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to Prof. S. H. Polevov  
with compliments  
S. H. Polevov

NORTH-WESTERN MANCHURIA AND THE  
REINDEER-TUNGUS

By  
MISS E. J. LINDGREN

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NORTH-WESTERN MANCHURIA AND THE REINDEER-  
TUNGUS: *A paper read at the Evening Meeting of the Society on*  
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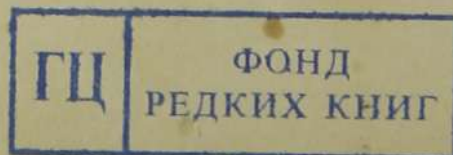
MISS E. J. LINDGREN

BEFORE describing a recent journey to North-Western Manchuria in search of a little-known tribe of Reindeer-Tungus, I must review enough of the geographical and historical background of this region to explain how it could have remained so neglected. The Chinese Eastern Railway, passing through Hailar and Manchouli, appears to bring all the essentials for economic development to its very door; yet it has received less attention, I believe, than the remote provinces of Western China. The Chinese have named the northernmost part of Manchuria Heilungkiang, or "River of the Black Dragon," after the Amur, whose dark waters contrast strikingly with the muddy yellow of their own streams. The Amur and its great tributary, the Argun, must be indeed the central figures in any study of the country, forming a frontier of unusual significance, political, commercial, and ethnographic. Navigable for small steamers as far as Olochi on the Argun, these rivers have brought to life a series of little trading stations dotted at intervals along the border, saving it from the obscurity which shrouds the interior. On the eastern side of the Great Khingan Range the whole region is drained by tributaries of the Amur, principally the Nonni and the Kumara, and on the western by those of the Argun, of which the more important are the Bistraya, the Marekta, and the Gan. The area to which I confined my attention during this journey lies between the Argun on the west and north and the Khingan Range on the east, being bounded on the south by the Hailar. This river is considered by the Mongols as simply the upper course of the Argun,\* and is so designated on certain maps.

The character of this region may be described as, roughly, of two types: that of the Mongolian plains in the south, and that of the Siberian taiga in the north. The forest belt approaches the bank of the Argun as the river and the line of the Khingan divide gradually converge, finally excluding the plains. From the valley of the Hailar to the Gan we find the dry, grass-covered, slightly rolling steppe which is the natural home of nomadic cattle-breeders such as the Solon and Chipchin who inhabit it. The triangular section of country drained by the Gan, the Derbul, and the Khaul has been named by the Russians the "Three Rivers" district, and is the richest in North-Western Manchuria. In its broad valleys agriculture flourishes, the hills afford excellent grazing for cattle, while timber is within easy reach on the thickly forested slopes of the Khingan to the east. Farther north the mountains begin to close in. If we follow the right bank of the Argun, however, we find the rolling foothills still quite barren as far as Shihwei, and they leave the river a wide bed in which to wander at leisure, forming many islands, often separating into two distinct arms, and sometimes doubling back upon itself. According to Bolotov,† between two settlements

\*Pronounced "Ergun" by Mongols, and believed by them to be derived from the root *ergi* (to twist, or turn around).

†'The Amur and Its Basin,' by A. A. Bolotov. Harbin, 1925. (In Russian.)



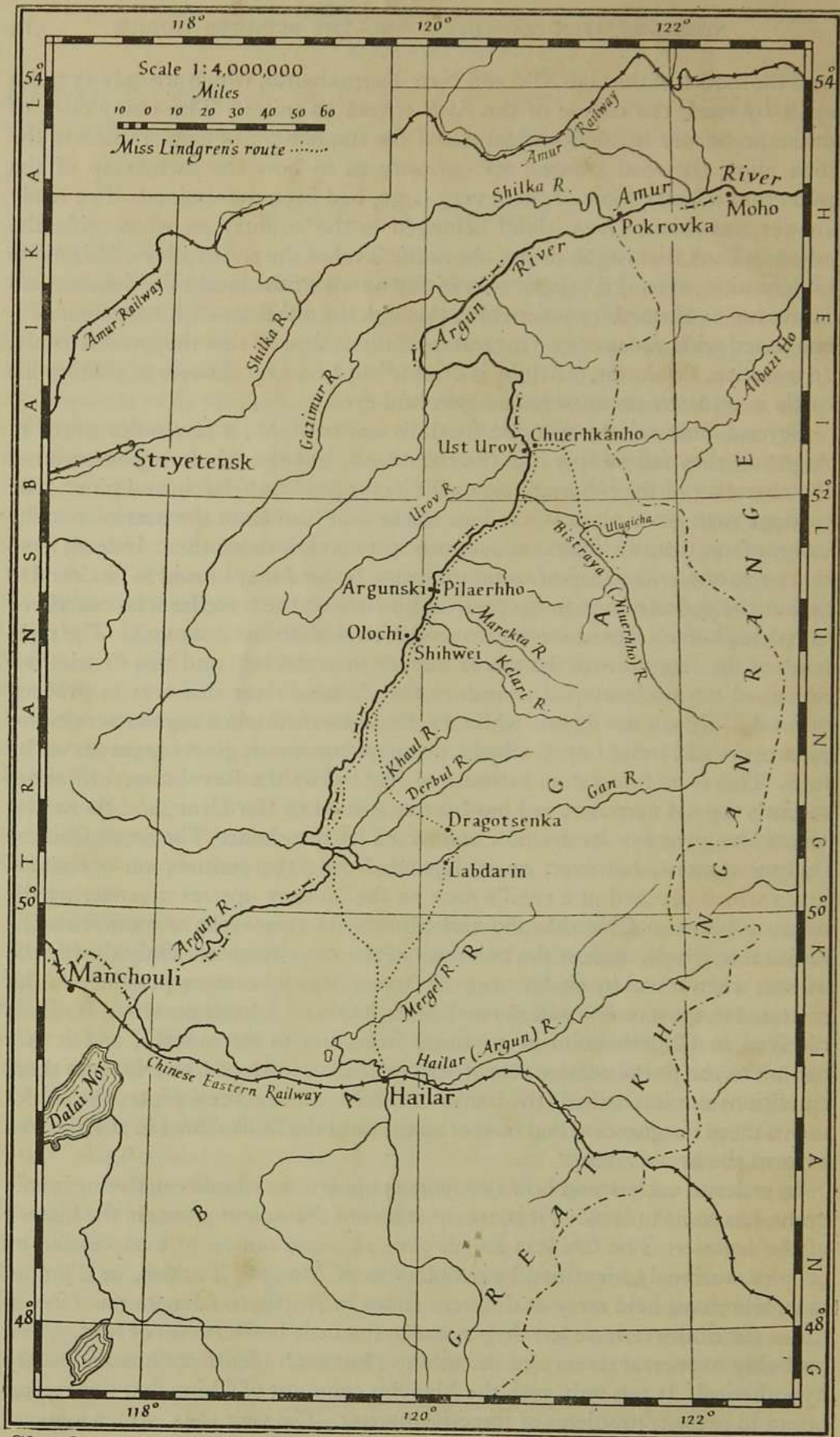


near the mouth of the Gan, Old and New Tsurukhaitui, which are only 15 miles apart by road, the course of the river covers 40 miles. The many tales of dramatic border incidents which form the staple topic of conversation in the inns along the road aroused my curiosity as to how the ownership of the numerous islands, some of them very large, had been determined. The ready answer was that a given island belonged to the country on whose side the adjacent bank first began to rise above the level of the river valley. This mode of definition, even if it existed only in the minds of the local inhabitants—and I have not confirmed it by searching through the old Russo-Chinese treaties—suggested wide vistas of varying interpretations, and all that they would imply. In practice, no doubt, "Might is Right," and he who chooses to pasture his cattle in mid-stream must have a watchful eye.

