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Human-environment relationships in Siberia and  
Northeast China. Knowledge, rituals, mobility and  
politics among the Tungus peoples, followed by Varia

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Nord-Est*

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# Human-nature relationships in the Tungus societies of Siberia and Northeast China

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- 1 Though the Tungus are dispersed all over Siberia and Northeast China and practice various economic activities, such as hunting, reindeer herding, horse breeding, fishing, and dog breeding, they can be regarded as a coherent cultural and linguistic group; more surprisingly, in the People's Republic of China (PRC), they are also occupied with agriculture and Mongol pastoralism<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the Tungus, living as they do across the borders of different provinces and states, allow us to conduct comparative ethnological studies thanks to the differences and similarities between the regional groups. In Siberia, they are the most scattered indigenous people. They speak different languages of the Tungus-Manchu branch of the Altaic language family<sup>2</sup>. Their cultures and languages represent an exceptionally rich research field for anthropological investigations, especially with regard to the theme of human-natural environment relationships as manifested in human and nonhuman interactions, economic activities, ecological knowledge and skills, adaptable mobilities, and the long history of interrelations with dominant states. As a cradle of shamanism, hunting and reindeer herding ritual practices, and cosmological perceptions, they provide tremendously fruitful grounds for ethnographic research and the theoretical conceptualisation of animism.

## The Tungus and anthropology

- 2 The field of Tungus studies allows us to discuss many encounters on several levels, from population movements to the history of anthropology in various strained political contexts. It concerns the movement, separation, and then meeting again of the Tungus

through Sino-Russian conflicts and frontier management. The field also encompasses the encounters and isolation of Russian, Western, and Chinese academic worlds during the historical tensions of the Cold War. These scientific relationships consist of collaborations, common foundations, long separations, and renewed encounters. These factors have influenced the Tungus themselves, as well as the researchers and sciences concerned.

- 3 From the 1950s, research on the Tungus people developed separately in the Soviet Union and in the People's Republic of China, where most of these small communities live. Since the Tungus are spread throughout a huge territory that stretches from the Ob valley to Sakhalin Island and from the Arctic Ocean in Siberia to the north of China and Mongolia, the linguistic and anthropological researchers investigating them have been correspondingly scattered across the world. The last pan-Tungus study dates back to the 1930s and was conducted by the Russian ethnographer S. M. Shirokogoroff (1887-1939), who emigrated to China after the Soviet takeover in Russia, where his life ended<sup>3</sup>. Publishing mostly in English, he was often quoted by several well-known Western anthropologists (see Shirokogoroff 1929, 1935)<sup>4</sup>. For several decades, Russian researchers had very limited access to Shirokogoroff's works in English because of the lack of available copies of his voluminous oeuvre, political prohibition until the 1970s and 1980s, and the language barrier. Only recently have they become accessible to all Russian scholars thanks to the initiative of A. Sirina and V. Davydov from the Institute of Ethnography and Anthropology (Russian Academy of Sciences – RAS) and the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera – RAS) (Sirina & Davydov 2017). With the support of two Russian grants and the contributions of A. N. Gorlin, A. M. Pevnov, O. A. Povorozniuk, and V. V. Simonova, Shirokogoroff's book *The Social Organization of the Northern Tungus* has been translated with a commentary (Shirokogorov 2017). D. Arzyutov and D. Anderson from Aberdeen University will soon publish a significant contribution about Shirokogoroff's unknown legacy, detailing his theoretical ideas, visual techniques, and scientific biography, and providing access to his letters, translations and research from his unpublished ethnographic accounts (Arzyutov 2017a, 2017b, among others)
- 4 In China, Shirokogoroff's famous book *The Social Organization of the Northern Tungus* was translated into Chinese in 1985<sup>5</sup> ((Shi Luogo ([1929] 1979) 1985), more than thirty years before the Russian version.
- 5 In Russia during the Soviet period, the Tungus were studied by remarkable ethnographers who directly or indirectly emerged from the famous school of anthropology founded by Sternberg and Bogoraz in 1917 at the State University of Saint Petersburg, like G. M. Vasilevich, I. M. Suslov, A. F. Anisimov, V. A. Tugolukov 1969, 1980, I. S. Gurvich 1948, A. I. Mazin 1984, and others (see the many quotations in this volume), all of whom produced rich monographs. Many ethnographers and linguists who were specialists on the subject of the Evenki were arrested during Stalin's repressions. Nevertheless, they demonstrated an extraordinary devotion to research by continuing to work even after their stay in the gulag (Tumarkin 2002).
- 6 From the beginning of Manchu rule in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Tungus aroused the interest of ethnographers, geographers, and officials in charge of collecting data in the Chinese empire's border region. First dedicated to the topographic study of an unfamiliar territory, the data collected regarding the Tungus people appeared in Manchu and Chinese officials' records. The former consist of official sources such as the "Official Histories"<sup>6</sup> (Ch. *Zhengshi* 正史). The historical and local geographic sources, such as local

gazetteers (Ch. *difangzhi* 地方志) and travel records (Ch. *youji* 游记), introduce the culture, history, and geography of a given area. For example, Zhang Jiafan 张家璠 and Cheng Tingheng 程廷恒 ([1922] 2003), the authors of the local gazetteer *Notes on Hulun Buir* (Ch. *Hulunbei'er zhilüe* 呼伦贝尔志略), offer a detailed description of the nomadic and ritual practices of the Tungus and Mongol people living in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Hulun Buir.

- 7 Shirokogoroff's work on the Tungus of China was updated a few years later by the Anglo-Swedish anthropologist E. J. Lindgren (1905-1988), the first Westerner to dedicate her research to the Evenki reindeer herders, among whom she conducted fieldwork between 1929 and 1932 together with the Norwegian photographer Oscar Mamen. Apart from the reindeer herders, they were also interested in Russian *émigrés*, the Mongols, the Orochen and the Solon living in the Hulun Buir area. Lindgren wrote some articles (Lindgren 1930, 1938) and an unpublished PhD thesis (Lindgren 1936). In addition, their 26,000 photographs are preserved in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge<sup>7</sup>. While Northeast China was under Japanese occupation (1931-1945), the Japanese officer H. Nagata studied the Evenki reindeer herders in 1939 and later published a monograph (Yong Tianzhen [1969] 1991). Born to a Russian emigrant family in Chinese territory, A. Kaigorodov (1927-1998) grew up together with Evenki reindeer herders and was one of the last witnesses of their way of life before the foundation of the PRC (Kaigorodov 1968).
- 8 Soon after the foundation of the PRC in 1949, the "Ethnic Classification Project" (Ch. *minzu shibie* 民族识别), one of the largest ethnological research expeditions in human history, was carried out to categorise the PRC's population. In the late 1950s, the new ethnographic knowledge produced by the project was published under the title "The Social Historical Research Investigation" (Ch. *Shehui lishi diaocha* 社会历史调查). Each "ethnic minority" had its own ethnographic investigation, such as "Social Historical Research Investigations on the Evenki" (Ch. *Ewenke zu shehui lishi diaocha* 鄂温克族社会历史调查) (NZBZ 1986). Some of its authors, including Lü Guantian 吕光天 (1983), Zhao Fuxing 赵复兴 (1981), Wu Shougui 吴守贵 (2003), and others, later became key scholars in Tungus studies, especially with regard to the Evenki people. Today, many researchers in China, including Han Chinese and members of "ethnic minorities", are specialists in Tungus studies in various fields of anthropology (folklore and religious studies, historical anthropology, and recently environmental anthropology). Bailan 白兰, an Orochen specialist on Orochen culture, and Wure'ertu 乌热尔图, an Evenki expert on Evenki oral history, are just two such individuals (Bailan 1991, Wure'ertu 2007).
- 9 Until the mid-1980s, Western scholars did not study the Tungus of China due to their inability to conduct fieldwork in areas that were then closed to ethnographic research. In 1985, the German sinologist and ethnologist Ingo Nentwig (1960-2016) conducted fieldwork among the Evenki reindeer herders (Nentwig 2003), followed in 1993 by the German Georg Heyne (Heyne 1999).
- 10 In Europe and America, Tungus ethnography has long been of interest to general anthropology. It appears in many famous works dedicated to shamanism, animism, human-natural environment relationships, and social organisation (F. Boas, C. Lévi-Strauss, E. Lot-Falck, L. Delaby, R. Hamayon and Ph. Descola 2005, among others). In 1976, the journal *Études mongoles et sibériennes*, founded by R. Hamayon and now renamed *Études mongoles & sibériennes, centrasiatiques & tibétaines* (EMSCAT), published a special issue entirely dedicated to Tungus shamans. Relying on the rich bibliography produced by

