical European principles of choreography and staging with some Western musical accompaniment. Both perform at Kamchatkan arts festivals, holidays, and other civic events. If Mengo dancers were professional natives as Department of Culture employees, then Weyem dancers were semi-professionals working hard to make the big time on the world ethnic dance scene. As an outsider, I initially found performances of both to be comparable. Their differences, however, are what local people highlighted in conversations about Mengo and Weyem. Yetneut emphasized to me that each of his dance pieces was readily identified with a particular dance style of a culture: Chauwchu, Karaga Nymylan Koryaks, Penzhina Evens, Siberian Eskimo, Itel'men. In Palana circles, Weyem was seen as more creatively dynamic, at least until Yetneut's death in 1997. Most importantly, at least in the eyes of native people in Palana, Weyem was judged to be more culturally authentic. They said Weyem did a far better job of adapting indigenous Kamchatkan dance to the stage than Mengo.

One evening I watched a videotape of native ensembles performing in Moscow with some staff from the KAO Department of Culture. As we watched an Even ensemble from central Kamchatka, one acquaintance (herself Even) was highly critical. She pointed out all the Koryak movements, which seemed to amount to just about the whole dance. She pointed out their arm and shoulder placement, their jumping moves, and said that these were all Koryak dance moves. "They are Koryakized," she complained. "Their dances looked a lot like Mengo performances." When Weyem came on stage, my friend said:

They dance just like our grandmothers in Ayanka, don't they, Volodia? [addressing a young man sitting near her]. I love Weyem, because

every time I see their Even dance, I am reminded of our grandmothers. They have all the moves, get down really low. Those grandmothers can get down really low and dance.

Not only are Mengo and other groups considered distant from authentic native tradition, Weyem performances are lauded as being close to traditional forms. Weyem is more authentic; it is close to the “real” (*nastoiashchii*) thing found among elders living in small, demographically native villages or, even better, living with a reindeer herd.

As I first got to know Yetneut, I thought he had personal, intimate connections with indigenous traditions through his mother, Aunt Masha. She personified native culture through her detailed knowledge of myths, rituals, traditional practices that are no longer common, and personal experiences of bygone times, which Valerii’s wife Liza liked to highlight in discussions about Weyem’s dances and its more authentic presentation than Mengo’s. Yetneut himself played down his own “innate authenticity” through an essential identity as a Kamchatkan native, which he rarely discussed. Instead, he talked about his travels and experiences among native elders, whether in Chukotka or in Koryak reindeer camps. Valerii Yetneut and other native elites in Palana ignored Yetneut’s personal identity and emphasized his field research with a video camera. Later I realized that my ideas of Yetneut’s identity as a Koryak as a source for his authenticity were not shared by most local people. In conversations, at least, they ignored Yetneut’s identity and focused on his actions, particularly his field research.

I have never heard anyone criticize Gil’ or Niumen for being ethnic Ukrainians directing a native Kamchatkan dance ensemble. Indeed, many of Mengo’s performers through the years have not been native Kamchatkans, but ethnicity or race or blood quantum is irrelevant to Mengo’s performative authenticity. Even though one could criticize Mengo for not being authentically Koryak because many non-natives have worked there, no one raises that objection. When people evaluated a performance or an ensemble as more or less “native” or “authentic,” their criteria were consistently based on the degree to which the performance corresponded to their own understanding of what native dances look like.

Authenticity

Discourse in Kamchatka about native people and their lives, traditions, ways of living and knowing uses a framework of cultures slotted into categories of Culture. While Koryaks may be primitives, they do have “a” culture, and representations are judged as more or less authentic based upon an assessment of the degree of fit with an understanding of what

The Elders (*stariki*) know, do, and tell. Individuals gain a reputation for authentic knowledge (and thus representations) by spending time with The Elders, especially those on the periphery. Native culture is located far away from the administrative center in Palana. It is “out there” in the tundra and cannot be located in Palana, only represented there. The value of an ethnic dance is dependent upon its authenticity. This is *not* dependent upon the inherent identity of the performer, but rather upon his or her experiences and the knowledge gained. Where did that knowledge come from? From books or the tundra? Knowledge from books is suspect when it comes to native culture, but tundra experiences are unassailably authentic. The only criticisms of Yetneut’s choreography (alluded to in Vania’s statement above) focused on his Itel’men dance, which was reconstructed from eighteenth-century descriptions by Krasheninnikov (1994), and not based on fieldwork.

