

Otto
Mänchen-
Helfen

Journey to Tuva

An eye-witness account of
Tannu-Tuva in 1929



ETHNOGRAPHICS PRESS
University of Southern California

An eccentric Englishman—he might have stepped right out of a Jules Verne novel—once traveled the world with the sole purpose of erecting a memorial stone at the midpoint of each continent, bearing the inscription: “I was here at the center of the continent on this day”—and the date. Africa and North and South America already had their stones when he set out to put a monument in the heart of Asia. According to his calculations, it lay on the banks of the upper Yenisei in the Chinese region of Urianghai. A rich sportsman, tough (as many fools are), he braved every hardship and reached his goal. I saw the stone in the summer of 1929. It stands in Saldam, in Tuva (as the former Urianghai is now called), in the herdsmen’s republic, which lies between Siberia, the Altai Mountains, and the Gobi: the Asian land least accessible to Europeans.

* * *

I saw the beautiful Gorki film *Mother* there. The Tuvans sat packed like sardines on the narrow wooden benches, with the keenest expectations. My neighbor was the shaman who on the previous day had sent his soul to *Erlík-oranь*, the realm of the dead. . . . Now he sat in the movie theater: next to him, a soldier, then the Mongolian envoy, then a lama, children, old women, young girls, and men who ran the Buddhist rosary of 108 pearls through their fingers.

The film broke at least twenty times that night, but that only made the viewers happy. So much the better! Now the fairy tale would last that much longer! They could not understand anything, not the slightest bit, . . . but their pleasure was nevertheless unending. They were absolutely neutral towards the proceedings on the screen. Whoever just fired, that was their man! . . . When horses appeared, the whole room went crazy. They jumped up, screaming, and drove the horses with wild cries of “Chaa! Chaa!” They had a magnificent time. . . .

The showing had long since ended, but still they stood together, laughing and chatting. At the cashier, one man just *had* to buy the horse that “the man with the golden tooth” had ridden in the film. Finally, one by one, they mounted their horses and rode home past the electrical power station and the post office, back to their yurts, back to the steppes through which the dark tones of the shaman’s drum were already calling the spirits from every quarter.



Otto Mänchen-Helfen

REISE INS ASIATISCHE TUWA

Mit 28 Photobildern

Journey to Tuva

Journey to Tuva

by

Otto Mänchen-Helfen

Translated and annotated by

Alan Leighton



Ethnographics Press
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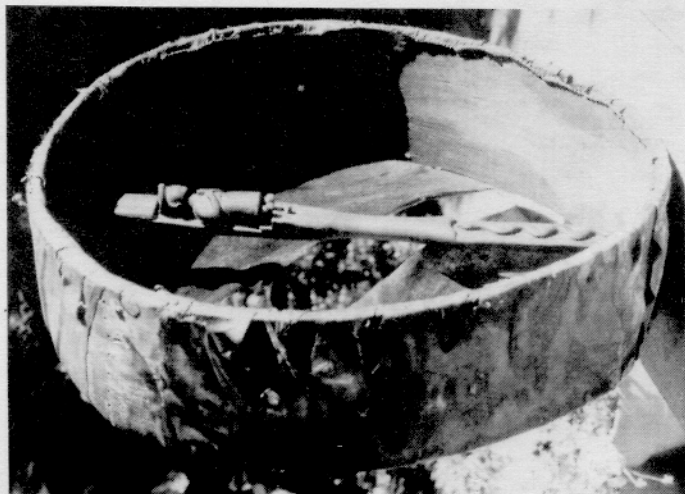
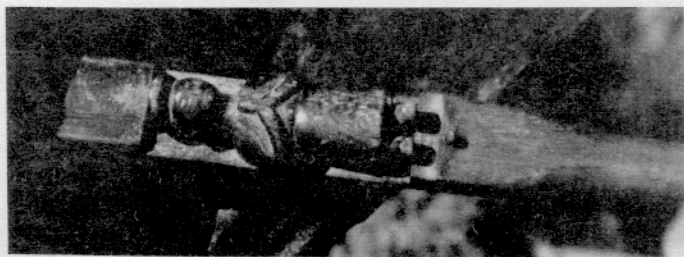
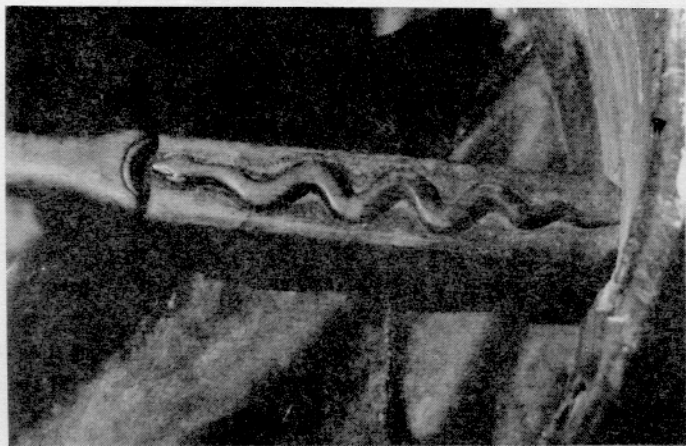
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[A Tuvan shaman's drum collected by Otto Mänchen-Helfen]

Foreword

Reise ins asiatische Tuwa (Journey to Tuva), published in Germany in 1931, is one of four books my husband, Otto Mänchen-Helfen, wrote before we came to the United States in 1938. This is the first time the Tuva book has been translated. Two others—*China*, and *Ein Drittel der Menschheit* (A third of mankind)—still remain only in the original German. My husband's last and most important book was *The World of the Huns*, published by the University of California Press in 1973 and translated into German as *Die Welt der Hunnen* in 1978.

