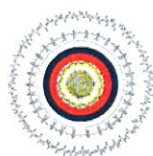


# The Conservation Value of Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic:

## A Case Study in Northern Russia

Report on the state of sacred sites and sanctuaries

CAFF Technical Report No. 11  
(2004)\*



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## PREFACE

The preparation of the report "The Conservation Value of Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: A Case Study in Northern Russia" was a joint venture between the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), the Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (IPS) and the Danish Environmental Protection Agency (DEPA), which funded the project.

With RAIPON in the lead of project implementation, CAFF and IPS provided technical assistance, especially regarding the project's international aspects. We view this project as an example of capacity building at its best and are grateful to the many experts and individuals that contributed to it, including Mikkail Todishev, Peter Billie Larsen, and Alona Yefimenko.

Working with indigenous communities, organisations and researchers in the Yamal and Koryak Autonomous Okrugs, we had a unique opportunity to address conservation and cultural heritage on a large scale. After a general introduction, the report provides a Russian context and describes the research findings. This is followed by an overview of international instruments for protection of cultural heritage, and a thematic analysis aimed at answering the questions posed by the project. The final chapter provides national and international recommendations for follow-up actions.

The report argues for the importance of a holistic approach to sacred sites management. If local authorities, indigenous organizations and researchers seriously wish to protect sacred sites, these sites cannot be treated independently from customary rights issues such as traditional livelihood activities and indigenous-driven education.

We hope this report will be read by Northern communities and used as an educational tool for current and future generations, inspiring further work to document and protect indigenous peoples' cultural heritage.

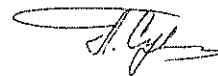
A next step is to hold an International Circumpolar Workshop on Sacred Sites and Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic. This Workshop will considerably widen and deepen the recommendations of the report and provide the opportunity to involve people from other regions of the Arctic.



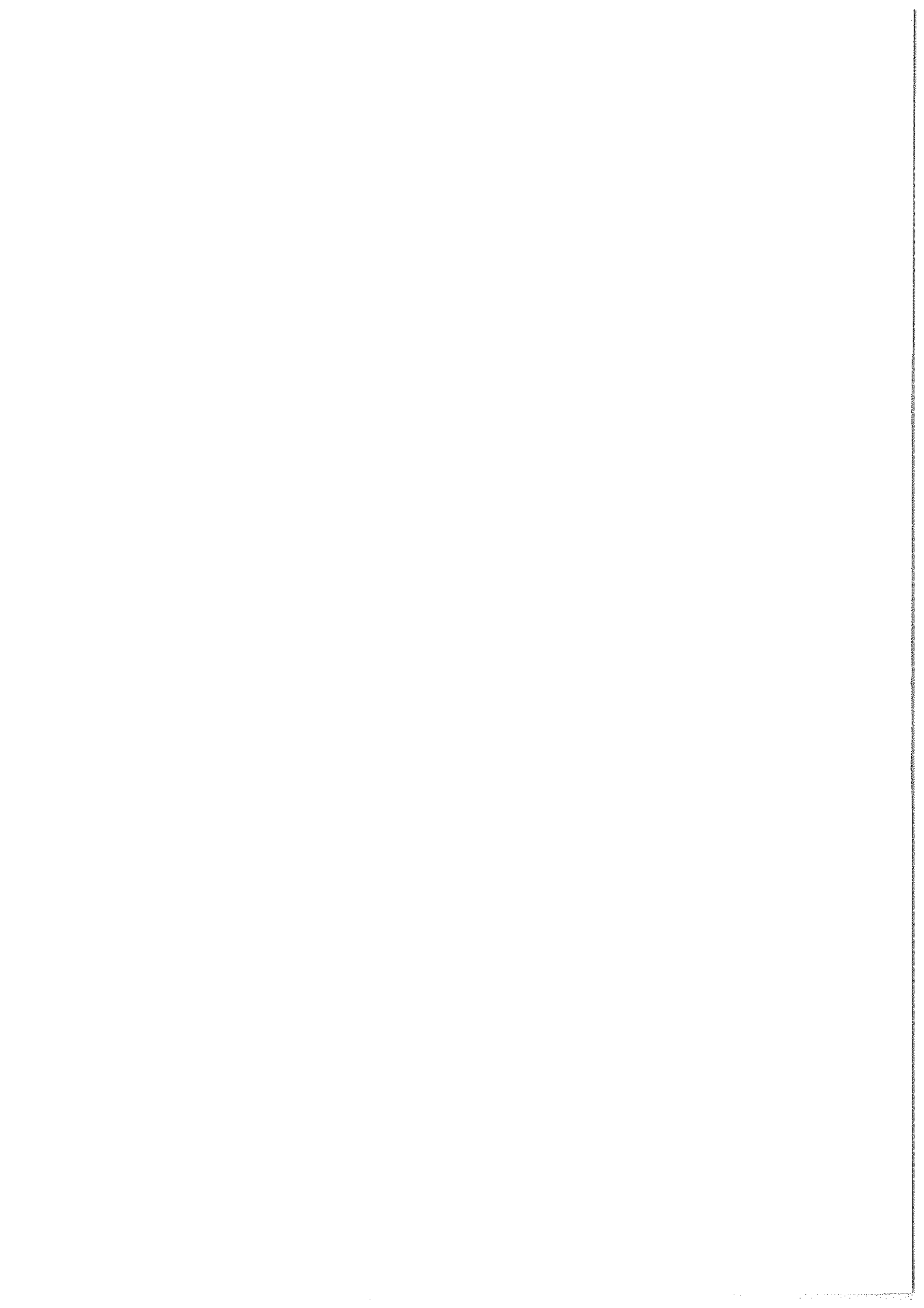
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President of RAIPON



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Chair of IPS



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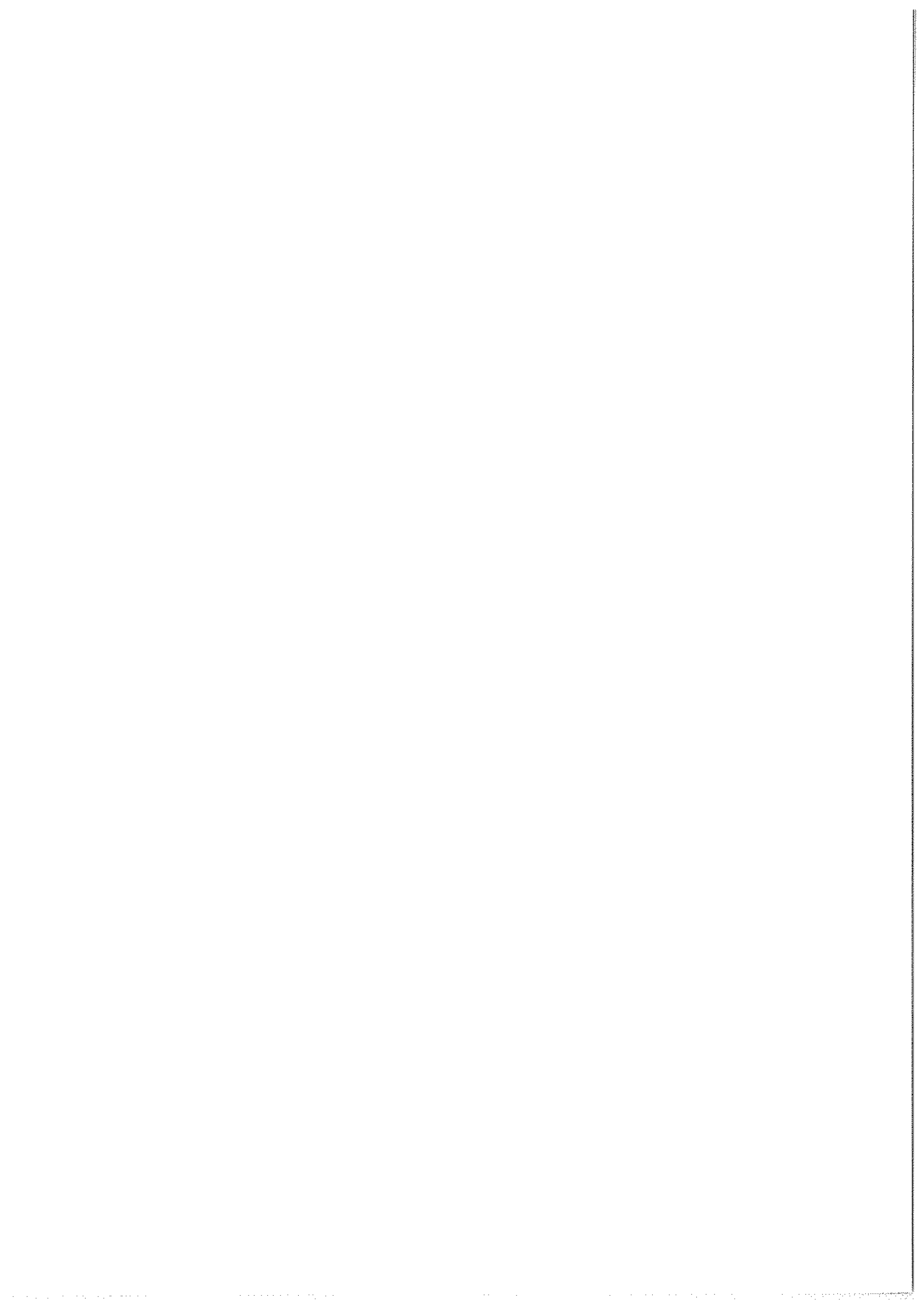
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## Chapter 1: Executive Summary

This report is the result of an innovative partnership between Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) and the Danish Environmental Protection Agency (DEPA) that supports groundbreaking documentation of Indigenous Peoples' sacred sites in the North, assesses their environmental significance and explores appropriate protection measures.

Field research took place in two regions: namely, the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YNAO) in the Northwest part of Siberia, and the Koryak Autonomous Okrug (KAO) in the Russian Far East. It involved an indigenous research team working in very close collaboration with local authorities, research institutions and indigenous communities.

The report documents how the Nenets and the Koryak, despite external pressures, have maintained customary use and management of sacred sites. Maps reveal an extensive cultural geography of sacred sites that cover large areas of the surveyed pilot regions. Although the research teams recognize that more work needs to be done, this first effort resulted in the documentation of 263 sacred sites in Yamal and 84 sites in Koryak. The report explores the cultural and social significance of sacred sites in the two regions. It confirms the ancestral relationship these peoples have developed with their lands. The sites also reflect the presence of spiritual and, more generally, cultural values attached to their surrounding environment.

An important finding is also the intimate link between customary livelihoods and sacred sites. Not only are most sacred sites located on or in the vicinity to migration routes, fishing sites or pastures; the active use, maintenance and protection of these sites depend on healthy livelihood systems. This customary relationship and the associated rights, the report argues, are fundamental components of strengthened conservation strategies, and fundamental for a sustainable future for the peoples and regions surveyed.

At the same time, sacred sites and customary use have not remained untouched by decades of cultural marginalization, socio-economic engineering and policy experimentation. Despite an impressive cultural resilience, the research reveals an increasing knowledge gap between generations. Site descriptions also document growing threats from weak protection efforts, the cumulative effects of industrial exploration and exploitation activities, as well as the continuous danger of pillage and theft. The increasingly difficult position of customary livelihoods contributes to this impact. Furthermore, customary rights of Indigenous Peoples to use, manage and protect their sacred sites as part of their heritage are rarely recognized or put into practice. Still, the project has initiated and revived policy level discussions in both regions to strengthen sacred sites protection.

Protection approaches explored in the report involve cultural heritage instruments, protected areas and indigenous rights instruments. Voices from the grassroots level and indigenous organizations are raising the critical importance of communities regaining control of their sacred sites through strengthened customary rights, cultural revitalization and the integration of sacred knowledge in indigenous education initiatives. Finally, the project has led to important policy dialogues and openings at regional levels.

After a brief introduction to the history and methodology of the project, the report describes the broader Russian context. In particular, it seeks to assess the broader federal legal context in terms of sacred sites protection.

The next section presents the research results from the two pilot regions. Each region and the Indigenous Peoples are briefly presented together with a selection of short sacred sites descriptions. This is followed by a regional overview, which discusses the cultural and environmental significance of the research results. Special attention is paid to the current protection status and the potential of existing regional policy instruments is critically assessed.

The following section provides an analysis of sacred sites and their protection in a global and Arctic context. International heritage, biodiversity and human rights instruments are assessed. Particular emphasis is put on examining experiences from other Arctic countries. Lessons are also learned in the Russian context.

In the thematic discussion section, the goal is to respond to the questions posed initially by the project. What do sacred sites mean to Indigenous Peoples? Have we learnt any lessons about the mapping and identification of sacred sites? Are sacred sites significant for biodiversity conservation and ecological stability? What is the current protection status of sacred sites? Which challenges and opportunities lie ahead? What is the potential of protected area instruments? How are sacred sites on other land use types best protected? The section seeks to provide answers based on the research results, and, further, presents preliminary guidelines for additional work in the area.

The report ends with a list of recommendations for further action. Important challenges ahead involve not just identifying appropriate instruments, but seeking to make them work in practice. For this purpose, strengthening Indigenous Peoples grassroots involvement in managing their heritage must take place, in parallel with policy recognition.



## Chapter 2: Introduction

### 2.1 Project Context, Rationale and Objectives

...apart from the ritual itself, there is another reason for visiting sacred sites, which is the opportunity to feel one is part of the present community, of this human space. The entire family or clan gathers together, and we can see what it is we share, how many of us are left, and what kind of changes have come about since the last time we met. Then you are forced to think about your life and about tomorrow. –Yurii Vella, Khanty writer.

Indigenous hunters and gatherers, fishers, and reindeer herders of the Arctic are keen observers of their ecosystems, which they depend on for their everyday and long-term cultural survival. Surviving in the most extreme natural surroundings, indigenous knowledge systems and practises have been important assets of the Arctic peoples for thousands of years. The preservation of sacred places is one of the keys to ensuring cultural survival. However, achieving this goal requires overcoming not only a variety of difficult socio-political problems, but also some very important theoretical and methodological ones.

The protection of sacred sites of indigenous peoples of the Arctic has been largely ignored so far, although the leaders of RAIPON and others have noted many times the threats facing these sites and the culture attached to them. At CAFF VI in Nuuk in 1997, the problems of sacred sites of indigenous peoples in the Russian Arctic were discussed, and it was suggested that their protection could be enhanced through closer links with CAFF's biodiversity conservation initiatives like the Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN). The necessity of developing a specific project to enhance the protection of indigenous peoples' sacred sites had been earlier expressed at Arctic Council meetings by Sergey Haruchi, RAIPON's President.

In 1998-1999, several consultations were held to launch an international project on indigenous peoples' sacred sites preservation and management in Russia, with RAIPON as the lead (or "in charge"). Several different project proposals were developed, screened and rejected either at the national or international level. At CAFF VII in Yellowknife, April 1999, there was the expression of "strong support for the RAIPON proposal on 'Sacred Sites and Sanctuaries: Protection of the Heritage of Indigenous Peoples of Arctic Russia'".

In May 2000, two model areas for the project work were selected by RAIPON. These were the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Region (Tazovsky district) and the Koryak Autonomous Region, northern Kamchatka (Olyutorsky district).

The Danish Environmental Protection Agency (DEPA) agreed to fund a fact-finding mission to the Koryak Region, to be conducted in the summer of 2000, building on an earlier fact finding mission to the Yamal-Nenets Region in December 1999. These missions together constituted an Initiation Phase for the project, the results of which were used in formulation of the final Project proposal and work plan.

The project was designed to support integrated conservation of Arctic biodiversity and the cultural heritage of northern indigenous peoples, through documenting the biological and cultural significance and status of indigenous peoples' sacred sites and sanctuaries.

There were many interesting aspects to this project. It was a fascinating opportunity to look at indigenous perspectives on landscape, biology, ecology, and conservation. With this in mind, the project aimed to explore a number of topics:

What makes a site special to an indigenous group?

What does "sacred site" mean to indigenous people? Are there different types of sacred sites for different purposes?

Are sacred sites distinct from their surroundings, or are they perceived as part of a broader landscape that has many spiritual dimensions?

What is the relationship of sacred sites to conservation, and how can sites best be protected?

What is the relationship of sacred sites to other cultural practices?

How is the concept of sacred sites linked to other spiritual practices of the group?

What is the ecological and biodiversity significance of sacred sites?

How important is this "natural" dimension in identifying sacred sites?

How does it correspond to Western notions of biodiversity conservation measures?

The project has sought to answer these questions. It has sought not only to document and map sacred sites, but also to insert the results in a broader context that respects the needs and concerns of the indigenous peoples themselves. For conservation, as we move towards greater involvement of people and local communities, it is essential that we develop a better understanding of the various ways people see and live with the environment. We hope this document will contribute to such an understanding.

## **2.2 Methodology Review and Experiences**

This section seeks to present the research process, the methodologies applied, as well as a number of lessons learned.

Initially, a project committee was established to oversee and guide the process. Indigenous participation and involvement in the whole research process was emphasized. The National Coordinator, Mikhail Todishev, a lawyer by profession, is himself an indigenous Shor and Vice-President of RAIPON. On the recommendation of the associations of the indigenous peoples of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug and Koryak Autonomous Okrug, the following two candidates were appointed as Regional Coordinators: Michael Nikolaevich Okotetto (Project Coordinator in Yamal), Albina Viktorovna Yailgina (Project Coordinator in Kamchatka).

Key advantages of the emphasis on having indigenous researchers involved are:

- Strengthened indigenous ownership of the research process
- The initiation of an action research partnership
- The building of trust-based relationship
- An indigenous knowledge driven process to strengthen documentation regarding sacred sites

These aspects were of crucial importance, acknowledging the complexity and, at times, inaccessibility of knowledge related to sacred sites.

Key research challenges of the first phase are:

- Building the capacity of the research team to ensure standardized approaches
- Identifying effective research methodologies
- Overcoming logistical challenges concerning travel, limited funds and large distances

In coordination with the Project Committee, a collection of appropriate methodologies was identified. In part, these methodologies were based on data collection methodologies used elsewhere in the Circumpolar Arctic to document traditional knowledge, customary use and ritual practices. Basic components included questionnaire methodologies, an interview manual, an interview matrix and a report manual. In-depth interviews with selected elders, reindeer herders, hunters and fishermen were proposed. Community meetings and focal group discussions were highlighted to receive broader feedback from the particular communities concerned. The initial project proposal considered in-depth studies in two or three regions. IPS and a consultant undertook feasibility study tours.

#### Standard Questionnaire

1. What is "sacred site"?
2. What do you know about sacred sites/sanctuaries of your area?
  - a) What kind of sacred sites you have (common, clan, family etc.)?
  - b) Are there sites that have split into good and bad spiritual energy?
  - c) Where are sacred sites generally situated? What are the explanations for selection of the sacred site location (beauty and biodiversity, landscape, presence of stones, trees of unusual form, internal feelings of the person, other reasons (what?), combination of several reasons)?
  - d) Purpose of the sacred site?
  - e) Are there sacred sites on the routes of reindeer transhumance? Which sacred sites?
  - f) Are there any prohibitions (limitations) on visiting the sacred site (if yes, who is not allowed to visit)?
  - g) Are there sacred sites for women? How do they differ from other sites (rituals, ceremonies etc.)? Purpose of such sacred sites.
3. Do you know any sacred sites?
4. What kind of sacred site is it (see 2a)?
5. How old are they?
6. Location of these sites? Are there zapovedniks and zakazniks around the sacred site? Indicate the co-ordinates of this place.
7. Why are they situated there?
8. Size of this site? How do you define the size of this site?
9. What are the biological characteristics of these sites (describe the landscape, fauna and flora)? Do the sacred sites biologically differ from the surrounding areas? If yes, how?
10. Why do these sacred sites became sacred? Is it because of the biological aspect or religious beliefs of the indigenous people?
11. The purpose of those sites?
12. How often do you visit them?
13. Who visit them?
14. Any connections to legends, fairy tales, myths? What kind?
15. Are there any rituals connected to visiting the sacred site? What kind?
16. What does the sacred site mean to you (subsistence, religious meaning)?
17. Does sacred site carry a biological importance with respect to the biodiversity conservation?
18. Is it necessary to protect the sacred sites? And why?
19. Which is better for the protection of the sacred site –knowledge or ignorance?
20. Do you know any measures taken by the administration of the okrug to protect such sites? Are they effective? 21. What kind of measures should be taken to protect sacred sites (local, regional, federal levels)?

*Note: the list of questions is not complete. It can be complemented with other questions.*

Finally, in April 2001, a capacity building and methodology testing workshop was held for the regional researchers in Moscow, attended by the Project Committee members (RAIPON and IPS) and a representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources. During the workshop, the goals and objectives of the project were set, methodologies were tailored to the specific research conditions, basic documents were compiled, and a questionnaire was approved. Document files, office equipment, and tape recorders were provided to the regional investigators, as well as resources for buying computers, modems, dictaphones, microphones, and tapes.

Community assistants were also identified for the research process: Leonid Alekseevich Lar, Galina Pavlovna Kharuchi and Roman Hasavovich Yando for Yamal; and Nedejda Semenovna Kuznetzova and Larisa Georgievna Khamidulina for Kamchatka. Larisa Georgievna Poutyanina, a resident of Hailino village, was involved as a volunteer assistant. Workshops were held to train regional assistants in basic interview skills, note-taking and general data collection. Each assistant received a file containing:

- An introduction to the project and project description;
- An inquiry form to be filled in by an interviewee;
- A tape recorder, microphones, tapes and batteries;
- General instructions on how to begin, conduct and finish an interview for the purpose of the project (interview manual);
- Calendars for time-planning and scheduling purposes
- A list of preliminarily identified sacred sites under the project; and
- A standard questionnaire.

On a weekly basis, regional researchers, together with the community assistants, prepared interview schedules.

### **2.2.1 Literature Review and Archival Research**

Existing literature about the ecology, culture and the legal situation was reviewed to present the broader social, biological and historical context of the research results. This also entailed retrieving data, old maps and ancient descriptions of sacred sites in local archives and museums. Accounts of foreign expeditions in the areas were also analyzed when possible. In reality, only limited material and documentation was available in the regions concerned. Still, the review uncovered isolated research and studies that were relevant. These included work on the sacred sites of indigenous peoples on Vaigach Island (Nenets Autonomous Okrug), on Yamal Peninsula (Yamalo-Nenets AO) and in the Khanti-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug. No research specifically focused on sacred sites in Kamchatka. Key information of relevance from this literature review is presented in the broader regional profile.

### **2.2.2 Questionnaires and Interviews**

The questionnaire contained questions of both private and public character. The quality of the responses differed widely, reflecting the complexity of the issue and the difficulty of obtaining this type of information through questionnaires.

The interviews represented an important complementary methodology to obtain more detailed information from the “specialists” in the communities. The community assistants, who were often

indigenous residents of the same settlements, prepared for these interviews by noting facts concerning the history of the person concerned, as well as requesting permission for interviews. Fieldwork was undertaken between June and September 2001. Due to limited budget and the expensive air-tickets, researchers made use of 'alternative' transportation opportunities such as flights delivering goods to remote settlements, and medical and mail delivery flights. Local authorities and transportation companies extended their support to make this possible.

### **2.2.3 Community Meetings and Focal Group Discussions**

The regional coordinator visited all field sites in order to undertake meetings with community leaders, elders and local authorities. RAIPON requested support from local authorities in order to facilitate the implementation of the project. This enabled detailed discussions about the goals and objectives of the project. At a later stage, a draft of the project report was discussed at the community level to verify collected data. Finally, copies of the final report will be submitted to each community covered by the project. At a different level, regional coordinators have also sought to stimulate debate and discussion through interviews and articles in television and newspapers.

### **2.2.4 Policy Dialogue**

Policy dialogue has been an integral part of the action research agenda. In both regions, meetings were undertaken with regional leaders and Duma representatives to assess the preliminary results, the broader policy environment, and the opportunities for strengthening that environment. Meetings with the regional associations of Indigenous Peoples were undertaken as part of this process as well as with other stakeholders including protected area managers, mining companies and scientists. This enabled, for example, the emergence of strong local agendas to enact legislation and protection measures.

### **2.2.5 Protecting Knowledge Holders**

The danger of disclosing secret knowledge and information related to the use, protection or location of sacred sites was highlighted early in the research process. The following safeguard measures were implemented:

- Feasibility studies were undertaken to determine the overall relevance of the studies.
- Communities and individuals interviewed were carefully informed about the research process, its goals and purpose.

The issue was raised again later by the international consultant. He particularly pointed to the danger of revealing specific site locations to the broader public, as this might go against the general will of the communities, risk abuse of sacred knowledge, and might facilitate further looting and externally-driven "ethno-tourism". Experiences from other countries, where Indigenous Peoples operated with tiered levels of information access, were suggested as a possible solution to this problem. It is possible to secure public recognition and commitment to the protection of sacred sites without revealing specific location. Rather, public offices and industrial actors are expected to consult with Indigenous Peoples concerned before initiating exploration or extraction activities.

### 2.2.6 Methodological Lessons Learned

The emphasis on indigenous participation and involvement in the research process was continuously hailed and underlined by local government officials and indigenous organizations as an innovative and positive approach. Simultaneously, the project partners recognized the accompanying challenges in terms of securing homogeneity in the approaches.

It is important for the future researchers to take into account the fact that the researcher's personality plays a significant role in filing and registering sacred sites. A male ethnographer may have easier access to sacred and religious sites being investigated. Apparently, the most important factor consists in the permission to enter on sacred sites, which allows for filing graphic documents and fixing religious objects available on the site. No doubt, it is not easy for an indigenous researcher (even a male one) brought up in traditional culture to visit a sacred site for the purpose of scientific investigation taking pictures and making sketches. Native residents, especially elderly people disapprove of such actions performed on sacred sites. According to the traditional standards, not every woman may be entitled to enter on sacred sites, other than female sites and those sites open to general use. In modern conditions, the rule extends over indigenous researchers as well. Besides restrictions in respect of access, there are some restrictions in respect of the questions a woman may ask a man, especially an elder. Naturally, the elders do not tell a woman the things she is not allowed to ask about. The opposition of "a stranger – a native" appears to be of great importance, and applies even to the indigenous researchers. Well-known indigenous researchers enjoy the interviewees' confidence. Local residents have always treated ethnographers with sympathy and indulgence since the latter are usually interested in "insignificant" and harmless matters. Sometimes it is believed that an "alien" (i.e. a stranger) researcher can be trusted with more information than an indigenous one, especially, when such an "alien" ethnographer asks intimate, delicate questions, which is absolutely impossible with an indigenous interviewer. Alien researchers may also receive deliberately wrong information to eliminate inquiries.

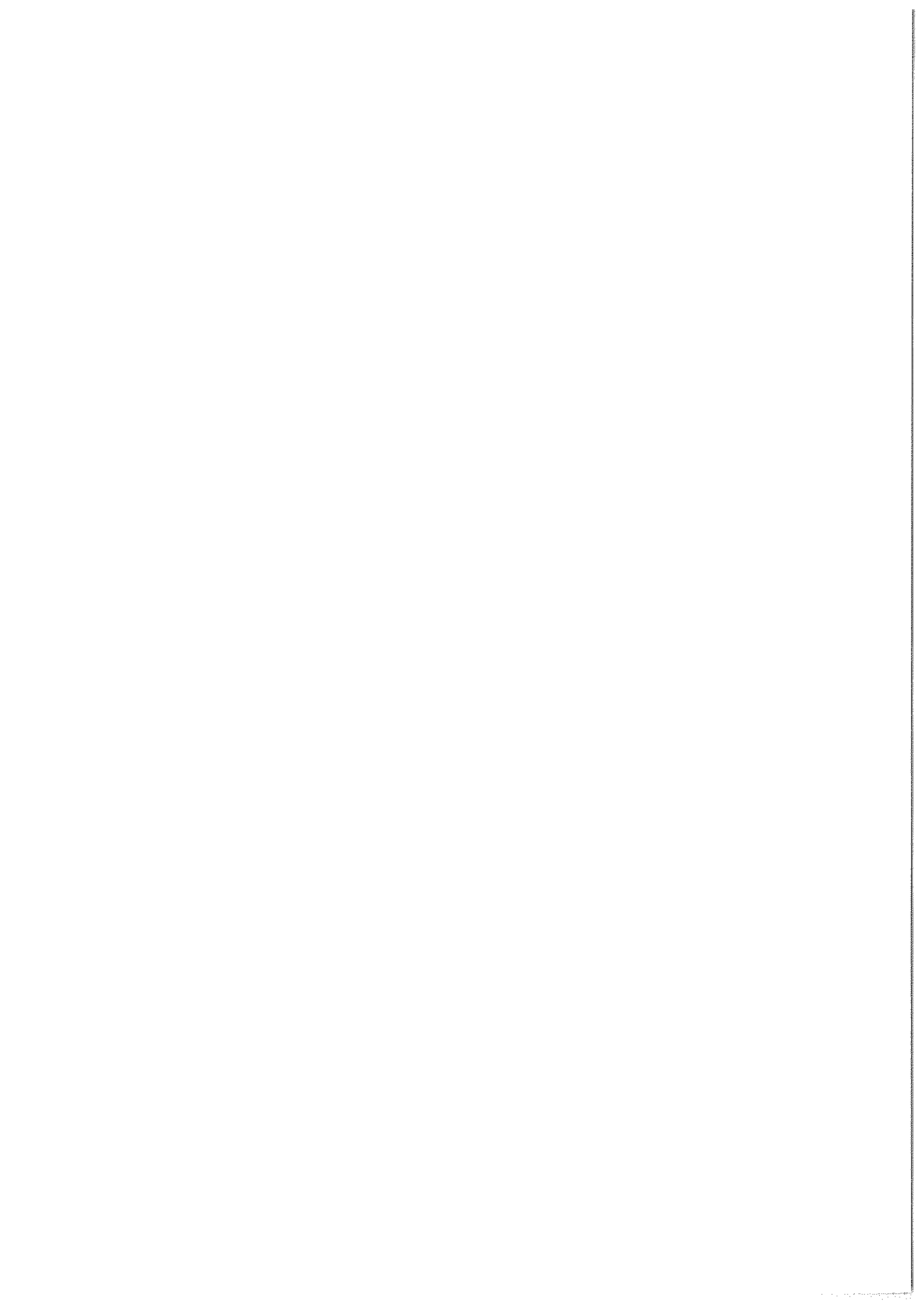
*Galina Kharuchi*

Collecting baseline data about sacred sites remains a methodological and logistical challenge. There are not \_ clear-cut definitions of sacred sites. Meanings and associated rituals differ from one area to another. Nevertheless, it is clear that identifying specific criteria and approaches to data collection, documentation and management remains of paramount importance.

The financial and logistical challenges of working with sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples in the North remain significant. Not all sites could be visited, and it was not always possible to receive up-to-date information concerning the sites that were documented. Knowledgeable people were not always present. These information gaps confirm the need to leave the sacred sites documentation process open, making sure to document information providers as well as the type of consultation undertaken.

Joint biodiversity research with Indigenous Peoples on their ancestral lands, although still in its infancy, is proving to be an effective research strategy to address long-term data related to biodiversity; for example: population data, habitat changes and threats. Still, assessing the biodiversity value of the sacred sites is considered a difficult task. On the one hand, such biodiversity assessments are acknowledged as complex, time craving and difficult among biodiversity specialists themselves. On the other hand, notions of biodiversity and ecological equilibrium are foreign concepts for Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, the research team had limited, if any, biodiversity related training; and far too little time for in-depth assessment of the situation of specific areas.

For follow-up in this area, it would seem relevant to develop specific sets of simple indicators adapted to the local ecological and biodiversity context. Although imperfect, such a set of key indicators would provide a list of issues to cover and discuss when discussing the specific site. These indicators would take into account the specific composition of the Arctic tundra, assessing such issues as thin soil layers, permafrost and the relatively low levels of species diversity. Considering the few number of threatened species, this would perhaps involve an emphasis on ecological processes and equilibrium.





## Chapter 3: Sacred Sites in a Russian Context

### 3.1 Overall Status of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Sites in Russia

The status of sacred sites of indigenous peoples of the Russian North is receiving increasing national and international attention due to the growing number of developments threatening their use and protection. Although they hint at the special relationship established between indigenous peoples and their environments, these portraits have rarely been in-depth. There have only been a few attempts to examine the broader context, map out the issues and identify long-term solutions.

Indigenous peoples have in a number of cases sought to reverse such processes, through raising their opinions and voices at local and national levels. In other cases, indigenous organizations, researchers and other institutions have sought to document their sacred sites and obtain new protection measures. The efforts on Vaigach Island in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Khanty-Mansi region are good examples.

In the late 1990s, the Marine Arctic Complex Expedition of the Russian Institute of Cultural and Natural Heritage conducted work on Vaigach Island in the Nenets AO. The research revealed the central role of the island in Nenets cosmology and resulted in the publication of a map of sacred sites and a guidebook to a number of monuments.<sup>1</sup> The map and catalog describe more than 150 natural objects and 230 cultural and historical monuments. The island, known as *Khekhe ngo* ("sacred island" or "island of the idols") to the Nenets, is one of their most revered places. The "grandfathers," the main spirits in the religious pantheon of the Nenets, and their sculptured images lived on this island. In 1827, Russian Orthodox missionaries burned these images, and over 400 wooden and 20 stone idols were destroyed.

Nenets believe that the idols' "spirit-children" were then scattered across the large territory of the Nenets migratory lands. Legends tell of their departure. Originally, they worshipped two rock idols on Vaigach: *Vesako* ("old man") and *Khadako* ("old woman.") They had four sons, who "went off and settled in different places on the tundra: *Niu khekhe* ("son-idol" or "son-spirit"), is a small cliff on Vaigach; *Minisei* is a protrusion on the Ural ridge; *Ya mal khekhe* is on the western side of the Ob bay, and *Kharv Pod*, is a larch copse in the Kanin tundra."<sup>2</sup> The two sons *Niu khekhe* and *Kharv Pod* are today located in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. The other two sons *Minisei* and *Ya mal khekhe* are located in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.

In 1983, Vaigach Island together with adjacent small islands and a three-kilometre marine area were designated the Vaigach State Game Reserve (*zakaznik*) of regional (*oblast*) significance (an area of 333,000 hectares). Even this status as a specially protected natural territory could not guarantee the sacred island protection from extractive industries. By the end of 2001, RAIPON received a request from the indigenous residents of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug to defend the most important sacred site of the Nenets from oil development on the shelf close to Vaigach Island. This points to the need for specific efforts to address the protection needs of indigenous peoples' and their sacred sites.

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<sup>1</sup> "Ostrov Vaigach (Khebidia ia—sviashchennyi ostov nenetskogo naroda." [Vaigach Island (*Khebidia ia*—The Sacred Island of the Nenets People)] *Prirodnoe i kul'turnoe nasledie. Ukazateli, poiasnitel'nyi tekst k karte, spravochnye svedeniia*. P.B. Boiarskii, A. A. Liutii, eds. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Ros. NII kul't. i prirod. Nasledii, 1999. p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> "Veniamin, Arkhimandrite (Smirnov). 1855. Samoedy mezenskie." *Sb. Vestnik RGO*. Part 14, p. 135..

Andrew Wiget and Olga Balalaeva,<sup>3</sup> through their work with the Eastern Khanty on sacred places and traditional land use mapping, have identified over 150 sacred sites in the region of the Middle Ob. They have lent support toward the proposed creation of a Yuganskii Khanty Biosphere Reserve, which would enlarge and link the Yuganski Federal Nature Preserve to surrounding territory of Khanty lands. In the course of their work, Wiget and Balalaeva have identified some of the problems inherent in the task of trying to classify sacred sites into general groups. General categories may not align very accurately with indigenous ways of understanding. While many sites are clearly associated with religious functions, others are more difficult to classify. The complexity and scale of some sacred sites may be an obstacle to defining their boundaries for the purposes of a state register. Some sites may include a range of natural elements together; one site may have several different toponyms, and very large areas such as an entire river basin might be identified as sacred. In this case, as Wiget and Balalaeva suggest, zoning might need to be incorporated into the protection regime to control access to varying degrees, as well as asking questions such as: “Does access require a special route to the site that should be incorporated into a protection plan? and Do the functions need to be protected from observers.”<sup>4</sup>

The research revealed a number of specific challenges appearing from the field data. These relate to effective protection regimes, implementation issues and the specific socio-cultural situation. There is a good potential to take lessons learned from different experiences across Russia, and exchange strategies for improving sacred sites protection. A particular challenge will involve the interpretation and application of federal legislation.

### **3.2 Legal Status of Indigenous Peoples’ Sacred Sites: Aspects of Russian Federal Law**

The Russian Federation lacks a specific policy approach to the sacred sites of indigenous peoples. Although these sites are defined in customary law, they have yet to be secured in Russian law. In the absence of a specific policy, the legal status of sacred sites can to some extent be regulated by various federal and regional laws. Sacred sites can be considered simultaneously as unique objects of the natural landscape, objects of historical and cultural significance, and active sites for religious rituals of indigenous peoples. Existing legislation related to environmental protection, the preservation of historical and cultural monuments, or the rights of indigenous peoples offer differing opportunities to regulate the legal status of sacred sites. The following provides a broad overview of the relevant national instruments.

#### **3.2.1 Environmental Protection Measures**

Environmental legislation in the Russian Federation came into being in the 1990s. At that time, the act, “On Environmental Protection”, and the federal acts, “On Specially Protected Nature Territories,” “On Ecological Impact Assessment,” “On Protection of the Atmosphere,” and “On Wildlife,” among others, were established. On January 10, 2002, a newly adopted federal act, “On Environmental Protection”, went into effect. The primary law of significance for sacred sites is the federal act of March 14, 1995, “On Specially Protected Nature

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Wiget and Olga Balalaeva, “The Khanty Sacred Trust Project: Emic and Etic Strategies for Creating Fieldwork-Based Typologies of Sacred Places.” Presented at UNESCO Sacred Sites Conference, Paris, September 1998. <http://www.nmsu.edu/~english/hc/paris.html>,

<sup>4</sup> Wiget and Balalaeva, p. 7.

Territories.”<sup>5</sup> According to this law, “specially protected nature territories” are land parcels, water surfaces, and the air space above them, where ecosystems and objects of unique environmental, scientific, cultural, aesthetic, recreational and health-giving value are located, which, by the authority of governmental organs have been completely or partially removed from agricultural or industrial use, and for which a regime of special protection has been established. The act distinguishes the following categories of territories:

- a) state nature *zapovedniks*, (strict nature reserves) including “biosphere” *zapovedniks*.
- b) national parks
- c) nature parks
- d) state nature *zakazniks* (special purpose reserves)
- e) natural monuments
- f) dendrological parks and botanical gardens
- g) places of recreational/health-giving value and resorts

Of these, the categories of national parks and nature parks can be used to establish legal protection for indigenous peoples’ sacred sites. According to Article 13 of this act, the primary goals of national parks include preservation of historical and cultural objects, as well as the restoration of damaged natural and historical-cultural objects and complexes. Management systems involve particular zoning measures, including the protection of historical-cultural complexes.

The legal procedure for national parks located in regions inhabited by indigenous populations allows for zones of traditional nature use. Traditional economic activities, cottage industries, and other related uses of natural resources are allowed within certain parts of national parks, with the permission of the park management. Where indigenous groups inhabit territories within state *zakazniki*, use of natural resources is permitted if these are such that they provide for preservation of their traditional environment and way of life. *Zapovedniki* forbid any type of human use except for scientific research.

Considering the important overlap between indigenous peoples’ customary territories and areas with high levels of biodiversity, protected areas remain a major protection tool for sacred sites management. There are some challenges as well. Many sacred sites do not fall within existing or planned protected areas. Others again may not even lie within the parameters of biodiversity priority areas. The linkage between indigenous peoples customary use and sacred sites, however, requires particular efforts in determining appropriate protected area categorization and zoning design in order to appropriately reconcile customary rights, sacred site protection needs and biodiversity conservation.

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<sup>5</sup> V. B. Stepanitskii, *Postateinii kommentarii k Federal'nomu zakonu Rossiiskoi Federatsii "Ob osobo okhraniaemykh prirodnykh territoriakh."* [Commentary on the Federal Act of the Russian Federation “On Specially Protected Nature Territories.”] Moscow: Center for Wildlife Protection, 2001, p. 247.

### 3.2.2 Cultural Heritage Instruments

Article 22 of the federal act, “The Basis for Cultural Legislation of the Russian Federation,” enacted October 9, 1992, guarantees protection necessary for preservation and restoration of national cultural particularities of minority ethnic groups of the Russian Federation by 1) taking exceptional measures for protection and stimulation; and 2) by stipulating federal public programs supporting socio-economic, ecological, national and cultural development. Article 35 states that the government bears responsibility for the detection, registration, study, restoration and popularization of historical and cultural monuments. Federal and local governments shall facilitate the protection and management of such monuments held as either private or communal property, and shall register the most important of these monuments.

