

REPORT ON THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPEDITION TO THE

YENISEI, MAY 1914 - SEPTEMBER 1915.

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In May, 1914, I was enabled, by means of a grant of \$1500, to which \$500 was afterwards added, made by the Museum Board at the instance of the Director of the University Museum, to join an expedition to the Yenisei, organised and led by Miss M.A. Czaplicka under the auspices of the Oxford School of Anthropology. The object of the expedition was to study on the spot, and to make collections illustrative of, the life of certain tribes of the northern Yenisei basin, especially the Samoyed, Yurak, and Tungus. On the subject of the Yurak and Tungus very little has been written; and although there is a fairly extensive literature dealing with the southern Yenisei, this latter region also presents many unanswered questions, especially with regard to its curious prehistoric and early historic remains and ^{the} migrations^{of which it has been the theatre}. In fact it may be said that the Yenisei valley as a whole presents the chief ethnological problem among the many which Siberia offers.

The expedition left London at the end of May, 1914, reaching Krasnoyarsk via Moscow and the Trans-Siberian early

in June. The year 1914-1915 was spent in the Arctic regions, the summer at the mouth of the Yenisei, the winter in the country between the rivers Yenisei and Lena.

The mouth of the Yenisei was reached by river steamer from Krasnoyarsk, a growing town of 80000 inhabitants on the left bank of the river, and an important point on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Krasnoyarsk is in the latitude of Copenhagen. The river voyage of about 2400 versts almost due north from the starting point occupied three weeks ; and we reached Golchikha, our headquarters for the summer, at the end of June. Golchikha is a trading-post and fishing-station on a small island formed by the junction of the little river of that name with the Yenisei in 71° 43' n. lat. It consists of three log-huts and some sheds - the dwellings of the few European fishermen and traders who inhabit the place, the fishermen only during the summer. The natives who come here for the summer fishing bring their own portable habitations - the skin-covered tents which are used by all these northern nomads. Golchikha is at the head of the estuary of the Yenisei, and from here we made frequent journeys up and down the river by fishing-boat, along the banks on foot, and into the tundra by sledge or on foot, to different points where native chums (tents) were to be found.

The country hereabouts is the characteristic marshy tundra of northern Siberia, frozen and snow-covered for nine months of the year. The surface is so water-logged and soft

(the soil is perpetually ice-bound at a depth of from eighteen inches to a yard) in the short summer that the ordinary means of travel is by sledge then just as it is in winter, though one of the tribes inhabiting the region - the Dolgan - travel also on reindeer-back. The Samoyed and Yurak never ride their deer. They have no word for saddle, but refer to it ironically as "the sledge on the back."

These, the three tribes, representatives of which inhabit the most northerly part of the lower Yenisei basin, are sometimes divided each into three sections - reindeer-breeders, hunters, and fishermen ; as a matter of fact they are all reindeer-breeders with the characteristic culture of reindeer nomads, and all engage in hunting and fishing as well. The majority fish in the streams and lakes of the tundra at considerable distances from the Yenisei; the fishing rights on that river, although nominally vested by the Russian law in the natives, having passed almost entirely into the hands of the European colonists - both the comparatively few who have settled on the banks below Yeniseisk (330 versts by river north of Krasnoyarsk), and the much larger number who come north only for the fishing season.

The Dolgan are - according to Miss Czaplicka - a tribe of Yakutized Tungus. Their physical type, material culture, and social organization are remarkably like those of the Tungus, and their language is a modified form of Yakut. They are, except

for a small group on the river Taz, the most westerly representatives of the Tungus. As mentioned above, they are the only people of this far northern region who have the Tungus custom of riding reindeer. They inhabit that part of the tundra stretching in a north-westerly direction between the Tungus territory on the upper Khatongo river and Samoyed territory on the right bank of the Yenisei.

The Yurak and the so-called Ostyak-Samoyed of this region are both representatives of the Samoyedic tribes which are distributed over the whole of northern Siberia and Russia between the Petchora on the west and the Khatonga on the east. Those of the Yenisei region are at the same time wealthier in reindeer and more primitive in their culture than the tribes of the more southerly districts of the Arctic region, such as the Tungus, among whom a herd of two or three hundred reindeer is considered fairly large, while a rich Samoyed or Yurak may have as many as from five to ten thousand deer.

The Yurak folklore is extremely interesting. Emotional as they are in their daily lives - fatal quarrels and murders arising out of love affairs or inspired by the desire to win the name of hero are of frequent occurrence - their tales and legends are chanted or told with a simple, poetic realism and a charming reserve. In this the Yurak present a striking contrast to ^{the} Tungus of the southerly regions of the Arctic. Among the latter, while quarrels, divorces, and scandals of

any kind are rare, and the orderliness of the community is generally exemplary, their tales are most licentious in tone and full of obscenities.

