**SPIRIT OF THE FUTURE**

Movement, Kinetic Distribution, and Personhood among Siberian Eveny

Olga Ulturgasheva

**Abstract:** This article discusses the concept of *djuluchen* (a spirit that travels ahead) among Siberian Eveny, which can illuminate the human potential to foreshadow one’s own future. Looking closely at case studies of Eveny adolescents reveals that the act of planning, narrating, or envisioning a future event, heavily charged and empowered by *djuluchen*, moves the event to its fulfillment. Drawing from the Deleuzian notion of ‘becoming’, the article shows the connection between prediction and fulfillment involved in the Eveny conceptualization of personhood and destiny. The discussion of ‘kinetic distribution’ and illocutionary acts uncovers the principle of detachability and the partibility of personhood in nomadic ontology.

**Keywords:** animist personhood, becoming, destination, Eveny, future, movement, reindeer herders, soul

In this article, I consider the notions of time, space, and destiny that are interwoven in the constitution of human and animal personhood among Siberian Eveny reindeer herders and hunters. I pay particular attention to the ways in which personhood precipitates a future event through the medium of a narrative about one’s own future. Specifically, I explore how the framework of ‘becoming’ and the transformability of personhood can assist us in understanding the ways that the future is perceived and construed in animist ontologies. I focus on the Eveny concept of *djuluchen*—translated as ‘a spirit that travels ahead’ or ‘forerunner’—among a nomadic group of Eveny reindeer herders and hunters in northeastern Siberia (Ulturgasheva 2012: 43–55, 154–172; see also Ulturgasheva 2014; Ulturgasheva et al. 2015). The concept of *djuluchen* productively illuminates the human potential to foreshadow one’s future by sending one’s own partible component ahead of oneself into the future along the envisioned life trajectory.
Spirit of the Future

Djuluchen is an inherent component of human and animal personhood, whose literal translation reads ‘a shadow that falls or runs ahead of a person’. It is a nomadic concept signifying the partible component of human personhood (referred to by some locals as one’s ‘traveling spirit’), which departs ahead of its owner and arrives at the destination prior to the owner’s actual appearance. Djuluchen stays on hold until the owner arrives later on and ‘catches up’ with the djuluchen part of his or her personhood. ‘Catching up’ is thus understood as an act whereby the owner reassembles with her or his partible, that is, djuluchen.

Djuluchen and its detachable, partible, and kinetic nature may recall the way that Émile Durkheim ([1912] 2001: 48) characterized the human soul and particularly its capacity to leave the body momentarily in the event of temporary loss of consciousness, for example, during fainting fits, apoplexy, catalepsy, ecstasy, or dreams. However, the difference lies in the fact that djuluchen travels to or moves into the future destination while its owner is fully conscious, and it is the act of his or her conscious planning or narration of the future trajectory that makes it leave for the destination. Durkheim’s discussion of the concept of the human soul is quite relevant for accounting for this difference as he posited that the soul is “a double of a human body which reproduces all its tangible features that serve as its external envelope. At the same time it is distinct in several ways; it is more mobile, since it covers vast distances in an instant. It is more malleable, more plastic, for to leave the body it must pass through the body openings, in particular the nose and mouth. So it is imagined as made of matter in some way, but a finer, more ethereal matter than any that we know empirically. This double is the soul” (ibid.: 49).

Contrary to ethereal characterizations of the soul, the ethnography that I shall present will show that Eveny do not locate djuluchen within the domain of ethereal ‘soul’ (in Eveny hanjyan). Rather, they view it as an incorporeal double of the body that is released from the body at the moment when the future event of a person’s arrival at a particular destination is conceived. Nor does djuluchen fit the Durkheimian duality of spirit and soul, because, according to Durkheim ([1912] 2001: 50), “the soul is attached to a body which it leaves only at rare moments … By contrast, although the spirit generally resides in a particular thing, it can distance itself at will, and man transforms into a spirit only at death when body and soul separate.” Hence, the soul acquires the mobility of the spirit only after the body’s death. But in Durkheim’s analysis, the soul is defined by its attachment to the body, whereas the spirit is defined by its detachment and separation from the body. What, then, distinguishes djuluchen from both soul and spirit is that although it is able to extend and depart for the future destination, it remains simultaneously attached, albeit loosely, to the body. Djuluchen can thus be characterized as an incorporeal avatar of a body that is distributed along the spatial trajectory toward the point of a person’s arrival, while moving the person irreversibly toward his or her destiny and future ‘self’.

In drawing from the ethnographic data on djuluchen, I argue that the moment of a person’s planning, narrating, or reflecting on forthcoming events should not be viewed as a mere act of contemplation on future possibilities. It may also
be understood as a form of ‘kinetic distribution’ and, borrowing from Deleuze (2004: 116–120), as an ‘actualization in progress’. This idea can be taken further, since the Eveny person’s planning of forthcoming events, which entails envisioning and thereby influencing how her or his own biography will unfold in the future, bears within it the ‘hyper-reflexive’ potential for charting one’s own life course (see Swancutt and Mazard in the introduction to this issue).

