

# THE CULT OF THE DEER AND “SHAMANS” IN DEER HUNTING SOCIETY

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## Abstract

The cult of the deer was widespread in traditional societies of deer hunters. This cult was connected with the worship of the deer or man-deer, the ancestor of people and deer, and a cultural hero, the teacher of deer hunting. The most important evidence supporting a deer cult in traditional societies are the totemistic mysteries connected with the reproduction of the deer, and magic hunting rituals. The most important participant in these rituals is the shaman.

Key words: cult of deer, shaman, Mesolithic, Neolithic.

The cult of the deer has a very great significance in the ideology of primeval peoples of the Eurasian forest zone. This cult includes myths and rituals connected with the worship of the deer or man-deer, the ancestor of people and deer, and a cultural hero, the teacher of deer hunting. The most important evidence supporting the cult of the deer in traditional societies are totemistic mysteries connected with the reproduction of deers, and magic hunting rituals. The most important participant in these rituals is the shaman.

Some investigators have touched on aspects of the cult of the deer. The ethnographers A.D. Anisimov, G.M. Vasilevich, L.P. Potapov and others studied questions of shamanism which were connected with the cult of the deer. (Анисимов 1958, Василевич 1953, Потапов 1934). Some archaeologists have tried to reconstruct the earliest studies of the cult of deer. In particular, A.P. Okladnikov made interpretations of Siberian deer rock paintings. He paid great attention to totemic and cosmological motifs (Окладников 1955: 285–330). B.A. Rybakov and V.V. Charnolusky analysed evidence of the cult of deer in hunting and agricultural societies (Рыбаков 1981: 31–212; Чарнолуцкий 1965). M. Otte mentioned the role of the deer in primeval ideology (Otte 1995: 75). G. Clark paid attention to the cult of the deer in his investigations of Starr Carr (Clark 1954: 169–172). But the main aspects of the issue have not been studied enough, particularly the genesis of the cult of the deer and the existence of shamans in ancient deer hunting society.

This article is devoted to one of the aspects of the cult of the deer, the genesis and development of the institution of shamans as cult executors in ancient deer hunting society. It is necessary to mention that the term “shaman” is rather relative. There is no clear definition for peoples connected with religious activity in pristine

society. For example, L. Levy-Brull enumerated seven names of cult activity executors in the Baronga tribe (Левы-Брюль 1934: 95). However, the term “shaman” is traditionally used in investigations of primeval society. We hold the opinion that a shaman is a religious specialist whose power centred on healing, sorcery and prophecy, and who has the ability to associate with spirits (or animals-helpers) (obsession). In our article we shall address only the category of shamans connected with deer hunting.

We shall try to reconstruct the phenomena of primitive spiritual culture on the basis of an interdisciplinary synthesis of ethnographic and archaeological sources. Using the comparative-typological method and method of survivals, we create a model of spiritual cultural phenomena. With the help of systematic analysis, we have made an extrapolation to ancient times (Залізняк 1990: 3–11).

The cult of the deer was widespread in traditional societies of deer hunters. The behaviour of the deer as a biological indication is identical in all areas it inhabited. It demands the same methods and terms for hunting. Obviously, the great economic significance of the deer provides his great ideological role. Using ethnographic evidence of the cult of the deer, we can try to create a model of this cult in deer-hunting societies, then to define the material manifestations of the cult, and compare them with archaeological artefacts. We can probably assume the existence of a similar cult in a certain historical period.

For the reconstruction of the primeval cult of the deer, we have to investigate its remains in Eurasian and American traditional cultures.

An important part of the cult was the myth about the man-deer, a cultural hero, and a teacher of deer hunt-

ing. He had conjugal relations with man and became an ancestor of certain tribes. The Kyrgyz, Saami, Georgians and other peoples have elements of similar myths (Чарнолуцкий 1965; Абрамзон 1971: 281–283; Вирсаладзе 1976: 74).

Rituals are the actualisation of myths. Siberian peoples, the Saami, Osetians, Bulgarians and Britons all have rituals such as deer offerings, the burial of deer antlers and bones in sacred places, the imitation of deer coupling, and so on. The central figure of the cult was the "shaman", the executor of totemic and magic ceremonies. In our article we address only white shamans of traditional Siberian societies, who performed hunters' rituals connected with the cult of deer. The black shaman had medical functions (Мазин 1984: 66, 91–99).

The shaman's costume reflected his connection with the deer (Fig. 1, 1). His coat was made of deer hide, and had small iron antlers on the shoulders, a general element of the costume. Firstly, there were real deer antlers, which reflected a similarity to deer for the shaman. The most important attribute of the shaman's costume was the headdress, with little iron antlers, a symbol of a shaman's power and strength (Fig. 1, 3). Only the mightiest shaman, who had six or seven years of practice, received such a crown. By putting on this crown, the shaman acquired the mystical qualities of a heavenly deer. A prominent illustration of such a transformation is Evenkian (Tungusian) ritual-schinkgelavun, which ensured both success in hunting and deer fertility. During the ceremony, the shaman, appearing as a deer, entered the spiritual world, where a giant female deer, hostess of the world, gave him pieces of deer hide, which became real animals later on. Some peoples with a reproductive economy have a shaman's crown with a deer's antlers as reminiscences (Потапов 1947: 163–182, 1934; Василевич 1953: 185; Элиаде 1998: 121, 123). For example, a gilt bronze crown from the fifth/sixth century from Korea has symbols of antlers (Furst 1977: 9).