Beyond Shihwei the wooded foothills are in sight; a few miles north of Argunski they fall steeply into the river itself, and the whole region assumes the character of the Siberian taiga with its typical birch, larch, and pine. The carriage road gives place to random tracks that lead from the narrow marshy valley of one deep swift stream over precipitous rises to another. Indeed, from this point onwards means of communication by land may be said to be closed to all but the pedestrian with his pack on his back or the traveller who can afford to risk his horse's legs at every turn, and of such there are not many. The right bank of the Argun is on the whole steeper than the left, and this district has remained too undeveloped to induce the Chinese river steamers to proceed beyond Moho on the Amur, while the Russians maintain a regular service for passengers and freight up to Olochi, using, at low water, great barges drawn by tugs. This is an innovation introduced just before the Revolution; still more recently a good carriage road has been extended to Ust Urov, and the settlements along the border are now connected by telephone. The small Chinese trading stations, however, must depend during the summer on occasional junks which proceed at a snail's pace on the journey upstream, covering the distance between Chuerhkanho and Shihwei in two weeks or more with unfavourable winds, against the two days of the river-steamer. Only during the winter, when travel by sledge over the frozen Argun becomes possible, do the scattered outposts come within reach of each other. A letter posted in Hailar is received in Chuerhkanho in anything from one to six months, and it is a tribute to the postal service that it arrives at all. North of Chuerhkanho these conditions are intensified; the banks of the Argun become steeper, the settlements more insignificant and farther apart, until the Shilka flows in at Pokrovka to form the broad Amur.

In order to understand how the sparse population, whether native or immigrant, has come to be what it is, we must review the salient points in the history of the frontier. The Chinese annals give us some notion of a succession of peoples, variously identified by scholars as of Mongol, Turkish, or Tungus race, who have held sway at different times in Northern Manchuria. One of these, the Shihwei, have left their name to the little border town of to-day, and probably to several rivers and mountains; but such identifications are purely hypothetical. It was only with the Manchu conquest of China that this region began to present problems of imperial interest. The year 1644, which inaugurates the Manchu reign, marks also, curiously enough, the first appearance on





