

book (I. S. Gurvich) correctly emphasizes certain features of the ethnic development of these peoples. In all respects this book should be commended for having produced a good description of the ethnic history of the peoples of Siberia and the north which have been taken for investigation.

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### New material on Tungus shamanism

Materialien zum Schamanismus der Ewenki-Tungusen an der mittleren und unteren Tunguska. Gesammelt und aufgezeichnet von I. M. SUSLOV 1926/1928. Eingeleitet, übersetzt, mit Anmerkungen, etymologischem Glossar und Indices versehen von KARL H. MENGES. Studies in Oriental Religions (edited by WALTHER HEISSIG and HANS-JOACHIM KLIMKEIT), volume 8. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1983. XV + 131 pp. ISBN 3-447-02234-5, ISSN 0340-6792.

There is probably no other living Western scholar who could claim to have a more profound and intimate knowledge of Siberian shamanism than professor Karl Heinrich Menges. Half a century ago he already published the materials on the shamanism of the Altay Turks collected by L. N. Potapov (Materialien zur Volkskunde der Türkvölker des Altaj, in: *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin*, 37:2, 1934), and ever since he has keenly followed the development of both Western and Soviet studies pertaining to this perhaps most complicated field of the North Asian cultural heritage. Quite recently, he dealt with Siberian shamanism in an extensive review article (Zum sibirischen Schamanismus, in: *Central Asiatic Journal*, 25, 1981), while another article is devoted to the shamanistic beliefs of the Koreans (Korean shamanism, in: *Central Asiatic Journal*, 27, 1983). Moreover, his approach to shamanism is multidisciplinary, with special emphasis on linguistics, a field often neglected by ordinary students of cultural anthropology.

The publication by Menges of the materials on Tungus shamanism collected by Innokentiy Mikhaylovich Suslov, is a rare and delightful example of fruitful scholarly cooperation between the Soviet Union and the Western countries. Suslov's materials, compiled in Russian, were originally designed for publication in the Soviet Union, but remained unpublished and were deposited in the Archives of the Institute of Ethnography in Leningrad, where Menges found them during a longer visit to the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1976 - 1977. The materials had occasionally been used by Soviet scholars, but, as Menges emphasizes, interest in shamanism was for long almost absent in the Soviet Union, a trend perhaps explicable as a bizarre side-effect of the intensive anti-religion campaign of the 1930s. Only recently has this situation changed, and in a surprisingly short period Soviet scholarship on shamanism has produced quite a number of new publications of a high international level. One of the latest achievements is E. S. Novik's monograph contributing to the structural, functional and typological ana-

lysis of Siberian shamanism (*Obryad i fol'klor v sibirskom shamanizme*, Moscow 1984).

In the preface to the publication of Suslov's materials (pp. VII-XV), Menges gives some information about Suslov. Born in Turukhansk, Suslov (1893 - 1972) lived during his childhood in close contact with a number of Siberian minority groups, including the Evenki, whose shaman songs he studied phonographically as early as 1914. After the October Revolution he held various appointments relating to the political indoctrination and cultural reorientation of the northern peoples, and in this connection he published a couple of articles demonstrating the anti-socialist content of shamanism. He collected the materials for a monograph on Tungus shamanism among the Western Evenki in the territory of the modern Evenki Autonomous Okrug during the years 1926 - 1928. It can be noted that this period of fieldwork coincides with the Siberian expedition of another student of shamanism, Hans Findeisen. It is delightful that Findeisen's basic ideas about shamanism have also recently been republished by Heino Gehrts (*Die Schamanen: Jagdhelfer und Ratgeber, Seelenfahrer, Kunder und Heiler*, Koln 1983).