By deploying Deleuzian vocabulary, which I consider most helpful in capturing the ontological ramifications of djuluchen, I aim to illustrate how the realization of the planned action can be animated by the principle of kinetic distribution of personhood. The Deleuzian notion of ‘becoming’ will be instrumental for considering the actualization of personhood within the framework of partibility, implicated by a subject’s capacity for predicting and fulfilling the future event through the act of visualization (Deleuze 1986, 2004). The account will illustrate how the relationship between a subject’s intention and a future event reported from the point of view of the future uncovers an ontological connection between prediction and fulfillment.

The Eveny, or Lamuts, are one of the Tungus-speaking groups in the north of Russia. A majority of Eveny live in northern Siberia and have a double economy, combining reindeer herding and hunting. Whereas in pre-Soviet times Eveny nomadic clans and their families moved along their traditional hunting routes and through vast territories of reindeer pastures, in the early 1930s the new regime launched a coercive process of sedentarization as part of the Soviet project of modernization in the Russian Far North. This included constructing villages and placing Eveny children in boarding schools (Kerttula 2000; Rethmann 2001; Slezkine 1994; Vitebsky 2005). The post-Soviet era of the 1990s brought socio-economic collapse, withdrawal of state support, poverty, and desolation. Despite earlier and later social upheavals, the Eveny economy continues to rely mostly on the subsistence activities of reindeer herding and hunting. These economic activities, which involve human movement alongside herds of reindeer, contribute to and still play a crucial role in Eveny cosmology, rituals, oral traditions, and perceptions of human and animal personhood. The small group of Eveny reindeer herders and hunters discussed here is based in the settlement of Topolinoye in the Verkhoyansk mountains in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia).

In 2003–2004, I conducted 12 months of fieldwork studying young Evenys’ ideas of their own futures in Topolinoye, a village with a population of 700. The starting point for my research was the local discourse of ‘futurelessness’ throughout this region (Vitebsky 2002). The term vymiraiushiy narod (a people who are dying out) has become a rhetorical tool used on the political level since the 1990s by representatives of the intelligentsia from northern indigenous minorities. I wished to explore how far this claim had become an integral part of young people’s identity, what social resources they were drawing on, and what strategies they might be devising for dealing with this situation. For this purpose, I asked children and adolescents to narrate their future autobiographies. I was not aiming at a literal forecasting or any sort of diagnostics of the participants’ life trajectories. My inquiry was intended to elicit young Evenys’
representations of their everyday lives through the medium of the story about one’s own future life. I was observing how their narratives about imagined futures might reflect their perceptions of themselves and their family histories, as well as how those narratives could unfold the connection between the young people’s imagined futures and the community’s present and its past. All of this was done in order to look at the ways Eveny children and adolescents reflected on the social and economic instability that has emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and what impact this situation had exerted on their plans for the future.

I returned for a follow-up study six years later. During my first visit in 2003, I was not aware that the participants’ stories of their future lives that were shared with me, particularly by my key interlocutors, were part of a much broader process that was beyond simply their perceptions of themselves as products of the recent drastic social changes. When I revisited the research area in 2009–2010, the most surprising thing for me was that those stories about future lives that I had harvested at that earlier time had actually been fulfilled. This made me realize that my adolescent informants were narrating their future lives as if they knew what would happen to them—that they envisioned themselves in the future as if they had already become the persons they were talking about. Figuratively speaking, they were narrating the past disguised as their future. That is to say, the sequence in which young Eveny narrated their own future lives and their fulfillment six years later is directed backwards, contradicting the usual order of memory production in which the knowledge or memory of an event is generated only after the event has happened.

Since I was the one who had devised such an inquiry, I also played a certain role in shaping the children’s and adolescents’ futures. But I was not to know that I had done so until six years later. Only then did I realize that my research questions inverted the order of things, with the events unfolding as if in a reversed mirror image. In other words, the standard narratological sequence, in which it is the experience (event) that comes first and the later oral or written report of the lived experience (narrative) that follows, moved backward: the future event was narrated in the first instance, and the actual experience happened afterward (cf. Shuman 1986).

If, right after my fieldwork in 2003–2004, I naïvely perceived adolescents’ future autobiographies as only products of their imaginations and individual representations of their social world, six years later I realized that, at the time of their narrations to me, my informants were foreshadowing nearly everything that would happen to them during the next half-dozen years. It was the unpredictability of the adolescents’ predictions that puzzled me as a researcher. The act of Eveny adolescents envisioning events in their future and how their actual lives unfolded over the following six years invoked a specific connection between prediction and fulfillment. Processually, I had invited my main informants to narrate their futures at the stage when they were just about to step into their adult lives, and they went on to turn that narrated future into the present.

The Evenys’ envisioned autobiographies accidentally marked the shadow reality of djuluchen and allowed me to track young narrators’ future movements
through it. Those narrated futures turned out to be neither youth’s random fantasies nor accurate and realistic calculations. Rather, they captured the Eveny phenomenon of the *djuluchen* whereby ‘the spirit travels ahead’ through its own foreshadowing force, which is discharged from the moment of its narration (as a future instantiation of personhood) toward the moment of its actualization, when the person catches up with this forward-traveling spirit in the future. The framework of *djuluchen*, then, affords a unique and penetrating lens for observing how narrative gives shape to subsequent lived events and transforms the act of narrating the future into a phenomenon of social and cosmological status.