Otto Mänchen-Helfen began as a Sinologist, studying in Vienna, Leipzig, and Göteborg, Sweden, where he worked with Professor Bernhard Karlgren. My husband was first and foremost a historian, but his work ranged from anthropology to the highly specialized study of Chinese art and archaeology.

As Mänchen-Helfen's widow, I alone remain to remember the circumstances surrounding his 1929 expedition to Tuva, then an independent country, but now a part of the Soviet Union. This introduction will have to be personal. I feel some reluctance in writing it, stemming from the doubt I have as to whether my husband would have wanted this book to be revived. The book is the work of a young man, energetic, enthusiastic, research-minded, and curious, and with a good sense of humor: dry and consistent. It was also a book written in a hurry (my husband would type all night, and in the morning I delivered the pages to an angry editor) without the opportunity of revision. But because of contemporary interest, and because of the book's historical value, I have agreed to this translation.

The expedition to Tannu-Tuva was made by my husband, along with a few others, in the summer of 1929—nearly sixty years ago! This was the only journey I could

not share with him, because we had an infant child. It was impossible for me to travel for months, riding on practically wild horses (which occasionally bolted through burial grounds), finding snakes in sleeping bags, and eating strange food, finally to float for weeks on a raft down the River Yenisei, which hurried north to the Arctic Ocean. Going along would have also meant two more people in the car he describes, already crowded with sixteen occupants plus gasoline cans and other supplies. Clearly this was not a journey suited for a very young child.

When my husband left Moscow for Tannu-Tuva, he was to join in Kъzл an expedition planned by the Soviet government, but bureaucratic difficulties delayed it for another year, so his small group was on its own. This part of the world was then isolated and unknown. To illustrate *how* unknown it was, here is one of the things I remember:

During the summer of 1929 I was at the resort of Rodaun, near Vienna, and on July 26, my husband's birthday, I tried to send him a telegram. I addressed it to "the town of Kizil in the country of Tannu-Tuva." The postmaster, looking at me as if I were suffering from some sort of mental disease, went to the back of the little post office to look in his books. When he returned, he said triumphantly, "There is no such town of Kizil, and no such country of Tannu-Tuva." I was stubborn, and asked him to send my telegram to the main post office in Vienna. The next day a telegram from Vienna said, "There is no such town; there is no such country." The postmaster was happy to be proven right. Nevertheless, I asked him to include in the address "via Novosibirsk," a Siberian city northwest of Mongolia.

Two months later my husband's expedition, on their Mongolian horses, met a camel caravan. Since such encounters did not happen every day in those steppes inhabited by nomads, both groups stopped, and my husband got the telegram. Not one word was intelligible, but the date was there, so he knew it was a birthday greeting.

I received two letters sent by him from Kъzл to Vienna, and still cherish their envelopes with stamps

decorated with reindeer.¹ However, I have not been able to find, among his many passports, the one with the visa in Mongolian script that said (since the representative of Tuva in Moscow did not copy his family name), "Citizen Otto may enter the country of Tuva."

Still in my possession is the knife described in this book, the metal obviously procured from a neighboring people, its handle still tightly wrapped with birch bark. In my house I also still have the shaman's drum which he held proudly in his hand when I met him at the railway station on his return to Vienna. Now, after sixty years or more, the drum is very old indeed, its skin dark and dried out, cut in the middle for the spirit of the drum to go free, its handle embellished with the carved wooden figures of a man and a snake, both beautifully clear as if done only recently.²

The drum, which was used to call the spirits of the sick and dying, represented to my husband the shamans, whom he admired for their honesty and their devotion. The shamans, he felt, were the opposite of the lamas, who were exploiting the nomads.

Along with his interest in the shamans—he watched one woman shaman for hours—the idea that drew my husband to Tuva was that the domestication of reindeer may have started right there in that part of Mongolia which later became Tuva, and that the domestication of other animals may have spread from there elsewhere. Research on this subject now occupies many scholars, including the Soviet ethnographer Sev'yan Vainshtein.

As a good Social Democrat, my husband was rather bitter about the bureaucracy and some of the policies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Tannu-Tuva, as he predicted, *did* become part of one of these republics. Has that changed the life of the nomads? Perhaps a

¹See photograph, p. xiii.

²See photographs, p. viii.

new expedition to this particular spot on the Earth will answer the question.

