

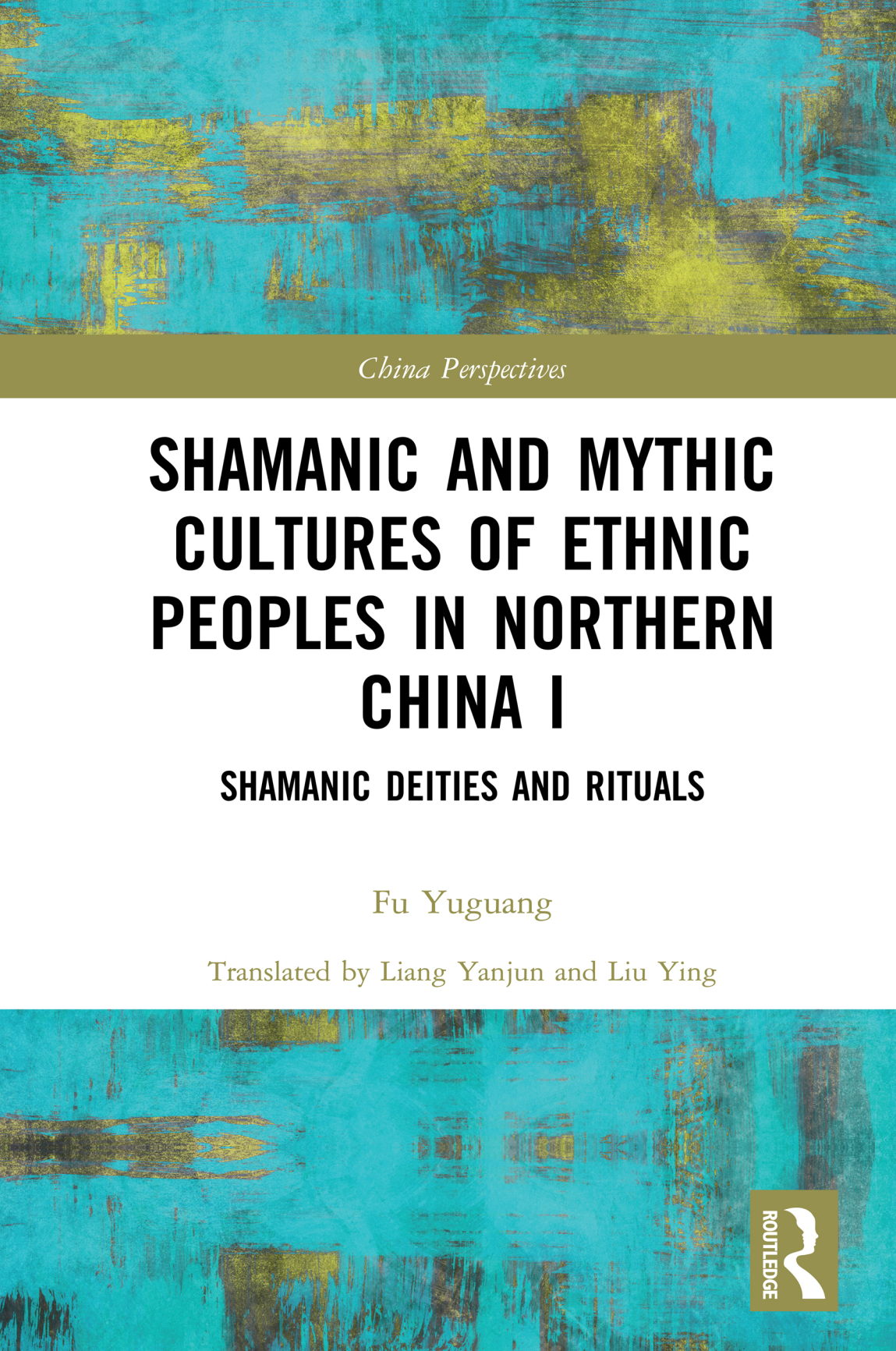


*China Perspectives*

# SHAMANIC AND MYTHIC CULTURES OF ETHNIC PEOPLES IN NORTHERN CHINA

Fu Yuguang





*China Perspectives*

# **SHAMANIC AND MYTHIC CULTURES OF ETHNIC PEOPLES IN NORTHERN CHINA I**

**SHAMANIC DEITIES AND RITUALS**

Fu Yuguang

Translated by Liang Yanjun and Liu Ying





# Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China I

On the basis of first-hand materials gathered through decades of field research and fleshed out with the author's insightful religious, cultural, and historical observations extending back to the Qing dynasty, ancient archaeological discoveries, and the legacy of Siberian peoples, this two-volume ethnological study investigates shamanic rituals, myths, and lore in northern China and explores the common ideology underlying the origins of the region's cultures.

Drawing from numerous oral myths, ancient documents, and archaeological findings, this first volume discusses the spiritual world of northern shamanism and investigates the various rituals, including ancestor worship, fertility, nature deities, blood sacrifice and rites, the worshiping of nature, and shrines. The book illuminates how these rituals and worships, animism, and ideas of the soul are imbedded in and interweave with the indigenous environment, culture, and history of the clans and people of northern China.

The book will be of great value to scholars of religion and to both anthropologists and ethnologists in the fields of shamanism studies, Northeast Asian folklore, and Manchu studies.

**Fu Yuguang**, a native Manchu scholar of shamanic and Manchu studies from the Jilin Institute for Ethnology, has been committed to ethnological and anthropological research on the myths, rituals, and cultures of Altaic peoples in northern China for over fifty years and has published many influential works.

## China Perspectives

The *China Perspectives* series focuses on translating and publishing works by leading Chinese scholars, writing about both global topics and China-related themes. It covers humanities & social sciences, education, media and psychology, as well as many interdisciplinary themes.

This is the first time any of these books have been published in English for international readers. The series aims to put forward a Chinese perspective, give insights into cutting-edge academic thinking in China, and inspire researchers globally.

To submit proposals, please contact the Taylor & Francis Publisher for China Publishing Programme, Lian Sun (Lian.Sun@informa.com).

### **Titles in history currently include:**

#### **The History of Chinese Feudal Society**

*Tung-tsu Chu*

#### **Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History I**

*Zeng Yeying*

#### **Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History II**

*Zeng Yeying*

#### **Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China I**

Shamanic Deities and Rituals

*Fu Yuguang*

#### **Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China II**

Shamanic Divination, Myths, and Idols

*Fu Yuguang*

For more information, please visit [www.routledge.com/China-Perspectives/book-series/CPH](http://www.routledge.com/China-Perspectives/book-series/CPH)



# **Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China I**

**Shamanic Deities and Rituals**

**Fu Yuguang**

**Translated by Liang Yanjun and Liu Ying**

**Revised by Daniel A. Kister**

The publication of this book is sponsored by Ministry of Education of PRC.

First published in English 2021

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2021 Fu Yuguang

The right of Fu Yuguang to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

English Version by permission of The Commercial Press.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-367-65412-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-13251-6 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman

by Apex CoVantage, LLC

# Contents

|                                              |         |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Author's preface and acknowledgements</i> | vi      |
| <i>Author's profile</i>                      | viii    |
| <i>Preface to the 1990 Chinese edition</i>   | xii     |
| <i>Introduction to the English edition</i>   | xiv     |
| <br>Introduction                             | <br>1   |
| 1 The spirit world of northern shamanism     | 6       |
| 2 Nature worship                             | 24      |
| 3 Ancestor and fertility worship             | 50      |
| 4 Blood sacrifice and fire rituals           | 62      |
| 5 Rituals for nature deities                 | 76      |
| 6 Tangse and jia rituals                     | 99      |
| <br><i>Bibliography</i>                      | <br>116 |
| <i>Index</i>                                 | 120     |



## Author's preface and acknowledgements

How time flies! For more than sixty years, I have been dedicated to rescuing, organizing, and studying the precious shamanic cultural legacy that has been passed down among the Altaic peoples over several thousand years. Thanks to the persistent and arduous efforts of like-minded scholars, Chinese ethnic studies and shamanic culture studies have reached out to the world. I have been fortunate to establish connections with many accomplished foreign scholars and academic societies of shamanic studies, which have helped expand my scholarly horizons, bolster my understanding, and nurture deeper insights into the study of Chinese ethnic peoples and shamanic culture. In the past few decades, some of my works and papers in these areas have been translated or introduced to academia in Korea, Japan, Russia, Finland, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States; and several scholars have written to learn more about obscure points of folk customs and phenomena and have expressed hopes of reading original works in this area. With the help of Professor Daniel A. Kister, Professor Liang Yanjun (梁艳君), and Liang Yanjun's fellow translators Wu Chunxiao (吴春晓) and Liu Ying (刘莹, Dalian Polytechnic University), my first Chinese work, *Shamanism and Mythology* (萨满教与神话), published in 1990, has now been translated into English, under the title *Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China*. It is my honour, moreover, to have had respected scholar and my good friend Mihály Hoppál take an interest in my work and encourage the publication of this work in English.

I am proficient in the almost extinct Manchu language because I grew up in a family in which the elders spoke Manchu. In 1980, I was assigned to a provincial research unit and threw myself into exploring, rescuing, and investigating the ethnic cultural heritage and traditional folk customs of the Manchu and other peoples of the endangered Altaic language family. I love Manchu history and culture so much so that I easily fitted in with ethnic groups. For more than ten years, I lived in ethnic villages, eating, working, singing, and dancing with the people, and many respected male and female shamans became my bosom friends. I learned to sing sacred chants, seek out holy objects of wood and stone in the mountains, make spirit idols, and beat the drum for sacrificial events. All this impressed me and moved me to collect my findings and publish *Shamanism and Myth*. At that time, shamanism was seen as a backwards superstition and so was banned by the

government, but this book took a fresh, positive approach. Bringing to public attention the mystique of northern shamanic culture, it described how shamans serve local people who have no access to modern medical treatment by using traditional herbs and practices to treat disease; it brought to light the time-honoured northern creation myth “War in Heaven” and the ancient traditions of inspired shamanic utterances and divination; it aimed to show that shamans are hardworking, trustworthy masters of clan survival, peace, and harmony.

Throughout the years, I have forged lasting friendships with elders from various ethnic peoples who share a strong belief in their shamanic culture. Now I am greatly indebted to the translators, who have spared no effort in working to make the customs, practices, and idioms of that culture easy for English speakers to the world to understand and appreciate. I think a poem by the famous Tang poet Wang Zi'an (王子安) best expresses my feelings: “A bosom friend afar brings distance near.”

Fu Yuguang  
October 2019  
Changchun

## Author's profile

Fu Yuguang (富育光) was born on May 4, 1933, into a Manchu family in Aihui County, present Heihe City, Heilongjiang Province, on the Amur River bordering with Russia. For over fifty years, he has done ethnological and cultural anthropological research and field work on Chinese peoples of the Altaic language family and the cultural heritage of shamanism as it has been passed down for generations among ethnic groups in northern China. He has dedicated his life to exploring, organizing, and translating ancient shamanic myths, rituals, divine oracles, taboos, spiritual healing methods, and the astronomy of the Manchu, Mongol, Oroqen, Evenki, Daur, Xibe, Hezhe, and other ethnic peoples, and his work has been widely recognized in the academic community and made him an influential leader in the study of Chinese shamanism. Fu Yuguang undertook two projects of the National Social Science Foundation and was in charge of shooting fifteen videos of the shamanic customs and traditions of Manchus living in Inner Mongolia and northeastern China. He has published important Manchu works and books and more than a hundred significant papers in journals at home and abroad, some of which have won awards. Although the author now has cerebral thrombosis, uses a wheelchair, and has become blind in one eye, he remains actively engaged in the study of ethnic peoples. He is currently a member of the Jilin Research Institute of Culture and History and the Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Expert Group, a researcher of the Jilin Provincial Center of Ethnic and Religious Studies, and an honorary director of the Shamanistic Research Institute of Changchun University.

Fu has received numerous honours and awards: in 2004, the Award for Scholarly Excellence of the International Society for Shamanistic Research; in 2007, the Chinese Folk Literature and Art *Shanhua* Award and the Folk Literature and Art Achievement Award; in 2008, the Changbaishan Literature and Art and Achievement Award of the Jilin provincial government; in 2009, the title of advanced individual safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage by the Ministry of Culture; and the title of inheritor of the Manchu *Shuobu* National Intangible Cultural Heritage. Since 1993, he has been granted a special government allowance from the State Council for his outstanding contributions to the social sciences.

**Major publications:**

- Shamanism and Mythology* (*Samanjiao yu shenhua*, 萨满教与神话), Liaoning University Press, 1990.
- Study on Manchu Shamanism* (*Manzu saman jiao yanjiu*, 满族萨满教研究), with Meng Huiying (孟慧英), Peking University Press, 1991.
- Goddesses of Shamanism* (*Samanjiao nvshen*, 萨满教女神), with Wang Honggang (王宏刚), Liaoning People's Publishing House, 1995.
- Shaman* (*Samanlu*, 萨满论), Liaoning People's Publishing House, 2000.
- Fu Yuguang's Collected Works of Folk Culture* (*Fuyuguang minsu wenhua lunji*, 富育光民俗文化论集), Jilin University Press, 2005.
- Shamanic Culture* (*Saman wenhualun*, 萨满文化论), with Guo Shuyun (郭淑云), Taiwan Student Book Company, 2005.
- Shamanic Art* (*Saman yishulun*, 萨满艺术论), Beijing Xueyuan Publishing House, 2009.
- Investigations on the Cultural Heritages of Manchu Shamanism* (*Manzu saman wenhua yicun diaocha*, 满族萨满文化遗存调查), with Zhao Zhizhong (赵志忠), Ethnic Publishing House Publishing House, 2010.
- Notes on Shamanic Culture* (*Manzu wenhua shouji*, 萨满文化手记), Beijing Xueyuan Publishing House, 2015.
- Fu Yuguang's Collected Works* (*Fu Yuguang wenji*, 富育光文集), vols I and II, Jilin People's Publishing House, 2017

**Representative compilations:**

- Colorful Holy Fire: Selected Manchu Folktales* (*Manzu minjian chuanshuoxuan qicai shenhua*, 满族民间传说选<七彩神火>), Jilin People's Publishing House, 1984.
- Legend of Kangxi* (*Kangxi de chuanshuo*, 康熙的传说), with Wang Honggang (王宏刚), China Folk Literature and Art Publishing House, 1985.
- Studies on Shamanic Culture* (*Samanjiao wenhua yanjiu*, 萨满教文化研究), Vol. I, one of the chief editors, Jilin People's Publishing House, 1988.
- Anecdotes of A Dissolute King* (*Fengliu hanwang mizhuan*, 风流罕王秘传), with Yu Youyan (于又燕), China Federation of Literary and Art Circles Publishing House, 1989.
- Dictionary of Religions and Myths of Ethnic Groups of China* (*Zhongguo gemizu) zongjiao yu shenhua dacidian*, 中国各民族宗教与神话大辞典), chief Jilin editor, Xueyuan Publishing House, 1990.
- Manchu Dictionary* (*Manzu dacidian*, 满族大辞典), coauthor, Liaoning University Press, 1990.
- Studies on Shamanic Culture* (*Samanjiao wenhua yanjiu*, 萨满教文化研究), Vol. II, one of the chief editor Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House, 1990.
- Dictionary of Chinese Symbols* (*Zhongguo xiangzheng cidian*, 中国象征辞典), coauthor, Tianjin Education Publishing House, 1991.

- Manchu Social Life and Customs* (*Manzu fengsuzhi*, 满族风俗志), with Wang Honggang (王宏刚), Minzu University of China Publishing House, 1991.
- Encyclopedia of Jilin Province* (*Jilinsheng baike quanshu*, 吉林省百科全书), vols I and II, author and associate editor, Jilin People's Publishing House, 1998.
- Dictionary of Religion* (*Zongjiao dacidian*, 宗教大辞典) coauthor, Shanghai Dictionary Publishing House, 1998.
- Dictionary of Chinese Mythological Figures* (*Zhongguo shenhua renwu dacidian* 中国神话人物辞典), coauthor, Shanxi People's Publishing House, 1998.
- Collected Materials of Primordial Religions of Chinese Ethnic Groups* (*Zhongguo geminzu yuanshi zongjiao ziliao jicheng*, 中国各民族原始宗教资料集成), author of Manchu Volume, China Social Sciences Press, 1999.
- Chinese Folk Cultures* (*Zhongguo minsu wenhua daguan*, 中国民俗文化大观), vols I and II, author and associate editor, Jilin People's Publishing House, 1999.
- Living Shamans: Chinese Shamanism* (*Huozhede saman-zhongguosamjiao*, 活着的萨满---中国萨满教), general consultor and coauthor, Liaoning People's Publishing House, 2001.
- Pictures of Chinese Manchu Customs and Traditions* (*Tuxiang zhongguo manzu fengsu xulu* 图像中国满族风俗叙录), chief editor, Shandong Pictorial Publishing House, 2008.
- Golden Mouth: Collected Manchu Traditional Storytelling* (*Jinzi yiyang de zui-manzu chuantong shuobu wenji*, 金子一样的嘴-满族传统说部文集), chief editor, Xueyuan Publishing House, 2009.
- Collected Manchu Shamanic Folk Works* (*Manzu minjian saman shenshu jicheng* 满族民间萨满神书集成), with Zhang Xuehui (张学慧), Jilin People's Publishing House, 2017.

### **Publications of traditional Manchu *Shuobu* (说部, storytelling):**

The traditional Manchu *Shuobu*, which has been listed as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage by the State Council, has made significant contributions to the study of the Qing history and Chinese frontier and ethnic relations. The threefold series of *Shuobu* collected and organized by me and published by Jilin People's Publishing House consist of twenty-one volumes and six million Chinese characters.

### **First series, 2007:**

*Records of Grievances of the East Sea*, vols I and II (*Donghai chenyanlv* 东海沉冤录); *Legend of General Sabusu*, vols I and II (*Sadaren zhuan* 萨大人传) *Legends of Three Maidens*, vols I and II (*Feixiao sanqiao chuanqi* 飞啸三巧传奇); *Heroic Mother and Son* (*Xuefei niangniang he baolugahan*



雪妃娘娘和包鲁嘎罕); *The Legend of Nishan Shaman*, vols I and II (*Nishan saman* 尼山萨满传); and annotated and organized six thousand lines of the East Sea shaman epic *Umesiben Mama* (“Wubuxiben mama” 乌布西奔妈妈).

**Second series, 2009:**

*Enche Boucou* (*Enqie buku* 恩切布库); *War in Heaven: Xilin Anban Mafa* (*Tiangong dazhan xilin'anbanmafa* 天宫大战: 西林安班玛发); and *Sumu Mama: Creation Myth and Tale* (*Sumu mama chuangshi shenhua yu chuanshuo* 苏木妈妈: 创世神话与传说).

**Third series, 2016:**

*Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao* (*Liangshi hanwangzhuan · wanggao hanwangzhuan* 两世罕王传·王杲罕王传); *Master Boatmaker Sahaliyan* (*Sahalian chuanwang* 萨哈连船王); *Legend of King Xueshan* (*Xueshan hanwangzhuan* 雪山罕王传); *The Story of Likunzhu's Wedding Escape* (*Likunzhu tiaohunji* 莉昆珠逃婚记); *Zhahutai Mama* (*Zhajutai mama* 扎呼泰妈妈); *The Tribute of River Beluga* (*Huangyu gong* 鲟鱼贡); and so on.

Liang Yanjun  
Dalian, November 2019

# Preface to the 1990 Chinese edition

The Chinese nation is a community of fifty-six ethnic nationalities, all of which have contributed to China as a whole from the bounty of their own cultural heritages. For a long time, however, we in China have not well understood the social history of some of these peoples. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, relevant ethnic policies were implemented, so this situation began to change.

In 1956, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China launched a nationwide survey of the customs and languages of minority peoples, focusing on socioeconomic structures and modes of livelihood. Due to the limitations of those times, the means of investigation lacked modern electronic tools, and even photographic equipment was not always available. If we had the present equipment, the materials that were saved would be more complete. As for primordial religion, only a general survey was made, because there was little understanding of Indigenous religions and integral parts of the social life of this people. Nonetheless, we initiated a formidable undertaking that had never been done by our predecessors, seeking to understand the basic socioeconomic conditions of the fifty-six nationalities. We gathered basic data for the formulation of ethnic policies, the development of ethnic economies, and the training of the first batch of Chinese ethnological researchers who could pursue further investigations of the field. With the development of the national economy and the implementation of national policies, social science research in China has seen a remarkable development. The ancient classics and documents of the Yi and Naxi peoples of southwest China have been systematically collated and translated, as have classical Mongol and Tibetan texts; and the shamanist cultures of northeast China have begun to be systematically and thoroughly investigated. Now China is facing a great era of opening-up and development, and understanding the evolution of China's ethnic cultures would contribute to the world at large. For various reasons, research on the various ethnic cultures of China has been unbalanced, but our ethnological research is advancing.

I am now glad to welcome the publication of Fu Yuguang's book *Shamanism and Myth*. The author has engaged in research on northern shamanism for many years, and the book deserves praise as the first systematic investigation of shamanism in China. Research in the social sciences needs to be comprehensive,

comparative, and integrated and based on precise and solid classifications. This book is a model of such research. It constitutes a living monument to the historical heritage of shamanism in the region. On the basis of the author's first-hand investigations, but with numerous references to ancient Chinese texts and foreign scholarly literature, the book opens up new horizons for ethnological and anthropological study. This new field of shamanic research needs to be pursued by aspiring young scholars, and I look forward to the field's flourishing as they follow in Fu Yuguang's footsteps.

Ren Jiyu  
September 1990  
Beijing

# Introduction to the English edition

It is an honour for me to write the introduction of this valuable book. For more than forty years, noted scholar Fu Yuguang has dedicated himself to rescuing and studying the shamanic legacy that has been passed down among his native Manchu and other Altaic peoples of northern China. He has done so in the footsteps of his father, Fu Xilu (富希陆), who began gathering folk materials while teaching in Aihui County on the banks of the Amur in the 1930s, when Fu was born. Fu Yuguang's own research is not just a matter of pouring over old documents at a scholarly distance. As he is happy to say, he lived for years in ethnic villages, eating, working, singing, and dancing with the local people; forming lasting friendships; and learning to sing the sacred chants, make spirit idols, and beat the drum in shamanic rituals. The present book, originally titled *Shamanism and Mythology*, is valuable not just because of its rich panorama of the rites, myths, and shamanic lore of the Manchu, Mongol, and other northern peoples but also because of the local colour and immediacy that his first-hand experiences bring to the material and for his insightful perspective on northern shamans' social, cultural, and religious roles.

Fu tells of entranced shamans inspired by the gods and is well aware of the mythic hero Nisan Shaman, who can travel to the underworld to retrieve dead souls. But for him, a northern shaman is not in the Eliade mould of one who makes ecstatic journeys to the otherworld. Rather, they stand out as one who has extraordinary sensitivity to the everyday needs of the common people and who can use that power to be of down-to-earth, practical service. The author seeks to break out of what he sees as the scholarly fixation on shamanic "spirituality" and trance contact with spirit worlds and recover an appreciation of shamans' original function as clan sages, the embodiments of the clan's spirit, wisdom, and power. They are respected as being well versed in clan history and adept at healing, sacrificial procedures, and the use of traditional chants and dances to ease peoples' anxieties and draw them out of their everyday perceptions of reality into a common mystic realm. Shamans deal with a plethora of nature and ancestral spirits, but their spiritual achievements do not have their origin only in so-called divine powers. Fu quotes an elderly shaman who once said that "In ancient times, divinity indicated limitless scope. You become godlike if you understand people's thinking, longing, imaginings and expectations."

Some of Fulim Yuguang's research has been translated and introduced to scholars abroad, but we are now fortunate to have in English his 1990 first work, translated under the title *Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China*.

In its present layout, the first volume begins with discussions of the spirit world of northern shamanism. The author points out that "shaman," *saman* (萨满), is a Jurchen word with the root meaning of "knowing" and stresses that the shaman is the embodiment of their "clan's spirit, wisdom, and power." The original religion of northern peoples, shamanism is an evolving religious belief that is based on the idea that deities and spirits are everywhere, but it is rooted in specific conditions of the freezing north. Northern shamanism worships the sun for its life-giving role, along with certain animals of the northern wilds. From a theoretical point of view, it focuses on manifestations of spirit energy (*qi* 气), the notion that human beings have three souls, and the ancient idea of multiple heavens. Fu maintains that exploring the ideology of northern ethnic cultures requires looking at concrete aspects of the Indigenous culture and history, not just generic trends of thought.

In line with this view, Chapter 2 discusses the worship of nature deities, often female: sun, moon, stars, mother earth, fire, water, magpies, crows, and local waterfowl. In Chapter 3, Fu introduces the worship of ancestors and fertility goddesses, noting that the dominant Manchu male god of heaven, Abka Enduri, was initially the female deity Abka Hehe.

The next three chapters cover rituals, beginning in Chapter 4 with what Fu regards as the most ancient shamanic ritual, blood sacrifice. He sees this is being in line with the life-giving power of blood and perhaps the notions that blood serves as a medium for floating souls as they wander about outside the body. Fu also gives lively descriptions of Mongol and Manchu rites that worship fire for its power for cleansing and casting off the cold of northern winters. In Chapter 5, he gives detailed descriptions of rites worshipping the stars. As ancient peoples began to settle down, they formulated laws concerning the positions and alterations the stars, which Fu summarizes in a mythical/astronomical chart. He also describes rites worshipping the East Sea and those worshipping willows as indicators of a nearby water fountainhead and so symbols of life. Chapter 6 presents enlightening discussions of the *tangse* shine rites of the Qing court against the background of the portable *tangse* shines used by ordinary Manchu when migrating. Then discussions of Manchu *jia* folk rituals as they came to be formalized in line with Qing norms follow.

In the second volume, Chapter 1 focuses on divination, which clan records and Fu's own observations show to be intricately bound up with northern shaman activities. The author understands divination as being based on the belief that everything has a soul and stresses that divining is indispensable when choosing new shamans. He traces the documented history of divination in China, going back almost three thousand years, and then analyses specific forms of northern shamanic divination, in particular the reading of bones and interpretation of dreams.

The following chapters deal with myths. Chapter 2 gives valuable background information concerning the shamanic roots of northern myths, noting that shamans

have continually added new episodes to traditional mythic tales. Fu discusses the interrelationship of the myths of Tungus peoples and the infiltration of Han motifs in their mythic tradition in the form of tales of the underworld and ghosts. He describes methods of mythic transmission, such as the clan chant contests that go back to Jurchen times. He then gives examples of myths focused on the goddesses and animals involved in creation, enlivening the material with quotes from mythic chants. Chapter 3 invites us to sample the whole array of narrative segments from the Manchu creation myth “War in Heaven.” Chapter 4 introduces individual tribal myths and burial customs, rounding out the earlier discussion on ancestor worship.

In Chapter 5, the author gives a lengthy treatise on spirit idols, suggesting that they may have come about with the rise of ancestor worship and belief in souls. Although they originally involved animistic worship, Fu maintains that they became what can truly be called idol worship only once they began to take on human or half-human features. He goes on to give intriguing accounts of how particular idols came to be revealed in dreams and ritual trance sessions and then fashioned accordingly. Since the ability of ancestral idols to protect the tribe depends on the power of their eyes, people have to give great care to fashioning the eyes. Since idols have great thirst for the life-giving power of blood, they need then to periodically offer the idols fresh blood in sacrificial rituals.

Chapter 6 ends the book with typical traits of northern shamans, first as depicted in Indigenous myths, for which he uses quotes from the Jurchen shamanic epic *Umesiben Mama*, and then as understood by modern scholars. Fu states the idea that underlies his research as a whole: northern Chinese shamans do not fit into Eliade’s model of people caught up in ecstatic journeys to supernatural worlds; rather, they are respected by their clans for their unusually keen human powers of sensitive perception and their efforts to hone these powers to aid clan members in everyday situations.

Daniel Kister  
Seoul, October 2019



# Introduction

Like many aspects of the ethnic cultures of northern China, shamanism arouses enthusiastic interest and wonder throughout the whole world. From the viewpoint of history, it can be considered the mother of all ethnic cultures, and the personality and the psychology of northern peoples have been shaped from generation to generation by numerous shamanic factors, including shaman dress, the beat of the shaman's drum, hawk and tiger dances, age-old myths and heroic epics, ancient secret histories, old precepts, secret divination practices known only to shamans, and the medicinal use of herbs, along with extensive ancestral experience in harnessing fire, flood control, catching fish and birds, nursing babies, training in cosmic teachings, the identification of stars, warfare drills, and other skills. In a threefold role of master, deity, and soul, a shaman inherits the spiritual heritage of their ethnic group. In the past, the influence of shamanism was felt in all households in the vast areas of the Changbai Mountains and Heilong River (Amur); and it has left its traces throughout North and Northeast Asia. As many domestic and foreign scholars noticed early on, shamanism has not faded out among the northern Chinese peoples or come to have less influence on them over the passing of time. Many scholars have lived in the rough with peasants to both research and appreciate the mystic aspects of these northern ethnic cultures and uncover the mysteries of the religious beliefs common in this part of the world.

I had a joyful experience in the course of the spring snows of 1990 while deep in the Greater Khingan Range in Heilongjiang Province. The aged Oroqen shaman Meng Jinfu (孟金福) was invited to perform songs and dances for us to the same beat of the drum used when hunting elk. At a young age, Meng was taught his musical skills by a spirit, and in accord with his forceful beat, all present clapped their hands to the music – an exciting event indeed. After the April Grain Rain Days (Guyu谷雨), one of the twenty-four solar seasonal terms marking the season when abundant rainfall is needed for sowing crops, we discovered a Manchu family's shamanic treasures that had been well preserved for over several hundred years. There were manuscripts of inspired shamanic utterances, spirit statuettes, figurines, and other objects dating back more than two hundred years, and we found that of all recently discovered artefacts from the Qing era, these are the oldest ones depicting nature worship and ancestor worship. They thus have great worth as both research objects and historic art finds.

## 2 Introduction

The word “shaman” is written in different ways in Chinese: *shaman* (沙曼), *sama* (萨玛), *shama* (沙玛), *sama* (撒麻), *saman* (撒瞒), *shanman* (珊蛮), and so on. The earliest written mention of the term occurs in *Documents of the Three Reigns' Northern Alliance* (*Sanchao Beimeng Huibian*) compiled by Xu Mengshen (徐梦莘) of Southern Song (1127–1279). It is said there that “*shanman*” is a Jurchen term for a sorcerer who has divine power. Since the Jin (1115–1234) and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties, various terms have been used, but now *saman* is in common Chinese usage. It is, in fact, a Jurchen word, the Jurchen language belonging to a Manchu branch of the Altaic language family. The term is often explained as *wu* (巫). In Chinese, following Ling Chunsheng, who defined it in this way, scholars of different countries define what a shaman is differently, on the basis of the external characteristics of their shamans. A shaman is often described as a person afflicted with some sort of mania, some national encyclopaedias defining “shaman” as “madman” or “a person who has mania.” In Soviet Russia, some scholars have defined the person as “one who loses control upon onset of the disease,” and others argue that a shaman is not “a normal person” but rather “a maniac.”

Despite these various proposals, such definitions and descriptions do not make the term “shaman” clear. We can, however, also look for meaning from its etymological roots. In the Manchu, Hezhe, Xibe, and Oroqen languages, the root “*sa*” or “*za*” means “to know,” and “to know” is pronounced “*sam*” or “*zam*.” In Manchu and Hezhe, the sound “*sam*” means “to know” and “*saha*” means “to have known it.” Thus, “to know” is what *saman* essentially means. In the well-known Manchu shaman epic *Umesiben Mama*, a shaman is “a person who knows all” (*ha juseen*). A shaman knows best what the spirits mean to communicate to us and serves as a bond with the spirits, and all that the shaman does is blessed by the spirits. A shaman thus enjoys great respect among the masses. In later Manchu oracles, in line with the meaning of *ha juseen* as a person who knows all things, shamans were venerated as “*abka juse*” or “*aha juse*,” suggesting that they are intermediaries between spirits and human beings. A shaman’s functions and abilities are clearly defined.

Regarding a shaman as mentally ill amounts to a completely flawed appreciation of the origin and characteristics of shamanic activity. In fact, none of the shamans of northern China or famous shamans of the past is mentally ill. On the contrary, they are by definition the wise people of each ethnic group. In some Manchu clans, a shaman is said to “have a golden tongue and great courage and wisdom.” To a certain extent, a shaman is an embodiment of the clan’s spirit, wisdom, and power. In daily life, shamans are simply clan members and enjoy no special privileges, but they will fearlessly rush in when an individual clansperson or the clan as a whole is in danger. Shamans serve as native doctors and guardians, shouldering the responsibility for the development and prosperity of the clan. It is said that without a shaman, a clan “cannot shine forever like the sun.” The reverence shown to shamans derives from many factors, including the rules for selecting a shaman, which have a close connection with shamanic concepts of primitive psychology, such as spirit transformation and the expenditure of vital energy (*qi* 气).

Shamanism is the original religion of northern Chinese peoples. As Cao Yanjie stated in *Records of Eastern Siberia* (*Xiboliyadongpian jiyao*), shamanic “trance

dance and folk customs have spread wide from the three rivers – Sungari, Amur, and Ussuri – the northeastern estuary” (Cao Yanjie 1934). As an Indigenous religion, shamanism is an inherited, closed tradition rigorously transmitted within the clan. Some foreign travel books before the Qing dynasty speak of it, and Qing dynasty records, notes, and historical texts of northern China present brief accounts of shamanic activity. Formal investigations and detailed observations of northern shamanic cultures did not begin until the early period of the Republic of China (1912–1949). At that time, Ling Chunsheng initiated field surveys of shamanic rites and customs. In line with his own field visits and the artefacts he observed, he made comparative analyses and wrote the classic work *The Goldi Tribe on the Lower Sungari River* (*Songhuajiang xiayou de hezhezu*). Published in 1934, the work brought him high prestige in China and beyond for its wealth of shamanic lore. Other Chinese scholars of that period discussed the concept and influence of shamanism or the shaman on the northern peoples in their articles as well.

Nevertheless, shamanism began to be systematically studied in China only after the 1950s. Shaman folk beliefs and customs were not distinguished from witchcraft and superstition at the time of the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, and this delayed saving shamanic culture. In the 1950s, scholars of ethnology, history, and economics initiated massive sociohistorical investigations on all Chinese ethnic areas under the competitive authorities according to state ethnic policy. These first investigations surveyed in the northeast region of China helped bring together a large team of ethnologists and blazed a trail with new methods for studying shamanic culture. Northern peoples praised them highly for their great efforts, and their hard work gave rise to a new academic subject: northern ethnology.

Chinese studies on the northern region progressed materially and intellectually, and after the Reform and Opening-up of the late 1980s,<sup>1</sup> ethnic studies came into their heyday. The cultural heritage of the region, including shamanic culture, was gradually rescued from oblivion with the collecting, translating, and editing of numerous materials. Many valuable books could appear in print, and since then, many well-preserved manuscripts and ethnic artefacts of the Manchu, Daur, Oroqen, Ewenki, Mongol, Xibe, and Hezhe that had been treasured for centuries have been collected. Now, prestigious shamans, singers, storytellers, and folk artisans are given their due respect. Although these reform-oriented investigations set the scene for future cultural research, researchers did not know enough about Indigenous beliefs, folk customs, or oral literature or in particular about Manchu culture. The ten years of turmoil from 1966 to 1976<sup>2</sup> did away with many inheritors of the tradition and rare materials. That tragedy has left many gaps to be filled, and despite scholars’ great efforts over the years, there are still many unresolved questions due to the shortage of primary sources. If we are now too slow in saving what we have left of shamanic culture, the history of northern ethnic peoples will never be uncovered, let alone truly understood.

I have a deep love for shamanic culture, and I hold a strong belief that no ambiguity or imprecision should be allowed in academic research and history.

#### 4 Introduction

Shamanic culture varies greatly with its long history, making it difficult for us to lay bare its true nature. How large is the cultural circle of shamanism? How can we truly understand its influence on China? What value and meaning does it hold in China? Some Chinese and foreign scholars argue that all original religious traditions can be categorized as shamanic. This concept, however, tries to include too much. As a primitive form of religious culture that prevailed in a sub-frigid zone and a northern frigid zone across Northern Europe, North Asia, and North America, the cultural circle of shamanism reflects strong localized tendencies of the isolated living habits of Indigenous peoples over time. The precise differences between shamanism and witchcraft or sorcery has confounded scholars for a long while. What are the differences and similarities? Japan's politically oriented investigations in Manchuria (the old name for the Manchu nationality or northeastern China) in the early 1930s combined and conflated ethnic shamanism with sheer superstition and shamans with cheats who extort money for prayers or even with murderers, and nowadays, shamanic rituals are spoken of as "evil spirit dances" (*tiaodashen*, 跳大神). We can take two approaches to shamanic activity: we can regard all shamanic practices as "pure superstition" and try only to prevent them from doing harm, or we can discard the dross and retain the essence for beneficial use. We need to understand shamanism as a primitive religion born at the dawn of human civilization that inevitably has had bright and dark aspects over the course of time, but we must come to realize that it constitutes a treasure trove of cultural wisdom and a rich spiritual legacy.

From a more international perspective, the cultural circle of shamanism is located in the temperate zone, sub-frigid zone, and frigid zone of the northern hemisphere. Foreign investigations into shamanism date back more than two hundred years. In the eyes of Westerners, shamanism has been seen as a key to uncovering mysteries of human history and culture and as a cultural repository in its own right. So they have shown great interest in it, founding academic institutions and publishing journals and monographs. At the same time, shamantology took shape as a healing and meditation movement and continues to this day. As a rare cultural heritage for the modern world, shamanism preserves what humankind learned and felt in the hard times when the ancients explored and conquered nature. It is a "living fossil" of original modes of human thought and civilization.

As far as China is concerned, it is the home country of shamanism, and it has kept intact many ethnic treasures of shamanic culture for thousands of years. Research on Chinese shamanism has thus come into worldwide notice as a vital part of the international shamanic community. The sociohistorical conditions of northeast China have made it possible to preserve shamanism intact. In the three northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang, the Manchu, Oroqen, Daur, and Ewenki not only accept it as their spiritual legacy but also perform living shamanic activities, and such performances serve as signs of its overwhelming influence. Some families in the area have preserved inspired shamanic utterances transcripts, sacrificial artefacts, and ritual costumes dating from the foundation of the Later Jin dynasty, specifically in 1616. Primitive nature rites have never been interrupted, including sea sacrifice, fire sacrifice, and the ancient Manchu *ye* ritual

(*Yeji*, 野祭) held to worship mountains, rivers, stars, the sun and the moon, and all living creatures while inculcating love and respect for nature. From the perspective of global cultural ideology, the original star maps, ancient medicinal lore, and divination techniques that have been handed down are crucial. In Xinjiang, too, the Xibe people in Qapqal Autonomous County still keep rare shamanic scripts and ritual tales, and in eastern Inner Mongolia, the Mongols have inherited shamanic beliefs and maintain the activity of their *boo* (shaman) as a distinct form of religion different from Tibetan Buddhism.

Primordial religious beliefs developed from primitive ideologies rooted in specific regional conditions. By analysing shamanist beliefs and practices, we can understand northern ancestors' primitive ideology and explore the origin of human civilization in the region. Humanity's childhood is a wonder and a mystery. Ethnic and national boundaries appeared later, as history evolved, but the concept of religion appeared far earlier than that of nation, and fledgling religious worship was never limited to any specific ethnicity or nation.

This book seeks first and foremost to explore the common ideology underlying the birth of northern ethnic cultures. To do so, we need to look into concrete aspects of pre-ethnic culture and history, not just generic trends of knowledge. It is only in this way that we can understand the lineage of ethnic culture and cement the cohesion of national unity and promote the flourishing of our many Indigenous cultures. Second, along this path of research, the book focuses on the shamanic cultures in Siberia and Far East Asia, aiming to get a clear picture of the unique traits of northern shamanism. Third, the book enthusiastically presents the field survey materials accumulated over decades. For reliability and research integrity and to authenticate the references and correctly annotate the folktales cited, I visited shamans, clan chiefs, and singers from northeast China.

In recent years, many forward-looking scholars in China have begun to understand and emphasize the importance of northern shamanic cultures. They have developed a strong interest in shamanist research and begun to redefine it as a cross-disciplinary field of study that demands due consideration in history, aesthetics, sociology, cultural anthropology, religion, folklore, and archaeology. All these various disciplines serve not only to absorb rich research nutrients from the shamanic culture but also to open up new ways of proceeding in existing fields of research. Of course, this is an international subject. I am confident that all scholars in China and beyond will join hands to uncover the mysteries of shamanism, even though it is a tortuous journey.

## Notes

- 1 Here and elsewhere in this book, some quotations of foreign authors are from a Chinese translation and so not identical to the author's original words. In some cases, the page or other reference for cited materials is lacking in the original Chinese book and cannot easily be located. Reform and Opening-up were part of a policy of opening up to the outside world implemented by the Chinese government in 1978.
- 2 The ten years of turmoil refer to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that took place during those years.

# 1 The spirit world of northern shamanism

## 1.1 The operational laws of the spirits

The essential concept of shamanism in any region or ethnic group is the following: All beings in the cosmos that human beings depend on, living and nonliving, constitute an abode of deities and spirits who are present everywhere, give rise to everything, and possess everything. This is why they are so earnestly worshipped. This pantheistic conception constitutes the basis for an understanding of shaman deities and spirits and the ground on which shamanic perceptions and modes of expression in all sacrificial rituals in northern China is rooted.

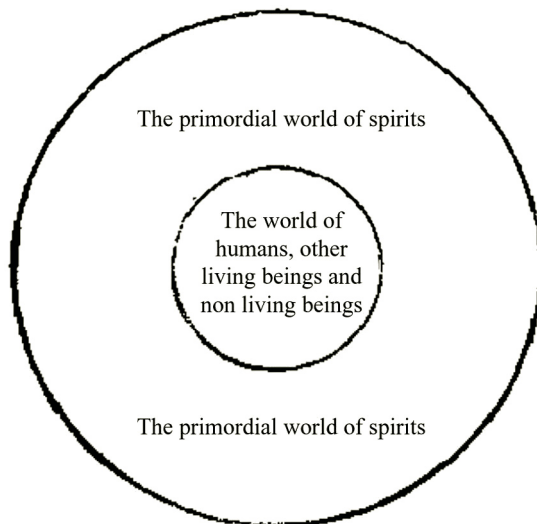
To study shaman spirits, we must first know what spirit activity means in northern Chinese shamanism. Every ethnic group in northern China has its spirit-chosen shaman, who acts as an intermediary between human beings and spirits and serves as the spirits' representative and mouthpiece. Shamans state unequivocally that gods and spirits really exist. They are celestial beings, and they have almighty power. A spiritual being is a substance made up of *qi* (气: literally "breath," "air," or "gas"; figuratively "material energy"), an invisible force that people know but cannot see, the active principle of any living thing. In most cases in shamanic belief, however, a spirit exerts their power and influence through a physical substance. A shaman who attains a supernatural level will state not only that supernatural power exists but also that they can feel that power. It possesses a shaman's body, coming suddenly and going quickly. That power may influence the shaman's own vital energy and may even command a shaman in trance to act supernaturally or ecstatically. In shamanic parlance, such phenomena are referred to as the coming of the spirit, presence of the spirit, or possession by the spirit. Only a person who can experience this is a true shaman, a proper medium between the spirits and human beings. Only such a shaman can communicate with spirits and keenly observe how they behave. A shaman who reaches this level can hear, see, perceive, know, and understand all phenomena in the supernatural world. Moreover, they can discover the dwellings of cosmic spirits at any time and communicate with them. In a word, a true shaman can move freely between the spiritual world and the earthly world. According to veteran Chinese shamans, this is the way to thoroughly understand the basic operational laws of the spirits.

What does the operational laws of the spirits mean? It goes beyond the understanding of common people. It points to supernatural power beyond the human

that embraces all beings in the cosmos. It is, in fact, a primitive form of pantheism. In the minds of ancient peoples, everything around them, supernatural or wondrous, was a life-threatening danger. The psychological mechanism behind their worship amounted to trying to counteract or defend themselves against such danger. In northern China, this led them to believe in a wide variety of types of spirits. According to shamanic beliefs of northern peoples, there are various spiritual beings in the universe, each with their own ideas, likings, habits, endowments, tastes, and personalities, which are not subject to interference from the earthly world. They live and move in accord with their own primordial principles of generation and their respective orbits of activity.

Spirits act independently in their worlds, which are separate from ours. In the northern Chinese understanding of shamanic gods and spirits, they have urges, emotions, ideas, and character traits like us on the one hand; on the other, they possess amazing power, which can be categorized according to various criteria, such as locality, nature, status, size, level of ability, distance, and good or evil. They descend to mortal beings or communicate with them by the channels of prayer, sacrificial rituals, and dreams, and they may use or possess a medium to bring about the object of their prayers once the prayers have been conveyed to them. Only a shaman assigned by a particular spirit can feel, see, hear, and understand that spirit's presence and wishes. This is because only the shaman can sense the primordial operational laws of the spirits. If people want to know or invite a spirit, shamans need to enter the spirit realm through ritual.

Each deity and each spirit have their own origin, such as materially embodied spirits, human spirits, animal spirits, and nature spirits. Every natural phenomena, such as thunder and lightning, rivers and lakes, and the sun and the moon, may have a supernatural power and so can be called god or spirit, in both cases in Chinese *shen* (神). The world that they inhabit can be shown as follows:





The diagram shows that beyond the mortal world, there are cosmic spaces or a divine world in which spirit beings live and from which they can travel to the world of the inner circle as they like. All this constitutes the primordial pantheistic world of northern Chinese shamanism. The ideas and beliefs associated with it have risen from specific sociohistorical conditions bound up with people's means of livelihood and mindset. Over the long history of the shamanic pantheism in China, its meaning has varied greatly.

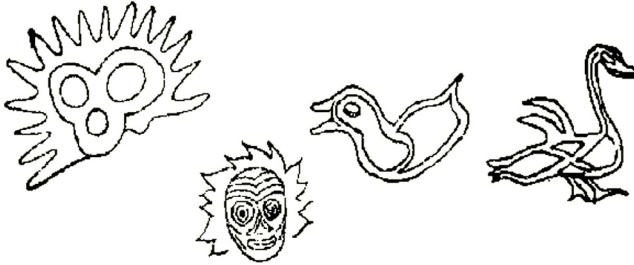
## **1.2 The evolution of northern shamanism**

Religious reflections on the fragility of human beings in our fight for survival against nature, no doubt, did not come with the first origins of humankind. Archaeology has confirmed that in the era when primitive groups of human beings separated themselves from animals, their thinking was underdeveloped. At that time, it can hardly be thought that they could form religious concepts or perform acts of worship, because they probably could not distinguish themselves from the natural world to which they had adapted. Ancient religion must have surfaced in primitive tribal society only after their mode of thinking became further developed. That Neanderthals of the mid-Palaeolithic period had a budding form of religious worship is attested to by archaeological findings that they had acquired customs, such as when burying the dead, they placed ram horns around the body and scattered chips of red stone around the remains.

As for northern China, definitive relics of budding shamanism have been rarely discerned, analysed, or identified, and it is difficult to date their earliest appearance. Red hematite powder, however, was sprinkled around the bone fossils in the Upper Cave in Zhoukoudian, Beijing, from the late Palaeolithic period, and flint stones, teeth with drilled holes, cockle shells, bone pendants, and other burial objects were scattered around the corpses, along with the sprinkled powder. All this indicates that the cavepeople there had come to have primitive religious notions about eighteen thousand years ago. According to local folk belief in northern China, red powder, standing for blood, reflects people's desire to soothe the souls of the deceased. Archaeological investigations have disclosed that in northeast China and in Siberia, many remains and skeletons dating back to the Palaeolithic period and the Neolithic period were buried amid similar objects. At Siunvge, northeast of Moscow, the remains of an adult male and a boy were similarly sprinkled with red ochre powder and those of the adult with three thousand beads, animal teeth, mammoth tusks, and other ornaments. Examples of other artefacts unearthed in China are the bone-carved hawk's head; fish and pottery figurines; and patterns of a dog, a pig, a bear, and water ripples, all on shards from Xinkailiu in Jixi, Heilongjiang. In Yinggeling in Heilongjiang were grey pottery shaped in the form of birds, deer, sheep, and frogs, and there are primitive drawings on earthenware from Heilongjiang sites in Ang'angxi, Bai Jinbao and Qinghua. At Baicheng, the capital of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) near the Ashi River, Heilongjiang, B.R. Tolmachevo unearthed a bronze vessel with two little birds carved in relief, which reflects the ancient worship of divine birds. All these

totemic objects represent creatures worshipped in the periods of gathering and both fishing and hunting economies. They are the product of peoples who worshipped primordial shamanistic deities, and they show that clan societies of those times worshipped animals such as the eagle, fish, swine, bears, and deer.

For his part, Alexander Okladnikov, in *Archeological Discoveries in the Far East of the Soviet Union*, depicts in detail the cave paintings at Sakaci Aliyang left by the Jurchen ancestors of the Manchu before they moved to northern China. One of the paintings, as shown next, reflects their sun worship:



These petroglyphs reflect a Jurchen myth that has been passed down to this day, which begins as follows:

Long, long ago, our earth was once all flooded, but some divine birds carried sand and stones to pile up a small patch of land on which human beings lived and multiplied. Blessed by the sun goddess, they thus had a chance to survive the flood, and all beings revived again.

The paintings point to the religious ideology and mythic concepts of the inhabitants of northern China and Northeast Asia in the distant past. They indicate that they brought their conceptual religious beliefs to life by countless physical artistic objects around the time of the transition from the Palaeolithic period to the Neolithic period. These old beliefs formed the soil for cultures in which shamanic ideology originated.

Along with the development of material means of production, the pantheistic ideology of shamanism was unceasingly enriched, improved as it evolved. In light of cultural artefacts available, its evolution falls into the following stages: The recently excavated Goddess Temple at Niuheliang Village, Liaoning, shows that there was a fully developed ideology of religious worship in northern China at least five thousand years ago. However, religious practices may well have extended back to more than a million years ago, and ancient relics verify the early birth of such activity in the region. Numerous artefacts have been unearthed that indicate that it began before clan-centred societies evolved. As human beings became homo sapiens, they, no doubt, sought to explain the cause of their fears and ease them. With their high intelligence quotient, humans adapted to life in their ever-changing natural environment, reproduced, and found means to extend

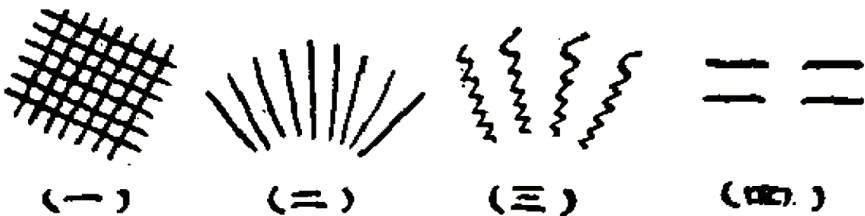
their lifespan, and their environment drew them to think, explore, and seek out the power and means to conquer it. In this way, low-level beginnings of religious awe, worship, and prayer emerged.

This is evidenced by the ancient stone vessels unearthed in northern China that scholars understand as having religious significance. Some have a willow-leaf shape that resembles the female vulva: a symbol of human life and reproduction. Others are engraved with various other patterns, such as the following Palaeolithic figures that also exist as fish-scale patterns on modern shamans' costumes. They are taken from pendants on the ritual costumes and headdresses of Manchu shamans Lang (郎) and Xu (徐) that have been passed down for generations as heirlooms.

The first pattern might symbolize murky night, the second sunshine, the third rippling water or rising vapour, and the fourth heaven and earth. The figures, moreover, show that the thinking of human beings even in that ancient era was complex enough to express natural phenomena in abstract terms.

The most prominent aspect of shamanism is the worship of the cosmos, and that religious outlook apparently appeared early in the north as our pioneering ancestors sought to conquer nature in that chilly land. Sunshine and warmth are the first conditions for survival, so it is perhaps for this reason that the above patterns can be found on ancient stone tools in the region. We should not regard them as either chance scribbling or mimetic reflections of natural phenomena or simply aesthetic objects. They express what the ancients thought about life, their desires for light and warmth, their religious perceptions, their myths, their knowledge of the cycles of day and night, and their understanding of nature. They felt warm on the land and cold underground in summer and vice versa in winter. They wondered about natural phenomena and sought the forces behind them, and when they received no support from nature, they turned to the spiritual world for comfort. In great fear and awe, they thus worshipped all natural things, which they knew could protect them but could destroy them instead. They had no choice but to prayerfully entreat the forces of nature when they confronted them in their weakness and helplessness. These were the earliest ideas of shamanism of which we can find evidence. There is no evidence of religious rites based on a definite image of a deity.

Ever since its inception, however, shamanism has been advancing in its religious thinking along with evolving human society. From about forty thousand to ten thousand years ago, between the mid to late Palaeolithic period and early



Neolithic period, our northern ancients entered into primordial clan society. The numerous manuscripts of ancient shamanic tales that have been collected are a rare cornucopia from which I infer that shamanism in the matriarchal era had by then matured with diversified characteristics and full-blown sacrificial rituals that would continue to develop as it then stepped into a more mature and more active phase in emerging clan society. Nature worship, totem worship, animism, and ideas of the soul all became imbedded in clan life and customs. The frequent celebration of colourful sacred sacrificial rites and reliance on judgements of the spirits in the form of oracles, spirit testing, and divination became typical of ancestral northern fishing and hunting peoples and took on strong regional features.

According to historical documents, next come the shamanistic developments of the Tungusic Sushen (Sušen) peoples: Jurchen (Nvzhen), Shiwei, Wuji, Mohe, Bohai, and others who lived in caves and trees in the north of China – fishing, farming, and using flint-headed arrows to hunt up into the Liao and Jin dynasties. With the Sushen, northern shamanism evolved from a matriarchal clan religion into a patriarchal one. The most important change in shamanic belief was that the worship of patriarchal ancestors and relevant sacrificial rites came to occupy a central position with earlier nature and animal worship. At the same time, the myriad deities and regulations and customs surrounding the rites became increasingly more complicated with the absorption of Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian creeds and Han ritual practices, such that the original face of shamanism was greatly changed. Then, too, as endless migrations occurred, when some northern ethnic groups moved year after year, and some peoples were reunited after division and others divided after unification. Shamanism became a huge stream of multiple cultural currents, such that it is now exceedingly hard to trace it back to its original roots. Much research needs to be done to do so, and much has been done in recent years in both China and abroad in the way of identification, analysis, and sifting out data from primary sources. However, all this has actually added to the difficulty of probing the basic nature and significance of northern shamanism. Mistakes have been made in trying to do so, with shamanism's sometimes being almost equated with ordinary witchcraft.

Finally, from late Qing dynasty until the present, shamanism in northern China has been increasingly on the decline. In the early Qing dynasty (1644–1911), its Manchu founders incorporated their traditional shamanic beliefs and sacrificial rites into the Han palace rituals of previous dynasties. Descendants of the Jurchen, they held traditional Jurchen *tangse* rites (堂子祭) at the Qing imperial ritual shrine. In the seventeenth year of the reign of Qianlong, the sixth Qing emperor,<sup>1</sup> there was promulgated the *Manchu Trance Rites for the Worship of Heaven* (*Manzu tiaoshen jitian dianli*), which unified the entire system of shamanic rituals throughout the empire, completing the standardization and reformation of the traditional clan religion that had been going on for centuries in the north. From then on, shamanic rituals became simply a set of household ancestor rites. Some Manchu *hala* (clan in the Manchu language) and other ethnic groups, such as the Oroqen,<sup>2</sup> Daur,<sup>3</sup> Ewenki,<sup>4</sup> and Hezhe,<sup>5</sup> still keep alive the ancient rites – but with changes, due to the influence of Manchu royal rites and other factors. Since

the Republic Period (1912–1949), moreover, the shaman rites have been held on a shrinking scale. As a primitive religion, northern shamanism has its original roots in the economic and cultural modes of life of ancient northern peoples, so it must necessarily downsize and wane with advances in civilization. In New China (since 1949), shaman rites and clan shamans have fallen into oblivion as elderly people die. It is now considered just a living fossil of history that attracts attention as ethnic cultural heritage.

