TRACING
SHAMANS
IN
SIBERIA
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THE STORY OF AN ETHNOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH EXPEDITION
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Translated from the Hungarian by Anita Rajkay Babó
INTRODUCTION

What was the "religion" of the "heathen" Hungarians like, how was the creed that notably determined their thinking, their attitudes and lives, and of which "neither stone nor writing does speak"?

This question has been intriguing me ever since my childhood years.

As if it happened today! About a good thirty years ago, my father took me to the amusement park, then called English Park, on my name day. We also visited the cyclorama of Arpád Feszty, depicting the entry of the conquering Hungarians. I have been a rather naïve, enthusiastic little boy and I have been immensely impressed by this theatrical painting, full of factual errors but flattering the nationalistic vanity. Back home, my mother was surprised to learn that neither the dragon-train, nor the swinging boats did I like half as much as the shaman, portrayed in the cyclorama, sacrificing a white horse. (It should be stated though, that this priest-magician looked more like a gesticulating medieval friar or prelate, than an ancestral Hungarian shaman.)

My second reminiscence dates back to my primary school days.

I received a rap on the knuckles from my teacher... Because he found a halting little poem about the shaman of the heathen Hungarians in my copy-book of arithmetics instead of the assigned problem.
Later, as a young grammar-school student, I got up at six o'clock every once in a while, to swot Latin words. My great zeal-ousness caught the eye of my father and one day he seized my vocabulary.

After some stammering I had to confess remorsefully: I was learning Turkish words.

I explained in vain, that without those I would not later be able to translate the Yakut shaman songs, my father confiscated my dictionary, mercilessly.

I got into trouble with the school-library too: I had to have a book rebound – the Hungarian Popular Beliefs and Mores by Géza Róheim, a Hungarian researcher – since, while I used it to ac-
quaint myself with the eastern roots of our popular beliefs, it dis-
integrated into loose leaves.

While I sat for my final examination at the end of my sec-
ondary school studies, I drew from among the cards indicating the theses of history the "Tatar Invasion" and I should have related the military expedition of the Mongols against Hungary in the thirteenth century.

However, I never reached the specific events of the combat, I started to speak about the language, the culture, and the religion of the Mongols. The commissioner in charge, a professor of Eastern European History at the University of Budapest, suggested after the examination that I should visit the Institute of Central Asian Studies, as well as of Turkish Philology and of Hungarian Prehistory in the C-Building of the University.

My parents warned me that without enrolling at the Teachers' Training College I would not be able to find a job upon my grad-
uation. but I stood fast by my choice of subjects: Turkic, Mongo-
lian and Finno-Ugric Philology, and Hungarian Prehistory.

I was not left without a livelihood either: I became the em-
ployee of the Anthropological Museum in its Asian Collections Department. Now, at last, I could rummage through the data of
Karagasy "kam", or shaman, in full ceremonial attire, holding a large drum. (From an old photo)
Hungarian and Siberian “shamanism” to my heart’s content.

Finally, on the eighteenth of June, 1957, my childhood dream came true: I could set forth to follow the trail of the shamans.

The right track to knowing the religious world of the “heathen” Hungarians leads through researches into shamanism.

The reason thereof lies with Hungarian history.

Hungarians are, as proven by our linguists and historians long ago, of Finno-Ugrian origin. The Voguls and the Ostyaks living in Siberia are our nearest relatives. Nevertheless, during the early stages of our history, we threw in our lot with certain Turk peoples. The Finno-Ugrian as well as the Turk peoples were shamanists and from this very fact we may logically deduce that the Hungarians were shamanists too, before having been converted to Christianity. Our shamans were called táltos, tató. (Siberian peoples mention their shamans by the name of bô or kâm, according to their Mongolian or Turk descent; only the Manchu Tungus of the Far East call their priests shaman, but as science took up this denomination, it became the term generally used.)

Under shamanism we understand a form of religion: a certain definite grade of the cult of the spirit.

Primitive peoples believe that everything possesses a spirit: men, animals, plants and objects alike. In addition to these, there exist other spirits too, such as the ghosts of the deceased, or, the various “master spirits”. The rivers for instance, or the mountains, have spirits just as the animals. The spirits and the ghosts know everything because being bodiless they can get anywhere. People of the shamanist creed believe that certain individuals, namely the shamans, are able to establish contact with these unearthly beings and may share their knowledge. Through their help the shamans are fully aware of everything nearby or faraway, in time as well as in space – at least according to those, who believe in them. They know the past and the future and therefore they profess to foretell events to come, but they can also tell where lost
things or animals that have gone astray might be found, or, what kind of illness torments a sick person and how could his health be re-established.

What are the ways and means by which the shamans “communicate” with the spirits? Well, that is quite a ceremony. Usually, they perform it in the evening or during the night. The shaman puts on an unusual headgear, a conspicuous gown and footwear and holds a single-headed drum, beating it rhythmically while he sings: he is summoning the spirits. The song becomes more and more temperamental, so does the beating of the drum, while the shaman keeps moving and wriggling to its rhythm, performing a shaman dance. More and more is he carried away, he raves ever-more unrestrainedly until suddenly the ecstasy can no longer be heightened and he falls into a deadly faint: it is at this time that the spirit enters the shaman and speaks through his mouth, or that the shaman’s soul leaves for the other world, following the spirit he conjured up. (The ancient Hungarians called this state rejteszik – conceals himself, or révül – falls into a trance.) As soon as he comes to his senses again, he communicates the wishes of the spirits or he discloses the information received from them.

At such ceremonies they often perform unexplainable feats. According to written records, they are able to dance barefoot on fire, they swallow live embers. They can run themselves through with a knife and no mark remains of the stab and they can inflict such wounds on others too. We know of some other miraculous deeds also. A Chukchi shamaness stripped to the waist, beat the shaman drum a few times and then grabbed a round stone with her hands. She started to press, to squeeze, to crumble it. Tiny, smooth pebbles started falling from it, a large number of them piled up in front of her. The big stone, however, remained intact in the woman’s hands.

One of the main activities of the shaman is healing. They are the medicine men of the community. We may certainly credit them
with some knowledge based on experience, they might also have achieved certain results by employing hypnotic methods. Today, however, there is no need for their healing activities any more. Not only do they interfere unnecessarily with the work of the physicians but they often cause trouble and damage too. The following incident happened in the Soyot region.

Some members of the settlement fell sick. They turned to their own shaman in vain, he was unable to help them. Therefore, they called the shaman of another village. He came promptly, beating his drum, raving and casting his spell, but the patients did not get any better. Thus disgraced he had to leave and go home. Very soon the inhabitants of the other village also fell sick. The shaman failed again, so did all the shamans of the neighbouring villages. The contagious disease, on the other hand, spread all over the area: it had been dispersed by the “healing” shamans.

Nobody could, of course, wish for a cure without payment. According to an Altaic Turkish proverb: “If the cattle are taken ill, the dogs get fat, if man falls sick, the shamans get fat.” There was a sick man whose family had to offer twelve heads of cattle, twenty-five tubs of beer and thirty puds of grain to the spirits as a propitiatory sacrifice, in the course of two years.

During the years of the Revolution the shamans, as well as the priests of the various churches, agitated against the Soviet Power. This fact in itself made it necessary to curtail their activities and some strong measures were taken; several shamans had been interned. There were, however, several among them too, who became loyal subjects of the new power and solemnly promised to put an end to their former practices.

Due to its peculiar character of uniting sacerdotal and medical functions, shamanism had to be handled differently than the other churches by the Soviet Authorities. They could not afford to wait until it ceased to exist by itself, peacefully, slowly.

Today, shamanism already belongs to the past. Due to the pro-
pagation of science it had to become extinct. But for the sake of science, it must not disappear without trace: for the benefit of the researchers of Comparative Ethnology, Ethnogenetics and History of Religion it is indispensable that the authentic and detailed records of this vanished world be collected without delay.

And this exactly was my task.

In some faraway corner, after endless inquiries, the researcher might still come across an old man who at one time had practised shamanism himself. Also, among the aged hunters, the old herds-men, one may find, even today, quite a few who could never break entirely free from the ancient, ingrained beliefs. It was for the sake of these "ancient oldsters" that I went on my quest to Siberia, in the early fall of 1957 and the summer of 1958.

Whether in the logcabins of the Buryats, or in the depths of the felt yurts of the Soyots, or in the cone-shaped bark tents of the Karagasys, crouching on the bearskins, I kept discussing the past deeds of the shamans all the time. My limited time hardly allowed for anything else. Of course, I was able to form a more or less general idea of the present way of living of the peoples of Siberia too, but the urgency of my research work did not permit me to enhance my impressions with details.

My task explains also why have I always tried to reach the farthest, most hidden, secluded places, why have I hurried to the shelters and settlements concealed in the virgin forest.

Therefore, the picture that this book may reflect is necessarily incomplete and does not characterize the Siberia of today, enlisting the forces of nature into its service, but partially. I am the chronicler of the ancient, disappearing or already extinct past life of this area. But, I trust, even so, it will not be uninteresting to the reader how I tell of this extraordinary expedition.

The success I achieved must be attributed mainly to the helpfulness, assistance and benevolence of the Soviet people, manifested at every step. I refer not only to the ethnographers and profession-
al experts who assisted me wholeheartedly in my research but also to the airline and railway employees, physicians, teachers, public servants, drivers, kolkhoz presidents and simple labourers, Russians and non-Russians alike. The pages of this book talk about them also, all along. I am very greatly indebted to them.

Budapest, October, 1959.
MEETING THE FIRST SHAMAN

As if we were flying over an infinite, white snowfield. But those are clouds and not snowfields sparkling beneath us. The new miracle of human creative power, the jet-propelled air liner slices the air at an altitude of ten to twelve kilometers.

Friday night, twenty minutes past two, the engines of the TU-104 started roaring at the Moscow airfield, two hundred and twenty minutes later we landed at Omsk, where it was already nine o'clock. Sixty minutes more in the air and we arrived in Irkutsk. While it was time for the morning snack in Moscow, in Irkutsk afternoon-tea was being served. The distance between the two cities is rather impressive even if we express it in time. My first day in Siberia was nearly lost. That is, at the moment of adjusting my watch to the Irkutsk time, I have aged six hours. I do not hesitate to admit that I have been deeply moved by standing on Siberian soil for the first time. As a matter of fact, I have been on the Asian continent before, namely a few years ago, when I worked for a while in Turkey, but for a researcher of shamanism, Asia begins only beyond the Urals.

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Prior to the conquest of the territory east of the Ural by the Mos-
cow principality, only one land has been called Siberia the Tatar Empire of Kuchum and Mahmetkul. This area had been subjugated by the “Conqueror of Siberia”, Yermak Tyimofeyevich and brought under the dominion of the tzar. The conquest was organized and financed by the Stroganovs, who colonized the region on the western side of the Ural. They sent a “complimentary offer” to the brave Cossack ataman. In their letter “they persuaded him to give up his present doings, undignified for a Christian warrior. They begged him not to be a robber chief any longer but rather become a brave soldier of the White Tzar...” The chronicler had even noted the exact date of the letter: April 6, 1579. Yermak and his companions “burst out crying” when they read the letter and after wiping away their tears “they unfurled their flag” on the banks of the Volga and five hundred forty men joined forces with the Stroganovs.

Yermak advanced toward Siberia from the south, from across the Chusovaya with his ferried “army” of already eight hundred men. They reached the river Tobol in 1582. This became the site of the great encounter. The desperate fight was raging all day and the Cossacks, escaping across the water, were only saved by the fact that the Tatars had no boats. At the mouth of the river Tobol the reinforced army of Mahmetkul was lying in wait for the Cossacks. Yermak considered himself too weak for the defense, therefore he attacked. Debarking his men to the last one, he burst upon Mahmetkul. The attack came so unexpectedly that the Tatars fled.

Victory however, was worthless, while Isker, the stronghold of Kuchum, still held its ground.

Kuchum was preparing for an attack and he distributed the tasks among his chiefs. He did not forget about the holy men and the shamans either: it was important to know the celestial auguries. The shaman was beating his drum all through the night, he was conversing with the spirits...
The Cossacks, sentenced to death by starvation or freezing, attacked the primitive fortifications of the Tatars under the leadership of Yermak on the twenty-third of October, in the morning. They broke into the camps whence the panic-stricken Kuchum had already escaped with his escort. The battle cost one hundred and seven lives on the Cossack side, Yermak’s army dwindled to five hundred men. But the power of Kuchum had been destroyed for ever and Isker, the “capital” surrendered to Yermak.

He opened the gate to Siberia.

The tsar gave Yermak, in recognition of his conquest, amnesty and a metal armour, the latter, according to time-honoured tradition, became his undoing.

The defeated Kuchum swore vengeance against Yermak.

On a stormy night in August, he pounced upon his conqueror. He surprised the campers in their tents and only one single Cossack got away with his life.

The exact circumstances of the death of the Conqueror of Siberia remained unknown. He is supposed to have tried to take flight across the river, swimming, but his heavy armour, the token of the tsar’s favour, pulled him down.

A few decades after his death, a Buryat khan came one day to the Russian voivode of Tobolsk and alluding to his repeated services to the Moscow Government, begged him for assistance in obtaining an old armour that was in the possession of a Tatar man. The Buryat had already offered ten slave-families and a thousand sheep for the armour, but the Tatar would not accept the deal. He declared that not even all the treasures of the world would make him part with his armour because it had magic power. Nevertheless, finally the voivode persuaded the Tatar to give up his precious armour for the slaves and the sheep. The Buryat felt, from then on, that he became invincible in possession of the desired magic armour and never again did he lift a finger for the Russians.
The mysterious armour — so the story goes — was that of Yermak. Probably it still exists: it might be rusting somewhere beside a dead Buryat or Tatar warrior. Some day, the spade of an archaeologist might unearth the armour and then it might be discovered that it never did belong to Yermak after all . . .

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Siberia is inhabited by many different peoples. According to their languages, the aborigines belong to several large groups: 

Finno-Ugrians and Samoyeds,
Turks,
Mongols,
Manchu-Tungus,
Paleo-Asiatics.

Our nearest linguistic relatives, the Voguls and the Ostyaks, belong to the first group as well, as the Nenets, the Enets, the Selkups and the Nganasans.

The second group consists of the Turk peoples of the Chulim, Altai and Abakan (or Minusinsk) regions and of the Soyots, the Karagasys, the Yakuts and the Dolgans.

The Mongols are represented by the Buryats.

The Evenks, the Evens and also the Nanays, the Orochi and the Udegeys speak Tunguso-Manchurian languages.

Those languages which do not belong to any of the above groups, namely, Yenisey Ostyak (or Ket), Gilyak (or Nivkhi), Yukagir, Chukchi, Koryak, Kamchadal and also Eskimo, are generally called Paleo-Asiatic languages. If we consider the Sakhalin Island as part of Siberia, we must mention also the Ainu language.

(These peoples, all together, do not amount to a total population of more than one to one and a half million. The Yakuts and the Buryat Mongols are the most numerous groups, each consisting of about two hundred fifty thousand people. The number of the
Turks, Chukchi and Ostyaks comes to about ten to twenty thousand each, but there are several small dispersions of distinct groups not amounting to more than a few hundred souls, like the Enets, Nganasans, Karagasys and Yukagirs.)

Naturally, the aborigines of this extensive territory possess distinctive anthropological, physical and facial characteristics. In general we distinguish four main types:

The **Uralians**. These are geographically limited by the river Yenisey in the east.

The **Northern Asiatics**, who are dispersed in small groups over the territory reaching the 160° longitudinal in the east and expanding as far as the Siberian frontier in the south.

Eastward to them we find the **Arctic** type, and the **Ainu** type is predominant on the Sakhalin Island.

A more precise anthropological classification makes further distinctions within the Northern Asiatic and the Arctic groups: the former is subdivided into Baikal, Central-Asiatic, Katanga, Sakhalin-Amur, Yenisey and South Siberian types, the latter is divided into the Kamchatka and the Behring Strait groups.

The population of Siberia is not homogenous from the point of view of religious history either. Until the time of the Revolution they belonged to the Orthodox Church, but this was hardly more than pure formality. Islam and Buddhism, the two new religions, were rooted much deeper. The great majority of the Siberians, however, remained faithful to their ancient belief: shamanism.

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At present, already a great number of Russians live among the inhabitants of the Siberian land. They are all settlers.

The process of settlement is still under way: the plowers are subduing the virgin soil of Siberia with backbreaking labour.

At the beginning not only sweat but tears and blood as well fell on this rich land.
The recently conquered territory became a penal colony.

Before the conquest of Siberia, the concept of exile was unknown in Russia. The undesirable elements, here as well as in other countries, were hustled out of the country and pushed across the border. If, according to the measure of those times, their crimes added up to an excessive total, they were simply executed. The tzars exercised these ancient and proven methods of punishment for a long time, but after having conquered Siberia, they sent the criminals, or their opponents, to colonize this territory.

Ever since the conquest of Siberia, there was not one subject of the tzars who could have felt assured that he would never be exiled. Not one. The poor peasants were driven on foot along the road, the rich and well-born were taken there on peasant-carts, or even sometimes with their own carriages, later there were trains to transport these unfortunates. The political offenders were not tried in courts, they went, because they had to go.

In the seventh century Siberian exile was the punishment for all those who “played cards, stole after their loss at gambling, stabbed a man on the street, robbing him and stealing his cap”. The smokers’ lot was even worse. We do not known what their punishment was after having been caught for the first and the second time, but if they persisted in their evil habit and had not given up smoking, they were put up on the rack and had to suffer a public whipping “more than once”. After all this, their nostrils were cut open, perhaps their nose was cut off too, and finally, they were sent to Siberia to labour as colonists.

Siberia was also the share of those, who killed while drunk, who “agitared among the people causing unrest”, who caused fire through negligence or begged, those, who attempted to arouse compassion by simulating paralysis or lameness and bandaged their sound limbs or pretended blindness, and, finally those, who “held the horses by reins”. Namely, in olden times in Moscow, the
coachmen were not sitting up in the driver's seat but they mounted
the near-horse or led the horses by the reins of a bridle. Whoever
drove the coach from the driver's seat was considered a torturer
of the animals, a heartless person, and as such, he was first flogged
and then, naturally, sent to Siberia, just as well as those, who
assaulted a pregnant woman.

Exile was the favourite punishment in those times. Not only
human beings but animals and lifeless objects were also subjected
to the sentence of exile or death. Ivan the Terrible ordered the
execution of an elephant, the present of the Shah of Persia, because
it would not kneel down in his presence. Tzar Feodor, the son of
Ivan, exiled the churchbell that was tolled in Uglich, when the
little tzarevich was murdered. This hired assassination took place at
the command of Boris Godunov, the boyar, in order to get rid of
the legal heir to the throne.

It was this same Boris who persuaded Feodor in 1592, that not
only the churchbell be sent to Siberia but also the people who
hurried forward responding to its chimes, or, with other words,
the entire population of Uglich. The people of Uglich headed the
long, endless procession of political convicts into the deep interior
of Siberia. They founded the town of Pelym in the north, one of
the most important and richest cities of Siberia, even to this day.

The churchbell was taken to Tobolsk, but only after having been
subjected to the physical punishments imposed upon it: its "ear"
was cut off, its "face", that is, its side, was torn out. Its tongue
was torn out also. But the condemned bell was needed again at a
later day: a new ear was forged, a new tongue had been hung
inside and it still marked the time faithfully when Tzar Nicholas II
and his family whiled away the bitter days of exile in Tobolsk.

During the seventeenth century the participants of all revolu-
tions, insurrections or political movements were sent to Siberia. It
did not matter whether they were insignificant stirrings or nation-
wide storms endangering the throne, it was all the same. In 1648
Moscow was visited by famine: bread, as well as salt, disappeared. First the shops and then the speculators were attacked by the mob, turning finally with the furious wrath of the masses against the civil servants. Two officials were sentenced to death by the tzar to pacify the malcontented. While they were being led to the scaffold the mob tore them away from the bailiffs and the soldiers, and they were literally torn to pieces. As soon as the populace calmed down somewhat upon the sight of blood and the hastily procured bread, the power of the authorities was applied against them. With blood-drenched heads, some of them mutilated, the claimants were marched in endless columns along the ill-famed Vladimir road toward Siberia!

The following year the people of Ustyug and Solvichegodsk rebelled. They had salt, but there was no trace of bread at all. The passionate bread-hungry had to be silenced: they were sent to Siberia.

One year later, after the war with Sweden had been lost, the Russians had to pay ransom in grains. The merchants were speculating, wheat became horribly expensive. The people of Novgorod and Pskov rose up in protest. Thousands were executed and whoever was left alive had to migrate to Siberia.

In 1662, after the war with Poland and Sweden, the so-called "copperinflation" set in. The value of money decreased, prices jumped. Moscow rebelled, its people marched on the Kremlin and practically besieged it. The revolution was suppressed, blood was flowing in streams. On the Vladimir road the clanking shackles resounded again....

The years 1670 and 1671 were marked in history by the insurrection of the famous Cossack of the Don, Stepan Razin. The rebellion spread all along the banks of the Volga. No-one knows how many thousands were sent to Siberia after Razin had been quartered in Moscow, it was not considered worth while to keep an account.
Revolutions along the banks of the Don, in the Ukraine, in the Volga-provinces... Cossacks of the Don, Cossacks of Zaporog, Cossacks of the Volga, Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Cheremiss — it was just the same. They had to go.

Then the time of religious persecutions came. The Russian Church split in two in the second half of the seventeenth century. New ecclesiastical rules, the rewriting of the old scriptures were urged by one group, the innovators. They represented the official stand. The others, faithful to the “old faith” were their mortal enemies.

Thousands of exiles were marched again on the roads of Siberia, the adherents to the old religion. Over the Baikal and in the valleys of the Altai Mountains, extensive territories are to this day populated by their descendants. They are tall, healthy, handsome men and women. Their women are especially famous for their beauty. They became contented and well-to-do settlers, they remained faithful to the “old moral rules”, did not drink or smoke, and acquired their properties with industrious labour. But before they got so far, their ancestors were persecuted for more than a century, like the wild beasts of the virgin forests. They were spied upon even during their exile.

We might mention also the members of the “Prosperity Association”, the Dekabrists (“Men of December”, who conspired against Nikolai I of Russia in December, 1825). They migrated to Siberia accompanied by the sympathy of the council-men of their respective communities. Their procession gave the impression of glory rather than that of punishment. The police-commissary of Tobolsk gave such a dinner in their honour, that eleven Siberian specialities, — eleven different kinds of fish, — were served. In Irkutsk, the merchants gave valuable presents to these homeless people.

The condemned were marched towards the lead mines of Blagodatsk.
But let us leave the shadows of the past. The purpose of my coming here to the Baikal has not been the revival of this chapter of history.

In spite of having lost nearly a whole day on account of the difference in time, I still had an opportunity to visit the museums of Irkutsk. In the "capital" of Eastern Siberia there are two museums: the Museum of Art History and the Regional Museum.

The Regional Museum, where those shaman objects are kept which were especially interesting to me, is a two-storeyed building with four circular towers. Above the windows of the towers the names of famous researchers of Siberia can be read: Pallas, Przhevalskiy, Behring, etc. However, the board of directors must have had confidence in the future generations: the space above the frames of some windows had been left empty.

I did not want to lose any time, I asked for the inventories immediately in order to get acquainted with the material in connection with shamanism. Fortunately, the descriptions of the Buryat shaman objects have been collected into one single volume, only the Evenk, Yakut and Karagasy objects were recorded haphazardly, their descriptions being scattered among those of other everyday utensils. My work might therefore proceed relatively fast, I would not have to search through all the bulky inventory books. Nearly two thousand shaman objects are preserved in this museum!

In the evening I went for a walk to get acquainted with the first Siberian city I have seen in my life.

Irkutsk had been built where the Angara and the little Irkut meet. Both rivers have a peculiarity. It has been proved, geologically, that the Irkut emptied into the Baikal a long time ago. A volcanic upheaval forced it out of its former bed and it flows now into the Angara, about a good sixty kilometers further to the west.

The Angara is a remarkable river: the only one which leaves the
Baikal, although, according to the people in Irkutsk, exactly three hundred and thirty-six rivers, rivulets and streams pour forth their water into this enormous lake. Naturally, this extravagance of the Angara originated a legend in Eastern Siberia.

... Once upon a time, very long ago, there was a wicked old witch, called Baykal, and she had three hundred and thirty-six daughters. The girls dreaded their mother and without waiting for any admonition, they obeyed her blindly and carried the water day and night, night and day.

Baykal’s eldest daughter, the blue-eyed, moon-fased Angara, was the most beautiful girl in all Siberia. One day, a handsome warrior, Yenisey the Brave, called at the yurt of Baykal for a brief visit. His black eyes lighted up upon the sight of the beautiful Angara, nevertheless, from that day on, she could not think of anybody else but him either.

Yenisey would have liked to stay on and on, however, he could not take advantage of their hospitality any longer. So the lovers had to bid farewell to each other.

Angara did not smile any more. She slept restlessly at night, she dreamt about the handsome knight from the north.

Yenisey had not forgotten her either: he kept sending her messages with white sea-gulls.

But one day, another knight visited the home of Baykal, Prince Irkut.

And he fell in love with the delightful, moon-faced, blue-eyed Angara, too.

Prince Irkut was a great lord, the richest among the rich, naturally the old witch favoured him right away.

The Prince lived far away, across the mountains in the taiga. Whether the old hag bewitched him or not, nobody knows, but the Prince decided to ask Angara to marry him.

One day he took off towards the yurt of Baykal to get engaged to Angara, the eldest daughter.

He was no further away from the yurt, than a day’s journey, when night fell. He had his tent spread and retired.

It was a stormy night. The shrieking gulls brought the message to Angara: her suitor, Prince Irkut, would arrive in the course of the following day.
Angara rushed out of the yurt into the howling windstorm, calling Yenisey and sobbing bitterly.

The tears of the enamoured maiden kept falling on the ground and began to dissolve the enormous, steep rocks that surrounded the yurt. And so, Angara could run away from Baykal, following the path thus opened.

The noise woke up Baykal, the witch. As soon as she realized that her daughter had escaped from her, she grabbed a huge stone in her fury and threw it after her. But the stone hit only the long veil of the girl, floating behind her.

The crash of the stone woke Prince Irkut from his sleep. He swung into the saddle and tried to catch the fugitive. He found Angara’s footprints at the point where today the town of Irkutsk is standing. But the girl had already fled to the north and reached her lover, Yenisey the Brave, safely.

Angara and Yenisey never left each other again and they are together to this day.

From that night on, only three hundred and thirty-five maidens carry the water for Baykal, the old hag, and Angara, the disobedient daughter, takes away all the contribution of her sisters.

The disappointed suitor weeps to this day over his loss and his tears keep streaming after Angara.

The large rock that Baikal had thrown after the rebellious girl can be seen till now. It stands where the Angara leaves the holy lake. And it is called Shaman Rock.

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The joining, as well as the sources of the Angara and the Yenisey rivers are rather peculiar. The Yenisey originates from two springs and its left branch, the Great Yenisey, the upper section of which the Soyots call Kizyl hem (Red river) and the Mongols mention by the name of Busyn gol, is situated at a distance of not even two kilometers from the origin of the Angara. This we realize, when we learn that a little river, called Muren, originating next to the Busyn gol – but on the other side of the watershed – flows into
the Selenga, tributary of Lake Baikal, from where the Angara “escaped”.

What a beautiful episode could have been built upon this geographical peculiarity and added to the legend, had it been known! Surely, Yenisey the Brave and the beautiful Angara had been predestined for each other already at their birth!

I turn from the busy main streets into some more quiet ones. The lacy woodwork of the houses, as well as the long wooden planks on the sidewalks along these little streets, preserve the atmosphere of the first settlers of Siberia.

However, Irkutsk could not be characterized any more by the log houses, but rather by the amazing speed of constructions, as for instance, the electric power plant of the Angara.

For the sake of this enterprise even a section of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Baikal section, had to be modified: the entire railway system had been moved southward. This decisive step can be appreciated only if we know the difficulties which arose during its construction around the Baikal. The Baikal section was the last part of the Trans-Siberian Railway lines to be finished.

At the time when Lake Baikal was not surrounded yet by a railway line, passengers had to be transported across the lake by boat. But the boat transported not only people and their luggage, it also transferred the whole train positioned on a rail section, mounted on the deck, to the shore on the other side.

The boat had been built in England and it had been shipped to the shore of Lake Baikal without being assembled. In order to facilitate the trains’ coming aboard, it had never anchored in the free waters of the port but in a dock, specially built for this purpose.

Right from the first moment after my arrival to Irkutsk, I began to ponder over the problem: how could I get to the Buryats as soon as possible? Back at home, I had been daydreaming ever so many times about the day of my arrival to Siberia, I invented
quite a little story for myself about that great moment:

I would arrive to some Siberian city and would visit the museum right away. There I would meet a museologist, with a knapsack on his back and a portfolio hanging from his shoulder. I would ask him where he planned to go. He would reply: "I am going to a Buryat village, I want to record the knowledge of the last shaman!" I would ask him to wait for me until I got myself ready for the journey. He would say: "All right, I will wait for you." And in about an hour, we would take off together.

This little scene has been re-enacted in my imagination several times, with slight variations.

For example, this individual could even be of the same nationality as the folk-group I planned to visit. Then the collecting would be even more successful.

But I found this too audacious an idea, even for a dream...

And now I was in Irkutsk.

Back in Leningrad I received the address of a Buryat lady, Mme. Sharakshinova, who lived in Irkutsk and whose speciality was Buryat-Mongol poetry. A few hours after my arrival I went to the University where she lectured, to meet her.

The first day I did not find her there. Next day I telephoned to the University.

- She is away, on an expedition.

But I was not satisfied with this information: I could, perhaps, still find her at home. I went to her house next morning, accompanied by the Director of the Irkutsk Museum.

A middle-aged Buryat man was leaning against the door-post. The Director greeted him in a friendly way and then he turned to me:

- I want you to meet each other, this is the husband of Mme Sharakshinova.

I asked him hurriedly:

- Did your wife leave yesterday?
— No, today. We have just taken leave of each other. That is why I am still standing here at the door. She left about five minutes ago for the garage.

I glanced hopefully at the Director.
— We might try to catch up with her — he replied, understanding my anxious expression.
— Could we send someone for her? Perhaps she could still be reached on a bicycle.
— One of the neighbour’s boys happens to be at home, I shall ask him.

And the husband was already off towards the house across the street, not even asking us what it was, that brought us here.

He came back promptly, but we still had to wait patiently for some time.

While we waited, I told him, what I was looking for in Siberia.
— My wife plans to see a shaman too. You should really go together.

I nodded. Inside I felt as if all the outcome of my research would depend on this.

Finally, about a good twenty minutes later, the young cyclist returned and a handsome, small Buryat woman appeared behind him in the doorway, as if one of the moon-faced heroines of the mythical songs would have stepped in front of me — in a raincoat.

I told her what brought me here, and added my request that she might wait till the next day, so that I could arrange the necessary formalities.

The most beautiful variation of my Budapest dream came true when she consented.

Right there we decided the course we were to follow. First we would go to the Bokhan district. I would fetch her with a car at six o’clock in the morning.

I settled my official business, I had been able to find a car too, and then hurried back to the museum, to copy the descriptions of the shamanistic objects.
The following morning, at six, the car awaited me in front of the hotel and we drove to the house of Mme. Sharakshinova. On the way the driver mumbled reluctantly:
- It would be better not to start at all, we might get stuck in the taiga. Look at this downpour!
  The rain was really streaming disconsolately.
  - Why, we would never get stuck! — I replied with a swagger.
  - Have you ever been in the taiga?
  - No, never.
  - Well, that's why you think so. It has been raining without interruption ever since yesterday morning, the roads of the taiga are soaked through to the bottom. The highway is under repair, we can not use that.

What could I have answered to this? I had really no knowledge of the roads in the virgin forests. I kept hoping that the opinion of my companion would be a different one.

We sounded the horn for a long time in front of her window. Mme. Sharakshinova looked out at last, but she did not appear to have been prepared for a long journey. Holding her raincoat above her head, she ran out to the car after a while with empty hands.

- Are you coming like this, without any luggage?
- Look, Vilmos, we really should not take off today. We would get stuck in the forest. We must wait for the rain to stop, then, after a few days, the mud will cake.
- We have got to take to the road now, otherwise we might have to stay here for as long as ten days or more.
- It is better here, at home, than in the forest. What would you do there?

But I would not give up. My time was limited. I had to take chances.

- It has only been raining since yesterday. The ground does not get soaked through so quickly. We can get across the taiga in one day. If we wait for the good weather, the roads will be drenched
and inaccessible. And what if the rain does not stop for one or even two weeks? It is not so vitally important to you, whether you get to Bokhan now, or a month later. But I want to be among the Soyots by that time. I cannot afford to lose a day, not even half a day.

Both knitted their brows pensively. I began to work on the driver:
- They told me at the garage that you were a skillful driver. You cannot let yourself be scared by a little mud!

He muttered a complaint:
- What does the skill of a driver matter, when the four wheels are stuck?

After a good half hour the ice was broken. The young lady went to fetch her knapsack and we could take off, at last.

*

Soon we left the town behind us, soon we turned off the excellent highway too. Pine-woods and birch-groves alternated, seldom had any other kind of tree appeared. The taiga was beautiful and I imagined, it must be the most fascinating in autumn. The pines were deep green, the foliage above the white trunks of the birches was red and the other trees put on a yellow garment. And when the wind had risen up, its gusts lifted broad veils of leaves into the air, circling them for a while and then, being laid upon the ground, they carpeted the earth according to the ancient order, one layer on top of the other, one autumn following the other.

Our car advanced in the taiga further and further, without any hindrance.

My Buryat companion held out a cone – the cone of a cembra-pine – and offered it to me:
- Try it, it is a Siberian delicacy.
- Thank you, but how shall I go about eating it?
- Like a squirrel!
I cast a furtive glance towards her. Mme. Sharakshinova broke off the bottom-scale of the cone with a skillful gesture and the black seeds rolled into her hand instantly. They were hardly any larger than the seeds of the sunflower. I soon accomplished this too. But at the second step I failed. The cembra-seed crumbled under my teeth as if it had been rubbed in a mortar with a pestle. My smiling companion divided the hard shell with her teeth exactly into two equal parts.

- Don’t crunch it, just halve it, like the squirrel.
But easier said than done. The squirrel, it seemed, must be much less clumsy than I.
- Don’t bite into it, just grind the shell between your upper and lower jaw in the opposite direction.

And then, I succeeded too and halved the seed according to the rules, just like a squirrel, or at least as well as a Siberian.

This is how I made the acquaintance of the first Siberian “fruit”.

Suddenly I woke up with a start from my oblivious chewing, we stopped. Our driver kept stepping on the gas, however, the car did not move at all.

I looked out: our wheels were nearly half-submerged in the mud.

The chauffeur, who, while in Irkutsk, insisted all along on delaying the trip, never uttered a word of reproach. But he could not do anything at all either.

- We will have to wait until another car comes along – he stated objectively.

I dared not ask, what the traffic was like on this road in the taiga. I was fully aware of the difference between the chances here and on the Balaton highway. (Road between Budapest and Lake Balaton.)

- At least we can stretch our legs – the little Buryat woman said, shrugging her shoulders.
I looked at her gratefully, I appreciated that instead of rebuking, she was trying to console us. And of course, herself too.

Soon, however, luck was with us. We were not held up for more than half an hour when the noise of an engine joined the roar of the wind.

— If it is not an aeroplane, we have won! — I began to joke.

A powerful Zim appeared within a few minutes. Our car had been pulled out of the mud as a feather. And the Zim became our guardian angel, because every time we got stuck, it came back for us.

*

We arrived in Bokhan, the first station of our trip, in the late afternoon. This is from where I shall visit the Buryat villages along the river Ida. Before we arrived in Bokhan, Mme. Sharakhinova pointed to a mountain we passed:

— We shall have to climb that one too. When I was a young girl, the taylga had been celebrated here, they used to sacrifice horses at this site. I have taken part in the ceremonies several times.

— You? How was that possible? I always thought that only men could attend those rituals.

— That is right. The horse-sacrifice is a tribal festival which can be attended only by men, because the women belong to other tribes, having been taken by their husbands from other clans. All families, however, had to be represented at those tribal festivities and, as I had no brothers, after my father’s death I attended them.

Only after my return to Irkutsk have I found out, while studying the Buryat ongons, or spirit dolls, why it was absolutely necessary that Mme. Sharakhinova’s family be represented at the ceremonies of the taylga.
We had hardly advanced on our way, when my companion pointed to a slope.
  - Can you see it, there? That is the cemetery.
  I could not see anything.
  - Let us get out and have a closer look, then I could take some pictures too.

We climbed the hill. When we reached the burial grounds (I avoid the expression "cemetery" on purpose), it became evident why I could not see anything from the road. There was nothing at all there to indicate that we were at the burial site: no graves, no gravestones.

The Buryats do not mark the resting place of their dead. However, in spite of that, I was photographing eagerly, because the non-visible grave is also a type of grave which should be recorded.

*  

I was rather disappointed with Bokhan. I was not as naïve as to have expected that our car would arrive at one of the yurt-camps of Genghis Khan, but I hoped to find something different than the straight streets of Bokhan, some of the sidewalks covered with broad wooden planks and the typical Siberian-Russian frame-houses.
  - Are there no more yurts left on the land of the Buryats? — I let the disillusioned question slip out unintentionally.
  - Do not forget that we are at the county town. We shall still see some yurts, even if they might be different to those of the warriors of Batu Khan on the Mohi Plain. (Battlefield in Borsod County, Hungary, where the invading Tatars defeated the Hungarians in 1241.)

The village did not differ much from the Russian settlements, but the Buryat traditions survive to this day.

This became evident as soon as I set foot in the house of Toro-
yev, the blind old folklorist, whose appearance was nearly European. Mme. Sharakhshinova had known him for a long time. She recorded the lengthy texts of the heroic saga of Bogda Geser Khan according to his narration. Whoever took such an interest in heroic sagas— I thought—could hardly have remained indifferent towards the shamans. His blindness encouraged my hopes too: it is generally known that the sightless are faithful guardians of traditions. I would have liked best to have begun immediately with my inquiries concerning the different manners and details of the horse-sacrifices, the tayilgas, I was very much of a greenhorn yet.

I soon found out that no investigations could take place before the old Buryat had entertained us. And this had its due course, not a short one either.

He placed a bottle on the table, its size could only be compared to those seen at the Agricultural Exhibition in Budapest, displayed by the wine-growers in their show-cases. The enormous bottle was filled to the brim with a water-coloured liquid.

— What does this “little” bottle contain? — I asked Mme. Sharakhshinova.

— Arsi.

She noticed that I had no idea what it could be, so she added:
— In some other dialects they call it arhi.

Oh!— I thought. It could be nothing else but the Buryat variant of the Turkic word araka, which was called raki in Stambul and had been consumed by some in secret, while the more liberal people drank it openly. It must be brandy.

— What is it called in Russian? — I asked hopefully.
— Tarasun. Do you know this word?
— Yes, of course. It means an alcoholic beverage distilled from milk.

My fears diminished at once: it could not be very strong.

(I was not worried about myself. I could have stood on my own ground, but after the feast, maybe, old Toroyev would not be able to speak so fluently.)
I looked at it, somewhat eagerly, after all it was not common vodka, but real tarasun, sparkling in front of us. How curious I had been when I read, still in Budapest, in the descriptions about the Buryat shaman ceremonies, that tarasun had been sprinkled towards the sky for the spirits and how much I desired to know what it was like...

Drinking has an established procedure: the host fills up the glass until it nearly overflows and then he sprinkles a little of it over the table, two or three times. (It seems that the spirits appreciate the tarasun also if it is not sprinkled towards the sky.) Then he downs a gulp and passes it on to the guest of honour: Ukti! (Drink it up!) The guest must drain the waterglass and fill it up again and after offering a few drops to the spirits and taking a symbolical sip himself, he has to return it to the host, calling out also: Ukti!

And so it goes around the table until each of the guests have drunk from the glass.

The glass had gone around once already. Our host passed the huge bottle and the glass to me. Thereby giving me the role of the host. After serving the fifth and the sixth guest, I realized with a shock that this was beyond a joke! Why, the glass wandered tracing a "spoke-line": I served the first guest, he in return offered it to me. I passed it to the second, he held it out to me. I gave it to the third one and he ordered me again: Ukti! ... Altogether six of us were seated around the table. While everyone took only their first glass, I had already had six. While the others gulped down their second, I had reached my twelfth. For heaven's sake, what if ten or fifteen visitors got together! By the time the last guest had heaved a sigh after the fourth glass, the host had been filled with forty or sixty glasses of liquid. No wonder they use such an enormous bottle for this ceremony. Luckily, the arhi is weak, it has only a few degrees of alcoholic content. However... the poor
host should be taken into consideration: a hose could be secretly passed to him or at least a cane, as to the bridegroom of Boldva-völgy, so that the inevitable consequences after so much drinking would make no noise under the table. The enormous quantity of this beverage might be resisted, as far as sobriety is concerned, but hardly any bladder could hold it.

At last, this giant bottle was drained, and now I could begin with the collection of research material.

Soon I discovered that it was really worth our while to look up this blind old man. He remembered that there were fifteen different procedures of the taylga, the horse-sacrifice, and he told about them one by one, it was only the last one he could not recollect.

He also recommended that I should visit the Jehe taylgayn hada, or The Mountain of the Great Animal-Sacrifices, to which my companion had already called my attention to on the way; at one time the Buryats of Bokhan used to offer their animal-sacrifices to their ancestors there.

It must have been around midnight when I put away my pencil and my notebook.

We trotted along with Mme. Sharakshinova to the log-cabin of her aunt: our quarters for the night awaited us there. The four wooden posts of the bed had already struck my eye in the house of blind old Toroyev, each of them extending high above the bed. “This contraption would stand on legs even if it would be turned upside down!” — I thought marvelling. And how narrow it is! How on earth does our plump hostess accommodate herself upon it?

— Well, at last I have a chance to try the Buryat bed too! — I said aloud to the hospitable family.
— Look out, do not fall off!
— Not I!
I covered myself happily with the rug, woven from goat-hair.
At daybreak we were already heading upwards on the side of the *Jehe taylgayn hada*. It is not really a mountain, but rather a somewhat larger hill. The river Ida winds around its foot, encircling it as if it would be a peninsula. The top of the hill is a plateau covered with bushes, shrubs and leafy trees, pines, privets and birches, spruces, larch-trees and lush, green grass.

Below us stretches the elongated settlement: Bokhan. The Buryats pronounce it *bō - hān*. Could it possibly be the compound of the words *bō* and *hān*? *Bō* means shaman and the word *hān* is the Buryat variant of the dignitary title *khan*. If so, who could that shaman-ruler have been, whose memory has been preserved by the name of this locality?

We did not have to search for long on the plateau before we found something.

- This is the *sīre*, the altar.

A heap of stones, that was all. Around the middle of the twentieth century only this much was left to be seen by those who climbed the mountain of sacrifices.

A few decades ago, Imre Sebők, a Hungarian researcher, who carried out a geographical survey on the Buryat territory west of the Baikal, could still partake in a sacrificial ceremony:

August 2, 1913. The day of the sacrifice.
I get up at four o'clock in the morning and go to the outskirts of the *ulus* (village), where everybody is still asleep. The sacrificial mountain with its sharp contour and the ten to twelve woodstacks standing on the lonely, rocky mountain's top strikes the eye at once. With me, I have the descriptions of this area by Busson, dated from 1912, when he made his expedition here, but he was more interested in the villages. I am looking for the sacrifice. Its fundamental part takes place, as I heard last night, here on the mountain. This is not the only sacrificial site, there are several other places where sacrifices are offered, but the people of this
neighbourhood are supposed to come here.
And they really come.
They come on small telegas (two-wheeled vehicles), then some solitary riders appear, all this, with plenty of noise.
As soon as the various clans and tribes occupy their respective places, the noise calms down and the preparations for the sacrifice begin.
At about ten o'clock they are ready to stab the first horse: before that, the initial part of the sacrifice had already been accomplished, kumiss and brandy, distilled from milk, had been spilled on the ground in front of the altar, some had been sprinkled on the altar too, which had not yet been ignited.
After this they pray, in a swaying, wavering manner, the murmur grows gradually louder. It is a kind of grace, rendered in gratitude for the produce of the earth and the flock, as I gather from the words of Al Sahanov, the Buryat teacher and interpreter. According to his information and what the others say, it seems that the sacrificial act takes place in direct communication between man and his deity and, the shaman, although the Buryats of Cisbaykal are still shamanists, has nothing to do with this ceremony.
The principal part of the rite is a rather ugly scene: they sprinkle the animal first with the gift of nature, milk, then they knock it off its feet, a short, small knife is struck in its belly and, cutting it open, they reach amidst the intestines and while those are pouring out they search for the aorta, cut it through, and in that moment "when the animal gives up its ghost to the deity, the sacrifice has been accomplished". The cut-up pieces of the carcass are placed on the altar in an anatomical sequence, the head is left there, the other pieces are later removed and (some of it half-roasted, some boiled in kettles) consumed. The bones continue to burn on the embers of the altar, once in a while some milk is sprinkled over them, some small pieces of meat are thrown upon the altar too. Finally, at about five o'clock, amidst an uproarious bustle the crowd that had gathered for the sacrifice begins to break up and finally the whole tumult dissolves.
Grace has been rendered duly to the deity for the harvest of this year.
Our car was soon taking us towards Hada-ayl, to the village of the old shaman of former times. How will this important meeting turn out? I wondered.

I kept worrying about what the Leningrad colleagues told me whenever the subject of my Siberian expedition came up. Namely, according to them, the times for collecting material about shamanistic beliefs had long since passed. The ancient shamans died out, they said, one after the other, and if you should occasionally come across one who had been a shaman before, he would already work in a kolkhoz and would not want to remember any more his former activities. These experts of Siberian folklore referred to their own experiences among various folk groups when they tried to warn me.

— I visited the Tungus or Evenks many times — one of them said, and he made a discouraged gesture — back in the thirties I took part in shaman ceremonies several times myself and now, now I cannot get a thing out of them any more.

Whether we spoke about the Selkups, the Nenets, or the Evens, all the researchers had the same opinion, and in reply to my inquiries about the possibilities of my work their pessimistic prophecy was uniform: "Your trip will amount to nothing but tourism."

Soon it will be revealed whether I am a tourist or an ethnographer in Siberia, while I am on this journey.

The sun had not yet disappeared behind the mountains when we arrived at my first shaman’s village. Here also, the houses were of the Russian log-house type. We left the car at the Council House and took off on foot towards the outskirts of the settlement, in the direction of the shaman’s home.

A peculiarly shaped construction caught my eye already from a great distance: it had the typical design of the houses of the settled
nomads, a transition between the round felt-tent and the saddle-roofed log-house. They are not portable any more because their walls do not consist of latticed screens or felt-rugs but of solid logs; the base is no longer round nor rectangular either, but hexagonal or octagonal, its roof is neither cone-shaped nor a saddle-roof, but a six- or eight-sided pyramid. There is no chimney at the top, only an opening for the smoke, not a round one as in the felt-yurts, but rectangular. This is the Buryat yurt of the twentieth century.

I was quite absorbed in taking pictures.

— Let us go inside — my Buryat companion called out to me at last. — This will not run away any more, if it has already stood here so long . . . Let us go and see the old shaman first.

— Does he live here, then? In this yurt?

Then, he did not retire into a wooden cottage, these former shamans are traditionalists after all, — In confided to myself, — he chose to live in a yurt, even if it is not a felt-yurt! I opened the door without delay.

An open fire burns in the centre, its smoke bursts forth high up through the opening in the roof. An elderly man is sitting beside it, on a torn felt-rug spread on the floor, his legs pulled up under himself.

— Hanhayev Hanhayevich, I brought you a guest!

We both have a good look at each other while we shake hands. Well then, this is Hadi the shaman, for whose sake I came to Hada-alj.

Typical, Central-Asian headshape, scarce, pointed beard, scanty moustache, Mongolian-folded eyelids (as if the upper eyelids would be lacking) and, a most remarkable feature, not black but grey eyes. The famous grey eyes of Ghengis Khan and his descendants scrutinize my face now.

I settle down beside him on the worn carpet. I quickly steal a look around the inside of the yurt. The furnishings are sharply
divided into two groups: to the right there is a long, tall wooden shelf, full of kitchenware: unusual, slender-necked glass bottles, Chinese style cups; to the left, there are long, narrow chests, metal appliquéd or with painted decoration. Across the doorway I see the already familiar, remarkably narrow four-poster: the resting place of the master.

I have hardly any time to look around, before the bottle with arhi and a little wooden bowl, the ancient Buryat drinking "glass", appear. Our host pours the arhi and then holds it out towards me. However, he does not spill any of it upon the ground, nor does he savour it. It seems he treats me as a stranger, unfamiliar, or even depreciative, with the Buryat customs. But I throw a little upon the ground, then only I taste the drink. Promptly, I grab the bottle as if I would be the host, I spill some of it on the floor and after taking a sip myself, I hand the bottle to him. I even call out: Ukti!

Not a wrinkle flutters on the face of the old man while I do this. But when he holds the wooden bowl again, he first spills some of the arhi into the fire, then he pours some at his side onto the ground, finally he throws all of the contents upward, towards the opening in the roof. In the meantime, half aloud, he murmurs incomprehensible words.

He did not consider me a stranger any more in whose presence the ancient customs had to be concealed, why, he even allowed me to witness his sacrificial offering to the spirits of the fire, the earth and the air.

Soon we became absorbed in conversation.

I told him that I came here in order to get acquainted with the ancient customs of the Buryats, also, that I would like to take pictures of many things, and that I would like to take notes too, because all these things are slowly disappearing due to the disinterest of the young people of today. I told him about Batu Khan, whose riders swept across Hungary, I boasted about the shamans
who lived among us once upon a time. Of course, around here, they are not called shaman but bō. The old shaman kept nodding with approval when I informed him that their bō word survived in our idiom in bű form in the expressions bū-bajos, būvūs-bajos, which had been used when referring to such persons who could būvölőn-bajolőn, that is, to enchant, to charm. This concordance, however, is not due to direct Hungarian-Buryat contacts, it is much rather a remnant of contacts with an ancient Turkic people, but I did not say anything about this.

I felt that the reserve in old Hadi’s attitude was waning more and more. So I made a bold attempt and voiced my request: I would like to talk about old times with him again tomorrow, or the day after.

Then I stood up ready to leave, we still had no quarters for the night. The old man motioned me to wait. He exchanged a few words with my companion. As I found out, he offered that we should stay with him for a few days.

It would have been impossible to wish for anything better than that. If I could live here, I felt sure he would take me into his confidence and I could also have some very interesting first-hand experiences. I promised right away, that as a sign of my gratitude, I would take a picture of him.

In the meantime I found out one or two things about my man. I was interested in his way of living and also in other people’s opinion of him. While he had been younger, he was working in the kolkhoz, now that he had grown old, he could not do much any more. He got some kind of a pension. The villagers thought well of him and noticeably he enjoyed their general respect. Would that be due to his former “conversations” with the spirits? Or, did they respect him because he was such an excellent knower of the past of the Buryats? My companion had told me this already, but then, later, I had an opportunity to experience personally that the old man was an inexhaustible source of traditions, mores, tales and histories.
We went back to the car to fetch our luggage and dropped in on the way at the Cultural Centre of the settlement, in order to arrange with them to let me work there for a few days with my tape-recorder, as old Hadi had no electricity installed in his yurt.

At night, when we went back to the yurt, I felt, a great confidence was welling up in my heart: after all, I would now become an ethnographic researcher and would not remain merely a tourist!

The worn-out old man insisted upon giving me his own bed, but I would not accept that. I did not want to take advantage of his hospitality.

— It would be better for me on this coloured homespun rug, spread out on the floor, I had never slept on anything like it anyhow, I kept protesting politely, but firmly.

This black and white, striped goat-hair-rug was a marvellous specimen of the Buryat women’s artistic handicraft. Although my host warned me that it would be rather “prickly”, the unusualness of my resting place made me forget any inconvenience.

Someone shook my shoulders at dawn, I woke up. The shaman stood in front of me, with an axe in his hand. He beckoned me to follow him. I took off with my camera after him towards a nearby birch-grove. By the time the rays of the rising sun were sparkling on the leaves of the birch-trees, he had already cut down a white trunk about an arm thick. We turned back without having spoken a word. At home he placed it on a stump and split it into two and then started to carve it. The shutter of my camera kept clicking away. I recorded every phase of the carving. The final form emerged slowly, the end of the staff had been shaped as a hoof. Why, I knew this! I have photographed similar objects by the dozen in the Leningrad Museum: the “hobby-horses” of the Buryat shamans. Mounted on these horse-sticks, the soul of the shaman could “fly” to the domain of the spirits, while in trance. When both sticks were ready, he handed them over to me:
Here you are, son, I made them for you.