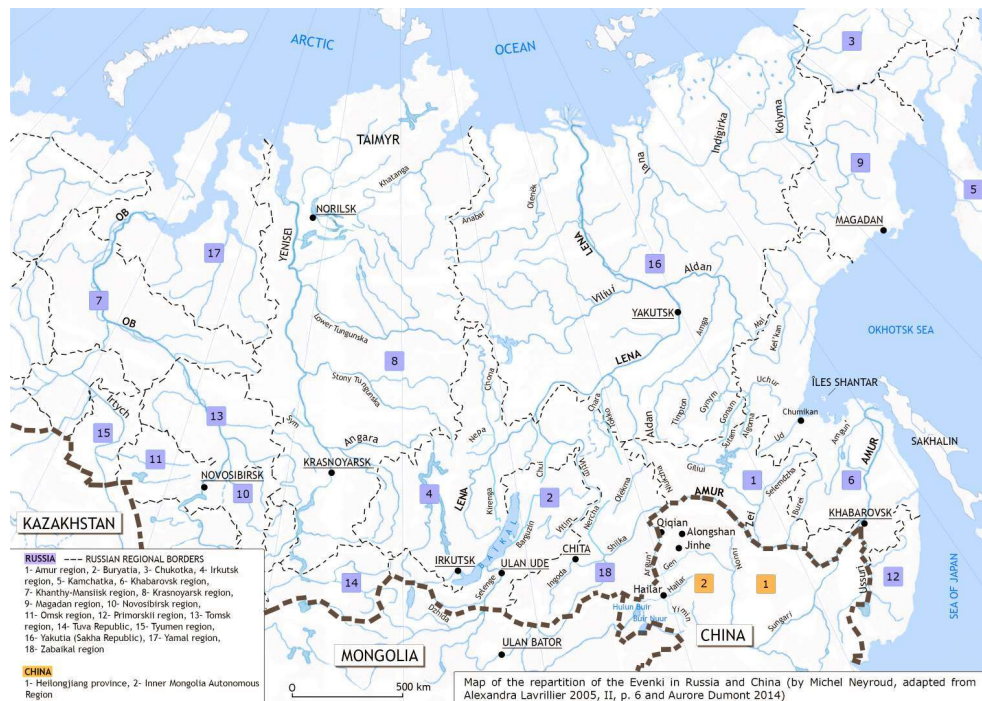
Tsarist and Soviet scholars, Delaby offered an acute analysis of the role played by the shamans among Tungus societies (Delaby 1976). For political reasons, Siberian field research was extremely difficult for Western scientists in the 1970s and 1980s, which meant that most of their studies provided anthropological analysis based on the previously published works of Russian ethnographers.

- 11 The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has enabled the development of academic contacts and long-term fieldwork in Russia and China, bringing a new generation of Western anthropologists into Siberia and Northeast China.
- 12 Western anthropologists were certainly influenced by Russian ethnography when it came to adopting long-term fieldwork. From the 2000s, a new generation of Russian scholars bridged the respective peculiarities of Russian and Western schools by merging intensive ethnographical research with recent Western anthropological theories. First introduced to China along with the other Western social sciences at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, anthropology and ethnology mainly served communist ideology. Today, while Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists continue research devoted to the “traditional culture” of Tungus “ethnic minorities”, they have also brought fresh perspectives by exploring new contemporary issues that have appeared in Tungus areas.
- 13 From the mid-2000s onwards, the initiatives of Tungus intelligentsia both from Russia and China to organise cultural meetings across the newly reopened frontier have encouraged some researchers to move towards transfrontier studies. Indeed, in *Frontier Encounters: Knowledge and Practice at the Russian, Chinese and Mongolian Border*, Billé, Delaplace, and Humphrey offer various ethnographic case studies highlighting the dynamics of border “assemblages” in Northern Asia between Russia, Mongolia, and China (Billé *et al.* 2012). Following research on border peoples in Northern Asia, Humphrey edited a special volume with papers dedicated to the notions of loyalty and disloyalty on the Russo-Chinese border (Humphrey 2017).
- 14 Furthermore, over the last decade there has been an increase in the number of Western publications related to Tungus ethnography: we have seen several anthropological books, PhD theses, or *recueil d'articles* on animism, nomadism, shamanism, childhood, personhood, and other subjects (among others: Hamayon 2012, Grotti *et al.* 2012, Ulturgasheva 2012, Kolás & Xie 2015, Brandišauskas 2017, Dumont 2014, Lavrillier & Gabyshev 2017).
- 15 Forty-two years after the last special issue of *Études mongoles et sibériennes*, we are continuing this journal’s tradition of hosting ethnological research devoted to the societies of Northern Asia. The present volume is dedicated to analysing the many forms of human-natural environment relationships among the various Tungus groups from Russia and China by studying the skills, rituals, mobility, and politics of the Evenki, Even, and Nanai peoples. The volume follows on the heels of the first conference to gather international specialists on the Tungus people, which was held at the University of Versailles, France, in January 2013: it was organised by Alexandra Lavrillier, Donatas Brandišauskas, Aurore Dumont, Vladimir Davydov, and Veronika Simonova<sup>8</sup>. The second conference was hosted at the University of Vilnius, Lithuania, in May 2015.
- 16 This volume is the result of collaborative work between scholars based in several countries and in various academic traditions who possess lengthy fieldwork experience in both Russia and China<sup>9</sup>. Long-term fieldwork conducted in various regions of both countries allow us to provide reliable empirical data on Tungus societies living in areas

where political, social, and economic encounters are constantly changing. Furthermore, it enables to gather fresh data with new theoretical approaches.

- 17 This is the first attempt to bring together diverse topics on Tungus-speaking groups from these two countries. We wanted to represent a variety of anthropological methodologies, such as ethnography, ethno-history, travel literature studies, oral literature studies, ethno-linguistics, comparative anthropology, and participatory transdisciplinary research. The editors wished to offer an equal balance of papers from Chinese, Russian, and Western academic schools, including Evenki scientists from both sides of the Sino-Russian border.
- 18 One of the common features of the Tungus of both China and Russia that influenced their self-identity and complicated their study, in particular their ethno-history, is the very complex, ever-changing, and garbled administrative and ethnographic classifications superimposed on the groups constituting this people(s), groups which were also highly mobile (moving within and out of the countries concerned). This mobility was enhanced by political changes.

Figure 1. Map of the repartition of the Evenki in Russia and China



Russia: 1 – Amur region, 2 – Buryatia, 3 – Chukotka, 4 – Irkutsk region, 5 – Kamchatka, 6 – Khabarovsk region, 7 – Khatny-Mansiisk region, 8 – Krasnoyarsk region, 9 – Magadan region, 10 – Novosibirsk region, 11 – Omsk region, 12 – Primorskii region, 13 – Tomsk region, 14 – Tuva Republic, 15 – Tyumen region, 16 – Yakutia (Sakha Republic), 17 – Yamal region, 18 – Zabaikal region. China: 1 – Inner Mongolia, 2 – Heilongjiang.