Governmental protection of cultural objects is further elaborated in the recently enacted law, “On Objects of Cultural Heritage (Historical and Cultural Monuments) of the Peoples of the Russian Federation,” (May 24, 2002). As the law states, it is concerned with the:

“constitutional right of every person of access to cultural valuables, to care for historical and cultural monuments, and also the realization of the rights of peoples and other ethnic groups in the Russian Federation to the preservation and development of their cultural-national originality, the protection, restoration and conservation of historical-cultural environments, and the protection and conservation of sources of information concerning the origins and developments of culture.”

Objects of cultural heritage are defined as:

“immovable items and the works of art, sculpture, and applied art associated with these, objects of science, technology and other items of material culture, having come about as a result of a historical event, possessing value from the perspective of history, archeology, architecture, urban planning, art, science and technology, aesthetics, ethnology or anthropology, social culture, and being a witness of an epoch of civilization and an original source of information about the origin and development of culture.”

These objects are further described under three types: monuments, ensembles and places of note. Indigenous peoples’ sacred sites fit many of the criteria described in these three groups. “Places of note,” perhaps covers the most inclusive definition in terms of sacred sites:

“works, created by humans, or the joint creation of humans and nature, including places where folk arts and crafts are practiced; centers of historical settlements or fragments of town planning and construction; memorial sites, cultural and natural landscapes, connected with the history of the formation of a people and other ethnic groups on the territory of the Russian federation, with historical events (including military), or with the life of an historically exceptional person; cultural layers, remains of ancient cities, towns, villages, camps; places for observation of religious rituals.”

Objects of cultural heritage are categorized according to their value, deemed to be of federal, regional, or local importance. Further, the law explains questions of governmental control, management, and funding for protection of these monuments. Central to their protection is the “comprehensive state register of cultural heritage objects”, which is a database containing information about the objects and their territories and protection zones. To be included in the register, application must be made to federal, regional, or local authorities (according to the object’s significance). The application must include an official application form, an official evaluation of its historical-cultural value, documents pertaining to the objects name, the date it was created or appeared, dates of subsequent changes to it, historical events connected with it, where it is located, describing to which category it belongs, a description of its particularities which merit inclusion in the register and what kind of protection is necessary, a description of the object’s boundaries, a photographic image of it, information as to the owner and user of

the object, as well as the owner and user of the land parcel where it is located, and if it is an archeological object, the legal regulations pertaining to that land.

This law does not mention sacred sites or indigenous peoples directly; however, it seems that sacred sites would qualify for protection as objects of cultural heritage based on the definitions cited above. Because cultural monuments are to be evaluated as to whether their significance is of federal, regional, or local importance, ultimately only those monuments connected with federal history and culture will be included on the federal register. Otherwise, it is up to regional and local authorities to determine their own procedures for inclusion on their registers.

Like the federal law concerning territories of traditional nature use, implementation of this law may prove to be difficult at the local level.<sup>6</sup> Local legislative bodies seem to desire more explicit guidelines. Where federal laws are vague, regional and local governments may be reluctant to apply these at all, or drag out the process of adopting their corresponding measures as the federal law requires. While the law does require cultural evaluations as part of the application process, it does not stipulate what these evaluations entail.

In some cases, sacred sites will prove difficult to categorize for the purposes of a public register because of their scale or complexity. There is a need for to emphasize indigenous peoples' own definitions when defining the components of such cultural evaluations. Moreover, sacred sites are part of a living tradition, and legal protection of them as monuments must involve indigenous peoples in defining the relevant protection regime. This would, for example, involve avoiding conventional fencing-off protection mechanisms and securing indigenous peoples continued access to, use and possible modification of sacred sites.

### 3.2.3 Indigenous Peoples' Rights

According to Article 14 of the federal act "National and Cultural Autonomy," (No.74-F3) adopted June 17, 1996, federal executive authorities and executive authorities of subjects of the Russian Federation are to provide for the preservation of historical and cultural monuments of value to citizens of the Russian Federation identifying themselves as belonging to a certain ethnic group. Such monuments are part of the cultural heritage of the Russian Federation.<sup>7</sup>

The federal act, "Principles for Governmental Regulation of the Social-Economic Development of the North of the Russian Federation", defines a traditional way of life for indigenous minority peoples of the North as:

"a means of subsistence, based on their ancestors' historical example in the fields of nature use, social organization, survival of their original culture, customs, and religious beliefs."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Olga Murashko's article for a discussion of problems arising in Kamchatka Oblast: Olga Murashko, "Zakon o territoriiakh traditsionnogo prirodopol'zovaniia—vremia rabotat'." [The Law on Territories of Traditional Nature Use—Time to Work.]

[http://www.raipon.org/russian\\_site/events/kamchatka/meeting\\_08\\_2001\\_with\\_governor.html](http://www.raipon.org/russian_site/events/kamchatka/meeting_08_2001_with_governor.html)

<sup>7</sup> *Status malochislennykh narodov Rossii. Pravovyye akty. Kniga vtoraiia.* [The Status of Minority Peoples of Russia: Legal Acts, Volume 2] V. A. Kriazhkov, ed. Moscow: Iurinformtsentr, 1999. p. 107.

<sup>8</sup> *Status malochislennykh narodov Rossii. Pravovyye akty. Kniga vtoraiia.* [The Status of Minority Peoples of Russia: Legal Acts, Volume 2] V. A. Kriazhkov, ed. Moscow: Iurinformtsentr, 1999. p. 110.

The guiding principle of this act is the regulation of industrial development in the Russian North with the goals of careful use of its natural resources and preservation of the environment and traditional bases for subsistence activities and ways of life of the indigenous peoples of the Russian North.

Governmental regulation of the development of the economy and cultures of indigenous peoples of the Russian North is aimed at supporting traditional ways of life, nature use, and forms of social organization. This includes designation of budgetary funds for the support and development of traditional industries and nature use, as well defining procedures for establishing territories for traditional nature use for the minority groups of the North.

According to Article 12 of the same law, governmental regulation in the field of environmental protection and nature use in the Russian North is aimed at satisfying the needs of the population in terms of natural resources, sustaining intact ecological systems, and provision of ecological security, while also considering the vulnerable situation of indigenous peoples there.

On April 30, 1999, federal act No. 82-F3, “Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the Russian Federation”, was adopted. It recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to their original socio-economic and cultural development, protection of their traditional habitat, their traditional ways of life, and economic activities.<sup>9</sup> It describes, for example, the regulation of the legal regime for ownership, use and distribution of lands for traditional nature use, and lands of historical-cultural designation. In areas of indigenous peoples’ traditional residence and economic activities, indigenous persons have the right to freely own and use lands (of various categories) necessary to carry out their traditional activities and industries. The law also authorizes the adoption of laws and other normative legal acts concerning protection of the original habitats, traditional ways of life, activities, and industries of indigenous peoples, as well as describing procedures for organizations and activities of indigenous peoples’ communities (*obshchina*),<sup>10</sup> with consideration of the historical, national and other traditions of these peoples. This, in other words, allows organs of local self-governments to adopt laws on sacred site management in accordance with federal legislation.

Article 10 of the same law proclaims the right of indigenous individuals and groups, in the interests of preservation and development of their original culture, to observe their traditions and perform religious rituals, and to maintain and protect their religious places as long as they do not contradict federal laws or those of subjects of the Russian Federation.

The federal law, “On Territories of Traditional Nature Use of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation,” (No. 49-F3) which took effect

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<sup>9</sup> Federal’nyi zakon ot 30 apreliia 1999 goda No. 82-F3 “O garantiakh prav korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossijskoi Federatsii.” *Sobranie zakonodatel’sva Rossijskii Federatsii*. [Collected Legislation of the Russian Federation.] 1999, no. 18, p. 2208.

<sup>10</sup> See Article 1, paragraph three of the Federal Law No. 104-F3, “General Principles of Organization of Communities (*Obshchiny*) of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation, adopted July 6, 2000. The law defines *obshchiny* as “forms of self-organization of persons, belonging to a minority group and united by familial (family or clan) and/or adjacent territorial identifications, created in the interests of protecting their original habitat, preserving and developing their traditional ways of life, economic activities, industries and culture.” Duma Round Table, 2001.

May 7, 2001, is of particular relevance for the protection of indigenous peoples' sacred sites.<sup>11</sup> This law is unique in that it gives territories of traditional nature use of indigenous minority peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East the status of a "specially protected nature territory," created for the purpose of traditional nature use and traditional ways of life pursued by indigenous minority peoples.

"Traditional nature use of the indigenous minority peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation," is understood here to mean historically based methods of utilizing flora, fauna and other natural resources, providing a sustainable system of nature management. This law defines customs of indigenous peoples as "traditionally based and widely employed rules of conduct for traditional nature use and traditional ways of life." Customary law is recognized as long as it does not contradict existing legislation. The primary goals of this law include:

- The protection of the habitat and traditional lifestyles of minority peoples;
- The preservation and development of original indigenous culture;
- The conservation of biodiversity within the territories of traditional nature use.

Applications to create territories for traditional nature use can be submitted by an indigenous person of the North, Siberia and the Far East, by a community (*obshchina*) or by their authorized representatives. Standards for territories of traditional nature use are regarded as those conditions necessary to support and preserve the sustainable biodiversity of flora and fauna; providing opportunities for indigenous peoples to undertake various forms of nature use; and preserving the integrity of objects of historical-cultural heritage.

These territories can be divided into the following sectors: parcels of land and water surfaces, utilized in traditional nature use and traditional ways of life, including: reindeer pastures, hunting and other kinds of grounds, off-shore areas used for fishing or hunting of sea mammals, areas for gathering of wild plants, objects of historical and cultural heritage, including religious structures, sites of ancient settlements, ancestors' burial sites, and other objects possessing cultural, historical, or religious value. Environmental protection within the boundaries of these territories for traditional nature use is provided for by federal executive authorities, executive authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation, institutions of local self-government authorities, as well as indigenous persons and indigenous communities (*obshchiny*).

Objects of historical and cultural heritage located within the boundaries of territories for traditional nature use (ancient settlements, other historical and cultural monuments, religious structures, ancestors' burial sites, and other objects of historical and cultural value) can be used only as they are intended. Scholarly research or other forms of investigation may be conducted in relation to objects of historical and cultural heritage within the boundaries of territories for traditional nature use if the activity does not violate the legal regime of that territory.

The major distinctive feature of territories for traditional nature use as a legal category is that these are defined very specifically as protected areas, where ecological questions are considered in conjunction with religious, cultural and other needs of indigenous peoples of the

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<sup>11</sup>Federal'nyi zakon ot 7 maia 2001 goda, No 49-F3, "O territoriiakh traditsionnogo prirodopol'zovaniia korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka Rossijskoi Federatsii." *Sobranie zakonodatel'stva Rossijskoi Federatsii*. [Collected Legislation of the Russian Federation.] 1999, no. 18, p. 1972.

North.<sup>12</sup> Like national and natural parks, parts of these territories can be intended for different purposes, which can include, in particular, territories of objects of historical and cultural heritage. These territories have as their main goals the preservation of the original habitats and traditional ways of life of indigenous minority peoples, as well as preservation of biodiversity. Implementation of the law is currently hindered by the absence of standardized regulations on the territories of traditional nature use, which still need to be approved by the Russian federal government.

Federal and regional legislation in the sphere of indigenous peoples' rights creates the preconditions necessary for preservation and defense of a traditional way of life for indigenous peoples, their traditional economic activities such as reindeer hunting, fishing and hunting, and also protection of the environment. However, there is no experience yet in applying these toward protection of indigenous peoples' sacred sites. At the same time, these laws may enable the protection of sacred sites by supporting customary livelihood and land use activities such as reindeer herding, fishing and hunting. Continuing these traditional activities is fundamental for Indigenous Peoples to maintain their customary ways of life and heritage.

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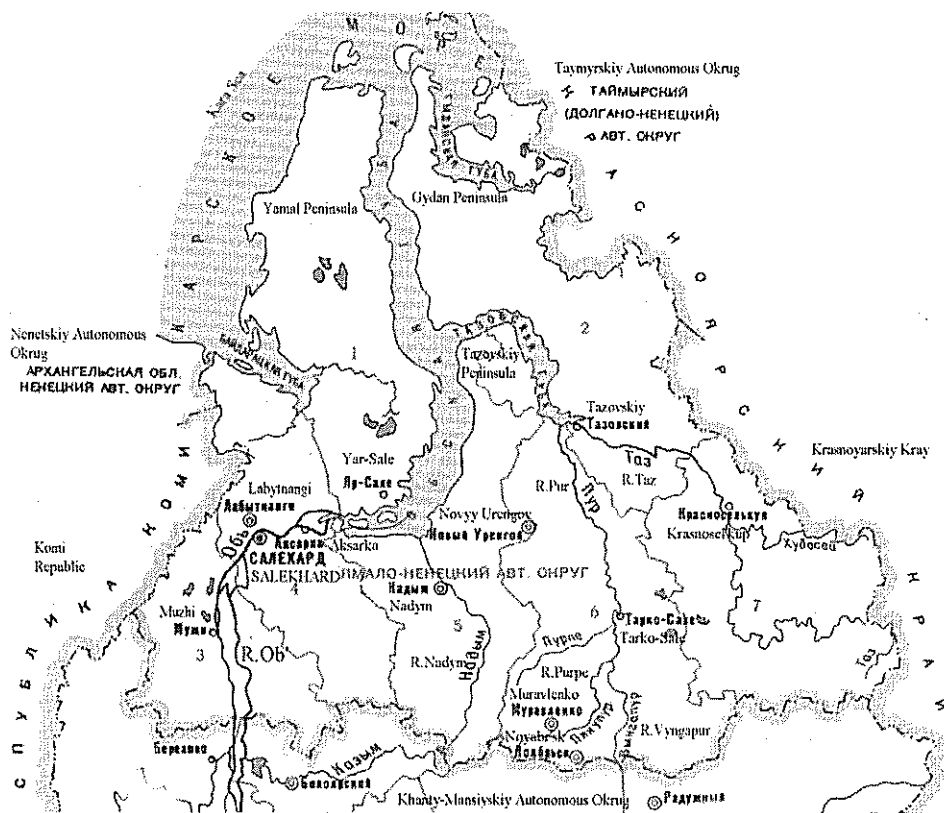
<sup>12</sup> N. P. Pavlov. *Kommentarii k Federal'nomy zakony "O territoriiakh traditsionnogo preiodopol'sovaniia korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa, Sibiri ai Dal'nego vostoka Rossijskoj Federatsii."* [Commentary on the Federal law "Territories of traditional nature use of indigenous minority peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation."] O. A. Murashko, ed. Moscow, 2001. p. 74.



## Chapter 4: Sacred Sites in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug

### 4.1 Regional Introduction

Sacred sites of the Yamal –Nenets AO have increasingly reached national, as well as international attention, as they have come under growing external pressures from research and resource exploitation efforts. In the Yamalo-Nenetsky Autonomous Okrug, where the vast majority of the population (82,6%) are urban dwellers, the project worked with the Nenets Indigenous Peoples of the Tazovsky district. Being the largest district in the Okrug, it covers 174,000 square kilometres inhabited by only 16,300 people. Other population groups include non-indigenous Russian-speakers, other Northern peoples and temporary residents involved in extractive industries.



The latter come due to the enormous resource potential. Over 10 oil and gas fields are already known in the district with gas extraction increasingly considerably. In contrast, indigenous Nenets are mainly engaged in customary livelihood activities such as fishing and reindeer pastoralism. The majority of Nenets are reindeer pastoralists, moving from northern tundra pastures in the summer to the more protected sub-Arctic taiga during the winter. Nenets are considered to have introduced reindeer pastoralism to the region. It has allowed them to develop a way of life highly adapted to the harsh Arctic environment. There are over 120,000 reindeer in the district resulting in one of the nationally most important production centres for meat, antlers and hides. Pastoral management strategies involve a combination of collective and individual herds, leading to complex processes of dividing pastures, migration routes and solving natural

resource management conflicts. Fishing is another important livelihood activity. The Nenets speak a language which belongs to the Samoyedic branch of the Ural-Altaic language family.

## **4.2 Sacred Sites among the Nenets**

Sacred sites play important roles for the Nenets, although they remain poorly understood by administrators, scientists and developers. Until now, little has been understood about the actual numbers, geographical dispersal, their protection status and emerging threats. Found all over the Okrug, they reflect the intimate connections these indigenous pastoralists have built over centuries of contact. Nenets continue to follow in their ancestors' footsteps and practice customary religious practices. They undertake sacrifices and offerings at sacred sites and burial grounds located along key reindeer migration routes.

The sites and associated uses reflect broader sacred landscapes and play a fundamental role as part of the indigenous way of life of the Nenets. An impressive amount of myths and legends testify to the profound cultural significance attached to vast landscapes. Both researchers and indigenous peoples continue to emphasize how Nenets sacred sites are "alive" and in use. They are not ancient temples, but contemporary sacred complexes composed of particular topographical features, cultural objects and relationships with the sites. Customary law often prohibits outsiders from visiting sacred sites. While the indigenous researchers were able to obtain much information, there were some sites that could not be visited. Instead discussions focused on places, which were acknowledged as open to outside researchers, such as abandoned sites.

Two hundred and sixty-three sacred sites were presented to the researchers in Tazovsky district (a complete list is included in the Annex to the final report). Due to space constraints, a synthesis of the research results is presented through ten examples of sacred sites. These specific sites have been chosen to reflect the diversity in the area, as well as to reflect specific linkages with biodiversity conservation. The case studies are followed by a regional profile, which summarizes the main issues and challenges related to sacred sites, their management and protection in Yamal. The cultural and historical significance of sacred sites is explained in further detail in the regional overview.

## **4.3 Selected Sacred Sites from Tazovsky district**

### **4.3.1. Khekh Sede Sacred Site**

The *Khekh Sede* site (listed as no. 5) signifies "God's Hill". It is located in the water meadows of the Guida river approximately 60 km from Guida village. The sacred hill is the only topographical feature, which distinguishes itself considerably from the surrounding area. This runs through several of the sacred sites descriptions. Nenets sacred sites often have distinct natural features which set them apart from the surrounding environment.

There are reindeer heads in three places on the hill, reflecting the link to reindeer herding both cosmologically as well as practically. In terms of biodiversity significance, the hill is an important nesting area for geese. In contrast with the general "use" orientation of sacred sites in Siberian Russia, customary management in this area prohibits hunting, disturbance and the gathering of eggs on sacred sites. Although this may mean little in the large biodiversity picture, it does confirm the relevance of sacred sites as an important cultural factor imbuing local landscapes and biodiversity with meaning and value.

### 4.3.2 Penzer-Seda Sacred Site

The *Penzer Seda* (listed as no. 8) or “Drum Hill” lies at Halyasanarta Lake. It was discovered on the shore near a boarding school over forty years ago by a shaman, Lapsuy Varak. The name of the site refers to his drum, which was later inherited by his son who also became a shaman. As in other cases, shamans are here the ones to discover sacred sites as entrance points to the spiritual realm. In other cases, sacred sites are identified by herders or fishermen during everyday activities.

The site is situated on a low hill and visited by all reindeer herders who pass through the area. Even the bus which drives children to the neighbouring boarding school often stops with the consent of passengers to visit the site. People drink tea, make a fire, and attach ribbons with pieces of metal to the stick, many of which are found at the site. Children and grown-ups go clockwise around the stick three times to show that everyone is alive and in good health.

The site is frequently used and visited by the Lapsuy Vanuyto and Yando clans. Such customary ownership and uses are key to determining effective community-based protection strategies. While this site is used by reindeer herders, others sites reflect the diverse types of activities indigenous peoples engage in.

### 4.3.3 Khibidya-Ngev-To Sacred Site

*Khibidya-Ngev-To* (listed as no. 27) is a lake named the “Sacred Lake of Heads”. Situated in the basin of the Yarto-Maha River, it is about three kilometres long and two kilometres wide. In contrast with sites discovered by shamans, this site is connected to a tragic event. Reindeer herders explain how long ago, some people and reindeer were crossing the lake in the wintertime and fell through the ice and drowned. A surviving woman went to a shaman who stated that the lake was either sacred or cursed.

Since then, it has been prohibited to cross the lake in sledges or to migrate across when there are a lot of unfrozen places where the ice is very thin (due to unpredictable warm currents). It is recommended not to make holes and fish. Women are advised not to pass the lake on the northern side.

### 4.3.4 Narno-Sede Sacred Site

*Narno Sede* (no. 38 in the general list) or “Narno Hill” is situated near the Ne-Yakha River. A sacred sledge and a steel sword with a brass hilt on the site serve as physical markers. Two hundred meters westwards lies a turned over sacred sledge. Three kilometres to the east, one finds the Simzi Sacred Site, a sacred pole situated at Pe-To Lake (Stone Lake) (see #62). The sacred site lies 700 metres from the lake and is identifiable by a pile of poles and reindeer heads with horns. At the same distance to the southwest Sacred Site *Yarsan-No* is situated on *Yarsan – To* Lake (see #63).

Not only do these sites reflect a complex sacred architecture, they also reflect the high degree of linkages between various sites. Unlike churches of sedentary farmers, the sacred geography of pastoralists often involves broader landscapes with inter-linked sites along certain migration routes. The sacred architecture is often understood, explained and retold through legends and creation stories such as the following:

#### *How Narno-Sede came to be*

A long time ago, the people of the *Tesido Clan* were very poor. They had only 100 reindeer in their herd. One day a strong wind rose and a snowstorm began that lasted for seven days and seven nights. Wolves arrived killing five deer-cows, three stags and two prickets. On the seventh day the storm quieted down. People looked at the reindeer in horror. There was a shaman among the people who said that a woman had followed a sacred sledge. This was considered a great violation of ancestral laws. The shaman ordered the slaughtering of seven fat reindeer. He said that only one man would be allowed to ride the sacred sledge ever after. Another seven days should pass and the sledge should be brought to a sacred site. The people did everything the shaman told them to do. They killed seven young deer and in seven years they brought the sacred sledge to this sacred site. That is how the sacred hill, called *Narno-Sede*, came to be. The people lived happily ever after and their herd started breeding. Each year people make a sacrifice for and worship the sacred hill with sledges.

#### **4.3.5 Tukcha Khekhe-Ya Sacred Site**

*Tukcha Khekhe-Ya* (site no. 45), “a Sleeve”, is also called *Chukchi Khekhe-Ya* (Sacred Site of the Chukchi). The sacred site is situated in the basin of the Ngapkei River. The core of the site lies on a hill surrounded by swamps. It is about 5 metres high, 30 metres long and 7 metres wide and consists of reindeer skull laid horizontally and vertically placed *sim si* poles. It further contains a chest with a sacred stone, which is taken out for ceremonies and covered with reindeer blood. The immediate surroundings contain several sacred sledges with chests of cult objects such as animal figures and coins. The site is considered as a special sacrifice site.

#### *Meeting a Giant Chukchi*

On a spring day a long time ago, a Nenets got lost in the tundra. Fog fell upon the area leaving the man wandering about for seven days. In the end, both he and his reindeer were exhausted. He decided to ask *Num*, the Supreme God, for help. Some time passed and a huge man appeared in front of him who said, “Don’t get scared. The fog will clear away soon.” “Who are you?” the Nenets asked and before the giant disappeared in the fog, he answered, “I’m a Chukchi”. Soon the fog cleared away. Before leaving the place, the Nenets looked around, but saw nothing important but a hill. Since then the hill has been called “Chukchi’s Sacred Site”. People have wondered for years why it was a Chukchi who appeared, but have not come up with an answer.

#### 4.3.6 Ngoleko Lahavey, Tevche and Nyangu-Chivi Sacred Sites

A number of sacred sites are inter-linked culturally, historically and ceremonially. While they can be described independently, they make cultural sense described together. The following sites together form a such a sacred site complex which despite being situated several kilometers from each other form a whole. *Ngoleko Lahavey* (no. 52), “a Small and Fallen-in One”, is situated on the bank of Lahavey River. Yar Huli constructed the site after having seen big herds of reindeer, allowing him to obtain some and escape from poverty. The site is connected to *Tevche* (no. 53), “Like a Reindeer tail”, which is situated some three kilometres from the first site. *Nyangu-Chivi* (no.54), “Rotten Lip” is another five kilometres from the second site.

Such sacred complexes need to be protected as a whole. In fact, they point to a general characteristic of indigenous sacred sites, namely that they usually make cultural sense in the broader context of customary use. In this case, three sites are inter-linked. In other cases, sacred sites are linked to particularly good fishing sites, old dwelling places or migration routes. These surrounding cultural landscapes needed to be integrated in protection measures as well. They furthermore point to the broader value and relevance of sacred sites when discussing ecosystem resilience.

#### 4.3.7 Ngev Seda Khekhe Ya Sacred Site

*Ngev Seda Khekhe Ya* (no. 67 on the general list) or “Head Hill Sacred Site” is situated on a hill in the vicinity of Cape Trehbugorniy. A pile of reindeer skulls, horns and sacred poles bent forward to the sunrise marks the sacred site. The site is visited two times a year in spring and fall. Nowadays the site appears to be one of the largest and most respected in Tazov Region.

Nobody knows exactly when it happened. A long time ago, a reindeer herder and his family were moving to a new settlement. A woman with a child drove the first *argish*. As soon as they began to move up a high hill, the land split before the people’s eyes and the earth swallowed up the first *argish* taking both people and reindeer. Afterwards, the land looked as if nothing had happened. Only prows of the disappeared sledge remained to be seen. The shaman was called right away. After the ritual had been performed, the shaman said that this site should be regarded as a sacred one by Yando Clan ever after.

#### 4.3.8 Neyto Ngo Khekhe Ya Sacred Site

*Neyto Ngo Khekhe Ya* (no. 77 on the general list) or the “Sacred Site on Burbot Lake Island” is situated on the Bolshoy Taz River on Marra Island (Olgin Island). The sacred site is in the middle of the island. There are two trees with reindeer skulls and horns there. As discussed earlier, sacred sites are often identified or represented by particular natural features along with offerings and sacrifices people have left over the years.

This may reflect relatively small areas, or it may, in some cases, cover whole rivers, landscapes or islands. One can therefore not assume appropriate protection measures simply based on the immediate physical appearance and presence of cultural objects. Effective protection will ultimately rely on discussing the specific cultural significance in a broader context of customary use.

### 4.3.9 Nyada Suti, Vasiley Khekho Ya, and Nganokhara Sacred Sites

This sacred complex links three individual sites all situated on the Yavay Peninsula. *Nyada Suti* (no. 95) or “Reindeer Moss Hill” is situated in the basin of the Halz-Yakha and the Ngarka Kharta-Yakha Rivers. There are some suspended oil wells in the vicinity from the Utrenneye oilfield. *Vasiley o Ya* (no. 96) or “Vasiley’s Sacred Site” is situated at the mouth of the Horta-Yakha River. The sacred site belongs to Salinder Clan. Finally, *Nganokhara* (no. 97), meaning “boat like”, is also on the bank of Horta-Yakha river. The hill resembles a Nenets boat turned upside-down. All the three sacred sites consist of sacred poles (*simzi*), sacred sledges, reindeer skulls and skulls of other animals.

### 4.3.10 Khekhe Khan’ Suti Sacred Site

*Khekhe Khan’ Suti* (no. 130) or the “Sacred Sledge Site” is situated 23 kilometres to the south-east from Guida village. There is a sacred sledge on the site which has no owner. A legend tells that the site was once owned by the Khabi (Salinder) Clan. Salinder P. had left a sacred sledge there with his father’s ritual objects. As a former reindeer herder and director of a collective farm, he had grown too old to have any reindeer and lived a sedentary life in the village. As he could not keep ritual objects in an “impure” wooden house, the objects had been placed on this site. The legend illustrates the fundamental importance of customary ways of life for the maintenance and use of sacred sites. Nenets stop at the site on their way to or from the village leaving sacrifices, talking to the spirit of the site often to request for fair weather and a good journey.

## 4.4 Regional Overview of Yamal Research Results

Over 70 interviews were conducted with reindeer herders, fishermen, and the elders of the Guidan, Antipautinskaya, and Tazov tundra of the Tazov District. Two hundred sixty-three sacred sites were identified, described, and put on the map. This is a large number of sites, which speaks for itself in terms of the success of the research effort in providing a preliminary picture of the sacred sites in the region.

However, it also became clear that the logistical as well as methodological challenge of providing detailed descriptions and analysis of these sites was beyond the budget and time frame of the project. Thus, Leonid Lar, a researcher with the project, could only visit and document fourteen sanctuaries out of the forty identified. A considerable number of the sacred sites listed need further documentation and mapping. It may also be argued that there is a need to insert the mapping effort in a broader context of customary land use. For the purposes of further protection measures, the communities concerned would need to consider further collection of baseline data particularly concerning:

- Current protection status and threats
- Customary management institutions and community mobilization potential
- The broader customary land use context of the sacred sites in order to document linkages to, among other things, settlements, pastures, fishing sites and migration routes

This being said, the whole research process documented the important aspects of Nenets cosmology, situated this in the sacred geography of the region surveyed and led to a revived interest among both local authorities and indigenous communities to address sacred sites protection.

## 4.5 Cultural Significance and Nenets Cosmology

The cosmology of the Yamal Nenets covers a complex ‘pantheon’ of spiritual beings and religious systems. A stick with seven notches represents the seven layers of the universe, which in various way may be said to represent heaven, earth and the underworld. This cosmology has always been closely connected customary livelihoods and environments. The symbolic centrality of reindeer is, for example, evident in a number of ritual practices.

One of the most important deities, *Noom* (or the Lord of Heaven), was annually offered a white deer in spring and fall. According to Nenets cosmology, weather phenomena such as rain, snow and lightning depended on the will of *Noom*. Performed in an open place, the flesh of the slaughtered deer was eaten raw and the head put on a stick turned towards the East. At this moment, all participants were to bow several times in this direction. Live white deer were also offered to *Noom* with distinctive marks to prevent further use.

“Master spirits” play a central role in the cosmology of the Nenets, and are continuously practiced as part of the relationship to their sacred sites, their use and management. *Iv erv* (the master of land), *akha erve* (master of the river), *to erv* (master of the lake), *paedara erv* (master of the forest) are continuously venerated and sacrifices<sup>1</sup> are performed to secure successful hunting, fishing or herding. *Nga*, the spirit of death and illnesses, was said to live underground and sacrifices are made to *Nga* to keep trouble far away.

When migrating across the Ob Riva the river spirit would be offered a deer with its horns hung upon a larch-tree. *Ya erv* (the master of soil and earth) received the highest esteem together with *Ya erv ne* (the mistress of soil and earth). Once again, the fundamental link between the masters of soil, moss, herbs, lichen and bushes, and customary ways of life is evident.

### Family/ house spirits

In contrast with the more or less fixed location of certain spirits in sacred sites, house or family spirits, *Siede*, followed the reindeer herders in their nomadic movements across the tundra. Represented by wooden sticks or small stones kept in separate trunks, the ‘private’ spirits were regularly offered new clothes and provided with reindeer blood in return for their support, aid and protection. Transported on separate sacred sledges, *Khekhe Khan*, the spirits would later be offered the honorary place inside the chum opposite the entrance.

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<sup>1</sup> Previously, this in some cases even involved human sacrifices. Before fishing, the oldest of the group would the spirit for good fishery and promise a human life in return. In case anyone fell into the water while fishing, he was not rescued but acknowledged as sacrificed to the spirit.

## 4.6 Aspects of Nenets Customary Law and Management

The research revealed that Nenets often use the word *mya* or *chum* when referring to sacred sites, since spirits and gods inhabit them. When the Nenets enter a sacred site, they pay a visit to their spirits to share their problems and lives. They may recognize the site as an important entry point connecting the Middle and the Lower World or simply as a place to communicate with spirits. They enter the house, *chum*, and realm of their spirits. Entering a house means respecting particular rules and customs as deemed appropriate and defined by the relationship between host and guest. This links Nenets to the immediate environment and to their ancestors.

Nenets cosmology and customary law does not value frequent visits to sacred sites. On the contrary, access to the most important sites are restricted to the chosen few. In many cases, Nenets women are forbidden to approach certain sites<sup>2</sup>. Paradoxically, for example, no woman has ever set foot on the “Spirit Point” despite the fact that the site venerates women. In many cases, only men are entitled to enter clan or family sacred sites. Only men can perform the ritual slaughtering for sacrifice. Only old women gain access once they have been “freed” from earlier restrictions. Furthermore, the research revealed a number of special female sacred sites<sup>3</sup>. Often located in proximity to other areas of significance, these sites have been used to pray for family well-being and prosperity. This engendered approach is also reflected in the “ritual” division of labour. Men may undertake the slaughtering of a deer for a particular site, while women perform a ritual in the honor of the spirit of the Mother, while cooking the meat of the sacrificed deer. In other cases, access limitations concern particular clans. For example, Tundra Nenets with last names such as Salinder, Porongui, Nerkagi, Tibichi and Lar, know of the “Seven Chums” site only by hearsay. Outside researchers have often sought to classify sites according to social criteria such as the user groups rather than seeking to reveal their cultural significance. T. Lekhtisalo, for example, classifies the Nenets sacred sites on the basis of social criterion. He distinguishes national, clan and family sacred sites (T. Lekhtisalo, 1998. P.50). Others have sought to reflect the more or less permanent or temporary significance of Nenets religious sites (Terebihin 1998).

### Sacred sites rituals and appropriate behaviour

Approaching or leaving sacred sites involves following certain rituals. If offerings are made to a spirit, then the spirit’s image is passed three times around the neck of the reindeer intended for sacrifice. The deer is then strangled by pulling a lasso around its neck in different directions. In the case that several deer are to be sacrificed (customarily, seven, or up to seven), they must all be tied with one loop of a lasso simultaneously. A lasso is used for any ritual killing. If the sacrifice involves offering to a sacred sled, the lead elder of the ritual encircles his face with his right hand when he is finished. “Clean” (silver) coins offered to the spirits are tied into a knot with a scrap of fabric. Knots are tied around sacred sculptures, poles, or trees with any bit of sacrificial fabric. A fastened loop of metal chain also serves as offerings to the spirits. A metal ring worn is often worn on a finger (or several rings on different fingers.) as a form of personal protection. Signs of a person’s worthiness and strength (particularly for men) are colored laces pulled around the waist or tightened around the knees of one’s reindeer-skin boots.

During some of the Nenets holidays, such as “Taier alia” in August, men and women dress in special clothes. Women prepare special dishes and men set out to visit the sacred sites. They

<sup>2</sup> This contrasts with sacred sites practices among the Koryak, where sacred sites are “engendered” differently.

<sup>3</sup> Examples include *Ne Khanondalava* – a female sacred site within Sote’Ya sacred site, Pyhytzya’ Sede – Old Woman’s Hill, *Yuribey Ngo’ Ya* – Yando Clan’s female sacred site



take with them protector idols (*khekhe* and *siadev*) and deer to be sacrificed. The idols are placed among other religious images at the site. They mark their faces with the deer's blood, and hang scraps of fabric and metal objects (coins, chains, jewelry) on the sculptures. Reindeer skulls and hides are left at the site. During the ritual meal one tries to think and speak only of good things. At the end of the ritual, they bow to the four sides of the earth and to the spirits of the southern and northern skies (*Num* and *Ngerm*). If the sacred site is far away, men will make the sacrificial offerings together with the women at the camp. They gather together around a sacred sled and light a fire nearby where they prepare fish or reindeer and tea. At the end of the meal, the women walk up to the sacred place (the sled), take cups full of tea from the men's hands and scatter a few drops in offering to the goddess of the earth and to *Ia-Miunia*.

Although Nenets do not apply a formal system classifying various types of sacred sites, the research revealed a number of different characteristics. Naming, for example, may reflect customary ownership, important events, particular objects or topological features. Contrasting social characteristics involve customary ownership and management of the site. Some sites are of broader regional or ethnic importance for Nenets and even acted as boundary markers or frontiers<sup>45</sup>. They may belong to different areas, specific clans<sup>6</sup> or families. A few others were personal sites<sup>7</sup> often based on personal spiritual encounters and experiences. As boundary markers, sacred sites have reinforced customary territoriality and cultural identity (Terebihin 1998) as well as strengthened cultural ties. The *Num-to Lake* (Heavenly Lake or the Lake of God), a forest Nenets' sacred site is a case in point. Situated on the borderline between the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Khanti-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug, it perceived as a "Nenets-Khanti sacred site." Up to seven deer are slaughtered in the ritual involving a prayer to spirits is in the Nenets language and a ritual performed in accordance with Khanti customary practices (T. Lekhtisalo (1998, p.48-49)). Finally, and very importantly, Nenets elders emphasize the "ownership" of particular territories by certain master spirits requiring respect, appropriate behaviour and sacrifice. This reflects customary collective heritage and property concepts, which may not be easily compatible with land management regimes requiring private, governmental, community or corporate legal persona. Indirectly, however, they form a fundamental part of customary practices, which can be recognized and formalized.

#### 4.7 Natural Features and Sacredness

In the flat tundra of western Siberia many hills distinguishable by their height are considered sacred. At every sacred site, there is something which gives the whole composition a pointed shape, whether it is the form of a sacrificial "pile" or a larch trunk sticking out from among the reindeer skulls. In the southern tundra, tall or single stands of larch are sacred sites; in the polar

<sup>4</sup> Examples include: *Khekhe' Khan' Sote* (Sacred Dog-Sledge Hill), *Yarta Ng O'Ya* (Sand Hill, Insular Sand Hills), *Mando'' Yara* – the Enetz Sand Hill, *Mando'' Ngeva* – the Enetz Head, *Mando'' Seda* – the Enetz Hill.

<sup>5</sup> Although names may reflect particular clan ownership, current practices and significance may have changed. In the Guidan area adjacent to Krasnojarsk Region, for example, two major sacred sites have been of key importance for the Enetz (Mando). However, today, the sites have become important sites for all Nenets, Enetz and Khanti in the region.

<sup>6</sup> Examples include: *Sote'' Ya (Vui Yar)* – Yar Clan, *Yaro To* – Yar Clan Lake, *Khungo Salya* – Tesida Clan, *Khantey Ngo* – Yaptone Clan (Yaptunone, Hapt' Narka), *Yuribey Ngo'' Ya* – Yando Clan, *Nate'Ngeva* – Yando Clan, *Khekh Sede'e* – Yaptone Clan (Yaptunay), *Porungey' Heho'' Ya* – Porungey Clan, *Salinder' Kheho'' Ya* – Salinder Clan, *Sa Ngota (Sa Ngovota Salya)* – Vengo Clan, *Sambdama* – Vengo Clan

<sup>7</sup> Personal sacred sites include *Nyadey' Seda Khabidya Ya* – Yaptunay H.I., *Vasiley' Khekho'' Ya* – Salinder Vasiliy, *Nyara' Khekhe* – Evay Nyara's place, Personal Yando N.P., Personal Yando N.H., *Syadey* – Idol, Yando Clan

Ural, the mountain peaks are sacred. Heights are considered sacred, the most significant of these are located along the northern borders of the tundra and the arctic islands (Khaen-sala point, Minisei mountain, Vaigach and Belyi islands).

Topological characteristics and natural features as such play an important role. In the following key words used by Nenets to categorize and name their sacred sites, the importance of natural features is evident:

**Common Nenets words to describe sacred sites**

<i>Khekhe</i> – God, Heaven	<i>Seda</i> – a hill
<i>Khebidya</i> – sacred, holy	<i>Ngo</i> – an island
<i>Syadey</i> – an idol	<i>To</i> – a lake
<i>Ya</i> – a place, land	<i>Yakha</i> – a river
<i>Suti (Soti)</i> – a flat highland with a wide foot and gentle slopes	

The importance of certain topological features as part of the vocabulary reveals a cultural significance beyond the simple “description.” Islands have, for example, a distinct role reflecting Nenets notions of the sacred implying isolation and inaccessibility<sup>8</sup>. As islands are difficult to access, there exist in most cases corresponding sites on the mainland, where rituals are performed for the sacred islands concerned<sup>9</sup>. Stones and mountains were also of particular significance ranging from particular tundra rocks to sacrificial practices to *Pe erc ne* (the Ural mountains) in southern Yamal to avoid avalanches.

The central role of the animal world penetrates a considerable number of sacred sites. Certain sites are dedicated to particular animals and their spirits. A preliminary list shows the impressive role and presence of the animal spirit world in the cosmology of the Nenets<sup>10</sup>. Beyond sites dedicated to certain species, the role of particular reindeer in the everyday and spiritual life of the Nenets is of key importance. Flora may, as fauna, be imbued with particular significance. The larch, for example, is considered sacred and often decorated with offerings as cloth, animal hides or the horns of sacrificed deer<sup>11</sup>.

