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The Religious Practitioner *Bimo* in Yi Society of Liangshan, Southwest China, Today

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This paper aims to analyze the nature and characteristics of the bimo, *religious practitioners of Yi society in Liangshan, southwest China, today in the light of knowledge gained in my fieldwork between 1986 and 1996.* Bimo *mediate the relations between humans and supernatural beings by chanting scriptures, which is different from another kind of practitioner, the* sunyi, *who are similar to shamans.* Bimo *have developed four collective characteristics: (1) they have their own special beliefs relating to their religious activities; (2) a set of special religious institutions has evolved gradually to sustain the* bimo *community and regulate the conduct of their religious activities; (3) they have their own professional morals and ethics concerning relations with clients, supernatural beings and other* bimo; *and (4) members of the* bimo *community have a common professional identity reflecting their self-consciousness as a class.*

Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture lies in the southwest of Sichuan Province, China. To the north of it flows the Dadu River, and to the south, the Jinsha River (the upper section of the Yangtze River). Its 60,000sq. km territory is the home of 1,610,000 Yi people in Liangshan, the single largest Yi community in China.

The ethnonym of the Yi in Liangshan is *Nuosu*. Until the democratic reform in 1956, no united regime had evolved and the Yi community was split into numerous patrilineal lineages. The estate-and-slave system with lineal descent and personal dependence as characteristics constituted the traditional Yi social institution. With high mountains and deep valleys as natural barriers and hostile relations with other communities around, especially with the Han, the traditional Liangshan Yi society was *sui generis* and developed a unique culture, including religious belief, in its

own way. Belief in gods and ghosts, worship of ancestors and a mixture of witchcraft with sacrificial ceremonies were the main constituents of traditional Yi religion.

After the democratic reform, the lineage system was abolished, the estate stratification was eliminated and social practices of mainstream society were introduced. Thus, there were great changes after 1956. In order to substitute scientific Marxism for the "superstitions" and the new socialist culture for the old culture in the slave society, the religious activities of the *bimo* (priest) and *sunyi* (shaman)[1] were forbidden and religious literature in traditional Yi script was taken away and burnt. The Yi traditional culture and religion declined in the following two decades.

However, in late 1970s, with the reform and open-door policy implemented, the Chinese economy was revitalized and political control relaxed. Traditional ethnic cultures began to revive. The once suppressed and weakened traditional Yi culture restored itself in the form of ethnic folk traditions and for the development of cultural tourism, etc. The trend of restoration gained momentum and developed further in the core area of the Yi community. Taking Meigu County[2], for example, statistics shows that there were 6,850 *bimo* (male only) in 1996, covering 4 per cent of the total population and 8 per cent of all males. The variety of religious ceremonies amounted to over 200 and the number of religious scriptures reached a staggering 115, 000 copies.

The form and content of current *bimo* activities have shown the following features:

(1) Gaining ground in the cities. Nowadays, soul-calling and chants of ghost-dispelling, with religious rites involving cattle-killing, can be heard and seen in and around the houses of Yi businessmen, workers, teachers, and even civil officials;

(2) A huge increase in rural *bi-yu* learning of *bimo* crafts.[3] In the name of upholding their forefather's dedication, such motivations, as

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[1] *Bimo* and *sunyi* are two different kinds of religious practitioner who coexist in the Liangshan Yi area. Yi words are given in italics.

[2] There are seventeen counties and one city in Liangshan Autonomous Prefecture, Meigu is one of them.

[3] See Bamo 2001.

pursuing material benefits, gaining prestige and social status and learning the traditional Yi culture, are integrated into.

(3) Many modern requirements, such as praying for promotion or college entry, making more money or cursing drugs and plagues, and avoiding traffic accidents and theft are included.

(4) The income of the *bimo* (by means of *bimo ka-ba* in the Yi) is much higher than that of other traditional Yi professions, including animal husbandry and farming. In other words, today's *bimo* follows more of a career or profession than a dedication. The living standard of the *bimo* is generally higher than that of farmers and herdsmen.

The revival of *bimo* activities offers us an opportunity to study *bimo* as a cultural complex. For this reason I went to many counties, including Xichang, Ganluo, Yanyuan, Leibo, Zhaojue, Meigu, and Xide between 1986 and 1996 to undertake fieldwork on *bimo* culture. I followed *bimo* when they roamed about to perform their craft. During the process, I also gained some knowledge about *bimo* scriptures. In this paper I would like to discuss and analyze the nature, function and characteristics of Liangshan Yi *bimo* in light of the knowledge gained during my fieldwork.

Bimo Mediating the Relations between Humans and Spirits by Reciting Scriptures

To approach the nature and function of the *bimo* in the Liangshan Yi social-cultural context, we can start with the connotations of *bimo* as a word. This word is closely related to *sunyi*, another kind of *religious practitioner* in Yi society. As two kinds of religious practitioner in Liangshan, the names *bimo* and *sunyi* are divided by the characteristics of their activities. In the Yi language, the *bi* in *bimo* means 'to recite'. It indicates how a *bimo* acts during a ceremony. This *bi* can be extended to refer to all the activities characterized by scripture chanting in ceremonies, such as *ge-fei yi-tsi bi*, a ceremony to invite the spirit for birth; *ma-du bi*, a ceremony to pacify the spirit (of the dead); and *ni-mu tsuo-bi*, to see the spirit off. The suffix *mo* in *bimo* means 'practitioner'. So, *bimo* refers to a man who engages in religious activities by reciting scriptures. Meanwhile, the *su* in *sunyi* means 'a person' and the *nyi* means 'shaking while dancing and beating a drum'. That is the activity of the *sunyi* in

religious ceremonies. Broadly speaking, the *sunyi* is very similar to the shaman, a *religious practitioner* who in ceremonies beats a drum and shakes while dancing.

Thus, in religious practice the function of a *bimo* is different from that of a *sunyi*. The action of a *bimo* is more tranquil and quiet—he just recites. In contrast, a *sunyi* employs more body language. He beats a drum and shakes in a crazy and violent manner as if a spirit has possessed him. No wonder the Yi people should say that the *bimo* is "mild" while the *sunyi* is "wild"; the *bimo* is "graceful in chanting" while the *sunyi* is "violent in dancing". The etymological comparison between *bimo* and *sunyi* reveals that a *bimo* is characterized by the chanting of scriptures. Thus, we can say that *bimo* as a term refers to those *religious practitioners* who communicate with gods and ghosts by reciting scriptures.

From *Bi-bu e-yi-ma* ("Bimo Scripture for Offering Sacrifice to Ancestors"), we know that in their origin and early stage of development the *bimos* had no written scriptures. Their chanting was handed down by word of mouth. It was not until the time of *qobu*, a legendary figure in the Yi tradition, that the *bimos* began to document their scriptures in writing, and their history passed from an oral period into a literary one. From then on, the scriptures became the reference basis for the *bimo*'s performance. The Yi saying *'ndi-vi' hxa-li-zi, 'ho-vi' ly-ci-hxi* means that there are 120 scriptures for incantation and 48 scriptures for offering sacrifice. Therefore, being literate, together with a mastery of written scriptures and excellence in all the oral ones, has become a prerequisite for a *bimo* to carry out his work and to communicate with gods, ghosts and ancestors.

A *bimo* communicates with gods, ghosts and ancestors by reciting scriptures. But he is much more than a mere mouthpiece or medium between people and the supernatural spirits. Rather, he is an effective mediator, an arbitrator in the conflicting relations between people, gods, ghosts and ancestral spirits. It is a consensus among modern scholars that relations between man and society and between mankind and nature constitute the two major categories of relations in human life. However, in traditional Liangshan Yi society, the relationships between humans and gods, ghosts and ancestors are also fundamental.

It is a deep-rooted Yi belief that ancestors, gods and ghosts are able to influence people's well-being, the harvest, the multiplication of cattle,

the prosperity of a lineage, etc. If the relationship between mankind and gods, ghosts and ancestors breaks or becomes unbalanced, it will not only endanger people's beliefs and mentality, but it will also affect their material production and daily life. Gods, ghosts and ancestral spirits are manifold. They are good and evil. They can bless or curse people. It all depends on the time and the occasion. So, people praise spirits and appreciate ancestors, but at the same time they hate ghosts and fear the gods and ancestors. In the interaction between humans and various spirits the latter influence the lives of the former. However, it is more important that the former can control the latter through the mediation of the *bimo,* who can avert disasters, invite fortune and turn disaster into fortune.

A *bimo* is able to predict the intentions of gods and ghosts and is familiar with the ancestors' desires. Through scripture chanting and with the magic power of language reinforced by rites of sacrificial offering and witchcraft with strong symbolic connotations, the *bimo* mediate the relationship between people and supernatural spirits by praising, appreciating, persuading, warning, cursing, etc. Just as Qubi Shuomo, a famous *bimo* in Meigu county, said: *bi-ne-mo-mu-su* (the *bimo*s are mediators), we *bimo* are just like *nde-ggu*[4], judges in the Yi folk society. The difference is that a *nde-ggu* mediates between people and/or between lineages, while a *bimo* mediates between humans and supernatural spirits. But the function is the same. The purpose of a *bimo*'s mediation is to serve the people. The aim of his mediation is not only to promote people's reconciliation with their faith but also to detach people's bonds with the supernatural spirits, including that of their ancestors, so that they will not interact with each other.

The *bimo* has developed from Yi society since very early times and evolved into a separate order of religious practitioner. This is reflected both in *bimo* genealogy and in the standardization and normalization of the *bimo* reward as an institution. Before democratic reforms, as well as cash in the form of silver, kind in the form of animals, grain and cloth, and services such as labour, such items as guns, slaves, land and even opium had entered the inventory of the *bimo's* income. A Yi saying indicates that "A tiger and a leopard may fail in food-hunting, but a

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[4] *Ndeggu* refers to the wise mediators famed for the impartial settlement of disputes, see Ma 1992.

bimo and a *sunyi* never return with empty hands after performing a ceremony." Up to now, rewards for ritual activities still contribute all or part of a *bimo*'s livelihood in Liangshan.

In brief, in Yi society the *bimo* are a class of people who specialize in religious activities dealing with affairs pertaining to people's faith. They mediate relations between human and supernatural beings, including ancestral spirits, by reciting scriptures. For this service they receive payments that constitute the total or partial resources of their life.

The Special *Bimo* Faith Relating to their Professional Activities

Believing in supernatural spirits is common to all the Yi as an ethnic group. But, on top of this, the *bimo* have their own faith. Since the formation and development of *bimo* as a religious profession, the ideology of *bimo* has gradually become established and some special supernatural spirits have emerged to suit the needs of the profession and to protect the *bimo*'s activities and interests. These spirits are the objects of the *bimo*'s adoration. They can be roughly classified into the *bimo* gods, the guardian gods and the souls of the *bimo* instruments and scriptures.

The common Yi name of the *bimo* gods is *bi-lu*. This refers to all the spirits of the *bimo* ancestors that can be traced back in the genealogy. Traditional Yi society recognized only a small number of lineages which have engaged in *bimo* practice, such as those of the Jjike, Shama, Jijli and Disse. These lineages, whose first ancestor engaged in the practice, are called *bimo* lineages. *Bimo* lineages have the tradition of inheriting the practice of their forebears. They have carried on the career from generation to generation. The *bimo* gods include all the first ancestors in these lineages, who in their lifetime tutored their children and grandchildren in the performance. Their souls are respected as gods and worshipped by their descendants. They are thought, on the one hand, to bless their descendants' fecundity and prosperity, and, on the other, to be guardians ensuring the success of their offsprings' ceremonial performance. In short, the *bi-lu* have the double character of being both the ancestral gods and profession guardians.

As Yi society attaches great importance to consanguineous lines and blood inheritance, it is natural that each lineage has its own *bi-lu*. This is demonstrated clearly in *bi-ci-e-yi-ma*, a Yi scripture meaning "The Scripture of *Bimo* Genealogy". It is essential for every *bimo* lineage. The scripture begins with the first *bimo* ancestor of the lineage. In the form of a chain-of-names between master and disciple (usually father and son; occasionally, uncle and nephew), it lists all the *bimo* in the lineage, down to the one who possesses and uses it today. This scripture, on one hand, is the certificate of a *bimo*'s lineage background that provides him with credit. On the other hand, it enables a *bimo,* by means of his reading or chanting, to recruit whatever reinforcement he needs from his *bimo* ancestors to bless the success of a ceremony.

The belief in *bi-lu* (*bimo* gods) emphasizes consanguineous heredity and continuity and stresses belief in the ancestors with whom the *bimo* has blood ties. This is obviously a combination of the Yi belief in ancestral spirit with the religious profession of *bimo*. It functions to identify and strengthen consanguineous relations between father and son, to guarantee the heredity and continuity of the *bimo*'s religious status and identity.

Besides the ancestral *bi-lu* with whom he has a blood relationship, the *bimo* also shares a common belief in those *bi-lu* who are famous in history and widely celebrated in the Yi community. This kind of *bi-lu* usually made some special contribution in their lifetime. They all have outstanding achievements—superior power, profound knowledge and lofty morals—in Yi folklore. For example, Tibi nramu[5] and Hxabi syizu[6] contributed especially to the establishment of ceremonial rules. Bi Asu lanzi[7] standardized writing and sorted out the religious scriptures. Age emo[8] brought a high mountain down by chanting incantations. However, these *bi-lu* from different lineages are regarded as heroes and spiritual leaders by all the *bimo* in Liangshan, especially the younger generation.

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[5] A famous Master *bimo* in Yi history.

[6] The same as above.

[7] The same as above.

[8] The same as above.

For this reason, whenever a ceremony is held a *bimo* will recite *bi-bu-te-yi* ("*Bimo* Sacrifice-offering Scripture") and invite these *bi-lu* to enjoy the offerings and ensure the success of his performance.

The common faith in these famous *bi-lu* is a special type of belief among the *bimo*. It transcends the consanguineous limitations of lineage. Instead, it is based on personal achievement and religious practice. We can say that it is a combination of hero worship and professional identity. It functions to stimulate and intensify the *bimo*s' dedication to their profession and to encourage them in following their heroic forebears' example and improving their knowledge and practice.

The guardian gods refer to spirits who help the *bimo* during their performance. In the Yi language they are called *mu-lu mu-si*, meaning all the spirits in nature, including the gods of the sky, of the earth, of mountains, wind, rock, thunder, tree, eagle, etc. Originally, they were the natural gods commonly believed in by the Yi people, each for its own divine duties. But the *bimo*s integrated them into a belief and respect them as guardian gods. In each ceremony the *bimo* establish divine seats by erecting magic branches and invite gods to come and help. As for whom and how many should be invited, this is determined by the nature and scale of the ceremony, or the kind and amount of the sacrifice. For example, *xuo-bur*, a counter incantation, is a small affair in which only a cock is sacrificed; thus, only some mountain gods nearby are invited. If the occasion is big, such as *co-ssy* (evil-cursing), when cattle and goats are sacrificed, the gods of sky, earth, rock and tree would be invited to share the offerings and help the performance. Special scriptures, such as *Mu-lu-mu-si-bi* ("Scripture of Gods-inviting") and *Mo-luo-mo-she-te-yi* ("Scripture of Warrior-recruiting") are chanted. The invitation of natural gods as guardians is a temporary matter. The guardian gods are at the *bimo's* call to come and go. During the ceremony they give up their duties temporarily and serve as guardian gods to the performance of the *bimo*.

Still another special *bimo* belief is that in the spirits of instruments and scriptures. Instruments and scriptures are the means and bedrock of *bimo* performance. According to *Bi-bu-te-yi*, a Yi scripture, the *bimo* came into being in the remote times of *Nyinyi*[9], *Shishe*[10], *Momu*[11] and

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[9] One of the famous ages in Yi legends and *bimo* scriptures.

Ge-wo[12]. But they did not have instruments like the golden water drum[13], divination bone, the cedar container of divine slips, the divine bamboo fan, divine bamboo hat, divine bell[14], etc., so they could not expel ghosts, bring fortune or heal patients. Not until the time of *Qobu*[15] were the *bimo*s equipped with all the instruments and scriptures. From then on, the *bimo* became omnipotent.

It is a *bimo* understanding that the magical power of the instruments and scriptures does not lie merely in their forms. Rather, a lively soul is embodied in each. If the soul is lost or polluted, the power will vanish or weaken. Ceremonies such as sacrificial offering to the souls of instruments and scriptures can call the souls back and purify them. The same belief is expressed in the rules and taboos for making, using, collecting and keeping the instruments and for the duplicating and circulation of scriptures.

In summary, belief in the *bi-lu*, guardian gods, and the souls of *bimo* instruments and scriptures is peculiar to the *bimo*. All *bimo*s must observe it. It gives them religious power for the performance of their religious activities and spiritual support for their existence and development.

A Set of Special Institutions for *Bimo* to Share

Over the long period of religious practice a set of special religious institutions has gradually evolved whose purpose is to sustain the *bimo* community and regulate the conduct of its religious activities. These are not rules made by institutions but spontaneous conventions formed in the course of religious practice. The conventions are highly relevant to the *bimo*'s roles and activities. They are the standards of *bimo* conduct. We can classify the conventions into two kinds: customary rules and *bimo* rituals.

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[10] The same as above.

[11] The same as above.

[12] The same as above.

[13] A kind of *bimo* instruments which is out of use.

[14] The divination bone, the cedar container of divine slips, the divine bamboo fan, divine bamboo hat and the divine bell are instruments which are still used by the *bimo*s.

[15] One of the famous ages in Yi legends and *bimo* scriptures.

The customary rules include all the conventional regulations that define the *bimo*s themselves and their activities. My tentative research witnesses that the following conventions concerning the inheritance of "*bimo*ship", initiation (*bi-jjie*), renunciation (*bi-cip*), and practicing *bi* on tour (*bi-ji*) are strictly observed by all the *bimo*s in Liangshan.

The inheritance of *bimo*ship comprises the passing down of both the status and the identity of a *bimo*. When a *bimo* becomes old and feeble, he will yield his *bimo*ship to a younger man in the lineage. How is this person chosen? Some special principles are relevant here:

(1) Only a male descendant can inherit *bimo*ship. This is in strict accordance with the patrilineal nature of Yi society.[16] The profession of *bimo* is sacred and highly respected. The lineage wants to keep this status and honour within itself. Therefore, it should only to be inherited by a male descendant in the lineage. A female cannot inherit it. When a girl reaches seventeen, she is no longer considered a member of the lineage whether she is married or not.

(2) The family of a *bimo* enjoys the primary position. This is the dominant form of *bimo*ship inheritance. It can guarantee the lineage of the *bimo* to possess the privilege of the profession.

(3) Inheriting by a non-*bimo* lineage is subsidiary. Under certain circumstances, a person from a non-*bimo* lineage can learn the craft from a *bimo*. Among the Yi, this is referred to as *zyt-bi*, meaning an 'inauthentic *bimo*'. The status of a *zyt-bi* in Liangshan is much lower, for he has no assistance from patrilineal *bimo* ancestors and no ancestrally inherited scriptures, so his power is inferior. He is not able to carry out such major ceremonies as offering sacrifice to ancestors, cursing evil people and ghosts or inviting spirits. Moreover, a *zyt-bi* cannot pass his status and identity to his descendants. For this reason, his lineage can never become a true *bimo* lineage. These principles reveal that the dominant ideology behind the transfer of *bimo*ship is the discourse of consanguinity and professional privilege. It is different from professional identity in modern society.

The conventions of *bi-jjie* and *bi-ci* refer to the starting or ending of *bi* as a profession. The profession of *bimo* is a holy one that communicates with spirits on behalf of humans. For this reason it cannot be entered or

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[16] See Harell 2001.

quitted at will. Special conventions with certain ceremonies have to be involved if one is to enter or leave it.

A long and special education is required before *bi-jjie*, initiation into the profession. Among the Yi, the education and training is known as *bi-sso*, meaning 'to learn the performance of *bi*'. During this period, the apprentice learns the moral norms of the *bimo*, as well as their knowledge and skills. This is to ensure a consciousness of the role. Only when the master thinks his apprentice can carry out religious rites independently can the latter become a novice *bimo*, after a ceremony called *bi-jjie-bi-hlo* (sacrifice offering to the gods at *bi-jjie*). All the *bimo* and relatives and friends from near and far are invited. In the ceremony, the new identity and status of the novice is announced publicly. The master hands over *bimo* instruments and scriptures to the novice and entrusts *bi-lu*, the guardian gods, and the souls of the instruments and scriptures to bless his disciple in his religious performance. Acknowledged by the master, the gods and society, the novice is recruited and the team of *bimo* is reinforced.[17]

In contrast to *bi-jjie*, *bi-ci* means to end or give up *bi* as a career. *Bimo* is a lifelong profession, but two situations lead to its cessation:

(1) A *bimo*'s soul cannot get along well with *bi-lu*, the guardian gods and the souls of his instruments and scriptures, and thus he cannot perform *bi* successfully. Such a failing *bi* will not bring safety and luck to the client. Moreover, it will invite disaster to the *bimo* himself or his family. In this case, the *bimo* must halt his career of *bi*, though his offspring can succeed him in his profession.

(2) If, for any reason, the *bimo*'s lineage has no descendant to inherit his profession for three generations. In this case a *bi-ci* ceremony must be held by the lineage to declare the quitting of the status and the privilege of *bimo* for good. A *bi-sha* ceremony is added to the *bi-ci* ceremony to send all the gods that have helped the *bimo* away. The *bi-sha* has to be presided over by another *bimo*. Its function is to undo the relations of a *bimo* with all the gods and spirits, to announce the ending of a *bimo,* and to get approval from the *bimo,* gods and society. After an offering of sacrifices, the divine branches standing for all kinds

[17] See Bamo 2001.

of gods, together with the *bimo*'s instruments and scriptures, are sent to a remote mountain, and thus the career of the *bimo* comes to an end.

The function of *bi-ji* (customary rules concerning practicing *bi* on tour) is to adjust relations between *bimo* themselves and between a *bimo* and other social organizations. As we know, a *bimo*'s religious practice is independent, mobile and far-ranging. A *bimo* roams from village to village to perform *bi* at the behest of his clients. It is usual for him to stay away from home for several months. When he is away from his lineage context, how can he coordinate relations between different territories and lineages? Can a *bimo* who depends on one lineage lord visit territories under the control of another, even perhaps hostile, lineage? All these are arranged by convention in Yi society.

If *bimo* A is invited to perform religion rites temporarily in the house where *bimo* B acts as *bi-si* (the regular family *bimo*), he has to yield part of his reward in kind or cash to B according to the rules of *bi-ji* (a convention on rewards). However, if he does this regularly and gradually replaces B in the house, he and the client family must pay some compensation to B. B then gives up his position as *bi-si* in the family.

In the Greater and Lesser Liangshan area, settlements of Yi people clustered according to lineage. Each *nuohuo* (black Yi) and *zimo* (chieftain) lineage has its own domain. Usually, every *bimo* lineage depends on one of them. A few *bimo* lineages are responsible for performing religious rites for every lineage and family all over Liangshan. According to the *bi-ji* rules, a *bimo* is entitled carry out religious rites in every village and lineage in the Yi area. So long as he wears or carries on his shoulder a divine bamboo hat, holds a divine fan and carries a bag of scriptures, no one must interfere with or obstruct him. Anyone who dares to interfere with a *bimo's* performance or injure him will be punished severely. In extreme cases, all *bimo* lineages will unite to curse the malefactor with reliable means until the death of the offender and his people. Therefore, a *bimo* can safely tour in the Yi area. He and his activities are respected and protected throughout society.

The *bimo* rituals (known as *bi-jie-mo-jie* in the *bimo*'s terminology) refer to all the procedures and rules a *bimo* must observe whenever he carries out his activities. They are the standard ceremonial procedures and the rules that govern *bimo* activities. Historically, the procedure of Yi religious ceremonies is well known to have been complicated, mystical

and over-elaborate. Over the long period of practice, the *bimo* have established a standard for various performances, and thus formulated a set of stable procedures and norms. As far as procedures are concerned, the following items are more or less universal:
(1) *Mu-gu-cy*, welcoming the assistance from gods by lighting a fire[18];
(2) *Lur-ca-su*, the rites of purification[19];
(3) *Yie-ly*, delivering a prologue or opening speech[20];
(4) *Te*, the rites of reconciling different gods and spirits[21];
(5) *Mu-lu-mu-se-bi*, inviting nature gods for help;
(6) Sacrificial offering in the form of live animals or birds[22];
(7) Chanting scriptures and the performance of crafts;
(8) Sacrificial offering in the form of killing on the spot but uncooked;
(9) Chanting scriptures and the performance of crafts;
(10) Sacrificial offering in cooked form (boiled or roasted);
(11) Comforting gods and spirits and seeing them off;
(12) *Ka-bba-qi*, payment of the *bimo*.

There are other strict conventional rules for ceremonies, such as the requirement of selecting the date and choosing the form of the sacrifice. Major ceremonies not only involve selecting the date but also the hour,

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[18] Rising smoke is a signal to inform the *bimo*'s *bi-lu* and *mulu-musi* that they should assist him in conducting the ritual. Two kinds of material are used: buckwheat straw is used in rituals for ancestors, gods, and people's souls; and wild grass is used in those for ghosts, enemies and the dead spirits.

[19] Two or three small, clean pebbles are heated in the hearth for a while, then placed in a wooden ladle where cold water is poured on them and the rising steam used to clean the ritual place, the attendees, the sacrificial animal, and the *bimo*'s instruments and scriptures.

[20] The *bimo* chants to explain the reason for the ritual to the supernatural beings and the attendees, why they are gathering what he is going to do.

[21] This brings together, or reconciles, the supernatural beings present at the ritual, who fall into three groups. One group consists of the *bimo*'s assistants, such as his ancestors, the natural gods, and the spirits of the *bimo*'s implements and scriptures. Another group comprises the souls and spirits of the host clients, such as woman's fertility spirit, man's protective spirit, the spirit of hearth. The last group is the souls of the guests and attendees. Only bringing all these entities together can ensure a successful ritual.

[22] There are three procedures for offering a sacrificial animal: offering the live animal; offering the dead but uncooked animal; offering the cooked animal, first baked, then boiled.

the month and the year. The sex, colour, age, quality and breed are all-important and have specific regulations. Details of the animal sacrifice include whether it is alive, uncooked or cooked, the blood, the horn, etc. Many ceremonies require an area for performance that is fenced by erecting branches. In this respect, different ceremonies require different kinds, quantities and ways of erecting the branches for different symbolic connotations.

The *bi*-rewarding institution is also important. There are three ways of acknowledging a religious performance: cash, kind and service. The means and the quantities vary. The main criteria are the ceremony's nature and size, the number of sacrifices used, and the terms between *bimo* and client. Conventions are also important. It is customary that a *bimo* cannot demand a sky-high price. These institutions reflect the fact that the *bimo's* religious practice has to a certain extent become a profession.

These conventions concerning the inheritance, initiation into, and renunciation of *bimo*ship, touring services, procedures and rewards regulate the behaviour and activities of *bimo*s in a united, standard, ordered and identical way. They are essential to guarantee the existence and sustaining of *bimo*ship as a religious practice.

Professional Ethics of Religion Observed by *Bi-mo*s as a Class

Besides the conventions and rituals, the norms of the *bimo* community are also reflected in the form of *bimo* morals or ethics. By nature, *bimo* morals are those of religious practitioners. In their professional activities, a *bimo* has contact with other *bimo*, as well as with gods, ghosts and humans. We can say that three relations are essential to the normal practice of a *bimo:* with gods and ghosts, with *vi-si* (clients), and with other *bimo*. In order to adjust all these relations to protect the reputation and dignity of religious practitioners, a set of morals has gradually evolved to adjust and restrain the *bimo*'s professional conduct.

It is a known fact that Yi religious belief has a strong connotation of utilitarianism. People worship their ancestors and believe in gods, ghosts and spirits for reasons of safety and happiness. As a religious practitioner,

a *bimo*'s task and mission are not to save people's souls or ensure they go to a paradise after death. Rather, he is required to fulfill people's needs in the here and now, such as the avoidance of disaster, attracting fortune and luck, ensuring the harvest and the well-being of animals, and to demonstrate the power and strength of their lineage, etc. In short, he is responsible for providing people with spiritual support and satisfaction for their existence and development. As a *bi* saying goes: "The fortune and peace of a client should be revealed in three days of the ceremony." Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the *bimo* is responsible for humans and the affairs of his clients rather than for gods, ghosts and spirits of any sort.

The *bimo* ethic is constructed on the basis of their professional duties. Closely interrelated with the nature and characteristics of the profession, it includes the following constituents:

(1) Dedication to the profession and to the duties it calls for. As already mentioned, *bi-mo* performance is the spiritual pillar of people's physical existence and development. It requires all *bimo*s to show full recognition of the profession and its social values. A *bimo* must keep on strengthening his love of the profession and continuously develop his sense of professional honour and firm aspiration. A *bimo* must take on his clients' concerns as his own and should always be eager to help them and be mindful of their interests. He is to be conscientious, dutiful and considerate in his activities. Even a minor error due to a *bimo*'s carelessness or negligence will bring misfortune and disaster to a client, and consequently to the *bimo* himself. As a *bi* saying goes: "Inadequate scripture-chanting harms the *bimo*, while insufficient divine branches harms the client." Therefore, it is basic for a *bimo* to love and be dedicated to his religious practice.

(2) Treating all clients equally. Every estate, lineage, family and person in traditional Yi society needs the service of a *bimo*. The requirement is widespread. A client can select a *bimo* with high power and moral reputation. But a *bimo* is not allowed to select a rite or client. The Yi saying in this respect is: "A good horse doesn't select the road, a good arbitrator (*nde-ggu*) doesn't select the issue, a good *bimo* doesn't select the client." Treating all in an equal way is one of the most important *bimo* rules. It specifies for a *bimo* that there is no difference between the rich and the poor, the noble and the humble, close relatives and strangers.

Whoever the client is, a *bimo* must fulfill his duty with equal responsibility. If he discriminates between clients, he will soon be reproached and condemned by the whole of society, including other *bimo*s. He will be isolated and receive no invitations to practise. Other *bimo*s will boycott him by halting the exchange of skills with him. The reason for the universal respect accorded to the *bimo*s arises not only from people's respect for their divinities but also from their ethics of treating people in an equal way.

(3) Keeping his commitments. This is determined by the nature of the *bimo* profession as well as by the minimum demands of society. The date of a Yi religious rite has to be calculated and arranged several days or more in advance, and details are forwarded to the *bimo* by the client or his trustee. A special rite like that of *ge-fei-yi-ci-bi* (fertility and soul-promoting) must be fixed a year in advance. When the time comes, the *bimo* brings scriptures and instruments to perform his craft. His activities are considered to resolve people's problems and dispel their worries. For this reason, he must turn up on time regardless of road or weather conditions or family duties. A *bimo* must keep his word. It is shameful to break an undertaking. The popular Yi saying in this regard is "Killing a *bimo* who fails in his promise is not a crime". If a *bimo* fails to keep to his commitments, his status and identity will come into jeopardy.

(4) Respect for colleagues and learning from each other. This is the norm of relations between *bimo*. The relevant Yi saying is that "All *bimo*s are equal in the face of knowledge." In congregation, they are encouraged to learn from each other to make up deficiencies. Many *bimo*s roam around Liangshan several or even a dozen times in their lifetime to visit famous *bimo*s, collect scriptures and gather knowledge from others. When a major ceremony is held, *bimo*s from far and near will come to help, while exchanging skills and copying scriptures from each other. A Yi saying acknowledges this: "The *sunyi*s are enemies, while the *bimo*s are friends." Traditionally, it is a popular belief that *sunyi*s will attack each other when they meet but that *bimo*s enjoy a mutual learning and communication. If a *bimo* is self-opinionated and habitually attacks and vilifies others, other colleagues will condemn him. The mutual respect and learning strengthens the internal solidarity of the *bimo*s as a community.

(5) Proper and solemn behaviour. This is a moral requirement concerning the language, diet and sexual behaviour of a *bimo*. The *bimo* as an intermediary between humans and spirits enjoys some divinity. In daily life he must show refinement of character and speech. This is helpful in establishing his divinity and gains approval from the spirits and trust from the people. Therefore, a *bimo* must avoid stirring things up, pronouncing obscenities and exchanging gossip. Otherwise, he will be thought a *ke-a-ggu*, untrustworthy on account of a loose tongue and light heart. It is a *bimo* taboo to use, hurt or kill such divine mammals as tiger, bear, dog, and cat, etc., or they will be considered polluted, lose their blessing from the spirits and thus their power. Theft and liberal sex relations are also taboo. Both *bi-lu* and guardian gods will abandon such a *bimo*. During major ceremonies, such as soul-escorting and sacrificial offerings to ancestors, a *bimo* should abstain from sexual intercourse. Otherwise, the ancestral spirits will be contaminated and will not be able to find their way to the homeland. Excessive drinking of alcohol is also forbidden because a drunken *bimo* tends to be irresponsible. A Yi saying goes that "A crooked *bi* cannot triumph over the evils." A drunken *bimo* certainly is no competitor for ghosts and monsters.

(6) Working hard and enduring hardship. The profession of *bimo* is a hard one. Touring far from home and turning up punctually for commitments means that a *bimo* has to endure sleeping or eating in rough places and travelling day and night. It is quite usual for him to undertake a journey of two or three days to reach a client's home for a ceremony. I have personally followed a *bimo* touring in the course of his duties, and I found the day-long walking and riding exhausting. Dismounting from horseback, my limbs were numb and I could hardly walk. A major ceremony tends to last for several days, sometimes more than ten days, with no interval. The *bimo* has to stay up night after night, enduring the torture of sleeplessness. Some apprentices give up learning *bi* simply because they cannot endure the hardship. A qualified *bimo* must have a strong will and lofty character.

(7) A lack of greed for money. Tradition says that in early times *bimo* performance was voluntary and no reward was involved. Nevertheless, along with the development of society and of the *bi* performance as an occupation, the *bimo* has gradually come to earn an income in cash, kind or service to sustain his life. The quantity and form of the reward is

subject to convention. A quarrel over his reward with a client is taboo. It is forbidden for a *bimo* to extract excessive rewards. He must fulfill his duty in performing a religious rite even when he knows the client cannot afford to pay. A favourite phrase among *bimo* is "No argument over rewards with clients". This is also a moral code they must observe.

The *bimo* ethic is based on their religious profession. It is a special requirement on anyone engaged in the trade. In the course of a long practice of morality, a stable religious psychology and collective personality characterized by peacefulness, dignity, sympathy and sense of responsibility have formed in the *bimo* as a community of religious practitioners.

The *Bimo* Group Identity and Sense of Belonging

Traditional Yi society is interwoven with consanguineous ties of lineage. The fundamental source of group identity is that of lineage. On top of this, the practice of *bimo* offers an overarching cultural identity. This is due to the fact that, as a person, the *bimo* finds his sense of belonging in his lineage as a social group, but, as a religious practitioner, he transcends the boundaries of consanguinity and finds his identity in his religious profession, which in turn is an integral part of Yi culture. At the same time, he identifies himself with the community of religious practitioners.

We know the two identities are different. The latter is an extension of the former. In other words, the existence of *bimo* lineages is the basic carrier of *bimo* as a social class. The overall *bimo* group identity is rooted in the *bimo* lineage identity. Here the two identities, the social and the religious, find mutual agreement to some degree.

The basis of the *bimo* identity as a group is their professional knowledge and practice. This is by nature a professional identity. As we have said before, the *bimo* engage in the same religious practice. They commonly serve as intermediaries between humans, gods, ghosts and ancestral spirits. They also deal with people's spiritual needs by means of ceremonies to ensure their safety and happiness. In a long and identical religious practice, common *bimo* values have also been formulated in the form of professional conventions, moral norms and ritual behaviours. Because of these, each *bimo* feels that all *bimos* are the same, sharing the same identity and

belonging to the same professional group. This gives them an identical psychology and professional consciousness, represented in the perception "I am a *bimo*", "we are *bimo*", etc. The identity becomes consolidated in the contrast with other social groups.

Owing to this, traditional Yi society has another special taxonomy to identify people in a dichotomy: the *bimo* and the *dzo-dzo*. All those who are not *bimo* are *dzo-dzo*, no matter to which class or estate they belong. As pointed out earlier, both the qualification and the identity of a *bimo* are approved by spirits, society and other *bimo*. Hence, the line of demarcation between *bimo* and *dzo-dzo* is distinctive and unmistakable. The whole society, including the supernatural beings, is fully apprised in such matters as which lineage is a *bimo* lineage and which is not; who is a *bimo*, and who is not. In religious life, *bimo* and *dzo-dzo* have different status, responsibilities and obligations. A *bimo* sustains his status and life by communicating with supernatural beings in the interest of clients. In providing *dzo-dzo* with the safety and happiness they require, a *bimo* earns his rewards. Therefore, we say that the existence of the *bimo* depends on the *dzo-dzo*, just as their identity lies in the interaction with and mutual aid to *dzo-dzo*.

The identity of the *bimo*s is expressed in their mutual support and aid as well. *Bimo* are a class and a professional group with special knowledge and skills. However, they have no defined religious place, no special institution or structured organization. Their religious practice is characterized by independence, mobility and the distances they cover in the course of their duties. They do have regular interactions and contacts, such as in training apprentices, helping each other at ceremonies, exchanging skills and scriptures, and visiting famous *bimo*s afar. Because of this, their group identity is developed and consolidated.