The entire significance of the word "son" in this short sentence became only clear to me later, when, during the following week, he kept telling me about the fading shamanistic beliefs with the same fondness as a father talking to his son.

My tape recorder was humming nearly uninterruptedly. Old Father Hadi was telling me about the old shamans' past history. He told me about the black and the white shamans – just like the Hungarian táltos (shaman) – who wrestled with each other in the shape of bulls. He chanted their magic songs. He explained why white horses had to be sacrificed to the good spirits and black horses to the bad ones. He recounted the story of his becoming a shaman, of his initiation and also put me wise about the many kinds of good and evil spirits.

But unfortunately, every good thing comes to an end. I had to leave again, following the traces of other shamans, along the river Ida.

Zaglik, Ukor, Horgelok, Dunday, – these were my more important stopovers. Meanwhile I rode several hundreds of kilometers on account of a shaman's gown. I tried to follow up a clue from village to village, because the gown in question wandered from one member of the clan to another, each living in a different village. Finally, we reached the family who received it a few years before.

But I was too late! One of the younger members of the family had thrown it upon the fire about three years ago.

I turned out of the door of the logcabin without a word. There was no use explaining that there is not a single Buryat shaman gown in the possession of any of the three museums in Leningrad nor, in the Irkutsk Museum.

Mme. Sharakshinova faithfully supported my research all along our trip. I found out, only later, how much she helped me by her mere presence.

Already in the first days of our expedition I noticed that the
Buryats not only showed her, but also let her hold their puppets, the images symbolizing the spirits (their Buryat name is ongon, zayan), and, that I was allowed in her presence, to photograph these objects, sometimes even taking them apart, in order to get acquainted with all the details. Only a word from her and they showed me in every village the sites of the horse-sacrifices and anything else that I wanted to see.

Finally, one day, the riddle had been solved! I had been inquiring about the family-trees of famous shamans and recording, in due order, the names of the individual members of certain shaman-families. And then, a familiar name caught my ear: Sharakshin the shaman.

Where have I come across this name? Have I read it in Leningrad, or perhaps Irkutsk, among the descriptions of the shaman objects?

All of a sudden, I understood. Of course! This name appeared familiar to me because of the name of Mme. Sharakshinova! The -ova ending is a Russian affix for the feminine form of a family name, her original Buryat name must have been Sharakšin.

Therefore, I have been visiting the villages of the Buryats with a descendant of a famous shaman-family!

As soon as we were alone, I started questioning her, whether she really stemmed from the same family which gave so many shamans to the Buryats hither of the Baikal.

— Yes, indeed. On my father's side as well as on my mother's, I “possess” an utha, that is, a “shaman spirit”.

When I returned to Irkutsk, I checked my notes on the descriptions of the Buryat “spirit-puppets” of the museums, to see whether the name Sharakshin occured among them. I found it on one of the inventory-cards copied in the State Ethnographical Museum in Leningrad. It referred to certain drawings.

These sketches depicted the six daughters of a Buryat man called Bazhigaltay and of a shamaness, called Helge. The girls'
names were: Adagata Agalzhin, Buruzanta Bugalzhin, Tödögösö Tonholzhin, Noktoto Nohoy Sharakshin, Garhato Gansushin and Amanda Agalzhin.

The fourth in the list is the shaman ancestor of our Sharakshinova.

According to tradition, Mother Helge locked up her daughters in the yurt during wintertime and there they died of starvation, thirst and cold. After they died they became spirits, ongons.

Either her daughter Sharakshin bore a child before that, or perhaps the records of the pious legend were not correct: we do not know, and the Buryats did not seem to have worried too much, about Sharakshin having perished or not.

Now it became clear to me, why the collection of shamanistic material among the Buryats proceeded so smoothly. Of course, the oldest members of the yurst knew only too well that my companion was an offspring of shamans! The Buryats live within a clan-system. Within such societies the origin of any individual is kept very much in evidence. Several old Buryats would easily enumerate their ancestors back to five or six generations, including all their progenies. And they keep in evidence not only their own genealogy but that of the others as well. Their respectful attitude towards the kind Mme. Sharakshinova, the great-grand-daughter of the shaman girl who turned into an ongon, and who paved my way so very understandingly among the last of the Buryat shamans, was motivated by this knowledge.
ON THE PLAINS OF THE KURGANS

Every once in a while I have to convince myself: I am not dreaming, – it is very difficult to believe all this is true.

I started out towards Kyzyl, to join the expedition of the Ethnographical Institute of Leningrad, to conduct research in the Soyot region.

I departed from Irkutsk in the morning, the day before yesterday and our train arrived at Krasnoyarsk yesterday morning. I continued my journey from there with the train to Abakan.

But first – prodded by heaven only knows what inspiration – I cabled Mr. Lipskiy, the museologist of the Regional Museum of Abakan that I would like to spend a few days there.

The express-train arrived at half past six in the afternoon.

As soon as I set foot on the platform, a grey-haired gentleman stepped up to me:

- Are you Mr. Diószegi?
- Yes, I am.
- My name is Lipskiy.

He pushed me into a car and we went to the hotel.

On the way, he gave me a startling bit of news: the ethnographical detail of the Leningrad expedition had already returned to Leningrad.

Trouble seldom comes singly: he also told me that he could
not assist me for long, because next morning he was due to go
to the Turk region of Abakan.

I reached a new decision within seconds. Then, I would conduct
researches in the surroundings of Abakan. After all, the inner
sequence remains the same: it does not make any difference
whether I begin the series with the Soyots or the Turks of Abakan.

— I beg you, Mr. Lipskiy, do wait a few hours. If only you
would not leave early in the morning, but around midday, I could
arrange everything and I would go with you, if you would let me.

— That’s what I thought — he laughed. — I have already informed
the authorities that a scientist of friendly Hungary would arrive
here and would work in this territory. Everything is settled, only
a few courtesy calls have to be made.

I was flabbergasted: my daydreams of Budapest materialized
for the second time. I found the museologist “with the knapsack
on his back” and again he was willing to wait “a few hours” so
that I might join him.

Next day, around noon, I climbed up into the truck together
with the students from around Abakan — all eastern types, black-
eyed Sagays, Beltirs, Kachins — and we were already off with a
roar from the yard of the Museum. These young boys and girls
would be the “pick-and-shovel” workers of the expedition. Lipskiy
planned to excavate.

From a distance the plain looked as if it would be dotted by
mole-hills.

The dust behind our car rose between rows of sizeable, round-
shaped hills, reminding one of graves. The plain appeared to be
undulating. These are the kurgans, Sayan kins of the Hungarian
kunhalmok. (Ancient burial mounds.) We were already in the
western Sayans, many thousands of kilometers away from the Bai-
kal lake and the Buryats and now I was looking for the last sha-
mans among the Turk peoples. (Or, I should rather say kams,
because that is how they address them around here.)
The Turks who live in the western Sayans, and who have been referred to by former scientific literature as *Abakan* or *Minusinsk* Turks and are mentioned nowadays as the *Khakasy*, form five large groups: the *Sagays*, the *Beltirs*, the *Koybals*, the *Kachins* and the *Kyzyls*. According to our plans I was going to visit all these groups except the Kyzyls.

Our truck advanced fast and we reached the excavation site. The students dismounted and Lipskiy went on. He left me in a *Beltir* village. Within a few days he returned and took me along further.

*

We selected Matkechik as our first village. Sixty years old Igrah Chibadayev, the sometime kam of the Beltirs, lived here.

We arrived. I started my exploratory inquiries with the director of the local school.

– I do not believe you will get anywhere with the old man. He is a rather unsociable character – he said.

Well, this was not exactly an encouragement. Anyhow, I set out for the village towards the home of the former shaman. My fears proved to be well justified.

I could say whatever I wanted, the old man crunched apathetically on a stump at the foot of his log-cabin still in construction. I tried to make promises, I tried to coax him, keeping to myself some expressions of a more abusive language – everything in vain – there had been no way to convince him.

– My house burnt down last year, he said, my head became dull and since that time I do not remember and I do not know a thing!

In spite of my continued persuasive talk this was all I could get out of him.

As a matter of fact, I was not really surprised. They are all aware of the times of their glory having gone by: they are ashamed
of their former occupation. And now, there was a stranger, whom he had never seen, never even heard about before, badgering him with questions: what was his drum like, how was his head-gear, his gown, what kind of spirits had answered his call... What need was there, if any, to talk about all this?

I took leave from him as well as from his village without obtaining any results.

Perhaps I would be more fortunate with the other Beltir! — I consoled myself. Let us go to Butrahti.

Here I found another old man about sixty, Nikolai Chibadyakov. His home was pointed out to me, I hurried there straight away. He was cutting wood in the yard. He was attired in an old padded garment, a Russian style fur-cap on his head.

I greeted him solicitously. He knit his brows.

— Old things interest me, like this yurt here, for instance.

He did not speak, just nodded. The Beltir yurt is exactly like the Buryat yurts: it is constructed from logs, and it is octagonal in shape.

— May I look at it from inside?

The interior was also identical: to the right from the entrance there was the woman’s side, a stand full of pots, to the left, on the man’s side were placed a chest and the harness. Opposite the door the master’s resting place could be seen, the place of honour. In the centre there was an open hearth, the smoke finding its way straight above through the four-sided outlet in the ceiling of the yurt.

Entering the yurt I stepped towards the left, I had already learned among the Buryats that a man has to get behind the fire from the left, a woman from the right.

My attention had been appreciated: the master of the house had immediately scooped up some fermented horse-milk with a little cup from the tub-like container standing hidden in the corner.

I already knew the kumiss, the Buryats have frequently offered
me some, while I was with them. But this small wooden dish had
a special significance: it was a symbol of friendliness: at least I
thought so.

After that I tried to direct the conversation towards shamanism.
But as soon as I brought up this subject I sensed immediately that
he became reticent. He explained readily the ways of preparing
kumiss, he had willingly spoken about the seating order in the yurt
or the like, but about the shamans... God forbid!

I could say, whatever I wanted, Chibadyakov kept smiling with-
out a word.

- These are things of bygone days. Why should we rake them
up?

About half an hour later, when I had exhausted all my powers
of persuasion, I realized that the attitude of my old Beltir was
unalterable.

Now I was unable to console myself with the prospect of having,
perhaps, more luck with a third shaman. There were no Beltir
shamans around anywhere, any more. At least, I had not found
any trace of them at all.

I left the yurt in very low spirits. There was no other choice,
I had to try my luck with the other Turk folk-group of Abakan,
the Sagays.

Our car was already speeding along the road towards the village
of Poltakov, across the kurgan-dotted valleys.

I had been informed that there was someone by the name of
Sunchugasev living there, who had never been a shaman himself,
but he had always participated in shaman ceremonies as a sort of
attendant of the shamans. I could at least ask him to come with
me, while I look up the Sagay shamans and he might be more
successful than I, in persuading the hesitant ones to remember.

Sunchugasev has been hoeing potatoes when we arrived. He had
dark hair and a bright face, he moved about slowly and with
composure. He gave me the impression of a man who had been
through quite a lot: later I heard that he had a life of many ups and downs. His trousers were of the urban kind but his blue shirt was typically Sagay: it was gathered in pleats around the neck and had an embroidered front, its sleeves were of the “borjuszájú” (calf snout) type. (Wide at the wrist, gathered at the shoulder.) My request surprised him.

– It is the working season now. I have no time to go driving around.

However, he started to meditate and I began to hope.

– It was not very probable that these kams would want to have anything to do with us.

– But of course they would, if you came along. You could explain the importance of their contribution to science.

He was still hesitating.

– I heard you are well liked and respected by them.

Finally, he turned around and went inside his flat-roofed little house to wash his hands. I climbed back into the car and had started the motor so as not to give him time to change his mind.

A few minutes later we were already on our way, together.

– Let us go to Kyzlan. They told me in Abakan that a man called Kyzlasov lived there. He had once been a widely known, famous kam. I believe you must know him.

Kyzlan, the Sagay village soon appeared in sight. It presented the usual picture: small, rectangular log-houses with flat or saddle-shaped roofs, here and there a sexagonal or octagonal yurt hidden among them. Just as if we were among the Buryats... Tiny little boys and girls peep out from the doorways, their curiosity aroused by the noise of our car. The famous Siberian dogs, the laikas, chase us furiously, barking loudly. Except for the children and the dogs, nobody pays any attention to us. Especially not the herd of cattle which surges along the road, occupying its entire width. We nearly turn grey before we struggle across this obstacle. The Sagay herdsmen, ambling alongside on horseback, crack their whips
indifferently. They know from experience: they cannot clear the way for the car, stubbornly sounding its horn. Their herd is not made up of the meek, obedient kind of oxen.

At last we found our way through this living wall land we reached the outer edge of the village. Here on the outskirts, outside of the village was the place where Kyzlasov lived, behind the slope of a hill.

Sunchugasev suggested that I should stay outside, it might be better if he tried to bargain first alone with the old man. I agreed: why should a stranger be there too, underfoot. If he had asked me to stand on my hands until he came back with good news, I might have done that too.

In the meantime, at least I had an opportunity to inspect the impoverished looking log-yurt. It was located far from the village, all alone, surrounded with birch-trees on both sides and at the back, this was already the edge of the forest. Not even the electric line was brought out this far. Suddenly, I noticed something interesting: next to the yurt there was a coach loaded with a wooden barrel, containing araga (this is the local name of the Buryat arhi, the brandy distilled from milk) and a knapsack filled with food-stuff. Someone was preparing for a long journey or these things were brought here as a gift.

Soon enough, my friend came back.
- Kyzlasov is sick. He is in bed.
- But . . .
- Yes, he consented.
- Well then, let us enter, quick!

The old man was lying on his resting place, but he was not undressed. He was only reposing. His head was wrapped in rags.

Beside him, I could see an elderly woman in the yurt and two visitors. They must be a married couple: a greying man and a middle-aged woman, both dressed in festive attire.

It seemed unlikely, therefore, that the provisions loaded onto
their coach were intended for a longer trip. What services could
the old man have rendered if they rewarded him in such a gener-
ous way? However, I found it wiser not to question about this sub-
ject.

Kyzlasov rose a little, he propped up his body on his elbows,
motioned me to sit down and pointed towards a sizeable plate.
The plate contained some kind of a black mash. I tasted it and
then helped myself to some more. I could not decide whether it
reminded me of ersatz coffee or of bitter almonds. Or, rather,
which of the two flavours was more dominant. I definitely liked it.
- Privet berries.

The two visitors left very soon, amidst effusive expressions of
gratitude. We were left alone.

Now I began to realize, how wise it had been to engage a com-
panion.

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After I had come forward with the purpose of my visit, it was
not difficult to get Kyzlasov talking, with the help of Sunchugasev.
The old man proved to be surprisingly intelligent, he understood
right away why, even the smallest details of his "profession", should
be recorded. After one or two words, I could already proceed
with my notes at a considerable speed, recording the knowledge
of the Sagay kams.

The old man set forth to convey his knowledge in an instructive
manner:
- The profession of the kam is hereditary, it descends from
one generation to the other.

According to the examples, there were usually some shaman an-
cestors to be found in the genealogy of the Sagay shamans. There
were shamans in the family of Kyzlasov too.
- My name is Yegor Mikhaylovich Kyzlasov. I live at the
mouth of the river Yes, in the village of Kyzlan, I belong to the Tag Harga clan. Pürigesh has been my first ancestor. Shtuk was his son. Shtuk was a shaman. Hizinah was the son of Shtuk. He left two sons. The firstborn was not a shaman, but his younger brother, Hislas became one. Hislas left an only son: Torah. The son of Torah was Payatay, he had a son called Ochi, Ochi's son was Mamay. Mamay fathered me and I became a shaman.

- It was not the talent I inherited, but the shaman spirits of my clan – he added for the sake of accuracy.

- Our shamans – interrupted my companion – become shamans by the will of the family's shaman spirits, or by the will of the spirit of a mountain, or of a spirit of some sickness.

Kyzlasov continued.

- Most of them become kams obeying the wish of the ancestral shaman and receive the spirits from him. The spirits are the ghosts of deceased shamans, they live on in clans. The new shaman may receive the spirits of his own family, but not as many as he wants, only the necessary number.

My companion interrupted:

- According to Todinov Kaptalak, the shaman, the will of the ancestral shaman can be changed. If someone should become a shaman because of his origin, but he does not want to, he must "go", accompanied by a shaman, to "invite" the ancestral shaman for a feast. Then they can beg the ancestral shaman to call back the spirits.

The old man nodded silently in approval. He seemed to have known this too.

My companion continued:

- Todinov Kaptalak, the shaman, said that one can not only refuse, but may also request shamandom: the man who wants to become a shaman must go to the ancestral shaman to invite him to a feast and then he can ask him to entrust the spirits to him. The ancestor may then give him those spirits which belonged to the deceased shamans of his own family.
I noticed in the meantime: Kyzlasov was already anxiously awaiting the opportunity to add something.

- One may become a shaman through the intervention of a mountain too, through the "master-spirit" of a mountain – the old sorcerer cut in at last. - Anybody might become a shaman through the spirit of the mountain, even if he had no ancestors of supernatural powers. Sometimes the ancestor himself entrusts the mountain with the search for a shaman for him. Such shamans become shamans through the intervention of the spirit of the mountain but in accordance with the wishes of the family shaman ancestor!

Now the wife interrupted:

- One might become a shaman by the will of a sickness too. There was once a shaman: Mitkezhkov Toka. Have you ever heard of him? He was of a rather advanced age, when one day he became gravely ill. The spotted guest got him.
- Spotted guest? What is that?
- This is what we call the pox. After his illness Mitkezhkov began to exercise shamanism, but only if someone became ill with the pox.
- He exercised shamanism in cases of measles and abscesses as well – the old man contradicted her.
- Yes, indeed – the woman agreed – but he was not able to heal anything else. He became a shaman through the father of the spotted guest.

Sunchugasev must have known of this case too, he spoke up:

- When the shaman began to introduce Toka to shamanism, he lost him along the way.
- I am sorry, but I did not understand this – I interrupted him.
- Well, this is what happened: the shaman had to take the soul of Toka to the ancestral shaman of his family. The shaman's soul got there all right, but Toka's soul was not there. Therefore the shaman interrupted shamanizing then. But he, as well as the others
present in the yurt, noticed, that Toka continued his ravings. As it turned out, Toka went ahead on his own way, along the road of the father of the pox, instead of taking the road of the ancestral shaman.

I heard, as old Kyzlasov murmured under his breath:
- The road of the spotted guest leads northward.

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Then the conversation stopped for a while. It did not matter, because I could check my notes and see if there were any details unclear to me, then I could at least ask about them.

While I was going through my notes, turning the pages of my note-book, I could not refrain from celebrating the idea of having brought Sunchugasev along.

One was reminding the other of old stories, they were almost cutting into each other’s words.

Then I remembered something, that was not quite clear to me.
- You mentioned a while ago that the ancestor might call upon the shaman to account for his activities. Tell me more about that – I turned to the old man.
- If a wicked shaman harms the people, shall we say, he brings sickness upon them, then the people of the vicinity assemble and they invite another shaman from elsewhere and send him to the family shaman to inform him about the doings of the wicked shaman. The invited shaman “takes off” and tells the ancestral shaman about everything, without concealing anything. In the meantime the wicked shaman is asleep at home, he might sleep for a long time, even as long as seven or nine days. He sleeps throughout the time he is being sentenced. Those shamans, on the other hand, who become shamans through the spirit of the mountain or through a sickness, cannot be taken to task.
The ways and means to hold a shaman responsible were at last clear to me, but, how did certain individuals acquire shamandom? The question was on the tip of my tongue, however, I was hesitationg, I was afraid that this personal question might alienate the old man. On the other hand, I thought, the conversation was warmed sufficiently already and he would not be embarrassed by my question any more.

After all, embarrassment and shame are very relative concepts. Years ago I had been conducting researches in a village on the bank of the Tisza. (River in Hungary.) I had to investigate sexual behaviour. I experienced then the same difficulties as now: I was groping anxiously for the right words to formulate my questions. But, after a few days I found to my surprise that only I was blushing to the roots of my hair, only I had inhibitions, the old and the young of the village replied unceremoniously to any of the confidential questions.

Would the same thing happen again? After all, the facts I wanted to know were deeply embedded in the faith of these people and they still believed them to be true.

I turned to my companion, and not to the old man, by way of precaution.

And he began to speak, just as naturally as before.

- The man chosen for shamandom is first recognized by the black spirits. The spirits of the dead shamans are called black spirits. They make the chosen one ill and then they force him to become a shaman. The black spirits are afraid of the ancestral spirit of the family and they avoid him. If he would catch sight of them, he would lock them up. The black spirits are not real spirits, they are the blackness of the deceased shaman.
- What does it mean “the blackness of the deceased shaman”? The evil in him, of course.
- Does the chosen one fall sick then? – I asked as if I had never heard about this before.
Yes, he is overtaken by illness – the woman answered. And he remains ill for quite a long time. He, who is seized by the shaman sickness and does not begin to exercise shamanism, must suffer badly. He might lose his mind, he may even have to give up his life. Therefore he is advised: “You must take up shamanism so as not to suffer!” Some even say: “I became a shaman only to escape illness.”

I thought, by now, I might venture to ask the one who was directly concerned, how did he become what he was. But I was still anxious when I turned towards him.

The old man was visibly shocked by my question, he wrapped himself in a stony silence, his face inscrutably set.

His wife smiled with embarrassment:

How did he become a shaman? Sickness seized him when he was twenty-three years old and he became a shaman at the age of thirty. That was how he became a shaman, after the sickness, after the torture. He had been ill for seven years. While he was ailing, he had dreams: he was beaten up several times, sometimes he was taken to strange places. He had been around quite a lot in his dreams and he had seen many things.

At the same time, unfortunately, the old woman glanced at her husband. Whatever she read in his eyes, I could only guess, but suddenly she changed the subject.

However, Sunchugasev, my companion, soon returned to this topic.

Over here a woman of the Asochakov clan fell ill. I, who knew the road that led to her ancestral shaman, accompanied her then to her ancestor, with gifts of food. There the woman gave him back the spirits which brought the sickness upon her. Thereupon her ailment ceased. But she did not become a shaman at all.

The wife got an opportunity to speak again:

Kopkoyev, the shaman, had a similar experience too. When the Soviet Power became consolidated, many had given up sha-
manism. He went to the shaman-ancestor too, offering him some gifts and returned all the spirits, turning his back on shamanism afterwards.

— And what would happen to those who would not return the spirits? I turned to my companion.

— First, at the beginning, the new shaman is guided. Usually two black men lead him across several rooms which are stuffed with all kinds of articles necessary to exercise shamanism. He does not see anyone but the two black men, the shaman-ancestor is not visible, only those two.

— And if the chosen one is reluctant to accept shamanism, what happens then? — I asked Kyzlasov’s wife

— If he refuses definitely, they might apply force.

My companion intervened:

— There was for instance, the case of Mukulka Borgoyakhov who lived in the village of Pitrahti. His brother was a shaman and after his death the spirits chose him: “Let him be a shaman in his brother’s place!” But he refused to obey. He defied them. When all their efforts came to nothing, they pushed him out of his yurt and said: “If you behave like this, we shall turn loose the spirits of all the dead shamans on you!” With this admonition of course they were able to compel him and they thrust upon him all the tools of the shaman. He renounced them all, nevertheless. It is true, he sometimes exercised shamanism, but only if many, at least twelve or fifteen spirits were after him.

— And how do the spirits torture the reluctant appointee?

The wife answered:

— He keeps on ailing, until he gives in.

I was very anxious to hear more about this.

— Why, the spirits make him ill — spoke Kyzlasov at last, rather reticently.

It was difficult to learn the details. I would have liked to find out what happened to the soul of the shaman while he was sick?
I formulated my questions in every way I could think of, until finally Sunchugasev began to talk about this.

- His soul is taken to the shaman-ancestor and there they show him a kettle full of boiling tar. There are people in it. There are some who are known to the shaman. A single rope is fastened across the kettle and they order him to walk over it. If he succeeds he will live long. If he falls into the kettle, he still might become a kam, but usually they do not survive.

My informants began finally to grasp what I wanted to hear. The wife of Kyzlasov spoke up:

- That kettle is always there. Not only the shamans fall into it. They say that the soul of a sick person might also tumble into it. Some of the shamans can not be persuaded to attempt passing over the kettle. This I know from certain people who told me that they were forced to pass around the edge of the kettle. They did it, and as they did not fall into the kettle, they became shamans.

Kyzlasov was still wrapped up in silence. Yet, I would have liked to hear his account best, as it would have been the most significant, at last a shaman could tell about himself, what "happened" to him during the period of his becoming a shaman.

I did not dare to force the issue any more, therefore I remarked casually, as if talking to myself, not directing my words to either of them:

- I heard something about the appointee being cut into pieces. I wonder, how would that be!

The silence in the house became so intense that even the barking of the laikas in the village became audible. My three Sagays stared in front of them. I did not even turn the pages of my notebook, to avoid the crackling of the paper.

Hm, will this oppressive silence break the resistance to speak, for any of the three?

Only now did I notice: the sun had already gone down behind the surrounding peaks of the Sayan Mountains and a dim twilight
was stealing in. I became aware of it that I have been writing without seeing the letters I put down on the paper, for quite some time.

The silence became even more oppressive.

The fire in the middle of the yurt was not aflame, only glowing, hardly casting a shadow behind us.

The stillness was beginning to thump on my eardrums.

Sunchugasev could bear it no longer!

— The candidate loses consciousness while sick. During this time he presents himself to the shaman-ancestor of his clan. When he gets there, they seek his excess bone. They cut up his whole body into pieces, they separate the heart and the lungs and examine each piece by the light. Meanwhile he sees himself cut up, he sees as his whole body and his viscera are being measured, whilst they are looking for the excess bone.

I wrote down my companion’s words and remained silent.

I felt that if I lose this chance, I might never again be able to make the Sagay kam talk.

There was quietness, a great tranquility reigned over the room, but somehow it was still perceptible: the stranger from faraway and the old shaman were wrestling with eachother.

The wordlessness became oppressive again. I could see it even in the darkness: Sunchugasev looked at the old man. And now the crouching woman raised her eyes to her husband too. These two are already my allies, they are with me in my attempt to besiege Kyzlasov, the shaman. I must not give up now.

— Were you... also?

The short question was scarcely audible, but in the tense stillness it sounded so demanding that it was not possible any more to remain reticent. He had to answer and he could not lie in the presence of the two eagerly attentive witnesses, who obviously knew his "history" well.

The erectly held head moved at last. He nodded: Yes.
The other two almost heaved a sigh.

After the great tension was gone, they could not remain quiet any more, my companion threw some logs on the fire, the old woman started cleaning the glass of the lamp.
– Are you going to light the lamp? – I spoke up, in order to re-establish a calmer atmosphere. – We shall need some light, it has turned rather dark and I would like to write down what your husband has to say about his experience.

Out of the corner of my eye I cast a glance at the old man, I directed these words of course to him.

He poured himself another cup of tea. Hm. Could I consider this as a preparation for the continuation of our conversation? And really, when the great hustle-bustle relieved our tension at last, the old man began to speak without any encouragement:
– I have been sick and I have been dreaming. In my dreams I had been taken to the ancestor and cut into pieces on a black table. They chopped me up and then threw me into the kettle and I was boiled. There were some men there: two black and two fair ones. Their chieftain was there too. He issued the orders concerning me. I saw all this. While the pieces of my body were boiled, they found a bone around the ribs, which had a hole in the middle. This was the excess-bone. This brought about my becoming a shaman. Because, only those men can become shamans in whose body such a bone can be found. One looks across the hole of this bone and begins to see all, to know all and, that is when one becomes a shaman . . . When I came to from this state, I woke up. This meant that my soul had returned. Then the shamans declared: "You are the sort of man who may become a shaman. You should become a shaman, you must begin to shamanize!"

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The kam of the Sagays had no more secrets left. After having
revealed his innermost experiences, he could not leave any of my
questions un-answered.

Not only did I feel this, he must have sensed it too. Now he
got up and told his wife to go and prepare supper.

At the time when I was looking at the little barrel and the
bundle of food loaded on the coach beside the yurt, I would not
have held it possible that I, as a guest of the old shaman, could
share it with him. I would not have dared to expect it either, that
his log cabin, far from the village, would become my quarters.

It happened during the supper that old Father Kyzlasov sud-
denly turned towards me:

– Would you like to stay here while you remain in this village?
I expect, we shall spend most of the time together, anyhow.

I accepted the invitation eagerly.

One of the steaming, meaty bones placed upon my plate turned
out to be a horse-rib.

– We consider it a delicacy, we dry it in the sun and then keep
it for the winter. There are not many yurts that still have some
left at this time of the year – bragged our hostess.

The tender dried rib was accompanied by fresh, boiled mutton.
There was an abundant choice of beverages: milk, tea, tea with
cream, araga (brandy distilled from milk) and naturally kumiss
too, – an appetizing assortment.

I had to smile: sipping the kumiss and nibbling on the horse-
rib, I could have easily fancied myself to have been attending the
feast in Saint Gallen (926 A.D.), in the company of the roaming
Hungarian ancestors.

*

During the meal I kept thinking about all that I had heard.

That evening I was able to record not less than three valuable
paralells of ancient Hungarian mythological motifs.
Back home, when I was journeying from village to village, collecting the vestiges of the ancient Hungarian táltoshit (shamanism), I had heard again and again, recurring like a refrain, that the shamans as well as the sorcerers and the wise men were always visited by illness of the body or the mind before they were able to exercise their supernatural powers. And tonight, many thousands of kilometers from Hungarian soil, in the yurt of the old shaman, the echo of that Hungarian refrain struck my ears again: the chosen one must be tortured by sickness in order to become a shaman through his suffering.

The shaman being cut into pieces was another coinciding detail.

The story about the magician and his apprentice is a well-known and wide-spread story, all over the world. It appears in Hungarian folklore too, but in one detail our variant differs markedly from similar tales of other nations: the hero gains his knowledge only after having been cut up into bits and pieces. After being revived, his capacities greatly exceed those of other mortals.

This motif points to an ancient Hungarian mythological background: the shaman, the sorcerer and the wise man had to be cut up first in order to receive the gift of knowledge.

All I had learned today from the old kam reinforced the opinion of those who stated that this child-scaring, strange detail of our tales is a relic of our shamanistic beliefs that had faded into the past long ago.

Another remnant of shamanism is the belief, that the Hungarian shaman is born with teeth or with six fingers on his hand. Naturally, a child born with teeth or a joint developing into a sixth finger has irregular, excess bone-formations. It may therefore be concluded that the same image survived with us as it did among the shamanist Sagays, the bones, Kizlasov, the shaman, had just mentioned, having the same significance as the excess bones, attributed to our shamans.
I was so absorbed in my thoughts, that I hardly realized we had finished supper. A quiet conversation began. The subject of the ancient shamans came up again.

So, I also put in a word or two. What happens – I inquired – after the shaman had already been “cut up”?

It was my faithful companion, Sunchugasev, who came up with the answer again.

– First of all, he orders food and drinks, necessary for the initiation feast. A lamb is slaughtered and the right side of its breast, the head, the legs, the lungs and the heart are cooked. As soon as the meat and the wine are ready, the shaman takes it to the ancestor.

– How does he take it to the ancestral shaman, who is not among the living any more?

– It is not taken to him really, only offered to him.

– But of course nobody else may touch it! – adds the old woman.

– When he gets there – continued my companion – the spirits order him to enumerate his ancestors. He has to name each shaman of his clan, one after the other, who lived before him. After that they give him spirits. It is then, that his drum is named, that means, he is told what kind of a drum will be given to him.

On the way to the ancestral shaman, the shamans arrive at the “wealthy birch-tree” in the neighbourhood of their own mountain and their own water. They rest at its foot and examine its tamgas, or brands, placed upon it by the shamans. Because, as a rule, all the shamans, descendants of the ancestral shaman, place upon this golden-leaved birch-tree of richly intertwined branches their own markings. The ones, who get their power through the spirit of the mountain or through a sickness, have no such symbols. If a member of a family is about to become a shaman, the tamga of the dead shaman of the same clan revives: it becomes clearly
visible on the trunk of the birch again. At such times they usually say: someone of the clan will soon become a shaman.

As soon as Sunchugasev finished his words, Kizlasov took up the subject of the "wealthy birch-tree".

- When the shaman goes to the chief-shaman, that is, to the family-ancestor, he has to cross the ham saraschan haraes mountain along the way. On the top of that mountain there is a pine-tree, its trunk resembles a six-sided log. The shamans carve their symbols into it, between the edges. Whoever places his marking, his tamga, upon it, then becomes a real shaman. It happens sometimes that a certain tamga "falls down", it disappears from the tree. Then its owner dies. After resting at the foot of this tree, the journey is continued. Then the shaman arrives to a crossing where an invisible shaman is sitting. He guards the crossroads. This is the place where all paths begin: the path of all the animals offered to the spirits, the road of the spirit of rabies, the path of the spirits of all other sicknesses, this is where all the wild animals of the forest enter upon their trails. When this crossroad is reached by one who became a shaman, through the spirit of a sickness, he must pray to the invisible shaman and offer him wheat-brandy. The right path is shown to him only after the offering has taken place. Then he may continue the journey along the appointed path. In the course of the journey the shaman arrives at a narrow plank-bridge across a very fast river and he must cross it. After having crossed the river he is not very far away from the ancestral shaman but there is still one more obstacle he must conquer. There are two cliffs there. Sometimes they close, and then again they withdraw from each other. They keep moving day and night. After they clash they then start to move away from each other again, this is when the shaman may slip across between them. But he, who is lazy and does not run, perishes there. In such cases the shaman becomes ill and dies. But if he succeeds, he is already treading upon the grounds of the ancestral shaman, covered with
black rocks. So, this is where the ancestor lives. The shaman cannot see him, he merely senses his presence.

- Hm - I meditated - how boundless had the passage been of the motif of the opening and closing cliffs! Not only do they appear in our tales, but the Eskimos, living on the Western coasts of Grönland, mention them as well.

We might easily presume that originally it has been an Eskimo motif altogether, which has been transmitted to us by certain Turk tribes long ago, when we were still living together within the same tribal community, if only we would not know that Jason, looking for the Golden Fleece, had been only saved by divine advice and long-suffering Odysseus could not have escaped the peril of the clashing rocks, had he not chosen the other dangerous road, that of Scylla and Charybdis.

Well, but what happens, after the shaman slips through safely between the dangerous cliffs?

- He who arrives - Sunchugasev said - may then see all his future instruments. First of all, the drumstick. There are many kinds of drumsticks. There are some made of stone, others are made of wood and wrapped in hare-skin. There are also some which are called bears and others are called horns. We consider the stone-drumstick to be the most ancient. In our days there are no more shamans who use stone drumsticks.

Both the old shaman and his wife nodded in agreement to everything that my companion just said.

- Why is a drumstick called "bear" or "horn"? - I asked.

- Because it is either wrapped in bear-skin or it has been carved out of the antlers of a stag - answered the old woman promptly.

- After having seen the drumsticks, the shaman is led to a place where the drums are guarded. This is a large house, it is even larger than a house. Today, we might call it a warehouse. There are only drums in there, all kinds of drums. There are huge leather drums and also various kinds of smaller bronze drums. These are
all different, the smallest one you could hold in the palm of your hand. Most of the drums, however, are common drums, covered with animal skin. All of them are shown to the shaman and they help him to find his own drum... After the drums the head gears are shown to him too.

- They point one out to him, or they even might let him search and pick out one for himself – explained the old shaman.
- Then his garment is brought forward, or they urge him to find one for himself – concluded my companion.

I would have liked to find out whether Kizlasov went through this same procedure.

I felt that something like this was bothering Sunchugasev too, when he turned to the old man.

But there was no necessity to ask him directly, he sensed it too, that we were all waiting for him to tell us about his own personal experience.

- When I was asleep during my sickness (his wife whispered to me: “He lost his mind!”), my brother came to visit me (“He had been dead for a long time already!” – added the woman in a low voice) and told me: I crossed the mountains already! He told me also: You are ill because of the mountain! (“The mountain-spirit!” – whispered Sunchugasev). Soon, however you would be healthy again! But I did not get any better for a long time to come. I wandered about in the mountains in my dreams. Then I went further and further, and my brother stayed behind. I even left the mountains behind me. I arrived in another land. There were some people there too. They were all writing something. Their tables were built of black earth and there were drums hung on the sides. There were some tables on the opposite side too, there were drums hanging on the sides of these too, but with their bottoms up. Here all the tables were also upside down. The shamans’ garments were also turned inside out. I have heard before: these are the drums of those shamans who do not live long. He that chooses from these
would die soon. At least the people said so... So I picked up a white drum and a garment from the other side. That is how I became a shaman.

It was late, very late, and we were still talking.

It was well after midnight by the time we retired. This was my first contented night's sleep on the plains of the kurgans. The stubborn silence of the Beltir kams had not allowed any peaceful rest before.

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In the morning I persuaded the old man to sing the song with which he exercised shamanism for the first time, to be recorded by the tape recorder.

I demonstrated the tape recorder while we were still in the yurt, I showed him the microphone and the tapes and then we started out towards the Cultural Centre where they had electric current.

I was quite worried when I plugged in the apparatus, whether it would function at all. But the motor started humming and the little bulb of the control-light vibrated with a reassuring evenness.

I cannot find enough words of praise for my machine. Also, later on, after I had dragged, pushed and shaken it for several thousands of kilometers across the Siberian forests, it had not failed me once.

In one of the Buryat villages the electric service had been interrupted on account of some construction work. Only a small generator supplied the power. In my desperation I connected it to this. However, the voltage was not enough. Then, according to the advice of our driver, I added the current generated by our car. And the tape recorder functioned!

In another place we had trouble again because of the low voltage, the disc stopped revolving every once in a while. While the shaman was talking, I kept turning it around with my finger and the recording turned out to be excellent.
However, I must admit, that the same night, when I stretched out on the striped rug in the Buryat yurt, everything kept revolving around me in my dreams, the revolutions of the disc made such a strong impression upon my nervous system.

(However, it might have also been the result of a bottle of arhi that I had to consume upon the insistence of my Buryat hosts, and which I drank before the dinner consisting of mutton chops and horse-ribs.)

During another one of my forced trips on mountainous terrain, half of the inner side of the tape recorder caved in and hung obliquely in its box. But, in spite of this, it kept on functioning faultlessly. I used it in this state for several days, because it was only in Irkutsk that I was able to have it repaired, when I met accidentally the mechanic of the archelogical expedition to the Angara. In about half an hour he was able to repair it.

It had been bathed too, because crossing a rivulet, our car was flooded. And it had journeyed in the stratosphere too. It had also been jolted by countless stones while we were returning from the Beltir country, when, in order to shorten the way, we descended into a steep, stony, water-worn ravine.

But the tape recorder still functions. It is a credit to Hungarian technological skill.

However, the recording of the shaman’s song did not go smoothly. It was not the failure of the tape recorder, Kizlasov, the shaman, did not change his mind either. The electric current caused the trouble, the voltage was continuously fluctuating.

Fortunately, it suddenly came to my mind like a flash, that on the way, I had seen a saw-mill and a flour-mill, both working. There was only one possibility: we must go to the president of the kolkhoz.

At the entrance of the offices a sign pointed to the door of his room.

A middle-aged, stocky Siberian sat behind the desk.
— I am a delegate of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences — and I explained about my assignment. — I could not work with my tape recorder because the voltage was constantly fluctuating. Please, stop the operation of the mills while I make my recording.

After I blurted out all this under one breath, I waited for the reaction. What will this friendly man say to my request, sounding ever so egocentric and selfish? Will he understand the scientific significance of the whole matter? There were even some other touchy angles to my request. What a lot of work would have to be interrupted because of it! Moreover, I wanted to have a shamanistic ritual performed, the damnable act of shamanizing, against which they had been fighting for decades. And — God forbid! — on top of it all, I was also a foreigner, who might use the acquired documentation for heaven only knows what purpose!

But the calm, big man followed my words intently and then for a long time he looked searchingly into my eyes, before he said in a friendly manner:

— There are no difficulties. All right. But it would be good if you would work right next to the power-house, so that when you have finished your work, the mills might receive the current immediately.

I still regret that I had not noted down the name of this excellent kolkhoz-president, I was very much obliged to him.

*

The machine is already humming, the old man raises his voice. Like the murmur of a faraway waterfall, the monotonous noise of the generator pervades the room. It blends with the song of the shaman, until the forceful intensity of the song does not overpower the sound of the machine.
It is true that I am hearing a shaman’s song recited *viva voce* for the first time in my life, I witness this performance for the first time, I have never before seen how they conjure up the spirits, but I have to confess rather embarrassedly, I was immensely impressed by it.

And this is just a simple demonstration.

There is no devout congregation watching the shaman and truly fearing the invoked spirits. The playful reflections of the fire are missing, there is no flaming or glowing fire here, casting strange shadows upon the walls of the yurt, suggesting the presence of the assembling spirits. Nobody throws twigs or branches and weeds into the fire, so that their overpowering smoke might let the clouded eyes see all that the shaman is singing about. Kizlasov has no drum, suggesting with its faster or slower, stronger or weaker beats, whether the mounted shaman gallops or ambles only, whether he is coming or going, further and further away. The ceremonial garb is lacking too, with its innumerable metal bells, straining the nerves with their tinkling, jingling sound and whose several hundreds of coloured ribbons make the human likeness of the whirling shaman improbable with their fluttering. There is no dance, the movements of which help to represent and explain all the shaman wants to indicate and depict. And, last but not least, I have absolutely no faith in the supernatural power of the shaman and no faith in his spirits, which have been instilled in every Sagay from the cradle on. And still...

It was an unforgettable experience.

Hardly had the old man begun his song when he had already been entirely immersed in it. There was no drum in his hands but with his right hand he kept beating out the rhythm as if he were holding a drumstick, slowly first, then faster, then in a syncopated time. The voice filled the empty room, it echoed from the bare walls and it poured forth incessantly from the shaman’s mouth, first slowly, then it became sputtering, then it was conver-
sational, then it grew into a song again, then it was a monologue, after that it formed questions and answers, now it was soft, and after that, resounding, it was high-pitched and then a deep bass, once it was only like a soft whistle, another time it was like the neighing of a horse.

I realized it now: no pencil, no tape recorder can ever capture this. This should be exempted from oblivion by a sound-film. However, it could never be the same without the original environment and that does not exist any more.

Very probably, the shaman could not remain indifferent any more than an actor if he performed to an enthusiastic audience and not to an empty room. What an enthralling force shamanizing might have had about fifty or a hundred years ago... we can only imagine.

But the text, the heretofore entirely unknown Sagay shaman-song had at least been recorded. Science will, no doubt, be able to make use of it. The only question is, shall we ever be able to interpret it correctly? The rhythm of the text, the melody and the meaning of the separate words may be captured, but would we ever grasp what is behind them? The inner tension, the secret meaning of the different melodious motives and the innermost, hidden significance of certain expressions might remain an eternal mystery.

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After the successful recording I stayed on for a few days more, following the old man around. I questioned him about everything, systematically, down to the smallest details.

Little by little, I found out that the shaman's drum is chosen for the shaman by the ancestral shaman. With other words, the family shaman determined its size, the kind of wood to be used for the frame, he decided which animal's skin should be stretched on
it and he ordered the designs to decorate the skin. Even the shape and the number of the metal pendants on the drum were determined by him.

This, however, is not all there is to it. Although the drum might be finished, it is still unusable, first it must be given to a small child to play with for a few days and then the so-called “reviving” ceremony must be performed. The shaman must look for the spirit of the animal which gave its skin to be stretched over the drum. He must follow the path where the animal had wandered, right back to its birthplace, because only there can its spirit be caught. After that the drum “comes to life”.

Finally, the drum has to be presented to the shaman-ancestor. This last information was of an extraordinary value, because there is no mention of such procedure in scientific literature.

- As soon as the drum is ready, the shaman revives it. The drum, before its revival, must be given to a child to play with before falling asleep, for three days. Nothing is drawn or hung as yet on the drum. After the spirits have been depicted upon the skin, it is never again given into the hands of children. After the revival the shaman takes the drum to the family ancestor. Before he takes off, there is another feast: sheep are slaughtered and the heart, the lungs, the right breast and other parts are cooked. A beverage of sour flavour is prepared from fermented grains in two larger and one smaller pail. Then a birch-tree is put up, they call it the “wealthy birch-tree”. They bring it from the forest, tearing it out with roots and all. This tree is decorated with ribbons and earrings, so that it looks pretty. When all this is done, they inspect and control the ornaments piece by piece, to make sure everything is complete to see whether every detail has been executed correctly. The shaman checks the earrings on the birch-tree: what kind they are and who gave them. If he finds a pair which belonged formerly to a woman of ill repute, he knocks it down immediately with his drum-stick. Then he grabs the drum and goes to his shaman-
ancestor. I have already mentioned that the shaman prepares three pails full of a sour beverage. One of these is small. This one is intended for the invisible shaman, sitting at the cross-roads. If they would not offer him something, he would not let anyone proceed. He opens the way only after having been offered a drink from the small container. Then he shows which road must be taken. The other vessels are taken to the shaman-ancestor. When the shaman arrives there, he greets the ancestor and presents his drum to him. The ancestor examines it and measures it to see whether they have complied exactly with the instructions he gave them and whether it is made according to the measures they received. If he finds that something was amiss, or not made according to his wishes, if something is smaller or larger, more or less, then he becomes furious. He is also very angry if the drum had not been given to children to play with for a few days.

I ask for an example.

Chebochakov, the shaman, for instance, who lived in Butrah-ti, appeared before the ancestral shaman without having let the children play with his drum. He had been sentenced by the chief shaman to eat nine hundred pieces of carbon.

Kizlasov "went" this way too.

As soon as I was better, I prepared all my equipment and became a shaman and I went to present myself to the chief shaman, accompanied by nine black-haired and seven straw-blonde men and three children. No shaman accompanied me. I laddled some gruel into a trough, put some boiled potatoes on top, and I went to the chief shaman, the ancestor. When I got there, he measured my drum, its circumference, its length and its height. He counted the pendants hanging from it. When he was ready, he gave me the men. (The shamans call their spirits men.) They are my friends. Sometimes they come upon me unexpectedly, then they disappear again. They are rather unstable. It is to them, I owe my well-being, it is through them, that when I hold the pulse of a
sick person, it becomes clear to me, what is wrong with him. Then I began to shamanize. After being shamanized, some people get better, others die. We know whether the patient is going to get well or not, but we do not reveal it to him.

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At the end of my stay we became such good friends with the Kizlasovs that they hardly let me go. I would have liked really to remain longer, because I felt, I might not come across anyone, ever again, as friendly as he, and, what was even more important from the researcher’s viewpoint, as intelligent: such a “fruitful” subject as this sensible old man, was not easy to find.

The yurt, hidden at the edge of the birch-grove, faded into the distance, so did old Kizlasov and his wife, standing in front of it. His tall figure, seldom seen among the Sagays, his exceptional, aquiline nose on which the eyeglasses perched as a symbol of his readiness to accept civilization, his carefully groomed, smooth white mane, his quiet manner of weighing every word before it was spoken, this I shall always remember fondly. But only in my memory will I have a picture of him. The photos I took of them were, unfortunately, spoilt.

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Our car was advancing again towards Butrahti, where I had already met with failure once. No, I had no hopes at all, that in the course of a week Chibadyakhov could have changed his reticent attitude and would now be willing to tell me about his experiences, like the sharp-witted Kizlasov. I was not trying to follow the traces of a Beltir, but of a Sagay kam now, called Borgoyakhov.

This Borgoyakhov, poor man, turned out to be a decrepit oldster of pitiable appearance. He kept his mouth open constantly,
like a lunatic, his tongue was hanging out and twitched like that of a panting dog. And what is more, he was blind too.

I shall not describe it in detail how I succeeded to make him talk, throwing in all my arguments, all my patience, begging, coaxing and promising. Why should I torment others with the description of all the agony? The main point is, that a few days later, we were already driving with him towards the kolkhoz, in order to record his knowledge with the aid of my tape recorder.

Nobody would have expected, looking upon this pathetically pitiable old man, what exceptional temperament, grace and expressive power were displayed by him and how he rejuvenated during his performance.

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We finished the recording that evening after sunset and when we started on our way back across the mountains, it turned bitterly cold. I seated the fragile old man next to the driver, so that he might not catch a cold, Synchugasev was sitting on his other side and I climbed up in the back of the truck. At least I was able to learn what the expression "continental climate" really meant.

During daytime we had to take off our jackets and roll up our shirt-sleeves, but even so, we were quite dizzy with the heat of the sun, reaching thirty to thirty-five degrees. But, as soon as the sun went down, our teeth started chattering.

The moon sparkled icily above, and I kept shivering. However, by the time we reached the yurt of the shaman, I warmed up somewhat. In order to be able to meet our schedule without delay, we did not spend the night there but continued our trip immediately.

Now I could also sit in the warm cabin of the driver. Soon I repented of having changed my place because it was too warm there. I was just going to open the window a little, when my teeth
started chattering again. It did not last long, however, heat and
cold began to come over me alternately. All at once I found every-
thing so strange: it must be the moonlight — I thought.

I have never seen a full moon of this size yet. Suddenly it turned
into the disc of the tape recorder and started spinning so fast that
I was afraid it would tear the tape. Now! At last it is slowing
down! Now, again it stalled. Never mind! I help with my finger,
I try to turn it. But, what happened? This is not the disc any
more, it is the full moon again! And the pine-trees keep running
past me. Now, the moon, as if it were a mask, is removed by a
hand and I can see a face behind it. It is Chibadyakhov! He is
smiling and he says:

— This belongs to the past! Let bygones be bygones . . .

He puts on his mask, the moon, and stands right in front of the
car, immovably. Crazy Chibadyakhov, watch out! We shall run
you over! Get out of the way! But he does not hear me. Or, maybe
he does, but he does not understand it, poor man, because I
shouted in Hungarian. It is terrible, I cannot remember the Rus-
sian words. Why did I not bring a dictionary along? Now there
are only five or six meters between us. I grab the steering wheel
and try to turn it to the left with all my strength: perhaps we can
still avoid running him over. But Ilja, the driver, holds it ever so
tight, I cannot move it one bit. Now Ilja looks at me. He pushes
my hands off the wheel. And his look is very strange. He does not
swear, he does not curse me for having nearly turned the car over
into the precipice on the roadside, he takes off his "fufayka", the
nice, warm, padded jacket and wraps it around my shoulders. I
could never have imagined that a stocky, rough Siberian fellow
could wipe my face with his handkerchief so gently. But why does
he wipe it? It cannot be perspiration, because I am shivering.
Well, at last we are off again. How strange . . . I never knew that
the moon-beams are strong enough to support a truck. Long ago,
I had read in a Nanay tale that a little girl escaped from her
wicked stepmother and went to the moon across this silver bridge. But, that was a tiny little girl, she must have been very light. And ... this is a very heavy truck ... We shall soon reach the moon. But, why did Ilja stop again? I can already see the water-carrier in the moon, quite well. She puts down both pails and she is coming towards us. Along the silver road.

- Bring the pail too, I am very thirsty!

The girl smiles and reaches for one of the pails.

And now, this silly Ilja halts.

- Go on, the girl is already fetching some water.

But Ilja points towards the trees. I see now, there is a log-cabin hiding there in the shadow.

I am unable to open the door, Ilja helps me. But, why does he put his arm around me? Well, it is better so, I let him help me, there are such a lot of stones around here, I might stumble over them.

Inside the house a woman jumps out of her bed and she leads me to her place. She smiles. She must be my mother.

- Good evening, Mother! I came home unexpectedly. Ilja brought me home across the silver bridge.

But, why does she not answer? And, how did I get home? When we bade farewell to the Sagay shaman, we did not intend to go homewards!

Now she hands me a cup.

- Lekarstvo!

I do not understand her.

- Em! - she says. That is, medicine.

I am already lying in bed when she pours it down my throat.

*

Next morning I find myself in a log-yurt. A Sagay woman bends over me.
- You see, you are already better from the medicine!
- What medicine was it?
- A bowl of sprit!

That means, she healed me with about half a pint of 95% pure alcohol.

It is a radical treatment, but I must admit, the result were radical too. Only my parched lips show that I must have had a high fever during the night.

And my legs wobble under my weight, while I drag myself to the car.

*

On a hillside, amidst tiny mounds, I see several groups of people.
- They are having commemorative feasts beside the graves—explained Sunchugasev.

The crosses of the Orthodox Church stand out prominently at the end of the graves which differ from the Russian graves: there are little wooden houses fabricated over some of them, others are weighed down by large, flat stone-slabs. On one side of the little houses I notice a rectangular opening: I can see that food and drinks are placed through these upon the grave. Beside the stone-covered graves there are flat, horizontally placed smaller stones next to the large slabs: food and drink stand on them. A little further there is a fire. Every once in a while a few bites of food are thrown upon it or they pour a little brandy over the flames. Thick smoke rises up towards the sky.