### 1.3 Shamanic spirits

What is deity, in Chinese *shen* (神)? This has always been a main question for theology, religious studies and sociology. Each discipline focuses on different aspects, but they have one point in common: A deity is an invisible, unknowable, mysterious supernatural power. Alternatively, we might say that what is unknowable is deity or what is unpredictable in its *yin-yang*<sup>6</sup> is deity. Deity gives birth to all things. There is nothing stronger than thunder in driving all things, nothing faster than wind in moving them, nothing hotter than fire in drying them, nothing happier than lakes in nurturing them, nothing better than water in nourishing them, nothing more powerful than mountains in providing their beginning or end. Thus, water and fire attract each other and wind and thunder complement each other. Mountains and lakes communicate with each other. Thus come about all changes, which produces all things. Commentaries on the *Book of Changes* interpret “deity” as the result of five elements or phases that produce and complement one another. The central idea is that deity is the first cause of all movements, but it is too subtle to be seen or felt. Buddhism considers deity as unfathomable karma or an invisible superpower that affects the future. Taoism argues that what has magical power is a deity. All such power is the magic of a god or spirit. All these thoughts envelop the notion of deity with a sense of profound mystery. As is said of Confucius, however, in chapter VII of the *Analekts (Lunyu)*, “The subjects on which the Master did not talk were extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings.”

Primordial shamanism is a natural religion from humanity’s childhood. It has no profound theoretical belief. From the words of master shamans as expressed by shamans in Manchu oracles and teachings, shamanist ideas of *shen* can mean deity, a deity, a spirit, spirits, supernatural, and mind – sometimes abstruse and fantastic yet realistic and sometimes simply materialistic. The veteran shaman of the Manchu Wu Hala (clan) Wu Botong said that *shen* is the mother of all things, but the author wants to say that it is the mind. It is what one perceives, senses, thinks, and hopes. It owns everything and exists everywhere. In a *jao’uyun* (traditional training class for Manchu shaman initiates), an old shaman of the Zang Hala (clan) taught shaman initiates that if one wants to really command shamanic techniques, one should not search out any magic or superpower but summon all the energies, powers, and forces of nature to serve oneself. One has to practice again and again until one masters them. Then, a true divine being will come about – the “presence of the spirit.” Yesong, the famous megashaman and chief of the Fuca Hala of Siji Village, Heilongjiang, once told shamans that

Shen is power. It is not outside, but inside; not on the skin, but in the heart. Where your heart is, there is true *shen*; otherwise the divine presence disappears. Indeed, deity/spirit is everywhere, and it can summon all magical powers for its use. A shaman must be busy as a bee or ant, coming to really know the medicinal property of all herbs, the basic nature of all beasts, the flying nature of all birds, the dynamic nature of mountains, rivers, stars and the moon. If you don't know, don't understand, don't act, or are incapable, you're not a shaman!

Kvgvturi the great flying shaman and chief of the Manchu Qian Hala, once said,

When I was nine years old, I dreamed of a pair of white eagles falling onto my chest. The tribesmen did not like them, so they built a fire to burn them to ashes. Seeing this, I dashed into the raging flames and suddenly jumped above the trees. I did not fall or have fear. That's *shen*! It is an act of gathering all one's powers together for one's self-use! Then I practiced *qinggong* (轻功, the prowess to fly). It's easy to jump over a tree canopy or mountain stream. Finally, I became a divine flying shaman.

Focusing on a different aspect of *shen*, Yu Kun, a megashaman of the Hu Hala said,

All things have their *hunqi* (魂气, soul energy). So do [humans], so do birds, foxes and other animals, so do stones, rivers, and mountains, so do the stars and the moon! *Hun-qi* is everywhere. It can go up or down, flow or wander, enter or leave, hide or manifest itself! At the same time, it can be touched; and it exists forever and never dies. Divinity is not mysterious! One who has *hun-qi* has it. Possessed by *hun-qi*, one is *shushen* (属神, part and parcel with spirit, possessed by a spirit and controlling the spirit); one is *lingshen* (领神, spokesperson for god or spirit).

Finally, a shaman's inspired utterances of the Seven Hulun Clans from the sixteenth year of Qing Emperor Guangxu's reign<sup>7</sup> says, "Shen is the home of energy. A shaman who uses energy has spirit, or more clearly, spiritual powers."

The aforementioned ways of understanding divinity or spirit are not just those of the Manchu and their Jurchen ancestors; they are representative of the ideologies of all northern shamanic ethnic peoples. From these excerpts, we can sum up several points. First of all, shamanism considers that the notion of deity or spirit stems from human thinking. Godly beings exist in all things around us. Different from the beliefs of some other religions, *shen* did not spring from nothing or attain divinity by ecstatic practices. Divinity is what human beings sense, perceive, and hope for in the objective world. To put it another way, spirit is the reflection of people's ideas. This understanding has a tendency towards simple materialism. Second, though shamans get in contact with the spirit world, their spiritual acts of

magic, power, and divination are all attained through their own repeated practice. They become superhuman by gathering the energy and power of all in this way and are the wise and powerful people of the clan. Third, according to shamanism, each shaman has magical power, but it admits that there are spiritual beings in the universe that can live in eternal separation from earthly living things and that bind together to exert their power on human beings to influence them to produce spiritual ideas or have spiritual experiences.

According to northern shamanism, too, the universe is filled with *qizhi* (气质, energy nature) or *qisu* (气素, energy essence). This mystic form of energy acts on humankind and all objective phenomena as a concrete form of spirit. All omens and manifestations of power are the result of its movement. The incarnation or communication of this energy, or *qi*, is prominent in shamanic thought and constitutes the heart of the operational laws of primordial shamanic spirits. The idea of divinity is actually this *qi*; it is a supernatural force that exists beyond the world of this earth. Shamans imitate, absorb, deploy and control it to cure disease, protect offspring, and predict the future. In a sense, to believe in this energy is thus to believe in spirit; it belongs to spirit. Vice versa, spirit is this energy. Spirit and energy produce and complement each other. They constitute the core power of all shamanic activities and the kernel dogma of shamanism. For this reason, my father and village elders emphasized the concept of *qiyun* (气运, energy motion) that they received from their elders. They would conduct augury sessions according to *qi-yun* to predict the harvest or the clan's fate and when an elder shaman passed away or when a *jiao'uyun* session was held to teach new clan shamans. So it is not an exaggeration to say that concepts concerning manifestations of *qi* are the oldest of all shamanic concepts handed down from generation to generation.

*Qi* is also embodied in the soul, as we shall see shortly. Ling Chunshen pointed out many years ago in *The Goldi Tribe on the Lower Sungari River (Songhuajiang xiayou de hezhezu)* that the primitive beliefs of the Hezhe (Goldi) include the belief

in the basic idea that *qi* energy produces everything. They worship their ancestors because both humans and animals have souls; they worship spirits and ghosts because disasters are caused by them; and they worship nature because all natural things are governed by spirits.

(Ling Chunshen 1934:102)

This view is accurate. It points to the fact that underlying shamanic worship is *shengqi* (生气, vitality), *qihua* (气化, energy incarnation), and *qixian* (气显, energy manifestation). The basic idea is that energy is the mother of all things.

Since ancient times, there have been philosophical discussions on the notion of *qihua*. Back in the time of the Eastern Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), the Taoist Wang Chong (王充, 27–c. 97 CE) taught that “Imbibing this fluid or energy, [humans] are born; and they live as long as they keep it. By the fusion of the *qi* of heaven and earth, all things of the world are spontaneously produced” (Wang Chong 1974). Centuries later, in the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127),



the Confucian moral philosopher and cosmologist Zhang Zai (张载, 1020–1077) stated in *Changes and Correcting Ignorance* (*Zhengmeng: Taihe*) that “In the great void, there needs must be *qi*, or energy, which comes together to produce all things.” Still later in Southern Song times (1127–1279), Cheng Yi (程颐, 1033–1107) writes,

All things were born from *qi*, or energy. They then gathered together and took shape and came to be mutually affected and transformed under certain circumstances. As the shape of *qi* became more and more extended, it gradually dispersed and finally vanished from sight.

On the whole, in ancient China, *qi* means destiny, and “What humans can feel but not see is *qi*.” Energy motion (*qiyun*) or energy manifestation (*qixian*) is the *qi*-transformed state of a human body or the cosmos. In the context of divination, it is fate or destiny. The Song dynasty work *History of Song* (*Songshi*) states that “Since heaven and earth became separated, all *qi* has been destined.” Accordingly, divination aims to determine the destined state of things.

In original shamanist thought, it is believed that all things in the universe have their origin in an extremely subtle substance which appears and disappears, increases or decreases, not unlike these philosophical notions of *qi* and the ideas in the *Book of Changes*. In my opinion, these ancient concepts of *qi* originally had a certain materialist bent. They are the fruit of a naïve understanding of the world held by people in primordial tribal society. Later, that view of the world evolved into a kind of philosophical theory as it came to be accepted and improved on by the different levels of literati. The primeval ideology of shamanism, however, has remained almost unchanged throughout the ages, with no literary emendations. Its theological notions are thus not as profound or rigorous as the theories of Taoism, Confucianism, or Buddhism, but its religious understanding of energy incarnation (*qihua*) has greater value as a primal ideological system of unique cultural significance. Although Manchu, Oroqen, Hezhe, Daur, Eastern Mongol, Xibe, Ewenki and other northern shamans differ in their supernatural experiences when possessed by the spirits, all of them have claimed to the me that the speaking of a spirit to them in a possessed state is a matter of “receiving spirit energy” and that a shaman embodies “energy motion.”

Whom the spirit chooses depends first and foremost on one’s personal *qi* or energy. Shamans say that anyone may be chosen by the spirit if they “love contemplation,” “have a tranquil mind,” and “keep their energy alive.” Many who have such qualities are young married women. Manchus chosen by the spirit have to undergo shaman training called *jao’uyun*. To invoke the spirits, tribespeople cleanse themselves and burn incense and spirit papers around the would-be shaman until they feel dizzy. In such a trance, they see phantom spirits and hear strange sounds or whisperings from nowhere. As the initiation process progresses, the person understands what the whisperings mean. If the process is successful, the person gains *qi*, hears a god’s orders and instructions, and becomes a shaman. The more a shaman prays, the greater power they will get, sometimes

eventually becoming a megashaman, with their own characteristic features and receiving much veneration. Such a great shaman lays much stress on practices focused on the energies of parts of the body to master the skill of *qi* motion and *qi* manifestation. In a sacrificial rite, they will feel at ease in spite of carrying objects up to several hundred kilograms for days and nights. Without eating or drinking, the shaman still has abundant energy, keen eyesight, and a sober mind, all of which keep tribespeople in awe. In shamans' terms, they are the marks of *qi*, energy motion (*qiyun*), or energy essence (*qisu*) that are attained through long-time practice. When praying to a deity, shamans may demonstrate supernatural abilities as evidence of their unique energy – walking on fire coals or a bed of nails, diving deep down into a stream, lifting a great weight, uprooting a tree, flying away, springing up high, descending into a gorge, putting on red-hot foot gear, rolling about on needles, or handling razor-sharp blades. They say that the supernatural energy does not come from within themselves but rather is awakened by the external force of *shenqi* (神气, spirit energy) and can be summoned to help with a particular task. It may give one either godly or demonic power, but if the spirit energy weakens or decays, the shaman will come to naught and can never serve as a medium again.

Also according to shamanism, if the external spirit energy disappears, it does not really die; it plants itself in another possessed person, who in turn becomes the tribe's shaman as external and internal energies blend together to serve the people. This is the cycle of shamanic incarnation. Many veteran shamans can thus invoke the spirits of earlier shamans. People call this possession by a past shaman. This inheritance continues age after age as the *qi* of shamanhood is passed down. Shamans bodily pass away, but the *qi* gets passed down to the next generation.

In the past, many scholars took all this as sheer superstition and looked down on it. However, Chinese research in recent years has found that *qi*-like energy indeed circulates in the human body (Sun and Li 2004:11–12). I believe that *qi* energy and supernatural power not only exist now but were present in old times as well. However, there is need for further study. The existence of a soul is another key aspect of ancient shamanist ideas about spirits. The shamanist religion claims that all things have their souls and that humans have three souls. First, there is the life soul (*minghun*, 命魂). Any living thing possesses this soul. When a creature is alive, this soul exists; when the creature dies, it ceases to exist. In this world, human beings depend mainly on this soul. The second is the floating soul (*fuhun*, 浮魂). It manifests itself as the dream soul (*menghun*, 梦魂) or the will soul (*yini-anhun*, 意念魂) and is limited only to humans and high-level beasts, birds, and insects. It may exist independently or wander out of the body to contact other living beings. The activity of this soul governs a human being's thirst for knowledge and is the source of willpower and the supernatural power of augury, mystic intuition, and wise foretelling, but it can also be affected by the external world and be a hidden source of temptation. In some rituals, the shaman draws the light of the heavens or the sun onto a sacred object, and if they fix seven-coloured sunbeams onto a person, they will make a fool wise or a coward brave. The third is the spiritual soul (*shenhun*, 神魂) or the true soul (*zhenhun*, 真魂). This soul may

lie hidden in the teeth, bones, or hair. It is eternal, the base of all the three souls, and in its incarnated state, it vitalizes humans and other animals. Shamans argue that though the body decays soon after a person dies, they can still invoke this true soul and talk with it.

The three-soul theory (*sanhun lun*, 三魂说) is found in all branches of northern shamanism – essentially the same ideology but with different names. Some Altaic and Yakut terms for soul are “*teng*” and “*kute*,” and terms for life are “*sunei*” and “*suer*.” Deep down, each living creature has a *teng* soul, and once it leaves, the person dies. There is also *kute* in every living creature, and where there is *kute*, its host is rich and their livestock thriving. Once it occupies the herder’s whip, no disease or wolf dare attack the herd. *Sunei*, however, is unique to humankind. Like the floating soul above, *sunei* makes humans think, feel, and desire, and when one falls asleep, it leaves the body to wander around. Here the human soul, in particular that of a dead person, knows how to communicate with all other souls and minor spirits and can transmigrate into another soul, and souls of the dead desire to possess a living person’s body. Shamans are commonly asked to seek out the soul of a dead person or animal in the other world. Through long-learned efforts, they can then return to the human world when summoned and possess a spirit idol. Such idols thus give comfort to the Manchu and other northern peoples; they are believed to be alive and watch over the clan or tribe day and night.

Shamanism believes that the soul, also called soul energy (*hunqi*, 魂气), is a *qi*-like substance. Folk legends imagine it as a kind of yellowish brown or murky black mist that has ever-changing forms. At one time, it may look like an oval bubble that rolls along a leaf or blade of grass like a bead of water. At another time, it may float in the air like a black bird or gallop like a horse. It is thus often referred to as a child soul (*tongzihun*, 童子魂). In any case, it is visible only to shamans or people with special sight, who can often see the floating souls, in particular those of the newly deceased. However, soul energy is often mistaken for its materialized form. In general, according to shamanism, various spirit energies move about in the cosmos, including those of humans and animals. This is the basis for spirit worship, belief in ghosts, and belief that shamans can act as spirit mediums.

One may ask what the differences between soul energy and the energy incarnation (*qihua*) mentioned earlier are. Energy incarnation refers to the energy motion (*qiyun*) of *qi*-energized forces within all natural beings, mostly within living animals and plants. On the other hand, soul energy refers to the energized form of dead humans or animals in the form of the floating souls (*fuhun*) or true souls (*zhenhun*) spoken of earlier. In fact, soul energy is the *qi* of ghosts. Energy incarnation and soul energy are thus two aspects of the spirit force of beings of nature – the one of the living, the other of the dead. In early shamanism, ghosts were regarded as a kind of spirit, with no distinction between ghosts and spirits. Ghosts were one kind of spirit, and demonic ghosts were spirits that brought about harm and are thus referred to as evil spirits in some oracles. In any case, depending on whether they are spirits of the dead or those of the living, souls manifest themselves through energy incarnation or soul energy, and shamans offer sacrifice to the spirits in terms of how much *qi* they manifest.

Different spirits fall into different cultic groupings according to a particular shaman's command over energized spirits, soul energies, and ghosts. Although the ethnic peoples of northern China have some common deities, each has its own pantheon of gods and guardian spirits in accordance with its particular living conditions and customs, and objects of worship vary widely. Worship centres mainly on bird, wolf, deer, and fish deities or on a plait of shaggy hair.

Bird cult shamans usually decorate their ritual headdress with carved eagles, with the number of eagles representing the rank of divinity. The Manchu, their Jurchen ancestors, and the linguistically related Xibe have traditionally decorated their headdresses with bird-shaped ornaments. As many as twenty-seven such ornaments may adorn the headdress of the highest ranked shaman, and falcons or condors embossed on its edges make it mighty and awe-inspiring.

The cult of the wolf is the posterity of Turkic and Mongol peoples, with most of the ethnic groups that worship the wolf doing so because it is the god of the prairie (*Caoyuan zhi shen*). Their shamans commonly wear a headdress ornamented with a wolf paw, tail, and skull. They say that wolf bone and fur produce a hallucinogenic scent and that taking whiffs of it draws one into a ritual trance, under the influence of which they may do what no one has ever done before.

In tribes of the deer cult, deer antlers represent the chief shaman, with the number of tines on the headdress indicating the rank of shamanic divinity and cultic group. Such tribes are often primordial tribes of North and Northeast Asia, especially forest peoples. As can be known from artefacts and conversations with veteran shamans, this is a long tradition. It is said that the earliest headdress insignia were wild beast bones or horns but that later they came from various local animals, including, according to recent excavations, broken mammoth teeth. As later ethnic groups evolved, wild beasts were driven away to distant mountains, and deer antlers began to be used – delicate, light, and handsome. As time went by, this became the common folk custom. Some Manchu clans have used them, whereas others have preferred bird ornaments.

Fish cults were often seen among Indigenous people on Sakhalin Island and the Amur Estuary. Ornaments for their shamanic headdresses are fish bones and skins and fish-skin beads. Their shamans often worship sea and river deities, especially the East Sea goddess, who has a fish head and woman's body. She is thought to govern light, warmth and water and has the duty of sending these precious gifts to the human world, along with the seven-coloured rays of the sun and fresh dew. As is typical of shamanic water spirits, only a few can fly.

As I have said, one cult centres on a plait of shaggy hair in the shaman's headdress. The brim of the headdress is trimmed with cloths of seven colours or leather or iron. The plait is made by intertwining a woman's hair with caudal bristles and the beard of a seal or sealion. The shaman wears long hair drooping over their shoulders and decorates their forehead with bone or stone beads and the like. Sometimes a string of bones from a bird's neck or around the eyes of a fish is also used. Shamans of several northern peoples have used such a headdress. Buryat shamans often dress themselves like a beggar seeking blessings from the gods. They are called *qiuqi* shaman and are thought to have divine status far beyond others.

Finally, there is also the worship of the demonic ghosts mentioned earlier. This is a rather recent phenomenon; it was not part of the original worldview of northern shamanic cultures but rather a product of Han culture, with its witches and Taoist ideology. Under Han influence, lords of the underworld and ghosts came to be absorbed into the shaman pantheon. Nevertheless, this cannot be ignored.

#### **1.4 The multilayered shamanic world**

The ancient idea of multiple heavens was the cornerstone of fledging shamanism in the north, and in the pantheon of northern shamanism, the gods of heaven have always held an eminent place. The global academic community has put great efforts into studying the ancient multiple heavens concepts and notions of heavenly deities. Some Chinese scholars have argued that “the god of heaven as a comprehensive concept appeared very late” (Qiu Pu 1985:19), but this does not agree with the worship of heaven found in the rites of northern ethnic peoples. In accordance with first-hand investigations of the shamanic heritage of the region and Manchu shaman’s inspired utterances, I think that shamanic worship of the celestial being is a time-honoured tradition and that it is essentially different from the worship of deified emperors that arouse after the emergence of class society. The worship of heavenly forces of nature is based on the concept held by primordial human beings that natural phenomena and forces are strong-willed, living beings. The most prominent heavenly objects worshipped in northern shamanism are those that have close ties with humans – the sun, the moon, wind, snow, thunder, lightning, hail, and so on and influence peoples’ daily lives. In the minds of early human beings, the divine world has a profound influence on the human world, and divine beings may come into this world, dwell in anything, and play dominant roles. Any social change or natural phenomenon beyond human control was thus considered the work of divine forces. In Chinese, the generic name for these forces is expressed in the ideographic character *tian* (天, heaven), which the 121 CE Han dynasty dictionary *Interpretation of Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi*) translates as “the great supreme being.” The most eminent shamanist deities are the unfathomable, unbounded heaven and the fleeting heavenly forces of wind, thunder, and lightning: those that kept primordial human beings in awe. The worship of heavenly deities was surely an initial notion of shamanic belief.

Early myths speak of the chaos of the primordial cosmos. Among the Savage Jurchen of the far north lower-middle reaches of the Amur, one of three Jurchen groups noted in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the widespread Manchu shamanic myth “War in Heaven” (*Tiangong dazhan*) says of the primordial chaotic world that “A long, long time ago, there was no materialized heaven. It flowed like flood waters and floated like clouds.” The heaven and earth were too dense to be separated, and heaven had not yet taken supremacy over the earth. As with other ancient notions of the primordial universe, in this myth heaven had no fixed form, let alone divinity. Norse myths express a similar belief that the universe was originally in sheer chaos – no heaven, no earth, no sea (Mao Dun 1929:17). Similarly, an ancient Chinese text states that “The world in chaos was thick like an egg” – a

simple shamanic metaphor of the primordial heaven as an embryo, with flowing water and clouds symbolizing heaven's movements. Some Manchu inspired shamanic utterances express ancient peoples' sense of the vastness of heaven with the poetic expression, "The blue sky is lofty and unbounded," and the oracles of some tribes speak of heaven as the dwelling of Sūn Morin, the sun horse. With a feeling of the awe that surrounds ancients' worship of celestial beings, still other oracles celebrate the multicoloured clouds in the sky as "acts of gods or spirits," "things transformed by spirits," and "the movement of the spirits."

Ancient mythic interpretations of the structure of the world of heaven vary in line with the observations of different northern peoples, and this gave rise to a multitude of oracles. One Manchu oracle says, "Rising up in the clouds, one finds that the heaven has ninety-nine levels, each inhabited by different spirits." The Japanese researcher Akamatsu Chijyo discovered an inspired shamanic utterance in North Korea who claims that the universe "has thirty-nine divine worlds" (Akamatsu Chijyo 1938). Some Turkic shamans have thought that "there are thirty-three heavenly worlds. Tuvans of southern Siberia also have a belief in thirty-three heavens. Manchu shamans commonly think of heaven as divided into nine levels, the nine realms of the divine cosmos, with "nine" meaning simply "very many" or "infinite." Other northern ethnic groups have had similar notions.

In general, the cosmos is thought to have multiple, even countless, heavens. Russian scholar N.A. Alekseyev speaks of a Yakut shaman who had to stop to take many breaks – to be accurate, thirty-nine – before visiting the great spirit of the cosmos Urutoiweng. In line with the Yakut tradition of the worship of heaven, many veteran shamans have taught the art of *oyon*, a shamanic term that means "spinning the soul thrice to ascend to heaven." A shaman makes turns, commonly three, to leave their body and go up to the heaven in trance. In the past, a shaman had to work hard to pass this tribal test. If one does not pass, one could not be a true shaman and deserve the divine title, but if one passes, one can act as spirit medium who serves the tribe by knowing oracles and conveying prayers to the gods.

In the minds of Manchu and other northern peoples, the cosmos is imagined as a cosmic tree. Legend has it that this tree is at the centre of the cosmos and connects all sub-universes. Its roots are the underworld, the trunk the intermediate world, and its seven or nine branches the worlds of divinities. This metaphor reflects an early view of the cosmos when human thinking was only budding. It dates back far earlier than the number-based expression of the various levels of the cosmos, and it has influenced the thought of all the shamanic peoples of China, Siberia, and Northeast Asia. In accordance with this concept, the Manchu erect their sacred pole and the Mongols set up the *oboo*, a ritual heap of stones or wood piled up at a mountain pass or highland, with willow branches stuck in it.

The shamanic multiple heaven view of ancient slave and feudal societies and the so-called feudal society of late Qing dynasty was at various times influenced and infiltrated by Buddhism, Tibetan Lamaism, and Christianity. In particular, when the ruling class of the early Qing dynasty sought to promote the standardization of sacrificial rites, they introduced into shamanic rituals nonshamanic deities



such as Avalokiteśvara and sagacious lord Guan Yu, the great general of the late Eastern Han dynasty who died in 220 EC and has been popularly revered for his loyalty and bravery. The multiple heaven view has continued in northeastern shamanism, but the primitive concepts of heaven have faded out, and the theory of three realms (*Sanjie Shuo*, 三界说) has widely spread. As stated in the encyclopaedic opus *Classified Qing Anecdotes* (*Qingbai leichao*) compiled by Qing scholar Xu Ke (徐珂) and published in 1917, "Shamanism established the concept of three realms: the first, Upper Realm, is paradise; the second, Middle Realm, is earth; the third, Lower Realm, points to Hell or the Underworld" (Xu Ke 1984:63–64). The Upper Realm is the abode of the deities, the Lower Realm is dominated by the devil, and the Middle Realm is inhabited by human beings. Xu Ke's account is based on North Asian and Nordic shamanic ideas. Of the Ewenki in Siberia, it is said that

In light of the shamanic symbolic cosmos of the Ewenks, there are three realms of the universe: the Upper World in the east, from which the shamanic Endekit River rises; the Middle World, namely the river itself; and the Lower World in the north. The mighty cosmic river has many branches, and each branch also has sub-branches, each the domain of a particular shaman. Later the Upper World was believed to be a realm of a deity called Xewuji, Aike-saili, or Mayin, along with unborn souls, or *aomidai*. The lower reaches of the river world is that of dead souls.

(Guo Yanshun and Sun Yunlai 1983:92–93)

Buddhism also has the concept of three cosmic realms, but they are understood differently: the Realm of Sensuous Desire for humans, the Realm of Form for semi-gods, and the Realm of Formlessness for pure spirits. The second realm has many heavens. Unlike shamanism, Buddhism preaches ideas of emptiness such as *karma* and meditative concentration. Xu Ke's account is widely divergent from this Buddhist concept.

Comparing the three realms view with the more original multiple heaven view helps us recognize how human thinking in the area has evolved. As the numeric abstraction of the universe evolved from multiple heavens to three realms with the development of society, northern shamanism became more hybrid, and its cosmos became richer and more vivid. It incorporated ideas of diverse nature such as the supreme being of Christianity and the Orthodox Church, Buddhist *karma* and Lord Yama, and the five emperors of the Taoist netherworld. The Yakut notion of three realms, for example, was possibly influenced by Protestantism or Eastern Orthodox ideas. Quite a few ethnic groups came to believe in the existence of hell. The Hezhe have thought that the Upper World is heaven, the Middle World is this mortal world, and the Lower World is the abode of monsters and demons, whose duty is to punish sinners. According to Mongol shamanism, the Upper World is inhabited by divine beings who often fight to protect mortals from the forces of hell that spread plagues and disasters throughout the human world (Lin Chunsheng 1934:103). There is also an unknown realm between the Middle World and the



Lower World which the dead inhabit. For their part, Turkic peoples, as reported by Japanese scholar Shibata Kenzo in *A Record of Manchu Religions* (*Manzhou zongjiao zhi*), have believed in Dange Karahan, the good heavenly spirit, who is like Jesus Christ in Christianity. This deity partitioned the cosmos into the world of light and the world of darkness of human beings. Heaven is the world of gods and spirits, while hell abounds with demons and ghosts (Liu Jianguo 1981:120).

Handwritten shaman's inspired utterances that I collected suggest that the three-realm view has prevailed in the shamanist cultures of the Nordic peoples and the peoples of North and Northeast Asia and that the more traditional nine-heaven view has dominated the northeast of China, but with influences of the three-realm concept. The Manchu concept is the richest and most mythological of all, embellished with tales of subduing demons and monsters. In the mythic tale Nishan Shaman, a shamaness descends to the Lower World at the request of an elderly couple to meet the lord of the underworld Erleg Khan and bring back the soul of their young son. In the myth "Nine Heavens in the Three Realms" ("Jiutian sanjie"), the Manchu cosmos has the traditional nine levels, but they are separated into three realms. The highest three levels comprise the realm of heaven: the heavenly realm, the realm of fire, and the realm of light. There dwell the supreme god of heaven, Abka Enduri, and other deities, along with many animal and plant spirits and deceased heroes. In portrayals collected from many clans, there are two divine birds that govern the sun at the left and the moon at the right and that glow with dazzling light throughout heaven. The realm of the middle three levels is for humans, birds, animals, and lesser sprites. The realm of the lowest levels is that of the netherworld. It is the home of the earth mother Banaji Emu, night-watching female spirits, and the devil Yeluli. As messengers of the nine heavens, shamans can fly up to the skies to converse with deities in the realm of heaven, subdue unwholesome spirits in the human realm, and descend to the dark place, where they sweep away all the demons but also invoke Banaji Emu for a good harvest and abundance across the land.

The complex cosmic concept of the Manchus and their Jurchen ancestors maintains the original idea that heaven and earth are in somewhat chaotic communion. Their earthly realm is not Buddhist hell, but it includes demons and troublesome sprites, and as we know from the Manchu creation myth "War in Heaven," the demon Yeluli can rush up to the heaven and make havoc there. That is quite a dialectical idea, and no divisions are absolute. Everything complements everything else. Plagues, disasters, and misfortunes frequently befall the human world, and the underworld is the home not only of evil spirits but also of divine beings like Banaji Emu. The birth of these ideas is bound up with ancient peoples' custom of dwelling in caves. As is said in the 445 CE *Book of Later Han* (*Houhan shu*) by Fan Ye (范曄), "cave dwellers may climb down nine ladders to descend below." This living pattern led them to worship earthly spirits and spirits of the underground. This idea is not limited to the Manchu. Indigenous people in the Arctic have also believed that there is world deep in the underground that is not the exclusive domain of darkness and evil: "It enjoys more beautiful sunshine than above ground, and it feels like summer all the year round" (Jin Qicong 1986). All

this forms the totality of the multidimensional framework of the multiple heaven shamanist world of northern China.

## Notes

- 1 Qianlong 乾隆 (1711–1799). His sixty-year reign was marked by cultural and economic prosperity, during which Manchu language genealogies, histories, ritual handbooks, the *Shamanic Code*, and the *Complete Books of the Four Imperial Libraries* 《四库全书》 were compiled.
- 2 The Oroqen 鄂伦春 are ethnic people in northern China who live mainly in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Heilongjiang. They are traditionally mainly hunters and customarily use animal fur and skins for clothing. They believe in shamanism.
- 3 The Daur 达斡尔 are ethnic people of northern China who live mainly in the Morin Dawa Daur autonomous banner, Hulun Buir, and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, but some live near Tacheng in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. They belong to the Mongol branch of the Altaic linguistic family and believe in shamanism.
- 4 The Ewenki 鄂温克 are ethnic people of northern China who live mainly in Heilongjiang and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. They belong to the Manchu-Tungus branch of the Altaic linguistic family and believe shamanism.
- 5 The Hezhe 赫哲族 are ethnic people in China and are known as Nanai in Russia and formerly as Golds, Goldes, Goldi, or Samagir. Traditionally living by fishing and hunting along the Amur, Sunggari, and Ussuri rivers, they believe in shamanism and have a rich oral literature known as *yimakan*.
- 6 In Chinese philosophy, *yin-yang* refers to how opposite or contrary forces are actually complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world and how they give rise to each other as they interrelate.
- 7 Guangxu 光绪 (1871–1908) is the eleventh Qing emperor, who reigned from 1875 to 1908, but in actual reality from 1889 to 1898 and under Dowager Empress Cixi's 慈禧 influence. He initiated the Hundred Day's Reform but was abruptly stopped when she launched a coup in 1898 and put him under house arrest until his death.

## 2 Nature worship

According to the world view of the Udege people, “There is nothing without life in nature or the cosmos. Everything is a living being, alive like humans. Even the earth itself is a gigantic living creature” (Arsenyev 1983:305). This is in line with the idea of the polytheistic shamanism of the peoples in northern China. In the eyes of primordial tribal groups, their celestial and secular worlds were inhabited by a variety of deities and spirits who were of different functions and statuses, good or evil. As a German poet said centuries later, “In every tree, there is a spirit breathing now. The world seen by our eyes is full of holy spirits” (Heine 1974:21). In the traditional shamanic view, the entire cosmos, is a paradise of countless spirits (*shen*) to whom shamans address their prayers. The roots of religious belief sprung from the weakness we experienced in the times when nature did not support our life needs. In any case, striving to survive and have a peaceful life, primeval human beings spontaneously worshipped nature. In northern shamanism in China, each clan commonly had its own spirit deities who lived in harmony with one another, not encroaching on one other’s authority. Some personified natural forces, though humanlike, and were actually animals and plants. Still others were idols or figurines that symbolized forces of life, and some were great clan ancestors who contributed much to the clan, of which clan protective deities were most prominent.

### 2.1 Nature deities

In the early shamanism of northern China, multiple materialized forms were piously believed to be spirits. At the earliest stage of shamanism, people thought that everything had a soul. Their worship of nature began with natural phenomena and later came to involve human and half-human spirits. Nature worship focused on figures that may seem rather strange but that are strongly symbolic. A rock or cliff is drawn simply in miniature, for example, to represent a mountain: , as often be found on shamanic costumes, headdress, and ritual vessels. Water lines are also commonly seen on shamanic costumes at the bottom of a shaman’s ritual skirts . For their part, straw, fur, or cloth strips symbolizing wind are woven into shamanic costumes as , some sewn together with hundreds or even thousands of colourful ornaments.

In the shamanic world, all things have souls, and as long as wandering souls are represented on ritual garments or objects, a shaman can offer prayers to an object of nature anywhere and anytime.

The sun, moon, and stars enjoy the highest reverence in nature worship. Adoration of the sun dates back early in the history of northern shamanism. This is because ancient tribes in the cold north had a dread of natural forces like frost, ice, and snow, which they regarded as threats to humans and other creatures. A snow-storm can destroy all mountain life overnight. Northern shamanism thus attaches great importance to the sun god. When the first day of the first lunar month comes, northern peoples have a long-standing custom of venerating the east, where the sun rises. The Oroqen have called the sun Derecin, a supreme being. A story narrated in 13th-century *The Secret History of the Mongols* (*Menggu mishi*) says, "I dreamed of a great white falcon bearing the sun and the moon with its claws into my hands" (Tsandin Damdinsüren 1956:41).<sup>1</sup> On the basis of oracle tales of the Manchu Fuca Hala (clan), the first shaman was brought from the east by a white falcon whose paws held a dazzling stone called *dunen* (brilliant sun), which was actually the soul of the sun. Later, the *dunen* evolved into a plurality, *dunensi* (myriad brilliant suns).<sup>2</sup> For this reason, a shaman always wears many glistening crystals and small bronze mirrors (*tori* in Manchu). According to veteran shamans' ancestral records, the mirrors symbolize the bright sun and are rare treasures that can dispel all evils, show demons' true colours, and point the path to divinity.

Among emblems of the sun, moon, and stars, the sun mirror is the largest. A shaman commonly wears two mirrors during a ritual performance, the larger on the chest and the other on the back, which signifies bearing the sun and the moon respectively. Another two mirrors are placed at both shoulders – the sun to the left and the moon to the right – and still another two are hung on the front and back of the waist to indicate mutual, eternal shining. In addition, every part of the shaman's costume is inlaid with small mirrors, stringed clam shells, stones, bones, horns, and fish gills. Shamanic tales say that celestial bodies were transformed from polished mirrors scattered about by the spirits, so such bodily ornaments are naturally associated with the stars of the cosmos. Most of the personified deities of northern shamanic natural worship are female, and shamanic myth says that the celestial stars are all female. The sun, in Manchu language *sūn*, is the eldest sister; Biya (moon) is the second sister; white clouds are next, and stars are other younger sisters. Together they constitute a huge female celestial family. Even a male shaman has to dress like a shamaness; otherwise, he cannot be in trance. The female celestial concept manifests the ancient shamanic lineage of female supremacy that goes back to the matriarchal age. The mirrors on the shaman's costume reflect the fact that in old times men often covered only their privates and buttocks, and the mirror covering the crotch refers figuratively to female fertility and fertility worship, as will be discussed later.

As society marched forth, fishing and hunting peoples formed the idea that a divine animal governs the sun. In the Manchu heroic epic *Umesiben Mama*, the story of the shamaness chieftain Umesiben, who unified the Donghai Jurchen

ancestors of the Manchus, the sun is *sūn morin*, a horse running the course of the day, and Manchu myth regards it as a white horse with radiant flames that runs so fast that no one dare see its light. Another ethnic group represents it as a running deer, and Han people believe it is a divine bird that flies time and time again. According to an early Manchu shamanic myth, the venerable mother sun, called Sūn Anbo Mama, has fiery hair as long as the nine (myriad) heavens. It flows down to earth and illuminates it with vibrant light. The mother sun lives in the nine heavens, busily dispatching minor spirits to the earth, in particular as the spirit who became the first shaman. The story says that long, long ago, she ordered the eagle deity to nurse a baby girl and bring her up to be a powerful shaman. So a shaman is the sun's daughter, and as we have said, the mirrors on shaman garments are metamorphosed as the light from the sun. The story continues as follows:

The wind deity Sisilin is a powerful deity who can devour everything with his broad mouth. He is a womanizer as well, and many females wanted to be his wife. The sun, however, flatly denied his approaches, so he always chased after her. Running all the time, she left him far behind. Sisilin got furious and blew away the sun from her sister the moon, so that the two sisters could never meet each other again. When the sun came out, everything bloomed, but when it hid from the wind, the icy earth became lifeless.

Shamanist believers have commonly offered blood sacrifice to the wind deity, who would devour the blood, mistake it for the sun, and stop chasing the sun. The sun could thus come out again.

Sun worship has first place in shamanism because its light and heat were indispensable. Moon worship comes second. The moon was considered a "very kind, tender sister," and tales about the moon deity flourished once the sense of the yearly seasons came to the fore with improved methods of agriculture. Northern myths see the moon as the deity of the hunt, as a goddess patrolling the night, or as a huge lantern illuminating the night.

There is also the cloud deity Ili Gege of the Manchu and Ilan Tusu of other northern peoples, such as the Oroqen, Daur, Ewenki, Hezhe, and Xibe.<sup>3</sup> The cloud deity is a graceful, attractive goddess. Although fairly obstinate, as a sister of Sūn Anbo Mama, she protected the spirit princess Sūn Gege. The cloud goddess is clever at making bridges and tents out of clouds and using them to beautify the sky. She usually travels around the heavens quietly with many wandering fairies and elves clinging to her colourful attire. In the Manchu creation myth of the Heishui (Black River) Jurchen tribes, "War in Heaven," however, she blocked Sisilin in his chase after the sun. The sky became a maze that the sky goddess Abka Hehe created to entrap the demon Yeluli, and if a shaman wants to ascend to the sky, they need to use clouds as wings or a ladder of stars or bright sunbeams. Shaman garments must have cloud patterns, which are said to have been brought into use by the first shaman from heaven.

In "War in Heaven," the beautiful goddess Nimanggi Mama or Xangyan Mama helps Abka cover the earth with her white vapour to make the dark evil demon

Yeluli materialize. Sūn Gege directs strong beams of light at him, and Nimanggi's son Bonoku punches him. Yeluli has no choice but to run away into the depths of the earth and is finally defeated. Nimanggi Mama is the snow deity, and her son Bonoku the hail deity. For peoples in the North, snow was neither a threat nor a disaster but an intimate friend. Snow could bring them everything – a house, a tent, skis, and a cellar for storing food and sheltering themselves from wild beasts. So it is no small wonder that snow is personified as holy mother.

In northern shamanism, the worship of the sky or heaven (*tian* 天) goes back to the matriarchal era when many deities were females. It embraces all of the natural phenomena associated with the sky: clouds, fog, dew, snow, rain, thunder, frost, hail, mist, rainbows, stars, and so on. In the traditions of northern peoples, it finds expression mainly in two systems, depending on the two main names of the sky god: Abka for the Manchu, Hezhe and Xibe peoples of the Manchu language family, and Tenggeri for the Mongol and Daur of the Turkic family. Other appellations are Buwasong in the Ewenki (Solon) language and Wujichu in Oroqen. Although the worship of heaven involves the worship of everything that appears in the sky, it cannot be compared with the divinity of later monotheistic religions. Moreover, heaven and the heavenly deities are quite different. Neither is subordinate to the other, and the heavenly deities are all sisters who have equal status. The shamanic concept of sky or heaven in the matriarchal period is analogous to relationships within matriarchal society, and it became imbedded in people's consciousness as it evolved into a mythology of goddesses in a female family of divinities. The heavenly kingdom was thus a mirror of matriarchal society. For his part, the supreme male heaven deity Abka Enduri came into existence as society evolved forwards later and became patriarchal.

As society evolved, later Indigenous peoples came to express their sacrificial worship of heaven in more-ceremonious forms, and as can be seen from ritual documents and official histories, a system of rites began taking shape. Ever since the Mongols' rise in the northern steppes, they have kept the rite of worshipping Tenggeri, using simple ritual garments and clean sacrificial utensils. According to the *History of Yuan (Yuan shi)*,<sup>4</sup> the emperor and empress would always attend the rite, along with other royalty. On the eighth day of the eighth month of the second year of his reign (1252), Emperor Möngke Khan<sup>5</sup> worshipped heaven (Tenggeri) at Mount Riyue in sacrificial dress. On the twelfth day of the twelfth month, he decided to erect a sacrificial altar in the southeast, seven *li* (1 *li* = 0.5 km) from the Lizheng Gate (currently Qianmen) of the capital. Two tablets were set up for the supreme lord of heaven and imperial queen of earth, and the emperor would thereafter attend major rites there to offer sacrifice to heaven and earth (Song Lian 1975). The shamanic worship of nature and heaven highlighted the importance of mountain worship. According to the *History of Liao (Liao shi)*,<sup>6</sup>

For the Mountain Sacrifice, tablets are erected for the god of heaven and queen of earth toward the east at Muye Mountain. One tree is planted amid other trees to stand for the emperor surrounded by state ministers, and two other trees are planted to resemble a sacred gate. If a drought causes havoc,

an auspicious day should be selected to hold a rite to ask for rain by shooting willow sprigs three times, twice by the emperor and once by each minister. For the rite to worship the sun, the emperor shall go up to the altar and kneel down twice on a cushion toward the Sun and then light incense sticks and insert them in the censer.

(Toqto'a et al. 1975)

The *History of Jin (Jin shi)*<sup>7</sup> reads that “The Jin court followed the Liao rites for the worship of heaven on the Double Fifth Festival, the Hungry Ghost Festival, and the Double Ninth Festival” (Toqto'a et al. 1975).

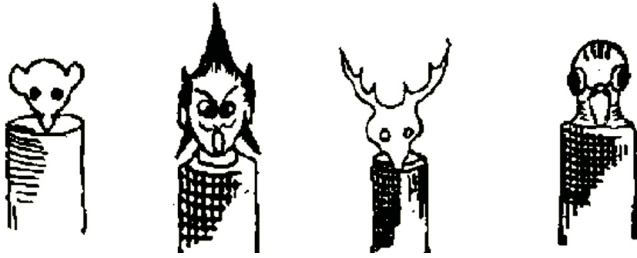
The Qing dynasty (1644–1911) subsequently accepted all these past royal sacrificial rites, raising the rite to worship heaven to a new height. The records indicate that the worship of heaven was not merely a matter of worshipping nature; it included the concept of worshipping a supreme being. This points to shamanism's eventually becoming monotheistic, but that transition was still in its infancy, with many deities' still having equal status among them. The concept of a supreme being appeared much later.

Mountain worship emerged as clans developed from a fishing and hunting economy to a more complex system. To worship a mountain is, for any clan, to worship the place of their settlement. In the fledging fishing and hunting economy, people often moved from place to place, but with the advance of farming and hunting, they needed to attach themselves to mountains. Only then, when they settled down and lived by a mountain, could they think of worshipping it as a steep and lofty height which could inspire awe. Manchu clans believed that mountain deities were both male and female, and in the Qing dynasty, the mountain god was called Murin Murinhan and worshipped as the hunting god. Along with mountain worship, the nature worship of northern shamanism later led to the worship of animals and plants.

## 2.2 Totem deities

It has long been thought that there was no totem or fetish worship except from the Indigenous peoples in what is now called Australia, Mesopotamia, and what is now called North America. Instead, however, all primordial humans took to animals, plants, and phenomena of nature as totems in their worship of tribal ancestors, and even in modern times, the totem worship of natural forces can be found in Africa, Oceania, and Asia. It is also found among the northern peoples of China. Some scholars have denied this because no corresponding ancient symbolic figures have yet been discovered, but totem worship naturally sprang up in clan societies of people related by blood. Such peoples readily took animals, plants, or nonliving things as their logos or special protectors and thought of themselves as having special kinship with them. It can thus reasonably be argued that totemic figures existed in tribes and clans who believed in shamanism in northern China even though no artefacts have actually been discovered. An oracle of the Seven Hulun Clans<sup>8</sup> from the twenty-sixth year of the Qing dynasty Guangxu (光绪,





1875–1908) speaks of the existence of nine poles used in fire sacrifices with an antlered deer head, eagle head, bear head, and horned human face carved on them.

These odd-looking poles are not ordinary works of art; they are clan symbols with distinctive totemic implications. Sacred eagles, deer heads and antlers, leopard tails, and wolf tails are often found on clan shamans' headdresses. I argue that these animal ornaments are the equivalent of totemic logos and that they later became the group's mark of its deities. They were called *mafa* in the language of the Jurchen ancestors of the Manchu, meaning "ancestral god." Along with animals, plant totems have also been a vital force in Manchu shamanic culture. Willows, for example, have been an object of worship until present day. Perhaps as a reflection of the totemic awareness of an ancient stage of Manchu culture, they are associated with the female genitals as a fertility symbol, and they are the object of solemn lofty feelings of respect expressed by kneeling and peons of praise.

Scholars who doubt whether northern peoples have totem worship think that they could not have had so many totems or regarded plants and animals as totems. They overlook the hard fact, however, that tens of thousands of years have witnessed repeated separations, unifications, and interethnic fusions leading to the present mixed distribution of China's northern ethnic minority peoples. These peoples have become a mixture of ancient Turkic, Khitan, Mongol, and Jurchen tribes. Most Khitans interbred with Jurchens, and Jurchens are not pure blood-line descendants of their more ancient Sushen ancestors.<sup>9</sup> Before the formation of the Manchus, fusions had occurred among Jurchens, Hans, and Mongols, and in the late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing dynasties, there were frequent fights, mergers, and divisions among interethnic groups, whose original beliefs ebbed and flowed with historical changes. It is hard to know what kinds of clan totems the ancient ancestors of present northern Chinese peoples had, but they surely varied greatly in style and functions that have been transmitted intact to this day as an indispensable aspect of their Indigenous shamanistic cultures.

One such totem is the bear, which is strongly enshrined among northern peoples. As Derevyanko has noted in *Tribes in the Amur River Basin*, "Some ancient tribes in the Far East often call the bear *amaha*, referring grandpa or dad, or in the forest *etihen*, *etihen*, meaning old man or uncle. Such names seem closely related with totemism" (Derevyanko 1987). The Ewenki traditionally call bears their grandpas and grandmas. The Oroqen's name for them is *nionioku*, but they never

use that name directly; instead, they respectfully call the bear *amaha* (maternal uncle), *yaya* (grandfather), or *taitei* (grandmother). Traditionally, they paid tribute to the bear before it was butchered and pretended to cry after it was eaten. Some Manchu clans summoned the bear god in sacrificial rites, and some, such as the Seven Hulun Clans, painted it on their clan banners. Ancient tribes formed totemic groups that evolved into subtribes over the course of time. Their banner totems remained unchanged, which evokes a primordial feeling and adds to the complexity of shamanistic evolution. Bear worship has also enjoyed a long currency among Siberian peoples north of the Amur, such as the Buryat, Nivkh, Feiyaka, Ewenki (Nanai or Goldi), Hezhe, and Udege. Before killing a bear for meat, these ethnic groups celebrated a sacred bear rite, in which group members regaled themselves in joyous communion. They traditionally considered it their most grand festive rite, and those who got a share of the bear meat were believed to be protected and to remain invincible because the bear's invincible soul enters their body.

The northern peoples of Asia have had other totems as well, such as the wolf, leopard, birds, and fish. The Mongols, Oroqen, and others idolized the wolf with awe. The Oroqen named it *gusige* but venerated it as *weng*, an onomatopoeic term which sounds like a wolf's howling (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986c:52). The Manchu also offered sacrifices to the wolf god and painted it on their clan banner. The Ewenki traditionally worshipped a sort of grey heron (*galebule* in Tungus languages). They treasured it so much that neither shooting nor even scaring it away was allowed (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986b:341). Some Manchu clans paid special reverence to the eagle goddess, a mother deity with an eagle head and human body that has two huge breasts, a bulging belly, and a swollen vulva. Worshipped as the mother of the human race and the first shaman, she served as the protective deity of many Jurchen and later Manchu tribes, and I argue that she must have been their totem in the matriarchal age. Other ethnic groups, such as the Hezhe, have similar beliefs. Kori, the eagle deity in the Hezhe *yimakan*-style<sup>10</sup> creation epic evokes the invincibility of a shamaness. In that Hezhe story, the earliest human was *kade* or *huodai*; among the Oroqen, it was *huodou* or *hadou*, all transliterated in Chinese as *xuan niao* (玄鸟, bird of fantasy). *Kade* was male in Hezhe patriarchal society, but the deity retained vestiges of their original female forerunners.

Influenced by animism, northern fishing and hunting peoples have diversified rituals of shamanistic animal and plant worship. Manchu clans have beasts, birds of prey, or plants as deities, numbering up to seventy and ranging from land and marine mammals to small reptiles like frogs, lizards, and even snails. The various forms of worship passed down among them can never be thought to stem from totemism in a narrow sense; nor are they all derived simply from the prevalent matrilineal clan kinship of ancient times. Rather, their totemism appeared with the improvement and expansion of the livelihood methods of primordial people as they developed needs and fantasies for controlling and possessing the animals, waters, and grasslands of their areas. They thus came to enshrine pieces of the land with a sense of mystery. That is the origin of their nature worship. Fear,

need, and desire can give rise to the worship of deities, and springing from such emotions, primordial shamanism came to include the worship of more and more deities, such that almost all living things were ultimately included. Of course, various tribes or clans have had different animal or plant deities in accord with their similar, but not identical, living conditions. Their worship of animals and plants is discussed throughout this book, but not independently in any particular chapter.

### 2.3 Fire worship

Fire is a great force of nature with a long history. It was cherished by human beings as soon as it was discovered and has played a huge role in human development. Fire worship was integral to northern shamanism, and fire sacrifices were offered to praise fire for its powerful service in dispelling cold, evil, and impurities and were offered as prayers for clan peace and prosperity. Fire worship originated from simple primordial nature rites of praying to heaven for warmth, light, and peace, and it has continued as an ancient custom among northern nationalities. As the famous Turkish scholar Abdülkadir Inan wrote in *Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm (Shamanism in History and Today)*:

Every shaman rite involves fire, and as a much-favored ritual, fire sacrifice has continued over a long period of time. Fire stunts were often performed when tribal-wide sacrifices were held. The scene was exciting and lively as tribesmen competed with one another in understanding, saving, setting and mastering fire. Elders would chant stories of the fire deity, and women exchanged their skills and taboos about using fire. All this reflects northern ancestors' heroic optimism.

(Inan 1979)

According to records of the clan sacrifices of the Lang Hala in the Jin dynasty, the Jurchens used to sprinkle salt into the flames during a sacrifice, and if there was no salt, they used chips of wood. The sound of the crackling salt was taken as an auspicious omen. Moreover, a shaman would beat their drum, jangle their waist bells, and light a fire before a new house was built or the bride carried in. Fire was used, too, to burn out rats in the weeds in a custom known as chasing out ghosts (*qugui*, 驱鬼). As the *History of Liao: Treatises of Rituals, Ritual on the Eve of the Spring Festival (Liaoshi lizhi suichuyi)* reads,

In the early evening, ritual officiants along with court sacrificial attendants would come to the gate of the imperial palace. They put salt and mutton into a brazier fire, and shamans and mega shamans worshipped the fire deity in order. Lastly, ceremonial escorts would lead the emperor to worship the fire twice.

(Toqto'a 1974)

The *History of Liao* also has a record of a ritual of "setting fire to sacrificial objects to offer worship to heaven" (Toqto'a 1974). Later, the Yuan dynasty held

what was apparently the same ritual to worship heaven. A shaman would light a fire in a stone basin on the ground or in the courtyard. The ritual officiant would then butcher and flay a pig or sheep and scrape and wash the meat before roasting it as an offering to the deities.

Fire sacrifice was common among northern fishing and hunting tribes. *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao* (*Liangshi hanwang zhuan*) and *Records of the Grievances of the East Sea* give (*Donghai chenyuan lu*) offer a glimpse into the Jurchen hunting fire rite: the tribal chief would lead the tribespeople in deciding the location in the mountains for sprinkling wine and worshipping the god of the hunt. Then they would start shouting loudly and beating the rocks while setting fire all around. As the flames grew bigger, they all chased after wild beasts, and when the fire died out, they killed them and offered the nine largest ones to heaven. After scraping and washing the meat, they enjoyed eating the “heavenly fire meat.” The Daur and Ewenki also had this custom. Sometimes called going fire hunting, it was actually a primitive mode of hunting.

According to traditional Manchu beliefs, to learn the past is to recall the past, and through play that imitates ancestral customs, people can learn and recall the past. In one ritual game, they light fires, and as the flames grow bigger, they play at chasing wild beasts. In another tradition, on the eve of the Spring Festival, they erect piles of firewood and foretell the peace of the coming year by huge bonfire. Manchu folklorist Zhao Wenjin (赵文金) recalled that the Manchu in former times had the custom of greeting the fire deity Tuwa Enduri to dispel evil. They kept an “eternal fire” alive and prohibited spitting into it, because for them it was holy, pure, and alive. In fact, they thought that something can be pure only after being torched or burnt.

Among the Mongols, the Zasag decree of Genghis Khan explicitly stipulates fire taboos. During the rite of alliance between the Jurchen King Wang Gao (王杲) and other chieftains, as well as between Wang Gao and the Gorlos Mongols, they sprinkled the blood of a black ox on a fire and then walked through the fire together. While being presented to Batu Khan, an envoy from Russia was ordered to walk through two fires to cleanse impurities. It was thought to be a great sin “to insert a knife in the fire, touch fire by any other means, pick a piece of meat from the pot or chop anything beside a fire” (Wu Yisang and Bagen 1987). For the Oroqen, the fire deity is called Tuowo Bukan. When having a meal, people would put some of the food into the fire as an offering. Splashing water on a fire and poking at a fire with a knife or fork were prohibited, so as not to infuriate the deity. A guest coming during the Spring Festival ought first to kneel to the fire deity and then wish the host a happy New Year. The Ewenki have traditionally venerated fire as a divine grannie, so women were prohibited from walking over fire, and when moving to a new dwelling, they dare not put out the hearth fire. They believed, moreover, that a wild fire breaks out by itself to dispel demons. The Daur thought that fire has a magical power to dispel evil or misfortune, so anyone returning from a funeral should walk over fire for good fortune and safety. The Hezhe call fire awe-inspiring Fojia Mama. There are similar customs and tales among the Ewenki (Nanai or Goldi), Hezhe, and Negidals of Russia and among

the Indigenous people of what is now called Siberia. According to ancient Greek myths, moreover, Prometheus stole fire from heaven. Apollo, the god of fire and light and protector of hearth fires, was enshrined in a firepan. "He was the patron deity of families, cities and colonies as well as livestock" (Schmidt 1987:66). In ancient Greece, there was an eternal fire in the family home of each area chief or village head. It was a holy fire that maintained family and civic stability.