For the sake of defending their status and benefits, *bimo*s have to some degree united themselves. The emergence of *vu-tu mo-mge*, the congregation for the mutual help of *bimo*s, is a good example. *Vu-tu* in the Yi language refers to the container of divine slips of bamboo, a *bimo* hallmark and a ceremonial instrument. *Mo-mge* means 'conference' or 'meeting'. The combination of the two words means 'the conference of *bimo*'. It is a congregation that emerges when, for example, a *bimo*'s wife is kidnapped, a *bimo* is killed, or a *bimo*'s crown hair-bun is seized, his property taken or his instruments stolen. The conference is held on

the site of the incident. Every *bimo* and his apprentice who are informed or who have heard the news, no matter how far or near, must attend. Any *bimo* can participate regardless of rank, lineage or divine power.

In 1921, Jjilu vyzi *bimo* in Mude Apu village, Yimu District, Butuo County, found that his Han slave girl had been kidnapped and sold. He sent out an invitation for a *vu-tu-mo-mge* to convene at once. Over 100 *bimo*s from different lineages arrived from all over Butuo County for the congregation. It was presided over by a *bimo* with higher prestige. In addition to the collective rite of incantation to curse the suspect, the participants wrote the name of the slave girl and the time and place of the incident in *tso-ssy-te-yypa,* a cursing notebook. The notebook was copied and circulated to every participant. Later, when the *bimo* performed religious rites in any house, they had to curse the kidnapper according to the notebook. This was carried on and on until the kidnapper was believed to have died.

Yi tradition says that if a *bimo* is engaged to perform a ceremony but cannot come, he is obliged to write curses on *co-ssy-sy-po,* a wooden board, and hang it on a tree by a road to show his support for the congregation. *Vu-tu-mo-mge* is a symbol of *bimo* solidarity. It also demonstrates their sense of belonging and identity.

The group identity of the *bimo*s is the identity of religious practitioners based on a common profession. This identity is the self-consciousness of *bimo* identity. Reflecting their interests, expectations, and demands, it constitutes the psychological and spiritual strength of *bimo* solidarity and coherence.

Concluding Remarks

The Yi *bimo* in Liangshan are religious practitioners who mediate relations between human and supernatural beings (including people's ancestral spirits) by chanting scriptures. As a community based on religious practice, the *bimo* have developed their collective characteristics as follows:

(1) *Bimo* have a common belief relating to their religious activities. The belief consists of *bi-lu*, the guardian gods, and the spirits of *bimo* instruments and scriptures. Observed by all *bimo*, it provides spiritual support in their religious practices.

(2) There exists a set of special conventions to regulate the inheritance, initiation and renunciation of *bimo*ship, the performance of *bi* on tour, and ritual practices. These conventions are strictly respected by all *bimo*.

(3) There is a set of ethical or moral codes that all *bimo* must obey. The function of these codes is to ensure and sustain the standards of *bimo*ship and its reputation.

(4) Members of the *bimo* community have a common professional identity that reflects the self-consciousness of the *bimo* as a class. This identity provides the moral force and psychological ties for *bimo* solidarity and cohesion.

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"Talking to the *Ongons*": The Invocation Text and Music of a Darkhad Shaman

ÁGNES BIRTALAN and JÁNOS SIPOS BUDAPEST

with J. COLOO (ULAANBAATAR)

The present article is devoted to a Darkhad ritual song of the shamaness Bayar from the Cagaan xuular clan (the Darkhad are a Mongolian-speaking people of North Mongolia). The ritual was performed at night on 2 August 1993 with the purpose of divination and invoking good luck in general, and for fortune in travelling. The main corpus of the song was performed by the shamaness herself, although her assistants also took part. The song is based on a ritual dialogue between the shamaness and her ongons*, and, with the help of Mongolian colleagues and the shamaness's family, the authors of the present work tried to investigate the role-playing aspect of the performance—which parts can be ascribed to the spirits and which to the shamaness. The text-corpus examined here has been put into the mythological context of* ongon *worship on the basis of newly recorded materials (reports by shamans), and also by referring to the oldest written sources (13th century).*

As members of the Hungarian–Mongolian Joint Expedition[1] researching folklore and dialectal folk traditions of the Western and Northern Mongolian ethnic groups, we had the opportunity to collect shamanic invo-

[1] The expedition started work in 1991 under the leadership of Alice Sárközi, Senior Researcher of the Research Group of Altaic Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Ágnes Birtalan, Associate Professor at the Department of Inner Asian Studies at the Loránd Eötvös University (Budapest), author of the present article. Associates of the Research Group, the Department, the Hopp Ferenc Museum of East Asian Arts and the Institute of Language and Literature of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences took part in the fieldwork. On the history and the publications of the expedition, see Sárközi and Birtalan 1996. The expedition and the researches are sponsored by the Hungarian National Research Fund (OTKA TO 21174, TO 32087) and the Stein–Arnold Fund of the British Academy.

cations and ritual texts in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999 among the Darkhads of Khöwsgöl (Xöwsgöl)[2] Province and the Bayads of Uws Province, both in the Mongolian Republic. Here we present a survey of one particular Darkhad shamanic invocation, collected from the shamaness Bayar in August 1993 in the Cagaan Nuur district of Khöwsgöl.[3]

Shamanic texts, incantations, invocations, blessings, curses, prayers and offering texts[4] are not easy going, even for researchers with a fair knowledge of a shaman's native language, so the publication process can take some time. As shown in our publications issued so far, in collecting texts the researcher has two options—either to record a text outside the ritualistic setting, or to transcribe it *in situ* shortly after the ritual. The first is easier, and perusing any number of studies on Mongolian shamanism one finds that most texts are of this type. Texts recorded during a ritual do not appear in such a pure form as those recounted separately from the ritualistic circumstances. During the ritual the Mongolian (in our case the Darkhad) shaman converses with the spirits, arguing and quarreling with them, and the spirits answer or make inquiries. From a client's point of view this dialogue is the most important aspect because his or her problem will be solved during the exchange. We had the opportunity to collect several such texts *in situ*; however, their investigation takes a lot of time, requiring checking and rechecking. This is true even when we have listened to the text again with members of the shaman's family or the shaman's attendant, a person who helps to interpret what the shaman is saying—in the case of shamaness Baljir her daughter or in Bayar's case her husband.

Several years ago Ádám Molnár, the editor of this journal, suggested that one of our texts should be published not just as the annotated text with translation but also with tune and rhythm. On his request we, the

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[2] In this article Mongolian words are given their conventional transcription, the letter *j* stands for /ds/ and x for /kh/.

[3] Several students and escorts took part in the expedition, which was led by Alice Sárközi, Ágnes Birtalan and O. Sambuudorj.

[4] A paper entitled "Preliminary Notes on the Analysis of Darkhat Mongolian Shaman Songs" and devoted to a textual survey of the Mongolian shamanic texts was presented by Ágnes Birtalan at the 6th Conference of the International Society for Shamanistic Research held in Viljandi, Estonia, on 12–17 August, 2001. For the variety of genres used by shamans, see Birtalan 2002.

two Hungarian authors of the present article, started to work on the analysis of several Mongolian shamanic invocations, and although the scoring has been finished, the setting of the text under the notes could not be completed. Some fragments of the texts remain undecipherable even though at our request Professor J̌. Coloo checked the tape with the shamaness's daughter Joljayaa and husband Manibajar in the summer of 2000.

Before discussing the text, the ritual environment and its tune and rhythm, we would like to summarise the present situation of Darkhad shamanism and its study.

The Darkhads

The origin of the Darkhads[5] (Mongolian *Darqad*, Khalkha, Darkhad *Darxad*) is still not completely clear. On the basis of the first Mongolian sources it appears that the Darkhads were ordered to serve the religious leader of the Buddhist Church in Outer Mongolia during the Manchu period (1648–1911), his holiness the first J̌ebjundamba (1635–1723), also called Öndör Gegeen, "High Brightness".[6] According to oral tradition, they were the serfs of a nobleman, Geleg noyan, and his sister Deǰid aqai, who offered themselves and their subjects to the J̌ebjundamba and were required to pay only reduced taxes. The phenomenon *darqad* has several meanings in Mongolian and Turkic languages. The meanings 'blacksmith' and 'free from taxes and other obligations' are semantically

[5] On the Darkhads, cf. Sanzheev 1930, 1931; the new edition of J̌amsranii Ceween's survey on the Mongolian nationalities (1997: 75–87); and an encyclopedic summary of the history, material and spiritual culture of the Darkhads by Badamaxatan (1965). For more recently published materials see Cerel 1997: 179–183.

[6] The J̌ebjundamba (from Tibetan rJe-bcun dam-pa) *qutuγtu*s, the living Buddhas in Yeke küriyen (later also called Urga in Russian form, today Ulaanbaatar, the later capital of Mongolia) are reincarnations of the Tibetan philosopher Tāranātha and ruled the Mongolian Buddhist Church (first only in Outer Mongolia, their power spreading later through the whole territory of Mongolia) from 1650 to 1924. A ninth reincarnation, discovered in Tibet, recently became known to the Mongolian religious population when he visited Mongolia in 1999.

connected because the occupation of blacksmith also had a special legal status.[7]

On the basis of their close interethnic relations with the neighbouring Turkic-speaking Tuvas and of the tribal names of the Darkhads, they are also considered to be partly of South Siberian origin.[8] As Diószegi (1963) noted, the shamanic traditions of the Darkhads contain many elements similar to Tuvinian shamanism.

Traditionally the Darkhads lived in three *sum*s (districts) of Khöwsgöl Province, in Bayanjürx, Ulaan Uul and Rinčenlhümb; nowadays a larger group of Darkhads also lives in the districts of Sümber and Artulag (D'iakonova 1996: 51) and in Cagaan Nuur. There are also smaller groups east and south of Lake Khöwsgöl.[9]

Darkhad Shamanism

Thanks to their geographical location, the Darkhads living in the forested region of Northern Mongolia retained their original belief system and shamanism after the Buddhist conversion and even during the last 60–70 years of socialism, which were times of ideological oppression. Even today this ethnic group is collectively famous for its unusual behaviour and shamanic abilities. Until recently there have been old, practising shamans (mostly shamanesses) who did not stop their activities of healing, divining and offering sacrifices in the time of anti-religious subjugation. During our research period we had the opportunity to visit one such aged shamaness (*udgan*), Tuwaanaa/Tuwaanii Baljir,[10] who

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[7] On the historical transformation of the meaning of this phenomenon cf. Vladimirtsov 1934: 93, 117, etc., and Doerfer 1963: 327, 1965: 460–474.

[8] In a recent study D'iakonova (1996) summarised the newest data about the Darkhads from the point of view of their relation to the Tuvas.

[9] The expedition's research team worked with the Darkhads of Ulaan Uul, Bayanjürx and Cagaan nuur and also among a few families living east of the lake, in Cagaan Üür district.

[10] According to the Mongolian custom there is no family name; people usually know their clan but officially they use only their father's (sometimes their mother's) name in the genitive case. The father's name of the shamaness *Tuwaa* + *-nää* (genitive) points to the possible origin of her family from the neighbouring Tuva (cf. Diószegi 1963).

practiced these activities for more than 50 years and to whose work we devoted several articles and studies.[11] Together with O. Čuluunbaatar, a professor at the Mongolian State University, we visited her for the first time in 1992 and devoted a detailed description to one of her most frequent activities, scapulimancy (she practiced the pyromantic type of divination using the shoulder blade of a sheep); the article includes a short life story of the shamaness.[12]

There are also several new shamans among the Darkhads, chosen by the *ongon*-spirits and trained by the older Darkhad shamans, inheriting their traditional shamanic knowledge. One of these new practitioners is the Darkhad shamaness Bayar of the Cagaan xuular clan, who started shamanizing in the 1990s after the political changes, when religious oppression was abolished. When we first visited her summer camp in 1993 she lived in the centre of Cagaan nuur district, but later she moved with her family to Khailast (Xailast), a suburb of Ulaanbaatar. She claimed to be a descendant of J̌otog, a legendary shaman who lived at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries (Chart 2). On her father's side she was a shamaness of the seventh generation, and on her mother's side of the tenth generation. Her mother, Yasnii Süren (1916–1992), was also a famous shamaness, but her father Banjaragč was not a shaman (Pürew 1999: 115, 189, 368).

Chart 1. Bayar's father's side

Xulgana jaarin	beginning of the 19th century
Galsan jaarin	
Ceweg udgan	1877–1950
Coyoogoo udgan	
Dašdawaa udgan	1899–1936
Banjaragč	
Bayar	

[11] We collected several ritual texts, shaman myths and stories from her. Two elaborate reports with her and her family members also have been recorded. These materials are in the process of published by the author (Á. B.). All the Darkhad and Bayad shamanic materials collected during the fieldwork will be published in a monograph devoted to the shaman texts.

[12] See Birtalan 1993. A more detailed life story can be found in Dulam 1992.

Chart 2. Bayar's mother's side

J̌otog jaarin	turn of the 16th/17th centuries
Xaǰ jaarin	
Anir	
Sambuu	
Sündew lam	18th century
Yampil jaarin	
Norǰmoo	
Oxinǰii	
Süren udgan	1916–1992
Bayar	

Bayar died in 2001 while travelling in Mongolia curing people. On the basis of Pürew's quoted work and our fieldwork materials, we have prepared a list giving the names of her shaman (Khalkha *jairan*, Darkhat *jaarin*) and shamaness (Khalkha, Darkhat *udgan*) ancestors. In her ancestry there are also lamas (Khalkha, Darkhad *lam*) and lay persons, whose names are also remembered.

The Darkhad shamans are so-called "black shamans"—*xar bөө, xar jaarin, jaarin*—and also *xar jügiin bөө,* 'shaman of the black direction, of the black creed'. In the case of the Darkhads such descriptions are not used in contrast with white shamanism but denote the non-"lamaised" shamans whose rituals are not, or not significantly, influenced by Buddhism, by the Yellow Faith reformed by Cong-kha-pa (1357–1419). Darkhad shamans regard themselves as enemies of the Buddhist monks: for example, the shamaness Balǰir mentioned to us several times that she does not harm monks but that she does try to avoid them. Almost every published article on Darkhad shamanism reports curses (*xaraal*) that reveal the story of shamans who struggle with the lamas and are irreconcilable enemies of Buddhism. The text of a curse was published by Diószegi (1961: 201–202), and also see Badamxatan (1965: 226–227).

Studies of Darkhad shamanism started in the early 1930s when Sanzheev (1930, 1931) published his folklore and linguistic materials. The studies of Badamxatan (1965) and Diószegi (1963), who worked with this ethnic group at about the same time, could also be considered to form the basis of Mongolian shamanistic research. Almost thirty years after the first research a source book of Darkhad shaman legends and

invocations (*duudlaga*) collected by O. Pürew and S. Dulam[13] appeared, and most recently Pürew (1999) has published a bulky monograph on Mongolian shamanism. Although Pürew's monograph covers Mongolian shamanism in general, it is based mainly on field research he carried out over several decades among the Darkhads. It is worthy of note that Pürew became a researcher on the influence of Diószegi, whom he accompanied as a Darkhad and Khalkha interpreter during the latter's fieldwork among the Darkhads in 1960 (Birtalan 2003). The Hungarian–Mongolian Joint Expedition visited the Darkhad territory four times (in 1992, 1993, 1997, 1998) and, except for the last journey, when the main aim was to collect material on the shaman spirit and Buddhist protector god Dayan degereki in Cagaan Üür (east of Lake Khöwsgöl), we worked with shamans living in the western districts of Khöwsgöl Province.

The Rituals

Below we give a chart that contains the main elements for a further typology of the Darkhad shaman rituals we observed during our fieldwork. We must emphasise again that it is based on our records. According to our observations, there are different types of Darkhad shamanic rituals in respect of their place, time, purpose and the circle of attendants. The following structure offers a preliminary pattern that could be modified during future fieldwork. This structure provides the background for the ritual conversation with the spiritual world.

1. Time
1.1. Concerning the part of the day:
1.1.1. Day ritual
1.1.2. Night ritual
1.1.3. Ritual that can be carried out by day and by night
1.2. Concerning the regularity of the ritual:
1.2.1. Regular rituals, ceremonies that can be carried out on any day that the shaman's clients desire.
1.2.2. Regular rituals connected to the calendar.

[13] Cf. Dulam 1992.

1.2.3. Irregular, occasional rituals at the request of clients

2. Place
2.1. Inside the shaman's *ger* (felt tent) or house
2.1.1. On the honoured place of the *ger* or house
2.1.2. In front of the fireplace
2.1.3. On the honoured place and in front of/next to the fireplace
2.2. Outside the shaman's place at altars or offering places out in the open:
2.2.1. At an *owoo*-altar (ritual stone cairn)
2.2.2. At a shaman-tree-altar
2.2.3. At a burial place
2.2.4. At a shamanic shrine
2.3. In the dwelling of a client

3. The purpose of the ritual
3.1. Healing
3.2. Purification
3.3. Pacifying the spirits
3.4. Sending off the soul
3.5. Divination
3.5. Cursing or counteracting the effect of a curse
3.6. Blessing
3.7. Offering

Type of trance during the ritual
1. Deep trance
2. Light trance
3. Rituals without trance

The shamaness Balǰir practices and Bayar practiced both types of ritual concerning its time: the night-time ritual or shamanizing with the "mount" (Mongolian *kölöge*, Khalkha, Darkhad *xölög*), i.e. with the drum (Darkhad *xec*); and the day-time ritual or shamanizing "on foot", without drum or staff (Khalkha, Darkhad *yawgan böölöx*). Both types of ritual are based on the interaction between the shamaness and her *ongon*s, 'helping spirits, spirits' (see below for details). According to

our observations this interaction can be called forth only during trance or, as Balǰir explained to us, in dreams. From her words emerges a picture of a possibly quite continuous interaction between the shaman and the spirits during and beyond the rituals.

Ene ǰil yuunii türüündü nada barak ordak baesan minii duudsan oŋγad biši. Xamaaguee neg oŋγad biš; odaa bi yirtemciig ergääd yamar-č yumunaar oraaldaad čiadaxguee giǰ. Yamar daen daǰin, yamar ükxül öwči boluu-l nada xaa-č xelnee, ünün xelnee. Teriig-l bi ikx gaexääd baeγaa yum.

This year they [the *ongod*] preferred to come to me. They have not been the *ongod*s I have called. Not a lonely *ongod*, I cannot go around the world, and get to know about things. What a war, what a destruction, malady, they tell me, telling the truth. I really wonder at it.

The *ongon*s are key figures of the shaman's activity. They are the messengers, as shamaness Balǰir told us, who inform the shaman about the actual problems that are the purpose of the ritual and also notify the shaman of all the important events that are not connected with a particular ritual.

The *Ongon*s

The key phenomenon of Mongolian shamanism and folk religion—the concept of spirits—presumably has its roots in the pre-shamanic belief system, in the animistic perception of the world. Although in the accessible written and oral sources numerous terms and designations belong to the concept of spirits (Hamayon 1990: 403–417; Birtalan 2001a: 987, etc.), the close connection of the concept expressed in the term *ongon* with ancestor worship is comprehensible. *Ongon* worship could be derived from the ancestor cult, and its significance in the ritualistic and magical context of shamanism is mainly as the spirit-protector and its representation. The word *ongon* (Mongolian *ongγon*) is also used in the plural as *ongod* (Mongolian *ongγod*), which means 'a group of spirits' on the one hand and expresses respect on the other. In contemporary usage *ongod* means mostly one, respected spirit (Birtalan 2001a: 1020–1022). Manzhigeev, the author of the Buryad shamanic and pre-

shamanic terminology, defined the concept of *ongon* as follows: "the types of *ongon:* 1. spirits of the territories, waters, mountains etc.; 2. spirits of ancestors; 3. spirits of dead shamans, hunters, fishermen, warriors etc., i.e. people who have led an unusual life; 4. spirits of young persons, mostly girls, who have died in early youth; 5. honourable tabooed deities or spirits" (Manzhigeev 1978: 62–65). His concept was based on two different beliefs, the worship of territorial spirits (*genii loci*, cf. No. 1.) and the worship of ancestors (cf. Nos. 2–4.). We would list the fourth group of spirits with the second group, for the reason that even if the young girls and lads are not *par excellence* ancestors, they did belong to a particular clan, and their worship contains this information. Manzhigeev's fifth group of spirits belongs to another approach to the spirits and also other phenomena: the word *ongon* can be used as an attribute with different phenomena in the meaning 'pure, original, sacred, noble, tabooed', as in *ongon*-mountain, *ongon*-tree, *ongon*-territory, *ongon*-offering (*ongγon aγula, ongγon modu, ongγon nutuγ, ongγon takilγ-a*); grey hair appearing among black hair, the uncut mane of a horse (*ongγon üsü, ongγon del*).[14] If his etymology is correct, Bertagaev's explanation confirms the original close connection between the expression *ongon* and ancestor worship. As he stated, the primary stem of *ongon* is *on-*, 'pervoosnova, pervonachalo, nachalo, pervichnaia sushchnost'' (Bertagaev 1974: 28– 39; cf. also Sečinčoγtu

[14] Here we chose the most characteristic from the point of view of our topic, although Sečinčoγtu, the author of a Mongolian etymological dictionary collected more items for the use of this expression: "1. shrine, amulet, ancestors, *ongγon*-shrine; 2. cemetery of nobles and ancestors, corpse-*ongγon*; 3. taboo, noble, sacred: *ongγon*-mountain, *ongγon*-tree, *ongγon*-territory, *ongγon*-offering; 4. primary, original: white hair among the black ones, uncut mane of a horse; 5. pleasant, trusted; 6. the name of an old Mongolian tribe, that inhabited the northern side of the mountain Dalan Qar-a [Seventy Blacks]" 1. *sitügen, sakiγulsun, degedüs, ongγon sitügen;* 2. *yekes degedüs-ün kegür orsiγuluγsan γaǰar, kegür ongγon;* 3. *darqan, nandin, seter: ongγon aγula, ongγon modu, ongγon nutuγ, ongγon takilγ-a;* 4. *angqan-u: ongγon üsü, ongγon del;* 5. *eyelseg, dotonu;* 6. *erten-ü mongγol-un nigen ayimaγ-un ner-e, odo-yin Dalan Qar-a aγula-yin aru-bar nutuγlaǰu bayiǰe* (Sečinčoγtu 1988: 327–328).

1988: 324–327). Sečinčoγtu further suggested the connection of this stem with the stems *ang-, angγai-, ongγoi-,* 'gap, space; to gape, to open wide".[15]

Ongon worship appears in the system of the black and yellow shamans as well. Hereditary shamans (Khalkha, Darkhad *yajguurtai böö, udmiin böö,* 'shaman with shaman ancestors, with roots'), who are descendants of shamans, inherit (Khalkha, Darkhad *süldl-*) their protector and helping spirits from their relatives, mostly from their father or mother or both, from clan members, and also from their master shamans. Shamans who are possessed by spirits without being hereditary shamans, who do not have shaman ancestors, inherit the spirits of their masters. Hereditary shamans possessing twenty or even more *ongon*s are not rare among the Darkhads. In his encyclopaedic work, Badamxatan (1965: 215–216) listed the *ongon*s of some famous shamans (such as Šagdar, Xas, Xorol, Dolǰinsüren) with numerous helping spirits. Our Darkhad shamaness informants Balǰir, Bayar and Joljayaa inherited numerous protector spirits. Balǰir has never revealed how many spirits she has; different sources give different numbers for Bayar's *ongod* (36 according to Pürew, 42 according to our fieldwork); and Joljayaa had approximately 20 *ongod* in 2000.

In numerous Darkhad shaman invocations the expression *ongon* is used for the owner spirits of the shaman's garments and of the different features of the landscape; while invoking the spirits the shaman calls them *aaw, eeǰ* 'father and mother'. The souls of departed shamans become protectors at their burial place. Shamaness Joljayaa explained it to us as follows:

Jöwxön biyiig oršuulsan bus, xengereg, deel, büx šüteeniig-n' jalaǰi bairluulsan gajar yum. Nas barsan udgun jairinii sünüs-n' ene gajartaa ongγod bolǰ buudag. Tegeed caaš-n' Teelee aaw Ulaan modnii aaw geed bii.[16]

Not only the burial place of their corpse, but the territory where their drum, garment and all their sacral objects were placed. The soul of deceased shamans, shamanesses descend to this place to become *ongod.* Then they will be called Father Teelee, Father Red Wood [after the toponym].

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[15] In our opinion, both etymologies have to be verified.

[16] Fieldwork material on tape, recorded on 13 January, 2000.

According to Badamxatan (1965: 215), the main protector spirits of the Darkhads were the owner spirits of their objects: the shamanic garments and other ritualistic objects. Badamxatan also gave a detailed description of the appearance and emplacement of the *ongon*s that corresponds to our own observations. Shamans keep their *ongon*s in the honoured place of the yurt, just opposite the door. The *ongon*s are represented as anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or anthropo-zoomorphic figures made of metal and textile (in Badamxatan's survey the materials from which *ongon*s are made are felt and metal), or in numerous cases (according to my observations) they are symbolized with a piece of textile or silk according to the number of spirits.[17] The *ongon* representations are attached to a thin rope, hung on the wall of the yurt and kept behind a cover during the day, even during a daytime ritual.[18] Another type of *ongon* that receives its first detailed description here on the basis of our expedition's findings is an object also referred to as *ongon* and which is used during the day ritual. We concluded that it must be a relatively new type of ritual object. To describe it we use the term *gariin ongon,* 'an *ongon* used in the hands', as it was called on the basis of its function by one descendant of a Darkhad shaman. Balǰir used such an *ongon* during her day ritual, although she did not call it *gariin ongon.* This type of ritual object consists of symbolical weapons, tassels of five colours, and also of a wooden or copper crow figure and a Jew's harp (or the box for a Jew's harp). Although Balǰir's *gariin*

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[17] In his epoch-making work Zelenin summed up the types of *ongod*-representations as follows. The representations of the above mentioned types of *ongon*s are the following: "Eto byli ili grubye skul'pturnye izvaianiia iz dereva, kamnia, kosti, metalla, travy, dazhe iz zemli (iz 'griazy') i snega; ili chuchela iz shkur, per'ev i shersti, ili kukly iz triapok, ili, nakonets, vyrezannye iz tkani, kozhi libo narisovannye na tkani ili kozhe figury" (Zelenin 1936: 6). The first mention of the *ongon*-representations such as felt and silk puppets by Plano Carpini and Willelmus Rubruck are quoted almost in every study written on Mongolian religions and shamanism, as by Harva (1938: 371) or Heissig (1980: 7). One of the first appearances of this phenomenon is in the *Hiao King*, an early Mongolian source, translated from the Chinese: *tariyan-u ongγod-ta taqil-iyan güyičegen čidaγad* "(he) succeeded in completing his offering to the deities of corn seeds" (Ligeti: 1972: 80). Cf. also in *Hua-I ih-yü* 459: *ongut* 'Geister' (Haenisch 1957: 21) and also in New Persian *ōnqūn* 'Filzpuppe, der als Stammestotem götterliche Ehren dargebracht werden' (Doerfer 1963: 179–181).

[18] Fieldwork material of the Hungarian–Mongolian Joint Expedition 1992, 1993, 1998.

ongon did not include a Jew's harp, she explained to us that originally it was attached to one (Birtalan 1996; Somfai Kara 1998: 237–247).

The Ritual Text, Conversation with the *Ongon*s

As we have mentioned above, in Mongolian the shamanic trance is called *ongon or-*, 'the *ongon* enters [the shaman's body]', and the interaction between shaman and spirits takes place during the trance.[19] This interaction is an achievement of a very special kind of communication, the so-called sacral communication.[20] The shaman is both an active and a passive participant in this action; thus he invites the *ongon*s, he begs them, he can even scold them, but the *ongon*s also talk through his mouth and use his physical body to transmit their opinions, demands or condemnations. From the client's point of view the dialogue with the *ongon*s is the most important part of the ritual. The shaman can invite the *ongon*s for different purposes, such as healing the sick, finding lost property, divining the causes of misery, sending off the soul of a deceased person, etc., but the first phase in all these aims is to ascertain the cause of the misery or suffering—i.e. to query the *ongon*s. The *ongon*s also ask the shaman about the current situation of his community (people and their property). It is rather unusual to find such a conversation with the *ongon*s in the literature, since what is mainly reported is the traditional corpus inherited by disciples from their masters, whereas the conversational part varies with the situation. Although the dialogue is improvised, it is subject to strict rules and motives and has elements that are fixed by tradition. Here we would like give a short outline of such a ritual text that was chanted in August 1993.

The text starts with an invocation (Khalkha, Darkhad *duudlag*), which can be longer or very short (just naming the spirit or god that is invoked) and is followed by the shaman's conversation with the invoked *ongon*s. The text of the invocation is standard and inherited from the shaman

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[19] "The word *ongon* means both the spirit and the material representation of the spirit, and the verb *onguulakh*, 'to make into an *ongon*' is used, for example of a shaman entering an ecstasy—that is, when the spirit enters his body—or of an animal that is possessed by a spirit" (Humphrey 1971: 271–290).

[20] On the sacral communication see Lovász 2002.

master by the disciple. Several Darkhad shaman invocations have been published by Rintchen (1975), Badamxatan (1965) and Dulam (1992), but there are only few data about the improvised parts of a ritual.[21] Whereas the invocation text contains the usual *loci communes*—namely, the evocation of the spirit(s) and descriptions of the spirit, its dwelling place and how it arrives at the place of the ritual—the improvisational part varies according to the requests of the "clients" and the actual situation. This free talk contains the questions of the shamaness and the answers of the *ongon*s, and the *ongon* may begin what he has to say with an animal sound if he has an animal form.

From the text of the "talk" the following observations can be made:

(1) A dialog with the *ongon*s forms a part of both the night and the day rituals. A dialog between the shaman and, in most cases, several *ongon*s is as important a part of the ritual text as the traditional invocations, prayers, blessings, etc. The text of the dialogue is improvisatory, varying with the type of ritual and the requests of clients.

(2) The talk with the *ongon*(s) is not identical with the shamanic invocations, its text being only partly defined.

(3) In most cases this text follows the rules of alliteration.

(4) Several of the invited *ongon*s talk through the shamaness's mouth. Most can be identified from features of the dialog—the motives stated, expressions relating to them, animal sounds, rhythm and tune.

(5) The talk consists of many distorted words (with several syllables added to the words), many of which cannot be identified.

(6) Problems of genre: in which traditional genre does the improvisatory dialogue appear? How does the shaman or one of his assistants define it? The relation of the text to other folklore genres (parts of folksongs, blessings, curses, proverbs) also appears in the talk of the shaman and the *ongon*s.

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[21] *Xan Tömörlengiin dudlaya* "Invocation to Khan Tömörleng" in Rintchen (1975: 82–84); on the collecting, see *Köbsögül ayimay Bürin sumu-yin iduyan Čebegdorji kelejü öggügsen-i temdeglen bičibei 1954 on*, "Collected from shamaness Čebegdorji in Xöwsgöl province, Bürin district, 1954," translated by Even (1988–1989: 241–244). Another example: *Cayᵏxilay xaᵗnii duudalya*, "Invocation to Khatan Cangxilang" in Rintchen (1975: 84–85); on the collecting, see *Köbsögül ayimay Bürin sumu-u iduyan Čebegdorji-eče temdegleǰü abubai* "Set down from shamaness Čebegdorji in Xöwsgöl province, Bürin district," translated by Even (1988–1989: 244–247).

(7) The relation of the defined and improvisatory parts in the shamanic text, namely: (i) the traditional defined parts, (ii) the traditional improvisatory parts, and (iii) the non-traditional (innovative) improvisatory parts, which vary according to the actual situation.

Some Preliminary Conclusions Concerning the Analysed Texts

(1) The dialogue with the *ongon*(s) is not identical with the shamanic invocations or prayers, and its text changes with the situation.

(2) The talk may also follow the rules of alliteration.

(3) Several *ongon*s are invited to talk through the shamaness's mouth, but not all are identifiable from their talk or the animal sounds they make. This talk consists of lots of distorted words, many of which cannot be identified because of the added syllables.

(4) The dialogue contains fragments of other folk genres.

Description of the Ritual Performed by Shamaness Bayar on 2 August, 1993[22]

Time: at night, full moon
Place: the honoured place (southwest side of the yurt) in the shamaness' tent, centre of Cagaan nuur district
Purpose: divination and blessing
Trance: deep trance
Audience: the shamaness' family, the shamaness' community (the people of Cagaan nuur), members of the research group
Assistants: the shamaness' husband, a kinsman called Baljir (the degree of relationship was not clear)

[22] The text will be published with more notes and remarks on its genre specification in the above mentioned monograph on Mongolian shamanic texts.

The Ritual Process

(1) The drum has been animated during the evening with the help of family members. The shamaness changed from her everyday clothes, putting on her shaman's garments aided by family members—her husband, her husband's previous wife and her children. (2) Bayar performed a libation in front of her altar; (3) Drumming in front of the altar, she called the spirits, the *ongon*s (for details see the text inserts below). During the ritual the spirits wanted some food (*cagaan idee*, 'white food', i.e. milk product), some drink (*šimiin arxi* 'milk brandy') and some tobacco to smoke (*tamxi*). Representing the spirits, the shamaness ate a little curd, drank a sip of milk brandy and took a puff from a cigarette, offering them in this way to the invoked *ongon*s. (4) After the spirits' departure the shamaness changed her clothes and performed a blessing ritual to her fireplace with a bowl of milk mixed with juniper (*arc*).

Language

The invoked spirits are of Mongolian and Tuvinian origin, the Mongolian spirits speaking in Darkhad-Mongolian. The Tuvinian spirit, who is called Uighur (a clan of the Khöwsgöl Tuvas), understands and is able to communicate in Mongolian, but generally he starts to talk in Tuvinian. Rintchen quoted similar situations when the attendants at the ritual ask the *ongon* to communicate in a language they can understand: "Speak in Mongolian please! We do not understand this Uighur language."[23]

Bayar began by invoking her main spirit, Mother Öjüür (var.: Ojuuraa yum):

Saalaa, saaluu, saaluu, saaluu saalaa, saaluu, saaluu, saaluu, saalaa.[24]

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[23] *Mongolčilaǰ xairl! Ene guigur* (sic!) *xeliig bid medexgüi baina* (Rintchen 1975: 83). The transcription of the text is simplified by the author (Á. B.).

[24] Typical beginning of Darkhad shaman ritual texts. Used for the invocation of the spirits, according to our observations it cannot be connected to a particular spirit or god.

Tawan taldaa tarǰ yow!
Arwan taldaa
Alga bolox čin' boloo yuu?
Ongon tawan tengertee
Sain jalbiraltai bai!

Saalaa, saaluu, saaluu, saaluu saalaa, saaluu, saaluu, saaluu, saalaa.
Go spreading to five directions!
Have you disappeared
spreading in ten directions?
Pray, as it is befitting
to the five *Ongon* gods.[25]

Mother Öjüür[26] scolds[27] the shamaness Bayar:

Ödör yaax geǰ böölöw či?
Xünees čin' yuu üxeew?
Malaas čin' yuu üxeew?
Ee, jailuul! Iim aǰil bitii xii!

Why did you shamanize during the daytime?
Who of your people died?
Which of your cattle perished?
Oh, dear! Do not do such a thing!

Trying to pacify[28] Mother Öjüür, shamaness Bayar says:

Öndör šar Öjüür bair min'!

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[25] The group of five spirits or gods is typical in the Mongolian pantheon, i.e. J̌ayaγači tabun tengger 'Five Destiny Gods', Tabun Dalha 'Five Dalxa Gods'. The grouping of the *ongons* into this quinary assembly follows perhaps analogously other spirit groups.

[26] Also Ojuurai yum, a main *ongon* of the Xuular clan. Dulam (1992: 57) explained as *yajguuriin ongon*, '*ongon* of the roots, origin'. In a shaman myth collected by Dulam Ojuurai yum is identified with a group of spirits called Daraanii yum (Dulam 1992: 57).

[27] This kind of blaming is rather typical in those few texts which contain fragments of conversation.

[28] The pacifying of angry spirits is one of the main aims of shaman rituals (Birtalan 2001b).

Örgön Xarmaa cengelt min'
Nartiin ornää xümüüs
Bügd amar sain baina.

My high, yellow place Öjüür!
My broad place Xarmaa cengelt[29]
People living under the Sun,
they all feel well.

The *ongon* Öjüür asks again:

Činii öširxöǰ yawdag
Nöxöd xed we?
Sain sanaǰ yawdag
Nöxöd xed we?
Öširxöǰ yawdag xünd čin'
Öšöön, tašaan xürgeǰ čadna bi.
Sain sanasan xünd čin'
Sain büxniig talbiǰ čadna bi.
Nariin cagaan Deeǰgee čin'
Ee, jailuul, büren mend üü?
Mendee, mendee?
Ee jailuul!
Tungaaǰ üjeereegti, daa! Ee jailuul tedüü nöxöd minee! Mendüü?

Companions under your protection
how many of them?
Companions, living the right way
how many of them?
To people under your protection,
I am able to cause bad luck.
To people living the right way
I am able to give all the best.
You thin white Deeǰgee[30]

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[29] Xarmai river, where one the ancestors of Bayar called Xaǰ shaman lived. After his death he became the spirit in his burial place, the river Xarmai; today in Ričenlhümb and Cagaan nuur districts he is called Xarmain aaw 'Father Xarmai'. Cengelt is a river in the Darkhad territory.

[30] We could not identify this entity more closely.

oh dear, are all of them healthy?
Are they healthy? Are they healthy?
Oh dear!
Clarify and see! Oh dear, they, all my companions! Are they healthy?

The assistants of shamaness Bayar[31] answer:

Mendee, mendee!

Healthy, healthy.