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## The Tungus in Russia

- 19 Throughout history, the Tungus of Russia have been involved in cross-border movements across the Sino-Russian frontier. For instance, the “Uriankai”, considered to be the

ancestors of the Tungus, were warrior groups close to Genghis Khan<sup>10</sup>. Lipskii and Vasilevich argue that the Tungus of Russia were employed as soldiers by the Manchu in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Lipskii 1925, Vasilevich 1965, p. 141)<sup>11</sup>. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Evenki were engaged by the Russian army to defend or survey the border (Radlow 1893, Rybakov 1903, Vasilevich 1965, p. 139-142). The most famous example is Gantimur in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a Tungus chief who left the Manchu to join the Russian army, where the service of his Tungus as auxiliary troops was so appreciated that he was made a noble by the tsar and gained wealth in Russia. In less tense periods during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the nomads frequently crossed the border rivers (the Ussuri and Amur) to meet each other and trade furs<sup>12</sup>. Let us note that border demarcations changed several times during this period, including after the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) put an end to a long Sino-Russian war. According to the treaty (which lasted until 1858, when it was replaced with the Treaty of Aigun), the Amur river basin was a Chinese commercial zone between the Chinese, Russian, and indigenous peoples such as the Tungus, who were, along with the other local natives, left to their own devices (Patkanov 1906, Forsyth [1992] 2000, p. 108, 204). We suggest that this led to the Tungus representing this area as one of free movement (see the papers of Dumont, Xie, Wure'ertu).

- 20 Nowadays in Russia, all the Tungus peoples have the official status of an “indigenous minority people” (Ru. *korennoi malochislennyi narod*): this category was created in 1926 by the Soviet authorities and concerned an indigenous population of fewer than 50,000 individuals (Gorelikov 2010<sup>13</sup>). Altogether, the Evenki number about 37,843 people and the Even 22,383 (*Federal State Statistics Service 2010*). The Evenki mainly inhabit the republics of Sakha (Yakutia) (21,080 individuals) and Buryatia (2,974), but they are also present in the following regions: Zabaikal (1,387), Krasnoyarsk (4,372), Khabarovsk (4,101), Amur (1,481), Irkutsk (1,272), Sakhalin (209), Primorskii (130), Tomsk (95), and Tyumen (87). The Even mainly live in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) (15,071 individuals) and the regions of Magadan (2,635), Kamchatka (1,872), Chukotka (1,392), and Khabarovsk (1,128). The Nanai number 12,003 individuals and live principally in the regions of Khabarovsk (11,009), Primorskii (383), and Sakhalin (148)<sup>14</sup>. The Tungus are thus spread across many different areas all over Siberia: this has led to the existence of several scientific classification systems which vary depending on the publication in question. For instance, some sources distinguish the Western Evenki (who live along the Yenisei, Tunguska, Angara, and Sym rivers of the Krasnoyarsk region) (cf. Sirina's paper) from the Eastern Evenki (who inhabit lands near the Aldan, Olekma, Tungir, Amur, and Shilka rivers in the regions of Irkutsk, Yakutia, Amur, Khabarovsk, Zabaikal, and Sakhalin) (cf. papers of Fondahl, Lavrillier & Gabyshev, Brandišauskas, Simonova; see map in Fig. 1). Others distinguish various groups according to their position around Lake Baikal (North or South Baikal, Zabaikal, Cisbaikal, Transbaikal, etc.)
- 21 The term “Tungus”, both as a scientific appellation and an administrative category, has a history as long and as complex as that of the Tungus themselves. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Russians settled on the lands of the Western Tungus. It is in this period that we first find the term Tungus<sup>15</sup>, but it did not enter frequent usage until the 18<sup>th</sup> century; from there, it spread throughout Europe. What struck the first travellers to encounter the Tungus were their shamans; the very term comes from their language. Much appreciated by explorers for their tracking skills and hospitality, the Tungus acquired a reputation as hunters of exceptional courage and endurance. These encounters produced numerous engravings and accounts, particularly in Europe, the homeland of several early travellers:

this gives Tungus studies a European dimension (see Borm in this volume, Beffa & Delaby 1993-1994).

- 22 The Tungus were progressively subjected to taxes for fur, the *Yasak* (Ru. *iasak*), first in the West (Ob and Yenisei rivers) in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century: from here it spread, reaching the most remote eastern groups (Aldan sources, Northern Amur region) by the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup>. Later, under Catherine II, the resources provided by this tax represented one third of the Russian Empire's wealth. In southeastern Siberia, the fur trade started long before the Russian colonisation; the Mongols and Chinese had intensive merchant relations with the local Tungus. The organisation of the *Yasak* disrupted this trade and provoked several conflicts between the Russians and the Tungus associated with the Chinese (Brodnikov 2001, Forsyth [1992] 2000, pp. 38-47, Maksimov *et al.* 2001, Stepanov 1939). Across the centuries, the management of fur tax payers and associated Christianisation campaigns (with the performance of mass baptisms on Evenki coming to the fur market) helped create complex and intricate nomenclatures and classifications, where "Tungus" designated different groups. In the fur tax registers, "Tungus" was one of the administrative categories, along with many others Tungus clan names (like the Kumarchen, Samagir, Birarchen, and so on): this can be demonstrated in the 1897 Tsarist census published by Patkanov (Patkanov 1906).
- 23 When studying the many movements of the Tungus clans across thousands of kilometres between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it seems that clans, sub-clans, and lineages offer a more coherent identity and clearer economic units than the notion of Evenki and Even peoples. Indeed, some clans belong to two or more Tungus peoples, and the archives show that some sub-clans belonging to one Tungus people also sometimes joined other Tungus peoples (Lavrillier 2005, 2011). This, along with state ignorance about their cultural features, may explain the confusion of the administration. Superimposed on the administrative classification, the social sciences (which matured and were institutionalised during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) developed their own nomenclatures of Siberian peoples based on linguistic and cultural studies, which evolved over the years.
- 24 Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the word "Tungus" designated all eight Tungus-Manchu peoples (but not the Manchu and Sibe). From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, it was used mostly to refer to both the Evenki and the Even. Between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and 1930, the term gradually came to indicate the Evenki alone, while the Even were called Lamut (from the word *lamu* - "sea", "big water"<sup>17</sup>). In 1930, the Soviet government gave each nationality a name that it could regard as its self-appellation. Most Tungus regional groups were labelled Evenki rather than Even during the Soviet process of ethnic categorisation: in the 1990s, some confusion still remained between the two groups. These ethnonyms were then widely used by administrative authorities, indigenous elites, and scientists as an official unified reference for the many scattered groups in Siberia and the Far East. For instance, these groups may still call themselves Orochen, Murchen, Tungus, or Khamnigan in the Zabaikal region and Orochon/Orach in the Amur region, Yakutia, and Kamchatka more often than Evenki or Even (from the fieldwork of Brandišauskas and Lavrillier, respectively). Despite the disappearance of "Tungus" from the administrative classification, it is still often used in comparative linguistics and anthropology<sup>18</sup>.
- 25 Most Evenki and Even combine reindeer herding with hunting and spring-summer fishing; these economic practices have faced many changes brought about by Russian policies. Even though each region in which the Tungus live has its own historical



specificities (chronology, local implementation of political measures, economic specificities, peoples in contact, etc.), their histories share the same general outline, presented here below. Some of these regional peculiarities and their related consequences are detailed in the papers of this volume (see Sirina, Fondahl, Lavrillier & Gabyshev, Brandišauskas).

