

**SHAMANS
AND
TRADITIONS**



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Mihály Hoppál

A series of books on the advances in the studies of shamanism

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SHAMANS AND TRADITIONS

MIHÁLY HOPPÁL



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Manchu shaman calling the spirits with his drum (from a 18th century manuscript) ex: Alessandra Pozzi: *Manchu-Shamanica Illustrata*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992 (p. 77. Fig. 26a)

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**In memory of my parents
and
for those shamans who helped me
to understand their sacred cultural traditions**

INTRODUCTION

A few decades ago it was generally held that shamanism in Siberia had ceased to exist and belonged among the worthless ideological memories of the past. This opinion prevailed both in the communist Soviet Union which still existed at that time, as well as in other parts of the world, in the western capitalist countries. In the mid-20th century and even in the sixties and seventies both ideological systems still lived in the fever of development. The most important ideal in those decades was that of the *modern* world that could be created through development.

The concept of modernism has been one of the most frequently repeated keywords of the 20th century and consequently had almost magical power. It was imbued with positive content, in part because it was associated with development – mainly technical development – and in part because it meant rejection of the tradition of earlier periods: the repudiation, denial and destruction of *tradition* of all kinds.

The 20th century has often been called the age of revolutions and revolutionary changes. But this label hides what was one of the very characteristic features of the process: modernity was always accompanied by destruction. In most cases, transformation meant the destruction of the earlier structures. Parallel with the technical development, the social structures changed, especially in those cases where the transformation was urged or even directed by political and ideological forces. It was perhaps folk culture that was most strongly affected by these changes. In the eyes of the militants of modernity, cultural traditions were the most hated enemy. This was especially true in Siberia where the archaic beliefs and mythology, the heroic epic and narrative tradition preserved the identity of the ethnic minorities. This meant that shamanism was among the elements of traditional culture to be eradicated.

In short, the transformation that was carried out in the name of modernity and so-called development was directed against tradition. However successful this ideology of modernity may have appeared for decades, by the late seventies of the last century, and even more in the eighties and nineties its shortcomings, failure and unavoidable revision became obvious. It was found that the forced industrial development had not only brought unquestionable achievements and created a certain degree of prosperity, but it had also caused enormous environmental pollution. The disruption of the traditional local communities and the rejection of cultural traditions (religions and rites) resulted in moral uncertainty (and in rising crime rates).

As a reaction, a return to traditions can be quite clearly observed in the post-modern age. This is especially true in post-communist Russia, among the small ethnic groups in the area of contemporary Siberia.

A quarter of a century after the studies in *Shamanism in Siberia* (DIÓSZEGI – HOPPÁL eds. 1978) were written, the emergence of a trend that could be called post-modern shamanism can now be seen. The author of these articles had the opportunity to observe a number of forms of this post-traditional shamanism. In the following the main types of Eurasian shamanism today are presented on the basis of experiences gained in the field. Naturally, this typology is not final; it is in need of expansion and refinement but for the time being it can be regarded as a good representation of the phenomena. There is a need for such a typology because most of the colleagues deal with the old shamanism but neglect the phenomena of (post-) modern shamanism.

Two main classes of phenomena can be distinguished: one contains those cultures in which shamanism as an autochthonous phenomenon has survived more or less continuously up to the present, while the other group of phenomena consists of neo-shamanism (or urban shamanism) which has arisen mainly in an urban context. The first group can be divided into a further two subgroups. The first comprises the cultures where shamanism survived and was kept alive by tradition practically without interruption, while the second contains the peoples and forms of shamanism where the shamans had been almost eliminated but escaped at the last minute.

Perhaps the best point to begin with the Koreans. Korea lies at the eastern extremity of the Eurasian continent, between China and Japan and has shaped a wholly autonomous culture. An important feature of this autochthonous culture is shamanism (*musok*). Scholars hold many different opinions on Korean shamanism, its character and components, but they agree on one thing: shamanism represent the oldest stratum in Korean folk religion.

In 2000 an international conference was held in Budapest with the title '*Rediscovery of the Shamanic Heritage*.' The proceedings of the conference has been published as volume 11 of *Bibliotheca Shamanistica* (HOPPÁL – KÓSA eds. 2003).

At the conference more than twenty scholars participated representing a chain of countries from South Korea through the USA to China. Europe was also represented by several speakers, among them those from the organising institution, the European Folklore Institute.

The symposium happened under the auspices of one of the current programmes of UNESCO, entitled 'Dialogue Between Cultures.' The chief sponsor was the Korean Commission for UNESCO from Seoul, South Korea together with the Hungarian UNESCO commission.

The Koreans had also brought along a group of eight shamanic practitioners who put on a shamanic ritual over two hours long. The conference was a success, nor did the 'dialogue between the cultures' fail to take place, since the spectacular 'ritual narrative' made a great impression on the lay audience as well as the scholarly professionals, even though many details of the 'ritual theatre' (in other words the Korean ritual itself) were unintelligible to the viewers. The shamanic happening served for emotional involvement while the actual dialogue went on among the scholars.

But why shamans? – the question offers itself. Because shamans were the persons entitled through their traditional role to mediate between heaven and earth, spirits and humans, life and death, past and present. The shaman's ability to mediate symbolically between the different worlds made them fit to become a symbol of international co-operation.

In this sense, if we think about it, the role of anthropologists or folklore researchers is similar to that of the shaman. They, too, mediate between different cultures. They carry communication by translating various texts (tales, myths, jokes, legends and even complicated rites) from the language of one culture to the other. They also mediate between the ordinary people and the higher, more educated strata of their society, between common and the elaborate cultural texts (e.g. between the original folk tale and the tales of the Grimm brothers, or Lönnrot's *Kalevala*). They mediate, quite plainly, between globality and locality, –what is more, they actually create the latter. In short, they create a new type of narration.

During the last few decades animism has escaped the attention of scholars of comparative religion. Animism, however, still represents a very important concept both in the world view and the shamanism of Northern Siberian peoples. In the third chapter different types of the concept of the soul will be enumerated, and animistic notions of Siberian shamanism will be presented against that background. Special attention will be paid to the different types of shamanic spirit helpers, and to the forms of their representation.

What kind of symbols play what kind of roles in that representation? The answers to that question will lead us to a semiotic understanding of Northern Siberian shamanism. Siberian shamanism, moreover, is involved in the cult of the dead, of ancestors and mountains, and in rituals of animal sacrifice. As a conclusion, one could say that the deepest meaning or message of Siberian animism was to balance man and nature.

It is well known fact that mythopoetic type of thinking permeates the rearing of those people who practiced shamanism in Siberia and beyond. In the chapter on cosmic symbolism some examples have been enumerated to show how the universal semantic oppositions work in reality, namely in the symbolic system of Siberian shamans' costumes. This semiotic methodology seems to be useful in order to understand better the symbolic meaning hidden in the whole system of Siberian shamanhood.

The next four chapters deal with the Hungarian contributions to the studies on Eurasian shamanism. First an almost completely unknown Hungarian traveller, who conducted field research in the Far East during the first decade of the twentieth Century. The collections of Benedek Baráthosi-Balogh (1870–1945) has been kept in the Budapest Museum of Ethnography. This article expresses the respect for the Hungarian scholar who was among the first to do research among the Ainu, the Ulcha and the Nanai peoples. He can be considered one of the pioneers of Hungarian ethnophotography.

It is rare in the history of Hungarian ethnology for a scholar to have roamed such vast stretches of Eurasia as Benedek Baráthosi-Balogh did. He was an excellent comparative ethnologist, since he was an observer with a keen eye, noting the tiniest details, little gestures that would have evaded the attention of most people, and he was a writer with an excellent style. Travelling, especially in the first quarter of the 20th century, took several months, which makes it all the more amazing how much interesting and for the age, novel information is to be found in his well-written, readable books. It must be noted that some of his hypotheses have been proven since his time while other has proved to be misconceptions.

What is of definitely lasting value, however, is his enormous collection, comprising hundreds of objects. The Nanai and the Ainu collections are among the most treasured pieces of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography. However, his linguistic notes are still unprocessed, the folklore texts unpublished.

The chapter eight is dedicated to my mentor Vilmos Diószegi (1923–1972), who established in a proper way the research of Siberian shamanism in Hungary as early as in

1960-ties. The present author has inherited the field of studies from him to continue this work after his untimely death.

Vilmos Diószegi (1923-1972), a Hungarian ethnologist, died more than quarter of a century ago, so it is timely to review and evaluate his oeuvre. The article discusses Diószegi's education and fieldwork. He studied the Buryats and the Khakas in 1957, and, in the following year, the Karagas and Tuvas. In 1960 he spent three months in Mongolia, and in 1964 he studied Kumandi shamanism in Gorno-Altai. The article further describes the Shaman Archive founded by Diószegi, and it evaluates the Hungarian scholar's publications, including those which appeared after his death. A section is devoted to the research Diószegi conducted on the traces of shamanism to be found in Hungarian folk beliefs.

The next two chapters present studies on the traces of shamanism in Hungarian folk beliefs both in the earlier centuries and in recent times. Chapter eleven enumerates examples of the role of shamanism in Hungarian ethnic identity. The last four chapters give insight of the author's field studies in Tuva, and among the Buryats (in Russia) and the Daur (in China). The later one is of special interest since after decades of fieldwork, the author is certain that sacrificial ritual plays an important role in the practice of shamans. It can be said that the sacrifice makes the whole ritual event sacred. The other focus of the article is the problem of trance, the reality of which has been called into question recently. The article presents an eyewitness account of shamanic trance which indicates that it is a necessary part of the whole ritual, at least among the Daur of Inner Mongolia, Northeast China. In 2003 we filmed a healing ritual in a small village where a Daur and an Evenki shamaness, working together, went into trance several times. Trance is necessary to communicate with the spirits. Furthermore, the trance indicates to participants that the spirit helpers have indeed appeared and that there is hope of recovery for the patient.

The very last chapter speaks about shamanic narratives as a special kind of speech act which are often used as an artistic form of sacred oral art. Since among those ethnic minorities shamanic prayers, charms, incantations are still in use and it would be a moral obligation to declare these art forms as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind. In the future the author wants to concentrate his own effort toward this direction and the studies of the present volume intend to contribute to reach this goal.

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2. Is Shamanism a Folk Religion?
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3. Eco-Animism of Siberian Shamanhood
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4. Pain in Shamanic Initiation
in: Siikala, A.-L. – Hoppál, M.: *Studies on Shamanism* 150–155. Helsinki – Budapest: Finnich Anthropological Society – Akadémiai Kiadó, 1992 (second edition 1998).
5. Death Experiences of Siberian Shamans.
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6. Cosmic Symbolism in Siberian Shamanhood.
ex: Pentikäinen, J. et alii (eds.) *Shamanhood, Symbolism and Epic* 75–87. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2001.
7. A Hungarian Researcher of Manchu-Tunguz Shamanism
ex: *Shaman* 7:1:3–23. (Budapest) 1999.
8. Vilmos Diószegi: Life and works.
ex: *Shaman* 6:2:117–149. (Budapest) 1998.
9. Traces of Shamanism in Hungarian Folk Beliefs of the Ancient Hungarians
ex: *Ethnographica et Folkloristica* 11:58–68. (Debrecen) 1999.
10. Traces of Shamanism in Hungarian Folk Beliefs
ex: Hoppál, M. (ed.) *Shamanism in Eurasia* 430–449. Göttingen: Herodot, 1984.
Rewritten for the present volume.
11. The Role of Shamanism in Hungarian Ethnic Identity
ex: *Danubian Historical Studies* 1:3:34–43. (Budapest)
12. Tracing Shamans in Tuva.

First appeared in: Kenin-Lopsan, M. B.: *Shamanic Songs and Myths in Tuva* 123–140. Los Angeles – Budapest: akadémiai Kiadó. 1997.

13. Shamans in Buryat Sacrificial Rituals
ex: Hoppál, M. – Kósa, G. (eds.) *Rediscovery of Shamanic Heritage* 211–226. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2003.
14. Trance and Sacrifice in a Daur Shamanic Healing Rite.
ex: *Shaman* 13:1–2:61–78. (Budapest) 2005.
15. Shamanic Narrative as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind.
ex: *EFI Communicationes* No 18. Budapest: European Folklore Institute, 2005.

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SHAMANS AND TRADITIONS



STUDIES ON EURASIAN SHAMANHOOD

1

It was more than a decade ago when two comprehensive reviews were published by the present author on the new results of studies on Siberian or Eurasian shamanism (HOPPÁL 1989, 1993). Since then a great number of new books, fieldwork data, monographs have been published all around the world. On the one hand it is great to have at hand the new results of our studies on our desk, however, it is almost impossible to follow the constant flow of new publications. So, for time to time it is necessary to give an outline on the most recent publications, or at least some part of them.

By the early seventies, a whole series of changes had taken place in anthropological studies of shamanism in both theory and practice. The incredible proliferation of books dealing with shamanism is characteristic of the last ten years, or, to be precise, of the nineties. In November 2001, the Royal Anthropological Institute in London had records of 386 books on the subject of shamanism, of which 240 (or over 60%) were written in the 1990s and quite a number in this century (KIM HOGARTH 2003:51). The reason for this is on the one hand, the flourishing of anthropological research, the interest shown in the subject by young researchers doing field work, since, influenced by their teachers, they had chosen precisely this subject. On the other hand, however, it is also true that the establishment of an international group of researchers, the *International Society for Shamanistic Research* (1991), the bi-annual conferences, the regular appearance of the Society's journal (*Shaman*, edited by Ádám Molnár and Mihály Hoppál, honorary editor in chief: Åke Hultkrantz), and of a series of books (*Bibliotheca Shamanistica*, Akadémiai Kiadó [the publisher of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences], Budapest, series editor: Mihály Hoppál), has also contributed enormously to the development of this part of the field of the comparative religion.

From 1991, the *International Society for Shamanistic Research* (ISSR), held a conference every two years. Shorter or longer accounts of these and the reports of the general assemblies of the society have been regularly published in the official journal of the society (*Shaman*). Unfortunately, only some of the papers given at these conferences have been published, as in the case of the first two conferences, held in Seoul in 1991

and in Budapest in 1993 (HOPPÁL – HOWARD eds. 1993; KIM – HOPPÁL eds. 1995). Only the papers of the fourth ISSR conference appeared, with few exceptions, in their entirety. The volume entitled *La politique des esprits* (AIGLE et alii. eds. 2000), is a collection of papers in French (with the exception of two Russian authors), which divides the material into three large thematic chapters. In the first, the writers examine the co-existence of shamanism and Buddhism in Asia; in the second, the mutual influence of Christianity and the native cultures of Latin America and in the third, the mutual influence of Islam and shamanism is explored.

In connection with the books of conference papers, I must mention the regional conference on the science of religion, which was organised in Helsinki in 1990 by the International Association for the History of Religion (IAHR) and its Finnish branch. Part of the material appeared in the volume entitled “*Shamanism and Northern Ecology*” (PENTIKÄINEN ed. 1996). The rest of the papers had been published earlier under the title “*Northern Religions and Shamanism*” (HOPPÁL – PENTIKÄINEN eds. 1992), as the third volume in the series *Ethnologica Uralica*, brought out by Akadémiai Kiadó in Budapest. Papers on the subject of mythology are to be found in the first half of the book, while the second part contains papers dealing with the shamanic traditions of Northern peoples (Sami, Inuit, Finns, Udmurt and other Finno-Ugric peoples).

In the last ten years, a serious debate has started about whether pictograms (rock art) and cave paintings have some kind of connection with shamanism; in other words, whether the creators of pictures, illustrations and drawings were the shamans of ancient times. What were the ritual or trance conditions under which these depictions were made? And many other questions arise which are hardly possible to be answered. Researchers have split into two camps. One camp feels that it is perhaps possible that the Palaeolithic depictions can be connected with the beginnings of art, the activities of the first artist-shamans, with the beginning of the conscious use of signs and symbols in the cognitive development of mankind. The other camp fiercely rejects such speculations. An example of the former is the work of the South African David Lewis-Williams and the Frenchman Jean Clottes. Their work was severely criticized by the participants of the ISSR conference held in Chantilly, near Paris (FRANCFORT – HAMAYON eds. 2001). An American researcher, Daniel Noel, joined the critical mood recently (2003). In an earlier book he had already referred to the most successful writers of neo-shaman literature (Eliade, Harner, Castaneda) with scathing criticism (NOEL 1997).

At the same time, there are numerous researchers who do not speak in tones of fierce rejection, but look for (and find) methodological points of reference, in order to understand the pictographic art of ancient times. With full knowledge of data from Central Asia and Siberia (JACOBSON 2001) it is primarily the Russian and Polish researchers who tend to see the figure of the shaman among the simple signs and symbols engraved in the cliffs. A good example of this opinion is a volume of essays which appeared in Poznań in 2002 (ROZWADOWSKI – KOŠKO eds. 2002), in which archaeologists and ethnographers examine Siberian pictographic art and its possible mythological and ritual context. The present writer tries to understand the secrets of ancient, enigmatic depictions with the help of semiotic analysis (HOPPÁL 2002a:42–47; 2003), just as certain Russian researchers use ethnological and mythological facts to explain pictograms (DEVLET 1997, 2000, 2001; DEVLET – DEVLET 2002).

In 1992, Gloria Flaherty published her excellent summary of how the word *shaman* and the expression shamanism appeared in the European mind. She based her analyses on the accounts of 18th century travellers (FLAHERTY 1992). The early French, German, later the Russian and English travellers, explorers, missionaries and other adventurers

first brought news and authentic descriptions of the activities of the shamans. Thus, in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, the entry *schaman* appeared as early as 1765, surprisingly, with a fairly accurate description (cf. FLAHERTY 1992:123). Following this, the American scholar examined the influence of the activities of the shaman on 18th–19th century writers, artists and works of art, such as Herder, Mozart, and Goethe's Faust.

At least as interesting is a work by Andrei A. Znamenski, in which he describes the history of the conjunction of shamanism and Christianity. Between 1820 and 1917, the early romantic wide-eyed wonder is gradually replaced in the 19th century by contempt and persecution of the shamans (ZNAMENSKI 1999). From the 1920s onwards, this persecution, in all its political entirety, unfolds ever more tragically in the 20th century (KEHOE 2000:16–19; GLAVATSKAYA 2001; REID 2002). Since the secret or closed archives in the ex-Soviet Union were only recently opened, many new details about the early persecution of the shamans can be discovered in these documents. Thus, for example, the Khantys living in the Kazym region, led by their shamans, organised a rebellion in the early 1930s against the abuses and atrocities of the Russian authorities (LEETE 1998). Naturally, the rebellion was put down and those involved were executed or taken away to gulags or forced labour camps, which was almost synonymous with death.

These years were sad chapters in the history of Siberian shamanism, but they still have to be examined, even if they bring back painful memories. We must report these details or facts, because the persecution of the shamans meant genocide in many cases. The old battle against religion appeared disguised as the class struggle and basically, even if in a milder form, lasted till the end of the 20th century. There are in general, numerous different misunderstandings and prejudices surrounding the way the shamans are judged. Certain writers are trying to dispel these and clear up misinterpretations (KEHOE 2000).

Naturally, there are popularising works, whose writers simply summarize the lessons of earlier works, giving extracts from them (HUTTON 2001, STUTLEY 2003), and we are fortunate if they state some kind of individual viewpoint. For example, among German writers, the psychological attitude dominates, which says that shamanism is to be considered a spiritual technique to cure and improve one's personal quality of life (ZUMSTEIN 2001). Another approach regards the role of dreams as the most important condition for understanding shamanism (ELSENHOHN 2000).

Another such characteristic and basic principle for introducing material is to present the manifestations of shamanism in terms of theory of signs and symbols. This is evident to those who deal not only with the manifestations of shamanism, but also with its meaning, since nearly everything, every object and every movement in Siberian shamanism has a ritual and symbolic meaning (LAR 1998; SEM 1999; KNÖDEL – JOHANSEN 2000; HOPPÁL 2002a). This is especially true of the shaman world view, the symbolic construction of the cosmos (LAR 1998, MASTROMATTEI – RIGOPOULOS eds. 1999; HOPPÁL 2002b). This is also true of the figures in symbolic myths and the totemistic personification of animal ancestors (BALDICK 2000, and PENTIKÄINEN et alii. eds. 2001).

The presentation of relics of shamanism in the last decade has opened a new chapter. Earlier, only one or two smaller exhibitions (e.g. in the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest, on the occasion of the second ISSR conference in 1993) had been dedicated to shamanism. In the last decade of the 20th century, however, especially with the opening up of the Soviet borders, large-scale and extensive exhibitions of shaman objects kept in Russian museums, were organised one after the other in European cities. Series of exhibitions were opened by the Kunstkamera in St. Petersburg, but no catalogue was published. On the other hand, when the material was shown in Tampere in 1998, a catalogue with very rich contents

appeared, illustrated by many pictures and containing excellent descriptions of the objects (PENTIKÄINEN et alii. eds. 1998). The Russian Ethnographic Museum gave good samples of the shaman material it holds at the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam (ROSENBOHM ed. 1997, in German, 1999). The material from the museum at Kyzyl was exhibited in the Antwerp Museum and a catalogue full of excellent articles was also published (van ALPEN ed. 1997).

In 2002, three exhibitions opened in three European cities. The first in Helsinki at the Museum of Culture (*Siberia – Life in the Taiga and the Tundra*) was open for a good year and a half. As the sub-title of the publication or catalogue indicates, the intention of the exhibition was not only to present the way of life in characteristic northern (forest) conditions, but also to show Even, Evenki, Khakas, Selkup, Khanty and Mansi, shaman drums and other ritual objects. The organisers praised the exemplary professionalism of Ildikó Lehtinen, who also edited the accompanying volume (LEHTINEN ed. 2002). In the same year in mid-October, an exhibition on Yakut shamanism and folk belief systems opened in the Polish town of Poznan, which was combined with a small scale international conference. Since many experts on shamanistic researches took part in the discussions and in the debates after the presentation of papers, it can be said that this symposium was very successful and was outstanding. The publication of the papers is expected soon. A Polish language explanatory brochure has already appeared (KOŠKO 2002).

The *Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari* in Rome (the local ethnographic museum), organised a very tastefully arranged exhibition entitled *The Flight of the Shaman – Symbols and Art of Siberian Cultures*, and published a large format catalogue of valuable material under the same title (MASSARI – MAZZOLENI [cura.] 2002). There were five complete sets of shaman clothes to be seen at the exhibition, as well as many shaman accessories which count as rarities from the rich collection of the Russian Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg.

The doyen of Eurasian research in shamanism, Åke Hultkrantz (†2006) has written several articles in recent years on the history of research in Siberian shamanism (HULTKRANTZ 1998). He also summarized his opinion on the use of drugs by Eurasian shamans (HULTKRANTZ 2003), mentioning the ancient Lapps (Sami) and Samoyed and Central-Asian data. According to his conclusions, if the acquisition of shaman knowledge requires the ability to enter a trance, then the use of drugs is only an extra, local feature, because in many cultures this altered state of consciousness can be reached without them (HULTKRANTZ 2003:14).

The turn of the century was the time of great summaries. It is true that no work similar to Mircea Eliade's one, written around fifty years earlier, was born (or at least it was not published), but two publishers felt that the "reader" giving a comprehensive picture was much needed. This was important as the works regarded as classics had long since disappeared from the shelves of bookshops since they had been sold-out. This is why J. Narby and Fr. Huxley decided that a few older works should be re-published. Their book is perhaps still the best selection dedicated to the historical developments of shamanism and to its historical understanding (NARBY – HUXLEY eds. 2001). The selection of abbreviated texts covering the period from the oldest data to shamanism today is very successful. Another volume also brings us up to date. Everything in shaman activities can be found in it: the various aspects of shamanism, initiation, ceremonies, aesthetics, from the social context and the cosmic to local protection of the environment (HARVEY ed. 2003).

The leading figure in French research and university teaching on shamanism, Roberte N. Hamayon, started her career as a Mongolist. She published her enormous summarizing

work in 1990, and its objective was to lay the theoretical foundations of Siberian shamanism (HAMAYON 1990). In this work of more than five hundred pages, she elucidates the concept, among others, that shamans enter into sexual relationships with the helping spirits and that this is how they ensure the continuing procreation of animals for the hunt and thus of the human community. She is also among those who no longer consider today's forms of shamanism as a subject for ethnological examination and she denies that trance or ecstasy are definitive elements of Siberian shamanism. It is interesting, however, that she undertook the writing of the text for a book of poetically beautiful photographs, entitled *Taiga: Land of the Shamans*, which contains superb photographs of a famous Evenki shaman woman and a young Yakut shaman (GARANGER – HAMAYON 1997).

There is an independent and important chapter in the history of studies of shamans. Those anthropologist wrote that chapter by their excellent field reports which cover the geographical area of the Himalaya region, Tibet and Nepal. Just to mention a few of the best monographs (OPPITZ 1981, SAMUEL 1993, EIGNER 2001, RÖSING 2003) one has the idea, that if anywhere this particular region and its inhabitants, due to their isolation, preserved not only a very vivid but complex forms of local shamanhood.

Research into shamanism in China was really revived in the last years of the past century (accounts of this appeared in turn in the pages of *Shaman*, SHI 1993, KŌSA 2001). I regard it as my personal good fortune that I could be an eye witness of this development, the political and ideological reasons for which are, of course, not worth denying. Chinese communism became more and more open and as it became economically stronger, it allowed more and more freedom in the field of research into minorities and within this, into ancient customs and beliefs, among them shamanism. Thus, when I first went to China in 1991, I had to meet an elderly shaman virtually in secret; a few years later, I was able to meet an other one openly and in 2001 and 2003, I was allowed to shoot video film with full cooperation and help. It is true that meanwhile quite a number of works had appeared, which give a picture of life and death – in the strictest sense of the words – about the shamans of minorities (Evenki, Daur, Hezhe or Nanai, Manchu, Mongol and other nations) living in north-eastern China (MENG 2000; GUO – WANG eds. 2001). The book by the woman researcher living in Beijing contains 90 pictures, while the book by the two writers contains 300. This is a breakthrough in the history of Chinese publications, which were hitherto not illustrated.

The latter book is the first extensive illustrated monograph published in China. Moreover, it was the first time that the writers gave a picture of the shamans of small nations living on the fringes of Chinese culture. In fact, there is very little information to be read about the shamanism of the peoples living in China, or about the figure of the *samen* (the village wizard) in Chinese culture, which according to the assumptions of certain scholars, was probably the origin of the Tunguz *saman* figure. The volume by colleagues in Changchun (GUO – WANG eds. 2001), is a source book, which will be much quoted in the coming decades by the researchers who deal with the comparative investigation of shamanism. And even more people will turn its pages for the sake of the colour pictures. These pictures are very valuable because they are authentic! They are not set up photographs, but snapshots which show folk customs faithfully; the photographers have made the movements and gestures of their subjects immortal. Thus, the photographs, with the help of the frozen moment, hand over the past to the future generation for keeping it. And for the foreign observer arriving from a distant culture, these pictures of the shamanism of minorities living in modern China, truly recall classical descriptions and pictures of conditions at the turn of the century, that is the

early 20th century. These are pictures of classical shamanism, which are hardly to be found any more in Siberia today. Researchers of Eurasian shamanism can be especially grateful for this book and its authors, because they can find in it inexhaustible parallel material. Thus, for example, the authors describe flat copper mirrors and their function of keeping evil at bay and protecting the heart (Buryat and Tuva shamans still use these important shaman emblems “sent from heaven”). The role of sacrificial trees is of central significance and we discover that in the rites of the Manchu shamans the cosmic tree reaches the sky, and also that in the shaman world view, the sky has nine floors. The ritual role of shamans was important in animal sacrifices, for example, among the Manchu, it was they who cleaned the horse before a sacrifice. With nearly every Eurasian people (including the Finno-Ugrians of the Volga!), one element of the rites is that the sacrificial animal (be it a cock, a pig, a lamb or an ox) has alcohol poured into its ear and if it shakes itself, that is a sign that the deity has accepted the sacrifice. We ascertain on the basis of the writers’ descriptions and pictures that without a sacrifice and a communal meal to follow, there is essentially no shaman religious ceremony - this too shows that shamanic religious ceremonies were ritual occasions for the togetherness of the community. At the same time, it is also clear that honouring their forefathers is one of the most important aspects of shamanism. Naturally, it was the great heroes and brave warriors who became the outstanding figures of the shaman pantheon (e.g. the Manchu *Baturu Mani*). Shamans with special capabilities were also respected, for example shamans who walked on fire. (I note that these excellent pictures could have done with more detailed and longer explanatory captions!)

The foreign reader picks up this book with justifiable curiosity and therefore expects much more from the ancient Chinese sources, wider quotations of texts from these sources, which are difficult to access, where shamans, or religious specialists fulfilling a similar social function, are mentioned. The unearthing and quoting of these texts is the task of Chinese scholars. As is the selection of representations pertaining to the early history of shamanism, from material contained in books publishing pictograms, which increase in number every day. In the case of such a valuable source publication, it would be (it would have been!) important to note precisely when and where every single photograph was taken. Naturally, we know that the pictures were taken in the 80s and 90s by and large, that is to say the volume is the result of twenty years’ work by the writers.

Besides the work of the Chinese writers, many valuable descriptions on the shamanism of the minorities of China have appeared in the journal *Shaman*, for example on the various groups of Sibo shamans (PANG 1994), on the “shaman handbook” used by them (QI 1997), the characteristics of the Manchu shaman dance (SONG 1997) and the shamanic elements in Yugur folk tales (ZHONG 1995). A separate monograph appeared on the shamanism of the Oroch people (GUAN – WANG 1998), with many pictures taken in the 90s of the still living customs and shaman religious ceremonies. Of the north-eastern ethnic groups, perhaps it is the Daur we did not know much about right up to 1996, when an excellent monograph appeared, containing discussions between a Daur emigré and a British anthropologist, as well as commentaries and explanations on the recollections of an elderly informant (HUMPHREY – ONON 1996). In the early nineties, a seventy-year-old Daur man recorded conditions typical of the forties in his stories, that is pre-communist conditions which were still guided by tradition. It is no accident that, when describing the details of local shaman identity, he uses the expression *shamanship*, and not the meaningless category *shamanism* (see fuller account of this debate in HOPPÁL 2002a:11–13). It is interesting that the *ominan* “remembrance of the spirits” ritual,

reported in detail by Urgunge Onon, was still practised in the 90s among the Dahur living in the Hailar region (cf. GUO – WANG 2001: 29–34).

The Chinese researchers dealt not only with the shamanic culture of north eastern minorities, but also with that of the south Chinese nations. The way the historic Naxi shamans organized the research and elaboration of the *dongba* traditions is exemplary (BAI – YANG ed. 1998). Just as the volume on Naxi ethnography published by the Völkerkunde Museum in Zurich is of the highest standard (OPPITZ – HSU ed. 1998). Of the south Chinese nations, the Naxi minority is the best organized, since they have their own research institute in Lijiang city, which is incidentally part of the World Heritage. Better and better ethnographic descriptions, full of interesting details are being written on the Naxi *dongba* traditions (GUO 1999), which are really shaman-like religious specialists, fulfilling the role of leading ceremonies. In the territory of Sichuan, among the Giang (ZEVIK 2001), and the Yi nations, these leaders of rituals and healers, who make up a wandering priesthood, fulfil an important role in the life of the small, local communities (BAMO AYI 2004). A very important characteristic of this social group is that their sense of responsibility towards the community is very strong; they feel a moral responsibility not only towards each other within the group, (since the craft of ‘shamanship’ or *bimo-ship* is inherited within the family), but their behaviour and their example also set an ethical standard for simple people.

Research into Korean shaman tradition has developed enormously since the nineties. This is largely due to the fact that South Korea has become one of the world’s leading industrial powers and (even at the time of the military dictatorship) attached and assigned great significance to tradition. One of the important characteristics of Korean culture, wanting to distinguish its individual features from Chinese and Japanese culture, is the individual shamanism (*musok* in Korean). Over the centuries this has established a specific system of religious ceremonies that last several hours and are almost like theatrical performances. We compare them to theatre because, during the service consisting of several acts, the leading figure changes clothes several times and every part (or “act”) has a dramatic climax (an excellent analysis of this topic is provided by KISTER 1997). Singing, knowledge of dance, text improvisation, humour and the ability to concentrate, are needed for the ceremony, which lasts several hours, sometimes a whole day. It is no accident that a long process of learning is necessary for shaman candidates to acquire the many layers of knowledge. Earlier they studied individually with one or two of the more famous shaman women (*mudang*), but more recently and currently, they study in groups, organized by the official shaman association. This association has over forty thousand registered members and its name *Tachan Suggong Kyongshin Yönhaphoe*. (Korean Spirit Worshipers’ Association for Victory over Communism) contains the hope of victory against communism (KIM HOGARTH 2003:57).

The research into Korean shamanism was always closely related to a kind of cultural nationalism (KIM HOGARTH 1999), which basically only meant a very conscious safekeeping of traditions and the collection of folklore. Thus, the songs of shaman women and a precise description of religious ceremonies have appeared in several volumes. This work was carried out in Korea by the first president Kim Taegon (1937–1996) of the ISSR (International Society for Shamanistic Research).

From the eighties onwards, excellent ethnographic descriptions appeared. These were written by foreign researchers (KENDALL 1985, 1988; KIM HOGARTH 1999) and Korean researchers who had studied abroad (KIM SEONG-NAE 1989; KIM HOGARTH 1999). The English language collection of Kim Taegon’s essays is illuminating (KIM TAEGON 1998), and it reports on the basic religious and ideological concepts of early shamanism.

Even more interesting is the work that uncovers for us the syncretism of Korean shamanism and Buddhism, in the cultural context of a modern city way of life in Korea today (KIM HOGARTH 2002).

Merete Demant Jakobsen, a Danish researcher (who received her Ph.D. in Oxford), published the results of her research in 1999 in the form of a book. She was essentially exploring two subjects: one was the memories of shamanism of the Inuit of Greenland in the writings of Danish missionaries of old, and the other is her examination of the manifestations of shamanism in the city today, observed from inside by taking part as a participant observant. She too was a pioneer among anthropologists in regarding neo-shamanism as a subject worthy of research (JAKOBSEN 1999, 2003). The tone of Robert J. Wallis' articles represents an accommodation of new attitudes in the world of European universities. Briefly, this means that it is no longer shameful among researchers to refer to the works of M. Harner, C. Castaneda or others. This is because on the one hand, these writers were the first to say something new about altered states of consciousness, on the other, the development of urban or neo-shamanism influenced by them has grown into a real cultural movement, and as such, can be investigated by anthropological methods (WALLIS 1999, 2000, 2001). This relates particularly to the "new pagan" movements, which are not a fashion, but whose time has now come. These are not simply short-lived 'new-age' fashions, but the revival of pagan cults that look to the past, search for their cultural roots and respect nature (BLAIN – WALLIS 2000; WALLIS 2003).

All these above reviewed works are of great importance for a better understanding of various shamanic traditions as an important form of intangible cultural heritage of mankind.



IS SHAMANISM A FOLK RELIGION?

2

From the History of the Question

Shamanism has always belonged to the domain of religion. Even the very first picture of a Siberian shaman from 1672 which appeared in Nicolaus Witzen's book and it was written under the picture of a half human – half animal like creature with two big antlers: „Tunguz priest” (WITZEN 1672).



Plate 1.

English was simply *Shamanism in Eurasia* (HOPPÁL ed. 1984). This topic was very carefully chosen since in the Soviet Union “social consciousness” was the code word stands for religion. For instance in the beginning of the 1980-ies a whole book was published with full of good articles on Siberian shamanism neither the word shaman, nor religion were mentioned in the title of it (VDOVIN red. 1981).

In 1992 when the first ever international conference was held on shamanism in Siberia, in Yakutsk, surprisingly the title of the booklet of the papers (and abstracts) was “Shamanizm kak religiya” (Shamanism as Religion with a subtitle. Genesis, Reconstruction, Tradition – GOGOLEV et alii eds. 1992, see a review of the whole conference in BALZER 1993). I personally was quite surprized that the term religion was used, but as I understood at that time it was a reaction to the longterm prohibition using it. Earlier it was customary to speak about “the early forms of development of the social consciousness of the aboriginal peoples of Siberia” actually this was a title in Russian of a conference which was held in Hungary in 1982 and the title in

During the 1950–60-ies in the Western countries (meaning Europe from an East European perspective) phenomenology was in full spring, so shamanism fall under the category of 'ecstatic religion' (ARBMAN 1970) and/or as an 'archaic technique of ecstasy' (ELIADE 1974). In Hungary Vilmos Diószegi who was not at all a theory oriented scholar he used the term *néphit* (folk faith or belief in Hungarian) and *ősi hitvilág* (ancient world of beliefs of the Hungarians) in his works, but when he edited the famous collection of essays on Siberian Shamanism in the title he used *Glaubenswelt* and *Popular Beliefs* (correctly folk beliefs) concerning *folk religions* (DIÓSZEGI 1963, 1968). For him terminology was not so important since he was interested in the phenomenon first of all, and he never considered shamanism as a folk religion. Neither Tekla Dömötör, nor Vilmos Voigt who were much more or even eminently theoretically minded scholars in their fields they never used folk religion as a term for shamanism (VOIGT 1976, 1978). So, in short, there were no agreement among scholars concerning the categories into which shamanism may fall into.

A German scholars Ulla Johansen in her paper on the history of shamanism argued that "shamanism is not a religion, but it is a phenomenon that can be found in various religions, namely the activities of shamans" (JOHANSEN 1998:2). According to Johansen the word '*shaman*' is used for bearers of religious functions:

1. can intentionally put themselves in a trance, that means in an altered state of consciousness, in which they react at least to a lesser degree to audial and visual stimuli in their real environment,
2. acquire the capability of doing so in a vocation and at a time of psychic crisis,
3. in this state of consciousness feel to be able to communicate with imagined, although from a scientific point of view non-existent beings, whose representations are determined according to the religion in which they act,
4. generally induce the religiously motivated state of altered consciousness in the interests of, and in accordance with, the whole of their society, in which they act as religious interpreters, and to which they convey a feeling of security in relation to the powers of the other world,
5. also in the directly visible forms of their activities – for example in ritual clothing, the course of rituals or preparation of their locality – are bearers of a tradition.

The use of the term "shaman" as defined by the five points above should not also be spatially confined to North and Central Asia. There is at least one important point in these elaboration namely Johansen puts an emphasis on local traditions.

The importance of local spiritual traditions seems to be evident for the study of folk religion and for shamanistic research as well. Recently it has been decided to introduce a new term *shamanhood* (PENTIKÄINEN et alii eds. 2001) to be used instead of the vague and overused term *shamanism*. This later one as it is elaborated and presented by Mircea Eliade offers only a very abstract scheme of a worldwide phenomena, and it has never existed as such. Therefore serious researches have to concentrate on the local variants of shamanistic phenomena and traditions. The local shamanic lore is deeply rooted in the folklore and mythology of the given ethnic group and it provides "mental models" building "world view" (SIIKALA 2002:109–111). Mythologies usually are „the most persistent mental representations, which endures even the most radical historical changes and continously carries the past into the present”– as A.-L. Siikala puts it – “...The life of mythical traditions is characterised by the inherent conservative nature of its basic

structures and even themes...” (SIKALA 2002:110). That is why one can state local folk religious traditions are based on the mythological mental models of the given ethnic group.

What is 'Religion' in 'Folk Religion'?

This is the question or at least this is one of the main concerns of our theoretical studies of religion today. Let me quote here Armin Geertz who did quite a lot to define (or redefine) the concept of *religion* for an up-to-date or postmodern study of religion: “...a reconceived study of religion would understand 'religion' as a reality which interconnects social activities both implicitly and explicitly. Of significance in this respect was a shift in attention to the meaning of religion in social interaction. There was a general agreement that analyzing social processes which are correlative with religious phenomena would require the evaluation and use of innovative social theories and models as well as those from different disciplines” (GEERTZ 1999:448). So, the study of religion, and folk religion as well, as understood by A. Geertz invites a wide variety of disciplines: such as history, sociology, linguistics, philology, psychology, anthropology and ethnography. And of course philosophy in order to get better insight into the hermeneutics of reading, understanding and interpreting texts. He also calls for a new discipline called *ethnohermeneutics* (by the way this term was proposed in a book published in Åbo ed. by Tore Ahlbäck 1999) was also proposed by me in the Festschrift for Lauri Honko published for his 60th birthday. But in my understanding ethnohermeneutics may include not only the study of meaning of written and oral texts as we do it in folklore research but visual texts as well (including motions, gestures and more complex ritual, and ceremonies performed for instance by shamans).

Along this line of reasoning let me remind you that, in one of his best article Veikko Anttonen also argued that shamanism can be interpreted as a form of religion. “Religion is understood as a form of human thought and behaviour involving some verbal and non-verbal interaction with the superhuman or non-human dimension of existence” (ANTTONEN 1994:100). A definite set of interrelated elements (gods, spirits, altered state of consciousness, etc.) in religions and mythologies, are the representations of non-bodily forms of existence, but “it is through bodily performance of ritual that man makes his faith or system of beliefs visible to others. Shamanism is a fine example of this: in shamanic ritual, music and religion assume a material form through the shaman's body” (ANTTONEN 1994:101). According to his opinion the shamanic drumming and dancing bring music and religion together in one total experience, which he call the 'sacred'. In this sense shamanhood can be seen as a religious phenomena, and all these different text of culture must be analysed together.

So, the cognitive perspective may goes hand in hand with ethno-hermeneutics and the two approaches may offer a better understanding the whole complex phenomena in the future.

Who is the 'Folk' in (Folk)religions?

There is an other important problem concerning '*folk religion*', namely who is the '*folk*'? In the great religions there is a strict division between the clergy (the elite) of the religious practioners (priests, mullahs monks with a rigid hierarchy) and the common folk. In shamanhood, however, there is no hierarchy, no separation between the shamans and the ordinary people. They are really together or acting together in a ritual. (see the Buryat animal sacrifice). Of course, there are similarities between the priestly and

shamanic functions and practices (singing together, moving together, etc.) but the relation between shamans and their 'folk' was/is *not hierarchical* but *participatory* in nature for instance the people help the shamans in ritual actions not serve them! So, what one may emphasise here that in shamanhood there is not that much religion but practical actions performed by the *folk* which forms one *communitas*. The actual shamanic *séanse* makes a local group (a family, a group of relatives) into a community. Even their songs, prayer, incantations, recital of myths can be seen as '*speech acts*' (Austin and Searle in the linguistic sense of the word – in Hungary Irén Lovász published a book on prayers as speech acts – LOVÁSZ 2000).

An American anthropologist, Alice Beck Kehoe dedicated in her book: "*Shamans and Religion*" a whole chapter to the "understanding religion from an anthropological perspective (KEHOE 2000: Chapter 2:21–35), in which she examined the claim that there is a "*shamanic religion*" contrasting with the religions of the holy book". Of course, one of the big difference between so called great religions and folk religion is that the latter ones have no dogmas written in a holy scripture. Shamanhood, as local variant of shamanic traditions, is especially good example of dogma-free practice. From an anthropological perspective for the members of a community the commonly shared beliefs (as I prefer to label it '*belief system*') gives a frame of reference for everyday behaviour in different life situations. This means simply that everybody in a small community knows (even can predict) how their shaman/ness will act in a given situation.

In other words, there are functions in a given society which must be fulfilled, and there are roles must be taken (for instance the role of shaman – as it was clearly explained by L. HONKO 1969 and A.-L. SIIKALA 1978 in her monograph). Since functional perspective has dominated ethnographic studies on shamans in Siberia it is reasonable to enumerates those functions which shamans (either male or female ones usually worked in). Just to mention some of the main ones: first which is usually mentioned is healing, the second was the leader of ritual animal sacrifice (for examples among the 1996 Buryats, among the Ostyaks) the third function was divination (fortune telling in Tuva), the fourth being the *psychopompos* (who leads the soul of the deceased into the other world – see in ELIADE 1974). The fifth is the functions of being a singer, a poet, a sage, the person who knows the sacred text, prayers, incantation, spirit evoking songs (*algysh* in Tuva and among the Sakha/Yakuts – see for more details in the last chapter of this book).

Of course there are some other roles which were not frequently mentioned in the literature on shamanism. For instance shamans were involved in child birth as well. Let me quote Mongush Kenin-Lopsan (a leading expert on Tuva shamanhood, from one his unpublished manuscript): „In the old days it happened that a women were not able to deliver her child, not even during three days, and her life was in danger, so a powerful shaman (*hondurgan kham*) was asked for help. The shaman came and looked around carefully, and he (no this case) ordered to untie all tied knots, open all chests, open the door of the yurt, in order to make the child's way free coming to this world. He blow a soul of the child into the mother to help her in delivery. It all these action were successful then the shaman refused to receive any gift or money for his service.” (KENIN-LOPSAN 1995 – field notes on Tuva shamans – manuscript in Russian. This notes were taken in Kizil in 1990. – Translation is mine.)

In 1996 a very detailed outline of Daur Mongol shamans' functions has been published in which six distinct ritual practitioners were mentioned: (1) the *yadgan* who sang and danced with a drum to evoke the spirits; (2) the *bagchi* (a male elder) who were responsible to call the clan's spirits; (3) *otoshi* a women curer working with a goddess-like spirit to assist women's fertility; (4) *bariyachi* midwives involved in childbirth; 85)

barishi 'bone-setters'; (6) *kianchi* representing malevolent animal spirits (HUMPHREY – ONON 1996:51). At the beginning of the year, 2003 I met a Daur shamaness, a *yadgan* who performed a healing ritual lasted about three hours (a video documentation has been taken) she was healing and leader of the sacrifice a lamb. There are more data about the ritual specialist often labelled as shamans but often having different local vernacular categories and/or names describing their special ability or task. For instance the Mansi diviner who can 'read' dreams called *alom-verte-khu*, or among Altaic Turks those who can make rain called *oksa yadachi*. – Among Guetemalan Maya there are eleven functions for *ajkuna* (shaman) including healing, divination by dreams, midwifery assisting childbirth, astrologer, etc. (see KEHOE 2000:53–54).

All these roles are everyday activities, which are not belonged to the sacred domain of the given culture. Non of these above mentioned activities fall into a category which can be called as religious. But since they were performed by the local shamans in their very special way, helped by non-visible spirits (according to their beliefs) at a sacred place in a so called 'sacred' situation so the whole event can be *sacred* – as Veikko Anttonen – argued (ANTTONEN 1994).

I had almost ready of my present paper when a picture came to my mind which I saw in Hailar, Inner Mongolia, China. In a local museum there is an ethnographic exhibition mainly on shamans. In this region (North-East part of China – next to the Russian border) a number of different nationalities (ie. ethnic groups) live together or in the vicinity to each other, for example Mongols (Bargu and Daur tribes), Ewenkis (Solon and Olaguya fratrics). The exhibition shows the colorful costumes of the shamans of these different ethnic minorities.

