

obtained in economic agreements. In places such as Ugut, Russkinskaia, and Nizhnesortim, Khanty also rub elbows with “prosperous” Russians and Ukrainians whose consumerist village life seems richer, easier, and more attractive than their own. On the Iugan, there are also many more girls than boys, so the girls often go to Ugut or, rarely, Surgut for husbands. The younger generation is much more likely to have been to “the big city,” that is, nearby places such as Surgut, Nefteugansk, Nizhnevartovsk, which only reinforces these “romantic” tendencies.

Still, it would be incorrect to imagine the complete breakdown of customary practices such as arranging marriages, soliciting parental approval, or giving gifts. For example, when we visited him in summer 2000 at his settlement on B. Iugan River, Nikolai Petrovich Kuplandeyev (Figure 13) whispered that he was trying to get his daughter married. Olga Kaiukova, a B. Iugan matchmaker, had talked to him on behalf of the prospective groom and arranged it, but the women in the family and his daughter were somewhat against this proposal. He said this was a young man from a large stoibishche, also on B. Iugan River, who had no hunting territory of his own, but he said, “Let him come anyway. He will live with us, hunt with us here. He’s a good hunter who will hunt sables.” Then, when we visited the settlement of the prospective groom, we met a woman who said she had arranged Kuplandeyev’s daughter’s marriage, that the young man was twenty-four years old, one of their family from Salym River who came to live with them on the Iugan after his father’s death, and she reckoned it was high time for him to be married. His mother was the first to speak with him about it, but the young man didn’t agree with her. Then Olga talked with him, saying he should first go to Ugut, probably to buy presents. During that same visit, Nikolai Petrovich’s brother, Iakov, told us he was already receiving presents from someone who wanted to marry *his* daughter, who was then barely fourteen or fifteen. The prospective groom never gave her a definite answer, but he did leave shortly for Ugut. He might have seen his potential fiancée because he visited her settlement some time earlier with the matchmaker’s husband. Nobody knows whether she saw or noticed him. When we saw them in 2001 the matchmaker and her husband were planning to take the potential groom and his mother to the girl’s settlement the next day. Nikolai Petrovich died of cancer the following November, but he knew that summer when we talked with him that he was very ill, and felt that he needed a young man to hunt and work the family hunting territory. This last point weighed on him, he confided to us. He had a son of his own, A, but, for reasons he did not share, he nevertheless chose to overlook him and his claims to the land in favor of this other suitor. However, he did confide that his own wife and brother were strenuously opposing him. Nikolai Petrovich lived to see the marriage made, but he was too weak to assert his desire that the new groom inherit his land in place of his own son. Instead the married couple lives in the groom’s settlement.

Without understanding the dynamics within Nikolai Petrovich Kuplandeyev’s family, one could easily misunderstand his daughter’s relocation to her husband’s