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Title: *Quantity and management vs. quality and knowledge? Different approaches to reindeer herding and the issue of domestication in Chukotka*

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Reindeer herding in Chukotka remains an important activity. For people living in some rural areas, it still provides jobs (to herders or to the people working for the enterprise that has replaced the sovkhose); and, for people living in urban areas, herding is symbolically meaningful, as it is situated at the heart of the definition of what being Chukchi/indigenous means in an often idealized view (see also King 2002).

Reindeer herding has gone through many changes since the last century, during and after the Soviet era. Most of these changes have led to a dramatic loss of reindeer, threatening the existence of herding itself. For instance, after privatization, carried out at the beginning of the 1990s, four fifths of the reindeer disappeared, as numbers fell from 465,400 in 1990 to less than 100,000 in 2001 (Department of Agriculture, pers. com. 2001; Ivanov 1995: 3). After this crisis, attention was given to increasing the number of reindeer and local policy was mostly concerned with the quantity of the herd.

On the other hand, while agreeing that it is necessary to increase the size of the herd, some experienced herdsman also speak about the problem of the loss of control of especially large herds. People insist on the necessity of having a close relation with their reindeer. This aspect of human-animal interaction is not taken into account by local authorities. For people living with and off the animals, reindeer herding does not mean only owning as many animals as possible; it also implies a particular relation to them, without which productivity is thought to be impossible.