People who lauded Yetneut’s authentic representations frequently mentioned his fieldwork with elders living in the tundra or in small, native villages. He learned how they danced and used a video camera to document the forms for later reference. The fact that Yetneut’s Koryak identity is irrelevant is born out by similar descriptions of Alexander Gil’ by his admirers. A Palana folklorist who knew Gil’ well described him as a “master folklorist.” He would visit with Koryak elders and study their every move, even the way they walked, and especially the way they danced. Whether Mengo or Weyem is judged as the more authentic ensemble staging native Kamchatkan dances, the criterion is the same – fidelity to the forms as practiced by the elders.

I am not interested in discussing the invention of Koryak traditions or deconstructing their cultural reifications. Not only is such an analysis passé (does Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983 need to be repeated *ad nauseam*?), it is downright harmful to people already in a vulnerable socioeconomic position. I am delighted to learn that Mengo has appeared again in Norway or Finland, and that other Kamchatkan groups are presenting Koryak, Itel’men, etc. dances in Germany or Alaska, for example. My point in this essay is that Kamchatkan discourses on authenticity rest upon notions of culture and identity different from our Western commonsense notions. Our sense of authenticity is a quality referring to a real and true essence, one that is not imitation, fakery, or invented. Walter Benjamin (1968) marks a useful starting point in Western discussions of authenticity. His ideas on the relationship (and differences) between film and stage productions could be extended to the relationship between staged ethnic dances in Kamchatka and performances involving dancing in ritual contexts. However, this would privilege dancing in rituals as more real than the simulacra

created by Mengo, Weyem, and other ensembles. Traditions are contemporarily significant practices, which are represented as being linked to the past although they are continually reinvented in the present (Handler and Linnekin 1984). Authenticity typically implies some sort of core self, an individual which retains essential integrity across time and space, whether that individual is a person or a group (Handler 1986). This understanding of authenticity rests upon notions of culture as a reified, bounded, and internally homogeneous entity.⁴

Kamchatkan arguments over authentic ethnic dances are different. They focus on a named style which is learned. Culture as style is an identity claim, but it is not individuated. Koryak or Chauwchu or Even are deployed adjectives, not nouns. These terms refer to a way of dancing, or a way of speaking, a way of being in the world. This is an abstraction, a rarefaction of how specific people (namely, elders) act, but once the style is mastered, it remains authentic and real no matter what the context. In this way, a Koryak way of dancing learned from the elders remains a real Koryak dance when it is performed on the stage for an audience, whether in Palana or in Paris. Identifying cultural traditions with the habits and styles of elders also has ideas of change and time built into it. As current elders grow older, pass away, and are replaced by different people as elders, the specific forms of traditions, the details of dances, will change, too. Koryak culture and examples of real Koryak dances are not naturalized, bounded objects in this discourse.

Thus, it is not a contradiction to juxtapose Koryak dance moves with Western music in a single dance number. Audiences in Palana applauded this as a creative innovation. Even his critics conceded that Yetneut was talented, worked hard, and was creating something entertaining and interesting. However, when he showed a videotape of Weyem's performance to a Moscow producer who specialized in "native arts," he was criticized for "not being native enough." The Moscow producer found the use of synthesizer music "inauthentic." He wanted Yetneut to create a model of traditional native dance as something totally divorced from Western influences and modern technology. For the Center, "natives" exist in the past and on the periphery, and are only contaminated by European cultural elements.

Conclusion – culture: genuine and spurious

A genuine culture for Sapir was one that allowed a person to thrive, where nothing is spiritually meaningless, in which no important part of the general functioning brings with it a sense of frustration, of misdirected or unsympathetic effort. It is not a spiritual hybrid of contra-

dictory patches, of water-tight compartments of consciousness that avoid participation in a harmonious synthesis (1949b, 315).

In this sense the culture of the Moscow producer is spurious, devitalized by the “dry rot of social habit” (Sapir 1949b, 315). The culture in Koryakia that I have been describing here (the culture where authenticity rests on the fidelity of a performance and not the identity of the performer) is a genuine one. However, this culture is but a small part of the world and not at all dominant. Soviet culture (and its post-Soviet descendants) was spurious precisely because it required water-tight compartments of consciousness.⁵

Yetneut reified culture in a modern manner, but differently from Gil'. Palana audiences readily identified Weyem's “Pokamchaw” dance as representative of Karaga, the Chauwchu dance as representative of Koryak reindeer herders, and so on. I suspect that one could map a continuity of difference and similarity for dance forms similar to the way various ways of speaking Koryak and Chukchi languages merge, blend, and overlap. Boundaries between variants of Chukotko-Kamchatkan languages are not self-evident or objectively constituted. Just as ways of speaking are typically associated with communities or even families, dances and characteristic dance moves are connected with individuals, families, and social groups which do not follow standard cultural or ethnic categories. In any case, Yetneut felt it imperative to capture the wide array of different dances and dance styles performed by elder Kamchatkan native people.