#### 4.8 Biodiversity and Ecological Significance

The Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug covers a range of vegetation types and zones including both tundra, forest-tundra and a sub-zone of the northern taiga. In the Arctic Tundra on the coast

<sup>8</sup> The Nenets word for island *ngo* coupled with notions of sacredness such as *hebidya* (sacred, holy) and *hehe* (idol, spirit). Examples include *Ngo''Ya Khebidya Ya* – Sacred Land Islands, *Khabidya Ngo* – Sacred Island, *Ser' Ngo Khabidya Ya* – the sacred site of White Island situated in the mouth of the Yasavo-Yaha (Yazavey-Yaha) river on Gydan Peninsula, but sacrifices were made for White Island Sacred Site in Yamal, *Evay''ngo* – Shokalskiy Island, *Neyte Ngo Khekhe Ya* – Burbot Lake Sacred Site (the Bolshoy Taz River, Marra Island), *Khebidya Ho Ngo* - Sacred Birch Island on the Bolshoy Taz river, *Kekhe' Ngo* – Sacred Island or the Island of Idols (Spirits), Vaigach Island, *Yaro'' Ngo* – Yar Clan Island (on the map it is Sibiriyakov Island);

<sup>9</sup> Examples include the i) sacrifices to worship *Evay' Ngo* (Shokalskiy Island), which are made on *Ngo' Ya Khebidya Ya*, , ii) for *Yaro' Ngo* (Sibiriyakov Island) sacrifices are made on *Yaro Ngon' Hantalva*. *Sote''Ya* situated on the right continental shore of the Oleniy Channel is also difficult to reach. The ritual may be performed in absentia in the mouth of the Ese-Yaha river on Hanontalava-Sutui Hill. The sacrifices for *Yuribey Ngo' Ya* are performed on Hanna Suti Hill, which lies opposite across the Gydan Bay in the mouth of the Yuribey.

<sup>10</sup> Sacred Sites dedicated to animals and birds include: *Huryuho' Seda* – Jaeger's sacred site, *Lortzak' Seda* – Sandpiper's Hill, *Minley* – Mythical Bird, *Varko' Ngeva' Seda* – Bear's Head Hill, *Veno' Han' Seda* - Dog-Sledge Hill, *Nokho' Seda* – Arctic Fox Hill, *Hor'' Sutui* – Bull Knoll, *Varkota* – Rich in Bears, *Haletе Khebidya Ya* – the sacred site of a river rich in fish, *Nyak Yakha* – Seal's River, *Sarmik Seda* – Wolf Hill, *Hora' Ngeva* – Bull's Head, *Nyamd' Mora Ngeva* – Head with Antlers

<sup>11</sup> In northern parts of Yamal, where larch is not present, dry larch is brought from the south and placed in sacred sites together with reindeer horns and a number of wooden idols.

of the Kara Sea, vegetation is limited to bushy lichen, mosses and sedge complemented by a continuous 'carpet' of sub-arctic flowers in the summer. Further to the south vegetation becomes more diverse. Wild rosemary, willow, and dwarf-birch are prevalent. The territory of Yamalo-Nenets AO extends to the sub-zone of northern taiga characterized by the predominance of woodless big-knoll marshes over forests characterize the northern taiga. White Arctic foxes, wild reindeer, Arctic wolves, wolverines and lemmings are among the mammals inhabiting the tundra.

For the biodiversity specialist, the immediate focus is on the composition of the area in terms of species, habitat and broader ecosystems. In the legal world, the flora and fauna of Yamal may be defined by various ownership structures and protected area categories. For the geologist, the land may be assessed according to gas or mineral deposits. In Nenets cosmology and everyday life, the tundra is not a vacuum of open-access resources waiting for geological discovery, exploitation or biodiversity assessments. Elders emphasize how territories are not only inhabited by, but owned by master spirits. Hill and lakes may have spiritual owners who need to be paid respect. These spiritual values and cultural significance form part of customary relationships to the land.

This research has also documented the fundamental role of sacred sites as part of broader customary relationships to the land. Sacred sites form an integral part of customary livelihood activities of the Nenets such as reindeer herding and fishing activities. Sacred sites may serve as boundary markers reflecting customary land tenure practices between user groups. In a broader perspective, they serve to reproduce community links to the land. In other words, they play a fundamental role in developing biodiversity conservation efforts, which seek to recognize customary rights and build on grassroots-based institutions and practices.

The okrug is known for its enormous oil and gas reserves. The last decades have seen extensive critique of the destruction of vast areas of reindeer pastures, rivers and spawning areas resulting from oil and gas exploration and extraction. The significance of Indigenous Peoples maintaining customary relationships to their land in the wake of such developments is extremely important. Sacred sites reflect intimate connections to the surrounding environment and spiritual values to the land, which are of fundamental importance for providing ecologically sound and viable alternatives to the large-scale industrial development model promoted by oil and gas developers.

Current debates on the ecological and biodiversity implications underline the significant levels of pollution, the fragility of the tundra and taiga environments and the drastic reduction of customary grazing areas. This is putting increasing stress on the fragile soil layer. Inserting sacred sites in these discussions may seem far-fetched compared to immediate questions of ecosystem balance. Indigenous peoples, in contrast, argue that their spiritual connection to their lands is a fundamental aspect of maintaining the biodiversity and ecological stability of the region.

Previously birds that migrated to our region stood near our camps and were not afraid of us. They were friendly and we did not try to scare them off either. A living animal is sacred to us because it guarantees us life in the tundra. A bird is only killed when it is needed. When we can longer obtain meat from reindeers in the spring, we eat birds. Reindeers change their fur in the spring and so they cannot be killed at that time. Then the Nenets eat birds. This time occurs about two weeks after the birds arrive. At the time they can be hunted. After that we don't need them for food and they become protected and sacred. Killing birds in the autumn is the cardinal sin because at that time the birds need to fly to warm areas, teach their little ones how to fly there and come back.

Oil and gas exploration is a significant cause for the worrying decline in the number of reindeers. The animals certainly had illnesses before but our means to handle them have decreased. Herding has been made more difficult by the intensive use of the land. Oil transportation needs railways, which of course have a certain amount of positive significance. This, however, breaking up the land and the reduction of the reindeer stock has been unprecedented rapid. One dangerous factor is that the animals in the spring eat grass that grows in the polluted areas. Some die right

away. Others fall ill, and the effects emerge in others only the following year. Those with the latter past the infection onto their offspring.

The water and land give off bad smell here and there. Is the rapid diminishing of the animal stock an indication that very soon the polluted areas will not be limited to isolated places? Soon clean water and land will be found only in a few places. The river that has provided me water all my life no longer has potable water.

Railways are being constructed in our region, even though the economic crisis that hit Russia has slowed down the work process. But the fish that has earlier swum in our clean river are no longer edible. Fish is destroyed within a radius of about 40 kilometres in surrounding area where railways are being constructed. We don't know the cause. Okotetto, Lidia (1999), "I no longer understand the tundra that has loved me", <http://www.maanystavat.fi/oileng/>

Considering that Yamal is one of the biggest reindeer herding areas in Russia, this points to the significant overlap of interests between reindeer herders and conservation workers. As biodiversity conservation increasingly is taken on board by regional authorities, there is therefore a need to promote the integration of sacred sites and customary use as part of conservation efforts. Industrial development of oil and gas fields not only results in the destruction of thousands of hectares of reindeer pastures or stream segments important for spawning purposes, they also threaten sacred sites and their use. They threaten the fundamental spiritual connection to the land, Nenets have developed over centuries, and more importantly need, in order to maintain their customary ways of life well into the new millennium. Beyond the human costs at stake, such a loss may endanger any realistic attempt to maintain healthy environments.

The further development of Guidan and Yamal gas fields, as well as the Ob Bay and the Kara Sea off-shore gas deposits during the coming decades may lead to the destruction of large parcels of land on the territory of YNAO with considerable ecological and biodiversity impact on the Okrug in general. Socio-economic pressures and cultural impacts on the Nenets and their indigenous way of life will also increase considering the existing picture and potential cumulative effects. Whether an alternative vision is reached for the region will depend on the political will to reconcile immediate economic interests with the long-term interests of the indigenous Nenets and ecological stability. The conflict between customary rights and ways of life, on the one hand, and oil and gas production industries development, on the other hand, needs to be solved. The following section on the regional policy environment, provides a picture of existing instruments which can be used for this purpose.

## **4.9 Legal Context in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug**

### **4.9.1 Environmental Protection**

A network of protected areas has been created within the Yamal-Nenets okrug consisting of the state *zapovedniks* Upper Tazovsky and Gydansky, thirteen state zoological *zakazniks*, and the Sysnko-Voikarskaya ethnic territory for protection of various animal species living within that territory. Plans for the Yamal *zapovednik*, the Numto ethno-nature park and other *zakazniks* are currently underway. Existing protected areas have had *de facto* protection impact, although they rarely recognize sacred sites. More protected areas would thus seem a good protection strategy. However, considering future plans for developing oil and gas deposits in the Yamal-Nenets AO, the enlargement of areas for creation of new specially protected nature territories may become difficult.

At the same time, the YNAO has introduced a new category of specially protected nature territories, the ethno-nature park, created by the law, "On Specially Protected Nature Territories of

the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug” October 14, 1997.<sup>12</sup> Like its federal equivalent, the law seeks to reconcile environmental values with the provision of legal rights for Indigenous Peoples of the North. Indigenous peoples are provided exclusive resource use rights and people who are not members of the designated families may only use the park’s flora and fauna with the permission of the owners. The legal regime of ethno-nature parks allows for preservation of not only biological diversity, but also indigenous peoples’ sacred sites located on these territories. It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of ethno-nature parks, since we do not yet have implementation experience. However, inclusion of identified sacred sites within the boundaries of ethno-nature parks is a good option for protection of sacred sites.

#### 4.9.2 Cultural Heritage

In the YNAO, a statute on protection of historical and cultural monuments has been active since 1993 (Statute of the YNAO No. 117, May 22 1993).<sup>13</sup> This statute describes the functions of the public authority specially authorized for protection of historical and cultural monuments. In 1996, the regional law, “On Conducting Historical-Cultural Evaluations on the Territory of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug”, was implemented.<sup>14</sup> But the deputies of the YNAO дума have gone further, and in October of 1998 they adopted a law, “On Protection of Historical, Cultural and Literary Monuments in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug,” which establishes the basic conditions for cultural heritage protection within okrug territory and regulates those relationships connected with state protection of immovable historical and cultural monuments.<sup>15</sup>

This regional law creates a good legal basis for addressing the question of protection of indigenous peoples’ sacred sites, since here for the first time “sacred sites, cultic complexes, places for rituals and cultic stones” are named in the list of immovable historical and cultural monuments belonging to state protection. This law determines the order for documenting and investigating objects of cultural heritage, and their inclusion in the lists of identified immovable cultural valuables of the autonomous okrug. This work is undertaken by the cultural protection authority of the autonomous okrug, or specialized organizations enlisted by the authority on a contractual basis. Once identified, cultural heritage objects will be inventoried and their historical or cultural significance is evaluated, after which they are included in the list of identified immovable cultural valuables. From the moment an object is included in the list, a temporary protective zone is established around its territory.

Identified immovable cultural monuments can be included in the appropriate governmental register of historical and cultural monuments of local or federal significance by decision of the corresponding governmental authority. In this case, they are not removed from the list of identified monuments, but are cross-referenced to their numbers assigned in the other registers.

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<sup>12</sup> *Normativnye pravovye akty Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga*. [Normative Legal Acts of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.] Informatsionno-poiskovaia sistema. Administratsiia Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> *Normativnye pravovye akty Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga*. [Normative Legal Acts of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.] Informatsionno-poiskovaia sistema. Administratsiia Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> *Normativnye pravovye akty Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga*. [Normative Legal Acts of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.] Informatsionno-poiskovaia sistema. Administratsiia Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> *Sbornik zakonov Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga sentiabr’ 1998-dekabr’ 1999 goda, tom II*. [Anthology of Laws of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, September 1998 to December 1999, vol. 2] Izdanie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy IaNAO, 1999. p. 246.

Particularly valuable objects are to be included in the state register of especially valuable objects of the cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation, and are considered federal property. Cultural and historical monuments taken under governmental protection must bear protective plaques placed by the preservation authority of the okrug. This authority conducts architectural, cultural, artistic, and geologic investigations of historical and cultural monuments, composes inventories, and develops architectural and historic planning zones. Protection authorities are to prepare and publish the state register of immovable historical and cultural monuments of local significance, catalogs, guidebooks and other informational materials.

According to Article 23, lands of historical-cultural significance include:

Those lands where historical and cultural monuments, ritual or religious sites and places of note, including those within national parks and historical-cultural *zapovedniks*, as well as those occupied by cultural organizations and which are connected with the existence of traditional folk arts, crafts and applied arts are located. Any activity not consistent with the established regime of use for lands of historical-cultural significance is forbidden.

Three types of protection zones have been established for immovable historical and cultural monuments and their adjacent territories: protected zones, zones where building and economic activity are regulated, and zones for protection of the natural landscape. The borders of the protection zones for those monuments of local significance their adjacent territories, as well as the regimes for their management, are determined by the executive organ of the autonomous okrug upon request by the protection authority. A protection zone for historical and cultural monuments and specially protected territories is defined as a territory with strict regime of use for the land, limiting economic activity and construction with the goal of providing for the physical preservation of the monument, the historical urban environment and the landscape. Persons who violate the legislation concerning protection of historical and cultural monuments shall bear civil and criminal responsibility according to Russian federal law.

The current legal base in the YNAO, in the opinion of the researchers, is adequate for real and effective work in the sphere of preservation and management of historical-cultural heritage. Those sacred sites already documented and described should be included in the governmental register of historical and cultural objects, which must be approved by decree of the governor of the YNAO. In the above mentioned documents, the procedure for including objects of cultural heritage in the governmental lists of monuments is described in detail.

The YNAO legislation defines sacred sites, cult objects and burial sites as archaeological monuments. The Scientific Committee of the YNAO administration, having developed a project called "Programs for the Detection, Study and Management of Historical-Cultural Heritage in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug" observed that objects of ethnic culture in the okrug make up a special group of historical-cultural heritage, which should logically be given a separate category in the inventory. It will be necessary to make additions and changes to the YNAO legislation in order for this to take place.

Developers of the project have proposed a division of the ethnic cultural objects into the following types:

- religious sites (sacred sites, sacrificial sites, ritual sites, etc.),
- burial complexes (cemeteries, individual graves, etc.),
- settlements,
- memorial sites (places connected with real or legendary events), and

- objects relating to production or trading activities.<sup>16</sup>

The researchers for this report support this proposition. In contrast to other categories of historical-cultural objects, objects of ethnic culture are unique in that they are part of a “living” culture. They continue to function, which means they can be changed, rebuilt, moved, or even destroyed in the process of religious or other derivative practice. Therefore, it is very difficult to make one of these objects into a monument, an unchanging part of historical-cultural heritage. Instead, it is proposed to designate only particularly valuable objects of ethnic culture (such as individual structures, graves, etc.) as monuments.

The YNAO administration acknowledges the necessity for protection of indigenous peoples’ religious sites and understands that it is a pressing question which, if ignored, might increase social tension and even lead to ethnic conflict. This understanding is evidenced by the governor’s resolution from December 20, 1999, “On the Creation of Historical, Ethnographic and Research Complexes of the Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North.” The resolution envisions conducting research on and compiling maps of sacred sites and burial sites for inclusion in the state register of immovable historical and cultural monuments of the Okrug. The Department of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs within the okrug administration has been assigned preparation of a draft law “On the Cultic and Religious Sites of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North on the Territory of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.”

This Department, along with the Research Center for Humanitarian Studies of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (based in Salekhard), has developed a program called “Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous peoples of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.” Scholars specializing in the study of objects of historical-cultural heritage of indigenous peoples were invited to participate in this program. This was time that the okrug administration had cooperated with indigenous scholars who were interested in protecting their cultural heritage. Knowledge of the language, traditional culture, particularities of etiquette and cultural norms of indigenous peoples allowed these scholars to collect reliable information on the sacred sites of the Yamal peninsula. Given the short time period and modest financing for the project, it only succeeded in accomplishing a little. Continuation of the research in the Tazovsky district within the framework of this current project is a logical extension of the work already begun in 1999.

### 4.9.3 Indigenous Peoples’ Rights

In the YNAO, several laws have been passed in the last five years, which are dedicated to defending the rights of indigenous minority peoples of the Russian North to a traditional way of life, traditional nature use, and preservation of their original environment. Provisions for the rights of indigenous peoples are secured in the Charter of the YNAO, in the laws, “On Mineral Resources and their Use,” and “On the Election of Deputies to the State Duma of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.” In February 2000, the duma approved the “Concepts for the Development of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug,” which emphasizes that branches of activity which help to ethnically form and preserve the indigenous peoples are reindeer herding, fishing, breeding of fur-bearing animals and hunting.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> From the report prepared by regional researcher G.P. Khariuchi, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> “Kontseptsiiia razvitiia korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa v Yamalo-Nenetskom avtonomnom okruge.” Utverzhdena Postanovleniem Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Yamalo-Nenetskom avtonomnogo okruga ot 23 fevralia 200 goda No. 886.” *Vedomosti Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Yamalo-Nenetskom avtonomnogo okruga* [News of the State Duma of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug], no. 3/2, 2000.

On October 1, 1997, the YNAO adopted the law, “On the Regulation of Land Interests in Places of Residence and Traditional Economic Activities of Indigenous Minority peoples of the North in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug”, which regulates questions concerning land as an object of nature, economic activity and property, which taken together are the basis for the life and traditional economic activities of the indigenous peoples of the North. Companies obtaining licenses for development of oil and gas resource which are located on the lands of indigenous peoples are required to consider their interests and the preservation of flora and fauna.<sup>18</sup>

The laws, “On Fishing Activities in the Waters of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug” (1998), and “On Fishing in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug” (1998), designate fishing as a form of traditional economic activity.<sup>19</sup> The law, “Rules for Fishing in the Waters of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug” (1999), determines the order for use of fish resources of federal and regional significance, as well as allowable places, methods, tools, and conditions for fishing.

The law, “On Reindeer Herding” (1998), establishes legal, economic, environmental, and social bases for reindeer herding as one of the traditional economic activities in places of residence of indigenous peoples of the North and is aimed at the creation of conditions for effective economic activities and preservation of the traditional way of life and culture of indigenous peoples.<sup>20</sup>

According to the provisions of “Concepts for the Development of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug,” specific programs have been developed to address the problems of indigenous peoples, considering the difficulty of moving from traditional economic activities to market conditions. Such programs include “Preservation of Reindeer Herding in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug,” and “Development of Fishing Activities in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.”

The law, “On Territorial Self-Government in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug” (Articles 5 and 6), allows for the creation of communities (*obshchiny*) of indigenous peoples.<sup>21</sup> Historically these communities have had various forms of economic activities, but reindeer herding, fishing and hunting have been and continue to be primary. The basis of an *obshchina* is formed of members of a family and their close relatives. The creation of *obshchiny* and the establishment of their lands and tribal grounds is executed on the basis of the recently adopted federal law “On General Principles for the Organization of *Obshchiny* of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation” (July 2000) and the regional law “On Local Self-Government in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug” (December 1996).

#### 4.10 Regional Follow-up

At present, the sacred sites in Tazov district have to a large extent remained intact since only limited drilling for oil and natural gas is pursued there. Research also documented increasing number of cases where Nenets sought to repair and maintain sites affected by outside

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<sup>18</sup> *Sbornik zakonov Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga 1995-iun' 1998 goda*. [Anthology of Laws of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 1995 to June 1998]. 1998: Izdanie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy IaNAO, pp. 575-589.

<sup>19</sup> *Sbornik zakonov Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga 1995-iun' 1998 goda*. [Anthology of Laws of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 1995 to June 1998]. 1998: Izdanie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy IaNAO, pp. 614-644.

<sup>20</sup> *Sbornik zakonov Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga 1998-dekabr' 1999 goda*, tom II [Anthology of Laws of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 1998 to December 1999, vol. 2]. 1999: Izdanie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy IaNAO, pp. 493-503..

<sup>21</sup> *Sbornik zakonov Yamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga 1995-iun' 1998 goda*. [Anthology of Laws of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 1995 to June 1998]. 1998: Izdanie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy IaNAO, pp. 683-689.



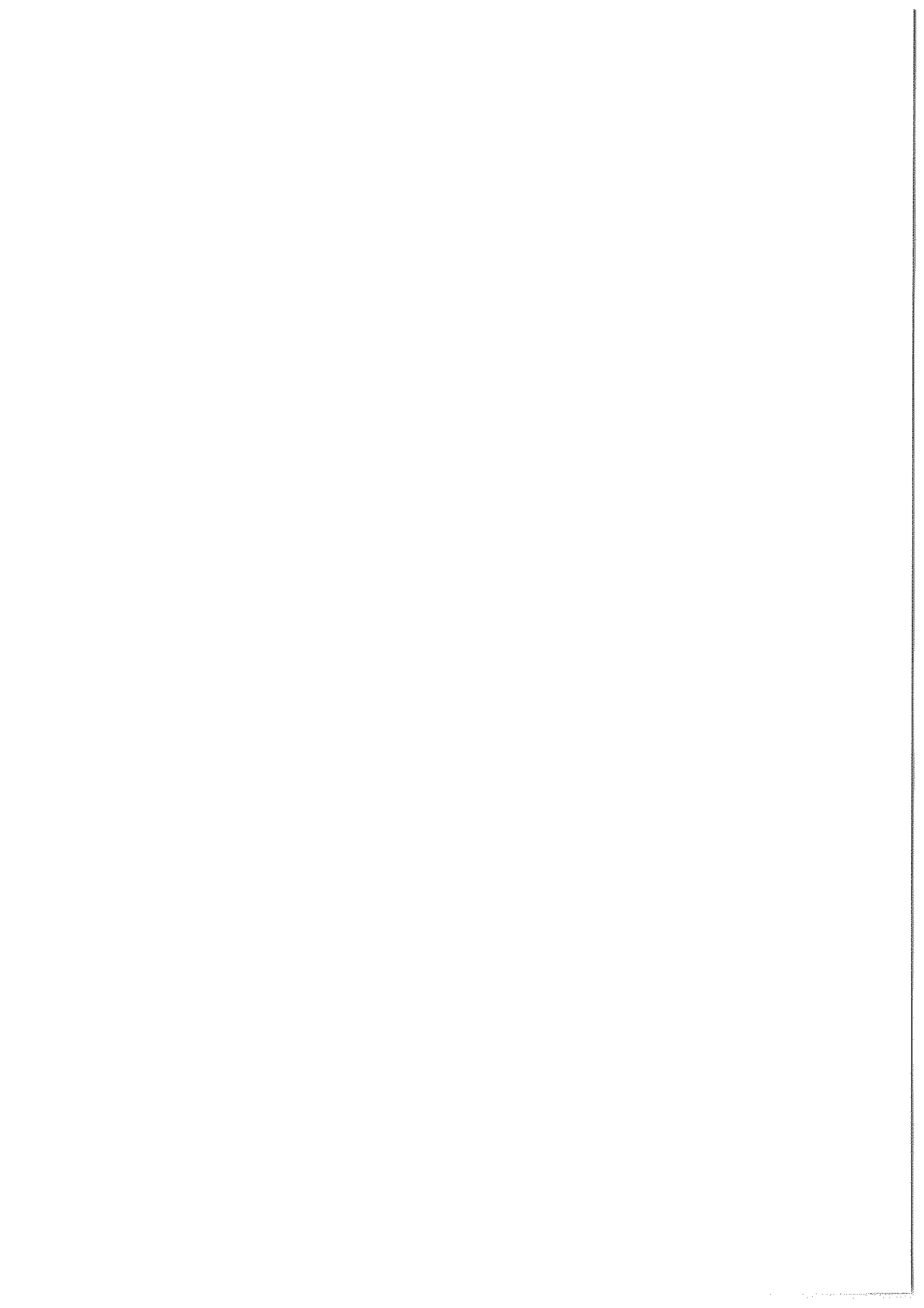
development. This has involved basic efforts to reassemble sacred objects as skulls, stones and antlers scattered around or removed from sites. Indeed, a number of customary protection and management activities continue to be practiced to some extent. The Yamal material documents continuous presence of community-based ownership structures. This should not be confused with exclusive use. Indeed, many sites and the spirits that inhabit them have been venerated by a number of different clans. Rather, customary management emphasized the importance of particular ownership and management which were to be respected from the various groups venerating or entering the site.

Working with existing customary management practices and the actual users of sacred sites in designing management solutions will be a significant challenge in the future. On the one hand, it entails enormous logistical challenges. On the other hand, representative institutions such as the Yamal Indigenous Peoples' Association and *Yamal Potomkam* [Yamal for Future Generations] have only limited experience and capacity. Still, as the policy section shows above, there are a number of opportunities in terms of cultural heritage, environmental protection and indigenous rights. All three sectors offer instruments which can reinforce or benefit Indigenous Peoples own efforts. These opportunities will need to be pursued and monitored carefully. On November 5, 2001, a meeting was held in Salekhard on the results of the work done under the project on the territory of Tazov Region of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. The meeting was attended by the representatives of the authorities, deputies of the Okrug Duma, representatives of the Research Center, the Project Coordinator, the most active members of the Association of the Indigenous Peoples of Yamalo-Nenets AO "*Yamal to the Descendants*" and local journalists.

Galina Kharuchi, a regional assistant, noted that the Science Board of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug Government developed a program on the protection of the historical and cultural heritage of Yamal, a worthy part of which shall be dedicated to sacred sites of indigenous peoples. By the results of the project, a manual shall be published, a list of sacred sites shall be submitted and the sacred sites enrolled shall be protected by the state.

Alexander Evay, a deputy of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug Duma, and the Vice-secretary of the Department on Indigenous Peoples' Affairs of Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug Government demonstrated their interest in receiving the results of the project as soon as possible and expressed willingness to develop and enact in cooperation with the Association of the Indigenous Peoples "*Yamal to the Descendants*" such standard acts as are necessary to protect sacred sites.

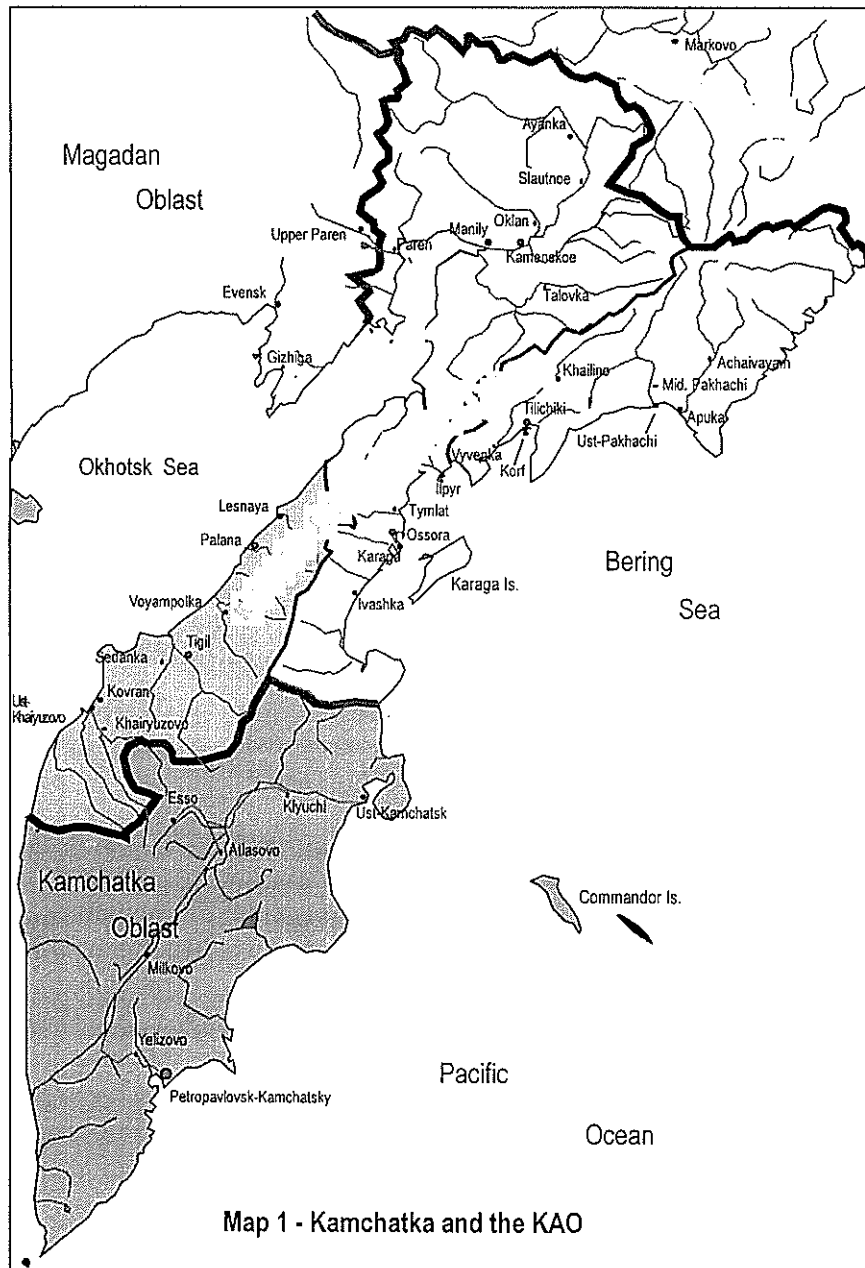
Nevertheless, experience reveals the immense gap between policy and practice. Given the regional commitment to initial project results and the importance of sacred sites to Indigenous Peoples, there is reason to believe that sacred sites protection will improve. Simultaneously, the future of sacred sites in Yamal, given their wide distribution, may very well serve as an indicator of the extent to which customary concerns of Indigenous Peoples are taken into account in future development efforts and actual policy implementation priorities.



## Chapter 5: Sacred Sites in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug

### 5.1 Regional Introduction

The Koryak Autonomous Okrug is a sparsely populated area covering 301,500 square kilometres in the northern part of the Kamchatka peninsula and the adjoining mainland. Only about 29,300 people resided there in 2000, mostly concentrated in a few administrative centers. At least one third of the population are indigenous peoples (Koryak, Itelmen, Chukchi and Even).



Culturally and linguistically they are of two primary groups, the Nymylans, who were traditionally hunters and fishers settled along the rivers and coasts and the Chavchuvens, who were reindeer herders migrating within the interior. Most Koryaks today tend to identify themselves with one or the other of these groups. Chavchuvens and Nymylans have a long history of exchange between them, trading reindeer meat and hides for fish or sea mammal meat and hides. This relationship reflects an important ecological adaptation, whereby neither group would go hungry in times of shortage and the primary resources would not be depleted.

The population of Olyutorsky District, the pilot research area, today resides in several consolidated villages and towns; Tilichiki (the administrative center), Korf (site of the okrug's largest airport, and transportation hub for both Olyutorsky and Penzhinsky districts) and the smaller villages of Vyvenka, Khailino, Sredniye Pakhachi, Ust-Pakhachi, Apuka, and Achaiwayam. The Soviet government forcibly relocated many indigenous people to these villages (most intensively in the 1960s and 70s), closing and abandoning older indigenous settlements. Today some of these settlements which, in contrast to the new towns, were situated closed to prime hunting and fishing areas, are still used by indigenous people as seasonal residences for hunting and fishing.

Khailino, Sredniye Pakhachi, and Achaiwayam are primarily reindeer-herding communities, while Vyvenka and Apuka are fishing communities. Ust-Pakhachi was the site of a fish-processing plant and has only a few indigenous inhabitants. With the collapse of state reindeer herding, many herding families are unemployed and have turned to fishing to survive. Herds have progressively grown smaller, attacked by increasing numbers of wolves or slaughtered by starving families. Today in villages such as Sredniye Pakhachi, indigenous people are entirely dependent upon the summer fishing season, not only for their winter supply of dried fish, but also for fuel and food, which can be purchased from the town merchants only in exchange for caviar. Families who otherwise would not be poaching for caviar are forced economically into doing so, particularly when so few fish even make it up stream to spawn: in the 2001 season, some sixty nets put up by "legal" commercial fishing enterprises blocked the mouth of the Pakhachi river.

## 5.2 Previous Information on Sacred Sites

Descriptions of Koryak sacred sites were given by the first European explorers of Kamchatka in the nineteenth century, such as Stephan Krasheninnikov, and in the twentieth century were described by major ethnographers of the Koryak such as Vladimir Jochelson, V. V. Antropova and I. S. Vdovin.<sup>1</sup> In the Penzhinsky district, Jochelson described Nymylan settlements, each having a guardian or founder of the settlement, represented by a post with a sharpened end, usually placed on a hill overlooking a village or on a rock near the sea. (See figures 1, 2) An individual family might have their own (smaller) protector as well. The guardians were decorated with sacrificial grass and "fed" with animal fat and blood, serving "as the intermediary between the inhabitants of the village and the rulers of the sea and of the hunting grounds."<sup>2</sup> Jochelson

<sup>1</sup> See for example: Stepan P. Krasheninnikov, *Explorations of Kamchatka, North Pacific Scimitar; Report of a Journey Made to Explore Eastern Siberia in 1735-41, by order of the Russian Imperial Government*. E.A.P. Crownhart-Vaughn, trans. Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1972; A. A. Resin, *Ocherki inorodstev russkogo poberezh'ia Tikhogo okeana*. [Essays on the Aliens of the Russian Coast of the Pacific Ocean.] Sankt-Peterburg, 1888; Vladimir Jochelson, *The Koryaks*. Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. X. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1908. V. V. Antropova, *Kul'tura i byt Koriakov*. [Culture and Life of the Koryaks.] Leningrad: 1971; I. S. Vdovin, "Zhertvennye mesta koriakov i ikh istoriko-etnograficheskoe znachenie." [Sacrificial Sites of the Koryaks and their Historical-Ethnographic Meaning.] in *Religioznye predstavleniia i obriady severnykh narodov*. L.P. Potapov and S. V. Ivanov, eds. Leningrad: Nauka, 1971, pp. 275-299; I. S. Vdovin, *Ocherki etnicheskoi istorii Koriakov*, [Essays on the Ethnic History of the Koryaks.] Leningrad: Nauka, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Jochelson, *The Koryaks*, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. X. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1908, New York: AMS reprint, 1973, p. 37.

also described sacrifices of dogs, antlers of sacrificed reindeer, as well as other offerings of tobacco, tea, scraps of fabric or ornaments made to sacred hills and rocks, “which are regarded as guardians of roads and protectors of hunting.”<sup>3</sup> Based on his research in the 1960s in the Olyutorsky district, Vdovin described sacred sites as being connected primarily to the cult of ancestors. Sacred sites located near every settlement embodied ancestor-protectors of the families, called *yllaapil*, “grandmother” or *appapil* “grandfather.” A second type of sacred site, known as *tintynutenut* (from the words “will” and “land”), on paths, cliffs, mountains, points in rivers or on the ocean, and at mountain passes, represented the “owners,” that is, spirits of the sea, rivers, and mountains.<sup>4</sup>

Research resulted in the documentation and mapping of 84 sacred sites. Due to space constraints, we have chosen to present a synthesis of the research results through ten examples of sacred sites. The specific sites have been chosen to reflect the diversity of sites in the area as well as to reflect specific linkages with biodiversity conservation. The case studies are followed by a regional profile, which summarizes the main issues and challenges related to sacred sites, their management and protection in Yamal. The cultural and historical significance of sacred sites is also explained in further detail in the regional overview.

### 5.3 Selected Sacred Sites in the Olyutorsky District

*For our people, the Chavchuven, among whom I was born and grew up, the purpose of sacred sites is first and foremost to pay tribute to and honor those gone to the “upper” world, so to speak (that is to show them that you remember them and bring offerings in deference to them). Specifically, as to worshiping water-spirits and spirits of the fire, sea, land and tundra, I always make a sacrifice every time I make a fire. When at the sea, I make a sacrifice to the sea. Valeri V. Tnagirgin, Tilichiki.*

As this quote shows, sacred sites offer entry points through which people may relate spiritually to broader sacred land or seascapes. This is done in a variety of ways as illustrated by the following site descriptions.

#### 5.3.1 Ngeyuyu<sup>5</sup> Mountain Sacred Site

*Ngeyuyu Mountain* is situated 60 km to the north from the village of Sredniye Pakhachi. The mountain has a triangle shape with a flat stony surface. There is a lot of reindeer moss at the foot and on the top. The ritual consists of offering of small bits of food, tobacco, reindeer fat or beads. If a reindeer is sacrificed, small slices of meat are cut off and given to the mountain. Some pieces of sealskin and a rope made of seal leather are put at the foot of the mountain. The mountain is asked to keep its “dogs,” i.e. wolves, fastened since there are a lot of broad gullies inhabited by wolves.

##### *Moving mountains*

This mountain once moved from the village of Khailino, since there is a twin mountain near Khailino. People offered a sacrifice to one mountain and there were two of them. The other one got offended and moved closer to Sredniye Pakhachi. There is a belief that sacred sites move away when offended. Told by Reltuve A.K., Sredniye Pakhachi

As the legend illustrates, it is common to find sacred sites that have moved, been moved or (dis-)appeared for a number of reasons. Such movements point to the importance of indigenous

<sup>3</sup> Jochelson., p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> I. S. Vdovin, *Ocherki etnicheskoi istorii Koriakov*, [Essays on the Ethnic History of the Koryaks.] Leningrad: Nauka, 1973, p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> “ng” in Chukotko-Kamchatkan languages is a single sound such as that found in English “sing,” never as in “finger.”

definitions when identifying sacred sites, their location and appropriate protection measure. It also points to the importance of not viewing the current list as the final result.

### 5.3.2 Main – Aichginai Sacred Site

*Main – Aichginai* translates as “Mountain-Wave.” It is also known as “Big Shamanka” in Russian, and is situated to the north of Sredniye Pakhachi. The size and borderline are not identified. There are bears and wild sheep on the mountain. The mountain is stony. There are birch trees growing on the slope. The rocks are not high. The site is no different from the surrounding landscape. The associated ritual involves taking a small bag decorated with glass beads and filling it with reindeer fat, hare fur, tea, tobacco. One may add other things at hand. A small wooden spear is made. The bag is left open in the tundra and the spear is stuck into the ground nearby. Then everything brought to the sacred site is enumerated to it. A ritual is an inseparable part of our life.

“Once upon a time there was a great flood. People made rafts and loaded them with people and reindeer. First of all, they tried to save a cow with a calf so that they would breed in the future. They say the rafts now covered with moss have been lying on the mountain since then. This site has become sacred and now a reindeer is sacrificed here”(Omrelkot Z.P., Sredniye Pakhachi).

The legend clearly links the sacred area to stories of creation and survival of the communities not only through the dramatic happening, but also through the centrality of reindeer and the pastoral livelihood. In a symbolic way, it summarizes how sacred sites may reflect a specific indigenous way of life as well as ancestral ties to the land.

### 5.3.2 Appana Sacred Site

*Appana* is a small hill 2,5 km away from Achaivayam. It is 60 metres high and 1,5 metres wide. The hill is wave-like. Formerly, people came together there and had festivities and thereafter the hill was considered sacred. One may see a lizard or a frog on the site. According to Koryak beliefs, it is an ill omen if this happens. Every year people perform commemorations here for those who died during the year. People kill reindeer belonging to the dead. The relatives of the dead perform the ritual. The reindeer is killed and the ritual is performed according to the laws of the ancestors. For instance, having slaughtered a reindeer, they cut it so that no sinew is damaged. Then, the meat is boiled and people are treated to it. The bones are cleaned of all meat and together with the entrails and blood buried in a hole. The antlers together with the skull and first vertebrae are attached to a stick, the stick is laid down in a row with alder branches and covered with stones. (Tinetegin V.Y, Sredniye Pahachi)

### 5.3.4 Ledianaya Mountain Sacred Site

*Ledianaya (Icy) Mountain* is situated 200 kilometres up from Achaivayam village at the confluence of the Pakhacha and Apuka rivers. The mountain is 2000 meters high. There are a lot of wild sheep and bears here. On passing the site, the reindeer herders inform of their coming by making a sacrifice, lest the sacred site get offended and so that it will give people health, as well as bring them luck in hunting and reindeer herding. Usually women plead for health of their families and children and seek protection. Men pray for peace in their herds and a good hunt. They say, there are lilac-white sheep on the mountain. According to the ancestor’s legends, the sheep shouldn’t be killed since it will bring misfortunes. Even if you see a lilac-white sheep, you

shouldn't tell anyone about it. There is a popular belief that there is a path leading to the other world on the mountain. Therefore, the reindeer that break away from the herd go up this mountain and get to the "Upper People", i.e. our ancestors. (Tinetegin V.Y, Sredniye Pakhachi)

The site, on the one hand, illustrates the intimate connection to use: people may pray for a good hunt. On the other hand, the site portrays spiritual practices, which involve customary hunting prohibitions. As discussed elsewhere, sacred mountains are of further biodiversity interest due to the vertical diversity of habitat.

### 5.3.5 Chimitka Sacred Site

*Chimitka* is a small hill situated 42 kilometres away from Achaiwayam village. It has existed for a long time, evidenced through the ancient gifts left there composed of centuries-old things, such as arrows, spears, cartridges, and animal skulls covered with moss. The site has a precise borderline since it is situated on the plain tundra. The sacred site is a kind one. There is an ancient legend associated with the site. As the elders say, once upon a time there was a great flood and the water was hot. People tried to save their lives by all means. And some people with a cow and a buck escaped the flood on this small hill. Later these reindeer bred. Even higher mountains were covered with water but this one was not, it towered above as a boat on the water surface. Old people say that the hill was treated with due respect and that is why it saved people's lives. People have been treating it even more respectfully ever since (Mamak A.S. Sredniye Pakhachi).