- 26 After the Revolution of 1918, the Civil War between the Tsarist and Red armies enflamed conflicts. The Tungus, who did not really understand the reasons for this war, helped the Reds and the Whites as pathfinders, and so were punished by both afterwards (Forsyth [1992] 2000, p. 251). This period led to some insurrections among the Tungus. The most important started in Nel'kan (Okhotsk region) and involved Tungus hunter-herders and the Tsarist General A. N. Pepeliaev; this triggered an official declaration by the 5,000 insurrectionists of the "Tungus Republic". This entity was abolished by negotiations with Moscow in 1925 (Pesterev 2000) (about insurrections among the Evenki of China, see Xie in this volume).
- 27 The Soviet authorities slowly established their power and control between the 1920s in the western regions and the 1960s for the most remote eastern regions. They firstly installed sales counters (Ru. *artel'*, *faktoriia*) as replacements for the Tsarist fur merchants. The first creation of a soviet within a nomadic clan happened nominally in 1921 in the lower Yenisei, but was ineffective for several years after its creation (Vasilevich 1969b, Forsyth [1992] 2000). Close to the sales counters or soviets, the Russians built some wooden houses and primary (boarding) schools and established state collective farms (kolkhozes), where (officially) benefits were shared between the cooperative's members. The Soviets led campaigns to inculcate literacy among adults and children (Vasilevich 1930, Sirina in this volume), but met considerable resistance from the nomads, who had the "tendency to hide from Russian officials" (Forsyth [1992] 2000, Maksimov *et al.* 2001). The Soviet authorities and their political ideas were established by using propaganda tools like settled "cultural bases" (Ru. *kul'tbaza*) and nomadic "red yurta" (Ru. *krasnaia iurta*), which combined cultural enlightenment (including literacy), medical services, political propaganda, and fur trading. Some of them became indigenous regional centres (Ru. *tuzemnyi raion*, *tuzemnyi sovet*) (Forsyth [1992] 2000, p. 253). The first alphabet for the Evenki language was created in 1928 (first in Roman script, then in the 1930s an alphabet adapted from Cyrillic). Several ethnographers practised a very early form of applied anthropology, like Vasilevich, who took an active part in the creation of the standard Evenki language for schools and manuals, or Anisimov, who in 1929 taught in "red yurta" in Stony Tunguska (Anisimov 1958). The kolkhoze attracted the poorest Tungus, while the richest fled in all directions over thousands of kilometres, including to the Sino-Russian frontier and Mongolia. The nationalist component of other indigenous peoples played an important role in this process, like in the 1920s, when Buryat discrimination against the Tungus pushed some of the latter to migrate to Mongolia (Forsyth [1992] 2000, p. 251) and China (Hürelbaatar 2000, p. 74).
- 28 Between the 1930s and 1970s, gold mines and geological expeditions bought the services of men and their reindeer from the state farms in order to conduct prospecting missions in the vast forest. Most Tungus abandoned the conical tent for geological tents, iron stoves, and expedition clothing (Forsyth [1992] 2000, p. 382)<sup>19</sup>.
- 29 In 1930-1931, a vast territory in Central Siberia was declared the Evenki National Region (along the Stony Tunguska and Lower Tunguska rivers), in addition to small territories designated as Tungus, Evenki, or Even national districts in the ASSR<sup>20</sup> of Yakutia,

Buryatia, and the Okhotsk coastline region. In the following years, most of these territories were abolished or underwent changes (*Ob izmenenii* 1936, Forsyth [1992] 2000, pp. 252-53).

- 30 With the implementation of collectivisation between the 1930s and the 1960s (depending on the region), the Soviet authorities confiscated reindeer herds and cattle in order to organise new state farms, the *sovkhoze*: the nomads became employees of hunting, herding, and fishing brigades. Again, the richest Tungus groups emigrated, moving through Siberia and/or to China in order to avoid the confiscations (among others Vasilevich 1969b, Forsyth [1992] 2000, p. 312). Hunting, fishing, reindeer herding, and milking were then transformed into intensive profitmaking activities (they became ten times more productive). Reindeer herding among the southeastern Evenki (traditionally with small herds for transportation purposes) was transformed, becoming a form of large-scale herding conducted for meat production. It was also forbidden to eat *kolkhoze* or *sovkhoze* hunting and herding products upon pain of imprisonment, especially during the Second World War (WW2). The Soviet authorities sold meat, antlers, and fur products on the national and international markets in order to sponsor economic growth and to fund the war. A terrible famine took place during and after WW2. In addition, most of the Tungus soldiers never came home, leaving women, youth, and elders to deal with hunting, herding, village construction, the regional transportation of goods by reindeer, etc. In the 1950s and 1960s, the “liquidation of villages without a future” – a policy which stated that the rural population must be concentrated (Ru. *ukrupnenie*, i.e. “strengthening”) – closed many small villages and gathered inhabitants into one place and one *sovkhoze*<sup>21</sup>. Some of the Evenki population settled in newly constructed villages, becoming workers in the new fox, pig, and cattle farms. In the 1950s and 1960s, all Tungus villages were managed by the administrations of the local soviets, along with the *sovkhoze*, shops, medical stations, cultural centres (Ru. *klub*), libraries, and boarding schools. Some Tungus were sent to Russian universities to form an indigenous intelligentsia, which plays a leading role today (Vasilevich 1969b). Among the Tungus of southern Siberia, the construction of the Baikal-Amur railway (BAM) at the beginning of the 1970s was considered very traumatic because of the ecological consequences, the threat to the overworked domestic reindeer<sup>22</sup>, and the arrival of masses of workers from Central Russia. This allochthonous population built many new towns (nowadays administrative and economic centres): many stayed in these areas of Siberia and now constitute the majority of the population; they are identified as “BAM peoples” (Ru. *bamovtsy*). Nevertheless, the 1970s and 1980s are mostly remembered as a golden age when the Tungus lived well, with salaries, houses, healthy herds, sufficient supplies, and even some leisure trips to central Russia (offered by the state to the worthiest herders)<sup>23</sup>.
- 31 For Western readers, the Tungus are best known for the word *shaman*, which is widely used today to refer to a variety of ritual specialists in Siberia and to denote worldwide ritual practices. However, the Soviet atheisation campaigns which banned rituals, imprisoned or shot shamans, and confiscated or destroyed ritual items almost eradicated the religious system of this people (among many others, Archives 1924, 1925, Skachkov 1934, Suslov 1931, Forsyth [1992] 2000, pp. 288-290, 314).
- 32 Nonetheless, like other peoples in Siberia, the Tungus have shown a great capacity to adapt their ritual practices. They transformed Soviet festivals into collective rituals with shamans’ participation. Some shamans were able to avoid repression by accepting the role of “shaman imitators”. They had to pretend to be this kind of ritual specialist in a