The inverted sequence questions the analytical perception of the narrative as secondary or complementary to some primary reality from which it is alienated (Barthes 1984; Kristeva 1980). The latter dynamic suggests that the narrative has the capacity to set the event horizon that a young narrator cannot escape, as she or he will be drawn into the event horizon, actualizing what has been envisaged and narrated in the story. That is to say, the Eveny future-oriented narrative—which unleashes the narrator’s *djuluchen* or traveling spirit—may work as a constitutive element and mediator of the narrator’s personhood, thereby fulfilling and actualizing events in the future, as envisioned in a young person’s ‘future autobiography’.

The unexpected fulfillment of the adolescents’ narratives about their future lives would not have been revealed without my long-term engagement in the destinies of my key informants, which has allowed me to uncover more nuanced perceptions of their personhoods. The ethnographic data suggest that the very moments of envisioning served as a catalytic force for the enactment of future life scenarios. Furthermore, these emerged as specific projections of the Eveny notions of destiny and destination, both of which are central features of nomadic ontologies and are ingrained in the concept of *djuluchen*.

**Foreshadowing the Future**

In order to illustrate this, I shall start with the story of an adolescent Eveny girl, Vera, who was 17 years old when she narrated her future autobiography. Vera comes from a single-parent family and is the eldest of her mother’s six daughters. In her narrated vision of the future, Vera expressed her sincere desire to leave her native community for the city. She dreamed about graduating from school, leaving the village, and moving into the city where she would acquire higher education, marry a man from outside of her native community, have one child, send remittances back home, and live with her own family in the city. While explaining her motives for moving out, Vera reflected on the socio-economic situation in the village, with its high rate of youth unemployment, a general sense of social desolation, poverty, and the breakdown of the local infrastructure. Her plan to leave the village emerged as the most prominent future life trajectory in her narrative, which was spatially oriented toward the city. Six years passed, and I learned that Vera had finished school in 2004 and
left for the city the same year. She completed a course in one of the technical schools there and works as a shop assistant on the outskirts of Yakutsk city. She married a man from a different Siberian region, and they have one child. She has never returned to her native community since she left and seems to be happy staying where she is now. As it has emerged, the imagined life she was narrating when she was an adolescent girl turned into her life in the present. It seemed as if she knew what would happen to her during the next six years.

Another adolescent was a 17-year-old Eveny boy, Kirill. He is an orphan whose parents worked in one of the local brigades of reindeer herders. His father died many years ago in a violent fight, and a few years later his mother was found frozen to death not far from the village during an extremely cold winter. After his parents’ deaths, Kirill spent most of his childhood in the forest with his uncle and aunt. When he was in the village, he stayed with his aunt, who took care of him. But during school holidays, he usually left for the forest.

When I interviewed him in 2003, he envisioned himself finishing school and leaving for the city to gain a university degree. While speaking about his own future life, he emphasized his willingness to come back to his native community. He spoke of compulsory army service, his possible failure to get further into higher education, and his eventual return to the village. He concluded his story by stating that their herd of reindeer and the forest might pull him back, putting this most eloquently by using the Russian word magnitiat’ (to magnetize). Kirill introduced this word when talking about his reindeer, telling me that reindeer possess a beauty that has the capacity to magnetize him. In his vision of the future, the magnetism of the reindeer was the dynamic force that would drive his eventual return. The trajectory of his movement would thus culminate in his return to the point of his departure, that is, a reindeer camp.

When I revisited the community in August 2010, I learned that after graduating from school in 2004, Kirill did in fact go to the city to study at a technical college. However, he could not finish his studies as he was obliged to do military service. Having served two years in the Russian army, he came back to his native community and joined his uncle’s reindeer herding brigade. It seems his djuluchen followed the same cosmological trajectory that he had envisioned six years earlier. The reindeer had indeed drawn him magnetically back to the forest where he now lives and works, taking care of his family’s reindeer herd.

A third future autobiography that struck me with its predictive nature belongs to a forest girl, T onya, who spent most of her childhood next to reindeer in the forest. While speaking about her future, alongside her ambitious aspiration to gain a university degree, she dreamed about returning to her family camp to help her parents take care of her younger siblings and their family reindeer herd. T onya envisioned herself returning as a veterinary doctor in order to provide medical treatment for reindeer. After school graduation, she had indeed entered a veterinary course in the city, studied there for several years, and returned in the capacity of a veterinary nurse. As in the future that she envisioned in 2003, she is now helping her younger siblings, is employed as a vet in the local reindeer herding obshina—a post-Soviet alternative to the Soviet state farm (see Fondahl 1998; Sirina 1999)—and spends most of her time close to
reindeer in the forest. As in Kirill’s case, it was reindeer that pulled Tonya back to her family camp.

The magnetizing power of Kirill’s and Tonya’s reindeer is a highly important point: it should be viewed as the opening to their future, the moment of the *djuluchen*’s activation. In this sense, the reindeers’ magnetism amplified the kinetic force of the *djuluchen*, anchoring the young people’s future movements and events.