Sketch-map of Miss Lindgren's route through Barga, North-Western Manchuria

NB. For Albazi Ho R. read Albazikha R. — 15/6

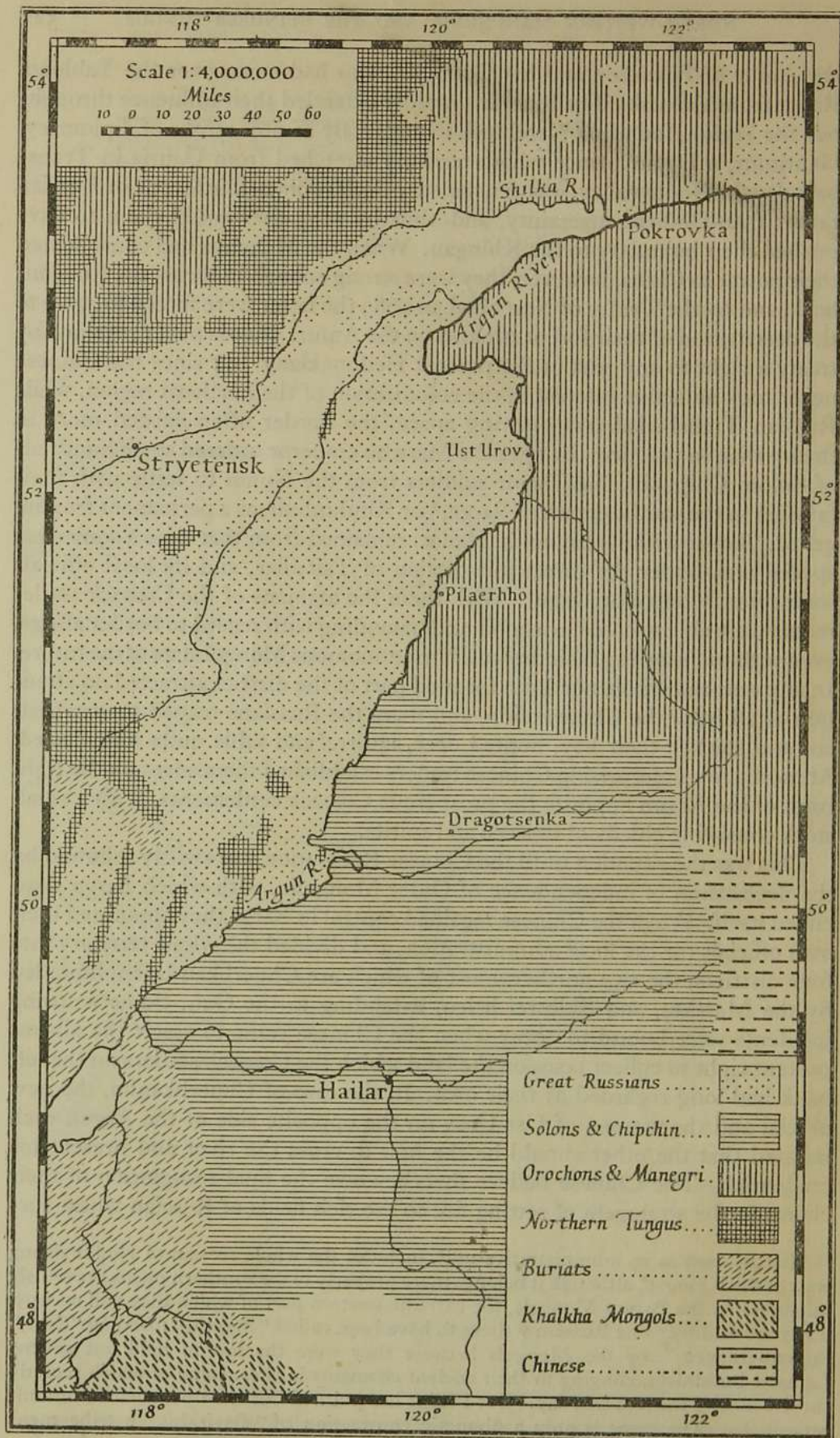


the Amur of Poyarkov and his Cossacks, who had come over the Yablonoi Range from Yakutsk. The Russians rapidly extended their influence throughout the region, founding Nerchinsk in 1654. By an able stroke of diplomacy, Gantimur, a Dagur prince whose territory stretched from Dauria in Transbaikal to the Nonni valley, was persuaded to declare himself in favour of Russian rather than Chinese suzerainty, and thus by 1675 they could claim to have pushed their boundary to the Khingan. When the Manchus had consolidated their power in China, however, they were strong enough to thrust the Russians back, and by the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689 the latter were forced to agree to the destruction of their fort at Albazin on the Amur. Russia never regained by treaty a right to any part of the present Heilungkiang, but since the Chinese never took an active interest in the colonization of the northern region, while Russian Transbaikal was growing apace, the border often existed more in theory than in practice. In 1732 the Manchu emperor ordered some hundreds of Solon, Chipchin, and Dagur soldiers from the Nonni to settle with their families in the southern part of Barga,\* or Khulunbuir, as a permanent frontier guard. Barga, with its capital in Hailar, remained from that time a somewhat special area under the direct jurisdiction of Tsitsihar, and its local officials were often Mongol or Dagur. With them the atamans of the Cossack settlements were able to come to a good understanding with regard to border affairs, even without fostering their dream of an autonomous Mongol state of the future. In any case the whole northern forested part of the district attracted no attention at all from the Chinese side, and there the Russians reaped their wheat, cut and stacked their hay, hunted deer, squirrel and sable quite unmolested. At most a few enterprising Chinese traders established themselves on the right bank of the Argun opposite the prosperous Cossack settlements, with a small stock consisting chiefly of tobacco and spirits.

This was the situation until the Chinese Revolution was swiftly followed by the declaration of independence of Outer Mongolia, with which Barga associated itself. When the Chinese regained control in Barga they appointed their own officials for the local administration, and divided the whole territory into four districts, the two northernmost of which are Chuerhkan hsien, bounded by the Marekta, and Shihwei hsien, extending to the Gan. Some amusing incidents were bound to occur when the Chinese came to assert the all-important right to collect taxes on the land which the Cossack settlers on the left bank had long regarded as their own. In the case of Chuerhkanho, the new official and the ataman of Ust Urov on the opposite side of the Argun each insisted that the other should be the first to cross the river and present his credentials. The Chinese believe that they owe the final recognition of their claims to the stratagem of setting fire to the rich fields of Russian wheat sur-

\*Barga, used as an administrative unit, includes the whole section of Heilungkiang west of the Khingan, although it belongs more properly to the southern plains previously inhabited by the Bargut Mongols, the extreme western part of which they still occupy. They are said by some Russian writers to have been called "Bargut," meaning "dark," "unenlightened," by the Mongols because they were the last to hold out against Lamaist Buddhism, clinging to their ancient shamanistic rites, some of which secretly survive among them to this day. But Pelliot has pointed out (in a personal communication) that their name is only a phonetic contraction of "Bayirkhu," a tribe mentioned in the Orkhon inscriptions.





*Ethnographical sketch-map of the Argun basin*

(from 'Ethnographical Map of Siberia' published by  
the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1927.  
Not amended by author (A/h)).



rounding the Chinese outpost. According to the Russian version, on the other hand, recognition only followed when due instructions to that effect were received from higher authority in Nerchinsk, and it is added that after the wheat-burning incident it was only with the greatest difficulty that the ataman restrained the hot-headed young men among the Cossacks from bloodshed. They would have asked for nothing better than an excuse for annihilating the handful of Chinese traders, rewarding themselves with the reserve stores of spirits, and wiping out many an inconvenient debt! From this time on, in any case, the Chinese population on the right bank began to increase, although very gradually. Apart from immigration, it had already recruited itself in a manner full of significance for present and future conditions along the frontier. From the first the Chinese traders had settled down with Russian wives, and to-day the growing second generation forms a considerable element in every community. The few Chinese women who brave the long and difficult journey to follow their husbands to these parts find the climate too severe; many die, while the others return as quickly as possible to their homes in Southern Manchuria or Shantung. Thus intermarriage with the Russians will no doubt continue indefinitely, and if the Eurasian type proves hardy enough to survive, the increase in population may gradually change the character of these lonely outposts and lead to economic development. Among the Chinese inhabitants we must include, besides the traders and the civil officials at the two administrative centres, the small garrisons of the guard stations, which coincide with the larger frontier settlements.

The Russian Revolution has indirectly supplied the Chinese with the most substantial element of the border population of to-day. The emigrants, many of whom have only crossed the river and settled within sight of their old homes, are largely of hardy Cossack stock and continue to live as farmers and hunters on land already familiar to them, as we have seen, for generations. The Three Rivers district has proved the most attractive, however, and has drawn the majority away from the frontier stations, where the Russians form only 35 per cent. of the population, against 90 per cent. of the 2000 or more distributed among twenty-two settlements in the Three Rivers district. But since it is the Russians, primarily, who raise the grain and carry on the trade in furs with the native tribes, the economic life of the region centres around them.

Between the small groups of Chinese and Russians scattered along the Argun and Amur, and the natives who fish and hunt in the depths of the taiga, there is little contact. There would, indeed, be none at all were it not for the taste they have acquired for tea, bread or millet, sweets, tobacco, flowered stuffs, trinkets, and above all spirits, and to obtain these they must offer valuable furs in exchange. But except for their periodic meetings with traders, they are never seen; for these hunters are all Tungus, and whoever has come to know them, in Siberia or Manchuria, has remarked their extreme shyness and distrust of the outside world. Even closely related tribes avoid each other.

Without raising the controversial question of whether the Tungus are a race with definite physical characteristics as well as a common language,\* we may simply note that the hunting tribes of Northern Manchuria are known in

\*See "On the Track of the Tungus," by M. A. Czaplicka, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vol. xxxiii, July 1917.



Russian ethnographic literature as Manegri and Oronchon,\* and are held to belong to the Northern Tungus group, whereas the Manchu and Gold are classified as Southern. The Northern Tungus are supposed to have come originally from Transbaikal or Manchuria, and to have migrated to the north through pressure from the Mongols of Central Asia at the time of Chingiz Khan and earlier. The majority remain in the northern tundra to this day, scattered over a wide area; when and why a few tribes returned to Manchuria is uncertain. The Manegri, who are found on both banks of the Amur, on the right inhabit principally the valley of the Kumara, where there is sufficient meadow-land for them to pasture their horses. They show strong Chinese influence, and are regarded by the Reindeer-Tungus as having always occupied the territory where they live at present. Ethnographers believe, however, that they once possessed reindeer, and migrated here from the north, although their own traditions are not clear on these points. The Oronchon, on the other hand, who live close to the ridge of the Khingan, from the Chinese Eastern Railway to the sources of the Gan, still remember their reindeer, exterminated over a generation ago by a plague, and thus deserve their name, which means "possessing reindeer" and was given them by the Manchus. The Oronchon have also come under Chinese influence, modified by Mongol on the west, but neither they nor the Manegri have been sufficiently investigated for us to be able to assert what differentiates them from each other; their similarities are certainly very great.

