

SHAMAN

Journal of the International Society
for Shamanistic Research

Maps drawn by Zsuzsa Draskovits and Kun Shi

Front cover: Altantuyaa, a Solon Evenki shaman from Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner (Hönlün-Buir, Inner Mongolia, China). Photograph: Dávid Somfai Kara

Photograph from Dávid Somfai Kara and Mihály Hoppál, A Revitalized Daur Shamanic Ritual from Northeast China

Back cover: Even reindeer herders driving their reindeer to a new camp on the Tompo River, Sakha Republic (Yakutia, Russian Federation). Photograph: Dávid Somfai Kara

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ISSN 1216-7827

Printed in Hungary

SHAMAN

Volume 17 Numbers 1 & 2 Spring/Autumn 2009

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Tumaralria's Drum

ANN FIENUP-RIORDAN

ANCHORAGE, AK

with Translations by ALICE REARDEN and MARIE MEADE

The following pages discuss the choice by contemporary Yup'ik elders to showcase a 100-year-old shaman drum in a national exhibition of their way of life. Elders' interpretation of the toothy cavity on the drum's handle is compared to their understanding of similar objects in other nineteenth-century museum collections, many also associated with shamanism. Drums like Tumaralria's played an essential role in shamanic enactments of power in southwest Alaska. Today these shaman drums are not rejected or hidden but given a prominent place in public statements and displays, telling us as much about the present as the past.

In August 2003 a dozen Yup'ik Eskimo elders and educators met at the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum and Cultural Center in Bethel, Alaska, to plan an exhibition presenting their way of life. During the meeting the group named the exhibition *Yuungnaqpiallerput/The Way We Genuinely Live: Masterworks of Yup'ik Science and Survival*. They determined to organize objects following the seasonal cycle—beginning with preparation in the *qasgi* (communal men's house); moving through spring, summer, and fall activities; and ending with celebration of the harvest in the winter village. They were careful to speak in the present tense, as many essential activities continue to this day. Elders emphasized the significance of various objects, including the kayak, bow, and *negcik* (gaff) or “life hook” required to venture onto the ice, but the group decided that visitors should be greeted by one representative object—Tumaralria's drum (pls. 1, 2).

Nelson Island elder Paul John stressed the importance of the drum as a metaphor for the continued vitality of the Yup'ik way of life: “I have said many times that God gave us our traditions to keep until the end of the

world. That's how it is. Our ancestors were in that drum. When Christian religions came around, all of our ancestors came out of that drum. But nowadays, it is like you Yup'ik people are working toward putting us back inside that drum. We shouldn't think that our traditional ways are nothing. They are very valuable things." Frank Andrew of Kwigillingok, a man of tremendous knowledge, noted: "The drum is indeed most important. Our ancestors used it in December. It was like they were giving thanks for the things that they harvested starting from January, and they were joyous, and the host village would invite other villages. All villages used the drum down on the coast and took part in dancing. That's why the drum is truly the most important item. Our ancestors kept the drum's sound alive, trying to follow its customary ways. What they said will be good—to see the drum first when entering." Frank concluded: "The reverberation of the drum kept everyone together."

The group then discussed both *cauyat* (dance drums) and *apqara'arcuutet* (shamans' drums, lit., "devices for asking," from *apqara-*, "to ask about something"). Paul John spoke at length about how *angalkut* (shamans) used these drums to heal people in the past. Marie Meade spoke of her experiences with a group of young people working in collections at the National Museum of the American Indian in July 2002. Staff had asked each student to write about an object from their collection for NMAI's website. A girl from Newtok was drawn to a drum collected by the Kuskokwim trader A. H. Twitchell in the early 1900s. The drum's handle had been shaped like a human body, with its stomach cut open and the cavity lined with teeth. The girl sat quietly on the floor, looking at it, and gradually all the other students gathered around her. Marie described the power she and the others felt emanating from the drum as they laid their hands upon it. Marie suggested that after being stored for such a long time, the girl's quiet disposition had allowed the drum to open and release healing energy that all could feel. Frank Andrew remarked that perhaps it had belonged to Ugka, an *angalkuq* (shaman) from Apruka'ar, said to have had a drum with a handle in the shape of a child with its stomach split open and lined with teeth.

Paul John's daughter, Theresa, then spoke of her experiences several years before at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. There she had examined a fine and little-known collection of Yup'ik material gathered by Israel Albert Lee, a New Englander who traveled to Alaska in 1897 in search of gold and later ran a trading post on Nelson Island. Lee returned home to Salem in 1910, bringing with him a large

barrel filled with bowls, blades, skin clothing, masks, and a drum. He invited everyone in his family to choose one object from the barrel. Lee later served as a letter carrier in Salem, and before his death in 1943 donated much of his collection to the Peabody Essex Museum, including the Nelson Island drum. For Theresa, the drum was memorable:

At that place I saw a drum [like that described by Marie and Frank] with the stomach split open, lined with very small teeth. The whole area had teeth, like he just said. [The human figure] had its arms spread out, and it was a handle. The drum covering had three designs on it as well—the ones flying up there, the ones below trying to live on land, and the ones down there swimming in the ocean.

A long piece of thread was attached to the drumstick, and its open stomach had a lot of teeth on it. At the Peabody Museum, they said that a person going to spring camp took it. I couldn't forget it, so I drew the picture on paper and called it shaman's healing drum. It had real teeth on its handle and three designs. Up above were designs of things on earth, birds and others, and there were people living on land, and down in the ocean were designs of sea mammals.

Paul John listened to his daughter, nodding in agreement, then said:

It was probably Tumaralria's drum. They referred to it in a story. He was the strongest among all the *angalkut* on the [Bering Sea] coast. There was no other [shaman] who was more powerful. [He] could accomplish anything. And he could travel through the ground when he wanted to.

Long after [Tumaralria] died, when that person was born, he used to hear of Tumaralria, a powerful *angalkuq* on Nelson Island. He had become an adult then, and when he was able to construct a kayak, he was roughly-cutting the shapes of his kayak parts during summer, what they call *qanilqerluki*, right below the first village of the people of Tununak [cutting], the *ayagarkat* [rib parts], *amuvigkat* [lower bow parts], and *kagaalurkat* [stern bottom parts]. He left the kayak parts that he constructed at their winter village.

Winter came, and a large mass of shorefast ice developed. He apparently had one dog. He went to get his kayak parts. They say that the provisions he had were raw frozen blackfish from the inner funnel of the fishtrap.

When he arrived down below the old village of Tununak, he went inside the *qasgi* and brought his dog inside. And they ate his provisions, and he even gave his dog something to eat. And they didn't finish their provisions.

When he was done, he went to bed, and because he ate frozen fish, he was cold, and his dog was curled up right below him. As he was trying to sleep, when the *qasgi* jolted, he suddenly woke up. They say there was a full moon. The floor of the *qasgi* suddenly detached, and he could go outside through [that crack].

Back then when they used to encounter apparitions, since he heard about haunting occurrences in stories, thinking that the part where the *qasgi* broke apart might go back in place, he took their leftovers and threw them underneath it and they rolled outside, but nothing happened to the *qasgi*, and it was still detached. When he thought he heard something, he listened closely and heard movement from the area near the village of Tununak. He saw that a person was approaching.

When [that person] arrived right outside, he entered through the area where there was usually a door up front, and when he stood in front of him, he told him, "Because I didn't want you to be cold when you slept here all night, I have come to get you so that you can sleep up there at a place where you won't feel cold." He suddenly thought, "They say that when they reply to these ghosts, they lose their ability to talk." And his dog wasn't aware of anything. His dog hadn't moved from his curled position. Even though they say that dogs are aware and can sense ghosts, his dog didn't sense anything and stayed curled up.

When he thought that, the one who went to get him replied, "You will not lose your ability to talk, even though you speak to me. I'm not a ghost. Just get up and come with me." He got up and went with him up there. When they went inland, he saw a village up ahead in a place where no village usually is. And their *qasgi* was visible. He brought him to the *qasgi* and brought him inside, and it was very hot in there and not cold whatsoever. When he laid down, he fell asleep.

After a while, the one next to him woke him up and told him, "It's time for you to get up. The one who will offer us [food] is about to come in." Just as he woke, the one who was giving [them food] handed it to the one who went to get him, a bowl filled with partly-melted whitefish. He said to him, "Do not feel squeamish about the next thing that they will offer you but accept it without any qualms." When the next one arrived, she was holding a bowl like that previous one. He looked inside and saw that it was filled with a child with its stomach split open, and it looked as though the area where the stomach was split had teeth around it. Even though he had told him to accept it without being squeamish, he stayed and didn't extend his arms.

When he didn't extend his arms to take it, the one next to him told him, "So, you don't want to accept it. It's okay if you don't want to accept it." He

told that one to take it back. When she took it out, he faced him, talking about the contents of his bowl. "Let's eat this together." They ate. He ate the partly-melted whitefish with him.

When he was finished, he told him, "Now, you should return. I'll follow you when you go down." He put on his skin boots, and when he went out, he went with him. And as they were going down toward the *qasgi* where he first slept, that one told him, "I wonder what you think I am. What do you think I am?" That person said to him, "I don't know." When he said he didn't know, he told him, "Now, have you heard of the *angalkuq* of the people of Nelson Island, Tumaralria? I am him. Since I didn't want you to sleep in a cold place but wanted you to sleep warm, I went to get you. When you return home, there are people still alive in your village who have heard of me. [Tell them,] "Tumaralria had me sleep in a place where I wouldn't be cold."

When he returned, he told that story, since he had heard of Tumaralria, the *angalkuq* of the people of Nelson Island.

When he told the story, those people said that since he wasn't malicious when he was their *angalkuq*, he still had compassion for people. Those people were praising him because he took pity on him.

That was probably Tumaralria's drum.

Many stories are told to this day about Tumaralria and his younger brother. According to Paul John, a couple living in Tununak many years ago was unable to have children and begged help from an *angalkuq*. He used his powers to help, later telling them that he had gotten them two sons descended from *ircenrraat* (extraordinary persons appearing in human and animal form). After the sons were born, the woman scolded them, almost causing them to return to their original home. A fellow villager saw the boys by the ocean shore, where Tumaralria was showing his brother the path they would follow. He put his hands on the small waves, palms up, and used his little fingers to lift up the water, revealing the footprints of the *angalkuq* who had fetched them. The villager recounted what he had seen to the boys' human parents, who never scolded them again. (Shield and Fienup-Riordan 2003: 478–505)

As he grew to manhood, Tumaralria revealed himself to be a powerful *angalkuq*, one who repeatedly used his strength to help the people of Nelson Island. To emphasize Tumaralria's abilities, Paul John (July 2007) told the story of four powerful *angalkut* living in the village of Paingarmiut. When another *angalkut* arrived, they would fight that

person with their powers until he was near death. Their eldest shaman, Caniqamelnguq, was the most powerful among them. Paul continued:

When [Caniqamelnguq] became elderly, while he was sitting inside his home, the third *angalkuq* ran in and said excitedly, “I’ve come to get you! Since Tumaralria, the powerful Nelson Island *angalkuq*, has arrived, we are about to attack him.”

Caniqamelnguq said to them, “My goodness, when you ask me to *ellangnuaq* [? travel through the sky], I do so once in a while. Tumaralria is too powerful for you. When you tell me to view things from the sky, I can’t get close to him when I see him in the sky. If he touches me, I wouldn’t be successful. He’s too powerful. Leave him be.”

That person said, “My, one person won’t be this powerful. Come to the *qasgi* now.” Caniqamelnguq said to him, “I told you, since I’ve seen what he’s like! If you are tired of living, go ahead and attack him. I don’t want to die early. I won’t go to the *qasgi*.”

They say they decided not to attack him, since their most powerful *angalkuq* told him to attack him only if they were tired of living.

Tumaralria is, indeed, a well-known coastal shaman and, by association, his drum a valued item. After listening to Marie, Paul, and Theresa, all agreed to request the drum for the *Yuungnaqpiallerput* exhibition. Whether or not the drum had actually belonged to Tumaralria, its Nelson Island origin and obvious association with once powerful *angalkut* made it an appropriate choice. The Peabody Essex denied our original request, as conservators judged it too fragile to travel to Alaska; however, on learning what the drum meant to the community, they relented. When *Yuungnaqpiallerput* opened at the Anchorage Museum in February 2008, Tumaralria’s drum was the first thing visitors encountered (Fienup-Riordan 2007).

The Monstrous Mouth

The drum’s striking design is not unique. Yup’ik shaman drums in other museum collections have similar handles. In 1989 Wassilie Evan and Willie Beans visited the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka, Alaska, and identified an extraordinary drum collected in the 1890s as belonging

to the lower Yukon shaman, Irurpak (Long Legs). Like Tumaralria's drum, its handle was shaped like a human figure with a slash lined with fox teeth running the length of its body. Elders subsequently requested the drum for inclusion in the Yup'ik mask exhibition, *Agayuliyararput/ Our Way of Making Prayer* (Fienup-Riordan 1996:180). Unlike the Peabody Essex Museum, the Sheldon Jackson Museum was unable to grant their request due to the drum's age. Yup'ik community members, however, were not deterred, and they commissioned John McIntyre of Bethel to make a replica of the drum, which Andy Paukan of St. Marys presented to the people during opening ceremonies in Toksook Bay in January 1996. Like Tumaralria's drum, the replica of Irurpak's drum was given a place of honor in the *Agayuliyararput* exhibition.

The Norwegian collector Johan Adrian Jacobsen also collected a number of shamanic pieces displaying toothy cavities. He described one fish-shaped drum handle from Nushagak (IVA5428) with two perforated hands and an open belly studded with reindeer teeth, as belonging to a shaman's drum. Working in collections at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, Catherine Moore (September 1997) from Emmonak demonstrated how to hold the handle with the drum frame (fastened on the top of the fish's head) close to and covering her face, and Wassilie Berlin described its use:

This handle does not look like those that go on regular drums. It's quite long. This looks like the size handle that would be held by *angalkut* when they went into meditative songs scrutinizing events. *Angalkut* used drums which were called *apqara'arcuutet* [lit., "devices for asking"].

This was the handle of an *apqara'arcuun* [shaman drum]. The front is shaped like a mouth with teeth. Such drums were small, and I've seen them, too. They held them in front of their faces and struck their drumsticks toward them.

Wassilie Berlin then described how *angalkut* had special songs they sang *apqara'arluteng* (asking for things) when they communicated with their *avneq* (other half). As the *avneq* spoke in song, only the *angalkuq* could understand what was said. Wassilie then held up the drum, and Catherine described a personal experience:

The person I saw beating the drum toward herself had a drum with a short handle, and each day she sat and drummed and sang, covering her face with

the drum. Her drum was small, but it was a genuine drum. Her mother told us not to go near her, but her mother would sit next to her as she drummed. The woman's skin had some kind of festering cuts. When I came in from playing, she would still be sitting at the same spot and singing. And the rest of the people in the house didn't complain about her singing and allowed her to do that. When she and her mother stayed with us for a short time, she did that. Perhaps she was an *angalkuq* because she drummed and sang every day.

The little boy I saw at that time being trained by an *angalkuq* was very lively and nimble. And since we knew that he was being trained to be an *angalkuq*, we were afraid of him.

Catherine then described how once she and a friend were alone in a house when the boy entered and asked them if they wanted to hear his *avneq* as it came up from underground. He proceeded to cover his head with a seal-gut garment and to mumble something to summon it while rustling the garment. Then the girls heard someone's voice coming up from the ground, but muffled and low, and they ran from the house in terror: "His *avneq* was coming up to meet him as he was singing and mumbling words." Later the boy's grandfather stopped his training when he began mumbling and snickering to himself and acting strangely.

At the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, elders also examined two large wooden figures (IVA4464, IVA4196) from the lower Yukon with toothy cavities running along their backs. Jacobsen designated them both as "Slaowikmiu-Tonnerak," which translates as *Ellam Yua tuunraq*, "spirit of the Person of the Universe." Jacobsen interpreted them as both "thunder devil" and "lightening spirit," and said they were hung in the entryways of houses as protective figures for children: "Among rich people the children are entrusted into the care of a shaman, meaning that he is responsible for keeping the children healthy. This is the reason for making such figures; then he forces the spirits under his power to go into the figure, which will then protect the children during his absence." Jacobsen said that the toothy cavity on the back of each figure was intended to "lock in the spirit of the lightening," among others, and marked it as a protective spirit. One (IVA4464) was also named "Inrok-Palok-Aderok-Nomnajorte" or *linruq paluqtaruaq enem nayurtii*, "spirit in beaver form guarding the house." These were valued items and not something people were willing to part with. Jacobsen candidly wrote: "I obtained this figure [IVA4196] in a house whose inhabitants had gone on a reindeer

hunt; the protective god was left behind. This gave me the opportunity to obtain the seemingly unattainable figure, something I had tried for months.” (Fienup-Riordan 2005: 222)

Working with Frank Andrew and other elders at the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum in December 2002, Alex Bird of Emmonak was inspired to comment while examining a three-inch-tall wooden person with a toothy cavity in its belly, said to have been owned by a shaman.

Some women exercised their shamanic powers back then, and the same with men. I will talk about what I heard because the stomach of this [figure] is open.

They called that [male] *angalkuq* Teggalquq [Stone] back when there were *angalkut*. That woman was messing with him because apparently she was an *angalkuq*. Because she was an *angalkuq*, she asked him to do what men do.

That man, Teggalquq, was an *angalkuq*, and that woman was an *angalkuq* as well. When he was about to lay on her, he saw that the woman was cut open from this part of her body, she was probably opened like this [wooden figure]. If he lay on top of her, that woman would kill him. Because *angalkut* are wise, he lay down with a log on him, and put that log inside that female *angalkuq*.

Then he let go. After a while, that woman started to have stomach pains, hurting inside because her fellow male *angalkuq* had put a log inside her. He pretended that piece of wood was part of his body. Those *angalkut* of the past always tried to be wise. I just recalled that story they told because her [stomach] was open [like this figure]. This is an object used by *angalkut*.

The toothy cavities appearing on both Tumalarria's and Irurpak's drums, as well as on other shamanic objects, have strong associations in Yup'ik iconography and oral tradition. Nonhuman persons, they say, possessed extraordinary sight, hearing, and smell, so that humans had to control their own vision, noise, and odor when dealing with them. The Yupiit also marshaled the forms and functions of the human mouth in their concept of the spirit world. A small, carved animal appears in the mouth of many masks, representing the hope for abundant game in the future. Other masks possess a twisted or distorted mouth, often associated with *ircenrraat*. Many accounts depict these supernatural beings as half human/half animal or, alternately, human and animal. Masks representing *ircenrraat* show human features on one side of the face and animal features on the other.

Among the most distinctive and intriguing mask features are the wide, toothy mouths and teeth running along great cavities in the body or down the arm or leg. Smithsonian naturalist Edward Nelson (1899: 406) noted that the toothy grooves on one lower Kuskokwim mask indicated that the being represented had mouths all along those portions of its body. This may be a reference to the creature's predatory, carnivorous nature. Anthropologist Margaret Lantis (1990: 173–176) contended that these toothy mouths symbolize animals' revenge on their human hunters. Jasper Louis (February 1994) of St. Marys said simply, "If the being they were creating had many teeth, they would make the mask look like it, too."

Lantis (1990: 170–176) related the masks' toothy mouths to the traditional tale of the a deformed baby with a mouth stretching from ear to ear that consumes its mother and others as punishment for breaking admonishments. The story of the big-mouthed baby is not the only tale featuring a creature with a toothy cavity or monstrous mouth. Cecelia Foxie (May 1993) of Stebbins gave a detailed account of a boy who disobeyed his grandmother and went to explore a nearby knoll, which he discovered was a house. Inside lived a hunter lying on his belly. Similar to Tumaralria's experience, a woman then served the boy a bowl. When she turned around, the boy saw a baby in the dish with its stomach slashed open, revealing canine teeth (see also Nelson 1899: 496).

Frank Andrew (February 2003: 106) told a comparable story from Canineq, the lower coastal area:

Their father [Kukukualek] was haunted in the *qasgi* of Iqukvaq. After he went up there, he was coming back, dragging a kayak sled. This was a time when no one was living in Kangirarmiut, but they were all at spring camps. This was when he spent the night in their *qasgi*. He was alone.

After he ate supper, he went to bed in the *qasgi*. He kept his light on. While he was lying there, he heard someone walking on hard snow, talking in a woman's voice. And he heard her enter the porch of the *qasgi*. He heard her say, "They said a stranger has arrived! He must be hungry!"

Because he couldn't do anything, he took his belt and wrapped it around his hand. He climbed up on a rafter. Holding that [belt], he was ready to swing it. When she came up, he was going to whip her on her face.

He could tell when she went into the entryway. She kept saying, "They say that a stranger has arrived! He must be hungry!"

The plate appeared down there. Inside it was a baby—its belly was slit open!

When her head appeared, before she came up, he whipped it in the face! After he whipped it, he lost all consciousness. When he woke up, daylight was coming through the window. He was lying on the floor, holding onto his belt.

As soon as he woke up, he looked around, but that woman was gone. And that plate with a baby was gone. He talked about that time and again.

The acts of eating and biting were fraught with associations for a people whose day-to-day lives depended on killing and eating animals, and they were often featured in scary stories of supernatural retaliation. Licking, however, was considered a healing act in many contexts, and saliva was often associated with long life. Alma Keyes (February 1993) described an extraordinary creature, the *uilurusak* (also *uiluruyak*, “meadow jumping mouse”), which was capable of licking people all over and giving them four lives:

They said if a person emanated light within their world, if it liked him it would come to him when he went down to the ocean in spring. They say that *uilurusak* has four ice holes. When a person came to them, one hole would be in the middle. When the mouse, *uilurusak*, came up on the ice it would get bigger and bigger.

As the person stood, the mouse would climb up on him and lick and slurp every aperture and blemish on his body. He would stand still, though he was petrified when the mouse came to him. Then it would enter him through his big toe and again in there. The person would remain though he was frightened. *Uilurusak* would turn into a mouse with a long snout. It would enter and lick every scuff and blister. It would come out, slowly, totally cleaning the person. Then it would turn into a person and ask him, “So, what do you wish for in your life? Would you like to become a great hunter? What do you want?” A person who was energetic would wish to become a great hunter and to become powerful through hunting. However, if a person had sense he should wish for a long life, realizing that he had already been cleansed by [the *uilurusak*].¹

¹ See also Nelson (1899: 442) on Wi-lu-gho-yuk.

The act of licking can, like the healing touch, mend injuries and restore a person's senses. Wassilie Evan (March 1989) described his experience when the shaman Irurpak licked his eyes, restoring his sight.

I was going blind. I could not open my eyes. My father had summoned Irurpak. When he arrived I thought he would chant for me. After he ate he told me to go to him so he could lick my eyes. As he proceeded to lick my eyes I noticed that his tongue felt like a file. After a while he told me, "Go outside and tell me what you have seen." When I first went out I did not see anything. It was still like a fog. I told him, "My sight did not improve."

He then went on to lick my eyes a second time. Again he told me to go outside and look around. As I went out and looked around, I noticed that across the river the Qissunaq shoreline was almost visible, but the trees were not. I told him that when I went back in. "I saw a little. I noticed the shoreline across the river."

Before he did it the third time he told me, "The next time you will see it as it is." I went back outside as he told me. I then noticed that the shoreline of the Qissunaq River was visible—even the trees were very clear. Everything was good. When I went back inside I told him, "I can see the trees on the other side of the river just the way they are." He told me that was enough. He stopped after the third time. He saved my sight and made my eyes open again.

The toothy mouth of a dog or wolf also was associated with healing in some contexts. Frank Andrew (January 2004: 146) described a healing ceremony performed in the *qasgi* during which a sick girl lay naked on a grass mat while men beat drums and the *angalkuq* Tairtaq circled her five times, dancing vigorously. After the third song, Tairtaq disappeared through the underground entryway, then reappeared to report that he had seen a dog coming down from the moon. When the fifth song ended, a huge dog entered the *qasgi*, sniffing around. After circling the girl, it crouched down, approached her feet, and ate the lower half of her body in one bite. People could hear her bones being crunched between its powerful teeth and saw blood gushing out of the sides of its jaws. The dog then ate the girl's upper half, licked the area clean where the girl had been, and disappeared through the entryway. Soon after, fingers appeared in the entryway, and two men pulled up the girl—alive and restored to health.

Cauyatulria/One Who Drums

For *angalkut* in southwest Alaska, the drum was an essential tool. Frank Andrew (September 2005: 247) eloquently explained:

People who went on spirit journeys used drums. One would use his spirit powers when dancing with the drum. They say an *angalkuq* traveled by standing and using his powers. He traveled with his body; using his spirit powers was a way for him to travel.

He would stand up and do the ritual. It was when he could go out and travel. In his mind he would travel far away, even though his body stayed behind. The *angalkuq* used the drum to see things. He would remove obstacles that he might face in the future, if the community asked him to travel. If they asked him to conjure and look through his mind's eye, he'd use his drum and check coming events, preparing to deal with them.

Kit'ellriit (shamans who traveled underwater, lit., "those who fall into water or drown") were aided by drummers and singers while they journeyed. Frank Andrew (December 2002: 342) explained:

They say they sang all night when he was gone, resting periodically when they were tired and then going on. They would finally stop when he arrived.

They call those [shaman songs] *yuarulluut*. They say other people sang for them when [*angalkut*] used their powers while standing. When [*angalkut*] used drums, they sang their own *yuarulluut*. But when they were standing, people who weren't *angalkut* sang for them, because they knew their songs.

Frank Andrew (December 2002: 344) described his experience in the 1930s in the village of Kwigillingok when he watched the *angalkuq* Ayuqsaq fly, using a drum.

They are amazing. They apparently fly seated on rocks at night. We did this in the evening down at Kwigillingok. We removed all the clothing from Ayuqsaq, a shaman a few years older than me, and sat him on a rock in a fetal position, binding him securely. And we pulled back these [arms] and tied his wrists together. We tied him up firmly with his body bent.

When he was all bound up we sat him on a rock at the edge of the floorboards on the back side of the *qasgi*. And a drum was taken out and placed

tilted in the tunnel entrance. Because the drum was so huge and didn't quite fit, they placed it slanted in the porch. Then a drumstick was dropped beneath the floorboards through a crack between the boards. Then finally the lamps were turned off. As instructed by Ayuqsaq, those sitting toward the back wall began to make [ticking] sounds by slapping their tongues against their lower lips inside their mouths, while those sitting toward the front entrance were going, "Shhhh, shhh."

While everyone made sounds, after we heard a short thud, we heard someone picking up the drum out there and starting to come up through the entrance. And once the person was inside, we suddenly heard a hissing sound from down below the floorboards. That was how fast the drumstick was moving. It was the drumstick we dropped beneath the floorboards. Then shortly after that we heard the sound of a drumbeat. The second drumbeat we heard came from above, then the drummer began going around quickly drumming as people started to sing up there. The drummer drummed following the singers and stopped every time there was a pause in the song. And as soon as the drumming ended, we heard a thud from the floor.

When the lamps were lit, Ayuqsaq was sitting on the rock with the drumstick sticking out of his mouth. The drum was sitting on his knees with the handle wedged in. He apparently had used his jaw and mouth to hit the drum. Yet he was all tied up, unable to move. When the five rounds were complete and the lamps were lit, we saw the bindings lose on the floor with the knots still in place.

They apparently go around five times. They call it *canipgurluni* when they do the five rounds.

Frank Andrew then described how his mischievous cousin Milton determined to poke Ayuqsaq with a fire poker when he flew. In preparation Milton hid the poker under bedding material near his seat. Frank continued:

When it was time, they prepared [Ayuqsaq]. When he would [drum], [Milton] would apparently reach out at him with that fire poker, but he said he never touched him. When he told him, Ayuqsaq said, "You will not touch me, even though you try to reach me. Do you think that I fly inside this *qasgi*? I circle up there above this village where you cannot poke at me, and you will not touch me, even if you try."

[Ayuqsaq] pointed at that rock, "This takes me." This [rock] took him while he was bent forward, and it was stuck to his buttocks. That's what he said.

Lerniq and Tengquq from Chefnak also did that in my presence, and Ayuqsaq as well. They would fly.

Frank Andrew (December 2002: 123) also described experiencing the powerful drumming of his cousin, who was an *angalkuq*:

I tested an *angalkuq*, my real *iluraq* [cross-cousin]. Let me tell you, his name was Mancuaq, my father's sister's son. He drummed like this.

It was down on one of the tributaries of Tagyaraq, the winter camp that was called Qamiqumiut. I was visiting there, at my deceased aunt's. When I got there, I did not know that my cousin had gotten good at drumming, and he surprised me.

Before I laid down to sleep, when they were looking for places to sleep, I told them that I would sleep next to my cousin, in front of the doorway, and he was sleeping there. I laid down and looked and saw that his drum was hanging, and I pretended not to notice him and said out of surprise, "Whose drum is this?" After grinning, he said that it was his. He said that he would drum and have fun with me. He was drumming, and so I went next to him and listened.

I got up. Not long after drumming, he told me to sit below him and cross my legs with my back to him. His mother was in the back area and his daughter was there as well, and her other daughter was also by the back wall. I sat in front of him on the pillow. He sat behind me, and after that, he blew on my back, turning off the lights.

After some time, I started to feel cold and to shiver, and my arms started to shake, and they were lifting. It seemed that my breathing was going inward sometimes. It started to get more powerful. Eventually, my voice started to come out unexpectedly, and I would make the sudden noise, "Ee-ee."

When I got to that point, I started to hear something, and I realized that people were laughing, those who I thought were sleeping. When it got too much and too powerful, I twisted the bottom part of my body and fell. That finally stopped when I hit the floor. They are powerful. I told him that I was done, that I wouldn't do it again.

They are powerful, and people should not think the abilities of *angalkut* are nothing.

Frank Andrew (December 2002: 310) explained how *angalkut* used drums to examine a variety of situations and conditions: "They say

they examine by drumming, and *angalkut* also use drums to look for someone to pass on their skills to. Those drums are a way for *angalkut* to search and examine. If they stand up, they can finally use their bodies to go, after examining their path with drums.” He then described hiding in the underground entryway of the *qasgi* and watching the *angalkuq*, Puyulkuk, drumming:

Puyulkuk drummed as well, and when his song was over, since he seemed to be moving, I became curious about what he did. I asked the one they called Qug’anaq, and we crawled inside the underground entryway when Puyulkuk was drumming in the back of the *qasgi*. When his face came into view, we stopped and lay down. *Angalkut* who are drumming don’t keep their eyes open. He was singing away and dancing with his body. When he started to sing faster, he would make motions and move his chin while he was drumming, but he would not open his eyes when his song would suddenly end. I wonder what he was doing? His powers probably did that to him.

[*Angalkut*] don’t stay still. They say they search when they are drumming. When they start on their journey, they take the drumstick and move it without hitting [the drum]. When they want to, they start to sing and drum. Then they drum faster and begin again, and when they move, they finally start to hit [the drum], drumming like regular drummers. But they get faster when the song is over. When that happens, they start to speak with their *avneq* [other half]. Probably all *angalkut* do that.

Frank Andrew (February 2003: 40) also described watching a female *angalkuq* conjuring, using a drum:

Cupungulria was an *igyararatuli* [one who drums and sings to conjure her spirit powers], *cauyatulria* [one who drums]. People said her drum was small. When she was drumming and singing to conjure her powers, sometimes the drumstick would hit her face. Paru was her *uicungaq* [teasing cousin]. He criticized her drum because the drumstick would hit her face. She replied that when her *taruq* [person] is near, her drum grows into a very large drum.

Her spirit powers came to her and inhabited her. They call those who do that *igyararatulit*.

As a final testament to the essential role drums played in shamanic enactments of power in southwest Alaska, Frank Andrew (September

2005: 271) told the story of the powerful *angalkuq* Arnaruaq (lit., “pretend woman”) who stole the drums of lesser shamans but was finally destroyed by one with a more powerful drum.

The story goes that a person named Arnaruaq from the Togiak River also instigated conflict between *angalkut*. Arnaruaq had two husbands who were *nukalpiat* [great hunters]. At night he turned into a woman. And during the day he was a man.

Arnaruaq lived on the Togiak River long ago.

The two husbands were avid bowhead-whale hunters. When they hunted whales they would go to the beach, and when they saw a whale diving with its tail out of the water, they'd shoot their arrows toward it and yell and ask that its body be washed up on the shore. After they said that they'd go home.

Later when they were ready, they'd go to the spot they mentioned and find a dead whale on the beach. The husbands of Arnaruaq would always hunt like that. They definitely were always provided for since Arnaruaq was an *angalkuq*.

Arnaruaq also would take drums that belonged to other *angalkut*.

In Apruka'ar that man named Keggutellek [lit., “one with teeth”] had a drum and would go on journeys with his drum there in his village. Then one day his drum disappeared. He tried to find the person responsible but couldn't figure out who it was. After that he gave up.

Then once when he was preparing to go to Togiak, two boys wanted to go with him. So he took them along and left.

They arrived in Togiak. After they had their meal and went outside, he noticed a man sitting at the end of a log nearby facing the ocean. Keggutellek was an *angalkuq*. He thought to himself, “Perhaps the man sitting over there is Arnaruaq, the *angalkuq* who people talked about back home. I wish I could get closer and see what he looks like.”

Then he walked toward him. As he approached the man turned and looked at him with a straight face. He noticed that he was an old man. So not coming right up to him, he sat at the opposite end of the log. After he sat down they began conversing. [Keggutellek] said that he had heard about an *angalkuq* named Arnaruaq who lived in Togiak. The old man said that he was that person and that people called him Arnaruaq.

Then Arnaruaq told him to come with him to his house so he could show him something. So Keggutellek followed him into his house. When they dropped down the hole in the porch and entered the tunnel entryway, he

noticed a huge whale vertebrae step below the entrance hole up ahead, the hole where you come up [into the main room]. There was also something to step on when dropping down through the front entrance hole.

When he went in he noticed that it was a big house. And on one side of the room, in the middle of the space along the wall, he saw a platform used as a bed. And he saw four posts situated as supports for the house frame. Then he noticed many, many drum skins tied up and down those posts. And above him he saw three drums hanging.

He looked at them and suddenly realized that one of the three was his drum. Then he thought, "So, he's the one who took my drum."

Then after saying something about the drum skins, he told him that after taking the drums from *angalkut* and realizing that their owners were not truly powerful, he usually took the drum skins off [the wooden frames] and hung them on the posts. And after checking and realizing they had no power, he'd take off the drum skins and hang them on these posts. After he told him about those drum skins, he turned to the drums hanging over his bed and told him that those drums were real. He told him that the drum hanging the farthest back was more powerful than the two beside it. He was talking about the drum he recognized. He told him that when he used it, he traveled out and couldn't get to all the places it could go. He said it was a drum with real power.

Then Keggutellek said, "I wonder who it belongs to?" He said that, even though he knew it was his drum.

Arnaruaq said that it belonged to an *angalkuq* from the Kuskokwim area who used it to go on journeys. Keggutellek agreed with him.

After telling him those things he said, "Perhaps you have thoughts about going to bed with me. I won't refuse if you can come and see me in the middle of the night."

Arnaruaq said that to him, and Keggutellek didn't say anything. He didn't even nod his head and let him know that he'd come. After listening to him he left and went over to the *qasgi*.

That night, though he had not said that he would come and see him, when everyone in the *qasgi* started sleeping he got up and went over to his house. He went into the porch, and when he went up and looked inside the tunnel entryway, he immediately realized that if he dropped down through the front entrance hole that he'd definitely be committing suicide. There was something sitting below the back entrance hole. The vertebrae he had seen during the day had turned into a polar bear. It was lying curled up below the hole.

If he went in through the tunnel, the polar bear was going to kill him. He couldn't enter.

He then started summoning all of his helpers, trying to find a way to go inside. Then when he found a down feather, he immediately transformed himself into that and dropped through the smoke hole and slowly floated down. When he landed on the floor he turned into a human. Then he looked around inside the house and spotted Arnaruaq sleeping, lying on his back with a blanket over him. [Arnaruaq] was a young girl after being an old man during the day. Arnaruaq turned into a woman at night.

Keggutellek looked at her and realized that if he touched her his body would surely rot and disappear. He immediately knew she was dangerous. He quickly recoiled, deciding not to get in bed with her.

While he stood there, she stirred in her sleep and suddenly woke up and saw him standing there. She got up and said, "How did you come in?" [Keggutellek said,] "I came in through your tunnel entryway." [Arnaruaq replied,] "I don't think you can come in through my tunnel entryway. How did you enter?" [Keggutellek answered,] "I came in through your tunnel entryway." [Arnaruaq] would respond, "You can't come in through my tunnel entryway."

So for a while she kept asking him how he entered. Then [Keggutellek] finally said, "Since you insistently want to know how I entered, watch me, I'm going out now." Then after Keggutellek stood for a moment his body suddenly got bright with light flashing out of him. He shone with bright light that suddenly went out.

Arnaruaq, after shutting his eyes because of the blinding light, opened them and found he was alone. [Keggutellek], who was there seconds before, was gone. Then he realized that he had left.

Keggutellek went back to the *qasgi*. When he was going back to bed he told his traveling companions that they were going home in the morning. The next morning they left. While they were going, when the sun was straight up in the middle, he started to feel pressure in his whole body. Then he probed into the situation and saw Arnaruaq with his arms and hands outstretched, and he could see himself and the boys going down his arm. He realized that Arnaruaq had gotten hold of them and that they were on his arm heading to his hand. Since they apparently had gotten [halfway down his arm], when he [bent] his arm, he apparently felt pressure in his body. And when [Arnaruaq] stretched out his arm, he'd feel better.

He evidently was about to kill all of them. When they got inside the palm of his hand he apparently was just going to pop them and kill them instantly by clenching his hands. *Angalkut* did these things when they exercised their powers.

As soon as Keggutellek saw what Arnaruaq was doing he told his companions that they should stop and camp. He said, "Let's stop and go to bed." And here the sun was out in the middle of the day. So they made a shelter and went to bed.

As soon as they went to bed, he got hold of the souls of his companions and kicked them toward home along with his drum. In minutes his drum reached their village, along with the souls of the two boys.

He then relaxed, knowing that Arnaruaq would not be able to touch them now because they were safe.

After he kicked them to safety, Keggutellek then took off with his spirit powers. He'd look back and see Arnaruaq sitting down and following behind him. Since he was worried that he might catch up with him, he turned abruptly and decided to go to his parents' place. He headed toward the upper Yukon River to a place called *Paluqtaviik*. He kept going, trying not to be caught.

And when he finally arrived at his parents' place he dashed inside their house. Seconds later, a violent bang shook their house when Arnaruaq put his hands on it.

They say in the upper Yukon River, a white rock, *uqumyak* [quartz], started to form there, adding color to that mountain after that incident. [That mountain was the den of *paluqtaviit* (large beavers)]. They say when Arnaruaq slapped his hand on the den, it suddenly cracked open.

As soon as Keggutellek entered, his father gave him a small bow. He told him that Arnaruaq was about to look in through the smoke hole and that he should aim. And just as he aimed, [Arnaruaq] looked in. As soon as he saw him, he shot his arrow straight at his chest. Then they heard him roll down. That was when he finally killed him. They say Keggutellek killed Arnaruaq like that.

I think this is where the story ends. I've just told you one of the stories [I know] for your enjoyment.

Conclusion

The dramatic toothy mouths inscribed on the handles of Tumaralria and Irurpak's drums as well as other shamanic objects likely recall the supernatural senses of the shaman's *tuunraq* (helping spirit) and the large-mouthed child of oral tradition—senses one dismissed at one's peril. The monstrous mouth was prominent both in the shamans' actions—biting and eating diseases—and in the objects they created. When Tumaralria's guest was presented with a bowl containing a child with slit stomach, the cavity lined with teeth, he refused it. Yet Tumaralria treated his guest with compassion. The powerful shaman, Irurpak, was also a healer.

Drums like Tumaralria's played an essential role in shamanic enactments of power in southwest Alaska in the past. Today these shaman drums are not rejected or hidden but given a prominent place in public statements and displays about the Yup'ik way of life. Discussions surrounding Tumaralria's drum provide us with insights into Yup'ik history. The act of telling also reveals something about the present. These tales are shared with enjoyment and pleasure. Listening to Frank Andrew speak about his experience, Alex Bird exclaimed, "You are fun to listen to. When someone is there to explain them well, they are easy to understand."

Cultural pride in *angalkut* as men and woman of extraordinary power and knowledge increasingly outweighs fear of them as "servants of the devil." Secure in their Christian present, a generation removed from the emotional debate over shamanism that tore families and communities apart at the turn of the century, elders like Frank Andrew and Paul John can look at their pre-Christian past and see the positive aspects of what they lost. They extol the virtues of *angalkut* not to revive the practice of shamanism, but to revive pride in the Yup'ik past for future generations.

This dramatic openness to reown their past and their pride in presenting it to the outside world has been made possible in part by the post-Vatican II climate of apology and forgiveness. The positive regard for *angalkut* also reflects a general revival of pride in all things Yup'ik. Efforts toward cultural empowerment take a multitude of forms in southwest Alaska today, including Yup'ik language immersion programs in the schools, multivillage dance festivals, and elders confer-

ences. Cultural pride is also apparent in the words of village elders as they revisit their past.

This “speaking out” by elders comes none too soon, as few remain of the last generation to have experienced these dramatic shamanic presentations. Their elderly status may well contribute to their desire to share their experiences. The story of Arnaruaq was one of half-a-dozen stories Frank Andrew shared with Marie Meade, Alice Rearden, and me in September 2005. We did not know that would be the last time we would all be together.

Today many Yupitit proudly recall *angalkut* as the “scientists of our past,” publicly proclaiming their strengths and virtues as healers and teachers. Their recollections open new vistas, countering descriptions of “heathen sorcerers” with public claims of *angalkut*, men and women alike, possessing extraordinary ability, empowered by our common creator.

Acknowledgments

I am as always indebted to the Yup’ik men and women who generously shared their knowledge, especially the late Frank Andrew, who taught us so much and gave us so much joy. Also profound thanks to Alice Rearden and Marie Meade, my partners in this work, who not only carefully transcribed and translated what elders shared but were from the beginning part of these conversations. Our work together in Alaska has been supported by the Calista Elders Council, with funding from the National Science Foundation, and we thank these organizations as well.

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ANN FIENUP-RIORDAN is an independent scholar who has lived and worked in Alaska since 1973. Her books include *The Nelson Island Eskimo* (1983), *Eskimo Essays* (1990), *Boundaries and Passages* (1994), *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks* (1996), *Wise Words of the Yup'ik People: We Talk to You because We Love You* (2005), and *Yuungnaqpiallerput/The Way We Genuinely Live: Masterworks of Yup'ik Science and Survival* (2007). In 2000, she received the Alaska Federation of Natives President's Award for her work with Alaska Natives, and in 2001 the Governor's Award for Distinguished Humanist Educator. At present she works with the Calista Elders Council, the primary heritage organization in southwest Alaska, documenting traditional knowledge.

Analysis of the Grandfather God of the Manchu Shi Clan*

GUO SHUYUN

DALIAN, CHINA

The Manchu Sikteri Clan (Chinese Shi) in Jiutai City of Jilin Province is one of only a few Manchu families in modern China that still maintain traditional shamanic rituals, and its system of shamanist gods has very distinct characteristics. The gods of this system include three kinds: high gods (including the Grandfather God and Manni Gods), wild animal gods, and household gods. The present article attempts to define clearly the Grandfather God of the Manchu Sikteri Clan, and it then examines three related areas: the criteria for establishing this god, the pedigree of the god, and the three forms of communication employed by the god.

The Manchu Shi¹ Clan in Jiutai City of Jilin Province is one of only a few Manchu families still maintaining traditional shaman rituals in modern China, and it is a typical shaman family.² The ritual performed by the family is unique, and its system of shamanist gods also has distinct characteristics.

According to traditional classification, the Shi Clan's gods are of three kinds: high gods, wild animal gods, and household gods. The high gods include two types: Taiyeshen (太爷神) Grandfather God and Manni God.³ The animal gods of the Shi family mainly include: Jackal, Wolf, Tiger,

* Translated by Liu Xucai (Changchun, China) with the assistance of Daniel A. Kister and Mark Leavitt. The Editors of *Shaman* express their sincere gratitude to all three for their help.

¹ The Manchu form of the clan name is Sikteri.

² The basic conditions of the Shi (Sikteri) Clan are seen in Guo 2008: 47–64.

³ Manni: Manchu for 'hero'. There are more than 30 Manni gods worshiped by the Shi Clan. Manni Gods include the Amba Manni, Baturu Manni, Juru Manni, etc., 33 in all. Everyone of them is a hero-god who possesses unique skills. For more information about Manni Gods, see Guo and Wang 2001: 55–64.

Leopard, Eagle, Python, Snake, Hawk and Otter Gods. The main household gods are: the Baishan ancestral god called Grandfather Chaohazhanye (超哈占爷, Manchu *cooha jaye*) along with Mother Fodo (佛多妈妈) and Mother Aodu (奥都妈妈, Manchu *odun*). Grandfather Chaohazhan is a heroic god commonly worshipped by Manchu families and pictured as a red-faced combat general on horseback. Mother Fodo is a goddess in charge of reproduction and the protection of infants, and her symbols are willow branches and a large basket designed for holding grandchildren. Mother Aodu is a female war-god, whose wooden idol takes the form of a heroic woman riding a horse. In the present article, the author makes a systematic study of the formation, establishment and pedigree of the Grandfather God and discusses issues concerning the function, nature, and forms of communication between gods and human beings.

Definition and Characteristics of the Grandfather God

In the Manchu Shi Clan, the Grandfather God is highly respected. He is a deceased shaman who is worshiped by the clan as a god because his soul returned to the clan after his death and possessed a new shaman. In the Manchu divinity system, the Grandfather God is a Shaman God; and in the human bloodline system, he is the family ancestral god. His importance to the Shi Clan lies in this twofold nature.

As Shaman God, the Grandfather God is not unique to the Shi family. Other Manchu clans that still perform the “wild rite” (*yeji*, 野祭) also worship the Shaman God.⁴ The tradition that a shaman is worshiped as a divinity after his death is thus not uncommon. However, the title “Grandfather God” is used only by the Shi Clan. It came to be used as

⁴ The “wild rite”: a form of Manchu shamanism. The so-called “wild rite” is comparable to the family god rite. The Family God Rite has been the main form of Manchu shamanism since the mid-Qing Dynasty. It became a standard rite after the Qing government promulgated the Manchu Rites of Offering Sacrifices to God and Heaven as law. It takes ancestor worship as the main emphasis, mainly expressed through wishes and sacrificial offerings, possession by the god being excluded. The “wild rite” retains the traditional ritual form according to each clan’s tradition. Some Manchu clans still adhere to the original god system and sacrificial rules in their own clans. The “wild rite” includes possession by the god, and contains the rituals of welcoming the god, the god’s descent, and seeing the god off as an honored guest.

the title of respect for the Shaman God in the course of the long-term development and evolution of the Shi Clan. The established criteria for characterizing the Grandfather God are inconsistent with those used by other clans.

As the Shaman Gods of the Shi Clan, Grandfather Gods come about through the deification of deceased clan shamans whose historical authenticity can be clearly traced and whose hereditary line is clear. Some descendants of Grandfather Gods are still alive. According to the records of the Divine Words and the genealogies of the Shi Clan, the first Grandfather God was the first Shaman God, Chong Jide, who was born in the early Qing Dynasty. The existence of the shaman Chong Jide can be verified at present, and he is consistently recognized as the Ancestral Shaman God of the Shi Clan by all the internal branches of the family. Ancestral shaman gods of other nationalities are mostly legendary figures, the authenticity of which varies greatly. In some nationalities of northern China, shaman ancestors have come down to us only in the form of folk legends. The historical period in which they are thought to have lived is remote, and shaman culture is traditionally an oral culture, with no relevant historical verification. For example, in the legends of Mongolian shamanism, there is said to be a shaman from Hebo Getai who is revered as the first ancestor of shamans from Korchin. According to the legend, the Hebo Getai shaman was a descendant of the famous, all-resourceful shaman Huochier, of the era of Genghis Khan. The Hebo Getai shaman once sparred with lamasism, but was defeated in the end and finally was degraded from the status of *Taiji* to live in poverty (Bai et al. 1986: 89). Because the time is remote, it is very difficult to determine the historical authenticity of the legend. Strong believers in shamanism as they were, however, the people tended to worship this legendary figure as the Ancestral Shaman God of the tribe. In the oral inheritance of generations, his sacred nature increased, and he became their legendary shaman ancestor. For this reason, as has been pointed out, “. . . although a shaman legend has some credibility, it is, after all, a mixture of true and false elements. To identify the Shaman God of a region or tribe is thus more difficult. The identity of such a god is not as clearly determined as that of the Grandfather God or Ancestral God.” (Se 1998: 42) In the case of the Shaman God of the Manchu Shi Clan, however, there is a clear line of inheritance dating back to the first Grandfather God; and his legends

can be collected to provide empirical data for the study of the shamanist divinity system of the clan.

