SHAMAN

Selected Papers from the International Conference

"Sacred Landscapes and Conflict Transformation:
History, Space, Place and Power in Shamanism"

Delphi, Greece, October 9–13, 2015

Guest Editors
Evgenia Fotiou, Diana Riboli and Davide Torri

Co-Editor
Dimitra Mari Varvarezou

Front cover: The shaman Birka Bahadur Rai at the sacred lake Salpa Pokhari. Eastern Nepal, May 2013. Photo: Alban von Stockhausen.

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The First Conference of the International Society for Academic Research on Shamanism (ISARS), Delphi, Greece, in 2015

This special issue includes selected proceedings from the Conference of the International Society for Academic Research on Shamanism (ISARS), which took place in 2015, in Delphi, Greece.

Founded in the same year, the ISARS aims to continue the work of the International Society for Shamanistic Research (ISSR) promoting the academic, multidisciplinary study of the variety of religious therapeutic systems often described with the elusive term "shamanism."

The renewal of the Society stems from the need to involve increasing research focused not only on local, but also on globally urgent issues, such as globalization, cultural resistance, human rights, and environmental degradation. Given the Society's focus, the theme of the first ISARS conference was "Sacred Landscape and Conflict Transformation: History, Space, Place, and Power in Shamanism."

In many parts of the world the wide array of religious-healing complexes defined as shamanism are mainly linked to ancient oral cultures and societies. Of course, the role of shamanism and shamans is not limited to addressing illnesses and misfortunes. Shamans are the main actors in shaping and preserving sacred landscapes both on the human and other-than-human levels. At the same time, they often deal with historical and mythical events. Therefore, shamans become powerful political figures. In recent decades, their voices have gained new vigor as they join environmental campaigns on a global level, thereby empowering the struggle of many indigenous peoples for human and land rights.

Over the years in their—often contentious—encounter with colonial and post-colonial economic and political interests, dominant cultures, and established religions, shamans were called to deal with structural, physical, and cultural violence that has historically undermined and continues to compromise the preservation and the very existence of

sacred landscapes and, therefore, the well-being and survival of many cultures. As highlighted by historical evidence and in particular by the survival of shamanic complexes even in regions where these were brutally repressed, shamans are masters in techniques and strategies of conflict transformation (and at times resolution).

The main aim of the hundred-plus participants from some thirty or so different countries who attended the ISARS conference in Delphi was to discuss the responses of shamanic cultures to exploitation, environmental, political, economic, social, and religious threats in the past, as well as in the present. The goal of this discussion was also to reframe shamanism: to contextualize the religious and healing practices that shamanism encompasses, provide a realistic perspective, and reconsider the highly romanticized view of shamanism that is widespread in many non-shamanic and mostly industrial and capitalist cultures.

With the passage of time, or perhaps as a result of the countless works on the subject, the definition of shaman and shamanism appears to be more and more elusive. Although we have probably managed to overcome the quite narrow perception that these terms should only be used for a very specific geographical area and cultural context, the scholarly debates, awkward silences, and scientific disputes continue. The frantic search for the "most authentic" main features in shamanism (usually perceived as being connected to hunting activities, symbolic healing, magical flight, and/or possession etc.) have not really led us to a conclusion.

From Mircea Eliade's model, based on supposedly "archaic techniques of ecstasy," to the more recent frameworks, which attempt to discuss shamanism in the context of a re-theorization of animism, stripped of its old and uneasy evolutionary context, a plethora of intriguing, albeit problematic, conceptualizations has been used intermittently to throw light on the subject.

The re-theorization of shamanism as a form of animism is probably one of the most thought-provoking of the last decades. In this context, anthropological studies and debates have attempted to engage in a re-theorization of the famous nature–culture dichotomy and of the term animism, used to describe indigenous religions (Bird-David 1999; Descola 2005/2013; Descola and Pálsson 1996, Harvey 2005; Ingold 2000; Viveiros de Castro 2004). "Animism" is a particularly problematic term when used within an evolutionary-theory framework, as the precursor to "higher" forms of religion. It becomes clear from the study of indigenous cultures worldwide that "nature and culture are part of the same socio-cosmic field"

(Viveiros de Castro 2005, 48) and that personhood in these systems "is open equally to human and non-human animals (and even non-animal kinds)" (Ingold 2000, 48). A deep sense of respect for, rather than the exploitation of, the natural environment and other-than-human beings, and a complex relational network and sense of brotherhood with such beings constitute the main differences between indigenous and non-indigenous perceptions not only of the natural, but also of the "moral" environment and world. In this sense, animism can be a useful concept with which to discuss the importance of shamanic indigenous knowledge not only on the local, but also on the global level.

All shamanisms (let us use the plural form to better underline the fact that we are focusing on very different cultural complexes the world over) are particularly linked to what we define as sacred landscapes both in the human and physical as well as in the other-than-human world. The physical and non-physical landscapes in shamanisms are deeply interrelated and interconnected, and constitute an inseparable unity. This is the reason why these territories are not just landscapes but "sacred landscapes." Again, we must be careful not to interpret these concepts only on a metaphysical/philosophical level. As Daniel Wildcat (2009) emphasizes with his term "indigenous realism", indigenous religions and worldviews are very practical and stem from a careful observation of nature and natural phenomena.

During the ISARS conference, many scholars emphasized that shamans are not just charismatic dreamers/leaders in between natural and other-than-natural dimensions but powerful political figures acting within and dealing with a continuum constituted by different realities. Although shamans often act "locally," the purpose of their actions is, in fact, always "global." When a problem occurs, the main task of a shaman is to restore the cosmic balance, and not just on the local level. The "global" dimension is not just relevant in shamanic worldviews and ritual actions. In recent times, we are also witnessing a new situation: indigenous communities and shamans living in very different parts of the planet are creating real connections using social networks and technology.

The survival, and nowadays revitalization, of shamanism in countries where it was (or is still) persecuted, and its amazing resistance in comparison to many other religious traditions eradicated by dominant religions and/or political pressures, are in themselves evidence of "indigenous realism." Shamanism is not only ritual action, but also a political response (Thomas and Humphrey 1996) to conflict and to internal and

external violence, as well as to individual, collective, and social suffering (Kleinman, Das and Lock 1997).

Despite the elusiveness of the concept, scholars participating in the ISARS conference offered a clear definition and description of contemporary shamans. Religious specialists defined by this term are, in fact, able to deal with and to transform conflicts, or (in many cases) resolve them. Among the most serious current conflicts are those that are provoking major damages to sacred landscapes, threatening the existence and survival of many indigenous cultures, but also affecting the ecological balance of the planet. These conflicts do not express themselves only (or, in many cases, at all) on a "symbolic" level: political, economic, and religious pressures, discrimination, and lack of rights are connected to mining, logging, resource extraction, environmental degradation, global warming, and all forms of direct and indirect violence, and are nowadays the fulcrum of most of the ritual activities.

In this sense, animism can be a useful concept for scholars to use to shift the focus from ritual actions, which differ greatly not only within a culture, but also from one culture to the other, and to place an emphasis on the commonalities of shamanic worldviews. There is also the risk that "animism" will become just one more anthropological label, putting emphasis only on the strict relationship(s) of shamans with nature. In this sense, it will again be quite easy to construct an idealized perception of shamans. Shamans are neither merely charismatic/mystic dreamers nor are they militant environmentalists, at least in the strict sense of the term.

To conclude, the first conference of the ISARS was particularly successful in promoting shamanism not just as a local phenomenon, but in its relationship to the globally urgent issues humanity faces and will have to face in the future.

An Overview of Selected Papers

Laurel Kendall analyzes the relation between people and places, offering us a new, fresh and quite surprising perspective on the relation between shamans and places in Korea: in particular, she highlights the function of the shaman's body as a receptor and transmitter of energy. As appears from her study, the Korean *mansin* seem to consider sacred mountains

and shrines as powerful sites from which to enter into communication with non-human entities, but also as repositories of a flowing energy which can, so to say, be stored in the shaman's own body. Therefore, pilgrimages to powerful, sacred locations constitute a very important act of devotion: through these ritual activities, a shaman's depleted energies can be restored to a desired optimum. Deities are also known to inhabit the painted images, which are commonly found in *mansin* personal shrines. These paintings, as Kendall informs us, are very special objects, charged with numinous power, and they must be treated with the utmost care at the time of their installation, or if they have to be moved: they are conceived as animated, and as the seats of the gods. Finally, the shaman's body itself is considered a mobile sacred site, hosting the presence of the gods and making it visible in the material world through dancing, singing, miming, and the like. According to Kendall, these physical sites hosting a presence of the divine constitute a complex, interconnected circuit where each part—mountains, bodies, and shrines—constitutes a node, allowing the circulation of the *myŏnggi*, literally, the "bright energy" which is considered the ultimate source of shamanic power and inspiration.

Jeffery L. MacDonald explores a surprising dimension of the relationship between landscape and shamanism, namely that of the "portability" of religion. His paper discusses the ways that Iu-Mienh refugees connect with the landscape and spirits of place after having relocated from highland Laos to Portland, Oregon, following the end of the Vietnam war in 1975. We learn how the animistic Iu-Mienh community has transported and adapted their rituals to the new environment not only preserving the essence of their religion but also incorporating spirits of the new place. With the number of refugees rising globally, the implications of this ethnographic example are far-reaching. Many of the ethnic refugee groups practice religions that are intimately connected with sacred places and spirits residing in particular landscapes. MacDonald shows us how the Iu-Mienh have solved this problem and recreated relationships with the spirits of sacred spaces in the U.S. Their traditional religion is a unique version of animism, shamanism, and ritual Taoism that they adopted in the fourteenth century CE. Iu-Mienh shamans, called spirit masters, use trance, and literacy and fluency in Chinese as a sacred language, to communicate with the spirit world, and Taoist rituals to control ancestral, celestial, and terrestrial spirits who influence the health and well-being of the living. The paper focuses on an

annual outdoor ceremony, carried out near an extinct volcano known as Mt. Tabor, to manage those spirits and the way that Iu-Mienh refugees reestablish relationships with outdoor spirits unfamiliar to their experience in Asia. Many of these spirits can cause harm to the living, and it is important to manage these relationships. In a group effort, the Iu-Mienh transform the outdoor space into a sacred ritual space and conduct the ceremony which manages relationships with both destructive and protective spirits of the place. Notably, in addition to spirits from the Mien pantheon, which is organized hierarchically and patterned on the human world's Chinese imperial system, they include the owner spirits of their new home, which are perceived to be an unnamed "Indian chief," Christopher Columbus, and George Washington.

In a nutshell, this ethnographic example demonstrates the dynamism and adaptability of animistic religions by placing them in the twenty-first century.

Raphael Mousa's paper brings us to the slopes and valley of eastern Nepal, home of the indigenous Kiranti (Rai) people. The religious relationship with the landscape here offers us invaluable insight into inter- and transcultural dynamics, showing unexpected patterns of reciprocal influences between different communities. The indigenous shamanic tradition is a relevant component of the cultural-identity movement of the Rai people, part of a larger revival of local ethnicities after the fall of the Hindu monarchy in 2008. In this context, peculiar religious traits became a form of cultural resistance to the hegemonic layer of Hindu ideology, strictly tied to power structures firmly in the grip of the higher castes. Local forms of shamanism quickly became symbols of non-Hindu identity not only among the Kiranti, but also among other groups belonging to the Tibeto-Burmese minorities of Nepal, very often marginalized by the Nepalese state and its Hindu apparatuses. After the sanskritization of the state ideology, in fact, following the unification of the country under the rule of the Gorkha kings during the eighteenth century, and the ensuing hinduization of the culture, local groups tried to maintain their specific identities, languages and customs despite the criminalization of political and cultural activities from the 1950s to the 1990s. The 1990s saw the first peoples' movement successfully force the king to reinstall democracy and, with it, a recognition and flourishing expansion of local identities. The civil war, which engulfed the country between 1996 and 2006, saw the Royal Army fighting a Maoist insurgency, whose guerrilla units consisted mainly of marginalized groups. At the end of the civil war, the country witnessed a renewed revival of

ethnicities, which were this time competing with each other for political power. In this volatile context, religion emerges as one of the crucial factors in defining identity. The local dimension of religiosity, i.e. the relevance of the local landscape, plays a central role in shamanic complexes of Nepal: often the shamans are in charge of delivering the souls of the dead to their final, transcendent abode, by means of a journey along the significant places, rivers, and mountains of the physical landscape. These locations are ritually, symbolically, and practically relevant, being an important component of a cosmological view, which assigns them a pivotal position in the shared memory of the community, mainly through the links between places and ancestors. It is in this context that another interesting phenomenon takes place: as a result of the eighteenth-century incorporation of eastern Nepal into the Nepalese state, Hindu groups started to settle in the area, and while bringing with them their religious traditions, they were widely influenced by local religions as well. Mousa's paper takes into account this kirantization of Hindu ritual practices, showing how non-Kiranti shamans incorporated local customs, paraphernalia, and rituals, up to the point of being possessed by Kiranti spirits.

Michael Oppitz—key-note speaker of the ISARS conference—explores the possibilities of comparison in shamanic studies, addressing particular attention to the crucial question of what can be compared in mostly different, but sometimes even in the same, shamanic culture or cultures. In his groundbreaking article, a variety of ethnographic examples from North and South Asia and the Americas open the way to fundamental methodological and theoretical issues concerning the legitimacy of comparing shamanisms of more or less distant geographical and/or cultural areas. Oppitz identifies specific domains in which comparative studies prove to be promising in shamanic contexts, such as ritual, oral transmission, and material culture. Without losing sight of the necessary caution required when comparing situations, facts, and objects (especially in trans-continental comparison), the author proves that comparative experimentation can indeed become, among other things, a particularly efficient cognitive tool.

Ippei Shimamura's article analyzes the revitalization of shamanism in Mongolia, which began after the collapse of Soviet Union and has increased dramatically in recent years. In what appears to be a "pandemic of shamans"—particularly evident in the fast-developing capital Ulaanbaatar—the author focuses on the study of how this "plague" (as Mongolian themselves define it) affects social relationships, bonds, and

hierarchy. Through an extremely rich presentation of different ethnographic case-studies, Shimamura highlights and analyzes the controversies of this astonishing shamanic revival, which on the one hand recalls and (re)shapes traditional cultural and social bonds, and on the other seems to break them. In a complex urban fabric with a population of about three million, where different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and social groups cohabit, affected by globalized networks and trends but also by xenophobic tendencies and social inequalities, shamanism overturns the rules regulating power relationships and social status.

Robin M. Wright explores a different political dimension of shamanism as manifested in the Amazonian Baniwa prophetic movements documented since the mid-nineteenth century. Indigenous prophetic movements have been common in the Americas since colonial times. Being primarily movements of resistance, they were important in fighting against oppression. Wright analyzes the Amazonian ethnographic example, while contextualizing it along with other indigenous prophetic movements or critiques of colonist invasions, such as the Kogi and Yanomamo shaman Davi Copenawa. The paper focuses on the savants or Wise People, the jaguar-shamans of the Arawak-speaking Baniwa of the Northwest Amazon. Through these prophetic movements, savants offer a scathing critique of the destructiveness white people have brought on indigenous cultures.

In a detailed account of fundamental Baniwa cosmology, Wright outlines their tradition of great seer-savants. The author takes an emic/etic approach and uses long passages from oral histories and mythological narratives. The oral traditions of these seer-savants, which constitute a distinct body of indigenous histories, recount the confrontation between the powers of the jaguar-shamans (*maliiri*) and the force of the state. In these stories, the power of these jaguar-shamans is far superior to that of outsiders. At the same time, they reveal internal conflicts generated by sorcery, which the *maliiri* are not always able to resolve. These shamans use symbolism from both Catholicism and shamanic tradition to overcome enemy sorcerers. The author discusses external disruptions to Baniwa society and the role of sorcery as a way to curb inequalities that might result from these disruptions. Seeing their communities being torn apart because of these factors and their aftermath, seer-savants have focused on eliminating sorcery and restoring balance and harmonious conviviality. The author discusses some of the well-known examples, such as Kamiko, Uetsu, Kudui, and the last living jaguar-shaman, Manuel da Silva. These Baniwa savants have demonstrated among other things their

ability to envision a new world without suffering for their people and to guard the knowledge and power gained through psychoactive plants and transmit them to the next generations. Wright demonstrates their importance for contemporary indigenous culture, showing that a central point in their messages has been to urge their followers to conserve their ancestral traditions, to prevent the "enemy" culture from dominating them, leading to the final destruction of the indigenous world.

Takako Yamada's article analyzes the embodiment of local and especially of fierce, warrior-like mountain deities (*wylie yul lha ghzi dbag*) among the people inhabiting the high Himalayas or the Tibetan plateau. In her study, the author takes into account these incorporations of shamanic practices into the fold of Tibetan Buddhism: among the Amdo Tibetans (Qinghai, China), or the Ladakhi (Jammu and Kashmir, India) we can see how local deities and local ritual specialists are important to the social life of the community. As Yamada shows, drawing from her research projects in 1984 and 2009, village shamans and oracles are in fact not only healers and diviners, and fully involved and integrated into religious festivals, as in the case of the Lörol; they are also important agents of change, transformation, and reconciliation.

Lia Zola in her article highlights the interconnectedness of power, identity, globalization, and space in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). Drawing upon recent developments in her field site, Kihilėėkh, she shows the transformation of sacred space into a tourist attraction. The push for the commercialization of sacred space brings into sharp focus not only the cultural practices that define a space as sacred, but also the agency of space itself. Zola masterfully shows the interconnectedness of space with indigenous and national (re)negotiations of individual and collective identity among the Sakha. While tourist expansion may provide new professional opportunities for Sakha individuals, questions among Sakha communities arise pertaining to land rights, indigenous representation and positionality in the national arena. Zola's work reveals the social complexities in which space is entangled: the production, negotiation, and renaming of space reveal the broader dynamics of indigenous identity, community cohesion, and group distinctiveness.

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EVGENIA FOTIOU, Kent State University
DIANA RIBOLI, ISARS President, Panteio University
DAVIDE TORRI, Heidelberg University
DIMITRA MARI VARVAREZOU, Arizona State University

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Shamans, Mountains, and Shrines: Thinking with Electricity in the Republic of Korea

LAUREL KENDALL AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, NYC

Korean shamans, or mansin*, engage the sacred in two primary spatial-temporal locations—sacred mountains and personal shrines. The* mansin*'s own body is a third, more mobile site. This paper takes electricity, and in particular, the electric circuit, as its central metaphor. It explores shaman bodies, shrines, and mountains and the ways in which* mansin *experience the divine in association with these three locations as a complex connective circuitry for divine inspiration. The metaphor of electric circuitry enables an appreciation of the interconnections and interdependence between these three sites, how Korean shamanic experiences "work," that might not otherwise be so evident.*

A shamanic encounter with place, the shaman as a receptor and transmitter of unseen forces or energies encountered in place, this is a recurrent theme in the literature on shamanic practice, and one that has concerned many of us working in different places with our diverse approaches. My subjects are Korean shamans (called *mansin*) who engage the sacred in two primary spatial-temporal locations—sacred mountains and personal shrines. If we think of the mountain and the shrine as "sites" for the transmission of inspiration, power, and information from invisible gods or spirits, we might add a third and more mobile site, the shaman's own body. The *mansin* receive inspiration from the gods who have taken seats in painted images installed in the *mansin*'s shrine. For their part, the resident gods require shamans' dancing, miming, and speaking bodies in order to become a presence that moves and speaks in the material world. To maintain a clear flow of divine inspiration, shamans engage in various acts of devotion; the most important of these are their pilgrimages to sacred mountain sites where, as one shaman put it, they recharge their batteries. This paper takes electricity, and in particular, the electric circuit, as its central

metaphor. It explores shaman bodies, shrines, and mountains and the ways in which *mansin* experience the divine in association with these three locations as a complex connective circuitry for divine inspiration, or in their terms *myŏnggi*, literally "bright-energy," an expression with its own metaphorical suggestion of illumination.

"When we go to the mountains it's as though we're recharging our batteries," an old shaman told me with a grin. I grinned back because I had been using that very same metaphor when I told my students in New York about the *mansin*'s pilgrimages to sacred mountains and what they hoped to accomplish there. Electricity is not just *my* metaphor; like many of my shaman informants, I cannot resist the temptation to use electricity to help me imagine the operation of things invisible, powerful, active, and sometimes dangerous. Electricity, as that most uncanny sign of the modern, has figured in the "electro-biology" of Victorian spirit mediums (Owen 1990, 109), the enlightened imaginings of early twentieth century Vietnamese spiritualists (Hoskins 2015) and modernity's aporia allegorized in a camera flash in the haunted Japanese village of Tōno (Ivy 2009). The metaphor is widely shared and seldom forced. It should not surprise us to find it here. To borrow from Claude Lévi-Strauss, electricity is "good to think with."

Shaman Bodies

Shamanship is an embodied practice, in Korea no less than anywhere else. The prospective initiate's emaciated body, mysterious illnesses, and manic behavior are read—in Korea and many other places—as signs that the gods will torture her to death if she does not accept her calling. As a fully-realized *mansin,* she conveys the ritual presence of deities through her own facial affect, voice, and body, and in the name of the gods, performs physical feats and delivers divinations. Most spectacularly, some *mansin* are empowered to balance the soles of their bare feet on fodder-chopper blades and from that perch, deliver astute divinations. A *mansin* might also hoist the heavy carcass of a pig on her shoulders with seemingly little effort or maintain a vigorous dance with the weight of a cow's head or a heavy crockery steamer of rice cake on her head. She balances a cudgel or a trident topped with a weighty burden of meat. These are passing moments, and things not all *mansin* accomplish with

the same panache. What every *mansin* must do is convincingly manifest a range of deities, one after the other—be it the presence of an imperious general, a greedy lesser official, a flighty maiden, a tearful ancestor, a mischievous child. With face and voice and appropriately costumed body, she is the presence of the god and through that presence she delivers clear divinations, expels misfortune, and opens an auspicious path for her client. A *mansin* prepares for these events with devotions and prayers but also with a bath, a visit to the beauty parlor, careful grooming, and by dressing in festive Korean traditional clothing. Thinking of the body as an instrument, I suggested to a *mansin* interlocutor that this was similar to a Vietnamese spirit medium's becoming "beautiful" for the gods; my interlocutor was offended. "We make ourselves *clean* (*kkaekkŭthada*)," she said, a different but no less aesthetic nuance, the body purified as an instrument for sacred work.

What happens when *mansin* perform a ritual *kut* and manifest a sequence of gods is not a one-on-one possession, the living woman overtaken by the god such that she becomes the god's puppet in the manner of a spirit medium in trance. It is not so simple, and in the *mansin*'s view, not so easy. One aspiring shaman, Auntie Cho, told me with great frustration, how full inspiration had long eluded her; she was a visionary but she lacked the ability to put words to what she saw. "A friend of mine asked me to divine for her, and when I did I could see everything, even to the graves of her ancestors. But a shaman has to have sense; she has to know how to put it all together, everything about all the client's kith and kin [to make a convincing divination]" (Kendall 2009, 25). The *mansin* performs the gods' will into presence through divine inspiration—through a variety of aural and visual cues, including vision, vivid dreaming, and bodily sensations—and sometimes inspiration eludes her. But even when the gods' intentions are unclear or ambiguous and the *mansin* has to improvise, her words and actions must convey the gods' intentions. In Diana Lee's and my film, "An Initiation *Kut* for a Korean Shaman," when the initiate falters, the experienced shamans tell her bluntly, "Hey, do you think some god is really going to move your tongue for you?" (Kendall 2009, 82) The burden is on the *mansin* to convey the will of the gods, and even when the transmission is unclear or ambiguous, when the *mansin* receives no better than a static transmission, the *mansin*'s own gods will punish her if she makes the wrong move, gives an incorrect message, and fails to convey their inten-

tions. Such failure results in divine punishment for both the *mansin* and her client. This is a widely held belief among Korean *mansin*.

In the *mansin*'s view, a successful *mansin*—a *mansin* who successfully conveys the gods' intentions and consequently enjoys their favor both on her own and on her client's behalf—enjoys a relationship of compatibility (*habwi*) with her personal gods; she receives a clear flow of inspiration that governs her actions. A successful *mansin*, through the favor of her gods, gives astute divinations and performs efficacious rituals. As a consequence, a *mansin* who enjoys the gods' favor is able to draw a large circle of loyal clients (*tan'gol*). Physical illness and accidents, as well as troubled dreams and bad business are "read" by the *mansin* as indications of divine displeasure that must be righted. Most ominous of all, affronted gods may fall silent and abandon the *mansin* altogether. The shrine is the site where the *mansin* seeks a condition of *habwi* with her gods. An efficaciously agentive *mansin* needs an efficaciously agentive shrine.

The Shrine[1]

For many years I acknowledged the shrine (*sindang*) as backdrop to the *mansin*'s work, altars piled with offerings, and with the incense pots, offering bowls, and decorative paraphernalia that clients, like myself, had dedicated as indications of a more durable bond between the clients and the *mansin* and the gods inhabiting her shrine (Kendall 1985). The gods, a colorful and imposing presence, looked down from paintings that hung over the shrine altar. Over many years of research, I made my own offerings, bowed to the floor in the gods' direction, and rubbed my hands in supplication. I knew that the paintings hanging above the altar were sacred in their way, and as with all shamanic paraphernalia, that they were charged and powerful, but I did not yet give much thought to how this sacredness worked. I did not yet see a connection between gods operating in and through paintings hung in shrines and gods operating in and through the inspired bodies of their chosen shamans. At the

[1] The discussion in this section draws on material presented in Kendall, Yang and Yoon 2015 and Kendall and Yang 2015, but to a slightly different point. I am grateful to Katherine Skaggs of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, for assistance in preparing this material for publication.

most superficial level, the *mansin*, in a succession of costumes, postures, and facial expressions, mirrors the series of painted gods in her shrine. The costumes, drum, bells, and paraphernalia are also sacred objects, stored in the shrine and kept separate from ordinary things. Costumes are either gifts from loyal clients, affirming their bond to a particular spirit and their loyalty to a particular *mansin*'s shrine, or the *mansin*'s own gift to one or another of her personal gods, usually made on the occasion of a major ritual.

The paintings above the altar, however, are probably the most numinous objects in the shrine, kept out of reach and requiring special care when they are installed, moved, and removed. But the paintings are considered animated; they are objects that have been entered by gods who have taken up their seats there, usually during the *mansin*'s initiation ritual. The notion of "animation" links the practices of the shaman's shrine to some other religious activities found in Korea and throughout the map of Asia: the ritual animation of Buddhist (Bentor 1996, 2004; Brinker 2011; Reedy 1991, 1992; Swearer 2004), Hindu (Gell 1998; Davis 1997), and other temple statues (Nguyen and Pham 2008; Kendall et al. 2008, 2010; Robson 2007) and the ritual activation of religious pictures, and talismans (Strickmann 2002; Vu 2008). In these traditions, Buddhas and deities are invited to inhabit statues following a prescribed and carefully orchestrated ritual performed by a priest or ritual master. Korean shamans similarly call on monks or mimic monkish eye-opening rituals when they install plaster Buddha images in their own shrines, but in the *mansin*'s world, Buddhas and gods are dissimilar entities and the animation of the paintings is not the same thing as a Buddhist eye-opening. It lacks the performative certainty of a liturgical rite and occurs within the context of an ambiguous and uncertain ritual process: will the gods appear at all? Will the gods be sufficiently present to take up their seats in the shrine and work harmoniously with the initiate? I asked the *mansin* Yongsu's Mother if there were any ceremony for this and she told me, "When the initiate sees the faces of the gods in her initiation ritual (*naerim kut*) then they are present in her shrine." I asked if there was a special ceremony (*haengsa*) for this. "Nothing special because the gods (*sin*) are already present, the gods are responding to the *mansin*'s petition (*yŏnggŏm*)."

In front of the paintings, a *mansin* makes daily offerings of pure water, lights candles, and burns incense, and here she makes her petitions—one could see these acts as a kind of ceremonious technology involving

both material and corporeal elements. Neglect of the shrine violates the shaman's relationship with her gods. When Yongsu's Mother was flat on her back with a broken leg, her "grandfathers" gave her rough and violent (*sanapda*) dreams. With a sense of urgency, Yongsu's Mother ordered her son—who only grudgingly accepted her profession—to pour the water and alcohol expected by the different grandfathers and grandmothers in the shrine as their daily offerings. *Mansin* who assist at a ritual *kut* will sometimes gather at the home of the colleague who has organized the team (*tangju mudang*), and before departing for the *kut*, they will enter her shrine. They greet her gods, and sometimes leave an offering, such as a bottle of liquor for a bibulous god, in gratitude for being included in the work of the *kut*. In shaman logic, the gods in the shrine have sent their shaman business. Regular clients see themselves as linked to the gods in the shrine through offerings of costumes and utensils that bear their own names—I have made this kind of offering—and through the regular seasonal devotions they make there. They express their loyalty by affirming the efficacy of the gods in their regular shaman's (*tan'gol*) shrine, the gods who respond efficaciously to their petitions and who send them astute divinations.

This productive flow of inspiration—from gods to shaman, and through the shaman to clients as divinations, divine manifestations in *kut*, and ritual actions—can be disrupted by the improper use or placement of paintings in the shrine. Let me tell you a story. Around 1983, Yongsu's Mother, my primary conversation partner, accepted gods and paintings from a retiring shaman. Both *mansin*'s dreams had indicated Chatterbox Mansin's gods were willing to take up residence in Yongsu's Mother's shrine. But, then, things went wrong for Yongsu's Mother, bad business, bad heath, and behind it all, a lack of divine inspiration. In Yongsu's Mother's words:

> There was no spiritual energy [no *myŏnggi*] coming from them to me. When the gods are there, you feel it. Without that, you can't put them on your wall. You approach them with an empty mind and they command you. But [when I put up the new paintings] things were off-kilter, strange. My luck was off, and then, whenever I tried to work with them, the words just didn't come out. It was as if they were mumbling and grumbling. It was all wrong.

Her health was bad, business was off, and Yongsu's Mother began to have strange dreams. In one dream, three women came to her for a divination but two of them hovered at the side of the room, refusing

to sit down. Yongsu's Mother began to cast coins and grains of rice, to divine from the resulting configurations with help from her own Guardian God, the Great Spirit Grandmother. Suddenly one of the standing women grabbed the divination tray and cast the rice on the floor. Yongsu's Mother awoke feeling sad; it was her own Guardian God's rice that had been cast on the floor. When she went into the shrine, the paintings had fallen to the floor. The image of her Great Spirit Grandmother and the Jade Immortal, Chatterbox Mansin's primary god, were stuck together. "They had been fighting," she said. The new gods would have to go. I would hear many other stories where the gods in the shrine, by inflicting illness and bad business, indicated their displeasure over the way their images had been arranged in a shrine or with the location of the shrine itself.

As with the Eucharistic properties of consecrated bread and the holiness of holy water, the sacred properties of a painting are invisible and silent, at least to non-*mansin*. Mansin Sŏ described shamans who operate a bogus practice with empty, uninhabited paintings in their shrines, either because the shaman was not sufficiently inspired to know the difference or because offended deities had departed on their own initiative when the shaman displeased them by committing polluting acts. "We see and we know these things," Mansin Sŏ said of the *mansin*'s capacity to tell whether or not a shrine was actively inhabited. The *mansin*'s initiation is both a risky and an ambiguous ritual as is her subsequent practice. The gods take seats in the paintings, but not always; the god is present, but is weak or angry, and does not enable the *mansin*'s work; they mumble and grumble or, in extremes, they depart, leaving the *mansin* to stone silence.

There are clear parallels between the sometimes-inhabited shrine and the sometimes-inspired shaman. But as the foregoing discussion suggests, the relationship is more than parallel, or even metaphoric; the shaman and the paintings in the shrine are processually linked. Gods transmit inspiration or *myŏnggi* to the shaman via the shrine while the shaman draws the gods into the shrine and nurtures their favor through rigorous acts of devotion and supplication including pilgrimages to sacred mountains. Sacred mountains are another node in the circuit.

Mountains

Shamans, and particularly recent initiates, will describe a constant cycle of intense prayer and mountain pilgrimage in order to build up their store of inspiration, to feel the gods' intentions more clearly, to make the gods more powerfully present in the shamans' sensing of their intentions. Some have stories of the vivid visions and uncanny voices encountered on these journeys. There is an electrical connection—the metaphor again—between the shrine, from which the shaman departs on her pilgrimage, and the sacred mountain sites from which she returns to prostrate herself in the shrine. She leaves with no words of farewell and returns with no greeting, words that would sever the flow of energy between the mountain, the shaman, and the shrine (Kendall 2009, 177–203). I was told many cautionary tales before setting off for the first time to Kam'ak Mountain with Yongsu's Mother and her colleagues in the spring of 1977. We had to be clean, not menstruating, not from houses or even neighborhoods where there had been a recent birth or death, our bodies scrubbed clean, our hair washed. If en route, we heard that someone had died, we would have to turn around and return home. The sight of a dead frog or squashed bug might be reason to abandon our journey.

We left at dawn and hiked all day. Some of the *mansin* quarreled, we missed a critical trail and returned footsore and hungry. This was not auspicious and in the following months there was speculation among *mansin* as to whether certain disappointments might be attributed to mistakes made on the mountain. As I have written elsewhere (Kendall 2009, 177–203), these pilgrimages have become much easier in the decades since my first fieldtrip: a short journey by private car on paved roads to a commercial shrine that provides on-site catering. All of this means that going to the mountain has become a much more frequent activity, potent mountains sites are sometimes crowded with worshippers, and shamans must seek out pure and quiet places off the main path for particularly serious work. But for even a routine visit to the mountain, the pollutions and purifications and the sense of power on the mountain are all still taken very seriously. The last time I went to Kam'ak Mountain with Yongsu's Mother, it began to rain when we set out our offerings in what proved to be an inappropriate place, an altar dedicated to higher gods than those for whom the offerings were intended. "Didn't you see?" Yongsu's Mother asked me. "It stopped raining as soon as we removed the offerings." And indeed, it had. The mountain was a powerful place. The

mountain's power infuses the shrine's power. The *mansin* is a conduit, and as in the ritual incarnation of gods, the shaman's body is not a neutral medium; it must be properly prepared and it must move through space in a manner that does not risk severing the connection.

Conclusion

I began this discussion with a metaphor of electrical circuitry and with it I will conclude. The shrine itself could be regarded as a first order receptor for the inspiration bestowed by the shaman's own otherwise invisible guardian gods, an engine of sorts whose working order can be easily disrupted by misplaced, ill-maintained, or otherwise inappropriate parts. The shaman's own body would be a second-order receptor that makes the gods' intentions and feelings animate; but it must be a good receptor—a skilled and perceptive shaman, a ritually acceptable body, periodically recharged on mountain sites, for the flow of concentrated power from mountain sites conducted through the mobile body of the shaman back to the shrine itself. A metaphor is a playful thing and also a potential limitation. This one risks an overly mechanistic view of Korean shamanic practice that ignores the creativity of the shamans themselves, the micro-politics of the rituals they perform, and the shifting social and political environments in which they live their lives, all of which I have tried to witness over several decades of writing about shamans in Korea. I use the metaphor gingerly. Thinking about flows of divine inspiration as moving through landscapes in something like an electrical circuit enabled me to look again at three sites that have figured in my previous research: shamans' bodies, mountain pilgrimages, and shaman shrines, to see these three sites as interconnected in ways that I had not previously appreciated. I also wonder about the viability of thinking with electricity as we move through new and still possibly unimagined technologies. A few years ago, I had occasion to ask a Burmese spirit medium if, when he drew inspiration from the *nat* spirits via the images in his shrine it wasn't like using a cell phone. "More like the internet" he told me with a smile.

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Laurel KENDALL is Chair of the Anthropology Division at the American Museum of Natural History and Curator of Asian Collections at AMNH as well as a Senior Research Fellow of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University. She holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia (1979) and has served as President of the Association for Asian Studies (2016–2017). Her knowledge of Korea began with three-years of U.S. Peace Corps service in the early 1970s. Her major publications about Korean shamans include *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (University of Hawaii Press, 1985), *The Life and Hard Times of a Korean Shaman: Of Tales and the Telling of Tales* (University of Hawaii Press, 1988), *Shamans, Nostalgias and the IMF: South Korean Popular Religion in Motion* (University of Hawaii Press, 2009) and in collaboration with Jongsung Yang and Yul Soo Yun, *God Pictures in Korean Contexts: The Ownership and Meaning of Shaman Paintings* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2015). With Diana Lee, she co-produced the video, "An Initiation Kut for a Korean Shaman" (distr. University of Hawaii Press).

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Reestablishing Ritual Relations with the Spirits of a New Land: The Iu-Mienh Refugee Outdoor Ceremony

JEFFERY L. MACDONALD IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE COMMUNITY ORG.

With over 15 million refugees in the world, this paper explores the ways in which refugee communities that are resettled in the U.S. reestablish religious traditions far from their original homelands. A distinction is made between cultures that practice a world religion and those that are animist or shamanic with an emphasis on the Iu-Mienh refugee community from highland Laos that lives in Portland, Oregon. This community's traditional shamans called spirit masters utilize trance, literacy and fluency in Chinese as a sacred language to communicate with the spirit world, and Taoist rituals to control ancestral, celestial, and terrestrial spirits who influence the health and well-being of the living. The paper explores how the spirit masters hold an annual outdoor ceremony to manage the spirits who affect the whole community and the types of spirits propitiated. Finally, the way in which the Iu-Mienh have created a portable religious and ritual system to assist them to resettle into new locations and its implications for refugees is explored.

With the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the modern era of political and religious refugees began. In the forty plus years since then ongoing wars and persecution on every inhabited continent has led to over 15 million refugees worldwide. Of these only a fraction of this wide variety of refugees have been legally accepted for resettlement in the United States and other countries. Among the many social, cultural, linguistic, and economic challenges these resettled refugees face in leaving family and homeland behind to create new lives for themselves, their children and grandchildren is the reestablishment of their own unique traditional spiritual and religious practices which are often dependent upon locating and recreating sacred places to worship and conduct rituals.

Such sacred places may be associated with specific natural sites that are felt to hold sacred power which for animist cultures might be a

genius loci, i.e., a protective spirit of a place, or a spiritus loci, i.e., a spiritual being indwelling a forest, river, spring, lake, a mountain, or cavern. There may be taboos associated with the site, or specific shamanic or religious rituals performed there to propitiate a spirit or seek advice from the gods or other spiritual beings. Modern new age parlance might ascribe spiritual energy to a location.

Often religious buildings or other ritual structures are built upon these natural sacred power sites. These might be in relationship to the sacred landscape as among the ancient Greek temples and Minoan palaces (Scully 1979) or they may be found to have celestial associations as with megalithic sites such as Stonehenge that archaeoastronomers (Hawkins 1965) claim are aligned to indicate astronomical events such as solstices and eclipses of the moon. In Asia, sacred power is typically conceptualized through such systems as feng shui in China, Korea, and Vietnam and *vaastu* in India, which guided the placement of temples, houses, and graves to be in consonance with terrestrial and celestial forces.

Recreating Spiritual Relationships and Sacred Places for Refugees

The ways in which displaced refugees like other types of migrants recreate spiritual relationships and identify sacred places in their new homeland is often contingent upon whether the refugee community practices one of the major religious traditions or is more animistic in belief or shamanic in practice. Typically, most newly arrived refugee groups begin by worshipping, praying, or holding rituals within their new living spaces in crowded apartments. After some years in their new homeland, most refugee groups who practice a world religion gain assistance from their new country's co-religionists to build, buy or rent a building for a church, temple, or mosque for communal religious purposes and the social organizing activities that such a space promotes.[1] However, refugee groups without major religious affiliations or supports, face much greater barriers to recreating sacred spaces and relationships with

[1] Yet in the U.S. these new sacred places seldom can be located at sacred sites because these sites are not known or even if identifiable are beyond the means of a community to acquire because of real estate values. Consequently, in the U.S. refugee sacred space is more tied to material rather than spiritual power.

the spirits of such places. This is particularly true for shamanic and animistic cultures that are separated from the sacred places and spirits of their homelands.

The Iu-Mienh[2] (commonly shortened to "Mien") refugee group from highland Laos, because of its long history of migration through East and Southeast Asia, lack of communal sacred buildings for rituals, animistic worldview, and practice of shamanism provides a unique example of the difficulties of recreating relationships with the spirits of sacred spaces in the U.S. Known as the Yao in Asia, they are one of the larger Asian migratory hilltribes whose domain stretches across the mountains from southern and eastern China to northern Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Like the better-known Hmong with whom they have historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, the Mien supported the U.S. during the Southeast Asian wars of the 1960s to 1970s. When the U.S. pulled out in 1975 and Laos fell to the communists thousands of Mien fled to Thai refugee camps, with the largest number resettled in the U.S. over the subsequent 15 years. The Portland community in the late 1980s consisted of about 1,500 Mien and has grown to only about 1,800 today.

This chapter is based upon ethnographic research with Mien shamans that I carried out largely from 1987 to 1993 with the Mien refugee community in Portland, Oregon with periodic ongoing research since then. I learned that the Mien were obsessed with spirits, whether ancestral, celestial, or terrestrial, and the effects of spirits on the living. Their traditional religion is a unique version of animism, shamanism, and ritual Taoism that they adopted in the fourteenth century CE as a means to organize and manage the spirits.[3] Relying upon literacy and fluency in a rare form of Chinese used as a sacred language (Purnell 1991), Mien ritual practitioners known as "spirit masters" (*sai diex*) perform shamanic roles as diviners and healers using trance and Chinese ritual

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[2] Most Iu-Mienh words in this chapter use the Unified Script Romanization system co-developed by the Iu-Mien in the U.S. and Yao or Mien scholars in China (see MacDonald 1997). Like Chinese, Mien is a tonal language and the Unified Script uses one of the following final consonants to denote specific tones: c, h, v, x, z, and one unmarked tone. Chinese words use the pinyin system which does not indicate tone. Wherever possible and appropriate I have inserted the traditional Chinese character used by the Mien for the term.

[3] Many Mien have converted to Christianity and more recently to Buddhism because they think these religions are superior to Taoism in controlling the spirits.

texts and letters to communicate with spirits, conduct rituals to harmonize the relations between the spirit or yin world (*yiem genv* 陰間) and the human or yang world (*yaangh genv* 阳間). The spirit world, which includes the spirits of ancestors, places, and animals as well as a celestial government filled with a variety of gods, sages, and spirit officials, is depicted upon sacred painted god scrolls (*mienv fangx*) (Lemoine 1982).

The spirit masters, in particular one with whom I have co-presented at conferences (see MacDonald and Saechao 1998, 2011), allowed me to conduct research once they learned that unlike most Caucasians they had met I was not interested in converting them to Christianity and burning their ancient sacred Chinese script books, god scrolls, and other ritual paraphernalia. With this acceptance, I began attending very complex Taoist ceremonies but not in Chinese style temples. Rather, as a migratory people, the Mien had developed a portable religion that could be practiced in their apartments or houses in social spaces that were converted from secular living to temporally delimited sacred spaces by hanging these god scrolls on the walls and calling the gods to embody the pictures for anywhere from a few hours to several days.

While these home-based rituals could easily be reestablished in Oregon to maintain harmonious relations with the spirits of ancestors, conduct various types of healing, divine illnesses or the identity of criminals, or enlist officials of the celestial government to help a family, how does a migratory group such as the Mien deal with a new continent's outdoor, terrestrial and celestial spirits that inhabit lakes, rivers, trees, sky, and mountains many of which seek to do harm to the living? Each time the Mien moved in the past they did so over the mountains of Southern China and Southeast Asia and at least many ecological aspects of the landscape and animals remained similar and familiar. For example, tigers as well as tiger spirits were found in their Asian homeland but not in North America. The migration out of Asia as refugees displaced the Mien and their shamans from their sacred places and ancestral burial locations in a far more radical, disconnecting way than their previous migrations. With the move to a new continent, with a new flora and fauna, unfamiliar landscapes, and moreover with the loss of their traditional agricultural lifeway to an urbanized, post-industrial lifestyle, how could the Mien refugees reestablish relationships with outdoor spirits totally unfamiliar to their experience in Asia? I soon learned that the Mien had a specific shamanic ritual adaptation for this that could provide a model for other displaced peoples refugees who find

themselves in refugee camps or resettled in new countries to which they have no spiritual connections. To provide a fuller understanding of this ritual adaptation the following sections describe this ceremony and the Mien spirits of place.

Outdoor Ceremony

In the spring of 1988, I was invited to the only Mien ceremony conducted solely outdoors called "Managing the Spirits of the Place or Country" (*Sipv Deic-Bung Mienv*).[4] This annual ceremony, practiced in Oregon and in other states propitiates the spirits of the area or place in which the Mien live and asks them to not bring disease or accidental deaths specifically to the Taoist practicing Mien families, but also extend the protection to anyone else living in Portland. The only ones specifically excluded by their own request are the Christian Mien. The ceremony, whose exact date is determined through divination, is done after the Lunar New Years, usually between March and May. In that first ceremony I attended and in the many I have attended since then, the group of spirit masters gather at one master's house at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning to collect the food and drink purchased with funds donated by each Taoist worshipping family as well as pots and pans for cooking, ceremonial materials, ritual books, and shamanic tools. Everyone enjoys cups of hot tea before leaving for what is often a cold, damp event. All who take part in the ceremony must stay the whole time, come and go as a group, and help with anything needed. No women are ever allowed to come to this ceremony because of a strict dichotomy of social space into *yin* (*yiem* in Mien) and *yang* (*yaangh* in Mien), female and male, spirit and human, civilized and wild worlds. Only men interact with the spirits; this is especially so for the outdoor, country spirits (Hubert 1985, 43–51, 225–30).