There are photos on the walls of the exhibition hall and one of them which I remember is a quite peculiar one. An old Evenki shaman of Olaguya clan held a major clan ceremony in every third year during which the shaman encircled the gathered community members with a long leather rope, pulling together the people literary having the dramatic experience the binding-together in of their ritual (QUO–WANG eds. 2001:32).



Plate 2.

Why I mentioned this example? Because “the word ‘*religion*’ comes from the Latin word *religio* ‘to bind’ pointing us to a major function of religions, the binding together of persons into a supportive congregation or community” (see KEHOE 2000:22). In short, a local shamanhood can provide us even a excellent argument giving an example on the original meaning of the word *religio*! So, shamanhood can bind together as a great religion may do so.

Our last example can be taken from Korea, namely South Korea. In the Korean Republic there is a very strong shamanistic cultural complex called *musok* which is an intricate system of beliefs, ritual practices, foods, costumes and symbols (KIM HOGARTH 1999:119). The *musok* is a cult, oriented towards the living human being, and its main purpose is the happiness, and harmony. By the help of shamanistic, rituals it wants to maintain the social and moral order in the world. Since the Korean shamans (*mudang* – predominantly women) practicing *musok* a part of their ritual and ideological system. In South Korea shamanism can not labelled as a religion, but many are aware of the fact that it has similar features as religion. “*Musok*, is something our ancestors believed in and practiced for generations”, moreover, many urbanites, who seek their “cultural roots” in *musok*. As Kim Hogarth argues that the recent renewed interest in this aspects of Korean *shamanism* is directly linked to the revival of the national identity. Moreover, it is (ie. Korean shamanism) a strong protest and protection against cultural ‘colonialism’ by the West, and particularly American, and “a reaction against pan-global cultural homogenization” (KIM HOGARTH 1999:349).

Summing up of the arguments presented in this paper from a functionalist / phenomenological perspective shamanism is not a religion, but from a cognitive perspective it is a form of religion (ANTTONEN 1994:100) and even it is a prehistoric cultural phenomena.

But according to my opinion the real question is not whether shamanism is a folk religion or a religion at all, but the real problem is its survival. Will this very old cultural phenoma be able to survive in our ‘beautiful’ globalized world?



ECO-ANIMISM OF SIBERIAN SHAMANHOOD

3

Introduction

The 19th century English anthropologist, Sir Edward Tylor, who first coined the term “animism” for the earliest period of magico-religious thinking, in his 1871 work *Primitive Culture*. Tylor made the distinction between the concepts *soul* and *spirit*, declaring that only human beings had *soul*, while *spirit* was an abstract notion that could be related to a wide spectrum of natural phenomena (TYLOR 1871:2:194–195). The English scholar was of the opinion that animism must have developed from the dream experience, where people generally feel as if they existed independently of their bodies, flying. In short, the soul could take “journeys” outside the body. During such dream journeys they could see dead relatives, friends, or their spirits.

This idea was then adopted by many, especially by the Russian-Soviet school of history of religion (V. G. BOGORAZ, D. KLEMENTZ, A. F. ANISIMOV, F. A. KURDRIAVTSEV, S. A. TOKAREV, T. M. MIKHAILOV – SEE KRADER 1978:194). Since one important element of shamanic lore was *soul-flight*, these Russian researchers, thinking in an evolutionary scheme, believed animism to be a religious-ideological formation predating shamanism (ANISIMOV 1967:109–115). S. A. Tokarev, who wrote a comprehensive Marxist-oriented work about the early forms of religion, made the conclusion that Siberian shamanism developed out of animism, refining it in the process – since it follows from a hunting lifestyle to maintain a close relationship with the spirits of hunted animals: this was the task of the shaman (TOKAREV 1964:304). Naturally, this idea has its antecedents, J. Stadling from Sweden (1912) has already stated that animistic ways of thinking are tightly interwoven with the world view of shamanism.

Ivar Paulson, who, after his monograph on the soul concepts (“Seelenvorstellungen”) in Northern Eurasia, studied the phenomenology of shamanism, and wrote that “shamanism is an animistic ideology, one of the characteristics of which is the use of an ecstatic-visionary technique” (PAULSON 1964:131). Another distinctive feature of Eurasian shamanism is the dualistic soul concept. According to the Estonian scholar the “free soul”, during ecstasy, is able to leave the body, and shamans send this soul to the world of spirits and gods, in other words, this is the type of soul which practices the so-called shamanic soul-flight.

Another prominent scholar of the studies of comparative religion, from Scandinavia, the Swedish Åke Hultrantz, treated the subject of the images of the soul in several of his studies. I am going to quote from a comprehensive article he wrote about soul-dualism in connection with shamanism:

"...the cases of soul-dualism were clearer in shamanism, due to the intense observation of shamanistic performances...In the majority of cases the free-soul of the shaman sought the free-soul of his client... in the majority of cases it was the free-soul of the shaman that went to look for the lost free-soul of the sick person... while his body-soul remained in the body to keep it alive..." ...The records of the diffusion of shamanic and soul-dualism make it evident that soul-dualism had its origins in a hunting culture." (HULTRANTZ 1984:31–34)

During the first year of the fifties' Mircea Eliade was completing his work, which, up to this day, counts as a fundamental, classic book (on the life work of Eliade, a scholar of Rumanian origin, Siikala has given a good survey and appreciation in 1989). He was an adherent of the phenomenological approach, therefore he was mostly interested in the phenomena which gave the whole complex of shamanism its distinctive characteristics: initiatory visions, the shamanic journey to the other world, shamanic cosmology and, above all, ecstasy. His book title reveals his main idea: *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (ELIADE 1951, enlarged edition in English 1974). Eliade did not discuss the historical antecedents of shamanism, thus he declines to mention animism, and it is characteristic, that certain recent comprehensive works – though made for the wider public –, which introduce shamanism as a world phenomenon in the framework of "Eliadism", also fail to discuss the formation of shamanism (PERRIN 1995, VITEBSKY 1995).

As a curiosity in the history of research I would like to mention the first issue of the periodical *Asian Folklore* from 1979, in which several studies were published on the subject of the images of the soul in the Far East. Many of these investigated the types of soul concepts in connection with shamanism (see KIM TAEGON 1979). That issue published the lectures of an international conference, so one could read about the soul beliefs of certain Indian, Singhalese, Thai, Japanese and Chinese peoples. Unfortunately these articles appeared to be rather like synopses of the lectures delivered at the conference, most of them lacking the *apparatus philologicus*, although many such articles delivering original folklore material would be needed in the comparative studies of the future years.

This is one of the reasons why we are planning to prepare a comprehensive work stretching to several volumes entitled *Encyclopaedia of Uralic Mythologies* (Editors-in-chief: V. V. Napolskikh – A. L. Siikala – M. Hoppál by the Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest from 2002, to be published) in which we describe and compare the soul concepts of all the Finno-Ugrian (Uralic) peoples.

Shamans, as it is well known, play several social roles in their respective societies (e.g. curing of the sick, fortune-telling, or conducting sacrifices etc.), but all of them share the common element that the shamans somehow contact the spirits.

"Shamans are experts in the movements of the human soul, because they not only control the ecstasy of their own souls but specialize in the knowledge and care for others' souls, as well." (SULLIVAN 1994)

In this study I am not attempting to describe the way shamans keep the human soul in balance, only to illustrate their relationship to the spirit world, with examples from the mythology of shamanism. Naturally, the relationship to spirits led to the idea of spirit

helpers, at least Siberian data seem to bear out that conclusion. One interesting aspect of this is that the final aim of communicating with spirits is the calming of the human soul to insure a spiritual as well as physical-biological balance.

Animistic Mythology in Shamanism

Among peoples with the hunting and fishing lifestyle, the daily interactions with their natural environment formed a unique world view, the starting point here is that not only human beings, but all the animate and inanimate things of the world also have souls. The belief system of Siberian peoples thus categorizes the knowledge of the world in a sort of “nature animism” (PAULSON 1964). In this form of thinking the environment is of primary importance, in other words: the ecologically-minded mythological world view provides shamanism with a unique background, or more exactly, it helps us understand the concept of shamanic spirit helpers deriving from this attitude. I am therefore going to quote a few less-known examples from Siberian folklore. One such idea is that of *spirit owners*.

N. A. Alekseev, a prominent specialist of the folk beliefs of Siberian Turkic peoples published his comprehensive monograph in 1980, describing the early forms of religion of these nations, and one chapter of this work, “The Deification of Nature and Elemental Forces” deals with animism. In this chapter he writes about the spirit owners of fire, water, mountains and forests, stating that “...in the consciousness of those who believed in them, the majority of spirit owners totally merged with the things they owned”. Names (*aazi*, or in Yakut, *ičči*) and the respective natural phenomena were completely identical.

“According to the beliefs of Southern Altaic peoples, every mountain, every lake or river has its own spirit owner, which owns the place, and is in command of the animals and birds living there. It could protect people who lived there or crossed the area. Spirit owners were believed to be able to understand human speech, and the myths associated with them say that, like people, they also had children, and one could obtain their goodwill with prayers, supplications and sacrifices.” (ALEKSEEV 1980:63)

A. Gogolev mentions them in his work on Yakut mythology thus:

“According to Yakut beliefs, the ičči is a unique category of being, present in certain specific objects and natural phenomena as a mysterious inner force. Among the ičči there is a higher category equal to the gods. These beings do not belong to the categories of either ayi or abasi. If certain rules are observed, they can be helpful to human beings in various life situations, people can regard them as protectors... For all the ičči bloodless sacrifices were made. Among the ičči a special place was accorded to the spirit of Mother Earth, Aan Doydu iccite.” (GOGOLEV 1993:42)

The spirit of Mother Earth was regarded as important and worthy of a special respect by peoples throughout Siberia (as well as by North American Indians).

Prayer and invocation are special forms of speech acts which do not exist and lose their meaning outside the ritual context. They are validated not only by the text, which, aside from certain phrases, is mostly improvised, but also by being spoken, by the act itself.

“The Shors believe in the existence of mountain spirits (tag-äzi) and water spirits (shug-äzi). Every clan had its own clan mountain and its mountain spirit, who protected the members of the clan. Every three years sacrificial ceremonies were held on that mountain. To express their respect, every Shor threw a libation to the spirit owner of the mountain or river, when he or she was near the mountain or river... The spirit owner of the

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waters was imagined as a long-armed naked woman by the Kumandines... The Tuvans used to believe in the spirit owners of the waters. They made an ovaa of stones and dry branches for her, too, on the riverbanks, and near the fords. This looked like a hut, and they placed the sacrificial objects in it: stones, rags, horsehair etc. Before crossing the river they usually performed a sacrifice.” (ALEKSEEV 1980:72–73)

Among the Tuvans the cult of springs (*arzhan*), especially that of medicinal springs was intertwined with the cult of the trees growing around the springs. This was especially true of the trees whose growth or shape differed from the usual - for instance, they had a double trunk, or their fronds consisted of branches grown irregularly. Trees of this kind were called “shaman trees.” I took a picture of one such tree in Yakutia in 1990 (HOPPÁL 1995:227. picture) – if such a tree stood near a spring, under the tree shamans made their ceremonies.



Plate 3.

Passers-by usually stopped – and even today, they stop their cars – at these special trees, and place some money, tie a little piece of their clothes or handkerchiefs on its branches, put a comb or some other personal belongings. They attribute special powers to these trees, and they maintain that the trees bring good fortune in travelling, and that they protect people from accidents. This belief is a sign of unconditional trust in the power of nature, of a conviction which supposes the powers of nature to be so strong as to control human destiny as well.



Plate 4.

When the Yakut hunter is getting ready to hunt, he turns to the forest spirit: above all he tries to win its favor, therefore he pours some oil on the fire. Then he gets down on his knees, puts his hand over his heart, bows towards the fire and says an *alghis* (a prayer asking for blessings). Having started out he is not allowed to look back.

“Before the start they sometimes hung a sacrifice (salama): they stretched a rope between two trees at arm's height, the length of which was “seven little fathoms,” on this they hung a hare's pelt, and horsehair taken from the mane of a white horse, and they tied woodpecker feathers on it. This sacrifice was intended for Bayanay. They asked for a rich quarry in their prayers performed for the spirit of the dark forest. In the old times a white shaman did the ceremony: the shaman of the ayii deities. He poured butter mixed with q'umis or sorat on the sacrifice from a hamiyah (large wooden ladle). On the occasion of the alghis the priest, shouting 'Urui!', also sprinkled some q'umis on the hunter.” (GOGOLEV 1993:23)

The Turkic peoples, however, were not the only ones who knew about and respected the spirit owner of forests, so did the hunter tribes living further north.

The Finnish researcher Toivo Lehtisalo visited the Yurak Samoyeds already in 1912, gathering valuable folklore data. Among the forest Yuraks, who belong to the Uralic group of peoples, the existence of an animistic world view was still obvious in those times. The forest spirit, the *parnee*, for example, is such a category: an invisible, malicious being, who can even kill people. It was believed to be a female being, who lives underground in a decayed tree-trunk, and, according to some accounts, has a human exterior, and possesses wings (LEHTISALO 1924:41).

Uno Harva prepared a comprehensive study of Finno-Ugrian mythology in the first decades of this century, dedicating several chapters of his work to animistic ideas. In some chapters he described forest and water spirits, the spirits of the weather (sky and wind), mother of fire, and the spirit places of plants and of the Earth (HARVA 1927:chapters XI–XV). Among the Selkups, who live along the river Ob, one can still

find animistic beliefs, thus S. M. Malinovskaya (1990) recounts that in order to ensure the success of fishing, one should give a gift or a sacrifice to the spirit owner of the water (*utkim-loz*).

Among the Nenets, who live in Northern Siberia, animistic beliefs are still alive today. This was the subject of M. Ya. Barmich's lecture at a 1990 Helsinki conference, the main theme of which was *Circumpolar and Northern Religions*.

"The Nenets people have always been conscious of the existence of spirits (in Nenets tadebtso) living side by side with them. The Nenets are confident that good spirits protect them from evil spirits, and provide them with a fortunate life. Custom and taboo are the two aspects of their spiritual life – positive and negative.

Thus the custom of feeding the fire reveals the traits of a good attitude towards the fire spirit. This custom has survived up to the present time. When sitting down to dinner, a senior person, if not all the persons are present at the dinner, is sure to throw a piece of foodstuff, pour some soup, tea or alcohol to the fire.

The taboos connected with the cult of fire are aimed not to hurt or pollute fire which gives pure warmth and to life prosperity, so that the people are forbidden to pour water on fire hastily, throw any unclean sweepings to the fire, or to spit into the fire. It used to be forbidden to stir up fire with sharp metal objects, otherwise the hostess of fire might be wounded. Women and girls are forbidden to step over the fire, since they are considered unclean and may pollute the fire." (BARMICH 1990:1–2)

The Samoyeds also believed that fire was a living being, notably an old woman. The licking flames of the fire are her movements, and She is the guardian of the tent, who immediately gets angry if someone throws trash or trodden wood shavings, or spits into the fire, or hits it. When children lost their teeth, they told them to throw the teeth into the fire, so that 'Old Grandmother Fire' could give them new ones instead. They were awed by fire, and respected its power so much that their swore by it, saying "May I be devoured by Old Grandmother Fire if I am guilty!" (LEHTISALO 1924:103).

Among the Turkic peoples of Siberia the Tuvans held the compulsory family holiday "fire-feast", which meant that under the direction of the most powerful shaman they sacrificed a lamb or a calf to the fire. They were feeding the fire with oil and butter, so that then following year the fire spirit would provide the family members with health and happiness (KENIN-LOPSAN 1993:31). The Yakuts categorized the spirit owner of fire (*Uat iččite*) among the most revered spirits, elevated to the rank of a deity.

"For the Yakuts of the old beliefs this god was a grey-haired, loquacious, old man in perpetual motion. What he chatters and twaddles is intelligible only to the few: shamans understand him, also the tiny babies whose ears are still not used to the comprehension of human speech. The fire, burning in the family hearth, however, understands brilliantly what is being said and done around him. Hence the warning that it would be dangerous to insult the fire. It was thought of as a living being, wherefore it was not advisable to poke at fire with iron. Housewives always attempted to keep the fire satisfied, and they gave him a piece of everything they cooked or baked. Similarly he got some from the results of a lucky hunting expedition." (GOGOLEV 1993:19)

The Tunguz of the Far East also personified fire and gave its spirit food and drinks (TUGOKULOV 1978:425).

The majority of Uyghurs live today in China. Zhong Jinwen, a researcher of Yellow Uyghur (Yoghur) shamanism, studied the cult of the Sun, the Moon and the heavenly bodies in Uyghur folk tales. As a starting point he stated that Yoghur shamanism is permeated with the idea that everything in nature possesses a soul. One interesting example he brought was the sun. Quoted as follows:

"Sun and fire are originally the one and the same god in the thinking of primeval man, they become divided into two deities in a later stage of social development only. The sun-god fosters and supports all beings, the fire-god, however, exists for the benefit of man only." (ZHONG 1995)

The Spirit Helpers of the Shaman

As we have seen, the animistic mythology of Siberian shamans, which is full of spirit beings, provides an ideological context to serve as a basis for the formation of the idea of spirit helpers. This whole paper aims to prove that point.

Two things follow from animism as a world view: one is the ideology of totemism, the other is the idea of helping spirits. I am not discussing totemism in the present paper, because I have already given an analysis of the interface of shamanism and totemism in an earlier one (HOPPÁL 1975).

M. Eliade has already pointed out the central role of spirit helpers, which can even become the shaman's alter ego. Notably, that is how the shaman's need for identification with the spirit helpers can be understood. In this case the shaman ventures to the soul-flight in the shape of the animal. All comprehensive studies mention these animal-like spirit helpers (see PERRIN 1995:38–39; VITEBSKY 1995:66).

"...Siberian shamans generally have animal helpers like bears, wolves and hares, or birds like geese, eagles or owls. Yakuts, for example, view bulls, eagles and bears as their strongest allies, preferring them to wolves or dogs – the spirits of lesser shamans." (DRURY 1994:27–28)

The idea of spirit helpers of an animal shape can be supposed to derive from its ancient character, from the age when for human beings animals represented both idols and an inscrutable force, which they could only scarcely control, and then only with the help of magic. That era goes back to the Palaeolithic, when animals were generally looked upon as superior and sacred, which is why they were portrayed with preference in ancient petroglyphs, rock art and cave paintings. Human figures – representing the first shaman or magician – appeared only later (see HOPPÁL 1994:37; VITEBSKY 1995:28–29). It is therefore perfectly natural that shamans wanted to identify themselves with powerful, strong and intelligent animals.

Shamans, however, possessed not only animal helpers, since it follows from animism that all phenomena of nature can serve as spirit helpers. Even today, one of the most crucial problems of anthropology is how far a researcher is able to penetrate the culture being under examination, how much he/she is able to comprehend the world view and the language of a given culture. Language skills of a native level are of utmost importance in the examination of mythology and, within that, soul beliefs.

Luckily, in Siberia today we can find many *native* ethnographers and folklorists working, who publish authentic data and descriptions. Such is M. Kenin-Lopsan, an expert on Tuvan shamanism, who is of Tuvan origin.

Kenin-Lopsan differentiated among five categories of shamans, starting from the Tuvan belief that only persons inheriting shamanhood can become true shamans. Kenin-Lopsan categorized Tuvan shamans in the following five groups, according to the origins of their powers:

1. Shamans who directly descend from previous shamans, or shaman ancestors. It is noteworthy that these shamans called upon their ancestors or mentioned their abodes in their invocation before their rituals.

2. Shamans who originate themselves from earth and water spirits (in Tuvan: *cher sug öazinden hamnaan hamnar*). The members of this group have obtained their shamanic powers from the host spirits of water and earth. The existence of these is without doubt connected to the animistic beliefs of the local Turkic peoples, since one of the characters of animistic mythology was *Yer-Shub*, the god of Water and Earth.

3. The members of the third group descend from the sky, their name was *tengri boo* (sky shaman). They had a relationship with rainbow: it related powers to them, or it gave a sign for them to perform their shamanic rituals. Shamans in this category chanted in their songs about various natural phenomena – storms, thunder and lightning; what is more, a man struck by lightning was to become a really powerful shaman. We can suppose that through their animistic spirit helpers this group of Tuvan shamans was responsible for the weather.

4. Shamans originating from the evil spirit called *albis* (*albistan hamnaan hamnar*). This evil spirit, which can manifest either as a man or a woman, steals the soul of the shaman-to-be, who falls ill with a really serious sickness (for example, epilepsy or temporary insanity). If he/she gets cured, such a shaman will be called a “sexless shaman” (*uk chok hamnar*) This category contained some very powerful shamans.

5. The last group also acquired their abilities from evil spirits, from a devil-like spirit called *aza*. This kind of shaman always invites his/her spirit helpers to the session to fight sickness (spirits of sickness). It would seem that fighting diseases was the chief function of this group of shamans (KENIN-LOPSAN 1993:1–5).

The activities of the “free soul” of the shaman are marked in accordance with the various animal shapes of the spirit helpers. This means that during the trance, the soul flight, as fish they would swim to the underground waters, to the domain of the dead, as birds they would soar to the sky gods of the upper world, while in the form of reindeer stags or bulls they would fight other shamans' spirit helpers or evil spirits on the ground.

The helpers of Tunguz – Nanai and Udekhe – shamans, as I have confirmed during my own field work – are members of the family, and influential shamans strive to collect all the spirits that belonged to other family members, relatives and earlier shamans to serve and strengthen themselves. Among the shamans of the Oroch people there were some who had as many as fifty such spirit helpers (QUI 1989).

Buryat shamans formed a very intimate relationship with their spirit helpers, as we learn from Roberte Hamayon's interpretation - they could even enter into sexual relationships. The whole shamanic session, with its increasing speed of drumming, consists of symbolic motions altogether comparable to sex (HAMAYON 1990:454–491).

Helping spirits and the symbolic meanings attached to them lead us to a hitherto quite neglected field, towards something we could call the semiotics of shamanism.

Here we should begin with the well-known fact that in a culture everything can be understood as a sign, according to the theories of ethnosemiotics (HOPPÁL 2002). We live in a world of signs and symbols, and this has always been the case with religious phenomena, and Siberian shamanism is no exception to this. We may declare that all the paraphernalia and ceremonies of shamanic rituals have been symbolic. Let us quote first Wilhelm Radloff, the linguist and traveller of the 19th century, who visited the lands of the Altaic Turks, and published his travel notes under the title *Aus Sibirien*, in which a particularly rich description of a shamanic ritual appears, beginning with the human-shaped spirit owner of the drum:

“Inside the drum, on the longitudinal aid of the frame there is a grip shaped like a stick, usually representing a man standing with outstretched hands, who is called the

master owner of the drum (düngür asi). A round head is carved onto the inner end of the handle, with button-shaped eyes on the head, with an iron stick symbolizing the hands. On this and the handle red or blue ribbons were attached, which symbolized the ancestors of the shaman, recalling their memory.” (RADLOFF 1884:31)

The enlivening of the drum was followed by the first element of the ritual – Radloff's authentic description tells the story of a horse sacrifice –, the invocation of the spirit helpers. Almost all the deities and spirit beings of the shamanistic pantheon are invited, “because without their help the shaman would be unable to make the journey, which is done during the ritual in the upper world of the sky” (RADLOFF 1884:31).

The shaman's costume was in its totality as well as in its details a carrier of symbols throughout Siberia (HOPPÁL 1994:108–121). Uno Holmberg-Harva (1922) perfectly summed up the main types, when he stated that types of 'bird,' 'reindeer' and 'bear'-costumes could be differentiated. In his opinion all kinds of shamanic costumes in all their constituent parts represented whatever real or imagined animal was regarded as the helper of the shaman, which, through its powers and abilities gave supernatural powers to the shaman who wore the costume. All these ideas gain their explanation from the animistic roots of shamanism (ALEKSEEV 1984:275).

In the case of Tuvan shamanism, a really powerful shaman never worked without his/her drum and costume, only weaker shamans relied solely on metal mirrors (*küzüngü*), or jew's harp (*khomuz*) (KENIN-LOPSAN 1993). While in the case of Tuvans the presence or absence of an object could signify the symbolic power of the shaman, among the Yakuts it defines two opposing categories of shamans.

Less well known is A. M. Zolotarev's monograph (1964) on the dualistic social structure and the similarly dualistic mythological structures of Siberian peoples. He quotes data from Yakut shamanism, where the main accessory of black shamans was the gown, while the symbol of white shamans was the drum. White shamans did their rituals in the daytime, while black ones chose moonless nights for theirs. White shamans served the sky spirits, the black ones malevolent spirits bringing illness. When sacrificing animals, white shamans chose white ones, while black shamans chose dark-colored animals.

It is obvious, that this series of mutually opposing symbols, which also explain each other, form a coherent world view. This world view means a way of thinking, or, to use an appropriate expression coined by Juha Pentikainen, “a grammar of mind” (PENTIKÄINEN 1995:266).

In language we put words into an order with the help of grammar, we build a world from words to create meanings. In other words, we attribute a meaning to things. We are conscious of the meaning of things from their mutual relationship. Understanding comes from revealing the inherent interdependence of things.

Beliefs in spirits in animism and in shamanic symbolism mutually suppose each other. I am going to add a few more examples to the ones we have seen before in order to shed some light on the real message of this ancient way of thinking, because it has a meaning for to us as well. Namely, if everything in nature has a spirit (or soul), then we ought to behave in a way so that we avoid hurting, insulting, or polluting them (SEROV 1988).

A characteristic attitude of protecting and not harming Nature is revealed in the belief system and taboos of the Todzha living in Tuva, described by N. A. Alekseev in his monograph on the religions of the Siberian Turkic nations:

"According to the belief of the Todzha Tuvans even big rivers and lakes have their spirit owners, which appear to people in the form of women only. They performed sacrifices to these before fishing: they tied a čalama on the tree near the river or lake, or sprinkled some tea or milk on the bank. According to their beliefs, every arzhan (medicinal spring) has its own spirit owner. The people who went there prayed to the spirit of the medicinal waters, making supplications that they would be cured at least for a year or two. Around the arzhan hunting was forbidden, because all the animals and birds there were regarded as the property of the spirit owner. It was also an obligatory rule to avoid polluting the water."(ALEKSEEV 1980:78–79)

The message is clear: it is our moral duty to maintain the balance of the natural order. Let us take another example, the nature philosophy of a Tunguz tribe from the Far East was thus characterized by a Russian scholar:

"A clear expression of the purely animistic attitude to nature was the hunting rite whose vestiges still make themselves felt in practically all areas populated by Evenki and Evens. The hunting cult of the Tunguz was based on the following premise: to kill animals, birds, fish, and to destroy trees in order to obtain food, clothing, fire, etc. is not contrary to nature and does not hurt it. What is contrary to nature and hunting is the useless, senseless waste of natural resources..."(TUGOLUKOV 1978:420)

Since everything in nature has a soul (spirit), it should not be injured – that is, it would be senseless to do so, because it would result in retribution. Exactly this rule was observed in former times by another Tunguz people, the Nanai, who live along the river Amur.

"In traditional Nanai society the unity of man and nature was regulated by the law of reflection or 'boomerang' (in Nanai amdori)... Centuries old observations led the Nanais to the conclusion that it is impossible to torture someone without being punished afterwards... This self-regulating system of interdependence between man and nature was kept through centuries, and maintained. At present this interdependence takes different shapes and people have almost stopped being conscious of it... Old people tell that some destruction in the spirit world upset the balance of Nature."(BULGAKOVA 1992:25–27)

I think the message of these sentences – which is ethnographical data at the same time – is quite clear: it is a program for a new, ecologically conscious animism – (*eco-animism*), for the protection of the environment. Unfortunately I have seen with my own eyes, while doing field work among the Nanai, how much injury the landscape sustained, how polluted the dignified river was, though still rich in fish, and how defenseless people could be, when they are left to fend for themselves, deprived of their traditions.

It is apparent, then, that an *ethnohermeneutical* (HOPPÁL 1992) understanding of shamanism can lead to the revelation that the belief systems of Siberian peoples, their mythological world view and their practice of shamanism, like a giant reservoir or refrigerator, have not only conserved the ideas of animism (GEMUYEV et alii 1989:136–137), but also a message valid up to this day, a message has been serving the protection of the environment from the most ancient times up until today.

The message is: balance has to be maintained in all respects – and this is typically a shaman's task. This is why we agree with Nevill Drury's statement: "Shamanism is really an applied animism." (DRURY 1989:5)



4

PAIN IN SHAMANIC INITIATION

In the past decade, anthropological research has turned with increasing interest towards shamanism. Shorter and longer monographs were published one after another both in the West (SIKKALA 1978) and in the East (NOVIK 1984), by which primarily the former Soviet Union should be understood. It is necessary to stress this because earlier this area of religious life was taboo (cf. HOPPÁL 1985, with a further ample bibliography). From the early 1980s onwards, a series of conferences have been held enabling researches – mainly the younger generation – to report on the experience they have gained in the field. These conferences included Sárospatak 1981, Manchester 1982, Vancouver 1983, Nice 1985, and also one was held in Zagreb in 1988. There have been some valuable collections of articles published as well (DIÓSZEGI ed. 1968, DIÓSZEGI – HOPPÁL eds. 1978, HOPPÁL ed. 1984).

The above list suggests that shamanism has come into vogue; this is attested not just by the large number of publications dealing with the subject (both popular and scientific works), but also by the fact that shaman-training courses, demonstration workshops teaching trance techniques are being run all over Europe and America (about these see HARNER 1980, HOPPÁL 1992). Rather than putting it down to fashion, perhaps we are closer to the truth if we say that shamanism has acquired relevance. Surely, we could learn something from this ancient healing technique!

One such popular publication (HALIFAX 1982) signals by its very title – ‘Shaman: the wounded healer’ – that the healing shaman takes upon himself the illness and the pains, for that could be one of the traditional human models of healing. The first picture in Joan Halifax’s book shows an Eskimo carving.

“This Eskimo carving, of a shaman harpooning himself, captures the essence of the shaman’s submission to a higher order of knowing which makes him able to handle unbearable pain” (HALIFAX 1982:4–5).

But one could have selected a much older picture too. The Tunguz shaman seen in, finely etched illustrations to J. G. Georgi’s book (GEORGI 1776–1780) may be regarded as an emblematical figure representing the Siberian shamans.



Plate 5.

(cf. MELZACK 1973). The problem of imaginary pain (phantom pain), in particular, needs to be clarified. It is also evident (although the exact interrelationships have yet to be elucidated) that the perception of pain is, to a large degree, subject to emotional and personality factors. In addition, the specific socio-cultural situation also determines the sensation of pain (e. g. in war, under strenuous exertion or in stressful situations – HÁRDI 1972:97–99). That is understandable enough, as every new physical stimulus tends to block out pain.

What may be of greater interest to the ethnographer-anthropologist is this, viz. that experiments have shown that the perception of pain is affected by the subject's ethnic origin. In brief, the perception of the threshold of pain is culture-bound, as, indeed, the categorization of pain is also a culture-specific phenomenon (similarly to the categories of colour – cf. OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1981:52–60). The problems of pain perception are further complicated by the fact that the world-image (*Weltanschauung*) of the given culture – or, in other words, the belief system evolved and used by the community on a daily basis – completely determines the individual's endurance of pain (about the functioning of the belief system, HOPPÁL 1976). A case in point is the fact that, in certain cultures, pain is regarded as punishment inflicted by supernatural beings (ROGERS 1982:155); therefore it can be cured by shamanic methods. Or, given that pain is the result of an evil spell, the belief system prescribes the removal, the sucking out from the body of the small objects or worms that are supposed to have caused the disease. This too is the task of the shaman, who, in this way, takes over, as it were, receives into himself the cause of the disease, relieving the patient off the pain.

No less culture-dependent than the perception of pain are the methods by which they try to battle against pain. Thus, for example, in traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture-induced anesthesia has developed almost to perfection the suspension of the sensation of pain (EKE 1986:77–90). In addition to different medicinal herbs, which were also used for anesthesia, rites were developed in the various cultures one of whose principal functions may have been precisely the teaching of the endurance of unbearable pain. These included, in India, various forms of meditation and yoga; fire-walking in Indonesia; and the Flagellant Muslim sects of Turkey and Persia. A common feature in all these is that the individual acts in the altered state of consciousness of ecstasy, that is, of trance. A particularly good example is the sun-dance ceremony of the American Blackfoot Indians, which has been revived in recent decades (see HALIFAX 1982:41 –

This picture portray, from the front and from the rear, a shaman of the region of the Argun river as he is pulling an arrow through his body (or more exactly, through his garment – GEORGI 1777:111. fig. 62.), symbolizing, as it were, the healing shaman, that is, the 'wounded healer' (HALIFAX 1982). In other words, the healing doctor must take upon himself the pain, the illness – that is one of the pivotal formulas of the shaman mythology.

Pain is a most natural biophysiological phenomenon, which, however, precisely because of the strong impact of psychic factors, medical sciences tends to interpret more as a psycho-physiological process (STERNBACH 1968); and although more and more is known about the nature of pain, there is still a lot of mystery surrounding the process of pain perception

photo by Richard ERDOES); during the dance, the thongs that the participants fasten onto their breasts tear out the flesh of their own breasts. Pain an important part of the religious ceremony.

But recent research has revealed that there is an important substance that the body generates during the ecstatic rites. It is called endorphin. Raymond Prince concluded his review of endorphins for anthropologists as follows:

"(1) the body does have an endogenous pain-controlling system that is in part mediated by endogenous opiates; (2) this system is not brought into play by ordinary day-to-day painful stimuli; (3) the system can be activated by artificial stimulation of circumscribed brain areas; (4) oddly, the system may be activated by stimulation of certain nonpain sensory endings as demonstrated by acupuncture; (5) it is possibly activated by emotional excitement and/or intense motor activity." (PRINCE 1982:311)

The scrutiny of endorphins leads on to the phenomena of shamanism, not simply because endorphins raise the threshold of pain, but also because they provide an explanation for many previously little known problems of the trance state. The other such, by now widely known, reliever of pain is hypnosis, and this technique too sheds light on a new segment of the phenomena of shamanism – for, according to recent research, the so-called ‘active alert’ state (BÁNYAI 1984) may be one of the best models of the trance state.

Pain had, and still has, an important function in initiation rituals in all parts of the world. That was particularly true of shamanism, and of its *locus classicus*, Siberia. It is interesting, that, for instance, in the Yakut culture, in Northern Siberia, the candidate has to go through two sets of ordeals. In the myths describing the birth of the shaman, the experience of dismemberment is a symbolic experiencing of pain. In addition, concrete exercises in self-torture must be performed as well. Among the Yakuts the novice hide in a forest, threw himself into water and fire, and cut himself. After ten or more days he returned to his village bloodstained and babbling incoherently.

The Indians of the North-West Coast, those young people who sought to take part in a ‘spirit dance’ ceremony, had to undergo a similarly cruel preparatory training and painful ordeals. Wolfgang Jilek, in his study on Indian healing, wrote, relying on his fieldwork among the Salish Indians.

"In Salish Spirit Dance initiates are ‘tortured’ during the repeated ‘grabbing’ procedures: they are ‘rattled’ with the deerhoof staffs, slapped, bitten, tickled, and pinched on exposed areas of chest, abdomen, and legs. In the words of a young initiate: They use the dances to work on you because they’ve got the power, and they bite on you on your side to put their power inside you. You feel a lot of pain when they bite you, you have to scream and holler, and pretty soon your song comes. I felt the pain in the stomach where they bit me. I passed out about three times while they worked on me. They kept doing that to me every morning and night for four days." (JILEK 1982:336)

In the above sketched ceremonies, pain stimulation is often combined with physical strain through forced hypermotility. The euphoria-producing effect of this combination is manifested by Salish Indian initiates, who in their exercise runs have traditionally whipped their legs with cedar bows in order to feel lightfooted, exhilarated, and tranced – indeed some candidates experienced their power-vision during such a run. One is reminded here of present-day jogging addicts who forcefully overcome the initial running pain in order to then experience their ‘jogger’s high’ – a euphoric trancelike state perhaps attributable to endorphin release (JILEK 1982:340). It is interesting to

observe the similarity between the two geographically remote, but culturally analogous cultures, as it determines the initiation ritual in terms of pain.

Highly revealing, moreover, is a case which was described by the Jileks, both of them psychiatrists, in terms of intercultural psychotherapy, while working among the Salish Indians. It provides a glimpse of what can be achieved by using, in modern psychotherapy, the differences between cultures. We quote the case as it provides a good example of a severe neurosis induced by the fear of pain.

"A Salish high school girl from in Indian reserve was brought to the hospital because of a serious suicide attempt. On the psychiatric ward she remained seclusive and depressed, not responding to any of psychotherapy ... But when she realized that she could talk about 'Indian ways' without being ridiculed she then poured out the traumatizing experiences which had led to the suicidal attempt. She lost her father in a fishing accident a few years ago and had felt haunted by his spirit. Her mother, fearing that her daughter would one day be taken by the ghosts of dead relatives to the land of the dead, wished for her to become a spirit dancer in order to be protected against these threats, but could not afford the cost of initiation. When a group of female ceremonialists offered to do the 'work' free of charge if the patient would be the first dancer of the season, there seemed no escape for her. The girl firmly believed that in the process of initiation she would be 'clubbed to death' – an expression used to denote the symbolic death and rebirth which has to take place before one becomes a spirit dancer. She thought that if she had to die anyhow, she would prefer the more peaceful way of taking an overdose of sleeping pills to the ordeal of spirit dance initiation." (JILEK-AALL – JILEK 1984:165)

This concrete – and, moreover, contemporary – example is a fine illustration of the extent to which the belief system at work in the given culture, the all myths, precondition the individual. What we have here is really a symbolic experience of pain. We have essentially the same appearing in a Yakut text, where the theme is the mythical birth of shamans:

"In far, far north, say the Yakuts, a great larch with many branches stands at the source of terrible sickness. On these branches are nests in which shamans are born ... When the shaman is to be born, a great eagle with feathers of iron and hook-like claws flies to the sacred larch and lays an egg. If the shaman is of the highest order, the bird stays with the egg for three long years. If the shaman is of a lower order, the time for nesting and hatching is only one year.

The she-eagle is called 'Mother of Animals'. On three occasions during the lifetime of shaman does she appear. The first, when she gives birth to the shaman; the second, when the shaman undergoes dismemberment and sacrifice; and the third, when the shaman meets death for the final time. ... When the neophyte has attained the proper age, his shaman-mother turns him over to three horrific black and gaunt spirits who hack his flesh to pieces. They place his head on a pole and scatter his flesh in all directions. Three other spirits take the shaman's jawbone and throw it as an oracle in order to divine the origin of all disease and suffering. In an oracle falls in a proper position, this means that the shaman can help a patient with the affliction in question." (LOMMEL 1967:55)

The Yakuts hold that the great shamans have to undergo the ordeal of dismemberment at least three times.

As an intriguing, if remote, parallel it is worth quoting here is an experiment that the contemporary Hungarian poet, Ferenc Juhász, carried out on himself. During the experiment, he was given LSD under medical supervision. In his account, which he wrote down just after the hallucinations had ceased, he reported that undergoing 'dismemberment' had been one of his most disturbing experiences.

"I am dead, it flashed across my mind, I got so frightened. The man cut off my head, tore my body into small pieces, and put it in a cauldron ... when it seemed that all my bones had been separated from the flesh, the blacksmith spoke to me, saying 'All your bones have turned into a river'; and, sure enough, I saw a river in the room, with my bones floating in it ... then, taking his pliers, he started fishing them out of the river. When he had hauled all the bones onto the bank, the blacksmith put them together and covered them with flesh, so that my body regained its former appearance." (JUHÁSZ 1967:135)

The poet's vision seems to be identical with the belief in dismemberment of the Siberian shamans, and afterwards both felt reborn.

The insight of psychiatrist John Weir Perry into the psychosymbolic process of individuals diagnosed as schizophrenic gives us important clues about the archetypal nature of the shamanic complex. For instance, death occurs in the process of dismemberment and sacrifice, the person is tortured, chopped up, and his or her bones are rearranged (see PERRY 1974; HALIFAX 1982:7). It is interesting to observe how identical the archetypal patterns of the shamanic ordeal are from Lapland to Manchuria; not to mention the fact that the shaman's journey symbolized precisely this, that only after enduring pain is the shaman reborn, becoming strong and possessed of knowledge. "The realization of power occurs most frequently in the midst of an ordeal, a crisis involving an encounter with death." (HALIFAX 1982:10)

Other culture-transmitting figures related to the shaman, such as the priest or the singer of folk epic, also gain their knowledge after the ordeals of initiation. Thus, for instance, in Turkish folk stories on the *asiks* (a Turkish bard), there is the characteristic motif of the sleep into which the hero falls invariably after some painful and exhaustive physical or moral ordeal. İlhan Başgöz has compared this motif with the three stages of the shamanic initiation ceremony, notably (1) the ordeal; (2) the symbolic death; (3) the reborn personality embarks upon its new life (BASGÖZ 1966:3–7).

Examples may be furnished from European culture too, i. e. from the world of ancient Greek religion.

Jack Lindsay, in his book devoted to the study of early Greek religion and culture, as well as the origins of drama, claims that there are striking similarities between the structure of the ancient mysteries, the main parts of the tragedy, and the patterns of initiation rituals. Namely, all of them start with the novice's departure (*pompe*), followed by death and rebirth (*agon* and *sparagmos*), and, finally, by the return of the initiate (*komos*). This pattern expresses the suffering, death and rebirth of the god, the pangs of ordeal, death and renewal in the initiation (LINDSAY 1965:295).

It is interesting to note here that these commonalities seem to be cultural universals which are structural of shamanic initiation as well.

Surveying the examples enumerated, it may be stated that pain is an important element of initiation rituals – it appears to be something of a cultural universal. The ritual significance of pain is, in all probability this, viz. that the fear felt prior to and during the initiation is suppressed by means of physical pain; this, sharpened to the point where it is unbearable, subsequently abates, resulting in a sense of rebirth. Every initiation, but especially shamanic initiation, was a preparation for the endurance of pain. Pain, by virtue of its repetition, foreshadows that which is to be expected; this, while aggravating the fear and the pain itself, tends, at the same time, to make them endurable.

The way to get closer to an (ethno-)hermeneutic understanding of cultural phenomena lies through attending to the voice of tradition (GADAMER 1984:258). The myth and the rite, as texts of culture, reveal their message. Pain, according to its anthropological concept, features, in the shamanic initiation, as symbolic

dismemberment; yet, it also denotes the endurance of physical pain. The individual, the shaman, suffers alone for the community, because the experience of pain is a pivotal element in the human formula for obtaining knowledge. Suffering is part of the healing process, since healing is invariably a collective action; thus symbolic pain, such as dismemberment is made subservient to the healing of collective fears (social pain). That may represent the anthropological understanding of pain.



DEATH EXPERIENCES IN SIBERIAN SHAMANISM

5

It was in 1912 among the Yurak–Samoyed that the Finnish researcher T. Lehtisalo recorded the legend about a shaman who

“After drumming, went up into the sky to Nushu. Nushu said that he had not called him, and ordered him to go to Ngaah, that is, to Death, and become his son-in-law. After seven days of wandering underground the shaman found Death’s hut. Death, however, did not want to marry either of his two daughters to him, but said instead that the shaman should become his servant, and should he say no, he would devour him. They fought for two days afterwards, Death became exhausted, and said: Please, let me go! Do not kill me! I will give you my youngest daughter. Stay with me and become my helper. Henceforth, if a shaman is shamanizing up in the earthly world with goodwill, I will release the souls of the sick. – That is how the shaman became the son-in-law of Death.”
(LEHTISALO 1980:403–404)

This Nenets legend from the turn of the century, which is the myth of reference of our paper, connects as a matter of course the figure of the shaman-sorcerer with death and wandering in the underworld.

Let us quote another text, which originates from a faraway, also shamanistic culture, the Manchu. It was at the beginning of the 17th century that the Manchu dynasty gained the throne of the vast Chinese empire, and the story we are going to quote, of the shamaness Nishan originates from that time:

“... Then the shamaness Nishan donned her bird’s gown, tied her skirt with a girdle decorated with tiny bells, and put on her head gear with nine birds ... Her strong voice was booming ... (then)... the spirit possessed her ... she fell on the ground ... she was going with the spirits ... they were following her that way, towards the realm of the dead... She was going that way until she reached the banks of the Red River. She took a look around, but she could not see a boat to take her across. No sign of a boatman, either... Then she cast her drum into the water, and stood herself on top of it, and, like a whirlwind, crossed the river in the blink of an eye...” (NISHAN 1987:21–28).

Then she ran across the three gates of the realm of the dead, found and retrieved the soul of the young man who came from a rich family, and brought him back to the realm of the living, that is, she brought him back to life.

A similar myth from the Buryat tradition is quoted by Vilmos Diószegi, concerning the first shaman:

"... Then the shaman continued to cast his spell even more forcefully. He descended to the underworld, where the wicked spirits keep the captivated souls of those humans who were sentenced to death, under lock. He could not find the soul of the little boy there either. The shaman looked for the soul everywhere: beneath the earth, under the waters, inside the caves and in the forests, but he found no trace of it. At last he mounted his drum and rode on it to heaven, to continue his search there. And there, finally, he found the soul in god's heaven, hidden in a bottle, and the bottleneck was plugged by the right hand of god. The shaman fell to his knees and begged god to return the soul of the little boy. But god would not give it to him. So the shaman went out, but he was back in a minute in the shape of a wasp, and he stung god's forehead. With alarm, god struck his forehead with his right hand and meanwhile, the shaman snatched the soul of the little boy from the bottle and escaped with it." (DIÓSZEGI 1968:111–112)

All three tales share the common element of showing the shaman's calling closely tied with death, and with an underground realm which is the dwelling place of the souls of dead people. We could quote many more passages about the journeys underground of great shamans (see POTAPOV 1991:142–143). One of them visits the empire of Khan *Erlik*, which he could access only through great difficulties and after various kinds of tests for instance, walking on a bridge made of sharp blade. There he could witness the tribulations of evil souls, haunted by terrible visions of Hell (ELIADE 1974:202–204).

Why death and the figure of the shaman have been interlinked in the belief system of Siberian (or Eurasian) peoples is the question to which this paper seeks to give an answer.

Answers already exist – obvious, ones or seemingly so. Mircea Eliade, who has written one of the most comprehensive works on shamanism to date started out from the idea of the mediators of the shaman and brought examples to prove that one important function of the shaman was the role of a psychopomp. In other words, one of his/her tasks is the leading of dead peoples' souls to the other world (See ELIADE 1974:205–204).