show while being shamed by communist propaganda as “a parasite on the indigenous worker’s body” (Archive 1925). At the same time, shamans and ordinary people practised other rituals secretly in the forest. Among Tungus peoples, shamans still practised their rituals in the 1960s and even later (Maksimov *et al.* 2000, Forsyth [1992] 2000, Bulgakova 2013 among others). After the fall of communism, the intelligentsia successfully re-established the banned collective rituals as neo-rituals (*ikenipke* and *bakaldyn* for the Evenki, and *eviniek* among the Even), but mostly without shamans. While several peoples of Siberia adhere to neo-shamanist movements or have succumbed to Orthodox, Evangelical, or Pentecostal proselytism<sup>24</sup>, the Tungus have multiplied the ritual expressions of their attachment to the natural environment. Evenki and Even nomads explain: “We are not ‘believers’ [in any gods]! Instead [of them], we have the natural environment [and the spirits inhabiting and managing it] which feeds us”. Most Evenki and Even consider neo-shamans or urban shamans as fakes because they are disconnected from the natural environment or because they self-appointed themselves as shamans. “A Tungus person is more shaman than any of these urban neo-shamans”, said the Evenki reindeer herders and villagers. They consider it dangerous to ask an urban shaman to perform a ritual for them because the latter might call dangerous spirits that he/she does not know how to deal with<sup>25</sup>. Instead, the nomads practise several small ritual gestures on a daily basis in the expectation that the spirits will deliver game animals and births both in the herd and in their own societies. Sedentary persons have two collective rituals annually to transmit their “traditions” and request that the spirits of the natural environment bring some luck to modern life. Nevertheless, from the mid-2010s, when the Evenki and Nanai lost their last “traditional” shamans, ethnographers have observed some consultations with neo-shamans from other peoples and the appearance of new ritual specialists among Tungus, mostly healers and, more rarely, neo-shamans, who mix some inherited shamanic practices with elements borrowed from New Age philosophy, numerology and/or bioenergy movements. At the same time, Evenki still believe in 2018 that the spirits elect some individuals to become shamans, but since the knowledge on how to become a shaman has almost disappeared, the spirits are said to dominate the person concerned, who either get sick or commit suicide (Lavrillier 2003, 2005, 2014-2018 field notes, Bulgakova 2013, Le Berre-Semenov 2008, Sirina 2012, Brandišauskas 2017). As we will see in several of the papers in this volume, despite the rarefaction of shamans, ethnographers still observe a diversity of ritual practices and healing specialists, as well as elaborate knowledge of spirits and rituals, that continue to play important roles in contemporary Tungus societies despite several decades of Soviet anti-religious policy.

- 33 Since the collapse of the state’s centralised system of resource redistribution at the end of the 1990s, the Tungus rely heavily on “traditional” economies, such as reindeer herding, fur and food hunting, and fishing. For many Evenki and Even regional groups, wild and domestic reindeer play a crucial role as pack and riding animals and a hunting resource. The domestic reindeer is an important source of empowerment, identity, storytelling, and cosmological ideas.

## The Tungus in China

- 34 On the other side of the border in the People’s Republic of China, the Tungus consist of various groups officially labelled “ethnic minorities” (Ch. *shaoshu minzu* 少数民族): the Manchu (Ch. Man zu 满族, 10,387,958), the Sibe (Ch. Xibo zu 锡伯族, 190,481), the Evenki (

Ch. Ewenke zu 鄂温克族, 30,875), the Orochen (Ch. Elunchun zu 鄂伦春族, 8,659), and the Hezhe (Ch. Hezhe zu 赫哲族, 5,354)<sup>26</sup>. Mainly scattered in the northeastern areas of the country, in Heilongjiang province and in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region<sup>27</sup>, the Tungus are not as numerous as the other “ethnic minorities” living in these areas, such as the Mongols. The Tungus live in different environments, which means they have diverse domestic economies. The taiga shelters Evenki reindeer herders, Orochen horse herders, Hezhe fishermen, and Solon Evenki engaged in agriculture and farming, while the steppe provides Solon and Khamnigan Evenki pastoralists with pastures. The Hezhe on the one hand and the Orochen and the Evenki on the other are also found in the Russian Federation, where they are respectively called the “Nanai” and the “Evenki”. Over the decades, the Tungus have been known in China under various names: in the early Qing records, the Tungus were identified according to the localities in which they lived (Lee 1970, p. 14); later, the term Solon referred to the present Dahur (Ch. Dawo'er zu 达斡尔族), Orochen, and some clans of Evenki.

- 35 Despite their relatively small numbers, the Tungus have played a significant role in the history of China's northern borders. Indeed, the Jurchen, a Tungus people, founded two dynasties that reigned over China: the Jin dynasty (Ch. Jin chao 金朝 1115-1234) and the Manchu<sup>28</sup> Qing dynasty (Ch. Qing chao 清朝 1644-1911). Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>29</sup>, following the repeated incursions of Tsarist Russia across the northern borders of the Qing Empire, the Manchu rulers incorporated some other Tungus groups (today known as the Orochen, Evenki, Sibe, and Hezhe) into the Qing banner system<sup>30</sup>. As garrison soldiers, the Tungus were in charge of border security and had to pay a tribute of furs (Dumont 2017, p. 518). According to the requirements of territorial consolidation, the Manchu dispatched the Tungus all over Inner Asia. In 1732, the Evenki Solon, together with other Mongol groups (the Old Barga and Eleut), were transferred from the Heilongjiang forest zone to the steppe areas of Hulun Buir, where they eventually adopted Mongol economic and religious practices (i.e. the herding of five species and Mongol Buddhism).
- 36 If some Tungus groups were subjects of the Qing Empire, other crossed the borders of contemporary China at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is the case for the Evenki reindeer herders and the Khamnigan. Under Russian and Yakut pressure and in order to find better hunting grounds, a few groups of Evenki reindeer herders crossed the Amur River between the early 18<sup>th</sup> and mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries to settle in Chinese territory. In 1915, the reindeer herders were still Russian subjects, paying tribute on the Russian banks of the Amur and marrying in the Orthodox Church (Shirokogoroff [1929] 1979, pp. 67-68). The reindeer herders were also engaged in trade with the Russian Cossack farmers settled on the Chinese side, borrowing many Russian words that are still in use today. The Khamnigan first left Russia to settle in the western areas of Hulun Buir after the October Revolution, but the waves of migration continued until 1934 (Janhunen 1996, p. 52). The Khamnigan relied on horse breeding and hunting in Transbaikalia, but, from 1880 onwards, they gradually converted to Mongol pastoralism (NMZ 1959, p. 8).
- 37 At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Tungus were dispersed across a large territory and their ways of life were distinct from one another. Additionally, through contacts with various neighbouring populations, the Tungus became acquainted with various religions (Buddhism, Christianity, and shamanism) and economic practices (hunting, reindeer herding, agriculture, etc.).

38 Soon after the foundation of the People's Republic of China (1949), the central government launched the "Ethnic Classification Project" to identify the different ethnic groups of the nation. In the northeastern areas of China, the classification of Tungus groups was complicated by the multiple auto-ethnonyms and exo-ethnonyms used by and for the Tungus. Between 1954 and 1957, the Tungus were classified by the Chinese administration into "ethnic minorities" according to their language, culture, and territorial affinities. In 1957, the Evenki reindeer herders, the Khamnigan, and the Solon were merged into a single "Evenki ethnic minority" and divided into three sub-groups known respectively as the "Yakut Evenki" (Ch. Yakute Ewenke 雅库特鄂温克), the "Tungus Evenki" (Ch. Tonggusi Ewenke 通古斯鄂温克), and the "Solon Evenki" (Ch. Suolun Ewenke 索伦鄂温克). These three sub-groups names were used by Russian traders living in the area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>31</sup>. By selecting Evenki as the official appellation for all three groups in 1957, the Chinese government split the former Solon entity (composed of the Evenki, Dahur, and Orochen) while the Orochen became an "ethnic minority" themselves. Nowadays, the "Evenki ethnic minority" has diversified economies according to the milieus in which they live.