In determining who is eligible to become a Grandfather God of the Shi Clan, certain standards have come to be used during the clan's long history. These are recognized by family members and have descended to the present as part of the traditional heritage of the clan. There are three indispensable criteria:

(1) The Grandfather God must be a member of the family before his death. This is quite different from the Manni God or Household God, who may come from the ancestor heroes of other Manchu clans. According to the traditional ideas of the Manchu, a Manchu daughter-in-law married into a family became a member of that family. She could not only inherit the shamanic tradition, but could herself also become a Grandmother God. Presently, three generations of the Shi Clan's gods are Grandmother Gods.

(2) Before his death, the Grandfather God must have become the clans' senior shaman. He must have been possessed⁵ by the former Grandfather God, and he must have performed rites to honor his family god. A shaman possessed by only the Manni God could not become the clan's Grandfather God after his death.

(3) After his death, the shaman's soul practiced austerities on Changbai Mountain.⁶ Several years later, his soul returned to his own clan and possessed the body of a particular clan member. That member thus inherited the post of clan shaman. The process is commonly known as "grasping disciples" (*zhuadizi*, 抓弟子).

The above three criteria are essential for becoming the Grandfather God. Of prime importance is blood relationship with the clan. The other two criteria have specific requirements: shamans possessed not by a Grandfather God, but by the Manni God, cannot become the clan's Grandfather God after their death, nor can *biaohun* (标浑,

⁵ The process of possession is known as *shen zhua*, which literally means "the god captures" and mainly indicates a subject is chosen by the god for possession. The one who is "chosen" undergoes a form of possession where he/she expresses a series of abnormal actions. The onlookers regard these abnormal actions as a sign or omen.

⁶ Changbai Mountain: located in the southeast of Jilin Province. It is the source of the Tumen River, the Yalu River and the Songhua River, and the birthplace of the Manchu nationality. It was regarded as a holy mountain during the Qing Dynasty.

Manchu *booi mukūn*) shamans or *zailis*.⁷ Likewise, a shaman who was possessed by a Grandfather God, but failed to possess a disciple after his death, cannot be regarded as the Shi Clan's Grandfather God. He would only be revered as a great shaman, not as the Grandfather God. For example, Shi Dianfeng, the great shaman who was possessed by the last Grandfather God, demonstrated his possession by the god by going through holes drilled in river ice. Though he has been dead for more than 40 years, however, he has still not possessed a new shaman. Therefore, according to the standards for becoming a Grandfather God, he cannot be worshiped as the Shi Clan's Grandfather God.

The process of shamanic inheritance by which the Grandfather God possesses a disciple and whereby the new Grandfather God is formed is one of cyclic repetition:

A clan member → possessed by the Grandfather God → the senior shaman
 → the soul returns to the clan after his death and possesses a new shaman
 → that new shaman becomes the Grandfather God.

This pattern is implied in figures drawn on the Great God Scroll (pl. 3). This scroll is of white satin, approximately 2 meters long, 1.5 meters wide. Both ends have handles, making it convenient to roll up or hang. It is usually placed in a wooden chest, approximately 1.5 meters in length and 30 centimeters in width and height. On the scroll are drawn six shrines. The highest shrine is for "the Lord of the Snow-capped Mountain." On the five lower shrines sit the Grandfather Gods from the first generation to the fifth. The background of the Great God Scroll is Changbai Mountain, with a phoenix roosting on a sacred tree. This is the holy land where the gods of the Shi Clan dwell and the homeland where the ancestors of the Shi Clan live. The animal figures on the scroll—tiger, bear, wild boar, wolf, python, hawk, etc.—are the wild animal gods worshiped by generations of the Shi Clan. On the right bottom of the Great God Scroll, there is a coffin, with raging flames under and around it. It is the coffin of the Grandfather God of the first generation.

⁷ *Zailis* are assistants to the shaman, and they undergo much of the same training that is given to new shamans. *Biaohun* are not official shamans selected by the god; they are substitute shamans that have been nominated by their family, by clan members, or selected by a head *zaili*.

The scroll vividly expresses the shamanic myth of the Shi Clan. At bottom left is a person near an ice hole, who is covered with white leather. He holds an iron rod in his hand and is portrayed as jumping into the ice hole. He is the senior clan shaman Shi Dianfeng, who was possessed by the Otter God and who is thus skilled at going through ice holes. Though Shi Dianfeng claimed he was possessed by the Grandfather God, the clansmen didn't believe him. Around the year 1910, the entire clan burned incense and tested Shi Dianfeng by ordering him to go through some ice holes. The clansmen dug nine holes in the ice near the Songhua River. After inviting the Otter God to take possession of him, Shi Dianfeng went through seven holes one after another. The clansmen then believed beyond the shadow of a doubt in his supernatural power; and from then on, he was well-renowned throughout Jilin Province. At the time the author was doing research in villages along the Songhua River in the counties of Yongji, Jiutai, and Shulan in Jilin Province, the legend of Shi Dianfeng's going through the ice holes was still being circulated among some Manchu clans.

The Great God Scroll is one of the most important shamanic symbols of the Shi Clan. It is taken out and hung up only for a ritual, and it vividly demonstrates the system of shamanic divinities of the clan.

Pedigree of the Grandfather God

According to the criteria of the Shi Clan, there are five existing generations of Grandfather Gods, one in each generation. The time of the possession of the Grandfather God, the amount of time the soul practices austerities after the shaman's death, and when exactly the soul returns to possess a new disciple, is not fixed. Each Grandfather God has his own shamanic name. This name is given to him after his death by the newly chosen shaman, who speaks out the name while in the state of possession by the old Grandfather God.

In the Shi Clan, the legends of each Grandfather God and his divine acts are passed on from generation to generation. Among these, the tales surrounding the first and fifth generation Grandfather Gods are the most legendary, the most mysterious.

According to the records of the Shi Clan's Divine Words and the clan's oral tradition, the first senior shaman and Grandfather God was Chong Jide, as was noted above. About 350 years ago, when the Shi Clan and

the Ao Clan lived in the same village, shaman Chong Jide of the Shi Clan and the shaman of the Ao Clan shared a relationship of affinity. That is, Chong Jide was married to the elder sister of the Ao Clan shaman, making the two shamans brothers-in-law. One day, as the two were drinking together and chatting, each began boasting to the other of his own god's powers. The shaman of the Ao Clan said, "My god can cross the river on a drum." Chong Jide said, "When my god comes, I can turn into a fish and overturn your drum." The Ao Clan shaman replied, "If you turn into a fish, I can pierce you through with a spear." Neither was willing to yield to the other, so the two decided each to invite his god to come down for a contest. The shaman of the Ao Clan began by sitting on a drum to cross the river. Chong Jide thought that, the two being relatives, the shaman of the Ao Clan wouldn't dare harm him, since this would be the equivalent of harming himself. So Chong Jide turned into a black carp and began swimming in the water. In the process of swimming to the middle of the river, he overturned the Ao Clan shaman's drum several times. Contrary to what Chong Jide had expected, however, the shaman of the Ao Clan, sitting on the drum with golden horse spear in hand, then hurled the spear at him with violent force. Chong Jide was seriously injured, beyond recovery.

Before reaching the point of death, he said to his wife, "After I die, place my coffin on the beach of the Songhua River, and 49 days later, I will come back to life. Promise to tell no one of this." This made his wife concerned about the welfare of her relatives in the Ao Clan, fearing that once her husband came back to life, they would suffer consequences for killing Chong Jide. So she broke her promise to keep her husband's plan a secret and told it to all her Ao Clan relatives. The whole Ao Clan discussed the matter and decided to destroy the coffin, along with Chong Jide's body, no matter what the consequences. That very night, they put charcoal on Chong Jide's coffin and lit a fire on it. At this point, the Eagle God and the Vulture God came with the intention of extinguishing the fire; but because the Ao clansmen had poured liquor and oil on it, the fire was very hard to put out. The fire burned on the beach for three days and three nights. In the end, the wings and tails of the Eagle God and the Vulture God were seriously injured. Then, however, there appeared a flaming combustion, symbolizing that Chong Jide had transmuted himself into a "gold and silver body." In the flame, a ray of golden light appeared, reaching all the way to the top of Changbai Mountain.

Chong Jide's soul thereafter practiced austerities on Changbai Mountain for more than 20 years. He then possessed a shaman of the second generation of the Shi Clan and thus became the first Shaman God of that clan. The clansmen revere him as "the Grandfather God of the first generation," with the shamanic name *sucungga mafa*, which means "first ancestor" in Manchu. According to legend, this Grandfather God had incomparable supernatural power and left behind a ritual called "running the fire pond (*paohuochi*, 跑火池)." Whenever the clan holds this ritual, the first generation Grandfather God must be invited.

From the time of the contest between the two shamans, the Ao and Shi clans contracted enmity with one another. Thereafter, the two clans have not intermarried and have had little interpersonal contact. Moreover, the Ao Clan became what is called a *kouxiang* (扣香) clan,⁸ a clan in which no new shaman was possessed by the god and which thus stopped holding shamanic rites.

According to the records of the Shi Clan's Divine Words, after Chong Jide died and practiced austerities, his soul returned to his clan as he possessed the second generation shaman, Dakabu, who was given the name Endurin mafa, which means "divine ancestor" in Manchu. Dakabu was possessed by the Grandfather God for more than ten years, and the whole Shi Clan was fond of him. After his death, his soul returned to Changbai Mountain to practice austerities, after which he returned in turn to possess the third Grandfather God.

This third Grandfather God was actually a Grandmother God, being female, and was given the name Saicungga mafa, which means "splendid ancestor" in Manchu. According to the tradition of most Manchu clans, women cannot be included in clan genealogies or on the Great God Scroll; so she is not depicted on the scroll. In her place, is her Manchu name and figure of her husband, Wulinba. Although this god was female, she had a very high prestige among her clansmen. She was the initiator and propagator of some of the clan's shamanic dances; and according to legend, she died while holding a drum used in shaman rituals.

The fourth Grandfather God was a clansman named Donghai. He had fallen seriously ill and nearly died. After being treated by a shaman, however, he was possessed by the Grandmother God Saicungga

⁸ *Kouxiang* refers to a clan in which no new shaman has been possessed by a god and which thus stops holding shamanic rites.

mafa and became the Grandfather God of the fourth generation, with the name Ferguwecuke, which means “wonderful.” Ferguwecuke was Grandfather God more than 30 years until his death, after which he returned to Changbai Mountain to practice austerities. He then returned to the Shi Clan and possessed the fifth generation Grandfather God.

The Grandfather God of the fifth generation is a very important god in the Shi Clan. His clansmen respect him highly, and legends related to him are spread throughout the clan even today. The clansmen firmly believe to this day that he is the one in charge of the world of the gods. Compared to the other Grandfather Gods, moreover, whose generations are remote, he is nearer to the modern age, which makes his lineage very clear. In fact, the generation that followed just after him is still alive.

As was stated above, the tales surrounding the Grandfather God of the fifth generation are among the most legendary. His name was Domingga, and he was from Dongha. His father was the youngest of three children in his family, so his nickname is “Shi the Third.” Domingga was his only son. When Domingga was three years old, he became ill and was believed to be chosen to be a shaman by the fourth generation Grandfather God. The god taught him the Manchu language and about all things related to the Shi Clan, so much so that he could even speak of these things in great detail. However, because the clan had ceased to be shamanic for years, the clan elders retained no knowledge of the Manchu language, nor did they even remember the etiquette for burning incense. So they didn’t realize that Domingga’s behavior was an indication of the Grandfather God possessing a new shaman. For more than ten years, Domingga’s illness did not leave him. His parents successively requested nine different shamans to treat him, all of whom said that his disease was caused not by any bodily sickness, but by the Grandfather God’s selecting him.

Nevertheless, Domingga’s shamanic qualification was not definitively established until he returned from Changbai Mountain after his death. On May 4th by the lunar calendar, when he was 16 years old, as he came back to his house from outside, he said to his wife, “I’m not well. By noon tomorrow I’ll be dead. When you bury me, be sure not to perform *shakou*.⁹ Just move me to the southern slope of the hill.”

⁹ *Shakou* is the name the Northeastern Chinese people give for the act of nailing a coffin shut.

His family did as he said. Three days later, after the burial, his family came to visit his grave, but they found his corpse was gone. The family thought that it had been taken away by the wolves. Three years later, however, Domingga appeared at the foot of Changbai Mountain.

There was an inn not far from Changbai Mountain. Every day at noon, Domingga would sit in front of the inn for a while. He had very long hair, shabby clothes and bare feet. The owner and the passers-by were all frightened at the sight of him. At that time, it just so happened that a troop commander of the Shi Clan from Small Han Village, known as Master Gaida, had just led an army back from battle. On his way to Wula Yamen to report his tasks, he came to stay at this inn. When he checked in to the inn, the owner told him about Domingga, hoping that Master Gaida could drive him away. At noon the next day, Domingga appeared, as expected, before the inn gate; and Master Gaida ordered his soldiers to seize him. After questioning him, they knew that he was indeed Domingga of the Shi Clan.

Master Gaida was of the same generation as Domingga's father and shared a close relationship with him, calling him "third elder brother." As soon as he recognized that the strange looking man was Domingga, he brought him back to Wula Yamen with him. After he had finished his duty there, he asked a messenger to deliver a letter to Domingga's father in Dongha village. Upon receiving the letter, Domingga's father said, "My son has been dead for more than two years!" Nevertheless, he went to Small Han Village half believing, half doubtful. When he saw Domingga, despite the long hair and thick, greasy dirt on his face, the old father knew that he was truly his son. His feelings alternated between joy and grief. Domingga then went with his father back to his hometown. Every night from then on, he would run off at a flying pace and soar to a place near Small Han Village, where he would dance religious dances on piles of stones.

As was noted earlier, at that time the Shi Clan had for some years ceased to be shamanic. Clan members didn't know the shamanic rituals or even the Manchu language. So the head of the Shi Clan and many senior members convened for a meeting, to which they invited Uncle Dou the Second, a member of the Guan Clan in Wula Street, to teach them the Manchu language. At this meeting, they spoke with Domingga and affirmed that he had been possessed by the Grandfather God of the fourth generation and so was entitled to be the Shi Clan's senior shaman. In this way, the once forgotten traditions and rituals of

the clan were restored and came to be continued on. Domingga was the Grandfather God for sixty years and died at over 70 years of age.

In the first year of the Xuantong (宣统) Period of the Qing Dynasty (1909), shaman Domingga possessed Shi Dianfeng of Dongha village, making him senior shaman. Three years later, in 1912, Shi Dianfeng obtained the qualification of senior shaman by going through holes in river ice (*zuanbingyan*, 钻冰眼), as was narrated above. Domingga was thus officially elevated to the position of Grandfather God of the fifth generation and given the name Kiyangkiyan mafa, which means “excelling ancestor” in Manchu.

The above mentioned Grandfather Gods are the recognized Grandfather Gods in the Shi Clan. For the sake of clarity, a table is given below:

TABLE 1. The Pedigree of the Grandfather God

Pedigree	Name	Sex	Divine Name	Time of Possession of the God	Village Assistant Zaili
Generation I (<i>ujuci jalan</i>)	Chong Jide	Male	Sucungga wenggu mafa ¹⁰	350 years ago	names not available
Generation II (<i>juweci jalan</i>)	Dakabu	Male	Endurin mafa	280 years ago	names not available.
Generation III (<i>ilanci jalan</i>)	Wulinba	Female	Saicungga mafa	230 years ago	names not available.
Generation IV (<i>duici jalan</i>)	Donghai	Male	Ferguwecuke mafa	170 years ago	Names not available.
Generation V (<i>sunjaci jalan</i>)	Domingga	Male	Kiyangkiyan mafa	120 years ago	Shi Yansan, etc.

The special position of even non-Grandfather God shamans enables them to transmit divine words, express the people’s hopes, dispel doubts and treat diseases for the people. So they, too, enjoy a very high status in the clan. Once they are exalted to the status of Grandfather God, however, they are ever after worshipped as imperial gods. The clansmen use incense burner bowls to represent each Grandfather God, who thus forever enjoy the aroma of incense during clan rituals.

¹⁰ *Wenggu*: Manchu for ‘old man’; *mafa* for ‘ancestor’; *sucungga* for ‘first (ancestor)’; *ferguwecuke* for ‘wonderful’; *kiyangkiyan* for ‘excelling (ancestor)’.

Moreover, their names, figures and deeds are painted on the Great God Scroll for the clansmen to revere.

According to the criteria of the Shi Clan, only the above mentioned five shamans completely meet the standards of becoming the Grandfather God. The two main branches of the Shi Clan, namely, the Dongha branch in Benka Village and the Small Han branch in Hujia, Jiutai City, both agree on the validity of these five Grandfather Gods.

Nonetheless, the supreme status that Grandfather Gods have before and after their deaths has given rise to major disputes between the two branches of the Shi Clan over issues relating to granting that status. Both branches hope to have more Grandfather Gods than the other. This leads to an interior duel for theocracy, clan authority and family status. The ninety-year-old head *zaili* in the Shi Clan, Qingquan, put it this way, "The living are fighting over the baskets of the dead." The theocratic dispute between the two branches manifests itself in many ways, but especially in regards to the establishment and order of the Grandfather Gods.

Although both sides have reached a mutual compromise concerning the Grandfather Gods of the first five generations, there have since been added four more Grandfather Gods as the sixth to the ninth generation Grandfather Gods. Nonetheless, even though the names of these latest four are all handed down in the clan's sacred records, and even though the ritual incense bowls representing the gods amount to nine, the two branches of the Shi Clan and those their rituals have had different opinions with regard to the establishment and order of these sixth to ninth generation Grandfather Gods.

Shi Dianfeng, the person possessed by the Grandfather God of the fifth generation, is recognized by both branches of the Shi Clan as the last senior shaman. Possessed as he was by the fifth generation Grandfather God, he met the first condition for becoming a Grandfather God. Though he has been dead for 46 years, however, he has not yet possessed a new shaman; so he hasn't met the second condition. Therefore, according to traditional criteria, he cannot be exalted to the official status of the sixth generation Grandfather God in the Shi Clan. Not until he has possessed a new shaman in the clan, will he finally obtain that status. Shi Dianfeng has thus yet to be Grandfather God, and by traditional standards, the Shi Clan is currently devoid of a senior shaman to succeed him.

The two branches of the clan have different methods of ranking order, but these methods do not accord with the original criteria set for becoming a Grandfather God and even violate the clan's traditional standards. For example, Shi Guangqian from Small Han Village was a *biaohun* shaman possessed by the Manni God. Though he had excellent skills, he was not possessed by the Grandfather God and so could not in turn possess a new shaman after his death. Therefore, he did not meet two of the standards for becoming the Grandfather God. As for Kundonga and Shiyan, they were famous head *zailis* who made great contributions to the clan's shamanic culture; but they were called only *zaili*, ritual assistant of the gods or "the servant of god." They were sacred persons in that they assisted shamans, but they themselves had nothing to do with shamanic inheritance. The act of promoting them from *zaili* to Grandfather God went very much against the clan's traditional standards.

In their struggle and mutual compromise, those of the two branches of the Shi Clan who are responsible for the ritual traditions have come up with several different rankings for the sixth through ninth generations of Grandfather Gods. This reflects their interior struggle for domination in the clan theocracy. Each hoped to claim more of its own branch's deceased shamans as Grandfather Gods, which would strengthen their own branch's status. This is not only "the living fighting over basket of the dead," but also the living taking advantage of the dead for status.

Changes in the Shi Clan's standards for establishing the Grandfather God have been caused by both clan and individual human factors, but they also reflect variations of shamanic ideas. Generally speaking, shamanism as an ideology is noteworthy for its stability. The stability of its divinity system is even more evident, for it is the most essential, sacred component of shamanic ideology. When we inspect the path of the Grandfather Gods' formation and evolution in the Shi Clan, however, we find that shamanism is not a completely closed system. Along with social and historical vicissitudes, its contents and forms have experienced some variations. The changes are slow, however, and pass through varying degrees of oscillation in the process of change. The question of the establishment of the Grandfather Gods' status has led to several dozens years of debate. An agreement has now been reached, though none of the Grandfather Gods from the sixth to the ninth generation meet the traditional standards. The fact that the stan-

dards have changed in the past, moreover, will lead to difficulties in the establishment of any future gods; for it readily gives rise to a situation in which each branch of the clan has its own respective and conflicting standards. The author thus does not approve of violating the original standards for establishing who can be recognized as the Grandfather God. Of course, now that the personages and positions of the nine Grandfather Gods have been established, the stability of shamanic ideology will continue to manifest itself through the clan's rituals. As time moves on and the elders in charge of ritual affairs pass away, moreover, disputes concerning the Grandfather Gods from the sixth to ninth generation will become a thing of the past and, along with the rest of history, simply preserved for posterity.

Forms of Communication with the Grandfather God

As supreme divinity of the Shi Clan and as an ancestral god who shares blood ties with clan members, the Grandfather God is the object of worship. In accord with the clan's traditional ideas, the Grandfather Gods are the ones who manage the clan's sacrificial offerings and other serious matters. For each historical period, however, a particular Grandfather God took charge of the altar. In most cases, the most recent Grandfather God undertook this task. The other Grandfather Gods did not come down if not invited and so got much less involved in the care of the clan than the Grandfather God who was in charge. In recent generations, it has been like this.

According to the author's years of investigations and the oral accounts of shamans, *zailis*, and clan elders, there are mainly two ways for the Grandfather Gods and their clan members to communicate.

DIVINE WORDS FROM THE GOD

The Grandfather God kept active contact with shamans, *zailis*, and clan elders, either transmitting instructions or warnings to them in two ways: through *dreams* and *involuntary possession*, called "rushing to the altar." In other words, the shamans and clansmen experienced the intentions of the Grandfather God in these two ways. These forms have universal significance throughout the world of shamanism, and are by no means confined within the limits of the Shi Clan.

The process of communication through dreams. The god transmits his/her divine will on his own initiative through the dream to the shaman. For his part, the shaman comprehends the dream through interpretation and then accepts the god's will. In line with the shamanic idea that a dream takes place when the soul goes on a journey, the god actively contacts the shaman and the shaman passively accepts the god's revelation in the course of the journey. Usually, the dream is given by the shaman's patron god, who may be an ancestral god or the master of a deceased shaman. Some patron gods maintain an intimate relationship with their shamans. They usually dwell in their respective god territory and only rarely make contact with them. Nevertheless, they pay attention to human activities and changes in the cosmos and the world at large. In the case of emergencies or matters which require warning, the shaman's patron god will transmit information in the form of dreams (Se 2007: 44).

According to the author's research, in the world of shamanism, communicative dreams that have been believed in firmly by shamans and their clansmen can be divided into three types: instructional dreams, skill-teaching dreams, and directing dreams.¹¹ In dreams of instruction, shaman nominees may dream of some god indicating to them or in some cases ordering them to accept the god's instructions to become a shaman. In such dreams, the indications and instructions are accompanied by the nominees being tortured in the dream and by frequent images of real-life calamities. Dreams of skill-teaching are dreams in which gods teach shamans some special knowledge and skill. Directing dreams are dreams that give cautions and directions to shamans, *zailis*, or clan elders. This kind of dream may include anything from small, daily trifles to things which concern the clan's development and very survival. Some dreams contain predictions and guidance and are regarded as expressions of the gods' love and care for the clan. Shamans believe in the dreams firmly and scrupulously follow them. Directing dreams thus play a guiding role in shamans' activities and lives.

According to the author's investigation of the Manchu Shi Clan, shamans and others responsible for the clan's spiritual life, such as *zailis* and clan elders, regard the Grandfather God who instructs them through dreams as lord—most often the Grandfather God of the fifth generation. In the minds of the Shi clansmen, that Grandfather God

¹¹ See also Se 2007: 44.

appears as an old man with a white beard and wearing a large, blue garment and blue hat. If this particular figure appears in their dream, they believe that the dream is given by that god. Many *zailis* who assisted Shi Dianfeng, the last senior shaman of the Shi Clan, in life met him after his death, in their dreams. It was believed that Shi Dianfeng gave them these dreams as dreams of instruction telling the people what they should or should not do. The dreams were believed by the people and became their guide for conduct. The following are some examples that the author recorded in her investigation.

In July, 1996, students of the American Shaman Foundation, led by the scholar Shi Kun, carried out an on-site investigation on shamanism in Dongha Village. At that time, the head *zaili* of Dongha Village was at his fourth daughter's home in Zhangzhuangzi of Benka Village, which was 8 *li* from his home. The evening of the first day, he dreamed that Shi Dianfeng had said to him, "Something happened in your family. Why not go back home?" The next morning, somebody from his family sent for him just when his daughter was about to find a car to send him back home. In the second half of the year 2006, the *biaohun* shaman currently acting as head shaman of the Shi Clan, Shi Zongxiang, was entrusted with the Great God Scroll. But, due to his wife's recent death, his moving away, and some other reasons, he planned to send the scroll away. Before Spring Festival, however, he kept dreaming of an old man with a white beard, who said to him, "You want to send the Great God Scroll away? Are you sure that's a good idea?" Upon waking, Shi Zongxiang would drink some wine and then go back to sleep, only to dream of the old man again. He knew that it was the Grandfather God of the fifth generation blaming him for his plan, so he didn't dare to send the scroll away.¹²

Although dreams of instruction are given mainly to those responsible for the clan's spiritual activity—such as shamans, *zailis*, and clan heads—some ordinary clansmen have also dreamed they met the Grandfather God; and they faithfully did as he told them. Once the dreams become true, the person who has been given the dream is regarded as a guardian of the Grandfather God.

¹² According to the account by shaman Shi Zongxiang as interviewed by the author in Dongha Village.

In the Shi Clan, there is a wide spread story of how the Grandfather God of the fifth generation saved Shi Dianfeng by means of a dream. As stated earlier, this last senior shaman possessed by the Grandfather God became famous after going through holes in river ice. He was very generous, ready to help others, always granting every request, enjoying high fame in his clan. Therefore, his stories were very popular among the clan's women and children.

From 1953 to 1956, Shi Dianfeng had a sickness that caused his chest and stomach to swell. When it was most serious, he lay down on a *kang* (heated sleeping platform) his belly swelling so high that there were no wrinkles in it, just like a thin piece of paper. In fact, the skin was so thin that some dirty water flowing inside the belly was visible from the outside. Although he was treated in many ways, his disease only grew worse, even beyond cure. During this period, Shi Yutang, who was on very good terms with Shi Dianfeng, often came to see him. Shi Yutang was a countryman of letters, educated and skilled in Chinese calligraphy. Because of the fact that he was the seventh child in his family and had owned a private school when younger, he was respectfully called "Mr. Seven." He was senior to Shi Dianfeng, being an older member of the family; so Shi Dianfeng called him "Seventh Uncle." Shi Dianfeng admired his knowledge, and Shi Yutang respected Shi Dianfeng's good character; so they established a friendship that went beyond mere kinship. After Shi Dianfeng became sick and bedridden, Mr. Seven became extremely concerned about him and visited him often.

On an autumn morning in 1965, Mr. Seven came again to see Shi Dianfeng. After asking him about his condition, he hesitated before speaking. When Shi Dianfeng saw his hesitation, he asked with the little strength left in his voice, "If you have something to tell me, please let me know, Seventh Uncle." Mr. Seven hesitated for a while and then said worriedly, "I have a remedy for your illness. If I don't tell it to you, I'll continue to be troubled; but if I do tell you, I'm afraid that you may get worse if you drink it." Knowing that something could treat their father's illness, Shi Dianfeng's sons and daughters begged the old man to tell them at once. So Mr. Seven told his strange dream to the children.

"In the dead of night, I had a dream," he said. "I dreamed of an old man with a white beard in a long, black gown. He was like the Grandfather God of the fifth generation. Standing in front of me, he said, 'Why can't you cure your shaman's disease?' I said, 'We treated him a lot, and he took a lot of different medicines and used some folk prescrip-

tions, but they were ineffective.’ The old man said, ‘You needn’t use any medicine. You just need seven goose tail-feather stems. Take the soft white cores out and cut them into pieces. Then, put the pieces in rice water and let the sick man drink it three times a day. He will soon be better.’ When I woke up, I found it was a dream. I didn’t believe it at that time and fell back to sleep. In the early morning, however, I dreamed of it again and could not sleep anymore. Even if I believe the dream is true, I don’t believe that goose tail-feather stems can cure disease; but if I say the dream isn’t true, there is still the fact that I dreamed this dream twice in one night, and it seemed so real. So I didn’t know whether or not I should tell you this.”

Upon hearing Mr. Seven’s words, Shi Dianfeng said, “What is there to believe or not believe? Just doctor a dead horse as if it were still alive! If I don’t drink it, I will die anyway; if I do drink it, it may be effective.” All the family members agreed to take the risk. And so, according to what the old man had said, Shi Dianfeng’s daughter made him keep drinking the stem cores for seven days. The dirty water in his belly drained out through his feces and urine; and his belly grew smaller and smaller day by day, until at last all the wrinkles on his belly were back. He completely recovered, though his illness was thought beyond cure. The news of this mysterious experience got around fast, and several relatives whose stomachs had also swelled up came to inquire one after another. But what had cured Shi Dianfeng proved ineffective for them. Shi Dianfeng himself and his clansmen believed that he had been saved by the Grandfather God.

People of the Shi Clan do not doubt this kind of instruction dream. They regard it as the main form of communication between the Grandfather Gods and those responsible for the clan’s spiritual welfare. Every time there was an important event or difficult problem, they would long for the Grandfather God to give them a dream. Thus, this became one of their beliefs.

Rushing to the Altar. The so-called “rushing to the altar” (*chuangtan*, 闯坛) refers to involuntary possession. That is to say, without the shaman’s invitation, the god takes possession of his body; or when a shaman even wishes not to be possessed in a certain place or at a certain time, the god suddenly takes possession anyway. If this phenomenon takes place during a ritual, it is called “rushing to the altar.” However, it can occur not only during rituals, but during non-ritual activities as

well. In these circumstances, *zailis* and the clansmen can judge by the shaman's demeanor, words and actions, exactly which Grandfather God has taken possession of him. Then, they praise the god, worship him, and respectfully follow his decree.

An interesting instance of “rushing to the altar” during non-ritual activities is recounted in the Shi Clan. During the *xuewuyun* period of shamanist training,¹³ *zailis* Shi Wentai and Shi Zongxiang, being young and mischievous, once moved Shi Dianfeng's *toli* (托力) mirror¹⁴ and a kind of semi-circular bead called the *gemoli* (哥莫粒).¹⁵ They lost the *gemoli* and were frightened to death, but they finally found it with great difficulty at the edge of a *kang* and put it back in place. After Shi Dianfeng came back, he knew at one glance that someone had moved his things. He shouted and punished the two boys by making them kneel on the ground for the amount of time it took for a column of incense stick to burn up. During their punishment, the two boys asked a young *zaili* to break off a section of the incense stick; but the old shaman, without even looking, knew what they were up to and flew into a rage. He made the young *zaili* kneel together with the two boys. Then, suddenly, the old shaman undid his leg wrappings, threw off his coat, and rushed toward the woods two miles away.

Six other *zailis* who were studying together with the boys saw this, and all eight of them hurried after him. They saw him flee into the woods and through the trees for two hours. The eight *zailis* and the head *zailis* who followed perceived that the Grandfather God of the fifth generation had taken possession of Shi Dianfeng out of anger with the two boys for their mischievous behavior. So all the *zailis* knelt down together with the two boys to beg forgiveness. It was a cold winter; but Shi Dianfeng, though dressed very lightly, was not cold at all. In contrast, the others' ears were frozen so stiff that they had to use their hands to rub them. It was a long time before they recovered from

¹³ *Uyun*: Manchu for ‘nine’: *Jiaowuyun*: the name for the Manchu people's period for training new shamans. There are nine days for one period, also called *jiaowuyun* or *xuewuyun*. See Guo 2008: 47–64.

¹⁴ *Toli*: Manchu for a round, copper mirror, held by the shaman during rituals and used for treating patients.

¹⁵ *Gemoli*: a semi-circular bead placed on the *tuoli*; its movements and directions are read during shamanic divination rituals.

the severe cold, and what happened left a deep impression on the eight young *zailis* and had a lifelong influence on them.

Another instance of “rushing to the altar” took place during the period from March 7 to 11, 1987, in Kalun Town of Jilin Province, when the Jilin Province Cultural Department and the Jilin Art Research Institute came together to make a video recording of the Shi Clan’s shamanic ritual of “running the fire pond.” On one of these days, the senior shaman Shi Zongxuan (1925–1987) was resting on a *kang*, when suddenly his legs began trembling uncontrollably. The *zaili* knew right away that this was a sign that he was being possessed, so he immediately took up his drum and bells and invited the god to the altar. When they got to the altar, the god had taken the possession of Shi Zongxuan. The god didn’t tell his name, but the *zaili* guessed by the shaman’s movements, manner and the wishes he expressed that it must have been the Grandfather God of the first generation. It had been reported that because of special circumstances, the ritual of “running the fire pond” could not be held on schedule. Apparently disturbed by this, the first generation Grandfather God suddenly arrived, possessed Shi Zongxuan and through him complained about delaying the fire ceremony. At that time, all present knelt to pray until Shi Zongxuan gradually came back to himself. Psychologically, this kind of occurrence can be understood as related mostly to the shaman’s own disturbed mood and concerns; but the clan members regarded it as a manifestation of the god’s divine will. They accepted his complaint and modified their own words and actions accordingly.

PRAYING FOR DIVINE WORDS

According to Manchu Shi Clan tradition, there is a Grandfather God in charge of each period of the clan’s history. At present, the Grandfather God of the fifth generation is in charge. Whenever there are very important events in the clan, especially matters related to clan rituals, the clansmen must ask for his instructions. If he gives them permission, they will act. Otherwise, they will stop for fear that they may be disobeying him.

There are two main ways of praying for divine words. One is surrendering oneself to the god to be possessed; the other is a form of divination called *zoutuoli* that we shall describe momentarily. Praying for divine words is used any time the clan meets a problem that requires making a big decision. For example, at the beginning of the 1980’s, in order to save their culture from being lost, the Shi Clan, together with provincial

departments, formed a plan to make video recordings of their ritual ceremonies. Such recordings sometimes require a shortening or altering of the original ritual ceremony. In these cases, those responsible for the clan's spiritual traditions often worry that they may anger the Grandfather Gods. In this instance, they used *zoutuoli* (走托力) divination to ask for instructions from the Grandfather God of the fifth generation.

In another instance, divine words were granted through possession. In 1981, the Minority Literature Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Science invited the *biaohun* shaman of the Shi Clan, Shi Qingshan, along with the head *zailis*, Shi Qingmin and Shi Qingquan, to take part in an informal discussion on shamanic culture. Before setting off, they held a ritual ceremony to ask for instructions from the fifth generation Grandfather God. After taking possession of the shaman, the Grandfather God agreed with their plan to attend the informal discussion, and then they were able to leave for Beijing.

Zoutuoli is a traditional Shi Clan form of divination that generations of shamans have followed. People roll a semi-circular *gemoli* on a copper *toli*, and shamans or others in charge of the clan's spiritual activities determine the god's wishes according to the *gemoli*'s route and movements. In the spring of 2004, the Junior Han branch of the Shi Clan decided to carry out *jiaowuyun* (教乌云) to educate new shamans and pass on the shamanic ritual tradition. Before beginning the training sessions, the head *zaili*, Shi Zongquan, used this method to ask for instructions from the Grandfather Gods. Because the *gemoli* had disappeared after shaman Shi Dianfeng died, Shi Qingquan put a round, glass ball on the *toli* instead. He prayed in the Manchu language; and then, according to the glass ball's route and movements on the *toli*, he judged that the Grandfather God of the fifth generation agreed to the holding of the *jiaowuyun* sessions. In the spring of that same year, selection of the new shamans began, and training was carried out for more than two months in the spring and winter. Then, from December 27 to 29, 2004, the Junior Han branch of the Shi Clan held a ceremony called *luowuyun* to pass the shamanic ritual tradition on to the new shamans.¹⁶

Information granted by gods and prayers for divine words are the two main forms of communication and mutual interaction between gods and

¹⁶ On December 27, 2004, the author was present among the Junior Han branch of the Shi Clan and witnessed *Zaili* Shi Qingquan demonstrate the divination practice called *zoutuoli*.

human beings. They are quite different in their modes of expression and contact with the gods. In the case of the former, the god communicates with shamans and *zailis* on his own initiative, while in the latter those responsible for the clan's spiritual life communicate with the god on their initiative. In the former, the god informs, warns and punishes the people, while in the latter it is the people who petition the god for something. Although both these forms have universal significance in the world of shamanism, in each different race and tribe, the divinity systems and forms of communication between the gods and human beings have characteristics that are special to that particular race or tribe. In the Shi Clan, the Grandfather Gods are the supreme gods. They each have their respective work, responsibilities and time of retirement. Since modern times, the Grandfather Gods of the first five generations have continually been the dominant gods and are highly respected by both religious representatives and ordinary clansmen alike.

In line with various social and ideological changes, there are not only variations in shamanic ceremonies, but also certain changes in modes of communicating with the gods. In the traditional mindset of the Shi Clan, only those shamans who have been possessed by the Grandfather God can preside over family ritual ceremonies, and only those who serve in important ritual ceremonies can become senior shamans. The senior shaman possessed by the last Grandfather God has been dead for over 40 years, and the *biaohun* shaman Shi Qingshan, who was possessed by the Manni God, has been dead now for over 20 years. Under these circumstances, out of the desire to maintain the clan's traditional rituals, the former *zaili* turned shaman, Shi Zongxiang, decided to communicate with the Grandfather Gods by his own method. Each time that he takes the shaman's role of presiding over a ritual ceremony, before he does so he burns incense and prays to the Grandfather Gods of the five generations, saying, "I myself am a *zaili*. In order that the traditional rituals of our clan might not be lost, I pray to the gods to possess me in the sacrificial rite and to endow me with shamanic skills. I ask that the Grandfather Gods permit this request and bless it." However, this constitutes a one-sided form of communication with the gods. Those approaching them beseech the gods' aid, but there is no way of knowing the gods' actual attitudes and wishes.

Conclusion

In summary, although shamans also exist in other Manchu clans and other nationalities of northern China, the method of certifying a Grandfather God in the Manchu Shi Clan, as well as the path his formation takes and status in the divinity system, is unique. This clan's Grandfather Gods have each had their own special traits. They each had their own special responsibility; and at times, certain Grandfather Gods acted as directors for the clan, each commanding and dispatching different numbers of Manni Gods. This shows that there is a hierarchy in the shamanic divinity system.

Grandfather Gods are in charge of ritual matters and important events in the clan, usually from afar, while perched on Changbai Mountain and practicing austerities. When the clan holds an important event, the senior shaman takes the responsibility of communicating with the Grandfather God, who in turn bestows divine words of instruction to the clansmen. The Grandfather Gods have the responsibility of directing and blessing descendants, and they accordingly have the right to reward and punish clan descendants. At the same time, they shoulder the main responsibility for shamanic inheritance. Only a Shaman who has been possessed by the Grandfather God can be called "senior shaman" and receive the clansmen's acknowledgment and veneration. In the Shi Clan, the Grandfather God thus plays a vital role in shamanic inheritance.

In the divinity system of the Shi Clan, both the Grandfather God and Manni God belong to the category of high gods. As far as their divine nature is concerned, both are Ancestor Gods. As far as the bloodline is concerned, however, the Grandfather Gods are Shi Clan Ancestral Gods, whereas Manni Gods are mostly heroic gods from various clans around Manchuria. They were warriors who fought all over the country, along with Nurhachu, a famous Manchu hero and warrior who united the Manchu people into a single unit; and they won many honors for their service before their death. After death, their souls returned to Changbai Mountain, becoming souls in service of the Grandfather Gods of the Manchu clans, ready to be dispatched on command. The Shi Clan Manni Gods include both common gods of various Manchu clans and clan ancestral gods. In terms of function, the Grandfather Gods belong to the category of Shi Clan Ancestor Gods, namely Shaman Gods; while Manni Gods have charge of different skills and manifest unique abilities. They can run the fire pond, use certain martial arts weapons, and dance and sing in a special way. This puts them in the category of "Functional Gods." Lu Daji has defined the Functional Gods as

follows: “They are not the embodiment of a concrete, natural phenomenon; rather, they embody special attributes and functions that natural things possess. They are not specific ancestors or leaders of the clan; rather they are the primitive founders of certain social occupations, or beings who manipulate the success or failure of certain professions. They often aren’t connected with any special, concrete image, but have a more abstract character” (Lu 1998: 17) The terms “Grandfather God” and “Manni God” are not themselves divine names, but refer to a specific community of divinities. Together with wild animal gods and household gods, they constitute the Shi Clan’s divinity system and serve to maintain their entire world of beliefs.

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GUOSHUYUN is Professor of Anthropology at Dalian University for National Minorities in Liaoning Province. She is also a professor at Changchun Normal University in Jilin and the director of the Center for the Study of Shamanic Cultures in Changchun. Her research interest is shamanism among the minority groups of Northern China. Dr. Guo’s past publications include six books in Chinese, and more than seventy academic articles in Chinese journals such as *Minzu yanjiu*, 民族研究 (Ethnic and Nationalities Study, Beijing), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu*, 世界宗教研究 (World Religion Study, Beijing), *Shehui kexue zhanxian*, 社会科学战线 (Social Sciences Front, Changchun) etc., some of which have been translated into English, Korean, Italian, German, etc., and published abroad.

Among Taiga Hunters and Shamans

Reminiscences Concerning my Friend, the Scholar
of Manchuria, Anatoliĭ Makarovich Kaĭgorodov (1927–1998)*

F. GEORG HEYNE

BIELEFELD, GERMANY

*This commemorative article introduces the person as well as the work of the scholar Anatoliĭ Makarovich Kaĭgorodov. It uses Kaĭgorodov's accounts of his personal experiences with the Reindeer Evenki of the Great Hinggan (Northeast China). He was the son of a family of Russian emigrants in the Three River Region that had longstanding trading relations with the Reindeer Evenki hunters of the taiga. The article discusses the cultural significance of the trading relationships between the two ethnic groups, relationships that were based on mutual trust and friendship characterized by the term *andak* (friend, partner). Furthermore, it is an account of the unique opportunity Kaĭgorodov had to witness the life of the Evenki hunters, because he was the godchild of their most revered shamaness of the first half of the last century. As such he became an intimate witness of the daily life as well as of the religious/shamanic world of the Evenki hunters.*

When the Manchu scholar and historian Anatoliĭ Makarovich Kaĭgorodov died ten years ago on April 25, 1998, a small group of Reindeer Evenki lost an important informant on the history of their culture and an eyewitness of their shamanism. These Evenki have lived as nomads in the northern part of the mountain range of the Great Hinggan since the mid-twenties of the 19th century. It is, therefore, of especially deep concern for me to commemorate this pioneer with the present paper.

* The present article is a modified and more than one-third enlarged version of the obituary Heyne published for Kaĭgorodov in *Asian Folklore Studies* (Heyne 2002).

He came to know intimately the small Evenki group and their hunting culture in the harsh mountain taiga of the northern Great Hinggan at a time when these Tungusic nomads of the forest were still leading almost untouched lives as hunters and reindeer herders. Only there in the forests in the Great Amur Bend was it still possible at that time to encounter free Reindeer Evenki. At the time this wilderness was still completely inaccessible and unknown—a blank spot on the maps—while the Evenki groups that remained in the former Soviet Union were already exposed to the leveling measures of a totalitarian state intent on destroying their traditional clan systems, exterminating their shamanism, making them sedentary, and forcing them into collectivization.

Thanks to his truly encyclopedic memory, Kaigorodov has helped to throw light on the quite unknown but eventful fate of the group of Evenki hunters who live in the primeval forest wilderness of northern Manchuria. This is true especially of the time of the Manchukuo regime (1932–1945) and the period from the end of World War II to 1949. I have made use of Kaigorodov's extensive correspondence and tape recordings made during a seven-week visit to the writer's house in 1995–1996 to produce the following account of his experiences and encounters with the Manchurian Reindeer Evenki. His personal relationship with the group's shamaness, Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina, will be particularly highlighted.

Anatoliĭ Makarovich Kaigorodov (fig. 1) was born on May 6, 1927, the son of Russian emigrants, in Tsigan (Chin. *Qiqian*) on the right bank of the Argun (Chin. *Ergun*), a tributary of the Amur that flows into this



Fig. 1. Anatoliĭ Makarovich Kaigorodov in 1947.
Photo: the author's archives.



Fig. 2. A Russian *zaimka* (hunting lodge) in the Hinggan Taiga.
Photo: Oscar Mamen, 29 October, 1931.

river from the Chinese side. His parents belonged to the frontier Cossacks of Transbaikalia, whose settlements were originally situated on the Russian side of the frontier river Argun. After the revolution of 1917 and the civil war that followed it, his parents and many other families left their Russian homeland and settled in Chinese sovereign territory.

The open spaces of natural steppe and forest and their wild but attractive rivers on the Chinese side of the region had been familiar to the Cossacks long before. Here they hunted and fished as they pleased, let their cattle graze and made hay for them. Many Cossack families had built primitive sheds (*zaimki*) or hunting lodges in the zones bordering the unexplored forests. That some of these sheds were built deep in the mountains, more than 100 kilometers from the border, did not pose a problem to anyone at the time. The area beyond the border was almost devoid of inhabitants, and on the Chinese side any border control worthy of the name was almost nonexistent (fig. 2).

Kaigorodov's parents originated from the Russian settlement of Ust Urov, situated directly at the mouth of the River Urov where it flows into the Argun. For Cossacks living in the settlements on the border river who had fought on the side of the white troops during the civil war, the question of where to emigrate was quite easily answered. One simply moved from one side of the river to the other and settled anew on the Chinese side, the right side, of the Argun. That is how Kaigorodov's parents also came to Tsigan. Tsigan had been founded in 1903 and was popularly referred to as "Chinese Urov" among the

Russians. This Chinese locality, situated directly opposite the Russian Ust Urov, changed its character within a short period due to a massive influx of Cossack families that turned the Chinese into a minority.

Fearing molestation in the immediate borderlands by the Soviets now in power in Russia, most of the Cossack families moved farther inside the country, especially to the so-called Three River Region (Russ. *Trekhrech'e*). The region was given this appropriate name because of its three rivers: the Gan (Chin. *Gan*), the Derbul (Chin. *Derbur*), and the Chaul (Chin. *Hawuer*). The first Russian settlements and single farmsteads there were founded around the turn of the 19th century, but now the region became an area of massive settlement by emigrants from Transbaikalia. A whole series of new Russian villages sprang up under long-tested, characteristically Cossack, autonomous administration.

Among the founders of the village Dubovaia ('Oak Village'), the village highest up on the River Derbul, we find Kaigorodov's father, Makar Dmitrievich Kaigorodov, and his brothers Georgiĭ and Pëtr. Dubovaia was situated at a very beautiful scenic spot on the left high bank of the rushing river, six kilometers down from the place where the river is joined by its main tributary, the Derbukan. Here the taiga began (fig. 3).



Fig. 3. The house of the Kaigorodov family in Dubovaia (Oak Village) in the Three River region, 1929. Photo: the author's archives.

At the end of the 1820s a small group of Evenki originating from Yakutia immigrated together with their reindeer into the untouched mountain taiga of mostly larch forests in the Great Amur Bend, or Heilongjiang ('Black Dragon River'), as the Chinese call it. At this time began the first barter contacts between these nomads of the forest and the Transbaikalian Cossacks living in the small border settlements (*stanitsa*). Already at

that time the Reindeer Evenki could no longer live completely aloof from trading contacts with the outside world. In exchange for high-quality furs and other natural products, they received what they needed: mainly guns, powder and lead, but also flour, salt, cloth and alcohol.

When the Evenki taiga hunters extended their hunting grounds farther south, they also showed up, in around 1860, in the Cossack *stanitsas* on the left bank of the Argun. At that time the area belonging to China on the river's right side was practically uninhabited. For that reason, the Ust Urov settlement played the role of a trading center for a portion of the nomads. After the civil war in Transbaikalia ended, the earlier route to Russia was cut for those Tungusic reindeer riders who had remained on Chinese sovereign territory. So from 1921–1922 the inhabitants of Tsigan on the Chinese side continued the practice of barter trading. After most of the Russian emigrant families had finally settled in the Three River Region, many Evenki appeared there for the first time in 1928. From then on, inhabitants of the two newly founded settlements of Dubovaia and Kliuchevaia were the main trading partners for the Tungusic hunters of the forest (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. A Russian hunter (Vasiliĭ Paramonovich Katkov) on a hunting trip in the taiga of the Great Hinggan Mountains. Photo: Oscar Mamen, 1931.

