Aims and claims: This talk examines the effect of the head last to head first parametric change on the relative clauses of Khanty and Udmurt, two Finno-Ugric languages of the Russian Federation. We claim that once the relatives of these languages undergo a prenominal to postnominal change, they develop a left periphery, and relative operators grammaticalize from $w_h$-elements and demonstratives. The relative cycle (Van Gelderen 2009), however, has not yet begun.

Background to Khanty and Udmurt: Based on the 2010 census, Ethnoague estimates that Udmurt has 339,800 speakers, while Khanty has 9,580. These languages have a native SOV word order. Originally they allow one finite verb per clause; subordinate clauses, including relatives, are nonfinite. As characteristic of SOV languages, relatives clauses in Khanty and Udmurt are prenominal and employ the gap strategy.

(1) $[kαटα\text{-}m\text{-}aм]\quad kуl\text{ put-нə} \quad kît'$
catch-PTC.PST-1SG fish pot-LOC stay-[PST.3SG]
‘The fish that I have caught stayed in the pot.’ (Csepregi 2012, ex. 9b) Khanty

(2) $[Kк kунal \text{ zor-\text{3ш}}] \quad zor \quad gəlti\text{-}z \quad s'ərəs'\text{-}ez$
two day fall-ING rain.NOM destroy-PST road-ACC
‘The rain that has been falling for two days destroyed the road.’ Udmurt

Khanty and Udmurt, however, are currently under heavy influence by the areally dominant SVO Russian (most speakers are bilingual). In the last few decades the VO word order started to appear in both main clauses and subordinate clauses. The change from head-final to head-first order also affects relative clauses, and it proceeds in three steps.

Step 1; positional change: The head-final to head-first shift in noun phrases first affects the position of relative clauses: while originally they were prenominal, now they can appear post-nominally as well. This step affects only the position but not the relativizing strategy (gap vs. relativizer) or the finiteness of the clause.

(3) $kуl, \quad [mа\text{-}nə kαটα\text{-}əm], \quad \text{put-нə} \quad kît'$
fish 1SG-LOC catch-PTC.PST pot-LOC stay-[PST.3SG]
‘The fish that I have caught stayed in the pot.’ (Csepregi 2012, ex. 9c) Khanty

Step 2; development of a left periphery: In the next step, the postnominal non-finite relative switches from the gap-strategy to the relativizer strategy. Russian, whose influence set the change to VO in motion, employs relativizers whose surface form is identical to $w_h$-elements. Khanty and Udmurt also use $w_h$-based as relativizers.

(4) $jy\text{ γуl-γu} \quad qa\text{-}nə \quad [qо \quad mа} \text{ γu l-\text{m-əm}]$
3SG live-PRES.3SG house-LOC where 1SG live-PST.PRT-1SG
‘He lives in the house where I lived.’ (Potanina 2013, 79) Khanty

(5) $kоrkαn\quad ik\quad ul\text{-}i,\quad [k\text{уtь}n\quad \text{l-ono myнyн}]$
3SG house.INESS same live-PST.3SG where be-PRT 1SG.DAT
‘He lived in the same house, where I have to live.’ Udmurt

As an alternative to (4) Khanty also employs a demonstrative-based relativizer ($fу$ means ‘that’). It is important that Russian only has interrogative based relativizers, but not demonstrative based ones. (6) therefore shows that Khanty (and Udmurt) do not just substitute Russian words with native words but have a structural requirement to mark clause typing. The relative operator is an overt marker of the clause type (which is defined by the complementiser).
Relative operators (whether interrogative or demonstrative based) or relative complementizers cannot appear in prenominal nonfinite relative clauses in either Khanty or Udmurt. We suggest that this is because prenominal relatives are truncated clauses: they do not have a left periphery and so they do not provide the positions that could host overt markers of clause typing (i.e. C or spec CP operators). We propose that postnominal nonfinite relatives, on the other hand, may or may not be truncated. Truncated ones have no left periphery and so no positions to host overt markers of clause typing. This is the analysis of postnominal relatives without a relativizer (see (3)). Non-truncated non-finite postnominal relatives are full clauses with a left periphery. As these clauses have the positions that can host relative operators and complementizers, marking the clause type (as defined by C) is possible in them, and they feature a relativizer ((4)–(6)).

With a left periphery in place in postnominal relatives, Khanty and Udmurt have started to grammaticalize interrogatives (and demonstratives) into relative operators, and prepose these operators into the left periphery. Roberts and Roussou (2003) and Van Gelderen (2002, 2009) argue that the diachronic life of relative clauses follows the relative cycle. First the operator in spec, CP is reanalyzed as the C head of the same projection. At this point a new, reinforcing operator may be introduced in spec, CP. Then the originally phrasal element, now a C head, may undergo head movement to a higher C head and is reanalyzed as being inserted in that higher position. We argue that Khanty and Udmurt have not yet started the relative cycle: the wh- and demonstrative based elements that introduce the relative clause are still operators in spec, CP and have not yet grammaticalized into relative complementizers. Firstly, the employment of relative operators is a new phenomenon in these languages, and the elements under consideration have not had time to grammaticalize into a head. Secondly, no new reinforcing operator can appear next to the interrogative and demonstrative based relative elements; this is best explained if these elements are still in spec, CP. Thirdly, these relative elements can be modified by postpositions (7); this shows that they are phrases rather than heads.

(7) So korkan ul-i, [mar şöryn kvala pukt-ono tynyd] 3SG house.INESS live-PST.3SG what behind holy.house build-PRT you.DAT ‘He lived in the house behind which you have to build the holy house’ Udmurt

Step 3: change in finiteness: In the final step the nonfinite verb form is replaced by a finite verb. The operator in finite relatives is obligatory. We propose that this is because finite relatives in Khanty and Udmurt are always full clauses with a left periphery included. As such they have the position that can host relative operators, and the structural requirement to mark clause typing overtly makes using that position obligatory.

(8) merem [mu-μj jateswe-wa1 aŋk-im] tale which tell-PRES.3SG mother-POSS.1SG ‘I listen to the tale that is told by my mother.’ (Filchenko 2007, 302) Khanty

(9) veras’k-i todmo-nenym, [kudze uram-yn pumita-j] talk-PST.1SG friend-POSS.1SG.INS rel.ACC street.INESS meet-PST.1SG ‘I talked with my friend who I met on the street.’ (Winkler 2001) Udmurt