SHAMAN

Journal of the International Society for Shamanistic Research
Maps drawn by Zsuzsa Draskovits and István Sántha

Front cover: The Kirghiz shaman grabs the smoke ring of the yurt, the symbol of the Upper World, as he stands on the shoulder of a helper. Photograph by Mihály Hoppál.

Photograph from Dávid Somfai Kara, Mihály Hoppál and János Sipos, The Sacred Valley of Jay Ata and a Kirghiz Shaman from Xinjiang, China
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An Eastern Khanty Shaman Song

MÁRTA CSEPREGI

BUDAPEST

Based on the literature and the author’s own experiences in the field, the study presents the shamanism of the Eastern Khanty people, who live near the Rivers Tromagan and Agan, tributaries of the River Ob. I provide the text of a shaman ritual performed in 1987 and a translation with possible explanations. The protagonist of this ritual is Ivan Stepanovich Sopochin, one of the most remarkable Surgut area shamans of the 20th century. The initiator of the ritual was Regina Nazarenko, an ethnomusicologist from Russia, who analysed the ritual from a musical perspective; however, her research was discontinued due to her early death.

The Uralic peoples, whose languages are related to Hungarian, live in a large area in Northern Eurasia amidst a variety of geographical and economic conditions; hence there are also differences in their beliefs. Shamanism characterises the peoples of the northern fishing, hunting, and reindeer-keeping culture complex who live in the northernmost parts of Eurasia (Map 1), from Scandinavia up to the River Yenisey and the Taĭmyr Peninsula (pl. 1 a, b). The Lapp (Sami) peoples, who are the westernmost peoples of this group, have ceased practising shamanism, but historical sources indicate that it was once a living practice, and their museums feature some richly decorated shaman drums, the drawings of which accurately reflect the traditional worldview of the Sami people.

The easternmost members of this culture complex are the Nganasan, who live on the Taĭmyr Peninsula in proximity to other Samoyed peoples. Their closest neighbours are the Enets. These two small Samoyed peoples are in danger of assimilation. Although earlier travellers reported powerful Enets shamans today none of them remain, and at the end of the eighties the last famous Nganasan shaman also died. Within the Samoyed peoples the Nenets and their culture have the greatest chance of surviving. Their population (40,000) and their strong
sense of identity give reason for hope. The southern Samoyed Selkups have not managed to preserve their culture as effectively.

East of the Lapps and west of the Samoyed peoples on the banks of the River Ob and its tributaries live the closest linguistic relatives of the Hungarians: the Khanty and the Mansi (formerly known as the Ostiak and the Vogul, respectively), who are also referred to as the Ob-Ugrians. Their culture is more or less homogeneous. Since the population of the Mansi is smaller and because they are highly Russified, their traditions survive only in a fragmented form; however, the survival and possible revival of the Khanty traditions seem more likely.

I gained experiences tied to Khanty shamans in the nineties when I took part in several expeditions in the Surgut (Eastern Khanty dialect) area with ethnographer Ágnes Kerezsi and ethnomusicologist Katalin Lázár. In collecting linguistic and folklore materials one inevitably becomes part of the whole life of the people, and later one can compare one’s experiences with the literature. This is what I am doing now in attempting to summarise the characteristics of Khanty shamanism.

In the large Khanty speech area, which comprises the 2,000-kilometre-long stretch of the River Ob with its tributaries from the River Vasiugan to the Arctic Ocean, there are various forms of shamanism. There is no standard word for ‘shaman’ either. In one of the eastern dialects, that of Surgut, t’ertte ko, ‘seeing man, knower’, is used, other versions of which can be found in several other dialects (t’ertang khoi in the Irtysh, sherteng kho in the Kazym dialect and so on). Along the River Vakh, jolte ku, ‘praying man’, is used with the same function, and the same meaning appears in the Surgut area in the form multe ko. Depending on the method and aim of the fortune telling, the people tied to the spirits can be referred to variously. According to his experiences in Vasiugan, Kulemzin (1992: 115–120, 2004: 45–60) lists five other names apart from those mentioned above. The mant’e ku, ‘story-telling man’, or the areghta ku, ‘singing man’, brings relief to a sick person through sacred tales and songs. The ulomverta ku, ‘dream-seeing man’, sees the future while sleeping, the n’ukulta ku, ‘game-chasing man’, brings luck to hunters, and during the actions of jisilta ku, ‘tear-bringing man’, the audience starts crying. The latter probably corresponds to the function of chipan (chepan, chepaneng kho), known in other parts of the speech area with

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1 The Khanty terms and texts have been written with a simplified transliteration.
the meaning ‘conjurer’. According to Peszikova (1993: 99), the difference
between a real shaman and any other sorcerer is that a shaman attempts
to provide an explanation for what is happening during his actions, offers
reasons and consequences, and also describes the way one can atone for
mistakes; in contrast, with sorcery one can only see the result without
any explanation. Sorcery of the latter kind has recently become common
among the Russified inhabitants. The Khanty people, who have kept
their traditional culture, reject this kind of magic since they believe that
it harms the balance of the world.

Like his or her Eurasian counterparts, the Khanty shaman does not
learn his or her craft, but receives it as a gift from the spirits in dreams
or visions. The shaman starts working after having digested all the
visions (this may take years) without any initiation rites or shaman tests.
Shamanness cannot be inherited. There are no signs of shamanness
which can be recognised at birth, but childhood sicknesses, neurasthenia,
epilepsy and stuttering often characterise future shamans. Shamans have
no separate caste. They fish and hunt just as the other members of the
community do; however, they tend to be luckier since they are favoured
by the gods. They cannot be considered leaders even though people lis-
ten to their advice because of their experience. They are called on to tell
the future, find lost objects and animals, and determine the intentions
of the spirits. They are often called to sick people; however, they do not
cure directly, but plead the cause of the sick with the spirits (Kulemzin
2004; Kerezsi 1997). Although they are the primary mediators between
humans and the world of spirits, their presence is not necessary at every
community feast. Any head of a family who knows the traditions can
lead a sacrificial ritual (pl. 2 a, b). Similarly, it is not forbidden for a
person otherwise not chosen by the spirits to pray with a shaman drum.
Along the River Tromagan there is a shaman drum in every hut. In 1996,
one of my hosts commented: “I am a believer, I have a drum, and I beat
it sometimes if I have a problem so that I may find relief.”

During rituals the Samoyed and other Eastern Siberian shamans
wear special costumes, cloaks, hats and headdresses. Similar acces-
sories are only used by shamans of the Vasiugan area, that is among
the easternmost Khantys (Kulemzin 1976: 68, 2004: 64–71). The Sur-
gut shamans put on their reindeer skin boots for the rituals because it
would be ill-mannered to approach the gods barefoot, but otherwise
they do not distinguish themselves from the rest of the community. The
Northern Khantys have no shaman costume either.
North of the town of Surgut, in the area of the Rivers Tromagan and Agan the most important tool of the shaman is the drum (kujep), whereas drums are no longer used towards the south along the River Iugan (pl. 3 a, b). According to Karjalainen (1918: 563), in the early 20th century the drum was unknown in the Irtysh area, and in the otherwise archaic areas of the Vakh and Vasiugan it has also become less used. The Ostiak drums are not as decorated with drawings as they are in the Altai mountains, but the Surgut shamans draw a circle on the inner side of the drum with the blood of the sacrificed reindeer, as they do on the front of the idol-sledge. “We draw the sun on it,” said the leader of the sacrificial ritual. The shaman from Tromagan falls into a trance while beating the drum, and attracts the attention of the spirits with the drum rhythm. In other areas a zither-like string instrument serves the same function (Surgut: narkes jugh, Vakh-Vasiugan: panang jugh, meaning ‘musical tree’). These instruments are also used in profane situations; however, during shaman rituals they are considered sacred objects (Karjalainen 1918: 567).

The trance may also be caused by fly agarics (pank); however, in this case the use of the drum is not allowed. After consuming a certain amount of dried mushroom heads (three or seven), the shaman falls asleep and finds the solution in a dream. When he wakes he tells his dream and gives answers to the questions posed.

The state of ecstasy is not always necessary in order to identify the intentions of the spirits or the deceased. It is enough to ask the spirits questions, while repeatedly lifting an object. If the answer is negative the object can be lifted easily; however, if the answer is affirmative, the object becomes extremely heavy, as if it were stuck to the ground. Fortune telling is not only the privilege of the shamans. If parents want to know which of their ancestors is reincarnated in their child, they keep lifting the child's cradle while enumerating the names of the ancestors until the cradle sticks to the ground. The name at which the cradle becomes heavy will be the name of the ancestor who they believe is reincarnated in the child, and from then on they will respect the child as they would respect this relative. Similarly, the last wish of a deceased person can be revealed by repeatedly lifting the funeral sledge while posing yes-no questions. Concerning minor issues the shaman may

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2 See also Niemi 2002: 204–205.
detect divine intentions by repeatedly lifting his chest, and nowadays lifting half a bucket of water is enough to predict the future. Earlier, guns and axes were also often used for the same purpose, but unfortunately so many murders are committed these days that these weapons are now avoided as they are now thought to be unworthy of involvement in such sacred actions. Also, if one wants to borrow something from the gifts piled up at the sacred places, the spirit has to be asked whether he is ready to give, and if yes, how much. In the idol house of Ewet iki, the spirit of the River Tromagan, there is an old sword which when lifted can help one determine how much Ewet iki will lend.

In the early 1990s, I witnessed some shaman rituals in the Surgut Khanty area. On these occasions the shaman did not sing while beating the drum. He just whistled and shouted. I found out later that the reason for omitting songs with lyrics at these rituals was to prevent them from being heard by unauthorised people. I know the shaman song quoted below only from a tape recording, but I had the chance to meet its performer in 1992. He was Ivan Stepanovich Sopochin (1910–1993), a shaman of the Surgut area, near the Rivers Tromagan and Agan, indeed one of Surgut’s most famous shamans of the latter half of the 20th century. According to Juha Pentikäinen (1998: 65), “[h]e was the only one to survive out of the eight shamans imprisoned dur-

![Fig. 1. The Khanty shaman Ivan Stepanovich Sopochin with his son and grandchildren, Surgut district. Photo: Márta Csepregi, 1992.](image)
An Eastern Khanty Shaman Song

ing the Stalinistic persecutions of the 1930s against the national leaders of the Khanty people in the area.” He became internationally known when in the 1980s he was found by Estonian, Finnish, Russian and Hungarian ethnographers. He was one of the protagonists of the 1987 documentary made on the Khanty bear feast tradition in the area of the River Agan. The film was directed by Lennart Meri, the Estonian film director (and later president of the Estonian Republic). In the late 1980s, Sopochin was visited several times by researchers from the Novosibirsk Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Ethnomusicologist Regina Nazarenko collected musical material, while linguist Natalia Koshkarëva collected linguistic data in which the shaman talks about his life (2005). In 1990, Finnish ethnographer Juha Pentikäinen (1998: 65–75) was introduced to him and gathered important information from him concerning the Elk Myth among others. His talent for story telling came to light much earlier, indirectly, when Hungarian linguist László Honti quoted one of his tales, also about the Elk Myth, which he had obtained in 1978 through Sopochin’s son, Eremei, who was studying in what is now St Petersburg. In 1991–1992, Hungarian ethnographer Ágnes Kerezsi spent some time with him, and won his confidence. Joining Kerezsi’s expedition in 1992, I also met him; however, in 1993 we were only able to visit his grave, since he had died in May 1993, a month before our arrival.

The shaman ritual reported below was performed in 1987 at the initiative of Nazarenko. The complete recording is kept in the folk music archives of the Novosibirsk Conservatory (Inventory No. A-47/174). In 1989, Nazarenko listened to and interpreted her recordings on site, and later she devoted more than a decade to decoding and analysing them; however, as a result of her tragically early death (she died at 42 on 18 August 2000), she only left preliminary reports. In July 1999, she introduced her findings in Oslo, but in the conference volume, which appeared years later, her lecture was scantily published, lacking references and sheet music (2005). In August 2000, she intended to give a lecture on the same subject at the International Finno-Ugric Congress in Tartu, but only the abstract was published (2000). These preliminary reports suggest in-depth research, but it is uncertain whether anybody will carry on her work.

An edited version of the recording of the shaman ritual performed in 1987 remained in the possession of the Sopochin family, and the old shaman’s son, Eremei, gave us free reign of it in 1992. I copied
the recording with Katalin Lázár, and on 9 July 1992, with the help of Eremei, we attempted to reconstruct the lyrics of the song. This was only partly successful since the lyrics are not clearly audible over the loud drum beats. In 1998, on one of my later journeys, I noted down the lyrics accurately. I previously dealt with the shaman song in a Hungarian-language study (Csepregi 2006); however, I have continued my research since, and the present study contains additional information. Since the recording was analysed primarily from a musical point of view in Novosibirsk, I would like to contribute the text of the song (with a simplified orthography), a translation and explanations.

The recording in our possession is 35 minutes long, but the conversations with personal data are not featured on it, meaning that the shaman ritual was longer. According to Nazarenko (2005: 176–177), the ritual consists of 16 parts, which are broken up by short conversations. Before the ritual the shaman’s assistant heats up the drum over the fire, and repeats this several times during the ritual so that the vellum becomes taut. From the beginning to the end of each part rapid, even drum beating can be heard, except in Part 9. In Part 15, after the long oo-oo cries of the men, there is only drum beating. At this point the rhythm changes, and the otherwise even drumbeats are followed by a ta-ti-ti drum pattern (every third beat is emphatic). The end of each part is indicated by a few drumbeats, which are louder, with longer pauses in-between. Apart from the drumbeats the rattle of the coins attached to the rim can also be heard constantly. The song has a descending structure, the basic formula of the two melody lines is AB. The lines mostly consist of four bars; the first note of each bar is short, and the second longer. The line-final notes are drawn out. In the A line “mi-do” steps (major third) are repeated; the B line is similar, except that the final note slides down to “la.” Naturally, the basic formula may vary in many ways. The parts with lyrics are introduced by lines, such as chocho-chocho-gaghagha-gagheho, which lack a lexical meaning, and similarly, filler lines can be heard between the lines of lyrics with elements such as ghej-ghej,  ghoj-ghoj, ghao-ghao. For prosodic reasons, the gha, gho, ja, jo, oa elements are built into the text.4

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3 Thanks to Katalin Lázár, a copy is now in the archives of the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
The course of the ritual:
Parts 1–2: Only the drum is sounded and the basic motif of the song without words can be heard, with the expletives only.
Parts 3–4 serve as an introduction to the ritual. The shaman considers whom to appeal to and what he should do. In the first six lines he addresses Father Sky and Mother Earth. All during the ritual there is doubt about whether it is allowed to perform the shaman craft in the presence and for the sake of strangers.

angteng sot kor
joreng torem
jeghuw n’oghelteluw antegha
choghra waghel n’oghtap kimel
norong putle kimleng naja
ankuw n’owalteluw antegha
wagheng wänchep chepan tarem
saj kontemli torem partem wär
köt winkemla sär tarem wär
kur säremli säremgha megh
sämät wolija

God accepting a hundred
Reindeer bucks as a sacrifice,5
Our father might be offended,
Goddess with the rim of a handled cauldron
Girdled around with hard iron,6
Our mother may be offended,
Iron-faced strong magician
Carries out a godly command.
His hand got caught, fast thing,7
His foot got caught, fast thing.
Can be seen.

5 The metaphor of Father Sky (**num torum**)
6 The metaphor of Mother Earth (**megh anki**)
7 The aim of the ritual is to identify the reason for the pain in the Initiator’s hand.
Part 4:

\*[t’eghene aregha
angtenga sot kor
jorenga torem
jichka jeghuw
kachenga oghpi
ar ikija
leghnegha loli leghelmal
kulenga paghel pormema
mengnegha kanoke
leghetmalne
muw wär valije
i’eghene aregha

This is how the song goes:
God accepting a hundred
Reindeer bucks as a sacrifice,
Our dear father,
Flying
To a lot of grey-headed old people\(^8\)
We also dig
The dirty threshold
trodden on by them,\(^9\)
Flying away
What is to come,
This is how the song goes.

In Part 5 the singer refers to how he became a shaman. According to reports by Kerezsi (1997: 401) and Koshkarëva (2005: 146–154), Sopo-chin received the calling on an otter hunt when he was young. He was hunting with his younger brother, and when he was left alone, he was overpowered by the moonlight and he could not avert its gaze. At the same time he heard a wonderful song, a voice, which was drawing nearer

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\(^8\) The ancestors of those present.
\(^9\) The people of today have to take the same road as their ancestors did.
and nearer. This was when he received two of his shaman songs. When his brother appeared, the vision disappeared. Sopochnin thinks that if the vision had lasted longer, he could have become a stronger shaman.

pyra kyt’em
kocheng wàrem
äwija wyghem
t’i tul sagham
sär lugha waliletèn
megha kalti n’awelko
t’i koneng torem
koneli toreme kolem lunk sagham
lunk saghangli saghang pych
kal saghangli saghang pych
kujpeng köteng
lunk saghangli kolem pychem
t’éghe-ne- nyghe
meghe kalte n’aweko
t’erghe jetalne t’éghe
torem pughes sachi nay
t’ores antepli kolghi nay
sôt antepli kolghi n’ur
torem posijem n’ewal n’awem
tarem woti kumpet oghne
luwe luw n’ewertili
sanki wagha kanchilem
n’orem wajegh latili
t’ènegha t’èna
lapet wagh n’almang pitmang nay
äle metape torem wàr
äle metape megh anki wàr
laghes joghila lortem lek
meng lek lortileluw
t’éghe-ne-neghi
lapet wagh n’almang tipang nay
jichek anki
aleng torem tighem latne
I shout to the girls
My trance
Left from long ago,
Happened
In such a foolish way.
Man of flesh and blood dying to the earth
Vaulted sky,
Spirit-song heard from the top of the sky,
Idol spirit’s inspiring impulse,
Spirit-woman’s inspiring impulse
Made his hands with a drum,\(^{10}\)
Idol spirit’s inspiring impulse,
Yes, indeed,
How a flesh and blood man dying to the earth
Became a shaman.
Holy fire-ruling princess born of god\(^{11}\)
Goddess rocking a thousand cradles,
Leather strap rocking a hundred cradles,\(^{12}\)
God marked the good man of flesh and blood\(^{13}\)
Let my soul fly
On the top of waves blown by strong wind,\(^{14}\)
At the time of the wild animal in the swamp\(^{15}\)

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10 The metaphor of the shaman.
11 A form of address for Mother Fire (t’ores naj imi).
12 Mother Fire gives life and determines its length in advance by putting the cradles among those who die early or those with long lives.
13 The shaman believes in his being the chosen one.
14 A reference to the difficulties of the shaman journey.
15 The metaphor of the bear.
An Eastern Khanty Shaman Song

Drawn onto the sky,
Yes, indeed,
Seven iron-tongued, crackling fire,
As commanded by Father Sky,
As commanded by Mother Earth,
Trail blazed in dense wood\textsuperscript{16}
We blaze the trail.
It is so, indeed,
Seven iron-tongued, creative fire,
Our dear mother.
In the beginning, at the birth of the world
The epochal sons of divine age
Receiving the power of idol spirit, triple power
(From) our great god father,
Thus I turn.\textsuperscript{17}
God marked the good man of flesh and blood
On top of waves blown by strong wind
Indeed, it is so . . .

In Part 6 Sopochin remembers his paternal grandmother, a Forest Nenets woman who was also a shaman. “Ivan Stepanovich remembered her strange behaviour, when she went away to the forest, spent a lot of time there alone, wandering through the forest, speaking with someone and gesticulating. [. . .] He used to say that he has three shaman songs, and one of them is from his grandmother” (Koshkarèva 2005: 123).

\begin{verbatim}
ma tul anki tojem pagh
lankes juwije lortem lek
kat kötghela joghethmin
kat wonghela karitimin
pom urnegha jekentel
anki n’ughelema
ej sogh lajman angtep korum
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{16} A reference to the difficult job of the shaman as soul leader.
\textsuperscript{17} At this point the shaman turns three times around his centreline, following the course of the Sun.
Son of a foolish mother
Dances in dense wood,
Flapping with two hands
Spinning with two shoulders
On a trail blazed in dense wood.
Divine snow-white woven harness
Of my smooth-haired antlered reindeer,18
Pursued by mother god,
Is now starting to loosen.19
On the miserable land visited by grief
I hardly lift my hand,
On the miserable land overcome by grief,
I hardly lift my foot.20

Part 7 describes the order of the world with people made to be different and with the source of everything that is good, the River Ob, which has a lower end (the mouth) and an upper end (the spring). In this phase the shaman sets out to find the guest’s dwelling, which he knew was at the upper reaches of the River Ob, and also to discover the cause of the illness. The souls of the shamans often travel on water.

18 A helping spirit inherited from his grandmother.
19 In the course of the journey the details slowly start to make sense.
20 The shaman is dancing in other worlds. The people participating in the ritual do not see anything.
An Eastern Khanty Shaman Song

In the beginning, at the birth of the world
The Russian is created to be Russian
The Khanty is created to be Khanty.
In the beginning, at the birth of the world
The sacred River Ob, along which run a hundred reindeer bucks ran,
was created.
Which has a lower end,
Has an upper end,
It is well-done, indeed.
Finite Ob, sacred Ob,
(On) earth holding a divine stick.\(^{21}\)

Parts 8 and 9 are longer than what the text suggests, but the majority of the song was indecipherable.

Part 8:

\[ t'it \text{ wele oghel panam} \]
\[ t'it \text{ wele tugel koren} \]

As if he is feeling wobbly,
As if he is seeing visions . . .

Part 9:

\[ ma \text{ sing pagheli} \]
\[ maghla torem \]

\(^{21}\) The word (sowjugh) means the ‘supporting pillar of the sky’ as well as ‘ski stick’. 
In a circle, round and round,
Roaming about the wide world . . .

In Part 10 the shaman tries to identify the illness.

chaje anteghe t’eghene
kolghaghape kighreleli
ru’pe wele walen luw
kat kurghel sänghel tajghel luw
i’ene jastemalne luw
i’imint wärma wujem
pa taghene tajlet luw
ronteng kuleng tajlet luw
tem maghlepe jimeng as
megha menem woleng luw
kuipeng kötep woleng luw
torem ar woleng luw

It seems it is really so,
Something holds back (the illness).
The Russians want to live also,
Since they have two hands and two legs,
Even though they speak differently.
I saw everything,
They live elsewhere,
Have different decorations.22
Here, along the sacred Ob,
Let the world know
That there are also drummer hands,
Indeed, there are many.

In Part 11 the shaman wants to make sure that he was right when he agreed to practise shamanism for the sake of the Russian woman. He turns to the fire and tells it to flare up three times if it disapproves of the shaman’s proceedings. He sings the prayer to the fire in a solo

\[ \text{Márta Csepregi} \]

\[ ^{22} \text{A reference to Russian religious customs being different.} \]
without the drum. The syllables in brackets are expletives appearing only in the song.

luw mustelegh wär waltal kunte  
luw rut’ imi(ja) waleng luw(a)  
muw megh imi(ja) waltan luw(a)  
t’it kunte(gha) luw n’awemli(ja)  
muw taghile n’ewertili  
et’e korasep(a) n’awi ko-ko(gha)  
pyktuw kitghe(gha) waleng luw(a)  
ente(gho) t’et’i äsle(gha)leli(ja) kunte(gha)  
lunk wagh chomlap kolem(a) pich  
lapet wagh(a) n’almap(a) naj(a)  
kolem lojmilteghle luw(a)  
chaie t’ene(gha) mustel kunte(gha)  
rut’pe et’e katel mosl(a)  
kantko et’e katel mosl(a)  
tem jenk sinkami maghelam naj(a)  
meng ej katl(a) tajluw luw(a)  
meng toghnam(a) lejlew(a)

If we do something wrong  
Because this is a Russian woman,  
Comes from another land  
Tell this  
So that we do not speak in vain  
She is also a human of flesh and blood  
Even though she is of another nationality.  
If you do not let  
Iron of the spirit23 give three signs  
Seven iron-tongued fire  
Flare up three times.  
Indeed, this is the way we should act  
The Russian also needs the Sun  
The Khanty also needs the Sun

23 That is, fire.
On this land washed by water
We live under the same sky.
Let us see now . . .

In Part 12 the shaman is waiting for the fire to react:

\[ \text{sar teghehe} \text{he} \text{geh} \text{he} \text{ghenoj} \]
\[ \text{teghehe} \text{he} \text{geh} \text{he} \text{ghenoj} \]

Well, s-s-s-s-s-so
s-s-s-s-s-so

Part 13:

Since the fire did not flare up, this constituted permission to continue the ritual. The drumbeats resound again, first quietly, then louder and louder.

\[ \text{sarnam kunte kanem kimne} \]
\[ \text{sarnam kunte kulghen kimne} \]
\[ \text{t’utne sarnam jasteli} \]
\[ \text{ente mane pyrije} \]
\[ \text{tem oghkujila metelije jastel} \]
\[ \text{ej korasep as tojeli joghetluw} \]
\[ \text{kit pâlekî asi joghetem ko} \]
\[ \text{kolne âle kolem} \text{tel} \text{li} \]

We may go ahead
We may sprint ahead,
We may speak on.
I did not ask,
Her boss said so.
(A person) coming from the end of the River Ob,
A person coming from the other side of the River Ob,
How could I not hear her.

In Part 14 the shaman has a dialogue with the initiator to specify the cause of the illness.
Part 15 is the peak of the ritual; the text is difficult to process. The atmosphere can be recalled by the words of eyewitness Nazarenko (2005: 177): “Shaman stands up, comes nearer to the fire, simultaneously continuing to play the drum and sing; addresses are made to Num Torum, his titles listed. Shaman begins to dance around the fire—which means that Shaman goes into a trance. The ritual exclamations by Attending men urge on the thoughts of Shaman. The shamanic dance comes to an end when Shaman comes out of his trance.”

It can also be heard on the tape recording that at the end of this part the shaman starts shouting, and the men present also join in. This is the
height of the ritual. In this way the community supports the shaman, who has reached the hardest point of his journey, and the men also believe in conveying their own wishes to the spirits now, in the most direct way. Afterwards, the drum rhythm changes to ta-ti-ti, then fades, or calms down as it were.

In the closing Part 16, “Shaman remembers those places where he went into his trance; he addresses the fire with a request to look after the state of Initiator’s health. After that, Shaman passes the drum back to Assistant and he turns it toward Attending men, who are supposed to beat the drum in accordance with tradition” (Nazarenko 2005: 177). During his journey the shaman visited the town where the initiator of the ritual came from. According to his account, the old part of town is on one side of the river, and the new one is on the other, and above the town the river widens so much that it seems to be a lake. Sopochin, who had never been to Novosibirsk, described the town on the banks of the River Ob correctly, above which there is indeed a reservoir.

Epilogue

The above description, though incomplete at some points, may serve as an apt characterisation of situations that currently prevail in Western Siberia. The industrialisation carried out in recent decades has changed the lives of the natives to their foundations. The traditional scale of values has been shaken, the way of bequeathing changed, and the old belief system also lives on in an altered form. Sopochin was in perfect possession of the spiritual traditions of his people. His family often complained about how many songs and stories he took to the other world without having passed them on to his children. In analysing the tape recordings researchers can only grasp small parts of the whole. Nazarenko attempted to unravel the musical world but left us before she managed to share all her knowledge. I am currently trying to take down the text, but during my work I have a nagging feeling that most of the underlying meanings remain hidden from outsiders. In spite of everything, I believe that even in such a fragmented form, what we know is worth communicating.
References


An Eastern Khanty Shaman Song 25
Márta Csepregi


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On a Shamanic Drum of the Vasiugan River Khanty

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The paper traces the history of a formerly unidentified shamanic drum back more than a hundred years. It reveals who was the last user of the drum; who might have continued to use it had he not been too fearful of doing so; and the ethnicity of its maker. In addition, the drum provides a good example of the nature of interethnic transmission and borrowing of objects: a people is always willing to borrow ritual objects from another whom it regards as transcendentally more powerful, and it comes to consider these objects as its own to the extent that in a few generations the actual origin of the object is forgotten. It is also shown that, in the case of the almost entirely assimilated Khantys of the Vasiugan River, a 120-year-old photograph of an ancestor that is now kept in a foreign museum may become extremely important for the group’s self-representation. These people’s concept of the soul leads them to consider photographs as living things with which one can communicate. Finally, the paper deals briefly with the stereotypical image of the Evenkis: for both the Khantys and the Russians the Evenkis represent the often ambivalent image of the “savage,” with all its positive and negative connotations.

In 1992 I saw a shamanic drum in the Museum of Local History in Tomsk, together with some pieces of the shamanic garment belonging to the drum. There were no notes or explanations attached to these objects. I cannot help interpreting this drum and its history symbolically. For some reason the drum with its torn skin made an unusual impression on me, although at the time I did not know that the bestower of the drum would be my future host and my best friend among the Khanty. Furthermore, the missing notes that should accompany this musical instrument symbolize all the scientific dilemmas connected with its classification. The drum also stands for ethnological fieldwork: partly because it shows how a single, unidentified object can gain its scientific and emotional
context during fieldwork, and partly because the story of the drum tells us about the impact the researcher and his actions make on the people who are being researched. In my opinion this self-reflexive contextual surplus is what ethnological fieldwork can provide for an object.

In this paper I present the story of this particular shamanic drum, while trying to reveal all the possible interpretations other researchers, the Vasiugan Khantys and I hold in connection with the drum. The story is inevitably mosaic-like, but this mosaic may help us to see a particular phenomenon within its rich, though seemingly accidental net of relationships. In this outlining network the shamanic drum is coherently linked to the Khanty soul-system, to the self-representation of the Vasiugan river Khantys, and to the stereotypical image of the Evenkis, which both Khantys and Russians share.

A Shamanic Drum of the Vasiugan River Khanty

In 1969, two ethnologists from Tomsk, Vladislav Kulemzin and Nadezhda Lukina, went to Ozernoe (Map 1), a settlement by the River Vasiugan, to purchase objects for the Museum of Local History. In this village they found a complete set of shamanic implements, which they wanted to buy. The researchers were inconsistent about the identity of the drum’s original owner, shaman Afanasi Milimov: in some instances they identified him as the father (Tuchkova 2001: 117) of the bestower, and in others as his grandfather (Kulemzin 1976: 69), but there were also cases in which they called the shaman Sidor (Kulemzin 2001: 164). However, Sidor—who is in fact Afanasi’s grandson—has never been a shaman, though in my experience he was an extremely talented story-teller. The Milimovs still know that the drum actually belonged to Afanasi, and that it was given to the museum not by his son but by his grandson, Petr. Afanasi Milimov was the last shaman in the Vasiugan region, where acculturation was extremely intensive.