In most cases the trading contacts were based upon a long tradition of dealings between the same families of Cossacks and Evenki. The contacts had existed since the Reindeer Evenki appeared on the Argun for the first time. The trading partners called each other *andak* (Evenki, pl. *andaki*), which means friend or trader friend (business partner). The Kaigorodovs, too, were such a family of *andaki*. Trading with the Evenki had begun as early as the time of Anatoliĭ Makarovich's grandfather, in

Ust Urov. Kaĭgorodov's father continued with this tradition in the Three River Region, and his son was also born into it. The Russian *andaki* were not professional traders, however, but ordinary farmers. There were also some Chinese *andaki*, but they were the occasional exceptions.

It happened that Kaĭgorodov came into his first direct contact with the shamanism of the Manchurian Reindeer Evenki when he was still a baby. His godmother was no less than the well-known shamaness (Evenki *odoyan*) Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina (1890–1944). Nominally the Manchurian Reindeer Evenki had become members of the Russian Orthodox Church even before they arrived at the Great Amur Bend. Seemingly they followed many Christian customs, yet *de facto* they continued to be pure shamanists. Between Evenki and Russian *andaki* families it was customary to provide godmothers or godfathers reciprocally for each other's children. When security in Tsigan immediately on the border worsened because of intrusions from the Soviet side, the parents of the little Anatoliĭ Makarovich sent the nine-month-old baby ahead of its family and by a different route to the Three River Region in the harsh winter of 1927–1928. The baby traveled with the reindeer caravan (Evenki *argiš*) of the shamaness, bundled into an Evenki cradle (*omkō*) made by the shamaness's husband and fastened to the back of a reindeer. The long and adventurous trip through the snow of the winter forest of the taiga took almost a month, but thanks to the care of the shamaness the baby reached the Three River Region in good health and spirits even though it had not been bathed once while on the journey. The Evenki men who accompanied the caravan attributed the fact that the trip was made safely to the supernatural powers of the shamaness, but Olga herself said that everything turned out so well because she gave the baby a piece of cooked bear lard to suck as a pacifier (fig. 5).

From that time on Anatoliĭ was treated like a relative of the shamaness, who had no children of her own. Throughout his childhood and when he went to school he wore boots of fur or buckskin (Evenki *muruvun* and *dyngki*), fur caps, and mittens or gloves made of buckskin. All of these were made by Olga Dmitrievna, while her husband, Nikolaĭ Larionovich Buldotin, made small toys for the godchild from wood or birch tree bark. With these objects Anatoliĭ's close relationships with the Reindeer Evenki began literally from the (Evenki!) cradle. As a result, he learned to know intimately and esteem the friendly forest people from his earliest childhood. Because he grew up in the Three River Region at the foot of the mountains of the Great Hinggan, and passed his childhood and youth



Fig. 5. Reindeer caravan on the *argiš* (route) to new hunting grounds in the Hinggan Taiga. Photo: Morishita Masaaki, 1942.

there, he had a unique opportunity to experience firsthand the lifestyle of the Tungusic reindeer herders remaining in Manchuria. There, too, he learned a great deal about the customs, the social relations and the history of the taiga nomads. In addition, his being close to the shamaness Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina allowed him to gain insights into the worldview, the religious ideas and the concept of the soul of the Evenki that otherwise could hardly have been acquired. On several occasions he witnessed séances of the shamaness that appeared strange and frightening to him. At the same time, though, he had been placed in a setting that would give him access to the roots of shamanism.

As Kaïgorodov eventually got to know, Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina was the offspring of an old family of shamans that included a line of powerful shaman ancestors. She had received the gift of being a shaman from her grandmother on the father's side, although a brother of her father also had been a shaman. The office of a shaman cannot be passed on to anybody; the person must be of strong character, the most courageous among the descendants. Among her siblings only Olga exhibited these characteristics. An older brother had been an excellent blacksmith. A sister died young leaving a son, Viktor, whom the shamaness later adopted. Before she became a shaman, she had been a brooding and meditative person who avoided contact with others. The decision to become a shaman was made after Olga had spent several weeks alone deep in the endless taiga, where she communicated with the shamanic spirits of her ancestors. When she returned to camp she was exhausted, but she had already become a shamaness and began to shamanize. Soon she gained great influence among all Reindeer Evenki

living in the dense forests of the northern Great Hinggan and became a kind of spiritual leader of the group. After receiving her calling, she spent some time with a shaman of the Tungusic Kumarchen, a nomadic group of hunters who kept horses and lived on the upper course of the River Kumara (Chin. *Huma He*). The Manchurian Reindeer Evenki at that time considered the Kumarchen shamans particularly powerful and knowledgeable, because they had never been in contact with Christianity. Nikolaï Larionovich Buldotin, Olga's husband, had been on friendly terms with this particular Kumarchen shaman. For that reason Olga had a chance to gain the necessary basic esoteric knowledge from this male shaman teacher. In her own group there was no shaman with the necessary experience for such a role. He introduced her to the technique of ecstasy and taught her how to discern the symptoms of diseases and choose the appropriate healing method. From him she also learned how a *kamlan'e* (a shamanic séance) should proceed.

After Olga rejoined her group her mystic shaman outfit was prepared. This consisted of a robe made of deer leather, a headdress with iron antlers, and a drum with its drumstick. The making of these items was the task of her social group. Every member made an effort to take part in doing some of the work because by doing so they participated in her becoming a shaman and the future protector of the group. The women sewed the robe, made from the tanned skin of an *isiubr* deer, and attached to it appendages made of leather and cloth. Wooden items such as the drum frame and drumstick, as well as the metal fittings and the iron shapes of spirits (e.g., various species of birds and fish) were made by Olga's brother, the blacksmith. Bells for the sledge and the raw iron needed to make it were purchased in Hailar by her Russian *andak*, the family of Gavril Lavrentevich Molokov. The drum was the most important item of the ritual outfit, because without it a *kamlan'e* could not have been conducted among the Reindeer Evenki of the Great Hinggan. The drum was used by the shamaness to fall into a state of ecstasy. Her sacred robe symbolized a spiritual microcosm and represented the world of the shaman's spirits. The headdress, in the shape of a crown with a deer's antlers fashioned from iron, and the tassels hiding the shamaness' face also represented helping spirits (fig. 6).

Kaïgorodov reports that the shaman's costume was always carried in leather pouches (*poty*) on a reindeer's back when Olga visited Russian villages or went to a trading spot (*bogžor*) in the forest. The costume



Fig. 6. The shamaness Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina in her shamanic costume with drum and drumstick and her husband Nikolai Larionovich Buldotin. Photo: Oscar Mamen, 26 November, 1931, in the region of the Martyälkoi River in the early morning after a nightly shamanic performance.

invariably went with her. Only on rare occasions was it left in a *kolbo* (an elevated storage structure on four poles) built in the wilderness.

In answer to my questions concerning the death of relatives at the time of a shaman's installation, Kaigorodov wrote: "It did happen that at the installation of Olga as shamaness several of her relatives perished. However, I am not in a position to answer the question of how and why this happens."

Kaigorodov describes a *kamlan'e* which Olga performed in the summer of 1940 on the occasion of a Reindeer Evenki wedding. He reports: "The guests let the reindeer roam freely while they huddled with serious faces around the fire. The reason for the change in their mood was evident because the shamaness was preparing herself for the *kamlan'e*. She put on her dark shaman robe and took up the drum. All those present sat down on the ground in a wide circle and waited in silence for the ceremony to begin. With a sudden movement of her hand the shamaness threw a strand of hair into her face and looked around her with an ecstatic gaze. Then, again suddenly, she hit her head with the drum which she held with her right hand. The echo of the sound of the drum, resembling the distant howling of a band of hungry wolves, was uncanny to me. For a moment the shamaness stood motionless, rolling her eyes. Slowly, as if it were beyond her strength, she danced once around the fire with short steps. Suddenly she jumped from her left onto the right foot, and whenever she did so her movements became increasingly faster and sudden. She tore the drum from her head and hit its membrane abruptly with the drumstick. With this

movement something that can hardly be put in words began happening. Now she leaped on the spot, now she moved around the fire in a strange dance hitting the drum incessantly as in a rage. Uttering wild guttural sounds that at times resembled animal voices she called forth her spirits. When they saw this, many of the Evenki present also fell into ecstasy. They jumped up from their places and howled, uttering wild sounds along with the shamaness and rolling their red eyes. One of them, Usatkan, began to howl and then to wail, while his brother Fëdor uttered sounds resembling hysterical laughter. Frightened, I waited for the performance to end. I was not in a mood either to howl or to wail, but I do not want to conceal that I was ready to run away from this place without looking back even once. Gradually the movements of the old shamaness grew sluggish. One could see that her strength was leaving her. Her voice became hoarse and pearls of sweat appeared on her face. Sluggishly she circled the fire one final time. Then, in an odd movement, she threw up her arms as if trying to clutch at something in the air and fell to the ground with a deep moan. With a dull sound the drum rolled to the side. The Evenki jumped from their places and encircled the woman, who was lying on the ground on her back. I did, too; I went closer and noticed that her face was wet and of a grey color like earth. On and off her whole body twitched. She could move her swollen tongue only with difficulty. Those present listened intently in an effort not to miss any of her words. I, too, tried to listen, but I could not understand anything. Later, the father of the bridegroom explained to me the content of what she had predicted. The spirits have promised the newly wed couple good fortune as great as the size of Mount Okol'doy. As a present to the wedding they had sent a bear killed by a Russian. In addition, the couple would have five children."

Later Kaigorodov explained to me that Olga did not wear a ritual headgear at this séance, which took place on a warm and bright day in summer. She had worn only her shaman robe. When she finished her predictions the robe was taken off by her helpers, who packed it into buckskin pouches (*poty*) together with the drum. The exhausted woman was carried into one of the tents (Evenki *dju*), where Kaigorodov brought her fresh river water in a container of birch tree bark (*čuman*). She drank the water eagerly and then fell back again in a partial swoon. Only in the evening did she recover her strength.

Sometimes in his correspondence Kaigorodov gives a good description of the person and personality of the shamaness. Here I will relate in

condensed form the observations he made. By local standards, Olga and her husband were considered to be well off. They owned a large herd of reindeer, which amounted at times to more than sixty animals. Since the couple did not have their own children, they had adopted three children of Olga's brothers and sisters. These were Viktor, Katerina (Katia), and Iakov, who lived in the couple's household and were brought up by them.

Olga was not of a tall stature, but she was well proportioned and had darkish skin. Most of the time she was reserved, and smiled only rarely. She had a dark chest-voice and spoke Russian well with only a little accent. She spoke slowly, dragging out the words so that it was a pleasure to listen to her. During the warm season she usually clothed herself entirely in black, draping over her shoulders a black silk scarf with big colorful flowers. She was an excellent housewife, keeping her tent clean and in exemplary order. She was a good cook, and able to prepare Russian dishes as well. She was also the only one of her people who made butter from reindeer milk. In addition, she was an expert seamstress and good at making embroidery with colored yarn; her products were much sought after in the taiga as well as among the Russian trading partners. She usually did not go hunting; besides her tasks as a housewife and her sewing, she took care of her reindeer (fig. 7).

Olga was very good-natured, friendly, and not at all rancorous. Because of her good nature she was loved and respected by her people; but she was also feared. The reason for such ambiguity in others' attitudes toward her probably was her role as a shaman. She was always hospitable. For a good guest she had always vodka and tasty sweets ready. She herself liked to visit others, including her Russian friends and trading partners (*andaki*). On entering a Russian house, she would first look to see where the icons were. As soon as she found them she enthusiastically made the sign of the cross and bowed. Then she greeted those present with a handshake and inquired about the health and wellbeing of the family. Like all Reindeer Evenki, she loved to eat butter and drink strong tea. She also liked *pelmeni* (dumplings made of dough and stuffed with meat or vegetables) and was fond of vodka. At trading meetings (*bogžor*) with her Russian partners (*andaki*) she sometimes drank more than was required to quench her thirst.

Kaigorodov became personally acquainted with almost all the Reindeer Evenki who came to the Three River Region for barter. Often he spent time in the camps of the nomads and hunted with them in the wilderness. Because hunting is a life-long profession with the Evenki, each



Fig. 7. The shamaness Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina in winter clothes and with a lynx-skin cap like a man. Photo: Oscar Mamen, 23 November, 1931.

hunter possesses deeply engrained faculties of orientation and is conversant with every detail of the mysteries of nature. In this respect Anatoliĭ Makarovich had the best teachers one could wish for in his Evenki friends. In his youth he learned to know the taiga thoroughly, and how to endure it. He understood the changes in the face of the taiga. Eight days of rain could change it into a hell, a mosquito-breeding swamp, but a few dry weeks made it appear lovely and familiar, filled with the humming of beetles and the splendor of flowers in spring (fig. 8).

The trading meetings or markets (Evenki *bogžor*) held by Evenki and Russian Cossacks took place several times a year, usually four or five times, at agreed localities. Spring, summer and fall *bogžor* were organized in the vicinity of the settlement of Dubovaia; the winter *bogžor*, however, were held deep in the taiga on the upper reaches of the River Derbul, or still deeper in the wilderness where the hunting grounds of the Evenki were located. In winter the frozen rivers served as natural roads for the loaded sledges of the Cossacks. Even as a child Anatoliĭ Makarovich was allowed to accompany his father to these meetings in the wild taiga with the reindeer nomads. On such occasions he was an eye- and earwitness to many details of ethnological interest, and he became friends with young Evenki (for example with Viktor, the shamaness's adopted son who was about the same age as Anatoliĭ). Viktor's Evenki name was Goko. In this context it is quite remarkable that the Russian trading partners rarely knew the Evenki name or the Evenkified form of the name of their *andaki*. This might be related to rules of taboo



Fig. 8. Evenki hunting camp. Photo: Morishita Masaaki, 1942.

concerning the use of personal names once common among the Evenki because of the fear that a name might be magically abused.

Between Evenki and Russian families connected with each another by trade relations there was also a certain exchange of items of their respective material or spiritual cultures. For example, keen Russian hunters from the Three River Region wore mainly Evenki hunting clothes made of chamois leather, and many Russians believed in the transcendental power of the Reindeer Evenki shamans, sometimes even enlisting their services. Among the Russian trading partners of the Evenki, the shamaness Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina had the reputation of being very clever and knowledgeable, and she was held in high esteem. In her presence people avoided boasting of bad deeds or using abusive language. Many Russians asked the shamaness to divine for them. Still, only a few Russian hunters had direct relations with her, among them the Molokov family, who since tsarist times had traded with the shamaness, and Kaigorodov's father, Makar Dmitrievich. Many Russians placed great confidence in her powers although such an attitude ran counter to their Christian beliefs. After her death many saw in Olga a kind of guardian angel or spirit and believed in her posthumous powers.

Because of his trips to trade with the Reindeer Evenki and his numerous hunting excursions into remote regions of the taiga, Anatoliĭ's father was known among the inhabitants of the villages on the Derbul as being one of the most knowledgeable Russian explorers of the forest, someone who knew the few paths through the great swamps and the deep forests to the secluded hunting camps of the forest nomads. Scientific expeditions into this still unexplored and unmapped area gladly took advantage of his practical knowledge of the area. For most

of the foreign explorers traveling the area in those days he functioned as a consultant and pathfinder—for example, for the Swedish–English ethnologist Ethel J. Lindgren, who visited the Reindeer Evenki in 1929 and 1931–1932. The German geographer Bruno Plaetschke of Königsberg, who explored the topography of the region on the upper Bystraia (Chin. *Jiliu*) in 1932, also collected information about the region from Anatoliĭ's father. During the time of the Manchukuo state (1932–1945) his father too was a trusted source of information for many Japanese scientific travelers about the conditions of the terrain in this unknown and unexplored region. Only with his help was it possible for explorers to find the nomadic groups (Evenki *urilen*) of the Reindeer Evenki roaming in the pathless wilderness of the taiga.

The encounters with these international scientists in the house of the Kaĭgorodov family probably further strengthened the interest of young Anatoliĭ in the people of the taiga and their mysterious shamans.

From 1935 Anatoliĭ attended the small village school in Dubovaĭa, but beginning in 1940 he attended the secondary school in Dragotsenka (today Chinese *San'che*), the capital and administrative center of the Three River Region, which at that time was completely under Russian influence. During the winter of 1944–1945 he attended the Russian high school in Hailar. Following the invasion by Soviet troops and the surrender of the imperial Japanese forces in Manchuria in August 1945, all of Northeast China was temporarily placed under Soviet Russian administration. Anatoliĭ Makarovich continued his education in Dragotsenka until he graduated from that school in 1947.

In the fall of 1939, when he was a fourth-grader in the elementary school of Dubovaia, he experienced another—for him—decisive encounter. In that year his father persuaded an Evenki hunter, Pëtr Prokopievich Buldotin, to pass the winter in the settlement, in the Kaĭgorodov family's home. The old hunter was very sick and emaciated and suffered from terrible fits of coughing. That winter turned out to be an unforgettable and most interesting period in Anatoliĭ's life because of the friendship that soon developed with the old man. Pëtr Prokopievich was known among his people as an expert hunter, and even the Russian *andaki* told stories about his truly marvelous feats. This Evenki forest dweller introduced the Russian youth to the marvels of nature and the hunt, teaching him the basics of the art of reading animal tracks. Because of his natural pedagogical talent, the old man quickly succeeded in arousing his friend's youthful enthusiasm. He

told him the origin myth of the Buldotin clan, as well as a series of Reindeer Evenki folk tales. He knew how to enthuse the youth with stories about the hunt and with accounts of many events in his life in the Hinggan taiga. He was, incidentally, the only person in his group who had succeeded in taming two elks after the Chinese Reindeer Evenki lost all their livestock around the turn of the century as the result of a scab epidemic. Using his two tamed elks as pack animals, Pëtr Prokopiëvich continued his hunting expeditions in the forests together with his family as usual. Other Evenki hunter families had had to live close to the Russian settlements on the border until they were able to purchase fresh reindeer from Siberia with the help of their Russian trading partners. The old Evenki hunter remained with the Kaigorodov family until March 1940, by which time his health had somewhat improved and he returned to the taiga with relatives who had attended the March *bogžor*. For Anatoliï, the encounter with the old man was a formative experience. In later years he produced a wonderful memorial to his old Evenki friend from the Hinggan taiga in the article “Dersu Uzala iz debreï trekhrech’ia” (Dersu Uzala of the Three River Region).

Although according to the Evenki understanding of the division of labor hunting was a male activity, there were a few women who were enthusiastic hunters and in no way inferior to the men. The widowed Evenki Akulina Ivanovna Sologon was one of these unusual women. In the Tungusic ethnic group of the Great Hinggan she was well known as an expert huntress. Her memory remains alive among the Chinese Reindeer Evenki to this day, even though she died in the early 1950s. Ethel J. Lindgren mentions her in her studies. Akulina Ivanovna was a close acquaintance of the Kaigorodov family, and Anatoliï told many stories about this remarkable Evenki huntress (fig. 9).

At the beginning of the 1940s Anatoliï’s parents adopted a little Evenki girl Katia, thought to be about five years old at the time. Katia was the youngest daughter of the widowed Nikolaï Nikolaevich Buldotin, who later died from alcoholism in Ernisaia (Chin. *Judenkecun*, now *Mordaga*) on the River Marekta. Through this new stepsister, Anatoliï became a relative of the Manchurian Reindeer Evenki. Since he had attended almost all the *bogžor* that took place in the wilderness, not only did he become acquainted with the Reindeer Evenki who traded with his father, but he also came to know almost all the Evenki of the Three River Region group (the *Gunačen*), who were engaged in barter with partners from Dubovaia and the neighboring village of



Fig. 9. The famous Evenki huntress Akulina Ivanovna Sologon on a hunting trip. Photo: Oscar Mamen, 29 November, 1931.

Kliuचेvaia. At the *bogžor* sites in the taiga he spent many a night with other *andaki* around campfires under the open sky or in temporary Evenki tents erected by putting up poles (Evenki *dju*). This provided him with good opportunities to become familiar with the Evenki way of life and to observe the customs of the taiga hunters. He often took part in their hunting expeditions in the immense forests, including the elk hunt in late May and early June. During nights that were already becoming shorter and warmer, he would wait for that awesome game at small forest lakes with his Evenki companions. In the same season he also hunted with them for Isiubr deer at salt licks. And in September he was taught how to hunt deer by imitating their mating call. He counted hearing the bellows of the rutting stags in the starlit and already frosty nights among his most memorable experiences. Using the *orevun*, a wooden instrument that looks like a slightly upward-curving oboe (the Russians of the Three River Region called it a *sosok*), the hunters produced a sound imitating the wailing bellow of a stag and sent it echoing loudly over the taiga, luring the rutting deer within range of their guns. He also learned about the hunting and cult of the bear, and about the belief among Chinese Reindeer Evenki that the bear is a relative of humans and possesses an immortal soul. He observed the reverence and awe with which they treated this able-bodied animal of the Hingan taiga, and he learned the aliases they used for it during the hunt to counter the animal's faculty of clairvoyance (fig. 10).

Anatoliĭ often engaged with his Evenki friends in hunting for fur animals in winter, especially squirrels. This began with the first snowfall and was a pursuit of Evenki hunters as well as of Russian hunters from the Three River Region. In this type of hunt he was always impressed



Fig. 10. The Evenki hunter Pëtr Sokratovich Sologon in full hunting gear with an *utkan* (long knife) in his right hand. Photo: Oscar Mamen, 26 November, 1931.

by the unusual speed with which the Evenki moved in the pathless terrain, a pace that he often found difficult to maintain. It was his opinion that the Reindeer Evenki were possibly the world's most authentic forest nomads. They are extremely fast walkers, their light clothing allows maximum mobility, and they know how to conserve body heat most ingeniously. They also have an ancient and magical relationship with fire, something that Anatoliĭ came to appreciate when in the fall of 1947 he was on his way to the taiga in the company of the Evenki Ivan Stepanovich Kaltakun. While the latter was still out hunting, Anatoliĭ stayed in camp preparing for the night's lodging. He collected wood and kindled the campfire to boil tea. When the Evenki at last returned and approached the fire, he turned quite pale and began to throw the burning logs in all directions—even pouring the tea out on to the ground. After he had calmed down he explained to Anatoliĭ the reason for his actions. He said that Anatoliĭ had not used the right wood for the fire, because the crackling of the burning wood was a sign that the woman of the fire, its spirit-being, was enraged and had prevented the success of his hunt. In the thinking of the Reindeer Evenki fire, like all things and natural phenomena, is the bearer of a soul.

In the evening, after a successful hunt for big game, people often danced the Evenki round dance known as *choro*. For this dance men and women took each other's hands and moved in a circle around the campfire burning under the open sky. As they danced they sang songs in the richly voweled Evenki language, but they also used Russian folk tunes. This activity in the evening around a blazing fire boosted not only

the sense of community fostered by the experience shared earlier of the hunt but also a feeling of the oneness of the male and female members of their society present there. Today it is difficult to imagine a life as free and unrestricted as that once experienced by the Reindeer Evenki and the Russian emigrants in the borderlands, an area where Russia's world ended and that of China began. Not surprisingly, the nights spent around a campfire enlivened by the round dance of men and women formed some of Anatoliĭ's most cherished memories (fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Milking a reindeer. Photo: Morishita Masaaki, 1942.

For the Japanese who occupied Northeast China in 1932 and then established the puppet state of Manchukuo with Pu Yi, the last emperor of the Manchu dynasty, as its head, Evenki–Russian relations were initially of almost no concern. Only in 1942 did they introduce a state monopoly of trade.

The area's freedom was terminated by the invasion of Soviet army units and the surrender of the Japanese military forces in Manchuria. Although the old and tested *andaki* trade was revived and continued to function until it was terminated by administrative measures of the newly established People's Republic of China at the beginning of the 1950s, nothing was the same as it had been before. A dark cloud of insensitive state power, in the form of an absolute regimentation of all sections of life and the sedentarization policy of the new regime in China, hung over the peoples of the taiga and portended coming misfortune.

In March 1949 Anatoliĭ visited a *bogžor* for the last time. There he learned from his Evenki friend Viktor, the adopted son of the shamaness Olga, some details of the terrible blood feuds that had broken out

among the Evenki clans after Olga's death in 1944. As early as 1945, when the area was still under Japanese occupation, ritual killings began to break out arising from a general sense of insecurity and especially because there was now no shaman who could serve as a safety valve for the ethnic group. Anatoliĭ had been able to meet his godmother, the shamaness, shortly before she passed away. Here is his description of the encounter: "In the summer of 1944 I encountered a long caravan of reindeer in the area of Karbelami. It came from the opposite direction and was led by Nikolaĭ Larionovich Buldotin. In the middle of the caravan an emaciated, stooped, and grey-haired old woman, who appeared to be very sick, was sitting on a large reindeer. In this woman I recognized beyond doubt the shamaness Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina. Even today this scene remains clearly in my memory with all the details. In the fall of the same year we learned that the shamaness had died" (letter of March 27, 1983). Earlier that year, in spring, Anatoliĭ's father had met the shamaness and invited her to the village of Dubovaia. She told him that she did not know if she could come because she was to die soon, during the same year. Apparently she had already foreseen her imminent death. She died half way on her journey to Dubovaia, which she had begun in the company of her adoptive adolescent children, Katia and the fifteen-year-old Iakov. On the road her health deteriorated severely and a camp was prepared for the night; the following morning the youngsters saw that Olga had died during the night. The two dug a grave and buried the shamaness in her clothes and wrapped in a blanket. They added the necessary funerary gifts, such as her needlework tools together with dishes and food needed for the journey to the land of the dead (Evenki *buni*). Finally they secured the grave with a structure of logs to prevent it from being ravaged by bears. From there the children proceeded to the Russian village of Dubovaia, where they reported the death of the shamaness. Katia shed a great many tears over her adoptive mother. In their confusion and grief they also had lost some of their reindeer on the way.

In 1947 Kaĭgorodov visited the grave of the shamaness, which was situated on the upper Derbul some distance from the *bogžor* meeting place at the "Devil's Cave" (Russian *Chortova Iama*). He writes: "On a site a bit above the Devil's Cave I noticed an Evenki grave. It lay on the southeastern slope of a flat hill, at a distance of about two kilometers from Medevch'ia. I did not dismount, but observed the grave carefully from the back of my horse. It was a small heap of earth encircled by

roughly hewn logs and covered with stones. It was evident to me that these measures were meant to protect the grave against bears. At the head of the grave a cross made of larch tree posts was erected. The presence of a nail made one assume that originally an icon was hung there. The Evenki hunter who accompanied me explained that this was the grave of their late shamaness Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina." Apparently, Olga did not take her shaman costume with her on her last journey to Dubovaia, having left it in one of her storage structures (Evenki *kolbo*). The Manchurian Reindeer Evenki visit the graves of their departed relatives only rarely and with no particular intention in mind. This is particularly true of the grave of a dead shaman because people fear the shaman's spirits, which might still be haunting the place.

Another tragedy related to the ritual blood feuds among the Chinese Reindeer Evenki occurred when, after the March 1948 *bogžor* came to an end, the Evenki wandered with their reindeer back to their hunting grounds. On the way back into the taiga, a young Evenki mother whose husband had been the victim of a blood feud the year before, in despair shot and killed first her barely one-year-old son and then herself. This tragic event was particularly shocking for Anatoliĭ because the little boy was his Evenki godchild, and the death left him haunted by feelings of guilt until the end of his life. In this regard he wrote me: "In March 1948, when I visited the taiga for the last time I met Aksin'ia again. It was at one of the last traditional trading meetings of the Reindeer Evenki with their Russian partners, with Chinese already in attendance. Later I learned of a terrible thing. On her return trip to the hunting grounds Aksin'ia stopped with her children at the campsite where her husband had earlier been killed. While the other Evenki continued on, she stayed behind and kindled a large fire, but did not unpack her reindeer. Then, with her hunting gun, she first shot and killed her little son and then herself. Her small girl, in a state of shock, ran after the other Evenki and managed to catch up with them. Until this day I have feelings of guilt regarding the young boy, my godchild Anatoliĭ Petrovich Zolotovskii, because I did not keep him back at that time in our village, but I had to go to Harbin for my studies."

Kaĭgorodov went to Harbin in 1948 to begin his studies at the Polytechnic Institute of the Province of Heilongjiang in the Faculty of Economy of the East. From 1950 to 1952 he was also enrolled on a course on Sinology with emphasis on the Chinese language.

Among his teachers at the Institute in Harbin was the ethnologist Ippolit Gavrilovich Baranov and the well-known scholar of Manchuria Vladimir Nikolaevich Zernakov, who was also director of the Museum of Natural History of Heilongjiang Province. The latter commissioned the student from the distant Three River Region to collect items of the material culture of the Reindeer Evenki for exhibition in the ethnographic section of the Museum. As a result, the friendly relationships Kaigorodov had enjoyed with the Reindeer Evenki of the Great Hinggan continued even during the years of his studies in Harbin. Among the Reindeer Evenki acquisitions Kaigorodov was able to present to the Museum were the following: a reduced-scale model of a boat made of birch tree bark (Evenki *džaw*), prepared by the Evenki Fëdor Stepanovich Kaltakun; two wooden deer calls (Evenki *orevun*); a small carpet made of fur (Evenki *kalaman*); reindeer saddle bags (Evenki *inmek*); and a reindeer bridle.

Through correspondence with his parents in Dubovaia, Kaigorodov was able to follow the later fate of the small group of Tungusic forest hunters in the Great Hinggan even during his years as a student in Harbin.

In 1949 one of the last *bogžor* meetings between Reindeer Evenki and Cossacks from the Three River Region took place. At that market meeting, Anatoliĭ's younger brother Vasiliĭ Makarovich once more provided the family's Evenki *andaki* with all they needed. A few years later, around 1951 or 1952, these traditional Evenki–Russian relations were abruptly terminated by the insensitive administrative measures taken by those authorities who now represented the newly established People's Republic of China. Russian settlers in the Three River Region were prohibited from visiting the taiga. The Evenki were allowed to use only a single state-run store established at Tsigan (Chin. *Qiqian*) to acquire the products of civilized society that they needed, primarily ammunition for their guns, but also flour, salt, and tea. The development begun by the new Chinese state and experienced by the small Evenki group could, initially, even be seen as something positive. However, this was soon undone when the new cadres began, in an overbearing manner and as if possessed by a mania for sedentarization, to force the nomads to settle in the vicinity of Tsigan and to limit their hunting area to the lower ranges of the River Bystraia.

The area put at the disposal of the Evenki and their reindeer by the Chinese theorists was much too small, and it did not produce the amount of lichen the reindeer needed. As a consequence many rein-

deer perished, while among the people from the taiga an epidemic of typhoid fever broke out in 1953. Many Evenki died, among them the last *andak* of the Kaïgorodov family, Fëdor Stepanovich Kaltakun, and his son Makar, the huntress Akulina Ivanovna Sologon and her daughter, and also Viktor, the adoptive son of the shamaness Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina and friend of Anatoliï.

The contact Anatoliï had with the Evenki through his parents was cut off from 1950 when Russians in the Three River Region were barred from having any contact with their former trading partners from the taiga.

After the successful conclusion of his studies in Harbin, Anatoliï took up his first employment in 1952 as a translator in the Heavy Industry of the North. At first he worked in Shenyang (formerly Mukden); later, after a promotion, he worked in Peking.

In the summer of 1954 he moved from China to the Soviet Union, like many other Russians. He went first to the Kemerovskiï Oblast', but later he lived in Moscow. On February 12, 1955, he began work as a librarian at the public library for foreign language literature in Moscow. In Moscow he attended courses in Mongolian, Vietnamese, and Indonesian and became the main librarian for Asian and African literature. He worked in this position until his retirement in 1988. During his years at the library he did not limit himself to strictly bibliographical work. He also produced several works on the recent history of Mongolia and wrote about Mongolian authors. Together with two Mongol scholars, he played an important part in the preparation of an anthology of writers from the People's Republic of Mongolia, published in 1982 under the title *Pisateli Mongol'skoï Narodnoï Respubliki 1921–1981* [Writers of the People's Republic of Mongolia, 1921–1981]. In connection with his Mongolian studies he traveled four times to the People's Republic of Mongolia, in 1968, 1977, 1978, and 1980, and visited his Mongolian colleagues there. In 1966 he married his colleague at the time, Raisa Lavrent'evna.

Now Kaïgorodov took to writing personal reminiscences. In doing so he lived once more in his thoughts in the forests with his Reindeer Evenki friends, when they were still living free in the mountains, free of administrative patronizing and regimentation. In his imagination he sat once more at their crackling campfires, listening to the hoofbeats of their reindeer, to the laughter and the melancholy songs of the forest nomads. Again he heard the rustle of the limitless larch forests swaying in the wind on the Great Hinggan. Once more he saw in his mind the

bear cubs playing in summer on taiga meadows covered with flowers, and experienced anew the icy winter nights filled with the howling of wolves, or the gentle snowfall on a calm winter's day. He recalled the keen readiness of the Reindeer Evenki to assist one another, their natural magnanimity, their wisdom, and how they conceived their world, and he also thought of his Evenki godmother, the shamaness Olga Dmitrievna Kudrina. In 1968 his article "Evenki v trekhrech'e" [The Evenki of the Three River Region] was published in Moscow in the academic journal *Sovetskaia Ėtnografiia*, followed in 1970 by "Svad'ba v taiga" [Wedding in the taiga] and "Dersu Uzala iz debrei trekhrech'ia" [Dersu Uzala of the Three River Region] in the same journal.

I first discovered these publications in 1983, in the course of my own research on the Chinese Reindeer Evenki, and began to correspond with their author. At first I sent the letters to his official address at the library, but later I wrote to him at his home in Moscow. He always readily answered my innumerable questions about the ethnography and history of the small Tungusic ethnic group in the mountain forests of the Great Hinggan and their former relationships with the Russian emigrants in the Three River Region. Gradually a lively and scientifically productive correspondence took shape. He proved by his competence and excellent memory to be a first-class informant and witness of that time. In the course of the fifteen years that our correspondence lasted, his letters accumulated to more than 1,200 pages. He often said that he found much pleasure in this correspondence on questions related to the cultural history of the Reindeer Evenki and to the history of an out-of-the-world region in China's northeast, and that it stirred up pleasant memories of a former free life in harmony with the harsh nature of the Great Hinggan (fig. 12).

With advancing age his wish to visit once more the places where he had spent his childhood and youth grew stronger. In 1985 he applied for a visa to visit Northeast China. Because of the bureaucratic barriers that existed at the time in the Soviet Union and because of a lack of financial means, the plan fell through. So he continued to return to his homeland at the edge to the taiga, to the forests of northern Manchuria, and to his Evenki friends only in his thoughts, while he continued with the writing of his articles in his small apartment in Moscow.

After his retirement he dedicated more of his energy to work dealing with the history of the Russian period of the Three River Region and



Fig. 12. A woman (Argashka Sologon) riding on her reindeer.
Photo: Morishita Masaaki, 1942.

the time of the Russian civil war in Transbaikalia and in the neighboring regions of Mongolia and Manchuria.

In 1995 he accepted an invitation from me and spent seven weeks as my guest at Schloss Holte, near Bielefeld, Germany where I was living at the time. In numerous conversations on specialized topics that were partly recorded on tape, we discussed many further questions relating to the cultural history of the Reindeer Evenki of Manchuria. He told me about life in the Russian villages with the change of the seasons, and about hunting and the barter trade with the forest nomads of the Great Hinggan. I, for my part, could report to him my encounter with the old Evenki hunter Alekseĭ Kudrin, who had once been a trading partner of Kaĭgorodov's father, during my visit to the Chinese Evenki in the fall of 1993. In the course of these meetings with Kaĭgorodov, sitting in my office listening to the enthusiastic eyewitness reports of this friendly and modest expert, it became clear to me that I was conversing with the last competent informant knowledgeable about the ethnology and history of the Manchurian Reindeer Evenki in the years before 1949. I will never forget the man and the time we spent together (fig. 13).

Sadly, Anatoliĭ Makarovich was unable to accept my invitation to make another stay at Schloss Holte in the fall of 1998. In keeping with his last wishes, the family of the late researcher turned the entire body of his archive material over to me.

The studies of Anatoliĭ Makarovich Kaĭgorodov on northern Manchuria and its inhabitants deserve special attention because they are based mostly on personal relations, observations and memories and because the Reindeer Evenki and their age-old, highly specialized,



Fig. 13. Anatolij Makarovič Kaĭgorodov with the author at Schloß Holte, near Bielefeld, Germany. Photo: Marcus Schneider, December 1995.

and close-to-nature culture of reindeer breeding and hunting in the Great Amur Bend are today faced with certain extinction. In 1949 this small group still consisted of six clans, but today only four of them remain—yet because of their rules of exogamy they are not allowed to marry among themselves. In August of 2003 most of the Manchurian Reindeer Evenki were again forcibly resettled, this time in Genhe. Genhe is a city of 73,500 inhabitants located about 250 kilometers south of the old center of the Reindeer Evenki, Aoluguya. Because of its southerly location the area is not suitable for either hunting or the breeding of reindeer. Only about thirty Reindeer Evenki still remain in their old homeland.

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F. GEORG HEYNE was born 1949 in Lohne in Northern Germany. At present he is a government employee living in Bielefeld. As an independent scholar his field of interest is the ethnology, the cultural history, and the languages of circumpolar populations, but in particular of the Manchu-Tungusic hunting and fishing peoples of East Asia such as the Reindeer Evenki, the Oroqen and the Hezhe. In addition he is engaged in research on the Skolt and Kola Sami, as well as on the Ojibwa Indians (Anishinabe).

The Long Road to Becoming a Shaman: A Ryukyu Shaman's Autobiography

PETER KNECHT

NAGOYA, JAPAN

The article is based on the personal account of a Ryukyu shaman about her experiences of how she became a shaman. Her story is of particular interest because it is the reflective account of a shaman about her social as well as spiritual experiences and not an ethnographic report produced by a researcher. The first part gives the itinerary of her life and shows how the itinerary is shaped by her reflections at its various stages. The second part reflects on the validity of clear cut distinctions in the use of such terms as "priestess" (noro) and "shaman" (yuta) based on the shaman's own statements. This is possible because the shaman herself discusses her experiences and her status in the light of current scholarly discourse.

Not always do things reveal their true nature at first sight. When I was browsing through new publications on religion in a large Tokyo bookstore a few years ago, the title *Birth of a Shaman* caught my eyes and immediately caught my interest, while at the same time arousing my skepticism. Interest, because the book claimed to be an account of a shaman's experiences over seventy years, and skepticism, because I suspected it might be an unfounded claim. It was with skepticism, then, that I began reading the volume, but to my surprise I was immediately enchanted by the author's story—so much so that I had to read it right through. It is the story of a woman born on Tokunoshima, an island of the Amami Archipelago in southwestern Japan. Her story fascinated me because she not only describes the many ups and downs she experienced on her road to becoming a shaman but also tells her personal story against the background of painful events in the history of her homeland and her family.

The string of islands that links Kyushu with Taiwan like the stepping-stones in a Japanese garden once was the Ryukyu Kingdom. Although

independent, the kingdom was oriented towards imperial China, to which it paid regular tribute until it was conquered by the fiefdom of Satsuma located on Kyushu. With this conquest a long period of exploitation and suffering began for the islands' populace, coupled with the loss of their independence. This lasted right up to the aftermath of World War II, when the islands came under the administration of the American occupation forces. Even today, long after the islands were returned to Japan in 1972 and Okinawa Prefecture was established, many problems remain, as well as inequalities compared with residents living in the rest of Japan.

In terms of their culture and the organization of their society, the islanders show a remarkable degree of common characteristics in spite of local variations, so that they are considered to constitute a clearly recognizable culture area in their own right. In these characteristics they are quite different from people elsewhere in Japan, yet many scholars of folklore in particular were of the opinion that certain features of Japan's ancient culture could still be found in the culture of the Ryukyus. One readily observed difference from other parts of Japan is the prominent role of women in the traditional religion of the islands. "Traditional" does not mean that this local form of religion, and with it the role of its female religious functionaries, did not undergo any changes in the course of its history; rather, it means "customary" or "what people have been used to." It is not the purpose of the present paper to trace the history of this religion. The core of what follows is a presentation of, and preliminary discussion of, the personal account of a woman born in the area who describes the process of becoming a shaman. In order that readers may understand her story in its cultural context, and especially what it means to be a shaman in this culture, I shall first provide a very general description of the types of female religious functionaries to be found in the Ryukyu Islands, and their roles.

Most scholars speak of two quite different types of female religious functionaries: *noro* and *yuta*. A *noro* is usually described as a priestess in charge of the public religious affairs of a community; in this role she conducts the community's rites at its ritual site, the *utaki*. Formerly she was appointed by the central administration of the kingdom and so was an official in the kingdom's politico-religious administration. Although a *noro* had to be officially appointed, her office would usually remain in

the same family,¹ within which it was transmitted hereditarily, basically along patrilineal lines (in case of need, however, this could be interpreted flexibly to allow even an in-married woman to become a *noro* for the family she married into). Today there is still the understanding that a *noro*'s office is hereditary within her family and/or village, but for personal as well as demographic reasons it can become difficult to follow this custom, thus necessitating recourse to other means in order to find an appropriate person to take over a *noro*'s position. In such a case recourse is often made to a *yuta*. A *yuta*, however, is not a public official; she is a charismatic person who responded to the personal calling of a spirit being, such as a deity or an ancestor. As such, she caters to the needs of individuals or families who seek her advice and help. In order to respond to her clients she acts with the help of her guardian spirit, whom she was compelled to discover in a frequently long process of searching. Once she has herself realized, or has been advised by an older *yuta*, that an unusual sickness or a string of misfortunes she has suffered is a sign that she is being called to become a *yuta* and to work in accordance with the will of her guardian spirit, she visits one religious site after another until she finally finds the one where her guardian spirit dwells. During her rituals she is likely to fall into a state of trance (something a *noro* does not experience). Therefore, a *yuta* is considered to be a shaman or *miko*, a category clearly distinct from that of the *noro*, a priestess. Yet a *yuta* might be the one who is called upon when a *noro* has to be chosen from among several possible candidates. In such a situation the *yuta* either pronounces an oracle or casts a lot. In either case she acts as an instrument of her guardian spirit. When I first noticed *Birth of a Shaman*, one reason for my immediate interest was that the author was apparently disregarding this accepted distinction between *noro* and *yuta*, because the book's subtitle went on: *An Account of 26,000 Days of a Noro Born in Tokunoshima*.

Below I propose to show why for her the distinction dear to scholars does not have much significance and what this may mean for further studies on shamanism. First, I believe it might be useful to state why I think the book is remarkable. In the recent past, researchers of Japanese or Okinawan shamanism have been careful to record *in extenso* either the complete life stories of the persons studied or at least the

¹ Cf. Lebra 1966: 134–135.

stories of their becoming shamans. The trailblazing studies of Sakurai Tokutaro (1973, 1974, and 1977) and the sensitive works of Takamatsu Keikichi (1983) and Ikegami Yoshimasa (1999), for example, come to mind. Notwithstanding the effort of these scholars to relate their partners' accounts as faithfully as possible, their reports still remain the works of the interviewing scholars. Takiguchi Naoko (1990 and 1991) goes one step further when she not only relates what her partner, a Miyako shaman, told her but also quotes extensively from his original diaries. One publication that comes close to *Birth of a Shaman* is Anne Bouchy's captivating account of Nakai Shigeno's life (2005). In this case Nakai was keen on entrusting her story to Bouchy in order to have it published; because of her blindness, she would not have been able to do it on her own, even though she felt that her story had to be made known. Shodo Kuni's life history differs from all these not only because she tells it herself, but also because she relates her story to significant events in the history of the region and of her family, late descendants of the Ryukyu's second Sho dynasty (Shodo 2002: 21). Second, I will introduce her experiences and her own reflections about her mission as a base for some reflections of my own on what this could mean for academic definitions of terms such as "priestess" (*noro*) or "shaman" (*yuta*).

Family Background

The author begins her account by describing a rite that took place seven days after her birth. In this rite her father, pretending to have picked up a baby at the border of the village spring, visits several houses asking whether the child was theirs. The reason for this rite was that the baby was born in a year of the horse, which happened to be the same year in which her oldest sister and also her grandmother were born. The grandmother had insisted that her father perform the rite because of the belief that in a family where three members had been born in a year of the horse, one of them would die early. The ritual was therefore to make believe that the baby was not really born into the family where it was going to be raised and that, therefore, none of the three would incur the danger of early death.

The father was not at all pleased about having to perform this rite. He was convinced that times had changed. In his opinion the southwestern

islands were culturally underdeveloped as a result of their unfortunate historical relations with Japan. To remedy the disparity every effort needed to be made in order to change their backward society into a modern one. He believed that education was the royal path to achieve this goal. He himself had become principal of the local elementary school when he was still in his twenties and later pursued a career that eventually brought him to the top of the prefecture's educational system. For his children he made every effort so that they could pursue higher studies at prestigious schools in Japan in order to be prepared for a promising career.

The grandmother, for her part, stood for quite a different world, that of tradition. She was the village's *norō* and, being of advanced age, she dearly wished to find a successor among the members of her family while she was still alive. Her first candidate, her daughter and the mother of the author, chose to become a schoolteacher and did not want to become a *norō*. For that reason the grandmother had set her eyes on her granddaughter, the author's oldest sister (Shodo 2002: 19). But fate worked against such plans. First of all, her daughter's family left the island altogether to follow the father, who had found employment in the prefecture's school administration in the capital, Kagoshima. There misfortune struck the family. The chosen granddaughter fell sick and died, followed shortly afterwards by her still young mother. Finally, the author's younger brother, the father's great hope for the future of the islands, was called into the army and died in the war. Although the family had nine children, of whom the author was the sixth girl, these events left her as the only choice of the grandmother because the two of them were both born in a year of the horse. But she was far from willing to accede to her grandmother's wish (Shodo 2002: 84–91). When the war ended she returned briefly to her grandmother on Tokunoshima, but after it had been decided that she would marry a man in Tokyo she left the island and her grandmother. In Tokyo, however, her married life was anything but happy. Eventually she gave birth to two children, but her husband kept her and her children on a budget barely sufficient to buy even ordinary things of daily life except food. He was more interested in investing in his real estate business than in his family. She felt so miserable and lonely that she no longer went out of the house or had contact with other people. Reflecting on her lot, she more than once considered divorcing her husband. These family hardships, though, were only one aspect of her life. Throughout

her days in Tokyo she had been receiving insistent mysterious requests that she become a *norō* and succeed her grandmother. There had often been moments where she was almost ready to give in to these requests, but in the end she always refused. Things began to change on the day she accompanied her child when its kindergarten class went on an excursion to Jindaiji, a famous temple in the western suburbs of Tokyo. On that day she had a strange experience: while the children and the other parents in the group took a rest she sneaked away to see the temple's treasure, the famous statue Hakuho Buddha. On approaching the hall of the statue she felt something pulling her inside, and when she stood before the statue she heard it say: "It's good that you've come!" (Shodo 2002: 139). To understand the significance of this greeting, it is necessary to review other mysterious experiences she had before that moment in the temple.

Mysterious Experiences and Events

The rite of being picked up at the spring at the back of her village was performed in order to avoid possible misfortunes resulting from the fact that the author had been the third person in the same family to be born in a year of the horse. But it did not prevent her from having strange experiences from early on in her life. On the contrary, as her grandmother explained to her, a child picked up at a spring is destined to have such experiences (Shodo 2002: 73). She could hear what others did not hear and see what others did not see, but this gift caused her suffering and shame so she was careful to conceal it from others. Although she vaguely linked such experiences to her grandmother's wish that she become a *norō*, she steadfastly resisted the idea. Yet she had severe doubts about whether she was an ordinary human being like her friends (Shodo 2002: 11–12). She could, for example, see the spirits of the dead in the shape of bluish fires. And one day when she was playing beside the village's small river she almost drowned but was rescued by a young man. When she regained consciousness she told those who were worried about her playing alone by the river that she had not been alone. She could watch herself from a position outside and above herself, and from there she saw how a young man helped her (Shodo 2002: 69–73). Another day, when she was crossing a small bridge on her way home from school, she clearly heard a voice saying,

“Later in life you will call yourself by the name Shodo Kuni” (at the time she was called Nakajima Kunie),² and she distinctly saw in her mind the Chinese characters by which that name would be written (Shodo 2002: 85–86).

Some of her friends in the village and at school gradually came to notice her gift but usually kept their knowledge to themselves. Yet there were also moments when people attributed certain events to her gift. After she graduated from her high school in Kagoshima she fell sick, and she was diagnosed as having tuberculosis. At this time she decided to respond to her grandmother’s call and return to her native Tokunoshima. But because it was shortly after the war, her native island had become foreign territory under American administration. To go there meant having to cross an international border. Without an official permit the only way to do this was to try to cross the border clandestinely in the hope of not being caught by American patrol boats. One day she found a boat that would take her and several others to her island, but the trip turned out to be a dangerous voyage of several days. When the disembarking passengers passed in front of her they joined their hands as if in prayer and thanked her. The riddle of this puzzling behavior was solved when she learned that a friend had told the frightened passengers, “She’s to be the successor of the *norō* of Tokunoshima, and so the boat will not sink” (Shodo 2002: 99–105). She herself was not, however, prepared to become a *norō*, despite the repeated and increasingly insistent appeals of her grandmother.

