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Front cover: Portrait of a shüpi

Back cover: Shaman carrying drum on back

Photographs from: “A Drum in the Min Shan Mountains” by Michael Oppitz
(photographs by the author)

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Some Remarks on a Khortsin Shaman

WALTHER HEISSIG

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Recently published parallel versions of Inner Mongolian shamanic texts make it possible to tell whether the shaman is repeating the same formulaic phraseology in each of his many performances. The study of these texts shows that the Khortsin shaman uses fixed formulas for the beginning of certain parts, but to these he adds other parts born of the moment and of the circumstances of the performance.

In research on Mongol shamanism the question remains unanswered whether at each of his many performances the shaman repeats the same formulaic phraseology. Some years ago I tried to identify some of these similarities of expression in Mongol areas (Heissig 1992). The difficulty in comparing such texts was partly due to the fact that in most cases only one version of a shamanist performance has been recorded. Recently, however, the Inner Mongolian scholar Nima (1999) has published transcriptions, made in 1991, of performances by the shaman Gombojab (*1928), a Khortsin from Inner Mongolia. Consisting of two versions of an “Invitation of the worshipped” (*Sitiügen jalaqu*), one of 75 lines (version A, Nima 1999: 188–192) and a shorter one of 35 lines (version B, Nima 1999: 193–194), they make the comparative study of the performances of one shaman possible. In addition, Nima published texts of *Amur men dü asayūqu* “Greetings for peace,” *Sügüsü talbiqu* “Presenting offerings,” and *Bayumal takiqu* “Offering to descending powers,” each in one version only (Nima 1999: 195–212).

Both versions of the “Invitation” remembered by Gombojab begin with similar lines:

Version A:

Qaralya jüg-dü qai qai qai
 Qanduju beye mini-e qai qai qai
 Qara jüg-ün ejen qai qai qai
 Jalbariju bayina ki qai qai

Toward the door x x x
 Turning my body x x x
 To the lord of the black direction x x x
 [I] am praying x x x.

Version B:

Egüden jüg-tü e qai qai
 Ergijü beye mine kü qai qai
 Üdesi orui bolqu kü qai qai
 Jalbariju bayina kü qai ye qai

Toward the side of the gate x x x
 Is turned my body x x x
 When at high night x x x
 Praying.

The similarity of expression, however, continues for only a few more lines, as shown below:

A09: *Aquu ču bayırsayar* x x x
 B09: *Degegür yabuday* x x x

A10: *Arqay-tai bolba* x x x
 B10: *Degeü nökiid mini* x x x

A11: *Arban dabqur jobalang-tai bolba* x x x
 B11: *Döčin doluğan* x x x

A12: *Elgegen ču bayırsayar*
 B12: *Bayri nuğud mini* x x x

A13: *Ebedč'in-tai bolba* x x x

B13: *Bičiqan beye mini*

A14: *Yisiün dabqur* x x x

B14: *Dayadqaju bayina* x x x

A15: *Erigdeju irele* x x x

B15: *Bayirin-ača ban* x x x

A16: *Alay debel-tei beye mini* x x x

B21: *Alay debel-tei mini* x x x

A17: *Kičiged la* x x x

B17:

After this there are just sporadic similarities:

A34: *Eriyen debel-tei namayi-ben* x x x

B21: *Alay debel-tei beye mini* x x x

A34: *Eriyen debel-tei namayi-ben* x x x

B30: *Eriyen debel-tei-ben* x x x.

From there on the wording of both versions is different. This creates the impression that the shaman uses fixed formulas for the beginning of certain parts to which he adds other parts born of the moment and the circumstances of the performance.

In both versions Gombojab mentions his shaman habit, using the old term (one used quite often by all shamans) *Alay debel* “multicoloured habit.” We find, for example

Alay debel tei beye mini

“My body with colored habit.” (Nima 1999: 189)

In connection with another shaman it is again mentioned as

Alay debel-tei-

“Two with colored habits” (Nama 1999: 191).

But the other frequently used term for the shaman coat,

Eriyen debel,
“multicolored coat,”

is also to be found (Nima 1999: 189).

Gombojab mentions *Alay debel-tei* (Nima 1999: 192) and also refers to himself as *Alay debel-tei Gombojab* (*ibid.* 192), *Alay debeltei beye mini* and *Eriyen debel debel-tei* (*ibid.* 194). Such expressions are similar to those found in other Mongol shaman texts (Li sing böge 1982: 1).

In his second invocation (version B) Gombojab mentions his *yisün dabaya*, “nine difficult mountain passes,” referring to the fact that he had mastered the difficult examinations that come at the end of the shaman’s education. However, we find no Buddhist names or religions notions, which indicates that Gombojab did not belong to the Yellow Shamans, who incorporate lamaist notions in their prayers (Birtalan 2001: 119–121).

In recent years many shaman prayers have been published in Inner Mongolia, and using them to further our understanding of shamanism offers an exciting opportunity.

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Thoughts on Drugs in Eurasian Shamanism

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In this article some examples are highlighted in order to illustrate how common references to drugs are in the northern shamanism of Europe and Asia.

Initiated students generally consider that most shamans in northern Europe and Asia—that is, the area of classical shamanism—achieve their trance states through autosuggestion. This is a most plausible opinion. It has also given rise to the probability that this simple way of provoking ecstasy (which I equalize with trance) is the basis of all shamanism. It is not my intention to discuss this problem any closer. I do, however, think that the frequent use of drugs, poisonous mushrooms and other poisonous plants in Middle and South America is a secondary way of inducing shamanism, strengthening and even giving rise to the trance. An anthropologist like Alice Beck Kehoe thinks that what is generally called South American shamanism is not shamanism at all.¹ As we know the intense consummation of drugs in this part of the world has been sufficient to provoke trance and shamanoid reactions. In contradistinction to Kehoe and some other students I think that it is obvious that South American shamanism is a continued link in the chain of Asian–North American shamanic traditions. Robert Lowie has, among others, observed such a continuum (Lowie 1934).

As we look closer into Eurasian shamanism we find that the use of drugs is not uncommon in shamanic séances. Here I shall give some examples taken from some Arctic peoples, the Saami (Lapps), and the Samoyeds, and a few other Asiatic groups.

¹ Cf. Kehoe 2000: 4, 65.

Saami Artificial Shamanism

In a work that my colleague and successor in the field of Comparative Religion in Stockholm, Professor Louise Bäckman, and I wrote in 1978 (Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1978), we showed that up to the end of the nineteenth century the Saami provided excellent proof of a psychotherapeutic shamanism founded on hallucinatory visions and auto-suggestively provoked trance experiences. Indeed, Saami shamanism was very close to Ugric and Altai shamanism, as Holmberg-Harva (1927; 1938) has shown in his books on Siberian religions. Particular parallels are to be found in the shapes and picture contents on the magic drums. But the shamanic séances have also the same structures in Lapland and Siberia.

One of the first writers who tried to understand the psychology of the Saami shaman, the *noaide*, was the clergyman, Lars Levi Laestadius, who in the 1840's and 1850's visited the Norwegian and Swedish Lapmarks.² In his *Fragments of Lappish Mythology* (1997) he writes:

There is still among some Lapps a strange weakness of the nerves, or what could be called a peculiar disposition, to fall in an excited psychic condition from a slight cause.³ This makes it probable that, as older authors have related about their *noaide*, they fell in a sort of coma or magnetic sleep after a strange physical or psychic effort. During this condition the soul was exalted and, as it were, detached from its physical bonds, and became filled up with the most peculiar imaginations. I do not know if this super sensitivity could have been a consequence of their eremitic way of life, or of their diet, or of a hereditary disease disposition in the organism. It is certainly true that some Lapps—in particular old women—are very touchy and easily faint. (Laestadius 1997: 144 f.)

There are several descriptions of such experiences in the old sources. They glide sometimes over into real shamanic conditions as Laestadius himself demonstrates by quoting Knud Leem's account of a Norwegian Saami shaman's ecstatic fits. According to Leem (1767: 475–477) the shaman took off his cap, untied his belt and his shoestrings, then covered his face with his hands. Next he put his hands on his hips and turned from side to side, singing a song starting something like this: *Valamaetit berke: sjaattjatet venas*

² Cf. Jonsell et al. 2000.

³ On these remarkable states, cf. Hultkrantz 2000: 111 ff.

(put the reins on the reindeer, push out the boat). He threw glowing coals from the fire with one hand without being burnt, after which he drank aquavita^e and hit his knee with an axe. Thereafter he brandished the axe over his shoulders and carried it three times around his female assistant (*sjarak*). Finally he fell to the ground as if dead. He lay there in ecstasy for a long while.⁴ There is, in Leem's narrative no reference to any toxic substance except the drinking of aquavita^e. Now, the consumption of strong liquor has been rather common among Arctic peoples, and the Saami were used to the drinking orgies of their Scandinavian and Russian neighbors. Whether drinking bouts had a decisive impact on Saami shamanism is difficult to tell. Laestadius does not seem to have this opinion. He mentions that the "magnetic sleep" of the Saami shamans before a shamanic act was caused by their "secret intake of narcotic drugs," something that he finds "confirmed rather than denied." He gathers this from reading about the descriptions of the partly poisonous toadstool (known in our days as *Amanita muscaria*, in Laestadius' days more commonly known as *Agaricus muscarius* Lin.). Laestadius (1997: 208 f.) gives a short description of this mushroom and its influx at digestion.

There is also other evidence, from the Inari Saami in Finland, of the use of fly agarics "with seven dots" in preparation for shamanic ecstasy (Itkonen 1946: 149). It is true that the well-known Lappologist, Björn Collinder remarks that "the old sources are silent on this point" (Collinder 1949: 150). He obviously contrasts the Itkonen notice with the information from Swedish and Norwegian authors 300 years ago. Certainly, these writers do not always give complete information on the issues that they discuss, but the very mention of mushroom stimulation is enough to rouse our interest. The collected impression seems to show evidence of the use of *Amanita muscaria* for shamanic entrancement.

Several of the authors who have speculated on the role of fly agarics in Saami ethnology have pointed to similar customs among North Siberian peoples.

⁴ The lengths of ecstatic attacks vary in the sources usually between fifteen minutes and an hour, see Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1978: 97.

Artificial Shamanism among Samoyedic Peoples

Splendid examples from the Samoyeds and their close kin, the Selkups (or Ostiak Samoyeds) and other ethnies along the Ket River, illustrate our theme. In the years before the First World War a Hungarian linguist and ethnographer, Benedek Baráthosi-Balogh, made journeys to Siberia and Japan to investigate the indigenous peoples and their cultures.⁵ Among other things he collected ethnographica from the Samoyeds northeast of Archangel, on the Kanin Peninsula. Hoppál has published the following notice from Baráthosi-Balogh's work (written in Hungarian):

It would be rather difficult to establish a unified procedure as to how an average Samoyed becomes a shaman. All shamans are trying to prove somehow their call to the profession . . . In addition to juniper berries the candidates frequently eat fly agaric and other stimulants to make themselves more open to contacts with the spirits (Hoppál 2000a: 25; 2000b: 117).⁶

Soon afterwards the Finlandish (Swedish Finn) scholar Kai Donner passed through the Samoyedic area. He found that in many places the shaman, in order to easily fall in a trance, consumed some fly agaric.

The poison that these mushrooms contain is rather strong, and from my own experience I know that it is most potent. The savages also use it in order to get drunk in the absence of alcoholic beverages.

Donner describes how stillness ensues thereafter. The shaman demonstrates through forceful yawning how he slips into another world by going to sleep (Donner 1922: 139).

In the years 1911–1912 the Finnish scholar Toivo Lehtisalo carried out a linguistic expedition to the Yurak Samoyeds (or, as they are called today, the Tundra and Forest Nenets in northernmost Russia). His report after the journey has been much praised by the afterworld. Lehtisalo also mentions the use of fly agarics in shamanism, and has more to tell about it. He writes that:

⁵ Cf. Hoppál 1999.

⁶ The quotation is taken from Baráthosi-Balogh 1996: 63.

The magicians of the Forest Yurak knew about the use of fly agarics. They are eaten when they are grown and have been dried. The small mushrooms that lack hats are too strong, and it is said that a female doctor has died from eating them. Only those who know the origin of the fly agaric may find luck in eating it. If however somebody does not clearly see the spirits in the steam, he runs the risk of being killed by them or going astray in the darkness. (Lehtisalo 1924: 164 f.)

Central Asia: Shamanism and Lamaism

Similar mycological speculations can be found among Indian and Tibetan groups in Central Asia. Their mediumistic ideas seem to have been developed on a partly shamanic basis.⁷ Of course, there is here the complication of Mahayana Buddhism. Nevertheless, referring to T. G. Wasson's well-known work on the Indian *soma* and the fly agaric, Berglie considers *Amanita muscaria* to be the best solution to the riddle that *soma* presents to us (Berglie 1991: 25). If this is so both Indian and Tibetan use of fly agarics in ecstatic-raising purposes should be obvious. From most peoples who partake of the mushroom we hear of its power to induce both pleasure and hallucinations.

Berglie reminds us here of the use of this mushroom among two shamanic east-Asiatic peoples, the Chukchee and Koriak. The former experience hallucinations during their intoxication journeys into foreign worlds (Bogoras 1904–1909: 205–207; Berglie 1991: 24).

⁷ As Berglie (1976: 85 f.) has pointed out, our use of the term “Tibetan shamanism is a question of the breadth of the definition given to the concept shmanism.” Cf. also Tucci 1970: 268.

Summary and Conclusions

The above account provides us with clear information that drugs were commonly used as auxiliaries in Old World shamanism. The examples presented here have been derived from Saami, Samoyed, Tibetan (and Indian), Koriak and Chukchee shamanism but could certainly have come from other quarters as well. The wide distribution of this usage should not surprise us: if the way into the world of ecstasy or trance is the requirement for shamanic wisdom (as has been emphasized by many shamanologists, now clearly shown by Ulla Johansen, 1999: 41), then it does not matter if accessible drugs add to the possibility of entrancement. Such additional means in fact add to the personal confidence that the trance will be realized.

That this has been the goal of such medication should be obvious and has its counterpart in Native North American shamanism (which may be regarded as a continuation of Siberian shamanism). We may remember Paul Radin's interesting analysis of the Winnebago Indian who could not experience traditional spirits in visions, but had an awareness of spirits when he joined the Peyote religion and took part in the sacrificial meals of peyote during a nightly ceremony (Radin 1950).⁸ Now, the North American cases of potential aids from nature are not so outstanding that we can define drug-induced areas there. North American shamanism is on the whole a weaker partner of Siberian shamanism, particularly south of the extreme western and northern parts of the continent.

This kind of shamanism is in all likelihood the original type of shamanism. The drug shamanism of South America seems to be a special case stimulated by ecological factors, such as the affluence of narcotic growth accessible to humans in this continent. It is thus a secondary form of shamanism, but no doubt a very vital form. As far as I can see the original form of shamanism is preserved in the shamanic structure of the Northern Eurasian and Siberian areas, with their faint expressions of artificial shamanism.

⁸ Cf. also my commentaries to Radin's text (Hulkrantz 1997: 124 ff.)

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Researcher or Searcher: Studying Shamanic Behavior in the New Millennium

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The division between the researcher and the researched in studies of shamanic behavior is becoming blurred in the beginning of the new millennium. Western researchers, who themselves are searching for a new spirituality, find in the fascinating and “tangible” spirit world of the traditional shaman an answer to the holistic and ecological quest of urban dwellers. Whereas in the past missionaries, explorers and scientists all acknowledged their own cultures’ belief systems, today some Western researchers are in the words of Nietzsche “cramming themselves with the religions of others” and are not only undertaking research but becoming apprentices while performing it.

When Hans Egede in 1721 arrived on the West coast of Greenland and encountered the Greenlanders for the first time, neither he nor the Greenlanders had any problems recognizing that they represented completely different worlds. The Greenlanders would have met the crew of the occasional whaling-ship before the arrival of the Egede family but now they were confronted with a man who was prepared to live among them and have a direct impact on their lives. Hans Egede was first and foremost a missionary, sent out by the Danish king, and he could, therefore, easily establish the differences between the belief system that he encountered among the Greenlanders and his own strong belief in Christianity. He was a keen observer of the Greenlandic culture and wrote regular reports back to Denmark on his findings. Although, as a missionary, he saw it as his task to convert the “savages,” he nevertheless produced important information on his experiences with the Greenlandic *angakktut* or shamans. His account of Greenland and the culture of the Greenlandic people was first published in Denmark in 1741, later translated as *A Description of Greenland*, in 1818. He was a representative of the Enlightenment and saw it as his task to educate the “wild man.”

“It is a matter which cannot be questioned, that if you will make a Christian out of a mere savage and wild man, you must first make him a reasonable man, and the next step will be easier. This is authorized and confirmed by our Savior’s own method” (1818: 216). With strong determination Hans Egede and later his two sons, Poul and Niels, set out to educate the people of Greenland so that they would reject the teaching of their *angakkut*. Naturally, the missionaries felt completely justified in this endeavor by their own religious beliefs.

They should also be kept under some discipline, and restrained from their foolish superstitions, and from the silly tricks and wicked impostures of their *angekkuts*, which ought to be altogether prohibited and punished. Yet my meaning is, not that they, by force and restraint, should be compelled to embrace our religion, but to use gentle methods. Is it not allowed in the church of Christ to make use of Christian discipline at times and seasons, with prudence and due moderation; which is a powerful means to advance the piety and devotion? (Ibid.: 217)

The gentle education of the Greenlanders could, however, take on a corporal character, especially when Niels Egede narrated the difficulty he encountered when telling the Greenlanders about God. He describes how “obstinacy and coolheadedness are reigning strongly among these people” (1939: 242) and Niels did not shy away from beating an obstinate *angakkoq* over the head.

When the mission was established it naturally had a tremendous impact on the lives of the Greenlanders living near it and Hans Egede was very much aware of the pitfalls of the work of the missionaries. The link between cultures and the contamination by diseases had fatal consequences for the Greenlanders and led to serious reduction of the population. The mission-station itself changed the hunting pattern of a people who would normally travel over long distances hunting for food. Now the food was more readily available if the Greenlanders were prepared to convert to Christianity. Niels Egede claims in his writings that the Greenlanders were just exploiting the Danes as their worship of the Christian God was based on an expectation of food and clothes.

Niels Egede was in no doubt that away from the watching eyes of the missionary the Greenlanders quickly reverted to their old belief system and their respect for their *angakkut*. The Greenlanders’ manipulation of the concepts of the Christian God is also underlined in the writings by the missionaries as, to their horror, the *angakkut* were prepared to include

the Christian God in their concept of the spirit-world. The Egede family were observing and narrating the behavior of the *angakktut* in detail with the intention of showing the errors of their ways to the Christian officials in Denmark and of supporting the importance of their own work.

Only in one interesting manuscript by Niels Egede from 1769 is there a slight recognition of the possible existence of the spirits believed in by the Greenlanders. Niels Egede had to leave Greenland in 1743 because of health problems but returned in 1759. In this late manuscript the former missionary comes across as disappointed in the development of the mission, and he makes an interesting concession to the role of the *angakktut*: “that if any among them is found to be sensible it has to be one of their *angakoks*, or wise-men, because they seem to have some idea about everything (Ibid.: 246). To recognize that the *angakkoq* in his own environment had an important standing must have been difficult for the old man who in his youth had eagerly physically chastised these *angakktut*. Driven by curiosity Niels Egede arranged to participate in a séance performed by an old *angakkoq*, Kannak. Even though he afterwards claimed to the *angakkoq* that he had experienced nothing during the séance, he wrote the following comments:

But something was not right. I, who am now a bit deaf, felt as if something blew under me, and the rest of the audience also thought there was something, but could not hear any words clearly, so I let him stay in the belief that his performance of witchcraft did not work. (Ibid.: 262)

This Christian man is suddenly not so certain that there is no truth in the words of the Greenlanders when they claim that the spirits are surrounding them and can be called forward by the specially trained shaman. But even though Niels Egede might have doubted his own resilience against the persuasiveness of the Greenlandic séance performed at his request, ultimately he would always be a Christian, and it would not have crossed his mind to convert to belief in the spirit-world of the *angakktut*. They were still of a completely different worlds and their cosmology even more so.

150 years after the arrival of Hans Egede and his family on the West coast of Greenland, Gustav Holm, a naval officer and explorer, in 1884 sailed up along the East coast. Holm was the typical scientific researcher of the end of the nineteenth century who carefully collected the Greenlanders' own accounts of their spiritual life. Christianity had now

a strong influence on the West coast but, as the East coast had been more or less isolated, Holm met the old traditional belief system in full flow. In no way was he expecting to be converted to a believer when he participated in the séance of the *angakkoq* Sanimuinaq. He made detailed observations without expressing a personal experience except where he was directly drawn into the séance by the *angakkoq*. The *angakkoq* called forward the presence of the spirit Amórtortoq, which was believed to be a fearful monster with black arms. If anybody during the séance came into contact with these outstretched arms he or she would turn black and die.

It went with heavy steps about the house and on the platform and roared: “a—mo!, a—mo!” Everybody fled to the farthest corner of the platform for fear that the monster should touch one of them. It was particularly lingering round me, roared at me in the ears and tried to pull the skin on which I was sitting away as if to get me up in the corner with the others, but it succeeded only in tearing the skin. (1888: 126)

Holm does not believe that the any supernatural being is present and therefore is not displaying any fear, even though the *angakkoq* tries to scare him into submitting to the same behavior as the rest of the audience in the séance. He does not flee from the monster as he does not believe in its reality. He is a scientific observer not a participant and his writings reflect this position.

Knud Rasmussen, probably the most famous of the Danish explorers of the Eskimo or Inuit cultures, was born on Greenland and had Greenlandic ancestry. His father was a Danish vicar in West Greenland and Knud Rasmussen grew up in the Greenlandic environment. He spoke Greenlandic and felt a strong relationship with the culture. His encounters with the different shamans on his travels in Greenland, or specifically in the North American Arctic on his 5th Thule (1921–1924) expedition, reveals a respect for the wisdom of the peoples living in close relationship to nature. Instead of the white man having knowledge and wisdom to enlighten the “savages,” Rasmussen revealed a respect for and insight into the mythological and spiritual world of the people he encountered while sharing their life-conditions.

Knud Rasmussen undertakes most of his observations and descriptions of the Inuit culture after the Western world had just faced the atrocities of the First World War where the capacity of the destructive

powers of science had been displayed in full. The preparedness to listen to the spiritual world of other cultures was prevalent in the Western world at large with the blossoming of a more general interest in indigenous cultures, and in Knud Rasmussen specifically, both because of his childhood upbringing but also because Rasmussen himself was a spiritual man. His encounters with the Iglulik shaman Aua are revealing the explorer as the engaged questioner of the insight of the shaman.

Rasmussen describes vividly his participation in the séance of the shaman Horgarnaq (the whale baleen) among the Musk-ox people in the Western part of Canada. A storm was reigning which was threatening the settlement, and the shaman was called upon to perform a séance to master the evil powers at work. Horgarnaq instantly explained that he had only got a few helping spirits and thereby expressed the modesty that was necessary for the shaman to uphold the positive relationship with the spirit-world. Then he started to move about and stare with bulging eyes at the audience while entering into a trance state. He became more and more violent in his behavior and in the end he grabbed an old man, Kingiuna, and symbolically killed him in a battle while performing a wild dance. Knud Rasmussen describes how the two men on behalf of their settlement battle with the forces of the storm and finally all join in a song for the great mother of the sea, the spirit that can release the game so that the settlement can again hunt food successfully and its survival be secured. Knud Rasmussen is narrating this whole séance not as an outsider observing the superstitious ways of the natives with the intent to convert them to Christianity as the Egede family would have done, neither is he the detached observer as Gustav Holm, he is the true participant:

And suddenly it was as if all of Nature surrounding us became alive. We saw the storm riding across the sky packed with the crowd of naked spirits. We saw the fleeing hoards of dead people rushing through the waves of the blowing snow and all the apparitions and all the sounds was gathered in the beat the great birds' wings that Kingiuna had made us listen for. (1943: 107 f.)

Knud Rasmussen experiences alongside the Inuit participants the forces of the storm as that of the spirits, he is fully participating in the images called forward by the shaman and his assistant. On this very ride of the spirits he included his readers and thereby became a widely read narrator of the Inuit culture and its spiritual and intellectual world.

Western societies were curious and excited by these new spiritual experiences. Knud Rasmussen was writing to a very receptive audience and he captured their imagination with his own fascination and first-hand experiences of the spiritual world of the Inuit people. None of his readers, however, in the modernist world of the first part of the twentieth century would have expected to perform the same kind of *séance* in their own society in their own home. The fascination was of the otherness of the Inuit culture not of a possible belief in and incorporation of the Inuit spirit-world into the urban Western societies.

This rather brief account of three different periods of contact between traditional shamans on Greenland and Danish missionaries and explorers serves the purpose of showing that there has been a significant development in the encounters between traditional societies and the representatives of the Western world. The society that the visitors to the Greenlandic settlements themselves were part of and the audiences that they expected to address were indicative of the attitude that they displayed. The relationship between the Greenlandic people and their Danish visitors began as clashes between belief-systems and moved over the centuries towards exchange and respect, maybe reflecting the parallel demise in the importance of Christianity in the West.

In the twentieth century there seem to be a growing gap between the importance of religion in the Western society at large and the individual's need for a spiritual concept of the world, often "borrowed" from other cultures. Presently this development seems to have been taken one step further, to that of incorporation of traditional rituals and beliefs in the spiritual concept of the Western researcher. The research into the world of the shaman in the beginning of the new millennium is of a very different nature from the centuries before, in that there is generally among Westerners, often American researchers, a wish to share and sometimes even practice the techniques that the shamans apply when contacting the spirit-world. The researcher who experiences the *séance* is not only participant-observer but sometimes also a seeker himself of a new spirituality for the Western world, a spirituality which will satisfy a need for a holistic ecological concept of the universe. The lines become blurred between research and search as the observer is not only a participant but a potential apprentice. It is out of this kind of research that neo-shamanism has sprung, performed specifically by American anthropologists such as Michael Harner, the organizer of core-shamanism. The new core-shamanism for urban dwellers in the Western world is presented in course

form where the participants can learn techniques to contact the spirit-world. This kind of shamanic behavior which is taught at the courses can in its own right be studied by researchers.

As Mihály Hoppál points out in *Shaman. Traditions in Transition* there are at the turn of the millennium two separate tendencies in the research and the development of shamanism.

The societies in which shamanism can be observed as a living cultural presence, can be placed in two categories. One is shamanism in the traditional sense, where, in essence, the functioning of shamanism can be considered continuous. The other form of active shamanism today is urban or neo-shamanism. These new shamans are characteristic figures of the late twentieth century. (2000: 89)

The traditional shamanism, as Hoppál identifies, is mostly researched using ethnographic methods which are characteristic of European and especially Russian researchers. There is an extremely important and new division appearing in the research of shamanism. Whereas it is possible to differentiate between the researcher and the researched in the traditional methodology, the anthropologist who undertakes research in the neo-shamanic setting is less obviously different mainly because the courses or other forms of neo-shamanic behavior takes place within the researcher's own culture.

My own field work, which was conducted in the mid '90s in core-shamanic courses organized in Denmark and England can serve as an example of the above. In social anthropology the method of participant observation is generally applied to this kind of research. As a researcher I was not sitting outside the circle of Western people, who with a bandanna over their eyes, were instructed in journeying to the upper-, middle- and lower world of the spirits. That would have created a barrier between me and the rest of the group and it would probably not have been allowed to take place by the course-organizer, as it would have established in the course-participants a sense of their constantly being observed when they had highly personal and emotional experiences. I participated in the journeying to the different worlds on equal terms with the other participants, sharing in the circle with them what I had encountered. I was careful never to record at any stage personal experiences by the participants that they had not given me permission to record. My collection of data was either from the way the courses were organized and the concepts of shamanism that were taught by the

course-organizer or from taped interviews with the participants who were all informed about my role. I used in my thesis and subsequent book two versions of my own experiences with the journeying as a kind of prototypical examples. My own role as a participant was important in that I had a first hand experience of the language and the concepts that the participants were using when formulating their encounters with the spirit-world. This, however, did not make me a believer in this specific version of the spirit-world, as Ulla Johansen (2001) suggests in her favorable review of my book, but I can understand how such a conclusion can be tempting to draw.

When the journeying was taught it was explained in detail what was expected to happen, almost like a guided journey. The participant would travel from a known entry, i.e. a well or a cave in "ordinary reality" through a tunnel into "non-ordinary reality," which was often a landscape, a wood, a plain or the seaside, where the spirits would be encountered. The drumming lasted fifteen minutes with a specific "call back" sound. As a participant it is not difficult to undertake such a journey as everyone who has undertaken guided journeys will know. The interpretation of the experience, however, will vary according to the belief of the single individual. It might be seen as a semi-conscious dream state, as an encounter with archetypes in the collective unconscious or a true direct experience of the spirit world. It was, as a researcher, not my task to prove the existence of spirits; that would obviously have been impossible, but to record the nature of the courses/séances, and the experiences of the participants as anthropologists have done for centuries.

There is, however, a problem which will, as far as I can see, become more and more the general methodological problem of anthropological research namely that the researcher is not only a participant-observer, he or she is a participant in the surrounding culture and the people whom she observes see her as "one of them" even though the tape-recorder is playing. In some ways this opens up more information as was my experience when recording peoples' spiritual encounters but it also creates expectations of the involvement of the researcher in the group. When a specific serious problem between the group and the course-organizer's assistant arose in two courses in which I participated, several distressed participants chose to address their worries to me, as representing both a participant and an observer and I had to assess whether to intervene by informing the organizer. The course-organizer had also in his mind

included me as one of the followers of core-shamanism even though he was fully aware that I was undertaking fieldwork. This would hardly have happened to Hans Egede, Gustav Holm or even Knud Rasmussen. They were clearly part of another culture, although Knud Rasmussen very much participated and was invited into the core of the Inuit world.

Added to this problem is the fact that many of the course-organizers of neo-shamanic courses are anthropologists “gone native,” Carlos Castaneda and Michael Harner being probably the two best known. Several university-employed researchers writing about the New Age are themselves followers. When they review literature in journals or when they present new material this background of belief might be important information that is not always made manifest. The reaction to my own research has shown clearly that the followers are vulnerable to the slightest criticism. These are considerations that the anthropologists of the future will have to address when more and more anthropological work will be undertaken by researchers working among their own people.

Daniel C. Noel in *The Soul of Shamanism*, writes about Mircea Eliade’s own relationship to his research, that his factual writing on shamanism was significantly driven by imaginative priorities revealed in his fictional work *The Forbidden Forest*.

The fictive basis of the neoshamanism for which his work laid a foundation may have been a blind spot for a man who, though a fiction writer upon occasion himself, even a shamanovelist, was so thoroughly devoted to the world of “objective scholarship.”

Eliade’s scholarship did, however, acknowledge the importance of what he called “creative imagination” even if he did not always see how deeply it informed that scholarship. For the most part he kept these two areas separate in his own conception of his work as both a novelist and scholar, while praising the process in which he participated when pursuing the former role. (Noel 1997: 77)

Researchers of shamanism and shamanic behavior might ultimately be deeply fascinated by the mysterious spirit world of the shaman and, when researching this world, find a sounding board for their own spiritual search. If this is a subconscious process the researcher might not realize this, as is indicated above, but most researchers today will probably agree that the concept of “objective scholarship” is as fictional as any novel especially when studying religious experiences. The Western researcher in the new millennium may, as has often been seen recently

in a shamanic context, be a searcher in disguise because shamanism appeals to the Western imagination. Nevill Drury describes the experience of the neo-shamanic workshop:

However, one thing never ceases to amaze me—that within an hour or so of drumming, ordinary city folk are able to tap extraordinary mythic realities that they have never dreamed of. It is as if they are discovering a lost fairyland of cosmic imagery from within the depth of the psyche. During the “sharing” which is part of the workshops, all these marvelous revelations pour forth. So I am very much committed to the idea of urban shamanism, of encouraging modern urban dwellers to explore these realities. (1989: x)

These workshops do not only appeal to the participants in Western communities they are also now making a link for some traditional shamans with the urban environment and supporting attempts to revive the role of the shaman and of the shamanic practice. Michael Harner has established a close relationship with the people of Tuva and an exchange of knowledge is taking place. Harner mentioned on a course in London in 1996 how he had interacted with and been praised by the Tuvan shamans. As a Western course-organizer he needs their confirmation of his courses' authenticity, and the traditional shamans might need his knowledge of urban Western societies' spiritual needs in the present time of transition. Young people in Siberia or Greenland might even feel more at home in the method of contacting the spirits and the ethos represented by the core-shamanic courses. A young Greenlandic woman that I interviewed on one of the core-shamanic courses explained that she felt that she was more inspired by the North American Indian philosophy than traditional Greenlandic spirituality and when she did a course in shamanism a couple of years before she had profound spiritual experiences although there were no Greenlandic element in them; it was more a contact to indigenous peoples throughout the world. This is not surprising as this 33 year old woman was mostly brought up in Denmark, in an urban environment, even though her mother had tried to keep the Greenlandic mythology alive for her and her siblings. She, however, shared the urban experience with people all over the world and the highly profiled New Age concept of Native Americans was therefore more familiar to her than the traditional Greenlandic belief system.

The division between the two lines of research, mentioned by Hop-pál, that of traditional shamanism and that of neo-shamanism, might

become even more blurred as the continuing exchange between the two develop. The anthropological researcher of shamanism in the future might be Greenlandic, Malaysian, Siberian or Danish but their common background will often be urban and the belief-system tailor-made to their urban existence is, therefore, the Harnerian version of shamanism. Not only are the two strands of shamanism merging, the researcher is sometimes also the searcher of a shamanic concept of the world, with the influence this might have on research and the people that are studied.

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Shamanistic Philosophy: Soul – A Changing Concept in Tyva

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The original title of Mihály Hoppál's recent book on shamanism in Hungarian runs "Shamans: Souls and Symbols" (Sámánok: Lelkek és jelképek). Here he not only makes a rhythmic pun but indicates that different symbols and a concept of what European tradition calls "soul" are basic for the shamanistic complex. In his opinions he represents the present state of research (e.g. Hamayon 1990: 329). I shall dwell on the second of these two fundamental elements—the belief in souls in Tyva, a region in which he has carried through fieldwork in many years. However, neither "soul" nor "Tyva" are clear-cut scientific concepts.

The Tyvan Region

In 1922 Tyva was officially given the name of those peoples who call themselves, *tuva*, *tuba*, *toba* or *tyva*. Menges (1959: 641) claims that these are the offspring of the old Tu-po, mentioned already in the Chinese chronicle *Sui-shu* (581–618). But in more recent times Tyva was called "Uriankhai" by the Chinese, who ruled the country till 1911 and during some phases of the civil war between 1917 and 1921 using the Mongolian term for the inhabitants of the wooded regions in the North and Northwest of their territories. However, the country does not comprise only woodlands; it can be characterized as Maslov has it:

It is possible to meet in Tuva the tundra and beyond some passes the beginning of the Gobi desert. It is possible to meet there herds of reindeer and camels . . . the fragments of feudalism and clan structure . . . (1932: 142)

The dialects and somatic traits of these regions show considerable differences too (Menges 1959: 641). Already in 1966 only a small part—

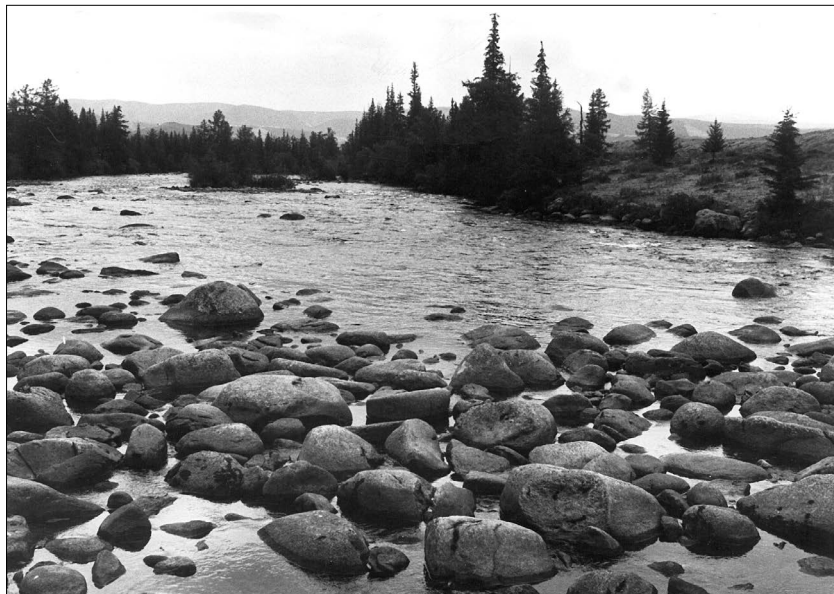


Fig. 1. Tuva landscape. Photo: László Kunkovács, 1990s.

about 15% of Tyvans—were really forest-people (Koshkarov: 1966: 4). Almost 85% of the population lived in the open steppes or even in the towns, mostly in the capital Kyzyl, and the tendency to leave the forest has increased during recent decades.