There is a third group of Tungus hunters, inhabiting the forests north and north-east of Mergen on the Nonni River; they may prove to be essentially one with either of the above. They were visited recently by W. Stötzner, who made a large ethnographic collection on behalf of the Dresden State Museum of Zoology and Ethnography and took many photographs which should add greatly to our knowledge of their material culture. In a preliminary account of his findings,† Mr. Stötzner refers to the members of this tribe as "Solons," which may prove to be a misleading designation. The Solons of Barga, who regard themselves as a definite ethnic unit, are a strongly "mongolized" Tungus tribe living as nomadic cattle-breeders in the rich pasture-lands bordering on the forests east and south of Hailar. They were largely "evacuated" from the Nonni valley to Barga as part of the Manchu colonization policy, and they emphatically declare that none of them remain east of the Khingan at the present day, although some of their fellow-tribesmen have settled as far west as the Ili valley in Dzungaria.

But least known of all the Tungus hunting tribes in Manchuria is that inhabiting its north-western corner. Its members number less than two hundred and fifty, and they are undoubtedly dying out. But this tribe alone has kept its reindeer, and with them the typically Tungus cultural elements, material and social, which centre around these. Its migrations are almost entirely confined to the valleys of the Bistraya to the west, and the Albazi Ho to the east of the Khingan; the Manegri have prevented them from trespassing on what they

\*Most authorities and maps spell Orochon or Orochen: the author, probably on etymological grounds, spells Oronchon.—ED. G. J.

†"A Journey to the North-East of Mergen," by Walter Stötzner, *Proceedings of the Manchurian Research Society*, No. 7, December 1928. Harbin. (In Russian.)



regard as their territory, the Kumara valley, by burning off the reindeer moss at repeated intervals, fearing that their rival hunters would deplete the game. This isolated and interesting group appears to be most closely related to the Reindeer-Tungus of the Olekma River, occasionally treated as a distinct type in ethnographic literature. References in the Chinese records to the "shih-lu pu" ("tribe using reindeer") cannot be ascribed specifically to any one of the groups we have described, since they all may formerly have had reindeer; most probably the southern Oronchons are indicated. Nomenclature is even now a problem of great difficulty. Russians use the term Oronchon for the Reindeer-Tungus of the Olekma and of Manchuria, but also for the Khingan tribe which now uses horses; all the Northern Tungus appear to call themselves "avanki," a name which the Manchus also apply to them. The occupational classification of Reindeer-, Horse- and Dog-Tungus has been rightly objected to as "having no ethnographical significance,"\* while that into Northern and Southern Tungus, as used by Schrenck and Shirokogorov, is partly a linguistic, partly a geographical one. It is still premature to suggest another, however, with the meagre material at our command. The Chinese of Barga refer to the Reindeer-Tungus as "ch'i-lin," a name obviously of foreign derivation, since it is written with different characters at different times, one pair of which has the plausible meaning "dwelling in the forest."

We find them referred to under this name in a report on the native tribes of Barga written in 1910 by a former Taoyin of Hailar,† and one of the spellings which he gives is written with the two characters signifying "unicorn"! This report contains an account of a trip undertaken by an official Commission to investigate the question of whether this tribe existed, and if so, where. The authorities at Tsitsihar contemplated conscripting all the Oronchon for the army, because of their reputation for unexcelled marksmanship, and had been much disturbed at the rumour that this semi-legendary tribe was trading with the Russians and considered itself subject to their government and not to the Chinese. Reaching Ust Urov, the members of the Commission turned to the Cossacks there and recorded all they could learn from that source; but they were so discouraged by the description they received of the hardships involved in entering the taiga at this point, that they went downstream to Pokrovka, which was at that time a trading station of some importance. There the Reindeer-Tungus living on opposite banks of the Argun often met, and when the Manchurian reindeer were decimated by a plague about thirty years ago, fresh stock was bought from the Siberian tribes; but all communication between them has since ceased, due to political conditions along the frontier.

In Pokrovka the Commission was able to obtain the services of one of the Russian traders as a guide and set out to find the Tungus. The Chinese found the swampy trackless forests very unpleasant, but struggled bravely on for two or three days, finally discovering two wigwams. The writer acknowledges that without the help of their guide, who managed to enter into conversation with one of the natives, their mission would have been fruitless, for the Tungus and

\*See "The Reindeer and its Domestication," by B. Laufer, p. 120, *Memoirs of the Am. Anthropol. Ass.*, vol. iv, No. 2.

†MS. in the possession of V. A. Kormazov, author of 'Barga: An Economic Sketch.' Harbin, 1928. (In Russian.)



their reindeer would certainly have disappeared into the taiga, leaving no trace. The Commission found the Tungus sullen, unresponsive to the solemn exhortations and proposals made to them on behalf of the Chinese Emperor, and finally quite stupid; they even contradicted themselves in giving the number and names of their elders, a matter which greatly interested the Chinese, desirous of obtaining some hold on them. The report concludes with the remark that they resembled dogs or horses, but had nothing in common with the race of men!

We suspect that both the Russians and the Tungus told the Commission rather less than they knew; but in any case the practical conclusion that it was fruitless to hope to enlist these shy hunters in the army was well founded enough. We learn from Mainov\* that those Northern Tungus who began leaving the Yakutsk region for the Amur over a hundred years ago, did so to avoid paying taxes to the Russian Government, and because the more aggressive Yakuts were gradually encroaching on the territory which had previously belonged to the Tungus alone. Essentially a peaceful people, asking only to be left to wander undisturbed through the forests, they prefer to travel over hundreds of miles rather than be brought into closer contact with their neighbours, to say nothing of being forced into open conflict or permanent subjection. At present the Chinese district administration at Chuerhkanho contents itself with levying a tax of about £150 a year on the ten Cossack families who carry on trade with the Reindeer-Tungus in this region. The Russians meet the native hunters two or three times during the winter, at a stated time and place, bringing mainly flour, tea, and spirits to barter for their furs, which are chiefly squirrel since the sable was exterminated twenty years ago, thanks to the fabulous prices offered for its skin. During the summer the Tungus must come themselves to Chuerhkanho, or to the Chinese at Moho, for what they need; as a rule they visit the trading stations once in May or June, and again in August.

Although this tribe has never, to my knowledge, been the object of any detailed investigation, brief mention is made of it by Mrs. Shirokogorov† in the account of a journey which she made with her husband in 1915 from the Argun to the Amur. The expedition, after unsuccessfully attempting to visit the Oronchon of the Upper Gan, finally proceeded up the Marekta valley and crossed to the Upper Bistraya, where it encountered several families of Reindeer-Tungus. After remaining with them for twenty days, the travellers crossed the Khingan divide to the Kumara valley, where they found the Manegri. Most unfortunately S. M. Shirokogorov, an ethnographer who has published unique material on the Manchus, has never made more than passing reference to his observations among the Reindeer-Tungus and the Manegri. The above-mentioned report gives a description of the condition of the roads and trails and a certain amount of topographical information, but in view of the hopeless inadequacy of the existing maps it is highly regrettable, as the authoress herself acknowledges, that this publication should be unaccompanied by a revised map. Had this sketch of the region been brought to my notice before I under-

\*'Some Data concerning the Tungus of the Yakutsk Country,' by I. I. Mainov. Published by the East-Siberian Section of the Imp. Russ. Geogr. Soc., Irkutsk, 1898. (In Russian.)