Agariin[32] *ongon* arrived and says:

Öndör Agar bair min'!
Örgön mörön Cengelt min'!
Gangan cagaan ulaač min'!
Tegelgüee yaaxab-daa!
Saixan eeǰiin tašaand
Sanxaragsan biye min' giiǰ,
Gangan cagaan ulaač min!
Gangan cagaan ulaač-l
Gangan bailguee yaax we!?
Ulaastiin goloor-l...
Ee jailuul, ulaač min'!
Ulaačaa-l bodooroi!
Ee jailuul, Ulaastaan goloo min'!
Gangan cagaan eeǰee min'!
Xatan baraanii deeǰ ulaač min'-ee!
Tegelguee yaaxaw bainaa!

My high place Agar!
My wide Cengelt river!

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[31] There is a similar fragment in Rintchen's (1975: 83) collection.

[32] The Agariin river flows in the territory of Bayanjürx district; the *ongon* called Agariin xairxan is the transformed soul of the shamaness Baglaan (Pürew 1999: 24, 144, 277).

My tidy white messenger![33]
Of course you are!
(I am) on the beautiful mother's hip (?)
my exhausted body shines,
my tidy white messenger!
The tidy white messenger[34]
should be of course nice!
Along the river Uliaast...
Oh dear, my messenger!
Think about your messenger!
Oh dear, my Uliaast river!
My tidy white mother!
You the best of... (?)
Of course you are!

Shaman Damdin's[35] *ongon,* called Caxiriin aaw,[36] arrives:

Ee, ee, ee, ee!
Xalx darxad xoyort
Xalbadag nertei yawsan.
Nariin cagaan Delbee čin'
Uurlaad dairaad dagaǰ baina.

Ee, ee, ee, ee!
Among the Khalkhas and Darkhats
My name was "The Flying".[37]

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[33] *Ulaač*, originally means 'an attendant sent with relay horses', and in the Darkhad shaman texts is one of the appellations of the messenger spirit. Sometimes the spirits might also call the shaman as their messenger.

[34] In the following lines of this fragment it is not clear whether it is the shamaness or the spirits talking.

[35] A very famous Darkhad shaman (1898–1972) of the Cagaan xuular clan (Even 1988–1989: 136–137; Pürew 2003: 67). Damdin was the master-shaman of Bayar's mother, shamaness Süren.

[36] Caxiriin aaw is the transformed soul of shaman Damdin, which became an *ongon.*

[37] One of the famous flying shamans, who travelled flying between the Darkhad and Khalkha territories (for the etymology if its name, cf. Darkhad *xalba-*, 'fly, float'). There are legends, myths about the seven flying shamans of the Darkhads.

Your thin, white Delbee[38]
follows me angrily, attacking.

Bayar's assistants say:

Tegelgüee yaaxaw!
Iim, iim ajiltaa bolood, gadniin ulsuud ireed...
Of course!
She became busy, foreigners arrived...

Shamaness Bayar prays (*jalbiral duudlag*)[39] to the *ongon*:

Xan-daa buurul eej min'!
Ajai buurul tenger min'!
Uurgüi nomxon jalarč,
Nariin cagaan Delbee min'!
Ogcomgüi dölgön jalaraa!
Ucaargüe nomxon jalaraa!
Altan tuyaagaa tusaxtan!

My grey-haired king mother!
My grey-haired respected god!
You arrive without anger and calm,
my thin, white Delbee!
Arrive without fury, quiet!
Arrive without anger, gentle!
Beam golden rays!

A new *ongon* called Uraanii eej[40] arrives:

Ee jailuul, üür-čin'!
Tand dutdag yum yuu baixaw?
Xargij nargij xarixad...
Nariin cagaan Delbee min'!
Xajuud tan' yuu č bolood

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[38] The name is not specifiable.

[39] On this genre of shamanic texts see Birtalan (2002: 855–856).

[40] Uraanii eej is an *ongon* that could not be identified more closely.

jogsooǰ čadna bi.
Ta nar diilex üü? Bi diilex üü?

Oh, dear, offspring!
What do you miss?
I revel, revel, when I return...
My thin and white Delbee!
I am able to stop anything
besides of you.
Will you win? Shall I win?

Bayar's assistants say:

O, tegeǰ boloxgüee. Aǰil töröl xiiǰ baixad tegeǰ boloxgüee!
Ulaastaan golooroo bodooroo!

O, you should not act this way! While working and acting it is impossible to do it so!
Think about your river Uliaast!

Another *ongon* called Usudagiin eeǰ[41] arrives and asks shamaness Bayar:

Xalx darxad xoyort
Xaanan č xalbaǰ yawsan biye min'
Nartiin ornii borčuul
Büren büten mend üü?

Among the Khalkhas and Darkhats
I myself went flying everywhere.
The poor beings under the Sun,
are they all healthy?

Bayar says:

---

[41] One of the three *ongon*s of the Agariin river (*Agariin gurwan xairxan* 'the three merciful ones of Agar river'). The soul of the shamaness called Amaǰii transformed into this *ongon*. She is also called Sudgiin eeǰ, 'Mother of Sudag' (*sudag* means 'canal', or 'ditch'), see Pürew 1999: 353.

Mend, mend!

They are healthy, healthy!

An *ongon* called Taigiin Caatan Balǰgaa[42] arrives and asks:

Taigiin Targuul nutag min'-dee-xöö!
Tawiad cagaan caa mor' min' mend üü?
Taigiin Targuul nutag min' dee-xöö!
Tawiaad cagaan mor' min'...
Yuu bolow? Yaagaad ödör böölöw?

My dwelling, Targal, in the Taiga,[43] hoy!
Are my almost fifty white reins and horses healthy?
My dwelling, Targuul, in the Taiga, hoy!
My almost fifty white horses...
What happened? Why did you shamanize by day?

Shamaness Bayar talked to Balǰgaa in the Caatan[44] language:

(...)

An *ongon* called Caramiin eeǰ[45] arrives and says angrily:

Eekee, eekee, eekee
ee jailuul!
Mend yüü? Mend üü?
Mendee, mendee bainaw.

---

[42] An *ongon* of the reindeer herder Caatan people who live in the northern part of Khöwsgöl province.

[43] The dwelling place in the Taiga of the reindeer keepers is called Targal or Targuul Taiga (personal communication by J. Coloo).

[44] A dialect of the Turkic Tuvinian (Tïwa) language. This part of the text was not understandable to anybody from the shamaness's family, who stated that the shamaness has no idea what she is saying in Tuvinian she is not in a trance. As the family explained, they do not speak or understand Tuvinian.

[45] Carmiin eeǰ is the name of an *ongon* that dwells on a mountain peak (Darkhad Khalkha *caram,* 'mountain peak').

Togloom naadmiin yumaa šinge
Ödör böölǰ baigaa čin' yuu we?
Önöö yüü? Margaš-uu?

Eekee, eekee, eekee,
Oh dear!
Are you healthy? Are you healthy?
Healthy, I am healthy.
It is like a play, a game
that you shamanize by day?
Today or tomorrow?

Shamaness Bayar answers with a prayer (*jalbiral*):[46]

Xöxöö üülen nömrögtön,
Xaw xar üülen xuwcastanguud,
Xar lusan xamǰaatanguud,
Xaltar üülen nömrögtöngüüd,
Awran öršööǰ xairla!
Altan tuyaagaa tusgaǰ
Ačit buural xöörxös min'.
Aa, öršöögtii, šüteǰ yawyaa, xündelǰ yawyaa!

You, whose cover is the blue clouds,
You, whose garment is the pitchblack clouds,
You, whose assistants are the black *lus*-spirits,[47]
You, whose cover is motley black clouds,
You kindly protect me!
You make beam the golden rays,
My generous, grey-haired dearest ones.
Oh, protect [us], we will believe [in you], we will respect [you]!

Shamaness Bayar calls the *ongon* Ulaan modon:[48]

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[46] On *jalbiral* see Birtalan (2002: 859–860).

[47] The *lus* or *luus* are the spirits of the water. Their name also occurs in the expression *lus-sawdag*, which has the meaning 'protector spirits of earth, waters, trees, mountains etc.' (Birtalan 2001a: 1006–1007).

[48] The two *ongon*s of place in Ulaan uul district (the northern part of the Lake Caw). Presumably the *ongon* of Tatai eeǰ 'Mother Tatai' (Dulam 1992: 121).

Örgön tengis bair min'!
Xaan ulaan mod nöxöd min'!
Sain eriin ganjgand yawǰ
...nada yagaad...
Ulaač min'-ee!
Al' saixan oljoo
Duudaad irsen biye min'!

My place, the wide sea![49]
My king red tree-companions!
Follow the best man on his saddletongue,
...why me...
my messenger!
Any good booties
I called myself.

The *ongon* asks shamaness Bayar:

Xeden xünii olj omog duudax
Yamar ganjag awčirsan be?
Xel! Xel! Xel!

How many peoples' booty shall I call?
What kind of saddletongue did I bring?
Tell me! Tell me! Tell me!

The *ongon* of the plain, the Taliin *ongon* or Xonǰ aaw 'Father Xonǰ', arrives and scolds Bayar for shamanising at an improper time and wants to stop her shamanizing.[50]

Shamaness Bayar scolds one of her younger relatives that some illness afflicted him because she put on somebody else's garment.[51]

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[49] For the Darkhads, "the sea" means the Lake Khöwsgöl.

[50] The recording is inaudible; this comment was added by members of the shamaness's family.

[51] A very typical part of the shamanic texts; we have also heard it stated several times that the shamans hate wearing someone else's clothes, jewels, etc. Personal

Xüntei či xuwcasaa sol'ǰ ömssön baina? Yaagaad xuwcasaa sol'ǰ xünii xuwcas či ömssön yum be? Čamd xuwcas dutaa yuu? Daxiad xüntei xuwcasaa sol'ǰ ömswöl biye xar čin' öwdööd l baix yum baina. Bol' odoo či.

You put on the clothes of somebody else? Why did you put on, changing the clothes of somebody else? Are there not enough clothes for you? If you change and put on the cloth of somebody else once again, your miserable body will suffer for sure. Stop doing it now!

Bayar's *ongon*s, stopping her shamanizing, return to their fireplaces.

Xaluun galdaa
Xar' buc!

Return, go back
to your fireplace!

Bayar asks:

Tarax-uu, tarax-uu?

Shall we finish, shall we finish?

All the *ongon*s answer:

Xaluun galdaa xar'na bi,
Bucna bi taruu, taruu?
Xaluun galdaa
Xar' buc!

I return to the warm fire,
I go back. Shall we finish, shall we finish?
Return, go back
to the warm fire!

Bayar asks:

---

paraphernalia keeps the destiny of their owner, and bad luck can be transferred in this way to another person.

Tarax-uu, tarax-uu?

Shall we finish? Shall we finish?

The *ongons* answer:

Xaluun galdaa xar' na bi, bucna bi.
Taruu, taruu?

I return, I go back to the warm fire.
Shall we finish? Shall we finish?

Bayar continues:

Öögii, öögii, öögii,
Naiman cagaan biyed min',
Nariin bumbiin tuyaatanguud!
Tarax-uu, tarax-uu, tarax-uu?

Öögii, öögii, öögii,
To my eight white bodies,
You shiny [spirits] from the thin vessel (?)!
Shall we finish, shall we finish, shall we finish?

Bayar's assistants say:

Odoo bolson bolox, ongod cöm orǰ garaad...

Now it is come to an end, all the *ongod* spirits entered and left...

A Musical Analysis of Bayir's Song

Ágnes Birtalan asked me (J. S.) to transcribe and analyse the Darkhat shamanic songs collected and published by her in this article. I was more than happy to undertake this task as the shamanic songs of the Mongol peoples are very little studied and, to the best of my knowledge,

none have been transcribed.[52] Hungarian ethnomusicologists have a longstanding interest in Mongolian folk music as there are similarities between some pentatonic layers of Hungarian and Mongolian folk music. They have visited Mongolia and Inner Mongolian peoples living in Northern China,[53] and I myself have been able to discover the Inner Mongolian parallel of a Hungarian musical style.[54]

Although we find references to shamans and professional minstrels in the *Secret History of the Mongols*[55] going back to the early 13th century, musical transcriptions of Mongolian shamanic ceremonies are lacking even today, and analytic works concerning Mongolian shamanic songs are practically non-existent.[56] If we attach great importance to these séances, we need also to examine the musical and extra-musical devices that represent an essential part of the shamanic ceremony.

The examination of shamanic songs is important from another point of view, in that they probably preserve old traditions. It is not easy to imagine that new songs creep into the repertoire of genres such as laments or shamanic songs since they are so close to the world of instincts.

I (J. S.) was not present during the shamanic ceremony described in the first part of this article, so I worked with tapes provided by Ágnes Birtalan. I selected the characteristic tunes from the whole material.

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[52] However, there are lots of recordings. In January 2004 I attended the 37th World Conference of the International Council for Traditional Music, where interesting papers on Korean and Manchu shamans were read, while there was only one lecture on Mongolian shamans (Liu Guiteng 2004). Though the lecturer presented video recordings, the melodies were neither transcribed nor analysed.

[53] E.g. Szabolcsi 1956; Vargyas 1968; Vikár 1958.

[54] See Sipos (1997, 1998, 2003).

[55] For example in paragraph §272: "...he was in distress, when one caused to divine by divers sorcerers and by diviners, [they said]...'Sorcerers, incant and conjure!,' when the sorcerers conjured, Prince Tolui drank the water of conjuration."; in paragraph §174: "...we pray [Heaven], seeking [him], saying '*Abui*! *Babui*!'"; in paragraph §189 we read "to play the *qu'ur* [A stringed instrument]" (Cleaves 1982: 212, 213, 100, 116).

[56] There are only a few analytic works concerning Mongolian folk music. One of the earliest publications is Rudnev (1909). Important studies have been published in Inner Mongolia, such as Rinčindorji *et al.* eds. (1979–1984). These books do not contain musical analysis but are full of reliable transcriptions.

The songs published here were sung by one of the most famous female shamans in Mongolia. The shamaness, whose power is equal to that of the male shamans, calls the *ongod* with songs and *xec* or *xengereg*, the skin-covered frame drum.

The drum accompanies the songs and fills the pauses between them. The basic rhythm pattern is ♪ ♩ ♪ ♩ or the smoother ♫ ♫. During the quite impulsive performance the pitch and the intensity of the units in the patterns above often alters. A remarkable phenomenon is that both the songs and the drums are performed in strict rhythm but they sometimes break away and then cling to one another again.

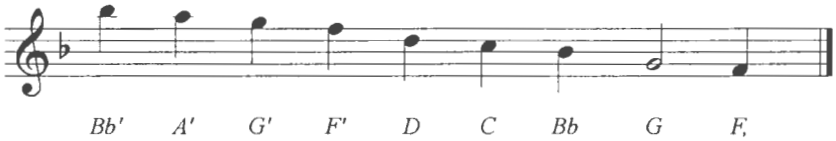

Fig. 1. Transcription of the pitches

In the majority of the songs the range of the voice reaches, or at least approaches, the octave. In some melodies we can hear the embellishments, trills and glissandos so characteristic of the Mongolian *urtiin duu*, 'long song'; however, most of the songs belong to the less ornamented *tempo giusto*, or 'short song' category.[57]

During the ceremony we hear fifteen songs following each other, from motivic songs based on a few tunes, to the arched, quaternary melody forms. Every melody moves on pentatonic scales, most of which are *do*-pentatonic (Nos. 2, 4–7, 9–12, 14), but there are a few *la*-pentatonic (No. 1), *so*-pentatonic (Nos. 3, 8) and *mi*-pentatonic (No. 13) tunes as well.

As is not rare in musical worlds that are relatively uninfluenced by composed music, we can hear sounds that do not fit perfectly into the pentatonic system and sounds intonated on various pitches too. In the transcriptions these are sometimes indicated by an arrow above the note (e.g. No. 13).

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[57] The concept *urtiin duu* came into general use after standardization of music under the communism. In reality each Mongolian group has its own repertory and names for its musical styles and forms.

Mongolian Shamanic Songs

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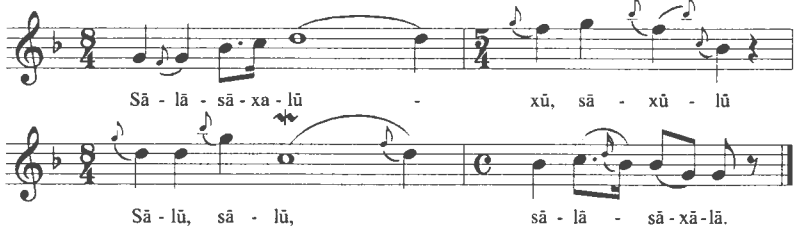

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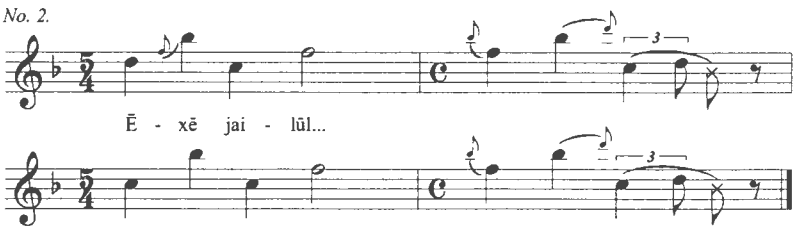

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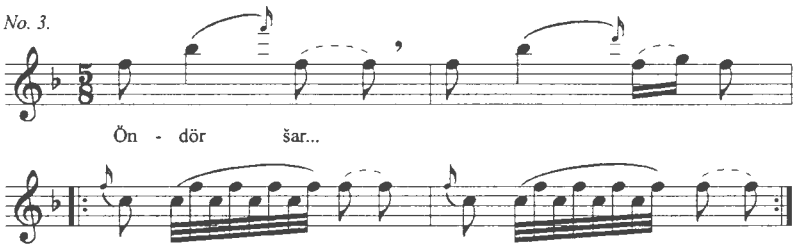

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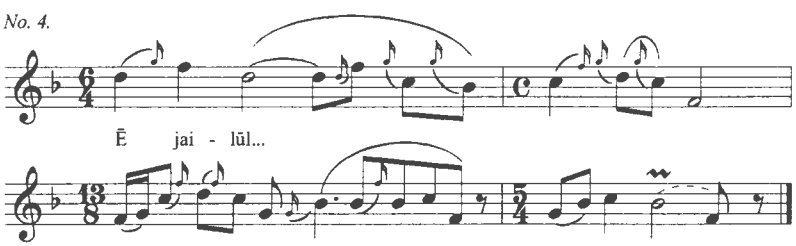

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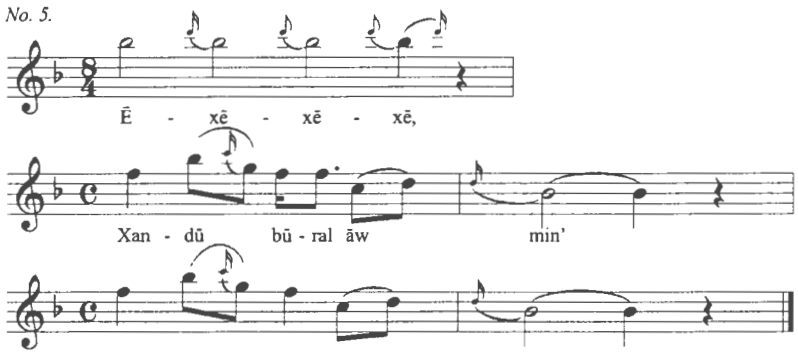

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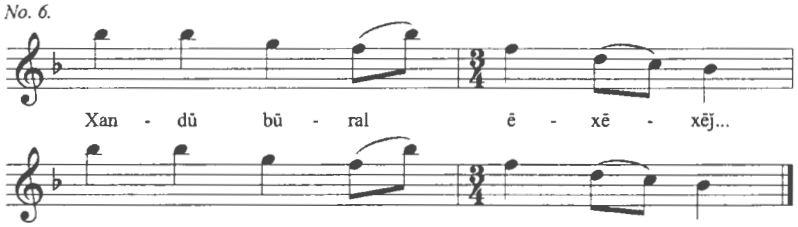

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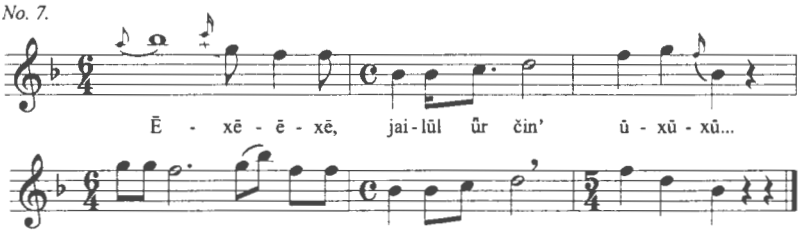

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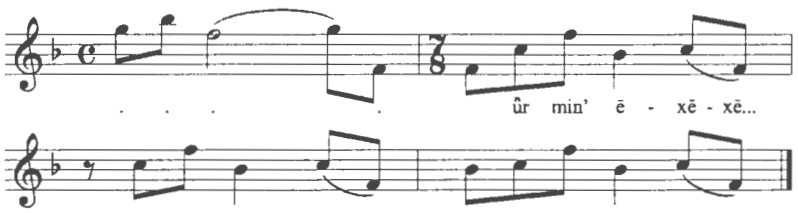

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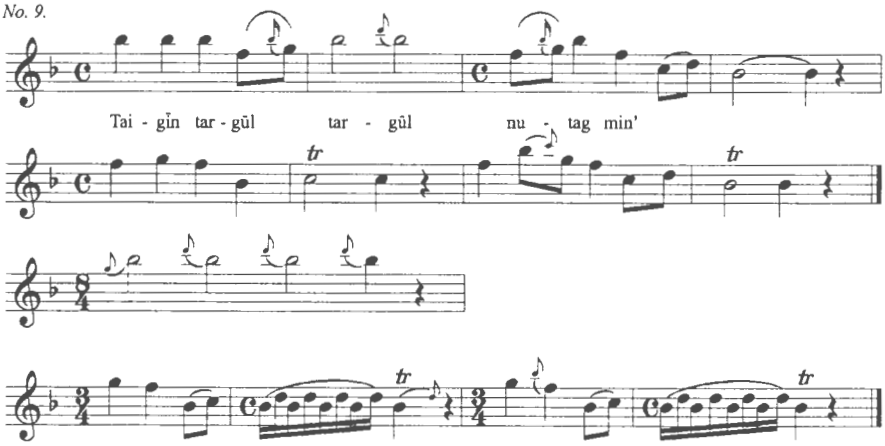

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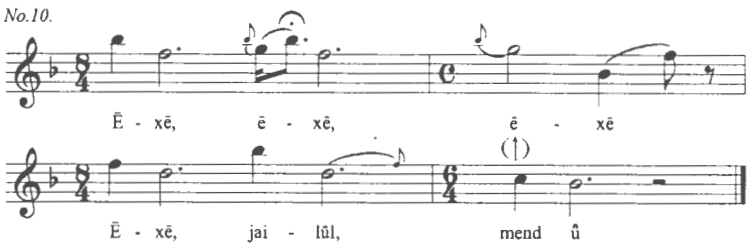

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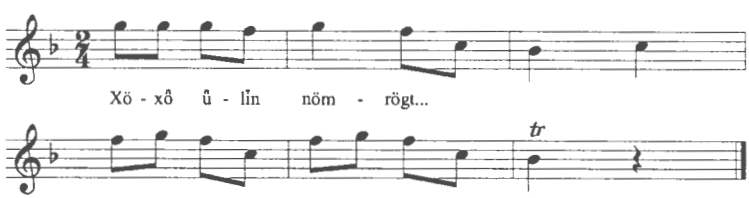

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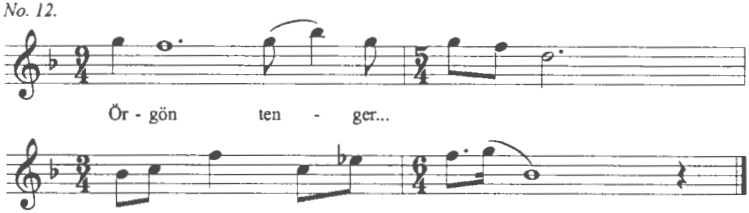

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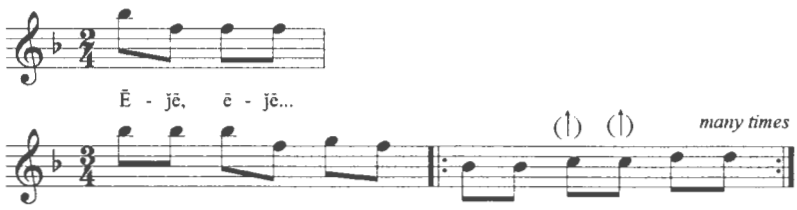

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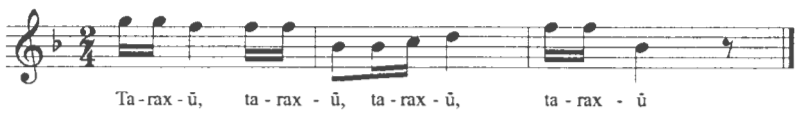

The melodies built up from simple motifs and the melodies with large melodic arches succeed each other as follows (I mark the motivic ones with underlining):

No. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

The motifs are usually constructed from leaps of a fourth, sometimes a fifth. Nos. 2 and 3 turns around F' on the C ← F' → Bb' triton. After a fanfare-like high opening, No. 8 moves on the F, ← Bb–C → G' tetraton. Here the middle zone is Bb–C, from where the melody jumps a fifth or a fourth up or down.

We have to discuss No. 13 separately. Seemingly its melodic line forms a dale, but if we examine it detail, after a four-note opening and a high-pitched bar we see a unique ascending motif ending on D repeated many times.

Among the melodies with larger melodic arches there are various forms. The simplest consist of a single melodic section and its variants (Nos. 5–7, 11, 14); others are two-sectioned (Nos. 1, 4, 9, 10, 12). The shamaness did not sing four-sectioned melodies, though amongst the two-sectioned ones No. 1 and still more No. 9 have a four-sectioned character because of their distinct inner caesuras. For the most part the movement of the first sections is descending, (Nos. 4–6, 11, 12), but there are wave-like (Nos. 7, 14), dune-like and even more mobile sections (Nos. 9, 10) as well.

The shamanic songs of different peoples are usually simple, being built up from a few tunes. Here I am referring only to the Selkup and Nanai shaman songs published in this journal,[58] but the same conclusion can be drawn from examining Tuvinian shamanic songs or shamanic songs collected by Vilmos Diószegi in Siberia.[59] A repertoire like our shamaness's consisting of such compound and well-developed melodies appears to be quite exceptional.

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[58] See Niemi 2001 and Bulgakova 1995.

[59] I transcribed several melodies from Diószegi's shaman collection. These recordings can be found in the Archive of the Institute for Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

We may add that it would be important to examine the relationships between the Darxat shamanic songs and the shamanic songs of other Mongolian people.[60] Similarly, we should also compare shamanic songs of different peoples. Though certain materials are at our disposal, the elaboration of this subject would require more space than this article permits.[61]

We have published the transcriptions here mainly in the hope that this musical material and the analysis will serve as new data for a later comparative musical examination.

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[60] For example according to J. Coloo, No. 13 is a typical Darkhad song.

[61] As an example I mention that Kyrgyz (1993) published shamanic songs from different Tuvinian areas. As Tuva neighbors the Mongolian Xöwsgöl area, from which the Darkhad melodies spring, it is worth making a brief comparison. The Tuvinian material consists of fewer compound melodies with smaller compass. The typical note set does not reach the octave, e.g. (D-C)-Bb-G, (F'-D)-C-Bb or the D-C-Bb trichord turning round its central C tune. The melodies are usually built up of motifs containing neighboring pentatonic notes. The only similarity between the mentioned Mongolian and the Tuvinian musical styles is the unique third and fourth trill which appears in Kyrgyz No. 8 and in our Nos. 3 and 9.

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Shamanism or Monotheism? Religious Elements in the Orkhon Inscriptions

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The Orkhon inscriptions (three runic tombstone inscriptions from the 8th century) contain various references which enable us to reconstruct a world view or belief system characteristic of the Türk people—even though these inscriptions are primarily epics about battles waged by the Türk tribes against neighboring peoples and about their efforts to build an empire. This belief system seems not to have been influenced by established religions which were later to spread among Turkic cultures. As regards the nature of this belief system, two theories have emerged: one was developed by Roux, who suggested that the texts indicate a monotheistic faith, organized around the concept of a heaven-god, which generally characterized societies at a relatively high level of socio-political organization; the other is the earlier but still prevailing view which connects the belief system of the nomadic Türk tribes to shamanism. The present paper contrasts these two theories and analyzes them in relation to these three Türk texts in the hope that a more precise and thorough textual analysis of the inscriptions will assist in pointing out the shortcomings in these theories and thus result in conclusions which may provide a firmer ground for future studies.

The first and only group of Old Turkic sources written by Türk authors which may assist the researcher in outlining the belief system of the Türk tribes before world religions spread among them comprises three runic inscriptions from the Second Türk Kaghanate (687–745) on tombstones erected for Tonyuquq around 726, Köl Tekin, the brother of Bilge Kaghan, in 732, and Bilge Kaghan himself in 735.

Up until the mid-1950s, when Roux (1956, 1957) published his first articles on a religious phenomenon he identified as *tengrism*[1], it had been widely held that Türk tribes embraced shamanism before world religions took hold among them (e.g. Thomsen 1924). This view has prevailed among researchers (including Mongols) who published in Russian (e.g. Basilov 1982; Stebleva 1972; Urbanaeva 1997; Skrynnikova 1997); however, Western European scholarship, in which Roux's theory predominated, has argued for the co-existence of shamanism and a monotheistic faith, the latter being characteristic of more complexly organized societies and a reflection of the given social relations (e.g. Eliade 1986; Róna-Tas 1987; Pritsak 1988).[2]

This study contrasts these two theories and also examines them in light of the inscriptions—but uses no other sources. This is significant, as scholars who have argued for one or the other theory, have had one feature in common: in the process of contextualizing the texts, they have supplemented the scattered references in the inscriptions with additional data from sources further away both in time and space. As this study pursues the extent to which these theories may hold true *vis-à-vis* the period the inscriptions describe, later data will be disregarded as will addenda which had earlier been introduced by others with the purpose of supplementing or specifying the somewhat incomplete sections of the texts.

As these theories are being examined primarily on the basis of the texts themselves, the applicable sections of the inscriptions are also presented in the *Appendix* along with their translations. In order to assist the reader in finding the relevant sections easily in the *Appendix*, extracts used in the study are labeled with the symbol § followed by a number, a convention also used in the discussion in reference to certain lines from the Türk texts. As the original Türk form is included in the *Appendix*, only the translated forms will appear in the analysis itself.

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[1] The term *tengrism* was coined by Roux (1956), deriving from the Old Turkic word *täñri* 'sky; god'.

[2] Uno Harva pointed out the significance of the word *Tengri* so frequent in these inscriptions as early as 1938. Harva regarded it as a local variation of Chinese Universalism (cf. De Groot 1892–1910). As this theory has not gained wide recognition and is not considered well-founded and thoroughly developed, it will not be regarded in this study either.

Understanding the Texts

The method applied by Roux (1956: 200–209) in his analysis of the texts was to gather all the words that defined attributes assigned to Tengri, whereas in her analysis of the religious and mythological system[3] among the Türk tribes Stebleva (1972: 215–220) attempted to systematize the various functions served by Tengri. Both methods may be followed, although Roux's approach should be broadened while Stebleva's should be made more precise.

The Attributes of Tengri

Roux found four attributes assigned to Tengri: *kök* 'blue', *üzä* 'raised, transcendent', *küč* 'powerful, filled with strength', and *möngke* 'everlasting', the latter word having appeared only in Mongol sources. At this point, Roux's proposition must be challenged in a number of areas. One, the words he listed do not carry the meaning he assigned to them. The word *üzä* means neither 'raised' nor 'transcendent' (neither in the inscriptions nor in later sources); it simply means 'up'. The Türk word *küč* is neither a feature nor an attribute of Tengri, as the meaning of the word is neither 'powerful' nor 'filled with strength' but simply 'strength', this strength being one of the gifts of Tengri (as later examples will illustrate). Moreover, this type of textual analysis should not be limited to attributes as Tengri is equally characterized by the verbs with which the word occurs.

Verbs that collocate with the word Tengri. To provide the clearest possible overview, the verb stems that collocate with the word *Tengri* are listed with no endings to mark tense or person and participles are listed without their suffixes. The negating suffixes, however, have been kept as they are significant in determining meaning. Transitive verbs are also listed with their objects indicated in brackets. The verbs are the following: (*öd*) *ay-* 'determine (time)' (§18); (*bilig*) *ber-* 'give (wisdom)' (§24); (*basa*) *ber-* 'allow (an attack)' (§26); (*el*) *ber-* 'give

[3] In works written in Russian, the word for mythology tends to be used more frequently and with a broader semantic field.

(an empire)' (§9); (*küč*) *ber-* 'give (strength)' (§9, 13); (*qan*) *ber-* 'give (a kaghan)' (§23); *basma-* '(lit.) not press; (in the text) if it does not fall in' (§8); *bulġa-* 'mingle (with the Earth)' (§§11, 17); *kötür-* 'raise' (§§3, 9); [*qaġan*] *olurt-* 'make someone rule (as a kaghan)' (§9); *qïlïn-* 'be being made, grow' (§1); *taplama-* 'unsatisfied' (§§15, 17); (*anča*) *te-* 'say (thus he says)' (§§3, 23); (*bodun bolčun*) *te-* 'say (let the people be, he says)' (§3); (*öl*) *te-* 'say (die, he says)' (§23); *(türk bodunuġ atï küsi yoq bolmazun*) *te-* 'say (let the name and fame of the Türk people not be lost, he says)' (§9); (*türk bodun yoq bolmazun*) *te-* 'say (let the Türk people not disappear, he says)'; (*töpesindä*) *tut-* '(lit.) hold (on top); (in the text) embrace, help' (§3); *yarlïqa-* 'show grace' (§§5, 14, 20, 21, 22, 25, 28); *yarat-* '(lit.) create; (in the text) install' (§2).

The word Tengri in possessive constructions. (i) It appears as a possession in *türk täñrisi* 'the God of the Türks': (§3): "Above, the God of the Türks, the sacred land and water of the Türks thus said: 'let the Türk people not disappear, let the people survive'; having said this, God embraced my father, Elterish Kaghan, and my mother, Elbilge Katun, and made him ruler." (ii) It appears as a possessor in *täñri yarlïqazu* 'the grace of God': (§10): "Afterwards, by the grace of God and because I had the charisma and luck of a ruler, I made the people, who had almost disappeared, people again."; (§27): "Since God showed grace, we did not fear the more numerous enemy, we clashed with them."

The word Tengri with the particle of resemblance ('-like'). In an epithet for the khan: *täñri teg* 'God-like': (§2): "God-like Türk Bilge Kaghan, installed by God"; (§19): "God-like Türk Bilge Kaghan, installed by God, I ruled then."

The Word Tengri with a Locative Suffix. In the same sections (§§2, 19) the word appears with a suffix which is locative in form but ablative in meaning: *täñridä bolmuš* '(lit.) came into being in Tengri; (in the text) installed by Tengri'.

Adjectives expressing attributes of Tengri. As mentioned above, the only adjectival attribute of Tengri is *kök* 'blue': (§1): "After the blue sky above and the brown earth below came into being (was made), man's son was made between the two."

Adverbs connected to the word Tengri. The only adverb connected to the word *Tengri* is *üzä* 'above': (§1): "After the blue sky above and the brown earth below came into being (was made), man's son was made between the two." (§3): "Above, the God of the Türks, the sacred land and water of the Türks thus said: 'let the Türk people not disappear, let the people survive'; having said this, God embraced my father, Elterish Kaghan, and my mother, Elbilge Katun, and made him ruler." (§8): "If the sky above does not fall in and the earth below does not cave in, Türk people, who would have destroyed your empire and your law?" (§15): "God above, the sacred land water, and my uncle's charisma of a ruler were unsatisfied." (§22): "Because God above and earth below showed grace, I settled my people in such an enormous territory that no eye could see it, no ear could hear it, to the rising of the sun toward the east, to the culminating of the sun toward the south, to the setting of the sun to the west, and to the dark of night in the north."

The Functions of Tengri

In her analysis of the religious and mythological system of the Old Türks, Stebleva distinguished between four functions of Tengri: (1) creator (gives an empire, raises the kaghan and the katun); (2) patron-defender (gives strength in battle, shows grace); (3) commander (determines time for man); (4) punisher ("be destroyed, he said").

Even if Stebleva's method is applied, it is worth establishing the essential functional categories from a new perspective in order to shed light on the various types of functions Tengri is associated with in the texts. These are: (1) Tengri as one pole of the cosmic order; (2) Tengri as the God of the empire; (3) Tengri as universal God.

It must be noted here that the words *empire* and *god* should be understood in a broad sense as the Türk Kaghanate cannot be considered a real empire and that inclusion of the concept of God would require a more precise description. These terms, however, are used here for lack

of anything more exact in the following senses: (1) the word *empire* is used to signify the system of powers which is expressed by *el* in the inscriptions; (2) the word *God* is used to signify Tengri when it is captured in a spiritual or transcendent sense.