DR. ANNA MAENCHEN
Berkeley, California
July 1987





[Envelopes sent by Otto Mänchen-Helfen from Kyzyl,
and a Tuvan knife collected by him]



АВСТРИЯ, ВЕНА

ЗАКАЗНОЕ
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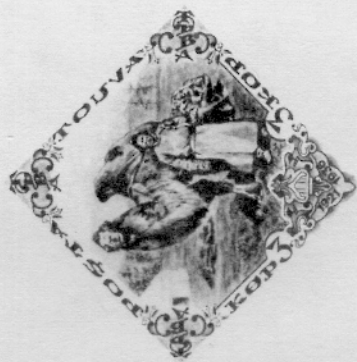
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In the yard of a trading post, [and a Tuvan postage stamp of 1936]

A Note from the Translator

In the fall of 1977 my brother, Ralph, with whom I often played geographical games, challenged me with the country of Tannu-Tuva. If he had entertained any hopes that I had never heard of it, they were soon dashed: I had come across Tuva's famous (some would say infamous) triangular and rhomboid pictorials in the course of my stamp collecting, and was thus acquainted with at least some facets of Tuvan life. For me, Tuva was but one of many interesting countries in the world, and I soon became preoccupied with other places. My brother, on the other hand, became obsessed with that strange and wonderful land.¹

Some time later Ralph triumphantly produced *Reise ins asiatische Tuwa*, the basis for this translation. He had found it at the Library of Congress, and was immediately captivated by its fascinating pictures. He had retained enough high-school German to realize that the text, too, was fascinating, and would be worth deciphering in more detail. By this time I was living in Germany, and somehow it seemed reasonable that I should place my familiarity with the German language at my elder brother's disposal. Thus began the efforts that led to the publication of this book.

In the course of preparing this translation, I myself was bitten by the "Tuvan bug" that was already afflicting my brother (and an ever expanding circle of enthusiasts). As I unearthed more and more information about Tuva, I began to take it upon myself to add annotations to clarify,

¹His obsession was inspired by the illustrious physicist Richard Feynman, and is chronicled in Ralph's book *Tuva or Bust!: Richard Feynman's Last Journey* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1991; Penguin Paperbacks, 1992).

update, illuminate, complement, or even correct Mänchen-Helfen's text.¹

Many people were of assistance in the translation and annotation of this book. First and foremost are the members of the research staff at the Tuvinskii Nauchno-issledovatel'skii Institut Yazyka, Literatury i Istorii (Tuvan Scientific-Research Institute of Language, Literature, and History: TNIIYaLI), many of whom were commandeered into sharing their knowledge and expertise by the TNIIYaLI director, Dr. Jurij Arancьн. Particularly helpful were Bolat-ool Bydyp, Boris Cydyk, Doruq-ool Monguш, Uljana Өpej-ool, Zoja Samdan, and Valentina Syzykej. Dr. Arancьн also invited Ralph and me to visit Tuva for ourselves (see Appendix B), placed his staff at our disposal, and answered, often at length, some of my questions himself. The archaeologist Monguш Mannaj-ool acted as our guide during our excursion, while our driver Viktor Badь-Sagaan's sharp eyes, quick reactions, and keen memory proved invaluable on numerous occasions. Rada Cakar translated and served as a general factotum without whose aid our trip to Tuva would have been difficult; in addition she, too, found answers to many of my questions. Tat'yana Vereshchagina of the Provincial Museum in Turan and Monguш Kenin-Lopsaң of the Tuva Republican Museum in Кызыл generously shared their knowledge. Some of my interviews with the above-mentioned Tuvans are credited separately, others are collected under the general rubric TS (for "Tuvan sources").

Ralph Leighton, Tuva enthusiast of the first order, spent many hours editing the text, offering material for footnotes (signed RL), and generally providing inspiration and encouragement. Linda S. Leighton, my tolerant and supportive wife, provided line drawings and the map at the end of this book, and also suggested many ways to improve the style and clarity of the text. Prof. (ret.)

¹This is a never-ending task, and for any incompleteness, inaccuracy, or long-windedness, I sincerely apologize. Any reader wishing to offer criticisms, corrections, or additions is welcome to write me in care of 1) the publisher; or 2) Friends of Tuva, Box 70021, Pasadena, CA 91117, USA.

John R. Krueger, too, was kind enough to read an early draft of the text, and made numerous useful suggestions. Claudius Przemus sacrificed part of his honeymoon to translate the dense prose of the Polish National Biography, providing nuggets for the footnote on Ferdynand Ossendowski. I am indebted to all of the above-mentioned, and to others too numerous to mention individually. These poor words must suffice to express my thanks to all of them. (Needless to say, any errors, omissions, or misunderstandings are entirely my own responsibility.)

Dr. Anna Maenchen, a remarkable woman, was most gracious in giving the idea of a translation her blessing, without which the completion of this project would have been unthinkable. Sadly, only preliminary drafts were finished before she passed away, so she was unable to see the final transformation of her husband's book. This labor of love is offered in her memory.

Bochum, Germany, 1992



Tuvan Pronunciation Guide

Tuvan words and proper names, written according to German phonetic rules in the original text, have been transliterated from modern Tuvan orthography using a modification of the Tuvan Latin alphabets in use in the 1930s. What follows is an abbreviated guide to pronouncing the Tuvan words in this book. For full treatment of Tuvan phonetics, see the *Tuvan Manual*, pp. 88-108. (The few Turkic and Mongolian words and names in this book are also transliterated according to this system. Thus, Genghis/Chingis/Chinggis/Čingis Khan/Khaan/Qayan become Cingis Xaan.)