†'North-Western Manchuria,' by E. N. Shirokova. Vladivostok, 1919. (In Russian.)





*Russian haymakers' shelter imitating  
Tungus wigwam*



*Dugout canoes of Northern Barga*



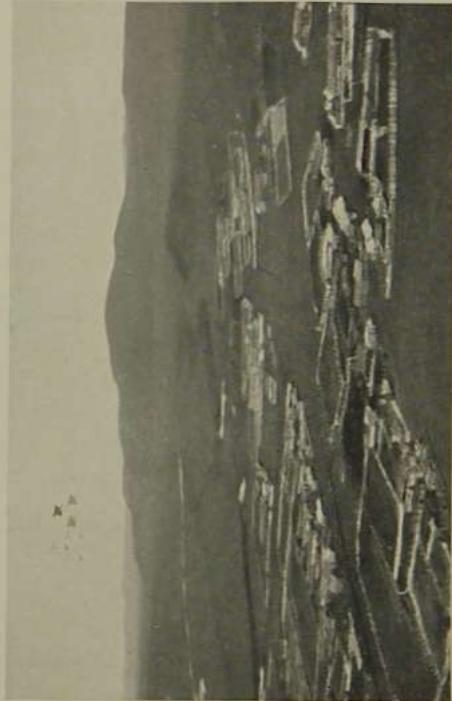
*Wicker house, Dragotsenka*



*The Upper Bistraya "125 miles from mouth"*



*Moose and wapiti ground on Upper Bistraya*



*Russian emigrants' settlement of Dragotsenka*



*The Ulugicha near its mouth*



took my recent journey, however, considerable time and trouble would have been saved.

For it was with incomplete and largely misleading information about Northern Barga, its modes of communication, and where and how the Reindeer-Tungus were to be found, that I set out to investigate this remote tribe in June of last year. We were a party of three, supported by two stubborn Mongol ponies and two Russian horses, later increased to three. Mr. Oscar Mamen, a Norwegian, was not only the photographer, but, on the basis of twenty years' travelling and hunting in Mongolia, he accomplished the unenviable task of adapting a meagre equipment designed originally for the plains to the demands of three months' travel in swampy taiga. Haisan, who looked after the horses and helped about the camp, was a Dagur recommended by the Mongol yamen in Hailar, and came of a clan influential in the local administration. He spoke not only Dagur, Mongol, and Chinese, but also Solon, since his mother was of that people, and this enabled him to make himself understood by the Reindeer-Tungus, a very fortunate circumstance for us. I cannot pay too great a tribute to Haisan, his courage and his loyalty; he shared to the full our determination to reach the goal in spite of hardships, some of which were unfamiliar even to a Mongol. To my two companions is due the fact that the many practical difficulties which encumbered the way were successfully surmounted.

From Hailar to Shihwei the main road leads to the mouth of the Gan, north of which it follows the right bank of the Argun; another branches off beyond the Mergel river to Labdarin, and after crossing the Three Rivers district, passes through rough and hilly country before emerging at Shihwei. The former route is preferable in summer, because of the ferries over the Gan and the Derbul near their mouths; the latter in winter, when the rivers are firmly frozen and even motor cars belonging to the larger firms of fur dealers sometimes make the journey, reaching Shihwei the first day and Chuerhkanho the next. With cart and pack-horse the same distance can hardly be covered in less than two weeks. From Hailar to the Gan the unbroken rolling steppe is only relieved, at the end of each stage of four or five hours' riding, by the avaricious hospitality of a Chinese inn, so built that the well lies under the kitchen and every drop of the precious water, for man and beast, can be reckoned in on the bill. Scrub-willow, growing along the course of a rare miserable stream, supplies the only material for fencing and for the crude shelters thrown together beside the fields of an occasional agriculturist—for the large unkempt personnel of an inn can scarcely support itself on the few travellers who straggle through.

When we reached the Gan, however, the ferry was already working overtime, and a long line of carts stood waiting on both banks; for the river was rising, and two days later became impassable at this point even for horses, remaining so for the rest of the summer. On our return journey in September we were forced to take the upper road in order to cross the Derbul and Gan where they were somewhat narrower. This enabled me to see the Three Rivers district and several of the settlements which have grown up there overnight. In places where the forests are at some distance, as at Dragotsenka, the poorer families have built themselves ingenious "wicker houses," made by filling with earth the space between an outer and inner wall of neat willow-bough fencing. Another curious feature is an instance of the influence of the native tribes on the



immigrants, a reversal of the usual order of things which is not infrequent among the Russian settlers in Transbaikal. The haymakers, who spend many days at some distance from their homes, have erected conical wigwams of poles and birch-bark like those of the Tungus, adding only a layer of hay. Caricatures and epigrams which I found inscribed on the bark wall inside one of these appeared to give vent to the feelings of some young party of haymakers who had been unwillingly confined within during this season when it rained two days out of three.

On our road north along the Argun, between the Gan and Shihwei, we received an early visit at camp one morning from an agitated Chinese traveller, who urged us to move on at once and refused even a friendly cup of tea, on the ground that we had spread our tent on the site of a murder. Pointing out a small mud hut on a strip of the Chinese bank that jutted out like a headland into the plain on the Russian side, due to a great curve in the Argun, he declared it to have belonged to two Chinese traders who, enjoying an evening stroll along the very bluff where we had camped, were surprised and killed by "bandits" from the other side. We could not feel very concerned about the injustice of their fate, since they would scarcely have chosen to live so far from any settlement had they not been at least dealers in contraband; and Haisan remarked laconically that as "lightning never strikes twice on the same spot," we had no reason to hurry our breakfast. Our informant left, disgusted with such lack of sensibility.

Shihwei lies opposite the Russian settlement Olochi, which is not only two or three times as large but acquires significance through being the terminal of the Amur river-steamer service. The Argun is here narrow enough for the voice to carry across without great difficulty, and some border incidents have been settled, and perhaps others caused, by this circumstance. When the villagers on the Russian bank all turn out to greet the incoming steamer, the event of the week, the envious onlookers on the Chinese side can hear the joking and laughing going on as provisions and merchandise are loaded onto the waiting carts. Some one starts humming a melancholy Slav melody which is taken up by others, soprano, alto, and bass falling almost instinctively into place, and soon these born choristers fill the valley of the lonely frontier river with the strange minor refrain. Shihwei is at present half deserted and predominantly Chinese, for the Russian emigrants who had ensconced themselves in primitive half-underground dwellings during the first years of the Revolution, thinking soon to return, have now moved on to the Three Rivers district.