The embodiment of the deer-ancestor or spirit-helper of a shaman is the tambourine, the most important attribute of a shaman's activity. An image of the deer was reproduced on the tambourine or the handle. In making this tambourine, the shaman usually reincarnated into a deer, which was specially killed for that ceremony (Потапов 1947: 163–172).

Not only Siberian peoples connected the tambourine with the deer. The South American Huichol tribe has the same subject. In ancient times, the primordial First Shaman carved the prototypical shaman's drum from a tree trunk and fitted it with the skin of the divine deer (Furst 1977: 11).

So, the white shaman was connected with the deer-defender, who was incarnated in his tambourine, and periodically reincarnated into a deer himself, putting on a deer skin and antlered crown.

Some scientists think that shamans initially used a bow and arrows for a musical accompaniment. Later, the tambourine received a name and replaced the functions of the bow. There is much linguistic evidence of these phenomena. The name of Altai and the tambourine is based on the name of a bow. A shaman's power was identified with a string. There is much ethnographic evidence for the use of the bow instead the tambourine. After the bow was replaced by the tambourine, the shaman used the model of a bow as a garment on his coat (Потапов 1934: 64–77; Анисимов 1958: 26–35; Галданова 1987: 70). Among the Huichol and a few other populations in South America, Asia and Africa, there survives an apparently very ancient example of the latter, the custom of using the hunting bow as a stringed instrument for casting a kind of musical spell to "charm" the intended prey. The Huichol shaman did this at the beginning and the end of a pilgrimage to a sacral ancestor's country. They used the bow "to soothe the Great Deity, Deer (Peyote)" (Furst 1977: 11).

Some peoples decorated the shaman's burials with deer antlers.

Here is a description of a Siberian shaman's grave: "It is a low chest of boards, which are strengthened by six stakes. The cross-beams are decorated with the nicely branched antlers of a wild deer, as a symbol of the last funeral repast, as an offering. The chest is covered by a red cloth. Stones are lying on the cloth, to hold it down in a storm. There is a sacral shaman's box open behind ..." (Хомич 1981: 37).

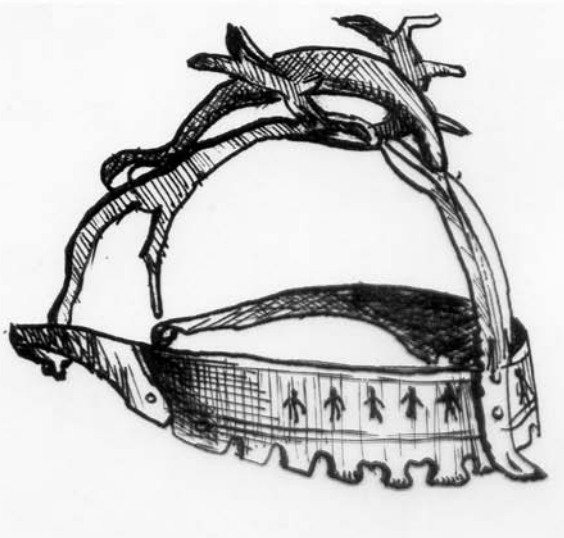
So, the attributes of a white shaman, a bow and arrows, deer skin and a crown with a deer's antlers, point to the connection of white shamanism with the hunter's activity. Many ethnographic peoples used a deerskin and antlers for hunting (Fig. 1, 2). This camouflage is based on knowledge of the physiology and behaviour of a deer, its short-sight and trust. Firstly, the hunter disguised smells, and then dressed in a hide and antlered mask (Кребер 1970: 158). Sometimes he decorated his breast with white paint and imitated deer sounds. Hunters in Siberia and North America used the same methods. K. Birket-Smith described the hunting by Caribou Eskimos: "At mating time when the bulls fight, the hunter sometimes carries above his head a pair of antlers, and at the same time imitates the grunting of animals ..." (Birket-Smith 1929: 107). Boas quotes the statement by J.C. Ross in 1835, that "The inhabitants of Bothnia imitate the appearance of the deer (rein-



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Fig. 1. Siberian deer masks: 1 Tungus shaman of the 18th century (after Clark 1954: Fig. 75); 2 Evenkian deer hunter, drawing by an Evenkian schoolgirl, 20th century (after Иванов 1954); 3 the headdress of a Siberian shaman

deer), the foremost of two men stalking a herd wearing a deer's head upon his own ..." (Clark 1954: 169)

Hunters, camouflaged in deer skin, before the hunting, executed a sacral activity for the attraction of game. Such hunting practices are known from the Zulus: "Before the hunt began, the chief of the hunters knelt, put grass into his mouth and imitated a deer eating the pasture" (Брайант 1953: 330).

Speaking generally about the primeval mentality, we have to take into account the phenomena of "participation" described by L. Levi-Brull. Using a deer mask during the hunting, the hunter not only changed his appearance, he reembodyed himself as the animal. He had to feel like a deer in his subconscious. The collectivity of rituals, rhythmic music (the rhythm of a tambourine can come to 200 strokes a minute), and, possibly, using

narcotic plants, provoked a trance. The performer fixed in his subconscious his reemodiment as a deer.

An important method of the primeval systematisation of the world is the idea of binary opposition between peoples-animals, alive-dead (Байбурин 1990: 3–6; Леви-Строс 2000: 157). The representatives of both worlds could cross the frontier from one to another in order to transform themselves from the status of a man to the status of an animal. For this transition, they had to put on clothes (a hide) or to take them off (Авдеев 1959: 54).