The legend is quite similar that of *Main – Aichginai* described above. The emphasis on the importance of respecting sites and their spirits is also of importance not least in terms of mapping customary practices.

### 5.3.6 Potat-Potatg'itg'in Lake Sacred Site

*Potat-Potatg'itg'in Lake* is situated near Khailino village up the Pilga River. The borderline is not clearly identified. It is rich in fish, animals and vegetation. It is a place where bears come to fish. Some species of bird live here, some species of swans, geese, cranes, and ducks. There are a lot of berries around, cloudberry being the juiciest of them. Reindeer drink water from the lake with pleasure; it gives them strength to survive during summer droughts. The site differs from other territories by its clean and fresh air. The lake itself is beautiful. Besides, it charges you with energy and you can take in the air easily. The water in the lake is unusually yellowish and clear. The ritual involves offering gifts and food, which are brought to the site. The legend says that once a rich man migrated up to the lake and saw a mammoth tusk sticking out from the ice. He began to strike it quietly, and the tusk moved and drowned everyone. After that the lake became large."<sup>6</sup> The site has religious importance since the kind spirit of Old Pattat, a shaman, lives here. He protects and shelters everyone nearby. If a person does something bad, the old man takes his powerful drum and goes out of the lake, and an earthquake begins. (Kaninlad N.N., Sredniye Pakhachi, Tnagirgina E.G., Igilgin I.M., Khailino)

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<sup>6</sup> Vdovin writes of the *rynykamak* "horned kamaks," or evil spirits, believed by the Olyutor Koryaks to walk underneath the ground in the form of mammoths. They wouldn't directly harm someone, but could bring on earthquakes, or erupt smoke and lava from volcanoes. I. S. Vdovin, *Ocherki etnicheskoi istorii Koriakov*, [Essays on the Ethnic History of the Koryaks.] Leningrad: Nauka, 1973, p. 94.

### 5.3.7 Appapil Sacred Site

*Appapil* (“grandfather”) hill is covered by dwarf-pines and lichens except on the top. The hill is situated on the right bank of the Tilgavayam river near a place rich in spawning salmon. There are king, chum, sockeye, silver and pink salmon, whitefish, grayling, burbot, and Dolly Varden char. On the slopes there are a lot of lingonberries and northern bilberries, at the foot there are crowberries and arctic bramble. There are rare species of bird here as well, such as gyrfalcons, golden eagles, swans, cranes, geese, and ducks. The site is inhabited by moose, American mink, otters, silver foxes and, very seldom, wolves. The hill is 750-800 metres high. In comparison with Khailino, the air of the sacred site is clear and fresh. Even water lying in a puddle here may be clean, fresh and tasty. The vegetation is beautiful, and the berries are juicy and delicious. Perhaps, the fact that it is a sacred site is the reason for the air to be cleaner, the water to be colder. Besides, the site is inhabited by manifold species of bird and animal. A long time ago a big dog used to come out of the Tilgavayam river. Whoever saw it had to sacrifice his favorite dog, a puppy. Usually a reindeer or a dog was sacrificed on this site. It was obligatory that a spear should be used. The site is of religious importance since it is inhabited by the *Valgirgin* (“one from above”) spirit. He protects everything around it from any possible evil (Tnagirgina E.G., Igilgin I.M., Khailino).

### 5.3.8 Kylil Engilqen Sacred Site

*Kylil Engilqen* or “glass beads crossing” is situated on the eastern coast. It is a crossing between the Navirinvoyam River and the Ilirvoyam. The crossing is rocky without vegetation. There is nothing but stones here. There are a lot of mountains, valleys, rivers, and lakes on this territory. There are rocks, chutes, house-size boulders, springs, and shrubs. *Kylil Engilqen* stretches over a vast territory. It is situated on the crossroads of major migration routes. There is a rocky corridor with a flat bottom at the crossing. This flat plateau has a steep slope to the north-west. The fauna is diverse here. There are wolverines, lynxes, bears, foxes, snow sheep, ravens, and eagles. Eye-witnesses say that it is possible to come across 27 bears in the course of one day. The site is rich in spawning salmon of different kinds. The flora includes golden root, tansy, different sorts of lichen, etc. The landscape is dramatic, the air is absolutely clear, the spring water is very clean. The site differs from adjacent territories in that it is a mountainous area. Secondly, the flora and fauna are diverse. The most striking thing about this land is that there are a lot of bears here, they live in big groups of six to eight members. Once a boy of ten years old disappeared on this site. His family still found him and they lived happily ever after, but *Kele*, a witch, got envious of their happiness and turned them into stones lest she should see their happy faces any more. Since then, people put things at the foot of the crossing when passing by so that *Kele* won't turn their hearts into stone.

The ritual at this site differs from others: men leave ammunition and women bring jewelry. The crossing got its name due to the large amount of glass beads, earrings, and necklaces piled on the site<sup>7</sup>. The ritual is as original as the site itself: all the gifts are put under stones. (Igilgin I.M., Vavakko A.I., Khailino). A.P. Ninani, also of Khailino, describes *Kylil Engilqen* as one of the more important sacred sites, which should “be protected from looting.” The site also reflects the need for broader territorial approaches to sacred sites management:

- The site covers a large territory
- It is situated on the crossroad of major migration routes
- The area presents important mammal habitat

<sup>7</sup> Another informant, L.A. Lilkiva of Khailino, mentioned that spear and arrow heads were taken from this site for display in a museum



#### *Learning the rituals*

*My parents showed me the rituals, but never told me about the sacred sites. There was a sort of taboo. When I am going to travel or to do something important I have to give something to the place. It can be small pieces of food, or hare fur mixed with beads and reindeer fat. If it isn't possible to visit a sacred place, you put it into the fire. Fire is sacred according to the beliefs of many indigenous groups (Koryak, Even, Chukchi). You "feed" the fire on all occasions, for instance upon a successful hunt or the arrival of the guest. First, you feed the fire, then you can eat. It is a bad action to spit on a fire, it can cause a bad accident. Another sacred place is the cremation place. (See Fig. 3) It is not allowed to take anything which belonged to the cremated person (a mug, spear, knife). Once you take it, the cremated person will "take" it back in the form of someone's death (relatives). You have to return the belongings to the place. Ludmila N. Lilkiva, Khailino, a nurse*

### **5.3.9 Ngeyuyu Sacred Site**

*Ngeyuyu*, which means "satisfied" or "pleased", is a cone-shape mountain about 800m high situated 25-30km to the north of Khailino. As reindeer herders and hunters say, the borderline of this or that site is identified according to signs known to them. They use neither maps nor compasses since the people know the tundra "like their own five fingers." The wildlife inhabiting the land includes bears, wolves, hares, otters, American minks, foxes, and moose. The land is suitable for moose since there are trees and shrubs here. Gyrfalcons and golden eagles (both endangered species), snowy owls, swans, geese, cranes, ducks, and larks are among the bird species inhabiting the territory. The birds nest here. Close to the mountain there are water bodies for spawning salmon, such as silver, king, chum, sockeye, and humpback salmon. The air is fresh and light. Sacred sites differ little from the surrounding landscape. Perhaps, the sites are sacred due to the fresh air, cool water and the diversity of bird species. Throughout the centuries people have performed the same rituals bringing gifts and food to both land and water gods. On this site they usually sacrifice a reindeer or a white dog. The spear, an ancient tool of ancestors, must be used for the sacrifice. It is believed that the sacred site protects reindeer herders and travelers; it brings them luck. It is also believed to have special significance for hunting.

Long time ago there lived a husband and a wife. Once they were bewitched and turned into two sharp-pointed hills. But later it happened that they quarreled and went apart. One hill, *Ngeyuyu*, remained, and the other went far to the east (in the vicinity of Old Pakhachi). (see site #1, *Ngeyuyu*) In place of the hill there appeared a lake with a small island in the middle. During a great flood people found shelter on the summit of *Ngeyuyu* Hill. The remains of the rafts can still be observed there (Kovanko A.P., Tnagirgina E.G., Khailino).

### **5.3.10 Tintikun Sacred Site**

*Tintikun* is located on the coast, not far from Lavrov Bay. There are two lakes, which freeze alternately: one year one lake freezes, the next year, the other freezes. Dwarf birch, alder and rowanberry trees grow here, the berries are especially large. There are many birds: ducks, gulls, ravens, magpies and all kinds of smaller birds. There are a lot of animals and different fish, large and small (except for king salmon.) When people passed near this site, they would sacrifice a reindeer. This site has special significance for hunters. When they killed a seal, they offered seal fat. When reindeer herders were in the area, they would sacrifice a reindeer. Then they would take pieces of the marrow and bury these in the ground. They would not eat before they made these offerings. (Igilgin S.M., Lilkiva L.A., Ninani A.P., Khailino)

This site is located within the buffer zone of the Koryaksky Zapovednik on Goven Peninsula, and strengthened protection strategies would involve improved recognition of customary use and management with the *zapodedvik* framework.

## 5.4 Religious Beliefs and Sacred Sites

Religious beliefs among Koryaks, Chukchi, and Nymylans living in Oyutorsky District and other districts in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug are often classed as “animistic” by scholars. Western observers may think of Koryak religion as one that animates or personifies inanimate objects, such as natural features, the weather and animals. Understanding Koryak cosmology requires one to understand indigenous ideas about a person, which are not the same as Western ideas.

A person in Koryak culture consists of several spiritual forces or elements united within a unique physical configuration (a particular body). Human persons have a multifaceted soul complex. This complex soul (*uyichit*) is made up of parts from a reincarnated ancestor, an animating force (breath—*wuyevi*), and a unique spiritual element connected to a person’s fate or life course. A person’s fate is written only in gross outline: duration on earth, general happiness and prosperity, or lack thereof. The details of a person’s life are directed by the choices a person makes and the amount of power a person has to realize his or her will. The idea of an autonomous will is very important in Koryak religion because it helps us understand sacred sites.

Non-human persons include animals, spirit beings, mythical ancestors, and sacred sites. Animals are persons in a spiritual sense, and a human being’s success with regard to animals requires a good relationship between individual humans and individual animals. This is achieved through words and deeds of respect of humans towards animals, who reciprocate through letting themselves be taken as prey or enduring hardships and reproducing, in the case of domestic deer. Sacred sites are variously described by native people in Kamchatka, but a common pattern is that sacred places are localities where an autonomous, non-human person resides. This person has an autonomous will, and people must relate to this person as they would with any other powerful person—with respect. Respect is demonstrated in the form of a small offering and words (or even just thoughts) of respect. Offerings generally consist of food, tobacco, alcohol, money, and bullets, although chewing gum, beads, and even small toys (such as those found in the popular “Kinder” chocolate eggs) are sometimes used as offerings. Respectful words and thoughts are characterized by humility. Thus, one does not boast of an easy hunt, fast travel, or other success in the context of communicating with a spiritual person like a bear, or a mountain, or a river crossing. Many native people in northern Kamchatka know of a legend where a travelling couple failed to pay proper respect to a sacred hill as they stopped for the night, and the next morning the offended hill had moved many hundreds of kilometers away from that original spot. (The same is true for #1 Ngeyuyu. #7, a tree near Sredniye Pakhachi and #21, a small cliff near Apuka, both moved to new locations after being disturbed by nearby construction.)

Persons are not good or bad, but they are generally assumed to be selfish, usually acting in their own behalf. As autonomous wills, sacred sites are willful, but rarely inherently good or evil. If a human treats a sacred rock with respect, he may benefit in return with success in hunting or a speedy trip through the area. If a human offends a sacred site by acting badly, then evil will result, whether a simple lack of success in hunting, recurrent problems in travelling (breakdowns, bad weather, etc.), or more dire events (for example, death, most often through drowning). The “natural world” (from a European perspective) is thus a social world in Koryak and Chukchi cosmology. Relations to special places (sacred sites) are social relations to spiritual personae with a certain amount of power over human activities. Power, in the abstract, is at once a spiritual power and a social power, social in the sense of existing within relationships between persons.

There are problems when it comes to establishing boundaries for sacred sites. A common type of sacred site in Olyutorsky District consists of an unusual rock formation. It is easy to see the limits

of the rock; it's finite. However, the power exerted by a sacred rock can extend very far, especially when it has a clear line of sight over long distances. Thus, on one occasion I was shown a sacred rock over one kilometer distant while looking through binoculars. Later when I described this incident, I was chided for not "praying" to the rock, not expressing thoughts of respect. On the other hand, a sacred mountain near the village of Sredniye Pakhachi, "Big Shamanka" (#5) is not continuously given offerings and prayers, but only when people pass close by it on the river several kilometers upstream from town. One can understand this relationship by the analogy of greetings. One does not continuously greet a person with whom one is in constant contact, but only at the beginning of contact or when in such close proximity that it would be rude not to directly address the person.<sup>8</sup>

## 5.5 Legal Status of Sacred Sites in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug

As mentioned earlier, protection of sacred sites can potentially be achieved under existing legislation for environmental protection, cultural heritage, and indigenous peoples' rights. Unlike the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the Koryak Okrug has no regional equivalent to the federal laws regulating protected areas or objects of cultural heritage. While technically in the absence of regional laws the federal laws would apply, in practice it often seems that in order for federal laws to be implemented, regional authorities must pass their own corresponding laws and instructions.

Indigenous peoples' rights are addressed in the KAO's Charter, as well as the laws "On the Fund for Support and Development of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug" (1995), "On Fishing in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug" (1998) and "On Reindeer Herding in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug" (1998). However, sacred sites are not protected specifically by any of these laws. The okrug also introduced a law "On Territories of Traditional Nature Use in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug" in 1997. Changes now need to be made in the okrug law in order to bring it into compliance with the 2001 federal law on territories of traditional nature use. In 1998 under this law, a group of indigenous Itelmen in the Tigilsky District were able to create the Tkhsanom territory for traditional nature use with support from the World Wildlife Fund for Nature. However, the okrug's newly elected governor issued an executive order repealing Tkhsanom's legal status soon after he took office in 2001.

This is a good example of the problems faced in implementing measures to protect sacred sites in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug. Protecting these areas under environmental legislation may prove difficult at the local level because of various understandings of such laws. Local authorities and locally powerful actors are interested in developing gold and platinum mining, and they tend to resist the expansion or establishment of areas that would prohibit the possibility of attracting foreign investment for mining, or that would pose a serious threat to current wildcat mining or "geological expeditions." Additionally, many local residents understand environmental protection as the establishment of a *zapovednik*, a strict wilderness reserve, which forbids all human activity, including traditional, low-impact use such as reindeer herding or subsistence foraging.

Implementing cultural heritage legislation related to indigenous peoples in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug, as well as in Kamchatka Oblast, is likely to require considerable sensitisation and awareness raising among current authorities, who lack understanding of the special rights and requirements of indigenous peoples. Local authorities, from village mayors to the okrug governor, are often patronizing toward indigenous peoples and need further support in understanding related policies, as the case with Tkhsanom illustrates. As Olga Murashko has

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander D. King, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany

observed in the neighboring Chukotkan Autonomous Okrug, local authorities tend to oppose any measures that might limit total local control of resources, mainly in the interests of developing extractive industries.<sup>9</sup>

Developing and supporting commercial reindeer herding is one policy avenue which may prove most effective at protecting sacred sites and benefiting indigenous communities at the same time. Herding reindeer requires huge areas of open tundra and land unspoiled by mining or industrial development. Many of the sacred sites are part of a geography of reindeer herding, and regularly visited or passed nearby only by reindeer herders. Subsidies and other support for reindeer herding enterprises will be popular with all indigenous communities, whether or not they are traditionally reindeer herders. Such action is increasingly supported by non-indigenous authorities who underline enterprise and economic development in their political agendas. In response to unemployment and the ecological fragility of the area, culture-based enterprise solutions are increasingly being implemented as the most effective and locally-adapted solutions.

Reindeer herding also has the advantage that, unlike salmon and caviar production, non-wood forest (tundra) products, and craft (souvenir) production, it is an economic activity that is not subject to abuse by outsiders. However, support would have to be carefully monitored to ensure that support programs actually reach and respond to the particular needs of *herders* and other local people

## 5.6 Protected Areas

The existing system of protected areas in the Koryak okrug includes the Koryaksky Zapovednik, eight okrug level nature reserves (*zakazniks*) (a combined area of 6,576,00 hectares), and thirty nature monuments. Koryaksky Zapovednik consists of two parts: the Goven peninsula and its adjoining marine area in the Bering Sea, and the southern portion of the Parapolsky Valley; together they cover 244,156 hectares of land and 83,000 hectares of marine area. The *zapovednik* was established in 1995 to protect the wetlands of Parapolsky Valley, an important site for nesting and migratory birds, and the Koryak highlands and coastal waters of Goven peninsula. The highlands are home to brown bear, Kamchatka sable, fox, ermine, and wolverine. The shores of the Goven Peninsula are habitat of some thirty colonies of sea birds along the rocky cliffs. The falcon population here is one of the largest in the Russian Federation, and white-tailed eagle and Stellar sea eagle also nest here. The coastal waters are important habitat for spotted seal, walrus and otters.<sup>10</sup>

Twelve of the sacred sites identified by the researchers are located within the buffer zone of the Koryaksky Zapovednik on the Goven peninsula. One site (#54) is located within the *zapovednik* proper at the very tip of the peninsula, a rock at the edge of a cliff. Three other sites mentioned by informants lie within the buffer zone of the *zapovednik* in the Parapolsky Valley, in the Penzhinsky district. The protection regime for a *zapovednik* normally limits human use to scientific research; the buffer zone allows for traditional uses such as reindeer herding and non-commercial hunting and fishing.

One of the okrug's eight nature reserves (*zakaznik*), is also located within Olyutorsky District. This protected area covers the 800 hectares of Verkhoturov Island and a two-mile marine zone

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<sup>9</sup> Olga Murashko, "The Concept of an International Ethnoecological Refuge." *Hunters and Gatherers in the Modern World: Conflict Resistance, and Self-Determination*. M. B. Peter P. Schweitzer, and Robert K. Hitchcock. New York, Berghahn Books: 2000, p. 189.

<sup>10</sup> Josh Newell, ed. *The Russian Far East: Forests, Biodiversity Hotspots and Industrial Developments*. Friends of the Earth-Japan. Second Edition, forthcoming.

surrounding it. The reserve protects the island's population of white fox and marine habitat for walrus, sea lion, and spotted seal. Although the island is uninhabited, it is considered sacred (#41), as is a rock located midway between the island and Il'pyrskiy Point on the mainland (#36). Since the site is rather inaccessible, people address the site through making a fire nearby.

## 5.7 Threats

Sacred sites in the pilot region surveyed face a number of different kinds of threats. For example, the expansion of mining in Penzhinsky and Olyutorsky Districts threatens sacred sites and the pristine ecology of the okrug unless remedial action is taken now. Politicians need to find ways to make major sources of economic development, such as large-scale mining, sustainable. Platinum mining at the Levtyrinyvayam and Ledyanoy deposits in the Vyvenka river basin of Olyutorsky District has become a major source of income for the okrug. Some low-grade coal is mined at the Korf deposit in Olyutorsky district, but the okrug continues to purchase most of its coal for heating and electricity from other sources in the Russian Far East. Other deposits of alluvial gold such as the Ametistovo deposit in Penzhinsky district have been explored but not yet been developed due to lack of investors. Coal deposits in the Tigilsky District and offshore oil and gas resources in the Okhotsk sea are also being considered for development.

A forthcoming publication on biodiversity hotspots in the Russian Far East describes the potential damage mining activities can cause:

"In the areas of alluvial gold mining nearby vegetation is destroyed, and mud sedimentation ponds are installed, which leads to the rise of ground waters and the emergence of new vegetation communities on the adjacent territories which are atypical for these areas. There is an increased threat of watershed pollution by mechanical admixtures from mud sedimentation ponds, as happened in 1998 at the Ledyanoy site in Olyutor Raion [district] after damage to the pond's dike in the spring. Fortunately, pollution of the Vetvei River spawning grounds did not occur. Mining activities affect wildlife disproportionately to the land area directly affected. Machinery and vehicles frighten animals and disturb migratory and reproductive patterns. Increased accessibility to remote areas also leads to increased poaching. Swampy areas cannot support heavy traffic by tracked vehicles along makeshift roads. As sections of ATV paths degrade into bogs or ponds, drivers drive around these areas, thus increasing the damage."<sup>11</sup>

While initially residents of the village of Khailino opposed the nearby platinum mining project, after a visit to the site and a public meeting, participants concluded that mining these deposits using modern technology would not negatively affect reindeer herding. Damage from mining is not limited to large-scale operations. Geologists often do small-scale mining of precious metals; some of the informants mentioned geological activities where taking place on or near sacred sites (#64, Chengai mountain, as one informant says, "they have dug up everything there, there are fewer fish;" #70, Ingetqychgin, a mountain near the road to one of the mines; #75, Kalevinai mountain, where women gather rocks to use as tools in preparing hides; geologists are also digging there.) Another informant mentioned geologists setting fire to a sacred hill and burning all of it (#82, Qtynpyngai). At least one sacred site (#17, Pina) has managed to thwart the geologists; no matter how many times they try to put drilling rigs there, the mountain seems to throw them off. Others affirmed the damage that tractors and tracked all-terrain vehicles can cause. Informants mentioned that often people will remove objects from sacred sites to keep as souvenirs for themselves, or in some cases, for display in museums. Increased development means increased access to sites by people unfamiliar with the local culture and the existence of sacred sites.

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<sup>11</sup> Josh Newell, ed. *The Russian Far East: Forests, Biodiversity Hotspots and Industrial Developments*. Friends of the Earth-Japan. Second Edition, forthcoming.

## 5.8 Regional Recommendations

*Sacred sites become sacred due to a certain accident or on the basis of a legend. In Koryakia, there is no distinction between a men's or women's sacred site. As for protection measures, it is difficult to say what is best for the sacred sites. It would be much better if the territory where indigenous people live would belong to them. People of the North are nomadic people and they need a lot of space. Industrial development should only proceed with the complete agreement of indigenous peoples, then sacred sites would be protected. There would not be no need for local, regional, or federal measures to protect them. Valeri V. Tnagirgin, Tilichiki*

Others may agree, but simultaneously argue that there is a fundamental need for indigenous-driven, local regional and federal measures to protect sacred sites and surrounding customary territories of Indigenous Peoples. In Koryak, there is a need to support regional authorities in developing appropriate legislation and implementation measures on the protection of sacred sites. Within the framework of this project, regional researchers in the KAO and deputies of the KAO Duma developed a draft law "On the Protection of Historical, Cultural and Architectural Monuments in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug," which will be reviewed and considered for approval in late 2002.

Most people agreed that there is a need for further legislation to protect sacred sites. At the same time, they point out the difficulty of achieving protection at the local level. As A. N. Lil'kiv of Khailino observed, "I doubt we can deal with the local authorities, regional and federal powers, who must be included." Others echoed his sentiment. Sacred sites protection, people suggest, needs to be integrated in broader economic, cultural and environmental policies. As A.P. Ninani of Khailino suggests: "We shouldn't consider protection of sacred sites independently from other general measures for environmental protection." Others, as Valeri V. Tnagirgin above, emphasize the need for indigenous customary land rights and self-governance as a fundamental prerequisite. While they may be supportive of further policy development, they also insist that favourable policies may only improve protection if Indigenous Peoples are empowered as a whole through broader recognition and capacity-building.

Informants also recognized how protection needs differed among sites. As A.P. Ninani notes:

"More important sites, such as *Kylil engilqen*, should be protected from looting, as they contain objects of importance for scientific (ethnographic, archaeological, historical, etc.) research. Perhaps they [sacred sites] could serve as tourist destinations within the regime of municipal parks or *zapovedniks*. For indigenous peoples, who are without or have lost a writing system, these sacred sites are like a chronicle [written] on the earth of the history of a dying civilization....When conducting thorough ecological evaluations, making plans for development of mineral deposits, construction of roads and so on, the location of sacred sites must be taken into consideration."

While not all agree in opening sites up for tourism, A.P. Ninani raises a recurring recommendation: there is a need to recognize the value of sacred sites when conducting impact assessments in connection with resource exploration and extraction activities.

Secondly, there is a need to strengthen indigenous-driven cultural heritage protection measures as part of a new policy approach. This would among other things involve recognizing the values of broader cultural landscapes as well as protecting such sites against looting. Public awareness raising will be an important step.

There is a need for strengthened mapping and documentation efforts of existing sacred sites. In Koryak, one person expressed himself against mapping:

I am against it. People will continue to visit this place without a map. Sacred sites are sacred because only selected people know about them: natives and elders. There is no need to map them. If someone wants to visit a sacred site, he has to talk to these people, he needs to find out about the place. Each sacred site has a certain purpose, and a person not knowing the site or how it came about could find it with the map and would break the ritual rules. Valeri V. Tynagirgin

These comments are important, and reflect potential dangers if information is mismanaged or abused. As it is discussed elsewhere in this report, there is a need to improve the way in which information is collected as well as how it is managed (see thematic discussion and international section). This is extremely important to ensure that Indigenous Peoples themselves decide what to do with their sacred sites. This being said, there is also a need for official recognition in order to prevent further impact exploration, mining or other activities by outsiders.

Future work on documentation of sites in the KAO should incorporate existing material already gathered by indigenous peoples. Many folklorists, teachers, and enthusiasts have gathered legends and other information about sacred sites near their village over the years, from elders who may not be living now. Efforts should be made to include these individuals in further research.<sup>12</sup>

Mapping of sacred sites would be most useful if developed on several levels and coordinated with mapping of other information. For example, types of sacred sites could be distinguished: cremation/burial sites, village guardians, ancient settlements. Because previous settlements are often considered sacred (home to ancestral spirits), maps of known archeological sites discovered or explored in Kamchatka would also be of use. Information such as existing towns, closed/abandoned villages, existing and proposed protected areas and mineral resources slated for development could also be correlated with maps of sacred sites. The ecological significance of sacred sites would become more evident when compared with the location of fishing camps, hunting grounds, herding bases and migration routes. In addition, analysis of indigenous toponymy would further enhance the understanding of sacred sites and cultural ecology.<sup>13</sup>

There is a need to integrate project activities closer with efforts in the fields of cultural revitalization, indigenous education and capacity- building. Publication of the material gathered for this project, for example, would be of most interest to teachers in the KAO where schools are in dire need of teaching materials, and materials focused on indigenous culture are particularly welcomed. Full publication of all data collected would also be an important contribution to the ethnography of the region.

“Everyone knows that a sacred stone was “disturbed” in Tilichiki. The offense committed against the stone turned into evil energy and none of those who disturbed the stone survived.”

V. Y. Tinetegin, Sredniye Pakhachi

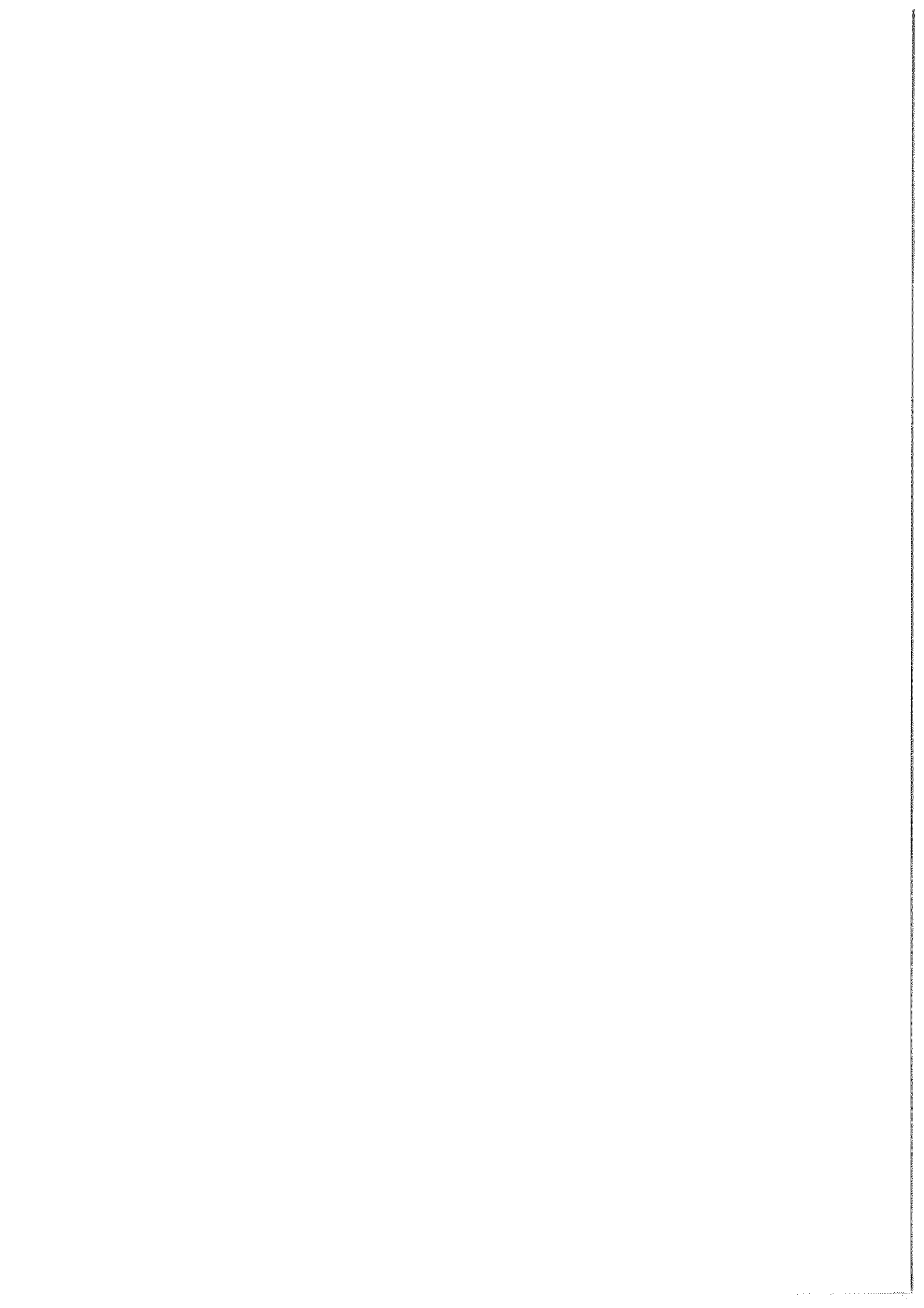
“Once a sacred stone was removed and brought to the center of Tilichiki. The stone was alive in the tundra but dried up as soon as it was removed. The people who removed the stone all perished later on. They say, God punished them. Indigenous residents worship the stone. They still keep bringing it gifts though it has been removed.”

L. A. Filippova, Tilichiki

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<sup>12</sup> Agrippina Nikolaevna Kul'u, a teacher in the village of Sredniye Pakhachi and Nina Nikolaevna Milgichil, a teacher in Manily, are two people who have collected substantial material.

<sup>13</sup> Nikolai Ivanovich Nayanov, a Koryak originally from Karaga (Karaginsky District) is a plant biologist who has been studying Koryak toponymy for years. He is now based in Irkutsk.





## Chapter 6: Indigenous Sacred Site Protection and Biodiversity Conservation: An Arctic and International Perspective

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This chapter seeks to provide a circumpolar and international perspective on the conceptual, as well as practical, issues linked to sacred sites management. It also seeks to integrate the debate with broader discussions of sacred sites, their cultural significance and appropriate protection measures.

The first section describes how the protection of sacred sites relates to international processes on cultural heritage and indigenous rights. The next section locates sacred sites protection within the context of international biodiversity conservation instruments. The third section proceeds with a discussion of Indigenous Peoples’ conceptualization and use of sacred sites. This is followed by an overview of protection regimes and mechanisms in the circumpolar region together with a number of examples from other relevant countries. Finally, the findings are distilled for further lessons learnt and good practices that are relevant in the Russian context.

Indigenous sacred sites reflect the diversity of spiritual and cultural values that Indigenous Peoples attribute to their territories, landscapes, biota and particular sites. As it has been experienced in many countries, standard definitions of sacred sites reflecting rigid notions of sacredness may exclude other notions and types of sacred sites. The analysis suggests that a global definition of sacred sites is of limited relevance, and recommends emphasizing the importance of Indigenous Peoples’ own definitions, experiences and practices.

## **6.1 International Work on Indigenous Cultural Heritage and Rights**

To what extent do international instruments in the fields of cultural heritage provide measures, instruments and protection mechanisms for indigenous sacred sites? The section presents international instruments directly related to cultural heritage, as well as human rights instruments and policies that recognize the importance of sacred sites. The two approaches represent distinct, yet inter-related, instruments to indigenous heritage. On the one hand, cultural heritage instruments recognize indigenous sacred sites as important heritage side by side with other exceptional sites. On the other hand, a number of rights instruments recognize the importance of sacred sites and ancestral lands for indigenous cultural identity and survival.

### **6.1.1 Sacred Sites and Cultural Property**

How do international concepts and use of cultural property relate or refer to sacred sites? Sacred sites encompass both tangible and intangible heritage. Apart from indigenous architecture, temple structures and other edifices, which fit within to conventional “tangible” heritage categories, sacred sites have been considerably underrepresented<sup>1</sup>. Sacred sites often include particular constellations of ceremonial objects and artifacts, which in many countries are coming under growing pressure from theft, neglect and pillage. The abuse of indigenous symbols, images or objects either commercially or culturally inappropriately is also occurring on a major scale.

The UNESCO 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, ratified by Russia, provides international standards for protecting the physical property, seeking to return important objects of, among others, spiritual importance removed from sacred sites as burial grounds and sacrifice sites. The Convention speaks of various measures including promoting “in-situ” preservation of cultural property. The recognition of indigenous definitions of cultural property plays a fundamental role in securing effective measures and can actively be pursued by the relevant government agencies and museum institutions.

### **6.1.2 Sacred Sites and Intellectual Property Protection**

Cases of abusing sacred sites and associated knowledge for commercial purposes or inappropriate use of sacred symbols have occurred in several cases<sup>2</sup>, pointing to the relevance of exploring further policy linkages to intellectual property issues as part of a comprehensive framework for sacred sites protection.

Important lessons learnt from the debate on intellectual property protection and traditional knowledge include:

1. Difficulties in approaching the collective nature and communal ownership of indigenous heritage.
2. Limited recognition of customary stewardship, use and protection mechanisms.

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<sup>1</sup> While there certainly are issues of neglect at stake here, it may – in some cases – be of indigenous interest to avoid categorization as “cultural heritage” depending upon the effect and unintended impact of national measures and protection mechanisms.

<sup>2</sup> The risk of abuse of shamanistic practices, sacred rituals, ethnobotanical knowledge and sites for commercial or other purposes is a real threat and issue in many countries (Posey and Dutfield 1996, WIPO 2001).

3. Contradictions between ancestral-based history of collective ownership vs. time-bound ownership of certain types of intellectual property protection
4. The limited linkages to and integration with national and international instruments recognizing Indigenous Peoples' rights (for example, only describing communities as knowledge holders rather than rights holders).
5. The continuous limited participation of Indigenous Peoples in Intellectual Property protection debates and policy making
6. Difficulties in implementing measures for effective Indigenous control over disclosure and use over traditional knowledge.

The non-codified status of much traditional knowledge, including that related to sacred sites, has rendered it an easy target for abuse. Communities can through their own documentation and registration efforts raise awareness among regional and federal authorities, as well as agencies in charge of cultural heritage, concerning such heritage as well as protecting their traditional knowledge. This may involve:

1. Providing authorities with typical descriptions of indigenous heritage associated with sacred sites for further policy development to prevent their removal, sale or inappropriate use.
2. Establishing register methods, which allow Indigenous Peoples to keep certain types of information confidential or prevent abuse or outside patent efforts. A growing body of Indigenous Peoples' experiences in this area involve, for example, providing tiered levels of access to different types of knowledge. Such approaches allow keeping certain knowledge components confidential, and other elements public, permitting to apply both positive and defensive protection strategies.

Indigenous Peoples may push for various forms of traditional knowledge registers to prevent abuse as a form of *defensive protection*<sup>3</sup> (as promoted by the Saami Council, WIPO 2001). In terms of *positive legal protection*<sup>4</sup>, they may not necessarily be in support of applying conventional Intellectual Property measures, but rather support the development of *sui generis* solutions (Simpson 1997:173, WIPO 2002a). The latter are being developed in a growing number of countries (WIPO 2002b) with relevance for the Russian context. Furthermore, there has been some recognition from Russian side within WIPO that existing legislation does not offer effective protection for traditional knowledge such as non-material expressions of folklore<sup>5</sup>. The variety of approaches and experiences need to be carefully analysed by Indigenous Peoples and governments as options for inspiration rather than blue print solutions. While only partially addressing sacred

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<sup>3</sup> The term “defensive protection” refers to measures aimed at preventing the acquisition of intellectual property rights over traditional knowledge by parties other than the customary traditional knowledge holders themselves (WIPO 2002a).

<sup>4</sup> Positive legal protection refers to the use of existing intellectual property or contractual rights or the development of *sui generis* rights to enable the affirmative protection of traditional knowledge by and for traditional knowledge holders themselves (WIPO 2002a).

<sup>5</sup> Although the 1999 law of folk-arts crafts provides positive protection of inventions and industrial designs based on traditional knowledge, it does not protect traditional knowledge itself (Russian Delegation quoted in WIPO 2001). Furthermore “works that had never enjoyed protection on the territory of the Russian Federation should be deemed to have entered the public domain” (ibid:13). This, evidently, puts the protection of traditional knowledge and practices of Russian Indigenous Peoples in an extremely vulnerable situation.

sites and associated knowledge<sup>6</sup>, defensive protection approaches could form an important element in a sacred sites protection strategy.

### 6.1.3 Sacred Sites and the World Heritage Convention

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted in 1972 ([www.unesco.org/whc](http://www.unesco.org/whc)), protects 721 sites split into 554 cultural sites, 144 natural sites and 23 mixed sites. Many sites overlap with indigenous customary territories, although only a few are recognized as such. It has been argued that a considerable number of sacred sites, particularly sacred mountains, could be added to the World Heritage List. The addition of cultural landscape categories and their criteria in the early 1992 is of particular relevance. Criteria (iii, iv and vi) for the inclusion of cultural properties are of direct relevance for indigenous sacred site nomination. Sacred sites may often correspond to these criteria, and there may, not least in the Russian context, be overlap with one or more of the four criteria for natural sites.

Tongariro in New Zealand, Uluru Kata-Tjuta in Australia, Sukur in Nigeria and the Laponian Area in Sweden are among the only areas listed as cultural landscapes with an indivisible connection between natural and cultural heritage and an important spiritual significance. Such associative cultural landscapes have been defined as:

“large or small contiguous or non-contiguous areas and itineraries, routes or other linear landscapes – these may be physical entities or mental images embedded in a people’s spirituality, cultural tradition and practice. The attributes of associative cultural landscapes includes the intangible, such as the acoustic, the kinetic and the olfactory, as well as the visual.” ([www.unesco.org/whc/archive/cullan95.htm](http://www.unesco.org/whc/archive/cullan95.htm)).

In the circumpolar region in general, and Russia in specific, there is a good foundation for a campaign for the inscription and re-nomination of properties on the World Heritage List that hold indigenous values, including cultural landscapes, ‘mixed’ cultural/natural properties, cultural properties and natural properties. A case in point involves the Volcanoes of Kamchatka (<http://valhalla.unep-wcmc.org/unesco/sites/124387.htm>, Kasten 1998). To reach more active involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the designation and management of World Heritage sites will require further dialogues concerning national legislation and implementation measures, as well as further consultations with Indigenous Peoples concerning criteria for highlighting the importance of sacred sites.

### 6.1.4 Sacred Sites as Indigenous Heritage

Sacred sites can also be considered more specifically as part of indigenous heritage as such without necessarily seeking to classify it as cultural, natural or of exceptional universal value. In the 1995 “Principles & Guidelines for the Protection of the Heritage of Indigenous People”, by Erica-Irene Daes, the comprehensive definition of indigenous heritage is provided in articles 11 and 12 includes sacred sites as an example of immovable cultural property belonging to indigenous heritage.

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<sup>6</sup> It is clear that the Indigenous Peoples in Russia face a number of other threats as well in maintaining sacred sites and associated knowledge. These include bridging inter-generational gaps, cultural marginalization as well as a number of external threats.

In article 31, it particularly notes that:

31. Governments should take immediate steps, in cooperation with the Indigenous Peoples concerned, to identify sacred and ceremonial sites, including burials, healing places, and traditional places of teaching, and to protect them from unauthorized entry or use.

In article 57, it is further noted that:

57. In collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and Governments concerned, the United Nations should develop a confidential list of sacred and ceremonial sites that require special measures for their protection and conservation, and provide financial and technical assistance to Indigenous Peoples for these purposes.

This has not been put in practice yet, but certainly points to the relevance of this project. Indeed, Russia could very well spearhead such an initiative at the national level.