Argunski represents the southernmost trading station to which the Reindeer-Tungus used to come, as it lies on the edge of the forest, which they are loath to leave even for a day. Opposite it on the Chinese side is Pilaerhho, and here we left our cart and most of the equipment with a Cossack family, packing the tent and some provisions on two horses, one of which belonged to a Russian hired as guide. We were constantly assured that the rains had rendered the country to the north, always considered closed for summer travel, quite impassable, and every one frankly expected to see us soon back again. The guide returned, it is true, within the week, for he did not relish the endless succession of streams swollen to roaring torrents by the rains, and we regretted only his horse, as we were forced to pack one of our mounts instead. Our mode of pro-





*The hospitable Tungus family and wigwam*



*Reindeer loaded with flour and rolls of birch bark*



*Tungus woman baking bread*





*Tungus cradle for strapping on reindeer*



*Tungus hunting equipment*



gression consisted in following the bank of the Argun until it fell so steeply into the river that we had to go back and take the hill at an angle, remaining on the heights for a few hundred yards before the next deep little valley brought us down again.

But the wild beauty of the scenery grew in proportion to the difficulties of the trail. From the hilltops wide vistas opened out against a background of darkly wooded mountains, and we had a bird's-eye view of the log-houses forming the isolated villages on the Russian side, some of which boasted a church. A low fence running continuously along the left bank of the river was obviously designed to keep horses and cattle from swimming across; but in spite of this precaution they are sometimes known to stray, and there is likely to be much shouting and vituperation echoing down the valley before they are restored to their anxious owners. The little groups of Chinese settled at rare intervals beside the Argun are chiefly gold-seekers, who busy themselves on the upper courses of the streams of this region, many of which are said to contain, like the Kelari above Shihwei, a small quantity of the precious dust.

832 p. sp.  
The only serious obstacle in our way was the Bistraya river, whose name means "swift" in Russian and is richly deserved. The difficulty lies in the fact that the force of the river carried the long and narrow dug-out which is the only means of crossing two feet downstream for every one it makes towards the opposite bank, and the landing-place can easily be missed, while beyond it the river is lined with cliffs on either side. The terrified horses soon give up the struggle for air, and the task of holding their heads forcibly above water for so long a time is not without risk. The dug-out, locally called "bat," is highly precarious, and the Chinese, who have never acquired the skill of the Russians in manoeuvring it, frequently upset and sometimes drown. A "bat" made from two tree-trunks joined together down the middle is safer and more useful, but is rarely seen (*v.* right-hand canoe in photograph, Plate I).

We attempted to cross the Bistraya at a point 3 miles from the mouth, where a few Chinese have settled with their Russian wives, cultivating a small clearing in the forest. They suffer badly from the mosquitoes, which close in like a mist as soon as one leaves the bank of the Argun. As much of the farm work as possible is done in a dense smoke; and later, during our weeks in the taiga, we learned to eat and write up the day's notes standing directly over slow fires banked with grass, the horses crowding around for their share of the benefit. The elder of this little community unfortunately took offence because we refused to buy a horse which he offered us at a fabulous price, and forbade the young Eurasian who owned the only dug-out to take us across the Bistraya at this more favourable point. We were forced to proceed to the mouth of the river, where a cheerful one-eyed ferryman lived alone with a Russian half-wit, whom he kept as a sort of slave. After repeatedly warning us that we were swimming our horses at our own risk, he bound his two dug-outs together, and we crossed in safety, Haisan having taken the precaution of burning some incense to the Water God for the lives of our steeds. We were sorry to find the ferryman's white cat standing guard alone outside his disreputable little hut on our return, and later learned that a few days previously he had been murdered for his stores of flour.

Chuerhkanho lies opposite the Russian Ust Urov, and both are named after





the rivers that flow into the Argun beside them. Although about half of the emigrant population on the Chinese side has recently left for the Three Rivers district, those who remain give us a clear picture of the life of the Transbaikalian Cossack peasant. The log-houses are solidly constructed, the steep roofs testifying to the heavy snowfall in this region; those of the richer settlers give an impression of comfort and cleanliness in the spacious rooms within. In the ample courtyard, as in the fields, the whole family is usually hard at work side by side with the maids and hired men, reaping wheat, mowing hay, or tending the horses and cattle. For household purposes they have comely vessels made out of birch-bark, which must first be boiled, an art they have learned from the native tribes of Siberia. Living in such isolation, the community must do everything for itself. There are frames for shaping wooden sledge-runners, for steel is too rare to be used for such a purpose. A device for crushing the bark of the larch, which is needed for tanning leather, consists of a wheel with iron cutters which is made by horse-power to revolve in a circular trough about a central pole. There is a variety of mills: two seen at Pilaerhho were joined to the bank only by a plank, and one of them was walled and roofed with birch-bark only.

If these Cossacks are hard-working farmers in the summer, turning their ingenuity to all forms of manual labour, in the autumn and winter they fall back on the more congenial companionship of a good rifle and turn to the chase. Moose, wapiti, roebuck, wild boar, bear, squirrel and occasionally a fox reward these enthusiastic hunters. But they never enter the taiga in the summer, fearing the endless marshes for their horses and heartily disliking the mosquito pest for themselves. It was with great difficulty that one of them was persuaded, at a high daily wage, to guide us into the forests, particularly as no one had an exact notion of where the Reindeer-Tungus were to be found. They usually move their camps at intervals of a few days, and when the Russians meet them in the winter it is always at a prearranged time and place.

We left with two pack-horses only, and thus carried a very restricted quantity of provisions, but we were assured that game was sufficiently plentiful for us to support ourselves with our rifles, while we could buy meat and flour from the natives, if we found them. Along the way we came upon traces of the Russian hunters in the shape of shelters ranging from a few bark-covered poles to a well-built cabin. One of these boasted a window consisting of two small pieces of glass fitted into a frame of two thicknesses of birch-bark, thus combining the virtues of good visibility and but little loss of warmth within. A high platform for storing food out of reach of dogs and wild animals was no doubt another lesson learned from the natives. After three days' march towards the east we emerged on the upper Bistraya, about 125 miles from its mouth. This river is misrepresented on all maps as shorter than the Marekta and lying north of the latter throughout its course; whereas all the hunters and natives of this region agree that it is at least 250 miles long and takes its source far to the south, within a few miles of that of the Gan.\*

Although the Tungus pitch their wigwams beside the smaller streams, they come to the Bistraya to hunt, for the lagoons and inlets formed along its banks are a favourite haunt of duck and moose. Here the Tungus leave their birch-

\*It seems impossible to modify Russian map to agree with these distances.—ED. G. J.

*NB: Estimates based on accounts of local Cossacks who have travelled the whole length of the river. If correct, the "seemingly impossible" is explained by the exceptionally devious course of the river—with*



bark canoes hidden in the grass each autumn, to be used again the following spring. Our guide knew where to find one, however, with its inventory of a double-bladed paddle, two yard-long sticks with which they pole upstream in the shallow water near the banks, and two small paddles which he assured us they manipulate with such skill that they can slip through the low shrubbery along the edge of a lake without a sound and surprise the moose taking a long drink at twilight. The canoes, like all the products of their material culture, are beautifully made: three large pieces of bark form the bottom, the upper edges are bound with slats of willow wood, which are also placed at intervals along the bottom, and joined to the bark with supple willow boughs.