By 8:45 a.m. the cars and trucks are loaded, and the caravan proceeds to an extinct volcano known as Mt. Tabor situated in an east Portland

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[4] The close relationship between the spirit and human worlds is reflected linguistically in the word *mien* which with the "v" tone (*mienv*) means spirit while mien with the "h" tone (*mienh*) means people.

city park. Named for the sacred Biblical Mt. Tabor[5] which it allegedly resembles, in an odd coincidence of eastern and western symbolism, the Mien selected it as a place full of sacred power for their outdoor ceremony. However, the Taoist spirit masters neither knew this Judeo-Christian association nor the fact that Portland's Mt. Tabor (unlike its namesake) was an extinct volcano until I told them. Rather, they had chosen it because they determined that Mt. Tabor has dragon earth veins (*luangh*[6]) that like their Chinese feng shui counterparts carry *qi* (氣 or *qiex* in Mien) energy. The Mien see the *luangh* as shaped like a long dragon's body coming down the hill and that finding a good *luangh* for a burial is essential to ensuring that the deceased's children will be rich, healthy, and prosperous. The spirit masters conduct the outdoor ceremony on Mt. Tabor's most spiritually rich main vein which runs through the volcano's crater.

Each year the group parks beside the crater and carries the supplies, charcoal grills, food and ritual paraphernalia to a picnic shelter next to an ancient Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) that grows on this *luangh* (Saechao 1988a). The spirit masters then begin to transform the tree and the surroundings into a sacred space for the duration of the ceremony. While one group begins to build altars on the ground around the tree, others set up the cooking area, table, and in recent years encircle the space with yellow hazard tape to keep out curious Portlanders on their morning walks, jogs and cycles. While the set-up is occurring, the head spirit masters review a list of Chinese character names of the heads of each spirit worshipping Taoist family in Portland. Each name is read during the ceremony to offer them protection. The spirit masters go over the list to remove any names of families which have moved away or converted to Christianity. They also prepare the written texts from which they chant and any Chinese character letters to be sent by burning to the spirit world. Another group makes the spirit money from paper towels and folds up gold and silver paper to make ingots. At the end of the ceremony the spirit masters burn the money and ingots to transfer this wealth to the spirit world to pay the spirits for their cooperation.

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[5] Location of the transfiguration of Christ.

[6] In Mien, "vein" is *luangz*, a different tonal pronunciation from *luangh* meaning "dragon."

Fig. 1. Spirit Altar at Base of Tree. Photo: Jeffery L. MacDonald, 2009.

The spirit masters set up between six and twelve altars around the roots at the base of the tree. The exact number is determined by divination of which spirits have caused illness or problems during the previous year. The altars are constructed by placing sacrificed and plucked chickens on paper, one to two per altar, with their heads pointing towards the tree (Fig. 1). Then come the tea cups for the alcohol offerings. Each altar includes a piece of wood with two or three small red candles and bunches of incense sticks that remain lit until the ceremony's end. A large supply of paper spirit money and spirit gold and silver paper ingots is placed at each altar. On years in which the help of the Jade Emperor (a major Mien as well as Chinese deity) is enlisted, letters or memorials in yellow and red envelopes addressed to him are included on his altar (see below). Finally, a small wicker bamboo stool is placed in front of each altar for the priests to sit on while chanting.

Each spirit master has his divination blocks (*jaaux* 珓) made of two six-inch long tapered pieces of ox horn or tree root, sawn down the middle such that one side is flat and the other is half round. Dedicated (appropriately for the outdoor ceremony) to the God of the Earth, the Mien spirit master throws this essential shamanic divination tool (also used by Chinese and other Asian shamans—see Ahern 1981) on the

ground to determine the will of the spirits. They can land in three ways from single throws that encode three possible messages: (1) both flat sides up meaning "yes"; (2) one up and one down, meaning "somewhat, maybe or possibly"; and (3) both flat sides down, meaning "no." Each spirit master also has his *gimx* or spirit knife made of iron with a short unsharpened, pointed blade and a handle with a wire holding several iron washers shaped like ancient Chinese coins (i.e., round with a square hole in the center). When the knife is shaken, the coins create frightening sparks that are only visible to the spirits.

After all the arrangements are made, the spirit masters take their places and begin chanting from sacred Chinese character texts prepared by the head spirit master for the ceremony (Fig. 2). Each text and its accompanying ritual is different for each of the different classes of spirits represented by each altar. Rites at each altar require their own spirit master and involve different types of transactions between the humans and the spirits. For example, destructive spirits are asked to stay away while protective ones are asked for help. The spirit masters must learn the stories from their ritual books and only change names, place, year, date, etc. in the ritual. For example, to ensure that the spirits know that the Mien are in Portland they say "we are living in Portland."

During part of the ceremony, spirit masters utilize Taoist mudras or ritual hand movements, similar to those used at Mien funerals. For example, one mudra involves both hands slightly cupped and turned upwards with one hand on top of the other and then switched back and forth while chanting. In another, the shaman's holds his hands in a similar way but rotates one around the other continuously for several spins. Each spirit master uses the divination blocks (*jaaux*) throughout the ritual to determine if the spirits are content with the ceremony to that point or need additional payment with spirit money. Each also offers homemade "white lightning" alcohol into the cups. Towards the end, each spirit master chants while using the spirit knife (*gimx*) to stab in the air to scare the evil spirits away. Each spirit master prepares a piece of paper money with Chinese character messages which form an agreement with the spirits to make bad things go away. As the ceremony proceeds, each is slowly rolled up into a ball. At the conclusion, these messages are passed between each person at the ceremony who holds them in turn before they are tossed away onto the lawn accompanied by stabs of the spirit knife. This underscores that all who take part in the ceremony have a communal responsibility in its successful out-

Fig. 2. Mien Shamans Chanting at the Tree Altars.
Photo: Jeffery L. MacDonald, 2011.

come. Finally, each spirit master counts out the spirit money required and confirmed by the spirits through divination for final payments for maintaining health, harmony, and good fortune for the next year.

After each spirit master finishes his ceremony at his assigned altar, other participants pick up the chicken sacrifices and take them to a picnic table where they are chopped up for cooking. They also collect the tea cups filled with alcohol as well as the paper money, candles, and remaining incense and transmit them to the spirit world by burning. After the chicken is cooked, the group sits down for the concluding feast with final toasts made to the spirits and to the spirit masters. Everything must be consumed including the beer and alcohol used as offerings. Anything which is not consumed is discarded into trash bins. After everything is thrown away the group leaves and returns to their original rendezvous point to converse, tell jokes, and drink more tea. Like the discarded spirit messages, no food or drink can be brought back because the outdoor spirits might follow them home where they could mix with the indoor and ancestral spirits and cause illness or bad fortune. Although no spirit master or participant at the ceremony is required to be paid for their services, often there is some money left over from the amount each Taoist family donates to pay for the ceremony.

Before the group disperses, these remaining funds are divided to pay each person a token for their participation.

Spirits of the Country

The Spirits of the Country (*Deic-Bung Mienv*), for whom this elaborate ceremony is conducted, are a small cross-section of the outdoor spirits who reside in the elaborate Mien spirit world whose hierarchical government is patterned on the human world's Chinese imperial system (Lemoine 1982). While some outdoor spirits are tied to other aspects of Mien myth and ritual and others appear mostly in the Outdoor Ceremony, they give a view into the Mien cosmos and Taoist religious rituals. The most common outdoor spirits for whom altars are erected divide into two classes: protective and destructive. Some years the spirit masters may call on up to twelve spirits, some of which are seldom propitiated because they are no longer relevant to Mien refugees living in urban settings. For example, when they lived in Laos and had to hunt to survive, they called on the hunting and forest spirits to help people get food. Another class of spirits were those called to "open up the forest" when a community had newly settled in an unknown forest. This ceremony released the spirits to help govern the new settlement, keep out rats and bad insects, and encourage crop growth.

Protective Spirits

A number of protective spirits directly tied to heaven and earth are typically propitiated at the Outdoor Ceremony. Corresponding to the importance of locating the ceremony on a *luangh* line of energy, the Mien assign a class of spirits known as Dragon Spirits (*Luangh Mienv*) to the line of energy. As local spirits, the shamans invoke them to improve life in the city and its environs. The spirit master at the dragon altar always faces away from the tree towards the top of the Mt. Tabor during most of the chanting, because the dragon and its qi energy comes down from the mountain top (Saechao 1988a). The Mien like the Chinese regard the dragon as a symbol of good luck, strength, and male power that only male spirit masters can invoke to protect the community.

A second altar is dedicated to the next most important group of spirits known as the Owner Spirits (*Ziouv Mienv*) who are the original, owners or pioneer founding father spirits of the land in which the Mien live. As a migratory people, the Mien typically establish the identities of these spirits when they move to a new place—a relatively routine spiritual historical activity in Southeast Asia and China where they have lived for millennia. In the U.S., they had to use their understanding of history to identify and honor three major owner spirits: an unnamed "Indian chief," Christopher Columbus, and George Washington. The spirit master priest calls on these spirits who "governed" America in succession, because even if, like Native Americans, they have died and lost political power, they still have spirit power and spirit armies under their control that must be called for permission and protection to live on the land.

A third altar honors the powerful Five Banner Spirit (*M'geh Mienv*), a Taoist spirit official. He dispatches the "five banner spirit armies" who as celestial beings transcend Asian geography, but not the location of the Mien themselves because the spirit armies are closely tied to the life and well-being of each family and to the village, particularly if there have been community conflicts or difficult lawsuits. Within the family, following Mien Taoism tradition, each male beginning at least from age twelve normally undergoes the first level of initiation as a spirit master. Known as "hanging the lamps," (*guaax daang*) this initiation confers spirit soldiers (*baeng*) upon him and once married, also to his wife, which protect his family and bring them prosperity throughout their life. If a man wishes to pursue a career as a spirit master, he will undergo additional higher levels of initiation which bring him and his wife more spirit soldiers (Lemoine 1982). Sometimes the spirit soldiers desert a family, and the shamans must call them during a special trance ritual (known as *Siou* or *Zaix Baeng*) held at the lunar New Years. The spirit armies are ultimately under the control of the Three Pure Ones (*Faam Cing* 三清) to whom the Five Banner Official reports in Heaven. Depicted on the painted god scrolls, this trinity heads the Mien (as well as Chinese) Taoist spirit government. In Mien myth, the Three Pure Ones directed the spirit armies to battle evil tree spirits (see below).

Every few years when the community has suffered many deaths or other misfortunes, the Mien conduct a larger outdoor ceremony that invokes the Jade Emperor (*Nyutc Daaix Hungh* 玉帝皇), one of the principal deities of Mien and Chinese Taoism (Fig. 3) to take control of the evil spirits. Calling heaven (*heuc lungh*) to bring the poweful and

Fig. 3. Spirit Painting of the Jade Emperor. Photo: Jeffery L. MacDonald, 1991.

important Jade Emperor to earth takes special precautions such as placing his altar away from the tree and altars of the lesser spirits around it as well as sacrificing a pig instead of chickens. The spirit master must dress in full shamanic ceremonial robes and buffalo (the Jade Emperor's sacred animal) hair hat to blow a buffalo horn to call him to earth. Since the Jade Emperor is a celestial deity, the spirit master must always be raised above the earth by standing on a board when calling or address-

ing him (Fig. 4). Finally, the spirit master thrusts his shamanic wooden staff (*cing-guonx*) into the ground to call the lesser spirits to attention.

Destructive Spirits

Besides calling on protective spirits to help, the spirit masters set up altars to request that the destructive spirits that cause disease, violence, and soul loss refrain from harming the community. Among the most troublesome are the Snaring Spirits (*Gaau Mienv*) who are the spirits of persons who have died but still haunt the living because their souls were not transferred properly to the spirit world. The Southeast Asian wars resulted in many such situations where individuals died without their family able to conduct the funeral ceremonies necessary to guide the deceased safely through the afterlife. Unlike an ancestral spirit that is holy and pure through ancestral worship and takes care of the living, the snaring spirit bothers the living causing accidents, sickness and bad luck. They do not remain in Asia either; like the living they too are displaced refugees who follow their living family members to the New World. These spirits are also employed by the Ten Judges of the Dead (*Ziepc Dinc Lengh Hungh*, 十殿靈皇), a branch of the Mien spirit government that decides the fate of the deceased, to abduct the soul of a living person to have it testify before them when judging a recently deceased soul. These abductions typically lead to illness and death without the ritual intervention of a spirit master to free the soul from the spirit jail.

Other than dealing with these celestial snaring spirits, the spirit masters must also control various terrestrial spirits that can cause disease and death anywhere in the world. For example, the spirit masters always set up another altar to control the very strong Tree Spirits (*Yunh Fiu Mienv*) who also inhabit small ponds and lakes. If not regularly propitiated, they bring diseases such as malaria that can kill a whole village. They are said to be particularly attracted to abducting the souls of smart, beautiful girls (Daang 1987). According to Mien myth, a long time ago the world was so backward that the tree spirits could transform themselves into humans and come to human ceremonies. The Three Pure Ones conducted epic battles against them and eventually vanquished them with their more powerful magic which they gained by going through spiritual initiation to gain spirit soldiers. This

Fig. 4. Invoking the Jade Emperor. Photo: Sengfo Chao, 1987.

original initiation became the model for Mien spiritual initiation still practiced today (described above). These initiatory rituals also convey upon spirit masters the knowledge of magical ceremonies to keep the tree spirits from coming into the group (Daang 1987). In the forest covered mountains of Oregon, it is particularly important to control these spirits. Indicative of their significance, the whole outdoor ceremony is conducted around an ancient Douglas fir.

In Asia, however, the tree spirits are mostly associated with banyan trees, whose multiple trunks resemble separate beings and which like a Douglas fir can grow to great age. Banyans are sacred in many Asian cultures where they can be associated with good and bad spirits. The Buddha is believed to have achieved enlightenment while meditating under a banyan known as the Bodhi Tree. Somewhat between good and evil are the Okinawan *kijimuna*, which look like a short young boy with bright red hair who lives in the tops of Okinawa's banyan trees and are known for playing harmless pranks (Corrao 2016). Probably the closest to Mien belief are the *asuang*, malevolent spirits, which the Mandaya of the Philippines believe inhabit the banyans and must be avoided (Yengovan 2004, 258).

Some years when Mien families have suffered certain types of disease or deaths, the spirit masters set up altars for specific types of spirits. When the community has had bouts of contagious illnesses, the spirit masters ward off the Contagious Disease Spirits (*Wuon-Mienv*) before their own altar (Purnell 2012, 725). Often this altar is specific to common seasonal communicable diseases such as cold or flu (*Haa Wuon-Mienv*) and are propitiated each year. Another class of dangerous spirits that the spirit masters set up an altar each year to control are the Violent Spirits (*Cung Mienv*) who cause violent, accidental deaths and injuries of various specific types such as "all over body pain, urinary bleeding (i.e., gonnorhea)," "rifle shot," "tree fall," "drowning," "diarrhea," etc. These spirits are propitiated if the Mien have experienced a number of deaths in the previous year from one of these causes, such as in 1990 when there were several drownings. They also appear during one part of the funeral ceremony, when the spirit masters beat tiny manikins representing these spirits to keep them from causing further harm to the family of the deceased (Saechao 1988a).

Conclusion

As can be seen from the above description, the Mien outdoor ceremony engages a variety of spirits some of whom have Chinese or other Asian analogs yet are uniquely Mien in function and worldview. The outdoor ceremony in many ways represents a unique adaptation for the migratory Mien who have moved across southern China and Southeast Asia for

over a thousand years because of population pressures and war with the Chinese Han and other hilltribes. Part of their migratory genius has been to create a portable religion and identity using sacred texts and painted god scrolls which could easily be carried with them. Indeed, Mien rituals can also be seen as another manifestation of shamanism itself as a portable adaptation to maintaining and reestablishing connections to the spirit world for migratory peoples with an animist worldview. Wherever they established new villages in the highlands, they never had to create temples to house their gods. Rather the gods themselves were portable because they could be embodied in the painted scrolls while the Mien spirit masters could easily transform the secular space of their homes into temporary sacred spaces for a variety of Taoist rituals.

The outdoor ceremony is a manifestation of this portability because it allows the Mien to establish contact with and permission of the spirits of their new location to live and prosper in their new homes. In this, some of the spirits they invoke are similar to genius loci, or spiritus loci. Yet the outdoor spirits are more than just geographically limited, since they can transcend the continents. The Mien may not know the specifics of the New World spirits, but they recognize classes of spirits that exist everywhere and are tied to their own cosmology. This portability also lends itself well to changing lifeways wherever the Mien live. In the U.S. for example, the spirits invoked in the outdoor ceremony reflect the current socio-economic situation of the Mien refugees who have been largely resettled in urban areas where they work in non-agricultural jobs. Consequently, spirits who regulate agricultural harvests are seldom invoked in the U.S. since so few Mien make their living as farmers.

In the U.S., the traditional Taoist Mien have continued this portable, adaptive model of religion and ritual wherever they have established new homes up and down the west coast of North America. The annual nature of the ceremony reestablishes and just as importantly realigns this relationship between Mien families and communities and the land based upon the previous year's level of prosperity, health, and fortune. It also helps restore balance between the living as well as the good and evil spirits who transcend space and time, but who are nevertheless tied to where families live. The ceremony also gives us a glimpse into Mien belief about disease etiology, transmission, and classification. While they recognize many diseases as contagious just as in the West, they do not trace the cause of disease to germs but to spirits, both of which are invisible to the naked eye, yet wreak havoc on humans. Likewise, the

Mien ascribe violent and even accidental deaths to evil spirits that transcend location and moreover provide a cause to what would Westerners might consider to be caused by random, coincidental acts of violence, bad luck, or infection. With the escalating levels of violence in the world today, the Mien emphasis on lowering violence by propitiating these evil spirits is well placed.

The Mien are careful to find just the right and most powerful place for their ceremony and to acknowledge and honor the spirits already resident in their new homeland. The choice of an ancient Douglas fir tree around which to hold the outdoor ceremony presents perhaps another tantalizing clue about Mien religion, particularly when coupled with their belief in and engagement with tree spirits in the outdoor ceremony. Tree worship and belief in spirits residing in trees is ancient and widespread among Asian cultures (compare Frazier 1922). Furthermore, this ancient tree on Mt. Tabor can be seen to be a symbol of the tree of life that connects the earth and heaven. Through the outdoor ceremony, the Mien as perpetual migrants, have learned how to find harmony with the spirits of the land wherever they reside. Moreover, they have generously extended the spiritual benefits they accrue to everyone in Portland and Oregon. In so doing, the Mien like resettled refugees everywhere enrich the society in their new homeland in new and unexpected ways.

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Jeffery L. MACDONALD, Ph.D., is a cultural anthropologist who conducted field research with the Iu-Mienh refugee community in Portland, Oregon form 1985 to 1993 and still is researching traditional books and literacy. He is Associate Director of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) where he directed development for twenty years and currently administers internal operations. He regularly presents papers and publishes on the Iu-Mienh community and refugee issues in applied anthropology. His first book on the Iu-Mienh is *Transnational Aspects of Iu-Mien Refugee Identity* (1997). He is currently completing a second book on Iu-Mienh traditional religion and ritual.

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The *Kirantization* of Shamanism: Cultural Exchange, Identity and Memory in the Shamanisms of East Nepal

RAPHAEL MOUSA HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

The Kiranti are the indigenous people of the hills of East Nepal. About two hundred years ago immigration from central and western Nepal into the area started. Nowadays the region is multiethnic, the Kiranti and their oral shamanic tradition are subject to Hinduization *and* Nepalization. *But a reverse cultural exchange happens as well, as Hindu shamans are heavily influenced by Kiranti traditions. In contemporary Nepal shamanisms become important symbols for the representation of ethnic identities, often opposed to Hinduism and Buddhism. Shamanism is a domain of cultural exchange, influenced by power relations, on the one hand and of cultural distinction, discrimination and identity-building on the other. Performances reflect these processes: in rituals, shamans get possessed by spirits and conduct soul journeys through the material environment. The expressed relations to landscape and its invisible inhabitants reveal important information about cultural conceptions. This article explores the factors of cultural exchange, memory and identity in the shamanisms of the northeastern Khotang district of East Nepal. The focus is on the process of* Kirantization *of local shamans belonging to Non-Kiranti groups who get possessed by spirits of Kiranti origin and hence use Kiranti language, paraphernalia and practices in their rituals.*

Shamanic traditions constitute stages for various processes of cultural memory, identity and exchange. Shamans transmit and enact the mythology and history of their people and become central symbols for the representation of ethnic minorities. The oral character of shamanism makes it a flexible and dynamic tradition that adjusts to the presence and is fundamentally influenced by its surroundings; shaped by syncretism, coexistence, conflict or competition with other cultural forces.

In Nepal, shamanism continues to be a widespread phenomenon, particularly in the rural hills of East Nepal. The indigenous peoples of this part of the country are collectively known as Kiranti. They speak

Tibeto-Burmese languages and their settlement area extends beyond the border to Northeast India. The Kiranti in Nepal include the Limbu, living in the far East, and more than 25 ethnic groups entitled by the ethnonym Rai who are scattered in the hills of mid-eastern Nepal. These groups are connected by a common sense of identity and descent and clear cultural and linguistic resemblances. Most Kiranti follow an ancient oral tradition, often called *muddum* or *mundhum*. Due to the geographic conditions, the different subgroups live quite separately, many having their own language. Hence, also details of these oral traditions differ in their characteristics. Contact between the Kiranti and Hindus started at least 500 years ago. Since East Nepal was integrated into the Gorkha kingdom in 1774 systematic immigration from Central and West Nepal was fostered. The autonomy of the Kiranti decreased and the processes of *Hinduization* and *Nepalization* began.

When I visited the northeastern Khotang district of East Nepal to conduct ethnographic field research among the Dumi Rai in 2012 and among the Nachhiring Rai in 2015 and 2016, I found these Kiranti groups living mostly in multiethnic villages, together with many ethnic groups and Hindu castes that migrated to the area over the last generations. Even though clear cultural differences and identities exist, borders are not always fixed and relationships and cultural exchanges between the groups fluctuate. Among other cultural contexts this can be seen in the domain of shamanism, or better in the plural, shamanisms, as all those ethnic groups have their own shamans. Hence, different shamanic traditions coexist in a small space, being in exchange and interaction, even though they form markers of ethnic identity.

In Khotang, I observed and documented about eighteen big nocturnal rituals (*cinta*) performed by shamans of various ethnic backgrounds, and interviewed them and their clients. Comparing and analyzing these rituals I noticed that differences between shamanic rituals in different parts of Nepal are much more salient than differences between rituals of shamans of different ethnic groups within Khotang. The local culture of the area seems to shape the shamanism more than the ethnic culture. Many Non-Kiranti shamans in Khotang use Kiranti paraphernalia and language in their performances. These shamans explained that their main guiding spirits (*guru deuta*), who possess and guide them in their rituals, are of Rai origin, hence these Kiranti elements. This seems indeed to be a common phenomenon in the area. That shamans who are members of immigrated groups, including high-caste Hindus, are

possessed by Rai spirits and perform rituals, using Kiranti language, ritual texts, rules and paraphernalia, constitutes what I argue to be the *Kirantization* of shamanism in northeastern Khotang. A remarkable process, especially in light of the *Hinduization* of the Kiranti and the cultural, political and economical dominance of the hill Hindus in past and present. In my research this was a striking characteristic of the local shamanisms that drew my attention alongside my actual research foci, which were the shamanic healing ritual, initiation and possession among the Dumi and Nachhiring Rai.

The cultures of the Kiranti have gained some anthropological attention, but many groups have not been researched yet. There are some brilliant works examining Kiranti mythology and ritual texts (Allen 1976b; Gaenszle 2007), psychological concepts (Hardman 2000, 2004), identity and kinship (Gaenszle 1991), landscape conceptions (Nicoletti 2006), shamanism (Nicoletti 2004; Sagant 1996) and new religious movements (Stockhausen and Wettstein 2013). Even though the common aim tends to be a focus on distinct elements of Kiranti culture, some authors deal with the relationships of Kiranti with their neighboring groups, framing analyses in a historical perspective and focusing particularly on processes as *Hinduization*, political change and economical interdependence (Allen 1997; Caplan 1970; Sagant 1996). But only few hints towards a *Kirantization* can be found in literature. Linguist Driem (1993, 28) notes that some Hindus, living among the Dumi Rai, follow the Kiranti prohibition to eat goat meat, out of fear of the spirits belonging to Kiranti land. Also Hardman (2004, 332) mentions the great fear that high-caste Hindus have for the Lohorung Rai ancestors. In my experience only the Non-Kiranti shamans would not eat goat meat, solely due to their possession by a Rai spirit that presupposes the further use of Kiranti language, paraphernalia and practices in shamanic rituals. Further, many Non-Kiranti households in the area perform annual rituals for house-deities that are perceived to be of Rai origin.

Before going into the details of the *Kirantization* of shamanism I will elaborate briefly on the background and context of this process. Starting with an account of the history of East Nepal, particularly the *Hinduization* of the Kiranti, I go on to explore the connections of shamanism and ethnic identity in Nepal. Next, the cultural context and ethnic composition of the northeastern Khotang district is examined. With this, the basis is laid for a further investigation of the *Kirantization* of shamanism in Khotang.

History of East Nepal

There are almost no written sources on the history of the hills of East Nepal prior to the eighteenth century. The myths of the Kiranti people talk about the migration of their god-like ancestors from the southern plains of Nepal up to the hills in ancient times. There, the ancestors dispersed, due to their lifestyle as nomadic hunters, founding the different sub-groups of the Kiranti. Limbuhang, the forefather of the Limbu people moved to the far east of Nepal and his brother Khambuhang, the forefather of many Rai groups, moved to the middle-eastern hills. One of Khambuhang's descendants is Nasru, father of the Nachhiring Rai. Nasru's five sons spread around the Lidinkhola river and founded the villages that are still inhabited by the Nachhiring, who, like most Kiranti, are able to trace their genealogy back to these mythical ancestors.

The existence of martial tribes of the Eastern Himalaya, called Kirata, was already mentioned in the Vedas, but the connection to the contemporary Kiranti is not clear. The proven history of the area starts only with the Rajput Sen-Dynasty, who ruled the plains and lower hills of East Nepal by the sixteenth century. The Kiranti in the hills, separated from the plains by the thick forest of the Terai, that was contaminated with malaria, could keep great extents of their independence and autonomy and there was only little influence of the Rajput on them. Though contact to Hinduism and some immigration of Hindus into the Kiranti land started probably around this time. The situation changed in 1774, when the Gorkhali subdued the entire east of Nepal. Like the Sen-Rajas before, the Gorkhali initially conceded much autonomy to the Kiranti. Traditional political structures and the communal land tenure (*kipat*) were maintained. In some places this continued into the early twentieth century.

However, since the Kiranti land was part of the Gorkha kingdom, immigration, especially of Hindus from central Nepal, was systematically fostered. This happened without conflicts, as enough land was available, and many Kiranti were happy about the new skills and products the immigrants brought. But throughout time, more and more of the Kiranti land was controlled by high-caste Hindus. They started to form a local elite that was integrated in the administrative state mechanism and the autonomy of the Kiranti decreased. With their Hindu polity, centered in Kathmandu, the hill Hindus succeeded to dominate politically and culturally over many ethnic groups and parts of Nepal (Gellner 1997, 4f.). Processes of *Hinduization* and *Nepalization* began and in 1909, Nepal was

declared a Hindu nation-state. For a more elaborate account of the history of East Nepal the reader should consult Allen (1976b, 5ff.), Caplan (1970), Gaenszle (1991, 52ff.) and Sagant (1996, 119ff.).

Hinduization *of the Kiranti*

The Kiranti have their own ancient religion, which is strongly influenced by shamanic elements. It is based on an orally transmitted text, called *muddum* among the Nachhiring, describing the ancestral way of living, consisting mainly of myths and ritual prescriptions. The Kiranti particularly worship their collective and family ancestors, the Earth and various local gods. After contact with Hinduism many Hindu deities, particularly Shiva, were integrated into the Kiranti pantheon. Some Hindu holidays are celebrated nowadays and Hindu symbolism is widespread. Examples of the latter include the use of the *thrishul* (the trident of *Shiva*) (Fig. 1, Pl. 1 *a*), *rudraksha* seeds and cow dung in every shamanic healing ritual. Generally, the shamanic practices of the Kiranti resemble, and are under strong influence of, the Pan-Nepali "Hindu-Shamanic" figure of the *jhankri* (Allen 1976a; Gaenszle 2007, 39). Hindu concepts of purity found their way into the customs of the Kiranti, such as the prohibition to kill cows, that is enforced by law.

As Allen (1997) elaborates, the most important part of the *Hinduization* is the integration of the Kiranti into the caste system. On the one hand, this was fostered by the *muluki ain*, the Nepali criminal code of 1854, that ranked all ethnic groups of Nepal in a pure–impure hierarchy. There, the Tibeto-Burmese people stand between Chettri (second-highest) and *dalit* (lowest). On the other hand, living together with high- and low-caste Hindus integrated Non-Hindus automatically into the caste system. In this situation they had to decide if they wanted to uphold Hindu rules of purity, such as avoiding certain contacts to low-caste *dalit*, or to become ritually impure altogether and of low-caste themselves, something that was normally avoided.

In contrast to Hinduism, Buddhism seems to have almost no influence on Rai culture, at least in northeastern Khotang, even though many of the local Non-Kiranti groups, like the Tamang and Gurung, are Buddhists. But Christianity and new religious movements increasingly gain ground among the Rai in recent times (Stockhausen and Wettstein 2013). *Nepalization*,

in terms of language, progresses mainly due to education and the media. Nowadays most of the people of northeastern Khotang speak Nepali as first language. The Dumi and Nachhiring languages are spoken almost only by the elders and in ritual contexts. This fact threatens the continuity of the oral tradition that is only transmitted in Kiranti languages.

The Rai of northeastern Khotang commonly use certain services of Brahmin priests, especially for name-giving ceremonies, the worship of Hindu deities and astrological calculations. But the *Hinduization* is limited: in contrast to many other Tibeto-Burmese groups of the area, most Rai approach their own shamanic ritual experts for almost all rituals of the life cycle and the circle of the year. For example, funerals, marriages, harvest- and other seasonal rituals are performed by the Kiranti shamans, not by Hindu Brahmins or Buddhist *Lama*s. These shamans are nowadays, also on a political level, central symbols in the representation of a distinct Kiranti identity, as opposed to the dominant Hindu majority.

Shamanism and Ethnic Identity

Shamanism as a symbol for a distinct Non-Hindu identity plays a crucial role not only among the Kiranti, but also many other Tibeto-Burmese hill peoples of Nepal. This is indicative on a small scale, the village level: attending shamanic rituals and calling shamans for rituals such as the cleansing of houses and healing purposes can be seen as a statement of the household for the traditions of their people. Shamanic rituals provide fruitful opportunities to discuss these distinct traditions of different groups that might come together, showing hospitality to each other. On a larger scale, the shaman as a representative of ethnic identity plays a role in a political context. Especially since Nepal is not a Hindu kingdom anymore (since 2008), ethnic identity is a central topic in political discussions, e.g. concerning the restructuring of the country. This seems to continue after Nepal eventually established a new constitution in September 2015. In the last two decades different ethnic groups started to build representative committees and organizations that act on cultural and political levels. For the Kiranti, the *Kirat Rai Yayokkha*, located in the Kathmandu valley, is such an organization. It works for the conservation and representation of Kiranti cultures and languages. In this context shamanism is used as a tool, e.g. for the ritual

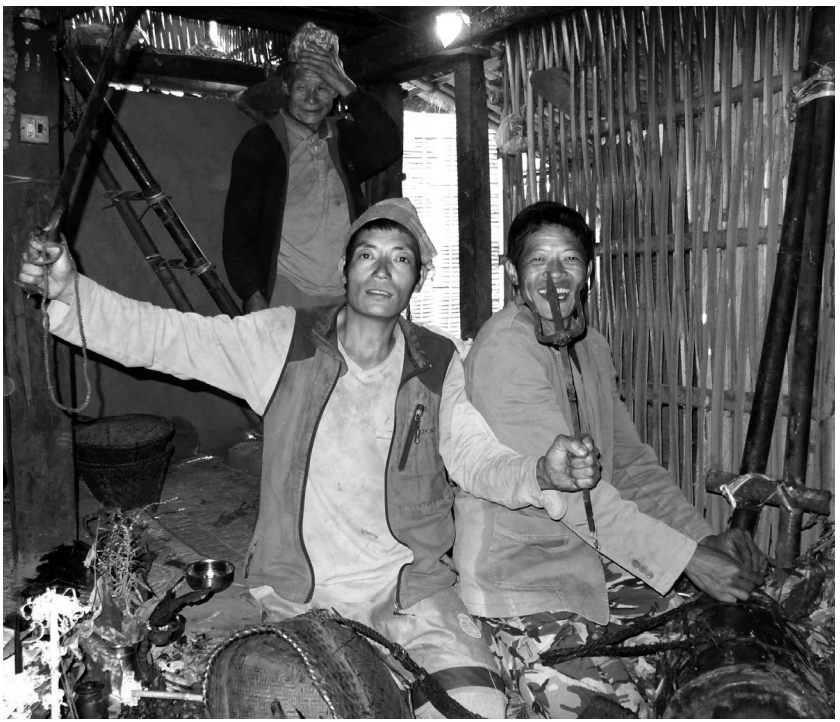

Fig. 1. Rai shaman's assistant, holding the *thrishul* of Shiva in his left hand and the sword of a Kiranti ancestor-god in the right, Wadasku, Khotang. Photo: Raphael Mousa, 2015.

creation of new official sacred sites of the Kiranti (Stockhausen and Wettstein 2003, 117f.). The *Yayokkha* also provides shamanic services to Kiranti living in the Kathmandu valley.

A broader ethnic umbrella organization is the "Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities" (NEFIN) that was founded in 1990 by representatives of 21 ethnic minorities of Nepal. By now, at least 54 groups have joined the NEFIN. They define themselves as indigenous, egalitarian people with animistic religions and emphasize Anti-Hindu or Anti-Brahmin elements (Gellner 1997, 8f.). Pettigrew (2002) elaborates on the importance of the shamanic version of ethnic history for the identity of the Tamu people of West Nepal. They are represented by the *Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh* (TPLS), a cultural organization that organizes a trek following the route of shamanic soul journeys, aiming to prove this to be

the actual migration route of the Tamu ancestors. These are only a few examples on the entanglement between shamanism and ethnic identity in contemporary Nepal.

The affiliation to a certain land plays a central role in the shamanisms of Nepal. One distinct feature of Nepali shamans is that their transcendent soul journeys do not lead them mainly to mythical worlds apart from ours. Instead, they are mostly earth-bound, leading through the material landscape, the hills, mountains and plains of Nepal. These journeys often follow the migration trails of the mythical ancestors. In such a soul journey, the landscape is charged with symbolic significance. The cultural memory of the people is intertwined with the contemporary landscape, religious symbolism and the aims of the certain ritual (cf. Pettigrew 2002; Desjarlais 1989). Also the Rai shamans of Khotang travel the migration route of their ancestors, telling their stories simultaneously, while resting at certain sacred places to worship gods or spirits. Their journeys mainly cover the area that is connected to Kiranti identity, while such routes differ based on ethnic identity. For example Hindu shamans of the area often travel down to the Ganga, to Benares and as far as the Bay of Bengal. This exemplifies how such soul journeys can be primary sources for the analysis of cultural identity and memory (cf. Oppitz 1999, 167f.).

Peoples of Khotang

In 2012, 2015 and 2016 I have conducted ethnographic field research in the northeastern Khotang district of East Nepal, in the settlement areas of the Dumi Rai and of the Nachhiring Rai. I conducted most of my data in relatively big villages, consisting of about 500 houses. There, the Rai live among many other ethnic groups and constitute hardly more than half of the population. Non-Kiranti groups of the region include Indo-Aryan high-caste Hindus (Chettri and Brahmin) and low-caste *dalit*, as well as many Tibeto-Burmese peoples like Newar, Tamang, Gurung, Sherpa and Magar. Marriage occurs between the different Tibeto-Burmese people and the Chettri. Only Brahmin and *dalit* marry usually only inside their own castes. Friendship is common between all groups and caste-boundaries tend to be less strict than in many rural plain areas of Nepal and India. Nevertheless, the composition of houses is roughly

structured by ethnic groups and there is generally a strong feeling of "togetherness" among people of the same ethnic group on various levels.

That the Rai are the indigenous people of the area is common sense among most contemporary inhabitants. The landscape is clearly shaped by their sacred sites, often huge trees with shrines, and their festivities are the biggest events in the villages. I heard people saying the Rai would often be arrogant due to their supposed indigeneity. That the Hindus invaded the land is indeed a common topic in chats between Rai as well as between Rai and Hindus. Anyway, there is no antagonism between them and these topics are often discussed half-jokingly.

All of the ethnic groups of northeastern Khotang have their own shamans. Even high-caste Hindus, which is generally rare in Nepal. Shamanic rituals are public events that can attract visitors of various ethnic backgrounds. Sometimes a person might also decide to consult a shaman of a different group for his problems. A few shamans even told me that their human *guru*, who ritually initiated them over years, was of different ethnicity than they are. These facts presuppose an intense cultural exchange between the shamanisms of the different ethnic groups in the area.

Kirantization *of Shamanism*

Shamans, *jhankri* in Nepali, can be found throughout Nepal and there are many elements that most of them have in common. And there are some elements that distinguish Kiranti shamanism. These include the use of certain paraphernalia in rituals, particularly a certain type of drum. Pan-Nepali *jhankri* mostly use the *dhyangro*, a frame drum with two membranes that is played by the shaman with one stick. The Kiranti shamans of northeastern Khotang, in contrast, mainly use the *dhol*, a tubular drum with two membranes that is played by two drummers, one on each side, with two sticks each (cf. Allen 1976a) (Figs. 2, 3). It was already in the beginning of my first research in the Rawakhola-region 2012 that I was surprised to see Non-Kiranti shamans using the *dhol* in their rituals. Also other paraphernalia that are typical for Kiranti (like *chindo*-vessels and *kaulo*-leaves) were included in the altars of every ritual I observed. Whenever the *dhyangro* was used it was a kind of hybrid with the *dhol*, as it always had two membranes and was played by two drummers with two sticks each (Pl. 1 *b*).

Back in Kathmandu, after my first research in the summer of 2012, I came across another surprise, while working on the recordings of ritual texts with my interpreter: A Gurung shaman, who used a *dhol*, spoke Rai language in parts of his ritual. This confused and fascinated me and the idea of a *Kirantization* of shamanism in Khotang evolved in my mind. I decided to look further into this phenomenon as soon as I would return to Khotang. I got this chance when I came back for research in the spring of 2015. Again, I visited rituals conducted by shamans of various ethnic groups. And again, I found the use of Kiranti paraphernalia and language not only among the Kiranti. So, when interviewing these Non-Kiranti shamans I inquired this further. Two of these cases will be briefly taken into account here: One *dalit* shaman and one Chettri shaman, a low-caste and a high-caste Hindu, respectively.

In Rakha I came across one *dalit* shaman, working as blacksmith, and attended a healing ritual (*cinta*) that he conducted for a Tamang household. In this ritual, the *dhol* was used in the typical Kiranti way, played by two drummers, and the *dalit* shaman spoke Rai language in certain instances, e.g. while conducting the chicken sacrifice for the drum. Other typical Kiranti paraphernalia, like *chindo* and *kaulo*, were used as well. When I visited this shaman two days after the ritual he told me that his main guiding spirit (*guru deuta*) is an ancestor spirit of the Kiranti. The shaman is not able to speak any Rai language in normal life (as most Rai are not), but only when his spirit is speaking through his mouth in the ritual possession. As he is possessed by a Rai spirit he is able to use the *dhol*, which is in the region commonly perceived as the more powerful kind of drum. Doing so, the shaman also has to follow the *muddum*, the oral text of the Kiranti, to some extent. This includes particularly not to consume goat meat, what is prohibited among the Rai, but usually very common among the Hindus of the hills of Nepal. All this applies to the shaman's brother, father and grandfather as well. They all are *dalit* shamans who follow the *muddum,* use the *dhol* and do not eat goat meat. None of them received any teaching by the Rai people, rather they were taught by the Rai spirits. Especially the shaman's grandfather accumulated much power from the Rai ancestor-gods.

The case of the Chettri shaman is more complex. Like the *dalit* shaman, he told me that his guiding spirit originates from a Rai ancestor, and that he therefore must not eat goat meat. Nevertheless, he uses the *dhyangro* and not the *dhol*. He said that his guiding spirit wants him to use the *dhol*, but as high-caste Hindu he cannot do so because

Fig. 2. Rai shaman in front of her *dhol*, Wadasku, Khotang.
Photo: Raphael Mousa, 2015.

it would contaminate him. This might be because *dhol* are associated with cow leather, which was used for the membranes in earlier times. But, the Chettri shaman emphasized, he treats his *dhyangro* like a *dhol*, performing all respective offerings. While doing this he speaks in Rai language in possession, but he is not able to speak it in normal life. As most shamans of the area he also uses *chindo* and *kaulo*.

Both shamans also explained their ritual soul journeys to me. Like all the Rai shamans, both always travel to *bhume*, a huge tree with an altar of the earth-god, located above the market of the village. But only Kiranti are allowed to enter the sacred area right in front of the *bhume* tree. So both shamans do not enter this area on their soul journeys, but they stop before the wall that surrounds the tree and worship this sacred Kiranti

Fig. 3. Two *dhol*s during the Sakela festival, Rakha, Khotang.
Photo: Raphael Mousa, 2016.

site by dancing *sakela* in front of it. *Sakela* is another famous and distinct element of the Kiranti, representative of their culture and famous all over Nepal. It is a certain dance that is performed during the two main festivities of the Kiranti, *ubhauli* and *udhauli*, both also known as *bhumepuja*, that worship the Earth in times of sowing and harvest.

When I visited northeastern Khotang again in the spring of 2016, I encountered another aspect of the *Kirantization*, beyond the domain of shamanism, that calls for further research. The Nachhiring, like many Kiranti, worship certain house-deities that are living on the upper story of each Nachhiring house, where the harvest is stored. Non-Kiranti are not allowed to enter this sacred area. Once or twice per year, a *puja* (worship) is performed by each household for these deities, to ensure a harmonious relationship. Interestingly, almost all Non-Kiranti households within the Nachhiring area seem to perform such *puja* for the house-deities, too, even though they do not prohibit the entrance to their house's upper story. All these *puja* for the house-deities happen around the same time and address the same deities as those of the Nachhiring. The house-deities are identified to be of Rai origin and so is the *puja*. A Chettri from Solukhumbu, who was visiting his relatives in the Nachhiring area, was quite surprised about this practice and jestingly defined his relatives as hybrids of Chettri and Rai when we discussed this topic.

Conclusion

Hindu shamans in northeastern Khotang use elements of the indigenous Kiranti culture in their rituals. How is this remarkable? It is indeed unavoidable that different shamanic traditions influence each other when coexisting in one village. Spotting a few typical Kiranti items on the altar of a Gurung shaman might not be particularly noteworthy. To understand the significance of the process of *Kirantization*, further historical and cultural context needs to be considered. Since the immigration of high-caste Hindus to Khotang started, they came as superior, educated specialists with a clear political, religious and linguistic dominance. Their higher caste status expresses particularly a higher ritual purity.

To be possessed by a *guru deuta* means for the shaman to be the vessel of this spirit, to follow its guidance and to enter into an intimate interdependence. An external agency is thereby embodied and enacted. In this light it is very extraordinary that even high-caste Hindus become hosts for Kiranti spirits. This also has very tangible implications: the drum, the central tool of every shaman, is of Kiranti origin (or treated "as if"), Rai language is spoken, and the *sakela*, the dance that forms

the central identity-performance of the Rai, is conducted by Hindu shamans on their soul journeys, while worshiping sacred Kiranti sites that they cannot enter. In addition Non-Kiranti households worship Rai house-deities in seasonal rituals. At least in northeastern Khotang, but presumably in many places all over East Nepal, this *Kirantization* forms a process that is quite significant for research on Kiranti culture and local shamanisms. To estimate its real extent, a long-term comparative ethnographic study is needed.

It has been shown that Nepali shamanisms are always closely related to the landscapes they are embedded in. The same is true for the various spirits the shamans deal with, who inhabit this landscape. The process of *Kirantization* seems to reflect a collective awareness and memory among all groups of northeastern Khotang, that the land in which they settle, including its spirits, originally belong to the Kiranti. The practices, paraphernalia, languages and spirits of the Kiranti are the ones that are perceived to be appropriate and most powerful for shamans practicing in this area. They need to worship the gods and sacred sites of the Kiranti and follow some of their rules, like the prohibition of eating goat meat, to be able to gain shamanic power in this land. This process exemplifies how a politically and culturally dominant group gets to be influenced through the backdoor by a marginalized indigenous community.

Coincidentally I came across the phenomenon of *Kirantization*, observing rituals conducted by Non-Kiranti shamans, though they were not part of my research focus. Reading ethnographic literature, one still sometimes gets the impression that the ethnic group that is studied lives isolated in a static cultural space. Simply because the people of other ethnic groups they stand in daily interaction with fall out of the ethnographer's view. In research on shamanism in Nepal, the object of study is usually one ethnic group. But the tradition of one ethnic group is not necessarily a more enclosed entity than the tradition of a valley or a district, especially considering the geographical and historical conditions of Nepal. For a dynamic approach to shamanism, and culture in general, ethnic boundaries should not limit the gaze of the ethnographer, as comparative analyses and a variety of sources are often able to provide new, important information and a more complete context and deeper understanding of cultural phenomena.