The worship of the hearth fire came into existence when humans began to settle down. So in general, fire deities emerged quite late, but not in northern China. For the northern peoples, age-old fire worship was integral to primordial shamanism. The fire deity was often female in the matriarchal society that flourished in northern China. As I have said, the Manchu fire deity is Tuwa Enduri (*eunduri* meaning "deity"), or fire mother goddess, *tuwa* and *emu* meaning respectively "fire" and "mother." She is called by that name in the Namdulu Hala and in other clans Tuwa Mama ("granny fire"). Manchu ancestors saw her as the mother for all living things, who rules over the light and heat of the cosmos and in some shamanic myths governs the rotation of seasons and the light and dark of the nine heavens. In sacrificial rituals, she traditionally has priority over the mountain, water, star, thunder, clouds, wind, and rain gods. Some Manchu oracles speak of her as a grannie in red whose garment was part of the sky. In ancient times, people believed that she lived in the highest realm of the sky vault and ran with the sun horse Sūn Morin day after day.

The various early shamanic fire deities reflect humankind's initial apprehension towards fire. To their way of thinking, it was utterly strange and inconceivable. It is not like natural food resources or water, which are visible in summer and winter. It is usually unseen. Oracles speak of fire as *edun angga* ("mouth of the wind" in Manchu). Keeping its mouth wide open, it can devour the forests and all living things. Verses from the Manchu shamanic epic *Umesiben Mama* read, "Fire comes smiling; fire comes jumping; fire comes from trees; fire comes from rain" (Fu Yuguang and Lu Liankun 2007). These verses indicate that the ancestors recognized that fire can crackle and torch things unexpectedly. Forests and rainstorms can easily break into fire.

The Mongol shamanic fire deity is also traditionally their Eji ("mother"); without her, a tribe can hardly live. They offered a yellow-headed white sheep to her with such words as "Khanum! Mother! My dear fire mother! Here we offer you butter, offer you a yellow-headed white sheep, offer you fat and oil, offer you *kefir* from mare's milk!" Peoples such as the Oroqen and Ewenki likewise took her as their Fojia Mama. All this gives evidence not only of reverence of fire but also of the high status that the female had in ancient matriarchal society. Fire worship was widespread in northern cultures because to fathom and master fire was for ancient human beings a great feat. Fire by friction for the first time gave them control over one of the main forces of nature, thereby separating the human race forever from the animal kingdom. "Impressed by the use of fire, primordial humans instituted fire worship when tribes and clans came into existence" (La Fargue 1963:47). In the history of ancient cultures, fire worship was a common phenomenon, and various peoples have kept their customs and tales. Still, however, fire worship

in northern China is especially remarkable in its history and extent and in the number of fire deities. Many of the shamanic writings about light and fire in the Far East involve fire worship. Many fire songs, bold and strong and known as fire classics, are wondrous; though buried long in oblivion, they belong to our cultural heritage.

Throughout many centuries, the old fire worship of northern China has been circulating across the area not only because of fire's beauty and light but more importantly because of the warmth it provided in the bitter cold winters. Present archaeology confirms that Siberia was inhabited by humans two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand years ago or even earlier.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that in that primordial era, a branch of human beings went north and occupied that vast region with the help of fire for developing the land. Many historical texts record that the land was all ice and snow, so that "even in summer people had to wear cotton clothes to resist the extreme cold" (Xi Qing 1984). The texts sometimes contain personal testimony: "It is bitterly cold here. . . . Some parts of the land have cracked. Snow turns into hard ice as soon as it falls on the ground. Even direct sunlight cannot melt it away" (Yang Bin et al. 1985). Inhabitants of temperate and hot zones cannot feel the need for fire to the same extent as northern peoples. Fire is like their mother, kind and warm; without it, there is no life. Hence, as we have seen, many shamanic writings and myths, especially of the Manchu, depict fire as a kind-hearted granny, not at all the demonic deity of Han mythology – a three-eyed evil monster with red hair and a green face and body that terrifies people. The fire deity of northern shamanism is personified as the protective deity of all people who dispels cold and evil and brings warmth to all living things. The personification gives expression to a positive view of fire that conveys humankind's great joy over controlling fire.

## **2.4 Worship of the earth and water**

The worship of earth and water has also had a prominent position in northern shamanic nature worship. Some have believed that the worship of the earth and soil came late, but in fact, it was part of the earliest concept of shamanic worship. It was unlike the subsequent worship of Houtu (后土), the god of the earth and soil in Han mythology. It sprang from the primitive understanding that just as heaven has many layers, so too does the earth. Although we can only look far up at the fathomless heavens, we can directly perceive and measure the earth, and by observing caves, tunnels, ravines, springs, cellars, and so on, ancient peoples came to have an awareness that the earth too must be limitless and profound. It gives rise to everything. Our lives can easily be endangered and injured by snakes', pythons', lizards', and insects' crawling up from holes in the ground or by ferocious beasts' suddenly springing out of caves. The earth is thus formidable and mysterious. For primitive human beings, all the sounds and tremors of nature were shrouded in mystery: when the winds blew and cranes cried, when beasts roared, when sounds blasted out from wild jungles, when mountain rocks collapsed on a moonlit or starry night. At the same time, the earth provides all

humans and beasts alike with the fruits that they survive on and the places where they dwell. It is thus the base of all things and the source of all life. Beauty and ugliness, excellence and worthlessness, genius and ignorance all spring from it. So ancient human beings regarded it as a god and mother and worshipped it.

In Manchu shamanism, the earth is Banaji Emu (mother earth), Ne Mama, Na Enduri, and Na Khanum. On the basis of the analysis of these terms, we can see that the term of address for earth changed from the feminine mama, to the masculine khanum, which echoes the evolution of shamanism from female deities in early matrilineal clan societies to male gods in patrilineal clans. According to the Manchu shaman Zang,

Ne Mama was an old woman with black hair and a body full of nipples. What flowed from the nipples was water, and her black hair formed valleys. The sound she made while walking was thunder, and storms arouse when she waved her black hair. When she blew away the sun and moon and changed her hair to white, winter and snow came. The numerous hollows in her flesh were caves in which men and beasts lived and multiplied.

The Manchu creation myth “War in Heaven” tells a similar story:

Shortly after the birth of the universe, there was a fight between Abka Hehe and the demon Yeluli. Yeluli was originally the black hair in Ne Mama’s birch basket, but he was blown into the sky by the Wind Diety Sisilin, and his black hair cast darkness over the universe. He tried to bind up Abka Hehe and prevent the world forever from seeing light. Abka Hehe, however, together with all other beings, waged war against Yeluli, struggling for rule over the universe so as to bring light and warmth to it for good. She had the Hedgehog God to use its spines to entrap Yeluli, and the demon was defeated when his mystic hair lost its magic. He fled back to earth and was buried in its core by Ne Mama, so that it was pitch dark in the earth’s core. Ne Mama had lost quite a few dark hairs, but still had left much white hair. For that reason, there are always more snowy days than warm days on the earth. With her white hair and the storms she arouses when walking, the earth is often visited by ravaging, whirling snowstorms.

(Fu Yuguang and Xing Wenli 2009)

This myth expresses well the perceptions and concepts of northern people.

According to another tale, Mulinmulin Alin (*alin* meaning “mountain”) east of the Amur (in Manchu Sahaliyan Ula, Black River) was called Mulinmulin Emu (mother), but the so-called Savage Jurchens of the region called it Cimoni Mama (*cimoni* meaning “breast” in Manchu). Originally, she was a snow mountain goddess whose snow-white skin was always exposed. She lay on her side facing the river while sleeping. When she was sound asleep, the sky was clear; the earth was grassy and permeated with the fragrance of flowers; and melting snow trickled through the mountains, nurturing the earth and animals. When she



looked southwards with her eyes open, however, wind and snow would blow up; hail came flooding in; and both humans and animals died. Sahaliyan clanspeople revered her as a shepherd goddess, but later, with the development and reshaping of society, male gods came into ascendancy, and she was transformed into the male god Mulinmulin Khan.

Women's breasts tend to be foregrounded in myths of the earth goddess. Thus, an Ewenki legend has it that "an old woman with huge breasts was credited with the appearance on earth of human beings, who fed on her breast milk and thus were prolific." Many Manchu shamans have believed that if one wants to pay respects to the earth goddess, one must do so on a dark starry night. Fond of stillness, Ne Mama often wanders the earth when all are asleep, visiting her children with milk, fruits, and breaths of fragrance. In the darkness, the mountains, land, rivers, and fields are the shadows of Ne Mama as she sits or sleeps. No one has witnessed her whole body, but she has long hair, and people can make out the hollows in her flesh. Among the star gods, only the eagle star deity has been able to catch sight of Ne Mama's face. For that reason, Ne Mama must be worshipped at night when shamans worship the stars and jangle their girdle bells to summon the help of the wind deity. Her steps can be heard only as they await the wind's visit.

With the development of social productivity, human beings grouped into tribal clans living by mountains and rivers. Each clan cluster had its own representative totem in line with the mountain or river where they dwelt, more often than not one that had an unusual shape. In worshipping mother earth Ne Mama, they regarded mountains as her incarnate representation. Thus, mountain worship came into being. Later, however, in the course of further social development, the image and matriarchal influence of Ne Mama gradually weakened, and the notion of mountain gods' and deities' reflecting particular features of the earth began to grow and solidify into sacrifices offered to a particular mountain, landform, cave, hill, or stone cliff.

The worship of the water god, including that of rivers, lakes, the sea, ice, and snow, has also played an important role in northern shamanism. According to shamanic beliefs in the region, water is inseparable from the earth. The waters of the earth are the breast milk of Ne Mama (Banajiemu), the maternal source of all life. In shamanic mythology, the water god Muke Enduri had its origin in the breast milk of the mother earth, and being born in liquid, this deity takes care of water. The ritual use of water was thus indispensable when worshipping the water god. It must be from clear springs, the depths of the sea, a fresh flowing river, or a well; no stagnant or filthy water should ever be used. Bathing one's eyes and body with clear water, moreover, could exorcise the evil of illness, because clear water is the liquor of the gods.

For her part, the goddess of life Dujin Enduri was born in the sands under the sea. She had eight hands and eight feet, with the depth of the water the same as the length of her feet and her breadth the same as the spread of her hands. Her feet shortened when water became shallow, and when water became less, so did her hands. The goddess had charge of deep waters and resided in the East Sea (Donghai). She was the mother goddess of all life in the sea, and human beings and fish

emanated from her every pore. Humans who were brought forth by her on windy days were men. Tossed about by wind and waves, they were thin, and the waves broke out in the form of the male reproductive organs (*coco* in Manchu). Women were born on calm days without waves, so in the past, there were more women than men.

It was also believed in shamanic myths that long ago the earth was flooded, in darkness, and subject to turbulent winds. All was plunged in total darkness. What was born first from the water? Was it *niyalma* (human being)? Was it *nimaha* (fish)? Was it *tasha* (tiger)? Was it *yindahvn* (dog)? No. It was *fodo* (willow); it was the willow deity Moo Enduri. Born in the shape of a *weihū* (canoe), this deity had the shape  and could float on water, run with wind, and reproduce ever more and more abundantly. Eventually, Fodo Moo (“willow” but also “female reproductive organs”) came into being. More and more people came to be everywhere because where there was water, there was Fodo Moo. Everything springs from Fodo Moo – flowers, fruits, and human beings. Fodo Moo was born in water, so mother’s milk is *muke* (liquid), the *buda* (food) needed to support life. It was believed that the water of the earth gave it its support. If there were no water, the earth would collapse. Similarly, the water in human bodies nurtures human beings, so if the water in one’s body gets drained away, one’s soul is gone. In shaman myths of the water god, human beings can exist only when there is water. It is the blood and breath of the earth, the source of all things and all life. So water is worshipped with the deepest piety.

According to the Manchu creation myth, when the universe was new, there was a boundless flood, and the waters and heaven were together. In the dark winds, the heavenly mother goddess Abka Hehe made bubbles like tadpoles that reproduced at a fast rate. The more they reproduced, the closer they came together, making a huge ball floating on the waters. Not knowing how much time had passed, six giants jumped out of the ball. They were six *anda* (sworn friends), the ancestors of the Zhushen (Jurchen), and each had charge of one direction – east, west, south, north, up, or down. Together they had thirty-six eyes, a pair on each one’s head, hands, and feet, so they could see everything. They had forty-eight feet, so they could walk fast and could go everywhere. They had forty-eight hands, so everything was within their reach.

Northern peoples have also traditionally deified water snakes, called water dragons (*shuilong*), and their spirit idols have the shape of snakes, big fish, otters, or the scorpion or lizard god with four legs. A myth recounts how the water dragon goddess Mukemuduri Enduri was exalted by the Jurchen to the position of one of the most ancient gods of the universe. Her armpit hair turned into numerous Mukemuduri (water dragons) that swallowed up the water day and night when Abka Hehe waged war against Yeluli after he flooded the earth. The more they swallowed, the heavier they became, and in the end, they could not move but rather turned into numerous long, wide, sparkling *charhan* (small rivers). White rivers swallowed white water and stones; black rivers swallowed black water and stones. They lay still on the earth and became huge long streams from a distant source. There was too much water in the bellies of these giant dragons, so some

became fountains. Others were hemmed in by the huge flood, so they wriggled their way through the earth and fled. They gorged up a long ditch and finally found the East Sea, guided by the chirping of birds. Magpies and crows call all day because they are helping send all the dragon gods to find pools of water and the sea.

Because of their fondness for and beliefs about water, northern peoples have had some special folk customs. They have commonly lived at the foot of a hill beside a stream, and “there was no social decorum in ancient northern customs, in the sense that the ruler bathed in the same streams and walked along the same paths as ordinary citizens” (Hong Hao 1868). Their customs were simple and unconstrained by propriety. High and low alike, they all believed that washing in streams can bring them good fortune and rid them of contagious diseases. They worshipped small water mammals and reptiles as mascots and fetishes, so frogs, snakes, lizards, waterfowls, and so on frequently appear on shaman drums, costumes, and spirit idols.

In the past, northern peoples who lived alongside rivers had the custom of water burial. They used stones or sand to sink the corpse of a deceased shaman deep in the water and sent it downstream into the sea, ushering their soul back to the origin of life – water. The entry “Heilongjiang” in the Chinese *Social Life and Customs* recounts that “it was customary to use cremation or water burial, sinking the corpse in the high tide” (Hu Pu’an 1986). When shamans of the Manchu, Hezhe, Xibe, and other northern peoples made glutinous rice cakes to offer to the gods, they would beat their drums to enliven the rice and sprinkle water. Some Manchu clans have sacred songs about water, such as “The mother’s rain began to fall, and the places where clans live, inner and outer, were all drenched with rain. Coming with the rain were the gods, and gone with it were evil spirits.”

Finally, the ice god and snow god are related to the invincible sacred power of wind and water. Some shamanic myths say that ice and snow were made by the evil god Yeluli. When fighting with Abka Hehe, he cast stones of wind to quench stones of fire, so the northern sky became frigid. He gave Abka Hehe a wily challenge. He asked her what the most beautiful thing in the world is, and she answered that it is the colour white. For her, the universe was golden white, and the earth’s rivers rushed with white water. She did not know that Yeluli had stolen Banajiemu’s white hair and covered the world with never-melting snow and thick ice. The snow and ice piled up like snow-capped mountains, and all creatures died. When Abka Hehe realized the truth, it was too late. The universe had turned into a white snow-covered world of freezing cold. She made the sun and stars shine and made the winds howl, but the ice and snow were too thick to melt. For this reason, it takes a long time for snowy days to warm up. An Oroqen legend has it that the wind goddess Feng Popo (风婆婆) took the ice and snow with her as she was wandering about in her wind carriage, mistaking them for clouds. That is why snow keeps falling and the sound of her wind carriage can be heard when it snows.

On the whole, the worship of water in northern shamanism is not as prevalent as that of fire, and the sacred chants and rituals honouring water are inferior to those for honouring fire. The reason for this may be that the freezing cold of the

North lasts five to six months of the year, so northern ancestors worshipped the warming fire god as the most important deity.

## 2.5 Worship of sacred birds

Many scholars in China and beyond are interested in the reverence of crows among the Manchu. Ever since the era of the Republic of China (1912–1949), numerous works have cited ancient bird worship as a part of the cultural history and primitive mythology of the Manchu and other northern peoples of China, Siberia, and Northeast Asia. Many peoples had the concept that sacred birds favour their world, and they developed many unique living habits, interests, and taboos related to birds in the long process of social development. Among Manchu customs, worshipping the magpie is well known, the earliest record of which can be found in documents of the Qing dynasty. *Veritable Records of the Qing Emperor Nurhaci* (*Qingzaizu nu'erhachi shilu*) recounts that a red fruit in a divine magpie's mouth was swallowed by Fogulun, a celestial nymph from Yuan Lake of the Changbai Mountains, and she became pregnant. She gave birth to Bukūri Yongšon, who “named his clan Manchu and became the primogenitor of the Manchu” (*Qingtaizu nupanyachi shilu* 1989). This creation myth has been told from generation to generation and refers to the origin of the Aisin Gioro Hala, the imperial clan of Manchu emperors from present-day Yilan (*aisin* meaning “gold”). Another Aisin Gioro magpie myth is documented in *Veritable Records of the Manchu* (*Manzhou shilu*), the most authoritative Qing record of magpie mythology:

Several of Bukūri Yongšon's descendants of the Odoli family were tyrannical, and their subordinates rebelled. In June, the Odoli were raided; and all clan descendants were killed except the boy Fanca, who fled into the wilderness. As he was being pursued by the foe, a sacred magpie perched on his head. The enemy thought there was no way that magpies could perch on a person's head, so they mistook the child for dead wood and went away. Fanca was thus saved and hid out until his death. All Manchu descendants regard magpies as divine and never do them harm.

(*Manzhou shilu* 1986)

Before Qing Emperor Huang Taiji (1592–1643) changed the name of his people from Jurchen to Manchu, there were widespread Jurchen myths of about divine magpies soaring in the heavens and saving creatures caught in floodwaters. In the flood myth The Celestial Princess Bai Yun (*Baiyun gege*), Bai Yun, the third daughter of the god of heaven, was greatly pleased with magpies who cast green twigs about so that all the creatures on earth were saved from the flood and multiplied. In “War in Heaven,” a sacred magpie was the maid of the heavenly mother Abka Hehe. To defeat the devil Yeluli, Abka Hehe wanted to eat pebbles from the East Sea to gain strength, so the magpie flew about to pick up stones every day and carry them back in its mouth. Tired on the way back, it perched on a sacred

tree to rest. The magpie was revered for this feat, and in Manchu tradition, the tree stretching up to the sky has also been celebrated, not only because of its great height but also because it was the perch of the sacred magpie.

Like the Inuit, who worshipped crows and forbade killing them, the Manchu also worshipped crows with great devotion and honoured them in the shamanic pantheon. In fact, as can be confirmed from handwritten oracles of some Manchu clans, crow worship far outweighed that of the magpie among the Manchu and other northern peoples and is even more ancient and widespread. Injuring or capturing crows was strictly prohibited, and they were worshipped in Manchu rituals that used a newly cut pole as a symbol of contact with the spirit realm above. *The Collected Records of Jilin (Jilin huizheng)* recounts that “the Manchu used sacrificial poles in the courtyard. They put pig intestines and lungs in a bowl and placed it on top of the pole to worship crows” (Xileng Guo 1914). Some Manchu clans regarded crows as their ancestors:

They would set up a pole in the center of the courtyard and at the top tie a cloth symbolizing the ancestors. They then slaughtered a pig and chopped up its meat. When a flock of birds descended and ate it all up, people would say that the ancestors are satisfied and rejoice. If the meat was not eaten, people would be anxious and say that the ancestors were frightened or angered and that disaster was approaching.

(Ning'an Annals Editorial Committee 1989)

In a Manchu household in Gongzhuling, Jilin Province, there was a bird-shaped spirit idol to the left of a sacred box for shamanic paraphernalia on the west *kang* (heatable raised bed platform). It was said by clanspeople that the idol was a crow god who rescued the chieftain Nurhaci. In the belief of the Negidal people who inhabited the lower reaches of the Amur and had an influence on ancient Manchu culture, crows used to be human beings. This accords with what is said in the rites of the Husihali Hala of Ning'an, Heilongjiang, that “the crow is a princess guarding the woods” as goddess of the forests.

The Oroqen believed that cawing forest crows were mourning something bad that would happen. If you heard them calling overhead on the way, there was bound to be a misfortune, accident, or the death of a horse. So everyone acted with extreme caution and were convinced that crows have an ability of divination. The Feiyaka (Nivkh) of China and formerly Russia held the belief that crows were sent to the earth by the supreme god of heaven. They thus venerated them as high gods and assumed that they had existed ever since the creation of the universe. Manchu ancestors and other northern hunters would sprinkle liquor and meat for them when they offered a sacrifice to the forest.

Crows have other mythic associations. The Qiahela and Manchu Nimaca and Namdulu Hala dwelling in the wild forests of the Ussuri River sometimes brought into their villages giant pythons which were accidentally found in the forests. Called *jabjan* in the Manchu language, the python was considered the messenger of the sun. Its colourful skin pattern was thought to be the incarnation of a

rainbow, and its flaming red tongue the incarnation of fire. To invite the sacred python to descend to earth, adults and children would imitate crows' "caw, caw, caw" and dance with joy, hoping that the python would bring light and warmth to the world.

As is recorded in the Manchu epic *Umesiben Mama*, the crow used to be a diligent attendant of the god of heaven Abka Enduri, but it was starving in wartime and mistakenly ate the poisonous plant *heicao* (black grass) and died. Later, it turned into a bird with black feathers and harsh cries circling around mountain villages. Fond as they are of pecking at the remains of animals and human beings, crows were believed to be the wolves of heaven. In shamanic lore, moreover, their black colour is the colour of dead souls and the skin of the evil god Yeluli. The Manchu hold the colour white in high esteem, but have traditionally been frightened by what is black. Crow reverence reflects this fear. At the same time, however, shaman lore has it that because crows' feathers are of a dark, sunless colour, they can warn humans and animals of danger. On suddenly spying ill omens or animal carcasses in the woods or wilderness, they caw in the sky to let humans know. *Veritable Records of the Manchu* mentions that when the founder of the Qing dynasty, Nurhaci, fought against Ming soldiers, a flock of crows blocked the enemy and acquainted Nurhaci with the military situation (*Manzhou shilu* 1986). Although he was greatly outnumbered, he was thus able to completely defeat the attackers and increase his power.

The respect for the breeding of crows had grown into a general trend in the Qing dynasty:

In the open space west of the Imperial Palace at Shengjing (盛京, present-day Shenyang), grains were scattered to feed crows. They would then flock together, hovering, perching, pecking at the food, preening themselves, flapping their wings, and cawing. Millions of them occupied almost the whole roof of the Imperial Palace.

(Xu Ke 1984)

People from various Manchu clans valued crows and did no harm to them. The flocks of crows scattering throughout clan settlements were taken as a sign that the clans would thrive and be affluent. Both crows and magpies are indigenous to northern China. Crows had a high place first and foremost in peoples' consciousness. In contrast, magpies were venerated for another reason: they cause no harm to human beings and animals, and with their white necks and bellies, their slender beauty elevated them to the status of maids of the celestial gods in folktales. Because both types of fowl were greatly venerated, moreover, in the classic literature of the Qing dynasty, their influence and status became even more heightened.

The reverence of birds was by no means limited to magpies and crows; nor did it first flourish in the Qing dynasty. Northern forefathers regarded birds as a symbol of sanctity and good fortune, as can be seen from both modern archaeological discoveries and historical documents. Unearthed cultural artefacts reveal that the worship of birds in the North existed as early as Neolithic Age. Russian

archaeologists have found numerous images of goddesses and birds carved in rock in the Amur River basin. *Relics of Baicheng (Baicheng yizhi)* notes that among the unearthed artefacts, there was a sculpted relief, polished on one side with two birds on the other. In 1955, Russian scholars found bricks with bird patterns in the Tucheng of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) along the Ussuri River. Chinese archaeologists found a precious hawk head exquisitely carved out of bone and shaped like a quarter moon in Mishan, Heilongjiang. It is consistent with the hawk-shaped spirit idols with a human body and bird wings worshipped by Manchu shamans. Numerous bones of birds, fish, and beasts and fragments of clam shells in a primitive site in Lishu, Jilin Province, have also been unearthed, as have bone beads in the shape of slim tubes from the limbs of birds in the ancient tombs at Kalunshan, Heihe City, Heilongjiang (Li Jiancai 1986:69). Such artefacts are too many to enumerate. They mirror the interests and superb artistic skills of ancient ancestors while giving evidence of their bird worship.

Ancient Chinese documents also give evidence of bird worship. It is reported in *Book of Jin (Jin Shu)*, the official account of the early Jin dynasty (265–420 CE) that was compiled in 648, that the Sushen, the ancient forebearers of the Manchu,

(also called Yilou) lived in the north of Buxian Shan (Changbai Shan).<sup>12</sup> A man would stick feathers in a woman's hair, and if the woman accepted him, he would ask her to be his wife and marry her in a formal, respectful way.

(Fang Xuanling 1974)

This custom of regarding bird feathers as a pledge of love was passed down into the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Feathers were also used in headdresses: "The Heishui Mohe<sup>13</sup> (ancestors of the Jurchen, who were in turn ancestors of the Manchu) had the custom of using wild boar tusks and a pheasant's tail feathers for their headdress" (Fan Ye 1965). A similar account can be found in *Collected Records of Jilin*: "It was a custom among the Heishui Mohe to use the pheasant's tail feather as headdress, and Russian women in modern times followed suit." *Records of the Great Jin (Dajin guozhi)* notes that the later Jin dynasty (1115–1234), founded by the Wanyan clan of the Heishui (Black River) Mohe, used the sun, the moon, and the falcon as embroidered patterns on their campaign banners, from which we know about their worship of sacred birds. *Travels of East Tartary (Dongda jixing)*<sup>14</sup> recounts that bird patterns were used as well on the masts of official ships of the area as a safety charm.

Throughout Liao, Jin, and early Qing days, the Jurchen retained their traditional habit of wearing feather caps and coats, weaving feather curtains, and using feather bedding, and rich people used feathers to cover their roofs. Young Jurchen girls wore a tube-shaped, five-coloured beading with ornamental engraving made of bird-neck bones. The beading made a tuneful, sonorous sound and was considered a talisman against evil spirits. According to the recollection of Manchu elders, when girls got married during the period of the Republic of China, the Manchu of Ning'an and some other regions made capes with beautiful buckwheat, leopard-spot, or cat's-eye patterns woven from pheasant plumes. After



the wedding, the cape would be treasured and worn only for New Year visits or festivals. For some Manchu newlyweds, after the *baitiandi* (拜天地, their worship of heaven and earth during a wedding) and the *zuozhang* (坐床, the bride's sitting on the marriage bed or *kang* for good fortune and happiness), her mother would change the bride's hair style from *liangbatou* to *yibazhua*, sticking clumps of brightly coloured plumes with a beautiful decorative pattern that had an auspicious meaning.

In some areas, swan feathers were often used at weddings. Legend has it that swans and other waterfowl were maids of mother earth Banaji Emu, who had charge of the earth's waters. So swans were regarded as sacred birds by the ancestors of the Manchu and some other northern peoples. According to legend, there was a river named Swan River in the upper reaches of the Sungari. Since sacred swans can foretell floods and droughts as they honk in flight, the river was named after them. The Hezhe presented swans as sacrificial offerings to their gods, and Manchu swan sacrifice is documented in *Introduction to the Annals of Changbai Mountain* (*Changbaishan huigang zhilue*). Using images of swans and other birds for divination and exorcism was a universal practice among northern peoples (Li Shutian 1987). The Manchu, Xibe, Hezhe, and Oroqen used bird patterns, moreover, for house decorations as good luck charms. When building a new house, the Ewenki (Goldi) in Russia would put cigarette butts and smashed bowls under two wooden house pillars and corner pillars, to prevent evil spirits from coming in and to ward off hunger, and would tie to the house beam a strand of eagle feathers, along with a strip of red cloth and a small packet of millet. It was said that eagle feathers could ensure that the house would be solid and the owner safe and sound.

Regarded as both spirits and intimate friends, sparrows and other small birds have been favoured as well by northern peoples. When sparrows flutter around silently, the house is without mishap, but when they get raucous, there is danger of fire, poisonous snakes, or pestilence just around the corner. Sparrows are smart by nature, frightened of fire and smoke, and perceptive of the slightest things. For that reason, people have deemed them sacred birds. Huozhuor, a female deity worshipped by the Daur, is said to have become a golden sparrow after death: "She swam gaily as a carp and became a companion of wild goldfish" (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986b:52). The Niaomai goddess of the Ewenki, Kazak, Uygur, and Kirgiz in China, as well as the Nanai, Ewenki, Negidal, Buryat, Kachin, and Khakas of Russia, was a little sparrow in charge of infants and subsequently revered as the goddess protector of infants. Sparrows made of birch or larch have traditionally been worshipped among the Ewenki in the hope that they would protect infants from danger. The same notion has been shared by the Manchu and Hezhe. They believe that chirping sparrows are like lively children and are incarnations of the souls of *tongzi* (童子, a child younger than fourteen). When retrieving the soul of a child, if a sparrow was seen flying past, people believed that the soul had returned. The child would recover, disaster would vanish, and the whole family would rejoice. Many clans put sparrow-shaped spirit idols on their altars.

Some Manchu clans worshipped the seedling god on hearing cuckoos in spring and the snow mama on seeing finches in winter. As legend goes, the finch was a girl who went to a snow-capped mountain north of the Siyanggun Bira (river) to hunt eagles with her father and died in a snow avalanche. She would subsequently go down south every year to seek out her family and was idolized by Jurchens.

Bird worship has occupied an important place in northern shamanic ritual costumes and mimic gestures for summoning or sending off gods. Bird deities vary depending on clan location. There were traditionally from two or three to five or seven such deities for every clan, including waterfowl like ducks, geese, and swans; predatory birds like eagles, vultures, and falcons; and pigeons and doves – covering every possible bird species. The eagle and vulture gods were particularly respected and worshipped because of their invincible might. According to the shaman schema of the Nine Realms of the Heavens (*Cangqiong jiutian*, 苍穹九天), all gods reside in the far-off lofty shrines of golden mansions in the firmament. They descend to earth by the light of the Big Dipper when summoned by ritual drumbeats, but in the minds of primordial humans, their majestic mansions were far beyond the reach of earthly beings. Only birds, with their magical wings, could soar into the heavens, so they had an aura of supernatural mystery. As the messengers of heaven and incarnations of gods or spirits, they could travel freely between heaven and earth, between the gods and human beings. They were thought to possess the power of the nature deities – fire, light, wind, thunder, rain, hail, and so on – and to be as powerful and invincible as animal deities. Hence in the trance dance of *ye* rituals (*yeji*, 野祭), shamans would summon bird deities by mimicking the flight of birds in a dynamic and bustling, but reverent, moving atmosphere.

Bird ornaments have been the most common fetish on shaman costumes, such as the fluttering bird ornaments on Manchu headdresses and a perching bird on those of the Udege. According to *The Guidebook of Ethnic Plastic Arts in the Amur River Basin* (*Heilongjiang liuyu minzu zaoxing yishu shouce*) by Russian scholar C.B. Ivanov, the Oroch people in Russia believed that when a shaman's soul goes to the sun, it first rides a white horse, then a ball of yarn, then a bird, and finally an iron boat with wings. The Udege would sew four strands of eagle feathers on the back, shoulders, and sleeves of their shaman gowns and let three long fabric ribbons fall down their backs from the collar. The Orochi had the same costume, with feathers on the shoulder blades (Ivanov 1990). The Daur had cuckoo spirit idols carved out of old willow wood enshrined in shamans' homes. Xibe shamans included the eagle god and other bird gods and the deer god in their pantheon, and they worship the eagle with various ritual gestures. The traditional Hezhe name of the eagle goddess is Kori, and the Oroqen portray Deleku Daryir, the deity of convulsions, on a sacred cloth together with two fierce birds, two dragons, two pythons, and a sun and moon. The Ewenki peel off the skin of a bird to fashion a flying horse named *Sewenki*. Their shamans believed that spirit idols made from bird skin could fly freely. They used idols made from the skin of two woodpeckers when praying for rain. They would put the woodpeckers inside a vessel full of water with their beaks facing upwards and hang them on branches, hoping that they could thus achieve their goal by bird magic (Qiu Pu

1962). Russian scholars relate that Siberian Ewenki worshipped a dozen kinds of bird idols, including the Niaomai bird god and especially the teal god. Their creation myth speaks of human beings made of bird feathers and bird flesh.

From these various categories of bird gods, we can see that primordial human beings formed an indissoluble bond with waterfowls for their fishing and hunting livelihood. Whenever northern ancestors held a sacrificial rite, they first made offerings to waterfowl deities – swan, cormorant, white water birds, and so on. When the gods descended, shamans would perform a bird dance and bird walk, all the while drumming, jangling their waist bells, and whirling the copper sparrow and long ribbons on their headdresses. The dance symbolized the sacred bird's flight – now whirling, now diving to catch fish, now soaring into sky – always followed by the assistant *zaili*. The solemn yet passionate bird dance was not just a simple imitative gesture; it often demonstrated the extraordinary origin and particular function of the bird deity being worshipped. Some Manchu clans have had as their totem the white water bird goddess in charge of floods, who brings rain and flying stones as she descends. According to legend, she was transformed from a white maiden. Long ago, when the earth was deluged with raging waves, a caring shamaness caught fish for her clanspeople to satisfy their hunger. She was a good swimmer and could swim hundreds of kilometres. Once, however, she mistook a white fish in the water for a stone and dashed it against a rock. The fish died, and after the shaman's own death, *shei* became incarnated as a sacred bird with white feathers. The bird had the divine power of swallowing water and moving stones, and its cries could forecast weather and floods.

Some forest birds have enjoyed the same ritual status as waterfowls. Such are Weji Gasha (forest bird god), Alin Gasha (mountain bird god), the supreme eagle Dala Giyahvn, the supreme vulture Dala Damin, and other eagle deities. Along with the vulture, the eagle god symbolizes power and light as the most ferocious divinity of the universe. The god has two silver claws resting on its breast and golden wings which can cover earth and snow. Ruling the earth's light and darkness, it bears the sun in the daytime and drives it away at night. Eagle gods have had great significance in shamanic rituals, traditionally appearing as a figure on shaman costumes and celebrated in sacred texts. Manchu texts recount that the earth was just a clump of ice when the universe was born. Abka Hehe dispatched a female eagle to fly past the sun while fluffing out her feathers to load light and fire and then fly to earth. From then on, the earth's ice and snow melted at times, so that human beings and all living creatures could have food and rest and breed. However, the eagle was so tired that she once nodded off to sleep, and the fire in her feathers fell down, setting the forest and stones on fire, which burnt day and night. She put out the flames with her huge wings and used her claws to dig up dirt to smother the flames. However, she died in the sea of raging flames, and her soul was transformed into a shamaness. So a shamaness's soul is an indomitable eagle. There are also two Russian bird tales about the origin of shamans. According to one, the first shaman was the guide eagle Di; according to the other, the eagle taught human beings how to perform the trance dance. In both legends, the

eagle has two heads, but ever since it taught people how to perform the dance, it lost one of its heads.

Because of their divine power and blood relationship with shamans, the eagle god and vulture god became the patrons and incarnations of shamans. According to shaman texts of the Seven Manchu Donghai (East Sea) Clans, during the era of the flood, a little seal rescued a man and woman, who then gave birth to a baby girl. Abka Hehe ordered the eagle-headed, female-bodied princess goddess to raise the baby, who subsequently became the first female master shaman. In a similar Mongol Buryat legend, the eagle god sent a vulture down to help human beings, and the first shaman was born by the vulture and a Buryat woman. The Yakuts also believed that shamans are descendants of the eagle.

The eagle god not only represents celestial light but also possesses the gift of roaming the world. It can visit the underworld, spreading out light and heat, and exorcise ghosts and monsters. The heroine of the famous Manchu folk epic “Nishan Shaman” was the shamaness Yin Jiang, who visited the underworld to rescue the souls of two children under the guidance of the eagle god. There she contended with the Manchu lord of the underworld Ilmun Khan and, assisted by the eagle god, brought them back to earth.

The religious concept of bird worship is revealed mainly in many primitive creation myths. In “War in Heaven,” the myth of the Jurchen group called Savage Jurchen by the Han Chinese of the Ming dynasty, the following is told of a sacred bird:

At the birth of the universe, there was no sun, moon, stars, or any other celestial body. Everything was plunged in darkness. Abka Hehe and Yeluli made a bet on who could be powerful enough to find light and see the color of the sky and earth. With his devil eyes, Yeluli found white ice among masses of ice in the darkness. He moved an ice-capped mountain to illuminate the universe, but it turned out that everything was frozen. At her wit's end, Abka Hehe was borne up to the sky by a celestial bird who pecked a hole in the sky, then another, and finally thousands of holes in the sky. From then on, the sun, moon, and stars appeared, and there was light and warmth, so that the ice and snow brought by Yeluli continuously melted.

(Fu Yuguang and Jing Wenli 2009)

From this myth, we can see that Manchu ancestors regarded birds as spirits that appeared together with the formation of the earth and the appearance of fire. In ancient times among northern peoples, there must have been a relationship between the discovery of fire and the activity of birds. People thus associated birds with fire and the sun and expressed this relationship in fantastic myths.

“War in Heaven” also speaks of the role of a sacred bird in the fight between Abka Hehe and Yeluli:

Yeluli tore up the battle suit of Abka Hehe, and she was injured and fell down by Sun River. There was a sacred tree in the river, with a golden sparrow

perching on its branches. It took pity on the injured Abka Hehe and gathered water from the river to wash her wounds and wiped her wounds with its colorful feathers. Abka Hehe soon came to her senses, and with her limitless power restored, defeated the devil Yeluli and acquired dominion over the universe.

(Fu Yuguang and Jing Wenli 2009)

The invincible might of the sparrow could thus protect even the god Abka Hehe, which shows that Manchu ancestors worshipped the bird god with great veneration.

*The Ancient Cultures of Siberia (Xiboliya de gudai wenhua)* recalls the role that a sacred bird had in the myth of three suns preserved among peoples in the Amur basin:

At the very beginning of the earth, there were three suns in the sky, scorching the earth and melting stones. A hero named Huotai appeared and shot two of the suns down, so that the earth became warm and pleasant. When the sky was on fire, a bird was the first to step on the melted stones, leaving its claw prints. Therefore, it was considered a deity contemporary with the beginning of the universe.

(Jilin Archaeological Research Office 1975)

According to another myth, the kindly deities who first created the earth in the time of the flood and thus made it possible for humankind to live and multiply were not anthropomorphic gods but gods who had the image of birds. They were white water birds whose colour was the same as the waves and white-feathered swans who were good at diving and picking out sand and stones. At the origin of the universe, there was flood water everywhere and no dwelling place for land creatures. White water birds, with the help of wild ducks, wild geese, wild swans, and so on, fetched sand and stones to make beach lands. In this way, the earth was formed. A similar myth has been widely spread among northern peoples, but it need not be given here.

On the whole, northern peoples shared many common shamanic myths and customs regarding divine birds that created the world and were the primogenitors of human beings. With the passage of time and the vicissitudes of ethnic migrations, the myths and corresponding customs came to have numerous variations. Research studies on bird deities have offered new insights into the treasure hoard of these myths, their religious ideology, and peoples' corresponding folk customs. Northern peoples' cultural consciousness was formed in the process of contact with the natural living conditions of northeastern China, Siberia, and Far East Asia, which are home to one of the largest bird habitats in the world. People lived in the wilderness of the Changbai Mountain, the Amur River, and the East Sea, and modern scientific expeditions have confirmed that the vast expanse of land marked out by the Yellow Sea in the south, the Sea of Okhotsk in the north, and the East Sea (Sea of Japan) in the east has long been a paradise for bird breeding.

There are numerous islands, lakes, and rivers near the estuary of the Amur that constitute an ideal breeding place for all kinds of fish and shrimp because of the long sunlight in summer and moisture in spring and autumn. With its plentiful supply of food and ideal conditions for breeding and habitation, the whole area is an ideal home for a variety of indigenous and migrant wildfowl. The ancestors of today's northern peoples lived, multiplied, and developed together with the birds in this fertile bird kingdom.

Northern bird folktales include "Bird Guiding to Treasure," "Crossing the Sea on Goose Feathers," "Marrying the Bird Maiden," "The Bird God Rescuing Humans from the Flood," and many others. During primeval times when productivity was underdeveloped, birds did not contribute much to humans in terms of food and clothing, but birds were humans' companions in life. One Manchu tale tells of a hero who went into the mountains to look for his wife, a deer, and got lost in the forest. With the help of a woodpecker, he climbed to the top of the sacred mountain and found her, the beautiful deer princess, who had been hidden in a hollow tree by a demon. People could predict misfortune and abnormal phenomena by birds' frightened cries and flight directions, and they built their houses and caves on the basis of the shapes and principles of bird nests. Owing to their contribution to humankind, the bird gods were generally worshipped as gentle and kind protective clan deities.

In primordial times when productivity was underdeveloped, we can imagine that once fire was discovered, some groups began to move north in search of better means of survival. They must have found it hard, however, to find their way in the wild forests, and as is said in a shamanic text, there were fog-bound lakes and swamplands with clumps of grass everywhere. To survive, they would have needed to observe the movements of migrant birds and so tracked their north-bound route. We can see traces of this in shamanic rituals. When shamans summon bird deities, the shamans walk like birds in the *bazi* gait with toes pointing outwards, the *guaizi* gait with feet cast sideways, and the *suolian* gait with progressive cross-steps. Their *zaili* assistants and clanspeople follow in step, singing, chanting, and dancing joyfully. The ancient Manchus believed, moreover, that if a hunter could find white bird droppings in the forest, the hunter could follow such markings as signposts and "sparrow's calligraphy," given to humankind so that we would not get lost. In the battle between Abka Hehe and Yeluli in *Umesiben Mama*, and the shamanic tale *Sirin Sefu*, Abka Hehe got lost but finally found a way to attack Yeluli with the help of bird droppings on forest trees. In primitive matriarchal clan society, there thus must have been clans whose totems were birds. With the passage of time, however, only totems of magpies, crows, and some water birds can be found.

## Notes

- 1 This classic Mongolian literary work was written for the Mongol royal family sometime after Genghis Khan's death in 1227 CE, by an anonymous author. It was probably originally in the Uygur script, though the surviving texts all derive from a Ming

dynasty transcription into Chinese at the end of the 14th century under the name *The Secret History of the Yuan Dynasty*. It is regarded as the single most significant native Mongol account of Genghis Khan.

- 2 This was recorded in an unpublished shamanic text of the Manchu Hu 胡 clan, Hunchun County 珲春县, Jilin Province.
- 3 The Xibe were a Tungus people living mostly near North Korea in Xinjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning.
- 4 *History of Yuan (Yuan shi 元史)* is one of the official history works in *Twenty-Four Histories of China*, commissioned by the Ming dynasty (1368–1844) and composed in 1370 under the direction of Song Lian 宋濂.
- 5 Möngke Khan (1209–1259) was the fourth great khan of the Mongol Empire and the first of the Toluid line. He made significant reforms to improve the administration of the empire; and under him, the Mongols conquered Iraq, Syria, and the kingdom of Nanzhao.
- 6 History of Liao (Liáo shǐ 辽史) was commissioned by the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) under the direction of the Mongol historian Toqtoya (Tuotuo 脱脱) and finalized in 1344.
- 7 History of Jin (*Jinshi* 金史) was the official dynastic history of the Jurchen Great Jin dynasty (1115–1234), compiled during the Yuan period under the supervision of Toqtoya.
- 8 The Seven Hulun Clans were Husihali Hala, Namdulu Hala, Nimaca Hala, Hexeri Hala, Cigujila Hala, Sumri Hala, and Niohuru Hala.
- 9 The Sushen were the ancestors of the Mohe, Jurchen, Manchu, and other Tungusic peoples. They lived in caves and trees in the north of China, used flint-headed arrows, and farmed, hunted, and fished.
- 10 *Yimakan* 伊玛堪 is the traditional Hezhe folk chant or recitative (Chinese general term *shuochang* 说唱) that reflects their ancient history, means of livelihood, life and customs and is called a living fossil or encyclopaedia of Hezhe culture.
- 11 See news report about a Russian scholar's archaeological discoveries in Xinhua Press, May 14, 1985.
- 12 Changbai Shan 长白山 (Ever White Mountain), first recorded in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Shanhaijin 《山海经》) under the name Buxian Shan 不咸山.
- 13 Heishui Mohe 黑水靺鞨, Heuksu Malgal, or Black-River Mohe were the most feared among the Mohe tribes. They lived along the Amur (Heilongjiang, Black Dragon River), in the Manchu language Sahaliyan Ula (Black River) in Inner Mongolia.
- 14 East Tartary was old name for the Manchu-inhabited territory from the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri rivers at Khabarovsk to Sakhalin Island.



### 3 Ancestor and fertility worship

Ancestor worship is an important aspect of northern polytheist shamanism, and numerous scholarly works in China and beyond touch on this topic. Ancestor worship evolved from other forms of worship, such as the nature and totem worship of matriarchal clan society, and it amounts to a higher level of ancient religious worship. It came into prominence with human social development when marital unions had become monogamous or polygamous and men came to have the dominant position in patriarchal society. As the power of male chieftains and family heads was growing, social mores came to centre on paternity; patriarchy became the code of social life; and the worship of natural forces evolved into the worship of one's male ancestors.

#### 3.1 Ancestor worship

Ancestor worship focuses mainly on the worship of the souls and spirit idols of ancestors of the male bloodline. It was believed that their souls are immortal and inhabit a world of light in the sacred mansions of the nine heavens, where they enjoy the same life as earthlings but one more comfortable and joyful. It was believed, moreover, that their noble souls were endowed with such invincible power and supernatural ability that they could freely roam the expanse of the universe and visit their descendants on earth, whom they protected and blessed as guardian deities in a caring and familiar manner. The ancestral deities of northern shamanism served as an emotional bond among clans, neighbouring clans, *mukūn* (paternal subclan, a Jurchen legacy), villages, and families in patriarchal society and provided a strong sense of communal cohesion.

As is the case with the ancestral rites of peoples all over the world, the shamanic ancestor worship of northern peoples originally focused on the ancestors of a particular clan or group, but it subsequently developed into the worship of the common ancestors of allied clans or tribes. Later, as family units grew up one after another, ancestor worship within the family came to pass. One feature shared among these three forms of ancestor worship is that they all regard the spirits of their own bloodline ancestors as sacred spirits and deities, while those of other clans are regarded as extraneous and even harmful ghosts. Therefore, northern ancestor worship is to some extent exclusive. People acknowledge only the patriarchal

spirits within the same clan or tribe as their protective deities and do not worship those of other clans. It was believed that other ancestral spirits do not protect and bless their offspring but rather are evil spirits to be avoided and exorcised. In the case of exogamous marriage, however, the ancestral spirits of the bride's clan could be brought into the husband's family.

The clan ancestors worshipped in northern shamanism include the following:

The primogenital patriarchal deity of the clan; pioneer and hero deities; heroic martyrs of clan expeditions; spirits of first-generation clan shamans and ancient hereditary shamans; spirits of deceased ancestors registered in clan genealogies. The deities worshipped in the Qing court were also ancestor deities.

The majority of ancestral deities have traditionally been male, but many female clan deities have also been worshipped, especially among the Manchu, which have numerous maternal goddesses. The far-reaching influence of maternal goddesses in ancient northern matriarchal clans continues to hold a strong inspirational force. When matriarchal society was flourishing, female shamans were regarded as a kind of protective goddess of the clan, and they continued to hold a powerful position after clan society became patriarchal. In fact, most shamans of the patriarchal clans of the Manchu and other northern ethnic minorities, such as the Oroqen, Xibe, Hezhe, Daur, and various Siberian and East Asian peoples have been female, even in powerful feudal society. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, among the Manchu clans of Yongji in Jilin Province and Ning'an in Heilongjiang, female shamans have had absolute superiority in presiding over shamanic rituals as the hereditary shaman of the clan.

The three forms of shamanic ancestor worship mentioned earlier – ancestors of a particular clan, common ancestors of allied clans, and ancestors of a particular family – have found expression in various ways. In the most ancient times, they found concrete expression among northern peoples as human-beast deities or deities concretized as physical objects. Among the former are the eagle-headed, woman-bodied or the woman-headed, leopard-bodied spirit effigies preserved in the sacred repositories of some Manchu clans. Among the latter are birch bark figures in the shape of a willow leaf standing for the female pudendum and stone or clay figures in the shape of male genitalia.

Some clans lost track of their original ancestral fetishes, due to long-time migration and assimilation with other clans, but they preserved some typical objects of worship from their ancestors. For example, the Manchu Xu clan originally lived along the Zeya River (in Manchu Jingkiri Bira; in Chinese Jingqili River), a northern tributary of the Amur, but they subsequently migrated to the Sungari (Songhua) basin, where they still worship three pebbles from the Zeya River, just as their ancestors did. They do so in their clan *jia* rituals (*jiaji*, 家祭),<sup>1</sup> shaman rites influenced by Qing court rites and standardized in the mid-Qing era without spirit possession and not necessarily a family rite, though *jia* basically means "house" or "home." Other objects enshrined as spirit fetishes among northern

peoples include a piece of leather or wood, pottery fragments, a birch or straw basket, fur, a bird feather, fish bone, stone needle, or stone arrowhead passed down from ancestors.

An interesting legend says that the Oroqen invited the ancestors of the Daur into their homes, worshipped them, and sacrificed fresh meat to them every day, which indicates that the ancestor worship of these two peoples originated from similar or related tribes. The same is true for some Manchu clans, in which one clan would take into their homes the spirit of a female shaman from a neighbouring clan. This female deity remained there to look after the weal and woe of both clans, so when the clan worshipped its own shamanic spirits, they had to simultaneously worship this guest deity, hoping that they would be blessed and protected by both. The two clans probably originated from the same ancient tribe and so give us a glimpse into clan evolution and development.

Some northern peoples, the primitive Manchu in particular, long held traditions of burial in the earth, cremation, and wind burial, as well as bird and beast burial – that is, abandoning the corpse of the deceased to birds and beasts in the wild. Before the concept of souls emerged, the dead were simply abandoned in this way. People would sometimes cover the corpse with a layer of earth, but they mostly left it exposed to be pecked at and borne off by eagles, crows, or wild beasts, the remains eventually being scattered everywhere. Since souls have traditionally been believed to lay hidden in bones, when the bones were scattered abroad in this kind of burial, the souls of the ancestors were believed to reside in all directions to protect and bless the land where their offspring dwell.

With the development in society, however, people could not bear to cast out the corpses of their loved ones in the wilderness, and with the development of the soul concept, people came to respect the sacred bones of the deceased as having hidden within them the soul. They thus preferred wind burial or cremation. In shamanic belief, wind has its source in *qi* (气, “breath,” “air,” “gas,” or “material energy,” “life force,” “energy flow,” the active principle of any living thing), and *qi* is the essence of a mobilized soul. So wind burial can help souls soar up to the nine heavens or descend to the dwelling places of their descendants. Cremation was also widespread. It came to be thought that the soul hidden in the bones could remain forever only through cremation’s cleansing by fire, which could exorcise evil and preserve the good. Teeth are the most difficult to incinerate, so it was believed that a person’s immortal soul may also be hidden in one’s teeth. After cremation, the teeth were thus hung around a shaman’s neck as prayer amulets, kept in a sacred basket, coffer, or pot or hidden in the hollow of a tree behind the family home as the ancestral shrine. Later, there came to be a combination of wind burial and cremation, the former mostly for children, the latter for adults. In any case, the preservation of the cremated remains of the deceased for ancestor worship appeared much later than the use ancestral idols and material objects. It became common among northern peoples in recent centuries.

There have been great differences in the customs of different clans. According to the Manchu heroic folktale *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao* (*Liangshi hanwang zhuan*) about the overthrow of the Ming dynasty in the early 17th century, clans

living in the basin of the Sungari and its tributary at Harbin the Ashi River often used water burial – casting the corpse into the sea or river to be carried away in the flowing water. People usually wrapped the corpse in fur or thatch, sprinkled wine, and offered animal sacrifice while shamans prayed; or they would tie the corpse to a stone, a stone idol, a pig, a sheep, or something else and throw it into deep water to let it sink to the bottom. Water and sea burial could be performed in either winter or summer.

In shamanist belief, the safest dwelling place is the world of water, a blessed place where deities live and keep the waters in peace and quiet. The *Legend of King Hailing* (*Hailingwang chuanqi*) reports that the consort of Emperor Wanyan Liang, prince of Hailing, fourth emperor of the Jin dynasty, was buried in the Ashi River but became frozen in the river ice in a sudden June snowstorm. Rebellious officials wanted to burn her corpse while the emperor was away in Yandi, but it was firmly protected by the hard ice and could not be burnt. When the emperor came back, he saw his consort in the ice as if she were still alive. Therefore, it was believed that water and ice can keep souls from corruption for centuries and that when souls of the dead cannot find a peaceful dwelling place or come back to earth to check the living conditions of their descendants, they often stop, swim, or hide in water. In any case, when the Manchu and other northern peoples began to settle down, they cultivated the tradition of water and sea sacrifice, and from the Jin dynasty onwards, they would offer animal and even human sacrifice. When shamans worshipped their ancestral gods, they often summoned them in the form of water animals like the otter, seal, turtle, freshwater carp, lizard, or frog. They would dive into the water, claiming that this would make the deities appear or allow them to exorcise evil spirits. Even until now in *ye* rites<sup>2</sup> for worshipping deities of nature, Manchu shamans of many clans display ritual feats such as *zuanbingya* (钻冰崖, the test for a shaman initiate to go through nine ice holes in the river), *tanhaixue* (探海穴, diving into the sea to search a sea cave), and *shuixia mozhen* (水下摸针, diving into the sea to grope for needles). Both the performing shaman and the audience think that these sacred feats can be performed only through the help of the mystic power of the spirits of deceased ancestors or shamans.

The spirit idols used in shamanic ancestor worship are unique and are thought to be powerful. They are made of wide-ranging materials of various shapes: wood, stone, clay, leather, silk, plants, animal bones and fur, fish bones and scales, and so on. With carved eyes, nose, and mouth, they stand for various types of ancestors. *The Goldi* documents that almost every house in that area of Russia had a wooden statuette with two giant breasts or had a pair of statues – man and woman. The 1891 Qing work *Annals of Jilin* (*Jinlin tongzhi*), vol. 27, recounts that in Sanxing (三姓, present-day Yilan, Heilongjiang), there were numerous trees but that they could not be cut down, because they were reserved for carving ancestor effigies. People would carve a human head that had eyes and brows on a piece of wood about one *chi* (尺, 33 centimetres) in length and place it in a corner of the house. Some families had more than ten such wooden idols and regarded them as their ancestors. They would worship them several times a year with a deer sacrifice.

The effigies were thought to have great power, and if a guest mistakenly offended one of them, they would suffer from glaucoma and be blind for several days. No prayer could bring about a recovery. As described in *Old Jilin Records* (*Jinlin jiuwenlu*), the Gilyak people (present-day Nivkh) mentioned in a 12th-century chronicle as inhabiting the Amur estuary worshipped their deceased loved ones with wood effigies that had carved eyes and mouth. They would dress them in bear skin and stick food on the mouth as an offering whenever they ate (Wei Shenghe et al. 1986). The Japanese scholar Torii Ryuzo found that in a small bronze figurine from a Jin dynasty city in northeast China, there is a hole which was probably for threading, to hang the figurine around one's neck as an amulet. Present-day Mongols preserve and worship similar bronze figurines, called *wengget*.

The Oroqen traditionally sacrificed a boar to their ancestral god Ajioru Borukan to pray for an ill clansperson's quick recovery. The Daur had as their ancestor deity the Huozhuor, a female deity worshipped mostly in individual *mukūn* ("sub-clan"), but also as the common ancestral deity of several *mukūn*, the primogenitor of all the Daur. The Ewenki call their ancestral clan god Sewenki. According to legend, when human beings were first born on earth, there was an Ewenki man with a long braid who found a lake named Lama in a mountain near the Lena River. Around the lake were many mountains, and in it were numerous beautiful flowers, along with hares and snake, and also a giant cave. The cave was considered the source of clouds and mist, and it harboured a two-headed snake 75 *chi* long, which came from heaven and was sacred. The cave was said to be the birthplace of the Ewenki people, and the man with the long braid was named Sewenki after his death by his descendants. Regarded as a god, he was also called Malu, and his soul was traditionally enshrined in the form of a human-shaped wooden spirit idol. For their part, the Qibaqi of Inner Mongolia have as their ancestral god Ojiaole, meaning "root." The ancestor was reportedly struck dead by lightning, and he is depicted on a blue cloth, eyebrows made of squirrel fur, along with the sun, the moon, and nine little figures – five golden female ones and four silver male ones. People traditionally implore Ojiaole to exorcise ghosts and treat illness, and they tell him not to be annoyed by his descendants.

