

In this volume we represent five examples of Nivkh folklore (*Myzit*) collected in the city of Okha, which is located in the northern part of Sakhalin. These examples were collected during a linguistic expedition that took place in April 2001. We visited Okha to meet Valentina Fedorovna Ivanova – Akiljak (1946-), a Nivkh female and the narrator of the stories below. She was born in the village of Ten'gi, located on the west coast of north Sakhalin. Her father Fedor Akiljak (1898-1963) was a Nivkh shaman as well as a skilled narrator and he told his daughter many stories in her childhood. He was born at the village of Chingay, a Nivkh village 17 kilometers to the north of Ten'gi and is from the *Pilavon* clan. Her mother, Kut'k was born at the village of Rybnoe, located further to the north. Later, the whole family moved to Chingay, where she now lives.

The folklore examples were all recorded on a digital tape recorder (SONY TCD-D100, microphone SONY ECM-MS907). At the same time, we recorded the whole performance on a video camera.

From April to July 2001, the authors transcribed the recorded material in the city of Nogliki and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. The titles of the stories are given by the authors. Abbreviations are VI: V.F. Ivanova, GD: G.D. Lok, ON: O.A. Njavan.

We transcribed the Nivkh texts in Cyrillic-based letters, as illustrated below:

Vowels: и у
 э ы о
 а

Consonants:

	labials	coronals	palatals	velars	uvulars	guttural
aspirated plosives	п'	т'	ч	к'	қ'	
nonaspirated plosives	п	т	ть	к	қ	
voiced plosives	б	д	дь	г	ғ	
voiceless fricatives	ф	п̣ с		х	х̣	
voiced fricatives	в	р з		ғ	ғ̣	
nasals	м	н	нь	ң		
laterals		л	ль			
glides			й			х

Following the Russian orthography, we used the following syllabic letters:

e = IPA [je], я = IPA [ja], ю = IPA [ju], ё = IPA [jo]

We made use of the hard sign "ъ" of the Russian orthography to separate syllables; when a syllabic letter follows a consonant in coda position: ньльвьѣя [л↔ϕ.φα]

1. The Clan of Big Village¹ (Пилавон)

VI: There once lived a skillful hunter. He had a wife and a son. In the village, he was a skillful bear-hunter. He gets up early when he goes hunting bears. One evening, his son asked him, "Father, the next time you go out bear-hunting, take me with you. I want to go with you. I want to hunt bears like you. He was still young so his father said to him, "Yes, of course. You ought to hunt bears like me. If you don't oversleep tomorrow morning, I will take you with me." The next morning the father got up and left for hunting. Before he left his house, he gave a round seal stomach² to his wife and said, "If our son gets up and decides to follow me, give this stomach to him. In the forest, I will turn into a bear and fight with another. The bear I am going to fight is black. I will bear a white spot on my chest. If the black bear is going to beat me, let our son throw this stomach at the black bear to kill it." When the son got up, his father had already left. The son began to follow the footsteps of his father. He continued walking. Suddenly, he heard a roaring of bears as if they were fighting. He had listened carefully to what his mother had said to him (his father's instruction). He drew closer and saw the bears fighting each other. Indeed, one of them had a white spot on its chest, and the other was black. They were fighting each other. He took out the seal stomach and took careful aim at the black bear. Then, he hurled the stomach and killed it. The bear with a white spot looked around, sat down and stood up. When it stood up, it transformed back into a human being. The bear lay killed beside him. In this way, the son saved his father's life. He took sufficient steps to protect his father.

GD: He saved his father?

VI: Being on guard, he was able to save his father. After a while, they went back to their village and held a feast with the game. When the son grew up, he became a

¹ The authors would like to thank Professor John C. Maher for stylistic advices in organizing this translation.

² The Nivkh's used to dry and blow up the stomach of a seal to store up oil.

skillful hunter like his father. He hunted game and caught fish. He married and had many children. He established his own clan, a very big clan.

GD: Which clan?

VI: The clan "Big Village". They raised dogs and rode on dog sledges. He established the clan "Big Village".

GD: That was a nice story.