Besides these geographical differences, one should note that not all groups bearing the name *tuba* etc. can be regarded as Tyvans, nor do all those classified as speakers of the Tyvan language live within the borders of the Republic of Tyva. Its frontiers are drawn quite arbitrarily on the basis of the Chinese–Russian treaty of 1727. Parts of the hunting and fishing grounds of two clans, the Choghdu and the Khash, were left outside Uriankhai, both clans with the bifurcation into intermarrying moieties common in this area (Sanzheev 1930: 35; Vaïnshteïn 1961: 40; and also Radloff 1893. I: 208; Potapov and Menges 1934: 53, 82 f.; Diószegi 1963: 80), setting a white or yellowish group in contradistinction to a black one: Aq Choghdu and Qara Choghdu or Sarygh Khash and Qara Khash. In the nineteenth century Russian administrators called all these clan fragments Karagas like the last named group. Castrén (1855: 373), Katanov (1891: 87, 92) and Radloff

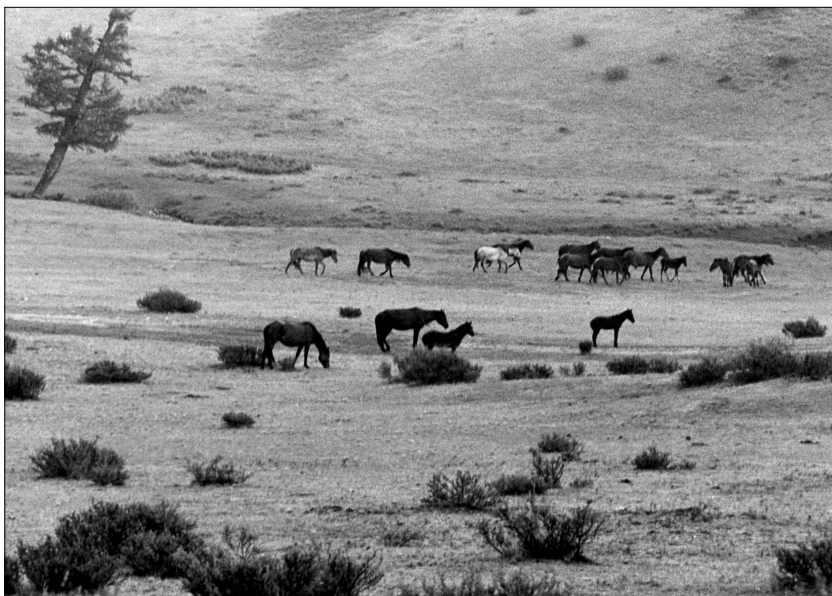


Fig. 2. Tuva landscape. Photo: László Kunkovács, 1990s.

(1893. I: 205 f.) stressed their partly Samoyed descent and their relationship with the population of Tyva, but nevertheless treated them as a different ethnic group. Their southernmost clan fragments in the Tunka Mountains, however, were not included in the Karagas, but looked at as a different tribe, because they were influenced mainly by the Buriats (Castrén 1855: 348; see also Klaproth 1823: 151; Menges 1959: 641). The same happened to the clans or clan fragments which live on the Mongolian side of Tyva's eastern frontier among the Darkhat or as Tyva-speaking reindeer breeders (Mong. *caatan ard*) near Rinchenlkhumbe and Ulan Ul in the Khövsgöl border region. Here too, among others, live clans, bearing the name Khash or Choghdu, here pronounced as Töt or Tödu (Potanin 1883: 12; Badamkhatan 1962: 3; Sanzheev 1930: 12 ff.; Diószegi 1961: 197; 1963: 73 ff.).

The name Khash has its root in a tribal designation, which is also the basic for the name of the "Kachintsy," the leading ethnic group of the Khakas. It was the word for 'person' speaking a Turkic idiom among the Southern Samoyeds (Sanzheev 1930: 22; Hajdú 1950: 94 f.; Joki 1952: 49, 54, 171 f.). Choghdu or Toghdu means 'reindeer breeder' from *tō*

‘reindeer’ in these languages (Joki 1952: 49). This word is the root of the name for the whole eastern half of Tyva with its reindeer breeding population, which is called Tozhu (Russian form: Todzha). In the Mongolian and Altai regions bordering Southwest and West Tyva we find the same situation: the frontiers cut through clan territories. In the mountains on the Siberian side of the frontier live Tuba and groups, who as a clan- or tribal name bear the Turkic word for swans, Qūlar, and further the large groups of Tölösh or Tülüsh and Telengit. These clan-names are distributed on the Tyvan side of the eastern Altai as well (Dulov 1951; 1956: map). In the south Taube (1992: 214; 1995: 145) met Tyva groups northwest of Khobdo in the mountainous area of Bayan Olji Aimaq, who had regular connections not only with their relatives in Tyva, but also to those on the other side of the Chinese frontier, in the Xinjiang part of the South Altai. To include all these different groups, who in the nineteenth century were still Tyva-speaking, I shall use the term “Tyvan region,” while retaining “Tyva” as the republic of the same name.

In view of these differences the question arises: can it be taken for granted that the religious conceptions about the soul are more or less the same among all the different Tyva groups?

The Sources

We have the advantage of being able to refer to old reports, which in a few sentences at least deal with concepts of what Europeans may call “souls” from all parts of the Tyvan region; besides these we have newer ones, which reflect the opinions of Tyvans before about 1950 from interviews with old people, whose philosophical thoughts were not yet heavily influenced by European/American religious conceptions. These are:

for the former Tyvan groups of the Darkhat: Sanzheev (1930);
 for the reindeer breeders near Khövsgöl: Badamkhatan (1962);
 for the Karagas: Katanov (1891), Vasil'ev (1910) and Alekseev (1980), quoted by Mel'nikova (1994);
 for Tozhu: Ostrovskikh (1898) and Olsen (1915);
 for southernmost Tyva: Potanin (1883) and D'iakonova (1975);
 for the Kobdo region: also Potanin (1883) and recently Taube (verbal information);

for the Ulug-Khem region of northern Central Tyva: Katanov (1900; 1907), Kon (1936) and Mänchen-Helfen (1931); and for the Khemchik region and westernmost Tyva: also Kon (1936), Mänchen-Helfen (1931), D'iakonova (1975) and Kenin-Lopsan (1987; 1993; 1994; 1997).

Most reports by Kenin-Lopsan, D'iakonova and Mänchen-Helfen, besides my own materials from 1996, however, refer to new conceptions, which show the cultural change introduced by Lamaism and in the last decade by modern American and European religious movements.

The most valuable source is the book by the historical anthropologist D'iakonova (1975). She collected her knowledge in the course of many excavation-campaigns in the *kboshuns* (provinces) of Süt-khöl, Möngün Taiga and Erzin (especially in the surrounding of Naryn), that is in the west, southeast and south of the Republic in the 50s and 60s of the last century. These excavations kept her for months at one place. Thus she learned the language and made friends with aged Tyvans from the countryside, who gave her detailed information during long, quiet private talks. The folklorist Taube also speaks Tyvan and lived for some months with Tyvans near Kobdo in the 70s and 80s of the last century. Potanin wrote the oldest source, the reports of his travels in 1876–1877 and 1879, as a geographer, but without knowing the language. Thus he makes only short remarks about the conceptions of the soul. Kon carried out his research in 1904, after seven years in *katorga* as a Polish socialist and twelve years' experiences in exile, as an anthropologist among the Yakuts and the Turkic groups in the neighbourhood of Minusinsk. He too could speak directly with his informants and as a trained anthropologist he wrote not only traveller's impressions, but carried out deeper interviews with Tyvan shamans and elders, mainly from the Oinar clan.

The other Western researcher, the Norwegian Olsen, in 1914 also preferred not to live, as was usual at the time, only at Russian trade-agencies, but rather to stay about a month with the reindeer breeders of Tozhu in the woods. However, he did not know the language and his main interest was in reindeer breeding. Ostrovskikh too has written only a short report on his stay in this area in summer 1897. Already eight years earlier Katanov, a Khakas philologist, who could converse with the Tyvans had stayed in Tozhu two weeks in spring 1889 collecting some texts at Safianov's trade agency in Saldam. Alas, there is no more detailed information about the conceptions of the Tyvans of Tozhu. But Katanov has collected many Karagas texts in 1890 and

a large amount of texts in 1889 by visiting different Russian trade agencies in Central and Western Tyva and interviewing the people in the neighbourhood. His book should be rated very highly as a source, because in it one can learn Tyvan philosophical thoughts as expressed by themselves. Mänchen-Helfen, a German anthropologist, who by the Russian–German agreements of Rapallo got the opportunity to live in the Soviet Union during the N.E.P.-period, travelled in 1929, mostly through the steppe-regions of Tyva, together with some commissars of Communist Party. Though he knew no Tyvan he gives very interesting political observations. As regards the religious convictions of the Tyvans, however, his situation of course did not allow him to speak frankly with the Tyvans. His information about their native religion is partly the result of an encounter with a shamaness at Khöndergey river, but to a great amount repeats Katanov's texts and other materials and Anokhin's (1924) data from the Altaians, but without acknowledging them, since his publication has the character of a popular itinerary. Thus Paulson (1958: 162 ff.) was in error in using this book as his main source for the concept of soul among the "Soyots." The two famous Mongolian investigators, Sanzheev and Badamkhatan, were able to give reports "from within" on the philosophy of, respectively the Darkhat in 1927 and the Tyvans from Khövsgöl from the 50s of last century, but this was not their main interest.

"Soul" and the Other World

The different authors dwell on the concept of soul in most detail in connection with the perception of death. After death the living person turns into another form of being. He or she leaves this world and goes to another one, which was mostly imagined as the realm of Erlik, the ruler of the Lower World, but looked more or less like the world of men, as the old Karagas thought (Katanov 1891: 145 ff. and 185; Vasil'ev 1910: 75; Mel'nikova 1994: 133). This was still the conviction of people at the Ulug-khem and the Khemchik too in 1904, when Kon (1936: 23) visited them. The equipment for the future lives of the deceased provided in their graves makes it obvious that this opinion was ruling in most parts of the Tyvan region till the twentieth century as well. In those of its provinces, which at the beginning of the century were already strongly influenced by Lamaism, and partly by Orthodox Missions peo-

ple believed in a causality of retribution in the world of Erlik. Sanzheev (1930: 44) refers to this as influenced by Buddhism among the Darkhat. Potanin (1883: 134) had noticed already in the seventies of the nineteenth century in the southern parts of Tyva that the souls of bad people had to go down to Erlik's cold and hot hells, while the good ones would live a pleasant life together with Burkhan. A decade later Katanov (1900: 229; 1907: Nos. 107, 108, 684) collected similar information from Tyvans living on the Khemchik and in Central Tyva: after a good person's death he or she goes to the country of the Good Creator, whereas a bad person has to go to Erlik and will be tormented in many ways, for instance by being bound to a column on stony ground and roasted in a low fire. The Lamas were said to be able helping him out, if they are asked and paid for reading prayers for him. All these data show an assimilation of the belief of the Tyvans to aspects of northern Buddhistic dogma in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

Similar beliefs in punishment or reward for the bad and good deeds of ones lifetime and the help of Lamas, were transmitted to D'iakonova in the Altai Mountains near the western frontier of the Tyva Republic and on the Khemchik river. A pious Lamaist believer added that good people are reborn immediately after a stay of 49 days in heaven, while bad ones never escape the sufferings in the Lower World of Erlik. In the south of Tyva some believers were of the opinion that the "country of the happy dead" was in the far south, in Tibet (D'iakonova 1975: 89 and 92). Earlier investigators in all parts of the Tyvan region, Potanin (1883: 134), Kon (1936: 23), Sanzheev (1930: 42), Katanov (1907: No. 190 from Tozhu) and similarly Mänchen-Helfen (1931: 78) as well as D'iakonova (1975: 46), learned that shamans or shamans' spirits do not leave this world after death. A single exception was one of Katanov's (1907: Nr. 684) informants from the lower course of the Khemchik river, who told him that the souls of good shamans go to heaven after death. All the other Tyvans were convinced that shamans' spirits live in the natural world around their graves. The shamans among their progeny were able to invite them to help during their séances.

Ordinary people were said to stay in the neighbourhood of their graves or their homesteads only for a certain period after death and to become dangerous for their relatives during this time. They did not want to depart from their earthly existence immediately. For at least three days they stayed at the place of their death and only slowly grasped that they were now dead, especially when they noticed that they did not

leave footprints in the ashes of the hearth when walking there. They did not want to leave their earthly homesteads alone, but to go to the Other World in the company of some of their loved ones. These relatives would become ill and die, if a Lama did not read prayers and send the aza (the ghost of the deceased) off to his new dwelling-place (Potanin 1883: 134). Another fact, which convinced the dead that they were no longer living members of their families, according to the Tyvans of the Ulug Khem region, was the fact that they no longer had a shadow (Kon 1936: 40). This dangerous period after death lasted 10 days, as conceived by the Karagas (Alekseev 1980: 16, see Mel'nikova 1994: 133). The deceased is provided with food and drinking during these days. In the regions of stronger Buddhist influence the period were said to be 49 days (Mänchen-Helfen 1931: 78; D'iakonova 1975: 59 ff.) and so was I told in 1996 in Kyzyl and the South of Tyva.

Tyvan Concepts Interpreted as Soul

Potanin obviously had no reluctance in insinuating that the Tyvan people had the same religious-philosophical concept of soul as he, a Russian geographer of the nineteenth century. This apprehension can be observed in the scientific reports from the following years too. Katanov (1900), as a philologist, writes in his general work on burial customs about the "souls" of the deceased, but only two (Nos. 684 and 29) of the huge number of texts which he collected in Tyva and among the Karagas actually make reference to "soul" *sünezi* in the meaning of "his spirit" (of a deceased). When living men are concerned, it is always the totality of a person that is mentioned, e.g. Katanov (1907: No. 254; 1891: 176) was told that dangerous spirits persecute "men," not their "souls." Even shamans told him about their visits to other worlds in the form of "I go to the country of Aza . . . the country of Erlik" or to the heaven, not "my soul goes" (e.g. 1907: Nos. 402 and 703, see also Nos. 348, 368, 1350/5, 8 and 10, 1351/8 and 14 and 1356, 4 for Tyva and for the Karagas Nos. 29; 1891: 222; and Ostrovskikh 1898: 429). A shaman from the Karagas near the River Uda recited to him the following verses of the text, which he used to speak at the beginning of a séance:

I continuously shamanize
 Going around the whole world!
 The animal, which I ride,
 Is the Maral.
 In farther and nearer distances
 I continuously go around and shamanize.
 I continuously see
 The ruler of the highest creation!
 I continuously see
 The Ruler, the Highest Lord!

Obviously he experiences travelling as a complete person, not as only an esoteric part of his being. In the early fifties of last century the Tyvan shaman Shonchu told the late Piotr Karal'kin that the eyes embroidered on his crown had the purpose of looking around in this world, while he with his eyes was absent in another world (personal communication). In recent times the shamanic texts collected by the best specialist of the shamanism of the Tsaatan, Badamkhatan (1962: 43 f.), reveal the same experience. Though Kenin-Lopsan (1997) writes about "souls," none of the *algyshbar* ('shamanic songs'), which he collected from aged Tyvan informants in the western half of Tyva, uses this term. On the contrary, these shamans too say "I" when they go to the world of spirits and speak to the ill, not to his "soul." Olsen avoids the term "soul" and writes only of "spirits" (1915: 99, 115) and so do both specialists for the Tyvan groups east of the Republic, Sanzheev and Badamkhatan giving the term *sünes* or *süns*. Kon (1936: 40) and D'iakonova (1975: 46) report that shamans turn to the deceased as whole personalities, when they ask them to leave this world and go to the Other World. D'iakonova (1975: 43) is very definite in this respect. She, who had the most intimate contacts to the Tyvans, writes always "soul" and argues: "This term was borrowed from higher religions and thus caused disorientation."

In the south of Tyva, near Naryn, amongst the clan of Chodu, who were stricter Lamaist believers, D'iakonova heard only the Mongolized words *öm* (from *amn*, *amin*, see Roux 1963: 73; Hamayon 1990: 551) and *sunus* (from *süns*), which may be translated as 'soul'. Since the theme of this study is limited to the Tyvan language, I shall give only a short report of the interesting syncretism of Lamaism and Old Turkic religion, which she deals with (D'iakonova 1975: 88 ff.). She was told that in every person there exist three *sunus*: *muu sunus* 'bad soul', *dunu*

sunus ‘middling soul’ and *sain sunus* ‘good soul’. The *muu sunus* and *dunu sunus* enter a person at the moment of conception and die together with their owner. The *sain sunus* comes into the mother’s womb through the navel not earlier than in the fifth month of pregnancy and enters the foetus through his nostrils. It lives in a person’s belt. Since children do not yet wear belts, they easily lose their souls, become ill and die. Most of D’iakonova’s informants thought it was the *sain sunus*, which was reborn after 49 days in a being about which Erlik and Burkhan decided together. In the intermediate time before rebirth only the very best people were allowed to live a very pleasant life in the highest of the 7 layers of heaven. The others waited at lower levels. The lower it was the worse was life there and the following rebirth. Many of D’iakonova’s conversational partners, however, already believed in only one soul, but obviously had no idea that this should be comprehended as the Buddhist concept of *karma*.

The first person who tried to understand the older philosophical anthropology of the Tyvans without prejudice was Kon (1936: 38 ff.). His data must be regarded as reflecting the philosophy of the population of Central Tyva and the Lower Khemchik region. His informants taught him that the vitality of men and animals can be discerned from their breathing *tyn*. If there were no breathing, life had ceased and the breath must have gone over into another being. An invisible power gets in and tears asunder the breathing of the dying individual, his *tyn*. This figurativeness of imagination has to do with the way the Tyvans use to slaughter their cattle by opening the thorax and tearing through the aorta, which is called “bridle of *tyn*,” as Taube has observed near Kobdo (see also D’iakonova 1975: 89 f.). Most informants told Kon that the ceasing of *tyn* shows that it dies together with the person or animal. The surviving principle is *saghysh*, the thought (Russian *мысль*) of a person. This genuine Turkic word is translated by Radloff (1960. IV: col. 269 ff.) also as ‘understanding’, ‘reason’, ‘memory’ or ‘contemplation’. Dreams result from it. Both vitality and reason of their fathers enter embryos at the moment of conception, but they do not make themselves conspicuous before the fifth month of pregnancy. Though *tyn* and *saghysh* are two principles they are inseparably bound to each other. Only at the moment of death does vitality, *tyn*, die, and the reason or the thoughts (*saghysh*), go over into another person. Other informants taught Kon that with the moment of death one cannot discern any more between vitality and reason. They fused together in the shape of *sünezin*,

the spirit of a person, which then has the ability to move around freely before it leaves for the Lower World. The third vital principle of human beings is *qut* 'good luck, prosperity, positive irradiation, happiness, health'. Especially children, who so easily may die in a society without modern health care need *qut*.

Saaya Sambu, born in 1908 in the Southwest of Tyva knew many shamanic texts, some of which were recited to heal childlessness. Kenin-Lopsan has published them. One of them, the following poem in alliteration (1987: 119) may serve as an example of the meaning of *qut*:

Saizanaqtap oinaar
Saryg bashtyg uruglarnyy
Qudu – kezbiin dilep tur men . . .

This means though not in as beautiful and poetic a translation as Kenin-Lopsan's literally: "I remain praying for the blessing of the happiness of Saizanaq (a Tyvan play) playing golden headed children."

D'iakonova, aside of Kon the best informed source, learned from aged people in West Tyva, who were not much influenced by Lamaism the same view, on human persona: *tyn* is looked at as the principle, which keeps a person alive, but *saghysh* too does not mean only thought and reason, but also, parallel to *qut*, energy and liveliness. The concept *sünezin* was explained to her as it was to Kon as the new existence of a person, a "personification of the deceased." It does not inhabit the living person, but lives somewhere in his surroundings during his lifetime and reaches him only after his last breath. Forty days after his death, when a memory feast has taken place, it becomes a *süne üzüt*, a 'cut off spirit' of the deceased, no longer at the centre of interest of the living, but having gone on the *üzüt chol*, the 'way of the cut off', cf. D'iakonova 1975: 45 f.). Only one source, Mänchen-Helfen's book adduces one more name for 'soul', *jula* (1931: 78). However, Mänchen-Helfen, whose problems I have already mentioned, has taken these data on "souls" completely from Anokhin's books on shamanism of the Altaians (1924: 19 f.; 1929: 254 ff.).

Comparing the meanings of the words *tyn*, *saghysh*, *qut* and *sünäzi* or *sünäzin* with the denotations of the same terms in other Turkic languages makes obvious striking parallels. The word *tyn* with the same meaning is distributed not only in the languages of all South Siberian ethnic groups, but even among the Uighurs. In modern Turkey it is still used in its negative form as *tynmamaq* 'to be absolutely quiet, not



Fig. 3. An Uriankhai shaman. Photo: László Kunkovács, 1990s.

to react'. In its figurative sense the word signified already among the medieval Comans 'life' and *tynly* meant liveliness (Radloff 1960. III. col. 1312 ff.). It is not necessary to dwell on this Old Turkic conception further, since Clauson (1972: 512) and Baskakov (1973) have done this already, though without a critical attitude towards their own concepts

of soul. It should be added that even in the Yakut language *tyn* has the same significance (Seroshevskii 1896: 667; Pekarskii 1927: col. 2948 ff.). This shows that already in the time of the Orkhon inscriptions, before the ancestors of the Yakut were separated from the bulk of the other Turkic groups, *tyn* had been a fundamental concept.

The distribution of concept *saghysh* 'reason' is the same as that of *tyn*. In the South Siberian Turkic dialects it has the same denotation as in Tyva. Thus Radloff (1960. IV. col. 271 f.) gives the following examples of its meaning in Teleut: *saghyzhy yätpäs* "his intelligence is not sufficient," *saghyshqa kirdi* "he understood" or "he remembered" (lit. "it entered his reason"), *aq saghyshtu* "with a white reason, honest" or *qara saghyshtu* "with a black reason, malevolent." It is to be found already in the Orkhon inscriptions (Nadeliaev et al. 1969: 486 f.; Clauson 1972: 812, 814) in the form of *saqyn* or *saqysh* with the significance 'thinking, meditating, remembering and mourning', but also 'calculating' and 'counting'. In the *Qudatghu Bilig* of 1069 is said e.g.: *qutadmysh kishi kör saqynmysh kerek* "a person, who has got qut must be thoughtful" (Clauson 1972: 813).

This sentence gives also an example of the use of *qut* in Turkic texts. Baskakov (1971: 4 see also Nadeliaev et al. 1969: 471) sums up the denotations of this word as 'happiness, welfare, bliss, prosperity, luck, success, beatitude, worth, greatness'. A very important meaning in medieval Turkic texts is 'blessed' just as in the West-Tyvan shamanic poem, which Kenin-Lopsan published. This concept too is spread among all Turkish groups (Radloff 1960. II. col. 990 ff.; Baskakov 1971: 3 f.) as far west as Anatolia and in the east again among the Yakut (Seroshevskii 1896: 667). Verbitskii (1893: 78) gives the example of its use: a barren soil is said to have lost its *qut*. Anokhin (1929: 253 ff.) learned that the Teleut considered it as especially important for the embryos and growing up children.

The word *sünä* is to be found among Turks of the Altai and some Khakas groups as well (Radloff 1960. IV: col. 804 f.; Räsänen 1969: 436), meaning always 'the spirit of a dead'. The word may have to do with *sünö* 'picture'. *Sünäzin* in Teleut has the same denotation, but is in its form likened to Mongol. The word has no other parallels in Turkic languages and can be derived from the Mongol concept for spirits of the dead separated from the body (Räsänen 1969: 340; Baskakov 1971: 2). In modern Tyvan it is confined to Lamaistic religious meaning (Pal'mbakh 1955).

Looking over all these data, it becomes obvious that a person was seen as an entity in which natural powers, evident mainly in the breath *tyn*,

and intellectual abilities—reason and reflection—*saghysh*, were bound together inseparably. It could be seen moreover that some persons had a special temperament, good luck or irradiation, especially children. They were said to have much *qut*, which is translated in the Tyvan–Russian dictionary of Pal'mbakh (1955: 253) as ‘animating power’. Some *qut* is necessary to everyone. To loose ones *qut* is explained in the dictionary as ‘to be in panic’, which means to loose orientation. Kon was told in death only *tyn* dies. The term *sünäzi* or *sünäzin* means the spirit of a deceased person, whose memory is still very lively in his group as if he continues to take part in the everyday life—only his body does not move any more. His personality seems to be without a body. This is experienced as a special form of social life. After this first period of mourning the deceased seems to become distanced from the everyday life of his loved ones, he has become a *sünä üzüüt*, a cut-off spirit of the dead. This unbiased conception of the human persona seems close to modern interpretations based on the inference that all cognitive processes are developed by the brain, a part of the body, not by bodiless power, much closer, indeed, than the soul conceptions of the world religions, which reached Tyva in the eighteenth and more powerfully in the nineteenth century.

The Influence of Soul-Concepts of World Religions

For educated Buddhists it is the amorphous power of the deeds of men which survives after death, not the personal traits as is characteristic for the European and Near Eastern concept of soul. This Buddhist conception of *karma* seems difficult to imagine. Its popular interpretation results in a notion comparable to the European concept of soul in those parts of the Tyvan region under strong Lamaistic influence. It is called by the Mongolian term *suns*, *sünes*, or *sunus* or near Kobdo *sünäzin*, as Taube has noted. It is the only “soul” in the cognition of Lamaist believers among the Darkhat and Tsaatan, as Sanzheev and Badamkhatan stated, and in South Tyva. The Tyvans in the neighbourhood of Naryn, however, divided *sunus* in three kinds of which only one was believed to survive after the death of its owner. This may be seen as a sort of continuation of the old Tyvan perception of many compound principles, which together compose a personality.

As is well known the European conception of the soul as an autonomous being reached its full development in the Platonic philosophy of a dualism of soul and body in the fourth century B.C. This dominating European

“soul and body problem” developed further in the Neo-Platonism of the 3rd century A.C., thereafter winning popularisation and continuation in the Christian dogma of an immortal human soul, imprisoned in an earthly body with a tendency to sin, especially to sexuality and gluttony. Later philosophers as Descartes and Leibniz, and even Spinoza, could not change the fact that European popular cognitions concerning the nature of man were dominated by this body and soul dualism intentionally or unwillingly. Thus I found during the time I lived in the Soviet Union that most eager socialist party liners, though they confessed to be atheists and historical materialists, often used the term “soul” in this dualistic sense, or spoke quite seriously of “the Russian Soul.”

The Christian mission had a deep influence on the Altaians and Khakas in the neighbourhood, but before World War I began to produce an effect on Tyva, officially a part of the Chinese Empire till 1911, only among the Russian settlers who flowed in since the end of the nineteenth century. The Russian missionaries and even anthropologists were not prepared to find among the Siberian Turks a concept of the human person other than their own. Even Anokhin, author of the most interesting study of soul conceptions among the Altaian Turks, writes at its beginning “In the view of the Altaians men consist of body and soul” (1924: 19) though his following text shows the opposite. The missionaries took *tyn* as translation of the soul-concept of the Orthodox Church, which had obviously problems in finding the right word for its dogma of one soul. The missionaries reverted to the European concept of breath, the invisible movement of aspiration, as a marker for the soul, which has been basic to the Indo-European and Hebrew image and nomenclature for the soul. To express the concept of Holy Spirit they chose Aru Tyn or Ary Tyn (Radloff 1960. III, col. 1312 f.) ‘clean breath’ or ‘spirit’. It is obvious that this does not render the original meaning of the term *tyn*.

Anthropological Soul-Concepts

Were the anthropologists more objective? Mänchen-Helfen, who was charmed by Tyva and its inhabitants wrote nevertheless as a summary of their conception of souls, which he vainly had tried to reconstruct from Katanov’s and Anokhin’s data and his own observations:

My attempts to clarify the contradictions, to adjust the conceptions, failed. This only made the people uncertain. When already in earlier times concepts like Tyn, Sünä and Yula were not as exactly delimited as Aristotelic Logic demands it (because the Tuvinians of course had no need for dogmatics), they now have become even more inexact, wavering and ambiguous through Buddhistic teachings on rebirth. (1931: 78)

Alas, this arrogance, which denies the need and the ability of non-industrialized societies to think logically and to have their own and interesting philosophy, is not an isolated case. Even Sanzheev, himself a Buriat patriot, writes “philosophy” in quotation marks when dealing with the ideas of the Darkhat (1930: 41).

This arrogance has its own history. It culminates with the evolutionistic ideas of the nineteenth century. It cannot be the task of this short paper, however, to give an exhaustive overview over the discourse on concepts of soul in the course of evolutionistic and post-evolutionistic anthropology from the last 130 years. I studied it with the help of the critical and stimulating M.A. thesis by Rappe (1989). He indicates e.g. that European dividing form of analysis cannot explain Chinese holistic thinking. As is already well known Tylor held the view, within the scope of his theory of the evolution of religions (1871: ch. xi–xix), that in societies representing primitive stages of mankind a plurality of concepts existed. In further developed stages, concepts which explain vitality on one hand and mind, spirit or image on the other could be distinguished. People of high civilizations in which he of course included nineteenth century Europeans, perceived that only one soul exists in every body. After Wundt (1912: 203 ff.) had tried to develop these conceptions further, it were Arbman and his prominent students Paulson and Hultkrantz who tried to support these more theoretical ideas through historical studies and solid field data. In their writings the dualism of body and soul was transformed into a dualism of body-souls and free-souls. But they were not bound to evolutionistic theories any longer and Hultkrantz, the surviving representative of this important centre, frankly discusses the uncertainties of the use of the term “soul” for concepts of non-industrialized societies outside Europe. He does not even hold the view that there is a worldwide soul-dualism any longer (Hultkrantz 1984: 30 ff.). In analyzing the concepts of the Tyvans the book by Paulson must be studied, who by his early death was deprived of the opportunity to develop his conceptions further. Characteristic



Fig. 4. An Uriankhai shaman. Photo: László Kunkovács, 1990s.

for the earlier Swedish School is Paulson's conclusive view on Tyvan soul-conceptions:

The life-soul, which is conceived in the breath and simply in life, was called *tyn* among the Soyots. *Yula* and *sünä* both designate the soul that appears outside the

body (free-soul), though *yula* as dream-soul and soul of the shaman has more claims to the right of being called an original or primary free-soul. *Sünä* was perhaps originally a me-soul, which now functions among the Soyots, however, as a sort of psychological or secondary free-soul. (Paulson 1958: 162)

Without regard to the shortcomings in the criticism of sources and linguistic analyse these sentences show the almost ridiculous efforts to adapt Tyvan philosophical conceptions of the human persona to the author's preconceived doctrine on soul concepts. They force him to "perhaps" and to have Tyvan concepts compete for the "right" of the first or second place in his opinion as "primary" or "secondary freesoul." Paulson just as Eliade (1957) is wholly unaware of his own prejudices, though the most important scholar before them, who studied Siberian religions in general, Harva, had already warned: "We fail, if we together with Tylor comprise our own acquired concepts in the belief in souls of the primitive people" (1938: 252) and used the term "soul" referring to convictions of Siberian peoples only within quotation marks.

Tyvan Soul-Concepts of Our Days

If a serious researcher like Paulson had difficulties in overcoming his own predispositions to pay proper respect to the conceptions of Siberian peoples, this can be expected even less from the ordinary people, who in their thousands immigrated to Tyva after second World War. The next serious sources after D'iakonova's studies in the 50s and 60s are the books of Kenin-Lopsan (1987; 1993; 1994; 1997), written already in a more or less post-Soviet period. So far as they deal with the present, they show that in the meantime a fundamental religious change has taken place. Kenin-Lopsan learned from his informants—with exception only of four, born in the years of the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—that there exists a special *urug-qudu* 'children's *qu*' and besides that every person has a "soul" *sünezin*, which survives after death. Shamans can then speak to them. They establish contact with the deceased especially on the 7th and the 49th day after death, before the dead person leaves for his rebirth. I obtained the same information in 1996, when my informants told me that the souls are tiny and transparent little images of the person. Thus I learned that the concept of soul had become the same as in Europe. True, I made the mistake of asking directly what they thought

about souls. Alas, I did not put the question cautiously in terms of their general conceptions of the human persona then (Johansen 2001). In the same way Kenin-Lopsan writes only about the soul and uses the word *siinäzin*, which has a Mongol and Lamaist provenance.

Maybe this is the result of the mission of the new religion of Core Shamanism, which has become influential in Tyva during the last decade. An article by Budegechi, published together with Kenin-Lopsan's (1994) for instance propagates the teaching of this movement: "This world is inhabited by Sky Deities and souls of good dead people . . . The Lower World . . . is . . . the residence of souls of bad dead people . . . He (the shaman) helped to renew links between a body and a soul, between a man and the Cosmos." And the author complains, that the "crude materialism has boiled down a man to just the visible limits of his organism . . .", but "shamans . . . restore the broken cosmic conscientiousness of present-day man and the natural integrity of his being" (Budegechi 1994: 15, 16 and 17). Besides Islam and Jehovah's Witnesses, this is now the newest wave of missionary action in Tyva leading its population to a global religious network.

Conclusion

The Tyvan region is suitable for the study of Siberian and Central Asian philosophical anthropology in its original form, because until the first half of the twentieth century it was at least partly outside the areas influenced by world religions. Sources from this period reveal that the Tyvans originally understood human beings as entities in which nature, manifest mainly in the breath *tyn*, and reason, *saghysb* were bound together inseparably. Besides this, they called the positively evaluated abilities of a person and the special vital power of children *qut*. After death, a person who lived forth in the imagination of people, turned into a spirit of the deceased, called *siinäzin*. These considerations were nearer to modern conceptions of philosophical anthropology than the Christian body-soul dualism. In the areas of strong Lamaistic influence, mainly in the east, southeast and southwest of the Tyvan region, folk interpretations of the dogma of rebirth had led to a belief in one soul already at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Europeans, who have been used to a division of body and soul for about 2,000 years, were not able to comprehend another view of

the human person. The Orthodox mission in the Altai, which needed a term for 'soul', chose *tyn*, which was in fact the less suitable concept. Anthropologists were soon convinced that they had found a belief in souls among the Tyvans, because they were not able to think in another way than in their traditional channels. Thus body-soul dualism survived even in Soviet times. It was modernized by the anthropologists into a dualism of "body-souls" and "free-souls," though it was difficult to maintain even this view, because in many cases "body-souls" were also imagined as moving freely during the life time of their owners. Shamanic travelling was interpreted by anthropologists as a "soul-journey." I did so myself, I must confess. But there exists not a single text from the older Tyvan shamanism, in which a shaman says: "My soul flies . . ."; they always declare: "I fly . . ." Articles by Chernetsov (1963) and Gracheva (1984) make it obvious that the pre-Christian conceptions among the Ob-Ugrians and Nganasan must have been similar to the old Tyvan apprehension of the human person.

Though deeply reflecting persons such as Harva, or D'iakonova, who have done special fieldwork for long periods, have already warned against use of a European concept of soul to explain Siberian or Tyvan beliefs, it even has become basic to the new, fashionable religion of "Core Shamanism," which, indeed, does not reflect anything other than traditional European/American body-soul dualism (e.g. see Harner and Harner 1999). But this religion has had, and still has, a strong influence on Tyvan neoshamanism, which has now, in the time of globalisation, fully accepted the European conception of one soul as its foundation.

Can research on original shamanism exist without using the falsifying neo-Platonic concept of soul as crutches for understanding the real philosophy of the shamans? I feel it will do even better without. But it may be a severe blow for the new religious movements, which teach their communities shamanic soul-flights, to discover that originally shamans never believed in souls.

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Inspiration or Instruction? Shaman-Training Institutes in Contemporary Korea

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This paper addresses the question of whether anybody can attain shamanhood. The author seeks an answer in contemporary Korean society, where shamanism has persisted despite the recent industrialization and great advancement in science and technology. In this age of information, when knowledge can easily be acquired through instruction, can anyone learn to become a shaman? Her field experiences suggest that spirit descent, an integral part of Korean shamanism, is a reflection of the shaman's psyche, and closely linked to his/her volition. Her findings also suggest that only those with a certain inherent predisposition are able to experience it. She therefore concludes that despite the emergence of shaman-training institutes in Korea in recent years, inspiration, not instruction, is of the essence in shamanhood.