The images of ancestors worshipped by northern peoples are depicted mostly in paintings. The Manchu, the Hezhe, and especially the Nanai (Hezhe) north of the Amur are keen on painting their ancestor gods. All kinds of mountains, forests, dragons, birds, snakes, tigers, leopards, frogs, and so on of the world around them are displayed in the paintings. The images of Manchu ancestors came to be elaborately painted with the sun, moon, sacred birds, fine steeds, and herds of animals, and the other world where they dwell is also intricately portrayed, as if they are living the same life they used to live. With the development of modern society, however, all such images have become simplified. To worship their ancestors, the Manchu and other peoples commonly fold multicoloured swaths of silk or satin cloth into squares and kneel before them, and the Manchus and Mongols sometimes also use sacred plaques or embroidered strips of cloth. They hang up yellow satin curtains and place four or five trays of incense in front of the plaques or painted strips of silk cloth in the same way as they do for wooden

spirit tablets. The spirit cloths are called *siren* in Manchu, and they vary in colour and number with each clan. Some Manchu families use only these strips, no other representations.

The Manchu, the Xibe, and other peoples traditionally performed *huansuo* as a symbol of the ancestors' protection and blessing of children as a stage in the rite honouring Fodo Mama, the Manchu ancestral goddess of fertility and protector of children. The shaman places a string of colourful threads called *suo* (索, chain) around the neck of a young child. If the child is a girl, the threads will make her grow up healthy and beautiful; if it is a boy, he will become a hero. The Xibe have a rite honouring goddess of fertility Xili Mama that has much in common with the Manchu rite honouring Fodo Mama. The Oroqen have also traditionally worshipped Fodo Mama, and the Daur worship a goddess of fertility, who will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

Some of the ancestral deities of the Manchu, Oroqen, and other northern peoples are hero gods called *manni* ("hero" in Manchu, probably an ancient Tungus word) or phonetic derivatives of *manni*, such as *malu*, *manye*, and *mangni*.<sup>3</sup> In life, the heroes made great achievements or outstanding contributions to their clans as masters of martial arts, acrobatics, music, dance, archery, or other skills. Some could perform magic, foretell weal and woe, teach music and dance, or tell stories of the clan history. In worshipping Manni or Malu, people would commonly use the sacred idols or utensils used by the heroes in worshipping their ancestors. They venerated them as the wise men of the whole ethnic group, but each clan preserved numerous Malu as their own deities, some clans having dozens of names for them. The fact that *manni* is probably an ancient Tungus word suggests that these hero deities have been worshipped and passed down for ages.

### 3.2 Worship of fertility deities

Notwithstanding the views of many scholars in the past, goddesses of fertility have always held a prominent position in northern shamanism. In the primordial period, the vast wilderness of northern China was sparsely populated, and fertility and reproduction were vital to every tribe. All people, primitive and modern, domestic and abroad, emphasize fertility and regard praying for babies as a meaningful activity. Archaeological excavations show that this was the case among the early inhabitants of northern China. *Ancient Cultures of Siberia* reveals that the worship of female fertility was prominent. Figures carved out of limestone have frequently been found in areas of the Amur River basin as relics from the Neolithic Age. The most prominent is that of a female ancestral deity. There are nude female figures, three of which have breasts and pudenda that are greatly exaggerated and foregrounded. Stone male phalluses have also been found (Jilin Archaeological Research Office 1975). This reveals that the worship of productive organs occupied a prominent position in both matriarchal societies and patriarchal societies and that fertility worship played an important role in primitive belief in the region.

In 1982, Chinese archaeologists found similar artefacts in areas southeast of the Dachengzi, Mongolian autonomous county, Liaoning Province and on both banks of the Daling River of that region. Altogether, over twenty fragments of red pottery figures were unearthed, most of them with human shapes. They fall into two categories: two small upright, pregnant nude figures whose heads and right arms are missing, and figures with curved bellies, bulky hips, bent left arms, right hands on the upper belly, and marks showing their pudenda. These are bulky figures of polished loess with round bellies and slightly bent lower limbs, all with a red glaze.

In excavations between 1983 and 1985, Chinese archaeologists working in Niuheiliang Village, western Liaoning, found a temple dedicated to a goddess, several groups of large stone graves, and the remains of square, castle-like stone walls covering an area of 40,000 square metres. These remains are believed to be five thousand years old, and from them precious antique symbols of matriarchal clan society have been unearthed: small nude female pottery figurines and the life-size coloured heads of goddesses, as well as a batch of clay fragments of nude female figures of various sizes. At the Dongshanzui altar site at Niuheiliang Village, two small ceramic figurines of pregnant nude women with curved bellies, bulky hips, bent left arms, left hands on the abdomen, and triangular markings on the pudenda were unearthed. Some experts think they are goddesses of fertility; others that they were used as sacrificial offerings.<sup>4</sup>

In 1984, I came upon an eagle-headed nude female spirit idol in Yangpao Village, Huichun, the Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture, Jilin Province, whose height is 50 centimetres and breasts are prolapsed like straps. She is breastfeeding an infant in her arms and has a curved belly and clearly exposed pudenda. A hereditary spirit idol preserved by the Manchu He clan, it is kept hidden in a secret sacred coffer and allowed to be taken out only when the clan shaman (originally female but later male) prayed for babies, breast milk, or an easy delivery or performed an exorcism before labour. The shaman would then worship the idol, burn incense, and conduct prayers. The similar eagle-headed, woman-bodied eagle princess goddess mentioned earlier has been regarded as the first goddess of fertility and as the primogenitor of shamans.

According to Zhao Xingya, an elder of the Manchu Zhao clan from a small village in Yongji County, Jilin, the primogenitor deity left three deities to humankind: Fohemu (pudendum), Dodokv (penis) and Tvhhongwu (fire bell). Passed down from generation to generation, their spirit idols are hung as clay pendants on shamans' breasts and have been worshipped for ages. Another fertility deity is the Manni spirit idol kept in a sacred coffer over the west *kang* kept by the Manchu Guan, Luo, and other clans in a sacred coffer over the west *kang* (炕, heatable raised brick bed platform in homes of northeastern China). The figure is broad at the top and narrow at the bottom, shaped ▲, without eyes, mouth, or nose. It is the goddess of fertility in charge of curing sterility in both males and females and ensuring birth to newlyweds who worship it.

Snakes have commonly been viewed as protective fertility deities. Fertility needs warmth and sunshine to breed and flourish, and snakes are regarded





as related to the sun god. The Chuokuo Manni worshipped by some clans is a column-shaped spirit idol enclosed by a lifelike raising snake head.

These figures are recorded in *Sacred Book of the Manchu Fire Ritual of the Seven Hulun Clans* (*Hulun qixing manzhou huoji shengshu*) from the sixteenth year of the reign of the Guangxu emperor (1891) of the Qing dynasty as the “divine words of fire sacrifice” of the Seven Hulun Clan Alliance of Jurchen tribes in the late 16th century.<sup>5</sup>

Fodo Mama, goddess of fertility and protector of children, occupies an important position in Manchu rites. Some clans have worshipped her in the form of a spirit idol shaped like a nude woman. In the Na clan of Yangpao Village, along with a hereditary wooden figurine of this goddess, there is also worshipped a goddess called Wanli Mama, who has care of female fertility, needlework, and cooking. Legend has it that she is naked and leads a horse. Only shamans are allowed to see her effigy and only when a sacrificial ritual is held (Peng Bo 1996:130–131).

As is noted in early Manchu mythology, the dominant male god of heaven and the universe Abka Enduri was initially the female deity Abka Hehe. *Hehe* means “woman” in Manchu, and its etymological Manchu root is *fefe*, “pudendum,” pointing to female fertility. At that time, the image of Abka Hehe was a pudendum shaped like a willow leaf, signifying that the goddess gives birth to everything. Primordial human beings saw a resemblance between willow leaves and pudenda, so mythology has it that willows gave birth to human beings and the world. According to a shaman’s inspired utterances of the Manchu Sitara Hala of Huichun, ancient Manchu people thus venerated willows as standing for the primogenitor deity. When Abka Hehe fought with the demon Yeluli, many good deities died, and Abka Hehe had no choice but to ascend up to heaven. Yeluli was close behind and grabbed hold of her battle dress, which was made of willow leaves. A handful of the leaves were stripped off, floated down to earth, and gave birth to humankind and the world.

Another myth regarding willows is contained in an oracle of the Fuca Hala of Mudanjiang, Heilongjiang, whose early ancestors lived by the Hurhan River:

In ancient times, the Hurhan River suddenly turned into the Hurhan Sea, and all creatures were drowned in the flood. Of all the persons made of mud by Abka Enduri, only one was left. About to drown as he floated on the rushing

water, he survived by grabbing a willow branch that bore him into a stone cave which stood halfway in the water. The branch then turned into a beautiful woman who had intercourse with him and bore offspring.

In this story, the willow takes on strong overtones of the clan totem, and in the past, Fuca clanspeople set a willow branch in a sacred container and worshipped it. They picked a new willow each year when the *jia* ritual was held and sent the old branch floating down the river with great reverence. This yearly ritual has passed down their ancestors' belief in the female primogenitor deity to modern times.

The prominent function of every clan shaman is to use their mystic power to treat illness and dispel misfortune, and for this, they have always been highly respected by their clanspeople. Even until modern times, many shamans have still had unique curative powers, which they kept to themselves. It cannot be assumed that such powers are a matter of mere fantasy. If that were the case, the shamans would have long been mistrusted by their clanspeople and abandoned. According to our interviews with dozens of experienced and newly initiated shamans among various northern peoples, the two most prominent functions of a shaman are to ward off evil spirits and pray for fertility. Shamans are said to have traditionally given advice on coitus techniques, including those based mainly on physiology: what kind of man and woman can have successful intercourse, when they should do so, and so on. According to scattered Manchu folktales and epic narratives such as the *Record of the Grievances of the East Sea*, the *Secret Records of the Shunzhi and Kangxi* (*Shun kang milu*), and *Umesiben Mama* and according to accounts of senior shamans of many clans, in the days of primitive society, people knew nothing about how to have intercourse, conceive, and go into labour, all of which were considered strange and mystical. Some had intercourse with people of the same sex because they believed that "only if two persons are physically united does the god bring babies." This was a rudimentary instinct expressed in oracles.

In those ancient times, group marriage and incestual unions were not uncommon, but as society developed, marriage became exogamous and later monogamous. According to clan principles, a female shaman, not the clan chieftain, executed divine authority to control and manage exogamous unions and guard against incest within the clan. She officiated at the marriages of her clanspeople, by saying ritual prayers. People who violated clan marriage rules were punished, which guaranteed the prosperity of clan offspring and averted malformation and degeneration. Men and women could not live together in exogamous unions without the permission of the shamans of both clans. In matriarchal society, a woman married a man from another clan, and he was dependent on her. The union commonly took the form of a reciprocal exchange sanctioned by a shaman's inspired utterances, and it was often with a man captured from another tribe. In patriarchal society, marriages arranged by shamans were more common and solemn. When a man married a woman from a different clan, the couple first had to worship heaven and the ancestors at the ancestral shrine.

Shamans have commonly performed ablutions for a new couple, often at night. Holding a sacred wand and ritual *hama* (knife) in their hands, the shaman would

poke and press at the couple's naked parts while chanting. This was a form of acupunctural *dianxue* known as *dim mak* (pressing the pulse). Sometimes, tuberose, mug wort, or perilla leaves were spread under the couple; rhododendron was burnt, and the couple would take powder processed from the penis of a fur seal.

Shamans have possessed special massage skills for curing infertility, and to cure impotence and infertility, some used powder made from talcum, agaric, earthworms, or beehives and others from the baked and dried male genitals of a Mongolian gazelle, dog, badger, or bear. While praying, they would have the couple take the powder as a cure. Steaming and washing one's waist and perineum with bear or tiger urine was also used to treat impotence and infertility. Female shamans often treated the couple at night through a *beideng* ritual (背灯祭, Manchu night rite with all the lights out) while a *zaili* assistant beat a drum fiercely and burnt mug wort. The afflicted couple would close their eyes and get undressed. Then the shaman would apply *dianxue* pressure and massage in a rite known as the descent of the Kvgymu deity, and in this atmosphere, the couple would then take medicine with water.

Shamans have also had special skills in dealing with problems during childbirth. The Daur *balecin* shaman was actually a midwife who helped correct the position of the fetus and deliver a baby (Qiu Pu 1985:88). The Manchu megashaman Wu Xulun (吴绪伦) of Ulajie, Jilin Province, could cure gynaecological diseases. In the past, female shamans of the Li clan from Bohai Xiang (village) of Ning'an could deal with a woman's difficult labour. Shamans of the Zhang clan in Sunwu, Heilongjiang, could likewise treat infertility and deal with difficult birth. Shamans were traditionally the closest thing to doctors for healthcare for a woman or child and the only physician of the whole clan. They performed medical treatment according to the mystical descent and prophetic oracles of the gods, and they performed some important operations and acupuncture treatments in a boisterous ritual environment that could distract patients' attention and alleviate their pain in a state of semiconsciousness. When patients recovered, they believed they were cured by the god, not by the shaman.

When shamans performed a healing rite to deal with infertility caused by intestinal gas or poor blood circulation, they would place dozens of leeches on a sacred drum, their waist bells, and the patient's belly and legs. They would then drum continuously and chant loud spirit chants. When leeches suck out the poison in the patient, they swell up and die, and the patient is restored to health. Northern shamanic rites praying for fertility include the *zisi* rite to pray for children's well-being, the *yuyun* ritual to pray for childbirth, the Jianying ritual to pray for a baby's health, the *duozi* ritual to pray for many offspring (especially male offspring), and so on. When exploring the various forms of shamanic fertility worship, we should attach great importance to goddesses of childbirth and the protection of children. Early in the 20th century, two statues of such goddesses – Cuisheng Niangniang and Songsheng Niangniang – were found in the Niangniang Temple built during the reign of Qing Emperor Qianglong (乾隆, 1736–1796). One is raising an infant with both hands while another baby is beside her legs; the other carries a bag on her back, from which many infant heads are emerging. The Han Chinese also had their own goddesses of fertility (Ivanov 1990).

Among the Ewenki and other northern peoples, fertility deities are often worshipped as Umai (Umay, from the old Jurchen word *umusi*). Umai is a goddess who protects babies and whose effigy is a sparrow made of birch or larch, but the term can also refer to a child's soul, which, as we have said, is thought to be a little sparrow. When a child is seriously ill, it is thought that the soul has left the child's body and gone to another world, so that it must be retrieved by a shaman in a trance dance (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986a:233).

I researched into the etymology of the names of some deities. Those of some deities in charge of childbirth and the protection of infants are similar among various Siberian peoples. When women desire to have a baby, they traditionally ask the following goddesses for help:

*Tungus Manchu*

Aomai – woman's belly, uterus (Ewenki)

Aomo – nest, cave, hole (Nanai)

Wumuke – nest (Ewenki in the Turpan area of Xinjiang)

Aomi – soul of one-year-old infant (Negidal)

Aomiya – soul of a one-year-old infant (Nanai)

Aomisong Mama – clan tree where the souls of children grow in this goddess's heavenly abode (Nanai)

Aomi (Umi) and Aomixi (Umisi) goddesses having the care of infants (Ewenki in northeast China)

*Turkic and Mongol*

Aomai – woman's belly, uterus (Khalkha, Inner Mongolia)

Umai – woman's belly, uterus (Mongol)

Umai – placenta (Buryat in Zabaykalsky Krai, Russia)

Umai – amulet protecting babies from misfortune and evil spirits (Kachin)

Emai – protective deity of children (Beltir)

Umai, Emai, Mai – protective goddesses of infants (Shor, Teleut and Khakas)

According to these names, the basic term "Umai" has been used with diversified phonetic pronunciations and meanings, but it refers mostly to the goddess of fertility who protects babies. Quite reasonable is the early Tungus-Manchu etymological explanation of the term as meaning "nest" or "cave," referring to the nest of infants, a woman's uterus or belly. The worship of female fertility grew into the worship of childbearing, which in turn evolved into the worship of a goddess who cares for children's souls.

Ancient Siberian peoples thus understood "Umai" in terms of female fertility, and this belief evolved among the Ewenki, such that the term "Umai" came to refer to the soul of a *tongzi* (young child). However, we hold the view that "Umai" originally referred to the worship and celebration of mystic female fertility as being more powerful than that of a man and deserving of great reverence in line with ideas of matriarchal society. Among the Manchu along the Amur, there are still words with a pronunciation similar to "Umai," in particular the term for the goddess of fertility

Umi. Legend has it that Umi was transmitted from mother to daughter as a goddess related to menstruation. The original image and the original concept of Umai have been preserved in folklore, but the meaning and the power have changed.

## Notes

- 1 Standardized form of the Manchu shamanic ritual in the mid Qing dynasty as influenced by Qing court rituals. It does not involve spirit possession, and it is not necessarily a family rite, though *jia* 家 basically means “home” or “family.”
- 2 *Ye* rites (*yeji*, 野祭) are Manchu shaman rites, including possession, inviting a god, and sending off the god.
- 3 Among the Mongols and Daur, Manni is called *manggai* or *mangus*; among the Oroqen and Ewenki, *mangai* or *mangni*; among other Manchu clans, *mahus* or *mahu*; and among the Hezhe, *mahu*.
- 4 See *Guangming Daily* 光明日报, July 25, 1986.
- 5 The seven clans are Husihali Hala, Namdulu Hala, Nimaca Hala, Hexeri Hala, Cigujila Hala, Sumri Hala, and Niohuru Hala.

## 4 Blood sacrifice and fire rituals

Shamanism features sacrificial worship of various types and styles as a manifestation of its beliefs and ideas about nature and human existence. The motley collection of its sacrificial rituals can be viewed as a kaleidoscope of history, religion, and culture. We have long had little understanding of the various rites, styles, rules, and taboos of shamanic culture, and we have wrongly assumed that many of the northern clans' sacrificial forms and methods are very much the same – simplistic and monotonous – and that there is no need for further serious study. In fact, this has hampered our objective understanding and study of shamanism. As a primitive form of religion, shamanism expresses its unpretentious forms of primitive theism mainly in ceremonies and rituals. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, the details in the rites have been largely forgotten. This chapter summarizes and sorts out typical Chinese shaman rites and their ritual modes in order to discuss the significance, status, and value that shamanism deserves in the history of human culture. *Discourses of the States (Guoyu)*, the collection of speeches from the spring and autumn period (771–476 BCE), documents that in times of yore human beings and spirits did not intermingle but that certain human individuals were more perspicacious, single-minded, and venerable than others. Their powers of comprehension enabled them to make meaningful comparisons between what lay above and below, and their insights into things enabled them to perceive what was remote and profound. It was upon these gifted people that the gods and spirits would descend. If male, they were called *xi* (覡, shamans) and, if female, *wu* (巫, shamanesses). At that time, the boundaries between the divine and the mundane were distinct. The gods accepted people's ritual offerings and blessed them in return, so that there were no natural calamities and no want of wealth and goods. Later, however, it is said that the nine prehistoric Jiuli tribes of the Yangtze River basin led by the mythical Chiyao<sup>1</sup> abandoned the rites, which led to disorder in the world and the intermingling of humans and gods.

The *Book of Rites (Liji)*<sup>2</sup> records that in ancient historical times, people worshipped heaven by burning oblations on a pile of wood at the Taitan altar, in a southern suburb of the capitol; and they worshipped the earth by burying oblations near the Taishe altar in a northern suburb. As an offering to the seasons, they buried a sheep and a pig near the Taizhao altar, and to exorcise evil, they offered sacrifices to the gods of cold and heat in a *kan* (pit) or on a *tan* (mound).

They sought blessings from the sun at the Wanggong altar, implored favour from the moon at the Yeming altar, payed reverence to the stars at Youyong, and made peace with the spirits of flood and drought at Yuyong. People established a *kan* and *tan* in each of the four directions – north, south, east, and west – to express their reverence for the gods of the four cardinal directions. They believed gods or spirits oversee mountains, forests, streams, valleys, hills, and mounds, which can produce clouds, winds, and rain but can also make monsters appear. State sovereigns would offer sacrifices to them all.

In ancient China, people celebrated the *laba* ritual (*labaji*, 腊八祭) on the eighth day of the La month (Layue 腊月), the twelfth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, in which they offered sacrifices to the earth, plants, insects, animals, and all the other objects on earth, in accordance with the primitive religious practices of the Huaxia (华夏, ancestral Han tribes). With the growing number of deities, the ritual procedures of the rite became more and more elaborate (Ding Shan 1988:4). So “taxes from the *Bangdu* area were used for sacrificial rituals” (Cui Gaowei 1997), and various ritual chants and sacrificial texts appeared.

The ritual types and styles of primordial shamanism were, no doubt, broadly similar to what I just wrote. In the past, it was not possible to substantiate the various types and styles, but progress in the field has been made on the basis of legends and the recollections of senior shamans. We have discovered traces of the types and styles in old texts that are the cultural heritage of the Manchu, Xibe, Oroqen, and Daur peoples.<sup>3</sup> Many of the sacred teachings in these documents are incorporated in the *jao'uyun* training programme for Manchu shaman initiates. They are related to specific ritual procedures and have been carefully written down and bound into records because of ancestors' worries that their posterity would neglect them.

#### 4.1 Blood sacrifice

According to such records, the most ancient shamanic ritual was solemn blood sacrifice, and that tradition has been preserved among the Ewenki, Oroqen, Manchu, and Xibe ethnic groups. According to the *Records of Sacrificial Rules and Procedures of the Fu Clan* (*Fushi jigui chengshi lixulu*), people of the clan should not forget the ancestral sacrificial rules. Shamans should perform a trance dance, choose an auspicious day, and offer sacrifice to the goddesses of the night in the *beideng* ritual, to the gods of the day in the *yuan* ritual, and gods of mountains and rivers in the *shanhe* ritual. They offer the hearts of certain animals and an adequate amount of blood of the finest animals. Among the various rituals, the *shanhe* ritual became solidified early. It involved primarily the worship of these deities of the wilds in line with the early consciousness of primitive human beings in their hostile living conditions. At the earliest stage of development, the sacrificial offerings were not limited to particular domesticated or wild animals, but the preferred choice was wild boar and elk, and people who lived by fishing or hunting along waterways sacrificed fish or birds. The *Uyun Divine Words of the Qian Clan* (*Qianxing wuyun shenyu*) recounts that clan ancestors had for many



a generation lived along the old estuary of the Huichun River, a tributary of the Tumen River near the easternmost point of Jilin Province. Legend has it that the ancestors made their houses on tree tops, where they lived all year long. When they offered sacrifice, they preferred deer, ducks, geese, and fish. On the occasion of the *beideng* ritual to the goddesses of night, all the clanspeople would line the river on a starry night and keep nine bonfires blazing so that the river was lit up as bright as day. The female shaman officiant wore a ritual costume made of white fish scales and white clam shells, with numerous white beads on her forehead and white scapula bones tied around her waist as bells. People packed deer, ducks, geese, huge Siberian salmon, and sometimes several captive boars on a boat, and more than a dozen people sprinkled animal blood on them to send a sign of their faithfulness to the woods, wilderness, rivers, heaven, earth, and rocks. They would smear their bodies, waists, and foreheads with blood and then make a fire to roast the sacrificial meat, which was shared by all. At dawn, they threw the remaining offerings into the river to drift away. The Qian *beideng* rite has a long history, and it was determined that it not fall into oblivion. Clan records are quite detailed. The sacrificial blood was sprinkled not only on mountains and rivers but also on all participants, from which we can see that offering blood was regarded as the grandest moment of the rite.

Blood offerings were traditionally indispensable in northern shaman rites, with blood symbolizing clanspeople's deep reverence for their deities. Shamans from the Zang and Wu clans, along with the Oroqen shaman Mo Fusheng (莫福生) and Daur shaman Wu Dekun (吴德坤) stated that the blood of wild animals was sacrificed in their *beideng* rituals. Pots, baskets, and all other containers were smeared with blood, and the foreheads and bodies of clanspeople and women suffering from chronic disease or making a prolonged recovery were smeared with the blood to exorcise the cause of their illness and dispel evil. In addition, people would add a few drops of blood to water or wine and then gulp it down as a propitious drink. They would also smear blood on the mouths of spirit idols and figurines of the Manni hero deity mentioned in the previous chapter and sometimes even on furniture and livestock. To this day, a thick layer of black and red marks can still be detected on long-cherished spirit idols made of deer hide, cloth, or wood, which master shamans say are traces of the smeared blood. In the early years of the Republic of China (1912–1949), a master shaman of the Zang clan once refused to drink ordinary water or rice wine when a god possessed him but drank only animal blood from a big clay bowl, and when a master shaman of the He clan of Huichun was possessed, he would drink the blood of wild ducks and swans.

Rites of drinking and smearing blood are documented in almost every Manchu clan. Blood sacrifice has not been common in modern times, but the *beideng* ritual could still be observed among various northern peoples, with the blood of slaughtered animals offered to nature deities, totem deities, or ancestor deities – all punctuated by smearing blood on the mouths of spirit idols and statuettes. Ritual instruments and sacred poles were also painted with a little blood. After the rite, the blood was always consumed, never discarded. Some people dribbled

blood into water, which they sprinkled in houses and barns and around gates to exorcise evil. They dripped the remaining blood into wine, which they then drank or made into pancakes or blood sausages.

For their part, the Mongols traditionally celebrated a grand blood sacrifice on Dokdor Mountain on the Songnen Plain bordering Inner Mongolia and Heilongjiang after dusk on a set day during the summer flood period:

The shaman presided over the ceremony by igniting nine bonfires and chanting sacred chants accompanied by his drumming and dancing. He would commonly stand in front of the crowd and perform miraculous feats of magic. The tribal chieftain would deliver prayers to the mountain god to express gratitude for the god's blessing. He would then splash three bowls of milk liquor in the direction of the mountain peak and slay a black horse as a blood sacrifice. They would bind the horse's four legs with its head pointed toward the mountain and then chop its face with an axe. Spurting toward the peak, the blood was offered to the mountain. For hundreds of years, through several dynasties, this sacrificial ritual of worshipping Dokdor Mountain has never ceased.

(Bo Shaobu 1987:33)

In rites of the northern Daur, a shaman would mix ox blood with milk or wine, which was then ladled into wooden bowls. At the same time, two shamans would invite the gods to descend to earth to enjoy the blood while the clanspeople beat drums and followed the shamans in dance. The shamans mimicked the chirping of birds, indicating that the deities turned into birds to drink the blood. Meanwhile, people smeared ox blood on the mouths of the spirit idols and deity statuettes one by one, indicating that the gods had drunk the blood (Cai Jiaqi 1988). The Oroqen held a sacrificial blood rite to worship the mountain god Bainata. The Ewenki celebrated solemn blood rites that had numerous taboos. Hunters should not cut into arteries when they were skinning a bear, so as not to cause loss of blood. Instead, they squeezed arterial blood into the bear's heart. They then tied up its head, throat, tongue, nose, neck bone, foot bones, and ribs with birch and smeared them all with blood and pigments from wildflowers as a grand wind burial for the bear. They also used the blood of deer or elk. When shamans performed a trance dance to treat illness, they would choose white reindeer or elk as an offering, erect a stake in front of the *sierranju* dwelling,<sup>4</sup> and smear the stake with reindeer blood (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986a). In the Xibe initiation *chakur* ritual of climbing a ladder of sharp knives, before climbing it, shaman initiates had to take a swig of sheep blood, which signified that they were blessed by the gods, made brave and invincible (He Ling 1990:106).

These sacred blood sacrifices have a long history, dating from the primeval period when it was believed that blood is life. During their struggles with fierce animals and creatures in the wilds, people realized that if they bled, humans and animals alike, they would soon die. In time, this fact led them to appreciate the sanctity of the red liquid coursing through their veins and the veins of other living

creatures. In ancient burial rites, live pigs, dogs, deer, and other animals were put in the exterior coffin of the deceased, probably for the sake of their blood. Older coffins were painted with blood and later ones with red paint or similar material, symbolizing that they were covered with blood – hence the red powder found the archaeological excavations of the Upper Cave of Dragon Bone Hill in Beijing in the 1930s. The shamanic idea is that blood or red is an omen of life and vitality.

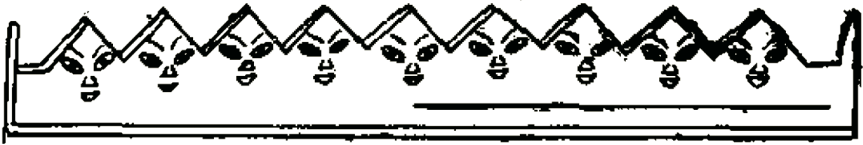
The belief that in dreams floating souls can travel outside the body might have inspired a similar understanding of blood: if it drains out of the body, the soul will get lost and go astray. For northern peoples, it is thus quite inauspicious if a common utensil is smeared with blood: it is feared that one day the blood will transform into evil spirits. This ancient notion and its corresponding taboo reflect northern peoples' belief that blood has life and can become an independent vital agent. Consequently, up until modern times, apart from blood sacrifice, northern peoples have normally avoided staining furniture with human or animal blood, believing that it may cause misfortune.

Ancient Chinese texts speak of the life-giving power of blood. The legendary *Chunqiu Hechengtu*, a 17th-century history of ancient China, tells of a girl born on Blood Rock. She was Qingdu, daughter of the divine Jade emperor (Yu emperor 玉帝) and mother of the mythic Emperor Yao. One day, when there was much thunder and lightning, blood penetrated into the huge rock, and from this Qingdu was born. Another ancient text, the medical treatise *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* (*Huangdi neijing*), supposedly from 2600 BCE, states that blood and *qi* are the essence of life. The 251 CE text *Book of Later Han: Biography of Deng Zhi* (*Houhanshu denzhi zhuan*) speaks of slaughtering animals and sacrificing their blood to the gods. According to the ancient *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*),<sup>5</sup> people held blood sacrifice to the gods of soil and grain, to the variously identified “five deities” of ancient China, and to the five great mountains.<sup>6</sup> In the oral traditions of northern peoples, moreover, there are numerous legends and folktales in which clean blood is transformed into good spirits, whereas contaminated blood becomes evil spirits.

Because it was thought that blood can make the earth fertile and fruitful, blood sacrifice became an established custom among northern peoples when they first settled down and began to farm. Accordingly, in the famous Manchu folktale “Daffodil Princess” (*Shuixian gege*), when the princess is killed by a serpent demon, her red blood spurts over farmlands that then yield myriad ears of the maize that is so common in northern China (Fu Yuguang 1984). In traditional *jia* rituals, the Manchu and other peoples worshipped the seedling god, who had charge of farming. They would butcher animals and sprinkle their blood on the ground and towards heaven as a prototype of later earth worship.

According to the *Record of the Grievances of the East Sea*, humans, not animals, were killed, buried, or drowned in some celebrations of the sea burial rite. In other cases, prisoners of war from enemy clans were killed and their blood offered in sacrifice. In the Manchu epic *Umesiben Mama* the great shamaness Umesiben sacrificed nine heads, nine hands, nine feet, and nine breast bones of the enemy Huduo tribe to the Black Wind Valley in order to seek a blessing that her clanspeople would get free of smallpox. In the eyes of the primitive peoples,

prisoners were like captive animals and could be killed as sacrificial offerings. Such human sacrifice could convey a higher degree of respect and piety and so please deities more. Consequently, there are quite a few shamanic legends that centre on human blood or bone sacrifice. In such tales, humans are sacrificed for their blood or bone spirits, and plotlines are added explaining that they were eaten by demons representing hated enemy tribes in an attempt to justify such human sacrifice. The widespread worship of human-eating demons indicates that various northern peoples had experienced a period of barbaric cannibalism in which humans were indeed sacrificed and eaten. The Oroqen, Daur, and Ewenki call such demons *manggai*, *mangai*, or *mangge* (from a Tungus etymological root) and imagine them as having a human form but malformed or with multiple heads, and Manchu folklore speaks of a human-devouring, blood-drinking demon called *mahu* or *mahuzi*. The following is a representation of the spirit idol of a Daur *manggai* carved in wood:



The nine human heads suggest a human-eating demon with invincible might and boldness.

Tragic episodes of blood feuds, the law of the jungle, and survival of the fittest among ancient tribes have been preserved in tales and rituals which inspire fear to this day. As human society progressed, however, human sacrifice and human blood sacrifice soon became abstract descriptions in history books. The custom of offering animal blood to the gods came to be practised in its place and passed down for thousands of years. The parts of animals traditionally used in northern shaman rites are as follows:

- 1 Domestic animals: bones, flesh, blood, hooves of cattle, horses and sheep.
- 2 Wild animals: bones, flesh, skin, teeth, blood of tigers, leopards, bears, boars, whales, pythons, and lynxes.
- 3 Deer: bones, horns, flesh, skin, hooves, blood of deer, elk, roe deer, river deer, red deer, musk deer, Mongolian gazelles, and wild goats.
- 4 Birds: bones, flesh, quills, feathers, claws, blood of eagles, vultures, ducks, domestic and wild geese, cranes, gulls, pheasants, quail, tomtits, hazel grouses, and great bustards.
- 5 Small animals: bones, skin, blood of hedgehogs, raccoons, martens, squirrels, and pangolin.
- 6 Fish: bones, scales, meat, fins, and the blood of various fish in rivers, lakes, and the sea.
- 7 Aquatic animals: bones, skin, digits, and the blood of otters.

This is only a rough, typical list. In practice, the animals sacrificed varied according to region and ritual purpose. The Indigenous peoples of the Arctic, for example, have traditionally used polar bears, whales, seals, and sealions. They would collect the animals' blood and ritually pour it into the icy sea.

It is clear that shamanism, as a religion stemming from primitive times, believes in blood sacrifice, but what exactly is the relationship between shamanic belief and blood? On the one hand, there is the notion that blood serves as a medium for floating souls to leave the body and roam about. On the other, there is the key concept that the soul dwells in one's blood. It is believed that souls inhabit both bones and blood, that blood makes a soul vigorous, and that the energy life flow of *qi* regulates blood flow. If *qi* is lacking, blood will also be insufficient or dry up. The soul will become feeble and eventually be lost. All in all, primordial shamanism has believed that *qi*, blood, and the soul are closely related and complementary, each relying perpetually on the other for survival.

Moreover, according to shamanism, a human spirit or animal spirit is protected by *qi* and nurtured by blood. This is much like concepts of traditional Chinese medicine: according to *yinqi*, *qi* flows in the blood vessels, complements blood, and has a strong *yin* aspect (feminine, dark, passive, soft, providing spirit), and according to *weiqi*, *qi* is distributed in the skin, muscles, and tissues; serves as a defence mechanism; and has a pronounced *yang* nature (masculine, light, active, hard, providing form to things). Also according to shamanism, *qi* cleanses the path for the spirit and the power of *qi* is enhanced and nurtured by blood. If blood is sufficient; *qi* is vigorous; and if *qi* is vigorous, it can defend and nurture the spirit.

On the basis of simple experience, primitive humans believed that for both humans and animals, blood and life thus enjoy a cause-and-effect relationship upon which all their activities depend. Consequently, they enjoyed drinking fresh animal blood, a practice that may have been learned from blood-eating rodents such as weasels. Many northern peoples drank newly slaughtered deer blood when they were hunting, believing that it could make them fit and strong. The custom of drinking blood was quite common, and people even mistakenly believed that when they lost blood from wounds or injuries, they could retrieve its power by sucking it back into the body.

The concept of blood eating gradually influenced peoples' notions of worship: they believed that if they offered fresh blood to spirits and deities, the spirits and deities would always be around to protect people and their livestock. For that reason, blood has long been considered the most sacred and devote form of worship. Early shamans commonly killed numerous animals the night before offering sacrifice, and the whole ritual became a matter of flesh, bone, and blood sacrifice. Sometimes shamans would drink animal blood as they pricked their own cheeks, hands, feet, and breasts, all while chanting and dancing. When people did not consume all the meat of a blood sacrifice, they would bury the leftovers in the wilderness, mountains, and riverbanks to provide the deities with everlasting food. Followers of Lamaism later condemned this practice as extravagant and wasteful, but believers in shamanism thought differently. When Manchu and other northern

clanspeople were sick or faced troubles, they would traditionally summon a shaman to perform blood sacrifice to seek a cure or peace. Even in recent history, a considerable number of clans have held blood rituals for ill patients or the heads of households who were facing difficulties, offering in sacrifice blood drawn by pricking their flesh.

## 4.2 Fire rituals

Ancient shaman fire rituals aim to praise and worship fire for its beneficence and formidable power to cast off chill, ward off calamities, and exorcise evil. Such rites had far-reaching influences and were quite prevailing. In Chapter 2, we stated the basic concepts of northern fire worship; the present discussion focuses on the materials and procedures traditionally used in the solemn but lively Mongol and Manchu fire rites. The discussion is based mainly on hereditary shamanic texts of various Manchu clans and interviews with elder shamans.

Mongol sacrificial fire rituals were performed in a distinctive atmosphere peculiar to the grazing and hunting culture. The open-air rite mentioned earlier to worship the sacred Dokdor Mountain on the Songnen Plain highlights fire sacrifice as a communal event or household activity. For the communal celebration, all clan members gather at the foot of the mountain after dark and set up their yurts in an august assembly. The presiding shaman first lights nine bonfires, then beats his hand drum, intones sacred chants, and pours three bowls of milk liquor towards the mountain. A black horse is slaughtered in sacrifice, and all kneel before the mountain. Afterwards, people divide into nine groups, which walk around the nine fires clockwise in turn, forming nine circles. As they walk, they pray silently, throw various kinds of dairy foods into the fires, and sprinkle the milk liquor. They normally remain at the site until the bonfires have completely died out. In conjunction with this public rite, each household usually holds a night family ritual to worship the mountain in the hope of obtaining blessings for family members or animals plagued with illness, troubles, or misfortune. People place a small square table in the northwest of the courtyard or yurt, build a fire before it, and offer mutton or a sheep's head in sacrifice. Some offer cream, cheese, dried milk, or milk curds. After setting out their offering, the head of the household or whole family kneel towards the northwest and then throw their offerings into the fire (Bo Shaobu 1987).

According to *Mongol Fire Rituals* (*Mengguzu baihuo xisu gaiguan*) compiled by Wu Yisang (吴依桑) and Bagen, the Mongols have an ancient custom of preserving a live "day fire" for one day, a "month fire" for thirty days, and a "year fire" for a whole year: the longer the more precious. At important family events, such as weddings, funerals, and the beginning of the pasturing and hunting seasons, people first offer liquor and butter at the hearth to pray for the fire god's blessing. On the twenty-third day of the twelfth lunar month, moreover, every household cleans their house and yard and holds the yearly Mongolian family fire ritual. In ancient times, a shaman officiated, but since it was not always practical for shamans to visit each household, the family head could preside. Sometimes,

too, lamas of the Yellow Hat sect,<sup>7</sup> which also had fire rituals, but was at odds with shamanism, competed with shamans for the role of presider. Lamas were exclusively in charge of fire worship in the Horqin clan. In any case, the officiant was usually male, and for the sacrifice, males are on the right (the superior position) and females on the left (the inferior position), with the elders in front and younger family members at the rear. The whole family kneel around the hearth, and the host chants the fire eulogy. According to *Appreciation of Mongolian Customs* (*Menggu fengsu jian*), the offerings for a fire sacrifice are mainly whole sheep, *amasi* (meat congee similar to pilaf), red dates, butter, liquor, and a white silk *khata*.<sup>8</sup> After kneeling, the host pours the offerings into the fire in a set order. The state of the flames indicates whether the family will prosper and have a good harvest: the more vigorously the flames dance, the more prosperous the prospects of a good harvest. The Mongolian fire eulogy is quite artful, with the following distinctive ethnic features:

*Khan!*  
*Mother!*  
*My dear fire-mother!*  
*Here we offer you butter,*  
*Offer you the yellow head of a white sheep,*  
*Offer you fat and oil,*  
*Offer you fermented mare milk kefir!*

The fire ritual is completed after people have worshipped, knelt towards the fire, chanted the eulogy, and offered sacrifice. Afterwards, the whole family sit around the hearth and eat *amasi*, using only black chopsticks, in the “fire meal.” Any guest present receives a share of the *amasi* and a chunk of the lamb breast as a sign of sharing in the blessings of the fire god.

For the Manchu shamanic fire rite, manuscripts of its rules and procedures preserved by various clans provide valuable information. The *Sacred Book of the Manchu Fire Ritual of the Seven Hulun Clans* (*Hulun qixing manzhou huoji shengshu*), compiled in 1891 and acquired by scholars in Huichun in the 1980s, is the most important manuscript for understanding the Manchu fire sacrifice during the Qing dynasty. The drive for compiling the document probably came from the gradual simplification of shamanism in the late Qing dynasty. Master shamans from various clans and *mukūn* (paternal subclans that still remain among Manchu-Tungus peoples) then wrote down the contents of the rite for future generations. An analysis of the manuscript as preserved in Huichun indicates that the final segments were recalled from memory after the original had been lost. Nonetheless, it gives us insights into the rite as practised in Qing times. It lists the following standard procedures: summoning of deities and prayer for peace and good health; worship of heaven; chant to raise the fire; *ye* rite; chant of the sacred tree; chant for the fire competition; sacrificial chant; and so on. A Manchu language version is attached as a reference for shamans and their assistant *zaili* when studying the sacrificial texts.



Among the Seven Hulun Clans, the fire rite is called fire rite of the sacred tree. From the manuscript, we learn that it was held mostly on occasions when clan illness, plague, or battles broke out or for injuries from hunting or fishing. The *mukūnda* (subclan chief) and all the clan master shamans would then perform the rite to pray for a quick recovery or peace and reconciliation, usually on an autumn evening. The people pray, beat drums, slaughter and offer the blood of sacrificial animals, light nine bonfires on the top of a hill, and pile up eighty-one *huochi* (火池, braziers), along with stone and earthen jars and earth around the fires. The *mukūnda* then announces to the deities the reasons for offering their prayers. If the fire flames up and sparks fly upwards, it means that all deities in the wilds and the whole universe give a sign that they have heard the prayers. People perform fire acrobatics and use fire to shape a fire dragon, tiger, python, horse, fish, mountain, and so on. All the clanspeople join the fire teams in celebrating the ritual, and the atmosphere is quite animated. If the wind is too strong, however, it can cause fire or other calamities, so there are quite a number of taboos regarding the rite. The worship of the fire god and other deities is shrouded in mystery, and only if the fire god and the East Sea (Donghai) goddess are invited together, maintaining a balance between fire and water, can the ritual be accomplished smoothly and successfully. Thus, divination and prayer before the rite is vital.

When it has been decided that a fire rite will be held, a clan meeting is normally held to elect the *mukūnda* and *shamanda* (head shaman) in charge of the proceedings. In early spring, the clan then prepares offerings and ritual instruments, stores badger and boar fat in a cellar for oil lamps, and preserves boars, roe deer, swans, pheasants, fish, hazel grouses, wild fruit, and other food for use in the autumn celebration. For the immediate preparations, the *shamanda* leads the clanspeople to put up a thatched hut on a high and tranquil hill, where the clan shamans who will participate in the rite will live. It is forbidden for them to bathe, rest, or go back to their clan for sexual activity. An elder shaman leads them in learning the sacred texts and preparing the ritual utensils. The texts are enshrined in the hut with statuettes of the deities, and two magpies and two male pheasants are caught and kept in a cage. When everything has been prepared and the sacred mountain and sacred tree have been chosen, the site for the sacrifice is divined by a ritual in which people toss a fish tooth in the air and observe where it points. Through further divination, the shaman locates the sacred tree from among the numerous forest trees in the direction indicated. For this purpose, the head elder shaman dresses in their ritual garb, puts on their sacred hat, fastens their waist bells, and begins beating their drum. The other shamans kneel, and the *mukūnda* sprinkles wine and blood and then prays. The elder shaman performs a trance dance, beats their drum, and intones a chant in the forest. Suddenly the drumbeat becomes louder and more intense, and the shaman faints and falls on the ground, lying on their back, unconscious. The tree that rustles above them is taken as the sacred tree for the rite. All the shamans then beat their drums, kneel, and pray. The elder shaman revives, and the procedure for choosing the tree has been completed. Regardless of its size or girth, it is believed to be able to establish communication with heaven and to be the habitat of deities of the universe and clan ancestor deities.

The sacred tree must be an elm or willow, and if the shaman faints under another kind of tree, the shaman has to choose again, which seldom happens. I have never seen such a situation. The shaman's success in identifying precisely the right tree with their eyes shut is interpreted as divine guidance. People regard the ability to do so as shrouded in mystery, but because of experience, shamans have an instinct for identifying the proper tree.

Once the tree and site have been pinned down, people from all around hitch their horse to a cart and head to the site, where they put up thatched huts or animal-hide tents to live and eat in the presence of the sacred tree during the three- to seven-night fire ritual. They determine their camping site by releasing pheasants to see where they land. The undulating terrain and gullies around the sacred tree often make it difficult for the various clan groups to choose their campsite near it and autumn fires, so they use the pheasants to allocate auspicious campsites. The *mukūnda* selects a beautiful, slightly hobbling wild pheasant cock, and people of the various *mukūn* separately kneel to the sacred tree. The representative of the first *mukūn* initiates the release of the pheasant, and the *mukūnda* completes the release. The place where the pheasant perches is marked with the totem flag of that *mukūn*. Subsequently, representatives of the other *mukūn* in turn release their pheasants to determine their campsite. If a pheasant perches in the same area as has already been allotted, a different campsite needs to be located. Once the campsites have been determined, the various groups start to cut wood and build shacks or treehouses or put up tents at their respective sites.

According to the manuscript account of the fire rite as performed by the Seven Hulun Clans, a pine gate is usually built in front of the sacred tree, with four totem poles on each side, on which there are various carved animals and human and animal sketches. Eight flags of totem animals are set in front of the tree: eagle, flying tiger, python, bear, boar, hedgehog, whale, and leopard. People hang numerous charms and fetishes from hunted animals on the tree, hoping that future hunting will be fruitful, and some hang human-shaped spirit idols to pray for longevity and well-being. People also hang cages of magpies and sparrows on the tree, to be released after the ritual has been completed in order to pass on the good news to heavenly deities. The sacrificial offerings themselves are abundant. Apart from those provided by various *mukūn*, there are live boars, wild deer, and hazel grouses provided by the whole clan. A long ditch is filled with fresh water, and in it swim large carp, grass carp, and mandarin dragonet fish. Piles of azalea are set aflame to make azalea *nianxi* incense.<sup>9</sup> The offerings also include roasted suckling pigs, deer breasts, and all kinds of cakes.

Soon afterwards, on a star-filled night, people begin to set out offerings, and at dawn, they begin the rite. To the blare of horns, the *mukūnda* and *shamanda* lead the heads of the various *mukūn* to the sacred tree, followed by shamans leading the clanspeople. As they process forwards, they kneel, beat their drums and a big bass drum, ring bells, and sound *ciyalaci* (wood clappers), creating a huge din. After they kneel, shamans begin the summoning of the gods. Live deer and boar are slaughtered, and their blood is poured into a sacred container, mixed with

water, and spread around the sacred tree and over the campground of the various groups. One cup of blood is kept aside by the *mukūnda* to worship the fire god at night. In the afternoon, shamans of the various *mukūn* perform the *baō* ritual of thanksgiving and conduct prayers. After dark, the Big Dipper Nadan Usiha (*nadan* “seven”; *usiha* “stars”) rises in the east, and when its head starts pointing towards the western sky, the drums and horns all blare to mark the formal commencement of the fire sacrifice. All the clanspeople are elated.

First, shamans light the bonfires in front of the sacred tree and various oil lamps before the altar, including a beast-head lamp, frog lamp, eagle lamp, leopard lamp, turtle lamp, and fish lamp. Tolon (torches) are lit from the fire, and amid a dancing sea of fire, the *shamanda* intones the chant to raise the fire. The clanspeople echo the chant, enlivening the celebration:

*Siran tolon mbi – siran tolon* (endless rolling torches, the endless torches)  
*Amba tolon mbi – amba tolon* (huge torches, the huge torches)  
*Usiha tolon mbi – usiha tolon* (starlike torches, torches like stars)  
*Hada tolon mbi – hada tolon* (peak-like torches, torches like peaks)  
*Bira tolon mbi – bila tolon* (river-like torches, torches like rivers)  
*Alin tolon mbi – alin tolon* (mountainous torches, torches like mountains)  
*Mama tolon mbi – mama tolon* (the grandma torches, torches like grandmas)  
*Mama tolon – tolon mama* (grandma, like grandmas)  
*Tolon – tolon – ere* (torches, these torches)  
*Tolon – tolon* (torches, torches)  
*To – lon – ere* (the torches here)  
*To – lon – ere* (the torches here)

According to the Hulun Hala account, during the chant, hundreds of torches made of badger and boar fat are set aflame, illuminating the dark night, and according to other scattered materials that I found, the rite is traditionally performed in similar fashion in the Mengjeje, Kūyala, and Tukri halas. They all light up nine bonfires after the torches are set aflame, and the clan head and his clanspeople worship the stars, the sacred tree, and the fires, which are heaped up with wood and branches in a pyramidal shape and tended by appointed men.

In the rite of the seven Hulun Hala, the bonfires are made into various shapes: some like pythons flying over the mountain, some like crouching tigers, some like galloping horses. The *mukūnda* and *shamanda* design and carefully lay out the fire formations, and clanspeople ride their horses or walk through them in small groups. Only the bravest and cleverest horse riders and hunters can handle the “Fire of Heaven” and pass through the formations safe and sound. They do so to “burn away” evils, believing that only the pure sacred fire can get rid of evil spirits and bring health and good fortune. The one who passes through the fire most often with tact and speed is revered as *baturu* (hero) and elected as the *lieda* (hunting leader) of the clan. The more adroitly they pass through it, the more mystical they become. Their ability has been proven, and they are shown to be protected by the gods and one of auspicious good fortune.

Among the games enjoyed during the celebration are playing hide and seek around the fires, chasing a running hare around them with a stick, tying up a deer or shooting a duck in the fire, and snatching from the fire stone beads, stone cups, and sheep or goat *galaha* (ankle bones used for divination). There are also activities such as going through a loop of fire on a swing, kicking a lantern, and competing in distinctive fire feats on horseback. The whole celebration expresses praise to the invincible power of fire while displaying *mukūn* skills handed down from generations in building, understanding, storing, handling, and fending off fire.

After the games and the accompanying din of wild blasts of trumpets and horns, all the clanspeople gather again in front of the sacred tree, and the shamans beat their drums to invite the deities to share in the joy. To the sound of bell ringing and drumbeats, the eagle god, bear god, and python god descend upon the earth, and the shamans perform stunts of various animal deities in front of the fire. Subsequently, they summon the East Sea goddess Dergiamo Mama, the mother goddess of brightness of the east and life. Pictured as having the head of a fish and a human body, she is worshipped by the Manchu and other northern peoples in line with their reverence of the east as the direction of life, brightness, and hope and her dwelling place. She comes, beating her sacred oval drum, waving ribbons of seven colours, and spraying clear water from her lips. It is thought that only once she has descended upon the earth will the sacrificial fire remain burning without causing damage to humans, beasts, and the forests. In the Manchu creation myth "War in Heaven," depicting the battle between Abka Hehe and the demon Yeluli, the East Sea goddess prevailed against the fire-leopard goddess Tuwa Yarha, and from then on, only the water of the East Sea was able to put out mountain fires. When people want to do so, they first have to piously worship the East Sea goddess. During the fire ritual, only once she has descended can the roaring fire-leopard goddess come, who endows the shamans and clanspeople with skills of handling fire. Then everyone can jump, dance, and perform the *tiaohuochi* feat of running over burning coals uninjured as an auspicious sign or test of divine judgement. As the clanspeople sing the fire song and perform the fire dance, the celebration reaches its climax.

Running the *tiaohuochi* is common among the Manchu and other northern peoples and among religious zealots all over the world. Sri Lankan spirit mediums swiftly run nude across a stone fire-ground heated to a high temperature, and devotees in South Africa and India also worship fire and practise walking on fire. In shamanism, the technique is viewed as mysterious, but it can be scientifically explained. When people run swiftly over a fire that has already been trodden down, their feet stay on the fire for such a short stretch of time that it cannot penetrate the skin. Because the possibility of getting hurt is really not great, people readily run across a blazing fire to seek acclaim. On the whole, fire rituals have played an important role in primitive religious activities, and their widespread popularity serves as evidence that humans had already conquered and freely handled fire in the distant past.

At the end of the Manchu fire rite, all throw their offerings into the bonfires and then pick out burning coals to preserve in small jars, pots, or basins as an "eternal

flame.” They dismantle their tents, pack up their food and utensils, say goodbye to one another, and go back to their respective *mukūn*, singing and dancing. Except for people who served as guards or were suffering from serious illness, everyone would attend the rite. Men and women, old and young, all become elated, and any hardship, hostility or hatred among clans or *mukūn* would be reconciled under the protection of the sacred tree. They bring the burning coals back to their villages, put them in the hearth or a brazier, and tend the fire well to keep it from dying out. For the next fire rite, sparks from it are brought to a new location and rekindled.

The shamanic texts chanted in the fire ritual are especially beautiful from a literary and artistic point of view and full of mythic meaning. However, many of the texts were neglected or forgotten by Manchu ancestors and so gradually got scattered and disappeared. Many such texts have become nothing but the monotonous, ossified chants heard in temples or shrines – an irreparable loss for the study of the northern cultures of China. The existing material available to scholars is but a drop in the bucket.

## Notes

- 1 Jiuli 九黎: Each tribe was imagined as having nine subtribes, led by a total of eighty-one brother chieftains. Later, the legendary Emperor Yan 炎帝 and Emperor Huang 黄帝 are said to have allied against Chiyou at Zhuoluv 涿鹿, present-day Hebei, and defeated him.
- 2 The *Book of Rites* 《礼记》 is a collection of texts describing the social forms, administration, and rites of the Zhou dynasty, Warring States Period (475–221 BCE), and early Han period (206 BCE–220 CE)
- 3 Such documents include *Records of Sacrificial Rules and Procedures of the Fu Clan* (*Fushi jigui chengxu lixulu*), *Uyun Divine Words of the Qian Clan* (*Qianxing wuyun shenyu*), and *Norms for Sacrificial Rites of the Zang Clan* (*Dazang dingshi shenji guiyi*). In addition, the elderly Oroqen shaman Mo Fusheng had in his possession *Hundred Divine Words* (*Buju shenyu*), and the Daur shaman Wu Dekun had *Kunhe Esoteric Divine Words* (*Kunhe shoushen mizhuan zunyu*).
- 4 The *Sierranju* is a traditional Ewenki dwelling, covered in the summer with birch bark and in the winter with deer furs. It has a conical shape, is constructed from twenty to thirty pine poles, and is usually about 6 metres in diameter and 5 metres in height.
- 5 *Rites of Zhou* first appeared in a 2nd century BCE collection of old texts.
- 6 The Five Great Mountains 五岳 were famous mountains that were imperial ritual sites: East Great Mountain *Tai Shan* 泰山, West Great Mountain *Hua Shan* 华山, South Great Mountain *Heng Shan* 衡山 in Hunan, North Great Mountain *Heng Shan* 恒山, and Centre Great Mountain *Song Shan* 嵩山.
- 7 Yellow Hat Sect (Huangjiao 黄教); is the popular Mongolian name for Buddhism originating from the Tibetan Gelugpa sect, whose monks wear a yellow hat while performing religious services.
- 8 *Khata* is a Tibetan Buddhist ritual swath of silk symbolizing purity and compassion and worn or presented with incense on ceremonial occasions. Mongolian *khata*s are usually blue, symbolizing the sky, and are commonly tied to *ovoo*, stupas, or sacred trees and stones.
- 9 *Nianxi* incense 年息香 is a Manchu ritual incense made from azaleas picked before July 7 of the lunar year, dried naturally under the sun, and then ground into powder.