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1 The line of the descent among the people mentioned:

Afanasi Milimov → Mikhail → Sidor

2 The Eastern Khantys had several religious specialists, who are, in scholarly writings, uniformly termed “shamans.” Afanasi had been a so-called jolta-ku, the only religious specialist using a drum.
Afanasiĭ’s grandson, Pëtr, had had the opportunity to take over as a shaman, but at the last moment he took fright and refused to glance into the shirt-sleeve of the dying Afanasiĭ, which was one of several traditional methods for transmitting shamanic knowledge. Thus the implements came into the possession of the grandson, Pëtr. Since he was my host during my fieldwork, we have accurate information about the way he obtained these objects. Initially Pëtr’s father, Mikhail, took care of grandfather Afanasiĭ’s drum, and when he died he passed this duty on to Pëtr. According to Mikhail, because there was no successor to the shamanic line the shamanic implements should have been hung in the sacred place just opposite the village. Why neither Mikhail nor later Pëtr became a shaman not even they themselves could explain. Finally, after lengthy discussion with Pëtr and his family, Kulemzin bought everything at a reasonably high price, despite the disagreement of Pëtr’s mother, who said that people selling or buying shamanic implements would suffer from spasmodic diseases.³ Appar-

³ The story of this purchase has also been recorded by Kulemzin (2001: 164).
ently, the main reason for selling the implements was the amount of money offered, but Pëtr subsequently explained his decision by saying that “they would be better preserved in the museum.”

The equipment consists of a drum and a box containing a shamanic headdress, and a breast plate along with plaïted ornaments. A smaller box full of money found in the larger box, was later returned to the Milimovs by Lukina.

The drum was damaged because, according to Pëtr, his grandfather cut it with a knife before he died (Fig. 1). The reason for doing so is that among the Vasiugan river Khantys a shaman who is not able to name a successor has to “kill” his drum by cutting it. The Milimovs ascribe meaning to the shape of the cut as well as it reminds them of an owl striking at a bolt of lightning (Kulemzin 1976: 80). Although they did not give a detailed explanation, it helps to understand their view if we note that birds are the most widespread forms of the soul among the Eastern Khantys and that they consider lightning to be the main activity of their chief god, Torəm.

Fig. 1. The front and back side of the shamanic drum (after Tuchkova 2001).
Mainly based on the ornaments of the drum, Kulemzin developed a theory about its foreign origin. To understand his theory it has to be noted that Khanty drums are generally quite simple, having no decoration at all: they have no drawings, their Y-shaped handles are made of wood; and the drums themselves are small and oval. Compared to this, this particular Vasiugan river drum has a handle in the form of a lizard, with eyes, mouths and noses. The interior, figurative bands represent the shaman’s bow and, accordingly, the rhomboids hanging from the bands stand for the arrows. There is a drawing on the outer surface of the drum’s skin: a figure of a red man can be seen in the upper middle part, while in the middle there are four rhomboid figures, possibly forming a cross. In the lower part there is a figure of a man drawn in black. According to Pëтр Milimov’s explanation, the black figure is an evil spirit, while the red one is a good one. To understand this, it has to be noted that in recent folk tales from the Vasiugan “the signs of God, the earth and the cross” have to be drawn on trees and on the ground as protection against malevolent spirits. Running along the edge of the drum’s skin are four parallel red lines with two lines of rhomboid figures between them. Black rhomboids between red lines are typical Evenki ornaments symbolizing a snake. The lower part of the drawing refers to the shaman’s activity: according to Ivanov, the Evenki shaman places a snake as a guard beside the souls found in the other world. The Evenki analogy is also supported by the similarities between the anthropomorphic figures and the drawings of the Sym river Evenki shamanic garments.

On the grounds of all these details, Kulemzin stated that the drum was in the Evenki-Yakut style due to its oval, egg-like shape, medium size, the width of its frame, its resonants, the form and material of its handles and its decoration. In other words, the production of the drum reveals Evenki influence, and Kulemzin even supposed that it was made by Evenkis. His statement is in accord with the opinions of

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4 My description is based on Kulemzin’s paper on the shamanism of Vasiugan and Vakh river Khantys, the main goal of which was to describe and explain this unique finding (which is the only shamanic equipment from the Vasiugan river Khantys that has been preserved in its entirety). On the drum itself, see Kulemzin (1976: 79–86).

5 Referring to Ivanov (1955: 243), Kulemzin (1976: 84) also points out this correspondence.
Karjalainen (1927: 265) and Munkácsi (1910: 374), according to whom painted Khanty drums show Evenki influence.

The theory of Evenki influence can be easily supported, since Sym river Evenki shamans, who wandered as far as the Vasiugan and maintained a close relationship with the Khantys, were rather popular among the Khantys of the Vasiugan. They considered them more powerful than their own shamans and preferred to consult them. Károly Pápai’s diary notes dating back to 1888 seem to support this phenomenon. In his fragmented, scarcely legible notes he repeatedly mentions a Tunguz man called Ivan “who taught sacred knowledge to the Khantys.”7 and he even states: “here the Tunguz are considered to be the best shamans.”8 As further proof of the strong Evenki influence some objects from Pápai’s collection could be mentioned which are said to be of Tunguz origin: a shaman’s breast plate, a drumstick, and the handle of a shamanic drum.9

In 1983 U. T. Sirelius’s travel diary about his expedition in 1898 was published under the title Reise zu den Ostjaken. His diary contained a picture of a shamanic drum (Fig. 2),10 in which the drum described by Kulemzin could be clearly recognized.11 The photograph was taken in Ozernoe, the village where the drum was acquired by Kulemzin. According to the caption, the picture shows an Evenki or Tunguz drum made by Tunguz people from the Vasiugan river area, though the term given as the authentic name for it was the Khanty word, kojem (Sirelius

6 Károly Pápai was a Hungarian ethnographer who travelled among the Khantys in 1888. His unpublished field notes—he died at a very young age—are kept in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest.
7 EA3751, Booklet 6, page 359. (EA is the call-number of the archive of the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest).
8 EA3751, Booklet 6, page 310.
9 In early ethnographies Tunguz is another term for Evenki.
10 As for references to these objects, see: Pápai Károly “Jegyzéke a m. kir. vallás és közoktatás-ügyi minisztérium megbízásából Északnyugat Szibériában gyűjtött néprajzi tárgyaknak [Pápai Károly’s unpublished list of objects he collected in northeastern Siberia on commission of the Hungarian Royal Ministry for Religion and Education]: “240. Tunguz shamanic breast plate; 241. case of a Tunguz magic drum; 242. drumstick of a Tunguz magic drum” (EA3751, Booklet 6.)
11 Figs. 88 and 89 in Sirelius 1983: 106.
12 The identity of the two objects was first pointed out by Kulemzin (1993: 126) himself, ten years after Sirelius’ diary was published.
Thus it is likely that at the time of his visit the drum was already used by Khantys, who clearly remembered its Evenki origin—a memory which had been lost by 1969. Without a doubt, therefore, Kulemzin’s theory is justified.

Among the photographs taken in the Vasiugan region by Károly Pápai I have found a picture of a shaman (Fig. 3), who, according to the caption, was an “Ostiak (Tunguz) shaman.”

Though the photograph is in a very poor state, it can be stated with great certainty that it shows an ornamented shamanic drum. It is also clearly evident that there are lines painted on the outer edge of the drum’s skin, and that there might be a human figure on the lower part of the instrument. Knowing the average height of the Khanty people, the size of the drum must be between 65 and 75 cm; the height of Afanasiï Milimov’s shamanic drum is 72 cm. If, in addition to the correspondence between the size and the ornamentation of the two objects, we take into consideration that Pápai definitely visited Ozernoe, and could have taken the picture there, we might have every right to suppose that the drum shown in Pápai’s and Sirelius’s pictures is the same as that kept at the Museum of Local History in Tomsk. Since the man

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13 The photograph is kept at the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest, no.: F2159.
in the picture seems to be young, and in 1888 Afanasiĭ Milimov was 27 years old, it is more than likely that the photo is of him.

A Shamanic Drum and the Vasiugan River Khantys

In 2001 I took Pápai’s photograph with me and showed it to the Milimovs. Independent of the fact that the drums mentioned above might not be identical, the Milimovs believed they recognized the shamanic drum they had given to Kulemzin, thus giving a new life to the drum itself. After learning that the photo had been taken in 1888, they (not having information from a registry) thought that Afanasiĭ could have

Fig. 3. A picture of an “Ostiak (Tunguz) shaman” from Károly Pápai’s collection. (Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, F 2159).
not been old enough to be in the picture. Thus they concluded that rather than the last shaman, their grandfather Afanasiĭ, the photograph showed Filipp, their great-grandfather.

Owing to this, the photograph became charged with extremely strong emotions. They repeatedly borrowed it from me so that they could look at it. Although they never usually asked for presents, they did ask if they could keep the photo. They told others proudly, and often, that their great-grandfather was well known in Hungary, and that he was a famous shaman with a beautifully ornamented dress. They made me promise to bring a copy of the photograph for the local museum in order to preserve the Milimovs’ memory better. They clearly saw the picture as a means of raising their status; and, indeed, the interest and amazement shown by the local Russians was quite intense.

One of their relatives has also exploited the photograph and the shamanic fame of their common great-grandfather. This woman was a soothsayer using cards when I met her in 1998, but even then she often boasted of her shaman ancestor and claimed to inherit his power. Her statement was further confirmed by Pápai’s photograph, supposedly taken of Filipp Milimov. Since then she has defined herself as a very powerful shaman, medicine woman, seer and interpreter of dreams. It should be noted, though, that on the basis of former experiences Khantys tend to think that ethnologists are primarily interested in shamans; thus, by taking on these roles, this lady was hoping to live up to these expectations.

The most interesting story linked to this photograph, however, is not one about the descendants of the soothsayer-shaman but is a story about my hosts. On one occasion we were looking at family photographs. Pëtr Milimov, as he always did, was carefully examining Pápai’s photograph. We, the others, were looking at the family album and found a photo where three men, Pëtr and two of his relatives, were standing beside a helicopter (Fig. 4). My host also looked at the photo, then turned his great-grandfather’s photograph towards it and said to his ancestor: “See, old man, now we travel this way, now we have machines

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14 Her grandfather, Pëtr Dimitrievich Milimov, was indeed a shaman.
15 It is true in spite of the fact that neither Afanasiĭ nor Filipp was Fedosia’s (the soothsayer) linear ancestor. Their line of descent is shown in the figure below:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sidor} & \rightarrow \text{Filipp} & \rightarrow \text{Afanasiĭ} & \rightarrow \text{Mikhail} & \rightarrow \text{Pëtr} \\
& \rightarrow \text{Grigorii} & \rightarrow \text{Dimitriĭ} & \rightarrow \text{Pëtr} & \rightarrow \text{Timofer} & \rightarrow \text{Fedosia}
\end{align*}
\]
like this.” Then, after a long while, he added consolingly: “Don’t worry, old man, you also had good lives.”

To explain this scene—that of someone speaking to a picture—some words have to be said about the soul concepts of the Vasiugan river Khantys. Their concepts could be termed dualistic, according to which a person has two distinct souls, a life-soul (lil’) and an alterego-soul (i’šal’). Beside these two, there is a quasi-soul as well, which the Khantys call kurr In fact, this is also a shadow, or alterego, and in Russian they denote the actual shadow-soul and kurr with a single term: ten’l. The term kurr is used when it is clear whose shadow is in question, while in cases when the owner of the soul is not recognizable they call it a shadow. Khantys consider photographs as shadows where the owner of the soul can be recognized; thus a photo is in fact somebody’s kurr. Because of this, their attitude towards photographs and video films was, even at the time of my fieldwork, rather peculiar, especially in the older generation. With some limitations they considered photos and video films as living. My host frequently watched videos about himself with great joy and attention, often making comments on what he saw: “It doesn’t matter if I die, since I’m going to stay alive and I will walk for ever.” On another occasion he ironically laughed at his TV self: “He
is working all the time while I just sit and watch him.” While listening to a tape recording he repeatedly agreed with his own statements: “He says it’s right.” Since Khantys consider photos to be souls, kurr, older people believe that photographs shouldn’t be burned, since—as my host has put it—“people whose pictures are burned are going to be sick.”

What Lies behind the Scene: Evenkis Living along the Vasiugan

The story of the shamanic drum and Pápai’s photograph clearly shows that the Vasiugan river Evenkis, who belonged to the westernmost Evenki group, the Sym river Evenkis, had an important role among the Vasiugan river Khantys. They came to the Vasiugan from the eastern bank of the River Ob at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (Vasilevich 1969: 6). Today only a few Evenkis live in the Vasiugan region; in 1998 there were 34 Evenkis living in the Kargasok district, also involving the river Vasiugan, while only seven of them were living immediately by the Vasiugan. These numbers are significant even if we know that Russian statistics on ethnic minorities are often far from precise.

By the time the Evenkis arrived in the Ob region lying near the Vasiugan, the area was already densely populated by the Selkups and Khantys, who, making their living dominantly by fishing, mostly settled on river banks. Evenkis fitted into this system of settlement and occupied the dense forests, where only a few Selkups and Khantys lived, and which provided enough lichen for their reindeer herds. They also appeared near the river, where they often possessed common fishing territories with the Selkups. Until the beginning of the 20th century the economy of the Evenkis was mainly based on reindeer herding, hunting and, to a smaller extent, fishing. Due to their nomadic way of life, they were frequently on the move in the search for new pastures for their herds.

Evenkis lived in peaceful harmony with both the Khantys and the Selkups. They had marriage relations with the Khantys but, due to their territorial division, inter-ethnic marriages were more common with the

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16 For their description see Trofimenko (1997) and Maksimova (2001).
17 According to the census of Kargasok district, 1998.
Selkups. The rather rare instances of reindeer possession among the Sym river Selkups go back to such relations: they got the animals from Evenkis in return for Selkup girls.

Vasiugan river Khantys still remember the presence of the Evenkis in the past. My host repeatedly told stories about the appearance of the tun-kis, which undoubtedly left him with good memories. When the Evenkis passed by Ozernoe with their herds, they slept in the village while the reindeer wandered freely in the forest surrounding the settlement. The Evenkis had only one special request: they asked that the dogs be tied up to stop them harming their reindeer or chasing them away.

In the eyes of the Vasiugan river Khantys, Evenkis became a symbol of freedom due to their nomadism and constant migration. According to stories told by the Khantys, it was their love of freedom which, in the 1930s, made the Evenkis leave the area and escape collectivization by withdrawing to the more sparsely populated regions of the Kënga and Parabel rivers. There was a similar flow of migration among the Vasiugan Khantys as well: they too frequently ran away from the Russian authorities by moving to the river Parabel and its tributaries.

Beside seeing Evenkis as a symbol of freedom and the refusal to adapt, the Khantys thought of them as a people more “ancient” and more “savage.” Primarily they emphasized the positive aspects of this “ancient, prehistoric” character of the Evenkis. In their eyes Evenkis possessed more perfect abilities: they could orientate themselves better, since they wandered around in the taiga without getting lost; and they were better hunters—they were thought to be even more skilful than the Iugan river Khantys, who were renowned as being very good hunters. And, as was mentioned earlier, Khantys attributed greater transcendental power to the Evenkis, a power greater than their own. They considered the Evenkis to be virtually pagan and, unlike themselves, never to have been Christianized. There is some truth in this statement, since it is a fact that Evenkis were the last to convert to Christianity. According to church registry books the last adult baptism to have taken place in the territory of the Vasiuganskaia volost’ (parish), also involving the settlement area of the Vasiugan river Khantys, was that of an Evenki woman, Natalia Lihachova, and her four relatives; and the aim of the
ceremony was to make the baptism and registration of her illegitimate child, Simeon, possible.18

This peaceful, friendly relationship has lasted after the Evenkis left the region. In 1998, my host watched a film about Evenkis with undisguised sympathy. In commenting on the film he has repeatedly stated that Evenkis and Khantys are relatives and that they have close relations—which “fact” he had already emphasized on other occasions as well. This admitted similarity between the two people was the source of a joke in one of their stories: two Vasiugan river Khantys visited Krasnoiarsk, where they went to see an exhibition about Evenkis. There the husband, who has left the taiga only four or five times in his whole life and who felt a complete stranger in the city, seemed to feel at home. His wife, who in contrast was used to urban life, asked the attendant if she could leave her husband at the exhibition: “We could leave him in this *chum*19 and he’ll be fine.”

The Russians living in the Tomsk district at the beginning of the 20th century had a similar picture of the Evenkis. Although Khantys and Selkups are the largest native ethnic groups of the region, the Evenkis are the ones whom Russians associate with Siberian romanticism. Russians considered them more archaic than the other ethnic groups living in the area, and thus they came to represent “nativeness” and “Siberian-ism.” As in the Khanty image of the Evenkis, this idea is rooted in the Evenki way of life—that is, nomadic reindeer husbandry. Traditional Evenki costume, which they gave up later than the Selkups and Vasiugan river Khantys, has also played an important role in creating and maintaining this image. Russians referred to the representative piece of Evenki costume, a reindeer-skin dress, whose front was shorter than its pointed backpart, as the “Tunguz tailcoat.” It was also of special interest that until the middle of the 19th century Evenkis had tattooed their faces—a custom unknown among the Khantys and the Selkups.

A good example of this idea is a series of postcards by N. Melikhov made in 1938, which gave an idealistic presentation of the Evenkis dressed in traditional costumes and leading an “archaic” but happy life (Figs. 5, 6 and 7).20

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18 Metricheskaia kniga Vasiuganskoĭ krestovodvizhenskoĭ cerkvy, 1916.
19 A traditional Khanty tent made of animal skins or bark.
This special position of the Evenkis is further supported by the fact that a novelist living in Tomsk, Aleksander Grigorevich Sheludiakov, wrote his novel *Iz plemeni kedra* (“From the Cedar Tribe” [1974]) about them, and not about other native groups (Fig. 8).

The best example of the romantic Russian view of the Evenkis is M. B. Shatilov’s field diary, which was published in 1924 under the title “Ostiak-Samoyeds and Tunguz living in Narym District”.21 In this diary he writes about his three-day visit to the Evenkis. This part contains traditional descriptions of their objects, but the stereotypes that emerge in connection with the Evenkis are now of greater importance.

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Even in this ethnographic description Evenkis are presented as representatives of the sometimes positive, sometimes negative universal symbol of the “savage.” Reading the text, it turns out that Shatilov, instead of taking the position of the ethnologist, tried to meet the stereotypical expectations of his readers.

In Shatilov’s writings we can easily trace the myth of the “savage” who lives in harmony with nature and possesses knowledge civilized people have long forgotten. In the text, the clumsiness and alienation of somebody living in the city is constantly confronted with the confidence and orientational skills of the Evenkis, who are perfectly familiar with the forest. The “horrible” road to the Evenki settlement, which lay in the swamps around the Païdugin river, led through swamps and
forests, and they were on it for a whole day, during which Shatilov was in constant fear of becoming lost. His Evenki companion tried to console him by saying: “Why are you afraid of getting lost my friend, we are walking in a forest!” (Shatilov 1993: 106) Shatilov himself interpreted this remark as a proof of the Evenki’s perfect skill of orientation. The image of the “savage” is also contained in their mysterious religion—that is, their shamanism, which Shatilov did not fail to mention. He writes that whenever his Evenki companions were reluctant to answer a question, they refused him by saying that “god does not like it” (ibid. 108) when they speak about the subject. And Shatilov also gave a detailed description of a shamanic ceremony which was performed by an old Evenki named Sholeul to heal one of his companions.

On the other hand, negative notions about the “savage” also appear in the text. According to these, the Evenkis were filthy people; they washed themselves and used soap, but they did this in a way which Shatilov found disgusting: “In a land of endless water they tried to spare water” (ibid. 107). For this reason the author preferred to wash himself in a pond instead of using the washing facilities of his hosts. Shatilov also found Evenki food primitive and disgusting: their tea made of
birch-gall was “nauseating” (ibid. 107), though he could improve this “wish-wash” by adding some reindeer milk to it.

The most interesting thing for Shatilov, however, was the “weird” image the Evenkis had about the world. To illustrate this he quoted and analyzed one of his conversations with the old Evenki shaman. Sholeul talked about how he imagined Tomsk, the capital city of the district: “Wait, they have a lot of bears, everybody is rich and in the streets they walk with bears” (ibid. 108). In other words, the sign of affluence for him was that people could afford to have a lot of bears. When Shatilov tried to explain how wrong he was, he did not believe him: “Don’t fool me, they have bears” (ibid. 108). And later he added, “and there are commissars walking in the streets as well” (ibid. 108). For him the city
always meant a threat, which threat took shape in the commissars who came from there, and that is why the image of commissars walking in the streets was a symbol of the city’s fearsomeness for him. When in 1924 Shatilov asked him about the Soviet Union, he answered as follows: “There is an enormous river called ‘Rasei’ where the Tsar lives, and there are bad people living there, they are always fighting and the strongest gets everything.” (ibid. 108.) Thus, in his writing, which did not lack political overtones as well, Shatilov was sad to conclude that that was all an Evenki living in the taiga thought about the revolution and about the state he was living in. For us, however, not only is Sholeul’s knowledge concerning the Soviet Union of interest but also the clues he gives about the Evenki world view. In their eyes everything connected to the state was linked to the river, since water and the river meant everything for them: it was the most important point of reference in orientation, and social and geographical groups were also defined by the river. In Shatilov’s words, “his personal life, all his memories were differentiated by big rivers; the big river is the beginning and the end of everything, it is a spirit, a god—and this explains why that certain ‘Rasei’ could be nothing else but a big river.” (ibid. 108.)

Conclusions

As for the problems raised at the beginning of this paper, if our presumptions prove to be right, we have managed to trace back the history of a formerly unidentified shamanic drum to more than a hundred years. Now we know who was the last to use it; we know who could have continued to use it had he not been frightened by the possibility; and we also know the ethnicity of its maker. Beside this, the drum provides a good example of the interethnic transmission and borrowing of objects: a people is always willing to borrow ritual objects from a people it regards as transcendentally more powerful, and it comes to consider these objects as its own so that in a few generations the actual origin of the object is forgotten. At the same time we learned that in the case of the almost entirely assimilated Vasiugan river Khantys a 120-year-old photograph taken of an ancestor and kept in a foreign museum

\(^{22}\) Cf. the Russian term Rossiia (Russia).
can have an extremely important role in the group’s self-representation. We have also been able to make some interesting observations about the soul concepts of the Vasiugan river Khantys, which make them consider photographs to be living to the extent that one can communicate with them. Finally, we dealt briefly with the stereotypical image of the Evenkis, who, for the Khantys and the Russians, represent the often ambivalent image of the “savage.”

In other words, we have been able to write the hitherto missing description of a museum object, a shamanic drum.

References


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The Sacred Valley of Jay Ata and a Kirghiz Shaman from Xinjiang, China

D. Somfai Kara, M. Hoppál and J. Siros BUDAPEST

The present account discusses the close relationship between two important elements of Kirghiz popular beliefs, the so-called sacred mazar sites and the shaman (bakši). During our field trip in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China in 2004 we visited the sacred valley of Jay Ata, which offers a good example of the mixture of animism and Islam. The animist worship of nature and the popular Islamic respect for the tombs of holy personages is combined in the Kirghiz concept of mazar sites. Later we witnessed a unique healing ritual of a Kirghiz shaman. During this ritual the shaman performed a dance (talma biy) that has already disappeared among the Kirghiz population of Kirghizstan. We were also able to observe the use of the shaman’s flag (tuu), which symbolized his travel to the Upper World. This article presents interviews with the shaman and the guard of the sacred valley, a written source on the Islamic legitimization of the valley and a musical analysis of the shaman’s song. Analysis of the shamanic ritual also reveals a strong link between the ritual and the mazar sites.

This account is based on a field trip conducted by Mihály Hoppál and Dávid Somfai Kara to China at the beginning of September, 2004. First we (Hoppál and Somfai Kara) attended the 7th Conference of the ISSR held in Changchun, Jilin Province, China, on August 22–25, 2004. Then, together with some other members of the ISSR, we were invited to Ürümqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China, by Dilmurat Omar, Head of the Department of Ethnology of the Xinjiang Normal University, to take part in another, smaller conference on shamanism. After that we traveled from Ürümqi to Kaxgar,¹ one of

¹ In Modern Uighur this is pronounced Qäšqär, in Kirghiz Kaškar.
the ancient centers on the Silk Road, and later visited the city of Artux,\(^2\) north of Kaxgar.

Artux is the center of the Kizil Su (Kïzïl Suu) Kirghiz Autonomous prefecture, which was founded in 1954. The Kirghiz nomads live along the border with Kirghizstan and Tajikistan, up in the Tianshan and Pamir Mountains. According to the official census of the year 2000,\(^3\) the Kirghiz population in China was around 160,000. We traveled to Tügürmiti, a small Kirghiz village\(^4\) with a population of some 4,000 approximately 70 kilometers northeast of Artux (see Map 1).

\(^2\) The name of the town in Uighur is Atuš, in Kirghiz Artïš. A road runs from Artux to the Kirghiz capital Bishkek through the Torug-art Pass. The majority of the city’s population is Uighur, but Han Chinese and Kirghiz also live there.

\(^3\) See Zhongguo shaoshu minzu fenbu tuji, 2002: 190.

\(^4\) The Kirghiz name of the village is Tegirmeti; its Uighur name is Tügürmiti.
During the trip, Mihály Hoppál used a video camera to record events, while Dávid Somfai Kara, who can speak Kirghiz, talked with the local people. We conducted two interviews and took part in a shamanic ritual. Besides the video recording we also took many photographs. Later, with the help of the video recording, Somfai Kara wrote down and translated the interviews and shamanic texts. Ethnomusicologist János Sipos was invited to analyze the shamanic song. The reader will find his musicological notes under the title “A Musical Analysis of the Kirghiz Shaman’s Song” at the end of this article.

Our host, Omar Dilmurat, originally planned a visit to a Uighur shaman, but in the end we met a younger Kazakh shaman and an older Kirghiz one. In the present article we give an account of the healing ritual performed by the Kirghiz shaman.5

First of all we visited the sacred valley known as Jay Ata (in Uighur Jay Päččim),6 which is situated by a small river. Certain rocks, trees and springs are considered sacred. These are called mazar7 by the Kirghiz, according to whom they are possessed8 by the spirits (arbak, from Arabic arwāḥ) of Muslim saints or martyrs (šeyit, from Arabic šahīd). In other Central Asian Turkic languages the word mazar has preserved its original meaning from the Arabic: ‘a tomb, a grave’. There are seven such sacred sites in the Jay Ata Valley. Local people make sacrifices (tülöö or tilöö, from the Kirghiz verb tile- ‘to wish’) at the mazar sites, where they pray and bathe in the water of the springs. They believe that, in return, the spirits will mediate between themselves and Allah, so that the pilgrims’ wishes come true. The valley is watched over by an old Kirghiz guard (karool) called Abdïrakman Seyit, 63 years of age, who also helps the pilgrims to choose the proper mazar and spirit for their sacrifice. But let us cite his words:

5 Kazakh shamans of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region have been recently studied by Dilmurat Omar (2003).

6 The local people could not explain the meaning of the valley’s name (Jay Ata or Jay Päččim). The Uighur name seems to be older, but the word päččim does not have a meaning in their language either.

7 This word comes from Arabic mazār ‘visiting, place of visitation, a shrine, a tomb or grave’.

8 Kirghiz ee-le- means ‘to possess’, from the Kirghiz word ee, which means ‘master’ or ‘spirit’; see also the Mongolian ejen ‘id.’
In the 900s a sultan by the name of Satuk Bughra Khan from the Karluk tribe had to flee, and he found a sanctuary in this very valley. He took a rest here in the Valley of the Seven Sacred Sites. The names of the mazar sites are: Sögät Mazar (Willow Mazar), Töö Taš Mazar (Camel Stone Mazar), Tamčï Mazar (Water-Drop Mazar), Šarkïratma Mazar (Waterfall Mazar), Kök Köl Mazar (Blue Lake Mazar), Kol Saldï Mazar (Hand-Touched Mazar) and Bešigerim Mazar. Bughra Khan accepted Islam in this very place. He became a Muslim while hiding here, he started to pray here and he made his first morning prayer (Arabic adhān) too. It was more than a thousand years ago. A lot of pilgrims come to visit this place from Artux, Kaxgar, and even Aksu, from many places. They can find peace here throughout the summer from May till October.

In winter only sick people come. The water of the springs can cure them. They take fallen stones from the rocks to heal themselves by beating the ailing parts of their body with the stones. The springs are mainly good for hypertension. But they can also heal headaches and pain in the limbs. These pilgrims sacrifice an animal to the spirits. Then they give a blessing and ask the owner spirits of the mazar sites to protect and heal them. The shaman (bakšï) also invokes the spirits of Jay Ata Valley during his ritual. Then at the end of the ritual he sends them back to the valley. Every mazar has its peculiar curing ability; for example, the Hand-Touched Mazar is visited by barren women and they touch it with their hands. The spring of that mazar has a healing power. At the Water-Drop Mazar people place their mouth or hands against the drops. The saints’ spirits hide in these mazar. They were martyrs. Bešigerim was also a martyr. She was a holy lady, who became pregnant. During her delivery she lost her baby and then died here. Since then this place has been called Bešigerim mazar.

My task is to check the pilgrims and visitors. They come here in groups or sometimes alone. A lot of people come between May and June. They can hardly fit in the valley. They come here during festivals or on ordinary days. They believe that the mazars are martyrs turned into stones. Their spirits are the masters of the mazar; they live inside them. The shamans invoke these spirits, the martyrs of the mazar, but they can tell you more about it. If the spirits agree to come they shout: “Behold, they’ve arrived.” The shamans

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9 See pl. 4.
10 Bešigerim is a proper name, see the text below.
call the spirits by shouting. At the end of the ritual they say: “Now return home.” They invoke them from the valley of Jay Ata, they sing: “Jay Ata, my sacred valley, I invoke your spirits.” When the shaman calls the spirits they come, when he sends them away they return home. They call the mazar by their names: “Camel Stone Mazar, Hand-Touched Mazar, Bešigerim. Oh, my saints, bless these people!” They shout like that.

The springs have healing power. They are so helpful that nearly a hundred animals are sacrificed to their spirits. We worship the mazar according to the Kirghiz custom. Pilgrims tie white ribbons and make a wish. They tie the sacred white ribbons around their necks at the entrance. Then they bind the ribbons to trees and bushes and express their wishes. Men and women equally bind ribbons. They visit the Jay Ata valley to make a ribbon sacrifice so that their wishes come true. This custom is inherited from our Kirghiz ancestors. Uighur people do not bind ribbons, only the Kirghiz do. The Uighur people sacrifice animals and read the Koran out of respect for the Muslim martyrs.

As we have seen, here the cult of nature is linked to a Central Asian Muslim legend. Artush was once the center of the Bughra Khans (Golden 1992: 214–215) from the Karluk Turkic tribes who ruled the area. One of these khans, by the name of Satuk (or Sutuk in modern

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11 See pl. 5.
Uighur), became Muslim by the help of a Persian nobleman Abū al-Naṣr. Later he founded the Karakhanid Empire (10th and 11th centuries). According to a legend Satuk met the Muslim pilgrim in the Valley of Jay Ata and secretly accepted the Islamic faith. He first practised his five-times daily prayer (Persian namāz) to Allah here. This legend has a historic foundation. The English scholar Robert B. Shaw published a text in Central Asian literary Turkic12 (also known as Chagatai in the west) written in the Arabic script, which tells the famous story of Bughra Khan (called Tazkirat-ul-Buğra in Arabic).13 We cite from the third passage of this text, translated into English by Dávid Somfai Kara.

Until he was 12 years old, Satuk lived the life of the infidels (Arabic kāfir). One day he went to hunt, and while he was hunting he came to the Valley of Baku (probably the same as Jay Ata) near Artush. He noticed that some well-dressed foreigners were sitting on the grass. The holy Sultan went nearer to the foreigners.