#### **6.1.5 Sacred Sites as a Basic Right and Integral to Indigenous Identities**

Compared to notions of cultural heritage, instruments dealing with the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples situate sacred sites as part of a broader set of collective rights. Sacred sites and ancestral territories are inseparable, it is argued, from the cultural identity and customary rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The central message from these instruments and Indigenous Peoples' representatives is that protecting sacred sites is interlinked with protecting indigenous rights to their territories and self-determination. In other words, they emphasize how effective sacred site protection relies on ensuring indigenous control and management of ancestral lands, water and seas. They also recognize how sacred sites play a fundamental role for the cultural identities of Indigenous Peoples.

While Indigenous Peoples rarely cease to emphasize this intimate connection, the selected instruments presented below seek to build this into a broader rights framework.

- ILO Convention No. 169 “concerning indigenous and tribal peoples” ([www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)) has been ratified by Denmark and Norway, while a number of other Arctic countries, including Russia, have considered ratification for a number of years. Article 7 stresses the right of Indigenous Peoples to decide on their own priorities for the process of development as it affects... their spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use.” Article 8 emphasizes the right to retain their own customs and institutions, and explicitly raises the issue of customary law. Together with article 13, which requires governments to “respect the special importance for the cultures and spiritual values of the peoples concerned of their relationships with the lands or territories”, and article 14 concerning their land rights, the Convention creates a strong policy foundation for indigenous-driven protection of sacred sites within the framework of customary rights and self-determined cultural priorities.

- The "Proposed American Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (<http://www.summit-americas.org/Indigenous/Indigenous-Declaration-end.htm>) includes a number of references with direct relevance to sacred sites. Article X on spiritual and religious freedom, notes that states, in collaboration the peoples concerned, "shall adopt effective measures to ensure that their sacred places, including burial sites, are preserved, respected and protected." Article XIV states that Indigenous Peoples have the right "to assembly and to the use of their sacred and ceremonial areas".
- The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/ind\\_main.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/ind_main.htm)) is often emphasized by Indigenous Peoples as a comprehensive framework. Key articles with direct relevance for sacred site protection include on the right to practice and revitalize cultural traditions and customs. Article 13 specifically states:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of human remains. States shall take effective measures, in conjunction with the Indigenous Peoples concerned, to ensure that indigenous sacred places, including burial sites, be preserved, respected and protected.

Together with article 26 on the rights "to own, develop, control and use the lands and territories", this recognizes customary laws and tenure systems and provides a strong foundation together with ILO Convention 169 for a rights-based framework to sacred site protection.

International instruments related to cultural heritage, indigenous heritage and indigenous rights provide different angles on sacred site protection. As will be discussed in further detail below, addressing sacred sites from a single angle, such as cultural heritage, entails certain disadvantages compared to the more holistic approaches envisioned through the indigenous heritage guidelines and the indigenous rights instruments. All options do, however, offer diverse frameworks for supporting further sacred site protection provided they are followed-up by national recognition, reporting, and implementation mechanisms.

Recognition as an international heritage site can act as an important safeguard to protect a cultural landscape against further exploitation. It may ensure that impact assessments are requested, consultation processes are initiated and the prior informed consent of indigenous communities is received. Rights-based frameworks, as provided through ILO Convention 169 and the draft declaration, recognize that Indigenous Peoples have the right to pursue the use and protection of their sacred sites as part of their own development priorities and customary rights. A fundamental priority of Indigenous Peoples concern the protection, maintenance and use of their ancestral lands, often identified as biodiversity hotspots.

## 6.2 International Processes linking Biodiversity Conservation and Sacred Sites

There are at least seven inter-related arguments, which link indigenous sacred sites to biodiversity conservation efforts.

1. Most Indigenous Peoples emphasize the importance of protecting their rights to healthy environments and the biological diversity on their territories. Sacred sites are part of a broader indigenous vision of land, which goes beyond resources and land as commodities.
2. The majority of sacred sites and areas in the circumpolar region are natural sacred sites, which are inextricably linked to local habitat, geological formations and landscapes. Their presence provides biodiversity-related values, enhances cultural landscape protection, and facilitates adapting ecosystem management to local conditions.
3. Most remaining wilderness areas of conservation importance overlap with Indigenous Peoples traditional territories (Oviedo, Maffi & Larsen 2000).
4. International conservation trends, policies and standards today recognize the importance of Indigenous Peoples, their rights and distinct cultures as a fundamental step towards effective biodiversity conservation.
5. Indigenous Peoples can, as local conservation partners, contribute with ecological knowledge and adapted conservation strategies in countering paper parks and ineffective conservation policies. Sacred site protection can form part of innovative ways of building protected area networks, corridors and integrating protected areas in surrounding landscapes.
6. The very presence of sacred areas and sites may in many cases be the only community-driven protection efforts that are sustained in the long term compared to the short-term interventions of government agencies and international organizations. Sacred sites provide obvious cases of local values to nurture, strengthen and integrate in management planning and regulation building.
7. Finally, a number of the Arctic countries have legally binding treaties with Indigenous Peoples, which have been adopted in legislation or through constitutional protection measures. These establish Indigenous Peoples, their governance systems and communities as equal partners in conservation planning and implementation.

The identification of sacred sites in the conservation planning process can secure a win-win situation, where sacred sites contribute to biodiversity conservation and biodiversity conservation contributes to sacred site protection. Nevertheless, it is also clear that indigenous practices as such do not imply conservation. Conservation of large predators may, for example, be in conflict with reindeer herding. However, sacred sites can, and should be, emphasized as part of a socio-cultural landscapes constituting the ecosystem concerned.

It is today acknowledged that most ecosystems have been, and continue to be, substantially influenced by human presence. Pastoralists lead their herds to certain areas. Agriculturalists cut certain trees, while leaving others. There are, for example, well-documented studies that Native Americans in northern Alberta “regularly and systematically burned habitats to influence the local

distribution and relative abundance of plant and animal resources” (McNeely 2002:11). This also helps us, it can be argued, to better understand how to take a conservation perspective on sacred areas of Indigenous Peoples. We should not merely be asking whether sacred areas matter for biodiversity conservation taking a narrow species or habitat focus, but in fact understand how sacred areas matter and function as part of an ecosystem.

### **6.2.1 The Convention on Biological Diversity**

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) ratified by all Arctic countries, except the USA, is of particular relevance. Article 8(j) notes that each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible, and as appropriate:

“Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices”.

This provision is of critical importance for the protection of natural sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples as governments are to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices. Sacred areas constitute and reflect customary knowledge, innovation and practices. Natural sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples are of crucial relevance for the conservation of biodiversity, not just because they often enhance protection, but also because they form a crucial part of the ecosystem. The programme of work on article 8(j) includes a number of relevant components such as participation in policy development and protected area management.

#### **Impact Assessments and Sacred Sites: CBD Recommendations & Draft CBD guidelines**

The CBD Recommendations adopted at the CBD Conference of Parties (COP 6) for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments<sup>7</sup> (Decision VI/10) provide useful guidance on integrating sacred sites concerns in impact assessments. Much in line with the conclusions from this study, they recommend integrating cultural, environment and social impact assessments as a single process. They include the identification of beliefs and religions, sacred sites and ritual ceremonies as well as customary practices, systems of natural resource use and patterns of land use. Impacts on subsistence, livelihood and other needs should be assessed together with key socio-economic elements such as traditional systems of food production, income and asset distribution. The recommendations emphasize the “need to respect both the custodians and holders of traditional knowledge and knowledge itself” stressing that “indigenous and local communities should be fully and effectively involved in the assessment process”.

Guidelines are in the making, which will provide further directions on the conduct of cultural (CIA), environmental (EIA) and social impact (SIA) assessments. Further considerations include respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples under national laws, the use of the precautionary principle and the establishment and review of dispute resolution procedures. The guidelines

<sup>7</sup> The full title of the recommendation is “Recommendations for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments regarding developments proposed to take place on, or which are likely to impact on, sacred sites and on lands and waters traditionally occupied or used by indigenous and local communities”.



recommend agreement building with affected communities. It is specifically noted in regard to possible impacts on sacred sites ‘and associated ritual or ceremonial activities’ that:

50. When developments are proposed to take place within indigenous and local community territories, personnel associated with such developments should recognize that many sacred sites, and areas or places of other cultural significance may have important functions with respect to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and, by extension, the maintenance of the natural resources upon which such communities rely for their subsistence.

51. If it is necessary that the potential impact of a proposed development on a sacred site be assessed, the assessment process should also include the selection of an alternative site for development in consultation with the site custodians and the affected community as a whole. Where a sacred site is to be affected by a proposed development, and in cases where no law exists to protect the site, the concerned indigenous and local community may wish to develop protocols regarding the site in the context of the proposed development. “

The CBD recommendations and future guidelines provide important tools and an important international platform for Arctic countries to strengthen approaches to further integrate different types of impact assessments.<sup>8</sup> (UNEP 2001b & UNEP 2002).

A number of other CBD articles are also of relevance for sacred sites protection. These include:

Article 10c on the protection of customary use of biological resources “according to their traditional cultural practices compatible with conservation and sustainable use.” Indigenous Peoples have stressed the importance of recognizing their fundamental rights as a necessary step to reach effective implementation of article 8(j).

Article 17.2 on the repatriation and return of information.

Further activities involve linking biodiversity conservation closely to efforts seeking to protect customary land rights and traditional occupations. While recognition of indigenous lands and waters is not explicitly addressed in the CBD, national approaches in terms of CBD implementation in the Arctic point to the significant potential and importance of strengthening ancestral land-based approaches to biodiversity conservation, co-managed protected areas and ecosystem management. Indigenous Peoples’ organizations can strengthen the integration of sacred site management in these processes by emphasizing the importance of the issue when dealing with broader issues related to biodiversity conservation on their customary territories.

## **6.2.2 The World Heritage Convention and Natural Sacred Sites**

The World Heritage Convention (WHC) provides some potential for the protection of natural sacred sites through its recognition of cultural landscapes and the combined use of criteria for natural heritage sites.

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<sup>8</sup> As highlighted by several indigenous representatives present at COP6, the concept of Prior Informed Consent, although questioned by Canada, plays an essential role in the effect of this work in progress

Beyond the nomination, a number of experiences within the WHC framework are of direct relevance for further work in the Russian Arctic. This concerns:

- The re-nomination or re-designation of existing natural heritage sites to recognize the presence of indigenous groups. Cases to consider include the Kamchatka volcanoes, Lake Baikal, Virgin Komi Forests and the Golden Mountains of the Altai (for list, see Butorin 1998).
- Integration of customary and community-based co-management of natural heritage sites inhabited by Indigenous Peoples. Several other countries have experiences in this direction including Pacific countries as New Zealand (Tongariro), Australia (Kakadu, Great Barrier Reef, Uluru-Kata Tjuta) and the Solomon Islands (East Rennel).
- Strengthening practical co-management mechanisms and tools to reflect customary tenure, use and presence.

Reporting mechanisms and international discussions within the WHC framework can raise substantial national as well as international awareness of problems faced on the ground. At the 25<sup>th</sup> WHC session, for example, the government of Russia was requested to provide a “state of conservation report” on threats including lack of management, hunting and gold mining identified in the Kamchatka Volcanoes protected area complex, and that “any change to the boundaries of this site requires a full analysis of biodiversity issues, ecosystems, migration routes and indigenous people issues” (WHC-2001/CONF.205/10). The protection of sacred sites should form an integral part of such efforts.

### 6.2.3 Man and Biosphere Reserves

The 408 Man and Biosphere (MAB) reserves are “areas of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems promoting solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.” The Seville strategy emphasizes to:

Establish, strengthen or extend biosphere reserves to include areas where traditional life styles and indigenous uses of biodiversity are practiced (**including sacred sites**), and/or where there are critical interactions between people and their environment (e.g., peri-urban areas, degraded rural areas, coastal areas, freshwater environments and wetlands) (emphasis added). <http://www.unesco.org/mab/docs/stry-5.htm>

There is a need for further work to ensure effective “multi-functional” biosphere reserves, which recognize and protect Indigenous Peoples’ sacred sites. Out of the 25 MAB sites in Russia, several cover sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples. Given the recognition of its importance in the Sevilla strategy, there is good potential to seek for the integration of sacred sites issues in the management planning of existing reserves as well as strengthening processes of indigenous-driven sacred sites or complexes of sites for further biosphere establishment. This being said, it should also be noted that the majority of MAB reserves have a poor track record in terms of their management effectiveness.

### 6.2.4 Broader Conservation Circles and Protected Area Issues

Major conservation organizations and institutions such as the IUCN, World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have issued resolutions and developed guidelines on Indigenous Peoples, conservation and protected areas. The Ramsar Convention includes guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities’ and indigenous people’s participation in the management of wetlands ([http://www.ramsar.org/key\\_guide\\_indigenous.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/key_guide_indigenous.htm)). The statements reflect the growing recognition by protected area officials and Indigenous Peoples to address their common concerns and identify

was forward. To what extent effective solutions are found on the ground differs considerably across regions and will require further monitoring, but they do provide a platform for strengthening co-management with Indigenous Peoples (Larsen 2000). Protected area systems and categories are evolving rapidly. Sacred areas are increasingly recognized as of considerable importance for conservation, just as the cultural values and significance is being recognized as a value in itself to be highlighted as a protected area objective. This is not an evident process. Both land claim and protected area management regimes have a tendency to be heavily influenced by Western systems, tools and methodologies neglecting customary law and practices.

IUCN defines a protected area as:

“An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other means”.

Particularly, categories V and VI of the IUCN System of Protected Area Management Categories (see annex 1), or a combination of several categories, offer an opportunity to make clear references to the sacred areas of Indigenous Peoples. All this, however, depends on national legislation and implementation mechanisms. While there are increasing examples of references to cultural landscapes and sites of cultural significance, most Indigenous Peoples issues in protected areas relate to governance or management issues such as the ownership questions, regulation of use and zoning.

The WCPA/IUCN and WWF principles and guidelines on protected areas and indigenous, traditional peoples (<http://www.panda.org/resources/publications/sustainability/indigenous2/>), recognize indigenous association with and rights to ancestral territories and promote conservation agreement building with Indigenous Peoples. The right to “maintain and enjoy their cultural and intellectual heritage, particularly their cultural patrimony contained in the protected areas” provides a point of reference to integrate sacred site management in such agreement building.

The WCPA (<http://wcpa.iucn.org/>) undertakes a number of initiatives with relevance for natural sacred sites. The upcoming World Parks Congress in Durban, 2003 will be a major event in this respect. The Task Force on ‘non-material values of protected areas’ has sacred sites on its agenda and has planned activities for the Congress. The Task Force on Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA) and a number of indigenous organizations are currently planning a number of interventions and publications for the World Parks Congress. The Congress will offer several opportunities to move the policy agenda on indigenous peoples and protected areas in general, and sacred sites, in particular. .

There is a growing recognition of indigenous rights in conservation circles accompanied with an increase of tools, processes and guidelines promoting indigenous-driven approaches to conservation. It will, however, depend on the indigenous communities, on the one hand, and the conservation strategies and institutions, on the other hand, as to how protected areas can assist in protecting sacred sites (and vice versa). Indigenous communities will need to calculate the costs and benefits when undertaking discussions with protected area authorities. This will depend on their shared understanding of their sacred areas and their protection needs as well as awareness of the protected area system. The need for better assessment, monitoring and reporting tools and mechanisms will be essential for this process. CPAN provides an ideal international framework for promoting such practices.

### 6.2.5 Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN)

Since the eight Arctic countries in 1996 endorsed the plan to establish CPAN, the need for it has grown steadily along with the increasing major development initiatives in the region (WWF 2002). The Rovaniemi Declaration/ AEPS in 1991 had already stated that the “development of network of protected areas shall be encouraged with due regard for the needs of Indigenous Peoples”. The process led by Russia and Norway has since then resulted in principles and guidelines as well as a gap analysis. In the Russian Arctic, the initial mushrooming of new protected areas has slowed down.

A recent CPAN gap analysis (Lysenko et al. 2000, see <http://www.caff.is>) for the Russian Arctic presents a number of gaps pointing to the urgent importance of strengthening the inclusion of customary lands and waters of Indigenous Peoples in the CPAN. A consistent approach needs to be taken to Indigenous Peoples as stewards of their lands, waters and seas as part of the CPAN. Such approaches are possible through the IUCN Protected Area categories, the Biosphere approach and the GEF Biodiversity Conservation Program Framework for Russia. The latter, for example, stresses the diverse forms of protected areas necessary including ethno-ecological zones. Not only can this increase areas under coverage, the IUCN categories in general, and categories V and VI in particular, offer a scientific foundation for strengthening the role of ethno-ecological zones, protected natural territories and natural sacred sites as part of the network of protected areas in the Russian Arctic.

Indigenous Peoples’ organizations in other Arctic countries have, at times, criticized protected area processes for neglecting their customary institutions and rights. Criticisms have concerned PA categories, zoning and user rights. Indigenous Peoples have also highlighted the, at times, dubious mechanisms and measures to institute ‘co-management.’ In contrast perhaps with other Arctic countries, the relationship between conservationists and Indigenous Peoples in Russia has been characterized by collaboration rather than conflict (Køhler & Wessendorf 2002:11).

The challenge is not simply to make sacred areas and other indigenous lands and waters part of a protected area network, but also to seek strengthen practical management models and mechanisms where indigenous communities participate in the designation, design and management of these protected areas. This is fundamental to *effectively* integrate sacred sites and other indigenous lands and waters as part of the CPAN.

The 1998 CPAN strategy and action plan included to “involve local and Indigenous Peoples, and their needs, concerns, and knowledge, in the identification, establishment, and management of protected areas”. A 4-year implementation plan issued in 2002, includes a number of action points listed in the matrix below with potential linkages to Indigenous Peoples ancestral lands and sacred sites:

Key points from the 4-year implementation plan <sup>9</sup>	
Action points	Suggested action
PA enhancement (assess gaps and strengthen national networks of PAs)	Assess overlap between protected area gaps and Indigenous Peoples territories Strengthen the integration of Indigenous Peoples sacred sites and ancestral territories as part of protected area network (follow-up to new PA category “territories of traditional nature use”)
Stakeholder participation: Improve involvement of local and Indigenous Peoples and other stakeholders in the establishment and management of protected areas.  Develop methods to better inform public and political individuals and networks and to improve their support of the values of Arctic ecosystems and understanding of the role of protected areas in countering imminent threats to these values.	Facilitate strengthening of PA identification, designation and management mechanisms to accommodate indigenous rights to, and management, of sacred sites and ancestral territories.  Raise awareness of indigenous cultural and spiritual values in general, and sacred sites in specific, as part of valuing Arctic ecosystems. Highlight the role of protected areas in combining both natural and cultural values.
Marine protected areas	Explore potential and practical opportunities for working with indigenous communities in establishing co-managed marine protected areas reflecting sacred seas, customary use areas and rights.
Establishing linkages (enhancing management effectiveness through CAFF collaboration)	Develop grassroots support initiative in selected areas of field sites (Yamal/ Kamchatka) to enhance the integration of sacred sites and ancestral territories with effective protected area management.
Management and monitoring (biodiversity and anthropogenic impacts)	Develop and initiate community-based monitoring programme with indigenous communities.

ECORA, the GEF project co-sponsored by CAFF, UNEP and the Russian Federation also offer key opportunities for integrating sacred sites management with ecosystem management through its planned three model areas (Kolguev Island (Nenets Autonomous Okrug); Indigirka River Basin (Yakutia/Sakha Republic); and Beringovsky (Chukotka Autonomous Okrug)).

Conservation efforts increasingly involve a valuation process to determine the competing values and demands attached to a specific area. It is of critical importance that natural sacred areas are included in such a valuation process. Not only will this recognize spiritual and cultural values attached to the land, but also enhance local ownership and commitment to conservation initiatives. This needs to be undertaken in both proactive conservation efforts (protected area and landscape conservation), as well as preventive and mitigation efforts before development is undertaken such as environmental impact assessments. The methodologies are today available to ensure that sacred areas are recognized and assessed in both types of processes.

<sup>9</sup> Institutional changes within the Arctic Council may have some practical implications for the implementation of such initiatives. This may involve increasing collaboration on monitoring with AMAP. A recommendation to increase CAFF work on living resources may also involve increasing emphasis on IUCN categories V and VI. Reindeer herding and monitoring have already been identified. As discussed elsewhere, there is a close connection between sacred sites and customary livelihoods offering an opportunity to integrate sacred sites management in this context as well.

## 6.3 Indigenous Conceptualization and Use of Sacred Sites

### 6.3.1 Similarities and Differences

What do we know about Arctic Indigenous Peoples and their perceptions of sacred sites? The circumpolar region has low population densities, but high densities of landscapes imbued with meaning and cultural diversity. It is generally recognized that Indigenous Peoples have spiritual relationships to their territories, which go way beyond a reductionist view of land and natural resources as mere commodities. This relationship may concern specific species, landscapes, ancestral lands or “Mother Earth”, as it is highlighted in many indigenous statements.

“Sacred lands is a serious topic. It is of increasing concern to Aboriginal people and should also be of increasing concern to non-Aboriginal people. When our people say, “ I am the environment, for the land and me are the same,” a lot of non-Indians interpret those statements metaphorically. Philosophically, from a world point of view, non-Indian societies do not live in reality” (Leroy Little Bear at the Sacred Lands Conference, University of Manitoba 1996)

“We all need to remember that the spirit of the land is connected to the spirit within each one of us which in turn connects us to the Creator. There has never been a separation from this, even when our culture was at its lowest ebb. We need to acknowledge the spiritual connection within each of us here today so Mother Earth can continue to provide for us. We need to begin a universal change of thought to preserve Mother Earth and to enable all of us to co-exist in harmony with Mother Earth.” (Vandenbroeck 1998:xiii)

These statements emphasize the need for a change in conventional thinking in order to understand that sacred areas are very real and important for Indigenous Peoples. The emphasis here is on illustrating particular aspects and characteristics rather than presenting an in-depth description of the significance of sacred sites.

Sacred sites are not simply of archaeological, historical or biological significance, they are first and foremost of indigenous spiritual and cosmological significance. They are the locus for crucial daily social interactions, as well as the ceremonial reproduction of indigenous cultural identities and social relationships. On the one hand, this is reflected in cosmological relationships linking land, creation stories and the indigenous communities. On the other hand, this is reflected through the intimate relationship between humans and animals. Sacred sites evoke notions of power, centrality and areas of spiritual access (Bernbaum 1996). Indigenous cosmologies place enormous weight and priority on building harmony between the physical world and the spiritual world. Sacred sites may function as entry points for building these bridges. It is not least this presence of spirits protecting animals (Schlesier 1998) associated with certain sites and hunting taboos, which have attracted the attention of ecologists and conservation practitioners.

A fundamental similarity is how sacred sites reflect and are inter-linked with customary collective<sup>10</sup> notions of territory. Simultaneously, it is also clear that indigenous visions of the sacred sphere

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<sup>10</sup> This being said, there are cases among the Saami, for example, where sacred areas (mountains) could be owned or listed in the name of particular individuals. Common types of privately-held sacred areas include burial grounds or graves. This research also documents a number of cases Russia, although sacred sites are predominantly held collectively.

often involve individuals entering personal relationships with the supernatural (Cummins and Whiteduck 1998). Although individuals or certain groups, such as shamans, women or elders, may have specific roles in relation to sacred sites, this takes place in accordance with customary laws and practices. Shamans may be the only ones accessing certain sites, but this does not permit him or her to transfer ownership outside the community. Sacred sites form an integral part of customary practices and territory.

### 6.3.2 Indigenous Definitions of Sacredness

While historical inter-linkages, long winters, the taiga or the tundra may certainly set a similar stage, one needs to be wary of assuming cultural similarities. Sacred areas is, indeed, one area where differences in perception, understanding and use need to be valued in order to allow for indigenous communities' own perceptions to gain presence.

There may not be indigenous categories, which exactly correspond to the coverage of the English 'sacred site'. Even in English, it can be argued that concepts such as 'sacred areas' or 'sacred landscapes' better encompass indigenous conceptions and significance. In fact, Indigenous Peoples typically apply a diversity of categories to reflect the range of relationships to nature, sites and space. In some cases, sites are not categorized as such, but rather related to specific events, accompanying ceremonies or particular peoples or groups. Sacred sites may or may not have physical markers such as Saami *seite* trees or stones or Inuit *inukshuk* stone structures. Indigenous communities may distinguish between a variety of sites including fertility sites, fasting sites, ceremonial sites, burial grounds and others. A good example of indigenous-driven categorization of sacred came out of collaborative research with the Dogrib, who define five categories of sacred sites:

1. Goghanaiᑯii<sup>11</sup> - "It tells us"
2. Weyiidii - "Spirit animals, Dwelling"
3. Nàte K'è - "Dreaming Places"
4. Kwe Nezi - "Good Rock"
5. Dqkw'qq Whetqq - "Graves"
6. A 6<sup>th</sup> category was added by the researchers to cover places of mythological or historical significance (Andrews et al 1998)

Indigenous categories make sense through indigenous languages, cosmologies and histories. Direct translation may not necessarily convey their significance, and indeed, may also pose problems in terms of administrative recognition. Nevertheless, this is part of the challenge of securing the recognition and protection of sacred sites. As such, sacred sites may not be associated with a type of site, but rather with a history of lived experience. This lived experience in turn reflects the diversity of ecological, cultural and historical spaces and events among Arctic peoples resulting in a multitude of types of sacred sites.

In Canada, the processes leading to land claims within the last few decades have also been instrumental in highlighting the importance of sacred sites. It was, for example, clear for the Gwich'in after the settlement of their Land Claim Agreement in 1992 and a workshop in 1994 that there was a need to ensure "that spiritual values of the lands should be respected and the traditional

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<sup>11</sup> The original paper includes appropriate Dogrib alphabet/ typography. This is an approximate attempt to replicate it.

knowledge must be passed on to future generations” (GRRB 1997). Research related to the Algonquin Nation Claim in Ontario thus, for example, documented 52 sites including burial sites, sites with petroglyphs or pictographs, places where supernatural events were observed and two traditional fasting sites (Cummins & Whiteduck 1998:5).

So-called wild rice (*manomin*), as defined by the Ontario government (Chapeskie 1999), are in fact cultivated by the Ojibway, who perceive its propagation as a spiritual experience. The sacred aspects are clear and closely related to Ojibway spirituality, but this may not qualify them as “sacred sites”. *Manomin* thus neither fit into classical notions of untouched nature, nor into conventional Western notions of sacred institutions and monuments.

The Kazan River Fall Caribou Crossing (Nunavut), was essential for inland Inuit who cherished the land at crossing areas to ensure that caribou herds would return every year on their migration routes (Buggey 2000). For the outside observer, this may again not correspond to the standard criteria for sacredness.

The challenge is, therefore, not to fit indigenous sacred sites into conventional categories, but rather to reflect locally lived cultural experiences. Sacred sites of the Arctic region and elsewhere play a fundamental role in the well-being and everyday lives of Arctic peoples and their relationships with their environment. Indigenous Peoples again and again emphasize that a holistic approach is needed to understand the role and significance of their sacred sites, which form part of a broader vision of the indigenous cultural landscapes or space.

Still, there may be a danger of over-focusing on ceremonial or burial sites and neglecting the broader processes affecting indigenous territory. As Rodney Bobiwias, Director of First Nations House, Toronto noted:

“... while the desecration of Native ceremonial sites is worse than deplorable, the isolation of that particular obscures the overall despoiling of the land by industrial societies addicted to luxury and excess (1998:207).”

There are intimate ties between traditional occupations and sacred areas. It makes little sense, for a considerable number of sacred areas, to understand their significance in a vacuum from the livelihoods, which surround and interlink with them. Indigenous Peoples depend on the land for their everyday survival. Adaptation, appreciation and understanding of the landscape links traditional occupations closely with sacred sites. In a Saami response to park protection plans of “Verdal/Snåsa/Lierne” and “Hartkjølen” in Norway, the authors emphasize how a considerable number of Saami sites were not included within the initially suggested park boundary, and that changes to include these would be necessary if intentions to include cultural heritage as a protection criterion is to be taken seriously:

“These cultural and historical determined relationships will naturally particularly be continued by the Saami who continue to practice reindeer herding. Therefore the protection of reindeer herding and its cultural landscape implies the protection of Saami traditions, history, language and culture (ibid) ([www.fylkesmannen-nt.no](http://www.fylkesmannen-nt.no)).”

It is evident among other Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic that indigenous notions of spirituality, sacredness and religious linkages to space have been under severe pressure from missionary activities and prohibition. Indigenous customary presence, use and rituals have, as a consequence,



rarely been well-documented. In some cases, it also seems that proselytization has led indigenous communities to turn their back to ancestral spirits and sacred areas.

There is an urgent and substantial need for Indigenous Peoples in Russia themselves to engage in a documentation effort of their sacred sites, their relationships to their lands and devise community-based protection strategies. Most Arctic Indigenous Peoples currently seek innovative measures to bridge the knowledge and cultural gap between generations. They seek to reverse colonial processes of cultural assimilation, which drew children and youth away from indigenous spiritualism, teachings and ways of life. Arctic Indigenous Peoples are engaging in various forms of cultural revival. Learning to read cultural landscapes, live and maintain sacred sites are all part of this.

## **6.4 Sacred Site Protection in the Circumpolar Region**

### **6.4.1 Arctic Experiences**

Among the Saami in the Nordic countries, the recognition of customary practices in legislation and practice differ according to the issue and region examined. In Norway, Saami cultural heritage sites older than 100 years are automatically classified as protected. The “Samisk Kulturminneplan” of the Saami Council (1998) aims at protecting Saami cultural heritage and cultural environments in a way, which “strengthens the continuity of Saami culture.” A Saami cultural heritage council advises on the protection of cultural heritage covering “pre-historic sites, as well as other sites with evidence of Saami activities such as dwelling sites, livelihood, religious practices as well as natural sacred offering sites and other sacred areas.” Jointly with local communes, the council is in charge of writing up priority action plans based on local, regional and national interests and professional assessment (Riksantikvaren 1998). This does not necessarily mean effective protection in practice. A recent estimate noted that 9 out of 10 cases of destruction of Saami cultural heritage reported to the police had been shelved. The Director of the Department of Culture and Environment of the Saami Council, Torvald Falch, believed that police tended to overlook Saami sites ([www.nrk.no/distrikt/nordland/nyheter/1630517.html](http://www.nrk.no/distrikt/nordland/nyheter/1630517.html)). Key challenges involve:

- Securing awareness and understanding among administrative personnel in the communes as well as effective “joint” management
- Providing professional advice in cases of land use planning to secure that due respect is made to the protection of Saami cultural heritage
- Countering lack of sufficient documentation, e.g. through earlier cultural heritage site registration only to a limited extent included Saami traditional areas. Many of these areas are today threatened
- Developing better decision-making tools and mechanisms for cultural heritage
- Improving the knowledge foundation, e.g. concerning different typologies, ethical issues and management practices. Securing practical coordination and cooperation between the council and local authorities
- Securing adequate financing

In Sweden, “abandoned sacred and ceremonial sites”, according to a government report to the UN, “are protected by Swedish law” without distinguishing between Saami and other citizens. In contrast with, for example, the Greenlandic system, the Nordic Saami Councils in general remain advisory, rather than decision-making organs.

There have been a number of indigenous-driven efforts to determine sacred sites and heritage management on their own terms. Several Indigenous Peoples have developed their own Heritage policies or guidelines. Varying degrees of home rule or self-governance have provided different opportunities and challenges to formalize such approaches. Whether dealing with the Greenlandic Home Rule (1979), Inupiat and the North Slope Borough in Alaska (1972), the territory of Nunavut in Canada (1999), the challenge of protecting sacred sites can be considered an internal as much as an external issue.

A number of land use and occupancy studies undertaken in relation to land claims have documented sacred sites and their locations. Use of GIS tools for mapping purposes has in some cases included specific layers reflecting information of cultural, religious, heritage or archaeological significance<sup>12</sup>. Inuit elders have, for example, sought to map and document the presence of *inukshuk* stone structures and the surrounding areas of significance (Nunavut).

In Greenland<sup>13</sup>, beyond references to the protection of archaeological sites, there are limited specific references to the protection of sacred sites in the form of formal policies and mechanisms. Protection of cultural relics is part of the overall objective of the world's largest national park in North and East Greenland according to the Executive Order no. 7 of 17 June 1992 from the Greenland Home Rule Authority. Chapter V specifically deals with historical and cultural monuments/relics without specific references to sacred sites (except for the cairns in article 16):

§ 16 Prehistoric and historic monuments and discoveries of cultural or historical interest are protected in accordance with "Greenland Parliament Ordinance no. 4 of 18 May 1990 on the Museum and Archive Department". Sec. 2. For the National Park, the following additional rules apply: a. All cairns and cairn messages, regardless of age and origin, are protected. b. All monuments have a protected zone of 100 m around them. Neither the remains nor the surroundings may be altered without permission. c. The conservation stipulations also include all buildings from this century which are not being used.

The landscapes of Arnangarnup Qoorua ('Paradise Valley') also refer to cultural significance without, however, mentioning sacred sites in specific. A recent draft (May 2002) for a new home rule policy on nature protection does not include any references to sacred areas or areas of cultural significance as such.

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement from 1984 does not refer to heritage management in contrast with the Gwich'in<sup>14</sup>, Sahtu<sup>15</sup> or Nunavut agreements. Differences between the latter, concern the degree to which Indigenous control and management is recognized and the institutional set-up. In the Nunavut agreement, the establishment of national parks includes, as part of "Inuit matters", the need for the "protection and management of archeological sites and sites of religious or cultural significance". Similarly, conservation areas include cultural heritage sites and historic places, as

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<sup>12</sup> Such mapping exercises present distinct lessons learned and challenges particularly regarding the scale of analysis, information inconsistency and the importance of metadata. This is of key importance for sacred sites management. We often lack knowledge about how information was collected concerning the sacred sites, the questions, people and authorities asked. This hampers verification and further data collection.

<sup>13</sup> Environmental protection and cultural heritage issues are decided upon by the Home Rule Government in contrast with issues such as foreign policy, basic law and the finance system.

<sup>14</sup> Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (1992), chapter 25 on heritage resources.

<sup>15</sup> Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (1993), chapter 26 on heritage resources.

well as other areas of cultural significance. Inuit are to “enjoy special rights and benefits of these areas”. Article 33 on archaeology, speaks of the importance of Inuit involvement in the identification, protection and conservation of archaeological sites<sup>16</sup> and recognizes the “spiritual, cultural and religious importance of certain areas in the Nunavut settlement area to Inuit.” According to the Permit System, disturbance of a site of Inuit religious and spiritual significance is among the reasons highlighted for rejecting research access. The institutional set-up is of interest and relevance for crafting similar institutions Russia.

The Inuit Heritage Trust, was established “by and for Inuit of Nunavut” in 1994 under the provisions of article 33 of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. It is dedicated to the “the preservation, enrichment, and protection of Inuit cultural heritage and identity embodied in Nunavut’s archaeological sites, ethnographic resources, and traditional place names.” The Trust has specifically been involved in defining Inuit Sacred & Spiritual Sites, such as *tunillarviit* (offering places) and *aglinaqtut* (a place of veneration and power) to address (<http://www.tunngavik.com/>). 3 of the four trustees represent the 3 areas covered by the Nunavut “with an appropriate balance of cultural awareness and technical expertise.”

The following paragraphs from the NLCA deal specifically with land-use:

33.5.12 Where an application is made for a land use permit in the Nunavut Settlement Area, and there are reasonable grounds to believe there could be sites of archaeological importance on the lands affected, no land use permit shall be issued without the written consent of the Designated Agency. Such consent shall not be unreasonably withheld.

33.5.13 Each land use permit referred to in Section 33.5.12 shall specify the plans and methods of archaeological site protection and restoration to be followed by the permit holder, and any other conditions the Designated Agency may deem fit.

In the 1993 Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement<sup>17</sup>, chapter 13 specifically deals with heritage management. It underlines First Nation ownership and management of heritage resources with settlement lands including larger traditional territories to be co-managed by the First Nation and the Government. The Yukon Heritage Resources Board includes First Nation representatives appointed by the Council for Yukon Indians and government appointees. An important institution has also been the Yukon Geographical Place Name Board in charge of reviewing “submissions from individual Yukon First Nations for the naming or re-naming of places or geographical features located within their traditional territory.” (de Paoli 1999).

Most conflicts and discussions tend to relate to broader land coverage, user rights, consultation practices and management mechanisms. Sacred lands are seldom recognized as a legitimate claim (Cummins & Whiteduck 1998:3). Land claims thus typically focus on resource issues and do not provide sufficient attention to the protection of sacred sites (Andrews et al 1998). In a discussion of the Gwich’in and Sahtu settlements, the authors note that:

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<sup>16</sup> As part of their contribution to the Nunavut process, the Canadian Museum of Civilization provided the Nunavut Planning Commission with a copy of its database containing 8,500 sites covered by archaeologists over the past century ([www.npc.nunavut.ca](http://www.npc.nunavut.ca)). “Archaeological sites and heritage sites” are also included under the GIS database as well as the topographical and thematic mapping efforts of the Nunavut Planning Commission ([www.npc.nunavut.ca](http://www.npc.nunavut.ca)).

<sup>17</sup> Umbrella Final Agreement between The Government of Canada, the Council for Yukon Indians and the Government of the Yukon

“Though both of these modern treaties discuss heritage in general terms, there are no specific provisions for sites of sacred significance... Typically the claim negotiations provide for Aboriginal ownership of only a fraction of traditional lands, and communities are consequently forced to make hard decisions as to what should be protected. Clearly, there is a need to alter the basis of the negotiations to respect the importance and significance of cultural landscapes. (Andrews et al 1998:316)”

In Canada, aboriginal sacred sites have, since 1990-1991, been eligible for designation as National Historical Sites, provided there is evidence (oral history included) that the sites are considered to have special cultural meaning (Buggey 2000). Furthermore, in 1994 Parks Canada recognized cultural landscapes and included them in the National Historic Sites System Plan. Only few have, however, been recognized by provincial and territorial governments, which in some cases have continued to dispute the authenticity and importance of sacred sites.

In the USA, a number of different instruments have been used or tested to protect sacred sites. The 1978 American Religious Freedom Act, while intending to protect spiritual practices, failed to protect sacred sites in four court rulings in the early and late 80s involving flooding, tourist restriction, parking lot/ski area expansion and road building. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act include rights to funerary objects, sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony for purposes of disposal or repatriation. The 1993 Native American Free Exercise of Religion Act initially included provisions for sacred site protection, which were later dropped. Native Americans have also used the 1996 National Historic Preservation Act.

Executive Order (EO) 13007, issued in 1996, and signed by President Bill Clinton, concerns the protection of sacred sites. This EO essentially requests federal agencies to: “(1) accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and (2) avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites. Where appropriate, agencies shall maintain the confidentiality of sacred sites.” To what extent this is being implemented in practice is questioned (Thorne 2002). Some have noted its relative strength in conjunction with other executive orders related to environmental justice and consultation with tribal governments<sup>18</sup>. They have, for example, resulted in the National Park Service Management Guidelines (2001), which emphasize Native American structures and permit ongoing use of sacred sites. The Park Service also recognizes ethnographic landscapes<sup>19</sup> as one of four types.

Following a forum on “sacred lands” in March 2002, the Interior Department reinvigorated the 1996 EO as well as initiating a Task Force “to oversee management of public lands Indians have used for ceremonial and religious purposes (Thorne 2002). This will happen through overseeing public land policies as well as working directly with Indigenous Peoples to identify sacred sites, according to Jim Pace of American Indian Trust (ibid). Currently, hearings have also been undertaken in the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs specifically on sacred site protection ([www.ncai.org](http://www.ncai.org)).

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<sup>18</sup> E.O 12898 “Federal actions to address environmental justice in minority populations and low-income populations” and E.O. 13175, “Consultation and coordination with Indian Tribal Governments”.

<sup>19</sup> “a landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage” (Buggey 2000).

### Sacred Site Protection in Australia

In Australia, various types of consultation processes and protection mechanisms are established with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples regarding the management of cultural sites (Smyth 1994). In Western Australia, for example, the Aboriginal Heritage Procedures Manual provides information to developers concerning the legislation and appropriate procedures for respecting aboriginal heritage including sacred sites as defined under the relevant heritage protection acts (<http://www.aad.wa.gov.au/Heritage/HeritageManual/TOC.htm>). Information material is available highlighting the institutions, the types of heritage concerned and the legal implications<sup>20</sup>.

The Department of Indigenous Affairs also keeps an Aboriginal Site Register with information on around 17,000 aboriginal sites in Western Australia:

“The electronic portion of the Register contains a brief description of the site, the site type, the site informants (usually the Traditional Owners) and a map showing the site boundaries and location. Where the informants have requested the site information be kept confidential, the location of the site is censored by placing one or more 2km square boxes over the extent of the site.” (<http://www.dia.wa.gov.au/>)

Sites are categorized according to the varying land claim/ tenure situations as well as the aboriginal areas concerned and can be consulted on-line (<http://203.17.214.135/aadapps/gis/asp/gistheme.asp>). The site provides a map with an overview of the sites within the area concerned, as well as clearly stating that:

“Sites may exist that are not yet entered into the Register system, or are on the Register and no longer exist. The Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 protects all Aboriginal site in Western Australia whether they are known to the Aboriginal Affairs Dept / Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee or not.”