Mengo's critics accuse Gil' of failing to capture this variety accurately. They claim that Mengo's dances are all “Koryakized” in such a way that they do resemble native dances, but native people don't really dance in such manner. Like the Soviet logic behind official Koryak language, striving for a homogenous speech community which does not exist, Mengo's dances are more homogenous in their styles. They are dominated by moves stereotypical of Chauwchu reindeer herders, but those dances referencing reindeer herders specifically (e.g., Dance with Lassos) are criticized by many as inauthentic. Yetneut said that he left Mengo in part because Mengo didn't dance like “real” Chauwchus. He was spurred to found Weyem in part because of a desire to stage an authentic representation of the way of dancing he remembered in his hometown, Manily. He didn't merely rely on his memory or imagination, however. He did careful research first. He was proud of a laudatory telephone call he received from a Manily Chauwchu grandfather after Weyem was broadcast on local television there. Yetneut was not a boastful person, but when he did boast of his success, it was about the validation of his authenticity by the elders directly from their mouths.

To continue the comparison with language, one can think of Mengo's dances as similar to the official Koryak found in 1980s-era textbooks, which are supposedly based on the language of reindeer-herding Koryaks, but in fact do not reflect the language of any speech community. Thus, as parents and grandparents reject the Koryak learned by little children in school as not "real" Koryak, many people reject the authenticity of Mengo's dances as not "real" Koryak (or Even or Nymylan) dances. Weyem's dances are a dance version of code switching, where phrases and clauses in Koryak are mixed with phrases and clauses in Russian and English in a manner that produces the greatest effect on those who can simultaneously appreciate the various styles and references. The "harmonious synthesis" of Sapir's genuine culture is achieved by the audience, which understands the playful creativity achieved through moving among multiple cultural styles at the same time. Such movement is unavoidable in contemporary Kamchatka. It is spurious to pretend that reindeer herders don't use rifles and snowmobiles, or that Koryak dancers do not listen to pre-recorded music.

The understanding of authenticity and culture as I have outlined it above makes cultural property alienable. As previously mentioned, Palana is not a place where authentic native culture happens according to the way people in Kamchatka (both native and non-native) think about urban spaces and indigenous Kamchatkan culture (i.e., as mutually exclusive). Palana is inherently a European cultural space, and native culture can only be represented there.⁶ These implicit understandings provide a context in which European immigrants can claim to represent not only indigenous culture but also represent "real" political interests of disenfranchised native people. Just as Gil' could arrive in Kamchatka, research indigenous dance by visiting elders, and then stage Koryak dances, non-native politicians can learn indigenous political interests by spending time with elders and represent those interests in their name. In both cases, the representations are not open to critique on the grounds of essentialized identities, but only with regard to the fidelity (or lack of it) of the representation. It is ironic that Kamchatkans' rather anthropological understanding of culture and performance (avoiding such essentializing pitfalls) opens symbols of native culture to control by immigrants, who may, or may not, have native interests at heart. Unlike the public performances of dance ensembles, many of the representations deployed in politics are difficult to scrutinize. One has to wonder if greater scrutiny of these politics will lead native people in Kamchatka to develop a different discourse of authenticity. Will they shift to the objectifying and essentializing discourse on culture which dominates "cultural property" and "heritage" activities (Handler 2003)? Doing

so may help Kamchatkans to profit better from their dances, hats, and other culture traits, for which other people are often willing to pay for handsomely.