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Raphael MOUSA is graduating in the M.A. "Health and Society in South Asia" at Heidelberg University. He submitted his Master's thesis "Donning the Gods" on the shamanic vocation and spirit possession among the Nachhiring Rai of East Nepal in October 2016. Raphael obtained his B.A. in anthropology and psychology at Heidelberg University in 2013 with his thesis on shamanic healing rituals among the Dumi Rai of East Nepal. During his studies he worked in a nursing service and as student assistant. His several journeys to Asia included three ethnographic research trips to rural East Nepal in 2012, 2015 and 2016.

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Analogies, Variation, Chance: Comparing Local Shamanisms

MICHAEL OPPITZ BERLIN, GERMANY

To compare ethnographic data of different societies has been an intellectual sport since the early days of the anthropological enterprise. The aims have differed. Some hoped to prove the unity of human culture; others the opposite: the diversity of local cultures. Some saw in comparison the means to demonstrate the migration of ideas and practices over short and vast distances, and how these evolved from place to place. Others again voiced the conviction that the human mind, no matter where and when, comes to similar conclusions, when confronted with similar challenges. Whatever people chose to compare, serious epistemological considerations were scarce. Studies in shamanism are no exception to this dissipated drive to bring data from different areas under a common roof. Even if a strict methodology is not offered, this essay points at least to a few domains in which comparative studies may open some attractive perspectives. These fields are: ritual practice, oral tradition, and material culture.

My Delphi lecture gives way to a widespread attraction—the temptation to compare. In anthropology this activity is generally labeled "comparative ethnography" and in the study of religious systems "history of religions" or simply "comparative religion." In the narrower field of shamanistic studies, what is there to be compared? And under what conditions is comparison apposite? To attempt some answers to these questions is the purpose of my presentation.

The challenge to compare is perhaps more tempting in shamanistic studies than in those dealing with the great religions of the book: no overall unity, supported by an orthodoxy, a church, a head, fixed moral codes, holy scriptures—all we are confronted with are individual shamans, their acts, their words, their chants, their accouterments and artifacts—residua of their practice. Their words and chants—unless they had been noted down by some industrious fieldworker—are as ephemeral as any spoken matter: they exist only in the act of their

immediate utterance; and they are rarely repeated in exactly the same way. It is similar with the acts and rituals: they emerge in the performance, momentarily, and once the show is over, they retract into invisibility, only to be revived in another séance, which will never be identical to the one before, as they all follow just a roughly memorized choreography. With physical objects, shamanic paraphernalia, it is slightly different: at least, if not destroyed after use, they remain in store. They can be employed again; and they can be collected and displayed, even in alien surroundings, as witnesses of former beliefs.

Shamanism—in short—is highly specific and ephemeral, bound to a myriad of heterogeneous local conditions and developments. It is this local peculiarity that provokes comparison with peculiarities in other shamanic surroundings, in the hope of finding common features on a wider geographical scale. For some aficionados, the main object of comparison is exactly this: to save the label "shamanism" in its singular, or at least in its plural form. For others, comparison can lead to only one consequence: to abandon the label "shamanism" altogether, in favor of other designations hardly more helpful, such as "local indigenous beliefs," "animistic religious practices," "faith-healing methods," etc. It is remarkable that one advocate of the term "shamanism" in its singular form, one who had patched together many loose ends of his day and tied them in a single, uniform bundle, namely Mircea Eliade, had spoken on the very first page of his influential book, *Le chamanisme* of 1951 of "diverse shamanisms" in the plural form. And yet, it took decades to liberate shamanistic studies from the bond of a uniform main label and give preference instead to concrete observation and description.

Apart from the respect for concrete facts and precision on which any reliable juxtaposition of analogue data rests, the comparative impulse has a methodological advantage. As Georges Dumézil, himself a passionate comparativist in Indo-European mythology, had proclaimed: the only equivalent available in the humanities to experimentation in the natural sciences is, in fact, comparison (quoted after Hamayon 1991, 21). The experiment, a foundation stone in the hard sciences, may thus be replaced in social studies by the pluck to compare. In neither realm, in either the natural sciences or in the humanities, can definitive results be guaranteed. In which domains, then, can some promising results be expected from comparison?

The most obvious domain for research—and consequently for comparison—is ritual: what are the shamans doing and how do they do it?

How do they choose and arrange their places of action? Who are their clients and for what purposes? Who are those that assist in the rituals? How are shamanic séances composed? What kind of acts do they consist of, and in what sequence and with what aim? What is the role of music and dance? What function is attributed to chanting, to role-playing, to techniques of the body, including those of *ekstasis*, to magical sleep, to yawning and belching, to animal imitation, to kinetic, symbolic or verbal simulation of ritual journeys? In which way do kin relations come into play during shamanic events? Do matrimonial categories and marriage rules, and do taboos, rank and social stratification have any impact? In which way, in short, do shamanic activities mirror social behavior and conventions?

A second domain in which comparative studies prove to be promising is oral transmission—chanting of myths, heroic tales, formulas, and instructions—all incorporated into the ritual process, of which they constitute fundamental units. It has been stated that the local corpora of shamanic oral literature are immense and may constitute separate fields of research, comparable in size and artistic refinement, in content and form, to those of scripted literatures as studied by philologists. The narratives of shamanic myths do not only relate origin stories, they also tell in primordial disguise what the contemporary shaman should do—myth as a model for acting. Moreover, the mythical tales reflect common economic, technological, medical, and social practices. Even the tools and paraphernalia employed in contemporary séances find their prototype in myth.

A third domain for comparison is material culture, in particular the physical objects, tools, gear, and artifacts employed by shamans in the course of their professional activities. These paraphernalia include the practitioner's costume: the coats and pants, headgear: hats and crowns, boots and gloves, masks, staves and sticks, armor and weaponry, which the shaman may carry or wear while doing his job. They include as well his pendants, necklaces, amulets, idols, and ritual utensils. And they include their acoustic instruments: drums, bows, plates, bells, and gongs, with which to accentuate their ritual acts and mark their proceedings and caesura by sound. Art objects—or rather, objects that by the fancy of our collectors were ennobled as art pieces—embrace works made of wood, bone, and iron; animal and human figures, statuettes and full-size sculptures of guardian and helping spirits, *ongon*s, ancestors, earth-, sky-, wind-, and forest-spirits, mythical beasts, spirits of

vice, illness, and death; and accessories of all kinds of shape and meaning—all these things may be submitted to the comparative eye.

Paintings and drawings on cloth and paper are rare in the visual art production of shamanic societies. This reserve coincides with a withdrawal from writing, from leaf, scroll, or book in most shamanic cultures, which are based, as we know, on the spoken word. A few exceptions may be found amongst Koreans and Manchu, scriptural cultures anyway; and in the Siberian Far East, amongst the Nanay, Udehe, and other groups of the Amur regions. Yet, there is one area where painting is a standard practice: in the use of drum hides as canvasses for cosmological drawings. Such drawings on membranes are found both in Siberia and in the Himalayas, and on historical drums of Lapland, as studied by Ernst Manker (1938, 1950).

Naturally, other domains are apt for comparisons. In the political sphere, one might compare the ways in which local shamanisms reacted toward powerful states and religions, which surrounded, embraced, or attempted to strangle them; how interior conflicts corroded them; how shifts in economy and subsistence affected the shamans' practice; or how external challenges, such as global influences or just temporary dislocation of shamans (as mercenaries in foreign armies or as migrant workers) changed their professional activities or brought them to a stop. These—and many more topics—which have been studied separately, could be subjected to comparative surveys.

In the domains mentioned above, comparison investigates similarities and differences apparent in two or more societies imbued with shamanic ideas. Given that shamanism has an atomistic tendency, supporting the view that there are as many shamanisms as there are shamans, the lower limit for comparison would be, evidently, the individual level: ritual acts, chants, and accouterments of shaman A compared with those of shaman B in the same village; or his personal repertoire in toto with that of his colleague down the village road. In addition to this comparison between two individuals, one could take a diachronic look at one and the same person: the chants and deeds of a single shaman recorded over several decades, permitting valuable insights into the mechanisms of stability and of self-generated change, in accordance with the dictum: *dire le conte – conte redire – contredire*. This kind of comparison over time would expose oral tradition as a constantly changing process.

In ascending scale, one could juxtapose the variations of local traditions between two neighboring villages of the same ethnic group or

between neighboring settings of mixed composition. This experiment could be widened by bringing into perspective traditions of historically and linguistically related groups (as for instance comparing variations within the different Kiranti tribes of East Nepal such as the Thulung, Khaling, Kulung, Sunuwar, Hayu, Dumi, Yakha, Yamphu, Mewahang, Lohorung, or Limbu). And one might step further up the scale and compare corpora of oral tradition, ritual practice, and physical objects within an entire geographical expanse, such as the Himalayan Range, and juxtapose these with those of another sphere of similar magnitude, such as Siberia: the wider the range, the thinner the air.

Within a village, within a local society, variation of similarities may pose fewer problems for explanation than differences. Borrowing will probably be due to intensive direct exchange between people or shamans of both compared units. Between communities further apart, yet still in mutual communication, such influences may still be direct; or it may be an indirect mode with intermediate relays and transmitters. Problems arise when similarities surface between shamanic facts of different communities or societies that entertain no mutual contact, societies that may not have even heard of each other. Here safe explanations by migration, diffusion, or similar cultural patterns reach their limit. We enter the desert of conjecture. Independent creation? Archetypal kinship of ideas? Similar human disposition? Common structure of the mind? Or just chance—coincidental jigsaw of data? The trap of speculation, a game of fantasy, can be partly avoided by suggesting another approach to comparison: to regard similarities and differences in two sets of data as transformations, in which historical assumptions and preconceived convictions are left aside—a move from connections in time and space to formal correlations. With this in mind, I now turn to the real material.

In the ritual activities of shamans two elementary services—and, with these, movements—can be observed. One is to heal, to avert death from the clients, the basic movement being a journey of the healer in search of the lost life-force of his patient. This is a return trip—after moving out to find the lost soul, the healer has to guide it back home. In the second elementary service, that of the psychopomp—guiding a deceased to his final resting place—the movement is one way, just leading out and away from the sphere of the living. The first of these functions is more or less universal, while the second is delegated to shamans only,

when no other religious specialist claims it for himself. The service as guide of the dead can be accomplished in two basic modes: by physical movement—bringing or accompanying the deceased in a special funerary ceremony to the grave; or by chanting the route to the final resting place, the abode of the ancestors. Both modes may be combined.

The *dtô-mbà*, the traditional shamanic priests of the Naxi, do this. In the course of their funerary rites, they guide their deceased clients in person—and symbolically—to their final resting place. The road to the ancestors is indicated by a very long strip of white cloth, made of homespun hemp, approximately 30 to 40 cm wide and 6 to 10 meters long (Fig. 1). This cloth is attached to the head of the coffin, its front end pointing away from the corpse in a northeasterly direction. The cloth is carried by mourners to the grave or the cremation place. This way-cloth is called *hà' zhî p'ì* (the road the gods decide). Instead of this plain white hemp cloth the Naxi were also accustomed to use an elaborate version of the *hà' zhî p'ì*: a long stretched-out canvas, covered with numerous painted scenes of the entire cosmos, to be traversed by the dead person, beginning in the lowest of hells, passing through the world of humans and ending in the highest realm of the gods and ancestors. This pictorial road map through all layers of the universe and the obstacles the dead would encounter is a trip through a tripartite vertical world laid out on a horizontal display. Iconographically, it is a voyage through heterogeneous cultural territories: Indian, Burmese, Thai, Tibetan, and Chinese ingredients are met on the way—tropical elephants; high-altitude plants and animals; the hellish tree of swords emerging from the jaws of the sea-monster *makara*; the wish-granting tree at the gate of heaven with a *garuda* on top, devouring snakes; dwelling places of Burmese *nat*-spirits; the locations of human rebirths; the palace of Indra in the city of Mahasudassana; Chinese judges and magistrates; Tibetan lamas; and Naxi *dtô-mbà* priests as tour guides—the painted soul bridge is a telescoped universe of syncretism, to which Naxi culture has been prone for centuries (Rock 1939).

The way-cloth, a directional guide for the deceased, has been reported for a variety of societies, both in the vicinity of the Naxi, such as the neighboring Moso, where mourners in line carry a long strip of white cloth, symbolizing a bridge to the pyre, and further away: among the Muong, a Montagnard tribe of northwest Vietnam, a white strip of cloth is used in the funeral procession as a directional aid for the deceased to find his or her way to the celestial land of the ancestors. A

Fig. 1. Naxi shamans (*dtô-mbà*) in front of a *hà' zhî p'ì* (way-cloth for the deceased). After Rock (1952, plate XXIV).

Fig. 2. Way-cloth (*bato*), guide for the deceased to his final abode among the Magar. Photo: Michael Oppitz, 1978.

white cloth, composed of several stripes, is also employed in the death ceremonies held by the *mudang*, the Korean shamanic priestess, as a bridge for deceased souls to connect the realms of hell with the gate to paradise (Lee 1980). As a transcendental road marker, a white cloth has been reported also much further west, in the funerary rituals of the Bhotiya of Almora and Garhwal. There it is literally called "way-cloth" (*am lugara*), composed of the Tibetan *lam* for "path" and the Indo-Nepali word for "cloth" (*luga-ra*) (Sherring 1906a, 123, 128; 1906b). This cloth is carried by female mourners, by sisters, nieces, and daughters of the dead person in front of the bier, on top of their heads, to show him or her the proper way. If the dead person was male, the cloth is of cotton, or if female, it is made of wool. In the course of a second funerary act, the soul of the dead is directed out of the village on the back of an animal guide, a yak, sheep, or goat. Again female mourners lead the procession with a white cloth. This time the way-cloth is lengthened by a white strand on the head and tail of the animal escort, a mark without which it cannot fulfill its function as guide of the dead. The Magar of northwest Central Nepal share both these traditions. A long white cloth, locally called *bato* (the way), is carried in front of the coffin from inside the village to the burial ground outside (Fig. 2). This way-cloth, composed of various stretches, each of them donated by a different lineage, is carried by respected men of the vicinity and—depending on the reputation of the dead—may reach a length of almost one mile (Oppitz 1991, 415). And in a second funerary act, the soul of the dead person is heaved symbolically on the back of a guiding sheep, which has been adorned with flower garlands, a short strip of white cloth, and paint in strong colors on head and body. This companion sheep is then driven in great haste through the village to a place outside the inhabited area, where it is slaughtered.

The animal guides of the dead—yak, sheep, goat, and also horse—as mentioned in various contemporary ethnographies (Naxi, Bhotiya, Magar) are repeatedly echoed in ancient pre-Buddhist Tibetan texts, in manuscripts found in the Dunhuang caves. Data from both contexts have been set side by side by Rolf A. Stein, Ferdinand Lessing, and Alexander W. Macdonald in the past and by Nicholas J. Allen, Anne de Sales, and Toni Huber more recently. Comparisons of this kind point to a common cultural stratum of considerable extent in time and space. How far they can be placed on safe historical ground may be left open for discussion.

In a number of Himalayan societies, among them the Naxi on the eastern marches and the Gurung of the Annapurna Range, the route which the deceased person is supposed to travel is chanted by the local shamans, through a step-by-step enumeration of topographical names. In both cases it is identical to the trail by which the forefathers were believed to have migrated to the present dwellings. The route describes a mythic return to the tribal origins. In the Naxi case this ancestral road, revived by a specific canto in the funeral, leads from the home of the deceased in Yunnan straight northeast through geographically known territories, and ends, depending on the shaman who is singing, at some place in Sichuan. This destination is considered to be close to the habitat of the Qiang people, from whom the Naxi claim to have descended. In the Gurung case the route chanted is part of a myth which relates the story of a forefather and his migration from Tibet to the slopes of the Upper Marsyangdi valley. On a subsequent trip the protagonist travels further south to the Gorkha region and founds a village and a family there. At the new dwelling place, his only daughter dies an untimely death, which causes the hero to return and to bury her at the place of origin (Mumford 1989, 65–72).

A prominent domain for comparative studies, maybe the most popular in anthropology and folklore studies, is the comparison of oral literature, or more specifically, of myth. Leaving the various trends aside that have been formed in the course of the twentieth century, such as the nature-myth school, the historical school, the myth-and-ritual theory, the diverse language-family schools, the psychoanalytical approaches, the archetype doctrine, the sociological schools, I will mention here only two names: Vladimir Ia. Propp, whose work on the Russian fairy tale, *Morfologiia skazki* (1928) was a masterpiece of formalism, a study, in which he described and analyzed such tales according to their constituent parts and the relations that these parts entertained with other parts, and with their totality; and Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his monumental *Mythologiques* (4 volumes between 1964 and 1971 and 4 additional volumes between 1976 and 1991), who studied the myths of north and south American Indians as a transcontinental network of transformations. Attracted in my younger years by these two scholars, I began my Himalayan comparisons with a myth, of which five variants had been brought to light by fieldworkers: two Magar ones by Jiro Kawakita (1974, 119–26) and Corneille Jest (1976), two Gurung ones by Bernard Pignède (1958) and Simon Strickland (1982, 153–76, 182–4),

and a distant version of the Thulung Rai by Allen (1976, 1980). I will summarize the plot in outline.

A father and his nine sons set out on a hunting expedition high up in rocky terrain to collect honey from wild bees. In preparation, they ignite a smoky fire under the overhanging rock, where several combs are hanging down. The party ascends from behind to the top of the ledge and suspends a rope ladder down the rock-face. The father asks the eldest son to climb down on the ladder. The son refuses on the pretext of not feeling well. In succession all the remaining brothers find similar excuses, for in secret they have decided to kill their father on this dangerous rope-ladder trip—the reason being their collective desire for his beautiful second wife, their stepmother. So it is his turn to climb down the rock face. When reaching the level of the combs, he starts collecting honey, equipped with appropriate tools: a pole with a long reach, a lance, a knife, and a collecting basket. Notified by the humming of the bees, the sons cut the rope. Roaring like tigers, they run home, spreading the fake news of their father's fatal accident. Immediately, each of them claims the widow for himself. She agrees to succumb to the winner of a competition in archery, the target being her necklace. The contest ensues, lasting for twelve years, as none of the brothers can hit the target. Meanwhile, the father has survived on a protuberant rock of the cliff, nourished only by the bees' wild honey. Various animals pass by and try in vain to rescue him: a langur, a crow, ants, and flies. Finally, a pair of eagles (*garud/garudni*) carry him on their wings to a well near his home village. When his wife, dressed as a widow, passes by, he drops his ring into the water, and by this token she recognizes him, although he is wasted like a ghost. In a basket she carries her husband unnoticed over a ladder with nine rungs to the attic. Day by day he regains his strength, secretly fed by his wife. Finally he asks for his bow and arrow. While the sons are still involved in their competition, he shoots one arrow from the hidden place right into the center of the target. Each of the brothers claims the winning arrow loudly as his. Only the youngest accredits its real owner. Seized with horror, the brothers run to their deaths, eight of them turning into evil spirits and the youngest into the demon of the domestic fire.

This summary, under normal comparative conditions, would be a capital sin: instead of leaving each version its own right of existence, I have made a synthetic variant instead. Yet my purpose here is not to juxtapose the original versions (which I have done elsewhere; see Oppitz 1991, 289–312), but to shift the comparison in another direction: the resemblances between the mythical tale and ethnographic facts, ergo-

logical, economic, and social in nature. The honey hunt described in the myth has a long tradition in the Himalayas as well as in Central India.

A rock drawing in a cave of the Mahadeo Hills near Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh, approximately 2,500 years old, depicts a scene with all details needed for a contemporary honey hunt in the area where the myths were collected: a person on a rope ladder, holding a long pole, points to a honey comb hanging from a rock; another figure with a basket held under the comb from which the honey will flow down; and a multitude of bees buzzing around (Fig. 3). There is no doubt about continuity between myth, archeological depiction, and contemporary collecting technique (Fig. 4).

Apart from the technique of honey hunting, the myth contains a second narrative string: the competition in archery to gain the hand of a woman. I will not pursue the reverberations evoked by this part of the story, both in classical Indian mythology—in the epic of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and in the classical Nepalese epos *Madhumalati* competitions of this kind abound—with varying protagonists and similar results. And I will abstain from comparing the Himalayan story with an episode astoundingly similar, well known from the Homeric *Odyssey*, even if it were tempting to investigate possible connections, direct or indirect. Instead, I will stay close by and bring into play a social custom that looks like an enactment of the myth. Several days' walk away from the Kali Gandaki valley, where the honey-hunting myth is chanted as part of the shaman's ritual, the Northern Magar of the Uttar Ganga River celebrate an annual village festival at Magh Sankranti (the Winter Solstice), in the course of which an archery competition is held, almost identical to the one described in the myth. The winner can choose a girl as his bride. Only the kin configuration of the protagonists differs (Oppitz 1988).

In the myth the archers compete for the favors of their stepmother, the father's second wife, with semi-incestuous fervor. In the annual festival competition in the Magar village the archers and their trophy—the girl whose necklace as the target has been hit—must conform to the valid rules of matrimonial exchange: the girl that goes to the winner must be a member of the prescribed wife-giving group *vis*-à-*vis* the archers, who are, in relation to her, members of the respective wife-receiving group. I mention this because in shamanic studies the kin relations of the actors involved, in myth as well as in ritual actuality, are often neglected. In

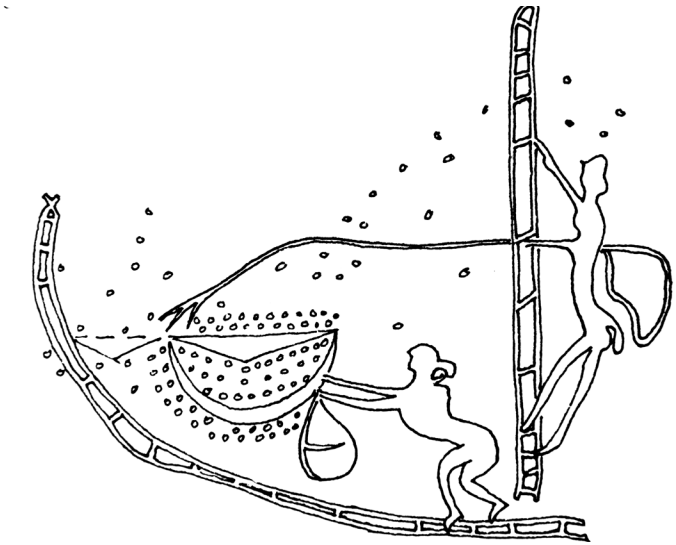

Fig. 3. Wild-honey hunt, rock drawing. Mahadeo Hills, Madhya Pradesh, India, 3,000 bc. Copy by Robert Powell in Oppitz (1991, 301, fig. 47).

Fig. 4. Wild-honey hunt on overhanging rock with rope ladder, Gurung, Nepal. Photo: Eric Valli (1988: plate 12).

Magar shamanic practice these relations, and their implications concerning the matrimonial alliance system, are clearly defined.

In the major types of rituals (in healing séances and in initiations) five elementary functions can be distinguished: in séances—the patient, the healer, his helpers, spirits, and the audience; and in initiations—the neophyte (a kind of patient), the synod of initiated shamans, their helpers, the shamans' ancestors, and the assembled lay villagers. In both types of rituals the active parts are delegated to mainly three of these groups: to the shamans, who direct the ritual proceedings; to their assistants, who carry out most of the manual and physically heavy tasks; and to the agnatic kin (of the patient or neophyte), who invite, feed, and remunerate shamans and helpers. In healing séances, the assistants of the shaman have to be wife-receivers of the patient; and in initiations, of the neophyte. Thus, the customers' agnates and the laborers stand invariably in a mutual relationship of wife-giver and wife-receiver, corresponding to the unequal relation between the two in matrimony: wife-givers are higher than their wife-receivers; and so they can expect from the latter life-long services, as also in shamanic events. The shaman as mediator *par excellence* between the human and the spirit world is also the mediating figure between his helpers and his clients. The dual relation between wife-giver and wife-receiver (client and manual worker) is thus augmented by a third position, the shaman. Seen in this light, shamanic rituals mirror the all-prevailing social conditions in the Magar marriage-alliance system: a triad of active participants; and an unequal dual relation between giver and taker—the model for a society practicing prescriptive matrilateral cross-cousin marriage.

When we compare myths with myths, we can do so in various ways: the content of plots and the sequence of narration; the artistic form in which myths are told; or the functions assigned to myths in the ritual process. Leaving out the formal and stylistic aspects of myths and their performance, I compare a few shamanic myths in regard to their plots. I have selected my examples from a complex, widespread in Himalayan societies and beyond: the story of writing that has been lost. I have collected about sixty such tales over the years, in which it is said that once upon a time the people affected were literate and in possession of books, but then, by some incident, lost the art of writing and became societies solely based on oral transmission of knowledge (Oppitz 2006).

The primordial *shüpi*, the first shaman of the Qiang people, had books and knew how to write. Once in a while he traveled to a Tibetan monastery to renew his collection. Returning from one of these trips, the load of books on his shoulder exhausted him. He lay down under a tree for a nap. When he woke up, he noticed that all his scriptures had been eaten by sheep. As he wept over his loss, a golden-haired monkey crossed his path, suggesting that the shaman should kill the culprit and make a drum from the skin. And so he did. When he started to play his new instrument, the shaman, with each beat of the drum, was able to recite a line from his lost books from memory. Thus the drum had become a valid replacement. The monkey, showing the *shüpi* his way home, died on the last stretch. As a keepsake of his guide and advisor, the shaman made a hat from the monkey's skin, wearing it whenever he was summoned to recite the memorized texts to the sound of his drum. And at each ritual occasion he took the skull of the golden-haired monkey along, wrapping it with paper, inscribed with a text written in Chinese characters.

This story, circulating amongst the Qiang who live in the Min Shan Mountains in northwest Sichuan/China, finds a distant echo amongst the Buryat of southern Siberia. Here, as in ancient China, the art of prediction was practiced by reading the cracks produced by fire in the shoulder blades of a ram. A story tells of the origin of this divination technique. The primordial ancestor of the Buryat had paid a visit to his deity, who had given him a divine law, recorded on a written document. Tired from the long journey home, the ancestor fell asleep in a barn. During his slumber a sheep passed by and devoured the sacred text. Henceforward, the messages of the deity were to be found inscribed on sheep's shoulder blades. Ever since, it has been the task of the shamans, successors of the primordial ancestor, to read divine messages by means of scapulimancy. In both stories, the original books and samples of writing are eaten by sheep and lost for good. In the Qiang case the loss is balanced by gaining a drum, made from the skin of the books' glutton. With the help of his newly gained tutelary, the monkey, plus the beat of his drum, the shaman can recite endless texts from memory. And in the Buryat case reading from written texts is replaced—thanks to the sheep incident—by reading from cracked shoulder blades.

In the next two tales the loss of writing is caused by the outcome of a competition between a Buddhist lama and a local religious specialist of the shamanic type (Pls. 2, 3). The first story is performed as a ritual text by the traditional faith healers of the Gurung of West Central Nepal;

the second is common lore amongst the Naxi in northern Yunnan. The resemblance here is even more astounding than the similarities between the previous two tales, since the two societies, Naxi and Gurung, live nearly 2,000 km apart and have never heard of each other.

A *pajyu* (or shaman) of the Gurung and a lama named Milarepa[1] decided to measure their powers by running a race to the top of Mount Kailash. At dead of night, while the lama was still asleep, the *pajyu* grasped his drum, flying on top of it up the steep mountain. When the first ray of the sun touched Milarepa's bedside, he seized it, and in no time at all he reached the destination point, just before his opponent arrived, riding his drum. Startled by the outcome, the shaman tumbled headlong down the slope, his drum slipping from his grasp and breaking in two on a rock. This is why to this very day the shaman's drum has only one single membrane, cutting its power in half, while the lama's has remained a double-sided drum, keeping its original power. Furious about losing the competition, the *pajyu* threw all his books into a blazing fire, where they quickly turned to ashes. In this moment the *pajyu* heard the voice of his tutelary spirit: "No matter what you did with your books, you are still obliged to hold rituals and to recite the appropriate texts." Disturbed by this command, the shaman grabbed the ashes and swallowed all his atomized knowledge. And since that event the shamans recite their ritual texts only from memory, belching up the ashes of their former books, while the lamas rely exclusively on scriptures when their knowledge is needed.

Most of the tribal societies that claim a former state of literacy do not resort to books in their contemporary performances. Some of them leave the craft of writing to a few experts, generally in scripts such as Devanagari, Tibetan or Chinese as used by the surrounding states and neighboring religions; some ignore writing altogether. In one case, however, a most ingenious system was invented after the legendary loss of books written in Tibetan alphabetic script: the Naxi system of pictographic writing. How did this come into existence?

Well, say the *dtô-mbà* priests, who monopolize this script, there is a story to its origin. The first shaman, Dtô-mbá Shî-lò, and his opponent, Mila, agreed on a race. The one who first reached the top of Mount Ngyù-ná Shî-lò Ngyù

[1] The famous Tibetan ascetic and poet of the eleventh century.

(Mount Kailash) far away in the west would become the exclusive owner of all books hidden up there. And the loser would end up empty-handed. In the middle of the night Mila mounted his drum, riding it up the slope. Shî-lò for his part waited till dawn, taking the first rays of the sun as his vehicle to the top of the mountain. But Mila was already there, and so it was he that won all the hidden books, the *terma* or "hidden treasures," as the Tibetans call such discoveries. Losing the treasures in book form to his opponent made the shaman so angry that by blowing a magic mantra he generated a gust of wind, which blew all of Mila's books into disarray. Mila, picking them up leaf by leaf, was unable to bring the pages back into their original sequence. Troubled, he asked the shaman for help and Shî-lò reassembled them in their proper order. Out of gratitude Mila gave his trousers and one of his sleeves to the shaman. That's why lamas haven't worn trousers since then and why one of their coat sleeves hangs down. Since that event, furthermore, Tibetan books are kept between heavy wooden boards. As Shî-lò, despite his expert handling of the books, did not receive any for himself, he was given a cymbal and a drum instead. These were played, henceforward, whenever a *dtô-mbà* held a ritual, reciting sacred texts by heart. Relieved of the necessity to fix his eyes on letters and lines, Shî-lò, by chanting from memory, was able to register all things around him in full detail. Whatever he saw, he carved into the wood of trees or painted it as pictures on stones. This is how pictographic writing originated. Naxi still call their way of drawing pictographs: *ssú dgyú lû dgyú* (marking wood, marking stones).

Both stories in their humorous manner deal with a serious and historically most real topic: the fight between two religions over the hegemony in a particular region. In both cases, it is the Buddhist faith (based on scriptures) that is victorious over the older shamanic religion (based on oral transmission). But the losing party is not fatally defeated. The shamans continue to practice, though with diminished power and without the support of books. This weakening brings them an advantage: not depending on books, they gain a superior capacity to memorize. This independence in regard to the written word enables the traditional priest of the Naxi story to sharpen his perception during his séances and—thanks to this intensification—to invent a new form of notation, the pictographs.

As regards the role of myth in the workings of ritual healing, I will allude in passing to a famous case from Central America: the complications of a parturient woman and the healer's attempts to help. The case was first described and the corresponding chant recorded by Nils Hol-

mer and Henry Wassén (1947). When a pregnant woman amongst the Cuna, an indigenous people of Panama, gets into trouble with delivering a child, a séance is held, in the course of which a ritual chant is sung by a shaman to lighten the load of the laboring patient. After an introduction to the woman's present condition, the chant centers on a mythical journey of a supernatural figure (*muu*), responsible for the development of the human fetus. The itinerary does not lead through a geographical landscape, but through an interior space: the womb of the woman in labor. Obstacles, dangers, and problems described on the way are exclusively located in the woman's vagina and uterus. This intra-uterine landscape is populated with monsters, ogres, and wild animals, such as black tigers, alligators, octopuses)—all allegorical personifications of the woman's pain. On a second trip, the shaman, in the form of an erect penis, enters this intra-uterine world himself, accompanied by a marching cohort of helping spirits, who try to widen the womb. The chant's healing purpose is apparently not only to describe the sexual organs and to illustrate the woman's pains, but also to manipulate these and to facilitate the birth. In the course of the chant, the healer—unlike a midwife—does not touch the woman. He just gives her a story to put her unspeakable state into verbalized images.

Lévi-Strauss (1949/1958), in his essay on symbolic efficacy, took up the account and compared the shaman's healing act with the psychoanalytic process, suggesting that both shaman and analyst play a double role: firstly, to enter into a direct contact with the client's consciousness; and secondly, to set in motion a transfer. The roles, however, were played differently: the shaman, by singing a collective myth, which the parturient woman was supposed to identify with, as an active verbal agent; and the psychoanalyst, by listening to the fabrication of an individual myth, composed from the patient's life-story, as a passive listener.

The Cuna myth has a surprising Himalayan counterpart in several local variations. When a Magar woman suffers from complications of a birth that a midwife could not diminish, the shaman is called in for a ritual, in the course of which a sequence of myths is sung to the beat of the drum (Oppitz 2017). One of these sequences presents a primordial couple, far beyond the age of reproduction. A god, dressed as a hermit, impregnates the old lady. Nine, ten, eleven months pass, but she cannot deliver. Deranged by unbearable pain, she tries to jump off a cliff. The first shaman, called for help just in time, prevents her from committing suicide. He measures her pulse, exorcises her with a yak-tail, and, by

using a drumstick, sucks negative influences out of her body. At long last, the child is born, while the old woman dies, tumbling down into the underworld. The little orphan, called Kubiram "Born-too-Late," subsequently turns into the child-killing spirit *ra*, after he has murdered his father, who in his turn becomes the "Spirit of White Lime" (*serajyea*), responsible for untimely deaths, such as pushing people off a cliff. Both these vindictive characters are evoked in the rituals for a parturient woman—and killed in a symbolical act.

It cannot be denied that the mythical tale of the old parturient woman resembles in part the situation of the shaman's laboring patient; yet it is equally obvious that the actual patient cannot identify herself with her mythical predecessor, for otherwise her fate would be that she too would have to die in her childbed, as prefigured in the myth. As the ritual and the plot progresses, she has to dis-identify herself from her mythical fellow-sufferer. A Magar woman, who had passed through similar conditions as a patient, confirmed with amusement the discrepancy: had she identified with the old lady when the shaman sang the myth for her, she would not be sitting on the same floor with the inquisitive ethnographer. Considering this native objection, the mechanisms of symbolic healing might assume a different reading from the Lévi-Straussian interpretation, which had put identification with the mythical heroine at the core of the shaman's efficacy. Events in myths may be similar to situations in real life, yet by nature they are also dissimilar. This point may be supported by the fact that in myths current social rules are established regularly by unspeakable, criminal acts.

I will now pass to my final domain of comparison: material culture, the object world of the shamans. This domain has one obvious advantage over the previous ones: one can touch and look closely at the apples and pears under investigation. Comparisons of artifacts—ritual regalia, paraphernalia, dress, and utensils—force the researcher to stay on solid ground. Among those who undertook systematic comparisons of Siberian shamanic objects, two researchers deserve to be specially mentioned, in lieu of many others. In a historical-ethnographic atlas of Siberian peoples, published in 1961, Ekaterina D. Prokof′eva (1902–78) made a typological study of North Asian shamanic drums, followed ten years later by a comparative analysis of similar length concerning the shaman's dress (Prokof′eva 1961). Similarities and differences in the juxtaposed materials, drawn from the superb collections of the Kunst-

kamera in St. Petersburg, she attributed mainly to historical causes: to migrations, cultural contacts, and blending or dissolution of ethnic boundaries. The collections that she studied she fittingly called "archeological monuments" of sunken religious practices and ideas.

Vilmos Diószegi (1923–72) went a step further, combining research in the basements of museums with fieldwork in Siberia, as far as this was possible in his day. In a swift succession of articles, published in a single decade between 1959 and 1970, he demonstrated how shamanic artifacts such as headgear, masks, coats, boots, sticks, drums, and idols were not only modified from one ethnic group to the next, but could vary also considerably within a single group. He concluded that inter-ethnic similarities were as prominent as intra-ethnic differences (Diószegi 1962). His comparisons, like those of Prokof'eva, were historically oriented toward questions of borrowing, lending, redesigning, and ethno-genesis. One of his diachronic studies was exemplary: comparing descriptions and depictions of shamanic residua, as preserved in early-eighteenth-century travel accounts on the Baraba Turks with those of their nineteenth- and twentieth-century neighbors, he was able to prove (over this time scale) that the Baraba Turks had been shamanic before their radical conversion to Islam (Diószegi 1978).

When one looks at studies on Siberian shamanism side by side with those on Himalayan shamanism, a general difference can be observed: Siberian studies, in particular Russian ones, have concentrated mainly on material culture, whereas Himalayan research has been focused predominantly on ritual; things versus acts; museum ethnography versus intensive fieldwork. This asymmetrical tendency is caused by incompatible historical developments: in Siberia shamanic practices, treated with hostility over the centuries, came to an end in the 1930s and, consequently, research moved from the field to the collections; in the Himalaya, on the contrary, research started not earlier than the late 1950s—not with collections, but with live observations in the field. Thus, North and South displayed a temporal disequilibrium. The so-called "ethnographic present" in Siberia is situated in the past (leaving revivals since Perestroika aside), whereas Himalayan observations are contemporary or recent. These conditions pose questions for comparison—problems concerning not only space, but also time. In the last section I try to demonstrate that the two areas, disequilibria notwithstanding and despite the force of habit to study these two expanses each on its own, belong in fact to a single conceptual universe. North

and South are one. I will pursue my assertion in a single domain, one in which I have done my own comparative research: in the field of material culture, or more precisely, in my ongoing work on the drum (Oppitz 2013).

Shamanic drums in both realms of North and South Asia and to a degree also on the North American continent, share two elementary features: all drums belong to a single basic type—the frame drum with a membrane on one side only (some Himalayan exceptions excluded, see below); and each single exemplar is different from any other individual piece. No two drums are identical. A third common feature may be added to this: oral and dramatic performances, wherever they occur on this vast expanse, are accentuated by the beat of a drum. The drum is, indeed, the most important and versatile tool of shamans, conceived by their owners not as a thing, but as a living being, born of the death of two living organisms—a tree and an animal, both from the wilderness. And as living beings, drums have to die, being smashed or hung in a tree after the owner's death.

Each drum is made for an individual owner, on demand and by a metaphysical hint: for a neophyte, who did not have one before, to honor his successful passage into his new profession; or for an experienced shaman in need of a new one. In the production process, the future owner is passive, the job being done under the supervision of a master shaman, the future teacher of the neophyte; and by laymen, who invariably belong, in the Magar case, to the candidate's wife-receivers. The only active role of the neophyte is that he selects the tree for his future instrument in a vision. In Tibetan Buddhism, in contrast, frame drums are fabricated serially on a modular basis, not to be owned by an individual, but by a temple or monastery.

The drum has many functions: as a sound instrument it accentuates the beat, meter, and rhythm of chants to be sung in a séance; and it promotes the steps of the shaman in dance. As an instrument for healing it is a vehicle for ritual journeys; is employed for diagnosis and divination; and is a utensil to call auxiliaries, contact ambivalent spirits and dispel malignant ones. In metaphysical confrontations, the drum can serve as a weapon, as a tool for defense or attack. When ornamented with designs, it offers insights into cosmological ideas, mirroring the world and its beings. And it brings forth the oral treasures of its players—the drum is the book of shamans.

Fig. 5. Chepang shaman drum (*ringh*) with iron pendants from West Nepal. Private collection. Photo: Michael Oppitz, 1990.

Fig. 6. Selkup Shaman drum with iron pendants from West Siberia. Russian Ethnographic Museum, St. Petersburg. P. Ostrovskikh, 1902.

Despite the uniqueness and individuality of each exemplar, shamanic drums show regional features. It is by such physical characteristics that they can be placed geographically. In my studies, I have isolated about a dozen such regional units for North Asia and half as many for the Himalayan regions: Scandinavian, Northwest Siberian, Mid-West Siberian, North Siberian, Central Siberian, South Siberian, Altaic, Mongol, Northeast Siberian, Far Eastern Siberian, and Arctic drums for North Asia; and West Himalayan, Central Himalayan, Tibetan, East Himalayan, and Qiang drums for the southern expanse. I have called these recognizable units "islands of form" or, more precisely, "archipelagos of form" (Oppitz 2013, 33–5). Within and between these physiological isolates, closer and more distant kinships can be detected. Based solely on morphological features, such as shape, size, weight, handles, and pendants on the open inside of the instrument, solid connections can be constructed between South and North Asian drums (Figs. 5, 6). The most apparent passages from north to south with the highest degree of resemblance are those between Southern Siberian and Qiang drums and between Southern Mongolian and West Himalayan ones. But, as there are many transitions from unit to unit in all directions, the shaman drums of North Asia and those of the Himalayas must be seen as a continuous and integral whole of unending transformations.

This unity in diversity can be detected also on other levels. The Central Himalayan drums, compared internally, share a feature that on first sight looks like a deviation or an exception from all the others. As mentioned, shamanic drums as a rule are covered with a single hide or skin on only one side of the hoop, with the handle inside the body; the Central Himalayan pieces, however, have two membranes, one on each side of the frame, a feature that assimilates them to their Buddhist Himalayan counterparts. In consequence, the handle is placed outside, fastened to the frame at the bottom (Figs. 7, 8). These exterior handles are all rather similar, resembling variations of the Tibetan *phurbu*. And yet they vary regionally and from piece to piece, just like the bodies of the instrument. In studying many of these drum-handles side by side, I have been able to demonstrate that they shift in iconographical detail and in the density of ornamentation from west to east. A graphic diagram that combines regional and ethnic variation shows these transformations synoptically (Fig. 9). At one point these exterior handles run into their ideological opponent, evident in the drums of Tibetan Buddhism, which are also double-sided with an exterior grip. These latter

Fig. 7. Central Himalayan shaman drum (*dhyangro*), with double-sided membrane and exterior handle. Kami *jhakri*, Mahadvdanda, Lalitpur, Nepal. Photo: Casper Miller, 1973.

Fig. 8. Buddhist Himalayan drum (*nga chen*) with double-sided membrane and exterior handle. Sherpa lama, Bhandar/Deorali, Solukhumba, Nepal. Photo: Michael Oppitz, 1983.

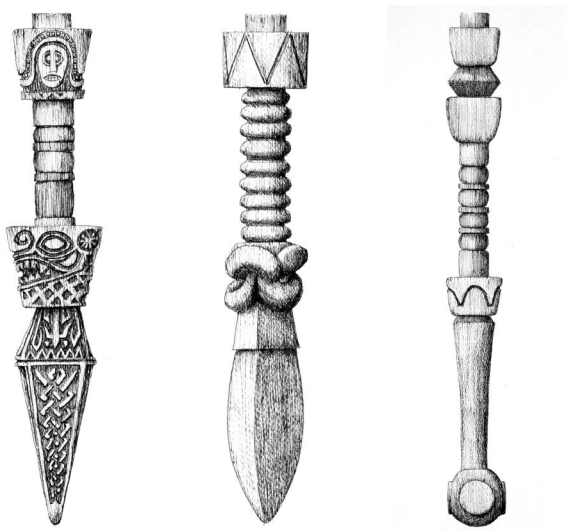

Fig. 9. Row of drum-handles (*nga yu*), Central Himalayan shamans and Tibetan Buddhist. Drawings by Robert Powell, 1999.

handles, however, are always conceived as a lotus, symbol of peaceful intentions, whereas the shamanic counterparts are ritual weapons, ready to kill supernatural enemies.

Finally, pictorial representations on drum-hides invite large-scale comparisons (Oppitz 2007). They exist nearly everywhere, from Scandinavia to the Amur, from Western Nepal to the Sino-Tibetan marches, from the Altay to the Arctic, from Alaska to the Rocky Mountains. Figurative or geometrical, they are in most cases of cosmological design. Yet again, in the execution of such drawings, individual and regional styles and preferences become evident. In the Himalayas, cosmographic designs on drums are predominantly concentric, with stars or chains of mountains on the outer fringes, marking the borders of the universe; and with specific heavenly bodies in the center, such as sun, moon, or Evening Star, or certain symbols, such as the trident of Mahadev, the protector of shamans (Figs. 10, 11). In the Qiang area the cosmos is depicted in terms of the constellations of the Eight Trigrams (*ba gua*), traditional signs in Chinese oracular art.

In northern Eurasia too the styles of cosmographic drum drawings vary again regionally. Sámi depictions shift between a horizontal, tripartite division of the world and a quadri-partition, marked out by a

cross in the center. Taymyrian drums, such as those of the Nganasan, show a preference for abstract lines and points in red and black, which represent corporeal beings inhabiting the underworld (worms and centipedes) or helpers on ritual journeys, such as stags and reindeer. They are distributed over the oval of the drum-skin, which represents a world map, divided into four parts. Ket and Selkup drum drawings are arranged concentrically and divided also into four sectors; or into those that are characterized by a vertical bipartition. The figures in the four sectors of the former are theriomorphic and anthropomorphic, or they display celestial bodies (Figs. 12, 13). Some resemble a cosmic cobweb. The bisected drawings show an anthropomorphic figure in the center, marking a vertical axis, on both sides of which celestial and underworld strata border the picture. Altaic drawings inscribe the layers and regions of a tripartite cosmos into the outlines of an anthropomorphic figure with outstretched arms and legs, "the master of the drum."

South Siberian drawings can be recognized by three superimposed layers, representing again a tripartite cosmos, and two extra-terrestrial realms on top and bottom, divided by a thin strip of zigzags—the human sphere. While the human sphere occupies only a modest horizontal part of the picture, fencing off the other two realms, the extra-terrestrial regions are large, vaulted, and richly populated with figures, with typical representations in each. Sayan drums are divided into symmetrical halves, whose vertical bipartition may be marked by a conifer as the world tree in the center and twin motifs on both sides. The draughtsmen of Evenki drums delight in viewing the world from above, from a bird's-eye perspective, showing its inhabitants below marching through a plain, as if on tundra or taiga ground. The earth is divided into four segments, at the crossing point of which a drawn circle represents the world's axis, the hole through which the shaman can reach the celestial and underworld regions. Amurian drawings are characterized by reduplication of motifs in mirror images of birds and chthonic beings (lizards or frogs). These drawings depict cosmic impressions through pictorial sparseness.