Introduction

The predictions by various researchers of shamanism (e.g. Shirokogoroff 1935: 402) in the earlier part of the twentieth century that shamanism would disappear completely with the advancement of science and technology, have not come true. On the contrary, there are signs that it has been re-emerging in various societies in recent times (Diószegi and Hoppál [eds] 1978/1996; Heinze 1991; De Rios 1992; Joralemon and Sharon 1993).

As of November 2001, the Royal Anthropological Institute library in London lists 386 books on shamanism in European languages, a large proportion of which are in English, but also in German, French, Spanish, Hungarian, etc. What is surprising is the fact that of those about 240 books (about 62%) were written in the 1990s, and some in

this millennium. That suggests the global existence of active shamanic practices in the contemporary world.

Shamanism, which is essentially an archaic socio-religious phenomenon, has always reflected the social structure and ethos, adapting its practices to social change. How then is it maintained and transmitted to the new generation of shamans in today's rationalized scientific world? More to the point, how does the shaman get recruited? Does modern technology have a new bearing, if at all, in the way shamanhood is initiated and maintained? Does advanced information technology mean that anyone can become a shaman through learning shamanic techniques?

It is an axiom that there are two ways of recruiting the shaman, namely by heredity and by "divine election" or "call from the spirits," which is manifested through various visions, illnesses and misfortunes. It is also generally accepted that once prospective shamans have decided to accept their destiny, they receive help from the spirits who actively give them clear guidance through visions, dreams and also by spirit possession (Shirokogoroff 1935; Eliade 1951/1964; Halifax 1982; Hoppál and Sadovszky 1989; Drury 1989; Vitebsky 1995; Diószegi and Hoppál 1978/1996).

However, this initial selection does not automatically qualify a person for shamanhood. In societies with a long established shamanic tradition, a lengthy period of vigorous training under a teacher shaman called spirit mother/father is a prerequisite for attaining shamanhood (Eliade 1964: 116 *passim*). A classic example of Van Gennep's liminality (1909/1960), this apprenticeship is often described by aspiring shamans as painful and arduous. The Korean shamans, collectively called *mudang*, traditionally go through a similar period of training under a teacher shaman called *shin ōmōni/abōji* (literally 'spirit mother/father') (Yi Nūnghwa 1927/1991; Akamatsu and Akiba 1938; Akiba 1950/1987; Yu 1975: 281 *passim*; Harvey 1979; Kim Ta'egon 1981: 62 *passim*; Hwang 1988: 23; Kendall 1985: 58–60 *passim*; Kendall 1988; Vitebsky 1995: 67).

Is this method of attaining shamanhood still relevant in contemporary South Korea, which has undergone a complete metamorphosis from a hierarchical agricultural society into a democratic industrialized nation-state? It is inevitable that changes should take place in the method of attaining shamanhood as in other aspects of shamanic practices. It is therefore to be expected that the traditional method of serving a long arduous apprenticeship under an experienced *mudang* in virtual servitude, has undergone some form of modification. My research reveals

that there are signs in some quarters that individual apprenticeship is gradually being replaced with group lessons in a classroom environment.

Murayama (1932: 157–164),¹ a Japanese colonial government officer who studied Korean shamanism during the Japanese colonial rule, mentions the existence of a training school in the southern provinces for hereditary *mudang*.² However, Choi (1991: 59) claims that such schools no longer exist in contemporary Korea, although she mentions an institute which offers four-week courses to interested laymen and some “advanced *mudang*.” My research refutes Choi’s claim, since I have visited three institutes which specialize in training neophyte *mudang* in Seoul. Two of them, in particular, are solid establishments with veteran shamans as teachers and a fair number of registered students who regularly attend the lessons.

Does the existence of *mudang*-training institutes mean that anybody can become one by merely attending classes? On the one hand, it seems possible. Some of my informants have told me in the field that anyone can become a *mudang*, if you associate with them long enough and if the conditions are right (Hogarth 1998: 138). Indeed many of my family and friends have expressed a concern, albeit jokingly, for the possibility of my becoming a socially lowly and despised *mudang* while researching Korean shamanism. They have repeatedly asked me: “Aren’t you afraid that the shamanic spirits may choose you to descend on?”

On the other hand, various scholars have noted that even when heredity is involved, not everybody can join shamanhood. Apparently a prospective shaman has a certain inherent predisposition; he/she is often sickly, psychologically unstable, introspective, moody, solitary, anti-social, and is prone to prophetic visions and dreams from early childhood. Akiba (1950/1987: 65) also writes that even in families of shamanic lineage, some people can never become *mudang*, however much they want to, or try to be. Spirits apparently only descend on a person with certain psychic orientations, which enable him/her to mediate between them and the humans. We will try to find out which

¹ Cited in Choi 1991: 59.

² There exist mainly two types of *mudang* in Korea, the inspirational type called *kangsinmu* (god-descended shaman) and the hereditary type called *sesümmu* (hereditary shaman). The former is the norm north of the River Han and some parts of the east coast, whereas the latter are prevalent in the south. For more details see Hogarth 1998; 1999.

is closer to reality through analyzing my field data collected through participant observation.

In sum, this paper analyzes the results of my research into the contemporary shaman institutes in Seoul, to divulge how much of a shaman's abilities are acquired through learning, as opposed to spontaneously bestowed inspiration, which I will call "the gift," in contemporary Korea.

Sources of Shamanic Abilities

Does the shaman acquire his/her special psychic abilities in later life, or are they inherent in him/her? Existing studies on shamanism reveal various results.

Cross-culturally there are basically two methods of recruiting the shaman, namely through divine election and heredity. However, since even in the latter case, the spirits "elect" those with a certain shamanic predisposition, being out of the ordinary, often sickly, solitary and introspective (Shirokogoroff 1935; Eliade 1951/1964). They have visions and dreams in which they have direct contact with the supernatural world. Therefore the boundaries between the two are often blurred.

It is also more or less universally found that a prospective shaman's journey through life is fraught with difficulties, most notably the loss of loved ones, health, employment and other financial resources (Akiba 1950/1987; Ch'oe 1978; Harvey 1979; Kim T'aegon 1981; Kendall 1988). This is generally interpreted by those involved as the spirits' way of forcing him/her to serve them, offering no alternatives.

My research among the Korean *mudang* reveals that they are without exception unfortunate people who have suffered great adversities in their lives. Since there are many people in similar situations who do not become *mudang*, what emerges is the fact that shamans are people with a strong character as well as inherent psychic abilities. Only those who have surmounted all the troubles and tribulations usually accompanying the spirit descent succeed in attaining shamanhood (Halifax 1982).

If the shamanic abilities are inherent in people, is there a need for their apprenticeship? Some, for example, Kwön, claims that they do not need any special training, since all they have to do is to follow the instructions of their tutelary spirits (Hogarth 1998: 120). Indeed in the early stages of their profession, when the most important task that they

have to perform is fortune-telling or to give advice to their clients about their future, all that they have to do is to consult their tutelary spirits for guidance. However, through its long history Korean shamanism (generally called *musok*) has developed into such a highly artistic and intricate form of religion that it is not possible to rely on direct inspiration from the spirits alone. Rather like musicians, who have to master the techniques before exercising their power of inspiration, the *mudang* have to learn the techniques involved in their chosen profession.

As Eliade said, shamanism is the “technique of ecstasy,” which is multifaceted and culturally patterned. In most cases, entering into states of trance/ecstasy requires little instruction for prospective *mudang* who already possess such abilities. However, what should be learned is the socially accepted method of reaching such a state, and formalities surrounding it. Since the mode of instruction varies according to social change, we will first examine the changing structure of the Korean shamanic community.

Changing Structure in the Shamanic Community in Korea

The Korean shamanic ritual, called *kut*, is the most important element of Korean shamanism. It would not be too far-fetched to say that without mentioning it, Korean shamanism cannot be discussed. Since the *kut* is the manifestation of the human devotion to the spirits, it is highly labor intensive, as well as extremely expensive.³

In pre-modern Korea, *mudang* relied entirely on the help of their spirit sons/daughters and close relatives, in preparation and management of *kut*. That is still to a large extent true, but there have been many changes.

These days, Korea is a newly industrialized and urbanized modern nation-state with great technological advancement. Modern conveniences, such as electrical appliances, are readily available. Butchers and supermarkets deliver sacrificial drinks and food, as well as other paraphernalia needed for *kut*. Neophyte *mudang* often have cars now, which means that they can prepare ritual food in advance in their well-

³ For a detailed discussion of the reciprocal relationships between humans and the spirits, see Hogarth 1998.

equipped modern kitchens, and transport it to the ritual place in plastic containers. *Kut* are also most often held in commercial ritual halls, which provide food and render much assistance for a fee.

These days, many neophyte *mudang* are reluctant to serve arduous apprenticeship under spirit mothers/fathers, being able to make quite a lot of money since they are thought to have more psychic powers. Therefore they become independent much sooner than in previous times. For example, Pak Ino, a veteran Seoul male shaman (*paksu*),⁴ with a large number of students (also called his spirit sons/daughters), has a quick turn-over of them, since many of them leave after only a few months. Several of them confided to me that they did not want to serve under him, since they could only expect a tiny income, although it was they who “booked” the *kut* for their own clients through divination in the first place.

Being financially independent early on is all very well, but after a while many of them realize that their skills are woefully inadequate, and that they have much more to learn about *kut* and its technicalities. Since they do not want to give up their newly-found freedom thanks to financial independence, the ideal solution for all concerned appears to be a training institute. It has many advantages. The neophyte *mudang* can keep their independence whilst training, and they can benefit through easier networking and pervasive community spirit. It also provides them with social occasions, through sharing food and conversations and other forms of relaxation during and after class. When a fellow student has an initiation ritual (*naerim kut*), they have an opportunity for hands-on practice by performing a part in it. Teacher *mudang* also benefit, since they get regular extra income and respect due to them as teachers, as well as a sense of achievement.

In the next section we will examine the three *mudang*-training institutes to gain insights into the psychic and social makeup of *mudang* in contemporary Korean society.

⁴ *Mudang* and *paksu* are direct terms referring to Korean shamans, but carry derogatory connotations because of the long existing prejudice against them. *Mansbin* is a more polite term, but is not so universal a term. I use *mudang*, since it is the most generally used term for Korean shamans, and I personally think that the stigma attached to the *mudang* will diminish in time.

Three Shaman-Training Institutes in Contemporary Korea

Currently the best organized and most active society of Korean *mudang* is Taehan Süggong Kyöngshin Yönhaphoe (The Korean Spirit Worshipers' Association for Victory over Communism), the largest of the three officially registered societies of *musogin* (*musok* people).⁵ Founded by an ex-politician called Ch'oe Namök in June 1970,⁶ it currently boasts over 40,000 registered members, with some 183 provincial.⁷ It is based on the ideology of anti-communism, as shown in the inclusion of "Süng-gong" (Victory over Communism) in the name.⁸ All *mudang* regularly go on a pilgrimage, called *sangido* (literally 'mountain prayer'),⁹ to high mountains to supplement and strengthen their spiritual/psychic powers. Since *mudang*'s rituals mainly take place on remote mountains, which are favored sites for North Korean agents' covert activities, they have had plenty of opportunities to spot and help capture the latter. Since its foundation, the society has been awarded many commendations and prizes by the government for contributing to the capture of North Korean agents. It seems quite clear to me that the situation is that of exchange, i.e. there exist reciprocal relationships between the South Korean government and *mudang*, the former giving a seal of official approval to the latter, in return for which the latter contribute to maintaining national security. Capturing North Korean agents also serves the purpose of self-protection for *mudang*.

The *mudang*-training institute, which first had the official sanction of Taehan Süggong Kyöngshin Yönhaphoe is called Musok Bojonhoe (Musok Preservation Society), run by one of the vice-presidents, Pak Ino, a veteran Seoul shaman. It is situated in the basement of the three-storey building which contains the offices of Taehan Süggong Kyöngshin Yönhaphoe. The number of students fluctuates between 20–40, their ages ranging from 20 to 50. The classes begin at 7 p.m. and finish around 10 p.m. The hands-on practice sessions consisting

⁵ Literally meaning 'musok people', it is a term of self-address preferred by *mudang*.

⁶ However, the society was officially registered in January 1971.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of the societies of shamans, see Hogarth 1998: Chapter 6.

⁸ For a detailed account of the society's activities, see Chang Hogün 2000.

⁹ Shamans in other societies are also said to reinforce their powers through visiting mountains and rivers. For example, shamans in northern Peru (Joralemon and Sharon 1993: 28).

mostly of singing and dancing last about two and half hours, with the last thirty minutes allocated to the theory of *musok* and questions. According to Pak Ino, all the students have experienced spirit descent, some having already done *naerim kut* (initiation ritual) and some being on the verge of doing it. However, they still had to learn the basic skills for performing *kut*. As of 1993, the fee was around ₩ 70,000 per month, with some fast learners mastering the arts in three to four months. What is amazing is that even *kongsu* (the spirits' messages sent through the possessed shamans) is also learned and practiced. Apparently although the contents of *kongsu* are sent by the spirits, the format, i.e. the vocabulary and the tone of voice, etc., have to be learned. Mr. Pak sits at the front facing his students, and sings and dances with them. That way he and his more advanced students lead the less experienced ones, who by copying them improve their own instrumental and vocal skills.

Mr. Pak also uses a textbook which he wrote, entitled *Chōnt'ong Hanyang Kut Kōri* (Traditional Seoul Kut Procedures). In the introduction of the book (Pak 1990: 6), he succinctly sums up the reasons why there is a need for such an institute: "Although the spirits give us inspiration and insights, the ways and means of putting them into practice must be learned." The book gives the novices a clear guidance as to the correct way to practice *musok*. It describes the basic principles of *musok* as venerating and paying proper homage to the Heavenly, Earthly and Human gods, ancestor worship, abandonment of self and emptying of one's mind,¹⁰ and the ancient Chinese cosmology of *obaeng* (The Five Elements). It explains various shamanic practices such as fortune-telling, ritual procedures including dance movements. It also contains the transcriptions of usually orally-recited *mudang* songs, such as the "Ballad of the Abandoned Princess" (Pari Kongju Muga).¹¹

I first visited Mr. Pak's institute in 1993, and have made similar calls on a number of occasions since. What hits me each time I visit is the changing faces of the students, which suggests that a long apprenticeship under the same teacher *mudang* is perhaps slowly coming to an end. What is interesting is the continuing existence of the fictive kinship

¹⁰ This concept clearly suggests a strong influence of Buddhism on Korean shamanism.

¹¹ For a complete English translation of this ballad, see Hogarth 2001: Chap. 6.

system, the students calling Mr. Pak, *aboji* (father) and referring to one another as *shin tonggi* (spirit sibling).

In 1993, I also visited a much smaller-scale, albeit possibly older, institute in Seoul, run by a musician called Kim Chongdök. Although not a practicing *mudang*, being of shamanic lineage, he was well versed in all aspects of *musok* practices. He used a textbook written by himself for *mudang*, called *Hanyang Sön'göri* (1989), which includes a history of Korean shamanism, classification of the gods and spirits, fortune-telling methods, *kut* procedures and transcriptions of the "Ballad of the Abandoned Princess." However, it is not written in any systematic or organized way. On the day when I visited his institute in a seedy room situated in a ramshackle part of central Seoul, he had a Korean traditional musician called Kim Chonghüi (b. 1918) who gave me some interesting comparisons between shamanic music and other forms of Korean traditional music.¹² Kim Chongdök, however, did not appear to possess the social skills of Pak Ino, and that day there was only one middle-aged lady student present, who just stayed for a short while. The fact that he is not a practicing *mudang* who can actually show them what to do may have something to do with his lack of success as a teacher. After the visit, I lost contact with him, and do not know whether he still runs his institute or not.

The more successful Musok Bojonhoe (Musok Preservation Society), however, recently seems to have lost the full approval and backing of Taehan Süggong Kyöngshin Yönhaphoe, because of Mr. Pak's fall from Mr. Ch'oe's favor, following a minor financial scandal involving the former. Mr. Ch'oe's current favorite appears to be Hong Kwangun (b. 1958), a veteran Seoul shaman, who possesses great dancing, singing and social skills. He is a good example of the newly-emerging generation of better-educated dynamic *mudang*, and even has an email account. He often officiates in public shamanic rituals praying for rain and the reunification of the two Koreas.

In January 2001, he opened a new institute called Chönt'ong Minsok Wiwönhoe (Traditional Folklore Committee), in eastern Seoul, which has long been an area where *mudang* reside. The students ranged from 20 to 50 years of age, proportionally younger than those of Musok

¹² For details, see Hogarth 1998: 40.

Bojonhoe, and generally better educated. Mr. Ch'oe told me that most of Mr. Hong's students held a high school diploma.

In the next section, we will examine the most recently opened *mudang*-training school in Seoul.

Chōngt'ong Minsok Wiwōnhoe (Traditional Folklore Committee)

Can shamanhood be entered through instruction alone? An extended evening that I spent at Mr. Hong's institute as the sole invited guest and participant observer provided me with an excellent opportunity to try to find an answer to that question. Let us first briefly examine the events that took place that evening.

It was Friday, 12 January 2001, a bitterly cold day with the daytime temperature hovering around -17°C . It had been snowing heavily for the previous few days, and Seoul took on the look of a city in Siberia. Despite the gloomy arctic conditions outside, the room inside was warm, clean and bright, the institute having been opened only a few days before. The lessons took place in a well appointed room with mirrored walls, and decorated with the usual symbols of contemporary Korean shamanism, such as the Korean national flags, calligraphy of the Chinese character *pul* (meaning 'the Buddha'),¹³ long strips of *osaekch'ōn* (long strips of five-different-colored cloth), etc.

The students arrived more or less on time, around 7 p.m. There were 18 students in all, predominantly female with only four male students, making the female : male ratio 78 : 22. Interestingly enough that is consistent with Kim T'aegon's rough estimate and also with my previous research results (Hogarth 1998: 100).

To my surprise and delight, one of them, in fact the oldest member, turned out to be Kim Hūisu (b. 1949), the ex-wife of Cho Charyong (real name, Cho Yongjin: b. 1946), ex-vice president of Taehan Sūggong Kyōngshin Yōnhaphoe. Apparently, they had got divorced following

¹³ The Buddha which is represented in various forms is one of the most important symbols in Korean shamanism. For a detailed discussion of the extensive syncretism of Buddhism and shamanism in Korea, see Hogarth 2001.

Mr. Cho's affair with one of his spirit daughters, and his wife had experienced the spirit descent soon afterwards and become a *mudang*. During my two previous visits, I was unable to make contact with her, but promised myself to track her down in one way or another. Oddly enough I wrote in my book (Hogarth 1998: 121–122) that she had a distinct shamanic predisposition, but did not practice as a *mudang*, mainly because she was involved in it anyway through her husband. Mr. Cho often said that she would have become a *mudang*, if he had died of blood cancer in his twenties as the doctor had predicted. As it happened, with the help of the spirits, he had miraculously recovered from his terminal disease, and had “employed”¹⁴ the spirits ever since.¹⁵ After their separation and subsequent divorce, she suffered the usual fate of a prospective shaman, illnesses, loss of fortune, etc., which forced her to become a *mudang*. She was fascinated to hear that I had actually written about her shamanic predisposition in my book. She also seemed to be overjoyed to see me, and confided to me that she decided to attend Mr. Hong's classes, because she wanted to improve her dancing and singing skills as well as learn more about the theories.

The students got dressed in red *top'o*¹⁶ and sequined red *kat*,¹⁷ the costume normally reserved for the Mountain Spirit. According to Mr. Hong, he made them wear proper costumes, since it made them feel as though they were participating in a real *kat*, thus making the practice more effective. The class was assembled in several rows, rather like a dancing class, with the wall facing the students entirely covered with mirrors. Mr. Hong positioned himself at the front, where he gave lectures, demonstrated various dances and also played the hour-glass drums, to the accompaniment of which most dancing took place.

Many of the students already knowing the basic dance steps, the lessons consisted of mainly rehearsal-like practice sessions. What I call “possession dance,” which is a frenzied dance involving twirling and jumping up

¹⁴ Mr. Cho prefers to use the term *shin-ül purida* which literally means ‘use/employ/manage the spirits’, instead of the more generally used phrase ‘serve the spirits’. In other words he insists that he is the master of the spirits, rather than vice versa.

¹⁵ For details of Cho Charyong's biography, see Cho 1996a; 1996b.

¹⁶ A tradition formal outer wear for gentlemen, it is often used as costumes for gods.

¹⁷ A gentleman's headgear resembling a top hat, its is secured with two pieces of string tied under the chin. It is usually made of horsehair and comes in black. Red ones are only used for *kat*.

and down immediately prior to the spirit descent, was repeatedly practiced. The dance was followed by *kongsu*, the spirits' messages through *mudang*, which usually begins with *ō utcha* in the Seoul area *kut*. However, the practice ended with that phrase, since apparently the rest of the *kongsu* was the domain of the spirits, and need not be learnt.

Mr. Hong's classes differed from Mr. Pak's in that the former concentrated on the dancing practice while Mr. Pak combines dancing, singing and playing of the instruments in more or less equal measures. Rather like a ballet teacher, Mr. Hong gave individual attention to his students, going around the room, pointing out students' mistakes and correcting them. Every so often they all sat down, and Mr. Hong explained some of the dance movements or other aspects of *musok* practices. About half way through, the students had a break with snacks and drinks brought in by some of the senior members.

After another long session of group dancing practice, three ladies demonstrated the routine choreographed by Mr. Hong. They had been chosen to perform at the *kut* to be held on the 30th of March on top of Nam-san,¹⁸ to pray for the reunification of the two Koreas. Kim Hūi-su,¹⁹ Cho Charyong's ex-wife, was one of the group, being the eldest and considered to be one of the best of Mr. Hong's students. To the uninitiated, this shamanistic dance program closely resembled any traditional Korean dance. The other students had a rest, while watching the chosen trio rehearse the fairly long and intricate dance routine.

I soon noticed that Ch'oe Pokhūi, one of the most experienced *mudang* of the group, was performing a similar dance, albeit her own creation, right behind the group. She was an excellent dancer, almost every bit as good as the trio. When I asked a male *mudang* sitting next to me what she was doing, he told me that it was Ttok-Suni (literally 'Smart Suni', Suni being a popular girl's name) who was dancing, not Ms. Ch'oe. He went on to explain to me that Ttok-Suni was a bright little girl spirit who ran errands for Ms. Ch'oe, often conveying messages to the *mudang*'s tutelary spirits. It struck me as amusing that Ms. Ch'oe, who was not included in the trio of chosen dancers, should join them unofficially on the side with her impromptu free-style dance, but nobody seemed to care. It seemed to me that a mild grudge that Ms.

¹⁸ Literally 'South Mountain', which is situated on the centre of Seoul.

¹⁹ Korean women traditionally keep their maiden names even after marriage.

Ch'oe possibly bore about having been excluded, might have played a part in the sudden descent of Ttok-Suni on her. Displaying her dancing skills to the onlookers might well have helped alleviate her frustration.

The class ended when the trio finished their rehearsal at around 10.30 p.m., and a few packed up their bags and went home. However, about a dozen of them stayed behind for an after-class party, to which I was most warmly invited. Despite the lateness of the hour and the treacherous road conditions outside, I was persuaded to stay, particularly after Ms. Ch'oe told me that Ttok-Suni wanted to play with me and show me how well she could sing.

What followed was an informal jolly party with plenty of food and drink. After an evening of exertion, the students relaxed completely sharing rice wine, soft drinks, cold roast pork, nuts and other snacks, as well as various banter and jokes. When the atmosphere became very mellow, there was the inevitable round of singsongs. One of the first to volunteer to sing was Ms. Ch'oe, or to be more precise Ttok-Suni, "The little girl spirit," sang very well, interspersing her songs with various short dialogues with Ms. Ch'oe whom she called "my Mum."

Suddenly a neophyte shaman in her thirties, called Yi Sunok, jumped up and started talking in a little boy's voice. Being one of the youngest of the group and a new *mudang*, she had stayed right at the back and had been almost invisible, except for the fact that she was a strikingly pretty woman with regular features, smooth skin, and a tall slim figure. "The little boy spirit (*tongja*),"²⁰ who so suddenly descended on Ms. Yi, started playing around with Ttok-Suni, playfully arguing with the little girl spirit, chipping in with "his" childish songs, etc. The little boy spirit's sudden descent on Ms. Yi can be said to be a parallel to that of Ttok-Suni on Ms. Ch'oe. Being a junior in terms of age and experience, Ms. Yi would have had to wait for a long time before her "proper" turn came. Her subconscious wish to join in the fun as soon as possible might well have caused the little boy spirit to descend on her, enabling her to chip in almost immediately.

After that all order and "propriety" vanished. On one corner another shaman, started dancing to their songs. The whole thing was spontaneous and natural, and everybody present took it as a matter of fact.

²⁰ *Tongja* is one of the spirits that most frequently possess *mudang* these days. It is often said to be the spirit of the *mudang*'s close relative, such as her dead son or nephew.

While all this was going on, the rest of the group continued to eat, drink and converse. It looked as though the party would continue throughout the night, but I had to leave this fascinating scene at around 1.30 a.m.

What I witnessed that evening confirmed my view that shamanhood cannot be attained merely through learning. As we saw earlier, all the students have already experienced the spirit descent in one way or another before registering at the institutes. Nobody teaches them how to contact the spirits. What they learn is merely the technique involved such as singing, dancing and the mode of speech, etc.

Conclusion

South Korea, one of the few places on earth where shamanism has been continuously practiced over the centuries, has recently undergone dramatic changes in her social structure. Almost completely vanished is the rigid social hierarchy with little social mobility. Good educational opportunities exist for most people, which enable them to escape from the social class into which they were born.

Strangely enough, however, *mudang* are people who still believe that they cannot escape their destiny. Despite the breakdown of the rigid social class system, the stigma that has long been attached to *mudang* persists, and they are still socially shunned and marginalized. *Mudang* themselves, especially older ones, are often ashamed of their profession, and do not reveal their true identity to their neighbors, and in extreme cases even to their relatives, especially their in-laws. What Akiba's *mudang* informants said is still true in contemporary Korea: "Nobody wants to engage in this profession which is so despised by people. One is obliged to do it, because to disobey the spirits means certain death (Akiba 1950/1987: 65)."

Conversely, not anybody can become a *mudang*, since the most vital element in shamanhood is "the gift," i.e. special abilities that enable one to enter another reality, which is neither seen nor felt by ordinary people (Siikala 1978; Winkelman 1992; Merkur 1992; Joralemon and Sharon 1993; Hines 1993; Gray 1997). Harner (1973; 1980) seems to believe that another reality exists and claims that anybody can practice shamanism with appropriate training and help, such as group coaching and hallucinogens. However, I cannot say that such a reality actually exists, since I

have never experienced it. On the other hand, I cannot absolutely deny its existence, just because I am personally incapable of getting in touch with it. What I can say for certain is that only those born with such abilities can attain shamanhood. Whether such a gift is born out of sensory deprivation or extreme stress, or a mere psychopathy is also hard to say categorically. My experience suggests that despite the existence of *mudang*-training institutes in contemporary Korea, a person who can competently mediate between humans and spirits is born with the gift. Since in Korea two of the most important means of this mediation are singing and dancing,²¹ a person who is to become a great *mudang* is also naturally gifted in those areas.

As Cho Charyong, a veteran male shaman, said (1996b: 20–21), no amount of learning can create true *mudang*, but studies are necessary for them to interpret the divine messages correctly and convey them to the humans in a socially accepted manner.

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²¹ The Chinese character meaning 'shaman' is *mu*, which depicts two people linking heaven and earth through dancing.

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Dispelling Dullness

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Trance, spirit possession, and soul travel often define shamans, characteristics that also distinguish the shamans of Western Nepal, whose ceremonies and oral texts make frequent and elaborate references to such thoroughly shamanic aspects of their practice. In contrast, a ceremony performed to treat yal, a specific form of madness, is marked, both ritually and textually, by the absence of such exotic attributes. Yal may be glossed as an inhibiting disconnectedness from the surrounding everyday world, of losing sight of the purpose of one's daily life. For cases of yal, the shaman's cure emphasizes entirely ordinary activity, the creation and re-creation of ordinariness. The chief insight that the recital offers is that "being ordinary" takes work. One is not ordinary as some innate virtue, not through an ingenuous normalcy. Being ordinary, no less than being extraordinary, is the practical consequence of sustained, consistent, deliberate, and relentless working at doing "being ordinary."

Often, spirit possession, soul travel, and ecstatic states characterize a shaman's performance and treatment. These characteristics are comprehensively prevalent in the ceremonies of shamans of Western Nepal (*jhāngarīs*), and the oral texts that they recite make frequent and elaborate references to such thoroughly shamanic aspects of their practice. In contrast, one particular ceremony performed in the Bhuji Valley¹

¹ The past forty years have seen major political and social changes throughout Nepal, including democratization of the political system and the introduction of a biomedical-orientated primary health care system based on Western models of medicine. In the area where the late John T. Hitchcock conducted a major part of his research, the Bhuji Valley of western Baglung District, primary schools have been established. There is now a high school and health post in Burtibang at the base of the valley, the confluence of the Bhuji and Nisi Rivers. During the past ten years there has been a growing social movement concentrated in Rukum, Rolpa and Jājarkoṭ Districts immediately to the west

to treat a specific form of madness (called *yal*, also pronounced ‘yel’ or ‘hel,’ and referred to by some shamans as ‘*ālaṅ mālaṅ lagnu*’), is marked, both ritually and textually, by the complete absence of such exotic attributes. *Yal* may be glossed as an inhibiting disconnectedness from the surrounding everyday world, the dullness of inertia, of losing sight of the purpose of one’s daily life. For cases of *yal*, the shaman’s cure emphasizes entirely ordinary activity.

of the Bhuji Valley, inspired by Mao’s theories of peasant communism, as developed by Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge and the Sendero Luminoso of Peru. Formally, a “People’s War” was declared in February of 1996, now fought between the Maoists and the police force of the central government. Through most of this area, including Dhorpatan and all of Western Baglung, the Maoists continue to be winning, and the police have withdrawn to the district centers. Until late spring of 2000, there were police posts in Burtibang and Galkot, but the police withdraw from all outlying posts to Baglung District Center after these posts were dynamited by the Maoists when the police, perhaps not by accident, were all absent on patrol. Although the Bhoji Valley is not a Maoist stronghold and in recent elections has consistently supported the mainstream (or, if one were to prefer the vocabulary of the Maoists, “revisionist”) United Marxist Leninists, various new Maoist-dictated policies increasingly disrupt the normal flow of daily life in the Bhuji Valley. Land can no longer be bought or sold, usury and dowries are forbidden, while alcohol production and consumption are increasingly risky, with a threat of public beatings for offenders. As many of the Maoist cadres are women, gender relations are also rapidly changing, with wife beating now punished by disciplinary community beatings.

Preceding the Maoist movement by two decades, Christian missionaries destabilized the same adjacent area, concentrating on the Magar communities around Taka, at one point even constructing an unauthorized landing strip, provoking years of violent confrontations between pro-Christian and anti-Christian factions and filling the jail in Pyuthan with self-proclaimed “martyrs.”

Earlier still, beginning in 1959–1960, immediately following the Dalai Lama’s flight from Tibet, the Swiss organized the resettlement of Tibetan refugees in Dhorpatan (mistakenly reported by Toni Hagen as “empty”), which is still the traditional summer grazing lands of Bhuji Valley herders, placing severe stress on the traditional patterns of transhumant economics at the time of John T. Hitchcock’s first visit to the area in 1961.

Despite these diverse social forces, there are few changes in the ritual healing practices practiced there, or throughout the complex rather misleadingly called “Dhaulagiri shamanism” (Oppitz 1991; de Sales 1991). See also Lecomte-Tilouine 1993, and Watters 1975 for other comparisons. Although condemned as superstitious anachronisms by the Maoists, shamans continue to fill important therapeutic roles in Western Nepal, where they diagnose problems, treat afflictions, and restore order and balance to the lives of their clients and their communities. Each of these efforts by shamans incorporates extensive oral texts, texts that document the ongoing concerns of a traditional society and preserve methods for solving medical and social problems.

Much shamanic activity focuses on the extraordinary, but in contrast, the text and ritual used to treat *yal* bounds a discursive space in which being ordinary, normal, and healthy are not only clearly defined, but which is filled with meticulous examples. The text delineates by exclusion the surrounding disordered spaces of the extraordinary, the abnormal, and the unhealthy from the daily life of well integrated, socially competent members of families and of society. Shamans, it will be seen, not only undertake to cross borders between this and other worlds in the service of their clients, they also actively and deliberately negotiate the crucially important borders of health and normalcy.

Yal is not the madness of uncontrolled spirit possession, nor of lost wits (although both also treated by shamans, using, however, oral recitals and rituals very different than those discussed here), but the everyday madness of irresolution, the overwhelming too-much-to-do-ness of keeping up the appearance of being ordinary. The theme of the recital used to treat *yal* is precisely the creation and re-creation of ordinariness. Its crucial insight is that “being ordinary” involves effort and must be worked at to be sustained. One is not ordinary as some innate virtue, nor through some effortlessly “natural” normalcy. Being ordinary, no less than being extraordinary, is the practical consequence of sustained, consistent, deliberate, and relentless work, the work of doing “being ordinary.” As cultural anthropologists insist, there is no irreducibly basic human “nature,” no pure natural state outside of culture’s influence. Everything that we do, including the most everyday, trivial activities, involves the work of culture. The shaman text recited as the central feature of the curative ceremony titled “Dispelling Dullness” demonstrates a clear understanding of the work of culture, as the text upholds the virtues and skills of being ordinary, coupled with a detailed presentation of the efforts involved. It concentrates on the most ordinary of daily household activities, illustrated by descriptions and corresponding gestures, of producing a variety of items. Miniature baskets, hairbraids, combs, sieves, and winnowing trays are all woven by family members of the patient, each prepared as the ceremony proceeds, each act demonstrating the family’s commitment to re-integrating the patient into their life, each item a metonymic reminder of that life. Finally, the ritual climaxes with the patient encircled several times by a tray filled with these items, the alienated patient literally woven back into the social fabric.

A re-establishment of order characterizes each treatment by a shaman, whatever specific affliction they address. Far more than being an enemy

of witches or of demons, a Nepali shaman is an enemy of chaos, of disorder and worldly deterioration. In relevant circumstances, uncontrolled spirit possession is cured by exorcism, lost wits are sought for and recovered, witches are bargained with and placated. Yet in each case, beneath the accidents of the situation, it is the order and balance of the world that most centrally concerns the shaman. At the beginning of every ceremony, an effort is made to fix in place each element of the world, excepting only that specific aspect that the shaman will actually treat. This fixing the world in place is done by whispering instructions onto a handful of mustard seeds, and then throwing some in each of the six directions. The seeds bind in place not only various predictable threats, such as witches, ghosts, and spirits of the dead, but bind hundreds of mundane items as well:

Wherever you strike, there you bind!
 Bind! Bind!
 First bind this house!
 Bind the foundation stone,
 bind the iron staff on the rooftop . . . (Maskarinec 1998: 20)

continuing, with exhaustive completeness, though doors, frames, beams, windows, kitchen utensils, and all the rest of a household's goods, item by item. This binding is repeated at the conclusion of most ceremonies, this time including those aspects of the world, such as planetary configurations or restless ancestral spirits, that the shaman has actively rearranged, but also not neglecting mundane things. Clearly, a shaman must evidence a concern for the most trivial items of everyday reality, as well as for esoteric abstractions and cosmological uncertainties. And this concern is most obviously seen in the ritual to dispell dullness, which maintains that the simplest, most ordinary tasks require consistent and unrelenting effort, that to be ordinary, one must do "being ordinary."

On occasion, as for the treatment of *yal*, shaman oral texts contain therapeutic advice, an aspect particularly noticeable in the text that I want to discuss today, "Dispelling Dullness." It does this with a very simple narrative, telling a story of an ordinary young couple, Jaimā and Balu, and their trivial daily activities, and by involving the patient's family in a mimetic recreation of those activities.

Preceding the story is a formulaic opening similar to the initial passage of all shamanic texts, whose purpose is to locate the performance

in ideal time—The Golden Age—and ideal space—the world before it began to deteriorate, when it was still “soft and unstable,” pliable and more susceptible to intervention.