We turned up the valley of a right-hand tributary of the Bistraya, the Ulugicha,\* in the hope of finding some trace of the natives along one of the innumerable little streams that flow into it from either side. Mounting one swampy valley and crossing over a few miles of trackless hills only to descend the next, we were struck not only by the lack of any indications of human habitation, but by the absence of all traces of game, except for the bared roots and scratched tree-trunks left by wild boar and bear. On the eighth day our zeal was finally rewarded; but it cannot be said that we "found" the natives. This is indeed impossible unless, on first scenting intruders, their own curiosity overcomes their fear. In this case it was our good fortune that perhaps the most enterprising member of the tribe, while on the trail of a bear, saw the smoke from our fire, and approaching nearer gave the halloo which is a sort of password between the natives and the Russians who trade with them. Our guide answered, and the Tungus finally ventured across the Ulugicha to our camp. Although he examined us warily at first, asking the Russian whether we were really "nice people," he was gradually reassured by our cordiality, and after we had shared with him what meat we had and a drink of vodka, he consented to our visiting his wigwam on the following day. The first sight of a herd of reindeer among the birch and evergreens and the hospitable reception given us by the Tungus amply rewarded us for our journey; and Haisan was fascinated by these "tame deer" in whose very existence he had frankly disbelieved. It was not long before we had succeeded in pitching our tent beside a camp of four wigwams, and were thus able to learn something of the life of the natives.

At first glance the ready-made cotton clothing which they have adopted for summer wear, and the fact that all adults speak Russian, convey the disappointing impression that they must have lost all that once distinguished them as Tungus. But when we see the hunter setting out for the chase with rifle and pack, flourishing his "palma," a long knife used to cut down branches in the path, the real Tungus emerges. Both the palma and a shorter sheath-knife have a finely tempered edge of which their smiths are justly proud, and are bought at good prices by the Russians and Chinese. The natives have retained their own footwear and winter dress of deer-skin chamois, cut according to a pattern characteristic of Northern Tungus tribes. The women do almost all the work

\*This river flows into the Bistraya about 160 miles from its mouth (see footnote opposite.—ED. G. J.) at the point where the latter turns sharply to the west, its upper course lying almost due south. The Ulugicha is probably the largest tributary of the Bistraya, but the river of approximately this size and position which is indicated on Russian maps is there called "Ildigicha." This, however, is the name of a small right-hand tributary of the Apa or Chuerhkanho.



about the camp, tending the reindeer, preparing the food, making the decorative birch-bark and chamois boxes, bags and vessels which they use. Theirs is also the tedious task of boiling and sewing together the broad bands of alternating white and brown birch-bark which cover the wigwam in summer, but which are replaced by strips of chamois in winter. Bread is baked without yeast on an iron plate, and during the eighty or more years of close contact with the Russians in this region they have come to consider it as a necessary complement to their diet, while their great-grandparents were content with meat and fish alone.

During the day the reindeer usually linger about the camp, and the click of the little hooves attached to their salt-bags is enough to bring them running to the wigwam when they are wanted. They are milked three times a day, and the milk, while small in quantity, is delicious and as thick as cream. During the night the reindeer roam as far as 5 miles from the camp in search of food, eating not only reindeer moss but the leaves of young birch and aspen and various small green plants as well. When the camp is to be moved, the men go in advance to cut the poles for the new wigwams and start the fires, blazing the trail for the women, who are left behind to do all the packing, loading, and guiding of the reindeer, which in the case of a large herd is no easy task. During the summer, when the reindeer are maddened by the mosquitoes, the Tungus travel only at dusk, and in order that the reindeer shall stand quietly enough to be loaded, they must be tied in small groups beside the fires which are always kept burning about the camp for their protection. A heavy smoke is made by heaping on a variety of *Ledum palustre*,\* which gives out a strong pungent odour; and the Tungus never fail to cleanse of evil influences any object bought from the Russians or Chinese by holding it in this smoke. The plant is also used to rub on the bleeding antlers of the reindeer when the diseased parts eaten by the mosquitoes have been scraped away with a knife.

The reindeer are loaded in a simple and expeditious manner. The packs are always arranged in a row beside the wigwam, ready for moving at a moment's notice; each consists of a deer-skin saddle-cloth, two skin-covered birch-bark vessels filled with flour which hang on either side, a saddle, and a box or two. In addition the long birch-bark bands are taken off the wigwam, neatly rolled and placed on top of the pack; the skeleton of poles being left to be used again by themselves or others. The baby's cradle, which keeps the child in a permanent sitting posture, is a great convenience to the mother, since it can be loaded on the reindeer and balanced against an equal weight on the other side, then covered over with a cloth as a protection against the rain; after which the most heart-rending screams from within receive no response, for the parents know that there is no danger. During a cold winter's march a Tungus mother is said to have reassured a Russian, who thought this practice barbarous: "Don't worry; baby is only warming himself"!

Occupied as I was with the study of such an attractive, if shy and uncommunicative, tribe, photographing types, recording their language, and attempting to reconstruct the elements of an older social organization which they have already all but lost, I would have liked to remain with them indefinitely, and

\*A specimen of this plant was identified by Mr. Gilbert Carter, of the Botany School, Cambridge.



with this my two companions were in complete accord. One unhappy young bachelor had made friends with Haisan, begging him to inquire into the possibilities of obtaining a Mongol wife from the south, as there was a shortage of girls in the tribe, and the only appropriate match had been carried off by a handsomer rival the year before. But luck was against us. Not only did we find no game ourselves, although the two experienced hunters of the party searched diligently in the surrounding country, but we learned from the Tungus that they themselves had been without meat for two months, and that the death of several children and the illness of some of the women were to be attributed to the unrelieved diet of flour, while the men were obviously listless and despairing. Apparently the almost unprecedented floods had frightened the game, which the natives imagined to have migrated to the east of the Khingan.

With every little stream swollen to overflowing, attempts at fishing were largely unproductive also. Although some of them still possessed reserves of flour, others were facing starvation, for they did not know when they could get more. The journey to Chuerhkanho could not be undertaken until the Ulugicha became fordable again, for the reindeer cannot swim when they are loaded. Hospitable by nature, the Tungus generously shared with us the first roebuck they had killed that summer, and our supplies were so reduced that we could not refuse. When our own provisions finally came to an end, we felt that to continue depending for our subsistence on being daily guests in their wigwams, where etiquette forced them to offer us large portions of bread with our tea and reindeer-milk, was nothing short of criminal.

Still unreconciled to turning my back on this tribe which we had come so far to find, I decided to attempt to buy enough flour to take us to the sources of the Bistraya, in the hope of finding another group of wigwams said to be encamped there. From them we could no doubt obtain more flour, finally regaining the Argun through the valley of the Marekta or the Gan. But when this plan was exposed to our Russian guide, who had long had quite enough of ethnography, mosquitoes, and a rapidly diminishing food supply, he was thrown into a panic. Failing to dissuade us, he provided himself with some bread from a Tungus who stood deeply in his debt, and fearing to make the return journey through the taiga to Chuerhkanho alone, he forbade the others to sell us any flour, on pain of reprisals when they next came to the trading station if they disobeyed.