THE TUVAN ALPHABET

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg q Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn n
Oo Oo Pp Rr Ss Ss Tt Uu Vv Xx Vy Zz Zz bb

GENERAL RULES

Stress is usually on the last syllable of a word, and is usually accompanied by a slight rise in pitch. Double consonants and especially double vowels increase the quantity of the sound without altering its quality. That is, a double vowel, for example, will be held out two to three times as long as its corresponding single vowel, but the basic sound quality will remain the same. (This is especially important to keep in mind with *ee* and *oo*.) A double consonant will produce a slight pause, as it does in English "hot tea," for example.

The VOWELS are pronounced as follows:

A, like the o in American *bother* (i.e. with unrounded lips). (Tuv. *ak, oḅaa.*)

E, as in *bet*. (Tuv. *terme, eeren.*)

I, as in *bit*. (Tuv. *bižek.*)

O, as the o in *roll*. The lips are slightly rounded. (Tuv. *ton, ool.*)

U, as in *ruse*. The lips are more rounded than for o. (Tuv. *Tožu, Uula.*)

Ө, similar to the i in *bird*, or the ö in German *schön*. Place the tongue in the position for Tuvan e while rounding the lips slightly as in Tuvan o. (Tuv. *örteel, cöön.*)

У, like the ü in German *Glück*. Place the tongue in the position for Tuvan i while rounding the lips as in Tuvan u. (Tuv. *syt, Syryn.*)

Ь, like the Turkish undotted i (ı). Place the tongue in the position for Tuvan u while opening ("unrounding") the lips as in Tuvan i. (Tuv. *Кьзъл, сьһн.*)

" indicates a "glottalized" version of a vowel. For example, *ă* is a glottalized a, similar to the Arabic 'a in 'ayn. It is pronounced with a constricted throat. (Tuv. *ăt.*)



The CONSONANTS are pronounced as follows:

F, G, K, L, M, N, P, S, T, V, and Z, as in English.

B, 1) at the beginning of a word, somewhere between a weakly voiced English *b* and an unaspirated *p* (as opposed to the strongly aspirated Tuvan *p*). (Tuv. *bižek*.)

2) between vowels and after *l*, like the Spanish (bilabial) *v*. (Tuv. *obaa*.)

C, 1) at the beginning of a word, like the *ch* in *chair*. (Tuv. *Cadaana*.)

2) between vowels and after voiced consonants, like the *j* in *juggle*. (Tuv. *Xemcik*.)

D, somewhere between a weakly voiced English *d* and an unaspirated *t* (as opposed to the strongly aspirated Tuvan *t*). (Tuv. *Donduk*.)

q, similar to the *g* in Spanish *agua*. It is like a *g* that is not quite stopped; that is, it can be continuously sounded, like *l*, *m*, *r*, etc. Note especially that it is voiced. This sound never occurs at the beginning of a word. (Tuv. *suq*.)

J, like the *y* in *yes*. (Tuv. *Ojun*, *aja*.)

n, like the *ng* in *sing*. This sound occurs only at the end of a syllable. (Tuv. *Tandb*.)

R, similar to the single Spanish *r* in *caro*. It is slightly trilled with the tip of the tongue. (Tuv. *kara*.)

Ş, like the *sh* in *sheep*. (Tuv. *Şemi*.)

X, similar to the *ch* in Scottish *loch*. It is somewhere between the *ch*-sounds in German *ich* and *ach*. (Tuv. *xaja*.)

Z, like the *si* in *vision*. (Tuv. *bižek*.)

CYRILLIC CONVERSION CHART

Russian words were transcribed from the Cyrillic alphabet according to the table below. Also included here is a recapitulation of the Tuvan transliteration scheme, which was also used for the few Turkic and Mongolian words found in this book.

Cyrillic Alphabet	Romanized <u>Transliteration</u>		Cyrillic Alphabet	Romanized <u>Transliteration</u>	
	Russian	Tuvan		Russian	Tuvan
Аа	a	a	Пп	p	p
Бб	b	в	Рр	r	r
Вв	v	в, v, f	Сс	s	s
Гг	g	g, q	Тт	t	t
Дд	d	d	Уу	u	u
Ее	e, ye	e, je	Үү	*	y
Ёё	e, yo	jo	Фф	f	f
Жж	zh	z	Хх	kh	x
Зз	z	z	Цц	ts	ts
Ии	i	i	Чч	ch	c
Йй	i	j	Шш	sh	ʃ
Кк	k	k	Щщ	shch	ʃc
Лл	l	l	Ъъ		''
Мм	m	m	Ыы	y	ь
Нн	n	n	Ьь	'	'
ң	*	ñ	Ээ	e	e
Оо	o	o	Юю	yu	ju
Өө	*	ө	Яя	ya	ja

* Does not occur in Russian.

To the Reader

The author's widow, Dr. Anna Maenchen, states in her foreword that the original manuscript of *Reise ins asiatische Tuva* was written in a hurry, without the opportunity of revision. Thus, some editorial changes (which I hope would have met with Otto Mänchen-Helfen's approval) have been made in this translation. These consist mainly of a few rearrangements of material in chapters 3, 7, 9, 16, and 21, and more extensive rearrangements in chapter 6. Subheads have been added to chapter 21 because of its disproportionate length. Annotations have been added throughout; material interpolated into the main text has been enclosed in square brackets.