The conception of the soul and of helping spirits in the world view of shamanism could also contribute to the close relationship of the shaman with death (see MASSENZIO 1984:204–209.). One of the shaman's areas of activity was the treatment of death. We could mention here the cult of *ongons* in Siberia, on which D. Zelenin wrote a monograph in the mid-thirties. He pointed out that "primitive peoples always made the connection between death and the moving in of a spirit of sickness into the body. We know that these peoples did not regard death as a natural phenomenon that is, sick people died from the intrusion of the *ongons*" (ZELENIN 1980:90). And since only the shaman possessed knowledge of which *ongon* caused the sickness, only he could cast it out of the sick person.

Another possible explanation is derived from the dual image of the soul characteristic of Eurasian peoples. During the meticulous observation of shamanic rituals it became obvious to Åke Hultkrantz that the concept of the dual soul is quite widespread among the Northern hunting tribes: "... in the majority of cases it was the free-soul of the shaman that went to look for the lost free-soul of the sick person... while his body-soul remained in the body to keep it alive..." (HULTKRANTZ 1984:31–34).

Ivar Paulson has dealt with the images of the soul (*Seelenvorstellungen*) of Eurasian peoples, as well as with the phenomenology of shamanism, and he states that "...

shamanism is an animistic ideology, one characteristic of which is an ecstatic-visionary technique” (PAULSON 1964:131). That insight of the Estonian scholar not only casts some light upon the close interconnectedness of animistic thinking and shamanism (HOPPÁL 1994:13, 1997) – it also serves as the basis of an explanation of an entirely different kind. For the shaman to be the first definition moment is selection – when the spirits reveal that he/she has been chosen to fulfill the role of the shaman. The would-be shaman then gets sick, and is tortured by visions (see SIIKALA 1987:119). That belief complex is widespread in Eurasia and one can even see it in local shamanism in Japan (WAIDA 1993:85), where dreamlike visions announce the appearance of spirits in the life of the would-be shaman.

During the course of visions or sickness the would-be shaman goes through near-death experiences (see ZALESKY 1987), through being dismembered or hacked to pieces in a dream. We are going to quote some more original fieldwork about that symbolic death-experience. G. V. Ksenofontov’s data derive from the Yakuts from 1925:

“Whoever wants to become a shaman should go through a psychotic (soul-disease) during adolescence; this can last as long as seven years. Before turning into a shaman, he can see that from above and from below the dead shamans’ souls, changed into evil spirits (üördar) gather together to cut his body up. As it is told, during that time the shaman sleeps for three days, lying like a dead man.” (KSENOFONTOV 1928:5)

We can find an even more detailed description in the data gathered by A. A. Popov, who took them down among the Yakuts of the Vilyuysk region, similarly at the beginning of the twenties’:

“The would-be shaman of the upper world is cut up the following way: during his sufferings he falls into a state of insensivity (to the people surrounding him) and can see that a large number of spirits approach him, cut his head off, put it on a shelf, or stick it on a long pole. Though his head is divorced from his trunk now, he will not lose his ability to see, hear and feel. The spirits who cut his head off will hack his body into very small pieces (according to some accounts to 99 parts) and put it in three separate piles. Then they take the pieces into their mouths and spit them out to the spirits, from the first pile to the spirits of the upper world, from the second to the spirits of the Earth, and from the third to the spirits of the Lower World, while calling each spirit by its respective name.

If during the cutting up the spirits (iččä) of herbs and trees manage to steal some pieces from the body, the shaman, although ordained for good deeds, can become evil.

Then somehow the spirits put all the little pieces back into their piles, they stick them together with their saliva, and when the body regains its former shape, they replace the head and the person wakes up again. I heard tell that in earlier times the dismemberment of the body took place in reality.” (POPOV 1947:5)

The shaman called by the spirits of the Lower World spoke the following way about his initiation tortures:

“... I often lost consciousness. In springtime I was considered mad by those around me, the people in my house had to keep me affixed to a pole for the period of seven days. At the end of the sixth day of my madness I began to see visions again. I am beginning to recall the motions when I began to hear that voice: ‘We are going to take you to the Northern One!’ – then they took me to a lowly, dirty and dark yurt, then they cut my head off. I felt terrible pain, and they proceeded to cut my body into little pieces, and together with the head, they put them in an iron cradle. In that cradle the little pieces of my body joined back together and I regained my usual shape. They bound me fast with colored ropes and began to rock the cradle. After a certain time they untied the rope, and, piercing with a sharp object they counted all my bones, and all the fibers of my muscles (atim

shashin) and declared: 'It has been proven that one bone and three muscle fibers of yours are superfluous'." (POPOV 1947:8)

Finally let us quote from the Siberian data of Vilmos Diószegi, which were published in his book *Tracing Shamans in Siberia*:

"... His soul is taken to the shaman ancestor and there they show him a kettle full of boiling tar. There are people in it. There are some who are known to the shaman. A single rope is fastened across the kettle and they order him to walk over it. If he succeeds he will live long. If he falls into the kettle, he still might become a kam, but usually they do not survive.

My informants began finally to grasp what I wanted to hear. The wife of Kyzlasov spoke up:

That kettle is always there. Not only the shamans fall into it. They say that the soul of a sick person might also tumble into it. Some of the shamans can not be persuaded to attempt passing over the kettle. This I know from certain people who told me that they were forced to pass around the edge of the kettle. They did it, and as they did not fall into the kettle, they became shamans..." (DIÓSZEGI 1968:60)

"... The candidate loses consciousness while sick. During this time he presents himself to the shaman-ancestor of his clan. When he gets there, they seek his excess bone. They cut up his whole body into pieces, they separate the heart and the lungs and examine each piece by the light. Meanwhile he sees himself cut up, he sees as his whole body and his viscera are being measured, whilst they are looking for the excess bone..." (DIÓSZEGI 1968:61)

".... I have been sick and I have been dreaming. In my dreams I had been taken to the ancestors and cut into pieces on a black table. They chopped me up and then threw me into the kettle and I was boiled. There were some men there: two black and two fair ones. Their chieftain was there too. He issued the orders concerning me. I saw all this. While the pieces of my body were boiled, they found a bone around the ribs, which had a hole in the middle. This was the excess-bone. This brought about my becoming a shaman. Because, only those men can become shamans on whose body such a bone can be found. One looks across the hole of this bone and begins to see all, to know all and, that is when one becomes a shaman... When I came to from this state, I woke up. This meant that my soul had returned. Then the shamans declared: 'You are the sort of man who may become a shaman. You should become a shaman, you must begin to shamanize!'" (DIÓSZEGI 1968:62)

Roberte Hamayon did fieldwork among the Buryats, and according to her interpretation the initiation sickness, which is full of sufferings and appears in the form of tortures in the life of the chosen person, that the *udha* (the inherited shamanic abilities) spirit of the shamanic ancestor should be inherited from generation to generation. The would-be shaman thus undertakes sufferings for the good and for the service of the community, and later undertakes the profession of shamanism itself. The body of the shaman is cut up and his flesh is boiled. This makes him able to transcend the limits between the categories (HAMAYON 1990:278, 692). Cooking generates a different quality – consider that the opposition of raw vs. cooked is essentially the opposition of nature and culture. The would-be-shaman steps from the category of natural ignorance to the category of knowledge. It is not by chance that for many peoples the name of the shaman is related to the root of the verb "to know" (the Tunguz root *sha* is such).

An important motif here is that a "superfluous bone" found during the dismemberment. Ivan Kortt, a Russian ethnographer prepared a valuable paper for the conference at Sárospatak, where he analyzed the significance and the meaning of the motif of dismemberment.

According to Kortt, the whole trance-journey, together with the initiatory dismemberment essentially serves the shaman's empowerment and rebirth from sufferings. Without these he would be powerless: it is suffering that makes him strong. Only through suffer he can serve his community. The shaman suffers for the whole community, representing the whole community in the other world. He does not undergo his initiation as an individual, but as the representative of the community. Bones (the skeleton represented on the robes) symbolize the direct relationship between the shaman and his community (KORTT 1984:299).

The idea that the shaman mediates between life and death (MASSENZIO 1984:210), is fortified by the fact that the spirits force the shaman to accept his calling through tortures. Through suffering the body and soul of the shaman are both radically transformed and reborn. The various spirits of sicknesses partake (feast) of the cup-up body, and the would-be shaman thereby gains the right to heal later (POPOV 1936:15).

The vision of becoming a shaman as well as the experience of the suffering and dismemberment are basically the ritual experiences of initiation: there are symbolic death and rebirth at the same time (ELIADE 1974:59). The death-experience, the suffering is so strong that most peoples, especially around the cold arctic Northern areas regarded it as identical with death, only to be experienced in the full trance state (BOGORAZ 1910). It is not by chance that the Chukchee who partake of certain mushrooms which cause hallucinations (*Amanita muscaria*) told Yuri Simchenko that the fly agaric led them to the dead, so that they could meet their ancestors:

"If my mother, father or children who died, visit me in my dreams, I go to see them. I take five mushrooms and eat them. Then I lie down to sleep. My body remains in the bed. Only my soul goes where the mushrooms lead me..."

The mushrooms can be as different as people. The bigger ones can be very benevolent. If an agaric asks you in your dream: "So, where are we going? Where do you want yourself to be taken?" then that agaric will always obey you. Then all you have to do is say "Take me to my father..." and it will know everything already. It knows where the father of that person is and takes you directly on the road leading to the dead. If the road is good, it will take you there very soon, it will lead you to where your father lives.

"And what is that place like?" – I interrupted the story.

"I did not retain the memory very exactly. Only that everything is full of ice there. As if a giant icy mountain crest would rise up where the dead live. There are some kind of cave-like holes in it, but some people appeared in those. I could not even see my father very clearly. I could only hear his voice, what he was speaking."

"And what was he saying?"

"He said it was not good for him there. That it was very cold, and life was hard. He asked me to sacrifice a reindeer for him, so that that reindeer would go to him. And I myself, when returning to this world, went to our shaman. The old man was still alive, he was a distant relative of mine somehow. He was a strong shaman. Without any kind of agaric he visited the Upper people, as well as those who were dead already." (SIMCHENKO 1993:50–51)

All around the world the meeting of dead ancestors is a characteristic motif of initiatory trance-states. Similar to the Siberian examples (POPOV 1968) the would-be Tamang shaman of Nepal meets the spirit of his grandfather on his father's side during trance (PETERS 1982), while in an altered state, half dreaming, half awake he is watching himself from a point outside his body.

Presenting his data on the female shamans of the Indian Sora people Piers Vitebsky wrote:

"... A Sora shaman fasts on the morning of a journey to the underworld... An assistant lights a lamp which will be kept burning in the darkness throughout the shaman's Journey... The shaman sits down with her eyes closed... she sings a song calling on a succession of former shamans who are now dead... The earth and the underworld are linked by a huge tree, down which she must clamber... After some minutes of singing, her voice peters out and her head flops down on to her breast, meaning that her soul has departed." (VITEBSKY 1995:70)

This short quote can serve as a reminder that the journey to the underworld basically symbolizes death; the shaman even acts out the state of being dead, that is, the state of loss of consciousness is a pre-death state. According to certain explanations the underworld journey is a symbol of returning to the womb. While journeys to the upper world can be frightening but exciting, the road to the Lower World is full of dangers and deadly threats.

It is interesting to note how similar out-of-body and near-death experiences are to the descriptions of shamanic journeys (VITEBSKY 1995:73). Dying people – or those returning from a near-fatal accident – reportedly soar above their bodies, or fall down into a long dark tunnel, at the end of which there is a bright light. Those participating in the shamanic workshops of Michael Harner also frequently report falls into a dark tunnel of the underworld. I have heard such stories myself. I was an ear-witness of these reports in Big Sur, California, in 1984 and 1990. On another occasion a young woman did not want to share her experience after the journey, she was merely shaking with sobs. Later she said that she had met her dead two-year-old son in the underworld during the journey, in the realm of the dead. She was not in communication with her helping spirits, rather with the little dead person who meant for her a perpetual pain.

This means that the shamanic journey is essentially a journey to the Other World: it is not simply the world of the spirits, but very concretely the world of the dead.

An examination of contemporary "urban shamanism" would lead us very far (HOPPÁL 1992:197–209), but one thing is certain, that people of today turn with great interest towards the shamans of old times, as well as towards ancient techniques of trance and ecstasy which are slowly sinking to oblivion.

Eliade writes about this question in his book *Birth and Rebirth*:

"The shamans and mystics of primitive societies are considered – and rightly – to be superior beings; their magico-religious powers also find expression in an extension of their mental capacities. The shaman is the man who knows and remembers, that is, who understands the mysteries of life and death." (ELIADE 1964:102)



COSMIC SYMBOLISM IN SIBERIAN SHAMANHOOD

6

The Shaman as Mediator

One of the most important characteristics of Siberian shamans was the fact that they mediated between the world of humans and the spirit-world; and they would do it in an altered state of consciousness, and always in the interests of some definite collective goal (cf. HULTKRANTZ 1984:34). The shaman was the religious specialist, because among most Eurasian peoples, there were several persons performing different, specific sacred functions and several kinds of shaman, each having a special function, whose function it was to maintain communication between the world of daily routine and the transcendental world, i.e. between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

That is the kind of large oppositions that mythopoetic thinking tends to operate with, describing, as far as possible, everything in the form of dual oppositions, such as black–white, up–down, male–female, left–right, cold–hot, light–dark. It is no accident that the social structures of daily living, the clan organization, the interrelationship between families and tribes, we defined in these terms, in the terms of oppositions; and that the narrative structure of creation myths, too, are characterized by dual oppositions (for a more detailed exposition of this see ZOLOTAREV 1964; on the Ob-Ugrian examples VERES 1975). The way of describing the world that mankind used before modern scientific thinking (and partly still uses) is called “mythopoetic” by semiotic research (HOPPÁL 2001). On this, V. V. Ivanov writes: “One of the most characteristic features of the mythopoetic model of the world is the portrayal of the world by means of two polarly counterposed strings of symbols – i.e. a dual symbolic classification. The universal dual oppositions include the counterposition of the two halves of the day (day–night) and the two seasons of the year (summer–winter).” (IVANOV 1984:393) In the opinion of the Russian scholar, that was the way of thinking that encapsulated archaic cultures, defining the sense of mythical origin not only of endogamous groups but also the divergence of ritual practice (e.g. the eating of raw and cooked meat), also pervading physical culture. Religious consciousness, the world view of the shamans also conforms to the rules of the mythopoetic cognitive mode; thus we may find good examples of this in world of

Siberian shamanism. Let us review the ritual paraphernalia of the shaman: his garments (primarily the shaman's cloak and the cap and/or the crown), and then some either important attributes.

The Shaman's Garments

The ritual garments – both in their entirety and in their details are a carrier of symbolic meanings. Given that the shaman would, in the course of the ceremony, act as a go-between the micro- and the macrocosm, this mediator role did manifest itself in the symbolism, too, of his/her garments. The shaman has the capacity to cross the boundary of worlds; and the symbolism portrayed this permanent intermediary condition, the transition, the dual character (RIPINSKY-NAXON 1998:124–125).

As Mircea Eliade baldly put it: “In itself, the costume represents a religious microcosm qualitatively different from the surrounding profane space. For one thing, it constitutes an almost complete symbolic system, for an other its consecration has impregnated it with various spiritual forces and especially with ‘spirits’ ... the shaman transcends profane space and prepares to enter into contact with the spiritual world” (ELIADE 1974:147).

Indeed, that was the nature of the very starting-point – i.e. ritual nakedness (the “*zero degree*” of dress!), which was, in effect, a attribute of the state of being outside society. There are data to prove that the shaman's cloak could be donned only on the naked body (e.g. the Chukchee shaman – cf. HOPPÁL 1994:15. picture).



Plate 6.

Given that it was the shaman's cloak that came into contact with the spirit-world, it was particularly important that should, in every detail, answer that purpose – i.e. that it should ensure the transition between worlds. Therefore the right side of the shaman's coat of the famous Nganasan shaman Demnime Kosterkin (1913–1980) was coloured with red dye, the left side with black. The former stood for spring and day, the latter symbolized night, winter and darkness (GRAČOVA 1978:319; see HOPPÁL 1994:131. illustration). The Russian Ethnographical Museum of St. Petersburg has an Even (Lamut) shaman's cloak (inventory number 245–303), whose symbolism was described

by T. Yu. Sem. The Russian researcher stated that each piece of the Even shaman's garments consists of two parts – one of a lighter, and one of a darker colour (white and black, red and black, white and red). The Even material makes it manifest that the darker, left side is the feminine side; while the lighter, right side is the masculine side (SEM 1993:135). Some researchers hold the view that such a colour-based dichotomy of the masculine and feminine principles was present as early as the Paleolithic age (IVANOV 1982), and that it can be traced back to the biological bases of the beginnings of the creation of human signs and symbols.

Dying was not the only method used in making the two-coloured garments of shamans; a more simple technique was to make it from reindeer skin of a light (white) and red (dark brown) colour, with the face of the skin outside.



Plate 7.

The right side was sewn using the cut normally used in men's dress, while the left side would be fashioned using the style of women's dress. A Yukagir shaman's cloak displays, on its left side, two anthropomorphic figures – figures symbolizing the shades of the dead ancestors of the shaman –; while, on the right side, we see two bird figures, the shaman's soul-escorts or spirit helpers. S. Serov concluded that the left side, the side of the shades, symbolizes the world of the ancestors; while the right, the light side stands for the world of humans (SEROV 1988). The cloak, on the back, is cut into two parts by a three-level, tree, which symbolizes the world tree conjoining the world of humans (the microcosm) and the world of spirits (the macrocosm). This cloak – according to the evidence of the card in the archive – used to belong to a Yukagir by the name of Igor Shamanov, who said when he put on the cloak he was transformed into the shamanic ancestor depicted on the left side, and could also change into a bird (SEROV 1988:248).

There are many legends about the mythical ability of Siberian shamans to change their form – and also concerning their androgynous character, i.e. the fact that they consist, at once, of a masculine and a feminine part. He stands on the borderline between the two genders (cf. the “third gender” in Eskimo shamanism – Saladin D'ANGLURE 1992); this is why he is capable of mediating between the worlds. A semantic attaches to the ritual division of the bear at the bear feast led by shamans of the Nanai, living along the Amur river. Here, the lower portion of the bear is given to the women; the upper portion to the men; the left side is given to the women, the right side to the men (SEM 1993:135).

Concerning the mythology of Nenets shamanism, an excellent monograph was written by Leonid Lar, who is himself of Nenets origin. He writes, in his book, that the Nenets shaman's dress is some sort of model of the universe, because the head-dress symbolizes the upper world, the cloak symbolizes the middle world, with the footwear standing for the lower world (LAR 1998:30). The two extreme elements are in opposition to the one at the middle, the world of humans. He presumably deduced his observations from the experiences of the inside observer, and that is how he came to summarize them.

Concerning the symbolism of the ritual dress of Siberian shamans, it can fairly be argued that, on the whole, they suggest the cosmogonic picture that corresponds to the world concept of shamanistic peoples. In short: the ritual dress of the shaman symbolizes the universe, and the middle of it may be interpreted vertically along the spinal chord, as a world axis. As L. Pavlinskaya states: “The shaman's ritual costume symbolises the universe. Making a costume equalled, in a way, the creation of a macro-cosmos: cutting

the reindeer hide = the division and destruction of the world; sewing the pieces of costume together = creation of a cosmic whole.” (PAVLINSKAYA 2001:41–48)

It can often be observed that the garments or the shaman’s coat are of two colours, are dyed in two colours: white – black (dark brown), red – black, light (the colour of the skin) – red. We find examples of this binary opposition also in the case of the cloak and the breastplate. It is a general rule that the lighter colour would be put on the right side – this was regarded as belonging to the male and a symbol of the upper world –; while the darker colour was the colour of the feminine, the lower world. The Yukagir shaman’s cloak also consists of two pieces, and the left side of it is adorned by seven human-shaped figures (the shades of the shaman’s ancestors) and seven cross-shaped figures (symbols of the soul-escorting shaman’s birds) (Hoppál 2002a:63). This symbolic opposition of meanings deriving from a dichotomy of colour may be observed in the shaman’s insignia of the Even, Koryak, and other peoples, sometimes in the opposition of spirit world/human world, sometime between good/evil, and sometimes in the light/dark or male/female opposition. The shaman, as an individual having an androgynous nature, carries within him the antithetical characteristics and is, indeed, capable of resolving the contradictions.

In Siberia, the shaman, among several peoples – because of his androgynous character – is a personality consisting of a masculine and a feminine part; and it is precisely this borderline position that renders his activity strong and effective. According to some researchers, the dichotomy of red/black, right/left, male/female is clearly traceable already in the world of the Paleolithic pictographs, and this notion (and, naturally, the data) can be used when trying to assign a date to the development of shamanism.



Plate 8.

The Shaman’s Head-dress

Another important appurtenance of the ritual dress was the shaman’s cap. The Nenets, the Ket – inhabiting the district along the Yenisey – and the Evenki considered the cap to be the most important part of the shaman’s dress, because the shaman’s strength resides in the cap. The headgear of the Even (Lamut) shaman displays a cross-shaped rosette, with a circle at its centre, from which there rises a small rod (the object can be seen in the collection of the Russian Ethnographical Museum of St. Petersburg); these presumably serve the maintenance of contact with the sky, the cosmos. If the rosette is a symbol of the universe, with the cross symbolizing its centre, then the shaman stands at the centre of the world, from where he/she may start the ceremony. In this force-centralizing position, the shaman really becomes a go-between the world and the cosmos. An added reason why the headgear is so important is the belief, held among certain peoples (e.g. the Udekhe and the Nivkh), that the soul of man can make its exit through the top of the head; so the shaman has to be protected in the heated state of the

trance. The small horn protruding from the cap symbolize the maintenance of communication with the cosmic forces.

The shaman's cap had another function as well—namely, that it protected the shaman's head, under the crowns, from the iron bands (e.g. among the Evenki). In certain cases, the symbols of the helping spirits were attached to the cap; in the north (among the Samoyed), these resembled the antlers of a stag; while in the south (among the Turks of the Altai) they mostly consisted of feathers.

This is the point where a few words are in order as to the symbolic meaning of head-dresses. When discussing the shaman's dress, it was already mentioned that – especially among the Turkic peoples of the Altai (e.g. the Teleut, the Tartars of Minusinsk, the Khakass, Karagas) – the bird symbolism was of outstanding importance. Not only did the shaman or the shaman woman consider the eagle or the swan to be his/her principal helper; they



Plate 10.

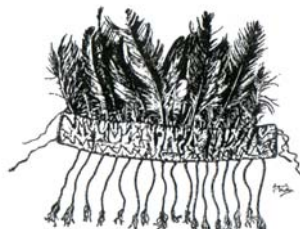


Plate 9.

would also indicate this by displaying the feathers of the chosen bird, most spectacularly in the head-dress, in the plumes of the headband. The head-dresses of the Tuva shamans displayed the plumes or feathers of wild duck, wild geese, cranes, falcons, buzzards, eagle-owls (*strix bubo*), and eagles. The eagle, as the bird of shamans, is well known in almost the entire Siberia; indeed, the birth of the first shaman is attributed to the impregnation of a woman by a gigantic eagle-like bird; this theme appears in Yakut and Manchu stories. The deeper meaning of the ornithomorphic symbolism is the fact that the shaman reports having intense experiences of flying during the trance, which he reinforces by the bird

attributes he assumes. The shaman symbolically becomes one with the animal whose characteristic features he assumes – i.e. he identifies with the helping animal.

Finally, there's another aspect of bird symbols that deserves mention – namely, that the feathers, by virtue of their lightness and because of the ability of birds to fly – birds being the masters of the air –, are also associated with the symbolism of light. The feathery head-dress encircles the shaman's head like a halo, because – in terms of the symbolism of the entire dress – it is, indeed, this part of the apparel by means of which the shaman communicates with the upper world.

The Shamans' Crown

The crown is a most prominent piece of the shaman's equipment – in both the physical and the wider sense of the word. When I saw a shaman for the first time in my life, one of the things I was most struck by was the crown he was wearing on his head. It happened back in the mid-1970s, in Moscow, in the film archives of the Ethnographical Institute of the Russian – or Soviet, as it was then – Academy of Sciences. Here, colleagues were recording on film the ceremonies of shamanizing among a small people of the north, the Nganasan. The filmmakers (Alexander Oskin and Yuri Simchenko) were filming the last shaman members of the Ngamtuso clan. They were responsible for the documentary profiling the sons of the last great Siberian shaman Dyukhodie

Kosterkin, filming them on the Tamyr peninsula. At a particular point during the ceremony, after the enlivening of the drum, prior to setting off on the journey to the next world, the shaman put the crown on his head. By this gesture, he fortified himself, as it were, for his symbolic journey to the other worlds, the upper or the lower world.



Plate 11.

Researchers have recorded that the Nganasan shamans used three kinds of crowns, depending on which world they turned towards, and with what purpose, in the course of the séance. In this way, they had a crown for the journey to the upper world, another one for the journey to the lower world, and a third one that they would use during a childbirth. Similarly, they had three different drums and three shaman's cloaks. They would use the crown which featured an eagle-like figure and two protruding horns for communicating with the spirits of the upper world. The horns symbolized the stag of the sky – the mythical being of extraordinary power which helped the shaman fly into the sky.

It was recorded among another Samoyed ethnic group, the Nenets, that the hoop of the shaman's crown symbolizes the sky, the spherical vault of the firmament, embodying the four cardinal points, as it were. The crown, as the uppermost portion of the shaman's dress, symbolized – as part of the cosmic symbolism – the upper world; it was the crown that enabled the shaman to maintain contact with the upper world. Concerning the shaman's crown having horns collected among the two ethnic groups at the beginning of the 20th century –, it was recorded that this was the insignia of the shaman, signalling his ability to communicate with the spirits of the upper world. Its strength was shown by the number of branches that the iron crown had – according to the collecting data of V. I. Anuchin, the three – yearly initiation cycles were repeated on seven occasions. On the crown, at the front, there is a blade, which was the weapon, sword or knife of shaman, which he used in the battle against hostile shamans. This latter was especially characteristic of the Ket and Selkup shaman's crowns.



Plate 12.

This type of headgear can also be seen on Siberian pictographs – or, more exactly, researchers presume that the depictions of human figures found on the rock walls, when they wear a headgear featuring horns, are portrayals of shamans. A. P. Okladnikov (1949) discovered, near the Lena river, rock engravings of this type, where the picture cut into the rock included a shaman wearing a headgear ending in horns with several points, his drum and his helping spirits. (This picture was adopted as the emblem of the International Society for Shamanistic Research – ISSR.)



Plate 13.

According to the latest research (PAVLINSKAYA 2001), the horned crowns of Siberian shamans are, based on data suggesting the appearance of metal working, probably to be dated to the centuries before and around the beginning of our era.

The crown adorned with horns is, as regards its symbolism, a badge of the strength and virility of the shaman, and, conjunctly, a symbolic weapon in the battle against the shaman rivals, as was observed among the noble stags in the animal kingdom. In other words, the shaman's antlered head-dress represented the stag-shaped animal helper.

Some researchers posit the existence in Eurasia of a highly ancient veneration of the stag, traces of the worship of the “stag of the sky” (MARTYNOV 1991). This can be traced in the pictographs and, subsequently, after the advent of metal-working, also in the archeological material. In other words, the shaman derives his strength from the sky; the antlered crown is a symbol of the belonging to the sky. Another possible explanation holds that the tiny horns of the crown symbolize the flames of fire – that is to say, these too, like the feathers, are symbols of light.

The most elaborately crafted and most intricately decorated crowns were worn and are still worn – by the Manchu shamans. On the branches of the crowns, there are tiny birds and many tiny decorations, rustling leaflike metal ornaments, which are greatly reminiscent of the gold crowns of the royal burials dating from Korea’s age of the Silla. The crowns featuring a “world tree” of the royal graves resembling the kurgans of the Altai region were the insignia of the sacred shaman-king. This is natural, given that he was the mediator between the world of the gods and that of human beings; presumably that is the reason his crown was adorned with the symbol of “sacred trees”.



Plate 14.

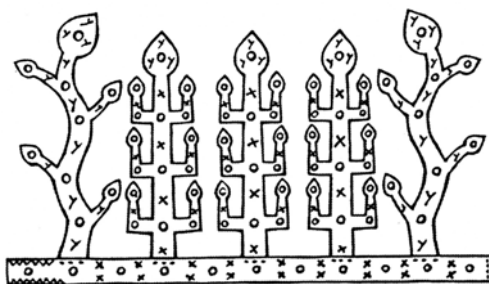


Plate 15.

The Shamans' Belt and Footwear

Where there was no characteristic shamanic dress, “ritual nakedness” was widely practiced in many places throughout Siberia; and it was especially frequent among the northern peoples of regions having an Arctic climate (in North America, the Eskimos had similar practices). The ritual meaning of this nakedness is this, that shamanizing cannot be practised in ordinary clothes, and at least a belt must be put on.

Among the Nenets of the tundra, the young shaman used his belt instead of a drum; the belt featured pieces of metal depicting the spirits of birds and other animals, birds’ claws, bear’s claws and teeth, bells and knives. These objects were all designed to protect the shaman during his hazardous journeys of trance to the other world. According to another Nenets data, the shaman’s belt helps one reach other worlds. In the symbolism of the complete shaman’s dress, the belt is the boundary between the upper world and the lower world, separating the upper masculine part from the lower body, which is the feminine, impure, lower world.

In the system of the symbolism of the Siberian shaman’s dress – if it is taken to be a mirroring of the macrocosm –, the footwear corresponds to the lower world. Even

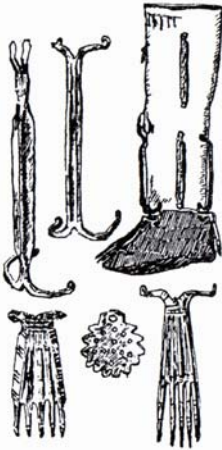


Plate 16.

collections from the beginning of the 20th century – for instance, a photo of a Ket shaman by Uno Harva – clearly show that the skeleton costume ornament continues on the footwear as well (HARVA 1938:513. Abb. 79). V. I. Anuchin recorded that the portrayal of bones on the footwear represents the shaman's reincarnation in the other world. As for the bear's paw, the symbolic meaning of this is that the human foot is not strong enough to overcome the hardships of the journey to the other world, therefore the bones of a bear are required. Among the Selkup, the bear's paw was simply a sign that the shaman was also capable of descending to the lower world.

The long irons attached to the boots of the Nganasan and the Enets shaman symbolize the leg-bones of the mythical stag helper.

The right boot, in the context of the costume, represents the “sunny” side; while the left boot stands for the world of evil spirits. The footwear of the Nenets shaman was a symbolic conduit serving to channel the negative energies from the world

of human beings into the nether world.

Summing up: because the human body was viewed as a reduced replica of the Universe, the shaman's dress and the making of it were regarded as a symbolic act of the creation or recreation of the Universe. The upper portion of the ritual costume of the shaman, the headgear, is an equivalent of the sky; while the trunk underneath corresponds to the earth, with the feet, the shaman's boots corresponding to the lower world.

The Shaman's Tree

The tree is one of the central organizing principles of the world view of Siberian shamans. In the world model, it joins the diverse worlds and the celestial layers. They imagined a gigantic tree – which, for instance, according to the Mongols, grows on the top of a huge mountain reaching to the sky. This cosmic tree became to the shamans, the “road” joining the sky and the earth, the road he has to traverse in the course of the trance. The climbing of the tree represented the ascent of the shaman to the sky.



Plate 17.

Not only the initiation, but also the raising of the young shaman happened on a tree (*turu*) (according to the belief of the Evenki). The great shamans are raised by the eagle on the top; the middle ones lower down, and the weak ones on the lower branches.

The importance to shamans of the bird symbolism was intended to strengthen “the ability of flying”. It was particularly the cult of the eagle that was very strong, since the Yakut believed that the first shaman woman conceived from an eagle.

The eagle helped the white shamans, the raven helping the so-called black shamans. In general, the various birds on the top of the shaman's trees symbolized the bird-shaped helpers of the shamans.

The tree was a graphic symbol to shamanism, given that it modelled the mediation by joining, through its roots, the lower – underground – dark world with the tree-trunk (the middle world, the world of human beings), with the crown (the upper, the

sky world, the world of birds and light, and, ultimately, of super-natural beings). It is a mediator just like the shaman. This universal character of the tree, whereby it modelled the cosmos with a single tree from the immediate environment, explains why almost everywhere, especially among the Turkic and Mongolian peoples, the veneration of the tree was so widely observed (BALDICK 2000). We would often stop on our journeys across Siberia to offer some small sacrifice at shaman's trees (in Yakutia) or at the *obo* (in Tuva and Mongolia). The historical depth of the cult is indicated by the fact that the veneration of the tree is present also among the Tunguz peoples, the Manchus, indeed, even among the Koreans – so much so that, at the entrance to villages, beside the road, there are spirit poles with bird-shaped ends (*sottae*) of this kind guarding the entrance to the villages, to avert evil. Throughout Eurasia, the shaman's tree, topped with birds, is presumably designed to symbolically ensure contact with the spirit-world.

The shaman's tree was standing in the middle of the world and connecting earth and sky, the microcosm and the macrocosm, as shamans do.



Plate 18.



A HUNGARIAN RESEARCHER AMONG TUNGUZ SHAMANS

7

Travels and Adventures

Baráthosi-Balogh was born on April 4th 1870. From an early age on he showed an interest in questions regarding the origin of Hungarians and the possibility of discovering new answers and new data in this field. He prepared himself consciously for his travels, mainly by pursuing linguistic and ethnographic studies. In 1899 he moved to Budapest in order to have access to better facilities in preparing for his journeys.

His interests drew him mainly toward the peoples of Easternmost Siberia, particularly towards the Manchu-Tunguz. After he gained the support of the Central and Eastern Asia Society, it became possible for him to satisfy this interest.

His first journey took him to Japan. He was there in 1903–1904, since in the subsequent years he published a three volumes travelogue (BARÁTHOSI-BALOGH 1906).

As we know from his own descriptions, it was in 1908 that Baráthosi-Balogh first reached the Eastern Tunguz who live along the Amur. He saw his journeys as his ordered destiny and withstood all hardship, of which he met with plenty on his journeys, with pride.

Baráthosi's 1908 journey began in Saint Petersburg where he was given an official pass to travel and permission to do research by the academician Wilhelm Radloff. From the Tzar's city he went on to Vladivostok. He joined the Sukhanov expedition filled with high hopes but he was soon forced to realise that wherever the Russians stopped the local Nanais – he still used the old-fashioned appellation Gold for these people – fled straight away. Thus later he continued his collecting work on his own, amassing a remarkable quantity of linguistic material and a excellent collection of objects. These objects can still be seen in the collection of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography but the descriptive catalogue was left incomplete at that time. Beside the valuable linguistic and folklore material (e.g. tales, myths, proverbs), the data regarding shamanism are of great significance – including the twelve shaman prayers (see BULGAKOVA-KÖHALMI 1999).

In 1909 Baráthosi-Balogh set out again, but this journey only lasted three months as he contracted typhus on the way. He still got as far as the Amur area and again returned with a large number of photographs.

In 1911 the International Central and East Asia society commissioned Baráthosi to go on a collecting tour to the Zyrian and Samoyed areas, west of the Ural Mountains in Northern Russia. From this journey he returned with a collection of almost a thousand pieces for the Budapest Museum of Ethnography. Most of these are objects and photographs, and also contains interesting contributions concerning Samoyed shamanism. It must be noted that although he met a shaman personally, he did not take a photograph, although he did note down a tale.

His third journey to the Far East took place in 1914. He left on April 23rd for Siberia and Japan, whence he went on to the Sakhalin, to visit the local Ainu population. It is here that he obtained his valuable Ainu linguistic collection. It was also during this trip that in a village about 20 kilometers from Otaru he collected five sacks of Ainu artifacts, some of which are to be found up to this day in the Budapest Museum of Ethnography while another part is displayed in the Hamburg Museum of Ethnography.

On 16th June 1914 he went over to Russia, in order to wend his way through Vladivostok to the Amur region and complement his earlier collections, make checks on the premises and fill in some gaps in the collection. Unfortunately, his luck failed him again. On 12th August he was arrested by the Russian authorities as a spy and foreign citizen. Luckily, the famous scholar, N. L. Gondatti, governor of the region authorised the young Hungarian ethnographer be made free again but the outbreak of the First World War forced him to leave the country instantly. It was only after a long and adventurous detour in his journey that he got home again late in the autumn. In his volume 'Bolyongások a mandzsúr népek között [Wanderings among the Manchu Peoples]', which is also a historical contribution about the fate of his Ainu collection as well as the entire Baráthosi-Balogh legacy, he recalled this episode, as follows.

"I spent most of my stay in Khabarovsk in the city Museum. It holds an interesting collection on natural history and archaeology but I was mostly interested in the ethnographic section. Out of the ethnographic collection which was gathered by Russian expeditions 100 to 150 years ago only a portion was kept in the St. Petersburg museum, another portion was stored in Khabarovsk. These were such ancient and valuable pieces that for their sake a true specialist would have gone as far as burglary. The director of the museum, Colonel Arseniev, a scholar of the best sort, kept and guarded with special care every piece that he had dug up and rescued from perishing in the cellars and attics of the museum.

I noticed that although all the peoples living along the river Amur as well as those along the seacoast, all the way up to the Chukchi peninsula, were represented in the collection, there was not a single piece in the museum from the Ainu. I asked the director how this was possible. The story which he told me in answer is very interesting. When in 1890 a World Exhibition was organised in Paris, the Tsar ordered the Ainu collection of the museum to be sent to the exhibition. The marvelous old carvings and ornamental costumes attracted a great deal of attention and the French and English embassies sent letters to the Russian embassy asking them to donate the collection to their own museums. The request was sent on to Petersburg. From Petersburg a telegram was sent to Khabarovsk that they should acquire a new Ainu collection for their museum, as they live at no great distance from that people. Thus the invaluable collection which was over 100 years old migrated to the museums of Paris and London. The Khabarovsk museum never had enough money again to be able to obtain a new Ainu collection. The ancient objects in the museum included over a hundred doubles from the Chukchi, the Kamchadal, the Yukaghir and other Eastern Tunguz nations. I tentatively put it to Arseniev whether it was

possible for them to give these pieces to the Hungarian National Museum if in return I give them my Ainu collection of over 300 pieces. Thus they could retain the whole of their old collection and it would be made entire by the missing Ainu treasures. Arseniev was overjoyed to hear my suggestion and instantly reported it to the governor who gave his consent. I sent a letter to Japan telling them to send a half of my Ainu collection to Khabarovsk. After striking the deal we got down to selecting the objects that I was to receive in exchange and loaded them into three crates with the intention that on my return I would take them with me along with the rest of my new acquisitions. In the meantime, war broke out, I was captured, I was forced to leave all my collection behind. In 1921 and 1922, however hard I tried, I did not manage to gain permission to receive back from the red government my collection, books, manuscripts, photographs and phonograph recordings or the boxes whose place I had revealed to them, and which they thereupon instantly confiscated and transported to the Khabarovsk museum. This I know from a Japanese staff captain who had personally intervened in the interest of regaining the collection. This is how I lost my collection which amounted to 24 boxes and was worth 46 thousand gold Crowns and together with the collection my financial independence.”
(BARÁTHOSI-BALOGH 1927:28–29)

Let me note that when in 1993 I myself had the chance to go on a visit to the Nanai living along the Amur in order to do ethnographic fieldwork, I also stopped for a few days in Khabarovsk. I saw a very impressive exhibition of the old shamanic objects of the local museum, many of which dated back to the beginning of the 20th century. The colleagues in the museum did not know about the origin of the objects although one of them had heard about the correspondence exchanged by Baráthosi-Balogh and Vladimir Arsenyev, director of the museum at the time. They showed great interest in Baráthosi-Balogh's history, which might enable them to determine the background of the objects hitherto catalogued as “of obscure origin”.

Baráthosi-Balogh had visited the Orient a number of times and later in 1920 he made another effort to regain the lost collection but he could only bring home the items left in Japan.

Between 1927 and 1936 Baráthosi-Balogh worked at home as headmaster of a high school in Budapest. His series *Baráthosi Turáni Könyvei* [Baráthosi's Turanian Books] came out in these years, in which he published a popularized account of his journeys among the Oriental peoples who were believed to be related to the Hungarians. He died weary of travel at the age of 75, during the World War II, in February of 1945.

Linguistic Research and Collections of Folklore Texts

Benedek Baráthosi-Balogh was a very tidy and very systematic man and on top of that also very hard working. Works on him and his career usually only give a very sketchy, in fact often superficial picture of his achievement.

They fail to mention that in the Ethnological Archives of the Budapest Ethnographic Museum there are 25 catalogued items of his manuscripts (numbers EA 963–985 and EA 4704–4707 – EA stands for Ethnological Archives, followed by the numbers of the inventory.) which contain over five thousand pages of handwritten notes. Among these is the unique Ainu dictionary which alone amounts to 5680 cards. This linguistic material is particularly valuable since according to certain Japanese experts this is one of the best recordings of Ainu dialect from the beginning of the century.

Vilmos Diószegi, who himself had started his career as a curator of the Oriental Collection of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography, went through the Baráthosi-Balogh legacy and listed 58 items, in 4 handwritten pages. It is probable that we also owe him the archive cataloguing of the entire material.

Baráthosi-Balogh collected in the Nanai (by the old name Gold) villages along the Amur, such as Buzin, Haitsu, Gedama, Tsaoza, Fanza, Tulki, Alda, Torgon, Yarin, Nergen, Hungari and Kui. Here we are quoting Baráthosi's sometimes imprecise uses of the names of these villages – today, of course, we would find that most of these have altered or totally disappeared. The method this Hungarian researcher followed was that he recorded the same list of words and phrases inserted in sentences, and interviewed various groups of the peoples living along the Amur. Thus he produced a collation of “Gold, Ulcha, Samar, Oroch, Neghidal grammatical sample sentences” (EA 973). What he carried out was genuine comparative dialectology, and he was also the first to classify the Manchu-Tunguz dialects. He had started this work in cooperation with the linguist Peter Schmidt (1923, 1928) who later published his works, while Baráthosi's notes remained unpublished [EA 970 – “A Sketch on Gold Grammar” (in Hungarian) 206 pages, “A Sketch on Neghidal Grammar” (in Hungarian), 239 pages].

The Ulcha glossaries are based on dialects spoken in the villages Udan, Puli and Ferma, while the Samar glossary (EA 977. 416) on the area along the river Gorin, more precisely on Hondon and Shorgo villages. Baráthosi also made collections among the Orok population living on Sakhalin (EA 967).

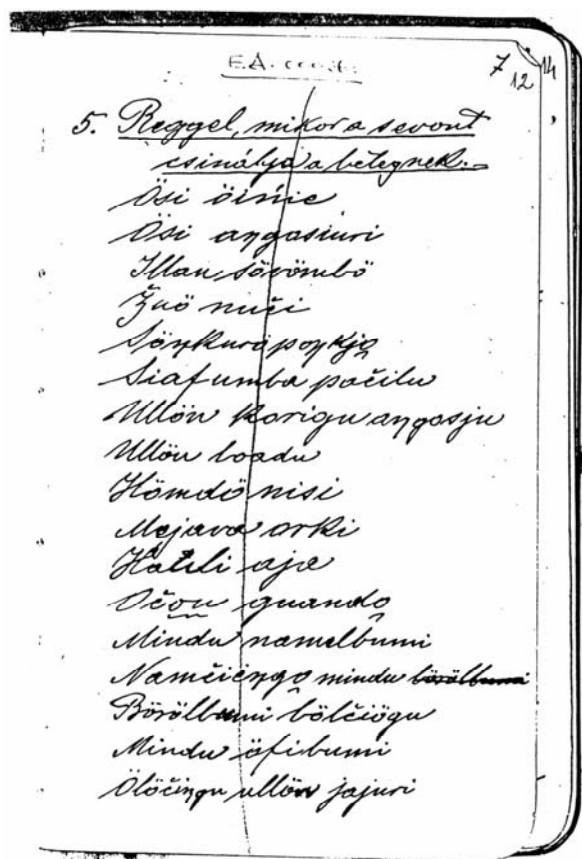


Plate 19.

He also collected among the Ainu on Sakhalin. His notes reveal that he was gathering material for an Ainu dictionary. This work is highly appreciated in our day by Japanese linguists and fellow-ethnographers.

Beside sample sentences of linguistic significance, Baráthosi-Balogh also noted down entire folklore texts among the various Manchu-Tunguz groups. The manuscript entitled "*My Manchu-Tunguz texts corpus*" which Baráthosi-Balogh finalized in 1915, contains 63 different texts, among them tales and mythological fragments (three versions of the story of the Magic Deer, and the myth about the flood of fire), as well as three versions of the fable about the fox and the raven, songs, riddles, love songs and shamanic verses. The last deserve special attention since they had never been published before. It is interesting to see how Baráthosi-Balogh refers to the particular marks of shamanic poetry creating a quasi generic classification: jesting shaman verse, shaman verse for celebrating the dead, shaman verse for healing the sick, peddler's shaman verse, healing song, shamanic rhyme.

Another large, almost two hundred pages long collection, which contains Nanai texts, begins with a dozen shamanic songs. Baráthosi-Balogh had noted these down "*from Bogdan Oninka, in the first days of August 1909, in the village of Torgon which lies 25 versts away from Troitskaya. His father had been the most famous Gold shaman, his name was Toakunga*". When we were collecting shamanic folklore and shooting a documentary film in the village of Daerge about 20 kilometers from Troitskaya, I still heard one of the last shaman women talk about the legendary Bogdan Oninka.

Tatiana Bulgakova translated the shaman songs into Russian and pointed out that Baráthosi-Balogh's phonetic recording needed hardly any correcting (BULGAKOVA–KÖHALMI 1999). Bulgakova, who knows the local language, easily recognised the text recorded by Baráthosi-Balogh. Vilmos Diószegi translated 10 shaman songs from Baráthosi-Balogh's collection in 1950 but only published one of them in 1972 (DIÓSZEGI 1972, see also in DIÓSZEGI 1998:215–227).

*When someone is about to die, is about to die
it is necessary to ask enduri (dieties) for happiness.
And to bow to the sky,
to ask the stars for happiness
and to make everybody bow.
He would take pity,
Three pigs should be killed.
Then there is a dzary man (a singer)
in the village,
then there is an able man.
It is not known whether the happiness will be given
when we ask for happiness with such troubles.
It is not known whether the sick person will be saved.
There are some beings with good luck among people.
If there is no good luck then a person will die,
and someone will cry.
He will die himself,
he will pass away himself,
and nobody will retain his soul. (BULGAKOVA – KÖHALMI 1999:30–31)*

In the case of some texts Baráthosi-Balogh's precision even noted the drumbeats (8, 4 or 2 beats) that interrupt the shaman's song while he heals patients at night. He also

pencilled in the words necessary for the translation between the lines. However, Baráthosi-Balogh never actually produced the final, precise translations.