- The Evenki reindeer herders, also known as "Yakut Evenki" and "Aoluguya Evenki" (Ch. Aoluguya Ewenke 敖鲁古雅鄂温克) after their ethnic village, represent the smallest sub-group, numbering fewer than 300 people. They traditionally practise reindeer herding and hunting in the forest areas of the northeastern part of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, near the Argun River. State policies of the last six decades have profoundly affected their nomadic way of life, including the reduction of their nomadic areas, the creation of sedentary spaces, and the development of ethnic tourism (see Dumont 2016, Xie and Dumont in this volume).
- The Khamnigan, also known as "Tungus Evenki", number approximately 2,000 people. They are mainly scattered across the steppe areas of Hulun Buir in the "Evenki *sum*"<sup>32</sup> (Ch. Ewenke sumu 鄂温克苏木) of the Old Barga Banner and in the "East *sum*" (Ch. Dong sumu 东苏木) of the Evenki Autonomous Banner among Barga Mongols and Buryat. Nowadays, the Khamnigan speak Mongolian in addition to their Khamnigan language, practise Mongol pastoralism of the five muzzles (sheep, goat, camel, horse, and cow), and use Mongol yurts during the summer.
- The Solon, the most numerous group, are the least studied in the contemporary ethnographic literature. They can be broadly divided between the peoples of the steppe and the forest zones. In the steppe, the Solon live mainly in the Evenki Autonomous Banner, with a large number located in the south next to the Hui River. They practise Mongol pastoralism and use a specific nomadic dwelling called the *ogo*. Quite similar to the Mongol yurt, the *ogo* is much bigger and is covered with willows, which gives it a specific golden colour. The Solon speak both Mongolian and the Solon language, the latter of which is particularly well preserved in the steppe area. Hundreds of kilometres away in the forest area, the Solon groups are scattered in Zhalantun, Arongqi, the Dahur Autonomous Banner, and in the northern part of Heilongjiang province, where they live in numerous "Evenki ethnic villages". Having abandoned hunting decades ago, the Solon are now engaged in agriculture and farming (Fuliang Shan 2014, p. 80).

39 The Chinese communist policies launched from the 1950s deeply affected the Tungus way of life. The main tasks of "modernisation" preached by the government were sedentarisation, the transformation of "traditional economies" into intensive modes of production, and the suppression of religious practices. At the same time, industrialisation

caused irreparable damage to the forest and grasslands. In the 2000s, the Chinese government adopted environmental policies, such as the “ecological migration” (Ch. *shengtai yimin* 生态移民) enacted among the Reindeer Evenki in 2003 as part of the “Open Up the West policy” (Ch. *xibu da kaifa* 西部大开发).

- 40 Following the reforms launched by the Chinese government in the 1980s, the religious life and ritual practices of the Tungus have been revived both by local communities and local government. If most of the shamans have disappeared or have stopped their activities among certain groups (notably the Orochen, the Evenki reindeer herders, the Hezhe, and the Solon of the forest), some ritual specialists, including shamans, have reappeared, especially in the steppe areas; today, the most powerful shamans are found among the Solon Evenki. The most vivid component of the ritual life of the Tungus of China is, without contest, the *obao* rituals: these are organised annually by the various Solon clans to ensure the fertility of the herds and the wellbeing of the community (Dumont 2017). In some other areas where shamanism has long been lost, ethnic tourism has created a new sort of professional shaman artist who works for the entertainment of tourists.

Figure 2. Positions of the case studies in the present volume



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## Volume content

- 41 The articles presented here cover traditional research themes in a new light, thus challenging some of the common stereotypes pertaining to classic Tungus ethnology. The papers aim to present ethno-historical accounts and emic views on history, ritual concepts, and the outcomes of state policies. The volume covers an impressive time period: from ancient migrations (Wure’ertu) to the first Russian and foreign travellers

(Borm), from the first interethnic partnership (Sirina) to the current survival of beliefs (Brandišauskas, Bulgakova, Simonova). It also extends over a huge geographical area, from Katanga in the West (Sirina) to easternmost Siberia (Bulgakova), from northern Siberia (Lavrillier & Gabyshev) to Northeastern China (Dumont, Xie, and Wure'ertu).

## 1. Ethno-Historical Retrospectives

- 42 Dedicated to ethno-historical retrospectives, the first part of the volume reviews various representations of indigenous groups found in early reports and in oral history, offering emic explanations on the origins of indigenous groups and their ethnonyms. While Tungus ethnogenesis has been a major topic of interest for many generations of Russian ethnographers (Tugolukov 1980, Vasilevich 1968, Dolgih 1960), the section provides a unique focus by demonstrating how this topic can be approached from the point of view of ethno-histories and the perspectives of indigenous peoples.
- 43 As an expert on European travel literature, Jan Borm discusses early literary representations of the Tungus and their religion, clothing, housing, and diet. The author analyses translations of Isbrand Ides' travelogue, thanks to which the word "shaman" became famous across the world. Specifically, he compares English, French, and German editions of these texts, stressing how the significant differences between these versions were intended to please their target readerships. Shamanic practice was of particular interest to most travellers and explorers and was therefore commented on in more detail. These texts demonstrate the long history of binary representations and perceptions of Siberian indigenous people in Europe: on the one hand, we find the demonisation of shamans and their practices, with some calling them "diabolical artists", while, on the other, there is a discourse that idealises the Tungus, describing them as "aristocrats of Siberia".
- 44 The Evenki writer from China Wure'ertu presents three legends that have been handed down among the Evenki reindeer herders and the Solon Evenki living in the People's Republic of China. Based on data gathered in the 1950s as well as during his own fieldwork, the author provides valuable ethnographic information regarding oral history. These three legends not only offer valuable data on the Evenki's origin and migratory movements along the rivers of Northern Asia, but also highlight the great significance of rivers for Evenki peoples. The author also discusses some Evenki origin theories developed by Chinese and Evenki scholars.
- 45 The ethnologist Anna Sirina continues the exploration of inter-ethnic contacts by analysing regional and local archival sources and field data about the interactions between Evenki (Tungus) and Old Russian settlers in the upper Lower Tunguska River. She describes the perception of Evenki among local Russians and analyses the economic and cultural features of both groups. She shows how a two-sided process of acculturation occurred between them, especially through hunting activities which offered a shared space.

## 2. Indigenous Knowledge, Mobilities, and Political Landscapes

- 46 The second part of the volume, "Indigenous Knowledge, Skills, Mobilities, and Political Landscapes", provides five empirical and theoretical studies based on contemporary fieldwork conducted among Evenki groups. These articles demonstrate the Evenki

knowledge system relating to climate, the observation of climate change, and spatial practices and perceptions; it also highlights how Evenki mobility is shaped by the current socio-political environment in Russia and China.

- 47 Indigenous skills are at the centre of Lavrillier (an anthropologist) and Gabyshev's (a reindeer herder and co-researcher) transdisciplinary paper, which, on the basis of field materials, analyses the complex traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) as a system through the Evenki observations of climate change and their understanding of an extreme event. After discussing the place of TEK in the Western sciences, the paper explains the emic science of climate and its uses. It shows that instead of perceiving an "extreme event", the Evenki distinguish between an "extreme weather process" (the accumulation of climatic anomalies in the same or different domains such as temperatures, precipitations and snow cover), an "extreme nature process", when climatic events are combined with external natural factors (biodiversity, predators, etc.), and a "hybrid extreme process", when accumulated climate and environmental anomalies interact with external human factors (economic, political, industrial development, laws). In this framework, the authors highlight the existence of emic concepts of adaptation, resilience and vulnerability.
- 48 Cultural geographer Gail Fondahl explores how the establishment and use of the "Ecological Trail", a path leading from near the north end of Lake Baikal in Buryatia into the taiga and eventually to the "Memorial Tree", close to Holodnaia Village, is a good example for understanding how the Evenki are re-making and performing places. In particular, the case shows how the Evenki use landscapes to actively encourage a sense of territorial belonging among their youth and communicate assertions of territorial rights to outsiders.
- 49 The anthropologist Aurore Dumont analyses how Chinese state policies have, over the last six decades, led to the transformation of the Evenki reindeer herders' nomadic economy. By examining Evenki annual movements between their village and camps, the author argues that, despite the policies of the state, the herders' mobility has become more flexible and extensive, while herding skills remain a fundamental component of their way of life. Thus, the constant movement of the Evenki between these two complementary spaces reflects their strategies to adapt to ecological and political challenges.
- 50 In her article, the anthropologist Xie Yuanyuan continues the analysis of the Evenki reindeer herders of China. She shows how the herders were forced to give up their traditional hunting life and were relocated to Aoluguya village in 2003 through the "Ecological Migration" policy. These Evenki are now only reindeer herders, thus challenging their established identity as "hunters". At the same time, in order to preserve Evenki lifestyles, the government introduced tourism to the area. In such a context, the author raises the question of how ideas of "presenting culture" and "preserving people" might interplay and raise conflicts.