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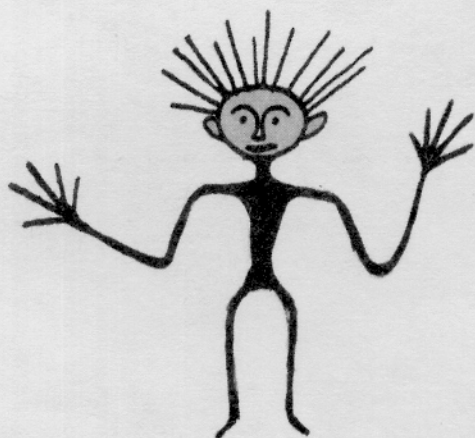
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Though Mänchen-Helfen fleshed out his book with background material from other sources, *Journey to Tuva* is primarily a description of a single visit to Tuva in 1929. As such, Mänchen-Helfen's account is colored by his subjective reactions to what he observed, and limited by the fact that he was not able to visit the entire country. (His description of the reindeer herders notwithstanding, Mänchen-Helfen did not visit Tozu, nor was he able to visit the Southeast or cross the Tandy-Uula Mountains.) Otto Mänchen-Helfen was not an expert on Tuva or Tuvan life, but he was an astute observer, and was extremely fortunate in having set foot in the newly created, nominally independent Tuvan People's Republic. He was one of the few non-Russian foreigners to be permitted to do so, and, to my knowledge, was the only one to leave

a record of his observations. As such, *Journey to Tuva* is a unique source of information for a little-known period of that little-known land. Herein lies the book's chief value: while other books may give a fuller or more definitive account of Tuvan history, customs, language, and so on, none offers an independent assessment, based on first-hand observations, of the nature of the supposedly sovereign Tuvan People's Republic and of the everyday life of its inhabitants.

ALAN LEIGHTON



Petroglyphs from Уттыо-Хая. ¹

¹Hair-associated rituals are especially important in societies which embrace the concept that the transcendence of the soul into the next world is the province of the shaman. The fact that hair continues to grow for a time after death is taken to represent a physical manifestation of life after death. Thus the prominence of hair indicated in the petroglyph suggests it is the figure of a shaman with transcendent powers. Personal communication by Maury Bynum to Ralph Leighton on November 8, 1993.

JOURNEY to TUVA



How I Reached Tuva

An eccentric Englishman—he might have stepped right out of a Jules Verne novel—once traveled the world with the sole purpose of erecting a memorial stone at the midpoint of each continent, bearing the inscription: “I was here at the center of the continent on this day”—and the date. Africa and North and South America already had their stones when he set out to put a monument in the heart of Asia. According to his calculations, it lay on the banks of the upper Yenisei in the Chinese region of Urianghai.¹ A rich sportsman, tough (as many fools are), he braved every hardship and reached his goal. I saw the stone in the summer of 1929. It stands in Saldam, in Tuva (as the former Urianghai is now called), in the herdsmen’s republic, which lies between Siberia, the Altai Mountains, and the Gobi: the Asian land least accessible to Europeans.²

¹Then part of the province of Outer Mongolia. (Brunnert and Hagelstrom 1912, §869A.)

²The mysterious Englishman was first mentioned by Vasiliï Rodevich, who said the marker was erected in the 1890s in the vegetable garden of G. P. Sa’yanov’s homestead at Saldam (Tuv. ‘place where the current flows slowly’). Sa’yanov’s youngest son, however, reminisced that the Englishman, whom he named as a certain Dr. Proctor, had visited Saldam around 1902 or 1903. Be that as it may, the original marker seems to have been made of wood, with a tin plate bearing the inscription affixed to it; it was replaced by a more permanent steel and concrete marker which stood for many years at 24 Red Partisan St. (next to the first electrical power station) in Kъзыл, capital of Tuva. In the early 1960s, that marker was in turn replaced by a much larger monument to the “Centre of Asia” a few blocks away on the left bank of the Yenisei. (Vasiliï Rodevich, *Ocherk Uryankhaiskago kraja* [Brief Survey of the Urianghai Region],

In 1913 a two-volume work appeared in London with the title *Unknown Mongolia*, in which the English explorer Douglas Carruthers described his expedition through Tuva and the Dzungarian Basin.¹ In his foreword, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, wrote:

The great interest of [these regions] lies in the fact that they constitute the Marches between rival races, creeds, and political powers. Here we see the Russian colonist [. . .] pushing forward from Siberia into a land rich with minerals, fish, and furs. [. . .] We see the Mongolian tribesmen, heirs of a mighty past, long withered under the blighting influence of degenerate Lamaism. [. . .] We see, on the plains of Dzungaria, the easternmost outposts of Islam. [. . .] We see China [. . .] exhibiting [. . .] considerable vigour and activity [there]. [. . .] The question which Mr. Carruthers continuously poses and indeed lies in the background of all his investigation and reflections is: with whom does the future of these mysterious regions rest, which have played so great a part in the history of the world, and which seem once more destined to have a future? To those who read between the lines [. . .], there will occur but one answer.²

Izдание upravleniya vnutrennikh vodnykh putei i shosseinykh dorog, vypusk 24 [Publications of the Department of Inland Waterways and Highways, no. 24] [St. Petersburg, 1910], 41; Tenişef 1968, 365; Tat'yana Vereshchagina, "Byl li Doktor Proktor ili net?" [Did Dr. Proctor exist or not?], *Tuvinskaya Pravda* [Kyzyl], Jan. 29, 1990; TS.)