Discussing the cinematic image, Deleuze (1986: 20–41) suggests considering human perception not as the reception of a singular representation—the image captured by a camera—but as a ‘becoming’. In this sense, becoming is a duration between two differences: ‘now’ and ‘then’. It is an interval within which an entity or particle extends to become a discrete element of an assemblage. In other words, it is an image envisioned in the future that can be understood as an interval of becoming that orients a particular future. Drawing from this proposition, I view Kirill’s and Tonya’s acts of formulating a wish and envisioning their return to the village as an event of becoming that emerged from emotional interaction with their future destinations associated with reindeer. As I shall describe later, non-humans (wolves and reindeer) can also project forerunners, and the Deleuzian notion of becoming helps to illuminate this phenomenon as well.

The six-year span between my informant’s future autobiographical narration and my return to witness their current lives shifted my understanding of this material in a profound way, as over those years the future life scenarios narrated at my request gradually moved into the stage of fulfillment. In the current situation of social despair, poverty, the collapse of local infrastructure, and isolation as a result of the dismantling of transport systems, one would have thought that everything imagined and dreamed by Eveny young people could easily have gone wrong. In this light, it might be argued that the fulfilled fantasies are simply an outcome of the limited choices that narrowed the Eveny adolescents’ visions of the future and that it was their very realistic assessments of possible future events that proved accurate. But I would not reduce the relationship between prediction and fulfillment down to the calculative character of the adolescents’ expectations of the future, which would make the causal link between the two unjustifiably linear and too straightforward. Rather, I would suggest that the Eveny adolescents’ visions of the future struck an extraordinary balance between agency and constraint, that their wishes for the future respected the limitations of the situation yet belonged to the realm of imagination. Although their imagined futures were conceived and worked within a local repertoire of restraints and possibilities, the fulfillment of those futures should not be viewed as automatic or guaranteed.

Tonya and her mother Polina were the first to make a connection to the concept of *djuluchen*. It occurred when Tonya and I were discussing her story in the presence of her mother at their family place in the village. When Tonya saw my sheer surprise at her fulfilled future autobiography, she responded in Eveny: “Bi tachimur *djulittiv*.” In literal translation, this would be: “It seems I sent *djuluchen* that time.” Her mum nodded, adding: “Adjit, Olga, nongan *djulittin*”
(Yes, indeed, Olga, she sent her *djuluchen* that time). Here I should note that the verb *djulukhendei* and the noun *djuluchen* are both derivatives of the adverb *djulekhki*, which in literal translation means ‘forward’, ‘toward the front’, or ‘ahead in time and space’. Figuratively speaking, T onya sent a part of her personhood into the future, ahead of herself, along an imagined life trajectory. After this conversation with T onya, I had separate conversations with Kirill and Vera. I asked them whether they also *djulititten* (sent their *djuluchen*s). In response, both of them repeated what T onya had articulated before: “Bi tar-dadukun *djulettitiv*” (That time I sent *djuluchen*).

Within the shamanic ontological framework, the adolescents’ envisaged futures can be understood as certain speech events during which the Eveny person asks spirits to send luck and to assist in vital activities such as hunting or herding. For example, while feeding the first portion of food to the Master of the Spirits or a spirit of a locality, or when sprinkling vodka on the fire as an offering, the Eveny person discreetly utters his or her wish in order to make it come true. By speaking aloud a wish for luck or safety during a trip, the Eveny person makes himself or herself heard by the spirits, and so, in this sense, the pronouncement of this wish is directed both inward and outward. Following the Durkheimian notion of ‘sacred speech’, which, according to Durkheim ([1912] 2001: 226; italics added), is “another powerful way of entering into relations with persons or things,” I suggest that these adolescents’ relations with their future destinations had already been created in the act of contemplating and verbalizing their plans for the future. In this act, they exhaled breath— *djuluchendei*—and, so to speak, released their *djuluchen*s, which moved the narrated prediction toward its fulfillment.

In his discussion of prayers among Siberian groups, Shirokogoroff ([1935] 1999) posits that prayers and addresses are heard and understood by spirits since they share the same language as human beings. It therefore does not matter to these spirits which language—Tungus, Russian, or Manchu—is used in a prayer. For example, the Tungus spirit *buga*, which is believed to be common to all peoples, “can understand all human beings whichever language they would use in praying” (ibid.: 204). If people are in need of spirits’ favor or are menaced by spirits, there is no other way to satisfy them except through prayers and sacrifices, for these spirits cannot be avoided.

Verbalized pronouncements are for the benefit of the self and all members of a social domain. As John Austin (1962: 9–10) puts it in his discussion of acts of uttering and awe-inspiring performatives, what is uttered outward “is a visible sign of … an inward and spiritual act: from which it is but a short step to go on to believe or to assume without realizing that for many purposes the outward utterance is a description … of the occurrence of the inward performance … It is not merely a matter of uttering words! It is an inward and spiritual act!” By contrast, young Evenys’ acts of pronouncing their wishes for the future were not only inward, spiritual acts. They also appeared to be outwardly directed illocutionary acts that triggered the movement of their *djuluchens*. In a sense, these pronouncements activated my informants’ personal traveling spirits or *djuluchens*. 