2. The Devil

(Кинс)

VI: I have another story. Did I tell you about the great devil: the devil which came to the summer cottage? There once lived a skillful hunter. He was very swift and powerful. One day, when he was in the forest hunting, he was hit by a storm. The wind blew hard and it was snowing. He didn't know where to go; whether to go forward, or not. When he looked around, he saw a summer cottage in front of him. He went closer, and opened the door. He entered the house. There was nobody inside. He found a broken pot. He brought it outside to get snow. He made fire and placed snow in the pot above the fire to make hot water. He sat down close to the fire and warmed his feet and hands. He waited until the water boiled and was looking at the water when suddenly there appeared a big face on the surface of water. He looked around, but there was nobody there. Then he looked up and found a big face, the face of a devil, looking inside the house through the skylight. He smiled to the devil, stood up and moved backwards slowly. Suddenly, the devil jumped down and stood beside him. He was terrified. He didn't know where to go. He couldn't escape because the devil was standing beside the front door. He moved towards the bed, but the devil did so too. Then, he stepped backwards. The devil made a step forwards. He took out his knife and showed it to the devil. But the devil did so too. In this way, the devil imitated everything he did. He thought, "How can I escape from here?" He saw that the firewood was almost finishing. He thought, "I will make a big fire, and rush out of the house." He took wood and began to make a big fire. The devil was standing behind him, but he also took wood to make fire. The fire was now blazing in the fireplace, and the wood was used up. Suddenly, he jumped up through the skylight and stood on the roof. Immediately, he jumped down on the ground, put on

his skis and fled the house. The devil followed him and tried to jump out through the skylight. However, the skylight was too narrow and only his head jugged out. From the skylight, he couldn't get out of the house. His body didn't get through. He tried once again, but only his head could get through. In the meantime, the man was already far from the devil. He got tired and sat down for a rest. Suddenly, he heard footsteps coming towards him. It was the devil. He couldn't get out by the skylight so he went out of the house by the front door. The man stood up, and started running again. He didn't know where to go. Then he saw the grave of a Uilta.³ He went to the grave and knocked on it. He called "Friend, friend!" From inside, someone answered, "Who is there?" He said, "Take pity on me. Give me refuge." The Uilta answered from the grave, "I cannot help you. Nobody can be near me. Even wolves do not come near me. I stink." The man said, "The devil is chasing me. Hide me." The Uilta said, "If you can stand my smell, come in and hide." So, he went into the grave and lay down. He spread the bones of the Uilta on his body. After a while, he heard the devil coming. The devil stopped by the grave. The Uilta asked, "Who disturbs me?" The devil answered, "It's me. Didn't a Nivkh come to you?" "No." The Uilta answered. "I have been here already for a long time. Even wolves do not come near me. I stink." The devil asked, "Why do the footsteps stop here?" "If you doubt me, open the grave and check it yourself." The devil didn't want to open the grave. He sat down and said something. It began to dawn. When it got light, the devil ran away. Before sunrise, the white crescent appeared in the sky. The devil ran away quickly. The man jumped out of the grave, put on his skis and went back to his village. On the way back to his village, he hunted deer. He told his friends that he had seen the devil and that he was terrified. Since then he tells his stories. People repeated his story adding new episodes. It became a very long story. When another person tells the story, he tells it in another way adding new stories.

GD: Who told you this story?

VI: My father.

³ The Uilta's hang their graves from wood.

3. The Stalk

(Чӳрхо)

GD: Can you tell us more stories?

VI: I know a very funny story for kids. I think I have already told this to you. About the stalk and the gimlet. The stalk and the gimlet were living together.

GD: What is *cNyrho* (a Nivkh word for stalk - HS)?

VI: *cNyrho* is stalk, and *haNrmās* (a Nivkh word for gimlet - HS) is gimlet with which you make baskets. They were living together. A long long time ago, I don't remember when, they were living together in happiness. One day, they were hit by a storm. It was blowing and snowing very hard. It was autumn. It was snowing and raining. All the firewood got wet. The stalk said to the gimlet, "I will go outside to gather wood." The stalk didn't come back for a long time. The gimlet waited and waited and got tired of waiting. He went out to look for the stalk around the house. But the stalk was nowhere. He went back to the house, fastened his belt made of net and went outside in search of the stalk. He continued walking, and encountered the urine of a dog. The urine asked the gimlet, "Friend, friend, where are you going?" The gimlet answered, "Didn't you see the stalk? He is my friend. He went outside and didn't come back. I am looking for him." The urine said, "Take me with you." And so, they went further together. They continued walking and encountered the excrement of a dog. The turd asked the same thing as the urine, and decided to go with them. Now the party had three members. They continued walking, and encountered the head of a dog. The head also asked them, "Friends, where are you going?" They answered, "We are looking for the stalk." The head said, "Take me with you." And so, they went further in search of the stalk. Now the party had four members. They continued walking, and encountered a whetstone. The whetstone also asked, "Where are you going?" They answered, "We are looking for our friend. We are looking for the stalk." The whetstone, too, said, "Take me with you." And so they went further all together. After a while, they reached a winter cottage. There was nobody inside. A big iron pot hung in the fireplace. The gimlet and the others entered the house and sat down. The head of a dog laid himself down at the bottom of the iron pot. Urine settled down beside the pot. The whetstone climbed up the door and laid himself there. The turd, too, settled down beside the pot. The gimlet sat down near them. They settled down and rested. Suddenly, the devil came up.