My camera keeps clicking. The vertical columns of the crosses are rather peculiar: they are carved in the shape of a human figure. Like in some Protestant graveyards in Hungary.

The smoke still lingers above the horizon, but soon I can not distinguish it any more from the clouds of dust rising behind our car.
We are going to the *Koybal* region. Nowadays the Koybals already speak Turkish, but, their language was, about a century ago, as shown by certain records, Samoyedic.

Unfortunately, nobody had ever heard anywhere of a Koybal shaman.

After two days of careful and diligent investigations, we gave up our search and I had to accept the unalterable fact: there are no Koybal shamans left.

We are returning to Abakan.

Late in the afternoon we were back in the city and we drove straight to the Institute. I gave a brief account of the results obtained, I showed parts of some of the songs. The texts were well understood by those colleagues at the Institute who came from the neighbourhood. We agreed to begin their transcribing in the morning. I borrowed some books from the library and went back to the hotel.

In my room I buried myself in the books. There were about fifty articles. Quite a considerable number. However, the view was promising only from afar. There are five ethnic groups living around the river Abakan, consequently, the fifty articles had to be divided among the five, right away. Also, the descriptions were, lamentably, rather superficial.

One account, however, impressed me. Not because it called my attention to some heretofore unknown phenomenon, nor did it contain the much wanted detailed description of some known fact, but it referred to the contact of the Abakan Turks and the Soyots, this being exactly the subject of my investigations: it contained a
reference to the reciprocal, "between peoples", inter-ethnic relationship of the South-Siberian shamanistic beliefs.

The story itself is rather insignificant:

During the sixties a famous shaman lived on the banks of the White Iyus river. His name was Surras, his family name was Tacheyev. One day, he decided he would move to the Soyots. He might have had a prevision himself, or he might have learned from the prophecies of former shamans, that a large number of people would arrive in their land, from several regions. These people would be attired differently, they would be wearing round caps and boots made of bast and many kinds of illnesses would appear with them. They would be complaining that there were not enough shamans to chase away the spirits of the illnesses and that it would not be possible to drive them all away even if there were shamans in every village.

Then this shaman thought: before moving away, he would inspect the Soyot land by means of his shamanistic powers. So that was what he did. He wandered all over the place. On his way back, on the plains across the Abakan, he found an emaciated human soul, hardly alive at all. With his drumstick, he pinned it to his drum and examined it, trying to find out where it came from. He looked over both banks of the Abakan, but he could not see anyone to whom this soul could have belonged. So he took it along and after a long time he found a man who could have claimed this soul as his own, but that was already in the region of the Kyzyls. This man had been sick for three years already and he was neither dead or alive. The shaman shook out the soul from his drum and the sick man got well again. Nobody knew how his recovery came about. But the shaman told the story to his friends back home. This is how it came to light that the man recovered his health due to the power of this shaman. Thereafter, they believed it even more, that he was really a true shaman.

This story called my attention to the possibility of a reciprocal interchange of motives and incidents between the Turkic Abakan and the shamanistic Soyot religions, and, this meant, that I wanted, beyond anything, to get to the land of the Soyots too.
In the morning we commenced our work in the Scientific Research Institute.

What an enormous change took place in all Siberia in the second quarter of our century! Our Hungarian Siberia-specialists, Reguly, the pioneer, later Károly Pápai and János Jankó, after them József Pápay and Bernát Munkácsi, could have regarded their collaborators only as simple data-suppliers while they were working among the various ethnic groups. Today, beside the informants, learned specialists also assist the research-worker. In addition to Kizlasov and Borgoyakhow, the shamans, there are a good many Sagay, Beltir and Kachin scientific researchers too. With their help, the most difficult part of the work, the evaluation of the texts, after having collected the material, may be accomplished.

But, in spite of all this, our work was far from proceeding smoothly. The song of the shaman is like a riddle: its language differs greatly from the spoken language of everyday usage, it contains numerous archaic idioms, many queer expressions (for instance the names of the spirits). Some lines had to be repeated ten or twenty times, we played them over and over again on the tape recorder until the meaning became clear.

Writing down the text is a tiresome, arduous task, but we were at it from morning till night, so that we might finish it. My collaborators at the Institute assisted me by taking it in turns at the tape recorder. Sometimes four or five of them gathered around it, if one or another difficult section called for united efforts.

One of the co-workers was a pretty, young Kachin girl, she was among the brightest. It was always her aid, we called upon, when we reached an intricate passage.

Hm. What could the explanation be? – I meditated.
The telephone solved the riddle.

We figured, that it would take too long to finish all the texts, therefore I asked permission from the Director to work at the Institute after office-hours, with the help of one of the assistants.

The Kachin beauty accepted the assignment to this extra work, knowing, that she understood the texts best.

One evening the telephone rang.

- Scientific Research Institute – the girl answered.

Her name must have been asked, because she said:

- Tatiana Grigoryevna Tacheyeva.

I must confess, I had no idea of her family-name until then, it is always difficult to catch it at the introduction and I was ashamed to ask it again. I called her Tatiana.

But, hearing her name, it flashed through my mind: this girl, Tatiana Tacheyeva, might be a descendant of Tacheyev, the shaman, who, while in trance, had “flown” to the land of the Soyots and found the straying soul of the sick man on his way.

I could hardly wait for her to end the conversation on the telephone.

- Tatiana, tell me, were there any shamans in your family? – I asked her.

She laughed.

- I am the granddaughter of the one about whom you read the other day.

- How do you know that?

- I saw you taking that book from the library which contains the story about him.

After that, I was no longer surprised, that she could interpret the shaman-songs better than any of the others.

*

While I visited all the villages around the city one by one and
looked for old men who would still well remember the fading creed of shamanism, the Siberian winter slowly approached. I had to stop collecting.

Soon, I was waving good-bye at the airfield of Abakan and I sat behind the window of the plane to Moscow with a feeling of satisfaction that, after all, my first Siberian trip had not been a mere excursion, as my Leningrad colleagues had prophesied. The train from Moscow did not take me towards Budapest, but to Leningrad. I planned to spend the winter exploring the museums there, and as soon as summer would come, to go back to Siberia.
BACK TO SIBERIA

The sixth of June. If it comes true, I shall soon see Asia again.

This is my last day in Leningrad, the city I have grown so fond of. Leningrad... What a lot of resignation and glory lies hidden in these nine letters!

I have been planning for months that I would devote my last day to bidding farewell to the city.

I wanted to compare once more the two equestrian statues of Peter the Great, founder of the city: the mounted "ceasar" of Rastrelli in front of the Engineer's Palace, and the bold rider mounted on a prancing steed, placed upon a foundation of a mighty rock, on the Dekabrists Square, by Falcone; I planned to admire once more the Isaac and the Kazan cathedrals, the Buddhist "church" and also the Mohammedan dzami, which they call here a "mosque".

I hoped to listen again to the monotonous splashes of the water against the walls of the Peter-Paul Fortress, with its casemates, which had only two exits: one leading to the madhouse, the other to the graveyard.

I wanted to take another walk along the Nevskiý Prospekt and to take a ride on the underground, and also to look once more at the pidgeon on the signpost at the Palace Square, which warns the drivers: "Drive slow! Pidgeons!"
Karagasy shaman garment
But all these plans remained unrealized. Why? Because I still had to photograph the last thirty shaman caps at the Anthropological and Ethnographical Museum, I had to denote, in the Museum of the History of Religion, the inventory numbers of the pictures I received from their photo-archives, I had to control the copies of the descriptions prepared of the Vogul-Ostyak shaman articles at the State Ethnological Museum, and I had to hurry to the Photo Institute to receive the microfilms taken of some manuscripts of the Academy of Sciences, two days before.

I had no time for farewells, nor had I any lunch. Even so, I nearly missed the Moscow express. As soon as our train pulled out of the station, it started to rain. Well, well, they weep over my departure in Leningrad...

During the last days of my stay the air became heavy with the feverish preparations in the Leningrad Ethnographical Institute: the colleagues were getting ready for their Siberian expeditions. The truck going to Southern Siberia had already left a few days before, part of the Tuva expedition had also left by train. Others were checking the sleeping bags: they planned to go up north to the lower banks of the Yenisey. They were co-ordinating plans, scheduling their itinerary... The telephone was ringing constantly: how long does the boat-trip take from here to there? What time does the TU 104 have a connection in Irkutsk? Is there an airline between Nizhneudinsk and the Karagasy territory? They were reserving seats on the Moscow express, they were booking hotel-rooms in the capital; letters, cables, phone-calls were sent north, whether the ice had started to drift, whether the boats had begun to ply the river. Everything was seething, everything was stirring with life. The peacefulness of the winter months was over. But within a few days silence will reign again over the Siberian Department.

How swiftly these nine months, which I spent in Leningrad before and after my Siberian journey, went by!
I well remember the day of my arrival to Leningrad.

The city received me with drizzle. I had a slight feeling of anguish at the station: are they or are they not expecting me? After a prolonged search I found the representative of the Soviet Academy of Sciences among some Roumanian, Czechoslovakian and German guests. At last, he collected us like a brooding hen collects its chickens, and the cars started towards the Hotel Europa.

I did not even unpack in the hotel, only took a bath and went straight to the Ethnographical Institute of the Academy of Leningrad.

Just as in Prague, the passengers were waiting at the bus-stop in a queue. Our trolley raced down the Nevskiy Avenue, it passed the Hermitage, it crossed the bridge over the Neva and we had already arrived. I looked at the number-plate: it seemed to be all right, this really was University Quay No. 3. I passed the towered building, I even crossed over to the other side to admire the edifice of the Kunstkammer, founded by Peter the Great, because this is where the Ethnographical Institute and the Ethnographical Museum are housed.

I feel rather touched, as I enter. My footsteps echo on the very same stairs which were trodden by our prematurely deceased researchers, before taking off on their Siberian expeditions: Antal Reguly a century and János Jankó six decades ago.

*  

All this seems to have happened only yesterday...

And how very dear this building became to me! It is only natural, I worked every day between its walls.
I made a great decision here: I must stay as long as the work that I had planned was finished. How long was that?

After the first week it became evident that the two months, foreseen by my official mandate, would be insufficient to accomplish my task. I planned to copy every description of photos or objects, referring to shamans. I wanted to reproduce the pictures and to photograph the artifacts. I wished to transfer the songs of the shamans recorded on wax-cylinders, to magnetic tapes. And, of course, I wanted to acquire the entire literature on shamanism on microfilm copies. Time was sorely needed for this; my bibliography listed more than twelve hundred articles.

How worried I was about the reaction of the Director of the Institute, Professor Potapov, to my plan of not going back to Budapest after my Siberian trip, but to come back to Leningrad again. And, what a happy day it was, when he told me that the Institute would officially support the prolongation of my research.

It was a great problem: how could I raise the money for my extended stay?

On a certain day – I can recall it ever so clearly – at midday, I tried to decipher the pricelist at the university canteen, figuring out, from the official allowance of sixty days, how many more days could I afford. At the bottom of the list I noticed these magic words: Complete Lunch – Four Rubels. Breakfast and supper added up to about another four rubels. Then, taking into consideration some unexpected expenditures, three hundred rubels must be enough for a month. I had to smile, when I remembered how some post-graduate students in Moscow and in Leningrad estimated that I would need about six to eight hundred rubels monthly.

I entered the tobacconist’s shop in a cheerful mood in order to buy Soviet cigarettes. When the shopgirl handed them to me, she had no idea that this small package of Soviet cigarettes was a symbol.
I brought enough supply of my preferred Hungarian brand for two months.

Of course, now that I was staying on, it would not be enough, so I had to get used to the local products. The prolongation of my research was therefore represented by the package of *papirosa* I held in my hand.

Of course I could not afford the room in the hotel any longer.

As I remembered my lodgings, I reached automatically into my right-hand pocket: yes, the letter, written on Sunday, was still there. The letter I wrote about my lodgings... I take it out, I begin to re-read it, it will help to pass the time on the train. It has been pleasant to recall those agreeable days at the student-lodgings, where, for a little while, even I felt like a young student.

*

I indulged in daydreams about my Leningrad stay for so long that by the time I came back to reality, all my companions in the compartment were already up, coming and going with their towels. I had to shave hurriedly, because the tall buildings of Moscow were already peeping through the windows.

I was arriving in Moscow for the fourth time. However, now there would be no more time for sightseeing, I had only two days before taking off for Krasnoyarsk.

I went to the Embassy in the morning, and, all I received was bad news. Nothing was heard of the courrier who was supposed to bring a battered tape recorder for me from Budapest. Another unpleasant surprise: months ago several reels of film had been sent by the Ethnographical Museum in Budapest, to be used for photographing the shamanistic artifacts during my expedition. They had not been forwarded by the Embassy. What an excellent service they could have rendered, had I been able to take them with me on my Siberian trip. But... they had been lying about
for some time here, and they were mailed just recently, to my Leningrad address! If they had done so three days earlier, I could still have received them there and if they had waited another three days, I could have found them here.

But the worst was yet to come: all my Leningrad material,—about a hundred pounds of books, twelve thousand inventory card copies, twelve thousand photos of shamanistic objects, thirty thousand microfilm photos, several hundred yards of magnetic tape, with shaman songs recorded from the wax-cylinders,—could be sent home by the diplomatic mail-service of the Embassy only, if they received orders from home, from the Ministry of Exterior.

But finally, all the problems were solved, I had another base in Moscow too: the Ethnographical Institute of the Academy of Sciences.

A Russian colleague, who would leave in about eight to ten days for the lower banks of the Yenisey, to work among the Kets, was planning to pass through Krasnoyarsk and he would bring me the battery-powered tape recorder, if it arrived in the meantime. At the Post Office I succeeded in making arrangements to have them ship the films from Leningrad to Irkutsk, where I could receive them. The Moscow Institute delivered the material for the Hungarian Museum to the Embassy and, to my great surprise, they had accepted it immediately, forwarding it the same day.

There was still some time left for visiting a Hungarian acquaintance before leaving, it was pleasant to be "immersed" into a Hungarian conversation again. Almost a year went by since I had been in Hungarian company. Suddenly I became aware of those turns, remarks, gestures, which sometimes make up for complete sentences and characterize us ever so much and the existence of which we realize only if we have been living abroad for some time. Before my departure they thrust three hundred rubels into my pocket as a "loan". They squeezed several packages
of cigarettes into my bag too: Albanian Diamant, Bulgarian Femina, Russian Drug and Hungarian Daru.

And, at twenty minutes past eleven, the train left for Siberia.

*

Last year, when I travelled to Siberia for the first time, I had not seen anything else on the way but clouds. Things worked out in such a way, that I had to fly on the way back too. I had decided then already, that if ever I had another chance to go to Siberia, I would go by train. I wanted, by all means, to get personally acquainted with the alternating broad and narrow blue stripes as well as with the light or dark brown patches of the map.

Yet, as long as you choose to travel by train, you must measure the duration of the trip not in hours, but rather in days. To Krasnoyarsk it takes five days, to Irkutsk six. Nevertheless, it is an amazing speed, not so very long ago the timetable of the Trans-Siberian Line has been figured in weeks.

The idea of this railway-line was conceived by the same Muravev, who received the epithet Amurskiy, for having subdued the territory of the Amur river. However, the task of building the railway-line appeared to be of such gigantic proportions at that time that it had been discarded without attempting it at all.

In later decades, several contractors offered their services, several projects were outlined. Only to mention one among the many, an English engineer suggested that the Pacific and the Atlantic Coasts be connected by a horse-drawn train.

In 1875 Tzar Alexander II decided that the plan for the railway-line should be brought into being. The rails would be laid from Nizhne-Novgorod to Tyumen, leading to Yekaterinburg. However, the Russian-Turkish War interrupted the preparations.

After the war was over, rails were laid as far as Chelyabinsk.
In 1891 rails were laid towards the west also. From then on the construction work on the more than ten thousand kilometers long railway-line had been commenced at several points simultaneously.

The railway-line, that crossed the whole of Siberia, was interrupted by several waterways: around Lake Baikal no tracks were constructed, passengers had to cross by boat in summer and the rails were laid across the ice in winter. One could board the train again on the other side, but it ran only as far as the Silka, the large affluent of the Amur. Here the voyage had to be continued by boat, because that was the only means of transportation to get to Khabarovsk. From there on, there was a railway line to Vladivostok.

This railway-line, combined with the waterways, was considered final at that time. In winter-time however, traffic was interrupted because of the thick layers of ice covering the frozen rivers. Nevertheless, even in summer, the journey lasted for about three to four weeks, sometimes even longer.

Even this was a considerable improvement in comparison with the time formerly needed for a Trans-Siberian journey.

According to tradition, Tzareva Elisabeth wished to get somewhat acquainted with her subjects living in the distant eastern region and therefore she ordered that six maidens be sent to her court from Kamchatka. But, by the time the girls arrived to Irkutsk, they had to interrupt their travel so that they could be delivered of their babies. The accompanying officers were punished by transfer. In spite of this precaution however, it happened so, that when the girls arrived in St. Petersburg, it had been again at the last hour.

Maybe, that all this is only an anecdote, but the experiences of the Behring Expedition had been recorded in writing. This Danish seafarer in Russian service — whose name had been given to the strait which was discovered by his expedition between Asia and America — needed several years to reach the eastern shores of
Siberia. Behring divided the members of the expedition and their
equipment into three groups when they took off from St. Petersburg,
and they crossed Siberia separately. The first group, consist-
ing of sailors and craftsmen, reached Okhotsk within three
years. Behring himself, who was burdened with a lion’s share of
transport problems, reached the same destination six years later.

*

But our train travels at a high speed. It clatters across the Maty
rodnaya, the river Volga, called mother in Russian folk-lore, and
we soon leave Yaroslav behind.

While in Leningrad, I had been very interested in Yaroslav.
My curiosity was aroused by the cheese produced there. Namely,
this was the cheapest of its kind and being continuously short of
funds, I favoured it always when I had been shopping for my
dinner. It is a great city, the towers of its beautiful Russian
churches glide past the windows of the carriage with graceful
dignity.

Soon the Vyatka and then the Kama roll along beneath us.
My heart skips a beat: this is the site of ancient Hungarian settle-
ments, all around.

And, we are already among the small mountain-formations of
the Urals. We cut through the World-Belt of our Vogul and
Ostyak relatives, hardly noticing at all, that we have left the
groves of the steppes behind and our train already races in the
Ural. Our ancestors could “walk” across from one side to the
other, at their hearts’ content.

Perhaps it would be useful also for our prehistorians to gain
a firsthand experience of it.

In Kungur some strange artifacts are sold. They resemble
fishes and squirrels carved out of semi-precious stones. According
to my companion, this kind of stone is not found anywhere else.
Kungur is also noteworthy from a Hungarian point of view: some time ago the village itself and its immediate surroundings had a Finno-Ugric speaking population.

After a while we passed Tobol, Isim is left behind too, and we also cross the Irtis, the river of the Ostyaks.

*

I wish I could meet some Ostyaks. There are several things I would like to discuss with them.

While I copied the descriptions of the Ostyak objects at the State Museum of Ethnography, I came across the following text, referring to a crown-shaped shaman headgear:

Shaman cap, made of iron: consisting of a horizontal iron hoop upon which two curved metal bands have been fastened, crossing each other at a right angle. There is a rein antler represented at the crossing point of the two metal straps. Ribbons of red cloth, decorated with pearls and bells, are fastened on the hoop. Nikolai Bezrukih, the son of the shaman made it to order, in the Turuhansk region.

According to my knowledge, the Ostyak shamans never wore an antlered crown on their head. Therefore, I had some doubts about the correctness of the data contained in the description of the inventory. It was more probable that it originated from the Selkup or the Ket peoples and not from the Ostyaks, because both these ethnic groups have also been called formerly Ostyaks, the former have been known by the denomination Ostyak Samoyeds, the latter as Yenisey Ostyaks. My theory was further reinforced by the fact that the shamans of both groups wore such crowns, secondly, both peoples live nearer to Turuhansk than the authentic Ostyaks. I never put my opinion under a bushel, so I shared it with the administrator of the collection. It was receiv-
ed with a polite smile. I felt: he did not believe that I was right. Therefore, I would have liked to support my theory with some hard facts.

As I continued working on the inventory, I found that the description of the above item was followed by several entries, referring to a considerable number of "Ostyak" artifacts, stating, that they were made by Nikolai Bezrukih. The descriptions contained also numerous technical terms and specific expressions, and tracing these might enable us to determine which language have they come from.

The same evening, at home, I kept turning the pages of the Ostyak, Yenisey Ostyak and Ostyak-Samoyedic dictionaries, borrowed from the library. The first two had not revealed anything, I could not find any words similar to those included in the descriptions at all. But the Ostyak-Samoyedic dictionary sprang the lock. The name loz, referring to the human figure depicted on the shaman garment, meant spirit, in Ostyak-Samoyedic, and the word kare, referring to the bird-figure, meant crane. One concordance after the other became evident. The researcher denoted the name of the scarf, as kute. And this is the Ostyak-Samoyedic name of an apron-like garment, covering the breast of their shaman.

Undoubtedly, those "Ostyak" objects, mentioned in the inventory must come from the Ostyak Samoyeds, also called Selkups, who actually live in the region of Turuhansk, on the left bank of the Yenisey.

But, I was anxious to determine even more exactly, where these artifacts have come from. I based my deduction upon the fact that all these items were made by Nikolai, the son of a shaman, called Bezrukih.

Therefore, I checked all my notebooks, containing the descriptions I copied at the museum of the Academy, to see, if perhaps by some miraculous coincidence, one of the collectors might have
mentioned the name of Bezrukh, the shaman. I did not have to search for long, the name I was looking for, appeared beside several of the artifacts. On top of it all, there was even a photo of two shamans, called Bezrukh. It must have been a great family of shamans, because two of its members, Andrei and Maxim, have been shamanizing. Also, I soon found out that their family belonged to the “Clan of the Eagle” and that they were fishing, hunting, and grazing their reindeer on the Taz-tundra, along the river Turuhan and its affluents.

The following day, when I reported my findings to the Administrator of the Siberian Collection of the State Museum, he did not break into a smile upon hearing my account, instead, he corrected the inventory.

It was now clear, at last, that the Ostyak shamans wore no headdress with antlers, but I would have liked to penetrate into the matter a little deeper: what kind of a cap did they use, when they were shamanizing? It would have been a very welcome coincidence to meet at least one of them, at a train-stop, while we were traveling across the Ostyak region.

Fate, however, was not that kind to me. I kept watching the small, little cottages of the Turks (the “Barbara Tatars”) through the window, we were racing across the widespread Baraba steppes already.

*

I got up early in the morning; soon our train was due to arrive at Novosibirsk, the future capital of Siberia. This city awakens a special interest in a Hungarian traveler: it is here that our train crosses the Ob, the great river of our nearest linguistic relatives.

I was aware of it that this section of the Ob could not give any better an idea of this great river, rolling across the land of the Ostyaks, than an aquarium would in representing the depths of
the ocean, but still... The clattering of the bridge indicated that we had arrived to Novosibirsk.

The train had not yet come to a halt when I jumped down from the carriage. I wore my gymshoes and trousers, topped only by a pyjama-jacket. "Never mind", - I thought gaily, - "I only want to have a quick look at the river, I want to dip my fingers into its water and soon I would be back!"

I stood on the river-bank and the drops of the water of the Ob rolled off my palm like pearls.

In a short while I walked towards the station at a comfortable pace, as if after a major accomplishment. I passed some women, they were selling fish. Suddenly, snatches of a sentence echoed in my ears, very different to the soft sound of Russian, but very much like Hungarian.

- Harum hol... ut hol...

Why, one of the women was meditating here in Vogul or Ostyak, whether she should buy three or five fishes? What a unique coincidence that out of the very limited number of Finno-Ugric words, recognizable without a special linguistic analysis, I would have the luck of stumbling precisely over such (három hal, öt hal, in Hungarian).

I started a conversation with the Vogul women right away. After a few friendly words, I brought up the question of the shaman's cap. My efforts yielded no results.

- They wore nothing special on their head, just a plain cap. Why do you ask?
- I work in a museum and there I have seen this sort of thing. Have you ever been to a museum? Do you know what it is?
- Of course we have been, here in Novosibirsk.

We warmed to the subject, I found out many interesting details about idols and sacrificial sites from my accidental "informants".

- The museum could collect many idols in our region - said the younger woman. I looked at her incredulously.
- I see, you do not believe me, but it is true.
- Haven't the idols been destroyed long ago?
- Yes, indeed, some were destroyed, those that were in the villages, inside the houses. But in the hidden groves, on the remote islands, nobody destroyed them. There is no one praying there any more, but nobody would go there to smash them to pieces either. They crumble slowly by themselves, the snow, the frost and the sun disintegrate them.
- Do you know from your own experience, or do you only suppose that those "idol-graveyards" still exist?
- Of course, I know! I have seen them with my own two eyes. Once I went to fish in a small boat. Suddenly, a storm gathered. I rowed to the first island I could find and anchored the boat there. I have never been there before. As soon as the storm was over, I ventured towards the interior of the island to have a look. And, do you know what I found? Idols! Lots of them! Everything was just as it had been, twenty or thirty years ago!

The typical hoarse whistle of the Soviet locomotives cut into the air, while we were still talking.

Suddenly, it dawned on me: I left the train only for a few minutes and quite some time must have elapsed since I had been chatting with the Vogul womenfolk.

I rushed to the station, on the way encouraging myself with the memory that I had been a cross-country racer in my high-school days. Upon reaching the building I dashed to the second platform: there was no trace left of my train. Never in my life have I lived through such agonizing moments.

The waggon, with my luggage, was rushing towards Krasnoyarsk and I stood at the railway-station of a strange city, attired in a pyjama jacket, without any money, without documents. I had even left my ticket on the train.

The swearwords came to my lips from the depth of my heart: _a fene egye meg..._ (Hungarian profane oath, meaning, the _fene_ should eat it.)
And these words, more than anything, were the irony of fate. Because, I missed the train and got into this situation on account of the fene, or rather, the fászkes fene (nested fene).

*

One of the objects in the Leningrad Museum, which I came across in the store-room, caused me a lot of headaches, and originated my meditations upon the subject of the fászkes fene.

Fene eats you. And, if it does, then it must be something that is capable of eating. Or at least, so they figured at the time when this expression had been introduced into the Hungarian language. In our profane oaths, we command the “rosseb” and the “iz” to gobble up something. The “rosseb” is a sickness, the “iz” is a spirit. Then fene might also be a sickness or a spirit, and that is why an angry person might wish that it would devour the cause of his anger. But, what on earth could the adjective, “fászkes” (fészek = nest, fészkes = nested), be?

And this is, where the above mentioned Siberian object in the Leningrad Museum became the link between the fászkes fene and the Vogul and Ostyak idols.

It had been made of birch-tree bark, reminding me of the drinking cup of the shepherds, the so-called csanak. A small doll had been fastened to the upper end of the “handle” of this “csanak”-shaped birch-rind. It represented the dead person and symbolized his soul or his spirit. Pieces of fur and rags were stuffed into the lower, hollow part (corresponding to the lower part of the “drinking csanak”, which serves to scoop up the water), and these were presents for the spirit, lest it should harm the mortals.

While I have been scrutinizing these little idols, equipped with the basket, I realized that they might have been called fászkes
spirits. If this could be proved and it would come to light that our word “fene” meant “spirit” at one time, then the riddle of the fészkes fene might be solved!

This is, why I began to question the Vogul fishwife on the bank of the Ob about these little idols, right away.

— Why, that is the piting pupig! — she exclaimed in surprise.

I have known for a long time that pupig means spirit, spirit-symbol, little idol. I was primarily interested in the adjective, the word piting.

I shall summarize in the following, what they explained to me about it then:

In everyday language piti could mean the nest of any kind of a bird. In folk-tales, in legendary stories, piti means the place where the pupig sits or resides, therefore, it is the location or seat of the spirit, or the place of the image of the deceased.

A piece of the pelt of some furry animal or a piece of reindeer-skin have been put in the nest of the idol — the itterma — of the dead person. Various other things might have been placed there too: clothes designed and made especially for the deceased, jewels, tools, or fancy goods, all offered by his relatives and his good friends, in order to appease his spirit.

Pieces of the fur of the polar fox or of the valuable skin of the sable were placed in the nest of the pupig. Women offered their costly silk-kerchiefs, adorning them sometimes with bells and rattles, sewn to the corners. The gifts were placed beside the pupig, or on its knees.

This is, why the pupig had been called in several songs the nyohse piting, uf piting pupig, meaning, “the idol of the marten’s nest”, “the idol in the nest of the fox”.

With the help of the Vogul women from the Ob-region I got as far as the nest of the “fészkes fene”, now it was up to the linguists to solve the riddle of the puzzling word fene.

By the way, the Vogul word, piti, meaning “nest”, is the phono-
logical equivalent of the Hungarian word "fészek", because the word-ending phoneme K is a diminutive suffix and the Hungarian F and SZ are the phonetical equivalents of the Vogul P and T.

If researchers would find that fene meant a kind of spirit, we might draw the conclusion that fészekes fene has been provided with a nest in order to furnish room for the offerings, and in ancient times, fene might have devoured those who failed to present their gifts.

*

Having recovered my wits after the unexpected blow, I rushed to the stationmaster's office. I confessed shamefacedly: I have missed the express-train. He did not seem to be surprised at all. (Perhaps I was not the first he met of this "species".)

He was a benign, rather stout elderly man, and immediately saw to it, with utmost calmness, that a cable be sent to Bolotnaya, so that my luggage could be removed from the train there. Then he turned to me cheerfully:

- Come back in about two hours, young man, then I might be able to tell you whether they succeeded in getting your belongings off the train at that station.
- I beg your pardon, for causing all this trouble.
- Oh, never mind, it happens nearly every day.
- May I ask you something? How shall I continue my journey? Namely, I also left my money on the train.
- We will issue a ticket to the station where your luggage awaits you. You must not pay for that, as you have already paid for transportation covering this section too. You may pick up your things there and continue your trip.

Hm. It sounded quite simple. But I would much rather have been in the place of one of the passengers on the train I missed. All my things were there, spread all over the compartment, my
money, the Exacta Varex, my electric tape recorder, all my docu-
ments.
In about an hour and a half, I stood in front of the office again.
When the reply came, I learned that they did not succeed in
collecting my luggage at Bolotnaya, the train did not stop there
long enough.
− Never mind, they will get it in Taiga. There the express halts
for a longer period.
Another couple of hours of nerve-wracking waiting.
It was around midday that my protector informed me: all my
stuff had been safely deposited at the railway station in Taiga.
Within a few minutes I held the “free” ticket to Taiga in my
hands.
By nightfall, according to Moscow Time, the Vladivostok ex-
press pulled out from the unforgettable station of Novosibirsk,
with me on board.
We were supposed to arrive at Taiga about dawn. I could not
even think about sleep. After midnight, I began to count the min-
utes and I stood shifting my feet at the end of the corridor to be
able to jump off the train as soon as it stopped. I had to find
the office, or store-room, where my things were deposited, I had to
carry them to the compartment, I had to have my former ticket,
that I hoped to find there, revalidated for the rest of the voyage
with this train. I had to hasten if I did not want to go through
the same experience as in Novosibirsk, once more.
I need not have feared the great moment so much. Things
worked out in Taiga as smoothly, as clockwork. By the time the
train started, I was already back in my berth, reading the letter
I found attached to my belongings.
There was a long list enclosed to the letter:

1 camera
1 tape recorder
1 knapsack containing: 1 pair of boots
   1 pair of pyjama pants, etc.

But why should I enumerate it all? I got back everything, down to the last razorblade, although I had left it unwashed somewhere on the table, as I had no time left to clean it, because of the River Ob.

In Moscow – how unbelievable! – I had been warned to be careful on the Trans-Siberian Line, because things might disappear easily.

This is what was in the little note:

_Dear Passenger, Who Missed the Train!

Please, if possible, try not to miss the train in future. Collecting your belongings and taking the inventory of your things involved a lot of unnecessary work._

_Maria Ivanovna

Ticket Inspector_

Everyone sees the world from a personal viewpoint. However, I was deeply moved by this rigorous reprimand.

*

Thanks, for having found my luggage so soon, were also due to the stubbornness of the people of Tomsk.

It happened long ago, at the time of the construction of the Trans-Siberian Line. The engineers who made the plans, requested from the people of Tomsk the illegal sum of one million rubels, for the favour of conducting the railway across their town. However, the good people of Tomsk refused to pay this illicit toll. They trusted the fact, that Tomsk was situated along the proposed route, just as Omsk or Krasnoyarsk. But the engineers, deprived of the expected extra earnings, were smart enough to prove that Tomsk might be reached only at an extraordinarily high cost be-
cause of the additional labour involved, and therefore suggested, that the line should be constructed hundred and fifty kilometers further south. And that is where it was built.

Later, a local railway-line was constructed from the unlucky city to Taiga. This is how Taiga, formerly a small Siberian village, became a railway junction, where even the fast trains stop.

If the people of Tomsk had not been so stubborn, Taiga would not have become a railway junction. The express train would not have halted there, or at least, not for sufficient time for me to collect my luggage, which otherwise might have journeyed, heaven only knows whereunto.

So, at last I could lie down peacefully on the cot. I had no fear that we might pass Krasnoyarsk, while I slept. Because of the delay caused by the intermezzo on the banks of the Ob, according to my new schedule, I was due to arrive there about five o'clock in the afternoon, and not early in the morning.

While I was falling asleep, I came to the conclusion: shifted teams of horses might have cut down the duration of a journey once upon a time, but shifting trains, definitely prolongs it considerably, nowadays.

When the train arrived to Krasnoyarsk on schedule in the afternoon, I had hardly finished yet with the ceremony of getting up. My research work in Novosibirsk was not only exhaustive, but exhausting too.

At the railway station everything went to the depot and I was off to look for lodgings.

* *

It is now for the third time, that I am in the Red Abyss. (This is the meaning of the word Krasnoyarsk.)

The Cossack forefathers chose this site with an excellent strategic sense: the settlement, spreading between the Yenisey on one
side and high hills on the other, was easy to defend.

The memories of old battles are guarded today only by a white watch-tower on the top of the hill. It could narrate many fabulous tales . . .

But after all, I must live in the present and the problems of the here and now weigh upon me. Where shall I sleep tonight?

After more than an hour of running about I had to resign myself to the fact that there was not one room available in any of the hotels.

Finally, I found shelter on the Yenisey river. The second floor of the harbour raft had been furnished to serve as an abode for boat passengers who interrupted their voyage. Not having found anything better, I also turned into a boat-passenger interrupting his journey.

Excellent fresh air, a beautiful view along the river, the sound of horns and sirens were among the special conveniences and when a ship, putting into port, was fastened to the raft, one felt like being in a cradle.

After having found my quarters, I could now deal with my second problem: the Museum. This red building, constructed in Egyptian style, was an old friend of mine. Last year, when I was on my way from Irkutsk to Abakan, I had already been-around it! I could only inspect it from the outside, because it was Tuesday. And, even the greenhorns among the Siberian tourists know, that on this day, all the museums close their doors.

On the way from Moscow to Abakan I had only a bird’s-eye view of it from the aeroplane. (I swelled with pride: I was already so familiar with the view of some Siberian cities, that I could recognize their public buildings even from the air.)

The museum in Krasnoyarsk, or, rather its director, was famous for strictness. She did not like strangers to rummage through the store-rooms, because they might disturb the jealously maintained order, they might disarrange the objects and then nobody could ever find them again.
I heard in Moscow, that not very long ago, an archeologist went to Krasnoyarsk to study the material there and she was not allowed to browse about freely in the repository. The store-room clerk handed over every single object separately to her for inspection. Unfortunately, this system slows down the tempo of the work considerably. And, I have so little time!

I approached the Museum with these disquieting thoughts. It was Sunday evening, the entrance was locked, the windows were dark. And, as I looked at the building more closely, I noticed suddenly, with great astonishment, that smoke was coming out through one of the windows.

The Museum was on fire! It flashed through my mind: surely, there is nobody in there! It took only a few moments to organize the extinguishing of the fire and, within less than an hour, it was all over. The exhibitions of Natural History and Archeology were burnt out. Relatively little damage was suffered by the Ethnographical collection.

*

On Monday morning, after this incident, I received an unlimited permit to work in the repository. I set about to copy the inventories first of all. This is not a very interesting occupation, but I put my back into it, rather resolutely.

To me, it meant that the Archives of Shamanism would soon be complete.

I conceived this idea a few years ago.

Hungarian researchers of the Siberian peoples have always shown a great interest in shamanism, while on expeditions or study-tours they tried to collect all available objects and texts in connection with this subject, and they also collected the available contemporary literature on shamanism. This was, how in the
course of time, the number of shamanistic artifacts, records and bibliographic material increased in Budapest, referring especially to the Finno-Ugrians, Samoyeds, Mongolians and Manchu-Tungus. This gradually but not organically assembled collection brought to a head the idea of creating a central archive in the Ethnographical Museum, which would include the complete material on Eurasian Shamanism, which the various museums and scientific institutes of several countries had collected or published, up to the present.

All the copies of the material in the Leningrad museums I had already obtained (also, as I learned from a cable, it had been delivered in Budapest), but the Siberian collections had still to be taken into account.

I started this work, while still in Hungary, spreading out the map of Siberia, listing the names of all major cities and writing to each one of them, addressing the letters to the local Regional Museum. I asked for the catalogues of the collections of the museums and for the descriptions of their shamanistic objects, if any. In most of these towns there was a museum and in due course I received the answers. However, I was still lacking information about the material of a few and the Krasnoyarsk museum was one of them. This is, why I was so anxious to fill this gap as soon as possible.

Within a few days I was already photographing the artifacts on the flat roof of the museum. There I got my share of the Siberian heat: on the flat, sun-baked, glowing roof the temperature must have been around forty-five centigrades.

After working hours, it was very pleasant to dip into the cool water of the Yenisey.

The river, named after the brave Buryat, Angara’s beloved, became a close companion of mine. I lived on it, I refreshed myself in it, and in the evenings I washed my laundry there. Once, one of my stockings was carried away by the thieving waves. Up
in the north, the *Kets* might have found it useful, if it had not been caught by a hook or net on the way.

After a few days I finished taking the pictures, the colleague from Leningrad, on his way to the *Kets*, brought my battered tape recorder sent from home, and therefore I could take off for my next stop: Irkutsk.

* 

After twenty four hours of travelling, the rumbling noise of the wheels echoed over the bridge across the Angara.

The director of the museum and I greeted each other as old friends. I learned, that Mme. Sharakshinova, who had accompanied me last year on my trip to the Buryats, was not in town. She was roaming the villages again.

The director accommodated me, according to his promise last autumn, in one of the towers of the Museum. There I copied those inventories which I could not finish last year.

It was in this quiet tower-room where I got acquainted with the story of the first Buryat shaman.

The first Buryat shaman had such power, such a supernatural strength, that he would not humble himself before anyone, not even before God, and he rivalled even the lamas. He had a book in his possession that was given to him by God.

At this time, there was a very rich, childless man. He asked the first shaman to help him in his great distress and to intervene, so that a boychild be granted to him by God. The shaman went to the house of the rich man, and he began to charm and enchant, but not as he should have done, begging God or the spirits for a boy, but creating a boy himself. He made the bones from stone, the flesh from clay and the blood from the water of the river, and then he undertook to make the soul. He gathered seventy kinds
of flowers, and prepared the soul of the little boy from these. Some time elapsed and a boychild was born to the rich man.

And then, one day, God in heavens ordered three of his winged heralds to descend upon the earth and look around to see if everything was in order, and whether there were any troubles or complaints there. The three winged heralds flew all around the earth. They found everything in order, except that in the house of the rich man there was an unusually beautiful boychild and they did not know who created him. The winged courriers returned to God and narrated all they had seen.

That is how God found out that the first shaman, scorning the gods, unlawfully created a child, although only God may create men. Therefore, God sent out his three winged heralds again to bring to him the soul of the little boy immediately.

The three heralds flew down again and in the shape of three lamas they went to the house of the formerly childless rich man. The lamas begged to be allowed to spend the night there. The rich man did not admit them, he said:

- It is not possible. We have a little child, we do not let strangers enter into the house!

The shaman advised the father:

- Let them stay overnight. What harm could they do?

The lamas set forth in the morning and secretly carried away the soul of the little boy.

God turned the soul into a fly and placed it immediately in a bottle, closing the opening with the thumb of his right hand. The son of the rich man became very ill after his soul had been taken to heaven by the three winged heralds. His father sent for the shaman at once. He came right away and began to shamanize with great ceremoniousness, but he could not find the soul of the little boy anywhere in his body.

Then the shaman continued to cast his spell even more forcefully. He descended to the underworld, where the wicked spirits keep the captivated souls of those humans who were sentenced to death, under lock. He could not find the soul of the little boy there either. The shaman looked for the soul everywhere: beneath the earth, under the waters, inside the caves and in the forests, but he found no trace of it. At last he mounted his drum and rode on it to heaven, to continue his search there. And there, finally, he found the soul in God’s heaven, hidden in the bottle, and the bot-
tleneck was plugged by the thumb of the right hand of God. The shaman fell to his knees and begged God to return the soul of the little boy. But God would not give it to him. So the shaman went out, but he was back in a minute in the shape of a wasp, and he stung God’s forehead. With alarm, God struck his forehead with his right hand and meanwhile, the shaman snatched the soul of the little boy from the bottle and escaped with it.

By the time God came to his senses, the shaman was already back to earth. He put the soul back into the little boy’s body and then he began to boast:

- There is no one like me, who could create a human being and rob a soul from God himself, if necessary.

God heard about this, and he became very angry with the first shaman. He commanded him to his presence at once. The shaman rode to heaven. God grabbed the shaman’s book, tore it up and scattered the pieces about in every direction. Then he said:

- How dare you, earthly mortal, create a man, in the place of gods? Only gods may do that! How dare you cause me pain, how dare you steal the soul of a sick person, if I hold it?

After these words, he cut his drum into two, so that the shaman’s power should become thenceforth weaker.

But the nine sons of heaven begged him:

- We need the shaman. We send to earth nine arrows every day and only he can return them back to heaven.

Therefore God let the shaman go back to earth, to prove his strength.

The nine sons of heaven shot nine glowing arrows to the earth again and at the same time they directed nine arrows to the three lamas too. This was to find out who could return them faster. The book of the shaman, broken up into leaves, had been eaten by a lamb. But the shaman killed the lamb, removed its shoulder-blade and through that he could see everything. (This is why the shamans use a shoulderblade for their fortune-telling to this day.) The shaman threw the nine red-hot arrows back to heaven faster than the lamas, because the lamas could read only half of the book. Then God sentenced the shaman to keep jumping up and down upon a black rock until the stone, or the shaman himself, would crumble into dust. If the shaman would break down first, he would perish and there would be no more shamans. But if the stone would disintegrate first, then the first shaman would rea-
pear on earth, vested with his former power. Therefore, the shaman put on indestructible iron boots and he keeps jumping up and down upon that rock, to this day. And the stone is wearing out fast, half of it has disappeared already.

Another version tells more about the punishment of the first shaman:

God placed him upon the northeastern side of a rock to jump up and down until the stone crumbled to dust. Until this day, the first shaman has been jumping up and down on the same spot ever since, on the same stone upon which the Heavenly Father had placed him. Since then, the shamans can not even be compared with the first shaman: their knowledge is weak, their power is limited, they are unable to reach the same perfection. The Heavenly Father reduced their power and their knowledge considerably.

At one time any shaman was able to get anywhere as swiftly as a rifle-bullet. They were at one place, and then again at another, with their hands they could reach anything, their eyes could see everything, even the unclean souls and and those who were living in the other world. With their ears they could hear all, even the conversation of the spirits and they could foretell the future for several decades.

But the power of the shamans became less and less, they lost it like the first shaman. His body was wearing out little by little in the eternal ups and downs. And when the body of the first shaman will break up entirely, there will be no more shamans. Their number might increase before that, but their knowledge would not be worth anything.

Since the legs of the first shaman disintegrated, the shamans cannot go as far and as swiftly as a rifle-bullet, because the legs of their souls are gone.

Since the first shaman had lost his innards, the shamans are always hungry and greedy. This is the cause of the insatiability of the shamans. Since he was left without his heart, the shamans are heartless and merciless towards the people, even to the invalids and they neglect their duties. Since he lost his hands, the hands of the shamans became crippled, they have no hold on things as
before. In vain they sprinkle brandy and offer their sacrifices to the spirits: the offerings never get to the honoured spirit, nor does the brandy reach them: it gets lost somewhere in between. Therefore, the sick die, the ruthless spirits capture their souls.

Since the shaman has no lips and no tongue any more, all the shamans are sullen, they speak incoherently, they do not know their prayers, and what they remember is confused.

Since he is noseless, the shamans can not follow the scent of the stinking, wicked souls.

Since he is without ears, the shamans can no longer overhear the conversation of the bad souls and spirits.

Since he lost his eyes, all shamans lost sight of their souls' eyes and they are unable to see the things as they did before. Yes, indeed, the ancient shamans could behold the wicked spirits, the inhabitants of the other world, and also the ghosts, they could communicate with them, ask them about the future, they could find out what was to come, they learned many secrets and they could keep sickness away from the people and prevent several disasters.

Since the first shaman has no brains, all the shamans have lost their memory, they forgot and they distorted the prayers, they cannot recall and confuse the names of the spirits, they do not remember how to offer a sacrifice, how to sprinkle the brandy, they even forgot how to tell fortunes from the shoulder-blade of the sacrificed animal, they can not figure out what the spirits want from a sick person: brandy or a sacrificial animal! Therefore the patients often die.

They say, by now, only the top of the head of the first shaman is left. And by the time he perishes entirely, there will be no shamans left among the Buryats. It will not be long, before they will forget the prayers, the rituals of the sacrifice, and the way to sprinkle brandy. Each shaman is worse than his forebears. The ancient ones could still resurrect the dead, they made rich men from the paupers, they almost governed the earth, as well as the heavens.

*  

These stories, relating to the gradual diminishing of shamanistic knowledge and power, greatly stimulated my search for the man-
uscript of Khangalov.

Let me explain what kind of a manuscript induced me to sacrifice the days necessary for the motorcar-trip of many hundreds of kilometers from my very limited time, and because of which, in the course of this year, I returned to Irkutsk again, and which was scattered among three places: Leningrad, Irkutsk and Ulan Ude.

This manuscript was the result of the research of a Buryat teacher. This teacher, Khangalov by name, lived among his people all his life and from the time of his graduation until his death around the turn of the century, he collected systematically all material he could, pertaining to Buryat shamanism.

He visited the shamans' graves scattered about the countryside, one after the other, in order to save from decay the caps and the sticks which were hung upon the trees; fifty years before the Buryat alphabet was composed, he invented a system of symbols to be able to denote the songs of the shamans before they faded into the past. Nearly half of the shamanic artifacts of the museums in Leningrad and in Irkutsk have been collected by him.

Consequently, Khangalov must have had an excellent knowledge of the mythology of his people, and therefore, his manuscript should be an authentic record of Buryat shamanism. But this manuscript is outstanding not only because of its quality, but also because of its voluminousness. One of the Leningrad museums, for instance, guards a bundle of sixteen hundred and sixty-four pages of it.

Khangalov's interest in the old Buryat traditions was already awakened in his childhood by the tales of his grandfather. Old Khangalov had the reputation of a great story-teller. If one can give credit to time-honoured anecdotes, he was capable of narrating for four days, uninterruptedly. It can be deciphered from one of the documents of the Buryat-Mongolian Scientific Institute in Ulan Ude, that he himself made some denotations too. How-
ever, there is no trace to be found of any of his note-books.

Grandfather's lost note-books were richly compensated by those of the grandson. Whenever the museums were unable to give him financial assistance, he would spend his own money on the expeditions. I was lucky enough to find a part of the broken up manuscript in Irkutsk, consisting of about six hundred pages. One night would be enough to photograph it all.

*

One morning I received a notice from the Post Office, while working at the museum: a package had arrived for me. It contained the negatives re-directed from Moscow to Leningrad. It meant that I was fully supplied with the necessary material for the photos.

A good beginning had also a good continuation: a lanky young man, a Russian, came to visit me the same morning at the museum.

— I am the teacher in Alygdzher — he introduced himself.

— Was it you, to whom I wrote from Leningrad, asking, if there were any shamans left among the Karagasys?

— I received your letter. I came to persuade you to accompany me. I am leaving in six days for home, to the Karagasy region. Do come with me!

— Do you think it is still worth while for me to go there?

— But of course! There are two shamans there. Why, last spring you could have even found three, but now one died in March.

We agreed that he would telephone me before his departure and I would decide by then, which way I wanted to go. It was possible that I might accompany him.

The teacher from the Karagasy region had hardly left when another guest was knocking at the door, it was a middle-aged Buryat man.

He was also a teacher. He did not offer any lengthy explanations
of his visit, but came right to the point as if we had known each other for years.

- I collect material for the museums in the ulus (villages) and I plan to go to the Buryat region in about two or three days. I heard that you are planning to go there too and I might ask you whether you would care to come with me.

This unexpected thoughtfulness touched me deeply.

- But I am looking for shamans.

- I know. They told me here at the museum. There is an old man in Kachug, he has been a shaman. He is a good friend of mine. I plan to look him up too.

Anyhow, this teacher came just at the right moment. We made arrangements for him to come every evening and we would translate together the Buryat shaman songs of the Khangalov manuscript, because the collector did not attach any translations. I made enlarged copies from the microfilm taken in Leningrad of this manuscript while I was still there, therefore, the text was easily readable on the positive reproductions.

*

As soon as I closed the door behind the Buryat man, I knew that another night of a long vigil and countless cigarettes was before me: I had to decide where I would go.

To the Karagasys, to the Buryats, or to the Yakuts? Indeed, the Yakuts had also to be taken into consideration, namely the Soviet Academy of Sciences, or rather, its branch office in Yakut, invited me to give a lecture on shamanism. After that, I would have a chance to get acquainted with the material of the Yakutsk museums and the archives of the Scientific Research Institute, and I could also take a trip to the settlements and collect material.

Which of the three possibilities should be my choice? My time was limited, my last month in Siberia had been scheduled to be
spent with the Soyots and the Altaic Turks, so only the next month would be at my disposal.

If I consider which of the three groups is the least known, then I must definitely go among the Karagasys. And I must not worry at all about the Yakuts.

Or, should I continue my collecting among the Buryats, commenced last year? Which would be a better solution: to finish one or to begin two?

Would I be able to finish the Buryat collection if I would go there? Unfortunately, the answer was: no. I would have to go there to work with them two or three more times. Therefore, this work would remain unfinished anyway.

And, what would happen if I would not go among the Karagasys now but during another Siberian trip? Would there be such? Would it not be too late? If I had worked in that region last year, and not among the Buryats, the old shaman who died in March would still have been alive. Would the two shamans, mentioned by the teacher from Alygdzher still be alive at a "next time"? We know the shamanistic beliefs of the Buryats relatively well, but the shamanism of the Karagasys is still terra incognita.

Finally I concluded: learning about Karagasy shamanism was of primary importance.

But let us now consider the practical possibilities of realizing it.

What about the Yakutsk journey? My hosts would provide me only with a boat-fare, and in this case, the voyage itself would take about a month. If I wanted to work seriously among the Yakuts, I would not have any time left for the Soyots and the Altaic Turks.

Of course, I could also go by air. I could make up the difference between the cost of the boat-fare and the flight-ticket from my own money. Then I would have ample time left for the Soyots and the Altaics, however, I could not go there any more, because I would have no money left. Therefore the trip to Yakutsk was out.
Let us consider the Buryat expedition. The museum would supply the car, so the journey itself would cost me practically nothing. So, this was a possibility.

Now, the journey to the land of the Karagasys was more problematic. I had to go by train to Nizhneudinsk and from there by plane to Alygdzher. My finances would allow for this, but would the weather permit it? A linguist from Leningrad had been there and according to him the weather interferes frequently with the flights above the Eastern Sayans. I might have to wait at the airport for weeks before the plane could take off. And after I got there, when would I be able to fly back over the mountains?

Therefore, the balance of my mediations was as simple as this: the Buryat expedition is no problem, the Karagasy journey is risky, to go to Yakutsk is impossible.

I had to co-ordinate this with the order I established from the scientific point of view: the Yakut trip is the least important, the Buryat expedition is important and the Karagasy journey is the most important. Consequently, Yakutsk was out, from both points of view. I still had to consider both the Karagasy and the Buryat regions. The journey to the Buryats was important and presented no difficulties, the journey to the Karagasys was more important, but risky.

But risks could be taken sometimes, so I decided to go to the Karagasy region!