When Earth was mother, when Heaven was father,
the good Age of Truth, the true level of the world,
the good Third Age, the third level of the world,
on that day, at noon. (version of 1962)

On that good day, on that good date,
in the good Age of Truth, in the ninth hour,
as the world was being created,
as the world was being formed,
in the home of foolish man. (version of 2000)

Every ceremony must be shifted at its very beginning out of the mundane present and into mythical time, and preferably, to a precise point of that mythical time. That point may be expressed more vaguely, as “that very day,” or more precisely, as the time of the god Mahādev’s origin, or even with the acute precision of an exact moment of astronomical time, most commonly the eleventh day of the moon falling on a Sunday in the month of Cait conjunction with Tuesday (Mars with the sun ascendant). That these opening phrases really attempt to shift the setting of the ceremony into mythic time is underscored by a set formula, variations of which shamans commonly used to indicate that they have paused in a performance and have returned to the present time so that members of the audience can consult them:

In this finished time, when the strong shove,
in this time of murder, what shall I say? Hai!
In the King’s house, in the God’s house,
there are disturbances. Hai!
There are sins and greediness. Hai!

The present time is, of course, the Kali Yuga, the Age of Destruction, a time in which one can hardly expect that intercessions with the gods will be successful, whether conducted by shamans or by anyone else. If someone is going to be cured, it is only because the continuity that roots the present age in the Golden Age parallels the continuity of modern shamans with the

intercessors of that former age, a time when the world, freshly created, was still responsive to intercession—it is explicitly described as “just a few hours old” in several recitals, not yet hardened and impenetrable. Events of miraculous import must take place in miraculous time, by shifting the banality of the everyday into the Golden Age, and, as we shall see, by establishing a fresh sense of responsiveness to ordinariness. The most ideal time, the best day, the most ideal moment—these are all conditions for a genuinely successful ceremony—if they don’t happen to be there, they must be introduced. Shamans inevitably said, for example, that Tuesdays and Saturdays were the best days for ceremonies, that one should sit facing eastward, then would go ahead and perform on any day and face in any direction. But the recital would specifically redefine the day as Tuesday, the direction faced as east. The words uttered take precedence over the accident of mundane details. By invoking the Golden Age, the ceremony is situated there, just as an invoking of familiar spirits induces their presence. In every case, shamanic intercession depends on successfully superimposing the ideal upon the accidents of the real, of imposing balance upon imbalance.² Once this shift from the temporal to the atemporal is complete, the text immediately proceeds to tell the deeds of Jaimā and Balu:

Oh, Jaimā, a young woman, oh, Balu, a young man;
 Balu, the young man, weaves a decorated basket,
 weaves a finely woven basket, . . .
 begins to cut cane for a hairbrush,
 begins to split cane for a hairbrush,
 begins to stitch together splintered bamboo.
 To make a loom for weaving, he begins to cut pegs.
 He begins to weave a winnowing tray,
 begins to weave a sieve.
 Jaimā begins to weave a finely woven blanket,
 begins to sew little pouches,
 begins to hang tassels on a handkerchief.
 Begins go weave on a loom, starts up the loom,

As new tasks are undertaken, the refrain interrupts for the first of a dozen times with an abrupt contrast:

² Cf. Maskarinec 1995 for a discussion of this issue.

Dullness, elder sister, dullness, dullness, younger sister,
atop the edge dullness, cast it off the edge.

This pattern, the recounting of blocks of beginning simple, daily, ordinary tasks, followed by the refrain, makes up the first section of the recital.

Next, for example, Jaimā begins to weave a little blanket and a coarse wrap, while Balu begins to entwine rope to make tassels of red, black, yellow and white threads and strings, then splits bamboo for a comb, each set of activities followed by the insistent echo of the refrain,

yal, didī, yal, yal, bibinī, yal.

Dullness, elder sister, dullness, dullness, younger sister.

These lines remind us that what is going on here is foolish, dull. The verb constructions emphasize incompleteness: “he begins to make,” “she begins to make . . .” *Yal* is the dullness of inertia, of anomie, of irresolution, of not finishing one thing before rushing to the next. The shaman who supplied this text directly quoted from it to gloss *yal* as “craziness,” and “suffering from stale air,” but a more accurate translation might be “paralyzing foolishness,” in a word: “dullness.” A sufferer of *yal* is apathetic, stunningly stupid, a person who has lost grasp of the work involved in being normal.

A pleasing ethnographic confirmation of this definition is found in a description of a case of someone suffering from *yal* that the one shaman’s nephew provided to John T. Hitchcock,³ when he was collecting texts in the Bhujī Valley of Baglung. The patient was a woman in her mid-twenties, married with two children. After the onset, she “never gave food to her children, never ate herself, wandered here and there, didn’t care about her clothes, sometimes didn’t put on her clothes at all, didn’t do her work.” A further point, to which I will return, is that this woman was prone to violent acts, she “sometimes throws sticks and stones at people who try to talk to her. If you ask ‘what are you doing now?’ she will take a stone or stick and throw it at you.” It should be

³ J. T. Hitchcock, unpublished fieldnotes, 1967 (quoted with permission).

noted that sufferers of *yal* are most often women, and most commonly newly married ones having difficulty adjusting to the demands of patrilocal residency. In the curing ceremony, however, both husband and wife are treated together (loosely as cause and effect of the affliction), and exactly the same text and ritual is used to treat men who suffer from *yal* as well.

Yal tends to be a chronic condition for which this ceremony provides only mild, impermanent relief. It fits into a set of very murky diagnostic categories (whether those of Nepali villagers or of western trained psychiatrists), treatments for which are often tried out one after another until either one succeeds or all options are exhausted. Cures for *yal* fall in between attempts to placate ancestral spirits with small ceremonies performed privately by family members, and expensive rituals involving a sacrifice of a goat and chickens to autochthonous deities sometimes held responsible for severe cases of madness. Apparently, it is often preceded by episodes of temporary lethargy and erratic behavior, but a shaman does not become involved in these early stages. As with nearly all types of affliction, from the shaman's point of view, and that of traditionally minded villagers, *yal* always has some external ultimate cause, such as malign astrological configurations, witchcraft, or autonomous forces of the fields or forests. The afflicted individual does not hold private responsibility for the conditions from which she suffers.

Only when the patient is severely dysfunctional, as in the above case, does it become imperative to try this ceremony. Comparing the degree of disconnectedness of the patient to the text's Jaimā and Balu, we see that their just beginning of small tasks, incomplete though they may leave them, is already a positive sign, and in counterpoint to these uncompleted tasks, their interaction also gradually increases. The recital reports that they sing and talk together, sing cheerful songs, sing sad songs. Each time, these activities are abruptly terminated by the refrain:

*yal didī yal, yal babinī yal,
dikkai ubri yal, dikkai muni phal.*

Dullness, elder sister, dullness, dullness, younger sister,
atop the edge dullness, cast it off the edge.

Jaimā begins to use the sieve and winnowing tray that Balu began to make, and, after Balu begins work on a plow and yoke, Jaimā begins

to play the Jew's harp, to brush and stain her teeth. She uses the comb and brush that he began, braids into her hair the tassels that he made. Reciprocally, he wears the blankets that she began to weave, ties over his head the kerchief which she began to decorate, and undertakes more elaborate projects, including a yoke, plow, leveler, and harrow.

That what they are doing is in fact doing "being ordinary," not just doing, can be clarified by contrasting this text with another used to treat cases of childlessness caused by quasi-physical entities lodged in a woman's womb. In that text, "The Recital of Kadum and Padum," (Maskarinec 1998: 292) among other absurd tasks assigned to a childless woman by her husband by levirate and harsh mother-in-law, the protagonist must husk rice without any husking tools, split firewood without an axe, and fetch water with a sieve. As a result, she requires explicitly supernatural assistance. Such assistance is most frequently introduced into texts by the invocation of the first shaman, Jumrātam, along with an account of the very first shamanic performance. Jumrātam is summoned to Indra's heaven to have his abilities as an intercessor tested:

He went to Indra's house.

He danced and drummed out to the crossroads,
danced and drummed back from the crossroads,
searched from the top of a ceremonial pole,
"Listen, everyone!

The seven times of natural death, I will make into one time,
the fourteen times of unnatural death, I will make into one time,
I will postpone the planets, will postpone extreme crises,
will postpone children's crises, will postpone the planetary threats." (Maskarinec 1998: 57)

A passage similar to this appears in nearly every shaman ceremony, as the contemporary shaman acknowledges that he may be able to perform a cure, but only because his knowledge is still the knowledge of the first shaman, rooted in the paradigmatic, perfectly balanced, past. The limitations of the present shaman are not due only to the decline of the world through its ages, however; when I was discussing the limits of shamanic knowledge with one shaman, he told a story of how even the original shaman, Jumrātam's knowledge was curtailed by the gods.

At first, the story goes, Jumrātam knew everything, but one day, someone wanted to find Mahādev, who had retired to the Himalayas to

make love in private with Parvatā. Jumrātam however told the enquirer exactly where to find them, and the searcher surprised them in an intimate condition. “Damn,” exclaimed Mahādev, “This is our own fault. We’ve given the seers (*bernebaru*) too much ability. Let them know some things, let them not know others.” And ever since, they have known some things but have been unable to know everything. Another explanation for shamanic failures that shamans offered was that, in this Kali Yuga, even the gods have become corrupt and lie, so that their pronouncements can no longer be trusted. Both explanations again support the conclusion that one must somehow approximate the Satya Yuga, to return to the time before the gods were offended or language corrupted, in order to produce a real cure.

Returning to Balu and Jaimā, the balance between their interest in each other and their failure to finish what they begin shifts further in the next section of the text. Together they go fishing, cooperatively constructing water diversions and fish traps to catch and poison fish.

Heh, they go to trap fish, they go fishing.
 Oh, Balu, the young man, oh, Jaimā, the young woman,
 start to open a channel, start to twist together ferns,
 start to twist together branches, made a dam of branches.
 Having diverted the current, they made a dam of mud.
 Jaimā, the young woman, cutting cane,
 Balu, the young man, starts to weave a conical fish trap,
 sets in the inverted trap,
 continues to pry up stones, starts to open a channel.
 Jaimā, the young woman, with nettles fibre,
 making hard fibre, she weaves a dip net.
 Having woven a dip net, she fished with the dip net.
 Having fished, she puts them in her shoulder sack.
 Fishing with the dip net, fishing with the conical fish trap,
 she starts to steer them by hand, starts to steer them in the water.
 She puts in khiralpoison, where the fish gather,
 the right side of the gathering place, in the great lake.
 Jaimā, the young woman, Balu, the young man,
 having blocked the stream at its divide, thus kill them.

By engaging in these activities, they channel any tendency toward acts of violence into an acceptable and even productive activity—the killing

of fish, an act considered sinless even by high castes in Nepal. For the first time, they finish things, and fill their pockets with fish. With this success, the mood of the recital becomes strikingly festive: she gathers a bouquet of flowers and gives them to him, and she dresses in her best clothes, dresses, in fact, for a wedding:

Having put on a velvet blouse, wearing a black skirt,
a white shawl, with a red scarf,
she walks, striking with the scarf's edge.
Putting on red coral, putting on a golden bar,
she walks, swaying her hips. They go through life together,
they walk through seven hills, walk through nine valleys.

As this climax is reached, suddenly the shaman directly addresses his patient and her husband, who are sitting together in front of him:

O distressed ones, fatigued ones, going,
O my patients, oh young husband, oh young wife,
the dullness shall be dispelled.
And at exactly this point,
Balu finished weaving the winnowing tray,
finished weaving the sieve,
wove nine trays, wove nine sieves,
wove nine flat baskets, wove nine hair brushes.
The dullness shall be dispelled.
With nine hair brushes, with nine combs,
with nine sieves, with nine baskets,
the dullness shall be dispelled, the dullness shall be dispelled.
Of the young husband, of the young wife,
the air was stale, thus this craziness.
The dullness shall be dispelled.

The trays and baskets that Balu has now completed are themselves woven into the contemporary curing ceremony. A stack of nine such trays, conceptually those of the text, actually lent by many different households in a noteworthy gesture of solidarity with the patient, with empty baskets, combs, brushes and sieves set atop them, are circled around the heads of the patients, giving them the needed breath of fresh air, opening up the surrounding space to release the patients

from their disconnectedness and reintegrate them into the social world, represented by the items contributed by relatives and neighbors. Once again, an opposition between the mundane gestures of this ceremony and the tampering with the supernatural present in other ceremonies is established, for here, the winnowing trays are simply circled around the patients' heads. But when astrological disturbances are being treated, the patient sits in the trays and is lifted up. To re-enforce the sense that the patient is being conveyed into the heavens, a model of the sun and moon are sometimes suspended from the main roof beam of the central room of the house along with a plant shoot (sometimes just a bunch of cinnamon or guava leaves suffices), and the patient is lifted up to them. While elevated, the patient should bite the plant shoot, and upon return, the recital takes the form of a dialogue between the shaman and the patient:

Did you eat the green grass, the fresh water?

Yes, did you see the nine suns, the nine moons?

Yes, did you cross the seven star obstructions, the seven impasses?

Yes, if you ascend to the sky, I'll pull you pack by your feet.

If you descend to hell, I'll pull you back by your top-knot.

When a shoot has been tied to the roofbeam for this ritual, the patient bites it ("tastes it"), and it is planted the next day. Its life course will mirror that of the patient; if it catches and sprouts, the patient will recover, otherwise not. Another measure of success is calculated by filling the tray under the patient with grain (ideally, nine measures of it), usually corn kernels, some of which the patient grasps in his or her foot. Upon the patient's return, the shaman counts the number of kernels that were grasped in the toes and decides on that basis whether the ritual has succeeded. While such predictive gestures reassure nervous clients, they are not taken obsessively seriously, and if an unfavorable result is obtained, the gestures are usually just repeated until there is a more attractive result. In one ceremony that I watched, the number of seeds was recounted several times, with a few added from those scattered around the mat. But what is important here is the sense of boundaries: the patient is actively committed to remaining in this world, with both the heavens above and hells below closed off as options. Finally, the parts of this world open to the patient, the healthy, domestic, and ordinary domains, are explicitly set off from malignant domains. This is

the purpose of the concluding segment of the *yal* ceremony, too. Flowers and scraps of cloth (those that Jaimā picked and wove, superimposed upon those collected by relatives of the patients) are arranged into male and female effigies, placed on the trays and in the baskets, and cast off at the crossroads:

Jaimā, the young woman,
having picked flowers, flowers of different colors,
on top of pieces of cloth, cloth of different colors,
having made effigies, put them in the nine winnowing trays,
put them in the nine sieves, put them in the nine little baskets,
the dullness is dispelled.
At the seventh crossroads,
the dullness shall be dispelled, the dullness shall be dispelled.
Dullness, elder sister, dullness,
dullness, younger sister, dullness,
atop the edge dullness, cast it off the edge.
Of Jaimā, the young woman, of Balu, the young man,
and of my afflicted ones, going, of my patients,
I've gone to dispel the dullness.

A shaman makes an obligatory visit to a crossroads toward the end of every ceremony, an act known as *dhuwā jānne*. Crossroads are the preferred meeting places of shamans, witches, spirits of the dead, and various demons, and the place where a shaman most often negotiates with these forces. How courageously this act is performed is an important evaluative criterion of how good a shaman is. Those who go, on moonless nights, to more distant crossroads, and stay longer, are judged more competent than their more timid counterparts. No negotiations are needed to dispel *yal*, however, one more confirmation that it deals exclusively with the domestic world. For this event, the trays are simply dumped at the crossroads and the shaman returns. But cast off with the flower effigies is the dullness, the dullness not only of Jaimā and Balu, but also, explicitly, the dullness of the young husband and young wife whom the shaman is presently treating.

O distressed ones, fatigued ones,
 O my patients, merry, bright, no longer delirious,
 no longer crazy, a complete change of air.

The transformation of the text, along with that of the patients, is complete. The initial appearance of semantic arbitrariness has, along with the dullness, vanished by its superimposed upon reality. The text has emerged as precisely the means of triumphing over the situation confronting the shaman and his patient. Rather than being subordinate to the cure that it accompanies, the text emerges identified as being the cure itself. The lethargy of the patients has been shattered by it, their moral paralysis, like that of Jaimā and Balu, is dispelled. In other recitals, demonic possession is cured by exorcisms, lost wits are sought for and recovered, witches are bargained with and subdued; in “Dispelling Dullness,” the inability of the patients to bring things to completion is simply cured by bringing things to completion. The cure, then, has captured the ethnomethodological insight (Sacks 1984) that being “ordinary” requires continual effort; to be ordinary you must do “being ordinary.”

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Fig 1. Hariban Kami. Bhuji Valley, of Western Baglung District, Nepal. Photo: Gregory G. Maskarinec, 2000.

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Neuroshamanology in the Ice-Age Caves: A Case of Methodological Promise and Modern Projection

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This essay describes and seeks to assess an approach to the interpretation of shamanism put forward recently by cognitive archaeologists who employ neuropsychological research to infer the shamanic auspices of indigenous pictographs and, in turn, Upper Paleolithic cave paintings. My focus is primarily on the work of David Lewis-Williams and Jean Clottes, drawing on their writing and on their presentations at a conference in 2001. Their methodology is found to be a worthwhile adjunct to other approaches, but one which is, as yet, prone to assorted projections and claims to exclusivity that require correcting. I call instead for a methodological pluralism that is mindful of postmodernist concerns and inclusive of aesthetic and humanistic as well as scientific considerations.

Introduction

In the spring of the year 2000 I stood in the cave at Lascaux, looking at a wall with paintings of animals and geometrical signs that were ten times older than the two millennia of our Christian, or Common, Era. I was looking at the beginnings of art—or, shall we say, at the origins of human imagination, in the sense that these and other Ice-Age cave decorations were among the first images, whether primarily aesthetic or not, made by humans.

As in Lascaux, or Les Trois-Frères, or Chauvet, the paintings include a few composite human-animal figures (bird-headed, antlered, bison-headed) which suggest the shapeshifting of shamans. Indeed, these figures, evocative of connections to animal spirits for the marshalling of magic in hunting and healing, have for some time led scholars such as Andreas Lommel to claim that the caves contain the beginnings of shamanism (Lommel 1967a; 1967b).

Lascaux's bird-headed ithyphallic figure, with his bird-headed staff or wand and the wounded bison nearby, is perhaps the most famous of these seeming depictions of a primal shamanism at the roots of human religion and culture. And I was there, some 20,000 years after a prehistoric painter made this tableau, wondering once again, as a scholar of religion and mythology, about the sources and significance of shamanism, what the popular mythologist Joseph Campbell had called "the way of the animal powers" (Campbell 1983). One thing I did know was that this very wondering—mine or that of other writers on shamanism, "shamanologists" (Flaherty 1992)—was prone to many a modern Western projection or fantasy (see Noel 1997).

Was not even the "-ism" a modern Western convenience, if not construction?

Of course, I was not looking at the original image of the "sorcerer" in his shaft: I was in Lascaux II, the painstaking replica, an admirable option for the many tourists who had had to be barred from the actual cave nearby because their very breath was damaging the images on the walls. And among the tourists gazing at the meticulously reproduced paintings that day, someone's cell phone rang. The science and technology of the twenty-first century had intruded upon the pictorial imagination and possibly shamanic spirituality of the Upper Paleolithic. But what was the message of the former to the latter?

Projecting Images of Primal Shamanism

Assuredly I did not know what that embarrassed tourist's caller was saying. Still, the culture of science and technology, which produced the cell phone has had much to say of late, and quite publicly, about the purported beginnings of shamanism in the decorated caves, much for scholars of shamanism in particular to assess. Whether this is yet another projection of the modern West onto the indigenous past—a matter of the mythic allure of the "there and then" for modern fantasizing, as anthropologist David Hess (1993) has described our primitivist indulgences—or, rather, a genuine hermeneutical bridge between our consciousness and that of Cro-Magnon *Ur*-shamans is the question I should like to address, or begin to address, in what follows as I also seek to summarize the major claims of a new theory linking rock art, indigenous and prehistoric, to shamanism.

When Andreas Lommel published his books, *Shamanism: The Beginnings of Art* and *The World of the Early Hunters*, in the late 1960s, there was

no very sophisticated cognitive archaeology, let alone any accessible neuroscience, to employ in explicating the meanings of the cave paintings (see Lommel 1967a; 1967b). His methodology was mainly iconographic and depth-psychological or psychoanalytic, though he also drew on the field reports of ethnologists. His major orientation was to apply such psychology to speculate on the “mental life” of shamans as reflected, he argued, in the visual motifs of indigenous pictographs and some petroglyphs.

In more recent decades, however, to some scholars in cognitive archaeology drawing on a rapidly-emerging neuropsychology, those same motifs reveal the neural activity—“entoptic,” or eyes-shut, imagery produced by the visual neocortex—on the part of the entranced or hallucinating practitioners who executed the images on the rock surfaces. Ethnographic analogies between indigenous ritualists and prehistoric functionaries, both sorts of figures assumed to be generating “rock art” under conditions of altered consciousness (or reproducing it thereafter), with altered-states experiences (trance or “ecstasy”) also assumed to be definitive for shamanic practice, allow these scholars to make inferences about a supposed primal shamanism in the Upper Paleolithic. Most importantly, neuropsychological research is used to offer objective confirmation of this universalistic argument from analogy.

Ethnographic parallels and comparisons are, to be sure, notoriously controversial: in a postmodern scholarly climate which privileges *diferance* and seeks to respect the great diversity of human cultures, universalizing claims must be advanced with great care—and with full awareness of the pitfalls into which previous claims of this kind have stumbled. Here, in the context of “cave art theory,” investigators are well-advised to bear in mind Andre Leroi-Gourhan’s derisive deployment of the term “comparativisme ethnographique.” As recently as the mid-1980s, in an article on Siberian rock art and the origins of shamanism later reprinted in his book, co-authored with Anna-Leena Siikala, *Studies on Shamanism*, Mihály Hoppál, citing Leroi-Gourhan’s term, criticizes Lommel’s universalism (Hoppál 1998: 132–33, 140). But the even more recent forays of the cognitive archaeologists into this topic had yet to occur. How successfully, then, does the new neuroshamanology, with its “hard science” tools and terminology, escape such criticism?

Perhaps its leading proponent, David Lewis-Williams, building on his earlier work with the rock art of the San people of southern Africa—work from the early 1980s which the Hoppál article does note (Hoppál 1998: 133; see Lewis-Williams 1981; 1983)—has since the late 1980s advanced

interpretations about the shamanic auspices of indigenous rock art and the shamanic origins of Upper Paleolithic cave imagery (cf. Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988). He has done this most dramatically in collaboration with a major authority on the Franco-Cantabrian caves, Jean Clottes. Their lavish book from 1996, *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves*, the work of neuroshamanology most likely to influence a wider public, moves quickly into the thesis that the neuropsychology of altered states of consciousness can best explain both world-wide rock art and the origins of shamanism.

Neuropsychological research into people's experiences of altered states such as trance and hallucination has provided the co-authors with the finding that these states have three stages. During these stages subjects report a succession of inner visual phenomena, which Lewis-Williams and Clottes apply to the reading of San rock art and Cro-Magnon cave art. The images in each case, they conclude, were a kind of projection of such entoptic phenomena onto the rock surfaces, later if not at the actual times of the altered states. Thus, it seems, do the geometrical signs as well as the animals and the half-animal figure come to occupy the walls of a cave like Lascaux: they result from the altered states of supposed Upper-Paleolithic *Ur*-shamans, shown by the altered states of contemporary research subjects to be shared with the altered states of San healer-ritualists whom Lewis-Williams has claimed to be shamans. All share the same universal and invariant neural activity producing essentially the same imagery.

And therefore, we can summarize, hard neuroscience has spoken, so that the argument of these cognitive archaeologists presented to us as social scientific and humanities students of shamanism must be accepted, must it not? As one of those students of shamanism I have very little interpretive leverage with which to dispute the presumably factual findings of neuropsychology. On the other hand, how such findings are handled in Clottes and Lewis-Williams' larger argument raises issues, and suggests shortcomings, which I can, in fact, seek to evaluate.

Stages of a Supposed Shamanic Trance

The co-authors of *The Shamans of Prehistory* make a special point of proclaiming that their combined knowledge plus "recent conceptual and methodological progress" have led them to "a better use of ethnographic comparisons today" (Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1998: 9). Of

what does this “progress” consist? Is it the use of contemporary Western subjects, none of them shamans, to describe the imagery “seen” in their three-stage trances, and then the ascription of this experience to persons thousands of miles or hundreds of centuries away, deemed to be shamans, who have created arguably similar images? Let us examine the three stages adduced for altered states by neuropsychology and attempt to assess exactly how these stages are applied to a shamanological reading of indigenous rock art and prehistoric cave decorations.

Lewis-Williams and Clottes begin by remarking that “it is particularly useful to form some idea of the stages through which subjects pass as they go deeper and deeper into trance, that is, into the hallucinatory state at the far end of the continuum” (1998: 14). (It is “particularly useful,” one might conjecture, to the persuasiveness of their argument.) At this point in their text is an illustration with the following caption: “The three stages of altered consciousness: possible examples that might be experienced by a Westerner” (1998: 15).

The illustration is a black-and-white drawing of geometrical images in Stage One; objects, rendered naturalistically, which are significant to the research subject in Stage Two; and, after a transition perceived as travel through a vortex or tunnel with lattice-work sides containing hallucinated animals and people, the entoptic contents of Stage Three, which the authors call “the bizarre world of trance” (1998: 17). In this stage it is emphasized that “monsters, people, and settings are intensely real. The geometric percepts are still present, but chiefly peripherally. With one’s eyes open, Stage Three hallucinations are, like the geometrics of Stage One, projected onto surrounding surfaces” (1998: 17).

Oddly enough, although Stage Three is also described as involving the experience of changing into a geometric form—which may or may not include a circle: this is never made clear—or an animal, no images of animals seen prior to such transformations are reported (assuming “monsters” are not, strictly speaking, animals). The authors refer to “a Westerner experiencing an altered state [who] said, ‘I thought I was a fox, and instantly I was transformed into that animal’” (1998: 17), but they do not say that this Westerner saw a fox. Such features of their description of the three stages do not seem particularly useful to their argument, despite the fact that this transformative experience could admittedly be applicable to the putative rock artist-shamans’ depiction of composite human-animal figures, and the authors are quick to so employ it.

At all events, along with this mixture of awkwardness and applicability, it is very soon clear what a remarkable range of comparativism *The Shamans of Prehistory* is committed to. Armed with their neuropsychological research, Clottes and Lewis-Williams make their bold assertion:

We emphasize that these three stages are universal and wired into the human nervous system, though the meanings given to the geometrics of Stage One, the objects into which they are illusioned in Stage Two, and the hallucinations of Stage Three are all culture specific . . . (1998: 19)

But what if the culture-specific meanings given, one might ask, are non-shamanic? Apparently this question is not one the authors have considered, since they go on immediately to state, “. . . allowing for such cultural diversity, we can be fairly sure that the three stages of altered consciousness provide a framework for an understanding of shamanic experience” (1998: 19). It remains to be seen, in the light of such oversights, how sure the rest of us can be as to the shamanological utility of their framework.

Now, to their credit, Lewis-Williams and Clottes do testify that they have been careful to avoid projecting the present uncritically onto the past and so making it seem as if Upper Paleolithic people were nothing more than exact replicas of Siberian, American, or southern African shamans—or, worse, twentieth-century neuropsychologists (1998: 19). However, aside from such cautionary remarks, they do not mention here the Western research subjects of those neuropsychologists, the first modern figures whom they are in danger of projecting onto the past, and it is debatable how effective the authors are in avoiding the sort of projection they rightly criticize—and other sorts of which they may be unaware and to which I shall return.

Despite good intentions, the universalism which has been a major source of scholarly projection in the past, is, for them, overriding: “Nevertheless,” they insist, “we are concerned more with the remarkable similarities that exist between shamans in various parts of the world and at various times” (1998: 19). This is because, they confidently maintain, “there are deep neurologically generated commonalities” (1998: 19).

The Uses of Neurological Commonalities

Until almost its end, this first and crucial chapter of *The Shamans of Prehistory*, a chapter simply (and somewhat preemptively) entitled “Shamanism,” goes on to put forth examples of the authors’ sought-after universal commonalities in various aspects of the lives and practices of figures from assorted cultures who are assumed to be shamans.

In these sections of their chapter there are some seventeen such examples of supposed shamanic practitioners from specific indigenous cultures along with the images they have experienced and/or expressed on rock surfaces. Each of these cultures is claimed to be shamanic, even the Zuni Pueblo people, agriculturalists with scant shamanic credentials—and indeed the authors’ blanket usage of “shaman” and “shamanic” or “shamanistic” will not be persuasive to all scholars of shamanism.

Several—though, notably, not all—of these cultures provide instances of figures undergoing altered states which Lewis-Williams and Clottes correlate with one or more of the stages reported from their altered states experiences by the Western neuropsychological subjects. It is important to recognize, however, that not one of these examples is claimed to be a case of all stages of the trance being reflected. In other words, the comparativist parallels here seem partial at best. And while the authors have offered a disclaimer early on—“Every subject does not necessarily pass through all three stages” (1998: 16)—this scattered or piece-meal application would seem to undermine the universalism which the authors seek and claim to have found.

If I may be permitted to draw my own parallel, it is like Joseph Campbell’s practice of claiming to find his hero-quest “monomyth” pattern all over the world by only citing as evidence those portions of particular myths which accorded with parts of the pattern (see Segal 1990). Campbell, too, it might be observed, granted that his monomyth was “inflected” differently in different cultures, but he clung, like Clottes and Lewis-Williams with their hallucinating rock artists and ur-shamans, to its universality by asserting the greater significance of purported commonalities. Other myth theorists today are almost unanimous in rejecting Campbell’s universalism: another cautionary note to keep in mind as we continue to explore and appraise the claims of neuroshamanology.

The chapter at issue closes with a section devoted entirely to San Bushman rock art, and here again the use of the three-stage model of altered states experiences is questionable. This section is called “San Shamanic Art”; it

contains another black-and-white drawing of images, this time from San rock painting and engraving, arranged into the three stages plus the transition between Stage Two and Stage Three. The caption is revealing:

The stages of altered consciousness represented in San rock painting. Stage One: painting in Western Cape and engraving in North-West province. Stage Two: painting of a swarm of bees, Natal-Kwazulu Drakensberg . . . Transition: painting, Natal-Kwazulu-Drakensberg. Stage Three: paintings, Eastern Cape province. (1998: 34)

Once more different stages are illustrated from art at different sites, and no site is claimed to represent all stages of the neurological experience that has been deemed universal, and universally present in rock art and its perennially shamanic production. Nevertheless, the section and the chapter end with the statement that “this brief survey of some of the characteristics of San rock art demonstrates how the universal aspects of shamanism are expressed within a specific community” (1998: 35). This strikes me as a claim which assumes as universal what it has yet to fully establish as such. And unfortunately, this dubious argumentation becomes the basis for assertions made in the rest of the book, where the focus is on the paintings and purported shamanism of the Franco-Cantabrian caves.

In these chapters the authors first lay out the data from the caves and their paintings, stressing the unity of the latter over the some 25,000 years of their creation, and then canvass the main interpretations of them that have been advanced over the past century: “art for art’s sake”; totemism; sympathetic magic for hunting, fertility, or destruction; and structuralism (1998: 61). All of this background is set forth so that they may convincingly present their shamanistic interpretation of the pictures in the caves. Citing Mircea Eliade, Weston LaBarre, Joan Halifax, and especially Andreas Lommel as precursors in this effort, Lewis-Williams and Clottes, as archaeologists, propose to go beyond them by having access to neuropsychology as well as ethnology—with, as we have seen, the hard science (and “hard wiring”) of the former undergirding the universalizing parallels drawn from the latter.

However, yet again there are rhetorical problems from Chapter One intruding into this later part of the book, as the caption to a third black-and-white depiction, this time of prehistoric cave art figures, makes plain:

Paleolithic representations related to different stages of trance. In Stage One are geometric figures [it is not indicated which site these are from]. In Stage Two, this ibex from Niaux has horns in which the characteristic rings are represented by a zigzag that extends into its forehead (possible transformation of the zigzags in Stage One [these were not illustrated from any cave site]). The “sorcerers” in Les Trois-Frères suggest composite beings—part human, part animal—which are typical of Stage Three. (1998: 92)

The authors’ own chosen examples are clearly damaging to their proposal: nowhere are we shown evidence of all three stages from the neuropsychological findings with Westerners appearing in a single instance of Paleolithic painting any more than they are evident in any example from San rock art. Would not a universally-applicable model be able to reveal many such comprehensive instances?

Moreover, a major lacuna throughout this book is the absence of any neuropsychological explanation of why, once having perhaps experienced an altered state as the authors claim, and even having projected it mentally onto surrounding surfaces, the putative artist-shamans would have gone on to make their paintings and engravings. That is, the actual impulse to depict or re-create their trance visions is nowhere accounted for by Lewis-Williams and Clottes’ core hermeneutic: certainly none of the Western research subjects is reported as proceeding, unbidden, to make art reflecting their altered states. Thus, other, non-material, elements must be appealed to, and an indispensable ligature in the book’s argument to illuminate the meaning of the rock images goes missing.

We need not go on with a detailed critique. Despite an engagingly nuanced sensitivity to contextual factors which one or another earlier writer on the caves may have overlooked—e.g., the role of cave topography, including the sense of the cave walls as a “membrane” or interface between this world and an unseen spirit dimension from which the painters drew out their images; the effects of lighting and shadows; the relationship of the paintings to portable pieces made during the same centuries; the possible social arrangements suggested as influencing, and being influenced by, the activities that may have surrounded the creation of the paintings—this sensitivity is placed in the service of a significantly flawed overall approach to the data, at least as an exclusive and totalizing one.

There are simply too many gaps and lapses in the argument and application of the authors’ central thesis for scholars of shamanism (as con-

trasted with archaeologists) to feel that their reading of Upper Paleolithic cave painting as shamanic is anything but suggestive. In other words, it cannot be taken, to this point, as conclusive: it is a promising adjunct to other theories, not in any way a final answer, as these authors and their fellow cognitive archaeologists often seem to be claiming.

Words of Caution

Indeed, in a publication from 1994 on the shamanic sources of rock art in western North America, the editor, reporting on a conference about the same topic the previous year, declares quite unequivocally that “the once-controversial issue of the shamanistic origins of rock art imagery had clearly been resolved” (Turpin 1994: vi). She has already pointed to David Lewis-Williams, whose contestable book with Jean Clottes was not to come out for two years, as having led “the revolution set in motion by researchers . . . who still had access to living descendants of artists whose paintings and carvings manifested their shamanistic beliefs” (Turpin 1994: v). Moreover, she and the other four contributors to her volume employ the “neuropsychological model” for the most part unhesitatingly—although one of these, David Whitley, another cognitive archaeologist, does offer some welcome words of caution.

Whitley’s essay, “Shamanism, Natural Modeling, and the Rock Art of Far Western North American Hunter-Gatherers,” is the first and longest one in the collection. It was written, the author says, under the dominant influence of Lewis-Williams: “I owe a great intellectual debt to David Lewis-Williams, whose ground-breaking research on southern San and Upper Paleolithic rock art continues to provide the intellectual model for my own studies in North America” (Whitley 1994: 30). With this expression of indebtedness it is all the more to Whitley’s credit that he tries to be temperate in his claims—more temperate, it seems to me, than are Lewis-Williams and Clottes in their volume.

To be sure, Whitley’s essay displays the symptoms of a familiar neuroshamanological universalism. In it he writes of the neuropsychology of altered states of consciousness (ASCs, in the standard acronym he employs) as a “natural modeling,” a material explanation for rock art commonalities across cultures, with shamanism featuring or derived from ASCs taken to be the practice that produced the art. As Whitley puts it, “since achieving an ASC . . . is a defining characteristic of

shamanism, cross-culturally experienced mental imagery has important implications for shamanistic iconography” (1994: 2).

Whitley seems unaware—or does not admit—that not all scholars of shamanism have agreed that “achieving an ASC,” the familiar Eliadean paradigm, is even the main defining characteristic of shamanism.¹ In any case, it is with his sense of the centrality of ASCs to shamanism that he then pursues an interpretation of “shamanistic iconography” which will reveal cross-culturally constant structures in the imagery—approached as “symbols”—of rock art.

Since the essay follows, for the most part, the hermeneutical lead of Lewis-Williams, my misgivings about it would echo those I harbor, and have expressed above, for *The Shamans of Prehistory*. And yet the mitigations here are significant: Whitley shows greater awareness than his mentor concerning the weak points of universalizing arguments, the danger of scholarly projections, and the need to consider other factors that may support alternative interpretations.

And this despite the fact that his ethnographic evidence—thickly contextualized and admirably documented—for the causal relationship, at least in some instances, between ASCs and indigenous rock art (though not between ASCs and prehistoric cave art, which he does not address) is more persuasive than Lewis-Williams and Clottes'. Such success may be owing, finally, to his relying at some points, and perhaps more than he is conscious of, on ethnography rather than neuropsychology.