In this respect, I suggest that the Eveny adolescents’ speech acts corresponded more to the genre of prayer than to autobiography per se. Figuratively speaking, in a prayer one is plugging one’s own wish into the pipelines of the cosmos in order to have the wish make its own way to a moment of fulfillment. Precisely because it is an autobiography of the future, the prayer cannot be simply a narrative account. It has to be the pronouncement of a wish. Hence, instead of viewing the fulfillment of their future autobiographies as a calculation or mere coincidence, I would rather see it as a result of Vera’s, Kirill’s, and Tonya’s pronouncement of prayers in which the forward-looking nature of narration and the act of envisioning events are closely intertwined with the Eveny concept of *djuluchen*. Their narratives from six years earlier had left, so to speak, an imprint (in Eveny *udj*) on the pathway of the destinies to which they were drawn and which they had to follow. The act of speaking aloud their anticipation for the future and, more specifically, of articulating their intention to move toward their future destinations triggered a dormant component of their personhoods and moved the future event to its fulfillment.

Since the adolescents whom I interviewed in 2003–2004 were about to embark on their life journey, their acts of narration can be viewed as sending *djuluchens* ahead of themselves into the future. That is to say, by fulfilling their future autobiographies, my young Eveny informants had ‘caught up’ with their *djuluchens* six years later. Moreover, it is my conversations with young Eveny about their future lives that made them produce the exhaled breath of *djulukhendei* that ultimately set in motion not only their *djuluchen*, but also my *djuluchen*, which made me return to the village for more fieldwork, learn that the children’s dreams had come true, and feed that exhaled breath of *djulukhendei* into my contribution to this special issue on hyper-reflexive relations. In other words, the production of the future narratives served as the ‘reflexive feedback loop’ (Swancutt and Mazard, this issue) that, to a significant extent, informs this account of Eveny conceptualization of destiny and personhood (see Ulturgasheva 2012).

**Djuluchen and the Partibility of Personhood in Eveny Ontology**

The issue of divisibility, detachability, and partibility of human persons has been a focus of anthropological research for several decades, most notably for Marilyn Strathern (1988, 1999). In Strathern’s view of Melanesian personhood, people live through moments of partibility, whereby they are ‘transacted’ (e.g., in marriage exchanges between two or more parties) much as gifts are exchanged, so that the exchange, movement, and to some degree even the ‘liquidation’ of gifts or people make them ‘equivalents’. The act of separating—or detaching—people from an existing set of relations creates a distinct, but not complete, temporary identity that Strathern (1988: 185) dubs the “partible person.” She writes: “The general enchainment of relations means that persons are multiply constituted. There is no presumption of an innate unity: such an identity is only created to special, transient effect” (ibid.: 165). Hence, in the
Melanesian contexts that Strathern speaks of, a singular person is composed of many different partible elements—their ‘roles’ as daughters, sisters, wives, or mothers, each of which entails a specific constellation of obligations to yet other kin. Moreover, Strathern argues that Melanesian people continually shift between these different, partible aspects of themselves, each of which is composed of and maintained by numerous relationships to yet other people. The upshot is that the so-called partible person is always in the process of being incorporated into something, as well as adjusting to something as he or she navigates through a wide range of different relationships throughout his or her life course (see also Strathern 2004). Strathern’s notion of the partible person, then, offers us highly useful analytical leverage for the Eveny phenomenon of djuluchen. Namely, it draws our attention to the poignant moments and different degrees in which Eveny use their narratives and traveling spirits to fore-shadow their destinies and compose their future experiences of personhood.

The concept of djuluchen also emphasizes the partibility of Eveny personhood, which, however, manifests in an ethnographically specific way. If the Melanesian concept of divisible personhood points to the person as a multiple product of others (clan or kin) who may become temporarily ‘partible’ from those same clan or kinsmen through acts of gift-giving, then djuluchen offers a conceptually different treatment of partible capacity. This is because djuluchen is not understood in relation to the extraction of ‘parts’ of a person, which are analogous to ‘gifts’. Instead, it is understood as an inherently unstable component of a person that can become separated from that individual and is even perceived of as a ‘shadow’ of that person. Thus, djuluchen is not ‘fully individuated’ in Strathern’s sense of the partible person, who may in certain contexts stand in for the total person. Instead, djuluchen always remains at least loosely attached to the person, even as it can be extended or advanced to a person’s destination on an extremely elastic scale. This also goes in parallel with Mireille Mazard’s (this issue) study of the Nusu in Southwest China, who, at certain critical moments in life (e.g., emotional crisis) experience their human souls emerging and acting as semi-independent agents, such as a doppelgänger (yân-hla) or an envious soul (yisu). There are thus some important ethnographic confluences between Eveny personhood and Nusu selfhood, both of which are partible in an elastic (but not fully individuated) sense, while containing latent and multiple aspects of the self that come into being at critical moments when a person is compelled to formulate an intention.

It is important to note that djuluchen should be viewed as embedded in the reindeer herding practices of movement in which envisaging one’s destination and visualizing or even narrating one’s arrival at the end of one’s travel amount to near actualization of the envisioned event, as in seasonal migration patterns of reindeer herds. What I find remarkable is that at the point of a person’s destination, prior to that person’s arrival, people hear and see the arriving person’s djuluchen. The djuluchen is seen as a shadow that imitates the body image of the arriving person and even reproduces the movements and sounds of the person as he or she walks around the camp and unpacks. So without even knowing that a person is traveling toward them, people may
recognize that a specific, known person will arrive in their camp sometime soon. The *djuluchen* traveling spirit awaits his or her owner, who reunites with the *djuluchen* upon ‘actual’ arrival.