¹Alexander Douglas Mitchell Carruthers (1881-1962), explorer and naturalist; he was awarded the Patron's Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1912, in part for his work in Tuva and Dzungaria in 1910 and 1911. For socioeconomic observations of Tuva made by the expedition's botanist (later a well-known journalist), see M. P. Price, *Siberia* (London, 1912), especially chaps. 6 and 10.

²Carruthers 1913, 1:v-vi.

Lord Curzon predicted well. The future belonged to Russia.¹ Northern Central Asia is ruled today by the Soviets.

What is it like in this colonial area of Soviet Russia? Until now, it was not known how the Soviets rule there: Tuva has been hermetically sealed off by Moscow. As long as the country was still Chinese, at least a few travelers somehow managed to get there. Before 1912 the Finn [J. G.] Granö² carried out archaeological research there, and as late as 1914 the Norwegian Siberia Expedition was able to make its way into Tuva's [northeast] corner, the "Todja Country" [Tozu].³ [Its leader,] Ørjan Olsen, wrote a short report called *A Primitive People: the Mongolian Reindeer Nomads*.⁴

The earlier travelers had it easy. The Chinese government was anything but overjoyed if a European hit upon the crazy idea of wanting to go to Urianghai, but in the end it would grant its permission. The man went at his own risk. If he were killed, it would be his own fault: the Chinese government had warned him. But as

¹In his book Carruthers explicitly stated, "Physically, politically, and economically the [Yenisei] basin [i.e., Tuva] should belong to Russia, and not to Mongolia, and the inevitable absorption of this region by the Siberian element could easily be imagined." (Rupen 1964, 75, citing Carruthers 1913, 1:97.) Not surprisingly, *Unknown Mongolia* was warmly received in Russia. (Rupen 1964, 75.)

²Johannes Gabriel Granö (1882-1956), Finnish geographer. His numerous expeditions to Mongolia (including Tuva) and the Altai contributed greatly to the understanding of the archaeology and geomorphology of those regions, and augmented the linguistic database used in the study of Turkic philology. His pioneering work in the area of perceptual geography is regarded today as his main achievement. (Olavi Granö, "Johannes Gabriel Granö," in *Geographers: Bibliographical Studies*, vol. 3 [London, 1979], 73-84.)

³"Tozu" is the Tuvan form of the name more commonly encountered as "Todja." (TS; Tenişef 1968, 462.)

⁴Ørjan Mikael Olsen (1885-1972), zoologist, journalist, and traveler. The book mentioned here is *Et primitivt folk: De mongolske retnomader* [Olsen 1915]. Also see Ørjan Olsen, *Til Jeniseis kilder: Den norske Sibirie-ekspeditions reise 1914* (To the sources of the Yenisei: The Norwegian Siberia Expedition of 1914) (Kristiania [Oslo], 1915); and Printz 1921. All these works include numerous photographs. (Information kindly provided by the Oslo University Library.)

of 1912 the country is no longer Chinese territory. Since then Tuva has seen rulers of every stripe: Mongols, czarist commissars, Red partisans, White cossacks,¹ and the troops of Little Hsü. [See chapter 21.] It is that area of Inner Asia where everyone has fought against everyone else: Chinese, Tuvans, Mongols, Soviets, Whites. Since 1921 Tuva has been an independent state. It has a government, a capital, an army, a national bank, and even its own postage stamps—in short, it has everything that goes with a state. Yet it is a colony—of a special kind. It is a Soviet colony.

I was the first non-Russian to set foot in the Tuvan [People's] Republic. Three years ago a certain Mrs. French, an Irish woman on assignment from an American newspaper company, tried to reach Tuva. She came right across the Gobi in a wonderfully provisioned automobile—complete with movie camera, revolver, and Worcestershire sauce—from Ulan Bator, the Mongolian capital. At the border she was stopped and politely but firmly sent back.² It does not look as if other travelers will fare much better in the coming years. I myself made it to “unknown Mongolia,” the land of the “primitive Mongolian reindeer nomads,” thanks only to a series of propitious coincidences.

In 1929 the *Kommunisticheskii Universitet Trudyashchikhsya Vostoka* [imeni Stalina] (the Joseph Stalin Communist University of the Workers of the East—abbreviated KUTV because you run out of breath if you have to pronounce this monster of a title a few times) fitted out an expedition to investigate the economic conditions and potential of Tuva. The university, on Moscow's Strastnaya Square, is a strange institution. Behind the great red

¹The “Whites” were ultraconservatives who fought against the “Reds” during the Bolshevik Revolution.