Shaking his frame, he entered the house. He put his hand in the pot to grab something. The head of the dog bit his hand. The devil was astounded. He jumped up and landed on urine. He slipped, fell and sat on the gimlet. He jumped up again, and grabbed the turd. He stood up, and ran to the front door. The whetstone fell on his head and killed him.

GD: Did you hear this story from your father, too?

VI: Yes.

4. The Frog-Woman (РАЛҮМҮҮ)

GD: What more can you tell us?

VI: I could tell you stories about various devils, but I have forgotten them because devils frightened me. I will try, however.

ON: It's said that devils exist. Your father told me that he once heard a devil crying under the bed in the corner of your house. He heard voices of the devils. He woke up and couldn't get back to sleep any more. How could he get back to sleep again? He was terrified. Then he took a long stick and tried to beat the devils under the bed.

VI: He took a stick to them.

ON: To stick them and beat them. This is what I have heard from your father. After that the devils disappeared. That's the way I heard it.

VI: I will tell you another story. There once lived a young woman. Her parents had passed away. She was living alone. When her parents died, she went out looking for a settlement where the Nivkhi's lived. She continued walking and found a house. There were three little bears inside the house. They were playing. There was a little table and a bed in the house, as if someone had just been there. She began to clean the house. The bears were playing and running about making everything in the house fall and roll onto the floor. She cleaned up and prepared a meal so that she could have dinner. After that, she fed the little bears. Nobody else came up so she sat down and ate her fill. She cleaned the table, went to bed and fell asleep. During the night, she suddenly woke up and found a big worm lying on the floor.

GD: A big worm?

VI: A big worm. She was terrified. She skirted the worm and fled outside. Finally, she came back. She laid down and fell asleep. But for three days she was terrified of the worm. When she woke up at midnight, she found a young man sleeping next to her. She took a look at the floor; the worm has disappeared. She fell again asleep. The young man got up early in the morning. He woke her up and said, "Look at this. This is my slough off skin. I will hang it here in this corner."

Did I tell you this story?

GD: No.

VI: I wasn't sure about that.

The man said, "If someone comes up to you, if the frog-woman comes up to you, and asks you to let her pick out your fleas to do something to you, don't allow her to do it. She just wants to burn my slough. From now on, you are my wife. If the frog-woman burns my slough, I will set it ablaze and fly to you."

GD: Through the skylight?

VI: No. "If I am far away from the house, someone will come here to burn my slough." After he left, the frog-woman indeed came to the woman. She said, "Ho! Friend! Let me help you water the puppies. Let us drink tea together. I will help you find fleas." The woman refused, "No, no, no. I have no fleas. Why do you touch me?" But the frog-woman managed to catch her. She held on to her and began to look for fleas in the woman's hair. The woman dozed off. The frog-woman stood up and took the slough. She brought it to the fireplace and threw it into the fire. The slough began to burn. The frog-woman laughed, and ran out of the house.

GD: The frog-woman?

VI: Yes, the frog-woman. The woman was still sleeping but she woke up because of the smoke. She couldn't breathe. She opened her eyes and saw black smoke. The smell of the burnt slough filled the room. She rushed to the fireplace, and found the slough of her man burning. Quickly, she took the half-burned slough out of fire. She put it in a basket and hung it in the corner where the slough had hung. Then she went outside and looked at the direction from where her man was supposed to come. Crying, she waited for her man. Suddenly, her man appeared. He took his belt and threw it to her. He threw a comb and whetstone to her. Then, he flew away. The woman ran in the direction where her man had flown. But she was not alone. Many women riding on red horses followed her. Crying and laughing, they passed her. They disappeared in the direction where her man had flown away. She continued

walking. After a while, many women on white horses passed her. Next, women on black horses passed her. She continued walking. Suddenly, a woman on a horse spotted like a seal, came nearby. The woman stepped aside to allow the rider to pass but the rider stopped. The woman asked the rider, "Friend, where are you going?" The rider answered, "Don't you know? Many women are gathering for a marriage matchmaking. The woman whose finger matches the ring will be married. The woman on the horse invited her to ride with her. "Come. Take a seat." She took her on the horse and they rode further together. They went on, and came to a summer cottage. There were many horses tied up around the cottage. The women who had passed her were all in that house. They were all talking and shouting excitedly. One came out of the house and another entered. Another woman tried to hang herself with the belt of the horse. Another woman was crying loudly. These were women who had been refused by the men. After a while, all the women left the house. The woman on the horse said, "Let's have a look inside." So, they entered the house. There the woman found her man sitting on the bed in the corner like a guest. He took his ring from his finger and gave it to her. She tried on the ring and found that it matched the size of her finger. The man decided to marry her. He grasped his wife by the nape of the neck and threw her out, so that the wolves could eat her.⁴ After all, she couldn't keep the slough of her man.