Furthermore, I suggest that the partibility of *djuluchen* might be interpreted as the act of spatial extension of one’s personhood, as the shadow does not completely separate itself from the person but falls ahead of the person, creating some sort of shadow imprint for the person’s future movement trajectory. What implicates or forms this shadow is not so much the movement itself as a person’s *intention* to move. The latter perception comes from the practice of people’s traveling together with their reindeer across the vast landscape of Siberian boreal forest and tundra. First, herders plan their movement toward a new encampment and then prepare for a trip. They pack all their belongings, fix broken sledges, tie down their luggage (including tents and movable ovens) to the sledges, and arrange a reindeer caravan. After the preparations are complete, the caravan of people and reindeer starts moving. The caravan follows the leading transport reindeer, which is tied to a sledge and sets the path for the rest of the caravan. It is followed by other reindeer, and only then come herders who are driving sledges.

The leading reindeer (in Eveny *baeretchik*) is believed to be the strongest reindeer and to have its own *djuluchen*, so it is the first to send its *djuluchen* forward. As I mentioned above, *djuluchen* derives from the adverb *djulekhki* (‘front’ or ‘forward’), whereas *baeretchik* is a mispronounced word for *peredny/perednik* (‘frontal’ or ‘at the front’). Since *baeretchik* derives from the Russian noun *pered* (front), *djuluchen* and *baeretchik* convey the same meaning—fore-runner, a spirit or animal that travels ahead. There is a striking resonance between the *djuluchen* who foreshadow the future and the Cuban *cordon espiritual* (spiritual cord), which encompasses spirit entities believed to protect those who practice the mediumship cult of Espiritismo Cruzado (see Espírito Santo, this issue). Just like the Eveny *djuluchen*, the spiritual cord accompanies the practitioners, acts on their behalf, guides and foreshadows their future, and even serves as an animation device that reveals the potential of human personhood “to generate new knowledge structures and to self-organize and self-integrate in light of them” (Espírito Santo, this issue).

Moreover, it is not only humans and reindeer that have *djuluchens*. Other animals such as wolves are believed to project *djuluchen*. A powerful wolf can project its traveling spirit from a dozen to even several hundred miles ahead of itself. One local Eveny hunter had a rare chance to observe this during a cold winter night when he had to cross a river. He presented the following account:

> It was the full moon. Everything was covered with luminous white snow, and the river ice was glowing like a clean and glittery mirror. When I stopped my caravan to take a short break, I suddenly noticed a wolf, which appeared out of nowhere. It was rapidly moving toward my caravan of reindeer and sledges. The wolf was just about to reach me when I suddenly realized that there was something strange and wrong about it. I noticed that the wolf was not leaving its footprints in deep snow. At a certain point the wolf also seemed not really to be moving forward but
was running on the spot as if it was stuck in some broken machine that repeated itself—like a broken record over and over again. All the wolf’s movements were clearly visible as it moved against the shimmering mirror of the frozen river. The ghostly wolf suddenly disappeared in the mist, leaving me speechless. But six days after I had seen that wolf on the frozen river, a pack of wolves attacked my small herd of reindeer and tore half of the herd apart. It was a leading wolf’s *djuluchen* that had already caught up with my caravan, and I was not quick enough to realize that the pack of wolves would be reaching my reindeer pretty soon.

This hunter’s account of a wolf’s *djuluchen* shows that it was the wolf’s intention to reach a herd of reindeer that served as an expressive point, determining the trajectory and destination of the wolf’s movement. His eloquent testimony demonstrates that it was the emotive power of the wolf’s intention that projected itself toward the moment of its spatio-temporal realization. The hunter’s initial encounter with the ghostly image of the wolf should not be taken simply as a cause, and what happened six days later should not be seen as an effect. I suggest that we should see both events as aspects of one continuum, within which the interior partible element of a wolf’s personhood found its expression through the exteriority of *djuluchen*.

Hence, the hunter’s description of his perception of a wolf’s *djuluchen* represents lucidly the Deleuzian notion of becoming. While discussing the notion of the event, Deleuze (2004: 8) comes up with the suggestion that “[t]he event is coextensive with becoming.” I find this particularly relevant for our understanding of the event of the hunter seeing the wolf—which we then learn becomes co-extensive with the wolves’ attack that took place six days later. Within this framework of becoming, the leading wolf released its incorporeal double (*djuluchen*) in order to catch up with it six days later. A partible aspect of the wolf extended itself to become an element in the assemblage that was the future wolf.