To sum up, drawings on shamanic drums are widespread, in northern Eurasia as well as in the entire Himalayan region. Rare are the cases where the drum-hide, regularly employed as a canvas to depict ideas, is left untouched by the draughtsman's fingers. Such drawings are predominantly cosmographic in nature. Conceptually, the surface may be bisected, tripartite, or divided into four segments. If bisected by a

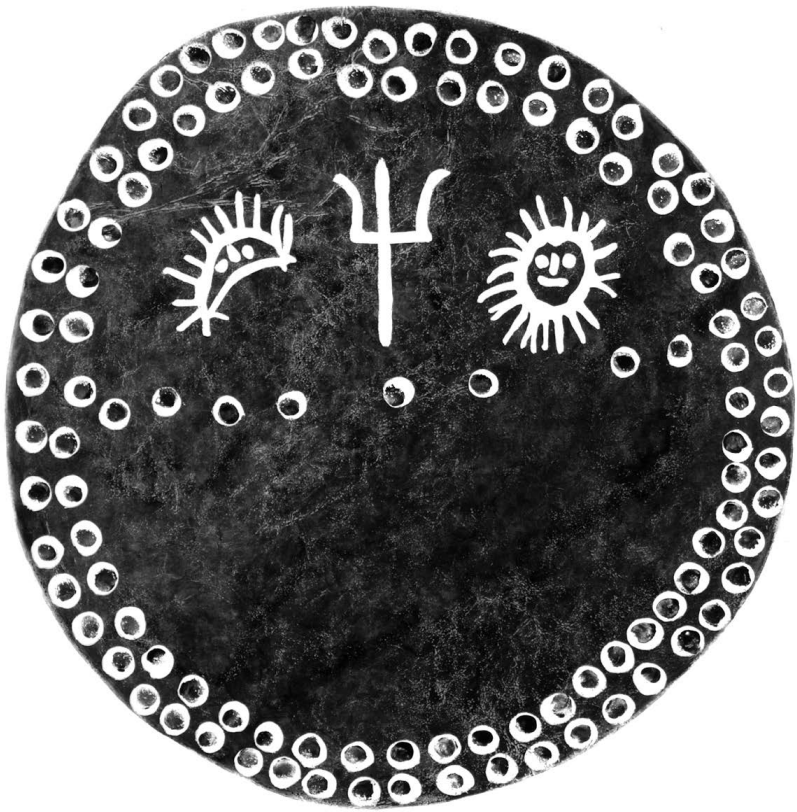

Fig. 10. Himalayan drum drawing in white clay, Tamang. Moon, a trident, sun and stars. Watercolor by Freda Heyden 2004.

vertical division, the emphasis is laid on depicting a world axis, running through the middle from top to bottom. Segmentation into three parts—by preference into superimposed, horizontal layers—illustrates a tripartite cosmos with sky, earth, and subterranean spheres. When the drum canvas is cut into four sections, stress is laid on a division according to the four points of the compass; at the crossing point in the center a circle may indicate entry into or exit out of extra-terrestrial spheres. A great number of drawings offer an aerial view, either up into a firmament filled with stars, or down to earth, populated with human and animal figures. This perspective contrasts with an opposite one:

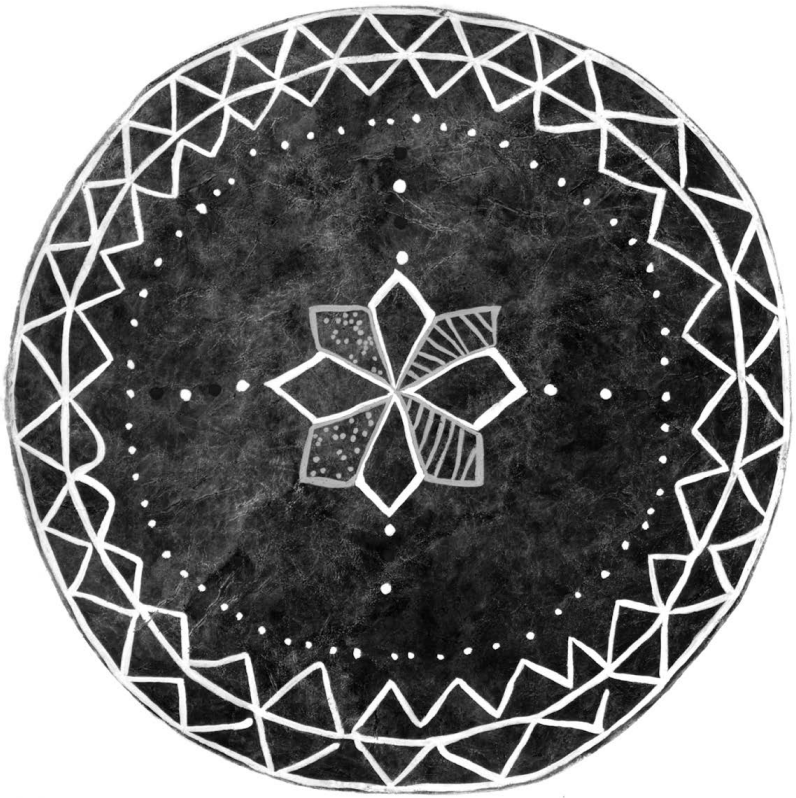

Fig. 11. Himalayan drum drawing on female side of the membrane in white and yellow clay, Sunuwar. Evening Star in the center, stars pointing to the four points of the compass and encircling the Evening Star. Outer circle: chain of mountains, border of the known world. Watercolor by Freda Heyden, 2004.

depiction *en face*. Change of perspective and variation in the choice of segmentation may occur within a single stylistic regional unit. Across these lines, any of the geometrical choices mentioned may occur, as well as any of the perspectives.

General statements of this kind are the outcome of comparisons. Such exercises in conceptual analysis, based on close observation, differ from conventional comparisons with diffusionist intent. These may be valid whenever dissemination or circulation of an idea, of a religious practice, or of a ritual object can be documented. Direct transmission may be

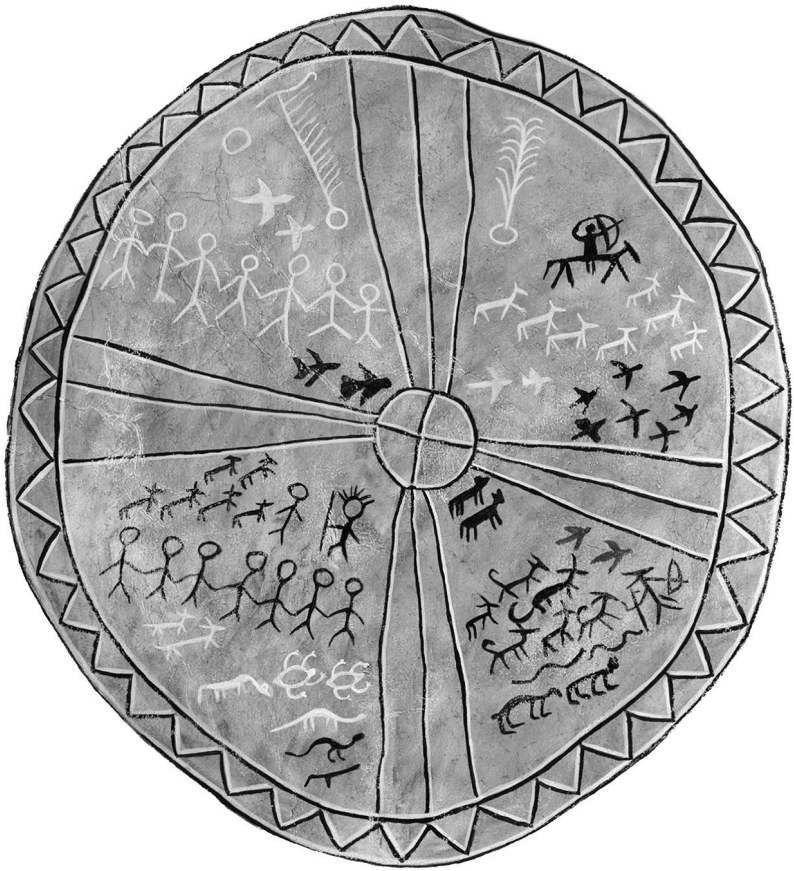

Fig. 12. Beltir drum drawing. Concentric quadripartition of cosmos, anthropomorphic and theriomorphic figures in four sections, framed by zigzag border lines. Museum for Anthropology and Ethnography, St. Petersburg. Watercolor by Freda Heyden, 2004.

expected between neighbors and neighbors of neighbors—such as in the honey-hunting myth of the peoples of the Kali Gandaki valley. It must be excluded when comparisons are made trans-continentally, as in the story of the parturient woman and the ways of her treatment. Are such comparisons, then, inadmissible? I think it depends on the intentions. When these are guided by the search for common origins, caution is called for. But comparison offers yet another access to similarities

Fig. 13. Ket drum drawing. Concentric display of cosmos in cobweb display with sun and moon left and right, figure of mythical shaman, Docha, below. Museum for Anthropology and Ethnography, St. Petersburg. Watercolor by Freda Heyden 2004.

and variation where historical connections are unlikely or implausible: comparative experimentation can be employed as a cognitive tool. When two things, only related by formal similarity and variation, are put under the same magnifying glass, the peculiar features of each emerge distinctly. I call this the dialectical effect of comparison. It all depends on the aims, named or unnamed, that such an exercise allows.

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Michael OPPITZ, born in Silesia in 1942; classical school education in Cologne, Abitur 1961; work as lumberjack on Vancouver Island; university studies at Berkeley, Bonn, and Cologne in Anthropology, Sinology and Sociology; first fieldwork 1965 amongst the Sherpa on tribal migration and clan history, published as book in 1968; doctorate 1974 with book on the history of structural anthropology; second fieldwork 1976–82 amongst the Magar, northwest Nepal; book on matrilateral cross-cousin marriage 1989 amongst the Magar as habilitation thesis; professorial jobs in Anthropology in Texas, Paris, Berlin, Kathmandu; 1986–87 Fellow at Institute for Advanced Studies, Berlin; full professor and director of Ethnographic Museum, Zürich, 1991–2008; emeritus since then; books in Himalayan studies, anthropological theory, visual anthropology, semiology, oral traditions, local religions.

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A Pandemic of Shamans: The Overturning of Social Relationships, the Fractured Communality, and Divergent Morality in Contemporary Mongolian Shamanism

IPPEI SHIMAMURA THE UNIVERSITY OF SHIGA PREFECTURE, JAPAN

The collapse of the socialist system, which began with the demise of the Soviet Union, has brought about the (re)structuring, or the new creation, of cultural and social bonds along religious lines in previously socialist countries. However, can it really be said that freedom of religion and faith necessarily brings about the (re)structuring of cultural and social bonds with roots in a shared religious experience? In this paper, I will address the phenomenon I describe as "a pandemic of shamans" in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar and report on the nature of the shamanism that, while building cultural and social bonds, is also fracturing and splintering those bonds. By acquiring an imaginary social position, those who become shamans overturn social relationships and fracture family bonds. Shamanism also gives rise to ethical models that differ from shaman to shaman. I will conclude by examining whether the practices of the shamans are a phenomenon unique to the post-socialist period or to shamanism in general.

Now is the time to ask, isn't it? Let's call the spirits (of the shamans) and ask them which way to go.
Let's ask: are our Mongol brothers are alive and well?
Let's ask: is all our Mongol land OK?
Let's ask: will the debts and the oppression go away?
Let's ask: what will happen to the poor masses? Who are the thieves?
Don't bother to ask! There is no person who can answer, no one!
Call the wise spirits who couldn't be satisfied in their previous lives and ask them!
Hey, shamans! Don't bother to ask the politicians!
(from the lyrics of "*Am Asuuya* (Let's Ask)" by the Mongol hip-hop group "Ice Top")

The collapse of the socialist system and the Soviet Union had an incalculable impact in the sphere of religion. The existing religions, suppressed under socialist atheism, were revived, and, once a closed society developed links with the outside world on a global scale, many foreign religions made their way to previously socialist countries. There was a resurgence of Orthodox Christianity in Russia, Islam in the various countries of Central Asia, and Buddhism and shamanism in Siberia and Mongolia. This has brought about the restructuring, or the new creation, of cultural and social bonds along religious lines (cf. Yamada 1998, 2002, 2004, 2007a, 2007b; Lewis 2000 [1971]; Menzel 2007; Fujimoto 2011; Shimamura 2002, 2004a, 2011, 2014a, etc.) With regard to Mongolia, various religious groups have flooded into the country, such as various Christian sects, the Baha'i faith, the Soka Gakkai from Japan, and Anang Arma, which originated in India. Among these, Christianity shows the most momentum in Mongolia: Christians account for 6% of the population as of 2004 (Takizawa 2011, 127). Meanwhile, the occult and magic are in vogue in the former socialist bloc because of the economic chaos and social uncertainty that accompanied the shift in social systems (Menzel 2007; Fujiwara 2010, etc.).

However, can it really be said that the freedom of religion and faith brought about by the collapse of socialism necessarily brings about the rebuilding, or the new creation, of cultural and social bonds with roots in a shared religious experience?

Undoubtedly, social bonds are being rebuilt by the institutionalized major religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, in their formation or rebuilding of religious communities and their connecting or reconnecting with local communities. In addition, in the case of an ethnic religion, it is predictable that religion can be an impetus for strengthening ethnic bonds anew. However, it is not certain, when it comes to post-socialist conditions, that religion can always rebuild cultural and social bonds. Taking northeast Asia after the collapse of the edifice of the Cold War structure as an example, where the generation of new religions and the penetration of foreign religions became entangled with one another, Katsuhiko Takizawa states that "it is not that religions and faiths are simply crossing borders; as people get caught up in new practices, their identity itself is shaken and shifts as it is remade again and again." Building on this, Takizawa uses the two concepts of "nomadizing religions" and "floating communality" to explain this religious communality that cannot be contained within either local or global structures (Takizawa 2011, 2–4).

Meanwhile, what about a non-institutional religion like shamanism? Fundamentally, shamanism does not have a unified canon or a religious organization. By adopting the form of "spirit revelations" by the spirits by whom they are possessed, the shamans become, essentially, "creators of tradition" who can create such things as ethical perspectives, worldviews, and ceremonial methods in any way they please (Shimamura 2011, 44). Could it not be that these kinds of shaman may, in response to the social and political environment, overturn various existing social values and even at times sever social bonds? In point of fact, it is said in Mongolia that "each shaman conducts ceremonies in different ways (*böö böönöör ondoo böölödög*)."

Quite naturally, shamanism is not totally lacking in the ability to forge social bonds. Indeed, traditional anthropology has repeatedly stressed that folk religions, including shamanism, assume the role of bonding the community together.

From 1999, I have been conducting field work on the Buryats who live in Mongolia and have clarified how the ethnic communality of the Buryats is being reconstructed through the phenomenon of multiplication, where "shamans are continually increasing to the point where they will make up 1% of the population" (Shimamura 2002, 2004a, 2011, 2014a).

What I want to present in this paper, however, are examples of shamanism that, while forging cultural and social bonds, also fractures those very bonds.[1]

Shamanism, which has long been understood as the religious practice of hunting and pastoral societies in North Asia, is not simply a static traditional belief; rather, its practice is changing with the progress of urbanization and mining development, which in turn is strongly connected to the global economy. Caroline Humphrey, in her examination of shamans in the post-socialist city of Ulan-Ude, Siberia, notes that

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[1] I first presented the idea for this paper under the title "The Increasing Shamans: The Situation in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia" at the 2010 Spring conference of the Japanese Association for Mongolian Studies (May 15, Obirin University). Additionally, after beefing up the data and deepening the discussion, I presented it under the title "Power, Morality, and Ethics: An Ethnographic Report on the 'Pandemic' of Shamanism in Contemporary Mongolia" in January of 2012 at the MIASU seminar at the department of Social Anthropology at Cambridge University (January 24). I further presented this paper at the 46th annual meeting of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology under the title "A Pandemic of Shamans: Some Thoughts on the Sudden Upsurge in Shamanic Activity in Contemporary Mongolia" (June 13, Hiroshima University).

the city is a context for shamanic activity but at the same time shamans themselves "actualize space," in de Certeau's phrase, and thereby create new contexts of the city (Humphrey 2002, 203–4).

However, what I aim to illustrate here is a shamanism which creates a new social context by destroying "traditional" knowledge and social contexts, by overturning social relationships, fracturing social communality, and diverging from the norm of society and/or morality.

In contemporary Mongolia, particularly in the capital of Ulaanbaatar, shamans are increasing dramatically, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, and wealth. In what follows, I discuss how, in this "plague of shamans" phenomenon, individual shamans overturn existing social relationships, rend apart social bonds, and, furthermore, shake apart what are considered to be "traditional" ethnic knowledge and customs.

In the sense that shamans are increasing, the examples from the capital of Ulaanbaatar I offer in this paper may, at first glance, seem to closely resemble those of the Mongol-Buryat's case that I studied previously. However, I want to point out that in contradistinction to the Buryat study, in which I undertook fieldwork around the year 2000, studying a minority in a remote region more than 600 km distant from the capital, in this study I undertook intermittent fieldwork starting ten years after that (March 2010 to March 2014) in the capital of Ulaanbaatar on people of various ethnic backgrounds, but concentrating on the Khalkh people (Khalkh Mongols), who make up more than 80% of the population of Mongolia. Regarding the "ever-increasing shamans" phenomenon, although there is continuity in increasing methodology between previous Buryat's case and today's Ulaanbaatar's case, there is important difference between them. The former was the case for reconstructing ethnic communality. On the contrary, the latter is the case for deconstructing social bonds and/or communality.

I first present a general overview of the phenomenon of pandemic of shamanism since the year 2000, while touching upon the social situation in Mongolia, which is now enmeshed in the global economy. In the third section, I discuss the ongoing "plague of shamans" phenomenon in the context of the various agents that are tangled up with shamanism. In the fourth and succeeding sections, I use concrete examples to show how shamans are, by overturning social relationships, breaking bonds, creating new "national knowledge," and atomizing the content of that knowledge. In conclusion, I examine whether these "deconstructive" practices of the shamans are a phenomenon particular to the post-socialist age or one particular to shamanism.

A Pandemic of Shamanism?

"Nowadays, there's a shaman in every home."
"My younger sister became a shaman too."

In recent years, conversations like this are whispered in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia (population 1.3 million). In Mongolian, a shaman is called a *böö* (a female shaman is called an *udgan*), and they are, in most cases, religious practitioners who are possessed by spirits (ancestral spirits in most cases) called *ongod*. In addition, shamans are often called *ulaach*, or "messengers," from the fact that shamans are understood to be entities who relay messages from the *ongod* spirits.

According to local media reports, in Mongolia, with a population of just under 3 million, the number of shamans has reached 20,000 to 30,000 at the present time. Shamans continue to increase day by day in the capital of Ulaanbaatar, and in mining towns (Shimamura 2014b), regardless of the ethnicity, gender, or economic position of the people who become shamans. Surprisingly, those who become shamans are not only regular, everyday people, but include celebrities such as singers (of rock and roll, hip-hop, and folk ballads, or *zokhioliyn duu*) and even members of parliament. In Mongolia, this phenomenon is described by the phrase "shamans are increasing almost like a plague (*khaldart övchin met böö tröröd baina*)."

Not only are shamans increasing, but businesses have sprung up that cater to the shamans. In Ulaanbaatar, many shops specializing in clothing and equipment for shamans have opened their doors; in the city's large open-air market, called Naran Tuul Zakh, there is even a street with rows of such shops.

In the past, the shamans had to enlist the aid of others to make the various implements such as the stretched leather hand drums, the clothing that weighed tens of kilograms, and the mouth harps. Now, however, at these shaman equipment shops, ready-made drums and ceremonial equipment are for sale (Pl. 4 *a*).

Mongolia, the stage upon which this drama is unfolding, experienced a transitional period of social and economic depression and chaos as a result of the sudden switch to a market economy after the collapse of socialism in 1992. However, with the development of natural and mineral resources that started in earnest around the year 2000, Mongolia has experienced rapid economic development. In 2011, Mongolia recorded a growth rate

in GDP of 17.5%, the largest in the world. Most of this development of natural resources is made possible by the inflow of people and capital from global companies. For example, the Oyu Tolgoi mine in South Gobi, which is said to have the largest reserves of gold and copper in the world, is, for all intents and purposes, under the management of the Rio Tinto Group, a global concern based in the UK and Australia.[2]

Meanwhile, the widening gap between rich and poor is becoming increasingly noticeable in spite of this rapid economic development. In the capital of Ulaanbaatar, while there are the moneyed classes who live in fancy high-rise apartments or private mansions[3] and drive new Ferraris, Mercedes Benzes, and Hummers, there are also many poor people who don't know where their next meal is coming from. For the past few years inflation has been in double digits and the almost daily increase in the price of goods is readily apparent.

In 2012, the population of the capital of Ulaanbaatar, which is infested with shamans, was 1,318,000, out of a total population in all of Mongolia of 2,867,000 (National Statistical Office of Mongolia 2013, 82). As the population in 1992 was 590,000 (out of a total population at the time of 2,158,000), this means that the population of Ulaanbaatar has doubled in twenty years. Today, almost half of the population of Mongolia is concentrated in the capital. The "development" of Ulaanbaatar since 2000 has been remarkable, with high-rise buildings going up one after the other and shops specializing in brands such as Gucci and Chanel, and fancy restaurants opening in rapid succession.

On the other hand, slums (*ger khoroolol*), or yurt districts, are sprawling on the edges of the capital. The *ger* districts have been in existence since the socialist period and were formed by those who moved from the provinces to the capital, carrying their *gers* or yurts, the moveable dwellings of the nomads. Once the move has been made to the capital, however, there is a tendency for the *ger*s to morph into wooden houses, so, contrary to

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[2] In addition to these large mines, many smaller mines have been found and strip-mining is ongoing. At these smaller mines, illegal miners called "ninja 3" have appeared, and anthropological studies with these people as the subject have made their appearance (High 2008, 2010).

[3] During the socialist period, planned apartment complexes were built in Ulaanbaatar, but no single-family homes were built. Around 2000, the wealthy classes, taking the wealthy classes of the West as their example, started to build large single-family homes. In Mongolia, such an upscale home is called a "house (*khaus*)." This is, of course, the English "house," adopted as a loanword.

their name, the "*ger* districts" now contain more wooden houses than *ger*s. It is safe to say that this sudden increase in the population of the capital is, rather than being a natural increase, due to this influx of people from the provinces. In addition, it is said that 60% of the present population of Ulaanbaatar live in these *ger* districts (Nishigaki 2010, 198).

In addition, while there is electricity in the *ger* districts, there are no water and sewer services, and the residents draw water from water-supply stations, while simply discharging household sewage into the streets. Toilets are simply holes dug into the ground, and the contaminated water that seeps out drains into the rivers together with household waste. Trash is strewn everywhere, and drunkards and pickpockets are rampant.

The negative side of economic development is not limited to the *ger* districts. Ulaanbaatar has some of the worst air pollution of any city in the world. In the winter in particular, exhaust from the ever-increasing number of cars, and smoke from the charcoal and coal burned in the *ger* districts for heating and cooking, enshroud the city, and it is impossible to go out of doors without wearing a surgical mask. According to the World Bank, 90% of this atmospheric pollution is caused by the smoke put out by the homes in the *ger* districts (Nishigaki 2010, 199). Most of the shamans come from these *ger* districts.

There is one more thing that we must not forget. This is the fact that in the urban society of Ulaanbaatar, extreme infatuation with foreign items coexists with rampant exclusionary sentiment directed at foreigners. For example, out of a registered population of 1,320,000, nearly 90,000 have traversed the world to places like Korea, the United States, and the Czech Republic as either migrant workers or students, with the result that Ulaanbaatar is intimately connected to the wider world, so much so that there is practically no-one in the city who does not have relatives abroad. The young people in today's Mongolia are eager to study foreign languages and go abroad, whether it is for work or study (Shimamura 2004b). To put it another way, those people who have gone abroad, or are going to go abroad, are not only in a better economic position than others but become objects of envy.

On the other hand, xenophobic feelings are now getting stronger and stronger. For example, while the Mongols have always disliked the

Chinese intensely,[4] even since the socialist period, today, as the boom in mining development, roads, and construction continues, a sense of crisis regarding the Chinese, who are investing vast sums of money and sending hordes of workers into Mongolia, has only strengthened Sinophobic feelings. In point of fact, several years ago, a right-wing group burned down a number of Chinese restaurants displaying signs written in Chinese characters, with the result that today, none of the Chinese restaurants in Ulaanbaatar display signs written in Chinese any more.

Hatred against Koreans is also on the increase. For Mongolia, Korea is an important destination for guest workers, and at the same time, Korean-style dramas and pop music are very popular. On the other hand, many people tell stories about Koreans, discriminating against them and looking down on them at their places of work. Also, the night trades in Ulaanbaatar are completely dominated by Korean interests, with the result that many city dwellers have taken a dislike to Koreans. What is surprising is that recently I have begun to hear people express anti-American sentiments. Since the collapse of socialism, for the Mongols, America has been an object of admiration, the source of Hollywood movies and popular music, and the symbol of wealth and freedom.

However, since 2000, I have started to hear expressions of contempt directed at Americans, such as "you damn Yankee!" (*ene muu yankiinuud*!). Even though I don't see any conspicuous anti-Japanese activity, we must not forget that Japanese are the victims of robberies and the like. This xenophobic atmosphere can be understood from the biting social commentary in the lyrics of some Mongolian hip-hop (Shimamura 2008).

Let us return to the discussion of shamanism. Among shamans there are those who engage in cultish activities. In the winter of 2009, a shaman caused a scandal when he insisted that the heart of an eighteen-year-old woman was needed to protect the nomads in the provinces from a drought (Notstoi Medee 2009). In addition, there was also an incident at the end of 2011 where a certain shaman told a client "You will suffer misfortune if you don't become a shaman," and then, when the client refused the shaman's demands for an exorbitant initiation fee,

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[4] The feelings of hatred that Mongols have towards Chinese had been on the increase since the end of the Qing dynasty, but it is conceivable that the Mongol government and the Communist Party, which sided with the Soviet Union in the Soviet–Chinese split of the latter half of the 1950s, strengthened these feelings as a matter of policy in the process of building up Mongol nationalism.

tried to set fire to the client's car during the night. He was caught in the act by the police (Byambadulam 2012).

In the spring of 2011, there was another uproar when a shaman predicted that a great earthquake would strike Ulaanbaatar. This was taken up by newspapers, magazines, and radio, with the result that the residents who believed her fled the capital *en masse*. Not discouraged by this, this same shaman, on the basis of the "Mayan calendar," subsequently predicted that the world would end on December 23, 2012. Until that day passed, there were many who believed in "the end of the world." There was also an incident where at a shamanic initiation, the master shaman demanded that the initiate inhale the steam of some alcohol that the shaman had boiled, which led to the death of his disciple (Erdene 2011). There are also criticisms that shamanism is nothing but a pyramid scheme, where, for an exorbitant initiation fee, shamans are manufactured one after the other, from the master to his disciple and his disciple's disciples (Gerelt 2013).

In short, shamanism presents a serious social problem in contemporary Mongolia. Society has come to recognize the understanding that shamanism is a "traditional religion" of the Mongolian people. From the 1990s, some Mongolian historians and anthropologists have become believers in shamanism, and statements such as "shamanism is a traditional religion that has been in existence since the time of Chingis Khan" can be seen in research papers (Pürėv 1998, 2000, 2002). This tendency became even stronger between around 2005 and 2010. For example, B (sixty years old, male), who is known as the "Great National Shaman" (*töriin zairan*), has, on numerous occasions, conducted the religious rites of Mount Burkhan Khaldun, which is believed to be the birthplace and the tomb of Chingis Khan, and the religious rites of the sacred mountain of Bogd Khan that faces Ulaanbaatar on the south. Important members of the government, including the president and various ministers often attend these ceremonies.

Also, in December of 2009, an informational program about shamanism called "Heaven Times" (*Tengeriin Tsag*) (Saturdays from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.) premiered on television. The show is in the discussion format, where the host talks with two guests (scholars well versed in shamanism, and shamanists, for example) about the history and culture of shamanism, and where the guests answer questions from the audience. This show aired until March of 2011. In addition, under the "supervision" of Mongolian scholars, including cultural anthropologists, the

monthly magazine about shamanism, "Heavenly Shamans" (*Tengerleg Böö*), was launched in January of 2011 (Fig. 1).

This magazine is composed of interviews on the lives of the shamans, their "doctrine," ghost stories that have happened to them, and articles by scholars on subjects such as shamanism, traditional ceremonies, and myths. This magazine also features articles on such things as traditional observances and divination relating to shamanism. In this atmosphere, in March of 2011, two public lectures were given by Mongolian cultural anthropologists, philosophers, and journalists known as experts on shamanism at a large disco club rented out for the purpose. The objective of the lectures was to present a "correct understanding" of shamanism to the local people. Even though there was an entrance fee, the venue was packed with more than 1,000 people. Of course, this lecture was featured in a special report in *Tengerleg Böö* (2011, 20–1).

The issue here is the fact that the people of Mongolia themselves do not understand the reasons behind the plague-like spread of shamanism. Why, exactly, are the people so devoted to shamanism? In the next section I introduce the various agents connected to shamanism.

Fig. 1. The monthly magazine *Tengerleg Böö* (Heavenly Shamans). Photo: Ippei Shimamura.

It is probably not possible to identify which of these various agents is a single "source of infection," but I will show how people choose the road of shamanism amidst the interplay of these various agents.

How Do People Become Shamans?

What/who is the "source/agent of infection" behind the plague of shamans? The first candidates that come to mind are, of course, the shamans who survived the religious repression of socialism. While Mongolia is a multiethnic state that has eighteen different ethnic groups within it, the Khalkh Mongols make up more than 80% of the population. However, as a result of the spread of Buddhism among the Khalkh Mongols from the eighteenth century onwards, it is not an exaggeration to say that when socialism collapsed at the beginning of the 1990s, there were practically no Khalkh Mongol shamans to speak of.

Many of the residents of Ulaanbaatar today describe the reason for their relatives or friends becoming shamans, using the phrase *ug nekhekh* (the roots demand/pursued/pestered) in the passive voice, to mean "they are importuned by the roots." Virtually, this expression, which is used among the Buryat shamans of Dornod province, is the vernacular explanation of the cause of misfortune (VECM), and means that people who have suffered misfortune are required by the roots spirits (ancestral spirits) to become shamans (Shimamura 2011, 2014a).

In addition, the Buryat refer to the process wherein at an initiation, after the roots spirit that is troubling the shaman candidate who has fallen victim to the mystic sickness is clearly identified, the candidate learns the techniques by which he or she may possess him or herself of that spirit, as *ug barikh* (to catch the roots). This shamanic term, of Buryat origin, is now shared by the people in Ulaanbaatar as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

What we must note here is that in today's Mongolia, the triggers for a person becoming a shaman do not fit into the framework of the conventional study of shamanism. Briefly, in general, the triggering events for a person becoming a shaman can be separated into three broad types: (1) "the divine call type," where as a result of a mystical experience that accompanies the mystic sickness a person is called to become a shaman by a supernatural entity; (2) the "hereditary type," where shamanism

is inherited through a special blood relationship; and (3) the "training type," where a person acquires the skills of a shaman through training (Sasaki 1984, 20; 1992, 249–72). However, in modern-day Mongolia, most shamans become shamans because a third party (another shaman) has determined that misfortunes and disasters that have befallen a person mean that that person is destined to be a shaman. That is, a major characteristic of the "plague of shamans" phenomenon lies in the fact that the underlying vernacular explanation of the cause of misfortune (VECM) is directly linked to the process of becoming a shaman. In other words, they become shamans primarily in order to resolve their own personal suffering. Therefore, contemporary shamans in the capital city are not masters of black magic who can affect the fate of traditional clans or village communities, nor do they operate for the sake of a particular group of believers.[5] Generally, many shamans form groups called *otog*, composed of a master shaman at the top with many disciple shamans and their families and relatives under the master. However, once a disciple shaman has been visited by the "spirit call," the disciple shaman quits the *otog* with hardly a backward glance and sets up shop as a "one-man company." In that sense, it is safe to say that, fundamentally, shamans work for a very small group of family and friends.

Among ethnic groups in Mongolia reputed to have a strong culture of shamanism, it is said that, whereas the Buryat create shamans by means of the roots-caused theory of disaster, shamanism among the Darkhad is passed on by the hereditary method (Diószegi 1963; Badamkhatan 1965). Consequently, among the Darkhad, there is no need to go out of one's way to search for spirits that demand that a person become a shaman. Also, there is no clear expression among the Darkhad that connects becoming a shaman with disaster or misfortune. Furthermore, in contradistinction to the Darkhad, who are very insular in relation to the majority Khalkh Mongols, the Buryat shamans have intermixed with the Khalkh and other ethnic groups and are thus not so insular in relation to outsiders.

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[5] Of course, some shamans, together with their disciple shamans and their believers (the families of the disciple shamans), create groups similar to religious organizations to carry out their activities. Such groups are called "shaman *otog*s" (*böögiin otog*). The word *otog* originally referred to a socio-political group in fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Mongolia (Atwood 2004, 430) and there were too many *otog*s to count. Of course, there are many shamans who operate without creating an *otog*.

A Buryat shaman from Dornod province who came to live in the capital (female, in her fifties) said that since coming to the capital she has taken more than 300 disciples (that is, she has trained more than 300 new shamans). However, she says that another female Buryat shaman she knows has taken 700 disciples.[6]

In contradistinction to this, a Darkhad shaman (female, in her fifties), even though she admits that she has taken disciples, says that "in our tradition, it is forbidden to take more than five disciples," thus indirectly indicating her displeasure at the activities of the Buryat shamans. Taking all of the above together, there is little doubt that the Buryat are one of the likely "sources of contagion."

Intriguingly, nobody knew and even understood the phrases *ug nekhekh* (the roots demand/pursued), or *ug barikh* (catch the roots) in Ulaanbaatar around 2000, when I used them after returning there from doing fieldwork in Dornod province. That is to say, it is conceivable that these notions of VECM, which derived from the Buryats, have diffused from Dornod as far as the normal citizens of the capital over the course of a decade. In fact, as I discuss later, most of the shamans I met in the capital practice a shamanism that has this cause of misfortune theory as its basis.

In the process of this VECM being transmitted to the Khalkh, there are cases of this VECM changing at the rhetorical level. For instance, a Khalkh shaman (male, in his thirties) said to me that "*ug nekhekh* is the tradition of the Buryat. We Khalkh have the tradition of *Tenger nekhekh* (heaven demands)." Another Khalkh shaman (male, in his forties), after giving a similar explanation, said "We Khalkh are not demanded by the *ug*, we are demanded by the *shüteen* (idol, deity)." In spite of inventing neologism among Khalkhs, it can be said their usage of VECM is almost same with Buryat original one.

Another possible agent for the plague can be the shamans' associations. Today, there is a jumble of competing shamanic associations in Ulaanbaatar. I had interviews with Mr. S in his fifties), a representative of the G Center, which is one of the largest shamanic associations. Although he was originally an elementary-school teacher, he got interested in shamanism and has been conducting non-academic research from the end of the

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[6] However, there are apparently many cases where people from the majority Khalkh group who have become shamans (even if they first became shamans by apprenticing to Buryat shamans) later leave their teachers, saying that they have been instructed by "the spirits" that Khalkh and Buryat traditions are different.

1990s. He has written many books on shamanism and is well known in the "shaman industry." He is not himself a shaman, however. According to S, about 700 shamans are members of the Center (as of August of 2011) and he acts as a consultant to explain shamanism to people who ask about it, and in addition to disseminating "correct information" on shamanism by publishing books and contributing articles to newspapers and magazines, the Center provides shamans to conduct the annual religious rites of Mount Burkhan Khaldun. The reason S emphasizes "correct information on shamanism" is because he is familiar with the numerous cases of injury and fraud and absurd initiation demands involving shamans, and because, as he told me, "I want people to know the correct information based on Mongol tradition." However, when I asked him about the increase in shamans, he said "they're like a plague" and affected a concerned manner. On the other hand, he also said the following:

An *ongod* (spirit) who possessed a shaman in our association predicted that "by 2012 ten thousand 'heavenly blue warriors' (*tengriin khökh tsereg*) of the era of Chingis Khaan will descend to earth." I think that "heavenly blue warriors" refers to the shamans. Today, there are 15,000 Christian missionaries here in Mongolia. There are 4,500 lamas. The Christians say that by 2015 they are going to raise the number of Christian believers in Mongolia to 400,000. It's a cultural invasion, isn't it ? (Interview, March 2011)

One can gather from this statement that S believes that in contemporary globalizing Mongol society, shamanism exists as an expression of nationalism. Also, while S does not see "the plague of shamans" in a positive light, it can also be said that he is driving the increase in shamans.

Finally, scholars and journalists can be named as agents contributing to the outbreak of shamans. The cultural anthropologist B (university professor, male, in his thirties), who supervises the magazine devoted to shamanism that I mentioned previously, says the following:

Shamans are increasing like a plague? Exactly! That's because shamanologists like you and me are here (laugh). Actually, I would like to contribute to our society because each anthropologist is required to have "social impact," an idea I got from the university I studied at in the UK. This school is always demanding scholars to make a social impact. I also want to contribute to our society by giving public lectures on shamanism. (Interview, August 2011)

In response to his boasting, I cautioned him, "Don't you think that academic researchers need to be fair and impartial? I think it is better not to get too deeply involved in religion," and he replied "Yes, I know. That is precisely why I am teaching people the 'correct knowledge of shamanism'."

Meanwhile, the host of the shamanism information television program that I previously mentioned, the journalist D (male, in his thirties) originally specialized in economics and was reputed to have been an atheist. However, four years previously, his elder sister was cured of an illness by becoming a shaman, and thereafter D became a believer/practitioner in shamanism. In the space of those four years, not only his elder sister, but his younger brother, and then, finally, his wife, also became shamans. D says that in that process, he became interested in shamanism and came to believe in the "reality" of the *ongod*s (spirits) and to believe in the shamans. According to D, "the *ongod*s sometimes make mistakes because they were/are humans." Also, some shamans are more powerful than others, so he says that he tests the extent of a shaman's powers (conducts experiments). Briefly, he said that he had asked sixteen different shamans to put a magical spell on sixteen different wheat fields, all of which were identical in size, and as a result of the competition as to which wheat field gave the greatest harvest, D said that he "understood which *ongod* was the best." (Interview, March 2011)

From the above, we may reasonably conclude firstly that even intellectuals who are concerned with shamanism, such as academic researchers and journalists, are generally believers in shamanism. The second point is that they have a dichotomous way of thinking, in which there is "correct shamanism" and "incorrect shamanism." Finally, and most importantly, those who are called "specialists" in shamanism are deeply involved in the "shamanization" of the people.

Now, let us examine specifically how Ulaanbaatar citizens are becoming shamans. When I speak with people who have become shamans, what becomes clear is that in response to calamities such as illnesses or accidents that affect the shaman himself or herself, or illnesses of family members, in most cases they go to a hospital for treatment, and in parallel with that, go to a Buddhist temple and have the lamas chant sutras to ward off evil. Mongolian Buddhism performs the ceremonies for warding off evil that would be done at a Shinto shrine in Japan. Just as with Shintoism in Japan, this chanting of sutras to ward off evil comes with a price schedule, and it is safe to say that it is quite perfunctory. In any case, if even in spite of this effort the situation does not improve, or if some other

new problem occurs, the people elect to visit a shaman. When they do, some people search for shamans through the grapevine, but many ask the associations. There are also cases where people meet shamans through the introduction of researchers at the university they are attending, and the shamans recommend that those people become shamans themselves.

For example, A, a Khalkh man in his thirties, after graduating from high school, was making his living by fixing equipment in Gachuurt, a mining town on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar. He has been a shaman for less than a year, but he is reputed to have a number of disciples. A number of years before he became a shaman, he was afflicted with cirrhosis of the liver. Disconsolate over the fact that he had not long to live, he fell into a life of debauchery, but a fellow student from his high-school days who had since become a cultural anthropologist introduced him to a shaman and he became the shaman's disciple. His master was a member of the Khotgoid ethnic group. He says that after becoming a shaman, the condition of his liver mysteriously improved (interview from March 2011). In Mongolia, sicknesses of this kind are called "the shamanic illness" (*böögiin övchin*).

J (Khalkh, female, thirty-seven years old) is from South Gobi province. She studied business administration in college and was working as a hotel manager. She says she has been a shaman for a year. In her case, the reason she became a shaman is a combination of factors; although the "shamanic illness" was not particularly severe, it was accompanied by a "mystical" experience of receiving the call. Originally, J had no interest in shamanism whatsoever. However, in the spring of 2008, on the invitation of a co-worker, she went to see a shamanic ceremony out of simple curiosity, and the experience had a profound effect on her destiny. J describes her experience as follows (interview, March 2011).

> The shaman who conducted the rite was named *udgan* Bayarmaa who had a Khalkh father and a Buryat mother. She was a woman about my age. However, for some reason or another I had been feeling ill ever since I had come to the ceremony. I had a feeling that if I thought about bad things they would actually happen. I threw up a few times. I did things like shaking my head sharply to drive away bad thoughts. A little while after the ceremony, some time around June, I came down with tonsillitis. I had a high fever was bedridden for three days. During that time, the *udgan* (female shaman) appeared in my dreams and tried to take something out of my mouth. But she just couldn't get it out. When I looked closely, something that looked like a black snake was trying to get out.

J, concerned about the dream, went to see *udgan* Bayarmaa. Thereupon, the spirit who possessed Bayarmaa said "Well, well, a Khalkh *udgan* has appeared. Why is she here? It's not yet time." However, not accepting that she was to become a shaman, J didn't do anything for half a year. However, one day J's younger brother was in a traffic accident and suffered some broken bones. Growing uneasy, J consulted a different female shaman and was told "Do not forget that the Law of Heaven is strict! (*tengeriiin khuul' khatuu gej sanaad bai!*)." J went to see *udgan* Bayarmaa as well, but was told "It's no good asking only one shaman. You need to get the opinions of various different *böö*s." J spent two months asking various shamans. She also went to see a fortune-teller. However, in response to her question "Must I become a shaman?" every one of them said "Yes."

Resigning herself to her fate, J went to see *udgan* Bayarmaa one more time. Thereupon, *udgan* Bayarmaa told her: "You were supposed to have caught your roots (become a shaman) when you were fifteen all along. Those roots are a number three *taiji* (prince, the title of the nobility among the Mongols from the sixteenth century) of some Khan or other." Thinking back, J remembered that she had had an encounter with a snake when she was fifteen. She said that she interpreted that as a foreboding. This is what led J to undergo an initiation in October of 2008 and become a shaman.

While there are cases like that of A and J, where people become shamans to the accompaniment of the shamanic illness, there are many cases where people become shamans without being afflicted by illness.

For example, T (female, thirty years old), mentally exhausted from two divorces, came to Ulaanbaatar around 1988 from Uvs province, accompanied by her parents and younger sister. T is an ethnic Bayad Mongol from western Mongolia. Currently, she lives in a *ger* district with her parents, her two children, and her unmarried older sister. She graduated from high school, but, approaching thirty years of age, she attended university and studied bookkeeping and accounting. T has an eight-year-old son and a three-year-old daughter, each with a different father.[7] T reminisces as follows: "Generally, people who have suffered become shamans. There is even a seven-year-old orphan who became a

[7] I interviewed and observed T on two separate occasions, March of 2011 and September of 2012.

shaman. In my case, my suffering was that I was deserted by my husbands." She says that, mentally exhausted because of her second divorce two years ago, she became a shaman on the recommendation of a shaman in Ulaanbaatar. In short, in T's case, she chose to become a shaman as a result of the suffering brought on by her second divorce.

B (male, forty-five years old), who has been a shaman for three years, and who has a number of disciples, also did not experience the shamanic illness. He relates his experiences as follows (interview, September 2012). "They say that people usually become shamans in the midst of some misfortune, disaster, or suffering, but for me there wasn't really anything like that to speak of. I just started having some problems at work. I didn't think of going to a shaman on my own."

After the collapse of socialism, B was an independent businessman called a "milk exchanger " buying milk from nomadic herders in the countryside and selling it to dairy factories in Ulaanbaatar. Taking advantage of the paralysis of the distribution system between the capital and the rural provinces caused by the dissolution of the collectives in the 1990s after the collapse of socialism, businesses like B's could reap tremendous profits. Essentially, the middlemen would buy dairy products, meat, and animal skins from the herders at low prices and sell them in the capital city at high prices, and then turn around and buy everyday necessities such as clothing and shoes cheaply in the cities and sell them to the nomads at high prices. However, as the distribution system came to be regulated, these sorts of independent operators were squeezed out. B continued his story:

> However, my family was worried about me since I was no longer making money, and said that I should see a shaman and that I should become a shaman. It was a real bother. But, as some of my family started to get sick and as my work started to go south, I started to think that I should become a shaman. There aren't that many people who become shamans because of some personal worry. It's when their families or their relatives start to suffer that they see that they should become shamans.

The pop singer U (Khalkh woman, in her thirties) encountered a shaman when her popularity as a singer started to wane and she had gradually come to indulge in drinking. There were also times when she assaulted her husband when she was drunk. A Buryat shaman judged

that this was happening because she was being "demanded by the roots," and so she became a shaman (interview, March 2011).