### 3. Human and Animal "Individuals", Ritual Practices, and Luck

- 51 Instead of focusing on the historical topic of shamanism, the final section draws readers' attention to notions of empowerment and rituality among Evenki groups. The three papers outlined below aim to reveal Evenki vernacular concepts related to the characteristics attributed to spirits, animals, humans, and their interrelationships.



- 52 In his paper, the anthropologist Donatas Brandišauskas explores how the socio-cultural changes that occurred during Soviet times and current challenges are creatively reflected and incorporated into Evenki cosmology, ritual practices, and storytelling in Zabaikal region. Various malevolent spirits, monsters, and cannibals that existed in cosmology for centuries are continuously encountered in daily life and depicted in contemporary Evenki storytelling. While references to the cannibalistic features of indigenous people were widely employed and distributed by the colonial powers, today the Evenki link the influence of malevolent beings with past and current state policies, tragic events, ruptures of ethical norms, and personal misbehaviour.
- 53 The anthropologist and specialist in oral literature Tatiana Bulgakova proposes a comparative analysis of the rituals and representations devoted to the tiger and the specific abilities attributed to this animal among the Amur Tungus-Manchu peoples. These peoples treat tigers like humans and believe that extraordinary tigers have the capacity to behave similarly to people. According to these shamanic ideas, such behaviour should be explained by the fact that, as dangerous predators, tigers can easily become spiritually charged, allowing the bodies of some tigers to serve the spirits as temporary dwellings. The spirits which possess tigers are believed to obtain some of the animal's external features: long after leaving these bodies, they still maintain the ability to become temporarily visible in tiger form.
- 54 The book concludes with a paper by the anthropologist Veronika Simonova. She analyses a network of relations between human and non-human actors. Based on research into the practice of inviting or bringing wild animals into human places as described by the narratives of reindeer herders in Kalar region (Zabaikal region), the author shows that this should be approached as a “magic of contact”, where the human and animal worlds coincide: such is also present in local *perednik* beliefs. These beliefs involve the sensory perception of an animal spirit that represents a significant part of human nature. The paper places empirical data within debates about perspectivism and mimesis, two theories which have been widely employed in scholarly interpretations of human-animal relations in Siberia. The author argues that these theories have certain limitations for understanding hunting cultures in Evenki contexts. The material about wild individuals brought into human spaces and *perednik* beliefs demonstrates the priority of the logic of the “magic of contact” as a substratum of human-animal relations in the taiga.

## Transversal perspectives

- 55 These papers raise new issues in Tungus anthropology. First of all, the volume offers novel insights into the diversity of past and present mobilities by analysing ancient voluntary migrations, recent forced migrations, nomadic movements, and the contemporary movements that bridge nomadic and urban spaces (Wure'ertu, Sirina, Xie, Dumont). The issue of accrued Tungus mobility is also expressed by ancient and current movements and exchanges across the Sino-Russian border (Wure'ertu, Dumont, Xie). Several papers underline the importance of rivers not only as migration routes, but also as markers of identity and ethnic memory (Fondahl, Wure'ertu). In addition, a strong link is forged between the biophysical environment and the preservation of Tungus culture (Fondahl, Lavrillier & Gabyshev). Another paper demonstrates that nomadic mobility is enabled by the sustained acquisition of complex ecological knowledge (Lavrillier & Gabyshev). Tungus intelligentsia in Russia and China share this focus on mobility, since

- both like to refer to the prestigious involvement of the Tungus in famous cultures and empires (Genghis Khan, Xiongnu, Xianbei, Shiwei, etc.) and border history (Wure'ertu, Dumont).
- 56 The matter of relationships with states is approached in various papers throughout the volume from the perspective of the policies employed to control the nomad world (Xie, Dumont, Fondahl), industrial development (Fondahl, Sirina, Lavrillier & Gabyshev), and repressive communist campaigns (Dumont, Brandišauskas, Sirina).
- 57 Many papers consider the question of inter-ethnic relationships, noting that long contacts gave birth to mixed local populations: this raises the notion of “local identity” rather than ethnic identity (Sirina). These papers also inform us about Sino-Evenki or Russo-Evenki commercial relationships (Xie, Dumont, Sirina) and inter-ethnic cross-views in Russia between Western travellers and Tungus (Born) and across the border between the Tungus of China and the Tungus of Russia (Dumont, Xie).
- 58 Several papers show that, despite several decades of communist anti-religious campaigns in China and Russia and the decline of shamans, animism and shamanic ritual practices demonstrate a high level of vitality, be it in neo-rituals or through more “traditional” forms in the rural world (Dumont, Brandišauskas, Bulgakova, Simonova).
- 59 In terms of the perception of the natural environment and ritual practices, it is surprising to see that many different emic concepts related to worldview and the relations between humans and animals appear among geographically proximate groups of Evenki and among the Nanai. Many papers demonstrate that biophysical elements of the natural environment are still considered sacred places and partners or tools for ritual practices (Fondahl, Brandišauskas, Dumont). This is related to various perceptions of souls (or of components attributed to human and animal individuals) and their ability to be personal, to circulate outside the body, to enter into relationships with other beings, and to leave marks on the environment (Bulgakova, Simonova, Brandišauskas). Among humans and animals, thanks to a spirit “possessing” one’s body or an individually specific “spirit charge” that leaves an “active imprint” on everything and everybody it touches, individuals are empowered to act, perform rituals, develop talents, and create. Apparently, each concept is very localised and does not always exist in other regions. Nevertheless, there is sometimes a common core, such as for instance between the Evenki and Even concept of spirit charge *onnir*, which focuses on human and animal bodies as receptacles for spirits, and the Nanai *oni*, which is a spiritual (imaginary) receptacle into which the shaman installs the formerly lost soul of the treated patient. Another specificity shown is that rituals are performed with and without shamans; furthermore, ritual practices are attributed to both humans and animals. Both humans and animals can act ritually through simple thoughts, without any items or gestures (Sirina 2012, pp. 153-203, Lavrillier 2012, 2013, Bulgakova 2016, pp. 141, 307, Simonova, Brandišauskas, and Bulgakova in this volume).
- 60 It is also important to underline that the many spiritual representations (Brandišauskas, Simonova, Bulgakova) and identity (Sirina, Fondahl) perceptions of the natural environment among the Evenki do not mean that they lack science-like elaborated knowledge, material and conceptual, about their natural environment and its function at a biophysical level: they certainly do possess such knowledge (Lavrillier & Gabyshev 2017).

- 61 Thus, this volume presents a broad spectrum of relationships and contacts between the Evenki, other peoples (humans), and the biophysical and symbolic/spiritual faces of the natural environment. These links, contacts, and relationships have developed over the course of centuries, despite (or thanks to) many socio-economic, political, and natural pressures.

