

In 1990—1991, shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, secession tendencies began to emerge in the individual regions and autonomous republics of the Russian Federation. In addition to the economic transformation, which focussed on intensification of mining of mineral deposits, the trend of profiling cultural differences and of greater differentiation from the majority Russian population came to the forefront. The National rebirth, as the phenomenon is often labelled, demonstrated itself especially in the construction of new museums, the activities of collectors and in the establishment of various folk ensembles and organisations. As I have been studying the culture of Siberian ethnicities for a long time, especially the nomadic Evenks living by the tributaries of the Yenisei River, I was able to observe the progress of the changes in the Evenk Autonomous Okrug and I was constantly confronted with the question of whether a real return to the roots is possible. The subject has brought me to the very beginning of the assimilation process that began in the 1930s; it interfered with the tribal structure of the Evenks and has not only led to forced russification, but also to an almost instantaneous shift from the nomadic to the settled way of life. I have attempted to reconstruct the process using the memories of its contemporaries. To this end, I have sought to avoid literature from that period as it largely served the purpose of propagation of the totalitarian system. In the wake of the physical liquidation of shamans and tribal chiefs — the biggest resisters of the 109 socialist regime — the traditional tribal system was also affected. ...