Tengri and the cosmic order. The basis of the cosmic order in the text is the opposition of

up : down ~ sky : earth

(§1): "After the blue sky above and the brown earth below came into being (was made), man's son was made between the two." (§8): "If the sky above does not fall in and the earth below does not cave in, Türk people, who would have destroyed your empire and your law?" (§11): "Since the sky and the earth mingled, and envy struck them in their galls, they became our enemy." (§17): "Since the sky and the earth mingled, [the Tokuz Oghuz people] became our enemy."

Tengri as the god of the empire. The appearance of the word *Tengri* in connection with the Türk Empire may be divided further into two categories: (i) Tengri helps to maintain and expand the Türk Empire and (ii) Tengri chooses the kaghan and raises him to ruler.

(*i*) Tengri and the Empire

(*a*) Tengri gives strength to the Türk army in their battles: (§4): "Since God gave strength, the army of my father, the kaghan, resembled wolves, those of the enemy resembled sheep." (§13): "Since God gave me strength, I massacred the (Oghuz) enemy and put them to flight." (§25): "There were two thousand of us, we clashed, God showed grace and we put them [the Oghuz army which outnumbered us] to flight." (§27): "Since God showed grace, we did not fear the more numerous enemy, we clashed with them."

(*b*) The kaghan is able to expand his empire by the grace of Tengri: (§5): "Since God was gracious, he who had an empire [my father, Elterish Kaghan] was deprived of his empire, and they who had a kaghan were deprived of their kaghan and made peace with the enemy."

(§14): "Since God showed grace, I increased my empire, and with that, the Türk people also increased." (§21): "Since God showed grace, under my rule I organized the peoples living in the four corners of the world." (§22): "Because God above and earth below showed grace, I settled my people in such an enormous territory that no eye could see it, no ear could hear it, to the rising of the sun toward the east, to the culminating of the sun toward the south, to the setting of the sun to the west, and to the dark of night in the north."

(*c*) Tengri also prevents the disappearance of the Türk people, of its fame and name: (§3): "Above, the God of the Türks, the sacred land and water of the Türks thus said: 'let the Türk people not disappear, let the people survive'; having said this, god embraced my father, Elterish Kaghan, and my mother, Elbilge Katun, and made him ruler." (§9): "Having said, so that the name and fame of the Türk people should not disappear, God raised my father to kaghan and my mother to katun; God who gave the empire, having said, so that the name and fame of the Türk people should not disappear, this God made me rule as kaghan." (§10): "Afterwards, by the grace of God and because I had the charisma and luck of a ruler, I made the people, who had almost disappeared, people again." (§28): "By the grace of God, I did not allow the armored enemy among this Türk people; I did not let a tied up horse run toward them."

Moreover, the sentence which, according to Stebleva, expresses Tengri's function as the punisher also belongs here: (§23): "God thus said: "[Türk people], I gave you a khan, but abandoning your khan you submitted [to the Chinese]. Since you submitted, well then be destroyed, he said."

When interpreting this sentence, it is more significant to emphasize the nature of Tengri's connection to the empire and the kaghan (rather than the appearance of a new type of function, that of punishment).

(ii) Tengri and the Kaghan

(*a*) Tengri raises the kaghan to ruler: (§3): "Above, the God of the Türks, the sacred land and water of the Türks thus said: 'let the Türk people not disappear, let the people survive'; having said this, this God embraced my father, Elterish Kaghan, and my mother, Elbilge Katun,

and made him ruler." (§9): "Having said, so that the name and fame of the Türk people should not disappear, God raised my father to kaghan and my mother to katun; God who gave the empire, having said, so that the name and fame of the Türk people should not disappear, this God made me rule as kaghan."

Moreover, the epithet for the kaghan also belongs here: (§2): "God-like Türk Bilge Kaghan, installed by God" (§19): "God-like Türk Bilge Kaghan, installed by God, I ruled then."

(*b*) Just as the empire is granted by Tengri so too is the kaghan: (§23): God thus said: "[Türk people], I gave you a khan, but abandoning your khan you submitted [to the Chinese]. Since you submitted, well then be destroyed, he said.

At this point one of the sentences must be discussed in greater detail because I offer an interpretation that diverges from its previous translations and analyses. The sentence in line six of the Tonyuquq inscription states that Tengri gave wisdom to Tonyuquq, the minister of the Kaghanate, on the basis of which he could ordain the khagan—the man who in the end would be Elterish. The present translation differs from previous ones in its essentially different understanding of the Old Turkic verb *qïs-*. In some of the earlier translations, the following definitions were given as meanings of this verb: 'press' (Clauson 1972: 666); 'ia zakhotel' (Malov 1951: 65); and "I...made" (Tekin 1968: 283). Before proceeding any further to propose a new possible meaning, let us examine a Chinese description of kaghan ordination.

The future kaghan was turned around and around, made to ride a horse, throttled with a piece of rope, and, once on the brink of death, asked how many years he would rule. Roux chose to identify shamanic elements in this ritual, which cannot be ruled out; however, it is worth interpreting this rite in a wider context for the time being. The ordination of a kaghan was an initiation rite, a type of rite of passage, and as such, it naturally contained symbols of death and rebirth. Returning to Tonyuquq's inscription, one may ask: who might have conducted the ceremony? I would suggest that it was Tonyuquq and that thus he was the one who ordained the kaghan kaghan. Therefore, the Old Turkic verb *qïs-* in §24 of this text can only mean that Tonyuquq himself ordained Bilge Khan: he was the person conducting the ceremony, that is, the person who was actually *throttling* the future kaghan. This

interpretation seems to be even more appropriate as it is clear from the inscriptions that one of the most significant grounds for the legitimacy of a kaghan is that Tengri makes him a kaghan, Tengri raises him, Tengri "makes him rule", and it is by the grace of Tengri that he is able to expand his empire and consolidate his power. Thus, the translation suggested here is: (§24): "Afterwards, because God gave me wisdom, I myself ordained him kaghan."

Tengri as universal god. The inscriptions contain only one sentence which clearly refers to Tengri as the universal god, the one who has power over every person and controls time—and, thus, life as well as death: (§18): Time is determined by God, all man's sons are created mortal.

The Religion of an Empire or a Shamanic World View?

The system of functions which has emerged from analyzing the inscriptions shows that Tengri had the strongest and most extensive ties to the empire. The first question to answer is whether this conclusion provides a firm enough basis to call tengrism a monotheistic imperial religion.[4] Before addressing this issue, however, it must be noted that it may be better to avoid using the term *religion*, even if it has sufficiently broad definitions as to allow for a very general application of the term. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the phenomenon being analyzed and described is one we know very little about. With regard to the term *monotheism*, we should tread even more carefully. If monotheism rests on the sole assumption of the existence of "a superior being", a large number of phenomena and belief systems should be considered monotheistic. However, monotheism is characterized by a number of other features, as well. Therefore, although Tengri appears in the inscriptions as "a superior being", the texts contain no other references based on which a monotheistic faith can be supposed.

If the question is rephrased to ascertain whether the texts tell us that Tengri is the only sacred spiritual force, the answer is naturally no. Before proceeding any further, however, another question raised by

[4] Cf. Roux 1956.

Roux should also be considered: is Tengri the *ex nihilo* creator or not?[5] Actually, this question was not prompted by the texts themselves but by the French researcher's own cultural and religious milieu; indeed, I have found no section in the texts with even the slightest reference to a monotheistic faith, especially not to a god and creator—nor, for that matter, to a shamanic praxis.

The two kinds of nature unified by Tengri, the physical ('sky') and the spiritual ('god'), have inspired a number of researchers to regard these meanings as separate from each other, as if not parts of the same notion but practically two homonyms. Their position seemed to be strengthened by the fact that corresponding forms of the Old Turkic word *täñri* in the majority of contemporary Turkic languages mean 'god'[6], while the modern words meaning 'sky' are related to the Old Turkic word *kök* meaning 'blue'. This separation in meaning, however, has appeared only in languages whose speakers had converted to Islam or Christianity. Naturally, these contemporary meanings are most likely the result of the following changes in meaning: *täñri* 'sky, god', *kök* 'blue' > *täñri* 'god', *kök täñri* 'blue sky', *kök* 'blue' > *täñri* 'god', *kök* 'sky, blue'.

Created after the Orkhon inscriptions, the Yenisey inscriptions already contain sections in which the word *täñri* meaning 'god' was distinguished from the phrase *kök täñri* meaning 'blue tengri = sky'), but it is the Orkhon inscriptions which prove that this change in meaning did not come about in the 8th century. The sentence containing the opposition of *üzä täñri* ('above the sky/god') and *asra yer* ('below the earth') does not only refer to an abstract, fundamental cosmic principle but also an actual sacred act: (§22): "Because God above and earth below showed grace, I settled my people in such an enormous territory that eyes could not see it, ears could not hear it, to the rising of the sun in the east, to the culmination of the sun in the south, to the setting of the sun in the west, and to the darkness of night in the north."

This sentence also clearly suggests that Tengri is not alone in showing grace. Based on this, it may be useful to compile a list which clearly

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[5] Roux 1956: 221–225; 1962: 13; see also Róna-Tas 1987: 36–39.

[6] Doerfer (1965: 578–579) offers a collection of the contemporary corresponding forms of the Old Turkic word *täñri* along with their various meanings.

outlines the various functions and features of Tengri mentioned in the texts and locates them in relation to the type of belief system they are tied to. Naturally, this list does not reveal all the functions and features of the various elements in the belief system as conceptualized in the given period, since the fact that the inscriptions do not describe Umay as being gracious does not necessarily mean that, according to the contemporary view, she did not have the capacity to be. What this list surely reveals, however, is the various modes of action and features of Tengri which were not exclusively tied to him.

Table 1.

	Täñri	Umay	*yer*	*ïduq yer sub*
(öd) ay- 'determine time'	+	-	-	-
(bilig) ber- 'give wisdom'	+	-	-	-
(el) ber- 'give an empire'	+	-	-	-
(küč) ber- 'give strength'	+	-	-	-
(qan) 'give a khan	+	-	-	-
basa ber- 'let (sy) attack'	+	+	-	+
bas- / tälin- 'fall in/cave in'	+	-	+	-
bulġa- 'mingle'	+	-	+	-
qaġan olurt- 'make sy rule as kaghan'	+	-	-	-
qïlïn- 'come into being'	+	-	+	-
kötür- 'raise (to ruler)'	+	-	-	-
taplama- 'unsatisfied'	+	-	-	+
te- 'say' (sg)	+	-	-	+
yarat- 'install (prepare)'	+	-	-	-
yarlïqa- 'show grace'	+	-	+	-
töpäsindä tut- 'help (keep on top)'	+	-		
(with attribute *türk*) 'Turkic'	+	-	-	+
(with particle *täg*) '-like'	+	+	-	-
(with color – *kök / yaġïz*) 'blue/brown'	+			
(with adverb – *üzä / asra*) 'above/below'	+	-		

Two other tables may also prove useful at this point: one to demonstrate the number of times these elements appear in the inscriptions (Table 2) and the other to show elements with which they appear (Table 3).

Table 2.

	Täñri	Umay	*yer*	*ïduq yer sub*
Köl Tegin	17	1	4	1
Bilge Khan	21	-	4	2
Tonyuquq	7	1	-	1

Table 3.

	Täñri	Umay	*yer*	ïduq yer sub
Täñri	+	+	+	+
Umay	+	ø	-	+
yer	+	-	ø	-
ïduq yer sub	+	+	-	ø[7]

These tables clearly indicate two facts: that Tengri is not the sole sacred and spiritual force, but that its prominence (in the texts at least) is beyond doubt.

Roux (1956: 219–220) also posed the question of whether Tengri may have had a "partner". In accordance with his theory, his answer was no. However, if the question is posed in a more refined way and Tengri's "partner" is not conceptualized as a "wife", further significant conclusions may be drawn. As has been shown above, the Earth, Tengri's cosmic opposition may be interpreted as one of Tengri's possible "partners". Therefore, a more appropriate phrasing for the question may be: what pairs of opposition may be set up on the basis of the texts?

Tengri and the Earth

It must be noted that the word *yer* 'earth, land, place' is often mentioned in the inscriptions; however, only those cases will be regarded in which the word is also related to the belief system by its meaning. It must also be pointed out that the same word is used in the text to signify

[7] The symbol ø indicates that the given element did not occur by itself.

both the sacred and the profane. The word *yer* also appears by itself (as an element of the belief system), but it also must be analyzed in two compounds. One is the Türkic *yer sub*, which has generally been considered in previous literature to be among the elements of the Türk belief system—albeit incorrectly so. One reason for this classification was that, on the basis of later data, the meaning of the compound *yer sub* ('land water') was connected to a patron spirit described in recent ethnographic findings. This compound in the Orkhon inscriptions, however, signified a territory united either politically or geographically.[8] Nevertheless, its meaning is clearly spiritual in its attributal form of *ïduq yer sub* ('sacred land water'), and it is a compound which does not appear with a meaning referring to the profane. It may be translated as 'home country', with the addendum that it did not refer to the territory (physical land) at all, but had abstract (intellectual) implications. This represents an opposition between

sacred *(ïduq yer sub)*: profane *(yer sub)*.

Therefore it may be concluded that the texts express a cosmic opposition as well as an opposition between the sacred and profane:

sky : earth ~ sacred : profane.

Tengri and Umay

The idea of coupling Tengri and Umay seems somehow to issue from the similarity of the structures *täñri täg qaġan* ('Tengri-like kaghan') and *umay täg qatun* ('Umay-like katun [= consort of the reigning prince]'). Roux rejected this pairing by arguing that the meaning 'placenta' of the word *umay* renders it impossible. Roux also added that in his conceptualization, Tengri did not have a sex. Concerning the meaning of the word *umay*, Roux yet again draws on later data in his proposition. If at the time of the inscriptions *umay* meant only 'placenta',

[8] This compound appears three times in the inscriptions: §§6, 7, 16.

it is highly unlikely that the superior wife of the ruler (kaghan) could not have been described with a more appropriate and uplifting epithet than 'the placenta-like katun'.[9] What may be concluded here is that Tengri and Umay, based on the phrases *täñri täg qaġan* : *umay täg qatun* comprise another oppositional pair. As the meaning associated with Umay is spiritual (in the texts), the basis for the opposition between them is the two sexes.

To sum up findings in this section, it may be concluded that three sets of oppositional pairs may be found, one cosmic (above : below), one profane-material : sacred and one sexual (man : woman).

Table 4.

PAIRS OF OPPOSITION	NATURE OF OPPOSITION	ADDED MARKS OF OPPOSITION
täñri : *yer*	cosmic	above : below blue : brown
yer sub : *ïduq yer* sub	profane / sacred	Ø : 'saint'
täñri : *umay*	sexual	kaghan : katun man : woman

It must also be noted that these pairs do not mingle: there is no contrast between the material and spiritual nature of cosmic oppositions, nor opposition in sexual terms; similarly, in the case of the sexual opposition, the sacred and profane opposition has no relevance. This must be emphasized for two reasons: one, just because Tengri may be in opposition to the land as well as to Umay, we cannot connect these two items and declare Umay to be the earth goddess of the Old Turkic world view (as has previously been done by several authors, e.g. Lot-Falck 1956). Two, it has been proven yet again that the two meanings assigned to Tengri which contemporary scholars tend to separate, that is, the physical blue sky and a sacred, spiritual god, cannot really be separated, since in the three sets of oppositions discussed above, the only place Tengri was not mentioned was where the material and the sacred could clearly be separated.

[9] In a later lecture, Roux (1988: 517) modified his view somewhat, defining the meaning of Umay as "une grand déesse placentaire qui favorisait la fécondité des femmes et des femelles et protégait lés nouveaux-nés."

The dichotomy of sky/earth was defined as cosmic opposition; however, in literature arguing for some sort of a shamanic mythology in the texts, this dichotomy becomes a trichotomy[10]. In order to prove their position, they quote a sentence which has also been used in this study—though here as proof of the dichotomy in the world view: (§1): "After the blue sky above and the brown earth below came into being (was made), man's son was made between the two."

According to scholars arguing for the shamanic world view, this sentence reflects the trichotomy characteristic of shamanism, but I would argue that this is not accurate. Even if it can be supposed that (1) Tengri is the physical sky and god in one, and even the embodiment of the "world above" and that (2) the phrase "between the two" refers to the middle realm of shamanism (the place where people live), one unresolved problem definitely remains. This is the fact that the "third place" in the inscriptions is the earth itself, which not only cannot be identified as a lower, dark world but is specifically related to the sacred, since, as has been pointed out earlier, it shows grace just as Tengri does. The concept of trichotomy is also weakened by the fact that "the brown earth below" is actually the place where man lives, even if the sentence continues with "man's son was made between the two." This is the place where man lives since (1) the word *yer* also means 'place' and (2) the compound of *yer sub* ('land water') refers specifically to a territory (inhabited by people). However, it is still not known whether contemporary and (local) shamanism shared in the trichotomic world view the researchers hope to find at all costs—granted that shamanism existed there.[11] And just because this particular trichotomic world view cannot be reconstructed on the basis of these inscriptions, it does not necessarily mean that it did not exist nor that the inscriptions may not also have been influenced by some sort of shamanistic world view.

Of course, it may still be supposed that there did exist some lower, dark world even though it is not mentioned in the inscriptions. This is not likely, however, since the references in the texts with definitely

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[10] E.g. Stebleva 1972; Nekljudov 1982; Basilov 1982.

[11] Urbanaeva (1997) suggests a possible dichotomy in the world view held by the Turkic and Mongolian peoples in an earlier period of their history; however, her articles often lack the rigor of the academy and thus her proposition may only be mentioned in a footnote.

negative connotations (end of the world; destruction as punishment) are associated with given elements (Tengri, the earth), which also have positive features (such as being gracious or assisting one).

At the end of the paper, having analyzed the inscriptions, I should return to the original question, posed at the beginning of the paper: do the texts allow for the reconstruction of an imperial religion or rather a shamanistic world view? In her 1997 book, Skrynnikova outlined another, conciliatory proposal, and although the majority of her text offers a contrastive analysis of the Türk inscriptions and shamanic texts, at the end of her book she also mentioned the possibility of the dual existence of a central faith, centering on heaven, which reflected the contemporary power structure, as well as a belief system dominating on the peripheries, organized around the praxis of shamanism. This approach is quite noteworthy and may provide a firm foundation for future research which aims at capturing this central faith with more precision.

Summary

This paper has examined the text from three Türk tomb inscriptions in order to reveal the nature of the world view hidden behind the lines. The fact that the content, function, and purpose, that is, the overall aim of the inscriptions, have impacted the scattered references to the belief system of the Türks rendered the analysis more difficult. As a result, it must be asked whether the fact that Tengri is strongly tied to the empire and the kaghan in the inscriptions may indicate that this figure represents the appearance of a totally new religion or is simply the result of the tendentious nature of the texts. Although data from later periods were not regarded in the course of the textual analysis, it must still be mentioned here that, since in the majority of contemporary Turkic languages the corresponding forms of the Old Turkic word *täñri* mean 'god', it is unlikely for Tengri to have been the god of only a small, politically and socially separated section of society in the eighth century.

In the system reconstructed in this study, Tengri occupies a distinguished position among the elements of the Türk belief system. Moreover, these texts also contain a number of other elements

characteristic of this system, which may be found among some of the contemporary Turkic peoples even today (Umay, *yer sub*). Tengrism does not seem to be a distinct religion; however, it does not show any resemblance to the shamanic world view either, which conceptualizes the world as a trichotomy.

Appendix

The paragraph numbers are followed by the abbreviation for the inscription in which the section is found (KT = inscription on Köl Tegin's tombstone; BQ = inscription on Bilge Kaghan's tombstone; T = inscription on Tonyuquq's tombstone). This is followed by an abbreviation of the specific sides (E = Eastern; S = Southern; etc.), followed by the number of the line. To illustrate: KT E 9, BQ E 16 means that the given sentence can be found in line 9 on the eastern side of Köl Tegin's inscription, as well as in line 16 on the eastern side of Bilge Kaghan's inscription. The inscription on Bilge Kaghan's tombstone is less clear; thus, whenever possible, I use the sections which also appear in Tegin Köl's inscriptions and do not mark the missing parts.

Vowels not spelled out in the inscriptions are in round brackets ( ). The transcription is based on the convention of etymological transcription; thus, the symbol ŀ may signify three vowels: *ï, i, e*. There is one exception to this system I introduce: initial, unwritten, closed *e-* (e.g. *el, eki)*, appears as *ä-*, in accordance with the general spelling rules employed in the inscriptions—that is, if a vowel is not written in an initial position, it may only be read as *a/ä*. Connecting sounds and suffixes not spelled out in the text are indicated in accordance with the internationally accepted rule, namely, that transcriptions must reflect not only vowel harmony but also labial harmony.

Square brackets [ ] are used to indicate words or runic signs which are missing—due to deterioration—but which are likely to be there. In these cases, the corrections offered by Thomsen (1896) and Tekin (1968, 1988) were used. Numbers within square brackets indicate the possible number of the runic signs which are illegible.

Angle brackets < > indicate words which are not part of the sentence quoted, but have been mentioned earlier and without which the sentence would be difficult to understand.

The following sources were consulted in the transcription and translation: Thomsen 1896; Gabain 1950; Malov 1951; Tekin 1968, 1988, Clauson 1972; Orkun 1987.

The translations make use of the possibility of differentiating between the two meanings of Tengri ('god', 'sky'), thus doing away with the possibility of illustating in every sentence that the two notions were expressed by one single word in the Türk texts.

§1 KT E 1, BQ E 2 *üzä kök: t(ä)ñri: (a)sra: y(a)ġïz: yer: qïl(ï)ntuqta: (ä)kin ara: kiši oġlï: qïl(ï)nm(ï)š:* "After the blue sky above and the brown earth below came into being (was made), man's son was made between the two."

§2 BQ E 2 *t(ä)ñri t(ä)g: t(ä)ñgri: y(a)r(a)tm(ï)š: türk: bilgä: q(a)ġ(a)n:* "God-like Türk Bilge Kaghan, installed by God."

§3 KT E10, BQ E 10 *üzä: türk: t(ä)ñrisi: türk ïduq yeri: subï: (a)nča tem(i)š: türk: bod(u)n: yoq: bolm(a)zun: tey(i)n: bod(u)n: bolčun tey(i)n: q(a)ñ(ï)m: elt(ä)r(i)š: q(a)ġ(a)n(ï)ġ:ög(ü)m: elbilg(ä) q(a)tun(u)ġ: t(ä)ñri: tö-p(ä)sind(ä): tutup: yüg(ä)rü: kötürm(ü)š: (ä)r(i)nč:* "Above, the God of the Türks, the sacred land and water of the Türks thus said: 'let the Türk people not disappear, let the people survive'; having said this, God embraced my father, Elterish Kaghan, and my mother, Elbilge Katun, and made him ruler."

§4 KT E 12, BQ E 11 *t(ä)ñri: küč: bertük üč(ü)n: q(a)ñ(ï)m q(a)ġ(a)n: süsi: böri t(ä)g: (ä)rm(i)š: y(a)ġïsï: qoń t(ä)g: (ä)rm(i)š:* "Since God gave strength, the army of my father, the kaghan, resembled wolves, those of the enemy resembled sheep."

§5 KT E 15, BQ E 13 *t(ä)ñri: y(a)rl(ï)q(a)duq: üčün: ell(i)g(i)g: (ä)l-s(i)rä)tm(i)š: q(a)ġ(a)nl(ï)ġ(ï)ġ: q(a)ġ(a)ns(ï)r(a)tm(ï)š: y(a)ġïġ: b(a)z qïlm(ï)š:* "Since God was gracious, they who had an empire, were deprived of their empire, and they who had a kaghan, were deprived of their kaghan <by my father, Elterish Kaghan> and made peace with the enemy."

§6 KQ E 19, BQ E 16 *(ä)čümiz: (a)pam(i)z: tutm(u)š: yer sub: id(i)siz: bolm(a)zun: tey(i)n: az bod(u)n(u)ġ: et(i)p: y(a)r[18]* "Our forefathers, so that the land they possessed should not remain without a master, organized the Az (or the few) people."

§7 KT E 20, BQ E 17 *kögmen: yer sub: id(i)s(i)z: q(a)lm(a)zun tey(i)n: (a)z qïrġ(i)z: bod(u)n(u)ġ: y(a)r(a)t*[6] "So that the Kögmen territory should not remain without a master, he organized the Az Kirghiz (or the few Kirghiz) people."

§8 KT E 22, BQ E *üzä t(ä)ñri: b(a)sm(a)s(a)r: (a)sra yer: t(ä)linm(ä)s(ä)r: türk: bodun: (ä)l(i)ñ(i)n: törüñ(ü)n: k(ä)m (a)rt(a)t(i):* "If the sky above does

not fall in and the earth below does not cave in, Türk people, who would have destroyed your empire and your law?"

§9 KT E 25-26, BQ E 20-21 *türk: bod(u)n(u)ġ: (a)tï küsi: yoq bolm(a)zun: tey(i)n: q(a)ñ(ï)m q(a)ġ(a)n(ï)ġ:ög(ü)m q(a)tun(u)ġ: köt(ü)r(ü)gmä: t(ä)ñri: el ber(i)gmä: t(ä)ñri: türk: bod(u)n: (a)tï küsi: yoq bolm(a)zun [tey(i)n öz(ü)m(ü)n ol t(ä)ñri] q(a)ġ(a)n: ol(u)t(°)dï (ä)r(i)nč:* "Having said, so that the name and fame of the Türk people should not disappear, God who raised my father to kaghan and my mother to katun; God who gave the empire, having said, so that the name and fame of the Türk people should not disappear, this God made me rule as kaghan."

§10 KT E 29, BQ E 23 *(a)nta kesr(ä): t(ä)ñri: y(a)rl(ï)q(a)zu: qut(u)m: b(a)r üčün: ülüg(ü)m: b(a)r üč(ü)n: ölt(ä)či: bod(u)n(u)ġ: tir(i)g(ä)rü: ig(i)t(t)(i)m:* "Afterwards, by the grace of God and because I had the charisma and luck of a ruler, I made the people, who had almost disappeared, people again."

§11 BQ E 29-30 *t(ä)ñri: yer: bulġ(a)qïn: üč(ü)n: ödiñ(ä): küni: t(ä)gdük: üč(ü)n: yaġï boltï:* "Since the sky and the earth mingled, and envy struck them in their galls, they became our enemy."

§12 KT E 31 *um(a)y t(ä)g:ög(ü)m: q(a)tun: qut(u)ña: in(i)m: köl teg(i)n: (ä)r (a)t boltï:* "Through the charisma of my Umay-like mother, my younger brother's adult name became Köl Tegin."

§13 BQ E 32-33 *oġ[uz 5]t y(ag[ï 10 t(ä)ñri] küč: bert(ü)k: üč(ü)n: ant(a) s(a)nčd(ï)m: y(a)ńd(i)m:* "Since God gave me strength, I massacred the (Oghuz) enemy and put them to flight."

§14 BQ E 33 *t(ä)ñri: y(a)rl(ï)q(a)duq üč(ü)n: m(ä)n q(a)zġ(a)nduq: üč(ü)n: türk: bod(u)n: qazġ[(a)n 4] (ä)ri[nč]:* "Since God showed grace, I increased my empire, and with that, the Türk people also increased."

§15 BQ E 35 *üzä t(ä)ñri: ïduq: y(e)r sub: [(ä)čim q](a)ġ(a)n: qutï: t(a)p-lam(a)d(ï) (ä)r(i)nč:* "God above, the sacred land water, and my uncle's charisma of a ruler were unsatisfied."

§16 BQ E 35 *t(o)quz: oġ(u)z: bod(u)n: y(e)r(i)n subïn: id(i)p: t(a)bġ(a)č-ġ(a)ru: b(a)rdï:* "Having left the Toquz Oghuz territory, he went in the direction of China."

§17 KT N 4 *t(ä)ñri: yer: bulġ(a)qïn: üčün: y(a)ġï boltï:* "Since the sky and the earth mingled, <the Tokuz Oghuz people> became our enemy."

§18 KT N 10 *öd t(ä)ñri: (a)ys(a)r: kiši oġlï: qop: öl(ü)gli: törümüš* "Time is determined by God, all man's sons are created mortal."

§19 KT S 1, BQ N 2 *t(ä)ñri t(ä)g: t(ä)ñridä: bolm(u)š: türk: bilgä: q(a)ġ(a)n: bu ödkä*[12] *ol(u)rt(u)m:* "God-like Türk Bilge Kaghan, installed by God, I ruled then."

§20 KT S 9, BQ N 7 *t(ä)ñri: y(a)rl(i)q(a)duqïn: üč(ü)n: (ö)z(ü)m:qut(u)m: b(a)r üč(ü)n: q(a)ġ(a)n: ol(u)rt(u)m:* "Since God showed grace and because I had the charisma of a ruler, I ruled as a kaghan."

§21 BQ N 9 *t(ä)ñr[i] y(a)rl(ï)q(a)d[uq ü]č[ün ö]züm: ol(u)rt(u)q(u)ma: [tört buluñdaqï] bod(u)n(u)ġ: et(i)d(i)m y(a)r(a)t(ï)d(i)m:* "Since God showed grace, under my rule I organized the peoples living in the four corners of the world."

§22 BQ N 10-11 *üzä: t(ä)ñri: (a)s[ra] y(e)r: y(a)rl(i)q(a)duq: üč[ün]: köz(ü)n: körm(ä)dük: qulq(a)q(i)n: (ä)š(i)dm(ä)dük: bod(u)n(u)m(ï)n: ilg(ä)rü: kün: to[ġsïqïña] berg(ä)rü [kün ortusïñ]a: qur(i)ġ(a)ru: [kün batsïqïña y(i)r-ġ(a)ru tün ortusïña tägi qonturtum]* "Because God above and earth below showed grace, I settled my people in such an enormous territory that no eye could see it, no ear could hear it, to the rising of the sun toward the east, to the culminating of the sun toward the south, to the setting of the sun to the west, and to the dark of night in the north."

§23 T 2-3 *t(ä)ñri: (a)nča t(e)miš (ä)r(i)nč: qan b(e)rt(i)m: q(a)n(ï)ñ(i)n: qod(u)p: ič(i)kdiñ: ičikd(ü)k üč(ü)n: t(ä)ñri: öl t(e)m(i)š (ä)rinč:* "God thus said: "<Türk people> I gave you a khan, but abandoning your khan you submitted <to the Chinese>. Since you submitted, well then be destroyed, he said."

§24 T 6 *(a)nta kesr(ä): t(ä)ñri: bil(i)g b(e)rtük üč(ü)n: öz(ü)m ök: q(a)ġ(a)n qïsd(ï)m:* "Afterwards, because God gave me wisdom, I myself ordained him kaghan."

§25 T 16 *biz: (ä)ki biñ: (ä)rt(i)m(i)z: süñ(ü)šd(ü)m(ü)z: t(ä)ñri y(a)rl(ï)q(a)dï: y(a)ńd(ï)m(i)z:* "There were two thousand of us, we clashed, God showed grace and we put them <the Oghuz army which outnumbered us> to flight."

§26 T 38 *t(ä)ñri um(a)y: ïd(u)q y(e)r sub: b(a)sa b(e)rti (ä)r(i)nč:* "God, Umay, the sacred land water allowed us to attack."

§27 T 40-41 *t(ä)ñri y(a)rl(ï)q(a)d(u)q üč(ü)n: (ü)küš t(e)yin: qorqm(a)-d(ï)m(i)z: süñ(ü)šd(ü)m(ü)z:* "Since God showed grace, we did not fear the more numerous enemy, we clashed with them."

§28 T 53-54 *t(ä)ñri y(a)rlïq(a)zu: bu t(ü)rk bod(u)n (a)ra: y(a)r(i)ql(ï)ġ y(a)ġ(ï)ġ: y(ä)ltürm(ä)d(i)m: tög(ü)nl(ü)g (a)t(ï)ġ: yüg(ü)rtm(ä)d(i)m:* "By the

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[12] The form *bu ödkä* is written thus only in the Köl Tegin inscription, and the corresponding text in the Bilge inscription reads *bödkä*, meaning 'so' or 'to the throne'. Thus, the Köl Tegin inscription is transcribed as *b(u) ödkä*, meaning 'at this time'.

grace of God, I did not allow the armored enemy among this Türk people; I did not let horses roped together[13] run toward them."

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A Comparative Study of the Semai and the Muruts Shamanic Cultures

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A comparative study of two distinct groups of indigenous peoples who are geographically located in two different parts of Malaysia have much to contribute to the understanding of indigenous shamanic cultures in Malaysia. These two groups are the Muruts of Sabah, formerly known as British North Borneo, and the Semai of Peninsular Malaysia. This paper will spell out distinctiveness of the indigenous cultures, besides enumerating the similarities and dissimilarities between these two shamanic cultures. The underlying presupposition of this presentation is the conviction that the belief system is inseparable from the indigenous cosmology and the two are an integral part of shamanic cultures. This paper introduces the two indigenous peoples of Malaysia in the first section while the second section is a brief comparative study of their indigenous cosmologies and belief system with a special focus on their traditional beliefs in the supernatural beings. The third section explains and compares their many rituals and categories of shamans that manipulate different kinds of specialized knowledge to regulate the relationship between the humans, the spirits and the cosmos.

The Muruts and the Semai

The Muruts, a term which literally means "Hill People," are the third largest indigenous groups in Sabah, after the Kadazandusuns and the Bajaus. The Muruts are by no means a homogenous group. They are subdivided into dialect groups such as the Baukau, Gana, Kalabakan, Okolod, Paluan, Selungai, Serundung, Tagal, Timugon, and the Beaufort and Keningau Muruts. The 1991 census has indicated that there are 54,037 Muruts in Sabah, with about 90 per cent of them geographically concentrated in The Southerwestern part of Sabah, East Malaysia.

The *Semai* belongs to the *Senoi* category together with the *Temiar* and they represents one of the three main groups (the other being Semang Negrito and Aboriginal Malay) of indigenous peoples in Peninsular Malaysia. *Senoi* are a Mongoloid people who are the direct descendants of the Hoabinhians and the Neolithic cultivators. They migrated to Peninsular Malaysia around 2,000 BC from presumably present-day Cambodia or Vietnam.

Indigenous Cosmology and Belief System

There is a marked difference in the cosmologies of the two indigenous peoples. The cosmos of the Muruts consists of seven levels above the earth and seven levels below the earth (Harris 1995: 70) while the Semai believe in a universe that is divided into the real world and the spiritual world (Edo 1998: 67; Dentan *et al.* 1997). The Muruts and the Semai believe in supernatural beings, among them is the highest being with different names, connotations and roles. The Muruts believe that there is a Creator God, known to them as *Aki Kaulung* (Fung 1998: 69) whom some regarded as a higher and unknown power (*kuasa* in Malay). *Aki Kaulung* is the creator of heaven and earth and lives in the uppermost level above the earth (Harris 1995: 70). As creator, *Aki Kaulung* penalizes human beings for any disrespect and mockery of the animals. Living in the spiritual world are supernatural beings. For the Semai, *Nyenang* or *Jenang* is the highest supernatural being, a term which denotes 'elder, owner' or 'master'. Terms like *Tuhard, Uyaang or Muyaang* and even the Malay word like *Tuhan* (God) are being used to refer to *Nyenang* as well. As an ultimate power, *Nyenang* created the universe, and even became a human being with a *ruwai* (spirit or head-soul). The *Nyenang* then sends plants to the earth, which possess similar *ruwai* as the human beings.

The Muruts do not believe in intermediaries as the Semai who subscribe to beliefs in the *malikat*. Since *Nyenang* does not deal directly with human beings, the *malikat* become *Nyenang*'s intermediaries with humankind. *Jaja' Bidat, Malikat Maut* and *Pangkal Tiik* (Edo 1998: 69) are the only three types of *malikat* that assist human beings while the other *malikat* remain in heaven. Sometimes they are known as *Mungkar* and *Nangkir* or *Sabit* and *Maut*. Among them *malikat maut* is

the most feared of the three. *Nyenang* sends *Sabit* to earth to bring about death while *Maut* is responsible for extracting life or *nyawa'* from the dying body. There are tasked with returning the souls (*kloog*) of the dead.

The Muruts believe in a spirit world inhabited by a variety of *aru* (spirits) whom they call by various names (Harris 1995: 72–75), some of whom were animals before, while there are other spirits that take on the form of animals, even of human beings. The *kamanggas* lives in rocks and trees. This spirit travels to different areas and may even reside in objects kept in the house. Whoever accidentally disturbs a *kamanggas*, kept in objects in the house, will be shot at with a blowgun and they are taken ill or they die. The *angungkung* is a lion that has become an evil spirit that flies around and preys on victim's soul when s/he laughs as s/he walks in the jungle. The *tambailung* is a spirit that takes the form of an animal such as a deer and feeds on its victims. But the *lalandou* takes on the form of a tall person and also kills its victims. Muruts believe in other jungle spirits that kill their victims in specific ways. The *amamalir* deceives its victims, especially children and makes them lost their ways in the jungle. It also takes on the form of someone familiar to the children. The *tampuyung* leads people who sleep a lot to places of danger, such as a high place or the branch of a tall tree, so that when they awake, they fall to their death.

Muruts believe in different kind of water spirits (Harris 1995: 73). The *bandak* resembles water buffalo with long teeth while the *panandom* looks like a human being. The deepest spots of a large river is believed to be the abodes of the *panandom* and this spirit drowns the victims. The *lompor* is a snake that becomes an evil spirit that sleeps in a hole in the river or jungle. The *baasan* does not kill but scares people. The *omolopot* is a water spirit that kills a victim bathing in a river by catching and wrapping its victim up in a net until s/he drowns. Other spirits attack very vulnerable persons like the children, pregnant women and older people. The *amaratan* causes children and the aged to fall sick. The *baai* cries like a child but it disturbs children, causes them to have bad dreams, cry and fall sick. Pregnant women are prone to be attacked by *lalabi'* which causes the baby to die. To avoid the attack, she must light a lamp and stay awake. Akin to the *lalabi'* is the *pontianak* which cries like a child and eat up the foetus in the womb.