*

During the next two days I finished copying and photographing the material of the Irkutsk Museum. I remembered, how joyously I reported my “victories” in my letters home, from Leningrad:

January 18: The last one of the enlarged copies of the microfilm, taken of the 1664 pages of Khangalov’s manuscript on Buryat shamanism, is ready.
January 22: I finished copying the descriptions of all the objects in the Anthropological and Ethnographical Museum. (The collection consists of about 4000 items.)

January 28: I have completed the copy of the descriptions of the shaman objects of the State Ethnographical Museum too. (There were also about 4000 items in this collection, which were of special interest to me.)

February 9: The descriptions of the pictures taken of shaman objects in the photo-archives of the State Ethnographical Museum have been completed. (About 500 items.)

The same day I have finished revising the archives of the manuscripts in the Anthropological and Ethnographical Museum, I recorded about sixty manuscripts, referring to shamanism. After that, I photographed the shamanistic artifacts in all the museums: there were about twelve thousands photos to be taken.

And now: after having finished my work in the Krasnoyarsk Museum, I have completed my work in the Irkutsk Museum too. At last, the dream of the Archives of Shamanism came true!

I wish I could be back in Budapest soon, to sit down, at last, to elaborate the material, to “play cards” with the notes, to sort out, to group and process them, and, finally, to write up the scientific conclusions I have reached.

*

Before my journey, I visited the hospital once more, where my sore feet were treated several times.

The Siberian heat was scorching, especially on the flat roof of the museum in Krasnoyarsk. I photographed the objects wearing a wet kerchief on my head and stripped to the waist, but I had no solution for my feet. The rubber gymn-shoes and the hot roof steamed them all day and in the evening they were black and blue. By the time I arrived in Irkutsk, they were ulcerated. A
stern-faced physician, with eyeglasses, to whom the colleagues had taken me, saved me from being laid up. In the mornings, even if with considerable difficulties, I was able to put my shoes on. Complete recovery, however, was delayed, the inflammation would not heal.

– I am glad that you are leaving – said the doctor, when I went to say goodbye to him – they will get you back in shape in Moscow very fast. Or, are you going straight home?

And he added jovially:
– There is no better medicine than the air at home! –
– I will stay on a little while yet, here in Siberia – I muttered softly, expecting his disapproval – I plan to spend a few weeks in the Karagasy region, and then I might go on to visit another ethnic group.

My words evoked a greater reaction than I expected. My generally imperturbable doctor turned purple, he jumped up and shouted beside himself:

– Where? Where do you plan to go? To the Karagasy region? With these feet? In such a state? Do you have any idea at all what kind of a place is it, where the Karagasys are dwelling? Do you know what kind of a region that is? What do you think, your feet would be bandaged every day there? Just wait a minute, I’ll show you something that will change your mind about your foolish plan!

He did not wait for my answer but grabbing my arm pulled me towards the corridor, I hardly had time to step into my shoes. We hurried to a small room in the hospital. On the bed, there was an unrecognizable human form, head, face, chest and arms, all heavily bandaged. After the doctor felt that I had taken the sad picture in he pulled me back into the corridor.
– Have you seen this unfortunate girl?

And then he told me her story.

In the Karagasy mountains two young geologists were getting
ahead of the others, advancing along a path. The girl had to disappear for a moment amid the trees, the boy stayed on the road. Suddenly, an enormous bear dashed out from the depth of the forest. It rushed forward to attack the girl. The girl started to run but before she could reach her companion, she stumbled and fell. The bear lifted her up from the ground with its left paw and with the right one it clawed her face. By the time her companion and the others ran forward upon hearing the screams and succeeded driving the beast away, it was almost too late.

I did not reply. What could I have said?

‒ Such is the region that expects you there — concluded the doctor. — Think it over well! No chances should be taken with your feet. Make friends with the bears at the zoo in Budapest or Moscow!

Moscow… Budapest… For a moment, I felt homesick. I remembered my favourites, the Hungarian racka-sheep, at the Budapest zoo. Nobody ever looked at them, not even on Sundays, I was the only one who fed them.

But… never mind! My racka friends can wait a little longer, if they have been kept waiting until now.
RATTLING PATHS

— Look, what a lot of people. They are all waiting for the aeroplane. There are some among them that were here already four or five days ago.
— Yes, but my time is limited.
— Unfortunately, for several days no pilot would risk a take-off.
— Why? The sun is shining and there is not a single cloud in the sky.
— You are right, but we are in Nizhneudinsk. You should see what it is like in Alygdzher. The fog has enveloped the Sayans. And it is raining there, too.
— What are the chances?
— You may start within two or three days, or at the latest, at the end of the week.

This conversation, between the commander of the Nizhneudinsk airport and myself, did not sound very promising. I remembered the warnings that I had heard in Leningrad: they were right, it was not so easy to get to the Karagasy region.

I was very disheartened and I was walking around the airplanes, when suddenly a familiar face came in view: the slender young Russian teacher from Alygdzher. Well, if he is here, then it must have been at least four days that these people have spent here.

Why were we not traveling together? It is a rather complicated
story. We agreed in Irkutsk, that six days later, before going home, he would call and help me to arrange the details of my trip to Alygdzher.

My teacher friend just then was taking some Karagasy youngsters for a school-excursion, an extensive boat-trip on the Lake Baikal. They embarked and had already been waving happily to those ashore, when it was discovered that two Karagasy urchins of their group were left behind. There was nothing else to do but to disembark at the next port and return with the next boat to fetch the two boys. Both their time and their enthusiasm had been reduced by this interlude and they started back to Alygdzher right away.

The teacher telephoned me then, but I was not yet ready with my work in the museum and therefore I could not accompany him.

- We shall then meet in Alygdzher – he said when we left each other four or five days ago in Irkutsk.

And now, we greet each other again here, in Nizhneudinsk.

He promised, he would speak to the commander of the airport that I should be allowed to board the first plane that would leave.

- Foreigners should be assisted! They do not have as much time as we, Siberians! – he added as an explanation.

I lay down on the iron-cot, at the lodgings reserved for flight passengers, with mixed feelings: I could not get my mind off the gloomy Leningrad prophecies. At least the Moscow predictions should not come true! Namely, one of the researchers at the Moscow Ethnographical Museum tried ever so hard to discourage me, when he heard that I want to collect among the Karagasy.

- It is a waste of time – he said – that handful of Karagasy people had already become completely Russianized. This is why the Institute had also given up collecting among them.

It is true, I meditated, that already in 1871, a traveller wrote about them that they are of the Russian Orthodox religion. But
his information was completed with the remark that their Christianity was nothing but pure formality.

The Karagasys are all baptized and they claim to be Pravoslavs since four centuries but this Pravoslavism is dubious. It is true that every Karagasy considers it indispensable to wear a copper cross hung around his neck, to genuflect upon entering into a log-cabin, to cross himself before and after meals and, he would be careful to have some kind of an ikon in his yurt, all this, however, does not stem from inner conviction: it is but mere utilitarianism. The Karagasys are, even to this day, de facto shamanists, there is a shaman in each settlement and the garment they use for their ceremonies might be found in every single yurt.

However, nearly a hundred years went by since this traveller visited the Karagasys. Things might have changed considerably in the meantime. But, even so, this change could not have taken place at a very fast rhythm. Forty years ago another traveller reported the following:

With the exception of a few, the Karagasys are baptized according to the Russian Orthodox Church, but their concept of God is rather ambiguous. Just as the great majority of the natives of Siberia, they confuse God with “God-fearing Nicholas”. Upon entering the yurt, one may behold in the frontal nook not one but several ikons, but it is impossible to get an explanation as to their significance, the Karagasys themselves have no idea about it. There is nothing surprising about the fact that next to the ikon they hang the images of their own gods, furthermore, that the Pravoslav ikons appear at the place of honour only if a Russian arrives to the settlement, otherwise they guard it in a sack. We might conclude that the Karagasys are Pravoslavs but their Pravoslavism does not amount to more than mere outward formality. In fact the Karagasys are all shamanists.

Yes, indeed, but this story is already forty years old too. If only I had not met that certain colleague in Moscow, or had he at least kept quiet about his misgivings!
However, by the end of the week I should find out whether all the efforts were worth my while or not! And, with this thought I fell asleep.

*

— Are you the one who wants to fly to Alygdzher? — I heard suddenly. I must have dreamt that I had been spoken to.

While I turn over to the other side, I grumble:

— What a silly dream! My nerves should really calm down at last!

— Hey, you! Are you the passenger to Alygdzher? — I hear for the second time.

But now I know it is not a dream, someone keeps shaking me by the shoulders.

I think, I must have looked around quite stupidly. The commander of the airport stood beside my bed.

— Get dressed quickly! Do you have your ticket already?

— No.

— Get it immediately.

I even ommitted the indispensable first trip of a riser and ran straight away to the building where the booking-office was located.

I paid the cost of my passage, onehundred and twenty rubels, and I already stood beside the proud, four-seat biplane. One of the four seats was occupied by the pilot. Two young geologists sat in the rear seats, I squeezed myself into the seat next to the pilot. With sleepy eyes I hung one of the straps of my knapsack on the control-lever, but, as soon as this obstruction had been removed, the motors started humming and we were off towards the Sayans!

Down below, the waving passengers look with envy and longing at the ascending machine, my teacher is there too, gesticulating
in the midst of his pupils: a tall white stork among black mallards.

*

We fly over wild country: crevices, pine-forests, birch-woods, swift mountain rivers pass beneath us. Our aeroplane is penetrating the Sayans more and more. We encounter and halve two enormous cotton-wool puffs. In vain do I reach out to them: I only grab vapour. It is unbelievable how many mountain rivers cut their way through the rocks everywhere. We are only bumping along at an elevation of about fifty to a hundred meters above the top of the trees.

This is, then, where the honourable “master-spirits” of the Karagasys reside. I have read in the library at the Irkutsk Museum that according to the belief of the Karagasys, the master-spirit of the mountain is the master of earth. Although he is not the Chief Spirit, they consider him to be of the greatest importance, because they are guests on his property. Furs, wild-game, all the animals of the woods are gifts from him, because all are in his power. The outcome of any venture depends on the understanding or, more exactly, the benevolence of the mountain’s master-spirit. He protects the Karagasy people and their property, the reindeer herds, from all evil. He is the one who grants a good increase, he feeds and watches the reindeer. His benevolence may be secured by prayers and sacrificial offerings. Once upon a time each crevice, each region had its own, local master-spirit and these were all subordinates of the mountain’s master-spirit. They used to pray to them and offered them sacrifices in order to obtain their goodwill and to induce them to such actions as were beneficial for the Karagasys. In the course of time a peculiar ranking order of the master-spirits was established: it was headed by the mountain’s master-spirit, who was followed by the master-spirits of the valleys, under these were the spirits of the crevices and
those of the mountain-gorges were subordinated to the latter.

As far as the waters are concerned, these are not under the rule of the mountain’s master-spirit, they have their own master, the master-spirit of the waters, to whom the master-spirits of the rivers, the fountains and the rivulets are subordinated in due order too. The master-spirits of the lakes rank as chief water-spirits. All these together form the order of the water-spirits.

The place of worship dedicated to the mountain-spirits can easily be recognized even from a considerable distance by the countless coloured ribbons hung on the trees. Usually they erect a small altar too at such sites: poles are dug into the earth and a flat stone-slab is placed upon them. They look like three-legged chairs. The ribbons presented as sacrificial gifts are fluttering in the wind around them.

They invoke the mountain’s master-spirit three times a year. First in early summer when all the Karagasys swarm out to their summer-quarters. The day after their arrival they gather around the summer-altar. Tea is prepared in a cauldron and they all sprinkle some of it for the local spirits, asking them to look after the reindeer attentively, to protect them from the wolves, to fatten their herds on the mossy clearings and finally, to give them strength and dexterity for the hunting season. Before the sable-hunting season begins, they turn to the spirits again. As soon as the Karagasys arrive to their families’ hunting territories they pray to all the master-spirits of their lands. They beg the mountain-spirit to give them sables, squirrels, fat meat and black bears. The month of May is the time for the third ceremonial gathering, when all the trees come into leaf. Now they pray to the master-spirit of the mountain, where they intend to camp and hunt. They beg him, to let them have many stags, that the rein-cows might be fecund and would bring forth their calves easily, and that no sickness would harras the herd. If at a given site there are two or three tents, their occupants perform the services together. They
try to win the favour of the spirits by offering them tea and suet, the tea is sprinkled around and the fat is thrown into the fire. Ribbons are hung on the trees too.

I kept looking down from the aeroplane trying to find out which rock, which slope or riverbend could have been such a sacrificial site at one time. I wondered whether the Karagasy people would show me any such place. The ribbons that had hung on the trees must have been torn down by the winds long ago, and the falling leaves had covered them up year by year.

In olden times all these rivers must have been just as many obstacles. This thought occurred to me upon perceiving the ease with which the shadow of the aeroplane slipped across one river after another. Until recently they must have only been able to get around by mounting their reindeer or horses.

The horse and the reindeer were essential properties, safeguards of the welfare of the nomad Karagasys. One or another beautiful specimen has been selected for the chief spirit, the master spirit, the lord of the mountain.

If the hunting was unsuccessful, if misfortune befell the family, if the herd began to die off or if someone fell ill, a reindeer was sacrificed upon the command of the spirits, interpreted by the shaman. Sometimes they offered sacrifices just to win the favour of the spirits, the fate and well-being of the Karagasys were entirely in their hands.

The invited shaman inquired by means of shamanizing, whether the spirits wanted a reindeer or a horse. If it was a reindeer, he found out which colour and what special markings should it have. If there was no such specimen in the herd of the supplicant, then he traded one from the herds of the others. The shaman always chose a castrated stag or a cow, but never a bull. At the end of the ceremony a string was tied around the neck of the reindeer and then several ribbons were fastened on it. Those herds which possessed such a chosen reindeer, enjoyed the special protection
of the mountain's master spirit. The antlers of such deer were never sawed off, in winter it was easily recoquized by its antlers. It was permitted to milk the chosen cows, but nobody, not even a little child, was allowed to mount those castrated reindeers which had been chosen. Such animals could be loaded only with "clean" objects: in the first place with lithurgical objects, such as idols, the shaman's garments, or gunpowder, hail-shot, lead, flour, unused coats or lengths of unused cloth. Shoes or used clothing, furs, cauldrons, felt-blankets used for bedding, were not allowed to be placed upon their backs. A special packaddle was prepared for them, the saddle of another animal was not allowed to touch their backs.

*

An unexpected jolt of the machine brought me back from the past to the present. Only now did I realize that there were other passengers in the plane besides me. Of course, the two young geologists. Well, well... they do not talk to me at all! In about a half hour it becomes evident that they are sulking a little. I am not surprised: one of their companions was left behind, due to the arrangements of the overzealous airport commander that I should be a passenger on this flight.

However, about halfway, we have already established friendly diplomatic relations, slowly but surely they admitted that the ambitious airport commander did the right thing, they would have had to wait in Alygdzher anyhow, not only for the companion left behind, but for the other members of the expedition too and my time was far too short anyway.

Beneath us a white patch sparkles here and there: June snow.

Suddenly a palm-sized green clearing appears between the rocks. Inside my ears I have a peculiar sensation: we are descending. Could this be Alygdzher?
We needed only two hours' time for the same distance that once upon a time meant six days of a strenuous journey on horseback or mounted on reindeer.

The plane is taxiing on the green grass already, we arrived at the Sayans. Praise to thee, Master Spirit of the Mountain, the Leningrad auguries did not come true. I must confess, before the moment that I set foot on the land of the Karagasy, I did not dare to prematurely rejoice and count my chickens before they were hatched, I heard that aeroplanes had to turn back more than once. If the weather changed during the flight, God forbid to attempt to land in the Sayans.

But now I am here, already! And perhaps even the Moscow fortune-teller might yet be proven wrong! As we were nearing the settlement, optimism got hold of me more and more. It simply cannot be that Russianized Karagasy would live in these cone-shaped bark tents.

I draw a deep breath of the sharp and clear mountain air, never have I smelled such overpowering pine-scent before.

Sounds of barking reach our ears coming from the direction of the settlement. The geologist stops me:

— Do you hear them? Those are the laikas! The famous dogs of Siberia.

I nod without answering. I do not wish to brag, but the laikas are old friends of mine. Last year among the Buryats, and later among the Turks of Abakan, I had been barked at by these fine dogs many times.

But I see reindeer for the first time. They graze and munch the weeds around the log cabins and the crust tents just like the goats in Hungary. What I see is a true picture of everyday life in the Karagasy region.

*
We walk towards the Council House. The geologists request twelve reindeers, mostly they want bulls and castrates, because those are stronger pack-animals and I ask for a bright Karagasy young man, who can read and write his mother-tongue as well as Russian.

The president of the council makes the arrangements promptly: he dispatches a hunter to the distant reindeer herds and then, explaining something to an old man, he sends him off to fetch my future companion.

In the meantime, I have an opportunity to watch the people while I am waiting. They are of medium height, their hair and eyes are black, the faces are of the Central Asian and the Katanga types. The Mongolian fold of the eyelids is not quite developed on most, the upper eyelids can be clearly distinguished.

This is then, what the Karagasys – the Samoyeds who intermingled with the Turks – look like. There are only two thousand four hundred and twenty of them altogether. This is the number of the entire people. And, the number of their young people had been greatly reduced during the war, which destroyed millions of lives in the struggle against fascism.

I eagerly listen to their conversation. They are busy getting ready for wolf-hunting. There are many wolves around and they destroy much of the livestock. It is remarkable that this is the first subject I hear about.

Namely, while reading various studies about the Karagasys in Leningrad, my attention was called to the fact that the losses of reindeer they suffer due to the wolves are much higher than those of other peoples who are also reindeer-keepers.

Traps and pitfalls were planned, the chase was being organized, but my impression was that only those few Russians who lived among the Karagasys were really enthusiastic about the whole prospect. The natives, at least those who were present, seemed to take a rather passive attitude, they only muttered something now and then. I did not expect that a very large quarry would be brought
back. But, what was the motif behind this behaviour? Or, was I only exaggerating and there was nothing more to it than the difference in temperament between the Karagasys and the Slavs?

My thoughts were interrupted by the president of the kolkhoz.

- This is a Hungarian ethnographer – he said to a beautiful, black-eyed girl, who looked up shyly at me.

- And this is Gala, your interpreter – he added, turning to me.

I learned, that Gala was a milkmaid in the kolkhoz. She spoke Russian well, and she could write Karagasy also. She employed Cyrillic letters and Russian orthography, but she could write.

(For the handful of Karagasy people no alphabet had been composed as for the other, larger ethnic groups.)

*

The Karagasys are hunters and reindeer breeders. They also use the reindeer for their transportation: they mount them.

They either hunt alone or in groups. Hunting groups are organized mostly when they hunt large animals: bear, wild reindeer, red deer and moose elk. Among the furry animals they prefer the sable and the squirrel, but they also hunt stone marten, ermine, weasel, otter, skunk and fox. Nowadays the hunters are already equipped with guns, however, at the beginning of the last century, bows and arrows were still in use. It is remarkable that they use no traps at all for catching wild animals, they do not apply snares used all over Siberia by hunting peoples. There is a custom, however, of luring the reindeer into pitfalls.

The reindeer are kept in the open air. They graze all the year round. In summer they are driven up into the high mountain country, sometimes as far as a hundred kilometers from their winter-stations, where they return to in October. During that month and in November the reindeer are mated. At about this time, or perhaps in spring, they castrate the males. The cows bring forth
their young about April. The animals are kept free, with no roof or shelter. Only the calves are tied to the tents the whole day and the mothers come there at feeding time. The cows are milked by the Karagasys in the morning, at noon and in the evening. The calves are turned loose after the last milking and they stay overnight with their mothers in the fields. The reindeer do not wander far off, they usually appear at the tents in the morning. If the weather is very hot, the herd gathers around the smoking-tents, in order to get rid of the gnats and midges, kept away by the smoke of the punk thrown upon the fire burning under the poles, which are arranged conically. After the animals have reached their third year, they are used for riding and as pack-animals.

Fishing is of little importance among the Karagasys. Since the olden days, they have used nets and barriers, closing the entire width of the river. Larger fish were speared at night, lighting up the surface of the water with birch-torches, or they shot the fish with guns, after chasing the prey into the shallower parts of the river.

Collecting had been very significant here in the past. Berries, the fruit of the privet, mountain-rhubarb, wild onions, the roots of dogtooth-violet and lily-root and, in the fall, the cones of the cembra-pine, were collected, the latter for its seeds.

Nowadays, their garments are made of manufactured textiles, but in the past century they still used the skin of the animals they hunted, to make their clothing. Their summer clothes were prepared from the hide of the reindeer and the red deer, the winter garments of the winter-pelt of these animals and they wore them with the furry side outward.

*

First of all, we inspected the settlement: Alygdzher. Soon I learned that it is pronounced by the Karagasys: ailig chair. In their lan-
guage the meaning of this is: Holy Place. The word "alyg" means "holy", the word "dzher" means "place". I asked an old man, whom we met on the street, how this valley got its name.

- Do you see that mountain-gorge? - he points towards the mountain rising on the other side of the Uda – there were spirits dwelling there before. This is why people venerated this place.

The old man throws a furtive glance at me and hobblies along indifferently.

- You see, Gala, this will be our work. We shall look for old people and question them about bygone things. Simple, isn't it?
  Gala nods.

- In the first place, I would like to inquire about the old belief. Are there any former shamans around here?
- You mean, kams?
- Yes, yes. I thought they might be called more often kams in this neighbourhood.
- Old Tutayev died last March, you should have known him.
- Well, we are too late for that. Can you think of anyone else?
- There are none living here any more, only in the other villages. But there is an old man, whose brother was a shaman, a great shaman. And, also . . .

Gala stops hesitantly. I look at her curiously.

- You could exchange a few words with my mother too.
- Does she know about the shamans too?
- Of course she does! Her brother, while he lived, was a famous kam.

It seems the Moscow prophecy will not come true either, after all . . . In spite of all the warnings, I might succeed in throwing some light upon the Karagasy traditions!

My first impression of the settlement is rather encouraging. Alygdzher is a rather new village: the result of the efforts of the Soviet Government to enforce settlement and bring an end to the nomadic way of life. Namely, the Karagasy people used to wander
along the larger and the smaller rivers of the Sayan mountains, grazing their herds and hunting wild animals for their fur. In the last decades, the authorities tried to concentrate the inhabitants of the tents, scattered along the rivers, into larger settlements. Here, they had to build Russian-style log-cabins. But, I can see, here and there among the houses, there are also some sone-shaped bark-tents. Smoke is lifting above some of them, consequently, they must be occupied.

— Who lives in these?
— Old Karagasy people, who could not get used to the log-cabins.

— Are there many of these, Gala?
— I think so. My parents do not live inside the house either, they live in a tent.

Meanwhile, we turn around the corner towards the bank of the Uda. Gala points ahead with pride:
— Look at that elongated island! It is our new fox-breeding ground.

The Karagasys are born hunters, even a boy of fifteen already has his own shotgun. They fulfill the required norm in furs, this entire village is one single hunter-kolkhoz. So, in order to augment their fur-production they introduced this innovation: they breed foxes.

We had not yet been around the entire settlement when it started to rain. I had not even noticed that the clouds had gathered.

I could not lavish enough praise upon the chief of the airport. Today the aeroplane, it seemed, could not make the return trip any more. Those who could not come with the morning flight, must wait for a change in the weather in Nizhneudinsk. And I am already here, collecting shaman-chants with my tape recorder.

It happened so that in order to escape the rain, we sought refuge in the tent of the younger brother of the Great Shaman and only after a few words the green light of the magic eye of the tape recorder began to sparkle.
We succeeded in winning over the old man before it could have occurred to him that he could protest.

While the disks were rotating smoothly, I looked around in the tent with genuine curiosity. How I used to envy Reguly and Jankó, the former Hungarian Siberia-researchers, for having been able to dwell in a bark-tent! And now, here I am, squatting in a tent, just like they.

A cozy semi-darkness envelops us, because only through the opening at the top, the smoke-outlet of the conical bark-tent, does some light penetrate into the tent. In the centre the logs, heaped upon the hearth, burn freely. A hook hangs above the fire, fastened to one of the posts of the tent, supporting a cauldron filled with boiling tea, tea with milk. Oblong, brick-shaped reindeer bags are placed along the walls of the tent.

Soft bearskins are spread near the fire, we may sit or even lie down on them. Bears still form a part of the everyday scene around here.

The walls of this primitive bark-tent enclose a small island, an anachronism destined to disappear soon, and the songs of bygone days, the magic chants of the late shaman, Bakhanayev, resound here perhaps for the last time.

Our host enjoys telling the tales of the past and about its beliefs, the pages of my notebook are filling up.

It is already late evening when we leave.

— Do come back again — I hear the hearty invitation from the distance.

We are going back to the wooden house of the geologists. They have kindly offered me to stay with them as long as they are there.

*

Day after day, we visit the oldest Karagas people with Gala.
I found out after a while that there were five clans and it also came to light that the shaman garment of each clan had been distinct: their headgears, their gowns, boots, drums and drumsticks all varied, even the tune of their chants were different.

In order to be able to establish a system of the distinctive characteristics, typical of the various clans, I had to know the shamanistic attire of each group. Therefore, I attempted to trace a shaman of each clan even if they did not live any more but in the memory of their descendants. This led me to follow up the track of about thirty Karagasy shamans, who exercised their vocation in the first quarter of this century.

The geologists questioned me curiously every evening about the results of my research that day.

— We have been here in the Sayans several times already, we know the rock-formations, the minerals and the geological peculiarities of this region, but we know very little about its inhabitants. We hardly meet any of them ever, we are always wandering about in the uninhabited forests and mountains. We have read something in general about shamanism, but we have no idea about the beliefs of the Karagasys.

Their interest proves to be very useful for me too, at least it prompts me every evening to reconsider the material I collected during the day and by doing so more meticulously than at other times, I have a chance to clear some confused details or obscure parts.

I find — I tell my geologist friends.— that in most cases only the members of certain families become shamans. This intrigues the researcher: is there such a concept as a shaman family? Consequently, is shamanism hereditary? And, if it is, could there be a perceivable regularity in the order of heredity?

Let us see: all the shamans of one clan originated from only two families, in one family there were two, in the other three shaman members. Three members of a family in another clan
became shamans. All the shaman members of the third clan came from the same family.

Let us go further.

In one of the famous shaman-families we find that not only the grandfather, but also the grand-daughter, and, in still another family, not only the living, present shaman member was shamanizing, but also his grandmother, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather were shamans as well.

The marriages of the Karagasy shamans seem also to point toward the existence of a shaman-family concept. The shamans married shaman-girls, the shaman-girls took shaman-husbands.

Within the Karagasy community therefore, the existence of shaman-families can be verified clearly and even the tendency to establish such shaman-families can be ascertained.

— Within one family, may the shaman talent be inherited? And, if so, is there any regularity in the hereditary laws? — asked one of the geologists.

The father of the great-great-grandfather of a certain family was a shaman — I continued — among the great-great grandparents, so they say, there were no shamans. But, one of the great-grandfathers and then the grandfather on the father’s side, were again shamans. The father had not become a shaman, but the son inherited the shamanistic powers of the grandfather.

Based upon this example, not an isolated case at all in the family histories of the Karagasys, we might conclude that the gift of shamandom is hereditary, in the six generations of the family we mentioned there was always a shaman member except in two (great-great grandparents, parents). At the same time, we might also draw the conclusion that each generation produces one shaman only, because there was only one in the Bolhoyev family among the four grandparents, one among the eight great-grandparents and one among the thirty-two parents of the great-great-grandparents.
But this is not the case. In another family of a different clan, two sons of the shaman Alexei – called Yegor and Innokentiy – became shamans. We might say: the shamanistic talent is inheritable. However, only these two were shamans among the five children of Alexei.

I also heard about several shaman families where although there were numerous descendants, children and grandchildren, not one of them became a shaman. For instance, in one family since the son born in 1874 and in another family since the son born in 1891, nobody became a shaman. However, if there is not always a replacement among the members of a shaman family, sometimes it happens that the child of a family, which lacks shaman ancestors altogether, suddenly becomes a shaman.

Therefore, we may state that shaman talent may be inherited, but it could also be acquired without having received it from a shaman ancestor. Consequently, the passing on of the shamanic capacity does not always exhaust all the possibilities offered by the following generation of a shaman family, on the other hand, it may sometimes transgress the boundaries of a clan.

– Well then, what conditions predestine an individual, according to the Karagasys, to become or not to become a shaman? – two members of the geologist group asked.

But, I could still not give an answer to them, that evening.

I had to continue my research first.

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As usual, Gala came to fetch me early in the morning. I wanted to question her mother about what she knew of becoming a shaman.

Her mother is a thin, elderly woman, she wears her hair parted in the middle and twisted into a bun in the back. By the way, although a woman, she is famous for being the best hunter among
the Karagasys, she holds the highest record among the hunters of
the Karagasy hunter-kolkhoz.

After thinking for a little while, she began to speak:

— Yes, my brother was a shaman. He became a shaman at the
age of eighteen. Prior to that, he became gravely ill. He had
visions, the spirits haunted him in his dreams and they persuaded
him to become a shaman. He had been ill for a year and was in a
very poor condition, because the spirits kept torturing him. He
could not go anywhere, not even to hunt, he stayed in bed all the
time. Finally, he agreed to become a shaman and then he found
relief at last.

While I was taking notes of the mother’s words, the daughter
kept looking out of the tent every once in a while and suddenly
she dashed outside.

By that time, I also perceived a loud, rattling sound and soon a
small reindeer-herd was trotting past the tent. Could this region
be so full of stones? I never noticed it. What else could cause the
hoofs of the reindeer to rattle so loudly, if it was not stones or
pebbles?

Gala soon came back, and with her, a man, who was rather
embarrassed. He was not young, neither was he old, he was in his
prime. I looked at him surprised. His hair was not black, only light
brown and in the reflection of the sun it looked nearly blond.
His eyes were hazel, not black. His upper eyelids were very dis-
tinctively outlined. His face was not the Central Asian type, I
could have taken him for a Hungarian peasant. Anthropology
calls this facial shape the Katanga Type, it is frequent among the
Karagasys.

— Let me introduce you to each other! This is Kokuiev, the kam,
and this is a Hungarian scientist who came here to study shaman-
ism — and first she pointed to the visitor and then to me.

I was afraid Gala might spoil the situation with her headfirst
plunge. She might scare this Kokuiev by revealing that I came
all this long way to meet him and people like him.

But it soon became evident that Gala knew his man. After the initial embarrassment, the man, who looked like a labourer, quietly began a conversation.

Yes, he had been a kam before, but he gave it up long ago. Now, he brought his reindere-herd from the mountains and he was anxious to get home, because he did not live in this village but in Nerkha.

— What a pity that you do not live here! It would have been invaluable for me to talk to you for a while about the things of the past.

— I could stay for an hour or so. Also, if you wished, you could come over to us. There is another old former kam there, he is my second neighbour.

I was very happy to receive such a kind invitation and I took advantage of the short time he offered. During that time, I might be able to find out how he became a shaman.

I waited no longer and asked him right away to tell me about it.

Kokuiev stared into the fire burning in the centre of the tent for quite some time. Was he hesitating, or was he trying to remember? I did not dare to disturb him and I too concentrated on the play of the flames.

Finally, he looked up at me and the words broke forth:

— I also became ill, when I was about to become a shaman. First my head began to ache, then my hands. Around full-moon my head was splitting with pain. I had been ailing for about three years. In the meantime the spirits came to visit me. While I slept, my tongue was chanting. It chanted like the shamans do. But I did not know anything about it. When I awoke, my mother and father and my sister told me: “You were chanting shaman songs.” After such occasions I always felt better for a few days. After three or four months the sickness overpowered me. My head was aching all the time and when I slept my tongue was chanting
shaman songs again. It went on like this, alternating every three to four months, for three years. One keeps suffering and suffering. When you want to rest or sleep, your tongue would be chanting. One does not know anything about it, because really the spirit is chanting. But not all the spirits chant equally well. Some chant beautifully, some chant hideously. The great spirit chants best. I was twenty-seven years old when I heard him chant. The little one, the little spirit used to come to me. He had flown into my mouth and then I used to recite shaman songs. When I had no more strength left to suffer, finally I agreed to become a shaman. And when I became a shaman, I changed entirely. Because, being a shaman turns one into quite a different person.

Our conversation became so animated that we continued it well over the promised time, for about two hours. The secrets of the Karagasy religious world were revealed to me, one after another.

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Kokuiev trotted away with his reindeer and I got hold of Gala’s mother, asking her to tell me who pieced together the shaman attire for her brother.
- The cap was made by my sister, the drumsticks by her husband and I made the dress.

I never even asked her whose handiwork was the drum, or the boots, I hurried to Gala’s aunt.

These were the words I entered with:
- I beg you, make me a shaman’s cap, just like the one you made for your late brother!

The kind-faced old woman looked at me somewhat perplexed, she was a little bit frightened by my request.
- I would like to take some pictures of the preparation of these articles – I added as an explanation.

I took the camera out from its case.
— Is your husband at home? We need him too.
— He is with the neighbours', I could fetch him. But, why do you need a man for making a cap? That is a woman's work!
— Oh, it is not because of the cap, it is because of the drumstick.

She went out to call her husband.

Within a few minutes the old “master” arrived home. We soon reached an agreement: he would carve the drumstick for me for thirty rubels and it would be exactly like the real one. We settled the price of sewing the cap at fifteen rubels.

They settled down at once to their unaccustomed work, they have not done it for a long time.

I zigzagged diligently between the two: photographing every phase of the preparation of the headgear and the drumsick.

Well, this kind of work can not be accomplished fast. The sun fell down behind the mountain-peak and interrupted our enthusiastic activity. But the memories of bygone days were brought to life by the old-time occupation. The stars were sparkling brightly when I left them.

My geologists impatiently awaited the latest results at our lodgings. My audience increased in the meantime. Today, at last, the aeroplane could take off at Nizhneudinsk and the other members of the expedition had arrived. The pretty lady geologist was also here who had been asked to give up her seat beside the pilot because of me. I asked for forgiveness jokingly:
— I suspected that I had taken the place of someone else, but I really had no idea it was yours.
— I forgive you only if you let me hear Bakhanayev’s chants. My colleagues were so enthusiastic about the excitement of shamanistic studies that I was truly impatient to hear about it all. However, I don’t believe it that you have been “shamanizing” until now, it is already eleven o'clock! Probably, you were busy courting some young Karagasy beauty!
Beehive-shaped liturgical headdress of a Karagasy shaman, representing the human face.
Only the chants of Bakhanayev, resounding from the tapes, put an end to the teasing remarks of the sharp-tongued geology student.

However, I might not be able to spare some unkind remarks either, if someone made me lose my seat on an aeroplane...

- Tomorrow I might show a shaman cap and a drumstick too, if they are ready!
- Well, you better urge your shamans because the day after tomorrow it would be too late!

Uncomprehendingly I looked at the geologists, their leader nodded:
- That's right! We take off at dawn, the day after tomorrow.

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Next morning, I informed Gala about the necessity of looking for quarters on account of the departure of the geologists.
- Come and live with us! I already talked it over with my mother.

I accepted gladly their kindness. Of course! Living under the same roof with the sister of a former shaman might supply me with further details, worth a fortune!

I went off to the house of my employés contentedly to continue photographing the details of their activity.

The sun stood high above our heads when I clicked my camera for the last picture. The preparation of shamanistic objects of no folk-group has ever been recorded on the site before. These two series will be quite unique.

In the afternoon I questioned Gala's mother and some other folks about the spirits. Again I forgot about the time, and darkness fell by the time I found my way home.

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The members of the expedition were still busy knotting ropes, sewing bread-sacks, preparing parcels of evenly distributed weight. They would be mountain-climbing for months, carrying their own provisions, tents, sleeping bags as well as the instruments necessary for geological research. The entire success depended greatly upon the efficiency of the preparations and a well-organized distribution of the parcels.

I was glad they had not yet retired.

— Where is the cap? If you let me see it, I may give you some supper! — the snappy geologist girl remarked.

An African hunter could not have been more triumphant with his trophy than I, when raising the feathery head-gear and the drumstick I held in my hands.

May I try it on? Are the Karagasy spirits going to swallow me if I do? — my adversary asked jokingly.

And not even expecting an answer, she snatched both from me and just like a North American Indian chief with his tomahawk, (to use another intercontinental simile), she danced around the room with them.

— Now you may sit down to the table, we left you something. But not much. At least this will teach you a lesson: it is forbidden to hang on the apron strings of the Karagasy girls until as late as eleven o’clock.

I helped myself modestly.

— I already forgave you for having behaved like a mole, — most likely she hinted at my “rooting her out” from the plane — I have not mixed any poison in your soup! You may ladle out more without any scruples!

But the encouragement was purely rhetorical, because by that time she had already filled up my plate herself.

— Ouch! I even get blisters because of you! — she blew her burnt finger.
Feathery headband of a Karaguta shaman with decorations resembling a human face, calling to mind the headdress of Indians.
— Cheer up! Tomorrow, at this time, I shall not cause you any more problems!

But her eyes did not reveal any joy over this prospect.

— Now let us hear, at last, the usual evening-report! — the leader of the expedition urged me.

Silence took over, the geologists sat up in their sleeping-bags, leaning on their elbows, and only the rattle of the hoofs of the reindeer-herds was audible from outside.

— The shamans are chosen by the spirits — I began — and they turn them into shamans. These spirits, according to the belief of the Karagasys, are of various kinds: they established qualitative distinctions and a ranking order for them.

According to the quality, they have been divided into two groups: black ones and white ones. The black spirits were wicked, while the white spirits were benevolent. The shaman, depending upon his having been chosen by a black or a white spirit, became a black or a white shaman. The black shamans also could do harm. The other shamans were afraid of him. Their garments were different from the white shamans': the gown was made from black material, the cylindrical ribbons hanging from it were also mostly black. The skin of a black bull had been stretched over their drum.

There was also a difference in rank among the shaman spirits, according to the Karagasys. There were great ones, medium and small ones among the white as well as among the black spirits. If the shaman was chosen by a great spirit, he became a great shaman, if by a small spirit, he became a small shaman.

The reason for the distinction in the ranking order of the Karagasy shamans was thus explained to me two days ago by Kokuiev, the shaman. According to another shaman, belonging to another clan — the relatives of the deceased told me — the number of spirits owned by the shaman was the cause of distinction in the rank of a shaman. He always used to say, as I was told, that he
was only a small shaman because he had only seven spirits, another shaman was a great one, because he had twenty-seven spirits.

- I think – I continued – that I may at last be able to give you a reply to the question I left un-ananswered the other day at our evening session.

- You mean, why one does or does not become a shaman? – asked the girl, much to my surprise, because she arrived only the day before and had not been present at the time the question came up.

- All shamans, whether they stem from a shaman family or not, become shamans at the wish of the spirits only. The great extent, to which the process of becoming a shaman is subordinated to the spirits can be demonstrated by the fact, that the goodness or the evilness of the spirit, as well as its might, or, with other words, the number of spirits he dominates, determine the future shaman’s becoming a black or a white one and also his rank. Not the quality of his shaman-ancestor is the decisive factor, he might not even have had any.

I was amazed at the attention of my audience, they were listening as if they were professional colleagues and not geologists.

- However, the spirits choosing the shaman might also be “inherited”. For instance, the younger sister of a shaman gave me the following account about her brother, and I repeated it word by word:

“Wassilij became a shaman at the age of eighteen. He inherited his father’s spirits, although Father never became a shaman himself. The shaman has to drink a lot of blood, reindeer-blood, when he becomes a shaman. Father had begged for reindeer-blood but he could not get any, therefore he was left out of shamandom.”

I also added that not only the fact of becoming a shaman was decided by the spirits. The whole attire of the shaman had to be prepared according to their wishes too.

- But this might only interest the professionals.
Tell us about it — the leader of the expedition encouraged me — at least our lady geologist will not leave us.

What do you think — interrupted us one of the younger members of the group, whom the others called "Fatty", not without reason — she already said that had she known that ethnographical research was such an exciting occupation, she would have rather chosen that instead of geology.

Yes, she definitely fell for the research of shamanism — added the leader of the expedition with feigned seriousness.

Or for the researcher... — quipped "Fatty".

But the flying boots of the lady in question, aimed at him, succeeded in shutting him up.

Come, let us go outside, if they are throwing things around — said the leader, and took me by the arm into the yard.

I was quite taken aback, when he put his hand on my shoulder and said:

I see you are rather short on funds. Please accept this from me, in the name of science. I can not give you more, but this much I can miss.

Before I was able to recover enough to find words for my gratitude and express my emotions, he stuck a hundred-ruble bill in my pocket and left me standing there, dumbfounded.

Up to now, I had no idea that the dew of the Siberian night may fall not only upon the leaves of grass, but also on eyelashes...

When I stumbled inside the house, it was dark and everybody was "profoundly" asleep.

For a long time I kept turning from one side to the other inside the sleeping-bag, borrowed from the geologists. They must have noticed, that the only thing I ate during the day was what had been offered to me by my Karagasy friends. The sun hat not even risen by the time the expedition started getting ready for the journey. The great bustle was soon over, only the loud calls of the reindeer drivers broke the silence. Not before long the path filled
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I have not heard from the expedition again. But, on one occasion, I was really grateful it was so. While I was visiting a distant settlement, I heard that a member of an expedition of geologists had had a bad accident: he had been hit and gravely injured by a gunshot. They brought him to the hospital in Alygdzher. When I returned from the settlement, I went straight to the hospital, to visit the unfortunate explorer. I was very much afraid to find one of my geologists there, who had grown so dear to my heart. But I found an entirely strange face among the pillows. Although I felt really sorry for the poor boy, I heaved a great sigh of relief.

Later, when I was already back in Budapest, among the letters forwarded by the Leningrad Ethnographical Institute, there was an article, cut out from a newspaper and entitled: On the Reindeer Path.

One of the geologists wrote a series of articles reporting the adventures of their expedition. The article sent to me dealt with the "Hungarian ethnographer".

The members of that expedition to the Sayans furnished me with an important datum, many months later and from a distance of many thousands of kilometers. Namely, the article, based upon my stories, mentioned the shaman cap worn by the gay geologist girl when she performed her "Indian Dance".

"... a shaman's cap decorated with the feathers of the capercaillie..." At that time, I noted carefully the name and the material of each part of the cap and fastened little slips of paper with the reference to each part with a thread. However, during the hardships of the journey the paper with the notes got lost and,
much to my regret, I could not recall what kind of a bird it was, the wing-feathers of which have been sewn on the band around the forehead. This detail, included in the article, enabled me to recollect the information.


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After the departure of the expedition I found myself in an entirely different world: the home of the younger sister of the late shaman.

When I lie down at night, the hairs of the bearskin prick and tickle and bother the skin of my face and the never subsiding odour of wild animals does the same to my nose. Nevertheless, I would not exchange my bed with anyone. An infinite silence reigns here, only the thicker twigs crackle among the flames in the fire every once in a while, exploding in playful sparkles. All the noises of the outside world die off around the tent too. Only seldom can you hear a reindeer low and the echoing answer of the laikas sounds like a distant wolf-howl. Or does it come really from wolves?

How varied are the melodies of the night! The horns of the ships broke the silence in Krasnoyarsk. I heard the dance-music from the entertainment-park behind the museum in Irkutsk, in Nizhneudinsk the aeroplane engines whirred and roared and here I was listening to the lowing of the reindeer herds.

Is there any other life as beautiful and rewarding, as that of an ethnographer? Especially, if he has the privilege of wandering through Siberia.

I was dreamily watching the strange designs of the smoke rushing towards the opening, I filled my lungs with the scent of the burning logs and twigs of pine and birch and I admired the contours of a birch-crust vessel, set off by the contrast of the shadowy walls of the tent.
Yes, formerly the cooking utensils were carved from the rind of the birch-trees. They cut a horizontal line around the trunk of the birch, at the bottom as well as at the top, and then with a vertical line they connected the two incisions and carefully peeled the soft crust from the trunk. These sheets were then used for the quadratic and cone-shaped pots and boxes. Milk and various foodstuffs, or the sewing equipment have been kept in these.

Not only the tree-rind had been used for such purposes, but also other materials, namely, animal skins. The hide of the shanks of the reindeer was cut and sewn and converted into brick-shaped bags for carrying weight, these were always hung in pairs when they loaded their pack-animals.

They were dangling, one on each side of the pack-saddle made of wood, but they had to be filled carefully, so as to have the weight evenly distributed.

They also use leather bags made of one single piece of skin. One kind is especially decorative, because it is covered with light spots. It is the result of a rather lengthy procedure. They kill a cow or reindeer in calf, cut the unborn young out of its mother and cutting its head off they skin it pulling off the hide in one piece. The opening at the neck becomes the mouth of the bag, the place of the legs is decorously sewn together. Housewives keep pieces of leftover fabrics in them. In the simpler bags they keep flour.

An unknown world also reveals itself in the kinds of food. Not only their raw materials are different to those we use, reindeer milk, cream of reindeer milk, bear meat and so on, but also the ways of preparing them.

The son of my hostess came home one night with a couple of large, and for me, entirely unknown fishes. He threw some fresh logs on the glimmering fire and then, with his sharp knife, carved some spits. He made them of birch-wood, because – as he remarked – it gives a pleasant taste to the meat. He cut up the bellies
of the twitching animals, with a gesture still preserved from the nomadic past, turned their insides out and threw it to his eagerly awaiting laïkas. Then he fastened the fishes, skin and all, on the spits stuck in the ground around the fire. The writhing prey, pierced through by the oblique poles, was placed exactly above the flames. Within a few minutes he was already taking off the freshly roasted fish from the spits, peeling the skin off the white meat in one piece, like we peel the staniol wrapping from the triangular cheese in Budapest.

And, if we wanted some bread with the reindeer milk? The old woman pulled out a flat elk antler from a corner, placed it on the floor and already she was taking the flour-bag off the hook. After strewing some flour on the flat plate of the antler, just as if it were a pastry board, she sprinkled it with water from the quadrangular birch-rind pot. If she wanted to favour us, she poured some reindeer milk from the cylindrical pot into the mixture. She was already kneading it and throwing thicker logs upon the fire in the centre of the tent. Why did she need all those embers? This I understood after she was ready with the dough. She scraped away the glowing firebrand. She placed the roll-size dough-heaps on the heated place of the fire and then swept back the live carbon carefully, covering the little rolls with a burning hot pyre.

After a short while she could already take them out: the ash-baked rolls (Hungarian “pogácsa”) were ready.

I remembered the Rumanian tale: The Miser.

The old woman gets up, she strews cornflour into the kneading trough, she pours warm water over it and begins to knead the dough (turtă). As soon as she is ready, she rolls it out on the board and smoothens it nicely. Then she sweeps the fireplace, places the turtă over it, covers it with embers and hot ashes and bakes it well...
In the meantime I became more familiar not only with the past world of the Karagasy but also with the late, one-time shaman.

Now it became apparent that his sister, my hostess, even remembered his songs. My tapes were rapidly filling with the texts of the chants, recited at the time of full moon, new moon and at the departure of the birds of passage.

At last I have learned the authentic story, how her brother became a shaman, which began at the time when their father, old Michael, was still alive.

Father Michael was an orphan, both his father and his mother were dead and his aunt had brought him up. He began to shamanize at the age of eighteen. He kept singing and chanting all the time, reciting shaman songs.

Then his aunt asked him:
- Listen, do you want reindeer-blood? Is that why you began to shamanize? - and she gave him no blood. - Go to the rich people, ask them for blood!

Michael asked reindeer-blood from the wealthy, but nobody gave him any. Then he begged some red cloth, suitable for a shaman cap.
- What do you want the red cloth for? Do you want it to hang it on the door of the birch-crust tent? - But they gave him no red cloth either.

Then he began to shamanize again. He chanted for months. He spread the skin of a musk-deer on the ground and slept resting his head on the saddle of a reindeer. While he slept, he kept chanting and chanting, chanting shaman songs. However, his urge to chant began to wane and he chanted less and less, finally he gave up shamanizing altogether.

Then he got married. He fathered twelve children, eleven daughters and only one son, and that was Wassilij.

And, when Wassilij reached his eighteenth year, he felt he would like to shamanize. His parents were astonished, because his father had also been eighteen years old when he began to shamanize. But Wassilij did not ask for blood, he did not need it because his father, at the same age, had not received reindeer-blood either.

When his headpiece was made, only a narrow red band ran
around the forehead and it represented solely his own blood. Instead of the long, wide, red ribbon a yellow coloured one was sewn onto it.

The shamans of other clans wore their caps with a wide, red ribbon hanging down from it, because the wealthy clans could afford to give their shamans plenty of reindeer-blood to drink.

* My notebooks filled one after the other and every day I had less unused reels of recording tape left.

The shaman’s head-piece, the garment, the kerchief and the boots of the brother of my hostess bore no more secrets, his drum, his drumstick, as well as his chants and his ceremonies, were not shrouded by mystery either any more.

Little by little I found out everything I could, also about the dresses and the activities of other shamans along the Uda. It was time for me to set forth and visit the other Karagasy shamans too, on the banks of the Nerkha.

One evening I made arrangements with a hunter to take me across the taiga on his reindeer, to reach the settlement. We would leave in the morning.

When I put my head out of the tent, thick fog covered the valley. My hostess greeted me with a smile:

- You chose good weather for the journey across the taiga.

I thought at first, that she was sarcastic, as I could not see anything else but the fog, and I had difficulty in finding even that familiar spot on the bank of the Uda where I used to wash in the mornings. But I was not even halfway through when the fog, as if upon a magic command, lifted suddenly. The sky was sparkling blue.

The hunter was already waiting in front of our tent with his four reindeer. Two were for the luggage and two for us. I measured suspiciously the thin-legged beasts: they were hardly any larger than a young doe, how would they be able to bear the weight of their riders?
As I prepared to “jump” into the saddle, an astonished Gala stopped me and motioned me to wait. She led the animal to a tree-stump.

- You cannot mount a reindeer like a horse! You have to look for a stone or a tree-stump first and standing on it you may then descend into the saddle.

- All right, I’ll do so — and I was already “descending”. I could not have been seated for more than a second, when I was already getting up from the ground with aching limbs. The saddle was swinging underneath the belly of the reindeer.

- I’ll look for a higher “step” — I said, and led my tame bull to a stone near-by.

The unglorious scene repeated itself a second time. I managed to fall upon a sharp rock, sticking out of the ground in such a manner, that I was unable to utter a word for a few minutes.

I did not experiment a third time. I preferred to keep in step with the reindeer.

- Well, we would have to dismount anyhow at the shore of the Uda and it is not really worth while to get into the saddle for this short time — said the hunter, looking at me rather baffled, trying to cover up my motives.

With good reason too: here I was, a grown-up man and I was unable to mount the tame reindeer. The children of this region learn to “ride” before walking. However, I did not feel like giving any further explanations at all. The reindeer-caravan got going, and the distance between us and the waving Karagasy friends, was growing.

* 

At the bank of the Uda, I should have fed the fire with green leaves while my guide went to fetch the ferry-man.

He put me in charge of keeping our uninvited guests away, the horseflies, gnats and midges, lest the animals, while trying to avoid their bites jumping and scratching, would shake off our packages.
An order is an order. I noticed a dry pine-tree, not very far away and started to brake off some dry branches, first the smaller twigs, then the larger boughs. At last the small pyre was built. Now let us get out the matches. I lighted one: no results. Sure, it must be the wind. I had not thought about this before. I tried to protect the flame with my palms, but it went out again. The third, the fourth, the tenth . . .

I stood there quite bewildered. "Greenhorn in the Jungle" could have been written under the snapshot, if there had been somebody there to take one.

But I would not give up. I quickly took off my shirt and fabricated an ingenious wind-screen from it.

There was a slight, but encouraging result: one little twig caught fire with a promising flame. Then it went out.

This happened again, five, no, ten times.

My vanity began to suffer from these failures. The fire must be burning before the Karagasy hunter returned!

Would it be possible, that he issued this "order" so that he could laugh again at the "greenhorn Siberian"?

I emptied all my pockets. An empty cigarette-package, a tramway ticket from Irkutsk that I forgot to throw away, half of a number of Pravda, the Eastern Siberian Edition. Now then, beat me this time! — I bragged. Well, it did.

Now I broke down. I had used up all my paper and the fire was still not burning.

I decided upon a last experiment: I selected the already carbonized branches supposing that at least those were dry. I got out of the parcel-bag on the reindeer one of my empty notebooks and another box of matches, and began to manufacture a kind of firebomb not patented yet: one page of a note-book, a soothy pine-twigs placed upon it and finally a match thrown in for good measure. Now I rolled and twisted it up.

It took me only a few seconds to produce sixty fire-bombs from
the sixty-page notebook. I had to hurry, the Karagasy could have returned any moment now and what would he say if the fire would still not burn?