²On the other hand, another source implies that Mrs. French, a self-styled ethnographer driving across China and Mongolia in her own car, was allowed to cross into Tuva. Vantal, the editor of *Krasnyi Pakhar'* (see p. 16, n. 1), stated that she was a valuable scientific worker and even a revolutionary. The identity of Mrs. French and the location of any writings on Tuva that she may have published remain a mystery. (Arancын 1992.)

monastery, after which the square is named, stands an inconspicuous two-storey building where human bombs are manufactured. Hundreds of young Orientals—Yakuts, Mongols, Tuvans, Uzbeks, Koreans, Afghans, and Persians—are trained there for three years to explode the old ways in their homelands. In three years shamanists are turned into atheists, worshippers of Buddha into worshippers of tractors. Equipped with soap, toothbrushes, and meager Russian, these fine fellows—crammed with catchwords and slogans and fanaticized, as missionaries surely must be if they are to accomplish anything—have the mission of pushing their countrymen straight into the twenty-first century.¹

In a single month (of which something yet will be told), the five students with whom I went to Tuva expelled two thirds of the [Tuvan People's Revolutionary] Party [TPRP] membership and raced across the steppes, forcing the confiscation of all livestock over twenty head from the nomad families in order to set up government herds of camels, sheep, goats, and cattle—an original way indeed of socializing the means of milk production!

The expedition was to travel to Tuva in April 1929: the five Tuvans as interpreters and experts on the country, and three or four Russians as economists. [As for me,] I had long since resolved to study shamanism, the ancient religion of the peoples of Northern and Central Asia, on the spot, but I had never found the necessary time or the necessary money. Since the autumn of 1927

¹The KUTV opened in 1921 and inaugurated its three-year course in 1923. General education was emphasized. The main subjects were Party Work and Political Education, Trade Union Movements, Economics, and Administration and the Law. The first Tuvans—ten students—arrived in 1925. 1927 saw the founding, as part of the KUTV, of the Nauchno-Issledovatel'skaya Assotsiatsiya po Izucheniuyu Natsional'nykh i Kolonial'nykh Problem (Scientific research association for the study of national and colonial problems: NIAINKP), under whose auspices the field trip to Tuva mentioned here was organized. The KUTV closed in 1930 in a reorganization of higher educational institutions for the minority nationalities of Central Asia and Siberia. In all, the institution had trained more than 200 graduates specifically for Tuva. See also p. 7, n. 3. (GSE 12: 296; Арансьн 1982, 165, 216; Şirşin 1975, 70.)

I had been Chairman of the Department of Sociology and Ethnology at the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. When I heard about the expedition planned by the KUTV, I determined to go along at any price.¹

That was not exactly easy. I was not a Russian citizen and not a member of the Communist Party; therefore I was doubly unqualified for a trip to the isolated country of Tuva. I had to go to great lengths to obtain permission to go. I went as an ethnologist. I pointed out that ethnologists, as everybody knows, are as harmless politically as mushroom connoisseurs or stamp collectors. Furthermore, I would go not alone, but guarded and guided by tested Party members. There was a GPU² in Tuva, too, and from Tuva there is no other way to Europe than back through the Soviet Union. Such were my arguments as I ran to a thousand agencies and offices; obtained certificates, stamps, signatures, and attestations; and filled in hundreds of columns of questionnaires ("What did you do in the year 1917, and why?"). Finally I obtained the Russian visa for departure to Tuva. Then the Tuvan legation in Moscow filled in a whole page of my passport with very pretty Mongolian characters: Citizen Otto—they overlooked my family name—was permitted to travel to the Tuvan People's Republic.³

(If I had not, warned by some foreboding, sent the greater part of the material I collected in Tuva to the West immediately upon my return to Moscow, I would now find it difficult to write a book about Tuva, because as I left Russia, I was stopped at the border station of

¹One price seems to have been to agree to write a pro-Soviet article on Tuva. (It appears as part of Appendix A in this book.)

²Abbreviation of the Russian words meaning "State Political Administration," a euphemism for the secret police, later known as the KGB.

³"Mänchen-Helfen" seems to be quite a difficult name for Tuvans: in August 1991 I witnessed Tuva's President Ondar stumble over the name while reading a short speech at a public ceremony. After several futile attempts, he finally skipped over it completely. Several Tuvan acquaintances also abandoned their attempts to pronounce the name while reading aloud from a newspaper article.

Negoreloye.¹ Moscow had informed the border GPU of my coming. They searched me thoroughly, confiscating every written page. They even searched the soles of my shoes to see if something were hidden in them, to see if I were taking "material about Tuva" out with me. Luckily, the GPU has not yet invented a procedure for destroying memories. I am writing about the Soviet colony of Tuva from my memories and with the help of the many notes that escaped the GPU.)²

The departure of the expedition was delayed. First there was a lack of funds; then the GPU gave even the Communists problems when issuing their passes; then some other obstacle appeared. I was burning with impatience to set off. I finally traveled in advance, to wait for the expedition in Kьzьl, the Tuvan capital. I had already been there an entire week when a telegram came—short and without further explanation: "The expedition is postponed until next year."³

Only the five Tuvan students showed up.⁴ The Central Committee of the TPRP had sent for them. They were indispensable for Party work. Only their help made it possible for me to travel so far alone in Tuva, and enabled me to see and learn so much. With little

¹Because of Soviet territorial expansion during and after World War II, Negoreloye is now in the heart of Belarus (Byelorussia).