Moreover, Muruts believe in a personal spirit known as *taniou* who attaches itself to an owner, resides in a rock, piece of wood or some other objects (Harris 1995: 73–74). *Taniou* relates to persons through dreams when specific instruction is given about the location where certain objects can be found. When s/he obeys the dream and obtains the object, the person becomes a *lumahon*, a Murut word for 'shaman.' The *taniou* confers the shaman with supernatural power to bring healing or afflict harm, sickness and death on others. To bring about healing, the *taniou* assists the shaman in diagnosing the illness and the method to cure the sick. Besides the *taniou*, the Muruts believe that the spirit of the dead, known as *alinguh* and *andauu*, lingers on after death (Harris 1995: 74–75). The *alinguh* returns just after death to bring with him/her its spouse and children. The *andauu* is the spirit of one who died a violent death which specifically preys on children unattended by their parents.

Among the educated Muruts, they believe that the ordinary spirit from the tree or the rock is not inconsistent with the Christian notion of God. The presence of *aru* enables Muruts to obey the moral imperative that obliges them to respect nature and the animals. To ridicule and disrespect them will incur punishment, while to honor and respect them will bring blessings and rewards. Muruts believe that when they sail past or underneath some boulders along the river, they observe a custom known as *amupuk*. This custom requires them to draw water from the river with their hands and sprinkled it on their heads. This is a requirement for those who made their first trip to sacred sites, particularly young kids as they sailed upstream. It is a sign of respect paid to the *aru*. At the same time, when they pass these boulders, it is customary to utter a few words, either asking to be excused or offering an apology for the use of the passage. The observance of this custom cautions that no one is allowed to shout, bang the boat or swim around in the river, out of deference for the *aru* of the boulders (Fung 1998: 70).

As for the Semai, supernatural beings act as guardian. As the "root of the earth," *Pangkal Tiik*, otherwise known as *Pasak Tiik*, *Mai Dengri'* or simply *penyakit*, is a guardian that is responsible for looking after agricultural land that is as extensive as seven main river tributaries. In the rituals, *Pangkal Tiik* is addressed as *Datuk Keramat* or *mai engra'*

de be jaga' dengri adeh, which means the 'elders who look after this plot of land.'

Like the Muruts, the Semai too believe that supernatural beings assume different forms. The *keramat* (Edo 1998: 70–71) are supernatural beings who did not come from heaven. In fact, a *keramat* has a human spirit which takes on diverse forms of animals and plants, be it that of an elephants, tiger, crocodile, turtle or snake, especially python and dragon, to that of a fallen tree and a trunk. They live as a cohort in a smaller area such as a river, swamp or a cave. Unlike the Muruts, Semai believe that human beings can become supernatural beings. They are known as as *penyakit* (Edo 1998: 72), with *Ngkuu'* and *Naga'* as two of the most well known among the *Semai*. They were both human beings who became bored with their existence. Upon their request, *Nyenang* transformed them into supernatural beings and they watch over human behavior. *Ngkuu'* looks like a gibbon, while *Naga'* assumes the shape of a dragon snake with its scales shinning most of the time. When pets and disabled persons are being ridiculed, *Ngkuu*'s anger transforms its voice into *terlaij* (thunder) while its shining tooth into lightning. *Naga* brings about flood. *Penyakit* are deemed bad when they set themselves up as opponents of the *hala'* and enemies of the *ruwai* of human beings which they devoured as *menghar* (meat).

The comparative study in this section has highlighted the differences in indigenous cosmologies and the spirit world even though they are similarities among the two indigenous cultures. In the next section, I will compare the rituals and shamans of the Muruts and the Semai in an attempt to understand the diversity in terms of the performers and the purposes of the shamanic practices.

Rituals and Shamans

(i) *Rituals*

Among the *Semai*, *Sewang gelap*, a term in Malay, is a shamanic ritual which means a 'ritual in the dark'. This ritual is often held some distance away from the village. But it is rarely held now. On the other hand, the Semai's kindred Senoi group, the Temiar, have a number

shamanic rituals (Jennings 1995: 152–155). Play-dance is the simplest ritual celebrated without any elaborate decoration, not even the intention of calling upon the spirit-guides. Play-séance takes place with some measure of decoration, accompanied by singing, dancing, vigorous and less vigorous trancing. The shamans and trainees administer the healing to the sick. Séance or trance-dance performance is "complete with decoration, ritual objects and healing elements." (Jennings 1985: 153) It is held either in the main house for the sick who can attend or in the house of the sick person. The shamans in trance perform individual healing, with the patient lying or seated in the middle of the room, witnessed by all present. The bursting of the mourning is a ritual held to conclude the mourning period. It lasts three nights. There is a big celebration in the village before the ritual. Gifts are presented to the visitors. On the first night, the music is played in a minor key, participants put on old clothes and no make-up is allowed. The most solemn and significant ritual is known as the tiger-séance which is held in darkness. A special shelter is made within a house without any decoration at all. Its purpose is to contain the shaman who becomes a tiger. The ritual is conducted to "heal sick persons but also to improve an ailing community." (Jennings 1985: 153)

In sharp contrast to the Semai, the Muruts do not have communal rituals to shamanize the sick. If at all, the rituals are on a one-to-one-basis (Fung 2000: 192). In his younger days, Garing bin Muntalan, a shaman himself, often responded to sick calls from individuals in his village or other villages. He went and shamanized them without the community gathering to pray together. Elap, his son, narrated to me once that his father shamanized a sick person. He used a *parang* (knife) and some lime fruits which he cut into two halves with his *parang*. Relying on his prayer-forumulae which he chanted silently, and, the use of the lime juices, he was able to effect a cure, and subsequently the patient recovered, though not immediately. In my recent visit (May 7, 2003), Elap mentioned to me the existence of a distinctive group of persons whom he called *limbai* in his language. He recounted that these *limbai* exhibited incredible feats through the use of their shamanic powers such as the climbing coconut palms with such ease. But he was quick to add that they had stopped demonstrating such shamanic practices since embracing Christianity.

(ii) *Shamans*

The shamans among the Semai are known as *pawang, hala'*, *malip* and *bidat* (Edo 1998: 62). *Pawang* constitute the highest ranking of the Semai shamans for reasons that *Nyenang* has given them *betuah* (extraordinary characteristics) for the performance of the *Ngenggulang* ritual, and for relating to the guardian spirits of the land. *Pawang* are given the *kloog* (soul) by the first shaman known as *Hala' Asal* (Original Shaman), now living in a section of the heaven only inhabited by the souls of the *hala'*. Besides, *pawang* must possess a cool *ruwai* (head-soul) and a cool *broog* (body) that accord them the "power" to deal with supernatural beings such as *Pangkal Tiik*, *Pawang Tiik* or *Mai Dengri'*. *Pawang* must be able to harness the supernatural power of the *gunig-gunig* (spirits) as guides and helpers, and work the different kinds of spells known as *jenampi* and *chenagoh*. In the performance of rituals, *pawang* must take care not to commit errors that annoy the *Pangkal Tiik* whose flaring anger brings about an epidemic to the villagers or death to the *pawang*. For this and other related reasons, *pawang* are few, limited to one in each village, with one or two would-be successors. The pressing demands on the *pawang*, their manipulation of supernatural power and shamanic knowledge for healing purposes, make them one of the most revered persons in the community. When they no longer fulfill their duties as *pawang*, they will choose their successors who are known as *ie panku'* or *ie penangku'*. They are required to undergo rigorous process of apprenticeship. The successor-elects will undergo ritual baths called *muh bunga* (flowery bath) to cool down their *ruwai* (head-soul) and *broog* (body) in order to approach the *Pangkal Tiik*.

Hala' (Edo 1998: 64) are ordinary persons who possess *gunig* and knowledge of *jenampi* and *chenagoh* for healing purposes. They only possess extraordinary characters when they become *ie panku* under a *pawang*. They become shamans in two ways: apprenticeship under a skilled *hala'* and by election through dreams, when a *gunig'* abandoned by a living *hala'* or one who has died, comes to elect a person. The person is advised not to ignore the dream for to do so will bring about illness. With the help of a skilled *hala'*, the "elect" establish a relationship with the *gunig* through a singing ritual known as *kebut* or *lamur*. During the healing rituals, the *hala'* seeks the help of the *gunig-gunig* (spirits) to find, even, rescue the lost *ruwai* of the ill persons from the captivity

of the bad *penyakit*, and bring the *ruwai* back to them. In some communities, the *hala'* have a considerable standing. In others, the *hala'* choose to be rather inconspicuous in the village community.

Malip are shamans who have mastered only *jenampi* and *chenagoh* but do not have the *gunig* (Edo 1998: 66). A strong ability to memorize and remember hundreds of *jenampi* and *chenagoh* is a prerequisite for becoming a *malip*. They obtain the knowledge of *jenampi* and *chenagoh* through a tedious learning process or through their dreams. The *malip* recite the *jenampi* over objects such as water and ointment, which are rubbed unto or drank by the sick for healing. Sometimes, the *jenampi* is recited over the affected parts of the body for healing. The same *jenampi* is used for personal gain and to bring about harmonious or intimate relationship. To bring this about, *jenampi* is recited over the fragrant oil and it is known as *cenuai* (love portion). Then it is used by a desperate person or a politician who uses *cenuai* to entice a woman or to regain his/her declining popularity. It is also used to rebuild a harmonious relation between husband and wife, or even the relationship within a whole family. On the other hand, *Chenagoh* is used to seek help or protection from a supernatural guardian, and, to expel bad supernatural beings.

Bidat (midwives) are exclusively women shamans (Edo 1998: 66–67). *Bidat* receive their skill from *Jajag Bidat*, believed to be the first midwife on earth. Her *kloog* is said to be residing in that part of the heaven only inhabited by children since it is her duty to oversee them. She too assists all the *bidat* on earth. Upon the requests of the midwives, *Bidat* comes to earth frequently to look after of the *ruwai* of children. *Bidat* are tasked with looking after the pregnant women, to deliver their babies, and look after the health of the children of her community. Among the Temiar, *bidat* are considered clever, brave and filled with knowledge and steeped in experience, and they are on restricted diet (Jennings 1995: 140–141) all their lives.

(i) *Rituals*

The rituals of the Muruts involved offering sacrifices to restore the harmony among the villagers, between the villagers and the spirit world, including the cosmos. Muruts have different rituals for different occa-

sions. *Amparawak* is a ritual aimed at placating the spirits through animal sacrifice that involves either a chicken, a pig or a buffalo. This ritual is offered to protect persons engaging in a project, such as preparing a field for cultivation, or building a house, which needed to be continued, in the face of a bad dream or an omen. A sacrifice is made and the blood is smeared on the persons who gathered, for instance in the house, to protect them from the angry spirits. When the offence is committed by the members of a household, the head of the household performed the *amparawak*. (Harris 1995: 80) When a traditional law, called *adat*, is violated, the village head offered the sacrifice to restore the harmony between the villagers and the spirits. The same ritual is offered to restore the harmony between the humans and the cosmos in incidences of relatives of close affinity marrying each other, a relationship which upsets the cosmos to the extent that the trees along the river system stop bearing fruits. *Amparawak* is offered when there is a change in status and human relationship, for instance, the need to mend the feuding parties, to show that they have no hard feelings against other members of the house when a family moves out of a longhouse, or to seal a new blood relation through adoption or marriage. (*Ibid.*)

(ii) *Shamans*

Among the Muruts, the shamans are known as *lumahon* by virtue of the shaman's personal possession of the *taniou* (see Indigenous Cosmology and Belief Systems). The *lumahon* are by no means all male. I have been told two of woman shamans in the Murutland. Inang Urik is first woman who hails from a village called Scalaban. She uses a rock with a hole in the center to bring about healing. The stone is said to be able to whistle and the sound is especially audible to the ears of those who are destined to hear it. A Murut man whom I met latter told me how he met up with this woman and she eventually cured him of a protracted ailment. The second is a young woman, living in another village called Sasadukon who is in her 20's. (Fung 2000: 184)

According to Harris (1995: 81), the *lumahon* has been chosen to "enter into a relationship with a spirit in order to gain access to supernatural knowledge and abilities" in exchange for the shaman's allegiance to the spirit who is the source of the shaman's power. To manipulate

the power of the Spirit, a Murut *lumahon* makes use of an object known as *babas* which may be a rock or some other objects that is known to possess the power to effect a cure or dispel a spell. Muruts know of three types of *Babas.* The first type is called *babas tangou* which has the power to reverse the curse that causes someone to turn yellow. The second type, known as *babas rambuyun*, cures an insane person who walks around talking to himself, while, the third type, *babas uparan*, heals someone who has a curse inflicted on her/him. (*Ibid.* 82)

To procure the specialized knowledge, a *lumahon* is known to have undergone a *batapa* (quest) in a place known to be the dwelling of the spirits such as the graveyard or on top of a tall hill where a shaman will receive a vision or a dream. Different *lumahon* are known to have different and/or a combination of specialized knowledge and power categorized as *amol*, *umparan*, and, *sasampui*. Some *lumahon* exercised the magical powers known as *amol* which prevents them from bleeding if they are stabbed or shot. Others exercise the power of *umparan* by manipulating the knowledge of curses. *Umparan* is used by the *lumahon* upon the requests of the clients who acted out of jealousy or disgust due to the excessive greed for wealth acquired to enrich oneself rather than for the benefit of the community. The *lumahon* also possess the knowledge of casting spells, known as *sasampui* which is intended for curing or destroying persons. *Sasampui* is administered by blowing over an object or through a combination of words and manipulation of objects.

This section explains the different shamans who are ritual specialists and the manner by which they regulate the relationship among the villagers and maintain the intricate relationship between the villagers and the spirit world that restores the harmony in the cosmos.

Conclusion

This comparative study on the shamanic cultures of the Muruts and the Semai foregrounds the significant differences in terms of classifications and beliefs between two indigenous cultures of the two different regions, even if the Muruts and the Semai hail from the same country. This study further establishes the inherent dynamism in the indigenous cul-

tures and belief systems, call it spirits or otherwise, which the shamans, who are the traditional ritual specialists, have ingeniously manipulated. Through their ritual performance they are able to regulate and negotiate the relationship between the human and the spirit worlds and consequently bring about the desired harmony between humankind and the cosmos.

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Teleut Shamanhood: Some Unknown Pages of Ethnographic Studies

DMITRIĬ A. FUNK MOSCOW

The author describes the role of A. V. Anokhin (1869–1931), one of the most prominent and best-known Russian ethnographers and researchers on the Altai Mountain region, in the study of Teleut shamanhood. Detailed descriptions are presented of the texts of Teleut shamanic séances, compiled by Anokhin at the beginning of the 20th century, and of some of his analytical papers held in different archives. The information should be useful for ethnographers and for anyone undertaking a thorough assessment of Anokhin's contribution, which contains not only unique, unpublished materials but also new, more productive ways for understanding the essence of the phenomenon of shamanhood.

A sharp upsurge of interest in the shamanic traditions of the peoples of Southern Siberia among scholars in various fields that has manifested itself in recent years in a wealth of expeditions and publications in many languages has revealed several problems. In my opinion, one of these is a poor knowledge of the scholarly output, published and unpublished, of our predecessors. It is difficult enough for those who have just started to open up Siberia as an "ethnographic field" to find what they need in the host of small-run symposia proceedings and the output of local publishers. Even more difficult is work on archival manuscripts—if one can gain access to such archives at all—which requires more than just a good knowledge of modern spoken Russian or the language of the ethnic group being studied.

This essay on the history of studies of Teleut shamanhood is devoted to the ethnographic collections of A. V. Anokhin (1869–1931), who is well known to researchers on Siberia. The information given here should be useful both for ethnographers and for anyone who, some day, sets about the task of presenting Anokhin's *œuvre* for dissemination to a

wider audience. This will not only present an opportunity for publishing unique materials but also for discovering new, more productive ways of understanding the essence of the phenomenon of shamanhood.[1]

* * *

Andreĭ Viktorovich Anokhin is one of the most prominent and best-known Russian ethnographers and researchers of the Altai region. His whole life was devoted to the study of South Siberia, the Kuznetsk Territory, the Altai and their inhabitants.

Anokhin was born on October 15, 1869, to a peasant family in Pravye Lamki village, Tambov Province.[2] In 1875 his family moved to Biĭsk in Siberia, where Anokhin attended a parish church school and catechist college. As an award for successful studies and abilities displayed, he was sent to the capital, where he studied at the expense of the government in the Saint Petersburg Chapel. After graduation he taught singing for several years at various colleges and seminaries in Tomsk until he was exiled to Belotsarsk (now Kyzyl) for participation in the Social Democrat movement. Anokhin was in exile for about a year. When he returned to Tomsk, G. N. Potanin encouraged his great interest in research on the culture of the Siberian peoples. As a member of small expeditionary groups from 1909 to 1912, he traveled through the entire Kuznetsk taiga ("Gornaia Shoria"), the Altai, Khakassia, Tuva and Northern Mongolia. The supervisor of Anokhin's trips was

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[1] In this work, I stick to the definitions of "shamanhood" and "shamanism" formulated earlier (Funk and Kharitonova 1999). The main topic is the system of mythological religious ideas existing in some society or another, and that is why the term "shamanhood" is used in most cases, and not "shamanism" (professional shamanism).

[2] Here I would like to express my deep gratitude to L. P. Potapov. I wrote this part of the present article based on his remembrances on A. V. Anokhin, his first teacher, which I recorded on October 10–12, 1994. The audio records are now kept in my personal archives. One of the most interesting essays on Anokhin's life and works of those published is R. Erkinova's article in the magazine *Kan-Altai* (1994. Vol. 3: 3–6). Many details of Anokhin's biography need to be confirmed. Even his date of birth is different in some works: 1874, 1889. The data given in the article are based on the copy of his birth certificate published in above-mentioned volume of *Kan-Altai*. The date of October 15, 1869 is according to the Old Style.

the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Committee of Central and East Asia Studies headed by world-famous Turkologists, Wilhelm Radloff in particular. Performing the task of the Committee, Anokhin paid great attention to the study of shamanhood. One of the results of his fieldwork was a book (Anokhin 1924), published in Petrograd. The author worked on the manuscript for ten years. In this work, the most active participants were such scholars as V. V. Radloff, Ė. K. Pekarskiĭ, L. Ia. Shternberg, A. N. Samoĭlovich, N. N. Poppe, S. E. Malov and V. V. Bartol′d.

Though small in size, the book won the author worldwide fame among experts. Thanks to the unique materials, perfectly compiled and published, it was highly commended by Turkologists, ethnographers and researchers on the Altai. However, according to L. P. Potapov, there were also some negative opinions—for example, from the local communist functionaries. The church also responded negatively to Anokhin's investigations on shamans, starting from his very first trips. Nevertheless, Anokhin's break with the Altai Religious Mission—he was precentor of the choir of Tomsk Cathedral—cannot be attributed only to his ethnographic work. A few years before his serious interest in shamanic studies developed, Anokhin had set some beautiful music to the well-known poem "Funeral" by S. Ia. Nadson. Inasmuch as the composition had an obvious political undertone, the church regarded the outburst of Anokhin's soul with apparent disfavour as early as that moment.

As he worked among the Altai Turks, Anokhin was simultaneously active in gathering materials on shamanhood among the Shors and the Teleuts of the Kuznetsk district of Tomsk province.

Unfortunately, hardly any of his written Teleut texts were published during his lifetime or after his death, and this is probably why this sphere of his activity was left almost uncovered in Russian historiographic reviews. It was only in the late 1980s and the early 1990s that I discovered extensive unpublished materials on Altai Turkic, Teleut and Shor shamanhood in the Anokhin archives, and was able to compile and publish an inventory[3] as well as publish some of the material.

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[3] See Funk 1996.

As far as I know, the only foreign researcher who had gained access to Anokhin's archives in Leningrad was the Hungarian scholar Vilmos Diószegi. In 1970, for example, he published an article titled "Libation Songs of the Altaic Turks"[4] that included 10 *alkysh* texts accompanied by English translations, and, in some cases, comments based on the literary and archival sources. All the texts but the first, which was told by Tubas and written down by Diószegi himself, were defined as collected and written down from Altai-Kizhis,[5] but this is not quite true. At least *alkysh* No. 5, "Libationary thanksgiving hymn sung when *ayran* is offered to Ülgen (*adam burqan teŋere*)"[6] was certainly written down from Bachat Teleuts. "Čolunoj"[7] was named as the place where the text was written, and, judging from the content, the text itself is of Teleut origin, not Altai Turkic.

Diószegi copied much Teleut material from Anokhin's archives, and some was even translated into Russian. I will return to these materials below.[8]

Since Anokhin's archival materials were almost unknown, some excerpts from S. E. Malov's foreword to Anokhin's book (1924) were also regularly reprinted in historiographic reviews. For example, one of them can be read in an article on Anokhin: "S. E. Malov was right at pointing to the absence of shamanic ritual description from the beginning to the end considering it as one of its shortcoming." [9] Of course, this should be attributed only to this specific publication of Anokhin. In general, virtually all the "shaman materials" collected by him have a logical, complete form and present comprehensive descriptions of sha-

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[4] See Diószegi 1970.

[5] Seven of them were taken from Anokhin's archives kept in the Muzeĭ antropologii i ėtnografii (Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, hereafter abbreviated as MAE), one written down by Diószegi himself, and another one by V. N. Tadykin.

[6] Diószegi 1970: 101–102. Here Diószegi refers to the Archives of the Institute of Ethnography (Hungarian Academy of Sciences), f. 11, op. 1, no. 28, page 485.

[7] Correctly the Teleut ulus Cholukhoĭ.

[8] In April 2002, I had the opportunity to study most of files kept in the Diószegi Archives in Budapest. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Hungarian colleagues in the Institute of Ethnography of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and to the ethnologist István Sántha in particular, for their help and cooperation.

[9] See Shatinova 1982: 105.

manic rituals accompanied by details of actions performed by the shaman and his or her audience.

Anokhin not only collected materials on the traditional beliefs of Turkic peoples, but he also recorded various folklore texts of those peoples with a keen interest and productivity, describing family ceremonies and acquiring items of traditional culture and life for Russian museum collections. He was one of the first to record the voices of narrators and shamans on wax cylinders. Unfortunately, the majority of these unique records were lost as they were stored in unsuitable conditions. Nevertheless, some wax cylinders have survived in the collections of the Institute for Russian Literature (Pushkin House), as well as in the Barnaul Museum for Regional Studies.[10]

Anokhin's name is connected with the beginning of the artistic activity of the painter Sofia Konstantinovna Prosvirkina, who accompanied him on the expeditions and whom, along with Anokhin himself, elderly Teleuts have remembered well until recently.

The heritage of this gifted painter includes dozens of paintings, drawings and sketches of everyday life and cult goods made under field conditions. Those works are waiting patiently in the wings—on

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[10] According to V. F. Khokholkov (1989: 123), "over two thousand folklore records made by A. V. Anokhin and saved by a miracle" are kept now in the phonogram archives of Pushkin House (Institute for Russian Literature, Russian Academy of Sciences) in good condition. The information about the wax cylinders with the folklore and shaman recordings that were passed from Tomsk Museum for Regional Studies to Barnaul was given to me by the Museum Principal, N. Ia. Sergeeva, during a conversation. According to the former Museum employee V. D. Slavnin, most of the wax cylinders that had been stored in various funds including Tomsk University were lost because of the improper museum storage.

The core of the archival fund of Anokhin's phonographic records in Pushkin House is apparently 75 wax cylinders with recorded songs and shamanic sessions of Altai Turks in 1910–11 from the fund of the Library of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR; in 1930 the wax cylinders were handed over from the library to the MAE, and in 1931, between April 1 and June 15, delivered from MAE to the phonogram archives of the Folklore Section of the Institute for Studies on the Peoples of the Soviet Union of the Academy of Sciences where they were registered under #26 (Folklore Section of Institute for Studies on the the Peoples of the Soviet Union, Academy of Sciences (hereafter abbreviated as IPIN), see Astakhova and Gippius (1931).

the shelves of the archives and storerooms of the Kunstkamera and Tomsk Museum for Regional Studies.[11]

Speaking of Anokhin, one should tell of another sphere of his many-sided activities, for the ethnographer was also a consummate composer! He received a special education in music, graduating from the Saint Petersburg conservatory, where he studied in the departments of conducting and composition. Anokhin is the author of the suite "Khan Talai" and of the scenic poems "Khan Erlik", "Talai Khan" and others written with the motifs of the Altai (in a broad sense), folklore and shamanic rituals in mind. He is also the author of a series of songs on N. A. Nekrasov's poems and some hits that were cheerfully sung in the Petrograd of the 1920s, as well as—as only a few now remember—pieces of church music, which include, as L. P. Potapov told me, an amazingly beautiful evensong.

All his life Anokhin was preoccupied with enlightening others: he worked as a singing teacher in schools and helped talented Altai Turks and Teleuts to study. He created a regional museum in the village of Chemal in the Altai in 1920, he was a research fellow of the Gorno-Altaĭsk (then Oirot) Museum for Regional Studies after 1923 (which now rightfully bears his name), and he guided the ethnographic practice of students, some of whom, like N. P. Dyrenkova, and L. E. Karunovskaia, later became well-known scholars. It is also known that Anokhin headed a children's choir between 1926 and 1929 that gave concerts throughout Altai. He concerned himself especially with the development of gifted children. It was thanks to his insistent advice and persuasion that the parents of L. P. Potapov, who later became one of the greatest experts on the history and ethnography of the Altai, allowed their son to go to Petrograd to study in the Department of Ethnography of the Institute of Geography.[12]

When Anokhin lived in Tomsk he delivered many public lectures. Thus, in November 1913 he addressed a meeting of the Society for

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[11] On S. K. Prosvirkina (1881–1971) see Zhegalova 1991 and Oktiabrskaia 1992. S. K. Prosvirkina is the author of the work *Russkaia dereviannaia posuda* published in 1955 and 1957 (Moskva: Goskul'tprosvetizdat).

[12] The oral communication by L. P. Potapov. See also "It was scholarship, but what scholarship!" (The eldest Russian ethnographer interviewed by V. A. Tishkov), see in Funk (ed.) 1995: 9–21.

Siberian Studies and presented a report entitled "Teleut Shamanhood",[13] which met with a generous response from Tomsk intellectuals. The next day a summary of his lecture was published in the newspaper *Sibirskaia Zhizn'*. The same lecture was included by the Czech writer F. Havelka in his book on Siberia, published in Prague and running to three editions.[14]

Anokhin seemed to have everything—an outstanding talent, followers, a wonderful book and articles to his credit, and recognition from scholars. But it would appear that he sorely lacked an environment in which a scholar, an enlightener and an artist might feel at home. Every meeting with people in his circle was a holiday for him. How happy he was when an ethnographic expedition led by S. A. Tokarev arrived at the village of Kuium! He arranged a real party for his guests; he played the piano, sang, addressed those present, and made plans for another meeting.

Anokhin was single, and therefore attached to the family of his sister, Marfa Viktorovna, who was married to the missionary, Terentiĭ Kan'shin, and his nephews Nikolai and Piotr and niece Olga. He did not have a family of his own. Andreĭ Viktorovich had a fiancée, Agnia Artobolevskaia, with whom he became acquainted in Tomsk. But fate prevented the lovers from getting married—Agnia was consumptive. Despite Anokhin's attempts to cure her with the healing waters and air of Chemal, she died. A white marble tombstone with the epitaph "To Agnia Artobolevskaia from a Friend" stood in the cemetery at Chemal for a long time, but now it is also gone.

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[13] See below, footnote 17.

[14] See Havelka (1926: 67–72). Some excerpts from this work translated into Russian were published by Potapov (1987: 145–149) and (1991: 249–250, 259). Franz Havelka ran the private art school in Tomsk. I came across the following advertisement in one of the issues of the Tomsk newspaper *Sibirskaia Zhizn'* (No. 204, 13th September, 1913): "The Artist F. J. Havelka, a painter, an assistant of the Leipzig Royal Academy of Arts, takes groups of pupils: 1) children, 2) fine arts, 3) applied arts. Information and registration: M. A. Pankrysheva, 38, Pochtamtskaia Str." In Tomsk, he also published "The Practical Guide to Drawing Ornaments and Writing in Decorative Style Used in Making Artistic Signboards, Bills, Diplomas, Honorary Addresses, Placards, Book Covers and Heading Pages, Magazine and Newspaper Titles, Inscriptions of Any Kind, Captions *et al.* for Students, Painters, and Amateurs" (Tomsk: "Pechatnia S. P. Iakovleva" Company, 1914).

Solitude had its effects on Anokhin's appearance and his habits. He was a respectable, winsome man, given to wearing gold-rimmed glasses and tails in the manner that was in fashion in the Altai region. He liked white shirts with a turn-down collar, but according to Zinaida Gippius, who met him once, his shirts were of "dubious cleanness".[15] In the last years of his life he began to "take to the bottle".

Andreĭ Viktorovich Anokhin died of a heart attack on the 31st of August, 1931, in the village of Kuium.[16]

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The materials on Teleut shamanhood collected by Anokhin are almost all unpublished, and are of special interest. Only two of these works were published in his lifetime: a large and very informative article on the Teleut concept of the soul that was based on his Teleut field notes (Anokhin 1929)[17] and a brief review of the report delivered in Tomsk in 1913.[18] The latter was unknown for a long time to researchers studying the shamanhood of the peoples living in the Saian and Altai Mountains. These two works present the results of Anokhin's ethnographic fieldwork among the Bachat Teleuts in the 1910s. The author revealed the basic structural components of the Teleut shaman concepts of the universe and "the soul", the preliminary conclusions being supported by professionally collected and extensive field materials related mainly to the Teleut shamans and their assistants.

The larger part of the unique data collected by Anokhin remains unpublished, although fortunately it has been well preserved in Russian archives.

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[15] See Gippius 1922.

[16] Anokhin's last guests from the capital were L. P. Potapov and his wife E. G. von Hafferberg. According to Potapov's memoirs, Anokhin died suddenly, a day after they left Kuium. They received the news about Anokhin's death when they were already in Barnaul.

[17] For its annotated new edition, see Funk 1997: 196–215.

[18] See Anokhin 1913; for its new edition, see Funk 1997: 193–196. Folklore materials and original works by Anokhin were published many times after his death, see Anokhin 1962 and 1989.

First, we should mention the archives of the "Peter the Great" Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (the Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where Anokhin's materials are included in the first inventory of the eleventh fund. After Anokhin's death almost all his archive materials were received into the custody of the Oirot Museum for Regional Studies. A. I. Novikov, the museum's director, made an inventory of the archives. In 1932 the museum was reorganized under the name of the Institute for Studies on the Peoples of the Soviet Union (abbreviated in Russian as IPIN). The institution belonged to the Academy of Sciences. This new institution had the task of processing the archives and publishing the completed works.[19] I do not know whether Anokhin's archives ever reached the IPIN and, if they did, when and under what agreement these archives were found at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (maybe this happened automatically, after the dissolution of IPIN). According to some sources, Anokhin's archives were transferred from Oirot-Tura (now Gorno-Altaĭsk) directly to the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, on condition that they should be processed in a year.[20]

In the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography the Anokhin materials were left at the disposal of Nadezhda Petrovna Dyrenkova, who was an acknowledged Turkologist of the time, and who started to work on some of his manuscripts. After she died in 1941, the materials remained in the cabinets of the Section for Siberian Studies until about the late 1940s or early '50s, and they came to light and were deposited in the archives of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography. At present, among the great number of unique files there are more than two dozens with the most valuable materials on Bachat Teleut shamanhood (nos. 26, 29, 32, 40, 56, 60, 68, 93, 147–50, 153, 154, 161, 162, etc.).

Second, there is a special Anokhin fund in the archives of the Tomsk State United Museum for History and Architecture (hereafter abbreviated as TSUMHA), op. 8. Some of these materials are duplicates of the manuscripts held in Saint Petersburg, while others supplement them to some extent or even present fully original works and field notes that

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[19] Anokhin's Archives, see *Sovetskaia ėtnografiia* 1932/5–6: 210.

[20] See Belousova 1995: 110.

one cannot find anywhere else.[21] The materials on Teleut shamanhood are registered in these archives in files nos. 1, 3, 9–15, 20, 22 and 24.

In both archives mentioned above the information on Bachat Teleut shamanhood is represented by field notes and correspondence from local sites; sometimes these are draft articles or even lengthy manuscripts which could in fact form a separate book. All the materials mentioned are written by Anokhin and R. A. Khlopotin.[22] The main part of these works is the texts of shamanic sessions (*kamlanie*), which are referred to as "mysteries" by both authors.

In the following, I will give a short description of the main Teleut shamanic texts kept in the archives at St Petersburg and Tomsk.

(1) The Mystery of Ezhik-tengerezi, the master spirit of heaven's door and the master of the threshold, dated June 1911, and consisting of 33 sheets of incomplete draft in the author's version (TSUMHA, no. 9), or 28 sheets of the author's typewritten copy (TSUMHA, no. 10), or 54 sheets of a typewritten text prepared for publishing by Dyrenkova in the 1930s (MAE, no. 147); or 55 typewritten pages. On the eighth sheet the text is on both sides; Dyrenkova took a copy of the original which is absent from the archives of the MAE; the text is a faded second or third typewritten copy, the typescript constitutes a small part of the text; namely, these are comments on shamanic actions; the main part of these archives is insets of proper shamanic texts in the Teleut language written in Russian handwriting. Since it was Dyrenkova who prepared the whole manuscript for publication, we can suppose that she made most of the insets apart from some fragments in illegible handwriting on sheets 11–17 and 29–47. All the texts are only in the original language.

I translated the whole text of the shamanic session for the threshold spirit (the version of the Tomsk archive text) and published it with comments in my book on Teleut shamanhood in 1997.[23]

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[21] Anokhin's funds are also found in the archives of the Barnaul Museum for Regional Studies and in the Gorno-Altaĭsk Research Institute for Humanities.

[22] Roman Alekseevich Khlopotin was not only Anokhin's associate, but also a serious independent field worker and an expert of the Teleut spiritual culture.

[23] Anokhin "Mystery of Ezhik-Tengerezi" in Funk 1997: 103–192, 250–258 (Teleut text, Russian translation, and comments).

(2) The Mystery of Jangys Som or Kirbi Khan, written down on June 22, 1911 (according to different data, from November 14 to December 3, 1911), in the Shanda ulus. The complete handwritten text of the mystery is kept in the archives of the TSUMHA (nos. 11, 37 sheets or 69 pages), while the typewritten text in the Teleut language prepared by Anokhin in Tomsk is now kept in the archives of the MAE and totals 95 pages (no. 153, sheets 2–40, 41–49 rev.). In the latter archives a part of field notes kept safe (no. 40, sh. 2–7 or 10 handwritten pages with draft translation of some phrases) and one more typewritten copy of the mystery text that was prepared for publication in the 1930s by Dyrenkova (no. 154, 104 sheets). All the texts are only in the original language, with the exception of 10 pages of field notes mentioned above. In the early 1960s a handwritten copy of the text in the archives of the MAE (at that time called the Leningrad Section of the Institute of Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences, Archive, F. 11, Inv. 1, no. 98) was made by Diószegi, who sent it (or took it himself) to the Altai to have it translated into Russian. In 1964 (or 1967?) the translation was performed by a Telengit of Gorno-Altaĭsk named Gavriil Dolmatovich Kalkin. At present, the handwritten text and translation are kept in the archives of the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in a file entitled "Archives of the Institute of Ethnography of Academy of Sciences of the USSR. F-11, Anokhin A. V., Teleut II. P-3 (PE)19/2". The archive text amounts to 102 handwritten sheets.

(3) The Mystery of Talai Khan: the manuscript in the Teleut language survived in the archives of the TSUMHA; told by the shamaness Pödök on June 14–18, 1913 (no. 14, sh.13–36 or 48 pages).

In 1998–2001 I translated the whole mystery and prepared it for publication.[24]

(4) The Mystery of Ot-ene. The text in the Teleut language was recounted by the shamaness Pödök and written down on June 19–21, 1913 (TSUMHA, no. 14, sh.1–12 rev. or 24 pages).

(5) The Mystery of Jöö Khan. Field notes in the Teleut language, told by the shaman Martel/Markel (Shanda village), written down on June 22, 1911 (TSUMHA, no. 1, sh. 86–92 or 13 notebook pages). In

[24] I worked on this text mainly in Cologne in 1998 within the framework of the project sponsored by Konferenz der Deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften. By now the translation and commentaries have been completed and extended.

one of the articles (Funk 1996a) I analyzed the shamanic and public ideas of the Jöö Khan deity and the shamanic session devoted to him, while the whole text with translation and comments was prepared for publication.

(6) The Mystery of Adam. Only a few fragments are kept in the archives of the TSUMHA. The largest fraction of the typewritten text is in file no. 20 (sh. 5–29 or 27 pages; the beginning of the text has incorrect, reverse pagination). In the archives of the MAE "The Mystery of Adam" is kept in three typewritten versions. The first two were prepared by Anokhin himself: no. 148 (1912, 117 sheets) and no. 149 (written in 1912, edited in 1915, 140 sheets). The third version was being prepared for publication by Dyrenkova in the 1930s. It is an incomplete text in Russian without the Teleut original (MAE no. 150, 352 typewritten pages). Some extracts from "The Mystery of Adam" (MAE version) are also kept in the Diószegi Archives at the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Complete copies of Adam's shamanic session texts which are, as far as I know, similar to that in the MAE archives (F. 11, op. 1, no. 149) are also currently held in the archives of N. V. Kalishev's family in Kemerovo and in the funds of the "Cholkoi" Teleut Museum of Regional History and Ethnography (Bekovo village, Kemerovo region).