To my great surprise: the fire caught. (I must confess: in the meantime I had been blowing it at the top capacity of my lungs and fanned it too, with my shirt.)

Just as if I would have obtained this wonderful result using one single match, I lay down beside my hard-fought-for treasure with an innocent face.

What has to be, shall be: the reindeer have really calmed down.

But I could not enjoy the fruit of my labour for long: the hunter was back already with the ferry-man.

- Why have you put leaves on instead of moss? The moss smokes much better – he said, looking at the fire.

After throwing a glance at me he added quietly:

- It is lucky that the Uda is right here. At least you can clean up.

I went to the water feeling every bone in my still aching back. The huntsman was right: I could have competed with any chimney-sweep who had finished his daily work.

We packed the load, carefully balancing it, into the boat and our beasts swam after us, directed by their halters. Only their heads were visible: they looked like enormous stag-beetles on the surface of the water.

My attempt to mount the reindeer on the other side of the river had not brought any more success than my first trial. So I stuck to my old system: I set out on foot on the crackling path.

The slant-eyed Karagasy led the reindeer with a sure hand, we were advancing in the forest in a single file, like geese.

I heard in one of the tents at Alygdzher, how the Karagasys acquired their name: when they are crossing the taiga with their reindeer, they look like black geese advancing in a single file. Kara means black and the word gas could be a somewhat mis-
pronounced variation of the Russian *gus* = *goose* word. But a visi-
tor, who had been present at the time of the conversation, correct-
ed this, according to him *gas* derived from the word *kas* which
means *duck* in the language of the Karagasys.

Another old man, however, told me that the first Russian around
here met a Karagasy man called *Karagas* and he gave this name
to the whole group of people.

One thing is certain though: the name must be of foreign origin
because the Karagasy call themselves *Tofa*. The information I
received from the old folks threw no light on anything else but
the fact that the Karagasy name can not be explained on the
basis of folk etymology. Our road presents more and more sur-
pises. It seemed as though a wounded beast had toppled into this
spring: its water was the colour of blood.

— *Kyzyl Sug*. Red water. — The hunter answered my unspoken
question.

We hardly clatter along for more than five minutes, and we
wade across a pitch-black stream.

— *Kara Sug*. Black water. —

Slender cedar-pines and river birch trees surround us. Among
the roots I behold little “flamelets” of dark yellow petals, also
*scarlet* and *pink* lillies of the valley. I have never seen any of these
before.

The water, from the countless springs, collects over the down-
trodden, deep-lying path. We advance in the soft mud. Much to
my amazement, I keep hearing the same rattling noise as before . . .
Do the hoofs of the reindeer produce this noise not only upon the
rocky paths?

The smiling Karagasy hunter solves the riddle: the rattling noise
is not caused by the hoofs of the reindeer but by their knees. It is
the sound of their tendons when in motion.

A great storm must have raged in this region a few years ago.
Large and small tree-stumps and trunks are lying scattered about,
uprooted or cut in half – exactly across the path. They make a hurdle-racer out of the traveller. The first few dozens are still intriguing. The second hundred appear monotonous, but the second thousand are already exhausting.

But, if there were only the stumps to reckon with! At the beginning I counted conscientiously all the rivulets and springs crossing our path, but very soon I lost count. Were there only thirty or perhaps even a hundred? You may jump over the first, the second might be crossed by stepping from one stone to another sticking out of the water, there might be a pine-log laid across the third, upon which you had to advance like a tight-rope-walker. But no wanderer could remain dry. In case of a wider stream there is no other choice: you must wade across it. I do not mind at all a knee-high, cold mountain-stream any more but if the water embraces me around the waist, my teeth start chattering.

The forest is marvellous and it is full of strange sounds. A persistent whistle is accompanying us already for some time. What kind of a bird could be following our track?

After a while I notice some brownish thing on a tree. It might be a squirrel . . . but no, it cannot be a squirrel, it is chirping!

The laikas, barking loudly, rush to the tree jumping as high as three meters, carried away by their vigour. The little animal looks down quietly from the tip of a protruding branch and answers their wild barking with a mocking whistle.

I learned during this journey that the striped squirrel whistles like a bird.

On the bank of one of the rivers an enormous white stone sparkles among the trees. My guide waves me to have a closer look at it because it is a shaman rock. Decaying tree-branches cover it, coloured ribbons are tied to them. Have the shamans at one time offered their sacrifices here or were these branches thrown by the passers-by as an offering to the spirit of this rock? My young hunter could not give me the answer.
Karagasy shaman garment with "ribo" on the chest
The sun had already passed its meridian and the lights glittering on the tree-trunks project never-seen beauty, everywhere I look.

I notice for the first time that the birch-trees - just like our reindeer - are "shedding". Their trunks are like fluffy catkins. The cedar-pines are growing beards. Some parasitic moss covers their branches like fine-meshed, emerald lace.

The journey through the taiga is beautiful, but also a test of patience. Our bags slip forward on the back of the reindeer, or they slide down sideways. Now we must take off our shoes, wade through the water, put our shoes on again and keep marching. If the bottom of the stream is stony, the rhythm varies: shoes off, socks off, shoes on, wade, shoes off, pour out water, stockings on, shoes on, march!

If only my doctor in Irkutsk, who treated my feet, could see me!

What happened? Have the bags slipped off again? No, my guide is not re-arranging them, he is unloading.

- We shall rest a while to let the animals graze.

Immediately I stretch out upon the soft, thick, dark green moss.

- Are you tired? We have only gone about halfway...

- Well, I feel those twenty-five kilometers! Our country is flat, and not as mountainous as this region. And all the streams! Such a lot of rivers!

I do not confess the main reason: the burning, tormenting pain of my toes.

- Let us have something to eat too, while the animals are grazing.

- I don’t feel hungry but I am rather thirsty.

- I’ll make some tea.

I turn my head curiously towards the hunter. How many matches would he use to light the fire?

But first he tethers the reindeer: he fastens the narrow leather strap tied to their right antler by which they were led and by which he held them in single file, slipping it between their front legs through to their left hind-leg.
Then he walks up to an ancient cembra-pine and I am just going to close my eyes, so as not to bear witness to one of the most intimate human activities, but no, he is only tearing off a bunch of well-developed “beards” from the branches.

Barely moving a finger, he already put it aflame with a match produced from his pocket. He kicks a few dry twigs over the flames and before you could even count to two, there is such a bonfire ablaze that I begin to worry about the safety of the old cembra-pine-tree.

With my innermost thoughts I apologize to the hunter! Of course he had no intention of making fun of my clumsiness when he told me to build a fire on the bank of the Uda! It must be inconceivable to this man, that someone should be unable to build a bonfire with a single match, in the depths of the taiga.

In the meantime he cuts a longer branch and sticks it into the ground beside the fire. He goes away for a moment but soon he is back, carrying a waterfilled cauldron. He tilts the pole he fabricated towards the fire and places the handle of the cauldron on it. I am lost in wonder again: the cauldron hangs exactly above the centre of the fire. And what I have not grasped to this day is, that it does not slip although the inclining pole is completely smooth.

I had a chance to ponder about many things... How degenerated are the senses of the civilized city-dwellers, how many of our instincts became dull...

Although I am not a tea-drinker, I soon sipped the hot tea with great pleasure. We could not rest for long, we still had half the journey before us.

— There is one more large river, the Chuglym, to cross and then we have to climb up a mountain. The rest is nothing, we just have to descend on the other side.

(But it would not be any less than twenty to twenty-five kilometers, I warned myself.)
Soon our caravan follows the meandering course of the Chuglym. This is the holy river of the Karagasys, where they used to offer their sacrifices to the spirits in old times.

- Where? Do you know the place?
- Up there, on the top of that cliff.

And at this moment, the black face of my hunter turns ashen. His eyes are fixed upon the sacrificial cliff. I am startled too: as if something stood on that rock! One thing is certain though: it is not the master-spirit of the River Chuglym!

- It is only a bear... Only a brown bear... – sighs the hunter with relief.

But if I had a choice between two evils, I would definitely prefer the mountain spirit!

Unfortunately the hunter could not entirely regain his calm after this shock and as a result he drove the reindeer pack straight into the rushing river.

It was too late to question whether it would not have been better to take out the tape recorder, the camera and the negatives from the saddle-bags, to prevent their getting wet. I do not know, how it happened, to this day, all I saw was, that one of the animals toppled. It must have stepped on a stone, or into a hole. And then it began to swim just as when we were crossing the Uda. But now, the saddle-bags were still on its back. It stumbled, it snorted in the overpowering waves of the current.

It had been the second animal in the line, the one loaded with the technical equipment.

We dashed across the river, not minding at all, where exactly the ford was. We tried to catch up with the reindeer on the other side. It was also trying to reach the shore. We cut in front of it at the bend of the river, running back into the water.

Finally we pulled the reindeer out, and everything it had on its back was soaking wet. I attempted as best I could to dry the crumbling batteries and the films on the sun-drenched rocks. I was
distressed: would the tape recorder function with these batteries? Would the pictures, taken with these films, ever come out?

It was nightfall before we reached the settlement of Nerkha.

My clothes had already dried on me in the meantime and I did not even take them off until I lay down to sleep.

*

In the morning Kokuiev accompanied me on my visit to his neighbour, Bolkhoyev, the shaman. He agreed to work with me too.

There was only one problem: the norm! In vain I kept repeating that I would be willing to pay for their time, this offer could still not solve the problem of their absence from work.

It was the same last year in the case of the Sagay shaman, Kizlasov, again I applied to the president of the kolkhoz. I asked him not to assign any work to these two men for a few days (finally it took one week), so that they could spend their time with me.

This time also my request had been granted.

From this day on, I spent day and night with my shamans. Indeed, I might say that the nights too, because I stayed with the Kokuiev family.

My notes increased considerably and my tapes swallowed the songs by the dozen. I recorded, among others, Kokuiev's chant for the occasion of the initiation of the shamanic garment, which in the Karagasy language began, as follows:

Tüngür tonam óroj dola berdi óroj
bola cserda óroj dola berdi óroj
bola cserden óroj surap delges óroj
bola csilning óroj sómir ajda óroj
tüngür tonam óroj dola berdi óroj
ejim ejim óroj ejim ejim óroj

(Literal transcription of the text included in the original, Hungarian edition of this book.)
Shaman beating his drum
I reproduce it without punctuation, like modern Western poetry, because this incessantly rambling, capricious text could hardly be marked with commas or periods and if there ever was a freely associative creation at all, then it is the shaman chant.

A liberal English translation, in accordance with the original rhythm, is introduced here in its tiresome entirety, in order to give an idea about all that is included in a shaman chant, always improvised, but rooted firmly in the traditions of the past, and to demonstrate how many times a motif is picked up just to be dropped again, and how it intermingles reality and extasy:

Drum and gown mine óroj already made óroj
see at this place óroj already made óroj
see to this place óroj I came to beg óroj
see in this year óroj in the green month óroj
drum and gown mine óroj already made óroj
ejim ejim óroj ejim ejim óroj
I am charming óroj and entrancing óroj
I shall set forth óroj I shall set forth óroj
all the children óroj are in good health óroj
chanting my words óroj I am charming óroj
my drum it was óroj taught by people óroj
yet the sole kam óroj only I am óroj
I shall grab now óroj my own good drum óroj
I am charming óroj and entrancing óroj
before I chose óroj to become kam óroj
I began here óroj to chant and charm óroj
see at this place óroj three years ago óroj
in the green month óroj see it reborn óroj
drum and gown mine óroj are ready now óroj
this drum of mine óroj taught by people óroj
who feasted with óroj a lavish feast óroj
I shall set forth óroj blessing ye all óroj
ejem ejem óroj ejem ejem óroj
this drum of mine óroj taught by people óroj
seven good men óroj kept teaching it óroj
so I began óroj magic and charm óroj
I have set forth óroj going southward óroj
I was charming óroj and entrancing óroj
ejem ejem óroj ejem ejem óroj
drum and gown mine óroj I cast the spell óroj
since three years now óroj I am charming óroj
now and ever óroj I am charming óroj
I do know where óroj spirits abide óroj
gown and drum mine óroj already made óroj
six good people óroj kept teaching it óroj
and the seventh óroj I have become óroj
I am charming óroj and entrancing óroj
at the homestead óroj of the masters óroj
I am charming óroj and entrancing óroj
going my way óroj throughout the night óroj
ejim ejim óroj ejim ejim óroj
I shall go forth óroj to that place there óroj
to the homestead óroj of the master óroj
and from that place óroj when I come back óroj
I shall then be óroj like any man óroj
see at this place óroj at the high top óroj
my drum has been óroj taught by three men óroj
and the seventh óroj I have become óroj
throughout the night óroj I am charming óroj
drum and gown mine óroj already made óroj
drum and gown mine óroj already made óroj
and at this place óroj at the time when óroj
my drum and gown óroj were made ready óroj
they have feasted óroj they have drunk much óroj
for gown and drum óroj were then finished óroj
in the green month óroj with the new moon óroj
I grab them now óroj my drum and gown óroj
I am charming óroj and entrancing óroj
I shall set forth óroj to go southward óroj
I shall be tall óroj I shall be long óroj
I am charming óroj and entrancing óroj
all the homesteads óroj of the masters óroj
I shall visit óroj right to the last óroj
I shall not stop óroj through seven seas óroj
I shall have fame óroj as a great bard óroj
I go forth hence óroj to all corners óroj
I shall enchant óroj and entrance too óroj
drum and gown mine óroj are ready now óroj
three years I had óroj waited and watched óroj
now my habit óroj ready at last óroj
in the moon phase óroj right at full moon óroj
my kam-garment óroj of pure white silk óroj
seven back-bones óroj on my garment óroj
already made óroj already made óroj
to the last stitch óroj already made óroj
three years went by óroj awaiting it óroj
see in this year óroj in the green month óroj
of pure white silk óroj my kam-garment óroj
already made óroj already made óroj

The words óroj and ejim-ejim are interjections like the words oh!,
hey!, heigh-ho! or alas! in English. Green month is the Karagasy
name for the month of May.

* 

During the prolonged period of living together with the shamans,
I became more and more convinced that one of my favourite plans might be carried out.

The collections, gathered to this date, have outlined only a general picture of the shamanistic beliefs of certain ethnic groups. However, it would be of utmost importance to get acquainted with the whole knowledge of one, or another, individual shaman: learning all about his concept of the universe, to record all his chants, to describe thoroughly every one of his spirits, to perpetuate all details of his ceremonies.

I made a few remarks about this plan to my shamans in general.

— Come and stay with us for longer, you could even live with us for half a year if you wish and then I could tell you all I know. Of course you would have to ask me questions otherwise I would not remember all about these faraway, bygone matters anymore — said Kokuiiev to me. The other shaman encouraged me in the same manner.

These shaman-monographies, however, would be of real value only if I wrote down everything word by word and if the account of the shaman would be rendered in his own language. This required not only time, but also the co-operation of a linguist, who could transcribe the Karagasy texts from the tapes, and would also be able to prepare the translation. In other words, it should be a person who knew the Karagasy language like a native.

If the Karagasy language was really as similar to the language of the Soyots as it appeared according to the text-excerpts published in the available literature, then with the cooperation of one of the colleagues of the Soyot Research Institute I might be able to accomplish this work. But would the Soyots understand the ancient texts of the Karagasy shaman-chants? This was only possible to find out in Kyzyl.

Taking advantage of my stay here, I could not withstand the temptation to search for an answer to the question: why are such considerable losses suffered by the Karagasy reindeer-herds, caused by the wolves?
My friends mumbled hesitatingly at first, when I brought the subject up.

— Tell me, what is the name of this beast in your language? — I asked.

— We say: kudurugtig.
— And what is the word for tail in Karagasy?
— It is kudurug.

The -tig ending is a common suffix in the Turkic languages and it means: to be supplied, equipped with something. (In English the corresponding suffix is -y, e.g. horn, horny; hair, hairy; etc.)

Therefore, the name of the animal literally translated would be: tail-wearing, be-tailed. It is the exact simile of the Hungarian word farkas (wolf), derived from the work farok, meaning tail. (The suffix in question is -as in Hungarian.)

This is a protective denomination, they do not want to name the beast itself, only circumscribe it in this manner when talking of it.

Because of its long tail, it became “the-one-with-a-tail” just like in Hungarian the deer became the horned one, szarv meaning horn: szarvas meaning deer, referring to its antlers. These protective names were given to animals which commanded special respect.

I explained this to the two Karagasys.

— You are right. The kudurug should not be called by its name. We do not raise a hand against it either.

They do not remember any more why it is so. Or, do they only want to keep it a secret? Possibly some Karagasy ancestor had been fed by a wolf, just like Romulus and Remus. And would it not be logical, to forbid to kill one’s ancestor or adoptive parent?

*
A month is quite a long span of time but it passed very swiftly. I must leave the region of the Nerkha.

I am on my way back along the rattling paths again, but this time, as a proud rider. I learned all the tricks of mounting a reindeer. What was the secret?

I answer with the words of a young Karagasy woman who told me with a mischievous smile:

- You must stay put in the saddle!

As soon as I arrived in Alygdzher, I went to book my reservation for the flight. I asked the commander of the airport to make an advance booking and notify me at the settlement as soon as the aeroplane arrived. My whereabouts was no secret to anyone there, and I would be able to reach the airport in time.

After everything had been well arranged, I went back to collect more ethnographical data.

Early in the afternoon, two days later, a little Karagasy girl came running to me:

- Hurry up, go to the airport!

I closed my notebook, put my pen in my pocket and hastened to fetch my knapsack from my lodgings.

I shall never forget how affectionately my Karagasy hosts saw me off. They all accompanied me to the airport.

In the last moment the Sayans presented their parting gift: a storm broke loose. Our plane was flying towards Nizhneudinsk amongst heavy clouds and pouring rain. I laughed at this naughtiness: if the weather in Alygdzher and Nizhneudinsk permitted flying, then — it seemed to me — all the fury of the Sayans could not do any harm. However, I felt relieved only when our plane was already rolling on the grass of the airfield.

I went directly to the station. I was lucky: within an hour I could stretch out comfortably on the bed in a compartment of the express-train and admire the Siberian landscape, swiftly passing by.

In the morning, I was already trotting along the streets of Ir-
kutsk. After cleaning up, I went to the hospital immediately, to see the doctor who treated my feet.

- Well, haven't the bears of the Sayans devoured you?
- We have a Hungarian proverb: lightning does not strike nettle!
- And how did your feet behave?
- That's what I came to see you about.
- Are they much worse?
- Look at them, please.

I took off my rubber-soled shoes. The doctor was shaking his head in disbelief.

- If I had not have treated them myself, I wouldn't believe it!
  My toes had healed perfectly!
- Wading in the rivers did a lot of good!
- Have you had your share of that too?
- Only in the forest.

- Well, from now on, I shall never put my patients with such feet upon the operating table, but rather send them to the Sayans... But next time you should not be so irresponsible!

And his voice sounded rather concerned.
BRONZE AGE SHAMANS

They kill the calf if it gets lost in the taiga. They penetrate its snout and devour the soft cartilagous parts. They cluster around its eyes and it tries, in vain, to chase them away by blinking, they ravenously eat up the soft eyelids. They invade the edges of its mouth, and if it sticks out its tongue to lick them off, they come back a hundred, no, a thousand times again, to suck and devour the slobberly, bleeding flesh. Don’t you believe it? But indeed, it is true! A few hours and they bite the animal to death. No calf ever comes back alive from the forest.

I was already beginning to choke from the smoke. The flaming branches of the cedar-pine and the birch were covered with wet moss and a thick, dense cloud of smoke billowed above the campfire. But nothing helped. Even if you lean over the smoke until the tears stream from your eyes, they still feast on the nape, on your neck. The smallest are the greediest. The gnats sting only, but these midges bite. Yes, now I began to believe the story of the old Buryat: they could destroy the stray calf lost in the taiga.

And what a strategy they employ! They enter by the open end of the boots and within seconds they are biting the soles, they hide under the straps of the suspender and they bite you so that no one may find them at once, so that they might have their fill before being chased away. There is no use applying any “potent”
repellent to your face, neck, or arms, nothing hinders this blood-thirsty kind. Such are the Siberian relatives of those innocent little Hungarian wine-flies which dance with a lively flutter above the glass with leftover wine, back home.

In the swamps, the slimy puddles breed them and there are countless quantities of these insects around the Oka. This is where we are now: looking for cliff drawings, along the banks of this swift little river.

The people of the villages around the Oka know since time immemorial, that there are drawings on the rockwalls on the shores. They are remnants of ancient cultures having withstood decay: neither the stone-crumbling Siberian frost, nor the continental summer’s burning heat, no wind, no snow, not even the quakes could destroy them.

But a sea is in the making in this region: the Bratskiy Sea. It is the water-collecting basin of a new Siberian waterworks. Man, enlisting nature’s powers into his service, destroys the memories of the ancestor’s homage to the very same forces of nature! This is why we are here now: to photograph and to copy the artistic creation of ancient man before it would disappear beneath the waves of the artificial sea, in order to save it, at least in a museum.

We had already been travelling by truck for three days. First, we were to go northward along the Angara, then, to turn into the valley of the Oka, one of the affluents of the Angara. One of the most prominent archeology-professors of Siberia is sitting next to me on this jolting vehicle. He is my “boss”

How did this come about?

*

It began in Leningrad. It was, when I had returned from my first Siberian journey, I had been occupied with a less than entertaining activity: I was copying by the hundreds and the thousands the monotonous inventory slips.
One day, there was somebody knocking energetically on the door and a tall, fair-haired, middle-aged man entered cheerfully. He walked up to my desk and asked to use the telephone. On the table, there was a letter supported by the calendar, addressed to me from home. The visitor wanted to talk to the director of the Institute, but the switchboard was busy.

- The telephone in the adjoining room has a direct line to the director's office – I said trying to assist him.
- I can wait for the line here, it will not take long – he replied, smiling.

After he had finished his conversation with the director, he pointed at my name on the envelope:

- Is this your name?
- Yes.
- I am Okladnikov.

This is how I met Alexei Pavlovich Okladnikov, the famous archeologist of Siberia, member of the Academy of Sciences, for the first time.

He pulled up a chair at my desk and right away he began to talk about the research of shamanism, as if we had known each other for a long time. He had read my essays and agreed with my conclusions and he said, he very much liked my system of co-ordinating and simultaneously using the results obtained by ethnography, linguistics and archeology.

He departed, promising me a copy of his books and articles.

I have not heard from him for weeks.

One day, I had been working in the library, sorting out the books to be microfilmed, when I was called to the telephone.

- This is Okladnikov. Could you come down to the Siberian Department for a minute? I have brought you the books I promised.

Quite a mountain of books towered upon my desk. They were
all the works of Okladnikov, many of them being out of stock in the bookshops.

I was very happy with the books, not only because they were otherwise not available works, but also they meant that Professor Okladnikov had not forgotten about me among his thousand obligations.

Suddenly, I had an audacious idea: I should request his assistance in my plan to go to Siberia for a second time. I knew, no matter how much I tried to economize, I would never be able to afford the costs from my own resources.

The idea did not appear to be hopeless, I knew the Siberian Expedition of Okladnikov was a “millionaire” expedition. My association with professional circles had been intimate enough to know that the yearly budget of this archeological expedition came to one million rubels. It might be possible, that he would be willing to enlist me as a co-worker, let us say, for a month, at least. Then, the costs of the journey, from Leningrad to Irkutsk and back, would be taken care of.

I became more and more excited about this possibility. If I would not give it a try, it would be impossible for me to follow the track of the shamans this year. And if he refused? Could I risk that?

But for the sake of a Siberian trip everything must be hazarded — I told myself, trying to suppress my misgivings.

After all, I would be confronted by a scientist who would not consider my attempt being motivated by impertinence and surely would not condemn me for it. Even if my request might not be granted, it would appear logical to him. Whatever his answer would be, I ought not be ashamed of it.

When he was leaving I accompanied him to the corridor.

— Alexei Pavlovich!
— Yes!
— Perhaps I did not mention to you before: I went to Siberia
last summer, collecting ethnographical material.

– But I knew it, our mechanic told me about it.
– I did not know that.
– Still, it is true. He repaired your tape recorder in Irkutsk when it broke down. I think you had just returned from the Buryat region at that time. I remember this little episode very well. As soon as you arrived to the city, tired, and still covered with the dust of the road, you hurried straight away to the museum and looked for a mechanic, instead of first thinking about your comfort and rest. Whoever places a broken-down tape recorder before everything else and does not even bother to dust his boots, take a bath or have a good sleep first, must really consider his work to be of utmost importance. Siberia needs such researchers. This is why I remembered you.

Oh, how good it was to hear this appreciative opinion of the famous professor! It proved to me that it was the right door I intended to knock at, when I decided to ask him to include me in his next expedition.

As a matter of fact, he was not even surprised on hearing my request.

– With pleasure – he answered immediately. Then he added thoughtfully: – But some kind of an official document will still be necessary.

– Should I obtain one from the Ethnographical Institute or from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences?
– Apply for it at the Museum, that is the place where you work. And someone might also sign it on behalf of the Academy.

Now I would have liked to do something really great, or, at least, run along all the corridors and through all the departments of the Ethnographical Institute of the Academy and shout so that all could hear that I am able to go to Siberia this year for a second time, I may wander about in the land of the shamans again!
— We could take you for a month to Siberia and, naturally, we would pay for your travelling expenses to Irkutsk and back. Alas, only by train and not by air.

— Thank you very much. I had also been thinking of a month’s visit and travelling by train.

And, with this, we parted.

I went back to the library to continue sorting out the books for microfilming.

The greyhaired librarian must have been quite perplexed, and, I am sure, she never understood to this day, why I was smiling so happily while I tried to decipher the titles of those dusty volumes.

Since that day I had not seen Professor Okladnikov for quite some time. Even a month may have passed.

During this period I had been working in the photo-laboratory: I had filmed all those books and articles dealing with shamanism which were not available in the libraries of Budapest.

One day I had been called to the telephone. I was always a little embarrassed if I had to talk on the telephone. Although I have acquired fluency in the Russian language, I was always worried lest I misunderstood something. (But it might be also a personal prejudice of mine: I always disliked the telephone, in Budapest too.)

Someone called from the Siberian Department: Prof. Okladnikov wanted to know whether I was at the Institute, if so, he would come over to see me there around eleven o’clock.

I hurried down to the Siberian Department at the appointed time and my “boss” arrived in a few minutes accompanied by a slant-eyed lady.

After mutual introductions I found out that our guest was of Yakut nationality, she was the directress of the Yakutsk Museum. I asked her all I could about the shamanistic material in that museum.

Professor Okladnikov listened to my questions solemnly, then
he stood up and led me by the arm to the large map of Siberia.
- Would you like to travel from here to there?
  And his finger slipped from Irkutsk to Yakutsk.
  And how! My heart missed a beat on hearing the unexpected offer.

Without a word, he picked up a sheet of paper from one of the tables and started writing. When he finished, he read it to me. It was a letter to the Yakut Branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. It contained only three sentences, but I remember the contents, word by word. And not because of its brevity.

Dear Zakhar Vasilyevich,
Vilmos Diószegi, who is studying the shamanistic beliefs of the Siberian peoples, will be working in the neighbourhood of Lake Baikal as a member of my expedition this summer. I beg you, in the name of science, to extend to him an invitation for a month to Yakutsk. You would only have to pay the train-fare between Irkutsk and Yakutsk.

Sincerely yours,
Alexei Pavlovich.

I could hardly mutter a few words of thanks. Not only happiness robbed me of my tongue, that I may get acquainted with the rich collection of shamanistic artifacts in the Yakutsk Museum, that I may microfilm the manuscripts of that branch of the Academy, and, that I may carry out ethnographical collection on that site, but I had been muted by the emotions aroused by the generosity of these complete strangers rushing to my aid in this manner, and when doing something for me, doing it in the name of science.

During the next few days I collected data on Samoyed shamanism.

We know very little about the shamanism of the four Samoyed ethnic groups: the Nenets, the Enets, the Selkups and the Nganasans. Therefore I traced the Samoyed students living in Leningrad and I arranged with them to come regularly to the Ethnographi-
cal Institute and relate all they had ever heard about shamanism to make recordings with my tape recorder.

One evening a Nenets and an Enets student and a Selkup girl were sitting in the office and the tape recorder was humming. All of a sudden the door opened and Professor Okladnikov peered into the room. Automatically, I put my finger before my lips to ask for silence. He nodded and quietly closed the door.

Okotetto, the Nenets student from the banks of the Tambey, was talking about how the old people used to make the sjadejs, the dolls representing spirits. I did not want to interrupt the story. But perhaps Okladnikov might have been insulted that I just waved to him and continued the recording. Maybe, he did not know how difficult it was to make these young students remember these old matters and even if they did, it was incredibly hard to break down their reserve and to persuade them to talk about it.

While Okotetto went on talking I began to feel more and more insecure, finally I was quite smitten with remorse. I despaired. I felt: I have already returned from Siberia. I could hardly wait for Okotetto to finish his story.

I hurried over to the other room to make my excuses but the colleagues informed me that Okladnikov had already left.

— Wasn't he angry with me?
— Not at all. He sent you a message, you may go to Yakutsk. The Yakut Scientific Institute invited you to give a lecture on shamanism. They would pay your trip from Irkutsk to Yakutsk and back. Unfortunately, the invitation not having formed part of their original scientific plans and their budget, they could only afford the cheaper way, by boat.

— Thank you for the message. But are you sure Professor Okladnikov was really not angry?
— Angry? On the contrary! He was praising you.
— Praising?
— Yes. He said there are still some ethnographers who place
science before everything else and would not interrupt a shaman's story for the sake of God himself.

I was relieved.

While I was walking home in the gloomy drizzle, I had time to meditate whether there were many more scientists in this world, so utterly without vanity, as Professor Okladnikov. And I was rather ashamed for having supposed that he might have taken offense.

I met him again, for the last time, in Leningrad, the day before I left for Siberia.

He gave me the forms to be filled out by the members of the expedition, five hundred rubels for the fare and nine hundred rubels for daily expenses. This was the allowance I received for a month as the "restorer" of the archeological expedition to Angara. I was going to receive the money for the return fare in Irkutsk. This is the story that explains, how it came about that now we are driving along the banks of the Angara and the Oka.

*

When I started out to the Karagasy region on the first of July, the Director of the Irkutsk Museum informed me that Professor Okladnikov would arrive about the end of the month. I arrived back to Irkutsk at noon on the 24th and I learned that Professor Okladnikov had already left for the excavation site on the banks of the Angara.

I was completely disheartened by this information. My pockets were nearly empty, and I still had to receive the money for the travelling costs from the Angara expedition. Therefore, I would have to travel to the camp-site of the archeologists, on the bank of the Angara. Consequently, I had to waste time and money in order to be able to get this sum.

The director tried to console me:
Tomorrow morning a truck will be going after Prof. Okladnikov's party. We could squeeze you in on that. They will arrive there about noon, and in the evening you could take the train and be here again the following morning.

This cheered me up somewhat.

I left without any luggage, not even a bag for this excursion of twenty-four hours. But - museum-director proposes and expedition-chief disposes. Professor Okladnikov invited me to the camp to visit the excavations with him. It would take only three or four days. I could not withstand the temptation. Especially, because it had been whispered to me in the meantime, that we would be visiting the famous cliff-drawings on the bank of the Oka too.

I remembered that during the archeological research-expedition to the Abakan region last year, several shaman-drum illustrations were found. Perhaps we might find some up here in the north too!

I climbed up on the truck.

Under the tarpaulin cover I found a merry group. All were students of the Irkutsk University: boys and girls, who enlisted to work at the excavations at Balagansk.

The students work as physical labourers during the summer vacations: in a kolkhoz, in a sovhoz, at tractor-centres, or, as my companions, they join archeological expeditions, to work at the excavations.

We started early in the afternoon from the recently opened excavations near Svirsk where a neolithic settlement had been discovered right at the bank of the Angara.

The road led for many kilometers among birch-groves and pine forests. The students were singing polyphonic songs, one after the other. I had an opportunity to hear the Piatnitzkiy Choir in Budapest and various folk-song programs in Leningrad and in Moscow, on the radio. My singing companions could have competed with any of them.

They must be studying at the Conservatory - I thought. I only
learned the next day, while the students were laughing heartily, that none of them were future opera singers at all, but students of mathematics, physics and literature, preparing to become teachers.

*

While we were advancing northward along the river, I kept racking my brains as to how the archeologists guess where they ought to start digging: not fifty kilometers more to the south or more to the west, not even twenty meters to the right or to the left of a certain spot.

I was unable to repress my curiosity and during one of the resting periods I blurted out this question to Okladnikov.

— Well, it is not simple, but you don’t need any witchcraft. The hills of the kurgans and the stones rise above the surface clearly, you can distinguish them even at a distance without having to probe the ground. Also, the population very often supplies us with the clues, they often know about locations where pieces of tile or man-shaped stones may be found. Frequently, the construction of roads or canals involves earthmoving and thus reveals the ancient settlements. And, last but not least, logic is a great help in obtaining results.

He pointed towards the river.

— Men could never survive without water. They settled mostly along the rivers. All those terraces, elevations which offered an advantageous settling place were supposedly inhabited.

He winked at me.

— Let us try what kind of an archeologist was lost in the researcher of shamanism! We shall drive along the bank of the Angara towards north. Watch the countryside and try to guess which place might have been convenient for a settlement. Just tell me and we do not mind spending a quarter of an hour digging with our spades to find out whether there were any people living there in the past, or not.
I took the challenge very seriously, I did not want to fail. I did no even hear the singing of my companions any more, I kept watching the countryside all the time, trying to figure out where would I have settled down, if in fact, I would have wondered hereabouts with my nomadic relatives, once upon a time.

Suddenly, I noticed a terrace, rising a little higher than the relatively flat surface of the bank. This site probably would have been my choice: the inhabitants of the tents built here could have held all this region in view, they could have looked out for advancing strangers in time, and they could have kept an eye on their herds even if the animals strayed to greater distances while grazing.

There ought to have been a human settlement here, for certain.

I worried a little about the possibility of a fiasco but I pointed out to Professor Okladnikov that I would excavate there.

— Bravo Vilmos! — and then he winked his eye — but, we do not have to get out here, we excavated this site some years ago.

The successful guess encouraged me and I grew bold. I just had to find another site.

In about half-hour I saw another slope, like the one before. I was not even thinking about the possibility of a failure any more, I turned to the archeologists:

— I would dig here!
— Let us see!

And the dust was already rising in the wake of our spades. I tried to work faster than any of them.

But someone else was luckier than I. A young girl, a future mathematics-teacher, help up a piece of broken tile of the size of a pocket-watch. I nearly kissed her, I was so happy.

At that moment I could not have been prouder of this little fragment of ceramics than of a perfectly recorded shaman-song.
— Keep it for a souvenir! — the leader of the expedition said.
A little later we were driving across an enormous birch-forest. The driver suddenly stopped.

- Are we going to test the ground here too? – I thought, almost jealously.

A couple of years ago a forest-fire raged here and burnt-out, carbonized trunks and stumps were scattered about everywhere.

- Let us load the truck with firewood! – we were told.

I am rather ashamed to admit how relieved I felt to find out that we had not stopped because of some ancient settlement overlooked by me. Joyously I loaded the largest, longest birch-stumps I could find onto the truck.

- Firewood will be welcome in the camp – said Professor Okladnikov struggling with an enormous log – we should make our archeologists happy with this gift.

The truck was filled with wood within a few minutes. We climbed up on top of the heap. We continued our journey in an even gayer mood if that was possible, the view was much better from up there and, of course, one could also rock to and fro on the birch-logs.

*

Just before Balagansk we had to cross the Angara. Just like last year, when we crossed the Abakan, a ferry-boat took us to the other side.

It was after sunset when we drove through Balagansk and finally our truck pulled up at the camp-site, situated a few kilometers outside the town.

About twelve tents were lined up at the foot of the hill, rising from the plain. The archeologists of the Balagansk section of the Angara expedition lived here.

The flames of the campfire shot up under the cauldron hanging over them on a horizontal pole, supported by two tree-forks, the
soup was boiling. Supper would soon be ready. But Okladnikov wanted to utilize every minute and went to inspect the newly opened up parts of the site, before nightfall. I accompanied him. They have two excavations in progress, one on the top and one at the foot of the hill. The top one is an earthwork, dating back to the sixth or seventh century. The archeologist, a young woman, who showed us around, supposes that it is of Turkic (Kurykan) origin. The “fortification” consisted of walls about fifty centimeters thick. A double line of poles must have been stuck into the ground and the space between them had been filled with clay which was then pounded to form the walls.

Could perhaps the Trans-Danubian Avar earthworks, “rings”, have been similar fortifications also? — I wondered. Was the memory of Hungarian earthworks, like these, rising on the river banks and lake shores, preserved today in the place-names of Dunaföldvár, Tiszaöödvár, Balatonföldvár, etc.? (Földvár = earthwork.)

At the foot of the hill a ninth century settlement had been opened up. This place became famous because the first Siberian gem was dug up here. It illustrates a head, decorated with wings. The fragment of a vessel had also been found here with engraved decoration, resembling two riders facing each other and a human head in front of the rider, on the left side. If we strain our eyes, we may perceive the suggestion of wings around the head too. Underneath this battle-scene, there are two long horizontal and numerous short vertical lines completing the design. This drawing was interpreted by an archeologist to represent the earthwork itself.

In the morning I returned once more to the ruins of the earthwork, this time to be able to see it in daylight. I imagined myself, resting my elbows on the parapet and watching the grazing horses, the cattle-herds and the lazy sheep.

I was startled by the voice of one of the archeologists:

— Come here for a moment, I want to show you something to be interpreted by an ethnographer.
He led me to the southwest corner of the earthwork. At the foot of the wall there was an oblong hole in the ground.

— It is already empty. We opened it up last year. There was a female skeleton in it. Nothing else was found beside it, the hole included only the skeleton. It had a rather strange posture. It was all twisted in an unnatural way, the arms were raised to the head, the fingers were bent inwards, as if she would have been tearing and scratching her own face. Please, do not be embarrassed, but we suspect that the unfortunate woman must have been buried alive. But why would a living woman be interred?

Many thousands of miles away from Hungary, the lines of the ballad about the wife of Mason Clement shot through my mind. "What they built until noon, tumbled before sunset, what they put up at night before dawn it crumbled..." Then, the grandiose, baleful agreement of the twelve masons: the first among their wives to arrive bringing the midday-meal to her husband, would be buried into the stonewalls (or her blood, her ashes), because: "...only so may we raise Fort Déva to stand high, and obtain its dear price, we may only thereby..."

Is it possible that here in Siberia too, the crumbling walls of an earthwork in construction demanded the life of an unfortunate woman? Who could ever give a definite answer to this question?

In the morning Okladnikov lifted out the large earthenware urn that was found exactly in the centre of one of the excavated channels, the administrator of the expedition handed over the five hundred rubels for my return trip and we were already off to the cliff-engravings on the banks of the Oka.

*

While in the truck, the never tiring view of the birches and pines of the taiga pass us by. We arrive to Tulun in the evening. We did not stay in the town but drove out to a nearby wood on the bank of the river.
Immediately we dispersed to gather twigs for the fire. While the water was boiling for tea, we opened and spread out our sleeping-bags. I was staring at the Siberian sky for a long time from my borrowed sleeping-bag. What a profound silence! Only once in a while can the splash of the waves or the brushing of the dry pine-branches against each other be heard.

There is nothing to be done about it any more, but I came late. Some decades ago the hollow sound of the shaman drum would have still been echoed by the riverbank.

In the morning I gazed at the water in amazement: only here and there could I behold its sparkling surface, it was covered entirely with logs. The river, this gratuitous means of transportation, carried on its back one of Siberia’s greatest treasures: wood.

But, no matter how much the sight of the floating trunks impressed me, rushing along with elementary force and crashing against each other, I became gradually more irritated and nervous about the dark stubble growing on my chin. I only planned to be away for twenty-four hours, so why should I have brought my razor along?

All of a sudden I heard Okladnikov’s voice:
— Come, Vilmos, I have shaved already!

And, he handed over his shaving brush, smiling.

Is this man a thought-reader? Or, is it only that his attention extends to even the smallest detail?

And while I was lathering my chin, I had an opportunity to wonder again whether there were many such down-to-earth academicians in this great big world . . .

We left right after breakfast.
Around the villages and settlements we often met girls and women, carrying heavy buckets.
— No, it is not water — my companion explained — they gather the berries of the privet in the clearings.
But, what an awkward headpiece they are wearing! In my childhood I have often seen the labourers carrying sacks of flour into the bakery, they covered their heads with empty sacks skilfully folded into a triangular shape. This is how they protected their necks and their backs from the flour. But, what kind of "flour" would these women have to protect themselves from in the forest? I was just going to make some joking remark, when the grave expression on the face of my companion cut me short.

- It is only midday, and there are already so many midges! - I heard the ominously sounding sentence.

The fashion of the sacks, worn as headpieces, and the grim expression of the colleagues became clear to me at once. I started scratching involuntarily although the speed of the vehicle protected us from the bloodthirsty swarms of midges.

In the afternoon we passed through the village of Shamanovo. Today, it only consists of Russian-type logcabins, but at one time its inhabitants must have been of the shamanistic creed, its name, Shamanovo, could not be a derivate of any other word but the word shaman.

- We are nearly there! - my companions comforted me. - Bolshaya Khada in the next community and the cliff-drawings are only a few kilometers further away.

We soon turned off the main-road. We were jolting along on a narrow trail, the branches of the birches and the pines kept hitting us in the face. Finally, we stopped in a clearing and we had to get off the truck. We continued the journey on foot.

After a while, I believed the old Buryat man who told me that the calves, gone astray in the taiga, might be bitten to death by these diminutive gnats.

We were beating about left and right, although after a few meters we found out that this does not help at all. The buzzing of the obstinately following mosquito-swarm suggested to me that the best was to accept it all, surely, it would be like this
anyhow, as long as I had to work in the northern taiga-belt.

At last the woods came to an end: the view of the Oka opened up before us.

Suddenly, the buzz of the mosquitos stopped: the rumbling noise of the river suppressed all other noises.

*

We stood at the edge of a tall precipice, about fifteen to twenty meters high, the rushing Oka underneath our feet. This was the ideal place for a primitive hunter to conclude a hunt. Reindeer, elk, red deer and wild horses threw themselves in their last despair into the water of the river from this altitude: it promised a way to escape.

It did not help, however.

The bed of the Oka is full of rocks, the rushing water is spurring foam as it breaks on the edge of hundreds of rocks. It is impossible to swim amidst them, the whirling current of the river smashes the fugitives to pieces on them.

Further below, beneath the curve, where the already tamed river rolls along loftily, the shaggy hunters could easily catch and butcher the wounded, injured quarry.

... We stare at the death-cliff for a long time in silence.

All of a sudden, one of us realizes with surprise: the sun had gone down.

It grows dark immediately, we will not see any more of the cliff-drawings. Namely, it is this precipitous cliff which is decorated with the ancient frescoes. Primitive man wanted to secure an abundant loot by magical means also and for the sake of this, he engraved various figures on the smooth-surfaced basalt rock.

Let us hurry, we might still be able to see the relics of the art of Neolithic and Bronze Age man.

A breakneck trail, cut into the rock, leads from the edge of the
water to the top. A ramshackle cottage, thrown together from logs, stands ready to cave in on a large, flat rock.

The two meter long catching baskets made of twigs, that stood around rotting in the cottage, prove that a fisherman must have been living in it. It is empty now, except for the small heap of birch and pine logs next to the fireplace, made of three rocks, so that if a tired and chilled wanderer might turn up, he could light himself a fire.

The water reaches the cliff. There is no protruding edge. If I want to advance further along the rock-wall, I must get into the river.

I am edging into the whirling water of unknown depth. How deep could it be? I struggle on amidst the rushing waves around my waist for about ten meters further, when the first cliff-drawing becomes visible. The outline of a stag becomes more and more distinct upon the grey basalt.

The ancient artist traced the contours with an approximately two to three millimeter deep and two centimeters wide line and coloured it with a vermilion paint.

As I push further ahead in the river, now waist-deep and later reaching up to my breast, the other drawings appear in view too: a galloping reindeer, a grazing elk, a slender-necked swan.

To all these drawings they attributed magic power, ensuring the hunter’s luck. They resembled the “souls” or “master-spirits” of the desired game. According to the belief of primitive man, wherever these spirits are depicted the animals must appear also, this is why the drawings were placed exactly on this rock-wall.

But something else keeps me intrigued. I presumed that if shamanism might have existed already in those ancient times, then the shamans ought to have taken an active part in summoning, conjuring up the animals. Therefore, there was a slight probability that the walls would also have been illustrated with drawings representing the shaman in his ceremonial clothing or with his
magic drum, his picture ought to have replaced the real shaman who could not have been shamanizing in person at the location for fear of scaring away with his chants and the beat of his drum the fleeing animals being driven towards the unguarded rock-wall by the gradually tightening ring of the hunters.

While I was staggering along, I caught sight of a circle-shaped figure about ten meters above us, engraved on the rock-wall.

Could it be the solar disc only?

I went a little deeper towards the center of the river in order to see the scarlet ring better.

This is definitely not a disc. It looks more like a cogwheel.

There is no other choice, I must climb up the rock-wall, so that I can inspect every detail of it. A little rock-climbing follows the cold bath.

Holding on to any suitable crack with my fingers, I push myself up on the basalt wall.

Okladnikov is shouting something at me from the water, but his voice is suppressed by the roaring river. His worried, disapproving features leave no doubt about the contents of his words.

After about fifteen minutes of strained climbing my head reached the height of the mysterious drawing. It was a circle, measuring about two spans in width with smaller circles and numerous short dashes within the large circle. The light was fading and I could not distinguish them very clearly.

But one thing is certain: the design deserved the break-neck climb. It is definitely a drum, the illustration of a shaman drum had been preserved here at this height for us.

It mostly resembles the ancient Asian Yenisei Ostyak (Ket) shamans' painted drums. In the twilight I begin to descend from the wall.

I let out a great sigh of relief when, with heaving chest and a sweat-soaked shirt, I could finally submerge into the rushing river and touched solid ground with my feet.
But it is too early to relax yet: Okladnikov comes towards me with a frown. Instead of trying to make excuses, I dip my finger into the water and sketch the disc upon the rock, robbed of its secret. The wrinkles slowly disappear from the forehead of the "boss":

— This is really a shaman drum — he says at last — furthermore, it is the oldest record of shamanism revealed to this date because while you were tight-rope-walking up there, I was studying the style of these drawings and came to the conclusion that all the designs on these rocks date back to the Bronze Age.

As soon as the sun went down, the humid valley turned cool.
— It is time for a cup of hot tea.

We hurried back on the path cut into the rock, towards the campfire, to warm ourselves.

I never liked tea, but now, after the prolonged chilly bath, I found it exquisite. The gnats and the midges had also retired.
That night it was not for long that I admired the Siberian night from the depth of my sleeping bag, but sunrise found me already at the rock-wall.

I became closely acquainted with all the cracks and protuberances that might suitably assist my climb. Then I tried to find a hold for my feet, in order to be able to use both my hands.

First of all, I lit a candle and illuminated the design from every direction, so that by the contrast of light and shadow, no part of the drawing would remain hidden. Now, at last, I could count the small lines between the two outer circles.

There were seven lines on the right and seven on the left and at the bottom of the circles there were seven lines pointing upwards and seven downwards. Could that mean that primitive man already attributed a magic significance to the number seven?

I placed a sheet of transparent paper over the drawing and supporting it with one hand I tried to trace the lines with a pencil. I had entirely forgotten the swirling, game-killing river, ten meters below.

At the edge of the drum a circle runs around, at the top right the moon is represented above the picture of the sun. Out of the sun-disc, at even distance, four mildly curving rays extend just like the present-day drawings on the Ket shaman-drums. From the highest point of the circle of the sun, a ray is also traced towards the centre. To the left of the drawing of the two celestial bodies, there is a vertical line: according to the testimony of the Tunguz drums, it ought to illustrate the shaman’s path. This might also be the significance of the smaller lines in groups of seven, on the left and on the right side as well as at the bottom of the drum, and even inside of the outer circle. The seven small lines below the drum might represent the ribbons and the leather straps so typical of the Altaic and West Sayan Turkic drums.

Both my arms were miserably numb by the time I finished drawing.
Holding the valuable paper between my teeth, I started to descend the dangerous and steep vertical wall. I am not ashamed to admit that I felt warm, not only because of the burning rays of the sun, by the time I reached the ground.

A few meters further Professor Okladnikov risked tumbling down from a similar position.

Okladnikov received me with good news: he had also made one more discovery in connection with shamanism.

High up, nearly at the upper edge of the cliff, a human figure can be distinguished with antlers on his head.

- The Bronze Age shaman must have read your treatise – he winked at me.

He referred to my dissertation in which I proved that some shamans wore antlers on their heads.

What a distance in space separates the Duna-Tisza region from the banks of the Oka and how immeasurably more is the distance in time that separates the Bronze Age from our days! But certain phenomena of culture span these distances. Because, the same antlers decorate the head of this human figure engraved on the cliff as those upon the head of the witch, spied upon from the “lucaszék” of Hungarian folklore. (According to popular belief, sitting or standing on a wooden chair, carved day by day from Santa Lucia’s day, the thirteenth of December, until Christmas, one might set eyes on the witches of the neighbourhood at the Midnight Mass, on the twenty-fourth.) Indeed, our witches must have inherited the antler-decorated headpieces from the conquering Hungarian shamans.

We try to reach the precious cliff-drawing from all directions, but all our attempts fail miserably. It is impossible to scale the vertical wall to those heights.

Exhausted by our efforts I look enviously at the swallows preening themselves near the drawing.

We had to give up the hope of immortalizing the Bronze Age
shaman by contemporary means: we could only copy it from a distance, with blinking eyes.

The discovered drawings teach the researchers of Siberian Religious History that shamanism had already developed during the Bronze Age and even at this early stage some characteristics valid to this day, were already formed then.

*

We started off towards Bratsk, the town that will give its name to the future sea.

While we were swallowing the dust and the miles, I had been wondering where the name of this town could have come from. The -sk ending is a Russian suffix to form the names of localities (E.g. Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk), but what could the meaning be of Brat-? Is it the Russian word for brother or is it a denomination of the Buryat people? I remember well, that the Karagasys called the Buryats Brat. If this would be the root, then the name could have been formed analogously as the place-name Yakutsk was also formed from the name of the Yakut people. This would mean then, that when this town developed, some Buryats were still living here and therefore their region must have extended much further north than at present.
But these problems can hardly be solved in a truck.

At last, the town with the quizzical name appears in sight. Three of the bastions of the wooden fortification still stand. Or have they been reconstructed? One of them, according to Okladnikov, is definitely original. From the bastions, we drove to the airport.

The excursion of twenty-four hours is over.

I arrived in Irkutsk at three o’clock in the morning.
THE CENTRE OF ASIA

Irkutsk is the city of decisions for me. Moscow or Siberia? This was the refrain this time.

On the first of July, due to my ulcerated toes, I had difficulties in deciding whether to fly to the Karagys from Nizhneudinsk, or to Moscow, to have my feet treated.

Today, the first of August, I am trying again to reach a decision about my journey. Where should I go? To Kyzyl, the astronomically calculated centre of Asia and from there to the Soyot shamans, or to Moscow, to return to Hungary from there?

The situation is the same, only the cause is different, a month ago the state of my health, now the state of my finances gave me the feeling of uncertainty.

I have only five hundred rubels. I can either pay for the train-fare to Moscow or for the flight to Kyzyl. If I return to Moscow, it means the end of the collection in Siberia, I would not get to the Soyot region. And if I should fly to Kyzyl? With only a few ten rubel bills in my pocket I cannot carry on for longer than one week, maybe ten days, if I am lucky... And how shall I get enough money to return to Moscow?

Compromise or adventure? Sure enough, a Siberian researcher must sometimes reach certain decisions which are not of a scientific character.
In the evening I did not go to the railway station, but made my reservation for the flight to Kyzyl with the airways. Not even my voice sounded hesitant when I asked for the ticket, although I knew I would not have more than about hundred rubels left in my pocket on my arrival. How would I be able to manage there, how would I get back to Moscow? I had no idea.

I left in the usual manner. I had to be at the airport at half past twelve and at half past eleven I was still photographing the shaman objects in the sunny yard of the museum. Then I grabbed my knapsack, took an abrupt leave from the colleagues and exactly at half past twelve, I boarded the aeroplane.

The Angara sparkled beneath, would I ever see it again?

When the aeroplane landed, before even seeing the board with the name of the airport, I had recognized it: Nizhnevodinsk.

I was very proud to think that there was already a town in Siberia, that I have seen before.

We were soon flying towards Krasnoyarsk. In the meantime I kept looking southwards in the direction of the Karagasys.