## 5 Rituals for nature deities

Chapter 2 discussed aspects of the northern shamanic worship of nature: heavenly phenomena, fire, earth, water, birds, and so on. The present chapter describes several of the rituals commonly used in worshipping nature gods, in particular star, sea, willow, bear, and snake deities.

### 5.1 Star rituals

In Chapter 2, we stated that the northern shamanic worship of the sky or heaven includes the sun, moon, stars, and all natural phenomena associated with the sky. According to *Records of Four Manchu Rites* (*Manzhou siliji*), such heavenly phenomena are called *shen* (神, deities), while those of the earth are called *qi* (祇, earth deities), but in general, the whole system is referred to as the worship of heaven (*tian*, 天). Ancient as rites worshipping heaven, they came into prominence later than blood and fire rites.

Rituals worshipping the stars are an integral part of the worship of heaven, and for ages, they have been one of the most influential practices observed by Manchu and other northern peoples. When people moved from the barbaric period to tribal society, they experienced a relatively stable stage of life and livelihood, and they came to have a clearer sense of geographical relationships and concepts. They began to take interest in noting the positions and alterations of the stars and formulating laws that govern them, and they associated the stars and their movements with their own lives and religious beliefs. The heavens were thus no longer isolated entities bearing no relationship to human beings; they were seen as mystical messengers and helpful forces for whom humans yearned and on whom humans depended. They were included in the ranks of shamanic deities and came to have their own rituals. Although star rituals came into being at a later stage in northern peoples' religious development than blood rituals and fire rituals, they became more and more dynamic and vital with the development of society. Many pious believers found it exceedingly interesting to explore the heavens, and star rituals came to have great appeal. Even now, star rites arguably influence the daily life of northern ethnic peoples.

As we have seen, the influence of Manchu and Mongol cultures has been stronger than that of other northern peoples in the region. They absorbed, moreover,

more Han cultural elements than did other ethnic groups, such as the practice recorded in the 2nd-century BCE *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*) of offering fire sacrifices to the sun, moon, and stars. *Old Jilin Records* (*Jilin jiuwenlu*) states that among the many Manchu sacrificial rituals, star rites and ancestor rites were equally important, and *Annals of Jilin* (*Jilin tongzhi*) records that among all northern rituals, the Manchu star and ancestor rituals were the grandest. They were held once a year or several years and demanded great expense. Star rites were far more important among the Manchu than they were in other ethnic groups, and they bore a close resemblance to Han Chinese practices. Of Han practices, *Rules for Manchu Sacrifices to Deities and Heaven* (*Qinding manzhou jitian jishen dianli*) recounts that from the reign of Emperor Qianlong (乾隆, 1735–1799), sacrificial rites should conform to the long-standing rules of the past, and from the numerous instances of shamanic star worship of Manchu clans, we can get glimpses into the basic features of ancient Manchu star rituals.

The ancient Manchu observed the stars in their particular geographical locations in the north for generations. They catalogued cyclical phenomena such as the rise and setting of the sun and moon; the orbits of Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, and Saturn; the positions of stars; and the shapes, numbers, luminosity, and metamorphoses of the constellations. On the basis of the yearly appearance of the constellations, or “mansions” (*xiu*, 宿) in the northern sky, people predicted seasonal climate changes, the direction and force of winds, the exact time of solar events, and possible temperature ranges and variations. They did so in accord with their understanding of both heavenly phenomena themselves and the modes of life and migration patterns of various animals and the estimated yield of plants and herbs. They observed the sun, moon, and stars to predict weather conditions for the coming year, and they recognized that various changes in nature correspond to constellations in the same area and predicted the weal and woe of the clan accordingly. At the same time, their observations of the heavens inspired their unique star rituals, which took shape in patriarchal society before shamanist ancestor worship emerged.

The Mongols have also had long deep reverence for the stars, especially for the Big Dipper, to which they would offer kumis and animal sacrifice. Nonetheless, they revered the sun and the moon even more. The Tartars, as the Mongol invaders were known to Europeans,

worshipped the sun, the moon, mountains and rivers and the five planets. The doors of their yurts were built to face the south, before which they would kneel down to worship the sun, pouring wine onto the ground. When they worshipped the sun, the moon, the mountains, the rivers, or the various celestial bodies, they would sprinkle liquor on the ground.

Mongol herders worshipped the sky out of the need for a greater abundance of flocks. A scene of such worship is inscribed on the rock paintings on the Yin Mountains of Inner Mongolia; the paintings were carved by the Hun nomads who dominated the Asian Steppe from the 3rd century BCE to the late 1st century CE



and by the proto-Mongolian nomadic Xianbei people, the Mongols themselves, and other ethnic peoples. The paintings depict the sun, the moon, the stars, and clouds with scenes of people worshipping the sun or dancing to the stars (Li Di 1986:16).

The Oroqen also had a grasp of meteorological knowledge. They traditionally recognized that if stars twinkled at night, there would be high winds the following day; if the sun rose with *dair* (bright spots on its sides called sun dogs), it would be warm that day; if the sun set with *dair*, it would be cold the following day; if there was a halo on either side of the moon, it would also be cold the following day; and so on. They did not traditionally choose auspicious days for weddings, funerals, and sacrificial rites according to an almanac; they did so by observing the waxing and waning of the moon. The Ewenki used the sun and the constellation of the Three Stars (Shen Xiu, 参宿) to tell time (Li Di 1986:16), and when they travelled at night, their only compass was the Three Stars and Big Dipper. To predict the coming year, they observed the position of the moon and the Chinese Southern Dipper. If the moon was at the upper left of the Dipper, there would be floods in the coming year; if it was at the upper right, there would be drought; and if it lay within or under the Dipper, there would be a good harvest with adequate rainfall and moderate temperature. The Manchu, like their Jurchen ancestors, still tell time according to the positions of stars. If the sky is overcast with no bright stars, they decide time on the basis of dimmer stars.

The original geographical scope of activity of northern ethnic groups was mainly between the thirty-sixth degree and the fiftieth degree of north latitude. Some groups had to go far up to the sub-frigid zones of the north to seek a living by fishing and hunting. The periods when the land was covered with ice and snow in these zones lasted longer than nine months, with long winter nights and short summers. Sometimes people had to live in the snow under the stars, and faced with such harsh conditions, they longed for light and fire, which could expel evil and cold and allow them to live and reproduce. This is likely the core motivation for early shaman star rituals in the region.

The stars worshipped in early shamanism were the winter constellations (mansions) in the northern hemisphere known as the “winter stars” (*jilengxing*, 祭冷星) or the “night stars” (*jiyexing*, 祭夜星), which were considered to be the dwelling place of deities in charge of night and cold. There were also the Manchu fire goddess Tuwa Enduri, with her sun horse Šūn Morin; Weledū Mama, the goddess who lays out the stars; and the mama goddesses who taught humans life skills. Among the terms used in star rites (“star,” *usiha* in Manchu) are *tumen usiha* (ten thousand stars), *mingan usiha* (one thousand stars), and *oron weceku* (star shrine niche). It was believed that the numerous cloudlike constellations were a dynamic world with life, spirit, consciousness, cognition, human character, and pathos. The stars were harmonious as equal members of the huge family of the heavens, bustling like humans day and night but possessing transcendental divine power. They are like birds flying in the sky with the luminous brilliance of their feathers, so shaman chants call them *wedun gasha* (birds of the universe), *aisin gasha* (golden birds), and *menggun gasha* (silver birds). They fly in orderly

formations from east to west with their glittering white wings day and night. They chase the sun god during the day and the moon god at night, casting a lustrous silver glow upon the earth. The brilliant sun, the tender luminous moon, and the twinkling stars have been deeply revered and exalted as the eyes of heaven. People thought that white was the true colour of the universe, as well as of the sun, the moon, starlight, and flames, and they revered it as the colour not only of the heavens but also of purity, life, and good fortune. In general, they regarded white as the symbol of youth, yellow as the symbol of the prime of life, and red as a sign of decline and foreboding pointing to life's twilight.

Among the various deities worshipped in the night *beideng* rite with all lights out, mentioned in Chapter 3, there is the great goddess in charge of setting out the stars in the universe, Weledū Mama, mother of the heavens, one of the three sisters of the universe in the Manchu creation myth "War in Heaven." With a human body and a pair of bird's wings, she is usually dressed in a fur gown with white feathers and is seen as carrying a small fur sack full of stars on her back. In the *beideng* rite, a shaman dressed in a white gown shakes their waist bells and flaps their arms to symbolize the flight of the goddess in the sky as they chant a sacred text. The shaman's soul thus ascends to the nine-storey heaven to visit the deities of the universe, animal deities, and clan ancestor deities. While doing so, the shaman prays for Weledū Mama's aid, hoping that she will give the shaman white wings, make the twinkling stars guide them by illuminating their way, guard them, provide them with food and water, or lend to his soul the Star Bridge as a resting place on this long journey. In the Manchu tale "Sirin Sefu," when the shaman Sirin visited heaven, it took him ten days in a trance to get to the Golden Mansion, where the East Sea goddess Aomu Mama lives. In any case, a shaman's soul cannot soar to the heavens without the help of star deities. In the Manchu *Jiao'uyun* training programme for shaman initiates and other ritual activities, chants to praise and worship the stars are performed with great reverence, and star rites are quite complicated and have rigid taboos. Among northern peoples, the Manchu possess the most documented records of star rituals. As can be seen in *Records of Grievances of the East Sea* (*Donghai chenyualu*) and other Manchu folk materials, the ancient Jurchen of the Donghai Weji (forest) tribe worshipped the stars twice a year, either separately or together with the worship of their ancestors. When people worshipped the stars right after the first snow, they hoped that they could have abundant food for winter, and when they worshipped them in the first month of the lunar year (solar February), they hoped to dispel evils, banes, and plagues and prayed for peace and health for the new year.

The star rite at the first snow was held when there rose up in the eastern sky the constellation Nehu Usiha (Pleiades or Seven Sisters, in Chinese lore Maoxiu). During this ritual, nine piles of long logs are set aflame as horns and drums blare. The nine clouds of smoke belching from the blazing bonfires are like nine columns billowing up to the heaven as the Star Bridge. The smoke columns "connect the sacred tree with heaven," and the fires expel evil and illuminate the world while protecting the star deities from evil spirits so that they can stay bright every night, guide people on earth, and deliver good news. The star ritual of the first

lunar month traditionally included the nine bonfires and sacrifices of deer, boars, wild geese, pheasants, and other wild animals. The whole animal was not necessarily offered, but when it was still alive, its blood was sprinkled in the woods and on the fires, and some of its flesh was roasted and offered in sacrifice. Wooden bowls and grass stalks were used as dishes and utensils, which illustrates the way of eating in Manchu *ye* rituals held to worship nature deities.

The grand star ritual cited in *Longjiang Annals* (*Longjiang xianzhi*) goes as follows: at night, people worship the stars in front of the chimney of the east house, with the lights out. When the rite begins, a person dressed in white kneels on the ground, holding a wooden knife in their left hand. They stab a pig, offers sacrifice, and then, with their relatives, eats the meat (Longjiang Annals Editorial Committee 1991). *Etiquette and Customs of Hulan Banner* (*Hulan difangqiji lisu*) from the reign of Emperor Guangxu (1875–1908) states the same: the Manchu of the Hulan District of Harbin worship stars at night in front of the east chimney of the principal house, with the lights out. A person dressed in white kneels, prays, and slays a pig with a knife in their left hand. Of the rite of the Kūyala Hala (clan), the star ritual is held on the night of an auspicious day after the three-day spring ploughing ritual (*Chungengji*, 春耕祭), when stars are neatly distributed throughout the sky. People set up an altar at the west of the house towards the Big Dipper and prepare a willow branch on which seven chicken wing feathers are bound with thin hemp. For the Irgen Gioro Hala of Ula, Jilin Province, the pig sacrificed in the star ritual should weigh under 50 *jin* (1 *jin* is equivalent to 0.5 kilograms); regardless of its weight, it must be carried by two people into the west chamber of the principal house and laid on bare ground with its head turned to the northeast. People set up ancestor tablets on a long altar table and invite the ancestors to enjoy the celebration together with the star gods. To pray for peace and health, they pour liquor into the pig's left ear. In a procedure known as *lingsheng* (领牲, sacrificial animal), if the ear twitches, that means that the god has accepted the offering. Also required are seven stacks of seven flat buckwheat cakes in the shape of the Big Dipper. Cups are filled with liquor, and seven pairs of chopsticks made of sorghum stalks are stood upright beside the cake stacks.

As I found in my field trips in Heilongjiang, Jilin, and other areas, Manchu star rituals continue to follow these old customs. The shamans are mostly dressed in white, but for some clans in yellow; the sacrificial animals are mostly piglets and birds; the number of offerings is three, seven, or nine (an odd number). The utensils used at the sacrificial meal are made of wood or sorghum stalks, but not chopsticks; the firewood consists of pine torches or candles, not bonfires. In some families, the rite is simplified and subsumed under the *jia* ritual (*jiaji*, 家祭), as was noted in Chapter 3. The form of shaman rites were standardized in the mid-Qing era without spirit possession and were not necessarily a family rite, though *jia* basically means house or home. When the star gods are worshipped as a part of the night *beideng* ritual, the rite is similarly simplified, by omitting the sacred chants praising the stars. In 1980, I went to in Jilin Province and visited the expert of Manchu folklore Zhao Jinwen (赵金文), Manchu elders,<sup>1</sup> and an elderly woman named Luo, all of whom recalled the details of the rite as performed in

Ula. They all stated that the tradition of reverencing the stars among the Manchu, old and young alike, has been an established practice handed down for ages to remind later generations of the hardships of the early settlements in the area. The shaman and clan chieftain would lead the clan to worship the stars in the traditional way, and anyone who violated the taboos was severely punished, with no exception.

Located 40 *li* (1 *li* is equivalent to 0.5 kilometres) northeast of the town of Ula is the famous Phoenix Mountain (Fenghuangshan), on which there were once many old temples. From the reign of Kangxi (康熙) until that of Qianlong (乾隆), 1661–1796, the Manchu villages near the mountain had the tradition of worshipping stars. When a star rite was held, numerous bonfires blazed on its crest and slopes all night long, like a stretch of bright stars. During the rite, shamans of various clans would gather to elect the clan to take charge of the rite in accordance with the tradition that people of the same tribe would worship the stars together in the same way. The fleece of white sheep, horse hides, and rabbit fur could all be used to make the ritual garb, worn with the fleece or fur on the outside. Shamans were stationed at different spots on the mountain, where they would beat their drums and chant a hymn to the stars, and all the people would sing a choral anthem that could be heard for miles around.

When people worshipped the stars, they had to call out to them. The more frequently they called, the brighter the stars would become, and this was believed to keep the stars free from harm and evil spirits. People had to prepare sacrificial animals; cast their blood and flesh, along with grains and rice wine, into the fire; and then build a fireplace with white stones as a temporary hearth to roast the meat. After the rite, all of the tribe would assemble around rows of wooden troughs, dip their hands in salt water, and together eat the meat roasted over the “fire of heaven.” Although the rite was commonly held in the dead of winter, the scene was quite spectacular. Some clans or families would hold the ritual separately at other times for particular purposes but according to the same procedure. According to anthropological studies, women were not allowed to take part in the ritual. In fact, however, the Manchu and other northern peoples were not much influenced by Confucianism. Women could ride horses or sleighs to join in the worship of the stars and pray for blessings. If there were passing travellers of other tribes, moreover, they were warmly welcomed as distinguished guests to enjoy the sacrificial meal together with the clanspeople. Actually, people believed that they would bring good luck and that the greater number people who attended the rite, the more neatly would the Stars appear and the more prosperous would the coming year turn out to be.

During the rite, clanspeople would have competitions of fire skills and games, such as jumping through “dragon fire hoops,” forming fire formations, swinging bundles of fire, horse riding, and shooting. From the middle of the Qing dynasty onwards, all kinds of fireworks displays and radiant fire shows flourished. People made a star observation platform out of snow and ice like a silver tower on the top of the mountain, and they fashioned on the mountain top with sacred animals and birds out of snow, which appeared like deities descending in luminous fire. If

snakes were seen crawling out of stone caverns during the rite, this was regarded as an auspicious sign, and people took care not to step on them or kill them. The shamans and clanspeople would then stir up the bonfires more brightly, slaughter animals, offer the animals' blood, and give thanks to heaven, shouting "A huge snake is coming; spring is approaching."

Star rites are still talked about not only by the Manchu but by other northern peoples as well. Ancient documents record that other northern fishing and hunting peoples have long had star rituals. *Book of Later Han Vol. 8 (Houhanshu, 445 CE)*, relates that the ancient Korean kingdom of Goguryeo (37 BCE–668 CE) liked to build shrines to worship the stars and also gods of the soil and grain. Many documents describe northern customs in the days of the Liao and Great Jin dynasties, of worshipping the stars and heaven, of regarding birds as star gods, and of predicting weather conditions in accordance with movements of the heavens and stars.

The shamanic custom of Shunxing (顺星), worship of the star deity in charge of the current year of the sixty-year Chinese calendrical cycle, has prevailed in northern China for hundreds of years. Shunxing originally focused on worshipping Taisui (太岁), the stars opposite the planet Jupiter, dating back to the 11th-century BCE Shang dynasty, and the use of the sixty-year cycle itself can be found in the 3rd-century BCE Zhou dynasty. When the mother of Jin Emperor Zhangzong (章宗, 1189–1209) fell ill for a long time, she soon recovered when the emperor prayed to the current year's deity Dingmao (丁卯) and built a shrine to house the god's statue. The custom of Shunxing grew more popular in the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), and Ming Emperor Yongle (永乐, 1360–1424) issued an edict for the construction in Beijing of the White Cloud Temple (*Baiyunguan*), which was called Auspicious Sign Temple (*Yuancheng-dian*) in the Qing years and known by the common people as Shunxing Temple (*Shunxingdian*).

Regarding Beijing rites worshipping the stars, the 1937 *Collected Customs of Beijing (Beiping fengsu leizheng)* records a legend: on the eighth day of the first month of the lunar year, all the star deities would descend to earth, and people would light lanterns to worship them. They could light up as many as 108 lanterns, but they lit forty-nine as the common practice. People also worshipped the star gods of their birth year and offered them star-shaped *yuanxiao* (元宵, glutinous rice balls). They would give the *yuanxiao* to relatives and friends as a present until the lantern lights began to dim (Li Jiarui 1992). *Records of Seasonal Yanjing Customs (Yanjing suishiji)* by the Qing standard-bearer Dun Lichen at the beginning of the 20th century contains a record of the same rite (Yanjing 燕京, another old name for Beijing). After dusk on the eighth day of the first month of the lunar year, people lit 108 lanterns with oil mixed with wine and burnt incense to send tribute to the stars in what was known as the star ritual. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth day of the first lunar month, people hung and lit flower-shaped paper lanterns called *sanden-ghua* (散灯花) in their rooms and the house hall, all the way to the gate, to get rid of evil (Pan Rongbi 1981).

Since 12th-century Jin dynasty times, this custom has been popular in the northern areas of China above the Yangtze River. Some scholars claim that it should be attributed to the spread of Taoism ever since the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), which traditionally worshipped goddesses in charge of stars, the heavens, mountains, and rivers, and the soil goddess Houtu (后土). However, Yanjing (Beijing) culture was also deeply influenced by Jurchen culture, and the content and structure of the star rite of the White Cloud Temple conforms more to the Manchu shaman Shunxing's star worship. The influence of ancient Han culture and Taoism may have added to the complexity of the Beijing star rite, but its roots lie rather in shamanism. In any case, the shaman chants and oracles that I have known among northern peoples have become mingled over time with the Beijing star ritual ever since the Han dynasty two thousand years ago.

On the other side of the coin, elements of traditional Chinese astronomical lore have become mingled over the ages with the star rituals performed among the Manchu and other peoples. Ancient Chinese astronomers divided the sky into four regions, collectively known as the four symbols, and they assigned to each a mystic animal: azure dragon of the east, black tortoise of the north, white tiger of the west, and vermilion bird of the south. Each region contains seven mansions, in total twenty-eight, which were determined in the spring and autumn and the Warring States Period (475–221 BCE) of the Zhou dynasty. These mansions are the equivalent of the Western zodiac constellations, but they are based on the movement of the moon through a sidereal month, not that of the sun in a tropical year.

When did the Twenty-Eight Mansions and other imperial astrological concepts begin to appear among northern ethnic peoples? On the basis of archaeological findings, we know that this happened at least as early as the Liao dynasty (916–1125). The Liao star chart found in the 1970s in Zhangjiakou, Hebei, is one of the most significant archaeological findings in the astronomical history of northern China. The chart is based mainly on the Twenty-Eight Mansions of China, along with the twelve Babylonian signs of the zodiac. It was the first such chart found in China that includes foreign astronomical references. The late-12th-century *Compilation of Documents of The Three Reigns' Northern Alliance* (*Sanchao Beimeng Huibian*), concerning the reigns of the first three Great Jin emperors, records that in the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), “archery competitions were organized among Jurchen clans and the titles of officials were named after the Palace of Nine Stars and Twenty-Eight Mansions” (Xu Mengshen 1987). From this, we can surmise that the astronomical concept of the Twenty-Eight Mansions was well known in Manchu households and that the deities of the Twenty-Eight Mansions were then revered in shaman chants.

On the basis of years of field study, interviews with shamans, and shamanic texts, we have found that the astronomical system of northern peoples was enriched during the evolution of society and gradually took shape as star rituals. From this, we can deduce that the embryo of the Manchu system actually appeared much earlier than did the Twenty-Eight Mansions of the Zhou dynasty. The Manchu system emerged earlier, moreover, than the twelve signs of the Western zodiac,



the constellations, and mythological map of the sky that has long been in use worldwide. The ancient star names, attributes, positions, and customs preserved in Manchu shamanism were cultivated according to the stars as seen in autumn, winter, and spring in northern China. Observation of these stars allowed people to identify changes in seasons, geographical positions, the time of day, and climate.

Nadan Nalahū was the leading star goddess in the eastern sky and assistant to the goddess Weledū Mama in her duty of setting out the stars. She is sometimes called Nalahū, Nahū, or Nadan Daihūn, and her mansion is also known as Chicken Nest (*jiwoxing*), Umbrella (*sanzixing*), Flower Bud (*huagutuoxing*), Seven Sisters (*qizimeixing*), and Seven Fairies (*qixiannv*). Some think her mansion refers to the Big Dipper, but the Big Dipper is Nadan Usiha (Seven Stars), which is worshipped separately in the *beideng* rite but together with Ilan Usiha (Three Stars) in the star rite.

According to ancient northern folklore, the light and fire of life dwells in the East, where the sun, moon, and stars rise. People had the custom of worshipping the sun and kneeling towards it out of their recognition that its changes are intimately related to the geographical conditions in which they lived. They regarded the northern sky where the sun, moon, and stars always rose in the east and set in the west as the most sacred place, and they imagined that the two goddesses Nalahū and Weledū Mama enjoyed playing in the heavens and occasionally liked to conceal the starlight under their feathered dresses, plunging the sky into complete darkness. Consequently, when shamans worshipped stars, they loudly chanted “words to awaken the stars.” Nadan Nalahū was at the centre of all the stars in winter, and as winter moved into the spring, the two goddesses led all the stars to rise quietly in the east when the sun set and ordered the mansions to head slowly westwards. When the two sunk in the western sky in winter, the sun began to rise in the east. They were worshipped as the supreme ancestral goddesses. For her part, the seven stars (Big Dipper) goddess Nadan Usiha appeared much later than did the great goddess of the universe Nadan Nalahū Nalahū. She came into being only after agriculture became common and people began to lead settled lives. She was worshipped by kneeling towards the north.

There are many summer stars that usher in the harvest: heart (*xin*), tail (*wei*), neck (*kang*), dustpan (*qi*), and other mansions in the region of the Four Stars in the Room Mansion, which *Book of Han (Hanshu)* says care for agriculture. According to the etymological dictionary *Ciyuan*, the stars in the Heart Mansion were called Big Fire (*dahuo*) or Shang Star (*shangxing*). They were known as the Three Flaming Stars (*resanxing*) among the people and served as the counterpart of the Three Stars Mansion Ilan Usiha in winter because they never appeared with the Three Stars. These agrarian stars are quite different in purpose from the winter stars worshipped in shamanism. Serving purely farming purposes, they were “worshipped to pray for good rain,” but “if there was excessive rainfall, people prayed for more sunny days, and if there was drought in winter, people prayed for snow.” *Collected Customs of Beiping* adds detail: “The northern people in general believed that when the Three Stars set at daybreak, the river is going to freeze” (Li Jiarui 1992).



Many statements about stars can be found in well-known farming proverbs:

*When the Eagle Star [yingxing] sets in the west,  
it will take a long time for the sun to emerge.  
A halo around the Mouse Star [shuxing] chills the winds  
and brings freezing torrents.  
If the handle of the Big Dipper points north,  
it ushers in a wintry season.  
If the handle of the Big Dipper points north,  
snow will be up to the thighs.  
If stars blink their eyes, winds will chill the cheeks.  
If starlight is braided, snowflakes will fly unabated.*

Other sayings based on heavenly phenomena are:

*The autumn equinox puts an end to thunder.  
The start of winter drives earthworms into hiding.  
The start of winter freezes water.  
A major snowfall fells elks' antlers.*

All such proverbs express generalizations of northern Chinese peoples on the basis of observations of stars and laws of nature, and they have played important roles in grasping seasonal changes and deciding agricultural matters. In general, the star rituals of northern shamanism constitute a prologue to scientific astronomy in the region and a vital contribution to the development of Chinese astronomy in general.

## 5.2 Sea rituals

Primarily conducted to worship the goddess of the sea and seek her consent for the succession of a new khan, sea rites usually began at night and lasted until sunrise. The main participants were the chieftains, family heads, and shamans of a particular tribe. Shamans – arms and feet bare – wore costumes made of fish skin, girded themselves with waist bells, and equipped themselves with numerous spirit idols and amulets made of fish bones, clam shells, fish eyes, and stones all over their bodies. After bonfires have been lit and the shamans' bodies have been anointed with fish oil and fish blood, they ride boats or rafts out into the rough sea. Some tribespeople kneel on the beach or cliffs, and others go out into the sea with the shamans on rafts or special sea-dragon boats carved out of wood.

As the din of drumbeats, conch shells, trumpets and other horns resounds in everyone's ears and reaches the sky, the head shaman kneels on the ground and invites the East Sea (Donghai) goddess. The shaman then enquires into whether the goddess agrees with the succession of the new khan, chieftain, or tribal head. For a new khanum, the shaman cuts her hair, draws blood from her forehead, and sprinkles the hair and blood into the sea. If no whirlpool-shaped white waves immediately appear, that means that the deity does not recognize the new khanum.

In that case, more blood must be sprinkled as sacrifice into the sea, along with offerings of chickens, ducks, deer, bears, cattle, sheep, or wild boars, which are cast into the sea. If still no white waves are seen, the shaman brings a whale kept in a sea cage, draws blood from it, and drips its blood into the sea. When the waves then turn red, the shaman kneels down again in prayer while the new khanum kneels on one of the rafts, her forehead still bleeding. When silver waves are seen, the whole tribe cheers. It is a sign that the goddess approves the succession, so the new khanum can take charge. She first offers sacrifice, tossing into the sea several virgin boys – not women or male adults. Before sacrificing the boys, she must touch their penises, indicating that the sea goddess should accept the human offerings because they are pure and are the khanum's favourites.

When people pray for a good harvest or a military victory, they perform a similar grand sea rite in which the sacrificial offerings likewise must be males. The rite came to be held among the Donghai Jurchen ancestors of the Manchu in days of matriarchal clan society, when women played a more significant role and men were deemed as just tribal appendages belonging to women. This demonstrates how matriarchal power was then supreme, but aspects of the tradition have been preserved even into modern times.

Still another type of sea ritual has traditionally been held as a burial rite. Manchu clans that sprung from the Donghai Weji tribe tell stories about the ancient burial traditions of people living by the sea, who preferred sea or sky burial to inhumation and cremation. In northern shamanism, human life is a gift from the East Sea goddess, and when people die, their souls should return to the Sea Palace, where the goddess dwells. Therefore, when a tribesperson died, shamans would offer prayers and splice together a raft. The corpse would then be placed at the centre of the raft, surrounded by clothes, commonly used household utensils, and a favourite dog, bird, or other small animal. During the burial rite, shamans beat their drums, ride boats out to the deep sea before the wind rises, and pray for the arrival of the goddess Tasituri, who escorts the dead to the Sea Palace. When possessed by the goddess, the officiating shaman falls into a trance, in which they order the tribespeople and head of the family to steer the raft towards a wind-blown bay or sea regarded as the burial site designated by the goddess. Subsequently, the family head tosses into the sea offerings such as cakes, wild fruit, and the blood of a deer, eagle, or other animal. When silk-like red ripples appear, it means that the seaweed of souls has clustered in the waves. All the boats then gather around the raft bearing the corpse, and the shamans load heavy stones onto raft and then lay them on the corpse, all the while chanting and beating their drums as they pray. When the stones submerge the raft into the depths of the sea, the burial comes to an end. Afterwards, live animal sacrifices are tossed into the sea, and stones are attached to another raft with earthen jars, stone pots, or wooden troughs containing whale and other animal oil. The oil is set aflame, and the boats all set out for the return to land. The light of the flames can sometimes last several days, and when it dies out, the tribespeople believe that the goddess Tasituri has taken the soul of the deceased to the wondrous Sea Palace and that the deceased's loved ones need not to worry anymore.

In modern times, due to the frequent territorial changes, wars, and ethnic migrations since the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the tradition of the sea ritual has ceased to be practised in many clans. However, it has still been preserved by the Manchu Nimaca Hala and Hexeri Hala, the latter being the oldest clan in Huichun, Jilin Province. He Yulin (何玉霖), an elderly master shaman there who passed away a few years before this book was written was not only familiar with traditional shamanic chants but could recite numerous folk songs. In recollections at his home in the summer of 1982, he said that he knew nothing about sea rituals but that he knew of earlier river rituals from his father and uncle, such as had once been held on the Huichun River to exorcise smallpox. When he recited river ritual chants for us, he referred to the rite as *aomuhe fucembi*, meaning sea ritual, as the name that had been passed down. This shows that, in days gone by, clan ancestors actually held sea rituals. When He Yulin danced as a youth in a shaman *ye* rite, he had once conducted a river ritual in which the otter god was summoned, and he dove into the river to collect shells. But the rite was just a part of the *ye* rite, with no special procedures of its own.

Another Huichun old-timer, the deceased Manchu master shaman Yang Shichang (杨世昌) of the Nimaca Hala from Jiutai County, Jilin, recalled in 1981 that a river ritual had been held at Chaliba Village of Yongji County in the days when he was a newly initiated shaman, to seek respite from a flood. People just killed a pig, offered its blood, roasted the meat over an open fire, and then ate, from which we can see how the ritual had become simplified over time. In river rituals performed as a session of *ye* rites by some clans, people would summon the waterfowl god and otter god and enhance the celebration with winter swimming feats, such as diving and resurfacing through ice holes. From these activities, too, we can see how the sea ritual has undergone drastic changes. Nonetheless, the worship and myths of the East Sea goddess are still preserved in river rituals and other *ye* rituals.

### 5.3 Willow rituals

In northern shamanism, certain plants were regarded as sacred objects and worshipped as deities, including trees, such as birch, elm, and willow (*fodo* in Manchu). Willows are found primarily in moist soil or on riverbanks, where they are known in northern China as willow swamp stretches and grow rapidly. The Jurchen ancestors of the Manchu lived mainly on fishing and hunting along rivers, and they found willows to be a most useful tree. They used its wood for firewood and making containers. Gradually, moreover, they came to regard willows as deities and created numerous myths and legends that reinforced this belief. Willow worship goes part and parcel with water worship. Northeast China is certainly not wanting in rivers and lakes, but the winters are cold and long. Water is indispensable for life, but drilling wells was more difficult there than in southern China, so people relied on seeking out willows as indicators of a nearby water fountainhead. Willows thus became a symbol of life-giving water, and finding a water supply meant finding the source of life and the foundation of existence and tribal development. Willows and their leaves have thus been regarded as sacred objects and held with great reverence. Whereas the grand fire ritual reflects the

pride of conquering the northern world of snow, willow rituals express the delight of finding water and have been celebrated with rapturous enthusiasm among the Manchu, Oroqen, Ewenki, Daur, Xibe, Hezhe, and Mongols. The 1st-century CE literary text *Baihutong* (*A Compilation of Conference Materials on the Confucian Classics in the Eastern Han Dynasty*) recounts that the place where the Tatars inhabited was extremely cold. But a willow survived the cold, and the native people regarded it as an exotic plant and hurried to see it in spring (Ban Gu 班固 1985). From this, we know that people north of the Gobi Desert long ago regarded willows as sacred plants.

Numerous legends and myths give expression to peoples' belief in the sacredness of the willow. According to a legend recorded in historical documents such as the *Veritable Records of the Manchu* (*Manzhou lu*) from the first half of the 17th century, the celestial maiden Fogulun swallowed a red fruit and thus gave birth to the primogenitor Manchu ancestor Bukūri Yongšon. In one episode of the legend, he went by canoe to suppress a riot in the Jurchen region of Sanxing (present day Yilan, Harbin), and as he was heading down the river to the far shore, he "snapped off a willow branch and bent it to sit on." He was obviously sitting on a willow mat, but the episode suggests that it was sacred. Apparently out of reverence for willows, *History of Jin: Treatise on Geography* (*Jinshi dili zhi*), compiled by 14th-century Mongol historian Toqto'a (also known as Tuotuo), records that in 1165, the fourth year of Jin Emperor Shizong (金世宗), the emperor ordered people to plant willows on both sides of the lane outside the capital gate, stretching for hundreds of *li*. The treatise also says that the Jurchen would reverently place thick willow branches in their *tangse* shrines and use them to punish children and household servants (Toqto'a et al. 1975). In recent times, willows have still lined the countryside lanes of the Shuangcheng District of Harbin, and "baskets and drinking vessels are traditionally made mostly of willow wicker" (Shuangcheng Annals Editorial Committee 1990).

Willow rituals figured prominently in shaman practices and became widespread folk customs. Jurchen in the Liao dynasty used to shoot at willows on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar year. In the subsequent Jin dynasty, children would use *fodo* (willows) to sweep tombs on Qingming (Tomb-Sweeping Day), and people would stick willow branches around tombs in worship. *Collected Customs of Beiping* (*Beiping fengsu leizheng*) relates that "On the day of Qingming, women and children would wear willow twigs whose buds were just unfolding like mulberries" and that "people pinned twigs of willow in their hair" (Li Jiarui 1992). According to *Customs of Bukui* (*Bukui fengtu ji*), there was a willow in the southern part of the city that was regarded as a deity and received incense from the local people because they believed its branches could cure disease.

The Oroqen and Ewenki have traditionally revered willows, along with pines, birches, and buckthorns, as sacred. When a senior Ewenki shaman initiated a new shaman, the senior would make a ritual offering of larches, birches, and willows. When hunters had not been able to hunt down prey for a long time, they would turn to shamans for help, and the shamans would conduct prayers to ask for divine blessings. They would first make a figure of a deer or elk fashioned from

willow branches and put it in front of the Malu (hero god noted in Chapter 3), as all the clanspeople looked on. The hunters who asked for the blessings would remove the heads of their bullets to reduce the power and then shoot the willow deer or willow elk. When the bullet went home, all present would simultaneously shout "Well done! well done!" This was quite a serious occasion, and no one was allowed to laugh. After shooting, the hunters pretended to skin the willow deer or willow elk and cut out its entrails, believing that from then on, they could track down wild prey (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986a:235).

Willow branches and leaves have been regarded as sacred objects also by the Oroqen. When new Oroqen shamans were initiated, they traditionally had to perform a ritual trance dance with senior shamans. They also had to put up a large *sierranju* dwelling centred on two upright willow poles on which they would set two horizontal pine poles and on them a wild duck, the animal commonly used when initiating a new shaman. The willow poles were viewed as a sacred means of access to the heavens. When shamans cured diseases, moreover, they would thank the gods outside the *sierranju*. The *calbalaicin* (presiding shaman) would kneel or stand beside the offerings, holding a willow branch in their right hand. At the end of the chant, the shaman would strip off all its leaves one by one and cast them forwards. The family host would stand at the shaman's side and chant with the shaman.

The Daur traditionally regard the willow as one of their deities. Shamans would hold a Yadagan gathering in the third or fourth lunar month every three years, in which they offered rites to the gods to expel evil spirits and pray for blessings for the whole *mukūn*. Among the deities worshipped in the ritual were twelve Duwalan deities of heaven and earth. Blood was offered to their idols, which were fashioned from tall or thick willows, shrub willows, poplars, or other species of the willow family. Willows have traditionally been used as sacred trees, moreover, in the Daur *yirdeng* shamanic ritual, in which a three-year-old sheep is slain as an offering, and its blood is eaten and a trance dance performed (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986b:263).

When the Hezhe held their *lushen* rite every March to honour the leaping deer god Tiaolushen (跳鹿神), the rite included a session of skipping the willow. The shaman would bend a willow branch into a semicircle and skip it like a child skipping rope, and all present followed suit: first the shaman family and then the others, each person skipping three times. Moreover, parents would twist a willow branch around their baby's cradle three times while chanting, to symbolize that the child would remain under the deity's protection so as not to be struck by misfortune, disease, or evil spirits and be safe and sound their whole life.

The Manchu have likewise regarded willows as endowed with magical power for exorcising illness and evils, and they have many customs expressing their reverence for and worship of willows. Among the Lang, Na, and Guan clans of Huichun, Jilin Province, people performed the ancient fire ritual described in Chapter 3 to show reverence to the sacred willow tree, and they continued to do so up until the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Even in the 1960s, many Manchu clans continued to perform grand willow rites and the child

*huansuo* (换锁) ritual honouring the goddess of fertility Fodo Mama mentioned in Chapter 3. A shaman places a string of colourful threads called *suo* (索, “chain”) around the neck of a young child, believing that the threads will make a girl pretty and healthy and a boy grow up to be a brave *baturu* (hero). Because a willow has numerous leaves and branches, it symbolizes numerous offspring, prosperity, peace, and happiness for the whole clan. In another child’s ritual, a shaman holding an arrow with a long bristle hung on the arrowhead, walks three times around a sacred willow pole pointing up to the heavens, and sprinkles rice wine on the ground. Clan children then scramble to eat *shuituanzi* (水团子), Manchu boiled rice balls, which are stuck on the willow. Both the leafy willow and the *shuituanzi* symbolize numerous progeny. In a ritual to seek childbirth in Heilongjiang, Jilin, and other areas, people would put a willow branch on the tablet of the goddess of fertility Fodo Mama and then fashion grass stalks into the shape of a bird’s nest, which is considered the dwelling place of children’s souls.

In the grand version of the *huansuo* ritual performed by the Jilin Guan clan to worship Fodo Mama, the shaman takes out a *zisunheng* (子孙绳, offspring cord) from a yellow cloth pouch hung under the *weceku* (sacred ancestor niche) above the western *kang* (炕, heatable bed platform) and ties one end of it to the bottom of the *weceku* and the other to a willow branch outside the door. Onto the cord are tied many coloured ribbons which the shaman entwines around the necks of the clan children as *huansuo*. The cords are then brought home, placed on the *weceku* of each child’s home, and then replaced with new ones in the next *jia* ritual.

The *huansuo* ritual was widely inherited and quite common. In still more detail in *News from Heaven (Tianzhi ouwen)* a late 19th-century Manchu scholar documents the following:

The *huansuo* ritual is held from 5 to 7 a.m. A stone is placed below the eastern steps, a willow branch set up on it, and a cord attached. One end of the cord is tied to the right bottom of the sacred niche above the western *kang* and the other end to the branch. New ribbons are hung on the branch in turn with clean papers, a low table with an incense plate is set in front of it, and a clean hemp cord is tied to a sacred arrow at the left of the branch. Women lead their children to kneel down in front of the Willow in turn. After the *huansuo* has been given them, at fish head is sandwiched between a big bun and placed in a crotch of the willow branch. In the afternoon, a servant is ordered to “invite” the willow outside, where he eats the bun and fish head. The willow branch is then hung on the roof, the table and incense taken away, the sacred arrow replaced, and the cord placed in the sacred niche and the ritual is over. (Zhen Jun 1982)

Willow worship is related to shaman creation myths. In early Manchu mythology, the goddess of heaven did not have any form. The early image of the heavenly mother goddess Abka Hehe was a giant vulva out of which all things came into being, and the willow was the symbol of the vulva. This gave rise to the myth

that a willow gave birth to humans and the world. A shaman text of the Manchu Sitara Hala in Huichun records the following myth:

Why did the Manchus respect and worship willows? Originally, when Abka Hehe fought against the evil god Yeluli, due to the massive deaths of good gods she had to soar up to heaven. But Yeluli chased after her fast, grabbed her crotch with one hand, and tore off a handful of the willow leaves which were draped over her. The leaves floated down to earth and gave birth to human beings and the world.

Obviously, willow worship in this matriarchal creation myth is closely related to the concept of reverence for women.

In the later patriarchal society, the male deity Abka Enduri became the master of heaven and the universe, but the myths about him were intermingled with the willow worship of the earlier matriarchal society. A sacred text of the Namdulu Hala in Huichun contains the following:

Long, long ago, when the sky and the earth had just been created, Abka Enduri took off several willow leaves from around his waist, and out of them came flying insects, reptiles, and also humans. From then on, signs of their life-habitation sprung up, and even now, green protuberances housing insects tend to grow on willow leaves like those left by Abka Enduri.

In this myth, the male deity replaces the female, but the matriarchal concept that willows give birth to humans and the world is preserved.

In a myth recorded in a text of the Fuca Hala of Mudanjiang, the initial focus on a male figure shifts in the end to a female generative act:

In ancient times, the Hurhan Bira (*bira*, "small river" in Manchu) where our Fuca Hala ancestors lived, suddenly turned into the Hurhan Sea, and its glistening white water submerged the world. Of all the males made of the clay rubbed off from Abka Enduri, only one man was left, floating with the tides. Just as he was about to drown, out of nowhere he spied a floating willow branch, seized it and survived. The willow carried him into a stone cave half-way in the water, and there it turned into a beautiful woman, who had intercourse with him and gave birth.

In this myth, willow worship has overtones of clan totem, and the clanspeople of the *hala* traditionally held a ritual to worship willows every year. After the rite, they would reverently place a willow branch in a sacred repository, replace it with a new one when they held the next *jia* ritual, and cast the old one into the river. This enduring yearly rite carried belief in the sacrality of female ancestors into modern times. From it and the other rites just cited, we can trace Manchu beliefs back to the primitive belief of their ancestors that willows were inseparable from the creation



goddess as the primordial source of human beings and all creatures in the world. Humans are descendants of willows, and ties of kinship with them are close.

With the passing of time, worship of the willow deity came not to be found not among northern ethnic groups, except for the Manchu. We have concrete records of the willow rituals and games held by their ancestors. Manchu *uleben* (tales) included in *Record of the Grievances of the East Sea* speak of the Donghai Weji tribe offering willows to the water deity and the sea, and the most famous willow rite of all is that of the Russian Donghai Gahutanhe tribe associated with the seat of the Weji khan. The rite was held when the sea tide went out, rivers dried up, a plague broke out, or green protuberances appeared on willow leaves. The khanum Sihulin would then select nine, seventeen, or as many as thirty-three beautiful women to represent the willow and sea deities, naked except for willow girdles around their waists. The tribespeople would group around the women, sprinkling deer blood, rice wine, and clear river water on their bodies as they shouted and echoed the dancing women's song. As a female shaman began to shake her waist bells and beat her sacred drum, the women would follow her to all areas of the tribe – mountains, wilds, and riverbanks – lively walking, dancing, singing, and shouting along the way. Wherever they trod was sprinkled with deer blood and river water to worship the willow deity, sea deity, and other deities so that they would bless the tribe with peace and a good harvest. During the ceremony, the women were not allowed to go home but rather had to live on the water. Nowadays, this kind of ritual no longer exists, but while doing fieldwork in Huichun, I heard Manchus speak of how similar activities were held during the Manchukuo period of the 1930s and 1940s, but with the women representing the willow deity dressed in their clothes.

The sacrality of willows is also highlighted in their use as idols. The Manchu have traditionally carved spirit idols out of willow, known as willow men or willow deities. They also fashioned various bird and other animal deities out of willow, and they made sacred ritual implements out of thick willow wood: *gida* (gun) barrels, arrow shafts, and sacred poles on which to hang *wadan* (pouches). The Donhai Jurchen epic *Umesiben Mama* records the use of willow wood by the Weji tribe in rites to worship fish. Before the ritual, fish-shaped sacrificial cakes were made of glutinous millet threshed in golden winds, and a fish-shaped spirit idol the size of two or three people was made of new, thick willow branches along the river. Apart from the fins, which were made of white swan feathers, the idol was made of fresh, tender willow branches and leaves, and it was shaped into various lifelike animated poses – jumping, flying, swimming, or one fish biting the tail of another. During the rite, youths good at swimming were chosen to worm their way into the fish-shaped spirit idols, and each would briefly touch the fish gills, sway the fish tails, and dive into the water and rise to the surface like a school of fish playing. The kanum wore willow beading, the presiding female shaman and participating clanspeople wrapped willow leaves around their bodies, and both children and adults wore fish-shaped hats made of willow branches or bark. The hats had various shapes – carp head, whale head, and flying fish head. The river and its banks were alive everywhere with these fish-shaped idols, fish

dances, and fish songs, as if the whole ritual were held in the submarine Dragon Palace replete with many kinds of fish – truly a world of fish and willows. The rite lasted three days and three nights, during which time all the clanspeople, old and young alike, lived on the riverside or on *weihū* (boats) on the water. They consumed willow leaves, fish, shrimp, deer blood, and river water. Only in this way could the fish god Medehe Enduri grant them abundant fish.

As an offshoot of willow rituals, willows games were an amusing source of entertainment among Manchu ancestors. In the late Ming and early Qing periods, one such game was *paoliucheng* (跑柳城, running the Willow Walls). As depicted in *Legend of Nurhaci and Wanggao* (*Liangshi hanwangzhuan*), girls selected as the tiger head queen or willow queen would wear a tiger-pelt blouse, willow skirt, and willow garland, and two teams would try to capture the queen of the other side and keep her in the submarine Dragon Palace. When a team's queen was captured, it would choose a second and then third queen and so on, and the team that had no tiger head queen left lost. It was said that when the Jianzhou Jurchen (建州) leader Wanggao went to the Ula tribe to visit Dolo Khan, he saw many young women happily playing this game.

#### 5.4 Bear rituals

The peoples of northern China have long held such animals as bears, tigers, wolves, and snakes in awe and dealt with them reverently. They have many rituals and myths, moreover, revering the bear god. As we noted in Chapter 2, Siberian peoples such as the Nivkh, Ewenki, Hezhe, and Udege have also long worshipped the bear. The Nivkh (formerly Gilyak) traditionally celebrated a bear festival and had bear sacrifice. The Ewenki and Oroqen in China also venerate bears. The Oroqen language word for bear is *nionioku*, but people never refer to them as such; they call them *amaha* (uncle) and more specifically male bears *yaya* (grandfather) and female bears *taitie* (grandmother). When they capture a bear, they carry it home but pretend to weep for it, and when they eat its meat, they conduct a wind burial for the bones, hanging them on a tree. They also hold a rite for skinning a bear and distribute the bear hide with great respect. The Ewenki actually believed that bears were formerly human beings but that because they committed mistakes, they were condemned to become beasts and walk on four legs. The Ewenki think that they, themselves, are actually human bears and hold wind burials for these “uncles” in a way that is quite similar to the Oroqen. The Ewenki believe that if they just toss out their bones without a proper wind burial, the bears will be unable to return to their caves to hibernate and hunters will thus not be able to easily capture them and, what's worse, will run the risk of being mauled by them.

The Ewenki wind burial commonly follows several set steps. First, hunters capture a bear, skin it, and wrap its body parts with birch bark entwined sixfold with willow branches. They do so with its head, throat, tongue, nose, neck bone, small leg bones, paw bones, two upper-right ribs, two lower-right ribs, and two upper-left ribs. To prepare the burial site, they then strip the bark off of two pines from a southern slope exposed to the sun, carve twelve horizontal grooves on the flat

surfaces of the stripped tree, and colour the grooves with various tints, using charcoal, blood, and the juices of wild flowers. Next, they inlay the bear's eyes in the two ends of the sixth groove and hang the bones and wrapped body parts between the two pines to complete the wind burial. People pretend once more to weep for the bear. They preserve the bearskin but toss out the rest. The Ewenki do not perform a wind burial for bears that have mauled people, but in general, they have traditionally viewed bears in a special way and disposed of them in a reverential manner.

The Daur have also held bears in veneration. Among their *wenggure* (deities) worshipped in *ye* rituals, tigers and bears occupy an important place, and in the Daur folktale "The Hero Shi'en and Maiden Zhang Lihua," an elderly man and woman who help the maiden are an *atirekan* (male bear) and *etire* (female bear).

Manchu bear rituals have a unique form. As is stated in *Tangyuan Annals* (*Tangyuan xianzhi*),

In the past, the banks of the Sungari (Songhua) River was the dwelling place of the Feiyaka (Gilyak) tribe, who liked to tease bears as *mafa* (grandpa). People regularly bought bears at a high price, domesticated them, and then let relatives, friends, and neighbors shoot them for entertainment. There were two kinds of bears that people used for this purpose in northern China: the Tibetan blue bear and the Asian black bear. People killed them and then gathered to eat the meat. First, they ate the head in the wilds to show respect to the elders; they then ate the remaining parts of the bear at home, women eating only the legs. A third species of bear – brown bear – also often appeared in the mountains. When hunters captured them, they made use only of their gallbladder.

(Tangyuan Annals Editorial Committee 1992)

The same document gives details of Feiyaka tribespeople's playfully teasing bears, from which we can see that they treated them with a certain degree of respect.

The Manchu praise bears for their boldness and loyalty and regard them as guardians of light for human beings. The bear god is a giant deity with invincible strength, and when shamans are possessed by him, they can lift a millstone, uproot a huge willow, or toss chunk balls of stone, displaying the humanlike boldness, bravery, and invincibility of bears. In the Manchu fire ritual, the infinitely powerful bear god is the trailblazer of the sun god, and in the Manchu myth "War in Heaven," the bear is called Lefu Mafa (*Lefu* meaning "bear" and *Mafa* "grandfather") and is the first being to have a human *coco* (male genitals). When Lefu Mafa fought against the evil god Yeluli, however, he shirked his duty and fell asleep among grape vines by the Amur River, resulting in Yeluli being able to knock many stars out of the Milky Way, which would become meteors.

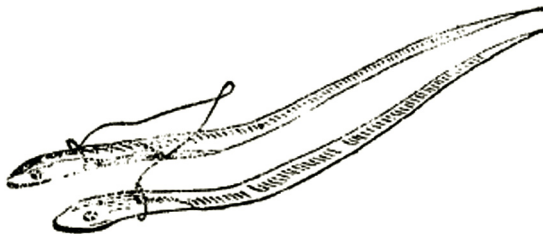
Of the numerous sacred Manchu lyrics that I collected, the bear ritual is documented in all *ye* ritual texts. From this, we can conclude that the worship of the bear god is ancient and widespread. The rules of the shamanic rituals of the Xu, Zang, and He clans specify that bear hide must not be used to make drumheads or idols. The Manchu believe that if a drumhead is made of bear hide, it will

crack, and if a shaman performs a trance dance to summon the bear god, the god will cause pandemonium and bring calamity upon the shaman and the ritual host. Therefore, to ensure that things go smoothly, only the hides of deer, elk, and cattle are traditionally made into drumheads. Today's northern peoples have now long engaged in farming, not hunting, but various Manchu clans still respect bears and fear them as humanlike animals who can potentially seek revenge. This mentality is believed to be a remnant of ancient bear totemism, which I find reasonable. In general, moreover, it shows that the formation and development of northern peoples' cultural mindset has a coherent, common foundation.

Bears are not the only animal revered in the North; other fierce wild animals such as tigers and wolves have also been held as sacred beasts, the tiger god being worshipped among the Oroqen, Ewenki, Hezhe, and Daur. The Oroqen name for the tiger god is Borukan, but he is also called Bainaca (mountain god), the mountain god being the tiger god who later became an elder with white hair. In general, the Oroqen call tigers *niocita* (great-grandfather), and they call wolves not *gusige* (wolf) but *weng*, after the sound of their call. Northern peoples also venerate leopards, jackals, and other beasts of the wilds; whales, sharks, snakeheads, pikes, turtles, and other aquatic animals; and hedgehogs and other small animals. In some clans, people enshrine the skins and bones of these animals as spirit idols, which they use as substitutes for the animals in sacrificial rituals. In *ye* rituals in the past, various ethnic peoples summoned these animal deities, and once they descended upon the altar, shamans and their assistants would mimic their natural traits in entertaining stunts. After they played for a while in this way, they would then reverently send them back to their divine world.

## 5.5 Snake worship

Besides powerful mammals, some cold-blooded animals have also held a special position in shaman worship, especially serpents. They are respected and protected by the python god, also called the snake god, which is worshipped in shaman rites of the Manchu, Hezhe, Daur, Xibe, Oroqen, Ewenki, and other northern peoples. In Manchu rites, the python is distinguished from other snakes by its size, pythons measuring nine *chi* 尺 and snakes eight *chi* (1 *chi* equals about 33.3 cm). For the Manchu, Daur, and other ethnic groups, the snake deity idol is binary, male and female always together, as in the following Daur spirit idol of the snake god carved out of wood:



Snake patterns are commonly found on shamanic ritual garb. In the *ye* rites of many Manchu clans, a python skin is sewn on the shaman's costume, and several snake-bone pendants are hung on the ritual headdress to allow the shaman to be able to see light in darkness. The sacred skirt of the great shamaness Umesiben in the Manchu epic *Umesiben Mama* was made of the inner skins of ninety-nine serpents of five colours.

The most difficult ritual gesture to be learned by shaman candidates in Manchu *Jiao'uyun* training sessions is mimicking a snake's slithering crawl. They must lay on their backs and use the strength of their shoulders to swiftly move forwards in criss-cross fashion. All Manchu shamans can imitate a serpent's crawl, and the more swiftly one can do so, the more powerful the shaman. When the python god possesses a shaman of the Xu clan of Suihua, Heilongjiang, the shaman not only crawls on their back but can also worm their way up a wall or straw curtain without dropping to the ground, quite like a martial art *qinggong*<sup>2</sup> feat.

For the Gilyak and many other peoples north of the Amur, serpent deities symbolize spring, the sun, light and warmth, and the Ainu on the Japanese Archipelago venerate the snake as the sun god. In Ainu mythology, the snake never descends upon the earth alone but always comes with his goddess lover, the sun. In some sacred Manchu texts, the snake is called the light of the sun, or serpent light: "a beam of light that descends to the earth like a snake."<sup>3</sup> It is reasonable that people understood snakes as a symbol of the sun and light. Because northern serpents prefer a humid habitat, their scales can eventually fester and maggots can breed if they do not sun themselves on sunny days. So when sunrays reappear after a rainfall, snakes wriggle out of their caves and coil themselves on rocks and logs, exposing themselves to the sun. On the basis of long-term observation of these creatures, primitive humans could well have believed that the snake was the messenger of the sun and so revered them as a sun deity.

Lizards have also traditionally been worshipped in the North. They are worshipped as a small deity in the dark that can foretell weather and flooding and indicate directions. As the assistant and messenger of the serpent deity, they also predict the arrival of the sun and sunlight. A lizard can heal snake wounds, and its saliva is treasured for its agglutinate effect on broken bones and the healing of open wounds. When shamans treat wounds, they often smash a lizard to death and apply its viscera to the wound. When they simultaneously invoke the lizard god and snake god, the wound heals quickly. Lizard patterns are painted on the shamanic garb of several ethnic peoples, and lizards are used as charms. In 1982, I saw several small dried black lizards that had been preserved intact for more than twenty years by shaman Yan Zhenkuan (阎振宽) in his home in Yongji, Jilin Province. When asked why he had preserved them for so long and what they were used for, he said they were talismans that had been passed down by shamans for generations and that they could exorcise evil spirits and ward off the effects of snake venom. Among the various deities that Yan Zhenkuan worshipped, there were two white serpent gods from the mountains of the upper reaches of the Sungari River. If people invoked them by offering nine small lizards, they would descend. He said it was amazing that people could know the time and direction of

the gods' arrival from a lizard's twitching. He gave these details with great solemnity, stressing that snake rituals are just as important as the bear ritual. Another shaman, Yang Shichang (杨世昌), once said that he could summon two python gods who dwelt near the East Sea. When he was possessed by one of them, he felt chilly and then lost his senses. He said, too, that normally he would not capture snakes, nor could he even easily see snakes, though other people could readily capture or restrain snakes in the wild by stepping on them. He also worshipped the lizard, believing it to be shamans' mentor. He hadn't seen a lizard for seventy years but heard this from his own mentor.