Whitley's restraint and openness to other interpretive perspectives are nonetheless real and deliberate: it is expressed, for instance, in his remark that “caution must be exercised because, even within the parameters of an interpretation of the [rock art] motifs as resulting from vision quest imagery, a variety of possibilities exists for the symbolic meaning of any given motif” (1994: 6). Later, having described Lewis-Williams' favored three stages of ASCs drawn from neuropsychology, he adds a thoughtful consideration which goes beyond an exclusive reliance on this schema: “The neuropsychological model solely concerns the mental imagery of ASCs. Of equal importance, in terms of natural models, are the aural and especially somatic effects of ASCs, and their place in shamanistic iconography and symbolism more widely” (1994:

¹ See, for example, Porterfield 1987.

12). His concept of natural modeling, in other words, is not limited to neuropsychological factors.

Going on to explicate the aural and somatic motifs in question, he says this about images of facial bleeding: “Such facial bleeding is a common crosscultural, albeit not universal, reaction to an ASC . . .” (1994: 14), adding that “. . . ethnographic evidence from North America indicates that it sometimes (but not invariably) occurred during ASC experiences in the far west . . .” (1994: 16). These are admirable qualifying insights and admissions, pointing to a more multiplex methodology for understanding the relationship between shamanism (with a mindfulness of its contested definition) and the images of rock painting—plus, by implication, the relationship (highly speculative though it continues to be) between shamanism and the images of the decorated Franco-Cantabrian caves.

Perhaps most striking in this regard are further statements made where they can be thought to have the greatest impact: in Whitley’s section of “Conclusions.” There, discussing the image of the red racer snake, he comments that “though strongly associated with southern California shamanism, in this instance the origin of this natural symbol is not obviously tied to ASCs,” and reiterates in the same paragraph that “this symbolism has no necessary connection with a shaman’s ASC” (1994: 28). Finally, the last sentences of his essay are especially noteworthy for their comprehensive flexibility and eye to *differance*:

Yet even while the similarities are compelling, it would be wrong to assume that North American hunter-gatherer rock art is in all cases fully equivalent. Instead, now that the general patterns are beginning to emerge, it will become increasingly important to look to regional differences and variations to more fully understand the richness of the Native American rock art record, with which we are so privileged to work. (1994: 28–29)

Written in Stone—and Wired in the Brain?

In a similarly wide-ranging statement, David Whitley has also warned against “neurological reductionism.” He said this not in his 1994 essay but at a conference I attended in early June of 2001, just a year after I had stood in the chambers of Lascaux II. And he said it in response to a comment and question from me voicing the sort of misgivings about neuroshamanology I am voicing in this article.

We were at the symposium entitled “Written in Stone: Shamans and the Origin of Art,” held at the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana. Whitley was a speaker; I was in the audience, attempting to follow up my visit to the Ice-Age caves of the Dordogne and my reading, thereafter, of *The Shamans of Prehistory*. Unaware at that time of Whitley’s extensive research on rock art in California, not far from where I live in the ancestral homeland of the Chumash people surrounding Santa Barbara, I had come to Bozeman to meet and hear David Lewis-Williams and Jean Clottes.

It was the latter who led off the small conference with a slide-lecture the first evening on “Lessons of Chauvet,” the most recently-discovered (1994) painted cave in France, containing the oldest images. Clottes is the leader of the scientific team investigating these images, and his slides of them were arresting. A major point he made was that even though these are paintings from as early as 32,000 B.P. (before the present, or 1950, when carbon dating was first employed), the style was fully as sophisticated as those from other caves made some 170 centuries later. I cannot recall to what extent he pressed the neuropsychologically-driven thesis of the shamanistic creation of cave paintings in connection with Chauvet—he makes no mention of this thesis in his Epilogue to the major book, thus far, on the cave: Chauvet, Deschamps, and Hillaire’s *Dawn of Art: The Chauvet Cave*, from 1995 (English-language edition 1996).

If Jean Clottes was reticent about advancing this thesis in a lecture which was mostly a presentation of Chauvet’s stunning data, Lewis-Williams, who presented first the next day, was far from reluctant to do so in his lecture, sweepingly entitled “Shamanism and the Origin of Art and Religion.” His entry point into the claims I have been attempting to evaluate was expressed in the phrase “universal aspects of rock art”—aspects which were, after all, the sought-after factors which seem to have come first in the progression of Lewis-Williams’ own research from San rock art to neuropsychology and the prehistoric caves, and thus to the origins, as he saw it, of art and religion. He went on to use John Pfeiffer’s term “creative explosion”² to characterize the beginnings of cave painting, and asked “Why was it made so deep underground?” and “What did people believe about it?”

² See Pfeiffer 1982.

Such questions seemed valid enough (unless one scrutinized the assumptions behind his use of “believe,” as I will do below), but Lewis-Williams’ answer to them was suspiciously monolithic and intemperate: it all begins, he assured us, with “the human brain, with the wiring of the human brain.” This meant, for him, that the entoptic images precede the paintings, precede any possible art. Pondering this, we were presented with a transparency of a chart showing successive stages of neuropsychological activity: a horizontal line starting from the left was labeled “daydreaming”; then there was a fork in the line, with the upper fork labeled “trance,” including its familiar three stages, and the lower fork named “dreaming.” This schema seemed to be borrowed, not surprisingly, from a neurologist, Gerald Edelman. It did surprise me to realize for the first time, however, that *The Shamans of Prehistory* offers very little actual documentation of the neuropsychological research, which is so foundational for it. (A speaker later in the day, I should note, did provide further expertise in this area.)

But another thing about Lewis-Williams’ chart was just as arresting, while pointing in a quite different direction. It was his remark that “you have to have an explanation for dreams: Jungians have theirs, Freudians have theirs, and I have mine.” His explanation, following from his chart, is that dreams are neuropsychological phenomena that are a kind of failed version of trance visions, giving us mere glimpses of the sort of imagery these latter visions provide—and resulting, he implied, in the comparatively tame or indirect insights of religious adherents rather than the direct revelations of shamanic seers.

Here could be inferred an interesting moment in Lewis-Williams’ thinking, a momentary wavering into an area of “depth” psychology dealing nonscientifically with dreams and religion which differs markedly from his determinative realm of hard wiring verified by hard neuroscience. In this alien territory of the anecdotal and impressionistic, where I do most of my work, not far from his almost-facetious reference to Jungians and Freudians, lies a book by a successor to both of them, James Hillman’s *The Dream and the Underworld* (Hillman 1979), to which I shall return in closing. But first let me finish my report on the Bozeman symposium.

David Whitley followed Lewis-Williams with a slide-lecture on “The Art of the Shaman,” focusing on the rock art of Numic-speaking peoples such as the Utes, the Paiutes, and the Shoshone, especially in the Mojave Desert and Coso Range mountains of southern California. He spoke of conventionally archaeological matters like establishing the age and continuity of the images of a site by way of the proximity of objects

such as quartz hammer stones. However, he then went on to emphasize that quartz has a natural luminescence, which he associated with the “universal use” of quartz crystals as references in shamanic narratives. This was an instance, he maintained, of the “profound natural logic behind shamanic tradition and belief systems.”

For all that cognitive archaeology, as Whitley later told me, considered itself—or was considered by conventional archaeology—to be on the far edges of a manifestly materialist discipline, I could not help but register the frequency with which its practitioners had to make a point of finding their own material evidence: “natural” logic, “natural” modeling, the natural, material, properties of sacred objects or symbols. Perhaps thinking of itself as “far out” impelled cognitive archaeology to be particularly scrupulous about securing its materialist credentials. This same predilection was reflected later in Whitley’s lecture, after some impressive slides of bighorn sheep images on the desert rocks, in his exploration of another aspect of the neuropsychological thesis.

“How do trance symbols relate to human concept formation?” he asked. And he proposed an answer from a work by Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh* (Lakoff and Johnson 1998). There, Whitley insisted, the authors present a theory of “primary metaphor” which has “empirically-verified components.” This again suggested the scientific need to demonstrate a material causality for mental activity, a need he further displayed by assuring us that “we now know” that these primary metaphors become—once more using the omnipresent metaphor—“hardwired” into the brain. This struck me, rather ironically, as just the sort of description of “archetypes” C. G. Jung had learned to avoid as being presumptuously genetic or physiological. Scholars outside of hard science have had to become more cautious than scientists, it seemed, when tempted to employ problematically materialist explanations, even as metaphors.

When Jack Cowan, an eminent “mathematician, neurologist, and computational neuroscientist” from the University of Chicago and the Santa Fe Institute, took the podium, Clottes, Lewis-Williams, and Whitley must have once again felt vindicated, validated, their views firmly authorized. Cowan’s lecture, “Geometric Visual Hallucinations and the Architecture of the Striate Cortex,” got underway with his observation as to how far from the cognitive archaeologists’ work his own scientific research seemed to him. I mused that maybe he was uncertain how appropriately they were using his research, but I wondered about something else even more.

Since I saw my own work, my theoretical and methodological inclinations, as just as far from these archaeologists' priorities and performances, but in the opposite direction from Cowan's science, his comment confirmed my sense that the appeal to materialist science in the study of shamanism was an issue with many ramifications. When Cowan then flashed us power-point pictures of the brain, and said of the visual cortex that "it really is a computer chip," I knew I was in the presence of someone who was too scientific to be aware that his own metaphors—including, yet again, "wiring"—were in fact metaphors; it would no doubt be a sheer annoyance to him to be told as much. And next, when he finished up by referring to "universal archetypes," I once more thought of how roundly Jung was criticized by those who were mostly, like him, outside of hard science, and had had to modify his explanations, having advanced his arguably essentialized ideas as empirical claims. Recalling these criticisms in the light of Cowan's scientific thought-style, it was as though some sorts of critical thinking had escaped their scientific auspices and could be used to expose science's own blind spots, not as part of the self-critical process of "normal science" itself but as an attack from outside, from the social sciences or even the humanities, against its unexamined metaphors and often unconscious faith in exclusively material causes. Surely, I thought, these considerations should play a role in the development of an adequate shamanology.

Still, here was David Whitley, in the general discussion that closed the "Written in Stone" conference, again evidencing a more moderate and less monolithically materialist viewpoint. In addition to his welcome warning about the danger of "neurological reductionism," he acknowledged the existence of forty years of postmodernism—something most scientists seemed to ignore or disdain. I took this to be an admission on his part that at least to some degree science was a social construction subject to the critical thinking of those removed from the hard sciences. Likewise, his familiarity with Gloria Flaherty's *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century* (Flaherty 1992), mentioned when we shared a flight back to California after the symposium, appeared to go beyond the awareness of such cultural-historical perspectives on the part of other cognitive archaeologists. Flaherty's book stresses the reception of the first reports about Siberian shamanism, with significant distortions, by Enlightenment Europe. I had found her insights valuably cautionary, and I hoped Whitley's reference was not to an opposing position he had quickly dismissed, or whose cautions he had considered only in passing.

Two Critics

Most assuredly there were recent opponents of cognitive archaeology (upon which Flaherty did not comment) who were specifically targeting its neuroshamanological hypothesis. One was an accomplished English writer on prehistory and the caves, Paul Bahn. Another was an American anthropologist, Alice Beck Kehoe. Both have been harsher than I would wish to be here.

Paul Bahn's *Journey Through the Ice Age*, with photographs by Paul Vertut, first published in 1988 but with a second edition from 1997, is brief and unsparing in its criticisms of both Lewis-Williams' claims as to the shamanic sources of San rock art and the claims made about prehistoric cave paintings by Jean Clottes and Lewis-Williams in *The Shamans of Prehistory*. Bahn begins by referring to Andreas Lommel as the major precursor of such claims regarding shamanism (but as lacking the resources of neuropsychology). He then moves on to Clottes and Lewis-Williams, and while he is not closed to the possibility of finding shamanic elements in Upper Paleolithic cave decorations, he does not welcome their methodology for verifying this possibility: "Unfortunately," he says, "the latest attempt to apply such notions to the Ice Age is based entirely on recent research on southern African rock art, involving hallucinations, trances and 'phosphene forms' [entoptic images]" (1988/1997: 181). He goes on to describe this guardedly as "based on ethnographic accounts and neuropsychological studies which suggest that as shamans enter 'trance' they experience 'entoptics'" (1988/1997: 182).

At this point Bahn relaxes his restraint and becomes more overtly and pointedly critical:

However, there are many problems with this approach to prehistoric art. First, a zigzag motif could easily be inspired by lightning, just as circles can be inspired by ripples in water [and, I would reiterate, circles have yet to be put forward clearly as Stage One phenomena]. Second, it does not require a shamanic trance to see entoptics . . . to seek the source of imagery only in altered states of consciousness and in universal neurophysiology has not produced a cross-cultural "skeleton key" that unlocks the secrets of Paleolithic art. (1988/1997: 182)

Bahn's view of what I have called neuroshamanology is, in other words, emphatically negative. Nor is he any more accepting of Lewis-Williams' ideas about San shamanism. "The African research on

which the new approach is founded,” he declares, “is itself based on massive assumptions, wishful thinking, and extreme selectivity of image and of interpretation. In fact there is no hard ethnographic evidence to link any prehistoric southern African rock art with shamans, let alone with trance phenomena” (1988/1997: 182).

Bahn cites his sources in support of such judgements, but permit me to move on to Alice Beck Kehoe’s book *Shamans and Religion*, which is hardly less dismissive than Bahn’s text. Kehoe’s study is subtitled *An Anthropological Exploration in Critical Thinking*, and for her a lack of critical thinking in regard to shamanism has led not only to universalist delusion academically but also to the political evils of colonialism and racism. Our frequent treatment of indigenous peoples far removed from the Siberian homeland of shamans as practicing shamanism, she insists, is part of a pernicious cultural primitivism of the “Other.” Within this condemnatory context, her specific rejection of the neuroshamanology thesis occurs in a chapter entitled “Shaman Painters?”

Her disdain for David Lewis-Williams partly seems to stem from an ethnographer’s suspicion about the ethnographic readings (and reachings) of an archaeologist. For one thing, Kehoe notes that “uncertainties about the protohistoric, not to mention prehistoric, peoples of South Africa were not addressed by Lewis-Williams” (2000: 72). For another, she differs strongly with his assigning of shamanic behavior to the San in particular:

Lewis-Williams labels these ritualists “shamans” because the San conceptualize a tiered cosmos they can reach through in trance. What is a tiered cosmos? One example would be Heaven, Earth, and Hell; by Lewis-Williams’ definitions, any Christians who believe their prayers reach Heaven should be labeled shamans, and the Christian religions “shamanistic.” (2000: 72–73)

By this point Kehoe is almost indulging in ridicule, as when she reacts to Lewis-Williams’ recourse to neuropsychology: “Perhaps eventually Lewis-Williams will analyze museum-collection paintings by Western artists, perhaps he will test his theory of the prevalence of entoptics by interviewing contemporary artists” (2000: 73). More straightforwardly, she observes that “labeling San ritual practitioners ‘shamans’ because they officiate at healing rituals called by Western observers ‘trance dance’ is playing loose with terms,” and that “unfortunately for Lewis-Williams’ theory, the observed San practitioners did not then go paint or engrave rock faces, or make any other representation of what

they may have experienced” (2000: 74). With these dismissals of the shamanistic sponsorship of San rock art in place, she is then able to address the collaboration with Jean Clottes and the neuropsychological arguments for shamanism being the cause of Paleolithic cave paintings.

Kehoe’s appraisal is again one that directly challenges the claims of the two cognitive archaeologists: “What must be explained,” she insists,

is not only the art itself, as in South African paintings on open rock faces, but the artists’ conviction that the art must be created fearsomely deep within the dark, slippery, clammy earth. It’s not the same as a Siberian shaman drumming, dancing, and then divining in a tent or cabin filled with the people of the community. Darkness inside a dwelling doesn’t equal darkness through a mile of twisting rock. (2000: 78)

This means, for her, that “there is no necessary connection between deep cave art and hunting or cave art and small societies [she has cited the example of cave art in Classical Maya society], much less cave art and shamans” (2000: 78).

The Need to Supplement Neuroshamanology

It is relevant to mention, as I begin to conclude my assessment, that Alice Beck Kehoe’s book lists Anna-Leena Siikala and Mihály Hoppál’s *Studies on Shamanism* as a text she consulted. This leads me to refer to their views on shamanism and rock art as important components of a shamanology that is more pluralistic and interdisciplinary than Lewis-Williams and Clottes’ approach, and even than Whitley’s, despite its own overtures toward a wider view. This is not so much to reject the promising findings and formulations of these cognitive archaeologists, as Bahn and Kehoe do (although their criticisms are well-taken). It is rather to underscore the notion that there are limitations in neuroshamanology that call for supplementary perspectives from other directions and disciplines, including those in the social sciences (with various perspectives in psychology and sociology as well as in anthropology) and the humanities, extending also into the arts. These would include the insights, for example, of Siikala and Hoppál.

One of the former’s essays, reprinted from 1984 in their co-authored volume, deals with Finnish rock art and the shamanic worldview. There

is, of course, no question here of appealing to neuropsychology; Siikala's methodology is drawn instead from folklorists' use of semiotic analysis and from Åke Hultkrantz's idea of "religious ecology." These methods allow her to establish a pertinent context for interpreting shamanism in relation to specific rock art sites, with special attention to the role of animal ceremonialism (1992: 56–67).

Mihály Hoppál, for his part, discusses the origin of shamanism as suggested by Siberian rock art in an article originally published in 1985 (and which I referred to at the outset). One of Hoppál's points is to caution against the overuse of the term "art"—other than as a convenience—in describing possible meanings of prehistoric and indigenous expressions at lithic sites, lest a discredited "art for art's sake" assumption re-enter our thinking. His other methodological emphases here are his use of the category of "belief system" as a broader alternative to "religion" when approaching shamanism and his recourse to a formidable "ethnosemiotics" to interpret images associated with a given shamanic belief system. This, in turn, can be attempted with "syntactic," "semantic," and "pragmatic" studies (1992: 132–49).

The work of these two scholars, I am suggesting, exemplifies the deployment of effective methodological tools in recent shamanological research that does not employ neuropsychology but that can correct and enhance the findings of the latter for the study of shamanism. These and still other resources can be helpful—and are probably essential—in a properly interdisciplinary shamanology given the incompleteness of a sheer reliance on the methods of cognitive archaeology. Certainly we need even more of the sort of openness to alternative hermeneutical strategies, which David Whitley has displayed.

A danger of neuroshamanology, for all of its claims and contributions, and one that a David Whitley, let alone a Lewis-Williams or a Clottes, notwithstanding their admitted eminence, may not have pondered sufficiently, is a kind of innocent or preoccupied scientism that succumbs irrationally to the very real allure of science's validating authority in modern culture. And this danger persists notwithstanding postmodernist deconstructions of purportedly objective, disinterested scientific themes and theories. Indeed, as the academic "Science Wars" have shown in recent years, most scientists resist—if not summarily reject—being told that their work and the "discoveries" of science more

generally are partly or wholly constructed out of historical, sociopolitical, and cultural interests.³

But shamanology, as an interdisciplinary enterprise, does not have the luxury of ignoring such concerns. In the last few years books of “neurotheology” like Newberg, D’Aquili, and Rause’s *Why God Won’t Go Away*, from 2001, have demonstrated, in the absence of actually presenting any neurological evidence for more than subjective spirituality (while insinuating they deliver proof of transcendent spiritual objects: e.g., “God”), have demonstrated again the enormous seductive appeal to the wider public—and not a few scholars—of ideas which give the illusion of having hard science’s *imprimatur*. Meanwhile, new books of neuroshamanology continue to emerge.

For instance, a book by Steven Mithen, *The Prehistory of the Mind: The Cognitive Origins of Art, Religion, and Science*, appeared in 1999, and Michael Winkelman, an anthropologist at the University of Arizona, published his study, *Shamanism: The Neural Ecology of Consciousness and Healing*, in 2000. The same year, David Whitley’s *The Art of the Shaman: Rock Art of California* came out. Similar works are promised for 2002: *Shamanism and the Ancient Mind*, by James L. Pearson, is subtitled *A Cognitive Approach to Archaeology*. Likewise, David Lewis-Williams returns with a new book, *Cosmos in Stone: Interpreting Religion and Society Through Rock Art*.

Related to the dangers of an exclusively neuroshamanological approach in such books, and one which may earn its way in part through an unexamined scientism, is the projection of ideas from modern scientific contexts anachronistically onto pre-scientific cultures. Alice Kehoe writes of the contemporary Western individualist consumerism, which characterizes the view of shamanism in the workshops and writings of New-Age “neoshamanism” (2000: 85), but scholars, too, are prone to projections. One example of these, I would suggest, is the employment of the term “hallucination,” a word with its own troubled history which involves an epistemological judgement about assumed truth claims entailed by the visionary experiences of supposed shamans. Connected to this problematic usage is another: the word “belief” or “believe,” indicating a more subtle Western epistemology, which was consequentially redefined during the Protestant Reformation and the early-modern rise

³ See Ross (ed.) 1996.

of science to mean, in most cases, what it had never meant in earlier eras, a propositional claim about matters of fact (see Smith 1977/1998, 1979/1998). The people in the prehistoric caves almost certainly did not “hold” shamanistic “beliefs” (or any others) in this narrowly modern sense—though they may well have been involved, as Mihály Hoppál theorizes, in an encompassing “belief system” of some more diffuse sort, closer to the original etymology of the word belief as heartfelt trust, cherishing, or devotion, which presupposed rather than claimed certain kinds of knowing. Aside from Hoppál’s defensible formulation, such projections of a modern scientific culture not only dishonor the experience of non-Western, indigenous, and prehistoric people, but also distort our understanding of shamanism.

All of these difficulties underscore the need to resist a shamanology driven by hard science alone and to allow for viewpoints that are deliberately nonscientific (as contrasted with ignorantly unscientific).

Conclusion

When I went to Lascaux in the spring of 2000 it was as a member of a tour of caves in the Dordogne led by an American poet, Clayton Eshleman. The winner of a National Book Award for translation, author of many books of poetry, and editor of the literary journals *Caterpillar* and *Sulfur*, Eshleman has been visiting the caves regularly for over twenty years and leading occasional tours. More importantly, he has been working with the ideas and images of the caves in his writing, both poetry and prose, throughout these years.

He is cognizant of all the theories about the caves and their “art”—his sense is that there may have been a “proto-shamanism” at work in the small societies which expressed themselves and their world in the cave depths—and he can see value in all of them. He only resists, as I do, monolithic and exclusivistic theories. Moreover, the work of his years of study and on-site reflection is about to be collected and published later in 2002 by Wesleyan University Press in a major work, *Juniper Fuse: Upper Paleolithic Imagination and the Construction of the Underworld*. In a draft of the Introduction that he has graciously permitted me to see, Eshleman makes a major point (which I need to quote at length) that indicates what an artist might bring to the study of a possible Ice-Age shamanism:

In the late 1970s, I became aware that cave imagery is an inseparable mix of mental constructs and perception. That is, there are “fantastic” animals as well as astutely perceived realistic animals. There are not only human figures representing men and women whose social role cannot be determined, but others, with bird masks, bison heads, and peculiar wounds, that evoke an interior world, in some cases shamanism. Instead of solely employing rational documentation (as have the archaeologists), it struck me that this “inseparable mix” might be approached using mental imagery as well as perception, or poetic imagination as well as thorough field-work and research.

Thus in the writing of *Juniper Fuse* I sought to be open to what I thought about and fantasized while in the caves or while meditating on their image environments—to create my own truth as to what they mean, respecting imagination as one of a plurality of conflicting powers. I also sought to be a careful observer, and to reflect on what others have written, photographed, and drawn. (pre-publication ms.: 7–8)

Here we gain an emphatic impression of what Eshleman means when he writes, earlier in his introductory draft, that he wishes “to make use of a pluralistic approach that may result in a fuller ‘reading’ of Upper Paleolithic imagination than archeological or literary approaches alone might yield” (pre-publication ms.: 2–3). Certainly as an artist he is equipped to tell us something worthwhile about what, beyond “art’s sake,” the art of the caves might have been “for.”

It is this sort of methodological pluralism, transcending modernist presumptions, that I am recommending to the study of shamanism in reaction to my encounter with neuroshamanology. As Clayton Eshleman also says of his intentions for *Juniper Fuse*, “I have wanted to make this book as multifoliate as the image-making it is focused on” (pre-publication ms.: 18). And among the multiple resources he relies on are the ideas of the post-Jungian psychologist of the imagination James Hillman.

Along with Eshleman, Hillman may represent the opposite pole from—and therefore a needed counterweight and complement to—the perspectives of neuroshamanology. Aside from a few evocative comments, Hillman has not written directly about cave art or its arguably shamanistic provenance. However, Hillman’s book from 1979, *The Dream and the Underworld*, opens up an intriguing connection, one that Eshleman understands in remarking that

With the Greeks in mind, James Hillman writes: “When we use the word underworld, we are referring to a wholly psychic perspective, where one’s entire mode of being has been desubstantialized, killed of natural life, and yet is in every shape and sense . . . the exact replica of natural life.” Behind such a definition is the Upper Paleolithic underworld: animal forms removed from their flesh and blood. (pre-publication ms.: 20)

Another Hillman book, produced in 1997 with the painter Margot McLean, has a title implying what the cave images may be for us today, if not perhaps also for their makers millennia ago: *Dream Animals*. A psychologist who is able to see dreams in terms of the metaphor of an insubstantial underworld derived from Greek myth, and who is then able to imagine animals in dreams as a metaphor for the autonomous behavior of all unbidden images in our mental life, has, I should think, much to offer to shamanologists who are called upon to conjure with cave paintings of animals that were not physically present to the painters, animals that are now, in many cases, extinct.

We need the imagination of a poet like Clayton Eshleman and a depth psychologist like James Hillman to put together with the historical and literary studies of humanities scholars like Gloria Flaherty, the fieldwork and theories of anthropologists like Anna-Leena Siikala and Mihály Hoppál, and the facts and analyses of hard scientists in archaeology or neurology. In interdisciplinary concert they might tell us something valuable, for instance, regarding that term about which, while using it so frequently, neuroshamanology left to itself has been largely silent: the “symbol,” the symbolism of images. We might thereby, in turn, be made to imagine more effectively the phenomenology of the visionary experience such symbolism mediates. Only with this combination of resources can we hope to penetrate the darkness of the cave depths and the consciousness of the painters to see if what we can find there was also the first shamanism. Only such a pluralistically postmodern perspective, inherently reflexive, cross-questioning, and thus self-critical, can hope to avoid the modern projections, with their possible colonialism and racism, which threaten our work.

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A Drum in the Min Shan Mountains

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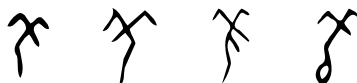
This article focuses on a particular shamanic instrument, the bu drum as used by the faith healers shüpi of the Qiang, an ancient ethnic group living in the Sino-Tibetan mountain regions of NW Sichuan. Its functions are described, its various forms depicted and its origin stories told. The outstanding morphological feature of the Qiang shaman's drum is a wooden frame covered only on one side with a membrane, while the handle is hanging suspended inside the frame to be grasped from the open side of the hoop. As such the bu drum of the Qiang connects Siberian and some Himalayan forms of the shamans' most important instrument, equally characterized as the one-sided frame drum. The Qiang drum may thus be called a missing link between North and South Asian shamanic paraphernalia.

Confronted with anniversaries in round figures, the celebrant starts to play with numbers. Like a juggler he throws decades into the air, one after the other, and when six of them are up, it is time to take stock. In the year of Mihály Hoppál's birth (which happens to be mine too and, coincidentally, is also the year of Bronislaw Malinowski's death) an American missionary, whose real mission was to write reliable ethnography, published his first full account of a group of people in the Sino-Tibetan marshes, whose name had been handed down—first on oracle bone inscriptions, later in Chinese chronicles—for nearly 4,000 years. The people are the Qiang and the ethnographer's name is David Crockett Graham.

When the celebrant was half the age Mihály is now, he thumbed through one of Graham's later publications on the Qiang which contained photographs taken by him almost three decades earlier, in the early thirties. One of them arrested my attention. It showed a Qiang shüpi or 'priest' (Graham's translation) wearing a monkey skin hat and holding a drum in his left hand. Behind him stood an assistant dressed

in a white hemp garment (fig. 1). The focal point of the picture was the space behind the “priest’s” hand: the interior of a frame drum covered on one side by a membrane and furnished on the other, open side with a handle running diametrically through the hoop. As time passed, I forgot the picture. But the drum’s belly must have settled firmly in my memory pool, for when I started, more than two decades later, on my ongoing project of a comparative morphology of the Asian shaman’s drum, this photograph re-emerged in my recollection and induced me to visit the Qiang people myself. This I did in 1998 and 2000, and what I discovered there in regard to the ritual drums of the Qiang shall be the topic of my following anniversary song.

The ethnonym Qiang 羌 is among the oldest in Chinese writing. It appears first on oracle bones of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties in various shapes, such as:



In both the ancient rendering and the modern character, it is composed of two constituent parts: of *yang* 羊 for ‘sheep’ and of *ren* 人 for ‘man’. Pictorially, the ethnonym *Qiang* could thus be read as ‘sheep people’, and, in fact, since time immemorial the Qiang have been associated with sheep—as nomadic or transhumant, and later as sedentary pastoralists. The name of the “sheep people” was applied by the Chinese since early times to a multitude of tribes living on their northwestern borders in what are now Shaanxi, Gansu and Qinghai provinces. According to Han dynasty chronicles and to their own legendary accounts, one of these Qiang groups was driven westward and then south into Sichuan, where they settled down in their present habitat around 100 B.C.

The territory of the present day Qiang is roughly defined by the area between the tributaries of the Minjiang River, the He Shui and Tsa Gu Nao Rivers in the Min Shan Mountains, covering four counties of the Aba Autonomous Prefecture, namely Heishui, Maowen, Lixian and Wenchuan counties. It is delimited by 103.2°–104.2° E and 31.3°–32.4° N (figs. 2, 3).

Scholars agree that the contemporary Qiang of the Min Shan Mountains constitute one branch of the ancient Qiang to their north and that some of their cultural features stand in a direct line of continuity with customs of their distant ancestors. This seems particularly the case with some of their spiritual concepts and the ritual practices of their local religious specialists.

The basic religious concepts can be studied by analyzing the ritual activities of these specialists and the ritual activities through a detailed study of their tools. The tools or paraphernalia consist of a special costume (a monkey skin hat, a five-lobed crown, a leopard- or sheepskin jacket, a white skirt and a peculiar necklace); a set of sound instruments (a one-sided and a double-sided drum, cymbals, bells, yak horn and conch shell trumpets); sticks and bladed ritual weapons (a sacred wand, an iron rattle, ceremonial knives and swords, and a three-bladed dagger); divination tools and printed charms (yak hoofs, strings, scapulas, and divinatory picture books, wooden printing boards and metal seals); and of magic accessories (such as a wrapped monkey head, a poison bag, chains of animal bones, horns, claws, skulls, teeth, beaks and iron pendants). A concise study of the ritual objects of the contemporary Qiang religious specialist is under way (Oppitz, Ms.); here I shall concentrate on one of them: the drum, which is perhaps the most important of all these objects.

The religious officiants of the Qiang (fig. 4), called *shüpi* (variants: *bi*, *pi*, *bi mu*, *xu*, *shi*, *shibi* or *shipi*), whom I do not hesitate to refer to as "shamans," distinguish two different basic types of ritual drums: a one-sided frame drum with a handle inside the frame; and a double-sided frame drum with a handle installed outside on the frame. The former type is played with a drumstick, the latter by way of two knobs fastened by leather strips to the frame on opposite sides. By twisting the handle forward and backward the knobs are made to strike automatically against the membranes. The one-sided drum is the larger of the two types. It is called *bu*, *bo*, *mbo*, *i-bou*, *rbu* or *rue*, depending on dialect variations. Morphologically it belongs to the order of classical north Asian shamanic drums.

The front side of the *bu* drum is covered with a membrane made of sheep or goat skin or, alternatively, of cowhide (figs. 5, 6). According to a local classificatory distinction, cowhide drums are used in rituals connected with the expulsion of ghosts and demons; and drums with sheep or goat skin are employed when dealing with deities. In Chinese,

this distinction is expressed by *xiatan fashi* and *shangtan fashi*. As far as contemporary practices are concerned, this distinction is generally ignored. From a mythological point of view, sheepskin is clearly the original and orthodox material for the membrane.

The leather of the membrane is stretched over the rim of the wooden frame with the help of strings which run in a zigzag line from the edge of the hide to holes in the middle of the hoop (fig. 7); these holes are placed at equal intervals all around the circular frame. Another way of fastening the membrane to the wood of the frame is by means of nails (fig. 8), which is locally called the “Tibetan way.” The hair of the hide is completely shaved off except for the outermost margin beyond the drumming surface, the hairy remnants reminding people of the drum’s animal origins.

The drumframe consists of a single lath bent into a circle, with the overlapping ends held together by iron clamps (fig. 9). This wooden hoop is often decorated with several bundles of red and white paper strips, which are interpreted in different ways: some say they represent the cranial hair of the drum (seen as a head, see fig. 10); for others they represent medicinal plants which the first healer brought back from a celestial journey; and still others, referring to a myth, see the paper strips as a cover to hide bloodstains left on the primordial drum after a human being had been killed in an accidental collision with the drumframe.

The open backside of the drum is characterized, first and foremost, by a wooden handle that runs diametrically through the interior of the frame (fig. 11). This handle, unlike most handles installed inside one-sided Asian drums, is not fastened at both ends directly to the frame; instead it is held by a circular wooden or iron ring which runs on a smaller radius parallel to the hoop and is connected to it by strings that run in a zigzag fashion between frame and inner ring. In some cases these strings are the same as those that stretch the membrane over the outer ring of the hoop. By means of this installation technique, the drum handle and the interior ring that passes through the handle at its two ends both hang suspended inside the drum, generating a rich and voluminous sound.

Most handles are carved: with simple geometrical designs; with stepped, engraved segments; or with figurative details, such as a “lizard” or a “sheep’s head” (figs. 12, 13, 14). Inside some of the frames, next to the top end of the handle, hang suspended two brass bells, which with

the movements of the drum produce from its interior an additional rhythmic sound.

As a rule the membranes of drums are not decorated with drawings. An exception is one drum I saw at a funeral in Napu village, Maoxian county, which bore a design on the hide: the famous eight trigrams or *ba gua* employed in Chinese divination (fig. 15). The trigrams, the circle around them and the eight segments attached on the outer circle, each enclosing a single Chinese character, had all been applied in black ink with a brush. To find the *ba gua* painted on a drum is not only an indication of the massive influence of Han Chinese concepts on the indigenous ways of religious thought, but also a hint at the fact that the drum is a device for divination.

Qiang shamans employ various techniques for divination: divination with coloured strings; by throwing yak hoofs; with the shoulder blades of sheep; with eggs; with the help of divinatory picture books; and with the drum. Here I will mention only drum divination. The technique is as follows: when venerating with fellow shamans the ancestral deity in a sacred spruce forest, the chief officiant asks his assistant at a peak moment of the ceremony to turn the one-sided drum into a horizontal position so that the membrane points upwards (fig. 16); when this is done, he scatters barley seeds on to the surface of the drumskin (fig. 17). Then he takes the drum into his own hands and beats it. The seeds, moved by the vibrations of the membrane, dance into various directions. The pattern they form or the exact spot where they fall off the drumframe is then read and translated into predictions of the future. It may be noted in passing that quite similar forms of drum divination have been recorded both in Tibet and in various parts of Nepal where shamanic traditions flourish (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1952; Oppitz 1982: 150 f.; and Riboli 2000: 244).

In the native divination books of the Qiang shamans, which assemble long sequences of figurative drawings next to abstract symbols, drums are frequently depicted (fig. 18). Whenever these are drawn along with a drumstick, a one-sided drum is described, and when the drumstick is missing, the drum is the double-sided hand-drum. The drumsticks of contemporary shamans are called *wu chüe* or *ruek jia*; they consist of a more or less straight piece of bamboo or other wood wrapped at the top with cloth, usually red in colour (fig. 19).

The terms used to refer to the various parts of the *bu* drum are as follows: the drumskin or membrane is called *tsa da*; the drumframe

or hoop is *wö i pa u jie*; the paper strips decorating exterior sections of the drumframe are referred to as *wu ba*; the drum handle is *wu pa shue* or *rue ji*; the inner ring, associated with the “twelve earth branches,” is known as *jia ji ba*; the eight trigrams drawn on the membrane are called *wo chi jia wa* (they are said to have been originally drawn by the mythical founder Taishang Laojun); and the bells inside the drum are called *lin chu*.