In this way, a fairly large number of people are becoming shamans simply as a way of solving personal problems, without the accompaniment of the shamanic illness. Furthermore, when a new shaman is born, we understand that although a number of different agents, such as the shamans, the shamans' associations, journalists, researchers such as local anthropologists, and the like are all interconnected in complex ways, they all share a universal understanding. This is the thought process which determines spirits as the cause of misfortune, in which problems such as a person or his or her family members falling ill or meeting with accidents, work not going well, or strife and discord in the family, regardless of the mediation of any agent, are understood to occur because the person is being "pursued by the roots" (or "pursued by heaven"). What infects people is precisely this "cause of disaster" theory.

Upended Social Relationships

On becoming a shaman, the neophyte is endowed with honorable titles by the spirits' oracle, such as *taiji* (prince), *noyon* (the noble), *tüshmel* (government official). These are bestowed according to the titles the shaman's ancestral spirits had while they were alive. This imaginary social status inspires awe in others.

The upending of social relationships in present-day Mongolia that results from people becoming shamans has begun to appear not only on the micro-level of the family but also on the macro-level of relatives and friends.

First, once a shaman is born in a family, the parent–child and sibling relationship in the ritual space is upended. For example, even if the new shaman is young, if the spirit that takes possession of the shaman is male, he is called "grandfather" (*öv*öö), and if the possessing spirit is female, she is called "grandmother" (*buuralaa*). The reason for this is that for the family of the shaman, the spirits are the spirits of their ancestors.

Meanwhile, the "spirits" call the participants in the ceremony, such as the family and relatives, "dear children" (*balchiruud*).

For example, in the case of T, the woman in her thirties who lived in the *ger* district whom I mentioned earlier, she was very solicitous of her parents, who lived with her, and she took care of most of the household

tasks in her daily life. However, when she was possessed by a spirit in a ceremony, her behavior changed suddenly. Wearing her shaman's clothing and possessed of the spirit, she spoke harshly to her mother, who was in obedient attendance on her, saying "You treated your daughter, my messenger, in any way you pleased!" and she struck her mother with the drumstick of her stretched leather drum and with her sword handle. Not only did her mother not resist this treatment, she prostrated herself and apologized, saying "Forgive me, Grandmother!"

Furthermore, the "Grandmother" who possessed T took the smart phone that T's younger sister had in her hand and threw it to the ground, saying "Mongols don't need these foreign things!"[8]

The spirit left, and T removed her shamanic garments. T said that she was embarrassed when her family told her that Grandmother sometimes showed her bad side, but she also spoke rather proudly of the fact that "All of my relatives visit me to pay their respects (*zolgokh*) at the lunar New Year," referring to the Mongol custom of visiting their elders' relatives at this time. According to T, the "Grandmother" that possesses her is an ancestor who lived 180 years ago. T said "I am 34, but at the same time, I am 'Grandma'." The figure of T's mother who, even after the ceremony was over, treated her daughter with greater than necessary consideration, left an impression on me.

T's case may be a little extreme, but even if the "Grandfather" or the "Grandmother" have gentle personalities, there is no difference in how the families wait upon the shamans who are their mystical vessels. For example, an eighteen-year-old male medical student, whose father is the vice-president of a university, siad that his father was very oppressive and did not listen to anything he said. However, when he became a shaman, his father's attitude changed 180 degrees. Now, whenever he did anything, he asked his son's opinions first.

In fact, at ceremonies, his family waited upon their son or son's spirit and consulted him or it on all manner of things. There are also many cases where the spirits who possess the shamans, being of the "royalty or the nobility" or legendary heroes from the past, upend the social hierarchy and erase the social distinctions between superior and inferior.

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[8] After studying Korean at university, T's younger sister became an interpreter and a Korean language teacher, and had the highest income of anyone in the family. It seemed that T was jealous of this.

For example, in the case of J, the former hotel manager I mentioned earlier, it was "revealed" that the spirit that possessed her was a *taiji* (prince), and the spirit "demanded" a *taiji* hat, expensive Mongolian traditional (male) shoes, and a marble snuff bottle (*khöölög*). What happens is that the family and relatives have to share the cost of purchasing such items, or, alternatively, the spirit will designate a specific person in the family and have that person purchase the items. J explained this as follows:

> Generally speaking, *ongod*s love to be respected. Especially my *ongod* loves to be treated with tea and foods, and loves to be bowed to because he was a *taiji* (prince) in his previous life.
>
> That's because the *tushee*'s [the shaman's assistant, the interlocutor with the spirits] tasks are crucial. When I had a ritual with a fellow female shaman, the spirit who possessed me said, "Oh, it's too bad. There are few people here." The reason he complained is that he had lived with many servants in his previous life.

Although J is a woman, during a ceremony she behaves like a *taiji* (prince) of the Qin era (1691–1911). As a result, gender role reversal occurs at ceremonies. In January of 2009, not long after she had become a shaman, J related how her father's younger brother and his wife took her to see a shaman from Uvs, who lived in Tolgoit (a place in the *ger* districts in Ulaanbaatar). The male participants were seated on the west side of the *ger* and the women on the east side according to Mongolian tradition. During the ceremony, the spirit who possessed the shaman looked in J's direction and said "So, there is someone here whom I don't know. She must be the daughter of a *taiji*." When one of the participants said "There is an *udgan* here," J said that the spirit said to her "Sit in the *khoimor* (the high seat) on the western side." In other words, she was treated as a VIP by the shaman because the "high seat on the western side of the *ger*" is where the (male) master of the house sits in a traditional Mongol setting.

There are also cases where the reversal of social relationships breaks out of the realm of the religious imagination and invades the real world. A young man named Q, twenty-six years old, who calls himself

a Darkhad shaman,[9] styles himself a "professor emeritus" and "honorary doctor." According to Q, his parents died when he was a child, and his only surviving family member, his elder sister, also died. He was taken in by relatives, but because of an illness he had to withdraw from the vocational school he had been able to get into only with great effort. In this situation, he met a Darkhad shaman and became a shaman himself. Currently, Q is a leader who commands a group of thirty trainee shamans. He sports a high-handed and haughty attitude, referring to everyone, even if they are above him socially, in language that is normally reserved for social inferiors.

He lives in a *ger* district located to the northeast of Ulaanbaatar. His home is large and spacious, and doubles as a shaman center. It is surrounded by a stout concrete wall about two meters in height. There was a brand-new Mercedes Benz in the garage. There were a number of *urt*s (conical tents made of animal skins stretched over a circular wooden frame) in an open area about 100 meters from the side of the house. When I asked about them, he said that they were ceremonial tents for the use of his group.

When I first went to see Q in March of 2011, it was, coincidentally, "test day" for the disciple shamans. When I went to the appointed place the day's afternoon, a dozen of shamans with their families were gathered there. They are no particular differentiation by age or sex. The shamans were not just in their teens or twenties; there were also middle-aged people in their thirties and forties, and even some in their fifties or older. What was a little unusual was that the shamans in their teens and twenties were sitting cross-legged and in front of them were people in their fifties and sixties, who appeared to be their parents and grandparents, who were making a deep bow to them (Fig. 2). While the trainee shamans were all dressed in shamanic garb, Q alone was wearing jeans and a sweater. However, Q was wearing a *taiji* hat and a silver-colored silk vest embroidered with a dragon in gold thread over his sweater. His disciples and their parents referred to Q as *bagshaa* (teacher/master) and consulted him on various things.

After a short time, at Q's command, the trainees all began to beat their drums and began the possession ceremony. As the shamans were

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[9] There is little possibility that Q is a Darkhad: he is from Bulgan province, where hardly any Darkhad live, and there was an obvious spelling error in the Darkhad clan name on his business card.

possessed by the "spirits,"[10] the families of the shamans, all in like manner, waited in attendance upon the shamans and in response to the requests of the spirits passed around liquor, milk tea, and tobacco. One by one, the young head shaman Q checked how each of his disciples was conducting the ceremony.

At the end, Q said that he would announce the results of the test in his house, and went inside the house. At the far end of a room that appeared to be a parlor there was a large altar, which housed a lot of icons or figures of the spirits. In addition to figures of stuffed animals such as a bald eagle, a wolf, and a swan and the like in the front of the altar, the altar was covered with dozens of small brass plates like those used in Buddhist ceremonies. The plates held what appeared to be offerings to the spirits, such as dairy products, biscuits, and liquor and the like. In my studies of Darkhad and Buryat shamanism, I had never seen such a large altar. Next to this altar, Q was seated regally in a chair that looked like a "throne." When about thirty shamans and their families had gathered in the house, people were packed in like sardines. Thereupon, Q called each of his disciples by name and announced the results, saying this person had gone up one level, or this person had stayed at

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[10] It seems that for the shamans, spirit possession is not just a simple performance. There is research that disavows the trance and interprets possession as a kind of mimicry (Hamayon 1994) and research that sees possession as pure "behavior" (Hanabuchi et al. 2005). However, a different approach is possible. I heard two extremely interesting stories in the field in Mongolia. According to a certain male shaman, having a spirit enter is "having the feeling that one is present while saying something else." When he first experienced spirit possession, he thought, "Wow, I am really talking a lot of garbage," but that "the words came naturally." He says that he has only had this experience twice out of all of the ceremonies he has conducted. Recently, however, having had an experience wherein "I was in the midst of darkness and had no sensation of holding a drum. I had no sensation of speaking, but I was aware of myself. Afterwards, however, my family told me about all of the things I had said," he has come to believe that perhaps the spirits actually do exist. A female shaman says that "maybe the *ongod*s (spirits) aren't ancestral spirits that have taken human form but are the words themselves." That is, "when I begin to sing the songs of the shamans to summon the *ongod*, in the beginning, I am aware of myself. However, in the process of singing the alliteration in the song of summons, while it seems that I am aware of myself, the words start coming out before I know it. After it is over, strangely, I don't remember any of it. What I mean is, I have no idea what I said. It feels like I am saying things that I seem to understand but, at the same time, don't understand." What one can perceive from these stories is that "possession" is a technology for speaking words that are different from words that one would speak on purpose, words that one cannot consciously manipulate.

Fig. 2. A father makes a deep bow to his daughter, who has become a shaman. Photo: Ippei Shimamura, 2011.

the same level, and so on. The disciples expressed happiness or sadness as the "grades" were announced.

Once announcing the "grades" was over, I handed Q my business card to introduce myself as a researcher from Japan. Looking down his nose at me, Q responded by saying "OK, you may be a doctor, but I've got the degree of doctor and professor from the United States of America!" Then he haughtily tossed at me his business card as though he were throwing it in the garbage. On his card was written the title "Professor Emeritus, Honorary Doctor of International Shamanism Research." Q said that he received his "professorship" and his "Ph.D." in shamanism studies from R University in the United States. He showed me a picture of him in academic cap and gown. Introducing the subject with "Listen up: Mongol shamans are the strongest in the world," he went on to talk effusively about his ideas at a breakneck pace.

Thinking it strange that his own home formed the background of the commemorative photo of the receipt of his degree, after I had returned

to Japan I went on the internet and checked out R University. It turned out to be what is called a "diploma mill."

As can be seen from the above, shamanism is giving birth to the overturning of social relationships. Therefore, while on the one hand shamanism is restructuring the familial relationships among people who accept the entity called "shaman," on the other hand it also leads to the severing of relationships with people who do not accept shamanism.

Among the busy residents of Ulaanbaatar, daily interaction with family is decreasing. In this situation, I have heard many stories where, when a new shaman is born in a family, that shaman tells his family that "Grandfather wants to see everyone," and the whole family gets together after not having done so for a while. The people say that a shamanic rite held under such circumstances "is really enjoyable, almost like *tsagaan sar* [the traditional lunar New Year's ceremony]."

On the other hand, however, family bonds are sometimes torn apart. For example, a man in his forties (a university teacher) whose nephew (the son of his elder brother) became a shaman says that his relationship with his elder brother's family has become more distant as a result. "Why should I have to treat my nephew, on whom I have doted since he was a baby, as my 'grandfather'? I want to see my nephew, but I have no particular desire to see my 'grandfather'," he says. As a result, he doesn't go to see his elder brother as often as he used to.

Parenthetically, Mongols have a custom of presenting money to their elder relatives at the lunar New Year. However, once a person becomes a shaman ("grandfather," or "grandmother"), even if that person is young, they receive financial contributions, such as at the lunar New Year: shamanism is upending the gift-giving vector that is based on the traditional seniority system. It goes without saying that within a kin-relationship this will lead to ruptures in kin bonds.

To give another example, a female college student told me her experience of how becoming a shaman triggered a family feud. A year ago she started to neglect her studies and took to frequenting bars and clubs. Her elder brother came down with liver cancer, and she began to worry that this was connected to her dissolute nightlife. Upon consulting with a shaman on the advice of a professor of cultural anthropology at the university, she was told that her misfortunes were due to her "being pursued by the spirits." She started going to see the shaman regularly, but her family, including her sick brother, were violently opposed, lead-

ing to a worsening family situation. After a few months, she bowed to the wishes of her family and decided not to become a shaman.

One reason that can be given for opposition in a family to one of its members becoming a shaman is the astronomical costs involved. To begin with, to become a "grandfather" or a "grandmother" an ordinary person has to pay a sizeable fee for an initiation. Not only that, it costs two to five million *tögrög* ($1,200 to $3,000) to buy all of the ritual implements such as the shaman's drum, clothing, and shoes. Furthermore, the "grandfathers" and "grandmothers" who possess the shamans ask that the families and relatives gather frequently and regularly. At these gatherings, scenes like those at the lunar New Year party unfold, where children and grandchildren talk with their grandparents. Meanwhile, as I explain in the next section, "grandfather" and "grandmother" often ask their "children" for money and other things.

It is clear that this contemporary shamanism in Mongolia is no longer of the traditional hunter-gatherer or pastoral nomadic type. Nor is the "marginal cult" which the British anthropologist I. M. Lewis advocated (Lewis 1989 [1971], xiii, xiv, and *passim*) as the nature of shamanism, because not only are people who occupy marginal social positions such as women and the poor becoming shamans, but also those who occupy a higher status, such as politicians, businesspersons, and celebrities. Moreover, in contemporary Mongolia, across all social classes and regardless of gender, shamanism is overturning people's positions in society and the power relationships between them. It must also be emphasized that contemporary Mongol shamanism also creates rifts in existing personal relationships, within families, kinships, and friendships.

Power and Pride

It seems that the concept of "power" is very important for contemporary Mongol shamans because they unfailingly use the word "power, strength" (*khüch*) when I have interviews with them. For example, many shamans explained to me that the word *böö* (shaman) means "person with power" (*khüchten*). They also use expressions such as "He is a powerful shaman," or "Mongol shamans have the most 'power'." What, then, does this "power" consist of exactly?

In most cases the shamans themselves explain power as "the ability to achieve things for the sake of the people" (*khünii tölöö yum buteej chadakh chadvar*). I think it is safe to say that they understand this to mean the ability to provide suitable ways to ameliorate the distress and sufferings of the people (accomplished with advice from the spirits).

The shamans have two ways to increase the "power" that they have. One way is to perform an ordination ceremony to increase the shaman's rank. The other way is to worship holy mountains or *ovoo* (sacred cairn) in the land of their birth. By doing this, they increase their power (*khüch memegdedeg*). The ordination ceremony is often called a *shanar* in Buryat shamanism (*chanar* in Khalkh Mongolian). Parenthetically, the initiation ceremony for a person who is becoming a shaman is also called a *shanar* or *chanar*.

Some shamans say that *chanar* is the Buryat term, whereas the Khalkh term is *erdem* (scholarship, learning, wisdom). In addition, the previously mentioned ordination ceremony that I attended was called a *shalgalt*, that is, a "test."[11]

The initiation ceremony differs depending on the group (*otog*) to which the shaman belongs. There are also cases where within the *otog* the way the ceremony is carried out differs depending on "the instructions of the spirits." While researchers and journalists trumpet "knowledge of true shamanism," the ceremonial methods are spreading according to "the instructions of the spirits."

In the past, the Mongol Buryat would cut white birch trees from the mountains and create a man-made ceremonial forest on the steppe. The shaman would undergo a type of ascetic training, where, wearing the heavy shaman's clothing and beating his drum, he would run around this forest (Shimamura 2014a, 190–234). In contradistinction to this, the contemporary Khalkh shaman G (male, in his forties), built a campfire on the steppe and conducted a ceremony in which he ran around the fire when it was blazing at its brightest. In the "test" conducted by Q and his disciples there was none of this "running" as a form of ascetic training.

No matter what they call the ritual *shanar* or *chanar*, it is common to the ceremony that it is carried out on the instructions of the master shaman, and not only does the trainee shaman participate, but his or

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[11] As a result of the "test," ordination is conferred by master shaman Q, but I was unable to find out exactly what this ordination is called.

her family, relatives, and sometimes even his friends, also take part. As far as worship of holy mountains and *ovoo* is concerned, since the way in which the rites are carried out is determined by the instructions of the spirits, there is no common or shared way of doing things in contemporary Mongol shamanism.

The shamans or ancestral spirits often say that "the more people gather in the ritual, the more the shaman will get their power" (*Olon khün irekh tusmaa böö khün khüchee avdag*). Why does the shaman gain power when people gather? One shaman explained "this is because heaven and the spirits are happy when the people gather," but when I asked this question most shamans were unable give me a clear answer.

Although it is not clear what the shaman's "power" actually is, it can be said at least that he or she can earn more money and fame if many people gather for the ritual. This teaching seems to have strong affinity with a Mongolian traditional proverb (*züil tsetsen üg*):

Taniltai khün talyn chineetei
Tanilgui khün algyn chineetei

Those who have many acquaintances have as much capacity/strength/assets as steppe-land.
Those who have no acquaintances have as little capacity/strength/assets as a palm.

From this, it is certain that "grandfather" and "grandmother" will be happy when people gather at the ceremony. That is because the shamans acquire "power" that has been made visible through shamanic rituals. Supposing that the spirit who has possessed a shaman during the ceremony (grandfather/grandmother) is "revealed" to be a member of royalty or the nobility, they will demand goods that have *symbolic* value (Baudrillard 1993) commensurate with their social status.

For instance, there are many cases where shamans demand an expensive shaman hat. Although Mongols used to made shaman hats by simple black cloth with a human face embroidered on it, nowadays they have come to make brand-new and quite expensive shaman hats which are made after the model of the nobility's hats in pre-modern Mongolia (Pl. 4 *b*). Among female shamans, there are cases where the shamans wear hats of the same design as those worn by noblewomen during the time of the Great Mongol Empire (Fig. 3). As to the boots that the shamans wear, I have heard that some shamans, because of "grandfather's

demands," wear expensive Mongol shoes with luxurious decorations of embroidery and brocade, which can cost 3 million *tögrög* ($1,700).[12]

There are also times when snuff bottles made of expensive stone, which Mongols consider to be traditional symbols of wealth, are demanded. I have also heard of examples of the spirits demanding golden rings and expensive smart phones. What is interesting is that among contemporary shamans, even if the shaman is a woman, if the spirit that possesses her is male, the spirit/shaman will demand symbolic riches for a man from the people at the ceremony. It goes without saying, undoubtedly, that the property gained in this way belongs to "grandfather" and "grandmother" while at the same time belonging to the shaman.[13]

This lust on the part of the shamans to acquire symbolic riches parallels that of present-day society in Ulaanbaatar. Currently there is a very strong tendency for people to pump up their pride by flaunting things like big, showy cars, brand-new mobile phones, and brand goods, flaunting their high social position to other people.

In short, Ulaanbaatar citizens are rapidly internalizing today's capitalist values. If you listen in on the conversations of the people of Ulaanbaatar, you often hear things like "What kind of fancy car was so-and-so driving?" or "So-and-so stuck their new smart phone in my face and was bragging to me about it (*gaikhuulsan*)."

Along with mobile phones, automobiles are the main type of symbolic riches that can give visible form to a person's pride for contemporary Mongols. They are proud of driving big cars, even if the gas mileage isn't that good.[14] There are many large SUV-type cars in Ulaanbaatar, and

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[12] From an interview in March of 2014 at the Nalantuul market in Ulaanbaatar. At the time, one US dollar is approximately equal to 1760 MNT (Mongolian *tögrög*).

[13] Of course, not all shamans are "greedy" as in these examples. According to G, a male shaman in his forties, his "grandfather" wanted a silver ring and a silver bowl. However, G said that his grandfather told him to "worship at the *ovoo* (piled stone stupa) of the birthplace of the *ulaach* and place the silver bowl on top of it when you are finished," and so G and his family, even though they thought it was a waste, did as they were told. Also, the "grandfather" who possessed G did not wear the silver ring, but put it on a bundle of cloth known as a *manjig*. That is, G does not wear the ring on his own hand (interview, March 2014).

[14] This situation has improved somewhat recently. Since around 2013, many high-mileage Toyota Priuses have made their appearance on the streets of Ulaanbaatar.

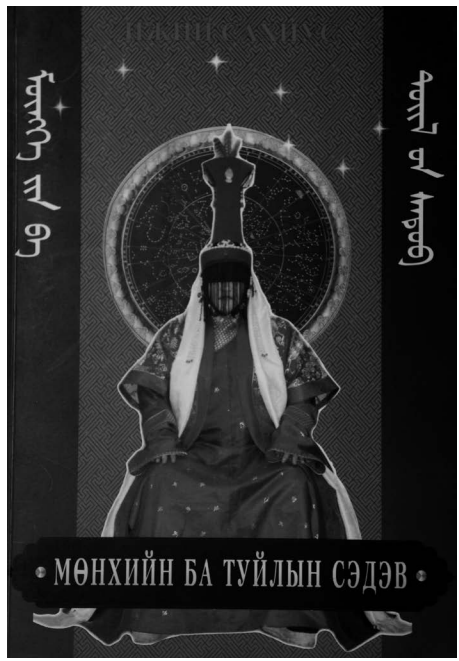

Fig. 3. The clothing of a female shaman (from the cover of a book on shamanism). It is clear that this clothing is modeled on that of a noblewoman of the Great Mongolian Empire period. The bundles of black cords that cover the face are unique to shamanism and were not originally seen on the hat of a noblewoman. Photo: Ippei Shimamura.

one rarely sees small or compact cars.[15] Since the socialist period, public transportation in Ulaanbaatar has mainly consisted of buses and trolley cars, but many residents see public transportation as being for "students and poor people," and people who have their own cars almost never use public transportation. On top of that, who is driving what kind of car is a subject of great interest among the residents of Ulaanbaatar.

When it comes to mobile phones, not only do expensive phones themselves, but telephone numbers too have symbolic value. The numbers that start with 99 are bought and sold on the internet for millions of *tögrög*,

[15] The reason Mongols like large cars is because once you leave Ulaanbaatar, there are practically no paved roads, but it is also possible that this may be related to the fact that traditionally owning a large, good-looking horse was a mark of status among nomadic people.

because the number 9 has traditionally been the most auspicious number, so that having a 99-telephone number in and of itself is a form of status.

According to a college student, "Rich people do not answer phone calls that come from a bad number," and "Young girls are concerned about whether or not the men they meet have good phone numbers."

As regards educational background as well, the "Church of the Almighty Diploma" has more believers than in Japan, and one's social standing rises not only according to the university one has attended, but continues to rise the more one piles up more advanced degrees, such as a Master's or a Ph.D. On top of that, the value of a degree increases even further if it was awarded by foreign universities from "advanced countries." I have heard of a number of cases where people in their early thirties who has received a Ph.D. from a university in the United States, Britain, or Japan have been immediately appointed to a professorship at a university[16] or to a high government post upon their return to Mongolia.

Concerning this situation, a woman in her thirties who is the president of a small company says that "Just having a bachelor's degree is nowhere near good enough here in Mongolia." She herself is a university graduate, but when it comes to trying to land large accounts, she relates that the government bureaucrats and the presidents of large companies she was trying to get as clients dismissed her out of hand, saying, "You don't even have a Master's?" She says "I need to get a degree abroad as soon as I can. I'm sick of having my pride trampled on."

Looking at all of this, it is not an exaggeration to say that contemporary Mongolian society is a "pride-competition society", where people are always in competition with others over things like one's symbolic values and social status. This kind of pride is called *ner tör* in Mongolian, and it literally means the politics of names/fames. It can be said that this is exactly what they are doing: competing ferociously over their names or honor. However, this kind of lust for honor can never be completely satisfied. This is because so long as one's pride can only be seen in property and social status, there will always be someone above oneself on the social ladder, ad infinitum.

To put it another way, most of the people in Ulaanbaatar, both men and women, and regardless of how rich or poor they may be, live their

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[16] Not a position as an assistant professor or a lecturer, but an immediate professorship.

lives with a feeling of relative deprivation as they compare themselves to the people around them.

What heals those who have been chewed up and spat out by this competition is shamanism. The "ancestral spirit" that possessed T, of whom I spoke earlier, gave her relief by smashing her elder sister's smart phone, of which she was so proud, saying, "Real Mongols don't need these things." The female singer U, who drowned her sorrows in drink when her popularity waned, later regained her self-respect by starting out on the road of shamanism. Then there is Q, whose fanatical insistence on his status as a "doctor emeritus" and "professor" must almost certainly be due to this background of "diploma worship." In the "pride-competition society" of Ulaanbaatar, the "power" of the shamans, by allowing a person to reverse social status relationships and to acquire symbolic values, becomes visible as a "power" that allows one to regain one's lost or wounded pride.

Fragmenting Traditional Knowledge and Divergent Morality

What all shamans agree upon is that the *yos jayag* of the shamans is very strict. *Yos* means "custom" or "tradition," and *jayag*, in its original meaning, refers to the "rules" and "laws" that the Buddhist lamas are supposed to follow. For the purposes of this discussion, then, we would not be amiss in understanding *yos jayag* as a concept that subsumes both "rules" and "laws."

However, the shamans, who have upended social relationships and acquired "power," are creating brand-new folk knowledge and customs through the mechanism of "the spirits say." Meanwhile, as shown by the saying with which I began this essay, "each shaman has different ceremonies" (*böö böönöör ondoo böölödög*); shamans do not have a coherent or consistent body of shamanic knowledge or ceremonies. Not only that, it is safe to say that under the instructions of the spirits, new knowledge, customs, and ceremonies are being generated.

For example, in the case of the Darkhad and Buryat peoples, two ethnic groups that survived the religious repression of the socialist period, the *ongod*s who possess Darkhad and Buryat shamans are believed to be the spirits of shamans who lived in the past. However, among the Khalkh people in Ulaanbaatar, the possessing spirits are those of the royalty and nobility of the Qing period. Accordingly, the Khalkh sha-

mans have taken to wearing ceremonial hats that are very similar to the hats worn by princes and princesses, which have never before been seen in ethnographic literature or photographs. The shamans say that these "customs" are taught to them by the spirits who possess them.

The "professor emeritus" shaman Q, for example, while calling himself a Darkhad, gathered his disciples together and held an ordination he called a "test" in broad daylight. However, in the survey I undertook in 1997–8, at no time did the Darkhad shamans conduct a shamanic rite in the daytime. The Darkhad shamans at that time told me that "it is our custom to begin after midnight." On top of that, not only is there no ethnographic literature regarding ordination ceremonies among the Darkhad, I have never heard of such ceremonies in my fieldwork. Parenthetically, T, who became a shaman after her second divorce, is from the Bayad ethnic group, while her teacher is Q, who claims to be a Darkhad. That is, a Darkhad takes a Bayad disciple, and it is the spirits who say what a "Bayad shaman is." The "traditions" born thereby are then put into practice.

The creation of these kinds of new ethnic-group *yos*, that is, traditions, is not, as such, limited only to ethnic groups that have traditionally practiced shamanism. There are also cases of such "traditions" being created completely anew. For example, I have not heard of any records regarding shamanism among the Sartuul people (one of the ethnic groups of Mongolia), who are said to be the descendants of Muslim traders from Khwarazm. The example given below regarding A, a shaman who lives in the mining town of Gachuurt, shows how "the traditions of the Sartuul shamans" are being created. A is a Khalkh, but he calls himself a Sartuul shaman. He describes the "traditions" of the Sartuul shamans as follows:

> Unlike the Buryat shamans and others, Sartuul shamans must do the rituals whenever someone asks for help, even if it is in the middle of the night. Buryat shamans only do the rituals on a date that includes the number 9, correct?[17] Among the Sartuul, a person who has Sartuul blood from the mother becomes a shaman. Therefore, it is not necessary for the father to be a Sartuul.

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[17] Mongol Buryat shamans do indeed hold spirit-possession ceremonies every month on days with a "nine" in the date. These are called *yusölgöö*. This does not mean, however, that ceremonies are not held on other days.

In the process of becoming a shaman, U, the ex-singer, was creating a new concept of family. Even though U had become a shaman, the situation involving her work did not improve, and she kept on drinking. At that point, when she sought the advice of a different shaman, the spirit who possessed the shaman told her "You've got things all jumbled up. You're using a Buryat shaman's drum but you're wearing Khalkh shaman boots." That is, because she had mixed up the traditions of differing ethnic groups, she had not been possessed by the spirit that should have come to her, but by a type of evil spirit (*albin tiilen*). Therefore, it was necessary for her to receive initiation once more from a shaman of the same *udam*. This word *udam* means "lineage," and in the original Mongol cultural context it refers to a family group that shares the same patrilineal lineage. However, the shaman she chose was the wife of the younger brother of her grandmother on her father's side (her father's mother's younger brother's wife). Here we can see that the *udam* is interpreted as being multilineal.

Shamanic folk knowledge and customs are being created right and left. Moreover there are no longer coherent knowledge and customs of "Mongolian shamanism" because they has been fragmentized to the limit: there are as many shamanic knowledge and customs as there are shamans. Shaman O, a medical student and son of the vice-president of a university, has the reputation of being able to bring down "Japanese *ongod*s." When I attended one of his ceremonies, the spirit that possessed the young O did, in fact, speak to me in Japanese: "I am from the eleventh century. You know, I am not your *Gosenzosama* [honorable ancestor in Japanese]. I am a *Taicho* [commander, in modern Japanese] of Jing dynasty . . . So I am not from thy country . . ."

His method of speaking and expression were not, however, authentic medieval Japanese but were similar to what is heard in contemporary Japanese animation films. Among shaman Q's disciples, the young O is famous for his ability to call down "the spirits of ancient Japanese." However, it is a mystery why a person from the Jing dynasty would know the phrase "eleventh century" and, even more so, speak Japanese. As a matter of fact, O lived in Japan for four to five years when he was in elementary school. It is conceivable that the manner of speaking of this spirit, which is obviously not medieval Japanese, is something that O himself could have learned from media such as the internet and television when he was living in Japan.

In any case, what is really astonishing about this is the fact that in the globalizing world of contemporary Mongolia even the "spirits" are becoming international. At the very least, what can be said for certain is that in the globalizing world a new and chaotic shamanic knowledge is taking shape.

The female shaman E,[18] who predicted the end of the world, displays a strange and curious "knowledge" cobbled together from history and geography from all over the world and from all historical periods.

I am the most powerful shaman called *otog böö*. You know, I am in charge of the stability of the natural environment of the entire world. That's because I could minimize the damage of the great 2009 Chile earthquake. I conducted a special ceremony to prevent the quake leading to catastrophic disaster. By the way, I am the daughter of Dua-sokhor in the *Secret History of the Mongols*. You know, there were many Mongolic heroes (*Mongol ugsaany*) among my ancestors. For instance, Alexander the Great, Sor-kharnai, Attila of the Huns, Bukha-bilig in France, Temjin-Chinghis khaan, and Nostradamus, as well. All of them are Mongols!"

The "believers" who surround E believe these things, she says, but of course, among ordinary people and even among shamans there are a lot of people who doubt her pronouncements. What must be emphasized here is, rather, the fact that in Mongolia, which exists on the periphery of a globalizing world, things such as shamanic "knowledge" and "traditions" which are being produced are fracturing even within ethnic groups,[19] and in some cases are atomizing ad infinitum down to the level of individual shamans and their believers.

I think it can be said that the mechanism that causes these kinds of atomized "traditions" and "knowledge" to function is the "law" of the shamans—the *jayag*. One thing that is common to all shamans is obedience to one's master shaman. For example, B, the forty-five-year-old shaman who used to be a "milk exchanger" and who has several disciples, says the following:

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[18] She says that she is from Govi-Altay province and was originally a mathematics instructor in the Army College.

[19] "Traditions" that are differentiated by an ethnic group to another are probably fictions that were systematized by the state during the socialist period using academics as the means (cf. Bulag 1998).

For example, one example that can be given is the order in which the disciples sit. Their age is irrelevant. They sit in the order from the high seat on down depending on the stature of the *ongod* who possesses them. If the spirit is that of a *khaan* or of a member of the nobility, their seating order is determined by the relative stature of the spirit. However, under no circumstances can a disciple sit in a position higher than that of his master. Even if the stature of the spirit of his master happens to be lower than that of his spirit, a disciple must never sit in a position higher than that of his master. A disciple cannot partake of a meal in a higher seat than his master. As a *jayag* of the shamans, what is most important is respect for one's master.

However, as can be seen in the case of the singer U, a disciple shaman will look for another teacher if the "traditions" and "laws" taught by his or her teacher do not suit the disciple, so this "law" of respecting one's teacher only really functions in a time-limited manner. Also, the *otog*, a shaman's group, will often easily break up for this reason.

Of course, in some cases, it appears that there are laws that the shamans themselves must follow. Q said that "If I drink too much and chase women, there will probably be natural disasters in the three towns of B, X, and T in Bulgan province. That is because these three cities are under my control (*minii medel*)." These three cities are Q's home, where he lived as a child.[20]

Is this atomization of "traditions" and "knowledge and diffusion of "laws" characteristic of the post-socialist period? The confused situation of shamanism in today's Ulaanbaatar can probably be explained as something that emerged with the collapse of socialism and that was born from the accompanying so-called "ideological vacuum." In Russia, what was injected into this ideological vacuum was the Russian Orthodox Church—this contributes to the building of individual, family, and public morality (Kazmina and Filippova 2005, 1071)—and the spread of occultism (Menzel 2007).

Humphrey, who discussed the state of morality in Mongolia before the advent of socialism, holds that "In Mongolia, unlike in Europe, in practice almost no space is given to general ethical precepts as emana-

[20] This idea that "shamans are in complete control of nature in his or her birthplace" is shared by other shamans. As a result, the shamans attempt to sacralize their birthplaces by worshipping the holy mountains there and constructing new piled stone stupas.

tions of God or society. Rather, such precepts tend to be *authored*, and they then appear in relationships as tied to the personalities of both the mentor and the follower." (Humphrey 1997, 33) however

The model in Humphrey's argument is the relationship between a Buddhist master lama and his disciple, but does it follow Humphrey's logic that this model can be applied to contemporary Mongolian shamanism? It is true that shamanism shares this quality in that morality in the practice of shamanism is built within the relationship between master and disciple.

In contemporary Mongolian shamanism, however, "the ethical precepts promulgated by God and society" exist in a form exemplified by the *yos jayag*. Be that as it may, in this section I have shown that as shamans continue to increase, moral models are created ad infinitum on "the instructions of the spirits" and these moral models then diffuse throughout society, resulting in the formation, yet again, of a moral vacuum. That is to say, because of the atomization of morality, the social norms of morality erode and a flat moral vacuum is created. It is likely that the cases of fraud, injury, and accidental homicide perpetrated by the shamans that I listed at the beginning of this paper occurred in this "moral vacuum" that has reappeared.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the reasons for the plague-like increase in shamans in today's Ulaanbaatar in relation to social context by elucidating the process by which shamans forge cultural and social bonds, while fracturing and atomizing those very bonds.

I first showed how, in today's globally connected economy, people interpret the suffering and misfortunes that befall them according to the theory of roots-caused disasters, which is Buryat in origin. In order to rid themselves of these worries and misfortunes, the people of Ulaanbaatar decide to become shamans, even if they are not affected by the shamanic illness. In addition, regardless of whether they are rich or poor, by becoming shamans, people who have been stripped of their pride recover it by reversing the inferior social position in which they have been placed.

Further, once a shaman is born, familial relationships, that have "grandfather" and "grandmother" as their apex, are restructured, and new cultural and social bonds, such as the *otog*, are created. On the other hand, social bonds are ruptured: relations are severed with family and friends who hate shamans, and shamans switch teachers and leave the *otog*.

Finally, while on the one hand the shamans create new folk knowledge called "traditions" and moral values called *jayag*, on the other hand, as a consequence of individual choices and the breakup of shaman groups, folk knowledge and morality become endlessly atomized. Without a doubt, the shamanism of contemporary Ulaanbaatar is "an entity that is susceptible to context" (Humphrey 1997, 50) and shamanism creates a new city context (Humphrey 2002, 202–21).

Is this situation, where shamanism creates cultural and social bonds with the one hand and breaks them down with the other, a contemporary or temporary phenomenon? Or is it an attribute that is built into shamanism itself?[21]

In the first place, the shamanism of northern and inland Asia has been understood in its relationship to the vocations of hunting and herding. At first glance, this contemporary phenomenon does not appear to have any connection to traditional shamanism. To be sure, it is a simple thing to connect this with the social insecurity of contemporary Mongolia, which finds itself in a post-socialist global economy, and discuss contemporary Mongolian shamanism as a transmogrification of traditional shamanism. It would also be simple to focus on the crimes that shamans have committed and conclude that contemporary Mongolian shamanism is nothing more than a newly formed cult religion.

It is definitely questionable whether local shamanism has a coherent religious or cultural commonality. It is also a fact that it is no longer possible to discuss the "shamanism that coexists with nature" of hunting societies without reference to the political and social context. I have also shown how variegated and, at times, completely opposing, shamanic imaginations have developed among shamans in the context of the cultural and political situation in which contemporary Mongolia finds itself.

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[21] For example, Buyandelger positions the revival of Mongol Buryat shamanism within the increasing poverty and social instability of local society caused by the move to a market economy in the post-socialist period (Buyandelger 2007, 2013).

However, I do not think that shamanism lacks systematic structure, because, if we confine ourselves to looking at individual shamans, regardless of whether we are talking about shamanism in a contemporary urban society or shamanism in a herding society, there is no difference between what the shamans are actually doing, which is "a symbolic exchange between humans and the 'unknowable entities' (spirits) who change in response to the natural environment, vocation, and political and social circumstances" (Shimamura 2011, 144–6, 2014a, 162–4).

It is conceivable that the political and social contextualization of shamanism came about as a result of the transition to a herding economy. In the first place, as a result of the development of the idea of human spirits, the shamans, depending on the prevailing political and social conditions, came to act as destroyers of tradition as well as fulfilling the role, at times, of the builders of the future (Shimamura 2011, 144–6).

This is because for believers, the "revelations" from the spirits that have possessed the shamans justify new "traditions" and "customs," created by the shamans, and they can sometimes influence society.[22] In this situation, because of the modernization and the destruction of the clan-based community brought about by socialism, shamanism was given the opportunity to become a practice rooted in extremely individual experience. As seen in the examples of J, the hotel manager, and U, the singer, I have shown how new "traditions" are born and justified and, in some cases, modified through the intervention of the shamanic imagination and the revelations of numerous shamans.

Is it possible that these attributes of shamanism, when linked with a society that is in a chaotic and unstable state, could lead to the birth of something like a new religion or a cult?[23] In a global economy where society, the economy, and the sense of values are rocked to their foundations, shamanism's power of imagination is splintered (diversified) in

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[22] For example, Catherine Swancutt (2012) describes how, in the unstable post-socialist societal conditions, in response to a condition where one believes that one is "cursed," the Buryat shamans in Mongolia ameliorate the situation by means of divination (what Swancutt calls "innovation making").

[23] This phenomenon, where shamanism surges against a background of social instability, has been pointed out in Japanese shamanism studies, for example by Hori Ichiro (1971) and Sasaki Koukan (1992), and others. Especially Takezawa (1992) theorized the mechanism that shamanism has strong affinity with new religions, terming Open System of shamanism, see Shimamura 2014a, 156).

accordance with the situation of each individual shaman, and can, at times, be amplified in a negative direction. The "plague of shamans" phenomenon has arisen in just such a situation.

If one were to cite a characteristic of contemporary Mongol shamanism that can be considered regional or related to the times, it would be the fact that this shamanism, as one in which the newly minted believer can subjectively choose his or her own road, will not grow into a cult religion or a new religion with a huge community structure. It is unclear whether this stems from nomadic culture with its strong tendency to individualism or if it is a result of the fact that shamanism itself, lacking the structure of a religious community, has been given the status of a Mongol "tradition" by scholars and journalists and has thus become established among the people. Alternatively, it is possible that what has happened is that these various conditions have combined to create a kind of shamanism that will never converge to become a united religious community but will continue to fracture time and time again.

In any case, in a setting where they are the vehicles for the spirits, the "unknowable entities," shamans build culture and social bonds and yet dismantle them as well. Shamans have probably always been an ambiguous and tricky presence, simultaneously building and destroying, and will probably continue to be so. Even as shamanism is influenced in the realm of the imagination by the social context in which it finds itself, as a system, it remains, as it were, a mathematical function that performs the symbolic exchange between humans and the "unknowable entities." To put it another way, shamanism is a "context-generating function" that generates a "dependent variable," that is, a new social context, by means of an "independent variable," which is the variations in social context and individual experienceIf this is so, then not only is there no need to romanticize shamanism itself, which is merely a social function, there is also no need to treat it as evil. What is needed is to take note of the social context, and accordingly to simply, calmly, and coolly evaluate each form of shamanism.

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Ippei SHIMAMURA (*ishimamura@shc.usp.ac.jp*) is Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Mongol Studies at the University of Shiga Prefecture in Japan. He has been working on Mongolian shamanism since the mid-1990s, and has written many papers on it. He is the author of *The Roots Seekers: Shamanism and Ethnicity among the Mongol Buryats* (2014). He won the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Prize in 2013.

VOL. 25. NOS. 1-2. SHAMAN SPRING/AUTUMN 2017

Wise People of Great Power: Jaguar-spirit Shamans among Baniwa of the Northwest Amazon

ROBIN M. WRIGHT UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, USA

Indigenous prophet movements in the Americas have historically engaged the most threatening and dangerous Other, the White Man. The savants of the Northwest Amazon region of South America have mostly sought to defy the destructive power of the White Man's knowledge by disclosing hidden, internal sources of conflict and conserving their religious traditions. A long succession of prophetic leaders from the mid-nineteenth century to the present has sustained the continuity of ancestral traditions even at great risk to the leaders' lives. I take a multiplex, interpretive approach to these shamanic traditions, grounded in the exegesis of their ancestral practices.

So-called prophet movements among indigenous peoples throughout the Americas have occurred when visionaries and religious savants announced the imminent end of an existing condition evaluated as catastrophic and the coming of a new order, in which whoever is deemed responsible for the catastrophic condition will either be eliminated or transformed into powerless entities. Utopian orders celebrate a spiritual condition of "world transcendence" negating violent powers of outsiders mostly linked with colonial domination, destruction of the environment, and the life within.

Prophetic leaders have been prominent in movements against oppression, constructing ideologies grounded in cosmogonic themes of world destruction and renewal. They initiate what in many cases have eventually become historical traditions of resistance; their movements cannot with any justice be understood as mere passing reactions to colonial domination. On the contrary, their views of the coming end times offer distinctly spiritual solutions, meaning (1) the overcoming of internal conflicts by constructing and maintaining what they urge to be a greater good of harmonious conviviality, and (2) the continued struggle against

domination by outsiders or non-indigenous peoples while guarding the sacred traditions so that the continuity of this knowledge is upheld.[1]

From early colonial times to the present day, prophet movements in the Americas have been marked by such processes as political and economic displacement; the awaiting of a salvific figure, who helps people move away from the path of destruction; a return of the earth to native control; arduous restrictions on believers; the incorporation of Christian symbolism in millenarian ideologies; the total suspension of normal living routines; total rejection of foreign clothes, goods, or foods; ceaseless dancing and festival performances as signs of admission into the envisioned utopia; dreams and visions; miraculous abundance of food; the incarnation of gods in material or human form; and the transformation of bodies (believers become healthy, invulnerable, or even immortal) (Sullivan 1988).

In some very recent cases, indigenous religious traditions have most significantly pointed to imminent ecological collapse as a result of the abuses of nature by the colonists. For example, the Kogi Indians of the Sierra Nevada in northern Colombia have produced in collaboration with the BBC two major documentaries that warn the non-indigenous societies of imminent natural catastrophes because of cosmic imbalance from the destructiveness and greed of the "younger brother" (the white man): "Message to the Younger Brother" (Ereira 2009) and "Aluna" (Ereira 2014).

The first, "Message to the Younger Brother," was a warning issued by the Kogi *mama*s (priests and priestesses) that the world was out-of-balance and that there was something seriously wrong with the climate because there was no more snow on the tops of Sierra Nevada where they have lived for the past four centuries since escaping the Spanish conquest and brutality. The peaks of the mountains have all dried up. The film "Aluna" goes beyond this by showing the *mama*s' extensive knowledge of the interconnectedness among the different ecosystems in the entire Sierra Nevada region. The *mama*s traced this interconnectedness through a kind

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[1] Throughout this text, I cite frequently from oral histories, interlocutors' discourses, mythological narratives, and exegeses about them. I have separated throughout my observations, reflections, and analytical voice from these primary sources. One could think of this methodological procedure as equivalent to the emic/etic distinction in linguistics and anthropology. In some cases, there may be slippage between my reflections and what the shamans say about the meaning of their practices. I have sought to be consistent in this procedure throughout, although maintaining a "distance" from the material at hand is not always successful. All translations are my own.

of pilgrimage in which they connected all the sacred points of their entire territory with kilometers of golden wire in order to protect it from falling completely apart because of colonist invasions. Many of their ancient gold figurines within this territory had been looted by grave-robbers and sold on international markets. These gold figurines were considered to be the generative sources of floral and faunal species, strategically buried in places where particular species were found in abundance.