I had many headaches there because of the Soyots: was it true that the Karagasy and the Soyot cultures were similar? Was it possible that the Soyots were the Turkicizing elements among the originally Samoyed Karagasys? Would the characteristics of Karagasy shamanism really appear in Soyot shamanism too?

I might be able to clear all this up. It was now up to me: tomorrow I would already be on Soyot ground.

I had been so absorbed in my thoughts that I only recovered my wits when the passengers were already getting ready to disembark.

In Krasnoyarsk I went straight to the booking counter to buy my ticket to Kyzyl.
The plane is full tomorrow!
I certainly was not prepared to hear this.

Please, give me some advice, what could I do?

Well, wait until the day after tomorrow.

Look, I am a foreigner, please, could you help? – I tried to play my only trump. – My passport is only valid up to a certain date and even the delay of one day is a great loss for me.

Well, talk to the dispatcher.

I found a strikingly pretty, blonde girl in the office.

I have been sent here from the booking counter. I should leave for Kyzyl tomorrow, but all the seats are occupied.

Why is it so urgent? Leave the day after tomorrow.

I repeated all I have already told the lady at the counter.

Instead of a prompt answer, she knitted her brows. I began to hope.

There is one solution: our freight-planes carry a limited number of passengers in urgent cases, perhaps I could get you on one of them. But they are not so comfortable – she added a little worried – however, the ticket is cheaper.

If only she had known how happy I was to hear about saving some money!

That would do very well!

In the morning I just had time to have my ulcerated heel bandaged at the first-aid station of the airport and I then embarked the Kyzyl freight-plane. The compartment reserved for the passengers was just like those of the passenger-planes, only the seats were arranged sideways, not facing the direction of the flight.

*  

Our machine floats among the clouds. Once in a while the grey cumuli open up as if we would reach an unexpected precipice. Down below, the forest-covered undulations of the mountains are
densely spotted with white patches. Could the snow have remained here until August? Or, are they white rocks? The Charga Bara must have been something like this, when Halgen, the shaman, mistook it for a white yurt.

It is an old and wonderful story, the history of Halgen, the shaman...

He lived at the mouth of the Erbek river, in times well past, but not so very long ago. There had never been such a mighty shaman as he, and probably never would be. Once, after having had his fill of brandy, he went off home. By nightfall he reached the Charga Bara cliff on the bank of the Great River. What do you think he saw there? Well, it was a great, big, white yurt. There was only one thing he found strange about it: the felt walls were not wound around with the hair-ropes that keep them in place.

He entered the yurt and there he saw an old woman. Yes, but what an old woman! Her eyelids hung over her cheeks, her face over her neck, her chin over her belly and her belly was hanging down to her knees. She was ugliness itself! Beside the old hag two young girls were sitting, two most beautiful maidens!

The shaman, Halgen, rested for a while, he drank some tea, and then he got ready to go. He was just about to mount his horse when one of the girls – the one who accompanied him out because of the dogs – grabbed his arm. The shaman, in self-defense, pulled the girl’s braid. In her sudden pain the girl screamed loudly.

– What do you want, daughter, from this damned shaman? The witches of my uncle could not get anywhere with him either! – her mother shouted from the white yurt. – Come back quick before he kills you!

The girl jumped away, but her braid remained in the hand of the rider.

The shaman took off. He was near his village when he noticed a young boy chatting with an old woman. He looked, and he looked, that was the very same witch from the yurt and her son. He quickly got out his flint-bag and hurled the firestones at them and he hit the witch-son exactly on his forehead with one of them.

The mother howled like a camel-cow. She flung herself at the
shaman but with a sudden leap he jumped up on top of a cembra-pine tree.

Thereupon the witch-woman began to chew at the roots of the cembra-pine. The rinds were flying, blood was oozing, but the old hag was now too old for that, she got more and more tired.

- Even if I cannot kill you now, a year from now to the day I shall take revenge for my son! I could kill you now too but I shall let you go because you are on your way to pay your respects to God! As soon as you arrive home, you will be finished!

This is how the witch admonished him and she dragged her son away amidst horrible wailings.

The shaman was really on his way to pay his respects to God.

Exactly a year had passed, when he got home. He arrived in the evening. He lay down in his yurt. Dawn broke, but the shaman did not come out. The neighbours went inside to wake him up. There he was, lying dead, he was already cold, although the evening before he had been as fit as a fiddle.

The braid of the witch-girl is still intact. It is hung together with the drum of the shaman in the woods of Kathilik Bazhi.

- I have not seen it personally – the story-teller apologized – but many people, who have seen it with their own eyes, told me that no human could have had such a braid. Its length measures a fathom and not even with both your hands can you encircle it. Whoever does not believe it could go and see it for himself. It is not very far: you have to go up along the Erbek then turn off towards Kathilik, climb up the peak and there you find the Serlik arga woods, there you can see this braid, fluttering on one of the trees.

*

I could not meditate for very long why the traveller recording this Soyot story around the turn of the century had not revealed whether he did or did not find proof, because our plane was
already descending. The sign-board behind the pilot flashed: "Don’t Smoke – We Are Landing" – could this already be Kyzyl?

I scrutinize the town underneath. It is a very familiar picture: the small river flowing into the great river. Perhaps it is not Kyzyl after all.

When the plane is already taxiing towards the airport I can read the big black letters: Abakan.

I was here last summer.

I would have very much liked to have driven into the city, greet the colleagues at the Khakasy Scientific Research Institute and the Ethnographical Museum who had so kindly assisted me in my work last year. I would have liked to give them a copy of the pictures I took of the Sagay shamans, Kizlasov, Borgoyakhov and the others, a year ago. But our stop here is only for a few minutes according to the timetable.

However, the weather does not always pay attention to the timetable. We were informed that a storm raged over the Sayans. Perhaps only Halgen, the shaman, could have told us whether it would be over in twenty minutes or would last for three hours.

In about two hours it had run its course and we could take off at last. I was rather impatient not only because of the wasted time, but it was Saturday, the museum would close at two o’clock, and if the plane arrived late, I would not find anybody there. How would I go about finding lodgings then? In addition, the next day being Sunday, if the plane would be late, everything would have to be put off till Monday. And I had to hurry, my time was so very limited and so much had to be accomplished yet.

*

There are written records about the Soyot shamans dating back to the years around 1300. Rashid-ed-din, the Persian geographer, wrote about the spirits of the Soyots in his work entitled "Djami
el Tavarih", referring to them in his own language as "djins".

Many fanciful tales and imaginative stories, as well as many shamans live, especially, in the most distant settlements. There is a general belief that the djins communicate through them.

Shamanism flourished among the Soyots as the exclusive religion for a long time. However, during the last century, through their southern neighbours, the Mongols, Buddhism reached them in the form of lamaism too.

A fierce battle flared up between the new and the old religion. Folklore preserved several episodes of this struggle.

The Mongol lama, Siretti, was the mouthpiece of the new teachings and Shaman Tungusten defended the old faith, aided by his mother. The shaman fell victim to this battle: the mighty lama, Siretti, with the power of his prayers, hurled the Khaierhan mountain over him. But Tungusten’s mother took revenge upon the mountain-peak: first she warned all those who lived thereabouts, so that they might flee before the oncoming danger and then she brought a terrible storm upon it. The elements were raging for days and when finally they subsided, a part of the peak turned white. It remained like that forever.

The fight of the two religions abated slowly. Although lamaism renounced the open fight, it never gave up the struggle against shamanism. The lamas became gradually more and more familiar with Soyot everyday life and they tried to replace the shamans. They erected cottages for idol-worship on the top of the mountains, the river banks, the crossroads and along the paths, everywhere where formerly the shamans were offering sacrifices to the master-spirit of the location. The tribal spirits were slowly changed into Buddhist deities and the new priests sacrificed white horses to them like the shamans did before. They ousted their rivals even from the bedside of the stricken and the beats of the shaman-drums were replaced by incantations to alleviate the last moments of the dying Soyots.
Nothing is new under the sun. Only the ancient winter-solstice was not called here Christmas, there was no crèche under the heathen Teutonic pine-tree: idol-cottages replaced the sacred groves of the shamans and Buddhist statues appeared beside the shamanic idols.

*

A lama or a shaman, or at least a trained nurse, would be a welcome addition to the crew of the aeroplane.

The other passengers are turning paler and paler and they are grabbing the sanitary papersacks fastened on the backs of the seats with a self-conscious smile. Nothing can be done about it: the air-whirls above the criss-cross of the intertwined mountain-chains and valleys keep our machine dancing all the time.

It might have been useful to graduate at the University from flying too, not only from Eastern linguistics . . .

*

The swirling clouds split up every once in a while and the glittering Yenisey river can be seen clearly beneath. The hum of the engines mingles with the roar of the Yenisey. The ethnographer in me recalls with envy the words of a travelogue:

The Soyots are devout shamanists to this day. When we were rowing up the Yenisey in 1907, the beat of the shaman-drums could be heard throughout the night across the land of the Soyots. Word was passed on, answering the inquiries of the inhabitants: what was that unknown boat carrying on the river, travelling upstream?

Fifty years later the humming of the engines of an aeroplane had replaced the beats of the shaman drums.
I am obsessed with the feeling of having come too late. The great popular movement of the Soyots, which called into being the Folk Republic of Tuva in 1921, directed a campaign against superstition and shamanism as well. Cultural centres, hospitals, the radio and the newsmedia all enlisted in this work of enlightening against backwardness, the old faith and ancient customs. This is how it really should be. It is important that shamanism should disappear as soon as possible, but it is just as important that this should not happen without records, as we know well enough, that in the history of the evolution of religious concepts it had been a significant phase. All that can be collected concerning it, must be recorded and safeguarded for the sake of science.

And if I have come too late already, at least János Jankó ought to have had a chance to carry out his plans.

János Jankó, the organizer of the Ethnographical Museum in Budapest, the founder of the science of descriptive geography and comparative ethnography in Hungary, planned to conduct a thorough research of shamanism among the Soyots upon the completion of his successful Ostyak expedition. He wanted to spend two years in this region, 1899 and 1900. But the leader of the expedition, Jenő Zichy, discarded this plan and Jankó never reached the southern part of the Sayans.

If only one could have studied the shamanistic myths with up-to-date scientific methods at the turn of the century... Two years would have had an enormous importance in the times when shamanism was still flourishing...

Nearly all my self-assurance evaporated... What do I want now, when there are no more shamans left any more? And even if there were a few, what could I accomplish within a month?

I had to laugh out loud. Is it not rather ridiculous to underestimate one month, which does not even exist? It does, according to my passport, but what about the money? The few ten-ruble bills, folded in my pocket, will hardly be enough to be able to travel, to live for a month and to pay a guide.
But I could not worry much longer. The aeroplane inclined to one side.

After a few more circles in the air, we landed on the green of the airfield. I arrived in the land of the Soyots, to the battle-field, where the Mongol lama, Siretti, and the Soyot shaman, Tungusten, fought with each other.

*

I hung my knapsack over my left shoulder, I grabbed my tape recorder with my right hand and joined the others at the steps pulled up to the plane for the passengers to disembark. The majority ambled along on the firm ground, visibly relaxed. Only those were still slightly nervous, who held – instead of flowers – the not unused sanitary paperbags. Their problem was solved at the first refuse-bin and their embarrassment disappeared quickly, they hurried smiling towards their relatives and friends waiting for them.

It is hardly necessary to mention: nobody expected me.

I began to get used to the appearance of the Soyots. They are of medium height, naturally their eyes and hair is black, their eyelids show the Mongolian crease, their high cheekbones are protruding. If a Karagasy and a Soyot would stand beside each other, it would be difficult to tell which is which.

I found out how I could get to the town and took the first omnibus that came along. I asked the conductress to let me off at the stop next to the museum.

We glided along a straight, asphalt-covered road, lined on both sides with trees, and I looked with curiosity at the town. The houses were one or two-storeyed, built mostly of logs. The streets were nice and clean.

As soon as I got off, I found someone to accompany me to the museum.
I looked for the deputy director, as I learned while still in Irkutsk, that the former director had been transferred and there was a deputy director in charge, for the time being.

I found a young woman in the spacious, sunny office where I was sent, she was the deputy in charge. I began to tell her who I was and that I came from far away. But I had not even introduced myself properly before she interrupted me:

- Then you are Diószegi!
- Yes, how did you find out?
- Karalkin advised me that a Hungarian researcher would come here, he also left a message for you, he went to the southeastern Soyots by plane, he will return within a few days.
- Then you might as well know that I would like to stay in Kyzyl for a short time. Please, could you help me?

The young woman seemed to be a very practical person.
- First you will need lodgings.
- Lodgings? There is time for that tonight. I would prefer that you would show me where the Scientific Research Institute is.
- Let us hurry then, they finish working at two o'clock and we have to look for the lodgings now as well.

The hotel was located in the same direction, so we rented a room, after I had whispered to my colleague on the way that the cheaper the better.

I just left my knapsack and we were already hurrying on to the Scientific Institute. I recognized it: I saw this handsome, two-storied building from the bus. We went to see the director right away. Is asked him that they check the Karagasy shaman songs I had recorded, in order to control the phonetic exactness of the transcription and the translation's correctness. I also asked the same for the Soyot shaman songs to be collected in the future.

The director assured me that I could depend upon their assistance and he took me immediately to the Linguistic Department.
There he introduced me to the colleagues and then we went on to the Literature and Folklore Department too.

I did not hesitate at all, I opened my tape recorder and demonstrated the Karagasy shaman songs. With tension I awaited the results: would they understand them, or not? They were nodding frequently while they listened, so, I knew they did, consequently the Karagasys and the Soyots were near relatives, not only anthropologically but linguistically too. This was no news to me, it was to be expected on the basis of the texts of the South-Siberian Turkic linguist, Katanov, but it was surprising, that the shaman-songs, containing so many archaisms and local references, would still be understood by them.

This was a very meaningful discovery for me, it meant that the Soyot colleagues might put down in writing for me my Karagasy shaman songs. But it also signified something even more important: there was a chance of realizing the monographs of the Karagasy shamans, that is, we might be able to learn all about the knowledge, beliefs and songs of each shaman, individually.

We made arrangements, right then and there, with one of the Soyot folklorists of the Institute, Kalzan, that the same afternoon, and the Sunday after, he would check my Karagasy songs. He also promised to revise the Soyot texts I was about to collect.

*

All the others were very kind to me too. The folk tale researcher of the Institute, a Buryat woman, demonstrated her kindness by giving me some news from home:
- If you have been away for so long from Budapest, perhaps you do not even know how much interest is displayed there for Soyot folk poetry?
- Siberian folk tales are being published there now — Kalzan nodded — they wrote to us too, to send some of our folk tales,
The folklorist handed me one of the already published Siberian volumes of the Hungarian folk tales series.

- Do you know it? – she asked – They are Nanay tales.
- A little – I answered and laughed – look, who translated them, on the title page.
- Why, but that is your name!

I had been fully accepted as a friend by the time I was about to depart and I was already in the corridor, when the colleague, who showed me the book, called after me:
- Wait a minute! Let me show you something else, something you really have not seen before!

As I entered again, she took something out of the drawer of her table, it looked very much like a wooden spoon. Only its handle was not cylindrical but prismatic, and its head was not round but rectangular, with nine indentations on it.

- Do you know what this is?
- I only know what it is not.
- I don’t know what you mean – she answered.

- I have seen such a thing in the State Ethnographical Museum in Leningrad when I was photographing the shaman-drumsticks of the Siberian collection. According to the inventory it was a drumstick, but I do not agree. That is why I said: I only know what it is not. Because this is definitely no drumstick.

- No, it is not, you are right. They say it is a tea-throwing spoon. It was given to me as a gift by an old Soyot. I met him recently on one of my expeditions. We became very good friends. He said, this had been used by shamans, they threw the tea-leaves with it up in the air. But when they did so and why, he did not tell me. Will you try to find it out while you are among the shamans? I am also curious to know about it.

- Among the shamans? Hm. Would I find any shamans?
  Kalzan answered my question.
- No, you will not find any more practicing shamans. But those
who have been shamans before, you will surely encounter. If you wish, come in to the Institute tomorrow, I will listen to the Karagasys songs here. In the meantime, I will check my notebooks for a few names.

This was wonderful news.

*

I hurried back to the museum, so that I could begin to inspect the objects as soon as possible.

The deputy director stayed in the museum in spite of the free Saturday afternoon in order to show me the collection.

I can hardly believe we are in the depth of Asia – exactly at its astronomically calculated centre, my impressions remind me more of a European city, where museology, the organization of exhibitions, can look back to several decades of experience. Not so long ago the museum, as well as the town, had not existed here, on the bank of the Yenisey.

Now spacious vitrines, life-like dioramamas display in tasteful arrangements the kind and quantity of ethnographical material, which might only be collected by museums at the site and is then sorted out by careful selection.

And another surprise: in front of several vitrines and dioramamas I had the impression that I was back among the Karagasys.

– No, this is not Karagasy, but northeastern Soyot material – my guide assured me.

The same cone-shaped rind-tents, with identical furnishings: the place for the hearth in the centre, around the walls of the tent the rectangular reindeer-skin satchels which are also called barba, the very same sacks and bags. Beside the anthropological and linguistic correspondance there also exists a cultural identity: at least in the case of the northeastern Soyots. Namely, the Soyots are divided into two very distinctive groups: one is the eastern,
Karagasy shaman headdress (frontal band) with feathers; the Soyots of the mountains adorned their head with similar headgears

mountain-region group, and the other, that of the western plains. The former are reindeer-keepers and hunters, the latter breed cattle and horses. The two different bases of their economy differentiate their whole culture: the differences show in their way of building as well as in everything else, right up to their shamanistic beliefs.

After having seen the exhibition and having inspected the objects in the store-room, it became evident: in order to be able to ascertain the contact between Soyot and Karagasy shamanism, I must visit the reindeer-keeping Soyots. The sharply determined, two-faced character of Soyot culture gave me plenty to think about. Is it correct, if, after getting acquainted with one group, I would not continue to study the other group, but, turning my back on the Soyots, I would set out towards the Turkic peoples
of the Altaic mountains? I had still to work out this problem in detail.

After having seen the tea-throwing spoon, I had yet another surprise: a natural, forked branch, supporting rolled-up rag-strips of different colours. The inventory-book cryptically revealed only this much: object used by shamans. How, and for what had it been used, and what was its name – was kept a secret.

Neither among the ten thousand shamanistic objects in the collection of the Leningrad Museum, nor in the rich collections of shaman articles of the museums in Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk or Abakan have I come across anything like it. I must investigate this too, while I am collecting.

In the evening, the museum director in charge showed me the library before leaving, and she gave me the catalogues to be able to search among their books to my heart’s content. Then she introduced me to the recently arrived night-custodian on duty and she left us.

The shaman-drums heaped on my table demonstrated clearly what I was doing at the museum.

The custodian, a friendly, elderly woman, could not resist to start a conversation and soon brought up a very pleasantly surprising question:

– Do you know that there is a descendant of shamans living here in this town?
– How would I know? I only arrived today. But if you would tell me who it is, I would appreciate it very much and then I could look him up.
– Kököl. The best-known actor of the theatre in Kyzyl.
– Do you think I could possibly meet him?
– I don’t think so. We live in the same house and as far as I know, he is planning to leave in the morning for a tournée of the Soyot towns with the company.

I looked at my watch: it was only seven o’clock.
— Who could show me to his house?
— My daughter. She works here in the next house, at the Public Health Center.
I found the actor at home, he opened the door himself. He was a handsome, brown-haired, self-confident man, with a winning manner.

After exchanging a few words, he readily promised to tell me about his mother, who had been a famous shamaness in her time. He became quite enthusiastic about it.

— I could even recite her songs for you, if only we had a shaman drum.

— There are plenty of those in the museum.

— But there is another, greater obstacle: we are leaving tomorrow at dawn. And I would not like to cancel this tournée, because the villages in the country seldom have a chance to see a theatrical performance, they have only movies... How long will you be here?

— I don’t know exactly.

(My unsolved problem haunted me again: ought I continue my work in the Altaic region after finishing among the reindeer-keeping Soyots or should I go to the cattle-breeding Soyots?)

— If you would stay until the end of this month I would try to get back a little sooner, so we could meet again.

I was really touched by so much kindness, but I could still not give a definite answer.

— I am truly sorry, but I do not know yet, but I might be able to tell you in the morning. What time will you leave?
— Very early, around six o’clock.
— I shall be here at five thirty.

I departed, not wanting to waste his time before such a long journey.

*
I went back to the museum to go through specialized reference books on the Soyots. It was easy to find the books in the catalogues of the museum, basing my search upon the bibliography I assembled in Leningrad.

Thirteen different works were heaped on my desk. And if all the references to shamanism included in them would have been typed up consecutively, they had not even added up to one page. That was all that had been recorded by science about Soyot shamanism in the course of nearly three quarters of a century. Namely, the first information – disregarding the quoted passage of Rashid-ed-din – appeared in 1887.

The reports are also rather disproportionate: except for two travellers, everyone visited the Soyots of the steppes, and there is hardly anything at all recorded about the mountain-dwelling Soyots. The records about the inhabitants of the steppes are also disappointingly taciturn. Let us see, for instance, the above mentioned article from 1887:

The lama-physicians are also assisted by the shamans who keep watch and shamanize over the patient at night, trying to locate the sickness and trying to find out what the patient is afraid of. Sometimes the lamas predict the future, the shamans also exercise fortune-telling.

We must think that the first researcher was not yet acquainted with shamanism and that is why his observations were so insignificant. Unfortunately, the situation had not simultaneously improved with the rising of the scientific niveau of ethnography either. One of the works published in 1916 describes, for instance, a Soyot shaman-ceremony thus:

The shaman, performing the rites in the yurt, went to the door and throwing away his drum went down on all fours and began to scratch the earth like a beast and demanded some iron, a knife.
When those present at the ceremony shouted at him that there is no iron in the yurt, then the old tarhan died, and now there is nobody left to forge iron any more.

This information hardly quickens the beat of a shaman-researcher's heart. Only a Hungarian finds it interesting: the word *tarhan* had been preserved by our place-names: Mezőtárkány, Felsőtárkány. The Soyot meaning of the word *tarhan* is blacksmith, but this occupational denomination of Turkic origin had been used as the title of a dignitary in Hungary in the times of the conquest and finally it remained only in these place-names.

It was impossible up to now to analyse or to compare the elements of Soyot shamanism, based on the sources at our disposal. To accomplish this task, one needs material covering the totality of shamanistic phenomena, not neglecting the smallest detail.

When I decided in favour of the expeditions to the Karagasys, Soyots and Altaic Turks, I did not reckon with the fact that under the name *Soyot*, two separate, in many respects very different cultures have to be taken into consideration. This resulted in the necessity of research being carried out regarding Soyot shamanism, as if it would belong to two distinct ethnic groups. Not even the culture of those in the steppe is homogenous. The few photos preserved at the museum demonstrated rather remarkable differences. To make a long story short: Soyot shamanism cannot be appraised on the basis of research conducted within one ethnic group only. To be able to reach valid conclusions, I suppose, painstaking collecting work must be carried out in three different regions: among the eastern (north- or southeastern), the middle and the western Soyot groups.

However, in this case, there would be no chance of an Altaic journey.

This was what the plan for August would be: first, I would go to the Soyot neighbours of the Karagasys, that is, I would travel to the reindeer-keepers in the northeast. On my return I would
go to the middle, cattle-breeding group, and finally I would journey to the western Soyots of the steppes.

Goodbye, Shaman Kyzlakov of the Kumandins! Farewell to thee, Shamaness Saburakova of the Teleuts! Tomorrow, at dawn, I shall ask Kököl to come back at the end of the month, because I would be waiting for him.

I must confess, I was a little heartbroken about the Altaic Turks. And I gave up certainty for something uncertain. In the Altai, among the Kumandins and among the Teleuts I have already secured the address of a shaman and the trip to the middle and the western Soyots might result in a fiasco.

Moreover, the conditions of collecting would become more difficult too. I could have worked together with Karalkin in the Altai, who was not only born there, but even knew the above mentioned shamans personally. Never mind! It is still better to know the shamanistic beliefs of one ethnic group thoroughly than of three superficially.

*

Now I heaved a sigh of relief. Yes, but where should the money come from? The leftover rubels in my pocket were just as insufficient for the research in the Altai as in the Soyot region.

I could either sell something or borrow money. But from whom? And how could I return it? From the fee paid for my article to be published in the monthly review of the Moscow Ethnographical Institute? It would probably not be published before my return. Maybe, I could sell something in Moscow. Let us see, what do I have? Hm. One tape recorder, a camera and a wristwatch.

I could sell these! I would sell them reserving the right to use them until the end of August. Yes, this is the solution, as I am ashamed of borrowing money. But, would anyone agree to pay for something, that the vendor would want to keep for several weeks longer?
In any case, I went through all my pockets. Unfortunately, there were more one- and three-ruble coins than fives or tens. A fifty-bill turned up, but there was not even one hundred-bill left. It was easy to make the balance: I had one hundred and eighty-five rubles and a few kopeks.

Behind my back, the map of the Autonomous Territory of Tuva hung on the wall. I ran my fingers along the Great Yenisey. Yes, Lake Todzha was here, with two Soyot settlements on its shores.

The question was: how could I get there and how much would it cost? However, you could hardly inquire at a travel bureau at three o'clock in the morning.

And the old woman? The night-attendant? I went to her room straight away.

— Excuse me for disturbing you, but could you tell me, how I could get to Ij or Tora-hem?

— Of course. An expedition of the museum went there a few days ago. You can penetrate the mountain-region only by aeroplane. On the way back there is also the waterway, by raft, but that takes a long time and it is dangerous. There are many whirlpools in the Great Yenisey and there are many ramifications in certain places. If you get into one of these dead-end branches, you may never find the way back.

— And how much does the flight cost?

— Eighty rubels to Tora-hem, seventy-five to Ij.

I decided to go by plane and come back by raft. Then I would have enough money to pay the men I had to employ. I might even think of food and billets if I were very thrifty. (Although I had been somewhat worried last week: after swallowing a mouthful, my stomach hurt at a certain point, as if the food had touched a wound. It is true, one cannot eat irregularly without punishment.)

But, what shall I do when I return? Oh, well, that is a long while yet, even a miracle might happen — and I postponed this question.
— Why don’t you lie down? Tomorrow is another day. It is four o’clock already – the old lady warned me.
— It isn’t really worth while to get undressed. I have to be at Kókól’s place at half past five.
— You should know best – she grumbled on the way out.

*

For one hour, it was really not worth while to lie down. I took out the articles again about the Soyots. Even if I do not learn anything about the shamans, they might be useful in some way.

One of them included the following:

Man dies, because a certain invisible force enters him and tears away his breath (tin), but it does not cease to exist entirely: it resurrects in some other kind of being, for instance in another man, beast, or even insect, which is born at the very same moment. The “breath-soul”, just like a light breeze, does not leave any trace behind. Everybody has a “thought-soul” (sagis) too. Dreams are caused by this. While these two souls dwell in the body, thought and breath are inseparable. And, in spite of that, they do not form a wholeness, but when the thought-soul departs from the body, it becomes an “indivisible whole-soul” (sunesin). The breath- and the thought-soul enter the descendant from the father in the moment of conception. This is the reason that the offspring always resembles the father. Until the fifth month of life in the womb, the breath-soul and the thought-soul, although already existing, are dormant. The woman does not pass on anything to the embryo, she only supplies the place for its growth. This growth depends on Kuday, the heavenly creator, who entrusts Sakchadippa, the spirit, to watch over the spirit Otchatiy, who is in charge of the creation of the child, and controls whether the child should be born or not. Those maidens who had no sexual contact before their twentieth year, can not bear a child. A “pain will originate” in their womb and it will cause the death of the embryo. There might be another cause for a child to be stillborn: if the mother
is ill, the child can not endure the heat of her body and dies within her womb.

It is remarkable that one of the sources denominates the sagis-soul with the word *jula*. This word does exist in Altaic Turkish languages but it would be impossible to find it in Soyot, for the simple reason that this language has no original “*j*” sound (“*j*” = *y* in *you*). If there is a word with this sound in the Soyot vocabulary, then it is a recently acquired guest-word. Those words for instance, which in the Osmanli Turkish language begin with a *j*-sound, changed it into a *tch*-sound in Soyot. An example: on the streets of Ankara or Stambul you can so often hear the word *jok* (= there are not any), this word, in Soyot, is *tchok*. Therefore, the soul-name recorded as “*jula*” would be “*tchula*” if it were a Soyot word. I heard it pronounced this way by the Sagays also last year.

The sources on the Soyots, therefore, were not only very limited but also inaccurate. There was no other solution but to check the validity of former records also.

*  

Luckily, I looked at my watch. I must hurry if I do not want to miss this somewhat early second visit to Kököl’s house. I arrived on time. Right at the door, he asked me anxiously:

– Well, what is your decision?
– I will stay here the whole of August.
– I am glad. I confess, I counted upon it, I was looking forward to meet you again at the end of the month. On the way, I will try to remember my mother’s songs.

We bade each other farewell, he had to leave.

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I walked slowly all over Kyzyl, in the light of the rising sun. The
town is situated where the Little Yenisey flows into the Great
Yenisey. It is a young city. Each street is as straight as an arrow
in this chessboard-pattern settlement. Some years ago, only flat-
roofed loghouses were lined up here, and one or two decades ago
only felt-yurts were to be found. Today omnibuses glide on the
asphalt-covered avenues spotted with numerous impressive public
buildings: schools, museums, the Research Institute, a theatre,
cinema, post-office, public baths, day-homes and the like.

With careful hands a natural island had been turned into a cozy
park as if by magic. As I walked, it could have been the Margaret
Island in Budapest, early in the morning.

I went to see the Electric Works too. I was not interested in
learning how power was generated, but I wanted to have a look
at the concrete block inscribed with the words: The Centre of
Asia.

When I found out on the way that this column was not sur-
rounded by a park but hidden in the yard of the Power Station,
I thought, those who planned the city should be scolded. But
standing beside this concrete block and listening to the quiet
humming of the generators, I was convinced that it was right and
I had to smile at my former wish to have this Public Works trans-
ferred elsewhere. Because, in this way, chance provided a symbol:
at the Centre of Asia there was the cradle of light.

*

After my sightseeing tour of the city I hurried back to the mu-
seum. I began to describe and photograph the shaman objects.

In the afternoon I dropped in at the Institute. Kalzan was
controlling my Karagasy shaman songs with great enthusiasm.

- Haven't you got tired of them? – I asked anxiously.

- No. On the contrary, I am most interested in them. I am
studying Soyot dramatic works and shaman lithurgy belongs into that group. It came in very handy that I had an opportunity to get acquainted with the Karagasy songs. I am very grateful that you collected them, they are very useful to me, because they are very similar to those of ours. It is excellent comparative material. I hope you will have a chance to record the Soyot songs too. When do you think you will leave?

- Tomorrow I am flying to the Great Yenisey to go among the reindeer-keeping Soyots. To Ij or to Tora-hem.

- I went through my notes. There is a man in Ij, who, so they say, used to be a shaman.

  His name is Ak Dardja.

  Thereupon I decided.

- Then I take a flight to Ij, and try my luck with Ak Dardja.

  Soon I returned to the museum, because the deputy director had promised that she would look in around five o'clock.

  I found her there already.

- Well, how do you like Kyzyl? Have you seen it already?

  I told her about my stroll in the morning.

- You are a lucky and clever man. Even if you had been around with a guide, you could not have seen anything more.

  I told her about my plan to fly to Ij.

- The researchers from the museum are in Tora-hem. Four of them are there: a natural scientist, a historian, the custodian of the store-room and a photographer.

- Are they Russians or Soyots?

- The historian, Mindermá is a Soyot, the others are Russians. It would have been an advantage for you to have travelled with them because the old people do not speak much Russian. Mindermá could have interpreted for you.

- Maybe I'll get along somehow.

- How did you progress with the work at the museum?

- I'll hardly be able to finish tonight.
were up all last night working at the museum. I presumed that you would do the same tonight, so I cancelled your reservation at the hotel, had your things brought down here and there is a sleeping bag for you in the director’s office.

— I am truly grateful for your thoughtfulness. Did you pay for the room? — and I pulled out my purse.

— There was no need to pay anything, you never used the room... Courtesy of the Grand Hotel of Kyzyl! — and she bowed ceremoniously. Both of us laughed.

— But I will not keep you any longer — she continued seriously again — go ahead with your work!

— Well, this is quite a lot but it has got to be done. It doesn’t help me to copy the inventory I must make my own descriptions of the objects.

And even if it was a tedious job, I got so deeply involved that I was startled when the old woman, the night-guardian, suddenly stood beside me:

— It is past one o’clock, please go to sleep. I have to pull you out of the sleeping bag at four o’clock anyhow! You must get to the airport in time.

I felt as if I had just gone to sleep when she woke me at dawn.

*

First I went to the Institute and got my tape-recorder from the custodian there, and then I waited on the street disconsolately for quite some time: do the buses circulate at this hour? Finally I set out on foot. I had gone about five kilometers when the vehicle in question hooted behind me. I got in and I thought: one always has to pay for learning. But at least I was not sleepy anymore.

A small group of passengers collected at the airport. Unfortunately at the booking counter they were issuing tickets only for
the western routes, none for the east. "Weather report unsatis-
factory". Now I could sit down again until the fog lifted or the
clouds moved a little higher. At midday we were still waiting for
the "favourable winds"

- There is a mountain pass, I don't know its name, but there
is always fog above it - a dark-haired young woman said - and the
aeroplanes only can get across the mountains there, that is why
we have got to wait.

- How come, that you don't know the name of the mountain-
pass? Aren't you from here? - I asked her.

- I am not a Soyot, I am of the Khakasy.
- Khakasy? Last year I had been among the Khakasy: I visited
the Beltirs, the Sagays, the Kachins and the Koybals.

- Then you have been everywhere except where we live: I am
of the Kyzyls.

The importance of the fog evaporated at once. After a few
words I could already get out my notebook to record what the
young woman knew about the shamans. However, she did not
remember much.

- You know, I am only thirty-five years old, there was not
much shamanism in my time any more. But I heard all kinds of
stories about it from my grandfather. Grandfather is a great story-
teller, he knows a lot of tales.

- Where does your grandfather live?
- In Abakan, Tacheyev is his name. Anyone in the town can
show you where he lives.

Silently I started to count the days because if I could squeeze
in two or three days after returning from Kyzyl, before going to
Krasnoyarsk, I could stop in Abakan.

It would definitely be worth while, because the few fragmentary
details the granddaughter remembered from the stories of the old
man, sounded very promising.

She heard from him about the peculiar birth of a shaman. She
recalled that the shamans had more bones than an ordinary human being. Her grandfather told her long stories about the fights the shamans fought with each other in the form of animals.

She knew quite a lot about the “tösz”. This word means a spirit as well as an idol, representing the spirit.

— Old people thought — the young woman related with an embarrassed smile — that there are good spirits and wicked ones. If someone had some trouble, became sick or had no luck in hunting, it was because of the wicked spirits. Every mountain and every river had its master to whom a sacrifice had been offered every once in a while.

This young Kyzyl woman knew a surprising variety of the spirit-dolls. They were usually prepared by the housewife and they were hung in the yurt. Once or twice a year sacrifices were offered to them. Those who were devout believers of the spirits, called a shaman, and he performed a ceremony first in honour of the spirits and then he instructed the inhabitants of the yurt how they should invoke the spirit, represented by the idol. Sometimes the shaman gave advice in case of sickness, what kind of an idol should be made.

In reply to my question, regarding the importance of the role of the dolls or, rather, of the spirits represented by them, she answered that they commanded the illnesses. They brought them upon someone or made them go away, and that was their most important role. There were spirits who could bring on sudden illness: “they grabbed your heart”. The “squirrel-spirit” sent pain into some part of the head, while the “hare-spirit” darted into the right shoulder-blade to cause pain in the shoulders. The “heath-cock” caused eye-trouble, mostly cataracts, other spirits caused heart diseases, depression, chest-pains, constant headaches, heart and belly-aches, coughs, stabbing pains in the bones, epileptic attacks, jaundice. I have also learned what kind of illness was caused by each spirit. But there were also such spirits who would mislead the traveller and kill him by frost.
I was nearly sorry, when we were so soon informed — at about three o’clock in the afternoon — that we should not wait any longer, because the flight to Lake Todzha had been cancelled for the day.

*

They were not at all surprised at the museum that I had to return. To penetrate the northeastern mountains is not easy, not even with an aeroplane. I continued scribbling, describing the objects of the museum.

I devoted the greatest attention to the shaman drums and the gowns of the northeastern Soyot shamans and I tried to acquaint myself with all details, so that the next day — and I hoped I was not overly optimistic — I should be able to conduct the investigation better, when questioning the oldsters about them.

The shaman drum of the reindeer-keeper Soyots hardly differs at all from the Karagasy shaman drum. But, would the name of the individual parts be the same? Does the drum also represent to them an animal for mounting?

And the gown of the shaman... Is it cut and decorated the same way? The Mongol influence was already noticeable: the deer-skin garment had been covered with a fabric of Chinese origin. Its “braided” ornament also looked like the human skeleton. But, do they also call the trimmings ribs, shoulderblades and backbone? I would know the answer in a short while.

It was well after midnight when the custodian ordered me into my sleeping bag. But then I already knew each Soyot shaman object in detail.

Only, all this was of little comfort: in spite of having read all references in the available literature, having studied each object of the corresponding collection, I still was not able to acquire a sufficiently clear picture of the whole.
In the morning I waited patiently for the bus. As soon as we arrived, tickets were issued to us at the booking counter. This meant, we must be able to fly today.

Very soon we boarded the small biplane.

The young Kyzyl matron arrived at the last moment.

– Have you placed too much trust in the fog over the mountain-pass? Or did the töte, we spoke about yesterday, mislead you?
– I asked.

– No, no. I forgot to wind up my alarm-clock.

But, by this time, we were already in the air, above the two Yenisey rivers.
A BOUQUET OF EDELWEISS

Mountains follow valleys, valleys follow mountains. Now a valley, then another mountain. This monotonous rhythm continues without hardly any interruption. Our little plane is careening like a small sailboat on a stormy sea.

But after about ten minutes everybody grows accustomed to it (or is it only resignation?) and across the openings in the clouds every once in a while we may behold some of the landscape beneath. The endless cloudlayers with the tiny openings remind me of a giant noodle-strainer.

High, but not very long mountain chains cross each other, covered with dark pine-forests. There are patches of darker and lighter green. Cembra pines? Scotch firs? On the slopes there are white birch groves. In the depth of the valleys there are swift mountain-rivers, rippling and whirling, cascading rivers. It is the wildest virgin forest. Really, there is no way of building railways or roads across this region.

Finally, after a teeming abundance of narrow rivulets, a broader strip of water appears beneath our machine. And now we follow its course constantly. We must be flying over the Great Yenisey.

We had been swinging in the air for about an hour, when a village appeared under us, but we do not descend. Our plane flies on for about ten kilometers or so, losing its altitude gradually.
small, green meadow becomes visible. It seems to be growing swiftly, so we must be landing. And, soon we are taxiing on the ground. We are in the village of Ij. I hurry and jump down to look around curiously. Could it be hoar-frost or do I only see dew-drops? I take a closer look: neither hoar-frost, nor dew-drops, the ground is covered with flowers. And not with a common sort of everyday-flower: it is edelweiss! I recognize it immediately.

A few years ago I have been in the High Tatra (Carpathian Mountains) and I was anxious to find at any cost, at least, one edelweiss. Those who were from that region warned me: even if I would find some, I may not pick any, it is forbidden. If I did, I would have to pay such an exorbitantly high fine, that I would remember it for quite some time... Spontaneously I turned to the pilot who was just getting out of the cockpit:

- May I pick one?
- What?
- One of these white flowers.
- What white flowers?
- These edelweiss here.
- Oh, that! Why not? But what on earth for?
  I excused myself rather embarrassedly.
- Because they are very rare.
- What do you mean “rare”? Look around, man!

Now I began to realize the ridiculousness of the word “rare”: thousands, no, tens of thousands of edelweiss were covering the ground, as far as the eye could see!
- You may gather a whole stack of them, if you want, you can make your bed of them!

His voice reminded me of the story about the man of Tihany, to whom someone delivered a lecture about the rarity of the kecskeköröm. (Popular name of the fossilized shell found in abundance on the shore of Lake Balaton, near Tihany, resembling a goat’s hoof.)
Decked with flowers, I set out for the village. After about a hundred meters a large truck drove past. It gave me something to think about: how on earth had they brought this thing up here?

*

First I went to the townhouse to see the president of the kolkhoz. But I had no success.

— Haven’t you met the truck? It had just left for Tora-hem, the president was on it too. Well then, let us go to the school.

— Where is the director? — I asked the children playing in the yard.

A little girl with pitch-black hair led me to his quarters. An exceptionally young, nice Soyot man came out. He took me to his office.

— I would like to stay in this village for eight to ten days.

I explained about my job. — I would like to ask for your help.

— I will help you with pleasure if only you would tell me in what.

— First I would need lodgings. Then I would also have to eat somewhere. And, last but not least, would you know of someone who had been a shaman?

The director answered my questions, one after the other.

— If you don’t mind, you could sleep in my office. I could have a bed made up here and nobody would disturb you, really. And, you could eat in the day-time home. You might find it a little monotonous and get fed up with gruel — he added with a grin — but you would be the guest of the school.

It was just as if a dream had come true! If I would not have to pay for bed and board I might be able to spend the money on the journey back: I would not have to use the waterway which took two weeks. I was as short of time as of money: in about a
Pipe-smoking Soyot mountain rifleman mounted on his reindeer.
(From a Soviet scientific publication, entitled, The Peoples of Siberia.)

month my passport would expire and I had to cross the Hungarian border before then.

- Oh - I said gratefully - I'll be very happy in your office and I certainly appreciate the possibility of eating in the day-time home. (I did not say it out aloud, but I had had a stomach-ache for several days already and the diet of mush might be very good too!) Allow me to thank you in the name of science!
He waved aside, with a smile, this rather formal expression of my deeply felt gratitude.

— As far as the shamans are concerned, however, I can not tell you anything. I was born in the steppe-region and only last year was I transferred to this community. If you inquire among the older people, they will surely know about someone.

I took out my notebook and my camera from the knapsack, I grabbed my tape recorder and I turned towards the door.

— Where are you going?
— To the next house or rind-tent to look for old people.
— But the oldsters do not speak any Russian!
— Don’t they? I come from the Karagays and their old ones speak some too.

— This region, the Autonomous Territory of Tuva, joined the Soviet Union only at the end of the war and only young people learned the Russian language.

— Then, I need an interpreter. Could I find one somewhere?
— I’ll call one of the teachers.

Soon a smiling, young Soyot teacher came in.
— Would you help me with my ethnographical collecting?
— I am free all day today. I shall go with you gladly. It wil be interesting for me too, I might learn some of the secrets of your profession.

*

It is not yet eleven in the morning and we are already strolling along the streets of the village. First we get acquainted with the settlement of Ij. It is a new village, it was founded only a few decades ago. The Soyots, who were hunting in the mountains and along the neighbouring rivers, as well as those who were wandering with their reindeer-herds, were centralized here. Loghouses were built for them in the customary style of the Siberian Russians.
But the nomadic Soyots were not easily getting accustomed to the new houses. Beside many a log-house, there is a cone-shaped, pointed rind-tent, just as many years ago on the riverbank, the old Soyots (and sometimes the younger ones too) continue to live in those.

But the great change irresistibly invaded this region. This plateau boasts of other things besides the recently constructed timberwood houses. Just below the village where the River Ij takes a turn, a dam is holding up the swift current of its water and, out of the building constructed of wood, a constant humming may be heard, day and night, as if it was a busy bee-hive. The electric power generator functions there. There is a large and noisy shed next to it: the saws of a sawmill are cutting the enormous pine-logs into boards.

At the other end of the village a whole new street is being constructed. The airport, the radio-station, a school, the daytime-home, the Cultural Centre, all these stand in the depth of the enormous virgin-forest, where a few years ago, only the reindeer passed, munching the juicy, fresh mountain grass.

In front of one of the houses an elderly woman is cooking something on an open fire.

— What are you cooking, auntie?
— Tea.
— Do you put milk into it?
She only nods, without a word.

But the old woman has such an intelligent face that I stay on in spite of her taciturn attitude. I wait patiently until she scratches off a thin layer of the compressed tea-leaf-cake with the axe. The Soyots like to conserve the tea-leaves in this form: they are compressed in the shape of a brick and then with an axe they scratch or cut a piece from it in order to make their tea.

The old woman puts the leaves into the boiling water, pouring some milk into it too. After she took the cauldron off the fire, I
asked her whether she would permit me to look at the interior of
her tent.

The inside of the tent was the exact replica of the one displayed
at the museum and like one of the tents of the Karagasys. Some
fur-rugs were spread out and an old man was lying on them. He,
as well as the old woman, were clad in Russian type garments.

I channeled the conversation towards the subject of shamanism
and soon I was able to take some notes.

This is how I looked into the log-cabins, this is how I got
acquainted with the inhabitants of the rind tents.

For the time being, I just inquired everywhere about former
shamans, had they known any, if so, would they be still alive,
where did they live, if they were dead, who were their nearest kin
and where did they live.

Within a few hours I succeeded in tracing about ten to twelve
former shamans and the whole village knew me already, they
became aware of the strange task I had: to find out about the
past deeds of shamans for the museum and they learned that the
museum was a great big building where the relics of the past
were kept.

Wherever I dropped in, they already knew about all this and I
did not have to repeatedly explain everything. If I found some
old people at home, I connected the tape recorder and showed it
to them, explaining that if they talked into it, afterwards they
could listen to their own voice. And, slowly but surely, I began
to collect the texts I wanted.

*

Soon I learned that the mysterious tea-sprinkling wooden spoon
is used during the process of making the shaman staff and the
shaman drum. The be-ribboned, naturally forked stick was nothing
else but the shaman-staff. But let me relate, what the oldsters
had to tell.
The new shaman had first only been equipped with the shaman staff and he got the drum only after he had already become a good shaman. The staff was the tool of the new shaman. It had always been made of birchwood and was usually painted red, with red clay, found in the mountains. If the shaman had been equipped with only a staff, he had to get around "on foot". After two or three years the new shaman could request his drum. Then he could already "mount the drum". Arikay, the shaman, for instance, had the staff for one year. Takpazhik shaman used one for two years. The shamans also kept their staff after having obtained the drum. There were shamans who kept their staff all their lives. For instance the shaman called Khodan, shamanized all his life with a staff. It is up to the spirit to decide this: he "informs" the shaman whether he wants a drum or not. However, the shaman equipped only with a staff might be just as powerful as the one, who has a drum.

According to some of my informants the shamanesses were only entitled to the staff. A lama-shaman told me that his aunt used a stick for her ceremonies until her death. Albis, the Kaday shamaness, had also shamanized with a staff all her life. Several persons affirmed that the "small shamans" were only entitled to a staff.

The shaman with the staff has no other instrument. Not only does he lack the drum and the drumstick, he has no headgear, garment or boots either. Such shamans are called the *staffed shamans*.

On the other hand, there were some, who never had a staff, they were given the drum right at the beginning.

It was an old shaman who chose an experienced woodcarver for the task of preparing the shaman staff, due to the illness of the appointee, who was unconscious, very often raving. While the candidate was lying in bed at home, helplessly, the old shaman,
accompanied by the woodcarver, took to the woods and chose a suitable birch tree. He tied a white ribbon on the selected tree and with a ritual tea spoon he sprinkled salted tea with milk three times in the air towards the tree. Then the shaman asked the birch tree to consent to becoming the staff of the shaman-candidate.

Then he returned home, leaving the other man behind to cut the birch tree. Right then and there the woodcarver would carve the staff, then he would take it home and place it immediately in the tent of the candidate.

The northeastern shamans used several kinds of staffs. The branches were called the “head” usually bearing markings of a face too: they carved the eyes, the nose, the ears and the mouth on it. There were two-, three-, five- and seven- or even nine-headed staffs. Underneath the heads, on a curved metal rod, three, seven, or nine conic metal pieces were hung. They also used to fasten bell-shaped chimes on the staff. The size and number of these bells indicated the financial standing of the shaman. Two or three cylindrical rolls of fabric were indispensable parts of the staff – they were called reins. Annular carvings decorated the handle.

With the shaman staff thus prepared, certain initiation ceremonies had to be carried out before using it.

Here is, for instance, the ceremony of Albis, the Kadyn shamaness:

A one-year-old white reindeer had been killed and its meat had been cooked. Then, two small dishes were placed in front of the staff on the bare ground. A small piece of the heart and a little piece of the brisket were placed in one of them, salted tea with milk had been poured into the other one. The two dishes remained for about two hours in front of the staff. In the meantime, those present, had a feast. Within two hours about everything placed in front of the stick had been consumed and the participants went home.
That night the old shaman shamanized in the name of the young shaman with the new staff for about an hour or so. He asked the birch tree, where it had been born, giving the answer of course himself. He asked how old the tree was, and he again answered the question himself. He begged the staff to serve the new shaman well:

- White birch-staff: be my horse, be my friend!

Again the shaman gave the answer:

- I agree.

After this, the shaman thanked the woodcarver and those who had sewn the cylindrical ribbons, and placing the staff in the new shaman’s hands he began to sing. He kept wailing into the ears of the young shaman for two or three hours. This is how he taught the new shaman the shaman songs. After this both went to sleep.

Next evening the old shaman began his instructions again. The young one was already holding the staff alone, the old one was holding only the reins. Both were sitting. Thus they practiced for two to three hours. If the young shaman had not learned the songs yet, the old shaman stayed on to teach him somewhat more. In general, the young shaman learned everything by the third day and from then on he could shamanize alone. The old shaman then left him and went home.

After about three or four months, the young shaman presented some kind of a gift to the old one, to show his gratitude: he gave him a sable-skin or a horse, or a length of silk. In general, the gift was worth about three to four hundred rubels. The above-mentioned shamaness, for example, gave a full-grown reindeer to her teacher. Only thanks were due to the maker of the ribbons.

Those who shamanized with a staff, held it in their left hand grasping it about the middle, supporting its lower end by the hip. The two “reins” were held by the right hand in the same manner as real reins. The shaman was riding on this “animal”

Consequently, the staff, although according to some Soyots the
"staffed shaman" went around "on foot", represented an animal for riding, which could be mounted during shamanizing ceremonies. An indisputable proof of this is the word "rein", furthermore, the initiation ceremonies, during which the shaman calls the stick "my horse".

By nightfall I could state with re-assurance: I had not arrived too late for collecting material, memory had safeguarded everything very well.

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Going towards my room, I knocked on the door of the director. I had to talk over the matter of an interpreter with him, namely, the young teacher had no time to accompany me, except on that one day.

— Let us go to the president of the kolkhoz and consult him — he suggested.

There was a council-meeting at the kolkhoz-office, when we arrived. My patron, the director, went right in to see the president of the kolkhoz.

— Come in — he called out a minute later.

The president of the kolkhoz was sitting among the leaders of the work-brigades. About ten or twelve Soyots were there. They received me with genuine interest. When they found out that I came from Budapest, one of them quietly said:

— Budapest consists of two parts: Buda and Pest. The Danube flows between them. — He looked at me, expecting me to say something, commenting upon his knowledge.

— How do you know that? Have you been there? Perhaps during the war? — I asked surprisingly. And it flashed through my mind, how often had we received letters from museums in the exterior, addressed thus: Anthropological Museum, Bucharest (1), Hungary.
— No, I have never been there, but I have heard about this. I could hardly answer all the questions he asked: what kind of animals are there in Hungary? Do we have reindeer? May we hunt sable? What do they know about the Soyots there?

I told them about János Jankó, who had wanted to direct research in this region at the turn of the century and I also told them about the students of the Turkic Faculty of the University, who were reading Soyot texts too. But I kept silent about my suspicion of being able to count on my fingers those Hungarians who knew, that Kyzyl was situated on the bank of the Yenisey and that it is the centre of Asia.

They listened with increasing interest and enthusiasm to my explanations concerning the similarities between the Hungarian and the Soyot languages due to the numerous loanwords of Turkic origin acquired in our ancestral homeland. They were quite amazed to hear that the word kők (blue) in Hungarian is kék. What they call szarig, I could describe with the Hungarian word sárga (yellow). They cut wood with the balti (axe), we use the balta for the same purpose. Of course, I led the conversation towards shamanism, which was the religion of the ancient Hungarians before they became Christians. I told them, that this was exactly the reason of my visit to the Soyots, to acquaint myself with their mythology, which must be very much like that of the Hungarian ancestors.

After this, my Soyot friends were outdoing each other in enumerating the retired shamans and those old people who were well versed in magical knowledge.

They were reluctant to let me go when I finally stood up and excused myself, not wanting to hinder the meeting any longer.

The president of the kolkhoz also recommended an interpreter: a Soyot teacher from another village, who was here for a fortnight on holiday.