When she left the island again, this time for her wedding in Tokyo, the grandmother, sick in bed, begged her granddaughter Kunie to see her for a last time. The granddaughter decided not to comply with her request, but before she could leave the grounds of the house the grandmother unexpectedly appeared on the veranda (*engawa*) in front of her room and from there she threw her white underskirt towards the girl, saying: “This is a keepsake from your grandmother. Take it along. That’s an order. The skirt is your grandmother’s life.” Although Kunie picked up the skirt she told herself again that she would never go to be a *norō* (Shodo 2002: 117–19).

² In the text I use the author’s civil name Kunie until I relate how she decides to take Shodo Kuni as her shaman name.

Kunie never saw her grandmother again alive, but the grandmother did not let her go with that sad separation. Kunie gave birth to her first son the year her grandmother died. One morning, when she turned on the gas of the water heater, she suddenly clearly heard her grandmother speaking to her, but she thought it was an auditory hallucination or, worse, that she might be suffering from schizophrenia. Although the grandmother said only that Kunie should lend an ear to her words, the sudden call was a sign that the grandmother was still close by and had not given up her desire to have Kunie become a *noro* (Shodo 2002: 129–30). The reason for the grandmother's insistence was the promise she had made to the deity of her sacred site to bring up a *noro* as Heaven demanded, lest her relatives would all go under—a promise she had made at the time the baby had been ritually “found” at the village spring (Shodo 2002: 19).

Shortly after having given birth to her first son Kunie had strange sensations whenever she wanted to leave her bed. Although the sensations did not last long, she began to feel that things she could not control were beginning to happen to her (Shodo 2002: 128). They left her frightened. About half a year after the birth of her second child they began to take clearer shape. By that time a good-looking old man with a long beard and clad in a white cotton garment appeared at her bedside.³ When she asked him who he was, he did not answer her question but announced instead that after a short while she would fall sick. About two weeks later it happened as the old man had foretold. Again he appeared and told her that she would recover only on condition that she do what Heaven asks of her because she had the blood of a *noro* of Okinawa running in her veins (Shodo 2002: 133). He also explained to her that her past suffering and mysterious experiences were all signs indicating that she was destined to become a *noro*. Eventually she told him she would follow Heaven's will (because she did not want her children to become orphans if she should die), yet in fact she did not heed the old man's request to become a *noro*.

The changes that she felt were taking place outside of her control gradually took clearer shape once her children had begun to go to a

³ At this point one is reminded of the old man with a white beard and twisted staff who appeared at the bedside of the young Korean woman who was later to become a shaman, as described by Laurel Kendall (1988: 56). (I am indebted to Clark Chilson for having reminded me of Kendall's account.)

kindergarten and later to school. The changes were of two kinds: she became increasingly involved in her children's school (for example, as a member of the school's PTA), and significant changes occurred in her spiritual development that inclined her towards becoming a *noro*. The first kind, changes related to her social milieu, opened up her social horizon after a long period of solitude and isolation caused by the intransigent attitude of her husband. She now began to involve herself in school activities, research groups, and travels. The second kind, changes in her spiritual development, set her on a path that was to bring her step by step to eventual acceptance of her calling, although this path was still strewn with obstacles caused by her continued hesitation to take the final and decisive step. The first step on this path was marked by her encounter with the statue of Hakuho Buddha that spoke to her during that excursion with her child's kindergarten class. Yet the two kinds of changes were closely connected with each other, as she was later told by Hakuho Buddha.

After her first visit she enjoyed visiting Jindaiji and its statue for personal motives, but she still had ambiguous feelings about her social involvement. When she mentioned her worries to the statue one day, she was told that she should not worry because her involvement in social activities such as the PTA was nothing else but her ascetic training "in the midst of a forest of people" (Shodo 2002: 145) in place of standing under a waterfall, a practice performed by her grandmother. Her visits to the Hakuho Buddha at Jindaiji took another turn when the statue one day told her that she had to look for another figure in order to find out who was really calling her. By way of a sign to help her know what she had to look for, she had a vision in which she was shown another statue, one housed in a fine building, but she was left with the task of finding out by herself where that building and the statue were located.

Kunie liked to visit the National Museum in Tokyo and look at the many old treasures of Japan accumulated there. One day she directed her steps quite naturally towards a section she had never visited before, but when she approached it she suddenly realized that this place was exactly like the one she had seen in her vision at Jindaiji. She entered and after a while found herself standing before a large glass case with a tall statue in it. This statue also spoke to her and told her that it had been waiting for her to come and that Heaven had been betting on whether she might eventually come or not. At the same time, the statue also revealed to her that it was still not the one to be ultimately sought

out, because it was only a replica of the original. The original she would have to find in Nara at the old temple Horyuji. After this experience she returned to Jindaiji to report it to the Hakuho Buddha there. Hakuho Buddha confirmed that she still had to look further for the original; at the same time it warned her to beware of evil spirits who would try to get hold of her and hinder her search (Shodo 2002: 154–158).

A group formed within the PTA for the purpose of studying Buddhist statues in Kyoto and Nara offered a welcome opportunity to visit Horyuji in Nara. It was at a time when the relationship with her husband had reached such a low point that she again began contemplating a divorce. At the same time she began frequently hearing her grandmother speaking to her. The grandmother's words not only comforted her, they also revealed to her the grandmother's situation in the other world as well as the significance of the strange painful events she had been experiencing in her life up to then. According to the grandmother's explanation, both the grandmother's situation and Kunie's troubles were directly linked to Kunie's becoming a *noro*. The grandmother was confined to a stone chamber at the entrance to the spirit world and not allowed to proceed any further because she had not accomplished in her life what she should have, namely, finding a *noro* to succeed her. She had therefore prayed to gods and buddhas to request their assistance in getting Kunie to become a shaman. The answer she had received was that it was indeed Heaven's will that Kunie become a shaman, and that all of Kunie's mysterious experiences, beginning with those of her early childhood up to the present day were nothing but the path on which she was being trained to become an influential shaman recognized in both the heavenly and the earthly worlds (Shodo 2002: 164–165).⁴

The grandmother's revelations were confirmed when Kunie finally found the Buddhist figure she had been searching for ever since she had met the one at Jindaiji. It happened when she came into the presence of the statue of Kudara Kannon at Horyuji Temple in Nara. From it she learned that the heavenly beings never had doubts about her shamanic gifts but that they were frustrated because they did not know whether she would finally accept her calling or not. The reason for their concern,

⁴ Kunie had been very anxious not to become a *noro*, but by about the time of her encounter with Kudara Kannon of Horyuji she speaks of herself as becoming a shaman. For this reason I will use the term "shaman" from now on, although such usage seems to be confusing. The explanation for this usage will be given in the discussion below.

Kunie was told, was that “the energy of gods and buddhas is supported and maintained by the energy of a living divinely chosen shaman.” Because there were almost no such shamans alive anymore it was most important for them that she, Kunie, accepted her calling (Shodo 2002: 169). As a result of this encounter Kunie came to understand the significance of her situation. She acknowledged the validity of the explanations she had received from her grandmother as well as from Kudara Kannon. The words of the latter, especially, successfully overcame what remained of her resistance. The Kannon, on her part, insisted that Kunie believe in and trust Heaven, whose voice she will be transmitting to those who would come to seek her help (Shodo 2002: 172).

The Final Step To Being a Shaman

The encounter with the original Kudara Kannon in Nara marked the end of Kunie’s long search for the supernatural source of her calling to become a shaman. At this point she had come to realize that her experiences were not symptoms of schizophrenia; quite the contrary, they meant she had received unusual spiritual powers. Nevertheless, she still lacked confidence in her calling and was doubtful about whether she really could be a *noro*, or a shaman, in her words. Although she continued hearing voices everywhere, a sign of her vocation, she was still unable to bring herself to decide once and for all to take up the burden of a shaman. It did not take long before she was drastically reminded of her conversation with Kudara Kannon and of her calling. She fell sick with a high fever, and the old man with the white beard again appeared at her bedside. He reprimanded her and announced that the reason for her falling sick again was that she had backed down from her promise to become a shaman. After several days of ups and downs in her sick state her fever worsened and she had to be hospitalized. In the hospital she was diagnosed with a very rare sickness that caused her terrible pain whenever she would touch something. While she was suffering in her hospital bed, the old man did not move from her side. At a given moment he unmistakably said, with a stern expression on his face, that it was no use trying to disobey Heaven. At that moment Kunie finally gave up her last resistance and expressed her resolution by confessing, “I believe in Heaven, I believe in Kudara Kannon, I believe in the Hakuho Buddha at Jindaiji, I believe in my grandmother, and I believe

in myself for my future life” (Shodo 2002: 176). Instantly a sensation of great relief swept over her and at the same moment the mysterious old man vanished from her side.

When she turned over in her bed, the white underskirt she had received from her grandmother years earlier suddenly unwrapped itself and flew to the ceiling of the room, where it looked to her like a flag. This was a sign that her grandmother had finally been able to enter the heavenly world and that Kunie had at last become a shaman. Kudara Kannon then appeared, to tell Kunie that the Kannon had known of Kunie’s heavenly gift to be a shaman already at the time of her first visit to Horyuji and Kudara Kannon many years earlier. Still, this gift alone does not make a shaman, Kannon told her. There needs to be a balance between the state of mind and the condition of the body in the chosen person. This is why Kunie had to undergo so many years of hardships in order to be truly prepared. The changes that were necessary were now all completed. At the end, Kudara Kannon disclosed that these changes had been watched throughout by the old man, who was none other than the deity of Mount Miwa (Shodo 2002: 177–178).⁵

These dramatic events marked the decisive turning point in Kunie’s life and signaled the beginning of her activities as a shaman. Gradually her being a shaman became known by word of mouth and people seeking her advice began to visit her. But there were also other changes signaling her new state. First, she finally got the divorce she had been thinking about for so many years; another visit from her grandmother made her take the decisive step. Second, she decided to give herself a new name, since she now was a shaman; when she considered what name to choose, she remembered what had happened to her many years before when, at the age of thirteen, she heard a voice telling her that she later should take the name Shodo Kuni, and even saw the Chinese characters by which to write this name. And so she decided that Shodo Kuni would be her name as shaman (Shodo 2002: 182).

⁵ Again, Kendall’s report comes to mind, where she reports how the shaman’s encounter with the Mountain God and Buddhist figures becomes the “source of personal power” as “sign of a marked and legitimate calling” (Kendall 1988: 80).

A Last Journey

Shodo Kuni married a second time. Her second husband was a man with a keen interest in history. When she expressed her wish to visit Mount Miwa, he began looking for relevant information in old texts and made a surprising discovery. In the story about the so-called Chopstick Tomb (*hashi haka*) recorded in the *Nihon shoki*⁶ he found that the name of the mother of the person buried in that tomb contained the two characters for “Kuni” as Shodo Kuni used them in her shaman name. Kuni had already been thinking of visiting Mount Miwa some day, because of a word she had received from Heaven, but she was also ordered to wait until somebody from that area would visit her. When such a person turned up, she and her husband decided to make the journey to Nara and Mount Miwa. But their visit to the shrine of Mount Miwa was a big disappointment for Kuni because her expectation of hearing a heavenly voice there turned out to be in vain. There was no response at all. Deeply disappointed, she wanted to return, but her husband suggested that they follow instead for a while the road along the mountains. There they discovered the entry to the path that leads up to the top of Mount Miwa and to its sacred stone settings. After they had climbed for a while, Kuni heard a voice telling her that she should stand under a nearby waterfall. The exercise made her feel light and ready for the rest of the climb. They passed the first and then the second stone setting, but Kuni did not feel any response, not even at a small shrine on the top of the mountain.

But then her husband discovered a third stone setting a slight distance apart from the small shrine, and Kuni’s expectations were fully met. There she experienced an enthusiastic welcome from the mountain’s deities, who all assembled at the spot and danced around their two visitors. Among the deities was also the one in whose name Shodo Kuni had discovered her name Kuni. This deity disclosed to her that Heaven had been betting on her and praised her for having overcome countless hardships on her way to becoming a “great shaman of the twentieth century.” At their departure the deity expressed her wish that the shaman’s “difficult but promising path” in the future be blessed

⁶ The *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan) is a text completed in 720 on imperial order. The story of the “Chopstick Tomb” is recorded as having happened in the tenth year of the reign of emperor Sujin (reigned 97–30 BC).

(Shodo 2002: 203). The encounter with the rejoicing deities on Mount Miwa sealed the long and at times tortuous journey of her life up to that date. She came to realize that her early mystic experiences already foreshadowed her future as a person chosen for a special mission, although she had made every effort to either conceal her experiences or resist what they kept insisting to suggest. Although her last encounter with the Kudara Kannon at Nara made her finally give in and accept the mission that was being entrusted to her, it was really the mysterious meeting on Mount Miwa that endowed her with the conviction that she was entrusted with a great mission. She now saw that her mission was not just to help people who came to her in order to find relief from their sicknesses or anxieties; even more than that, it was a mission to make modern people aware that rational science did not have all the answers and that there was a spiritual world governed by its own rationality. It fell to Kuni to explain the marvels of the spiritual world to the people of today (Shodo 2002: 204 and 207). By the time Shodo Kuni had reached this state, she was in her forties.

Discussion

As I mentioned in the beginning, one of the reasons why I was intrigued by this book the moment I noticed its title was that the author used both terms “shaman” and “*noro*” to describe herself. The usual studies of Ryukyuan female religious functionaries would apply the two terms to two different kinds of functionaries. In academic discourse the term “shaman” is mostly used for a *yuta*, a charismatic person acting in response to a personal calling from some spirit being, while the term “*noro*” is used in the sense of “priestess,” a public functionary filling an established and often hereditary position in a village society or a family group. The typological distinction does not mean, however, that the two kinds of functionaries had no connections with each other. For example, in a case in which it was not evident who should succeed a *noro*, a *yuta* could be called in to draw lots or to announce in a state of possession the successor, and her pronouncement was accepted as coming from the deity possessing her (Miyagi 1979: 206). With the collapse of the Ryukyuan Kingdom *noro* had lost their politico-religious status, yet they continued to function in the role of priestesses in important village rituals. However, demographic and political changes,

especially after WWII, undermined the position of *noro* even more, so that some *noro* became *yuta* in order to survive. *Yuta*, on the other hand, although they prospered to a certain degree because they dealt with personal requests rather than public functions, did not become *noro* (Yamashita 1977: 30).

In the light of Yamashita's observations, Shodo Kuni could be considered an example of a *noro* (or at least a person destined to become a *noro*) in fact becoming a shaman, i.e., a *yuta*. At one point in her account Shodo Kuni reflects on her own experience in the light of the common analyses of scholars who distinguish three types of shamans: shamans by training, shamans by vocation, and hereditary shamans. Since "shamans by vocation" are defined as persons who experience visionary as well as auditory illusions during their initiation process until they discover the identity of the spirit calling them, she agrees that her own initiation was evidently that of a shaman by vocation and as such her experiences would be equivalent to those of a *yuta*. Yet her conclusion to her reflections on current scholarly opinions is quite surprising. While she acknowledges that in view of the conditions for a shaman of vocation she would qualify as one of them, she goes on to say that, despite showing such characteristics, she is different, saying "I am not a *yuta*, but a *noro*. If one looks at my blood relations this is quite clear." She further explains her opinion by saying that in the *noro* system as it had been established by the second Sho dynasty, the rule of hereditary succession for the *noro* ended up making the *noro*'s office an empty form. She, however, had experienced the shamanic initiation process of the original *noro* as they were before their office's formalization by the royal administration (Shodo 2002: 110–111). Here one is reminded of Sakurai's remark that the *noro* originally had possession experiences at their sacred site, the *utaki*, and that in such a state they learned of their deity's will, but that after the office of the *noro* had been institutionalized as part of the royal administration, this sort of extrasensory experience was lost to them and instead became the characteristic of the *yuta* (Sakurai 1973: 9–10). Shodo Kuni appears to understand her role as one that answers her grandmother's wish to succeed her as a *noro* while at the same time she herself is a shaman as the original *noro* are said to have been.

Thinking back on Shodo Kuni's account, one notices the prominent role played by her grandmother, a *noro*, who is under an obligation to find a successor to her office and becomes eventually convinced that

Shodo Kuni will have to succeed her. However, Kuni chooses for a long time to reject her grandmother's requests. Not only that, when she finally agrees to accept the calling of the deities and buddhas who had been guiding her, she watches the underskirt of her grandmother float to the ceiling of her hospital room. We might expect her to interpret this phenomenon as a sign that she had fulfilled her grandmother's wish for her to become a *norō*. But surprisingly she says, "This was the sign that I had become a true shaman" (Shodo 2002: 177). And at the end of her account, when she describes her encounter with the deities on Mount Miwa, she is addressed as "shaman Shodo Kuni" and as a "great shaman of the twentieth century" (Shodo 2002: 203). In these decisive instances no mention is made of the term "*norō*."

There is, however, another interesting passage that reveals how she personally understands the tasks demanded of her. Still in the beginning of her activities as a shaman, she says that she does not deal with the requests of her customers as a shaman in a state of possession. The reason she gives for her matter-of-fact behavior is that she had told Heaven how exhausting it was for her to hear Heaven's voice in a state of possession, and that therefore she had asked Heaven to spare her such an experience. To the reader who may be doubtful about her being a shaman under such conditions she justifies herself by simply saying, "It cannot be helped, that is the way I do things" (Shodo 2002: 183).

Clearly the author considers herself a shaman, even according to the definitions of scholars to whose work she alludes. Yet she makes it clear that she is not a *yuta* and does not work in a state of possession. In other words, she fills the conditions set down for a *yuta*, and therefore she is a shaman as they are, but she is *not* a *yuta*. This solves the puzzle contained in the title of her book: *Birth of a Shaman: An Account of 26,000 Days of a Noro Born in Tokunoshima*. According to this title, the account is that of a *norō*'s experiences, and yet it is the account of a shaman's birth. There is another interesting aspect connected with the way she uses the term "shaman." The characters she tells us to read as "shaman" are not usually read that way. They are usually read as "*shinjo*" ('divine [sacred] woman') or "*norō*." In this case both "*norō*" and "*shinjo*" are general terms used in a wider sense to designate the female religious functionaries in a group of relatives or a village, while in the narrower sense a *norō* would be the head of these functionaries. As used by Kuni, the term "*norō*" can be considered as an expression of the wider sense of the term *norō*, rather than the narrower sense. And

so I believe that, by formulating the title in the form she did, the author wants to portray herself as a shaman, yet one who remains within the fold of the *noro* and hence differs from a *yuta*.

There is one more question that arises in this context. It is connected with the observation of Yamashita Kin'ichi mentioned above that under contemporary social conditions a *noro* might become a *yuta*, but a *yuta* would not become a *noro*. The reason is that a *yuta* does not perform official religious rites for a social group (in the village or among relatives) to which she herself belongs. She caters mainly to individual and personal requests, and if she does it for a group it is on a case-by-case basis prompted by a particular problem the group has encountered and not because she has an official religious function in that group. A *noro*, on the other hand, becomes deprived of the social basis of her office once her group dissolves if members move to other areas. Since her office also brings her some economic remuneration, she loses this along with her position. Therefore, she might try to make up for the loss by becoming a *yuta* and so secure herself some income. Certainly, in most cases a *noro* does not have or does not need to have the mystic experiences of a *yuta*. However, a *noro* can become what is called a *narai yuta*, a 'yuta by training'. As Sakurai Tokutaro writes in regard to Okinawa, in such a case the person would choose a practicing *yuta* from whom to learn what is necessary by observing her behavior and by listening to her prayers and songs (Sakurai 1973: 227).

Yamashita's observation mentioned above is of more direct interest here because he discusses the shamanism of the Amami Archipelago, which also includes Tokunoshima, the island where Shodo Kuni was born. Accused of illegally exacting contributions from credulous people for their superstitious actions, *yuta* (and later on also *noro*) suffered greatly from strict controls and even persecution under the Satsuma rulers and later under the Meiji government. As a result many *noro* lost their positions and influence. The *yuta*, although forced to go underground, were actually much sought after because they could provide care and consolation to a populace suffering from government exploitation (Yamashita 1977: 49–50). Shodo Kuni does not describe in any detail the activities of her grandmother, the *noro*, but one persistent line in her account is the great concern of her grandmother to find a person who would succeed her as *noro*. That the grandmother, being a *noro*, had fallen on difficult times we may gather from some of the short conversations she had with her daughter's husband, the

father of Kuni, who is quite opposed to the grandmother's concerns. He considers them part of a time that had to pass if the islands were to reach the standards of mainland Japan. Although Kuni herself does not seem to share her father's feelings toward her grandmother's concerns, she in fact spends many years trying to avoid having to give in to the grandmother's pleas. Her move to Tokyo means a complete separation from her home and village. In this respect she seems to share the fate of an uprooted *noro* while steadfastly denying that she is a *noro* at all. On the other hand, in hindsight she comes to understand that the separation from her homeland, her stressful family life in Tokyo, and her sickness were all part of the ascetic training she had to undergo in order to become a shaman. But her becoming a shaman happens under a double aspect. On one hand it is the much expected response to her *noro* grandmother's wish; on the other hand she insists that she is *not* a *noro* because her spiritual experiences are not those of a *noro*, yet she is *not* a *yuta* either, because she does not act in a state of possession. Furthermore, as a shaman she has no connection with a particular social group, neither relatives nor a village, as a *noro* would have; she accepts whoever comes to her for help, as a *yuta* would do.

In the course of her long initiation Shodo Kuni was guided or watched over by different kinds of beings, human as well as not human. Some of them she encountered only at a certain stage of the initiation, but her grandmother accompanies her throughout her life, from her birth to the moment of her divorce after she had agreed to become a shaman. In this way the grandmother is not only her guide and trusted partner; after her death she is also a link to the other world. The Buddhist statues that talked to her and the old man who appeared at the side of her sickbed are her guides from the other world and for this reason we might see in them the shaman's guardian spirits. The Buddhist figures in Tokyo and Nara gave her advice in numerous encounters and gently guided her further and further along the path to being a shaman. Yet their advice was not entirely selfless. It was mentioned to Kuni that these beings had been betting on her becoming a shaman or not. Their reason for doing this was that a shaman's energy supports that of the deities, and vice versa. And finally, Kuni's agreement to become a shaman was a cause for their promotion in the other world.

The encounters with her guides took place after Shodo Kuni had left her family in order to get married. Through these encounters she not only learned about the significance of her social activities and the

hardships she was suffering, she also learned that she had to look forward to meeting the one figure that had only been foreshadowed in all her previous encounters. When she finally encountered this figure, the Kudara Kannon of Horyuji, it turns out that Kannon knew of Kuni's call to be a shaman and had been watching her ever since Kuni, as Kunie, had first made a chance visit to the site during a trip to Nara in her twenties. Kuni eventually learned that it had been this Kannon who had entrusted the other figures Kuni had met in Tokyo with the responsibility of guiding her to Kudara Kannon (Shodo 2002: 168–169).

We can note still another line of spiritual guidance in Kuni's initiation experience. It is the guidance provided by the old man who again and again appeared at her bedside at crucial moments in her development. He was the one who had told her repeatedly and at times rather sternly that the reason for her sufferings was her refusal to accept her calling as a shaman. Kuni was not aware of the man's identity and did not know who he was until Kannon disclosed his identity during an appearance at the time of Kuni's last decisive sickness. There she was told that the old man was the deity of Mount Miwa who had been guarding her through all the major changes in her life since she had visited Nara when she was twenty.⁷ As mentioned before, during a trip to Mount Miwa after she had begun to be active as a shaman she encountered a deity whose name contained the Chinese characters of Kuni's shaman name. Furthermore, it was also this name that Kuni had heard from an unidentified voice when she was still going to school and which she was told to adopt later in her life (Shodo 2002, 182). It appears, therefore, that her searching for the source of her vocation had always happened under the tutelage of the deity or deities of Mount Miwa.⁸

When we look at Kuni's experiences we notice that her searching had brought her into contact with a number of spirit beings, until she finally found the most important one in the deity of Mount Miwa. Such experiences of wandering in search of the divine source of one's vocation are often reported in the cases of individual *yuta* (Lebra 1966: 81). Such a journey may last several months and take a *yuta* quite far away from her home, but even so it happens mostly within the Ryukyus. In the

⁷ Shodo 2002: 178. See also note 5 above.

⁸ In Japan mountains are often considered to be the abode of spirits who may become the tutelary spirits of shamans, although such a tutelary spirit need not be the Mountain God (Bouchy 2001; Knecht 2002).

case of Kuni, however, it took place in Tokyo and Nara, the modern and ancient centers of Japan. Perhaps it is possible to interpret this circumstance as being a sign that, although the experience as such is similar to that of an Okinawan *yuta*, Kuni is to be a shaman of a different kind, one with a different mission. This, perhaps, is what was meant when she is told that she is to be a “great shaman of the twentieth century” (Shodo 2002: 203). Such a mission cannot be confined to a rather narrowly defined area such as the Ryukyus. Possibly, the fact that the base for Kuni’s activities is in Tokyo, the international metropolis, can be interpreted as an outward sign, a physical property, of a shaman whose activities are meant to transcend local and national borders.

In conclusion I wish to point out one facet of Shodo Kuni’s autobiography that, I believe, will be increasingly necessary to consider when we study shamanism. Shodo Kuni attaches a list of reference works to her book. It contains several source books for the history of her homeland, but also books on shamanism by renowned scholars. Furthermore, she demonstrates in her text that she is familiar with these studies on Okinawan shamanism by discussing them and using them to show that her experiences are different from those described by the writers of these books. I hope to have shown above how she challenges, for example, the customary differentiation of a *norō* from a *yuta*. In her eyes she is a *norō* by descent but a *yuta* as far as her activities as a shaman are concerned, yet she is also different from a *yuta* in that she does not rely on possession experiences in her activities. In fact she says that she just can see what the problem is, when a client comes to see her. For instance, in a case in which a family called upon her in order to have the alcoholic father cured of his addiction, she says that the moment she saw the man she also had a vision of an ancient sword being the source of the problem (Shodo 2002: 183). She declares that she had asked her spiritual guides to spare her from possession experiences, but what she says in the few examples of her shamanic activity that she describes in the text, strongly reminds me of what I was told by some folk healers in Inner Mongolia. One of them claims to see in a dream the night before she is visited by a patient what causes the patient’s sickness and how she can cure it. Another says that she just sees what a patient’s sickness and its cause is, when she meets the patient. Of course, it is difficult, if not impossible, to check such a statement as the one about seeing things in a dream. But in the latter case I myself was present when the diagnosis was made. I witnessed the utter surprise of the family that

had accompanied the patient. They had brought with them an x-ray photograph, but the healer did not look at it, and yet the family said that the healer's diagnosis was the same as that of the doctor they had seen a short time earlier. In addition, earlier in the day the family had called by telephone to ask for an appointment. Already at that moment the healer told me and my companion what the problem was even though at that time the family could not have told her yet because they had not yet seen the doctor. On the other hand, this latter healer insisted that her gift had nothing to do with a shaman's practice. Therefore, it seems to me that the story of Shodo Kuni and other persons such as the healers I just mentioned should stimulate us to reconsider our customary analyses of what a shaman is, and to pay more attention to what shamans say about themselves. What they say may well be based on their reflections on available academic studies on shamanism—as it certainly was in Shodo Kuni's case.

Acknowledgment

Originally it was planned that this article would be written in cooperation with Clark Chilson of Pittsburgh University. It had been a pleasurable and stimulating experience to discuss Shodo Kuni's book with him. Unfortunately, his workload did not allow him to continue on the project, but I owe a great deal to his suggestions and observations. Although I developed the article in a way he may not have expected, I wish to thank him for his stimulating discussions and helpful observations. Furthermore I thank Edmund R. Skrzypczak for taking meticulous care of my English.

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PETER KNECHT taught cultural anthropology (Anthropology of Religion) at Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan, from 1978 to 2006. He was appointed full professor in 1997 and was director of the Nanzan Anthropological Institute. For nearly thirty years he did fieldwork on belief systems in the mountain villages of northern Japan. Until 2006 he was editor of *Asian Folklore Studies*, a journal published by the Nanzan Anthropological Institute. He is now retired and lectures part time at Aichi Gakuin University, Nisshin City, where he teaches Anthropology of Religion.

Athapaskan, Ket, and Chinese Concepts of a Wind Vital Core of Human Life: A Family Resemblance?

JAMES K. MCNELEY

DINÉ COLLEGE, TSAILE, AZ

This is a comparative study of conceptions of “wind” as being the vital core of life in the traditional belief systems of the Athapaskans of North America, the Ket people of Central Siberia and people of China. Some striking similarities between the attributes of the “wind” concepts in these belief systems are reviewed. The similarities are hypothesized to be derived from a shared ancient belief in “wind” as the vital core or activating principal of life together with linguistic and cultural affinities and the cultural or logical implications of the belief in wind as the vital core of human life.

This paper is motivated by four purposes. The first is to provide an overview of the evidence that the term “wind” best expresses the Athapaskan concept for the “vital core” or “animating principle” of human existence. The second is to point out some striking similarities between the Athapaskan wind concept and the concept of the “wind soul” held by the Ket people of Central Siberia. The third is to compare the Athapaskan concept with the Chinese concept of *ch'i*, (pronounced “chee”). And the fourth purpose is to suggest partial explanations for the described similarities .

Regarding these purposes, Evans Pritchard, in his foreword to the 1971 edition of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's, *The “Soul” of the Primitive*, alerted us to the difficulties of such endeavors:

We are dealing with conceptions such as those which we translate as “soul” and “spirit.” That is as near as we can get to their meaning in our own language, but what the words in their own language mean . . . may not correspond . . . with what the words by which we translate them mean to us. In the

process of translation . . . we may easily put into the thought of primitive (*sic*) people ideas quite foreign to them . . . (1971[1927]: 6)

The Navajo Wind Concept

A primary example of this problem is to be found within the ethnographic history of Navajo culture, one of the Southern Athapaskan groups living in the American Southwest, and this example is all the more telling because the author of the error was the greatest of all of the students of Navajo religious culture, the Franciscan priest Father Berard Haile. Father Berard's meticulous recordings, in Navajo and English, of numerous Navajo ceremonies, including detailed texts of their songs and prayers, has earned him the place of highest honor in the history of Navajo studies. Perhaps it should be no surprise that his outstanding failure was in a realm in which a Catholic priest might be most vulnerable for projecting his own deeply held convictions onto the concepts of another people. As one later critic observed, Father Berard interpreted the Navajo view of man "from the perspective of a Hellenic-Christian body-soul dualism" (Lukert 1975: 161).

When Father Berard Haile was told by Navajo informants that *nílch'i hwii'siz'ínii*, "the instanding wind," gives life and controls the thoughts and actions of an individual, it must have been natural for him to liken it to the Western concept of the "soul." He saw that, like the Western "soul," the Navajo "instanding wind" gives life, breath and the powers of speech, motion, thought, and behavior to the individual. To be sure, it differed in important ways from the Western soul concept: this life-giving "wind," in Haile's view, enters the person at birth, completely controls the life of the individual for better or worse in accordance with its own nature, and departs at death. It's deterministic force, in Haile's view, meant that there is no room in Navajo psychology for free will: therefore the Navajo individual could not be held responsible for his own actions. In Haile's view, the "instanding wind" controls the individual's life-stuff, and this psychology therefore dispenses with conscience, merit, reward, accountability and punishment (Haile 1943: 169).

Had a lesser scholar than Haile made such assertions, others might well have challenged them, for the Navajo worldview was already recognized as a system for maintaining human balance and harmony with the natural and spiritual environments. Yet Haile asserted that in the Navajo view

there is no connection between the deities and the human soul, there is no room for individual conscience, and there is no morality except for a situationally-based concern with the consequences of one's actions.

We now have new data that show that the Navajo's "instanding wind" is not as Haile imagined it (McNeley 1981). The clue is in the term "wind." As with all winds, the "wind within one," in the Navajo view, is not by its nature fixed or permanent. It flows! The Navajo view reflects the common human knowledge that we all breath air in and out as long as we are alive, exchanging what had been in our body with what is in our environment. We breathe in both beneficial and harmful "wind" or air. Other living things in our environment, people, animals, plants, and in the Navajo view earth, water, the mountains, the sun—everything, give off "winds" which can affect our lives. Winds from people who have prematurely died, winds sent from those who wish us ill, winds from negative powers all have the potential to cause us harm. On the other hand, the deities, particularly the deities in the cardinal directions that are associated with the sacred mountains, send "wind" agents or messengers to guide us in our lives and heal us when we are not well. These "little winds" can whisper warnings in our ears and even be breathed in to strengthen or replace the wind standing within us. In a word, the Navajo world is suffused with winds, and the "in-standing wind" as well as all other winds are all but parts of one all-encompassing Navajo deity, *Nilch'i diyinii*, "Holy Wind". In the words of one medicine man informant, "it is like living in water."

General Athapaskan Wind Concepts

What about concepts of the "vital power" or "animating principle" held by other Athapaskan peoples? Do they share the Navajo conception of "the instanding wind" and its interactions with other winds? I have not had the opportunity to do first-hand field research about these questions in Northern or Pacific Northwest Athapaskan communities, but I have surveyed some of the existing ethnographic literature about them. What I find are differences of opinion about these matters, or at least the use by ethnographers of different English words to characterize Athapaskan concepts. I commonly find the terms "spirit" or "soul," sometimes used interchangeably with the term "wind." However, as I am trying to show here, it is no small matter to use such terms interchangeably: it is one

thing to characterize a people as believing in individual human “souls” that enter at birth, depart at death and guide the courses of peoples lives in between. It is quite another thing to characterize a people as believing in “instanding winds” that indeed also enter at birth but are subject to the influence of surrounding winds throughout the course of life, including supportive and helping winds from the natural environment as well as harmful winds that must be guarded against.

The causes of health and well-being versus ill-health and sickness are likely to be conceived differently depending on a people’s view of the vital core or animating principle of life. Gary Witherspoon observed that health for the Navajo involves a proper relationship to one’s environment and not just the correct functioning of one’s physiology (1974: 54). “Winds” play a primary role in establishing and maintaining that harmony. For example, one Navajo informant had this to say about how the “little winds” sent by the Holy Ones help an individual to stay on the right path: “When our thinking, the one that stands within us, becomes tired, the little wind sends others from there (the cardinal directions) so that our thinking is strong, the one standing within is strong. It takes it out (i.e., the one that became tired). It does not give up for us.” (McNeley 1981: 40)

On the other hand, cultures that foster a belief in autonomous internal souls as the vital core of human life are more likely to attribute health and well-being to the results of internal activity—taking good care of oneself, thinking positive thoughts, following religious prescriptions of moral behavior and so forth.

My hunch that the views of other Athapaskan groups are similar to those of the Navajo has been supported by a cursory review of ethnographic studies of both Southern Athapaskan (Apachean) and Northern Athapaskan-speaking peoples and their cultures (McNeley 2005). For example, conceptions of the role of Wind that are similar to Navajo beliefs are found in accounts of Apachean culture. Morris Opler cited the belief that as a human being was created from natural elements, the supernatural powers sent “wind into his body to render him animate (1938: 5). Natural phenomena are also regarded as being animate, and they communicate with humans by means of “wind” that carries messages to them (1938: 140). The whirlwind as a messenger for the supernaturals is a recurring theme in the folk-lore of the Jicarilla Apache (1938: 10–11).

As mentioned earlier, in ethnographies of Northern Athapaskan cultures, the view is commonly expressed that each animal or natural object is animated by a “spirit” or “soul” that dwells within it. For example, Cornelius Osgood described this belief among the Ingalik (1959: 102), but ethnographic accounts typically do not identify the ontological nature of the “spirit” or “soul”—that is, the stuff that they are made of. In addition, David M. Smith notes (1998: 425) that there is some evidence that the use of the word “soul” may be traced to the influence of missionaries.

Interestingly, John Honigman sometimes alternatively referred to an animating force as “soul” or “wind,” reporting for example that the power to perform a shamanistic vision quest represented a portion of the animal’s “wind (or soul)” passing into the dreamer to enhance the latter’s natural ability (1954: 105). Honigman also reported that the Kaska view is that a shaman effected cures “with the aid of the power that resided in his soul or wind” (1954: 111). In another context he wrote that: “Communications from animals or other beings were the mark of a successful ‘vision quest’ and promised that a portion of a being’s ‘wind’ had passed into the dreamer to enhance his natural powers. The successful questor could now rely on the aid of the helper” (1981: 448).

Elsewhere, Honigman (1954: 112–114) lends credence to an indigenous “instanding wind” concept in stating that a sorcerer might try to steal his victim’s “wind.” There is also reference to “wind” as a force pervading the natural world, comparable to the Navajo concept, for Mason (1946: 38) cites an old Slave Indian who referred to “the wind which is the spirit of all and pervades everything.” This is reminiscent of other ethnographic accounts that present Athapaskan conceptions of an all-pervading life force.

Smith (1998: 427) suggests that dualistic assumptions underlying Western thought confounded earlier attempts to understand Athapaskan religious concepts, and he advocates instead the “monistic” view that one’s relationship with a helping animal is with the entire animal, body and spirit. I would like to add to this the thought that achieving a monistic view of one’s relationship with a helping animal is less problematical if we conceive of it in terms of a relationship with the animal’s “body and wind” rather than a relationship with the animal’s “body and spirit.” The term “spirit” immediately conjures up the Cartesian dualistic bugaboo, while the term “wind” refers to a common

natural phenomenon, albeit one that may be endowed by other cultures with powers that are not acknowledged in Western culture.

I am convinced by the evidence that I have seen that Athapaskans generally share the Navajo conception of wind as providing the animating principle of their lives, although the evidence from Navajo is much more elaborated in the ethnographic literature than that from other Athapaskan cultures.

The Ket Concept of the “Wind Soul”

When I first became aware, in 2001 of the hypotheses offered independently by Professors Merritt Ruhlen and Edward Vajda of a genetic relationship between the Athapaskan and related languages in North America and Ket and related languages (the Yeniseic language family) in Central Siberia, I decided to compare the cultures of the speakers of these languages to determine if they too share similarities. It was my good fortune to find an opportunity to work on this project with Dr. Alexandra Kim Maloney, a Russian specialist on Siberian cultures. Dr. Maloney brought with her to this study a professional relationship with Professor Vajda who kindly provided access to his extensive library as well as his personal knowledge of the Ket and related languages and cultures. Dr. Maloney and I together jointly reviewed ethnographic descriptions of Athapaskan and Yeniseic peoples that we found in the library of the University of Alaska at Anchorage and in Professor Vajda’s library, and Dr. Maloney also reviewed Russian language ethnographic studies of the Kets that she obtained from Siberian sources. More recently, Dr. Maloney shared with me some brief data about the Ket concept of a “wind soul,” from Heinrich Werners’s (2002) comparative dictionary of Yeniseic languages. It is there that I find some striking similarities with the Navajo concept that I will report on here.

Among the entries in the dictionary is a Ket term *ulbij*, that is defined as (1) “shade,” (2) “soul of a person,” (3) “woman, wife,” (4) “whirlwind,” and (5) “shaman’s spirit-helper.” (Donner 1955: 96) These attributes are strikingly similar to attributes that may be used in describing the Navajo concept *nílch’i*, “wind”—except for “woman, wife,” the presence of which in the list of *ulbei* attributes I cannot explain.

We have seen that the Navajo term *nílch’i* means “wind” as does the Ket term “bei.” Linguist Edward Vajda states that “the word for ‘wind’ is cognate in Ket and Athabaskan, according to my analysis,

even though Navajo *ch'i* and Ket *bei* no longer look alike at all" (2009, personal communication).

Both terms are used in referring to what has been commonly called the "soul of a person." As is the case with the Ket, the Navajo prominently state that *nilch'i* sometimes takes the form of whirlwinds. The Navajo describe these whirlwinds as existing both in the external environment, such as the "dust devils" that are often seen spinning across the desert Southwest, and also as winds that enter the body at birth leaving their spiral tracks on the fingertips or at the top of the head where the hair spirals outward.

As for the Ket characterization of *ulbei* as a "shaman's spirit-helper," we saw earlier that Northern Athapaskan cultural informants reported that the power to perform a shamanistic vision quest was brought about by a portion of the helping animal's "wind (or soul)" passing into the dreamer to enhance the latter's natural ability, and that the Kaska view is that a shaman effected cures "with the aid of the power that resided in his soul or wind" (Honigman 1954: 105, 111).

Finally, the "shade" referred to in the dictionary definition of *ulbei* is comparable to the Navajo *ch'üdi* "ghost" that represents the "wind soul" leaving the body at death although some ethnographers argue that the *ch'üdi* is "something ethereal or intangible" rather than the departed "wind soul" (McNeley 1975: 40).

I should point out that there are other characterizations of *ulbei* that do not correspond so neatly with the Athapaskan concept of "wind." For example, Professor Vajda wrote to me that one of his Ket informants told him the *ulbei* was in the shape of a very little copy of a person. Vajda added, however, that since the word contains *bei* "wind," he suspects that "the original Ket concept was much closer to the Navajo."

Ulbei is also characterized as having seven different parts, one of which is called the "outside soul" that may travel far from the host (Werner 2002. ii: 336) This conception of a traveling "soul" may be compared to the Navajo belief that "little winds" travel from an individual to the deities in the four directions to report on that person's behavior (McNeley 1975: 196).

Mention should be made that ethnographic descriptions of Ket culture are replete with "spirits" and "souls," much as we found in early ethnographic reports of Athapaskan cultures before new generations of ethnologists discarded such terms as being probable artifacts of missionary

influences. Whether similar terms are due for review by current ethnographers of Ket culture is a matter that must be left to Ket specialists.

The series of correspondences between the Ket *ulbei* and the Navajo *nilch'i* concepts that are cited above lead me to propose that they are cultural cognates; that is, similar concepts in two related cultures that have a common origin.

Similarities to the Chinese Conception of *Ch'i*

While the Athapaskan and Ket concepts of “wind” as an activating vital core of human other life is quite foreign to contemporary Western cultures, this concept is analogous to conceptions that are said to be common in many Asian cultures. The example that is probably best known to Westerners is the traditional Chinese concept of *ch'i* “air,” “breath” or “gas,” that is frequently translated as “energy flow” (Graham 1989: 101).

In ancient China, winds appear in the earliest inscriptions from the Shang Dynasty of the 18th–12th centuries B. C. E. (Kuriyama 1994: 23). Winds were thought to emerge from caverns in the earth, and they became identified with the deities associated with the four cardinal directions (1994: 23, 37). Similarly, in the Navajo creation story wind is said to have existed in the very “roots” of the earth, from which it emerged through the underworlds to earth’s surface where winds, recognized as deities, were placed in the four cardinal directions (McNeley 1975: 1981). Winds in ancient China were closely linked to diseases prompting sacrifices to them for their appeasement (Kuriyama 1994: 24–25). Navajo winds of the four directions have been predominantly regarded as sources of assistance and guidance, although the sickness producing effects of harmful winds is widely acknowledged (McNeley 1981).

In late Chinese antiquity, the concept of eight winds was developed, and these were conceived to ensure the regularity of the seasons. Kuriyama writes that they imposed a natural order with which human social and political life should be synchronized: “The founding insight of traditional Chinese medicine, we are always told, is the unity of human microcosm and heavenly macrocosm,” and he notes that, in medicine, alignment with seasonal changes became the foundation of hygiene (1994: 30–31). Again, we find a central focus in Navajo thought on the importance of the individual identifying with the elements of the

natural universe and living one's life in synchrony with the daily and seasonal cycles of the Sun (McNeley 1981: 49).

The traditional Chinese concept of *feng*, "wind," is said to be the conceptual ancestor of *ch'i*, but Kuriyama also points out that despite their genetic connection and semantic overlap, *feng* and *ch'i* never became identical: "Thus late Warring States and Han texts frequently still spoke of *feng* and *qi* [*ch'i*] interchangeably" (1994: 34) while the winds ordering the four seasons were gradually subsumed into the notion of *qi*" (1994: 35).

Graham provides a definition of *ch'i* based on *Kuan-Tzu*, a collection of writings from between the 4th and 2nd centuries B. C. Graham characterizes the last of these writings, called "The Inward Training," as possibly the oldest "mystical" text in China (1989: 100). Here, *ch'i* came to be regarded as:

the universal fluid . . . out of which all things condense and into which they dissolve. But in its older sense, which remains the primary one, it is like such words in other cultures as Greek *pneuma* 'wind, air, breath'. It is the energetic fluid which vitalizes the body, in particular as the breath, and which circulates outside us as the air." (1989: 101)

Kuriyama elegantly puts it this way in writing that "Individualized orifices on the body mediate the confluence of cosmic, local, and personal winds" (1994: 34). This concept shares similarities with the Navajo concept of *nilch'i* "wind," as presented earlier in this paper, a conception of winds that pervade the natural world and that give the breath of life to all things.

Some Logical Implications of Belief in Wind as the Vital Core of Human Life

How best explain the striking similarities that we find today between the Athapaskan concept of the wind vital core, the similar Ket concept, and the Chinese conception of *ch'i*? While there is linguistic evidence that the languages spoken by the Athapaskans and the Kets are genetically related (Vajda 2008), there is no evidence to my knowledge that the cultures of ancestral Kets and Athapaskans co-evolved with that of

the Chinese, nor is there any indication of contact or cultural borrowing in historic times between these three groups of people. However, prehistoric contact between ancient ancestors of Kets, Athapaskans and Chinese peoples cannot be ruled out. Edward Vajda (2008), who led the effort to establish the Dine-Yeniseic language family suggests that the Sino-Tibetan language family shows promise of being related to Dene-Yeniseic; also, Peter Gold (1994) has extensively documented striking similarities between Navajo and Tibetan sacred cultures; and the central focus of Navajo culture on achieving harmony and balance with the natural world mirrors a similar focus in Chinese thought (Kuriyama 1994: 31).

I suggest that the best explanation for the similarities between the Athapaskan, Ket and Chinese conceptions of the vital force of life lies in a common prehistoric Asian origin of these core concepts. My hypothesis is that perhaps as far back as Paleolithic times, Asian peoples developed a simple core belief that the common wind is the vital force that gives life to humans as well as to other living beings. This basic concept was sustained as Asian peoples diverged into different parts of the continent with some of them later migrating into the Western hemisphere, although over time the core belief was elaborated on in different ways into the forms that we find today. I suggest that the similarities between the Athapaskan and Ket wind concepts and the Chinese concept of *ch'i*, together with associated beliefs are essentially a family resemblance, a resemblance that was perhaps shaped to some extent during the course of cultural evolution by the logical or cultural implications of the belief in wind as the vital core of human life. For, if wind is believed to be the vital force that activates human life, there are implications for associated cultural beliefs that differ from the cultural implications of a belief in a vital autonomous soul such as we find to be dominant in the West.

Suggested Cultural Implications of Wind as the Vital Core of Life

Here, I will examine the principal similarities that have been discussed between the Athapaskan concept of wind (as primarily documented from Navajo sources) and the Chinese concept of *ch'i* as to whether

those similarities are explainable on the basis of the sharing of a common ancient belief in wind as being the vital core of life.

ORIGINS OF WIND IN THE EARTH

How can we account for similar beliefs between the Athapaskan Navajo and the Chinese in terms of the origin of wind (*nílch'ifeng*) within the earth? A Navajo medicine man related to me that wind existed in the very "roots" of the earth and emerged from there into the lower worlds from which they emerged to become deities in the cardinal directions. Kuriyama notes that the points of acupuncture in Chinese thought were known as *xue*, which literally means "holes" or "caverns," and that the term derives from Chinese mythology. In one Chinese myth version, the four directions were staked out by four caverns from which blew the four cardinal winds: "Underlying the term *xue* . . . was a conception of the body in which winds streamed in and out of strategic orifices in the skin, just as winds streamed in and out of the hollows and caverns of the earth" (1994: 37).

How might we explain the similarities between these two explanations of wind's origin in the absence of evidence for co-evolution of contemporary Athapaskan and Chinese cultures? I would hazard an explanation based upon the common conception in cultures around the world that earth is the "mother" of all things on earth's surface. If wind is held to be the vital force in giving life and concurrently the earth is conceived of as the mother of all living things, it follows that wind must be within the earth, as that which gives earth life and then gives life to other living things.

THE EFFECTS OF WIND ON HEALTH

Kuriyama (1994: 23) notes that "winds loomed large in the Chinese understanding of the body's afflictions because they loomed large in the Chinese understanding of the World," and he added:

"It is not hard to imagine why. Winds brought nourishing rains to crops or swept in bitter frost; they stirred up the storms that made hunting dangerous, or they stirred nothing and left sweltering drought. Weather ruled much of life in Shang China, and weather, then as now, was ultimately wind." (1994: 24)

Undoubtedly similar experiences with winds by Athapaskans, as hunters and gatherers, gave rise to their wariness about certain kinds of winds that were regarded as bearers or carriers of powers that are adverse to human health and life.

