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Tundra Nenets extended reciprocity and reindeer theft

Nenets believe that people get their reindeer fortune from *Ilebiam pertia* (Илебям' пэртя) - the Nenets deity responsible for people's wealth and their reindeer. This name has the same stem as the Nenets word *il* 'life' and could be also translated as 'somebody who gives a living' (Kostikov 1930:116; Tereshchenko 2008:141). According to the Nenets common law, every person has a right to have reindeer as private individual property. Personal reindeer (Rus. *chastnye oleni*, Nen. *khari' ty*) have their owner's marks on ears and fell. As it was noticed by Stammler (2005) that such visible way of indicating a personal reindeer is deeply rooted into the reindeer herder's history. Every reindeer herding family has its own general reindeer marks, with a definition of every personal reindeer marks for every male family member. The tundra rule of the personal property said that no one could use or take any one's personal reindeer, but only after getting permission from a reindeer owner.

When Nenets elders start to tell their stories they usually tell about how people used to get or to lose reindeer. Even the Nenets epos and folklore texts tell how Nenets used to get reindeer on the huge space of the tundra (Kuprinova 1957; 1960; Pushkareva 2001; Golovnev 2004). The main hero of the Nenets folklore stories, Wauli Neniang was a sort of the Nenets Robin Hood. The Nenets historical stories *wa''al* tell how Wauli Neniang used to steal reindeer from rich reindeer herders and gave them to poor tribesmen. Even he was just an ordinary reindeer thief, but according to the Nenets collective memory Wauli Neniang has more positive images and he was not considered to be a criminal. People's stories about some groups of Nenets who used to steal reindeer describe them as professional reindeer thieves, which are called *talei''*. Actually, there is a big diversity of stories about how criminals used to steal reindeer. However, there are just few stories which tell about how they were punished for their crimes. In general, one could say that it was not a real stealing reindeer, but it was connected somehow to the Nenets' concept of extended reciprocity and giving gifts.