“I have never seen such men in our city, what kind of foreigners are they?” he asked, puzzled.

“Let us go and see them,” he said, and approached them. These foreigners were Al-Naṣr Sāmānī and his companions. Abū al-Naṣr Khodja noticed that horsemen were approaching. When they got closer he recognized Satuk Bughra Khan, the future ġāzī14 about whom he had read in the ḥādiḥ (sacred text).

“Allah has been merciful, I have found the one I was searching for,” he thought joyfully, and he turned to his servants:

“Oh Lord of the World and Judgment Day (Allāh), here comes the one I was waiting for. I believe he is the reason that I came to this land. Servants, open the luggage!” he said, and then they all started to pray. After the prayer they sat down in the same place. The holy Sultan watched these things on horseback and was amazed.

12 The sedentary Turkic population of East Turkistan did not use the term Uighur, their neighbours called them Taranči (from Oirat-Mongolian täräänči ‘peasant’) or Sart ‘sedentary’. They called themselves the People of the Seven Cities (in Uighur yättä šähärlik). In English their language used to be called Eastern Turki. They began to use the term Uighur after 1930s because their intelligentsia decided to do so at a conference.

13 See Shaw 1875, Appendix, 3–5.

14 The ghāzī is a sacred warrior who fights for the spread of Islam, see Mélikoff 1965.
“What strange people these are. They do not fear us. What is more, they opened up their luggage. They even put their heads on the ground.”

The Sultan approached to within seven paces of the holy Khodja. He descended from his horse and greeted the Khodja, who respectfully invited him into his camp. The Khodja placed two expensive textiles in front of the Sultan.

The Sultan found the Khodja very appealing. Once in a dream of his the holy spirit of the Khidhr had appeared and informed him that one day a man would come who would convert him to the true faith. “He might be the one” thought the Sultan, and asked him his name. The Khodja answered: “My name is Abū al-Naṣr Sāmānī.”

The Sultan was happy because he realized that the holy Khidhr spirit had inspired this man’s coming to him.

“Father, ask anything and I will do it. But explain to me one thing. When we were approaching on horseback you opened up your luggage. Were not you afraid that we would rob you? Why did you do this?” he asked. The Khodja said:

“Oh, my prince, this world is transitory. Everyone passes away. Our money and wealth cannot save us. On the contrary, it is money and wealth that lead people to hell. Nobody can avoid the Last Day (Arabic ākhirat). But the true faith prepares you for the Last Day,” he answered. The Sultan became frightened.

“Oh Khodja, you speak about the true faith. I want to believe in the true faith, what shall I do?” he said, and the Khodja answered:

“Speak the words of the proclamation (Arabic kalimat ul-šāhida) Lā ilāha illā’llāh, Muḥammad rasūlu’llāh (There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the apostle of Allah).”

“Who is Mohammed?” asked the Sultan. The Khodja said:

“Mohammed is Allah’s best friend. The Great God offered the world and Judgment Day to Mohammed. At that Judgment (Arabic qiymat) the sins of the people of the true faith will be forgiven and they will go to heaven. Mohammed’s faith is true, and his law (Arabic šarṭ’at) is right. It is not like that of other prophets, their laws are false. One who takes the path of Mohammed will reach his goal.” He told him about Mohammed, and the Sultan said to the Khodja:

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15 The meaning of the Arabic word al-khodir or khidr is ‘green’. Khidhr is a mythological figure that is connected with life and vegetation. In Central Asia it is good spirit which appears in the form of an old man and gives people blessings and disappears, see Wensinck 1990.
“Oh, my teacher, is there anything else important besides the proclamation of the faith? Tell me, I will learn it and I will be a good Muslim.”

As we have seen, the legend of the Kirghiz nomads is quite similar to the written historical legend. It is difficult to see the process whereby the written legend spread among the illiterate nomads. But this phenomenon illustrates well the formation of syncretic religion. The nomads legitimized their cult of nature by recourse to the ancient Muslim legend of the Jay Ata Valley. So the owner spirits (Kirghiz ee) of the sacred rocks, springs and trees became the spirits of Muslim saints (Kirghiz šeyit).

Conversation before the Ritual

After our visit to the valley a sheep was sacrificed to the spirits. Then our host made delicious kebab from its meat and we said goodbye to the sacred canyon. We reached the Kirghiz village of Tegirmeti in the afternoon, where the older men of the village (ak sakal ‘white-bearded’) received us. A nomad felt yurt (boz üy) was put up in our honour on the edge of the village and we were treated with real nomadic hospitality. Later they introduced us to Abdikadır bakši, with whom we had a long conversation about how he became a shaman.

Abdikadır’s shamanic illness started when he was only 11 years old. Once he noticed that a grey ram (kök kočkor) joined the flock of sheep he was shepherding. Nobody could see the ram apart from him, so he was afraid to mention it to others. Later he suffered from a lack of appetite and fell ill a few times. Then, when he turned 15, the ram changed into a human being. It was the spirit of a Muslim saint, who challenged the boy to become a shaman. These were the boy’s hallucinations which he experienced in a state of unconsciousness. When he was 19, the spirit ordered him to heal a dying boy. The young bakši managed to heal the
boy, who was already considered dead. He started to heal officially at the age of 25. After that he obtained other helping spirits (*peri*),

18 but his main helping spirit remained the grey ram. Abdikadir, 59 years old when we met him, talked about this during our interview with him.

I was 11 years old when this thing happened. In those days I had to look after the sheep—I was a shepherd. Once I drove the sheep out of the village and reached the foot of a mountain. Before I reached the pasture I heard a lamb bleating. “What kind of lamb is that?” I asked myself, looking around. But I could not see the lamb. Then suddenly I noticed a young ram among the sheep. But it was not one of our rams. I had never seen that ram before, I thought. As I was wondering the ram got separated from the sheep. I drove the sheep further, and as I was reaching the pasture three ewes turned back to the village. I shouted at them but they would not listen. I ran to the sheep, yelling, and started to curse them too. Then the ram spoke with a human voice: “Stop it!” I was a little boy, so I was frightened. I could not even speak any more. After hearing the ram’s voice I became silent and drove the sheep to the pasture. I only returned home in the evening. The ram stayed with the sheep even though I drove them inside the corral. I thought that my parents would see the new ram, but they did not even notice. During supper I could not eat at all, I had no appetite.

I was so frightened that I did not want to talk, I just sat there. My mother poured some tea into my cup, but I could not drink it either. She asked me anxiously: “What happened to you, my son?” “Nothing.” I answered briefly. Then my mother went out to take care of the lambs. When she had finished we went to sleep. In the morning they counted the sheep and I realized that they could not see the ram.

This ram followed me for three years, grazing among the sheep. Nobody knew about this and I did not tell them all those years. Four years passed, and I turned fifteen years old. That time the ram appeared to me as a human being. Once I was on my way to the pasture. I noticed that six men were standing in the fields. They were about to pray as I approached them. I went there to pray with them but suddenly I lost consciousness. I had no idea what happened

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18 The helping spirits of the *bakši* are a male Bactrian camel (*buura*) and a male Dromedary camel (*nar*), but he invokes the spirits (*arbak*) of Muslim saints to the ritual and the owner-spirits of the *mazars* (Kirghiz *mazar eesi*) from the Jay Ata Valley, see Baialieva 1992: 138, Abramzon 1971: 317 and Seyfullin 1964: 160.
to me. I simply fell down beside these men. Then I felt that I was walking
towards the mountains. In one place I saw lots of eggs lying on the ground.
One of the eggs in the middle was standing upright. First I was afraid to touch
it. But then I said “Bismilla” (in the name of God) and grabbed it. I took the
egg and cracked its shell. There was some strange liquid inside. I sipped it and
went further to the mountains. I left the sheep far behind.

Then I noticed a few wild sheep (arkar) tied to each other. I have encountered
all kinds of strange things, the wild sheep turned into ladies. I only returned
home after sunset and was full of fear. I tried to tell my family what had hap-
pened, but I did not know how to start. So I quickly lay down to sleep. Next day
I drove the sheep out again. In the pasture I met an old man with a white beard. I
think I had seen him before. He gave me a big piece of flat bread (nan). I tasted
it and began to see the spirits. This is how it all happened.

Then many days passed and I was not ill any more. After I turned seventeen
I noticed that if I touched an ill person he soon became well. I touched quite a
few people in the village, but only secretly, not telling them why. Then when
I turned 19 one of the sons of my aunt became very ill. I was attending sheep
near the village when suddenly I heard somebody’s voice: “Hurry to the vil-
lage, Kurban’s son is dying. When you get there they will already be starting to
remove his clothes.” Then he taught me a prayer (sürö, from Arabic sūra) and
told me to say this prayer next to the boy. The boy would be healed through that.
I memorized the prayer and set off. When I reached their house I entered imme-
diately. I saw that three women were taking the boy’s clothes off. They thought
that he was dead already. Having entered I started to say the prayer. I took the
boy into my hands, finished my prayer and blew on him. Something ran out of
his body. That is how everything started; gradually I started to heal people. I
became an official healer in 1970 and I have been healing ever since.

About a Kirghiz Healing Ritual

The ritual began in a felt yurt¹⁹ which served solely as a healing place for
the shaman. The trance of the bakši is expressed by the verb oyno-, mean-
ing ‘to play’. A Kirghiz bakši does not use any musical instrument (like
the tüngür ‘drum’ among the Altay-kizhi or the kobiz ‘fiddle’ among the

¹⁹ Kirghiz boz iiy ‘grey house’ is the native term for yurt among the nomads.
Kazaks) or any other devices to fall into trance.\textsuperscript{20} This bakšï had only a short riding whip (kamčï) in his hand to chase away the demons from the sick. The bakšï was accompanied by about seven helpers (šakirt, from Persian šāgird), male and female, each with a different role in assisting him. During the ritual, the bakšï and his helpers lined up in the felt yurt. One of the helpers sitting at the main place (töür) of the yurt, opposite the entrance, took four candles in his hands (šam, from Arabic šam’), which were used to invoke the helping spirits. The shaman could see these spirits (peri, from Persian parī) by the light of the candles.

These malicious helping spirits (peri) can harm people but they can also help the bakšï to fight the demons (jin, from Arabic djinn), who, according to their beliefs, are the different forms of the devil (šaytan, from Arabic šaiṭān). These jin demons cause illnesses when they enter into a person’s body (jin baskan, “the jin attacked him”). Likewise the peri spirits also enter into the shaman’s body, which multiplies his strength. In that case with the help of Allah and the good spirits (arbak) he can overcome the demons and illnesses.

Besides the patients and the helpers, some curious villagers also came into the yurt—mainly women, who have a stronger belief in magical healing. At the beginning of the ritual the shaman warned participants that the impure ones (aram, from Arabic ḥarām) should leave. A drunken person or women with menses are considered impure, and the helping spirits of the shaman might attack them. The shaman also warned that once the ritual had started nobody should enter or leave the yurt. Four ill young people came to the shaman for help, two men and two women. The two young men had an alcohol problem. One of the women was suffering from nightmares and the other fainted repeatedly.

At the center of the yurt (kolomto), where a fire had been built, a big stake was driven into the ground and fastened to the smoke ring (tündük) at the top of the yurt. This stake with the rope was called tuu ‘flag’, and it was the shaman’s ritual “flag” or “tree.”\textsuperscript{21} At the very beginning of the ritual the shaman said a prayer in Arabic from the Koran (pl. 6) and participants answered with oomiin (amen); then, according to the Muslim custom, they stroked their faces with their hands. The shaman gazed at the candles for a while (pl. 7a) before starting to sing his shamanic song.

\textsuperscript{20} These devices are sometimes called ‘hand ongon or eeren’ in the scholarly literature (Mongolian onγon, Tuva eeren is an ‘idol of a spirit’); see Birtalan 2001: 1062.

\textsuperscript{21} See Malov 1918: 4 and Basilov 1992: 87.
In the first part of the song he invoked five ancestor spirits (arbak) and two helping spirits that chase away the demons (peri), who appeared in the form of two male camels (buura and nar). He also asked the owner spirits (mazar eesi) of mazar sites from the Jay Ata Valley to assist him during the ritual. This is his song and its translation:

Suu ay bašï Sulayman, 22
Suu ayagï ey Türkistan.
Ey, Beš-toruk, Beš-toruk atam, oluya,
Özündön, özündön medet, tileymin.
Kazan bir, Kazan bir, bu dagï oluya,
Özündön, özündön medet tileymin.
Tešik-taš, Tešik-taš atam, oluyam,
Özündön, özündön medet tileymin.
Teŋge-tar go atam,
Özündön, özündön medet tileymin.
Kïyla ey, kara nar ey,
Ey, jetip bir, jetip keldi jiïyinga.
Ayrï bir, ayrï örköč ak buura,
Insandar, azïr bir tüškön jiïyinga.
Jay atam da, taš bagïm,
Mïnakey čak eken kolumda ey.
Bir kara bir kara kaška at mingen,
Čaap keldi ey-ey.

The source of the river is (Mount) Sulayman, 23
The end of the river is (the town of) Turkistan. 24

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22 This same beginning can be found in a Kazak shamanic song, see Divaev 1899: 308.
23 The Mount of Sulayman (from Arabic Sulaimān) is situated near the ancient city of Osh in the Ferhana Valley, Kirghizstan, and it is a holy pilgrimage site. The founder of the Great Moghul Dynasty, Bābur (a Turk from the Ferghana Valley) built here a house of prayer (Arabic hujra) around 1500. The springs of Syr-Darya begin in this area, so the text probably mentions that great river.
24 Turkistan (from Persian Turkistān) is the name of the Central Asian territory inhabited by Turkic peoples. Near the ruins of Yasï, an ancient city north of the Syr-Darya, Temir Emir (Tamerlane) founded a small town and named it Turkistan (Kazak Türkistan). He built a madrasa (religious school) in the town after he learned in the 1390s that the famous Sufi philosopher Aḥmad Yasawī had been buried there.
Besh-toruk, Besh-toruk, my ancestor, my saint,
I ask assistance from you.
Oh, my Kazan, Kazan, he is a saint too,
I ask assistance from you.
Teshik-tash, Teshik-tash my ancestor, my saint,
I ask assistance from you.
Tenge-tar Father,
I ask assistance from you.
Big black male camel with one hump,
He arrived at the ritual.
My white male camel with two humps,
Oh my friends, he descended to the ritual.
My Jay Ata, my dear rocks,
I feel them in my hands.
The one who rides a black bald horse,
He has galloped here.

Under the influence of the song the shaman started to fall into a trance. Then suddenly he grabbed the rope (tuu) that was tied to the smoke ring (tündük). The yurt appears to be a symbol of the world in the belief of the Kirghiz, just as among other nomads (Birtalan 2001: 1062). The house is the Middle World (bu düynö), where people live. Under the yurt lies the Lower World (o düynö) or the realm of the dead. The smoke ring symbolizes the Upper World, where divine creatures can be encountered. The stake by the fireplace is a symbolic “shaman tree” (bay terek), up which the shaman can climb to heaven (beyiš).

The shaman, with a whip in his hand, started to walk around the stake and the rope and his helpers followed him. Later the patients were also taken into the circle and the bakši began to hit them symbolically (pl. 7b). He began to sing louder and louder and circled around the rope, grabbing it fitfully. He then fell into a trance and ran round and round, hitting the patients with his whip. He grabbed the shoulders of one of the participants and pushed him around at a crazy pace. Then he began to rattle like a male camel and moved his head back and forth. Two of his helpers, a young man and a middle-aged woman, also fell into a milder trance, but they did not sing, just drove the patients around hitting them with their whips.
Later the raving shaman started to sing a song to his main helping spirit, the grey ram, in a higher tone, calling on him for help as well (pl. 8a). During the most explosive phases the shaman “knocked” the two boys and then the two girls to the ground and began to trample on them (pls. 8b, 9). They bore it silently, and when the shaman released them they continued to circle around obediently.

Minakey jakin bir jerden keldi,
Kečeeki jaŋgïz müyüz kök kočkor,
Kök kočkor, sen keldin go yüŋö.
Minakey ker-booruja saygilayt,
Minakey Kekiliš ubake kelgileyt.

From a close place,
My former one-horned grey ram,
Grey ram, you came to your yurt.
Lo, your feel stinger in your side,
The Kekiliš saint has arrived.

Suddenly the shaman stepped on the top of the stake and shouted as if he was quarrelling with the spirits. Soon he climbed up to the smoke ring of the yurt by the rope with the aid of his helpers. For a while he stood on the shoulders of a helper, grasping the edge of the smoke ring (pls. 10, 11a). By hooking his legs onto the smoke ring of the yurt he hung there upside down (pl. 11b). This act is a classical example of the shaman’s symbolic trip to the Upper World and is rarely observed nowadays (Diószegi 1974: 641). After he climbed back down (pl. 12), he grabbed new patients into the circle. At one point the bübü (from Persian bībū), a female helper of the shaman, lost consciousness and started to twitch on the floor. When the shaman noticed the unconscious lady he trampled and blew on her and then hit her with his whip.

Later one of the male helpers climbed through the smoke ring of the yurt and stood on it screaming. The shaman kept rattling like an angry male camel and circled around the stake. A patient tried to leave, but the shaman dragged him back into the yurt. Meanwhile the stake broke loose from the ground a couple of times. Finally, they hammered the stake back in with a hoe, but the ritual was never interrupted.
Abdükkadır bakši called a young girl out from the spectators because he noticed that a jin demon was about to attack her. He took her around the stake and hit her gently with the whip, but stronger intervention was not needed.

Then another purifying part of the ritual commenced. The shaman’s helpers brought a cup of water and started to walk beside the circling shaman, who was pushing a patient in front of him. He took a big sip from the cup and blew water over the patient’s head and face. This blowing (üšküruü) is a well-known method of healing in Central Asia (Somfai 2006: 118). The shaman hit the ill people with his kamči and trampled them. Having done so, he drove the demons out of their body with the help of his spirits (peri). Now it was time to “blow them away.” The helpers also conducted such purification by blowing but without water.

Some old people in Kirghizstan still remember a similar shamanic ritual of dancing and climbing up to the smoke ring of the yurt. This raving dance of trance is called talma biy ‘faint dance’ (talma means ‘faint’ or ‘epilepsy’). The ritual disappeared after the repression of the Stalin era, along with the bakši mediators who practised it.

The End of the Ritual

As the ritual came to a close the bakši sat down next to the rope while his helpers aided him. The man at the main place (töőr) of the yurt had been holding the candles and murmuring prayers throughout the ritual. Now he knelt next to the shaman and gave him the candles. The bakši put the burning candles one by one into his mouth so that the helping spirits (peri) inside his body would leave through it. When he was sure that the spirit had left his body he put out the candle. However, it seems that one of the spirits was unwilling to leave his body and wanted to make him fall into a trance again—as shown by the fact that at one point he started to twitch and rattle. He put the candle back into his mouth for a second time and the spirit decided to leave (pl. 13). Meanwhile his hands were seized with a cramp, so one of the helpers massaged them.

25 Data collected by Dávid Somfai Kara in 2002 in the village of Döñ-Aliş, Kočkor County, Narîn Province, Kirghizstan.

26 See Baialieva 1972: 122.
Then the shaman stopped by one side of the yurt, and his helpers rolled up the felt wrapping (ütük) on the yurt’s roof bars (uuk). They said farewell to the spirits and all the people present said a prayer together to Allah. The shaman scolded the bübü who had lost consciousness because she had let the spirits possess her body fully. Then he turned to the participants and told them that everything they had seen was the might of Allah (Arabic qudrat). He said that he himself was a sinful mortal man, and the spirits who had chosen him helped so that with Allah’s grace he could overcome the evil powers. He warned them not to live a sinful life and to respect Allah and the spirits of the ancestors. The shaman remained seated for a few minutes before suddenly spreading his arms in a Muslim prayer and stroking his face, which signalled the end of the ritual. The ritual ended as it had started as they asked for the blessing of Allah on a totally pre-Islamic ritual. The whole ceremony had lasted for about fifty minutes.

Conclusions

We can conclude that there is a strong link between the mazars and Kirghiz shamanism. The mazar is a syncretic phenomenon of popular Islam among the nomads of Central Asia. Their former animistic cult of nature was transformed into one of visiting these holy sites, where the spirits of ancestors and Muslim saints hide. So the nomads do not worship nature (stones, trees, springs, mountains) any more but turn to the spirits (arbak) of the mazars, who can mediate their wishes to Allah. The spirits of the mazars can be invoked by the shamans, as we have seen in Abdïkadïr’s song. They assist the bakšï during his healing ritual, along with other helping spirits. Sacred places linked to some Muslim saints, martyrs or champions of Islam provide good legitimation for the shamans, who have to communicate with demons and other evil forces. This is also reflected in their shamanic songs. Furthermore, Abdïkadïr mentioned two holy sites (Mount Sulayman and the town of Turkistan) and invoked the spirits of Jay Ata. Thus, the valleys of the mazars are not only suitable sites for the nomads to perform sacrifices and worship, but the activity of shamans also centers on these places and their spirits.
A Musical Analysis of the Kirghiz Shaman’s Song

Ordinary people usually sing and rarely recite in prose. The same is true of minstrels or shamans, who use the power of music to get in touch with higher powers and, what is sometimes equally important, to hold the attention of their audience. It is beyond question that in general we should study not only the text and the music separately but the relation between them as well.

In the ritual described here, Abdîkadîr Kirghiz bakşï repeats a single slightly varied musical line again and again. As the music does not change much during the ceremony, we can leave the relation between the music and the healing process out of consideration; it is sufficient to refer to a few musical sections to paint a quite satisfactory picture of the whole musical process (Example 1). At the same time we study the melody in more detail because it is not baseless to presume that shamanic songs belong to the older layer of music. As the shamans of different areas and peoples often have different repertoires, we might ask if these songs serve exclusively mystic goals or whether they have connections to the secular repertoire as well.

Let us have a closer look at the melody of the healing ceremony. After a small C–F–C “mound” the melodic line ascends to F, where it has a rest before descending to C through D. This is a characteristic phenomenon: the beginning of the line leaps up from G to C and the end of the line leaps down from C to G. Similar leaps of a fourth are not rare in pentatonic folk music, and this pattern occurs in the performance of the famous Kirghiz Manas epos as well.27 In the pentatonic layers of Hungarian folk music we usually hear it at the end of the musical lines.28 This musical phenomenon occurs in non-pentatonic folk music as well; as examples I might mention the well-known French Christmas song

27 Similar melodies can be found in my unpublished material collected from a manasçï named Jumabay-uulu İrîsbek in Darkhan village, Kirghizstan.
28 We see examples of C–G leaps and of the interchangeability of these notes in Vargyas (2005: 238, Examples 181f–g–h and a1).
Eveille-toi bergère, or several English songs with a domed structure that are similar to the so-called “new style” Hungarian melodies.29

The most surprising thing, however, is that the melody we are examining is identical to the most typical form of the Kirghiz lament košok, as my recordings of 2002 and 2004 made in Narïn, İsïk Köl and Talas demonstrate.30 Not only does the scheme of the melodic line seem identical, but the fourths at the beginning and end of the sections and the rendering of the song does too. The only minor difference is that here the singer starts with a small mound, while the melodic line of the most typical laments does not descend to C in the middle of the sections—and especially it does not have a rest there.31 As we see in Example 1a, the uncertain intonation of the third degree (E–Es) is frequent in Kirghiz laments; this creates ambiguity between major and minor modes—a phenomenon that occurs in the folk music of many different people of the world. And another characteristic phenomenon: the singer sings the longest notes on the meaningless syllable ey. Though the first note of the laments is usually sung on the first syllable of a meaningful word, the culminating point in the middle of the sections and the last note are usually sung on the same ey syllable.32

I examined the relation between the laments of several Turkic people and it turned out that the Kirghiz lament—which includes the melody examined here—is not similar to the laments of the Karachays, Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvash, Mongolian and Aday Kazaks, Anatolian and Bulgarian Turks or that of the Hungarians.33

29 Songs with a domed structure have low-lying first and closing sections and higher middle sections. A more special structure is typical of the melodies of the Hungarian “new style,” where the middle sections are five tones higher than the first or last (see Vargyas 2005: 0330, 0339a, 0334). The same structure can be seen in many English folksongs (Lloyd 1967: 80). At the end of the Hungarian and English melodies we often see the C–G closing formula.

30 The Kirghiz lament (e.g. Diushaliev and Luzanova 1999: #8) has a rare form that is identical to the small form of the Hungarian lament.

31 At the same time, in some sections of the present lament we see this mound-shaped initial.

32 The use of important notes of the melody on meaningless syllables is not exceptional; see the Anatolian uzun hava melodies (Sipos 1994: ##174, 175, 180, 190, etc.).

In Example 1a we see the melody in question and beneath it a Kirghiz lament (Example 1b). The significant similarity of the two melodies must be evident even for those who cannot read a score. But why did the shaman sing a lament melody during the ceremony? In many cultures the melody of the laments is similar to the farewell songs of brides, which is understandable because the bride—at least symbolically—dies to her parents when she leaves their house. Anyhow, in the Kirghiz culture the examined musical form has a strong connection with

Example 1. (a) Kirghiz shamanic song, (b) Kirghiz lament (Sipos Kirghiz collection: At-Başı 9–36).

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34 In some areas, e.g. in Anatolia, lullabies are also similar to laments, a phenomenon that is more difficult to explain.
the deeper layers of the soul, which can explain why the shaman used this melody to such effect in Kirghiz culture to reach a state of trance and to maintain his connection with the other world.  

References


35 At the same time shamans often sing simple twin-bar melodies built up from motifs, e.g. Le Coq (1911: 5051) from East Turkestan or Birtalan and Sipos (2004) from Mongolia.


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The Shaman(ess) – the Performer. Examples of the Activities and Life Stories of Darkhad Mongolian Shamanses

ÁGNESS BIRTALAN

In examining the shamanic ritual texts of the Darkhads and Oirads, the author recorded several life stories and numerous other data concerning the shamans’ and shamanesses’ ritual and beyond ritual activities. These valuable data help us to investigate the texts and to understand them in the ritual context. During her fieldwork an enquiry pattern emerged from the materials that can serve to establish a multilateral approach to both shamanic activities and the texts themselves. The model for presenting the shamanic activities comprises among other things the personal data, the masters, the ritual objects, the shamans’ taboos, and the interaction between the shaman and his human and spirit community. The main areas of the activity of five shamanesses will be introduced according to the established enquiry pattern.

The present article is part of a fieldwork-based study devoted to the correlation between the ritual text and the ritual performer in Darkhad Mongolian shamanism. Working with shamanesses and shamans in Northern and Western Mongolia, the author established a system of investigation on the main points of the activity and the life story of shamans/shamanesses. This short survey does not aim to present the life stories in detail (they will be published as a separate chapter of a monograph entitled Darkhad Shamanic Texts. Text – Performer – Communication), but to introduce an approach to analysis of the multilateral correlation between the performer and text of shamanic rituals. The author and her colleagues recorded several interviews with

1 The author’s fieldwork is supported by the Hungarian Scientific Foundation (OTKA 62501).
the shaman(ess)-performers of various rituals and also with members of their families and larger community or district (in Khalkha sum).

In the following, the analytic system and its implementation will be introduced on the basis of fieldwork materials. Some parts of the interviews with the shamans and shamanesses have already been published by the author in the context of particular rituals: records of the Western Mongolian Bayad shaman Kürlää (Birtalan 2001b: 119–142), his mother, Shamaness Čuluun (Birtalan 1996: 85–105), and the Darkhad shamaness Balǰir (Birtalan 1992: 1–10). Also, the main events of the life story of the Darkhad shamaness Bayar are summed up in an article analysing a ritual text recorded from her in situ (Birtalan et al. 2004: 25–62). Further, the events of Shamaness Xüüxenǰii’s life are touched on in an article about a Dayan Deerx text recorded from the shamaness (Birtalan 2005: 21–32).

Collecting data about the shaman(ess)’s² lives required several methods. First of all we tried to conduct long interviews with them. Through such interviews, however, one cannot answer all the questions concerning their lives for several reasons: the shamaness grows tired, she has a great many clients and it is difficult to draw her away from her tasks for too long. There were topics and questions that the shamans hesitated to respond to or did not answer at all. This is why the investigation pattern of the activity and life stories of shamanesses below are not wholly balanced: some points concerning their lives are introduced with sufficient information, some are not for lack of sufficient data. But most of the interviewed shamanesses did not refuse to talk about themselves; they only evaded questions concerning their taboo topics. Furthermore, we had talks with the shamanesses’ families and also with members of their larger communities, i.e. local people living in their environment, close and distant neighbours in the district. For example, since Shamaness Bayar did not wish to talk about herself, we gleaned materials about her from her daughter’s, husband’s and ritual helper’s narratives. Attempting to gather more exact information about a shamans’ life, we returned to certain questions from time to time, even during the next visit several years later. When the shamanesses had no clients and were surrounded with their family members, we

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² Henceforth, I tend to use the term ‘shamaness’, as the text-relevant investigation is based on the Darkhad shamaness’s activity.
could repeat certain questions about their lives with more success. This free talk with the shamanesses’ families was always very fruitful. Not only can one become acquainted with more details of the rituals and ritual texts, but one can also obtain information about the shamanesses themselves. Sometimes the family members were more prepared to talk about their famous relatives. In the case of the Shamanesses Balǰir and Bayar, their husbands informed us of important details about their wives (in their wives’ presence).

When it was impossible to use the tape recorder (the shamans did not allow any kind of recording except notetaking), we put down data in a field diary. Sometimes we just had to keep in mind what we had heard because even the diaries were not within reach (e.g. when we joined in preparing food or some other chore tied to livestock).

As regards Shamanesses Balǰir and Bayar, there are also other materials already published besides our records. The two Darkhad shamanesses came to the fore through studies by Pürew and Dulam. We have also used their materials to complete our records while noting the differences, if any, in the two sets of data. There are also other interviews among our field records which we will be publishing in another context in the future.3

Before introducing the shamanesses’ activity in the analysis pattern, I will explain the database model around which the recorded information is clustered. The main features of a shamanesses’ life that can expeditiously demonstrate the contexts of the Mongolian shamans’ activity are the following:

(1) Personal particulars of the shaman(ess): name(s), year of birth, particulars of close relatives, clan affiliation, and place of domicile.
(2) Place of the shaman(ess) in the emic shamanic typology: black, yellow, white, hereditary or non-hereditary shaman.
(3) Shamanic ancestry: matrilineal and patrilineal ancestors, if any.
(4) The procedure of becoming a shaman.
(5) Shaman masters.

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3 The entire life stories of Western Mongolian “yellow shamans” are planned for publication in the context of possibilities for the survival of shamanism in a strongly Buddhicised area. The full interviews with Shamanesses Amarǰargal and Čuluun and Shaman Kürlää will be included in a study devoted to the activity of Western Mongolian yellow shamans. Here only the Bayad Amarǰargal’s activity is quoted, as her background and ritual texts are relevant to our topic.
(6) The main ongons, or ‘protector spirits’.
(7) Rituals, requisites, creed.
(8) Taboos to be observed by the shaman.
(9) Judgement of the family, of the local or larger community about
the shaman(ess)’s activity and contacts with other shamans.

This model could certainly be completed with further points accord-
ing to the results of further field research.

