



SHAPE



Integrating Cultural & Natural Heritage in Karelia

Case: the Great Bear

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The Significance of Bear in Karelian Cultural Area

- The most sacred animal
 - His name shall not be uttered loudly; euphemisms such as: Bruin, honeypaw, the king of forest, forest gold
 - Occasionally regarded as an ancestor of humans
 - Ancient totem animal
 - Bear songs (*runes*) belong to the oldest poem layers
- the bear must be comforted to guarantee hunting luck
 - Magic spells before a hunting trip: safe and successful hunting
 - Rituals after hunting a bear: *Kouvon häät* (the Bear's Wedding)
 - Bear as a bridegroom and a maiden as a bride
 - Symbolically, bear was returned to the sky: *to the shoulders of Otava* (The great bear, ursa major – a combination of seven stars near the Northern Star)
 - Bear's skull was cleaned and hung on the branches of a sacred tree

Storytelling (*rune singing*) connects nature and culture: words make them inseparable.

Where was Bruin Given Birth?

Missä on ohto synnytetty
karhun poika kasvatettu?
Villasessa vakkasessa
Rautasessa vakkasessa.
Missä on ohto synnytetty
karhun poika kasvatettu?
Päällä pienen pilven naulan.
Millä se maahan laskettiin?
Nuoralla nimettömällä
Aivan tutkimattomalla.

Where was Bruin given birth
the bear's cub brought up?
In a little woollen box
In a little iron box.
Where was Bruin given birth
the bear's cub brought up?
On the peg of a small cloud.
How was he let down to earth?
On a nameless, quite
untouchable string.

The Bear Feast

Oi Jumala! Jonka annoit
jot ei syödä laulamata
Päätä puuhun kantamata!
Mehtolasta me tulemma
taikka Tapiolasta;
Mehtä meille merkin anto
taikka taikasi Tapio
Mehtolaan mäntyäni.

Oh God! The one you gave shall
not be eaten without song
and its head borne to the tree!
Out of Forestland we come
That is, from Tapiola;
the forest gave us a sign
That is, your spell, Tapio
When I went to Forestland.