Why have northern peoples worshipped the snake god? Shirokogoroff once suggested that snake worship proves that northern Tungus shamanism originated in the South. In fact, however, Snake totems have long existed among the ethnic peoples of northeast China and Siberia, and the snake was absorbed into their shamanic systems. Many scholars long believed that in the North there are indeed snakes, but no pythons, so they surmised that python rituals may have originated with the Han Chinese or at least that this northern tradition had been influenced by southern Chinese culture. However, I heard the elders say that huge pythons were once in northeast China. Several eighty-year-old elders in Huichun claimed separately that they had seen a huge python sinking its head in the river to quench its thirst, with its body on a cliff or in a cave of the mountains near the village of Madida. Their accounts indicate that that serpent was quite long. Similar accounts have been heard from elders in Dongning in Jilin Province and Tonghua in Heilongjiang. *Collected Records of Changbai Mountain* (Changbai zhengcunlu 1910) documents that "the local snakes are mostly black and that serpents as long as several *zhang* (丈, 1 *zhang* being 3.58 metres) could be found in the forests and some over one *chi* in girth in the undergrowth and hills" (Zhang Fengtai and Liu Longguang 1910). *Huinan Annals* (Huinan xianzhi) records that serpents of various kinds are often seen in the mountains, the bigger ones several *zhang* long and as thick as a *yu* (broad-mouthed liquid container) (Bai Chunyi and Yu Fengtong 1927). These records substantiate that there were pythons in the northeastern mountains in times gone past that posed a great threat to the populace, especially to those who lived in the forests.

In more traditional accounts, in the mythical legends of *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhai jing*) from the 3rd century BCE to the 2nd century CE, there was a mountain in the great northern wilderness named Buxian Shan where there was a country called Sushen, where there existed insects with four wings and animals with a beast's head and a snake's body called *qinchong* (琴虫) (Liu Xin 1989). That legendary Chinese animal may have been a reptile or giant lizard. In any case, people were frequently attacked by fierce reptiles and out of human weakness and fear turned to worshipping them in the hope that these powerful beings would show them mercy and protect them, not harm them. The Manchu *Record of the Grievances of the East Sea* depicts pythons coiling around human bodies and strangling them to death in just a few minutes with a tight grip that would break their bones. In addition to casualties caused by large pythons, mountain cave dwellers were frequently attacked by smaller serpents. Snake worship was a cultural response to people's fright and awe (Fu Yuguang 2007).

Another impetus for worshipping the snake and its description in the art and mythology of ancient northern Asian peoples is that they desired the presence of serpents. Snakes are ubiquitous and can hide in any tiny space. No intricate cave, tree hole, cranny, or crack in a rock formation can elude their eyes. When primitive human beings sought to plumb the mysteries of life, they thus believed that the snake could assist them. As mediators between deities and humans, clan shamans hoped to possess the snake's divine inspiration and mystical power. This partly explains why serpent images appear in every decorative item of a shaman's ritual garb.

People have worshipped serpents, too, for their procreative power, believing that they can bring them an abundance of offspring. The Manchu shaman Yang Shichang mentioned earlier once said that worshipping the snake god and praying for child blessing can heal menstruation-related diseases. Some people, moreover, that snakes are licentious and can copulate not only with their own species but also with turtles. Thus, folklore tales speak of a hybrid turtle snake. The Manchu *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao* (*Liangshi hanwangzhuan*), recounts that Wanggao, the tribal hero of the Jianzhou Jurchen, was born near a pool in response to his mother's morning prayers when a celestial snake copulated with a sacred turtle in dense fog. His mother breathed in the spermous air, became impregnated, and thus gave birth. Like some other Chinese and foreign myths, this myth reflects the idea that serpents have a kind of blood relationship with human beings. In ancient Chinese myths, Nüwa (女娲), the mother goddess known for creating humankind and repairing the pillar of heaven, is portrayed with a human head and snake's body. Some also believe that snakes can copulate continually and that the snake god can heal impotence and sterility. People thus worship the snake also because of this curative power.

For examples of snake worship outside China, look to the Dravidians in South India, where a childless couple sometimes offers sacrifice to an image of two snakes coiled together as a symbol of copulation. On the Fiji Islands, snakes are regarded as the incarnation of a revered deity. The Ainu in Japan never kill snakes or eat snake meat; instead, they hang or place snake icons on their most important and sacred places, such as by a lampstand, the hearth, or the enshrined tablets of family ancestors.

Finally, snakes are the most powerful protective deities of the shamans of northern China, and shamans patronized by the snake god are, themselves, considered the most powerful. When a snake possesses a shaman, that shaman can perform miraculous feats.

## Notes

- 1 The elders are Fu Jixiang 付吉祥, Gao Qishan 高岐山, Yan Wenkuan 阎文宽, and Guan Zhiyuan 关志远.
- 2 *Qinggong* 轻功 is a legendary technique in which a martial artist is alleged to have the ability to move swiftly and lightly at superhuman speed and perform gravity-defying moves such as gliding on water surfaces, scaling high walls, and mounting trees.
- 3 See *Translation of the Sacred Texts of Manchu Xu Clan* (Sumu Hala), unpublished.



## 6 Tangse and jia rituals

Since the Manchu Qing dynasty, there have been basically two kinds of shamanic rituals in northern China: the Qing imperial *tangse* rituals performed at the state Tangse Shrine in the southeast of the Forbidden City and the *jia* folk rituals of commoners. The Qing *tangse* rituals were an evolved but in some way corrupted form of the shamanic folk rituals of the Manchu and other northern peoples. The *jia* rituals were the standardized form of shamanic folk rites as influenced by the Qing court rituals. The two have similarities as well as differences. On the most basic level, the Qing *tangse* rituals drew upon Manchu folk traditions but were fettered by the set procedures of the palace worship of preceding dynasties. Although unfettered by ritual regulations and disciplinary rubrics, the *jia* folk rites have varied contents, forms, and sacrificial procedures which are also quite complicated.

### 6.1 Tangse rituals

A summary account of the Qing rites held at the imperial Tangse Shrine is given in *Encyclopedia of Imperial Documents: Rites Honoring the Heaven and the Earth* (*Huangchao wenxian tongkao jiaoshekao*), the 1787 Qing work covering the period from the beginning of the dynasty in 1616 to 1785:

At the beginning of his reign, Nurhaci of the Qing dynasty established the tradition of worship in a visitation to a temple. Rites were held for important state events, on New Year's Day and on the first day of every lunar month at the Tangse Shrine. Before an important journey or excursion, prayers are first offered at the Tangse, and before a military campaign and after a triumphal return, prayers are also offered at the Tangse, which is all ceremoniously lined with military banners.

A more detailed account is given in the early-19th-century work *Miscellaneous Records of Xiaoting* (*Xiaoting zalu*):

The Qing dynasty had the tradition of worshipping heaven in a manner that originated in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, in which sacred standards were

erected. In a peaceful hall known as Tangse gods of the soil and grain were also worshipped, in accord with old Ming traditions. When the Qing Empire established its capital in Beijing, a Tangse was built outside the Chang'an Left Gate. A shrine where all deities could be worshipped was constructed at the center of the Tangse court facing south. In front and to the south of it, a circular shrine for worshipping heaven was constructed, and in the middle of the court, there was a stone pedestal with a hole for erecting the emperor's sacred standard. On the right and left behind the standard were lined six rows of six stone pedestals, each with sacred holes where other ritual standards would be erected, the first row for the sons of the emperor and the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth rows in turn for princes of the first rank (*qinwang*, 亲王), princes of the second rank (*junwang*, 郡王), princes of the third rank (*beile* 贝勒, meaning "lord," "prince" or "chief" in Manchu), princes of the fourth rank (*beizi*, 贝子), and various dukes and counts.

(Zhao Hui 1980)

A still-more-detailed account is given in *History of the Qing: Treatise 60, Rite 4 (Qingshigao zhiliushi lisi)* of the 1929 encyclopaedic work praising the Qing dynasty by elderly Qing survivors:

The custom of worshipping heaven in the Tangse Shrine had its origins at the beginning of the Qing dynasty in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. In the Beijing Tangse, sacred standard poles were erected to send tribute to heaven. The shrine was a peaceful edifice in which various deities were worshipped. When Qing Emperor Shunzhi (顺治, 1638–1661) established the capital at Yanjing (燕京, present-day Beijing), the Tangse was ordered to be built according to tradition outside the Chang'an Left Gate. In the middle, there were five shrines facing south with glazed tile roofs, in which various deities were enshrined. In front of them, the shrine for worshipping heaven was constructed facing north. To the south and in the middle of this shrine was the emperor's stone pedestal with a hole for his sacred standard. On each side of the emperor's standard, there were six rows of six stone pedestals with holes for sacred standards. The first row was for the sons of the emperor and then the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth rows in turn for princes of the first, second, third, and fourth ranks and various dukes. At the southeast of the Tangse, there were three shrines facing south, known as the sacred deity shrines. For worshipping heaven on New Year's Day, praying before a military campaign, or celebrating a triumphal return, the emperor would perform the sacrificial rite at these shrines in person. For the monthly rituals, as well as for sacred pole rituals, horse rituals, and the Buddha's birthday celebration on the eighth day of the fourth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, the emperor would send representatives to perform the rites. Emperor Chongde (崇德) made it a rule in the first year of his reign (1626) that on New Year's Day, the emperor, princes of the first rank, and the vice dutong (副都统, banner head) should perform the sacrifice.

According to another section of the 1929 encyclopaedic work, volume 92 of *Qing Dynasty Decrees and Regulations (Qinghuidian)*, among the various Manchu rites worshipping heaven and other gods, some were held during the day, others at night. The deities worshipped during the day were Śākyamuni Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, and deified 2nd-century Chinese General Guan Di (Guan Yu, 关羽), which are not Indigenous shamanist deities but “guest gods” that shamanism had come to worship under the influence of Buddhism and the religious beliefs of the Han Chinese. Several other deities were worshipped at night.<sup>1</sup>

Among Qing imperial rites, the *zhao* (朝祭, dawn) rite was held from 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. and the *xi* (夕祭, dusk) rite from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Both were held in the emperor’s Qingning Palace (清宁宫) and, after the capital was moved to Beijing, in Kunning Palace (坤宁宫). The *zhao* rite was held on the west *kang* of the palace and the *xi* rite on the north *kang* in the west chamber. The deities worshipped in the Qing *tangse* rites were ancestor gods of the imperial Manchu Aisin Gioro clan, along with nature and animal deities worshipped for generations as the protective gods of the clan. The rigid imperial rituals promoted during the reign of Emperor Qianlong in the 18th century are well documented in *Manchu Trance Rites for the Worship of Heaven (Manzhou tiaoshen jitian dianli)*, but the details of these rites are too extensive and repetitive to give here.

“*Tangse*” came to be the official term used for the edifice used for imperial rituals in the *Veritable Records of the Founding Emperor Nurhaci (Taigzugao huangdi shilu)*, composed in 1749, the fourteenth year of the reign of Qianlong (乾隆). Previously, the word “*miao*” (庙, shrine, temple) had been commonly used for that edifice. The term “*tangse*” cannot be interpreted literally as an edifice, but it is appropriate because the content and character of the court *tangse* rituals resembled the Indigenous northern shaman *ye* rites worshipping deities enshrined in the traditional Manchu *tangse*. *Ye* rituals summoning a deity who would possess an entranced shaman were popular among nomadic tribes before the Liao and subsequent Jin dynasties (907–1234). For the ancient Jurchen, such rites included the worship of heaven, fire, water, sea, stars, and trees, and they were held even as people migrated. They would then take their deities with them in sacred coffers, also called *tangse*, and later, when they ceased their nomadic ways, they revered them in actual buildings, called *tangse*.

I discovered from documents unearthed in records of the Nurhaci clan, the *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao (Liangshi hanwang zhuan)*, and the *Legend of General Sabusu (Sadaren zhuan)* that has circulated in the Aihui area of Heilongjiang for almost three centuries that *tangse* folk rituals have long been practised by the northern peoples of China. Historian Meng Sen (孟森), citing *Records of Yongxian (Yongxian lu)* concerning early-18th-century Qing history, wrote that northern trance-dance rituals originated from the Huihe township of Aihui and that *tangse* rituals did not originate with the Manchu (Xiao Shi 1997). However, Manchu genealogies and shaman texts demonstrate that “*tangse*” is a Manchu term commonly used early in the Jurchen era, derived from the Manchu word *dangse*, meaning “archive.”

The heads of the various Manchu clans preserved an Enduri pack of enshrined deities and a *tangse* pack of tribal genealogies, spirit tablets, sacred texts and instruments, and portraits of ancestors and deities. These packs enshrined deities, but they were not buildings. They were the tablets of the deities that nomadic clans carried with them and would enshrine in their yurts when they set them up. They put spirit idols, portraits of the ancestors, and sacred texts and instruments mostly in birch, willow, and other wooden or bone cases or in stone or earthen pots, which they then placed in rectangular chests with moveable lids as “sacred coffers,” known as *tangse*. The deities thus lived with humans in the same dwelling. This was a long tradition among Manchu and other northern peoples.

Later, when people settled down, they constructed *tangse* buildings, the form of which became gradually fixed, and passed them down to new generations in accordance with Manchu modes of life and religious beliefs. Before Nurhaci, chief of the Jianzhou Jurchens, unified other Jurchen tribes at the beginning of the 17th century, clan *tangse* were regularly established in the hoton (town) where the tribal chieftain (*khan* or *da* in Manchu) lived. At that time, the word “*tangse*” was also written *tangshe* or *dangse*, all transliterations of *tangse*: a holy place for worshipping guardian spirits and ancestral gods. The size and construction materials varied among tribes. In some large tribes, there were both the main *tangse* and branch *tangse* for *mukūn* subtribes, all similar to the Qing court *tangse* built later by the Aisin Gioro clan.

Concerning the *tangse* edifice of the Hada tribe of the 16th-century alliance of Seven Jurchen Hulun tribes mentioned in Chapter 3 that Nurhaci eventually conquered, *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao* records that with the help of the Ming government, the Hada Khan Wan once aspired to the paramount leadership of all the tribes. When his mother, Dong Eji, celebrated her eightieth birthday, the chieftains of four tribes in the Hulun Alliance, along with leaders of the Jianzhou Left Guard and Right Guard, assembled their forces and offered prayers for her at the Xiachang Tangse, the magnificent Hada *tangse* edifice. In another incident, when the leader of the Jianzhou Right Guard, Wang Gao (王杲), borrowed troops from the Donghai Weji tribe, that tribe’s chieftain brought Wang to worship at his *tangse* and later married off his daughter to Wang. When Nurhaci later conquered the Hada, Hūfa, Yehe, and Ula tribes, he regularly destroyed their *tangse* and plundered their ancestral portraits and genealogies. As an aid in the unification of Jurchen tribes, he established the Manchu Eight Banners (八旗) that would form part of the military and political system of the Qing dynasty.<sup>2</sup> Early in the reign of Qing Emperor Huang Taiji (皇太极) in the 17th century, the emperor ordered the Manchu administrative banners to stop building *tangse*. As we have just seen, however, Manchu clans had long been housing their portable *tangse* in their yurts. As a more evolved form of ancestor worship, the *tangse* in the Qing court came to include all the universal deities recognized by the Jurchen ancestors of the Manchu. Apart from the ancient ancestral gods of the Aisin Gioro clan were also *nohontaiji* (god of heaven) and *uduben beise* (primordial ancestors), which frequently appear in the records of Manchu clans and were worshipped in routine rituals as both universal deities and tribal ancestral gods. In a Manchu

dialect, “*nohon*” refers to the colour pea green or bluish green. So in some sacred texts, *nohon abka* means “blue sky” or “heaven,” and shamans interpret *nohon taiji* (*nohon anji* in shaman texts of *dongjing*, *heilongjiang*) as “the god of heaven,” which I regard as correct. *Uduben beise* (also recorded as *wuzhu beizi*, *wudu beise*, etc.) refers to primordial ancestors. Many believed that various nature deities, ancient ancestors, and hero gods of one’s own tribe lived in the heavens after death, and their idols or icons were preserved. The seedling god was also worshipped, demonstrating that praying for a good harvest was common among the rituals honouring the gods of heaven and pointing to a boom in agrarian economy in feudal societies.

The rituals in the Beijing Kunning Palace mentioned earlier were similar to those held by the common public but simplified. The shamanic *zhao* (dawn) rituals there included, however, the worship of non-Indigenous deities, such as Bodhisattva, and Guan Di. The evening *xi* rituals worshipped clan ancestor gods and the deities that had been worshipped by Jurchen tribes for generations, such as the star gods Enduri Sengge and Nadan Daihūn invoked for protecting the family household and bringing peace.

In ordinary folk rites, most Manchu clans did not worship the foregoing three Han deities but stuck strictly to their own shamanist traditions. There is no doubt that some clans worshipped Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the *jia* rituals (*jiaji* 家祭) influenced by the court rituals, but such foreign deities were not honoured with ritual offerings or individual eulogies. The statue of Avalokiteśvara was simply placed beside the sacred curtain for worship along with other deities.

By comparing the ancestral deities worshipped in the court *xi* rituals and those worshipped among Manchu clan commoners, one finds that many gods with the same or similar names were included in both. Such, for example, are Ahun Niyansi and other deities found in the more than forty hand-copied clan texts that I collected. Although the Chinese transcriptions of the names sometimes differ, it is not difficult to identify them as referring to the same god, indicating that the deities worshipped in the *xi* rituals were not only the ancestor gods of the imperial Aisin Gioro clan but also those worshipped by Jurchen tribes in earlier days. Another case in point is the various names of the Jurchen ancestral protective deity of the wood or boar skin spirit idol Muli Khan (Chinese transcription Mao’er Khan), who is also called Mulin Kahn, Biganyi Mafa, and Biganyi Enduri. I think that Muli is a Tungus word referring to the deity Borukan worshipped by many northern peoples. Still another example is Katun Noyan, which is referred to in various documents also as Gatun Nuoyin, Katun Panyan, and Katun Nayan. This deity is regarded as a Mongol god in some historical accounts; as is commonly known, however, Manchu clans did not worship deities of other clans or tribes, and the same was true for Kunning Palace rituals. This god is a Manchu deity, not a Mongol deity. Despite the various pronunciations of the name, Gatun Nuoyin can be recognized as the same protective deity worshipped by the Jurchen and Manchu ancestors living in the Changbai Mountain and along the Sungari and Mudan rivers. In fact, the divine power of Katun Noyan was omnipresent in northeast China. The worship of “portrait gods” was little known in the court *tangse xi* rites, but

Manchu clans had the tradition of making coloured ancestor portraits that were respectfully preserved in a sacred coffer on the *weceku* ancestor niche on the west wall of the main room. The portraits were hung, repaired, and worshipped during the Spring Festival, in spring and autumn rituals, and in the years of the dragon, tiger, rat, and snake according to the stems and branches (*gangzhi*, 干支) calendrical cycle of sixty signs marking days or years. In the past, people used straw, wood, stone, leather, silk, and other materials to make these spirit portrait idols; with modern painting skills, people now use coloured drawings and photocopies. Oroqen, Ewenki, Daur, Mongol, and Xibe clans neighbouring the Manchu have also had this tradition. Most of the portraits are those of *da mafa* (primogenitor or remote ancestor). In portraits of the Manchu Li Hala in Ning'an, Heilongjiang, the top of the picture depicts the moon on the left, stars on the right, the Big Dipper in the sky, and a sacred bird perched on the ancestral soul tree. The ancestor is drawn on the lower part of the canvas, with a chart stating his major exploits and a list of his fine steeds and domestic animals. People worshipped only the ancestor portraits of their own clans, not those of other clans. The 13th-century *Khitans Chronicles* (*Qidan guozhi*) records that "the deities worshipped should not be disturbed by those of other clans" (Ye Longli 1985).

Some court *tangse* rituals followed the common Manchu folk tradition of holding a memorial to worship deities whom they believed have special powers to cure an epidemic or contagious disease. For instance, Ming General Deng Zuo (邓佐) was one of the smallpox gods worshipped in *tangse* rituals. Like other northern ethnic groups, primitive Jurchens and Manchus were fearful of the various pestilences and plagues that could affect the clan's populace. Smallpox could wipe out an entire clan and in ancient Manchu shaman texts is called *shantaha* (white devil). Manchu shamans devoutly believed in goddesses who could dispel the bane of smallpox and called them mama goddess, among whom are Talaha Mama and Fodo Mama. In the folk custom of *zoubaibing* (走百病), "walking a hundred diseases," on the fifteenth or sixteenth day of the first lunar month, people would take a stroll in groups and cross every bridge they met, in the hope that this would keep them free from baneful spirits. Other customs handed down from the Jurchen period to eradicate smallpox, ward off threats of disaster, and pursue happiness are *sheliutiaohuo* (射柳跳火), shooting at willows and running over burning coals, and *dahuami* (打画迷), blackening one's hands with soot from a pan bottom and then smearing it on women's faces in imitation of the legendary Aunt Zhaoli.

The court *tangse* rituals preserved some of the original features of the rituals of the Aisin Gioro Hala of the Qing rulers. As we have said, however, they were both influenced and hemmed in by the set practices of palace worship of preceding dynasties. Therefore, they gradually became standardized palace-like, temple-like affairs, and their Indigenous ethnic traits suffered considerable loss. In particular, with the alterations and "enrichments" carried out during the reigns of the Qianlong Daoguang emperors (1711–1850), the vividness, literary vitality and strong northern cultural features of the traditional shaman chants became empty, stylized eulogies droned out in extremely rigid rites. As a merger of sacrificial rites from

past dynasties, they constitute a rare cultural heritage for scholars to retrace the evolution of court rituals, but they suffered a great loss in content and value for people's daily life.

## 6.2 Manchu jia rituals

Concerning the Manchu *jia* rituals held by the standard-bearers (*qiren* 旗人, militarily and politically organized Qing commoners), the 1934 encyclopaedic *Records of Mukden (Fengtian tongzhi)* quotes from the 1777 Qing dynasty work *Researches on Manchu Origins (Manzhou yuanliu kao)* as follows:

Ever since the beginning of our dynasty, we have constructed *tangse*, erected sacred poles to worship heaven with great respect, and placed deity tablets in the main hall of the imperial worship chamber. From this we know that the Manchu custom of worshipping sacred poles and deity tablets has had a long history. The bannermen inherited this custom, with instruments and procedures varying according to the following rules. The west wall of the family room or west chamber of the house is regarded as a sacred area because it is reserved for the deity tablets. They are usually kept on a board hung with yellow satin curtains or stored in a wooden chest covered with colored silk strips several *chi* (尺 = 1/3 meter) long. Sometimes the chest is placed on the sacred board with four or five coils of incense and is treated the same as spirit tablets. The tablets of Wanli Mama or Fodo Mama are set to the left of the chest. This goddess does not have a portrait; instead, there is a silk pouch attached to the tablet, in which there are cords of five colors, six or seven *zhang* (丈 = 3 1/3 meters) in length and known as *suo* (锁, chain lock). Under the southwest roof, a long wooden board enshrines portraits of Guan Di and Avalokiteśvara painted on silk, beneath which is a narrow *kang* on which nobody is allowed to sit or sleep.

People set up an altar table there and twisted straw into ropes to bind up the sacrificial animal. In the south corner of the courtyard, they erected the *somoimoo* (sacred pole) and put a tin plate on the top.

The account of the *jia* ritual in the 1777 Qing work continues as followed:

Families of the bannermen usually conducted a sacrificial rite lasting three days twice a year, in spring and autumn. Before the rite, they should fast, and during the course of the rite, they get up early and clean the west *kang*. They hang up the silk painting of Guan Di and set before it a table with three cups of liquor. They also set up a rectangular wooden brazier and cast into it purple Asian rhododendron petals used for incense, and they make flat steamed broomcorn millet cakes sprinkled with sesame as sacrificial offerings. After they get up on the first day of the rite, the family worship Guan Di. They kowtow three times to his portrait and then put it back in its place. They do the same before the sacred board and the tablet of Wanli Mama. They may lead



into the courtyard a domesticated, but normally not yet ridden chestnut *tahe* (sacrificial) horse covered with a saddle cloth and make it stand still. The master of the household holds the brazier in his hands and circles the horse three times. The horse is then led away and the portrait of Wanli Mama removed. A drake is killed, cooked in front of the sacred tree – usually a nearby elm – and put on a plate as an offering to the tree. During the rites, another animal is killed, its gall bladder hung on the tree and its bones placed carefully under it.

On the night of the first day of the rite, the family worship before the sacred board. They first present the sacrificial offerings, light incense, and offer the sacrificial cakes. All family members and relatives then kneel down. The official in charge of cooking puts the sacrificial animal on a rectangular wooden platter, and the master of the house pours liquor into its ear. If the animal cries out and twitches its ear, people call this *lingsheng* (领牲, the sacrifice is accepted). Before the animal is slain, the master takes off his hat and kneels to it to express his gratitude. After the animal is slaughtered, its hair is removed, and its entrails and hooves are commonly dismembered into eight parts, cooked, and then offered to the gods. The different parts of the cooked meat are laid out to resemble the animal's whole body, which is placed on a sacrificial board, called *zu* (俎). With all lights extinguished, the master kneels down, gropes for a wine cup, takes it, and fills it with liquor. As junior members of the family stand attentively, he raises the cup above his head and passes it to three of them, signifying that descendants are drinking the liquor as substitutes for deceased ancestors. After that, the master delivers a speech in the Manchu language. Family members drum chopsticks on bowls in response and sing chants to present the sacrifice to the deities with great piety. After a while, the lights are relit, and all kneel down and kneel three more times. Finally, the sacrificial board is removed, and all gather to eat the meat. They put a little minced meat on the tin plate on top of the *somoimoo* to feed crows.

On the second day of the rite, the family worship the sacred pole, kill another sacrificial animal, skin it, singe its hair, cook it, divide up the meat, and then fry rice. They spread out a tarpaulin over the courtyard, and clan relatives all gather to eat the meat. Passers-by can also enjoy a share of the meat, and the host may give a slice of the roasted skin as a special token of respect. When the guests leave, they need not express gratitude, and the host need not see them off.

On the third day, people worship Wanli Mama. They take the five-coloured cords out of the pouch, leading them through the hall door and then tying them to the *somoimoo*. An animal sacrifice is offered and its meat cooked in the same way as the first night's worship before the sacred board. Afterwards, the *huansuo* ritual honouring the goddess of fertility Fodo Mama described in Chapter 3 is held. Unmarried boys and unmarried girls all kneel down in front of the tablet of Wanli Mama, and senior women dip willow twigs into clean water, sprinkle them over the unmarried ones, and put the coloured *huansuo* strings around their necks. After three days, the string chain is taken off and put back in the purse for use in the next sacrificial ritual. The married women let their husband's family prepare

a pig and liquor to worship Wanli Mama while they preserve a new *huansuo* in that family.

Finally, a 1777 Qing work adds that “another Manchu tradition is to worship ancestors on the first day and fifteenth day of a lunar month, which is the same as the tradition of the Han Chinese.”

The 1891 Qing work *Annals of Jilin* (*Jilin tongzhi*) describes Manchu sacrificial *jia* rites held by the common public of Jilin as follows:

The Manchu rituals are magnificent. There is star worship and ancestor veneration as well as the spring and autumn *chunqiu* rituals (春秋祭) celebrating the revivification of nature in spring and the harvest in autumn. One day before these rites, people cook broomcorn millet, also known as glutinous millet, which they mash up and make into glutinous rice *dagao* cakes as sacrificial offerings, and clansmen visit one another. For the rite itself, a shaman puts on a sacred headdress and apron. In what is called dancing the family gods (*tiaojiashen*, 跳家神), he then dances, holding a drum and shaking his waist bells, and chants words to bring good fortune. The clansmen beat drums to echo the chant. During the ritual, they grind millet flour to make small wild mint cakes stuffed with bean-mash filling and wrapped with wild mint as offerings to the ancestors. The remaining procedures of the rite are the same as in *chunqiu* rituals. The Mongols offer pigs and sheep in sacrificial rituals similar to those of the Manchu. Because troubles and misfortunes often strike people, they sacrifice animals to seek blessings from the gods. They also hold sacrificial rituals at home on one's birthday or the anniversary of a loved one's death. They rarely build shrines.

(Guobuluo Changshun 1989)

The *Annals of Jilin* continues as follows:

The Manchu people, whether of high or low status, must worship deity tablets with no inscriptions in their homes. Some use wooden coffers instead of tablets. They place one tablet on the west wall and the other on the north wall of the principal room. For rooms with a southern or northern exposure, the west is regarded as the most sacred direction, but for rooms with an eastern or western exposure, the south is most sacred, and the shrine is placed on the south wall. Some families use yellow satin to make the shrine curtains. Others place a chair on the shrine of the north wall and under it place five pieces of wood sawed into the shape of a tablet; or they place there a stool and under it three pieces of wood, over which incense is sprinkled and burned during the rite. People select a spring or autumn day to hold the rite and perform a trance dance. They know little about the dance, but they think it is performed to worship the ancestors. Among all the deities worshipped, Avalokiteśvara comes first, then Guan Di, and then the god of the soil and the gnome-like god of the ground. People thus use three plates of incense.

(Guobuluo Changshun 1989)

Before the rite, the pigs used in sacrifice must be pure black. They are placed in front of the gods before daybreak on the day of the rite. The officiant raises their cup of liquor to express respect for the pig, and then they pour it into the pig's ear. If the ear twitches, that is an auspicious sign. If it does not, it means that it is not pure black, the sacrificial utensils are not clean, or the fast is not sufficiently pious, and there will be baneful events. In that case, people have to kneel and pray again until the pig twitches its ear. After the pig has been cooked, its head, tail, shoulders, ribs, lungs, and heart are put on the sacrificial *zu* board, and a small amount of meat from each part is placed in a big copper bowl as *ama zunrou* (dish of meat honouring Nurhaci). People then offer the meat to the gods and kneel. The officiant stands in front, with other men standing behind him according to their clan seniority, and the women then line up behind the men, all with head coverings removed. All kneel. After the ritual, people gather before the gods and eat the *ama zunrou*, which symbolizes that they are receiving the meat as a blessing. At night, another animal is killed and sacrificed in the same manner as in the daytime ceremony. All lights are extinguished, and the sacrificial meat for this rite is called *bidengrou* (避灯肉), meat offered to the gods with all lights out. The meat sacrificed to gods must not be taken out of the home, but its bones are given to dogs. If they do not eat them all up, the remaining bones are left outdoors at night. Some families burn the remaining bones and then bury them, and they may give the *bidengrou* to friends and relatives. On the same day, the family serve guests with the meat, but after eating, the guests need not express their gratitude or the family see them off. Only when the guests and the host meet the next time can the guests express their thanks.

Turning from Jilin further north to Heilongjiang, the 1933 *Heilongjiang Annals* (*Heilongjiang zhigao*) describes Manchu sacrificial *jia* rituals in that province:

People worship heaven and earth at daybreak of the second day, which is known as "fulfilling old vows" (还愿, *huanyuan*). A rectangular altar table is set up behind a screen wall in the courtyard, and three wooden cups and a plate of broomcorn millet are placed on it. A pig is skinned and divided into eleven parts, which are placed facing toward the east of the wall. A pot and brazier are put at the west of the wall, and a little meat is cooked, cut into small squares, and put into two porcelain pots. Two wooden bowls are filled with steamed millet and placed on the altar. The shaman goes down on one knee, chanting prayers. Holding copper spoons with the meat and millet, he then kowtows to the west and south respectively nine times. In the east corner of the courtyard a sacred *somomoo* is erected, which is, an ancestor pole with several *zhang* high, known as the pole of good fortune. At the top is fastened a tin dipper, or wood dipper for a poor family. When the family begins to worship the pole, they fill the dipper with the pig's tail and bladder, and also millet. The top of the pole is pointed, and on it the bones of the pig's neck are stuck horizontally for crows to eat. . . . It is said that crows once rescued Manchu ancestors when they were in danger, so people worship them for their

kindness. It is also said that the pole is erected to worship heaven and as a means of communication with heaven. After worshipping the pole, people eat the remaining meat in the courtyard, which is known as “sharing the simple meat meal” (*chixiaoroufan*, 吃小肉饭). In the afternoon, the family stew the meat of the pig, singe its hair, and then eat the meat in their room, known as “sharing the great meat meal” (*chidaroufan*, 吃大肉饭). When the sun sets, people worship the Stars in front of the chimney of the east room. During the ceremony, a person dressed in white kneels on the ground with all lights and candles extinguished. When he finishes praying, he holds a wooden knife in his left hand and stabs the pig. Later he does so with a real knife. After the ceremony, friends and relatives are invited to share the meat, and when they finish eating, the lights or candles are lit again. A pure black pig must be used for the sacrifice, and the leftovers must be buried in the courtyard and the bones tossed into the river.

(Heilongjiang Annals Editorial Committee 1992)

Usually the whole rite lasts two days, but in affluent households, it may continue for six or seven days. There are female shamans as well as male shamans, and the number of shamans invited varies according to the family's financial status. In the past, families would hold the *jia* ritual once a year or offer prayers on the winter solstice, but this is rarely seen nowadays. Some people pray to their ancestors, to protect them as they sail through troubles or recover from illness, and some worship the ancestors to express gratitude for their wealth, peace, or a happy event. They worship deity tablets or sacred wooden coffers indoors. If the house has a southern exposure, the west is regarded as the sacred direction; if it has an eastern or western exposure, the south is so regarded. Sacrificial rites must be held on auspicious days, and the sacrificial pig should be chosen on such a day. It must be pure black, and once chosen, it cannot be used for other purposes, even when the ritual is postponed for three or even five years.

In procedures similar to the rites just described, at dawn on the day of the sacrifice, the pig is led before the gods, and the officiant raises a wine cup and prays. People then pour liquor into the pig's ear. If it twitches, this indicates *lingsheng* (sacrifice accepted); if it does not, the officiant must pray again until *lingsheng* occurs. Afterwards, the pig is dismembered and cooked before the gods. Then people cut out small pieces of the pig's head, tail, shoulders, ribs, lungs and heart and put them on a bronze plate as the *ama zunrou* (dish of meat honoring Nurhaci). They set the plate before the gods, kneel three times, and offer it three times. The officiant and all clan members kneel down in rows according to seniority and kneel. After that, everyone goes before the gods and eats the meat as a sign that they share in its blessing. At night, they again offer sacrifice, the same as for the daytime ritual, but with the lights out, offering the sacrificial meat, called *bidengrou*. People eat it and then bury the leftovers. During the rite, invited shamans perform a dance. When the pig is sacrificed in the daytime rite, the shaman wears a sacred headdress; shakes their girdle bells; beats a drum while shaking

their waist, hands, and feet; and chants a prayer to the sound of the drumbeats and tinkling of the waist bells. A pole is erected on the left side of the courtyard and a platelike tin dipper is tied to the top. People worship the pole and offer a sacrificial animal before it the following day in an action known as worshipping heaven. After the rite, the pig's chitterlings, lungs, tripe, and other parts are placed in the tin dipper to feed crows. If friends or relatives visit that day, they stay and use their knives to help themselves to some of the meat. When they finish eating, they need not express their thanks, and the host need not see them off.

The foregoing excerpts of Manchu shamanic rituals from Liaoling, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provide a basis for comparison and analysis. As is related in the records of these three provinces, the procedures of the Manchu *jia* folk ritual have much in common. In terms of preserving ancient Manchu beliefs, however, the Heilongjiang rite is more effective than that in Jilin, and the Jilin rite is more effective than that in Mukden (Shenyang, 沈阳) and the surrounding areas of Liaoning. Nonetheless, in 1984, a hundred years after the account in *Annals of Jilin*, I videotaped a Manchu *jia* ritual held by several clans in Yongji County of Jilin Province, which revealed that the traditional form of the rite has been well preserved there. As of the writing of this book, moreover, shamanic rituals, with complete sacred texts and traditional ritual instruments are still preserved among some Manchu clans in both Jilin and Heilongjiang, and new male and female clan shamans are still initiated to pass the rituals down. Furthermore, the gathering of *mukūn* (subclans) has been strictly preserved by the Guan clan in the town of Ula, Yongji County, and in Heilongjiang by the Zhao clan of Sanjiazi Village and the Li clan of Bohai, Ning'an County.

Among the Manchu rituals performed by the common people, along with *jia* rituals (*jiaji*, 家祭), some clans still perform *dashen* rituals (*dashenji*, 大神祭) and *ye* rituals (*yeji*, 野祭), with their powerful primitive religious overtones. In addition to the *jia* ritual procedures, which are quite similar among various Manchu clans, other ritual actions are necessary in these rites. For the *dashen* rite, for instance, people set up a *dashenanzi* (大神案子) altar board and a canvas with images of shaman deities, and shamans summon their clan's animal deities, bird deities, and other personified animal patron gods of land or water, as well as their ancestral gods and the Manni hero gods noted in Chapter 3. The Manchu worship more than thirty ancestral Manni (瞞尼) or Malu deities, including Amba Manni, Baturu Manni, Juru Manni, and so on, each with each deity's unique magical powers. The *dashen* rite is commonly performed by senior shamans, called *dashen* (大神, great spirits), who have special divine powers when possessed. They are aided by other shamans, and pooling their joint efforts, they use their special powers to summon, praise, entertain, and send the gods away.

The early-20th-century Chinese work by a Japanese spy agency, *Annals of All Provinces of the Republic of China* (*Zhonghuo minguo quanguo shengqu quan-zhi*), gives the following information about *dashen* rites:

The shaman's hat is like a helmet with a green brim and five colored pendulous strips and two small mirrors which look like eyes. The shaman's face

is covered by slips of paper, and he or she wears a red costume and dances to loud drumbeats. The most powerful shamans can use mirrors to exorcise evil spirits and cure disease. They apply a mirror to the patient, and when it touches the diseased part, it sticks to it and cannot be easily removed. Once it vibrates, the bone joints make an echoing sound, and the patient recovers. The patient's family fashion a straw human being, bird, or beast, which is worshipped amid drumbeats and chanting and then sent off. The head of the straw figure is cut off and hung on a pole because people believe it can exorcise ghosts.

(Lu Long and Bai Meichu 1924:48)

The same work continues as follows:

Among all the shamans (*wu* 巫), there are well-known *dashen*, who are usually young, and their assistant *ershen* (二神, secondary shamans). When a family holds a sacrificial ritual, a pig, liquor and incense are placed before the shamanic gods before they can be invited. The *dashen* wears his or her sacred outfit and hat. The hat and belt are decorated with small bells, and when the *dashen* is possessed by a god, he or she can dance continuously to the tinkling of the bells. After a while, all lights are extinguished. Once when the Manchu language was then heard spoken, it turned out that the possessed shaman was asking questions and the assistant was responding. Their voices were loud and distinct, with long, sweeping tones, much like those of folk songs. The *dashen* first chanted and then the *ershen* and other people repeated the last notes together and beat their drums. Then the rite was over.

(Lu Long and Bai Meichu 1924:48)

Such documents about past *dashen* rites can be found among many Manchu clans, and we have documents for some clans that describe the rituals for ye spirits (animal spirits, 野神).<sup>3</sup> The ye spirits and plant deities preserved in some clans can be as many as thirty or forty, and there are numerous ancient ancestral shaman gods and hero gods worshipped in each clan as well, in some clans reaching a hundred. After the Liberation of China in 1949, a few clans that have still preserved shamanic rituals and the sacred ritual texts, and instruments, and they still have people who can perform *dashen* rituals. However, most clans preserve the sacred texts but no longer have shamans, while some still have shamans but have lost their texts and ritual instruments.

### 6.3 Shamanic rituals of the Oroqen, Ewenki, Daur, and Hezhe

Extensive investigations into the last decades of the 20th century found shamans still alive among the Oroqen, Ewenki, Daur, Mongols, and other ethnic groups. Two senior Oroqen shamans in the Greater Khingan Range region, Heilongjiang, had sacred instruments and could cure diseases for their clanspeople. There

were also two shamans in the Hulun Buir, Inner Mongolia. However, a venerable female Daur shaman passed away in 1988, and surveys reveal that shaman rites have been going extinct among these ethnic peoples. Most examples of shamanic activity are limited to written statements dating from the mid 20th century and are neither detailed nor ample in comparison with what can be found among the Manchu. Of the Hezhe in Tongjiang City of eastern Heilongjiang, You Jinliang (尤金良) once said that their shamans have long been extinct and that none exist anymore. He noted that there are only some oral tales and legends about shamans preserved by elderly Hezhe. As for the Xibe, evidence of their shamanic activities has been preserved mainly in the Qapqal Xibe autonomous county, Xinjiang. The *Shaman Songs* (*Saman shenge*) collected and released towards the end of the 20th century was originally preserved by ordinary Xibe people and are significant for the research of their shamanic culture and folk customs and for their general history.

I have learned, however, that shamanism still prevails among the Mongols of eastern Inner Mongolia and that some rituals are still practised there, especially those centred on *ovoo*, the stone cairns on mountain tops and road passes. These cairns originally served as landmarks, but later Mongols and related peoples came to regard them as religious markers for the worship of the god of heaven, mountain gods, road gods, and other nature and ancestral deities. They serve as a sacrificial altar in the shape of a mound, usually made from piles of rocks. If no rocks are available, people weave willow branches into baskets and stuff soil inside them. The basket is round with a spire and is usually placed on a small mound. There are large and small *ovoo*, and sometimes, several small *ovoo* are put near or in front of a big one. In the middle is stuck a wooden pole, three to four *zhang* in height. Numerous square cloths with scriptures written on them festoon the pole. *Ovoo* worship is deeply rooted in Mongol culture and sincerely respected by the people. Before they set out on a long journey, they pick up a stone from an *ovoo* and carry it with them, hoping that they can thus be safe and sound throughout the journey. When they encounter an *ovoo* on their way, they kneel and then walk around it. When horse riders come across one, they dismount and worship before it. *Ovoo* worship is held regularly every year, moreover, among which the autumn ritual is the most majestic. The present midsummer Nadam Fair held throughout the country, with its wrestling, horse racing, and archery games, has its roots in *ovoo* worship.

Among the Oroqen, the primary purpose for the religious activities practised by their shamans is to pray for and bless diseased loved ones and conduct prayers for a bounteous hunt or harvest. Shamans who treat patients of their clan are called *bakci*, and the deities who possess them are the nature deities Jiyaci, Jolo Borukan, Hulujin Hadar, Kutun Borukan, and other goddesses. There is only one *bakci* in a *mukūn*, and some *mukūn* do not have a *bakci*. When they are treating patients, *bakci* do not wear a special sacred outfit or sit on a sacred stool. Rather, they sit on a *malu*, the place of honour facing the door. They treat the patient after being possessed by one of the numerous deities worshipped in Oroqen shamanism. Apart from the ancient nature deities just mentioned, there are deities who



have care of various diseases, such as the goddess Ergudun for smallpox, Deleku Daryir for convulsions, Urenhadar for medical examinations, and Ercin for headaches and chest pains. There are also deities in charge of hunting and production, such as Jiyaci, who is worshipped when hunters have long been unable to track down an animal.

The Daur also worship numerous deities. Hunters worship the mountain god Bainaca, and foresters and fishers the river god Birgebal. Everyone worships *ovoo* and Tengri, the heaven god or sky god. On the whole, their deities can be divided into two categories: those that have long been worshipped in one's clan and those that were introduced from other clans. Deities are worshipped in the form of idols. When a clansperson falls ill, a cow, sheep, pig, or chicken is sacrificed, and their shaman-like *yadegen* conducts prayers and performs a trance dance to expel the disease. Shamans who have long served their *mukūn* are highly respected. As of the writing of this book, Jin Mokun of a village in Qiqihar was the youngest clan shaman. In addition to treating illness, *yadegen* perform bone setting, help deliver babies, and offer the blood and meat of sacrificial animals to express gratitude to the gods. They also seek to satisfy ghosts in prayerful activities known as *baitelebei* (pray). In past times, shamans would summon the blue and white python god, the black and white fox goddess, pairs of male and female mad wolves, and the ferocious black bear. During the trance dance, the shamans demonstrate various skills: *zouzhadao* (走铡刀, walking on knives); *tiaotiexie* (跳铁鞋, applying wax or oil to one's feet and then leaping about on red-hot ploughshares); *jiehongdai* (结红带, entwining a red-hot iron chain around one's bared waist); *zouhuochi* (走火池, running over burning coals); *shetian hongyundou* (舌舔红熨斗, licking a red-hot iron with one's tongue), and *fan'gunshimo* (翻滚石磨, tossing a millstone).

Daur shamans regularly hold three types of clan rituals: *jieshen* (洁身, purification), *yirdeng*, and *ominan*. The third is the most ceremonious. Held in the third or fourth lunar month every three years, it consists of sacrifice to the gods. The officiant, who is always a new shaman, commonly performs a trance dance in a home or near the village. The rite lasts for three days, and on midnight of the third day, the blood-drinking *shaxue* (歃血) rite is held, in which the gods are offered in a *tan'gula* birch bark bowl a mixture of ox blood, ox milk, milk wine, nine bits of incense, and nine portions of ox lung. With all the lights extinguished, the shaman beats a drum, dances up and down, and mimics the cry of a cuckoo. All those present simultaneously echo and imitate the shaman. Afterwards, the lights are reignited and ox blood smeared on the mouth of every spirit idol. With this, the *ominan* rite is over.

Ewenki shamans are hereditary and enjoy high prestige among the people. All take part in the grand *ominarang* rite held in August, when lambs are weaned. They all wear their shamanic garb, but only one shaman is masked. All the participants contribute their sheep, chickens, and milk for a large communal ritual meal. The women are in charge of cooking, usually using more than twenty pots and pans. For the ritual, twenty or thirty people clasp their hands and form a circle, swaying and dancing. The shamans and elders sing songs and perform

trance dances together for three days and nights, playing around the clock, with assistants helping the shamans with their singing.

Ewenki shamans also perform a trance dance to treat patients, and when people worship heaven or worship the nature god Jiyaci in the spring and autumn, shamans are invited to sing chants to seek blessings for peace and fruitful stock breeding. They are also invited to conduct prayers if someone has an inauspicious dream or suffers a great loss in stock breeding. When they treat an illness by exorcising an unsettled spirit, a black goat is slaughtered or, for a large-scale trance dance, a yearling calf, which is then given to the shaman after the ritual. The animal is needed for the spirit ghost to ride after the trance.

In the past, Hezhe shamans would perform *tiaolushen* (跳鹿神, leaping the deer god) every February and March and also in July and August, when it is known as *tiaotaipingshen* (跳太平神, leaping the god of peace). In this rite, people pray to the gods in the hope of expelling ill fortune and being blessed with good fortune. A shaman divines the date for the rite, and on that date, after the sun has climbed to a height of three bamboo poles, they take the Aimi god and sacred instruments out of a pack and place them on the west *kang*. The shaman then burns incense, offers food and liquor, and worships before the gods. When the various deities descend, clanspeople sprinkle liquor on the shaman, and young men of the village take sacred wands and deity figurines and beat drums as they follow the shaman out of the house, singing and dancing. Filing in formation, family by family, they place the Aimi god under the *kang*, put a sacred eagle on the *kang*, and stick a sacred knife in front of the west *kang*, with its sharp point downwards and knife edge outward. All the while, the shaman performs a trance dance outside the house door and then in the west room. All is repeated three times. Then the group line up and set off to another house. The number of families they visit should be odd – seven, nine, or eleven, and so on – and every family has to propose a toast to the shaman. When the shaman reaches the last family, they take off the shaman dress, rest, and are treated by the host. They then put the ritual dress back on, and clanspeople sprinkle liquor on the shaman. All the way back home, the shaman chants spirit songs and upon reaching home circles the house three times before entering. Afterwards, the shaman goes to the sacred pole, and people who have fulfilled their vows or are to make vows gather in front of the pole, offering sacrifice and praying.

In the past, the Hezhe also worshipped the god of heaven in the form of a spirit idol placed in a sacred tree. They also worshipped the auspicious star god with a *jia* ritual, and they did the same for the tree god when they set off for a hunt or returned from it. Among their numerous deities, they also worshipped their ancestor gods, placing the ancestral spirit idols on the west *kang*, burning incense, offering liquor in sacrifice, and kneeling. However, women were not allowed to attend this rite.

## Notes

- 1 The deities are Ahun Nianxi, Anchu Ayala, Muri Muriha, Nadan Daihūn, Narhvn Hiyancu, Enduri Sengge, Baiman Janggin, Nadan Weihuri, Endu Monggolo, and Katun Noyan.

- 2 The eight Manchu banners were the yellow banner, white banner, red banner, blue banner, bordered yellow banner, bordered white banner, bordered red banner, and bordered blue banner. Along with the Han Army Eight Banners and Mongolian Eight Banners, they formed the military backbone of the Qing dynasty.
- 3 They are found, for example, in the Nimaca Hala, Diaoluo Hala, Hexeri Hala, Siheteli Hala, Namduru Hala, Kūyala Hala, Wuhuguae, Nimaca Hala, Diaoluo Hala, and Hexeri.

# Bibliography

- Akamatsu Chijyo 赤松智诚 1938. *Chaoxian wushu de yanjiu* 朝鲜巫术的研究 [A Study of Korean Shamanism]. Osaka: Osaka House Bookstore.
- Arsenyev, B.K. 1983. *Lin zhong ren wudehe* 林中人—乌德赫[Udege in the Forest]. Trans. Guo Yanshun 郭燕顺 and Sun Yunlai 孙运来. *Minzu yiwenj* 民族译文集 [A Collection of Translated Ethnic Essays]. Changchun: Jilin Social Sciences Press 吉林社会科学院出版社.
- Bai Chunyi 白纯义 and Yu Fengtong 于凤桐 1927. *Huinan xianzhi* 辉南县志 [Huinan Annals]. Press unknown.
- Ban Gu 班固 (Eastern Han Dynasty) 1985. *Baihutong* 白虎通. [Compilation of Conference Materials on the Confucian Classics in the Eastern Han Dynasty]. Beijing: Shanghai Commercial Press 商务印书馆.
- Bo Shaobu 波少布 1987. “*Duokeduo'er shan jidian yishi yanjiu* 多克多尔山祭奠仪式研究 [Research on the Sacrificial Ritual of Dokdor Mountain].” *Heilongjiang minzu congtan* 黑龙江民族丛刊 [Heilongjiang Ethnic Series]. Harbin: Heilongjiang Institute of Ethnology 黑龙江省民族研究所.
- Cai Jiaqi 蔡家麒 1988. *Lun yuanshi zongjiao* 论原始宗教 [Primordial Religion]. Kunming: Yunnan Ethnic Publishing House 云南民族出版社.
- Cao Tingjie 曹廷杰 1934. *Xiboliyadongpian jiyao* 西伯利亚东偏纪要 [Records of Eastern Siberia]. Shengyang: Liaohai Book Press 辽海书社.
- Cui Gaowei 崔高维 1987. *Heilongjiang yan'an de buluo* 黑龙江沿岸的部落 [*The Tribes along Heilong River*]. Changchun: Jilin Culture and History Press 吉林文史出版社.
- 1997. *Zhouli yili* 周礼·仪礼 [Rites of Zhou: Etiquette]. Shengyang: Liaoning Education Press 辽宁教育出版社.
- Ding Shan 丁山 1988. *Zhongguo gudai zongjiao yu shenhuakao* 中国古代宗教与神话考 [Investigations on Chinese Ancient Religion and Mythology]. Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House 上海文艺出版社.
- Fan Ye 范晔 (Southern Song Dynasty) 1965. *Houhan shu* 后汉书 [Book of Later Han]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Fang Xuanling 房玄龄 (Tang Dynasty) 1974. *Ji shu* 晋书 [Book of Jin]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Fu Yuguang 富育光 1984. *Qicai shenhua* 七彩神火 [Seven-hued Divine Fire]. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House 吉林人民出版社.
- 2007. *Donghai chenyan lu* 东海沉冤录 [Records of Grievances of the East Sea]. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House 吉林人民出版社.
- and Jing Wenli 荆文礼 2009. *Tiangong dazhan* 天宫大战 [War in Heaven]. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House 吉林人民出版社.