Before embarking on the particular features of the shamanesses’
activity, the terminology used in connection with them must be clari-
fied. There are several emic terms in Mongolian languages and dialects
to denote male and female shamans. Here, only the contemporary use
of the terms will be discussed, without touching on their historical
aspects. For a male shaman there are two terms in recent Khalkha and
Darkhad language usage: böö (Mongolian böge) and jairan, jaarin
(Mongolian jayirang, jayarin). In my experience, both are also used
for female shamans, though only rarely; udgan (Mongolian idugan,
Buriad odigon) only means shamaness.\(^4\) The use, the semantic field
and the context of these terms will be analysed in the future on the
basis of the rich material from the interviews. An important emic dis-
tinction among Mongolian shamans is indicated with colour designa-
tions. Shamans who follow the traditional faith affected slightly, if at
all, by Buddhism are called xar jügiin böö ‘black shaman, shaman of the black creed (lit. direction)’, and shamans whose ritu-
als are significantly Buddhicised are called šar jügiin böö ‘yellow shaman, shaman of the yellow creed (lit. direction)’.\(^5\)
There are also white shamans (cagaan böö, cagaan jügiin böö) among
Mongolian ethnic groups, but they did not appear in our material.\(^6\) The
distinction between black and yellow shamanism is clearly reflected in
the rituals and ritual texts: the shamanic texts are traditionally catego-

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\(^4\) In the Dahur language, yadagan, a derivative of idugan, is used for both sexes.

\(^5\) Although there are some studies touching on the problem of Buddhicised and
non-Buddhicised shamans (Rinchen 1984: 19–24), a new interpretation of the prob-
lem is necessary. The latest views on this issue are included in essays published in an
encyclopedia on shamanism (see Shimamura 2004: 649–652 and Kharitonova 2004:
536–539); Pürew (1999: 19–29, 54–61) also discussed the matter.

\(^6\) An entire monograph is devoted to the problem of the historical aspects of white
The shamans also differentiate themselves based on whether they have shaman ancestors, i.e. whether they are hereditary shamans (udmiin böö) or non-hereditary shamans (udamgii böö) who are possessed by master spirits (lus sawdag xöllösön böö). All the shamans interviewed with whom we had the opportunity to work were hereditary shamans.

The main rituals of the shamans carried out for any purpose (the rituals we witnessed were usually compound) are categorised by shamans as follows:

1. **Yawgan** or **yawganaar böölöx** (shamanise on foot), i.e. day rituals without wearing the shaman garment or using the drum, but using the Jew’s harp.

2. **Xuyaglaǰ böölöx** (shamanise with the “armour” [the garment] on), i.e. night rituals with shaman garment and drum.9

Below, five short activity models will be demonstrated, four of Darkhad shamanesses of different ages and one of a Western Mongolian shamaness whose text repertoire is also relevant to our topic.

Shamaness Tuwaanii Balǰir10

(1) Tuwaanii11 (pronounced by herself and by other Darkhad informants as Tuwaanaa or Tuwaanää) Balǰir (Fig. 1, her full name is Čerenbalǰir) was very weak and ill (Darkhad **oraalgan**) after her birth and was given a taboo name, Xurmaš yangircag (Wretched Pack-saddle).12 She was born at the Baruun Agar (Western Agar) River in 1913

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8 According to Pürew (2003: 104), these shamans are quite powerful and able to “see” the master spirits—a rare ability even among the shamans.
9 Besides this general typology, there are various types of rituals according to their purpose, e.g. purifying rituals, blessing rituals, healing rituals etc.
11 In the entries, the Khalkha forms of the names will be quoted; in some cases the pronounced Darkhad forms are also provided.
12 The “saddle” is an invective used for women (personal communication, J. Coloo, 2004).
(the year of the tiger), and died in 2003. When she was born, a lama told her parents that the girl would be very lucky and blessed and asked them not to let her be adopted by others. The camps of her family are in the Bayandsürkh district (Bayanjürx sum). She belonged to the Black Darkhads (Xar Darxad), to the larger family of Taitan Mönkh (Darkhad Täätan Mönx) teexen. Her father’s name was Mederǰäägiin Tuwaan (a Darkhad form), which seems to refer to the Turkic-speaking Tuwas in South Siberia, her mother belonged to the Dalai Nyamain (Balǰir also said: Dalaa Nimaan) teexen. She lived with her husband S. Čoisüren and two daughters, as well as her daughters’ families.

(2) She was a hereditary black shaman. However, she was attracted to Buddhism in her youth. As the lama who had given her a name ascertained, she was a blessed person and had a close connection to the goddess Lhamo, a “protector of the Buddhist Faith” (Sanskrit dharmapāla).

(3) There have been several shamans and shamanesses in her family.

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13 Balǰir said quite a lot about her birth. She was born during the new year ceremonies, between the sending off of the old year and the greeting of the new. That is why she was considered to be two years old when she was two days old. “I was born of my mother at [. . . .] I was born on the last day of the year (caγaan saraan bütüüind). At the end of the year. [When people] meet each other (jolgolt keex). I was born in the morning of the new year. Then [. . . .] came the first day of the new year, I spent one night and [the next year was already the year of the] hare. I was born on the first day of the new year (sic!), spent one night and became two years old. I spent one night on the last day of the year, and became two years old on the first day. I was born in the morning of the last day of the year, spent one night and it was the time for meeting (jolgaxxa), wasn’t it?” For the Mongolian text and the context of this fragment, cf. Interview with shamaness Balǰir 2.

14 “When I was a baby, and alive just three days, I was given a name. [But do not call her by the name] Cerenbalǰir said [the lama]! Later [offer her] to the clergy, to [god] Qormusda [said the lama]. I was called Wretched Pack-saddle, I was very sick at that time. Do not give her to another family! She is a very blessed person, said [the lama]. It is not possible to let her be adopted, [he] said. She was born on the last day of the year; she is a hand limb of Lhamo Buddha, [he] said. What kind of Buddha Lhamo Buddha is, I do not know.” Interview with Shamaness Balǰir 2.

15 108 households (örx) in a clan form a teexen (Dulam 1992: 8). The Black Darkhads traditionally have seven teexens.
Chart 1.
Baljir’s close shaman relatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s side</th>
<th>Mother’s side</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buural <em>udgan</em> (Baljir’s aunt)</td>
<td>(Baljir’s Grandmother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šar awgai (Baljir’s aunt)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yünden <em>udgan</em> (Baljir’s aunt)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Čagtagaa <em>jairan</em>, Baljir’s elder brother</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(4) In her youth, she was a devout follower of Buddhism and prayed to White Tārā (Cagaan Darex). Dulam added that she prayed 21 times a day and liked to recite mantras (*maan’*).\(^{17}\) She explained to us that there had been nothing unusual in her life until she was 31, except that she could not remain in the same marriage for long. Dulam wrote that Baljir’s first encounter with the *ongons* took place when she was 19 years old. She behaved furiously, acted deviantly (rent her clothes, rode her horse madly), and started to envision human-like figures. She was strongly opposed to becoming a shamaness; she would hate putting on “such an impure thing as the shaman’s cloak.”\(^{18}\) She refused to become a shamaness until she was 31, when she fell very ill\(^ {19}\) and lost everything. To quote her, she became a *xünii xagas* (half man). She said that it was then that she had accepted the *ongons’* call. Baljir also explained to us how difficult it was for her parents to scrape together the gifts for her master shaman.\(^ {20}\)

\(^{16}\) No name was mentioned.

\(^{17}\) This data is recorded by Dulam (1992: 13). She supposedly recited a Sitatārā *dhāraṇī*, the number of times recited is common for the Buddhist mantras. The yellow shamaness Čuluun uses Tāra-*dhāraṇīs* for healing, reciting it seven times or a multiple of seven (21 times).

\(^{18}\) “*Tiim muuxai jüülig edlexgüi, tolgoi deeree šuuvuunii öd gargaxgüi, xoyor möröndöö šuuvuunii öd jüüxgüi.* “I will not use such an impure thing, I will not put a feather on my head, and I will not put a feather on my shoulders.” (Dulam 1992: 13)

\(^{19}\) “I was full of wounds, I was very tired, [I got] injections [but they] did not heal, the medicines did not heal [me], I was given Mongolian medicine by the doctors; [but I was told] you are a person to shamanise; [now I] became a half man and shamanised. [. . .] I have not been healed by injection, I have not been healed even by medicine, only by shamanising, and I acted like people jumping off.” Interview with Shamaness Baljir 2.

Her master shaman was Sandiw (in our materials Sandag) as was his elder brother Čagtagaa, as Dulam noted. Dulam (1992: 14) also mentioned that she had three lama masters apart from these two shamans.

Her main ongons were “The One of the Roots” (she and her family called this ongon Ojuuraanyam, i.e. Ojuuraa yum), “The One from Iwed” (Iwediin yum), the ongon of Shaman Delden Mend, and the ongons of the Turkic-speaking Soyod people (Soyodiin ongod).

She practised both types of rituals: day and night rituals. These both serve to heal people, to divine for various purposes, and to perform purificatory and offering roles. She had a garment (xuyag), headgear (malgai), boots, a drum (xengereg), and a drumstick (orow). During the day rituals, she also used an object that was formerly attached to the Jew’s harp (xuuriin uyaa) and contains symbolic weapons to protect the shaman from harm inflicted by the spirits.

Thus, the ongons took possession of her body from time to time; she had to keep her body very clean (Dulam 1992: 16). She clearly avoided putting on others’ clothes, headgear and footwear; certain colours (the red and yellow connected to Buddhism) were taboo for her, and so too any-
thing consisting of three colours. She never ate meat of livestock bitten by dogs or wolves. She observed five behaviour taboos kept also by Buddhist laymen (Khalkha uvš, Mongolian ubasi from Sanskrit upāsaka): not smoking, not drinking alcohol, not stealing, not lying, and not abusing people. She did not visit the cemetery.

(9) Baljir was understood to be one of the best shamans in Mongolia. Her fame had also been spread by the mass media. Not only did the inhabitants of the same district and of the Darkhad territory seek her help, but also people from all over Mongolia. She was visited several times by Mongolian and foreign researchers. She was famous for her abilities and prophecies. She is often cited as having predicted an air crash in 1995 in the territory of Khöwsgöl.21

Shamaness Banjaragčiin Bayar22

(1) Her father was Banjaragč (not a shaman); her mother was the very famous shamaness Süren (1916–1992) (Pürew 1999: 115, 189, 168). Her husband was Maibayar, who used to be the helper during her rituals. She belonged to the Tsagaan Khuular (Cagaan Xuular) clan of the Darkhads. She lived in the centre of the Tsagaan Nuur (Cagaan Nuur) district of Khöwsgöl province and in 1999(?) moved to the Khailast (Xailast) circle of Ulaanbaatar with her family. Bayar died in 2001, while travelling throughout Mongolia curing people.

(2) She was a hereditary black shaman.

(3) She claimed to be a descendant of the famous shaman Jotog, who lived at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. She was a shamaness of the 6th generation on her mother’s side and the 10th generation on her father’s side.23 Her daughter Joljayaa, however, emphasised that her mother was of the ninth generation and she herself of the tenth generation.

On the basis of Pürew’s work and our fieldwork materials, we drew up a list with the names of her known ancestors. There are lamas (lam) in her ancestry, and also laypersons whose names have been kept in remembrance, too.

21 Also referred to by Pürew (2003: 19).
22 See pl. 14. On the basis of our field notes (Birtalan 1993, 1999), the two interviews with Bayar’s daughter, Joljayaa (Birtalan 2000), and Pürew (1999).
23 Not all the shaman ancestors were named in the materials at our disposal.
Chart 2.
Bayar’s father’s lineage

Xulgana jairan beginning of the 19th century
Galsan jairan
Ceweg.udgan 1877–1950
Čoyoogoo.udgan
Dašdawaa.udgan 1899–1936
Banjaragč (father)

Bayar

Chart 3.
Bayar’s mother’s lineage

Jotog jairan turn of the 16th and 17th centuries
Xaǰ jairan
Anir (father)
Sambuu (father)
Sündew lam 18th century
Yampil jairan
Tuwaan lam
Norǰmoo (mother)
Oxinǰii (father)
Süren.udgan 1916–1992

Bayar

(5) Her master was her mother, Shamaness Süren.24
(6) Her daughter claimed Bayar had forty-two ongons; Pürew mentioned 36 (Pürew 1999: 295). Her main ongons were: Mother of Dsawir/Dsaiwar (Jaiwriin eeǰ), Father of Khos (Xosiin aaw), the ongon of Shaman Delden Mend, Mother of Ereen (Ereenii eeǰ also called Öndör Ereen, [The High Ereen]), the ongon of Shamaness Dašdawaa, Father Grey-haired Damdin (Damdin Buural aaw), Mother of Üdsüür

24 On Shamaness Süren, see Fridman 2001.
(Üjüüriin eeǰ, also called Öjüüriin eeǰ) i.e. the ongon of Shamaness Süren, Uigur ongons, Mother of Tsakhir (Caxiriin eeǰ), Mother of Uran (Uraanii eeǰ), Mother of Usdag (Usdagiin eeǰ), the Tsaatan Baljinga from the Taiga (Taigiin caatan Balǰgaa), and Mother of Tsaram (Caramiin eeǰ). She also worshipped the Merciful Spirit of Agar (Agarii xairxan), the lock of whose sacral place could only be opened by blowing on it.25

(7) Bayar practised both the day and night rituals, and she used to travel throughout the country after she moved to Ulaanbaatar. Bayar is considered to have been among the shamans who, when drinking alcohol, are able to communicate with the world of spirits and to tell everything about their clients. This status is similar to trance or possession.26 She had a garment (xuyag), headgear (malgai), boots, a drum (xengereg) with a deer drawn on it, a drumstick (orow) and a Jew’s harp (aman xuur, xuur). Her daughter said she had shamanised with the Jew’s harp for twenty years, and with the drum for ten years.

(8) Bayar was considered to be a very powerful shamaness who was good at turning back the effects of curses. She was invited to conferences and also to major festivals, where she acted with other shamans as performers of rituals for the well-being of the nation and the country.

Shamaness Bayariin (Maibayariin) Joljayaa27

(1) Her nickname used in her family is Xöörög (snuff-box). She based her name on her mother’s, Bayar udganii oxin, Joljayaa, or “Shamaness

25 The ongon problem will be discussed in the monograph devoted to the Darkhad shamanic texts.

26 Pürew mentioned several such shamans: Shaman Damdin and Shamaness Ceren from the Galsuud (Galjuud) clan. Bayar’s daughter, Joljayaa, explained that drinking some brandy was an essential part of the ritual, and that her mother did not usually get drunk; she merely shared the offered drinks with the spirits and her clients (cf. Interview with Shamaness Joljayaa 2). We also observed during Bayar’s rituals that when offering some drink, white food, and tobacco, the shamaness would consume them, but only in symbolic quantities. There are texts containing the spirits’ requirements for such an offering, cf. Canxilan xatnii duudlaga and Ongon ideeleex (Rintchen 1975: 84–85). Drinking alcohol is a way of communicating with the spirits and also a kind of offering tasted by the spirits through the shaman’s mouth.

27 On the basis of two interviews conducted by J. Coloo (2000).
Bayar’s daughter, Joljayaa.” Her father was an adopted son in his family, among whom she could remember the name of only one shaman, Shaman Cagaan (without further details). Similarly to her mother, she belongs to the Tsagaan Khuular clan.

(2) She is a hereditary black shaman presumably of the tenth generation (cf. Bayar’s data base model).

(3) Besides her masters (her grandmother, Süren, and mother, Bayar), she remembered Shamaness Gomboloi from among her shaman relatives.28 Gomboloi’s two children were shamans: Shamaness Dašdawaa (cf. Bayar’s lineage, although she is mentioned in the lineage as Bayar’s grandmother), whose ongon is Mother Üdsüür (Üjüürriin eeǰ),29 and the famous shaman Damdin.30

(4) She used to be sickly in her childhood and lose consciousness. She was examined by her grandmother, Süren, who established that she should become a shamaness.

(5) Her master was her mother, Shamaness Bayar. When she was nine years old, she received her grandmother Süren’s Jew’s harp (aman xuur). Shamans in her family are commonly masters to succeeding generations. (Süren was Bayar’s master). When she was 13 years old she started to shamanise with her mother’s garment and drum and when she was 19 years old, she received her own garment, headgear and drum. She first shamanised with her mother.

(6) She has 22 ongons, the main ones being: Mother of Dsawir/Dsaiwar (Jaiwiriin eeǰ) and Mother of Üdsüür (Üjüürriin eeǰ), that is the transformed soul of Shamaness Süren. These are her two main ongons (yasnii ongon). The master spirit of her garment and drum is Father of Khos (Xosiin aaw), the transformed soul of Shaman Delden Mend, and the master spirit of her headgear is Mother of Ereen (Ereenii eeǰ), the transformed soul of Shamaness Dašdawaa. Further, she mentioned Father Grey-haired Damdin (Damdin Buural aaw) as well.

28 She is not included in her mother’s ancestry; Joljayaa said she was the grandmother on her mother’s paternal side.
29 Ongon Üjüürri or Üjüürriin eeǰ.
30 “Shaman” Damdin jairan is the hero of numerous tales, stories and myths collected by Rintchen, Pürew and Dulam; he is also an informant of many shamanic texts, cf. Rintchen 1975; and Even 1988–1989: 136–137.
(7) She performs day (yawgan böölöx) and night rituals (ix böögee xiix).\textsuperscript{31} Her helper (tüšee) during her shamanising is now her husband, a singer called Čadraabal.

The shamanic creed her mother, Bayar, bequeathed to her is: “Do not cause harm to people, to believers, to anybody at any time! This is the strong rule (xatuu yos, juram) of our hereditary (udmiin) shamans and shamanesses. Live preserving, strongly protecting this tradition, this rule, and these principles! Do not [. . .] with shamans and other deceitful people. We have not been governed by anyone since our ancestors (öwög deedeeseec). It is prohibited to have contacts with yellow shamans (šariin böötei); it is prohibited to covet money. You have to take what is given according to customs, to the principles. It is not you, but the ongons and the gods (ongod tenger) who receive the favour (xišgee xürteǰ baigaa).”\textsuperscript{32}

Her main requisites are: her headgear (malgai), her shaman gown (xuyag, with manǰig, yaltas, mörgöl), boots, drum (xengereg) and Jew’s harp (aman xuur).\textsuperscript{33}

(8) She keeps the following taboos: not betraying her husband, not putting on other peoples’ clothes; when she first shamanised for 21 days, she avoided eating meat. She primarily worships the ongons, the fire and her own bed which must be very clean (figuratively as well).

(9) She keeps contact with a yellow shamaness called Cogtbayar, who is her sworn sister.\textsuperscript{34} But as she stated in our second interview, they are just friends like ordinary people and do not touch each other’s shamanic spheres. Up to now we have collected no data on her activity from her clients.

\textsuperscript{31} Darkhad yowgan böölöx, lit. ‘to shamanise on foot’; she used a special term for the night ritual, Darkhad ix böögee xiix ‘to perform the great shaman [ritual]’.

\textsuperscript{32} Interview with Shamaness Joljayaa 2.

\textsuperscript{33} Interview with Shamaness Joljayaa 1.

\textsuperscript{34} On the peculiar ritual through which they became sworn sisters, cf. Interview with Shamaness Joljayaa 1.
“Shamaness” Xüüxenǰii

(1) Xüüxenǰii (pl. 16 a) uses her mother’s name and calls herself Cagaanǰii udganii Xüüxenǰii (Xüüxenǰii, daughter of Shamaness Cagaanǰii), cf. also Joljayaa. She was born in 1932 (the year of the ape). She lives in the Tshandamani Öndör district (Čandaman’ öndör sum) of Khöwsgöl province but originates from the Darkhad territory, Rinchenlhümß district (Rinčenlxümb sum). She is presumably a Darkhad person, but she has never mentioned it.

(2) She said of herself that she was not a real shamaness, but only a healer who used incantations (arga dom argalǰ) to cure sickness and suffering; she said that she had never experienced an altered state of consciousness. However, she knew quite good offering texts and recited two long ones (daatgal ‘prayer’) and three short ones (dallaga ‘text of the ritual for beckoning fortune’).

(3) In terms of genealogical and shamanic background, her mother, Shamaness Cagaanǰii, came from Altan Tag; she died when she was 94 years old. She lived in Rintshenlhümß of Darkhad territory. Her mother’s master shaman was an Uriankhai (Urianxai) shamaness, who died when she was 80 (her name was not mentioned).

(6) She started to worship Dayan Deerx after they moved to the eastern side of Lake Khöwsgöl and came under his protection—as she said—from that time. She also visited Dayan Deerx’s Buddhist shrine in the Monastery Deerxiin Xüree several times in order to perform an initiation ritual.

(7) Her mother had a shaman garment and a drum too, but Xüüxenǰii did not wish to say anything about them. Her mother’s Jew’s harp, which was once used daily during shamanising (yawgan böölöx), has been inherited by Xüüxenǰii’s sister. Her mother used to say to her children:

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35 The report was recorded in the summer camp of Xüüxenǰii, in Khöwsgöl province, Tshandmani Öndör district on 14 August 1998. For a summary of her life story, see Birtalan 2005: 22–23. We put the title “Shamaness” in quotation marks in the heading, because she claimed to be rather a healer than a shaman and never experienced—as she stated—an altered state of consciousness. However her activity and text repertoire is that of the shamans.

36 The geographical name Altan Tag (Golden Mountain) is of Turkic origin, it may refer to a Tuwa connection of her family.

37 The monastery was located inTsagaan Üür district (Cagaan Üür sum), east of the Lake Khöwsgöl.
“Live praying only to your own destiny and charisma!” (Jöwxön jayaa süldeereye jalbirč mör mörööröö yaw!) Her most important sacral activity was healing, the seter-offering (consecration with sacred silk; see Birtalan 2001a: 1039–1040) and the divination with 41 pebbles or pieces of sheep dung (döčin negen čuluugaar mergelex, xowlog tawix).

(9) Xüüxenǰii has been called by other people to perform different rituals and is considered an authority in sacral affairs in the district where she lives.

Shamaness Dügerxüügiin Amarǰargal

(1) Amarǰargal (pl. 15) was born in 1958 (that is, in the year of the dog; however, she told us that it was the year of the cock). She belongs to the Donkey Khalkha (Elǰigen xalx) clan. She lives in the Dsüün Turuu district (Jüün Turuu) of Uws province in Western Mongolia. Her husband is Sugarragčaa (a tractor driver).

(2) She is a hereditary yellow shaman. However, her community also referred to her as the reincarnation of the Buddhist goddess Mother Tārā.

(3) Her paternal grandmother was a shamaness called Čimeg (she died when she was either 73 or 78 years old). She claimed to be a shamaness of the sixth generation; Amarǰargal inherited the shamanic knowledge (how to pray, how to use ritual objects) from her grandmother, who brought her up.

(4) She fell ill when she was 13 years old and was loath to become a shamaness. She used to faint. When she fainted for the first time she called her father by name (this is strongly tabooed!) and told him to give the Buddha representations to her (apparently her grandmother’s soul ordered her son, Amarǰargal’s father, to act thus, and then receiving the Buddhist statue she came to herself). She supposes that a candidate ought to faint 300 times before becoming a real shaman.

(5) Her masters are: Goddess Mother Tārā (she said the goddess was her master in her dwelling place); there is one master in the centre of the Dsüün Turuu district, one in the centre of Uws province, Ulaangom,

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38 On the basis of the interview recorded on 27 August 1995 in Dsüün Turuu (tape material and fieldwork diary).
a lama in Ulaanbaatar, and a shaman in Tuwa called Yamaaxai, who already visited her. She did not name her other masters.

(6) She has numerous ongons, but she did not name them. The main protector of her family is Dayan Deerx. The ongon summoned by her grandmother appeared in the shape of an antelope (jeer).

(7) Her creed is to help people. Her shamanic activity, helping people, is her main aim (ač tusaa xürjej ögöx); she makes offerings to the master spirits of the land (gajar taxix), to pacify the dragon spirits (lusiig aragdax) and to purify their harm (gajar usnii sawdag, lusiin xorlol). She usually goes to the places of sick people and also to various places to perform a pacifying ritual. She recites mantras (maan’ unšix)\(^{39}\) of Green and White Tārās (Cagaan, Nogoon Darex unšīna); she does not remember the actual texts she recites in the state of trance or possession (she is also said to speak in Uriankhai, i.e. the Tuwa language, when in a trance or under possession). Her helper is her xadam egč “elder sister-in-law” (Badamǰargal).

She uses her grandmother’s requisites: a mirror (toli mandaa), a small mirror (ǰiǰig toli mandaa), a rosary and dice for divination (šoogaar, erxeer mergeldeg), a vajra-like ritual-arrow called heavenly arrow (ten-griin sum), and a Buddhist type of headgear (malgai) with five skulls.

(8) Lying is the taboo she strictly observes.

(9) Sometimes she is still very sceptical about her knowledge, although, as is clear from several cases she and her family described, she is quite successful in healing. The local people consider her as the incarnation of Green Tārā (Oirad Nogaan Dārek, Khalkha Nogoon Darex), though some people do not believe in her abilities. She keeps contacts with her masters. She told us that when there was someone she could not cure she would send him to her masters.

Further Research Options

As I mentioned previously, this short survey could be completed with additional points of investigation and with data from further fieldwork. There are several more interviews with mostly shamans (and also sha-
manesses) at our disposal that will be discussed in later studies in a context other than that of the text performer. But these interviews will also be elaborated according to this model. The investigation model discussed above provides not only a multilateral presentation of the activities of individual shamans and shamanesses, but also an opportunity to compare particular aspects of the shaman/shamaness ritual and beyond ritual activity.

References


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Shamanic Traditions, Rites and Songs
Among the Mongolian Buriads:
Meeting a Shamaness and her Assistant

MÁTYÁS BALOGH

BUDAPEST

This study endeavors to present the main features of Buriad shamanism practised in Mongolia. Most of the data was collected during the academic year 2004–2005 in Ulaanbaatar with the aid of my two informants, the shamaness Altanceceg and her assistant Dawuuǰin Namsarai, who both reside in Dornod province, Eastern Mongolia. The texts that appear in this article, which are samples from the inexhaustible source of Buriad shamanic poetry and oral tradition, are compared to those published and translated by György Kara and collected by G. Gantogtovx and Jawjan Coloo from another Buriad shaman, Čoiǰiliin Ceren. Some details of the Buriad shamanic initiation ritual, the paraphernalia, the sacrificial altar, etc., have been provided by other informants and are compared with those given by Altanceceg and Dawuuǰin Namsarai.

Introduction

Shamanism in Mongolia has attracted the attention of many scholars, both Orientalists and anthropologists. Much fieldwork has been carried out in the country during the last few decades (Dalai 1959; Diószegi 1960; Birtalan 1993, 1996). However, the collected data and the published materials are mostly concerned with the shamanism of the northwestern Mongolian Darxad people. In contrast, the reviving shamanism of the Buriads1 living in Mongolia is less well known. I would like to emphasize that in the present article I am concerned with the shamanism of the Buriad people living in Mongolia. These Buri-

1 This ethnic name is usually written as Buriat or Buryat in English, while the academic transcription of the Mongolian word ᠬᠥᠷᠤᠤᠳ is Buriad.
ads live in the northeastern area of the country and are the descen-
dants of the Russian Buriaid immigrants who arrived in this region in
the 20th century. In addition to these, approximately 400,000 Buriaids
live in Russia around Lake Baikal, and other groups of Buriaids live in
Manchuria. The shamanism of these Russian and Manchurian Buria-
ads is outside the scope of the present study. The aim of this paper
is therefore to fill this gap in the study of Mongolian shamanism by
making an attempt to provide an overall view of the shamanism of the
Buriaids who live in Mongolia,\(^2\) including their initiations, parapherna-
lia and the role of the shaman’s assistant. I will also describe a ritual
conducted by a Buriaid shamaness named Altanceceg and her assis-
tant, Namsarai (pl. 16\(^b\)), whom I met in the course of my fieldwork
carried out in the academic years 2004 and 2005.\(^3\) Consequently, a
three-hour video recording\(^4\) of the ritual (Balogh 2005b) and an inter-
view with its performers is one of the main sources for this paper, as
Altanceceg, and even more so her assistant, Namsarai, proved to be an
inexhaustible source on Buriaid shamanic traditions and poetry. Their
confidence in me enabled me to record several Buriaid shaman songs,
oaths and other items of folk poetry. Some of these will appear in the
present article as samples of this rich shamanic heritage. I will point
out the parallels between them and the invocation texts collected and
published by G. Gantogtokh, György Kara and Jawjan Tsoloo from the
shaman Ceren in 1998.\(^5\)

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\(^2\) For more about Buriaids living in Mongolia, see Oyuuntungalag 2004; and Shimamura 2002.

\(^3\) Both Altanceceg and Namsarai are members of the Golomt Center of Mongolian Shamans. Although they usually practice shamanism in their homeland, the Dašbalbar district of Dornod province in Eastern Mongolia, I met them in Ulaanbaatar: they were invited by the head of the Center, Šagdarin Süxbat, to record one of their rituals for archival purposes. The video recording was made in Ulaanbaatar in January 2005.

\(^4\) The color pictures (pl. 16\(^a\)–20) published in this article are taken from this video
recording, which is why they are of less good quality.

\(^5\) Ceren böö – (?–2005) was the most famous Buriaid shaman in Mongolia and the
source of information for numerous researchers, including both Mongols and foreign-
ers, see Gantogtokh et al. 1998.
The First Initiation and Oaths of the Buriad Shamans\textsuperscript{6}

After suffering from meningitis (menengee) at the age of 13, Altanceceg was supposed to get in touch with her spirits and experience her first initiation (zalaagaa awax), but she did not. She did so later, in 1981, and by now she has undergone eight initiations.\textsuperscript{7} Her first initiation was led by her master’s master Namžil, who became a shamaness when she was 15, and who lived to be more than 80 years of age. Namžil is now one of Altanceceg’s spirits. Altanceceg assumes that after her death she will also become a spirit (ongon), and might be invoked by her disciples.

She performs various kinds of ritual except for curses (xaraal žatxa) and anything else she might consider harmful. As she explained, Buriad shamans have to take 99 oaths\textsuperscript{8} (yürön yühön tangarag) during their first initiation. These forbid them to cause any kind of harm: it is prohibited to endanger human life (xüünii amind xürexgüi), to put obstacles in people’s way (xünd saad xiixgüi) and to quarrel (xerüül margaan xiixig xorgilono), and they have to help all living creatures (xamag amitnii tusiin tuld yawana). They must not eat camel meat since they consider it impure (buzartai), and for the same reason there are shamans who refuse to sit on a camel cart—indeed, some will not even put their paraphernalia on one. A distinction is made between two kinds of oaths, “hard” and “light.”

When taking the hard (xatuu) oaths the shaman says:

\textit{Buruu xazagai duudwal}
\textit{Buurral ereen orgoig butiin xeweg id’eg}
\textit{Xazagai buruu duudwal}
\textit{Xairan saixan biyiimin’}
\textit{Xadiin šuluu deldeg}
\textit{Xazagai buruu duudaxgüi}

\textsuperscript{6} Among the Mongols, regardless of ethnic group, the most usual reasons for becoming a shaman are affliction by some disease, the death of a family member, or a personal tragedy. For more about becoming a shaman, see Banzarov 1955; Diószegi 1961; and Badamxatan 1965.