Additionally, the special powers of wind as the vital source of life, would be a source of other beliefs about the danger of winds. In the Navajo area of the American Southwest, whirlwinds or “dust devil”: that spin counterclockwise are believed to be sources of danger, perhaps bearing the *ch’iidii* “ghost” of a deceased person or the evil intent of a practitioner of witchcraft. In ancient Chinese medicine, physicians spoke of evil *ch’i* that could penetrate the body through orifices in the skin (Kuriyama 1994: 36–37). In such instances we see the influence of the association of wind with the power of life, disease and death. Sickness and death may also be associated with wind in these cultures because the vital force sooner or later falters, weakens or withdraws.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY AND SYNCHRONY WITH THE NATURAL ORDER

It follows from a belief in wind as the vital core of human life that those having such a belief would tend to seek unity with the natural world, for the very source of their lives is conceived to be derived from the external world and is dependent on that world, from birth when wind enters to give life and afterwards in providing vital sustenance throughout life.

Life-giving wind is palpably variable in its characteristics throughout the seasons of the year as well as in the diurnal cycle, sometimes in extreme ways such as in seasonal monsoons or drought producing winds. Cultural adaptations would predicatively evolve to reflect the challenges and opportunities that are provided by these changing cycles. Religious rituals would evolve as ways of coping with destructive winds or of expressing thanks for beneficial winds. The concept of living in concert with the natural world would seem to go hand in hand with belief in wind as providing the vital core of life. On the contrary, cultural beliefs in an internal life-giving soul provide no apparent reason for seeking synchrony or unity with the natural world.

WINDS ENTER THROUGH ORIFICES IN THE BODY

It is given that if winds provide the vital core of life that they must enter the body through bodily openings or orifices. Some of the locations that Navajo informants have identified are the top of the head where a spiral of hair identifies the point of entry at which wind enters at birth; also, spirals in the skin such as at the tips of the fingers testify to wind's entry at those points. The nose and mouth are of course recognized as primary openings for wind; and the ears at which "little winds" or "wind's child" may convey advice from the powers imminent in the four directions are also recognized (McNeley 1981: 40). In classical Chinese medical theory, aside from *ch'i* entry in the process of breathing, *ch'i* may also enter at specific points on the surface of the body, particularly at those points that are associated with meridians or channels conceived to be connected with vital organs within the body. Stimulation of such points by acupuncture or other means is believed to energize the flow of *ch'i* within the body. Thus, while the entry of winds through bodily orifices has been elaborated on in different ways by the ancestors of today's Athapaskan and Chinese peoples, the central conception of a flow of wind (*nílch'i/ch'i*) into and out of the body stands.

Conclusion

This paper has described similarities between the Athapaskan, Ket, and Chinese conceptions of wind concepts of the vital force of life. I have hypothesized that these similarities may be explained, in part at least, by the interaction of several variables:

(1) A shared Asian cultural origin, perhaps in paleolithic times, of the ancestors of contemporary Athapaskan, Ket, Chinese and probably other peoples that included a belief in winds as providing the vital core or activating principle of life,

(2) Cultural implications of the belief in a wind vital core of life that would tend to develop and sustain a core of associated beliefs such as shared beliefs in the origin of wind within the earth, a value placed on harmony with the external environment, beliefs in bodily orifices that serve as points of entry for winds, and beliefs in the association of winds with health and disease.

(3) Subsequent affiliations as is suggested by the recently developed evidence for genetic linguistic connections between the Ket and other speakers of the Yeniseic family of languages and the speakers of the Athapaskan languages in North America. I have also alluded to the suggestion of a possible early linkage between the Sino-Tibetan and the Dene-Yeniseic language families, as well as cultural correspondences between Navajo, Chinese and Tibetan cultures that would, if supported by further evidence, help to explain some of the similarities that we have seen.

Knowing as we do of the Asian origins of Native Americans, we should not be surprised at the similarities that have been described. As the earliest of the immigrants to what we call the “New World,” the ancestors of contemporary Native Americans undoubtedly brought with them an Asian philosophical baggage, just as later immigrants brought their European philosophical baggage. Still, it is jarring to our usual assumptions about Native Americans to come to realize that, to this day, their philosophical orientations and concepts share commonalities with the Ket and Chinese and undoubtedly other cultures of Asia.

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JAMES KALE MCNELEY (james.mcneley@gmail.com) Awarded a Ph. D. degree by the University of Hawaii in Cultural Anthropology. Dissertation: "The Navajo Theory of Life and Behavior" which became the basis for a book, *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy* (University of Arizona Press, 1981). Authored "Athapaskan Concepts of Wind and Power," published in the 2nd edition of *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Served as a member of the faculty, as Academic Dean, and as Vice President for Academic Affairs of Diné College during the period 1976–2005. Currently retired and providing volunteer service for Diné College.

The Last Shaman of the Oroqen People of Northeast China*

RICHARD NOLL
DESALES UNIVERSITY, USA

KUN SHI
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, USA

This paper provides background information about shamanism of the Tungus-speaking peoples in northeast China, particularly the Oroqen. It describes in detail the life and healing practices of the last Oroqen shaman Chuonnsauan (Meng Jin Fu) who lived just south of the Amur River. The paper may be the most extensive documentation of the last Oroqen shaman in China.

In the 17th Century a Dutch explorer in Siberia witnessed something terrifying that only a handful of Europeans had ever seen before. During a visit to an encampment of nomadic tribal people whom the Russians generally referred to as the *Tungusy*, Nicholas Witsen reported being horrified by the satanic nocturnal dancing, drumming, leaping and screaming of a “Priest of the Devil” adorned in a furry costume that made him seem half-human, half-animal. This devil-priest whom Witsen said the Tungus people called a *Schaman* was performing a healing ritual for a sick member of the tribe. Witsen is given credit today for introducing the word “shaman” into Western culture, though earlier Rus-

* This paper is the first publication of data collected among the Tungus (Manchu, Evenki and Oroqen) in Northeast China during three months in the summer of 1994. We deferred publication until confirmation of the deaths of all the shamans we interviewed and photographed. We did not want to make their private lives public, and hence expose them to exploitation. Our research was funded by a Wenner-Gren Foundation grant (Grant No. 5676), and we wish to thank that institution for its generosity. Richard Noll first presented our field data on the last Oroqen shaman at the Institute for Religion at Sogang University in Seoul, Korea, in May 2004. He wishes to thank Professors Kim Chae Young and Kim Seong-nae for this stimulating opportunity.

sian explorers had already encountered and used the Russified version of the term (Znamenski 2003). In his 1692 book, *Noord en Oost Tartaryen*, Witsen also included an illustration of the Tungus Priest of the Devil as a monstrous amalgam of man and beast in an image of evil familiar to 17th-century Europeans: the lycanthrope, or werewolf.¹

This famous image was the very first representation of a Siberian shaman to appear in any European publication, and it has haunted the imagination of the world for three centuries. Indeed, the word “shaman” is itself derived from the Tungus *saman/xaman*, though the origin of this word and its indigenous meanings among the Tungus are still less than clear (Janhunen 1986). But after Witsen’s book appeared, and especially after its second edition in 1785, the feared Siberian people known as the Tungus and their lycanthropic devil-priests became a legend, a source of endless speculation by natural philosophers, explorers, and much later, ethnologists (Hutton 2001). Siberian shamans and in particular those of the Tungus peoples have had an almost magical reputation for being the most authentic and most powerful of all shamans studied around the world.

In July 1994, almost exactly three hundred years after Nicholas Witsen provided the world with the first image of a power Siberian Tungus shaman, the following scene took place in a land not far from Witsen’s “Tartary”:

In a small clearing in a Manchurian forest very near the Huma River, close to the border between Russian Siberia and the People Republic of China, a small but muscular man in his late 60s has just been helped into a heavy buckskin ceremonial gown by his “second-spirit,” or assistant. Swirling, brightly-colored flower-like patterns are sewn into the heavy animal hide garment. As he struggles into his gown, the long yellow and blue ribbons hanging from his waist sweep across the earth like the drooping wings and tail feathers of a giant eagle perched at the top of the world just before launching into flight. Circular brass mirrors hang from the front and the back upper torso of the costume, adding weight and sounding a continual cymbal-like cacophony. It

¹ An excellent reproduction of this 1692 illustration can be found in several volumes, especially in Hoppál (1994: 43). Flaherty (1992: 24) provides an uncropped reproduction of the same image and allows for a view of the conical tents of the Tungus that so closely resemble the teepees of the North American Plains Indians.

is only after his second spirit, his wife, assists him with the fringed headdress of ribbon-covered brass antler horns, completing his sacred transformation, that the dance begins.

It is hot, unusually so for the southern Siberian borderlands. The man's high-cheek-boned face is glowing cherry-red as he wildly swoops to and fro, beating his flat-head drum and singing a spirit song, bending low then soaring upwards, then finally stiffening, his head cocked back and his fringed face angled to release the spirits from his body and send them back to the upper world. At that crisis point his second spirit suddenly springs into action, deftly positioning herself behind him and catching him as he falls backward. As we learn from him later, the singing of the spirit song and the rhythmic drumming and dancing summoned the spirits into his body and propelled him directly into a trance, though he did not intend to fall so deep during an artificially arranged demonstration.

An uncanny resemblance to North American Plains Indians makes us forget we are in the People's Republic of China, the last great communist empire, the land of Mao Zhuxi, Chairman Mao. We know the significance of what we are recording and do not allow ourselves as much as a breath to be taken between photographs. For here, before our eyes, was a gentle man whom we knew was the very last of his kind, a master of spirits who would die without leaving behind colleagues or apprentices of his own. We knew this man was probably the last authentic Siberian Tungus shaman in China and we were documenting for posterity one of the final performances of the most ancient of human rituals. It felt as if Nicholas Witsen was reaching out to us from across the centuries, and in a strange way we felt a kinship with him, as if we were the endpoints marking an era in magical time and in magical space. Nicholas Witsen's 1692 illustration of a Tungus shaman unleashed a stream of Western cultural fantasies that we knew our photographs would close forever.

This man was known to outsiders by his Han Chinese name, Meng Jin Fu, but to his Oroqen relatives and neighbors his was known as Chuonnasuan, (pl. 4 *a, b*) an onomatopoeic name given to him by his mother when he was an infant because he cried like a bird that made that sound. At the height of his powers he mastered more than 90 spirits (*bukan*). He was, truly, the last shaman of his tribe.

Beginnings

In October 1993, one of us (Richard Noll) received formal approval for a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation to travel to the People's Republic of China to locate, interview and document the cognitive styles of Tungus shamans in Xinjiang and Manchuria.² Following the hypotheses generated in a theoretical article on shamanism published in *Current Anthropology* (Noll 1985), we sought to examine the use of mental imagery, particularly visual, in healing and divination as well as collect data on the mnemonic strategies that shamans used in their role as transmitters of culturally vital symbols and narratives. Shi Kun, then a doctoral student in anthropology at The Ohio State University in Columbus, had conducted fieldwork among the Manchu and other ethnic minorities in the PRC and had published several scholarly papers on shamanism (Shi 1993). Already a seasoned anthropologist, he agreed to participate as a facilitator and translator. What the Wenner-Gren Foundation did not know was that our quest was based only on rumors of Tungus shamans who may still be alive in Xinjiang (among the Sibe or Xibe people) and along the Russian–Chinese border (among the Evenki and Oroqen). When we arrived in Beijing in June 1994 we learned that we could not travel to the western province of Xinjiang due to civil unrest. Our hopes were dashed. We did not know for sure if we would locate even a single living shaman during the next three months.

We had received permission from the Foreign Affairs Office of the PRC³ in early 1994 to conduct research on the religion of the ethnic Tungus groups. This was an unprecedented gesture. As we were told time and again as we made our way from Beijing to Changchun to Harbin, Jagdaqi, Tahe, and finally, not far from Tahe, the dusty People's Liberation Army garrison village of Shibazhan in northern Heilongjiang prov-

² The Tungus-speaking people in China are mainly found in the country's northeastern region, which used to be called Manchuria. They are further divided into five officially recognized ethnic groups. According to the 2000 census these groups had the following populations: the Evenki or Ewenki (30,500), Hezhen (4,640), Manchu (10,682,300), Oroqen (8,196) and Sibe or Xibe (188,800). The Sibe also live in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in China's far west and, when we proposed our fieldwork in 1993, were said to still have several practicing shamans within each clan. The Sibe of Manchuria do not.

³ The permission was made possible by Shi Kun's association with the Jilin Nationalities Research Institute.



Fig. 1. Shibazhan in northern Heilongjiang Province is the home of the last Oroqen shaman. Drawn by Kun Shi.

ince where we found Chuonnasuan, no other outsiders had been allowed unrestricted and unmonitored access to ethnic minorities to specifically study their religious beliefs and practices. International political forces had fortunately cleared our path: the summer of 1994 was marked by a singular warming of relations between the United States and the PRC, a honeymoon that did not last long and which has not returned. We were told by several local Communist Party administrators along our journey that although foreign linguists (such Juha Janhunen from Finland, whom we were delighted to meet in Changchun, and, later, collaborators Lindsay Whaley of Dartmouth College and Fengxiang Li of the California State University at Chico, who began their fieldwork among the Oroqen in 1995) had been allowed to conduct research on the Tungus languages, we were the first foreigners specifically allowed in Heilongjiang province (northern Manchuria) and Inner Mongolia since the creation of the People's Republic in 1949 for the purposes of studying "superstitions" such as shamanism. And we knew from the existing ethnographic literature in English, German, French, and Chinese that only Ethel J. Lindgren and S. I. Shirokogoroff had documented Tungus shamanism in these

regions, and their most recent publications dated only to the mid-1930s.⁴ The Japanese invasion of Manchuria, World War II, and the communist take-over of China in 1949 had effectively ended the scholarly study of shamanism by foreign researchers in Northeast China until we arrived in the summer of 1994.

Some of the folklorists we met knew the work of Ethel John Lindgren, a Swedish-American who conducted fieldwork in Mongolia in the 1920s and northwest Manchuria in 1931–1932, later becoming a lecturer at Cambridge University. Her primary focus of research was on the Evenki (Ewenki) Tungus reindeer-herders living north of Hailar (now called Hulun Buir) in the Greater Khingan range (Lindgren 1930; 1935a; 1935b).⁵ We learned later that German anthropologists F. George Heyne and Ingo Nentwig had conducted fieldwork in the Reindeer-Evenki community of Aoruguya in the early 1990s, but in 1994 we were unaware of their efforts (Heyne 1999a; 1999b; 2003).

Of paramount importance for our research were the works of S. I. Shirokogoroff, particularly his magnum opus, *The Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (Shirokogoroff 1935). Although most of his fieldwork was conducted among the Tungus north of the Amur River, from 1915 to 1917 Shirokogoroff and his wife, Elizabeth, collected data in the regions of northwest Manchuria and Inner Mongolia that we explored almost eighty years later. We were especially pleased to discover that much of the material on shamanism we collected among the Oroqen and Evenki corroborated the masterful observations of Shirokogoroff.

With the denial of our proposal to travel to Xinjiang in northwest China to locate Sibe or Xibe shamans that were rumored to exist we instead decided to try our luck in northwestern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. Although we again heard rumors of the existence of some of the old Tungus “wild shamans” in the Heilongjiang/Amur river region, we had no firm facts to guide us. From the Beijing central train station we made our way north to try our luck among one of the smallest officially recognized ethnic minorities in China, the Oroqen.

⁴ Neither of us reads Russian, but we became aware to Mazin (1992) which should be mentioned here for its relevance to the Evenki and Oroqen peoples that we visited during our fieldwork.

⁵ The last two shamans of the Reindeer-Evenki were female, and as of 1998 both are deceased. See Heyne (2003).

The Oroqen

The Oroqen, also called Orocen or Orochon (or Elunchun in Chinese) traditionally have lived south of the Heilongjiang (Amur) River in the forests and on the rivers of the Lesser and Greater Khingan (Xing'an) and Ilkhur (Yiehuli) Mountains of northern Manchuria. In the past the Oroqen have been known by names associated with their geographical localities, such as the Kumarchen (or Manegir) of the Kumara (Huma River) basin on the Upper Amur, the Birachen (or Birar) of the Xun River and Zhan River basins on the Middle Amur, the Naunchen, Ganchen, and Numinchen. Collectively they have been called the Khingan Tungus or Mergen Tungus. Although the official Chinese system of ethnic taxonomy distinguishes between the Oroqen and Evenki nationalities, ethnically and linguistically the Oroqen are close to the Evenki—so much so that ethnolinguist Juha Janhunen argues that, “The subethnic difference is not big, and by any objective criteria there would be no reason to recognize the Orochen of China as an ethnic group separate from the Ewenki” (Janhunen 1996: 69).

The Oroqen in China are horse-keepers and have no history of reindeer-herding, unlike their Oroqen relatives north of the Amur River in Russian Siberia. Formerly nomadic hunters and gatherers, since the early 1950s they were forced to settle in log cabins and to learn to grow their own food. Many still hunt and are given special permission to maintain firearms, a rare privilege in the PRC. Today the Oroqen live in ten main localities within the province of Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia. These are: (1) Gankui; (2) Guli; (3) Nuomin; (4) Tuozhamin in the Oroqen Autonomous Banner of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region; (5) Shibazhan in Tahe County; (6) Baiyinna in Huma County; (7) Xinsheng in Heihe City; (8) Xin'e; (9) Xinxing in Xunke County; and (10) Shengli in Jiayin County.

The Oroqen do not have a written language. Some Oroqen could speak and write Manchu because of the historical influence of the Manchu, the most powerful Tungus group. Today, most Oroqens speak their native language and Mandarin Chinese. Traditionally, Oroqen society was comprised of patrilinear *mokun* (clan) organizations. Each *mokun* consisted of several *wulileng* (large families) units. Although a *wulileng* usually had a number of nuclear families, each living in a tepee, the property was communally owned by the *wulileng*. According to legend, seven clans of the Oroqen migrated south of the Heilongji-

ang (Amur) River. Demonstrating the extent of the assimilation of the small Oroqen population to the dominant Han Chinese culture, Chinese surnames identify the different clans. For example, MENG identifies the Manyagir clan, GUAN the Guragir clan, WU the Uqatkan clan, and so on. Exogamous marriage is the norm, and wind burial in trees is practiced (Guan and Wang 1998; Qiu 1983 and 1984).

Oroqen Shamanism

Although we knew that the Oroqen were mentioned in two classic volumes on shamanism (Eliade 1964; Shirokogoroff 1935), no literature specific to Oroqen shamans or shamanism existed in any Western language at the time of our fieldwork in 1994. However, Ma and Cui (1990) indicated there were some Chinese publications relating to Oroqen shamanism before 1994. Indeed, if we relied solely on the literature, there would have been very little reason to believe that Oroqen shamans still existed. In the only fieldwork report on the Oroqen available at the time, that of the first joint Sino-Finnish ethnographical expedition of the Oroqen of Heilongjiang province in August 1988 which focused on the village of Xinsheng in Heihe, the researchers reported that “no active or even formerly active shamans are reported to have lived in the village recently” (Janhunen, Hou and Xu 1989: 17). When we encountered Juha Janhunen in Changchun in June 1994 he also personally testified to the fact that he had not come across any active shamans in his nine fieldwork excursions to Manchuria. Later (1997 to 2000) fieldwork expeditions by linguists Lindsay Whaley and Fengxiang Li among the Oroqen led to the subsequent conclusion that, “It seems the shamans are all dead, many of them reportedly killed during the persecutions of Mao’s Cultural Revolution (1966–1976)” (Whaley 2001: 1).

We proved to be the first ethnographers from outside of China to locate and extensively document the life of the last living Oroqen shaman in the village of Shibazhan in July 1994. We were fortunate to have made the acquaintance of a local amateur folklorist, Guan Xiaoyun, who introduced us to Meng Jin Fu and to a woman who was in training to be a shaman prior to 1952, Guan Kouni, but who never performed a healing and remained at the level of a “second-spirit” or *jardalanin*. Guan Xiaoyun opened her home and her heart to us, and her cooperation was invaluable. Following our visit to Shibazhan, Guan

Xiaoyun published a book on Oroqen shamanism (Guan and Wang 1998) which included 9 photographs (numbers 59 to 67) of the last shaman taken at the very same time as we were recording him with video and still photography. Biographical material from our interviews with Meng Jin Fu at which Guan Xiaoyun was present as our Oroqen to Chinese translator also is used in that book. In the spring of 1997 Daniel Kister of Sogang University in Seoul, Korea, traveled to Shibazhan and interviewed Meng Jin Fu (Kister 1999), but no mention is made of our prior fieldwork, which he simply may not have been told about. Kister found the shaman to be “tender-hearted, practical, and endowed with a good sense of humor” (Kister 1999: 88) as did we. This is a very apt characterization of this remarkable man.

We were not the first to photograph Meng Jin Fu in his shaman costume. One of the first things he told us was that he had been filmed by television crews from Japan and China on four prior occasions, and on two of them he also unwillingly fell into a trance while demonstrating the basic choreography of his ritual behavior as he remembered it from his youth. He and others told us that the occasional folklorist would visit him and ask him to remember folk tales or spirit songs, but no one had ever inquired about his initiatory sicknesses or his training and practice as a shaman. “No one has asked me these question in 40 years!” he told us, the emotion in his voice revealing his wonderment and gratitude.

Introductions

It wasn't until the second day after our arrival in the dusty village of Shibazhan that we met Chuonnasuan.⁶ He stood in the middle of an intersection of two dirt roads, a look of amusement on his face. Wearing a blue cotton Mao jacket and matching cap, he looked more like a party cadre than a shaman. After a brief introduction he led us down the road to his orange-brick home. His mother and brother were in the front yard awaiting his return. All three had been busy making birch-bark canoes. There had been an order for 100 such canoes to be

⁶ Hereafter we will refer to Meng Jin Fu by his given Oroqen name, Chuonnasuan.

made, which would then be shipped to various “Ethnic Villages” where tourists could see reconstructions of the homes and daily artifacts of China’s 55 ethnic minorities. They were to be paid 1500 *yuan* per boat, so many in this largest of the 10 Oroqen communities were feverishly at work on the project.⁷

We sat on the ground near a finished canoe and regarded each other with great curiosity. When Richard Noll took off his straw hat, the shaman also quickly removed his cap.

“You’ve come a long way to be here,” he said to Richard Noll. “You’re about 30, aren’t you?”

Richard told Chuonnasuan he was 34.

“You have had much progress in your life for someone so young,” the shaman replied. He then told us he needed to continue to make the canoes, but promised to come to our room in the local guesthouse that evening to talk. That night would be the first of several long evenings during which Chuonnasuan told us the story of his life.

The Life, Initiatory Illnesses and Training of the Last Oroqen Shaman

“It is not that anyone can become a shaman if one wants. It is the intention of the spirits that the person becomes a shaman.” Chuonnasuan, July 1994

Chuonnasuan was born in 1927 near the Huma River among the Kumarchen Oroqen. His *mokun* or clan was the Manyagir. As is often the case in Siberian shamanism, Oroqen shamanism is based on hereditary transmission. Chuonnasuan’s grandfather and his paternal uncle, the older brother of his father, Minchisuan, were both powerful shamans. We

⁷ We were told that Shibazhan had a population of 528 in July 1994. This population may be for the Oroqen village Chuonnasuan belonged to, or the total Oroqen population in Shibazhan. Shibazhan is the name for the Oroqen township, with several villages (not including the government forestry company and a military unit nearby). According to Guan and Wang (1998: 24), Shibazhan Oroqen township had 1,357 households with a total population of 4,458, including 546 Oroqen, 194 Manchu, 21 Mongol, 17 Daur, 13 Korean, 6 Evenki, 6 Hui Muslim, 2 Sibe, and 1 Russian. The majority are Han Chinese. The name of the township meant “the 18th encampment” of the last Chinese empress who was traveling north from Beijing.

were told that this uncle was so powerful that he cured two cases of TB and that “he could use a spirit to kill a pig.” Minchisuan, who died circa 1947, was stricken by sudden death after performing a healing ritual. Chuonnasuan attributed it to the fact that his uncle had conducted the ritual alone, without a *jardalanin* or “second spirit” to assist.

When he was a little boy Chuonnasuan used to attend the community healing rituals of shamans and mimic the activities of the second spirit, sometimes in a manner that would make others laugh. But because he was able to perform the role of a second spirit so convincingly, he was told he might one day be selected by the spirits to become a master shaman. It would take three classic “initiatory illnesses” and three healings by master shamans before Chuonnasuan would join their ranks.

THE FIRST ILLNESS

At the age of 16 Chuonnasuan “became sick.” According to Guan and Wang (1998: 52), Chuonnasuan lost a younger brother and sister in 1943. That traumatic experience made him wander around in the forest and often in seclusion and sometimes in trance state. His mother first asked a local shaman to conduct a soul retrieval for him, but the condition got worse. His mother was afraid he might die, so she went with him to Baiyinna in Huma County to ask for the help of Wuliyen, a powerful female Oroqen shaman. At that time their family was in the process of moving down from the mountains into the Huma River area and they were “very poor.” For a major healing ritual they knew that had to provide a horse, and they couldn’t afford it. But Wuliyen agreed to attempt to heal the boy anyway because she said Chuonnasuan was “selected” and “had to become a shaman.”

The ritual took place on the banks of the Huma River from dusk until dawn over a period of three nights. Thirty to forty persons sat in a big yurt, men on one side and women on the other. Offerings of moose, wild duck, goose, fish and antelope were prepared for the spirits. As the shaman Wuliyen danced and beat her drum and sang spirit songs, over the course of three days Chuonnasuan was introduced to over 50 spirits. One by one, as the shaman sang a spirit song specific to only one spirit, the spirits came to know Chuonnasuan and taught him to dance. This was the first step to becoming a shaman.

“Wuliyen asked the spirits to come teach me. She invited the spirits and made me possessed by the spirits, and they made me follow her

in the dance. I couldn't do anything else but follow her in dancing. I couldn't speak or hear anything. I followed Wuliyen and the others joined the dancing." When we asked him if he had any physical sensations when the spirits "descended" into his body, Chuonnasuan replied, "Not a great sensation from my heart, but a feeling like the earth was a soft quilt, like walking on a very soft mattress. I couldn't hear or understand what I was singing or chanting. Others would repeat the songs or the chants back to me. I could hear her as she sang the names of the spirits, and at once I could hear them as they came into me."

Since our intention was to examine the role of mental imagery in the subjective experiences of the shaman, we were intrigued by the emphasis on auditory imagery, particularly the hearing of spirit songs that would signal the arrival of a particular spirit. We asked him if during this ritual experience or later if he ever had visions while dancing during rituals. "For three nights I was learning to dance, and Wuliyen introduced spirits into me. But visions, or experiences I would have of going out of this world, I would have during healing." Contrary to our expectations, time and again during our interviews with the shaman we noticed the primacy placed on auditory mental imagery rather than visual mental imagery. Perhaps this pointed to a particular cognitive style that may differ from other shamans, or it may point to differing cultural demands leading to different modules of information processing in select individual shamans within those cultures. For him, enhanced visual mental imagery—visions came years later in his training.

"My becoming a shaman is due to the power of the spirits of the universe. I was taught by those spirits, and taught by them to learn other spirits, and in healing I relied on spirits for their power. With Wuliyen, the spirits did not teach me how to heal, but they taught me how to dance. Through dancing, all the spirits descended into me."

Chuonnasuan told us that spirits were invited into a person's body usually only during healing rituals, and that a shaman would not do this casually. We asked him if it was possible to introduce spirits into another person without first doing a healing ritual, and his one word answer was emphatic: "No."

We additionally questioned him about why the spirits "descend" into him. He told us that most of them come down from the upper-world

(*b'wa*).⁸ “More than half of my spirits came from there. The shaman does not go there. Some spirits come from above, some wander around on earth (the middle world, or *berye*), like fox spirits.” When we asked him which class of spirits was more powerful, he said it depended on the situation. “But usually those from above are more powerful.” However, on certain rare occasions demanded by a serious illness, the shaman did travel to the lower-world (*buni*) to seek the cause of disease and bring about a cure. These three levels of reality form the basis of Oroqen cosmology and are shared under different names by most Tungus groups.⁹

After being cured of his illness by Wuliyen after a three-day ritual, Chuonnasuan occasionally served as a second spirit to other shamans. It was not known if he served Wuliyen as her *jardalanin*, but it is probable, at least for a time. What we do know was that for most of the next three years Chuonnasuan was not working under Wuliyen as her apprentice, for he was with his family in Tahe and she was in Shibazhan. We know he had a shaman's gown and complete paraphernalia because he told us that, after Wuliyen healed him, “nine persons worked to make a shaman's clothes for me.” When we asked him how he trained to be a shaman without the presence of a master shaman, he again reminded us that his teachers were the 50 spirits that he had been introduced to during his three days with Wuliyen. “After I was healed by Wuliyen, I just consulted with my spirits.”

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE *JARDALANIN* (SECOND SPIRIT)

“To be a shaman, one must first be a *jardalanin*, and then healed.” One of the most remarkable things we learned from Chuonnasuan is the critical role of the powerful figure of the shaman's assistant or “second spirit.” Other than Shirokogoroff's (1935: 239–330) insightful section on “the assistant of the shaman” in *The Psychomental Complex of the Tungus*, this is a fact that also has gone rather under appreciated in the anthropological literature on shamanism, which accentuates the role of the shaman above all others.

Chuonnasuan revealed that he was not a skilled second spirit. He said he was almost “just acting like a second spirit. I was not a formal second

⁸ This is probably related to the Tungus term *buga* for “heaven-sky.” See Shirokogoroff (1935: 1) for a discussion of this core Tungus concept.

⁹ See Shirokogoroff 1935: 125–126.

spirit. I would just interpret a little then stop. I was not as experienced as the others.” Perhaps this was because of Chuonnasuan’s natural talent for entering trances or ecstasies, and the requirement of a second spirit is to not allow himself to fall into a trance during shamanic rituals, but instead, as Shirokogoroff (1935: 330) remarks, “(he) must carefully follow the shaman, to observe and, when needed, to come to his assistance. There is a special selection of persons who are not susceptible to ecstasy, but who understand the essentials of the performance.” Shirokogoroff further remarks, “As a special characteristic of the assistants it should be noted that, almost as a rule, they are not inclined to become themselves shamans.” Chuonnasuan also hints at individual psychological differences as perhaps distinguishing who is destined to remain a second spirit and who will one day become a shaman:

“A *jardalanin* is smart from childhood and can read the shaman, but doesn’t have to go through illnesses. A shaman can select someone smart to be his second spirit. There is a rule that the second spirit is selected by the shaman, not the other way around. They must have a very good relationship and be able to read each other’s minds. Even during ordinary (non-ritual) times this was true too.” We asked Chuonnasuan if a male shaman would be more likely to have a male second spirit, and vice versa, and he replied, “No, there’s no difference if the second spirit is male or female. But if the second spirit is female, she must be older and more experienced and not a girl. Also, during healing rituals, no woman who is menstruating can be present.”

“The *jardalanin* is like an interpreter,” Chuonnasuan noted, observing the two interpreters in the room one Oroqen, one Han Chinese repeating back what he said in two foreign languages (Mandarin Chinese and English) as the video camera recorded the exchange. “When the shaman sings or chants, he is the person who best understands the shaman’s sounds. Yes, the *jardalanin* is quite powerful. Sometimes when a shaman invited a spirit and the spirit cannot help, then the *jardalanin* could tell from the shaman’s chant that the shaman did not get the spirit’s help, and then the *jardalanin* can suggest to the shaman another spirit who could help. When the *jardalanin* sees another spirit coming who would help, he stands up and announces it to the shaman and the audience. The *jardalanin* can read the movements of the shaman, the sound of the drum, the metal bells, and then he stands up and notifies the shaman and the audience of the coming of the new spirit.”

Chuonnasuan explained further: “When I danced I didn’t know what was going on. But the *jardalanin*, who was in communication with the spirits would know. The *jardalanin* would then communicate to the family (of the patient), what images to use, what prayers to offer, what meats to prepare as offering.” Chuonnasuan’s personal assistant or *jardalanin* was named Meng Changguo.

Chuonnasuan would later tell us that it was the *jardalanin* of the master shaman who healed him who told Chuonnasuan that he should become a shaman.

THE SECOND ILLNESS

At age 19, Chuonnasuan once again became ill. “After I knew the spirits introduced by Wuliyen, some new spirits wanted to enter me. But Wuliyen’s spirits couldn’t accept them, and they had a fight. The fighting of the spirits made me ill.¹⁰ I couldn’t eat well, I couldn’t sleep well, and I wanted to be alone all the time. So, I would sit silently alone by myself under a tree or somewhere. When I was alone outside I could hear voices talking in the far distance, and enchanting songs from the spirits. This lasted 5 months or half a year.”

We asked Chuonnasuan about his subjective experience of the new spirits trying to enter him. Did he hear, see, or feel them trying to enter his body? “I didn’t see them coming, but I could hear the new spirits coming. They were spirits from my grandfather’s father.” In other words, he was possessed by ancestral spirits, and this made him ill.

A grave personal crisis may have precipitated this second illness. According to Guan and Wang (1998: 52–53), Meng Jin Fu got married in 1944 when he was seventeen, but a year later his beautiful wife died due to an illness. (He married his second wife, Ding Xiuqin, in 1963.) One day, when he was walking near the Huma River, he heard a thunderous noise and saw brightness and lost consciousness. Still an adolescent, Chuonnasuan’s parents became involved. “Since new spirits were involved, Wuliyen could not help. They had to find a new shaman. So my parents consulted directly with their ancestral spirits, and the advice they got was for a different shaman to help.” His parents hired the services of his uncle, Meng Minchisuan, a highly respected master shaman during the 1940s and 50s in Tahe (Guan and Wang

¹⁰ On the fighting of spirits and souls, see Shirokogoroff (1935: 320–322).

1998: 38). The healing ritual took the following form: Minchisuan, the master shaman, danced alone for more than an hour. Then the second spirit, a very good speaker, informed the spirit why the spirit was wanted for this purpose. Then it was time they all went to sleep. The next morning, the master shaman Minchisuan said he had dreams. He saw many, many spirits gathered and demanding offerings of antelope, moose, duck, and so on. "Then I followed Michisuan in dancing for three nights." But this did not cure Chuonnasuan. "So Michisuan stayed 3 more days and offered deer to the spirits. After this I was well and no longer heard the enchanted singing of the spirits." Michisuan introduced 10 new spirits into Chuonnasuan, and he was restored to health when "the old and new spirits became friends within me."

The master shaman Minchisuan introduced him to the most powerful two-headed Eagle Spirit *sheki*. After that, Chuonnasuan's power greatly increased and he was often invited to perform healing rituals.

THE THIRD ILLNESS

Following the death of his uncle in 1947, the powerful shaman Minchisuan, Chuonnasuan once again became ill at the age of 20. Chuonnasuan told us that he had lost consciousness for three days, and for almost two months he felt "blurred" in his mind, almost as if being in a trance. "I felt other spirits coming into me. I just felt lost. I didn't want to eat. I didn't want to be with anyone else. I just wanted to be alone." His family sought out the most powerful shaman in practice at the time, Zhao Li Ben. What is interesting about this fact is that Zhao Li Ben is the only shaman that Chuonnasuan ever initiated into shamanhood during his brief career, and this event occurred only a year prior to Chuonnasuan's illness. In that one year Zhao Li Ben had become a very powerful shaman indeed and in many respects, Zhao Li Ben was a remarkable man in the history of the Oroqen people for a variety of reasons.

We interviewed Zhao Li Ben's brother, Zhao Ben Chang, who told us that Zhao Li Ben would have been 68 years-old in 1994 if he had not died in 1978 from cancer. Their father was Han Chinese from Shandong province and their mother was Oroqen. The fact that Zhao Li Ben was half-Han Chinese would open doors for him after the People's Republic was founded in 1949. Their father owned a trading company in Tahe, the Yimin Company, that sold animal skins, deer antlers and

other products. Zhao Li Ben was born in Tahe circa 1928, making him close in age to Chuonnasuan. During the Japanese occupation, some Oroqen men were forced into military service by the Japanese, but Zhao Li Ben convinced these Oroqen conscripts to rebel and they killed a Japanese officer. Not long after the war Zhao Li Ben became ill. As his brother tells it, he was “crazy, running around, mumbling nonsense and climbing trees.” Zhao family sought out Chuonnasuan to cure their son. The healing ritual took place in a large yurt and lasted three nights. During that ritual, according to the brother of Zhao, Chuonnasuan’s spirits “educated” Zhao Li Ben’s spirits, and he was called to become a shaman. After Chuonnasuan healed him and initiated him, Zhao was considered perhaps the most powerful shaman in the Oroqen community until the summer of 1952 when, as his brother put it, he “took up the work” and became an ardent Chinese Communist Party cadre and convinced the Oroqens to give up the “superstitions” of shamanism and convince the spirits to go away (see below). Zhao Li Ben became perhaps the most powerful person in the Oroqen community from that time until his death, serving as township director of Shibazhan, and later the Director of Nationality Affairs for Huma County. But his early career as a shaman came back to haunt him during the Cultural Revolution: Zhao Li Ben was “criticized” and put into a labor camp for more than a year. Perhaps his conversion to atheistic communism was less than perfect and others suspected it. For example, even long after he had become a strong Communist Party cadre, sometimes at night he would jump up out of bed and be startled by the spirits, and his wife had to jump on him (“ride him”) to keep others from finding out.¹¹

Chuonnasuan was emphatic when he told us more than once that, “The first time I healed someone was after my third sickness.” Unfortunately, we were left with a contradiction that was never fully

¹¹ This is according to Guan Kouni (born 1935), whom we interviewed in Shibazhan on July 14, 1994. According to Kister (1999: 89), she is “the last female shaman” of the Oroqen, but she herself insisted in our presence that she was “only a *jardalanin*” and never a practicing shaman. She was, however, in training to become a shaman after Zhao Li Ben cured her of serious chest pains in 1950 or 1951 when her mother-in-law, the shaman Wuliyen, failed to do so. When the new communist regime convinced the Oroqen to renounce their “superstitions” in the summer of 1952 her career as a shaman-in-training was over.

resolved: If he healed Zhao Li Ben, initiated him to be a shaman, and then was healed by his former apprentice a year later when he became ill for the third time, how could he make this statement? We could not get a direct answer from him about this logical contradiction, and so we have decided that the confusion in detail may be due to our lack of understanding the typical career of an Oroqen shaman as well as the 67 year-old shaman's difficulties in remembering an occupation he had not practiced since 1952.

We believe, based on the account of Chuonnasuan's life found in Guan and Wang (1998: 53), that he probably began conducting healing rituals after being healed from his second illness and that the version he told us was incorrect.

When we asked him how he knew that he was to start practicing after his third healing, and what form this realization took, he said the following:

"I had a direct call from the spirits to become a shaman," Chuonnasuan told us. "It is not that anyone can become a shaman if one wants. It is the intention of the spirits that a person becomes a shaman. First I had a direct call from the spirits to become a shaman (his first initiatory illness) and then I learned I could become a shaman when I was in a trance. Then later I was asked to become a shaman when Zhao Li Ben healed me and Zhao's spirits told me I could become a shaman. I was then told of the different roles or powers of the spirits of Zhao, which spirits could cause disease and which could heal."

We were curious about the form the communication took between Zhao's spirits and Chuonnasuan, and he replied: "It was Zhao's *jardalanin* who introduced the different spirits to me, and what disease each spirit participated in. During the third healing Zhao's *jardalanin* told me I should be a shaman." (Again, this is confusing because Chuonnasuan was already a shaman after the first illness and a fairly powerful one after the second illness. How can he be called to become a shaman after the third illness and with the help of his own apprentice?!) He interpreted this as the *jardalanin* reading the mind of the shaman, Zhao Li Ben. This story not only supports the extraordinary power of the shaman's assistant or "second spirit," but also the classic model of shamanic initiation through initiatory illnesses as found in Shirokogoroff (1935) and Eliade (1951/1964).

HEALING RITUALS

Shamanism is a hereditary vocation among the Oroqen not only in terms of members of succeeding family generations taking up the career of a shaman, but certain spirits are inherited as well, and without the mastery of spirits no healing is possible. Since the spirits are already comfortable with one family member, they tend to introduce themselves to other shamans in the bloodline. Often this happens after the death of a shaman. In the case of Chuonnasuan, when his paternal uncle died, his uncle's spirit songs were passed on to him. "My uncle sang this song, and my cousin who was a shaman sang this song, and I did too. We all used it in healing rituals. Usually shamans didn't use this song until this particular spirit had descended, and then they used the song. Each spirit has its own song."

This was clearly a very powerful spirit, so we asked Chuonnasuan the identity of the spirit. He didn't want to answer us. "I'm not clear about this," he said. This was a typical response whenever we asked the specific identities of spirits. He was clearly uncomfortable talking about them. We asked him when he did his first healing ritual as a shaman.

"The first time I healed a person was after my third sickness. (More likely this occurred after his second illness, as argued above.) He suffered from seizures. After this went on for many months, his family asked me for help. I danced twice for two hours and asked each spirit one-by-one for help, but they demanded many offerings. These were communicated to the family by the *jardalanin*. Presumably the healing ritual was successful.

On another occasion Chuonnasuan said he successfully treated two persons from the Guo family who suffered from skin infections, and he healed them without herbs or ointments. Our data is again corroborated by Guan and Wang (1998: 53), who write that one of the first patient Chuonnasuan healed (presumably between 1946 and 1947) was a young woman named Manniyān, or Guo Xiuzhen in Han Chinese. She was so grateful to him that she kept sending gifts to Chuonnasuan during festival time until the late 1990s.

However, there was one healing ritual in particular that he would never forget.

THE TRIP TO *BUNI* (THE UNDERWORLD)

During our discussion of healing rituals we asked Chuonnasuan if he ever went to the underworld during a healing ritual.

“One trip,” he said. “It was a special ritual. I went to *buni* to save an old woman. Her husband, who had died years before, was trying to get her to come to *buni* and was making her sick. Her husband was trying to steal her soul. She died three years later. It was not me who saved her soul, but my spirits.”

Chuonnasuan then told us that the healing ritual had taken place over three nights. On the first night there was no dancing. He consulted with his spirits but they could not discover the cause of her illness. On the second night he held a ritual dance, but the spirits still couldn't figure out the cause of the illness. On the third night he invited new spirits to the ritual dance and these new spirits told him that the woman's soul had been stolen by the soul of her husband in *buni*. He said the spirit that told him this was a powerful ancestor spirit named a *shurkie*. While inside a dark yurt, he then laid face-down on an animal skin and attempted to enter the lower world or land of the dead, *buni*, on a visionary journey.

“At first I couldn't see anything. It was dark. Then I closed my eyes and it was bright. I saw my spirit going ahead, leading two dogs by the hand.” This spirit was the *seki*, the two-headed Eagle Spirit, and it had taken human form. “It was dressed in a shaman's mask. This spirit was one of the spirits of my paternal uncle. This spirit simply entered me. During the healing ritual, this spirit had been called for help by my *jardalanin*.” This was the spirit that was so powerful that his uncle could use it to kill a pig.

We then asked him to tell us what was in the lower world.

“I saw the spirit in the shaman's mask going ahead into a passage that became narrower and narrower, then there was a barrier, then I saw first a tiger, then a black bear, and other human forms, and they were all eating each other. It was very frightening.” Chuonnasuan became quite nervous at this point and refused to say more about *buni*.

We asked him if the lower world was always a frightening place, and he replied: “I don't know if other people think so, but it was frightening for me. But after passing through those frightening things, it is a nice place. Or so I heard.” He later said he followed the spirit into the passage, and it led him back out, but he doesn't remember anything in between. This was the only time that Chuonnasuan specifically revealed the use of visual mental imagery in shamanism. All other reports emphasized auditory mental imagery.

SUMMER 1952: TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS

One reminiscence that everyone shared was the tragic summer (June or July) of 1952 when Zhao Li Ben, a newly converted communist, and the Chinese authorities coerced the Oroqen people to give up their superstitions and abandon any religious practices. This *Götterdämmerung* was a reluctant capitulation on the part of the Oroqen. Chuonnasuan and Zhao Li Ben were two of the most powerful and respected shamans among the Oroqen, and so the Chinese communists took them for a free trip to eight major cities by train and airplane to try to convince them that resistance was futile and that the future was with Mao and the Communist Party. Most likely, an alternative interpretation from the communist official viewpoint would have been that the purpose of the trips was to reinforce the message that shamanism was “primitive” and a permanent settlement of “modern” life should be their future. Since neither man had ever been out of rural Oroqen regions, they were clearly affected by the propaganda exercise and organized and participated in a three-night ritual in which the Oroqen people asked the spirits to “go away.”

According to Guan Kouni, who was a 17 year-old shamaness in training in 1952, the final sending away of the spirits took place over three nights in Baiyinna (where she was living) and in Shibazhan. She estimated that about 200 people participated the ritual in her home village, but “they were very reluctant to do that. This was especially true of those Oroqen living south of the Huma River who did not want to give up the spirits. The public communal rituals in those two settlements asked the spirits to go away and to not return, and each shaman did his or her own ritual at home to send away the spirits. Guan Kouni told us she could not remember any of the chants or songs from that fateful ritual, just that everyone ‘begged the spirits not to come back.’”

Guan Kouni said that her husband snatched the birch bark box containing her ritual items and threw it in the fire. Her shaman’s gown, which was made of cloth (“that was not as good as a leather gown,” she told us), was taken by the grandfather and hidden in the mountains, but she never learned where he hid it. After the summer 1952 ritual, neither she nor Chuonnasuan openly practice any shamanic ritual. No communal healing rituals were ever held again. Guan Kouni told us that she had wanted to continue to practice shamanism, and dreamed of it often. After the ritual to send away the spirits she told us she felt “pressure on her chest” and often cried because she was no longer allowed to learn shamanism.

Conclusion

The stories told to us by Chuonnasuan (Meng Jin Fu) during multiple formal and informal interviews in mid-July 1994, presented above, are some of the most detailed descriptions of the life, calling, training and career of a Tungus shaman to ever appear in print. Although we set out on our journey to Manchuria and Inner Mongolia to gather evidence for or against certain psychological hypotheses we had entertained, our inquiries proved to be of a much wider scope.

At the beginning of our second interview with Chuonnasuan, as we met him along the road, he said to Richard Noll, “You are the uncle of my child.” This was a high compliment, indicating he regarded Richard as one of his generation. His trust in us allowed him to freely share some of the most intimate details of his life, knowing that his brief career as a master Oroqen shaman was being recorded and would be preserved for others. There are no more shamans among the Oroqen.

Chuonnasuan died on October 9, 2000.

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RICHARD NOLL (*richard.noll@desales.edu*), Ph. D., was born in 1959 in Detroit, Michigan. He is a clinical psychologist and Associate Professor of Psychology at DeSales University in Center Valley, Pennsylvania, USA. In addition to his research interest in shamanism, Noll has also published numerous scholarly articles and books on the history of psychiatry (primarily the works of Carl Gustav Jung and the early history of dementia praecox/schizophrenia). Currently he lives in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and is the father of a seven year-old boy, Wolfgang Noll.

KUN SHI (*shi.7@osu.edu*) has done research on shamanism since 1987. He received his M. A. in cultural anthropology from the Ohio State University in 1992 (and completed Ph. D. studies in 1995), taught at OSU and Denison University, served as program developer for social service agencies and program evaluator for Ohio's Legislative Office of Education Oversight, and currently is director of the K-12 Chinese Flagship Program at OSU.

A Revitalized Daur Shamanic Ritual from Northeast China

DÁVID SOMFAI KARA and MIHÁLY HOPPÁL
with a Musicological Note by JÁNOS SIPOS

BUDAPEST

In September 2007 two Hungarian ethnologists, Mihály Hoppál and Dávid Somfai Kara, were invited to attend a Daur shamanic ritual. The ominaan ritual was conducted by Sečengua, a famous Daur shaman from Nantun (Hölön-Buir, Inner Mongolia, China), and her students. The ritual lasted for two days, and during that time the people made sacrifices to Tengger, God of Heaven, spirits of ancestors and other spirits. After the ritual Sečengua gave us an interview in which she explained how she had become a shaman and why she had decided to revitalize the ominaan ritual among the Daur of Hailar. We recorded the beginning of her invocation song and tried to analyze it. Sečengua told us about her shamanic ability (ojoor) and that she had inherited it from the legendary Laa saman, who was her great grandfather. In the article we attempt to shed more light on the meaning of some emic terms of Daur shamanism: ojoor, barkan, and ongoor, as well as on interethnic relations of the Daur with the local Tungus and Mongol ethnic minorities. We also discuss the way in which Sečengua widens the frame of shamanic traditions and clan rituals.