The Tungus refused all our offers, although it was plain that they felt very awkward about the situation in which they placed us; but the economic hold of the Russian traders is absolute since the natives have become dependent on them for flour, tobacco, tea and spirits. Our suspicions of our guide's treachery were confirmed through Haisan, who could talk with the Tungus without being understood by the Russian; but this knowledge did not help us to find a solution. In fact, we were forced to share the small supply of bread he had reserved for himself on the way back, as an alternative to eating nothing at all. Beggars are not choosers; delay was no longer possible, and at the end of five hungry marches, relieved only by a few capercaillies shot along the road, we were overjoyed to come upon a gay company of Cossack haymakers from Chuerhkanho who had camped in a forest clearing. They greeted us most warmly, saying that they had never expected to see us alive again. They laid down their work, the



women soon had the kettle boiling for tea, and all stood about asking questions and smiling indulgently while we devoured the bread, cream, and salted mushrooms which they heaped before us.

We left the Tungus with real regret, and they in turn appeared to be sincere in urging us to return. They were most anxious for copies of their photographs, which I trust have since reached them safely through the trading station. Although I believe that with the material I have collected it will be possible to classify them in relation to other Tungus tribes, when we have the corresponding data, there is still much left to do. With such pleasant and interesting memories I cannot but hope that, with better equipment, adequate provisions, and reasonable good luck, a second journey to North-Western Manchuria at some future time may prove even more fruitful than the first.

### DISCUSSION

Before the paper the President (Sir CHARLES CLOSE) said: To-night we originally had fixed a lecture by Major Hingston on the subject of the Oxford Expedition to British Guiana, but we were fortunate enough to catch—if the expression may be excused—Miss Lindgren on her way from England, and we persuaded her to give us a lecture on North-Western Manchuria. I mention this rather carefully for fear there should be any in the audience who accept all the information which Miss Lindgren will give us and apply it to British Guiana. Miss Lindgren is a very distinguished scholar. She has travelled widely in China and Manchuria, and is going to describe a corner of North-Western Manchuria which has very rarely been visited by any Western Europeans. She has great advantages in that she understands and speaks Russian, Pekinese, and Mongol, acquirements which personally I do not possess. She has made full use of those advantages. She went out primarily as an anthropologist and ethnographer, but it is quite impossible to be a good anthropologist without being a geographer. So, as we know that Miss Lindgren is a very good anthropologist, we also know that she is a good geographer, and I ask her now to begin her lecture.

*Miss Lindgren then read the paper printed above, and a discussion followed.*

Sir HAROLD PARLETT: The lecturer has visited a part of Manchuria with which I am not familiar, but there are one or two questions I would like to ask her. Miss Lindgren mentioned the intermarriage of the Chinese with Russian women and the possibility of solving in that way, to a certain extent, the question of the population. We have heard a great deal of recent years of Chinese emigration into Manchuria, and they are gradually settling that part. Can Miss Lindgren tell us anything about their appearance in the particular region in which she journeyed? Did she notice any Chinese infiltration at all; and what conclusions did she come to with regard to intermarriage between the two races? Is the result at all good? Is the Eurasian an energetic person? Is he likely to help really to colonize that part of Manchuria?

Miss LINDGREN: As far as infiltration is concerned, it affects far more of the region to the east and south of where I was, along the Nonni river valley; the Chinese have been coming into Manchuria in millions since the Japanese created relative peace in the southern part of the country. There is now a Board of Emigration in Mukden concerning itself with the region near the Khingan, about where the Chinese Eastern Railway crosses the range. The work of that Board can only be termed very enterprising; it is trying to bring about the clearance of forests and swamps, but all considerably south of the part I visited. I do not



think in the region I have described there will be any colonization to speak of for a long time to come. Colonization must follow the large rivers such as the Nonni; none of the rivers in the region I have visited are really suitable.

As for the Eurasian type, it is perhaps a rather difficult and delicate subject. Those one sees are, of course, all bilingual. They speak Russian and Chinese equally badly, because their parents are not very educated. I doubt whether they would be able to take up the sort of life which the Cossack lives, that of hunter and farmer, under the very severe conditions of that region. On the other hand, I believe they could undoubtedly carry on quite well the occupation of the Chinese, namely, trading by boat and keeping little shops in the settlements. It is perhaps too early to judge of the type as such, because one of the factors will be their physical resistance to the climate, which, as I say, the Chinese as well as the Japanese women, cannot stand.

Sir HAROLD PARLETT: I take it that from your experience, Miss Lindgren, so far as colonization goes, this country is at present practically in the possession of a few nomad tribes who must eventually disappear and the country become colonized; and that of the two races, Chinese and Russian, the Russians are those who are more likely to colonize it.

Miss LINDGREN: That is a very difficult question. One has to differentiate the Russians from the Cossacks. I think, without entering on racial generalizations, one can say that the Cossacks are perhaps the best Russian stock one can find anywhere, and they conquered Siberia for the Russians. They seem admirably suited to conditions in Manchuria. Whether ~~the other Russians, so called, and~~ the other types of Russians could colonize the district is somewhat questionable, because so much of Siberia is still quite undeveloped, compared to what is being done to similar regions in Canada, for instance. I believe that the thickly forested region will remain for a long time quite undeveloped. The more open parts will certainly be occupied by Russians and Chinese; but in view of the political aspect one cannot predict.

Sir DENISON ROSS: I wish to express my great appreciation of the remarkable lecture to which we have listened. One point struck me as especially interesting. The trading which takes place across the Argun river, apparently four times a year, has a parallel in the very early history of Central Asia, where we are told there were people who traded but never met each other. One tribe crossed the river once a year, placed their goods on the bank, and then retired; later on the other tribe came and placed their goods on the bank in exchange, and again withdrew.

To me this has been an extraordinarily interesting evening because I have devoted a great deal of time to the study of Central Asia; and there is for me no more fascinating topic than the home of Chingiz Khan and the surrounding country.

The Rev. A. C. MOULE: I should like to echo what Sir Denison Ross has said. I had the honour of helping Miss Lindgren in some of her studies, and it has been with the greatest admiration and interest that I have listened this evening to an admirable account of her very remarkable journey.

The PRESIDENT: Mr. Moule, who has just spoken, helped to teach Miss Lindgren Chinese. That will give you an idea of how much Miss Lindgren knows. She is one of our youngest lecturers; the youngest but one, I think, that we have heard. We have had one younger, Mr. Watkins. Now we have Miss Lindgren, and she has shown that the young can do a great deal nowadays in geography, even if they are anthropologists. It seems to some that we are living in too great comfort in London, but if we want to get into contact with Nature we can go into those swamps, haunted by mosquitos, and be as uncomfortable as we like.



And when I speak of swamps I think I ought to say something about the swampy taiga; the swampy taiga is not an animal, though it may sound like it.

Miss Lindgren said that the maps were very inadequate. Maps are inadequate. That is one of the great comforts which geographers have: there still are inadequate maps. Miss Lindgren has given us some idea how the maps may be corrected, though I do not know that she has brought any maps back. Anyway, she knows that existing maps are wrong, and that is the great thing. It only remains for me, in your name and in the name of the Society, to thank Miss Lindgren for her singularly interesting lecture and to congratulate her on her admirable and adventurous journey, which has enhanced our knowledge very considerably.