\textsuperscript{7} However, her assistant said that she had 12 branches on her headgear, which means she must have had 12 initiations.

\textsuperscript{8} For more about shamanic oaths, see Gantogtox 1999; Bum-Očir 2002.
If I invoke you in a wrong way may the chaff of the bush
Eat my grayish-spotted head-gear
If I call you improperly, may the rocky stone
Squash my poor body
I won’t call you improperly
I am the royal ancestors’ silk guide
I am the great ancestors’ silk guide.

A parallel fragment can be found in shaman Ceren’s invocations:

. . . Xazagai buruu duudahan baigaa haamni
Xan garbali zalaruulaarai
Buruu xeltegei duudahan baigaa haamni
Burxan garbali zalaruulaarai . . .

. . . If I called for you in a wrong way
Correct (me, you) mighty ancestors
If I called for you improperly
Correct (me, you) divine ancestors . . . 9

The light (zöölön) version of the oath is far more permissive:

Buruu dutuu xazagai duudaxamm’i
Ug garwal zalaruulaarai
Xazagai buruu duudwal
Xaan garwal zalaruulaarai.

If I invoked you in a wrong way
Correct me, ancestors
If I invoke you improperly
Correct me, royal ancestors.

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9 Translated by György Kara in Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 98.
Those who take the hard oaths can even die if they make a mistake during a ritual (xiisen xeregtee diildex). It can be more dangerous for young shamans, who cannot arm themselves properly.10

Initiation Ritual of the Buriad Black Shaman (Šanar)11

Buriad shamans can be initiated 12 plus one times during their lives. The 12th is named after the two-year-old colt (daagan šanar) and, in general, is considered to be the last. The 13th is regarded as an extra initiation and is called Otxon šanar, which means “the youngest and the last of all.”12 To our knowledge no special names are given to the preceding initiations. By the first initiation one becomes a shaman and takes the 99 shamanic oaths (böögei yüren yühen tangarag). Having more initiations confers more magical power. Stronger shamans meet stronger spirits, and they can be attacked by stronger malevolent spirits as well. With each initiation their paraphernalia become more and more sophisticated in order to give them more protection.13

During the first initiation nine birch trees are erected (the number of these trees always increases by a multiple of nine). This group of birch trees is called derwelge. In addition to the derwelge three bigger birches are planted in the ground with their roots. When these bigger trees are removed their trunks are marked on the south side (naran tal) and they are replanted back where they originally grew. They are referred to as the “father tree” (esege mod), the “mother tree” (exe mod) and the “nest tree” (üür mod), and they are connected with a golden and a silver thread (altan dugui damžilaga mungön dugui müšgilög).

Before the ritual begins the three big trees are adorned with the furs of five different animals and colorful ribbons. A blue ribbon (xadag) is tied to the top of each tree. Then a picture of the Sun and the Moon drawn on

10 There are several stories about shamans who were too young or not sufficiently well trained to perform difficult rituals such as saving human life or responding to a curse, and who finally died as a result of their mistake.
11 The first description of the ritual was given by Rintchen 1961. For more details about šanar, see Badma-Oyuu 2001; Balogh 2005a; Gantogtox 1996, 1997; Kümin 2001.
12 Otgon: otgon xiii ‘the youngest son’, otgon sur ‘the last archery competition of the year’ (Kara 1998: 337).
13 For details see Balogh 2005a.
a piece of textile is put on the branches. The following lines are quotations from shamanic songs related to decorating the initiation trees:

\[\text{Altan šaraga nartai} \]
\[\text{Almai buural}^{14} \text{ hartai.} \]

[It has a] Golden yellow Sun
and an elderly grey Moon.

\[\text{Yag sagaan šandaga} \]
\[\text{Yagaawtar uulan gur} \]
\[\text{Xub šar solongo} \]
\[\text{Xurdan sagaan iyen} \]
\[\text{xöö xarxan xerem.} \]

A white hare
A pinkish red roebuck
A pale yellow weasel
A swift white ermine (and)
A pitch black squirrel.

These five animals—the hare, the roebuck, the weasel, the ermine and the squirrel—are represented by cutting their shapes from textiles and tying these to the branches with red thread.\(^{15}\) According to the assistant, it would be better to put the furs of these animals on the branches, but there are places where their furs are hardly available.

The “nest tree” is considered to be the center (literally the “head” or the “brain” in Buriad) of the initiation ritual (\(\text{šanariin tarxi, tolgoi}\)). Namsarai said that this tree is the most important present given to the spirits.

There is another tree, called \(\text{serge}\), to which the ancestral spirits (\(\text{ug garwal, hax’uuha}\)) can tie their horses. The initiation itself takes place when the shaman climbs the “mother tree” and then falls down.

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\(^{14}\) \text{Almai- ‘forgetful’, almai buural- ‘someone touched with grey’}.  
\(^{15}\) In the Mongolian shamanic tradition the red thread symbolizes the veins, blood and life in general. When the Buriad shaman heals a sick person, the shaman, the drum, and the sick person are connected with a red thread. After the healing ritual, the sick person has to wear the thread on his or her wrist, usually for three days.
The “mother tree” can be of different heights, but the higher the better. After the initiation ritual all the birch trees are taken away (xüdöö zalana) and offered to the spirits, namely to the thirteen Lords of the North (Ariin arwan gurwan noyid).16 Making an offering to the trees, the shamans say:

*Ariin arwan gurwan noyid*  
*Aduunii baruun talda*  
*Anduugii xiregoii*  
*Mürön dalae xaa вал*  
*Taw’aad garxa ongoso*  
*Xangil baisa boowol*  
*Damžaad garxa šata.*17

Thirteen Lords of the North:

Come to the right side of the stud  
Without any mistakes.  
If rivers and lakes hinder  
The rowboat takes you to the other side.  
If cliffs and rocks hinder  
The ladder puts you through.

Usually there are more shamans to be initiated during the same ritual, though not at the same time. All are students of the same master, and they can undergo different levels of initiation. While one is preparing to climb the tree, the others with the master encourage him or her by shouting and drumming.

16 This group of deities is believed to live on the Olihon island of Lake Baikal; for more details on them see Rintchen 1961:123–127.  
17 Collected from Dawuujin Namsarai in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.
Two people, called the “father” and the “mother,” play the role of the initiated shaman’s parents. They circle around the *derwelge* trees followed by nine children (*yühönšin*).\(^{18}\)

Three or four days after the ritual people can take and use the birch trees.\(^{19}\)

**Initiation Ritual of the Buriad White Shaman (Šandruu)**

The white shaman is called *bariaš* (the one who puts bones right). As Namsarai explained, the *šanar* of the white shaman is called *šandruui*, which means that it is the initiation ritual of white shamans.

Altanceceg is a black and white (*xar sagaaniye xabsarhan*) shamaness; thus she has undergone white initiations as well. In this ritual *derwelge* birch trees are used in much the same way as for the black initiation, although here the main difference between the black and white rituals is that in the latter a cauldron is set right in the middle and is used for distillation (*šandruu nerexe*).

In the first step they put mutton in the cauldron, pour in koumiss (*airag*) and other liquid dairy products (*airag, sagaa*), place twigs on top of these and finally cover the cauldron with a lid. White and black initiations can be performed at the same time, and sometimes the ritual is called a *šanar-šandruu* (black and white initiation). The first black initiation is called the “mother initiation” (*ex šanar*), while the first white initiation is the “father initiation” (*eseg šandruui*).

**The Assistant**

Among the Mongols it is usual that assistants help the shaman during the ritual. The assistant’s task is to serve the spirits, to give them what they want. The spirits that possess the shaman’s body are regarded as

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\(^{18}\) As seen in another initiation ritual, led by master shaman Dašbalbar jaarin, video-recorded in the Cenxermandal district of Xentii province, Mongolia. This video recording is very important parallel material for the comparative studies of initiation rituals led by different shaman masters.

\(^{19}\) Explanations of Altanceceg’s initiation ritual by shaman assistant Namsarai, video- and audio-recorded in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.
special guests, and they should be treated accordingly. If a spirit asks for something which is not available, or is not satisfied with the food or drink offered, it is the assistant who has to apologize. If the spirit invited is someone who lived long ago it can happen that modern vodka or cigarettes do not please him or her. In this case the spirits usually ask for traditional Mongolian *arxi* (spirit made from fermented mare’s milk) or a pipe. The assistant may have to explain that nowadays Mongolian people drink bottled vodka and smoke cigarettes (Birtalan 1993: 5).

The assistant also has to interpret and explain the spirits’ words because they do not use everyday language but speak in riddles, which are barely comprehensible to the ordinary person. While the shaman places his or her body at the spirit’s disposal, the assistant is the one who communicates with them and understands their language. It is clear then that assistants may also play an important role in mediating between the spirits and those attending the ritual. That is why the Buriads call the assistant “interpreter” (*xelmerše, tulmaaš*).

Shamans say that anyone can be an assistant who knows the shamanic traditions well, who knows how to serve the spirits and what to do when they want this or that. The assistants do not suffer from shamanic diseases, nor are they initiated or chosen by the spirits. Thus he or she can be replaced by anyone suitable, even by another shaman. The shaman’s assistant is often a member of the family or an acquaintance.

Altanceceg’s assistant Namsarai has an extended knowledge of Buriad shamanic traditions. He started to follow shamans at the age of 13 or 14, and now he knows all the Buriad invocations by heart. He has never suffered from any kind of shamanic diseases but his eyesight is poor, just like the Western Mongolian presenters of heroic epics, who know thousands of lines of poetry by heart.

The Paraphernalia

THE WHITE SHAMANIC COSTUME

Altanceceg’s white shamanic costume (pl. 17 a) consists of two pieces of clothing. The first is a simple headgear made of textile (*maixabš*) with two eyes represented on it. There is disagreement between shamans and some scholars regarding the two eyes (sometimes a whole face is
represented with ears, nose and mouth). Some scholars think that they are the eyes of the spirit that owns the headgear. Other scholars say that it is more likely that the representation of eyes or the face is a kind of camouflage serving the purpose of deluding malevolent spirits.

The other article is a blue brocade gown (xüxö xamba nümörgö) resembling the Mongolian national costume (mongol deel). It is usual for shamans to wear the traditional costume during “simple” rituals such as fortune-telling (mereglex) or diagnosing the origin of a patient’s problem (Khalkha üjleg). These rituals do not require the whole shaman armament to be donned, but everyday clothes would not be accepted by the spirits. Altanceceg’s boots are traditional Buriad boots (gutal) without any decoration.

Shamanic rituals are divided into two groups by Buriads, and also by Mongols, according to the shaman’s instruments. The first are rituals with a drum (xesetei böölön), and the second are those without a drum, called “shamanizing on foot” (yawgan böölön). The white shamans in general use a bell instead of a drum. Altanceceg’s bell is exactly the same as those used by Buddhist monks. A horse-headed staff (bayag) (pl. 17 b) is also part of the white shaman’s paraphernalia. A piece of blue ribbon tied around the neck of the “horse” indicates that it is a seter (sacrifice) dedicated to the spirits.

The following invocations refer to the bell:

Dan sagaan xonxo
Dašuulan buuhan
Dalan xeltei xonxo.

A pure white bell
Descended swinging
Seventy-tongued bell.

Ebderxeeye ebrüüldeg
Zadarxaaya zalgululdag
Xugarxaaya xündeg.

20 The Mongols usually wear western-style clothes in their everyday life, but they put on their traditional costumes before having a photo taken, or when they observe a celebration. It can be said that the mongol deel is becoming an all-purpose casual wear.
Repairs the broken
Mends the torn
Joins the separated.

_Erxii soorxoi em šengi_
_Dol’oowor soorxoi dom šengi._21

Like the medicine of those with a holed thumb
Like the remedy of those with a holed forefinger.

In shaman Ceren’s invocation “flying the splendor and fate of the sheep” (_xoninoi hülde degdeeex duudlaga_), lines with the same meaning can be found:

. . . _emderxeiyiini eblüülehen_
_handarxayiini zalguulahan_
_dol’oobor soorxoi domšonornuud_
_erxei soorxoi emšenernüüd . . ._

Healers whose forefingers are holed (sensitive)
medicine-men whose thumbs are holed (sensitive)
repaired what was broken
mended what was torn.22

Altanceceg has two big mirrors, one for the black ritual, made of copper (_guuli_), and the other for the white ritual, made of brass (_zed_). She wore both at the same time. She also has a white whip (_sagaanii bardag_), which is made of three tamarisk branches collected from three different places or from three different mountains, and its handle is made from the horn of a three-year-old elk. In the invocations it is mentioned as follows:

_Gurwan uuliin suxai_
_Gunan bugiin ewer._23

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21 Collected from Dawuujin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.
Tamarisk branches of three mountains
Horn of a three-year-old elk.

Eight rattles (xolbogo) are fastened to the tamarisk branches as parts of the shaman’s armor (xuyag). The whip is covered by many colorful pieces of sacrificial ribbon (xadag), which are regarded as the clothes of the whip’s spirit.

THE BLACK SHAMANIC COSTUME

The black costume has far more articles than the white. The basis of Altanceceg’s black headgear (üülen amitai) is a metal crown-shaped helmet (orgoi) with 12 (two times six) branches (pl. 18 a), which are regarded as crows’ claws (xereenii zurgaa-zurgaan sawar). Many accessories are fastened to the helmet—for example, snakes and lizards made of textiles, silk ribbons, and thin iron rods.

The helmet is covered by silk ribbons and has three times three, altogether nine rattles, one at the front above the forehead, and two hanging on the two branches.

Two snakes (mogoi) hang down to the back of the costume from the helmet’s left and right sides (Birtalan 1996), their heads looking upwards. The left snake is female, and is responsible for the fate of women, while the right one is male and responsible for men’s fate. In the invocations they are called xüštei yix mogoinuud (powerful great snakes). In regard to function, the lizards (gürwel) are the same as the snakes; the left lizard is a girl (basagan) and the right one is a boy (xüü); these, however, hang down the front of the costume. In the invocations they are referred to as xüren ereen gürwel (brown-striped lizards).

Silk ribbons (xadag) are always found on the different articles of shamans’ costumes as presents for their spirits. Their number depends on the shaman’s rank, and it increases with each initiation.

Three chains of twisted iron rods (gezgebš) hang from Altanceceg’s helmet down the back of her costume. Each chain consists of three pairs of twisted rods. They are joined by metal rings with three rattles on each of them. In the invocations they are mentioned in the following way:
Nayin naiman naliwa
Naiman dawxr xürel müngön garxi.

Eighty-eight . . .
Eight layers of bronze and silver rings.

When Altanceceg showed her black costume, first she put on a brownish-red gown on which were many rattles and two wild-boar figures. These give protection against every kind of harm, or curses coming from or sent by grayish dust (*Gajriin bor xürsöör yawuuldag xaraal žatxa*).

Altanceceg’s armor consists of two main pieces, the back-armor (*arxaal’*) and the front-armor (*elgebše*). On another shaman’s front-armor there are representations of three animals: the “Garuda” bird (*xan garid šuwuu*) stands for heaven, the wild boar (*bodon gaxai*) stands for the earth, and the lizard (*gürwel*) stands for the underworld (pl. 19 a).

The back-armor is a thin iron slat, approximately 50 cm long, that goes on the back of her costume. It holds the front-armor and has nine branches at each end. Altanceceg has 30 branches altogether (12 on her helmet and 18 on her back-armor). These branches are to indicate the shaman’s rank. The maximum number of branches is 42, of which 12 are invisible (*xii arwan xoyor halaa*), given by the 13 Lords of the North. The invocations refer to the back-armament:

*Ar biyiig xuyigalsan anxnii ix arxaal’*
*Arwan tawan tarxitai gürwel mogoinuud.*

The first great back-armor, which armored the back-side
Fifteen-headed snakes and lizards.

Chains of twisted iron rods hang down from the back-armor in addition to those suspended from the helmet.

The front-armor (pl. 19 a, b) is a brownish-red leather vest which has ten rings fastened to it, with three rattles on each. On it are also a metal
human heart shape and two bows and arrows. Certain parts of the human skeleton are also represented on the black shaman’s costume (pl. 19 b).

Namsarai emphasized that Altanceceg’s costume was not complete. She did not yet have, for example, the suede coat, and she was going to have a mythical “Garuda” bird (xan garid šuwuu) sitting on her right shoulder, and a brown-spotted eagle (xüren ereen bürged) sitting on her left shoulder.

The black whip is more sophisticated than the white one. Like the white one, it is made of tamarisk (huxai) branches collected from three mountains, and the horn of a three-year-old elk, but it has thongs (šerbüülge) made of burbot skin. In the invocations the whip is mentioned as follows:

\[
\text{Gurwan uuliin suxtai} \\
\text{Gunan bugiin ewer} \\
\text{Gutaar zagahanai arha} \\
\text{Gutaar zagahanai arhiye gürmöhölž bürhen ezen yix bardag.}
\]

Tamarisk branches of three mountains  
Horn of a three-year-old elk  
Skin of a burbot fish  
Lord of the whip made by spinning the skin of a burbot.

Shaman Ceren’s song *Damdin Dorlig hax’uuhanai durdlaga* (Calling for the protecting spirit Damdin Dorlig) mentions a black whip:

\[
\ldots \text{gurban goloi huxai} \\
\text{gunan xandagain eber bar’uultai} \\
\text{gutaari zagahanai šerbüügetei} \ldots
\]

\[
\ldots \text{whose handle is made of tamarisk (branches)} \\
\text{of three streams} \\
\text{and made of the horn of a third-year-old elk} \\
\text{and whose thongs are made of the skin of the burbot} \ldots
\]

\[26 \text{ Translated by György Kara in Gantogtogh et al. 1998: 112.}\]
A plethora of miniature tools and weapons are fastened to the whip. These are believed to be made by Damdin Dorlig, the protector deity of blacksmiths. The person who forges all these weapons, and all the shaman’s accessories, worships Damdin Dorlig and is called Dorligtoi xün (a person with Dorlig). Damdin Dorlig is responsible for everything connected with metalwork, machines, techniques, and electricity. Damdin Dorlig’s anvil (düš) and hammer (alxa) are represented on the whip.

Two objects help the shaman to overcome obstacles during his or her journey: a 4 cm long iron ladder on the whip is for climbing rocks and cliffs, and a rowboat (pl. 20 a) of the same size and material, equipped with paddles (selüür), is used to cross oceans, lakes and rivers:

Xangil baisa garwal damžaad garxa šata
Mürön dalai xaawal taw’aad garxa ongoso. 27

If cliffs and rocks hinder the ladder puts (you) through
If lakes or rivers hinder the rowboat takes (you) to the other side.

The ladder can be used for another purpose as well—namely to transfer sacrifices and offerings to the 13 Lords of the North. There is a key and a lock for opening their door.

The shaman often has to face dangerous enemies such as invisible malevolent spirits (xii xad uuliin aliban sabdag), harmful spirits of the dead (üxöör xaxaar) and curses emanating from unknown places (xariin gazarhaa yawuulsan xaraal żatxa). The shaman either captures them or tries to defeat them with the aid of his or her weapons.

Altanceceg’s tools for capturing and restraining ill-willed spirits are the following: a lasso (salama) is used to catch the spirits, and then a strap (argamžaa) and a stake are used to keep them captive. First the strap has to be tied to the stake, then the shaman binds the harmful spirit with the strap.

For fighting and battling Altanceceg uses a wide range of weapons: an axe (sišxe), a pickaxe (balt), a hatchet (lantuu), a pair of scissors (xaiš), a bow with an arrow (num sum), and a saber (heleme). Namsarai quoted the parts of invocations referring to the bow with arrows and the saber:

27 Collected from Dawuujin Namsarai in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.
Xüxe tümör numiiye
Delgelgen bolowo
Xargui xar humiiye
Xolgolgom bolowo.

He took out
His blue iron bow
He pulled out
His black . . . arrow.

Dair sagaan helemiyye
Deeree barin xuyigalhan.\(^{28}\)

He armored himself
Grabbing his white saber.

Two further items—the smoothing iron of Damdin Dorlig \((\textit{Damdin dorligoi ilüür})\) and a pair of pincers \((\textit{xabšig})\)—are not for struggling with enemies but serve different purposes. Licking the red-hot smoothing iron is used in divination, while the pincers are useful for picking up red-hot pieces of iron. The drum \((\textit{xese})\) is the black shaman’s mount, with lots of accessories and decorations on it. Altanceceg’s drum is a plain round drum with three times nine rattles attached to it. These rattles are not the same as those on her costume; here they are tiny round pieces of iron strung on three wires. The wires are fastened to the inside wall of the drum’s margin. Altanceceg’s drum has 27 rattles altogether; however, the part of the invocation that refers to it mentions one more:

Xorin naiman xolbogtoi
Xond’oo haixan duutai
Dai delxii bürxööhen
Daiwan xar xese.

With twenty-eight rattles
With a beautiful sound

\(^{28}\) Collected from Dawuujin Namsarai in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.
A great black drum
That covered the world.

In Xesiin ezenei duulлага (Invocation of the Lord of the Drum), recounted by shaman Ceren, the following two lines are found:

. . . daida delexeiye bürxööhen la
daiban xara xesiin ezen.

Lord of the Huge Black Drum
that covered the world . . . 29

The purpose of the rattles is to make a jingling sound when the drum moves. At three points on the drum’s outer margin are tied three bunches of colorful ribbons, which are the clothes offered to the spirit of the drum. The drumstick (toiwuur) has similar bunches of ribbons tied to its nine iron tongues. The drumstick is regarded as a crocodile with nine tongues, which is why it should be crocodile-shaped, and a crocodile head should be carved on its handle. During a ritual the tongues rattle and mediate information just like the human tongue. It is believed that the spirits of the drum and the drumstick are talking when the shaman beats the drum. A piece of suede or goat skin is covers the drumstick’s beating surface (zöölöbš) to make it softer.

A “Light” Ritual

There are several types of shamanic ritual, including sacrificial rituals (taxilga) where an animal (usually a horse or sheep) is sacrificed for the spirits; initiation rituals; rituals performed to the order of someone who needs help (Khalkha jasal); and rituals in which the shaman calls his or her spirits merely in order to keep in touch with them. For the last-mentioned type of ritual Mongolian shamans usually call their spirits three times a month. The Buriad black shamans do it on the 9th, 19th and 29th of the traditional Mongolian calendar. The white ones call their spirits on the 8th, 18th and 28th of each month. The aim of this

29 Translated by György Kara in Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 124.
ritual is to invite the spirits to a party and to offer them food and drink. As Altanceceg’s assistant said, “It was not a ritual ordered by someone, the shaman didn’t do anything but called her spirits to have a good time together, it was a ‘light’ ritual (xüngön böölön).”

In January 2005 Altanceceg performed a so-called “light” ritual for the head of the Golomt Shaman Center, Šagdarin Süxbat, who asked me to make video recordings. The participants were Altanceceg, Dawuuǰin Namsarai, acting as assistant and interpreter, Altanceceg’s husband, who took the role of a secondary assistant, two of Altanceceg’s apprentices, and the author of the present article.

Preparations

Before the ritual starts, the first step is to prepare the offerings. Altanceceg put eight copper cups (cöge) on her altar (pl. 20 b) and filled them with the offerings. She poured milk (hüüi) into three of them, put sweets in another four and filled one with vodka (došgin xar dugaraa). In addition to the eight cups, there were two wicks, although only one of them was lit. The wick is to illuminate the way of the shaman. A bigger cup was filled with a mixture of offerings: milk, sweets, vodka and the yellow fat (šar tos) used for the wicks. This was the offering to all spirits (oron delxiin ürgöl). Placed on the table behind the cups were a folded piece of silk, a blue sacrificial ribbon and money. Altanceceg referred to the offerings:

Zurxai zurxain taxiltai  
Ornoi haixan seržimtei  
Oixonii noyidiin šumbalagtai  
Xadag torgon meregtei  
Ünöö üyiin xorgoi meregtei  
Ünöö üyiin müngön meregtei.

The properly counted six offerings
With the fine spirit of the country
With the offerings for the Lords of the Olihon
With silk and ribbon
With brocade of this era
With money of this era.
Shaman Ceren’s invocation “flying the splendor and fate of the sheep” (xoninoi hülde degeexxe duudлага) refers to the offerings in a similar way:

\[
\begin{align*}
\ldots zuun xülte zulatai \\
zurxai yühen taxiltai \\
xamba torgon xabšuurgatai \\
xadag torgon belegtei bi \\
münöö üyiin mügen beleg \ldots
\end{align*}
\]

I have the xadag-silk gift
With the wick of a hundred legs
With the properly counted nine offerings
With the xamba-silk xabšuurga \ldots

During the ritual Altanceceg wore her white costume; however, she also played on her drum, which definitely belongs to the black shaman’s paraphernalia. Because it was not a difficult, “hard” ritual (xatuu šanga xereg) and the invoked spirits were unlikely to be especially dangerous, she did not have to arm herself with all her armaments.

Calling the Spirits

The spirits participating in the ritual can be divided into two groups. The first group are the deities of the Buriad shamanic pantheon, such as Awgaldai and Buxa noyon (one of the 13 Lords of the North). The second group consists of Altanceceg’s personal deities, which are the spirits of real people like Namžil, the master of Altanceceg’s master, and the 16 to 18-year-old girl. Altanceceg calls her spirits by singing their invocations, while the assistant introduces the scene, the participants in the ritual, and the shaman herself. This introduction is rarely the same, the assistant often extemporizing using key words and sets of expressions. When a spirit appeared Namsarai said:

\[\text{Translated by György Kara in Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 102.}\]
In the spacious and beautiful land of Outer Mongolia
At the Golomt Shaman Center
The association of the world’s shamans
Your talented mediator comes and prays.

It is not usual that foreigners participate in a Mongolian shamanic ritual, so Namsarai had to extemporize during the ritual at which I participated and recorded. He introduced me by saying:

Xariin gazarhaa yirehen
Xünii gazarhaa yirehen
Ündör dawaa dawž
Ürgön golii gatalž
Olon xilii [. . .] tuulž yirehen
Ungar yahatai
Xongor haixan xüwüün.

Someone came from abroad
From other people’s land
He has passed high mountain passes
Crossed wide rivers
And many borders
He is a handsome boy of the Hungarian nation.

To another spirit he introduced me using different expressions, emphasizing that I had come from far away:

He came from Hungary
Crossed many rivers
Climbed high rocks and mountains
Crossed the wide ocean.

Namsarai had to inform the descending spirits about the character of the ritual:

*Naimnii nagalga
Yühnei yürgölğö.*

This is the swinging of the eighth
Swaying of the ninth.

In shaman Ceren’s song *Damdin Dorlig hax’uuhanai durdlaga* (Calling for the protecting spirit Damdin Dorlig) the following lines offer a parallel:

... amar mende huuxiin tülöö geže
yuheningei yürgelgeniiyi
namaniigaa naigalganiyi xeže uradlagiyyi xebeb.

I made (this) call performing the swing of my Nine (fellows)
And the sway of my Eight (fellows)
In order to live safe and sound.\(^{32}\)

After the introduction the spirit is offered vodka or milk, depending on the spirit’s taste. As the spirits speak in riddles, the assistant has to do the same—he or she should not use everyday words to name the drink or food that is offered. For example, when Namsarai offered the

\(^{32}\) Translated by György Kara in Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 116.
vodka he said: \textit{xatuun xar dugaraa barigtii daa} (take your black and hard drink), and \textit{xatuun xariin deezee barigtii} (take your wild black choice of the drinks); when he offered the milk he said: \textit{dalai hüü barigtii daa} (take your ocean-like milk).

The Spirit of Namžil, an Elderly Shamaness

Shamaness Namžil was the master of Amgalan, Altanceceg’s master. She died at the age of 85. When her spirit descended, Altanceceg began to stoop like an old woman and put her drum on her back, then sat down on her sitting pillow. Namsarai offered the sacrifices saying:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Amtan bariž xürtëgëttii daa}
\textit{Xadag torgon xabšulagatai}
\textit{Altan müngön Šimegtei daa.}
\end{quote}

Take and taste the sweets 
(we) have silk and brocade with gold and silver decoration.

Namsarai then introduced Altanceceg, saying: \textit{Altanseseg xar sagaaniiyye xabsarhan šawindni šawi} (Altanceceg, who is a black and white [shamaness], she is the student of your student).

\begin{quote}
\textit{Tümendöö aldartai}
\textit{Tiw delxiidee suuriatuu daa}
\textit{Ene haixan aldariiyiy}
\textit{Ataa žütöögüi}
\textit{Ariun haixnaar irüülž}
\textit{Tiw delxiidee aldar suuriatai}
\textit{Tiw delxii böögei xolboo}
\textit{Altan haixan delxiidee}
\textit{Suuriatuul sagna . . . bolo daa}
\textit{Narnai haixan gerelde}
\textit{Namuu haixan ilyödtöö}
\textit{Xorwoo haixan yürömsdö}
\textit{Xosgui haixnaar . . .}
\end{quote}
After this Namžil asked something about Altanceceg in a whisper, an utterance that only Namsarai could understand. His answer was Za olon tümend hain yawana. As the question is unknown this could have two different meanings. The first would be “She is well accepted by the people,” and the second, “She does well for the people.” After this Altanceceg stood up and started to beat her drum again.

Then Altanceceg started to jump and shake her costume and drum in order to let Namžil’s spirit leave her body.

The Spirit of a Young Girl

Altanceceg said that most of her personal spirits were people who had died young. After Namžil’s spirit had left, a 16 or 18-year-old girl’s spirit descended and possessed her body. She asked for another head-gear, which was simple textile cap (maixabš) decorated with traditional Buriad hairgrips. This was a headgear that had been prepared for this
spirit because she had been a young girl who used to like wearing nice jewelry and hairgrips.

When she was offered vodka to drink, she refused it and asked for milk. Namsarai referred to her as a child, a young girl (xüüxed, zaluuxan basag-an) who did not like vodka.

According to Namsarai this girl was an excellent shamaness despite her young age. She was initiated at the age of seven or eight. The circumstances of her death are not clear. It is possible that she died as a result of attempting something too difficult (xiisen xeregtee diildex) or because of rivalry (id’eldee xarwaldaan).

The Definition of the Ritual

While the spirit is in the shaman’s body anyone who has a problem or question can consult it. The spirit gives advice and will say what kind of ritual has to be ordered to solve the problem. During the present ritual no one asked any questions, the spirits possessed the shaman’s body one after the other and they drank their vodka and milk or smoked their cigarettes. Namsarai explained:

"Ene bol xeselei böölön bayariin böölön, nagalgin böölön. Xereg xiižagaam biš xiinii xereg biš. Gexdee ene:

Naimandaa nagaž
yüsdöö öyrgož
Miür müöröö tušalsaž
Miŋon xoolii gargašaž
Gar garaa barilsaž
Gans xoolii gargašaž . . ."

This was a ritual with a drum, a celebration, a party. It was not performed to someone’s order, it was only the:

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34 Collected from Dawuujin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.
Swinging of the eighth,  
swaying of the ninth  
leaning against each other’s shoulders  
offering silver (and) food  
shaking each other’s hands  
and offering one single food.

It was merely about having fun during the ritual, it was just for the shamaness herself, for the ancestors, her spirits and disciples. It was all about inviting and pleasing these spirits.