The hunter in a deerskin "transformed" from the world of people to the animal world. He became a creature with a double status. He took the independent power of the animal world (Л. Леви-Брюль: 66). He became a mediator between worlds.

The opposite mediator was the mythological totemic ancestor, the mutual ancestor of peoples and animals. He was a representative of the "other" world, an ambivalent creature, with the features of peoples and animals (Петрухин 1986: 10).

So, we can surmise that white shamanism, connected with deer hunting, had its roots in a deer hunters' society. Probably, every man-hunter could execute some sacral activity to succeed in the hunt and to increase deer herds. During the ceremony, he put on a deerskin and antlers as a hunter, and imitated deer behaviour. He prayed for success, using a bow and arrows for an accompaniment. Later, the most successful and talented hunters attained the rights to productive and imitative magic ceremonies. The bow and antlers became symbols of their magic power. The connection of a shaman with his totemistic ancestor, the deer, was formed simultaneously. A totemic ancestor came to the peoples' world in the guise of a man, whilst the shaman entered the ancestors' world in the guise of a deer.

With the appearance of classic forms of shamanism, obsession, the totemistic ancestor transformed into the shaman's spirit-helper. The bow and arrows, as the cult's instruments, were transformed into a tambourine. A deer was drawn on the handle. Ritual deer offerings were performed on the shaman's grave. Antlers were put on the shaman's graves. We can assume that already in prehistoric deer-hunter society, the category of people authorised for cult activity connected with the reproduction of the main economic animal (deer) was formed. "Shamans", performing their sacral functions, looked zoomorphic, dressed themselves in deer antlers and skin, and used zoomorphic cult instruments.

Let's consider the archaeological evidence of the existence of shamans in prehistoric deer-hunting societies. They are depictions, cemeteries and deer frontlets.

There is a well-known Palaeolithic painting depicting a supernatural creature with deer antlers in the Trois Frères cave in Ariège, France. Traditionally it is called "The Sorcerer" after Abbot Breuil's definition (Fig. 2, 4). G. Clark, M. Street and other investigators shared this interpretation. But we have doubts about the veracity of this title. Really, this being has a human body, deer antlers and bear paws, similar to a Tungus Shaman from an 18th-century engraving (Fig. 1, 1). On the other hand, the face of this creature is not human, it has an animal's ears, the eyes of a bird and the tail of a wolf. The creature has both human and animal features. We can compare this depiction with other Palaeolithic syncretic depictions. Some of them look like a camouflaged man (for example, the Bison-Man from Gabillou (Fig. 2, 3), and the horned man with the bow from Trois Frères) (Street 1989: 52; Елинек 1982: 308). Others are fantastic anthropozoomorphic creatures, like the ivory Lion-Man from Baden-Wurtemberg, the Little Devils depicted on the Chiefs Staff from Teija, the anthropo-ornithomorphical being from Altamira (Fig. 2, 2–3) (Street 1989: 52; Zappellini 2002: 39; Елинек 1982: 585). Most likely The Sorcerer is not a "masquerading shaman", it is a mythical being, an ancestor, a mediator of worlds, a patron of peoples and animals. Probably, it is a prototype of an antlered deity, which appeared in the Bronze Age (Valcamonica) and developed in Celtic times as Cernunos (the Gundestrup cauldron, and so on) (Ross 1964: 176–197). Probably, the so-called "sorcerer" was the helper of an ancient shaman.

Archaeological artefacts which can be interpreted as evidence of shamanistic existence appear in early Mesolithic times on Eurasian forest zone sites. In the first place, there are well-known deer masks from Starr Carr (Fig. 3), Hohen-Viheln (Fig. 4, 1), Plau, Berlin-Birsdorf and Bedburg-Konigshoven (Fig. 4, 2) (Gramsch 1982: 433; Keiling 1985: 34; Schuld 1969; Street 1989: 52). They were made from stag frontlets with antlers and skin. The frontlets were smoothed and intended to be worn on the head. They had specially drilled holes for the straps to attach them to the head.

There are two hypotheses about the use of deer frontlets. G. Clark supposed that stags frontlets were used both for hunting and for ritual dances, designed to improve the hunter's luck, to increase the fertility of the deer, or to promote a natural increase in general. He also connected masks with burials with antlers. He mentioned Cernunos, the depiction of Tungus Shaman and the horn dance in medieval Staffordshire (Clark 1954: 169).