Conceptually, the wolf’s *djuluchen* originates from the same rubric of animal doubles as the concept of a guardian reindeer, or *khavek*, which has been understood as a non-human component of a human personhood (see Ulturgasheva 2012: 109–130; Vitebsky 2005; Willerslev and Ulturgasheva 2012: 51–58). The Eveny distinguish between wild reindeer (*buyun*) and domesticated reindeer (*oron*). One type of reindeer belonging to the *oron* category is termed *khavek*, which means ‘double soul’, and it serves to guard a human being, in particular a young child, from attacks of malicious spirits (Ulturgasheva 2012: 43–45). The *khavek* may stand in for the child, taking her or his place when malevolent spirits launch their vicious attack on the child. The *khavek* is the first to receive this attack by disguising the child’s human identity in the eyes of the spirits, which may take it for a reindeer. Here, an animal double—that is, a guardian reindeer—serves to stand in for its human double in order to neutralize or minimize the risk of harm. It is the ability of a reindeer to receive the attack instead of its human counterpart that should be understood as one expression of animist personhood’s capacity to split, double, and depart.
In contrast to a guardian reindeer, *djuluchen*’s capacity to split and depart has its limits, as it is also associated with the danger of its residue, *khedoke*, which may remain permanently awaiting its owner.³ The term *khedoke* refers to a traveling spirit that was never caught up with and remained ahead, in the future destination. This suggests that there is always a possibility that *djuluchen* can be stranded in the future due to a person’s accidental death, illness, or sudden misfortune. In this situation, *djuluchen* transforms into a ghostly trace of a person, or *khedoke*, a traveling spirit that still remains on hold waiting for its owner’s arrival. Therefore, any locality associated with *khedoke* is, by definition, haunted as it is a site of a former *djuluchen* that a deceased owner had sent but never caught up with while he or she was alive.

As the cases of the three adolescents, the wolf, and guardian reindeer have indicated, the Eveny conceptualization of animal and human doubles points at animist personhood’s propensity to extend into the future and the past through the process of splitting, doubling, and departing. However, the concept of *khedoke*, that is, *djuluchen* that remain ‘on hold’, also suggests that personhood’s potential for splitting and departing has its limitations as it may lead to cosmologically permanent incompleteness.

**Kinetic Distribution**

If in Vera’s case it was the image of herself and her future family that produced an effect of *djuluchen*, in Kirill’s and Tonya’s case it was the image of future reindeer that got invested with the transformative power of becoming. In other words, the magnetizing power of Kirill’s and Tonya’s reindeer served as the moment of their *djuluchens*’ activation. As Kirill put it, it was the powerful magnetism of his reindeer that made him extend his *djuluchen* to its future destination where it was reunited with the reindeer, his animal double. In this sense, we can view two adolescents’ acts of envisioning their own return and the pronouncement of their wishes as an event of sequential double-reassembling with partible components whereby the owner sequentially reassembles—first with *djuluchen* and then with a guardian reindeer (*khaevek*). This act of double-reassembling (or the event of becoming) emerges from and is propelled by the adolescents’ emotional interaction with their future destination, associated with the reindeer.

In his discussion of Malangan art objects—specifically, the notion of distributed personhood—Alfred Gell (1998) suggests that the internalized memory image or ‘simulacrum’ of the ancestors who are depicted in Malangan art gives those same art objects the agency to be redeployed and reproduced in the future. Each part of the ancestral body charged by its agentive capacity becomes a socially distributed memory image, that is, a material object, which retains its potency and efficacy as long as it remains socially relevant (ibid.: 227–228). In the case of *djuluchen*, we observe a similar type of transaction in which a human or an animal distributes a memory image (simulacrum) that carries with it the intention to move toward a certain destination. Note, however, that
in Gell’s case it is a material object (in the present moment) and the body of a deceased ancestor (from the past) that are transacted in order to reproduce and perpetuate the agentive capacity of the deceased. By contrast, the Eveny djuluchen unleashes a future memory image of djuluchen and the present agentive capacity of a subject that are kinetically linked at the moment when the movement toward the future destination is being conceived. So the principle of djuluchen’s distribution between future and present points at the capacity of human and animal personhood to transmit kinetically (through movement) rather than statically (in place). It is the intention to move that propels the distribution of djuluchen and, by extension, Eveny personhood.

The present moment of djuluchen should be understood as a shadow moment between a person’s departing and arriving, since djuluchen is always in between departure and arrival. In other words, djuluchen contains a temporal and spatial point from which the memory of the future unfolds over the Eveny person’s (or animal’s) life trajectory. As we can see from the story about the wolf, the hunter was informed about the pending attack by the wolf’s djuluchen. This suggests that the information or knowledge about the future event was transmitted by djuluchen, which serves as an envelope or a vehicle of the memory about the future. In the cases of Vera, Kirill, Tonya, and the hunter, we have seen how the Eveny djuluchen traveling spirit opens up a kind of ‘time travel’, whereby an entity’s traveling spirit simultaneously stretches into the past and the future, through the narrated (and potentially infinite) expansion of the present.

We can see that the adolescents’ future life stories, which were fulfilled six years later, present us with a unique mode of futurity, as they cannot be easily placed within the well-established distinction between intuition and intellect and, respectively, pre-reflective and reflective consciousness (cf. Grosz 1999: 21; Young 1987: 11–12). Here, the narrative, which is often viewed as reflexive, fixed, typified, and representational in most anthropological literature, turns out to be a product of ongoing and unreflective presence in the world (Barber 2007; Goffman 1969; Gullestad 1996).