It might still be worth quoting the reconstruction of one of the texts collected by him in the village of Udan, inhabited by the Ulcha people, from a shaman called Aydanu. He met Aydanu in 1909 and, as he describes, they swore to be blood brothers. The following mythological fragment talks about the origin of the universe, the flood of fire which destroyed the world (this is what the three suns refer to), about the spreading of the human race and the appearance of the first shaman. The following is a quotation from one of his unpublished studies.

"I only managed to acquire a few fragments about the origin of the earth. They were quite reluctant to talk about it and often what they said showed the Christian influence. According to what I heard, the dwelling of the heavenly lord is similar to men on earth but it is made of silver and gold and precious stones. It was at his command that a duck brought the Earth up from the depth of the waters. And when the lord filled the earth, the waters and the air with living things, the duck learnt from him the trick of creation and he set to creating also. This brought great danger to the world. The mighty god had only created one sun and one moon but the duck created two of each so that he comes out richer. But this led to a great deal of trouble. The three moons made the night so light that nobody on earth could sleep. And when the three suns came up, they caused such brightness, that most of the living things went blind, the plants withered and burned, the water began to boil, the fish were cooked alive and human beings caught fire. Then the oldest man built a hut out of ice, hid in there and shot down, one by one, two of the tree suns and two of the moons. Thus the earth became fit for living on again.



Plate 20.

I consider a more complete version of this myth the following story which was told to me by Aydanu (in Udan village). The great heavenly god only created Doldu Haday and his wife. They, however, were immortal. They had lots of children, but they could not die,

either. When they grew old, they went to sleep and they woke up rejuvenated for a new life. This is how it went on for generations. Finally there were so many of them that there was not enough room for them on earth and they did not have enough to eat. Doldu Haday, his wife and his eldest son were very much saddened by this situation. They held council as to what they ought to do, for if mankind continued to multiply in this way, they would all die of starvation. The woman thought it would be best to go up to the great heavenly god and ask his advice. But the man did not want that. There is no need to disturb the heavenly being except if there is no other way left for us to help ourselves. – You two are immortal, said their first born son, but all those people who were born from a mother are just like me. If only I could die, they, too, would cease from resurrecting and this great multiplication would come to an end. So it would be best if I managed to die somehow or other. They thought very hard until they finally decided that the son will retire to a cave and the old woman will close the entrance with rocks. They did just that but the resurrection and multiplication of people still did not cease. The old woman went to the cave and saw that her son had not died. She thought for a while and then took a large animal skin and stretched it over the opening of the cave. In the meantime she thought that by the time the last piece of that animal skin rots off the entrance of the cave, the resurrection of the people will come to an end. And so she left the cave. For a while the people continued to be resurrected and so did the animals since they, too, were in the same state as people, having become so numerous that they could not live because of the great numbers. After a time the old woman went to the cave and saw that the last piece of the animal skin was just rotting off and in the cave lay her son, dead. She went home full of joy. What they wanted had come to pass at last.

But their joy was short lived. The next day, instead of one, three suns rose in the sky. It became so bright that it blinded man and beast alike and at noon the heat was so great that most of the people and the animals and the plants burnt like dry wood on the fire. The water, too, started to boil so that the scales fell off all the fish. And at night the moonlight, which had also tripled, made it so bright that those who survived could get no rest at all. The old couple were very scared because the next day even more of the people and the creatures perished. If it goes on like this, in a few days there will be no living being on earth. So they took council again, to discuss what they should do. The very same night they built a hut out of pumice stone, with a little hole at the top. The old man tied together three bows so that they made one and then he made himself three very large arrows, with iron heads. Then he quickly hid himself in the hut and waited for the sunrise. When the first sun emerged from behind the mountain and its beams were not so blinding, he stretched his enormous bow and shot it into the sun which fell back into the sea. He did the same to the second sun. That, too, perished in the sea. But he left the third sun to rise. Thus they had a good, proper sun and the people and the animals that had survived now came round. In the evening he shot the two unnecessary moons and thus regained night rest for the earth. Thus he became the saviour of earthly life, because if he had not shot the two suns and the two moons, all living things would have died. This is how proper death came to the earth. (EA 982, pages 10–12)

Vilmos Diószegi, who catalogued this study called ‘A keleti tunguzok (Amurvidékiek) hiedelmei’ [The belief system of the Eastern Tunguz (of the Amur region)], stated that “most of it is translation and not his own collection (Budapest 12th February 1953, Vilmos Diószegi)” even though the very subtitle clearly indicates that it is based on Baráthosi’s field work: “Compiled from the material of my 1908, 1911 and 1914 journeys”. The data at the end of the study are of particular importance, as they are missing from the Baráthosi-Balogh’s book (1927), even though they contain interesting details and witness accounts.

“Most interesting of all was the shaman’s house in the village of Nergen. This had two doors. One, as usual, faced toward the river, while the other faced South. On the Eastern

side of the house a slight slope descended toward the river. On the upper half of this there stood two richly carved posts, each about a meter and a half tall and about 20 centimeters thick. When I asked about these I was first told that they are for tying the animals to before they are sacrificed. Later I saw that when they were guiding the spirit of the dead to the other world, they built the shaman's tent behind these two posts and then tied the two posts together with three strings of shaman's rope. To the strings they tied long blades of grass which hung down and were set on fire during the ceremony. These blades of grass did not burn with a flame but kindled slowly and sparkled like little stars in the half dark. They also leaned against these posts the large human shaped figure which they dress in the clothes of the deceased and then place a sacrifice of dried fish and a strong spirit before it in a wicker basket. Before the ceremony the shaman hung his cap on top of one of the posts and leaned his stick against the other...

At the shamans' meeting by Lake Bolony all shamans had their own little tent. The stood side by side close to each other, in a semi-circle facing the lake. Aydanu who took me to these meeting made it a condition that I must not take my camera along so I could only make feeble sketches of the shaman camp. It was a touching experience to witness the magical celebration which went on a whole week. In the evening every shaman sat in front of his tent, dressed in their magic costume and lighting a little fire. In the middle of the semi-circle a greater fire was burning and the shaman whose turn it paced around this with dancing steps, singing and beating the drum." (EA 982, pages 14–15)

The descriptions by the Hungarian traveller are even more vivid when he recalls his encounter with a Nanai shaman in a book written for a general public. This is actually the first description of an encounter with a shaman in Hungarian ethnology. Baráthosi was a keen eyed observer who recorded plenty of small details when he visited the village of Naikha in the summer of 1907, accompanied by his wife. It is worth reading a longer extract from this description from the turn of the century, especially since the photographs complementing the description can also be seen in the photo archives of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography.

"The shaman was waiting for us in front of the rude canvas tent erected before the village judge's house. He was a sly looking man with an extremely cunning face. He took the whole thing as a joke and talked laughingly of our curiosity. Then he put on his costume. He pulled on boots made out of fish-skin and decorated with drawings of colourful snakes and tortoises, his linen coat had similar painted decorations. On his head he put a fur hat which had 10 or 12 streaks of fur longer than half a meter hanging from it. Between these streaks of fur there were bells and small Chinese bronze mirrors hanging while on the front it had a pair of devil's antlers with several branches, made of iron. In his right hand he held a long stick which was covered with snake-skin and its brass handle figured something like a Chinese saint. He tied a leather belt round his waist from which there hung cone-shaped iron bells a span long. In his other hand he took up a flat drum which also had some rattles and iron rings attached to it.

While I photographed him he was constantly mocking me, asking what sort of a face I wanted him to make. Then he came out with the idea that I should pay him a fair sum of money for each photograph, since I am going to sell them and get a lot of money for them. We almost had a row over the bargain because the police officer also got involved. Finally I got hold of him by his vanity. I told him that I am going to put this picture into a book so that the whole world will come to know him, the greatest shaman. This worked, he was pacified, he stood for us and became cheerful. He was laughing as he began to beat his drum and sing and he asked us twice whether we liked it.

Hardly had he been singing a few minutes, though, when the fox-like smile vanished from his face, he became serious, began to beat his drum more strongly, his voice became louder, it grew to a shout and, circling round the blazing fire he began a jumping sort of dance. During this time two dressed-up human dolls, taller than a meter, were brought

into the tent. They stood them up on a straw mat on which they had placed fish in a plate and a strong spirit in a bottle. The shaman stepped inside the tent, poked at the two human figures with his stick and crouched down on the ground. The two figures were meant to embody a Tunguz couple who had been burnt in their house a few days earlier. The shaman beat his drum and sang for a long time and repeatedly he spread the food and the drink over the mouths of the wooden figures. In the meantime it got dark and only the firelight spread a mystical twilight, casting its red light over the shaman working inside the tent, increasing his song to a howl and beating the drum as hard as he could. His face became distorted, his lips were foaming, his limbs were all in spasms and eventually, as if shot through the heart, he collapsed and only his gurgling breath and his hands groping the air betrayed that he was still alive. He had a long and hard struggle with the spirits guarding the other world, he said on his recovery, a good fifteen minutes later. But finally he managed to help the souls across.” (BARÁTHOSI-BALOGH 1927: 114–116)

These vivid descriptions, together with the photographs, the poetic texts and the dozens of drawings rich in detail provide a unique and unified database for the study of Amur regional shamanism. This rich material is also so elaborate, so highly sophisticated that it offers itself for further and deeper analysis.

The Drawings Collection

Baráthosi's drawings are also of source value. His practice was to make sketches on the premises and then to copy them out on separate sheets at home, so that on each sheet we see the different formal variants of the same group of objects. There is reason to believe that the drawings were made by his wife, Sarolta Vavrik, who accompanied him on his journeys. Several hundred of the drawings remain unpublished even though they are made valuable by the fact that objects such as those depicted here will never be made again since the customs are becoming simplified along the river Amur as well as all over the world. Hopefully, the ancient shapes will survive for posterity in Baráthosi-Balogh's drawings.

The collection of Baráthosi's drawings is to be found in the archives of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography, (under catalogue number EA 975). Baráthosi copied the sketches he made during field work onto a hundred and one pages, altogether about three hundred drawings and he also included his descriptions, which are usually quite short, amount to 6 to 8 lines. He gave the following title to his collection, "Idols by the Eastern Tunguz (of the Amur region), from my collections of 1908, 1909 and 1914. Descriptions of amulets and shamanic accessory objects". Even at their sketchiest, these drawings of objects provide a comprehensive idea of the set of objects related to the religious life and shamanic belief of the Nanai, since they present the groups of objects together with their variants. Had Baráthosi left nothing other than this collections of drawings, he would still have inscribed his name forever into the history of the ethnography of the Amur region. Up to this day there have not been as many drawings and photographs published in the Russian language literature of the subject as there are in this collection alone. It would be worth interesting to publish all three hundred drawings in a separate little volume. These objects are a witness to the conditions at the beginning of the 20th century and have long since disappeared from the ritual tradition or can only be found in the most simplified remnant versions, as I experienced in the summer of 1993. Beside providing the precise local name of each object, the collection is also made valuable by the remarks attached to them, for example in the following fashion: "Numbers 10, 11, 12 belong to the shaman of Naida. He would not sell it to me because then he would lose its assistance, and he would not make a second copy since that would mean that I also have

the same power as he. He would not even let me take a photograph. He only allowed me to hold it when I threw a small bottle of spirits as a sacrifice to the *ayami*". (EA 975. 3)

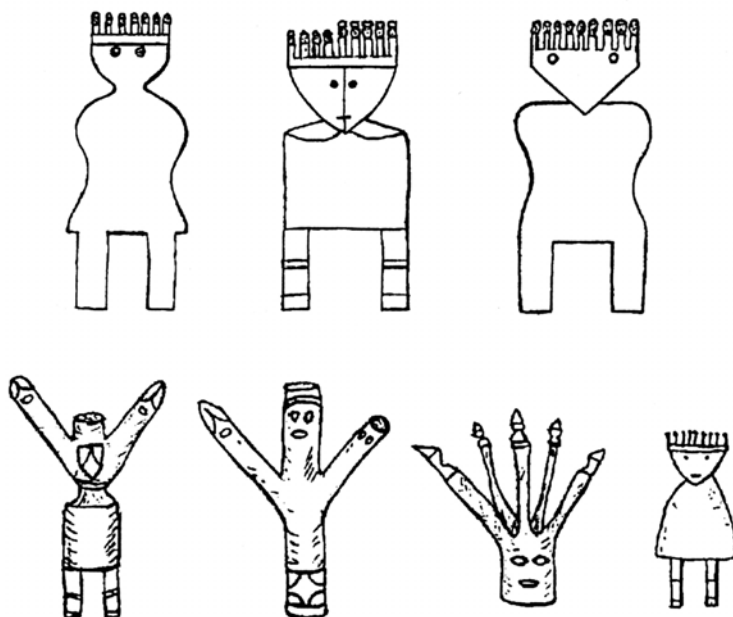


Plate 21.

These often brief descriptions contain several small details but the pictures also speak for themselves, for example the crown shaped shaman's hats (*ungiptu*) (drawings No. 232–241), the shaman's sticks (*boolo*) and other shamanic objects, pieces of clothing, belts, tomb-sculptures of shamans, many of them displaying objects that have never been published earlier (BARÁTHOSI-BALOGH 1997:6:87–102). This might have already shown how much significance Baráthosi attributed to the visual recording of ethnographic facts.

The Beginnings of Ethnophotography

The term ethnophotography is a new coinage both in Hungarian and international anthropological literature and refers to the photographs made during fieldwork. The several thousand photographs that Benedek Baráthosi-Balogh made during his journeys to the Far East make him one of the pioneers of Hungarian ethnographic photography. His photos are also in the care of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography. In the photo archives we can find the original prints as well as the original glass negatives. In the 1940's and 50's reproductions were made of the glass negatives and so Baráthosi's old photographs were preserved in relatively good quality. Naturally, on some of the glass negatives the emulsion has disappeared as a result of long years of storage sometimes in unfavourable circumstances. One of them is the picture of a Neghidal shaman from the valley of the Amgun river from 1911. The upper half of the photograph is entirely missing, but the picture itself is of great value, since it depicts a shaman holding a special stick, and wearing a belt with rattles and a fur head-dress (F. 17052).



Plate 22.



Plate 23.

As early as in the report of his first journey Baráthosi mentions “400 photographs taken by myself and the same number I bought” (BARÁTHOSI 1909:171). Fifty years after his death there are about a thousand photographs kept in the photo archives of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography as pictures taken or obtained by him. He took the majority of these during his travels at the Amur in the villages inhabited by Nanai, Ulcha and Gilyak groups near Troitskaya and Khabarovsk. There are also pictures about the Ainu of Sakhalin, as well as the Ainu of Sakhalin, as well as the Ainu. Baráthosi was a competent photographer but he was a master at catching the right moment of everyday life and he also took excellent portrait photographs. The current publication contains a collection of these latter.

It is worth noting that on the catalogue cards of Baráthosi's photo collection we see the year 1911 marked as the date of taking the photograph whereas in fact this is probably the date when the pictures were catalogued.



Plate 24.

As far as the photographs of shamans are concerned, we can say that Baráthosi was among the first in the world taking pictures of this theme (roughly at the same time as Sakari Pálsi, S. D. Mainagashev, Kai Donner and others – see in HOPPÁL 1994). A particularly valuable document is the photograph which, according to Baráthosi's note, depicts the shaman Aydonu with whom he swore to be blood brothers (F. 15785, Udan

village, in the Valley of the Amur, Gold). To another picture (F. 16644 – F. stands for the photo archives number in the Budapest Museum of Ethnographic) Baráthosi attached the following note, “The walking of the sick person – they call in every house of the village and there the shaman and his assistants dance. They do 9 dances with 9 people. If the patient cannot walk, they stick 8 posts into the ground and the people dance around that all night.” In another picture, as revealed by the description, a Gilyak shaman is healing a patient, but in the photo we can only see the group of people looking into the camera, standing around the shaman with his drum (F. 17129). Baráthosi also took excellent pictures depicting the preparations for the bear feast, about a score of them, but unfortunately most of these have been ruined (F. 15927–15941, the photographs taken among the Gilyak). However, there are also a number of negatives from which prints of a perfectly satisfactory quality can be made. Among these are the photos of the Ainu, but it is possible that these were not taken by Baráthosi. It was his habit to buy pictures ready made and include them in his collection. This is how a drawing of unknown origin about a Yakut shaman (F. 16.509) and photographs of several views of an exhibition dummy dressed in the costume of a Tunguz shaman came to be included in his collection. These latter he probably obtained in Saint Petersburg.



Plate 25.

In a series of particularly interesting photographs (F. 16915–16918) Baráthosi captured a shaman of Gold (Nanai) nationality in the village of Gardama along the Amur. The shaman is sitting before a tent and, as Baráthosi’s notes attached to the pictures tell us, “he is helping the soul into the other world at the feast of the remembrance of the dead” (This expression means that the Nanai shaman was a *kasatai* shaman, whose task or function was to lead the souls of the deceased to the other world [*buni*]). The glass negatives of these photos, which have been ruined in consequence of inappropriate storage, only allow us to produce very poor prints. But even in spite of that we can ascertain that Baráthosi’s photograph collection meant the beginnings of Hungarian visual anthropology, especially when viewed in a historical perspective. It can also be stated that few researchers have left such a valuable collection to the Budapest Museum of Ethnography – Baráthosi’s work comes second only to the invaluable legacy of the other great Hungarian shamanologist, Vilmos Diószei.



VILMOS DIÓSZEGI: LIFE AND WORKS

8

Education and Field-works

Vilmos Diószegi (May 2, 1923–July 22, 1972), born in Budapest, was the son of poor, lower middle class parents. Educated in Budapest, he enrolled the Faculty of Liberal Arts of the Pázmány Péter University in 1942, where he pursued Manchu-Tunguz studies with Professor Lajos Ligeti. He also attended intensive courses in other Siberian languages at the Turkic Philological Institute directed by Gyula Németh and at the Finno-Ugric Philological Institute. His interest in Eastern cultures led him to learn Japanese, Turkish, and even Russian. He graduated summa cum laude and received his bachelor's degree in 1946.¹ He wrote his dissertation about Manchu-Tunguz linguistics. Pursuant to his studies, he worked as an assistant at the East-Asian Institute of the university, and barely a year later, in March 1947, became a fellow of the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest.

It was at the museum that he first came to know the invaluable Benedek Baráthosi Balogh collection² of shamanic objects, invocations, myths, as well as dialectal data and several hundred drawings and photographs from the beginning of the 20th century on, which has remained unknown to international research to date.

Diószegi (1947) wrote his first scientific article about Baráthosi and his collections, which was published in *Ethnographia* (the journal of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society). I have been unable to discover why he never wrote a monograph about this

¹ See Lágler 1984:161. Cited from Diószegi's autobiography written in 1970. This writing by Lágler is the best summary of Diószegi's lifework to date.

² See Hoppál 1996. In 1996 the Nanai and Ainu objects of the Baráthosi collection were exhibited in the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest. The Historical Museum in Sapporo showed the collection of Ainu objects at a special exhibition in 1997, for which acknowledgment is due to Kazuyuki Tanimoto.

important collection of objects and folklore texts.³ However, he did publish later on a number of articles on the shamanism of peoples living along the Amur (1947a, 1949, 1950, 1955, 1957, 1960a).

In 1960, he was awarded the candidate's degree. From 1963 on, he worked as the senior research fellow of the Ethnographic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences devoting himself to research for the brief nine years left to him. After this brief survey of the main stations of his life, let us turn our attention to his field-work and scientific studies.

Following a short study trip to Turkey in 1954, he left for Leningrad (St. Petersburg today) in June 1957, fulfilling his old dream of studying shamanic objects in Russian museums and taking stock of the more important collections. Although his grant to undertake a field trip was enough for two months only, eventually, he spent 15 months in the Soviet Union, which was to have a decisive influence on his later work.

His aim was twofold: one, to collect material for founding an archive of shamanism, and, two, to carry out field work among Siberian peoples. He realized that this could not be accomplished in two short months, therefore, living frugally, he extended this period during which he worked very hard. As a result, he subsequently established the Archive of Shamanism in the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest.

In 1958, Diószegi wrote two articles describing the work of the Archive of Shamanism, the material in the collection, and the main sections of the collection (1958, 1958a). These are as follows:

1. *Bibliography*: a title catalogue of the literature on shamanism available at the time (c. 1200 titles, in December 1958) and of fifty manuscripts; 2. *Library*: a reference library of partly original volumes, and partly microfilm copies (he listed about 800 of these), to aid his research on Siberian shamanism; 3. *Photograph and drawing collection*: photographs and drawings of the shamanic objects found in the different museums (primarily in Leningrad, but also in Krasnoiarsk, Irkutsk, Abakan, and Kyzyl), copies of photographs and drawings on display there, as well as reproductions of illustrations (a total of approximately twelve thousand photographs⁴ plus the related subject catalog); 4. *Collection of tapes and records*: the wax cylinders, on which 200 shamanic songs were recorded in the first half of the 20th century, are preserved in the Pushkin Russian Literary Museum. Diószegi wrote down their exact description and copied most of them on tape.⁵ He began to transcribe and to translate into Russian the text of the songs while in Leningrad with the help of ethnic students living there. 5. *Collection of films*: according to Diószegi, it was the poorest part of the Archive. "At the moment, it would consist of one film (!) made of a Soyot shaman rite in 1958, were it not

³ I saw Diószegi's handwritten comment in the Ethnological Archive saying that Baráthosi's notes were inaccurate, and also that they were translations from the Russian-language literature, when, in fact, the specific study he was thus referring to was Baráthosi's own work.

⁴ In the Photograph Collection of the Ethnographic Museum the numbers between 138.238–150.910 refer to the Diószegi's collection of approximately twelve thousand pictures, most of which are of shamanic objects.

⁵ In the early seventies – after Diószegi's death – we made technically enhanced copies of these rather poor quality recordings using the facilities of the Hungarian State Radio, which are now in the Ethnographic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In the nineties, using modern technology, Japanese ethno-musicologists made CD copies of these recordings.

still in Irkutsk.” (Diószegi 1958a:252)⁶ 6. *Collection of negatives*: the microfilm copies of books, the negatives of photographs and drawings are kept in the collection of negatives of the Ethnographic Museum to ensure systematic storage.

In 1963, when Diószegi began to work in the Ethnographic Institute of the Academy he borrowed the archived material for his daily work. It was returned to the Ethnographic Museum after his death, but some of the books, Diószegi’s library and manuscripts, his notes, were placed in the Institute’s own archive, sequestered for years in accordance with the widow’s will. They are still inaccessible for research because they have not been properly catalogued as yet.⁷ The Archive of Siberian Shamanism is the first of its kind and the largest in the world. It is especially valuable since it contains material that are impossible to find today. His devoted work cannot be repeated for the simple reason that the same opportunities no longer exist, and the books are unobtainable. Diószegi went to Siberia four times: in the fall of 1957, he did field work among the Buryats and the Khakas, then in the summer of 1958, among the Karagas and the Tuvas (called Soyots by Diószegi). In 1960, he spent three months in Mongolia. In 1964, he travelled to Siberia again to study the relics of Kumandi shamanism in Gorno-Altai. Let us take a closer look at these collection trips.

After just a few months in Leningrad, he arrived in Irkutsk in the fall of 1957, where the ethnic Buryat folklorist of the local university, N. O. Sharakshinova, acted as his interpreter. It was through her that Diószegi first met a shaman among the Buryats living near Irkutsk. The old shaman took the Hungarian scholar into his confidence, called him his son, and carved a shaman’s staff with a horse’s head for him. He also collected Buryat shaman songs together with Sharakshinova, which were published only decades later.⁸



Plate 26.

⁶ Diószegi’s film has not been found yet. However, he described the circumstances of making the film in *Tracing Shamans in Siberia* (Diószegi 1960 [in Hungarian] and 1968 [in English]). In the mid-nineties the author of the present work made several documentaries about Siberian shamanism, including films about Tuva, Yakut, Buryat, Nanai, Nganasan, Manchu, Korean, and Japanese shamans.

⁷ The Diószegi remains in the Ethnographic Institute were cataloged by Éva Schmidt. In 1997, we have begun work to computerize the registry and index of this material. The classification number of the Buryat collection in the Ethnographic Institute is (PÉ) 29, but the collection is also described in *Tracing Shamans* in Diószegi 1968. The shaman’s staff in the collection of the Ethnographic Museum.

⁸ See Diószegi 1970a. In an interview I made with N. O. Sharakshinova in 1992 for a film about Diószegi, she said, she had good memories of their joint work.

From Irkutsk, he went to Krasnoïarsk, where he studied the shamanism of the Khakas, then upon returning to Leningrad he worked through the winter. He continued to copy and photograph the cards in the museum's catalog, to study manuscripts and inventories. His associates (E. A. Alekseenko, V. P. Diakonova, L. P. Potapov) still remember the cloistered life he led, his industriousness, persistence, and friendliness.

In July 1958, he left for his second trip to Siberia, going to Krasnoïarsk first. Then, joining a group of geologists, he visited the Tofa (called Karagas by Diószegi). There he took pictures of how the shaman drum and drumstick were made. He met F. N. Kokuev, a shaman of outstanding intelligence, who invited him into his house and taking him into his confidence, told him in great detail about shamanism. Diószegi published these stories in his book, *Sámánok nyomában Szibériában* [Tracing Shamans in Siberia]:

"[...] Yes, my brother was a shaman. He became a shaman at the age of eighteen. Prior to that, he became gravely ill. He had visions, the spirits haunted him in his dreams and they persuaded him to become a shaman. He had been ill for a year and was in a very poor condition, because the spirits kept torturing him. He could not go anywhere, not even to hunt, he stayed in bed all the time. Finally, he agreed to become a shaman and then he found relief at last ...I also became ill, when I was about to become a shaman. First my head began to ache, then my hands. Around full-moon my head was splitting with pain. I had been ailing for about three years. In the meantime the spirits came to visit me. While I slept, my tongue was chanting. It chanted like the shamans do. But I did not know anything about it. When I awoke, my mother and father and my sister told me: 'You were chanting shaman songs.' After such occasions I always felt better for a few days. After three or four months the sickness overpowered me. My head was aching all the time and when I slept my tongue was chanting shaman songs again. It went on like this, alternating every three to four months, for three years. One keeps suffering and suffering. When you want to rest or sleep, your tongue would be chanting. One does not know anything about it, because really the spirit is chanting. But not all the spirits chant equally well. Some chant beautifully, some chant hideously. The great spirit chants best. I was twenty-seven years old when I heard him chant. The little one, the little spirit used to come to me. He had flown into my mouth and then I used to recite shaman songs. When I had no more strength left to suffer, finally I agreed to become a shaman. And when I became a shaman, I changed entirely. Because, being a shaman turns one into quite a different person.

*Our conversation became so animated that we continued it well over the promised time, for about two hours. The secrets of the Karaghas religious world were revealed to me, one after another."*⁹



Plate 27.

Then he joined Academician A. P. Okladnikov's expedition, in the course of which he discovered along the banks of the Oka river a pictograph of a shaman drum dating back to the Bronze Age. Although he was running out of money, he decided to make the journey to Tuva. He flew to Kyzyl, where the associates of the local museum were glad to help him get to the village of Iy on the Iy river, near the Todzha lake, and join an expedition there. A young historian, Minderma, came to his aid in translating the local language, thus, Diószegi was able to collect valuable material on the particulars of drum-making, among others:

⁹ See Diószegi 1960:108–109, 1968:141–143.)

“At last, I had found a qualified helper in Minderma. But, even so, we had to work for several days until we could clear up all the peculiarities of the drum, to the last detail.

When the shaman, commanded by the spirits, requested the drum, he went to a hunter for the skin. He asked him to shoot a reindeer or a moose-elk for him, according to the kind of skin he wanted for his drum.

Then he ordered the drum to be made by an expert drum-maker. The preparation of the drum had to be rewarded, for instance, a two-year old reindeer was an appropriate payment. The reward to be given had to be about two hundred rubles worth. The headgear, the gown and the boots were made by some of the women of the community. These were made without charge, some shamans, however, rewarded these women too.

The shaman always demanded a young deer of no more than two or three years of age from the hunter. If the skin of such a young animal was used for lining the drum, the drum had a better tone. The shaman warned the hunter to be careful about delivering the skin intact and not to reveal, under any circumstances, the place where he had shot the animal. The skin had been dried, the hairs were scraped off. When they finally began the actual preparation of the drum – two or three months might have elapsed – the skin had been moistened again, and it was in this state, that it had been stretched and fastened over the frame of the drum.

I was very anxious to learn the preparation of the drum in detail and therefore I was searching for oldsters who had witnessed such procedure, or even had taken part in the preparation of the drum themselves.”¹⁰

During his four weeks’ stay in Tuva, between August 2 and 29, Diószegi collected a very rich material. Among his manuscripts there is a thick file of his Tuva collections, including a collection of shamanic songs.¹¹ In his book he describes one occasion of making a collection, when he met the former shaman Süzükpen in the village of Medvedevka on the bank of the Bi-khem river:

“Süzükpen, the one-time great kam of the stock-breeder Soyots, settles down next to me. We glance at each other silently.

He is a thin, old man of middle height, his eyes are shiny and lively. A shapeless, worn European style hat sits on his shaven head. He seems to have a neurasthenic tick, his head jerks slightly at irregular intervals.

I show him the microphone and explain that he would have to sing into that. He scrutinizes the strange, shiny object, through narrowed eyelids.

I press the button and vibrating green light flashes.

I hold the microphone for a moment to announce:

‘Now we shall hear the chant of Süzükpen, born of the Saldzhak clan in 1887, former shaman in the region of the River Suy-Surmak, right side affluent of the Little Yenisey.’

¹⁰ See Diószegi 1968:248–249. The excerpt is taken from the book, *Tracing Shamans in Siberia*, which is considered a rarity today. In 1996, I had a long interview with Minderma, who gave a detailed account of the time he spent together with Diószegi and of the woman shaman’s ecstasy he also succeeded to film – cf. note 6.

¹¹ (PÉ) 4. Diószegi himself divided the material into two parts. The first part, titled “Tuva (szojot) sámán-énekek (Tuva [Soyot] shamanic songs)”, contains 676 lines of text obtained from seven informants (in one place the insertion reads, “second reel”, indicating that it is a transcription of a recording), a vocabulary of the text, followed by 13 pages of Russian translation. The second part contains 39 pages of loosely typed field notes, probably a fair copy of his collection notebooks. He included parts of these texts almost verbatim in his very successful book (Diószegi 1968). But oddly enough, this extremely punctilious collector did not indicate before (or after) the texts who the informants (shamans?) were.

But the old man did not even wait for me to finish the sentence, he began his song at once.

In order to have the first words recorded intelligibly, I make him start all over again.

After a few lines he is already closing his eyes and throws his head from left to right, chanting loudly.

The mothers place their children to their breasts, so as to keep them quiet. But under the suggestive influence of the forceful song, they forget all about their babies and the little ones forget to cry, they let go of the nipples and they listen too. The women do not care about their open blouses, they are completely absorbed in watching the shaman. Gradually, he is more and more overcome by ecstasy."¹²

Unfortunately, he did not include the shaman songs in his book though there is a detailed description of how long he and the former shaman worked on puzzling out the words, how often he and Minderma listened to each recording, translating it line by line.¹³ The book, *Tracing Shamans in Siberia*, gives the reader an insight into the young ethnologist's collecting technique of reconstruction on the basis of recollections as narrated by the storytellers with the help of tape recordings, instead of direct observation, for which perhaps he would be much criticized today. At the same time, he was among the first in the early sixties, who had the courage to record and publish his personal experiences and impressions, considered at the time a revolutionary innovation in anthropological literature.

"[...] the real difficulty was not in searching for the shaman song, or recording it but in transcribing it. Because, not even the shaman himself understands his own sentences better than anyone else. He does not understand it, because he does not know his own chant, he has no definite text, and those sentences he drones out while entranced, are just as strange and unknown to him as to the listeners.

Nothing can prove this better, than the difficult labour we had to devote to the transcription of the texts.

It proved that the shaman improvises while he chants, although he is using ready motives to a given melody.

Finally, we surmounted the difficulties of the song and we had finished the translation too.

However, all this had dwindled the contents of my purse considerably. But, could I have expected the poor, old man to let himself be exhausted for days, for nothing? Certainly I could not, after all he had done for me. He had told me how the new drum had been initiated, he spoke about the training of the drum, and, on the basis of his words I could sketch the location of the shamanic objects in the yurt, and record how these objects were transported if the shaman took off to another region.

He even had a surprise for me: the küzüngü.

I must confess, I do not know what that is, not to this day. Scientific literature, known to me, does not record or mention it, I found the only reference in the Soyot-Russian dictionary. This is all the information I have about it: "a tin sheet with ribbons, shamanic object".

But, let us hear what Süzükpen had to say about the küzüngü:

'I was already a kam, and I had my drum too, when I found it. I came across this object in the mountains, between the rocks. At the spot where it had been lying, the stone was carved out. It was very hot, I could hardly hold it. We always thought it was vested with power, because it was hot. At home, I smoked it over the fire of juniper branches and

¹² See Diószegi 1960:277–278.

¹³ See Diószegi 1968:282: but he did include a song by another old shaman (1968:264–265).

then I washed it with milk. I washed it twice, and after I had dried it well with a white cloth, the blue overcast it had had before, vanished entirely. Then I hung it up in the yurt, its place was above the drum. It had never been removed from the yurt. If I had been called away to shamanize, I never took it along.'

Well, this is all, about the küzüngü.

Could it possibly have been one of those Chinese bronze-mirrors, which turn up so frequently in the kurgans? And, would Süzüken attribute it the warmth only to enhance its magic 'power'?"¹⁴



Plate 28.

In September 1958, Diószegi returned to Budapest with a wealth of material, but in poor health.¹⁵

The Mongolian field trip came next, in 1960. Originally, he had planned to stay for six months, but had to return to Hungary after three months, because he did not receive the promised funds. Professor B. Rinchen, a researcher of Mongolian shamanism, accompanied him on the trip, the purpose of which was to study Mongolian shamanism, in particular, the Darkhat traditions, as well as the reciprocal influence of shamanism and lamaism. Diószegi brought back for the Ethnographic Museum a rich collection of objects from the area around Lake Khövsgöl, from the Soyots living at Ulan Ul and from the Darkhats. Shaman drums, dresses, and other objects, as well as photographs of objects in

museums enriched the Archive of Shamanism. It is interesting that in his report on the trip he does not mention having met a real shaman.¹⁶ Actually, it is surprising that he was allowed to work and take photographs at all.

In 1964, in the course of his fourth trip to Siberia, Diószegi visited the city of Gorno-Altai where he met the young researcher, F. A. Satlaev, who later wrote an ethnographic monograph about his own people (SATLAEV 1974). Before his death in 1995, Satlaev recalled their meeting to the young Hungarian Turkologist, Dávid Somfai-Kara, as follows:

"One day, a scholar arrived from Hungary. He spoke fluent Russian and was doing research on shamans. This was a sensitive topic at the time. In the thirties, most of the shamans were killed or deported. In order to escape, many of them got rid of their shaman drums and clothing. A number of them were taken ill and even died, because a shaman feels a compulsive need to fall into trance, and, if he cannot practice shamanism, he will fall victim to tormenting sickness. A few of them made bells with mirrors on them or other objects as substitutes for the drum, and were easy to hide from the KGB... Diószegi was tireless, some force did not let him rest. He talked to shamans during the day [with Satlaev

¹⁴ See Diószegi 1960:283–284.

¹⁵ His widow, Judit Morvay, remembered in 1975.

¹⁶ Cf. Diószegi 1961 and 1961a. In the early sixties, great effort was exerted in communist countries to obliterate even the memory of old historical and cultural traditions. Thus, in Mongolia, too.

as his interpreter] and wrote down everything at night working well into the morning. He hardly ate anything, but was never without a cigarette in his hand."¹⁷

Satlaev, who was a member of the Kumandi ethnic group, told Somfai-Kara that during the few weeks of his stay, Diószegi visited only three Kumandi villages, but managed to collect a few shaman songs. These were tape-recorded in the city of Gorno-Altai. A copy of the recordings is preserved in the archive of the conservatory in Novosibirsk. Their musical notation was finished only in the mid-1990s (SYCHENKO 1995). N. V. Alekseev, an expert of the shamanism of Turkic peoples, undertook the puzzling out of the texts. He and the author of the present article plan publication of these texts, especially since Diószegi's manuscripts already contain the translation of a number of songs, thus, for instance, the Altai Kizhi shaman songs chanted at animal sacrificial rites to the master spirit of the Earth (*d'ezim bij*), and also a song of praise to *Erlík*, that V.F. Chumakaev sung on November 17, 18 and 19, 1964.¹⁸

We learn from Satlaev's recollection that this trip ended badly for Diószegi, who decided to visit the Telengits,¹⁹ but was too impatient to await the official permission to travel and slipped away leaving his escort and interpreter behind. The authorities, however, caught him and ordered his return to Hungary without delay. He was never allowed to go back to Siberia to continue his field work, though, knowing what the accumulated material in the Archive of Shamanism contained, he had precise plans of what he still wanted to collect and where.

He was bitterly disappointed by the reluctance of his Russian colleagues to help, or more precisely, by the official standpoint of the Soviet Academy of Sciences according to which Siberian shamanism was extinct (!), therefore, its research was politically untimely. In an article about his South-Siberian field trip in 1964, published by a popular science journal, he, too, said that he had met the last of the shamans.²⁰ The article is also interesting, because, Diószegi called attention, among other things, to several kindred features between the shamanism of the northern groups of the Altaic Turks and the shamanism of the Ob-Ugrians. Thus, for instance, certain elements of the erotic rite called *kocho-kan*, the use of phallic symbols are also present in the shamanic bear rite of the Ob-Ugrians (Mansi and Khanti).²¹ This was an important new finding. Only few researchers arrive at ethnogenetic conclusions. Diószegi was one of them.

According to his widow, Judit Morvay, Diószegi "accomplished only a fraction of what he planned on his third Siberian collection trip. He suffered from illness throughout. When he came back and got off the train, he came home a changed man, emaciated almost to the point of unrecognizability."²² She told me that in spite of the many disappointments, he worked steadily until his death. As a young researcher, I had the opportunity to work with him from 1967 on at the Department of Folklore of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

¹⁷ See Somfai-Kara 1995:3–4.

¹⁸ (PÉ) 30.2.1–11. The file, "Song to Erlík", contains the text in Diószegi's handwriting. It was presumably this he published in the article, titled "Libation song..." (Diószegi 1970).

¹⁹ The file (PÉ) 12 contains the Telengit collection giving the exact date of the collection as September 26, 1964.

²⁰ See Diószegi 1965. Unfortunately, this excellent article was published only in Hungarian.

²¹ In 1985, Lennart Meri made an excellent documentary film of the Khanti bear rite, showing this erotic symbolism.

²² Judit Morvay's personal account (1975).

which he directed. Later he resigned from this position in order to devote all his time to research.

In 1970, he made a twenty-year plan, which included the writing of more than two dozen monographs, thus, several monographs on folk beliefs in various Hungarian-speaking areas, a comprehensive work, titled *The Shaman Songs of Altaic Turks*, an atlas of Siberian shamanism (that is, a chart of the types of shamanic equipment and shamanic clothing), two monographs on the shamanism of Altaic Turks and of the Yenisey region (Ket, Selkup, Enets and Evenki), and a book on the Manchu-Tunguz bear cult. The scope of the plan²³ is obviously in excess of what one man can do or has the time to do.

Diószegi did not have the time; even his dissertation for the degree of the doctor of sciences was left unfinished. In March 1972, he was suddenly taken ill, and he spent the next few months in a trance-like, semi-conscious state until he died at the age of 49 at the end of July in 1972 without regaining consciousness. Overwork probably ruined his health, and, in a manner of speaking, he passed into the realm of his beloved shaman spirits.

After his death, the documents, notes and books found in his office at the Ethnographic Institute and in his home were inventoried. His valuable collection of *Sibirica* books is now in the library of the Ethnographic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The accession list for the first half of 1973 contains the more than 700 titles, including rarities, of his library. It is a very informative list, giving an idea of the range of Diószegi's readings. It includes many small editions that were published in the fifties and sixties somewhere in the provinces (e.g., Gorno-Altai or Ulan-Ude), and are, therefore, virtually unobtainable today. Various folklore studies (such as the volumes on Khakas and Tuva epics), the dictionaries of small languages (such as the Tuva–Russian and the Russian–Tuva dictionary which was last published in 1955!) are long since considered out of print. Without doubt, next to the central libraries of Moscow and St. Petersburg, this is the best reference library in the field of Siberian shamanism.

As mentioned above, Diószegi's literary remains were divided among his widow, the Ethnographic Museum, and the Ethnographic Institute. His widow Judit Morvay has his collection notebooks and private correspondence.²⁴ Regrettably, after his death the directors of the Ethnographic Museum²⁵ insisted that the Archive of Shamanism should be returned to the museum. His widow gave his manuscripts to the Ethnographic Institute where they were catalogued and thematically arranged in 60 files. There are separate files containing the Tuva (PÉ. 4), the Telengit (PÉ. 12), the Khakas (PÉ. 18), the Kumandi (PÉ. 23 and PÉ. 35) collections. Some files contain translations of shaman songs (e.g., Nanai: PÉ. 8, PÉ. 31; Kumandi: PÉ. 23; Buryat: PÉ. 36), others contain translations from the works of old Russian researchers (e.g., Anokhin, PÉ. 77), still others, data for the bibliography of shamanism. In short, the Archive of the Ethnographic Institute contains several thousand slips of paper and notes.

Several thousand photographs in the Archive of Shamanism constitute a unique collection preserved in the Ethnographic Museum. This collection alone offers sufficient material for

²³ Cited by Lágler 1984:181–182.

²⁴ In 1996, when she was interviewed for a documentary film about Diószegi, Judit Morvay promised to hand over a part of his correspondence which contains many interesting data. It would be just as important to study the collection of his field-notebooks from the point of view of reconstructing the results of his fieldwork and his sources; in the case of the Tuva collection, for instance, he omitted the names of his informants.

²⁵ It was János Kodolányi in particular, who strove to have the Archive of Shamanism returned to the Ethnographic Museum, but once there it lay forgotten for years.

studying Siberian shamanism, and it would be worthwhile to publish a selection of these photographs.²⁶ Furthermore, it would be important to reunite Diószegi's manuscripts in a single collection, to expand and to supplement it with works published since.²⁷

Articles and Studies on Siberian Shamanism

Diószegi was tireless in creating the Archive of Shamanism, in carrying out field work, and was also an industrious scholar who wrote and published many studies. His bibliography shows that he authored more than one hundred articles and studies (inclusive of about a dozen popular science works), and five books, he edited a number of others, indicative of the important part he played in the history of research on shamanism and Hungarian folk beliefs. In the following, I shall briefly discuss first the studies which are important in international shamanistic research, then the works revealing traces of shamanism in Hungarian mythology, and finally, the posthumous influence of his lifework, because I believe that it represented a turning point in the research on Siberian shamanism.

One of Diószegi's first writings, which dealt with the etymology of the word *shaman*, was published in 1947 in a Hungarian linguistic journal (1947b) after he finished the university. Unlike other explanations, he derived the word from the Tunguz verb *sa-* ~ *sha-*, meaning 'to know', to which was added the deverbial suffix *-ma*, thus the original meaning of the word is 'a knowing, clever man, he who knows'. This word has passed by way of Russian into international scientific terminology.

At the end of the forties and in the first half of the fifties he studied primarily the Nanais living along the River Amur, as a natural extension of his major course of studies of Manchu-Tunguz at the university. He even published a small volume containing a translation of folk tales of the folklore of this region (1957). In another study, he examined the ethnogenesis of the Shamagirs, another group of people living along the Amur (1953).

He wrote one of his first studies (1947a) about the curative notions of the Goldi – Nanais in current usage – published in French in *Ethnographia* in 1947. Later, he did further research on this subject, and published in Russian his study about Nanai amulets used for warding off sickness in the first volume of *Folia Ethnographica* (1949). In this and other writings covering the Nanai material, he analyzed the objects of the Baráthosi collection in the Ethnographic Museum.²⁸ He noted that the Nanais, a Manchu-Tunguz people, distinguish three groups of amulets, sicknesses, and auxiliary spirits, because in their view it is this trinity that determines the curative approach.²⁹ In addition to the precise presentation of the linguistic material, the many illustrations give these writings a special significance.

²⁶ We aimed to give a visual anthropological presentation of Eurasian shamanism in a source publication (Hoppál 1994).

²⁷ We plan to develop the Archive of Shamanism in the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences by adding our own collections, photographs (approx. 1000), films (25 in 2007), books and reprints, as well as our collection of manuscripts and translations to the Diószegi collections. Development of a uniform record and index system has already begun. A part of the data will be accessible on CD-ROM and on Internet, laying the foundation for an Archive of Eurasian Shamanism.

²⁸ See more details in Hoppál 1996.

²⁹ Diószegi 1947c, 1949, 1957, subsequently also published in German (1963f) and in English (1968a).

In the fifties, he wrote two more articles in Russian about Manchu-Tunguz topics: one about shaman mirrors (1950), the other, a comparative examination, about the antler headgear of Nanai shamans (1955). He found parallel examples for the shaman headgear with antlers in the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest (Inventory No. 82.439) in the rock art along the Lena and the Yenisey.

“Thus, the ethnographic, linguistic, and archeological evidence show that the shaman headgear with antlers goes back to very early times; and from this it follows that the conceptions shaping our object are rooted in one of the ancient layers of Man’s view of the world.

The solution of the problem of which layer we are dealing with lies in the answers to three questions: Is there any relationship between the shaman and the animal whose antler he wears on his head? If there is, what kind of a relationship is it? Why is it necessary for the shaman’s headgear to represent the animal in question?

On the basis of the Manchu-Tunguz folklore data available to us, the answer to the first question is affirmative: there is a close relationship between the shaman and the deer. The shaman’s life-soul assumes the shape of a xargi, that is, a deer, but the soul, or spirit, of the shaman’s ancestor is also xargi, or deer-shaped. The deer shape of the spirit of the shaman’s ancestor, or it being a deer, refers to the quality of the relationship between the shaman and the animal his headgear symbolizes. If the shaman’s ancestor is a deer, the shaman is a descendant, that is, a relative of the deer.

Consequently, the shaman and the animal symbolized by his headgear are very closely related: the shaman is a descendant of the deer, therefore, the antler headgear is a symbol of this ancestor animal.