M. Street, the investigator of Bedburg-Konigshoven, interpreted the deer's frontlets as a shaman's attributes

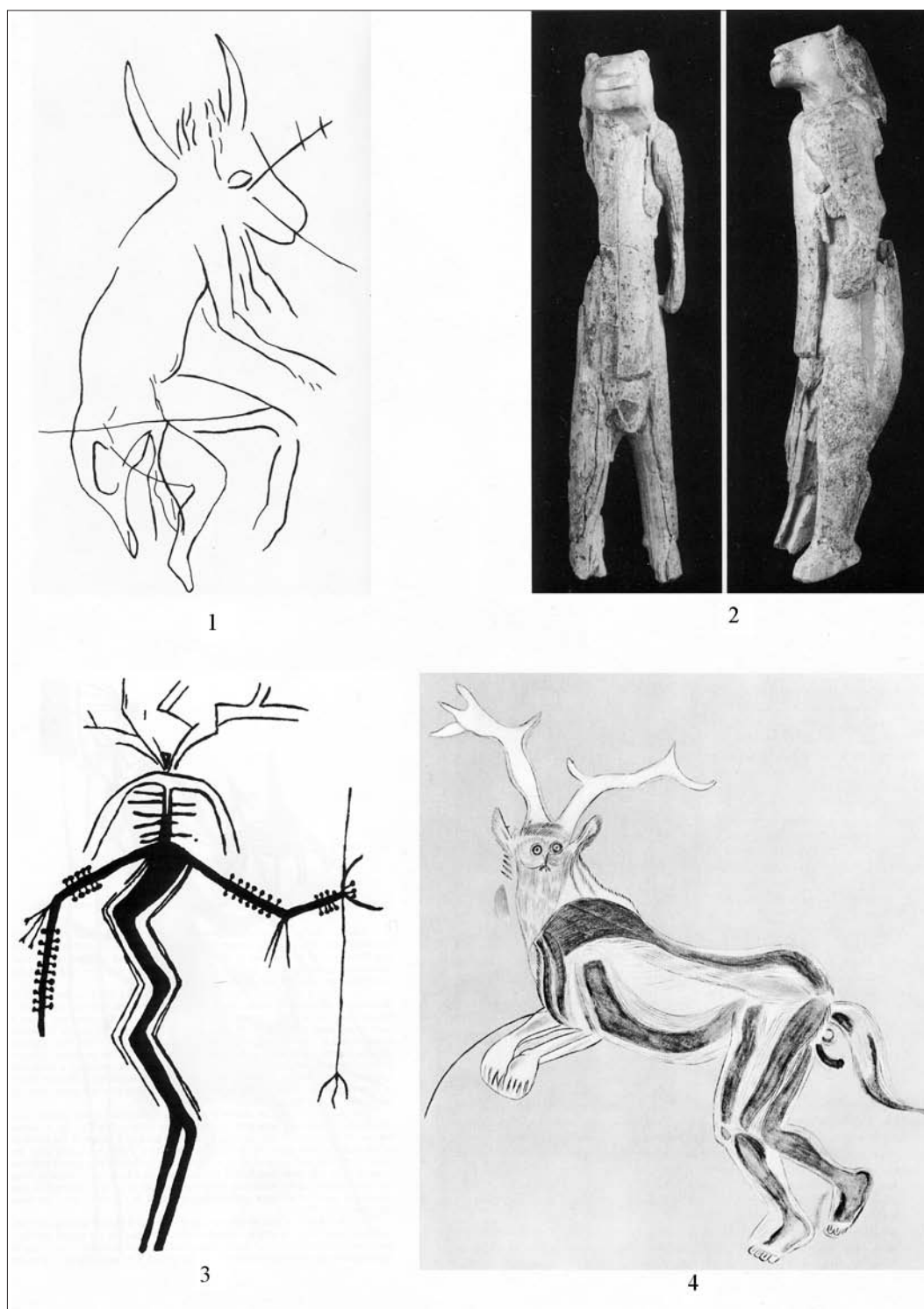


Fig. 2. Anthropozoomorphical beings; 1 Bison-Man from Gabillou (France); 2 Lion-Man from Hohlenstein-Stadel (Baden-Wurtemberg); 3 shaman from Bhimbetka (India); 4 The Sorcerer from Trois Frères (France)

(Street 1989: 44–53). G. Tromnau holds the same opinion. He has compared frontlets with Siberian shamans' headdresses and depictions of "antlered man" (Trois Frères, Hohle-les-Espelugues and Astuvansalmi in Finland) (Tromnau 1991: 25–27).

L. Zalizniak and O. Yanevic hold an alternative opinion, also formulated by G. Clark, that deer frontlets

were used for stalking (Залізняк 1991: 7; Яневич 1990: 104–106).

We think that deer frontlets did not have a single meaning. Probably, the frontlets were items of changeable semantic status. In primitive societies the difference between utilitarian objects and sacral ones is very relative. Everything could be used, or was a ritual symbol

(Байбурин 1989: 63–89; Топорков 1989: 89–102). Frontlets, as objects-symbols, could be used as hunters' masks during the hunting, and as cult attributes during hunting magic rituals and deer reproduction rituals. Men in deer masks and skins were the prototypes of shamans.

The second category of archaeological sources are Mesolithic burials. Firstly, we have to definite what category of burials we can consider as shamans' graves. Investigators of Siberian shamanism have distinguished some features of shamans' cemeteries. These are burials in caves (or under stone plates), the unusual position of the deceased (for example, sitting), deep pits, dismemberment, the bones of animals, birds or fishes as a detail of costume, a belt, instruments or tools (Ю.Б. Сериков 2003: 141–164).

L. Levi-Brull wrote that people who were held in high esteem received very independent additional powers after death. Their tribes disfigured their bodies, to protect themselves against the deceased (Леви-Брюль 1934: 270).

Now, let us consider the cemeteries which look like shamans'.

The cemeteries of Teviec and Hoedic are located on what are now small islands in Brittany, off the Atlantic coast of northwest France. They are dated as Late Mesolithic. The ten graves found at Teviec held the remains of some 23 individuals. A total of nine graves were recovered from Hoedic, containing 14 individuals. In addition to the graves themselves, other features at Teviec included a series of stone-lined hearths showing varying degrees of burning. The Pequarts classify these into three types: domestic, feasting and ritual.