Finishing the Ritual

When all the spirits left her body Altanceceg took a break, had a chat with their students and drank some tea. After a few minutes’ break she started to send her spirits off, but suddenly a new spirit, the owner spirit of the Šiliin bogd mountain, came without being invited and appeared in Altanceceg’s body. Namsarai introduced the shamanic center and the participants and offered vodka to the spirit as he had done to the previous spirits. After pleasing the Šiliin bogd spirit, Altanceceg sat down in front of the table and started to sing the following song:

35 The Šiliin bogd is a sacred mountain in Eastern Mongolia with a great owoo called the Golden owoo (Altan owoo) on its top. A national sport festival (Altan owoogiin naadam) and a sacrificial ritual are held there annually.
Here is the properly counted six offerings
With the fine vodka of this country
With silks and ribbon
With beautiful golden presents
Offering the money of this era
For the thirteen Lords of the North
Black and white vodka
These are my fine offerings.

After this song Altanceceg’s husband took the milk, sweets, vodka and the cup with a mixture of them (oron delxiin ürgöl) and went outside to offer them all to the spirits. When one offers something to the spirits, one has to sprinkle the cups’ contents in a certain direction (for the 13 Lords of the North in a northerly direction) wearing some kind of headgear, whether a cap, a hat or a hood. If no headgear is available, the person making the offering can put his or her hand on the top of his head. The offering process is considered to be a form of communication with the spirits, which is why the one who offers needs some form of protection, albeit less than the shaman who performs a ritual. Namsarai explained the offerings as:

Ornii tengeriin seržem
Oron delxii owoo uluiin seržem
Butiin šineen ideetei
Bulag met undaatai.\(^{36}\)

Vodka-libation for the earth and the sky (spirits)
vodka-libation for mountain and Owoo-spirits of the world
with a bush-like food
with a spring-like drink.

After offering the sacrifices, Altanceceg started to sing the last song, sending off all the spirits:

Xanatai gerees garagtii
Xad gertee busagtii

\(^{36}\) Collected from Dawuujin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.
Please go out from the house which has walls
Please return to your rocky homes
Go out from the smoky house
Return to your mountain homes
Please leave now
Head towards your homelands
Go up to the Sky
Ascend to the Sky
Go back to your vast lands!

Please return to your rocky homes!
Your weasel-sable blankets are ready.
Return to your bushy homes!
Your sable-weasel blankets are ready.
Please fly up and up!
In the *Xesiin ezenei duudлага* (Invocation of the Lord of the Drum) by shaman Ceren, the following version of this part is found:

. . . xada gertee xarigti daa  
buta gertee busagtii daa  
ogtorgoidoo degdegti daa  
oron n’utagaa busagtii daa . . .

. . . return to your rocky home  
go back to your bushy home  
fly up to your heaven  
go back to your native land . . .

Conclusions

The study of Mongolian shamanism is mostly based on Darxad materials. The shamanism of the Buriads living in Mongolia is less well known. A large proportion of the material concerning the shamanism of these people originates from a particular shaman, the recently deceased Čojjiliin Ceren (Ceren baawai), who lived in the Bayan-Uul district of Dornod province. He was the most important informant for the famous researcher Gantogtox, who has published numerous articles on shaman Ceren’s rituals. The shamanic songs, rituals, and paraphernalia of Buriad shamans from other districts of Eastern Mongolia have not been researched as exhaustively as those of the aforementioned shaman. Since there are many more Buriad shamans from Eastern Mongolia, it seems to be necessary to compare one with another.

The present material could form the basis for such a comparison—especially the excerpts of invocations and songs cited by the assistant, Namsarai. Not surprisingly, these lines of poetry are quite similar to those of shaman Ceren; however, the differences are always more interesting to a researcher.

The description of the ritual itself is a unique one in the sense that a full description of this kind of ritual among Mongolian Buriads has not been published yet.

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37 Translated by György Kara in Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 129.
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The Jurchen Shamaness. An Analysis of the First Written Reference to the Word ‘Shaman’

GÁBOR KÓSA

This short study discusses the first appearance of the word ‘shaman’. A gloss in the Song dynasty Sanchao beimeng huibian 三朝北盟匯編 equates the Jurchen word shanman 瑚曼城 with the Chinese wuyu 巫嫗. The context and these terms are investigated to elucidate the exact meaning of this reference.

It was French Sinologist Paul Pelliot who famously drew the attention of the scholarly world to the first written record of the word šaman.¹ He pointed out that in the third chapter of his Sanchao beimeng huibian 三朝北盟匯編 (“Collection of documents on the treaties with the North during three reigns”), Xu Mengxin 徐夢莘 of the Song dynasty (1126–1207) made the following remark:

Wushi was cunning and talented, he himself created the laws and the script of the Nüzhen [Jurchen], and unified the country. The people of the country called him a shanman. As for the word shanman, it is the Nüzhen equivalent

¹ Pelliot 1913: 466–469. It is, however, not the first time that a Chinese source mentions a foreign designation of the word shaman: “[The Kirghiz] designate the wus as gan [qam]. 吐火魯‘甘’ (Xin Tangshu 新唐書 217 xia, liezhuan 142 xia [6148]; cf. Laufer 1917: 369). The Tang pronunciation of this word was ‘kam’ (Pulleyblank 1991: 102). A much later, but in a European language still early occurrence of this word can be found in William of Rubruck’s description, though he evidently confuses it with the word Khan (Xan) (Itinerarium fratris Willielmi de Rubruquis de ordine fratrumbero Minorum, Galli 19.): “Can nomen dignitatis quod idem est qui divinator. Omnes diuinatores vocant Can. (Can is the name of a dignity which is the same as a diviner. All their diviners are called Can.)” On the Turkic and Mongolian designations see e.g. Németh 1913–14: 245; and Roux 1958.
of (the Chinese) ‘shamaness’ [wuyu]. Because of his magical powers, he was similar to the spirits; thus nobody who was (in talent) below Nianhan could approach him. 元室加之有才，自製女真法律、文字，成其一國。國人號珊蠻。珊蠻者，女真語巫媚也。以其變通如神，粘罕以下皆莫能及。2

During Xu Mengxin’s life, the northern part of China was ruled by the “barbarian” Jurchen Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234), and the Chinese court was forced to flee to the southern city of Hangzhou (Lin’an), where it established the Southern Song court. In the above excerpt, Wushi 元室 (or 悟室) is a reference to Wanyan Xiyin 完顏希尹, a Jurchen imperial advisor under the Jurchen emperors Jin Taizu 太祖 (1115–1123) and Jin Taizong 太宗 (1123–1135).3

Wanyan Xiyin was originally Gushen, he was the son of Huandu. Since (Jin) Taizu engaged in wars, he was always with the troops, either following Taizu or Sagai, or (participating) in the attacks together with the generals. He was always successful. Originally the Jin people had no writing. The power of the country was becoming stronger day by day. They had a friendly relationship with the neighbouring countries, so they used the Qidan [Kitay] characters. (Emperor) Taizu ordered Wanyan Xiyin to create a complete system of writing for their own country. Imitating the regular script of the Chinese and taking the Qidan character system as a base, Xiyin harmonized them with his mother tongue, and created the nüzhi [nüzhen] characters. In the 8th month of the 3rd year of the Tianfu period [1119], the characters and the script were completed. Taizu rejoiced greatly and ordered their propagation. He gave Xiyin a horse and clothes. Later on, Xizong also created nüzhi [nüzhen] characters, which were used simultaneously with those created by Xiyin. The Xiyin-made characters were called the great characters of the Nüzhi [Nüzhen], and those designed by Xizong were called the small ones.4 完顏希尹本名谷神，敦都之子也。自太祖舉兵，常在行陣，或從太祖、或從從政，或與諸將征伐，比有功。金人初無文字，國勢日強，與鄰國交好，通用契丹字。太祖命希尹撰本國字，備制度。希尹乃依做漢人楷字，因契丹字

3 His biography is recorded in the Jinshi 金史 73, liezhuang 11 [1684–1686]. Nianhan 粘罕 was Zong Hanben 宗翰本, an eminent military leader, see Jinshi 74, liezhuang 12 [1693–1699], Franke 1975: 141, 150–151.
4 Jinshi 73, liezhuang 11 [1684].
This part of Wanyan Xiyin’s biography testifies that he was basically a “secular” person, but can we find any reason for his being called a shaman? After searching through the entire corpus of the official histories, we find that—though his name is often mentioned—there is only a single episode where Wanyan Xiyin seems to display some kind of “supernatural” ability: after questioning a young boy, he predicts that he will become a talented and famous person. Nevertheless, this prediction, as the story suggests, is due to the intellectual abilities of Wanyan Xiyin, and not shamanic ones. Strangely enough, no other references to his extraordinary capacities or functions can be found in the Chinese sources.

Thus, most probably Wanyan Xiyin was not a shaman in sensu stricto, but a Jurchen advisor who created Jurchen writing. It might have been this important cultural contribution that made him extraordinary in the eyes of the people. The text mentions the word ‘shaman’ precisely because of its unusual, non-religious usage. Consequently, one could thus paraphrase Xu Mengxin’s sentence as follows: “The people applied the term ‘shaman’—which they generally used in connection with ‘real’ shamans—to Wanyan Xiyin because this was how they expressed their appreciation.” Therefore, strangely enough, the first reference to the word ‘shaman’ is not related to anybody of shamanic abilities or function.

Nevertheless, Chinese sources also attest that shamanism did exist among the Jurchen. Though not too numerous, there are some hints that—besides Taoism and Buddhism—shamanism was an important religious tradition among them.

According to the customs of the (Jurchen) kingdom, if someone had been killed, a wuxi [shaman] was employed to curse and chant at the slayer (of the deceased). (The wuxi) tied a blade to the end of a long pole and, accompanied by a crowd of people, went to the house [of the guilty man] to revile him:

5 Jinshi 88, liezhuan 26 [1949–1950].
6 On the role of Buddhism and Taoism, see Franke 1994: 313–319; and Yao 1995.
“I will take an ox of yours that has one horn pointing to Heaven and one horn pointing to earth, and a nameless horse that from the front has a splotchy head, from behind a white tail, and from the sides wings to the left and right.” The sound of this song was plaintive and shrill, like the sound of the [Chinese dirge] “Haoli.” After (the shaman) had drawn on the ground with the blade, [the guilty man’s] livestock and valuables were seized, then (the shaman) withdrew. Once a person’s house has been cursed like this, the household will be rapidly ruined.7 國俗，有被殺者，必使巫觋以詛祝殺之者，通繚刃于杖端，與眾至其家，歌而詛之曰：「取爾一角指天、一角指地之牛，無名之馬，向之則革面，背之則白尾，橫視之則有左右翼者。」其聲哀切悽婉，若萬里之音。既而以刃畫地，劫取畜產財物而還。其家一經詛祝，家道輟敗。

Zhaozu had been childless for a long time. There was a wu [shaman] who could speak the language of a spirit, which proved very reliable. (The emperor) went to pray to that spirit. 昭祖久無子，有巫者能道神話，甚驗，乃往禱焉。8

In cases of illness they do not have physicians or drugs, but prefer shamans and invocators [wuzhu]. When somebody is ill, the shaman [wuzhe] kills a pig or a dog to exorcize it [the demon of the illness]. 疾病，則無醫藥。尚巫祝，病則巫者殺豬狗以禳之。9

Though the term wu 巫, wuxi 巫㝛 or wuzhe 巫者 (and not shaman) are mentioned in these texts, they evidently mean somebody similar to a shaman.

Xu Mengxin’s text implies that a generally used Jurchen religious term (shanman)—associated with a generally practiced religious phenomenon—is applied by the people in connection with a wise advisor. The late Song and Yuan dynasty pronunciation of 嶂蠻 [present day

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8 Jinshi 65, liezhuang 3. [1541], transl. Groot 1982: 1223, cf. Franke 1979: 139–140. Other examples in the Jinshi: 64, liezhuang 1. [1500]; 64, liezhuang 2. [1530–1531]; 65, liezhuang 3. [1541]; 70. liezhuang 8. [1617]; 119. liezhuang 57. [2602]. All these examples use the word wu 巫 or similar compounds.
shanman] was ‘sanman’.

It might be interesting to note that the second character of this transcription (man) is a collective designation for “the southern barbarians,” who were most prominently associated with shamanic practices since the Warring States period. This kind of “semanto-phonetic” transcription was in use in China. Works like the *Chuci* (especially the *Jiuge*, the *Lisao* and the *Zhaohun* parts), the *Shanhaijing*, the art of Chu, some references in the *Lunyu*, and several historical sources attest to the intimate link between the southern “barbarians” and shamanism (Kósa 2000: 149–159, 2006: 307–314).

When giving a definition of the word shanman, Xu Mengxin applies the traditional Chinese method of explanation: he provides a short, interpretative gloss of a term which contemporary readers were obviously not familiar with. Using the traditional grammatical structure of such glosses (. . . zhe, . . . ye), he equates the unknown term (shanman) with a more familiar one (wuyu, shamaness), also noting that the former derives from the Jurchen language.

Although Pelliot (1913: 468–469) had mentioned the apparent contradiction between the reference to the male Wu Shi and the female shamaness in his article, he did not elaborate on this issue. In his translation of the third chapter of the *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, Herbert Franke (1975: 155–156) does not discuss the problem either, but simply refers to Pelliot’s article. As far as I know, nobody has analysed this particular line since then. Here I make an attempt to identify the exact meaning of wuyu in order to understand more accurately whom Xu Mengxin might have in mind in his gloss.

As I have previously attempted to demonstrate, since the Warring States period (451–221 B.C.) at least, the Chinese word *wu* designat-

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10 Pulleyblank 1991: 274, 207. In later Chinese works, this word was transcribed in several ways: sama 萨吗 [sa’ma’], sama 萨麻 [sa’ma’], chama 又玛 [tš’ama’], chama 察玛 [tš’a’ma’], saman 萨满 [sa’mán’] (Pulleyblank 1991: 46, 47, 206, 207, 271). Since its first usage in the *Da Qing huidian shili* 大清会典事例, saman 萨满 is the accepted transcription of the word.

11 A well-known example is that of the transcription of Abraham in the Jewish community of Kaifeng: Awuluohan 阿無羅漢 is on the one hand a rather close phonetic equivalent of Abraham, on the other hand, it contains the term luohan 罗漢 which is the Chinese term for the Buddhist arhat, thus emphasizing the eminence of the character (Plaks 1999: 39–40).
ed a religious specialist whose activities and attributes can be roughly paralleled with those of a “traditional” shaman. Chinese sources most often made a clear distinction between male and female shamans. Retelling some stories from the southern kingdom Chu, Guoyu of the Warring States remarks:

A spirit descends onto the person. If he is a man, one calls him a \( xî \) [a male shaman]; if a woman, one calls her a \( wu \) [a shamaness].

In his *Shuowen jiezi* (completed in 100 A.D.), Xu Shen defines \( wu \) as follows:

Shamans \([wu]\) are invocators. They are women who can perform services for the shapeless and make the spirits come down by dancing.  

As for \( xî \), they are persons who fast and serve the spirits. If he is a man, one calls him a \( xî \); if a woman, one calls her a \( wu \).  

In the 4th century A.D., Ge Hong, who was collecting “ethnographic data” in the southern part of China, still made a clear distinction between the female \( wu \) and the male \( xî \), though he ultimately derives his information from other, former works.

Some say that among those who can see the spirits, the males are (called) \( xî \), the females are \( wu \). Someone must have this ability naturally; it cannot be acquired through learning.

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13 Guoyu, Chuyu 18:1a. Also see Hanshu 25 shang, zhi 5 shang [1189].  
15 Shuowen jiezi 2910 [193–194].  
The latter case, borrowing from the earlier sources is evident; still, a theoretical distinction seems to remain constant through the centuries. However, as early as the 2nd century A.D., the word *wu* came to be used more generally, simply meaning anybody with a shamanic function,\(^\text{17}\) and other compounds arose that were applied when it was important to point out the female character of the shaman: *niu* _wu_ 女巫, *wupo* 巫婆 and *wuyu* 巫娅.

During the Song dynasty there were several official suppressions of local shamans or spirit mediums: three large-scale ones took place in 981, 992 and 1023 (Sutton 2000: 10). The activities of the shamans became more and more mediumistic, and they were more often associated with women than with men. This is the reason why it may have been easier for Xu Mengxin to explain the foreign word *shanman* by alluding to the contemporary Song practice of shamanesses or spirit mediums. The question remains, however, why Xu Mengxin would have chosen this name for a shamaness, as it is by far not the commonest among these names.

In the classical canonical works, one can find several references to the *wu* 巫, but none to the *wuyu* 巫娅. In the 25 traditional Chinese historical annals, there are altogether two references to this compound, while the word *niu* _wu_ 女巫 is used from the *Shiji* to the *Yuanshi* throughout. It would seem more logical to annotate an unknown term with a well-known one, for example *niu* _wu_ 女巫. I think that taking a closer look at one of the two references can give us a clue to this problem.

One of the two references to *wuyu* can be found in the *Shiji* 史記.\(^\text{18}\) In this story, the *Shiji* relates how an official of Wei, Ximen Bao (c. 437–c. 387 B.C.), put an end to the barbaric local custom of a shamaness sacrificing young women to the River God (Hebo 河伯). The story was well-known in later periods, and it is worth quoting the last episode at length.

When the hour had come, Ximen Bao went to join them at the riverside. The three elders, the officers with their followers, the notables, and the old men of the wards had all flocked to the spot, with two or three thousand spectators


\(^{18}\) *Shiji* 史記 126, *liezhuang* 66 [3212]. The other minor one, not treated here, is in the *Xin Tangshu* 89, *liezhuang* 14 [3757].
from among the people. The wu was a spinster of seventy years; ten female disciples, each dressed in a gown of silk, stood behind her. “Call the wife of the River Lord hither,” said Ximen Bao, “that I may see whether she is beautiful or ugly.” They forthwith fetched her out of the tent, and as she stood before him, he looked at her and, turning to the three elders, the wuzhu and the old men, he said: “This maid is not nice enough; chief wu-dame [wuyu 巫媪], be so kind as to go into the water for me and tell the River God that we will try to get one of greater beauty to send to him another day.” And on his orders the constables lifted up the chief wu-dame [wuyu 巫媪], and flung her into the stream. After a while he said, “Why does the wu-dame [wuyu 巫媪] stay in there so long? Disciple, go and tell her to make haste,” and they cast a disciple into the river. Again there was a pause, after which he exclaimed, “Wherefore does that disciple stay away so long? Despatch another one to hurry her on!” and they flung yet another disciple into the water. Still a third one of them suffered the same fate, whereupon Ximen Bao said, “Those disciples of the wu-dame [wuyu 巫媪] are merely women, unable to deliver any message; the three elders must go into the water and deliver it”; and they too were cast into the stream. Now Ximen Bao stuck his writing-pencil into his hair, bent forward towards the river, and remained in this position for a good while, the old men, the officials, and the spectators standing horror-stricken. He now turned towards them; “How is it,” said he, “that the wu-dame [wuyu 巫媪] and the three elders do not come back? I will now despatch an officer and a notable to hurry them on.” But they all struck their heads against the ground again and again so that their foreheads were almost smashed and the blood gushed out on the ground; their faces had an ashy colour of death. “Yes,” said Ximen Bao, “let us wait here a few moments more”; and when these had elapsed, he said, “Officers, rise! the River God detains his visitors so long that evidently they are gone forever; let us go home now.” So great a fright thus came on the official class and the people in Ye that from that moment nobody even ventured to speak of marriages of the River Lord. 至其時，西門豹往會之河上。三老、官屬、豪長者、里父老皆會，以人民往观之者二千人。其巫，老女子也，已年七十，従弟子女十人所，皆衣織布衣，立大巫後。西門豹曰：「呼河伯婦來，視其好醜。」即將女出帷中，來至前。豹視之，顧謂三老，巫祝。父老曰：「是女子不好，煩大巫祝為入報河伯，得更求好女，後日送之。」即使吏卒共抱大巫祝投之河中。有頃，曰：「巫祝何久也？弟子趣之！」復以弟子一人投河中。有頃，曰：「弟子何久也？復使一人趣之！」復投一弟
In the text one can find a brief description of the shamaness and her followers: “The wu was an elderly woman of over seventy years; ten female disciples, each dressed in a gown of silk, stood behind her.20 其巫, 老 女子也, 已年七十. 從弟子女十人所, 皆衣緞單衣, 立大 巫後。” Later on, the text calls this woman a wuyu 巫嫤 five times. The word yu 嫤 actually means an elderly woman; thus the compound is rather similar to another, more general term for shaman, wupo 巫婆. Both expressions imply an elderly, female person. The main message of the text above is the conflict between the civilized official and the barbarian shamaness, and the conquest of the latter by the former. It should also be stressed that the text mentions wuyu four times in the dialogues and only once in the written comment. This seems to point to the fact that wuyu 巫嫤 was more often used in the spoken language, which—if true—may account for its almost total absence from the dynastic histories.

If mentioning the word wuyu most probably evoked the memory of the widespread story of Ximen Bao—which mentions the word wuyu five times—one has to prove that Xu Mengxin’s attitude to the Jurchen was similar to that of Ximen Bao’s to the barbarian shamaness. Indeed, Xu Mengxin’s prejudice toward the Jurchen can be seen from several remarks in the third chapter of his book, as he often alludes to their barbaric, non-civilized nature:

These people [the Jurchen] are stupid, rustic, audacious and violent, and unable to distinguish between life and death. 其人憨仆勇鷄, 不能辨生死。21

Their character is deceitful, covetous and cruel. They honour the strong and

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21 Trans. by Franke 1975: 126 (slightly modified).
despise the old. 其性奸詐，貪婪殘忍，貴壯賤老。22

They are very fond of wine and then become murderous. 啸酒而好殺。23

Rules for ceremonies do not exist (among them). 無儀法。24

These people do not know about chronology. 其人不知紀年。25

The starting point of our analysis was a definition of the Jurchen, i.e. “barbarian”, word *shanman* by a Chinese *literatus* during a period when the northern part of China had been conquered and was ruled by the Jurchen. By alluding to the well-known story of “an anti-shaman hero” (Sutton 2000: 35) (Ximen Bao), Xu Mengxin applies “verbal violence” to situate the word *shanman* in the contemporary Chinese context.

**Summary**

(1) The first appearance of the word ‘shaman’ in fact does not refer to a genuine shaman, but to a political advisor who was respected by the Jurchen people as a shaman probably because he created Jurchen writing. As Xu Mengxin’s information seems to derive from a reliable source, the Chinese word *shanman* is the transcription of the word. As there is virtually nothing that points to Wanyan Xiyin’s shamanic functions, but we do have evidence for the existence of Jurchen shamanism, we can therefore surmise that the word ‘shaman’ was already being used in a broader sense by this time and was not necessarily restricted to its original meaning, but could designate anybody with extraordinary power or merits.

(2) The Chinese transcription of this word as *shanman* 珊蠻 contains a hint of the southern barbarians (*man* 蠻) who were well known for their sensitivity to shamanic practices since the Warring States period. Most probably, this semanto-phonetic transcription was Xu Mengxin’s

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23 Trans. by Franke 1975: 129.
24 Trans. by Franke 1975: 130 (slightly modified).
own invention, as it does not appear in any other source. Besides being a good phonetic equivalent of the original word, it is also a pun which alludes to the barbarian nature of the person involved.

(3) It was the general Chinese association of *wu* with women and the relatively rare independent occurrence of *xi* (male shamans) that led Xu Mengxin to define the word *shanman* as shaman-woman, shamaness (*wuyu*). He did this despite the fact that the person being referred to was without doubt a male person. Thus it was most probably not his deep acquaintance with the complex question of the sex of the shaman that led him to this definition, but simply the contemporary Song dynasty practice. On the other hand, it is also possible that he was deliberately presenting the famous barbarian advisor, Wanyan Xiyin, as being regarded by his own people as an old shamaness.

(4) The specific usage of the rather rare word *wuyu*巫姫 for a shamaness might be explained if we consider that this compound evoked the memory of the classical *Shiji* story of the official Ximen Bao and the barbaric shamaness, which might have provided an analogy for the Chinese–Jurchen relationship in the Southern Song dynasty.

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The Shaman and the Spirit World

Catherine Uray-Kőhalmi

Earlier theoretical research concentrated on the personage of the shaman and less on his or her cultural background, system of beliefs and world concept of shamanism. By researching the myths and epics of the Tungus, Mongolian and Siberian Turkic peoples, the author became familiar with the religious concepts and world image of these peoples from the inside, from an “emic” point of view. It is characteristic of this animist religion that beside the threefold World there is another parallel world, which exists in the form of myths and epics. The shaman as master of souls and spirits had important functions in connection with this parallel world.

Almost every researcher who has approached the phenomenon of shamanism with even a hint of a theoretical purpose has tried to define the essence of it. There have been researchers who saw shamanism as a phenomenon characteristic of all primary cultures of the world, while others restricted true shamanism to Eurasia or to Siberia. Some tried to explain it as a culturally defined complex of phenomena, others held it to be a complex of certain techniques of ecstasy. Some saw it as a religion, and there were those who simply saw it as a mass of rituals. Some traced it back to the most ancient ages of human culture, whereas others believed it to be a relatively late development in history.¹ That is, no generally or even partially accepted theory has so far been developed to define it, in spite of a general agreement on the question of what phenomena can be asserted to belong to shamanism. Naturally, I myself would not venture here to decide the problem: nevertheless, I should like to introduce a point of view that has been neglected up to now.

¹ See the excellent summary of Hultkrantz 1993; see further Anisimov 1958; Bogoraz 1910: 5–6; Samuel 1985; and Smoliak 1991.
Earlier research concentrated merely on identifying and examining shamanic practices, on the person, the devices and activities of the shaman, and less on the cultures, systems of belief and world concepts where shamanism appeared. These cultures were rather diverse even within North and East Asia.

More recent research has pointed out that the shaman—whether male or female—is not the only cultic person whether among the hunters of the Siberian tundra and taiga, among the pastoral peoples of the steppe, or in the centralized, despotic kingdoms and empires of the Far East (Kendall 1985; Wu 1989; Uray-Kőhalmi 1991). In Siberia the hunters themselves performed the rites of hunting and gathering. The ancestor worship of the families or larger kinship groups were performed by the oldest man or woman of the community. The same can be observed, perhaps in more elaborated form, among the pastoral peoples of the steppe, where clan heads and the paramount chiefs themselves had strictly circumscribed ritual tasks (Uray-Kőhalmi 1991: 231; Kendall 1985: 144–163; Rintschen 1959: 13–15; Franke 1978). Those qualified to cure certain illnesses and also capable of preventing natural catastrophes were persons who had already either been cured of those illnesses or who had a special contact with a certain natural phenomenon (e.g. storms) because of their descent, and thus were supposed to be able to help others as well. It is interesting to note that, from Anatolia to the Amur River, cultic personalities who specialize in a given type of illness or natural catastrophe or dynastic cult ordinarily form kinship groups, and they have supernatural powers to overcome sickness or bring luck by virtue of belonging to those groups. The singer of epics, the bard, is also mostly a cultic person independent of the shaman.

So it is not only the shaman who determines the religious life of these peoples. These religious systems also exist independently of the shaman.

I had the opportunity when researching Tungus, Mongol and Siberian Turkic myths and epics to become acquainted with the religious concepts and image of the world of these peoples from inside, from an emic point of view. Here of course is not the place to elaborate on these systems of belief, so I will try to characterize them with a few words only.

The system of belief that preserves the most ancient basic traits from among the above mentioned is that of the Siberian hunters: the Tungus, the Turks, the Samoyeds, the Kets of the Yenisei, the Yukaghir, etc.
This is a singular type of animism, one that penetrates and determines all. I have, however, to point out that the spirits and souls they believe in are completely different from those believed in by Christians.

According to the Tungus, everything in the world has a soul—that is, a spiritual substance, a force, an essence. This is what remains as an idea, a memory in our brain. Even lifeless objects and geographical or natural phenomena have such souls, in Evenki *musun*. Living things, from plants to man, are connected with and tied as if by a thread to the sky by a special mental power, by a sort of vital force, in Evenki *majin*. If the connecting mental thread is broken, the development of the respective creature is interfered with. The prey has a soul of its own (Evenki *šingken*), and even the different species have guarding master spirits of their own. A bred animal has a different kind of soul (Evenki *kutu*), which is influenced by breeding luck and even by the current value of the animal. A human being, beside the souls controlling his or her skeleton and the different inner organs (Evenki *uksuki*), and beside the vital force of the soul, *majin*, connected with the sky, also has an infant soul (Evenki *omi*). This is basically a part of the vital force of a clan or of an extended family. If the baby dies, the *omi* soul returns to the tree of the clan in the form of a little bird. After the age of one, he/she has a personal life soul (Evenki *ergen*). The Evenki *hanjan* (Manchu *fayangga*), the shadow soul or dream soul of man, contains all the individual traits of a personality. This creates the image which lives in the minds and memories of members of the community. This is the soul that wanders for a while after death to the world beyond the abode of the kinship group. To what extent this soul is thought to be identical with the ego of the person is not clear. Anyway, instead of the alleged double soul, there are many more, and more complicated souls, in the beliefs of these peoples. This belief in souls comprises a well-founded, coherent system.²

It is characteristic of this animist religion that beside the threefold world it contemplates a different, parallel world, the second reality, which exists and reacts to the real world in the form of reminiscences, history, myths and epics. The shamans, as masters of soul vision, leadership, calling and preventing, had important roles and functions in

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these societies and in their systems of belief (Hatto 1970: 1–19; Ucht-

The pastoral peoples of the steppe region adopted quite a lot of this
animism of the hunters since most of the great peoples of the steppe
originated in the taiga; nevertheless, they of course inherited the beliefs
and gods of the former nomadic peoples as well. Among them was,
for example, a powerful, even almighty sky god, teŋrı, who, however,
was not active, but rather had the characteristics of a deus otiosus. The
nomads believed in an earth mother goddess who at the same time was
the original, first mother of their clans, and also in mountain gods,
who were the guardians of the region and at the same time spirits of
the ancestors. It is among the nomads that a god of fate and Erlik khag-
gan, the ruler of the underworld, appear. The personal soul of the life
force is connected to the scalp and to the person’s name, and could be
acquired by taking them from a conquered enemy.

World religions had a really forceful impact on the beliefs of the peo-
ple of the steppe. Missionaries were cordially received and allowed to
work in the courts of the empire-founding great khagans, who of course
kept their shamans too. In the course of time Buddhism, Islam, Christi-
nity (and even Judaism) conquered these peoples, at least superficially.
Their ancient world beliefs, their image of the world beyond became
confused, and survived in their epics only. Shamanic rituals became
restricted to the religious life of the common people.3

Characteristic of the religions of East Asian despotic kingdoms is the
ideology of the divine origin of the ruling family, and the process by
which guardian spirits became heavenly personalities, or gods. Other-
wise the systems of beliefs differed widely both within and between the
respective countries.

In this short paper my aim has been to point out that research on sha-
manism is not equivalent to research into systems of belief, and cannot
be replaced by it. Systems of belief can be researched without shamans,
but the shamanism of different peoples cannot be researched without a
knowledge of their systems of belief and religious world concepts.

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References


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The Shamanic Healer: 
Master of Nonlocal Information?