Another powerful example prophesizing impending doom is the recently published autobiography of the Yanomami shaman, Davi Kopenawa, titled *The Falling Sky* (2014). This tour-de-force is a compelling critique of Western society's relentless destruction of the Amazon environment and its native peoples. The extraordinarily complex metaphysics of the shaman Kopenawa reveals the intricate web of interrelations between the forest of spirits and Yanomami. This web has been torn apart by the onslaught of the Western capitalist juggernaut, which—Kopenawa warns—will ultimately bring about the total collapse of the cosmos, when the sky breaks apart and comes crashing down to earth, wiping out all life.

My focus here is on the savants or Wise People (powerful jaguar shamans) among the Arawak-speaking peoples (Baniwa, Kuripako, Wakuenai, Baniva, and others) of the Northwest Amazon. A central point in their messages has been to urge their followers to conserve their ancestral traditions, for without these, the "enemy" culture will dominate them, leading to the final destruction of the indigenous world.

In general, indigenous visionaries criticize the disastrous historical relations between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples; but, from their point of view, the enemy will be destroyed by the same means they have used to try to destroy the indigenous people.

The complexities of the savants' spirituality demand that we constantly seek to understand them by constructing a conversation among the elements of oral histories, cosmogony, and exegeses about jaguar shamans. There is often a sense of mystery in the narratives about shamans' powers, which probably gives people today confidence that they continue to be protected by the immortal jaguar shaman spirits. I begin with Baniwa cosmogony, followed by a discussion of the jaguar shamans' healing powers, which sets the stage for interpreting traditions of the seers-savants of the Northwest Amazon, and finally, a comparative overview of similar traditions among other indigenous peoples of northern South America.

Coming to Terms with the Primordium

In many Native American cosmologies, the life that was given to humans by the creator deities is never one of perfect bliss and happiness. It is rather one that may be marked by a variety of negative elements, such as sickness-giving spirits and sorcerers, whose thought is dominated by the desire to kill and avenge a loss until that desire is satisfied. This goes beyond a mere settling of accounts or "eye-for-an-eye" retribution and extends to total annihilation of the enemy. The primordial models of sorcery can be found in narratives of the creation times through which people understand the dynamic that generates sorcery today.

Many creation narratives relate how primordial beings sacrificed themselves so that humanity could live well and prosper. Today, humans—especially those considered as the guardians of knowledge—recall their deeds, give them thanks for having left such gifts, and call on them, for example, to help plant their gardens. Yet, harmony and disharmony, predation and reciprocal exchange form the elements of an eternal struggle in which humans seek to maintain order, despite continuing disruption.

Among the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Amazon, in particular the Baniwa[2] at the very beginning of the universe, there was one single being called "Universe Child" who established the most fundamental conditions of existence (day/night, different phases of each) (Fig. 1). This primordial state came to an end when the first shamanic beings cut down an enormous world tree that bore all food and fruits, including the beans that shamans use to make their psychoactive snuff. The second phase of creation is characterized by constant warfare between the creator beings and tribes of animals, spirits of the dead, spirits of the forest, and others

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[2] Specifically, the Hohodene clan of the Aiary River, Northwest Amazon, border of Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia. The Hohodene are one of several very large clans that comprise the Baniwa people (approximately 12,000 people). They are predominantly agriculturalists, which they supplement by fishing, hunting, and foraging. Their history of contact with non-indigenous society, depending on the region, goes as far back as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many Baniwa were evangelized in the 1950s and '60s, developing a distinctive evangelical tradition that is prevalent in these communities. As we shall see in this article, however, the "wise men" (*kanhenkedali*) demonstrated the greater power of their knowledge and clairvoyance to defend their traditions against the destructiveness of the evangelicals.

who predated on them. The Universe Child is devoured and dismembered by the animal tribes, but comes back into life through the nurturing care of a wise grandmother. The Child comes back into the world as the First "People." These same People seek retribution against the animal tribes for the deaths of their kin and ultimately reestablish a provisional world of order. Order and disorder constitute the dynamic of the second phase, in which order represents the world of kinspeople, which is society, while disorder characterizes the world of enemies and affines, other societies. There is no clear resolution of this conflict that continues to exist in present-day human relations, a world of constant struggle and precarious balance between kin and affines, humans and nonhuman "other" beings that bring death into life.

Fig. 1. Drawing by E. Lima da Silva and Thiago Aguilar, 2010. In this drawing, Nhiaperikuli (Baniwa creator) is seated and enchanting all the fish. (Manuel da Silva 2010. Interview with author)

Baniwa cosmogony then recounts how, before real human ancestors emerge into this world, the creator deity burns it with fire and later washes it with water in order to cleanse it of cannibalistic animals and demons, which plagued the first humanity. The stories sometimes foretell that more times of purification and renewal may occur. The Wise People (savants and seers) undergo rigorous training in order to be able

to detect the signs of those times of imminent change and to consult with the creator deities themselves, in order to advise their kin of what to do and how they should prepare for the end times.

Throughout more than two centuries of contact with non-indigenous people, the Baniwa have experienced repression of their religious beliefs by missionaries, exploitation of their labor by merchants, and violence against their communities from the border military. Consequently, the primordial category of enemy sorcerer became fused with historical images of the White Man. The ancient spirit Master of Sorcery (known as Kuwai) and other treacherous spirits fused with representations of the White Man, who likewise was experienced as evil, monstrous, immoral, and violent. It is believed that only in the paradisiacal world of the creator deities will humans find respite from the multiple forms of pain, sickness, and harmful elements that permeate the contemporary world.

The Jaguar Shamans and Spirits of Healing Power

The key articulators of cosmological dynamics in the present condition are the "jaguar shamans," or *maliiri-nai* (pl. of *maliiri*). The most ancient spirit of healing power and the first jaguar shaman is named Dzuliferi, who is believed to know everything about all human beings in this world—when their souls enter the world at birth and when they will return to their origins at death. The jaguar shamans state that during their cures they hear the voices of Dzuliferi and other *maliiri* spirits, which advise them on whatever they seek to know. The jaguar shamans' most important responsibilities are as protectors or guardians of the cosmos, its people, and its food resources. As diviners, they are seen as sentinels against attacks by enemy-spirits, sorcerers, and omens that plague peoples' lives with sickness, famine, disorder, and death. It is said that Dzuliferi also communicates with the religious leaders of the White People, such as the Pope, to whom he sends messages written on paper instructing how the White People should live. The great Spirit of Power, Dzuliferi, also has trickster qualities that he uses to deceive enemies and protect the people.

Sickness, understood as a partial or total loss of a person's soul, is cured by the *maliiri*'s soul-voyage to the parallel Other Worlds where they encounter the great spirits and deities and obtain remedies from

them. Their soul-voyage is complemented by a singing-into-being of the "new, Other, and beautiful World" (Manuel da Silva[3]—hereafter M. da Silva—in Wright 2013) once the *maliiri* opens the portal that separates This World from the parallel Other World. Note that they speak of the "new, Other World" and not the world of the primordial past; from the point of view of humans, the great spirits live in the "ancient" Before World (*oopi*), but from the point of view of the *maliiri-nai*, they see that ancient world from the temporal perspective of when it was still "young, beautiful, and shining." This is why they must "die" before returning to the Before World:

> Nhiaperikuli [the Creator] guides the *pajé* [*maliiri*[4]] in curing the sick. He advises whether the sick person will get better or not. He accompanies the *pajé* at all times of his everyday life. The *pajé* is the messenger for Nhiaperikuli. For the Dzato Dzawika [snuff jaguar] *pajé*, Nhiaperikuli has no fixed abode. He is the Spirit that is everywhere. Only at the time of ritual, the *pajé* converses with him. This is a very sacred moment. (M. da Silva 2010, translation by author)

The *maliiri-nai* say that in their search for the souls of the sick, after inhaling the powerful, sacred psychoactive snuff called *pariká*,[5] their souls ascend a stairway and proceed to search for the "lost" soul throughout the spaces of the cosmos.

The powers of the *maliiri-nai* derive from an extraordinary attunement of their observations to the sensuous qualities of all living beings. Every living being (plants, animals, birds, insects, etc.) has several interrelated modalities—the first is the visible, bodily form that has a regular name (e.g., a certain type of fish) along with well-known qualities (size, habitat, etc.). The second is the spirit manifestation of the entity, accompanied by a spirit name and sensuous qualities uniquely associated with that spirit entity (e.g., "brightly-colored" or "with smooth scales"). The *maliiri-nai* are specialists who are trained to know how to distinguish between the "true" spirit manifestations and the "false" material

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[3] Throughout this article, I'll be citing the oral testimony of shamans and elders that are indicated by name or initials, publication source if that's the case, and year.

[4] *Pajé* is a lingua geral (trade language of the Amazon) word for *maliiri*, which the shamans use more frequently in explanations to outsiders about themselves.

[5] *Pariká* is produced from the red exudate of the Virola tree, the chemical principal of which is DMT, the so-called "Spirit Molecule" (Strassman 2000).

manifestations of the same entity. The third modality is the "shadow-soul," which is the projection of the entity's dark interior. Other names for the "shadow-soul" are "that which walks in front"; for example, the *maliiri-nai* recognize sorcerers because their "shadow-souls" are projected with the shapes and qualities of spirits of the dead, while their body shapes are said to be like that of furry animals.

The jaguar *maliiri-nai* say they are capable of perceiving imminent danger before it actually happens because they are "surrounded by mirrors" that allow them to see the entire world from "all angles and all at once" (M. da Silva, in Wright 2013). In this way, they can determine the location of lost objects or persons. As long as their mirrors accompany them, the *maliiri* is considered invulnerable to sorcerer attacks. Once the light from their mirrors begins to fade (when they can no longer withstand the potent effects of *pariká*), however, even the most powerful of the jaguar *maliiri* becomes vulnerable to attack. This is what happened to the Wise People, according to the stories that the *maliiri-nai* remember.

The jaguar *maliiri-nai* go on to state that they obtain a great deal of their power from the spirit-beings of nature (e.g., the harpy and other eagles, the birds, the jaguar) with whom they share a connection to the primordial world. In passing on their knowledge and power to their apprentices, the master jaguar *maliiri-nai* say they transform into cicadas that drone and sing in the early summer "when the whole forest changes its appearance." (L. M., in Cornélio 1999) The master jaguar *maliiri* is said to become one with the "universe people" who, since the beginning of time, have "drunk the knowledge of the *pariká* flowers" (M. da Silva in Wright 2013; L. M., in Cornélio 1999) in the early summer season. So, the teaching of an apprentice must begin in the same period, when the cicadas regenerate their bodies, shedding their old ones and returning renewed as new, other beings. The knowledge and power the jaguar *maliiri-nai* transmit to their apprentices is that of the power of renewing the universe.

The greatest form of power and knowledge that the jaguar *maliiri-nai* say they have is that of world-making, or "re-making the whole world and everything in it—water, stones, even people" through their "thought-song" (M. da Silva, in Wright 1998). In this, the *maliiri-nai* say they reach a point in the Other World where they arrive at a space "like a room next to" the universe creator (M. da Silva, in Wright 2013). Their spirits then transform into the primordial harpy eagle's body, which opens or reveals the "ancient, hidden world of happiness

and well-being" (M. da Silva, in Wright 1998). The *maliiri* then sits in the place of the Creator and "sees how the creator saw the world in the beginning" making that vision come into being in This World—a vision, for example, of a "world without sickness" (M. da Silva, in Wright 1998). These jaguar *maliiri-nai* are great seers—savants believed to, as they say, "know everything there is to know about This World" who can restore health to the world when it is overrun by sorcery, sickness, hunger, or poison (J. Cornélio, in Wright 1998).

The traditions of the great seer-savants undoubtedly existed prior to any written historical record about them. Stories of the phratric ancestors are likewise remembered with great pride, for they recount how the ancestors saved the phratries from extinction in early contact history. From the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, there has been an unbroken and documentable line of seer-savants who have emerged in the context of increasing contact with non-indigenous intruders—powerful representatives of the state military, the missionaries, and the merchants. The oral traditions about these seer-savants constitute a distinct body of indigenous histories in which there is a confrontation between the powers of the jaguar *maliiri* and the force of the state to subdue/dominate that power. These stories universally assert that the *maliiri*'s powerful knowledge is far superior to the threat presented by the outsiders; however, they consistently point to internal conflicts generated by sorcery and the limitations of the *maliiri*'s powers to overcome sorcery. These limitations are given as the main incentive for a kind of spiritual vision-quest in which the seers-savants then have direct experience of their deceased kin and primordial spirits of power themselves. A deep loss or setback, such as the death of their children, often forces the *maliiri* to seek this greater knowledge.

Stories of Seers and Savants of the Northwest Amazon

The narratives I, other anthropologists, and indigenous researchers have recorded relate that the seers and savants, powerful shamans, and priestly chanters among the Hohodene Baniwa utilized both key symbols from Catholicism and shamanic traditions to overcome enemy sorcerers. While the narratives are almost unanimous in attributing greater strength to native power over the White Man's violence, sorcery

is more problematic. Various authors (e.g., see Whitehead and Wright 2004) have shown that among Amazonian societies, sorcery consists of the infiltration of some entity perceived as an enemy "other" into the heart of community harmony. Visionary leaders seek to pull the communities up and away from infighting, making them recognize that they must return to live in harmony if they are to survive common external threats, such as epidemic diseases and the "evils" of the White Man (alcohol, violence, hypocrisy, domination, disorder).

Narratives about historical ancestors often begin with situations of conflict, pass through periods of peace and alliance-making, and end with the present period of dispersion and diffusion. Wise People have central roles in these histories, for they demonstrate the greater efficacy of shamanic powers over non-indigenes and *mestizo* authorities (especially the White military government established in the Amazon throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). The narratives specifically about seers and savants seem to refer to a time around the mid-nineteenth century, when there was much recorded violence and exploitation of indigenous labor by the White military and government authorities, against which shamanic leaders rebelled by declaring autonomy from the Whites and their superior powers over military violence.

Kamiko

One of the most widely known seers-savants throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century was Venancio Anizetto Kamiko. Kamiko's fame was widespread among indigenous and *mestiço/mestizo* communities of the frontier border region between Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia. The oral traditions about Kamiko state that his principal message had to do with the elimination of sorcery and the installation of a society based on harmonious conviviality, that is, a healing of the community. He began a tradition called the "Song of the Cross" in which people would dance with or around a cross. As his fame grew, the local military government heard that he claimed to be a saint and had a great following, so they went to test him and take him prisoner. The stories say:

> They prepared a coffin, put Kamiko inside the coffin and threw him into the river. He stayed one whole night inside the coffin at the bottom of the river. Next day, they took the coffin out, opened it, and he was inside, still alive. Dur-

ing the night, his soul had left his body (some people say they could see him dancing on the other side of the river with his rattle). Then they believed that Kamiko really was a saint. (Cornélio et al. 1999)

Was this so extraordinary? Shamans state that after they have taken their psychoactive substance, their bodies lie down "as though dead, inside a coffin" and they "see their skeleton" as their heart/souls make a journey throughout the parallel Other World. According to the traditions cited here and elsewhere (see, e.g., Wright and Hill 1986; Hill and Wright 1988), the seer-savant Kamiko had shamanic powers sufficiently strong enough to thwart all attempts by the White military to kill him; it is said that he even foresaw the military government's own destruction by rebellion, which actually did occur in the 1920s.

Uetsu

After Kamiko's death in the early twentieth century, another savant emerged named Uetsu, said to be Kamiko's "son" (figuratively speaking, because Uetsu was of another phratry from the upper Içana River, while Kamiko is said to have been from around the upper Guainía River). The following narrative was told by an elder named Laureano from Ukuki village, whose father was a follower and canoe rower for Uetsu:

The White man did exactly to Uetsu as with his father—made him get inside a coffin, threw it bound by rope to the bottom of the Orinoco River. When they pulled it up after a night, he was still alive. He then ordered that the learned men do the same, to see whose power was greater. The White man complied, but died after an hour underwater. (Laureano Fontes—hereafter, L. F., in Wright 2013)

Laureano did not know Uetsu personally, but his father had told him many bits and pieces of his extraordinary wisdom. The following is Laureano's version which I present here, transcribed and translated verbatim from my interview:

Uetsu would say to the people: "You will suffer along our way." When it was the night before a festivity, he looked for people to celebrate together, and at the same time he helped people in their difficulties, telling them how much time that person would remain alive with their families, or with regard to a sickness that he was about to get, Uetsu would help those people protect themselves.

But there came a time that the community and even his own family began to disbelieve in his powers. Three of his sons died and he was unable to cure them from sorcery. His wife accused him of being a fake, to which he responded he would obtain more knowledge by taking more *pariká* and extending his soul journeys. He went into deeper trance lasting an entire day, consuming both *pariká* and *caapi*,[6] and so increased his knowledge of the world more and more. He began seeing and conversing with the dead. The dead sent messages to the living, through him, with their remembrances.

One time, his dead sister suddenly appeared to him. The other dead gave him their medicine and the world revealed itself more for him. The dead took him to their world and showed him where they lived, and where the house of God was which was very beautiful, brilliant, resplendent, just as the sun when it rises, like gold. Uetsu conversed with God, who authorized him to say that he was a saint, but not to say anything about what he saw. From then on, Uetsu would always see in his dreams and sing. In his dream, he would awaken to the other world and see the dead people. They would always guide and advise him of things to come.

It is said that he would pray every night, in a very reserved way: he rolled himself up in his hammock, and during the prayer he would lie down for a long time, during which time he would converse with the creator deity, and when he returned from his dream, he would come back praying silently until he woke up. When he came back, he would always ask for water to quench his thirst, and then he would say that the way was difficult to be able to reach Dio.

Then God authorized him to tell the people of what he saw in the world of the dead and of God. Because of this, he began attracting more people. They wanted to make him into a king for them, a chief. There were those people who rowed a canoe for him, he had people who gave food to him, he had people who accompanied him. But he didn't want all of this. God had given him orders that he not allow himself to be made chief. He wanted to be equal to the other people, neither superior, nor inferior. When it came time for Uetsu to leave this world, he had no more power to defend himself. According to what the *maliiri-nai* say, when their time comes, Dzuliferi no longer shows what is to happen to the *maliiri* nor speaks to him. It is said that his body was divided in two and buried in separate places which people today continue to visit to ask for Uetsu's protection.

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[6] *Caapi* is a botanical psychoactive substance derived from *Banisteriopsis caapi sp.*

Uetsu died because he had no more powers to defend himself against sorcery. (L. F. in Wright 2013)

Kudui

The next seer/savant was Kudui from the late 1950s to the mid-'70s, who knew and practiced with Uetsu and likewise was considered to be a great healer. Uetsu and Kudui, it is said,

. . . walked together in knowledge. Uetsu would confirm for people that, after he left This World, there would be a person with the same knowledge as he had, but after the death of that person, there would be no other successor to him in his knowledge. It would be very difficult for there to be another person who was as wise as he. (L. F. in Wright 2013)

Among Kudui's teachings were that the true center-of-the-world was located at a large boulder near the place from which the ancestors emerged at the beginning of time. Kudui defined the great boulder of Dzuliferi as the dwelling-place in This World of the primordial healer and Spirit of Power, Dzuliferi. It is like a portal to the sacred time/place of the Other World, "where no one can die" (M. da Silva, in Wright 1998). Even today, people go to this boulder, leave food offerings, and request the great spirit's protection and wisdom. *Maliiri* and many people believe that the spirits of the great seers return to their graves and stay for a long time after having left This World, to attend their families' needs. People today still visit the graves of Kamiko, Uetsu, and Kudui requesting their protection or intercession to prevent adverse situations, especially following an omen. Kudui is considered to be "our salvation" because he said that there would come a time/place when "there would be no more sickness" in this world (M. da Silva, in Wright 1998). Kudui was a powerful shaman and seer throughout the critical period of religious dissension in the '60s and '70s amongst communities because of evangelical missionary campaigns to force people to abandon their traditions. The savants' teachings have continued to circulate as underlying themes in community conversations to the present day. Their messages of living well together in happiness without sorcery and exposing and getting rid of the secret evils that lurk within society are among the most important moral guidelines the Wise People have taught.

Manuel da Silva

Finally, I mention Manuel (Mandu) da Silva, 98 years old at the time of this writing in early 2016, considered by many peoples as a savant. He was a charismatic *maliiri*, chanter, and chief for many years. In 2009, The Foundation for Shamanic Studies (with my intermediation) granted him its Living Treasure award. When I last saw da Silva, he spoke at the inauguration of the Shamans' House of Knowledge constructed in 2009 in the village of Uapui, on the upper Aiary River, Northwest Amazon, Brazil. He reaffirmed his principal message, which I had heard for three decades, about the need for community harmony and commitment to the traditions.

Da Silva's apprenticeship was guided in its first stage by Kudui and later by a Dzauinai (Baniwa phratry) *pajé* named Kumadeyon, also known as Alexandre Jawinaapi, who was considered to be even more powerful at one point in his career than Kudui, and who had reportedly cured Kudui following a sorcery attack. Da Silva recounted how Kumadeyon was to him like Dzuliferi. They had taken *pariká* together, da Silva related, then he "died for an hour. And I met Kumadeyon in the Other World of the sky. Inside a beautiful house. There, it is not like This World; everything is beautiful there and everyone is white in color." (M. da Silva, in Wright 2013)[7] Then Kumadeyon said to da Silva: "now you are a *pajé*, now you know and have to live well with people" (in Wright 2013). Kumadeyon had foreseen that da Silva would be a great *pajé* for he had acquired extraordinary powers during the final stages of his apprenticeship (Wright 2011).

In 1989, a Venezuelan television documentary was produced entitled "Las Advertencias de Mandu" (Fundación Villa del Cine 2006) which had been filmed in the town of Maroa on the upper Guainía River. At the time of the filming, da Silva was visiting his kin in the region and was interviewed regarding culture change and the risks of losing indigenous cultural traditions. He was quoted as saying:

> The same errors cannot be repeated that caused the destruction of the world in times past and the disappearance of the ancient peoples . . .

[7] The "whiteness" of the Other World refers to shamanic descriptions of their spirits and the spirits in general whom the shamans see once they have entered the Other World.

It is necessary to maintain the teachings and healthy ways of the ancestors, because these traditions guaranteed survival . . .

If [the indigenous peoples] do not react, the only result will be their ruin and bad fortune. (in Fundación Villa del Cine 2006)

Da Silva's message developed along the same lines as those of his predecessors in alerting his people to imminent disaster if they allowed the enemy to control their lives. In this instance, corrupt politicians abused the powers of the *pajé*s by manipulating them to do their dirty work through sorcery. Sorcery meant the domination by "enemies" infiltrated within the communities, who coopted native sources of power, thereby turning the peoples' principal source for protection against themselves. The Wise People perceived this and courageously tried to expose the danger, even if this meant risking their own lives in the process.

The Vital Importance of the Savants for the Future of Humans in Nature

When Baniwa savants have spoken of their utopian dreams, they have referred to a variety of much anticipated situations: a time when there will be no more sickness, no more debt to the White merchants, no more excesses of sorcery. They have encouraged social harmony, prosperity, abundance of food, and faithfulness to ancestral traditions. The utopian time refers both to the primordial world of happiness, when the great spirits walked with their knowledge in This World, but it could also refer to an imminent future. Past, present, and future times collapse in these liminal moments. The savants, people state, earned their fame through their "miraculous" cures, through their knowledge and direct experiences in the Other World, and, I would add, through the resonance of their messages with peoples' struggles, desires, and hopes. For their followers, they have demonstrated extraordinary abilities to divine and to "see," and, with this knowledge and power, to interpret the future of their people, especially in relation to the actions of spirits in This World.

In sum, the unique powers of the Baniwa savants reside in a combination of the following:

(1) The *maliiri*'s recognized skill at singing the new, Other World into being in order to heal the people of this world. Beyond this, the savants are remembered for articulating visions of a new, beautiful world without suffering; encouraging harmonious conviviality with all other living beings; exposing the hidden evils of sorcerers, and ridding their communities of poisonous substances that could annihilate them;

(2) Their compassion and caring for their kin, who "suffer along their way" (L. F., in Wright 2013), as well as the protection of their communities against harm, even after their physical departures from This World; in their messages, through which they provide guidance in moments of uncertainty; and in their calm and tranquility in the face of impending dangers;

(3) The extraordinary powers of the jaguar *maliiri* (*a*) to translocate and metamorphose in order to escape deathtraps; (*b*) to recognize hidden, disguised alterity in humans; and (*c*) to serve as sentinels against attacks by sorcerers; and

(4) Their lifelong dedication to developing the knowledge and power gained from the experiences that *pariká* propitiates and to guarding the traditions, ensuring they are transmitted over the generations.

Comparative Perspectives on Prophet Movements in Northern South America

Prophetic traditions have been documented among numerous other indigenous peoples of the northern Amazon during the more than four centuries of contact with the non-indigenous world. We might ask of these other traditions: what are the relations of the prophet and his/her messages to cosmology? What changes occur in their orientations to ultimate reality? From this brief review of key themes, we may see that most are focused on the same questions: how can life and a way of life be perpetuated in the face of constant transformations? How can humans secure what is most sacred to them in the face of massive destruction and change?

To answer these questions, it may help to understand that common to many of the prophetic movements is the search for a utopia, which can take several forms. The first is spatial, which can mean a return led by the prophet(s) to a place of origin in order to reunite with the primordial and eternal people or divinities. This was a dominant theme in

the seven prophetic movements that took place within a relatively short period of time at the beginning of the twentieth century among the Ticuna of the upper Amazon. Humans, it was believed, had strayed too far from the morally correct ways of living, and the prophets—called "those who desire to be sacred"—showed the way back to sacred places at the headwaters of certain streams where the primordial people were to be found (de Oliveira 1988). These visionaries were young people whose emergence was foretold by the traditional religion. De Oliveira (1988) pondered that the movements were defined by the values and expectations transmitted in Ticuna stories of world destruction and their sense of history as a continuous cycle of humanity's "fall from grace." The Ticuna expected to undergo purification by the culture heroes and immortals from whom they would attain salvation.

Narratives of the Tupi-speaking Cocama from the border of Brazil and Peru, neighbors of the Ticuna, tell of long migrations in their past of whole communities in search for a land where they could cultivate their gardens and renew spiritual contacts with their ancestors. Oscar Agüero in his *Millennium among the Tupi-Cocama* (1992) interpreted the movements in terms of a "religious ethno-dynamism," in which symbolic representation of historical experiences became an instrument to modify the objective conditions of their relations with the Peruvian national society.

In the creation stories of the Apuriná, Arawak-speaking people of the southern Amazon, mention is made of ancient migrations by the first people in search of a sacred place in the north, which only some of them reached. Half of the pilgrims decided to stop in the middle of the journey, while the rest continued on. The "middle place," where the Apuriná live today, is called the "moribund place, the place where many deaths occur" (in Wright 2011), and is not the sacred place they had hoped to attain.

The desired condition when all will be right in the world is intrinsically related to moral questions having to do with the existence of sorcery. In many native Amazonian cosmologies, there exists a tension between light and dark forces, hidden and revealed conditions, protective and harmful spirits of the cosmos. All of these are represented in mythological narratives and are necessary, the traditions seem to say, for the dynamics of cosmological and historical existence. Among the Carib-speaking peoples of the Guyanas and Orinoco, there are narratives that recount the story of creation as the struggles between two brothers whose deeds set the framework and conditions for human society and individual destiny.

One of the brothers is associated with the dark, sorcery, and the creation of plants and animals; the other, with light, healing shamanism, and patronage of humanity. These mythological struggles set the stage for warfare between living *kanaimà* sorcerers—"dark" shamans who specialize in violent killings—and *piai* (light) shamans, which has lasted until the present day (Whitehead 2002).

During the 1840s in the Guyana/Brazil frontier regions, a prophet movement arose led by a Moravian-educated Macuxi Indian by the name of Bichiwung. This movement resulted in the creation of the Hallelujah religion, a blending of indigenous cosmologies, shamanic worldview, and the incorporation of elements of Moravian Christianity (e.g., church meetings and pieces of paper with English words written on them), which were considered to be major symbols of power. During the Hallelujah ceremonies today, participants report that a spirit of light imbues them with power. The Hallelujah religion, like the Song of the Cross in the Northwest Amazon, became a long-lasting tradition, even being recognized officially by the Guyanese government (Butt Colson 1960).

The second form of prophetic movement is temporal, awaiting a time or moment of transformation, when the earth—considered to be irredeemably flawed with impurities, rotten with the corpses of so many dead, and contaminated by sicknesses and toxicity, as well as dangerous and harmful creatures—will be purified by fire and washed by water. After this, the survivors who hid inside the earth or on the tops of trees will reappear to a new life. The stories of creation of many peoples tell of a time when these events occurred, and the savants are those who interpret the signs of the times in order to determine whether the people of This World will be annihilated as happened in the past with the Yanomami, as described by Kopenawa (2014). The great seers and savants are understood to be the emissaries of the divinities who are the only ones to know when these things will take place.[8]

The Tukanoan peoples of the Northwest Amazon in Brazil and Colombia are neighbors and frequently affines to the Baniwa. Their shared history has included the tradition of the prophet movements, as initiated by Kamiko and later developed by Tukanoan followers. There is

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[8] The millenarian message of pentecostal and fundamentalist missionaries has sometimes provoked flares of religious movements led by non-shamanic and sometimes non-indigenous individuals.

a long line of sages and shamans who are remembered for some incident or prophesy that banished the Whites from their lives, and in some cases, there were exchanges in the positions of "boss" and "laborer" between the Indians and the Whites, thereby making the Whites understand intergenerational Indian suffering. The Tukanoan shaman-seers existed within a number of different ethnic groups, including Dessano, Tukano, Barasana, and others, and were not concentrated in one single figure as among the Baniwa and other northern South American, Arawakan-speaking peoples. Stephen Hugh-Jones (1994) has suggested that there exists a tension and rivalry between two kinds of shamans in Barasana society—one "horizontal," the other "vertical," with distinct but complementary powers—that became exacerbated during the history of relations with the Whites, resulting in the movements. Hugh-Jones' observation supports in part the narratives that say there was considerably more internal dissension in these movements.

I suggest, in conclusion, that the Baniwa seers-savants are best known in their communities for a series of qualities and actions that distinguish them from the jaguar *maliiri*—even the very powerful ones. These are:

- their extraordinary capacity to reveal what is hidden. This knowledge is gained, the *maliiri-nai* say, from the Spirit of Power, Dzuliferi, who speaks to them in trance; for the savants, however, this knowledge comes from the creator deity and mostly during dreams;
- their mirrors and other knowledge-enhancing instruments; the depth of their instruction as apprentices during the long period of fasting, combined with the constant use of *pariká* which changes the way they "see the world" (Wright 2013);
- the revelatory experiences that may occur before, during, or after the period of instruction, that have changed their lives (having survived sorcery-induced sickness, for example);
- cosmogonic narratives that buttress the savant's narratives, for they are often overlaid with Christian symbolism (the cross and people's suffering, for example) which extends the savant's powers into the religion of the Whites; in so doing, they invert the ethnic inequality in the Baniwa's historical situation;
- and last but most important, the resonance of their messages and actions of promoting harmonious conviviality amongst the communities. These savants possess a recognized capacity to transcend local differences and conflicts, because their visions appeal to all related communities.

By placing a series of voices in dialogue with each other, carefully distinguishing amongst the sources as emic or etic, I hope to have engendered a deeper understanding of the sources of the savants' powerful knowledge.[9]

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[9] Author's note: Over the four decades since I began researching the Northwest Amazon and jaguar shamans, I have had a number of uncanny experiences that have left a powerful mark on my identity as scholar, researcher, and activist engaged in support of indigenous struggles. It was my objective to learn as much as I could about shamans' practices through participant observation, focused interviews, and informal apprenticeship. I have published three books about Baniwa religious traditions and their continuity (1998, 2005, 2013), and was closely involved in a field project to support Baniwa traditions through the construction of a shamans' House of Powerful Knowledge (Malikai Dapana) in 2009. In 1999, I, along with four Baniwa shamans/narrators, organized a collection of creation stories under the title of Waferinaipe Ianheke. We decided to put the name of José Cornélio (d. 1977), my mentor during my doctoral field research, as the principal editor of the book, in honor of his vast contribution to the teaching of shamans' knowledge.

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Robin M. WRIGHT teaches on indigenous religious traditions, religion and healing, and contemporary shamanisms. He has conducted extensive field research on indigenous religions of the Amazon region of Brazil. He has worked especially on the relations of humans and nature in indigenous cosmologies throughout the Americas, representations of sacred places in indigenous religions, and the centrality of shamanisms to spiritual connections with the natural world. Among his most important books are: *Religion, Medicine, and Healing: Contemporary Perspectives* (2nd edition, 2014) and *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon* (Nebraska, 2013).

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Shamanic Power as an Agent of Reconciling Communal Conflicts

TAKAKO YAMADA KYOTO UNIV./KANAZAWA SEIRYO UNIV., JAPAN

Field researches done so far among the Ladakhis and Tibetans indicate that the belief in shamanism has been lively preserved today along with the devotion to Tibetan Buddhism among them. For example, the Lörol ritual festival performed by the communities of Amdo Tibetans in the Repgong area of Qinghai Province cannot be quintessential without the full involvement of village shamans: it requires the presence of local deities embodied in shamans. The Ladakhis in Western Tibet have still firmly maintained the belief in shamans who embody the power of local deities and the number of those who visit shamans has never decreased. Moreover, Nechung, the Chief State Oracle of Tibet, who was possessed by Dorje Drakden, appeared during the Long-Life Empowerment and Long-Life Offering held on the last day of the Thirty-third Kalachakra Initiation July 3–14, 2014 in Leh (Ladakh), by the Dalai Lama. As this shows, the embodiment of a deity functions indeed as an occasion of making laypersons believe in its power. Thus, shamanism, diverging from local practices of village shamans to state-level practices of Nechung Oracle, has been fundamental in shaping the religious landscape among Tibetan societies. Shamanistic research among Tibetan societies so far has mostly focused on aspects of local shamans as healers or diviners. However, once shamanic practices are reappraised in terms of contemporary context of the interactions between shamans and clients/laypersons, a new role of the shaman as an agent of reconciling communal conflicts in the communities can be revealed. This paper is to explore how shamanic power works as an agent of reconciling or transforming communal conflicts on the basis of case studies of Ladakhis and Tibetans.

Religion and religious practices are integral to societies and the individuals within them as a source of cognitive ordering for everyday life (Yamada 2001). They may also serve to support ecologically sustainable practices in the absence of scientific knowledge (Irimoto and Yamada 1994). However, it is not only these practical advantages, but also sys-

tems of religious belief and ritual performance that evoke religious feeling or spirituality in individuals. No religion can survive unless it provides for its community occasions of shared spirituality and social solidarity; these occasions convince the people of communal and personal security. All religions, from the major world religions to shamanism and local folk beliefs, have developed ceremonies, rituals, liturgies, festivals, and feasts, which regularly remind their adherents of their shared religious belief systems.

My observations of animistic and shamanic practices among the Ladakhis in Western Tibet, the Tibetans, the Sakha in Eastern Siberia, and the Ainu in Japan have suggested that in each culture, the indigenous religion, expressing an indigenous worldview, has been sustained by a continued or renewed vitalization of its original ritual characteristics (Yamada 2005, 2008). These localized ethnic religions forge and nurture feelings of belonging to a specific ethnic community—a communality.

As the history of the International Society for Shamanistic Research (ISSR) indicates (Hoppál 2015), shamanistic studies have revealed a variety of facets of local shamans as healers or diviners. Moreover, because of their special relationships with supernatural or spiritual beings, shamans in particular have often functioned as significant agents for the survival of local religious beliefs. Furthermore, when shamanic practices are reappraised in terms of the contemporary context of the interactions between shamans and clients/lay people, we can see shamans in their new role as agents of reconciling conflict in the communities.

This study aims to clarify the shaman's new role in communities. The study reveals how shamanic "power" works as an agent for reconciling or transforming communal conflicts, based on case studies of Ladakhi and Tibetan societies today. First, by exploring the general landscape of the belief in shamanic power in Tibetan societies, it is shown that shamanic tradition is lively, maintained, and integrated in Tibetan Buddhism. Second, by exploring the transformation of the Matho Nagrang (*mang sphro nag rang*), the Matho Monastery's ritual festival, between 1984 and 2009, the manner in which shamanic power is manipulated in order to retain the monastery's ritual festival as well as to settle communal conflicts is clarified.

General Landscape of the Belief in Shamanic Power and its Continuity in Tibetan Societies Today

General Landscape of the Belief in Shamanic Power

It is well-known that the idea of spirit possession has long prevailed in Tibet and Ladakh, including possession by Buddhist *dharma* protectors and local deities (*lha*). Many Buddhist Ladakhis and Tibetans still hold strong beliefs in shamanic power or spirit-possession—it can be considered inseparable from belief in Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama. In Tibetan societies oracles who become the embodiment of deities through possession have been graded according to the rank of the deity that possesses them: the State Oracle of Nechung (*gnas chung*) on top, followed by the oracles of monasteries and local village oracles (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; Waddell 1978, 481–99; H. R. H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark 1978, 294).

Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet, many oracles have also taken refuge in India. In Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh in northern India, alongside the Dalai Lama, four high-ranking oracles are also in exile, including the Nechung State Oracle, whereas minor oracles can be found in refugee camps throughout India, and are still consulted by their fellow Tibetan refugees (H. R. H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark 1978, 288). Tibetan oracles who give divine messages in a state of spirit possession can be shamans in a broad sense as suggested by Heinze (1989) and Reinhard (1976).

Heinze (1989, 355) defines a shaman as one who can access an alternative state of consciousness at will, while Reinhard (1976, 16), defines a shaman as a person who at his will can enter into a non-ordinary psychic state (in which he either has his soul undertake a journey to the spirit world or he becomes possessed by a spirit) in order to make contact with the spirit world on behalf of members of his community. Again, Aziz (1976, 344–5) points out that "if the incarnate system can be considered spirit possession by 'the descent of the gods to man,' then the incarnate lama can be considered in the context of a wider definition of shamanism," while Jones (1976, 3) notes that the incarnate system can be assumed to be a form of spirit possession. The system of reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism can be identified as a version of spirit-possession: the idea of spirit-possession is involved and integrated into Tibetan Buddhism.

However, it should be noted that the Dalai Lama himself, in a conversation with Günter Schüttler, once commented on the tradition of oracles as follows:

> This has nothing to do with Buddhism. The oracles are absolutely without importance. They are only small tree-spirits. They do not belong to the three treasures of Buddhism. Relations with them are of no help for our next incarnation. They should be looked upon as a manifestation of popular superstition that is deleterious to the health of human beings. (Schüttler 1971 cited by H. R. H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark 1978, 287)

Despite these negative comments regarding oracles by the Dalai Lama, the oracles known as Tsering Che-nga (*tshe ring mched lng*a) or the Five Long-life Sisters, as well as Nechung State Oracle, have been occasionally invoked. The following section discusses how shamanic or spiritual power is manifested in the Tibetan Buddhist Initiation Ritual based on the participant-observation of the Thirty-third Kalachakra Initiation July 3–14, 2014 in Ladakh by the Dalai Lama.

Manifestation of Shamanic Power during Kalachakra Initiation in Ladakh in 2014

Over hundred thousand people including not only Ladakhis and people from other Himalayan regions and Tibetans but also foreigners from all over the world attended this ritual event (Fig. 1).

The huge ritual gathering of the Thirty-third Kalachakra was an eleven-day event. Big screens were installed to enable the wide gathering to see the ongoing ritual programs. The programs included three days of Kalachakra ritual preparation, three days of preliminary teachings, one day of Kalachakra ritual and offering dance, one day of preliminary initiation, and two days of Kalachakra initiation (one for entering the mandala and the other for the final session of empowerment). Each day, when the Dalai Lama appeared on the venue, attendants took turns in approaching him to display their respects. On one of the days, the Mon musicians saluted the Dalai Lama by bowing. The setting where participants could feel the Dalai Lama's spirituality and divinity is indicated using italic in the following paragraphs.

Fig. 1. The venue of the Thirty-third Kalachakra Initiation in Ladakh with more than a hundred thousand participants. Photo: Takako Yamada, 2014.

The first day is the day of ritual preparation. The Dalai Lama lighted a butter lamp at the beginning of the first day of the Kalachakra Empowerment and conducted rituals to prepare and consecrate the venue. He initiated the first step to prepare the base for the Kalachakra Sand Mandala that was to be constructed by the monks of Namgyal Monastery and helped prepare ritual vases that were placed around the Kalachakra Sand Mandala. On the second day, during the ritual preparations, *the Dalai Lama conducted rituals to consecrate the base of the Kalachakra Sand Mandala through ritual dance mounting on the base*. Monks from Namgyal Monastery who were fully dressed in ritual costumes performed the Kalachakra Earth Ritual Dance for the Kalachakra Empowerment. Then, *the Dalai Lama drew the initial lines* that guide the construction of the Kalachakra Sand Mandala. On the third day, ritual prayers continued: after completing the lines to be used for the sand mandala, *the Dalai Lama placed the first bits of colored sand to mark the beginning of the Kalachakra Sand Mandala construction*; monks from Namgyal monastery began its construction. As the construction of the sand mandala progressed, the Dalai Lama provided the preliminary teachings for the Kalachakra Initiation from the fourth to the sixth day. On the sixth

day, the Kalachakra Sand Mandala was completed. Different ritual items were placed around the completed sand mandala following the guidance of the Dalai Lama.

The seventh day was the day of the Kalachakra ritual and offering dance. Ritual offerings (*mchod pa*) for the Thirty-third Kalachakra Empowerment were arranged in front of the Kalachakra Thangka (traditional Tibetan painting). Monks from Namgyal Monastery wearing traditional ritual costumes performed the Kalachakra Ritual Offering Dance in the afternoon. Dances from different localities were performed in the intervals, by different types of performers such as those from Teopa region of Tibet, the Sakti region of Ladakh, Changtang, Lahaul and Spiti, the Zanskar, traditional Tibetan dancers, members of Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts and from Mongolia.

The eighth day was the preliminary initiation for the Kalachakra Empowerment. The Kalachakra Initiation was performed on the following two days with the ninth day being dedicated for entering the mandala and the tenth one for the final session of empowerment.

The last day was for the long-life empowerment of the public and the long-life offering to the Dalai Lama. In the course of the Long-Life Offering to the Dalai Lama, which was presided over by Ganden Tri Rinpoche, Rizong Rinpoche, according to a White Tara ritual, the high-ranking oracles of Nechung and Tsering Che-nga, were invoked to display their respect to the Dalai Lama powerfully and convincingly. Attendants were solemnly waiting for the coming of the Nechung State Oracle. After being completely possessed by *the Nechung deity, the Nechung State Oracle ran for some distance to display his respect and gave blessings to the Dalai Lama*. Alongside the invoking of these high-ranking oracles, *several cases of spontaneous possession among Ladakhi and Tibetan members of the audience occurred*. An attendant who became spontaneously possessed by a *lha* was about to be brought to the Dalai Lama by the security officers; this could be seen on the screen (Fig. 2).

Shamanic power is considered generally to be a minor tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. However, it is suggested that the manifestation of shamanic/spiritual power during such sublime liturgies as the Kalachakra Initiation operate positively to convince the attendants of the reality of its power along with reaffirming the belief in Tibetan Buddhism.

Fig. 2. The screen depicts a possessed woman brought to the Dalai Lama. Photo: Takako Yamada, 2014.

Manifestation of Lha*s (Local Deities) during Monastery's Festival in Ladakh*

Again, as suggested above, among the people of Ladakh in the Trans-Himalayan ranges of India, although there are believers in world or universal religions such as Tibetan Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, shamanic beliefs are retained in a lively manner (Yamada 2015). Their *lha ba* (male) and *lha mo* (female), religious functionaries who claim access to spiritual possession by the local deity (*lha*), are visited by Ladakhis, regardless of whether they hold to Buddhism or Islam as their religion, for practical and spiritual advice. As I have shown in an earlier paper (Yamada 2015b), Ladakhi *lha ba* and *lha mo* continue to play social roles not only as healers and diviners, but also as mediators to mediate and alleviate religious and political conflicts.

We can also see that the local tradition of spiritual possession is incorporated into the ritual festivals of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. The festivals of Matho Monastery (*mang spro dgon pa*), Stok Monastery (*stog dgon pa*), and Thikse Monastery (*khrig se dgon pa*) are famous for incorporating local deities (*lha*) as agents of possession. In the Matho Monastery festival, two monks become oracles possessed by a *yul lha* (village deity), while in the Thikse and Stock Monastery festivals, a villager or

Fig. 3. Manifestation of *lha* is shown by a village oracle during the Thikse Monastery's ritual festival, Thikse Gustor. Photo: Takako Yamada, 2009.

villagers carry out this role. The guardian of the monastery manifested itself in the embodiment of a village oracle during the Thikse Gustor festival (Fig. 3).

Lha achieve human embodiment through the spirit-possession, and a person possessed by a *lha* is the visible object of worship for the Ladakhis. Ladakhis today vividly believe in shamanic power. The idea of spirit-possession is again elaborately integrated into Tibetan Buddhist ritual among the Ladakhi society.

Shamanic Power as a Device of Mediation: An Example of Amdo Tibetans' Village

Shamanic power can function as a device for mediation. Among the Tibetan communities of the Repgong area of Qinghai Province, for example, the manifestation of *lha* embodied by a shaman is an essential element of the Lörol (*klu rol*, lit. "amusing Naga") ritual festival, which has been revived since the 1980s (Yamada 2011, 2012, 2013). The very essence of its religious meaning—praying for a good harvest in advance—has gradually become weakened and faith and religiosity are no longer the main motives

Fig. 4. Villagers sincerely listen to what the village shaman says during the Lörol ritual festival. Photo: Takako Yamada, 2009.

for keeping the festival. The Lörol festival has begun to assume new roles: it is now an occasion to express "Tibetanness" as well as an occasion to settle disputes and conflicts among villagers.