The Daur are an ethnic group in northeast China and their tongue belongs to the Mongolic group of languages. They are presumed to be descendants of the Khitan.¹ Their population is around 130,000.²

¹ The Khitan (*kitañ* or *kitan*) were a Mongolic people who conquered northeast China and founded the Liao Dynasty (907–1125), which was ended by the Jurchen (Jin Dynasty). Some groups of the Khitan invaded Central Asia, while others moved to the Amur River. China got its Turkic and Mongolian name from the Khitan (Turkic *Kītay*, Mongolic *Kītađ*), which was also adopted by the Russians (*Kumai*).

² According to the Chinese census in 2000 (Hao 2002: 202).

Most of the Daur live in Hölön-Buir Prefecture of Inner Mongolia (about 70,000) but they also live around the city of Čičgaar (Qiqihar, Heilongjiang, pop. about 40,000) as well as in the town of Čöček (Tacheng, Xinjiang, pop. about 5,000). The Daur of Hölön-Buir are divided into two groups: one of them lives on the east side of the Khingan Mountains in the valley of the Naun River (Nenjiang) and the other lives around the town of Hailar. The valley of the Naun River is called Bathan in Daur where the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner is situated. The population of this banner is 320,000, with the majority being Han Chinese and the Daur numbering around 46,000. The Daur of Hailar (about 14,000) live in the Evenki Autonomous Banner together with other local Mongol (Bargu, Aga Buriat and Öölöt) and Tungus (Solon Evenki and Khamnigan) ethnic groups.³ The Daur of Hailar are strongly influenced by the Mongols and are usually bi- or trilingual (Daur, Mongol, and Chinese). There are no Mongols in the region of Bathan, so the Daur are influenced by the Han Chinese there (see Map 1).

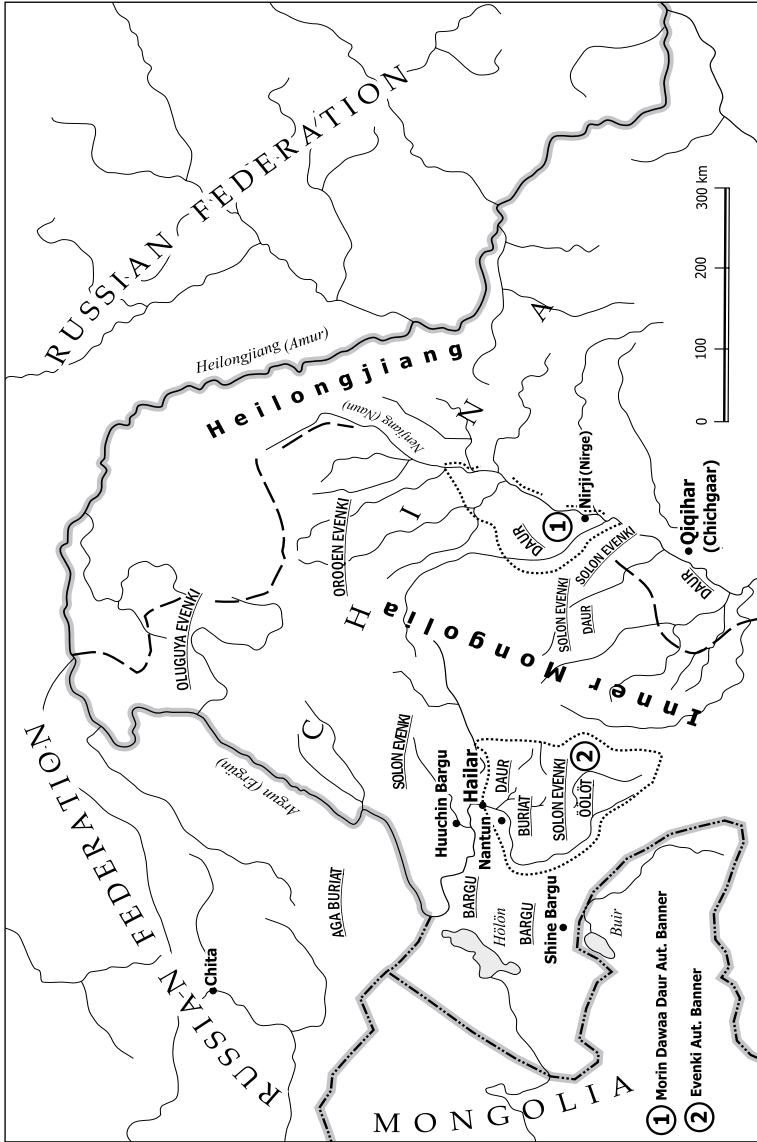
The Daur settled around Hailar during Manchu times as frontier guards. They have preserved their clan system until now. A clan is called *xal* in Daur (Manchu *hala*) and it is divided into branches (Manchu and Daur *mokon*).

When ethnologist Mihály Hoppál traveled in the northeastern part of China in 2003, he was simply continuing the good traditions of Hungarian research, since Louis Ligeti, the great Hungarian scholar, did fieldwork among the Daur of Hailar and Bathan for about eight months as early as 1930–1931.⁴ On his journey, Hoppál met shaman Sečengua from the Onon clan. Later Sečengua attended the conference of the ISSR, held in Hungary in 2007 and she invited the authors to her *ominaan* ritual scheduled after the conference in September 2007.

We started our fieldwork in China on September 13, 2007. First we flew from Beijing to Hailar, then we went by car to the town of Nantun,

³ In addition to the Daur, the following ethnic groups live in the Evenki Autonomous Banner: Mongols (28,000), Solon Evenki (10,000), Manchu (4,000) and Shibe, Muslims (Hui) (1,400), Koreans (230) and Russians (160). The number of Han Chinese is 90,000, so they comprise 61% of the total population (146,000) (Hao 2002).

⁴ Most regretfully, Louis Ligeti never published his Daur materials, but see his report on his journey in Ligeti 1933: 12.



Map 1. Northeast China showing the geographical locations of Mongol and Manchu-Tungus ethnic groups. Drawn by Zsuzsa Draskovits, 2009.

the center of the Evenki Autonomous Banner,⁵ 10 km from Hailar on the Emin River.⁶

The great clan ritual *ominaan* was preceded by two other initiation rituals conducted for Sečengua's two Solon Evenki students. During the first ritual, Altantuyaa was initiated as a shaman (*yadgan*),⁷ while during the other, Narangerel was initiated as a bone-setter (*bariečin*).⁸ Each initiation lasted for a day, being held on September 14 and 15, respectively; thus the great two-day *ominaan* ritual actually started on September 16.

The Origin of the Ritual *Ominaan*

The etymology of the word *ominaan*⁹ suggests that this ritual is most likely of Evenki origin among the Daur. The stem of the word is probably the Tungusic *omi* 'soul, spirit,' and the verb *omi-na-* 'invoke spirits' derives from that. The spirit-evoking ritual is called *ominaran* in Evenki and *ominaan* in Daur.¹⁰ *Ominaran* or *ominaan* is basically a great clan ritual where the shaman of the clan invokes the most important spirits of nature, the spirit of the ancestors of the clan and shamanic helping spirits. By invoking new helping spirits the shaman can obtain a higher rank and increase his or her strength.

According to the local Daur, the ritual disappeared from the region of Hailar (Mendüsürüng 1983: 271) during the Cultural Revolution

⁵ The town is also called Bayan-Tokhoi in Mongol.

⁶ The day after we arrived we started to document the rituals. We used two video cameras and two digital cameras. In 2008 a 38-minute documentary movie called "Shamans without Borders" was produced from the video footage with the assistance of Duna Television, Budapest. The interview was conducted by Dávid Somfai Kara while Mihály Hoppál recorded it on video camera. The Daur and Mongol texts were translated by Dávid Somfai Kara.

⁷ See Humphrey and Onon 1996: 183 ff.

⁸ Cf. Mongol *bariyači*.

⁹ On this ritual see Humphrey and Onon 1996: 237–260.

¹⁰ The Evenki *omina-ran* is a deverbal noun from the *omina-* 'to invoke the spirits', and Mongolic *-γan* is a suffix similar to Tungusic *-ran*. The pronunciation of *omina-γan* in Daur is *ominaan*.

(1966–1969),¹¹ and it was Sečengua who decided to revive this tradition forty years later.¹²

How Sečengua Became a Shaman

Sečengua, who is from the the Daur Onon clan, was born in 1950 in the vicinity of Hailar. She started to be ill from the age of eleven, but the family did not realize that she was suffering from a shamanic illness. She worked as a teacher in the Daur village of Xiqi until 1983, but due to her bad health she retired quite early. She began to see all kinds of dreams, and her shamanic ancestor spirit (*oʃoor barkan*) and a dragon (*mudur*) appeared to her. Later she learned that her father's grandfather was a famous shaman who had shamanic ancestors. Eventually she was initiated as a shaman (*samaan*)¹³ in 1998 and started to heal officially; she also has some students.¹⁴

Interview with Sečengua after the Ritual

We conducted the following interview with Sečengua in the town of Nantun on September 19, 2007. She spoke partly in Bargu Mongol

¹¹ During the years of the Cultural Revolution, Buddhist monks and other religious specialists of the minorities, including the Daur, were persecuted, with many losing their lives.

¹² Guo and Wang (2001: 37–40) published pictures taken at the *ominaan* ritual of an old Daur shaman from the Qiqihar area that was held in a village in the 1990s.

¹³ It is interesting to note that while in Daur *yadgan* (cf. Mongol *iduyān*) is used to denote both male and female shamans, Sečengua mainly used the Tungusic word *samaan* to define herself and her students as religious specialists. In modern Mongol dialects this word is used only to refer to a female shaman (Buriat *udagan*, *odigon* and Khalkha *udgan*), while a male shaman is called *böge* (Buriat, Khalkha *böö*) and *ɣayarin* (Buriat *zaarin* and Khalkha *jairan*).

¹⁴ Sečengua has four students who possess shamanic abilities (*oʃoor*). These students used to suffer from a shamanic disease but have since become healthy and they now heal people. Her other students are not shamans, but bone-setters (*bariečĭn*) and assistants to shamans (*baričĭ*), or midwives (*bariši*), and as such also heal people.

and partly in Daur.¹⁵ In Hölön-Buir the local Mongols speak various Mongol dialects (Bargu, Aga Buriat, etc.), but they learn the standard Inner Mongol language (*barimĵaa*) at school. When we spoke with Sečengua we used the Khalkha (Ulaanbaatar) dialect, while she was mixing *barimĵaa* and Bargu Mongol. Sometimes she switched to Daur, but when she did she also used Mongol words. The language of education is Mongol in the local Daur schools, and the Daur use written Mongolian in their correspondence.

I inherited my shamanic ability (*oĵoor*) from my father's grandfather (*yeeyee*). His name was Laa *samaan*. Shamanic ability has been inherited in my family through seven generations. I am the fourth generation. Laa shaman's (*samaan*) father was also a shaman, by the name of Buxačoloo. He also had a shamanic ancestor who was his grandmother (*taitii*)¹⁶ Segmed. This woman lived in the northern territories [i.e. by the river Amur]. I don't know if we had shamanic ancestors before her. I certainly know that my father's grandfather had shamanic ancestors since people told me about it. I did not invent it myself, many people know about that.

- (1) Segmed *yadgan*
- (2) Buxačoloo *samaan*
- (3) Generation was skipped
- (4) Laa/Lama *samaan* (Taa *yeeyee/yeeyee*)
- (5) Generation was skipped
- (6) Generation was skipped
- (7) Sečengua

Fig. 1. Sečengua's shamanic genealogy

Yeeyee was a very powerful shaman. When the Japanese occupied our land [in 1931–1945] about thirty shamans were exiled to the Amur River [Chinese Heilongjiang] and were executed by seventy bonfires. My father's grandfather was burned in these bonfires for three days but survived. We have similar

¹⁵ We would like to thank Mátyás Balogh (Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest) for his help in translating the Mongolian text.

¹⁶ From Chinese 太太 *taitai*.

legends about Laa *samaan* or Lama *samaan*. This story was told by an old Daur woman who died recently.¹⁷

I was constantly ill from childhood till the age of thirty and I was seeing strange dreams. I was sick but did not want to become a shaman. I thought that a shaman had to suffer a lot. The shaman has to suffer for the people. Later I got really sick after my son was born when I was 32. My son also became sick, as well as the rest of my family. The spirit of my shamanic ancestor (*oḵoor barkan*) has chosen me. We worship the spirit (*barkan*) of my father's grandfather, from whom I inherited my shamanic abilities. Meanwhile my sister became sick too, so I decided that for the sake of my children and my Daur clan I should accept the will of the spirits and become a shaman.

At first I did not know anything about the shamanic traditions. There weren't even any books to read about them and I could not talk about them with the people. Only my dreams guided me. I followed their instructions and teachings and became the hereditary (*oḵoortii*) shaman of the Onon clan. I have been a shaman ever since. I had no master (Mongol *bagši*),¹⁸ nobody taught me or initiated me to the spiritual world. I was initiated into the world of the spirits by dreams, they showed me the road. Nobody invoked the spirits for me, so I had to get in contact with them myself. My dreams guide me on that road and I have given Gaagčā *oḵoor*¹⁹ and the other *barkan* spirits my oath. I follow the road of spirits of our Daur clan.

Inherited Shamanic Abilities (*Oḵoor* or *Hoḵoor*)

According to Daur traditions, a shaman inherited his or her special ability from a shamanic ancestor of the clan who passed on the ability after his or her death. Shamanic abilities were not inherited by each

¹⁷ Laa *samaan* is also mentioned by Omachi 1949: 18; and Humphrey and Onon 1996: 184 (Lam).

¹⁸ Sečengua emphasized that she had no teacher, that she had been initiated into the spirit world only through her dreams. After the ritual we met an old Bargu shaman named Khüdre in the Khuuchin Bargu Banner, who claimed that he had initiated Sečengua in 1998.

¹⁹ Gaagčā *yeyee* (grandfather) was a legendary Daur shaman. After his death the female shaman Točingga from Bathan inherited his ability, so he is respected as an *oḵoor barkan* (Onon and Humphrey 1996: 249; *Dawoerzu shehui lishi diaocha* 1985: 261–262; Omachi 1982: 36).

generation—sometimes these would reappear after one or two generations. Although the clan system of the Daur is patrilineal, shamanic abilities and spirit ancestors can be inherited from the mother's clan (*naajil*). A third possibility was that shamanic abilities were granted by the God of Heaven, Tengger, usually in the form of lightning. Sečengua believed that one of her ancestors also acquired the abilities by being struck by lightning.²⁰ The term for 'shamanic ancestor' in Daur is *oĵoor barkan*.²¹ The word *oĵoor* (*hoĵoor* in the Bathan Daur dialect)²² goes back to *ijagur* (Middle Mongolic *hiĵagur*), meaning 'origin, bottom', and *barkan* means 'spirit'. Sečengua considers Laa *samaan* (Taa *yeyee*)²³ to be her shamanic ancestor who gave the ability to her. Taa *yeyee* is her father's grandfather.

The concept of an "inherited ability" is widespread among Mongol ethnic groups, especially the Buriat. Mongols use the following terms:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| (1) <i>ug</i> | Aga Buriat of East Mongolia and the Chita Region |
| (2) <i>uzuur, udxa-uzuur</i> | Khori Buriat |
| (3) <i>udxa</i> | Western Buriat of Transbaikalia (Ekhirit-Bulagat) |
| (4) <i>udam</i> | Darkhat and Uriankhai of North Mongolia (Khövsgöl) |

Both Khori Buriat *uzuur* and the Daur *oĵoor/hoĵoor* are phonetic variants of the Middle Mongolic *hiĵagur*.²⁴

After the death of the shamanic ancestor, the ability is inherited from his or her spirit (*oĵoor barkan*). The spirit chooses a child whose father or mother belongs to the clan of the spirit. After receiving the ability the child falls ill with the shamanic disease. This is usually recognized by other shamans, and the clan or community accepts the young person

²⁰ In her shamanic song Sečengua tells about the shamanic abilities: *artii tenggerees anantii* 'arrived by order of High Heaven'. Another expression in Daur for 'receiving shamanic abilities by lightning' is *hundur nirgewei* 'heaven thunders'. This phenomenon is also known among the Buriat as *neryeer* (Somfai 2008: 103).

²¹ *Hoĵoor barkan* in Humphrey and Onon (1996: 189).

²² In the Bathan dialect of Daur the Middle Mongolic *h-* sound has been preserved, while it has disappeared in the Hailar dialect just as in the various dialects of Mongolian, e.g. Daur *harban* (Bathan), *arban* (Hailar), Middle Mongolic *harban* 'ten', Daur *huθ* (Bathan), *us* (Hailar), Middle Mongolic *hüsiin* 'hair', etc. (Tsumagari 2003: 132).

²³ Daur *yeyee* is from Chinese 爷爷 *yeye* 'grandfather'.

²⁴ See also Somfai 2008: 101.

as someone having an inherited ability (*oǰoor-tii*). After the shamanic initiation the shamanic disease disappears. During the initiations the shaman also acquires helping spirits (*onggoor*)²⁵ that help him to get in contact with the spiritual world, solve problems and heal people.

The Difference Between *Barkan* and *Onggoor*

In Daur the ‘spirits of ancestors’ are called *barkan*, which is a word of Buddhist origin.²⁶ Usually the spirits of extraordinary people like shamans turn into *barkan* spirits, but some of the *barkan* have legendary origins. The Daur make small wooden houses (pl. 5 a) to keep pictures of the *barkan* spirits in them (pl. 5 b), and they perform sacrifices for them. But in order to turn them into helping spirits the shaman must invoke them during the initiation rituals. The *barkan* spirits appear to them in the form of helping spirits (*onggoor*) and they enter the shaman’s body (*onggoor uar-*). The *barkan* and *onggoor* are not two different spirit categories. A *barkan* spirits are only called *onggoors* by the shaman when they become helping spirits and enter the shaman’s body. There are also *onggoor* spirits who are not ancestor spirits, but spirit owners (*eǰin*) of the land.

In earlier studies the difference between *barkan* and *onggoor* spirits was sometimes not clearly defined. The original meaning of *onggoor* is ‘pure, intact, saint’, and it is used to denote spirits who are in connection with the shaman. In other words, spirits of ancestors or spirits of nature can be invoked and incorporated to the shaman’s body in the form of an *onggoor*.²⁷ It was the *oǰoor*, not the *onggoor*, that forced someone to

²⁵ The Daur *onggoor* comes from Mongol *onggod*, the plural form of the word *onggon*, see Poppe 1930: 8–14.

²⁶ A *barkan* derives from an Old Uighur word *bur-qan*, which originally means ‘Buddha khan (king)’ (Clauson 1972: 360). The word *bur* ‘Buddha’ is the Turkic pronunciation of Middle Chinese *puð*, and its Mandarin form is *fo* (佛).

²⁷ Shamans in Mongolia sometimes use the Khalkha word *šüteen* instead of *onggon*. This word means ‘belief’ or ‘the one we believe in’. The Buriat of Mongolia also use the word *haxiuhan* (Mongol *sakigusun*) ‘protector, talisman’ for spirits and for the shamanic devices (my own fieldwork material, collected in Dornod in 2007 and in Xöwsgöl, Mongolia, in 2008).

become a shaman.²⁸ Mongol ethnic groups also use *onggon* to refer to the pictures of idols or shamanic devices (Birtalan 2001: 1021).

During the *ominaan* ritual a particular clan invokes the spirits of their ancestors. The shaman is only a medium who separates his or her “free soul” (*sums*²⁹) from the body so that the ancestor spirit can enter it in the form of an *onggoor*. We do not find the classical type of shamanic journey—only the possession trance is practiced among the Daur (Johansen 2003: 139–140).

Sečengua’s *Ominaan* Ritual

Sečengua’s ritual took place by the Emin River at a camping site near the town of Nantun. The place was rented for the occasion from its Han Chinese owners.

At the beginning of the ritual Sečengua and her assistants created the sacred space, which they encircled with a red rope (pl. 6 *a*). In one of the halves of the rectangle-shaped space there was a Mongolian felt house (Mongol *esegei ger*) with an altar inside. Next to this inner altar was a wooden ladder (Mongol *šatu*) where the spirits symbolically descended from heaven. Sečengua’s dress (*samaaški*³⁰ and *jawaa*³¹ and her main idols, Abagaldai³² and Dogšin Kukur,³³ hung beside the

²⁸ “The *onggor* was a particular kind of *barkan* consisting of the soul-spoor of previous and now dead shamans. It was when this entered a young person, becoming identified with their soul that he or she had to become a shaman.” (Humphrey and Onon 1996: 185)

²⁹ See Humphrey and Onon 1996: 185.

³⁰ Humphrey and Onon give the form *sumaski* (1996: 204), and in Engkebatu’s (1985: 213, 225) dictionary (*samaaškie and sumaaškie*), see also Odongowa 1991: 4–7. I recorded the form *samaaški*, which derives from Evenki *samaasik* ‘shamanic dress’ (Vasilevich 1958: 343), itself a derivative of the word *samaan*.

³¹ The *samaaški* and *jawaa* are two different parts of the shaman’s dress, see Humphrey and Onon 1996: 211–212.

³² Abagaldai was a powerful Khamingan shaman (Diószegi 1967: 171–201; Humphrey and Onon 1996: 242–243; Omachi 1982: 36; Noll and Shi 2007).

³³ Dogšin Kukur means ‘Wild Kukur’ and is a name of an ancestor spirit (*ojoor barkan*) of a dead shaman. To the best of my knowledge it is not mentioned in the scholarly literature. Sečengua says that this spirit can open the door of the Lower World (in Irmuu xaan’s Realm, see Uray-Kóhalmi 2003: 118).

inner altar. In the other half of the rectangular space stood the outer altar. Two sacrificial trees (*tooroo*)³⁴ were erected by the inner and outer altars. A rope (*sunaarjil*)³⁵ was stretched between the two *tooroo* trees of the inner and outer altars and was decorated with ribbons of eight colors (*tarbas*) representing the eight directions.

Sečengua's Own Account of the Ritual in her Interview

Between September 16 and 17, 2007, we raised *tooroo* trees and we conducted the *ominaan* ritual around them on the eighth night of the eighth month of the lunisolar calendar.³⁶ If two shamans conduct the ritual we say *ominaa-wei*, 'to make the *ominaan*'. If one shaman conducts we say *igšie-wei*, and if it takes place at home we say *igde-wei*.³⁷ The *ominaan* ritual is conducted every three years in spring or autumn on a predetermined day.

Why do we conduct the *ominaan* ritual? The center of *ominaan* is the *tooroo* trees around which the ritual is performed. During the ritual the shaman makes sacrifices [Mongol *takilga*] and blessings to the *onggoor* spirits. By this the shaman's power increases and the sacrifice brings luck and health to other people too. *Tooroo* is the place where the *onggoor* spirits descend from heaven. Let us look at what we do during the ritual stage by stage.

PREPARATIONS

(1) At sunset we raise one birch tree on the southern side of the felt house (in front of the door). It stands twenty meters from the door. It is about nine feet and seven inches high. It is called *gaad-ii tooroo* in Daur, that is, 'external *tooroo*'.

(2) Inside the felt house we raise two trees (*geri-ii tooroo*). We make a rope called *sunaarjil*. The rope is woven from three colored threads with hide inside. We bind the *sunaarjil* rope to the outer and inner trees and the rim of the smoke hole (Mongol *čagarig*) on the top of the felt house. We hang the pictures

³⁴ See also Evenki *туру* 'column or shamanic tree', Buriat *туруу* 'shamanic tree' (Dugarov 1991: 54). Cf. Humphrey and Onon 1996: 239–242 ff.

³⁵ This word derives from the verb *sunaa-* 'to stretch'. Humphrey and Onon (1996: 201) give *shuanna*, cf. *suanna* (Engkebatu 1985: 227).

³⁶ The Mongolian lunisolar calendar starts after the Chinese Lunar New Year and is divided into twelve zodiacs.

³⁷ I could not find any information about the words *igšie-* and *igde-*.

of Tengger (God of Heaven), the Sun and the Moon on the trees. Next to the pictures we tie a bell to the rope and it is decorated with ribbons (Mongol *tarbas*) of seven colors. We also bind seven *tug* flags of different colors to the rope. The outer *tooroo* is made of three trees, and seven branches are also fastened to them. Next to the trees there is a stake bound to three more stakes. These are called silver and gold stakes (*alt-munggu gad*). The trees are the descending places of the *onggoor* spirits. The descending places are called *tergul* ‘road’ in Daur. The leaves on the *tooroo* trees must be green. The two inner *tooroo* trees are fastened together with three crossbars representing the three steps of the spirit ladder (Mongol *šatu*). The crossbars must be bound to the *tooroo* tree by bands made of bark. The bars are made of cherry wood. The spirit ladder symbolizes the path between the shaman and the invoked spirits. Shamans worship Tengger, and the trees connect people to Tengger. If a shaman wants to get more power, he or she has to go around the *tooroo* trees. That is the best way to get in contact with the spirits. The tree is the way to Heaven. With the help of the spirits the shaman can fight the demons. We also bind silk ribbons (Mongol *qadag*) to the *tooroo* trees to show respect to the spirits.

(3) In front of the inner *tooroo* there is an altar with a food sacrifice. At the bottom of the tree there is a black and white snake. By the two sides of the *tooroo* two shamanic dresses are hanging. When I conducted my first *ominaan* in 2004, the Abagaldai mask was hanging there too. This time we put the Abagaldai mask on the wall on the right side of the felt house. On the right side of the *tooroo* tree was the picture of an *oĵoor barkan* (ancestor spirit) by the name of Dogšin Kukur. We believe that this spirit can open the gates of the Lower World. He was chosen by the spirits just as we have been chosen too. Not everybody can become a shaman.

FIRST DAY OF THE RITUAL IN THE MORNING (SEPTEMBER 16, 2007)

(1) Before the beginning of the *ominaan* ritual we go around the *oboo* of a *lus*³⁸ spirit and the *šandan*.³⁹ The *šandan* is a place near a spring and the burial

³⁸ The Mongol *lus* ‘spirit of nature’ is a word of Tibetan origin and is often used as *lus-sabdag*. This term is gradually displacing the original Mongolic term (Mongol *ejen*, Daur *eĵin*). There is another Daur term for it: *lužir barkan* (our fieldwork material, Nantun, Hölön-Buir, China, 2007).

³⁹ See Humphrey and Onon 1996: 187 (*shand*).

site of our ancestors. It is situated east of the *oboo*. By this we ensure that the sacrifice will be successful.

(2) We return from the *šandan* and, after some preparations, the ritual begins by the *tooroo* trees. Before the ritual we must go to the burial place to say prayers there.

(3) After the preparations we perform the first sacrifice to Tengger.

(4) Then I make a sacrifice to my own *oḵoor barkan*. I invoke the *onggoor* of Laa samaan *yeeyee*, who enters my body. He tells me exactly what to do during the ritual—what kind of sheep I have to sacrifice to *oḵoor barkan* spirits and Tengger.

(5) Then we paint the *tooroo* tree with the blood of the slaughtered animal. Two shamans sit down by the two sides of the inner *tooroo* and purify their drums (*xuntur*) with the smoke of thyme (Mongol *gangga*) to keep away the evil forces during the spirit invocations.

(6) Then the spirits tell as what kind of sacrifice has to be performed next to the *tooroo* trees.

(7) At the beginning two shamans stand by the outer *tooroo*, after which we enter the felt house and the invocation begins. The spirit of my great grandfather (Taa *yeeyee*) enters my body and tells me about the order of the *ominaan*. He tells us the color of the sheep for the sacrifice and the color of the ribbons we have to bind. The killed animals are cooked in the traditional way (Mongol *sigüsün*).

FIRST DAY OF THE RITUAL IN THE AFTERNOON (SEPTEMBER 16, 2007)

(8) First I invoke the spirit of Taa *yeeyee*, and then the others one by one.

(9) The second *onggoor* who entered my body was very angry. Then I invoked the *oḵoor barkan* named Gaagča *yeeyee*, and then Omie *barkan*.

(10) When it was dark we wanted to sacrifice a goat and offer its soul (*sums*) to the demons. The tail and the feet of the goat are placed on a sacrificial table (*delkin*) facing west. The demons eat the soul of the goat. We believe that diseases and suffering are also taken away with the soul of the goat. We usually make sacrifices to the *barkan* spirits and Tengger, but we also have to feed the demons, we cannot forget them. Nobody can eat the meat of the goat offered to the demons. It is prohibited even to take it into the house. The purpose of the ritual is to live in happiness without illness and suffering. We shamans believe that when the goat disappeared during the ritual it took away all our

sufferings. If it runs away, then we can offer it alive. As we say: “Something that is taken away from the house should not be returned.”

SECOND DAY OF THE RITUAL IN THE MORNING (SEPTEMBER 17, 2007)

(11) At the beginning of the second day we invoked the spirits of my husband Baatar’s clan (*xadan*). I am their daughter-in-law (*beri*). My husband’s Bargu clan also has shamanic ancestors, and we invoke their spirits too. We sacrifice sheep to them and cook the meat during the ritual.

(12) There is a spirit of nature among the spirits of my husband’s clan. His name is Čonotiin, and he is the owner spirit of mountains and rivers. We invoke the Čonotiin spirit and sacrifice sheep to him too.

(13) Then we invoke further spirits of nature (Mongol *lus*) with the help of my Daur student, Wo Yufen.

SECOND DAY OF THE RITUAL IN THE AFTERNOON (SEPTEMBER 17, 2007)

(14) In the afternoon we sacrifice the young bullock. Then its meat is placed on another sacrificial stand (*delkin*).⁴⁰ They put the head and other parts (*žuld*) of the bullock on the stand. Seven boys have to ride the bullock before it is killed. If it gets wild the shaman takes the drumstick⁴¹ and touches the head of the bullock to calm it down. We sacrifice the bullock to the spirits of the mountains, who are also my helping spirits, as well as to the greatest spirit of the Daur, called Xoimor ačaa *barkan*.

(15) Then nine boys and girls do a traditional dance (*lurgieel*) for the spirits around the outer altar. In the old days we made a smoke sacrifice to the spirits using tobacco leaves.

(16) Then we spray the people with water brought from five springs (*bulaarii os*). We also brought stones from nine springs. We say: “Khan Mountain spirit by thyme, to the Khan lady-spirit by spring water.” We

⁴⁰ Cf. Evenki *delken* ‘stand’ (Vasilevich 1958: 90).

⁴¹ In Daur *xunturii gisoor*, see Humphrey and Onon 1996: 206 (*gisur*), cf. Evenki *gisun*, *gis* (Vasilevich 1958: 90).

cleans the people to chase away the evil forces.⁴² We could not do this ritual because the wind became strong.

(17) A sacrifice to the spirit of the fire was also canceled because of the wind.

END OF THE RITUAL

(18) Then again we invoke spirits by the *tooroo* trees outside and go around them thrice to the left and thrice to the right and shout (*xurai, xurai*).

(19) Then we invoke all the spirits along with Abagaldai. They turn into spirit birds (*degii*). On the shoulders of the shaman you see the “Grey and Mottled Bird” (Bor-Čooxor *degii*).⁴³ In fact they are two birds, a male and a female. They bring the spirit of my ancestor *yeyee*. This “Grey and Mottled Bird” is also called *dualan* bird.⁴⁴ All the *onggoor* spirits turn into thousands of birds and fly here. Some of them appear in the shape of doves and they drink the *sus*. This is the so-called *susal* (drinking *sus*).⁴⁵

(20) While they are drinking the *sus* we have to be quiet and we have to meditate. Meditating shamans are quite rare. Only shamans with higher rank are able to meditate. Meditation helps, so when I invoke the spirits I ask someone to meditate for me. Then we summon all the *onggoor* spirits to come to the felt house.

(21) At the end we invoke the *onggoor* of Arxan Toldor,⁴⁶ and he drinks *sus* as well. Xoimor ačaa *barkan* has nine *manggie* demons, and these *manggie* demons are also invited to drink *sus*.

(22) We invoke all the *onggoor* to find out their opinion about our *ominaan* ritual. The invoked spirits tell us if the ritual went right or wrong.

(23) Then they tell us when the next ritual should be held and when we should raise *tooroo* trees again. The third *ominaan* ritual must be held in the

⁴² In Buriat shamanism this is called *ugaalga* ‘cleansing’ or *arašada-* ‘cleansing with spring water’. Its Daur name is *bulaarii osoor uaawei*, meaning ‘washing with spring water’ (data collected during fieldwork we conducted in Nirge or Nirji, Morin Dawaa, China, after the *ominaan* ritual).

⁴³ See Poppe 1930: 14; Humphrey and Onon 1996: 187–188 (*borchoohor*).

⁴⁴ Odongowa (1991) writes that *dualan* was a tree where the spirits of former shamans appeared; see Onon and Humphrey 1996: 206. This kind of shamanic tree we also find among the Evenki (Utkin 1991: 168–174).

⁴⁵ I could not find *sus* in the dictionaries, but according to my fieldwork data it seems that *sus* is a sort of sacrificial drink that the spirits consume while incorporated into the shaman’s body, cf. *suš* ‘vitality, energy’ (Engkebatu 1985: 226).

⁴⁶ Arxan Toldor is a Bargu spirit; I could find no reference to it in the available sources.

year of the rabbit. Next year is the year of the rat, then the cow and the tiger. Only after them comes the year of the rabbit, four years from now. My shamanic headwear (*magal*)⁴⁷ has ten branches of antlers. If I conduct another *ominaan* in four years' time my headwear will have twelve branches. This means that I will have become a highest-ranked shaman.⁴⁸

(24) Then the *tooroo* trees are taken away in the direction of the East to a place where nobody drives cars. The sacrificial food from the bullock is taken to a pit in the direction of the West. By this the *ominaan* ritual comes to an end. I conducted the ritual according to my dreams. I wrote down the messages of the spirits. I had no teacher so I was only initiated by the spirits. I have to write down the messages of the spirits immediately to be able to remember everything. One dream comes after the other, and I write down everything accurately. When I have finished one part I see another dream, and so on.⁴⁹

A Brief Analysis of the Ritual

The two-day *ominaan* ritual has two objectives:

(1) Invocation of the ancestor spirits of the clan. People ask for guidance for the members of the clan and for information on how to conduct the rituals and sacrifices. They also ask for protection against evil spirits. They please the good spirits so that they will grant them prosperity and health as well as conciliate angry spirits so that they do not harm them.

(2) They increase the number of the helping spirits (*onggoor*) of the shaman who conducts the ritual. By invoking new spirits, the shaman

⁴⁷ The shamanic headwear is called *eurtii magal* 'hat with antlers'. It is similar to the shamanic crown of the Buriat and Khamnigan called *orgoi*, which also has two antlers (Manzhigeev 1978: 19).

⁴⁸ Buriat shamans also go through twelve *šanar* initiation rituals before they reach the highest rank and become *zaarin* after the thirteenth initiation (Balogh 2007: 91).

⁴⁹ Because Daur is not a written language, Sečengua usually writes down her dreams in Mongol, using the Uighur-Mongol script to do so. During the *ominaan* ritual a *barieč'in* student (Solon Evenki Narangerel) was recording the messages of the spirits in Mongolian as well, because the shaman does not remember the songs afterwards. Mendüsüring (1983: 258) also writes that shamans get in contact with the spirits through their dreams called *sooloon*.

can increase his or her power and can reach a higher rank. This is similar to the *šanar* ritual of the Aga Buriat.⁵⁰

At the beginning of the *ominaan* they conducted a sacrifice to the spirits of nature (*ejin*, Mongol *lus*) and the spirits of ancestors by the ritual *oboo* place. The cult of nature and the cult of ancestors are both important in their folk beliefs. The actual ritual only started later in the sacred space that had been created beforehand. Sečengua first invoked her own shamanic ancestor (*oĵoor barkan*) Taa *yeeyee*, who instructed her on the sacrifices she should make to the spirits. Then they sacrificed to the main spirit Tengger (God of Heaven). Tengger is a duality with a male and a female part (the Sun and the Moon). Tengger also has nine children: five Sun boys and four Moon girls (pl. 6 *b*). They sacrificed three sheep to Tengger in front of the felt house. They purified the sheep by smoke and spraying. The shamans first invoked the spirits by the inner altar, where they descended on the spirit ladder (pl. 7 *a*). Later the spirits went to the outer altar along the rope (*sunaarĵil*) stretching between the two *tooroo* trees when the shaman went outside.

The invoked spirits possessed the body of the shaman while the shaman's free soul (*sums*, Mongol *sünesün*) flew away. After the spirits possessed her body, the shaman started to jump in trance (*ekee-wei*) while an assistant held her by the belt to prevent her from falling. Then slowly he lowered her to the ground and rolled her body as if helping the spirit to find a good position inside her. After that two assistants made the shaman sit on the ground or on a chair. Usually shamans go into a state of trance and lose consciousness. Sečengua started to heave and hiccup. Now they had to make the spirit speak through the shaman. They shook the bells on the shaman's dress and gave her the drum (pl. 7 *b*) or the horse-headed shamanic stick (Mongol *morin sorbi*, pl. 8). The sound of these instruments made the spirit speak to the clan members and the shaman started to sing. When the shaman's assistants realized which spirit had possessed her body they summoned the clan members (*mokon*) of the spirit. They kneeled down in front of the shaman and listened to the shaman's song with great enthusiasm (pl. 9 *a*). They performed a sacrifice by giving drinks to the spirit through the shaman's body. In return the spirit gave advice to the clan members, who in turn could ask questions with the help of the shaman's assistant, who inter-

⁵⁰ On the *šanar* ritual, see also Tkacz 2002 and Balogh 2007: 91–105.

preted their requests (about, for example, ancestors' spirits, sacrifices, divination, and illnesses).

In the afternoon Sečengua once again invoked the spirit of her shamanic ancestor (Taa *yeeyee*). Then she was possessed by an angry spirit. The spirit was angry with its clan (Onon *xal*) because it had not been invoked for many years. The spirit possessed her body without invocation and complained that the clan had forgotten him. Good relations with the spirits of the ancestors and dead shamans are considered crucial among the Daur (Onon and Humphrey 1996: 262). Angry spirits can take revenge on the clan, so it is important to conciliate them.

Then the spirits of Gaagča and Omie⁵¹ *barkan* were invoked. Meanwhile Wo Yufen, Sečengua's Daur student from Bathan, also invoked some spirits of nature.

In the evening they wanted to make a sacrifice to the demons (*šurkul*⁵² or *manggie*⁵³) and wanted to kill a goat. This is much like a "scapegoat" (Mongol *jolig* or *jükeli*) because its soul takes away illnesses and sufferings. The goat had run away before the sacrifice and the shamans reckoned that the demons had accepted the offering without it needing to be killed. The goat left the community taking the evil forces in its body.

The following morning the shamans invoked (pl. 9 *b*) spirits of her husband's clan (*xadan*). Baatar is Bargu Mongol and also has shamanic ancestors. We have to note that usually shamans do not invoke the spirits of their spouse's clan. Čnotiin is a Bargu spirit of land. They invoked him and sacrificed sheep to him.

The afternoon session started with the main sacrifice of killing a young bullock. A similar kind of cattle sacrifice can be found among the Buriat, who call it *tailgan*.⁵⁴ Nine boys mounted the bullock, and when it collapsed they stabbed a knife to its brain. The bullock's head, skin and some inner organs (*žuld*, Mongol *žülde*) were placed on a sacrificial stand (*delkin* or *gandir*)⁵⁵ that had been set up (fig. 2). The bullock was sacrificed to the greatest *barkan* Xoimor Ačaa, which is

⁵¹ Omie *niangniang* (from 娘娘 Chinese 'mother', (Omachi 1949: 22; Onon 1996: 184, 286–301) is the same deity of fertility as the Turkic Umay (cf. Turkic *umay*, Mongol *umai* 'womb') and the Manchu Omosi mama (Uray-Kóhalmi 2003: 115).

⁵² Humphrey and Onon 1996: 190–191 (*šurkul*).

⁵³ Humphrey and Onon 1996: 278–279 (*mangee*).

⁵⁴ See Khangalov 1958–1960, i: 523–529.

⁵⁵ See Humphrey and Onon 1996: 230.



Fig. 2. The bullock's head and some inner organs (*jułda*) were put on a sacrificial table (*delkin* or *gandir*) made of willow trees. Its fore and hind shins are bound to the four legs of the stand (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China). Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.

also worshipped by the Buriat.⁵⁶ Then nine boys and girls performed a traditional dance (*lurgieel*)⁵⁷ around the outer altar. It was quite obvious from their movements that they had only recently learned the dance to perform it at the ritual. During the Buriat *šanar* ritual the shaman also has nine young assistants⁵⁸ to run around the shamanic tree.

On the first day the spirits of the Daur clans were invoked. The following day was dedicated to the Bargu spirits of Sečengua's husband's clan (e.g. Arxan Toldort), and after the main sacrifice the spirits of all the clans of the participating shaman students were involved in the ritual. The students invoked many spirits and demons and performed a rite called *susal* in Daur. During this rite they offered sacrificial drinks (*sus*) to the spirits.

⁵⁶ The Daur of Bathan call him Bain ačaa, while his Buriat name is Xoimor aba.

⁵⁷ See Humphrey and Onon 1996: 184 (*lurgel*).

⁵⁸ Cf. Mongol *yisünč'in*, Buriat *yühenšen*, see Balogh 2007: 94–95.

Sečengua's Khamnigan student Sünžedmaa used her shamanic sticks during the trance (pl. 10) instead of the drum. Meanwhile her Solon Evenki student Altantuyaa invoked her own Solon spirits to join the ritual (pl. 11). There were two more as yet uninitiated students who went into trance: the Aga Buriat Sežedmaa from Chita (Russian Federation) and the Bargu Badmaa. An *onggoor* started to speak and cry inside Sežedmaa (pl. 12 *a*) because it had taken many generations before this spirit could pass on the shamanic ability. Badmaa jumped around in ecstasy, while the spirit inside her body remained silent (pl. 12 *b*). Sečengua said that the girl's mother had put a curse on her so that the shamanic ability of her clan would pass to someone else. Finally Altantuyaa blew some vodka on her face and chest to force the *onggoor* outside her body.

At the culmination of the ritual a Daur *bariečin*⁵⁹ from Bathan, Meng Xiaoru, also reached the state of trance with a traditional fan (*delbur*, Mongol *debigür*) in her hand. After they had said farewell to the spirits, all the participants took some food into their hands and sat down by the outer altar. There they began to make circles with the food in their hands, saying *xurai-xurai* and asking for a blessing from the spirits. People believe that this ritual food (Buriat *xurailahan edien*) can bring good luck if they eat it.

⁵⁹ See Humphrey and Onon 1996: 320–321 and elsewhere (*barishi*). In their book the authors say that *barishi* was a 'bone-setter', while *bariyachi* was midwife. According to our fieldwork data it is the reverse: *bariečin* (Mongol *bariyači*) is a 'bone-setter' and *bariši* is a 'midwife'.

AN INVOCATION SONG TO A SPIRIT

1.

<i>Dekoo dekoo dekoo yaa</i>	<i>Dekoo, dekoo, dekoo yaa</i> ⁶⁰
<i>Artii tenggrees anaantii ireesen</i>	It arrived by order of High Heaven.
<i>Amban owoogoos amilaaltii le</i>	It came alive at the Amban <i>oboo</i> .
<i>Emiin golooroon tegeetii le</i>	It lives by the Emin River.
<i>Kuku tenggrii guidel irdew</i>	It runs in the blue skies.
<i>Kudee taliin saudaaltii le</i>	It sits in the plateau.
<i>Xailaar goliigoo umdii bariesan</i>	It drinks from the Hailar River.
<i>Onon xaliigaan oĵoor deediġee</i>	The <i>oĵoor</i> spirit of the Onon clan:
<i>Aċikċaan ĵiltii Laa(xai) samaan xuu</i>	Laa <i>samaan</i> was born in the year of the Rat.
<i>Taa(xan) yeeyeġee oriĵ aajawe</i>	Great grandfather, I am invoking you.
<i>Bod buyeeree booĵirwudee</i>	He arrives by his own will
<i>Bor-ii-Ĉooxor degii le</i>	Turning into the Bor-Ĉooxor spirit bird.
<i>Booĵirwudee daatgaa ĵalĵ aawei</i>	When he arrives I incorporate him.
<i>Sss</i>	<i>Sss.</i>

2.

<i>Ĵuuruu l moodii ĵurkuntii le</i>	In the center there is a double tree.
<i>Isen keukrii maršilawtii le</i>	Nine boys are running behind him.
<i>Arwan irgen-gurgentii le</i>	He has ten students.
<i>Xar(xan) ċigaan xobilgaanaar yaugu</i>	He walks with black and white spirits.
<i>Ĵaran durwen tergultii l</i>	In sixty-four roads,
<i>Guċin xoiroo ĵuurentii l</i>	He has thirty-two helping spirits. ⁶¹
<i>Osii ĵosiin gui-iċiĵ-ie l</i>	He runs by the rivers.
<i>Ĵawaa ĵaslaa emse-eċ yawaasan</i>	He puts on his shamanic clothes.
<i>Onon xal-iigaa oĵoor deed-ii-(n)ġee</i>	The <i>oĵoor</i> spirit of the Onon clan,
<i>Laa(xan) samaan Taa(xai) yeeyeġee</i>	Laa <i>samaan</i> , my great grandfather,
<i>Oriĵ-soriĵ daatgaa ĵalĵ aawai</i>	I invoke and incorporate him.

⁶⁰ The words *dekoo dekoo dekoo yaa* do not have any specific meaning, they are just the beginning of the invocation. This is probably a result of Manchu influence. The famous Manchu shaman Nishan began her song in a similar way: *deyangku, deyangku* (Nowak and Durrant 1977: 129).

⁶¹ The word *ĵuuren* is probably from the Chinese 主人 *zhuren* ‘master’; it is also used in the meaning of ‘helping spirit’ by the Daur.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SHAMANIC SONG

The lines above are the beginning of Sečengua's song (*iroo*).⁶² She invokes her most important helping spirit, Laa *samaan*. He is her direct shamanic ancestor (*oʃoor barkan* or *oʃoor deed* as mentioned in the text).⁶³ In the first part she sings about the following things:

- (1) The origin of the spirit of the Onon clan (*artii Tenggerees anantii* 'Arrived by order of High Heaven');
- (2) its sacred places (*Amban owoo*);
- (3) its sacred river (*Emiin gol*, etc.);
- (4) her shamanic ancestor's year of birth (*ačikčaan jiltii*);
- (5) her ancestor descends in the form of a "spirit bird" (Bor-Čooxor *degii*).⁶⁴

In the second part we learn about the way her shamanic ancestor used to do his rituals:

- (1) he too had a double shamanic tree (*tooroo*);
- (2) nine children (*isenči*) took part in his initiation ritual;
- (3) he had ten shaman students or assistants (*irgen*);
- (4) he had connections with black and white spirits (good and harmful), all together 32 of them;
- (5) with the help of the spirits he could travel along 64 spiritual roads (*tergul*), usually moving along rivers;⁶⁵
- (6) he performed shamanic rituals dressed up in shamanic clothes (*jawaa*).

At the end the shamanic song she repeats the lines from the first part and invokes the spirit again (*oriĵ ĵalĵ aawei* 'I am calling him').

⁶² Some other Daur shamanic songs (*yadgan iroo*) were published by Engkebatu 1985: 387–414.

⁶³ The word *deed* 'ancestor' comes from Daur *dees*; Sečengua pronounced the final *-s* as a *-d* due to Buriat influence.

⁶⁴ Poppe (1930: 14) writes that Bor-Čooxor is a very powerful *onggoor*. Humphrey and Onon note (1996: 187–188) that the last and most powerful spirit of the ancestors appeared in the shape of this mythological bird.

⁶⁵ The Evenki also believe that shamans move along the river to the source (the world of the ancestors) during their trance (Vasilevich 1959).

A Musicological Note

The Daur shaman varies a single musical line moving on a pre-pentatonic G–E–D–A tetraton, with an E–G–E–D–A schema (example 1). In the introductory part this melodic progression is sung to two short lines of text (*Dekoo dekoo dekoo ya, Dekoo dekoo dekoo ya*) with ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ rhythm. Later, the rhythm is varied (e.g. ♩ ♩. | ♩ ♩. | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩, ♩ ♩. | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ etc.) and until the end of the performance the whole melodic line (E–G–E–D–A) is sung to longer text lines (e.g. *Artii tengrees anaantii ireesen or Amban owoogoo amilaaltii le etc.*). The basic rhythm formula (♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩) is popular in many folk music traditions of the world. The shaman holds the beat steady, the drumbeats sound on the same pitch, and a louder dynamic stress is placed on the odd beats.

Song of the Daur shaman

De - koo de - koo de - koo yaa. De - koo de - koo de - koo yaa

De - koo yaa deek - oo yaa. De - koo de - koo de - koo yaa

Ar - tii tengg - rees a - na - an - tii i - rec - sen

Am - ban o - woo - goos a - mi - la - al - tii le

Scale

Schema of the melodic progression

Example 1.