A site registration form ([http://www.aad.wa.gov.au/Heritage/HeritageManual/Site\\_Recording\\_Form.doc](http://www.aad.wa.gov.au/Heritage/HeritageManual/Site_Recording_Form.doc)) can be downloaded ensuring standardized data on consultation processes, descriptive data and maps. The FAQ section also provides important steps and links (<http://www.aad.wa.gov.au/Heritage/FAQ.htm>). Such provision of information is extremely important to secure that people supposed to contribute to sacred site protection in practice have the knowledge and tools available to actually do it.

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority administers the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (<http://www.nt.gov.au/aapa/text/NTASS%201989%20Act.htm>), the aim of which is the protection and prevention of desecration of sacred sites in the Northern Territory. Research activities have included surveys of traditional significance, identifying traditional aboriginal place names, cultural ecology and aboriginal heritage sites. Land developers only receive a authority certificate (downloadable from <http://www.nt.gov.au/aapa/text/certform.pdf>) to proceed with their work once safeguard measures have been taken or agreement reached with the aboriginal community. To what extent protection is effective depends on the regional characteristics. Thus Aboriginal peoples in central and northern Australia have exercised significant control over sacred sites, while sacred site protection has been particularly weak in the southern, more developed, regions (Smyth 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Failure to report the existence of a site or any unauthorized action which may disturb a site are offences under section 17 of the AHA.” From “Heritage matters – advice for developers”, ([http://www.aad.wa.gov.au/Heritage/advice\\_for\\_developers.htm](http://www.aad.wa.gov.au/Heritage/advice_for_developers.htm)).

#### 6.4.2 Neglecting Customary ‘Informal’ Protection Measures

The presence and issue of customary or ‘informal’ or orally transmitted protection strategies needs to be highlighted. Knud Rasmussen in his documentary effort on myths and legends includes dispersed information in this regard. In terms of burial sites, Rasmussen also describes *Mingulerterineq* or *tunigdlaineq*:

“a sacrifice, consisting of offering meat to the dead by placing it in their graves; this only needs to be small pieces as the dead are capable of making them as big as they wish. In the same way, it is also possible to sacrifice to certain mountains or stones to wish for good weather on a travel of luck before a hunt.” (Rasmussen 1979: vol2, p 11).

While it is clear that such sayings may not correspond to current reality, they nevertheless represent cultural approaches, which are difficult to formalize in legislation, and may make little sense beyond the boundaries of the community. In other cases, informal approaches involving moral codes of conduct, rituals or even sanctions guiding conditions of access, use and behaviour (denoting, for example, sacred sites as off-limits) testify about the presence of such practices.

“Many community members were aware of the numerous burial sites found throughout the Claim Territory. These were not disputed as to their veracity of their legitimacy as ‘sacred sites’. Neither were the handful of sites at which community members had witnessed *wesquejak* or *pikwadjini*. Similarly, while there are no markers to authenticate the traditional fasting sites in the Claim Territory, the Algonquin can accept that they are, in fact, special places. (Cummins & Whiteduck 1998:7)”

The authors contrast this with the Judeo-Christian tradition requiring codification to confirm the authenticity of the site. Such recognition has posed enormous challenges to indigenous communities when entering courtrooms to prove site authenticity. Western legal documents and policy mechanisms have been ill-adapted to the indigenous knowledge forms and practices.

A significant, and often neglected or misunderstood, informal approach involves Indigenous Peoples keeping the existence and location of sacred sites secret. This has been particularly effective in keeping sites protected from external threats. Information concerning their location may be very sensitive. In New Zealand, the use of ‘silent files or registers’ are means used to maintain the secrecy of a site by keeping lists of sacred site in confidence by the appropriate tribe, sub-tribe or family:

“the precise location would not need to be recorded on the local authorities’ plan. If any development was planned on that title, then the local authority would have the responsibility to check with the holders of the silent file ... before approval was given for development to proceed” (Sole and Woods 1996).

In the circumpolar region, there have been several documentation attempts and databases, which to varying degrees reflect indigenous values and knowledge (see, e.g. Burgess 1999) include traditional knowledge aspects, which, in some cases, inter-relate closely to informal protection mechanisms.

### 6.4.3 Protecting the Spiritual and the Material

The circumpolar region covers a range of different protection regimes offering more or less effective solutions to sacred sites protection.

- The inclusion of sacred sites in the documentation, mapping and planning processes leading to land-claims as part of indigenous self-governance
- Protection through co-managed protected areas and recognition under cultural landscape provisions
- The recognition of sacred sites in impact assessment procedures and processes<sup>21</sup>
- The recognition of (some) sacred sites as sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance enhancing the risk of compartmentalized or partial solutions due to definition-related questions, size, age or lack of distinctive features.
- Specific, but weak, sacred site protection policies and poor implementation

Still, there is a considerable lack of indigenous-driven and self-defined sacred site protection efforts and mechanisms, which integrate both spiritual and material aspects. Sacred site protection has tended to rely on compartmentalized action by different departments, sets of rules and regulations. Imposed protection mechanisms may not correspond to or may even infringe upon the customary rights and practices of the Indigenous Peoples concerned. Cultural heritage protection strategies have, for example, been accused of harming what they were supposed to protect (Kulcyski 1998:23).

There is a need to ensure that customary rights and practices involving both material and spiritual aspects are understood as integral part of sacred sites protection. If a parallel is drawn to certain areas in Russia, it may thus make no sense to only physically protect a sacred site linked to certain reindeer grazing areas, if the traditional occupation simultaneously is being undermined. Integral sacred sites protection involves supporting indigenous communities in their efforts to maintain spiritual relationships (Kulchyski 1998:24).

Empowering Indigenous Peoples to manage and protect sacred sites as part of their broader territories thus emerges as the most viable and effective protection strategy. This does not exclude such areas from being listed and registered as cultural heritage or of historical importance. Indeed, such registration and documentation will remain just as crucial for land planning, management and preservation efforts within an indigenous framework be that a land claim agreement, a co-managed protected area or an ethno-ecological territory.

There continues to be considerable ignorance about the importance and role of their sacred areas. In many cases, Indigenous Peoples continue to see their sacred areas being threatened by construction, infrastructure, mining operations or other forms of land use initiatives. Simultaneously, there are growing conciliatory efforts, which seek to ensure that indigenous rights and prior informed consent are protected through impact assessments and consultation processes. At a circumpolar (even global) level, sacred site issues illustrate, perhaps more than anything, the difficulties governments have had in understanding and recognizing indigenous forms of land use and ownership. The

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<sup>21</sup> The actual integration of sacred sites in such processes are critical. In the Environmental Report for Trans-Alaska Pipeline System Right-of-Way, section 4.11 specifically deals with sacred sites: ([http://tapseis.anl.gov/documents/docs/Section\\_411\\_May2.pdf](http://tapseis.anl.gov/documents/docs/Section_411_May2.pdf))

implications are two-fold. On the one hand, sacred sites are presented in a vacuum, seemingly without maintenance or protection. On the other hand, communities are neglected as rightful, resourceful and powerful actors in protecting sacred sites. As discussed above, it is up to communities themselves to protect sacred sites integrally within a conducive environment. External support strategies only provide the necessary conditions for indigenous communities to live, practice and protect sacred sites.

## **6.5 Lessons for the Russian Context**

Sacred sites play a fundamental role for the ways of life, ancestral territories and identity of Indigenous Peoples. They form important cultural landscapes and points of reference in fragile ecosystems providing cultural values and community stewardship often linked to important species, habitat and regions.

A major factor, recognized in most other Arctic countries, concerns the lack of awareness among the general public, industries and local authorities with respect to the sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples. While in most countries there exists a certain kind of appreciation for sacred sites, understanding may evaporate if it hinders an infrastructure development initiative or if sites do not have valued physical attributes or characteristics. Implementation of CBD Recommendations could be useful in establishing “good practice” in this area.

The circumpolar region reflects a broad array of sacred sites and protection strategies. Above all, the review portrays difficulties and conflicts surrounding sacred sites in several Arctic countries. Such difficulties include:

- Seeking to fit sacred sites protection into existing legislation and management practices related to cultural and natural heritage without reflecting their unique and distinctive characteristics
- Poor reflection of indigenous categories in sacred site designation and protection
- Weak policies and poor implementation due to weak administrative agencies
- Lack of comprehensive protection frameworks based on the rights-based approaches (despite direct references to sacred sites in instruments such as ILO Convention 169)
- Differences and potential conflict between conventional definitions of sacred sites/ protected areas and Indigenous views
- Ignoring customary practices and mechanisms in sacred sites protection
- Limited understanding and recognition of the conservation value of natural sacred sites as of relevance for broader ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation
- Dealing with diverse land tenure situations

In turn, the international review reveals a number of opportunities for follow-up to challenge these difficulties.

Sacred sites protection must be driven from the bottom-up. The effect of seeking to fit indigenous sacred sites into external categories, lists and definitions only has a partial effect. Indigenous communities themselves rightly, and best, determine the definition and most effective protection strategies.



Indigenous Peoples have emphasized the importance of a holistic notion of sacred sites, which locate them within surrounding cultural landscapes and contiguous ancestral territories and community-based management regimes. International instruments such as the World Heritage Convention, the Man & Biosphere Programme and the IUCN protected area categories promote and facilitate such approaches. This, in turn, makes sense for the purposes of ecosystem, landscape and habitat management. Sacred sites provide a “win-win” opportunity for strengthening biodiversity conservation and protected area networks through integrating various models of ancestral territorial management based on indigenous land use categories.

Participatory research and mapping experiences in the Arctic reveal the feasibility and difficulties of integrating sacred sites under conventional protection regimes. Sacred sites make sense and gain life through indigenous languages, categories and customary use. The continued presence of sacred sites also proves the long-term interest and viability of customary protection and maintenance mechanisms. Indigenous Peoples should be vigilant in insisting on their right to use their languages and customary knowledge in mapping, designation and management planning. The Arctic experience exposes considerable difficulties in recognizing oral history, evidence and testimonies, that will need to be further clarified in policy frameworks.

There is an urgent and substantial need for Indigenous Peoples in Russia themselves to engage in a documentation effort of their sacred sites, their relationships to their lands and devise community-based protection strategies.

There is a need for a comprehensive policy framework for indigenous sacred sites and heritage. This is being raised in the Arctic, but also in other countries as New Zealand (Sole and Woods 1996). Sacred sites need to be protected by indigenous communities as part of a broader effort to e.g. secure their basic rights, strengthen their livelihoods, their role in ecosystem management and ensure that appropriate intellectual property measures. Needless to say, the questions of enforcement, penalty and monitoring are of critical importance. Legal provisions alone will not do the trick.

Recognizing the value of sacred sites also means recognizing the cost of their presence. Developers will need to recognize the value of sacred sites in heritage and environmental impact assessments surveys as well as in consultation processes. The CBD recommendations and draft guidelines, discussed above, provide building blocks in this direction. Other circumpolar experiences with specific tools and instruments, such as cumulative effects assessments, can also assist in valuing and protecting sacred sites.

While there are a number of lessons learned to be shared between Arctic countries, there are also particular characteristics in terms of financial resources, infrastructure and protected area categories, which clearly require specific and adapted approaches. Large geographical areas, as in the Siberian case, may, for example, require refined tools to strengthen participatory mapping, interview techniques, consensus building and predictive modeling. As has been experienced in Russia and elsewhere, there may be a considerable gap between federal policies, regional laws and their effect on the ground. Management institutions and practices are rarely adapted to the actual needs (Colchester 2001).

Coupled with the fact that most agencies dealing with cultural heritage, biodiversity conservation or indigenous issues are relatively inadequately staffed and resourced, this once again confirms the

need for a conducive policy environment coupled with more grassroots-based sacred site protection initiatives. Indigenous communities cannot, should not and in most cases do not wait for external agencies and bureaucracies to protect their sacred sites and ancestral lands. Their customary rights are fundamental prerequisites and important resources in this work.

## 6.6 Annex 1: IUCN Protected Area Categories

IUCN System of Protected Area Management Categories (1994), (<http://wcpa.iucn.org/>)

The six management categories are defined by the primary management objective, as follows:

- I. Protected area managed mainly for I(a) science or I(b) wilderness protection. Areas of land and/or sea possessing some outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring; or large areas of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition (Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness area).
- II. Protected area managed mainly for ecosystem conservation and recreation. Natural areas of land and/or sea, designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for this and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible (National Park).
- III. Protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific features. Areas containing one, or more, specific natural or natural/cultural feature which is of outstanding or unique value because of its inherent rarity, representative or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance (Natural Monument).
- IV. Protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention. Areas of land and/or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats and/or to meet the requirements of specific species. (Habitat/Species Management Area).
- V. Protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation. Areas of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, cultural and/or ecological value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area. (Protected Landscape/Seascape).
- VI. Protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems. Areas containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, managed to ensure long-term protection and maintenance of biological diversity, while providing at the same time a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs (Managed Resource Protected Area).

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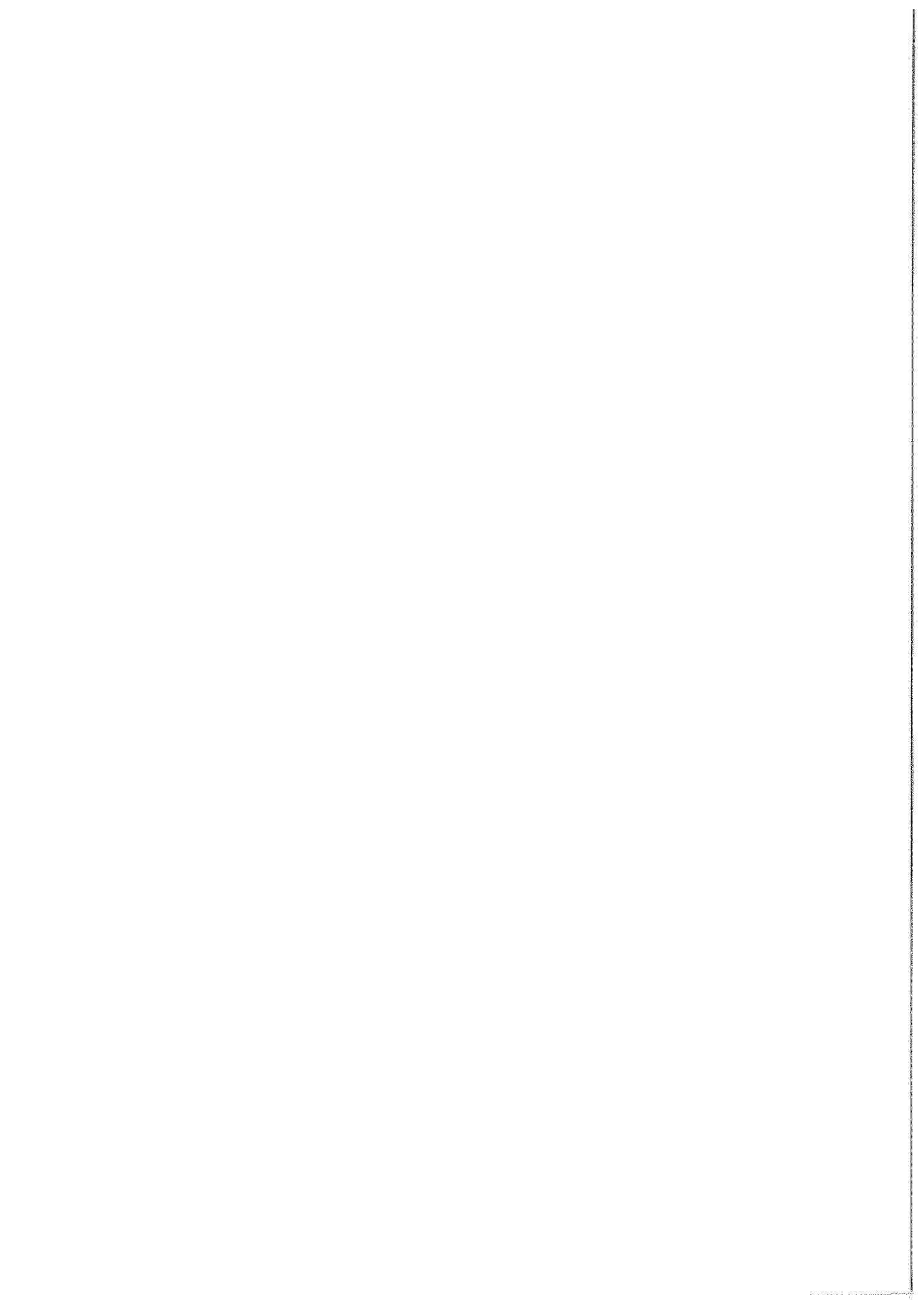
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The following thematic analysis seeks to summarize the main points and issues emerging from the research. It also presents some initial preliminary guidelines for working with sacred sites. These guidelines are not based on extensive consultation, and are merely a first attempt to summarize some of the emerging issues. The section has been divided into a number of questions followed by the answers emerging from the field data, thereby seeking to respond to the initial questions presented in the project document.

## 7.1 The Importance of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Sites

Sacred sites are part of the living cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples. This research has made two important findings in this respect:

1. Individuals, clans and other social groupings continue to use, maintain and manage their sacred sites.
2. Indigenous spiritualism is inevitably embedded in and affected by broader socio-economic processes Indigenous Peoples face today. The latter have resulted in both opportunities and challenges for indigenous spiritualism and the future of sacred sites.

On the one hand, urbanization, economic reorganization and decades of State-driven social engineering have not been without cultural impact. Studies document extremely low numbers of language proficiency in local languages. In terms of sacred sites, this research also documents a profound inter-generational gap, particularly when dealing with people no longer practicing traditional livelihoods. The latter group have only limited knowledge concerning the location of sites and the associated practices and rituals.

On the other hand, there is a trend of Indigenous Peoples, their organizations and individuals to revitalize their relationship to their cultural identity. Reaffirming the importance of their sacred sites, they seek to counter trends of cultural marginalization. They are attempting to reconquer lost cultural territory, so to speak. In terms of sacred sites, this involves *rediscovering as well as redefining* the significance of sacred sites.

### 7.1.1 What do Sacred Sites mean for the Indigenous Peoples?

The research reveals a variety of sacred sites with differing importance, significance and use. They cannot be simplified or reduced to one meaning or representation, but reflect the different historical and current experiences of particular communities, clans or herders. Indigenous spiritualism and cosmologies penetrate, constitute and evolve around the sacred sites and their associated practices.

In some cases, informants made specific references to certain spirits or deities. Still, the research also reveals that indigenous spiritualism may evoke broader notions of spiritual energy and influence. The following examples illustrate this point:

”Sacred stones possess some spiritual energy (they emit it). They must have good energy. Sacred sites shall not be evil. That is what our ancestors taught us”.  
Filippova L.A. (Tilichiki)

“Each sacred site possesses spiritual energy and I think the energy is good”.  
Kakakko A.I. (Hailino)

“ I think, yes. In performing a ritual on a sacred site, people are influenced by spiritual energy but positively, not negatively. It means it is good energy. People always feel better after a ritual, healthier. As if they purified themselves and got rid of everything bad and evil”. Lilkiv A.N. (Hailino)

The emphasis is here on energy, well being, belonging and positive interaction with the sacred sites. Such experiences may indeed better reflect the actual experience of indigenous communities and their sacred sites than specific references to deities.

Contrary to Western notions of churches and religion, flexibility, adaptability and change are among the recurring characteristics of sacred sites, their use and maintenance. While there exist appropriate ritual practices and ceremonial behaviour, it is also clear that the informants were not necessarily referring to specific deities, but rather reflecting broader cultural understandings of power, energy and influence. Indeed, perceiving sites as living beings as such is also a common conceptualization. Such beings could both help and punish.

As respondents in the Koryak AO noted, it is forbidden to make fire or shout near a sacred site. The procedures of such rituals differ from one another among Indigenous Peoples but most of them are based upon “feeding” and sacrificing. People “feed” the site offering food (reindeer fat, meat, fish), tobacco, or bringing some things (cartridges, glass beads, patches, pieces of skin). Reindeer play a fundamental role for talking about, constituting and, indeed, living out a number of sacred areas. Although reindeer herding has been losing economic significance in Koryak, it continues to play a fundamental cultural and symbolic role for the peoples concerned.

For the outsider, a number of questions emerge: Are sacred sites different from archaeological or historical sites? There is perhaps a tendency to discard sites which may no longer be visited, or where sacrifices no longer are undertaken. This remains a dangerous act, as the research documents several cases of certain sites only being visited with large intervals (due to changing migration routes), or unpurposefully neglected (due to changes in the pastoral economy). Second, sacred sites appear and disappear. Furthermore, many have lost significance, and a considerable number of sites are only known to a few herders or elders.

These conclusions are by no means unique to Russia, but could be said about a great number of Indigenous Peoples facing cultural, social and economic marginalization. The Soviet Union did not provide a conducive environment to the spiritual knowledge and practices linked to sacred sites and their maintenance. On the contrary, a wide number of policies and practices in the fields of education, economic organization and culture were explicitly aimed at directing people away from these sites. Important vehicles of cultural transmission, such as oral culture, had been prohibited, marginalized and contested by official notions of appropriate development, such as the Stalinist attempt to eliminate ethnic differences. Cultural shapers, opinion makers and specialists as wealthy reindeer herders and shamans were ostracized or simply regarded as exploiters.

What is remarkable has been the ability of Indigenous Peoples in Yamal and Koryak to continue to reproduce, use and manage their sacred sites under such circumstances. The data collected reveals continued cultural practices, despite a difficult environment. The data, however, also reveals growing ignorance of sacred sites and associated practices among considerable parts of the indigenous population. Opportunities to support Indigenous Peoples’ own versions and definitions have been absent.

Indigenous Peoples venerating their sacred sites do not fit into the conventional image of the pilgrim, which requires him or her to dedicate a time of her life for solely religious purposes leaving behind worldly matters. While the occasional urban intelligentsia of Nenets or Koryak visiting a sacred site as part of a trip back home may qualify as such, the vast majority never leave behind the

spiritual aspects of their everyday lives. In contrast with some other sacred sites such as sacred groves in India, the picture in Siberia and the Far East is closely connected to use. Kosigin E.P. (Tilichiki) states it directly:

“Historically, sacred sites are stones or some places. People make sacrifices there, otherwise there will be no fish and game”.

As Vavakko R.N. notes, somewhat differently, about spiritual energy:

“I think, there is some spiritual energy. In trying to please spirits, people believe that they can protect themselves and their families from disaster, they believe that success will attend them in hunting, fishing, reindeer herding. People are sort of charged with positive energy feeling the presence of spirits that assist them in their everyday chores. And evil energy can be found in places with anomalous natural phenomena such as boiling water or unfreezing lakes. There are places where a man or an animal becomes aggressive. It’s something one can’t explain. It’s easy to believe in evil spirits, then”.

Or as Kovanko A.P. states:

“People make sacrifices to please both kind and evil spirits believing that the latter will heal them and their reindeer, protect their houses from disaster and bad weather, bring them luck in hunting and fishing. If there is luck in traditional activities, there will be well-being and people will never experience hunger and illnesses”.

In fact, the interchange with the animal world and the surrounding environment is a constitutive part of the sacred sites. Nevertheless, indigenous participants would not necessarily distinguish their experience from other religions. As Vavakko A.I. notes:

“ I think, yes, and the energy is positive. Why? It reminds of purification in Orthodox Church. While performing a ritual on a sacred site, people feel the presence of spirits, somehow, and the latter control people’s actions. That is why it were the shamans who chose a sacred site in the past since they are believed to be hypersensitive to spiritual energy, which can not be evil”.

Although indigenous understandings of the sacred may not put in opposition to the profane, it is nonetheless considered a different realm with other rules and issues at stake. Sites may be visited according to determined annual cycles of ritual, ceremonial or livelihood character.

It is also clear that sacred sites may not be shared by all community members. They may be of significance to certain individuals, groups or households. They may be specifically for women as in the case of *Ngev Sede* in Yamal, involving specific rituals signifying longevity and good health. It has been emphasized that a major difference between a common temple and a sacred site is that a sacred site is accessible for the initiated only, while temples are accessible to the public. (I.N. Gemuev, A. M Sagalaev, 1986, P. 154). This was both confirmed and contested by the research.

In some cases, public access was underlined. As Vavakko A.I. (Hailino) noted:

“Everyone has the right to show respect for the memory of the dead. It’s the same with Orthodox Church”.

Others, contested this such as Lilkiva L.A. (Hailino), emphasizing:

“Everything, which remained after the burial (i.e. a knife, a mug, glass beads, a spear, etc.) shall not be touched for it belongs to the dead”.

Customary rules would emphasize that families, which had just had a burial, were not permitted to enter a sacred site. Women and girls having menstruation are prohibited to enter on a sacred site as well, for they are considered sinful (“*syamami*”) during the period. There are sacred sites which a young woman shall not visit at all. (*Ngev Syada Hehe Ya, Parisento Hehe Ya, and others*).

Others, however, emphasized limitations to a much further extent:

“There are some restrictions. It’s only our people who shall know the sacred sites. They say, strangers (other peoples’ representatives) shall be prohibited to access since they may be ill tempered, they may put the evil eye upon everything good. One shall not tell anybody about or show the sites. Once a man took a picture of a sacred stone. While developing a film, he found out that it was spoilt. The photographer got ill and died, then his wife and relatives died. That is why strangers shall not visit sacred sites. Our ancestors followed the rule; they prohibited writing about customs and traditions. It was allowed only within a family or a clan. The information was passed on orally. It is the main reason for having no literature or any sources of information available for access”. Filippova L.A. (Tilichiki)

Delkini A.A. (Hailino) similarly emphasized the latter:

“Sacred sites are everywhere. Our ancestors showed the sites but didn’t provide much information for some reason. It was prohibited to talk much about sacred sites. The word “sacred” implies it”.

### **7.1.3 Towards a Working Definition of Sacred Sites?**

How do Indigenous Peoples themselves define sacred sites? Is it possible to extract a “standard” set of criteria to determine a sacred site? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach?

The people interviewed presented a range of different answers. The material reveals a variety of sites with different functions, owners and uses. Some informants emphasized physical characteristics, others noted the origin, while some pointed out the function of the area. The following examples illustrate this:

“These are the sites inhabited by some spirits. To some extent, they (sacred sites) may be associated with history (ancient history) of the natives. As a rule, it is connected with human sufferings”. Ninani A.P. (Hailino)

“Sacred sites are the sites, which have been worshipped by our peoples, the Chukchi, the Koryak, the Even, throughout centuries. All sites have their names. When passing a sacred site in the tundra, one shall put tobacco, cigarettes, matches, and hare fur. It’s done to please the spirits so that the family will be happy or lest somebody fall ill. It’s done in order to respect each other in the family or community. People shall not curse on a sacred site. It is forbidden to put an evil eye upon the site. People shall say kind words. In general, the Nimilans (the Koryak) are prohibited to tell strangers about sacred sites. The information is passed on from generation to generation so as children could learn about the sites. It is prohibited to tell aliens about sacred sites since it is our land and talks desecrate it. Filippova L.A. (Tilichiki)

Most of the sites are situated on the routes: Tilichiki – Kultushnoye, Kultushnoye – Olyutorka, Vivenka – Hailino, etc”.

“Sacred sites are mountains, hills, lakes, rivers, crossings, which are associated with some legends and tales. People keep knowledge of sacred sites and pass it on from generation to generation, they keep on making sacrifices to sacred sites”. Kakakko A.I. (Hailino)

Tololo Z. E. believes that “a sacred site is a site, where one can find peace and quiet, make a gift and pray for himself and his children for we don’t have churches as the Russians do... so these sacred sites are for praying”.

Delkini A.A. (Hailino) says, “For the Koryak, the Chukchi and the Evens all sites are sacred since our ancestors lead nomadic life and we do. On migration routes we come across ancient settlements, burials, places where people perished. All such sites are sacred. In the past, we sacrificed to the air, land, water and fire as if we pleased them so as our families were well off and our animals could breed. The whole Nature, the Tundra is a sacred site for us since it feeds us and gives us to drink”.

Tnagirgin V.V. (Tilichiki) says, “ Sacred sites are the sites worshipped by people and associated with some memories. These are the places for making a sacrifice. They can be situated in such areas as are defined by a legend, a myth. A sacred site may be connected with some happening on certain territory. It may be situated near some stone, hill, on a hill or anywhere else”.

Mamak A.S. (Sredniye Pahachi) believes that the sea is also considered a sacred site “since it provides for food by giving us seals, and through its sons, rivers, by giving us fish”. Omelkot Z.P. (Sredniye Pahachi) said, “A sacrifice is made to the Sunrise and the Sunset, the Full Moon in January and on a calf’s birth”.

In our opinion, Filippova L.A. gave an interesting definition to a sacred site, “sacred sites represent cultural heritage of our peoples. Each family preserves its culture and traditional style of life. They pass it on to their children and grandchildren so as the latter could preserve the culture and the Nature, the tundra, rivers, mountains, and hills. It was the reason for worshipping sacred sites”.

As with many other religious practices transmitted through oral traditions, there may not exist formal definitions that everyone agrees upon. There are rather general practices that people adhere

to and reproduce on the basis of their own notions and shared experiences. In contrast with Western exclusive understandings of sacredness, indigenous notions seem highly inclusive. New areas and types of sacred sites can be included based on events, happenings or contact with the divine. Any attempts to formalize definitions thus runs the danger of simplifying the diversity of sacredness as people experience it, and leaving a picture, which essentially risks excluding Indigenous Peoples' own sites. We need to ask ourselves what can be gained from a standard definition of sacred sites. The argument here is that field data reflect a wide diversity in cultural meaning, as well as social ownership and management practices. This limits, in our point of view, definitional issues to the basic principle of following Indigenous Peoples' own definitions.

#### **7.1.4 Preliminary Guidelines 1: Understanding Sacred Sites and their Cultural Significance.**

- Ensure that Indigenous Peoples concerned agree to the research, understand its implications and provide their prior informed consent to the public disclosure of information concerning their sacred sites.
- Results emphasize that the general public are prohibited access to certain sacred sites, their associated knowledge and practices. Respect indigenous rights over their knowledge systems and practices. Protect against abusive practices such as popularisation, tourism or commercialisation of sacred knowledge and sites.
- Explore ways, from the early stages in the research, to support Indigenous Peoples in elaborating tiered levels of access to documentation regarding their sacred sites. Identify what types of data need to be revealed to ensure effective governmental support to protection, and which information can be safeguarded by community-identified indigenous representatives or institutions.
- Work with Indigenous Peoples' own definitions and understandings of sacred sites and their accompanying practices.
- Acknowledge Indigenous Peoples' holistic understanding of sacred sites. Avoid isolating descriptions from customary rights, use and practices.
- Broader zoning and cultural landscape-based protection need to be integral components of sacred sites protection. It makes little sense to protect specific sites in isolation from the cultural landscapes, which constitute them and provide access to these sites
- Avoid standard definitions of sacred sites, including those presented by government agencies or indigenous individuals, as research presents differing perspectives and experiences. There is an acute danger of misrepresenting sacred sites when seeking to document their presence and translate their significance into text.
- Documentation results need to be considered as preliminary efforts. Government agencies and others need to be aware that documentation and mapping efforts are long-term and highly complex undertakings.

## 7.2 Identifying and Mapping Sacred Sites

How visible and identifiable are sacred sites? Do they have clear boundaries or do they blend into the landscape? What are the key issues and difficulties when mapping sacred sites?

As discussed above, standard definitions may result in gaps or mistakes when identifying sacred sites. However, it also needs to be recognized that working with indigenous conceptualisations of sacred sites is far from easy. Some of the immediate pitfalls involve:

- Translating Western notions of sacredness and cultural heritage when mapping sites.
- Emphasizing sites rather than broader landscapes and areas.
- Neglecting seemingly small or otherwise determined as ‘insignificant’ sites
- Encountering resistance to information collection and obtaining wrong information

Many dangers result from not investing enough time and resources in the documentation and mapping effort. Outsiders have experienced difficulties in obtaining information concerning sacred sites. This research has attempted to take Indigenous Peoples’ own conceptualisations as a starting point. The detailed mapping effort, undertaken within this research framework, was developed through data collected by indigenous field workers.

Quantitatively speaking, the initiative was successful in obtaining knowledge about the presence and location of a considerable number of sacred sites. Indeed, the research confirmed extensive knowledge about sacred sites, but it also proved to be impossible to cover all sacred sites in the regions. Such work must be considered as continuing as Indigenous Peoples, researchers and organizations present further cases.

Qualitatively speaking, the results differ considerably in terms of depth and content. Some sites include associated long legends and myths. Others describe particular habitat types or species. On the one hand, this can be expected when dealing with oral testimonies and efforts to translate these into coherent written documents. On the other hand, project experiences can be used to develop lessons learned on collecting relevant baseline data on sacred sites. Indeed, the lack of systematic baseline information on indigenous sacred sites presents a major challenge in terms of presenting clear responses to the questions asked. There is a need for standardized approaches, which simultaneously acknowledge the vast diversity of information. Simultaneously, there is a need for *informed* community level consultations on appropriate storage, register and documentation modalities.

Indigenous sacred sites in Yamal and Kamchatka reflect a variety of geological, topographical and ecological characteristics. Such natural sacred sites may not necessarily distinguish themselves physically from the surrounding environments, although they, or significant parts of them, may often be defined relatively clearly as particular hills, mountains or rivers. It may involve an entire lake or a section of it. The sacred site of Shaiki To Lake is in the middle of the lake and can only be visited after strong frosts. In the case of Evay-Ngo, the whole island is considered sacred. It may involve complexes of several sites. The research documented several of such cases involving several types or levels of individual sacred sites. The sites of Ngoleko Lahavey, Tevche, Nyangu-



Chivi and Halmer He Han, situated several kilometres from each other. It may also involve sites, which serve as boundary markers for larger sacred landscapes. Such diversity is not easily translated into standard maps.

In this research, sacred sites have only been identified by individual dots rather than seeking to represent the various types of sites.

### 7.2.1 Mapping Oral History and Ancestral Ties to Sacred Sites

“Each sacred site has its history, its legends and myths. Almost all sacred sites are ancient. There are few new sacred sites”. Kelevji A.A. (Sredniye Pahachi)

“These sacred sites existed in times of our ancestors, great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers. The latter passed on the knowledge to the next generation”. Uley A.A. (Tilichiki)

The research uncovered a rich oral history documenting ancestral ties between Indigenous Peoples and their sacred sites. Such knowledge differed considerably among different areas, groups and people. Particular emphasis was on the knowledge of elders and the need for documentation. Concerning certain sites, a number of informants thus emphasized the general lack of knowledge. Thus, as Tololo Z. E. (Sredniye Pahachi) said:

“sacred sites appeared long ago, it’s difficult to say when exactly, they say, when the first man appeared. Each sacred site has its origin reflected in the legends, stories and fairy-tales. The sites became sacred such a long time ago that we know nothing about them but their location”.

Others made specific links to the origins of ethnicity, specific events or legends:

“the ancestors defined sacred sites. First, there were real events, such as pestilence inflicted upon people or animals, hunger, natural disasters or collapse of hostile tribes. Little by little the event turned into legends”. Lilikiv A.N. (Hailino)

“sacred sites appeared on the day “Kuikinyaku people” appeared. Then people got a fly-agaric (a dead cup), which became a guide in their dreams... The fly-agaric gave people an idea of what, when, and where should be sacrificed. Since then, the site became sacred for ever....” Omelkot Z.P.

“Sacred sites appeared together with the first people. There is a legend about Great Kuikinyaku, who made people and it was the very moment when sacred sites appeared”. Rultuve A.K. (Sredniye Pahachi)

”A long time ago our ancestors were superstitious, they believed in spirits and worshiped them. Burials became sacred sites. Then, in the event that something important happened, e.g. a battle between two hostile tribes, the site became sacred. Sometimes, when some natural disaster occurred, e.g. a flood or an earthquake, the site might become sacred. In the past people suffered from different disasters more often: they died of hunger, epidemics inflicted upon them, and the whole settlement could extinct. Such sites also became sacred. Then, there are sacred sites with queer figures created by Nature”. Vavakko R.N.(Hailino)

Two broad challenges are evident when discussing the mapping of sacred sites. The first involves how to map individual sites. The second, involves covering broader sacred landscapes, interlinked sites and areas, which may not be uncovered by the first rounds of efforts to identify specific sites.

### 7.2.2 Mapping Individual Sites

Literature documents considerable resistance from Indigenous Peoples towards the identification and mapping of individual sacred sites. In many cases, it has simply been prohibited to pass on this information to other people. This is highly understandable in a historical context of cultural marginalization. According to Filippova L.A. of the Museum of Local Lore in the Olyutor Region, some elders still prohibit to pass on the information on sacred sites, draw or take pictures.

“There are some restrictions. It’s only our people who shall know the sacred sites. They say, strangers (other peoples’ representatives) shall be prohibited to access since they may be ill tempered, they may put the evil eye upon everything good. One shall not tell anybody about or show the sites. Once a man took a picture of a sacred stone. While developing a film, he found out that it was spoilt. The photographer got ill and died, then his wife and relatives died. That is why strangers shall not visit sacred sites. Our ancestors followed the rule; they prohibited writing about customs and traditions. It was allowed only within a family or a clan. The information was passed on orally. It is the main reason for having no literature or any sources of information available for access” Filippova L.A. (Tilichiki)

In their opinion, it may have ill effects upon those who violate the prohibition. The research project also encountered resistance from a number of interviewees. Others emphasized the importance of mapping the presence of sacred sites to ensure the protection against evolving threats such as extractive industries.

It therefore remains a major political, methodological and practical issue to respect the secrecy of certain sites, while simultaneously seeking practical solutions to their mapping and protection. Mapping individual sites presents both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, it provides Indigenous Peoples with the possibility to document their own cultural geography, to address gaps and to raise highly localized problems. On the other hand, there is the danger of losing touch with the broader picture. A major methodological problem or challenge involved with mapping individual sites concerns the danger of mapping them in isolation from the customary land use and management practices, which surround them. Thus while the research team produced many sketch maps of individual sites, these were rarely mapped in the context of fishing areas, migration routes and other practices. As such, there is a methodological risk of isolating sacred sites from the broader environment and socio-cultural practices, which surround them. The danger, for example, is that industrial actors agree to protect isolated sacred sites, but not the broader ancestral territories, which the Indigenous Peoples depend on. A second danger involves Indigenous Peoples (rightfully) acting against mapping of their sacred sites, which in turn may lead to blank spots on the map. In such cases, more general mapping efforts, which nevertheless document customary use areas and management institutions are needed<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> As discussed elsewhere in the report, there are ways of mapping sacred sites while keeping basic information secret.

### 7.2.3 Covering Territories of Sacred Landscapes, Interlinked Sites and Secret Areas

“For the Koryak, the Chukchi and the Evens all sites are sacred since our ancestors lead nomadic life and we do. On migration routes we come across ancient settlements, burials, places where people perished. All such sites are sacred. In the past, we sacrificed to the air, land, water and fire as if we pleased them so as our families were well off and our animals could breed. The whole Nature, the Tundra is a sacred site for us since it feeds us and gives us to drink”. Delkini A.A. (Hailino)

Despite the considerable fieldwork undertaken, the field researchers acknowledged readily that not all sites have been, nor indeed, could they be documented in the short period with the limited travelling opportunities. In many cases, researchers only relied on a few specific informants and lack further information from other community members. Furthermore, while informants listed several sites along migration routes, the interrelationships between sites were typically taken for granted by informants. In other cases, there was a tendency of only sketch-mapping specific parts of sacred sites complexes, rather than the broader sacred landscapes. The research results can therefore not be considered a *final* list of sacred sites in the given pilot sites. Neither can the list of sites be considered a *full* description of the sacred geography, which many times covered larger landscapes, sacred complexes and whole rivers or areas. The lists are indeed preliminary documentation and mapping attempts, which allow Indigenous Peoples to move further in their own documentation and analysis.

Mapping sacred sites, landscapes and cultural understandings presents substantial challenges in terms of translation, documentation and visual representation. In Australia, the Yanyuwa community are attempting to map their sacred knowledge through an atlas comprising three volumes. Facing the death of most elders, only 10 full speakers of their language remained leading a group of five senior men and women together with some youth to push for the preservation for documentation effort. As it is noted:

“ The few remaining older Yanyuwa men and women possess among them many ancient traditions nearly all buried in contemporary chaos. The country from which these traditions has been cut up and ‘squared’ into town boundaries, pastoral leases, mining leases and parcels of land. Some of it has been ‘won back’ through the long process of land claims, but its status remains in doubt as government ministries, unhappy with court decisions, delay land grants (Bradley et al 2002)

Researchers face a conceptual and logistical challenge of mapping sacred sites among people, who had seen their communities undergo socio-cultural disruption, seeing their customary livelihoods being transformed and, who in many cases were alienated from indigenous knowledge systems and practices. Inserting sacred sites in a broader context of customary land use and management is a further challenge considering changing land regimes, leases and the presence of extractive industries.