During the Lörol festival in one village, for example, it was noticed in both 2009 and 2010 that several community meetings were held with the local shaman attending in a possessed state (Fig. 4).

In particular, in 2009, a community meeting turned into an arena filled with arguments and complaints, which were directed towards the village chief and the village's chief secretary of the communist party. Villagers complained about inequality in the distribution of economic support provided by the government. The arguments were so heated that some of the attendees almost came to blows with the village chief. However, with the shaman's intimidating presence and influence, the arguments were finally settled peacefully without violence. Furthermore, a villager ironically commented that although, formerly, villagers prayed for the intermediary of a shaman during the festival, today it is the shaman who asks villagers to participate in the festival or to perform dances. Nonetheless, shamans did take the initiative to maintain the festival and played the role of disciplinarians by punishing those who

did not observe every detail of the festival. Thus, among the Tibetans in the village, the Lörol festival functions as an arena in which the solidarity of a village community is strengthened by allowing villagers to publicly express grievances and to settle communal disputes, as well as reconfirming traditional norms and values. In these settings, shamanic power manifested by a shaman in a possessed state does make the shaman effectively function as a disciplinarian and mediator in village life (Yamada 2012).

From the examples described above, we can note that this impressive scheme of the visualization of spiritual/shamanic power allows the people to retain their ideas of spirit possession in local Ladakhi and Tibetan society even today. Thus, it is possible to say that Tibetan and Ladakhi followers have firmly maintained their belief in shamanic power today.

Confusion and Conflicts Surrounding the Matho Nagrang (mang sphro nag rang) *Festival in Ladakh*

I had the chance to participate in Matho Nagrang Festival twice, in 1984 and 2009. In 2009, I noticed a sort of atrophy in the festival programs. Moreover, after the festival in 2009, I found that there were serious confusion and conflict among Matho villagers surrounding the festival from 2005 to 2006. Here, based on my field studies in 1984 and 2009, I will explore how shamanic power has been manipulated in order to aid recovery from the confusion and conflicts among the villagers and to enable the festival to flourish again.

Matho Nagrang in 1984

Matho Monastery was established in 1410 by a high spiritual lama, Thunpa Dorje Spalzang, who came from Tibet to disseminate the Sakya doctrine of Tibetan Buddhism among the Ladakhis. According to tradition, he was accompanied by seven brother deities (*Spun bdun*), two of whom were especially powerful and fearsome. Dorje Spalzang ordered these two deities to become the protectors of Matho village, the *yul lha*, enshrining them in a *lha tho* (cairn shrine erected for local deities) at the head of the Rong (meaning "narrow") Valley. The two deities are called

Rong-tsan Karpo (White Narrow Valley Spirit of *Btsan*) and Rong-tsan Marpo (Red Narrow Valley Spirit of *Btsan*)—for short, the Rong-tsan Kar-mar. The Rong-tsan Kar-mar deities are both terrifying and dangerous, and have human form. The red spirit is called the monk's deity and rides on a red horse, while the white spirit is the king's deity and rides on a white horse (Gyaltsan 2015).

The Matho Nagrang (literally, "black-self," a Buddhist ritual festival consisting of sacred mask dances (*'chams*) and the appearance of Rong-tsan Kar-mar), includes a series of rituals, which last over eleven weeks from the fourteenth day of the eleventh month to the eighth day of the second month. The annual celebration of Matho Nagrang is said to have been performed without interruption since the time of Dorje Spalzang in the fifteenth century (Gyaltsan 2005, 19; Irimoto 2014).

The main part of this ritual celebration stretches from the seventh day of the first month to the eighth day of the second month of the Tibetan Calendar: the season normally corresponding to winter. The fourteenth and fifteenth days of the first month are known by Ladakhis as "the Nagrang festival," during which mask dances, with each mask representing a Buddhist deity, are performed by monks in the monastery courtyard and the two deities manifest themselves by achieving human embodiment through spirit-possession.

On the thirteenth day of the first month, the eve of the "Nagrang festival," the two oracles possessed by Rong-tsan Kar-mar openly displayed their presence to the lay villagers, and answered the villagers' individual questions through divination. On the fourteenth day, the first day of the festival, under possession, the oracles joined the monks performing the mask dance in a circle in the monastery courtyard. On the fifteenth day, the second day, after the oracles bathed, a wrathful face of Gonbo (Mahakala) was drawn on their chests and backs, which visualize the belief that possession by the Rong-tsan Kar-mar gave the monks the transcendental knowledge of Gonbo (Gyaltsan 2005, 26). After being blind-folded with a black cloth folded over nine times, the oracles, who became the embodiment of Gonbo, walked both within and outside the monastery. According to custom, the oracles left the monastery with the images of Mahakala painted on their bodies, and visited places of spiritual importance, such as the cairn shrines of noble families, the sacred willow tree, and the *stupa*s (sacred pyramidal buildings that were originally sepulchers containing the relics of departed saints) in Matho village. On the way, the oracles could be approached by villagers

Fig. 5. The performance of mask dances, *sgser skyem ja nag* (offering golden wine in a black hat) during the Matho Nagrang Festival. Photo: Takao Yamada, 2009.

and would stop to give divinations upon request. To the villagers, this appeared miraculous.

In 1984, the Matho Nagrang festival did function to confirm and deepen relationships between the monastery and the lay population of Matho village. Significantly, the 1984 rituals were intimately connected with agricultural fertility. After completing a sand mandala (a circular figure representing the universe in Buddhist symbolism) of Hevajra (*kye*

rdo rje, a Buddhist deity that is the main dharma protector of Matho Monastery) on the seventh day of the first month, a ritual for the Hevajra was performed daily until the twelfth day of the first month, when the mandala was broken. The sand of the mandala was collected in a pot and shared among the villagers, who spread it on their fields in order to prevent harmful insect attacks on the crops.

Because the Rong-tsan Kar-mar deities are believed to bestow happiness, not only on Matho villagers, but also on all Ladakhis, and to foretell the future welfare of Ladakhi society, even Ladakhi politicians have attended the festival to profess their faith.

Consistency and Transformation of the Festival in 2009

When the rituals of the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the first month of the Nagrang (the "Nagrang festival") performed in 1984 are compared to those performed in 2009, both consistency and atrophy are apparent. The consistency was found in the performance of mask dances: the titles and the order of the mask dances performed in the courtyard had not changed between 1984 and 2009, and the performance ran strictly according to the Buddhist ritual text (Fig. 5).

However, in 2009, there were readily observable differences in the behavior of the oracles on the second festival day, both in the ways in which they manifested their divinity and in their manner towards the villagers.

In 1984, the people of Matho believed that if they respected and honored the Rong-tsan Kar-mar, the deities would protect them from suffering all kinds of misfortunes, but that if they neglected these duties, the deities would bring bad luck and disaster on the village. On that occasion, once the Mon music began, signaling the possession of the oracles, I perceived a growing uneasiness in the waiting crowd sitting in the courtyard. I was told that the oracles were likely to use sticks to beat any monks who made mistakes in the mask dance or who accidentally hindered their passage, and that if they noticed tourists taking photos, they would rush at them and beat them with sticks. In fact, I did observe the oracles as they ran through the crowd with their swords, swaying occasionally to beat members of the crowd. Thus, my impression from the first festival day in 1984 was of the people's fear and awe of the Rong-tsan Kar-mar. The oracles, through the deities, were figures of discipline.

In contrast, by 2009, their disciplinary role had disappeared and they acted purely as diviners. This time, it was not the oracles, but the villagers themselves, who prevented tourists from taking photos. Moreover, in 2009, the performance of the oracles on the second festival day was greatly atrophied as compared with the situation in 1984. In 1984, the deities embodied in the oracles on the second festival day were less terrifying but more miraculous than those on the first festival day: they went out into the village visiting sacred places, and the villagers readily approached them about their concerns for the future or current illnesses. In contrast, in 2009, I observed that the oracles provided divinations only within the monastery; they did not go out into the village and visit sacred places, but moved from room to room similar to the first festival day. A villager told me that the oracles have stopped going out of the monastery since 2007.

In the basic structure of the rituals, which is largely of Buddhist origin, there was little change over the 25 years between 1984 and 2009. However, there was thus noticeable atrophy in the comportment and role of the oracles.

Local Discourses on the Atrophy of Oracles' Performances

The changes in the "Nagrang Festival" in 2009, especially in the context of the embodiment of the *lha*, were in reality the fruits of the negotiations of communal conflicts among Matho villagers. The changes were explained locally as being caused by the problem of finding a successor for the body painter and by the weakening of villagers' adherence to traditional religious practices. In reality, the head painter, who was from the family of "Lha bdag" (literally, "the owner of *lha*") in Leh city, and drew the face of Mahakala on the bodies of the oracles, passed away before the start of the festival in 2005. Villagers said that, in the festivals of 2005 and 2006, the deities almost came: on the first day, they did come, but on the second day, they did not possess the oracles.

An elder of Matho village explained to me the circumstances of the atrophy as follows:

> The oracles tell their attendants that they will not go down to the village. On the first festival day, they said as follows, "In future, the black form (i.e., the Mahakala) will not come." Even though Sakya Tenjin, His Holiness of the Sakya (head lama of all the Sakya order monasteries), requested the Mahakala to come

by performing a special liturgy, the answer was that the black form would not come on the second day. Then, Sakya Tenjin, together with the painters, again requested the Mahakala to come, and eventually the oracles answered that the deity would appear only inside the monastery. Because of this, on the second festival day, the oracles no longer move about outside the monastery but only within the monastery. They walk only a short distance. It is very important to us, the villagers, that the oracles should embody the *lha*. If the *lha* do not come at all, then our traditions will completely disappear.

The elder commented further, as follows:

When I was young, the villagers showed greater respect for the mask dances. Now, the people do not put their faith in the mask dances performed by monks. Previously, we believed that the masks were the real manifestation of *dharma* protectors and guardian deities who would help us when we were in the state of *bardo* after death.

These accounts suggest that the Matho village elders have sensed a weakening of religious faith among the people. However, the accounts also show that they are striving to maintain their traditions by repositioning the embodiment of the *lha* as an essential part of the "Nagrang festival" tradition. It has been also noticed that the son of the head painter from Leh City did not inherit their family heritage as a painter. Therefore, the monastery had great difficulty in finding out another painter to replace him for the festival in 2005.

There may be another context for the change in the oracles' behavior on the second day. Because Matho monks think that the embodiment of the *lha* on the second day of the festival is under the control of the Mahakala, a *dharma* protector, the spirit-possession of the oracles by the Mahakala depends on the active involvement of the monastery. In other words, the participation of Mahakala is in the hands of the monastery. Accordingly, a learned monk from another monastery suggested that the refusal to leave the monastery is not simply the insistence of the *lha* through the oracles, but is due to the command of a high spiritual lama, the head lama of the monastery. Here, it is pointed out that the changes in the actions of the *lha*s on the second day resulted from the monastery's intentional involvement in restoring or revitalizing the "Nagrang festival" by confining it more to the context of Tibetan Buddhism (Yamada 2010).

Fig. 6. Musicians playing the drum and the flute during the Matho Nagrang Festival. Photo: Takako Yamada, 2009.

Rumors About the Social Conflicts in Matho Village

The village elder did not tell me other stories about what might have caused the atrophy of the festival. It became widely known among the Ladakhis that conflicts arose among Matho villagers due to the refusal of a village musician to participate in the festival (Fig. 6).

A man from one of three Mon families of Matho village, who had always played the role of musicians during the festival, refused to play during the festival in 2005. He quit his role as a musician because he had joined the army.

In Ladakh, music played by Mon villagers on the kettledrum and flute is considered indispensable to pleasing the *lha* that is embodied by the oracle. However, in recent years, there has been a tendency for Mon families to refuse this role, which is tied to a low caste position in the hierarchy of traditional Ladakhi society. As democratic values have spread in Ladakhi society, people of the Mon caste have rebelled against their position and begun to reject their traditional role as musicians during festivals.

This led to conflict between that Mon family and other villagers. Responding to the words of the Matho *lha*s, the villagers claimed that

lha would not come unless the son who had joined the army played the kettledrum. However, in response, the son insisted that the army would not grant him leave to attend the festival. It is in 2005 and 2006, when Matho oracles could not become fully possessed by deities on the second day of the festival that the conflicts between the villagers heated up.

Eventually, this conflict had heated to the extent that other villagers punished this man's family for his dereliction by preventing irrigation water from passing through their fields. In opposition to the disturbing of their fields by other villagers, this Mon family complained to the Dalai Lama, saying, "There is no mention of discrimination in Buddhist doctrine, so why are we so discriminated against?"

It is said that the Dalai Lama replied that there is no foundation for caste discrimination. His reply led to public consensus that communal sanctions should not be taken on a Mon family by Matho villagers. Although the monastery belongs to the Sakya Order of Tibetan Buddhism, both the monastery and the villagers had to observe the answer of Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of all the Tibetan Buddhists.

Conflict Resolution and Manipulation of Shamanic Power

Then, how has the monastery solved these emergent conflicts? The monastery went step-by-step through the following processes by responding to villagers' reactions and remodeled the festival in 2007. As is shown below, a series of developments in solving the incidents aptly suggest that the Matho monastery has strategically accommodated the changing situation by manipulating shamanic power.

The Beginning

In 2005, the monastery was faced with two difficulties. One is the musicians' refusal of playing. The other is the apparent fail to find a new head painter who could replace the previous one when he passed away before the start of the festival in 2005.

Facing the changing context, the monastery took the strategy first of taking the side of villagers who opposed the refusal of a Mon musician, by letting the Matho *lha* say they would not come unless the son who had joined the army played the kettledrum at the festival. Moreover, the monastery tried to solve the unavailability of a head painter by letting

*lha*s manifest themselves only on the first day and telling the villagers that, in the future, the black form (i.e., the Mahakala) would not come on the second day.

Here, it was suggested that the monastery had great difficulty in finding a new painter. It was before the festival in 2007 that they could finally find another chief painter from Chimle village to replace the previous one.

Second Step

In response to the *lha*s' opposition to the refusal of the musician, and fearing the loss of their festival, villagers took action against him by preventing irrigation water from passing through his family's fields. Therefore, the conflicts between the Mon family and other villagers escalated until the Mon family complained to the Dalai Lama about the villagers' interference in their fields.

Since the Dalai Lama responded positively to the complaint of the Mon family, both the monastery and the villagers were left with no grounds for opposing the refusal of the Mon musician to play the kettledrum at the festival. Although the monastery belongs to the Sakya Order of Tibetan Buddhism, they had to observe the answer of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of all the Tibetan Buddhists, as we have said before.

Last Step

The monastery then acted assertively by asking Sakya Tenjin, His Holiness of the Sakya (head lama of all the Sakya order monasteries) to request the Mahakala to come on the second day by performing a special liturgy. Although the initial answer was negative, in response to Sakya Tenjin and the painters' second request to the Mahakala to come, the oracles eventually answered that the deity would come only inside the monastery.

This is the way that the conflicts were settled in 2007, meaning the Mahakala was present on the second day of Matho Nagrang and visited from room to room inside the monastery. Consequently, I observed in 2008 that villagers seriously obey the rules not to let the *lha*s offended.

Strategy of the Monastery for Conflict Resolution

The remodeling of the festival is considered the monastery's way of adjusting to the difficulties in maintaining their festival in the present days. It can be interpreted that the way the process developed, as described above, shows that the monastery made the oracles to present monastery's intentions as divine messages, stating that the manifestation of the *lha*s on the second day would be confined to inside the monastery.

In the course of accommodating changing situations, the Matho monastery took initiative by thus manipulating shamanic power in order to represent the remodeling not as the will of the monastery but as that of the deities.

Conclusion

It is well-known that the practice of shamanism has developed a variety of devices and methods that enable clients and the lay audience to sense and believe in spiritual beings or spirituality, which include, for example, glossolalia, the techniques of "sucking out," and performing wild animal cries (Yamada 2008). Tibetan oracles are by no means an exception to this. Both the State Oracles and village oracles have manifested their spiritual/shamanic power through an impressive and sublime way of coordinating Tibetan Buddhist liturgies. Based on this analysis, especially of the conflicts surrounding the Matho Nagrang festival, the following points can be summarized in conclusion, relating to shamanic power as an agent of reconciling communal conflicts and accommodating contemporary changes.

First, as shown in the case studies described above, the unwavering faith in shamans/oracles among Ladakhis and Tibetans is inseparable from the highly stylized manner of their appearance. Guaranteed by spiritual manifestations, Ladakhi and Tibetan shamans function today not only as healers, but also as keepers of tradition, accusers of those who violate social norms, and mediators of conflicts.

Second, although the Ladakhi and Tibetan people have kept their deep faith in spirit-possession and Tibetan Buddhism, recent social changes, along with globalization and modernization, have seriously affected the survival of ritual festivals. In reality, the monasteries' religious festivals have faced a critical threat to their survival. Although

both the monastery and the villagers wish to keep their ritual traditions, it has begun to be difficult to continue traditional family roles, such as painters of sacred objects or musicians who play essential roles in maintaining the religious festival.

Third, regardless of whether spirit-possession is considered a cultural tradition that is shared by the villagers, or a purely religious tradition exclusively for the monastery, shamanic power is indispensable to the survival of the Ladakhi Buddhist tradition, as well as a way of maintaining lay people's cultural and religious traditions. Since the embodiment of the *lha* in the oracles during the Matho Nagrang has been essential to the festival, both for the monastery and the villagers, the shamanic power of the oracles was manipulated to negotiate social conflicts in the village as well as to remodel the festival.

Divine message operate to convince lay people to accept it. Thus, with the firm belief in spiritual power, social conflicts stemming from religious matters can be aptly solved by utilizing this religious power to the fullest.

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Takako YAMADA (*yamada.takako.78a@st.kyoto-u.ac.jp*), who holds a D.Sc. in anthropology from Graduate School of Sciences of Kyoto University, is a professor emerita of Kyoto University since 2012 and a professor of Kanazawa Seiryo University since 2015. She has been carrying out field studies from shamanic and animistic viewpoints among the Ladakhi in Western Tibet of India since 1983, the Ainu in Hokkaido Japan since 1986, the Sakha in Eastern Siberia since 1994, and Tibetans and Tibetan refugees since 2004. She is currently directing a research project on the remaking of communal identity among the Tibetans living in Japan.

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The Making and Unmaking of a Sacred Place: A Case-study in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia)

LIA ZOLA UNIVERSITY OF TURIN, ITALY

The whole area of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) is characterized by a good number of sacred places, in particular lakes, rivers, trees, mountains, hills, and plains. Shamans' graves, generally placed deep inside the woods, are also considered sacred places. Almost every Sakha, before crossing a river or passing by a sacred tree or a shaman's grave, leaves food offerings, but also cigarettes, CDs, DVDs, or small presents, and avoids speaking loudly in order to prevent attacks from the spirits or the dead shamans' souls resting there. In the past ten years, a growing number of travel agencies have started to organize package tours to Kihilėėkh, a rocky mountain site at the northern end of the Sakha Republic. Tourism in the Kihilėėkh mountains has recently raised many doubts and controversies. The most debated point is the question whether Kihilėėkh was a sacred place turned into a touristic spot or vice versa. Some native scholars and journalists argue that sacred places are not for the many, and therefore the mountains, sooner or later, will take their revenge. Others opine that the mountains possess healing powers: the number of people who actually improve their health after visiting Kihilėėkh is increasing. I seek in this paper to assess the creation of sacred places, their meaning, and the politics of the revival of shamanic culture in the Sakha Republic.

The complex relationship of people with place has come under increasing scholarly scrutiny in recent years: place refers to "something" that surrounds human beings, but it is not only limited to this. The issue of place has been analyzed from different perspectives and disciplines, starting from cultural geography. Much of the research conducted on the sense of place during the 1970s and 1980s reflected strong influences from both Martin Heidegger (1962) and Michael Foucault (1977). The former's notion of "dwelling" appears to have inspired the themes of rootedness, uprootedness, and transrootedness in the works of Anne Buttimer (1980, 1985) and, in the early 1990s, of Stephen Daniels and

Denis Cosgrove (1988). In the late 1990s other approaches to the issue of place were formulated. On the one hand, authors such as Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997) critically explored the concepts of identity, place, and power. These works were inspired by increasing mass migration, displacement, mobility, and the transnational cultural flows of a late, postcolonial world. In addition, various authors focused on the cross-cultural understanding of place, seen as a cultural site worth protecting and safeguarding (Carmichael et al. 1994).

Two interesting perspectives in this regard were formulated by Eric Hirsch and Michael O'Hanlon (1995), and by Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (1996). The approach of the first work, *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, rests on the idea of "landscape as process." Hirsch and O'Hanlon suggest that anthropology might provide a perspective of place as a dynamic cultural process, multisensual, and constantly oscillating between a "foreground" of lived emplacement and a "background" of social potential. The second (edited) work, *Senses of Place*, hints at the multitude of approaches referring to places. The underlying idea is that talking about place in the singular transforms it into a static concept, whereas it is necessary to consider places in their wholeness: through perception, imagination, conflict, and remembrance places are metaphorically and metonymically related to collective identities.

Three of the most representative authors concerning themselves with place are Tim Ingold, and Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga. Ingold (1993, 152) proposes a "dwelling perspective," according to which places and landscape "bear an enduring record of the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and have left there something of themselves". Places make spaces, and are, according to Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003, 861), a way of *spatializing culture*, which means "to locate both physically and conceptually social relations and social practice in social space." Similarly, in *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre rejects the notion of absolute space, arguing that space is produced by social activity, and thus is inherently historical. Space, for this author, is not a neutral container, but an ongoing social production (Lefebvre 1991). The literature mentioned above illustrates that the traditional sense of belonging to a land and its people has been replaced by an increasingly expanded notion of what constitutes viable spaces or places as foundations for self/group identification and belonging.

Places are part of a space, which is not blank, but is a social arena made of places, which differ according to their functions. The localized

nature of social interaction among human groups, which deals with the effort human beings always make to situate their actions in specific places, is one of the most relevant aspects of the anthropology of places and will be a starting point for my analysis.

Sacred Places in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia)

Discussion of sacred places can take many forms and is a debated issue, as there is still a need for a working definition that is accessible to different stakeholders, from indigenous groups to policymakers.

The English word "sacredness," as Jane Hubert notes, derives from Latin and

> is defined as restriction through pertaining to the gods. The concept of sacred implies restrictions and prohibitions on human behaviour—if something is sacred then certain rules must be observed in relation to it, and this generally means that something that is said to be sacred, whether it be an object or site (or person), must be placed apart from everyday things or places, so that its special significance can be recognized, and rules regarding it obeyed. (Hubert 1994, 11)

In many societies, the concept of the sacred is not restricted to one area of life, but is expressed more widely: what is believed to be sacred may not refer to easily recognizable buildings or objects, but may include elements in the landscape like rocks, trees, rivers, or the landscape itself. Although the translation of words and concepts relating to the sacred in different cultures may be inexact, separatedness, respect, and rules of behavior seem to be common ways of approaching sacred places in different contexts (Hubert 1994).

Another point seems to be common to different cultures when dealing with sacred places: as they are cultural constructions, they can be created and unmade. This raises questions about the life and persistence of sacred places and their transformation over time: what happens when a sacred place undergoes a process of desacralization? Does it still retain its sacredness or does it evolve into something else? Such questions are central to the discussion of sacred places and, although my paper will not provide direct answers, it will attempt to assess and discuss the issue of making specific places sacred.

The whole area of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) is marked by a considerable number of sacred places in the form in particular of lakes, rivers, trees, mountains, hills, and plains. In the span of eighty years the names by which they were referred to witnessed remarkable changes: in pre-revolutionary society the use of proper toponyms was avoided as it could enrage the spirit masters associated with specific places. Consequently, they were commonly referred to by different Sakha words: *ytyk* (sacred) indicated mountains and hills, but also specific objects; *ėhė*, *ėbė* (grandpa, grandma) stood for rivers and lakes, as we can see in the chart below, illustrating a few place-names in the southern district of Churapcha (Bravina 1996):

OFFICIAL TOPONYMS	SUBSTITUTE PLACE-NAMES
Imittė	Ilin Ėbė (The Eastern Grandma)
Churapchy	Arğaa Ėbė (The Western Grandma)
Ulakhan Tunkuluŭdu	Dirin Köl (The Deep Lake)
Kychchygyĭ Tunkulujdu	Kuchchuguĭ Ėbė (The Small Grandma)
Kharada	Uulaakh Ėbė (The Grandma with a spring)
Buluma	Ulakhan Ėbė (The Big Grandma)
Tuoluna	Ulakhan Örekh (The Big River)

During Soviet times, a remarkable number of place-names were substituted by Soviet terms, as also happened with streets and squares, so that rivers such as "Small Grandma" or "Deep Lake" were turned into "River Lenin" and "Lake Komsomol" (Balzer 1993; Sülbė 2004).

Language and Memory

Language plays an important role in forming the social world and it is used to construct and shape social, political, and power relations. Language has the effect of including or excluding groups and individuals according to their perception of the linguistically created "reality" (Clark, Hercus and Kostanski 2014). As Charles Taylor (1985, 258) points out, "it is language which enables us to draw boundaries, to

pick some things out in contrast to others. Thus through language we formulate things, and thus come to have an articulated view of the world." It is not spaces which ground identifications, but places. "How does space become place? By naming." (Carter, Donald and Squires 1993, 12) Carter and other authors are among the few who have overtly linked the process of naming to the creation of places. Many authors have reflected upon the issue of whether the social and cultural role of toponyms can be partly defined through a theory on toponymic identity (Kostanski 2014). Mark Abrahamson (1996, 84) notes that communities occupy their own geographical areas, with which they become intimately associated: through this process of identification, "areas acquire symbolic qualities that include their place-names and social histories." Kostanski (2014) argues that it is important to pass down historical meaning through the names for places with which they identify. It can be seen that it is not only place identity, but also toponymic identity, which connects a population with their history.

Yi-Fu Tuan (1991, 688) noted that "only a socio-political revolution would bring about a change of name . . . the new name itself has the power to wipe out the past and call forth the new." Elisabeth Furniss (2001, 285) elaborates further on Tuan's statement, arguing that the imagined linearity of colonial history erases "any prior indigenous history, suggesting instead that the land and its inhabitants somehow did not exist, or their existence was unimportant, until they were 'found' and incorporated into Western systems of knowledge." In the case study analyzed by Kostanski, dealing with place-names in Australia, sentiments of the nonexistence of indigenous history, or of the unimportance of indigenous history to the case-study area, often emerged during her fieldwork. The perceived need to identify with colonial history and names, or to assert the suitability of indigenous names, saw the narratives relating with identity diverge according to the memories that people associated with the names. The discussion in part focused on the power dynamics of place inclusion and exclusion exhibited by communities. It was argued that the existence of non-indigenous names in the landscape served as constant reminders of colonial history and "ownership" of the landscape (Kostanski 2014).

A toponym can be a symbol of multiple identities and the use of two toponyms for one place can be a strong reminder of the multiple place histories and cultural identities which may exist for a locale. At this point in the discussion, "attention needs to be given to notions of how

collective or community cultures influence the creation and interpretation of place, and perhaps, toponymic identity." (Kostanski 2014, 282) Memories of place imbue the users or inhabitants of a specific place with a present-day identity. This place identity is almost the glue which holds community groups together through a shared understanding of their collective past (Kostanski 2014).

Memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority: in this respect, it is worth mentioning Edward W. Said's (2000, 179) reflections on the interplay between geography, memory, and invention. He aims at underlining the extent "to which the art of memory for the modern world is both for historians as well as ordinary citizens and institutions very much something to be used, misused and exploited, rather than something that sits inertly there for each person to possess and contain."

The study and concern with memory, or a specifically desirable and recoverable past, is a late-twentieth-century phenomenon that arose at a time of great change, of unimaginably large and diffuse competing nationalisms, and, most importantly, of the decreasing efficacy of religious, familial, and dynastic bonds. According to Said (2000, 179), "people now look to this refashioned memory, especially in its collective forms, to give themselves a coherent identity, a national narrative, a place in the world, though the processes of memory are frequently, if not always, manipulated and intervened in for sometimes urgent purposes in the present." To this extent the invention of tradition is a method of using collective memory selectively by manipulating certain parts of the national past, while suppressing others, and elevating yet others in an entirely functional way. Thus, memory is not necessarily authentic, but rather useful (Said 2000).

Simon Schama's volume *Landscape and Memory* (1995) illustrates the to-ing and fro-ing between specific geographical locales and the human imagination. In Said's opinion, the most compelling aspect of Schama's book is that the author shows in many different ways that forests, villages, mountains, and rivers are never coterminous with some stable reality out there that identifies and gives them permanence. What Said finds particularly interesting is the hold that both memory and geography have on the desire for conquest and domination. The great voyages of geographical discovery from Vasco da Gama to Captain James Cook were motivated by curiosity and scientific fervor, but also by a spirit of domination, which becomes immediately evident when white men

land in some distant and unknown place and the natives rebel against them. These experiences trigger complicated memories for natives and colonizers alike: "It is easy to see the fact of displacement in the colonial experience, which is the replacement of one geographical sovereignty, an imperialist one, by another native force. More subtle and complex is the unending cultural struggle over territory, which necessarily involves overlapping memories, narratives, toponymic identities and physical structures." (Said 2000, 181) Taylor's idea that people's life narratives are "nested" within larger narratives is a useful way of conceptualizing both the temporal nature of memory's grounding in place, and the relationship between place and collective memory. Taylor (1985) argues that, as a result of our capacity to connect events that have occurred within different contexts, our life narratives are imbued with references to history and the historical construction of place. This is quite evident in the Siberian post-Soviet arena.

In the 1990s, in many Siberian areas, the collapse of the Soviet Union fostered an unprecedented political, cultural, and spiritual revival, whose main feature was a clear orientation towards local distinctiveness and national uniqueness. This was specifically pursued in the newborn sovereign republics like the Sakha Republic, where the re-establishment of elements belonging to Sakha "traditional" culture played an important role in redefining and determining what was considered unique and authentic. Together with the national summer festival Yhyakh and shamanism, sacred places were focal in the new debate on Sakha identity. Consequently, a further restoration of pre-revolutionary placenames, along with a renewed form of worship at these sacred sites began to be, and is still, enacted whenever people cross a river, set out on a journey, build or enter a new house, go hunting and fishing, or, more generally, any time they interact with the surrounding environment. These actions are always preceded by offerings to the spirit masters of specific places. Shamans' graves, often hidden deep in the woods, are also considered sacred places: food, *olad'i* (pancakes), cigarettes, CDs, DVDs, USB devices, and other small presents are only a few examples of offerings left for the spirits and the dead shamans' souls resting there. The increasing attention to sacred places has not only been limited to individual worship but has recently attracted the tourist market too.

Kihilėėkh: The Making (and Unmaking?) of a Sacred Place

In the past fifteen years, a growing number of travel agencies have started organizing package tours to Kihilėėkh, a rocky mountain site at the northern end of the Sakha Republic, in the district of Batagay, some 700 km from the capital city, Yakutsk. Kihilėėkh is a common name, indicating groups of granite rocks standing on several peaks scattered over an area of about three miles (Fig. 1).

The action of wind through time has shaped some of these rocks in such a peculiar way that they resemble human beings: hence the name Kihilėėkh "Anthropomorphic (Rocks)." The trips to the mountains are organized from June until mid-September, depending on weather conditions. Around mid-June the site welcomes a peak of visitors, coinciding with the annual summer solstice festival of Yhyakh: this way they can observe their own celebrations on the top of the mountains.

The first trip organized by a travel agency was in the early 2000s and, since then, the number of visitors has been increasing. Over a span of fifteen years, the mountains of Kihilėėkh have not only attracted a growing number of tourists, but have also helped the tourist market in a broader sense: in 2008, two hundred visitors climbed the mountains;

Fig. 1. The Kihilėėkh rocky mountain site. Photo: Lia Zola, August 2008.

in 2015 five hundred of them followed, mostly of Sakha or Russian origins. In the last eight years the number of travel agencies in the capital city offering package tours to Kihilėėkh has risen from two to six: in an area like the Sakha Republic, where tourism is still underdeveloped and mostly internal, because of the bad condition of the roads and the lack of proper infrastructure, such numbers matter.[1]

The growing number of tourists visiting Kihilėėkh has produced an open debate among native scholars, journalists, healers, and shamans: the main point of contention is upon whether the Kihilėėkh mountains were sacred places turned into tourist spots or vice versa.

As with any mountain, the area too is considered sacred and watched over by one or more spirit masters. However, since the rocks started to become a tourist attraction, another aspect has been advertised by travel agencies: Kihilėėkh as an energy center. According to those who have visited the area, the energy released by the rocks regenerates the human organism, as well as recharging electronic devices. In some Sakha tourist reviews dealing with Kihilėėkh, the mountains have even been defined as "the energy center of the planet, the Northern Shambala" (Khodulova 2007).

But according to some geologists the "energy center" is nothing other than the result of radiations emitted by the rocks. This was mainly claimed by a geologist working for the Permafrost Institute of Yakutsk, who stated that "radiation can be found everywhere on earth: some is emanated by the rays of the sun, some other by ionizing air, both of which are useful for our organism. When taken in small amounts radiation is not harmful, but prolonged exposure may cause some trouble" (Murzin 2003, 5). This appears to have happened to him: when he came back to Yakutsk after spending several nights at the foot of the rocks, he was diagnosed with radiation sickness.

Another debated point concerns the involvement of shamans, healers, and *algyhyyt*, prayer-givers, in the area. Since the beginning of the tourist activity, a considerable number of them have started to climb the mountains, occasionally with groups of visitors, at times on their own. Their aim has been to lead different rituals in order to propitiate the spirit mas-

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[1] According to the national survey on tourism led by the Ministry for Tourism, in 2015 150,000 tourists of Russian origin and 6,000 of foreign background visited the Sakha Republic (http://www.sakha.gov.ru).

ters or just to bless the travelers. This caught the interest of the media, which filmed this, wrote about it, and documented what they did and how, raising further debates on the truthfulness and effectiveness of shamans, healers, and prayer-givers, an old and particularly thorny question in the Sakha Republic. In this respect, it has been argued that only the most powerful and "true" shamans are entitled to climb the mountains and shamanize there, otherwise the rocks themselves will, sooner or later, pour forth their wrath upon them. Somehow this seems to have come true: the visit, a few years ago, of a famous female healer, Fedora Innokentevna Kobiakova, better known as Ed'zhi Dora (Dora the Elder), was said to have caused flooding in the villages at the base of the mountains. As one of my informants, a healer herself recalled:

> in the old times only the most powerful shamans, those who had been summoned by the upper-world spirits could climb the mountains. Nowadays the site has been opened to the forces of the netherworld, but the upper world hasn't agreed yet, so no-one should really go there. The travel agencies know about it but never tell the tourists. (I. Lukina, August 2008)

Sacralizing People and Places

In August 2008 I went to Kihilėėkh on a field trip: a few points which particularly struck me may be useful as concluding remarks.

For my travel companions, a group of ten people of Sakha origin, some of them coming from faraway districts and aged approximately between thirty and seventy-five, Kihilėėkh was the trip of their life (and of their dreams): for this reason they had saved their money for years. The people who took part in the trip did not know each other and it was the first time they had set out on a journey like this for everyone.

Their shared main aim was "to get as much energy" as they could, something I could not grasp at all at the beginning of the trip, but which became clear to me during the week we spent together. We took a plane from Yakutsk to Batagay, then traveled by bus for about three hours until we reached the river Adjchy and spent the last three hours on a motorboat, heading for the base camp at the foot of the rocky site. From the moment we landed in Batagay until we got to the base camp, a heavy, insistent rain followed us: that was interpreted by my compan-

ions as a sort of blessing from the mountains, but when I came back to Yakutsk and told my friends, they said that it was a rather bad omen, meaning that we were not supposed to go there and that something bad would eventually occur to us. Outside the huts of the base camp we met our guide, a local schoolteacher who, during the summer, as an extra source of income, often guided groups up to the mountains (Fig. 2). In the rain, she led the first welcome ritual by lighting a fire, "feeding" it with food offerings and reading some blessings from a notebook.[2] Even though the trip lasted one week, the actual ascent to Kihilėėkh mountains was organized over three days: the first was dedicated to climbing one of the lower groups of mountains where the rocks lay, and where we set up camp. During the walk to the top, armed with rubber boots, walking sticks and food provisions, from time to time we passed by small groups of curiously shaped rocks: each of them bore a name, such as the "Desire Stone," or the "Wealth Stone." My companions stopped and tried to absorb their "energy," laying their foreheads and their knees against each of them (Fig. 3), or leaving money and pictures that they would collect, properly recharged, on the way back to the base camp. The second day was dedicated to the exploration of a bigger group of rocks on the other side of the mountain. They were impressive as they stood with their gigantic shapes against the blue sky and the gray surroundings: they bore names too, but of a different sort, like the "Gate of Angels" and "Paradise." Our schoolteacher/guide, reading some notes, explained to us that those particular rocks represented a gate to the upper world and to all the supernatural beings living there: those of us who wished to be blessed by the spirit masters could pass beneath the "gate," while the others, awaiting their turn, were allowed to take pictures. The blessing was led by our guide, who promptly dressed in a shocking-pink "traditional" Sakha dress and started to shake the *d'jaybyyr*, a horse tail used to chase away mosquitoes and other insects as well as evil spirits, over the heads of the visitors. Our last day before going back to the base camp was mostly spent visiting other smaller rock groups in the surrounding areas, where we were invited to medi-

[2] During the Delphi conference in 2015, Marjorie M. Balzer, who had been to Kihilėėkh more recently than I, remarked that the same person, a few years later, was no longer considered a schoolteacher who occasionally worked for tourist agencies, but had become a sort of professional, acknowledged *algyhhyt*, a prayer giver. Somehow she had become part of the process of sacralization herself.

Fig. 2. The schoolteacher-guide (right) and her assistant (left) during the welcome ritual at the base camp. Photo: Lia Zola, August 2008.

tate and to practice yoga and reiki in order to open up our chakras, so that the "energy" that we had previously gathered from the rocks could freely flow through our bodies. On our way back to the airport, we all exchanged phone numbers and emails.[3]

In the winter of 2009, when I went back to Yakutsk, we managed to meet again to share pictures and memories of our summer trip. On that occasion one of the participants, a seventy-year-old man, reported that he had gained enormous benefits from his visit to the mountains. His opinion was shared by all the others who had experienced particularly positive events in their lives after the trip. It was the "energy" that had acted so well, something it was impossible to find anywhere else but in Kihilėėkh.

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[3] The names attributed to the rocks, the practice of meditation, yoga and reiki can be seen as a form of syncretism, a "marriage of religious amalgamation" (Van der Veer 1994, 208) where two or more religious forms and/or cosmologies encounter each other, interact, and subsequently merge or co-exist. Syncretism also deals with how borrowing parts of different religions is exploited, posing "historical questions about roots, cultural contacts and received influences" (Stewart 2004, 128).

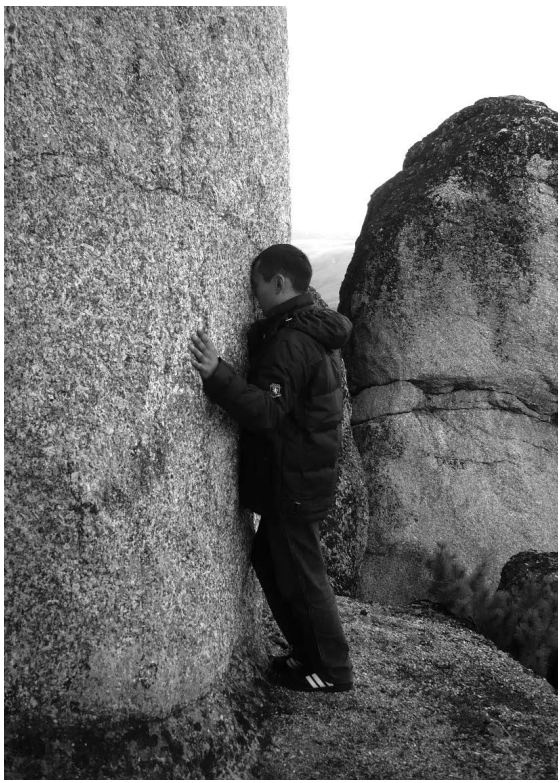

Fig. 3. Getting the energetic strength from the rocks.
Photo: Lia Zola, August 2008.

Conclusion

Rob Shields (1991, 18) argues that "Places, images and the way we see them are historical products and may also be contestable." This means that places are not only historical and cultural constructs, but also their making and unmaking is related to the needs of a particular human group. The literature I quoted at the beginning of my paper, together with the debates on Kihilëëkh and my field trip, suggest that the case study I have analyzed can be seen as an example of sacralizing not only a place, which probably was already sacred, but also its surroundings,

endowing them and the people who have to do with them with an "extra sacredness." In the case of Kihilèèkh a sacred place appears as the result of superimpositions, re-significations, incorporations, and adaptations to a specific historical period and to its needs. Creativity has been defined as an "activity that produces something new through the recombination and transformation of existing cultural practices or forms" (Liep 2001, 2). The creative and innovative ways in which people practice their religiosity through ritual action, in the Kihilèèkh case, has created a novel a dynamic spiritual stream in the present-day Sakha Republic.

Going back to the questions of the persistence of sacred places I wrote of earlier, further doubts arise: what will happen to Kihilèèkh when the tourist potential ends? What debates will follow? What tales will be told to explain a sacredness that is no more? Will the sacredness formerly attributed to that specific place simply migrate somewhere else? These and other questions will probably find their answers and foster more speculations only over time. But even without waiting too long I am quite sure that in a couple of years, together with the "Desire Stone," visitors will admire and stop by a "Chakra" or a "Reiki" rock.

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Lia ZOLA is Senior Lecturer in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Turin, Italy. She has carried out fieldwork in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) since 2005 for her Ph.D. and for her post-doctoral research. She is currently working on issues of revival and authenticity related to contemporary Sakha shamanism, both in urban and nonurban contexts. During her most recent fieldwork, in 2017, she has begun an investigation into environmental anthropology and shamanism. Her main publications include *Il commercio degli spiriti: forme di sciamanesimo contemporaneo nella Repubblica di Sacha (Jacuzia)* (2008, Roma, Aracne), *Creating, Reinventing and Assessing Cultural Performances in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia)*, "World Futures," 2009, *Lo sciamano in vetrina: autenticità, revival, reinvenzione* (2012, Milan, Franco Angeli).

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The Swan Dance: A Kazakh Healing Ritual from the Syr-Darya Region

DÁVID SOMFAI KARA BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

The present field report contains data collected during my month of fieldwork in south-central Kazakhstan in June 2013. Between 2011 and 2013 I visited Bolatbek Erdäwlet-uly (Fig. 1), a famous epic story-teller (*jıraw*), in his home in the city of Kentau (36 km northeast of the town of Türkistan) several times, and I collected extracts from epic songs, such as *Barak Batır*, *Edige*, *Shora*, and *Orak-Mamay*, from him. I also conducted interviews on his practice of performing epic songs and how he became a story-teller. Consistent with my earlier research among the Kyrgyz story-tellers (*manasčı*) (Somfai 2013, 52–3) was the fact that he too was initiated by the spirits (*arwak*). As is often the case with story-tellers (Somfai 2003, 182) among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and South Siberia, for example the Altai-Kizhi and Telengit story-tellers (*kayčı*) Alekseĭ Kalkin and Arzhan Kezerekov, Bolatbek was also a spirit mediator (*baksı*)[1] and a clairvoyant (*köripker*). During our conversations he revealed to me that he had two female disciples (*šäkirt*) in his native town, Kazaly,[2] close to the receding Aral Sea. So when I encountered him the third time in 2013, he decided that he would visit his native town to perform epic stories there for the local nomads, and I accompanied him. It took us almost a day to get there because of rough roads and crossing the Syr-Darya river. We passed by the famous Baykongyr (Russian Baĭkonur) Cosmodrome situated only 134 km from Kazaly. We visited a nomadic settlement (Fig. 2) in the so-called Aral Karakum desert (not to be confused with the Karakum desert in Turkmenistan).

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[1] See Divaev 1899, 307–8.

[2] By the Syr-darya River, 643 km from the town of Türkistan.

Fig. 1. Bolatbek Erdäwlet-uly, a famous Kazakh epic singer and spirit mediator (*baksı*) performing from the epic *Edige Batır* in a traditional yurt accompanied by the two-stringed instrument (*dombıra*), in the nomad settlement in the Arak Karakum Desert near Kazaly, Southern Kazakhstan. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

Local people, especially the older generation, were happy to listen to some traditional epic songs (*jır*). Bolatbek performs epic songs from the Nogay epic cycle (*Kırımnıng Kırık Batırı*, see Reichl 2007, 44) that suggests that the nomad clans of the Nogay Horde (1440–1634) participated in the formation of the Western Kazakh also known as the Lesser Horde (Kishi Jüz).

Fig. 2. The nomad settlement in the Aral Karakum desert near Kazaly where the spirit-invoking ritual (*zikir*) took place in a yurt. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

Spirit Invoking Ritual

Bolatbek had been performing the epic songs for two days, when the local people requested him to organize a spirit-invoking ritual (*zikir*) for them. Thus, Bolatbek called for his two female disciples, Liza and Shynar, who arrived the next morning. They also brought their sacred objects with them: whips (*kamši*) and shovels (*kalak*). First, everybody had to leave the yurt where the ceremony would take place after sunset. Only Bolatbek and his two disciples entered the yurt with their sacred objects. Bolatbek said a Muslim prayer (*duga*) and blessed (*bata*) them and their paraphernalia (Fig. 3).