The big, one-sided drum of the Qiang priest is employed on many different ritual occasions: at healing séances, in which tutelary deities and auxiliary spirits are invoked and enemies such as ghosts and malignant spirits are exorcised; in ceremonies to retrieve lost souls; at weddings to ask for supernatural blessings to benefit the young couple; at initiation ceremonies for prospective new shamans; at various calendrical events; and during all kinds of rituals related to death.

On these occasions the drum is employed as a means to transmit transcendental messages; as an accompanying instrument to the recital of religious chants; as a tool for making enquiries about future events; as a transportation vehicle in ritual journeys; and as a rhythmic pacemaker for shamanic dances. The styles and rhythms of drumming vary from occasion to occasion, generating different moods, and, when stimulating the dance movements, a considerable variety of steps.

When a shaman visits a client, the big drum has to be carried over the shoulder, just as the first shaman did when he descended from heaven to the people on earth (fig. 20). Two versions of a legendary tale relate in their own way how this method of transporting the drum came about.

Originally, the shaman did not have to carry his drum to the client’s home because, just like its owner, the drum flew to its destination on its own. One day, when he was called to a patient, he told his wife to open the door of the room where the drum was stored as soon as she heard a noise from within. After a while she heard a noise but paid no attention to it. Likewise, she remained deaf to a second knock. And when, after the third knock, she finally opened the door, the drum flew out at such speed that when it brushed against her head she was killed. When the drum arrived at the client’s place, the shaman noticed some blood on the frame and knew immediately what had happened. Blaming himself, he took some five-coloured paper strips and placed them on the rim of the drumframe to cover the traces of blood. To prevent such accidents in the future, he reduced the size of the drum and car-

ried it himself when going out to a ceremony. That is the origin of the paper strips and the shaman carrying the drum.

The second version goes like this:

Long ago there lived a shaman called Abagejie who used to fly to his patients accompanied by his drum. One day he forgot to take it along. The drum began to make noises in its box. The shaman's wife, surprised by the banging, opened the box and was knocked on the forehead by the impetuous drum, which flew away to its master. The shaman, seeing bloodstains on the frame, rushed home only to find his wife dead. Since that time, when someone calls in a shaman he or she has to send a messenger to the shaman's house to pronounce an explicit invitation to both him and the drum. The messenger must then carry the drum to the patient's house and, after the ritual, back to the shaman's.

Once every year the *bu* drum has to be consecrated and its power reinvigorated. This ceremony, a small rite, is called in Chinese *kai gu* 開鼓 'opening the drum'. It has to be performed on a dragon day of the first lunar month of the year. It is said that no shaman should hold any other ceremony in the new year prior to this rite. Otherwise it would bring bad luck.

The following story is generally regarded as the origin myth of the one-sided drum. It is a very popular tale, known by all Qiang people, and it circulates in different versions. In the same breath as it explains the origin of the drum, it relates the genesis of other shamanic implements: the monkey skin hat and the effigy of the patron deity—a monkey skull wrapped in paper; moreover, it explains why the Qiang have no writing. Simple as its plot may be, the myth is very complex and deserves special attention. I shall present it, therefore, in two renderings. The first version, which follows, was recounted to the author by shaman Zhang Fuliang of Luobucui village, Wenchuan county, in December 1998.

In the beginning, the *shüpi* or shaman *did* have written books. Every three years he would make a trip to a Buddhist lama to renew them. One day, on his way home after he had collected a new set of scriptures, he settled down under a tree for a nap. While he was asleep, a flock of sheep passed by and one of them ate his scriptures. When the *shüpi* woke up he realized the disaster that had befallen him. Having spent all the money he had taken for the trip, he did not

want to go back to the lama to ask for another set of books, so he started to cry. A golden-haired monkey (fig. 21) passed by and told the tearful man how to solve his problem. He instructed him to kill the guilty sheep and make a drum from its skin. When the shaman started to play his new instrument, he was able to recite a phrase from his lost books with each beat of the drum. The next day the shaman lost his way, and again the monkey appeared and carried him on its shoulders out of the impasse. But, before reaching the shaman's home, the monkey died of exhaustion. Thereupon the first shaman made himself a hat from the monkey's skin and wrapped the skull in paper. Since then the shaman, when holding a ritual, has worn a monkey skin hat and keeps a monkey skull wrapped in paper as his patron deity.

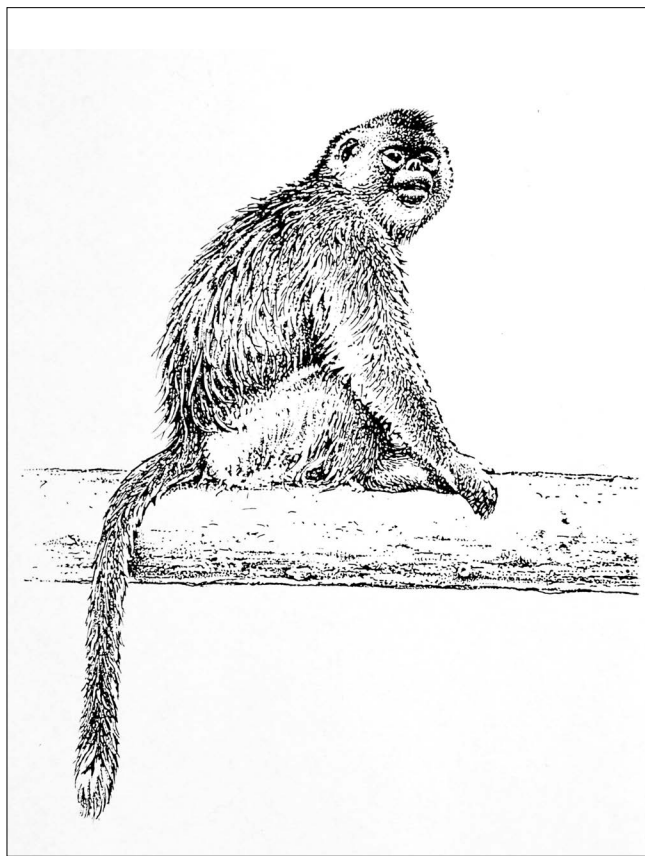


Fig. 21. Golden-haired monkey

Some other versions of this tale have been reported in the literature on the Qiang (Hu 1941: 15; Stein 1957: 8 f.; Graham 1958: 22; Oppitz 1998: 340 f.). Instead of reproducing these, I will add a version that was told to us by shaman Ren Yongqing of Heihu village, Maoxian county, also in December 1998. As will become clear, this version opens a path into the field of comparative folk literature.

A long time ago, in the Tang period, there lived a monk by the name of Tang Seng who undertook a journey to the western skies in the company of a monkey called Sun Wukong to collect sacred scriptures there. On their way back they encountered the ghost of a sheep, who ate all the newly acquired scriptures. The monkey became very angry, killed the sheep ghost and used its skin to make a drum. Thereupon Tang Seng and the monkey met with the eighteen Arhats (wise men who have attained the state of Nirvana by leaving the concept of Self behind). After listening to their teachings, Tang Seng picked up the sheepskin drum and was able to repeat all that he had heard from their mouths by reciting to the beat of his instrument. Since then all shüpi use a drum when reciting their knowledge from memory.

It should be noted that, as soon as he had finished telling the story, Ren Yongqing himself pointed out the parallels between his version and an episode in the famous Chinese novel *Journey to the West* or *Xi yu ji* by Wu Chengen. This relates the adventurous journey of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang (602–664) to India, where he collects sacred scriptures which he brings home to China for translation. On the westbound leg of his pilgrimage Xuanzang is accompanied by a clever monkey—in the novel also called Sun Wukong, whereas he, the monk, is referred to as Sanzang. Sometimes the monk is also referred to as the “collector of scriptures,” and on woodcuts and stone-rubbings that illustrate the many editions of the novel he is occasionally shown carrying a tall load of books in a pannier (fig. 22).

Towards the end of the novel, just before they re-enter China and after having survived eighty ordeals, the monk and his companions (the monkey, a pig and a servant called Sandy) are confronted by one last obstacle: they come to a river they cannot cross. As there is no boatman in sight they mount the back of a white turtle, which takes them safely to the eastern bank. Or almost. For when the turtle finds out that the monk has forgotten a request it made to him at the outset of the journey—to ask the Buddha how long it will be before the

turtle can attain human form—the scabby-headed animal shakes itself and dives with a splash into the depths of the river. The four pilgrims and their scriptures are all soaked. Hardly have they climbed up the bank of the river than a great storm with thunder, lightning and strong winds comes upon them, almost blowing the wet scriptures away. It dawns on the monk that invisible demons are trying to snatch them away, for the wisdom and knowledge the books contain have incurred the envy of every spirit in heaven and earth. On a flat place, later called “the rock where the scriptures were dried,” the pilgrims spread out the soaked scrolls to dry. Asked by some fishermen from a nearby village to complete the drying of the scriptures in front of their house, Sanzang and his entourage begin to collect them up. However, several scrolls stick to the rock, which is why traces of writing remain on it. In addition, part of one sutra ending is torn off; and that is why today it is incomplete. The rest of the scriptures are saved and brought before the Emperor in the capital.

It is said that the historical Xuanzang actually suffered a mishap similar to the one recounted in the novel. When crossing the Indus River on his return journey, a considerable number of canonical texts and rare seeds he had collected were washed away in the current. The motif of the turtle, on the other hand, which carries people on its broad back but is capable of plunging abruptly into the waves, is an old topos of Chinese folk literature (Dudbridge 1970: 11).

There can be no doubt that the Qiang origin story of the drum and the wet-scripture adventure of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang in the company of a helpful monkey are nurtured on a common substrate of folk tradition. This becomes clearer in yet another version of the Qiang myth, where it is stated explicitly that the shaman’s scriptures are eaten by a sheep after they have become wet in a river crossing and have been spread out on a meadow.

The motif recurs even in a historiographical account of the Qiang that deals with their migration from the north down to the Min Shan Mountains. In this semi-legendary report it is emphasized that their forefathers were forced by the Chinese to set out on a long journey south. On the way they cross a river in round boats covered on the sides and bottom with leather hides. One of the coracles breaks up and the sacred books taken along on the journey get wet. While they are being dried in the sun a passing herd of goats eats them. That is why the Qiang, after settling in the area they now inhabit, have had no written

language and are forced to hand down their knowledge by word of mouth (Graham 1958: 7).

The monkey of the Qiang myth not only advises the first shaman how to overcome the catastrophe of losing his books by making a drum, but its own body supplies the material for some of the shaman's basic auxiliary gear: from its pelt the *shüpi* makes a hat and its skull becomes a venerated icon. Such ritual objects are still in use amongst the contemporary Qiang of the Min Shan Mountains.

The most spectacular item among a shaman's garments is a towering hat made of the fur and skin of the golden-haired monkey (fig. 23). The hat, locally called *jar tä*, is decorated with white cowrie shells, several iron or brass plaques, small bells and polished white bones. The "head" of a monkey can be discerned on the front side of the hat: in the main central section the fur is shorn off in the shape of a monkey skull, whereas outside the facial section the hair is left long. At eye level two cowrie shells are sewn on to the shaved part of the skin as "eyes." Below these a brass disk with ornaments in the shape of nostrils represents the "nose"; and another plaque with the Chinese character *shang* 賞, 'reward,' written in its centre stands for the 'mouth'. This character is said to be an official recognition of services rendered to the population by one shaman of the past in praying for rain.

On some hats the real ears of the monkey have been left on. These enable the hat to "hear," just as the cowrie-eyes allow it to "see." Polished bones in the shape of a circular disk—presumably the kneecap of a tiger—and another set of ornamental cowrie shells on the lower rim of the front side of the hat represent powerful defensive devices in the guise of a monkey's brooch and necklace. At the top, the hat has three towering points made from the monkey's tail; these have cosmological connotations, alluding to the three layers of the universe. The furry points make the headgear look more like a crown than a hat (fig. 24). At the back of the hat various strips of monkey skin patched together hang down over the shoulder of its owner.

The three-pointed monkey skin hat is kept with veneration and handed down as a sacred object from master to pupil. Its main purpose is to conquer demons or keep them at bay. Monkeys and demons as antagonistic partners are also known in the oldest Tibetan traditions.

The special relation of the Qiang shaman to the golden-haired monkey is also expressed in another ritual object: the monkey skull wrapped in layers of white paper and carried carefully by its owner to some of his

ceremonial locations. This magical accessory is called *abba mula*. At the top end of the wrapped paper bundle the monkey skull looks out, while the bottom end is tied up. A cowrie shell in each eye socket represents the eyes, just like those sewn on to the monkey hat. Inside the bundle, next to the skull, are kept dried pieces of the lungs, liver, intestines, lips and nails of the monkey's "five organs."

The paper wrappings must not be removed; on the contrary, with every important ceremony conducted by the idol's owner a new layer of white paper should be added. Thereby, the accomplishments of a shaman are on public display, open for all to see in the number of layers around the skull. Some *shüpi* will not allow any other person to touch their *abba mula* image and keep the wrapped skull in a secret, sacred place in the innermost part of their house. Because such heads are rare, a shaman may bequeath his treasured item to his favourite pupil. The piece is taken out only on special occasions—for a severe case of bad luck, for example, or for special worship of the *abba mula* in a sacred grove of spruce trees, the preferred playground of the golden-haired monkey.

Abba mula, a word composed of *abba* 'father', and *mula*, 'god', is the name of the patron deity of the shamans. Each shaman has his own, just as he has his own *abba mula* icon in the form of the wrapped monkey skull. The patron or tutelary deity is the guardian, instructor and advisor of the Qiang *shüpi*—just as the mythical monkey was the first shaman's advisor, protector and guide. Without his tutelary deity the shaman would be fighting a losing battle against the most powerful forces of evil, and to be forearmed he keeps his patron's materialized image in the form of the monkey skull.

In some areas, as in Sanlong in Maoxian county, the golden-haired monkey is even venerated, as it was in ancient Tibet, as the founder of the human race. On account of this attribution, *abba mula* is not only the patron and instructor of the shaman, he is his genealogical ancestor, identical with *abba sei*, the primordial male forefather.

Thus, the monkey skull is the tangible image of the shaman's patron, protector and even genealogical ancestor, and the paper wrappings materialize an otherwise ungraspable fact: the position of the Qiang and their religion between oral and scriptural culture. The paper, one of the two basic media and conditions for writing, is the vestment of an image whose legendary or mythical incarnation entertains a two-sided relation to writing: as a bringer of books in the figure of the Chinese monkey; and as a bringer of the drum, replacing a lost tradition of books, in the

figure of the Qiang shamanic monkey patron. Whenever the wrapped monkey skull is put on display at a ritual conducted by the shaman, both traditions are visibly and simultaneously present: writing in the guise of paper wrappings; and, in place of writing, the oral transmission of knowledge, in the guise of the drum brought by the monkey whose head looks out of the paper.

Before I move on to some wider conclusions about the one-sided drum of the Qiang *shüpi*, it may be advisable to introduce the second type of drum that is regularly employed in the shaman's séances. This is a double-sided frame drum called *jeo wo* or *ji wu* with an exterior handle that runs diagonally through the closed interior of the drum. A short section of one end of the handle projects out of the frame at the upper top, a hole drilled through this taking a loop of cord to hang up the drum, while the longer end, 20 to 30 cm long, projects out of the frame at the lower top and is the actual handle (fig. 25). Some drums have a string hanger at the end of the proper handle, so that when suspended the drum hangs upside down. The handle is usually carved with geometrical ornamentation. In reference to the length of its handle the double-sided frame drum is also referred to as the "long-handle drum."

This drum is not beaten with a drumstick. Instead it is played by the movement of two leather knobs attached at the end of two leather strips which are fastened to the frame on opposite sides. The knobs beat the two membranes alternately when the handle is jerked forwards and backwards. The *ji wu* hand-drum is played predominantly in the course of funerary rituals; in a ritual called "handling the attacks of mice and pig problems"; and in healing rites and ceremonies to call back lost souls. As a rule it is played in conjunction with a flat brass cymbal by a dancer, who twirls the hand-drum in his right hand and handles the cymbal in his left (fig. 26). This combination is also encountered with the *dtô-mbà* priest of the Naxi. A pictograph showing a *dtô-mbà* priest holding a hand-drum in his right hand and a cymbal in his left conveys the lexical meaning of "religious dancing":



In Qiang mythology, cymbal and hand-drum were created simultaneously, mutually supplementing each other, as related in the following story:

In the time of Panguwang's reign the earth was populated by many demons, and the Jade Emperor conferred with the god of thunder and the god of lightning on what measurements to take in that matter. To conquer the demons and diminish their number, the god of lightning supplied a cymbal (*qi ni*) as a gift, whereas the god of thunder sent down to earth a big *bu* drum and a *ji wu* hand-drum. That is why the hand-drum is still associated with thunder and the cymbal with lightning and why the two instruments are played together.

Like thunder and lightning, hand-drum and cymbal complement each other: the shiny metal of the cymbal dazzles the demons and the penetrating sound of the drum puts them to flight. On account of its playing technique the *ji wu* drum of the Qiang can be classified as a variation of the widespread Himalayan *damaru*: both are twirled forwards and backwards so that the beat is produced by the two knobs flying in opposite directions. This attribution can be backed up by a comparison with the corresponding Naxi drum, called *dtâ-bbêr-ler* (pronounced *damberlör*). The name is nothing else than a phonetic imitation of the Sanskrit word *damaru*. The morphological features of the Naxi *damberlör* are very similar to those of the Qiang *ji wu*, and the Naxi pictograph for this instrument:



is almost identical to the pictorial representation of the *ji wu* in Qiang divination books—minus the clappers.

However, both these drums, which resemble each other closely, are considerably different from the standard *damaru* of the Tibetan and Nepalese Himalayan traditions. Here the body of the drum is usually made of two cup-shaped parts—in some cases skulls—opposing each other in hourglass fashion; there, it is delimited by a single lath bent into a circle. In addition, where the Naxi/Qiang type has a wooden handle passing through the drum's body, the Tibeto-Himalayan type is held and operated with a ribbon of cloth or silk. So the kinship is morphologically not as obvious as the Naxi name suggests. What, then, could be a related type of drum?

I suggest that it might be an ancient Bonpo drum as depicted in an old manuscript of the *Gzer-myig* kept in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek.

This drum was associated by Hoffmann, who first described it as a “tambourine,” with the Tibetan *shang* (fig. 27). The *shang*, however, is nothing other than the flat cymbal mentioned above, an instrument of a totally different kind. As if he were not happy with his classificatory guess, Hoffmann suggested two more associations of the depicted Bon instrument: one with a drum called “half-drum,” or *pyed-nga* in Tibetan; and one with the drum of the Chukchee shamans (Hoffmann 1950: 201–202). However, the name of the first, the so-called half-drum, should be distinguished from *nga chen*, the big double-sided drum of the Tibetan Buddhists; this is employed by Himalayan shamans such as those of the Gurung, Thakali, Magar or Chepang. And the other association is clearly too far-fetched, both geographically and culturally—the Chukchee living way up north near the Bering Strait: their drum is morphologically related to the Eskimo drum.

Hoffmann made his astonishing connections on the assumption that the Bon drum depicted in the Berlin manuscript had a membrane only on one side. The drum stick in the practitioner’s right hand might suggest this. But what of those clappers hanging down on the side of the frame? If they *are* clappers, they make sense only if both sides of the drum have a membrane. The handle, for its part, shows considerable resemblance to those found on the Naxi and Qiang double-sided hand-drums (and their pictorial representations): it is long at one end, which is the actual handle, and very short at the other, top end; and it passes all the way through the body of the drum. On account of this I repeat my suggestion: if the Bonpo drum depicted in an old Bon manuscript kept in Berlin has any morphological connection with a known drum type at all, the kinship should be sought in a double-sided hand-drum found in various parts of the Sino-Tibetan borderland and classified normally as a (deviant) transformation of the *damaru*.

And with the word *transformation* we are back at the one-sided drum of the Qiang and its wider implications. As we have heard, plenty of stories have been woven around this instrument: origin myths, and legendary, historical and biographical tales. But the drums, just like any of the shaman’s other paraphernalia, also tell their story—a story of materialized culture—from within. Ritual objects may be genuine documents of a unique local tradition; or they may be plain borrowings from neighbouring societies or from major or minor religious

systems; they may be transformations of such adoptions; or they may constitute a syncretistic mixture of various simultaneous influences. It is certainly not easy to tell in each case to which of these categories an object belongs.

Concerning the ritual objects of the contemporary Qiang religious specialist or *shüpi* (a full study of which I have prepared for another publication, Oppitz, Ms.), it may be stated in the most general terms that all these categories apply. Some of the objects used by the local shaman are plain borrowings; examples are the flat cymbal and the thunderbolt dagger or the five-lobed crown, which have been taken over *tel quel* from a Tibetan Buddhist and Bon repertoire; or the printing boards and seals for printing charms or the ready-made charms in brass or copper, which have been borrowed from the Chinese, in some cases clearly from a Taoist tradition. In other cases the locally used ritual objects are transformations of wider Sino-Tibetan or pan-Himalayan applications—such as the use of divination strings, a sacred wand, poison bags or empowered necklaces, or the double-sided drum. Other objects, again with a markedly special touch, can be identified as local mouldings of a wider, or even of a far wider, shamanistic tradition, such as the different animal attires found in the form of chains of bones, skulls, claws, or skins of wild beasts; or in the form of iron rattles. And some of the ritual objects seem genuinely original pieces, such as the Qiang shaman's monkey hat, the monkey skull or the one-sided drum known as *bu*. But even these will have a modified counterpart elsewhere. The drum can exemplify this.

In regard to the high civilisations of Tibet and China, as well as to the surrounding indigenous cultures of the Sino-Tibetan marshes, the *bu* drum is unique in the simple fact that it is a one-sided frame drum with a handle inside the hoop. Nowhere else in this vast region has a drum of this description come to light—so far. As soon as we widen our search and look further to the north, however, this description applies to nearly all shamanic drums. In Mongolia, only in the northeastern parts do we occasionally find drums with handles installed outside, but in the northwest Siberian traditions are predominant. Throughout the vast north Asian continent of Siberia, from the Ob to Kamchatka and from the North Polar Sea to the Altai Mountains, the one-sided drum with a handle inside the hoop is the only prevailing general type of shamanic drum—with one exception: the drum of the Chukchee, where the handle is installed outside on the frame.

This Siberian pattern is interrupted throughout China proper, Tibet and most parts of the southern Himalayan range. In Tibet, Nepal and Himalayan India we predominantly encounter—in societies with shamanistic practices—a type of drum which could be called a belligerent variation of the Tibetan *nga chen*: a frame drum with membranes on both sides and a handle below, as a rule in the shape of a thunderbolt dagger. A remarkable exception to this distribution pattern is a pouch in the Dhaulagiri region; here the shamanic drums of the Magar, Jajarkoti Kami, Chantel, Gurung, Thakali and Chepang display all the elementary Siberian features: one-sided drums, with a handle inside the hoop—the so-called “half drums” or *phyed-nga* of the Tibetan classification.

Up to the present day the vast Siberian territories and the small Himalayan enclave around the Dhaulagiri range could not be connected. Now, with the Qiang drum, we have the missing link. It connects for the first time north Asian shamanism with that of south Asia, by way of its trademark: the drum.

As I have it in mind, the comparative morphology of the Asian shaman’s drum will be based on the concept of transformation (Oppitz 1999: 27–40). The result will not be a stone edifice, but a pervious tent; and for this tent the shaman’s drum from the Min Shan Mountains will ram in one peg.

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Michael OPPITZ, born in Silesia in 1942; studied Anthropology, Sociology and Sinology at Berkeley, Bonn and Cologne; doctoral thesis in 1974 with a study on the history of structural anthropological theory; since 1965 field research in the Himalayas: first with the Sherpa, then with Rai and Magar ethnic groups of Nepal and since 1996 various field trips to the Sino-Tibetan marshes, including research on the Naxi of northwestern Yunnan and on the Qiang in northern Sichuan; publication of various books and many articles on Himalayan ethnography covering topics such as kinship, shamanism, art, mythology, ritual and oral traditions; since 1991 full professor of Ethnology at the University of Zürich and Director of the Ethnographic Museum Zürich; in this function several Museum exhibitions and catalogues.



Fig. 1. Shaman and assistant.
Historical photo: David Crockett Graham

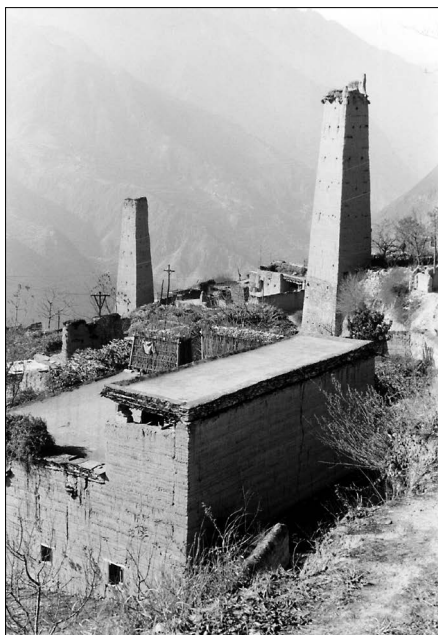


Fig. 2. A Qiang village with watchtower

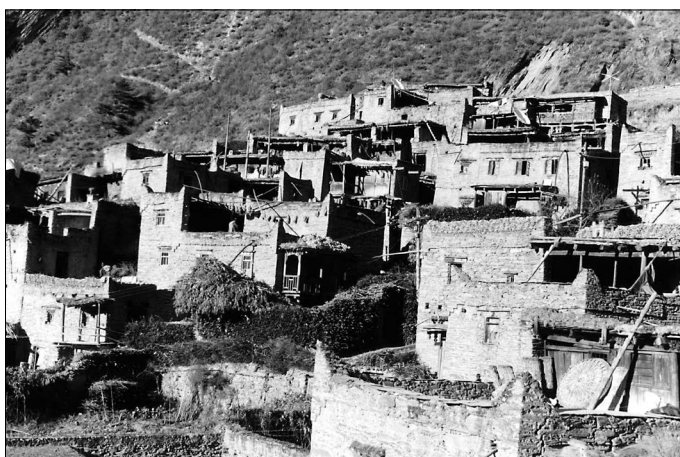


Fig. 3. A Qiang village. Photos: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 4. Portrait of a *shüpi* (shaman). Photo: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 5. Front view of a *bu* drum

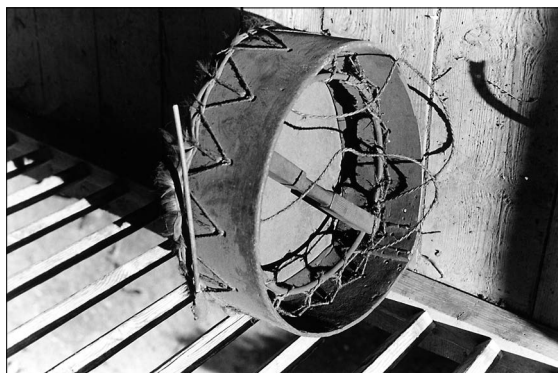


Fig. 6. Rear view of a *bu* drum. Photos: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 7. Way of fastening membrane



Fig. 8.
“Tibetan way” of fastening membrane



Fig. 9. Overlapping ends of drum frame
clamped together

Photos: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 10. Decoration of drum frame with paper strips.
Photo: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 11. Drum handle inside drum I



Fig. 12. Drum handle inside drum II



Fig. 13. Drum handle inside drum III



Fig. 14. Drum handle inside drum IV



Fig. 15. Eight trigrams drawn on drum. Photo: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 16. Drum divination (drum held horizontally) I



Fig. 17. Drum divination (drum held horizontally) II.

Photos: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 18. Divination book (with drum depicted, double page)



Fig. 19. Drumstick. Photos: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 20. Shaman carrying drum on back. Photo: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 22. Xuanzang carrying books



Fig. 23. Monkey skin hat. Photo: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 24. Monkey skin hat, rear view. Photo: Michael Oppitz



Fig. 25. Two double-sided drums,
ji wu and a cymbal



Fig. 26. A double-sided drum and cymbal

Photos: Michael Oppitz

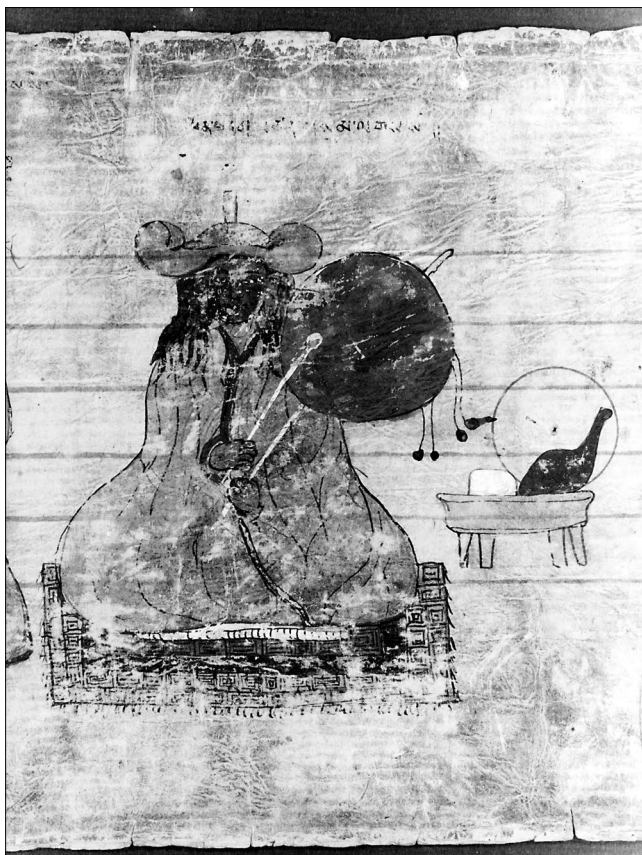


Fig. 27. A Bonpo playing drum (*Gzer-myig* manuscript).
Photo: Michael Oppitz

Landscape of Spirits: Holy Places and Changing Rituals of the Northern Khanty

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This fieldwork-based article examines religious traditions of the Khanty in the rapidly changing Northern Ob' area. In 2001, the authors documented holy places of men and women in Shuryshkary and recorded several rituals conducted in them. Alongside private rituals leaning on tradition there are new forms of public shamanic performances which—although based on traditional knowledge—are a part of tendencies to express and strengthen ethnic culture. This article aims to clarify how the holy places representing traditional culture mark the Khanty' everyday environment and how the rituals held in them help to recreate the Khanty understanding of the world in a changing cultural situation.

2nd August in 2001. It is Il'ia's Day in the Malyĭ Ob' region of Siberia. People arrive by boat from the administrative centre and neighboring and distant villages. Next to a hut that has been erected in the village square towers a pole on the top of which hangs a stylized shaman's drum. This is the staging area for the official part of the St. Il'ia's Day Festival, which the Khanty refer to as Midsummer's Day. A little further away from the square, in the holy place of the village, a fire is lit for performing the sacred ritual of the festival. The program of this bilingual festival includes traditional plays, dances, and a wrestling tournament which the Khanty regard as their own sport although it is of Turko-Mongolian origin. However, the main event is the sacrificial ritual performed by the shaman Vasilii Petrovich Pugurchin.

The 70-year-old shaman arrives, having placed his rucksack under a holy birch tree that grows at the edge of the sacrifice area reserved for men. He leans both his saber, which he uses for magic rituals, and his fox-fur trim shaman's hat against the holy tree. He exits momentarily to carve a stick one cubit in length which he will use to fumigate both his feet and equipment; he also fumigates

pieces of red cloth used in sacrifice and hangs them on the branches of holy trees. In this location last year three birches were used for sacrificial rituals, but this year only two: the main tree used by the men, the other for women's equipment, and on which later are placed the internal organs of sacrificed animals. Pugurchin also places under the tree after fumigating an essential ritual detail: a red and yellow scarf "with a pattern of the sun." Standing with his back to the sacrificial tree, the shaman pours out a drink into a glass from a bottle wrapped in the scarf. After saying, "I do not drink to get drunk, I drink to give the sprits a treat," he pours the vodka out to the tree with a sweeping gesture of his right hand while simultaneously turning quickly toward the sun. After this four men lead out a sacrificial black ram.

In the Khanty view every ritual must have a specific purpose in mind: this ritual is devoted to friendship. The shaman then calls on all the spirits beginning with *Torəm*. After asking the participants if a certain god should be invoked, and receiving a positive reply, the shaman summons the celestial god while drawing a circle with his saber above his head. He summons the lower-range deities, by calling them while drawing a circle in front of himself; he summons the mythical heroes (*mātur*) as he presses the saber against his waist. After agreeing for the presence of the Master of the Underworld *Kuł-il'pu-iki* or *Hyn'-iki*, he touches his saber to the ground, saying "Very Well! If the sacrifice is dedicated to friendship, we will invite everyone and forget no one!"

At the festival's beginning different foods have been set on a long tablecloth spread over the ground: fish, biscuits, sweets, tea and vodka. The festival program is informal: people listen to recorded popular music, and both watch and participate in plays and games. At a short distance from the festivities the sacrificial animal is slaughtered and its meat treated according to a familiar prescribed ritual. The shaman himself does not participate in the slaughter, but dispenses advice when needed. The animal skin is placed under a birch in a sitting position; refreshments such as fish, bread, and an open bottle of vodka and glass are placed in front of the skin. They throw the intestines into a hole behind the birch; the liver, heart, lungs and kidneys are placed onto the women's tree to give later to local people. They place the meat into a bucket and hang it over a fire to the left of the holy tree.

After the meat has been cooked, the shaman ties to the saber's point and handle a red woolen garter taken from his right leg. While sitting under the birch he draws under him his left foot and extends his right and begins to sing. The men carry away the animal skin and hang it on a young spruce by piercing a hole in the animal skin's head; the tree is then bent to the ground and released with the animal skin still attached. This ritual is considered to be so holy that women

are not allowed to attend. The meat of the sacrificial animal is then placed in dishes brought by the participants and eaten at the common table.

The description of the sacrificing ritual at the St. Il'ia's Day Festival is based on notes taken during the 2001 expedition to the village of Khanty-Muzhi in the Shuryshkary district situated on the Northern Ob'. During the expedition in August 2001, which was made possible thanks to the efforts of the Finnish Academy, the Komi Academy of Sciences and the Muzhi Museum of Local History, we documented several holy places of the Khanty villages. Today the Khanty have a much more open attitude to these topics than before. Many showed us sacred objects and places in homes and villages as well as cemeteries. They also performed rituals in our presence and briefly commented on them; the reason for this was in part due to the fact that this was our third trip to the region.

In rapidly changing cultures, the ethnic religious traditions represent at the same time an old, disappearing world while striving for the construction of self-awareness and ethnic identity. The aim of this article is to give an ethnographic description of these mixed and multidimensional processes. We will try to clarify in what way an ethnic religion marks the modern Khanty environment and everyday life, and how the rituals as specific manifestation of culture promote reconstruction of the Khanty world view in changing society. We base our next examination of Khanty sacred places and rituals mainly on the material we collected in 2000 and 2001; however, we also make use of the research of our predecessors.¹

Changing Culture

The number of Finnish, Hungarian and Russian linguists, ethnographers and folklorists, beginning with Matias Aleksanteri Castrén, who have worked in northwest Siberia, to put it simply, is quite large. However, to this day the most influential researcher of the Khanty religion is K. F. Karjalainen. He published in his book *Jugralaisten uskonto* (1918)²

¹ The names of informants in the text cited without last name or patronymic at their own request.

² See also Karjalainen 1921–1927.

not only his predecessor's research but his own fieldwork as well. How we nowadays can use the ethnographic material gathered by Karjalainen and other early language and culture researchers, is a problem as such, but not one we are going to tackle in this context. Let it be said though, that the Khanty cannot be considered as one united group and information gathered from one group cannot be considered as representing all the Khanty. The area inhabited by the Khanty is quite large, with significant cultural and linguistic variation. The historic, economic and societal changes throughout the centuries have affected fundamentally the cultures of various ethnic groups. However, the Northern Khanty, even though they live among the Nenets, Izma-Komi and Russians, have preserved their culture by keeping secret many of their cultural details (including holy groves) from foreign relic hunters, Orthodox priests and state authorities.

Naturally, it is necessary to examine both contemporary and earlier ethnographic material in the light of social and cultural change. In the Shuryshkary territory, Soviet authorities organized the infrastructure, transport, public health and education. However, the ethnographic map from 1917 and onward became more varied. This variation dissolved the cultural boundaries and elements that uphold traditional societies and thereby destroyed their integrity. The raising of children in boarding schools, which was not in harmony with the Khanty traditional didactics, and Cyrillic alphabet-based education—a system not adaptable to the features of the Khanty language—negatively affected the Khanty's knowledge of their language as well as the perception and preservation of their traditions. After the collapse of the Soviet Union noticeable changes have occurred in the region. Today the North is changing even more rapidly and fundamentally: oil and gas field exploration, the pouring in of foreign capital investment, and the strengthening of international contacts, which mark especially the town of Salekhard (the pre-revolutionary Obdorsk), are the hallmarks of the era of globalization. More astonishing is the fact that many beliefs and rites which were considered to be already forgotten continue to thrive despite the efforts at modernization. As these beliefs and rites receive new interpretations and significance, they both prolong and develop the traditional culture.