Researchers have therefore emphasized the need for further detailed identification of sacred sites, further mapping and documentation efforts. This experience also provides us with hints and suggestions for follow-up work in this area.

#### **7.2.4 Mapping for Official Purposes**

There is a need to determine the kind of mapping needed in order to secure both indigenous and public validity of the mapping exercise. Important criteria include the possibility to verify certain information. In other countries, information obtained concerning a particular site needs to have clearly identified the source of information and the type of consultation used to obtain this information.

While this report serves as an initial effort to test approaches in the Russian context, there is a need to emphasize a more standardized and transparent approach to data gathering in further guidelines development on the issue. Issues to standardize include:

- Describing source of information and date for obtaining information.
- Describing the type of consultation and data gathering technique (community meetings, questionnaires, personal interviews, books).
- Sketch mapping.
- Secrecy and privacy safeguard measures.

Such information is crucial for both Indigenous Peoples and public services alike. Indigenous Peoples need to be able to verify information internally to present a realistic picture of the situation. Public servants, on the other hand, need to be able to defend the authenticity and relevance of the issue when facing developers and others.

#### **7.2.5 Preliminary Guidelines 2: Identifying and Mapping Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples**

- Ensure that Indigenous Peoples concerned provide their prior informed consent to mapping exercises. The research revealed some level of resistance to mapping of specific locations. As discussed in the international section, such privacy wishes can be respected through tiered levels of access to information and various forms of censorship.
- Seek to conduct sacred sites mapping as part of a broader community-driven effort to map customary use and practices to avoid presenting isolated pictures.
- Make sure to indicate or refer to the variety of sacred sites, landscapes and complexes when mapping sacred geographies. Limiting maps to small sites risks harming broader sacred landscapes and systems.
- Ensure that Indigenous Peoples themselves are the owners of any maps and additional information produced as well the decision-makers as to how to use them. Ensure that Indigenous Peoples are aware of the potential implications of publicly disclosing maps revealing locations of sacred sites.

- Make sure that standard types of information are gathered for all sites concerned. Key baseline information includes:
  - The source of information, date and type of consultation
  - Indigenous Peoples contact details for further consultation and discussion (these will differ according to the site concerned)
  - Whether location is to be kept in confidentiality, secrecy.
  - Basic description including approximate size, position and other characteristics
  - Documentation of sacred and/or archaeological objects on-site
  - Description of land tenure/ ownership arrangements
  - Linkages to customary livelihoods, use and ancestral presence
  - Linkages to other sacred sites
  - Large-scale maps locating sites in context of migration routes, settlements, pastures, pastures and other cultural landscapes
- Emphasize the quality of the mapping in the legend. Underline, for example, the preliminary character of the results (and the possibility of further identification of sites as public awareness increases), information gaps and communities covered.
- Obtain prior informed consent of Indigenous Peoples concerned before providing maps to public services, developers, researchers or other stakeholders.
- Promote mapping of sacred sites as planning tool to ensure that results are integrated in development impact assessments, protected area planning and other forms of land use.

### 7.3 The Biodiversity Significance of Sacred Sites

“It is connected with the belief in gods. The gods, we believe in, are in the tundra, rivers, and the sea. The Supreme God is An,An (The God of All Gods). Everything is connected with Nature and natural phenomena”. Filippova L.A. (Tilichiki)

Russia makes up one eighth of the global land area. Covering 102.600 km<sup>2</sup> of Polar or Arctic Deserts, 2.021.320 km<sup>2</sup> of lowland Tundra and 1.843.650 km<sup>2</sup>, the Russian terrestrial Arctic forms a vast part of this. Functioning as both nursery and feeding grounds for migratory birds and mammals, this adds to the stationary fauna.

Both the Yamal peninsula and Koryak lie within the 238 ecoregions (out of 895) identified at a global scale to represent the Earth’s major terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitat types. The Yamal peninsula forms part of the “Taimyr and Siberian Coastal Tundra Ecoregion”, while Koryak is part of the “Kamchatka Boreal Taiga and grasslands” as well as the “Russian Far East Rivers and Wetlands” (see Oviedo, Maffi and Larsen 2000). This global significance makes it even more relevant to examine the significance of sacred sites for their conservation.

How are sacred sites relevant in terms of biodiversity importance and conservation of ecosystems? What does the data collected show in terms of overlap with protected areas/ biodiversity hot spots? What is the role of traditional ecological knowledge?

*Sacred sites in Yamal and Kamchatka are found in a broad range of areas including, but not only, those of biodiversity importance. Cultural sites and landscapes form an integral part of areas of biodiversity importance.*

The documentation and mapping exercise revealed the comprehensive customary presence and activities of Indigenous Peoples in the pilot areas surveyed. This included areas as biodiversity hotspots<sup>2</sup> as well as other areas<sup>3</sup>. The results demonstrate in a fundamental way how models of wilderness and biological diversity are not in contradiction to Indigenous Peoples' customary management and use. The research demonstrates how areas of biodiversity importance may also be areas of significant cultural importance for the Indigenous Peoples concerned. The practical implications of the findings involve identifying management solutions, which address both perspectives and concerns.

*Sacred sites often overlap with key topographical features as mountains, hills and lakes*

Although generalizations cannot be made in this respect, the role of particular topographical features in the vast Arctic landscapes is of a certain importance. From a biodiversity perspective, such features may harbour specific niches or provide breeding grounds for particular species forming a network of patches in a fragmented conservation landscape. More particularly, they may form part distinctive habitat for specific subspecies or populations entailing particular importance in terms of genetic diversity. Relevant types of sacred sites include sacred mountains and sites located near important waterways. The vertical topography of mountains is, for example, often highlighted together with the accompanying multitude of microclimates (Bernbaum 1999). A comprehensive study of the correlation between these factors is beyond the scope of this study. Still, considerable overlap for certain subspecies or populations can, for example, be considered within the high presence of sacred mountains in the Koryak pilot region. As discussed below, such conservation value needs to be understood from a network perspective, rather than an individual focus.

*While the biodiversity importance of individual sacred sites viewed separately is limited, they form important networks and broader cultural landscapes of fundamental biodiversity value and ecological importance.*

Seen separately, most sacred sites do not represent areas of significant biodiversity importance. Although some sites do encompass particular species or important habitat, many are relatively small without distinctive features distinguishing their importance from surrounding landscapes. The *Heh Sede* Sacred site in Yamal, for example, is an important nesting site for geese. It is prohibited to hunt and take eggs out of the nests within the sacred site. A number of other sites also provide important breeding grounds and habitat for particular species. However, such examples remain a when analyzing the broader picture. The importance of sacred sites goes beyond specific species, discrete habitat and needs to be understood in an ecosystem context. This partly explains the limited attention paid to the role of sacred sites in biodiversity conservation. As such, they have generally been deemed insignificant from a biological point of view. In contrast, this research reveals that sacred sites are part of a broader customary use and management of the Arctic landscape.

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<sup>2</sup> Considering the limited area covered by the research, further comparative analysis in AOS could shed further light on this argument. In the Koryak AO, for example, five other hotspots have been identified in other areas of the Okrug.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted here that CAFF on several occasions has noted the continuous protection gap in the Russian Arctic compared with other Circumpolar countries.

Seen together, natural sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples form a variety of ‘networks’, which testify the importance of customary land use and management practices in maintaining biological diversity. The types of ‘networks’ include:

- Groups of sacred sites together forming sacred sites complexes
- Sacred sites under the customary management of particular clans
- Sacred sites as customary boundary markers
- Sacred sites as part of network of migration routes
- Sacred sites representing larger sacred landscapes and areas

The key issue is that sacred sites form part of a customary relationship between the indigenous communities concerned and the ancestral lands. These interactions are of fundamental importance to secure healthy ecosystems and the cultural landscapes concerned. Effective biodiversity conservation efforts need to recognize the presence of these areas, and customary rights and roles of Indigenous Peoples in managing them. The cultural complexity and different types of sacred sites underline the advantage of indigenous frameworks compared to conventional natural and cultural heritage instruments.

*Sacred sites of the Russian Arctic are rarely areas of non-use as experiences show in other countries. They are integral components of customary land and resource use, as well as territorial management practices.*

Indigenous Peoples interviewed underlined the intimate relationship between sacred sites and indigenous activities such as reindeer herding, fishing and hunting. In fact, many sacred sites require the sacrifice of reindeer, fish or special parts of it. Furthermore, many sites are intricately linked to successful hunting, the protection of reindeer or good fishing. The sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples in Russia are in only in a few cases like numerous sacred groves in South Asia where all human use and presence is prohibited. Correspondingly, they do generally not reflect *zapovednik* models of fencing off protected areas. They do, however, reflect intimate environmental relationships with direct relevance for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem resilience.

The fundamental connection between sacred sites and customary livelihoods logically favours an integrative framework, which, on the one hand, seeks to support comprehensive management solution to biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and, on the other hand, supports indigenous-driven solutions to strengthening customary livelihoods, sacred sites protection and territorial management. As the pilot regions show, such challenges may differ considerably.

Whereas strengthening customary livelihoods in Yamal may involve seeking alternatives to overgrazing and the loss of customary grazing areas, Koryak communities have highlighted the destructive impact of economic breakdown, disappearing market opportunities and expensive transportation. Regional legal challenges and opportunities also differ between the two regions.

*Sacred sites reflect indigenous knowledge systems and values of major cultural importance, which in many cases also promote rational use of the environment.*

The maps of the research areas are full of dots representing sacred sites. Beyond these, other areas of cultural importance such as (previous) settlements and migration routes could also be included as part of a broader mapping effort. The point is that Indigenous Peoples in the regions surveyed attach cultural values to their surrounding environments. Such values also include conservation-minded ones. They represent a fundamental connection to the land, which is of crucial importance if different visions of the land are to compete with those of extractive industries and development. One example, which is also found among other Indigenous Peoples in the circumpolar region, involves moral codes prohibiting excessive use and waste:

“In order to live well, an elder says, “ we shouldn’t kill even a bird if we don’t need it”. It is not necessary to kill more animals than it is required “so that one can easily find an animal or a bird he needs in the future”. In the summer, when there is a lot of fish in the rivers, man should stop hunting. Hunting shall prevail only when fishing season is over, i.e. in fall.”

As elsewhere, such moral codes may not reflect the actual practices. However, they are often promoted as part of indigenous value system, and Indigenous Peoples emphasize how sacred sites may initiate the person to their surrounding environment:

“Sacred site teach us to communicate with nature” A.K. Rultuvje (Sredniye Pahachi)

“Sacred sites teach people to love their habitat and wildlife”. A.N. Lilkiv (Hailino)

“ Sacred sites teach people the rules of behavior. It is prohibited to hunt animals to excess. We shouldn’t kill even a bird if we don’t need it to survive. In summer, when there is a lot of fish in the rivers, man should stop hunting. Hunting shall prevail only when fishing season is over, i.e. in fall. It is not necessary to kill more animals than it is required so that one can easily trap any animal or catch a fish when hard times come. These instructions are based upon the long-term experience of our ancestors in respect of careful attitude towards Nature and their care for future generations. The land is sacred for most Koryak people. The Koryak still make sacrifices and offer gifts for the sake of their native land, they address words of gratitude to it. Sacred sites are a symbol of rational management of the tundra lands since otherwise people may do a lot of harm”. E.G. Tnagirgina (Hailino)

Other examples include sacred sites and associated practices reflecting indigenous notions of awe or gratitude to nature such as the case of the *Ngoya Hibidya Ya*, one of the largest sacred sites in Yamal at the mouth of the Mogche-Yaha River. When hunger and famine touched the area in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reindeer herders and fishermen left heads of killed game as signs of gratitude. In other cases, hunters or fishermen may ask permission to hunt or fish.

This being said, it is also clear that indigenous values and knowledge systems may have little direct conservation impact. When, for example, Z.A. Gichgolkovav (Sredniye Pahachi) describes reindeer sacrifice, it rather seems to reflect a highly adapted and specific cultural practice:

“a reindeer is killed (during the commemoration of the dead) and a ritual is performed pursuant to our ancestors’ instructions as follows: the reindeer is cut so that none of the sinews will be torn. Then the meat is boiled and offered to people. The meat is cut off the



bones, the latter are put together with entrails and blood into a pit and then it is filled up. The horns, the skull and the neck-bone are attached to a stick laid on the ground together with alder branches and covered by stones. Z.A. Gichgolkovav (Sredniye Pahachi)

Indirectly such practices of course reflect other practices such as customary livelihoods reinforcing the relevance as such within as part of the human interactions constituting the ecosystem concerned.

From a more general perspective, the sacred sites provide clear-cut examples of the “associated cultural values” often recognized and referred to in protected area policy documents. They also provide good examples of what the CBD article 8(j) defines as:

“knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity”

In fact, it makes little sense to consider conservation and sustainable use initiatives in these areas without protecting and promoting Indigenous Peoples’ use and management of this knowledge. In practice, however, there is a tendency to rank these lower or simply neglecting them from a conservation perspective from a sustainable use perspective. What is cultural continues to be viewed as peripheral or simply irrelevant to the Arctic wilderness. As argued elsewhere, this trend needs to be reversed if policies of community-based conservation are to work in the long-term and walk the talk when it comes to associated cultural values.

*Sacred sites offer a widely distributed network of cyclical human presence in vast territories with a substantial potential for the monitoring of biological diversity and ecological processes.*

For scientists working in the Arctic, monitoring of ecological and biodiversity processes, in the short and long run, remains a financial and logistical challenge. Previously well-financed, the scientific community has suffered considerably with fewer resources and the weaker position of biodiversity conservation in general following the Ministry of Natural Resources taking over responsibilities from the former State Environmental Committee.

For Indigenous Peoples, being able to document and identify changes happening to their customary territories is a basic element of their efforts to secure a sustainable future. Continued use and management of sacred sites is intimately connected with access, control and continued livelihood practices. These livelihood practices are in turn dependent on ecological stability.

Scientists and Indigenous Peoples, in other words, face shared interests in monitoring biodiversity and ecosystem changes. Sacred sites form a cultural grid to support such processes.

*Customary use: a potential threat to biodiversity?*

Today, there is increasing focus on the growing ecosystem impact of reindeer herding in the Yamal area due to diminishing grazing areas (oil and natural gas exploration leases) and growing reindeer herds. As pastoralists elsewhere in the world have experienced, such experiences easily lead to questions concerning the sustainability of herding practices, despite the obvious external pressures. Maintaining sacred sites as part of a pastoral lifestyle may thus risk accusations of seeking to revive outdated and unsustainable practices. Nothing could be more damaging to the cultural and

biological diversity of the Okrug. It is important here to address the magnitude of the threats discussed. The massive withdrawals of land for oil and natural gas exploration have been emphasized by the UN as a highly unsustainable form of land use (UNEP 2001). Impact includes the complete destruction of plant cover on thousands of square kilometres within oil and gas fields and along main pipelines. In contrast, Indigenous Peoples have through their customary land use and presence proved the long-term viability of their land use both socially, ecologically and economically speaking. Reindeer herding and sacred relationships to the land present a viable alternative. It too, however, presents ecological challenges. However, reducing long term ways of life due to recent ecological challenges provoked, in large part, by external pressures is unfair.

As herding evolves, it also presents distinct ecological, economic challenges. However, in contrast to the worst case scenario of dead landscapes, Nenets have maintained productive landscapes and relationships with the land as part of the ecological system, which present a way forward. It has been emphasized by UNEP that the Arctic increasingly will be transformed by anthropogenic cumulative impacts (2001). As Forbes and others have argued, pastoral land use has not excluded the considerable presence of wildlife, but given the conditions, may have a considerable ecological impact in terms of thinning the organic layer leading to highly erodable surfaces. Customary land use and practices are not miracle solutions to ecological questions, but present a solid alternative to the short-term gains and high impacts of extractive industries. Such challenges would of course need to be further addressed in biodiversity strategies elaborated with the reindeer herders in question.

### **7.3.1 Preliminary Guidelines 3: Working with Sacred Sites and Biodiversity**

- Sacred sites play an important role in Indigenous Peoples' customary relationships with their surrounding environments, and are thus of importance in assessing and strengthening biodiversity protection efforts of their customary territories
- Holistic visions of and linkages to the land are today fundamental ingredients in viable conservation strategies in the face of short-term development opportunities. Ensure that these are recognized as such.
- Sacred sites cannot be limited to cultural impact assessments. There is a need to strengthen the integration of sacred sites in environmental impact assessments as well as ecosystem mapping efforts.
- Spiritual and cultural values form an integral part of biodiversity and ecosystem management. Their importance needs to be recognized in biodiversity assessments.
- Cultural landscapes, including sacred areas, form an integral part of many biodiversity hotspots in the Arctic. This needs to be further recognized in protected area policies, protected area planning and management practices.
- Sacred sites are areas of customary use and rights. This needs to be respected when identifying protected area categories and designing zoning. The most appropriate model is the recent category on Territories of Traditional Nature Use.

- Avoid unduly focussing on the specific significance of single sites, but seek to assess the broader value of sacred landscapes, complexes and spiritual values.

## 7.4 Sacred Sites, Customary Land Use and Management

### 7.4.1 Customary Ownership and Management

The research documents various types of customary ownership, management and stewardship practices.

A number of sites were privately owned with individuals taking care of them (*Nadya Tane Yaha* in Yamal). The majority of sites, however, reflect some degree of collective ownership or tenure. Some sites have an identified keeper, who maintains and protects the site, but still may be considered part of collective landscapes. In Yamal, this included the *Heh Sede* site of the Yaptunay clan or the *Mando Ngeva* site. The latter is visited by Enesy Nenez of the Vi'Yar Clan, while the "keeper", Hunguda Yar, is a reindeer herder of the Guidan Tundra. One or several clans may own a site. The *Lutza Pya Salya* site belongs to the Haruchi and Shushakov Clans. The *Ngate Ngeva* site belongs to the Yando clan and other clans in neighbouring areas. Although research exposed changing, and in some case dissolving, customary ownership practices, Indigenous Peoples generally maintain clear pictures concerning rightful stewards of particular sites.

Customary management may also include specific rules and practices concerning certain sacred objects. The practice of handing down sacred stones (identified by shamans) from generation to generation in secrecy, as well as rules concerning the use and presentation of the stones (*Yaro – To Se Nev*), is one illustration of this. Particular emphasis is put on appropriate behaviour and proper respect:

“All sacred sites are good. But when someone disturbs them, shouts or shoots, they punish him. They are like live beings”. Uley A.A. (Tilichiki)

“ Why do people bring gifts to sacred sites, when passing by? If they forget, the site may punish the person. The man may fall ill and animals (reindeer or dogs) may behave in a strange way. The energy might be either positive or negative. It depends upon the way we behave” Delkini A.A. (Hailino).

Tnagirgina E.G. (Hailino) says, “The old people think each sacred site has an invisible covering. When a man does something bad on the site, the covering takes the evil and then it is reflected back with a greater power of punishing energy. When a man does something good, he is filled with positive power or kind energy and he will be rewarded in the end”.

“ Yes. In general, different parts of the Earth possess different bio-energy, which men and animals feel. In my opinion, sacred sites are situated in the places of liberation of the most concentrated energy. Some people and animals feel such liberation as something disturbing, fearing or causing panic. Shamans are hypersensitive people. They marked such places and worked out a procedure in respect of behavior in each particular place of this kind. The procedure serves as a shield against the impact the energy has. Usually, it is an evil energy, which requires a “behavioral shield”. Ninani A.P. (Hailino)

As these quotations underline, sacred sites are not simply considerable vulnerable, but also powerful and potentially dangerous. External threats to sacred sites are not simply viewed as potentially harmful to the sites, but to the spiritual harmony and social well being of the indigenous communities concerned. This reflects practices of building and maintaining peace, an indigenous *pax deorum* with the spiritual world. Activities such as such pillage or disturbance have inevitably been viewed by indigenous communities with severe gravity. For the communities concerned, customary management is a question of customary respect.

Defining customary institutions or seeking to integrate them in policy planning or land management practices is not simple. Decades and decades of state-driven efforts to seek to develop or revive representative institutions such as the clan soviets (Slezkine 1994: chapter 5) to fit into the Soviet system proved extremely difficult. A major lesson has indeed been the danger of imagining institutions, which were simply absent. Similar caution is needed when seeking to working with customary management of sacred sites. Many authors have noted the tendency to exaggerate the significance of traditional forms of social organizations. It is, in many cases, unlikely that planners will find existing institutions and decision-making structures ready to integrate in okrug heritage management structures. Nevertheless, customary management and rights form the necessary cultural grid to build on when developing community-based institutions.

#### **7.4.2 Linking Customary Livelihoods and Management**

“We have lost our deer during the recent years, which resulted in a change of the way of life. Formerly the deer were slaughtered at the sacred site and a rite was performed. And this was our culture, our way of life”. A.K. Rultuvie (Srednye Pakhachi)”

Sacred sites have been forgotten. They were kept in mind earlier, when our people were nomadic, but now no herds have remained at present. Our generation doesn't remember anything already”. S.M. Igilgin (Hailino)”

The intimate connection to customary livelihoods is evident. The link between livelihoods and sacred sites has considerable impact on the use, maintenance and management of sacred sites. A number of findings relate to this:

1. First, many show clear linkages to traditional livelihoods. Several sites are located on the traditional reindeer herding migration routes. As Vavakko AI underlines: “Sacred sites can be found anywhere but mostly on the reindeer routes”. The sites of *Nado-Mara Syadey* and *Ngarka Ladukey-To* in Yamal are visited only during the fishing seasons. Reindeer heads, reindeer blood and the sacrifice of reindeer as such are fundamental ritual elements. Stories portraying the discovery of the sacred site may involve the drowning, retrieval or healing of reindeer herds.
2. Second, many interviewees emphasized the linkage between the discontinuation of customary livelihoods and the disintegration of sacred sites use and management. The study indicates higher rates of sacred sites disintegration in Koryak, where customary livelihoods have been disrupted or are under threat. It similarly points to a highly dangerous scenario with existing and increasing exploration and exploitation activities in the Yamal area. This points to two basic issues: namely, i) how to secure a conducive environment for healthy and sustainable customary livelihoods; and ii) how to bridge the knowledge gap concerning sacred sites emerging from a growing number of people taking on board other socio-economic practices. Both issues are

complex as illustrated by national and international discussions on indigenous economics and multicultural education.

3. Third, indigenous communities interviewed emphasized the importance of poverty and contrasted it with an external regard and interest in sacred sites. For them, it made little sense to view research on their sacred sites in isolation from the social and economic challenges that they were encountering.

Securing sustainable customary livelihoods is thus a fundamental requirement for protecting sacred sites and customary livelihoods. This documents the fundamental relationship between sacred sites preservation and healthy customary livelihoods. It is therefore not surprising that the indigenous communities interviewed would constantly highlight basic “bread and butter” issues when approached by the researchers. The two are fundamentally linked. Customary livelihoods face differing situations and threats in the regions covered by the research.

What are the differences between a region with the world’s largest herds of reindeer, and a region where reindeer herding is crumbling? In the Yamal-Nenets AO, reindeer herding is thriving with approximately half of the population engaged in it. In Koryak AO, reindeer herding has suffered considerably from the breakdown of the Soviet economy. It is recognized that Yamal-Nenets AO is one of the areas with the highest levels of degraded grazing areas due to gas and oil exploration, as well as collectivisation attempts to rigidly fix brigade routes for reindeer herding. The first event limited land available considerably, while the second event maintained continued use of particular areas of the fragile ecosystem. Researchers have argued that reindeer herders need to have an opportunity to allow for the existence of fallow pastures. Furthermore, growing herds, due to the lack of market, have provided little economic incentive to reduce.

When collectivisation efforts thus led to the fixation of herding routes in Yamal, a number of sacred sites were no longer taken care of. Where Nenets would earlier change routes on a regular basis, and thus over a number of years cover a range of different grazing areas, the fixation of hundreds of kilometres of routes<sup>4</sup> (Forbes 1999), has therefore had considerable cultural impact in terms of sacred sites management. In Kamchatka, reindeer herding has virtually disappeared since 1990, while Yamal herders in certain districts are struggling with overgrazing and pasture degradation issues. This was very clear at the Second Congress of Russian Reindeer Herders, in Salekhard 2002 (Stammler 2002), where the Kamchatka discussions evolved around state subsidies, while one Yamal herder called for new incentive measures to increase the slaughter<sup>5</sup>.

There are indications that continued role of reindeer herding in Yamal has resulted in stronger customary management institutions. Compared to the stronger presence of the Soviet state in Kamchatka, customary commons management has been documented among reindeer herders in Yamal (Gray and Stammler 2002) revealing a complex map of individual migration routes and pasture use patterns. Such customary management may be more or less weakened by external pressures and policies, but do provide a cultural grid and logical starting point for sacred site management.

An important customary understanding involves sacred sites and spirits as protectors or of influence as such over a particular area. Tinetegin V. Y., for example notes:

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<sup>4</sup> This being said, it is also clear that sacred sites linked to reindeer herding were not necessarily visited on a regular basis in times before collectivisation simply due to cyclical changes of migration routes.

<sup>5</sup> The argument being that prices are too low to encourage herd reduction.

“Our grandfathers and great-grandfathers told us about the sites... a sacred site is a host or a hostess of the area it is situated in. Therefore, when passing some sacred sites, reindeer farmers inform on their coming by making a sacrifice lest the site be offended and so that it could bring them luck in hunting, reindeer herding, and give health to everybody”.

The stress is on sacred sites and spirits as powerful agents. From a land tenure perspective, such conceptualisations are of immediate relevance for the design of land use and management regimes, which reflect customary use and practices. As Olga Murashko has noted information about sacred sites is fundamental to “substantiate the choice of place and size of a planned territory of traditional nature use as well as the historic relation between the indigenous people concerned and the territory in question (Murashko 2001)” Proactive information gathering and mapping by Indigenous Peoples can assist local governments in speeding up the process of implementation. However, indigenous-driven action does not stop with information gathering and documentation of sacred sites.

In order to protect Indigenous Peoples’ rights to their sacred sites, it is important that Indigenous Peoples, based on their documentation efforts, organize and register themselves as register to gain legal influence on the management of the sacred sites. Depending on the case, this may involve individual, lineage-based kinship structures, herding teams and broader communities. The *obshchina* may be a relevant unit in one area for a certain type of site, but not others. The various types of sacred sites suggest several different ways of registering to ensure that customary ownership and management is recognized. While such sacred site management ideally would be envisioned as part of a broader management framework for territories of traditional nature use, registered community organizations can also have an impact and serve as a building block where these are not present. The danger of creating too many overlapping structures here point to the relevance here of consultative models at a district and okrug level, where broader policies and guidelines are followed in this direction.

#### **7.4.3 Preliminary Guidelines 4: Sacred Sites and Customary Management**

- Promote sacred sites protection as part of the broader recognition of the customary rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Ensure the legislation on Indigenous Peoples’ sacred sites and their protection recognizes customary rights as outlined in Convention 169 and other international instruments.
- Customary ownership practices and identities provide a fundamental resource for building community-based protection and conservation mechanisms. Support the documentation and integration of customary institutions, customary law and conflict-resolution mechanisms.
- Customary management codes and rules may range from informal practices dealing, for example, with appropriate behaviour to more formalized ritual practices and codes of conduct. Both need to be recognized as valid mechanisms when defining ‘official’ approaches to sacred sites management.
- The fundamental link with customary livelihoods points to the importance of a holistic approach integrating sacred sites protection with the strengthening of customary livelihoods. Viewing sacred sites in isolation from use and practices, renders sites void of significance.

## 7.5 Current Protection Status of Sacred Sites: Summary of Challenges and Opportunities

The protection status of sacred sites remains both critical and encouraging in both pilot regions surveyed. Critical, because a number of existing and potential developments are of direct threat to the continued use and maintenance of indigenous sacred sites. Indicators such as development prospects, projections of cumulative effects and weak policy implementation measures are likely to make it increasingly difficult for Indigenous Peoples to protect their sacred sites unless proactive action is undertaken.

The situation is nevertheless encouraging, because many Indigenous Peoples continue to use, protect and even revive their sacred sites. Such areas therefore differ radically from archaeological sites void of significance and use. Sacred sites continue to be used, maintained and protected by Indigenous Peoples. There are also cases of new sacred sites appearing. Furthermore, the research process has documented regional interest and commitment in strengthening the protection of sacred sites.

Although many sites are currently not directly affected by development efforts, there is a reason to believe this may change. At present the sacred sites in the northern part of the Yamal peninsula and in the Guidan peninsula, for example, have remained intact since no industrial oil or natural gas drilling is pursued there. Depending on global markets and strategic decisions made within the extractive industries, this picture may change.

### 7.5.1 Sacred Sites: Doomed to Death?

Although sacred sites are under increasing pressure, their eroding status is far from a natural development. The research documents how Indigenous Peoples have faced different challenges throughout history. Under the Tsarist regime, Indigenous Peoples faced efforts to destroy their sites as part of a broader missionary effort. While cultural identities and beliefs were also marginalized during socialist period<sup>6</sup>, this also brought another type of threat. The introduction of new administrative and territorial boundaries along with economic reorganization had a profound impact. For the Nenets, this meant being split between three administrative units with fixed migration routes. As a result, many Nenets were hindered to visit a large number of sites.

The destruction of sacred sites has further amplified with the growth of oil and gas exploitation and exploration efforts. Although the research documents individual efforts to restore or even move certain sites demolished by developers, the impact is in most cases irreversible.

### 7.5.2 Bridging the Generational Gap

In my opinion, sacred sites are not of such great importance. Everything is gradually buried in oblivion, and one lacks not only the knowledge of the names, but that of the whereabouts of sacred sites as well. A.I. .Kakakko (Hailino)

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<sup>6</sup>As A.P. Ninani notes (Hailino): “Presently sacred sites are not as important to many people as they were in the past. Indigenous communities used to worship their sacred sites, totem animals, like the bear, the reindeer, the seal, the raven etc. Under the Soviet power all the concepts merged, unified and were replaced by ersatz-culture. Many of the sacred sites have been lost and are not attended”.

Interviews revealed a profound gap between generations when it comes to knowledge about and the use of sacred sites. Several informants raised the superficial level of knowledge among youth

“The importance of the sacred sites, A.P. Kovalko says, is evident to old people only, but they are quite few now. Sacred sites mean nothing to young people. One may ask any Young man about them and you will hardly find one to give you an answer. They have no idea about rituals, ceremonies and customs. It’s only national dances, home-bred artists and funeral ceremonies, that have been left for the culture.”

This is often coupled with a profound sense that cultural identities are being transformed into mere folklore:

“There has been no special significance, if any at all, in sacred sites for the recent 10 to 15 years. Even old-timers, who are in fact very few, do not know much about the sacred sites. As to the young generation, they know just nothing at all. It’s only legends, stories, beliefs and customs that have been left to the culture. R.N. Vakkako (Hailino)

Others would stress other factors such as language marginalization:

“Everyone has forgotten, or taken on Russian culture. I have already mentioned that the language is gone. Young people can not understand and speak our language”. A.A. Delkini (Hailino)

Finally, a number linked the reduced use to a result of sedentarization:

I don’t know anything about it. No significance by the moment. No nomads left. Our people have settled.” I.M. Igilgin (Hailino)”

No importance at present, our people have strictly settled in the settlement”. A.N. Lilkiv (Hailino).”

“Now that we live the sedentary life of a settled population, our children don’t know, where the sacred sites are situated. If they do, this is only due to stories”. L.A. Lilkiva (Hailino)

Others are more optimistic pointing to their own role in conveying this knowledge to their children:

“Now quite few young people lack the knowledge of the sacred sites, forget their names because they are not informed of their location. We are losing everything. We ourselves are to blame for what we tell our children. When children come to the museum, I tell them where the sacred sites are. They enjoy it. It would be much better, if the information were transmitted in families”. L.A. Phillipova (Tilichki)

“They are still very meaningful to us. This has ever been passed from generation to generation, so we do the same to our children”. E. P. Kosygin. (Tilichki)



Interestingly, they indicate the general interest among children in learning more about these sites. Some, in fact, point to the important values attached to sacred sites:

“we are pagans, and sacred sites are sacred to us. One enriches his spirituality and becomes ennobled if he knows the sacred sites and sticks to the rites, one just feels like part of this land and realizes his responsibility for everything that is to be found on Earth”. L.A. Lilkiva (Hailino)”

A growing number of people acknowledge the difficult situation, and seek to revert these processes.

“Little significance. The knowledge of rituals is superficial, and not everyone will name any sacred sites or their location. Of course, it’s a shame. And there are no discussions or tutorials. However, it might be possible to held conferences at the sacred sites or to arrange meetings with old-timers at school. “A.N. Kovanko (Hailino)

“Young people should be told stories, taught and imparted knowledge. The young people of today know less, they are not provided with information” A.A. Uley (Tilichki)

The majority of the interviewees are worried about the continuous degradation of traditional ways of life. Elders and others emphasized the importance of:

- Retrieving and documenting ancestral memory
- Maintaining traditional ways of life, traditional economies and resources management
- Revitalizing language, culture and customs
- Preserving and conveying traditional knowledge and spirituality

Such measures were emphasized as fundamental to the retention of the sacred sites’ status with the Indigenous Peoples.

### **7.5.3 Industrial Resource Exploration, Extraction and Transportation**

There are certain rules of behavior on the sites identified as sacred or on the territories adjacent to them.. Almost all Indigenous Peoples of the North regard burials, clan sanctuaries, the habitat of spirits patronizing the territory, shamans or other people as sacred sites (usually they are situated on the land, on the sledges, trees or a log cabin). Strangers are prohibited to enter on the sites not to mention touching or taking away some objects. In the event that some stranger enters on the site, he shall “feed” and “give to drink” to the spirits inhabiting the place (splash some water or leave a piece of food). One shall not approach or withdraw from the site straight on, he shall, first, walk round the site by the Sun”.

Manual for public employees (Russian Arctic, ed. by Anikov S.M., Moscow, Drofa, 2001: p.298)

The book addresses public employees and provides general notions of spiritual values of the Indigenous Peoples of the North. It underlines the special status of sacred sites, which requires respectful and careful attitude. Can such respect of cultural and spiritual values be taken over by extractive industries?

There has been increasing international attention to the environmental threats linked with the enormous gas and oil prospects of the Yamal–Nenets AO (Forbes 1999), the number one gas-producing region in Russia (and number two in terms of oil-production). Three decades of massive development has had substantial impact in certain areas of the Okrug. Less attention has been paid to social and cultural impact of these exploration and extraction activities. These research results document a number of cases where sacred sites located close to drilling, storage or exploration sites have been affected.

This has had dramatic consequences for sacred sites in a number of cases. The *Lutza Pya Salya* site, located in the vicinity of a petroleum storage depot, was despite clear customary ownership and continued significance, demolished by a bulldozer. The *Habidu Yara* site of the Habdu Clain on the Maliy River (Yamal) was destroyed by land surveyors constructing a trigonometric station on the hill. Local communities now speak of visions: “in the form of an old man and old woman in front of those people, whose clan will suffer some misfortune in the future”.

The actual cumulative impact of natural resource exploration, extraction and transportation in terms of environmental damage and social disruption is only starting to get recognized. In the Koryak AO, there is increasing discussion of the role of extractive industries and companies reaping the benefits from other major fishing sites. Considering the important role of customary livelihoods for sacred sites use, it is of great concern that the governor of Koryak in 2001 abolished Tkhsanom, the first territory of traditional nature use, while simultaneously promoting increase of extractive activities.

While such activities in both Yamal and Koryak pose threats to sacred sites and their management, they are nonetheless part of the reality Indigenous Peoples and conservation actors all over the country are facing. Although the economic growth argument is often presented, many Indigenous Peoples have now realized the short-term gains and long-term dangers of the quick material wealth obtained through first-generation agreements with extractive industries. Often cumulative effects have been left out of impact assessments, leaving indigenous stewards poorer off than before, particularly if sustainability indicators as health, diet and self-subsistence are taken into account.

There is a need to engage proactively with these actors, and seek solutions, which lead to a broader recognition of indigenous rights to sustainable customary livelihoods, appropriate forms of consultation and management processes. Ecologists and biodiversity conservation planners are similarly showing how such avenues are a fundamental requisite for future land use planning if the regions are to remain ecologically and economically fit for the future. There is a need for innovative approaches to collaboration between industry and Indigenous Peoples, where genuine attention is paid to indigenous concerns identified through effective impact assessments.

Several Arctic Declarations have recognized the importance of respecting and protecting the cultural diversity of the region. Indigenous Peoples have emphasized the importance of sacred sites for their cultural survival. The 1997 Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines, for example, speak of minimizing adverse impacts on the resource use and cultural values of Arctic indigenous communities. It specifies that:

“necessary measures should be taken, in consultation with neighbouring indigenous communities, to recognize and accommodate the cultural heritage, values, practices, rights and resource use of indigenous residents. Arctic States, in partnership with the oil and gas

industry, should address the economic, social, health and educational needs of Arctic indigenous residents. *All phases of oil and gas activity* should avoid historic or prehistoric archaeological and *sacred sites*, historic shipwrecks and other potentially important cultural resources. (AEPS 1997, my emphasis)”

This is followed by a list of recommended governmental action to:

- Urge and, where appropriate, require industry to integrate cultural and environmental protection considerations into planning, design, construction and operational phases of oil and gas activities;
- Improve cross-cultural communication methods to ensure full and meaningful participation of indigenous residents including procedures to incorporate local knowledge;
- Identify and prohibit or restrict oil and gas activities in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas; and
- For use in planning and decisions, identify species which are resources for human use and their ecological requirements, and identify patterns of their use as resources.

As discussed in the international section, work is proceeding within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity to elaborate guidelines for impact assessments and sacred sites. RAIPON is also active in an upcoming review of issues related to extractive industries, the World Bank and Indigenous Peoples.

It is clear that alternative extraction models are evolving. Major companies in the fields of mineral and resource exploitation have initiated dialogues with Indigenous Peoples organizations and local government agencies. The global experience shows that initial agreements are important first steps, but rarely sufficiently address indigenous concerns. Initial Russian experiences with agreement building have similarly revealed gaps in terms of enforcement, adequate benefit-sharing mechanisms and sufficient impact assessments. The picture may be changing. RAIPON is undertaking dialogues with gas companies and roundtables are being organized to discuss the concrete issues. As a whole, the current trend towards substantiating agreements and putting into practices concepts of free, full and informed consent when elaborating agreements will continue to remain a major challenge. Secondly, there is a need to highlight the principles of transparency and the avoidance of “divide and rule” tactics that split indigenous communities.

#### **7.5.5 Preliminary Guidelines 5: Addressing Challenges and Strengthening Protection Measures**

- Considering current and historical gap between policy and implementation, it is important the protection measures rely on hands-on assessments of protection challenges, realistic opportunities and actual impact. Consult with communities in order to identify actual threats and develop grassroots-based solutions.
- In the face of industrial development, the issue of cumulative impact assessments remain crucial. It is clear, not least in the Yamal context, that an understanding of cumulative

environmental, cultural and economic effects of industrial development is necessary to secure effective dialogue and agreement building between Indigenous Peoples and industry.

- Innovative cultural, environmental and social impact assessments are needed, which reflect the holistic nature of sacred sites. Experiences in this respect can furthermore feed into international discussions on this issue within the context of the Convention of Biological Diversity.
- Sacred sites protection will have little impact unless Indigenous Peoples engage in a broader social mobilization effort to bridge knowledge and experience between generations. Cultural revitalization efforts present hopes in this respect, but need to be accompanied by systematic efforts to document indigenous knowledge and sustain customary knowledge transmission measures. Local authorities have an important role in facilitating access to education systems and planning modalities.

## 7.6 Sacred Sites and Protected Areas: Current Linkages and Follow-up

The majority of sacred sites lie outside urbanized areas. In many cases, they overlap with areas of biodiversity significance. Protected areas offer different challenges and opportunities depending on a range of factors including:

- The type of protected area under consideration,
- Management effectiveness, and
- The involvement and participation of Indigenous Peoples

*Although established protected areas cover some of the sacred sites identified, the majority of sites are not included. Furthermore existing protected areas have only limited, if any, references to sacred sites in their management plans.*

Maps of the survey areas reveal a high number of sacred sites lying outside existing protected areas. Although some of this lie within areas of planned protected areas and biodiversity priority, it is currently unrealistic to imagine protected areas as the sole solution to sacred sites protection. On the other hand, it is possible to strengthen the integration of sacred sites in existing and future protected area management.

Sacred sites located within the borders of existing protected areas may today be protected, but they are rarely recognized as historical and cultural monuments or objects of cultural heritage, and certainly not on indigenous premises. Protected area staff are not required to protect them *per se*. Indigenous Peoples' use and access relies on the understanding and good of the protected area director. Considerable work is therefore needed to 'officially' recognize the cultural value of sacred sites within existing and new protected areas, and on this basis determine the most appropriate protected area category.