The director took me to see him right away. We immediately
agreed with the young teacher that he would receive ten rubels a day, as a fee, for being my interpreter.

Now I must pay out the money saved for the return trip to the interpreter. Consequently, there would be no time left for research among the other Soyots. That evening it never occurred to me, that I would not be able to afford it anyhow. On my way home, I visited an old man, who had been a lama-shaman a long time ago. I agreed with him that same evening he would sing into the tape recorder.

I worked till midnight with the withered old Soyot with slanted eyes and protruding cheekbones: his melodies and his interpretation reminded me much more of the shaman songs of the Buryats than of those of the Karagasys.

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In the morning I was up already by the time my interpreter called for me. All day long we were visiting old people, I was drawing, taking notes and photographing.

The individual chosen for a shaman, also with the Soyots, first became ill, this I already knew. If it was a girl, this happened at the age of ten to twelve years of age, if a boy, at the age of twenty to twenty-five. The girls were chosen much earlier than the men. The invalid suffered headaches, was frequently sick and had no appetite. A shaman was then called to heal them. But the shaman discovered right away that a spirit was calling for them: either the spirit of the mountain or the spirit of the water, wishing the invalid to become a shaman. Then the shaman recommended that a shaman staff should be made.

An old man narrated the following:

— The spirit drags and pulls the one chosen to become a shaman. The spirit stays with him for three or four days, torturing him. Later he does not remember what happened to him during
this period. The chosen one does not smoke, does not drink, he takes neither milk nor tea or milk-brandy, but he is singing and talking nonsense like someone, who is drunk. He might continue in this state for three, seven or even nine months. An old shaman guards him all the time. This is necessary, because the appointee is tearing his dress, breaking and destroying dishes. If the shaman lives near, he brings his drum along and all his other things, but if he lives far away, he arrives empty-handed.

I would have liked to learn more about those Soyot “spirits” upon whom the choice of turning someone into a shaman depended. Going from tent to tent, slowly, the whole myth-complex took form, like a broken mosaic being restored.

They explained to me that the shaman is always chosen by one or more spirits. If someone wanted to become a shaman and the spirits did not choose him, there was nothing he could do about it, he could not become a shaman.

If the spirit is strong enough, it might choose even two or three shamans, but it also happens sometimes, that two, or even more spirits have the same choice.

The spirit, who has more than one shaman, may appear to all his chosen ones at once, even if they summon him at the same time. The spirit is very strong and very swift, that is why he is capable to do so, according to the Soyots.

The power of the shaman depended upon the power of the spirits who chose him. The Soyots also distinguished small and great shamans. The great shamans’ spirits are more powerful and more plentiful, the small shaman has less and weaker spirits. The shaman, who is exercising his vocation, may increase the number of his spirits himself, if he is strong and clever enough, he might kill other shamans and capture their spirits.

Spirits might be inherited too. If the father was a shaman, his spirits may be inherited by the son. But not in every case though, and not all of them, unconditionally. It might happen that upon
the death of the father, some spirits move elsewhere, and they choose another shaman. Perhaps the father was killed by another shaman, who robbed his spirits. As long as that shaman was alive, the spirits could not become the spirits of the son. It might also occur that upon the usurper’s death, his son, and not the son of the murdered shaman inherits the spirits.

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In the meantime, I also learned from the Soyots that in this period of the year there was no floating of timber. I might go down on the Great Yenisey by raft only if I hired men for this purpose. But, in this case I would make a rather bad deal.

The trip would cost money anyway, and if I wanted to go back to Kyzyl, I could not go on paying for an interpreter any more. I was racking my brain what could I do? Then, finally, I remembered. There was a young member in every family who spoke some Russian, although I had not paid much attention to them until now. I could get hold of these to serve as interpreters. I would not stay at the same place for a long time anyhow, so that these amateur interpreters would not get too tired of this unfamiliar task forced upon them.

In the morning, I set out collecting with my “new” system. And everything went as smoothly as could be! I drew the picture of the former shaman’s headgears, garments, footwear, I denoted the names of the appliqués, embroideries, pendants and the corresponding beliefs, one after the other.

The Soyot shamans used two kinds of headgear: either the feather-decorated frontal band (this resembles somewhat the feathery headpiece of the Indians) or a fur-cap.

The gown either reached the hips or was of knee-length, sometimes it came down to the middle of the thighs; it had been made of reindeer hide or goatskin but the skin had been covered with
cotton or broad-cloth. The boots were made of a similar material with flat soles and no heels, the bootlegs coming up to the knees.

The whole gown was decorated from top to bottom with embroidery and fringes. At last I found out what I was so anxiously trying to learn while among the Karagasys, and what I had already suspected on account of the one single shaman gown of the reindeer-breeding Soyots, namely, that the embroideries, appliqués and fringes of the Soyot gown were also representing the human skeleton and the parts of the human body. The denominations left no doubt about this.

On the headgear for instance, they marked the eyebrows, the eyes, the nose and the ears. The ribs were embroidered on the front part with reindeer-hair as well as the breastbone and the breast with the nipples. White and red ribbons were attached to these, they called the white ones milk and the red ones blood. On the back of the gown, the shoulderblades, the spine, the ribs, the hipbones and the rump-bone were traced either by embroidery or by metal pendants. In a similar manner the knees, the shinbones, the ankles and the toes were marked upon the boots.

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The description of the many headgears, garments and boots and the sketches I made of these, soon filled up my notebooks. Therefore, I went to the kolkhoz-shop to get new ones. The shopkeeper handed me the copybooks and then asked me:

- Are you from the museum?
- Yes.

- Then you are the one who wants to photograph the things in my yard, they were inspected this morning by your boss.

I stood uncomprehendingly at the counter: to whom could he be referring to?

Finally, the confusion was cleared up: four members of the
Kyzyl Museum, about whom the deputy-director had already told me about in Kyzyl, arrived here from Tora-hem the day before and the good man thought that I was a member of that group. I also found out that they had put up their tents outside the village, on the bank of the Great Yenisey.

Tomorrow morning, early, I shall try to reach them — I decided. They were surprised to learn that I was a museologist too, and a Hungarian at that!

— How does the work proceed? — the leader of the expedition asked.

— Really I can not complain at all.

— Do you have an interpreter? — Mindermá, this Soyot colleague, a slender, black-haired woman of about thirty-five years of age, asked with concern.

— Only casual ones.

— Why, this is impossible! Your research will suffer by that! I will help you.

— But you have your task to think of! — I hesitated — You did
not come all this way to interpret for me . . .

- I am at home here. I might come again in autumn or next spring. But I don’t think that you have much time. I think it is very important for you to get your work done soon. You might even have planned to go elsewhere too, isn’t that so?

Immediately she hung her bag on her shoulder so that we would not lose any time, and we were already off.

This young woman represented the new intellectual type of the Soyots. She was born in the south, on the steppes, in a felt tent. If she was ill, a lama or a shaman would “drive out” the wicked spirit from her. But after the popular revolution of the Soyots, calling the Tuva Popular (National Republic) into life, the lamas and the shamans were driven out as well as the spirits. Instead, schools and hospitals were built. The little Soyot girl grew up among school-benches and not beside the herds. Today she is studying the ancient culture of her nation and preserves it from decay by collecting its relics. Her husband is working on the list of the place-names of the Soyot region and her brother is a well-known poet.

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At last, I had found a qualified helper in Mindermá. But, even so, we had to work for several days until we could clear up all the peculiarities of the drum, to the last detail.

When the shaman, commanded by the spirits, requested the drum, he went to a hunter for the skin. He asked him to shoot a reindeer or a moose-elk for him, according to the kind of skin he wanted for his drum.

Then he ordered the drum to be made by an expert drum-maker. The preparation of the drum had to be rewarded, for instance, a two-year old reindeer was an appropriate payment. The reward to be given had to be about two hundred rubels worth.
The headgear, the gown and the boots were made by some of the women of the community. These were made without charge, some shamans, however, rewarded these women too.

The shaman always demanded a young deer of no more than two or three years of age from the hunter. If the skin of such a young animal was used for lining the drum, the drum had a better tone. The shaman warned the hunter to be careful about delivering the skin intact and not to reveal, under any circumstances, the place where he had shot the animal. The skin had been dried, the hairs were scraped off. When they finally began the actual preparation of the drum — two or three months might have elapsed — the skin had been moistened again, and it was in this state, that it had been stretched and fastened over the frame of the drum.

I was very anxious to learn the preparation of the drum in detail and therefore I was searching for oldsters who had witnessed such procedure, or even had taken part in the preparation of the drum themselves.

At last, one of the Soyots blurted out, that his third neighbour had probably seen how the drum of the shaman, called Arikay, had been made. Soon I was squatting beside the fire in the tent of this man, in the company of three oldsters.

- Have you already written down much about the Soyot shamans in your book? — the host came up with the question, to my great surprise.

- Well, several note-books are already full, but there is still a great deal that I would like to record. How do you know what I am looking for?

- I was also present at the council-meeting at the kolkhoz that evening when you dropped in there.

- Please, help me. I would like to find out how the drums were made!

My old friend turned towards the others. They exchanged a meaningful wink.
— Now you can write down everything about making a drum, even about two, because I have seen one being made and this man here, made one himself! — and he indicated one of the old men.
— Would you then tell me about it? I will write down everything I can.

There was no need for further encouragement.
— This was in 1927. Arikay, the shaman, went to Chivüzey, who knew everything about how the drums should be made. They agreed: he would make the drum for him, for the price of a young reindeer. At about nine o'clock in the morning, the shaman went with the master to the forest. I had just left at that time to gather some berries. I noticed the two men and ran after them. It must have been about two or three kilometers outside the village. Then the shaman pointed to a tree and asked: “Would this one do for a drum?” — I heard Chivüzey answer: „No, it wouldn’t, it would break”. It was a tree of the knotty kind. They kept ambling along. Suddenly, Chivüzey stopped in front of a tree and said: “This will do” They made a fire and first they prepared some salted tea with milk. As soon as the tea was boiling, the shaman dipped the wooden spoon, which served this purpose, in the brew and drawing some of the liquid out, sprinkled the tree with it. Then he produced a white ribbon and hung it on the tree. Then they began to eat. Finally, the shaman agreed to cut the tree and then, he himself, went home alone. I stayed behind to watch what Chivüzey was doing. He felled the trunk and cut off a length of about three meters from it. He halved the piece lengthways and then carved a plank of about one to one and a half centimeters thick from it. Then he warmed both sides of the plank above the fire and after that, he curved it around the trunk.

— Had they really felled the tree? In other regions I was told that the tree chosen for the frame must not be cut.
— Our clan, the Akchodu family, always proceeded in this manner. I know, the Karagasys do not fell the tree, they only cut out a piece of the trunk but let the tree stand. They believed it to be very bad if the tree died and would not continue to live on. But, we do not attribute any importance to that.

The other two Soyots were nodding in agreement: Yes, this was true.

— But how did they bend the rim? — I wanted to know more about this in detail.

— He could tell you more about it, because he himself did it too — said the old man and he pointed to the oldster at his side.

— I made the drum for the shaman called Takka. He went into a trance one evening, in order to find out where we should go to find the tree. He said, we must go to the snow-capped “Silky” mountain because a certain kind of cedar-pine grew only there. The shaman came with us and he pointed out the right tree. There were three of us there, besides him. We left in the morning and came back the same night. We also felled the tree. The shaman himself told us how to cut it out. But after pointing out the tree, he went home. We cut the plank from the tree, there on the spot, and bent it too. Two of us curved it around the trunk of the felled tree. One was smoothing one end, the other was shaping the other end upon the trunk. The ends were fastened with two double wooden pegs at the point where they touched. But this was not enough, the plank was not yet evenly bent, so we traced a circle upon the ground and stuck some wooden spikes around it into the earth, in the middle of the circle we made a fire, and we shaped the final form of the rim around the spikes. Furthermore, we cut off enough of the trunk for the handle and the other wooden parts of the drum. But the rest of the work we had already carried out back home. The drum was ready within three or four days.
My three men warmed so much to the explanations upon the subject of the preparation of the shaman’s drum that they unwittingly revealed something more: there were some other things too to be found around here in the land of the edelweiss that might certainly be of interest to me. One of them began:

– I went to the mountains to hunt. Not far from the bank of the Ij, all of a sudden, my laikas grew restless. They ran hither and thither, they dashed off and then they were back again. What on earth could they be chasing? I went after them. I got to a sparse birch-grove. The dogs were there, pointing, with flexed legs, barking up at a group of trees. The sun was just rising, its rays reflected upon some glittering object among the birch-leaves. I went nearer: it was a staff, propped up against a birch-trunk. The wind was playing with its ribbons.

– It was a shaman’s staff, wasn’t it?
– Not only the staff was there, but the shaman was there too. Only he was dead. He was stretched out on the ground in torn clothes, a tea-kettle and a few small dishes were placed beside him. My laikas were barking at the corpse.

– How many years ago did this happen?
– Not so long ago, it was last year.
– I would like to see it too! If only the animals had not yet torn it to pieces!

Perhaps it is still there... At least the staff!

– It should be there, nobody ventures to those parts. And if anyone would get there by mistake, they would not dare to touch it, anyhow. I did not disturb it either.

– I wish I could see it soon! – I tried to force the issue. The sun was still high above and I thought I might be able to take a picture if we would get there in time.

I stood up, indicating that it might be best to leave at once.
The old hunter did not wait for any further prodding, he himself got up too.

But first we went to his tent, so that he could fetch his dogs. Certainly, these mountain-hunters cannot ever be without their dogs. They own an astonishing number of laikas. I noticed this for the first time among the Karagasys, what a great number of dogs they keep. I even asked Gala once: what do they need such a lot of dogs for? The food devoured by these animals could very well serve for the purpose of raising hogs.

- What do we need pigs for? We don’t like pork!

A little later she added:

- We prefer the taste of bear-pads.

I had an opportunity again, to admire the edelweiss while we crossed the immense meadow just outside the settlement. After that we were already treading upon the fallen leaves of the forest.

A few striped squirrels must have joined us too, those little trapeze-artists, because once here, then there, their whistles resounded among the trees.

I had to laugh now, when I told the Soyot hunter that while in the Karagasy region, I thought it was the sound of a bird!

We turned towards the bank of the Ij, advancing along the river, up towards the north.

In one of the small bays a little Soyot youngster was squatting with a long fishing rod. The hunter asked him to lend him his rod for a moment.

- Are you going to fish?

- No, I don’t want to fish, I want to hunt.

Now, this sounded like a tricky answer, if there ever was one...

I watched my companion curiously. He motioned us to hide behind the undergrowth, while he stole silently towards the foot
of a pine-tree. I took a closer look at the old tree: one of the little striped squirrels was crouching on one of the branches there.

The old hunter fabricated from the string an easily closing loop at the end of the rod. He lifted the rod slowly, pointing it towards the squirrel, which was looking down upon it. The loop was reaching the same level as the head of the little animal. It was inspecting this strange object with genuine curiosity, without a trace of suspicion. I think, he even stretched his neck forward. A sudden gesture and the loop tightened around the neck of the little beast.

The hunter lifted the squirrel off from the branch it had considered so safe, only a few seconds ago. The little striped animal was struggling desperately and kicking in every direction, but there was no escape. The hunter turned the stick directly towards our hiding place in the brush, so that I could rescue the little captive from its distressful predicament. The little warm being panted between my palms. The whistle got stuck in its throat. But its eyes were still looking into the world with more curiosity than fear.

Or, was it, that it knew it would be set free anyhow, because its skin was hardly worth more than a few kopeks?

I ran my fingers along its striped, soft back, with friendly strokes.

What a strange being: it resembles a squirrel, it produces the sound of a bird, and it is caught like a fish. A real Siberian potpourri.

When I turned it lose, it disappeared among the trees with enormous leaps and bounds.

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The pine-forest was soon followed by white birches. The velvety, silky rind of the trunks is soft and warm when I touch it, it feels
as if the trunks would be pulsating underneath, although they are only trees. It is true, however, that they are birch-trees and the sun is shining right upon them too.

Suddenly the laikas jump, it seems, they caught a scent. Had we reached our destination?

It is a quiet birch grove, undisturbed by human steps, the sunrays sparkle on the trembling leaves as if they would be covered with glistening cobwebs. The dry leaves crumble under our feet and I can hear my own heartbeats.

The sight I behold is unequalled in all of Siberia today.

The corpse of the shamaness is already lying on the ground, a few thick, decaying branches are spread around it. The reindeer jacket is torn, wild beasts and dogs might have destroyed it. The wooden dishes are empty, the teacup contains but rainwater, or melted snow. But, the shaman’s staff, put up against the birch-tree, still stands there triumphantly! Careful hands tied it to the trunk, it cannot fall, the falling leaves could not yet hide it. The snow, the rain and the sun had faded the colours of the ribbons, but they are still fluttering in the breeze, even now.

Years ago, I visited a cemetery on the banks of the Tisza. From the distance, only the tall poplars were visible stretching towards the sky, hundreds and hundreds of crows were circling above, pitying the deceased: kár-kár-kár! (The cawing of crows: kár also means pity in Hungarian.) The sinking graves were marked with crudely carved boat-shaped, wooden posts at the head-end, fabricated from coarse tree-stumps. Some of them had rotted and they toppled over the graves. As if Charon had pulled them up from the waters and left them on the riverside hill.

At that time, I envied those buried there for having obtained a resting place, expressing perfectly the idea of passing away.

But, at that time, I had not yet been here, I had not yet seen this hillside.

It was a long time before I was able to take out my camera
and my notebook, to eternalize the burial place of the shamaness.

...And I did not have the heart to untie the staff, and I also left the idol, depicting the shaman spirit, where they were.

We left without a word and we did not talk for a long time. I wondered how will these pictures come out as the light was bad when I took them. However, even if they would come out in the best possible way, they could still not recapture the atmosphere of the ancient burial-site. I had used the best materials, my Exacta Varex, colour film, but something would still be lacking...

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I could never figure out, what made my old Soyot friend confess to me on the way back that he also took part in the initiation ceremonies of the drum that he had helped to make.

I asked him to tell me about it when we would have an opportunity. This already came the next day and he told me about it, in detail:

- When the drum was ready, it had been propped up against the wall, in the interior of the tent, so that its inside turned towards the fire. The new pair of shaman-boots, recently finished, was placed on the ground, so that the bootlegs would – as much as possible – recline upon the inside of the drum. Upon the boots, they placed the gown. The one who arranged all this stepped up in front of the boots, holding the shaman's garment vertically in front of himself, and then let it slide down slowly in such a manner that it would stand in the way as the shaman would wear it. The headgear was fastened above the neck-opening of the gown. The drumstick was tied to the upper wooden cross-beam of the drum.

A reindeer had been killed in front of the tent, its meat was cooked. Three dishes were placed inside the tent in front of the drum and before the shaman's garment, upon the ground. A
piece of the breast had been placed in the first vessel and a small piece of the heart in the second. The shank of the hind leg was put in the third dish. Nearer to the fire, in front of the three dishes, three cups were placed and they poured salted tea into the first one, mixing it with reindeer-milk, brandy, fermented from milk was put in the second one, and pure reindeer-milk into the third. The dishes and the cups were not filled by the shaman but by the others. These dishes and cups stood there for about an hour and a half, while the drinks and food in them were cooling. Those who were present at the ceremony were feasting in the meantime.

When all the steam evaporated from the contents of the dishes and the cups placed in front of the shaman's garment and the drum, these foods and drinks were consumed too.

Then the guests declared: "Now this congregation will teach the drum, and the shaman may shamanize with it during the night." Then, one after the other, they put on the shaman's garment, taking hold of the drum and beating it. There were some among them, who would beat it for as long as half an hour.

- I had only been shamanizing for about five minutes – my informant said – the shaman's gown was so very heavy!

Those, who are present at the ceremony, form a circle and everybody waits for his turn. Five, seven or nine persons have to shamanize. The more, the better. But if only eight people have been shamanizing, then they went out and looked for a ninth, because the number had to reach nine. The guests were very gay, they were laughing a lot.

As soon as darkness fell, the kam did not wait any longer. He related, in due course, where the cedar pine-tree grew that supplied the wooden parts of the drum, and how old had it been. After that, he spoke with the reindeer, whose skin had been used for lining the drum:

- Where were you born?
- On the bank of the Choigan-hem.
- How old are you?
- I was born three years ago.
- Who killed you?
- Santik, the hunter killed me.
- Where is the bullet?
- Here, look, here is the bullet! — The shaman pretended that he held a bullet in his hand and he dropped it into his tobacco-pouch.

After this, he expressed his gratitude to all the women who made the gown or worked on the ribbons, by singing for them. He wished them good health, pure spirits and that nothing bad should happen to them as long as they lived. He also promised to intervene, on behalf of everybody present, with the spirits.

He also talked about the drumstick, in a similar manner. First he chanted about the horn, about the antlers of the deer of which the drumsticks were made. He tried to find out and then explained what kind of a deer the antlers belonged to, where had it lost the antlers and who found them. Then he acted as if he would place the antlers back on the head of the animal and then he asked the deer to give it to him in the form of a gift. The animal “agreed”.

Then the shaman spoke with the bear whose paws were skinned to supply the lining of the drumstick.

Then he chanted about the owner of the feathers decorating his head-dress. He narrated about the bird that supplied the feathers, what kind it had been, how long had it lived, who killed it and who had pulled the feathers out of its wings.

All these details I have been able to collect on the basis of the information of my Soyot friend, about the initiation ceremony of the Soyot shaman drum, were recorded for the first time, just as the descriptions collected in Alygdzher and in Nerkha, about the ceremony of the Karagasys.
* 

After the first lock had been broken, all the others seemed to have opened automatically. Every day brought more and more new information. Just as in the Karagasy region, I gradually became familiar with the whole picture, down to the smallest detail.

And how easy it became to collect now! Of course I kept coming across the parallels of the Karagasy mythology. From the decorative designs of the garment, right down to the meaning of the drum.

The shaman, Karagasy or Soyot, was “flying” in the air. The greater the shaman, the higher he could fly, mounted on his drum. This is, why one of them chanted:

*Under the clouds,*  
*above the trees*  
*I fly!*

Or the other, who claimed:

*Under the skies,*  
*above the clouds*  
*I fly!*

A good shaman could fly as high and as fast an an “aeroplane”, he could see everything. The bad shamans, on the other hand, could not see anything, they could only hear, because they could not fly, they were only squatting in their tents.

The son of a deceased shaman revealed to me that when the shaman is flying, he is in fact riding, mounted on his drum, up in the air. His father had been galloping, mounted upon his drum, the same way as if he had been mounted upon the back of a *maral-deer*. He rode that way because his drum had been lined with the skin of a maral-deer.
Shaman drum with double crossbeam. Such were used by the kams of the Karagasys and the Soyots of the mountain region. The "veins" encircle the edge along the knots, on both sides of the top part the "ears" can be seen (three "earrings" dangle from each), the upper crossbeam is the "breast strap", the lower one the "breeching stay", the three ribbons are the "heart" and the "lungs", representing also the "reins". All these terms refer to the corresponding parts of the body and the equipment of the animal whose skin had been used to line the drum.

The fact that the drum represents an animal to mount to the shaman, had already been indicated by the description of the initiation ceremony, at which – as they themselves put it – they “train” the drum, or in other words, they break it in. I found out from the chants of the Karagasy shaman, Bolhoyev, that while shamanizing, they call the drum white horse or reindeer bull.

The denominations of each part also prove that the drum represents an animal, more specifically, an animal for riding.

The Soyots, for instance, call the different parts of the drum: ears, jaw-bones, upper rib and lower rib of the horse. The Karaga-
The gasy drum also has ears, lungs, heart and veins.

The two crossbeams supporting the drum from the inside are called by both peoples breast strap and breeching stay. These two parts are essential for saddling an animal, because they hold the saddle. The shaman's horse, namely the drum, was also equipped with reins, necessary for directing it. Both the Karagasys and the Soyots were talking in identical terms about the gallops, while mounted on the drum.

"The shamans said: they could ride their drums like any saddle-animal. If they were shamanizing without a drum, they were going on foot. If they had a drum, they were riding. When they were beating the drum with the drumstick, they were whipping their horse. Those who rode mounted upon their drums, could ride fast to faraway places."

It was because of the riding, that the skin that was stretched over the rim, had to be well chosen.

"The skin of an animal in its prime is best for the drum. The drum is the saddle-animal of the shaman, therefore neither an old, nor a young animal serves for this purpose. If the animal is too young, it tires too quickly. If it is old, it does not move fast enough."

The length of the period during which the shaman may use his drum was determined exactly by this concept of mounting the drum like a saddle-animal.

- Not all drums are apt for the same length of time. Everything depends - Kokuyev, the shaman, told me once - upon the age of the animal whose skin had been tightened over the drum. The beasts only run well up to their seventh or ninth year. Therefore, the drum might not be used for more years than those, which would remain after killing the animal until it would have reached its seventh or ninth year. After that, the skin fastened on the rim must be renewed. I also had two drums - continued Kokuyev - because the first, made of the skin of a stag, was good only for three years.
Many a time I have heard, back at home, in Hungary, from white-moustached old peasants or toothless old women, about the talltoslo (shaman horse), upon which the hero rides away into the clouds and visits faraway lands. And I learned from an old shepherd in the Csallóköz (largest island of the River Danube), that this Hungarian “táltosló” had quite a lot in common with the shaman drum. Once when I have been questioning him about the talltosok (shamans) and their talltoslovak (shaman horses), he came up with a riddle:

— I have such a talltoslo (shaman horse), which can neigh into any house. What is it?

I could not guess, I gave up and asked him what it was.

— Well, the drum, of course . . . — he answered.

*

I arrived back from the taiga to Kyzyl. Thus, the collection on the site in the northeastern Soyot region was finished.

Direction: the museum, going there straight from the airport. I was able to take advantage of an unexpected opportunity, a truck came to fetch the museologists of the Kyzyl Museum and they took me along.

In the museum I requested the renewal of my permission to stay in the building of the museum again and also asked for a sleeping bag. Namely, the new director had been nominated in the meantime. He had also kindly offered his office, therefore, this was where I spread out the sleeping bag every night. I could, in this way, save again the daily cost of seven rubels.

Now I have already prepared my sleeping place, but there is such a pleasant, peaceful quiet reigning in the building, that I do not feel like retiring yet, I prefer to go through the results of my research-work, accomplished up to now.
I am sitting in the office, on the table before me there is a large bouquet of edelweiss in a glass of water and in front of me there is a dummy. It is wearing the only Soyot shaman-gown of the museum. I am thinking about the late owner of this shaman-gown. He is well-known to me, I nearly consider him a personal acquaintance, I even know his name.

We have the pleasure of meeting Sandjima, the shaman. Eighteen years have gone by since he returned to the domain of those with whom he used to meet so often while entranced, and where he used to ride around, mounted upon his drum. While he had been alive, he wandered about in the valleys of the Hamsara river.

Is it surprising, that I know all this about the former owner of this garment? But it is easy for anyone who knows all the shamans of northeastern Tuva.

Is that true?

Let us make a test!

It might have been as long as one hundred years ago, that the old Sharday had been shamanizing on the banks of the River Sistighem. He was a great shaman. The Karagasy shamans themselves instructed him how to cut the garment, how to prepare the headgear and the drumstick. He rewarded their advice well: he gave them a white reindeer with a golden-bridle and a length of Chinese silk. He obtained the latter from Mongolia especially for this purpose.

His son had also been approached by the spirits, but for some reason or other, they were unable to convince him to obey. He paid dearly for his reluctance: he became half-witted and stayed thus until his death.

The shaman's grandchildren learned from the sad experience of their father and they did not resist the will of the spirits.

One grandson was Nitka, the other, Arikay. The former took the shaman's habit in 1910, the latter was clad in the fringed and tasseled shaman's gown in 1928.
But I realize now, how impolite I have been: I should have begun with the womenfolk. I could have mentioned, for instance, the venerable Ham-kaday first.

This is not a real name, it only means: shamaness.

It is true: the majority were men, as for instance Takpazhik, Sadakpan, Ingazhik or Sandik shamans, whose chants were soaring with much dignity!

Or, there was Tazhiseren. This poor man once tumbled down from a reindeer and broke his leg. The bones did not set well and the broken leg remained shorter. He could not perform the shaman dance any more and therefore he gave up shamanizing altogether. All this I learned from one of the ministers of the Tuva National Republic. (He is a carpenter now at one of the sawmill-plants.) How come, that he knew all this so well? It just happened, that Tazhiseren was his brother.

And – if we are at the enumeration of the kams, there was old Takka, Ak Taylik, Tamchat, Kamdjalân, Takiyak and Ham Targa, who had been dead long ago.

But we must not forget the only Soyot kam with a Russian name either: Ak Stepan. (How well it would sound even in Hungarian: Fehér István, that is, Stephen White.)

*

I have been able to save one of the lengthy chants of this Ak Stepan from certain oblivion, because fortunately I found a man who could render it almost completely for recording on the tape recorder. It is a somewhat confused, hardly intelligible text. Let us, therefore, be satisfied with some excerpts from it:

Öbügeler, öbügeler
Bay of Deriy Lake of Wild Ducks
dwelt-in land mine born-in land mine
the Great Taiga the Heart Taiga
I do climb it I do scale it
spirit recluse spirit recluse
my staff tingles the tender pine
have you not seen Alan's mothers
the ancestors of our kam
kuk-kuk-kuk-ku - -

Ancestors of Alan the kam
wicked spirits recoil in fear
those of the depths recoil in fear
Tüvek's drum reaches the sun
the drum of Alan the moon can hear - -

Children's devout supplication
tames the wicked spirit's wildness
that's good that's good and enough so
let them not ask more from us now
children's devout supplications
soften the dark spirit Höstey
silver abode bûo - bûo
it is now time to head for home - -

Smallest offspring of Birekey
came to the world born in new shape
born with miraculous power
oh mothers mine oh mothers mine
half witted old Chagan father
that is good so that's enough now
we shall go home we shall go home
the tall handsome dresses up now
masters mine are nicer than nice
uu uu u - -

Alan's forebear may hear the moon
and deaf Süden may hear the sun
that is good so that is enough
oh mothers mine oh mothers mine
kuk-kuk-kuk-ku - -

Ruddy-red tea ruddy-red tea
let us drink it comes from China
young shoots of heath juniper branch
taste it is from our own woods - -

The "Great Taiga" and the "Heart Taiga" were denoted in the Soyot text as Ulug Taiga and Churek Taiga. The first Russian settlers translated the Turkish word taiga - mistakenly - as woods, although its original meaning is peak, snow-capped mountain top.

This chant is also interesting, because the bird-spirits keep interrupting it (kuk-kuk-kuk-ku) and so do the wolf-spirits too (uu-uu-uu).

Some of the shaman chants are even more elaborate.

*

Because we are on Soyot ground, to where lamaism has infiltrated from Mongolia, we would not have a complete picture without mentioning the lama-shamans. If it was necessary, they were lamas, if it was so desired, they were shamanizing. Kol Duganchi in the Tora-hem valley and Siydan on the bank of the Kut were such lama-shamans. I have recorded some of the songs of old Kol Duganchi on my tape recorder, in order to be able to compare the knowledge of the shamans and the lama-shamans.

If I counted correctly, I became acquainted with nineteen shamans in northeastern Tuva. In all probability, there were not many more of them.

Suddenly, the telephone rang.

Whom on earth could they be calling here at the museum at this hour?
WITH THE KAMS

- Hallo, this is the Kyzyl Museum!
- You have a Hungarian researcher there, I would like to talk to him.
- I am the one you want.
- This is the Pravda, I am the reporter of the Pravda of Tuva. Please, forgive me for disturbing you so late, but we would like to have an interview with you for our paper being published tomorrow. Could you receive me now?

I glanced at my watch: a quarter past eleven, fairly late, but why should he not come, I thought. According to Moscow time it was four hours earlier and if we were in Budapest, we would be drinking our afternoon tea.

- Please, come to the museum, I am expecting you.

In about ten minutes, the reporter arrived. I could see right away that he would not leave me until he had the answer to all his questions.

- Please, forgive for the hour of this visit, but we heard only tonight that you are here in Tuva and we would like to report this to our readers, immediately.

And then he inundated me with questions.

While I have been giving him the answers patiently, I have been silently considering whether I could mention to him or not,
that I am about to sell my Exacta Varex, their photo-reporter might be interested in it.

However, I kept this to myself, after all, my financial situation will not become catastrophic yet, for another two or three days. And, until then, perhaps a miracle would happen...

– I will send you a copy of the paper tomorrow – the reporter said, when he was departing around one o’clock.

In the morning, we were listening to the tape recorder with the Soyot folklorist and we tried to check the accuracy of the denotations.

We had hardly been working for more than an hour, when the reporter appeared at the door. He was waving the last number of the Tuvinskaya Pravda.

– The Editor liked the report very much and he would like you to write an article for us!

Surprise robbed me of words. But the reporter misunderstood my silence.

– We wish to recompense you for it: we will pay four hundred rubels for the six columns we want – he added persuasively.

I drew a deep breath: I do not have to part with the Exacta and I could still pay for my trip to Moscow.

– They would like to have the article by four o’clock.

While the colleagues at the museum had their lunch, I wrote up the “train-fare”: The Interest of Hungarian Science in Siberia.

The ink had hardly dried on the pages when I was already at the editor’s office. The editor in chief ran through it right away. I kept glancing at his face unobtrusively, would he find it satisfactory?

– Hm. You have a better style than some of my collaborators. There are no grammatical errors in your manuscript either. I would not be able to tell, that you are not a Russian.

My tension subsided.

– Couldn’t you write one more article for us? – he turned un-
expectedly towards me. – We would like you to report your findings among the Soyots, with reference to shamanism.

Miracles seemed to multiply. How could I have had any doubts? What a wonderful and unexpected turn of events! I could hardly believe it myself, but this meant that not only did it supply me with sufficient funds for the return trip, but might enable me also to continue with my work! I was not obliged any more to go home yet, not tomorrow, nor the day after! After having visited the northeastern Soyots, I might yet get acquainted with the Soyots of the steppes too.

After having been to the banks of the Great Yenisey, now I might also see the region of the Little Yenisey!

I was nearly running on my way back to the Institute. I was looking for one of the folklorists, Kular. He once mentioned that he knew an old shaman among the steppe-dwelling Soyots.
– I hope he is still alive, he used to live in the village of Medvedjevka. If I remember well, his name was Suzukpen.

Wonderful! Let us go to the director of the museum now, and discuss the subject of the collection with him too.

– It would be a pity, if you wasted your time on this. It is true, there is a former shaman living in the village of Medvedjevka, but one of our researchers just visited him, about a month ago. But, he could not make him talk at any price...

In spite of this warning, I bought a bus ticket, with the optimism of those born in May. For me the essential part of all this information was, that the oldster was still alive. I hoped, I could make him talk.

It was late afternoon when I arrived nearby the village. Unfortunately, only nearby, because between the village and the highway there were two small rivulets I had to cross. I would never have believed it, had I not had the experience, how cold these streams could be, even after a hot day.

But these small streams were the least of the obstacles. I had
also to cross the Ka-hem, the Little Yenisey itself. This was already far too deep, it was impossible to wade through its water. Only a ferry could solve my problem.

After about a good half hour of loud shouting, the towline of the ferry began to hum at last. About ten minutes later the ferryman arrived, an old Russian, who could not have been much less than a hundred years old, with a great, big, white beard, therefore, he must have been of the Orthodox creed.

Any pirate of the high seas could have looked upon me with envy as I stood there, with my trousers rolled up to the knees, my hair blown by the north wind, unshaven, at the stern of the ferry.

About ten meters before getting to shore, we had to transfer into a boat. The ancient structure was half filled with water. I tried my best to balance on the crossbeam, so as to avoid the pleasures of a foot-bath.

But can you ever defy your fate? It must have been written in the stars that I should take a cold bath that day. Namely, the boat ran onto a rock in the darkness!

I had to surrender to the force of gravity, because as I stood with my back towards the course, I could only fall flat on my back. The knapsack, having been fastened to my shoulders, was immersed too.

The tape recorder, as well as the camera, had not only been baptized in the holy river of the Karagasys, the Chuglym, but also in the water of the Little Yenisey.

After half hour of wandering about in the village and finding lodgings, my first activity was to connect the tape recorder. Absolute silence.

In spite of the drenched and freezing cold garments sticking to my body, I felt hot at once. But the apparatus only needed a little drying. In about twenty to twenty-five minutes it was functioning as well as if it would have been brand-new, just delivered by the factory.
But I must add, that you could not very well mistake it for a new one. The operating handlebar was held together by a bolt, filed from a crude iron-nail, its elegant grey linnen-case reminded me of someones who has just had chicken-pox and had scratched someone the blisters open.

*

Next morning I was up early. I examined the view of the village, entirely unfamiliar to me.

Namely, the Buryats and the Turks of Abakan build loghouses, the eastern Soyots have conical rind-tents, but these Soyots live in circular wooden structures, covered by felt.

Beside one of the tents, an old woman was pottering about. I saluted her with a smile.

She returned my greeting also with a friendly expression.

— I would like to look inside this tent. You know, auntie, I come from very far and I have never seen a tent like this one before.

— Is it worth your while looking at this old junk? — the old woman asked embarrassedly. But she was already opening the wood-plank door of the yurt.

I carefully observed the framework of the yurt. It consisted of vertical walls and of a softly curved dome, with an opening in the center. The walls, as well as the cupola were supported by a wooden structure and this was covered by felt-sheets. But let us look a little closer at these wooden structures.

The walls are a series of interwoven wooden poles: one row of poles inclining from left to right, the next row in the opposite direction. Where the poles touching in an X-shape meet, they have been perforated and short leather straps have been passed through these holes. Instead of nails, this ancient solution had been applied for the purpose of fixing the poles and in this way,
they had obtained a wall surface of several frames. Of course, this kind of fastening was far from secure: each section could be folded or opened like the bellows of an accordion.

But this had also been a great advantage. The Soyots, who changed their dwelling places frequently, could easily transport the mobile walls of the disassembled tent.

The sections were folded: the poles crossing each other were tightly pressed together, they occupied little room and were therefore easily fastened on the back of the pack-animals.

Even the supporting structure of the dome might be placed with them, because that too can be taken apart. It consists of poles bent in a curve, one of their ends is tied to the upper edge of the tent, always at such points where the poles constructing the wall-sections have their meeting point, their other ends being collected in a fairly large wooden ring which has at its outer edge the corresponding holes. This ring holds the top part of the poles and supports the whole roof-structure.
The vertical walls, as well as the dome, are then covered with sheets of felt and these are fastened with straps to the structure.

I sat down beside the fire. I led the conversation back into the past. Soon the subject of the kams came up.

− Once upon a time there were even two of them: a woman, Horlu, and Suzukpen.
− Are they still alive?
− Not Horlu, if I remember well, she died in 1952.
− And Suzukpen?

She does not answer at once. She looks searchingly into my eyes instead. But finally she says:

− Suzukpen is still alive.
− Where does he live?

She is silent again for a short while.

− That man has no permanent dwelling. He sleeps once here, then there, he keeps moving from one yurt to another, then again on to a third place.
− I would like to meet him. How could I find out where he is staying now?
− Go to his sister, she would know where he is, − and she pointed with relief towards a nearby yurt.

*

Fortunately, I found this old woman at home too. First we talked about all sorts of actual things, mainly about my having come all this long way from a faraway country to the banks of the Little Yenisey, in order to find out about the past life of the Soyots.

Then, there too, I began to talk about the shamans. I did not say a word, however, about having been informed about her brother’s shamandum. I kept on asking insistently about the woman Horlu of the Saldzhak clan.

− And you, auntie, have you ever seen shamanizing?
- Certainly, I saw her, yes, I did.
- Could you perhaps recall what her drum was like then?
- Oh, it was nothing special, it was just like any other shaman’s drum.
- But I would like to know about it exactly, all details interest me.
- It was just a simple drum.
- Well, do you know what, auntie? If it was that simple, perhaps we could make a drawing of it.

And I produced the notebook and the pencil.

The old Soyot woman just could not resist the temptation of the novel, unusual task.

An unskilled, but clear sketch of the drum of the shamaness emerged on the paper. She drew the form exactly and I noted which parts were of wood and which were made of leather, and what were the corresponding names of each.

The old woman was quite proud of her accomplishment.
- Oh, auntie, you remember these things so well! – I flattered her in the hope of further results. – Wouldn’t you like to try the drumstick too?
- I don’t see why not! – She gladly agreed and she was already reaching for the pencil.

And, within one and a half hour she fabricated the sketch of the headgear and the boots of the shamaness too, on the pages of my notebook. We sketched the front and the back view of the gown as well. The old woman even recalled the colour of each ribbon.
- Well, well auntie, aren’t you clever at these things! Perhaps you haven’t forgotten Hohlu’s songs either, or have you? Try to think back a little, you might be able to recollect some of them. This machine here is a tape recorder: if you would sing into it, afterwards you could listen to it and hear your own voice.

The old woman shook her head in disbelief.
- You think, my voice could be heard from this machine too?
the visitor spoke up, who dropped in about a half hour ago, and watched our work since then, squatting on the ground.

— Sure it could! Of course! Anyone’s voice might be heard. Only, first you must sing into it.

The visitor’s interest was greatly aroused. He placed the cup he held on the floor – it was a Chinese type cup and he had been sipping salted tea with milk from it – and he stepped up to the tape recorder.

He scrutinized it from every side, and as if he knew exactly what it was all about, he turned to me:
— I have also seen a kam while he was shamanizing.
— Do you remember his chant?
— Of course I do. When I was wandering in the woods alone I used to sing them to myself frequently.

I hurried to open the tape recorder, I handed him the microphone to hold, pushed the starting button, and the little lamp started blinking.

— But now, you must sing into this little box – I whispered to him mysteriously and I pointed at the vibrating light.

After clearing his throat he began. His beautiful, strong voice filled the yurt.

And by his response, the example had been set. Hardly had he finished the song, the old hostess turned to the microphone.
— But let us hear the machine first!

Both listened to the recording with a devout, serious expression on their faces.
— Right you were. This is my voice! — stated the guest with sincere astonishment.
— Which shaman’s chant will you sing? — I turned to the old woman.
— The woman Horlu’s – she answered quickly, without any hesitation.

Soon the old auntie could also hear her own voice from the tape.
What a pity — I said, pretending real regret — that there are no more real kams around here any more. If there would be at least one, I would record his song too. Then he could really consider himself to be a great kam, because his voice would live for ever.

The visitor and the old woman exchanged a glance.
- Would you record the chant of a real kam?
- If a real kam would come here... And if he would turn up soon, because I have little time, I have to set forth on my journey...

For the sake of emphasizing what I said, I even looked at my watch.
- And if I would fetch one? — the guest asked with a meaningful look.
- Well, I wouldn't mind, if you would, in the worst case, I would be a little late... — I mumbled with a feigned indifference, like one, who would be willing to oblige.

And while waiting and smoking a cigarette, I kept guessing: would Suzukpen come or would he not?

* 

We know very little about the Soyot shaman-songs. Only Katanov collected some texts at the turn of the century. Altogether, they do not amount to more than about five printed pages. This, of course, is very little. These texts do not provide sufficient basis for determining the characteristics of the Soyot shaman-songs, nor can scientific comparasion be effected on that basis. As far as the melodies are concerned, the situation is even worse: not a single one had been recorded to this day.

While I was thus meditating, the yurt filled up slowly. I was wondering, whether the interest was due to the visitor from another continent, or have they already known that a shamanistic séance was about to take place.
The majority were women, nearly all of them with a little child in their arms, but there were some men among the guests too. They filed in and sat around the fire burning in the centre of the yurt, without a word being spoken.

Ten to fifteen minutes later, the man I knew came back, but he was not alone: an oldster, about seventy, followed him with careful steps into the yurt.

The multitude of visitors obviously did not turn up for my sake: it seems the Soyots have already found out about the favourable answer of Suzukpen to my invitation.

*

Suzukpen, the one-time great kam of the stock-breeder Soyots, settles down next to me. We glance at each other silently.

He is a thin, old man of middle height, his eyes are shiny and lively. A shapeless, worn European style hat sits on his shaven head. He seems to have a neurasthenic tick, his head jerks slightly at irregular intervals.

I show him the microphone and explain that he would have to sing into that. He scrutinizes the strange, shiny object, through narrowed eyelids.

I press the button and the vibrating green light flashes.

I hold the microphone for a moment to announce:

— Now we shall hear the chant of Suzukpen, born of the Saldzhak clan in 1887, former shaman in the region of the River Suy-Surmak, right side affluent of the Little Yenisey.

But the old man did not even wait for me to finish the sentence, he began his song at once.

In order to have the first words recorded intelligibly, I make him start all over again.

After a few lines he is already closing his eyes and throws his head from left to right, chanting loudly.

The mothers place their children to their breasts, so as to keep
them quiet. But under the suggestive influence of the forceful song, they forget all about their babies and the little ones forget to cry, they let go of the nipples and they listen too. The women do not care about their open blouses, they are completely absorbed in watching the shaman. Gradually, he is more and more overcome by ecstasy.

I have already given up following the movements of his head with the microphone. I am thinking with horror: holy God, how shall we ever be able to transcribe all this?

The old man shakes his head incessantly, once he whispers, then he bawls loudly, sometimes he hoots or inhales with a rasping sound, at times he covers his mouth with his hands so that the words become no more than a muffled, senseless murmur.

When the dramatic tension becomes nearly unbearable, a woman puts down her little child and crawls towards the shaman. She picks up the pipe that fell out of his belt, stuffs it with tobacco and lights it. At the proper intervals she gushes forth all the smoke her lungs can hold on the shaman. She does this more and more often.

Suddenly the chant is interrupted and the old man holds his palm before his mouth and amidst loud hiccoughs, he swallows the smoke.

He had completely turned away from me by now. I stand up and try to lift the microphone above his head reaching across from behind to place it in front of his mouth. I break out in a cold sweat: the tape is coming to its end and while I turn it, valuable lines of the chant might get lost.

But I have devilish luck: when the last centimeter of the tape unfolds from the disc, the old man finishing with the invocation of the spirits and the woman blows the smoke towards his mouth my eyes: go on, go on — another song will follow! with all the force she has in her lungs. I command her only with

Nothing was left out of the recording. The second half of the
tape starts exactly with the first words spoken after the trance, bearing the first traces of returning to consciousness.

Whilst Suzukpen crouches on the ground and tries to recover from his exhaustion, I have time to think about the fascinating performance which might have been very similar to the ceremony of the "táltos" (shaman) of the ancient Hungarians. This shaman bewitched his audience just like the Sagay Kizlasov did last year.

However, I am surprised to notice that I have not been captivated half as much as last year, experiencing the ceremony for the first time.

*

I let the old man breathe for a while, but soon I approach him and drop several hints concerning his knowledge. How did he acquire it? When?

Without much prompting his tongue loosens:

— It has been a long time ago. With two of my brothers, the three of us went to hunt squirrels. Late at night we were crossing a mountain, going after the squirrels, when suddenly I saw a black crow right in the middle of the road.

We were advancing in single file, I was the first. I came nearer, but the crow kept crouching in the middle of the road. It stayed right there and waited for me.

When I reached it, I threw some snow towards it from a branch.

It never moved.

Then I hit its beak with my stick.

Kok-kok. The knock resounded loudly.

What was all this? What was going to happen to me? Because the night before — before seeing the crow — I had already felt miserably.

Next day I went back to where I had seen the crow.

Not even a trace of it was to be seen, anywhere! Although the others, that is, my brothers, have seen it too.

From then on, from the time I hit the beak of that crow, I became very ill. My mind was deranged.

I have been suffering for as long as seven years.
Finally, I began to shamanize, because everybody kept saying all along: I must shamanize in order to get well again.

Nine years after I became ill, I gave in at last and ordered the drum and the drumstick because I had been urged to take up shamanizing.

The old shaman visibly enjoys recalling those days in which he still lived for his vocation.

I take advantage of this good opportunity and immediately we draw the drum and the drumstick. Before his enthusiasm could wear off, a sketch of the garment and another of the headgear are produced too.

It is remarkable how much the ritualistic objects of the shamans of the Great Yenisey and of the shamans along the Little Yenisey differ. Even in the preparation of these objects the two folk-groups display the difference between their cultures.

There is no trace of the symbols of the skeleton upon the garment here, without which we can not find any shaman gown in the Great Yenisey region. There are no “shinbones” or “toes” on the boots either. Also, for instance, Suzukpen’s drumstick had been lined first with sheep-wool and only then was the animal skin, covering it on the outside, sewn onto it. The reindeer-keeping Soyots do not use sheep-wool at all, they do not even know sheep.

But there are similarities to be found too. For example, the drum here represents the shaman’s mount upon which he is riding around in the other world, but here the drum is not a reindeer but a horse, and the drumstick is a whip.

This similarity, however, is logical, it is one of the basic concepts of shamanism, it is believed thus all across Siberia.

There are certain likenesses in the details too.

Although the shaman’s gown is not decorated with the skeleton, there are such headgears on which the human face is indicated. However, these were not embroidered with the long, white neck-hairs of the reindeer.
The headband of Suzukpen had been adorned with three cowrie shells: the middle one had been placed vertically, the other two horizontally on both sides. Directly underneath the vertically placed shell there was a Chinese button sewn onto the cap. A circular shape cut out from a blue fabric had been appliquéd on each side, outside the horizontal shells.

All this hardly reminds one of the shamanistic headgears of the Great Yenisey region, although, according to Suzukpen, these represent the parts of the human face too: the vertical shell is the nose, the two horizontal ones are the eyes, the Chinese button represents the mouth. The two blue, round pieces of fabric are nothing else but the ears.

*

Suzukpen becomes so enthusiastic about conjuring up the past that he even shows me fortune-telling by means of a drumstick.

In lieu of something better, he throws a wooden spoon in front of me, to see, whether my trip will be successful, and whether I get home safely to my native country.

The Karagasy and the Soyot spirits seem to have come to an agreement, because Suzukpen's throw indicates good fortune, just as a month ago old Karagasy Adamov's cast.

Namely, when Adamov prepared a drumstick upon my request, in order to enable me to study and photograph every phase of its preparation, he threw the finished object in front of my feet, so that we would see, how it would fall, for good or for bad. Well, it also fell in my favour.

In olden times, the shaman, at the end of his performance, threw his drumstick in front of all those present, one by one.

This was a symbol: he returned from the journey, which he made on his drum, and now he greeted the congregation. It counted as a kind of handshake.
The one whose turn it was, caught the drumstick with his gown, so that it should not fall on the ground.

The throw is also a prophecy at the same time.

The shaman holds the drumstick in his hand in such a manner that the fur-lined end should point downwards.

And then, the shouts resound, one after the other:

- *Ujgu tūstū!* (Dream fell!)
- *Tōrek tūstū!* (Tōrek fell!)
- *Ujgu tūstū!* (Dream fell!)

If the drumstick reached someone with its furry side downwards, he had to shout: *tōrek tūstū*, if it turned in the air and the fur-lined side pointed upwards, *ujgu tūstū* had to be cried. The former signified a favourable, the latter, a bad augury.

The drumstick was always returned to the shaman with its furry end pointing toward the earth.

* 

I worked with Suzukpen throughout several days, and he became quite friendly towards me by the time we had finished.

Such was the old man, to whom "it is not worthwhile to go, because not even with a pair of pliers can you get anything out of him."

And he had to work, I made him work really hard!

I played his song back to him line by line, when we were transcribing the text. I did all of it in his presence, so that if Mindermá would not be able to understand something, the old man might help out. I repeated some of the sentences ten, or twenty times, without stopping.

This is how we proceeded in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening and sometimes at night as well. And next morning we continued again, throughout the whole day.

The experience I had with the shamans of the Buryats, Sagays,
Karagasys and reindeer-keeping Soyots proved that the real difficulty was not in searching for the shaman song, or recording it but in transcribing it. Because, not even the shaman himself understands his own sentences better than anyone else. He does not understand it, because he does not know his own chant, he has no definite text, and those sentences he drones out while entranced, are just as strange and unknown to him as to the listeners.

Nothing can prove this better, than the difficult labour we had to devote to the transcription of the texts.

It proved that the shaman improvises while he chants, although he is using ready motives to a given melody.

Finally, we surmounted the difficulties of the song and we had finished the translation too.

However, all this had dwindled the contents of my purse considerably. But, could I have expected the poor, old man to let himself be exhausted for days, for nothing? Certainly I could not, after all he had done for me. He had told me how the new drum had been initiated, he spoke about the training of the drum, and, on the basis of his words I could sketch the location of the shamanistic objects in the yurt, and record how these objects were transported if the shaman took off to another region.

He even had a surprise for me: the küüzüngü.

I must confess, I do not know what that is, not to this day. Scientific literature, known to me, does not record or mention it, I found the only reference in the Soyot-Russian dictionary. This is all the information I have about it: "a tin sheet with ribbons, shamanistic object."