Interethnic Relations between Bargu, Buriat, Evenki and Daur Shamanism

The evolution of Daur shamanism is a very complex problem and cannot be dealt with thoroughly in this article. We have to note that Daur shamanic traditions suggest that the Daur mixed with Tungusic (Solon Evenki) and Mongolic (Bargu, Aga Buriat, Khamnigan) groups. This resulted in an abundance of interethnic features in their folk religion. The above-mentioned mask of the Abagaldai idol and the horse-headed shamanic sticks (Mongol *morin sorbi*) are good examples of that. Vilmos Diószegi (1967, 1968) dedicated two separate articles to them, one to each, in which he tried to show their Evenki origin. He also published articles about the interethnic relations of Tuva and Darkhat Mongol shamanism (Diószegi 1962, 1963) where he emphasized the ethno-genetic problem of shamanic traditions in Siberia and Inner Asia. He argued in his articles that shamanic traditions could reflect the ethno-genetic processes and interethnic relations of ethnic groups that speak different languages. The language is merely a means of communication and can be replaced in one or two generations. But religious ideas and folk religions, including shamanic traditions, can survive the adoption of a new language. This phenomenon can be observed among the Mongol-speaking Khamnigan, Darkhat and Uriankhai groups, who were assimilated by the Mongols not long ago.

The origin of different traditions is a complex problem. We suggest that mutual interethnic relations result in some areal cultural phenomena. Sečengau's *ominaan* is a good example where Mongol, Solon Evenki and Daur traditions were mixing in front of our eyes, and sometimes it was difficult to define their origin. The ritual itself was mixed linguistically, with texts spoken in Daur, Mongolian, and sometimes in Evenki depending on which spirit was being invoked.

Daur shamanism was of course strongly influenced by the Evenki. The *ominaan* ritual and its *tooroo* shamanic tree both have names of Tungusic origin.⁶⁶ Some shamanic devices have Tungusic names (e.g. *xuntur* 'drum' and *gisoor* 'drumstick').⁶⁷ The name of the sacrificial stand (Daur *delkin*, Evenki *delken*) is also a loan from Evenki.

⁶⁶ Evenki *ominaran* (Du and Banjibumi 1998: 329) and *turu* (Vasilevich 1958: 404).

⁶⁷ Evenki forms are *gisun*, *gis* and *xungtuwun*, *xungtuun* (Vasilevich 1958: 90, 496).

Evenki shamans travel along the rivers, a custom we do not find among the Mongols. But Daur shamans mention a river in their shamanic songs, and that spirits move along those rivers. The shaman's night journey (*dolbor*) also has an Evenki name in Daur.⁶⁸ The Spirit of Bor-Ćooxor appears in the form of birds (male and female). Among the Evenki there are birds representing different spirits (Evenki *omi*) too.

In addition to the Khamnigan Abagaldai, we find common idols and spirits with the Buriat and Bargu Mongols as well (e.g. Xoimor aĉaa or Bain aĉaa).

Shamans beyond Borders: Revitalized and Changing Traditions

It is important to note that Seĉengua widened the frame of the *ominaan* clan ritual. She included her husband's clan (*naaĵil*) and the clans of her shaman students. Seĉengua's main shamanic assistant is her husband, Baatar, who is a Bargu Mongol. Seĉengua also has four initiated shaman students who were chosen from different ethnic groups.

Clans participating in the ritual Their shamans

(1) Daur from Hailar	Seĉengua as the main shaman
(2) Bargu Mongol	Seĉengua as sister-in-law and Badmaa ⁶⁹
(3) Daur from Bathan	Wo Yufen from Morin Dawaa (across the Khingan)
(4) Aga Buriat	Seĉedmaa from Chita (Siberia) ⁷⁰
(5) Khamnigan ⁷¹	Sünĉedmaa
(6) Solon Evenki	Altantuyaa

⁶⁸ See Humphrey and Onon 1996: 227–237 and other occurrences. The Evenki word *dolbor* means 'nightly', from *dolbo* or *dolboni* 'night' (Vasilevich 1958: 119–120).

⁶⁹ The Bargu student (Badmaa) was unable to communicate with the spirits apparently because of the curse her mother had placed on her.

⁷⁰ Seĉedmaa was not a shaman during the *ominaan*. She was initiated a month later during another ritual.

⁷¹ The Khamnigan are Evenki clans assimilated by the Aga Buriat. They speak an archaic Buriat dialect (U.-Kõhalmi 1959) now extinct in Mongolia but apparently surviving in Hölön-Buir (see also Janhunen 2003: 84). The Mongolian word *qamnigan* means 'Evenki' or 'Tungus'.

Besides shamans there were bone-setters (*bariečín*, Mongol *bariyačči*) and other kinds of healers (*bagči* and *bariši*).⁷² All shamans had their own assistants. Shamans were exclusively women, but their assistants were all men, who held the shamans by their belts during their shamanic dances.

By including her students, Sečengua performed the *ominaan* ritual not only for her own clan but also for the clans of other tribes and ethnic groups. The *onggoor* spirits of their ancestors were invoked by her or with the help of her students. Members from all the clans were invited so that more than a hundred people participated in the ritual. It is an important feature of modern shamanism that many cultural borders disappear. Sečengua has become the religious leader of different ethnic groups of the region. She has also accepted the Aga Buriat Sežedmaa from Chita (Siberia) as a student. Her activities may now even extend to influencing the Aga Buriat on the other side of the Chinese–Russian border.

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⁷² They are the Daur Meng Lizhu, Meng Xioarui and Xiao Liu from Morin Dawaa (Nirge, Bathan over the Khingan Mountains) and the Solon Evenki Narangerel from Nantun.

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MIHÁLY HOPPÁL (*hoppal@etnologia.mta.hu*) is senior research professor of the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His researches include the comparative mythology of Uralic peoples, ethnosemiotics, theory of tradition, and shamanism in Eurasia. He has conducted fieldwork in Siberia among the Sakha, Tuva, Buriat and Nanai, and in northeast China among the Manchu, Daur and Bargu nationalities. He has recorded his work with shamans in ethnographic documentary films. Some of his books have been published in Japan, China, Finland, Estonia and Italy. He is a founder and the president of the International Society for Shamanistic Research.

JÁNOS SIPOS (*sipos@zti.hu*) is senior researcher at the Institute for Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He conducts fieldwork among Turkic peoples (Turkish, Azeri, Kazakh, Kirghiz and Karachay-Balkar), and has published eight books on Turkic folk music. His main field of interest is comparative analysis of the folk music of various Turkic and Mongolian peoples. His main publications include *In the Wake of Bartók in Anatolia; Kazakh Folksongs from the Two Ends of the Steppe* and *Azeri Folksongs – At the Fountain-Head of Music*.

DÁVID SOMFAI KARA (*somfai-kara@freemail.hu*) is a Turkologist and Mongologist. He currently works as a researcher at the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Between 1994 and 2008 he did fieldwork in Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Siberia, and western and northeast China. He has collected oral literature (folksongs and epics) and data on Inner Asian folk beliefs among Kazakh, Kirghiz, Tuva, Tofa, Altai Turks, Abakan Tatar (Khakas), Sakha (Yakut), Buriat, Daur and Sart-Kalmak. He wrote his Ph. D. on the vocabulary used to express the folk beliefs of Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Inner Asia (2006).

The Manchu Imperial Shamanic Complex *Tangse*

GIOVANNI STARY

UNIVERSITY OF VENICE

Tangse, a Chinese loanword meaning 'hall', is the general Manchu designation of the temple complex where the Manchu imperial clan Aisin Gioro celebrated its shamanic rites to Heaven and the protective spirits. Such tangse existed in all capitals of the Manchu khanate and the Qing empire, and its rites (which were codified in 1747 by the Qianlong Emperor under the title Manjusai wecere metere kooli bithe) are well known and had already been translated into French in 1887. Some questions, however, remained unresolved or were misinterpreted: the present paper offers a new interpretation and describes the various sites where imperial tangse existed.

The *Tangse* in Peking

During the Manchu Qing dynasty there existed two places in Peking where the Imperial Court celebrated its shamanic rites, inherited from ancestors living in Manchuria. One place was the so-called Kunning gong Palace (Pang: 1993) located inside the Forbidden City, and the other was the *tangse*, a Manchu word that is clearly of Chinese origin (*tangzi* 'hall'). The Kunning gong Palace was the sacrificial place reserved for the imperial family, while the *tangse* was open to the high nobility of the Aisin Gioro clan. Because of its political, social and religious importance, the *tangse* was one of the first buildings constructed in Peking immediately after its conquest; the date of the beginning of its construction was October 14, 1644 (Corradini 2005: 388). It was located outside the southeast corner of the Forbidden City, near the Chang'an left gate and east of the Yuhe Bridge. After the Boxer uprising and the consequent enlargement of the legation quarter, the site it occupied was given (in 1901) to Italy for the construction of its embassy. Since the emperor, to celebrate the rites there, had to formally

ask the permission of a foreign state to enter an extraterritorial area—which was of course unthinkable for a Chinese emperor—the *tangse* was abandoned and destroyed, and in 1904 a new one was built on the north side of Chang'an Street, on the site where the west wing of the Beijing Hotel was later constructed. Nowadays, no trace is left either of the old or of the newly built *tangse*, which was almost identical to the old one (Ishibashi 1934: 60–61, fig. 1), and seemingly the only

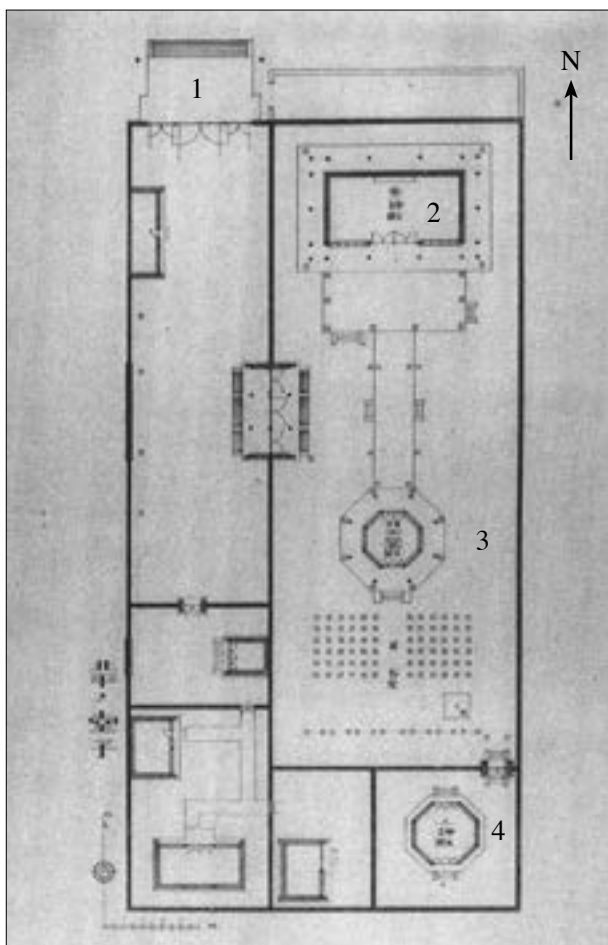


Fig. 1. Ground plan of the newly built *tangse* in Peking, 20th century. 1: entrance 2: main sacrificial hall 3: octagonal temple, pavilion (*ordo*) 4: Shang shen dian or *Sangsi Enduri Ordo* 'Supreme Deity Hall' (Ishibashi 1934: between pages 60 and 61).

existing photographic evidence of the old *tangse* complex is found in Guan and Gong (eds) 1993: 33 (pl. 13 a). Nevertheless, we have a good idea of the old Beijing *tangse* thanks to an imperially commissioned “Code of sacrifices to Heaven and Gods of the Manchu,” dating from 1747 in Manchu (*Manjusai wecere metere kooli bithe*), and thirty years later in a Chinese translation (*Manzhou jishen jitian dianli*) that was included in the *Siku quanshu*. It contains all the prayers to Heaven and the tutelary spirits, with a detailed description of all sacrifices and rites performed in the *tangse* (and the Kunming gong Palace), and has been studied by generations of orientalists (Di Cosmo 1999). A full French translation was published in 1887 (De Harlez 1887).

The sixth and last chapter of this work contains drawings of all the paraphernalia and objects used for the rites and sacrifices, and among them is a ground plan of the *tangse* itself (fig. 2). From this plan we

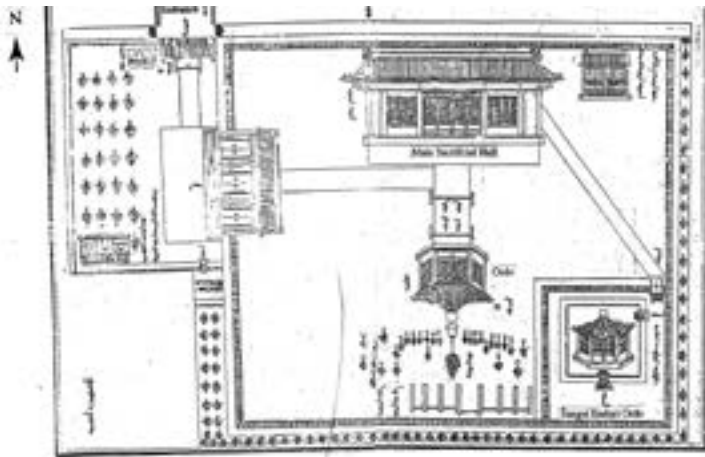


Fig. 2. Ground plan of the old *tangse* in Peking
(*Manjusai wecere metere kooli bithe*, 1747, VI. 1–2).

learn that the *tangse* was *not* a simple “shaman temple” (as the term is generally translated), but a walled complex of several buildings, three of which were devoted to worship.

Entering from the north, and passing a railing (*hiyatari*) and a guard post (*juce-i boo*), one arrived in a courtyard planted with trees, where there was a kind of storage-room for offerings (*gindaha ulin baita de teisulefi fayabume wecere boo*) with a nearby lavatory (*horho boo*).

Turning left, one went through a gate with three doors into the main complex, where, on the left side was located the great “sacrificial hall” (*wecere deyen*, pl. 13 *b*). South of this was the octagonal temple, called *ordo* (‘pavilion’, pl. 13 *c*), and to the north there was a frame for the *siren futa*. The *siren futa* (two synonymous words, both meaning ‘rope’) was a rope to which colored paper and cloth were attached, and which during rituals was tied between willow trees and the altar.

South of the *ordo* was the place for the *siltan moo* ‘pole-tree’, which in the Chinese version is referred to by the more descriptive term *shen’gan*, meaning ‘pole of the spirits’. South of the pole-tree there was a place for storing the pole-tree when it was not in use (*siltan moo be sindaha tehe*).

On the left side of the “sacrificial hall” (*wecere deyen*), a big storage room for flags and paper money (*lakiyaha girdan hoošan jiha be asarara boo*) was built.

Starting from the sacrificial hall and proceeding in a northwesterly direction, one arrived at a temple surrounded by a wall, called *Šangsi enduri ordo* (Pavilion of the God Šangsi), whose octagonal shape is almost identical to the *ordo* found in front of the sacrificial hall. But in this case we are faced with a problem which is still not definitely resolved. Who is the “deity” (*enduri*) called Šangsi (尚錫), and why only to him was a special temple devoted, where he was worshipped along with “Heaven’s children” (*abkai juse*)? Many tentative explanations have been offered in the past, by both Chinese and European scholars. Chinese researchers proposed an identification with the Ming general Deng Zilong, the genius of sowing, and the protective genius against smallpox.¹ Among the few European interpretations we must cite De Harlez, the translator of the “Code,” who linked the term with Chinese *Shangdi* 上帝, “Supreme Emperor,” admitting however that he could not explain the passage of the Chinese “di” into the Manchu “si” (De Harlez 1887: 14–15). Shirokogoroff accepted this idea, and found the evolution from Chinese “di” into Manchu “si” (pronounced “šī”) quite normal as being due to typical Manchu palatalization principles. Furthermore, he added that among the Manchu living in Peking (but not among those living in remote Manchuria!) this word substituted under Chinese cultural influence the original word *abka* ‘Heaven’ (Shi-

¹ For a résumé of Chinese interpretations, see Jiang 1995: 46.

rokogoroff 1935: 123–124). Even in Chinese the same evolution is quoted in Mathews' dictionary, where the following sentence is found: *shangdi tian ye* "Shangti is Heaven." (Mathews 1972: 780) This equivalence "šangsi = heaven" is now widely accepted and translated correctly as 'Himmelsgeist' in German (Gimm 2001: 580) or as 'le maître suprême de tous les esprits célestes' in French (Delaby 1998: 31). What is wrong here, however, is the starting point: *šangsi* is not a Manchu "adaptation" of Chinese *shangdi*, but originated—in our opinion—from Chinese *shangshen* (上神) 'Supreme deity', an alternative name that is frequently used for the Šangsi (in Chinese *shangxi* 尚錫) temple. The proof of this origin is found in the "Old Manchu Archives" called *Jiu Manzhou dang*, where at its first mention (in a date corresponding to July 31, 1636) the form *Šang jin* is found in old Manchu script (vol. X, f. 4925), and old Manchu *jin* could not but originate from Chinese *shen*.

In conclusion, we may assert that *šangsi* is not the name of a god, but a paraphrastic term indicating 'heaven'. And 'heaven' (*amba abka*, *dergi abka* 'great/supreme heaven') was the first Manchu religious deity, to which the emperors—first of all Nurhaci—addressed themselves in their prayers. It is therefore not a surprise to find in the *tangse* an isolated temple devoted only to Heaven. As an additional proof, we may recall that in the already mentioned floor plan of the new *tangse* (fig. 1) the *Šangsi enduri ordo* is now called *Shang shen dian* 'Supreme deity hall'.

The *Tangse* in Mukden (Shenyang)

Mukden, now Shenyang, was the capital of the Manchu empire from 1625 to 1643. One year after its conquest, the Manchu ruler Nurhaci died and was succeeded by his eighth son Hong Taiji. Among the "great enterprises" of this ruler we find the continuation of the war with China, the submission of Korea, and the transformation of the feudal khanate into an empire following the Chinese model. In doing this, Hong Taiji ordered the construction of an "Altar of Heaven" (*Tiantan*), an "Altar of Earth" (*Ditan*), an "Ancestral temple" (*Taimiao*) and, following Manchu traditions, a *tangse*.² Very little is known about when the *tangse* was constructed, and sources refer to it only in the

² For more details, see Zhou 2000.

year 1636, on the eve of a campaign against China, when the above-mentioned prayer to *Šang ĵin enduri* was registered in the “Old Manchu Archives” (Stary 1993).

This *tangse* was located east of the Fujin Gate of the inner city’s eastern wall, near its southeast corner, as seen on an 18th century map of Mukden published in the “Imperially commissioned General Description of Shengjing” (fig. 3).³ A plan of the *tangse* is found in

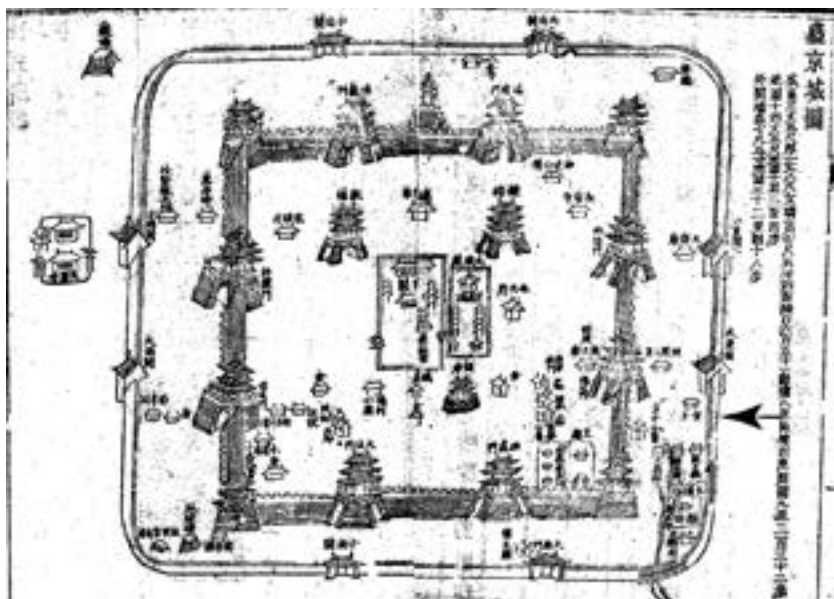


Fig. 3. 18th century map of Mukden, with location of the *tangse* indicated by arrow (*Shengjing tongzhi* I: 1a-b).

the *Shengjing tongzhi*, where we surprisingly discover that it is almost identical in shape to the *tangse* in Beijing. And, like the Beijing *tangse*, the Mukden complex was built near the southeast corner of the inner city wall. In other words, the *tangse* in Beijing was nothing other than a greater copy of the Mukden *tangse* (Corradini 2005: 390, fig. 4). The Mukden *tangse* has now disappeared, like the “Altar of Heaven” and

³ *Qinding Shengjing tongzhi* I: 38.

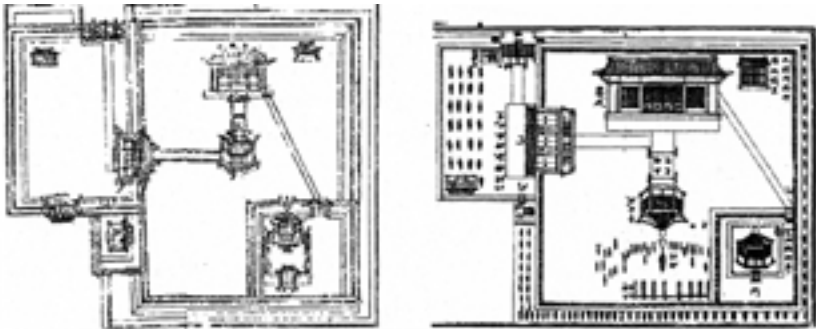


Fig. 4. The *tangse* in Mukden (left) and Peking (right) (Corradini 2005: 390)

the “Altar of Earth,” but good photographic evidence has been preserved by the Japanese scholar Naitō Torajirō (1935: 51–56, pl. 14 *a*), in addition, a reconstruction of a *tangse* can now be seen in the Manchu Folklore Museum near Shenyang (pl. 14 *b*).

The *Tangse* in Hetu Ala (Yenden)

Before the conquest of Shenyang, the capital of the Manchu khanate was a small fortified town about 150 km southeast of Mukden, named Hetu Ala, a name which in 1636 was changed into Yenden, in Chinese Xingjing.

Hetu Ala too had its *tangse*, located (like those in Mukden and Beijing) on the southeast corner of the city wall. The *tangse* disappeared a long time ago, but from recent excavations we know that it was a building measuring approximately 16 x 23 meters (Fu et al. 1994: 29–56). It was in that building that Nurhaci often prayed to Heaven for assistance before he undertook his battles against the Ming, as well as on the eve of other military enterprises (Di Cosmo 1996: 16). According to Chinese sources (Li 2002: 60)⁴, a *tangse* had probably existed there since 1535, and it was where in summer 1583 the Aisin Gioro clan members met to swear an oath to kill Nurhaci, whose power was growing day by day, provoking the jealousy of his clan (Hauer 1926: 7).

⁴ According to Corradini (2005: 382), at that time it was probably only a tent.

The *Tangse* in Fe Ala

Before Nurhaci moved his residence to Hetu Ala in 1603, he lived in an anonymous settlement south of Hetu Ala, which in later sources is called Fe Ala ‘Old Hill’. This residence—nothing more than a fortified village—was carefully described in 1596 by a Korean envoy, Sin Ch’ungil, in his work *Kōnchu kichōng toki*, which also contains a drawing of the city that has been published and analyzed several times (Stary 1981). Sin Ch’ungil mentions a hall which can be identified with the *tangse*, since incense was burned there and every day two geese were “cooked” and sacrificed.

In October 1593, on the eve of the war against a coalition of nine Jurchen tribes, Nurhaci went there and prayed for Heaven’s assistance. This is the oldest Manchu prayer we know of, and it contains the following request addressed to Heaven (Stary 2000):

batai uju de fusihūn obu,
mini uju be wesihun obu.
mini coohai niyalmai jafaha šusiha be ume tuhebure,
yaluha morin be ume buduribure.
eršeme wehiyeme yabubu.

Make the enemies’ heads be in downward position!
 Make my own head be in upright position!
 Make the whips held by my soldiers not be lost!
 Make the saddle-horses not stumble!
 Let [me] go ahead with [your] assistance and your help!

Conclusion

In lieu of a conclusion, our findings may be summarized in the following five points:

(1) During the Qing period, the *tangse* was not a single hall or temple, but a complex with three main buildings for worship, i.e. a great sacrificial hall (*wecere deyen*), a temple for worshipping special clan spirits (*ordo*), and a temple for worshipping Heaven (*Šangsi enduri ordo*).

- (2) *Šangsi enduri* originated from Chinese *shangshen* ('supreme spirit', old Manchu *sangšin*) and was used instead of *abka* 'Heaven'.
- (3) The *tangse* in Peking was a reproduction of the *tangse* in Mukden.
- (4) The change from a simple "hall" (as in Hetu Ala and Fe Ala) to an architectural complex is probably due to Chinese influence.
- (5) All *tangse* were built on the southeast corner near the inner city wall. Why this position was chosen is a question which still awaits explanation.

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GIOVANNI STARY is Full Professor of Manchu Language and Literature at the University of Venice. He gained his Ph.D. (1969) in Slavic Languages and Classical Chinese at the Oriental University, Naples, Italy. In 1978–79 he was Humboldt Fellow at the Zentralasiatisches Seminar, University of Bonn, specializing in Central Asian History (with Prof. Walther Heissig) and Manchu (Prof. Walter Fuchs). He is Editor of the *Central Asiatic Journal*, *Aetas Manjurica*, and *Shamanica Manchurica Collecta* (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag). He was awarded the PIAC Gold Medal (University of Bloomington) in 2006.

Quest for Primal Knowledge: Mircea Eliade, Traditionalism, and “Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy”

ANDREI ZNAMENSKI

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

*The paper is an attempt to answer a question about what might have prompted Mircea Eliade, who never considered himself an expert on shamanism and tribal peoples, to write his classic text *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. It is suggested that for Eliade with his mindset, which was heavily affected by the philosophy of traditionalism, it was a logical step to enter the field of shamanism studies. An intellectual and cultural movement in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s with numerous links to esotericism, traditionalism fostered quests for “archaic” roots and an authentic primal tradition. The paper also discusses how humanities and social science scholars responded to his book and how Eliade’s vision of shamanism as a cross-cultural primal religion inspired numerous spiritual seekers in the West in the 1960s and the 1970s.*

In post-war Paris, in a small apartment stuffed with books, a Romanian émigré scholar was absorbed into writing a volume for which he invented an enchanting title—*Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. The name of the scholar was Mircea Eliade (fig. 1). The book, which deals with tribal religions all over the world, was published in 1951 (fig. 2). Like many other books on similar topics, it seemed that the text was destined to vanish into obscurity. At least, few people noted its publication in French. Yet, as the students of shamanism know well, the book did not vanish. Since the publication of its revised English edition (1964), the text became not only a classic in shamanism studies but it also began to inspire various spiritual seekers who were on the quest for an alternative to the mainstream Judeo-Christian tradition. The question this paper addresses is why Eliade chose the topic of shamanism in the first place. What prompted the Romanian émigré scholar to enter a field that at that time was familiar only to a small group of



Fig. 1. Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). Courtesy Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.



Fig. 2. The first French edition (1951) of *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*.

anthropologists specialized in Siberia and North America? For Eliade, who was a student of Hinduism, Yoga and Oriental mythology, it was indeed a strange intellectual enterprise. Moreover, the scholar never considered himself an expert on shamanism and tribal peoples. The timing for such a project did not appear appropriate either: Eliade was already working on another project—a mystery novel titled *Forbidden Forest* (1978). Nevertheless, he found it necessary to compose a lengthy treatise on shamanism. Addressing the posed question not only will help us understand the motives that drove Eliade to write his famous shamanism volume but it will also provide an additional insight into the ideas that shaped Eliade's intellectual world, particularly during his earlier career. Since for the past thirty years Eliade has been the object of various ideological accusations, it might make sense to see how valid some of them are.¹

¹ For an example of a superficial criticism of Eliade, see an entry dealing with his biography in a popular on-line encyclopedia "everything2.com": "He [Eliade] was deeply concerned with religion in and of itself, and was interested in knowing what we can learn about it if we accept in on its own terms. Eliade was an Orthodox Christian. He remained one all his life, despite a stint with the Shamans of Yakutsk and at least a two year stint in a cave with a Yogi master. He was also a fascist sympathizer, connected to the Legion of the Angel Michael in Romania, who believed that the main result of the study of comparative religion would be to prove that Christianity, and specifically, the narrow brand of Greek Orthodox Christianity practiced in Romania was the most 'advanced' religion in the world." Jordan M, "Mircea Eliade," <http://everything2.com/e2node/Mircea%2520Eliade> (accessed 09/23/08). Except the first sentence, all other pieces of information are here either false or only partially true. Eliade was never an Orthodox Christian. He did not visit either Siberia or Russia, and certainly he never observed a Yakut shaman. In fact, he did not observe any shaman alive. Although he did visit India and apprenticed with some spiritual masters, he did not have any two year stint in a cave with a Yogi master. Although Eliade could be called a fascist sympathizer, he never used comparative religion field to prove that any branch of Christianity was the most advance religion in the world. In fact, his scholarship was directed against mainstream Christianity, which was one of the reasons his writings became so appealing to spiritual seekers in Europe and North America in the 1960s and the 1970s. There are numerous studies dealing with various aspects of Eliade's biography and scholarship. In my view, one of the most balanced accounts is Allen 1998.

Revolt against the Modern World: An Excursion into Traditionalism

To understand why Eliade wrote his book on “archaic techniques of ecstasy,” I suggest that we take a more in-depth look at the intellectual tradition that might have inspired him to undertake that project. Sentiments manifested in the Romanian scholar’s writings and intellectual friendships he struck before World War II clearly point in the direction of traditionalism. Many critics of Eliade, especially those who label him an Eastern Orthodox Christian writer, dismiss or underestimate the influence of this widespread tradition on the formation of his intellectual world. Traditionalism was a loose movement that spread in the turbulent European atmosphere of the 1920s and the 1930s. Grounded in Romanticism and linked to European esotericism, it united conservative European ideologists, writers, and spiritual seekers who crusaded against the legacy of Western civilization, particularly Enlightenment, capitalism and materialism. Overwhelmed by modernity, these people were seeking to solace themselves in their own indigenous roots and soil. The quest for roots meant the retrieval of ideal ancient indigenous spirituality that, as they argued, was erased by cosmopolitan Judeo-Christian tradition—the foundation of the Western civilization. Julius Evola, one of the prominent ideologists of traditionalism, explicitly conveyed the intellectual stance of this movement in the title of his major book, *Revolt against the Modern World*.²

In pre-war Europe, young Eliade and the greater part of Romanian intellectuals were seeking to root themselves in their indigenous soil, inventing ancient Romanian tradition, promoting Romanian nationalism, holding in high esteem popular Christianity and organic “soil” spirituality.³ The sentiments manifested by Eliade were not marginal intellectual leanings but a cultural discourse immensely popular in Europe at that time. Moreover, in such countries as Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Romania, where large groups of population felt that they were somehow mistreated or cheated by the West, those sentiments turned into the dominant discourse and eventually expanded beyond culture

² Evola 1995. For a comprehensive history of traditionalism, see Sedgwick 2004.

³ For more about Eliade’s prewar career as a “soil and blood” conservative writer and scholar, see Laignel-Lavastine 2002.

and folklore into the realm of politics and social movements. Although later Eliade downplayed his pre-war right-wing intellectual leanings and writings, traditionalism never ceased to affect his scholarship, including his shamanism book and numerous writings he produced in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

Eliade's kindred souls were such prominent traditionalist writers as Rene Guenon (1886–1951), Julius Evola (1898–1974), and Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998). Moreover, with one of them (Evola) Eliade was on friendly terms through correspondence and occasional meetings. Like Eliade, these and other like-minded writers crusaded against Western civilization and modernity, and propagated anti-capitalism. They romanticized traditional non-Western cultures and spiritualities, revered the Middle Ages, popular Christianity, nature and organic life, archaic symbols and mythology. They were equally attentive to all things local and national at the expense of the global and cosmopolitan. Before World War II, such ideas and sentiments were usually associated with conservative circles and the Right. Yet, many of the same sentiments became resurrected by counterculture and environmentalism during the second major crusade against Western civilization in the 1960s and the 1970s. Ironically, this later cultural revolt against the modern world more often than not manifested itself on the left-liberal side of a political spectrum. Jumping ahead, I want to stress that this was precisely the reason why such writers and scholars as Eliade suddenly found themselves in a spotlight, becoming intellectual celebrities in the 1960s and the 1970s. This also might explain why to some authors later Eliade appeared not as a conservative thinker but as a “radical modernist” (Ellwood 1999: 119).

Not a small matter in traditionalism was a desire to go beyond Europe to supplement the quest for indigenous roots with the search for inner spirituality in places that were not yet “spoiled” by Judeo-Christian tradition. It is known that Eliade travelled to India, where he lived for a short while apprenticing with Hindu spiritual masters. In the 1930s, his experiences materialized in the book on Yoga (1958) and in a novel *Bengal Nights* (1994). This surgeon to the Orient left a profound imprint on Eliade's entire scholarship and helped shape him not only as a comparative historian of religions but also as a visionary writer and esotericist who blended elements of Western and Eastern “wisdoms.” In a similar manner, other prophets of traditionalism conducted their own real or imagined surgeons beyond Europe. Thus, Evola partook

of Eastern spirituality by writing a book on Buddhism, which in fact represented his own message about what should be considered traditional rather than a description of actual Buddhism. After a brief romance with several esoteric orders, Guenon, the intellectual father of traditionalism, immersed into the study of Muslim spiritual techniques and eventually left his native France for Egypt where he converted to Islam. Schuon similarly moved away from Judeo-Christian tradition to Islam, later supplementing his spirituality with what he viewed as Native American religion.

The gist of traditionalism is that modernity represents not a progress but rather a fall of humankind. Like many prophets of anti-modernity in the East and in the West, traditionalists have argued that Western Civilization with its Enlightenment and capitalism is not a blessing but a curse, which should be overpowered by the return to traditional roots that should help to spiritually anchor disenchanting humankind. Thus, Guenon begins one of his major works, *Orient et Occident*, with an accusation: “Western Civilization appears in history as an anomaly. Among all known civilizations this is the only one that moves fast forward toward materialism. This is a harmful trend that started during the time they usually call the Renaissance, and it is accompanied by intellectual degeneration.” (Guenon 2005: 35) Conventional Judeo-Christian religion could not provide a way out because, as he argued, it was itself part of Western civilization and therefore equally corrupt and degenerate. Although the Orient similarly became spoiled by the intrusion of materialism and rationalism, in that area tradition was not yet erased to such a degree as in the West and, therefore, it could be reawakened. To be exact, for Guenon the Orient was not so much a geographical entity but rather an ideal spiritual state. Another important element of traditionalism was what one can describe by a present-day expression “cultural pluralism.” In their opposition to reigning Eurocentrism, Guenon, Evola, Eliade and like-minded writers viewed all civilizations as inherently valuable, unique and equal to each other. The only exception was contemporary Western tradition that they treated as anomaly. Crusading against the West, the traditionalists tended to prioritize non-Western cultures and spiritualities, holding them in a high esteem and contrasting them with the corrupt and materialistic Judeo-Christian tradition. Incidentally, the latter intellectual stance resonates well with the reverence of the “non-Western ones” that became popular in Europe and North America since the 1960s onward.

It is also important to stress again that historically traditionalism, which draws on European Romanticism and its irrationalism, symbolism and non-conventional spirituality, has numerous links to Western esotericism (Versluis 2007: 143–147). All past and present writers and scholars associated with traditionalism have been very interested in various types of occult and inner knowledge. Eliade was not an exception in this case. As part of Western esotericism, traditionalism claims that it is possible to regain ultimate spiritual knowledge and truth. It also insists on illuminating people through reshaping their conscience. Avatars of traditionalism have stressed that true knowledge is not available to wide masses, whose minds are clouded by materialism, rationalism and trivialities. Guenon believed that it was the only intellectual elite in the West that was able to be illuminated and then to become a “ferment” that would breed in regular human minds the reverence of tradition.

The traditionalism project invited people to go down to the most archaic layers of culture. The message here is very simple: the older the better. If contemporary religion was corrupted by modernity and did not contain anything worthy of revival, if some early modern traditions were equally ambivalent as a source of inner knowledge, it meant that it was necessary to dig farther in our most ancient archetypes for the most traditional and therefore the most reliable spiritual blueprints and eventually bring them to light. For some traditionalist writers it was not so much Oriental religious traditions and European Middle Ages but rather what had preceded them that were to provide the sources for spiritual regeneration. Hinduism and Buddhism were certainly better than contemporary mainstream Christianity and contained much traditional material to serve the spiritual revitalization of Westerners. Yet, what if we dig deeper, moving toward the most ancient layers of human tradition such as pagan, tribal and Stone Age civilizations that were presumably purer than later cultural additions? Shall not we stumble in the process of this movement upon something that is more archaic and therefore more authentic? I suggest that this was precisely the direction that Eliade was moving at when he decided to embark on his shamanism project.

Eliade saw his own mission as one of uncovering common ancient patterns hidden under the thick layer of “civilization.” Writing the book on shamanism was part of the effort to descend to the depth of the human spiritual tradition, to find the roots of the primal religion

and to decipher its universal archaic patterns that could be retrieved for future spiritual regeneration. Incidentally, Eliade became enchanted by the very word archaic, which he frequently used as a synonym for the ancient or the primordial. On many occasions, he indiscriminately used this word to describe Stone Age people, classical civilizations, and modern “primitives,” all of whom he considered to be the carriers of primordial wisdom lost by modern civilization. Shamanism appeared to him as the manifestation of the most archaic primal spirituality that sprang up independently among all peoples. Furthermore, Eliade implied that this knowledge could be brought back to help his contemporaries reestablish a direct contact with the sacred.

Learning from the Tribal and Ancient Ones

According to Eliade, what “archaic” peoples could do and what modern ones were unable to do was returning to the primal time through the myth and ritual. In so-called primal societies, the whole life moved in a cycle, which brought a spiritual order, security and stability. One can express this view with the famous Native American metaphor of the sacred circle so popular in present nature spiritualities of Europe and North America. Eliade speculated that the downfall of Western society happened when it squeezed the sacred cycle from its life and, like an arrow, headed forward toward progress. That was when Westerners cut themselves from their primal roots. Living under a constant “terror of history,” people belonging to Judeo-Christian civilization had to pay a high price: meaningless existence, stress, and eventually death. Eliade believed that many contemporary problems originated from denigrating the sacred and spiritual in the Western tradition and creating idols of science and technology. It was only natural that throughout his career the scholar remained a stout critic of the Enlightenment tradition with its stress on rationalism and linear development.

Eliade explained his keen attention to archaic spirituality by his desire to correct the bias of Eurocentrism, which systematically diminished and ignored archaic myths and beliefs: “I’m trying to open windows onto other worlds for Westerners—even if some of these worlds foundered tens of thousands of years ago. My dialogue has other interlocutors than those of Freud or James Joyce: I’m trying to understand a Paleolithic hunter, a yogi or a shaman, a peasant from Indonesia, an African, etc., and communicate with each one.” (Allen 1998: 301) The

scholar contended that before it was too late, Europeans and Americans should learn from the non-Western other in order to see the surrounding world through the lens of the myth and the spiritual, which would bring people back to the original harmony.

Eliade repeatedly stressed that although we were condemned to live within Western culture and history, people should find out ways to shield themselves against their powers. At least for himself, the writer outlined the following agenda: “My essential preoccupation is precisely the means of escaping History, of saving myself through symbol, myth, rites, archetypes.” To Eliade, such a mindset was a fulfillment of a natural human need to go beyond the ordinary realm into the world of dreaming, mythology, and imagination. After all, as he emphasized in his autobiography, “the thirst for the fantastic, for daydreaming, for adventure has remained as unquenched as ever in the soul of modern man.” (Allen 1998: 273)

Since Western civilization had relegated the ancient knowledge to the level of the subconscious, our job would be to reactivate it and bring it to the conscious level. Eliade argued that the first step for Westerners toward the sacred was to learn how to take seriously symbols, metaphors, and stories—everything that might bear the remnants of ancient archetypes. The most accessible way for modern people to escape profane time and space and return to the mythological past was fiction. Eliade was convinced that in contemporary society literature was one of the remaining strongholds of ancient mythological conscience; he called fiction the “residue of mythological behavior” in modern world. Although the scholar admitted that the time spent reading a novel was certainly not the same as the reenactment of a myth by an “archaic” person, it was still some way to abolish linear history. Eliade himself was a fiction writer directly involved in the production of this Western version of mythological consciousness. In his autobiographical notes, he repeatedly talked about himself as a person of the dual vocation—a scholar and a writer.

As I have already mentioned in the beginning of this essay, while writing his *Shamanism*, Eliade simultaneously worked on a mystery novel, *The Forbidden Forest*. At one point, torn between these two projects, he put aside his research on the “archaic techniques of ecstasy” and totally devoted himself to the fiction. It is also important to note that in the beginning of his career in the 1930s, Eliade was a noticeable figure in Romania’s literary world as an essayist and the writer. His scholarly

texts should not be disentangled from his fiction. On the surface, they are formatted as academic texts with endnotes and appropriate jargon. Yet, like the works of his traditionalist colleagues, Eliade's scholarly books and articles are not, strictly speaking, conventional academic writings. Injected with a large dose of imagination, they are located somewhere in the middle ground between mainstream scholarship and literature. In his shamanism book, addressed to all contemporaries who are ready to fly on the wings of their imagination, Eliade immersed his readers in the fabulous world populated by gods and magicians, the world where everything was possible. Here, the dead returned to life; people disappeared and reappeared or turned into animals and vice versa; laws of nature were abolished; and human beings were endowed with the power to freely ascend heavenly heights. I think the term "visionary scholar" best defines such writers as Eliade.

Archetypes of Primal Religion: Eliade's Vision of Shamanism

Eliade believed that learning about religions of modern and ancient tribal people, one could identify the blueprints or, using Carl Jung's famous expression, archetypes of the primal religion, which were corrupted and distorted by later civilizations. In his *Shamanism* book and other writings, Eliade identified and described a number of primal archetypes. Thus, one of the chief universal blueprints that manifested itself in shamanism was ecstasy (altered state), which shamans used worldwide to interact with the sacred. Another universal pattern he detected was the shamanic ascent (flight) to the heavenly world.

As an example, let us see how Eliade explained the universal origin of the latter archetype. The scholar began his book on "archaic techniques of ecstasy" with an example of the Altaian shaman ritually climbing a birch tree during his séance—the ascent to the "heavenly" sphere. For the description of the typical shamanic séance, Eliade relied on Wilhelm Radloff's *Aus Sibirien* (1884). If we assume for a moment, said Eliade, that the idea of ascension came from the Tibetan Buddhism, which was in close proximity to the Altai, it would be a false suggestion. One could find similar rituals of ascension to heaven all over the world among people who had nothing to do whatsoever with the ancient



Fig. 3. On the quest for archetypes of primal religion; according to Eliade, one of these archetypes was the cosmic center (*axis mundi*), which, for example, manifested itself in the cross-cultural idea of the world tree. Drawing from Philpot (1897: 115).

Orient. Therefore, concluded the scholar, we must assume that the very symbol of celestial ascent was wired into the spirituality of people all over the world. In this case, it “belongs to man as such, not to man as a historical being” (1964: xiv). In the same manner, Eliade discussed the religious experiences of other ancient and modern people.

Eliade also devoted much attention to another important universal idea, the symbolism of the center (*axis mundi*). He pointed out that manifestations of this symbol could be diverse among various peoples: the shamanic world tree, the sacred mountain, the bridge that Siberian shamans use to access the world of spirits during their spiritual journeys, the smoke hole in a nomadic yurt, the shaman drum, and temples or sacred towns in more “advanced” civilizations (fig. 3). Still, in essence, all of them conveyed the universal archetypal idea of the center. For example, to Eliade, the fact that the Siberian shamanic drum was made of wood of ritually selected trees pointed to the link with the world tree, which again mirrored the idea of the mystical center.

He also stressed that the shamanic universe worldwide consisted of three levels (another archetypical pattern): the upper, middle, and lower worlds, which are connected by the central axis (the world tree or the sacred mountain). Eliade certainly knew well that the picture of spiritual universes varied among different cultures. For example, in his shamanism book, he indicated that, among the Altaians, some people believed that there were seven “heavens,” while others talked about nine “heavens.” Still, eager to locate universal patterns, Eliade called such variations later additions that “contaminated” the deeply grounded universal archaic idea of three worlds. For example, he suggested that the idea of the seven-layered cosmos reached several Siberian indigenous groups through the classical Orient. Always on the quest for ancient cross-cultural religious symbolism, Eliade stood close to Jung, another visionary scholar who later became popular in countercultural circles and who shared a somewhat similar vision of the sacred. Although Jung’s ideas were grounded in the scholarship of psychology, like Eliade, he was interested in identifying cross-cultural archetypes of spiritual life.

The particular universal symbols Eliade identified in shamanism entered his scholarship through Finnish folklore writings that discuss Eurasian mythologies. Especially important were *Der Baum des Lebens* (1922) and *Die religiösen Vorstellungen der Altaischen Völker* (1938) by Uno Harva-Holmberg. Eliade took the archetypical symbolism that Harva-Holmberg found in the mythology and spirituality of Eurasian peoples and extended it to the rest of the world. Another influence came from the ethnographies of Siberian regionalists, who also searched for universal patterns in Eurasian mythology and whose works Eliade knew from German translations and renditions.

It is notable that in “The Formation of North Asian Shamanism,” which represents the conclusion to his shamanism book, Eliade challenged those who believed that shamanism was a regionally based spiritual practice characteristic of northern Asia—a stance popular among many scholars from the 1920s to the 1940s, when the expression “shamanism” was not yet used so loosely as today. Just as Sergei Shirokogoroff found a Buddhist connection in Tungus (Evenki) shamanism, Eliade acknowledged the link between Tibetan Buddhism and the indigenous beliefs of southern Siberia. Did this mean that Buddhism molded Evenki shamanism, as Shirokogoroff suggested? Eliade

did not think so and stressed that Tungus shamanism was not a creation of Buddhism; he even italicized these words (1964: 498).

The scholar wrote that Oriental tradition might have affected the form of Evenki shamanism. After all, their spiritual pantheon did include Buddhist deities. The crux of Eliade's point was however that such an influence hardly affected universal archaic patterns of shamanism: the concept of the center, the world tree, the ecstasy, and the celestial ascent to the heaven. The scholar insisted that, despite all of the changes and innovations, the core elements of shamanism, which were deeply wired in all archaic cultures, remained the same. It was therefore natural for Eliade to surmise that each shamanism, if cleansed of local cultural traits and alien "coatings," would always manifest its universal primal archetypes.

Christian Allegories

How can one differentiate between archaic and modern elements in shamanism in this case? Eliade answered this question by relying on his creative imagination, which was certainly informed by his background, intellectual leanings and biases. For example, he somehow assumed that the magic flight of the shaman to the heavenly sphere (upper world) to secure help from celestial beings was an idea that went back to archaic times, whereas the descent of the shaman to the lower world was a later innovation. The scholar implied that, in archaic times, spiritual forces were divided into good, benevolent deities, which resided in the heavenly sphere, and evil beings, which inhabited the underworld. In reality, many indigenous tribal societies never knew such a division. For example, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ethnographic accounts tell us that indigenous peoples of Siberia and North America treated all spiritual forces, no matter where they resided, as neutral. The spirits could become benevolent or evil depending on how well humans appeased them.

In contrast, Eliade's ultimate shaman yearned for flights to the heavens and viewed spiritual journeys to the lower world as descents to hell. The scholar treated these lower-world shamanic journeys as a later innovation layered over the archaic spirituality. Eliade characteristically called them "infernal" travels to the land populated by "demons." Note his use of Christian allegories. Following the blueprint of archaic shamanism he built for himself, Eliade (1964: 500) suggested that Evenki shamanism

was “decadent” because their spiritual practitioners devoted too little attention to the ascent to the sky (the archaic technique).

Critics correctly contended that in prioritizing the upper world over the lower world, Eliade betrayed his Christian bias rather than described the actual evolution of shamanism. The biblical metaphors were certainly detrimental to his project of composing a cross-cultural portrait of shamanism, an effort that otherwise might be sound. For example, Eliade linked the very origin of the shamanic vocation worldwide to the idea of the human “fall.” He wrote that, from various myths worldwide, we learn that in some unidentified primal time people had lived in a sacred manner in intimate harmony with the natural world. Animals had talked to people, and people had talked to animals. In fact, they had been so close to each other that human beings could turn into animals and then back into human beings. At that time of spiritual paradise, everybody could directly access the sacred.