The increasing realization of the significance of one's own culture is both the consequence of and counterforce to world globalization. This is also true of the Khanty, whose intellectual elite turn to traditional beliefs and language. The ritual performed by Pugurchin is not an

exception but a part of modern Khanty culture. Shamans once again are active: they operate not only in terms of folk belief but also in cooperation with centers of culture. The centuries of prosecuting the representatives of traditional belief by church officials and civil authorities did not prove to be altogether futile: according to locals Pugurchin is the only shaman active in the region. It is possible that these events, which are organized by national and regional culture centers and supported at the political level, are only a trend of the times, a small respite to cultural pressure. Nevertheless, it was not the first year in the Shuryshkary district that festivals were organized; these are timed to coincide with the most significant traditional calendar festivals of the Khanty, namely, Voronyĭ Day and Midsummer's Day. The primary aim of these events is to preserve and renew traditions. Similar phenomena are not uncommon in modern Russian social and cultural life: the scale of activities is large, beginning from general Russian regional and urban/municipal festivals to events which arise from an ethno-cultural foundation. The rituals included in these festivals build cultural egos, and are interpreted in various ways; for example, they are also considered to be pure forms of ethno-religious ceremony.

Holy Places Outlining Landscape

The Khanty, traveling by boat along the tributaries of the Ob', (and beyond them the Komi, Tatars, Russians and representatives of other people who live in these places) sacrifice small change or drink a toast of vodka at a particular area. We can come across places such as these along the river Synya when we approach the village of Ovgort, the Holy Cape, and at the estuary of the river Voïkar Cape Kamennyĭ. It is a question of holy places, the spirit of which must get their own gift, to guarantee a safe passage. "The offering has to be made, otherwise the spirit would be angry" was said to Oleg Uliashev in 2000 near the Cape Kamennyĭ.

K. F. Karjalainen refers to a story from Dem'ianka when he describes the Khanty ideas regarding nature: "Every swamp, every lake, every area of thick forest and every high bank or deep river access has its own spirit-occupant, male or female, in some places there are even more than one, some powerful, some weak." (1918: 137) However, we must separate actual sacred locations from the general animistic belief characteristic of all northern people that Karjalainen describes. In addition to cemeter-

ies, there are places, defined in the Khanty language as *jeməŋ* or *pəsəŋ*, which corresponds to the Finnish concept *pyhä* ‘holy’ (Karjalainen 1918: 188). Karjalainen points out that in dialects of the Khanty language it is possible to see the stems of the attributes *jem* and *pəs* cited above. These probably refer to a certain entity’s or object’s inviolability, unassailability, or sanctity with respect to other entities or objects. He compares these words with the concept “taboo” in the religious sense. He also mentions that these words at the time (beginning of the twentieth century) referred to everything that ran against beliefs and conceptions of propriety, i.e., what was not acceptable. In connection with this, he translates these words into Russian as *зпex* (sin) (Karjalainen 1918: 188–189). The Khanty living in the Shuryshkary district today use the word *śobma* in the sense of ‘sin’ or ‘taboo’.

On the other hand, V. M. Kulemzin, in his book *Khanty Mythology* (2000), regards the words *jəm* (good) and *pəsəŋ* (strong, holy) to mean everything that is allowed in daily life in contrast to the term *atəm* ‘bad, ill’, which means everything that is against the rules of religion, morality and law.³ Just like Karjalainen, Kulemzin discusses the ethical norms concerning Khanty social life and attitude towards nature. These are in force not only in everyday life but also during ceremonies, bear festival and funeral rituals; the breaking of these was strictly punished (Kulemzin 2000: 134–135, 112–115). However, the northern Khanty word (*jem*, the eastern Khanty *jim*) and *jəm* are different words. Thus, the meanings of these concepts do not become clear through the concepts of ‘good / bad’. In the district of Surgut the female tradition of covering the face in front of her husband’s “holy” relatives in situations that require avoidance and respect is referred to with a derivative of the concept *jim*, *jimettə*.⁴ It is a word derived from the concept *jim* which can be translated to express ‘not to offend’. In the modern language the words *jem* and *jeməŋ* refer to the concept of ‘holy’, which can be seen, for example, in the eastern Khanty word *jiməŋ kăt* or northern Khanty *jeməŋ hot*, which means ‘a church’.⁵

³ Cf. Komi *jen(m)* ‘god’, and *pež* ‘sacred filth; dirtiness; forbidden’, or ‘sinful’, and also the juxtaposition *jen / omöl*, ‘god / antigod’, literally ‘bad, weak’.

⁴ Interview of November 15, 2001 with Márta Csepregi, specialist in Khanty dialects.

⁵ Cf. the Komi word *jen-ko*, *jen-com*, literally ‘divine hut, a god’s hut’, or *jen kola* ‘a chapel’, literally ‘god’s hut’.

Veikko Anttonen examines in his book *Ihmisen ja maan rajat. 'Pyhä' kulttuurisena kategoriana* (1996) the concept of “holy” through cognitive study of religion. Basing his argument on K. F. Karjalainen’s translation of the above-mentioned words with the concepts of “inviolability, unassailability/virginity,” Anttonen believes that the expressions *jém* and *jémen* were used for separating and limiting everything that belongs to gods, spirits, the deceased, bears, etc., and to things which the Khanty regard with caution (Anttonen 1996: 135). Beginning with the meanings connected with separation and limiting, he comes to the conclusion that the concept *jeməŋ* is a territorial category showing the border between the internal territory in use and external sections of uninhabited woods and wilderness.⁶ If Anttonen examined Finno-Ugric agricultural societies of Eastern Europe, where holy places are territorially defined with clearly marked boundaries, it would be easy to agree with his interpretation. However, it is difficult to outline the borders of the Khanty sacred places. Already Karjalainen paid attention to this detail: “Holy places do not have strictly defined borders. In some areas the border is a shore, the edge of a swamp or meadow, path, etc., but there are not any clear visible signs of a boundary.”⁷

When we examine the models of thinking and behavior connected to cult places, we must start with the general question of how people move in a certain space and how they use it. Memory about space develops during the target-oriented actions of innumerable generations. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1995: 112) has pointed out that man’s acts in space require an ability to mark borders, directions, and—from the activity’s reference—central places in the real world. In this way geographic space

⁶ Anttonen finds additional evidence in the concepts *jelpin* and *häebidje* in Artturi Kannisto and Toivo Lehtisalo’s collections, which he also considers to be connected with the concept of territoriality. According to him both in Ob-Ugrian and Samoyedic linguistic traditions words are the element with which the territorial circle of actions between populated area and uninhabited wilderness are outlined, as well as the cultural rules with which the relationships between different categories are expressed (Anttonen 1996: 135). However, according to Lehtisalo the concept *häebidje jaa* in the tundra Nenets language means ‘sinful; ill; poor’ (Lehtisalo 1923: 192). Thus, the Russian translations of these words are nearly the same as the word ‘sin’ recorded by Karjalainen, and is probably the evaluation of the Orthodox Church of the character of ethnic ceremonial areas and other things connected to ethnic rites.

⁷ Karjalainen 1918: 186; see also Balalaeva 1999.

forms behavioral environments and value systems which externally express a subject's internal action.

Cultures that subsist on hunting and fishing view topography differently than agricultural societies based on land ownership and who thereby regard land borders as important. We must remember that village settlement occurred rather recently in northern Siberia; thus, the Khanty view of landscape is connected to land use, which is characteristic of an indigenous source of livelihood. The highlighting of territorial borders and the dividing of space into the internal sphere regarding inhabited areas and the external sphere of uninhabited forest and wilderness, do not describe aptly the Khanty experience of environment. Life is divided into periods of movement from one place to another in accordance with the seasons. When we wander along Khanty trapping paths or travel by boat from one settlement to the next, it is easy to notice that this logic of landscape is different from that of an agrarian society. Spheres of activity, and accordingly, space, are outlined rather broadly: directions and topographic landmarks such as roads, paths, water routes, heights, capes and islands become important instead of borders. James Weiner met similar models of thinking that characterize hunting cultures among the Foi people of Papua New Guinea; here paths are the most central elements of scenery that outline space. The borders of areas are not important, but paths are, since they are ways from one place that sustain life to another. They shape and transform the ground, partition the earth, and create human space (Weiner 1991: 37–38). This logic of forming used territory and mental images of it characterizes all northern Siberian hunters, fisherman and reindeer herders. This is especially noticeable in shaman stories where defining the cardinal directions and finding one's way to the hereafter is a condition for the shaman's spiritual development (Siikala 2000: 130–132; 1992: 61).

In Khanty culture holy places initially are not bordered territorially. They are inviolate, forbidden places because of their third dimensional aspect: they form an entrance to another reality. Thus, they become a meeting place with representatives of the Other World. Holy places are the residences of spirits, and therefore must not be violated by cutting down trees, clearing branches, or collecting berries (Karjalainen 1918: 189). The most important sign of holy places is the idol of the spirit; there can be many in one place including the spirit's family or servants. In northern Khanty culture the number of spirit idols might have been

several dozen: it was told that one wooded area had over 80 idols. Near the idols were found wooden or lead images of zoomorphic spirit-servants (Karjalainen 1918: 91). Karjalainen, who examined Khanty cult ceremonies at the beginning of the twentieth century, pointed out that idols had already disappeared from many areas. However, even now spirit idols are both made and worshipped, though this practice occurs mostly in areas hidden from outsiders. The field notes of Oleg Uliashev from the year 2000, include interesting facts:

1. There is a place called Elan' Puyor, a holy place, situated on an island 20 kilometers from Ust'-Voïkar; men made idols there some years ago. There were about 30 wooden idols there measuring 50–60 centimeters in height and made of spruce. If one does something not propitious, a hand or foot may become withered. When men come to this place they make *kasha* (porridge), fish soup, and smear the idols' faces with the porridge (Andreï, born 1943, Ust'-Voïkar) (Uliashev 2001).

2. Nine kilometers from Vershina Voïkar. There, on Kryzha Poyar island, I saw two *jalan's* (wooden idols with pointed heads), perhaps a little higher than 50–60 centimeters (Aleksander, born 1976, Vershina Voïkar) (Uliashev 2001).

In addition to places guarded by spirits, forbidden places also include areas where heroic warriors met their death. Ritual meals are also organized in these places as we testified in Vershina Voïkar in 2000. Sacred islands once inhabited by ancestors give topics to local narratives.⁸ Many

⁸ “In earlier times people often gathered together. They didn't have bottles with them, but they made tea and talked about how they should live. They sat together drinking tea. Today it's true that without a bottle people go nowhere. Before people just gathered together. We have many such places where men gathered; men also gathered there on the island. They lived before on that shore, in the village, in the hills in Voshpaï. It was a long time ago. It was because of girls that they all fought. Somehow this village was attacked. The girls were taken and all the men killed: only two remained. They swam wounded to the island and changed into spruces. They said, 'Let them remember us.' The *porlady* (ritual meal) was organized there. I still remember it; it happened in my lifetime. But only men remembered the warriors there.” (Samuil, born 1931, Vershina Voïkar; Uliashev diary, 2000)

“Near Vershina Voïkar there is an island which is called either Huləm-hul in Russian ‘three leaf trees; three spruces’, or Kat-hul, in Russian ‘two spruces’. In Voshpaï there was an old village. There lived old people. There was an old village also over there, Aïvosh, and it was on the side of the cemetery. Only now did they move here and give the name

holy places on the Voïkar river are situated on islands and capes. The beliefs about an entrance to the next world via water as well as dangerous entities of the spirit world who impede or kill travelers are common among many northern people. Water routes played a significant role in choosing burial places among Finno-Ugric peoples from prehistoric times (Siikala 1992: 110). Zoia Sokolova (1975 [1974]: 166) discovered 20 years ago that the Khanty buried their deceased in coffins that resemble boats. This tradition has not disappeared—the Khanty living in Shuryshkary often bury their dead in coffins resembling boats called *kaldanka*, the bow and stern of which are sawn off. The boats are nowadays made in Gorki, about one hundred kilometers from the Voïkar villages.⁹ Potential dangers from the Other World forbid entry into sacred areas to those whom society considers to be weak or unprepared; visits to these places are also prohibited. Besides the holy residences of spirits, avoided places include areas where warriors of heroic times have died, abandoned villages, cemeteries and places where somebody has met a sudden death, for example by freezing or drowning. We must note that modern cemeteries are often situated in places of old settlements, i.e., in places where ancestors have lived and where they are considered to be still living: the villages of Iamgort (where rows of dugout ruins remain), Ust'-Voïkar (near Aïvosh), and the old cemetery of Verzhina-Voïkar (near Voshpaï). This tradition continues the Ugric or Samoyedic custom of transporting the dwelling place of someone who died, or even the transporting of an entire settlement where many people perished (Sokolova 1971: 238).

Voïkar. But Voshpaï is over there, and there lived old people. They fought with each other all the time, all the time they fought with each other. The same way there also. An attack was made on the village, all were slaughtered, and maybe some were taken prisoner. But two men remained. They jumped over the river and became two leaf trees. That's why the place was also called Kathul, 'two spruces'." (Pavel, born 1971, Ust'-Voïkar; Uliashév diary, 2000)

⁹ "I bought these *kaldankas* in gorki. It is about one hundred kilometres from here. Well, it is more . . . There they are still made, there are masters. In fact, I have one by which I go, over there, near the shore. But these boats are not for travelling. I bought and brought them here myself for me and my brother, so that we would be buried at least in a respectable way. The fact is that we are already aged. My brother is even older than I. Well, they also bury in those. Today, many are put in the grave this way. A coffin resembling a Russian one is knocked up, using boards, but it is not closed. I wish in the same way as our ancestors . . ." (Samuil, 1931, Verzhina Voïkar; recorded by Uliashév, 2000)

According to Khanty belief the second of a deceased woman's four souls, or a man's five souls, called *urt* or *uras uj* 'wandering soul', lit. 'soul animal', is especially dangerous because it can take a living person's soul either out of revenge because of offensive behavior, or simply because of love and missing someone. A relative's death, therefore, causes a dangerous situation for children.¹⁰ In Ust'-Voïkar, e.g., it was told that children of a family could not swim after the disappearance and possible drowning of the grandmother.¹¹ The *urt* of a dead person visits relatives in the form of an animal, e.g., as a wolverine, fox or squirrel, but powerful shamans appear as a bear and wolf.¹²

For fear of offending the spirits, even old and unused places of sacrifice retain an aura of sacredness and remain untouched; it is possible to see, from nearby villages, trees wrapped in faded cloth for ceremonial purposes. Trees in cemeteries are draped with the clothes of the deceased. This expresses the Khanty conception regarding souls and the avoidance of the deceased; according to these beliefs a dead person's third, external soul, or forest soul, moves outside the body and comes back to a person during sleep. If there is no connection between death and the perishing of this soul as it wanders then it will stay alive in the clothes of the deceased, according to V. N. Chernetsov. For this reason the clothes, in which the soul exists for a short time, are hung on trees either in or near cemeteries (Chernetsov 1963: 21–23). According to Sokolova (1971: 238), Mansi women hang old clothes, insoles and placentas on trees near women's holy places to guard against the creation of creatures that would pose a deadly threat to the community (*pauljerut*). In Synya, women hang their clothes after childbirth on a tree near the village, or hang scarves on trees after bad dreams concerning relatives Sokolova (1975: 386–387). In Ovolynqort in the summer of 2001, next to an *urə* (special graveyard with small huts on poles for drowned or otherwise disappeared) we were shown a holy tree, *usəŋ jub* (a tree full of holes), next to where blood sacrifices are performed on certain occa-

¹⁰ Chernetsov 1963: 17–18; see also Chernetsov 1959.

¹¹ "When Vitia's mother died, and her body was not found, the children were not allowed to go swimming because the drowned whose body is not recovered can take their children or grandchildren with them, especially if they were loved quite much." (Iura, born 1973, Ust'-Voïkar; Uliashev diary 2000)

¹² Iura, born 1973, Ust'-Voïkar; Uliashev diary 2000.

sions. The tree is selected by a shaman and used as a preventive instrument for potential danger.¹³

Places, even holy places are signs marking space for the needs of different kinds of social worlds. Cult places, cemeteries, deserted houses whose inhabitants have died, trees, or even the places where discarded ashes from houses are thrown and which must be avoided, transform the landscape into a network of specially meaningful places. The dynamic forces implied in this network effect the ways in which people use their everyday environment. In fact, the spirits, the invisible inhabitants of certain areas, are part of the local topography. In these territories the avoidance between the supranormal and normal world and, on the other hand, the inevitable interaction of these two worlds meet. Topography not only defines value categories and social groups, but also acts as a connector between these two, as Veikko Anttonen (1996: 135) correctly observes.

Men's and Women's Holy Places

The sacred place of Khanty-Muzhi lies near the edge of the village, in a place where a meadow suitable for gatherings and a forest meet. The grove reserved for the performance of rituals is small, about 20 meters in diameter. It differs from its surroundings only by the cloths that hang in narrow strips from the trees associated with sacrificial rituals. The symbols of ritual space are trees: the main tree in the middle, the men's tree to the right of the main tree, and the women's tree still further to the right. The first two (birches) are situated about 10 meters apart, the third (willow) is at the edge of the holy grove in the border of the meadow used in festivals. Near the men's area, on the left side of the grove,

¹³ "If someone has a dream about a living man swimming upwards, then this is a good omen. If the person in the dream swims downwards (i.e. to the Underworld), it is bad. If a relative begins to have these kinds of dreams often, then the person who has the dreams must inform the one seen in the dream. They then discuss their next course of action; in these situations, near an *usəŋ jub* (a tree full of holes), an animal is sacrificed to guarantee the safety of the person in the dream, to ensure that everything is in order. Some of his clothes are pulled through a hole three times, then tied so that the holes can't be seen; in addition, a scarf is thrown over all of this." (Petr, born 1929, and Varvara, 1930, Ovolynqort)

is a space reserved for the bonfire with stakes for pots over it. This area of sacrifice, which unites the Khanty people, is exposed to view. However, women enter the sacrificial area in a roundabout manner; for example, in August 2000 a local grandmother blocked immediate access to women, saying “Men may go where they wish, but women, go there and wait.” As a result of this injunction women sat away from the area of sacrifice until the men had lit a fire and called them. The women then placed sacrificial presents on branches and under the roots of the women’s holy tree. They then sat beside the tree together and talked quietly while waiting for the meal.

Khanty women especially avoid approaching the first two trees. A woman can only approach to place a plate of food under the women’s tree, and this done only in the context of a ritual performance. Thus, when one woman approached the main tree with a present during the ritual, shaman Vasilii Petrovich interrupted the rite, leaped to his feet, drew a circle around himself three times with a saber, and began to swear in the Komi language, in which he is fluent. Later Nikolaï, the shaman’s disciple and our guide, in his anger at the woman’s behavior commented on the situation thus:

When a shaman calls spirits, the highest spirits, refreshments are made for them and they are at the host’s table. But if someone breaks the rules concerning the ritual, if he does something in the wrong way, lower and evil spirits all come to the feast when they are not called. They will also sit at the table as the main guests. And this may turn badly for the person who performs the ritual. This is especially a concern for the shaman, and after him the others who are present. It is the shaman who has called the spirits to the feast. That’s why Vasilii Petrovich became so angry with the woman. And, in fact, women were killed because of this kind of action, and nobody said anything about it to the shaman. You know, all people have said that it was the woman who wanted to call the evil spirits. They, the evil spirits, in fact wait for this kind of action all the time. (Nikolaï, born 1959, Muzhi; Uliashev diary, 2001).

Not everyone involved has such a severe attitude towards all breaches of rules: during the same ritual a little girl, after she had fumigated over the fire a ribbon with coins, hung it on the men’s tree. She was scolded for this, but not severely because she was still a little girl and not yet a woman in either the biological or social sense.

The sacred place of Khanty-Muzhi described above differs from similar areas of sacrifice in other Khanty villages nearby in that only here are rituals performed that local authorities officially sanction. Zoia Sokolova (1975) recorded information regarding several areas of sacrifice along the Synya river in 1971–1972. In the summer of 2001 we noticed that several of these areas were still in use, although Sokolova, as well as the ethnographers who worked before the revolution, wrote about these places of worship and religious rituals as if they were on the verge of disappearing. Conclusions of this sort were dictated in the beginning by the policies of the Orthodox Church, and later by Soviet authorities. Ethnographers, in order to please these two groups, were obliged to record conditions that describe the victory of Orthodoxy, and later the victory of atheism “over superstition and prejudices,” although the field material could point to nearly the opposite conclusion. The reason for the researchers’ hypotheses that certain cultural phenomena were on the verge of disappearing stemmed from the desire to protect their informants from persecution. Also, these early ethnographic descriptions, although commendable because of their detailed description, often contain false information caused by the realities of fieldwork. Therefore, Karjalainen’s material is very reliable, but it contains a number of remarkable errors. For example, he wrote that “the most noticeable feature in the attitudes towards holy places is, however, that in the old days women’s access to those places seemed not to be allowed” (Karjalainen 1918: 190).

It is true that even today women’s access to men’s holy places is forbidden, or at least restricted. Women participate in “Feeding the Spirits,” which are kept in a *kurəŋ-hot* barn but it is forbidden to them to go into the building. Food and wine are brought to women outside. Women are also not allowed to go to the attic of a house in which male spirits are kept. In 2000 only men participated in the ceremony “Feeding of the Spirits” in the attic of Iura’s home in Ust’-Voïkar; the host did not permit the female researcher to go into the attic, but he did ask her to make food for the spirits. In Ovolynkort, Oleg Uliashov visited a men’s worship area along with two Khanty men. When they had disappeared over a wooden path, a housewife in her 70s took Anna-Leena Siikala by the hand and said, “Let’s go by another path to see the men’s place.” The women did not

dare to approach closer than fifty meters to the men's sacred area; they did, however, received a reprimand for even this behavior.¹⁴

Such behavior among men is not proof of discrimination, because among the Khanty, at least in the river Ob' area, there are female cult places near every village to which men are denied access. Since it was impossible for Karjalainen to approach worship areas reserved for females, his conclusions regarding the Khanty religion became one-sided. Therefore, both ethnographers and others who research the Khanty religion err if they, basing their studies on Karjalainen, claim that Khanty women are excluded from cult life.¹⁵ In fact, there exist gender based parallel cults, which, as they form a unity, in fact exclude each other. Another question regards the hierarchical relationship and significance of male and female cults from a general point of view, as well as the social importance of religious and magic beliefs connected to different spheres of activity. Male cults are based on the worship of the most important and powerful spirits. Thus it is in the central position, as far as the renewing of the society is concerned. The rituals a shaman performs in modern festivals that are "blessed by authorities" continue traditions centered around men's cults.

In Ovolongort, the male holy place (*joh porłəty hār*) and female holy place (*ney porłəty hār*) are clearly separated from each other corresponding to the similar separation of the male and female in secular activities. Holy trees decorated by sacrificial cloths, campfire areas and sacrificial presents mark sacred areas. According to Sokolova, in the Synya region the tree that signifies female cult places is generally a birch, while spruce trees define male areas. However, in the cult place of Khanty-Muzhi (Malyĭ Ob') the birch symbolizes both the male and female, while in a ritual in Ovgort on the Synya river women hung ribbons on a pine which held many similar past offerings. Oleg Uliashov was asked to hang a ribbon onto a birch tree which held men's gifts. Naturally, there exist preferences as well as sufficiently developed symbolism regarding plants; however, the significance assigned to a certain tree depends not only on the those who sacrifice, but also

¹⁴ In the same village in 2001 the host did not allow the Khanty guests, who had come from the town, to gather currants where ashes had been thrown from a now abandoned house. Men were sent to collect the berries, although among the Khanty this is generally a task done by women.

¹⁵ See e.g. Nenola 1999: 479.

on local topography (swamp, hill, forest, lake or river) characterized by the predominance or absence of certain tree species as well as the hierarchical position of the spirit and of the fraternity to which it belongs. In this way the rituals for the highest deities are performed under a birch, and spruce or cedar for divinities of the Lower-Realm. The birch is a tree of the Moshch fraternity, while a leaf tree belongs to the Por fraternity. Sacrificial animal skins are hung on the spruce and skulls from either birches or willows (Sokolova 1971).

The rules concerning activities regarding the inviolability of holy places are more strict, as already Karjalainen observed. In Ovolynogort the male area is situated at a distance of several dozen meters from any building in a rather gloomy pine forest that surrounds the village, whereas the female place, along a path that leads to the shore, is easily visible. The male area, it is believed, presents many dangers to women; conversely, women also endanger men's safety by allowing access for evil spirits. Rituals performed in male areas have blood sacrifices for local spirits: animal remains, bones and furs hang on nearby trees. However, on the scenic and well-lit female area multi-colored cloths hang on birch trees; an area reserved for campfires stands on the other side of the path.

Trees formerly used in both male and female rituals now stand within the village after its enlargement. According to inhabitants, before village enlargement the trees stood on the edge of the forest at a distance of 25–30 meters from the nearest house. No new offerings hang from their branches, but injunctions against using the trees for firewood is evidence of the honor and worship still accorded to them. The trees will be conveyed to the present sacred areas when they fall. The trees still mark gender boundaries: one stands by the path leading to the men's lavatory, while the woman's tree stands by the lavatory reserved for women.

Rules and prohibitions regarding female behavior are attached not only to religious but also to secular spheres of activity. According to Marjorie Balzer (who worked among the Khanty in 1976), a woman's wrong behavior is a risk both in religious life and in social contexts as well such as making food. There exist many cultural prohibitions connected to female physiological changes, such as pregnancy, childbirth, menstruation, i.e., at times when women are considered unclean. Women must strictly obey traditions concerning avoidance of her male

affines.¹⁶ Veikko Anttonen (1996: 146) emphasizes that the social classification/division in connection to concepts of “clean/unclean” effects not only relationships between the sexes but also the organization of socially-occupied space. His interpretation of the ethnographic material of Karjalainen is apt even today. Women are not allowed to enter the attic of a house because women must not step over a man or his clothing.¹⁷ Tradition also forbids women from stepping over poles, fences, or dogs; she must not sit straddling a sledge or sled drawn by dogs (she must sit sideways), or pass them standing. Such behavior is referred to as *śobma*. It is also *śobma* to enter a holy area, go up to a storage hut, or attic.¹⁸ In the *urə* (a graveyard for those who have disappeared) of Ust'-Voïkar, small grave huts on poles (*hāla*) for women are constructed lower than those for men. The explanation of this was: “because a guy is taller than a woman, like men’s *ittərma*, they are lifted into the attic, in the same way they are also higher in the *urə*.”¹⁹

Although sexual equality was declared and officially practiced during the Soviet period, the Khanty in traditional villages still observe behavior based on avoidance. For example, young women in the Synya district cover their face with a corner of a scarf, a gesture that defines social distance and intimacy between genders. In Ovolynqort an older woman hid her face from male outsiders for 24 hours, and the hostess’s twenty year old daughter hid her face for the same amount of time from the Khanty guide, and for twice as long from the Komi researcher. Every young woman we encountered covered her face from men, as well as from both video and still cameras operated by men. The older of two little girls (one four, the other six years of age) present obeyed the tradition of avoidance by hiding or turning her back when she noticed a camera in operation. Marjorie Balzer (1981; 1987: 139–140) sees that in the Khanty culture alongside the male dominance one can see women’s solidarity and independence. Women do not regard the avoidance behavior as a limitation, but as a means of being separate. The active

¹⁶ See Balzer 1981; also 1987: 103–148; Jääsalmi-Krüger 1996; 2001.

¹⁷ “A woman’s *ittərma* must not be lifted up to the attic, and so a woman must not go up there, because she must not be above a man, it is *śobma*.” (Iura, born 1973, Ust'-Voïkar; Uliashev diary 2000)

¹⁸ “Since it can happen that a woman can be over a man, things will turn out badly for him.” (Andreï, born 1983, Ust'-Voïkar, Uliashev diary, 2000)

¹⁹ Iura, born 1973, Andreï, born 1983, Vitaliï, born 1965; Uliashev diary 2000.

use of sacred places reserved for females in Ovolýngort confirms the existence of parallel but separate rituals.

Feeding the Spirits

In Khanty-Muzhi, shaman Vasiliĭ Petrovich summoned all the main gods, holy heroes and spirits of the sacrificial place to take part in the ritual. According to the Shuryshkary Khanty there exist four main gods: The Creator-Lord (Num-torəm), The Mistress, (Emyŋ-aŋki, the Holy Mother), The Creator's Son (Lovn-ho, the Man on the Horse), and The Lower Master (Hyn'-iki, or Kuł-il'-pu-iki). Kin spirits which are kept in a holy corner of the house are known as *mut śūŋ-iki*. The kin main idol is kept in an area called the *eməŋ ura*, that is, 'the holy place', whereas only rags and other objects which the shaman has asked the god to bless remain in the holy corners of a house.

Łu(ŋ)b is a general word for 'spirit' but also refers to the guardian spirit of home and family. The *Łu(ŋ)b*-spirits in Shuryshkary were kept in storage bags called *appa* which were then placed on a shelf behind a curtain or in a *kurəŋ hot* (storage house). According to Karjalainen (1918: 140), home guardian spirits are imagined to have anthropomorphic appearances; they are constructed by a relative, or, more often, an outsider. Cloth (to symbolize clothing or scarves) is wrapped around the body which is carved from wood, bone, stone or metal. According to our sources, a guardian spirit may not necessarily be anthropomorphic or zoomorphic in nature, but connected somehow to the person under its protection: the home guardian may be a goose beak, bear claw, small stone or even a button wrapped in a rag. The 43 year-old Nikolai explained the relationship of kin guardian spirit and objects consecrated by it:

Objects kept in the holy corner of a home are kin spirits, or objects consecrated by them. The kin guardian spirit is kept by one member of the kin, and certain objects are consecrated by this spirit: rags bearing coins sewn in corners of scarves, or bear paws. We ourselves have a bear paw; we also have the kin spirit, called *aśyn . . .*" (Uliashév diary, 2001)

After marriage, a girl takes the kin spirit for her own protection, provided the spirit sanctions this act after special magic rituals.²⁰ Sokolova (1971: 231) also wrote about this practice in the 1970s, basing her conclusion on evidence she collected among the Khanty and Mansi; a small object (coin, button, stick) wrapped in cloth was given to a girl before her marriage; this object personified the connection with her native home. However, Sokolova does not mention the term *tub* in this context. We saw a *tub* of this type in Ust'-Voikar; it was wrapped in 19 scarves and kept in the holy corner of the house.²¹

According to Karjalainen, people ask for help and success from the guardian spirit in the same way as they ask for help from the spirits that inhabit holy places. It is indeed customary to feed the home guardians every time when there are guests in the house or a vodka bottle is opened. However, the sphere of influence from guardian spirits of a larger kin group or society is greater, and thus they are imbued with more power. Therefore, people appeal to greater deities when they seek successful results in hunting or fishing, or success in general.

The concept reflected in sacrificial rituals of mutually giving and receiving is the basis for the existence and continued activity of holy groves. In addition to rites of public sacrifice, in which Khanty com-

²⁰ "If the spirits of these idols reject their new home, they cause illness in the household. Illness is removed by feeding the spirits, after which 'rags' are left in the holy corner." (Nikolai, 43 years, Muzhi. Uliashev diary, 2001)

²¹ "Valentina showed her mother's and aunt's *ittərma*, as well as the *tub* of the home and the family which they kept in separate bags in the holy (south-western) corner of the house. The size of the *ittərma* is 20–25 centimeters, and the *tub* is approximately 50 centimetres. In contrast to the *ittərma* in Iura's home, which was made of reindeer hides sewn together, Valentina's *ittərmas* were made of cloth. The *tub* was wrapped in nine big scarves and ten small ones; old and new coins and a small iron bell were tied into the corners of the scarves. One 20 kopek coin, dating from the nineteenth century, was so worn that the year was not clearly visible; the other coins were from the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. The scarves are bought by relatives who are experiencing some misfortune in life, either illness or unhappiness. Everyone exposed to the *tub* can tie a coin, Valentina said, 'thus the spirit grows'. The *tub* was made by Valentine's mother, Tamara Maksimova V'iukhova, when she was young. Then Valentina was brought to Ust'-Voikar (she is originally from the Khanty–Mansi area) when she married. Women make spirits, both the young and aged, those who know how can do them. Valentina herself does not know how to make one. The spirits are fed at festivals and also at the funeral meal; a bottle of vodka and food is put on the shelf or beside the stove. When a baby is born, this is also done in the dame way." (Uliashev diary, 2000)

munities participate in large numbers, there exist other places for sacrifice as well. Family and kin rituals are intimate in nature, thus their participation requires close relationship between host and guests. The following field notes describe the ritual of feeding the spirit in the kin place of sacrifice. The ritual was recorded on video.

A.-L. S.: Ovgort, 6th August 2001. Galina walks at a quick pace along the path nearest to the village border. She stops at the gate and turns to the last house. The reason for this is clear: we are going to the kin place of sacrifice, and I must dress in the Khanty national costume. Galina searches for a suitable *jernas*, a woman's dress, and a scarf that matches it.

After we have left the village, we come to a pine forest. On the edge of the forest, hidden from view but still nearby, is a place for a campfire and two trees that stand close together, and on which hang pieces of cloth. We—Galina, her mother Evdokiia who was the first wife of the shaman Vasiliĭ Petrovich, Svetlana, their daughters, and two dogs—arrive quickly at our destination.

The women light a campfire and bring out a low table and benches. Soon hot water for tea begins to boil, and Galina sets it on a bench at the table. This table lies close to the men's tree of sacrifice which is decorated with cloths in which coins have been tied. It appears that this holy place has been in use frequently: people gather here for festivals, but also when a family group wishes to organize a sacrificial ritual known as the *portoty*. The participants place presents suitable for daily sacrifice on the table: fish, biscuits, sweets, tea and vodka.

Grandmother Evdokiia ties light-colored cloths on the men's and women's trees. The red ribbons, meant as sacrificial presents, are fumigated above the fire. Oleg hangs the ribbon on the men's tree, and grandmother on the women's tree nearby. Those who hang ribbons circle clockwise three times, bowing occasionally in the direction of the tree's spirit.

The meal begins with the customary round of vodka; Oleg, who brought this gift, serves it to those present in small cups in the traditional manner. People converse, eat and smoke.

When Evdokiia arrived, she placed a plastic bag under the men's tree of sacrifice. She now draws out from the bag a bundle of clothing that resembles the home spirits that are hidden in the corners of Khanty houses. That is what it is: *tub*, a guardian spirit has been brought to participate in this ceremony. Soon a cigarette lit for the spirit is placed on a box at the mouth of the bag.

After finishing the meal, grandmother shows a nearby tree, under which offerings for the Master of the Underworld, Kuf-il'pu-iki, have been buried.

After digging up some soil she catches sight of some pieces of dark cloth with coins that have been placed between the roots of this spruce tree.

Then the women wash the dishes and extinguish the fire. After the table and benches have been properly collected and stored under the tree we are ready to return. (Siikala diary, 6 August, 2001)

O. U.: Ovgort, 6th August: Galina came already around 4 p.m., saying, "Let's go to the forest, the others have left already." Quickly we dragged everything that was necessary. The food that was prepared in advance for the *porə* (treat) we managed to stuff into our rucksacks. I was very angry because I did not manage to shoot video of our coming out of the house and carrying the *hub*. I came to the conclusion that they did not show it to us intentionally. Anna-Leena was dressed in *jernas* at Galina's home; moreover, they took so long dressing that I became even more suspicious.

However, it turned out that we were expected: Evdokiia, Svetlana, her younger daughter, Sveta, the eight year old daughter of Galina, Katia, Svetlana's six year old daughter, and we three arrived at our destination. The *put jub* (a supporting beam for a pot) was stuck at an angle into the ground, although we had observed that it is usually fastened between a pine tree and a stake. A fire was burning in an iron container that held 20 liters. The table was set in our presence. Afterwards, Evdokiia gave everyone a piece of crimson cloth (measuring 50 x 20 centimeters); into the edges of the cloth two coins had been tied. Women hung the cloth on a pine, on which old ribbons were hanging as well; Evdokiia showed me a birch, the thickness of which was approximately that of a pole, and on which presents reserved for men were hanging. After this we, having bowed three times toward the four directions, sat down at the table.