GL: He threw away his own wife?

VI: Yes. His wife cried loudly, and ran away. Suddenly, she heard footsteps of someone following her. She looked back, and saw a huge devil stretching out his arm to grasp her. She ran away. She remembered that her man had given her a comb. She threw the comb backwards. There appeared a bamboo forest. The devil broke the bamboos and continued to follow her. While the devil was breaking the bamboos, she was already far away from the devil. She was tired, and wanted to sit down to rest but the devil was already close to her. She started to run away again. She remembered that her man had given her his belt. She threw the belt backwards. There appeared a river. The devil reached the river and stopped. He was thinking what to do and crying. He grasped a big tree that was growing at the riverside. He bit it and grasped the tree, trying to break it. Then, he climbed the tree to jump over

⁴ The story gets confused at this point. The woman and the wife ought to be one and the same person.

the river. He leaped, broke the branches, but managed to reach the other side of the river. He got wet. Nevertheless, he started to chase her again. The woman was already far from the devil. She was tired, sat down to rest but the devil was following her again. There was no time to hide. The devil was already close by. She stood up and began running again but the devil was about to catch her. Then she threw the whetstone backwards. There appeared a mountain of rocks.

GD: A mountain?

VI: A mountain of rocks. What was it called?

GD: Rock-mountain?

VI: Rock-mountain? She threw the whetstone backwards and there appeared a rock-mountain.

ON: Yes, a rock-mountain.

VI: A very high rock-mountain had appeared. The devil began to climb the mountain but couldn't climb it. The rocks were rolling and breaking into pieces. Suddenly a huge rock fell and landed on the devil. The devil died. The rock fell on the devil and killed him. The woman was still running. After a while she looked back. The devil was no longer there. Then, the woman looked for the settlement of the Nivkh. She found a settlement and married. She stayed there ever after.

5. The Evil-Child

(ОЙДОМ ОҒЛА)

VI: Did I tell you about the evil-child? Have you heard of the evil-child?

ON: The evil-child? No, I've never heard of it.

VI: I have forgotten it.

ON: I don't know. I've never heard of it.

GL: The child that fell from the summer cottage?

VI: No. Not from the summer cottage. There lived a woman. She had no children. When she went to the forest to pick berries, she found a child under a pine tree. She brought the child to her house.

ON: I've never heard of this child.

VI: She found a child under a pine tree. She brought the child home, made a cradle and changed the diaper in the cradle. She chewed the upper part of a dried fish soft

and gave it to the child. She took care of the child. The next day she went again to the forest to pick berries. Before she left, she fed the child, changed the diaper and let him sleep in the cradle. She prepared a meal for herself and left. When she came back from the forest, she looked for the meal that she had prepared. But it was nowhere to be seen. Someone had taken and ate it. The same thing happened several times. Then, she decided, "I will hide myself and watch what is going on here." She fed the child, changed the diaper, cooked the meal and laid the child in the cradle. Then she went outside, walked around the house and climbed up on the roof. She watched inside the house from the skylight. As soon as she went out, the child jumped out of the cradle and began to eat the meal that she had prepared. After he had eaten all that she had prepared, he went back to the cradle, changed his diaper and fell asleep. Having seen all that had happened, the woman became terrified of the child. She decided to run away. She entered the house, changed the diaper of the child and cooked a meal for herself. She went outside and hid the meal. Then she took a comb, a whetstone, and *what else had she with her?* Yes, a belt, a knife and a basket. She took all these things and ran away from the house. Suddenly, she heard the voice of the child, crying "Mama, milk." The child was following her. He was crying "Mama milk, mama milk." The woman continued running, but the child was about to catch her. Then she threw the comb backwards, and there appeared a river. The child couldn't cross the river. But finally he managed to swim across the river. He was again about to catch her. The woman continued running, but was very tired. Suddenly, a giant appeared and grasped the woman by the nape of her neck. He placed her on a branch of a big pine tree.

GL: That woman?

VI: Yes. The child passed the tree, crying "Mama, milk. Mama, milk." The woman looked around to find who had grasped her. But nobody was there. It was getting dark. Where could she stay that night? There were no settlements nearby. She decided to sleep in the tree. She got up early in the morning. She found that the tree stood next to her house. She had run away around her house to get away from the child. Since then the child has never appeared again. After a while, the woman moved to another settlement and lived there ever after. The child was an evil-child.