Structures of red-deer antlers are associated with two adults (one male and one female, graves A and D) at Teviec, and with four adults (two males and two females, graves F, H, J, K) at Hoedic (Fig. 5, 3); these appear to have formed small tent-like arrangements over the heads of these individuals. Grave goods found in the burials at Teviec and Hoedic include flint implements, ornamented bone pins, "daggers", bi-points, awls, antler batons, antler picks and/or clubs, worked boar tusks, perforated red-deer teeth, and an abundance of perforated marine shells of various species.



Fig. 3. Deer frontlet from Star Carr and a reconstruction of the headdress (after Tromnau 1991: Fig. 17)

Teviec includes nine individual and collective burials in the pits, covered with stone plates, with the remains of ritual fires and offerings. In burial A there were skeletons of a man and a woman, covered with red deer antlers. In burial D there were skeletons of a woman and a baby, covered with antlers. On the island of Hoedic, under plates with ash from a fire, was a burial of a woman with a child, covered with fragments of antlers. The authors of the excavations suppose that the presence of antlers on the burial allows us to assume that the dead people were connected with religious activity (Pequart et al 1937; Schulting 1996: 344–350).

A small test excavation at another site located between Teviec and Hoedic, revealed a pit surmounted by three antlers with a bone pin (Kayser, Bernier 1988: 45).

We believe that some features of cemeteries with antlers demonstrate that they can be shamans' graves. The unusual richness of grave goods (in comparison to other grave complexes), stone plates which covered the deceased, especially ornamented bone pins, which were found in three cemeteries with antlers, look like features of shaman burials.

The Mesolithic cemetery at Vedbaek, Denmark, belongs to the Late Kungemossian culture and the Early Ertebølle Culture. There 22 graves were excavated. Three of them had deer antlers (Fig. 5, 1–2).

Undisturbed grave 10 contained the unusually well-preserved skeleton of a 50-year-old male. Two large flint blades to the right and just above the pelvis were found as grave goods. The deceased was laid to rest on a pair of red deer antlers, one placed under the shoulders and the other under the pelvis. Five big stones were placed on the skeleton's lower extremities. The skull was surrounded by ochre.

Undisturbed grave 11 was of the same type as all the others. At the bottom were a red deer antler, a bone awl and a core-axe. The bottom was coloured by ochre, but there were no traces of the interred person. The explanation by the authors was found in the detailed stratification of the fill, which suggests that the body was disinterred shortly after the burial. The composition of the grave goods suggests that grave 11 originally contained a man.

Undisturbed grave 22 contained the well-preserved skeleton of a 40 to 50-year-old female. There was no ochre in the grave, but below the head and shoulders of the deceased lay a pair of deer antlers.

The antlers were from slain animals. It was noted that the graves containing antlers were the deepest in the cemetery. Grave 10 had stones to weigh down the legs of the deceased (Albrethsen, Petersen 1976: 28).

The deceased with antlers were an old man and woman. They had some distinguishing features. Their graves were deeper than the others, but the grave goods were poorer than in the other graves. The man had only two flint blades, and stones were put on his legs.

The deep pits and the stones indicate that the deceased were people of high status. The absence of other grave goods might indicate their old age (according to the analogies from Middle Dnieper Mesolithic cemeteries) (Телегін 1991). But the absence of pendants looks astonishing. In connection with this, we should mention the ritual of the Kets (Siberian people). After the



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Fig. 4. Deer frontlets: 1 Hohen-Vicheln (after Schuld 1961); 2 Bedburg-Königshoven (after Loeffler 1991: Fig. 92)

shaman's death, they took off all the pendants from his clothing. They saved the pendants in a special bag, made from bird's skin.

Probably, the "shamans" from Vedbaek were deprived of pendants too.

The deceased, laid on deer's antlers, in Vedbaek have features of shamans. Deep pits and stones indicate that the deceased were dangerous to people. The absence of pendants can be evidence of saving them specially in a sacred place.

The Scateholm site in Sweden contained a combination of settlement area and cemetery, both of Late Me-