The Nanai shaman’s headgear – together with the Manchu-Tunguz antler headgear – represents the shaman ancestor, the xargi, that is, the deer, the animal that selected the shaman to become a shaman, then made him into a shaman, and always helps him in his shamanic activity. It either helps the shaman’s soul to assume the shape of a xargi (when it separates from the body to go to the other world), or the xargi moves into the shaman’s body and governs the shaman’s actions. The antler headgear worn at rites is the result of this close and manifold relationship between the xargi and the shaman.” (DIÓSZEGI 1955:108)

Among the articles about Manchu topics, two dealing with the question of shaman songs have not been mentioned. The first gives an exhaustive analysis and detailed annotation of the five brief texts transcribed by A. Rudnev at the beginning of the 20th century (1960a), the other contains the translation of shaman songs collected by Benedek Baráthosi Balogh also in the early years of the century (1972, see the English translation in BULGAKOVA – KÖHALMI 1999).

Generally, Diószegi published his writings in Hungarian and some other language, thus, the one about the combat of the shaman’s animal-shaped auxiliary spirit was also published in Russian (1952, 1952a). In the late fifties and early sixties, he usually published his works in German, thus, the two papers on the traces of shamanism in Hungarian folk beliefs (1958b, 1960b), the report on his collection trips in Siberia published in *Sociologus* (1959), a paper about Soyot shamanism (1959a), and one about the typology of Selkup shaman drums (1963a). The last, which was published in Hungarian only three years later, belongs among the series of papers exploring interethnic cultural relations through the examination of the area of spread of certain object types. He demonstrated in this paper that the drum with the Y-shaped handle used by the shamans of the Mansi and Khanti peoples is a typical Ob-Ugric cultural element, and not an object taken over from the neighbouring Samoyeds. This is proved by the

widespread use of the drum-names, *koi'p* ~ *koi'm*, which is etymologically related to the verb, *kei* ~ *koi*, meaning 'to enchant', or to the appellation of the shaman (1960c).

Denkmäler der samojedischen Kultur im Schamanismus der ostsajanischen Völker is similarly valuable for its ethnogenetic conclusions (1963a). One of the most important problems, if not the most important, that Diószegi had in the early sixties concerned the interpretation and valuation of ethnographic facts (the presence or absence of certain objects) or certain phenomena in folklore or folk belief as ethnic determinants.

He also investigated the problem of "ethnic homogeneity" in the case of Karagas shamanism in a paper the length of a small monograph (1968b). In July 1958, he studied a Turkic people called Tofa – or Karagas by an older name – a tribe of five clans numbering barely 500 by that time, who were hunters and nomadic reindeer herdsman living on the eastern slopes of the Sayan mountains. On the basis of information given by former shamans – who ceased to practice shamanism in the fifties – he learned in detail how shaman candidates are chosen, how they are initiated, and whether they would become small, or medium, or big and powerful shamans. His data showed that uncritical generalizations cannot be made in this matter, noting, as a case in point, that a person may become a shaman even without shaman ancestors. Furthermore, there are also white and black, benevolent and malevolent shamans, and they have many kinds of auxiliary spirits at their service, who determine the symbols, color and shape of the shaman's clothing and equipment, e.g., the drum. Three different head ornaments can be distinguished in the case of the Tofa shamans: the headband, which is the most frequent, the hat, and the crown. Diószegi asked one of his old informants to make the shaman head ornament with feathers in front of him and took photographs of the whole process. The informant was a shaman's sister, and since she had made a head ornament for her brother decades before, this reconstructed piece may be considered as authentic. In contrast, the ethnographic authenticity of the color drawings published in this paper, is highly questionable. In Diószegi's words:

*"Since the costumes of Tofa shamans are unknown in ethnographic literature, I wish to publish part of the drawings I had the opportunity to have made in the course of my field work. These objects are no longer in existence: their owners destroyed them when they stopped practising shamanism. They were drawn and described from memory by ex-shamans or their relatives who still clearly remembered these costumes."*³⁰

In other words, these were reconstructions based on narratives, drawings, indeed color drawings, of non-existent objects.

His summary of the symbolic meaning of the Karagas shaman drum, namely, that the shaman considers his drum as a symbolic horse which he rides during the shamanic ritual, is much more significant. Even though he spent very little time in Siberia, the material he collected among the Karagas contains a wealth of details, which he systematized for this study, and, for this reason, I believe that it is one of his best studies.

³⁰ Diószegi 1968b:294. Sometimes the enthusiastic researcher got carried away by his good intentions. He tells that he had the informants draw from memory the clothing of old shamans, and then published these as well as the oral description they gave. See coloured pictures in 1968b:296–323. However, we dropped these pictures from the 1996 reprint of the original volume because we believe that "imagery ethnography" of this type is unworthy of the great scholar. It is understandable that this method was subject to severe criticism even in his lifetime.

Diószegi went to Siberia in difficult times because of political reasons, when it was impossible for him to learn about shamans from the shamans themselves, but had to be contented with stories told by those who had known real shamans. In view of the fact that shamanic relics were not valued at the time for ideological reasons, he had to make heroic efforts to do his work. He compiled excellent studies from scattered data, such as his work on the regional differences in Tuva shamanism and the similarities between neighbouring ethnic groups (1962), or his work on the ethnogenetic conclusions of the investigation of Darkhat shamanism (1963e). He illustrated these articles with a rich array of pictures of objects he had collected since he realized, and this is one of his methodological innovations, that the minute differences in shamanic objects (such as the drum, staff, dress, headgear, etc.) may serve as important distinctive features in the exploration of intra- and interethnic relations.

Two studies of his investigating shamanic objects, their origin and ritual significance also belong here. One of them discusses Evenki shaman masks (1967), the other, shaman staffs (1968c).

He also gave a detailed account of the results of his field work in Mongolia (1961), outlining, as it were, the problems of research.

As the above sketchy survey shows, Diószegi conducted a systematic investigation of the shamanism of more than a dozen Siberian peoples, and wrote one or more papers on each. He treated the Tuva material in perhaps the greatest detail, publishing several papers (DIÓSZEGI 1959a, 1962b), as well as an enjoyable itinerary for the general public (DIÓSZEGI 1960, in English 1968). The latter reveals Diószegi's method of work, though the reader may sometimes feel that he idealized his informants. At the same time, it is commendable that some parts of the text of the scholarly papers are included verbatim in the popular book (in fact, they are among his unedited notes contained in the manuscript collection).

In the last years of his life in the early seventies, Diószegi wrote three articles about shaman songs. The first is about the sacrificial songs of the Altaic Turks (DIÓSZEGI 1970), the second, written together with his Buryat field assistant, the folklorist N. O. Sharakshinova, about Buryat shaman songs (DIÓSZEGI 1970a), and the third about the healing songs of the Nanais (1972). He probably felt, or rather, after reading through the literature, realized how neglected the study of shamanic narratives was.

One of the last monographic studies compiled of incredibly varied material and written with exemplary thoroughness, is a treatise of the pre-Islamic shamanism of Baraba Turks (DIÓSZEGI 1978). This study is perhaps one of the most important Hungarian contributions to research on Siberian shamanism both for its methodology and ethnogenetic conclusions.

Another, brief and comprehensive book, titled *Samanizmus* (1962), is little known because it was published only in Hungarian. Written for the general public, it is not only an excellent summary of all there is to know about the basics of Siberian shamanism, but its flowing language also makes it an enjoyable reading. Separate chapters discuss the place shamanism occupies among the religions, the world of the shamans in Siberia the world view as reconstructed from shamanic myths and the drawings on shaman drums. We can read about the myth of the birth of the first shaman, the dramatic structure of shamanic rites, the rhythmic pattern of shaman songs, and many other interesting facts about the beginnings of shamanism as evidenced by Siberian pictographs. More than two dozen pictures illustrate the volume mostly from Diószegi's own collection that were never published before. It detracts much from the value of the book that the author left out the sources of data and quotations, probably at the request of the publisher.

Let me add as a final note to the book that, in accordance with the spirit of the age – that is, the early sixties – (1958:113) describes shamans as neurotics, and, in conclusion, predicts the disappearance of shamanism in Siberia, explaining that he himself had found only the memory and the ruins of this ancient tradition. Fortunately, he was proved wrong, for shamans are still active, in fact, a kind of renaissance of shamanism can be seen to take place today (HOPPÁL 1996).

About a decade later, he wrote an entry, titled “Shamanism” (1974), for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Its structure, the examples and data cited therein are the same as in the above book. This excellent summary, containing the essence of the Hungarian scholar’s knowledge, was Diószegi’s last work written shortly before his death.

Tracing Shamanism in Hungarian Folk Beliefs

Diószegi’s studies on Hungarian folk beliefs must also be mentioned in this context, even if briefly, for two reasons. The first is that the investigation of the ancient religion of Hungarians was one of his fields of inquiries from the start. Essentially, he began his research on Siberian shamanism in order to find those parallels with the help of which he would be able to reconstruct the ancient Hungarian religious system.

The second reason is that these studies, also interesting from point of view of methodology, are practically unknown to foreign scholars simply because they are available only in Hungarian.

János Kodolányi, an old friend and well-read in Diószegi’s works, wrote:

“Even before Vilmos Diószegi, students of old religion of Hungarians have already found certain phenomena in the Hungarian folk traditions which they could compare with the phenomena of shamanism and could explain their origins through it. Many had even stated that the conquering Hungarians had been believers and practitioners of shamanism. One of the great plans of Diószegi was to compile the belief system of Hungarians from the relevant elements of folk traditions, to reconstruct their world view. What he had in mind was not, however, a static view, but a dynamic one throwing light upon the developments and influences that moulded it through centuries. Thus, he wished to look into the past. Questions of genesis, of the origins of phenomena, had great fascination for him. He set out to discover the past from the present, attempting to reach as far back as possible. He also considered ethnology to be an historical discipline capable of throwing light upon times prior to written history.” (KODOLÁNYI 1984:XIV)

Diószegi summarized his research methods and outlined the road through which he thought it is possible to reconstruct the belief system of pre-Christian Hungarians in the paper titled “A honfoglaló magyar nép hitvilága (‘ösvallásunk’) kutatásának módszertani kérdései” [Methodological problems of research concerning the religious beliefs of the first Magyar settlers of Hungary]” (1954). In his review Kodolányi says that Diószegi mentioned these presuppositions for the first time in a paper on methodology, titled “The combatting Táltos-bull and the animal-shaped life-soul of the shaman” (1952, 1952a), in which he examined in detail a group of elements in Hungarian folk tradition contrasting them with certain shamanic phenomena. At this time he was already collecting material for a major and comprehensive work. He used not only the archive material and the published works but tried to enlarge the scope of the extensive fieldwork, especially in order to determine more exactly the spread of certain phenomena, and to make them more available for analysis. His monographical work (1958) titled *A sámánhit emlékei a magyar népi műveltségben* [The remnants of shamanism in Hungarian folk culture] was

published in 1958. In the course of comparative investigations he threw light upon the remnants of shamanic elements in Hungarian folk beliefs. In differentiating between the historical layers he noticed that certain phenomena of shamanism had analogies among the traditions of the Siberian Turks, among those of the Finno-Ugric peoples. Let us quote Kodolányi again:

"[...] the belief system of the peoples connected with the conquering Hungarians was shamanism, and as other ideologies (as for example Christianity or Judaism) did not affect them considerably, we have to suppose that shamanism, or rather a version of shamanism, was the belief system of the conquering Hungarians. [...] we have to compare the phenomena of Hungarian folk culture with the corresponding cultural phenomena of the European peoples; in certain cases the result of this comparison is negative and then these phenomena have to be compared to the corresponding shamanic elements of the peoples related to Hungarians and of the peoples who had stood or stand in historical connection with them." (KODOLÁNYI 1984:XV)

This work, the result of very extensive research, was also his Ph. D. dissertation. In her memoirs, Diószegi's widow wrote the following about the two pillars on which his work rests: "He began the collection of folk beliefs covering all Hungarian-speaking areas as well as the survey of ethnographic literature on folk beliefs parallel with the collection of the Siberian material. He travelled to regions of the country still steeped with tradition, did extensive collection among the Székely people of Bukovina and Moldavia, the Palóc people in the Mátra region, as well as in the northern, western, and eastern territories of Transdanubia. He worked in several villages in the region between the Danube and the Tisza rivers, then in Mezőkövesd, the Nyírség and Szatmár regions. He visited Hungarian villages across the border in and around Csallóköz, Gömör, and Nyitra several times." (MORVAY 1975:6) He had further plans of writing a series of monographs about various regional folk beliefs. Unfortunately, the few years left to him prevented him from carrying out these plans, though he worked with incredible energy.

However, he was able to write and publish the small monograph titled *A pogány magyarok hitvilága* [Folk Beliefs of the Pagan Hungarians] (1967).

The conclusion Diószegi arrived at was that the shamanic world view probably formed the backbone of the world view of pagan Hungarians. He stressed, however, that this world view was not homogeneous, just as the Hungarians as a people were not. He also called attention to the difficulties arising from the fact that after the conversion to Christianity and due to the ensuing persecution of old beliefs, the pagan belief system gradually lost its power.

Comparison of the tradition concerning the figure of the "pagan Hungarian *táltos*" with Siberian shamanic phenomena constitutes the most coherent part of Diószegi's researches and his lifework. The selection of the *táltos* candidate in Hungarian folk belief takes place by way of an illness just as in the case of the shamans of most Siberian peoples: the candidate is marked by illness, he is "called" by the spirits, falls into long periods of sleep, and his body is "cut up" then put together during dreamlike visions (see the previous chapter of this book).

Diószegi compared not only individual elements, but related motifs and, ultimately, conceptual systems, and noted that he found one conceptual system which forms an organic whole, "not a single element of which is missing from among the concepts of the shamanism of kindred peoples, nor does it lack any element that constitutes an essential feature of the conceptual sphere of shamanism" (1967a:135). It is difficult to surpass Diószegi's exemplary analyses and endeavors to find parallels. There is only one aspect

of his work which we have tried to supplement on the basis of our collection partly in Hungary and partly in the Far East. In the mid-seventies, we found data in Zemplén County for the correspondence between the drum and the sieve (HOPPÁL 1984). I have yet to publish the complete material of our very rich findings concerning the conception of the sieve or the drum as the shaman's means of transportation (horse, ship), which leads us again to the Far East. A particularly interesting parallel for the Hungarian motif of a wise shepherd crossing the Danube on his sieve discovered in Csallóköz, is the shamanic narrative motif I happened on in China in 1995 when my colleagues in Beijing translated a story of two Manchu shamans fighting where one attacks the other who is trying to cross the river standing on a drum (SUNG 1997:149).

However systematic Diószegi's comparisons and however convincing – and surprising – the correspondence between narrative motifs, the congruity of linguistic etymological data, the evidence (e.g., the leather sieve), the fact remains that Hungarians have lived under the ideological influence of Christianity for more than a thousand years, during which time pagan rites were, presumably, ruthlessly persecuted, therefore, nothing of the shaman rituals could have possibly survived – and, in fact, nothing did. For this reason, many deny the existence of pagan Hungarian shamanism at the time of the settlement in Hungary. It is the easy way of solving the problem to say that the findings and data are insufficient. The other, the more difficult way is to find new data in order to prove that Diószegi was right, that is, to follow the course he had set.

The Afterlife of Diószegi's Works

“He didn't die, he only hide himself,” is the way a Hungarian poet describes the *táltos* to indicate his changed state of consciousness. Diószegi was not yet fifty when he passed away, but he is with us in his works, his influence lives on. The obituaries (KÓHALMI-URAY 1972, LOT-FALCK 1973, DÖMÖTÖR 1973), without exception, stated that his work opened a new epoch in the research on Siberian shamanism. Over the past decades, Russian colleagues have said many times again and again how much Diószegi's presence in the still extant Soviet Union meant to them. The rate at which he worked set an example, and under the ideological constraints of the period, it meant a great deal to them that the Hungarian scholar was interested in a “forbidden” subject (i.e. shamanism) and asked Russian scholars to write articles for a book.

Diószegi, like a true shaman, tried to mediate between the different worlds, between the East and the West. I remember that by the end of 1971, the material for the book was essentially complete. Naturally, the Russians sent their papers written in Russian. We may assume that Diószegi had the time to just read them (but not their English translation) before he became fatally ill in March 1972 preventing him from editing the book. The volume, titled *Shamanism in Siberia* (DIÓSZEGI – HOPPÁL eds. 1978), was published only years later, by Akadémiai Kiadó. I remember this distinctly because I was also present at the Soviet–Hungarian ethnographic symposium in 1969, when Diószegi asked the Russian colleagues to write studies for the volume he was planning to publish. By this time, his book, *Glaubenwelt und Folklore der sibirischen Völker* (1963) had already been published and favorably received, indeed, the English edition had also appeared as the 57th volume of the *Uralic and Altaic Series* (1968). These volumes gave a new impetus to research on shamanism in Europe and in what was the Soviet Union.

It gave further impetus to development that together with the Russian researchers we organized another symposium in 1981, *in memoriam* Diószegi, which bore the working title “Comparative Studies of the Early Forms of Religion”, while in English it was

called *Shamanism in Eurasia*. The thirty-eight lectures delivered at the conference were published in two volumes with the same English title, by the Herodot Publishing Company in Göttingen (HOPPÁL ed. 1984). The volumes were well received in Hungary and abroad, and, together with *Shamanism in Siberia*, they are used to date as university text books (DIÓSZEGI – HOPPÁL eds. 1978).

Diószegi's last study, the length of a small monograph, titled the "Pre-Islamic Shamanism of the Baraba Turks and Some Ethnogenetic Conclusions" (1978), was published in the latter volume. The entry written for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1974) appeared only after his death. In 1996, Akadémiai Kiadó published the selected reprint volumes of *Popular Beliefs and Shamanism in Siberia* in its *Bibliotheca Shamanistica* series (DIÓSZEGI – HOPPÁL eds. 1996, 1996a). Thus, in a manner of speaking, this great scholar continues to publish his works and is a part of scientific life even after his death. He is also present in the works of his associates, many of whom became outstanding researchers. Recently a new generation of researchers grew up in Hungary, a number of whom became involved in the study of shamanism. Excellent reviews of the relevant literature (VOIGT 1976, 1978), as well as a whole series of analytical studies have been written on the shamanic elements of folk medicine (OLÁH 1988) and witch trials (KLÁNICZAY 1984), on Central European folk consciousness (LAMMEL 1993) and ethnic identity (HOPPÁL 1987), among others.

The Hungarian Ethnographic Society and the Hungarian Association for the Study of Religions have devoted several scholarly meetings to his memory, but, unfortunately, these lectures were not published.

However, on the 20th anniversary of his death, a Finnish and a Hungarian researcher (SIKKALA – Hoppál 1992) issued a volume of their selected studies summarizing the results of recent research. Mostly, they investigated problems that Diószegi had not touched upon. In spring 1998, when Diószegi would turn seventy-five years old, volume of his selected writings was published (DIÓSZEGI 1998).

Diószegi's works and their influence live on, though he himself is dead, and let us hope that sooner or later his studies in Russian and German will also be published in separate volumes. We plan to open the Diószegi's Archive of Siberian Shamanism to international research, and, thus, his important contribution to the research on Siberian shamanism will gradually become available for study.



SHAMANISM AND THE BELIEF SYSTEM OF THE ANCIENT HUNGARIANS

9

It may be stated with some certainty that for the last two centuries scholars of the history of Hungarian culture have tried eagerly to ascertain what the old religion of the ancient Hungarians must have been like. Now, after the time of the 1100th anniversary of the Hungarian Conquest, this interest is still active, and questions and problems, if possible, are only increasing in number as we learn more and more about details, possible parallels and analogues.

Addressing the members of the scholarly community of Göttingen in the late 1700's, Daniel Cornides naturally spoke of a 'religion' but the first problem that actually emerges in this connection is whether we can talk about a religion at all or whether instead we ought to refer to our subject as a mythology or a popular belief or system of beliefs. A correct and readable summary of these problems was provided in one of Vilmos Voigt's last lectures (2003).

While earlier research usually speaks of 'ancient religion' (e.g. SOLYMOSSY in 1929 pointed out elements of an ancient religion in Hungarian folk tales, mentioning oriental parallels to the motif of the duck-legged revolving castle), Vilmos Diószegi's attempt (1967) was directed at reconstructing the "belief system" of pagan Hungarians. Unfortunately, he failed to finish the grand project that he had laid out so carefully, but he did complete its most important part, the comparison of Hungarian *táltos* beliefs and Siberian shamanism. In other words he invested a great deal of difficult and meticulous labour to assemble a mosaic from its fragments. What are the elements that belong to the system of ancient Hungarian pagan beliefs? Instead of using the term shamanism I prefer to speak of shaman belief, not only because it sounds less modern but also because it expresses a degree of abstraction. Shamanism I believe is not a religion but a world view of a kind, a relation to things, to the world and to one's environment. It is not much a collection of sacred dogma but rather a practice of everyday life.

In 1967 Vilmos Diószegi published a short monograph on *A pogány magyarok hitvilága* [*Folk Beliefs of the Pagan Hungarians*]. In this book he summarises the results of his earlier research regarding the world view of pre-Christian Hungarians and the figure of the

Hungarian *táltos*. Naturally, Diószegi based his statements mainly on his research into shamanism, or more precisely on the results of the comparison he carried out between Hungarian popular beliefs and the shamanism of Siberian peoples.

His starting point was the methodological principle according to which he only included those elements of Hungarian popular belief in his comparative study which are not to be found among the neighbouring peoples and of these elements only those which have parallels in the Far East. It is evident that his main interest was in these oriental elements. This is no wonder as his original orientation during his university study was Manchu-Tunguz linguistics and only later did he become an ethnographer. As such he left behind him a most coherent body of work, not to mention what is called his Shamanism Archive, which is unparalleled throughout the world.

In the following paper we are going to provide a brief summary of Diószegi's views and describe the oriental elements that he detected in Hungarian folk belief. A summary of his ideas could be that the basic structure of the world view of pagan Hungarians was a shamanistic cosmology.

One such series of elements is the 'world tree with the sun and the moon' and another is the tree with a bird at the top which clearly retains reminiscences of the world model of Siberian shamanism. Diószegi supported his ideas with a multitude of data and the conclusions he draws are thoroughly well-founded (a detailed treatment of the topic in question can be found in DIÓSZEGI 1969). Another surviving series of ideas is the set of views regarding the underworld. Talking of these, Diószegi points out that "on the basis of the image of a land of snakes, lizards and frogs which is presented by Ob Ugrian, Samoyed and other shaman-faithed peoples, it is possible that the faith of Hungarians in a similar underworld also goes back to pre-Christian times and was thus once a part of the cosmology of pagan Hungarians" (DIÓSZEGI 1967:21).

The correspondence between the Hungarian features and the distant, Oriental tradition goes well beyond the rough outline – it extends to details like the candidate's reluctance in consequence of which he or she becomes seriously ill or the rite of passage which usually means climbing the shaman ladder or the tree that reaches the sky. It is worth noting here that of all the Far Eastern data cited by Diószegi the ones that come closest to Hungarian *táltos* folklore are the parallels from the Altaic Turks, Tuva and Mongolia.

Diószegi lists the objects which belong to the *táltos* shaman's equipment – the drum which served as vehicle for the trance journeys to the other world, the head-dress which was ornamented with birds' feathers or was shaped like a crown and adorned with antlers and the *táltos*'s tree – as each shaman had his or her own tree (cf. HOPPÁL 1994:22–228, pictures, Yakut data and DIÓSZEGI 1967:91). I myself had the occasion during my Siberian journey to see a shaman tree in a Yakut village and to photograph the Nanais perform their animal sacrifice in front of the three *turu*, which is the name of the sacrificial tree.

Speaking of the *táltos* shaman's activity, it is the etymological analysis of the Hungarian words *révül-rejtezik* (to go into a trance, to hide) which leads us into the area of Ob Ugrian parallels (as BALÁZS pointed out in his 1954 article, cf. DIÓSZEGI 1967:95–103), including details like yawning which is a sign of the commencement of trance or an altered state of mind. Diószegi's most detailed analyses regard the struggling of the *táltos* (1967:108–122) and it is noteworthy that these narratives are perhaps the most complete surviving presentations regarding the shaman's struggle. These usually take the form of a bullfight, or more precisely the shaman's animal-shaped helping spirit tights the helping spirits (*tin-bura*) of the other shaman. The best parallels and motif

correlations are to be found in the material collected among the Yakut and the Buryat Mongolian people and it is from here that Diószegi himself cited them. Diószegi's work is not a mere comparison of individual elements but of coherent motifs and ultimately, of the entire image system. He pointed out that he found a system of images which form an organic whole and 'among which there is no part or detail that is not paralleled among the images and notions of the shamanic faith of the shaman ladder or the tree that reaches the sky. It is worth noting here that of all the Far Eastern data cited by Diószegi the ones that come closest to Hungarian *táltos* folklore are the parallels from the Altaic Turks, Tuva and Mongolia.

Diószegi could not be very well acquainted with the material of Manchu shamanism and thus did not rely on it to any particular extent. It must be said in his favour that until a few years ago Manchu scholars who lived in a minority in China were prevented from publishing their own works and even now their work mainly appears in Chinese.

During my study trip to Uiguria in 1995, I met a young scholar belonging to the local Manchu minority, the Sibe. Kicheshen had only recently sent off an English translation of his richly documented paper on the shamanism of his own people. In this the first similarity with Hungarian features is that the shamanic candidate, usually when still a child, falls ill which indicates to the people around him or her that the person in question has been selected by the spirits for the shamanic mission. He or she must undertake the task, no matter what suffering it entails (KICHESHEN 1996:5, or as the second line of a related Hungarian folk song says, 'he must go through hell'). Thus, for example, the Sibe candidate must climb the ladder that reaches the sky and is built of sharp knives (*chakur*) so as to meet the main deity of shamans (*Isanju Mama*). (Representations of the shamanic pantheon and of the ladder had been published in STARY 1993:231, 235.)

In the Manchurian city of Jilin the local Manchu colleagues have assembled in the last few years a collection of several objects from the attributes of Manchurian shamanism. They collected shaman costumes, drums and other ritual objects of the most varied kind from the different peoples living in the area (e.g. Daur, Shibe, Oroch, Evenki, Hezhe). Among the objects is a clay statuette which represents a breast-feeding woman with an eagle's head. In answer to my question they told me that this woman is the mother of the first shaman who was inseminated by an eagle (her name is *Isen-mama*).

This myth, the origin myth of shamanism seems to exist not only in Buryat shaman mythology but all over Siberia (and Eurasia) with the eagle and the shaman both figuring, to an equal degree, as mediators between the worlds of people and of the gods (ELIADE 1974:69–71, further examples in HALIFAX 1982:23). The Tunguz Gilyak people, for example, use the same word to signify eagle and shaman. At any rate the mother of the tribe of shamans was begotten by an eagle of heavenly origin which is a motif that bears noteworthy similarity to the basic motif of the origin myth of the tribe of Árpád, leader of the Hungarians of the conquest. This is the myth of Emese's dream, in other words the myth of the Turul bird (Regarding this see RÖHEIM 1917, regarding the animal-shaped mothers of Siberian shamans see LOMMEL 1967:62. A very interesting analysis of Álmos has been published in DÜMMERTH 1986).

It is interesting that neither Diószegi nor Jenő Fazekas gives any attention to this motif and even Dezső Pais (1972:302–307) only mentions it as a tribal totemistic legend in his linguistic work entitled *A magyar ősvallás nyelvi emlékeiből* [Some linguistic remnants of the ancient Hungarian religion]. The Turul legend was recorded by the chronicler Anonymus in his *Gesta* thus we have all reason to consider it not only old but also authentic since Latin chronicles borrowed and retained a great deal of folklore motifs. It is not entirely unfounded to assume that at the time when the Nameless

Chronicler (Anonymus) was working there were still bards living and working from whose 'chatters and silly stories' the chronicler may have heard or borrowed this motif. The institution of the king-shaman is well known from Korea where it functioned during the time of the Silla dynasty in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD (which dynasty is assumed by Korean scholars to have originated in Inner Asia (COVELL 1986:139–137), see the example of crowns adorned with a world tree and of the horses that fly to the sky).

Still talking about Manchuria and the Orient we must add that one of the basic motifs of Hungarian *táltos* stories, the 'bull-fight' (meaning a fight between shaman's animal shape helping spirits) is to be found among many Turkic peoples (e.g. in Kazak folk stories) and it also survives in the form of a popular game (sport) among the Hui tribe which lives in the Xingjiang area. The director of the Ethnic Minorities institute of Jilin still remembers having seen such games in his childhood. Fu Yuguang, an expert in Manchu folklore and oral tradition has told me that this game, i. e. the sport of stopping the bull with one's bare hands, is also known among the Manchus. Three or four decades ago young men would not elect a man leader unless he fought the bull bear-handed. Such men were then called *batur*. As is well known, this motif survives not only in Hungarian *táltos* stories but also in the 19th century poet János Arany's epic poem, *Toldi*, as a sort of vague reflection of long by gone Oriental connections. It can be no accident that the Hungarian words '*Álmos/álm*', *Emese*, *Turul* and *táltos* belong to one etymological group and also constitute a myth cycle.

Another interesting element of the set of beliefs surrounding the Hungarian figure of the shaman is the everyday meaning of the word *táltos* which is none other than the image of a horse of great strength or extraordinary abilities. Since it mainly occurs in folk stories, the *táltos* horse has been to some extent ignored by Diószegi's analyses. In folk stories it appears as a winged, flying horse. This correspondence is probably not accidental, since in Yakut shamanism the shaman appears in the form of a stallion while the helping spirits invoked are of the female sex (from the early part of the century, based on G. V. Ksenofontov's collection, see BALZER 1995:178).

Here as well as in the traditions of other peoples the shaman enters sexual intercourse with the helping spirits and/or the entire session can be transcribed in sexual symbols (as in the case of the rein-deer sacrifice among the Ostyaks). This aspect of shamanism has been little researched thus far (it is mainly drumming that is usually interpreted in this way – HAMAYON 1990), even though the French scholar Roberte Hamayon's explanation is based on a very convincing logical argument when she points out that the essence of the session is that 'the shaman must obtain a woman from the world of spirits' (HAMAYON 1993:4, 18).

The image of helping spirits as sexual partners is quite wide-spread in the shamanism of Siberian peoples (cf. BASILOV 1984:53) and it might be worth-while to examine the character of the spirit helper-lover which appears in the Hungarian cycle of belief surrounding the figure of the *lidérc* ('nightmare' – a reference to it was made in PÓCS 1992:48), as it is possible that this would reveal a further shamanistic element in Hungarian popular belief.

The *Emese* and *Turul* motifs is not mentioned either by Hungarian scholars (GUNDA 1957) nor by those working in other countries (RÓHEIM 1954) even though they were examining the remnants of totemism in old Hungarian shamanism. They did, however, mention an ancient element, probably of oriental origin, and this is the use of 'magic mushroom' (*Amanita muscaria*) in order to achieve the altered state of mind (CZIGÁNY 1980). This article is little known in Hungary as it was published in the *Slavonic and East European Review*. Similarly little known are F. Goodman's (1978) and Jenő

Fazekas's (1967) studies. They both examined, one by one, the categories of Hungarian 'shamans' on the basis of the available linguistic material. They distinguished the clearly circumscribed social roles of *garabonciás*, *néző*, *boszorkány* and *regös* (PÓCS 1994).

Without going into details we must mention that the word which forms the root of *regös*, which is also present in our words, *révül* (*rejtezik*) originates in the oldest, probably Ob Ugrian (perhaps Uralic) stratum of our language (Cf. BALÁZS 1954). Together with the word *kiált* it retains the memories of the shaman belief of the Ugrian era (*kalált*, *kaj*, *hal*, *hui*,) but *hejgetés* can also be included (MÉSZÖLY 1952, DEMÉNY 1994), in other words the memory of shaman songs has very probably been retained by our language and there are also traces of it in folk customs. (e.g. *regölés*, *hejgetés*).

The *regös* question can be seen in an even more interesting and more clearly historical perspective if we recall the explanation of the archaeologist István Dienes who assumed that in the horse-riding nomadic society of the age of the conquest, which was similar in a typological sense, there existed institutionalised shamanism. The shaman partly played the role of the organiser of the ceremony and partly that of a bard, occupying quite a high position in the social hierarchy.

"The institution of the sacred monarchy was meant to support the structure of the state organisation through the means of religion, by institutionally controlling social consciousness. The order of the shamans, who were in the service of the court, was organised around the sacred king." These enjoyed a privileged position under the leadership of the much respected shaman and "...their main task was to keep alive the circle of legend surrounding the founder of the dynasty and his progeny as well as to laud and glorify the current monarch and his leaders at any one time and to enhance their prestige." (DIENES 1989:376, 383)

Besides these there existed also the healing shamans who attended to everyday tasks of healing, as we can observe to this day all over Siberia. In fact the number of these is even increasing at the present time. With the help of *regös* bards (DIENES 1985:387) fragments of the ancient heroic epic survived through centuries, as is witnessed by numerous references. We find it likely that certain motifs of the Toldi legend which hint at an oriental origin also survived in this fashion. The same is probably true of certain images in folk stories (e.g. the winged *táltos* horse, about which we are planning a major study in the future, cf. KISS 1995).

Quite naturally, critical remarks are also repeatedly voiced regarding the oriental elements in Hungarian popular beliefs (e.g. Géza Róheim, Tekla Dömötör). Gyula László questioned Diószegi's entire theory in 1976 in an article which he wrote in memory of Dezső Pais entitled 'Különvélemény ősvallásunkról' ('A dissenting opinion regarding our ancient religion'). In this he voices his disbelief regarding the possibility of correlation between our word *táltos* and the word meaning shaman. Referring to Dezső Pais, he questioned the etymological evidence of the Turkic origins in spite of the fact that words that correlate to the stem *tal-* are not to be found anywhere else. But even he did not deny the identity between folklore texts and certain motifs. He quite logically pointed out that obvious differences which separate *táltos* and shaman must be taken into account as well as correspondences (LÁSZLÓ 1990:169). Indeed the *contrastive* research which is to collect differences is still a task which has to be completed but that will be the topic of another paper.



TRACES OF SHAMANISM IN HUNGARIAN FOLK BELIEFS

10

On the Concept of Belief System

A theoretical study of the early forms of religion should include at least three components. The first is the conception of belief system, the second is a text theoretical approach to the analysis of narrative structures, and the third is a general ethnosemiotic description of the 'texts' or codes of culture.

Here we use the concept of belief (and belief system) in a wide sense similarly to that of American sociology: the belief system represents the total universe of a person's beliefs about the physical world, the social world and the self. In fact, this system corresponds to our everyday knowledge about surrounding reality, with a wide transition between beliefs and established knowledge (HOPPÁL 1979, 2000: 39–59).

In the literature of rather different disciplines like psychology, philosophy and sociology, the statement occurs from time to time that beliefs do not stand side by side in a chaotic disorder, but rather they form a system. We cannot produce direct evidence for this assumption, since it is the human mind itself which serves as data bank and memory. The analysis of various folklore texts revealed, however, the existence of such a latent system. It is not accidental that the first experts who emphasized this fact were folklorists and social psychologists. But an interdisciplinary approach should be developed in mythological research as well. Both on the conceptual and the linguistic level, our knowledge, which is at the same time a part of the whole cultural system, creates a coherent network of associations. Where concepts are built one upon the other and ideas presume one another, we may speak of a homogeneous and well-integrated cultural code, in which the various beliefs are mutually reinforced.

Perhaps the network is the best graphic model for the representation of beliefs as a system. The network of a belief system may contain a great number of elements. Belief systems may be viewed as culturally constituted network and are transmitted as cognitive structures from one generation to the next as part of a group's cultural heritage. In the network, each element – node – is in correlation with the other elements, even if

through an intermediate element. This interrelation is the very reason why the mythological and/or belief systems are such long-lasting.

The transference of culturally accepted behaviour patterns or more specifically, the acquisition of culture is not possible, without the belief system, and in precise relation to that the belief system – like all other ‘languages’ or codes in the culture – is socially determined and its formation takes place at the same time as does the development of the personality in the early period of socialization, so beliefs are very deeply rooted in our personal and cultural memories.

The belief system is to be considered one of the most important subsystem of the ideological sphere within culture. The belief system alone comprises every sort of historically developed and socially inherited conceptions. Within the given culture, the conceptions and views (for example, on the nature of the universe and man’s place within it) create a relatively coherent system – to be more exact, there is a tendency towards the creation of internal coherence.

Anyone’s world view is based upon many individuals’ encyclopedic knowledge of the world. The most important function of a society’s ideological system is that it helps to give an answer to every question which emerges. For example: Where is my place in the world? What is the structure of the world like? Answers to this questions (which concern the internal mechanism of the world view) are given by the cosmological beliefs within the belief system. It is indisputable that beliefs of the world view are extremely important; the individual inherits and accepts these beliefs just as he does the language. It is important to emphasize here that belief systems and natural languages are extremely closely related.

The reason why spoken language has a central function is that it is the best ordered natural system among, the (nonartificial) semiotic systems used by men. The sphere of religious beliefs plays an important role in every culture, and it is conspicuous in its regularity. This is true especially for the great world religions; but the smaller religions build up a similarly complicated system with their intricate dogmas and rituals. Another important characteristic feature of the system of religious beliefs is that in most cultures this particular subsystem stores the given community’s value judgments (in many cases exactly in the form of the religious rules). The elements of a religious system are more rigid and coherent; therefore, they are less easily changed than the system of everyday beliefs built on more open and profane elements.

If one considers shamanism a ‘religion’ or simply a system of beliefs, the above statements are held to be true – at least in an everyday context. Eurasian shamanism, taking into account its main features, is a sacred, but at the same time, everyday phenomenon (curing illness, fortune-telling, hunting rituals and sacrifice). The belief system functions as a program of man’s cultural behaviour. (For further elaboration of the above concepts see HOPPÁL 1979, 1981.)

Traces of Shamanism in Hungarian Folk Beliefs

Since the Hungarian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric and, ultimately, to the Uralic language family, all the students of Hungarian folk beliefs tried to find ways of comparison back in Eurasia. There was a long tradition among scholars that the old religion of pagan Hungarians could not have been different from the primitive faith of the Siberian peoples, whose main set of ‘religious’ beliefs is labelled as shamanism.

Classical examples of Siberian shamanism have been found among the Khanty, Mansi, Saami and Samoyed ethnic groups, while the rest of the Finnish group have preserved only vague traces of the common belief of ancient times. The sacrificer called *tuno* in Votyak and similarly *kart* in Maki arranged the sacrificial ceremonies. The ancient Finnish and Lappish magicians were named by the words *noita* and *noiade*, respectively, which are etymologically identical with the Mansi *najt* 'shaman'. The similarity points to the common roots of shamanism in ancient times (HOPPÁL 1976:236–237).

Earlier literature on Hungarian mythology and folk belief often quotes from medieval Hungarian chronicles which contain narratives and scattered references on Hungarians sacrificing horses, mentioning at the same time that the sacrificer among the Hungarians was called *táltos* (see VOIGT 2003).

Research interest in shamanism arose at a relatively early time in Hungary. As early as the middle of the 19th century, a romantic urge to discover kindred folks led scholars to visit diverse nations living in the remotest corners of the Eastern world. Less known among the students of shamanism both in Hungary and abroad, are the names of Gábor Szentkatolnai and Benedek Baráthosi-Balogh. The latter made three field trips around 1880 to the Nanai, Ulcha and Oroch living along the Amur river. From these tours he brought home valuable objects and texts relating to shamanism. The century-old interest in the beliefs of the pagan Hungarians, or more precisely in bringing to light relics of Hungarian shamanism, has not abated to this way. More than a hundred articles and studies have been devoted to this topic.

In 1962, when, as far as I know, the last symposium was held on shamanism in Europe, J. Fazekas wrote an overview of studies on Hungarian shamanism. He presented not only a history of research but of materials as well. In the final analysis one can state that the shamanistic features in the Hungarian material have a strongly heterogeneous character, and some of them strikingly recall Central-Asiatic phenomena (FAZEKAS 1967:106; the same opinion is also held by RÓHEIM 1925:25; and SOLYMOSSY 1929). Investigations into Hungarian shamanism has therefore resulted in the differentiation of four main figures (*táltos*, *tudós*, *garabonciás* and *regös*), a series of so-called half-shamans. Earlier these were often reduced to one single ancient Hungarian shaman figure (FAZEKAS 1967:112).

A little later Vilmos Diószegi also published a review on Hungarian contributions to the study of shamanism, especially Eurasian, of which he was one of the most devoted researchers (DIÓSZEGI 1971). He succeeded in collecting field materials while "tracing shamans in Siberia" (DIÓSZEGI 1968). On the basis of this considerable amount of comparative material, he tried to clarify the connection between Hungarian and Siberian traditions. Up to now his monograph on the traces of shamanism in the Hungarian folk culture has remained the best work of its kind (DIÓSZEGI 1958).

After the early death of Diószegi, a number of works appeared, aiming to continue his work and research. Since one of the main tasks of a shaman is to cure illnesses, there were attempts to review data concerning shamanistic practices in Hungarian folk medicine (HOPPÁL – TÖRÖ 1975; KELEMEN 1980). It is little known even by the expert scholars that there is evidence in Hungarian folk beliefs concerning the usage of 'fly agaric' (*Amanita Muscaria*, *L. bolondgomba* = 'mad mushroom'), a mushroom which has hallucinogenic ingredients, and which was widely used to achieve trance state by shamans. It is definitely known that the utilization of 'mad mushroom' was a common practice in witchcraft (especially in love magic), but of course there are only very few data, since this practice must have been based on a jealously-guarded secret of the *táltos*

or the *tudós pásztor* ('knowledgeable shepherd'). In Hungarian folklore there is a recurring reference to the *táltos*'s habit of appearing on the doorstep and asking for milk. (This uttered demand of milk is understood by the common village people that the strange looking alien must be a *táltos* according to folk narratives.) This motif, often ignored as a curiosity, seems to make sense when collaborated with the evidence of modern pharmacology, which confirmed that milk is a powerful detoxicant to counteract the impact of fly agaric (CZIGÁNY 1980:216).

The figure of the *táltos* has received more and more plasticity, owing to the analysis of the rich belief and legend collections of the past decades. For comparative mythology, the following characteristic features may be of importance:

- The *táltos* infant is born with teeth.
- When seven, he disappears and roams about (relevant is the occurrence of the number seven in this circle of beliefs).
- If he does not disappear, then he is tormented by a disease with symptoms of spasmodic convulsions and swoons.
- He sleeps for days: *rejtezik* 'disappears from the visible world'. This synonym of the above mentioned *révül* 'to be entranced', expresses one of the most important elements of the notional sphere of shamanism: the concept of journey to the world beyond.
- When he comes or returns home, he asks for milk, and if he fails to get the drink, he spreads a storm over the region, which implies that he is endowed with supernatural powers.
- Further, he is characterized by the ability to disappear and transfigure.

A very important motif is attached to the latter capacity, the narrative motif of flight in the shape of animals. In the narratives of the shepherds of the Great Hungarian Plain, the *táltos* fighting his antagonist appears in the form of bulls of various colours (black vs. white, red vs. blue). Shamans in the legends of reindeer-raising peoples fight in the shape of a reindeer, while in those of horse-keeping nations they assume the form of a horse or a heavenly bull on such occasions (see for more details in DIÓSZEGI 1958; BALÁZS 1967; HOPPÁL 1976).

It can be established that a shamanistic conception of the world constituted the backbone of the pagan Hungarians' world view. And it was not a futile endeavour on the part of earlier researchers to associate the image of the tree reaching up to the sky, well-known from Hungarian folk tales, with the tree of shamanistic initiation and other shamanizations, i.e. the hero of the Hungarian folk tale had to climb while in a trance, which symbolized the fulfilment of the aim of the ceremony. In Hungarian folk tales he has either to climb or to fly on his mount up the tree, and Siberian shamans often call their drums the 'shamans' horse' that do service in their flight to the world beyond. (Compare the same phenomenon in HULTKRANTZ 1967:64 "... a shaman-to-be climbs up the pillar of the world which may serve as a vehicle for the communication between the medicine man and the spirits in the world above.")

There are more critical approaches to the problems of Hungarian shamanism. Vilmos Voigt denies that the ancient 'religion' of the pagan Hungarians would be based primarily on a shamanistic complex of beliefs (VOIGT 1976; see also the critique of his view by GOODMAN 1980).

In recent Hungarian peasant narrative tradition shamanistic motifs have survived mostly in the form of folk belief legends. A few old peasants or shepherds can tell stories about people whom they knew and could fall into trance and then fight in the air in the

form of animals, usually as bulls (BIHARI 1980:195–196). Other traditional traits known are the surplus bones, the initiation of the shaman (which takes place at the age of seven, fourteen and twenty-one, respectively); other typical shamanistic concepts, such as helping spirits, are absent in Hungarian narrative tradition.

It is an historical fact that Hungarians became Roman Catholics during the 10th and 11th centuries. But in spite of this fact, a number of traits of shamanistic origin could be found in the folk narrative tradition, and Hungarians still seem to remember their once powerful shamans (DÖMÖTÖR 1970:40) called *táltos* by common village people. They remember not only some stories about the activity of or its equivalent, the sieve.

Some Data from the Recent Past

In the middle of 1977 a friend of mine from Slovakia told me that he had met a former shepherd who had told him some interesting stories. He suggested that we should visit him together. In the last week of December we went to see this man, who is about 45, energetic and working now as a tractor driver. He lives with his ten children in a two-room house in a village in the North-East part of the Hungarian language area. The population of the village is Hungarian but belongs to Czechoslovakia today. This border village, surrounded by marshes and reeds, used to be a relatively closed area in the centuries before, and archaic traditions are preserved in the memory of the inhabitants (the texts were published in several excellent folk belief legend collections).

A four-member team equipped with a video-tape recorder, cameras and tape recorders, helped me to carry out the first interview. We discovered at the very beginning of the conversation that we had met an informant with a particularly valuable archaic knowledge.

We learned from him that his father was a very famous shepherd known for his curative knowledge in the whole region. The old man was often called on – even in the 1950s – to cure animals. The motifs of these stories coincide with elements in legends about shepherds with magic power.

Our informant is the youngest son of the old ‘knowledgeable shepherd’, who died some years ago. According to the tradition, the knowledge has to be passed to the youngest boy. Our informant spent his childhood and adolescence with his father as a shepherd. It turned out from his narrative that his ‘initiation’ also took place at the age of 14, while standing at a crossroad at night in a circle he drew around himself. He had to endure dreadful visions. It is a known epic motif in Hungarian and international belief legends (see SIIKALA 1978:291) that the crossroad, with its extra territoriality, became the venue of initiation rites, where the frightening monsters and trials are typical models of shaman initiations (SWEENEY 1981:13).

Our man told us that with his superhuman (or maybe special) abilities he had cured a girl. It happened in the following way:

“They came to my house at midnight ... her mouth was moist (presumably the girl had epilepsy, M. H.) ... this is a heart disease-she swallowed herself in convulsion ... Without saying a word I have to take the slip she wore for nine days to a place, where many people pass (e.g. a crossroad). I should not say a word to anybody. I hang it on a briar and leave it there.”