- and Lu Liankun 鲁连坤 2007. *Wubuxiben mama* 乌布西奔妈妈 [Umesiben Mama]. Changchun: Jinlin People's Publishing House 吉林人民出版社.
- Guo Xileng 郭熙楞 1914. *Jinlin huizheng* 吉林汇徵 [Collected Records of Jilin]. Press unknown.
- Guo Yanshun 郭燕顺 and Sun Yunlai 孙运来 1983. "Aiwenkeren 埃文基人 [The Evenki]." *Minzu yiwenji* 民族译文集 [A Collection of Translated Ethnic Essays]. Changchun: Jilin Academy of Social Sciences 吉林省社会科学院.
- Guobuluo Changshun 郭布罗长顺 (Qing Dynasty) et al. 1989. *Jilin tongzhi* 吉林通志 [Annals of Jilin]. Changchun: Jilin Culture and History Press 吉林文史出版社.
- He Ling 贺灵 1990. "Xibozu Xinyang de samanjiao gaikuang 锡伯族信仰的萨满教概况 [Survey of Xibe Shamanism]." *Samanjiao wenhua yanjiu* 萨满教文化研究 [Studies on Shaman Cultures]. Vol. 1. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House 吉林人民出版社.
- Heilongjiang Annals Editorial Committee 黑龙江志稿编委会 1992. *Heilongjiang zhigao* 黑龙江志稿 [Heilongjiang Annals]. Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House 黑龙江人民出版社.
- Heine, Heinrich 1974. *Lun deguo zongjiao he zhexue de lishi* 论德国宗教和哲学的历史 [History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany]. Beijing: Commercial Press 商务印书馆.
- Hong Hao 洪皓 (Southern Song Dynasty) 1868. *Songmo jiwen* 松漠纪闻 [Records of Songmo]. Beijing: The Four Imperial Libraries 四库馆.
- Hu Pu'an 胡朴安 1986. *Zhonghua quanguo fengsuzhi* 中华全国风俗志 [Social Life and Customs in China]. Shijiazhuang: Hebei People's Publishing House 河北人民出版社.
- Inan, Abdulkadir 1979. *Samanjiao jinxi* 萨满教今昔 [Shamanism in History and Today]. Trans. Yao Guomin 姚国民 and Zeng Xianying 曾宪英. Beijing: Institute for Ethnic Literature in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中国社会科学院民族文学研究所.
- Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 内蒙古自治区编委会 1986a. *Ewenkezu shehui lishi tiaocha baogao* 鄂温克族社会历史调查报告 [Sociohistorical Investigation on the Evenki]. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House 内蒙古人民出版社.
- 1986b. *Dawo'erzu shehui lishi tiaocha baogao* 达斡尔族社会历史调查报告 [Sociohistorical Investigation on the Daur]. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House 内蒙古人民出版社.
- 1986c. *Elunchuzu shehui lishi tiaocha baogao* 鄂伦春族社会历史调查报告 [Sociohistorical Investigation on the Oroqen]. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House 内蒙古人民出版社.
- Ivanov, C.B. 1990. *Guidebook of Ethnic Plastic Arts in the Amur River Basin* [Heilongjiang liuyu minzu yishu zaoxing shouce 黑龙江流域民族造型艺术手册]. Trans. Sun Yunlai 孙运来. Tianjin: Tianjin Classics Publishing House 天津古籍出版社.
- Jilin Archaeological Research Office 吉林省考古研究室 1975. *Xiboliya de gudai wenhua* 西伯利亚的古代文化 [Ancient Peoples of Siberia and their Cultures]. Changchun: Jilin Archaeological Research Office 吉林省考古研究室.
- Jin Qicong 金启琮 trans. 1986. "Xiboliya ge minzu zhi samanjiao 西伯利亚各民族之萨满教 [Shamanism of the Siberian Peoples]." *Samanjiao ziliao yanjiu cankao ziliao* 萨满教研究参考资料 [Reference Materials for Shaman Studies]. Vol. 1. Beijing: Institute of Ethnology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中国社会科学院民族研究所.
- La Fargue, Paul 1963. *Zongjiao yu ziben* 宗教与资本 [Religion and Capital]. Trans. Wang Ziyue 王子野. Shanghai: Joint Publishing Company 三联书店.
- Li Di 李迪 1986. "Menggu zu zaoqi de tianxiangguan 蒙古族早期的天象观 [Early Celestial Concepts of the Mongols]." *Neimenggu shehuikexue* 内蒙古社会科学 [Inner Mongolia

- Social Science]. Vol. 4. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences内蒙古自治区社会科学院.
- Li Jiancai 李健才 1986. *Dongbei shidi kaolue* 东北史地考略 [Brief Introduction to Archaeological Sites in Northeast China]. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House 吉林人民出版社.
- Li Jiarui 李家瑞 1992. *Beiping fengsu leizheng* 北平风俗类徵 [Collected Customs of Beiping]. Beijing: Commercial Press 商务印书馆.
- Li Shutian 李树田 1987. *Changbaishan huigang zhilue* 长白山汇岗志略 [Introduction to the Annals of Changbai Mountain]. Changchun: Jilin Culture and History Press 吉林文史出版社.
- Liu Jianguo 刘建国 1981. "Guanyu samanjiao de jige wenti 关于萨满教的几个问题 [Questions about Shamanism]." *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 [Studies on World Religions]. Vol. 2. Beijing: Institute for World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中国社会科学院世界宗教研究所.
- Liu Xin 刘歆 (Han Dynasty) 1989. *Shanhaijing* 山海经 [Classic of Mountains and Seas]. Annotated by Guo Pu 郭璞. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House 上海古籍出版社.
- Longjiang Annals Editorial Committee 1991. *Longjiang xianzhi* 龙江县志 [Longjiang Annals]. Beijing: Chinese City Press 中国城市出版社.
- Lu Long 卢龙 and Bai Meichu 白眉初 1924. *Zhonghua minguo quanguo shengqu quanxue* 中华民国全国省区全志 [Annals of All Provinces of the Republic of China]. Vol. 3. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press 北京师范大学出版社.
- Manzhou shilu 满洲实录 [Veritable Records of the Manchu] 1986. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Mao Dun 茅盾 1929. *Shenhua zalun* 神话杂论 [Miscellaneous Mythic Studies]. Shanghai: Shanghai World Book Company 上海世界书局.
- Ning'an Annals Editorial Committee 宁安县志编委会 1989. *Ning'an Xianzhi* 宁安县志 [Ning'an Annals]. Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House 黑龙江人民出版社.
- Pan Rongbi 潘荣陛 (Qing Dynasty) 1981. *Yanjing suishiji* 燕京岁时记 [Records of Seasonal Yanjing Customs]. Beijing: Beijing Classics Publishing House 北京古籍出版社.
- Peng Bo 彭勃 1996. *Manzu* 满族 [The Manchu]. Chengdu: Sichuan Ethnic Publishing House 四川民族出版社.
- Qingtaizu nupanyachi shilu 清太祖努尔哈赤实录 [Veritable Records of the Qing Emperor Nurhaci] 1989. Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore 上海书店.
- Qiu Pu 秋浦 1962. *Ewenkeren de yuanshi shehui xingtai* 鄂温克人的原始社会形态 [Primordial Social Forms of the Ewenki]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- 1985. *Samanjiao yanjiu* 萨满教研究 [Studies of Shamanism]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House 上海人民出版社.
- Schmidt, Wilhelm 1987. *Yuanshi zongjiao yu shenhua* 原始宗教与神话 [The Origin and Growth of Religion]. Trans. Xiao Shiyi 萧师毅 and Chen Xiangchun 陈祥春. Shanghai: Shanghai literature and Art Publishing House 上海文艺出版社.
- Shuangcheng Annals Editorial Committee 双城县志编委会 1990. *Shuangcheng xianzhi* 双城县志 [Shuangcheng Annals]. Beijing: China Prospect Publishing House 中国展望出版社.
- Song Lian 宋濂 (Ming Dynasty) 1975. *Yuanshi* 元史 [History of Yuan]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Sun, Y.A. and Li, X.R. 2004. "Study of *qi*, Systematic Function, and Materiality." *Chinese Journal of Basic Medicine in Traditional Chinese Medicine*. 10 (1).

- Tangyuan Annals Editorial Committee 汤原县地方志编纂委员会 1992. *Tangyuan xianzhi* 汤原县志 [Tangyuan Annals]. Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House 黑龙江人民出版社.
- Tsendin Damdinsüren 策·达木丁苏伦 1956. *Menggu mishi* 蒙古秘史 [Secret History of the Mongols]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Tuotuo 脱脱 (Toqto'a) et al. (Yuan Dynasty) 1974. *Liaoshi lizhi suichuyi* 辽史·礼志·岁除仪 [History of Liao: Treatises of Rituals, Ritual on the Eve of the Spring Festival]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局. 华书局.
- 1975. *Jinshi dilizhi* 金史地理志 [History of Jin: Treatise on Geography]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Wang Chong 王充 (Eastern Han Dynasty) 1974. *Lunhen* 论衡 [Critical Essays]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House 上海人民出版社.
- Wei Shenghe 魏声和 et al. 1986. *Jilin liuwen lu* 吉林旧闻录 [Old Jilin Records]. Changchun: Jilin Culture and History Press 吉林文史出版社.
- Wu Yisang 吴依桑 and Bagen 巴根 1987. "Mengguzu baihuo xisu gaiguan" 蒙古族拜火习俗概观 [Mongol Fire Rituals]. *Heilongjiang minzu congkan* 黑龙江民族丛刊 [Heilongjiang Ethnic Series]. Vol. 4. Harbin: Heilongjiang Institute of Ethnology 黑龙江省民族研究所.
- Xi Qing 西清 (Qing Dynasty) 1984. *Heilongjiang waiji* 黑龙江外记 [Records of beyond Heilongjiang]. Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House 黑龙江人民出版社.
- Xiao Shi 萧爽 (Qing Dynasty) 1997. *Yongxianlu* 永宪录 [Records of Yongxian]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Xu Ke 徐珂 (Qing Dynasty) 1984. *Qingbai leichao* 清稗类抄 [Classified Qing Anecdotes]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Xu Mengshen 徐梦莘 (Southern Song Dynasty) 1987. *Sanchaobeimeng huibian* 三朝北盟会编 [Documents of the Three Reigns' Northern Alliance]. Vol. 3. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House 上海古籍出版社.
- Yang Bin 杨宾 (Qing Dynasty) et al. 1985. *Ningguta jilue* 宁古塔纪略 [Summary Records of Ningguta]. Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House 黑龙江人民出版社.
- Ye Longli 叶隆礼 (Song Dynasty) 1985. *Qidan guozhi* 契丹国志 [Khitan Chronicles]. Annotated by Jia Jingyan 贾敬颜 and Lin Ronggui 林荣贵. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House 上海古籍出版社.
- Zhang Fengtai 张凤台 and Liu Longguang 刘龙光 1910. *Changbai zhengcun lu* 长白山征存录 [Collected Records of Changbai Mountain]. Unpublished Manuscript.
- Zhao Hui 昭榘 (Qing Dynasty) 1980. *Xiaoting zalu* 啸亭杂录 [Miscellaneous Records of Xiaoting]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Zhen Jun 震钧 (Qing Dynasty) 1982. *Tianzhi ouwen* 天咫偶闻 [News from Heaven]. Beijing: Beijing Classics Publishing House 北京古籍出版社.



# Index

- Abka Enduri xv, 22, 27, 41, 57, 91  
Abka Hehe xv, 26, 35, 37, 38, 39, 46, 47,  
48, 57, 74, 90, 91  
Acheng 23, 56  
Ahun Niyansi 103  
Aihui viii, xiv, 101  
Aikesaili 21  
Aimi 114  
Aisin Gioro 39, 101, 102, 103, 104  
Ajioru 54  
Akamatsu Chijyo 20  
Aleksyev, N. A. 20  
*alin* (mountain) 35, 45, 73  
*ama zunrou* (dish of meat honoring  
Nurhaci) 108, 109  
*amasi* (meat congee similar to pilaf) 70  
Amba Manni 110  
*Analects (Lunyu)* 12  
*anda* (sworn friend) 37  
*Annals of All Provinces of the Republic  
of China (Zhonghua minguo quanguo  
shengqu quanzhì)* 110  
Aomai (woman's belly) 60  
Aomi (*ya*) (soul of one-year-old infant) 60  
*aomidai* (unborn souls) 21  
Aomisong Mama 60  
Aomo (nest, cave, hole) 60  
Aomu Mama (East Sea Goddess) 79  
*aomuhe fucembi* (name of a sea ritual) 87  
*Ancient Discoveries in the Far  
East of Soviet Union (Sulian yuandong  
kaoguxue)* 9  
Arsenyev, Vladimir 24  
*atirekan* (male bear) 94  
Avalokiteśvara 21, 101, 103, 105, 107  
Ayuele Bukan 32
- Bagen 32, 69  
Bai Chunyi 27  
Bai Jinbao 8  
Bai Meichu 111  
Bai Yun 39  
*Bai Yun, Celestial Princess (Baiyun  
gege)* 39  
Baicheng 8  
*Baicheng, Relics of (Baicheng yizhi)* 42  
*Baihutong (Baihutong)* 88  
Baiman Janggan 114  
*Bainaca (Bainacha)* 95, 113  
Bainaca (Mountain Deity) 95, 113  
Bainata (Mountain Deity) 65  
*baitelebei (pray)* 113  
*baitiandi* (worship of Heaven and Earth  
during a wedding) 43  
Ban Gu 88  
Banaji Emu (Earth Mother) 22, 35, 43  
bannermen 105  
*bao* ritual 73  
Batu Khan 32  
*baturu* (hero) 73, 90, 110  
*beideng* (night ritual with lights out) 59,  
63, 64, 79, 80, 84  
*beile* (lord, prince, chief) 100  
*Beiping, Collected Customs of (Beiping  
fengsu leizheng)* 82, 84, 88  
*beizi* (prince of the fourth rank) 100, 103  
*bidengrou* (meat offered to the gods with  
all lights out) 108, 109  
Biganyi Enduri (Spirit Idol) 103  
Biganyi Mafa (Spirit Idol) 103  
*bira* (river) 44, 91  
*Bird God Rescuing Humans from the  
Flood (Niaoshen tuoren bihongshui)* 48  
*Bird Guiding to Treasure (Niao yinlu  
tanbao)* 48  
Birgebal (River God) 113  
Biya (moon) 25  
Bo Shaobu 65, 69

- Boli (Khabarovsk) 49n14  
 Bonoku 27  
*boo* (shaman) 5  
*Book of Changes (Yijing)* 12  
*Book of Rites (Liji)* 62, 75n2  
 Borukan (Tiger God) 54, 95, 103, 112  
*buda* (food) 37  
 Bukui (Qiqihar) 88  
*Bukui, Customs of (Bukui fengtuji)* 88  
 Bukūri Yongşon 39, 88  
 Buowo Bukan (Supreme Deity of Mountains and Forests) 32  
  
 Cai Jiaqi 65  
*calbalaicin* (presiding shaman) 89  
 Cao Tingjie 2, 3  
*chakur* ritual 65  
 Chaliba Village 87  
 Changbai Mountain 1, 39, 47, 103  
*Changbai Mountain, Collected Records of (Changbai zhengcunlu)* 97  
*Changbai Mountain, Introduction to the Annals of (Changbaishan huigang zhilve)* 43  
*Characters, Interpretation of (Shuowen jiezi)* 19  
*charhan* (small rivers) 37  
 Cheng Yi 15  
*chidaroufan* (sharing the great meat meal) 109  
 child's soul (*tongzihun*) 60  
*chixiaoroufan* (sharing the simple meat meal) 109  
 Chiyou 62  
 Chongde 100  
*chunqiu* rituals 107  
 Chuokuo Manni 57  
 Cimoni Mama 35  
*coco* (male genital) 94  
*Crossing the Sea on Goose Feathers (Zuo eling kuahai)* 48  
 Cui Gaowei 63  
 Cuisheng Niangniang 59  
  
*Da Mafa* (primogenitor) 104  
 Dachengzi 56  
*Daffodil Princess (Shuixian gege)* 66  
 Dala Damin (Supreme Vulture) 45  
 Dala Giyahvn (Supreme Eagle) 45  
 Dange Karahan (Good Heavenly Spirit) 22  
*dangse* (archive) 101, 102  
 Daoguang Emperor 104  
*dashen* (great deity) 110, 111  
*dashen ritual* 110, 111  
  
 Deleku Daryir 44, 113  
 Deng Zuo 104  
 Derevyanko, E. I. 29  
 Dergiamo Mama (East Sea Goddess) 74  
 Diaoluo Hala 115n3  
 Ding Shan 63  
 Dingmao 82  
*dodokv* (penis) 56  
 Dolo Khan 93  
 Dong Eji 102  
 Donghai Weji 79, 86, 92, 102  
 Dongning 97  
*dream soul (menghun)* 16  
*dunen* (brilliant sun) 25  
*duozi* ritual 59  
 Duwalan Deities 9  
  
 Earth Goddess 36  
 East Sea Goddess 18, 74, 79, 86, 87  
*East Tartary, Travels of (Dongda jixing)* 42  
*emu* (mother) 35  
 Endu Monggolo 114  
 Enduri Sengge 103, 114n1  
 Ercin 113  
 Erleg Khan (Lord of the Underworld) 22  
*ershen* (secondary shamans) 111  
*etihen* (old man, uncle) 29  
*etire* (female bear) 94  
 Eastern Han 14, 21, 88  
  
 Fan Ye 22, 42  
*fan 'gunshimo* (tossing a millstone) 113  
 Fanca 39  
 fire rite 32, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76  
 floating soul (*fuhun*) xv, 16, 17, 66, 68  
*fodo* (willow) 37, 87  
 Fodo Mama (Goddess of Fertility and Protector of Children) 55, 57, 90, 104, 105, 106  
 Fodo Moo (willow, female reproductive organ) 37  
 Fogulun (celestial maiden) 39, 88  
 Fohemu (pudendum) 56  
 Fojia Mama 32, 33  
*Four Imperial Libraries, Complete Books of the (Siku quanshu)* 23n1  
 Fu Jixiang 98n1  
 Fu Xilu xiv  
 Fu Yuguang i, ii, iii, iv, vii, viii, xii, xiii, xiv, 33, 35, 47, 66, 97  
 Fuca Hala 12, 25, 57, 91  
  
 Gahutanhe 92  
 Gao Qishan 98n1

- gasha* (bird) 78  
 Genghis Khan 32, 48n1  
*gida* (gun) 92  
 Goguryeo 82  
*Goldi Tribe on the Lower Sungari River*  
     (*Songhuaqiang xiayou de hezhazu*) 3, 14  
*Goldi, The* (*Guo'erteren*) 3, 14, 53  
 Gongzhuling 40  
 Gorlos 32  
*Grievances of the East Sea, Records of*  
     (*Donghai chenyuanlu*) 32, 58, 66, 79,  
     92, 97  
*guaizi* (gait) 48  
 Guan Di 101, 103, 105, 107  
 Guan Yu 101  
 Guan Yu, Sagacious Lord 21  
 Guan Zhiyuan 98n1  
 Guangxu 13, 23n7, 28, 57, 80  
 Guo Yanshun 21  
 Guobuluo Changshun 107  
*Guoyu* (*Discourses of States*) (Guoyu) 62  
*gusige* (wolf) 30, 95  
  
*hada* (tribe) 73  
*hadou* (bird of fantasy) 30  
 Hailing 53  
*Hailing, Legend of King* (*Hailingwang*  
     *chuanqi*) 53  
*hala* (clan) 91  
*hama* (knife) 58  
 Han dynasty 14, 19, 21, 83  
*Han, Book of* (*Hanshu*) 84  
 He Yulin 87  
*Heilongjiang Annals* (*Heilongjiang*  
     *zhigao*) 108, 109  
 Heine, Heinrich 24  
*Hero Shi'en and Maiden Zhang Lihua*  
     (*Shi'en morigen he zhanglihua katuo*) 94  
 Hong Hao 38  
 Horqin 70  
 Houtu (Deity of the Earth and Soil) 34, 83  
 Hu Pu'an 38  
 Huang Taiji 39, 102  
*huansuo* (child's blessing string) 55, 90,  
     106, 107  
 Huaxia 63  
 Huduo 66  
 Huichun 56, 57, 64, 70, 87, 89, 91, 92, 97  
*Huinan Annals* (*Huinan xianzhi*) 97  
*Hulan Banner, Etiquette and Customs of*  
     (*Hulan difang qiji lisu*) 80  
 Hulujin Hadar (Nature Deity) 112  
 Hulun Buir 112, 23n3  
 Hun 77  
 Hunchun County 49  
  
*hunqi* (soul-energy) 13, 17  
*huochi* (brazier) 71  
*huodai* (earliest humans) 30  
 Huotai 47  
  
 Ilan Tusu (Cloud Deity) 26  
 Ilan Usiha (Three Stars) 84  
 Ili Gege (Cloud Deity) 26  
 Ilmun Khan (Lord of the Underworld) 46  
*Imperial Documents, Encyclopedia of:*  
     *Rites Honoring Heaven and Earth*  
     (*Huangchao wenxian tongkao zhaojiao*  
     *shekao*) 99  
 Inan, Abdülkadir 31  
 Ivanov, C. B. 44, 59  
  
*jabjan* (python) 40  
*jia* ritual (folk ritual as fixed in Qing  
     times) v, 51, 66, 80, 90, 91, 99–115  
 Jianzhou Jurchen 93, 98, 102  
*Jiehongdai* (red-hot iron chain around  
     one's bared waist) 113  
*jieshen* (purification) 113  
 Jilin i, viii, 4  
*Jilin, Collected Records of* (*Jilin huizheng*)  
     40, 42  
 Jin dynasty 4, 8, 31, 42, 53, 54, 83, 88  
 Jin Mokun 113  
 Jin Shizong 88  
*Jin, Book of* (*Jinshu*) 42  
*Jin, History of* (*Jinshi*) 28, 88  
*Jin, History of: Treatise on Geography*  
     (*Jishi dilizhi*) 88  
*Jin, Records of the Great* (*Dajin guozhi*) 42  
 Jiuli (nine tribes of the Yangtze River  
     Basin) 62  
 Jiutai County 87  
 Jiyaci (Nature Deity) 112, 113, 114  
 Jolo Borukan 112  
*junwang* (Prince of the Second Rank) 100  
 Jurchen xv, xvi, 2, 9, 11, 13, 18, 19, 22, 25,  
     26, 29, 30, 32, 37, 39, 42, 46, 57, 60, 78,  
     79, 83, 86–88, 101–104  
  
*kade* (earliest human) 30  
*kan* (pit) 62  
*kang* (heatable raised bed platform in  
     northeastern China) 40, 43, 56, 84, 90,  
     101, 105, 114  
 Kangxi 58, 81  
 Katun Noyan 103  
*kefir* (a kind of liquor) 70  
 Khabarovsk 49n14  
*khata* (Tibetan Buddhist ritual scarf) 70, 79n9  
 Khitan 29, 104

*Khitani Chronicles (Qidan guozhi)* 104  
 Kori (Eagle Deity) 30, 44  
 Kutun Borukan 112  
 Kvgvmu 59  
 Kvgvturi 13

*Later Han, Book of (Houhanshu)* 22, 82  
*Later Han, Book of: Biography of Deng Zhi (Houhanshu dengzhizhuan)* 66  
 Layue (twelfth month of the Chinese lunar calendar) 63  
 lefu (bear) 94  
*Lefu Mafa (Grandfather Bear)* 94  
 Li Jiancai 42  
 Li Jiarui 82, 84, 88  
 Li Shutian 43  
*liangbatou* (bride's coiffure) 43  
*Liao, History of (liaoshi)* 27, 31  
*Liao, History of: Treatises of Rituals, Ritual on the Eve of the Spring Festival (Liaoshi lizhi suichuyi)* 31  
 Liaoning 4, 9, 49n3, 56, 99, 100, 110  
*lida* (leader of the hunt) 73  
 Ling Chunsheng 2, 3  
*lingshen* (spokesperson for a god or spirit) 13  
*lingsheng* (sacrificial animal) 80, 106, 109  
 Lishu 42  
 Liu Jianguo 22  
 Liu Longguang 97  
 Liu Xin 97  
*Longjiang Annals (Longjiang xianzhi)* 80  
 Lu Liankun 33  
 Lu Long 111  
*lushen* 89

*mafa* (grandpa, ancestral god, great shaman) 94  
*malu* (hero, hero idol) 55, 89, 112  
*Manchu Fire Ritual of the Seven Hulun Clans, Sacred Book of the (Kulun qixing manzhou huoji shenshu)* 57, 70  
*Manchu Origins, Research on (Manzhou yuanliu kao)* 105  
*Manchu Religions, Record of (Manzhou zongjiaozhi)* 22  
*Manchu Rites, Records of Four (Manzhou siliji)* 76  
*Manchu Sacrifices to Deities and Heaven, Rules for (Qinding manzhou jishen jitian dianli)* 7  
*Manchu Trance Rites for the Worship of Heaven (Manzhou tiaoshen jitian dianli)* 11, 101  
*Manchu, Veritable Records of the (Manzhoulu)* 39, 41, 88

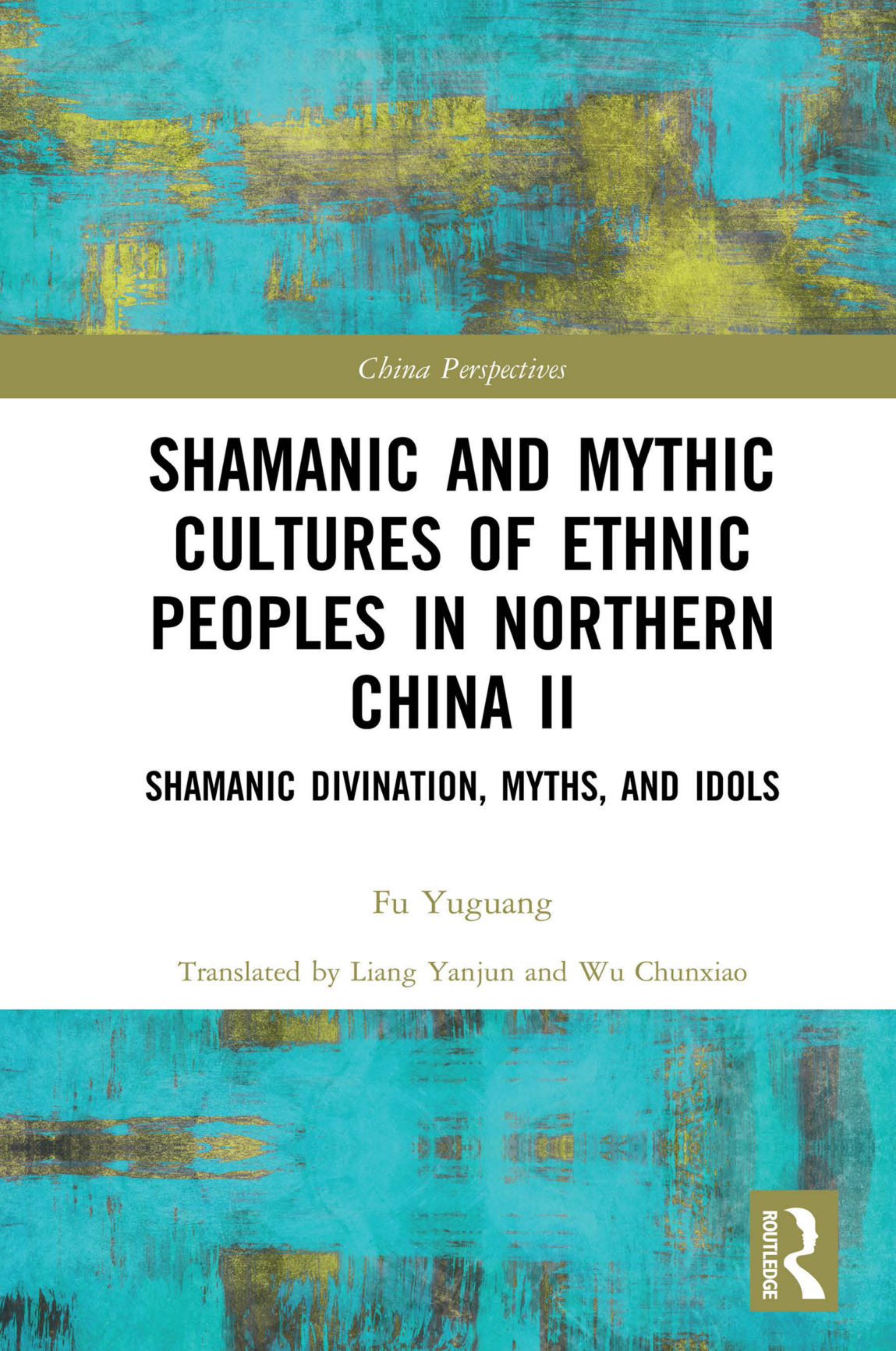
*manggai* (man-eating demon) 61n3  
*mangge* (man-eating demon) 67  
*mangni* (hero, hero idol) 55, 61n3  
*manni* (hero, hero idol) 55–57, 64, 110  
*manye* (hero, hero idol) 55  
 Mao Dun 19  
*Marrying the Bird Maiden (Yu niaonv chengqin)* 48  
 Mayin (hero, hero idol) 21  
 Medehe Enduri (Fish God) 93  
*menggun gasha* (silver bird) 78  
 Meng Huiying ix  
*menghun* (dream soul) 16  
 Meng Jinfu 1  
 Meng Sen 101  
*miao* (shrine, temple) 101  
*mingan usiha* (1,000 stars) 78  
*minghun* (life-soul) 16  
 Mishan 42  
 Mo Fusheng 64, 75n4  
 Möngke Khan 27, 49  
*Mongol Fire Rituals (Mengguzu baihuo xisu gaiguan)* 69  
*Mongolian Customs, Appreciation of (Mengu fengsujian)* 70  
*Mongols, Secret History of the (Menggu mishi)* 25  
 Moo Enduri (Willow Deity) 37  
 Mudanjiang 57, 91  
*Mukden, Records of (Fengtian tongzhi)* 105  
*muke* (liquid) 37  
 Muke Enduri (Water God) 36  
*mukūn* (paternal sub-clan) 50, 54, 70, 72, 73, 75, 89, 102, 110, 112, 113  
*mukūnda* (sub-clan chieftain) 71–73  
 Muli Khan (Spirit Idol) 103  
 Murin Murinhan (Mountain God) 28  
*mahu* (blood-drinking demon) 61n3, 67  
*Mountains and Seas, Classic of (Shanhajing)* 49n12, 97  
 Mohe 11, 42, 49n9  
 Na Enduri (Mother Earth) 35  
 Na Khanum (Mother Earth) 35  
 Nadan Daihūn 84, 103, 114n1  
 Nadan Nalahū 84  
 Nadan Usiha (Seven Stars) 73, 84  
 Nahū 84  
 Ne Mama (Mother Earth) 35, 36  
 Nehu Usiha (Pleiades, Seven Sisters, Chinese Maoxiu) 79  
*News from Heaven (Tianchi ouwen)* 90  
*nianxi* (incense made from azaleas) 72, 75n10  
 Niaomai Goddess 43

- Night Stars 78  
*nimaha* (fish) 37  
 Nimanggi Mama 26, 27  
 Nine Heavens in the Three Realms 22  
 Nine Realms of the Heavens 44  
*Ning'an Annals* (*Ning'an xianzhi*) 40  
*niocita* (great-grandfather) 95  
*nionioku* (bear) 29, 93  
*Nishan Shaman* (*Nishan saman*) 22, 46  
 Niuheiliang Village 9, 56  
*niyalma* (human being) 37  
 Nohon Abka (blue sky, heaven) 103  
 Nohon Taiji (God of Heaven) 103  
*Nurhaci and Wanggao, Legends of*  
   (*Liangshi hanwangzhuang*) 32, 52, 93,  
   98, 101, 102  
*Nurhaci, Veritable Records of the*  
   *Founding Emperor* (*Taizugao huangdi*  
   *shilu*) 101  
*Nurhaci, Veritable Records of the Qing*  
   *Emperor* (*Qingtaizu nu'er hachi shilu*) 39  
 Nüwa 98  
  
*obao* (sacred pile of stones or wood) 20  
 Odoli 39  
 Ojiaole 54  
 Okladnikov, A. P. 9  
*ominan* (clan ritual) 113  
*oron weceku* (star shrine niche) 78  
*oyon* (a flower) 20  
  
 Pan Rongbi 82  
*paoliucheng* (running the Willow Walls) 93  
 Peng Bo 57  
  
 Qapqal 5, 112  
 Qibaqi 54  
*qihua* (energy-incarnation) 14  
*qinchong* (legendary animal) 97  
 Qin dynasty 57  
*Qing, History of: Treatise 60, Rite 4*  
   (*Qingshigao zhi liushi lisi*) 100  
*Qing, Veritable Records of the*  
   (*Qingshilu*) 39  
*Qing Anecdotes, Classified* (*Qingbai*  
   *leichao*) 21  
 Qingdu 66  
*Qing Dynasty Decrees and Regulations*  
   (*Qinghuidian*) 101  
*qinggong* 13, 96, 98n2  
 Qinghua 8  
*qinwang* (prince of the first rank) 100  
 Qiqihar 113  
*qiuqi* shaman 18  
*qiyun* (energy-motion) 14–17  
  
*qizhi* (energy-nature) 14  
*qi* (breath, air, gas; figuratively, material  
   energy) xv, 6, 14–17, 52, 66, 68  
 Qianlong 11, 23n1, 77, 81, 101  
*qixian* (energy-manifestation) 14, 15  
*qisu* (energy-essence) 14, 16  
 Qiu Pu 19, 44, 59  
 Qing dynasty i, 3, 11, 20, 28, 39, 41, 61,  
   70, 81, 87, 99, 100, 102, 105, 115n2  
  
 Ren Jiyu xiii  
  
 “Sirin Sefu” (*Xilin sefu*) 48, 79  
*Sabusu, Legend of General*  
   (*Sadarenzhuang*) 101  
*Sacrificial Rules and Procedures of the Fu*  
   *Clan, Records of* (*Fushi jigui chengshi*  
   *lixulu*) 63, 75n4  
 Sahaliyan xi, 35, 36, 49n13  
 Sakaci Aliyang 9  
 Sakhalin 18, 49n14  
*sama* (shaman) 2  
*saman* (shaman) xv, 2  
*sandenghua* (flower-shaped paper  
   lanterns) 82  
 Sanjiazhi Village 110  
*Sanjie Shuo* (Three Realms Theory) 21  
 Sanxing (Yilan, Heilongjiang) 53, 88  
 Savage Jurchen 19, 35, 46  
 Schmidt, Wilhelm 33  
 Seven Fairies 84  
 Seven Hulun Clans 13, 28, 30, 49n8, 71, 72  
 Seven Sisters 84  
 Sewenki (Evenki ancestral clan god) 44, 54  
*Shaman Songs* (*Saman shenge*) 112  
*shamanda* (head shaman) 71–73  
 Shang dynasty 82  
*shanhe* ritual 63  
*shanman* 2  
*shantaha* (white devil) 104  
*shaxue* (blood-drinking) 113  
*shen* (deity) 7, 12, 13, 24, 76  
 Shengjing (Shenyang) 41  
*shengqi* (vitality) 14  
*shenhun* (spiritual soul) 16  
*shenqi* (spirit energy) 16  
*shetian hongyundou* (licking a red-hot  
   iron) 113  
 Shibata Kenzo 22  
 Shirokogoroff, S. M. 97  
 Shiwei 11  
*shuituanzi* (Manchu boiled rice cake) 90  
*shuixia mozhen* (diving into water to grope  
   for needles) 53  
 Shunxing 82, 83

- Shunzhi 100  
*Shunzhi and Kangxi, Secret Records of the*  
 (*Shunkang milu*) 58  
*shushen* (possessed by a spirit or god) 13  
*Siberia, Ancient Cultures of (Xiboliya de*  
*gudai wenhua)* 47, 55  
*Siberia, Records of Eastern (Xiboliya*  
*dongpian jiyao)* 2  
*sierranju* (Evenki dwelling) 65, 89  
 Sihulin 92  
 Siji Village 12  
*siren* (spirit cloths) 55  
 Sisilin 26, 35  
 Siunvge 8  
 Solon (Evenki) 27  
*somoimoo* (sacred pole) 105, 106  
 Song Lian 27, 49n4  
*Song, History of (Songsshi)* 15  
 Songsheng Niangniang 59  
 Southern Song 59  
 spiritual soul (*shenhun*) 16  
 Sūn Anbo Mama 26  
 Sūn Gege (*gege*: daughter) 26, 27  
*sūn morin* (sun) 20, 26, 33, 78  
 Sun Yunlai 21  
*suolian* (gait style) 48  
 supreme lord of heaven 27  
 Sushen (Sušen) 11, 29, 42, 49n9, 97  
  
*Taishe* (altar for Earth in thenorth of the  
 capitol) 4  
 Taisui 82  
*Taitan* (alter for Heaven in the south of the  
 capitol) 62  
*taitei* (grandmother) 30  
 Taizhao 62  
 Talaha Mama 104  
*tangse* (portable shrine, Qing court shrine)  
 xv, 88, 99, 101–105  
*Tangyuan Annals (Tangyuan xianzhi)* 94  
*tanhaixue* (diving to search a sea cave) 53  
*Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm (Shamanism*  
*in History and Today)* 31  
 Tartar 77  
*tasha* (tiger) 37  
 Tenggeri (Heaven, Sky God) 27  
 Tengri (Heaven, Sky God) 113  
 Three Flaming Stars 84  
*Three Reigns' Northern Alliance,*  
*Documents of the (Sanchao beimeng*  
*huibian)* 2, 83  
 Three-Soul Theory (*Sanhun lun*) 17  
*tiaohuochi* (running over coals barefoot) 74  
*Tiaojiashen* 107  
*tiaolushen* (leaping the Deer God) 89, 114  
  
*tiaotaipingshen* (leaping the God of Peace)  
 114  
*tiaotixie* (jumping about on red-hot  
 plowshares) 113  
 Tolmachevo, B. R. 8  
*tolon* (torch) 73  
 Tonghua 97  
 Tongjiang City 112  
*tongzi* (child younger than fourteen) 43, 60  
*tongzihun* (child's soul) 17  
 Toqto'a (also known as Tuotuo) 28, 31, 88  
*tori* (bronze mirror) 25  
 Torii Ryuzo 54  
*Tribes in the Amur River Basin*  
 (*Heilongjiang yan'an de buluo*) 29  
 true soul (*zhenhun*) 16, 17  
 Tsendin Damdinsüren 25  
 Tucheng 42  
*tumen usiha* (10,000 stars) 78  
 Tuotuo (Toqto'a) 88, 49  
 Tuowo Bukan (Fire Deity) 32  
 Tuwa Enduri (Fire Deity) 32, 33  
 Tuwa Mama (Granny Fire) 33  
 Tuwayalha 74  
*tvhhongwu* (fire bell) 56  
 Twenty-Eight Mansions 83  
  
 Uduben Beise (primordial ancestors) 102,  
 103  
 Ula (Jilin City) 35, 110, 49n13, 80, 81, 93,  
 102  
 Ulajie 59  
*uleben* (Manchu tales) 92  
 Umai 60, 61  
*Umesiben Mama* xvi, 2, 25, 33, 41, 48, 58,  
 66, 92, 96  
 Urenhadar 113  
 Urutoiweng 20  
*usiha* (star) 73, 78, 84  
*Uyun Divine Words of the Qian Clan*  
 (*Qianxing wuyun shenyu*) 63, 75n4  
  
*wadan* (pouch) 92  
 Wang Chong 14  
 Wang Gao 32, 102  
 Wanli Mama 57, 105–107  
 Wanyan Liang 53  
 “War in Heaven” (*Tiangong dazhan*) vii,  
 xi, xvi, 19, 22, 26, 35, 39, 46, 74, 79, 94  
*weceku* (ancestor niche) 78, 90, 104  
*wedun gasha* (birds of the universe) 78  
 Wei Shenghe 54  
*weihū* (canoe) 37, 93  
 Weji 45, 79, 86, 92, 102  
 Weledū Mama 78, 79, 84

- weng* (idol) 30, 95  
*wengget* (bronze idol) 54  
*wenggure* (shamanic idol) 94  
 winter stars 78, 84  
*wu* (shamaness) 2, 62, 111  
 Wu Botong 12  
 Wu Dekun 64, 75n4  
 Wu Xulun 59  
 Wu Yisang 69  
 Wuji 11  
 Wumuke (nest) 60  
  
 Xangyan Mama 26  
 Xewuji 21  
*xi* (evening sacrificial rite) 101  
*xi* (male shaman) 62  
 Xi Qing 34  
 Xianbei 78  
 Xiao Shi 101  
*Xiaoting, Miscellaneous Records of*  
     (*Xiaoting zalu*) 99  
 Xili Mama 55  
 Xu Ke 21, 41  
 Xu Mengshen 2, 83  
*xuan niao* (bird of fantasy) 30  
  
 Yadagan 89  
*yadegen* (shaman) 113  
 Yakut 17, 20, 21, 46  
 Yama (Lord of the Underworld) 21  
 Yan Wenkuan 98  
 Yan Zhenkuan 96  
 Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture 56  
 Yandi 53  
*yang* (departed spirit) 68  
 Yang Bin 34  
 Yang Shichang 87, 97, 98  
 Yangpao Village 56, 57  
 Yanjing (Beijing) 82, 83, 100  
*Yanjing Customs, Records of Seasonal*  
     (*Yanjing suishiji*) 82  
*yaya* (grandfather) 30, 93  
 Ye Longli 104  
*ye* ritual 44, 80, 87, 94, 95, 101, 110  
*ye* spirit (animal spirit) 111  
*Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*  
     (*Huangdi neijing*) 66  
 Yellow Hat Sect: 70, 75n8  
 Yellow Sea 47  
 Yeluli 22, 26, 27, 35, 37–39, 41, 47, 48,  
     57, 74, 91, 94  
  
 Yeming (altar for the Moon) 63  
 Yesong 12  
*yibazhua* 43  
 Yilou 42  
*yimakan* 30, 49n10  
 Yin Jiang 46  
*yindahvn* (dog) 37  
*yinianhun* (will soul) 16  
*yin-yang* 12, 23n6  
*yirdeng* (Daur shaman ritual) 89, 113  
 Yongji County 56, 87, 110  
 Yongle 82  
*Yongxian, Records of (Yongxianlu)* 101  
 You Jinliang 112  
 Youyong 63  
 Yu Emperor 66  
 Yu Fengtong 97  
 Yu Kun 13  
*yuan* ritual 63  
*Yuan, History of (yuanshi)* 27, 49n4  
*yuanxiao* (glutinous rice balls) 82  
 Yuyong 63  
*yuyun* ritual 59  
  
*zaili* (shaman assistant) 45, 48, 59, 70  
*Zang Clan, Norms for Sacrificial Rites*  
     (*Dazang xingshi shenjiguiyi*) 75n4  
 Zang Hala 12  
 Zasag Decree 32  
 Zhang Fengtai 97  
 Zhang Zai 15  
 Zhangzong 82  
 Zhao Hui 100  
 Zhao Jinwen 80  
*zhao* rite 101  
 Zhao Xingya 56  
 Zhaoli Aunt 104  
 Zhen Jun 90  
*zhenhun* (true soul) 16, 17  
 Zhou dynasty 75n2, 82, 83  
*Zhou, Rites of (Zhouli)* 75n6, 77  
 Zhokoudian 8  
 Zhushen (Jurchen) 37  
*zisunheng* (offspring cord) 90  
*zouhuochi* (running over burning coals)  
     113  
*zouzhadao* (walking on knives) 113  
*zuanbingya* (going through nine ice holes  
     in a river) 53  
*zuozhang* (bride's sitting on the marriage  
     bed good fortune) 43





*China Perspectives*

# **SHAMANIC AND MYTHIC CULTURES OF ETHNIC PEOPLES IN NORTHERN CHINA II**

**SHAMANIC DIVINATION, MYTHS, AND IDOLS**

Fu Yuguang

Translated by Liang Yanjun and Wu Chunxiao



# Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China II

On the basis of first-hand materials gathered through decades of field research and fleshed out with the author's insightful religious, cultural, and historical observations extending back to the Qing dynasty, ancient archaeological discoveries, and the legacy of Siberian peoples, this two-volume ethnological study investigates shamanic rituals, myths, and lore in northern China and explores the common ideology underlying the origins of the region's cultures.

This second volume focuses on northern shamanic divination, spirit idols, and folklore covering the myths of the Manchu-Tungus, Manchu creation shrine tales, and individual tribal myths. This mythic heritage helps identify shared patterns of thought among the ethnic peoples of northern China; points to cultural integration with Buddhist, Daoist, and Han Chinese cultures; and shows their understanding of the natural world, the creation of humankind, social life, and history and their interactions with their surroundings. In this regard, shamanic spirituality in northern China is characterized by functionality and practicality in daily life situations, in contrast to the received wisdom that defines shamanic praxis as a pure supernatural spirit journey.

The book will be of great value to scholars of religion and to both anthropologists and ethnologists in the fields of shamanism studies, Northeast Asian folklore, and Manchu studies.

**Fu Yuguang**, a native Manchu scholar of shamanic and Manchu studies from the Jilin Institute for Ethnology, has been committed to ethnological and anthropological research on the myths, rituals, and cultures of Altaic peoples in northern China for over fifty years and has published many influential works.

## **China Perspectives**

The *China Perspectives* series focuses on translating and publishing works by leading Chinese scholars, writing about both global topics and China-related themes. It covers humanities & social sciences, education, media and psychology, as well as many interdisciplinary themes.

This is the first time any of these books have been published in English for international readers. The series aims to put forward a Chinese perspective, give insights into cutting-edge academic thinking in China, and inspire researchers globally.

To submit proposals, please contact the Taylor & Francis Publisher for China Publishing Programme, Lian Sun (Lian.Sun@informa.com).

### **Titles in history currently include:**

#### **The History of Chinese Feudal Society**

*Tung-tsu Chu*

#### **Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History I**

*Zeng Yeying*

#### **Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History II**

*Zeng Yeying*

#### **Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China I**

Shamanic Deities and Rituals

*Fu Yuguang*

#### **Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China II**

Shamanic Divination, Myths, and Idols

*Fu Yuguang*

For more information, please visit [www.routledge.com/China-Perspectives/book-series/CPH](http://www.routledge.com/China-Perspectives/book-series/CPH)

# **Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China II**

**Shamanic Divination, Myths, and Idols**

**Fu Yuguang**

**Translated by Liang Yanjun  
and Wu Chunxiao**

**Revised by Daniel A. Kister**

The publication of this book is sponsored by Ministry of Education of PRC.

First published in English 2021

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2021 Fu Yuguang

The right of Fu Yuguang to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

English Version by permission of The Commercial Press.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-367-65413-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-13252-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman

by Apex CoVantage, LLC

# Contents

|                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Introduction to the English edition</i> | vi  |
| Introduction                               | 1   |
| 1 Northern shamanic divination             | 6   |
| 2 The northern mythic heritage             | 37  |
| 3 The Manchu creation myth “War in Heaven” | 65  |
| 4 Tribal myths and ancestor worship        | 93  |
| 5 Spirit idols                             | 115 |
| 6 The northern shaman                      | 148 |
| <i>Bibliography</i>                        | 165 |
| <i>Index</i>                               | 168 |

# Introduction to the English edition

It is an honour for me to write the introduction of this valuable book. For more than forty years, noted scholar Fu Yuguang (富育光) has dedicated himself to rescuing and studying the shamanic legacy that has been passed down among his native Manchu and other Altaic peoples of northern China. He has done so in the footsteps of his father, Fu Xilu (富希陆), who began gathering folk materials while teaching in Aihui County on the banks of the Amur in the 1930s, when Fu was born. Fu Yuguang's own research is not just a matter of pouring over old documents at a scholarly distance. As he is happy to say, he lived for years in ethnic villages, eating, working, singing, and dancing with the local people; forming lasting friendships; and learning to sing the sacred chants, make spirit idols, and beat the drum in shamanic rituals. The present book, originally titled *Shamanism and Mythology*, is valuable not just because of its rich panorama of the rites, myths, and shamanic lore of the Manchu, Mongol, and other northern peoples but also because of the local colour and immediacy that his first-hand experiences bring to the material and for his insightful perspective on northern shamans' social, cultural, and religious roles.

Fu tells of entranced shamans inspired by the gods and is well aware of the mythic hero Nisan Shaman, who can travel to the underworld to retrieve dead souls. But for him, a northern shaman is not in the Eliade mould of one who makes ecstatic journeys to the otherworld. Rather, they stand out as one who has extraordinary sensitivity to the everyday needs of the common people and who can use that power to be of down-to-earth, practical service. The author seeks to break out of what he sees as the scholarly fixation on shamanic "spirituality" and trance contact with spirit worlds and recover an appreciation of shamans' original function as clan sages, the embodiments of the clan's spirit, wisdom, and power. They are respected as being well versed in clan history and adept at healing, sacrificial procedures, and the use of traditional chants and dances to ease peoples' anxieties and draw them out of their everyday perceptions of reality into a common mystic realm. Shamans deal with a plethora of nature and ancestral spirits, but their spiritual achievements do not have their origin only in so-called divine powers. Fu quotes an elderly shaman who once said that "In ancient times, divinity indicated limitless scope. You become godlike if you understand people's thinking, longing, imaginings and expectations."



Some of Fulim Yuguang's research has been translated and introduced to scholars abroad, but we are now fortunate to have in English his 1990 first work, translated under the title *Shamanic and Mythic Cultures of Ethnic Peoples in Northern China*.

In its present layout, the first volume begins with discussions of the spirit world of northern shamanism. The author points out that "shaman," *saman* (萨满), is a Jurchen word with the root meaning of "knowing" and stresses that the shaman is the embodiment of their "clan's spirit, wisdom, and power." The original religion of northern peoples, shamanism is an evolving religious belief that is based on the idea that deities and spirits are everywhere, but it is rooted in specific conditions of the freezing north. Northern shamanism worships the sun for its life-giving role, along with certain animals of the northern wilds. From a theoretical point of view, it focuses on manifestations of spirit energy (*qi* 气), the notion that human beings have three souls, and the ancient idea of multiple heavens. Fu maintains that exploring the ideology of northern ethnic cultures requires looking at concrete aspects of the Indigenous culture and history, not just generic trends of thought.

In line with this view, Chapter 2 discusses the worship of nature deities, often female: sun, moon, stars, mother earth, fire, water, magpies, crows, and local waterfowl. In Chapter 3, Fu introduces the worship of ancestors and fertility goddesses, noting that the dominant Manchu male god of heaven, Abka Enduri, was initially the female deity Abka Hehe.

The next three chapters cover rituals, beginning in Chapter 4 with what Fu regards as the most ancient shamanic ritual, blood sacrifice. He sees this is being in line with the life-giving power of blood and perhaps the notions that blood serves as a medium for floating souls as they wander about outside the body. Fu also gives lively descriptions of Mongol and Manchu rites that worship fire for its power for cleansing and casting off the cold of northern winters. In Chapter 5, he gives detailed descriptions of rites worshipping the stars. As ancient peoples began to settle down, they formulated laws concerning the positions and alterations the stars, which Fu summarizes in a mythical/astronomical chart. He also describes rites worshipping the East Sea and those worshipping willows as indicators of a nearby water fountainhead and so symbols of life. Chapter 6 presents enlightening discussions of the *tangse* shine rites of the Qing court against the background of the portable *tangse* shines used by ordinary Manchu when migrating. Then discussions of Manchu *jia* folk rituals as they came to be formalized in line with Qing norms follow.

In the second volume, Chapter 1 focuses on divination, which clan records and Fu's own observations show to be intricately bound up with northern shaman activities. The author understands divination as being based on the belief that everything has a soul and stresses that divining is indispensable when choosing new shamans. He traces the documented history of divination in China, going back almost three thousand years, and then analyses specific forms of northern shamanic divination, in particular the reading of bones and interpretation of dreams.

The following chapters deal with myths. Chapter 2 gives valuable background information concerning the shamanic roots of northern myths, noting that shamans

have continually added new episodes to traditional mythic tales. Fu discusses the interrelationship of the myths of Tungus peoples and the infiltration of Han motifs in their mythic tradition in the form of tales of the underworld and ghosts. He describes methods of mythic transmission, such as the clan chant contests that go back to Jurchen times. He then gives examples of myths focused on the goddesses and animals involved in creation, enlivening the material with quotes from mythic chants. Chapter 3 invites us to sample the whole array of narrative segments from the Manchu creation myth “War in Heaven.” Chapter 4 introduces individual tribal myths and burial customs, rounding out the earlier discussion on ancestor worship.

In Chapter 5, the author gives a lengthy treatise on spirit idols, suggesting that they may have come about with the rise of ancestor worship and belief in souls. Although they originally involved animistic worship, Fu maintains that they became what can truly be called idol worship only once they began to take on human or half-human features. He goes on to give intriguing accounts of how particular idols came to be revealed in dreams and ritual trance sessions and then fashioned accordingly. Since the ability of ancestral idols to protect the tribe depends on the power of their eyes, people have to give great care to fashioning the eyes. Since idols have great thirst for the life-giving power of blood, they need then to periodically offer the idols fresh blood in sacrificial rituals.

Chapter 6 ends the book with typical traits of northern shamans, first as depicted in Indigenous myths, for which he uses quotes from the Jurchen shamanic epic *Umesiben Mama*, and then as understood by modern scholars. Fu states the idea that underlies his research as a whole: northern Chinese shamans do not fit into Eliade’s model of people caught up in ecstatic journeys to supernatural worlds; rather, they are respected by their clans for their unusually keen human powers of sensitive perception and their efforts to hone these powers to aid clan members in everyday situations.

Daniel Kister  
Seoul, October 2019

# Introduction

Like many aspects of the ethnic cultures of northern China, shamanism arouses enthusiastic interest and wonder throughout the whole world. From the viewpoint of history, it can be considered the mother of all ethnic cultures; and the personality and the psychology of northern peoples have been shaped from generation to generation by numerous shamanic factors, including shaman dress, the beat of the shaman's drum, hawk and tiger dances, age-old myths and heroic epics, ancient secret histories, old precepts, secret divination practices known only to shamans, and the medicinal use of herbs, along with extensive ancestral experience in harnessing fire, flood control, catching fish and birds, nursing babies, training in cosmic teachings, the identification of stars, warfare drills, and other skills. In a threefold role of master, deity, and soul, a shaman inherits the spiritual heritage of their ethnic group. In the past, the influence of shamanism was felt in all households in the vast areas of the Changbai Mountains and Heilong River (Amur); and it has left its traces throughout North and Northeast Asia. As many domestic and foreign scholars noticed early on, shamanism has not faded out among the northern Chinese peoples or come to have less influence on them over the passing of time. Many scholars have lived in the rough with peasants to both research and appreciate the mystic aspects of these northern ethnic cultures and uncover the mysteries of the religious beliefs common in this part of the world.

I had a joyful experience in the course of the spring snows of 1990 while deep in the Greater Khingan Range in Heilongjiang Province. The aged Oroqen shaman Meng Jinfu (孟金福) was invited to perform songs and dances for us to the same beat of the drum used when hunting elk. At a young age, Meng was taught his musical skills by a spirit, and in accordance with his forceful beat, all present clapped their hands to the music – an exciting event indeed. After the April Grain Rain Days (Guyu谷雨), one of the twenty-four solar seasonal terms marking the season when abundant rainfall is needed for sowing crops, we discovered a Manchu family's shamanic treasures that had been well preserved for over several hundred years. There were manuscripts of inspired shamanic utterances, spirit statuettes, figurines, and other objects dating back more than two hundred years ago, and we found that of all recently discovered artefacts from the Qing Era these are the oldest ones depicting nature worship and ancestor worship. They thus have great worth as both research objects and historic art finds.

## 2 Introduction

The word “shaman” is written in different ways in Chinese: *shaman* (沙曼), *sama* (萨玛), *shama* (沙玛), *sama* (撒麻), *saman* (撒瞒), *shanman* (珊蛮), and so on. The earliest written mention of the term occurs in *Documents of the Three Reigns' Northern Alliance* (*Sanchao Beimeng Huibian*) compiled by Xu Mengshen (徐梦莘) of Southern Song (1127–1279). It is said there that “*shanman*” is a Jurchen term for a sorcerer who has divine power. Since the Jin (1115–1234) and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties, various terms have been used, but now, *saman* is in common Chinese usage. It is, in fact, a Jurchen word, the Jurchen language belonging to a Manchu branch of the Altaic language family. The term is often explained as *wu* (巫). In Chinese, following Ling Chunsheng, who defined it in this way scholars of different countries define what a shaman is differently, on the basis of the external characteristics of their shamans. A shaman is often described as a person afflicted with some sort of mania, some national encyclopaedias defining “shaman” as “madman” or “a person who has mania.” In Soviet Russia, some scholars have defined the person as “one who loses control upon onset of the disease,” and others argue that a shaman is not “a normal person” but rather “a maniac.”

Despite these various proposals, such definitions and descriptions do not make the term “shaman” clear. We can, however, also look for meaning from its etymological roots. In the Manchu, Hezhe, Xibe and Oroqen languages, the root “*sa*” or “*za*” means “to know”; and “to know” is pronounced “*sam*” or “*zam*.” In Manchu and Hezhe, the sound “*sam*” means “to know” and “*saha*” “to have known it.” Thus “to know” is what *saman* essentially means. In the well-known Manchu shaman epic *Umesiben Mama*, a shaman is “a person who knows all” (*ha juseen*). A shaman knows best what the spirits mean to communicate to us and serves as a bond with the spirits, and all that the shaman does is blessed by the spirits. A shaman thus enjoys great respect among the masses. In later Manchu oracles, in line with the meaning of *ha juseen* as a person who knows all things, shamans were venerated as “*abka juse*” or “*aha juse*,” suggesting that they are intermediaries between spirits and human beings. A shaman’s functions and abilities are clearly defined.

Regarding a shaman as mentally ill amounts to a completely flawed appreciation of the origin and characteristics of shamanic activity. In fact, none of the shamans of northern China or famous shamans of the past is mentally ill. On the contrary, they are by definition the wise people of each ethnic group. In some Manchu clans, a shaman is said to “have a golden tongue and great courage and wisdom.” To a certain extent, a shaman is an embodiment of the clan’s spirit, wisdom, and power. In daily life, shamans are simply clan members and enjoy no special privileges, but they will fearlessly rush in when an individual clan member or the clan as a whole is in danger. Shamans serve as native doctors and guardians, shouldering the responsibility for the development and prosperity of the clan. It is said that without a shaman, a clan “cannot shine forever like the sun.” The reverence shown shamans derives from many factors, including the rules for selecting a shaman, which have a close connection with shamanic concepts of primitive psychology, such as spirit transformation and the expenditure of vital energy (*qi* 气).

Shamanism is the original religion of northern Chinese peoples. As Cao Yanjie stated in *Records of Eastern Siberia* (*Xiboli dongpian jiyao*), shamanic “trance

dance and folk customs have spread wide from the three rivers – Sungari, Amur, and Ussuri – the northeastern estuary” (Cao Yanjie 1934). As an Indigenous religion, shamanism is an inherited, closed tradition rigorously transmitted within the clan. Some foreign travel books before the Qing dynasty speak of it, and Qing dynasty records, notes, and historical texts of northern China present brief accounts of shamanic activity. Formal investigations and detailed observations of northern shamanic cultures did not begin until the early period of the Republic of China (1912–1949). At that time, Ling Chunsheng initiated field surveys of shamanic rites and customs. In line with his own field visits and the artefacts he observed, he made comparative analyses and wrote the classic work *The Goldi Tribe on the Lower Sungari River* (*Songhuajiang xiayou de hezhezu*). Published in 1934, the work brought him high prestige in China and beyond for its wealth of shamanic lore. Other Chinese scholars of that period discussed the concept and influence of shamanism or the shaman on the northern peoples in their articles as well.