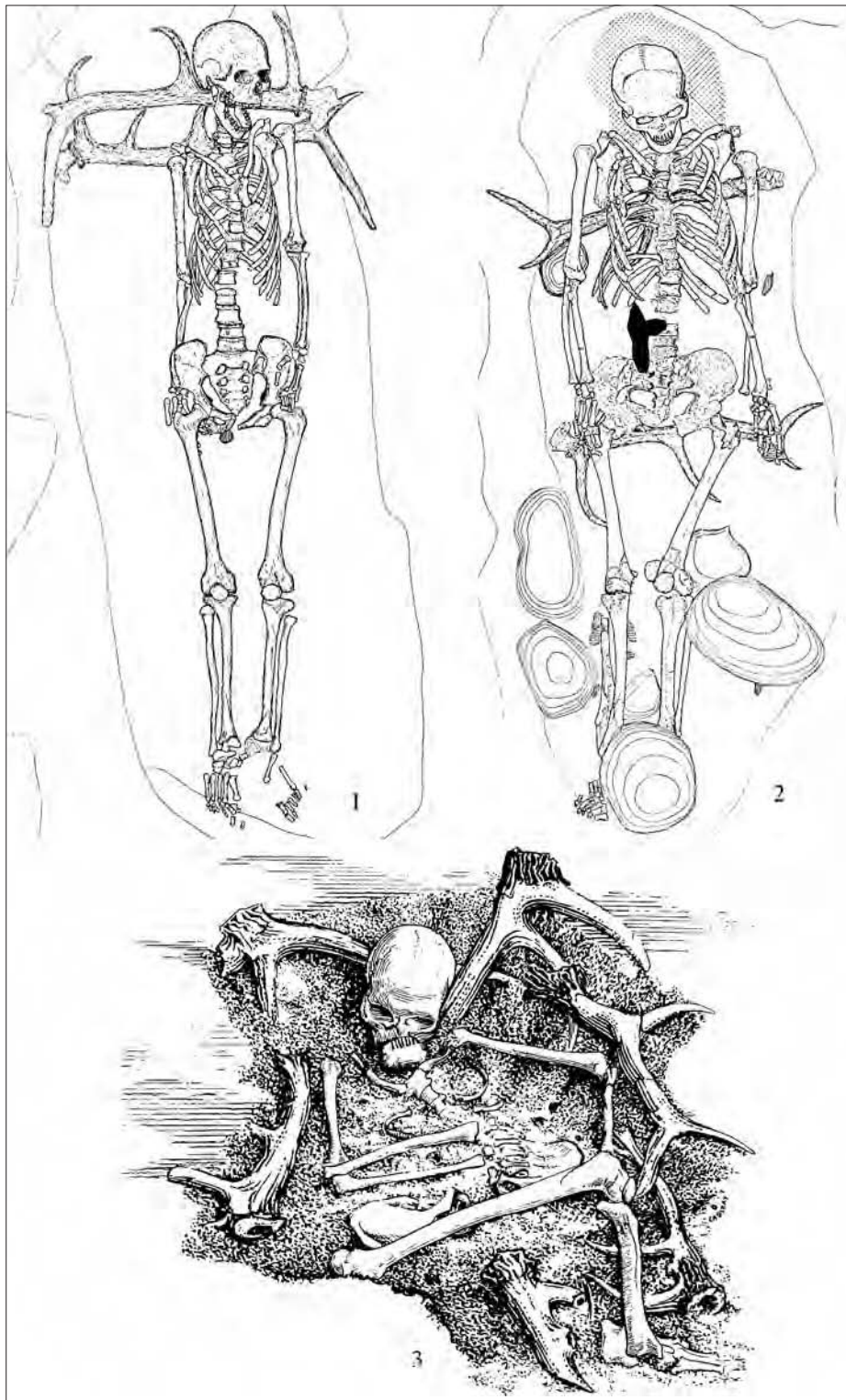


Fig. 5. Mesolithic cemeteries: 1, 2 Vedbaek, Denmark (after Albrethsen, Petersen 1976: Fig. 12, 17); 3 Hoedic, France (after Pequart and Pequart 1954: Fig. 41)

solithic. Twenty-two graves were examined at Scateholm II.

Grave XI, with a young adult male in a supine position, featured a veritable network of red deer antlers placed transversely across the man's shins. Two antlers were still attached to a cranial fragment.

The deceased at Scateholm had "shaman" features: seated position, and headdresses from deer's teeth.

The "cenotaph" phenomenon, as in Vedbaeck, is very interesting.

Alberthsen and Petersen explain the empty grave as traces of cannibalism (Alberthsen, Petersen 1976: 22).

Grave XV contained a young male placed in a sitting position. Two antlers of red deer lay by the man's head, while a large antler lay by his feet. A row of perforated teeth of red deer ran across the top of the cranium, evidently the remains of a more elaborate head-dress. Two flint blades lay by the hip and a core-axe to the left of the thigh. Several teeth of wild boar lay below the right underarm.

Grave XX contained a young female in a supine position. A row of perforated tooth beads extended around the waist, including teeth from aurochs. Tooth beads also occurred behind the head. A dog was found in a pit behind grave XX, with a red deer antler lying along its back. In addition, three flint knives and an ornamented hammer of red deer antler were found on the dog's stomach.

A pit with no traces of a skeleton was recorded, and three large deer antlers were found in the pit. This feature has, with some reservations, been interpreted by the author as a cenotaph (L. Larsson 1989: 373).



We can propose another hypothesis. There was a custom among East Slavic people to exhume the dead bodies of sorcerers and other dangerous diseased people, and to bury them in another place, or to drown them in water (Зеленин 1995: 63, 101). Graves with antlers but without dead bodies could probably be indirect evidence of the existence of shamans.

The existence of some categories of peoples who had the right to sacral activity connected with the cult of deer in Mesolithic society was confirmed by the presence of deer masks, as well as burials with deer antlers.

In Neolithic times, after the migration of reindeer to the north, the elk became the main traded animal. There were very interesting burials of a category of people with staffs, that had the form of a female elk's head (Fig. 6, 1). The most famous is a burial of a man and two women (Oleniy Ostrov, Kolsky Peninsula). The skeletons were covered with numerous elk's teeth and the bones of animals. Another six burials had the same staffs. The burial on Oleniy Ostrov (Barents Sea) also had a staff, topped by an imitation elk head (Гурина 1956: Fig. 113, 114; Гурина 1953: 378) (Fig. 6, 3–4).

The same staffs are very common in northern and parts of Eastern Europe (Загорский 1983: 183; Римантене 1975: 138–153). Some investigators have compared them with rock drawings of peoples with zoomorphic objects in the hands from northern Europe (Helskog 1987: 24–25) (Fig. 6, 2).

Probably, the staff became an incarnation of the elk-totem, the sacral animal-ancestor, as tambourine was an incarnation of the deer-ancestor. Perhaps, peoples with elk-formed staffs could be associated with the totemic ancestor.

After the transition to reproductive forms of economy, the cult of the deer was transformed, acquiring a new sense. The main function of the deer became as a symbol of fertility and prosperity. The deer symbolised the sun, life, power. Important attributes of the deer were solar symbols, trees of life and phallic symbols. Maybe the stimulating properties of young deer antlers could be a reason why the hunters' cult of the deer transformed into a fertility cult, and antlers became a symbol of fertility and life (Арешян 1988: 90–98).

At the Bronze Age burial in Warren-Hill in Britain, in a complex of three round graves, was a female skeleton. It was covered by 18 red deer antlers. There was a rich ornamented pot near the skull. The deer antlers and remains of offerings allow us to suppose that it was the burial of a sacral woman. Clark connected female burials with antlers with the idea of fertility, because the

long-term growth of antlers could be associated with the sexual cycle (Fox 1923: 32; Clark 1954: 172).

Burials with deer antlers were known in Roman Britain. The skeletons of two people which were put on deer antlers were found under a mound 25 yards in diameter (Fox 1923: 32).

The remains of the deer-hunter cult were known on the American continent. In the mounds of Adena and Hopewell cultures were wooden antlered masks and helmets, with wooden or copper deer antlers. Deceased people were richly decorated, probably they were priests (Bender 1985: 22).

Evidently, the cult of the deer had such an important role in social ideology that it survived in the ideology of modern agricultural societies. Huichol mythology in Mexico is an excellent example. The population of that tribe was occupied in the cultivation of maize, cattle breeding and hunting. The totemistic cult of the Divine Deer (as older brother) applies to agricultural ideas about Mother Earth, the Sea, Rain and the Father-Sun. The deer is associated with Peyote (a psychotropic plant). "Dried peyote segments, called buttons, collected while on the hunt, are attached to the tines of the deer antler carried by the shaman on the peyote pilgrimage. On the peyote hunt, the peyote is hunted, like a deer, with bow and arrow. Once the shaman has found the peyote-deer while on the hunt, he takes aim and shoots it with an arrow" (Boyd, Dering 1996: 271). Using this narcotic, the shaman connected with the deer and received information from the gods (Furst 1977: 25).

A depiction of an antlered anthropomorph with a black dot at the end of each antler tine is known at the White Shaman site along the River Pecos on the Texas-Mexico border. Boyd and Derind believe that the depictions of antlered shamans were engraved 9,000 to 2,000 BC (Boyd 1996: 259).

We have considered the numerous ethnographic and archaeological evidence of the cult of the deer in Eurasian cultures. On the basis of these dates, we can assume the conditions for the appearance, development and survival of the cult of the deer. Archaeological evidence of a totemistic cult of the deer was found in the Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites of the forest zone. These sites were established in the period when a cultural-economic type of deer hunter was formed. Reindeer and red deer became the main animal of trade. The economic significance of the animal was very important. Deer supported primitive hunters with meat, skin, antlers and bones for making tools, and sinew for tying. Probably, the important role of the deer in

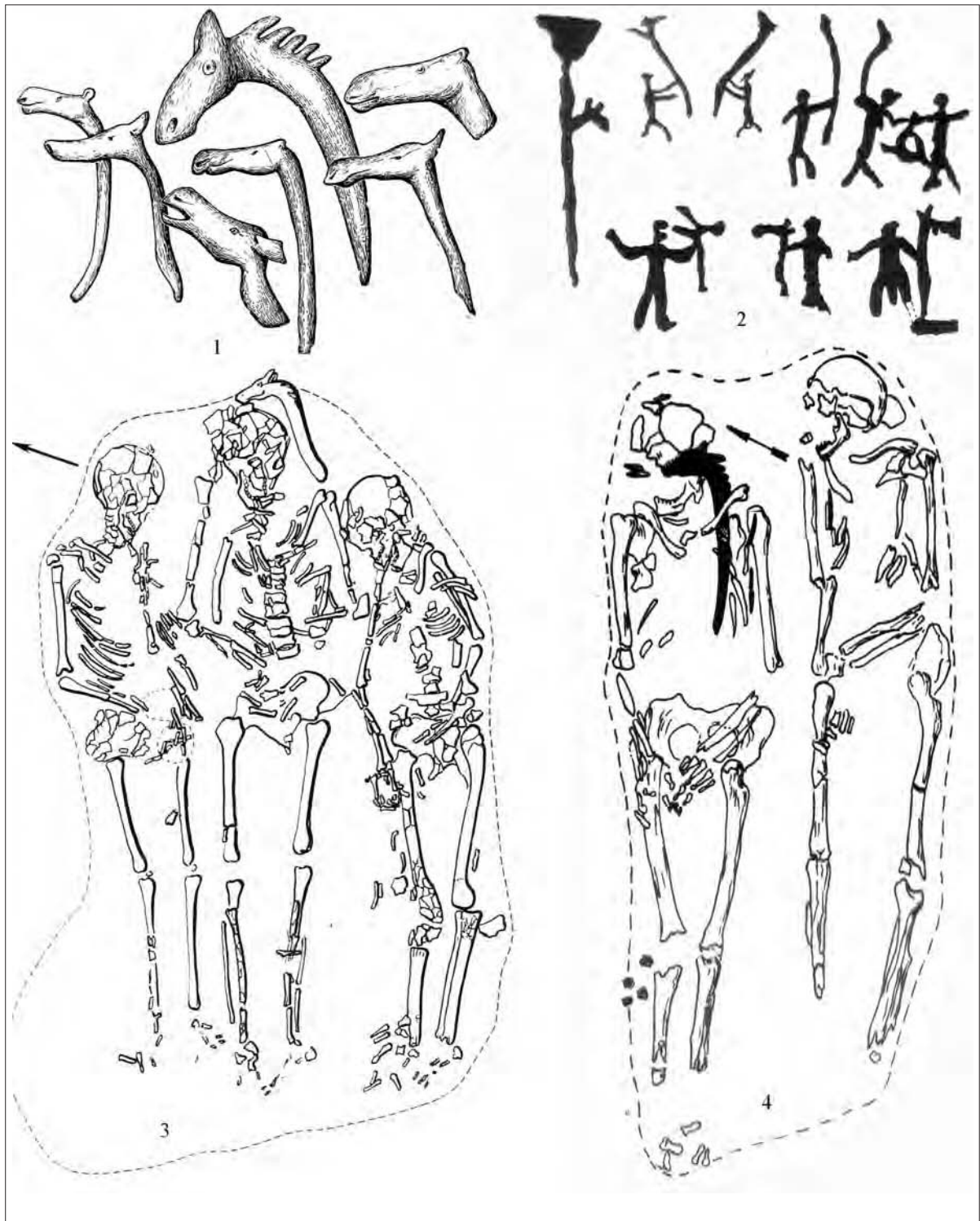


Fig. 6. Elk-headed staffs: 1 staffs from northern Europe (after Рыбаков 1981: 65); 2 depictions of elk-headed staffs (northern Europe) (after Helskog 1987); 3 Neolithic cemeteries (northern Russia) (after Гурина 1963)

man's life, and its majestic appearance, gave grounds for treating the animal with respect.

During the hunting ceremonies, people used deer hide and antlers for making masks. Before beginning hunting, man, dressed as a deer, imitated the deer's movements to bring successful hunting. Considering the features of primeval totemistic thinking, we can as-

sume that people dressed as deer, felt like deer, and so realised their special relationship with deer. They became beings of a double status, mediators between people and animals, alive and dead. They gained access to the power of the animal's world. Probably this was the time when myths about man the deer, the common ancestor of people and deer, began.

This ancestor could be depicted in a cave, like the famous Sorcerer from Trois Frères.

Mesolithic deer frontlets could be used as hunting camouflage, and as a detail of totemistic ritual. They became the basis for a future shaman's costume.

The totemistic rituals for the reproduction of deer were formed gradually. During the ceremonies, participants, dressed as deer, imitated deer coupling, killed and ate a sacral animal, and buried bones and antlers in special places for the future regeneration of the deer. The performer of the sacral activity was personified during the Mesolithic age. His function was to provide success in hunting, and to secure the fertility of deer and peoples. These shamans had the monopoly on communication with the deer as a spirit/helper. The burials of shamans were marked with deer antlers.

After the transition to reproduction forms of economy, the significance of the deer decreased, but its cult was saved and transformed. Now it had to provide for the fertility of cattle and harvests. The deer became the caretaker of life power, couples (Даркевич 1988: 109). Its majestic antlers were associated with the tree of life. The deer had to guarantee the king's immortality (Ross 1964: 176–197). Deer antlers or images of deer accompanied powerful deceased people in their graves.

The ideological significance of the cult of the deer in primitive people's thinking was so important that it was preserved before Christian times, and is fixed in ethnographic material and documents.

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## ELNIO KULTAS IR „ŠAMANAI“ ELNIŲ MEDŽIOTOJŲ VISUOMENĖSE

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### Santrauka

Remdamasi archeologine ir etnografinė medžiaga autorė pabandė rekonstruoti vieną iš įdomiausių pirmųjų visuomenės dvasinių reiškinių – elnio kultą. Šis kultas gimė vėlyvojo paleolito ir mezolito elnių medžiotojų visuomenėse ir išsilaiškė kai kuriose tradicinėse visuomenėse iki naujausių laikų. Kulto pagrindą sudaro elnio, kaip protėvio ir kultūrinio herojaus, garbinimas. Svarbiausi kulto elementai buvo toteminiai papročiai, skirti padėti elniams, kaip medžioklės objektams, daugintis, ir medžioklės magijos papročiai, turintys užtikrinti medžioklės sėkmę. Pagrindinė papročių figūra buvo „šamanas“, vadovaudavęs ir atlikdavęs misterijas, įsikūnydavęs į elnių. Star Car, Hohen-Viheln, Plau, Berli-Birsdorf, Bedburg-Konigshoven mezolito gyvenvietėse buvo aptikta elnių kaukių, kurios galėjo būti naudojamos tiek medžioklei, tiek ir medžioklės misterijoms. Tevjeke, Hoediko, Vedbaeko ir Skateholmo kapinynuose rasta žmonių kapaviečių su elnių ragais. Šie radiniai patvirtintų galimybę, kad elnių medžiotojų visuomenėse galėjo būti „šamanų“, susijusių su elnio kultu. Jų atsiradimas buvo sąlygotas pirmųjų medžiotojų toteminio sinkretinio mąstymo ypatumų, taip pat išaugusios elnio, kaip pagrindinio medžioklės objekto, svarbos žmonių ekonomikoje. Vėlesnis „šamanų“ egzistavimas patvirtinamas neolito laikotarpio (Elnių sala, Zvejniekai, Šventoji), žalvario (Varen-Hilas), geležies amžiaus (Kembridžas) medžiaga bei Adenos ir Hopevelo kultūrų Amerikoje paminklais.