

Vladimir Shumkin

**WESTERN AND EASTERN TRADITIONS IN THE ABORIGINAL CULTURE OF
NORTHERN FENNOSCANDIA**

Abstract

The population which was West European by its nature, reaching the extreme limits of the oikumene northern Fennoscandia, living under very hard conditions and standing more than once on the verge of extinction, succeeded in a certain period of its history in attaining such a high level of subsistence that this has hardly been exceeded by any other economy of foraging type.

The earlier long isolation contributed to the formation of the specific features of the cultural and economic life, as well as to the consolidation of a particular racial type and preservation of a unique linguistic substratum. The subsequent cataclysms forced the aboriginal population to choose a peculiar way of development, an original system of values, which enabled them to preserve themselves in the existing natural and cultural surroundings.

The Sami nationality was formed on the local ground, going back to the pioneers of developing northern Fennoscandia. The formation of different ethnological groups among this monoethnic population had continued since the Early Middle Ages as a result of contacts with the West and the East, and under various political and economic influences depending on the concrete historical situation at any given time. Many of the unusual traits of the Sami's way of life, e.g. their outward appearance, culture, psychology, language and philosophy of life may be understood properly only after careful consideration of all the stages of their development.

Vladimir Shumkin, Academy of Sciences of Russia, Institute of the History of Material Culture, Dvorcovaja nab. 18, 191065 St. Petersburg, Russia.