The arrangement of Suslov's monograph is well-balanced and clear. The work consists of four parts. The first part (pp. 1 - 37) deals with the spiritual background of shamanism, and presents a detailed classification and characterization of the cosmological concepts of the Western Evenki, as well as of the various categories of spirits postulated by them. The text contains many interesting details. For instance, the famous case of the Tunguska meteorite (1908) was explained by Suslov's informants as the result of a battle between two shamans. The explosion was attributed to an immense flock of thunderbirds (*agdi*) sent by one of the shamans to the camp of the other. The same explanation was, as Menges points out, somewhat later given to G. M. Vasilevich by her informants from the Tunguska region.

The second part (pp. 38 - 58) is focused on the material aspects of shamanism with special reference to the structure and function of the shaman tent. All serious instances of shamanizing among the Western Evenki used to require the building of a separate shaman tent according to the instructions of the shaman, and it is remarkable how strictly regulated the structure of this tent was, in spite of its considerable complexity. Moreover, the exact significance of all the details was known only to the shaman, who never transmitted this knowledge to ordinary people. Suslov analyzes three shaman tents and proves one of them, built by a young and incompetent shaman, to be a fake. The public ridiculing of fakes and inconsistencies in the doctrine was an essential part of the anti-religion program all over the Soviet Union, and it often turned out to be the most effective method of creating confusion among the adherents of shamanism.

The third part (pp. 59 - 84) contains four descriptions of shamanic sances, as performed by shamans of various ages and qualitative levels. One of the shamans was quite young and did not even possess a drum, but as the son of a great shaman it was considered that he was destined to become one himself and he had a steadily growing reputation. The three other shamans had longer careers behind them, but only two of them were considered as competent by the Evenki, while the third had lost his authority. Suslov's characterization of the shaman personalities and their behaviour during the sances proves him a keen psychological observer with an obvious feeling of sympathy towards his informants. He seems to be especially anxious to find

simple natural explanations to the sometimes perplexing acrobatic and other tricks performed by the shamans. Certainly, his materialistic approach in this respect stands on firmer ground than the odd spiritualism of Findeisen.

The fourth part (pp. 85 - 96) presents a brief selection of Evenki folktales with a shamanistic content. Although only six samples are given, they well illustrate the richness of this special branch of Evenki folklore. Without doubt, the systematization of this and other similar material in a broad context, comprising the shamanistic folklore of all the Siberian peoples, would be a major research task that could be carried out through intensive collaboration between folklorists, ethnographers and linguists. Without creating such wide background knowledge, the possibilities to understand correctly any single piece of shamanistic folklore remain very limited. Take, for instance, the sample presented by Suslov under the title "Why the Tungus are slant-eyed" ("Warum die Tungusen Schlitzaugen haben"). The story goes as follows:

A young man lives with his parents and elder sister. The sister suspects that her brother is planning to kill her. However, the brother leaves his home and goes to live in a far-away region, where he marries a rich and wise girl. In spite of their good life, the man cannot resist his longing for his parents and sister, and decides to visit his old home. Reaching the tent of his parents, he notices that his sister has turned into an evil shaman. She has killed and eaten their parents, and although she prepares her brother a seemingly friendly welcome, he is afraid of becoming the next victim. During the night, when his sister is sleeping, he smears her eyes with fish glue and escapes. On waking, the sister cannot open her eyes, but after considerable rubbing she nevertheless manages to produce a narrow slit in both eyes. This is the reason why the Tungus are slant-eyed. Having regained her sight, she begins to chase her brother, but is finally killed through the cunning of her brother's wife.

This little tale presents a multitude of unanswered questions. Firstly, it is difficult to understand, why the Evenki should have an explanation for their "slant-eyes" at all, as all of their aboriginal neighbours are also "slant-eyed". Could the anthropological contrast between the Baikaloïds of Central Siberia and the Uraloïds of Western Siberia have been so obvious and important to the Western Evenki? Or, alternatively, could this part of the tale reflect a late reinterpretation, due to increasing contacts with the Russians? And why, after all, is the relationship between the brother and the sister so hostile? Why is the sister afraid of her brother killing her, and why does she later kill her own parents? The story would make better sense if in place of the sister there were a dangerous beast, perhaps a bear. Indeed, such an identification seems possible in the light of an innocent fable recorded from another Tungus group, the Nanay. The fable has been published at least twice, by Lipskaya-Val'rond (in the Nanay primer *Bono bit-xö*, Khabarovsk 1928, p. 101) and by L. I. Sem (*Ocherki dialektov nanayskogo yazyka: bikinskiy (ussuriyskiy) dialekt*, Leningrad 1976, p. 117), and goes briefly as follows:

The fox has cheated the bear, and the bear wants to kill the fox. The bear catches the fox, as the latter is making glue. The fox tells the bear that smearing the eyes with glue improves the eyesight. The bear asks the fox to have his own eyes smeared too. Having smeared the bear's eyes, the fox tells the bear to sleep. On waking, the bear cannot open his eyes. However, after intensive rubbing he is able to see again, but his eyes remain

small and bleary. This is the reason why the bear has small eyes. (The bear continues to chase the fox, but is ultimately killed by the latter.)

The implication is that the relationship between the brother and the sister in the folktale recorded by Suslov is actually one between a Tungus hunter and his most precious prey, the bear. Moreover, the power of the bear is reported to be comparable to that of a great and evil shaman. Thus, although the tale seemingly contains no reference to the bear, it can be understood only in the context of the phenomenon of the bear cult. Of course, this is just one possible interpretation, but it may serve as an example of the type of problems encountered in the analysis of shamanistic folklore in general.

Menges concludes his publication of Suslov's materials with an elaborate technical part (pp. 97 - 131), consisting of notes, deriving partly from Suslov himself, lists of abbreviations, an etymological glossary, and lists of tribal, personal and geographical names occurring in the text. The etymological glossary, containing all the Evenki words cited by Suslov, is especially useful, as it seems that Suslov's knowledge of the Evenki language was far from perfect. His transcription of native language material is inconsistent and might even be confusing to a non-linguist without the comments and corrections made by Menges in the glossary. Actually, although Suslov occasionally gives samples of shaman songs with both an Evenki text and musical notes, it seems that he was unable to write down any longer pieces of language material directly in Evenki. Thus, for instance, the folktales are presented by him in translation only. On the other hand, the lexical items recorded by Suslov constitute a valuable source of information on the special language of Tungus shamanism, containing many important additions to the existing Evenki dictionaries.

As to the etymologies suggested by Menges for the individual Evenki words, they reflect his enthusiastic attitude to not only the Altaic but also the Ural-Altaic and Nostratic hypotheses. In spite of the basic absurdity of this "omnicomparativist" approach, Menges often succeeds in pointing out quite plausible lexical connections, reflecting the historic spread of cultural innovations. Of course, excessive optimism causes many errors. For instance, from the very point of view of cultural history, it is difficult to accept the old etymology connecting the Tungus word for 'shaman', \**samān*, with a Sanskrit term for 'itinerant monk', *śramaṇa*. There is simply no way to explain the geographical and chronological distance between the two words, not to speak of the semantic and phonological difficulties involved.

Suslov's manuscript on Tungus shamanism, now published by Menges, represents but a tiny part of the total amount of Tungusological materials preserved in Soviet archives. Menges himself has drawn attention to two considerably larger unpublished corpora, collected by K. M. Rychkov, also among the Western Evenki (Die ewenki-tungusischen Materialien von K. M. Rychkov, in: *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher*, 50), as well as by the Lipskiy-Val'rond couple among the Nanay (Die nanaj-tungusischen Materialien von Lipskiy-Val'rond in Leningrad, in *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher*, 52). Menges has already begun working on part of Rychkov's material, and it is desirable that Soviet scholars also take steps to prepare the manuscripts of the Lipskiy-Val'ronds for publication. The value of this type of material can only increase in the future, as the cultural and linguistic assimilation of the remaining Tungus speaking groups nears its completion.