This type of healing is very rare and occurs only in the North-Eastern regions of Hungary (only the unpublished collections of the author contain examples of this). In

another narrative he talked about love-charm used to cast a spell upon a cow's milk, how to take it off, keep it or give it back.

"If there is no milk, 12 kinds of herbs are needed. If there is no butter, 12 others should be added ... One has to go to the cow-house. The first egg of a pullet laid in early spring is needed. It should be either an all-white or an all-black pullet. I put it into a pot which was used many times and I bury it at the threshold or under the manger. This way the milk cannot be taken away."

The elements of this narrative are well-known from the Hungarian belief system; thus, there was nothing astonishing in the shepherd's stories. Still, these memories were imbued with the force of faith, his faith in his own strength, in the justice of beliefs, in the effect of magic practices (although it is evident that in most of the cases it was a spontaneous recovery and cessation of symbols). As to his physique and psyche he is a strong man, being also strong in his convictions and beliefs. This might be an explanation for the fact that many times during the interview he stopped talking and did not want to reveal certain details as if he wanted to protect or keep for himself certain details of the esoteric knowledge he deemed important.

As part of the methods of investigation, I regularly controlled the stories told by our informant about his father and the ancient magical practices of shepherds. One year later and then two years later again I made him repeat the same story, and there are now 2 or 3 variants of the same text (a total of some 300 pages). The other means of control was to visit two of the informant's elder brothers, who also used to be shepherds with their father, even if for a much shorter period. I learned some small details which our informant was at first reluctant to tell me, saying that he did not intend to pass on the entire knowledge. I experienced a kind of mistrust towards me, which is evident since he was asked to share the knowledge which gave him strength and healing power.

In the course of the question-and-answer period about the details, he said that his father used a sieve or shifter, called the 'leather sieve' similar to a drum and having the same function. Scholars researching the traces of Hungarian shamanism revealed that the sieve or shifter often played the role of the drum in magic and particularly in healing rituals.

"Coming in, the old Hódas moved away from the others ... and set down without saying word. He bowed his head and gazed for a long time into the air. He seemed to sleep with open eyes. The others waited whether he was going to do something. Sometimes he nodded, waved his hand, shook his head. The woman took a sieve from below the bed and put it on the chimney corner seat together with a wooden spoon. Thereupon he began to speak: 'Quiet! Don't do anything but keep silent.' – he said. 'Do not disturb the one who is coming.' He lifted the sieve to his chest, closed his eyes and started to beat it. First slowly, then more and more rapidly. He murmured something. 'A big tree grew and three roads met underneath ...', he began. By the time he finished the ditty, he beat his sieve more strongly ..." (SZÜCS 1975:46–48)

After this example from the Great Hungarian Plain we could quote another narrative from the Western border region of the country which also suggests that besides fortune-telling the sieve was used for healing:

"A shepherd from Kunsziget, János Virág, told fortunes with the help of his sieve. He said, for instance, who the thief was who stole the cattle. Once my grandfather's pigs were also stolen. By beating his drum he learned who the thief was. And the pigs were found at that person. He put white and black beans on the sieve, about 41 pieces. Then he started to beat one side of his drum with his knife. The beans jumped about on the sieve and at the

end he told fortune from their position. We also know about him that he was able to cure with his sieve. He lifted bewitchment. He beat the rind of the drum till the malign was fed up.” (TIMAFFY 1964:318)

Several other data could be enumerated about the magic use of the sieve in other regions of Hungary (see DÖMÖTÖR 1982:205, and pictures no. 22–27, sieves in magic use).

The memory of the drum, the most important tool of the shaman, has been preserved in Hungarian folklore in the form of a children’s rhyme:

*Gólya, gólya gilice
Mitől véres a lábad,
Török gyerek megvágta,
Magyar gyerek gyógyítja,
Sípbal, dobbal, nádi hegedűvel.*

*[Stork, stork, turtle-dove
Why is your foot full of blood,
Turkish boy has cut it
Hungarian boy heals it
With his fiddle, pipe and drum.]*

This children’s rhyme used to be sung in the spring when storks were back again.

*Adj Istenem csendes esőt,
Mossa össze mind a kettőt
Szita, szita péntek
szerelem csütörtök
Dob szerda.*

*[May god give us a slow rain
Wash those two together
Sieve, sieve on Friday
Love on Thursday
Drum on Wednesday.]*

The drum and sieve belong together, not only on account of their similar shape, but due to the fact that at some places the sieve became the tool of magic fortune-telling. The sieve would be ‘turned’ in order to find out who had caused the sickness; but there are data for a kind of quackery with the sieve, too. The healing woman would beat the sieve with a knife or a wooden spoon over the sick (DIÓSZEGI 1958:171–225; HOPPÁL – TÖRÖ 1975:70).

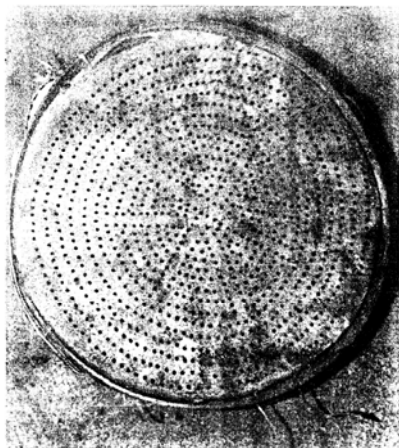


Plate 29.

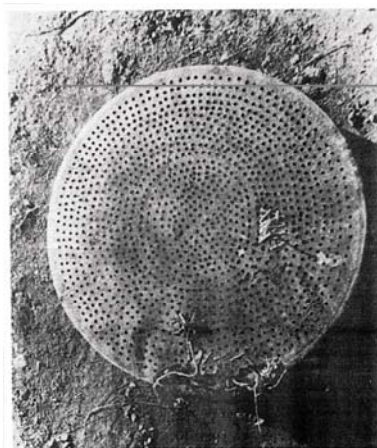


Plate 30.

When we asked our man what the sieve was made of he said it was of leather. It should be pronounced ‘bőrosta’ in Hungarian but he doubled the first vowel and said ‘böőrosta’, böö = bő which means ‘large’. Such sieves covered with leather were used in almost all regions of the country until the first half of this century. Recently (in 1980) friends of mine took photos of the last pieces in Transylvania, where (in Korond-Corund-Jud. Harghita, Rumania) I also took photos of leather-covered sieves in 1969. Although these sieves were used in everyday life (the first written evidence dates from

1587, see SZABÓ 1976:1065), the particular (cross-shaped) design of the holes contradicts it. There are several data which suggest that they were used for fortune-telling, i.e. for magic acts; I made photos of them in the Southern part of Hungary in the second half of the 1970s while shooting an ethnographic documentary film on healing rituals.

Certain data mention the sieve as a tool of the *táltos* (shaman) or of the knowledgeable shepherd:

“József Rostás of Vajka was a sieve-maker and sold his sieves wandering from village to village. He held the sieve high and looked through the holes – that is how he cured. There had been learned women before in Öttevény and Ikrény who told fortune with the help of a sieve, throwing grains of maize on it. They also put embers on the wishbone of a goose, blowing it until the bone cracked. Then they told fortune from these cracks. ‘It was said about a táltos shepherd called Kelemen, from Cikolasziget, that he put embers on a sieve, strewed herbs on it and smoked the sick cattle. In the meantime he bewitched ‘as if he recounted’. He was also invited to former death-watches. He fumigated the evil spirit from the dead so that they leave it in peace’ ... ‘He put embers on an old sieve and strewed herbs on it.’ Others said that ‘he put a birch tree’s shoot on the embers which sizzled like fat ...’. He heated around the dead with it murmuring something.” (TIMAFFY 1964:320)

When we asked our informant why he called it ‘large’ sieve instead of ‘leather sieve’, he said: *“Because it is large, it can contain anything.”* This reply surprisingly coincides with some elements of a witchcraft trial which took place in 1728 where a *táltos* (shaman) or witch with superhuman force said the following in his testimony:

“Dániel Rósa accused of witchery in 1728 was asked at his trial the following question: – Could you take men over the river on a shelf, on a cape or on boat? He answered: – I could have done it if I had wanted, but I never did since there was room for even 100 persons in a sieve.” (DIÓSZEGI 1958:204)

Another piece of information from the other end of the country confirmed that this belief about the sieve of special power was largely known:

“... it was also said about the knowledgeable shepherd that at a time the cattle used to graze at the Bogdány Danub bend and scattered every time at midnight. The shepherd said that at midnight a rolling sieve crossed the river, with 41 pieces of embers on it and this made the cattle run in all directions. They called József Páli to help. He came and ambushed on the bank. After midnight came the rolling sieve full of embers. He took off his magic cracker from his hat, put its snapping end on the whiplash and banged three times on the sieve. All the embers fell into the water and the sieve rolled back to the opposite bank. It never came again and the cattle did not scatter any more” (TIMAFFY 1964:320).

As V. Diószegi wrote in an entry of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: “Sometimes the shaman makes the journey on a river and the drum is his boat ...” (DIÓSZEGI 1974:640) I. T. Itkonen also collected data among Finnish Lapps which suggest that “the Lappish shaman’s drum could be called a boat” (SIKALA 1981:22). Actually, in the Hungarian belief system some very characteristic features of shamanism were preserved in the form of *drum = sieve = boat* equation.



THE ROLE OF SHAMANISM IN HUNGARIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

11

The national identity consciousness of the peoples in the Danubian region is deeply rooted in their folk cultures and in pagan traditions preserved by the peasantry under the cover of Christianity, which were later discovered and incorporated into high culture by scholars and poets in the era of national awakening. The best-known Hungarian example is pentatonic music, which was handed down in popular tradition for centuries before being discovered and included in written music by Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály after 1900.

Recently, there has been a similar interest in the beliefs current in ancient Hungarian religion, which have shown close kinship with Finno-Ugrian, Mongolian, Old Turkish, shamanism, and which also attracted the attention of Mircea Eliade, the most eminent scholar in the field of shamanism. These beliefs have not only become the focal subject of research in Hungarian religious history, but also a major source of inspiration for modern Hungarian poetry.

Shamanism, dating from before the Hungarians' migration from their original home and preserved in popular beliefs, sorcery practices and tales, as it were, to our own days, received its earliest detailed account to come down to us in 1648. It was written by Marco Bandini, an Italian bishop who visited Hungarians living in the Rumanian principality of Moldavia, east of the Carpathians. He observed that:

"Sorcerers are as highly esteemed by them (the Hungarians) as discerning and pious scholarly men are in Italy. The practice and study of magic and quackery are honourable and open to everybody. Oh, how many prayers I offered up to god! How many opportunities I had to exercise tolerance when hearing and often seeing the practice of this loathsome quackery! What can be read of ancient oracles in the fabulous stories of Antiquity can be personally experienced here. Whenever a sorcerer wishes to learn about the future, he will mark out a certain place where he stands for a while muttering, with his head twisted, his eyes rolling, his mouth awry, his forehead and cheeks puckered up, his countenance distorted, his arms and legs flailing around and his entire body shaking. Then he throws himself down and remains there seemingly lifeless for three or four hours. When he finally regains consciousness, he is a horrible sight for onlookers: first, he slowly revives with trembling limbs, then, as if possessed by infernal spirits, he stretches out all

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his limbs, fingers and toes so much so that one expects no bone to remain in its socket. Eventually, as though emerging from a dream, he relates this as the future. When somebody falls sick, or loses something, he will turn to the magician. If somebody sees his friend's or benefactor's spirit turning away from him, he will try to win it back by magic. And if they have some enemy, magic is regarded as the best way of taking revenge. The practices of various magicians, quacksalvers, soothsayers and charlatans could not be related in a single volume.” (DOMOKOS 1931)

This detailed description is rarely referred to, although it undoubtedly provides an accurate account of a trance technique, which was still employed at the time, and also serves as evidence for the fact that divining the future and magic, as based on ecstasy, were established and everyday practices among the Hungarian people for more details see POZSONY 2005).



Plate 31.

Interest in pagan Hungarian beliefs and in the discovery of the heritage of shamanism has not diminished in the centuries that have passed since Bandini's relation. The subject had been approached in hundreds of articles and papers, until Vilmos Diószegi, having studied an enormous amount of comparative material, established the Siberian (Uralian and Altaic) connections of some elements of Hungarian popular belief. In the first place, Diószegi found the shamanistic analogue of the Hungarian shaman, the '*táltos*', among Altaic peoples. As a results of his research, he claimed that many aspects of the beliefs associated with the *táltos* can be proved to date back to the time of the settlement of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. For instance:

“The selection of the táltos candidate by sickness, by long sleep, or by the disjuncting of his body, that is, his acquisition of knowledge through the search for superfluous bones and his initiation through climbing a sky-high tree, in its entirety as well as in its details, represents the Hungarian settlers beliefs about the táltos candidate. A single headed drum in his hand, being his vehicle at the same time, an owl-feathered or antlered headdress, a grooved or ladder-like ‘táltos-tree’ with representations of the Sun and the Moon – these are the paraphernalia of the Hungarian settlers’ táltos. His time-honoured activities, on the other hand, are trances and fights in animal form when in a trance, or his conjuring of spirits by means of incantations.” (DIÓSZEGI 1958:435)

Diószegi's method was systematic comparison between Hungarian popular beliefs relating to the *táltos* and similar beliefs among the neighbouring peoples (e.g. the South

Slav *krešnik* and *nestinar* – KLANICZAY 1984), and he only compared those elements of the former to the respective shamanistic beliefs of kindred peoples living further to the East that were exclusively Hungarian. For example:

“The section of the Hungarian shaman was a process similar to that used by the Voguls, Ostyaks, Lapps, or the Altaic Turks, Yakuts, etc. This is to say that the candidate’s calling was of superior ordination... He will receive his being chosen as a heavy burden, as an unavoidable destiny ... initially he wants to renounce it but finally he is compelled by the ‘shaman-sickness’ to accept the vocation ordained for him.” (DIÓSZEGI 1958:56)

This socially-enforced and institutionalized method of role-taking was later considered an important feature of North-Eurasian shamanism by other scholars, too (HONKO 1969, SIIKALA 1978). The innovation in Diószegi’s method was the comparison and analysis of not just single elements but entire belief systems, and the consequent ability to prove that these phenomena were not isolated. He also showed, that Hungarian folk culture has got an ancient stratum, that is, shamanism, which had already been a part of the settling Hungarian tribes’ spiritual culture.

After the untimely and unexpected death of the eminent scholar in 1972, Hungarian research on shamanism briefly came to a standstill, only to be taken up later on by a new generation of scholars. A volume of essays on Siberian shamanism collected by Diószegi was published, although unfortunately he could no longer take part in the editorial work (DIÓSZEGI – HOPPÁL eds. 1978). Some years later, an international conference was held in Hungary, the participants of which presented papers on their latest research in commemoration of Diószegi (HOPPÁL ed. 1984). Some of the papers complemented Diószegi’s achievements, since they addressed themselves to subjects not covered by him, Tekla Dömötör, for instance, was the first to deal with Hungarian female shamans (DÖMÖTÖR 1984). The present author discussed some aspects of shamanism today, the chances of its survival, and also gave an account of his conversations with the last Hungarian *táltos* or, more exactly, the last ‘*tudós pásztor*’ (knowledgeable herdsman) who could still

remember the method of healing with a leather-covered sieve which substituted for the drum (HOPPÁL 1984). A paper on the delusions’ and neuroses recalling the memory of shamanism, delivered by a psychiatrist who based his discussion on the accounts of numerous patients encountered in the course of his medical practice, (KELEMEN 1984) aroused a lively interest at the symposium.



Plate 32.

There is a little known article published after Diószegi’s death, by Lóránd Czigány, an eminent Hungarian literary historian on *Amanita Muscaria*, that is, on a certain species of fly agaric toadstools (CZIGÁNY 1980). As is well known, this species was widely used as a hallucinogen by shamans all over the world, (WASSON 1968) and particularly in Siberia. We also have some data on its use (especially in the case of love charms) from Hungarian popular belief, though the nature of the phenomenon – it was a strict secret since the poison could be lethal – will certainly prevent much more information coming to light. Czigány, however, found an interesting piece of indirect evidence for the use of the mushroom. According to Hungarian *táltos* beliefs, a ‘*tudós pásztor*’ or *táltos* would only *ask for milk* when dropping in at a house in his shabby apparel. According to villagers, this humble request was the sure sign of his being a *táltos*. Let us quote from some recently collected material, which Czigány could not have been familiar with:

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"They were born with teeth and they had to be looked after very carefully until the age of seven. Because when the sky became clouded they were stolen, they were taken away and they could not be looked after carefully enough, they were taken away. The child was taken away. These are the táltos'es who were born with teeth to govern the clouds when the sky becomes cloudy. And once they came down to the earth, and they went to the people and asked for something to eat. They went into a woman's house and told her that they wanted some milk to drink. The woman told them she had no milk while she did have some. They knew that she had some milk but she did not want to give them any. They said, Well, if you have not got any milk, you will have water. And they poured such a rain upon the earth that water was flowing over the threshold and window-still." (CSORBA 1980:131)

This motif was considered irrelevant and was totally neglected by scholars, although modern pharmaceutical research has shown that milk could be an effective detoxicant in cases of mushroom poisoning.

Due to the accumulation of material during the last decades, newer and newer dimensions of the *táltos* are revealed in the analyses. The following features can be important for comparative religious history research: the *táltos* is born with teeth; at the age of seven he disappears (wanderng about in the surrounding fields or in the reeds – notice the special role and frequency of the number seven in *táltos* beliefs); if he does not disappear, he falls sick, has convulsions and, finally, falls into a long and deep sleep.

For this deathlike sleep there used to be a peculiar word *elrejtezik* (to hide), whose root is identical with that of the verb *révül* (to become entranced) (BALÁZS 1967). As is known, *elrejtezés* or *révülés* (hiding and becoming entranced respectively, here both are implied in the meaning of the latter) are essentially symbolic expressions for one of the most important elements in becoming a shaman, the trip to the other world, during the course of which the candidate comes into the possession of knowledge. In Hungarian popular belief, the trip to the other world has been particularly well preserved in beliefs associated with the necromancer (MOLDOVÁN 1982).

Another important feature of *táltos* beliefs is the above- mentioned motif of asking for milk and the *táltos*'s capacity to raise a storm or to send rain on houses or villages if no milk is provided. He is, therefore, clearly in possession of supernatural powers. His next characteristic is especially important for mythological comparison, namely, his ability to change shape: he could turn into a bull, so that he could fight against his enemy in animal form. It is particularly in stories of the herdsman of the Great Plain where lively descriptions of fights between bulls of different colours (black and white, red and blue) abound. These fights can be compared – as was done by Diószegi – to those of the shamans of reindeer keeping peoples, where the shaman's helping spirits appear in the shapes of reindeer bulls. The shamans among horse keeping peoples on the steppe, however, fought in the form of stallions or bulls of divine origin (DIÓSZEGI 1958: 342–355).

Research has shown that shamanistic beliefs can be considered the backbone of the ancient Hungarian pagan belief system. And it was not futile, even on the part of the earlier generation of scholars, to search for the survival of shamanism not only in mythology, but also in folk tales (SOLYMOSSY 1929). The sky-high tree is well known in Hungarian tales and the figure of the young swineherd climbing it has been identified with the protagonist of the shamanistic ritual of initiation (climbing the shaman tree or ladder was a symbol of entrancement). Climbing the tree in fact means the trip to the other world, where the shaman gets into contact with the gods, so that he could play the role of a mediator.

It should not be concealed that there are some critical approaches to Hungarian shamanism in our folklore – approaches which question, if not deny, its existence (VOIGT 1976).

Undoubtedly, one hardly negligible problem is posed by the lack of an unambiguous terminology. As early as 1967, a thought-provoking article by Jenő Fazekas drew attention to the fact that in Hungarian folk belief there are four different figures (the *táltos*; the *tudó* or *tudós* [someone in possession of knowledge]; the *garabonciás* [wizard: someone disguised as a travelling student, capable of raising storms]; and the *regős* [a bard who brings about fertility with his magic songs performed around Christmas]) – all of which are comparable to that of the shaman. On the basis of their characteristic features inferred from Far Eastern analogues (FAZEKAS 1967:106). Fazekas believed that they could be traced back to a historical personality with a complex social function. In search for the etymology of the word *táltos*, he listed the possible parallels that had been suggested before, among others the Finnish *tietäjä* (SIHKALA 2002:20), the Mongolian *dalda* (secret, miracle) and the Turkish *taltys* (to grow weak). In his monumental *Linguistic Remains of the Ancient Hungarian Religion*, the linguist Dezső Pais devoted a separate and elaborate chapter to the description of the Turkish word family *tal*, associated with the root of the word *táltos* and having in its semantic field the meaning ‘to grow weak’, ‘to faint’ and ‘to get tired’, which can be indirectly related to the meaning of the Hungarian word *táltos*.

Although the direct analogues of popular Hungarian shamanistic beliefs have been found among kindred peoples, this is not reflected in similarities of terminology. The old words for the Lapp magus were *noita* and *noiade* (adopted by Finnish, too), etymologically identical with the Mansi word *najt* (shaman). Analogies like that might refer to the common origin of shamanism. The Votyak animal sacrificer was called *tuno*, while the name of the same person among their Cheremis neighbours was *kart*. In early Hungarian mythological literature, the Hungarian sacrificer is identified with the *táltos*, who offered the horse sacrifice. In this case, the only identical practice is that of offering sacrifices, while there is no reference to a common origin in Finno-Ugrian vocabulary. According to a recent etymology, the Hungarian word *táltos* may be of Ugrian origin (cf. Mansi *tült*, Khanty *tolt*, ‘magic power’ – see HOPPÁL 1976:230).

There is no unambiguous indication of the place of shamanism in the ideology of Hungarians settlers though we have been reminded that the reduction of ancient Hungarian religion to shamanism is untenable (KIRÁLY 1921:52). It was suggested by Vilmos Voigt as early as 1965 that even if the Hungarians had adopted shamanism before the settlement, it could not be their most highly developed “religious system” (VOIGT 2003). In a nomadic pastoral society, which had adopted highly developed military techniques and certain elements of agriculture, shamanism could only be a part of the system. In his article *The social role of shamans in nomadic states*, István Dienes suggested the revision of earlier views on the basis of Menander, Rašīd-ad-dīn, Plano Carpini and other sources. He wrote:

“Obviously enough, it was the shaman aristocracy at the court that created and popularized the religion-like belief system of a religious conviction more advanced than shamanism. States based on personal dependences were not only bound together by the arms of the prince’s retainers, but equally by intellectual factors sanctioned by the court shamans.” (DIENES 1982:258)

The archaeologist Gyula László’s doubts and ‘dissent’ concerning the ancient Hungarian religion is even more clearly articulated:

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Both the shaman and the tálto are men of the powers above and, consequently, the true religious stratum – be it either monotheistic or a world of spirits – must transcend them. The same can be inferred from the mythology of the related peoples; the world is everywhere ruled by a wise and divine creator (Numi Torem, Tengri) ...” (LÁSZLÓ 1976:68)

Research up to now seems to prove unambiguously that the settling Hungarians no longer exclusively adhered to shamanism. Like other Eurasian peoples, they were living within the reach of great world religions: on the steppes surrounding the Black Sea they became acquainted with Nestorian Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and still earlier with the activity of Sogdian Manichean missionaries in Southern Siberia (HOPPÁL 200b). The latter influence must have been particularly important in the formation of the Hungarians’ spiritual world view mythology.

Furthermore, although it is a historical fact that Hungarians have been Christians since the end of the 10th century, but traces of the shamanistic tradition can still be found in narrations and tales collected in the last decades. *Táltoses*, memories of whom have remained quite vivid, were characteristic figures of villages and regions, almost each village having its own *tudó*, *táltos*, or *tudós pásztor*. Recently, people could still remember their deeds as well as the use of the riddle or sieve, reminiscent of the one-time drum, for these ordinary utensils had often been used for magic, like fortune-telling or medication. In other words, it was the practice of everyday beliefs that a one-time shamanism governed. That is, shamanism – as Diószegi has pointed out (1962:13) – rather than being a religion, was a stock of everyday beliefs that helped people to regulate their relationships with nature and supernatural powers. There is still one more aspect to be mentioned, that is, the general function of all ideological systems to regulate the relationship between the individual and his social environment; by providing the members of the community with advice and prohibitions, such a tradition supplies patterns of behaviour and shapes morality.

Tradition has the same social role today, and therefore it is no wonder that writers and poets, who have always played an important part in Hungarian culture, found their roots in shamanistic tradition. Remember Endre Ady’s prophetic role and his references to his *táltos* ancestors:

“I am the servant of the Sun-god
who ministers the midnight wake
and feast ...

I am a priest – a pagan, pagan priest ...
I am a martyr of the East ...

a scion of cursed *táltos* ...”

(Egy párizsi hajnal)

“Ki vagyok? A Napisten papja
Ki áldozik éjszaka torán ...

Én pap vagyok, de pogány pap ...
Szent Napkeletnek mártírja vagyok

Táltosok átkos sarja talán ...”

Among the contemporaries, we could mention Ferenc Juhász’s visionary poetry and the experiment that the young poet conducted on himself in 1957, in order to experience the entrancement of a shaman under the influence of hallucinogens. He writes:

“I died, it flashed through my mind, I became so scared. The man cut my head off, slashed my body into tiny pieces and dropped them into the cauldron ... when all my bones seemed to have been severed from the flesh, the smith said, ‘All your bones have now turned into rivers,’ and indeed, I saw a river in the room, with my bones drifting in it ... he began pulling them out of the river with his pliers. When he had pulled all the bones to the

bank, the smith assembled them and covered them with flesh, so that my body regained its former appearance.” (JUHÁSZ 1967:80)

The poet's vision is much the same as the belief in the shaman's or *táltos*'s dismemberment, followed by a feeling of being reborn on the part of the initiated.

Since folklore and literature are parts of culture with the social function of preserving – or tending – the identity of the community, it is no accident that such motifs appear in literary works. In the dramas of recent years especially, there are some very interesting examples of the shaman or *táltos* appearing among the *dramatis personae*, by the side of Prince Géza (10th century), for instance, in Magda Szabó's *Az a szép, fényes nap* (That Lovely Bright Day); or as King St. Stephen's (997–1038) friend, the tutor of his untimely deceased son Prince Imre, in József Ratkó's play *Segítsd a királyt!* (Help the King!) (RATKÓ 1984). In both cases, the shaman or *táltos* is a historical figure symbolizing the preservation of traditions. The conflict between the adherent of old beliefs and the followers of the new ideology consists not so much in whether the new is necessary at all, but whether the introduction of a new ideology should necessarily be accompanied by the demolition of ancient traditions. The conflict is particularly sharp in the very successful Hungarian rock-opera *István, a király* (Stephen, the King), for here the *táltos* is found on the side of the pagan chieftain Koppány, who is in revolt against King Stephen, a Christian. His songs are always in the old style of folk music. The above examples show that beliefs exalted into symbols – among them the shaman mythology – can become important elements of ethnic and cultural identity.

It has been proved the events of contemporary world politics that ethnic consciousness may appear in many different forms from the revival of old religiosity to new messianic movements (WALLIS 2003) or even to a therapeutic renewal of shamanistic practices.



TRACING SHAMANS IN TUVA

12

The first Hungarian ethnographer to report on the Tuva shamans was János Jankó. He visited the Uriankhai towards the end of the 1880s and in the *Ethnographia*, the Hungarian journal of ethnography he published a report on his travels with detailed notes in its 1890 issue.

His description (JANKÓ 1890), which contains many valuable details and the local terminology (e.g. the name of the drum and drumstick, the name of the shaman's cloak: *tering*, etc.) shows that he observed not only the dance of the shamaness but also paid careful attention to all the minor details when he recorded the shaman séance. Not only did he describe the shaman's activity, he constantly compared it with phenomena found among other people (and with the linguistic material). In the chapter "Fragment from the Shaman Beliefs" he describes prediction using a shoulder bone, the reverence of fire and finally, animal sacrifice. He devotes a separate chapter to the drum, illustrated with around 12 drawings. These illustrations are of objects which may no longer exist. In the final chapter – "The Shaman's Costume" – among others he gives a detailed description of the shaman costumes he saw. Unfortunately, the richly detailed descriptions do not indicate whether he saw these costumes on the spot or in the "Russian imperial academy of science" in St. Petersburg. Whatever the case, we know of only one similarly early report in Helsinki from the end of the 19th century describing the costume of a Soyot shaman (HEIKEL 1896).

Reading Diószegi's report of his journey to Tuva again and again I find (DIÓSZEGI 1968:209) that in his opinion János Jankó never reached the southern region of the Sayan Mountains. It is possible to believe that Diószegi was right. His first article which appeared was a detailed report of his research trip to Tuva in 1958 (DIÓSZEGI 1959). This study, which could be described as a short monograph (DIÓSZEGI 1960), later appeared in English (DIÓSZEGI 1968).

After the sudden death of Vilmos Diószegi in 1972, part of his library and manuscript legacy was placed in the archive of the Institute of Ethnography of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Éva Schmidt arranged and made an inventory of this material in 1973. One of the units is a thick folder containing the material Diószegi collected in Tuva between 2 and 29 August 1958. He himself divided the material in the

folder into two parts. The first, under the heading “Tuva (Soyot) shamanic songs” contains around 676 lines of text from seven informants (at one point there is a note: “second reel” suggesting that this is a transcription from a tape-recorder!), then there is a glossary of words in the text, followed by 13 pages of Russian translation. The second part consists of 39 double-spaced pages of typescript field notes, probably a fair copy of entries in his collecting notebooks. He drew on these texts almost word for word for his highly successful book *Sámánok nyomában Szibéria földjén* (*Tracing Shamans in Siberia* – DIÓSZEGI 1960) and also for his scholarly reports presenting data (cf. DIÓSZEGI 1959a). The following passage on shaman staffs is cited as an example:

“...The new shaman had first only been equipped with the shaman staff and he got the drum only after he had already become a good shaman.

The staff was the tool of the new shaman. It had always been made of birchwood and was usually painted red, with red clay, found in the mountains. If the shaman had been equipped with only a staff, he had to go around “on foot”. After two or three years the new shaman could request his drum. Then he could already “mount the drum”. Arikay, the shaman, for instance, had the staff for one year. Takpazhik shaman used one for two years. The shamans also kept their staff after having obtained the drum. There were shamans who kept their staff all their lives. For instance the shaman called Khodan, shamanized all his life with a staff. It is up to the spirit to decide this: he ‘informs’ the shaman whether he wants a drum or not. However, the shaman equipped only with a staff might be just as powerful as the one who has a drum.

According to some of my informants the shamanesses were only entitled to the staff. A lama-shaman told me that his aunt used a stick for her ceremonies until her death. Albis, the Kaday shamaness, had also shamanized with a staff all her life. Several persons affirmed that the “small shamans” were only entitled to a staff.

The shaman with the staff has no other instrument. Not only does he lack the drum and the drumstick, he has no headgear, garment or boots either. Such shamans are called the staffed shamans...

...With the shaman staff thus prepared, certain initiation ceremonies had to be carried out before using it. Here is, for instance, the ceremony of Albis, the Kaday shamaness: A one-year-old white reindeer had been killed and its meat had been cooked. Then, two small dishes were placed in front of the staff on the bare ground. A small piece of the heart and a little piece of the brisket were placed in one of them, salted tea with milk had been poured into the other one. The two dishes remained for about two hours in front of the staff. In the meantime, those present had a feast. Within two hours about everything placed in front of the stick had been consumed and the participants went home ...” (DIÓSZEGI 1968:238–239)

It can be seen from the above text that Diószegi refers to a number of shamans in his account, but he does not indicate specifically, either in the original manuscript or in the book, the informants from whom he recorded the data. He noted that he recorded stories about the shamans not so much from the shamans themselves as from people who had themselves seen genuine shamans. This is understandable since at that time the memories of shamanism were not yet valued and Diószegi waged a heroic struggle. Using the scattered data, he produced such excellent studies as the one on regional differences within Tuvan shamanism and the similarities with the neighbouring ethnic groups (DIÓSZEGI 1962a, 1962b), and on the ethnogenetic conclusions of his investigation into Darkhat shamanism (DIÓSZEGI 1963b). He lavishly illustrated these articles with pictures of museum objects he had collected because he had discovered – and this was one of his methodological innovations – that tiny differences on the shaman

objects (the drum, the shaman staff, costume, headgear, etc.) could be important distinctive features in exploring intra- and interethnic relations.

The enthusiastic researcher was sometimes carried to extremes by his good intentions. He recounted that he had his informants draw the costume of the old shamans from memory and later he also published these drawings and the oral descriptions (see DIÓSZEGI ed. 1968:296–323); when the reprint of the original volume appeared in 1996 these pictures were left out because this form of “imagery ethnography” is unworthy of the great researcher. It is not by chance that he was harshly criticised already during his life for this method – cf. JOHANSEN 1967).

However, what was important and progressive in Diószegi’s approach was the emphasis he placed on the visual aspects of research with the use of many photographs of objects, maps and drawings. Few people know that he was probably the first in the history of research on Tuva shamanism to make a film on the healing séance of a shamaness which he had recorded by a crew from Irkutsk. The following passage from *Tracing Shamans in Siberia*, now a rare book, describes this:

“The old woman – Shizhep Mongus by name (or in other words: Shizhep of the Mongus clan) – the former shamaness, squatted in front of her yurt, tearing wool. She was getting ready to full felt-cloth.

In no time I was just as well informed about all the details of the making of felt-cloth, as she was about by profession of collecting the records of shamanism.

It was not difficult at all to persuade her to demonstrate her knowledge of past times. I was to promise her that she could see herself on the screen in the film, this would soon be shown at the Cultural Centre.

– Yes, yes – she agreed – but if I have to heal, then I need a patient too.

We did not even have a chance to discuss it, when a little old woman beside us joined the argument:

– Why don’t you heal me? Some time ago you already shamanized for me.

Only when the operator lifted the camera to his eyes, did we find out: we could not begin filming because it was too dark in the yurt.

– Have you not brought any flashlights?

– No, we have not, but it is not necessary. We can take the roof off.

Wonderful idea, only the felt mats had to be rolled back from the top of the yurt. But, what would the mistress of the house say about it?

What? She agreed right away. Now, there were no more obstacles.

The gown was taken out of the chest. It was not a genuine one, it was not even a shaman gown. That had been destroyed long ago. It was the festive attire of a Soyot woman, and also a long and short scarf. The long one was wound around her head.

Somewhere behind the chest there was a long stick, she tied the short scarf on that.

This was all her equipment...

By the time the roof of the yurt had been removed, the first scenes were already explained to Shizhep Mongus. Everything went smoothly. While the camera was diligently humming, she put on her Soyot dress with the help of Minderma and prepared the shaman staff, that is, she tied the shorter scarf on the stick.

Our other “leading character” lay down on the cot, the next part could be started: the healing ceremony. The instructions of the operators were not necessary any more.

I have also prepared the tape recorder. I have learned it from my experience with Suzukpen that I must have the apparatus in my hand – I could not put it on the floor – because I had to be free to accompany the shaman in his movements with the microphone.

And then, the first lines of the chant resounded in the yurt. It was slow, a soft reciting, rather like that of a poem than of a song. One type of shamanistic healing, the black process, was under way to be immortalized by the film-camera and the tape recorder.

Shamans and Traditions

The voice of the shamaness had not become louder, she did not raise it at all, her recitation did not even become faster. And, in spite of that, the atmosphere was filled with tension.

The patient became genuinely ill: she reclined with a pale face and her eyes searched with trusting devotion the face of her healer.

Indeed, this old medicine-woman must have been healing her in the past. In this moment I was convinced: it might have been not so very long ago! And by this time Shizhep Mongus did not know anything about the film-camera any more, she was not aware of the tape recorder either, although I held the microphone about the length of a span in front of her face. She began to lose consciousness. Her face became contorted, her eyes were turning deliriously, like in a trance, like those of a drunk or a lunatic.

Suddenly the humming of the camera stopped. I noticed that the operator requested a new reel of film. He was signalling to me: the chant of the shamaness must be interrupted. But it would be all in vain. She had already lost contact with the world...

– I continue recording, let them go to fetch the film – I answered.

But they could have hardly reached the car, when the shamaness fainted and fell in full length upon the floor of the yurt.

She lay in a deep trance. For three and a half minutes – I checked it with my watch – she had fits of retching and then she became completely rigid. She had worked herself up so much, that she became completely entranced. The patient and the healer exchanged their roles, now the other woman was placing wet packs on the cold forehead of Shizhep Mongus, who was lying rigidly like a corpse.

The operator, running with the new film, arrived in vain, the filming had to be stopped.

– Please forgive me that I could not take all of it – he excused himself.

As if I could have been angry at him! I owed it to him that I was at last able to witness a complete ecstasy. And even if the filming had come to a standstill, the ceremony had been immortalized in its entirety. The whole ceremony was recorded on the magnetic tapes.”
(DIÓSZEGI 1968:308–311)



Plate 33.

Another merit of Diószegi, one which is also of importance for the history of research on Tuva shamanism, is that he persuaded S. I. Vajnštejn, when they met in Kyzyl, to study the material culture of the Tuvans and nomad culture in general, in particular shamanism, not only from the viewpoint of materialism. It was perhaps under the influence of these friendly words that the young researcher who had been educated in a Marxist atmosphere began to turn his attention to shamanism. In 1961 his historical ethnography monograph on the Todzha ethnic group in the northeastern region of Tuva appeared. In this he devotes a separate chapter to religious beliefs, for the most part to shamanism (VAJNŠTEJN 1961:171–191). However, he published only old photographs, and a few fine drawings of the shaman staff (*dayak*) and the shaman costumes, as well as texts of the shamanic songs (*algysh*). He published the same material, considerably expanded, three decades later in his richly illustrated monograph on the world of the Central Asian nomads (VAJNŠTEJN 1991:240–277). His articles on Tuva shamanism have undoubtedly earned him a permanent place in the history of research on shamanism in Siberia.

For this reason, the arguments he puts forward in examining the historical roots of Tuva shamanism are of special interest: drawing on old written records concerning the Huns, who were probably the ancestors of the Tuvans, he notes that they record a number of sacred rituals still practised by the Tuvans ([VAJNŠTEJN] WEINSTEIN 1964:11). He also points out that the similarity between many of the rock carvings and the head-dresses of today's shamans is so striking that it is impossible to deny the link (VAJNŠTEJN 1991:271–272), especially if we consider that the masks and head-dresses may have been symbolic representations of the shaman ancestors.



Plate 34.

S. I. Vajnštejn was the first to record and publish from the fifties his personal encounters with Tuva shamans, and was able to acquire much valuable data. In 1963, for example, he was able to observe the shamanizing of a healing shaman where the focal point of the ceremony was driving out the spirits causing the sickness. He described in detail the course of the ecstasy, the struggle with the harmful spirits during which loud drumbeats indicated that the shaman had driven a “steel arrow” for each beat into the spirits of sickness (VAJNŠTEJN 1977).

In one of his studies he presented the data of the 1931 census which show that 725 active shamans were counted, representing one shaman for every twenty households (yurts or families) (VAJNŠTEJN 1984:353). In the same study he reported that a horse was sacrificed under the direction of the shaman when healing a seriously sick person. A light-coloured (grey) horse was sacrificed to the lord of the sky and a braun horse to the spirit of the mountain. The reference to the practice of the recent past should give researchers of culture pause for thought since such data indicate that centuries mean very little in the life of nomadic cultures. Our Siberian contemporaries, only a few hours away from us by plane, still make sacrifices like those described in the mediaeval chronicles, as I was able to see for myself in 1996.

In another excellent article he wrote about the role of *ēren* in Tuva shamanism. The *ēren* is an object filled with spirit which the shaman can use, for example, to drive the sickness out of a person. He spent many years of his youth in Tuva (because his father was a political exile there in the early period of communism), in this article examined the various types of *ēren*. These valuable ethnographic data are from the 1950s when the researcher was a young man doing fieldwork (VAJNŠTEJN 1978).

It should be mentioned here that in footnote 3 of the paper, using the political terminology of the time, that is, a quarter of a century ago, the author noted that “owing to the great success of socialism in Tuva, shamanism here has now lost its significance entirely...” (VAJNŠTEJN 1978:457) Fortunately, shamanism in Tuva has not lost its significance at all, on the contrary, simultaneously with the successful collapse of socialism, shamanism is alive and flourishing (HOPPÁL 1996).

There is a great authority of shamanic studies in Tuva, Mongush Borakhovich Kenin-Lopsan. His forebears in the extended family were shepherds, smiths, renowned singers and shamans. His maternal grandmother, Kuular Khandizhap was a famous shamaness who was imprisoned on false charges under Stalin and died in prison. During an interview in summer 1996 he recounted the following about his beloved grandmother:

“My grandmother was a famous shamaness. She was the best known in the district. She had to suffer for this on three occasions. On the first she was imprisoned in 1934, the second time her son was accused of being a German spy. In the mid-forties, when Tuva joined the Soviet Union, she was arrested once again on charges of ‘conducting propaganda against the great Soviet Union’. How could an illiterate woman have conducted propaganda? All of that was only a pretext to liquidate a great living shamaness. It is a very sad story, not only in the life of an elderly woman but for the whole of Tuvan society!” (KENIN-LOPSAN 1996)

Later he became a writer, a living classic of Tuvan literature, who published poems, short stories, novels and translations (from Russian literature).

Although elements of shaman folklore always appeared in the literary works of Kenin-Lopsan, in the fifties and sixties this was naturally a forbidden subject. This is best expressed in his own words as he recalled those times in the summer of 1996:

"At that time, it has to be admitted openly, the Tuvan scholars were not dealing with Tuva shamanism. They were very afraid. If they dealt with it at all, they did so in great secret so that no one would know what I was collecting and doing, what shaman I was meeting. Then one day they said that a foreign scholar had come, a Hungarian researcher, an orientalist and ethnographer, Vilmos Diószegi. On one occasion he asked me whether I dealt with shamanism. I told him that I had written studies but that I was afraid to show them. He said: 'Bring one of them. I would like to see it!' Next day I brought the one on the burial place in the air of Tuva shamans. According to the Tuvan belief, the shamans have bones which cannot be given to the earth so they must be buried on a platform – known as seri – raised in the air." (KENIN-LOPSAN 1996)

The paper mentioned by Kenin-Lopsan is almost certainly the one which was published years later, in 1978, in the volume *Shamanism in Siberia* under the title "The Funeral Rites of Tuva Shamans" (KENIN-LOPSAN 1978). In it he gave a detailed description of the funeral rites for dead shamans and their various phases. One of these that appears especially important is when an invited shaman indicates the direction in which the shaman must be taken, that is, the place of his grave. Also important is the taking out of the body from the yurt: it is not taken through the door but through an opening made in the wall. It is also important that the skin of the drum is slashed and the drum placed on a pole (*čagy*) together with the shaman's clothes and other objects. The body itself is placed on a platform (*seri*) resting on four poles. In other words, the custom of burial in the air existed here in the same way as among certain North American Indian tribes.

Only one scholarly article by Kenin-Lopsan had been published earlier than that. It appeared in the 1977 volume of *Sovietskaya Etnografiya* and dealt with the different types of Tuva shamans. This classification is based on the principle of the source from where the shaman (*kham*) receives his power (KENIN-LOPSAN 1977). It was essentially this category system that he described in one of his small books which appeared in 1993. I cite the typology from that work:

"In the belief of the Tuvans, the only true shaman is one who inherits the ability. This is the most popular and most powerful group of Tuva shamans. Namely 1. the shamans who trace their descent from shaman ancestors; 2. the shamans who trace their origins from the spirits of earth and water; 3. the shamans who trace their descent from the heavens; 4. shamans originating from the 'albis' witch-like evil spirits; 5. shamans originating from the 'aza' devil-like evil spirits. The position he occupied in the shaman hierarchy depended on which of these categories he belonged in, and it was on this basis that he was attributed different abilities and power to influence others, those who sought his help". (KENIN-LOPSAN 1993:14)

From 1966 until his retirement Kenin-Lopsan worked for the Kyzyl Local History Museum and he began the collection of shamanic objects which eventually led to an exhibition opened in 1993.

In 1982 he defended his candidate's dissertation in Leningrad. The title was "*Syuzheti i poetika tuvinskogo shamanstva*" (Legends and Poetics of Tuvian Shamanism). In the summary Kenin-Lopsan mentions that shamans belonging in the second type, who received their ability from the master spirits of the earth and water, obviously preserve the memory of the respect of nature and animistic beliefs of the old Turkic peoples (KENIN-LOPSAN 1982:5). In the same way the shamans of heavenly descent (*tengri boo*) gain their power from the sky, a rainbow or flash of lightning. (In 1995 I personally met a shaman of this type named Kyrgyz Khurak.)

Kenin-Lopsan listed the modes of shaman activity (1993:26–27) (these can be distinguished with the help of the aids and objects used:

1. Shamanising (ceremony) with a round metal mirror (*küzüngü*).
2. Shamanising with a *khomus*, an instrument (Jew's harp).
3. Sèance with drum and wearing a ritual garment; this was characteristic only of powerful shamans of higher category and in the past this rite was performed only at night.
4. Sèance with shaman drum or staff (*dayak*). The three-headed shaman staff decorated with ribbons was the principal equipment of the Tuva shamans; this was the first piece of equipment they received to begin their activity.

In 1987 his monograph *Obryadovaya praktika i fol'klor tuvinskogo shamanstva. Konets XIX–nachalo XX veka*. was published in Novosibirsk by the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy, Siberian Division, USSR Academy of Sciences. This is the full text of the dissertation (KENIN-LOPSAN 1987) from which extracts have also been published in English (KENIN-LOPSAN 1995b). It is the pioneering merit of this work that it gives a detailed description of the structure and main features of the shaman sèance (*kamlanie*), from the preparation of the site, through the invocation of spirit helpers, to the culmination of the sèance when the shaman(ess) determines the cause of the illness/trouble and predicts the future, the passing of the sickness or improvement of the state of affairs.

In the second part of the study he listed the typical subjects of the shamanic songs (*algysh*) and the shamanic poetry which included the frequent use of alliteration, parallelism and vowel harmony within the sung lines. It should be mentioned that in recent years he has devoted increasing attention to the questions of the poetics of shamanic poetry and to publication of the texts. In the volume two parts have appeared, one in Russian and the other in Tuvan (KENIN-LOPSAN 1995:22–288 in Russian, and 294–519 in Tuvan).