Of all the surviving texts of shamanic sessions "The Mystery of Adam" appears to be the best prepared for publication; at any rate, virtually all the lines of the Teleut original are provided with Russian translation.

(7) The Mystery of Ak Ülgen. A complete version is kept in the Tomsk archives, file no. 12, on 53 sheets or 103 typewritten pages. In file no. 13 there is a handwritten text on sheets 67–120 (104 pages) dated "January/March 10, 1912". In file no. 1 on both sides of sheet 172 (or two pages) there is a brief handwritten part of a mystery dated December 23, 1913. In the archives of the MAE at present the mystery has only survived as fragments (MAE no. 163); all the texts are only in the original languages. It is interesting to mention that in the 1960s a complete copy of a complete original from the archives of the MAE (F. 11, op. 1, no. 10) was taken by Vilmos Diószegi. A handwritten text and its translation (it is difficult to confirm, but most likely the translation was made by a certain Nikolaĭ Pavlovich Kuchiiak, himself an Altai

Turk) are kept in the Archives of the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in a file entitled "Archives Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of USSR, F-11, Anokhin, A.V., Teleut II. P-3 (PE) 19/2". The archive text numbers 95 handwritten sheets.

Besides Anokhin's notes mentioned above, the archives contain several shamanic texts written down by Khlopotin.

(1) The Mystery of Talai Khan. A part of this mystery is kept in the archives of the MAE ("*Kam* ['shaman' in Teleut] addresses Ker-balyk on spewing *altïn kut*) (no. 60, sh. 2–3).

(2) Dialogue between the *Kam* and the *emegender*s. The manuscript is in the archives of the MAE (no. 60. sh. 4–16 rev., 17).

(3) The Mystery of Jöö Khan. Field notes from a shaman named Kanakai, dated June 12, 1913. (TSUMHA, no. 14. sh. 37–40 or 7 pages); manuscript written on large sheets dated January 7(?), 1914, sent to Anokhin by Khlopotin. (MAE No. 60. sh. 44–65, 66-69).

(4) The Mystery of Saldy-nemezi. Noted down in 1915 (TSUMHA, no. 24. sh. 2–20 or 37 pages).

All these texts are written by Khlopotin in Teleut, in shorthand, plagued with errors and grammatical inaccuracies. Certain phrases in the Emegender and Saldy-nemezi spirit mysteries have drafts of verbatim interlinear translation. The first three texts were copied by Diószegi in the archives of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of USSR (F.11. Op. 1., no. 78) in the early 1960s. G. D. Kalkin contributed to the rough translation of the texts into Russian. At present these manuscripts, with a total length of 74 sheets, are in the archives of the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

* * *

These texts are unique and plentiful and, once published, they could significantly boost our knowledge of shamanic sessions. Unfortunately, all the Teleut texts need amendment or careful editing. The texts of shamanic rites written down by the Teleut Khlopotin pose the biggest challenge as they contain a multitude of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors or inaccuracies.

Another serious problem is that no ritual texts have been translated into Russian. Here we refer to the texts that contain an extensive vocabulary of religious terms, which stand witness to the language of the last century, and, moreover, the language is Teleut, not Altai Turkic (or, as the Soviet/Russian school of linguistics would have it, "Teleut dialect of the Altai Turkic language"). Without keeping this in mind one cannot translate Teleut shamanic texts into Russian adequately. This was the case with an Ülgen shamanic session recorded by missionaries in the region of the Altai. "Shamanic mysteries of Gorno-Altaĭ",[25] by N. A. Baskakov and N. A. Iaimova, was published in 1997 (dated 1993) and featured an Ülgen shamanic session as recorded and published earlier by V. I. Verbitskiĭ. The authors mastered most of the translations. But at the same time they proceeded from the assumption that they had an Altai Turkic text and therefore analyzed and edited it as such. As a consequence they translated the text as Altai Turkic and left out a number of essentially Teleut entities.

This also applies to the translations of some Teleut texts made for Diószegi by his Altai Turkic correspondents and translators who did not have a good grasp of Teleut culture or Teleut shamanic vocabulary.

* * *

We have a much less detailed image of Anokhin as a researcher of all the unique material he collected. In addition to the article on the "soul" and its properties mentioned above, he wrote a study in which he described the Teleut shaman's drum. I published this manuscript in 1997.[26]

Anokhin wrote a lengthy article (about 80,000 words) on the universe and gods and spirits as portrayed in Teleut shamanic texts. Several versions of his manuscript, entitled "A Report on Teleut Shamanism", are kept in the archives of the MAE. In fact, the title reads: "Report on Teleut shamanism written in 1912. Tomsk, A. Anokhin" (Archives of the MAE, F. 11., Inv. 1., nos. 162, 33 large sheets, typescript). The same text, titled "Spirits of Teleut shamanism" and with minor additions,

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[25] See Baskakov and Iaimova 1993.

[26] See Funk 1997a.

was prepared for printing by Dyrenkova in 1934–40 and is in the same archives; its number is 161 (58 A4 sheets, typescript with insets in Latin handwriting).

Anokhin's attempt at a classification of shamanic drums deserves great interest. His research "On Altaic Shaman's Drums" (1916) is probably the first ethnographic article that suggests a classification of drums on the basis of handle type. Anokhin discerned three types of drums—*d'ezim, kanïm* and *mars*—used by Altai-Kizhis, Tubalars, Kumandis, Chelkans, Teleuts and Shors and provided detailed descriptions.[27]

At L. Ia. Shternberg's request, Anokhin described the several relationships between shamans and female celestial spirits in a letter and later in a sketch of an article. In his letter to Shternberg dated July 24, 1924, Anokhin explicitly states: "...in my research I never directly asked *kam*s about the power they get from female spirits. Who knows, if I changed my question I would get a different answer..."[28] Still, his data are worth looking into at least in terms of the historiography of the problem.

* * *

When we come to realize that Andreĭ Viktorovich Anokhin worked with dozens of Shor, Kumandin, Chelkan and Southern Altai Turkic shamans and that most of his notes have not been published,[29] we get a better idea of his outstanding scholarly achievements, of the importance of his *œuvre* and the need to publish it. We do not deem it necessary to explain these points in detail. They speak for themselves.

What we need is a specialist capable and willing to work with such challenging material and prepare it for publishing.

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[27] Diószegi copied the article in the archives of the Leningrad section of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (f. 11., op. 1., no. 101).

[28] The letter is kept in the archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg (F. 282, op. 1, no. 49, page 7).

[29] His notes on Shor shamanism have been published in part (see Funk 1995).

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Spirit Mediumship: Discursive Power and the 'Play' of Belief in Patrasi, Nepal

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The article examines ritualized spirit mediumship amongst the (Hindu) Matwāli Chetri of north-west Nepal. By suggesting that when spirit mediumship in Patrasi reaches its highest potential it engrosses its participants (both the ritual players and audience alike) in a unique mode of hermeneutic experience, this article theorizes the hermeneutic processes through which practice translates into belief. Experimenting with the applicability of Interpretation Theory to the study of ritual, the article examines the possessed body as a "text" that discursively leads the community into a new world of meaning in order to explore the interpretive dynamics through which such rituals become flashpoints of belief and testing grounds for the fundamental tenets of the religious system in which they are embedded.

Background to the Paper

Fieldwork for this study took place in the Patrasi Valley of Jumla, Nepal, where I spent the winter of 2000 researching religious belief and practice. At the time of fieldwork, and while writing this essay, I was working as an independent researcher. However, this project would not have been possible without the help of Mr. Surendra Pandey and several other members of the Nepalese National Assembly who provided essential guidance and bureaucratic support throughout. Though it is important to assert that this study had no formal ties to the government of Nepal, my thanks go out to Mr. Pandey in particular for his creative vision in initiating this project and to the various administrators, more generally, whose open-mindedness and bureaucratic agility made my time in Jumla not only possible, but also enjoyable. Since then, I have

been enrolled in graduate programs in the United States, where I have continued my work with the people of Jumla through the disciplines of Religious Studies and Anthropology. As the following pages will illustrate, this article represents some of my preliminary work with mapping models of literary Interpretation Theory onto the events of spirit mediumship as I encountered it in Jumla. In my more recent work, I have continued with this analytic endeavor, greatly complicating and expanding upon many of the themes presented here. Insofar as this article is then a preliminary sketch of sorts, I hope that it gestures to the heuristic potentials of this type of approach, and in so doing, encourages thought and an extended discussion along these same lines.

During my time in Patrasi I lived in a village comprised primarily of a group that called themselves the Matwāli Chetri, an ambiguous ethnic/caste distinction.[1] The classificatory affiliations of the Matwāli Chetri are somewhat problematic and so deserve mention. Derived from the Varnic caste classification Ksatriya, Chetri denotes a Hindu caste distinction of high ritual status (i.e. those who wear the sacred thread and abstain from alcohol and other impurities). Matwāli on the other hand, denotes liquor consumption and the absence of the sacred-thread, each of which is a violation of orthodox Chetri status. In the case of the Matwāli Chetri it appears that the rules of Hindu orthodoxy have been historically manipulated so as to include peripheral groups whose lifestyles otherwise might not have meshed with traditional Hindu law. Located within the borders of Nepal, the only officially Hindu nation in the world, association with Hinduism has brought with it a variety of economic and political advantages.[2] Elsewhere in Nepal, the term has been used in similar fashion for such inclusion into the State.[3] Arising from a nebulous socio-religious history, it is difficult to decipher out

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[1] Others who have worked on the case of the Matwāli Chetri include Bishop 1990; Campbell 1978; Connell 1991; Furer-Haimendorf 1975, 1978, 1981, Guatam and Thapa-Magar 1994; and Sharma 1971, 1972.

[2] On the social dynamics of Hinduism and the nationalism of Nepal, see Furer-Haimendorf 1975: 234.

[3] Matwāli Chetri is a loose label that various groups have adopted so as to achieve status in the caste system (Furer-Haimendorf 1975: 234, 1981: 66).

the specific forces that have shaped religious association in the area, but for the sake of this paper what is important is that the Matwāli Chetri claim to be Hindu.

Ranging from 35 to 140 homes the three villages in which I conducted research include both the largest and the smallest communities in the area. Situated at over 8000 ft. the villages of Patrasi represent the highest settlements along the Upper Tila River. The environment is harsh, yet suitable for sustainable agriculture. Staple crops include corn, barley, wheat, and potatoes. In the past the villages were involved with the trans-Himalayan "salt for grain" trade, but due to population increases, the closure of the Tibetan border, and a host of others causes, this trade has become virtually extinct. Today the Matwāli Chetri of Patrasi remain sedentary, focusing their energy on an efficient style of highland agriculture.[4]

Organized into patrilineal clans known as *thar*, the Matwāli Chetri represent about 80% of each village's population with the remaining 20% being composed of occupational "down-caste". In Patrasi the Matwāli Chetri are the highest caste; however, in the capital town of Jumla Bazaar (a day's walk away) there are other caste groups such as Thakuris, Brahmins, and even more orthodox Chetris, all of whose caste status trumps that of the Matwāli Chetri. On occasion Brahmin priests perform ceremonies along side the religious leaders in Patrasi, but for the most part, the Matwāli Chetri have an autonomous religious practice.

Introduction

Whether viewed as a miraculous cosmological exchange or simply as a conservative ritual practice, the power and meaning of spirit mediumship manifest as inter-dependent products of social discourse. Amongst the Matwāli Chetri, when a god overtakes the human body, it is belief that hangs in the balance. Indeed, rituals of spirit mediumship often serve as flashpoints of belief, or put another way, testing grounds for the fundamental tenets of their religious system. In partaking in these rituals,

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[4] Many of the men once migrated to the plains of India for seasonal work during the winter, but recent civil unrest has made the journey south too dangerous to justify.

the communities engage in a special sort of hermeneutic enterprise, the phenomenology of which is of integral importance for understanding how these rituals are semantically rendered by the communities that enact them. By leading its audience into an arena of social discourse in which domains of reality transcend one another, spirit mediumship breathes life into established tradition, and has the potential to create entirely new substances of meaning—ones which can jump the bounds of what was previously thought possible. It is this uncanny ability to work with, and then go beyond the limits of understanding that has made spirit mediumship a timeless focus of human intrigue.

The practice of spirit mediumship in Patrasi acts as an authoritative pendulum by which the community balances its socio-religious realities. The most definitive examples of spirit mediumship in Patrasi are elaborate rituals that engage the entire village. As the community gathers to witness the possession of their religious leader, the *dhāmī*, the stakes are high. The appearance of a god before the community (via the body of the possessed) provides a means for the community to address certain issues that affect their well being. Most importantly, the community appeases its god, and therefore secures its protection. At the same time, the rituals bring to light the vitality of the community–god relationship—the experience of which is integral to the construction of belief. The rituals also allow the ill to receive healing, the suffering to express their grievances, and the community to gather in celebration. As I observed various instances of spirit mediumship during my fieldwork, these basic characteristics were fairly explicit, yet it seemed that the power of spirit mediumship, that is how it created these effects, was more obscure. To me, it appeared that the most significant results of these rituals were the ways they affected the shared beliefs of the community. From this point of view, I began this exploration into the discursive power of spirit mediumship in Patrasi.

In its most powerful form, spirit mediumship creates. It creates meaning; it creates respect; it creates belief. From the structures of continuity the potential for pure creativity rises hesitantly. But in the liminal world of possession this creative potential feeds on the imagination of man, transforming the mundane into the miraculous. Spirit mediumship condenses two parallel realms down into a single point, the body of the possessed. In a play of agency, possession produces an

alternate state of being. As the point of cosmological intersection, the possessed body reaps the power of both the gods and man, thereby enabling a rebalancing of the spiritual divide it spans.

Addressing the dialectical nature of ritual with conceptions such as "structure/antistructure,"[5] and "flow/reflexivity dialectic", Victor Turner (1986: 55) has aptly shown how ritual often involves a certain manipulation of structures which in turn unlocks a power made possible by the temporary transgression of such structures, not wholly unlike the ideas put forth by Mary Douglas (2002 [1966]) in her famous book, *Purity and Danger*. In Turner's approach, the emphasis is primarily on how structures shape events.[6] In Patrasi, ritualized spirit mediumship certainly relies on structure for shape, yet it also creates what Ricoeur would call new worlds of meaning.[7] In a process of reciprocal determination, the established meanings of spirit mediumship and the events of spirit mediumship are in constant dialogue. Just as the structures of belief shape the event, so too may the event shape the structures of belief. In this paper I would like to illustrate how spirit mediumship acts in this accord. But before examining *how* this phenomenon creates belief, it is first necessary to ascertain *what* forces are at work in shaping the practice of spirit mediumship in the Patrasi Valley.

Present Day Religious Orientation

The cornerstone of religious life in Patrasi is the Masta Orientation[8], a peculiar form of Hinduism that at times seems to operate as a relatively autonomous religious system, while at others it fits nicely into the broader Hindu schematic.[9] What might be deemed the signature religion

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[5] See Turner 1969.

[6] Structure in the Turnerian sense entails the "cultural conditions" and "customary norms" that order the social world (Turner 1969: 94–97).

[7] Here "new worlds of meaning" refers to Ricoeur's notion that the "text" of discourse opens up new ways of perceiving the world. See Ricoeur 1976.

[8] Elsewhere referred to as Masto, Masta.

[9] Others who have written on Masta include Bishop 1990; Campbell 1978; Connel 1991; Guatam/Thapa-Magar 1994; Gaborieau 1976; Maskarinec 1998; Pandey 1994; and Sharma 1972, 1974.

of north-west Nepal, the Masta Orientation appears in various forms throughout the region and tends to serve as a common thread for the region's various Hindu caste/ethnic groups. This belief complex constitutes one structural continuum loaded with specific mechanisms of discontinuity through which the greater structure is locally appropriated. These discontinuities create a distinct sense of "our village religion", while simultaneously placing the village within a greater continuum of socio-religious exchange.

The cult of Masta is an oracular religion through and through. Today its most notable feature is the practice of spirit mediumship. While this practice verifies the gods' presence in the "here and now", the ontological presuppositions of Masta originate with the mythology of the Twelve Masta Brothers (*bāra bhāi Masta*).[10] The most common narrative holds that the Twelve Brothers were born the sons of Indra in the village of Dādār, located in the Bajhang district (west of Jumla).[11] From this point, the Twelve Brothers began to independently roam the territories of northwest Nepal. Most accounts put the brothers on a general north to south trajectory (Bishop 1990: 118; Campbell 1978: 294). In the north they are said to have lived like Bhotias (Buddhists). However, as they traveled south, they became more inclined to behave like Hindus.[12] Gradually, as the brothers dispersed throughout the land, they began to claim certain territories for themselves. In order to secure these lands, the Twelve Brothers quarreled not only with each other, but also with demonic cosmological competitors. Once a given Masta incarnation had established his domain, he would make his presence known by creating his principle shrine[13], and perhaps most importantly, possessing

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[10] "Masta" generally is used to refer to the 12 Brothers, whereas Masto is the singular form. Whether or not Masta was originally conceived of as one god who then took on multiple incarnations, or if it was in fact 12 Brothers that were "born" remains a point of ambiguity across the region (Campbell 1978: 293; Gaborieau 1976: 217).

[11] Campbell notes that many legends place Garhwal as the place of origination. See Campbell 1978: 293.

[12] This fact is quite interesting in that it suggests that the mythology of Masta in some ways is a testament to the mixed Buddhist/Hindu histories of the region. On Bhotia versus Hindu customs in the mythology of Masta, see Campbell (1978: 294).

[13] Many of the names of the various Masta Brothers are based upon the location of these principal shrines. See Sharma 1974: 252.

a mortal of the resident community.[14] Through sacrifice and the presentation of offerings, each village soon came to have special relationships with the respective gods that dwelled nearby, and through time, ritualized spirit mediumship became the means not only to satisfy, but also to communicate with the inhabiting deities, thereby reaping their protection from the unknown dangers of the world. These original relationships have been maintained with varying degrees of success throughout the ages, and continue to be held in high esteem at the local level.

Incorporated into the foundation of Masta are various other gods who have come to be associated with certain villages. Most notable of these are the *Nau Durgā Bhawāni* (the Nine Durgā Sisters). Most local narratives claim the *Nau Durgā Bhawāni* as part of the Masta family, however it should be noted that whether they are related by "cosmic blood" or were merely adopted remains a dubious point.[15] Aside from the Durgā Sisters there are also other divinities distinguishable primarily by the fact that they are not technically "members" of the Masta family. Insofar as each village has an average of five major protectorate gods, these alternative deities tend to round out the local pantheons, and often play analogous roles (in both belief and practice) to those of the Masta Brothers. With these additional gods the continuous influence of Hinduism surfaces rather conspicuously, as it is not rare to find such gods as Vishnu and Shiva existing side by side with the Masta Brothers. Clearly a certain degree of borrowing has occurred; however, the people do not root these gods in the same mythological context that has made them the preeminent figures in the classical Hindu pantheon. Instead they are considered to be contemporaries of the Twelve Masta Brothers, and for analytical purposes of this paper may be included within the orientation of Masta.

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[14] The story of each Brother is preserved in oral texts known as *parelis*. Typically sung or chanted at the onset of possession, these autobiographical oral texts account for the god's journeys, his legendary strengths, and his own unique personality traits.

[15] Elsewhere in Nepal Durga and associated female deities are prevalent. This is due largely to the fact that Dasāin, Nepal's greatest national holiday, is a celebration of Durga. The lesser role the Durga Sisters occupy in Jumla may be the result of a sort of grafting, in which the Durga orientation was grafted onto the Masta orientation later in their history.

The *Dhāmī*s and *Dhāmenī*s

In relating religious practice to the creation of belief in Patrasi, it is my contention that the single most productive event is the performance of spirit mediumship. However, the constituent elements that define and shape spirit mediumship are also integral to systems of belief in the area. Here I would like to introduce the players of spirit mediumship and the stage on which it unfolds.

The mediums themselves are known as *dhāmī*s and *dhāmenī*s (male and female respectively), and in Patrasi they constitute the foremost religious leaders of their communities. They perform the roles of spiritual leader, healer, and ritual orchestrator, but perhaps their most profound significance is simply as a symbol of the god's presence. For each of the village's gods, there is either one *dhāmī* or *dhāmenī* who serves as its medium. In a village of 200 residents there might be anywhere from 10–20 *dhāmī*s and *dhāmenī*s of various spiritual prowess.[16] The mediums of the principal gods each have a *dhāngre*, who are their ritual assistants. Typically, the number of *dhāmī*s to *dhāmenī*s is about equal. Out of the three villages where I worked, one proclaimed a *dhāmenī* to be its most powerful medium. While gender does not necessarily affect a medium's capacity to rise to the top of the religious hierarchy, gender does seem to affect the roles of the village's religious players. Certain groups of *dhāmenī*s perform in troops that add song and dance to the spectacle of the ritual. As supporting players in the drama, these *dhāmenī*s contribute a great deal to the performance, but are not always considered to be powerful intercessors. Men also fill a variety of supporting roles, but typically it is the women who lead the more musical side of the rituals. While much work remains to be done on gender and the religious hierarchy of Patrasi, in this study I focus primarily on those *dhāmī*s and *dhāmenī*s considered to be some of the village's most powerful, and therefore choose to condense this gender distinction by referring to both as "*dhāmī*s".

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[16] The number of *dhāmi*s and *dhāmenī*s always exceeds the number of protectorate gods because it takes into account the *dhāmi*s and *dhāmenī*s of the lesser *bhan* deities, who are servants of the protectorate gods.

As a religious leader and healer, the responsibilities of the *dhāmī* range from conducting personal healing seances to serving as the centerpiece of the more elaborate full-moon rituals. As is found elsewhere, the *dhāmī*s typically follow strict[er] rules of purity than their peers. In theory, it is generally regarded that *dhāmī*s should abstain from alcohol and chicken. However, in practice, I noticed considerable variance. When I would question a certain *dhāmī* about his/her apparent breaches of purity in comparison with other *dhāmī*s, most would respond that they were simply following the will of their god. ("The god likes liquor, so I drink it", etc.) *Dhāmī*s garner a highly respected social status, yet their secular life is not unlike the rest of the village. These religious leaders tend their own fields, slaughter their own animals, and prepare their own food. How they differ from their peers is in their relationship to a specific god of the village.

Becoming a *dhāmñ* is involuntary and somewhat unpredictable. The calling tends to follow loose lineages subject to abandonment at any time.[17] This condition of uncertainty is pivotal. Never is it assumed that the child of a *dhāmī* will in turn take on his/her parent's role. At the time of death, instead it is the god's choice to decide if, when, and who it might inhabit. Typically the downtime last anywhere from one to three years before the god possesses another member of the community. During this time rituals are held to call the god back to the people. Most mediums experience their initiatory possession in the formal context of these rituals, but it is not rare to hear of others who were first possessed during the course of their daily lives. Typically the first years are fraught with trepidation. However, most *dhāmī*s testify that after a certain time they come to a working understanding of their relationship with their god. Many who have endured the initial anxiety say that they now quite enjoy their relationship with their god.

Before moving on to the specific practices of the *dhāmī*s, it is important to highlight the pivotal condition of uncertainty in the presence of the gods. The case of the divinity and *gupta bās,* or "the god in-hiding" serves this purpose well. In Patrasi, the existence of the *dhāmī* not only enables, but also indicates the existence of the god. When a *dhāmī* dies

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[17] These "loose" lineages are similar to findings elsewhere in Nepal. See Winkler 1976; Gaborieau 1976; and Pandey 1994.

and the god fails to possess another member of the community, it is an ominous sign of its disfavor with the people. Seldom will the people be able to explain why the god has gone into hiding, but they always shoulder the blame. This is a devastating state of affairs and a constant source of religious anxiety. In one village a protectorate god, Thārpā Masta, has been in hiding for over 40 years despite repeated efforts to call it back.[18] To date, no *dhāmī* has emerged as the vehicle of Thārpā.

What then can we make of the presence of the *dhāmī*? As the case of *gupta bās* demonstrates, the unfailing possession of the *dhāmī* therefore carries with it an intrinsically positive commentary on the status of the community-god relationship.[19] In his work on shamanic oral texts in Nepal, Gregory Maskarinec (1995: 130) writes, "the evocation of a spirit does not just summon its force, it is that spirit. The spirits are present because their naming presents them." In Patrasi the phenomenon is very similar, only here the deity is presented through its consistent possession of a village member. The mediums, therefore, are not only a means through which the deity is invoked, they also are signifiers of its presence. In turn, the medium embodies a dialectic that connects and qualifies the cosmological realms which are temporarily condensed into his/her body during the drama of ritual. Both inside and outside the sphere of ritual then, the presence of the *dhāmī* signifies the presence of the god. This presence is cherished both for what it says about the god's love of the people in the here-and-now, and for the possibilities that it opens up for the future. As one elder explained, "If there is no *dhāmī*, there is no door".

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[18] Before he deserted the people, Thārpā was widely acknowledged as the most powerful deity of the village. His absence is therefore all the more disconcerting.

[19] Here this intrinsic meaning of mediumship is much like DuBois' work (1992: 69) with divination in which he writes, "The dynamic of invocation and suppression of intention carries meaning in itself".

The *Paith* Full-Moon Rituals

In Patrasi, ritualized spirit mediumship may be classified within two types of practice: full-moon rituals (*paith*) and healing seances (*dhāmel[ā] basālne*). There are many similarities between these rituals. Where they differ lies mainly in whom the ritual is meant to address, and the grandeur with which they are performed. While the healing seances are designed to address the needs of ailing individuals, the full-moon rituals are more spectacular and communal affairs conducted to reaffirm the relationship between the entire village and the particular protectorate deity being honored on that day. For the purposes of this paper, the full-moon rituals will provide a more appropriate platform on which to explore the discursive power of spirit mediumship.

Each and every full-moon ritual begins in a small temple known as a *thān.* Inside the temple the *dhāmī* is accompanied by his/her ritual assistant, the *dhāngre,* and other supporting ritual players. When a *dhāmī* is known for his/her healing capacities, the small temple is also usually filled with the sick and suffering. Drums initiate the rising crescendo of possession, during which time the body of the *dhāmī* begins to shake more and more violently. Upon reaching the state of full possession, the *dhāmī* shifts to a small perch (the *gaddi*) reserved only for the god. The hair, (in the case of the male *dhāmī*s the long matted lock known as the *laTTā*) is let down—typically by the *dhāngre,* who then assures that all of the necessary paraphernalia is in place. Once the medium assumes the perch of the god, his/her words don a new authority and agency; from this point on, the body of the *dhāmī* is considered the vessel of the god.

Typically, the medium begins by reciting the god's *pareli*, which recounts its mythological autobiography. These invocations are typically sung in a tongue that is quite difficult to interpret both for locals and the anthropologist alike. The bells (*ghanTā*) rung by the *dhāmī* during the *pareli* only add to the commotion. Upon completing the *pareli,* the medium ritually recognizes those in the temple by adorning them each with a *Tikā* on their forehead. This is done in order of ritual hierarchy beginning first with the *dhāngre*, and then progressing down the ranks from other *dhāmī*s, to elders, and finally to the youngest in the temple.

Once these practices have been completed, attention typically turns to sacrifice, the presentation of offerings, and exorcism. For the sick and suffering, the appearance of the god in human form is an opportunity to be taken advantage of. As the ill approach the *dhāmī* for healing, what ensues is a true dialogue. Often involving sickness or misfortune, the people explain their troubles to the god, who then responds with a diagnosis, which might include anything from witchcraft, to ghost afflictions, to the victim's lack of respect for the god. The cadence and utterances of the possessed *dhāmī* are quite different than the language spoken in everyday life. Both the *dhāmī*s and the lay community explain that the language is somewhat intelligible to man, but not fully. This seems to be a powerful mechanism in that the responses are quite open to interpretation, and so may be molded to the specific needs, concerns, and desires of the people.

Aside from healing, other issues of community importance are often introduced before the god. The dialogue with the god is an open one. During my time in Patrasi I witnessed complaints concerning the lack of rain, the lack of a male heir, and even the threat of civil unrest that was encroaching from neighboring areas. This last case was particularly interesting because it shows the fluidity of the people's interaction with the god. During my first stint of fieldwork in Patrasi, Maoist guerillas blanketed the area with propaganda for the first time.[20] This group has been waging an escalating resistance to the government of Nepal and has taken to especially violent means to forward their cause. News of violence had been circulating for months in Patrasi, but now the actual group had made its appearance causing a great deal of fear in the villages. Shortly after the Maoists' arrival the topic began to crop up during the rituals of spirit mediumship. People expressed their concern to the god, and begged for protection from the violent Maoists. What

[20] Since Patrasi's first exposure to the Maoists in 2000, drastic changes have followed. Today, both Patrasi and virtually the entire district of Jumla are Maoist held territory, with only the central bazaar town of Jumla-Kalanga remaining a government occupied zone. The effects of the Maoists both in Patrasi and in Jumla have been significant. I was fortunately able to get back to Jumla during a recent cease-fire but due to the adverse circumstances both then and now that fighting has resumed, I am not able to share here what tentative conclusions I was able to garner.

struck me about this was the immediacy and sense of desperation with which this topic was introduced into the ritual discourse. As this episode makes clear, the discursive parameters of these rituals are not bound by tradition, but rather arise out of the flow of everyday life. Indeed the members of the community are free to air their opinions on a variety of issues[21]; at times some may even approach argumentative stances with the god. However, it is the god who commands ultimate respect. As a social forum then, the ritual provides a vent through which issues can be submitted into social discourse, be they personal problems of the sick or social problems of the community.

While the exchanges that take place within the temple are of great importance, the spatial logistics of the ritual limit the public exposure the medium can achieve in the tight confines of the temple. It is only when the *dhāmī* emerges from the crowded temple that the actions of the deity become fully public. It is here within the dancing phases of the ritual where the hermeneutic processes of the community are most dynamic.

Insofar as these full-moon celebrations are communal affairs, what is crucial to both the people involved and our discussion of such, is that these rituals *bring to light the vitality of the people's relationship with their protectorate deity*—which is to say that the actions of the possessed body are thought to be representative of the people's status in the eyes of their god. According to the hermeneutics deployed, the god expresses its favor/disfavor with the people. This interpretive mode of reflection is especially active during the dancing phase of the ritual, where the vigor of the dancing mediums testifies to the *deutāko kushī*, the god's happiness. The point to keep in mind throughout the following exercise is that this performance is explicitly reflexive. This statement is not made in the Geertzian sense of cultural interpretation whereby the anthropologist represents a given event of the "other" as an implicit,

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[21] It should be noted here that the jurisdiction of the *dhāmī* does not include judicial affairs between members of the community. This responsibility instead falls on the shoulders of the elected village head-man.

yet exemplary, "story that they tell themselves about themselves".[22] Rather, here, this mode of interpretation is explicit, and decidedly native.

As the crowd circles around the dance, all eyes are on the possessed. It is here where the vitality of the community-god relationship comes to light. As the ritual progresses into the early evening, possession becomes "contagious" as other *dhāmīs* and *dhāmenīs* join the rising fervor of the dance. Each represents their respective god, thereby creating a sort of performative microcosm in which the village pantheon takes center stage. At moments audience members may dart into the dervish to present offerings and receive a quick blessing. At others, the encroaching crowd is reprimanded by a barking medium intent on reclaiming its performative space. With exhaustion and nightfall the ritual draws to a close and the *dhāmī* returns to the temple where the spirit will eventually leave the body. Although the public spectacle may be over, the youth of the neighboring villages continue the festivities well into the night. Exercising the more social element of rituals, they participate in *chāche khelne*, a flirtatious exchange of song and dance.[23]

Throughout the region, the full-moon rituals embody the crowning moments of celebration in each community. These rituals are a time when the gods are summoned into the world of man so that they may receive offerings and publicize the vitality of their relationship with the community. As the focal point of these rituals, the actions of the possessed *dhāmī* are the single most important variant in the discursive exchange that unfolds between ritual players and the audience. However, other aspects of these rituals also help order and sustain the socio-religious environment.

Each village reaffirms its relationship with the gods in specific temporal patterns. To illustrate this point, consider the following ritual calendar taken from one of the villages in Patrasi.

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[22] Thus, this is explicit, unlike Geertz's exegetical reading of implicit meanings. For more on performance and reflexivity, see Geertz 1973: 448; MacAloon 1984; Turner 1967:106, and with particular reference to mediumship and ritual, see Drewal 1992: 96 and Boddy 1989: 9, 353.

[23] For a more comprehensive view of the full-moon rituals of Patrasi, see Middleton 2000.

Nepali Full-Moon Date	God
Māgh Purni Puja	Kul Deu Mastā
Srāvan Purni Puja	Thārpā Mastā
Bhādra Purni Puja	Angre/Gaurakoti Mastā
Kārtik Purni Puja	Lvāchāri Mastā
*Dasāin	Celebrated throughout Nepal

No other village in the area will celebrate these particular gods on these particular full-moons. From the smallest children eager to see the drama of the coming ritual, to the seasoned elder preparing her offerings, the entire village shares a common understanding of the approaching date. As the community annually progresses through each of these rituals, an organic whole begins to emerge. The ritual calendar serves as more than just a temporal arrangement; it becomes "the way we do things here". Furthermore, on any given full-moon, a person can point in the direction of a nearby village and tell you not only if they are performing a ritual, but most likely the specific god for whom the ritual is being enacted, and possibly even the names of the people performing in the ritual. The intra-village notion of "the way we do things here" therefore carries inter-village meaning *vis-à-vis* "the way they do things there".

The full-moon rituals of the Matwāli Chetri provide a necessary means to maintain the proper balance of the community–god relationships. Each and every ritual involves appeasing the gods through sacrifice, and various other offerings. By "feeding the god's hunger" the people win its protection from the malevolent forces of the world. These forces may range from natural conditions such as drought, to entities such as ghost and witches, which are believed to be the primary causes of disease and suffering.

For the Matwāli Chetri, gods are at times invoked as legislators of morality, while at others they seem removed from local ethical and juridical affairs. Instead of the meandering entwinement of man and god that one might find proposed by a more ethically based religious system, in Patrasi the proper balance involves a distanciation between man and god. This sets up a juxtaposition of the cosmos where the human realm and the godly realm tend to run parallel with one another.

It is through ritual that these parallel realms are bent toward a common point of intersection. Ritual establishes the arena for these realms of reality to converge upon the possessed body. The role of ritual then is to provide the means for cosmic interaction, reaffirmation, and ultimately, rebalancing.

Village to village, the full-moon rituals entail a certain degree of uniformity. For the most part the standard sequence of events remains unchanged. This allows the audience a sense of "what to expect" when they gather for a full-moon ritual, and so makes the entire event understandable. Clearly in the ritual life of the Patrasi Valley an underlying continuum of structure persists; one might even say it is conservative. Mary Douglas (1970: 55) raises the question, "Is ritual a restricted code?". The structural uniformity in Patrasi seems to suggest it is. In the rituals of spirit mediumship in Patrasi anything *could* happen, but not anything *does* happen. Expectation and the status quo are the conservative structures that determine what may happen and what should happen in the rituals of spirit mediumship. Everything from the role of the *dhāmī* to the actual sequence of events during the rituals relies on these structures for coherence. It is these parameters that enable ritual to reflexively address, support, and sustain the beliefs that unite the constituency of the social body. Ritual then is the platform in which the community submits this "culture of belief" into social discourse, and then reappropriates it in its refreshed form. The full-moon rituals offer an annual opportunity for this type of reflexive submission, and so enable the continual rehashing and refurbishment of the collective meanings that define the community's relationship to the specific god being honored on that particular day of the lunar calendar.

New Horizons of Belief

A variety of inferences can be made concerning the roles of ritual ranging from sustaining religious belief to rekindling social solidarity. Clearly the forces that drive these rituals provide a base level of discursive production and sustainment; otherwise they would lose their necessary social value and become defunct. But what of the purely creative capacity of ritual? Why does spirit mediumship often become a flashpoint for

new substances of meaning? In its most remarkable instances, ritualized spirit mediumship supercedes the very structures from which it is born, and creates new horizons of belief for the agents of the discursive exchange.[24] Whether referred to as "structure/antistructure" (Turner 1969) or "flow/reflexivity" (Turner 1986: 55), clearly there is a dialectic here involving the relation of creative license to structural limitation. Boundaries in this case often exist to be broken. In other words, spirit mediumship works with, and then goes beyond the bounds of normality.

In order to explain the phenomenology through which spirit mediumship achieves these ends, Interpretation Theory can provide useful insight by viewing the performance of the possessed body as a "text" that opens up a "world of meaning" for its readers—or, in this case, for the participating community.[25] But before moving on with this endeavor to map a literary based model onto a performance based cosmological event, it will be first worthwhile to put forth some of the theoretical premises through which I will be formulating this argument. First, spirit mediumship in Patrasi is a socially discursive event. It may then be said that there are certain agents in this discursive exchange. The most important agent is the community. Representing the collective social body, it is this agent that holds the currency of shared meaning. The ritual players comprise a second group of agents subsumed by the first, yet performatively distinct. According to the people of Patrasi there is also a third agent, the gods. The ritual performance itself may be considered the "text", or what is submitted for interpretation. Perhaps most importantly, interpretation itself is seen as an experiential event in which the interpreter recognizes a certain meaning being put forth by the "text", and then appropriates this understanding as his/her own

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[24] Gadamer's (1989: 245, 302–307) notion of "horizon" here concerns the new understanding created for the participant of discursive exchange.