*Many protected areas in Russia suffer from poor enforcement and limited management effectiveness. Strengthening Indigenous Peoples involvement in management is a fundamental step to counter the weakening of local protection measures.*

Insufficient funding, staffing and limited management effectiveness continue to be among the major problems of most types of protected areas. Besides of the specific challenges related to particular protected area categories, it remains a fact that the Russian Protected Area system has lost considerable funding and has come under increasing pressure from large-scale industries, poachers and mining activities. Studies have documented more than half of protected areas being under major threats. Furthermore, the overlapping management responsibilities and institutions make sacred sites protection and management an extremely complex task. It may therefore not necessarily strengthen protection to receive overlapping categories (both cultural and natural heritage), although this would seem to be the case. Protected area designation may therefore not necessarily result in strengthened protection, but can as a minimum serve to legitimise community-based efforts to protect their sacred sites.

### **7.6.1 National Protected Area Categories and their Relevance for Sacred Sites Protection**

The different categories of the Russian Protected Area System present certain characteristics, which may be more or less conducive for sacred sites protection.

*Zapovedniks*, which correspond to IUCN category 1A, provide the strictest level of protection, but typically prohibit human presence, economic activities except limited activities in the buffer zones. In cases, where existing *zapovedniks* contain sacred sites, there is an opportunity to include provisions for their protection. There may, however, be a need to consider changing categories and new management solutions to recognize customary rights, involvement in management, and continuing livelihood issues. In certain cases, tourism is being taken on board to strengthen the economic situation. This may be to the disadvantage of further sacred sites management, particularly in cases where Indigenous Peoples wish to see their sacred sites protected from the public.

*Zakazniks* (IUCN category IV), or wildlife refugees, are renewed on a five year basis and serve to provide, often temporary, ecological or specific species protection measures. Although the landscape category is included, its potentially temporary status provides a weak protection solution to address the long-term importance of sacred sites.

*Pamyatniki Prirody*, or Natural Monuments, protect unique natural or man-made objects. This may correspond to certain types of sacred sites. In practice, such monuments are, however, limited to relatively small areas (typically between 100 to 500 hectares) limiting their broader relevance for broader indigenous cultural landscapes. Interestingly, in a number of cases, such natural monuments have been combined to create larger protected areas. Such experiences are of immediate relevance for indigenous sacred sites protection, which together often form larger networks of inter-connected sites, landscapes and territories. Another feature is the legal responsibility of land users to protect the monuments. In practice, however, such monuments are typically left without local staff, signs or other practical measures to ensure protection.

*National parks* have been created to protect both ecosystems and cultural heritage, and are often designed to allow for tourism. The latter aspect may render it a weak instrument to ensure effective sacred sites protection. Key advantages include the large coverage providing an important alternative to other types of land use.

*Prirodniye Parky*, Nature Parks, are defined as “natural recreational institutions set aside for the purpose of nature protection, education, and recreation and under management of the Russian Federation.” Under regional management, they are an increasingly popular management tool.

*Private Nature Reserves*, the first (Muravyovskiy Nature Park) created in 1993, is mainly a solution for relatively small areas. It may, however, be considered in cases where sacred sites are identified on the lands of other stakeholders.

### *Territories of Traditional Nature Use*

Regional ownership and implementation measures have revealed both strengths and weaknesses. The case of Tkhsanom presents the dangers of regional administration intervening on behalf of other interests and stakeholders to abolish such territories. The recent federal legislation is still encountering considerable implementation obstacles, but provides the best opportunity on paper to integrate sacred sites protection in a protected area framework, which reflects customary right and use strategies. While the overall policy instrument is in place, the actual lack of such territories on the ground is jeopardizing a highly innovative protected area model. Furthermore, as it has recently been noted (IWGIA 2002:40), the presence of such territories on paper may not necessarily secure the impact assessments or public hearings in connection with infrastructure development. Such threats are also shared with other types of protected areas (Tyrylyshkin 2002).

Since ratification of the CBD in 1995, implementation measures, partly with the assistance of the GEF, have mainly focussed on strict protected areas. The gathered information on sacred sites further documents the urgent necessity of moving forward with the concrete implementation of innovative protected area models such as the Territories of Traditional Natural Resource Use. Despite an increase of protected areas, it is also broadly recognized that the coverage of protected areas is weak compared to other countries in the Arctic region. Strong public support, which can be obtained through indigenous stewardship models, are fundamental to counter the severe protection gap experienced currently in Russia.

*The different types of consultation and involvement of Indigenous Peoples in protected area management and decision-making processes have considerable impact on the degree of effective protection of sacred sites.*

Although the role of cultural values and , there is a gross discrepancy with actual involvement in decision-making and management on the ground. Revised categories and official recognition of sacred sites will have little impact, unless Indigenous Peoples are actively involved in the day-to-day management of protected areas.

### **7.6.2 Preliminary Guidelines 6: Protected Area Conservation and Sacred Sites Protection**

- Promote the official recognition and cultural value of sacred sites within existing protected areas, and seek to support indigenous stewards in identifying appropriate management initiatives. These may involve new zoning practices, involvement of indigenous communities in new co-management arrangements and the recognition of customary use and access to the areas.
- Promote the application of recent legislation on Territories of Traditional Nature Use as the most relevant protected area category to encompass both biodiversity conservation and sacred

sites protection. This being said, Indigenous Peoples will have to carefully review whether actual implementation takes place, and whether or not it may make more sense to seek other forms of protected area designation. Discussions will also need to ask whether federal or regional designation, funding and other income related issues.

- Strengthen on-the-ground co-management mechanisms and structures, which engage Indigenous Peoples in the management of protected areas through affirmative hiring policies, innovative representative institutions and consultation practices.

## 7.7 Sacred Sites and Other Forms of Land Use

Other forms of land use and tenure -such as government land, private land or industrial leases-present distinct access, use and protection challenges. Although the field material reveals little information in this regard, questions in this direction are of immediate relevance. Considering, for example, the slow implementation of the federal law "On Territories of Traditional Nature Use of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation" (Murashko 2001), Indigenous Peoples may have to seek interim solutions as immediate protection tools.

*Support of local authorities is fundamental particularly to ensure protection of sacred sites within areas outside existing protected areas and other forms of protection*

Support of local authorities remains a crucial factor in order to secure the official recognition of sacred sites as well as basic legal and administrative support in addressing the challenges and potential conflicts inherent in protecting sacred sites.

For this purpose, awareness raising and sensitisation of local cadres about indigenous sacred sites, relevant legislation and their responsibilities are of key importance. Their support is fundamental to ensure that appropriate consultation efforts and impact assessments are undertaken when leases are provided to extractive industries or when agreement building is facilitated with Indigenous Peoples.

*Cultural heritage recognition and listing is considered an important option. Indigenous Peoples' sacred sites are rarely recognized as cultural heritage.*

Indigenous Peoples' sacred sites are important areas of historical and cultural heritage. Although indigenous sacred sites in a few number of cases are listed as cultural heritage, considerable gaps remain in terms of coverage and effective protection. Even in the cases, where listing takes place, it is argued that the managerial regime may not respect the indigenous concerns and second that cultural heritage instruments rarely provide effective protection. These need to be recognized as such on indigenous conditions. Existing cultural heritage policies may, in many cases, offer some protection measures, where other opportunities are absent. Indigenous Peoples in Russia may therefore actively pursue cultural heritage listing to the extent they feel this improves protection, and simultaneously promote innovative policy and protection tools to cultural heritage, which recognize their broader customary use and access. It would seem important that Indigenous Peoples from the beginning stress a broader vision of their cultural heritage, while acknowledging the *interim* relevance of some heritage nomination to protect existing sites. Cultural heritage listing thus would seem only to be a first step a broader concerted effort to seek recognition of indigenous heritage, which also integrates linkages to customary livelihoods and land use practices.

### *Cultural heritage protection rarely integrates an indigenous perspective*

There is a need to at federal and regional levels to integrate indigenous conceptualisations and perspectives on cultural heritage. Ideally, these would insert sacred sites in a context of customary heritage and rights. Another practical approach would involve strengthening the use of cultural landscape tools to sacred sites scattered in vast areas. This would allow for the recognition of connected migration routes, surrounding landscapes as well as the inclusion of larger sacred territories or rivers.

#### **7.7.1 Preliminary Guidelines 7: Sacred Sites, Cultural Heritage and Land Use**

- Support Indigenous Peoples in documenting and mapping their sacred sites on all types of land use. Given the considerable socio-economic changes and massive developments in some areas of the Arctic, a number of sacred sites are now found in areas used for other purposes
- Ensure that sacred sites are integrated component of impact assessments. Support local authorities and implementing scientific teams in obtaining relevant tools and existing information in order to undertake such impact assessments
- Promote inclusive approaches to cultural heritage in both policy work and actual designation, which acknowledge that indigenous sacred sites most often include broader cultural landscapes, associated migration routes and livelihood activities. The latter are integral part of the sacred site and its use, and need to be recognized as such.
- Avoid simplistic approaches to sacred sites as cultural heritage, which merely fence off small areas without reflecting broader customary use and rights. This particularly needs to be considered when seeking official cultural heritage listing and recognition of sites or when Indigenous Peoples agree on protection measures with industries and other stakeholders.
- Seek commitment from other land users and neighbours, as some degree of local ownership is fundamental in the current context of weakened official protection institutions. Consider developing awareness-raising campaigns adapted to the local context.

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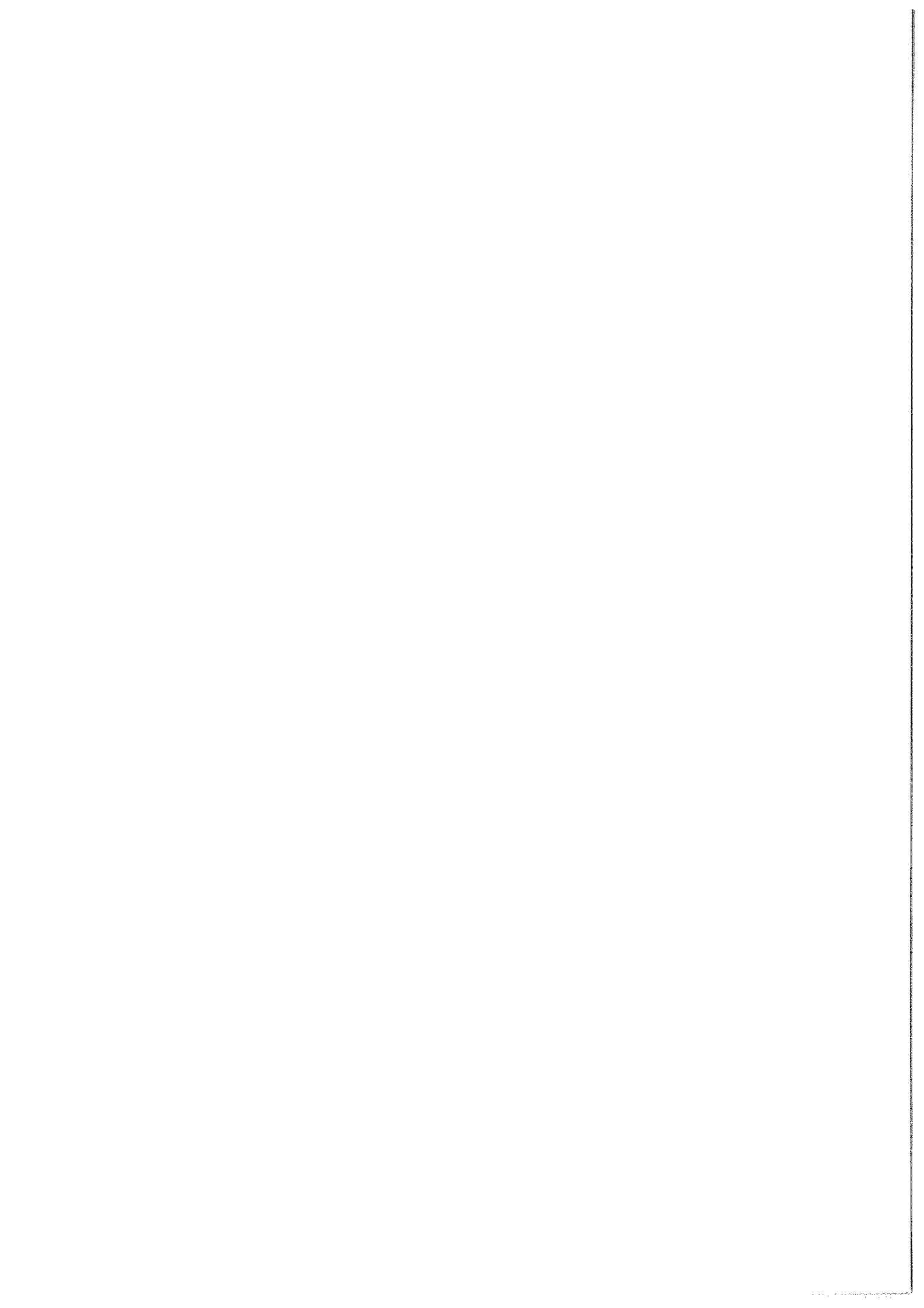
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## Chapter 8: Recommendations

A multi-pronged or holistic oriented approach is needed, which is directed towards sacred sites, their customary use and community-driven protection efforts. Existing legal systems and legal regimes have a potential for the protection of sacred sites, but new approaches are also needed. The following recommendations propose specific follow-up actions for cultural heritage legislation, protected areas and community action.

### 8.1 Overall Sacred Sites Framework

As a basis for the “sectoral” recommendations below, this report argues for the importance of a holistic approach to sacred sites protection. If local authorities, indigenous organizations and researchers seriously wish to protect sacred sites, this protection cannot be addressed independently from customary rights issues, such as traditional livelihood activities and issues of preservation and transmission of indigenous traditional knowledge to future generations. It is therefore recommended that:

- RAIPON and other organizations of indigenous people promote sacred sites management as part of a broader Indigenous Heritage approach. Follow-up to UN recommendations in this respect could be considered.
- Rights-based frameworks are promoted as a fundamental component of effective sacred sites protection. Most effective protection of sacred sites of indigenous peoples can be achieved within legislation on indigenous rights, especially in those cases when sacred sites are included in the boundaries of territories of traditional nature use as they are established. Acting regional legislation of Ymalo-Nentsky Autonomous Region (YNAO) offers opportunities to resolve the issue of protecting indigenous peoples’ sacred sites even today. To achieve that we need to competently use the existing legislation of YNAO on land use, specially protected nature territories, on protection of historical and cultural monuments, customary livelihoods and public territorial self-governance of indigenous peoples.
- Indigenous Peoples develop specific action plans, where traditional nature use and management of sacred sites is part of a broader effort to enforce their customary rights.
- Awareness is raised among local authorities and other decision-makers about the broad range of threats to sacred sites that need to be immediately addressed.
- Local authorities are encouraged to develop integrated solutions, rather than piecemeal approaches, to the problems of sacred sites management.
- The development of a comprehensive policy framework for indigenous sacred sites protection is considered.
- RAIPON initiates a database on indigenous sacred sites, their protection status and on-going initiatives, in conjunction with other actors seeking to strengthen indigenous sacred sites protection.
- RAIPON will hold a circumpolar workshop on conservation and protection of sacred sites and traditional knowledge of Arctic Indigenous Peoples. This workshop will considerably broaden and extend the recommendations in the report. It will also provide the opportunity to involve other Indigenous Peoples in the discussion and will perhaps provide good conditions for preparing recommendations which would be suitable for the whole Arctic region.

## 8.2 Community-based Action

First, the research process revealed great community interest, but also capacity gaps, in terms of strengthening the protection of their sacred sites. The following action is suggested as follow-up:

- The final version of report, including the international section, is shared with the communities concerned.
- Regional indigenous organizations and communities of indigenous peoples are supported with capacity building in order to document and protect their sacred sites. Specifically:
  - The documentation of baseline information concerning the sites and their protection status is improved through capacity building and further data collection.
  - Community-based mapping exercises are facilitated.
  - Dialogue and consensus building with local authorities is facilitated to strengthen effective implementation of relevant instruments of cultural heritage and preservation of biodiversity.
- Informational material is produced and distributed throughout the regions, describing basic opportunities and steps for indigenous communities and their organizations to protect their sacred sites. Once project work has been completed, this experience and methods can be recommended for replication and implementation in other areas populated by Indigenous Peoples.
- Practical capacity building is facilitated for local authorities in charge of cultural heritage preservation and biodiversity conservation.

Second, Indigenous representatives who were interviewed, and in particular elders, stressed the threats to indigenous ways of life as a fundamental aspect. They argued for the need for more community-driven initiatives to tackle, among other things, the disintegration of customary livelihoods and cultural gaps between generations. It is therefore recommended to facilitate community-driven initiatives to:

- Strengthen the integration of sacred sites protection with traditional livelihoods and rights.
- Strengthen the transmission of customary knowledge related to sacred sites through the integration of this knowledge in multi-cultural education, as well as innovative approaches to raise awareness among the large group of youth outside the education system.
- Facilitate the development of accessible information in indigenous languages, as well as Russian.

Third, many elders stressed the importance of protecting knowledge related to sacred sites from abuse. As the research revealed a variety of opinions, it is recommended that:

- Communities develop guidelines on the management, distribution and use of information related to sacred sites, their location, associated rituals and objects. Inspiration may be sought in approaches taken from Indigenous Peoples elsewhere.

- Tiered levels of knowledge documentation and registers are supported to ensure secrecy and restricted access, as well as create different levels of information availability for public institutions, industrial actors and indigenous communities.
- The design, production and distribution of maps are controlled by the communities.
- Specific guidelines are developed for developers, geologists and extractive industries on consulting with communities concerning the location of sacred sites.

### 8.3 Cultural Heritage

Indigenous Peoples' sacred sites are important areas of historical and cultural heritage. They need to be recognized as such, on terms specified by Indigenous Peoples. Existing cultural heritage legislation provides more potential than is currently used in this respect. However, further policy work is needed, particularly in the Koryak AO. Project participants expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of fencing off areas or hanging up signs.

The major problem remains enforcing cultural heritage legislation. This may be even more so for indigenous sacred sites. A further danger involves viewing sacred sites in isolation from each other; thus only protecting isolated areas in broader cultural landscapes. Still, cultural heritage recognition is an important *ad hoc* or interim solution to the protection of specific sites and objects until broader recognition of ancestral land use is in place. This is particularly important in industrial regions, where there is a large population of newcomers, temporary workers and transient industrial groups, such as geologists, surveyors and drilling brigades. A combined approach of policy work, awareness raising, and facilitating the implementation of legislation is therefore needed, as well as the application of other protection regimes. In terms of follow-up actions, it is therefore suggested that:

At the federal level:

- Explore options of securing further federal recognition of sacred sites and landscapes through federal cultural heritage tools, such as the recent law on Objects of Cultural heritage.
- Conduct sensitization activities and awareness raising activities to highlight the immediate importance of allowing and facilitating Indigenous Peoples registering their sacred sites as cultural heritage, if they so wish.
- Promote standard steps and methods forward for the recognition and protection of sacred sites.
- Strengthen the implementation of federal measures for cultural impact assessments to include the protection of sacred sites, their traditional use and management.
- Promote the recognition and use of cultural landscapes as a cultural heritage tool to recognize and protect sacred sites in the broader context of cultural livelihood practices.

In the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug to:

- Facilitate changes and additions to the law, "On the Protection of Historical, Cultural and Architectural Monuments in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug"; and further develop the draft law, "On Cultic and Religious Sites of the Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North on the territory of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug."

- Facilitate the inclusion of sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples on state registers, as deemed appropriate by the communities concerned given that a considerable number of communities wished to keep sacred sites locations secret.
- Raise awareness among local government officials and other key actors, such as local industries and society at large, concerning new legislation.
- Facilitate further protection of sacred sites according to cultural heritage instruments in remaining districts of the Okrug.
- Build capacity of local authorities and indigenous organizations to undertake cultural impact assessments and document indigenous sacred sites, and their customary use and management.
- Raise awareness among enterprises and private sector involved in natural resource extraction about cultural impact assessments and how to respect customary rights to sacred sites.
- Conduct follow-up monitoring of documentation and registration activities to assess progress in registering sacred sites, as well as assessing whether this provides increased benefits.
- Strengthen the monitoring role and capacity of indigenous organizations.

In the Koryak Autonomous Okrug:

- Finalize efforts initiated under the project with regional researchers and deputies of the KAO Duma to develop a draft law, “On the Protection of Historical, Cultural and Architectural Monuments in the Koryak Autonomous Okrug”. Emphasize the relevance of Territories of Traditional Nature Use as an appropriate protection tool.
- Promote the adoption of a law on the protection of historical and cultural monuments which pays due respect to the sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples. Initial drafting work has been undertaken within the framework of the project.
- Strengthen registration and implementation measures.
- Raise awareness among local government officials and other key actors, such as local industries and society at large, concerning new legislation.
- Build capacity of local authorities and indigenous organizations to undertake cultural impact assessments and document indigenous sacred sites, and their customary use and management.
- Raise awareness among enterprises and private sector involved in natural resource extraction about cultural impact assessments, and how to respect customary rights to sacred sites.
- Strengthen the monitoring role and capacity of indigenous organizations.

#### **8.4 Biodiversity and Protected Areas**

Special protected nature territories cover a variety of management regimes, which have differing relevance for the protection of sacred sites. As this report underlines, sacred sites contribute to biodiversity conservation and ecological stability in a number of ways. Still, although protected areas offer *de facto* protection for sacred sites, they rarely recognize the

value of these sites. Furthermore, communities are dependent on the goodwill of protected area managers to access and to continue to use their sacred sites.

Particular importance is therefore placed on the protected area category of Territories of Traditional Nature Use (TTNU), as the model for further follow-up and support in areas with Indigenous Peoples. This new protected area category holds considerable potential to integrate the issue of sacred sites, as this can be done within a context of customary livelihoods, natural resource use and management. It is, however, meeting resistance in some regions such as the Kamchatka Oblast, where local authorities view it as further recognition of Indigenous Peoples' customary territories<sup>1</sup>. In order to view the TTNUs as a realistic management option for sacred sites, there is a need for further action:

At the federal level, there is a need to:

- Promote further policy action to facilitate actual implementation measures and mechanisms at the local levels for Territories of Traditional Nature Use.
- Ensure that the particular aspects of sacred sites use and management are highlighted in briefing and awareness raising materials.
- Strengthen consultation and advisory mechanisms when designating and nominating protected areas.
- Ensure that criteria for environmental impact assessments include the protection of sacred sites, and traditional uses and management.
- Strengthen collaboration with legislative and other initiatives to protect sacred sites, and to develop joint action plans.
- Sensitize federal actors working biospheres, world heritage sites and seek innovative approaches to the further recognition of the value of sacred sites within existing and new areas being considered. Strive to obtain additional designations for a number of cultural heritage sites, which also have cultural significance for Indigenous Peoples.

At the regional level, there is a need to:

- Strengthen dialogue and trust-building exercises between local administrators, managers of special protected nature territories and Indigenous Peoples
- Strengthen capacity-building and practical participation in local management for Indigenous Peoples.
- Strengthen practical participation of Indigenous Peoples in the mapping, zoning, and management design of special protected nature territories to ensure that they reflect traditional rights.
- Develop a consultation mechanism to allow for the cooperation and resolution of possible conflicts connected with the existence of sacred sites within the borders of special protected nature territories. Plans for administrative measures should be developed in cooperation with the local population.<sup>2</sup>
- Facilitate pilot cases of TTNUs, which integrate sacred sites in planning, zoning and regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> See Olga Murashko. "Zakon o territoriyakh traditsionnogo prirodopol'zovaniia—vremia rabotat'." [The Law on Territories of Traditional Nature Use—Time to Work.]

[http://www.raipon.org/russian\\_site/events/kamchatka/meeting\\_08\\_2001\\_with\\_governor.html](http://www.raipon.org/russian_site/events/kamchatka/meeting_08_2001_with_governor.html)

<sup>2</sup> "Rekomendatsii Komissii MSOP po natsional'nym parkam i okhraniyaemym territoriiam, mai 1992 g." . [Rekomendatsii Komissii MSOP po natsional'nym parkam i okhraniyaemym territoriiam, mai 1992 g.] *Vsemirnoe kul'turnoe i prirodnoe nasledie. Dokumenty, kommentarii, spiski ob'ektov* Moscow: Heritage Institute, 1999. p. 337.

- Strengthen the recognition and integration of sacred sites in existing special protected nature territories.
- Integrate sacred sites protection and traditional uses in regional planning processes that establish and designate new special protected nature territories.
- Facilitate the extension of protection measures to sacred sites, surrounding cultural landscapes, and connected migration routes lying outside TTNUs.
- Strengthen the integration of cultural knowledge in local management through an affirmative hiring policy when selecting protected area staff, coupled with focused training of selected indigenous staff.
- Strengthen approaches to environmental education, which recognize the biodiversity significance of sacred sites and spiritual values attached to the land.
- Facilitate the testing of innovative approaches to environmental impact assessments, which protect sacred sites, traditional use and management.
- Develop innovative assessment, monitoring and reporting tools for including sacred sites management in biodiversity conservation.

At the international level, there is the need to:

- Develop action plan for the further integration of sacred sites and indigenous territories of traditional nature use in the Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN).
- Actively recognizing the cultural value of sacred sites for assessments and planning purposes within the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF).
- Encourage Indigenous Peoples to seek further reporting on sacred sites and their protection into national reporting on the implementation of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).
- Bring to the attention of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) the need to accommodate within its work knowledge about indigenous sacred sites, as this is a significant and important perspective for the intellectual property, traditional knowledge and genetic resources of indigenous peoples.
- Suggest that the World Park Congress (WPC) adopt recommendations regarding the compulsory inclusion of the interests of indigenous peoples and their communities, as well as the special role and importance of their sacred and ritualistically important places, into special protected territories, since the livelihoods of these peoples depend on traditional nature uses and traditional types of nature management.
- Seek technical and financial support to strengthen policy processes and implementation efforts at the regional and district levels.
- Strengthen further research and information exchange on practical approaches and measures to sacred sites protection, and efforts of Indigenous Peoples of other countries to protect biodiversity.
- Support Indigenous Peoples from other regions with further research on practical approaches and measures for sacred sites management.



## APPENDIX:

### Lists of Sacred Sites In the Yamal-Nenets Okrug, Tazovsky District

1. Ngoya
2. Kharv
3. Seheryav-Syadei Hehe
4. Yamb Nade
5. Heh Sede
6. Verm Mal-Hy
7. Ngoya Hibidya-Ya
8. Penzer-Seda
9. Vyirchi
10. Teho-Nyav
11. Lavui Nado
12. Shaiky-To
13. Mayeta Nyavhy Ngoya
14. Payuta Ngoya
15. Yarto-Yaha Ngoya
16. Ngev Suty
17. Yav Mal Hibidya Ya-To
18. Ven Hibidya Ya
19. Nadky
20. Ngarka Hadynche
21. Nyada Tanyo Yaha
22. Ngoya Hibidya Ya
23. Yaro-To Syo Nyav
24. Ngev Sede
25. Ngev-To
26. Habt Seda
27. Hibidya Ngev-To
28. Pravy-To
29. Nyarme Hibidya Ya
30. Lambin Hibidya Ya
31. Pangvtav Ngeva
32. Hehe Seda Sylava
33. Mantoi-Sede
34. Heh Sede
35. Noi Lavats
36. Hibidya Ngo
37. Noleko Labahei
38. Narno-Sede
39. Hibidya-Nade
40. Hantei
41. Heh Han Suty
42. Labangane
43. Lutsa Pya Salya
44. Syadei Hehe Ya
45. Tukcha Hehe Ya
46. Habdu Yara
47. Sudarta Salya
48. Nado-Mara Syadei
49. Hibidya Ho Ngo
50. Nenyang-To
51. Hevada Veva To
52. Ngoleko Lavahei
53. Tevche
54. Nyangu-Tivi
55. Halmer He Han
56. Ngoglei
57. Ngelo-Suty
58. Ngarka Lavahei
59. Ngarka Ladukei-To
60. Puhucha-Sede
61. Ngate Ngeva
62. Simsy
63. Yarsan-To
64. Lyder-To
65. Nero-Sede
66. Mando-Ngeva
67. Ngev Seda Hehe Ya
68. Numt Hanotorma
69. Parisen To Hehe Ya
70. Tadebya Hehe Ya
71. Myal Ha Hehe Ya
72. Ty Hgeva Seda
73. Nyahar Ngevte
74. Syade Hehe Ya
75. Nado Mara Hebidya Ya
76. Habdu Yara Hehe Ya
77. Neito Ngo Hehe Ya
78. Hebidya Ho Ngo
79. Nyamboi To Hehe Ya
80. Nyartso
81. Ngolsa Ngeva
82. Ngev Hebidya Ya
83. Seyete E Hebidya Ya
- 83 (a). Mando Seda
84. Yarongon Hanotalva Hebidya Ya
85. Sote Ya
- 85(a). Pe-Souty
- 85(b). Myad Puhutsa Hebidya Ya
- 85(c). Yenya Peya
86. Hanontalava-Suti
87. Ngoner Ngeva
88. Hano Suti
89. Ngo Ya Hebidya Ya
90. Nohopalka

91. Syadei
92. Monggatolyang
93. Ngev Seda
94. Mongte E Yaha Hebidya Ya
95. Nyada Suti
96. Vasilei Heho Ya
97. Nganoraha
98. Parelaha
99. Samb Na (Cambdama)
100. Ivarmya
101. Lyambala Hebidya Ya
102. Hor Suty
103. Syadei
104. Larui
105. Porungui Hebidya Ya 1
106. Porungui Hebidya Ya 2
107. Nyahar Yaha Hebidya Ya
108. Simy Seda
109. Ngev Sede E
110. Yesya Hora
111. Porungui-Hehe
112. Salpada Yaha Hebidya Ya
113. Pari Suty
114. Nyara Hehe
115. Syv Yaha Hebidya Ya Yevai Ngo
116. Yevai Ngo
117. Salya Mal Hebidya Ya
118. Yara Michu
119. A Place Without Name
120. Mongte Salya
121. Yava (Yavo) Seda
122. Paihata
123. Sacred Place Yavai Ngo
124. Yuribei Ngo Ya
125. Vadele E
126. Murlyk
127. Ngedya Hebidya Ya
128. Nudya Lyder To
129. Nyadei Seda Hebidya Ya
130. Hehe Han Suty
131. Ngev To Hebidya Ya
132. Nyarme
133. Sihirtya To
134. Sihirtya Hebidya Ya
135. Ngate Ngeva
136. Yaroto Lake
137. Parise E To Lake (Black Lake)
138. Vento Lake- Dog's Lake
139. Lysuk To Lake
140. Har To Lake – Knife Lake
141. Neito Lake
142. Serngo Hebidya Ya
143. Sya Mei Yun
144. Sidyam Ngevt E
145. Sylava
146. Nudya Sylava
147. Ngerm Sede Hebidya Ya
148. Vysy Yara Seda
149. Ilebyam Pertya Hebidya
150. Liv Ngasede E
151. Vy Yaro Hebidya Ya
152. Pare Suty
153. Ngevt To
154. Ngeva
155. Sanggota Seda
156. Yumbure E
157. Huryoha Seda
158. Tadanggalava
159. Sehryav Heho Ya
160. Halete E Hebidya Ya
161. Mesya Yaha Hebidya Ya
162. Ngara Ne
163. Teta Yaha Hebidya Ya
164. Versi Ngo
165. Sacred Site of Yando Nikolai Hasavovich
166. Narei Salya
167. Yuneribei
168. Tahabei Seda
169. Syabu Suty
170. Hanormyan Hebidya Ya
171. To Ngeva
172. Nero Seda
173. Nyamd Ngeva
174. Talebtic Yara Seda
175. Ngete E
176. Lakun Suty
177. Pedarte E
178. Nyanguyuto Hebidya Ya
179. Nyak Yaha
180. Pe Nado
181. Nyango Tibi
182. Tevte E
183. Nudya Punta Ngo
184. Narka Punta Ngo
185. Lapta Hebidya Ya
186. Tadebya Sede
187. Pyalik Salya
188. Sarmik Sede
189. Pariko Sede E
190. Nyarava Nado
191. Yara Seda
192. Hebidya Ngo
193. Hora Ngeva

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 194. Ha Al To                          | 237. Ader Yaha, National Burial Place |
| 195. Halete                            | 238. Yarongo                          |
| 196. Myalha Pe                         | 239. Ty Ngeva Seda                    |
| 197. Yaro Hora Maha                    | 240. Tos Meta                         |
| 198. Pevhy                             | 241. Sydy                             |
| 199. Id Yerv Hehe Ya                   | 242. Antipayuta                       |
| 200. Noho Manesarma Hehe Ya            | 243. Without Name                     |
| 201. Venngo (Venovta) Hehe Ya          | 244. Ngev Sede                        |
| 202. Numt Hanotorma Vanuito            | 245. Chugor                           |
| 203. Numt Hanotorma Lapsui             | 246. Hebidya Pe                       |
| 204. Medna Seda                        | 247. Lutsi Ngin Hehe Ya               |
| 205. Palka Ma Hehe Ya                  | 248. Tunder Suty                      |
| 206. Susoi Hehe Ya                     | 249. Pa Narui Seda                    |
| 207. Hebidya Paye Suty                 | 250. Minlei                           |
| 208. Myaro                             | 251. Tetneda Tarko Salya              |
| 209. Payesya                           | 252. Hungli Seda                      |
| 210. Yumb Seda Hehe                    | 253. Syadhalui                        |
| 211. Nero Seda Hehe Ya                 | 254. Yesyam Homa                      |
| 212. Noite Ne                          | 255. Lorsak Seda                      |
| 213. Tusida Seda                       | 256. Yapto Ik                         |
| 214. Tos Maha Yaha Hehe Ya             | 257. Parise Pe                        |
| 215. Nado Ha Hehe Ya                   | 258. Ngabkei Hehe Ya                  |
| 216. Hehe Han Seda                     | 259. Yara Yaha Hehe Ya                |
| 217. Nyadongi Seda Hehe Ya             | 260. Lumbad Yaha Hehe Ya              |
| 218. Sydarta Seda Hehe Ya              | 261. Salender Hehe Ya                 |
| 219. Ty Manesalma Hehe Ya              | 262. Neita Ngo Hehe Ya                |
| 220. Ader Hehe Ya                      | 263. Lad Ngo                          |
| 221. Nganoraha Hehe Ya                 |                                       |
| 222. Hebidya Poyose                    |                                       |
| 223. Si Iv Seda                        |                                       |
| 224. Yabta Yaha Hebidya Ya             |                                       |
| 225. Paltsavei Hebidya Ya              |                                       |
| 226. Hoi Pyia                          |                                       |
| 227. Pariko Suty                       |                                       |
| 228. Si Iv Seda                        |                                       |
| 229. Varkota                           |                                       |
| 230. Yando Neptya Padurivich Site      |                                       |
| 231. Hungo Salya                       |                                       |
| 232. Veno Han Seda                     |                                       |
| 233. Nyamboi To Hebidya ya             |                                       |
| 234. Tibei Sale, National Burial Place |                                       |
| 235. Gas Sale, National Burial Place   |                                       |
| 236. Nyamboi To, National Burial Place |                                       |

**Lists of Sacred Sites  
In the Koryak Autonomous Okrug, Olutorsky District**

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Neyuyu Mountain          | 49. Yllya Appiln,yak    |
| 2. Vietkona                 | 50. Totoran             |
| 3. Egilgyki                 | 51. Alutalh,in          |
| 4. Ilpinai Mountain         | 52. Pankal Ynan         |
| 5. Main-Aichginai           | 53. Ivtyr G,ypah        |
| 6. Dipatcheln               | 54. Atval Yn,pyn,av     |
| 7. Without Name             | 55. Vivisir             |
| 8. Without Name             | 56. Lulu Ynnan          |
| 9. Hai-Aichginai Mountain   | 57. Lillillivut         |
| 10. Vochvin                 | 58. Appapil             |
| 11. Cheviny Hill            | 59. Imlanvayam          |
| 12. Telyllevit              | 60. Pontan,ai           |
| 13. Kagenpiklav Mountain    | 61. Innokenti K,aniyav  |
| 14. Appana Hill             | 62. Kylil En,ylk,en     |
| 15. Lake Anana              | 63. Neyuyu              |
| 16. Ledyanaya Mountain      | 64. Chen,ai             |
| 17. Pina Mountain           | 65. Enalvatyk           |
| 18. Chimitka Hill           | 66. K,tynpyn,ai         |
| 19. Methev Mountain         | 67. Anyan,avut          |
| 20. Anana Cape              | 68. Vukvupil            |
| 21. Without Name            | 69. Attyllyatoin,yvayam |
| 22. Chaachai                | 70. In,etk,ichgin       |
| 23. Yemet                   | 71. Vilv,yn,e           |
| 24. Groznyi Cape, (Dzhimka) | 72. Tintikun            |
| 25. Ain'avefkonvo           | 73. Kain,ylevut         |
| 26. Appavelnin Mountain     | 74. Tyhlaelv,yrg,yn     |
| 27. Yayapylhan              | 75. Kalevinai           |
| 28. Vonoaimit Mountain      | 76. Lyvlyvayam          |
| 29. Oival Enmo Mountain     | 77. Without Name        |
| 30. Egedimen Mountain       | 78. Without Name        |
| 31. Potatgitgin Lake        | 79. Appapil             |
| 32. Without Name            | 80. Koin,yechgin        |
| 33. Keinipil                | 81. Yllyn,a             |
| 34. Kliktumu                | 82. K,tylpyn,a          |
| 35. Vamtukalirnin           | 83. Gilenvayam          |
| 36. Kekur Neupokoyeva       | 84. Ommai               |
| 37. Tynta In Pin Av         |                         |
| 38. Priyatel Cape           |                         |
| 39. Tig,g,ara Ynpik,lavol   |                         |
| 40. Yn Applaku              |                         |
| 41. Sama Yn,pin,av          |                         |
| 42. Tyntynut                |                         |
| 43. Tynta Kymug,yn          |                         |
| 44. Without Name            |                         |
| 45. Without Name            |                         |
| 46. Without Name            |                         |
| 47. TynTykun                |                         |
| 48. Yaulhan                 |                         |

## **CAFF PUBLICATIONS:**

### **Arctic Flora and Fauna – Status and Conservation (2001)**

### **Arctic Flora and Fauna – Recommendations for Conservation (2002)**

#### **CAFF Habitat Conservation Reports (HCR):**

- No.1 The State of the Protected Areas in the Circumpolar Arctic (1994)
- No.2 Proposed Protected Areas in the Circumpolar Arctic (1996)
- No.3 National Principles and Mechanisms for Protected Areas in the Arctic Countries (1996)
- No.4 Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN) Principles and Guidelines (1996)
- No.5 Gaps in Habitat Protection in the Circumpolar Arctic (1996)
- No.6 Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN) Strategy and Action Plan (1996)
- No.7 Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN) Progress Report 1997 (1997)
- No.8 Summary of Legal Instruments and National Frameworks for Arctic Marine Conservation (2000)
- No.9 Gap analysis on the Russia Arctic (2000)
- No.10 Protected Areas of the Arctic: Conserving a Full Range of Values (2002)

#### **CAFF Technical Reports:**

- No.1 Incidental Take of Seabirds in Commercial Fisheries in the Arctic Countries (1998)
- No.2 Human Disturbance at Arctic Seabird Colonies (1998)
- No.3 Atlas of Rare Endemic Vascular Plants of the Arctic (1999)
- No.4 Global Overview of the Conservation of Arctic Migratory Breeding Birds Outside the Arctic
- No.5 AMAP/CAFF Workshop on Climate Change, Rovaniemi, 24-25 March 1998 (1998) (1999)
- No.6 CAFF/AMAP Workshop on a Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program, Reykjavik 7-9 Feb, 2000: Summary Report
- No.7 Workshop on Seabird Incidental Catch In the Waters of Arctic Countries, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia 26-28 April 2000; Report and Recommendations
- No.8 CAFF Workshop on Conservation of Migratory Arctic Birds, Songli, Norway, 10-11 September 2000: Summary Report
- No.9 Seabird Harvest Regimes in the Circumpolar Nations (2001)
- No.10 Proceedings of the First International conservation of the Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Flora Group Workshop: 2002
- No.11 The Conservation Value of Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: A Case Study in Northern Russia
- No.12 Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program – CBMP) Coordination Meeting, Akureyri, Iceland, April 11-12, 2002
- No.13 The Distribution of Murres outside the Breeding Season, A Circumpolar Murre Banding Program, North Atlantic region, CBird, 2004

#### **CAFF Strategies**

- Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN) Strategy and Action Plan (1996)
- International Murre Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (1996)
- Circumpolar Eider Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (1997)
- The Co-operative Strategy for Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Arctic Region (1997)
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**Program Management and Meetings**

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CAFF Report to SAOs 1997 (June 1997)

Report of the Working Group 1992-1993 (1993)

Third Meeting of the CAFF International Working Group (CAFF III), Reykjavik 1994: Proceedings (1994)

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