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The prevailing neuroscientific paradigm considers information processing within the central nervous system as occurring through hierarchically organized and interconnected neural networks. The hierarchy of neural networks doesn’t end at the neuroaxonal level; it incorporates subcellular mechanisms as well. When the size of the hierarchical components reaches the nanometer range and the number of elements exceeds that of the neuroaxonal system, an interface emerges for a possible transition between neurochemical and quantum physical events. ‘Signal nonlocality,’ accessed by means of quantum entanglement is an essential feature of the quantum physical domain. The presented interface may imply that some manifestations of altered states of consciousness, unconscious/conscious shifts have quantum origin with significant psychosomatic implications. Healing methods based on altered states of consciousness and common in spiritual or shamanic traditions escape neuroscientific explanations based on classical cognition denoted here as ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ (characteristic of ordinary states of consciousness). Another channel of information processing, called ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ (characteristic of non-ordinary states of consciousness) is required to be introduced for interpretation. The first one is capable of modeling via symbolism and is more culturally bound due to its psycholinguistic features. The second channel lacks the symbolic mediation, therefore it has more transcultural similarity and practically ineffable for the first one, though culture specific transliteration may occur. Different traditional healing rituals pursue the same end: to destroy “profane” sensibility. The ritual use of hallucinogens, the monotonous drumming, the repeated refrains, the fatigue, the fasting, the dancing and so forth, create a sensory condition which is wide open to the so-called “supernatural.” According to contemporary anthropological views, the breakdown of ordinary sensibility/cognition is not the ultimate goal, but the
way to accomplish healing, that is psychointegration in the widest sense. From the perspective of system theory, integration needs information to be brought into the system. According to the presented model, when the coping capability of the ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ processing is exhausted in a stressful, unmanageable situation, or its influence is eliminated by the use of hallucinogens or in case of transcendental meditation, a frame shift occurs, and the “spiritual universe” opens up through the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ channel.

Introduction

The belief in spiritual forces and other worldly realms appears universal in the human species. Rational thinking deems such concepts superstitious, originating in illusion or fear of death, representing anxiety over ego-dissolution, and considers them products of wishful thinking. Academical accounts see spiritual practice arising from the functioning of the human mind with its supposed tendency to seek spiritual states, or comfort in a hostile world (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2005). Accordingly, in worshipping spiritual beings humans are just paying homage to a rarified form of themselves.

One can see that certain beliefs and experiences universally crop up in spiritual practices around the world and have been maintained for millennia. The empirically established existence of resilient commonalities is considerable. Regardless, the fact that spiritual teachings and mystical wisdom traditions share a remarkable cross-cultural similarity can be dismissed with a skeptical shrug; commonalities can be explained away as projections of intrapsychic structures common in every human being, and that misinterpretation of universal experiences like dreams may lead to the belief in existence of spiritual beings (Tyler 1987).

There are some elaborate explanations drawing parallels with a pathological condition. Similarly to schizophrenia which, as some speculates, is a price the human race pays for the gift of language (Crow 1997), the tendency to believe in ‘supernatural’ beings is common in all humans, because it is an offspring of creative imagination. In essence, something maladaptive resides in us universally and stays with us persistently, because it is closely tied to an adaptive trait; that is creativity in present case. The most permissive, dispassionate scientific approach accepts universality to be sufficient for establishing phenom-
enological reality, but leaves the question open to its ontological source (Winkelman 2004).

This essay takes effort to follow a passionate approach in order to establish an ontological foundation of shamanic practice and spiritual worldview. Nevertheless, it will be seen that for understanding and rationalizing spiritual claims one has to leave the safe ground of mainstream science and enter uncharted areas following a slippery path. The authors of this article are fully aware of the pitfalls of passionate thinking. Truly, the methodological approach to be used has minimal experimental support; it can rely only on neurophenomenology, model-making, searching for inconsistencies in rivaling views, and using of the dubious power of converging evidence.

Changing Views on the Shaman’s Mission: Psychointegration and Divination

In the course of recent studies in psychological anthropology, a consensus has emerged that the vast majority of ritual ceremonies are primarily concerned with healing in a general sense. They exert influence on physical well-being, heighten identity, enhance interpersonal cohesion, reintegrate community into the environment, and mitigate perceived conflicts with ‘supernatural’ powers. In spite of the cultural diversity of therapeutic institutions and practices, the fundamental healing principles show a good deal of cross-cultural uniformity. Michael Winkelman (2000) emphasizes the traditional healer’s role in the reintegrative activity, and coins the term ‘psychointegration’ as a description of the healing process.

All traditional shamanic rituals pursue the same end: to destroy ‘profane’ sensibility, and create a sensory condition that is open to the ‘supernatural.’ This is not only a matter of physiological techniques. Traditional ideology directs and imparts values to all these efforts intended to break the frame of profane sensibility. The result is an altered state of consciousness (ASC): ecstasy or trance, which is not the goal but the means of contacting spiritual realms in archaic healing ceremonies. Mircea Eliade (2000) defines the technique of ecstasy as the common denominator of all shamanic practices. According to his view, the shaman is a skilled technician, a manipulator of ASC’s of all
the participants including himself or herself, an experienced navigator of spiritual realms as revealed in the shamanic journey.

Over the past decade it has become increasingly clear that while trance techniques are important there are cultures with exceptions (Hoppál 2005: 76–77). More universal is the shaman’s function in the role of a communicator: the shaman is the traditional healer who encounters divine entities and spirits in order to fulfill his therapeutic obligation. This is psychointegration in the broadest sense. Integration, which is reintegration in case of healing, necessarily means bringing information into the disintegrated system through a process known as divination.

Then we arrive at a new definition of the shaman’s mission: acting as messenger of divine information in the service of the community. Despite millennia of “field testing,” divination has no scientific validation. It may reach epistemological acceptance at best without ontological recognition (Winkelman and Peek 2004). Ignorance is more common from a scientific standpoint. Due to lack of controlled observations—the result of academic indifference, it is extremely difficult to refer to well organized field work on the functional outcome of divination practices. Anecdotal reports are more common but have only limited scientific value. In some instances such reports can be persuasive.

Let us review now three cases from widely separated locations world-wide. A Tungus shaman in Siberia agrees to the request of tribal hunters to locate game during a poor hunting season. Using drumming technique he enters an ASC and provides information which helps his hunters. The Western interpretation—if it accepts at all the validity of this kind of information—would be that the shaman calculates the behavior of the game according to weather and well-known environmental conditions. In other words, it is a decision based on cognitive processing of sensory data. The explanation of the shaman himself is different: guidance was provided by forest spirits.

On another continent, hunters of the Kalahari !kung tribe leave the settlement for hunting, which may last two days or two weeks. Timely preparation for the return of successful hunters is necessary for processing the game. The people left behind make the appropriate steps long before the hunters’ re-appearance. Their foreknowledge of the hunters’ return could be explained, rationally, by saying they had a messenger sent ahead, or used tam-tam drums or smoke signals. The tribesmen report: it was the spirit of ancestors who informed them.
Next we move to the Amazon basin. The Shuar shaman is facing a new disease in the community. Herbal remedy is sought by adding leaves of a candidate plant into the hallucinogenic beverage *ayahuasca*, a sacrament indigenous to the Upper Amazon region. The shaman drinks it and upon return to ordinary consciousness, decides the usefulness of the plant in question. Is his decision based on accumulation of ethnobotanical knowledge of several generations in combination with trial and error? The head-hunter Shuars are not likely to be merciful to an ineffective medicine man, so his techniques must be working. According to the *ayahuasquero* healer, the spirit of the new plant revealed itself with the help of plant teacher *ayahuasca*. Sometimes it is also told what plant to try next if the first one is not useful (Luna, personal communication).

The following contradiction can be pointed out: healers of different cultures were unequivocal in their way of interpretation, while rational thinking used diverging, unsystematic explanations. What side should be slashed with Occam’s razor? Occam’s razor is also called the ‘principle of parsimony.’ These days it is usually interpreted to mean something like “do not multiply hypotheses unnecessarily; or do not posit pluralities unnecessarily when generating explanatory models.” The ‘principle of parsimony’ is frequently used by philosophers of science in an effort to establish criteria for choosing from theories with equal explanatory power.

At first glance it is the “ primitives” who multiply causes unnecessarily by referring to the ‘supernatural’. However, Occam’s principle may easily be applied to the “rational” view, if those arguments are less parsimonious. What if there is no distinction assumed between the ‘supernatural’ and the natural world? Dividing nature into natural and ‘supernatural’, and delegating spirits to the ‘supernatural’, is not parsimonious within the materialist’s assumptions.

We are not satisfied with the explanatory power of current academic reasoning. The approach we will present does not ignore the aboriginal view in developing a broader model. The view of divination to be presented will come closer in interpretation to the “emic” view of native people. The term “emic” refers to how cultural phenomena are understood by members of that culture, as contrasted to “etic” viewpoints, which are based on rational explanations derived from western science (Harris 1979). The basic questions can be formulated this way: “What
is the source of the psychointegrative information? Where does the shamanic healer travel to?”

The Shamanic Journey

The centerpiece of shamanic practice is the shamanic journey. Also known as soul flight, it defines shamans and differentiates them from mediums, psychics, faith healers, and mystics. Only the shaman travels in an ASC, in a shamanic state of consciousness, according to Michael Harner (1990). Her or his soul is believed to leave the body and to travel at will throughout the expanses of the Lower, Middle, and Upper worlds. Others may heal or minister in an altered state, but it is the shaman alone who primarily engages in soul flight. The shaman is a cosmic traveler because, “. . . his soul can safely abandon his body and roam at vast distances, can penetrate the underworld and rise to the sky. Through his own ecstatic experience he knows the roads of the extraterrestrial regions. He can go below and above because he has already been there. The danger of losing his way in these forbidden regions is still great; but sanctified by his initiation and furnished with his guardian spirit, a shaman is the only human being able to challenge the danger and venture into a mystical geography.” (Eliade 2000)

The shaman’s journey takes place in “nonordinary reality” (Castaneda 1991). On the way the shaman may traverse strange landscapes and encounter numerous spirits. Such journeys are generally undertaken in order to learn, to heal, and to help in the service of the community. For instance, the shaman may journey for obtaining knowledge; for prophecy; for the purpose of treating illnesses; for appeasing tribal gods; or for assisting people to make the transition over to the land of the dead. According to the shamanic traditions of five continents, spiritual beings are the source of the energy and information needed to fulfill these goals.

Shamans establish contact with guides or teachers in “nonordinary reality,” from which they solicit advice regarding individual or tribal problems. Healing (i.e., integrative) power is acquired through interaction with “power animals,” “guardians,” or other spiritual entities. In all these activities, during the information-seeking endeavor, the shaman remains in control of her or his faculties, maintains awareness for recalling experiences, and is able to interpret them to members of
the community upon returning to ordinary reality. Hence, being able to remember what happened during a shamanic journey is crucial and distinguishes the shamanic state of consciousness as a unique ASC.

The Shamanic State of Consciousness

This type of ASC is dreamlike, but shares with the waking one a feeling of reality. In this state the shaman—like a skilled navigator—is keenly aware of the surrounding reality (both ordinary and “nonordinary”), and can give direction at will to her or his movements.

An ASC is one that differs significantly from ordinary or basic consciousness. Baseline consciousness might be best defined by the presence of two important subjective characteristics: the sense of self at the center of one’s perception (Ego awareness), and a sense that this self is identified with one’s body (i.e., “skin-encapsulated” Ego). States of consciousness where one loses identification with one’s self or with one’s body are definitely ASCs. The latter happens in the shamanic state of consciousness.

An ASC is marked psychologically by an individual’s modified perceptual responses, processes of memory formation, cognitive skills, affective reactions, and personality structure relative to the basic or ordinary state of consciousness for that person. Integration in an ASC can occur because—based on set and setting (frame of mind and situation of the person)—an attenuation of the ordinary mode and its primary faculties permits the emergence of integrative symbolic and cognitive processes normally repressed by ordinary consciousness (Tart 1975). Orchestrated destructuralization, combined with patterning forces that redirect psychological functioning toward culturally desired patterns of experience, can lead to a stable, integrative ASC (Winkelman 2000).

Examples of ASCs recognized by Western culture include hypnotic trance, deep sleep, dreaming (REM) sleep, meditation, use of hallucinogenic substances, or periods of peak athletic performance. Some of these states may be spontaneously achieved, instigated by such things as psychological trauma, sleep disturbance, sensory deprivation or overload, neurochemical imbalance, epileptic fits, or fever. However, they may also be induced by purposeful activities such as breathing exercises, extreme deprivations (fasting, social isolation), self-inflicted
pain (flagellation), reductions or elevations in the level of sensory stimulation, rhythmic photic or sonic stimulation (drumming), and frenzied dancing, spinning or chanting. Finally, they may be evoked by the use of psychoactive substances. Altered states of consciousness are frequently marked by vivid hallucinations and visions, the content of which is determined by the cultural background, set and setting.

During its history mankind has devoted astonishing energy and ingenuity to altering consciousness. In a survey of 488 societies in all parts of the world, Erika Bourgignon (1976) found that 437 of the societies had one or more culturally patterned form of ASCs. That means fully 90% of the world’s cultures have one or more institutionalized ASC. In tribal societies or Eastern cultures these are regarded—almost without exception—as sacred or revered conditions. Mystical or sacred states of consciousness are called *samadhi* in yoga, *moksha* in Hinduism, *satori* in Zen, *fana* in Sufism, and *Ruach Hakodesh* in Kabbalah. In the West they are known as *unio mystica* (Christian mysticism), *numinal state* (Carl Jung), ‘peak experience’ (Abraham Maslow), ‘holotropic experience’ (Stanislav Grof), ‘cosmic consciousness’ (Richard Bucke), or perhaps ‘flow’ (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi).

Western rational thinking marginalizes or even pathologizes ASCs, considers them not only altered but deviant states, cannot differentiate between their disintegrative or integrative forms, and cultivates only the basic state of ordinary consciousness. Hence, the West got stuck in one state of mind, not capitalizing on the potential of integrative ASCs.

To put it in ecological terms: Western civilization with its institutionalized propensity to escape transcendence is a monoculture, like a cornfield with low levels of biodiversity, in contrast to the flowery pasture of other traditions. Cultural relativism prohibits comparing and judging the validity of cultural values. Nevertheless, evolution prefers diversity. The West is largely suspicious of ASCs, lacks institutional means to directly experience the sacred, and is left without understanding the integrative properties of transcendent ASCs. Techniques for inducing ASCs—typical in tribal cultures—gave way to mere symbolic rituals; direct experience is replaced by faith; and living ritual tradition of the past fossilized into dogma. The West would benefit from re-examining a deeper level of spirituality, paying respect to higher structures, living in accord with other ‘holons’ (term favored by Ken Wilber for denoting systems embedded in joint hierarchies), and work to regain personal access to transcendental realms. This infusion of
more traditional spirituality into the West has been called the Archaic Revival (McKenna 1992).

We have seen that the existence of institutionalized procedures for altering consciousness is a near-universal characteristic of human culture. The majority of societies regard ASCs as equal to or of higher value than ordinary consciousness. This raises an intriguing problem: if there is more than one accepted form of consciousness, then the reality they provide access to is multiple, and one cannot discard one or the other as irrelevant or pathological.

Here we arrive at the *incommensurability* of realities. It is untenable to make statements from one form of consciousness regarding the reality of the other. Rationalists think about *satori* as a dreamlike state, while a Zen monk may say: it is the ordinary person, rational people, who live their lives in a dream world. Experiences of “nonordinary reality” are ineffable in ordinary consciousness. Judging, valuing one state of consciousness compared to another one is logically prohibited. “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”—such spoke Ludwig Wittgenstein. A Zen Buddhist would agree with him on this accord. Yet we continue breaking the silence. . .

**Educatio Demistificationis**

Competing epistemological theories of the last century agree on the nature of human knowledge as a constructive process, which builds belief systems based on consensus. There is no such thing as “mirroring” objective reality as it is “in itself,” no thing-in-itself or *Ding-an-Sich* (Kant 1999). Even scientific objectivity cannot achieve that—even if there was such a thing as scientific objectivity. The evolution of theories is based on internal consistency, explanatory power, and external consistency with other substructures of the knowledge system. The experimental method is the “royal road” to reach agreement, but this can hardly be applied to liberal arts, where an arduous process of long-lasting debates leads to the necessary consensus. Many people can become excellent experimental scientists, while social sciences have only a few outstanding thinkers in each generation.

Experimental science has a simple algorithm to be followed, which looks like this:

(1) under such and such circumstances (like mine),
(2) do this and this (like me),
(3) observe what happens,
(4) and report it.

In other words: (a) set the experimental conditions, (a) define the
method, (c) make observations, and (d) publish them.

It should not come as a surprise (but most of the time it comes), that
mystics follow a similar algorithm, the same methodological steps, in
their contemplative techniques of seeking knowledge. Authentic mys-
tics ask you to take nothing on mere belief or verbal teaching. Rather,
they present you with a set of tasks within the laboratory of your own
mind. You experiment, observe results, and compare your results with
the experience of others who perform similar experiments. Out of this
consensually validated pool of knowledge certain laws emerge: the
laws of the spirit (Wilber 2001).

This is a form of empirism as well. The only difference is the lack of
quantifiable measurement. However, this is not Reality’s problem for
having immeasurable processes. Rather, it is the problem of scientism,
which limits Nature to the measurable.

Science is a world view that measures our “external reality.” Accord-
ing to its extreme form—scientism, whatever can not be measured in
some way is deemed to be unreal, and thus its value is unknowable.
Values, emotions, and intuition have no part in the scientific worldview;
there is no room for thoughts and feelings, only measurements of what
is “out there.” The material side of life is all-important, not the internal
or spiritual. The inner world has been abandoned, and we have lost ties
with totality. Scientists with high integrity are aware of the limits of
their own method. “A man’s gotta know his limitations!” (Dirty Harry
1973) The greatest of the scientific revolution were mystical at heart:
Kepler, Newton, Einstein, naming a few.

Consensus can be reached by a third manner: hammering concepts
into the subject with the help of faith. This is not about attacking the
general importance of faith, it is rather about inflation of faith; explo-
iting it as the replacement of empirical experience. Dogmatic religions
apply this method, and abuse faith. From this point of view, there is
more similarity between a scientist and a mystic than a scientist and
an orthodox religious believer. The claims of both groups of wise men
are not based on mere beliefs or doctrines, but rather on direct experi-
ence. In the era of the holy inquisition scientists and mystics were in
the same boat, while after the scientific revolution the latter had to stay underground.

If the sages are right about the ways to mystical enlightenment, than their truth must also be correct in the framework of another knowledge system—Western science. The problem is to find a proper way of translation. The purpose of this essay is to answer the above questions in a scientific—well, some critics may say pseudoscientific—way, and will attempt to cross-over between the concepts of different worldview. We have so far attempted to demystify spiritual paths and to get them closer to the scientific way of knowledge-building. Now, we will try to reconcile science and the realm of our inner Universe.

Levels of Organization Relevant to Consciousness

Table 1 summarizes the levels of organization supposedly involved in generation of the conscious experience. Since the topic of consciousness is mostly ignored by mainstream neuroscience, it is difficult to determine the opinion of prominent brain researchers. My department chairman in the United States once warned me (E. F.): “if you want to make a career, you must avoid studying consciousness.” Despite some positive trends in other disciplines, orthodox neuroscientists avoid the issue, and unorthodox ones use the politically correct term ‘awareness’ when preparing their grant proposals. Nevertheless, with the exception of the levels at the very top and at the very bottom, most neuroscientists would not disagree with the assumption that all these levels represented in are involved in the process.

Since no experimental data can be introduced in its support, this hypothesis is as much as anything strengthened by pointing out inconsistencies within the current neuroscientific concepts. Again, this is not easy because one rarely hears established neuroscientists expressing their views on consciousness. If they do, they emphasize the neurological correlates of consciousness as did Francis Crick (1995), who spelled out his radical reductionistic vision as follows:

“You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As Lewis Carroll’s Alice might have phrased it, ‘You’re nothing but a pack of neurons’.”
Science writer John Horgan (2000) criticized such narrow views: “In a sense, Crick is right. We are nothing but a pack of neurons. At the same time, neuroscience has so far proved to be oddly unsatisfactory. Explaining the mind in terms of neurons has not yielded much more insight or benefit than explaining the mind in terms of quarks and electrons. There are many alternative reductionisms. We are nothing but a pack of idiosyncratic genes. We are nothing but a pack of adaptations sculpted by natural selection. We are nothing but a pack of computational devices dedicated to different tasks. We are nothing but a pack of sexual neuroses. These proclamations, like Crick’s, are all defensible, and they are all inadequate.”

To avoid the trap of radical reductionism, one must assume that all levels are at work with bidirectional inter-related causative processes. Let us pay attention to the position of the dashed line in Table 1. One may call it the “knowledge horizon” since it divides levels based upon their assumed causational role in generating the conscious experience. According to the theory of the neurological correlates of conscious-

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ness, the neuroaxonal system has a pivotal role both in the emergence of conscious experience and in the function of levels above it. In his book, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*, Steven Pinker (2003) writes, “culture is crucial, but culture could not exist without mental faculties that allow humans to create and learn culture to begin with.”

The effect of culture in shaping brain structure and neuroaxonal function is also permitted. This means that bottom-up and top-down interactions are at work above the dashed line, and every level has an active role. This is not the case below it: the assumption here is that subcellular levels are passive, subserving higher levels by permitting, but not shaping, their function. Here the causation operates only from bottom-up, but the role of top-down effects is not believed to operate at this level in mainstream neuroscientific thinking. Above the horizontal line there is a well-balanced “cooperative hierarchy,” below it “oligarchy” is the rule. Of course, this is an arbitrary delineation with broken symmetry. For improved integrity one may postulate that subcellular systems add to the experience something which is a characteristic of their level. They can also shape consciousness.

Since the size of the subneural component is close to quantum physical measures, the suggested characteristic subcellular levels add to consciousness is their connection to quantum reality, or “quantum weirdness”—some physicists like to say. The most outstanding case of “quantum weirdness” is ‘nonlocality’, more specifically ‘signal nonlocality’.

**The End of Local Realism**

The most unusual feature of quantum reality is its independence of space-time constraints of classical physics, which assume local realism and local causality. Local realism is a combination of two intuitive notions: (1) the ‘locality principle’ stating that physical effects have a finite propagation speed; (2) the ‘reality principle’, which means that particle attributes have definite values independent of the act of observation. The Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) paradox was first in formulating the following problem: the laws of quantum mechanics are not consistent with the assumptions of local realism. Based on the EPR paradox, Albert Einstein et al. (1935) suggested that the theory of quantum mechanics was incomplete. John Bell’s (1964) theorem
indicated that local realism requires invariants that are not present in quantum mechanics, and implied that quantum mechanics cannot satisfy local realism. Bell test experiments (Aspect et al. 1982; Wheeler 1984) provided overwhelming empirical evidence against local realism and demonstrated that under special circumstances “spooky action at a distance” (words of Albert Einstein) does in fact occur.

Different interpretations of quantum mechanics reject different components of local realism. In one interpretation local realism is broken down due to the ‘principle of nonlocality’, which posits that distant objects can have direct, instantaneous influence on one another. The nonlocality principle derives from quantum entanglement: a set of particles that have interacted as parts of the same quantum system maintain their interaction after separation regardless of space and time constrains. To put it simply and anthropomorphically: entangled systems “sense” each other without space and time limitations.

While the theory of quantum mechanics has perfect internal consistency and strong predictive power, it has weak external consistency compared to other realms of current knowledge. Nevertheless, it maintains consistency with the theory of relativity. With the help of ‘Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle’ the theory of relativity is not violated by nonlocal actions since some vital information is scrambled during the process. Information can be transmitted nonlocally, but no one can control the information in advance: bidirectional information exchange with supra-luminal (faster than light) speed does not occur. Therefore, lack of local realism does not lead to what could be referred to as “spooky communication at a distance.”

Some interpreters—and not necessarily the naïve ones, or those with New Age bent—of contemporary physics suggest that nonlocality is not an esoteric idea. On the contrary it is a very realistic one. According to them, nonlocality is actually the basic principle of the Universe, meaning that the whole Universe is an interconnected, entangled totality. Based on this view, consciousness is inherently nonlocal as well. This fundamental nonlocality of Mind and Universe collapses in the ordinary state of consciousness. Space and time are themselves manifestations of this breakdown, and with them the separated array of particles that dominate large areas of the Universe. In this interpretation individual consciousness arises from the interplay of Mind—developing within the nonlocal aspect of the Universe—with matter, which is the localized aspect of this same Universe. Then
where in the brain this interplay does occur? What part of the brain serves as an interface between nonlocal and local processes, between the Mind and the material Universe?

The Quantum Array Antenna of the Brain

After the development of quantum mechanics many physicists, and subsequently other scientists and non-scientist popularizers, were caught up in the excited belief that quantum theory might explain the mystery of consciousness. There exists a precise correspondence between physical reality and logic since according to the laws of matrix logic (Stern 1988) those are two aspects of the same thing. The striking similarities between the general quantum and the thought processes gave rise to the quantum hypothesis of the mind. Discovery of quantum computation added another impetus, and dozens of brain models were developed based on quantum computational principles. Among them, the most elaborated is the Penrose-Hameroff model (Penrose 1996). Perhaps not the entirely correct or the ultimate one. Nevertheless, the strength of our concept is not tied to the validity of one model, but to the argumentation outlined in the preceding paragraphs for avoiding the trap of radical reductionism.

Roger Penrose and Stuart Hameroff proposed that consciousness emerges from biophysical processes acting at the subcellular level involving cytoskeletal structures. In their model, consciousness is attributed to quantum computation in cytoskeletal proteins organized into a network of microtubules within the brain’s neurons. The cytoskeleton is dynamic “scaffolding,” a network of tubes and filaments providing both structural support and means of transportation of subcellular materials in the cell. While the cytoskeleton has traditionally been associated with purely structural functions and chemical transportation, recent evidence has revealed that it is involved in signaling and information processing as well. The microtubules’ periodic lattice structure seems ideally suited to molecular-scale computation and possibly the source of the amazing feats of unicellular protozoa. These tiny one-celled organisms swim, learn, get around objects, avoid predators, and find food and mates—all without the benefit of a nervous system. In multicellular organisms microtubules are connected to each other structurally by protein links, and functionally by gap junctions, self-
assembling into a nanoscale network far vaster than the neuroaxonal system. The human brain has about $10^{11}$ neurons and $10^{18}$ microtubule units (tubulins). The dimensions of the neuronal cell-body are measured in micrometers and the diameter of the microtubules in nanometers. Microtubules interact with other cell structures, mechanically with the aid of proteins, chemically by ions and ‘second-messenger’ signals, and electrically by voltage fields. In the brain they organize synaptic connections, and regulate synaptic activity responsible for memory and learning.

The microtubular network—with 10,000,000 times more elements than neurons and with a component size close to the quantum physical realm—is a reasonable candidate for quantum computation and nonlocal information processing. ‘Signal nonlocality’ is the recent buzzword. Just as special relativity is a limiting case of general relativity, so is classical quantum mechanics with signal locality a limiting case of post-quantum theory with signal nonlocality (Sarfatti 2005). The latter is exactly what is implicit in the microtubule model of quantum consciousness and may help us understand, tentatively, what may happen in the shamanic state of consciousness.

One may notice that despite their impressive delicateness, microtubules may be too coarse-grained to explain the emergence of consciousness—of who we really are. In fact, microtubules do not form the finest texture of subcellular organization. Even smaller and more subtle structures branch and interconnect in networks which comprise an “infoplasm,” the basic substance of living material (Hameroff 1987). The most delicate cytoskeletal system is the microtrabecular lattice, a web of microfilaments (biofibers) 4-5nm in diameter. This represents the current microfrontier, the “ground floor” of living material organization. If the periodic lattice of microtubules forms a network within a network of neurons, then the microtrabecular lattice is a network embedded in a network of the cytoskeleton!

Several arguments can be raised against the Penrose-Hameroff model. First of all, it is merely a theoretical model without any experimental support. The publications where the authors introduce and elaborate their concepts are not rigorously refereed. More damning is Tegmark’s (2000) and others’ critique that the warm temperature of the brain should prevent the material organization necessary for quantum computation. As part of the phenomenon called heat ‘decoherence’, Brownian movement of particles in the “infoplasm” disturbs the ele-
ments which process the quantum bits (qubits). Due to the lack of effective error correction, it eventually may ruin the computation.

In response to Tegmark’s criticisms, we offer a counter-example, and then an alternative model.

(1) The electric ray fish has no coil: meaning that technological solutions can be entirely different in biological systems.

(2) Therefore, it is conceivable that the brain may develop and maintain a Bose-Einstein condensate, some sort of superconductive state without ultra-cool medium, or it may incorporate a resilient substrate with highly efficient error correction. ‘Topological quantum computation’ represents a possible solution for the latter, and one tentative model is outlined briefly below.

Topological Quantum Computation

Essentially, quantum computational models are based on a theoretical ability to manufacture, manipulate and measure quantum states, to process “qubits” of information encoded in the state of particles such as trapped ions, atoms held inside silicon chips, or uniformly oriented molecules organized within the microtubules. Both chips and microtubules face one big problem. They have to be carefully shielded to protect them from ‘decoherence’. This is where quantum weaving in the microtrabecular lattice enters the equation, and potentially eliminates this problem of heat ‘decoherence’ altogether. Vaughan Jones’s mathematical work (1987) proved that knots can store information. His ideas were developed further by physicists Edward Witten (1989) and Alexei Kitaev (1997), who pointed out that a braided system of quantum particles can perform quantum computation. Using quantum particles with just the right properties, braiding can efficiently carry out any quantum computation in super-fast time. And while traditional qubits are prone to ‘decoherence’, “braiding is robust: just as a passing gust of wind may ruffle your shoelaces but won’t untie them, data stored on a quantum braid can survive all kinds of disturbance” (Parsons 2004).

The basic flaw of current theories of quantum computation in biological systems is that they are based on attempts to use concepts of conventional quantum theory. The classical quantum measurement approach is not good for consciousness studies (Anderson 2005). The demonstrated quantum weaving model represents a newer physical approach called...
‘topological geometrodynamics’, which provides more perspective (Pitkanen 2006). One should not be reductionistic as far as length scales are considered: Matti Pitkanen believes that the Universe is “emulating” itself in all length and time scales and it is quite possible that quantum computations are carried out in all relevant biological length scales.

A biological model of information processing is proposed here in which the microtrabecular lattice is a medium of quantum holography. Cytoskeletal systems fulfill multiple tasks in the experiences of the human mind: they can pattern cognition at the macro level, shape consciousness at the micro level, and we believe that the microtrabecular lattice network is probably immense enough to contain holographic information about the whole Universe via nonlocal interactions. The Universe replicates, or—using Pitkanen’s words—“emulates” itself within the brain’s structure. In this model, the action of mind is not restricted to the brain, but extends to the whole Cosmos: Mind breaks out of the skull.

The Direct-Intuitive-Nonlocal Mind: A Second Foundation of Knowledge?

“We must close our eyes and invoke a new manner of seeing. . . .

a wakefulness that is the birthright of us all, though few put it to use.”