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## NOTES

1. By Tungus, we refer here not only to the Evenki and Even, but also to the Khamnigan, the Orochen, and the peoples belonging to the group of the “Tungus of the Amur river”: the Nanai in Russia (and the same group called Hezhe in China), the Udeghe, the Neghidal, the Solon, the Ulch, the Orok, the Oroch. For more details about the term “Tungus”, and the different peoples it refers to, see later in this text.
2. The peoples who speak Tungus-Manchu languages are, in addition to the Manchu and the Sibe, the Nanai, the Udeghe, the Orok, the Oroch, and the Ulch for the southern branch. The speakers of the northern branch are the Evenki, the Even, the Orochen, the Neghidal, the Solon, and the Khamnigan. This represents around ten million individuals dispersed over a territory measuring approximately 9,000 km from east to west and 3,000 km from north to south. As detailed further in the text, the Tungus have given two dynasties to China (the Jin dynasty, 1115-1234, and the Qing dynasty, 1644-1911). In each of the Tungus-Manchu languages, there are many dialects: in Evenki, for instance, there are more than 50 (Bulatova & Grenoble 1999). See also further in the text.
3. In China, Shirokogoroff is known as Shi Luguo 史禄国, which is the Chinese transliteration of his surname.
4. For a new study of Shirokogoroff's contribution to Tungus anthropology, see Shirokogoroff 2016.
5. Shirokogoroff's work on the Manchus, *Social Organization of the Manchus: A Study of the Manchu Clan Organization*, originally published in 1924, was also translated into Chinese in 1997 (Shi Luguo [1924] 1997).
6. “Official Histories” refers to a genre of historical writing composed by private individuals and officials throughout imperial times. Following the model of Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史记 (Records of the Grand Historian), they are arranged according to an “annal-biography” system: most of them are topical monographs. Although the purpose of compiling these histories was to provide a record of the actions and decisions of legitimate dynastic rulers, they also contain a wealth of information on institutions, historical events, major figures, and peoples of the realm.
7. In 2015, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, in association with MAE (Kunstkamera), Saint Petersburg, organized the exhibition, “River Stars Reindeer. Imaging Evenki and Orochen communities of Inner Mongolia and Siberia”. This exhibition was dedicated to Lindgren's and Shirokogoroff's photographic collections.

8. From the University of Versailles (UVSQ, France), the University of Vilnius (Lithuania), the Institute of Ethnology at Academia Sinica (Taiwan), the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera, Russia), and European University in Saint Petersburg (Russia), respectively.

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10. The term *uriankai* is itself a real conundrum because it was used by many different peoples, sometimes as a self-ethnonym, sometimes as an exo-ethnonym. Schematically, one finds this term mentioned in Chinese sources, among the Mongols, and in Russia to designate some Mongol groups, the Tuva people, some Tungus groups, and other groups dispersed over the huge territory stretching from the Yenisei River to Korea through Manchuria (Vasilevich 1966, p. 73, Dolgih 1960, p. 298). The ethnonym *Uranhai* is one of the most famous in Europe for designating non-Islamised Turkic mongolised populations (they remained shamanists or became Buddhists). This name is also used by the non-mongolised population of Mongolia, which consider themselves Tuva. It was also used to designate ethnic groups serving Gengis Khan (mongolised or Mongol ones). It is also included in the name of the ancestors of the Yakut and Evenki peoples (*uraanghai sahalar* and *urangkai Evenki*, respectively) (Tamisier 1998, p. 252, Ksenofontov 1992, Vasilevich 1966, Lavrillier 2005, p. 53-54). See also Wure'ertu in this volume.

11. We know this from an historical oral account relating the migration of the Samagir clan along the Amur River from its source to the lower part through the Argun (along the current Russian-Chinese frontier), Nonni, and Sungari (within current Northern China) rivers and a list of armed clans employed by the Manchu in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Lipskii 1925, Vasilevich 1965, p. 141).

12. In the Russian taiga, the older nomads know several stories about these movements (Lavrillier 2005, p. 106 *et passim*).

13. Nowadays 40 peoples possess this status in the Russian Federation: 37 indigenous minorities are situated in the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation. Altogether, they represent around two per cent of the Russian population (*Federal State Statistics Service 2010*). In this area, there are a further eight peoples with the official status of "indigenous people" (also created during the Soviet period). This status is assigned to native peoples with a population upwards of 50,000 individuals. Advantages and subsidies like free medical treatment, schools and kindergartens, specific hunting and fishing quotas, free places at university, and financial support for reindeer herding are attached to the category of indigenous minority; however, these benefits are currently in decline in many Siberian regions (Turaev *et al.* 2011, Lavrillier field notes).

14. All-Russia Population Census (*in Russian*) 2010. *The other Tungus population groups in Russia are the Neghidal (513 individuals), the Ulch (2,765 individuals), the Oroch (596 individuals), the Udeghe (1,496 individuals), and the Orok (now called Uilta) (295 individuals).*

15. Quoted in Popov 1869, pp. 398-464. The origin and meaning of the term "Tungus" have been debated since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Vasilevich 1969a, p. 10). The most frequent, but probably erroneous, interpretation refers to the words *tongus* or *tungus* in Tatar, meaning "wild boar" or "pig" (Georgi 1775 and 1779, II, p. 33). The word was thought to have been propagated by the Tatars of Tobolsk (Strahlenberg 1730). Other authors hold that *tongus* comes from the Yakut *tong* - meaning dog or frozen (in the sense of someone who does not understand (Shimanskii 1905). Another, more recent, hypothesis suggests that the term derives from a Samoyed group, the Nenets of the Yenisei river basin, who, according to this theory, were the first to use the word to designate the Evenki to the Russians (Helimski & Janhunen 1990). Tungus became later a "self-designation" for the Tungus-speaking communities raising horses and cattle in Barguzin (Buryatia), Shilka, and Nerchinsk (Zabaikal region).

16. For more details, see Brodnikov 2001, Lavrillier 2005, pp. 83-92.

17. The term *lamu* is also studied by Wure'ertu in this volume.
18. For ethnonyms such as Orochen, Murchen, Evenki, Khamnigan, and another 13 ethnonyms and related literature, see Patkanov 1906, Vasilevich 1969a, Lavrillier 2005, pp. 50-68, Sirina 2012, pp. 43-57.
19. For more details, see Lavrillier 2005, pp. 133-134, Archive 1946.
20. Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.
21. This Soviet policy is compared by Xie (in this volume) with current Chinese relocation policies known as “ecological migration” directed at the Evenki reindeer herders.
22. For more information, see Forsyth [1992] 2000, pp. 383-384.
23. For more historical details on eastern Siberia, see Lavrillier 2005, pp. 102-139; for the Zabaikal region, see Brandišauskas 2017, pp. 39-49.
24. For a study of conversion or neo-shamanism among other Siberian peoples, see Vaté 2009; among the Yakut, see Hamayon 2007.
25. Lavrillier 2003, 2005.
26. According to the Chinese 2010 national census.
27. Except the Manchu, who are distributed throughout China with a high number in the Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning provinces, and the Sibe, who live in the Jilin and Liaoning provinces and in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
28. For more details regarding the usage of the term “Manchu” and the history of the Qing dynasty, refer to Elliott 2001.
29. The Russian advances led to the conclusion of a series of treaties (the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, the Treaty of Aigun in 1858, and the Treaty of Beijing in 1860) and the demarcation of the Sino-Russian boundary.
30. For a detailed analysis of the organisation of the Tungus groups into Manchu banners, see Kim 2009. Regarding the relationship between the Solon people and the Qing frontier institutions (*Lifanyuan*), see Chia Ning 2015.
31. In some cases, these exo-ethnonyms given by the Russians were adopted by the Evenki. Lindgren noted, for instance, that when the Reindeer Evenki were speaking their own language, they called themselves “Evenki”, but when speaking Russian they referred to themselves as “Yakut” or “Orochen” (Lindgren 1936, p. 76).
32. A *sum* is a rural administrative unit used in Mongolian-speaking areas of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. In Hulun Buir, a *sum* is always divided into several *gachaa*, the smallest administrative unit in Inner Mongolia. Under the jurisdiction of the *sum*, the *gachaa* is a residential area with grazing pastures for pastoralists.

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## INDEX

**Keywords:** Tungus, China, Russia, ethnohistory, politics, minority-state relationship, nomadism, landscape, hunting, reindeer herding, ritual practices, shamanism, traditional ecological knowledge

**Mots-clés:** Toungouse, Chine, Russie, ethnohistoire, politique, relations minorités-État, nomadisme, paysage, chasse, élevage de renne, pratiques rituelles, chamanisme, savoir écologique traditionnel