[25] Gadamer's theory concerns a "fusion of horizons" in which the horizon of the author and the horizon of the reader fuse. Ricoeur on the other hands suggests that texts open up new worlds of meaning before the reader. That is, the meaning of the text lies in front of the text. Though these two models of interpretation differ in certain regards, I think they each provide rich heuristic purchase when applied to the hermeneutics of spirit mediumship (Gadamer 1989: 306; Ricoeur 1976: 88). Other anthropologists who have made use of these theories in regards to spirit mediumship include Boddy 1994, and Lambek 1981.

(Ricoeur 1976: 92; Gadamer 1989: 302–307). (For the sake of this argument the "interpreter" is represented by the community celebrating the ritual). This appropriated meaning moves the experiencer to a new understanding of the world around him/her. Finally, this discussion relies on the concept that "reality" is perception inextricably entwined with belief.

In its most powerful form, the performance of spirit mediumship is an event that challenges the existing structures of belief, and then moves the collective body to new understandings of their world. Just as the structures of belief mold the events and interpretation of spirit mediumship, the events of spirit mediumship may also affect the structures of belief. In summarizing the general structures that support spirit mediumship in Patrasi, the ways in which established belief (i.e. expectations and the ritual status quo) shape the events of the full-moon rituals have been put forth. Now I would like to reverse the approach and ask *if*, and *how*, certain performances of spirit mediumship can force the collective social body to reformulate the structures by which it understands spirit mediumship. By reversing the approach, I hope to expose the phenomenological power of spirit mediumship, and take a hermeneutical step closer to an understanding of its social meaning in Patrasi.

Performance, Reputation, and the "Power" of the *Dhāmi*

It is not my contention that all spirit mediumship engages the participants in a movement toward new horizons of belief. In Patrasi, nothing could be further from the truth. Like any performance, the rituals of spirit mediumship range from the utterly boring to the absolutely miraculous. Public perception hinges upon the events of the possessed body. Certain *dhāmī*s and *dhāmenī*s make a name for themselves, others seem to merely fulfill a role that their religious system requires. Those who are compelling assume the highest levels of religious prestige; those who lack the charisma hardly draw a crowd. Like any performers, the success of the *dhāmī*s and *dhāmenī*s of Patrasi depends much on the critical notion of reputation.

Reputation signifies the social standing of the *dhāmī*. Spirit mediumship is not an isolated event, so in working with native formulations of reputation it is important to recognize that there are other factors besides the performance of possession that contribute to the *dhāmī*'s reputation. These may include family affiliation, caste, age, gender and variety of other conditions. However, the one factor that can override all the others is the actual performance of spirit mediumship.

Throughout my stay in Patrasi, I was constantly confronted with an apparent distinction between the *dhāmī*s who I met. A very few (one or two per village) were considered the *mukhyā dhāmi*s, "the most powerful *dhāmi*s", while others seemed virtually inactive as spiritual figures. Of these virtually inactive *dhāmī*s, some were elders who claimed that in their youth they too were *mukhyā dhāmi*s, yet others were able-bodied individuals who simply lacked the charisma. Of the older *dhāmī*s most explained that the god simply no longer empowered their bodies like it used to. One *dhāmī*'s god even abandoned him in his later years, only to possess a younger, more vibrant *dhāmī*. Typically the older *dhāmī*s are less flamboyant, yet still manage possession for their particular full-moon. Aside from the elders, there are still many other *dhāmī*s who simply fail to command the respect of their peers in the way the *mukhyā dhāmi*s do. Many seem disenchanted by their role. Judging by the lack of engagement on the part of the audience and the general atmosphere at their rituals, it seems that some are merely "going through the motions".

There are two main indicators of the social perception of a *dhāmī*'s power. The first is the atmosphere that surrounds the *dhāmī*'s full-moon rituals. Certain *dhāmī*s draw audiences from all over the region. At these rituals, hundreds gather in anticipation of what might unfold. The atmosphere is charged, and the audience engaged. On the flip side, there are also full-moon rituals that draw far fewer spectators. The *dhāmī*s of these rituals are hard-pressed even to have village leadership attend. The community's apathy toward these rituals and their unwillingness to spend an afternoon watching such performances suggests that these rituals are not only lackluster, but also fall short of verisimilitude in many witnesses' judgment.

The second indicator of a *dhāmī*'s power is his/her activity as a healer. Like any medical figure, the healers with the best reputation

gather the most patients. Often healing is virtually monopolized by the most powerful *dhāmī* of the village. Those who are regarded as exceptional healers might perform personal healing seances multiple times in a month; those who lack the reputation might not perform a healing séance for years.

In choosing between one *dhāmī* and another, the people objectify their interpretation of the *dhāmī*'s power as a cosmological interlocutor. A *dhāmī*'s reputation may rely on one single miraculous event, or it might be established through consistently compelling performances. The key then to uncovering the discursive power of spirit mediumship lies in an analysis of what makes one possession "compelling" and another not—that is, why are some possessions so real and engaging, while others lack the believability? As an agent submitting a performance before the collective eye, the possessed *dhāmī* is subject to the interpretation of the audience. To sustain belief the performance must fulfill certain expectations, but to create new beliefs, the performance must exceed these expectations. In order to evaluate the mechanisms and phenomenological arrangements that allow spirit mediumship the potential to work in such accord, it will first be worthwhile to examine a case in which a single event forever altered the horizons of belief for a village. I first stumbled across this incredible tale in the context of a conversation I was having with some young men about their belief in spirit mediumship. The following account is a compilation of their story and others' who witnessed the miraculous event.

The Miracle

During the time of fieldwork for this study, the most powerful *dhāmī* of the village in which I was living was the *Dudhe dhāmī*. Unlike most *dhāmī*s who find their calling directly, the *Dudhe dhāmī* first entered the ritual stage as a *dhāngre*, a position that entails no sort of possession. Some twelve years ago, he became possessed for the first time and has since been a *dhāmī*. Throughout his first years as a *dhāmī* his reputation gradually grew. After five years, another village god left its previous *dhāmī* to possess the *Dudhe dhāmī*; he now serves as vehicle for two gods. Village-lore holds that two years before my arrival, a miraculous

event occurred during one of the *Dudhe dhāmī*'s full-moon rituals. During this ritual a man approached the possessed *dhāmī* with an iron rod approximately an inch thick. The possessed *dhāmī* took the metal into his hands and bent it with remarkable ease. This event sent shivers through the audience, and still remains a commonly evoked event in religious discussions. The bent rod rests in the temple of the *Dudhe dhāmī*, a memento of proof to the incredible power of his god. Ever since this one event, the *Dudhe dhāmī* has been without a doubt the most active, most well respected, and most powerful *dhāmī* of his village.

Miraculous performances by the possessed are referred to as *shaktishāli*, or "the power of the gods'". *Shaktishāli* has taken a variety of forms in the Patrasi Valley; possessed *dhāmī*s have been known to drink boiling oil, transform rice into milk, and perform feats of superhuman strength. Certain *dhāmī*s and *dhāmenī* are known for their specific performances of *shaktishāli*. The *Dudhe dhāmī* in particular is known for a wide range of miraculous events. Some *dhāmī*s routinely utilize more simple examples of *shaktishāli* to bolster their performances. For instance during one séance of the *Dudhe dhāmī*, I was handed a few grains of rice to examine. I then placed the rice into the palm of the possessed *dhāmī*. After rubbing his hands together he handed back to me a pile of black char which looked like ash. I was a bit skeptical that I had been subject to a sleight of hand, and many joked that I had. Still, there were many more believers who asked me intently, "Did you see the work of the god?"

To return to the miraculous bending of the bar. Some of the young men who first shared this story with me explained that prior to this event they were skeptical of the possession of their village *dhāmī*s, but this one event changed their mind. Others simply cited this as proof that possession was real, and not some staged act of ritual. As I pursued other accounts of the event, it became clear that this was a definitive moment in the religious life of the village. One event had instantly made the *Dudhe dhāmī* the undisputed *mukhyā dhāmi* of the village. One event had converted the skeptics, and taken those who already believed to new levels of conviction.

Agency and the Possessed Body

The case of the miracle is rare, yet its power to affect the community is related to the discursive phenomenon that makes certain performances of spirit mediumship so compelling. Not all *dhāmī*s and *dhāmenī*s have been blessed with the capabilities of such miraculous deeds; however, they still become beacons of spiritual power, and in slightly more subtle ways create new beliefs in their community. The way in which they refurbish their religious system and rise to the forefront of religious practice hinges upon their ritual performances. Like the "miracle" these utterly convincing performances introduce a third agent into the discourse. When the possessed body performs *shaktishāli*, it is the god's power. When the possessed body quakes and dances, it is the god's movements. After each ritual that I attended, I was barraged by the question, "Did you see the god? Did you see the god?". The phrasing of this question sheds light on the collective notion that there is a third agent at work in spirit mediumship.

The body of the *dhāmī* enables the presencing of a god, yet it is still the flesh and blood of a human. The person of the *dhāmī* does not stop when the drums of ritual begin to rumble, nor does it begin again when they have been put away. Instead, the *dhāmī* also is subject to the praise and criticisms of the community who looks on. Like the god that s/he represents, the *dhāmī*'s vitality as a spiritual figure depends on his/her performance, and the way in which the community perceives the events of the possessed body.

Concerning the experience of possession, the *dhāmī*s defer all agency to their god. On the surface, the community adheres to the same belief. However, when we begin to look at the importance of reputation, it becomes clear that the actions of the possessed body have social repercussions for the *dhāmī* in day-to-day life. These repercussions take form both socially and in the form of introspection. Some *dhāmī*s were surprisingly curious about my work. Its seems that my research had become a means to compare their capabilities and prestige with others. Questions like "Sure they dance there, but did the *dhāmī* perform this or that *shaktishāli* like I do?" were not uncommon during my conversations. Upon finding their abilities superior to another, many would sport a wide grin and a conspicuous sense of pride in their superiority.

Clearly they were reckoning personal worth. Both inside and outside the ritual circle, it may therefore be said that the body of the *dhāmī* is the continuum of his person. While on the surface people grant the agency of the possessed body to the god, in truth both the god and *dhāmī* are in some sense "held accountable" in the judgement of the people.

In the realm of interpretation then, the possessed *dhāmī* assumes an inscrutable duplicity in which s/he is both human and god. There is one body, but two agents. What makes certain performances of spirit mediumship so compelling is the ability to weave a seamless tapestry between the agents at work. In a play of agency, the possessed body socially and simultaneously presents the realms of humans and gods, and intertwines the power of one with the power of the other, thereby unlocking a metaphysical power suspended in the space between.

Spirit Mediumship as 'Play'

If the power of spirit mediumship lies in its ability to play with agency, to play with belief, then the key dynamic of this phenomena is the notion of "play". In his work on ritual, Victor Turner (1986: 167) writes, "play is a kind of dialectical dancing partner of ritual". While not explicitly written with ritual in mind, Gadamer (1989: 101–134) presents a conception of "play" that is notably different, but nevertheless quite provocative when applied to spirit mediumship. Summarized eloquently by his contemporary, Paul Ricoeur (1981: 186) explains:

> Gadamer developed his conception of play in the course of a meditation on the work of art... Play is not determined by the consciousness which plays; play has its own way of being... What is essential is the 'to and fro' (*hin* and *her*) of play. Play is close to a dance, which is a movement that carries away the dancer... The to and fro of play occurs as if by itself, that is without effort or applied intention. Whoever plays is also played.

Though Gadamer's conception of play was largely construed in respect to the interpretation of art, it also seems quite relevant to the subject of mediumship. Like a work of art that draws one into the world of its canvas, the play of mediumship too draws one into the world it [re]pre-

sents. In doing so, it can often engross its participants in a reality that seems to surpass them. Here I sample some excerpts from Gadamer's discussion of "play" and apply it to our subject matter, spirit mediumship.

Gadamer includes both sides of discursive exchange in "play". He writes (1989:109), "*Players play their role in any game, and thus the play is represented, but the play itself is the whole, comprising the players and the spectators.*" For possession to be maximally powerful, it must affect the audience just as it affects the *dhāmī*s. This is not to say that the audience becomes possessed, but instead that the social power of possession lies in the interaction between the *dhāmī* and the on-looking community. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the interpretive powers of the audience, but the *dhāmī* is also a believer, and thus his experience must also ring true.

Accounts of the actual experience of possession differ in Patrasi. Some *dhāmī*s claim that they are aware of their actions while possessed, but others deny any sort of sensory engagement. Many make claims such as, "I have no memory of my possessions", or "My eyes don't see; my ears don't hear; I am not on my own two feet." Clearly the play of agency touches both the players and the audience. Gadamer (1989: 102) writes, "*Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself to play*", and later (1989: 105), "*the structure of play absorbs the player into itself, and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative*". As we have already seen, the structures of belief in Patrasi hold that possession is the will of the god. The introduction of this new "non-self" agent into the body is why neophyte *dhāmī*s experience such fear in the wake of their initiatory possession. Only through time and familiarity does the *dhāmī* work out a peaceful relationship with the god. The *dhāmī* "takes no initiative" because s/he is in a position to receive the god, not to master it.[26] In becoming possessed the *dhāmī* surrenders his/her body to the will of another. The experience of the "play of agency" within the possessed body thus seems to correlate

[26] This point raises an interesting question of whether spirit mediumship is necessarily shamanism. The classic definition of shamanism involves mastery and soul travel, both of which are absent in the spirit mediumship of Patrasi. On the classic definition of "shamanism" see Eliade (1964: 4). On the application of this distinction in Nepal, see Maskarinec (1995: 72–75, 100–113).

with the interpretation of possession outside the body (i.e. the judgement of the spectators). In its ideal form, this correlation gives a sense of discursive coherence to the events of spirit mediumship.

The discursive coherence of spirit mediumship in Patrasi stems from the fact that all participants are convinced of the reality that it temporarily creates. Expectation, reputation, and established belief fuel the discursive exchange with an energy that moves the community closer and closer to true play, but it is ultimately the performance of the possessed body—the "text", if you will—that leads the discourse past the bounds of normality and into the extra-ordinary—a liminal space as Turner (1969: 94–130) would say. Here Ricoeur's notion of the "world" of the text becomes less figurative and more normal, which is to say that the community is led into an inhabitable world of cosmological intersection—a shared social space between deities and man.

It is in the experience of this "world" disclosed by the text of the possessed body where spirit mediumship seems to achieve a life of its own. In Gadamer's (1989: 109) words, "*the player* (including the audience) *experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him. This is all the more the case where the game is itself 'intended' as such a reality—for instance, the play which appears as presentation for an audience*". Certainly the rituals of mediumship in Patrasi are "intended" to conjure a specific "reality", and furthermore, they are also "presented for an audience". But, and this is critical, the audience of mediumship differs from that, say, of the theater. The audience does not live vicariously in the intended unreality on stage as one would at the theater. Instead the people of Patrasi actively and directly participate in the intended reality conjured by the ritual. The ritual is no longer experienced as a *representation* of cosmological beings, but rather as an actual *manifestation* of the deities in a tangible—and perhaps most importantly, socially approachable form. In other words, the ritual participants (including the audience) find themselves acting *within* a world of cosmological intersection rather than performing it.[27] It should come as no surprise then

[27] This is much like Catherine Bell's work on ritual in which she writes (1997: 82), "The body movements of ritually knowledgeable agents actually define the special qualities of the environment, yet the agents understand themselves as reacting or responding to this environment."

that the line between "intended reality" and "reality" is so seriously erased with the stroke of verisimilitude. Belief then becomes the ante in this wager of liminality, and the currency of the discursive exchange.

Conclusion

Spirit mediumship in Patrasi is a phenomenal event. In presenting it here, I have tried to create a general overview of the structures that support this phenomena both in the belief of the community and in the actual performance of ritual. In focusing on the power of spirit mediumship to create meaning, I have hedged toward a theoretical analysis of *how* spirit mediumship achieves its discursive power. In doing so, I have approached the topic from one direction at the expense of the other. If I had been after a comprehensive idea of "*what* is spirit mediumship in Patrasi", then the pendulum would have swung back toward a more ethnographic analysis. It is indisputable that a further endeavor into the subtleties of ritual structure would facilitate a more complete understanding of spirit mediumship in the region. Despite the favor I have given the theoretical, I feel as though this essay has only begun to scratch the surface of what promises to be a complex, but rewarding theoretical application of Interpretation Theory to the world of spirit mediumship—an application which, in my opinion, begs further inquiry. As I have found in my own work, this extended inquiry exposes slippages, congruities, and provocations, all of which greatly complicate the issue. Nevertheless, I hope that this sketch of sorts gestures to the heuristic possibilities that this model can bring to bear on the subject of spirit mediumship in particular, and ritual more generally.

To retrace the sketch: In presenting an overview of the structures that determine the social meanings of spirit mediumship in Patrasi, I have attempted to establish the stage on which the drama of possession unfolds. The Masta Orientation represents the greater religious system in which spirit mediumship finds its place. Integral to this system is the *dhāmī*, and his/her role in the social presentation of the god. By ordering notions of "our time" and "our gods", the full-moon rituals help maintain notions of village identity, and bolster social solidarity. At the same time, these rituals temporarily condense cosmological realities down to

one point, the body of the possessed, and so enable the rebalancing of cosmological realms it dialectically qualifies. In this fashion, the full-moon rituals preserve belief and carry out certain social functions that support their practice in the religious life of the communities.

But spirit mediumship does more than simply preserve; in its most powerful form it creates. The case of the miracle is a prime example of the way in which spirit mediumship can create new horizons of belief, as well as fortify prior convictions. However, the case of the miracle is rare, and so one must look to other means by which spirit mediumship achieves this type of discursive production. The disparity between the most powerful *dhāmī*s and the least powerful pushes one toward an analysis of the actual performance of spirit mediumship. What makes one performance of spirit mediumship so compelling and another not? In answering this question I have suggested that spirit mediumship involves a sort of play of agency. As a dialectic between the realms that it qualifies, the possessed body taps into both the power of man and of god, thereby releasing the superior power locked in the space between. Taking into account the importance of reputation and the way spirit mediumship affects day-to-day reality, it appears then that at some level the possessed body is both man and god. It is this play of agency, that is the ability to transcend cosmological lines of demarcation, that determines the power of the performance to move the community towards new horizons of belief.

By invoking Gadamer's concept of "play" I have pushed for a more phenomenological understanding of the power of spirit mediumship and the hermeneutics through which such power is rendered. As a phenomenon that engrosses both the players and the spectators, spirit mediumship in it most powerful form is a sort of play that has an essence in and of itself. Subtly locked within the structures that shape spirit mediumship is the potential for this unique state of liminality. Led by the performance of the possessed body, the full-moon rituals of Patrasi achieve their ultimate power only through an escalating give and take between the discursive participants. In realizing this ultimate potential, the community both engages, and is engaged by, a reality that surpasses it. By experiencing this reality in which gods and man share a social space, the community may appropriate it as its own, and so revitalize, and even extend, the horizons of the very system from

which the ritual is born. In conclusion then, it may be said that ritualized spirit mediumship in Patrasi, through a play of agency and belief, performatively transforms an intended reality of belief into one that is both socially real, and perhaps most importantly, individually experienced.

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The Beauty of the Primitive: Native Shamanism in Siberian Regionalist Imagination, 1860s–1920

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The paper examines the sources of a keen interest of Siberian regionalists (Potanin, Iadrintsev, Anokhin, Anuchin) in native shamanism. Siberian regionalism (1860s–1920), which sought to upgrade the social and cultural status of Siberia in Russia, appropriated native culture, including shamanism, to enhance its agenda. Regionalists viewed indigenous shamanism as the most ancient part of Siberia's "living" heritage. Collecting and recording shamanism as well as inviting native shamans to participate in public performances became an important part of their work. As a result, Russian and native regionalists (Anokhin, Anuchin, Khangalov, Ksenofontov) produced a number of comprehensive ethnographies, which became Siberian shamanism classics.

Appropriation of non-European spiritual heritage, including indigenous shamanism, has always been an essential part of the Western intellectual tradition. Some Western poets, writers, musicians and scholars, who increasingly question the values of Euroamerican civilization, have looked at "native primitives" as a mirror where they can trace elements of their own golden past.[1] This paper, however, deals with the group of intellectuals who, while collecting and appropriating native spirituality, never questioned ideas of Western progress and colonization. The intellectual milieu under discussion is Siberian regionalism, the movement that developed between the 1860s and 1920 under the leadership of geographer and ethnographer Grigoriĭ Potanin. Regionalists insisted that Siberia was a colony of European Russia and sought to upgrade

[1] Moreover, the fascination with primitive led to a desire to merge with the primitive (Liebersohn 1998: 168). For more about the end of the nineteenth-century primitivism movement, see Barkan and Bush (eds.) 1995.

the political, social and cultural status of this Imperial periphery.[2] Peculiar aspects of this movement included laments about the conditions of Siberian natives, attempts to safeguard their cultures, and simultaneous promotion of modernization and mass Russian colonization of Siberia (Slezkine 1994: 119).

To my knowledge, students of Siberian regionalism have not paid enough attention to the role of the "native connection" in this movement. Those works that do address this subject have discussed the concern of regionalists over the plight of the "vanishing natives" (Slezkine 1994: 113–129) or ascribed to regionalists projects of exploitation of native labor.[3] While correctly noting the regionalists' paternalism toward the native population of Siberia, these works nevertheless neglect elements of cultural pluralism and leave beyond their discussion the deep involvement of regionalists in the retrieval of Siberian ethnography and archaeology.

I suggest that the regionalists' profound interest in indigenous cultures should at least partially be ascribed to the very ideology of Siberian regionalism. Everywhere regionalist and nationalist projects seek to appropriate the most "authentic" cultural values to boost their ideological aspirations. If such values are missing, they are borrowed or simply invented. In their search for Siberia's "authentic" identity, regionalists attempted to prove that Siberia both culturally and socially was able to stand on a par with European Russia. What and who could provide such proof? It is known that regionalists partially resolved this problem by creating an image of Russian Siberian settlers as rugged individuals, free spirits, carriers of democratic and nationalistic expectations who could serve as an example for the rest of Russia. Still, Siberian Russians were new arrivals and their histories were not ancient enough to be extensively used to manufacture a "genuine" identity of Siberia.

As in the United States, where for lack of "ancient" building blocks, the developing American identity had to appropriate elements of Native American culture,[4] in Siberia regionalists had to dwell on native spiritual

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[2] For more on Siberian regionalism, see Watrous 1993.

[3] For an example of such study, see Sesiunina 1974.

[4] Deloria 1998. As the Siberian natives, the Indians could also serve to the purposes of regional authenticity, for example, in the American southwest (Dilworth 1996: 187).

and material culture. Native antiquities and folklore were employed to demonstrate that Siberian cultural heritage could match or even surpass that of the hinterland. In this context, the fact that the leader of regionalists, Potanin, was hardly interested in the ethnography of Russian Siberians comes as no surprise. E. L. Zubashev (1927: 62), one of his colleagues, remembers, "The Russian Siberian village drew little attention from Grigoriĭ Nikolaevich [Potanin], whereas native Siberia was the object of his most tender feelings".

In this paper I use native Siberian shamanism to underline the deep interest of regionalists in indigenous Siberian cultures. In my attempt to establish a link between this interest and the ideology of Siberian regionalism, I rely on Altaian materials, not only because this is the subject of my current research, but also because regionalists frequently used the Altai and surrounding areas for their cultural and economic generalizations. This region, which is blessed with a relatively mild climate, was a favorite retreat for Potanin, Iadrintsev and many other members of the regionalist circle.

Outside observers of Siberian shamanism and indigenous shamanism in general either found the phenomenon fascinating or castigated it as fraud or devil worship. The image of a native conjurer who was supposedly able to communicate with spirits disgusted such Enlightenment observers of native Siberia as Gerhard Müller, Johan Gmelin, George Steller, and Daniel Messerschmidt, who tried to demystify and debunk indigenous spiritual practitioners.[5] The travelers of the Romantic age were either ambivalent about shamanism or were fascinated with its "Gothic" forms. As a matter of fact, as early as the end of the eighteenth century, after Johan Gottfried Herder, one of the early classics of Romanticism, disavowed Enlightenment for its determinism and acknowledged the shamans as people endowed with creative imagination (Narby and Huxley [eds.] 2001: 36–38), the attitudes of observers began to change.

Educated travelers of Russia, who always developed under the spell of the German academic and cultural tradition, usually absorbed these attitudes. The ethnographies of "Russianized" foreigners such as Matthias

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[5] For Western images of indigenous shamanism in the eighteenth century, see Flaherty 1992. For the reflection of Siberian shamanism in Western imagination, see a coming study by a renowned historian of European paganism: Hutton 2001.

Castren (1840s) and especially Wilhelm Radloff (1860s),[6] both of whom worked within the German academic tradition, colored with a large dose of Romanticism, try to view Siberian native spirituality on its own terms. These works put to rest speculations about Siberian shamanism as a savage distortion of the "high religions" of China and Mongolia[7] and significantly muted Orthodox attacks on shamanism. In his famous *Aus Sibirien*, Radloff surmises that the "poor shamans are not so bad as they are usually perceived." He also stresses that native spiritual practitioners were the "carriers of the ethical ideas of their people" and as such can be compared with the "clerics of other religions" (Radlov 1989: 401–402). It is also apparent that the gradual change in the approach to native spirituality depended on a general shift in the Western mind during the 1870s and 1880s. Most vividly this trend manifested itself in Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), which gave validity to the "Dionysian" tradition of "ecstatic" and "primitive" worldview in the eyes of the educated public.

Siberian regionalists not only shared these ideas, but also attached to them ideological significance. Seeking to prove that Siberia was a land with its own rich and unique culture, which was no less significant than the European Russian tradition, they devoted much attention to collecting native antiquities and ethnography. The very language they frequently used in their ethnographic observations points to the goals they pursued. Iadrintsev in his travel notes about the Altai constantly compares this region with ancient Greece. To him, like that of Ancient Greece, the Altai's surrounding landscape was filled with "mythological creatures," nature itself "spoke its own language" and "endowed childish hearts of savages with its secrets" (Iadrintsev 1882: 41).

Location and description of the ancient tomb stones of southern Siberia occupied such regionalists as Potanin, V. A. Adrianov, Nikolaĭ Iadrintsev and Dmitriĭ Klementz, who called these relics of the past "runes," drawing analogies with stone tombs of northern Europe. More-

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[6] Castren 1856–1857 and Boiko 1997: 16; Radloff 1861, 1862, 1863. Later Radloff included these letters into his famous *Aus Sibirien* (1884), which introduced a non-Russian audience to the first comprehensive discussion of the Siberian shamanism.

[7] A popular viewpoint articulated in Russia by the Orientalist scholar and monk Nikita Bichurin, see Iakinf (1839). For a similar and cruder assessment of Siberian shamanism, see Zavalishin 1862: 207–209.

over, Potanin insists that in southwestern Siberia "still survived remnants of antiquity, which preceded the earliest ever known civilization".[8] Archaeology was to prove the ancient origin of the Altaians, Tuvinians, and Buryats, and eventually to point to the ancient tradition of Siberia. For regionalists, evidently, archeological discoveries not only satisfied scientific curiosity, but also supported ideas of Siberian regionalism (Fedorova 1988: 76).

In their search for the cultural uniqueness of Siberia, regional scholars and writers could not bypass shamanism for two reasons. First, being to the Europeans the most exotic and attractive aspect of native culture, shamanism was also the most visible trait of the ancient indigenous tradition.[9] Second, because of their negative attitude to the Russian Orthodox Church, regionalists were naturally drawn to native spirituality.[10] After his first trip to the Altai in 1880, Iadrintsev excitedly reported to his friend in Switzerland, "Mores and customs of local savages are extremely interesting. Their religion is shamanism. But what is shamanism? This is pantheism. In a nutshell, the Altai is Greece, where everything is animated: rivers, mountains, stones; here one can hear thousands of legends and what legends they are!" [11]

When Iadrintsev witnessed a shamanic séance, it produced on him such "an unforgettable impression" that he left a poetical description of the whole session: "I remember that night when I had to stop at that place. That mysterious beautiful night with thousands of bright stars spread over the awesome mountains full of savage beauty and poetic charm. I saw the shaman in a fantastic costume decorated with rattles and snake-like plaits. Feathers were sticking from his helmet, and in his hands he held a mysterious drum. At first, the shaman circled

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[8] See Grum-Grzhimaĭlo (ed.) 1989: 81.

[9] In a attempt to trace the continuity between contemporary native shamanism and indigenous antiquity of southern Siberia, Potanin analyzed the drawings on shaman drums and compared them with the inscriptions found on the ancient Turkic "runes." In an 1878 letter the father of Siberian regionalism instructed his friend Iadrintsev, who was planning an expedition to the Altai, to "carefully examine each drum and copy its drawings". See Grum-Grzhimaĭlo 1989: 132.

[10] See Koshelev 1962: 127–128.

[11] "N. M. Iadrintsev to Alexandr Khristoforov, 6 December 1883," in *Vol'naia Sibir'* 2 (1927): 184.

around the fire. Then he jumped out of the shelter of bark to the open air. My ears still can hear his magnificent howling, his call for spirits, and the wild mountain echo that responded to his invocations."[12]

Reflecting on shamanic music, Andreĭ Anokhin, another member of the regionalist circle, stressed that because "shamanism represents the peak of expressive skills of the Altaian singing, people with weak nerves are not able to withstand the power of the feelings which are transmitted through a shaman."[13] To this scholar, the power of the "shamanic mystery plays" and "prayers" resembles that of Hebrew psalms: he finds in them "the same incorruptible sincerity that reflects a simple, but deeply sensitive soul, the same metaphors, the same magnificent pictures of surrounding nature" (pl. 5 *a, b*).[14]

The attempts of Siberian regionalists to retrieve ancient spiritual heritage and to interweave it into the Siberian culture added to their ideology an element of cultural sensitivity. In his program work *Siberia as a Colony*, Iadrintsev (1882a: 124) underlines the value of each culture, which would attach "unique elements to the future civilization." He also indicates that native people's "historical services to Russian people in Siberia are still not appropriately appreciated" and remarks, "Who knows how much we might gain form the revival of these peoples, provided they have favorable conditions for manifestations of their talent and intelligence. Many Asiatic peoples forwarded teachers of the humankind and created unique civilizations. Therefore, traditions of other tribes included into world civilization and spiritual life will unavoidably benefit everybody" (*ibid.* 123–124).

Potanin, Iadrintsev's colleague and friend, eventually took this cultural relativism to the extreme. The leader of Siberian regionalism subjected all his voluminous ethnographic books to one goal: tracing the origin of the entire Judeo-Christian spiritual heritage from an indigenous inner Asian tradition. Drawing wide and arbitrary parallels between Hebrew, Russian, early Christian and European medieval mythologies, on the

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[12] Iadrintsev 1885: 628. See a similar poetical description of a shamanic session made by another regionalist writer, Naumov (1870), see Naumov 1951: 99–100.

[13] See Shul'gin 1994: 9.

[14] Andreĭ Anokhin, "Shamanizm sibirskih tiurkskikh plemen," Arkhiv Muzeia antropologii i ėtnografii, St. Petersburg (Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography Archive), f. 11, op. 1, ed. khr. 144, l. 17ob.

one hand, and shamanic legends from Mongolia and southern Siberia, on the other, Potanin insisted on their genetic similarity and coined the so-called Oriental hypothesis.[15] Very much like later scholarly celebrities Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell, Potanin totally disregarded local traditions in trying to reduce the complexity of world mythology to a few universal pillars. Thus, Potanin came to the conclusion that the polytheistic nature of southern Siberian and Mongol shamanism was an illusion. In reality, he argued, the names of all spirits were related to one mythological character, "Erke," whose image simply became dissolved in nature and encompassed the entire universe.[16]

Potanin's letters clearly show how he used each opportunity to attach new evidence to his hypothesis. When native Chevalkov, an Orthodox missionary, described to Potanin a shamanic session devoted to Erlik, "the prince of underworld," the scholar immediately pointed to a "parallel" with Russian fairy tales.[17] As early as 1879, before he formulated his "Oriental hypothesis," Potanin wrote, "I am inclined to believe that Christianity originated from southern Siberia." (*ibid.* 166) It is clear that trying to raise the cultural significance of the periphery in his own and the public's eyes, Potanin acted as a typical regionalist haunted by an inferiority complex. His desire to overcome the inequality between the center and the periphery led him to advocate the cultural superiority of the periphery over the center.

To be exact, before he coined his theory Potanin occasionally allowed himself a dose of self-irony. In one of his letters (1877), he called his cross-cultural mythological parallels "ethnographic fantasies." Yet in the same letter, Potanin insisted that despite his possible mistakes in particulars, he was convinced that Turkic and Mongol legends and beliefs were "more ancient than Semitic ones" and had given rise to

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[15] Potanin articulated his "Oriental hypothesis" in the following works: Potanin 1899, 1912 and 1916.

[16] See Grum-Grzhimaĭlo (ed.) 1989: 180; Sagalaev and Kriukov 1991: 188–189.

[17] According to Chavalkov's story, during his journey to the underworld country of Erlik, a shaman encounters a narrow passage, where the sky and the earth almost touch each other. The shaman jumps, then stops quietly beating his drum, and a few moments later stays silently, which means that he went through. Potanin invited Iadrintsev to compare this episode "with our [Russian] Vasiliĭ Buslaev jumping with his war party over *altyn-stone* or over the sea tide." See Grum-Grzhimaĭlo (ed.) 1989: 151.

Christianity. (*ibid.* 80–81) Absorbed by his theory, the leader of Siberian regionalism passionately wrote, "Yes, this locality, where we live [southern Siberia] is the genuine motherland of humankind. It was here that the first religious cult was established. Now I am quite sure that the Eden of Adam and Eve was located at the sources of the Irtysh River on the banks of which I was born" (*ibid.* 90). Despite the skepticism of his colleagues from European Russia, Potanin persisted into his final years. Articulating the basics of his "Oriental hypothesis" for a St. Petersburg scholarly audience in 1911, Potanin (1926: 131) continued to insist, "We clearly see that it is the central Asian shamanic legend that lies at the foundation of the legend about Christ, and that the image of Christ himself was shaped according to the image that had existed many centuries earlier in inner Asia" (pl. 5*c*).

Professional scholars in European Russia totally ignored the "Oriental hypothesis." Moreover, Eurocentrism, which was common in social scholarship at that time, only reinforced negative attitudes toward such a bizarre concept. At the same time, in Siberia Potanin's theory did affect a number of scholars and writers. In 1929, Gavriil Ksenofontov, a Sakha native ethnographer, who matured in Tomsk strongly influenced by Potanin's ideas, released a book, in which he similarly insisted on the similarity between the early Christianity and Siberian shamanism and on the special role of inner Asian nomads as cultural heroes (Diachkova 1992: 8, 19). Elaborating on Potanin's hypothesis, Ksenofontov simply labeled Jesus Christ the first shaman and pointed to relevant parallels. To Ksenofontov, Jesus acted as a healer who was able to perform shamanic miracles, while the induction of a Sakha native into a shamanic vocation resembled the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Moreover, he saw the visionary slashing and chopping and then putting back together of a would-be shaman's body as nothing less than the death and resurrection (Ksenofontov 1992: 115–137).

We find a literary version of this analogy in *Strashniĭ Kam* (*Scary Shaman*) (1919) by Viacheslav Shishkov (1926), who started as a regionalist writer and a member of the Potanin circle. The persecutions inflicted on the Altaian shaman Chelbak, the major protagonist of this modernist novel, are compared here with Christ's sufferings. In the novel, which is based on a real story, an enraged crowd of Russians stones shaman Chelbak to death for performing a shamanic session.

Shishkov clearly designed the detailed description of the Russians' escorting Chelbak through a village as a metaphor for the Savior carrying the cross. In their loyalty to the official church, his persecutors betray the idea of genuine Christianity with its compassion. The spirit of the shaman wanders around, gradually drains vitality from his executioners and finally wipes them out with diseases. The sounds of the shaman drum continue to resonate in the ears of the villagers: "The invisible drum rumbles around. Villagers open their mouths, make the sign of the cross and run away" (Shishkov 1926: 50). An old peasant woman, Feodosiia, is the first to realize that what the Russians did was against genuine Christianity and therefore appeals to the spirit of the dead shaman in a Christian manner, "I am a sinner, I am a sinner, forgive me, father Chelbak" (*ibid.* 44) (pl. 6).

In addition to their literary and scholarly constructs, regionalists also used shamanic tradition to enhance the public display of the Siberian identity. In 1909 Potanin, Anokhin and Adrianov brought Mampyĭ, an Altaian shaman from the Katun river area, to the city of Tomsk. Mampyĭ was to play the core part in an "ethnographic evening" designed to introduce the Tomsk "cultured society" to the life of Siberia (Zubashev 1927: 62). The native participants of the "evening," who represented such tribal groups as the Altaians, Sakha, Buryat, Tatar, and Khanty, dressed in their traditional garb, displayed scenes from their life, played native music and recited short excerpts from their epic tales. These scenes of "live ethnography" were set against a background of replicated native dwellings, household items, and sacred shrines. Moreover, the walls of Tomsk's hall for public gatherings (*dom obshchestvennogo sobrania*), where regionalists held the "ethnographic evening" were decorated with the skins of Siberian animals. The portrayal of the Siberian landscape was topped up by a decoration that depicted a polar night and a huge block of ice.[18]

Large crowds of spectators filled this Siberian "house of culture." The attention of pubic was concentrated on Mampyĭ. Working together to digest the essence of shamanism for a general audience, Mampyĭ and the regionalists divided the shamanic "session" into several "acts."