But, let us hear what Suzukpen had to say about the küüzüngü:

- I was already a kam, and I had my drum too, when I found it. I came across this object in the mountains, between the rocks. At the spot where it had been lying, the stone was carved out. It was very hot, I could hardly hold it. We always thought it was
vested with power, because it was hot. At home, I smoked it over the fire of juniper branches and then I washed it with milk. I washed it twice, and after I had dried it well with a white cloth, the blue overcast it had had before, vanished entirely. Then I hung it up in the yurt, its place was above the drum. It had never been removed from the yurt. If I had been called away to shamanize, I never took it along.

Well, this is all, about the küzungü.

Could it possibly have been one of those Chinese bronze-mirrors, which turn up so frequently in the kurgans? And, would Suzukpen attribute it the warmth only to enhance its magic “power”?

Thus I have learned the most important details, but all the notes I had collected about the woman Horlu and Suzukpen, could still not be considered a representative, complete picture of the shamanism of the Soyots, living on the banks of the little Yenisey.

I had still to go on looking for another shaman in this region.

I kept gently urging Suzukpen, until he finally said: a certain Chirgalang, also of the Saldzhak clan, had also been shamanizing some time ago, and slowly but surely, I have learned that he had been the shaman of the Soyots settled along a little river, called Buren-hem, and he lived at present in the village of Zubovka.

*

On the way back, I had no difficulty in crossing the Little Yenisey. But now I had another problem: what kind of a vehicle would take me to Zubovka? There was no other choice: I stood on the edge of the highway and waited for my luck to change.

It did not take very long. In about an hour a truck raised the dust of the road, coming from the east.

The driver stopped at my signals:

- Where are you going to?
- Towards Abakan.
- Well, that's still quite a distance...
- It takes two days before we get there.
- I would like to go only as far as Zubovka!
- Well, climb up, then.

I did not wait to be asked twice. I found a princely seat on top of a potato-sack.

I was not the only passenger.

My travelling companions soon found out that I was a foreigner, because of my accent. They tried to guess where I came from, naming one country after another. One of the young women teased me:

- You might say that you came from Africa because you are so black!

She was right, sitting at the rear end of the vehicle, all the dust stirred up by the truck was blown into my face.

After a little while, the driver stopped beside a straw-stack. We loaded some straw in order to make our seats more comfortable.

In the next village we had to deliver a few reels of film for the Cultural Center. Only after a lengthy searching and rummaging could we find them underneath the great heap of straw.

Before my legs could have become numb, we had already arrived in the vicinity of Zubovka.

*

First I washed in a little fountain and then went on towards the village.

- Where does Chirgalang live? - I asked the first bypasser.
- Look, over there, they are eating now! - and he pointed at a nearby yurt.

Really, in front of the yurt there were about eight people, crouching on the ground. They kept lifting the tea cups to their
Soyot steatite statuette. It shows the former attire of Soyot women. Women of other nomadic peoples wore similar costumes. (From the publication entitled The Peoples of Siberia.)
mouth with the traditional gestures. If I was lucky, the old man would be among them.

I went towards the group self-assertingly.

— Good appetite! I don’t want to disturb you, go ahead with your meal, I will take a couple of pictures in the meantime!

A horse with a harness, a couple of old flower-decorated chests, a saddle, stirrups, a dismantled yurt — all are real treasures in the eyes of an ethnographer, even if he happens to be a researcher of shamanism. I had plenty of material to take photographs of.

But the young women, holding their children in their laps and eyeing my activities with great curiosity, could not contain themselves much longer and they called out:

— Take also some pictures of us... but promise to send us some copies too!

However, my photographic ambitions cooled down suddenly, when I noticed, that old Chirgalang had finished his meal and stood up, and, without a word spoken, mounted his horse.

— Well, this man had left me in the lurch! — I muttered under my breath, looking after the galloping rider.

He could not have been any further than a few hundred meters, when I saw that he had stopped and dismounted from the horse and was squatting on the ground.

One of the young women who must have deciphered the confusion expressed by my face, reassured me smiling:

— He went just to urinate!

— Is he urinating? Squatting? A man?

— Well, this is the custom with our men.

*

As soon as I crept inside the yurt with Father Chirgalang, he treated me as a welcome guest. He expressed this by handing me a cup of tea with salted milk.
It tasted very good after travelling in the heat of the sun. I
drained the cup to the last drop.
- Do you want some more?

I nodded. I sensed that this second cup of tea really sealed our
friendship. I read in the eyes of the old shaman: this stranger who
came from a faraway land did not mind to sit down in a yurt, he
accepted our Soyot tea and what's more, liked it so well that he
even asked for a second cup.

I felt the moment had arrived to speak up and put my cards
on the table.
- The kam of the Saldzhak clan, Suzukpen sent me to you.
And I repeated my explanation that I had so often recited.
The small, inquisitive eyes of Father Chirgalang penetrated my
glance.
- Suzukpen told me you shamanized too, at one time.
He turned away, he even made a disconcerting gesture with his
hand as if to say: Let bygones be bygones . . . !
- Suzukpen mentioned that you used to chant together some-
times . . .
- Hm, yes.
Well, he was not very talkative, but at least he admitted having
been a shaman.
- What was your drum like?
- I had no drum.
- Don't tell me!
- No.
- How is that possible?
At first I thought, he was just denying it and did not want to
talk, but somehow my question broke the ice and the torrent of
words of the shaman, Chirgalang of the Saldzhak clan, began to
flow freely.
- I was twenty years old when I fell sick. My heart was ailing.
I had been sick for about ten years. Finally I took up shamanizing.
The shamans gave me this advice, one of them was Suzukpen, whom you know. The other was Barbaksin. Suzukpen taught me the songs, but only the first few words. The rest I had to find myself. This happened in Suzukpen’s yurt, I used his gown, his drum. That is why I had no drum of my own.

Chirgalang, therefore, was also “well-informed” about ethnography, he had gained his knowledge like the rest of the Siberian shamans and the late descendants of the Hungarian tilitorsok, the “wise men” and the “ghost seers”, through sickness.

This was one more addition to the great number of data, already collected in this respect. But, never have I heard it expressed with such clarity before how the shaman’s chants were passed down from generation to generation.

*

When I had been trying to track down the traces of Hungarian shamanism, I had studied all the shamanistic chants in due order, beginning with the North Siberian Vogul chants, to those of the Udegeys of Southeastern Siberia. I came to the conclusion, that, except for the refrains at the beginning and at the end of a song, there is no permanent or standard text, most of the text is improvised. The songs of the Buryat, Sagay, Karagasy and Soyot shamans, recorded on tape, proved my theory too.

The improvised text was formed according to the purpose of shamanizing. The contents of the song varied, the words were different if the shaman had to heal a sick person, or, if he had to find a stray animal, and it was distinct again, if he had to accompany the soul of a deceased person to the other world, so that it might not wander about on earth, haunting and scaring the living.

But, whatever was the purpose of shamanizing: the task could only be accomplished with the help of the spirits. And the spirits might only be invoked by uttering certain interjections. These
were included in the above mentioned beginning and ending refrains of the shaman chants, which were generally used in whole Siberia.

The Manchu shaman, for example, begins his chant thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ko \ ho: \ ke \ ho \\
oj \ kej \ kou \\
ko \ ho \ i \\
Spirits \ of \ those \ who \ departed, \\
if \ I \ myself \ supplicate \ you, \\
oj \ kej \ kou \\
listen \ to \ my \ invocation \\
by \ this \ chant!
\end{align*}
\]

But, not only the shamans of the faraway, eastern Asiatic peoples, but also those of the western Siberian folks, invoke their spirits in a similar way. The Nenets kams, for instance, chant with these words:

\[
\begin{align*}
He \ he \ héj! \\
God \ and \ all \ spirits, \\
descend \ to \ this \ place! \\
Je \ héj! \ he \ héj! \\
Hear \ ye \ this \ sound, \ coming \ they \ come!
\end{align*}
\]

The exclamations héj, haj, characterize the shaman songs of our nearest relatives, the Voguls and the Ostyaks best. And these are preserved in the lines of the Hungarian “regősének” (ancient shaman chant still surviving in Hungarian folklore): “héj, regő rejtem!”, “haj, regő, rejtem!”

The interjections, appearing in the first lines, are an indispensible part of the shaman chant, consequently, they are traditional, the newly initiated shaman had to learn them from someone, supposedly, from an old, experienced shaman.

All this I deduced before, basing my observations on the existing
texts. And now, here on the bank of the Little Yenisey, Chirgalang the shaman summed it up precisely, when he declared a little while ago:

- Suzukpen taught me the songs, but only the first words. After the beginning I had to invent the rest myself!

*

- Did you not, later, have a drum made for your own use? – I insisted, because I would have liked to have had a clearer picture, with respect to the drums.
- I never owned a drum, I always borrowed one from another shaman. Whenever I was asked to go to some other place, I used the drum of the local shaman.
- Why didn’t you have your own drum?
- Because I did not shamanize for very long, I began to shamanize at the age of thirty and I gave it up after two years.
- But why?
- Because I did not see the spirits any more. So I thought I would not become a shaman.

Was it really true, what Chirgalang told me, or did he only try to avoid any further questions?

But he seemed to be telling the truth, because afterwards he told me all about himself and all the other shamans he knew.

He was not reluctant at all to admit his having been a shaman, he went as far as chanting his songs for the tape recorder.

I have learned among many other things from him, that the shamans of the Little Yenisey region are not buried in the air.

Obviously, this had been the influence of lamaism, the lamas have often been asked to attend the funeral of a shaman.

He told me, for instance, that a lama took part in the burial of a shaman named Tarpka, who lived in the Suglazi region. This lama read from the Holy Book beside the corpse: he ordered the soul of the dead shaman to enter heaven.
The corpse, lifted by two poles or placed on the back of a horse, was taken to the burial site. At the chosen place they put it upon the ground in such a manner that it should repose on its side, the knees bent and pulled up a little and the face turned towards the west. The body had been covered with white material and there was no earth placed over it.

The drum of the shaman had been placed at a distance of thirty to forty meters from the corpse. If there was a rock to be found nearby, then it was placed upon that, if not, they simply put it on the ground. The drum had been wrapped in the shaman’s gown and the headband was placed on top.

According to Chirgalang, it was not customary around here, to tear open the skin that was stretched over the drum.

The shamans of the east, in the Great Yenisey region, still observed the ancient tradition very strictly. The body of the dead shaman had not been placed upon the ground like that of any common mortal, but a stand was erected and upon this he was left to perish “in the air”.

They buried the shaman in this manner, because as long as he lived, the shaman was flying in the air.

They fabricated the stand for the deceased in the woods. Any kind of tree could be used, except the wood of the birch tree. The birch tree is white, therefore it was forbidden. Cembra-pine, poplar or red-pine were used.

Two pairs of forked twigs were stuck into the earth and short poles had been placed horizontally across those pairs which were at a shorter distance from each other. Across these poles, sticks, about two meters long, were laid lengthwise, tightly packed. This final resting place had then been covered with the skin of a reindeer or a horse, and the body was placed upon it. The whole stand was covered with a sheet-like white cloth.

The stand was fragiley constructed, so that it should collapse
easily. Generally it never stood longer than a year. The shamanistic objects were hung on the trees around it, and for this purpose weak and thin branches were selected. They chose the weak ones, because they wanted those objects to fall down to their decay soon.

The skin stretched over the drum had always been torn. Why? In order to prevent that the dead shaman should catch the souls of the living and take them with him to the other world.

— Very often the soul escapes from the body. How frequently you dream that you are wandering around in the mountains! How often you hunt in your dreams! On such occasions your soul departs from your body and wanders in the mountains and it goes stalking game — the Soyots told me.

Only, this oblivious wandering of the soul is a dangerous adventure.

The wicked spirits lie in wait, they capture the roaming soul and torture it.

Thereupon the owner of the soul falls sick. If the wicked spirit dips the soul into hot water, the man, whose soul it is, suffers of fever. If it is submerged in cold water, the owner will have the shivers. If the spirit twists the hands and the legs of the soul, then the owner has pains in his limbs.

Then a shaman has to be called to the bedside of such person. If he succeeded in catching the escaped soul and brought it back into the body, the sick man was healed.

The shaman catches the soul with his drum, usually in one of these two ways: he either "laddles it up", or, "covers it" and then grabs it in his drum.

After his death, the shaman can catch the soul of the living with his drum just as well, if it was left undamaged. But, with prudent foresight, the skin had always been torn and then the captured soul could slip through the opening and escape.

*
In the heat of our conversation, Chirgalang revealed that once there was also another shaman active in the neighbourhood, a man named Barbaksin. He was already dead, but his wife was still alive, living here in Zubovka.

All right then, let us go and see the widow of Barbaksin.

But it seems, that even on the banks of the Yenisey, everything goes in threes.

After getting acquainted with Horlu, Suzukpen and Chirgalang, I did not succeed in finding out anything about Barbaksin. The widow left to visit a relative somewhere. This was all they knew about her in the neighbouring yurt. And to find her on the Soyot plains would have been impossible.

*

That evening I arrived back in Kyzyl. On the way, I must admit, I looked sadly out through the window of the bus. It was not because of the fourth shaman, no. I was leaving the Soyot land... And this also meant saying goodbye to Siberia.

The money I made with my articles was just covering the train-fare to Moscow. I had to leave, although my time was not yet up, this was the twenty-second of August and my passport was valid until the sixth of September.

Had the director seen how forlorn I was when I crossed the gates of the museum, he could only have said: I told you, it was not worthwhile for you going to that village!

I threw down my knapsack wearily.

If I did not have to go home now, I would sit down at the desk, I would look through my notebooks and sum up the results... And, afterwards I would study the map of Tuva, which was the best way to reach the region of the Cha-Khol and Kemchik rivers, so that I might get acquainted with the shamans of the west, after having been to the eastern and the central regions.
Humans are strange beings. The notebooks pile up in front of me, full of the secrets of the Buryat, Sagay, Karagas and other shamans. And, instead of rejoicing about this, I am sad that the western Soyots are missing.

But I can not help it, the case of the Soyots is ever so intriguing! I know, already, that the belief of the eastern Soyots is basically identical to that of the Karagas and that the creed of the central group is full of the Mongolian Halha phenomena. And now, I will not be able to examine the Soyot mythology in its entirety, because I can not conduct a research at the site of the third group, in the west.

Would they also have been affected, like the central group, by the southern, Halha influences? Or have they adopted some of the characteristics of their western neighbours, the Altaic Turks? Or, have they, perhaps, been influenced by the north? I remembered when I was in the western Sayans, I met a Soyot horseman in one of the Sagay or Beltir villages. I even took a photo of his harnessed mount. This old man told me that they go over to the Sagays and the Beltirs along the valleys of the affluents of the river Yzerla and through the valley of the Abakan, regularly. It is true that the voyage lasts for several weeks even on horseback, but their fathers, grandfathers and their great-grandfathers used to go too. And, would a contact ever be possible without an involuntary exchange of traditions?

All these questions would have no answer, because I only had enough money for the trainfare.

I put my watch on the desk. No money — no money — it ticked irritatingly. It took the wind out of my sails: I would not go through the collected material any more tonight. I would have plenty of time for that in the train, during those seven days it took me to get to Moscow.

I went to fetch my sleeping bag, to spread it out on the floor. A note was pinned to it:
The film-operator of the Kyzyl branch of the Irkutsk studio was looking for you. He would like to make a film with you for the newsreel. He would like very much to go with you, while you work at some research-site, if you could spare a few days. He will be at the museum at eight o’clock in the morning, to talk it over with you. Greetings, Mindermá.

I read the letter with reviving optimism: will it be possible, after all, for me to go to the western Soyots?

Although I tried to harness my hopeful thoughts, in my dreams I was already wandering along the banks of the Cha-Khol and the Kemchik rivers.
THE UNFINISHED FILMING

I woke up early next morning.

And whether my hopes were going to be justified, or not, I started to re-organize the material collected in the Little Yenisey region.

It may still be possible that instead of going to Moscow, I shall leave for Western Tuva.

I was so absorbed in the work that I forgot all about the time as well as about the film-operator.

A knock on the door brought my activities to a halt.

A blue-eyed man about fifty smiled at me from the door.

- Did I disturb you?
- There is always plenty to do if your time is short.
- And I shall require some of your precious time, probably two or three days.

- I expect, you are the film-operator.
- Yes.

He sat down and continued.

- I read the report in the Tuvinskaya Pravda about you. I think, their readers are interested in the same subjects as the public visiting the movies. Please permit me to film you while you carry on your interesting work.

I tried to hide my extreme interest in his offer. Of course, I
was thrilled, it was up to him whether I would have to buy the train-ticket to Moscow within a few hours, or complete my research with an expedition to Western Tuva.

- What would be my job? I would not like to upset my tight work-schedule because of the filming.

I said all this rather indifferently, but I was ashamed of myself because of my “diplomatic” attitude.

- All that I want is to go with you, together with my assistant, and be permitted to film you while you are working.

- This sounds very simple, but I now plan to go to a faraway region. (And, how faraway!)

- It does not matter. We could finance this. We would also hire a motor-car to take us there.

If we would take a four-seater, beside the two photographers and myself, there would be sufficient room for an interpreter too.

- I thought.

My short silence gave the impression to the visitor, that I was hesitating.

- We would not only supply you with the transportation but you would also be our guest, naturally.

That would be fine - I thought - it would be rather embarrassing if they would notice that I am on a starvation diet. And, sooner or later, they would notice it.

I had, in my mind, already postponed the purchase of the Moscow fare.

- Your conditions, with other words the transportation and my provisions being supplied by you, are satisfactory, however, I am afraid we can not come to an agreement.

- Why?

- Because I would now like to go to the western territory and that is several hundreds of kilometers away.

Now - I thought - I have spoken the words, which would end the second Siberian expedition.

But, the operator was firm as a rock.
That does not matter: we go wherever you want us to go and stay as long as you wish!
I could hardly conceal my happiness.
– All right, it is a bargain! But I have one more request.
Success made me bold, I played for all or nothing.
The film-operator looked at me inquiringly.
– If we succeed in finding a living shaman and I would be able to persuade him to shamanize, I would like you to film the whole ceremony. You would do a great service to science. Because, I believe as yet there have been no films made about the shaman’s dance.
– I would do it, with great pleasure. But you are mistaken if you think that there were no such films made. About ten to fifteen years ago, I filmed the Nanay shamans myself. Namely, I worked at that time in Khabarovsk and in Vladivostok. However, I do not think those films still exist.
I stood up and I was filled with exultation. It was in a rather peculiar manner, that I was given a chance to wander all over the Soyot land, first enabled by the honoraria that the newspaper paid, and now as the hero of a film.
– Tomorrow morning we shall be here with the car. What time do you want to leave?
– At five o’clock, so that we are able to get there as soon as possible.

*A few minutes before five the car was already hooting in front of the gate of the museum. I grabbed my knapsack.
– I did not expect you to be so punctual – laughed the operator. – I was afraid you might have overslept. After all, you came back very late from your collecting and you could hardly have had any rest while on the site.
I did not reveal my secret method of insuring myself against “oversleeping”: I had not even gone to bed at all. Even so, I could not finish the work completely.

We drove to fetch Mindermá and then we took to the road.

We drove along the Ulug-hem, or, in other words, the left bank of the upper section of the Yenisey, up to Cha-Khol. Hence we were driving along the right bank of the Cha-Khol, our destination was the locality called Ak-Turuk. Ak-Turuk – White Peak, I repeated the name to myself, savouring it.

I had been informed that a former shaman lived there who has still kept his gown.

Some distance before reaching Cha-Khol, where the road continued between two hills, I suddenly noticed a small heap of stones.

By the time I had called out to the driver to stop, we had already passed it. However, we turned around immediately, because I suspected there was something more to it then just a few stones. I was right.

There were two poles sticking out of that little mound of stones. The longer one was placed at an obtuse, the shorter at an acute angle. But both were equally decorated. Several pieces of cloth were hung on them, all different in shape, colour and material, horse-hair and pieces of lace were wound around them too. Moreover, torn tire-tubes and even some other machine-parts were tied on them.

All these things were presented as sacrificial gifts by the travellers on that road.

Civilization already infiltrated the world of the shamans and nothing could be done about it, not only lamb-ears were hung nowadays upon the obo, but machine parts too.

Our film-operator asked me hesitantly, while I was taking pictures of the stone-mound from near and far of both its right and left sides:
- Is this also something of professional interest to you?
- Of course! This is an obo, a sacrificial mound. In olden times there was one of these erected at all the dangerous points, on every road. Those who passed by threw something on it, a stone, a scarf, or whatever they had, in order to insure themselves against any misfortune that might befall them while passing the dangerous section.

My Soyot interpreter nodded in approval to everything I stated. They took the cameras out and started filming the report about the ethnographer following the traces of the shamans.

*

While the motion picture camera was humming, I kept wondering whether we would find an opportunity to immortalize by means of a lense a shaman ceremony. Would we find a kam in Ak-Turuk, who still preserved his gown?

We arrived in Ak-Turuk, but there were no gowns there.

I learned this from a former lama, the shaman was not in the village.

The old lama was very helpful in giving me information about the priests of other "denominations".

- Of course there were shamans too, beside the lamas! Mönge, the shaman, for instance, who was of the Mongus clan, lived in Ak-hem, and in Cha-Khol Aksi, there was another shaman, also of the Mongus clan, called Balgan.

He knew Mönge the shaman well and he remembered his gown, but he could not describe his equipment in detail.

But, it did not matter, Balgan's widow was still alive, dwelling, according to him in Cha-Khol Aksi, and if I would interview her, she could tell me all about her husband's activities. Furthermore, in the Zhdanov kolkhoz there was another shamaness, called Chemba, living in the house of a chauffeur, called Karol.
I took advantage of the helpfulness of the lama and we sketched the drum, the drumstick, the headgear and the cape of Mönge of the Mongus clan, one after the other.

So, I succeeded in getting acquainted with the clothing of the shamans along the Cha-Khol, but I was rather disappointed not to have succeeded with the project of filming a shamanistic ceremony.

But, after some further investigations I found a new cue: on the bank of the river Chadan, in Bazhin Alak, there was a woman who used to shamanize, maybe, she would still have her equipment.

Therefore, after having finished the collecting in Cha-Khol, I directed our car towards the river Chadan.

*

The sun was nearly setting by the time we left, however, the driver reassured me: we would not make any unnecessary detours, we would not even go back to the highway, but if we proceeded along an unpaved road which was hardly used, we could reach the river in a few hours. Our gasoline supply would also be enough for this shortcut.

I was anxious to find out, as soon as possible, whether the woman on the bank of the Chadan was in fact still in possession of the shamanistic attire, and as I had to be back by the twenty-ninth in Kyzyl, I did not utter any objections about the rather late hour.

Just before we left Cha-Khol, an old woman had called out: — Be careful: where the road bifurcates, do not go to the left, because that leads to Kara Sug!

Very soon we were admiring the enormous sphere of the rising moon.

The winding road could not have been used much: the wheel-tracks were covered by grass.
First, we drove along the ridge, then we had to cross smaller and larger mountains.

We were all looking out for the bifurcation of the road, in order to take the one on the right.

Our Pobjeda easily managed all the inclines up to now, however, all of a sudden, at the foot of a steep hill, we stopped.

- Shouldn’t we get out? Shouldn’t we push?
The driver laughed.
- If you get out, that will be enough.
We climbed out from our seats.
- Walk on ahead, I will catch up with you.

And off he went, backwards, only to enable him to turn the car around. Then he attempted to get up the slope in reverse. At this moment I realized that motorcars develop a greater power while driving in reverse.

Even so, driving up the treeless hill was not an easy job, he had to zig-zag from side to side.

Finally he made it, and arrived at the top of the hill.

After the descent a nearly horizontal section followed. We must have arrived in a long valley.

Suddenly, blinking lights appeared in the darkness, as if four torches were flashed at us. Who could be giving light-signals in the depth of the forest?

Our car slowed down, dogs were barking. Now I understood the mysterious signals. Two laikas ran towards our car: their eyes shone with a phosphorescent sparkle, reflecting the light of the reflectors.

We advanced slowly. On the left, the silhouette of two yurts slowly emerged.

Mindermá shouted through the window:
- What’s the name of this settlement?
Somebody shouted back from the darkness:
- Kara Sug!
In the silence that followed, I could clearly distinguish the tick-
ing of my watch.

This was exactly what we were afraid of, this was why we were
watching the road so closely, and now, in spite of all our precau-
tions, we had lost our way.

Kara Sug consists today only of two yurts. Nobody passes by
here for months. I would have preferred to think about almost
anything else, but what kept going around in my head, was: would
we have enough gasoline?

All the faces reflected the same question, not one of us could
get rid of this thought.

We turned back.

— Now at least we cannot lose our way any more — mumbled
our driver with an expressionless face. None of us were in the
mood to smile.

Soon we were climbing up the same hill that was such a great
obstacle on our way here.

— Now then, we know your tricks already! — I heard from the
front.

But we did not.

All of a sudden the car stopped as if it had collided with a rub-
ber-wall.

I jumped out to see what had happened.

One step forward — and I stood rooted to the spot. I was stand-
ing in a swamp, nearly up to my knees.

Within seconds, the rescue operations began. We frantically
started to carry stones. In those moments, we were busier than the
diligent ants of a stirred-up ant-hill.

Would we succeed fast enough to carry and place sufficient
stones underneath our car, to prevent it from sinking into the
swamp up to its axle?

The rain began to pour down in the meantime, but we did not
care at all.
It was long after midnight by the time we had the impression that the car would not sink any more.

Now, at last, we could catch our breath.

We had just finished our cigarettes, when the driver called out:
- Second half-time!

We dragged an enormous, fallen tree into the swamp. We were going to try the impossible: we attempted to lift the car out of the marsh.

I must confess: frankly, I have no idea even today, what the weight is of a Pobjeda. And, I might never learn, how much it weighs if it had been bogged down in a swamp.

But by dawn, raising the wheels inch by inch, we got it out.

At last we were able to wash in the little rivulet, the overflown water of which supplied us with the experiences of this unforgettable night.

The motor was running again, we were bumping along on the grassy road once more. Would bad luck go in threes in the Soyot land too? Or would our gasoline last, after all?

By the time we reached the town of Chadan, the morning could not have been called early any more. We stopped in front of the restaurant.

We swallowed our supper and breakfast, all together at once, and took off straight to the gas-station. After less than twenty meters, the car stopped.
- No more fuel – laughed the driver.
- We were lucky that this happened here and not a few kilometers before, in the taiga – whispered Mindermá.

Of course, she did not know that Suzukpen, the shaman, threw the supplementary drumstick for me and it pointed to a lucky journey . . .

*
We made it as far as Bazhin Alak, a short distance from the town, without any further adventure.

Yes, this is correct, as far as Bazhin Alak and not to Bazhin Alak.

Namely, the stream at the edge of the settlement rose to a high level and rushed with a torrential speed between its banks.

Unfortunately, the engine of the Pobjeda is mounted rather low, we could not risk crossing the water by car. On this side of the small stream, now grown into a river, there is a yurt. A horse and a two-humped camel stand beside it.

— Everybody can get across, as they like best — points our driver towards the animals — but I shall stay here in the car.

Mindermá was already wading through the water, the operator’s assistant was balancing on a cedar trunk lying across the stream, our operator blinked from the back of the horse. The old Soyot touched my arm and pointed towards the camel.

I would have certainly appreciated the kind invitation, if only I knew whether I was expected to sit between the neck and the first hump or get up the back of the camel, between the two humps.

Finally, I mounted with considerable help from the owner and found myself in the valley between the two humps.

I never considered myself a born rider in the reindeer saddle either, but now, on the back of the camel, I made up my mind never to become a jockey, even if I would fail as a researcher of shamanism.

However, I managed to get across the water without taking a bath. The exaggerated precaution with which I entrusted my tape recorder and my camera to the others, proved unnecessary.

After I climbed down from the back of my indifferent camel in front of the first yurts, I inquired about the shamaness.

— Yes, there is someone like that, she lives at the other end of the village. That old out-of-the-way yurt is hers — said the little
Soyot youngster, pointing the way.
Let us go that way then.

*

The old woman – Shizhep Mongus by name (or in other words: Shizhep of the Mongus clan) – the former shamaness, squatted in front of her yurt, tearing wool. She was getting ready to full felt-cloth.

In no time I was just as well informed about all the details of the making of felt-cloth, as she was about my profession of collecting the records of shamanism.

It was not difficult at all to persuade her to demonstrate her knowledge of past times, I was to promise her that she could see herself on the screen in the film, this would soon be shown at the Cultural Centre.

– Yes, yes – she agreed – but if I have to heal, then I need a patient too.

We did not even have a chance to discuss it, when a little old woman beside us joined the argument:

– Why don’t you heal me? Some time ago you already shamanized for me.

Only when the operator lifted the camera to his eyes, did we find out: we could not begin filming because it was too dark in the yurt.

– Have you not brought any flashlights?

– No, we have not, but it is not necessary. We can take the roof off.

Wonderful idea, only the felt mats had to be rolled back from the top of the yurt. But, what would the mistress of the house say about it?

What? She agreed right away. Now, there were no more obstacles.
The gown was taken out of the chest. It was not a genuine one, it was not even a shaman gown. That had been destroyed long ago. It was the festive attire of a Soyot woman, and also a long and a short scarf. The long one was wound around her head.

Somewhere behind the chest there was a long stick, she tied the short scarf on that.

This was all her equipment.

I remember, Borgoyakhov, the Sagay shaman also kept squeezing a rag in his hands, while he was chanting. The Karagasy shamans also mentioned that if there was no drum available, they shamanized with a piece of cloth. Therefore, the stick with the rag could not be considered as an individual variation, but it would be the traditional substitute.

The operator and his assistant had a quick conference and the makeshift script was soon ready.

The ethnographer arrives at the yurt, the former shamaness is busy with her everyday work, she is cleaning wool. The ethnographer asks her to demonstrate how she shamanized when she was young. The woman hesitates first, but finally agrees to do it. The interpreter of the ethnographer helps the woman to dress up in the gown used for the ceremony and then she begins to work charms over the old auntie, lying sick in the yurt. The ethnographer records the songs, otherwise sentenced to oblivion, with his tape recorder.

By the time the roof of the yurt had been removed, the first scenes were already explained to Shizhep Mongus. Everything went smoothly. While the camera was diligently humming, she put on her Soyot dress with the help of Mindermá and prepared the shaman staff, that is, she tied the shorter scarf on the stick.

Our other “leading character” lay down on the cot, the next part could be started: the healing ceremony. The instructions of the operators were not necessary any more.

I have also prepared the tape recorder. I have learned it from
my experience with Suzukpen that I must have the apparatus in my hand – I could not put it on the floor – because I had to be free to accompany the shaman in his movements with the microphone.

*

And then, the first lines of the chant resounded in the yurt. It was slow, a soft reciting, rather like that of a poem than of a song. One type of shamanistic healing, the *black process*, was under way to be immortalized by the film-camera and the tape recorder.

The voice of the shamaness had not become louder, she did not raise it at all, her recitation did not even become faster. And, in spite of that, the atmosphere was filled with tension.

The patient became genuinely ill: she reclined with a pale face and her eyes searched with trusting devotion the face of her healer.

Indeed, this old medicine-woman must have been healing her in the past. In this moment I was convinced: it might have been not so very long ago!

And by this time Shizhep Mongus did not know anything about the film-camera any more, she was not aware of the tape recorder either, although I held the microphone about the length of a span in front of her face.

She began to lose consciousness. Her face became contorted, her eyes were turning deliriously, like in a trance, like those of a drunk or a lunatic.

Suddenly the humming of the camera stopped. I noticed that the operator requested a new reel of film. He was signalling to me: the chant of the shamaness must be interrupted.

But it would be all in vain. She had already lost contact with the world.

The camera was working again. Everything blended in my eyes too, my whole attention was tied down by the constantly moving,
dancing woman. If I would not have kept the microphone close to her mouth all the time the text would have been incomprehensible.

And then, I suddenly realized that a certain, familiar noise was lacking. I turned towards the operator, who waved desperately.

— We have no more film! They did not think the ceremony would take so long. The rest of the film had remained in the car!
— Mindermá whispered.

— I continue recording, let them go to fetch the film — I answered.

But they could have hardly reached the car, when the shamaness fainted and fell in full length upon the floor of the yurt.

She lay in a deep trance. For three and a half minutes — I checked it with my watch — she had fits of retching and then she became completely rigid.

She had worked herself up so much, that she became completely entranced.

The patient and the healer exchanged their roles, now the other woman was placing wet packs on the cold forehead of Shizhep Mongus, who was lying rigidly like a corpse.

The operator, running with the new film, arrived in vain, the filming had to be stopped.

— Please, forgive me that I could not take all of it — he excused himself.

As if I could have been angry at him! I owed it to him that I was at last able to witness a complete ecstasy. And even if the filming had come to a standstill, the ceremony had been immortalized in its entirety. The whole ceremony was recorded on the magnetic tapes.

*

We lifted the shamaness onto her bed, we replaced the roof of the yurt and walked into the village.
Here, just like in Abakan last year, my colleagues, Kalzan and
Luckily, we met a few oldsters and I inquired about the attire
and the instruments of the former khams.

That same evening I was able to state: I also became acquainted
with the western shamanistic objects.

My wishes came true with this. What appeared so mysterious
back in Kyzyl was now revealed to me: the shamanistic belief of
the western Soyots was related to that of the Altaic Turks. All the
illustrations and descriptions of my copybooks proved this.

I did not mind that we could not while about any longer, we
still had plenty to do in Kyzyl with the recorded texts, and also
I had my appointment with Kököl, the Soyot actor.

- Now we can go to Kyzyl.
- If we take the main-road, we will be there in the morning -
said our driver.
- At least we can enjoy the sight of the full moon.

The full moon, this enormous sphere, was nearly as large as
it was that night when we left for the Koybals from the Sagay
shaman, Borgoyakhov . . .

On the way I had time to meditate whether it is correct to call
the cattlebreeding Soyots steppe-dwellers. After having seen the
endless Baraba steppe, I felt, this region does not really deserve
this denomination. There was no flat land except for the narrow
bank of the rivers and on both sides you could reach out with
your hand and nearly touch the mountains.

The whole way our car drove among mountain-chains. We must
have driven several hundreds of kilometers that night. The river
was winding in narrow corridors formed by the mountain ranges
and we kept following it.

It was dawn and the sun had already risen by the time we
reached Kyzyl. In spite of having spent the night sitting in the
car, I could not even think about my sleeping bag.

I just bathed and went straight to the institute.
Kulár were translating alternatively my recently collected texts.

At noon, just back from lunch, I ran unexpectedly into an old acquaintance: Professor Potapov, director of the Leningrad Ethnographic Institute.

We were both glad to see each other. I learned soon: he was on his way back to Moscow from southwest Tuva.

— Well, how was the second expedition? I hope it has been as successful as the first one — and he shook my hand — come tell me something about your findings.

And he led me by the arm towards one of the empty office-rooms.

— I must tell you — he said on the way — I succeeded in discovering a shaman grave.

I also boasted about having photographed such a rare relic myself, in the land of the northeastern Soyots.

We lit our cigarettes, settled comfortably in the armchairs and I began to “report” my findings.

*

My research was in compliance with the existing records on shamanism among those peoples I visited: I tried to fill up certain gaps. I examined the person of the shaman, as of a man of the community, I was especially interested what his social role, within society, was, in his clan, as well as in his family. But also, I had paid attention to the real reasons behind the mythological beliefs.

— I am really interested to learn, what your results were. I would appreciate it if you would mention a few examples.

All right. Let us first study the facts behind the process of becoming a shaman and behind the differences in ranking, among the shamans.

I shall begin with the manner of obtaining shamanistic knowledge.
I had an opportunity to meet several shamans personally, and I could observe them for longer periods too. My experience had shown that there were notable individual traits in every single one of them, which were not characteristic of the other members of their ethnic group in general.

The Buryat shaman, Hadi, was an introvert. He was neurotic. He had frequent hallucinations. Chibadayev, the Beltir, was extremely misanthropic. Chibadyakhov was also rather like an introvert person, evidently neurotic too. The Sagay, Kizlasov, was of poor physical condition, he suffered from constant headaches. All the time that I was with him, he had cold compresses upon his forehead, daily. Borgoyakhov was psychopathic. His mouth was constantly open, his tongue hung out and it kept jerking like that of a dog. The Karagasy Kukuyev was taciturn and shy. His capacity of concentration was poor and failing. At the time of full moon he suffered from headaches. While I was there he had several nose-bleeds.

The Soyot Ak Nitka was a misanthrope. Suzukpen Saldzhak had neurotic convulsions. His family was affected with hereditary abnormality, the daughter of his sister for instance, about thirty years old, was a harmless idiot.

Those former shamans, whom I have had an opportunity to know personally were, doubtlessly, mostly nervous, neurotic individuals. These abnormalities must have been evidently inherited within the family or the clan. This could explain the belief of the hereditary order of becoming a shaman. However, this in itself would not be enough to become a shaman: a tendency, a feeling of vocation, must have been another condition. Therefore, those members of a family who were born with a hereditary abnormality, could only become shamans if they possessed this tendency, because only such individuals would “feel” the calling of the spirits, they would “see” the “spirits” coming to them. This must be the
reason that the aspirants became shamans only if they were "chosen".

As far as those shamans are concerned who were not descending from a shaman-family: just as in a family with abnormal genes there are healthy members, a member of a healthy family might also be inflicted with neurotic tendencies or abnormal mental traits. Such individuals — although they have no shaman-ancestors — "feel" their vocation, they "see" the spirits, consequently, they become shamans.

— I think — Potapov interrupted me — you are following the right track. At last we might settle the question of heredity or choice in scientific literature.

The origin of the differences in ranking order among the shamans might be found in the individual differences — I continued. The shamans distinguish themselves not only with the sensitivity of their nervous system, but also with some other special talent: in one way or another they excel, they are above the average. For instance the old shaman Hadi delivered his chants in a soaring, resounding baritone, Borgoyakhov, whose tongue was hanging out of his mouth, danced his shamanistic dance with such temperament and expressive force that no young man could have done any better, the crazy Bolhoyev demonstrated an exceptionally high level of theatrical talent, and I myself could not escape from the influence of the dramatical force of Kizlasov's rendition.

Their personalities differed not only while shamanizing. I shall never forget those few nights I spent in the yurt of Kizlasov. How poetically he spoke about the dance of the flames, of the birches and the pine logs crackling on the hearth, what a gifted imagination was revealed by his expressions referring to the shadows quivering on the walls. Or, when the Buryat shaman, Hadi, woke me up at dawn and we went together, to carve the shaman's stick... What a lot of deep human sentiment, what a profound knowledge of nature manifested itself in his words on the way. How captivat-
ing were the words of shaman Kokuyev, while he spoke about the red and black fountains, the streams, the full-moon and the rising sun and about the playful rays of the sun reflecting upon the dewdrops, when we crossed the taiga.

A soaring imagination, a suggestive interpretation, the possession or the lack of a well-developed aesthetic sense enhances or lessens the rank of a shaman.

To give just one example: the “little shaman”, Bolhoyev, chanted more melodiously than the other “little shaman” Kokuyev, but the dignified flowing, the expressive tunefulness of the chant of Tulayev, the “great shaman”, was unequalled by him in spite of the fact, that the melodies of the late Tulayev were recited only by a simple Karagasy man, who had never been a shaman, but remembered these tunes, having heard them a long time ago.

I have attempted to get acquainted with all the specific features of shamanism: the attire, the instruments, the chants, the order of the ceremony and all its details. I have investigated how each object had been made, I photographed or sketched every phase of the preparation of the shaman staff, drum, drumstick or headgear, prepared in my presence.

— Have you succeeded in throwing some light upon the question of the reciprocal influence of the different southern Siberian peoples? — brought up Potapov this intricate problem.

The existence of adaptations and reciprocal influences could be established only after lengthy analyses. However, some similarities were evident even now, in the process of the collecting work. Only, I feel that not the general characteristics of shamanism itself, but rather the small details should be considered in this respect.

— Evidently — stated Potapov.

The fact, that the drum is being used by all southern Siberian peoples, does not suggest much, but if the drum is equipped with some such addition which only certain peoples have in common, then some conclusions could be drawn.
Karagasy shaman boots with the indication of bones in the leg and the toes

— Have you found anything like that?

Let us keep to the subject of the drum. The Karagasy drum with the two cross-beams is not known anywhere else except among the northeastern or reindeerkeeping Soyots. This form must have been adopted by the Soyots from the Karagasy. Due to the neighbouring location, and also to other coinciding characteristics of their cultures, this might be considered a logical fact.

On the other hand, the drum of the western, or cattle-breeding Soyots of the steppes is similar to that of the Altaic Turks. These Soyots, — according to other respective occurrences also, — must have learned from the Turks and not the other way round.

But the drum leads us also to some already extinguished peoples.

— Surely you are referring to the Samoyeds? — asked Potapov.

— I was just going to ask you, whether there were any traces left in shamanism of those Samoyed peoples who lived in the Sayans and who are Turkicized by now?

— Yes indeed! — I was glad to answer this question, which was of special interest to me. — One kind of the southern Siberian shaman-drums is known only to the Karagasy and to the north-
eastern Soyots. We may say the same about their attire, headgears, gowns, scarves and boots, decorated with the symbols of parts of the human body which are also known to them. And these can also be found among the Nenets, Enets and Selkup shamans in the North.

- Namely, among the still existing Samoyeds! – finished excitedly Potapov. I congratulate you, this is a beautiful concordance. Have you found any other such interaction too?

- Of course. For instance, in the shamanism of the Karagasys we might trace the Buryat and the Abakan-Turkic influence. And in the shamanism of the Soyots of the steppes, we find Halha, Mongolian influence.

* *

We were so deeply involved with the subject of our conversation that we never realized that the colleagues at the Institute were getting ready to leave, the working hours were over.

I said goodbye to Potapov with sincere gratitude. I had to thank for my second Siberian expedition as well as for the prolongation of my stay in Leningrad, mostly to him.

- Have a good trip and elaborate your excellent material as soon as possible. Our scientific experts are looking forward to it with great interest!

I had already stepped out in the corridor when he called me back:

- Vilmos – and he waved me to come nearer – are you not in need? I would be really glad to lend you some money if necessary!

I blushed. A scene of a hundred years ago repeated itself: then, the academician, Baer of St. Petersburg, offered a loan to Reguly, who was on an expedition in Siberia.

- No, thank you very much, I have sufficient money. But I am very grateful that you have been kind enough to think of this too.
Karagasy shaman garment, decorated with metal pendants, bells, cylindrical ribbons and a long, three-pointed, leather tail hung lengthwise on it.
but I took the tape recorder with me, I needed it for the evening.

In the museum, Kököl, who was already there, received me enthusiastically. He came back earlier from his tour of the interior for my sake.

- Well after all, we could meet! Have you found any shamans?
  I held up my notebooks.
- As far as I can see, you have not done so badly! Was it very
difficult to get those people to talk?
- The main thing is: I succeeded. I hope it will be easier to-
night!
- As long as we have a drum, I can promise to let you hear
something you have never heard before.
- That's no problem – and I lifted one up from beside the table.
Kököl really revealed a secret, that I had not known. But not
only I did not know it, scientific literature had no information
about it either until now: the way of beating the drum.

Because, this has its established rules too!

The shaman represents his riding upon the drum with various
manners of beating the drum.

Now he is ambling, now he begins to race. Suddenly he stops
short: he was startled by something. Now he is running again
swiftly, and begins to gallop, you can nearly see the floating mane
of the horse. He is far away now, the clatter of the hoofs resounds
in our ears only as a slight echo. Indeed, drumming is a real art.

Kököl not only demonstrated it, but gave an explanation too.
And, I recorded everything with the tape recorder.

Soon we had an audience: Kalzán finished with the texts, he
joined us first. Then a stranger knocked on the door: it was a
reporter from Moscow, who was writing a report about the Soyots.
He heard about the Hungarian ethnographer roaming the Yenisey
region, so he came to see me. Finally the sound of the shaman's
drum also lured the fat Soyot living in the neighbouring house to the museum.

I owe gratitude to Kökól that he came back to meet me the night before my journey home. Without his co-operation the "orchestration" of the shamanistic ceremony would have remained unknown. Because the shaman – as he explained and demonstrated – was a one-person orchestra while he was shamanizing. The drum is beaten, the metal bells are jingling, the metal bands of the drumstick can be considered the third instrument, and the fourth hidden instrument is the gown itself. Kökól also knew that the shaman shrugs his shoulder in such a way that the bells sewn on the gown should touch and jingle. And, the rich, expressive voice of the shaman, imitating the song of the birds or the howling of the wolves tops it all. We must agree with the opinion of the son of the shamaness: this music must have been overpowering, equal to the music of a whole orchestra.

*

It must have been around midnight when I turned the tape recorder off. This was my last recording in Siberia.

I shook hands with Kalzan and Kökól. Would we ever see each other again? It was the sincere wish of all three of us that it would be possible.

We went to have supper with the reporter to the "Margaret Island" of Kyzyl.

When we asked for the bill, my companion politely offered to pay for both of us. I asked him to be my guest. He was reluctant, but I insisted.

– It might sound strange to you: but for many months I was unable to offer anything to anyone, but now, my last night before going home, I would very much like you to accept my invitation.

Did he know – I wondered – how much it meant to me, that
for the first time after fifteen months, I was able to give and did not have to receive . . .

*

When I arrived back to the museum, I was unhappy as I spread out my sleeping bag. Hm. When will I do this again?

I could not sleep for a long time.

No, I was not trying to make a balance. My memories were still too fresh.

I was thinking about Rynchen, the professor at Ulan Bator, whom I met when he was returning to Mongolia, in Leningrad. He invited me to go from Kyzyl to Mongolia. Then I refused this trip (I would, even now), because of the Siberian collection. The copies of the Leningrad Museum's descriptions, the photos, notes, were such an enormous amount of material, that I would drown in it if I would top it with more from Mongolia. But next time I will follow the traces of the Mongolian shamans. The influences of the contacts of the South-Siberian peoples and the reciprocal exchange of objects, concepts and various traditions, can be clarified definitely only after having learned about the culture of the Mongolian peoples too, who are their neighbours.

I had to get to Mongolia because of the Buryats too. Not only on the shores of the Baikal lake, but also on the northern edge of Mongolia there were Buryats. Without knowing their beliefs, the monography on Buryat shamanism would be incomplete.

But this was in the future, first it was Budapest's turn: the organization of the material that I had collected during the last fifteen months.

In about a week or ten days, I would be home. On the sixth of September, when my passport expired, I would have crossed the Hungarian border.

Only a few days on the plane, then on the train, and then . . .
I would have liked it if my sleeping bag had turned into a flying carpet and had taken me home.

But I did not really mind that miracles do not happen, this way at least I could once more admire the Siberian landscape. (However, I would definitely not leave the train on the banks of the 
Ob this time . . .)

How good it will be to take the train in Moscow. Only two more days and a half, and, I would be home, at last.

*

As if I was going to the airport for the first time, I left on foot again. I wanted to enjoy the beauty of the Siberian sunrise for the last time.

The aeroplane arrived on schedule from Abakan. It looked as if it would take off on schedule on the way back as well. Indeed, the sky was sparkingly blue.

The passengers of the Krasnoyarsk aeroplane were warned to get ready, I grabbed my tape recorder and my knapsack. A familiar face appeared among the travellers: Kökol came up to me. He came to say goodbye.

It really was a pleasant surprise.

The Soyot actor, not paying any attention to the restrictions, slipped through the gate to accompany me right to the steps. I was already beginning to climb up but he was still shaking my hand.

— In about a few decades, when the inhabitants of Siberia wish to learn how life was in the times of their grandfathers, before civilization spread over this territory, they will have to refer to your records too. And they will do so! Because, we can only measure how far ahead we got, if we know where we started from.

I could not answer him any more because the powerful roar of the engines drowned my voice.
INDEX OF PICTURES
Photographed by the author

1. Buryat-Mongol boy. He was not any more brought up in the shamanistic creed.

2a. Toroyev, the blind bard, decorated artist of the Buryat people (festively attired in a urban suit, on the occasion of being photographed), with Mme. Sharakshinova at his side and his wife behind him.

2b. The site of the horse-sacrifices – the tayga – in the past, near Bukhan, county town of the Buryat region.

3. Mme. Sharakshinova, descendant of former shamans, lecturer at the Faculty of Literature of the Irkutak University and also, interpreter of the author during his stay among the Buryats.

4. This young Buryat woman (Mme. Sharakshinova’s niece) smiles contentedly in her lace-curtained window, in the company of her little daughter.

5a. The author with Father Hadi, the former shaman (now a pensioned, old member of the kolkhoz), who “adopted” him.

5b. Metal appliquéd Buryat wooden chests.

6a. Buryat wooden gate. It is similar to the Székely (Hungarian of Eastern Transylvania) gates.

6b. Octagonal Buryat log-yurt on the treeless, grassy plain. It still resembles the nomad felt-tent in its shape, however, it is already more like a house. It is the dwelling of shepherds who still cling to traditions.

7a. The ferry transports three trucks across the Abakan river.

7b. Octagonal timber-constructions, half-yurt-half-house, are not unknown in the Abakan region either.

8. Distrustful Chibadyakhov, former shaman of the Beltirs. He was taking off his belt to be used as a substitute for the drum but changed his mind afterwards and kept silent.
9. Beltir woman. (Beltirs form one of the ethnic groups of the Abakan Turks.) She healed the autor with a cup of very strong spirit.

10. Turk grave in Abakan, covered with stones. At one end the Pravoslav patriarchal cross had been erected, at the other end there is a stone slab upon which sacrificial foods are burned to "feed" the deceased.

11a. Turk grave in Abakan, covered with boards. There is a cross standing out at one end and it has an opening through which the food-sacrifices may be offered, according to ancient traditions.

11b. Khangalov, the Buryat teacher, was an untiring collector of the traditions of his people during the decades at the turn of the century. Soviet ethnography celebrated the centennial anniversary of his birth in 1959. This is the house where he was born.

12. Conical rind-tent, a relic of the nomadic way of life, vanishing on Karagasy soil as well as in the mountain region of the Soyots. It is similar to the bun-shaped huts of the shepherds on the Hungarian plains.

13. The roaming, nomad Karagasy were accustomed to settlements and log-houses by Soviet authorities, but behind the houses there are still a few rind-tents to be found: old folks feel at home only in those. The black laika in front is a specimen of the famous dogs of Siberria.

14. Gala's aunt, sister of the late Karagasy kam, is sewing a shaman cap upon the request of the author. Beside her, on the log, there is a bundle of bristles, neck-hair of the reindeer. She wears a flowery, Chinese silk dress.

15. Kokuyev, kam (shaman) of the Karagasy in his youth, now, worker of the kolkhoz of hunters and herdsmen in Nerka.

16a. Gala, the Karagasy milkmaid, who interpreted for the author, stands shyly at the fence made of stems and boughs. Opposite her a shepherd ambles in front of a reindeer herd (he went back to Nerka with the autor), with his laika alongside of him.

16b. Feathery headband of a shaman of the mountain-region Soyots, similar to an Indian headdress. (Compare with the Karagasy headdresses among the drawings.)

17. Soyot kam's garment from the mountain-region. The "trimmings" should be considered as decorative representations of the human skeleton. (The only shaman gown in the Kyzyl Museum.)

18. This baldheaded, old Soyot woman with a pipe grinds wheat between the millstones.

19. Mindermá, Soyot ethnographer of the Kyzyl Museum and, for a while, interpreter of the autor among the various Soyot groups.

20a. Wood framed felt-yurt at the foot of the mountains, it is the shelter of the Soyot shepherds living dispersed thereabouts. It had seen better days.
20b. A two-humped camel, pack-animal of the Soyot plains. It is, on this picture, transporting petrol.


22a. An obo is erected at dangerous crossroads or at the site of past disasters. All, who pass there, throw a stone upon it and hang something on the poles, sticking out from it. In ancient times a string of lambs’ ears (partial animal-sacrifice) had been offered, nowadays they place whatever they find: horsehair, ribbons, torn bands of cloth, stripes of tyres or even parts of the engine of motorvehicles.

22b. A relic of the past: felt-yurt at the edge of the Soyot village, Bazhin Alak. A stove-pipe sticks out at the top, the film-operator’s cross-country vehicle stands beside the yurt. The woman sitting in front of her home practises “household-economy”; she is cleaning wool for the purpose of fulling felt-cloth.

23. Only a felled tree-trunk leads across this suddenly overflowed stream. The author preferred to cross mounted on a two-humped camel.

24. An exceptionally lucky photograph: Sizhep Mongus, the old shamaness is pictured herein the state of ecstasy. Her attire is that of Soyot women in the past, at festive occasions, her head is wrapped in a scarf, she holds a stick (shaman staff), replacing the drum.
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