The eternally youthful, untiring collector himself translates his works from his native tongue to Russian, giving him an appreciation, as an artist and a creative poet-writer, of the poetics of the *algysh*. He feels he has a moral duty to pass on these valuable texts of Tuvan narrative folklore to future generations. It was to preserve these relics of spiritual culture that the writer-scholar compiled a manuscript of hundreds of pages containing the shamanic myths and published his collection of *algysh* (KENIN-LOPSAN 1997). He has also produced a small book on traditional Tuvan ethics, showing how morals are related to the traditional shamanic world view. During the interview he made the following remarks on this:

“This book of mine became a textbook in our secondary schools and colleges. Because Tuvan ethics is a culture of childraising elaborated over the centuries. We too have our own pedagogy, a folk pedagogy. The period of education extends from the ages of one to thirteen years. What may a child do and what is forbidden? What must be kept in sight? How must a child be treated? For we only raise children to the age of thirteen. When they reach the age of thirteen they enter manhood and become real men or, in the case of girls, grown girls. By then they know all the rules and norms of life, the ritual ceremonies of Tuvan society. During the years of communist terror no one wanted this culture. And no one wanted my textbook either! But there would have been a great need to publish this book because every people has its own language, its own customs and the customs are the original source of every ethnoses, every people. Earlier, education here was conducted on the basis of curricula elaborated in Moscow which were mandatory for everyone. National

culture was forced into the stern of the ship despite the fact that our national culture is deeply rooted first of all in our language, in our ancient inherited culture, our shamanic beliefs." (KENIN-LOPSAN 1996)

The life and work of Kenin-Lopsan is of model value, an example of how the educated son of a small nation undertakes the task not only of collecting the old traditions but also of actively reviving them. This work was recognised in 1993 by the Foundation for Shamanic Studies established by Michael Harner when it declared Kenin-Lopsan to be a "Living Treasure of Shamanism" (BRUNTON 1995). This represented great recognition for the elderly professor in his homeland too where in the same year the Society of Tuva Shamans (*Dungur*) was officially registered and then the first Tuvan-American scholarly symposium was held on shamanism, attended by both researchers and practising shamans. However, perhaps the greatest success and gratification of his life came on 15 October 1993 when the president of the Tuva Republic introduced a government resolution (Act No. 383) setting up a scholarly centre for research on shamanism and also ordered the establishment of a therapeutic centre where shamans can regularly practice healing in Kyzyl, the capital city (BUDEGECHI ed. 1994:42–43). The work of Kenin-Lopsan almost certainly marks the end of the classical stage in Tuva shamanism because what he launched in 1993, the period of the *Dungur* shamans, represents the beginning of something entirely new.



Plate 35.



Plate 36.

In Leningrad too, there was an enthusiastic researcher of Tuva shamanism, V. P. Djakonova (1981) who found in the taiga the grave of a Tuva shamaness who had died in 1958. Since the shamaness had been laid to rest in her shaman costume, with her equipment and drum, the researcher was able to make a precise description and inventory. It became possible to clarify details that can only be ascertained with the help of such a fortunate find (e.g. that the symbols of the head-dress and costume show precisely whether the shaman was strong or weak, or whether he was helped by good or evil spirits). In Tuva, only strong shamans could wear the cap-like head-dress (DJAKONOVA 1978). The writer of these lines photographed such a head-dress in Kyzyl in 1995 where one of the eldest shamans belonging to the *Dungur* Shaman Society wore a cap of this type. It should be noted that in his book, *Tracing Shamans in Siberia* (1968) Vilmos Diószegi also lamented the passing of Tuva shamanism, but Djakonova's paper

showed that it still flourished in everyday practice in the remote taiga areas. It is not surprising then to see its full revival nowadays as this ancient healing craft undergoes a renaissance.

At the same time as the Russian researchers (1966–69), German researchers collected the folklore traditions of the Uriankhai ethnic group living in Mongolia. They published the tales in several volumes and wrote a study examining the links between the Central Asian heroic tales and the shamanic rites (TAUBE 1981, 1984). More precisely, together with others, they hypothesised that the tales reflect not only the material aspects of the culture but also the social relations and above all the beliefs and world view. The Leipzig researcher, Erika Taube, shows, motif by motif, the correlation between the heroic tales and the shamanistic beliefs. For example, both the hero of the heroic tale and the shaman feed the helping bird with their own flesh during their journey in the underworld. She also compares the tale motif of the princess carried away to the other world by dragons with the journey of the shamans in the other world in their ecstasy to bring back the lost – i.e. sick human – souls into the community (TAUBE 1984). She also points out that among the nomadic herders of distant Mongolia it was the shamans who kept the heroic tales and heroic epics alive, who creatively passed on and preserved oral tradition, so it is understandable that these narratives are imbued with shamanistic motifs.

It is a well known fact that the power of the shamanic séance and the ceremony as a whole is made up of a variety of factors, besides the voice, dance and gestures of the shaman, music and even more generally, acoustic effects are an important component. This aspect received little attention in research until recently with the appearance of a few articles on the subject. In 1993 Zoya Kyrgyz published a short study on the music of the Tuva shamans, more precisely, the shamanic song. It is to the great credit of the author that, as the director of the International *Khoomei* (throat-singing) Centre, she is an excellent organiser and the centre is able to provide support for researchers. Unfortunately, the paper presents only a few well-known facts but at the end it gives several precise musical scores by way of illustration, something that is not generally found in other papers. Despite the title of the publication: *Rhythms of Shamanic Drums*, there is no discussion in the volume of this subject although it would have been of pioneering significance (KYRGYZ 1993).

Valentina Süzükei, takes as her point of departure in her studies of musical folklore the traditional Tuvan folk world view that nature (trees, mountains, springs) has Spirit-Masters whom the shamans evoked, either with the sound of the drum or with whistling or throat-singing (SÜZÜKEI 1995 see LEVIN 2006.). In a symposium held in 1995, Mongush Kenin-Lopsan threw light on the role of whistling in shamanic rituals.

“While preparing for a shamanic ritual, the shaman has to throat-sing a sygyt piece (sygyt means “whistling”). The symbolic essence of sygyt lies in the possibility for a shaman, with the sole help of sygyt, to urgently call his spirit-helps. When the spirit-helps do not come immediately, the shaman imitates the sounds of domestic and wild animals and did so with great skill. If they still do not appear, a shaman imitates an oriole’s singing. In the old times it was forbidden for the ordinary people to sing sygyt as they could offend the shaman’s spirits. This could result in a strong wind, storm, snowing, raining or even a war.” (KENIN-LOPSAN 1995a:14)

With the easing in the political situation it is now much easier to travel in the territory of the former Soviet Union and so growing numbers of foreigners can also do research among the shamans. In 1996 Kira van Deusen summed up her experiences in a

manuscript study titled “*Shamanism and Music in Tuva*”. Herself a musician, she was able to identify a few important characteristics of Tuvan shamanic music:

“The spiritual function of Tuvan music is especially clear in relation to shamanism. The shaman sets up a soundscape using the natural setting: bird calls, rustling breezes, voices of domestic animals, and various other sounds which, though deliberately produced, can hardly be called musical. Most of these come from the costume. On top of this soundscape comes the rhythm of the drum and the melody of the algysh, or poetic chant.

Music operates in the shaman’s world in several ways. Music helps the shaman and other participants in kamlanie to locate and enter the inner world, opening the inner, spiritual ear. Secondly, musical sound calls helping spirits and transports the shaman on the journey. And thirdly, both the rhythm and the timbre of musical sound help heal the patient through the effects of specific frequencies on the human body.” (van DEUSEN 1996:3–4)

During the years of political oppression when loud drumming was reason to fear, the reduction in the strength of the sound also took away the shamans’ strength: at least this is the explanation some people gave for the weakening of the faith in shamans. Nowadays, in contrast, the shamans consider that they can make their strength appear greater than it actually is by having a drum made and using it during the healing ceremony, even if only for a few minutes.



Plate 37.

The problem of the rebirth of Buddhism, lamaism and shamanism is also arising, at least in part, as a political question. Excellent studies have been written overviewing the origin of Tuva shamanism and the history of its development (MONGUSH 1986, 1992, 1995; VAJNŠTEJN – MOSKALENKO 1995). This history begins with the records written by the Persian historian Rašīd-ad-dīn and naturally its last stage is the syncretic mingling of lamaism and shamanism. This co-existence is now being raised at the level of state policy in the issue of what state religion independent Tuva should adopt.

The same problem has arisen in the case of other Siberian peoples with an ancient shamanic tradition, such as the Yakuts where it was discussed already in 1992 (see BALZER 1993, 1996). In Tuva lamaism has strengthened in recent years, especially following the visit of the Dalai Lama.

The supporters of shamanism have also strengthened their positions and from the early nineties a new period began in its history. It is worth citing the most authentic source, Mongush Kenin-Lopsan, on how the Society of Tuva Shamans was established:

"We decided to create a forum for the Tuva shamans, that was in 1992. On 21 October we formed the Society of Tuva Shamans. I believe and know that this was a timid first step, but it was a step that brought great happiness. Then the Tuvan Ministry of Justice registered us and we gained legal rights. We regard this as the birthday of the Society of Tuva Shamans; it is called Dungur which means drum. We were very pleased by that event and in the same year, here in Kyzyl, capital of the Tuvan Republic, we held an international symposium, a meeting with the participation of Tuvan and American scholars and with Tuva and Austrian shamans. In the same year, on 15 October 1993 the Government of the Tuva Republic adopted a decision setting up a scientific centre for the study of Tuva shamanism. There is no other scholarly centre of this kind anywhere in Siberia, only here. We have among us shamans with membership cards certifying that they are genuine shamans. Ours is a young organisation; we have 37 shaman members with membership cards. We have talented young people too, young shamans, in every district even if not very many; there are around 100–200 persons. After a certain time we subject them to an examination and accept the best as members. At present they are still able to work without restrictions, but we keep an eye on them. Before 1937 there were more than 700 active shamans in Tuva, precisely 725. In pragmatic terms, the shaman was the only person in the village armed with knowledge. Now there are only 37 of them, although the population of the country is 210,000, that is the number of native Tuvans. I trust that the ancient sources of our old culture, our spiritual culture, Tuva shamanism will be reborn. This tradition is our ancient source because the Tuva shamans always conduct the shamanic rites and sing the shamanic songs in their mother tongue, the Tuvan language. The shamanic belief is the ancient faith we are born with." (KENIN-LOPSAN 1996)

Kenin-Lopsan always expresses himself precisely and poetically and, in fact, it is his prestige, the esteem in which his writings are held that made it possible for the Dungur Federation to be established. They have been given a separate building in the centre of the town, rather ironically, just opposite the municipal hospital so patients can choose where they have themselves treated.

"On any given day, one to ten shamans can be working at Dungur. It just depends on who is in town. Dungur sends shamans to the outlying villages when needed. When you arrive, you can see people waiting to see one of the shamans. There are small placards on the room doors which relate the name of the shaman, what his specialties are (female organs, gall bladder, heart and circulation, etc.), and what region s/he is from. Waiting can be an all day affair sometimes. The people sit in the hallway, outside and wait. When their turn arrives, they show their receipt and receive treatment. Fees range from 5000 rubles to 15,000 rubles. Foreigners pay more: 100,000–200,000 rubles. Divination is usually made with khuvaanak – 41 stones. Drumming, singing and movement are made if necessary. Sometimes, hands on massage is given. Sometimes it is only using artysh – a juniper species which is used as incense. Individuality of the shaman functions at this level. People have their favourite shaman, just as we have our favourite doctor. There is a lot of purification work going on at Dungur. Families arrive and pick up a shaman to take home for purification, sanctification, 7 and 49-day rituals. The building is a meeting place for the shamans and the people. (BUCKBEE-LAPPALAINEN 1995:10)

In summer 1996 the author of these lines visited Tuva for the second time; the following extract is taken from the diary of that journey:

“On the morning before the day of our departure we went into the Dungur centre again. I was not disappointed this time either because one young shaman and two old ones were treating and receiving ‘patients’. I have used inverted commas because most of the patients gathered there, around ten people, sitting or standing in the corridor and in the small space before the cash table, were not sick but wanted to know the future, whether they should begin some venture or other, whether the date was lucky, or their affairs are not going well and they want to take part in a purification ceremony. Two days earlier, on Tuesday, when we visited the centre we counted fifteen patients. But this number is constantly changing because in the short half hour we spent there at least a dozen people dropped in (most of them left again) but some stayed, paid and waited for their turn. At quarter to twelve people were still coming, at least a half of them young people and the majority women. Often whole families came together.

In one room an old shaman with a benevolent face was treating a young girl when I entered. I later learned that the shaman Kular (Mokurool Sevenovich) was only 59 although he looked 70 (and came from the Baj taiga where he lives in the village of Teli).

The shaman was in the process of making a prediction for the girl, using the 41 pebbles, later he drummed around the girl who was sitting on a chair. The family was seated beside the wall, watching in awe as the old man with his red drum worked himself into a kind of weak trance by his singing and drumming. This could be seen on his face and his twitching shoulders. Of course, this lasted barely more than a few moments since the ceremony was almost as mechanical as a routine visit to a doctor.” (HOPPÁL 1996b)

What is happening in the Dungur centre is in fact an entirely new development in the history of shamanism. It is an authentically late 20th century phenomenon shaped by circumstances differing from the traditional. On the one hand a very conscious organisation, formed at the initiative of local intellectuals, is serving a demand on the part of the common people as the large numbers who comes day by day. Tuva shamanism today is a typical example in the post-communist world of the preservation of changed and changing traditions that have their roots in the past but are adapting well to the present conditions. (For similar phenomena, see BALZER 1993, 1995, 1996; HOPPÁL 1996.)

There is another interesting feature of today’s Tuva shamanism, namely that it seems to function even better in the urban environment than in the rural areas, although shamans are once again working in the countryside too and the urban shamans go out into the country as well, making regular healing tours.

Finally, one more important thing must be noted concerning the current development of Tuva shamanism. This is the foreign influences coming on the one hand from the interest shown by scholars and on the other from the “Foundation for Shamanic Studies”. The latter, a nonprofit educational organisation, organised two expeditions to Tuva in 1993 and 1994. Reports on these have been published in English (PETERS 1993; BRUNTON 1994; UCCUSIČ 1995) and it is obvious from them that the researchers and practising urban shamans from the western world – as, for example, Paul Uccusič from Vienna – have done a great deal to help the Tuva local authorities and the shamans themselves to recognise their own interests. If we wished to be very critical, we could say that a kind of “shaman tourism” is beginning to emerge in Kyzyl, organised by the Dungur. (In 1995, for example, the largest ever group of “urban shamans”, including a number of psychiatrists, came to Tuva and worked together, “healing” with the local shamans.)

Shamans and Traditions

“Another of the magical shamanic sites that we visited was a holy spring, one of nine such healing sites in the country. The spring flowed out of a hillside, forming a stream that ran downhill and eventually emptied into a ravine. At the source was a white statue of a ram, which was said to be the emblem of the district. There were enclosed showers at the hillside, and our group, along with the other pilgrims, bathed in the icy healing waters. I later thought of this as the Lourdes of Tuva.

After we visited the spring, I heard someone drumming. In the late Central Asian evening sun, I could see the drummer sitting on a small hill, a short distance from the spring. It was Roza, the healer who works with mirrors and worked with the lama at Khaiyrakan. I joined her, and soon a group of us were playing in a circle.” (PETERS 1993:48)

At all events this is an extremely interesting phenomenon for research on cultural anthropology since the co-operation between the local shamans and western psychiatrists, the observation and learning of each other's methods is creating a new situation. The researcher, who came to the “field” to study local traditions, finds an “urban” shamaness from America in one of the rooms, drumming around a local young couple, and in another room a local shamaness diagnosing the troubles of a French research doctor. All this shows the complete intermingling of traditional roles: there is nothing surprising in it – it is the nature of our “post-modern” world (HOPPÁL 1996). In this context it is not a chance development that in July 1996 the four best Tuva shamans were invited to Austria, to a world congress on psychiatry where a special section dealt with the question of shamanism and psychiatry. The shamans, led by Kenin-Lopsan, flew to the West to give demonstrations. The history of Tuva shamanism is convincing proof that despite all persecution and foreign influence shamanism is alive and flourishing again, because the healing drums are being played again in freedom.



SHAMANS IN BURYAT SACRIFICIAL RITUALS

13

Animal Sacrifice among the Buryat

In June 1996 an international conference on shamanism was held in Buryatia. It was known beforehand that, beside scholars, several local Buryat shamans were also invited to the event, what is more, the organisers took care to time the conference so that it coincided with the summer sacrificial festivities in order that an animal sacrifice may be performed as part of the gathering. In the olden days the *tailga*, Buryat for this rite, meant a horse sacrifice (URBANAIEVA 1997 and van DEUSEN 1997). It is in this sense that I had always been lead to think of it, both in the related literature, and in a film that I had seen a few years before at an ethnographic film festival. This is how I had seen it represented in old photographs in the ethnographic collections in Saint Petersburg.

Recently, when I was preparing for publication the works of an undeservedly forgotten Hungarian ethnographer and traveller, Benedek Baráthosi-Balogh (HOPPÁL 1999), I came across an excellent description of a Buryat horse sacrifice which he had seen in 1911.

“The next day it was still dark when they shook me awake. The baron and I travelled on a Russian type carriage for a good hour until we reached a steep, rocky stretch of shore on the Baykal. There were ten or twelve carts already standing there and at least twice as many saddled horses tied up. During this time daylight began to spread so I could take a good look at the surroundings which I had only been able to guess at in the half dark. On top of the cliff I saw a huge pile of rocks, about three metres long, a metre and a half wide and rising to the height of a table. The top was made out of flat blocks so that it created a relatively even surface. The altar stone was covered in a round shape with living branches. They stood around this altar table, on which a blazing fire had been lit, in a wide semi-circle. In the meantime they had milked a few of the mares and scattered several splashes of the fresh milk over the fire on the altar. Two people held the long reins on either side of a horse while another four men held a long piece of rope each, with the other end tied to horse’s four ankles. Now they splashed a bit of the milk between the eyes of the horse which made the animal back away and rear but the two men held it fast. At the moment when the first rays of the sun emerged from the water of the Baykal, the four young men,

running all in the same direction, pulled the horse to the ground with their ropes. Some ran to their help and stretched the legs so far apart that the animal could not move at all. Then an old man, one of the baron's relatives, stepped up to the horse. Using a dagger-like, strong knife he split the abdomen and, entering through the gaping hole he most competently sought out the main artery and cut through it. This all happened in a few seconds and the animal expired without any major struggle or suffering. The men standing around it cut the animal's head off and placed it in the middle of the altar. Then they pulled the skin off with agile hands and put that on the altar as well. This was followed by the dismemberment of the body and as the legs and other parts of the animal were cut off, they were laid on the altar in their natural sequence. While this was going on, the onlooking crowd of about a hundred men, women and children softly hummed an old song which gradually grew into a loud, strong singing. I forced a promise out of the baron that he would note down for me the tune and words of this ancient, hymn like song and would even make a phonographic recording of it. He also promised to let our museum have a copy. It appears, however, that his death in the following year prevented him from fulfilling this promise to ethnographic science. During this singing they splashed fresh mare's milk on the lumps of meat on the altar.

The baron told me that the sacrifice of the horse speaks directly to the great heavenly god and is a thanksgiving for the grace of god which had supplied what is necessary for man's subsistence. The animal's soul, returning to god, carries with it man's gratitude....

...The feast ended at about sunset and all the people got on their horses or into their carriages to head back for their shelters. The next day I myself was sitting in the carriage drawn by the great iron horse, re-living in my dreams the excitements of the previous day, filled with tremendous pride that of all living Hungarians I was the first and only one to have seen this sacrifice." (BARÁTHOSI-BALOGH 1930:148–151)

The reason why I quoted the Hungarian scholar's description at such length is because he observed such a great deal of small detail. Seeing the Russian director Leonid Kuperschmidt's ethnographic film which included a Buryat horse sacrifice, I found that a great many details agreed precisely with Baráthosi's description.

The Russian director's documentary film was made in 1987 and one of its episodes was the traditional performance of the horse sacrifice. By traditional I mean that the structure of the animal sacrifice has remained old and traditional even though several elements have been incorporated which are specific to our day and age (e.g. they use a lorry to transport the sacrificial animal to the spot). This sacrifice was always performed on the sacred hill of the tribe. In the past few decades this was done in secret until a few years ago when official permission was granted or, more precisely, the ban was withdrawn. What is more: this populous feast of wide kindred relations was even visited by the local party and state leaders, since they, too, are members of the tribe (in the film we can see that they even took part in the wrestling). The even distribution of the meat was an important moment of the *tailga* which is also clearly visible in the film.

Nadezhda Stepanova described the preparations for the sacrifice on the bank of the Baykal in the following fashion:

"This is a sensitive world, the world of the shamans. We ourselves are protected, but if anything goes wrong, it is you others who will come to harm. We are mainly concerned about you... The ceremony begins on Sunday – a nice day. There will be three lambs sacrificed, everything will go as it should. The sacrifice will be made to the host spirit of the lake Olhon, to his son, and to the host spirit of the lake. Three lambs have already been prepared, these will be the sacrifice. This is a very sophisticated thing, you know, the gods teaching, men and women teaching, it all happens with the permission of the gods, as it is in their honour that the rite is performed, the sacrifice goes to them. Not everyone is

allowed to come and see, because everything goes according to the rules of the rite.”
(Recorded in 1996)

The female shaman Maria Tsibenova told us the following about the *tailga* and the role of women:

“The tailga is a sacrificial rite, a sacrifice to the spirit, to the host spirits of the Olhon, the Baykal and the hosts of the birds. To the khan, so to say, of the birds, which is for us, Buryat peoples, not the eagle but, on the maternal line, the swan. There used to be an abundance of swans in this area at one time. People believe that something evil must have happened and the swans disappeared. I think it must have been a change in the environment, in the climate. Well, and now for women. According to the tradition among our people, the shamans for such a great occasion as this were always men. The male shamans always enjoyed priority. The women shamans only ever had second place. They were the helpers. This probably survived from the time when people lived in a matriarchal system. At least that is what I think. The tradition has it that women must keep away at these times, but not only women, but all strangers as well. They must keep as far away as possible, because the Buryat say buzurte, which means that women are unclean. These days we only sacrifice sheep, not horses. First we must see what sort of an occasion it is, what is the aim of the tailga, what the gods require and that defines the sort of sacrifice we make. Thus, for example, I know that to purify the Baykal on the far side requires the sacrifice of a cow. We have to plan out well in advance what the gods want, this determines the quantity of the lambs and of the vodka but that also depends on the type of spirits we are dealing with.” (Recorded by the author in 1996)

The *bō* (shaman) Ochir, said the following:

“The tailga is a prayer, a religious service. The question is whether we should sacrifice a horse or a sheep. We are grateful to the elder shamans by blood, to the older generations, because when those hard times began, they reached a compromise with the heavenly gods saying that from now on we shall not be able to sacrifice a horse, we shall not be able to sacrifice a cow, let us make a deal so that we shall only be sacrificing a sheep. This contract, so to speak, has been kept to by both parties.” (Recorded in 1996)

All these opinions and data highlight the social background to the *tailga*. Later, when we have discussed the structure of the rite, we shall also talk about the historical data. This description is not based merely on local observation and note taking. Besides several dozen photographs, it also relies on a two and a half hour video recording by cameraman Lajos Nádorfi. The following description is practically based on this footage as ethnographic text.

Ethnography of a *Tailgan*

The ritual began at 11 o'clock on Sunday (June 23 1996) morning. This is when the local people, the inhabitants of villages near and far, and the participants of the conference began to gather. The venue was a resort house in a village called Enhaluk, so by local people we mean the people from the resort house and the inhabitants of the surrounding villages – a crowd of several hundred people. The preparations were rather spectacular as several crates of vodka were unloaded from two lorries (by the afternoon a hundred bottles must have been emptied – mainly by splashing, but, naturally, the participants also drank some.)

The first interesting moment was that the participants had to go through a ritual cleansing process. The women had to step over a small fire lest their impurity should jeopardise the success of the rite. (This is an analogue of the passage between two fires

that is described by Marco Polo in his famous work on the court of the grand khans of Mongolia.)

On the previous day the shamans had asked the spirits whether the strangers were allowed to shoot a film. The spirits had granted permission and we were most grateful for the opportunity.

The participating men, shamans and shamanesses were gathering on the bank. Neatly stacked piles of wood, vodka bottles and cutting instruments were lying on the spot where the ceremony was going to take place. The idyllic landscape was strewn with grazing horses and cattle, while in the background the Baykal glistened like a mirror in the bright sunshine.

The preparations began. A fire was lit, water was heated in great cauldrons and one of the shamans conducting the ceremony, with the assistance of a local helper, erected the sacrificial trees: two side by side and one more a little distance away from these.

The water was beginning to steam in the cauldrons and the shamans, some with great brass mirrors, others with drums, set out to the shore where the first lamb had now been delivered. Two people were carrying it and then they placed it under the erect sacrificial birches. A Buryat lama was playing beautiful music on his recorder and we could also hear the tinkling of some bells some distance away. Some of the local women put their hands together in prayer.

One of the leaders of the ceremony stood up before the long row of benches where the male participants sat, he raised his arms high, parted them, stood facing the lake and then a few seconds later rubbed his two palms together. Then he turned right and repeated the same motions and then to the back and finally in the fourth direction, too, he raised his arms, palms to the sky. Finally he returned to his starting point, facing the lake, where he rubbed his hands together four times and stood for many seconds with his arms apart upward toward the sky.

One of the shamans sitting among those who waited beside the steaming cauldrons dripped seven drops of his vodka to the ground, and then raised it high toward his companions before drinking it. The participants and onlookers began to taste the vodka but before each drink they spilled a few drops onto the ground and they never omitted doing this.

Another shaman, who was in charge of conducting the ceremony, held a stick, the end of which was red hot and smoking. With this red hot stick he drew four circles over the heads of the chief shaman and his helper, probably with the aim of purifying them. Then he began the singing and drumming. The shamans, shamanesses, helpers and other participants were all there on the shore, facing the lake, while two strong lads held fast onto the lamb. Those standing nearer the back sprayed vodka toward the lake from the little bowls and glasses they held in their hands and also spilled a few drops on to the ground. A few people did the same from the bottle. Beside vodka there was also milk and milky tea to drink.

The shamans stood directly next to the lamb – several of them were drumming and singing, lead by the chief shaman. They were calling up the spirits. At this point the chief shaman broke a branch off one of the sacrificial trees and laid it where the lamb was being held, more precisely, he laid it under the animal's spine. This was the sign for the killing of the lamb. The animal was laid on its back, its legs were held and an incision about two inches long was made on its abdomen. Then the man put his hand in and within an instant snapped the artery to the heart. Then they started processing the meat, but first they tied a ribbon onto one of the birches standing on the bank.

In the meantime a shaman was kneeling on the bank holding a little bowl in his hand and while he was singing, he kept lifting the bowl toward the lake and splashing vodka with his hands. Then he stood up and continued the same movements. He had a vast mirror hanging round his neck. On the bank there were men sitting on the grass, splashing the earth with vodka, some from their glasses, others from their bottle.

Three female shamans and a male shaman of about fifty years of age carried on their ritual on the beech. The Buryat shaman poured vodka into a bowl after removing the cap with his teeth. Then they parted their arms together with all the others, raised their palms toward the sky facing the lake and called the host spirit of the lake. The male shaman lit a small fire, only big enough to give smoke and he drew three circles over the smoke with his vodka bottle and then another three circles with his left hand and finally another three with his right. Then he took a few steps to the right, a few to the back and finally drew five circles over the fire with his bowl. Finally he raised the bowl to the sky and splashed six times toward the lake. Behind his back one of the shaman women lay down facing the earth, parting her arms, practically embracing the earth beneath her. Then the shaman splashed some vodka on the ground, refilled the bowl and repeated his previous motions, murmuring something. The shaman women knelt down, the shaman along with them, and they touched the earth with their heads.

In the background, men were spraying vodka on the ground from glasses and bottles. Other men washed the internal and other parts of the slaughtered lamb in large bowls. The water was steaming away in the cauldrons, they were cooking the lamb and in a separate bowl they were stuffing the intestines with blood – making genuine blood sausages. A group of men and shaman women were sitting around a fire, one of the shaman women was murmuring a long prayer while dripping thirteen drops of vodka onto the ground.

At about two o'clock in the afternoon a short break ensued – several people went off to have lunch, and the shore became somewhat less crowded. Now the women were allowed to go close to the spot where the lamb had been killed. During the break the shamans were healing and purifying local people – soothing pain, hushing crying babies, and exorcising evil spirits. The high reverence of the people toward the shamans was evident.

An hour later the men lit a new fire on the shore and carried a long wooden table over to it which held the internal parts, the liver, the heart and the lungs that had been cut up into little pieces.

The killing of the second and the third sheep took place after the same fashion as the first. After a long stretch of drumming, splashing and spraying the ground with vodka the chief shaman poured a little vodka on the lamb, broke another branch off the tree and placed it along the lamb, thus giving permission for the killing. The lamb was laid on its back, its legs held tight and the incision was made in the chest. The expert man reached in and broke the main artery within a few seconds. The lamb did not struggle long. The processing of the meat began and another ribbon, which also included some bank notes, was tied onto the sacrificial birches. The lambs were skinned within a few seconds, the offal removed, the other parts chopped up, sorted out and placed in the cauldrons.

Everyone was eating, some sitting down, others standing up. Two shaman women studied slips of paper over their meals which had been given them by some participants – they had written their own names and those of their family members, asking the shamans to beseech the gods for blessing, good luck or recovery during the ceremony.

Beside the birches that had been stood on the bank, a fire was crackling and the lamb skins had been prepared next to them ready to be burned so that the sacrifice may rise to the sky with the smoke of the fire.

The meal was followed by drumming and everybody went down to the shore. They offered more vodka and also some food as sacrifice to the water and the earth. The sheep skins were thrown onto the fire. Several people knelt and touched the ground with their heads, others gave deep bows, and a shaman splashed a whole bottle of vodka about the burning skins. Although it had grown late in the afternoon, the sun was still in the sky, shining with a velvety warmth and gulls were circling over the lake. One of the conducting shamans clapped his hands twice, first with his back to the lake and then facing it – with this gesture he symbolically declared the event concluded.



Plate 38.

Rite and Meaning

A leading authority in the study of Buryat shamanism, T. M. Mihailov pointed out in his preface to the latest edition of Buryat shaman songs the social significance of the *tailgan* rituals.

“Shamanic rites and ritual actions are very rich in their contents and formal repertoire, and their elements have a set order. We may divide sacrificial rites according to the degree to which they are compulsory and to their prescribed frequency into compulsory and non-compulsory, regular and irregular rituals. From the point of view of the aim and function of the rite, and from the point of view of participation, we may divide them into communal-collective and family/individual rites.

One of the communal-collective rites was known among the Buryat as tailgan. Its main function is to beseech the heavenly being to grant prosperity, a good harvest, good pastures and for the animals to breed well for the coming year, as well as for family happiness, and to keep away trouble, illness and disaster. Rituals of this kind are usually held between the end of spring (May) and autumn (October). Each administrative area has its long-established, traditional communal order for this ceremony within which they held

7, 8 or even more tailgans each year, addressing each to one particular deity. Each of these festive occasions was conducted amongst ceremonial circumstances, they were genuine feasts with the participation of the whole population and they lasted a whole day or even several days. (MIKHAILOV 1966:11)

Surveying the events of this event it can be ascertained that the local shamans “worked a full day”, keeping the events under their control. In the first half of the day and the rite they killed one lamb and in this case all those present functioned together, as a community. By the second half of the day, roughly after two o’clock, when it came to killing the second lamb, small groups had formed, each engaged in its partial mini-ritual, such as *libation* (drink sacrifice – this is why so much vodka was consumed) and healing/purification (KISTER 1997:142, van DEUSEN 1997:8).

I use the concepts of healing and purification together because during my field work study of Siberian shamanism I found that the task of the shaman is not so much healing (at least in our day, e.g. in Tuva) but prevention. One of the chief shamans I observed by Lake Baykal treated his queuing patients by symbolically cutting round them, thus removing illness or the evil spell (?). And with his mirror he concluded the purifying rite. This is similar to the way in which women had to pass over a purifying fire at the beginning of the event. The function of purification is to ensure a healthy condition, its meaning is to secure balance. The fact that the ceremony lasts a whole day is not the result or development of some sort of a crisis situation but a regularly repeated, consciously festive occasion during which the people express their respect before the local spirits and the host spirits of the lake.

To return to the time structure of the rite, the first half of the morning is dominated by the killing of the animals while the second half by the cooking of the meat. To speak the language of the well-known semiotic oppositions, the raw becomes cooked, the natural condition is transformed into culture. It is this transformation that the participants unconsciously experience during the rite by the fact that everybody partakes of the meat, particularly of the internal parts. These were cut into very small pieces since this impresses all participants with the notion of equality.

Repetition is another important significant element of ritual behaviour as it ensures the effect of the actions. The animals that are sacrificed, the drink that is splashed, the clapping of the hands are all organised by sacred numbers: 3, 7, 9, 13. I must note here that not even the most unfailing attention, neither counting nor note taking enable the observer to record all details properly – only a video recording can assure this during the slow motion replay in the editing room. We have defined video cameras as the greatest new opportunity in ethnographic description.

One of the participants of the conference was V. N. Alexeyev, a famous researcher of Siberian shamanism who told us in an interview, among other things, that

“In the olden days they used to sacrifice, say, a red bull, to the host spirits of the Olhon. Among us, Yakuts, a white horse was sacrificed to the deity. Depending on the age and the possibilities, the Buryat might, for example, sacrifice a sheep. There was a tailgan here yesterday which usually consists of several phases as a sacrifice is shown to several deities on the same occasion. A sacrifice was performed to the host spirit of the Baykal, to the spirit of the Sky and, in the third phase, to the spirits of the Olhon mountains. It is also interesting that in the olden days a separate sacrifice used to be performed for the individual tribal, dynastic gods. Each tribe has its own patron spirit and it is the duty of the tribe to offer it sacrifices and beseech them to grant prosperity, health and happiness for all the members of the tribe. Thus the people who gathered here obviously performed a

grand scale tailgan which was in many respects perfectly true to the tradition."
(ALEXEYEV 1996)

The tradition survived in people's memories and there are individuals living who still remember everything accurately. In the recent years tailgan rites have again been performed regularly and it is a very important and interesting aspect of the symposium that this is the first time when researching scholars and practising shamans have made a joint effort to come to understand the nature of shamanism. There are researchers here from various countries, most of whom look on shamanism, as it were, from the outside while the shamans look on it from the inside. An alliance of these two views in the future might give us a better understanding of shamanism as a phenomenon (HOPPÁL 1996).

An important meaning was carried and a central role played within the context of the rite by the fact, that only men were allowed to stay in the direct closeness of the animal sacrifice while women stayed in the background where they performed their own prayer service (van DEUSEN 1996:8). The separation of men and women is a very important meaningful opposition within the structure of rituals, the typological analogues of which may be found all over Siberia among the Turkic peoples just as well as among the Finno-Ugrians (VERES 1975).



TRANCE AND SACRIFICE IN A SHAMANIC HEALING RITUAL

14

Introduction

Some recent findings in the research of Eurasian shamanism are forcing us to reconsider our earlier view of this cultural phenomenon. After accumulating the results of intensive collection and field work, over the last few decades certain researchers have concluded that the sacrificial rite always plays an outstandingly important role in the ritual practice of shamans. This follows from the ideology of shamanism, namely from the attitude that if the balance of the surrounding world is disturbed (eg. through illness, lack of children or death) then it is the job of the shaman/ess to re-establish the balance. In brief, if we want something from the spirits, we also have to pay them some sacrifice.

Sacrifice can be of many kinds from genuine to symbolic gifts, from verbal to the most gory offerings. At any rate it ranges from the simplest food sacrifices, through chicken, rooster, dog, sheep, cow, bull, horse and human sacrifice. Naturally, it is the local cultural tradition that decides which elements of this paradigmatic line the shaman is going to use in a given situation. The type of sacrifice to be selected is decided by the direct local tradition and, naturally, the financial situation.

All this results in the fact that a 'culturally correct' sacrifice, which was governed by the traditions and was also correctly organised in a 'grammatical sense', was always a part of the rich cultural phenomenal world of shamanism. It was the sacrificial rite that made the entire event sacred. Naturally, the presence of the shaman/ess and their *actions*, rooted in and enacting ritual tradition, as well as their active 'work' are also forms of manifestations of the sacred in the distinguished moments of ritual time. Since, however, the premises for presenting and conducting the sacrificial rite was determined by those who 'commissioned' the event, in other words the needs of the most important participants (in most cases the family, the relatives, in some cases the clan or the extended family), this was something that changed all the time, as did the place of residence of the nomadic peoples. In this way the location was less important than some permanent elements of the rite. Some of these are, besides the sacrifice, the song and/or prayer invoking the spirits and a few important objects among the requisites used by the

shaman/ess. These ritual attributes (such as the drum or the shaman stick, certain pieces of clothing e.g. the belt or the head dress or a special shaman's cloak) are sometimes present in some local traditions, in others they are absent. Thus, once again, we can point out that it is the local tradition that requires examining as they can be very different in terms of detail, in other words there is no general model which is universally applicable to all situations.

It is generally characteristic of shamanism that it forms a very flexible system and is thus very easily adapted to the given setting or specific occasion. Thus, e.g. the rite can be conducted with the participation of one or of several shamans but, in the absence of shamans the role of head of ceremony can also be taken on by one of the more prestigious members of the extended family or clan. Naturally, this only applies in cases where the tradition allows it (Cf. HUMPHREY – ONON 1996:145).

The Location and the Participants

I visited the town of Hailar in North East China, in the last week of January, 2003. This was my second trip to this northernmost part of Manchuria which borders on the Eastern corner of the inner Mongolian province. This little town is notable for the fact that in its closest vicinity there are several different ethnic groups living, such as the Bargu Mongolians, two groups of the Evenkis called Oroch and Solon and well as the Daur. The Daur (or Dahur) ethnic group speak an archaic Mongolian language and live on the territory between Hailar and another town further South called Qiqihar (pronounced Chichihar). According to the data of the 1990 census they number some 120 thousand.

It is also in the city of Hailar that we find the Inner Mongolian Evenki Research Institute which published a Chinese translation of one of my earlier books (HOPPÁL 1993). This was the occasion on which I was invited by the head of the institute with the promise that I shall have a chance to do some research, too. He kept this promise and on the afternoon of the very first day took me to see a young shaman of Bargu nationality living in a neighbouring village. On the second day of my visit I was taken to visit a somewhat older shamaness, also of Mongolian nationality, living somewhat further away. She was at that time visited by one of her 'students' as this was the day they regularly met.

On the third day I was taken early in the day to Nantun which is a village practically incorporated into Hailar which is also the home of the Evenki regional museum. (The impressive building of this museum was unheated so it was necessary to keep our overcoats on while visiting the exhibition which consisted of the reconstructed versions of six shaman costumes.) The village has a mixed population of Daur and Evenki people as well as Chinese who settled later.

When we arrived at the home of the shamaness, reputed to be a famous healer, there were about eight people waiting to be seen, both outside the door in the extremely cold winter weather (-27 Celsius) and indoors. As we entered I saw someone pay the shamaness' assistant, next a young girl and a more elderly lady fell into a state of rigid trance within less than half an hour, under the effect of the drumming. (The young Chinese lady translator was looking on stiff with shock – she had never seen anything like that before.)

Later, with the help of the local colleagues, I conducted an almost one hour long interview with the shamaness. She told me that she started practicing as a shaman in 1999. She showed me photographs of her initiation rite. She told me that the spirits of her ancestors showed her in her dream what she had to do. They also showed her when

and how she should have her initiation rite conducted. She had to jump over three fires when the flames were at their highest – to show her power as a shamaness.

During our conversation another of her ‘patients’ arrived. It was a young girl and Sichingua drummed over her for a relatively short period of time then agreed with the girl’s mother that she would visit them the next day in their own home and carry out other healing rituals. I asked through the translator whether we could participate and record the event on video – the shamaness agreed readily. This is the event we are going to describe in the following section of this paper.



Plate 39.

Until recently there was very little data available for researchers concerning Daur shamanism. In 1996, however, an excellent monograph was published containing the conversations of Caroline Humphrey with Daur emigrant Urgunge Onon whose reminiscences helped shed light on many details of the shamanic tradition (HUMPHREY – ONON 1996:251). On the basis of this work the main characteristics of Daur shamanism can be summarised as follows.

Among the Daur the shaman could only be someone blessed with unique capabilities, mainly in healing and in divination from a shoulder-blade bone. An old member of the clan participates as assistant to the shaman or rather as a specialist of certain rites (*bagchi*). The two persons, the shaman and the *bagchi*, were also distinguished by the fact that the shaman was not allowed to hunt because animals also belong to the sky, as does the shaman. The prohibition, however, does not extend to the *bagchi*. There were also other specialists (*bunian yadgan*) who, according to the Daur, functioned similarly to shamans, such as healers (*otoshi*), bone setters (*barishi*), midwives (*bariyachi*) and magicians (*kianchi*). *Bagchi* could do rain magic which was an ancient shamanic activity according to old Turkic sources. Although the Daur only

considered a person with the label *yadgan* and *otoshi* as real shamans, the other specialists also played an important part in the life of the community as they participated in the organisation and conducting either of everyday life or of the festive ritual practices. Each had their very unique and specialised knowledge which was required for the proper conducting of rites, and of saying the necessary prayers (which deity or helping spirit to address). This was also the case with midwives who conducted births, but it was particularly true of bone-setters (*barishi*) who had absorbed knowledge of anatomy from their childhood on as it is a part of this tradition to pass this vocation on from father to son. As bone is the symbol of the national group, this occupation can be seen as a kind of living shamanhood, the more so as these people were also entrusted to perform the sacrifices addressed to the heavens if the relevant specialist (the *bagchi*) was not available. After their death the shamans were buried on a tree and it was believed that such 'burial in the sky' meant that the body was offered up to the heavens (HOPPÁL 2002:78).

This rich tradition is, naturally, only just being revived these days, as Mao's 'cultural revolution' had persecuted all previous cultural traditions. Yet, according to my observations, this oppression was not as radical as that in the one time Soviet Union. Thus it becomes understandable that during the ideological thaw of the past decade the old faith and ritual tradition became reinforced among the ethnic groups. It has been apparent ever since the 1960's that the rituals were attended by masses of people as testified to by photos taken at the time (GUO – WANG 2001:38–41).

Extracts from the Field Journal – Description of the Ritual

We left the hotel a few minutes after 8 o'clock. It was very cold, a dusty snow was falling and it all seemed as if it was foggy, but in fact it was the snowfall. First we went past the crossroads where we had agreed to meet but then they noticed the minibus waiting for us. In the minibus the two shaman women were accompanied by the husband, Batu as chief helper, and a very knowledgeable old woman with a paralysed hand. They two of them gave me very valuable information in the intervals of the ceremony, however, it never transpired why they had accompanied the shamans.

After leaving the main road we waited for the crew of the Hailar local television which consisted of two cameramen. It would have been good if they had been able to shoot some landscape and village atmosphere but after we arrived I could barely unpack, the ceremony started very soon.

At the edge of the village we had to go through some very rough country to get to the house of the parents of the girl whom shamaness Sichingua last treated (or healed?) – the girl she had drummed over in Nantun on the previous day. They cannot be very poor as there were 15 cows and even a tractor in their yard. There were also two 'clean rooms' tiled with very large sized tiles. The rest of the house was in a terrible state, they used one of the rooms to kill and skin the sheep – the filthy dirt floor was perfectly suited for the job.

As we found out, the aim of the ceremony was to take the illness off this permanently ailing young girl who was 26 (but looked 16, she was so thin). According to the shamanic approach it is necessary first to show a sacrifice which will in turn procure success for the operations, but only if the shamans are visited by their spirits – in other words if they manage to fall into a trance. It was Wureertu who found this out and related it to my translator.

The ceremony started shortly after we arrived, around half past nine, with the decorating of the altar. This meant nothing other than sticking up colourful paper cuttings

to cover up the large size poster decorating the wall in the background. As I look back, I notice an interesting element that did not attract my attention at the time – namely, that when we arrived the altar was already there. With the *ongons* of the shamaness (or the local family) which they framed with *hadags*. In front of them there were tables richly laden with food. The whole thing had the atmosphere of Korean shaman altars – true, Korea is not very far from here (at least from a European angle). The formula at any rate is the following: icons, in front of them the various types of food, piles of fruit and sweets and in front of these a row of little oil lamps. Who had made this altar before we even arrived? Presumably the people of the house – a Mongolian family who use the help of the Daur shamaness who, in turn, was accompanied by her Evenki helper. Nationality is a matter of no importance to them – it seems it only bothers us. The Evenki shamaness chanted the blessing and the song in her only language but nobody seemed to care. And then the drums all speak the same language.

The main shamaness sat down in the corner and started drumming and singing straight away while the others were making the paper cuttings which created a very Chinese impression. These were stuck to the wall by Batu and a helper, using sticky tape. While the women were cutting the paper, Batu sprinkled around an alcoholic spirit (a kind of Chinese brandy) and milk from three little glasses standing on the table. Both shamanesses were wearing blue clothes and they drummed together. The shamanesses changed melodies after only a minute (more precisely, I only noticed it by the text – it was a song beginning with ‘deko, deko, dekoyan.’ By sprinkling the milk onto the floor Batu performed a drink sacrifice to the local spirits, more precisely to the spirit master of the house. The drumming lasted barely two minutes and when one had finished, the other one took her drum and continued in the Evenki language, but she sang the same tune, too.

In the meantime, Batu gave milk to the head of the horse-headed sticks and to the rattle that is on the side of the stick, as if he symbolically made them drink. I can see on the brass mirror of the Evenki shamaness that there are Chinese signs in it. The other shamaness sits in the background and listens. Then a woman in a red head-scarf (another helper of the shamaness) ‘gives’ milk to the rattles of the drum from a little spoon (so, similarly to the horse, the drum was given something to drink). This woman gives more drink to the horse-headed sticks, including the little arrows hanging down and the other rattles, while the others carry on tearing up silk ribbons in the background, and proceeds to tie them on to the twigs standing in the corner – in other words they are making a *tooroo*, a sacrificial tree inside the room. This stands to the left of the altar, there is a bowl in front of it with sweets, biscuits, a piece of butter on a plate and a lovely white silk scarf was also placed on it. To the left of the altar they also put two shaman flags made of paper. While the women go on tearing the large piece of silk into ribbons, the girl waiting for the healing is looking on from the background!

On the altar, on the left-hand side there are two bottles of local brandy, on the first plate there are oranges, apples and grapes but one of the people from the house also placed three biscuits there. On the second plate there is dried cream cheese or butter broken into small triangular pieces (I tasted it but could not decide whether it was butter or cream cheese, at any rate this is what they put into my milky tea as a special treat). The third plate had eggs on it, presumably boiled. (There is another thing I forgot to ask. When one is there, trying to focus one’s attention on so many things at once, these little details just appear self-evident and one does not ask!) The fourth plate also had fruit on it, apples as well as oranges, and on top some large dark blue grapes.