This is a common holy place for the kin to come to feed the spirits; sometimes they pray to the highest god, *Torəm*, and his sons. They hang white and red cloths on trees, and sew seven robes in the color known as *sab*. If they pray to the old spirit of the Underworld, *Kuł-il'pu-iki*, they bury seven black *sab*, about 15–20 centimeters in length, under the roots of trees and beneath moss. Showing an old *sab*, Evdokiia took from a hole one white and one black piece of dilapidated cloth and said that the white one had fallen from the tree where it had been hung as a gift to the highest gods. However, she put it back in the hole: "It has fallen, that means that it is already at *Kuł-il'p-uiki*, and must not be lifted up."

After the dinner of fish, known as *njar-hul*, and tea, Evdokiia said that now it is possible to smoke, and smoke we must. After lighting a cigarette, she set it on a half-open box where sat a *hub* on a box of matches in front of the idol. When

the cigarette began to smolder on the box of matches, she explained, "This means that the spirits are eager to smoke!" She buried the cigarette butt, after covering it with spit and crumpling it with her fingers to extinguish it, under the root of a pine and into a hole with a *sab* for Kut-il'pu-iki.

After bowing three times to the four directions we went away. (Uliashov diary, 6 August 2001)

The stages of the intimate family rite described above follow the general scheme of the offering ritual: (1) Preparation phase: dressing and gathering together to go to the place of sacrifice, (2) building the ritual stage: chopping wood, lighting the fire, brewing tea, setting the table, (3) purification rituals, the aim of which is to be freed from the unholy: fumigating cloths with smoke, (4) giving the gifts: hanging pieces of cloth on men's and women's trees, (5) prayers, (6) meals eaten in common, where both people and representatives of the Other World participate by eating, conversing, and smoking, and (7) finishing the ceremony and preparing a place for the following ritual: cleaning the table and putting out the fire, then ritually placing objects in their proper storage places.

Although Finno-Ugric rituals that take place in holy groves are quite similar schematically, they are endless in detail. The rituals discussed in this article differed not only in their details and significance but also from the point of view of the actors and their actions. In Khanty-Muzhi, rituals were organized under the men's holy tree, and its main participants were men who brought a blood sacrifice to the powerful spirits summoned by the shaman. In the sacred area of Ovgort, the greatest attention was paid to the appeasement of the spirit who saw to the welfare of the extended family. The participants were female, except for the outside male researcher.

According to the theoretic thinking that underlines cultural practice, the ritual can be perceived as a situational strategy of action. In spite of the clear goals and means of the rite, which are known to everyone, many of its events remain in the unconscious of the participants. The nature of the rite also intends to produce a view about world order (Bell 1992: 81). A ritual's strategy of action is based on prior knowledge of schemes and modes of behavior which in different situations can be applied creatively and negotiating about each choice. Thus, when rites are organized, specialists who both know the scheme of the ritual and have an idea of possibilities and limits of proper performance are in a

central position. Specialists differ in their ability to contact different spirits. In the public rituals of Khanty-Muzhi in 2000 and 2001 which involved higher deities, a shaman acted as the specialist, whereas old women recognized as rite specialists were the principal actors in the kin's place of worship in Ovgort 2001 as well as in the cemetery in the village of Verzhina Voïkar and Vosiahovo in 2000. The opening and closing of a graveyard so that the souls of the dead will not leave their residence needs knowledge of the proper behavior. On the other hand, most people know well the rituals connected with the remembrance of the dead.²²

A ritual begins at the moment when the participants come to a conclusion regarding its importance and prepare for it. Collecting clothes and other objects (and food as well) becomes the main attraction; these are actions that are important from the view of ritual symbolism. Dressing prepares the body for the ritual: symbolic decorations, covering or uncovering, and attention paid to symbolically significant details of the wardrobe. Among the Khanty of Shuryshkary, as well as in other Finno-Ugric areas, instructions concerning men's and women's ritual preparation differ significantly. Among men only active participants highlight their ritual functions with the traditional costume or belt (the most important symbol for men); however, dressing in traditional costume is not a requirement. In general, we must take note that the shaman's wardrobe is not of major ritual significance among the Khanty. Thus, in 2000 Vasilii Petrovich performed the ceremony dressed in Khanty costume: a traditional reindeer breeder's belt. He also performed shamanic rituals with an axe. In 2001 he wore a modern three-piece suit, but on his head he had on a pointed hat with fox-fur trim, the upper side of which was sewn from two blue and two red pieces of cloth. He also used a saber as his shaman and ritual attribute. What appears to define equipment choice is the nature of the ritual and the spirits who are summoned.

Women, in contrast to men, all dress in traditional costume. Thus, during the visit to the graveyard in the village of Vosiahovo in 2000, one woman gave *jernas* for her friend on the rare occasion that she did not

²² In the cemetery of Ovolynort an old man was the principal actor. Young men of 20–25 years of age acted as specialists in ancestor feeding rituals in the *urā* of the village of Ust'-Voïkar in 2000 and in Ovolynort in 2001: the prerequisite in these ceremonies was general knowledge rather than detailed knowledge as is the case in other rituals.

have the proper festive clothing. During the visit to the sacred area in Ovgort, as mentioned above, women searched for a suitable dress for the female researcher. In general, women wear the national costume even on weekdays much more frequently than men for the following reasons: women's greater cultural conservatism, and also because, as is the case with appeals to ancestors, women refer to the authority of the past, as in "old people acted in this way," or "we do not know, but old people tell it this way." Also, many rituals require women to dress in special clothing. Therefore, actions such as manipulating scarves during rituals, covering the face during lamentation, conversing with the soul of the deceased at the grave, undoing braids to sacrifice a lock of hair, changing scarves in return for those presented at funerals require not only the wearing of scarves but also knowledge of their special use.²³

Fumigation is the most common purification rite among the Khanty, for example, in bear ceremonies, in rites that take place after the birth of a child, and also in everyday life: if a woman steps on or over men's clothing, they are then purified with smoke (Kálmán 1968: 89). In the rites we observed, the participants, after circling around a bonfire three times, fumigated ribbons with coins attached before hanging these on holy trees. Also, participants fumigated the axe used in sacrifice as well as scarves given as gifts and the one used to cover the animal in a sacrificial ritual. The shaman fumigated his legs twice before he approached the holy tree. The color red refers to several ritual meanings; it symbolizes fire, blood and consequently, life. For this reason red or white cloth is sacrificed to upper-world spirits, whereas lower-realm spirits receive black cloth. Additionally, although white is the main color for gifts, people prefer cloths decorated with large red (orange or yellow as well) patterns called *bat̄ hanši* (the design of the sun).

The act of organizing the area that contains the table and benches near the tree of sacrifice (or the grave in a cemetery), lighting the bonfire and setting the table creates a framework and central orientation for the ceremony: a sacred object, sacred area, fire and a table. According to our informants it is usually the spirits of the holy place who arrive at the extended family worship area. However, it is possible to summon Num-Torəm or other more powerful spirits. In situations

²³ The Khanty borrowed this feature from the Turkic Mongolians during the Middle Ages.

such as these a more competent shaman performs the ceremonies. In the Shuryshkary region Vasilii Petrovich, a seventy year old man, is the master of the shaman songs and prayers required to summon the highest spirits of both the upper and lower worlds to holy places. In Ovgort one festival participant was the family spirit, or *tub*, the idol of which the grandmother Evdokiia brought and placed under the holy tree. The conveyance of the family spirit to the kin's holy place during the *portoty* ritual is customary.²⁴ Offering sacrificial gifts to the spirits, making a sacrifice, prayers, and a common meal are the central phases of rites: they create connections with representatives of the Other World while simultaneously connecting and differentiating the participants of the event. In the men's cult in Khanty-Muzhi only a small part of the men present participated in slaughtering the sacrificial ram, reciting prayers, and hanging the slaughtered animal's skin on the holy tree. However, both men and women ate the meat of the sacrificed animal and soup from common dishes at the table. It is necessary to mention that during the performance of the women's rituals which contain blood sacrifice, the animal is slaughtered by a man specially called for the occasion. In most instances he departs after this act.

In Ovolongort people visit the kin holy place quite often, especially during calendar festivals that are important in the promotion of the economic sphere. Concluding the rite and cleaning the sacred area to ensure that there will be a next time places the event into a continuity of ritual time. In the same way as the space of a landscape includes meaningful places, which make it possible to meet the supranormal, also moments for encountering spirits are structured on the time axis. These places and moments are important from the perspective of creating and renewing social order.

Common Rites, Different Meanings

Avoidance and honoring the holy places color the everyday life of the small villages of the Shuryshkary Khanty even today. The environment of everyday actions consists of areas both for humans and spirits, the living and the dead. In the same way feeding the idols of the

²⁴ Oral interview with Feodisiia Longortova; Helsinki, 17 November, 2001.

holy corners of the houses and the cult of the dead are a natural part of life, even the proper way of actions may be a topic of negotiation and their meanings unconscious or forgotten. In the private sphere, the interest in traditional culture depends on values and perspectives of individuals and the opinions of their relatives and friends. Public performances of common rituals need efforts and acknowledgement of a larger group of people.

Many researchers, from Emilé Durkheim onwards, have emphasized that a ritual gathers a society together as it also defines its boundaries. Rites happening in a family's sacred place or women's and men's cults gather the group with bonds to the holy place over and over again. This expresses kin unity, but also highlights differences connected with gender, age and values. At present not all Khanty have similar attitudes regarding rituals, and many refuse to participate. Thus, in Ovgort, Evdokiia's grandchildren considered as important their participation in the "Feeding of the Spirits" ritual, but the men of the family refuse to take part in rites.²⁵ On the other hand, it is not exactly proper to differentiate only between men and women. In this case we must examine the young men's unwillingness to participate in the ritual in light of tendencies that characterize contemporary young people who strive for modernity, often to the detriment of ethnic traditions. Most likely the scales, on one side modern comforts, and on the other cultural spiritual fulfillment, at some time will be balanced. At the present time, among the young at any rate, illusions regarding modernity are gaining the upper hand compared to traditional beliefs. In this way the relationship to ritual aspects of Khanty life separate in many ways not only the male from the female but also the old from the young. Attitudes among the young, on the other hand, vary from rejection to keen interest and are often situational.

Modern ways of celebrating the main festival days of the Khanty calendar (Crow's Day and Midsummer's Day) have become a mixture of official celebration, festival program and traditional ritual, which, however, fit into the common scene as generally self-contained units. In con-

²⁵ Galina explained in simple terms, "Our men come here very seldom, and they don't like to come. They say, "What should we do there? We could sit at home." The time comes when they notice for themselves that they must come to the family's place . . . If someone must come, he comes, but you can't lead them there by force." (Galina, recording by Uliashov 2001)

trast to the old days when all participants took active ceremonial roles (leader, assistant, male/female participants' "choir"), and all knew their place in the ritual scheme, (motives, structure, and the general outline of the action), now modern festivals have become events that require comment. All participants do not view traditional rituals equally since everyone interprets and explains ritual actions from their own point of view. For a shaman who specializes in holy rites, the most important goal is to perform the rituals as precisely as possible to achieve a high degree of positive spiritual interaction. The ritual has different meaning e.g., for a woman who, out of ignorance, breaks a prohibition such as approaching a holy tree; she is more interested with entertainment and representatives of this world and not the next. Thus, modern rites with various meanings should be examined as an action or as an interpretation of actions rather than public display of social categorizing. The rite is never the same for all the executors, nor do all the participants have the same kind of a relationship with the events of the rite.

In the St. Ilia's Day Festival in Khanty-Muzhi two cultural tendencies, i.e., the official and the traditional, penetrate and infuse with each other to form an event which reflects the modern state. In addition to the inhabitants of the village, the participants in the sacrificial festival in Khanty-Muzhi included both researchers, local academics, administration representatives and visitors from foreign countries for whom the religious ceremony was as interesting as the official and entertainment parts of the celebration. Thus, for most of the participants who were not raised according to Khanty tradition, both the sacred and the profane were of equal importance. Participation in this festive occasion, even in the role of passive observer, provides fascination as it obscures both social and ethnic boundaries. The goal of this kind of festival is to reconcile differing, even contradictory interpretations of the ritual in honoring Khanty original culture as well as highlighting the importance of connections between ethnic history and ethnic values. This ritual, performed by a practicing shaman and members of the ethnic group who are living representatives of tradition, remains authentic, even when it is included within the framework of a modern festival. The public performance of the ritual is only one form of preserving and transferring ethnic traditions in this era of modernization and globalization.

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Khakassian Mountain Spirit and Snake Lore

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This article examines the central roles mountain spirits and snakes play in Khakassian legends and shamanic culture. In both historic and contemporary tales mountain spirits initiate shamanic artists, give information, accompany the souls of the dead and give people wealth which is often problematical. Snakes are more often connected with images of creation, and with gifts of language.

In the south Siberian republic of Khakassia sightings of mountain spirits are getting more frequent every year. Some *tag eezi* appear as huge horsemen wearing elaborate but old-fashioned clothing, while others come on foot, dressed all in black, appearing where just a moment before there was no one. Some give instructions, others are silent. All appear far from human habitation. They inspire wonder and fear, like a meeting with a wild animal in the forest. Some people do not survive it.

Khakassia is an especially rich source of mountain spirit lore, although very similar stories are told in Tuva and other Siberian regions and there is a certain similarity in mountain spirit lore world-wide. Turkic Siberians have long lived with their herds in the steppe-land, going deep into the mountain forests to hunt. They meet spirits there and in the treeless mountain-steppe areas full of rock cliffs, caves, and ancient kurgans. Mountains are awe-inspiring and sacred places for ritual, and at the same time sources of food and valuable furs. People are often alone there, and it is easy to get lost—to fall into a ravine, be attacked by a wild animal or crushed by a falling boulder.

Although they form such an important part of the Khakass spiritual world, mountain spirits elude categorization. Intensely personal and individual oral records show them as catalysts for initiation; gifting peo-

ple with untold wealth and artistic-spiritual talents, and often causing death. But there is always a sense of something more, just beyond grasp.

People today view many of these tales as historical sources for the development of their shamanic philosophy, past and present, connecting images from the time of creation with immediate experience. New legends about the intervention of mountain spirits in human life influence the public rebirth of shamanic culture, and play a role in politics as well.

I have been working in collaboration with the Writer's Union of Khakassia on publishing a collection of traditional stories, in the Khakass, Russian, and English languages. Our collection contains about twenty mountain spirit legends and magic tales taken from the works of the nineteenth century Khakass ethnographer N. F. Katanov, from the private collections of Galina Kazachinova of the Writer's Union dating back over the last forty years, and from tales people have told me in the last five years.¹ We settled on these stories for our first venture, since they are unusual, fascinating, and very much alive today. In this article I would like to examine the roles mountain spirits play in shamanic and storytelling traditions, their relationship to stories of snakes and of the *khai eezi*, spirits connected specifically with epic singers.

Historical Tales

Both historical and contemporary tales are of several have several features—most overlap the time periods although their style has changed. In the nineteenth century up until the end of communism we find the following:

¹ The stories mentioned in the article are from Kazachinova's collection unless otherwise noted. I have given names to Katanov's tales, most of which were un-titled. Readers interested in seeing our publication when it comes out, or who would like to give me feedback on my ideas may get in touch at: kiravan@imag.net. Thanks to G. G. Kazachinova, P. Topoev, A. I. Kotozhkov, L. V. Anzhiganova, A. Kyzlasova, V. K. Tatarova, A. Kurbizbekova for their help.

GEOLOGY AND CREATION

In tales about the mountains themselves, the spirit is not personified as separate from the geology. "The Mountain Seven Girls" reflects themes of creation, where one mountain desires to marry and becomes enraged when his beloved refuses him for another. He breaks her peak into seven, as she remains today. In another legend, Mount Irt stands in the way of the rivers Yenisei and Abakan as they race to the sea, influencing the courses they take today and their relative sizes. (Patient Yenisei went around while Abakan tried to make a way through the mountain and came last in the race.) Mount Irt has a snake-legged protector spirit, whose shape mirrors the snaking forms of the rivers which she later took under her protection. The resemblance between a spirit's visual image and a geographic formation is reflected again in "The Bride of the Mountain Spirit," where a girl is abducted and spends three years inside a mountain. The spirit appears to the girl's mother in human form, but when he turns there is no movement in his neck, as if he were made of rock.

GIANTS

Mountain spirits are distinguished from mountain people, although the two are often mentioned together. Again there are many themes of creation. Long ago there is said to have been a race of mountain people, who were like human beings, only larger. At a certain point they "went away," leaving their gigantic bones behind. "The Akh Kharakh (white-eyed) People" shows them as the builders of the kurgans. In the historical record, the kurgan builders are known to have been larger than today's Khakassians, and to have left the area in a mysterious manner. The legend explains their disappearance as well as the formation of the steppe where there was once forest, possibly of coal deposits, and the proliferation of white birch which spoiled grazing lands and presaged the coming of the Tsarist government and agriculture. This was said to be the result of the giants' prideful digging in the ground, which displeases the spirit of the earth.

Similar giants also appear in the legend which explains the source of the musical instrument *khomy*s which was the gift of a mountain spirit.

DESCRIPTIONS AND INVOCATION

In many tales and even short anecdotes, mountain spirits are described, complete with details of their rich clothing and lack of eyebrows, their homes which are reached by hidden openings in rock cliffs, and their displays of wealth—gold, silver, precious stones, and abundant furs. Certain people have found their way into these cliff-homes, and in “Light of the Eyes” a man’s soul goes there in the form of two candles as he sleeps. This is natural since it is the soul which contacts spirits.

This attention to visual detail reflects a point made by Katanov (quoted without its source in Kenin-Lopsan 1999: 126). In invocation of any spirit, he says, it is essential to bring forward these same details about the spirit’s home, clothing, horse, and many more. If this is not carried out, the spirits will not appear and the shaman will not be successful. Here these details hint at ritual use of the stories in the past—something which is not recorded by Katanov but is postulated by Kazachinova based on her research and experience.

CONTACTS

Three kinds of people are most commonly contacted by mountain spirits offering gifts: hunters, shamans, and storyteller-musicians. Although at one time the three skills may have been combined in the same person, in our tales from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries most of those who accept the mountain spirits’ gifts are storyteller-musicians and hunters. The relationship of the tales and legends to shamans is usually more indirect. (Although Kazachinova tells of a woman shaman who was dragged through a mountain cliff in her initiation, Kharitonova 2000: 83). Refusal or betrayal of the spirit can lead to death, as can refusal of the shamanic gift. Spirits may also abduct human beings either temporarily or permanently, and sometimes they help the souls of the dead cross to the next world.

(a) Gift accepted by a human being: In tales of initiation, a person learns an art from the mountain spirits, or the languages of the animals from a snake. He may receive a musical instrument, which in turn brings him good luck in hunting by attracting the mountain spirits who provide game. In many tales a hunter receives good luck directly from

the mountain spirits. Both kinds of luck are problematical, as we'll see in a moment.

The musical instrument is given as a means of maintaining communication with the spirits, who are known to love music and story, often gathering to listen to an especially skilled artist. The spirits initiate contact with human beings in order to impart knowledge which ultimately benefits both spirits and humans. This becomes clearer in the contemporary tales where mountain spirits impart ecological lessons, which were probably given more indirectly in the traditional tales.

Sometimes mountain spirits become a storyteller's helping spirits, as with the famous *khajji* (epic singer) Petr V. Kurbizhekov (1910–1966). On the other hand these helping spirits may also be *khai eezi*, which seem to be similar in many ways to mountain spirits, while specializing in the arts of throat singing used in storytelling. However, Kurbizhekov's granddaughter Albina says that the *khai eezi* may actually be masters of the mountains (personal communication 1999).

The gift always has a negative side as well as the positive. Some of the gifted people lose family and friends. They may turn up alone in a distant century, or die before their time. (Kurbizhekov's spirits are held responsible for his death at 55.) As one snake-spirit says to the hunter he is rewarding, "Better to take the gold and precious stones. He who knows seventy languages does not find it easy to live!" The gift sets a person apart—helping others does not necessarily make one's own life easier. And the further we delve into the spiritual realm, the more there is to learn. Knowing secrets adds layers of complication and subtlety to life, which is one of the things that makes the shaman's path so difficult.

The stories show the distinction between a gift that enriches the receiver directly, and the kind of artistic or shamanic gift which is used to benefit others. In spite of the personal difficulties that may ensue, Khakassians show a preference for gifts which bring connection, choosing animal language, music, or the gift of a living being (often a puppy) over cold cash. Those who gain wealth without using physical skill, and who then live by trading, may wind up lonely as a result of contact with the "dead" metals from the lower world. A lack of engagement in life-work is understood as being intrinsically less interesting and less evolutionary. This could reflect political realities as well as spiritual, in that the traditional way of life which was both materially and spiritually richer was severely damaged by the influx of Russians, and the payment of tribute which forced people to trade, and eventually impoverished them.

In “The Snake King” (Katanov #581), a man helps a snake win a battle with an ancient enemy, and receives a reward: marriage with the snake’s daughter, who brings him wealth and good fortune. Although he has obeyed the snake spirit, later he disobeys the daughter and loses everything he has gained. She asks him not to wake her for seven days and nights, during which time she returns in her sleep to visit her parents. He wakes her because of a household inconvenience on the sixth day, and she then disappears in anger, while he returns grieving to his former life-style. (Kazachinova cites a different version in which the man loses his wife but later has great luck in hunting.) Before she disappears, the snake-wife flings their three children away, conjuring them to become three of Khakassia’s rivers. And so the hunter’s loss turns into a huge gain over time for the whole people. Here the theme of creation-time is again connected with snakes, as in the tale of Mount Irt and the two rivers.

In “The Snake King” we see the familiar world folklore motif of a person who does not obey or persist to the end of a task; who looks back before the specified time as in the myth of Orpheus, or fails to return a skin, as in tales of marriage with seals, swans, and other animals. This all-too-human impatience or insecurity shows a lack of trust in the autonomous process of crossing from one world to the other, and in the end makes the crossing impossible. The snake-wife needed to return home once more before becoming completely human, and now the husband unwittingly makes it impossible for her to come fully back to his world.

Other tales begin with this same snake battle, but the hunter, (or sometimes a herdsman who has helped a snake) is rewarded with understanding the languages of the animals. He leads a long and successful life because he does not reveal the secret of his knowledge—he obeys the laws of the spiritual world (Katanov #447).

In “Paper Money” (Katanov #556) there are two mountain spirits, one of whom defeats the snake who had frightened the protagonist, but wants to give the man a gift of gold and silver that will ruin him. Instead a female mountain spirit gives the man good advice—he gets home successfully and becomes a trader. The advice itself is rather mysterious—she tells him to reject gold and silver, but to accept paper money instead. Does this indicate modernization, a preference for a new kind of money? More likely it is a disinclination to use the metals that come from the under the ground.

(b) Gift refused: In the tale of “Khan Köchim,” the khan refuses to marry a mountain spirit, and endures grievous losses in war as a result. In “The Bride of the Mountain Spirit,” a girl who refuses to marry a mountain spirit gains wealth but never marries in the human world. The storyteller Agol, who refuses to go to the home of a mountain spirit to entertain him, dies before his time, after partly losing his artistic gift (Troiaikov 1995). Of those who refuse the gift, only Agol actually dies—most encounter misfortunes instead.

(c) Abductions: Both females and males are abducted in order to marry a spirit or help him or her. This is sometimes a part of an initiation, but often these stories stand alone as anecdotes. For example, artist Alexander Kotozhekov tells of one man who was allowed to take back the children born to the marriage of his daughter and a mountain spirit, although the girl herself never came back. These legends offer an explanation for what happens to those who simply disappear on mountain journeys. In some cases there is a sense of justice—The bride of the mountain spirit is sent back because, “They can’t hold a person more than three years.”

(d) Psychopomp: In some hunting tales a man dies after being helped home by a mountain spirit. “The Man who Slept in a Bear’s Den” (Katanov #591) gets lost in the taiga, goes to sleep in a bear’s den in mid-winter and comes out with the singing of the cuckoo. He still cannot find his way home. A mountain spirit appears, helps him, but then strangles the man when he goes back on his agreement not to tell anyone who helped him find his way.

The spirit could be seen as a psychopomp for a person who has died far from home and whose soul is still wandering in our world. It is possible that the man is already dead, after sleeping with the bear, and just doesn’t realize it. But it is equally likely that the events in the story relate what is happening from the soul’s point of view during the shaman’s ceremony of accompanying the dead. Evidence for this idea is the fact that the mountain spirit offers the man some charred antlers to assuage his hunger, and the man feels satisfied from the smell alone. The mountain spirit explains that the man’s family had assumed he was dead and had celebrated the funeral. The smell of the meat they burned in the ceremony is what satisfied him, which is exactly what is supposed to happen. This might indicate that the mountain spirit really is a shaman’s helper in this case, although the spirit could also be acting independently.

The man's wife is surprised when he reappears. They drink together and he tells her about the mountain spirit. At this point the spirit reappears and strangles him. But it is possible that what his wife saw was not the living person but his soul after death (*siine*)—that he needed to revisit his home since he had died far away, and that once this was accomplished the mountain spirit helped him permanently to the other side. From the point of view of the family, it is easier to let the man go after seeing him once more.

Does the outcome of an encounter with snakes and mountain spirits depend on the whim of the spirit, the decision of the human, or some combination? What if the man who slept in the bear's den had not betrayed the secret? Would he have been able to stay alive? Perhaps he was not really dead after all, but hovering on the brink, and it was his own will that made the difference.

Generally the spirit initiates the contact, but human decisions play a role in the outcome. In at least one case human ingenuity defeats the purposes of the mountain spirits completely. A man named Syganakh who was taken to task by the mountain spirits for making noise on the mountain displayed his superior strength and wit when they took him to their home, and then tricked them and escaped. Later, he managed to keep their gold while driving them away from his home. The tone of this magic tale is much more defiant and up-beat than that of the legends.

Likewise in the tale of "The Female Mountain Spirit" (Katanov #425) a hunter resists the spirit's tickling, and shoots her. He and his brother scare two more spirits away from their camp after overhearing their conversation coming from inside the mountain. It's interesting to think that it might be possible to kill a spirit using a rifle! When the men arrive home an elder explains that if one gives in to the temptation of a female mountain spirit, he will surely die—she wants him to be her husband in the world of the dead.

Contemporary Stories

Space forbids recounting contemporary meetings with mountain spirits here. Several have been previously published (Anzhiganova 1997; Van Deusen 1997; 1998) In brief, there have been many sightings by people from all walks of life. Since 1990, mountain spirits have clearly

initiated at least one epic singer, given pointed warnings about the necessity of caring for the land and for traditional beliefs, language, and culture. They emphasize the necessity of returning the stone figures to their rightful places in the steppe, explaining that only in this way can Khakassians survive as an ethnic group. Unfortunately many suicides among Khakass youth are also attributed to mountain spirits who have ordered the young people to take drastic action which they seem unable to resist.

Shamanic Connections

What connection do mountain spirits have with shamans? In these stories, which represent a cross-section if far from the totality of mountain spirit lore, the spirits participate in initiations and in accompanying the souls of the dead. They give information (as in a shamanic divination), enforce the hunting laws, and lure people to their death. All of these functions are still alive in the present time.

They may bring an initiatory gift and then insist on its being used according to their rules and for their pleasure. Although mountain spirit initiation applies more often to storyteller-musicians and hunters than to shamans, it follows the familiar pattern. Both mountain spirits and shamans mediate between life and death. As psychopomps, mountain spirits bring a wandering soul back home, giving it a choice of whether to live or die, and then dispatch it to the other world if the person disobeys the spirit's injunctions.

An interesting side-light is that shaman's mirrors often appear unexpectedly in the mountains, and disappear again after the shaman's death. One of these mirrors belonged to Tuvan shaman Kaigal-kham, whose drum was heard in his native village after he had died far away—reinforcing the idea that one must return home before leaving this world finally for the land of the dead (M. B. Kenin-Lopsan: personal communication 1996).

There is at least one hint of invocation in the stories. The attention devoted to their detailed physical description, (usually missing in speaking of human characters,) acts to call spirits present. When hunters wander lost in the taiga, almost dying of hunger, it is often said that the spirits have deliberately led the men astray. The men then reach the altered state of consciousness induced by hunger or a long sleep which

enables them to come into direct contact with the spirit—a kind of reverse invocation.

This brings up the question of the purpose of telling the mountain spirit tales in the past. Galina Kazachinova notes with regret that Katanov did not record the circumstances in which the tales he collected were told, saying that the context is all-important in understanding them. We do not know who the listeners were, what life situation caused the tale to be told, and whether the stories were told as part of a ceremony, to increase hunting luck, to give warnings, or to explain losses or gains.

The lessons involved in a person's lacking patience with the spiritual process, like the man who married the snake king's daughter, points up the importance of a shaman's maintaining complete trust in his/her own helping spirits and their processes, and the way things can go wrong when human impatience interferes. This could be important if the story were told in a ritual context.

For men and women working alone in the forest, contact with mountain spirits can bring wealth coupled with loneliness, perhaps similar to the social status of a shaman who is respected (if not wealthy!) and at the same time feared.

Of the shamanic repertoire, only soul retrieval seems to be absent in mountain spirit lore. These spirits do not engage in healing. In fact, in "The Bride of the Mountain Spirit" it is just the opposite—the human woman brings her daughter back from the spirit who is holding her in the mountain, while Syganakh and the two hunters who escaped the female mountain spirit bring themselves back by means of their own ingenuity, courage, and strength. Mountain spirits act from the side of the dead, not the living—pointing up the moments of choice.

Snake stories are different. Snakes are some of a Turkic shaman's most powerful helpers, frequently appearing on costumes and drums. Snakes often bring the gift of language, so important to a shaman, while the *kbai eezi* connect the words with music, creating the powerful sound world in which a shaman works. In the mythic record, people who have met snakes usually live to tell the tale, while those who have met mountain spirits often do not.

A number of questions remain unanswered in our collection. In one tale a mountain spirit directs the hunter to return home but never to hunt again and to forbid his children from hunting. Why? Perhaps the forest had been over-hunted, another place where we are missing

the story's context. Another man is told not to share his take with his brother. Ordinarily this would go against the hunting laws. The brother of the man whose eyes went to the cave at night returned alone and took away valuable furs—also evading the usual sharing. Are the spirits calling people away from human values, or is there a life-saving reason for these breaks? In other cases a break in the law, specifically making noise in the mountains, is the cause of the meeting with the mountain spirit.

Mountain spirits are in the whole backdrop of shamanic culture. This collection makes frequent reference to creation time: to the formation of mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, and steppe. Other important elements of traditional philosophy appear as well—notably the concept of an animal consecrated as *yzymb* (sacred)—the one on whom the health of the whole herd rides. We see the importance of feeding the fire deities, who will desert a person if not treated right, and who protect hunters and others. Even smoking tobacco helps protect the hunter from the female mountain spirit. All these things point to the sacred nature of the tales.

Ultimately many mountain spirit tales involve the possibility of making difficult but life-saving choices. Like the shamans themselves, the spirits mediate between life and death, which may be why they are showing up now, in a time when the very life of the Khakass people is at risk. Intimately connected with creation, mountain spirit tales may have been told ritually in the past. They are strongly connected to music and storytelling, and track cultural and political changes. Mountain spirits offer help and punishment, like the dangers and blessings of the mountains themselves.

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Over the last ten years Kira VAN DEUSEN (www.kiravan.com) has been conducting independent research on Siberian storytelling and shamanic traditions, both in their traditional and contemporary forms, in the Amur River region of the Russian Far East, Tuva, Khakassia, Buriatia and Chukotka. She is a professional storyteller/musician and the author of four books, including *The Flying Tiger: Women Shamans and Storytellers of the Amur*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001.

Book Review

ÅKE HULTKRANTZ. *Soul and Native Americans*. Edited with a foreword by Robert Holland. Woodstock, CT: Spring Publications. 1997. ISBN: 0-882-14223-2. 233 pp.

Both this book and this book review have a long history. All well-informed students of comparative religion know the excellent Swedish scholar, the professor emeritus of comparative religion at Stockholm University, Åke Hultkrantz. All are familiar with the series of seminal books and articles—especially those on North American Indians—ha has published, which excel in their immense grasp of facts, the author's inborn ability to present these in a clear and coherent way, and, last, but not least, their wit and transparency. Hultkrantz's first publications on American Indians date back almost half a century! The first to appear was *Conceptions of the Soul among North American Indians. A Study in Religious Ethnology*, published in 1953 by Statens Etnografiska Museum, the leading Swedish museum of anthropology). Now, almost 50 years later, the professional American popular writer Robert Holland has prepared an abridged version for the greater audience. This is a welcome development as the book is not only out of print but, being a publication of a museum, has been inaccessible to many. I can understand, too, why today's readers should prefer short, summarizing works, something that Hultkrantz himself is not at all against. He has published several small but important books—for example *Native Religions of North America*, which, with less than 150 printed pages, is perhaps the best introduction to the topic. The book, which is not overburdened with illustrations or scholarly references, is a concise and elegant summary work.

Holland's version *Conceptions of the Soul* is the product of a demanding assignment. He describes his method in the "Foreword"—condensing the references in a bibliography at the end of the book and, simply, omitting parts of the original descriptive text. It has to be said that the merits of a classic work like of Hultkrantz's will shine through whatever the skills of the abridger, and the *Soul and Native Americans* remains

an exciting and clear presentation. It describes the important aspects of North American Indian beliefs and customs related to their conceptions of the soul. In his own book Hultkrantz mobilized all the pertinent data and classified them into a pragmatic system. He often gives very many references, but then he is treating the most interesting fieldwork data at length, and his general remarks, whether of introduction or summary, he shows mastery of the vast range of material. Hultkrantz has the ability to convey the variability of religious practice, the plasticity of everyday life, while still demonstrating the validity of rules in comparative religion.

Holland's abridgement does not altogether come off and it has several shortcomings. We learn many facts and can follow Hultkrantz's argument and terminology. But the scope of the original is not fully conveyed and descriptions are often too curtailed. The references have been pruned, and in a curious way. In-text references disappear, yet the bibliography remains very large. Possibly the publisher's requirements changed as the book progressed. This might account for the unexplained differences between the chapters: for example in Chapters 3 to 5 there are no references to works listed in the bibliography, but from Chapter 6 they are given in brackets.

Overall, my impression is that Holland's version falls between two stools. It is still a taxing read for those who want just an introduction to the subject, but for the scholarly reader it has lost its philological integrity.

To come back to Hultkrantz's original book, it was written in the "pre-Castaneda" times. Reading it now it is amazing to see how many of the later "revelations" were well known to Hultkrantz 50 years ago. Diametrically opposed views on the topic—"American Indians do not have concepts of soul,"; "our modern life might be reorganized according to the American Indian world view")—prevail, confusing readers new to the field. Hultkrantz reports on the facts, in their multiplicity, in a very balanced way.

Hultkrantz's book is not a book on shamanism. But without a deep insight into North American concepts of the soul we cannot understand shamanism. North American Indian shamanism is a complex and much debated topic. *Conceptions of the Soul* is required reading for students of shamanism.

Returning to the opening sentence in my review: when I met first Professor Hultkrantz his book was only about ten years old. Through my interest in Siberian shamanism I knew the other Stockholm publi-

cations on the concepts of soul held by Eurasian peoples, and the richness of the North American Indian concepts came as a surprise. After so many years I was reminded of that experience through a reading of the shortened version of the book.

All “primitive” religions are less primitive, as we might think at the first glance. Good scholars understand this, and the best express it in their works. Professor Hultkrantz is among the latter. But, even, in evaluating primitive religion, sensitive scholars are concerned more with the empathy of the individual than with the system of thought. American Indian soul concepts are in fact an early form of philosophy (as was suggested by Paul Radin, as early as 1936.) Not only in Hultkrantz’s original book, but also in the present version of it is astonishing to see how “philosophical” the world view of American Indians is. Hultkrantz speaks of “simple” phenomena (as, for example, the ego and his souls, the soul as an expression of life, the signs of death, incarnation etc.), but precisely in this way we arrive to a genuine “philosophy.” Here the reviewer can praise not only the original book, but the recent except too. Those who read Holland’s book will better understand why everyone who encountered genuine American Indians realized that there was a wisdom, in every sense of the word, behind their world view. This wisdom is not a fake, nor an artifact of back-extrapolation (referring again to the “Castaneda syndrome”). It can be seen in Hultkrantz’s book too (see especially chapters 8, 10, 15, 16, 17).

A valid description, provoking thoughts in the reader, and an unbiased evaluation—this is the final merit of Holland’s book. But I should like to ask whether concepts of the soul have changed among North American Indians during the last half century. And if yes (I am not quite sure about it!) into which direction? It would have been nice to include at least a short afterword on the topic by Hultkrantz himself.

References

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BUDAPEST

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