In Sufism, people believe that one can achieve an altered state of consciousness by repeating the name of God (Allah). This is called *ḏikr* in Arabic, or *zikir* in its Kazakh form. In Sufism, it is also believed that God chose certain people as his close friends (Ar. *auliyā'*, see Mélikoff 1987)[3] and after their death their spirits (Ar. *arwāḥ*) would act as mediators between God and the people (Somfai 2013, 48). Of course, not everyone can communicate with the spirits. The spirits choose and initiate some people to become spirit-mediators, called *baksı* and *balger* in Kazakh. The spirit-mediators connect with the spirits during the *zikir* ritual to ask them to mediate requests and questions to God.

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[3] The most famous of these Sufi saints were Arslan-Bāb and Khoja Ahmad Yasawi from the twelfth century.

Fig. 3. Bolatbek gives blessing (*bata*) to his disciples, Liza (in the picture) with the magic shovel in her hand. The other disciple, Shynar is in the yurt. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

Fig. 4. The two spirit mediators (*baksı*) heat up their magic shovels by the fire outside the yurt. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

After Bolatbek blessed the two disciples, they went outside and lit a fire close to the yurt in the desert. Then they started to heat up their shovels for the ritual (Fig. 4). Meanwhile people sat down in the yurt in a circle by the wall opposite the door. The disciples then entered the house and Liza kneeled down in front of the participants. They said a short prayer before the ritual. After that Liza suddenly stood up and started to run around the center of the house while performing her special ritual dance (*biy*). The Kazakh and Kyrgyz, nomadic peoples of northern Central Asia, do not traditionally dance because they consider dance a sacred activity. Sedentary peoples of Central Asia, such as the Sarts, Uzbeks, Uyghurs, and Tajiks, do have profane dances, called by various distinct names and performed during feasts (*toy*) and other festivals (*bayram*).

Here Liza was imitating the movement of a swan (*akkuw*), lifting her arms up and down like two wings and running and spinning around (Pl. 5). Meanwhile she also performed the *zikir* by chanting *ya alla* (Oh, Allah), but there was no invocatory song. Shynar left the yurt and returned with Liza's shovel, that had been heated up in the fire outside. Then she handed it to Liza, who ran around in the house and licked the hot shovel several times (Pl. 6 *a*). Although the hot shovel did not burn her tongue, she heaved a little. Still running around, she touched the palms and the backs of the patients with the shovel, which was still very hot. All these things are performed to frighten the evil spirits away from the patients' bodies. The patients were citing *bismillah* (in the name of Allah) during the healing. She made a sick old woman sit in the middle of the yurt. While dancing around her she blew repeatedly towards her and then massaged her shoulders as part of the healing.

Healing with Hot Objects

Healing with hot objects is quite common in Central Asia and it sometimes involves the spitting of water (*ušık*), but Liza did not use water and she did not spit either (Basilov 1992, 155). She repeated the dancing and licking of the hot shovel two more times and during the dance she sometimes stopped in a strange position, lifting one of her arms over her head and reaching out with the other (Pl. 6 *b*). She turned towards one of the patients with her extended arm and started to diagnose the

Fig. 5. Liza goes around the patients and strikes their palms with the hot shovel to heal them of the evil spirits causing illness and bad luck. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

patient's diseases and earlier traumas. She also ran around with the hot shovel, chasing the evil spirits out of the patients' bodies, and struck their palms and backs (Fig. 5). Liza was now in a state of trance and sweating heavily. She danced again but then suddenly stopped and kneeled down to say another prayer to conclude her *zikir*.

Chasing away the Demons

In Central Asia it is widely believed that all kinds of diseases are caused by evil spirits (*jın*) controlled by Shaytan (Satan). The *baksı* in the state of trance are able, assisted by the spirits and the power of God (*Allanıng kudıreti*), to see these spirits and can chase them away with hot objects, spitting water and striking them with whips. Demonstrating the strength of the *baksı* also helps to impress and frighten the evil spirits. Liza licked the hot shovel, while Zamanbek, a *baksı* in Sayram, swallowed a knife and lifted a heavy millstone to achieve a similar effect (Somfai and Torma 2005, 184). At the end, Liza kneeled down again

and performed another prayer with the patients. Afterwards Shynar started her own ritual while Liza assisted her by taking the heated shovel into the yurt. Shynar performed a similar kind of *zikir*, but she was only running around inside the house with her whip (*kamšı*). She symbolically hit the patients with her magic whip to chase away the spirits (Pl. 7 *a*). Then she also grabbed her hot shovel, decorated with little rattles (Pl. 7 *b*), and continued to run around in the yurt. She performed the *ušık* ritual, but not by licking the shovel: she simply spat on the shovel and blew on the patients while striking their palms with the hot implement.

A Ritual Dance and its Symbolism

In 2004 I also witnessed the spirit-invoking ritual (*oyun*) of a Kyrgyz *bakšı*, Abdylkadyr, when he performed a special dance (*talma biy*) around this magic flag (*tuu*) in the middle of the yurt to achieve an altered state of consciousness (Somfai, Hoppál and Sipos 2007, 56–8). He imitated the movement of a male camel (*buura*). In our case, Liza was imitating a swan, dancing around the center of the yurt. But what is the symbolism behind these animals? Abdylkadyr explained that his main helping spirit from the valley of Jay Ata appeared in the form of a camel that he mentioned in his invocation song but the spirit that initiated him appeared in the form of a ram. I have recorded rituals where one of the helping spirits of the Kazakh *baksı* Batyrkan (Altay Mountains, Mongolia) was a camel (Somfai, Kunkovács and Sipos 2006, 123). Liza also said that her helping spirit was a *peri* that appeared, turning into a swan. The *peri* is a fairy-like spirit that can turn into an animal (Divaev 1899, 310–11).

Among the Bugu, a Kyrgyz clan of the Ysyk-köl lake, there is a legend that the wife of their ancestor, Alseyit, was a *peri* who sometimes turned into a deer (*bugu*), whence she is called Bugu Ene (Deer Mother). From folklore materials we know that the leading clan of the Nogay Horde was the Manghyt, the wife of whose ancestor Angshybay was a *peri* who could turn into a swan (Somfai 2010, 123–4). Bolatbek also performs the story of Angshybay and his marriage to the swan girl. Edige of the Manghyt clan, who founded the Nogay Horde (1396–1634), claimed to be the descendant of Angshybay and the swan girl (DeWeese 1994, 430–2; Reichl 2007, 39–45).

From historical sources (e.g. *Taḏkirat al-Bughra*; see Shaw 1875, Appendix 3–5), the leading clan of the Karluk Turks can be determined as being the Bughra (male camel). Satuq (934–55) was the first Turkic leader to convert to Islam, and he founded the Qarakhanid state (934–1212) in Central Asia. Before the Karluk Turks converted to Islam their leading clan Bughra probably worshiped the male camel and had some totemic beliefs as well. The Satuq Bughra khan was buried in the Jay Ata valley near Kashghar and Artush. So the question arises, whether there is a link between Satuq Bughra khan, the spirit of the male camel, and the Kyrgyz *bakšı* invoking the spirit of this animal. If there is a link, we can also assume that it is no accident that the Kazakh of the Lesser Horde invoked the spirit of a swan lady, venerated as the wife of the Manghyt forefather. During my fieldwork I also recorded how members of the Kyrgyz Bugu clan invoke the spirit of Bugu Ene (Deer Mother) during their pilgrimage to the sacred valley of Manjyly-Ata by the Ysyk-köl (Somfai 2008, 189). We can presume that invoking these animal spirits during the Sufi *ḏikr* rituals is a pre-Islamic element within a Muslim custom.

Sufi Traditions and Fundamentalist Islam

As we have seen, although Bolatbek's *zikir* is a popular version of the Sufi ritual (*ḏikr*), Islamic fundamentalism is now attacking both Sufism and its popular form throughout Central Asia. The popular form of Sufism has survived the seventy years communist ideology, although during the Soviet period people were prosecuted, but Soviet ethnography tried to prove that these traditions were pre-Islamic, so-called "shamanic practices in Muslim disguise" (Baialieva 1972, 3–10; Basilov 1992, 10). Despite some pre-Islamic elements, such as the appearance of healing spirits (*peri*) in the form of animals, popular Islam and its rituals (e.g. *zikir* and *jaar*)[4] are of Sufi origin and they have a thousand-year tradition in Central Asia (Kunkovács and Somfai Kara 2004; 162; Somfai Kara and Torma 2005, 181–3). In popular Islam people believe that the spirits of Sufi and other saints can mediate between them and

[4] These are the Kazakh and Kyrgyz pronunciations of the Arabic words *ḏikr* and *jahr* (short form of *ḏikr bi-l-jahr* 'loud *ḏikr*').

Allah. So people pray to these spirits and do pilgrimage (*ziyārat*) to their tombs (*mazār*). Fundamentalist Islam condemns these practices, claiming that there are no spirits and saints and only God should be respected and worshiped. They even cite Soviet scholars as the proof of these customs being pre-Islamic or shamanic (Somfai Kara 2016, 478–9). I was once witness to a big quarrel between Bolatbek and his son, who rejects the belief in spirits; his father accused him of being a Wahhābi follower. The spread of Islamic fundamentalism has already affected the lives of his disciples, Liza and Shynar, who are being prosecuted on the basis of the civil code of Kazakhstan. Fundamentalists are bribing the prosecutor's office to charge them with illegal healing, saying they cure people without proper medical qualification, which is against the law. So Liza and Shynar asked me if I could get some kind of international certificate to prove that they are qualified practitioners and not charlatans. Nowadays they are afraid to organize rituals openly, so Liza had given up practicing almost entirely. They were really thankful to us that with Bolatbek we organized a ritual for them in the nomadic settlement, under the guise of an epic story-performing night.

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Dávid SOMFAI KARA (*somfaikara@gmail.com*) is a Turkologist and Mongolist. He currently works as a researcher at the Institute of Ethnology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Between 1994 and 2015 he did fieldwork in western and northeast China (Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Inner Mongolia), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, and Russia (Siberia, Ural, Caucasus). He has collected oral literature (folksongs and epics) and data on Inner Asian folk beliefs among Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uyghur, Bashkir, Nogay, Kumuk, Tuva, Tofa, Altay Turks, Abakan Tatars (Khakas), Sakha (Yakut), Buryat, Daur, Khoton (Sart-Kalmak) and Yugur. He wrote his Ph.D. thesis on the vocabulary used to express the folk beliefs of Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Inner Asia (2006).

Book Reviews

ANA MARIELLA BACIGALUPO. *Thunder Shaman: Making History with Mapuche Spirits in Chile and Patagonia.* Austin: University of Texas Press. 2016. ISBN: 9781477308981 (paperback). 288 pages.

Ana Mariella Bacigalupo describes her book as a hybrid that seeks "to understand rural Mapuche notions of time, history, continuity, change, and agency through a shamanic lens" (p. 11). The author does this through the life history of Francisca Kolipi Kurin, a Mapuche *machi* (shaman), who lived in the community of Millali in the Quepe area of Araucanía in southern Chile. Francisca was a "thunder shaman," initiated by the forces of the world at moments of crisis. Such a moment was the devastating earthquake of 1960, during which the force of thunder *machi* was unleashed. Francisca was struck by lightning and possessed by the spirit of Rosa Kurin a thunder *machi* who had lived in Millali in the nineteenth century. Rosa Kurin, a prestigious shaman who was part Mapuche and part German embodying both Mapuche and German powers in her practice, incorporated colonizers into Mapuche history and challenged their notion of civilization. Both women were important in challenging colonizers' notions of civilization and obliterating that history. Thunder *machi* do not go through the typical initiation or shamanic calling we are used to from other areas. Since they are initiated directly by a primordial force that cannot be controlled by humans their communities are ambivalent towards them. Francisca's ambivalence is evident in the fact that during her life she was suspected of sorcery by members of her community. While *machi* have a close relationship to horses, animals associated with masculinity, warfare, and engagement with outsiders, their spirits are inherited through the female line. *Machi* also embody cogendered identities as well as morally ambiguous persons.

The sources of the material presented in the book besides the author's observations and archival material are the community's collective memory after Francisca's death, their reactions to archival documents about

them as well as their perceptions of shamanic biographies and the use of Bacigalupo's research over time. The data on Francisca's life history was collected between 1991 and 1996 but the book was not written until later when the process of disremembering and re-remembering Frascisca was complete. This process means that for a period of time after a *machi*'s death the community will intentionally disremember them for fear of their spirit returning. *Machi* go through a process of disrembering and re-remembering during which they are first incorporated as ancestral spirits before they are re-remembered as individual figures.

According to the author, the "book is Francisca's bible; it is both a study of shamanic historical consciousness in Millali and an agent in the transformation of that history" (p. 11). It comes several years after Francisca's death and her wish for a bible to be written that would embody her and would be a powerful shamanic object. Francisca conceived her bible "as an intertextual object that would link biography, ritual performance, and personhood with graphic and alphabetic literacy" (p. 14). The book was meant to be a bible because in Francisca's eyes bibles are perceived as power objects capable of agency. Through her friendship with the author, Francisca sought legitimacy for herself and her shamanic forms of history-making. Through the book, she would have the "ability to transform the world and the future" and her words would reach the future and allow her to exert her power and agency. This is no ordinary book, but a dynamic, subjective object. Francisca envisioned future shamans smoking and chanting over it to effect the rebirth of her spirit in another shaman's body.

The book challenges the myth that indigenous peoples lack historical consciousness and agency because they do not conceive history in a linear manner, but as an ongoing process that includes the past, present and future simultaneously. In Bacigalupo's own words, "the *machi*'s experience of shamanic rebirth; the combination of cyclical and linear histories, temporal dislocation, and multitemporality; and the indissoluble links between spirituality, politics, and ecology challenge positivist, linear notions of history" (p. 8). In fact, the author succeeds in presenting *machi* as historical agents—something unthinkable for mainstream Chilean culture—that challenge the colonialist institutions of authority and ethnic histories that have been constructed by others. The Mapuche challenge who is civilized and who is savage in the dominant Western historical narrative. Bacigalupo argues that the Mapuche "use shamanic histories to challenge the conventional Chilean history"

and "to present themselves as the spiritual victors of history, to resist ethnocide, and to construct a new place for themselves in the world" (p. 37). They also use their relationship to the land as well as literacy to justify that position.

Another thread that runs through the book is Mapuche fierce critique of *wingka* (non-Mapuche) ways; things such as selfishness, rudeness, and anger, all anti-social features originated from non-Mapuche and are still associated with outsiders. Stereotypes of ahistoric indigenous peoples that live in some enviable harmony with nature persist even though ethnographers have repeatedly shown that shamanisms and indigenous mythologies incorporate seamlessly elements introduced through colonization, missionization, and urbanization. The incorporation of outsiders into indigenous myths historicizes and politicizes these myths and the Mapuche are good at incorporating otherness and using it for their own purposes. In fact, Bacigalupo shows that being civilized means to integrate Mapuche and non-Mapuche ways of thinking that are deployed strategically for the well-being of the community. Specifically, *champuria* (people of mixed descent) are thought to have special powers because they can see the world as both insiders and outsiders. Francisca, a *champuria*, experienced herself in multiple temporalities at once, past and present. *Machi* will appropriate foreign objects, powers, and images, while at the same time rejecting their underlying systems of knowledge and belief. *Machi* also share multiple personhoods with beings from different worlds and times as they are simultaneously collective ancestral persons and historical individuals. Their inherent ambiguity allows them to cross boundaries and while in trance, they can become multiple individuals at once. They use thunder and lightning bolts to conduct spiritual warfare against Spanish souls, which emphasizes the opposition between Mapuche and others.

The book closes by outlining the unique Mapuche process of disremembering the deceased after their death and the eventual re-remembering that follows once sufficient time has elapsed. In the case of Francisca, this time came in the 2010s when certain events pointed to Francisca's imminent return. To achieve the disremembering of Francisca, her ties with human, animal, and spirits had to be severed. This way she was constructed as an outsider who no longer had any relations on earth. This process of disremembering is serious because if it is not done properly, there is the danger that the life force of a *machi* can be manipulated by a sorcerer and become an evil spirit that will harass the community. In the

process of re-remembering her, Francisca was stripped of her ambiguous qualities and conflated with other deceased *machi*. Through this process, the Mapuche transform history, create a better future and allow the possibility of the rebirth of a *machi* in a new body.

This collaboration between an anthropologist and a *machi* provides legitimacy to indigenous historicities that have been marginalized by positivist historiography. In some ways, both anthropologist and shamans are mediators that bring worlds closer and in this case, Bacigalupo intended the book to be a contribution to efforts to decolonize the production of knowledge. As she says, it is not just an academic narrative with shamanic content but "shamanism in action." However, readers might disagree with this since, at least superficially, the book is delivered in academic format and published by an academic publisher. Since, according to the author, Francisca herself approved the final product, we can only assume that the academic mantle offers the bible an extra layer of power and legitimacy. What this book demonstrates is that indigenous traditions including shamanism are fluid, dynamic, and engaged with local and national cultures. Shamanism has never been outside history and in the Mapuche case, it remains to be seen how it will evolve when Franscisca reincarnates.

The book is an important contribution to the field of historical anthropology and will be of interest to anthropologists and historians alike as well as anyone with an interest in shamanism or indigenous issues.

UNIVERSITY OF KENT, OH, USA EVGENIA FOTIOU

MICHAEL OPPITZ. *Morphologie der Schamanentrommel*. [Morphology of the shaman's drum]. Edition Voldemeer Zürich – Springer Wien and New York. 2013. Two linen-bound volumes in slipcase, 1240 pages, 8 maps, 1224 illustrations, 23.8 x 13.2 x 28.9 cm., 6094 grams. ISBN 978-3-7091-1592-3.

"If you look long enough in the drum, you will find the answers to everything you're asking me," Bal Bahādur Buda, a leading Magar shaman of Taka Village, West Nepal, told Michael Oppitz in 1979, a remark quoted (p. 57) as an epigram in *Morphologie der Schamanentrommel* [Morphology of the shaman's drum]. Oppitz has clearly taken

this advice to heart, and demonstrates that he has looked long enough into the drum to produce an extraordinary, definitive work on shamans appealing to anyone who studies Asian societies, cultures, religions, or arts. It will also fascinate fans of Oppitz's legendary epic "Schamanen im Blinden Land," (1980) which stars Bal Bahādur, whose drumming also opens the sound samples that supplement these magnificent volumes.

This work distills forty-five years of research by its author, Michael Oppitz, and assimilates material from dozens of other ethnographers who have studied Himalayan shamans and their drums. The epigrams that Oppitz has sparingly scattered throughout these 1240 pages offer clues to unpacking the foundations of this monumental work, which opens with a cautionary quote from Proust (p. 13): "A work in which there are theories is like an object on which the price-tag remains." We can trace the concrete, dryly scientific title of *Morphology of the Shaman's Drum* to Darwin (*On the Origin of Species*): "Morphology is the most interesting department of natural history, and may be said to be its very soul" (p. 459), with echoes, of course, of Marcel Mauss as well as of Goethe and Albrecht Dürer (as Oppitz himself observes [pp. 18–9]). The meticulously detailed comparisons of drum specimens find justification, if any is needed, in Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues*: ". . . one must first observe differences in order to discover attributes," (p. 198) a key axiom previously quoted by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1962/1966) to defend the science of the concrete while proclaiming that the goal of ethnographic analysis to arrive "at invariants beyond the empirical diversity of human societies," a goal clearly shared by Oppitz with his mentor. Lévi-Strauss is said to have 50 years ago identified Oppitz to be the most promising ethnographer in Europe; this work confirms the accuracy of that assessment. And Lévi-Strauss' concluding sentences of *Regarder*, Écouter, *Lire* (1993/1997) his answer to the question "What is the value of art?" appears in *Morphologie der Schamanentrommel* as another epigram (p. 412): "For men and women differ, and even exist, only through their works. Like the wooden statue that gave birth to a tree, they alone bear evidence that, among human beings, something really did happen in the course of time."

Morphologie der Schamanentrommel is divided into two volumes, "text" and "pictures," designed, Oppitz tells us, to facilitate dialogues between words and images. Volume I, "text," begins with a short introduction, "Voices of the instruments." With clear, precise prose, demonstrating the *Kunst der Genauigkeit* for which his writing is known, Oppitz out-

lines his objectives and their antecedents, beginning with Lévi-Strauss' emphasis on the concept of transformation in ethnology, the premise that one object does not emerge from another, but rather that each demands a system of representations (Lévi-Strauss 1958/1963). Every shaman drum, the most important instrument of a shaman, his means of communication with the supernatural, is a unique and singular object, but each falls within strict parameters. Always a frame drum, covered on one or two sides with animal-skin membranes, struck with a drumstick, shaman drums are musical instruments that accompany religious and therapeutic actions, each with a personal biography linked to that of its owner. Each drum is conceived of as a living being, and as such subjected to the cycle of birth, life, and death. Key to this study, "no drum has a random appearance, even if it is different from every other, its origin is precisely determined by its resemblance to pieces surrounding it" (p. 35). Shaman Parsad Buda of Ghumibang stated in 1979 (p. 153), "The entire world sits in the drum." And, as becomes clear as one appreciates the details of individual drums, as every drum is distinct, so does every shaman differ, and so too every performance by every shaman—for as many drums as exist, there exist that many distinct shamanic worlds. The geography of those worlds is thoroughly mapped in this extraordinary book.

As the study of shamans, and their drums, began in Lapland and Siberia, before more recent discoveries of remarkably vibrant traditions of shamanic activity on the southern slopes of the Himalayas, Oppitz briefly reviews those earlier studies. He proposes twelve "islands of form" for North Asian drums, and five "islands of form" for those of the Himalayas. The first of these islands, "drums with one membrane in western Nepal," include the area that Oppitz personally knows best. Given more attention in the book and featured in more illustrations than any other drums are those called *rè*, of the Magar of Western Nepal, specifically, those of Taka Village. Taka, one of the villages of Kham-speaking "Northern" Magar, had, during the period (1977–84) that Oppitz studied their culture and filmed there, thirty initiated shamans, "perhaps more than remained in all of Siberia during the period of hostilities toward them" (p. 56). The decline of shamans throughout North Asia was a result of the intolerance of Orthodox missionaries in the wake of Russian colonization and subsequent promotion of Soviet socialist atheism (p. 36), a situation, curiously, with some parallels in Taka. Although Oppitz neglects to mention it, in the early 1970s, Taka

had one of the only underground Christian communities to be found in Western Nepal, the result of David Watters and the covert missionary work of the notorious "Summer Linguistic Institute." Watters in fact was the first to record Kham shaman oral recitals,[1] though he claimed to have lost all copies of them.[2] Missionaries in Taka have been recently followed, in a miniature permutation of Siberian history, by an atheist Maoist/Stalinist ideology, whose consequences for shamanic practice also go unreported here. Unlike the effects of missionaries and communists in North Asia, however, both apparently have fortified shaman practice in Taka, not weakened it. More insidious a threat to the shamans than either missionaries or Maoists are, I suspect, the satellite television discs now sprouting on Taka rooftops, as Bollywood flicks and Kathmandu soaps compete with the chanting of myths and the beating of drums.

Magar *rè* are composed of a roundish hoop frame made from wild oak, with a single membrane of wild sheep hide, stretched over one side of the hoop, with two bamboo canes crisscrossed inside the hoop that serve as drum handles. These canes are fastened loosely with iron loops that rattle when the drum is played. A *rè* uses iron rivets to hold the frame together, cowhide laces, and tendons to keep laces and membrane together. For the shamans who own them, these drums have life and require nourishment. Each drum has a biography determined by the life of its owner, although most shamans need a succession of drums during their careers, since each is not likely to last more than fifteen years, even with frequent repairs and occasional replacements of their membranes. Oppitz details the birth of a drum, both in the text and in the photographs, and includes the oral texts that connect every new drum to its mythical first ancestor, overall allowing for a profitable doubling of "myth and practice, text analysis and description of real objects, philology and ethnography" (p. 120). With remarkable precision, myth and reality authenticate one another.

As described in the text and shown in the photos, *rè* are not only drummed, thumped by hand or played with a wooden drum stick to assist with the recall of oral recitals and as rhythmic pacesetters for dance steps, they are also shaken, ridden, rolled, used as divination

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[1] Bal Bahādur Buda, personal communication, Taka, 11 June 1992.

[2] David Watters, personal communication (e-mail), 30 July 2000.

instrument, compass, mirror, as navigational tool, weapon, shield, lid, or basket, as canvas on which to paint, as pillow or "telephone," sometimes becoming a curio to sell to tourists or ending up as dead objects in ethnographic museums.

The first "island of form" also includes drums of Kāmī shamans from Jājarkot (the western limit for drums of one membrane, and for the type of shamans who use them), drums of Dhorpatan and the Bhuji and Nisi river valleys, those of the Southern Magar, and single-sided drums of Chepang, Thakali, and Gurung shamans.

Part II examines "drums with two membranes in central and eastern Nepal." Here we find drums of Central and Eastern Nepalese ethnic groups, Ghale, Tamang, Thami, Sherpa, Rai and Limbu, as well as those of "Muglan," as Nepalis traditionally designate the region of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Sikkim. Of particular interest in this chapter is an apparent anomaly, a unique single-sided Thami drum *chyake* featured with thirteen photos (plates #498–511, more than any other drum except those whose stages of constructions are documented). The *chyake* is played by the shaman once a year only, at a small temple dedicated to an earth-god (*bhume*), its presence in the area where otherwise there are only two-sided drums explained by tracing possible migrations of Thami to hypothetical connections with Chepang of western Nepal. Noteworthy in this chapter, too, are short descriptions of two séances in Solu-Khumbu that Oppitz himself witnessed, forty-five years apart, the first in 1965, the second in 2010. Solu-Khumbu is home to Nepal's Sherpas, yet both of these séances were conducted by Kāmī shamans, as Sherpas themselves are actively discouraged by their Buddhist lamas from engaging as or with shamans (Ortner 1995). The second of these séances, we are told, was undertaken to treat Oppitz's daughter Maya, eleven years old at the time, of a stomach ache brought on by eating yak meat the day before and required a magical extraction from the patient's stomach of something resembling a small chunk of yak (pp. 309–10).

Also reviewed in Part II are pilgrimage sites of Central Nepal frequented by shamans—the best known of these sites, Gosainkund, curiously merits only a few lines of text (p. 275) and a single photo (plate #401) while its urban counterpart at the temple of Kumbeshwar in Patan has a dozen photos (plates 402–14) and a short summary of the 1966 report by Corneille Jest. Given that the sacred tank has since gone dry, more information about how this has affected the pilgrimage would seem appropriate. Description of a *beyül,* "a hidden valley," a paradisia-

cal place to be revealed only when the rest of the world is ready for it, Khempalung (Reinhard 1978), important to Limbu shamans, which Oppitz visited in the 1970s, is also included. Hidden as well are the relevant illustrations: Plates #633 "Figurative reproduction of the hidden valley, *beyül*, Khempalung," and #634, "Hanuman bringing a mountain with healing herbs from the Himalaya" are both discussed on page 348 of the text, where two details from the latter painting, from Himachal Pradesh belonging to the Museum Reitberg Zürich, also appear and are also labeled Plate #634, but are only found toward the end of Volume II, on pages 1168 and 1169 respectively, in between plates #955 and #756 and an unnumbered two-page illustration of a Qiang village in the Min-Shan Mountains. Perhaps forcing readers to turn many pages or resort to the index to find a particular illustration, and to search further elsewhere to identify its source, was intentional, but it seems just as likely that we may lose the thread of argument before finding the sought-for plate and its provenance, leading me to conclude that the "interplay" between volumes I and II would have been facilitated considerably by numbering the illustrations consecutively.

Oppitz opens Part III, "On the northern borders of the double-sided shaman drum" with a question that he acknowledges is likely to occur to any reader, particularly after noting in the previous chapter that "the great opposition between the shamanic and Buddhist worlds can be effectively traced beneath the surface down to the last detail of material culture" (p. 372): why include the drums of Tibetan Buddhists in a study of shaman drums? Are the obvious similarities between *nga chen* drums used in Tibetan Buddhist ritual practice and *ḍhyāngro* used by shamans in the central and eastern Nepal "island of form" random, or are they dialectical transformations making deliberate modifications?

After exploring the drums used by *pawo* and *lhapa* (Tibetan spirit mediums), Tibetan mythical accounts of the origin of the *nga chen*, explorations in iconography (again, finding the cited illustrations requires searching), particularly that of drums used in the competition between the Buddhist Milarepa and the Bon Priest Naro Bonchung (in which only the defeated bonpo is equipped with a drum), and a thorough comparison of differences and similarities of particular *nga chen* with particular shaman drums of Central and Eastern Nepal, Oppitz can conclusively state that "the connections and cross-overs between the two types of drums are more pronounced than their differences" (p. 417). The competition between Buddhist professionals and shamans/

non-Buddhist or pre-Buddhist religious figures is further explored, and analyzed structurally in detail, using textual and oral material drawn from Tibetan sources as well as from stories told among the Sherpa, Tamang, Gurung, Chepang, Thakali, Ghale, Thami, and even Naxi, an opposition, in its simplest expression, between drum and book, that is, between oral traditions and written cultures (p. 438). Throughout the variations, the invention of the drum goes back to the time of creation, and we find it serving diverse purposes: as heavenly coat of arms of air spirits, as dwelling for demonic souls, as vehicle through the aether, as death escort for heretics, as pacesetter for dancing, as instrument for netherworld healing activities, as instrument of wandering ancestors, as musical accompaniment for pilgrimage, and its classic function, too, as companion for shamanic flight.

An enormous gap—Oppitz calls it a "veritable no-man's land of drums," (p. 459)—separates the central and eastern Nepal "island of form" from that of Part IV, "Shamans and their instruments on the Eastern Flank of the Himalayas." This section concentrates on the Naxi of Northwest Yunnan but also includes material on the Moso, Yi, and Drung. Naxi use diverse drums: clapper drums (small hand drums with two clappers attached to the sides which strike the drum when it is swirled back and forth), barrel drums, handle drums, wing drums (with oxtails attached to either side as "wings") and variations of Tibetan *nga chen*, all of which are examined in this chapter, as are their origin stories, the mythic origins of Naxi picture writing, and representations of drums in Naxi picture books. Was the ark that saved the Naxi from the mythical flood at the time of creation a coracle, a belly-float, or a drum? (Rock 1935) If it were a drum, it would seem to have been a shaman drum preceding the first shaman, a possibility discussed in the chapter, but which appears to be a detail of myth that can be resolved neither by philology nor by ethnography.

The fifth "island of form," consists of "Drums with one membrane in the Min Shan Mountains," found more than a hundred kilometers to the north of the previous island, in the Sino-Tibetan mountain regions of Northwest Sichuan, drums of the Qiang. Here, remarkably, besides small clapper drums with long handles, *ji ver*, resembling those of the Naxi, Qiang shamans use a drum, *bu* or *ruer*, covered on one side only with the handle suspended inside the frame to be grasped from the open side of the hoop. These drums link Siberian forms with those westernmost south of the Himalayas, bridging North Asian and

South Asian shamanic paraphernalia (p. 494). One-sided frame drums with internal handles consequently form book-ends to this study, also marking the range west to east of places where Oppitz himself has done ethnographic field research.

Among a wide range of divination techniques, including the use of yak hoofs, string knots, eggs, and scapulas, Qiang shamans also practice a form of drum divination extremely similar to that of Magar, Chepang, Tamang and Kulung shamans and among the Tibetans: bouncing seeds on the drum as it is beaten while held horizontally, membrane facing upward, the pattern into which the seeds dance or the place where they leap off the drum offering predictive insight.

This section also contains fascinating material relating the role of a golden-haired monkey, tutelary deity of the Qiang, who invents the drum to replace lost scripture (the Qiang, who the Naxi claim as ancestors, having no tradition of writing, and no books, other than extremely rare concertina-folded "Leporello" divination picture books that managed to survive China's cultural revolution). The chapter concludes with further reflections on the traditional antagonism between "the book and the drum," that is, between literate and oral cultures, and discusses the proposal of James Scott (2009), that it might be by choice that various highland Asian societies remain without writing.

The final, unnumbered, section of text, "On the leap from the Himalayas to North Asia," sketches in five pages what that leap would entail, identifying twelve "islands of form" for North Asian shaman drums, framed by Chepang and Qiang one-sided drums, and suggesting how shaman drums might be traced materially through the circumpolar cultures across north America as far as Greenland and south to Central America, up to the point where faith healers now use a rattle rather than a drum.

Volume II reminds us of Oppitz's outstanding achievements in the field of visual anthropology. The remarks opening Volume II, "The Interplay of Image and Word," tells us that this volume seeks, as Oppitz puts it, "to restate in its own way what the first sought to put in words." "Interplay" (*Wechselspiel*) is key to the relation of the two volumes of this work, images showing what words cannot tell, a contest without winner or loser, "word and image overlapping as equal partners of mutual clarification" (p. 605), a point clarified by the epigram from W. S. Sebald (2011):

It is necessary to keep these things somehow. This can be done, of course, by writing, but the written is not a true document. Photography is the true document par excellence. The second point is that I use the camera as a kind of shorthand or *aide mémoire*. I do not associate any artistic intentions at all with it. But I believe that writing and photography are very, very closely connected with the art of research.

All of the illustrations are of exceptionally good quality, with the best taken by Oppitz himself, among whose photos we find Magar, Chepang, Gurung, Tamang, Thami, Sherpa, Majhi, Jirel, Rai, Muglan, Tibetan, Naxi and Qiang specimens, one measure of how extensive his own research has been. There are wonderfully detailed drawings of drums, drumsticks, drum handles, and drum stitchings by Robert Powell. Comparing Powell's drawing #8 on page 1220 (smaller version on page 59, also numbered #8) with the photo of the bags on which it is based, #10 on page 611, or his drum drawing #6 on page 1221 (smaller version on page 59, also numbered #6) with photo of the same drum #16b on page 614, gives a good sense of how accurately drawn these are and the ways in which the drawings reveal details that might be overlooked in the photos. Images also include carefully chosen relevant Tibetan and Bhutanese *thangka* and wall paintings that include drums, pages from Qiang picture-books, Naxi pictographic manuscripts, and a somewhat eclectic selection of historic representations, the earliest of which is a single engraving of lamas drumming in procession from Georgius published in 1762, one from Georgi of Buryat idols published in 1775, and six of Peter Pallas' engravings of Buryat and lama scenes published in 1776. In addition to the series of photographs on the construction of a Magar *rè*, plates #21–56, well documented are the construction of a Chepang *ringh*, plates #225–64, and of both a *ḍhol* and a *ḍhyāngro* from the same tree by Koyi-Rai, plates #571–88. Ultimately, the collection of illustrations is overwhelming, forming an advance in visual ethnography that has no parallel. That the text is in German will limit the accessibility of Volume I, but the illustrations of Volume II are open to all and deserve a wide audience.

Insecurely bridging Volumes I and II (*"im Grenzland zwischen beiden eine unsichtbare Brücke schlagend"*) are seventy-two sound clips from twenty-one different groups, downloadable from http://www.dhyang-dhyang-voldemeer.ch/tonbeispiele.html audible testimony, as Oppitz puts it, to dialogues between the peoples at the top of the world with the worlds beyond (p. 607). Listening to the clips while reading the text or view-

ing the illustrations adds enormously to the pleasure of opening these volumes. There is no epigram for this third dimension, but an appropriate one might well be taken from Mickey Hart: "When the rhythm is right life is good, when the rhythm stops we die."[3] On the website each sound clip is indexed to relevant passages in one or both of the volumes and there are twenty-one additional small maps (the third of these accidently reproduces the second) putting the samples in geographic context, two features not found in the printed index to the clips, tucked rather obscurely behind the index, pages 594–7 of Volume I.

The indexing (pp. 572–93), other than overlooking the *Tonbespiele*, is very thorough, divided into six subsections: "personal names," "geographical names," "things," "terms related to the drum," "indigenous terms," and "ethnonyms." The list of image contributors (pp. 532–5) includes over a hundred individuals, listed alphabetically, twenty-two museums and nine monasteries; another table references the photos by ethnic/geographical group, listed west to east, to place, photographer and year(s) of research involved (pp. 536–45).

Readers who visited the 2007–8 exhibit of drums at the Völkerkundemuseum Zürich, or have seen its catalog, *Trommeln der Schamanen* (2007), and who could not resist the temptation to begin by first browsing the illustrations in Volume II will have immediately noticed that many drums from that exhibit do not appear in these volumes (one catches a glimpse of them in the final map, on pages 530–1 that map itself the subject of a short film by Mehdi Sahebi (2004)); Oppitz initially promises (p. 48) a third volume, devoted to the drums of North Asia. However, the final line of Volume I (p. 528), in Greek, which appears to be a paraphrase of Prodicus of Ceos: "Hercules, at the crossroads, is approached by two goddesses . . ." leaves open the choice which path he himself will take, hinting that the monumental task of completing this tapestry throughout all of Asia may need to be undertaken by others. The choice is to follow either of two different connecting threads, the first, the intangible oral myth of the loss of writing, the second the physical drum with its material foundations of wood, leather and iron. The latter would take us from the Qiang, "the last to hold both threads," north, while to follow the myth of the loss of writing would

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[3] http://www.mickeyhart.net/news/mickey-hart-ae-grateful-dead-ae-drummer-creates-painting-rhythm-25355 [accessed 3 June 2017].

take us through the highland communities of Southeast Asia. "Both routes are equally tempting, for a comparative ethnography of high Asia, equally rewarding, equally entangled, and equally laborious." (p. 528) Will anyone take up this challenge? If so, accept direction from one more of the epigrams, this from Richard Ford's novel "Canada" (p. 360): "We don't discriminate carefully enough, you know, between things that seem alike but are different. You should always do that. Oh well. You're going to have thousands of mornings to think about all this." This work itself, definitively the most important work on shamans ever to be assembled, with its exceptionally meticulous, standard-setting documentation, warrants that anyone with a serious interest in the ethnography of Asia think about it for a thousand mornings; to follow the paths it opens with equal precision will require thousands more.

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HAWAI'I UNIVERSITY, HONOLULU, HI GREGORY G. MASKARINEC

KATHRYN ROUNTREE (ed). *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe: Colonialist and Nationalist Impulses*. EASA Series, Volume 26. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015. 315 pp. Price $95.00/£67.00. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-78238-646-9.

If shamanism is a lucrative business today, from California to Kyzyl, from South Korea to Colombia, why should scholars not follow the same line and discuss the current shaman world?

The European Association of Social Anthropologists is a new and flourishing interest group, and its publications—the EASA Series—amounts so far to 26 volumes. This may simply show how different their focus is from previous (also shamanistic) research paradigms. First-class airline travellers, magic in Italy, neoliberal Europe's working class, and even migrants are some topics visited within the book series.

The volume under review is a manifestation of a similar new research "paradigm." The editor is from New Zealand, and the idea for gathering a collection of papers on contemporary pagan movements in Europe arose in coffee shops in Malta and Hungary. The editor appears to have been unfazed by superstition in gathering precisely thirteen papers into the book. Gender equilibrium is also pursued. Kathryn Rountree's elucidating "Introduction" is followed by descriptions of Sami neo-shamanism, the Danish "Old Gods" belief, modern Swedish heathens, the Wolf Brotherhood in the Czech Republic, Siberian neo-shamanism, the Estonian National Religion, contemporary pagan ideologies in Hungary, witchcraft in Berlin, paganism in Ireland, Wicca lore, and Iberian, Italian and Maltese neo-paganisms. The different regions and social structures of Europe are thus fairly balanced. (The book even extends the term "Europe" to cover Siberia.) It is the first general handbook on the "contemporary pagan." Some chapters are more closely related to shamanism

than others, but for researchers of shamanism there are lessons to be drawn from them all.

Today various new "innate religions" penetrate into the common European cultural heritage. Neo-shamanism is only one branch of them. The book gives a very good comparative description of the related religious movements. Every chapter is distinct. On an "etic" level there are two key notions in the volume: "pagan" and "native." They are not precisely defined in the book, but, we understand, various beliefs and rituals look similar and different at the same time. As for the historical past, the sources of today's paganism in Europe might have a millennium-long background (such as the old Germanic myths), nineteenth-century extravagant romanticism, or be products of the Nazi regime. There is no doubt that a similar mosaic of religions also existed long ago: in Ancient Egypt, Rome, Byzantium etc. The manifold interpretations of Central Asian "shamanism" might also be extended along the same line of multiculturalism of religion.

On an "emic" level the two similarly crucial terms are "colonialism" and "nationalism." They are too general as terms, today often used just as slogans, but they can indeed be used in a skillful way to describe both modern and "new-age" shamanic phenomena.

The book fulfills all philological requirements. Carefully documented descriptions and good indices distinguish the book. And, as it is a comparative work, I suggest reading it to gain an overview of contemporary shamanism and neo-shamanism as well. It is not a book on shamanism, but it illuminates it in its own ways. We may call this the snooker-effect: we push the ball in direction A, and we gain from its return to place B.

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY VILMOS VOIGT

CHARLES STÉPANOFF. *Chamanisme, rituel et cognition chez les Touvas (Sibérie du Sud)*. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2014. 413 pp. ISBN 978-2-7351-1631-7, ISSN 1257-9947.

This is a recent French monograph in a series describing traditional cultures in our day. There are around thirty monographs in the series, detailing lesser-known peoples in the style of the French Ph.D. exami-

nation practice. As ancestral spirits it is not the Siberian "shamanologues" but Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss who dominate for the author; and the author's fieldwork concentrated on the "concepts" used in ritual in Tuva. (Charles Stépanoff prefers the French term "cognition," but, I am afraid, most non-French people do not grasp the difference.) Following Roberte N. Hamayon's Buryat interpretation, the essence (*udha*) was intended to be the target of Stepanoff's fieldwork and description. The key concept of the Tuva is that a shaman is not trained to be a shaman, but is "born" to that position ('on ne devient pas chamane, on naît chamane', p. 16).

This carefully written dissertation (with philological scrutiny) gives all the necessary information about the Tuva (who belong among the Turkic-speaking Altai–Sayan peoples). Their shamanism was briefly mentioned already in the great Russian ("Siberian") expeditions in the eighteenth century. Over the two last centuries there have been several research strategies for investigating shamanism. In listing them, Stépanoff praises particularly the "ethnographic" approach by Soviet scholars after the Second World War. He does not shut his eyes in the face of modernity. A suggestive photograph from the capital, Kyzyl (p. 37), with five-story block houses, indicate how effective the social changes of Khrushchev's time and thereafter were. Stépanoff has done some excellent fieldwork in looking at recent times. He shares the view of Mihály Hoppál: the Tuva shamanism of today is a "totally new phenomenon in a post-modern world" (p. 47).

Similar phenomena are found abundantly in Inner Asia and Siberia too; however, one of the most striking figures is the extravagant Tuva scholar and writer Mongush Borakhovich Kenin-Lopsan, who initiated "his own modern shamanistic religion" (p. 48), while at the same time denouncing other "shamany samozvantsy = chamanes autoproclamés." During recent years several new notions have arisen there (e.g. the "white" shamans: *ak kham*). More recently some "shamans" may act as sorcerers. Tuva society incorporates the new phenomena, and in criminal cases accepts them as legal evidence. Today people can see the *eeren* on buildings as domestic emblems, similar to shop signs (pp. 102–3). However, the distinction between "true" shamans and "impostors" among the Tuva is not a new one. Potanin (1883) already clearly separated the *uktug kham* from the cheating persons. Still, Tuva is not a Harnerland of shamanism.

Stépanoff's book from chapter three to chapter ten presents particular and individual reports. The description is emphatic and effective. Because the author has already given the necessary background information about the traditional Tuva way of life, the reader can draw reasonable conclusions of his own.

In full armor, a French "shamanologue"—Stépanoff—describes the "shamanic motifs" in Tuva's society today. And at the same time he reflects on the "old" shamanism there as well.

The book is worth reading, for its study of both old and new shamanism. It is a fruitful branch on the old tree of the renowned French school of shamanism.

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BUDAPEST, HUNGARY VILMOS VOIGT

Plates

1 *a* Rai shaman in front of her shrine and the fireplace, Rakha, Khotang.
Photo: Raphael Mousa, 2015.

1 *b* Tamang Shaman behind her *dhyangro*, Rakha, Khotang.
Photo: Raphael Mousa, 2015.

2 Contest between lama and shaman, Mila vs. Bonpo.
Wall-painting in village temple, Amthali Sindhupalchok, Nepal.
Photo: Alban von Stockhausen, 2012.

3 Contest between lama and shaman, Mila vs. Bonpo.
Wall-painting in village temple, Amthali Sindhupalchok, Nepal.
Photo: Alban von Stockhausen, 2012.

4 *a* A shop in the open-air market of Ulaanbaatar specializing in shamanic implements. Photo: Ippei Shimamura, 2011.

4 *b* A shaman's hat in the style of a hat of the nobility. A normal nobleman's hat does not have eyes attached. The national emblem of Mongolia is affixed to the peak of the hat, indicating the nationalist tendencies of the shamans. Photo: Ippei Shimamura, 2011.

5 Liza performs the swan dance (*akkuw biyi*) in the yurt during her spirit-invoking ritual by running around and flapping her hands like wings. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

6 *a* Liza takes the hot shovel into her hands and then starts to lick it to frighten the evil spirits (*jin*) away from the sick people. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

6 *b* Liza holds her arm in a strange position as she diagnoses one of the patients, at whom her arm is pointing. Her arms act like a spiritual antenna, transmitting information between the patients and the spirits. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

7 *a* Shynar, the other *baksı*, also performs her spirit-invoking ritual by running around with a whip. She sometimes symbolically strikes the patients to chase away the *jın*-spirits. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.

7 *b* Shynar chants a prayer and holds her magic shovel in front of her. Although her shovel was also hot, she never licked it as Liza did during the ritual. Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2013.