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[18] "Muzikal'naia ėtnografiia i shamanstvo na 'Sibirskom vechere' v Tomske." *Ėtnograficheskoe obozrenie* 1 (1909): 134.

First, in a "poetical manner" Mampyĭ described the meaning of shamanism and the symbolism of his shamanic costume. Second, the shaman showed how he was putting the costume and addressing a fire. Then, in a "whirling dancing manner," Mampyĭ addressed his ancestor shaman Kanym, the spirit of the Aļtai, and then Erlik, Ülgen, earth, water, Teletsk Lake, and finally the "foundation of the earth." At the end of the ceremony Mampyĭ took off his costume and in "a singing manner" explained the meaning of the whole ceremony (pls. 7, 8).[19]

Yet the story did not end there. Six days after the "ethnographic evening" regionalist archaeologist and ethnographer Adrianov delivered a paper on the basics of Siberian shamanism to satisfy the interests of a more scholarly audience. Serving as a "live illustration" for the presented paper, Mampyĭ again performed a shamanic session. That evening the same paper and session were repeated at the Tomsk technological institute, again for the general public (Adrianov 1909, 1909a). Finally, to reach a yet wider audience, the regionalists duplicated and distributed copies of Adrianov's paper "Shamanic mystery ceremony (*kamlanie*)" (Devlet 1977: 131). During one of his urban "sessions" Mampyĭ so immersed himself into his role that shamanizing continued more than an hour, and the organizers had to interrupt him by force after the curtain already had closed (Zubashev 1927: 63).

No doubt the exotic nature of shamanism and scientific curiosity were among the reasons the Tomsk audience was drawn to Mampyĭ's "séances." Yet the fact that Potanin and his fellow-regionalists accepted Mampyĭ as an equal, taking him on a tour of the city and sharing with him the results of their scholarly and scientific pursuits tells us that there was more here than natural curiosity. It appears that regionalists viewed the native shaman as a person who could add to the developing Siberian culture as the whole. Indeed, during the "ethnographic evening" in the Tomsk "house of culture" the borders between Russians and so-called native others were blurred. In addition to native life-ways, the organizers flashed Russian folk song accompanied by a *balalaika* band. Furthermore, the spectators included both Russian and natives who resided in Tomsk.

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[19] *Ibid.* 136.

Despite their literary romanticism and impressionistic scholarly constructs, Siberian regionalists believed in progress and hard science. Therefore, they were not awed by the sacred power of shamanism. Some of the regionalists, like Anokhin, generalized about shamanism in the spirit of the then popular explanation of shamanism as a neurosis.[20] Still, one may sense that in their writings and activities regionalists treated native spiritual practitioners as creative individuals who capitalized on indigenous folklore as well as their skills as actors and musicians to produce a powerful impression on natives.[21]

It is natural that Mampyĭ came under intensive psychological and physiological observation while in Tomsk. In the wake of the "ethnographic evening" Tomsk-based physician V. V. Karelin presented a special paper on the Mampyĭ mental state for a local branch of the Russian Imperial Technological Society. Karelin reported that he had tested the shaman before and after a shamanic session, then tested Mampyĭ again in his neurological clinic and even, to make the investigation complete, x-rayed the shaman's body. Finally, Karelin (1909: 138) concluded that physically and mentally Mampyĭ was an absolutely normal person without any traces of neurosis and depression (Karelin 1909: 138).

The experience of many other indigenous peoples shows that such persistent attention to native traditions from outside observers always prompts native "others" to enhance their "traditional" beliefs. Mampyĭ's visit to Tomsk and his warm reception were no exception. The event encouraged other Altaian shamans to "persist" in their old vocation, which they had quit for various reasons. Orthodox missionaries complained that "the word of mouth that learned people from Tomsk are interested in shamans" served as an inspiration for Altaian shamans.[22]

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[20] Anokhin, "Shamanizm sibirskikh tiurkskikh plemen," l. 6ob-7.

[21] *Ibid.*, l. 16ob. It should be noted that for the description of shamanic séances Anokhin employed the language of theater: "performances," "mystery ceremonies," and "acts."

[22] "Altaĭskaia dukhovnaia missia v 1910 godu." *Pravoslavnyĭ blagoviestnik* 2, no. 12 (1911), 516. The attention that the educated Russian public paid to native spiritual traditions always disgusted clerics. A zealous missionary Stefan Borisov, who was a native Altaian, bitterly complained that the ethnographer N. B. Sherr had "confused" his native flock by giving them gifts for performing shamanic sessions, which reinforced

Missionaries became so upset that the chief of the Altai Orthodox mission delegated a special cleric to conduct an instructive talk with Potanin. The formal promise granted by the leader of the Siberian regionalists that "in future he and his friends would not invite shamans any more and would not organize public gatherings for this purpose" as well as a politically correct agreement "to be cautious" during his research satisfied clerics.[23]

The emphasis Potanin and his circle made on native shamanism as an attractive ancient rite worthy of recording and displaying unavoidably drew the attention of native intellectuals, who came to share ideas of regionalism. Encouraged by the Siberian regionalists, some of these native intellectuals turned to the collection of and writing about shamanism. Matveĭ Khangalov[24], from the Buryat tribe, and Ksenofontov, from the Sakha tribe, later became renowned students of shamanism.[25] In a letter to Potanin, his friend and colleague, the Altaian artist Grigoriiĭ Choros-Gurkin stressed, "Your cause is my cause, and I always listen to your advice."[26] It was no exaggeration. Not only did Potanin and Anokhin drew Choros-Gurkin to the ideas of Siberian regionalism, they also triggered his interest in the ethnography of his own people, especially spiritual culture and shamanism.[27] Choros-Gurkin, whom Potanin and Adrianov also advertised as the first genuinely Siberian landscape artist, not only wholeheartedly worked to retrieve ancient Altaian religion, he also idealistically dreamed about building among the Altaians a common "national cult," a shamanic ideology that em-

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the power of a shaman named Zakhar. For more about this incident with many peculiar consequences, see Stefan Borisov, "Iz zapisok altaiskago missionera." *Pravoslavnyĭ blagoviestnik* 2, no. 14 (1902): 240–247.

[23] "Altaĭskaia dukhovnaia missia v 1910 godu." *Pravoslavnyĭ blagoviestnik* 2, no. 15 (1911), 100.

[24] See Khangalov 1890.

[25] Potanin personally sought to open new publication and scholarly opportunities for such native intellectuals. G. N. Potanin to S. F. Oldenburg, 24 April 1908, Arkhiv Rossiĭskoĭ akademii nauk, St. Petersburg (Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg), f. 208, op. 3, ed. khr. 480, l. 17.

[26] See Pribytkov 2000: 61.

[27] Interestingly, Anohkin himself was inducted in the study of shamanism by both Potanin and Radloff (Pribytkov 2000: 43; Shatinova 1982: 107).

braced the "pagan past, when human beings were free and worshipped only invisible forces of nature" (pls. 9, 10).[28]

Partaking of the regionalist cultural constructs served Ksenofontov and Choros-Gurkin as an ethnonationalist inspiration that drove them to work in the first short-lived native autonomies: Yakutia (Sakha) and the Altai. In case of Choros-Gurkin, his close spiritual connection with the Potanin circle impelled the Altaian native artist to envision a utopian Oirat republic that could bring together all Turkic tribes of southwestern Siberia. Interestingly, it was a Russian regionalist, A. V. Anuchin (1914), another renowned student of Siberian shamanism, who originally developed and eventually offered to Choros-Gurkin the very idea of the Oirot state. Anuchin based his political fantasy on his general vision of the origin of Siberian shamanism. Thus, he insisted that "the motherland of primal shamanism is the territory between the Pamir and the Altai [southwestern Siberia]" and that this shamanism had "practiced monotheism" and existed "long before Buddhism and Christianity."[29]

In concluding, I would like to return to my original proposition. The approach of Siberian regionalism to native cultural tradition, including shamanism, was colored with cultural sensivity. However, this stance originated not from regionalists' humanisitic approach to indigenous tradition. It was the desire to upgrade the status of Siberia within the Russian empire that produced this cultural sensitivity. Notwithstanding the regionalists' motives, scholarship profited from their approach. As a result, we have a number of excellent works on shamanism and its mythology (Potanin[30], Anokhin,[31] Anuchin,[32] Khangalov[33] and Kseno-

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[28] "G. N. Gurkin to Ia. Kh. Dovtian, 5 July 1924." Prilozhenie k delu 18255 po obvineniu Gurkina G. N, Arkhiv noveĭsheĭ istorii respubliki Altai (Archive of Modern History of the Altai Republic), f. R-37, op. 1, ed. khr. 579, vol. 14, l. 14ob.

[29] *Idem.* "K voprosu ob Oĭratskoĭ respublike." *Sibirskie ogni* 2 (1922): 197.

[30] See Potanin 1883.

[31] See Anokhin 1924.

[32] See Anuchin 1914.

[33] See Khangalov 1890, Agapitov and Khangalov 1883. The latter was summarized for the German reader by Stieda 1887.

fontov[34]). Added to the works of exile and émigré scholars (W. Bogoras, V. Jochelson, W. Sieroshevski, and S. Shirokogoroff), these ethnographies stand out among biased missionary records and "cropped" Soviet narratives (pls. 11, 12).

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[34] See Ksenofontov 1930. For a German translation, see Friedrich and Buddruss (eds.) 1955: 95–214. Mircea Eliade, an author of a classical impressionistic study of shamanism, has extensively quoted these and other ethnographies written by Siberian regionalist scholars: Eliade 1964: 518–569.

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On a Rare Kirghiz Shamanic Ritual from the Talas Valley

LÁSZLÓ KUNKOVÁCS and DÁVID SOMFAI KARA BUDAPEST

The two of us, both Hungarian researchers, made a one-month expedition to the Ala-Tau (Tian Shan) region between Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan in April 1995. Ethnophotographer László Kunkovács made the pictures published in this field report, while Turkologist Dávid Somfai Kara wrote the article. We visited Kazakh and Kirghiz villages in the region around the ancient city of Taraz (named Jambyl during the Soviet era), where the mixing of the two Turkic groups has been the strongest. We first visited some Kazakh villages around Merki between the Alatau and the Moyunkum Desert. Then we travelled to the Talas Valley on the other side of the mountains. The Talas Valley is situated along the Talas River, which flows into the Moyunkum Desert.

The Talas Valley is a sacred place for the Kirghiz because according to legend their main epic hero, Manas, was buried there. Manas is a legendary hero of the Kirghiz, who, as the epic recounts, led the Kirghiz from the Altai to the Alatau (Tian Shan) Mountains. In the valley there is a tomb dating from the 13th century, and this small building (*kümböz*, from Persian *gumbaz*) is believed by local people to be Manas' tomb (Manas Kümbözü) (Abramzon 1990: 36). Thus it became a place of pilgrimage where people come to pray to the spirit (*arbak*, from Arabic *arwāḥ*) (Baialieva 1972: 58) of the great hero. Our first trip to the Talas Valley led to this tomb. We were lucky because we arrived on a Thursday afternoon, the sacred evening before the Muslim religious holiday, Friday (*žuma*, from Arabic *žum'a*), when people gather for the main prayer.

The Kirghiz nomads became Muslims only after the collapse of the Chagatai Ulus (Moghulistan) in the 17th century. The nomads, though

nominally accepting Islam, kept their old shamanic beliefs. This mixture of shamanism and Islam produced a syncretic religion. The popular beliefs of the Kirghiz incorporated many components from South Siberian shamanism, Islam and other Central Asian beliefs. Sometimes it is difficult to discern these layers. The most important feature of this religion is that all elements have Arabic and Persian names. Thus their identification with their Siberian counterparts is problematic.

The Kirghiz rarely go to mosques (*mečit*, from Arabic *masjid*); rather, they observe their religious duties on the sacred night of *ǰuma* through other activities. One of them is baking sacred bread (*ǰeti nan*, 'seven loaves of bread') on Thursday evening to please the spirits of the ancestors. There are certain mediators (a kind of shaman) between the spirits and society. The male mediators are called *bakšï* (Old Uighur *bakši*, Chinese *boshi*, 'teacher, wise man') (Baialieva 1972: 118), and the female ones are referred to as *bübü* (from Persian *bibi*, 'respected lady') (Basilov 1992: 48). They too perform their rituals on the sacred eve of *ǰuma*.

In the Talas Valley a revival of these *bakšï-bübü* rituals started after the collapse of the Soviet Russian regime in 1991. Some of the mediators gather at Manas' tomb on Thursday afternoon. (pl. 13) They take the blessing of the Great Spirit of Manas and decide where to gather for the common rituals. Sick people also go to the tomb and join the ritual in the evening. We were very lucky that night, for we not only saw the *bakšï* and *bübü* mediators gathering at the tomb, but later we also learned that they were to hold a night session in a little village (Ak Sai) not far away. We asked permission to participate from their leader, a very old lady (*bübü*), who we had met earlier on a hill by the tomb.

Thus we were able to take part in a traditional ritual that no other Westerners had observed before. The interesting thing is that I have never heard of such a gathering in other parts of Kirghizstan or in Central Asia. The mediators usually perform their rituals alone, so this type of common ritual seems to be quite unique in the region. The name of this ritual, *ǰarga tüšüü*, is also unknown in other Kirghiz regions, and it cannot be found in the literature either. Initially I translated it as 'falling into an abyss', but later when I returned to the region it was explained to me that in this phrase *ǰar* means 'help from the spirits' (Persian *yār*). It is a dance of the mediators, who fall into a

trance while calling the spirits. This phrase cannot be found in any dictionary (see also *jar bol-*, 'to give help, to support'). The gathering started around midnight in complete darkness. We were only allowed to use flash so that we could photograph the ritual. During the shots we were able to glimpse some moments of this unique custom. The female mediators (*bübü*) were dressed in white clothes with white kerchiefs. There was only one male mediator, who was dressed normally with a little cap on his head (*takya*). The ladies sat with small whips (*kamči*), while the young man held a stick (*asa-tayak*) (Baialieva 1972: 21) in his hand. These are very common healing devices used by mediators.

The use of shamanic drums is unknown among the Kirghiz, but Siberian shamans use other devices during their rituals too. The Kirghiz also have them as a substitute for drums. In 1994 I observed a Kazakh shamanic ritual with a Kazakh fiddler (*kobïz*) with mirrors on it in the city of Chymkent, not far from Taraz. Nowadays shamans with fiddlers are disappearing, but sticks and whips are very common. They also have Siberian counterparts, like the Tofa (Karagas) three-headed stick (*üš tayak*) or the Buriat shaman-stick (*hor'bo*). But Islamic mystic dervishes (*devāna*) (Basilov 1992: 242) also had their ritual sticks (in Arabic '*asa* means 'stick'). Not far from the town of Talas we met another *bübü* who had an *asa-tayak* decorated with little coins (pl. 14). When she shook the stick the noise made by the coins apparently called her helping spirits (*arbak*).

To return to the ritual, those who were ill had to sit in the middle of the room, where the lady-healers sat down beside them while the male healer stood next to the door. At midnight they started to chant the *Koran,* mentioning the name of Allah, who was able to keep the evil spirits away (pl. 15*a*). The chanting got louder and louder, and as they fell into a trance they slowly swung their bodies. Some lady-healers (*bübü*) began to symbolically strike the ill people with their whips in order to chase their illness away (pl. 15*b*) The ritual gradually became more and more extensive as the chanting continued. Then suddenly the *bakšï* started to dance with his stick in his hand. At one point he was jumping around in such a violent way that I was afraid he would hit somebody, but nothing happened (pl. 16*a*). The healers were almost yelling the religious texts, while the healed people groaned as if they were in pain from falling into a trance. The whole ritual lasted about

one hour, then suddenly the healers stopped moving and shouting. We all sat in silence for a while. Then they said some more prayers and blessed the spirits for helping them. After that we had to leave, while the healers gave some further advice to the ill people, who had apparently started to feel better immediately.

The Kirghiz people in the villages believe in all kind of spirits, good and bad. The good spirits are the spirits of the ancestors (*arbak*), who can bring fortune and happiness to people and also keep the harmful spirits away. The Kirghiz and Kazakh people have a great cult for these spirits, who mediate their wishes to Allah and to the powers of nature. Sometimes the *arbak* spirits became the owner of a valley or a spring. These places are called *mazar* (Arabic *mazār*, 'tomb'), and the spirits are the owners of the *mazar* (*mazar eesi*), just as the Siberian Turks refer to spirits of nature as the owners (*ee*) (Abramzon 1972: 317) of places, e.g. a spring, mountain or pass. This cult is also related to the Central Asian Islamic custom of pilgrimage (Arabic *ziyārat*) to the tombs of sacred people (Arabic *awliyā*, Kirghiz *oluya*). Pilgrims go to these places to read the *Koran,* pray and give sacrifice (Arabic *qurbān*, Kirghiz *kurman*).

According to the Kirghiz the bad spirits are the different forms of Satan (Arabic *shaytān*), but people generally call them *ǰin-šaytan*. Allah and the *arbak* spirits can keep these evil spirits away. There are fairy-like spirits (Persian *parī*, Kirghiz *peri*) (Baialieva 1972: 132), who can also harm people. But mediators can call them as helping spirits (*koldooču*), and they appear in the form of animals, like an eagle, a camel, etc. Interestingly, a *bübü* healer we met in a different village held a bad opinion of the mediators who took part in the *ǰar* ritual. She said that they healed with the help of harmful spirits (*peri*) during the night, which was against the will of Allah. She only healed in the daytime with her stick (*asa-tayak*). The coins on the stick called the spirits of the ancestors (*arbak*) when she shook it. This kind of division into night and day rituals, good and bad spirits, is very common amongst the shamans (*kam*) of South Siberia, where people talk about black and white shamans.

Finally, I have to admit that many aspects of the above-mentioned ritual remain unclear. Further research is needed to understand its functions, its historical background and its relation to other rituals and

beliefs. I still do not know if it is a traditional ritual that was revived after the collapse of the Soviet regime or whether it is a new type of practice that evolved from other, ancient elements. Whatever the case, this unique ritual is worthy of attention, and to the best of my knowledge it has not been described in the scholarly literature.

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Leonid Pavlovich Potapov (1905–2000)

A. M. RESHETOV ST. PETERSBURG

Leonid Pavlovich Potapov, one of the greatest Russian ethnographers, a historian, museologist, Turkologist, and an outstanding scholar of shamanistic studies, was born on 6 July, 1905.[1]

L. P. Potapov's entire life revolved around the Altai Mountains and Southern Siberia. He was born and went to secondary school in Barnaul, a town in the Altai Mountains. The future great Turkologist and Member of the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences, V. V. Radlov had taught in the very same building between 1859 and 1871. The young man's carrier was greatly influenced by A. V. Anokhin, a student of local lore, ethnographer and musician. In 1922 Potapov, a student at the time with his main interests in ethnography and shamanism, took part in an expedition of the Russian Academy to the Altai Mountains, led by A. V. Anokhin. After finishing school the young Potapov went to Leningrad, where he continued his studies at the Ethnographic Faculty of the Geographic Institute. He attended lectures by L. Ia. Shternberg, V. G. Bogoraz, S. I. Rudenko, A. N. Samoĭlovich and other great scholars. After graduating from the university, although dreaming about working in the Altai Mountains, he was sent to work in Uzbekistan. He became engaged in scholarly, organisational and teaching activities in Samarkand, and collected unique material on the ethnography of the Uzbeks on his several expeditions.[2]

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[1] On Potapov's life and scholarly activities in detail, see Abramzon and D'iakonova 1975; Potapov 1995 and Reshetov 1995.

[2] See A. M. Reshetov's (1999) review on Potapov (1995).

In 1930 Potapov returned to Leningrad, and undertook postgraduate studies at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, completing them in 1933. At the same time he worked at the State Academy of the History of Material Culture, in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Soviet Academy of Sciences), but later he worked mainly at the Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum (later renamed the State Museum of Ethnography of the Peoples of the Soviet Union, today the Russian Ethnographical Museum). There he began his carrier as an assistant researcher, later being appointed Head of the Department for Siberian Studies and a deputy scientific director of the museum. In the 1930s, the young, dynamic L. Potapov and his colleagues actively took part in discussions on Marxist methodology, of which they became masters. As early as 1932, he was one of the first scholars to argue, on the basis of material on the Oirots, that feudalism had existed among the nomads. His monograph, *Survivals of the Tribal System Among the Turks of the Northern Altai* was published in Leningrad in 1937. From the very beginning of his carrier, the talented scholar showed an interest towards the shamanistic studies, and his scholarly achievements were based original fieldwork. He successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation at the session of the Scientific Committee of the Faculty of History, State University of Leningrad on 23 April, 1939. In his dissertation, he discussed the surviving remnants of the primitive communal system of peoples living in the Altai Mountains.

During the Second World War Potapov worked at first in the blockaded Leningrad, and when the city was evacuated in 1942, he went to Novosibirsk. On 6 October 1942, he read his paper on the history of the primitive society and the ethnography of the peoples living in the Altai Mountains in Oirot-Tura (former Gorno-Altaĭsk) at the Karl Liebknecht Pedagogical Institute of Moscow, which had been evacuated there. In 1943, S. P. Tolstov started to organise the Moscow Branch of the Institute of Ethnography (Soviet Academy of Sciences), inviting scholars from all over the country to join the institution. Potapov was invited to Moscow to work in the institute as a candidate for a doctoral degree. In 1946 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation at a session of the Institute's Scientific Committee.

In 1946–48 Potapov worked as a deputy director of the State Museum of the Ethnography of the Peoples of the Soviet Union in Leningrad. Between 1948 and 1967 he was a senior research fellow, Head of the Department for Siberian Studies, and also deputy director of the Institute of Ethnography (Soviet Academy of Sciences), and Head of its Leningrad Branch. From 1949 He was editor-in-chief of the series *Sbornik Muzeia antropologii i ėtnografii*, in which he published a number of articles on the ethnography and shamanism of the Altai Turks. He was awarded the Stalin Prize for his monograph *Studies on the History of the Altai Turks*. His most significant works that mark his place in the history of scholarship are *A Sketch on the Culture and Life of the Altai Turks* (Gorno-Altaĭsk 1948), *Sketches on the History and Ethnography of the Khakass in the 17th–19th Centuries* (Abakan 1952), *The Origins and Formation of the Khakass* (Abakan 1957), *The Ethnic Composition and Origins of the Altai Turks* (Leningrad 1969), *A Sketch of the Folk Life of the Tuvas* (Moscow 1969). He was one of the leading contributing authors to, and together with M. G. Levin he was editor of, the collective work *The Peoples of Siberia* (Moscow and Leningrad 1961), which was published in English translation in the USA in 1964. He devoted a great deal of work to preparing and editing the *Historical and Ethnographical Atlas of Siberia* (Moscow and Leningrad 1956). While living in Leningrad, he remained in contact with the people of the Altai Mountains, and locals of that region—some of whom knew him personally—often visited him. Potapov himself, though busy with his scholarly and organisational activities, returned to his homeland whenever he could. He lead several expeditions to Tuva, the results of which were published in a number of volumes.

Cosmology and the early phases of its development of the Siberian peoples played a special role in Potapov's research. As the list of his works appended below shows, interest in these key subjects was always present in his *œuvre*. The significant results of his research on this field were published in such works as "Using the Historical-Ethnographic Method in the Study of the Relics of Ancient Turkic Culture" (Moscow 1956), a paper presented at the Fifth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnographic Sciences, "Some Aspects of the Study of Siberian Shamanism" (Moscow 1973), a paper presented at the Tenth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnographic Sciences.

One of his most important works is the monograph *Shamanism of the Altai Turks* (Leningrad 1991), in which he presented the results of his investigations of many years in this field. He masterly presentation of unique ethnographic material—known to nobody else at that time—he argued that the shamanism of the Altai Turks had been formed and functioned as a complex religious system for more than one thousand years and that it had shown its vitality despite undergoing several crises during its history. At the P.I.A.C. Meeting held in Szeged, Hungary, in 1996, Potapov was awarded the P.I.A.C. Gold Medal of Indiana University.

L. P. Potapov's teaching activities were also very important, many of his students—among whom are natives of the Altai Mountain region—today holding Ph.D. or doctoral degrees. He was always in a lively connection with the Russian academic centres for Siberian Studies. He published a number of fine studies, with others being recently being prepared for press. Potapov's name and works are well known both in Russia and abroad in foreign translations. Works of his translated into foreign languages have excited great interest. He paid close attention to the latest results in shamanistic research and was always ready to help colleagues. A hard worker all his life, he continued his scholarly activities right up to his death on 9th October, 2000.

A List of L. P. Potapov's Works on Shamanism

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Book Reviews

ÁGNES BIRTALAN. *Die Mythologie der mongolischen Volksreligion. Wörterbuch der Mythologie.* I. Abteilung. Die alten Kulturvölker. 34. Lieferung. Hrsg. von E. Schmalzriedt und H. W. Haussig. Klett-Cotta 2001. ISBN 3-12-909814-3.

This excellent volume in the series *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* is an extensive dictionary of Mongolian mythology. It gives an overall picture covering the earliest times from the beginning of the Mongols up to the 20th century and a large territory where Mongols have ever lived.

It is not an easy task to present a reliable picture of Mongolian folk religion as it has been influenced by different "great" religions and by the folk beliefs of neighbouring people. How, for example, can one decide whether a ritual carried out earlier by the shamans and later taken over by the lamas, or a certain god now belonging to the Lamaist Church, could be regarded as phenomena of the folk religion? Ágnes Birtalan skilfully solves this problem and points out how Lamaism incorporated more and more elements of the folk religion.

The first part of the book gives a general outline of the history of the Mongolian peoples, beginning with the Xianbei, Tuyuhun, Shiwei and Kitai and concluding with the contemporary Khalkha, Oirats, Kalmüks and Buriats and the tribes of Inner Mongolia. This section concentrates especially on the cultural and religious history of these nations.

The following chapter briefly describes the mythology of these peoples, highlighting the similarities and the differences. There were fishing-hunting, nomadic, semi-nomadic and even agricultural tribes among the Mongols. This fact, of course, resulted in essential differences between their belief systems. A separate part is devoted to the general characteristics of Mongolian mythology, while the specialities of the belief systems of certain tribes—the Buriats, the Oirats-Kalmüks and the agricultural tribes of Inner Mongolia—are also presented.

After a short overview of earlier attempts (and their results) to present Mongolian mythology, the author details the most important sources of

her work. They are the written sources, among them the Mongolian chronicles, Chinese, Persian, Armenian, Russian, Latin, Middle French, Arabic and Tibetan year-books and historical works and the Buriat chronicles of later times. Travellers' diaries also offer rich material on the religious beliefs and practices of the Mongols.

Recent circumstances in Mongolia brought about a religious revival that have given both the Lamaist Church and the shamans' practices a new impetus. Nowadays it has become possible to conduct expeditions in the country and to collect new material. The oral heritage, on the one hand, supports the written sources and at the same time sheds new light on the already known data. The author of the book, a member of the Hungarian–Mongolian joint expedition, used the results of her field-work and so made a great contribution to the early results.

The main body of the book consists of detailed entries, beginning with *Abai Geser xübüün* and ending with *züülde*. The entries are encyclopaedic, exact, informative and give bibliographical data offering an outlook on other works related to the subject. They present mythology by describing gods (Vačirbani, J̌ayaγači, Manaqan, the Western Good Gods, Köke Möngke Tengri, etc.), heroes (Gengiz Khan, Alan qo'a, Geser, etc.), spirits (*teyireng, luu, mangγus*, etc.), beliefs concerning animals (*ünege, šira šibaγun, čono*, hunting-cult), practices (libation, *ǰükeli, ǰada*, weather-magic, etc.), origin myths (of the world, of people, of the stars, etc.), the world system (the three-layered world, the hells, etc.), number symbology, etc.

Several maps, tables, a rich list of sources and a bibliography help in closer orientation, and many interesting illustrations make the book more interesting and understandable.

This reference book is highly recommended and will certainly become a handbook for Mongolists and all those interested in the subject.

BUDAPEST ALICE SÁRKÖZI

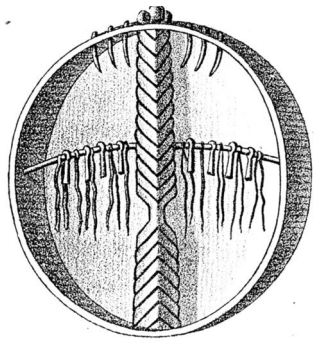
1 Shamaness Bayar sitting squat and drumming in front of her altar during a night ritual. Behind the shamaness her two assistants sit. In front of her, above the altar-chest the *ongon*-tassels hang besides of the family photos (Cagaan nuur. Photo: Gergely Bolya, 1993).

2 Shamaness Bayar talks to her *ongons* standing and drumming in front of her altar, her assistant puts up his hands for fear that she might have a fall, which happened quite frequently during her rituals (Cagaan nuur. Photo: Gergely Bolya 1993).

3 Day-ritual in shamaness Bayar's house in Ulaanbaatar, she does not wear her ritual garment (*xuyag*), but she puts a peace of xadag (ritual blue scarf) to her coverchief. She uses Jew's harp (*aman xuur*) and mirror (*toli*) instead of drum that is appropriate only for the night rituals (Photo: Attila Rákos, 1999).

4 The angry *ongon*s caused shamaness Bayar to fall down during a day ritual in her house in Ulaanbaatar (Photo: Attila Rákos, 1999).

(*a*)



(*b*)

(Рис. 5). Рисунокъ помѣщенъ на наружной
бенъ имѣетъ овальное очертаніе. Пове хность
на двѣ части. Въ верхней ча́сти изображены д
шинѣ каждаго стои
Подъ аркой вдоль
добныхъ фигуръ, чи
по объясненію шам
подъ именемъ бууре
нисты разумѣютъ м
на которыхъ шамае
ство Ерлика или д
Въ моей книгѣ
вы въ средневѣково
эпосѣ", на стр. 113
нокъ-копія съ монго
ны „Юсунъ-сульдэ".

Рис. 5.

(*c*)

5 (*a*) An exterior side of a Teleut shaman drum. Drawing by Andre@ Anokhin, c. 1910–1911. This image later became popular with students of shamanism, who reproduced the drawing in their books and articles. Andre@ Anokhin, *Materialy po shamanstvu u Alta@tsev*, 63.

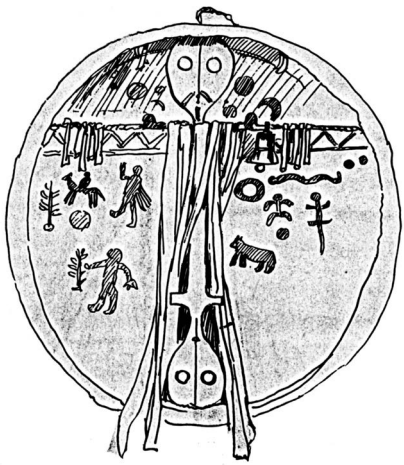
(*b*) A drum of an Altaian shaman Bylykchi, the Teletsk Lake area. The drawing was made by Grigori@ Choros-Gurkin for Andre@ Anokhin, September 9, 1912. From Potapov, *Altaiski@ shamanism* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1991), drawing 2, pp. 192–193.

(*c*) Potanin's ethnographic reflections on the drawings from a shaman drum. *Trudy Tomskago obshchestva izuchenia Sibiri* 3. No. 1 (1915). 105.

6 A book cover for Viacheslav Shishkov's *Strashni@ kam* (Scary Shaman).

7 “Shaman Mampy@ during his performances in Tomsk, 1909. Tomsk University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, photograph #343.”

8 “Shaman Mampy@ during his performances in Tomsk, 1909. Tomsk University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, photograph #345.”

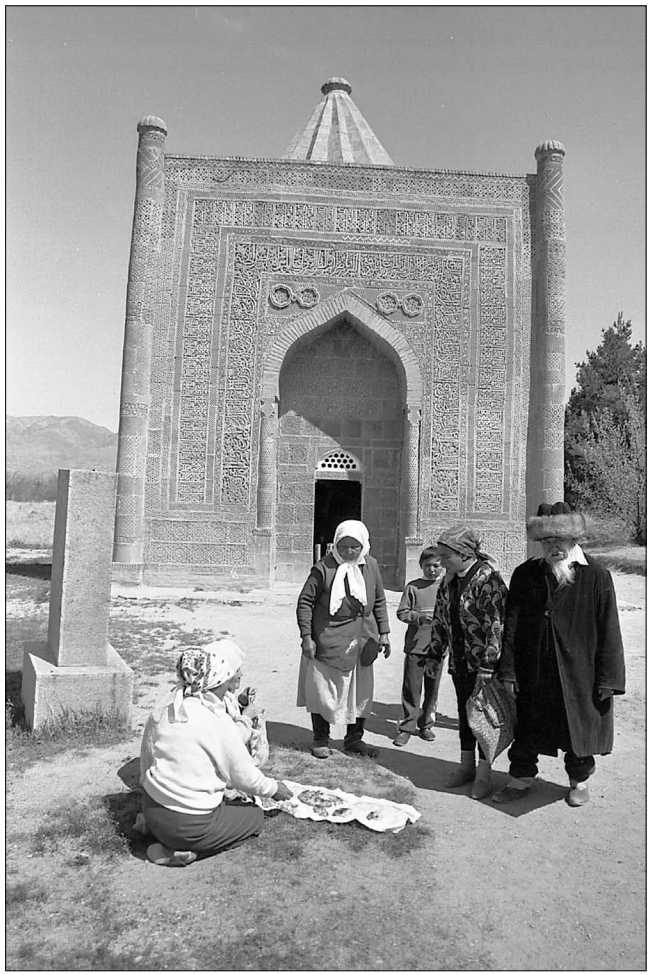


9 A drum of an Altaian shaman Bylykchi, the Teletsk Lake area. The drawing was made by Grigori@ Choros-Gurkin for Andre@ Anokhin, September 9, 1912. From Potapov, *Altaiski@ shamanism* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1991), drawing 2, pp. 192–193.

10 Russian and native fellow regionalists: Grigori@ Potanin and Grigori@ Choros-Gurkin. From Grigory Choros-Gurkin: *Catalogue of Pictures*, comp. R. M. Erkinova (Amsterdam, Moscow and Novosibirsk: Sluis Publishing, 1994), 7.

11 An Altaian shamaness. Photograph by S. I. Borisov, 1908. The image of this shamaness captured by the Siberian photographer was reproduced in old Russia as a color postcard with a caption “Un jaman (sorcier) d’Altai.” Author’s Personal Collection.

12 A Khakass Shaman. Photograph by N. N. Nagornaia (1928). Such staged romantic images became very rare in the 1930s. Novosibirsk Regional Museum, fond II-F N2, photograph # 2384/149.



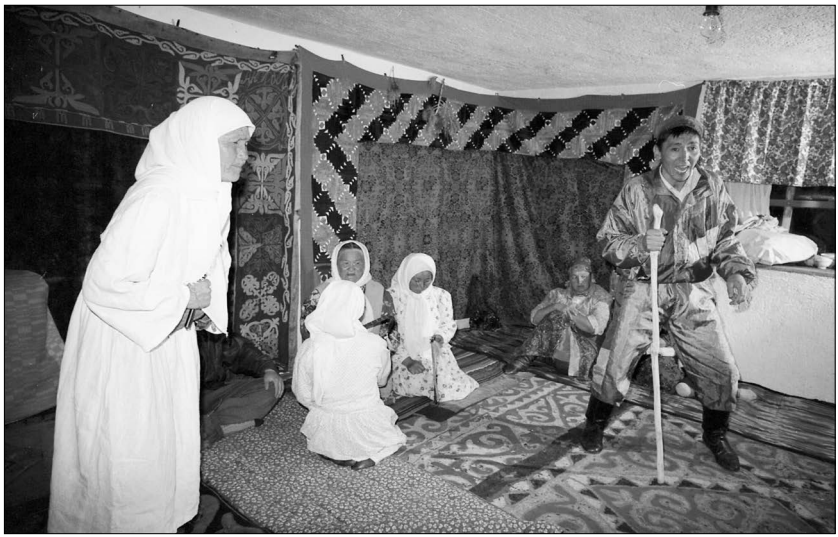
13 Manas' tomb in the Talas Valley, Kirghizstan, where the healers (*bak£ï-bübü*) gather and pray before the night of the holy Δ*uma* (Friday). A lady-healer is offering bread to pilgrims (Photo: László Kunkovács).

14 A daytime healer (*bübü*) with her magic stick (*asa-tayak*), which connects her with the ancestors' spirits (*arbak*). She is the Kirghiz counterpart of South Siberian white shamans (*ak kam*) (Photo: László Kunkovács).

(*a*)

(*b*)

15 (*a*) The healers chant the Koran and say a prayer to Allah at midnight before they turn off the light and start the ritual in darkness. It is the beginning of the Holy Δ*uma* (Friday), when the ancestors' spirits (*arbak*) help their people. The patient dressed in a black leather jacket sits in the middle. (*b*) Sitting in front of the patient with her whip, the head of the *bübü* healers starts to heal her, while the young *bak£ï* is healing with a magic stick (*asa-tayak*) (Photos: László Kunkovács).



(*a*)

(*b*)

16 (*a, b*) At the culmination of the ritual, the healers call on their helping spirits (*peri*) to chase away the evil ones (Δ*in-£aytan*). Everyone is shouting and crying, while the *bak£ï* and some *bübü* healers dance in the darkness (picture taken with flash) (Photos: László Kunkovács).