

AI-TCHOUREK

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Ai-Tchourek 2003 near Milk-Lake, Tuva

AI-TCHOUREK went to another world on November 21st 2010 – and how could it be otherwise – at the hour of the full moon... since her name translates to MOON HEART. She was one of the most potent shamans in Tuva and head of the shaman center TOS DEER where numerous shamans worked and that was recently destroyed by the local Government. She also traveled to Europe and the USA, gave lectures, performed shaman rites, healed whoever was seeking her help. Ai-Tchourek performed also at the UNCOOL festival 2003 and 2007. The wonderful fire ritual CAMLANJE held at the lakeside still evokes its inspiring power remembering...

I first met Ai-Tchourek in Kyzyl, the capital of Tuva in Siberia in 2002, where the famous Tuvan singer Sainkho Namtchylak invited me to make me see the land of her ancestors. Ai-Tchourek became my teacher and my friend and I feel connected to her in a serene way.

I would like to cite part of a text of mine written in 2004 and published at:

http://www.uncool.ch/ustuu-huree/impossible_E.htm.

The shaman center TOS DEER (meaning nine skies) hosted us with traditional food – such as boiled sheep, special cheese, double cream, rice or noodles with meat, some cucumber, tomato and carrot salads, cookies and sweets, and of course milk-tea.

TOS DEER is situated at the river Yenisei and composed of a main wooden building and two yurts – one for the family in charge of the domestic works and cooking, one for the guests. In front of the building was a large OVAA¹ decorated with many colorful CHALAMA hanging from several branches and strings between the branches. Next to the OVAA a circular fireplace was situated where the ritual fires are celebrated and next to it you found a ritual circle made out of 9 poles – 9 the number of the skies – which were connected with each other by CHALAMA decorated strings.

With the celebration of the GREEN LEAVES – the summer ritual celebrated with the appearance of the siege of the growing moon in the evening sky – Ai-Tchourek together with the shamans of the center transformed the OVAA into a stone circle using the 9 poles as outer delimitation and burying the branches with the CHALAMA under it.



Stone Circle 2004 Tos Deer, Kyzyl, Tuva

During the ritual all the AEREN, the magic puppets were seated on the stone circle. The shaman gathered, Ai-Tchourek lit her pipe and smoked for the spirits, she then did benedict some ritual objects, people gave her together with special wishes for others and themselves, she dipped it in milk in a wooden bowl, speaking words of wisdom over it and handed it back. She would also spread the milk with a large wooden spoon over the stone circle, into the sky – for the moon, the stars and the sun.

The fire was lit, the hip part of the sheep, looking like a face bearing horns and being stuffed with rice, butter, cookies, colorful sweets was placed in the fire while the drumming and singing of the ALGISH filled the air. People were sitting on trunks closely next to each other, hands folded and minds meandering in good thoughts, following the flying movements of the shamans, the fire, the upcoming wind, listening to the sounds and meaning of the chants, the rhythms of the drums which reflected the individual player in its pace and intonation, but was merging with the others into a song, a melody, a wish, a future.

We were given some fresh crumbling cheese to strew into the fire and onto the stone circle. The moon was rising, dancing as a brilliant siege over the river, meandering color from mother pearl to night blue twilight in the changing reflection of the water.

¹ OVAA is a shamanistic sacred place where stones are piled around branches that are decorated with colorful straps of platted cloth, the CHALAMA, the carrier of wishes.

As the shamans danced by behind our backs, a couple of strokes with the shamans' whip hit our shoulders – it did not hurt but was strong enough to feel the potential power. The fire devoured the gifted food completely, the drumming and chanting ceased and Ai-Tchourek gave a speech in her strong voice leaving no doubt about her message in this beautiful poetic language sounding like a gurgling rivulet, like the galloping of horses, like the song of the wind...

Be her journey white....

Cornelia