To penetrate for any great distance into the interior of the tundra it is necessary to wait until the frost and snow have made the streams, lakes, and marshes practicable for sledge travel. The Tungus are so scattered over a vast territory that one has to cover a great deal of ground to see much of them.

The winter was spent in the tundra north of the Arctic Circle between the Yenisei and the upper Khatonga valley. We travelled in reindeer sledges from chum to chum among the Tungus, chiefly those of the Limpiisk territorial group. A visit was also paid to the Yakut living on and near L.Yessei, our farthest east, some 1500 versts north-east of our starting point, Turukhansk-Monastir, on the Yenisei. This latter place, a small Russian settlement of about twenty houses, 140 versts by river south of the Arctic Circle, we reached by steamer from Golchikha a short time before the river traffic ceased. About 3000 versts of sledge travel in a mountainous region were accomplished during the winter of 1914-'15, in a temperature ranging from - 30° to below - 80° F.

The Tungus of this region - "the Limpiisk tundra", so-called from one of its numerous streams, the Limpa - are the most primitive and the least affected by Russian influence of all

the 50,000 of these nomads, various tribes of whom are spread over Siberia from the lower Yenisei to the Amur. They are a sturdy stock, and their reindeer are as yet little affected by the epidemics of anthrax which have sadly reduced the herds of the rapidly degenerating Yenisei-Ostyak on the other side of the great river.

Examples of purely representative art independent of religious usages were not observed among any of the tribes visited, apart from figures of reindeer (one of a horse) scratched upon the surface of combs made of mammoth ivory by the Tungus. The rude representations of animals carved out, or built up, of wood seen among the Tungus ; the grotesque wooden figures of "gods" made by the Ostyak and Yurak, are all connected with shamanist observances. One model of a wild reindeer contained in the collection, carved from wood and stained with the blood of a deer, shows careful workmanship and a true feeling for form. Tungus and Ostyak representations of birds, etc., hammered out of iron, are much conventionalized in form. The characteristic ornamentation of Yurak garments, cut out of cloth and applied to the skin of which the garments are made seems to be zoo-morphic in origin, conventionalized from the form of reindeer antlers ; a similar motive, less elaborated and truer to the original, is sometimes seen on the hood and shoulders of Tungus skin overcoats. The characteristic dress ornamentation of the Ostyak-Samoyed does not seem to be inspired by the imitation of any real object. It consists of a pattern of sparse squares

of alternately dark - and light-coloured skin, obtained by plaiting narrow strips of hair-covered hide ; or a similar effect is sometimes obtained by staining some of the strips, if bare hide is used, with ochre.

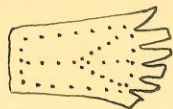
The materials treated decoratively are mammoth ivory, reindeer bone, iron and copper (now obtained chiefly from Russian sources), driftwood (in the far north, where no other wood is obtainable), and skins.

Both Dolgan and Tungus employ coloured glass beads largely in the ornamentation of their clothing. This applies especially to the caps worn by the Dolgan men, the skin boots of the Tungus of both sexes, the snow-goggles of the Dolgan (in which the place of glass is taken by thin plates of copper or brass with a narrow slit across the eyes), and the belts of the Tungus women. Designs in these cases seem to be regulated principally by the individual tastes of wearers with regard to the effective alternation of different colours. Bead ornamentation is also applied to the bridles used by the Tungus in riding reindeer. Tungus pack-saddles are decorated; but the harness of their sledge teams is quite plain.

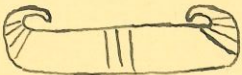
Ochre and graphite and burnt resin are used for staining. Decorative stitching is done with hairs taken from the necks of reindeer, where the hair grows long in winter.

The iron pipes of all these tribes are often quite graceful in outline, and are ornamented with incised lines, and sometimes inlaid with small pieces of silver.

The most elaborately decorative Tungus costume is the ceremonial coat of the shaman, now very rare. It consists of a long tunic of wild reindeer hide, reaching to the knees. Long strips of hide, which sweep the ground, fringe the back of the sleeves from shoulder to wrist. At the point of attachment of each of these thongs there is fastened a large coloured glass bead, the beads forming a line which extends also round the back of the coat across the shoulders along the edge of a kind of cape the margin of which is continuous with the seam of the back of the sleeve. A beadwork belt, studded with small pieces of iron encircles the waist. From just below the belt another fringe hangs to the knees, the thongs here being interspersed with strings of twisted strips of cloth, and other thongs, covered throughout their length with small cylinders of thin hide. Both of these latter terminate in tassels formed of thinner bits of hide, and the covered thongs are adorned at their upper ends each with two or three large coloured glass beads. Along the side of each sleeve at shoulder, elbow, and wrist are fastened plates of copper, the two upper ones embossed with a design of crosses, the third thus :



Between the two upper plates on the sleeve is a representation in iron of a bird. Depending from the upper part of each sleeve by a string of beads and brass rings is an iron ornament

shaped thus :  At each side of the tunic under the upper part of the arm is an iron grille with five horizontal bars. Beadwork encircles the neck of the tunic. Attached to the breast of the tunic, and covering the lower part of the chest and the abdomen is an apron bordered all round with beadwork and fringed at the bottom with thongs. Sometimes the apron is covered with symbolic figures. To the lower half of the apron are attached vertically two representations in iron of the northern diver with the beaks pointing upwards, and below these, horizontally, an iron ornament of the shape shown immediately above. Over the navel is a round disc of copper. Certain short tassels of twisted cloth or hide depending from the lower edge of the apron represent the male genital organs. At each side of the copper disc is a lizard, or newt, in iron, and below it, at the very edge of the apron, a third ornament of the shape shown above.