Plate 40.

In front of the third picture there were also eggs and in front there were small oil lamps in a row in small metal holders with bases – 12 of them. My photos show clearly that these are not the icons of the shamaness but belong to the local people. There are five of them. The picture on the right (which depicts a figure with a halo sitting by a table) also had a dish of dumplings on it, piled high. This is a white pastry similar to bread. It also had another dish of fruit – apples and grapes. On the right hand side of the altar there was a large glass of milk and a glass of milky tea as well as three bottles of drinks, two of them had been opened. In the meantime someone had lit the oil lamps and the ailing maiden and the shamanic helpers had decorated the little tree *tooroo* which represents the sacrificial tree with blue, green, red and white ribbons.

Next there was some more drumming, the two shamanesses without shamanic dresses, but standing in front of the altar, began to drum, then they turned round a quarter and so on, calling the spirits by drumming in all four directions. Then they took the horse-headed sticks into their hands, their right hand, shook it and bent their knees in the direction of the altar, led the stick round behind their backs and only then laid it down. (They started the drumming again two minutes later, standing facing the altar singing the words which begin ‘Dorizan, dorizan.’)



Plate 41.

In the meantime the sheep had been brought in, and made to stand in front of the altar so that its head would be facing the altar. The main shamaness was drumming over the head of the animal. One of the male relatives held the animal tightly as it kept wanting to walk away but then it calmed down. At this point they sprinkled milk all around its head and back, all along its spine. They smoked it with some vegetable powder which smelt of hemp or cannabis. Then they led the poor animal away and killed it in one of the neighbouring rooms, using the method customary among nomads, i.e. by making a hole in its chest they tore the main arteries leading to its heart. This happened at exactly a quarter past ten. Then there was a long pause as the sacrificial animal had to be skinned, very carefully, before it could be offered up in front of the altar. This happens in several phases – first they bring in the sheep's four legs – these were held together by a thin band of the skin but the hooves and the lower leg (which they call *sor*) was also there. Then, a quarter of an hour later, they put the heart on to the strip of skin that represented the spine, together with some pieces of offal. They put a small china tea dish full of blood on to the altar of the ancestors. Altogether it seemed to me that the whole ceremony was still addressed mainly to the spirits of the ancestors. The girl waiting to be healed occasionally appeared in the room but was only focussed on later, when they drummed and sang for her and over her. More precisely, it seemed as if something had to die, i.e. the sacrificial animal, if we want someone to be healed. This is the way the world can be round and balanced and this eternal circulation ensures balance.

After a good quarter of an hour (it was still before half past eleven) they carried in the skin of the lamb and put it over the pieces already there. While the meat was cooking, in the other room, we were talking with the old woman with the withered arm who had accompanied the shamaness. It transpired that she was also of Daur nationality, 63 years of age and was called Shu Hui-yin (she only had a Chinese name) and she was indeed a helper to Sichingua as had become clear during the ceremony the previous day. She told us that the large mirror on the chest of Daur shamans was there to protect the heart and the two small ones to protect the lungs. The old man (who was called a *bagchi* the previous day, he was the one who gave us the list of the types and tasks of Daur shamans) told us that there are 9 kilos of brass mirror on a shaman's costume. These *tol* drove evil spirits away with their glitter and the little spinners strengthened the shaman when the spirits came. The ornaments of the dress (the 'ornament', what a European notion!) thus actually act as a protective shield because here we are talking about an actual fight, not simply about winning the favours of the spirits. Talking about the crown the old man told us that after each successful healing they tie a new silk scarf onto its horns – thus it is no wonder that you can hardly see them for all the silk! In the Daur language the cloak is called *chava*, the crown is called *mahel*.

It was still before 11:30 when they carried in the whole sheep, in the meantime someone had put oil into the little oil lamps. (At this time there was relative quiet for a while so I shot some footage of the altar, the lamps, the icons and the sacrificial drinks, to cut in for the periods when they sing facing the altars.) The fresh cooked mutton was steaming away and the individual parts were most carefully assembled so that the body was reconstructed in an anatomically correct fashion. After they had completed the body of the sacrificial animal they carried in the smoking dish – a tin basin full of embers over which they sprinkled dried herbs from time to time (*artis*).



Plate 42.

The shamaness began to get into her costume and sing, she has a very strong sharp voice. She put on, rather hung round her neck, her heart shaped large mirror. In the meantime the helper, Batu, smoked the shamanic cloak. This is made of leather and was truly very heavy from all the metal mirrors hanging on it. The purging of this garment, i.e. its smoking, took place amid terrible rattling. There were two women helping the shaman get dressed, for example the old lady with the withered arm took her plaited hair out from under the cloak another woman helped her put on the sleeve. When she had put on the second sleeve (for the sleeve was quite tight or the woman had put on weight) she started flapping up and down with her arms to the rhythm of the music as though she wanted to fly. (These observations would be impossible to note down or remember without the video, there are so many things happening at the same time!). Batu attached the shoulder ornament to the cloak, too which was decorated by three rows of cowri shells both front and back while on its back there was some attractive colourful embroidery on black velvet. (Of course I did not take a photo of the back! The cowri shells were stitched on in a triangular shape like this, altogether 156 of them!) While they were adjusting the cloak and tying it up, the shamaness flapped with her arms. The crown was placed on her head and while she was singing, the rattling produced by the rhythmic flapping of her arms gave a good accompaniment to the song. They also started dressing the Evenki shamaness and she sang the same tune but with different words. While the other shamaness was being dressed, the Daur woman stood to one side, by the door. Outside the door in the 'front hall' there stood a young boy among the family members who was embracing a large, bright radio-tape recorder in his arms and lap waiting to record the shamanic rite.

The Evenki shamaness also had a male helper who dressed her and, as the last accessory, tied a green silk belt around her waist. Then they smoked both of the drums

Trance and Sacrifice in a Shamanic Healing Ritual

and the two women turned to face the altar and began to sing and drum. Behind them there stood a male helper each who held the belt of the shamanesses.



Plate 43.

After barely two minutes of drumming and singing the large Daur shamaness collapsed and rolled on the ground. Batu had a job to hold her down and it was difficult to get her to sit on a stool. As I watched the video again it seemed as if Batu was rolling her on the ground – the large body rolling left and right and then the two men tried to lift her and sit her up. One of the female helpers took the drum from her hand to prevent it getting damaged and the other one helped with the lifting, too. The one with the withered arm brought the tin basin with the smoker and held it close to help with the smoke. The shamaness had her eyes closed, her face distorted, she was snarling and clapping her teeth together, breathing heavily in and out. They gave her the drum and she began to drum, this seemed to soothe her somewhat. (The entire trance scene lasted exactly one minute!) They took the crown off her head, she began a new tune which Batu sang along with her – by this time they had made the sick girl kneel in front of her, facing the altar. Her mother also knelt by her and then they called the father, too, who also came to kneel down. (Naturally, the video tape was bound to end at this dramatic moment of the ritual.) We had to admit that it was all very impressive and, however short, it was a shaking experience – particularly for those actually in trouble, but also for the external onlooker!



Plate 44.

In the meantime they gave the shamaness a drink from a small cup – first she seemed to drink milk directly after the trance but the second time her drink was vodka. The helper Batu was holding the woman's belt and seemed to translate the words of the song to the family who were kneeling there on the stone floor, with tears running down their faces. The mother and the daughter were equally touched and the father too, who, similarly to the others, bowed right to the ground in front of the shamaness. Sichingua sings on in a tearful sort of voice and the helpers seem to be giving signals of approval. The poor young woman just kept crying and nodding. Sichingua is crying and carries on singing at the same time and the family are also crying and looking on. The mother lifts her hands, folded in prayer, to her forehead and bows to the ground.

After just under seven minutes of singing mingled with crying the shamaness suddenly threw her drum away and threw herself back, rigid. It was not for no reason that her husband and helper stood behind her, she kept jumping up, they had a job putting the stool under her. The other man helped, too. Sichingua did not open her eyes during practically the entire rite and that was the way she sang! The other male helper (the Evenki woman's helper) shook the lower wings of the shamaness' cloak from time to time – this part is heavily laden with rattles.

Sichingua is panting, crying and still singing, the girl and the mother are looking scared, listening to the song and the slow drumming. Batu is talking all the time, translating and approving. At the end of one of the verses of the song, when Sichingua said something with great anger, the helper shook the bottom of the cloak powerfully, thus attempting to resolve the tension. (This song, after the trance, lasted another six or seven minutes but seems a lot longer. I can imagine how dramatic this must have seemed in the old days when it was done in the evening by firelight – it was dramatic enough as it was, done in the morning.)



Plate 45.

The song of the shamaness is almost sobbing, they keep wiping her tears and the sweat off her forehead, Batu keeps translating, standing behind her. The family is completely under the impression of the events, kneeling and bowing, a young female member of the family is recording the whole thing with a large tape recorder in her hands – I was told that this was the phase when the shamaness gave the family all the advice and commands as to what had to be done. The song had been going on for about fifteen minutes when suddenly the telephone rang in the background. This did not confuse the shamaness although she did hold a longish break.

They called in one of the young male members of the family to join in and kneel down to listen to the song. The song had been going on for almost thirty minutes (with eyes closed all the time!) when Sichingua fell into a trance for the third time. Then, when they sat her down again, she gave huge heaving burps as though she was about to vomit. She put her head on one side, they sat her down in a corner totally faint. She leaned against the wall in utter exhaustion and they gave her water to drink.

At this stage the Evenki shamaness started to drum, in full ornamental costume, with her young male helper standing behind and holding her belt. She had hardly been singing a minute when she started throwing herself around, first throwing herself back (these wild spasms went on for about 20 seconds!) and then went rigid. The helpers put the stool under her and sat her down. Her eyes were also closed the whole time – when they gave the horse-headed sticks into her hands, which were clasp like in a cramp, they had to force her fingers open and place them on to the stick. She was quite evidently not conscious, for they took the stick out from her hands and gave her the bells that were at the bottom of the costume which she began to shake. Her eyes were still closed and she kept on singing – the others sang along with her. In the background Sichingua sat leaning against the wall totally exhausted. She was shaking her little bells and saying something in a reciting voice that the others heard with approval (at least this is what

their intonation says). The members of the household listen to her again, on their knees, and give a full drinking cup to the ailing daughter and it is she who gives the drink, presumably something strong, to the Evenki shamaness. (I noticed that the shamans are not allowed to touch the drinking vessel. At any rate it is not easy to drink this way as they have to use their lips to hold a small semi-circular china dish.)

Silpaa, the Evenki shamaness rose from her chair after a few minutes and, holding both sticks, the horse-headed sticks painted red, in her right hand, kept shaking the sticks while bowing down deeply. She was evidently not quite back to a normal state of consciousness yet. In the corner Sichingua, probably upon seeing this, began a strong and fast drumming. Silpa sat down on a chair but a third young woman, wearing blue Mongolian dress and, similarly to the others, a green silk belt around her waist, stood between the two shamanesses and the quick drumming was actually for her. Although she was quite tall, the chief shamaness lifted her drum high and drummed at the head of the young woman with her eyes closed. This woman is also the student and assistant of the Daur shamaness – she stood there with her eyes closed, Batu behind her holding her belt. The girl started shaking her head to the sound of the drumming and came into a trance quite quickly, in barely half a minute. (It is almost incredible that this is possible in so short a time!) At this time she started singing, then jumping, the man held her tight by her belt. She threw herself back, in fact became quite stiff – the helpers (the woman with the withered arm and another who served through the entire ritual, one with a red scarf) sang, then brought in the smoker and forced the horse-headed sticks into the woman's hand, then sat her down. The young woman leaned forward in a spasmodic fashion but when she lifted her head you could see that she was crying, sobbing – she could not speak. She gritted her teeth, kept her eyes tight shut too, and just kept on sobbing loudly and painfully. In the meantime the drumming went on. Sichingua stood over her, drumming, she seemed to be crying, too, then she went on to drum more softly, then more powerfully, but neither of them soothed the painful sobs. The others sang along, but the crying did not become abated, so they started shaking the sticks in the woman's hands. They put the smoker at her feet then the Daur woman put her drum on her lap to calm her down. (This woman seemed to have come to join the others in practicing trance, I cannot think of anything else.)

After this stage Sichingua went to stand in front of the altar in her full outfit, crown on her head, began drumming once more and after a few verses those present began to shout hurray, hurray, hurray and, holding their hands parallelly, moved them in a circle in front of their bodies. They repeated the call Hurray seven times over, the shaman always being first to call it, as the last word of the verse. It was very clearly evident all along that she is the leader of the ceremony but it was also clear how the helpers acted in accord with her and how they helped move around those present to make sure they behaved appropriately.

In the meantime the Evenki shamaness had also put on her crown and, standing side by side, turning toward the altar, they started singing the song with the good strong rhythm. The master of the house tied a long blue *hadag* to one horn of each shamaness's crown. (This is when it would be good to have two cameras, then we could see more clearly what actually happens.) The two helpers stand behind the shamans' back, in their right hand they hold, clasped together, the two horse-headed sticks each. The song and the drumming lasted just under seven minutes – then the Daur shamaness stuck the drumstick behind the leather straps by which she held the drum, then, holding the drum in both hands knocked it against her knees, starting on the left hand side and then progressing towards the right. Then she moved on upwards like this, inching her way up

knocking her thighs, then finished on the large mirror over her stomach. Then she moved downward again, then up again and after the third round declared the ceremony finished, with this gesture. Batu stood in front of her straight away, took off her crown and the other man started to unbutton the collar and then the two men together took the heavy cloak off her. Then they folded it up but first they carefully smoked it. Indeed, the hair of the shamaness was very frazzled and sweaty.

The Evenki woman knocked the drum against her person in the same way after she finished drumming – she did everything the same way as the other shamaness but more briefly. They smoked her, too, the lady with the withered hand carried the smoker around. The Evenki shamaness circled herself once more with the two horse-headed sticks so that after each circle she put the sticks in her right hand and leaning on them bowed in the direction of the altar or acted as though she wanted to kneel in front of it although that never actually happened. Eventually, they took her cloak off, too, amid rattles and ringing noises. The smoke just grew and grew, someone was always coughing in the background.

The people of the house including the girl for whose sake all these shaman bells had tolled stood quietly by the door, almost confused as to why the ritual had ended so abruptly. It was just past one o'clock when it ended.

Trance – The Thing that is not or the Thing that is Needed

In the last few years a debate emerged regarding the importance of trance or ecstasy or even its mere existence within shamanism. The question partly emerged because the title of Mircea Eliade's book quite provocatively states that ecstasy (in other words trance) is the determining element of the group of cultural phenomena which we term shamanism (ELIADE 1974). The French original was published in 1951 and the Hungarian translation, eventually, in 2001.) This claim was criticised by Roberte Hamayon, professor of the Sorbonne, in 1993 at the shamanism conference held in Budapest. Her point of departure was that trance and ecstasy were indefinable concepts 'irrelevant to anthropological analysis' (HAMAYON 1993:4, 6, 18.) and therefore it was time to forget this methodologically empty category. The French researcher's attitude is partly understandable as her own field experiences in Siberia and Mongolia from the seventies gave her this conviction – as this was the time when trance had almost entirely disappeared from shamanic ritual and was thus not at all important. (I must note that my own experiences from the 80's and 90's also led to forming a similar opinion. The very short phases of an altered state of consciousness, which did not even appear particularly deep led me to consider this element of the shamanic tradition a symbolic element.) Even apart from this, what Hamayon considered the most important element of the shamanic rite was the act of symbolic exchange (HAMAYON 1990) whereby, in return for the prey they had hunted, the shaman must marry the protective spirit of the game they had killed.

The model of shamanism constructed from elements of French rationalism fits the action of hunting pragmatically and symbolically, it is less applicable, however, in the case of healing. The French professor considers the ritual of shamans a collective action whereby the shaman wishes to exert influence through his activity upon the world surrounding him or them. In this model we see the functioning of a coherent symbolic system in which shamanism is not really a religion but a socially controlled method for experiencing the spiritual (HAMAYON 1998:184–185).

However convincing we may find Hamayon's reasoning, what I saw in January 2003 has proved completely that trance (at least in this particular cultures) is not an element that the Daur shamans can forget or do without. By talking to shamans I found out that trance was necessary in order to communicate with the spirits in the interest of the patient during the time of the altered state of mind. The trance indicates to the participants that the spirit helpers have indeed appeared and there is hope for recovery. By the shaman contacting the spirits the gates are opened to the spiritual experience and this experiences is necessary (for the sake of belief) both for the shaman and for the patient.

The fact that the Daur shamaness went into a trance three times means that she wanted to secure a positive result (this is true whether the trance was symbolic or real but her tortured face certainly seemed to indicate the former). As the local informants told me, as the appearance of the spirits, the trance indicates that on the level of ritual communication something has taken place. It is doubtless that this is all that the two students invited by the chief shaman and their trances were meant to confirm. It was through the loss of consciousness and the spasmodic body language that the shamaness was indicating that she had entered contact with the spirits. Successful communication, in its turn, was represented by the advice, commands and recommendations announced in song.

I would not claim that there were no theatrical elements in the trance of the Daur shamaness and her two students but after the clearly visible spasms of trance, recorded on video, we can no longer deny the existence of these ritual behaviours. In their position of cultural isolation, the Evenkis and Daurs living in China have retained phenomena of archaic shamanism which no longer exist in other places.



SHAMANIC NARRATIVES AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF MANKIND

15

The Shaman's Functions

One of the most important characteristics of shamanism is that shamans always offer their power and skill to the service of some social mission. What are the main tasks and functions that the shamans fulfilled? The role of the shaman in cultures of different types varied widely and it is only natural that a shaman who was a local tribal leader in a small hunting-fishing community had a totally different social value than the court chief shaman of the great nomadic empires.

The following is a brief list of the Eurasian shaman's main roles and activities: 1. the spiritual leader (guard of the ethnic consciousness); 2. a sacrificial 'priest'; 3. psychopomp 'guide of the soul'; 4. the knower of fortunes; 5. healer; 6. poet, singer of songs, narrator of shamanic legends and myths, and 7. the main actor of the shamanic drama.

The so-called poetic aspects of shamans' songs have been analysed in many interesting papers and books (HAJDÚ 1978, SIMONCSICS 1978, SIIKALA–HOPPÁL 1992:68–86). Nobody would deny that a strong affinity exists between shamanic performance and the ritualized narration of myth (legend or a heroic epic) by singers of traditional oral narratives. Here the poetic aspect of shamanic narratives is understood as least at two levels: stylistic and functional.

As Romano Mastromattei characterized shamanic texts by their ecstatic quality, claiming that "a text becomes shamanic primarily *qua* recited in an ecstatic context" (MASTROMATTEI 1978:7). Since there are only very few studies on the poetics of shaman songs, this would be an urgent task for future research – not only the collection of shamanic texts, but also a detailed analysis of phonetic and semantic levels would seem to be important, given active-alert hypnosis as a model of ecstasy. Similarly, glossolalia can be seen as the audible (phonetic) expression of the neuropsychological trance process (GOODMAN 1972).

The oral ecstatic performance and collective singing were important features of the pre-ecstatic phase of the shamanic seance. In symbolic healings performed by the shaman, magic incantations were used throughout Eurasia (cf. *cantatio* 'singing', Latin

cantio = song). The shaman mediated between illness and health with the help of songs. Here symbolic, poetic and healing functions are intertwined. In 1968, for example, a therapeutic seance in Northern Afghanistan was performed by a *baxsi* or shaman with the aid of *qobuz* or horsehair fiddle and singing (CENTLIVRES et alii 1971:160).

There are data suggesting that the shaman and the singer of oral tradition (i.e., the poet of non-literate societies) were the same person. A. T. Hatto chose 'Shamanism and Epic Poetry in Northern Asia' for his Foundation Day lecture topic, in which he noted that heroic epics were sung by shamans among the Voguls and Ostyaks. Narration was normally in the first person, and the 'voice' was that of the hero. There is an 'inner style' of shamanic epic narration among the Ob-Ugrians, and the roles of shaman and bard once overlapped among the Samoyeds as well (HATTO 1970:7-9). Among the Sakha and the Buryats shamans were the principal guardians of the rich heroic oral tradition (OINAS ed. 1978).

Reference should be made here to V. V. Ivanov's proposal for a new etymology of the word 'shaman', he mentioned to me that, there is a Sanskrit word *saman* 'song'. This implies that the shaman is literally the person who sings the song to cure, to conjure, to heal. He is not simply an 'ascetic', but also a wise man and poet. One of the main roles of oral-traditional poetry in culture is to create a bridge between past and present. This again is a form of symbolic mediation with the aim of maintaining group identity by means of oral tradition. The ailing identity consciousness of a given society, or an ethnic minority, is nurtured by the poet-shamans through repeated ecstatic, or quasi-ecstatic oral performances. In modern contemporary poetry, examples could be found to label some modern poets as a continuation or extension of shamanic traditions – employing songs as a psycho-social healing method even today.

Mythic Narratives of Shamanism

The local variants of shamanism is constituted by the narrative tradition which the shaman must learn during the time of his or her initiation. There texts can be seen as the first group of shamanic narratives. "A shamanistic rite is a social action. Shamans perform their rites in order to satisfy the requests of the people in their society; therefore, their actions must be understandable to their people. Thus, shamans must explain their actions, and for this reason verbal performance represents an important element of their ceremonies." (BASILOV 1994:273) The belief system relating to shamanism contains a few general, widespread features, even though the particular cultures show great variation. In shamanic cosmology the universe is of a tripartite structure. It is divided into an upper world, a middle world and an underworld. This triple structure also appears on the depictions of shamans' drums. Both the upper and the underworld, the worlds of the spirits, are divided into further strata, whose number is three, seven or nine depending on the tradition of the belief system. The middle world is the habitat of man, in the middle of which, on the navel of the earth, there stands an enormous tree, a pillar that rises to the sky, a world pillar or a world tree. This vertical axis (which can also be a large river as in the folklore of the Ket people) connects the different worlds. Transport between the worlds is possible through the hole that opens at the North Star (as the mythic traditions of the Chukchee people reveal). The entire starry sky, in other words the upper world, was imagined as a vast tent and the support of this tent was the cosmic pillar which is identified with the Milky Way. In shamanic mythology this pillar or hill or tree that reached the sky became transformed into a shaman tree, it was on this that the shaman travelled up and down during his or her ecstatic journeys.

The other great area of shamanic belief that an initiated shaman must be familiar with is the system of gods and the groups of various spiritual creatures that populate the world. Turkic and Mongolian peoples believe in an supreme sky god (among the Altaians it is called *Ülgen*) who is a benevolent, helpful deity with seven sons and nine daughters. The ruler of the underworld (among the Altaic Kizhis this is *Erlik Khan*) is a malevolent deity who sends trouble and disease to people.

In the belief system of shamanism various spirits play a far more important part than gods. They play an important part in two cases: at the initiation of the shaman and during the visionary experience undergone at ceremonies in an unconscious state. The prospective shaman must meet his or her animal shaped helping spirit before initiation. There can be a number of these, e.g. a wolf, a bear, a raven or a sea gull can appear to the shaman, but among the Ob Ugrians this spirit can assume the form of seven animals. This spirit assists the candidate through the numerous trials and sufferings of the initiation ceremonies. Its visitation, which often only happens in a dream or a simple hallucination, means that the spirits have truly chosen the candidate for the mission of shaman.

The mediation of the spirits of the shaman ancestors is of decisive significance in the selection of the potential shaman. This is even characteristic among the Buryat where the shaman's vocation is passed on through inheritance within the clan. Among the nomadic Evenki who live beyond the Baykal Lake, the spirit of the dead shaman calls and invites the chosen person to follow the dead forerunner and learn the skills of shamanship. The spirit of the shamanic ancestor stays with the shaman through the further course of his or her life as an actual spirit helper (HOPPÁL 2000:10).

There are some inherited spirits which not only help the shaman but also maintain an erotic relationship with their protégé (see the *ayami* among the Nanais). The notion of the helping spirits is a significant element of shamanic narration, especially in mythology since the helping spirit accompanies the shaman on his or her journey to the other world. This is one of the distinguishing marks of Eurasian shamanism.

Shamanic Narratives Told by Shamans

In 1996, during my fieldwork in Siberia, I had the chance to interview Buryat shamans, both men and women. They were proud to tell me the histories of their family legends about shamanic capabilities. These stories are typical shamanic narratives told by shamans.

"In my dynasty there were many shamans purely on the maternal line, several dozen generations, who all came from a shamanic dynasty. All the shamans in our dynasty were very powerful. Their relics are kept in the Yakutsk museum now. But I believe that I mustn't take advantage of the fact that they once belonged to my ancestors. They are now the property of the people. Our dynasty is one of powerful shamans on the paternal line as well.

We are called Abze. My father and mother came from the same dynasty. Our gods go about on horseback, on blue horses, heavenly blue horses. There is a beautiful long legend about the way in which our dynasty always helps the people who belong to it. In times of war they always appear straight away on their horses to save their sons who are in trouble because they never abandon their own blood. They always help people who turn to them with a pure heart.

The dynasty of darhats is a dynasty of blacksmiths. There are 77 blacksmiths. This is a very extended dynasty, they know all about magic and they work with fire. According to our legends the new moon is seen on the first day by the river fish nalim, on the second day it is seen by the dog and on the third day people from the Abze dynasty can pray to it. That is my maternal and paternal dynasty. On the fifth day you can pray with the darhat. On the

fifth day my heavenly patrons, the patrons of the Abze's descend to earth and the blacksmiths from my dynasty shows their heavenly horses. That also shows how close our contact is with the heavenly beings. Of course this is a very beautiful legend and I only told you very briefly what it is about. My husband's ancestors on the maternal line were also great shamans and healers. They could perform rituals in honour of the spirits of the ancestors – rituals for the dynasty. There are shamans who... there are nine degrees altogether but I must not talk about this of course ... there are shamans who can bring prosperity to their dynasty and family and tell the future. There are shamans who can come in contact with the heavenly beings." (STEPANOVA in: HOPPÁL 2000a:85–88)

Let me quote here a story narrated by a young Buryat shaman, who is very conscious about his family legends concerning his shamanic background.

"There have been shamans in our dynasty both on the maternal and the paternal line. But there were more on the paternal line. In our district the famous shamans erected horse posts – five posts to tie horses to among the mountains. There are these five horse posts and each of them has its own meaning, signifying when is erected, for whom and by which shaman. and these five horse posts have a further sacred significance, too – they represent the five braches of the tribe. On the basis of these horse posts we can also talk about the traditions of the tribe, of tribal history.

My grandfather was a darhan and so was my great grandfather – this means blacksmith. One of his great uncles within the dynasty was a white shaman and therefore they dressed him all in white when he was dying – in a white costume made of deer skin and he was buried on a white horse. His bell was placed next to him. The white horse was taken on the taiga, since that is the horse of the dynasty, and the dynasty has a sacred grove there. And they let the horse go when I was still a child, I went to this grove to burn my grandfather. Shamans were burned and so was my grandfather. That is also how my grandfather's mother was burned – I was there. Of course, it was not me doing the burning but the dynasty – I was just present at these rituals. There was a very thick tree, with a door in its trunk. If you open the trunk, you will still find the bones inside a cavity. But the tree is alive, growing new branches and in its foliage, on the branches, there are lots of bank notes, old money – I saw them myself in 1961. In the Soviet times the Soviet roubles were on top, beneath them were 5 kopek coins from the Tsar's times – little gold coins, with holes made in the middle. Somehow that really got stuck in my memories." (HAGDAEV – in: HOPPÁL 2000a:80).

The third personal history was told by a well educated Buryat woman who quite unexpectedly realized that she got a shamanic fate, and she got ill which interpreted as shamanic illness. At that time she was in her early forties.

"I come from a shaman dynasty, from the Isle of Olhon. My maternal grandmother left that island just over a hundred years ago. In the olden days several branches of our dynasty migrated through the Barguzin valley to the mountains of Kurumkan and they got as far as the Mongolian border. There are about a hundred families surviving of this dynasty today. During the years, of course, they had become assimilated to the Buryats, the Horinsk Buryats. When I was born, a prediction was instantly made that, coming from a dynasty of shamans, I, too, would become a shaman. The Buryats say the child was born with a sign, that is, he or she has a "third eye" – indeed, there is a photograph of me in which it seems as though the sun was shining in the centre between my two eyes. People who don't understand say that there is something wrong with the photograph. In fact this was a complete accident, there were two photographs taken because photos don't always work out. Later, when I had begun to talk, at about the age of two (I talked late) there were a lot of things I predicted, things that were in wait for people, things that were going to happen. Because my father worked for the KGB, my mother performed a prescribed rite on me in order to keep my capabilities hidden. This sort of rite could be carried out by chief

shamans. When I was never allowed to reveal this sort of thing. My grandmother was always on the alert. She would not let me come in contact with people and made sure that my capabilities remained hidden. (M. H.: What is the Buryat name for these capabilities?) The shamanic capability is called utha, and tündökhte is the name of the power that enables you to see and feel and see into the future and to heal and to exhort evil and to do good deeds. The shaman can see dreams – I have often flown in my dreams, I have seen a lot of places. I must have been about twelve when I already knew that I would have two children. For seven years now I have known the sort of things that were going to happen here on the bank of the Baykal. I also knew what sort of people I was going to come in contact with...

The first time I performed a rite was last year. Before that I was taken seriously ill – this is what is called shaman's sickness round here. But since I had kept my powers hidden until I was 24, I willingly admit to you that I had never thought I would actually become a shaman. Nobody had foretold it except my grandmother who had been long dead by this time. Our dynasty had died out almost entirely, perhaps that is why I cannot let the shamanic faith perish. When I was so seriously sick, that was about a year ago, I went to see the doctor but none of the doctors knew what the disease was that was tormenting me so. They set up all sorts of diagnoses but finally I was forced to seek the help of the shamans.

... I was very anxious, very worried about the responsibility, to take on me the knowledge of the shamans and to heal and to work with people's lives and destinies. I kept putting it off, I was very reluctant to assume the knowledge of the shamans but finally I was forced to go and see a shaman who received me and performed two rites on me! In other words he gave back to me what had been kept secret from me and what I myself had also repressed. During these two rituals he revealed all this to me through the way he carried out the rituals, the shamanic rites, the sacrifice and the prescribed prayer. After this point I began to seek shamans myself and a few months later the rite of initiation was carried out on me. My master, or let us call him my grandfather (in Buryat he would be called bata), who is now 82, had taken over the shaman's knowledge from one of my relatives." (TSIBENOVA – in: HOPPÁL 2000a:72).

All these stories contains important details concerning the origin of their shamanic power. The shamans' personal histories validate their place within the community. Shamanic worldview found expression not only in rituals, but also in narrative folklore (van DEUSEN 1997). During their seances, Siberian shamans made journeys in the under world, the upper world, and the middle world, populated by people. The shamans told their listeners of their impressions and actions. It might be said that shamans created worlds through words. However, shamanic narrative poetry has not yet been investigated as an important part of oral folklore. These were the second type of shamanic narratives.

Shamanic Song (*algish*) as Speech Act

Mongush Borakhovich Kenin-Lopsan is a born collector of shamanic narratives in Tuva. His forebears in the extended family were shepherds, smiths, renowned singers and shamans. His maternal grandmother, Kuular Khandizhap was a famous shamaness who was imprisoned on false charges under Stalin and died in prison.

Kenin-Lopsan eventually has become a wellknown writer in his county. His first novel appeared in 1965 and was followed by some fifty volumes of poems, ballads, short stories, novels and translation (from Russian literature) and later he became a devote collector of Tuvan folklore, especially shamanic songs and narratives. Some years ago he published a book of his collection in which he translated the best, most interesting and poetic shamanic songs (KENIN-LOPSAN 1977). Here we quote some translated texts, as

good examples of typical shamanic narratives sung by the shamans during their ceremonies as an important part of the ritual conducted by them.

We have used the expression “Shamanic Song” in the title of Kenin-Lopsan’s book rather than “hymn” as originally intended since these are songs that are actually sung and for the most part the whole ritual context as a part of healing, cleansing and blessing. In the same way, although Kenin-Lopsan uses the term “myth” for the texts forming the second part of his book according to our concepts they are belief stories, belief legends or memorates which the collector noted down in writing on the spot or later from memory since he did not have a tape-recorder. With the help of the text one can reconstruct the shamanic model of the world, or world view and mythic pantheon, the helping spirits and the world of rituals. We can trace the respect for nature and animism arising from the shamans’ world view. As the elderly scholar put it in a conversation in 1996: “The shamanic myths are our philosophy. The shamanic hymns (*algyshtar*) are our poetry. The shamanic rites give the frame and laws for the Tuvan way of life. The shamanic tradition is for us what the university is for the French.” He also stressed several times that the survival of the Tuvan language is also due to a large extent to the poetic tradition preserved in the *algysht*. This is why Kenin-Lopsan’s collection is of such great significance, since it serves to maintain the collective memory of his people.

The *algysht* is a song, or prayer, invocation, blessing, request, appeal to the spirits – I use all these European concepts only tentatively since none of them corresponds precisely to the type of text sung and recited by the Tuva shamans. It is, however, certain that the *algysht* is a kind of sacral communication, a “speech act” (see AUSTIN 1962, SEARLE 1969) and specifically an illocutionary performative act. The characteristic of such an act is that it is not a declaration or communication of something but an action performed through speech. Research has not paid adequate attention to this modality aspect of the shamanic songs (prayer, blessing, spell).

Algysht of a Shaman Devoted Himself

*You have not drank buk and milk.
You have not drank Burgan and milk.
What place have you come to?
What place are you walking around?
One should not buy things from the people.
One should not ask for things from the people
Having burned the thing called artysh.
Probably I am shaman who starts to shamanize.
With the power of shamanic roots
Probably I am a shaman who starts to shamanize.
So having shamanized
I am probably a shaman who finishes shamanizing.
(KENIN-LOPSAN 1997:10)*

Algysht of a Shaman Who Prays to the Moon and the Sun

*At Moonrise, at Sunrise,
In the beginning of our day, –
I sprinkle my sacred liquid which has become the sea,
I have laid my sang which has become my taiga.
The Master-spirits of the Oasis having become Time,
You Master-spirits of the steep Oasis having become the Rock!
The one who is with orba, he has the only fate,
The path of the Universe is the only one.*

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*The one with the drum has only one bottom,
The numerous stars have just one parth.*
(KENIN-LOPSAN 1997:12)

How a Shaman Concludes His Ritual

*Let us finish our shamanizing.
Let us cross the nearest pass.
Let us finish the shamanizing and go home.
Let us cross the low pass.
The sun has risen.
The poor titmouse has started to sing.
Let us depart and go home.
Let us get revived and thrive.*
(KENIN-LOPSAN 1997:12)

Algyshtar of Shamaness Kyrgysd Kurgak Asking for Happiness

*Even from the loud noise of my drum
The Skies will thunder, will shake.
Jumping when I shamanize,
I am like strong windy storm in a rage.
I can even subdue the Sky
I am a very strong shaman
You are Mistress of the Universe
The Mistress of the Universe is telling me.
Upon unruly people
I can bring down lightning
Upon greedy persons, liars, scoundrels
I can swell up their stomachs.
Even forest taiga places
I am a shaman who knows.
Even the beginnings of rivers, waters
I can shamanize, I can make rituals.
Getting my power from the original source,
For living freely in peace
I was destined to be born in a light land,
I was born in a light land.
When I shamanize wearing my clothes –
They enjoy watching me, being edeared to me.
Where is the one who is stronger than I?
After looking at me, they start to pray.*
(KENIN-LOPSAN 1977:11)

The *algyshtar* presented above were collected between the 1950s–1990s. During my visits to Tuva I found shamans actively using *algyshtar* for introducing themselves, describing their spirit helpers, praising their shamanic paraphenelia, describing their journey to non-ordinary reality, describing the illness or problem of the patient. What I observed was when the shaman was engaged in something more than divination with stones (*khiivanak*), they used song – chanted, sung (with obvious melody) and sounds from nature. The richness, variety of these songs varied greatly. Both elderly and young shamans had prolonged singing, lasting over fifteen minutes. Phrases, both melodic and rhythmic, were often repeated with only the words changing. One thirty-eight years old female shaman in Kyzyl sang for almost twenty minutes using a structured melody, with repeated melodic phrases.

Shamanic Techniques in Sacred Narration

In Siberian myths, especially in those of the Buryats, shamanism and human deaths are intimately associated in their very origins. The shaman as a mediator is placed at those extremely critical points where the human and suprahuman spheres do indeed overlap. The shaman's activity covers the liminal spheres of the world which are dangerous for ordinary human beings and for shamans as well. His or her mediating activity relies on beliefs in symbolically taking all the difficulties (pain, sickness, responsibility of decision-making, etc.) upon himself or herself. All these observations and data truly stress the utmost significance of the symbolic aspects of the mediation process. Most recent publications agree that this mediation is a central part of shamanistic ideology. Here shamanism as an 'ideology' is understood not as a religion, but rather as a special system of beliefs centred around symbolic meditation. Anna-Leena Siikala however paid little attention to the symbolic aspect of shamanism, but rightly stated that:

"The shaman's function as mediator between the normal and the supranormal worlds is based on systems of belief according to which difficulties threatening the even pace of life are caused by representatives of the spirit world, and they can be eliminated with the help of benevolent spirits." (SIKALA 1978:319)

In Siikala's opinion the main task of the shaman is to create a direct and reciprocal state of communication aimed at the spirit world, and the very structure of the shamanic seance reflects this communication.

As a mediator, the shaman is the restorer of balance. In other words, he maintains a shamanic equilibrium of power relations within his community and the outside worlds. Those who have access to the channels of communication have more power within their community. The shaman as a mediator is a specialist in ritual communication (see SATHER 2003).

The sacred-kind of communication is a multichannel process, which makes the whole process a very effective one. Therefore shamans use different media during their seances. There are common features of shamanic rituals such as dancing with special gestures, drumming (or using other instruments which make noise), chanting special text (incantations, prayers, invocations). Shamans use a special language different from the common tongue during seances (GRAČEVA 1984). For example in Himalayan shamanic practices, among the Magar shamans, one may distinguish between several kinds of shamanic speech or discourse, applied during the curative séances. "The first and most prominent kind of shamanic speech consist of narrative origin myths in metric verse, recited in the course of a séance by the leading shaman and repeated line after line by a pupil or younger shaman, who, by echoing his master's textual sequences, will learn by repetition the entire repertoire over time. These recitals are formal constructs of a high artistic skill, rich in poetic techniques concerning metre, play of words, alliteration, rhyme, repetition and an all pertaining parallelism." (OPPITZ 1998:139) The second kind of shamanic speech is a chant which does not tell stories but it is a countless enumeration of geographical names and topographical features. These recitals are used during shamanic journeys.

The next kind of language employed mantric formulae, these are magical pronouncements, which give transcendental orders to spirits. Their proper use is a secret affair. An other kind of shamanic speech is used during divination in a form of a dialogue with the supernatural. The fifth form of speech is a language used to

communicate with the auxiliaries. The helping spirits in animal shape of a shaman speak a kind of animal language. This is the tongue of ecstasy (or trance). There is a distinction between male and female type of cursing vocabulary (with full of four letter words and with sexual references). As Michael Oppitz simply put is “the shaman may, in the course of his/her rituals, performs absolutely normal colloquial speech act” (OPPITZ 1998:141).

Let us here consider this an important point of departure since speech acts in a ritual context are quite common phenomena in shamanic and other kinds of sacred communication. Actually speech acts are not conveying messages but they are showing the performative power language, power of words. They do not inform but they do things as name, persuade, promise, declare and curse.

According to the theory of speech acts the performative speech acts (see FINNEGAN 1969) can not be true or false but only successful or not successful. This means that the shamanic prayers, incantations, blessings, or course are always effective or useful (see GILL 1981 on Navajo sacred words). In the context of shamanic performances there is a “secret language” (MARAZZI 1984) which is used by the shamans (and their helpers) only. So, the language of songs, chants, prayers have a kind of “invocatory” character (see SIIKALA 1992: 100, in: SIIKALA–HOPPÁL 1992).

In shamanic narratives the use of language one may find a great number of repetitions. Those ritual repetitions makes even more effective, and more easy to remember the melodic-phonetic formulas and meaningful textual elements. At this point, one may say that the shamanic technique of communication is a good model for effective communication. It means that shamans used a very archaic type of communication, which is an archetype of sacred effectiveness.

Narrative Folklore and the UNESCO

The foundation of the European Folklore Institute was based on a UNESCO resolution and on the accepted *Recommendation...* At the same time it came about because of a recognition on behalf of some of the heads of UNESCO influenced by anthropologists and folklorists that it is not enough to recognise castles, palaces and churches built of stone or bricks as part of the world’s valuable heritage but we must also protect the oral tradition, so much more vulnerable than stone, as well as the local traditions of small ethnic groups, together with any knowledge or acumen that they hold, as these constitute *folklore* in the truest and original sense of the word. The phrase *intangible culture* became the key term, and its retention and even dissemination became an officially recognised mission of the member states.

Within the process of elaborating the details of operation, UNESCO tried to assist preservation by launching new programmes. Thus in 1993 they started the programme Living Human Treasure which focuses mainly on individuals, on persons who carry the tradition and create folklore. (In Korea the local women shamans (*mudang*) for their life work received title as Living Human Treasures.)

The other UNESCO programme was advertised in 1998 as the Proclamation of ‘*Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.*’ This slightly complicated title covers an invitation for states to name and protect the most beautiful and valuable pieces of the world’s mental heritage. Japan made a generous offer to finance the programme and an international jury has already selected the first dozen and a half items of this section of the world heritage. This jury comprises poets and writers, politicians and princesses, Arab Sheiks and an African king, the representative of a poor and tiny state (Vanuatu) and a well-trained anthropologist, a folk singer from South

America as well as career diplomats and cultural policy makers - there are no proper folklore experts among them (except by accident). The UNESCO regularly summons its meetings (e.g. on the definition of folklore) and they discuss the meaning and sphere of use of the terms they most frequently use (such as traditional, popular, living, oral, intangible culture, intellectual property, cultural heritage). Even the same word has different meanings in different cultures, in different parts of the world and in different languages. To quote but one example, a participant of the Washington Conference, arriving from the Pacific region, declared, "The terminology 'folklore' which is true for many of our indigenous cultures is no tan acceptable term. Our culture is not 'folklore' but our sacred norms intertwined with our traditional way of life and where these norms set the legal, moral and cultural values of our traditional societies. They are our cultural identity." (BLAKE 2001:7)

The ground for this rejection is obviously cultural difference, or the even more deep-lying fact that in some places tradition belongs to the sacred order of things and in others to the profane. In fact, the definition of folklore in the 1989 Recommendation is open and acceptable: "Folklore (or traditional and popular culture) is the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts." (BLAKE 2001:9)

The UNESCO text goes on as follows:

"Eurocentric view of cultural heritage that has traditionally valued monuments and sites over the intangible values associated with them. Furthermore, the alliance of 'oral' with 'intangible' itself appears odd since oral heritage is, by definition, intangible. Given that 'intangible' is an extremely difficult concept to grasp and suggests a subject matter for protection that defies identifying legal measures for this, it is probably better avoided. A further drawback as a terminology is that it fails to encompass the significance of the social role of this heritage. Reference to its oral and traditional character, on the other hand, is sufficient to make clear that it includes these intangible elements. There was a proposal to include intangible heritage within the categories of protected heritage of the 1972 Convention that, although not eventually adopted, illustrates that this is a neglected aspect of cultural heritage. In view of the objections voiced to the use of the term 'folklore', there are strong arguments against the retention of the terminology 'traditional culture and folklore' used in the Recommendation. It is possible to formulate some other phraseology that employs the terms 'traditional', 'oral', 'popular and/or living' in some formulation to describe this cultural heritage. Those elements not incorporated into the actual terminology used can, of course, be brought out in the definition(s) given in the text. It is a central issue in the development of a new standard-setting instrument and one that deserves debate, especially since experts from different disciplines and backgrounds will have strong arguments in support of their favoured terminology. Although the terminology used can be greatly affected by the way in which it is defined for the purposes of the text, it remains a crucial question. A poor choice of terminology can confuse those interpreting the text and may give a false impression of its subject matter and even its aims. A phrase worth considering is 'oral and traditional cultural heritage'" since it encapsulates two fundamental aspects of this heritage while placing it within the wider body of cultural heritage law. For the purposes of this study, however, I have generally used 'intangible heritage' since that is the current term of art." (BLAKE 2001:9)

One may see that there is a strong theoretical orientation in the above text and a very pragmatic one, as well. This means that the inter-cultural dialogue results in the emergence of a kind of super-text the subject of which is folklore and the whole of

intangible culture. In other words, the text of shamanic narratives is of the possible forms of the intangible oral heritage of mankind (HOPPÁL 2002).

There is a remarkable phrase used in the definition of folklore, ‘tradition-based,’ which refers to the importance of local traditions. The sheer fact that a global organisation such as UNESCO pays attention to local fact is remarkable in itself. It can be no accident that a group of researchers (particularly in the Scandinavian countries) considers field-work based on dialogue one of the possible trends of development (VASENKARI 1999). The same must be true of theoretical interpretations where a dialogue of interpretations will characterise twenty-first century folklore studies (BLAAKILDE 1998:114).

Another important aspect of ‘tradition-based’ local societies is that they are able to use a few elements (or even one single element) of cultures as an ethnic symbol (SOIJANEN 1998, BALZER 1999). This can lend great importance even to a single text (e.g. *Kalevala*), a song, a gesture, a piece of clothing, a dance (*tango*, *chardash*), a dish (*gulyás*) or a figure (*shaman*) in the eyes of a nation. Any of them can become a national symbol because they can all serve the confirmation of identity (see BALZER 1999:204–211).

For the reasons described above, the observations of Anna-Leena Siikala made in her speech for the UNESCO conference in Finland, can be called significant:

“The traditions bound to crumbling institutions vanish, but in doing so they make room for new communities creating and preserving tradition. In multicultural communities traditions serve as a means of creating a distinct identity, of constructing and expressing the self of a person or a group. Ethnomimesis, the imitation of a former traditional culture, is a mark of the battle of survival of small minorities. Traditions unite displaced communities and create significant differences within the consolidated urban masses. Tradition processes in the present day world represent pursuits for identity formation in a world where economy, technology and information flows change the interconnections of local and global.” (SIKALA 1999:13)

The respect for local cultures means, at the same time, the upholding of cultural identity (BALZER 1999:204–211; HOPPÁL 1999:14). The most serious problem for the peaceful co-existence of various national or ethnic, or minority groups, apart from human rights, is the freedom to declare their collective cultural identity and the maintenance of the values inherent in local traditions.



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