I suggest defining the predictive, foretelling, and transformative force of the future autobiography as ‘kinetic distribution’. By sending the djuluchen ahead on the path that the person plans to take, it places the subject’s intentions in the present and puts the future of the event into contact. This dynamic makes a subject’s intention to move and the subsequent event resonate by means of volitional, intuitive force. That is to say, it was a wolf’s and an adolescent’s intentions that projected to ‘actualization in progress’. It is thus the volitional power of djuluchen that offers us a glimpse into the ways personhood operates in shamanic and animist ontologies or, more specifically, in a wider Eveny shamanistic cultural complex (Brightman et al. 2012; Shirokogoroff [1935] 1999; Vitebsky 1995, 2005).

In most ethnographic literature on shamanic societies throughout Siberia and Inner Asia, it is virtuoso shamans, powerful game players, and other elite practitioners who come closest to mastering their spiritual transportations for the purpose of divination and to transmit their souls to other realms at will.
(Eliade 1964; Swancutt 2007; Vitebsky 1995: 70–71). However, the *djuluchen* provides us with evidence that lay people inherently possess a capacity to foreshadow events in the future by having part of one’s personhood travel ahead of oneself. In a sense, it operates on the level of inchoate potential, which is several degrees or stages away from shamanic or other specialist skills. Here, *djuluchen* should be understood as a foreshadowing agency that is literally opened and accessible to any ordinary person, including children and adolescents.

**Conclusion**

This account of *djuluchen* has illustrated the capacity of a subject, that is, the Eveny person or animal, to predict a future event by communicating the intention to move and to arrive at a particular destination in a certain period of time through the medium of a narrative about one’s own future (as in the case of the adolescents) or by means of a ghostly image (as in the case of the wolf). In the accounts of Vera, Kirill, and Tonya, it was a six-year span between the pronouncement of their wishes for the future and the fulfillment of those wishes, and it was an interval of six days between the moment the hunter saw the image of the running wolf and the point when the wolf reached his reindeer herd. During the interval between prediction and fulfillment, *djuluchen* becomes an extension of the internal and external, the body and its shadow, the soul and its envelope as it kinetically distributes itself into the future destination or moment of fulfillment. *Djuluchen* can thus be sent on a rapid or slow journey, remaining ‘on the move’ for shorter or longer intervals of time.

*Djuluchen* instantiates what Tim Ingold (2006: 14) defines as “the animic world … in perpetual flux.” But the foreshadowing force of *djuluchen* takes this argument a step further, offering ethnography that shows more precisely how Ingold’s ‘perpetual flux’ can be set in motion. It emphasizes that personhood is always in some process of unfolding, splitting, doubling, and departing. By and large, the Eveny *djuluchen* (as both a concept and a phenomenon) is an outcome of having envisioned one’s destination while focusing on movement toward it. Calling to mind—and pronouncing—the distant vision of one’s destination forms a relationship between the Eveny person or animal who envisions movement toward that destination and the actual destination itself as a point of arrival. It is thus movement—or more precisely human and animal movement—that provides the foundation for the very concept of *djuluchen*.

Finally, *djuluchen* points at the capacity of a human or an animal to form this relationship, not only when reaching the destination, but also when moving toward the destination is only an intention. *Djuluchen* starts moving toward an Eveny person’s destination long before that person makes any such observable move. The individual’s intention is projected ahead of his or her actions and can be picked up by the target of this intention. As we have seen in the hunter’s account of a wolf, at a certain point, *djuluchen* turns into the wolf’s traveling spirit, which spatially and temporally distributes itself ahead of the wolf. The process of ‘catching up’ between *djuluchen* and the Eveny person
or animal may take time to reach its fulfillment. But Eveny believe that once the *djuluchen* is set in motion, reassembling with its owner is inescapable and even ‘already actualized’. It is the image of the future event that simulates the emotional power of *djuluchen* and transforms its potential for foreshadowing the future into an ‘actual’ destiny.

**Acknowledgments**

This article has benefited greatly from comments of the editors of this issue, Katherine Swancutt and Mireille Mazard. I thank them for inviting me to contribute and for their helpful suggestions. I am especially grateful to the Arctic Social Sciences Program of the National Science Foundation (ARC-1207894 and ARC-0755348) without whose support this research would not have been possible.

**Olga Ulturgasheva** is a Lecturer in Social Anthropology in the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Manchester. She has carried out ethnographic research on childhood and adolescence, narrative and memory, animist and nomadic cosmologies, and reindeer herding and hunting in Siberia and Alaska. Since 2006 she has been engaged in a number of international projects exploring human and non-human personhood, movement patterns, and youth resilience in Siberia, the American Arctic, and Amazonia. She is the author of *Narrating the Future in Siberia: Childhood, Adolescence and Autobiography among the Eveny* (2012) and a co-editor of *Animism in Rainforest and Tundra: Personhood, Animals, Plants and Things in Contemporary Amazonia and Siberia* (2012).

**Notes**

1. In this issue, see Katherine Swancutt and Mireille Mazard on the lens of hyper-reflexivity, and Vanessa Grotti and Marc Brightman on collaboration and indigenous autobiographies.
2. See Diana Espírito Santo on plasticity and cosmology in this issue.
4. In this issue, see also Espírito Santo on the Cuban notion of ‘enfoldment’.

**References**


