

CHAPTER VII

TECHNICAL ADAPTATION

27. MIGRATIONS In the previous Chapter V, I have already shown how the Tungus mind behaves in reference to the natural phenomena of primary milieu. In accordance with the acquired knowledge of the primary milieu the Tungus have worked out their system of migrations, also imposed by their chief industry of hunting and reindeer breeding, and the substitutes for the reindeer-breeding. We have seen that the Tungus have created a system of communications, the paths. Indeed, in the eyes of the people accustomed to the railways and artificially erected high-roads with bridges, dams, the system of Tungus paths would not seem to be a technical achievement, a cultural adaptation. However, it is not so when one looks more closely at the phenomenon.

The Tungus roads are made with quite concrete aims, namely, to reach certain points, e.g. the hunting region, the pasturage for reindeer or horses, the best localities for the campment etc. The choice of the directions is also conditioned by consideration of the ability of the draught animals, in carrying the loads, anatomical characters of the animals as the form of the leg seen e.g. in the reindeer and horse, their psychomental characters, and their power of resistance to the hardships of travelling. Indeed, the Tungus must know perfectly well the degree of danger from natural agents such as the rivers changing their water level during different seasons, fire in the forest, the falling of trees under the pressure of strong wind etc. If a Tungus is not familiar with these conditions he may sometimes lose his own life, those of the members of his family and exhaust the energy of the animals, that of his family members and his own when terrified by the non-existent or wrongly overestimated danger. So in nomadism the system of roads is created in the same manner as that of the railway which is cut into the sections with stations, where the fuel and water may be supplied and the servants changed (in the Tungus conditions they take rest); the roads are adapted to the least loss of energy of the animals and men. Yet, this system is also correlated with the needs of hunting and others, as for instance, the hay storing, pasturage etc. When one is familiar with the actual conditions one may see that this system is the best one in the given conditions and it shows that the Tungus are very keen observers, people who arrive at perfectly good conclusions and the best forms of practical solutions of the problem.

As one of the interesting facts it may be pointed out that in the creation of the system of communications there are engaged not only men but also the women. In fact, the Tungus women very often, if not to say usually, perform duties of the leaders of the caravans. During the travelling they very often have to change, at least slightly, the local variations of the direction, and thus they also take their part in the improvement of the system of communications.

Sometimes it happens to the Tungus to meet on their way the spirits which may very often lead the people astray. These cases are considered by the Tungus as due to the weakness of the people and ill-natured character of

some spirits. Since according to their ideas, the spirits are particularly dangerous at night and when the people are drunk, after heavy drinking they avoid travelling during the night, especially when they are not familiar with the locality. Yet, some localities are almost permanently either visited or even inhabited by the spirits and these places are avoided, especially during night travelling. So that with certain preventions, and when the migrating groups are numerous, this factor affecting the rational system of communications is not of great importance, amongst the Tungus who are using the system. There are many reasons for that. Let us suppose that a Tungus brings in evidence that a certain locality is affected by bad spirits. This information may be accepted and the Tungus will avoid this region until some other Tungus happens to visit it. If nothing happens and no confirmation of spirits' activity is found the first idea will very likely give place to the restoration of the idea of the original safety of the place, according to the Tungus, perhaps, temporarily affected by the spirits. The need of having as much as possible of the territory free of spirits will bring them to the "cleaning" of the territory from the spirits. Yet sometimes the spirits may be removed by special methods, which will be later discussed. It is, however, different with the Tungus who do not very much depend upon their migrations. Such groups of the Tungus who do not hunt extensively and live on cattle breeding or some other trade practised in a limited region, believe much more in spirits located in different places, which they do not want to visit. It is very likely that in this case the peopling of these regions by the spirits is one of the forms of justification for the Tungus for abstaining from the hunting and preferring the quietness of life in the settlements, (e.g. some groups of Birarçen, the Nomad Tungus in Transbaikalia and others). It is interesting to note here that the Manchus who live on agriculture refer as one of the reasons for their abstaining from hunting, to the numberless Tungus (*oronçun*) spirits which people the taiga, and whom they are afraid to meet. According to the Tungus living on the taiga, the Manchus are wrong.

If a Tungus were asked the cause of misfortune, for instance in the case of a tree falling on a traveller, he might give the reason as the activity of a certain spirit. He might choose the road across a forest, where there are many half-rotten trees, in fair weather, but he would avoid it during the stormy weather; he would know perfectly well that the forest in which there are no half-rotten trees even during a storm is not dangerous. The conception of spirit in this case would approach very near that of the "luck" and "bad chance". Thus the record of similar explanations of accidents must be always carefully checked up and analysed.

For protecting themselves against different accidents the Tungus must know exactly what they must do in various conditions. For instance, if a Tungus is surprised by the snow and rain, which is typical of Manchuria and Transbaikalia during transitory periods (sometimes in