Notes

- 1 Zhornitskaia (1983) provides a good survey of the ethnography of indigenous dances of northeast Asia, as well as a history of house of culture dance ensembles in the area (1983, 134–51). Kravchenko (1995) provides a celebratory history of Mengo and includes information on some of the other Kamchatkan ensembles. Photographs and video clips of Mengo and Weyem performances can be found at <http://www.koryaks.net/dance.html>. King (2000, 188–94) describes in detail a special concert in 1998 of Mengo's classic repertoire from the 1970s and 1980s. King (2000, 202–6) describes a videotaped performance of Weyem's repertoire as Yetneut choreographed and performed it.
- 2 This dual relativism and universalism in discourses about culture is related to Soviet theories of the ethnoses and the dictum "national (ethnic) in form, socialist in content" (cf. Rywkin 1990, 63, see also Bromley 1977, Kuoljok 1985). Slezkine (1994) and Grant (1995) discuss the role of native Siberian cultures in the development of this ideology and theory of culture, which has affected the way many indigenous Siberians think about their cultures and their ethnic identities.
- 3 This is not to say that rituals are no longer performed and dancing is no longer a part of them. Several villages, such as Lesnaya and Tymlat, for example, are famous for their rituals, where dancing continues into the wee hours of the morning. On the other hand, there are also villages like Paren', Manily, and Khairyuzovo, where traditional rituals are no longer carried out and dancing is wholly secular.
- 4 Kaneff and King (2004) develop these theoretical arguments further.
- 5 When I call Soviet and post-Soviet culture "spurious," I don't mean that it is fake (all cultures are real/genuine, see Handler 2003), but that it cultivates a certain deviousness. It champions diversity of cultural forms, but only if those forms are gutted of most of their meaning and power. I believe Sapir was decrying a similar trend he saw in American multiculturalism.
- 6 See King (2002) for discussion of native versus European spaces in Kamchatka and the cultural and political consequences of these ideas.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the editor, Thomas Miller, and Alona Yefimenko for comments on a previous draft. I have also been stimulated during the process of working with Deema Kaneff on a related article, "Owning Property" (Kaneff and King 2004). This essay represents an intermediate stage in my thinking, as I am writing a book on representations of indigenous culture and language in the Russian Far East, and its many imperfections are all my fault.

References cited

- Baudrillard, Jean 1983. *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Benjamin, Walter 1968. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, H. Arendt (ed.), 217–52. New York: Schocken Books.
- Bromley, Yulian V. 1977. *Soviet Ethnography: Main Trends*. Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences.
- Bruner, Edward M. 1993. Lincoln's New Salem as a Contested Site. *Museum Anthropology* 17: 14–25.
- 1994. Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism. *American Anthropologist* 96: 397–445.
- Eco, Umberto 1986. *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Gable, Eric and Richard Handler 1996. After Authenticity at an American Heritage Site. *American Anthropologist* 98: 568–78.
- Grant, Bruce 1995. *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Handler, Richard 1986. Authenticity. *Anthropology Today*. 2(1): 2–4.
- 1988. *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- 2003. Cultural Property and Culture Theory. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 3(3): 353–65.
- Handler, Richard and Eric Gable 1997. *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Handler, Richard and Jocelyn Linnekin 1984. Tradition, Genuine or Spurious. *Journal of American Folklore* 97: 273–90.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jochelson, Waldemar 1908. *The Koryak*. Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History. Vol. 10. New York: AMS Press.
- Kaneff, Deema and Alexander D. King 2004. Owning Culture. *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 44.
- King, Alexander D. 2000. Trying to be Koryak: Soviet Constructions of Indigeneity in Kamchatka, Russia. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Virginia.
- 2002. Reindeer Herders' Culturescapes in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug. In *People and the Land: Pathways to Reform in Post-Soviet Siberia*, E. Kasten (ed.), 63–80. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Krasheninnikov, Stepan Petrovich 1994. *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki*. Photoreprint of original 1755 edition. Sankt-Peterburg: Nauka.
- Kravchenko, Valerii 1995. *Mengo*. Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii: RIO KOT.
- Kuoljok, Kerstin Eidlitz 1985. *The Revolution in the North: Soviet Ethnography and Nationality Policy*. Stockholm: Uppsala.
- Rywkin, Michael 1990. Searching for Soviet Nationalities Policy. In *Soviet Nationality Policies: Ruling Ethnic Groups in the USSR*, H.R. Huttenbach (ed.), 62–72. London: Mansell.

- Sapir, Edward 1949a. The Psychological Reality of Phonemes. In *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality*, D.G. Mandelbaum (ed.), 46–60. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 1949b. Culture: Genuine and Spurious. In *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality*, D.G. Mandelbaum (ed.), 308–31. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Slezkine, Yuri 1994. *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Zhornitskaia, Mariia Ya. 1983. *Narodnoe khoreograficheskoe iskusstvo korenного naseleniia severa-vostoka Sibirii*. [Folk choreography of the indigenous populations of northeast Siberia]. Moscow: Nauka.
- 1994. Traditional Choreographic Art of Northeastern Siberia. In *Anthropology of the North Pacific Rim*, W.W. Fitzhugh and V. Chaussonnet (eds.), 205–16. Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian.