

# Shaman - Hunter - Deer

## Abstract

*The cult of the deer had a very important significance in the ideology of the primeval peoples of Eurasian forest zones. This cult included myths and rituals connected with the worship of a deer or man-deer; the ancestor of people and deer. The most important evidence supporting a deer cult in traditional societies are the totemistic myths connected with the reproduction of deer, and hunting magic rituals. These rituals were performed, above all, by shamans. The attributes of shamans: bow and arrows, deer skin and crowns of deer antlers all point to the connection of shamanism with the activities of hunters. There is considerable archaeological evidence for the existence of shamans in prehistoric deer hunting societies.*

Shamanism is one of the oldest forms of religious thinking and very popular among the investigators of both contemporary traditional societies and archaeologists alike. The phenomenon of Shamanism, especially "ecstatic technique" – the important feature of this religious form, is widespread across Central and Northern Asia, especially, within Siberia. Soviet investigations over 20-30 years during the 20<sup>th</sup> century allow us to study this phenomenon. By revisiting this rich ethnological material, we can examine the key underlying principles that have existed for thousands years, and compare them with archaeological material. It is possible to trace the most ancient evidence for shamanism from within the Late Palaeolithic, and to follow its development within the Mesolithic-Neolithic periods of Eurasia.

Soviet field ethnographers A.A. Popov, E. D. Prokofeva, A.D. Anisimov, G.M. Vasilevich, L.P. Potapov, and others, studied the evidences of shamanism in Siberia (Анисимов, 1958, Василевич, 1953, Потапов, 1934, Попов, 1936). Their studies were continued by A. Mazin, E.S. Novik, I.S. Vdovin, L.V. Khomich and others (Вдовин, 1981, Хомич, 1981, Мазин, 1984, Новик, 1984).

"Shamanistic conception" has become very popular lately. The investigators of prehistoric rock art J. Lewis-Williams, J. Clottes, T. Dowson compare the motifs and style of the Franco-Cantabrian and

Levantine rock art with San Bushmen rock art. They suggest, that Palaeolithic and Mesolithic paintings reflect shaman's visions [Lewis-Williams, 1986, s. 171-178, Clottes, Lewis-Williams, 1996, Dowson, 1994]. Some investigators of Levantine rock art have interpreted anthropomorphic depictions with strange headdresses as shamanistic (Hameau, 2004, Utrilla, 2005). A. Datta studied shamanistic evidences in Mesolithic Indian rock art (Datta, 2002). D. Witley has also studied shamanistic elements in North American rock art.

British archeologists, including, Sh. Conneller, and T. Schadla-Hall have studied deer frontlets from Mesolithic site of Star Carr. They interpret the frontlets as shamanic head dresses (Conneller, Schadla-Hall, 2003). A. Serikov has investigated shaman's cemeteries of Ural (Northern Russia) (Сериков 2000, 2003). E. Jacobson studied shamanic images within Mongolian Altai rock art (Jacobson, 2001). G. Tromnau has compared evidence of Siberian shamanic practice within the archaeological materials and rock art of Europe (Tromnau, 1991).

This article is devoted to the study of role of the shamans in deer hunting societies. The cult of the deer has very important significance in the ideology of the primeval peoples of Eurasian forest zone.

The idea of the cult, as suggested by the author on the basis of ethnographic mate-



Fig. 1. 1 - Evenk shaman's costume; 2 - antlered headdress (Tromnau, 1990).

rial, is a mythos-ritual complex; it is focused on the deer. The object of worship is a sacred deer, incarnated as: a female deity, Deer-Mother, zoonthropomorphic ancestor and cultural hero. The rites, related to either natural and economic cycles or ones associated with the life cycle of people, were the form of worship. The rites were an essential component of the cult, inextricably linked to the verbal element, comprised of myths that were both totemistic and cosmological in nature.

The most important evidence supporting a deer cult in traditional societies are the totemistic mysteries, connected with the reproduction of a deer, and hunting magic rituals. The central participant of these rituals is shaman.

It is necessary to mention, that the term "shaman" is rather relative. There is not clear definition for people, connected with religious activity in pre-contact societies. For example, L. Levy-Brull enumerated seven names of cult activity executors in

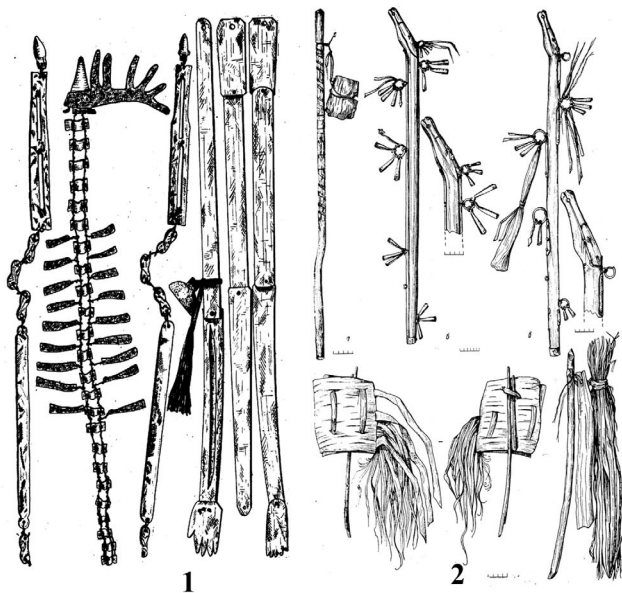


Fig. 2. Siberian shamans' evidence: 1 – metal details of costume; 2 – shamans zoomorphic stuffs, Altay (Дьяконова, 1981); 3 – Evenk shaman, XVIII century (Clark, 1954).

inhabited. It demands the same methods and terms for hunting. Obviously, the great economic significance of the deer provides this great ideological role. Siberian peoples, Saami, Osetians, Bulgarians and Britons all had rituals, such as: deer offering rituals, the burial of deer antlers and bones in honorable places, the imitation of deer coupling, and so on. The central figure of the cult was "shaman"- the executor of totemic and magic ceremonies.

The shaman's costume reflected his connection with a deer (Fig.1; 2,3) His coat / parka was made of deer hide, there were small iron antlers on the shoulders – the main element of a costume (fig.1, 1, 2,2). Initially, real antlers were used, directly indicating similarity between a deer and a shaman. Iron antlers later supplanted these. The most important attribute of shaman's costume were the headdress and little



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the Baronga tribe (Леви-Брюль, 1934, p.95). However, the term "shaman" is traditionally used in investigations of prehistoric society. We will hold the opinion, that a shaman is a religious specialist whose power centered on healing, sorcery, and prophecy, and who has the ability to associate with spirits (or animals-helpers) (obsession). In our article we shall only touch upon the category of shamans, connected with deer hunting.

The cult of the deer was widespread in the traditional societies of deer hunters. The behavior of a deer as a biological indication is identical in all the areas it

iron antlers - a symbol of shamans power and strength (Fig.1,2) Only the mightiest shaman, who had 6-7 years of practice, received such a crown. By putting on this crown, shaman acquired the mystical qualities of a heavenly deer. The prominent illustration of such transformation is evenkian ritual - *schinkgelavun*, which ensured the success of both the hunt and deer fertility (fig.3). During the ceremony, the shaman, appearing as a deer, entered the spiritual world, where giant female deer, hostess of the world gave him pieces of deer hide, which became a real animal later on. Some-





Fig. 3. Evenk drawing from the 20th Century. Evenkian ancestral ritual. 1 – shaman in the antlered headdress and with tambourine; 2 – wooden deer sculptures; 3 – members of the genus imitating deer coupling (АНИСИМОВ, 1958).

times shamans had sexual relations with Deer-Mother.

Some peoples with reproductive economy retain the shaman's crown with deer antlers as reminiscences (Потапов, 1947, с.163-182, 1934, Василевич, 1953, с.185, Элиаде, 1998, с. 121,123). For example, gilt bronze crown of 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Century Korea has the symbols of antlers (Furst, 1977, p.9)

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

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

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

Some investigators suppose that shamans initially used the bow and arrows for a musical accompaniment. Later, the tam-

bourine was introduced and replaced the functions of a bow. There is much linguistic evidence of these phenomena. The name of Altai tambourine is based on the name of a bow. A shaman's power was identified with a string. There is much ethnographical evidence for the use of the bow instead of 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, с.64-77, АНИСИМОВ, 1958, с.26-35, Галданова, 1987, с.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. Huichol shaman did this at the beginning and the end of the pilgrimage to a sacral ancestor's country. They use bow "to soothe the Great Deity - Deer (Peyote)" (Furst, 1977, p.11). Some peoples decorate the shaman's burials with deer antlers.

Here is a description of Siberian shaman's grave: "It is low chest made of boards, strengthening by six stakes. The cross-beams are decorated with nice branchy antlers of wild deer, as a symbol of last funeral repast, as an offering. The chest was covered by red cloth. The stones are lying on the cloth, to hold from the storm. There is the opened sacral shaman's box behind..." (Хомич,

1981, с.37). "On the big men or shamans burials giant antler storages were grown" (Борогэз, 1939, p.192)

So, the attributes of the shaman - bow and arrows, deer's skin and crown with a deer's antlers, point to the connection of white shamanism with hunter's activity. Many traditional peoples used a deerskin and antlers for hunting. This camouflage is based on knowledge of physiology and behavior of a deer, its short-sight and trust. Firstly, the hunter liquidated smells, and then dressed in a hide and antlered mask (Кребер, 1970, с.158). Sometimes he decorated his breast with white paint and imitated deer sounds. The hunters of Siberia and Northern America used the same methods. K.Birket-Smith described the hunting of Caribou Eskimos: "In mating time. when the bulls fight, the hunter sometimes carries above his head a pair of antlers and in the same time imitates the grunting of animals..." (Birket-Smith, 1929, p.107.). Boas quotes the statement by J.C.Ross, in 1835, that "the inhabitants of Boothia imitate the appearance of the deer (reindeer), the foremost of two men stalking a herd wearing a deer's head upon his own..." (Clark, 1954, p.169)

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

Speaking generally about primeval mentality, we have to take into account the phenomena of "participation", described by L.Levi-Brull. Using the deer masking during the hunting, the hunter not only changed his appearance, he was re-embodied into the animal. He had to subconsciously feel like a deer. The collectivity of rituals, rhythmic music (the rhythm of tambourine can reach 200 beats a minute), and possible use of narcotic plants, provoked trance. The performer fixed in subconscious his re-embodiment with the deer.

An important method of primeval systematization of the world is the idea of binary opposition between people and

animals, and alive and dead (Байбуурин, 1990, с. 3-6, Леви-Строс, 2000, с.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 their clothes (a hide) or to take it off (Авдеев, 1959, с.54)

The hunter in the deerskin "transformed" from the world of people to the animal world. He became a creature of double status. He took on an independent power of animal world (Леви-Брюль, 1936, p.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 people and animals (Петрухин, 1986, с.10)

So, we can surmise, that shamanism connected with deer hunting had its roots in a deer hunters' society. Probably, every 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 behavior. He prayed for success, using bow and arrows for the 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 shaman with his totemic ancestor, the deer, was formed simultaneously. A totemic ancestor came to peoples' world in the guise of a man, whilst shaman entered ancestors' world in the guise of the deer.

With the appearance of classic forms of shamanism, that employ obsessive focus to achieve a higher state of consciousness, the totemic ancestor were transformed into shaman's spirit-helper. The bow and arrows, as the cult's instruments, were transformed into a tambourine. The deer was drawn on the handle. Ritual deer offerings were performed at the shaman's grave. Antlers were put on shaman's graves. We can assume that, the category of people authorized for cult activity connected with the reproduc-

tion of the main economical animal (deer) was formed within prehistoric deer-hunter society. "Shamans", performing their sacral functions, looked zoomorphic, dressed themselves in deer antlers and skin, and used zoomorphic cult instruments.

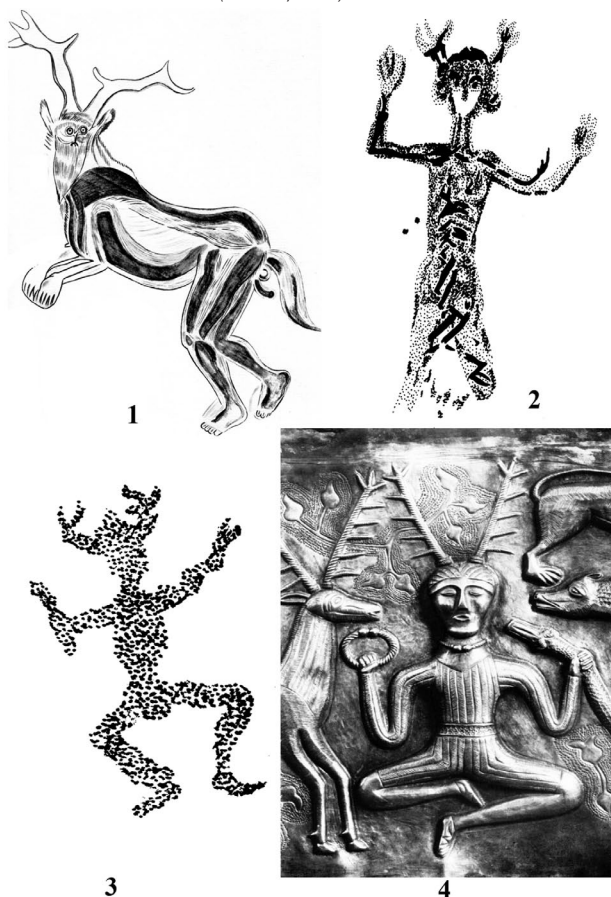
Let us consider the archaeological evidence for the existence of shamans in prehistoric deer-hunting societies. There are depictions, cemeteries and deer frontlets.

There is a well known Paleolithic painting, depicting a supernatural creatures with deer antlers in the Trois Frères Cave in Ariège, France. Traditionally it is called the "Sorcerer" after Abbot Breuil's interpretation (Fig.4,1). G. Clark, M. Street and others scholars share this view. 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 the gravure of XVIII age (Fig.2,3). On the other hand, the face of this creature is not human, it has 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 camouflaged men (for example, the "Bison-Man" from Gabilou, and horned man with the bow from Trois Frères) (Street, 1989, p.52, Елинек, 1982, с.308). Others are fantastic anthro-zoomorphic creatures, like an ivory "Lion-man" from Baden-Wurtemberg, the "Little devils" depicted on the "Chiefs staff" from Teija, anthro-ornitho-morphical being from Altamira (Street, 1989, p.52, Zappellini, 2002, p.39, Елинек, 1982, с.585). Most likely, the "Sorcerer" is not a "masquerading Shaman", it is a mythical being, an ancestor, a mediator of worlds, patron of peoples and animals. Images of antlered men are

known in Spanish Mesolithic art (fig.4, 2,3). Probable prototypes of an antlered deity appeared during the Bronze Age, within Valcamonica, Northern Italy, and developed during the Iron Age as Cernunnos (fig.4, 4) (Ross, 1964, p.176-197). So, probably, the so-called "Sorcerer" was a helper of an ancient shaman.

There some depictions of rituals in Mesolithic Levantine rock art (Utrilla, 2005, p.171). Some of them include images of masked men and captive deer (fig.5). Probably, these were also shamans.

Fig. 4. Images of men as deer: 1 – The Sorcerer, Trois Frères cave, Upper Palaeolithic, France; (Елинек 1982); 2, 3 – Spain, Mesolithic (Dams, 1980); 4 – Celtic god Cernunnos on the Iron age Thracian cauldron found at Gundestrup, Denmark (Schlette, 1976).



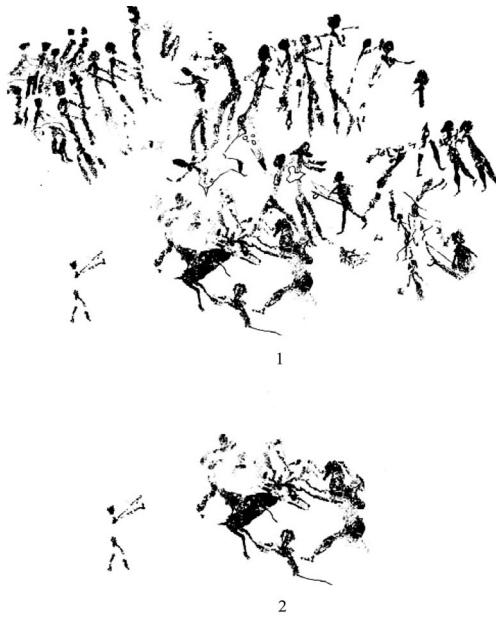


Fig. 5. Rock painting, Murieha, Spain, Neolithic. Camouflaged man (shaman) catching the deer (Utrilla, 2005)

53). G.Tromnau has the same opinion. He compared frontlets with Siberian shaman's headdresses and depictions of "antlered man" (fig.10, 2,3). (Trois Freres, Hohle Les Espelugues and Astuuvansalmi in Finland) (Tromnau, 1991, p.25-27)

L.Zalizniak and O.Yanevic hold the alternative opinion, also formulated by G.Clark, that deer frontlets were used for stalking (Зализняк, 1991, с.7, Яневич, 1990, с.104-106)

We think that deer frontlets didn't have a single meaning. Probably, the frontlets were the items of changeable semantic status. In pristine societies, the difference between utilitarian objects and sacral ones is very relative. Everything could be used as utilitarian object, or was a ritual symbol (Байбурин, 1989, с.63-89, Топорков, 1989, с.89-102). Frontlets, as symbolic objects, could be used as hunters' masks during hunting, and as cultic accessories during the hunting magic rituals and deer reproduction rituals. Men in the 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 shaman's graves. Investigators of Siberian shamanism identified some features of shaman's cemeteries. There are; burials in caves, or under stone slabs; unusual burial practices, for example: sitting, placed in deep pits, or dismemberment; inclusion of bones of animals, birds or fishes, as a costume detail; a belt, instruments or tools (Сериков, 2003, с. 141-164). L. Levi-Brull supposed that peoples, who were held in high esteem, received very independent additional power after death. People disfigured their bodies, to protect themselves against the deceased (Левь-Брюль, 1934, с. 270).

The Téviec and Hoëdic cemeteries are located on, what are now, small islands in Brittany, off the Atlantic coast of northwest France. They are dated to the Late Mesolithic. The ten graves found at Téviec held the remains of some 23 individuals. A total

Archaeological artefacts which can be interpreted as evidence of shamanistic existence appear in early Mesolithic time at Eurasian forest zone sites. In the first place, there are well known deer masks from Starr Carr (Fig.10), Hohen-Viheln (Fig.4,1), Plau, Berlin-Birsdorf and Bedburg-Konigshoven (Gramsch, 1982, s.433, Keiling, 1985, s.34, Schuld, 1969, Street, 1989, s.52) They were made from stag frontlets with antlers and skin. 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 stag frontlets were used for both hunting, and ritual dances, were designed to improve the hunter's luck, to increase the fertility of the deer or to promote reproduction in general. He also connected masks with burials and antlers. He mentioned Cernunnos, depictions of Tungus Shaman and Horn dance in medieval Staffordshire. (Clark, 1954, p.169).

M.Street, the investigator of Bedburg-Konigshoven, interpreted deer's frontlets as shamans' attributes (M.Street, 1989, c.44-



Fig. 6. Rock depiction of the ritual, Surukhtakh- Kaya, Siberia, Neolithic. In the centre antlered men with staffs can be seen (Окладников, 1972).

of nine graves were recovered from Hoëdic, containing 14 individuals. In addition to the graves themselves, other features at Téviéc include a series of stone lined hearths showing varying degrees of burning. Pequart classifies these into three types – domestic, featurig and ritual.

Red deer antler structures are associated with two adults (one male and one female: graves A and D) at Téviéc, and with four adults (two males and two females: graves F, H, J, K) at Hoëdic (Fig.7,3); these appear to have formed small tent-like arrangements over the heads of these individuals. Grave goods found in the burials at Téviéc and Hoëdic include flint implements, ornamented bone points, "daggers", bi-points, an awls, antler baton, antler picks and/or clubs, worked boar tusks, perforated red deer teeth and an abundance of perforated marine shells of various species.

The Téviéc complex includes a grand total of 9 individual and collective burials in the pits, covered with stone slabs, along with the remains of ritual fires and offerings. In burial A, there were skeletons of a man and a woman covered by red deer antlers. In the burial D, there were skeletons of a woman and baby, covered by antlers. On the Hoëdic island, under the slabs, together with ash from fire, the burial of a woman and child, covered with fragments of antlers was founded. The authors of excavation report concluded, that the presence of antlers on top of the burial allows us to assume, that the dead people were connected with religious activity (Pequart, et al. 1937, Schulting, 1996, p. 344-350)

A small test excavation at the contemporary site of Beg-er-Vil, located between Téviéc and Hoëdic, revealed a pit surmounted by three antlers with bone pin (Kayser O., Bernier P., 1988, p.45)

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

The Mesolithic cemetery at Vedbæk, Denmark, belongs to the Late Kongemose culture and the Early Ertebølle culture. 22 graves were excavated there. Three of them had deer antlers. (Fig.7,1,2 )

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. The deceased was laid to rest on a pair of red deer antlers; one placed under the shoulders; 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. There were a red deer antler, a bone awl, and a shaft-hole axe at the bottom. The floor of the grave was colored by ochre, but there were no traces of the interred person. The explanation offered by excavators 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 as no ochre in the grave, but a pair of deer antlers lay below the head and shoulders of the deceased. 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, p.28).



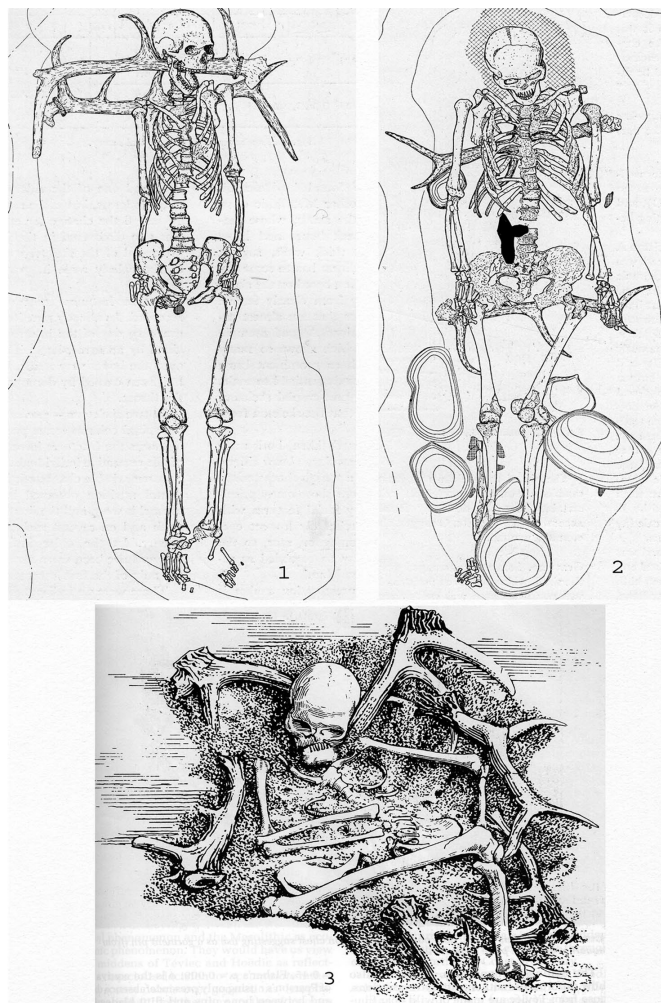


Fig. 7. Cemeteries of the men with antlers: 1, 2 – Vedbæk, Denmark, Mesolithic (Alberthsen, 1976); 3 - Hoëdic, France, Mesolithic (Pequart, 1954).

tion with this, we can mention the ritual of Kets (Siberian people). After the shaman's death they took off all the pendants from his clothing. They saved pendants in the special bag, made from bird's skin (Алексеевко, 1967, с.199)

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

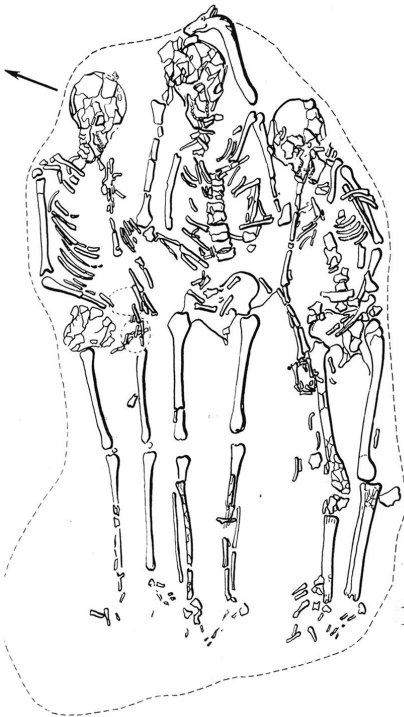
So, the deceased, laid on deer's antlers in Vedbæk also have the features of shamans. Deep pits and stones indicate that deceased were dangerous for the people. The absence of pendants may be the evidence for special retention of them in sacred place.

The Skateholm site, in Sweden, contained a combination of settlement area and cemetery, both of the late Mesolithic age. Twenty-two graves have been examined at Skateholm 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.

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 headdress. Two flint blades lay by the hip and a core axe at the left of

So, the deceased with antlers were old men and women. They had some distinguishing features. Their graves were deeper, than others, but the grave goods were poorer than other graves. The man had only two flint blades and stones were places on his legs. The deep pits and the stones indicate, that deceased were people of high status. The absence of other grave goods can indicate their old age, (according to the analogies from Middle Dnieper Mesolithic cemeteries) (Телєгін, 1991). But the absence of pendants looks astonishing. In connec-



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Fig. 8 Oleniy Ostrov cemeteries. Northern Russia, Neolithic (Гурина, 1956).

the thigh. Several teeth of wild boar lay below the right underarm.

Grave XX contained a young female in a supine attitude. A row of perforated teeth beads extended around the waist, including teeth from aurochs. Teeth beads were also found behind the head. A dog was found in a pit behind the grave XX, 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. Three large deer antlers were found in the pit. This feature has, with some reservation, been interpreted by author, as a cenotaph (Larsson, 1989, p.373) æ

The deceased from Skateholm have the features of "Shaman" - seated position, head-dresses from deer's tooth. The presence of a "cenotaph" is very interesting as it is the same as at Vedbæk.

S. Alberthsen and B.Petersen explain the empty grave as traces of cannibalism (Alberthsen, Petersen, 1976, p.22). We

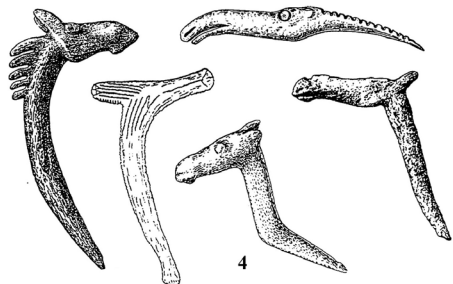
propose another hypothesis. There was a custom amongst Eastern Slavic people to exhume dead bodies of sorcerers and other dangerous diseased, and to bury them in another place, or to drown them to water. (Зеленин, 1995, с. 63, 101). The graves with antlers but without bodies could probably be indirect evidence of the existence of "shamans".

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

There is Mesolithic female cemetery in Bad-Durrenberg, Saxonia. The body was in vertical position and a little baby was found between the hips. The rich inventory includes Red Deer antlers, turtle armour, stone and antler axes, teeth and jaws of the animals, shells, and drilled bone (probably a musical instrument). The pathology of the spine can be an indirect argument for the



Fig. 9. Elk-shaped staffs and their depictions: 1 – Zalavruga, Northern Russia, Neolithic; 2 – Karsky Nos, Northern Russia, Neolithic, 3 – Namforsen, Sweden, Neolithic, 4 – Northern Russia, Neolithic (Carpelan, 1975).



shamanic interpretation of the burial (Meller, 2003, fig.35).

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 female elk's head. The most famous is a burial of a man and two women (fig.8) (Oleniy Ostrov, Kolsky Peninsula). The skeletons were covered with numerous elk teeth and bones of animals. Another 6 burials had the same staffs. The burial on Oleniy Ostrov (Barentsevo Sea) also had a staff, topped by an imitation elk head (Гурина, 1956, рис. 113,114, Гурина, 1953, с. 378).

The same staffs are very common in Northern Europe and Northern Asia (fig. 9,4) (Загорскис, 1983,с.183, Римантене, 1975, с.138-153). Some scholars have compared them with rock carvings of people found in Northern Europe with emphasized sexual attributes and holding zoomorphic objects (fig.9,1-3) (Helskog, 1987, p.24-25) (Alta, Zalavruga, Peri Nos, Namforsen, Bosseco). Some of them are dancing or conducting ritual activity (fig.6).

Probably, the staff became an incarnation of an elk-totem, the sacred animal-ancestor, just as the tambourine was an incarnation of the deer-ancestor. Perhaps, peoples with elk-formed staffs could be associated with the totemic ancestor. They were probably shamans, who had had virtual sexual relations with the Elk – Great Mother.

After the transition to reproductive forms of economy, the cult of the deer was transformed, acquiring a new meaning. The main function of a deer became as the symbol of fertility and prosperity. The Deer symbolized 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 hunters' cult of the deer transformed into a fertility cult, and antlers became a symbol of fertility and life (Арешян, 1988, с.90-98).

At the Bronze Age burial at Warren Hill, in Britain, within a complex of 3 graves located within a group of round barrows, 18 red deer antlers covered a female skeleton. There was a rich ornamented pot near the skull. The deer antlers and remains of an offering allows one to suppose, that it was a burial of a sacred woman. Clark connected female burial with antlers with the idea of fertility, because long-term growth of antlers could be associated with the sexual circle (Fox, 1923, p.32, Clark, 1954, p.172)

The remains of a deer hunter cult were known on the American continent. In the mounds of Adena and Hopewell cultures there were wooden antlered masks and helmets, with wooden or cooper deer antlers. Deceased people were richly adorned, as they were probably priests. (Bender, 1985, p.22).

Evidently, the deer cult had such an important role in social ideology that it survived into the ideology of modern agricultural societies. Huichol mythology in Mexico is an excellent example of it. The



Fig. 10. Deer frontlet from Star Carr and the reconstruction of the hunters camouflage (Tromnau, 1990; Gronnow, 1985).

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' references agricultural ideas about Mother of Earth, Sea, Rain and 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 tips 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 and Dering, 1996, p.271) Using this narcotic, the shaman was able to connect with a Deer and receive information from the Gods (fig.11) (Furst, 1977, p.25)

A depiction of an antlered anthropomorph with a black dot on the end of each antler tip is known at the White Shaman site along the Pecos River in Texas-Mexico border. C.Boyd and P. Derind suppose that the depictions of antlered shamans were engraved in 9000-2000 years BP (Boyd, 1996 p.259).

We have considered numerous ethnographical and archaeological evidences for the cult of the deer in Eurasian culture. On the basis of these dates, we can assume the conditions of the appearance, development and survival of the deer cult. Archaeological evidence of the totemic deer cult was found during the late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites of the forest zone. These sites were established in the period when a cultural-economical type of deer hunter emerged. Reindeer and red deer became a major trading animal. 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 fixing. Probably, the important role of deer in people's life, and, his majestic exterior gave grounds for treating those animals with respect.

During hunting ceremonies, peoples used deer hide and antlers for making masks. Before beginning hunting, men, dressed as a deer, imitated the deer's movements to bring successful hunting. Considering this feature of primeval totemistic thinking, we can assume that people dressed as deer, felt like deer, and so realized their special relationship with the deer. They became beings of double status, mediators between peoples and animals, alive and dead. They gained access to the power of animal's world. Probably this was a time, when the myths about man the deer, and the common ancestor of people and deer began.

This ancestor could be depicted in a cave, like a famous "Sorcerer" from Trois Frères or the antlered men in Levantine rock paintings.



Fig. 11. Huicholi rock painting (Northern America, XX century).  
*a* – shaman; *b* – sacred Deer; *c, d* – ancestors; *e* – zoomorphic being (Boyd, 2013).



and harvests. Deer became a caretaker of life power and couples (Даркевич, 1988, с.109). Its majestic antlers were associated with the tree of life. Deer had to guarantee the king's immortality (Ross, 1964, p.176-197) Deer antlers or deer images accompanied powerful deceased in their graves. The ideological significance of deer cult in traditional peoples' thinking was so important, that it was preserved before Christian times and is fixed within ethnographical materials and documents.

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

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

The significance of deer decreased after the transition to an economy based upon the domestication of animals, but his cult was saved and transformed. Now it had to guarantee the fertility of cattle

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