Plotinus

It was previously shown that information processing within the central nervous system occurs through hierarchically organized and interconnected neural networks. This hierarchy of networks does not end at the neuroaxonal level, but rather incorporates subcellular structures as well. When the size of the hierarchical components reaches the nanometer range, and the number of elements exceeds that of the neuroaxonal system, an interface may emerge to enable a transition between neurochemical and quantum physical events. Nonlocality, maintained by means of quantum entanglement, is an essential feature of the quantum physical domain. The presented interface, especially the microtubular and microtrabecular lattice, is a reasonable candidate for serving as medium of quantum holography. Based on the principle of nonlocality and with the quantum array antenna of cytoskeletal networks, the brain
is in resonance with the whole Universe. If the brain truly contains the whole Cosmos like a hologram, then the perennial mystical wisdom of “As above, so below,” “The kingdom of Heaven is within you,” “Look within, you are the Buddha” obtains a fresh perspective, and there is hope for their integration into Western rational thinking. Cytoskeletal matrix can be the mediator of the Jungian ‘collective unconscious,’ and cytoskeletal quantum holography can explain a very common but obscure phenomenon known as ‘intuition’.

Psychointegrative practices based on altered states of consciousness and divination seem to elude neuroscientific explanations based on classical cognition. Classical cognition can be conceptualized as a ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ way of information processing characteristic of ordinary states of consciousness. This is to be contrasted with another mode of information processing, based on nonlocal connections denoted here as ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’.

The ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ mode is neuroaxonally based, relies on sensory perception, cognitive processing, and symbolic (visual, verbal, logical language) mediation. This form of information processing is an indirect way of achieving knowledge compared to the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ method. In accordance with the indirect nature of its processing, this mode splits the world into subject and object, and then performs modeling. Its linguistic feature makes this mode culturally bound. The ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ method of information processing has been evolved evolutionally for the purpose of task solving, represents a “coping machine” at work, and reaches its peak in Western scientific thinking.

The introduction of a ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ channel is necessary for an ontological interpretation of integrative ASCs, such as the shamanic state of consciousness. This mode of accessing knowledge is based on cytoskeletal functions, provides direct experience (no subject-object split), and is not bound by language or other symbols. Since the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ channel lacks symbolic-linguistic mediation, it has universal characteristics, shows more transcultural similarity, although culture-specific interpretations exist. This may be why mystics get better agreement comparing their “data” than do materialistic scientists.

David Lewis-William and David Pearce write in their book entitled *Inside the Neolithic Mind* (2005: 50): “In altered states of consciousness the nervous system itself becomes a ‘sixth sense’. . .” We can but
agree adding that it is the cytoskeletal system which acts as a ‘sixth sense.’ Regrettfully, the above authors navigate to calm waters of more traditional concepts continuing this way: “. . . that produces a variety of images including entoptic phenomena. The brain attempts to recognize, or decode, these (meaningless—added by us) forms as it does with impressions supplied by the nervous system in a normal state of consciousness.” No offense, they are right, like most of the authors who emphasize the “made-up” quality of ASCs. We are not arguing here for the ontological validation of every experiences in ASCs, but for those few, very informative ones in integrative ASCs.

The ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ perception of the world also needs rigorous training for its highest development, common in all fields. It takes decades to train an indigenous shaman because the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ route into the realm of “nonordinary” consciousness is seemingly capricious, its denizens are so unpredictable, and our ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ mind is so unprepared, being incapable of distinguishing between what is personal and what is impersonal. What can be nourished, that can be atrophied as well; the latter might have happened in Western civilization and the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ channel has become “The Forgotten Knowledge.” The latter was the source of ancient myths. Giving credit to mythical knowledge also means that the teachings of ancient myths and wisdom tradition should be considered as starting point for developing modern scientific theories, and deserve to be tested as “working hypotheses” by the scientific method.

Every success of the “coping machinery”, such as fame, position, money, or other forms of social acceptance empowers the Ego, unless the individual interprets his or her achievements as gifts from the “outside” and considers self as a “vessel,” a mediator of majestic powers. Identifying too strongly with the agent of the ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ processing suppresses the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ way. “. . . it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.” (Matthew 19: 24) Wisdom traditions usually recommend a humble attitude for approaching the spiritual realm. Without humility its full potency remains hidden beyond the veil. Perhaps, there is no need to smash the Ego entirely; elimination of Ego-inflation might be enough, and what is left should be used in service of the common good.

The ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ foundation of knowledge is a result of the brain’s interactions with the local aspects of the Universe.
The ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ perception of the world derives from the ‘nonlocal’ features of the Cosmos. In other words: the local Universe of the classical, Newtonian worldview is the reality of our ordinary consciousness, based on the ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ process. On the other hand, the Mind’s interfacing with the nonlocal Universe (revealed by modern physics) generates the reality of the “nonordinary” states.

We raise these issues in order to explicate the wisdom of shamanic worldview, which indicates that there are different realms of reality. According to this tradition the physical or phenomenal world is not the only reality; another non-physical (i.e. non-classical) realm exists. The outlined dualism of human knowledge resembles Julian Jaynes’ (2000) “bicameral mind,” but we are not concerned as much about a left-right hemispheric distribution of work, but rather about an up-down division between neural and cytoskeletal (microneurological) function. The dualism in information processing carries consequences for artificial intelligence research: there are efforts to model the ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ mode, but what about the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ one? Where is the technology for creating a holograph of the Universe, a “machine with soul,” a computer capable of accessing the spiritual?

Mind Kinks, Plant Intelligence, and Interspecies Communication

“Vegetalistas, like their counterparts, the Indian shamans of many indigenous groups of the Upper Amazon, claim to derive healing skills and powers from certain plant teachers, often psychoactive, believed to have a mother. Knowledge, particular medicinal knowledge, comes from the plants themselves, the senior shaman only mediating the transmission of information...”

Luna and Amaringo 1999

According to the presented model, current efforts of artificial intelligence are about problem solving, and usually aim simulating cognition processed in the neuroaxonal system of the human brain. While machines may exhibit the ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ form of intelligence, animals have the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ form as well. But what about plants? What if they harbor a structure for ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ mind, and in lack of nervous system only that one?
This intriguing concept arose after a personal discussion with Dennis McKenna at Luis Luna’s home in Wasiwaska, Florianópolis, Brazil. Dennis gave report of a giant mushroom *Armillaria ostoyae* commonly known as a “Honey mushroom,” and sometimes called “Shoestring rot,” found in the Pacific Northwest (Malheur National Forest, Oregon), which is one of the biggest single organisms (or a colony having the same DNA) on Earth. It is an immense network of interwoven fungal fibers (mycelia) spanning 2,200 acres, three feet underground, and containing one square mile in volume. The visible golden mushrooms above ground are only the reproducing organs, and represent the tip of the iceberg. Recently, an even larger *Armillaria ostoyae* was found in Washington state covering over 11,000 acres.

Genetic tests indicate that fungi are more closely related to animals and human beings than to other plants. Fungal mycelia fibers may develop a network of loops in much bigger numbers than the microtubular matrix of the human brain. Information can be encoded in knots and threads, a fact what the Incas had discovered and used in *quipu* recordings. A *quipu* consists of plied, colored threads of cords with the data stored in knots, a coded system yet to be deciphered. Computation based on weaving is named ‘topological’ (Collins 2006), and a vast loop-network may enable an organism or superorganism to resonate with the World, which is essentially a manifestation of Mind, and may be called ‘topological consciousness’, Paul Stamets (2005) writes that, “The mycelium is an exposed sentient membrane, aware and responsive to changes in its environment . . . Interlacing mycelial membranes form, I believe, a complex neuron-like web that acts as a fungal collective consciousness.”

The size of topological consciousness does not necessarily reach its top at the giant mushroom level. Threads, loops on every scale can form a topology emerging in consciousness. There are giant marine plants like *Posidonia oceanica*, discovered in the Mediterranean Sea (near the Balearic Islands, Spain) with a length of several miles and with estimated age of about 100,000 years. Can you imagine the topological wisdom a plant like this can hold? Moreover, the majority of plants on Earth with interconnected root fibers may represent a form of topological superconsciousness, the Gaian mind. The huge network of plants—like the Internet—shares information on changes in the environment, and it has a form of intelligence that only a few of us recognizes. In an alternative model, in Pitkanen’s (2006) theory of
Topological Geometrodynamics the flux tubes of Earth’s and all living systems’ magnetic field are conceptualized as superconductors. These flux tubes might be a kind of nervous system of the entire biosphere and make possible meaningful communications between plants, animals, and humans.

Besides Stamets, the McKenna brothers (Dennis and Terence) were among the first outspoken propagators of mushroom and plant consciousness, what we humans are able to tap into in altered states of consciousness. Although, plants cannot speak because they lack a neuroaxonal system, they can be in deeper contact with the World than we suppose, and are able to communicate to us (McKenna 1992). When we use our topological (‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’) consciousness, hidden in the fabric of the subcellular matrix, and liberate it from the suppression of the over-dominating ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ cognition of ordinary consciousness in rituals, we can access the wisdom of plant kingdom. While animals exhibit the network for ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ processing, it is rather limited for meaningful interspecies communication and the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ channel in an ASC is the way to communicate with the animal kingdom.

Hopefully, these “twisted” paragraphs will help us to interpret the mystery of our symbiotic relationship with the plant world, and why the Shuar shaman (we referred to above) is right in his practice of getting knowledge from a plant itself with the help of the ayahuasca brew. We can even get a rational guess why folklore traditions are pretty unequivocal in attributing to shamans the skill of talking with animals. In summary, topological consciousness, the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ channel functioning in the shamanic state of consciousness can give a more constructive way of rationalization than mere academic denial of the tradition.

**Keys to Nonlocal Realms**

The use of psychedelic drugs, monotonous drumming, repeated refrains of chanting, extreme fatigue, strict fasting, frenzied dancing and so forth, during traditional rituals result in the breakdown of ordinary cognition. The outcome is not chaotic behavior, or insanity. When the coping capacity of the ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ processing is exhausted in a stressful, unmanageable situation, when the “coping machine” cannot
handle the situation (this might be the hidden agenda of the Zen koans),
or its influence is turned off in meditation or eliminated by the use of a
powerful psychedelic, a shift occurs. Then the “spiritual universe” opens
up through the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ channel, its particular content
and form being affected by set and setting.

Strassman (2000) has hypothesized that levels of dimethyltryptamine
(DMT), the endogenous psychedelic compound of the brain, is released
in near-death experiences, religious ecstasy, or by means of ritual tech-
niques (spirit quest, shamanic initiation). Psychedelic drugs in general,
and DMT in particular, are some of the most powerful keys to Hell or
Heaven. Proper doses dissolve ego boundaries. In conditions of total
ego-loss reason recedes as the mind’s fundamental orienting function
the new compass must be faith. This is not inflated faith which substi-
tutes for empirical experience. Rather, it is faith is in service of the self.
Reason is in service of the body-centered, “skin-encapsulated” indi-
vidual ego, and the latter can barely guide someone under the influence
of a powerful psychedelic or other ASC. Faith and spirit guides can do
a better job in nonlocal realms, in the “Mystical Beyond.”

Masters of Nonlocality

Communication with spirits is a key feature of shamanic practice. Spirits may exist, however, not in seemingly objective material form,
but as mediators of information. They are not necessarily just mere
projections of unconscious conflicts or complexes (although they
mostly are in the disintegrative type of ASCs, such as psychosis).
Spirits of the well-integrated shamanic state of consciousness contain
information existing in the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ sphere, brought
into ‘cognitive-symbolic’ processing, bypassing the perceptual stage in
a culture-specific manner. Spiritual beings originating from nonlocal
apperceptions contain more informative value than do the ghosts of
intrapsychic projections.

That is one important difference between shamanic healers and
schizophrenic patients. Shamanic healers purposefully enter an inte-
grative form of ASCs in service of the community, while schizophrenic
patients hopelessly fall into a disintegrative form of an ASC and are
unable to bring out any socially useful information from that condition.
The main tenet of this essay is that the difference between psychosis
and shamanic states of consciousness is the lack or presence of an inte-
grative information-gaining process from the nonlocal domain.

Spirits appearing in the shamanic state of consciousness are real
beings in some sense, and not sheer products of imagination. Based
on the duality of reality detailed in this essay, they are entities of the
spiritual-nonlocal realm. It may sound mind-boggling, but the concept
of their spiritual existence is not in denial with their physical reality.
As István Dienes, an unorthodox physicist, a follower of the topological
theory of consciousness said recently: “Spirits are autonomous struc-
tures existing in the topological field!”

“How could you, a mathematician, believe that extraterrestrials were
sending you messages?” a visitor from Harvard asked the mathemati-
cian John Nash, one of the founders of game theory and Nobel Prize
Laureate in Economics who suffered from schizophrenic disorder.
“Because the ideas I had about supernatural beings came to me the
same way my mathematical ideas did.”—came the answer. “So I took
them seriously.” Thus begins the story of John Nash, the mathematical
genius who slipped into madness, and emerged after decades of ghost-
like existence to win a Nobel Prize and inspire a major motion picture
A Beautiful Mind (Nasar 2001). His statement is an excellent example
for the occurrence of both integrative and disintegrative ASCs in the
same person.

In his book The Cosmic Serpent, Jeremy Narby (1998) presents the
hypothesis that shamans take consciousness down to the molecular
level and gain access in their visions to information related to DNA,
which they call “animate spirits.” In essence, Narby got it right. The
DNA, packed in chromosomes, is in close relation to the microtubular
system. There are avant-garde, “off-off-mainstream” theories about
DNA as being not an originator, but a receiver of morphogenetic (i.e.,
structure forming) information “lying out there” (i.e., in the ‘nonlocal’
domain). It follows from the conceptual framework of this essay that
DNA receives information from the microtubular network, which is
considered “the antenna of ‘nonlocal’ information.” With help of the
genetic code DNA translates that biologically relevant information into
the language of protein synthesis, in the same manner that neuroax-
onal system translates the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ information to the
concepts of ‘cognitive-symbolic’ processing. Narby’s shaman does not
get knowledge about the double helix from the DNA itself; rather, her
or his neuroaxonal system accesses the same ‘nonlocal’ source that the DNA molecule does!

Shamans are the masters, though not the only ones, of nonlocal realms. They are able to bring information from the nonlocal Universe into the local one. But they are humble persons, giving respect to the tenets of Albert Einstein, and obeying the law of relativity. Authentic shamans may remotely sense and perhaps modify the state of a system they are entangled with; however, they cannot exchange information with velocity exceeding light speed, but in terms and symbols we can understand at our own ‘perceptual-cognitive-symbolic’ level.

Q&As and Concluding Remarks

Present essay has raised a good deal of questions. Most of the answers were provided in the text. This section is for brief and “easy going” recap.

Q: Where is the boundary of the scientific method?
A: It is in the head of scientists.

Q: Does spiritual wisdom have place in our world view at the beginning of the 21st century?
A: No, but it ought to. The West would be better off reinventing spiritual tradition in a new kind of renaissance.

Q: Why wisdom traditions are so unequivocal in their basic tenets?
A: Because they sidestep language barriers in acquiring knowledge using the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ channel.

Q: What side (kind of thinking) should be slashed with Occam’s razor?
A: It is the rational thinking, which posits pluralities by dividing nature up to natural and ‘supernatural’, and delegating spirits to the ‘supernatural’.

Q: Supernatural or natural? What if there is no ‘supernatural’ at all in the sense one incorporates its realm coherently into the natural world?
A: The answer is within the second question.

Q: Where does the shamanic healer travel to? What is the source of the psychointegrative information?
A: Our Big Integrator pays visit to the ‘nonlocal’ and gets “take home messages” from that realm.
Q: Which one is right: East or West, North or South?
A: Not PC (politically correct). But here is for ya’: Northwest is wrong.

Q: What part of the brain may serve as interface between nonlocal and local processes?
A: The cytoskeletal network—as you surely remember.

Q: Where is the technology for creating a holograph of the Universe?
A: Far down the road. That technology would be necessary for creating artificial intelligence with “soul.”

Q: But what about plants? What if they harbor a structure for ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ mind, and in lack of nervous system only that one?
A: According to Paul Stamets and the McKenna brothers they exert some form of intelligence, what present author calls as topological mind and lists under the ‘direct-intuitive-nonlocal’ information processing.

Q: Does God exist?
A: That question was not raised.

We are fully aware that we have tried to explain something unacceptable to the mainstream with something not (yet) accepted by the mainstream. Certainly, this is not the best way to get the approval of the mainstream.

What may more provocative is our challenging the following concepts, which belong to the foundation of current Western rational thinking:

1. All information comes through the sensory organs, and we can know nothing that does not pass through the senses;
2. All you are is within your body. Your consciousness is compartmentalized by the skull, and is a product of your brain’s activity;
3. There is one reality.

One may find similar claims and counter-statements in the New Age literature. However, we come from a neuroscience background and are approaching these issues from a scientific worldview. Nevertheless, if someone feels that his/her own rational worldview has been threatened, then perhaps we have fulfilled the goal of this essay.

With all limitations kept in mind, we are humbly arguing that our concept of reality needs to change for a rational explanation of shamanic practice. Understanding the shamanic state of consciousness prob-
ably requires a much more sophisticated model of reality than scientific empiricism currently allows. This essay concludes that shamanic heal-
ers have been indeed coming into contact with a spiritual intelligence
that appears to antedate space-time as we know it, and spiritual beings
are ‘nonlocal’ entities: emerging intrapsychically in “nonordinary”
consciousness through ‘nonlocal’ connections of the Multiverse.

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The Shamanic Healer: Master of Nonlocal Information?


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Acta Ethnographica Hungarica
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHNOLOGY

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FOUNDED IN 1950

HU ISSN 1216-9803
(print)
HU ISSN 1588-2586
(online)

Publication:
one volume
of two issues annually

2007: Vol. 52

Subscription price per volume:
EUR 260
incl.
FREE ONLINE access

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A Solon Ewenki Shaman
and her Abagaldai Shaman Mask

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Introduction

The shamans of the Tungus peoples of Russian Siberia and Northeast China have been a source of fascination for explorers and scholars for almost 500 years (Znamenski 2003). The word *saman/xaman* is originally of Tungus origin, but ethnolinguistic interpretations of its indigenous meanings remain speculative (Janhunen 1986). Although once an ubiquitous phenomenon of Northeast Asian spirituality, as discovered by Sergei I. and Elizabeth N. Shirokogoroff during their fieldwork in northwest Manchuria from 1915 to 1917 (Shirokogoroff 1935), at the beginning of the twenty-first century we are instead documenting its apparent extinction. This tragic end to a legendary religious phenomenon is documented in a paper published in *Anthropos* in 2003. Anthropologist F. George Heyne recorded the stories of the last two shamans of the Reindeer-Evenki in the Greater Khingan Range of Northeast China (Manchuria), Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina, who died in 1944, and Njura Kaltakun, who died in 1998 (Heyne 2003a).

In the summer of 1994 we conducted fieldwork among the Oroqen of Shibazhan in northern Heilongjiang province, the Manchu of Jilin province, and the Solon Ewenki near Hailar (now Hulunbuir), Inner Mongolia, with the generous support of a Wenner Gren Foundation grant. Our goal was to find the last living Tungus shamans and to learn as much as we could about the cognitive psychological and psychiatric aspects of their training, particularly their use of internal visual and auditory mental imagery. We were testing the hypotheses generated in a theoretical article published in *Current Anthropology* (Noll 1985).
Although we did not collect enough data to support or reject those hypotheses, we did have the good fortune to record perhaps one of the most detailed stories of the life and training of a Tungus shaman to ever appear in print, the Oroqen shaman Chuonnasuon, known to outsiders as Meng Jin Fu (Noll and Shi 2004).

In July 1994 we traveled to the village of Yiming Gatsa in the Ewenki Banner (county) of Hulunbuir League (prefecture), Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. There we interviewed and photographed one of the last Solon Ewenki shamans (pl. 21, 22 a), a (then) 75-year-old woman named Dula’r (her Ewenki name), but also known as Ao Yun Hua (her Han Chinese name). Due to the ravages of age and alcoholism she was not a particularly good informant, but perhaps the most intriguing aspect of our encounter with her was her presentation and shamanic demonstration of a rare Abagaldai shaman mask. The only known photograph of this mask in the possession of a shaman was taken in 1931 by Otto Mamen of the Daur shaman Huangge Yadgan (Lindgren 1935a, 1935b; Humphrey 1996: 246, see Fig. 1). As far we have been able to determine, no known photo exists of a shaman actually wearing an Abagaldai mask has been published prior to the photographs we include with this fieldwork report. However, an illustration of a “Solon shaman with copper mask” from the National Museum in Copenhagen can be found in Heissig (1970: 20).

At the time of the writing of this article we could not confirm if Dula’r is still alive, nor could we confirm the current whereabouts of her rare mask.

The Solon Ewenkis

The Solon (Suolun in Mandarin Chinese, native, Soloon) are the largest of the three distinct ethnic groups included under the official designation Ewenki (Ewenke) by the government of the People’s Republic of China. The other groups are the Manchurian Reindeer Tungus (Ewenkis) and the Khamnigan Ewenkis. The Solon Ewenki (Suolun Ewenke) are by far the largest of the three, with a population of nearly 25,000 estimated in 1987 (Janhunen 1996). The two most populous Solon communities are found in the regions of Hailar and Nonni. The Ewenki Autonomous Banner region in the basins of the Imin and Hui rivers near Hailar contained approximately 8,300 Solons in 1987. Most Solon Ewenkis are bilingual,
speaking the Mongolic language of their neighbors, the Dagurs (Daur). Not surprisingly, there is much cultural cross-fertilization between these two peoples who have been historically linked for centuries. Both shamanism and Buddhist Lamaism are still followed by older persons in the northern and western areas of the Ewenki region.

Although there is a literature on the shamanism of the Reindeer Ewenkis (Heyne 1993, 2003a, 2003b) and the Dagurs (Humphrey 1996), we are unaware of any extensive published reports specifically on the shamanism practiced by the Solon Ewenkis. Even Shirokogroff had little to report on this matter: “In so far as I could gather, there were some shamans among the Mergen group and Solons. But I did not see them and I got no details about them.” (Shirokogoroff 1935: 386) He did estimate,
however, that there were “probably far over twenty” shamans still active among the Solons. According to Mandu Ertu (1999: 122), three Ewenki shamans existed by the early 1990s and they were all females. The other two female Ewenki shamans are Niula and Modege.

The Life, Training and Career of a Solon Ewenki Shaman

We were taken to the residence of the shaman’s daughter and son-in-law by the Ewenki scholar Ha He’r. By local standards this was a very affluent family. The son-in-law was part owner of a mining operation that was quite lucrative. The family was proud to show us their new sports utility vehicle (a Cherokee Jeep), and they dressed in their finest clothes to pose with for photographs while standing next to this vehicle. Dula’r slept in a separate concrete building in the rear of the home. Next to her concrete stove-bed was a wooden dresser upon which was constructed a shrine containing a plate of rotting meat (an offering to the spirits) and her shaman’s paraphernalia: her wooden horse-head staffs, her drum, and the copper mask adorned with bear fur (pl. 22 b). It was in this piping hot room, along with countless flies, that Dula’r continuously sipped beer and told us her story.

Dula’r was born in 1920. She said she had been physically frail since childhood. When she was 20 years old she experienced an initiatory illness (Mandu Ertu’s version indicates that she got the strange illness when she after her marriage at age 18.) She claimed she was “thin” and felt pain all over her body. She approached a lama for a healing, but he introduced her to a Mongol shaman and said she should become a shaman. Her father also encouraged her to be treated by a shaman. The name of the Mongol shaman who healed her was Jamusu, and after he healed her he trained her and officially initiated her to become a shaman. She was initiated nearby, within the territory of the modern borders of the Ewenki Banner. Later she also studied with an Ewenki shaman, but did not remember his name. For the first three years she learned to dance and chant by imitation, but she was not taught how to travel to the upper or lower worlds. She claimed she was 25 or 26 years-old before she conducted her first major healing ritual. Her guardian spirits include her ancestors, a dog, a snake, and a wolf.

Since we were conducting fieldwork in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia to see if we could collect data on the cognitive styles of shamans,
and in particular their use of visual and auditory mental imagery (as hypothesized in Noll 1985), we asked many questions of a psychological nature. When we specifically asked her if she saw visions during her healing rituals, she replied that she often saw the spirits of a fox, a wolf and a snake. Three legs of the wolf were bound together.

Dula’r insisted on making a distinction between “prairie Ewenki” (such as herself) and the “forest Ewenki” (i.e., reindeer Ewenki) who lived in the north. She told us that learning to have visions was not part of the training by a master shaman in the prairies, but she didn’t know about the shamans in the forests to the north. She noted that she couldn’t speak of the experiences of others. She said that when she was young she traveled to an area just south of where the northern forests begin and she watched the healing rituals of Oroqen shamans. She said they danced and chanted and drummed until they fell to the ground. When asked, she admitted that Ewenki shamans also fell to the ground during healing rituals.

We then asked her about her own subjective experiences during healing rituals. She told us, “After inviting the spirits from above, I had a feeling of shivering and would fall down.” She would invite spirits and a deceased shaman she knew to come down to her, and in her “blurred state” she saw a fox, a wolf and a dog.

We asked her if she ever left her body to travel to the lowerworld. She replied that she “could never be anywhere other than here” (the world of humans and animals). When she denied going to the lowerworld, she used the Mongol word for that realm, *elenkan*. When we asked her if she had ever treated a patient whose soul went to the lowerworld because of shock, she replied, “Yes. I chant. I ask the wandering soul to come back. I do not travel myself.” She added, “While chanting I would use the name of the lowerworld in getting rid of spirits. But that was a long time ago—more than 30 years ago.”

Healing rituals were carried out at night. If the patient was a child, she would ask the mother of the child to squeeze her breast to entice the soul of the child to return. If the patient was an adult, she might leave offerings of food to lure the wandering soul back into the body. She healed many children and adults suffering from shock or “seizures.”

Dula’r claims to have openly practiced shamanism up to the time of the start of the Cultural Revolution (1966). Before then, she claims to have treated many people, old and young. She was tormented by the communists during the Cultural Revolution, and people would scorn her
and yell “cattle spirit/snake spirit” (niu gui she shen) at her. All of her shamanic paraphernalia was taken from her and destroyed—all except her Abagaldai mask, which she had received from the Mongol shaman Jamusu when she was in her 20s, because it was well-hidden. Dula’r was therefore very suspicious of us and was reluctant to talk about anything regarding the inner workings of shamanism, going so far as to deny any knowledge of the upper and lower worlds in later interviews. She did still participate in religious rituals. She told us that earlier in 1994 she had gone to the banks of the Hui River and made offerings at an oboo. She said she saw many young people there, but when they asked her for help she told them to go to a physician when they were sick.

Shamanic Paraphernalia

Dula’r told us that during the Cultural Revolution everything was taken away from her except her shaman’s mask and a large medal medallion that hung from wooden Lamaist beads from her neck. The medallion contained a mandala of Chinese astrology.

She had two orange-painted horse-head staffs (pl. 23), each about a meter in length. Tiny bells hung from them. She told us the staffs had been made two or three years prior (circa 1991). She complained that they were “too short” and not at all like the staffs of old. Two pairs of such staffs were taken away during the Cultural Revolution. The Ewenki word she used for the staffs was sorbi. Dula’r told us that the staffs represented a whip for the spirits, and she “fed” the staffs tea or wine. She further revealed that the staffs helped her to “foresee things” and to see things ordinary people did not see. The staffs were also there to help her during rituals when she was possessed by the spirits.

Dula’r would not reveal much information about the copper shamans mask. The mask itself was damaged—one of the white eye coverings was missing—and was obviously not of recent origin. The head hair, eyebrows and beard were comprised of bear fur. When the mask was on display, a wad of animal fat was wedged in its mouth, making the ritual mask look as though it were sticking its tongue out.

Dula’r was kind enough to demonstrate how she would wear the mask during a ritual, and donned it for us so that we could take photographs. Vilmos Diószegi (1967) described many of the more than 30 masks collected for European museums from the Ewenki in the late 19th and
early 20th centuries. According to him, Abagaldi was a powerful spirit known not only to the Ewenki in Siberia and Northeast China, but also to the various Evenki and Buryat groups of Manchuria and Transbaikal. He noted that it was mostly female shamans who mastered this spirit (Diószegi 1967: 190). According to Humphrey (1996: 242–243), the mask represents a barkan (spirit or deity) known as Abagaldi, the spirit of a black bear. According to her Daur informant, “rather than an item of apparel . . . it was worn by a shaman only once every three years at the ominan.” For Dula’r to don this mask and to allow us to photograph her was therefore a rare privilege indeed.

Conclusion

Much remains to be learned about Solon Ewenki Shamanism. Mongol and Chinese scholars have published Ewenki folklore collections which contain information about Solon shamanism, and one Daur scholar has even published one paragraph in Chinese about the life of Dula’r (Mandu Ertu 1999). We hope that this fieldwork report, though brief in detail, and our photographs, may add to the growing understanding of Solon Ewenki shamanism.

References


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Plates

1 (b) “Goddess with a rim of a handled cauldron, girdled around with hard iron,” i.e. the Mother Earth. An aerial view of the Western Siberian plains in summer. Photo: Márta Csepregi, 1994.
2 (a). Female members of the Sopochin family in front of their summer tent, Surgut. Photo: Márta Csepregi, 1993.

3 (a). Gennadii Russkin, the shaman’s helper preparing for the ceremony, Surgut. Photo: Márta Csepregi, 1993.

4 The Blue Lake (Kök köl) mazar of Jay Ata is also possessed by a spirit (arbak). Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2004.
At the beginning of the ritual the shaman says a prayer and explains the rules to the participants. Photo: Dávid Sömfi, 2004.
7 (a) The helpers burn the candles that invoke the spirits. The shaman was able to see his helping spirits by the light of the candles. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.

7 (b) The shaman starts to walk around the rope (shaman’s flag or tuu) as he hits an unwell person walking in front of him. He symbolically chases away the evil spirits (jin) that cause the illness. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.
8 (a) The shaman circles around the rope as he calls his main helping spirit, the grey ram, by whistling. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.

8 (b) The shaman steps on a boy who suffers from alcoholism to force a demon out of his body. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.
9 The shaman steps on a boy who suffers from alcoholism to force a demon out of his body. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.
The shaman grabs the smoke ring of the yurt, the symbol of the Upper World, as he stands on the shoulder of a helper. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.
11 (a) For a while the shaman (in the background) stands on the shoulders of a helper (in blue shirt in the middle). Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.

11 (b) Hooking his legs over the smoke ring, the shaman hangs down in ecstasy during the ritual. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.
The shaman starts to climb down the rope (tuu) as his helpers hold him. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.
13 The shaman swallows one of the spirit-invoking candles to drag a spirit out of his body while his helpers watch expectantly. Photo: Mihály Hoppál, 2004.
15 The Bayad Shamaness Dügerxüügiin Amarjargal with the larger mirror in her left hand. Her headgear is on her right knee. Photo: Ágnes Birtalan, 1999.


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for Shamanistic Research

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Shaman on the Internet Contents and abstracts of all previous and current issues, subscription information are available at www.folkscene.hu

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Shaman (ISSN 1216-7827) is published once a year (two numbers bound in one) by Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers, Budapest, Marczibáni tér 9. Hungary, H-1022.
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Subscription rates for two issues/year:
Institutions US$40.00
Individuals US$22.00