²See the "Key to Short Title References," p. 265, for printed sources probably used by Mänchen-Helfen in addition to his own notes and memory. (Арансн 1991.)

³The NIAINKP expedition arrived in Kьzьl in early June 1930. Its results were published as *Tuvinskaya sel'skokhozyaistvennaya i demograficheskaya perepis' 1931 goda* (Tuvan agricultural and demographic census, 1931) (Moscow, 1933). (Арансн 1982, 167, 175-176.) See also the study published by one of the expedition's participants, R. M. Kabo: *Ocherki istorii i ekonomiki Tuvy. Ch. 1: Dorevol'yutsionnaya Tuva* (Brief Survey of the history and economy of Tuva. Pt. 1: Pre-revolutionary Tuva), *Trudy Nauchno-Issledovatel'skoi Assotsiatsii po Izucheniyu Natsional'nykh i Kolonial'nykh Problem*, vol. 12 (Moscow and Leningrad, 1934). (Dulov 1956, 16-21.)

⁴In addition to the Tuvans, a hard-line communist, Dr. Karl Schmücke, escorted Mänchen-Helfen throughout the entire journey. (Арансн 1992, citing a memorandum by A. G. Starkov.) See pp. 237-242.

money, no horse, and insufficient equipment—the expedition's organizers would have attended to all that—I would have had to turn back immediately. Most important, the students obtained for me the authority to demand horses at every yurt. I rode through Tuva as the couriers of Cingis Xaan rode through the Mongol empire: from one camp to the next, always on a new horse—the small, tough, fast horses that carried the Huns from the Central Asian steppes to the outskirts of Rome, and carried the Mongols to Silesia. I thank them, the five students—Sedip-ool, Toka, Дарьт, Сундук-ool, and the small, clever Kamova¹—for enabling me to explore the heart of Asia.

¹Sedip-ool Tokpak-oolovic Tanof (1901–1985) held several important posts in the Tuvan People's Republic after graduating from the KUTV. First he was the Chairman of the Board of the Tuvan Central Cooperative (Tuvintsenkoop), which he represented in 1930 at the Thirteenth Congress of the International Cooperative Alliance in Vienna. Later he was Tuva's ambassador to Moscow (1931–35), Minister of Culture (from 1935), and Manager of the Tuvan Bank of Industry and Trade (during World War II). After the war he headed the Scientific-Historical Archives in Tuva, and directed the Tuva Republican Museum of Regional Studies. (TS, citing PdT, 82–84; Арансѣн 1982, 135.)

Salcak Kalvaxorekovic Toka (1901–1973) was Minister of Culture of the Tuvan People's Republic (1930–1931). He survived (and also instigated) a number of purges to become General Secretary of the TPRP (1932–1944) and then First Secretary of the Tuvan branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1944–1973). He was also a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1971–1973). The first part of *Араттын сөзү*, his three-part autobiographical novel, appeared in English as *A Shepherd's Tale* [Toka 1958]. Among the many honors showered upon him by various governments was the title "Hero of Socialist Labor" for his great services to the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet State. His statue stands in downtown Кызыл. (GSE 26:201; Rupen 1964, 190, 236; Rupen 1965, 612; Şirşin 1975, 394–395; Арансѣн 1991; TS.)

Ojun S. Дарьт (1904–1936). After graduating from the KUTV in 1931, Дарьт was a top trade union leader for a short time in the Tuvan People's Republic. From 1933 until his tragic death, he was the highly successful manager of a succession of gold mines in Каа-Хем Коюун. (Арансѣн 1991; Арансѣн 1982, 186–187. [Арансѣн, by the way, is Дарьт's nephew.]

Ojun Сундук-ool (alias Kirof) (1907–19??) studied at the KUTV from 1927–1931, then became Deputy Chairman of the Tuvan Cen-



tral Cooperative (Tuvintsenkoop). In 1936 he was arrested on false charges, but was nevertheless given an eight-year sentence; in 1959 he was completely rehabilitated. (Арацън 1991; Institute 1991a; Арацън 1992.)

Tat'jana Şozzapajevna Sat (alias Kamova) (1908–1988) became the head of the Women's Section of the Central Committee of the TPRP in 1929. (She was also an alternate member of the TPRP Politburo, and a member of the Central Committee of the Revsomol—the Tuvan Young Revolutionary League.) Kamova was chairman of the Kolkhoz (collective farm) Center of the Tuvan People's Republic and chairman of the Group Producers' Union (1931–34), Secretary of the Tuvan Embassy in Moscow (1934–36; her husband was the Tuvan ambassador), and chairman of the Къзыл Consumers' Society (1936–38). In 1938, after her husband was arrested and executed as a counter-revolutionary, she was sent to work as an agricultural laborer on the collective farm “Soviet Tuva,” in Kaa-Xem Kozuun. She was awarded a medal honoring her fifty years of Party membership. (TS, citing an obituary in *Tuvinskaya Pravda* [Kyzyl], Dec. 25, 1988, as well as other press reports; TRM; Арацън 1992.)