In “The Yearning for Paradise in Primitive Tradition,” which represents a condensed summary of his shamanism book, Eliade noted that as soon as humans broke their intimate connection with “heaven” by separating themselves from the natural world, they lost their easy access to the sacred. At the same time, people immediately began to long for its return, feeling “nostalgia for paradise.” Fortunately, noted the scholar, ancient and modern tribal societies were able to stay in tune with the sacred through special mediators—shamans—who helped common folk “to reconstitute the state of primordial man” (1962: 86).

Shamans were those few individuals who through their esoteric practices maintained the original ability of people to talk with sacred animals, to turn into them, and to come back to the ordinary world. All ritual activities of shamans appeared to Eliade as exercises in the mystical reconstruction of the primordial natural state lost by humans. As an example, the scholar used the widespread shamanic practice of imitating the voices of animals. While for many earlier observers, who viewed tribal spiritualities through the eyes of psychiatry, this practice was evidence of shamans’ bizarre behavior, to Eliade, such mimicking meant the establishment of “friendship with animals,” which led to the acquisition of “animal spontaneity” and eventually advanced the spiritual practitioners “far beyond the general situation of ‘fallen’ humanity” (1962: 88, 90–91, 98).

Eliade believed that, through shamans, tribal people learned how to deal with this original fall and therefore never lost their connection with the natural heaven. In contrast, those societies that stepped on the shaky

path of civilization and organized religions experienced a second fall, which proved to be fatal. According to Eliade, the circle of traditional spirituality, represented by myths and shamanic rituals and used to symbolically return people to the state of paradise, became broken. At that point, the spiritual became not only distant and less accessible but also went underground to the level of the unconscious. Eventually, the “fall” into civilization led people to the swamp of secularism, stressed Eliade. In Western civilization, the sacred was doomed to linger as nostalgia on the level of fantasies, literature, art, music, or social theory. The exception was Christian mystics, whom Eliade considered to be modern versions of shamans. In all other respects, in his view, modern society was not capable of producing any human agents who, like the shamans of old, could spiritually return people to the lost paradise.

Although Christian allegories have flawed Eliade’s scholarship, they might have simultaneously added to the popularity of his books among spiritual seekers in the 1960s and 1970s. After all, the biases he spilled into his writings were the biases of an ecumenical writer scholar open to all kinds of spiritual experiences as long as they fit his Romantic traditionalism and went beyond mainstream Judeo-Christian religion. The mind of Eliade was affected not only by biblical idioms but also by a variety of Occidental and Oriental metaphors. Among them were the ones that came from European mysticism and astrology, nature-oriented Christianity of Eastern European peasants, Hindu tradition and from other spiritual systems outside of the Western historical religions. Philosopher Douglas Allen (1998: 123), who produced a balanced intellectual biography of Eliade, stresses, “Eliade was an eclectic, synthesizing, universalizing thinker whose religious orientation was influenced by a combination of non-Western archaic phenomena, Hindu and other forms of Asian spirituality, cosmic Christianity and other forms of ‘cosmic religion’, and other expressions of the sacred.”

Eliade himself stressed that all his life he struggled to understand the variety of people whose sole “job” was to believe: the shaman, the yogi, and the Australian aborigine along with famous Christian saints such as Meister Eckhart or Saint Francis of Assisi (Allen 1998: 121). With such a mindset, Eliade certainly never was a Christian religious scholar, as his critics sometimes depict him. The intellectual world and scholarship of Eliade rather revolved around the search for parallels among religions and mythologies world wide, keen attention to marginal and occult spiritual experiences, to the human fall and a possibility of future illumination in order to gain inner knowledge. In fact, these intellectual leanings allow

us to place Eliade not only into the rank of traditionalist writers but also into the broad tradition of Western esotericism.

Later on, in the 1960s, Eliade's scholarship loaded with the above-mentioned sentiments began to appeal to American and European spiritual seekers who revolted against Western civilization and who felt at home with all his eclectic cross-cultural symbolism. Like Eliade, many of these people came from the same Judeo-Christian tradition, which they distrusted, and similarly fed on the variety of non-Western, pre-Christian, early Christian, and Western esoteric spiritualities.

Responses of Western Spiritual Seekers and Academia

It is important to remember that Eliade himself sought to reach out not only to academics but also to general audiences that appreciated the world of the spiritual. Thus, contemplating his shamanism book, Eliade (1990: 91) especially stressed that he did not want to restrict himself to writing an academic treatise: "It would please me if this book, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*, would be read by a few poets, dramatists, literary critics, and painters. Perhaps some of them would profit more from the reading of it than would certain orientalists and historians of religion."

In his foreword to the book, Eliade again pointed out that his text was primarily designed for the non-specialist. It was quite a brave hope to harbor such an expectation in the early 1950s, the time of reigning positivism and psychoanalysis. And the scholar understood this. In fact, while nourishing that hope, he had no illusions about attracting a large audience among his contemporaries. Moreover, in the same foreword he admitted that his descriptions of shamanism and its paraphernalia would most probably leave many readers cold. Indeed, when in 1951 the first French edition of his shamanism book was published, non-Western and especially tribal spirituality was still the object of a marginal, mostly ethnographic interest. Nevertheless, Eliade prophetically wrote that the fate of European culture depended on dialogue with the non-European spiritual universe. And, sure enough, when Westerners became troubled about their own Judeo-Christian civilization in the 1960s, they increasingly turned to the books of such intellectual avatars as Eliade, who promoted both the spiritual legacy of the "non-Western ones" and the marginalized traditions of European esotericism. Also, Eliade might have sensed that the era of intellectual positivism was coming to its end.

Hinting in his shamanism book that “things change,” he stressed that the world of modern and ancient archaic peoples was neither less consistent nor less interesting than the contemporary Western world. Moreover, he pointed out that any cultivated person who was a true humanist could benefit from learning about non-Western beliefs, “for it has been some time since humanism has ceased to be identified with the spiritual tradition of the West, great and fertile though that is.” (Eliade 1964: xx)

Indeed, things changed. In the 1960s and 1970s, counterculture came to challenge mainstream Judeo-Christian tradition and environmentalism became elevated to the status of a new secular religion. A wide circle of scholars and spiritual seekers became interested in tapping archaic layers of spirituality, including shamanism. This new revolt against the modern world encompassed much wider circles of people than traditionalist movement in the 1920s and in the 1930s. Although some current seekers who are interested in “archaic techniques of ecstasy” do criticize Eliade for factual flaws, for many of them, his book remains a major text on classical shamanism. The power of Eliade’s scholarship is his ability to capture the anti-rationalist aspirations of his contemporary Western audiences and point the direction in which the spiritual seeker might search for alternatives.

In addition to the rehabilitation of nature religions in the eyes of Westerners, he stretched out the geographic borders of the shamanism metaphor. In a sense, Eliade made shamanism go global. His predecessors tended to restrict this phenomenon to Siberia, arctic areas, and western North America. In contrast, Eliade invited scholars and seekers to apply this idiom to all non-Western and pre-Christian European spiritualities, which did not fit the format of organized world religions and in which spiritual practitioners worked in altered states.

In the wake of the Eliade book, which exonerated tribal beliefs and broadened the meaning of the term “shamanism,” scholars and writers gradually began to revisit such old labels as possession, sorceress, magician, and witch doctor, which they had earlier used to describe tribal spiritual practices. By the end of the 1960s, this dated usage looked anachronistic and begged for change. In these circumstances, the Eliadean usage proved very attractive. The words shaman and shamanism were certainly convenient substitutes because they lacked the negative aura associated with the above-mentioned terms. Although such popular expressions as medicine man and medicine woman did survive in academic and popular writings, they were tied too much to

the North American ethnological realm. For this reason, these gender-colored terms did not always look as general and neutral as shaman to serve as effective descriptions of traditional spiritual practitioners.

Another attraction of shamanism as a definition was its emphasis on the sovereignty of tribal spiritual practitioners. Eliade's shamans acted as charismatic heroes who called in their spirit helpers at will and boldly transcended time and space, establishing contact with the forces of other worlds. Dwelling on Shirokogoroff's book on Evenki shamans, Eliade stressed that tribal spiritual practitioners cemented their communities, bringing stability, order, and security. Without these individuals, tribal groups were doomed to disintegrate.⁴ Overall, this portrayal of the shaman fit the changing attitude toward non-Western cultures, which reemerged from obscurity in the 1960s and 1970s. A student of African traditional religions, I. M. Lewis captured well this changing attitude when he wrote: "The shaman is thus the symbol not of subjection and despondency but of independence and hope." (1989: 169) This was a statement that in fact said not so much about shamanism proper but catered more to the cultural aspirations of emerging African nations that did not want their spiritualities to be marginalized as sorcery and witch doctoring.

For better or worse, with his volume, Eliade rehabilitated spiritual practitioners in nature religions, whom earlier scholars had marginalized as mental deviants, sorcerers, and witch doctors (pl. 15). Placing tribal spiritualities on the same level with so-called world religions, he stressed, "The manifestation of the sacred in a stone or a tree is neither less mysterious nor less noble than its manifestation in a 'god.'" (Eliade 1964: xvii) Thus, shamanism, which had been earlier considered primitive, in the eyes of educated Westerners now was shining as the spiritual foundation that could anchor disenchanting Western seekers.

Neo-shamanism became one of the Western spiritualities that capitalized on the Eliadean vision of "archaic techniques of ecstasy." Thus, this vision had a profound effect on anthropologist Michael Harner, the "founding father" of neo-shamanism in the West. Thus, the intellectual legacy of Eliade is clearly visible in "core shamanism," a psychotherapeutic technique Harner developed by singling out what he viewed as

⁴ Later, some post-modernist anthropologists, who came to view shamans as spiritual anarchists, who through their "carnival sessions" reenacted contradictions existing in society, dismissed such vision of shamanism as a "fascist fascination." For more on this, see Znamenski 2007: 230–231.

common archetypes of shamanism from all over the world. Introducing the “core shamanism” techniques in his classic manual *The Way of the Shaman*, Harner wrote (1980: 41), “It is precisely because of the consistency of this ancient power and healing system that Eliade and others can speak with confidence of the occurrence of shamanism among peoples long isolated from one another.”

To some extent, “core shamanism” became a fulfillment of Eliade’s dream about recovering the archaic knowledge for the benefit of modern humanity. Like Eliade, Harner wrote about a time of golden paradise when animals and humans lived in unity, which was subsequently lost. He similarly noted that, after humanity’s fall, shamans remained the only people who were able to stay in contact with the animal world. Again, like Eliade, the founder of “core shamanism” stressed that, despite dramatic historical changes, modern tribal groups living in remote areas still maintained the basics of their shamanic knowledge intact.

A characteristic feature of the entire Eliadean scholarship was his dislike of any approach that placed religion in specific contexts; he called these contexts “parasites on the religious phenomenon.” The scholar was convinced that the sacred should be singled out and discussed on its own terms without being reduced to social life, history, economics, and brain function. This method became known as the phenomenological approach. Eliade stressed that he looked into “dreams, hallucinations, and images of ascent found everywhere in the world apart from any historical or other ‘conditions.’” He explained that his goal was not to ground shamanism in a particular culture, history, or place but to capture its universal nature. In the late 1940s, when Eliade was still contemplating his volume on “archaic techniques of ecstasy,” scholars preferred to scrutinize shamanism through the eyes of psychiatry. With his shamanism book, Eliade revolted against this particular approach. In 1946, he noted in his diary (Eliade 1990: 18), “I must present shamanism in the general perspective of the history of religions rather than as an aberrant phenomenon belonging more to psychiatry.”

Eliade was interested in shamanic experience for its own sake and naturally downplayed its mundane aspects. An example was the manner in which Eliade explained the origin of the respect for and reverence of shamans among non-literate people. Thus, he suggested that tribal spiritual practitioners gained prestige and power not by curing the sick, producing rain, or protecting their communities from aggression, but through surpassing people around them in the amount of sacred power

they accumulated. He insisted that this was how ancient and modern elementary societies thought about successful shamans.

Although popular with spiritual seekers, Eliade's phenomenological approach and his entire scholarship are now out of favor in mainstream academia, especially among anthropologists. To be exact, Eliade's interpretation of shamanism remains appealing to scholars who work in religious and literary studies. It appears that these disciplines more easily accommodate impressionistic vision of shamanism than does anthropology, which is keen on cultural particulars. Anthropologists, who are considered the major experts on tribal and elementary societies, distaste his attempt to dilute spiritual techniques of modern and ancient tribal peoples to locate the archetypes of "generic shamanism." Moreover, Eliade's cross-cultural and universal vision of shamanism does not exactly fit the present-day postmodernist thinking that favors the unique, the different, the particular and treats with suspicion any grand comparison—the method Eliade used in his numerous books and articles. It is notable that in the 1960s, before the rise of postmodernism, many anthropologists did express an interest in Eliade's scholarship, frequently referring to his shamanism book.

There is certainly a legitimate reason for the skeptical attitude to cross-cultural generalizations. Namely, this is a concern about the sources of these generalizations. Are these sources representative enough? Or they are simply accidentally acquired facts filtered through Western eyes? Unsure about drawing broad conclusions and plagued by the permanent fear of somehow offending "non-Western ones," today many anthropologists shy away from drawing broad comparisons and conclusions. They feel more comfortable restricting themselves to specific cultures and letting "natives" speak up about their own traditions. These scholars argue that such Eliadean concepts as ecstasy, celestial flight, the three world spheres, and the cosmic center (world tree), which he canonized as universal pillars of shamanism worldwide, fall apart when cast against specific beliefs.

In fact, many anthropologists have tried to change or totally discard the very definition of shamanism. This trend began in the 1960s with Clifford Geertz, the late dean of American postmodernism, who argued that such abstractions as shamanism or totemism, which had been invented by Westerners, were meaningless and only served interested scholars as convenient tools to sort their materials. In an attempt to part with the Eliadean cross-cultural vision of shamanism, anthropologist Jane Monig Atkinson (1992) intentionally introduced the plural expression "sha-

manisms” to underline the fact that tribal spiritual practices were unique and resisted generalization. Archaeologist Robert J. Wallis (2003) picked up the same expression to describe the diversity of spiritual practices of modern neo-shamanism.

More serious concerns have been raised regarding the credibility of Eliade as a researcher. Indeed, Eliade was a perfect example of an armchair scholar—extremely well read in secondary sources, he never observed a single shaman. For anthropologists who consider field experience a prerequisite for any solid insight into the culture of others, this “arrogant” bookish approach discredits his whole scholarship. Critics have also pointed out that his shamanism treatise contains factual mistakes, especially when he talks about cultural particulars. In all fairness, the absence of such mistakes would have been strange in any scholarly project that involves cross-cultural comparisons. Unless we silently agree to weed out any generalizations from the humanities and social sciences and “tribalize” our knowledge staying within the realm of the particular, the unique and the individual, this type of mistakes will be unavoidable.

Critics also pointed out that Eliade’s scholarship, including his shamanism book, reveals ideological biases. For example, anthropologist Wallis, the author of one of the most comprehensive studies of neo-shamanism, and several others pointed to Eliade’s Christian biases. As we have seen, there is certain truth in this statement. At the same time, these biases are no more “Christian” than those of current New Age, neo-pagan, and nature spirituality writers who, although being raised within Christian tradition, are also informed by the host of Buddhism, Hinduism, Nordic and Native American ethnographic, folklore and other “biases.”

More serious are accusations of the Romanian scholar in pro-fascist sympathies, which goes back to Eliade’s prewar public media essays that spoke favorably about Romanian nationalism and praised indigenous soil and tradition in general. Thus, philosopher Kelley Ross has argued that, since the writings of the Romanian *émigré* scholar privileged non-rational “archaic religion,” Eliade’s scholarship should be linked to the “neo-pagan amorality of the Nazis” (Sedgwick 2004: 109–117). It appears that to some writers the mere mentioning of pagan

symbols or spiritual quests that involve pagan and especially Nordic folklore is still associated with Nazi tradition.⁵

On a final note, in her recent book anthropologist Barbara Tedlock has claimed that psychoanalysis popular in the 1940s and 1950s heavily affected Eliade's shamanism book, which is simply not true. In fact, as we saw, one of the major goals of Eliade's *Shamanism* was to completely revisit psychological and psychoanalytical interpretations of the "archaic techniques of ecstasy." Tedlock (2005: 64) also insisted that, under the influence of psychoanalysis, Eliade downplayed the role of female shamans in history. It is true that Eliade privileged male shamanism and denigrated the historical role of female practitioners of shamanism. Yet it has nothing to do with psychoanalysis. If one puts Eliade's shamanism book in the context of time, it will be clear that the writer simply mirrored the general Victorian patriarchic attitudes toward women—a practice that was still widespread in intellectual and cultural life in the post war Europe.

By separating valid criticism of Eliade from unwarranted accusations, putting his scholarship in the time context, and exploring ideas that shaped him as a scholar and writer, one will understand more clearly what motivated him to embark on his grand shamanism project, which spread the shamanism metaphor into Western humanities and social sciences and eventually affected numerous spiritual seekers.

⁵ Occasionally, the mere mentioning of Nordic pagan deities serves as a red flag. After Timothy White, the editor of *Shaman's Drum*, suggested that Western spiritual seekers follow in the footsteps of Odin, reader Hal Litoff became immediately concerned about the implications of this statement. Litoff pointed out that Odin was a warrior god, which, in his view, contradicted the benevolent nature of modern Western shamanism. He noted that Odin was included in the state religion of Nazi Germany and served as the foundation for the occult practices of Heinrich Himmler's SS. Litoff's particular fear was that following a shaman's path by using such symbols as Odin might be a truly Faustian bargain. In his reply, White noted that it is not about who used particular deities but about how spiritual seekers use them and what manifestations of deities we choose to appropriate. Acknowledging that Odin was a god of war, White also stressed that this deity was also the god of prophecy. As such, he continued, this deity manifested the Nordic shamanic vision-questing tradition and can be safely restored without bringing back Norse war practices. Interestingly, as an analogy, White uses the Plains Indians' Sun Dance. Originally linked to the Indian warfare tradition and brutal self-mutilation, in the hands of modern Indian and Western spiritual seekers, the tradition evolved into a benevolent ritual of renewal and the continuation of life. "Letters," *Shaman's Drum* 56 (2000): 10.

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ANDREI ZNAMENSKI, Associate Professor of History, Alabama State University, is currently Assistant Professor of History at the University of Memphis. His most recent book, *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and Western Imagination* (2007) has been published by Oxford University Press.

Book Review

ANDREI A. ZNAMENSKI. *The Beauty of the Primitive. Shamanism and the Western Imagination*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 2007. ISBN 978-0-19-517231-7. xv, 434 p. US\$ 40.00.

Andrei A. Znamenski has published a number of important works on shamanism in the past decade. It became clear earlier on, in his three-volume anthology (*Shamanism: Critical Concepts*, 2004)—the most wide-ranging collection of studies on shamanism—that he prefers writings from a variety of theoretical and methodological points of view or those that place shamanism into new contexts. Having started out as a Russian scholar, continued his research in the US and taught as a professor in Japan, among other places, Znamenski is uniquely up to the task of writing a comprehensive book on interpretations of shamanism and its manifestations. This more recent book is one of the most outstanding surveys of the history of research on shamanism, replete with a great deal of clearly categorized data and with perfectly serviceable, sensible comments by the author. In sum, it is a fundamental, important work. The book itself is attractive, painstakingly edited and appropriately priced.

Moreover, it is enjoyable for its articulate style. The author also mentions facts and connections which may surprise even the average researcher on shamanism. Since he covers a number of continents (and does not simply analyse the shaman séances of a single tribe in detail), it can automatically be regarded as a handbook.

In his preface, the author gives an account of the circumstances under which the book came into being. He himself regards his work as one of cultural history and notes as its immediate forerunner Gloria Flaherty's book (1992) on the presence of shamanism in 18th-century European thought. Another important precursor is Kocku von Stuckrad's work on the history of western esotericism (2003), especially with regard to the nascent ideas that have led to contemporary western "plastic shamanism."

The book consists of nine chapters, each of which focuses primarily on one particular period or problem. Chapter one deals with the Enlightenment and Romanticism; the second chapter discusses anthropological collections that have emerged since the late 19th century (primarily due to the work of deportees to Siberia); the third offers psychological explanations; chapter four covers hallucinogenic plants; five discusses how the study of shamanism spread throughout the world (e.g. Eliade and Castaneda); six introduces the neo-shamanism that has consequently emerged; the seventh chapter surveys its variations in contemporary western cultures; the eighth investigates the neo-shamanistic redefinitions of traditional European mythologies, religions and rites; and the ninth discusses how these may have emerged as worldviews. The author discusses numerous scholars and phenomena in each chapter. The book closes with an epilogue about the role of the descendants of shamanism in the contemporary world. Here as elsewhere, the author emphasises how important elements borrowed, or believed to have been borrowed, from shamanism are often used in manipulated contemporary consumer substitutes for religion.

The author uses endnotes for his sources. These are followed by a seven-page bibliographical essay, in which he offers a list of the most significant scholarly works in the field and a brief description of each. There is, therefore, no list of works cited as such although, by my estimation, the book contains at least 1300 references. A name and subject index is integrated, carefully constructed and divided into 500 main entries or so. Many items can, therefore, be located, but not everybody and everything since the scope of the book and the references used in it are broad and not everyone is listed in the index.

The subtitle captures the contents of the work more accurately than the poetic title does. Znamenski is knowledgeable on the history of research on shamanism and is primarily interested in biographical facts and theoretical correspondences. He, therefore, does not show the world history of shamanism but does discuss both methods typically used and significant researchers in the field. Since a major section at the end of the book is devoted to contemporary neo-shamanism or the new esoteric movements, the author places special emphasis on the antecedents to these in the early chapters.

Naturally, the book centres on Siberia but the author also considers North American shamanism as of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, along with Central and South American shamanism, our under-

standing of which owes much to the work of Castaneda and Harner. The author occasionally includes India and other regions as well. The work contains a number of edifying images (including those of plants containing hallucinoids and rare portraits of researchers on shamanism). He borrowed these from sources other than the omnipresent and vague handbooks. His illustrations are well justified, truly integral to the argumentation of the book and supplied with the necessary explanations as well. Still, this is not a pictorial publication. Nor is it a systematic analysis of shamanistic phenomena in the world. It does not cover the shamanism of the Sakha or the Saami either. That was not the author's purpose. If we, therefore, do not find, say, the entries *Mongolia* or *Mongols* in the index, this does not mean that there has never been shamanism in that land or among those people. (It does exist there as the author notes in the book—though this is not covered with encyclopaedic conciseness or fullness.)

This is exactly why it would be difficult to sum up the author's claims about his historical data and his conclusions even in a longish article. This review attempts to offer a mere glimpse into his argumentation.

Right in the first chapter, Znamenski introduces a number of views and tendencies. The reader is exposed to a variety of notions from the first descriptions of Siberia to the important Finno-Ugric research of the 19th century and Radloff's works on Turkology. At first, shamans were viewed as servants of the devil, and later as magicians. At times, they were asked to perform in clown shows. Shamanism itself was considered to have originated in India, then, as a result of Romanticism, it was seen as a religion close to nature and as the ancient religion of certain peoples. Shamans were already being idealized by such figures as Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903), an odd character who believed that shamanism represented the worldview of America's indigenous people. Originating from Inner Asia, shamanism reached these people via the ancient inhabitants of Northern Europe, who passed it on to the Inuit, who then spread it to the Natives of Labrador and New England. Having spread fantastical ideas in other areas of mysticism as well, Leland left behind views that can still be found in contemporary esotericism—but today they are actually the least tied to shamanism.

I do not wish to argue against Znamenski's views, nor to replace them with my own. Nevertheless, I must note that it is no mean feat to follow his argumentation at times. He is certainly right that the two-syllable word *shaman* cannot be directly related to Sanskrit. However, his rec-

ommendations regarding a one-syllable original form and etymology related to Tungus are similarly unfounded. It also seems to me that he is too ready to refer to too many things as simply being “romantic” or a matter of “natural philosophy.” He seems to use the former expression for anything he considers a curiosity, while he applies the latter to signify cases in which nature is simply integrated into a religion—where agriculture, industry and writing cultures, that is, the non-natural factors, are missing because these were not part of, for example, the culture of the Samoyed.

The second chapter on the heyday of folklorist research on shamanism mentions C. G. Jung, Oswald Spengler, Pablo Picasso and Vladimir Kandinsky, among others, with good reason. However, if we were to have a closer look at the matrix of connections between them, we would obtain quite a complex picture. (Naturally, if Znamenski had studied these in such documentary detail, his book would have been five times longer.) Since I myself also often quote the poem “Venus and the Shaman” by the genius modernist poet Velemir Khlebnikov, I understand why he uses the lines in which an outmoded Venus complains that she is being replaced by the shaman as the new vogue, and thus wants to become a shaman herself, leading a simple life in the forest. However, I also remember the end of the poem, which tells us how brief and fruitless their meeting was (“*Shamana vstrecha i Veneri – byla tak kratka...*”). That is, creating this new natural-mythological religion has borne no fruit.

Znamenski used the term “Siberian regionalists” for Russian ethnographers of the second half of the 19th century who viewed the belief system of the native tribes there as primarily ancient and natural. They were regarded to be so ancient that some proposed to link them with Greek pantheism, and others with Christianity. The connection was put forward as follows: it was not the world religions that spread in the Altaic Mountains, but the other way round. As Potanin wrote, the basic principles of Christianity originated in the old beliefs of Inner Asia. And he was also “able” to prove this. He maintained that it was not only the stories of Solomon the Wise that came from the Mongol shamans, but that theirs was also the original home of mankind, around the riverhead of the Irtish, to be more precise—indeed, the place where Potanin was born. The Siberian regionalists introduced real shamans to a broader public as well. It was similar to the time when Americans discovered the art, lifestyle and wisdom of the Native Americans. The most frequently

mentioned example of this is a rich and eccentric woman from New York, Mabel Dodge Luhan, who unexpectedly moved to New Mexico in 1917, where she established an avant-garde artistic community that imitated Native life. She even found herself a Native American husband, out of whom she also hoped to fashion an artist who would be able to overcome the gap between the cultures. We may add that we know how by then art dealers with good sense started to ship original (or presumably original) Native American “folk art” all over the world—as known from modern studies on Aby Warburg’s move to the Native Americans and the identification of Hopi snake dancers with the archaic Greeks.¹ And then, in almost every country, plain air painters moved to rural areas, drank the healthy goat’s milk, awoke at dawn, at least in theory, and worshipped Breton lace or embroidery from Hungary’s no less emblematic Kalotaszeg, as one would an ancient source. That is, this folklorism/primitivism emerged not only with regard to shamanism. Shamanism was first pulled out for these general tendencies the way you pull out one drawer after another in the kitchen, but when it became obvious that shaman séances were also ecstasies those interested changed and their number increased—they were looking for “something different” in the ancient religious practice.

Space does not permit me to comment on what Znamenski writes about the results of American and Siberian “fieldwork” traditions although he reveals some unusual or unknown facts.

The third chapter deals with the problem of the shaman’s psychological characteristics, which is quite a complex issue. Znamenski is in his element here; this chapter, therefore, requires a complex explanation instead of one-sided simplifications. He points out the mistakes and shortcomings in both fieldwork and interpretations, the gradual canonization of not entirely reliable data, and the way these data are ultimately regarded as basic truths in the study of shamanism and religions. Of course, the fact that some observers thought Siberian ritual dancers were mentally disturbed, that others concluded that they simply tended to lose consciousness, and that still others reckoned they were victims of winter darkness and the extreme cold reflects not only the uncertainty of the researchers, but also the difficulty of arriving at a single explanation for the complex cases of what were called Arctic

¹ An excellent report on this can be found in Hungarian in Szőnyi 2004.

hysteria (or Siberian hysteria). The parallel existence of the multiplicity of performances has previously been discussed by Elena Novik (1984) in her book in Russian on ritual and folklore in Siberian shamanism. Although she is not referred to in this book, Znamenski's striking examples are truly food for thought. For example, the *menerick* or *emeriak*, known among a number of Eastern Siberian peoples, chronically imitate or repeat texts they hear or events they have witnessed. The Canadian Lyle Dick was the first to consider these expressions of a disturbed mental state caused by the shock of encountering modern culture. The expeditions of the US Arctic explorer Robert E. Peary had a similar effect on the Inuit. The psychoneurotic characterisations of the shamans became a recurring theme in handbooks by the early 20th century. By the spread of Freudianism, psychoanalytic explanations also appeared soon. He mentions the names of Oskar Pfister (1932), Géza Róheim and Georges Devereux, for whom the author has particularly high regard. (Znamenski himself does not know that Devereux was born in Hungary and that his original family name was Dobó—a fact not often remembered.)

Of course, there are still fascinating Siberian shaman productions left unmentioned. For example, one will not locate the phenomenon of transvestitism in the index, although there are cases of this among the examples mentioned. Moreover, the book does not refer to the relatively small, but nonetheless existing feminist explanations for shamanism.

Like other chapters, this one makes frequent mention of the works of Shirokogoroff. These deal with a number of points of view, but do not always constitute a regular system. We know very little about the life of this scholar, who had a major impact on, and played a significant role in, theories of ethnography. Znamenski mentions that Shirokogoroff studied philology in Paris and then worked for the ethnographic museum in St. Petersburg (the *Kunstkamera*). Radloff, then head of the institute, sent him to do fieldwork in the Far East, which he conducted with his wife. Partly due to his excellent talent for languages, the clever and perceptive Shirokogoroff managed to understand the shamans much more accurately than his predecessors. He introduced the well-known phenomenon of the psychomental complex in his work (described as characteristic of the Tungus), which is neither a simple phenomenon, nor a suggestion of condemnation. Far from being an illness, it is rather the possible psychic arrangement of life—despite features that might seem bizarre. Shirokogoroff does not consider shamanism a remnant

of some ancient religion but claims that this was the method of traditional life as lived in Siberia. He simply despised the encroachment of modern culture into Siberia. Later, following the October Revolution, during his years spent in Manchuria and then in Beijing—as if in political exile—he considered cultural factors rather than biological ones in the life of certain peoples. He emphasised the limits of racial anthropology (precisely through the example of the Chinese). It is therefore surprising that, as Znamenski also notes, Shirokogoroff sympathised with the national socialist societal structuring introduced by Hitler in the 1930s, as proved by his correspondence with Wilhelm Mühlmann. Mühlmann's subversive role in shaping and keeping alive a variety of nationalistic *Völkerkunde* would deserve a special case study. Mühlmann wrote Shirokogoroff's obituary in *Archiv für Anthropologie* in 1940. (In Hungary as well as in the rest of Europe, it was Mühlmann who introduced Shirokogoroff to a wider audience. Most recently, he is also praised by post-Soviet Russian ethnographers, this being quite complicated although certainly a typical latter-day Russian phenomenon of reintegrating many forms of extreme nationalism into the current ideology.) Since Znamenski notes only a few biographical sources, it would be high time to produce a monograph on Shirokogoroff that covers his contribution to ethnography.

He makes brief references to the views of other authors (Lévi-Strauss and Andreas Lommel) at the end of the chapter. He fails to refer to certain antecedents (e.g. in the field of French religious studies, sociology, the psychology of primitive peoples etc.).

In the chapter on consciousness-altering plants and drinks, the first author discussed in detail is naturally R. Gordon Wasson (1896–1986), who began his career as a journalist and made his fortune as a banker. He and his followers saw the ritual use of drugs as elemental among more and more peoples and cultures. Later, this topic became popular not only among anthropologists, but also due to Michael Harner and the increasingly global drug tourism of more recent years near masses of people were drawn to this possibility of tripping, as it were. But of course all this happened during (and after) the time of Timothy Leary and his experimentation with LSD.

Znamenski only registers these developments and offers no critical comments on the various works. Although he must know further studies by Soviet philologists (V. V. Ivanov, V. N. Toporov and others), for example, on the origin of the old Indian *soma*, he does not cite them.

Chapter five, in mentioning Eliade and Castaneda, introduces a theory according to which the desire for an ancient harmony that once existed in nature but then was lost—captured by the metaphor of “searching for paradise” by Eliade—was transformed from an interpretation of shamanism to an explanation of its use. (Znamenski refers here to California flower people’s paradise.)

Chapter six continues the overview and discusses the postmodern success of post-Castaneda. Such readings of Native American tribes are familiar. Although Znamenski is right when he separates proper anthropologists and those who differ from them into two poles, his examples are not sufficiently convincing since, for example, Carlo Ginzburg, who is filled with fantasy and likes mysticism, is still a renowned authority. (Otherwise, he is an archivist-historian, not a religious studies scholar nor an anthropologist.) The number of examples here can also be multiplied. For example, in Hungarian research, the ethnic-ethnographic description (see works by Vilmos Diószegi) was followed by postmodern understandings by both Mihály Hoppál and Éva Pócs, although neither of them can be considered non-academic. I have also written a number of times that I have not found the tiniest seed of Siberian shamanism in Hungarian folklore, nor in Ginzburg’s mediators between the sky and the earth. (I will have more to say on this later.) I would have been happy to see Znamenski discuss remarkable authors, such as the Italian Elemire Zolla, who was not just a typical guru, but also a truly outstanding philologist.

Chapter seven discusses Harner’s life and the appearance of today’s urban shamans. Znamenski covers Harner’s first groundbreaking research on the Jivaro with admiration and with respectable objectivity. (However, the author could have discussed South American shamanism in a somewhat more detailed way or the survey by Alfred Métraux—or at least mentioned his name.)

Chapter eight follows on the heels of this, discussing this new movement in the Americas all the way to the emergence of the European pagan revival, when, for instance, American Indian shaman drums serve the new Celtic shamanism organised around the figure of Merlin or the Odin cult revived from the Ancient Germans. Znamenski’s data are precise and compelling. However, in the case of such phenomena spreading in contemporary Europe, I would have noted two other factors. One, these groups show the typical symptoms of New Religions, which have spread worldwide though not every one of them resembles shamanism.

Of course, according to the post-Harnerian understanding of religion even the Baha'i faith can be considered shamanism—although the extension of shamanism beyond any realistic boundaries, even if we experience it from day to day, will eventually lead nowhere. The second factor may be observed when political implications may also be considered either by having neo-shamanistic groups organised in the face of some leading ideology or through borrowings, for example, when the German (or Aryan) idea of the *Männerbund* is borrowed by Fascist mass education. It was not only Otto Höfler, but also Jan de Vries who served such purposes. The totemistic *Männerbund* was also the archetypal basis for the political commandos of the Grey Wolves under Colonel Alparslan Türkeş in Turkey. That is, neo-shamanism is not as sterile in political or ideological terms as this chapter seems to indicate.

The title “Back to Siberia” of chapter nine is expressive of the structure of the book, along with the interest and the background of the author. Is this justified by the facts themselves? I do not know exactly which Siberia today's Yakut/Sakha minister of cultural affairs can return to, having danced to rock and roll music at a scholarly conference held in Yakutsk, the capital, for researchers of shamanism—which was officially declared as the state religion. (Similarly, Hare Krishna groups throughout the world, Zen Buddhist centres and Shaoling martial arts schools in fact do not bring participants back to Hinduism or Buddhism.) In this chapter, Znamenski first introduces the history of Marxist interpretations of shamanism, then the Soviet-era persecution of shamans, the slow recovery of research on shamanism in the Soviet Union after World War II, and the characteristics of contemporary revivals in shamanism. Since he is well informed, one would do well to take note of both the data he presents and his conclusions. (Of course, anyone who is familiar with the Estonian or Latvian neo-pagan movements knows that these are surprisingly similar to neo-shamanism—although this connection is usually not mentioned even by these groups. However, the “ancient priests” who are also “today's shamans” have also emerged in the Baltic States and sell their CDs as shamans.)

Of course, a number of suggestions for corrections could be made. For example, when referring to Revunenkova he should have included her oft-cited book (1980) on Indochina—and not an insignificant article. Moreover, Vilmos Diószegi was not a Marxist at all, as the author suggests—this poor man is referred to as such by people who do not understand him at all. When Znamenski discusses the evolutionist (and

later Marxist) views of Russian and then Soviet researchers, he fails to mention the most important of these scholars, Lev Shternberg, and the grand series of evolutionist talks he published on the history of religion (1936). And this was not only the theoretical basis for Tokarev and a number of other researchers on the Buriat, but was also the most important contribution to the central thesis of the “pre-religious era” which had long been in the focus of materialist ideologies that claimed that religion was a “false consciousness” and therefore posited the “temporary existence of religion.” If shamanism or other primitive religious phenomena could be studied in the Soviet Union without condemnation in the 1930s and beyond, it could be done only by denying the bourgeois (!) concept of the “ancient religion.” This solution was also in line with Frazer’s collection of data. And Frazer was believed in Bolshevik Russia to be a critic of Christianity because of his work on the folklore of the Old Testament which was also translated into Russian.

The chapter ends with a mention of the untimely death of Mingo Geiker, the Nanai shamaness. She travelled to the US and became the belle of neo-shamanist séances. She fell ill immediately after her return home and soon passed away. People around her either praised this famous member of the community or considered her death a punishment by the local spirits: Mingo Geiker betrayed her old life. Znamen-ski does not take a stand in this case; however, he obviously considered this story parabolic, based on where he placed it in the book.

At least in theory, the epilogue considers a contemporary western boom in shamanism the closest thing to New Age ideology. As I have said elsewhere, I have collected many references from the wealth of endnotes: works known, works unknown, new editions, references juxtaposed etc. It was when I was reviewing these references all the way to the end that I saw that most of them were in English, many of them in Russian and some in German. However, it was not only writings in all the other languages that were left out, but also the enormous body of work on shamanism which has been published in Budapest as well as the newer books on Finno-Ugric/Uralic mythology. Some of these—but not all—obviously fell outside the scope of the author. The bibliographical essay at the end of the book indicates clearly what the author focused on and what he did not. We can understand from this essay why the book lacks two very important trends in the study of shamanism: the historical approach and that of the phenomenology of religion. Although these are indeed less often used in today’s shaman

courses, they should at least have been mentioned to prevent the reader from thinking that Znamenski does not appreciate scholars who prefer such methods (say, from Father Wilhelm Schmidt to László Vajda.) This misunderstanding could have stemmed from the fact that the author discusses not only the work of Eliade, but also that of Czaplicka, Ohlmarks and Nioradze. That is, we are able to read about authors of the rest of the handbooks.

I have already noted that the name index is not complete. (And a subject index is never complete!) If the reader, therefore, does not find someone in the index (as is the case of the excellent but still not widely quoted scholar W. Z. Park), that person might still be mentioned in the book (as is the case with Park). It is instructive, though indeed a bitter pill to swallow, that except for Róheim, Devereux and Diószegi, Znamenski mentions no Hungarian scholars. Not even Mihály Hoppál. But since Znamenski is familiar with our journal *Shaman*, and even makes mention of it, the reason behind this is not that he is uninformed, but clearly that he did not find any publications of ours that he considered worth mentioning. But shamanism in Hungary did not only appear by or in the age of Harner. It has occupied a respectable place in the constitution of the ancient homeland in the Hungarian identity since the reform era of the mid-19th century. Although Eliade (and his followers) wrote about Romanian shamanism as well (erroneously, I hasten to add), others found such ecstatic figures even in Sicily, while, according to Meuli and Dodds, ancient Greek philosophy also had such characteristics—therefore we are most likely not the only European nation in the lexicons of whom the entry on religion would begin even today as: “The original religion of the [Hungarian] nation was shamanism.” In reality, this does not mean that it *was* the case, but rather points to the fact that traces of these have *survived* up to the present day. (This is the point that I anticipated earlier on.) And such contemporary ideologizations comprise the theme of Znamenski’s book. Indeed, we can bring in examples from other areas of research as well. The cult that has emerged around the figure of the excellent Hungarian Finno-Ugrist, Éva Schmidt, who died young in the land of the Khanty a few years ago, is truly a good example of how interest in folk traditions translates today to achieving not only transcendence, but also other more obvious objectives.

I opened my book review by stating that Znamenski is an excellent researcher on shamanism and the history of its research. I will not be refuting this now when I add that a good portion of his fascinating and

enjoyable book is indeed about the history of research on shamanism, but that the book also discusses today's movements in a number of sections—particular examples of New Religions. The subtitle clearly refers to this. However, not much is said about the beauty of the primitive world. It is no surprise, then, that neither the word *beauty* nor *primitive* is mentioned in the index.

Since Znamenski's book does not show the role shamanism played in big "world" cultures but offers only an analysis of the history of one interpretation of small and local forms of shamanism, it refers to two big ideological eras. Long ago, representatives of high culture met shamans on various occasions or just read about them. They made their own comments based on these encounters. Herder and Longfellow certainly idealized the figure of the shaman, but in fact—except for a few enthusiastic and vague lines by Thoreau and Emerson—they were loath to exchange their own lifestyle for a primitive one. Znamenski rightfully notes that certain researchers were armchair scholars with no experience of fieldwork. Similarly, there were also quite a few armchair neo-primitives among them. The unfortunate majority of researchers on Siberia in the 19th century had been deported there under the czar's tyranny: no one went to live in Kamchatka or among the Chukchi of his own accord. The situation was quite different in the second phase, which was similar to today when young people leaving our cultures behind, some hippies, others Ché Guevara admirers, still others *peyotl* users or even neo-Hungarians seeking a *chakra* in the Pilis Hills near Budapest. In the previous era, the fieldworker and the intellectual looking for freedom were individual researchers on shamanism. They were therefore different from those in the second period who were mass representatives of counter-culture. At this point, I must note a Marxist concept (also used in the study of religions), which is "false consciousness." Neo-shamanism can be easily grasped with this term. None of the actual personal or social problems of the unemployed or the bored rich are solved by attending urban drum classes. These participants are not interested in real shamanism, but in a new world which is provided for them there by mass culture. If they were told that followers of Celtomania are at once shamans and witches, they would hardly notice that this is in fact impossible. This is what happens in a world of substitutes and imitations. We know, for example, that as a young man even Winston Churchill dressed up as a Druid.

People have long imitated all forms of loosely understood religions. Where you had Jesus showing signs, you also had Barjesus imitating his miracles. At the same time, substituting and imitating do not represent a simple phenomenon either. I refer to one of my favourite examples, a play entitled *Siberian Shaman* by Russian Empress Catherine II, in which, as far as we know, not only a real shaman had been brought to the capital from Siberia to play a role (and *not* to act like a clown in the imperial palace, as Znamenski claims), but also that this was the “conspirator revealed,” a character type well-known from Molière’s plays, and the empress herself reveals that he was also there to expose the unscrupulous and dangerous Count Cagliostro. Even the words of the Siberian shaman in the play were borrowed from the entry *Théosophes* by Diderot in his *Encyclopédie* (Voigt 2008). All this to say that the ideas regarding the shamans of the official culture were not very simple, even in the first period; indeed, they were rather complex and multi-faceted.

Znamenski also demonstrates how real researchers grew increasingly close to real characterizations of shamans (while in fact shamanism was on its way out—indeed, it could also be presumed that after the persecutions at least in socialist countries it completely disappeared.) And although this book is a real history of scholarship it is not the complete history of research on shamanism. It also shows how shamanism has progressively entered into a strange (or at least gradually distanced) world. Marxist mass educators, dreamers who regard Siberia as the home of human culture, silly young people, bored new artists and shaman managers ready to turn their interest into money all appear on the pages of this book. This part is the pathography of an uncertain society beyond shamanism—not an old religious world but rather a substitute for religion in present-day life.

It is possible that there are more “shamans” working today than ever before and that their number will continue to grow! Nevertheless, Jesus’ words do not refer to them (although they certainly did apply to the shamans who were real and lived under very harsh conditions): “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”

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BUDAPEST

VILMOS VOIGT

Plates



1 Tumaralria's drum, collected by I. A. Lee on Nelson Island, 1905. 53 c. long. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. Photo: Jeffrey Dykes.



2 Painted designs on the face of Tumaralria's drum, depicting land animals above and sea animals below a black horizon, all encircled by elongated beasts. I. A. Lee, 1905, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts
13084 (5 3/8"H x 12.5" W x 20.5" L).
Photo: Jeffrey Dykes.



3 The Great God Scroll on which the divine acts of the five Grandfather Gods were drawn. Photo: Guo Shuyun, Dongha village, March 2007.



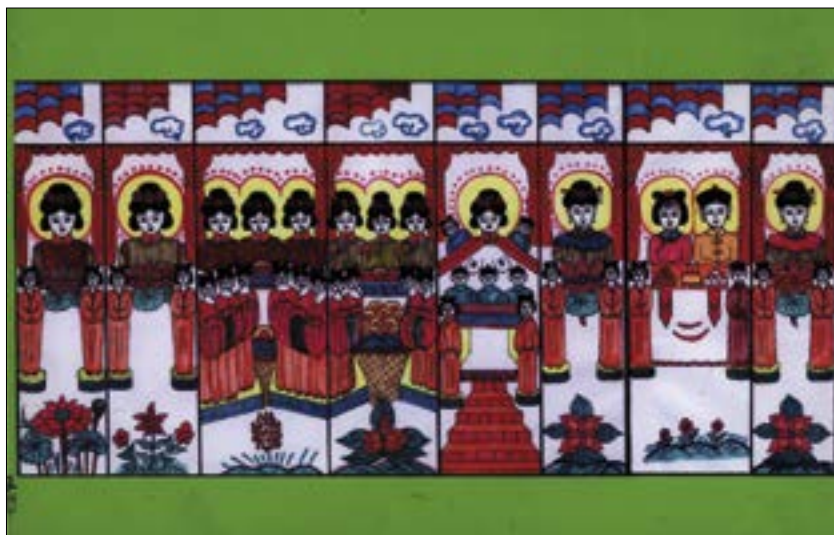
4 (a) Kun Shi and Richard Noll with Oroqen shaman Meng Jinfu (front center), 1994.



4 (b) Oroqen shaman Meng Jinfu (Chuonnasuan) drumming and chanting with his wife as an assistant. Photo: Kun Shi, 1994.



5 (a) Small wooden houses are made for the pictures of the *barkan* spirits (Nirge, Morin Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China).
Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



5 (b) A picture of the famous Omie *niangniang*, goddess of fertility, and her servants drawn by De Hongling, Wo Yufen the Daur shaman's daughter-in-law (Nirge, Morin Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China).
Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



6 (a) The outer and inner sacral spaces are represented by two birch trees (*tooroo*) with a rope (*sunarjil*) stretching between them. There are two altars, one by the outer *tooroo* and the other by the inner *tooroo* in the felt house.

A picture of Tengger (Heaven) hangs on the outer *tooroo* (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China). Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



6 (b) On the spirit ladder of the inner *tooroo* hangs another picture of Tengger, God of Heaven, showing the god's male and female sides, the Sun and the Moon. Tengger's children are also shown: five Sun boys in red and four Moon girls in blue clothing (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China).

Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



7 (a) Sečengua's students wait patiently on the right side of the felt house while she (not visible in the picture) invokes a spirit on the left (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China). Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



7 (b) Sečengua sits on a chair after the spirit (*onggon*) has entered her body. The spirit starts to sing to the sound of her shamanic drum (*xuntur*) and gives its message to the clan (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China). Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



8 Sečengua uses a horse-headed stick (*morin sorbi*) instead of the drum when she makes the spirit sing inside her. This kind of shamanic stick is also used among the Bargu and Buriat (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China).
Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



9 (a) During the afternoon Sečengua invoked the Daur spirits of her own Onon clan. Members of the clan kneel down in front of the spirit singing inside the shaman's body (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China).
Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



9 (b) The following morning Sečengua's two students (Wo Yufen and Altantuyaa) play their drums inside the felt house before the main sacrifice of a young bullock.



10 In a state of trance, Sünžedmaa makes the spirit inside her body sing with the horse-headed stick (*morin sorbi*). Her helper stands next to her in Buriat traditional clothes (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China). Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



11 The recently initiated Solon Evenki Altantuyaa begins her invocation song and dance. Her assistant holds her belt tightly to prevent her from falling (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China).
Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



12 (a) The Aga Buriat Sežedmaa from Chita experiences her first ever trance. The spirit enters her body and starts to sing in a wailing voice (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China). Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



12 (b) The Bargu Badmaa, who was cursed by her mother, goes into trance but the spirit inside her remains silent and she can only jump around in ecstasy (Nantun, Evenki Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, China). Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2007.



13 a General view of the old *tangse* in Peking, 19th century
(Guan and Gong 1993: 33).



13 b Sacrificial hall of the new *tangse* in Peking
(Ishibasi 1934: between pages 202 and 203).



13 c *Ordo* of the new *tangse* in Peking
(Ishibasi 1934: between pages 202 and 203).



14 a Sacrificial Hall and *ordo* of the *tangse* in Mukden (Naitō 1935: 54).



14 b Reconstruction of a *tangse*, Manchu Folklore Museum near Shenyang.
Photo: Giovanni Stry, 2002.



15 Eliade expanded the meaning of the expression “shamanism” beyond Siberia and North America, applying it to the variety of spiritual practitioners, including European witches. Drawing from Quanter (1924: 177).