At the back of the tunic across the shoulders there is a line of six iron figures of birds, their beaks pointing upwards. The two larger are in the middle, one representing either an eagle or a goose, the other a northern diver ; the two smaller ones ^{at} each side also represent divers. At each end of the line is a rectangular iron plate terminating above in a representation of reindeer antlers. From below these hang a line of copper and iron rings. To the middle of the back is attached a large iron "sun", narrow grooves radiating from the centre to represent sun-rays. Beside it is another iron disc

representing the moon. The sun sometimes hangs on a rectangle of skin taken from the head of the bear.

The boots are long, of soft hide, covering the thigh. A long strip of iron extends the length of the skin from knee to ankle, hammered into a serrated ridge throughout its length in front. At the lower end over the instep it is fashioned into the shape of a reindeer's cloven hoof :  At each side of this, another thin, flat bar of iron extends from knee to ankle at the sides of the boot.

It will be seen that various parts of the ornamentation of the costume are intended to represent, or call attention to, different parts of the shaman's anatomy, at the same time as they indicate the close connexion of the pursuits of the reindeer-breeder and hunter with shamanism. Thus, besides the too lavish provision of symbolic leg-bones with their combined suggestion of zoö - and anthropomorphism and the same suggestion in the antlered shoulder-blade plates, we have ribs (the iron grilles at the sides of the chest), navel, viscera (the fringes of the apron), etc.

I have described this costume at some length because it is upon shamanistic implements and accessories generally that the Siberian expends his supreme artistic efforts, and because I was unable to obtain a specimen of the costume by reason of the extensive confiscations of shamanist paraphernalia carried out in recent years among the Yenisei Tungus by the

Russian church authorities. The collection, however, includes two shaman's drums (one Yenisei-Ostyak, the other Tungus) and several specimens of shamanist accessories.

It is curious to note the manner in which the persecution of shamans has influenced the forms of shamanist accessories. The shaman's drum and coat were the chief objects of ecclesiastical prohibitions. Thus, while many shamans have now abandoned the use of the ceremonial coat, all the symbolic figures that normally would adorn the coat, now appear upon the apron. (See photograph of Yenisei-Ostyak shaman.) In some places, e.g. on the river Sim, in the middle Yenisei valley, and in the south, some shamans use, instead of the drum, a short wooden truncheon, with symbolic carving, very similar to the drum handle of the Ostyak-Yenisei and "Tartar" shamans. One of these implements, still known as "drums", is to be sent from Minusinsk to the University Museum.

In the spring of 1915, when the rapidly lengthening days made the cessation of winter travel imminent, we returned to Monastir to await the opening of the river traffic.* From here

* During this time we had the opportunity of seeing something of the Yenisei-Ostyak, the remnant of a once powerful nation akin to the not long extinct Arine and Kotte. In two things they still preserve traces of their former prosperity and power. Their shamans are exceedingly clever, and are acknowledged to be so by all the neighbouring tribes; and they are also acknowledged by their neighbours to be supreme in the art of making compound bows. The collection contains a Yenisei-Ostyak bow, arrows, and an arrow-case. (See photographs of Ostyak shaman and Ostyak using bow.)

we returned to Krasnoyarsk by the first steamer. Thence we went south to Minusinsk and the Abakan steppe for a short visit to the Kachin and Sagai "Tartars," tribes of Turkic extraction. Here we obtained, not without difficulty, some relics of the ancient so-called "Chud" culture, from the kurgani, or burial-mounds, of the Abakan steppe.

The return journey from Krasnoyarsk was lengthened through delays occasioned by the disorganisation due to the war of various public departments to whom application had to be made for permits and other necessary documents connected with the transportation of the collections. Opportunity was taken to visit the museums of Krasnoyarsk, Minusinsk, Moscow, and Petrograd in order to observe their Siberian collections.

In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Gordon and the Museum Board for the generous contribution to the funds of the expedition which enabled me to join it; and to the leader and organiser of the expedition, Miss M.A. Czaplicka, to whose pluck, energy, and tact in dealing with the natives the success of a difficult venture was entirely due.

H. U. HALL.

Appended is a map showing the route of the expedition, and some photographs illustrating native types and the use of some articles contained in the collection.