Nevertheless, shamanism began to be systematically studied in China only after the 1950s. Shaman folk beliefs and customs were not distinguished from witchcraft and superstition at the time of the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, and this delayed saving shamanic culture. Nonetheless, in the 1950s, scholars of ethnology, history and economics initiated massive sociohistorical investigations on all Chinese ethnic areas under the competitive authorities according to state ethnic policy. These first investigations surveyed in the northeast region of China helped bring together a large team of ethnologists and blazed a trail with new methods for studying shamanic culture. Northern peoples praised them highly for their great efforts, and their hard work gave rise to a new academic subject: “northern ethnology.”

Chinese studies on the northern region progressed materially and intellectually; and after the Reform and Opening-up of the late 1980s,<sup>1</sup> ethnic studies came into their heyday. The cultural heritage of the region, including shamanic culture, was gradually rescued from oblivion with the collecting, translating and editing of numerous materials. Many valuable books could appear in print; and since then, many well-preserved manuscripts and ethnic artefacts of the Manchu, Daur, Oroqen, Ewenki, Mongol, Xibe, and Hezhe that had been treasured for centuries have been collected. Now, prestigious shamans, singers, storytellers and folk artisans are given their due respect. Although these reform-oriented investigations set the scene for future cultural research, researchers did not know enough about Indigenous beliefs, folk customs, or oral literature or in particular about Manchu culture. The ten years of turmoil from 1966 to 1976<sup>2</sup> did away with many inheritors of the tradition and rare materials. That tragedy has left many gaps to be filled, and despite scholars’ great efforts over the years, there are still many unresolved questions due to the shortage of primary sources. If we are now too slow in saving what we have left of shamanic culture, the history of northern ethnic peoples will never be uncovered, let alone truly understood.

I have a deep love for shamanic culture, and I hold a strong belief that no ambiguity or imprecision should be allowed in academic research and history. Shamanic culture varies greatly with its long history, making it difficult for us to lay bare

#### 4 Introduction

its true nature. How large is the cultural circle of shamanism? How can we truly understand its influence on China? What value and meaning does it hold in China? Some Chinese and foreign scholars argue that all original religious traditions can be categorized as shamanic. This concept, however, tries to include too much. As a primitive form of religious culture which prevailed in a sub-frigid zone and a northern frigid zone across Northern Europe, North Asia and North America, the cultural circle of shamanism reflects strong localized tendencies of the isolated living habits of Indigenous peoples over time. The precise differences between shamanism and witchcraft or sorcery has confounded scholars for a long while. What are the differences and similarities? Japan's politically oriented investigations in Manchuria (the old name for the Manchu nationality or northeastern China) in the early 1930s combined and conflated ethnic shamanism with sheer superstition and shamans with cheats who extort money for prayers or even with murderers; and nowadays, shamanic rituals are spoken of as "evil spirit dances(*tiaodashen*, 跳大神)." We can take two approaches to shamanic activity. We can regard all shamanic practices as "pure superstition" and just try to prevent them from doing harm, but we can also discard the dross and retain the essence for beneficial use. We need to understand shamanism as a primitive religion born at the dawn of human civilization which inevitably has had bright and dark aspects over the course of time, but we must come to realize that it constitutes a treasure trove of cultural wisdom and a rich spiritual legacy.

From a more international perspective, the cultural circle of shamanism is located in the temperate zone, sub-frigid zone, and frigid zone of the northern hemisphere. Foreign investigations into shamanism date back more than two hundred years. In the eyes of Westerners, shamanism has been seen as a key to uncovering mysteries of human history and culture and as a cultural repository in its own right. So they have shown great interest in it, founding academic institutions and publishing journals and monographs. At the same time, shamantology took shape as a healing and meditation movement and continues to this day. As a rare cultural heritage for the modern world, shamanism preserves what humankind learned and felt in the hard times when the ancients explored and conquered nature. It is a "living fossil" of original modes of human thought and civilization.

As far as China is concerned, it is the home country of shamanism, and it has kept intact many ethnic treasures of shamanic culture for thousands of years. Research on Chinese shamanism has thus come into worldwide notice as a vital part of the international shamanic community. The sociohistorical conditions of northeast China have made it possible to preserve shamanism intact. In the three northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang, the Manchu, Oroqen, Daur, and Ewenki not only accept it as their spiritual legacy but also perform living shamanic activities, and such performances serve as signs of its overwhelming influence. Some families in the area have preserved shamanic oracle transcripts, sacrificial artefacts, and ritual costumes dating from the foundation of the Later Jin dynasty, specifically in 1616. Primitive nature rites have never been interrupted, including sea sacrifice, fire sacrifice, and the ancient Manchu *ye* ritual (*Yeji*, 野祭) held to worship mountains, rivers, stars, the sun and the moon, and all living creatures while inculcating love and respect for nature. From the

perspective of global cultural ideology, the original star maps, ancient medicinal lore, and divination techniques that have been handed down are crucial. In Xinjiang, too, the Xibe people in Qapqal Autonomous County still keep rare shamanic scripts and ritual tales, and in Eastern Inner Mongolia, the Mongols have inherited shamanic beliefs and maintain the activity of their *boo* (shaman) as a distinct form of religion different from Tibetan Buddhism.

Primordial religious beliefs developed from primitive ideologies rooted in specific regional conditions. By analysing shamanist beliefs and practices, we can understand northern ancestors' primitive ideology and explore the origin of human civilization in the region. Humanity's childhood is a wonder and a mystery. Ethnic and national boundaries appeared later, as history evolved, but the concept of religion appeared far earlier than that of nation, and fledgling religious worship was never limited to any specific ethnicity or nation.

This book seeks first and foremost to explore the common ideology underlying the birth of northern ethnic cultures. To do so, we need to look into concrete aspects of pre-ethnic culture and history, not just generic trends of knowledge. It is only in this way that we can understand the lineage of ethnic culture and cement the cohesion of national unity and promote the flourishing of our many Indigenous cultures. Second, along this path of research, the book focuses on the shamanic cultures in Siberia and Far East Asia, aiming to get a clear picture of the unique traits of northern shamanism. Third, the book enthusiastically presents the field survey materials accumulated over decades. For reliability and research integrity and to authenticate the references and correctly annotate the folktales cited, I visited shamans, clan chiefs, and singers from northeast China.

In recent years, many forward-looking scholars in China have begun to understand and emphasize the importance of northern shamanic cultures. They have developed a strong interest in shamanist research and begun to redefine it as a cross-disciplinary field of study that demands due consideration in history, aesthetics, sociology, cultural anthropology, religion, folklore, and archaeology. All these various disciplines serve not only to absorb rich research nutrients from the shamanic culture but also to open up new ways of proceeding in existing fields of research. Of course, this is an international subject. I am confident that all scholars in China and beyond will join hands to uncover the mysteries of shamanism, even though it is a tortuous journey.

## Notes

- 1 Here and elsewhere in this book, some quotations of foreign authors are from a Chinese translation and so are not identical to the author's original words. In some cases, the page or other reference for cited materials is lacking in the original Chinese book and cannot easily be located. Reform and Opening-up were part of a policy of opening up to the outside world implemented by the Chinese government in 1978.
- 2 The ten years of turmoil refer to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that took place during those years.



# 1 Northern shamanic divination

Among the ancient religious activities performed by ethnic peoples, divination was common, significant, and profoundly influential. After doing extensive research on Hezhe divination, Ling Chunsheng (凌纯声) wrote detailed accounts of the characteristics and methods of bone divination among the Hezhe and their neighbouring peoples; and in *Shamanism in History and Today*, Turkish scholar Abdülkadir Inan gave a systematic introduction to bone divination among some Turkic groups who believe in shamanism. There are also scattered records and accounts in other scholarly works. However, I find that these works actually have a limited understanding of shamanic divination, not to mention their lack of attention to the characteristics of northern divination practices. Formed on the basis of my years of research, this book aims to call attention to specific aspects of these practices.

## 1.1 Divination as sacred activity

Divination activities include foretelling future events, predicting the unknown, and transmitting oracles. People practised the earliest forms divination out of concerns for security and a need for survival. These forms reflect simple primitive materialist views, but they were not meaningless or deceitful activities. When primitive humans were faced with their tough natural environment, survival was their first priority, and divination reflects their attempt to adapt to nature and interpret natural forces. Although it is quite often blind and fortuitous, divination serves practical purposes, and original divination, as a manifestation of human beings' preliminary understanding of adaptation to certain phenomena and laws of nature, was the first genuine attempt at understanding their lives and insuring reliable production results. In primitive society, members of the tribe came to understand natural phenomena and changes under the guidance of a knowledgeable tribal member.

Belief in the human ability to foretell the unknown has long been passed down in shamanist cultures through various methods performed by knowledgeable clan shamans. Early people believed that everything has a spirit or soul and that not only human beings but all things should be treated as active entities with a life force, variously called consciousness or soul. They believed, moreover, that nonhuman beings have special powers to survive and defensive skills to prepare for the future that are far superior to those of human beings. As intermediaries

between human beings and deities, shamans regularly fulfil their clan obligations and perform worship activities for the clan or an individual by turning to easily available mystic paraphernalia to ask for good fortune and the successful outcome of future events. The famous Manchu scholar Wu Jixian (吴纪贤) said in his *Collection of Local Sacrificial Rituals* (*Xiangsi bihui lu*) from around 1923 that people in Heilongjiang were fond of divination and that shamans there served their purpose by divining with bones, horns, teeth, claws, blades of grass, wood slabs, river pebbles, mountain stones, the sun, the moon, the stars, the wind, and so on. In *Supplement to Ancient Customs of Aihui* (*Aihui zufeng yishi*), Fu Xilu (富希陆) writes the following, in greater detail:

Divination is a common practice among shamans of Manchu clans. Those who are incompetent in divination cannot become famous. Clans divine many times a year on important occasions, such as childbirth, farming, hunting, fighting, making a journey, selecting a building site, dividing a household, choosing a date for worship, curing illness, seeking a harmonious marriage, holding a funeral, overwhelming an enemy troop or bandits, asking for good fortune and seeking survival. Among northern ethnic groups, the Manchu have ranked first in both piety and expenditure in practices of divination. Besides Manchu shamans, their counterparts among the Oroqen, Solon (Ewenki subgroup) and Daur living near Aihui (along the Heilongjing River) also have believed in divination with great sincerity. The bead pendants on a shaman's sacred headdress, objects such as the eagle mirror on a shaman's shoulder and wooden spirit idols can all be taken down at any time, set in a certain direction, and smeared with blood for use in divination.

(Fu Xilu 1930a)

I have seen Oroqen divine with roe bones, roe veins, deer horns, boar tusks, and tiger teeth. In doing so, the shamans of northern peoples strictly obey their clan rules. When divining in their clan, they are allowed to pray only for their own clanspeople, but they can be invited by other clans to perform divination as well. Traditionally, those who possess extraordinary divining powers may travel hundreds of kilometres to divine for people of other clans, and they usually should not decline such an invitation. Divination results among the Daur and Oroqen can appear to be precise, and people believe this is because their divination tools are one-hundred-year-old sacred bones that have thus acquired divining power. A Daur shaman surnamed Wu living in Kunhe (坤河) Village to the north of Wujiazi (五家子), Jilin Province, reportedly worshipped a red ginseng root in the shape of a beauty with four limbs, and its unique appearance made him believe that it had efficacious mystical power to provide predictable results of weal and woe. So people of the Hurmojin area all went to worship it.

According to *Records of Fuca Clan Rituals* (*Fucha hala lixu tiaoshen lu*), shamans of that clan in Heilongjiang regularly use a *hama* (knife) for divination:

The *hama* is a shamanic divination tool which has been passed down for generations, but if people know nothing about its use, this means that their

ancestors have not imparted its use to them. When divining, shamans have to hold the sacred *hama* in their hands transversely while chanting and shaking the knife loop as they pray and make predictions to the rhythm of the loop.

Years ago, I learned the divinatory use of the *hama* from the senior shaman of the Zhao (赵) family in Jilin Province. For generations, his family had kept the *hama* above the west *kang* (炕, heatable raised bed platform) and used it for divination in the night *beideng* ritual with all the lights out. When there is an ill omen, the knife loop would make sounds, and the whole clan was convinced without the slightest doubt of the divination results. From this, we see that the use of the *hama* as a divination tool was also a common practice in Jilin. Yang Shichang (杨世昌), the deceased Manchu master shaman of Jiutai in Jilin, would perform divinations with it on a peaceful night, and master shaman Guan Yunzhang (关云章) likewise used it for divination as he burnt incense, shook the knife loop, and chanted prayers.

According to *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan (Wushi wosheku jipu)*,

Divination must be performed by the shaman of one's own clan. On the occasions of key village events, such as holding rites to worship the gods, teaching new shamans, settling disputes within the clan, and selecting sites for tombs etc., people had to set before the shrine nine sacred mirrors, nine white conch shells, nine pig talus bones, and nine Mangni [Manni] spirit idols made of deer hide. They would then burn incense, worship and kowtow. Subsequently, the shaman and the master of the house performed divination, and when there were definite omens, they decided what corresponding measures to take.

Northern peoples have commonly used clams, *tana* (Manchu pearls), bronze mirrors, and bones for divination. The Manchu Shi clan of Jiutai have used mirrors and pearl grains; the Li clan of Ning'an (宁安) in Heilongjiang the shaking of brass bells; and the He clan of Hunchun, Jilin Province, the *hama* and wild boar tusks. Many clans have used boar tusks, ivory fossils of ancient mammoths, unearthed ancient remains, eave tiles, human skull bones, ancient arrows, copper coins, spirit idols, and the relics of deceased shamans as divination tools, believing that there are helpful spirits within these objects that can help predict and exorcise evil spirits.

Although some scholars believe that divination is neither prominent nor important in shamanism, the foregoing cases lead us to conclude that northern shamanic activities in China have strong ties with divination. Predicting future events is indeed an important shamanic practice, and a perceived need for predicting things guides every divine activity in northern shamanism. Divination has its ideological foundation in the belief that everything has a soul, and this ideology can be found reflected in all facets of life. The deities worshipped are commonly determined by divination. For example, the Daur had not worshipped the god Dabarken before they moved to the Hailar area of Inner Mongolia from

Butha. After they had moved there, someone went to the local Yimin River to bathe, only to find a birch container with various items inside. After divination, it was fished out of the water and worshipped, and it became an important deified object in some areas of the clan.

The authority of a shaman to perform rites of worship is also determined by divination. The most important external way to test whether someone is a qualified shaman is to see whether they have the ability to let their souls leave their bodies and roam about as floating souls and whether they have an ability to draw deities into their bodies and be possessed and directed by them to perform sacred activities. Whether they are truly possessed by deities or not is determined in part by their trance state. As Eliade wrote, "In primitive times as well as modern times, we can often see that some people publicly acknowledge that they can communicate with spirits, commanding them or commanded by them" (Eliade 1974). Before a shaman attempts any supernatural task, however, people have to ensure through divination whether a god or spirit is truly possessing the shaman. Sometimes when shamans speak and act as if commanded by the spirits, one cannot tell if a god or spirit has truly visited them. Some people assume that we can know this by observing the shaman's eyes, whether they are shut or not, but this is a quite superficial observation. Possession needs to be confirmed through such divining methods as patterns of the tinkling sounds of the bird wings on the shaman's ritual headdress and costume, the different sounds of their bronze mirrors and waist bells, or hints from the Big Dipper. All such signs can point to the identity of a visiting deity that is actually possessing the shaman, and the senior clan shaman has the responsibility to interpret such signs correctly. There are also highly respected *zaili* (shaman assistants) in every clan who are specialized in observing and interpreting the signs.

Divination is an indispensable step in appointing new shamans. Initiates not only must go through special ordeals but also must have the validity of their shamanic identity confirmed. Among the Oroqen, Ewenki, Manchu, Hezhe, and other northern peoples, anyone who suddenly goes berserk, running about or manifesting great fear of water or fire, can generally be considered as possessed by the spirit of a deceased shaman and acceptable for selection as a new shaman. They are believed to have clean blood, a good mind and heart, and pure white bones. If the person continues to make a disturbance for several days, clan shamans perform divination and require that they perform certain feats in a state of trance, such as *padaoshan* (爬刀山, climbing a knife ladder), *paohuochi* (跑火池, running barefoot over burning coals), *qianbingku* (潜冰窟, diving through holes in the ice of the river), *panfeishushao* (攀飞树梢, climbing or flying to a treetop), *yuejianqian* (越涧堑, skipping across a ditch), fighting with a dangerous animal (bear, tiger, or wild boar), swallowing fire or a knife, or performing some other paranormal feat. If the initiate possesses such supernatural abilities that common people do not have, they can be appointed as new clan shaman. Xibe shamans have to drink goat's blood and climb a ladder of dozens of sharp scythe blades unharmed and barefoot. They are then revered as a shaman certified by the gods.

There are numerous methods of divination for different occasions. The results of divination have brewed in shamans an innate conviction of its validity, which has served as a vital source of mental strength over thousands of years that cannot be disregarded. Due to social changes and the succession of new shamans, however, the formalities in divination procedures have gradually become simplified or faded out of practice in some ethnic groups, and some matters for divination have gradually been discarded, so that what remains may sometimes be only symbolic gestures.

The history of divination can be traced back in ancient Chinese historical works, mainly from the Central Plains of China – the lower reaches of the Yellow River, which formed the cradle of Chinese civilization. According to the 9th-century BCE *Book of Changes* (*Yi jing*), the *Book of Documents* (*Shu jing*), *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi ji*) from around 94 BCE, and other ancient documents, divination dates back to the times of the mythic ruler and cultural hero of the 2nd-millennium BCE Fuxi (伏羲), who is credited, along with his sister Nüwa (女娲), with the creation of the human race and the invention of hunting, fishing, and cooking. An inscription on the stone tablet of the tomb of Yu (禹) the Great, the legendary founder of the Xia dynasty (perhaps 2100–1600 BCE) reads, “Fuxi accidentally discovered sacred yarrow plants and used yarrow stalks to divine his tactics.” The 3rd-century CE *Critique of Records of the Grand Historian* (*Gushikao*) says, “Fu Xi created divination practice with stalks and [the legendary shaman] Wu Xian (巫咸) excelled in divination practice in the Shang dynasty” (1600–1100 BCE). The 2nd-century BCE *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhou li*) describes divination in the Zhou dynasty (1100–476 BCE): “Divination operates like this: the sovereign observes the signs, senior officials read the colors, historiographers read the ink, divination officials observe the cracks.” These statements suggest that divination existed in the times of the mythical Fu Xi, when it was already fairly sophisticated. They suggest, too, that in early times, especially those of the Shang (Yin) and Zhou dynasties, divination relied mainly on oracles such as are recorded in the *Book of Changes*. In ancient divination, the wholeness of an object or lack of it indicated good or bad fortune; colours indicated virtuousness or villainy; shades of ink predicted size, large or small; and the patterns of cracks showed whether changes would be subtle or drastic.

On the basis of the numerous oracle bone inscriptions that have been unearthed, we can see that the oracles of those early dynasties were written on turtle shells. The 2nd-century CE Han dynasty *Interpretation of Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi*) records that “People singe a fragment of a turtle shell and observe and interpret the resulting cracks as omens.” *Book of Rites* (*Li ji*) says, “Turtle shells were used for divination and yarrow stalks were used for augury.” According to *Book of Documents* (*Shujing*), “When we divine for official affairs, we must determine what we hope for and then turn to the turtle for divination.” From accounts in *Rites of Zhou* and *Records of the Grand Historian*, we learn that divination oracles were sorted out and polished by scholars, diviners, and divination officials. More fully, the latter work says the following:

When soothsayers divined, they had to obey the laws of nature, track the changes of the four seasons, follow the rules of benevolence and righteousness, and interpret the yarrow stalks. Only in this way could they read the omens, divine and interpret natural phenomena and the outcome of events. When ancient monarchs established their states, they used turtle shells and yarrow stalks for divination. They then took upon themselves to govern the state as the agent of heaven and selected an auspicious day to inaugurate the capital. When commoners gave birth, they divined in advance and decided accordingly whether they should raise the baby or not. Fu Xi devised the eight trigrams;<sup>1</sup> and King Wen of Zhou (周文王) developed them into 384 horizontal lines, according to which people could discover the mastery of the world. The ruler of the Yue Kingdom (越国) won the [5th-century BCE] war with the Wu Kingdom (吴国) because he followed the trigrams of King Wen.

From these accounts, we can see that later generations devised mystical trigrams and hexagrams which, as they appear in the *Book of Changes*, deviated considerably from the original forms of religious divination.

Ancient forms of divination in northern China were numerous and not confined to yarrow stalks and turtle shells. They included tiger divination, chicken divination, bird divination, animal bone divination, and bamboo divination, as well as astrology, observations of winds or *qi* (气), geomancy, interpretations of dreams, physiognomy, and so on. As is said in the 9th-century CE Tang dynasty *Records of Beihu* (*Beihu lu*),

From documents and books, we can see that divination is quite varied. There is tiger divination, cow-hoof divination, heated-bone divination and bird divination etc. These divination methods cannot rival divination by turtle shells and yarrow stalks in importance, yet some of them are worth mentioning.

On the whole, divination amounts to the working of the simple mind in an attempt to gain insight into the unknown or inquire into changes in a situation by way of a standard occult process or ritual. Regardless of specific divination tools, occasions, time, or place, people have had the tendency to turn to divination whenever unusual happenings occur or when they see suspicious omens.

## 1.2 Northern divination

In terms of the foregoing features of Chinese divination, shamanic divination took root in northern China earlier than Shang and Zhou times. We have collected the oldest examples of divination among the northern peoples of ancient China from records in *Collection of Local Sacrificial Rituals and Supplement to Ancient Customs of Aihui* as well as interviews with Manchu and other shamans and documentary materials of inspired shamanic utterances from Heilongjiang, Liaoning, and other areas. These records convincingly substantiate that long before Fu Xi is said to have devised the eight trigrams and before the Shang and Zhou dynasties

made use of turtle shells and yarrow stalks, divination methods and tools were widespread in northern China. The divination there was random, crude, and far from scientific or systematic; yet it constituted a form of early divining activity in human history that is worth researching in order to learn about processes of the human mind and its modes of conceptualization. The two works just mentioned are not ancient works. The former was compiled around 1923, and a hand-copied version of the latter was made before 1929, when many senior shamans of high achievements who were performing rituals and could narrate and record an abundance of precious materials were still alive. Extant inspired shamanic utterances of various clans dating from two hundred or three hundred years ago also serve as evidence of ancient shamanic divination customs in the region.

Some scholars believe that the Shang (Yin) and Zhou oracle scripts were originally the mystical hexagrams mentioned earlier. In fact, however, the old oracles and oracle bones were just summarized bits of wisdom gained from experiences of livelihood production adapted to objective realities. Only later did divination take literary shape when it was processed and polished by diviners and litterateurs. In any case, what can be confirmed in northern shamanism is that primitive divination came into being before the appearance of written script. Primitive humans accumulated insights and spread their original artless divination concepts in their struggle against nature. Later literary forms of divination cannot be grouped together with these preliminary attempts at understanding and summarizing experiences and laws of livelihood production. According to the extant shamanic materials available, the earliest forms of divination in the north of China fit into the following general categories.

### ***Prognostication from unusual phenomena***

People commonly sought, by using their senses of sight, smell, and touch, to discern the good or bad potentialities of certain phenomena or situations. Against the background of the normal state of affairs and frequent events, people came to be aware of occasional abnormal states, features, signs, or phenomena. They then used their observations to predict positive or negative outcomes and take measures to foster the positive and prevent the negative. This kind of practical divination is quite simple: if rivers froth, they are going to swell. If frogs are found in peoples' dwellings, it means that their houses are damp and that those who reside there for a long time will be stricken with pestilence. If a burrow is filled with dead snakes and ants, methane gas is hanging around, so people need to move away at once. If a bird's nest is unoccupied and leaves wither, there will be a pestilence, so if people do not move within three days, they will be infected. If a shoal of fish rises to the surface of the water, there is gas around and the water is poisonous. If ground squirrels, snakes, lizards, raccoon dogs, and weasels abandon their caves and flee because of the heat, there must be an earthquake or flood coming within ten days. If a flock of birds makes restless noises for several days, there must be misfortune. Then, too, places inhabited by tigers are good places for humans to live and hunt, but if a valley is often fogged



up and lacks sunshine, it is baneful. People can hunt there but not live there. When day lilies grow, river deer are coming, and when peonies whiten, brown bears are approaching. When tigers eat humans, they leave the bones in caves; when jackals eat humans, they leave the bones on a ridge. When bones are left in a tree, it means that animals were killed by vultures or pythons; when bones are left in the wild, it means people were killed in a war. If the grass is dry, leaves wither, insects and butterflies die, marshes are hot, and the earth is shrouded in mist, then skin infections will break out within five days. If boars and deer flee in panic, there must be a flood or fire. If thunder crashes in remote mountain areas, there might be death or fire.

Such commonplace prognostications can be considered the earliest forms of divination, but they are actually more proverbs than instances of divination. They have their origins in practical experiences and serve to educate future generations of the clan as they are transmitted orally from generation to generation. Shamans know them well and use them to warn people in times of peace or to deal with an emergency in a time of crisis.

### ***Prognostication by physical testing***

In ancient times, people in the North chose certain objects or living beings to detect potential danger or discern good or ill as an easy mode of divination that has enjoyed a long history and has practical value. They would throw stones or pieces of wood in water to measure the depth or monitor the pattern of river currents; they put frogs or birds in caves to verify whether there is methane gas; they drove roe deer into caves to detect whether there were wild beasts there; they roasted beasts or birds at night to lure mandrills, brown bears, or wild animals and thus know if the place was safe for dwelling; and they tied boars, deer, elk, and other animals to stakes in the forest and examined the next day to see whether there are wolves, jackals, lynxes, leopards, or other animals around that they could trap as game.

In early times, moreover, primitive people did not know how to use physical things of nature for their benefit, but their common sense gradually led them to use what they found in nature for food and clothing in a kind of germinal exploratory divination. An oracle of the Manchu Fuca clan gives mythical expression to this process:

The heavenly goddess Abka Hehe once saw that green grasses eaten by deer, elks and roe deer were non-toxic and chose ninety-nine kinds of edible plants for humans to eat. She realized that the fur of tigers, leopards, bears, badgers, raccoon dogs, deer, wolves, foxes, martens and rats can keep these animals warm in the wind and snow of winter and so had their fur used to fashion 999 kinds of clothes. She also believed that bird feathers could be made into women's clothes and had nine 9999 kinds of fashion accessories made out of feathers. She saw fish swimming in the river and had 90,999 kinds of food and clothes made from fish and fish-skin.

***Generalizing from experienced observation***

Primordial people gradually accumulated their experiences and common sense through long-term observations of recurring changes in natural and social phenomena, such as eclipses, wind, thunder, the earth's crust, earthquake aftershocks, flooding in rivers, lakes and seas, wildfires, plagues, and other unforeseen events. Any sudden changes in the natural pattern of things can point to something and serve as a means of enlightenment or warning. People came to regard predictions based on the observations of such changes as a form of divining by observing signs and generalizing from experience. Shamans knew this accumulated lore well, and people used it to ward off sudden perils. Old-time shamans knew that if owls hoot while perching on a house roof, it is an ill omen. Owls are wild birds that normally perch on forest trees in the daytime; if they enter a village during the day and hoot in fear, to call out to their mate and flock, there must be invading enemies or pestilence. When old-time dwellers of mountains or forests heard thunder rolling or foxes scampering away, they took it as an ominous sign of a landslide and knew that they had to move quickly to a safe place if they were to avoid a calamity. If there is frequent drought, a heat wave, rain, wind, or sand in the air all year round, people see it as an omen of pestilence, and if swallows abandon their nests in spring or sparrows fall off the eaves and die, shamans traditionally regard this as an omen of smallpox.

The Manchu and some other northern peoples have worshipped the goddess of smallpox Shandaha. In the past, a plague of smallpox could be a catastrophe for the whole village, so people preserved signs of an outbreak of the disease in warning oracles. The original form of Shandaha is *xandaha* (white demon): *xanyan ilha* means "white flower" in the Manchu language. If a person has a fever, and white and red flower-shaped spots appear on the chest and if they feel quite itchy, are fond of ice, experience delusions, or even fall unconscious, that is regarded as a symptom of smallpox. In that case, the shaman would summon the goddess Xandaha.

From sacred shamanic texts, we can see that divining by observing natural signs became more and more complicated. The more that experiences brought people into contact with bizarre incidents and phenomena, the more complicated divination became. Some abnormal phenomena that could not be explained were taken as mystical signs in a combination of divination and superstition. Such abnormalities could be a three-legged cow, a two-headed dog, a tornado that blows in fish and shrimp or uproots a tall tree, an eclipse of the sun or moon, double rainbows in the sky, a python or spider struck by lightning, the birth of a deformed child, a moustache growing on an old lady, and so on. In attempts to explain such abnormalities, the more primitive and simpler materialist divination predictions gradually took a more visionary turn.

*Records of the Grand Historian (Shi ji)* relates that "at the end of the Shang dynasty, winds raised up cows and horses, wrecked houses and uprooted trees, and raged on and on for thousands of kilometres, and afterward, Shang was defeated by the Zhou dynasty" (Sima Qian 1998). The bizarre natural

occurrences were divined as signs of the fall of Shang. In the shamanic lore of northern China, there is a story about the Yan clan in the days of the Qing dynasty told by the shaman Yan Wenkuan (阎文宽) in 1980. In those days, clan *dashengding* (打牲丁), as the hunters, fishers, and farmers who sent their products to the Qing Court were called, had charge of river beluga whales for the Qing emperors. Once, however, many belugas were gashed by turtles and died. The clanspeople were all scared because they took this as an omen of disaster for the clan. In a grand shaman ritual, they divined that the gashing of the belugas was a sign that people would pay with their lives, and in accordance with the divination, they dismissed a seventh-generation Yan clansperson named Saicunga, who was the official in charge of fishing and hunting. He then died of disease in the same year.

### 1.3 Types of shamanic divination

#### *Divination with bones*

In northern shamanic practices, divination with the bones of various animals – tigers, leopards, bears, wolves, badgers, lynxes, deer, roe deer, boars, otters, and so on – was common. Also used are the bones of birds (vultures, eagles, and pheasants); those of domestic animals (cows, horses, pigs, sheep, dogs, chickens, ducks, geese); those of fish, primarily of more than one kilo; those of water snakes, turtles, and pythons; and those of such insects as certain butterflies, colourful moths, centipedes, large spiders, mole crickets, dragonflies, locusts, and fireflies. According to *Collection of Local Sacrificial Rituals*, all animals, including birds and insects, can be used in divination, by observing peculiarities in fierceness, shape, or colour according to time and circumstance. Specific bones or organs of certain animals have traditionally been used, and the animal must be caught alive. Dead, rotten, sick, or emaciated animals have not been used, nor were animals that were shot or gnawed to death by another animal. From this, we can see that the tools used in divination are scrupulously chosen; otherwise, the prediction will be inaccurate and ineffective.

When bones are used, the parts or organs from which they are taken vary according to different animals. For beasts, many parts can be used: paw bones, ribs, scapulae, skulls, shin bones, and teeth. Used also are the male reproductive organs of all animals, whole bird skeletons, breast bones, foot bones, and fresh internal organs. Whole insects are observed in terms of their shape, colour, sound, and dynamic state. As for fish, the two pharyngeal teeth, gills, scales, internal organs (of big fish), and various fresh bones are used. For pythons, the coloured veins of their skin are used.

From ancient inspired shamanic utterances of the Manchu and their Jurchen ancestors, we know that some clans used human bones for divination, mainly the skull of a shaman ancestor with the same surname, which is regarded as highly efficacious and used only for special divination.

***Divination with plants***

Unlike the Central Plains of China, where divination tools were limited to bamboo and yarrow ever since Shang and Zhou times, many plants have been used for northern shamanic divination, with no strict rules. When special situations or risks arose, people in ancient times randomly chose flowers, grasses, or wood for divination.<sup>2</sup> The flowers and grasses must be taken from high mountains, water shores, or areas with fresh air and no animal excrement, and they are collected before sunrise with the dew still on them. Shamans traditionally use flower buds, grass stems, and tree branches to predict the harvest, pest attacks, or illness by observing veins in the grass or bark. Apart from their use for divination, flowers and grasses have been draped over shamans' ritual garb so that under the cover of hundreds of plant spirits, shamans can retrieve lost souls from the underworld and bring them back to earth without their being recognized by the devils there (Fu Xilu 1930b).

***Divination with metals and stones***

Colourful ores have also been used as tools in shamanic divination. Human-made stone paraphernalia of various shapes passed down for generations have been used not only as ornaments on shamanic costumes but also for divination. Also used have been bronze mirrors, fragments of tile or porcelain, amber, needles, hair fasteners, iron spears, brass bells, saddles, ancient flutes and mouth organs, pointed peach-shaped instruments with a feathered head, and ancient coins and *yuanbao* (元宝, old silver or gold ingot currency). However, the metal and stone divination tools especially treasured by shamans mostly fall into the following two categories: first, objects passed down for generations by ancestors or deceased shamans that are believed to possess spirits and, second, the excavated relics of shamans or clanspeople and war relics found in ancient tombs. Sometimes thousands of years old, they are believed to have a sacred nimbus or harbour spirits or ghosts. Those found in ancient tombs are thus used as esoteric divination instruments to predict the activities of ghosts.

***Divination by observing the stars***

Interviews with knowledgeable people indicate that star divination was one of the early forms of nature divination used to predict wind directions, weather, and harvest. Later, with the emergence of astrology, winter star maps were made, on the basis of northern geographical features. Influenced by Han culture, the Manchu and Mongols used the signs of the zodiac, the Twenty-Eight Mansions (constellations), the orbits of the five planets, and the rising and setting of the sun and the moon in shamanic divination. They used mostly the Three Stars (Orion) and the Big Dipper to discern time and direction, and they had divination star maps drawn according to the distribution, colour, luminosity, and other properties of stars. The Oroqen and other peoples also had their star maps, star alignments, and methods

of astrological divination and interpretation. Various peoples also have their own astrological myths.

### ***Divination by dreams***

Some special movements of the human body or mind were all considered by early people as mystical omens of adversity: abrupt heartbeat, a twitching eyelid, ringing in the ears, numbness at hair's ends, a delusionary call, talking to oneself, something lost or regained, dreams, even sneezing, and so on, where divination by dreams was traditionally the most prominent. Divination by observing a sudden variation in the human physical state is not confined to northern China. As can be seen from numerous materials worldwide, such observations, especially of dreams, have commonly served as a divination basis for shamans and their clients. Among ancient Chinese documents, the 1st-century CE *Book of Han: Treatise on Arts and Letters (Houhanshu yiwenzhi)* records that among various divination methods, the interpretation of dreams is of utmost importance. The treatise notes that when people divine by interpreting dreams, they must master time, differentiate *yin* and *yang* (阴阳), and observe heaven and earth and the celestial bodies. The treatise divides dreams into six kinds: regular dreams, unpleasant dreams, reminiscent dreams, awakening dreams, delightful dreams, and nightmares (Zhu Tianshun 1982:133). The 9th/8th-century BCE *Classic of Poetry: Lesser Court Hymns (Shi xiaoya)* has a short poem about dream divination:

Here shall he sleep, and waking, say,  
“Divine which dreams are good.”

Despite their respective variations and characteristics, the shamanic interpretation of dreams in northern China has a lot in common with that of the Central Plains. It has had great influence, but it cannot be said to be the most representative and original form of divination, because its universality and Indigenous characteristics are not prominent.

### ***Divination with spirit idols and sacred instruments***

Divining with spirit idols and sacred instruments has been a prominent practice in northern shamanism in line with the customs and beliefs of ethnic peoples in the area and the basic concept of divination with the help of the gods. Among the Manchu, Xibe, Hezhe, Oroqen, and other northern peoples, such divination has been used in sacrificial rites, rites involving trance, funerary rites, and rites for retrieving lost souls or curing illness. As we saw in earlier chapters, spirit idols made of wood, bone, stone, leather, or cloth represent nature deities, universal deities, and ancestral gods, and some are human shaped to represent particular gods. The idols themselves are regarded as deities and so are transported or placed in shrines, sacred coffers, or baskets that people preserve with great piety. For

shamanist believers, divination by spirit idols involves inviting the deity to be present to decide uncertainties or solve clanspeople's troubles. It is thus more mysterious than other divination methods. People burn incense and sacrifice an animal, offer its blood, and apply its blood to the mouth of the idol before they begin divining. To gain insight into a question or situation, shamans commonly kneel down and observe whether the spirit idol sways or whether it faces upwards or downwards in its container. They also make a prediction by randomly picking an idol from among a group of idols or by making calculations on the basis of the idol's relation with nighttime dreams or bone divination. There are numerous complex rules, processes, and rituals involved. Other divination methods can be used by clanspeople themselves without a shaman, but divination of this kind must usually be performed by shamans, because many incantations and chants and the bearing of the idol are hard to interpret.

Sacred instruments like the mirrors, bells, knives, and liquor cups used by shamans can also be employed for divination. They are commonly handed down by shamans and used only by them for medical treatment, inquiries to the deities, seeking wealth, and solving difficulties. Common people are not allowed to touch them, because disturbing them would anger the spirit power within them and lead to swollen eyes, headaches, or even disaster. Every clan member thus highly respects them. If the implements shake or ring spontaneously without anyone's manipulating them, there may occur dream omens of special import. In that case, a shaman must hold a grand sacrifice to please the gods and pray for peace. From all this, we can see that such sacred instruments, like the spirit idols, are used with great care.

#### **1.4 Divination instruments**

Any bone with streaks of blood and smelling of fish or mutton, any coarse grain of seemingly valueless gravel, and any plant that seems nothing more than animal fodder but that has come into the owner's possession in an unusual way can be regarded in northern China as a sacred treasure endowed with prophetic power by shamanist believers.

##### ***Divination bones from live animals***

Northern shamanism is the religion of fishing and hunting peoples, and bones extracted from live animals are thought to be effective at divining. In ancient times, shamans would toss bones to pray for peace in the home when clanspeople laid the foundation for a house. They would do so as well when waging war, burying the dead, praying that a river not overflows its banks, and praying that a forest fire would not sweep through the village. Divination bones are prepared by a skilled Manchu, Oroqen, Ewenki, or Hezhe sacrificial butcher and must not be from a dead animal.

The method of removing the bones from a live deer is described in detail in the sacrificial procedure of a *sama* (male shaman) of the Manchu He clan:

To obtain a divining bone, a two-year-old stag is chosen, one that is not yet in estrus and can be trapped alive. It is washed by clean river water without sludge or feces, and after the hoofs and tail are all rinsed clean, it is carried before the sacred altar and sprinkled with water. As it is about to leap, a strong young shaman cuts its throat with a knife, and when blood spurts out, he kicks it to the ground. A second shaman is then needed. One steps on its neck, the other on its hind legs. The shaman stepping on its neck swiftly cuts out a scapula with a sharp knife and then another. The two shamans then cut *galaha* (small ankle or knee bone) out of the animal's four knees, put them on the altar and kowtow. It is an auspicious sign if the stag remains alive after its bones are removed. It then crumples down on the ground dying, however, with its blood draining out. Finally, the whole clan eat the meat of the animal and then throw the remains into water or bury them on a mountain.

The story goes in the Manchu epic *Umesiben Mama* that when the shamaness Umesiben launched her expedition to conquer seven hundred *gashans* (tribes), she removed nine ribs from three living leopards, for divination. According to *Supplement to Ancient Customs of Aihui* (*Aihui zufeng yishi*), the divination bones used in the past by the Daur and Oroqen were likewise extracted from animals that were still alive. When tigers, leopards, bears, gazelles, elk, lynxes, and so on were captured, their bones had to be conserved the minute they were killed. As for some small animals, such as hedgehogs and lizards, their skins have mostly been used, skinned when the animal is still alive, and for Siberian trout, carp, and grass carp that are up to hundreds of *jin* (斤 = 12 kg) in weight, their throats are slit and their teeth removed. The custom of extracting bones from animals while they are still alive is still common. According to an interview with the shaman Lv Zhenkuan (吕振宽) of Yongji in 1980, the *galaha* bones should be removed before a pig dies: "This requires skill, but experienced butchers can remove them easily. When its blood drains away, the pig breathes its last." In any case, removing animal parts from a living creature for divinatory use is a pious ritual that must not be neglected.

There are many bones used in divination; they are by no means limited to scapulae, *galaha*, and ribs. Many efficacious bones have been passed down for many generations, but some are buried with a shaman. In Manchu narratives like *Records of the Grievances of the East Sea* (*Donghai chenyuan lu*) and (*Tiangong dazhan*), when ancient people were at war, they used human bones to divine, believing that the skull of a living person is highly efficacious. Divination bones have various shapes, shapes that complement their intended use: whole scapulae; shin bones split into thin strips; short, square split ribs; backbones; small phalanges; or fragments of the tail bone. Some believe that they should all be cleaned of meat and blood, by scraping and washing them.

Shamans have said that – except for fire-heated bones, which are scraped to prevent cracking and fuming – bones usually remain intact after being removed from an animal and do not crack or become deformed. They are carefully placed in a birch basket or a divination container made of catalpa wood. About ten days after being baked by fire or heated by the sun, they are cleaned of sinews and flesh,



which fall off naturally or are removed by hand. Any streaks of blood also disappear, but the blood of a beast or one's own finger is applied to divination bones because people believe that the spirit in the blood will make divination more accurate. The method of removing bird or fish bones for divination is much the same as that for beasts. Their edible parts may be eaten, but the inedible parts should be burnt, thrown into the river or buried in the mountains. Their remains may not be simply abandoned or left to be eaten by beasts or crows. That is regarded as a profanity for divination tools.

Divination taboos are similar among various northern peoples: before seeking or making a divining implement, a shaman must first bathe and live in a temporary thatched shed or tent outside the village apart from their spouse, where they burn incense before spirit idols passed down from ancestral shamans. Once they have obtained the needed implement, they should continually make ablutions and then put it in its container. They must not show it to anyone other than shamans and diviners, and ordinary people must not touch or play with it. The finished divination tool should be placed high on the west wall of a quiet room, or, for some peoples, on the east wall or hung from a tree branch to the east or north behind the shed or tent. In general, divination tools must not be randomly abandoned. They should be arranged properly and mostly burnt in a fire, sent to the bottom of a river, buried in a quiet mountain, or placed on the upper branches of a tree. People thus traditionally treat them as though they are human beings. In shamanism, they possess consciousness and are protective deities with mighty power.

### ***Divination instruments obtained by dreams***

Not only animal bones but also such things as an oddly shaped tree root, a deer antler with nine tines, a multicoloured rat tail, and even just a pebble in a river can all be important divining tools found under the guidance of mystical dreams. In shamanism, a dream is the felt vision of a person's soul as it relives an experience in another world. Through dreams, human beings enter that other world, where their wandering soul can travel to fantastic places and encounter or obtain miraculous things unavailable on earth. The sometimes-grotesque divination implements seen in dreams are thought to be bestowed upon a person by the soul as it wanders around in that world. As divination came to be an increasingly mystic activity and belief in it widespread, people came to feel that divination instruments were miraculous things not to be obtained in usual ways. They had the superstitious belief that they can be revealed as miraculous visions only in mystic dreams. Due to this belief, shamans and diviners spared no efforts in trying to obtain divining implements by signs and omens in dreams, especially when ordinary methods were considered inaccurate or when urgent situations arose. There were cases, too, when shamans or diviners spontaneously dreamt of strange things and then endeavoured to find them and try them out as divination tools.

In northern China, anyone who wants to obtain means of divination through a dream must undergo a period in which they have to bathe, live apart from their spouse, sleep in a thatched shed outside the village, drink from a mountain spring

and eat meat roasted over an open fire in the tranquil wilderness free from worldly interference. They live, as it were, a primitive life in the wilds without contact with relatives and friends in order to settle their mind in a peaceful state. Only in this way can a person get a true divination dream. Every day, apart from sleeping, they roam the wilds, climbs mountains and old trees, jumps into water and delves into caves, trying their best to enter a trance state. According to shamans and others who have come to find divination tools in a dream, only in this way can one obtain them.

Becoming completely exhausted, one must rest one's head on a spirit idol and sleep on a mat of eagle feathers and hedgehog pelts. They bound to dream, and when they wake up, they need to carefully track down the object inspired by their dream in the mountain wilds until they find it. They take it and treat it by heat, and then they can use it to divine and predict the future. If the person has not had a dream for a long time; if the object in their dream is blurred; or if two or more objects appear in the dream, it is considered ineffective. In that case, the person needs to go and pray for a dream in the wilds once more. Manchu shamans frequently said that some such people have been bitten by snakes, injured by beasts, lacerated by thorns, or injured by falling rocks and that they came back in rags, looking insane. Finding divining tools through dreams is the toughest activity in the divination process. Some people have a trance dream about humans or about half-human, half-beast figures which cannot be found on earth. In that case, shamans or diviners draw or carve the images that appeared in the dream and use them for divination as what are called spirit idols acquired through dreams.

### ***Instruments handed down from former shamans***

With the differentiation of tribes into clans and *mukūn* (subclans), the patriarchal family system came to play a prominent role in northern societies, and an ordinary family member took on the role of diviner. The person would divine not only for their own family members but also for those of other families and would receive remuneration or gifts in return. Such people gradually emerged as professional diviners. Although bones extracted from living animals and implements acquired by dreams are generally the main means of divination, professional clan diviners came to use tools obtained from clan shamans through hereditary rituals and passed down for generations. Such tools became the most representative means of divination, and every clan came to have its own particular one, which people treasured as a sacred clan object and worshipped with great sincerity. Every *mukūn* has tended to have one or two such sacred implements, and with this heirloom, shamans can predict weal and woe, pray for omens, and cure disease for their clanspeople.

Among the hereditary divining tools of Manchu clans, old willow branches are used by the Fuca Hala, bronze mirrors and clam pearl grains by the Heheteli Hala, fish teeth by the Hešeri Hala, tree root-shaped spirit idols by the Nimaca Hala, *hama* knives by the Diaoluo Hala, tinkling bells by the Li Hala, deer *galaha* bones by the Na Hala, and so forth. Shamans of the Oroqen, Hezhe, Ewenki, and other

peoples use the scapulae of roe deer, elk, and deer, whereas Mongol and often Xibe shamans use sheep or goat scapulae. These hereditary divining implements have traditionally been passed down for decades or hundreds of years, along with other shaman artefacts. They were originally obtained through the traditional methods of extracting bones from living animals or receiving them in dreams, and they later became the sacrosanct protective spirit of the clan. The longer they are preserved, the more efficacious they become.

Normally, however, people do not preserve means of divination like animal or fish bones or shells heated by fire, broken or cracked implements, the grasses and flowers used to predict the year's harvest, the frogs and lizards used to foretell floods, or the cuckoos and little snakes whose colour, figure, internal organs, and food left in their stomach are used to predict weather. Clanspeople are unwilling to preserve these things lest other clans use them to spy out the clan's divination secrets.

### ***Improvised divination tools***

In the case of a sudden disappearance, serious illness, adversity, life-threatening danger, or unfulfilled love, a desire to know what may happen naturally springs up, and this can move a person to try a simple form of divination to discover a good outcome or a bad outcome. They may toss a copper coin, pray silently and observe the way it falls, or stand one or more chopsticks in the middle of a bowl and see if it stands upright or falls over. The diviner asks a question and states an answer. If the answer is correct, the chopstick remains upright, and the divination is considered successful. One may also set an egg on its end, put a coin in a pot of water, aim an arrow to hit a bull's-eye, toss *galaha* into the air, draw lots, select a written character with one's eyes closed, look into a mirror or observe finger prints, and so on. These kinds of simple, improvised divination means have been widely employed in northern China, but they have nothing to do with shamanistic divination or sorcery. They are the arbitrary contrivances of the mind – flexible in form, drawn from the immediate circumstances, and not subject to the restrictions of general divination customs or rules.

On the whole, however, traditional shamanic divining implements have more magical power. According to Manchu tales in *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao (Liangshi Hanwang zhuan)* and Oroqen and Daur tales from Kunhe (坤河) Village on the banks of the Amur, instruments like a shaman's bronze mirrors, animal teeth, and objects made of birch bark or deer skin are endowed with special magic. They can make the garb of shamans of other tribes lose its divine power. In one tale, however, a shamanic divination tool led a brother and a sister captured by demons out of the mountains back to their blind mother. In another, such a tool guided lost horses out of the bone-filled Black Eagle Cave (*Heitiaodong*, 黑雕洞) and illuminated the path back to Black Valley (*Heigu*, 黑谷). Northern folklore is rich in legends and myths of mysterious means of divination similar to the charming tales of magic wands in the West. Such legends have been spread among numerous peoples, which shows the broad influence that divination culture has had in the region.

## 1.5 Detailed divination accounts

### *Fired bone divination*

For divination, heat is commonly applied to animal bones, such as the scapulae of cattle, sheep, or pigs, and patterns of the cracks are then interpreted to learn the sought-after answer. The Oroqen and Ewenki have used mainly beast bones, such as those of deer, elk, or roe deer, and the Daur and Hezhe also use such bones. Descendants of ancient Jurchen mountain tribes came to use the scapulae of yearling boars or pigs. The Mongols mostly use the bones of cattle and sheep, or sometimes a horse. Turtle shells are not commonly seen, because there are few tortoises and turtles in the North. It is said in *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao* that some people bought tortoises from Nikan (Manchu for Han Chinese) merchants from the Central Plains for divination, but they must have been from rich families that were deeply influenced by Han culture. The average Jurchen used local materials.

A personal account of fired bone divination by a Wu clansperson of Sunwu County (孙吴县) on the Amur River is recorded in *Collection of Local Sacrificial Rituals*:

When I went to the home of my Uncle Jiu (九), he was scraping bones on a stool covered with roe deer hide in front of nine scapulae, three bleached and the rest dark red. I asked why they were different, and he replied that the bleached bones were roe deer scapulae while the others were those of bears, boars, and pigs. Closer inspection revealed that it was difficult to distinguish between bear and boar scapulae. Their dark red color is due to their musty blood after being butchered, but these dark red bones can be as bleached as light as the deer scapulae after being processed. Bones used in divination should be exposed to the sun, baked, cleaned of meat and blood to create smooth, white, flat surfaces after they are removed from live animals. They should be frequently exposed to the sun to keep them from being damaged by insects and rats. Heating by charcoal or iron balls or bars is preferred in divination by fire. If bones are thick, sawing and scraping them smooth is necessary. If bones are too thick, they cannot easily crack, and if they are too thin, they can be easily ruined. Therefore, bones of moderate thickness are culled. People mostly used fire divination to diagnose an illness, locate lost objects, pray for a safe journey, seek blessing in fishing and hunting, plead for well-being and good fortune, safeguard the procedures of a wedding or funeral, and pray for a woman's safe delivery, all of which my uncle can divine. Many of his neighbors invite him to divine for them, and he accepts no reimbursement other than a small bottle of liquor.

The criteria for interpreting fired bone divination by the Manchu and White Mongol people of Dahuashulinzi Village are documented in *Supplement to Ancient Customs of Aihui* as follows:

Horizontal cracks, 三三, means good for traveling; horizontal plus vertical crack, — |, means it's good to leave early; vertical plus horizontal, | —,

means it's better to leave late; two vertical cracks, | |, departure not recommended, be cautious. Triple vertical cracks, ||| |||, signify something good; double vertical cracks, || ||, something somewhat good; other double vertical cracks, large beasts approaching. Skewed cracks, 𠂇 𠂇, signify baneful results; fish-bone shaped cracks, Y Y, neither good nor bad; other fish-bone cracks, 𠂇 𠂇, better than average; still other fish-bone cracks, 𠂇 𠂇, good luck; fish-bone cracks, 𠂇 𠂇, it's better not to head out (Fu Xilu 1930b).

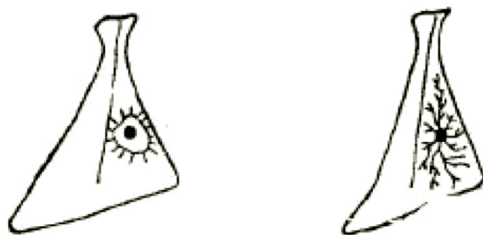
There are hundreds of such crack patterns, used mainly for hunting foxes, yellow weasels, and raccoon dogs or for trapping roe deer.

For other uses, people in the past chose the scapulae of roe deer. They would pray and burn incense before applying heat to them and then put a number of them before the ancestral altar, *kneel*, and then express their desired intentions and seek a response. They would next heat the bones on the ground near the west *kang*. When a scapula is heated, the narrow side should face upwards and the fan-shaped side downwards before the altar. The heat can cause one to three holes to form, as in the following pictures:



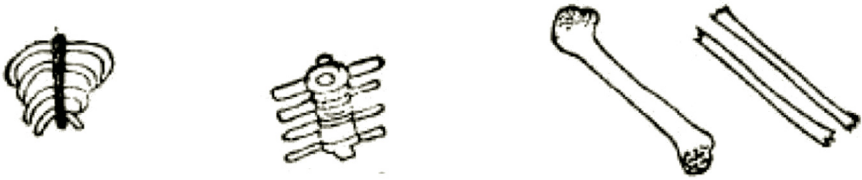
The first of these two heated scapulae has the horizontal cracks 三三; the other has the auspicious threefold sign *san yuan* (三元, heaven, earth, and human beings), combined with *sitongzhao* (四通兆, everything goes well). “✚” is the very best and most auspicious sign, meaning “all the best” and “smooth going.”

In another two pictures, the cracked scapula bones have different patterns and corresponding interpretations:



The first has the rare auspicious sign *taiyang boo* (太阳卜, sun divination) or *amba urgun* ("great fortune" in Manchu). When the scapula is heated, a round figure appears around the hole, with radiating beams like solar rays, as if the sun has appeared. The pattern on the second scapula is called *maowen boo* (毛纹卜, bone hair cracks divination) because of the irregular hairlike cracks around the hole. This is considered an inauspicious omen that points to an outbreak of unpredictable ill fortune. If a hunter receives this sign, it is commonly believed that beasts will injure someone or even devour someone's organs. The man who receives it is traditionally forbidden to hunt.

The fired bones most commonly sawed, scraped, smoothed, and polished are fan-shaped ribs, spinal bones, and split neck bones, as in these pictures:



Such bones from wild beats are frequently used because the more ferocious the beasts are, the more difficult it is to capture them. They are thus difficult to use for divination, and the efforts needed to do so reveal one's utmost sincerity in divining. In any case, northern peoples have traditionally had a strong belief in and deep reverence for divination by fire.

As was noted earlier, in primitive times, when clashing tribes were long at war and humans and beasts lived together and were not clearly distinguished, human bones were sometimes used for divination. Foreign tribespeople would readily be viewed as either predators or prey and could be more ferocious than beasts. So using the bones of foreign warriors for divination was viewed as especially accurate and mystical and was thus a common practice. *Legends of Nurhaci and Wang-gao* tells of the chieftain of the female Tuyemuli tribe of the Donghai (East Sea) Weji tribal group. The tribe inhabited an East Sea island and often went to the coast and raided the Feiyio Gaxan tribe. When the Tuyemuli encountered great loss in a raid, their shamaness chieftain would snatch several boys of the Feiyio Gaxan tribe and kill them. She then heated their scapulae and used them in divination.

In 1981, the author's research team surveyed the shaman rituals of the Bayara Hala in Yongji, Jilin Province. By then, the many shamans of the clan were deceased, such that sacrificial rituals could no longer be performed, but their descendants told of many cases of rites that worship ye spirits (野神, animal spirits) performed by great shamans of the clan. The diary entry of December 17, 1980, moreover, by the senior shaman Gao Qishan (高岐山) of Gao Village gives an account of a shaman boy who was gifted in divination:

After a great shaman died, the clan once selected as clan shaman a child who was extremely smart and would go into trance for a whole day. He could

foretell things with miraculous accuracy. Once out of the blue, he said that the skull of the deceased master shaman was behind his house near a river. This was strange, because the Bayara ancestral graves were near the Zhan-glao River, far away from the village. The villagers didn't believe the boy, but they went to check. They found a decaying wooden coffin entangled in willow roots, and in it, they could see the corpse of the master shaman, but with the skull missing. This incident spread as a fantastic story, and afterwards, the clansmen chose the child as a shaman who could divine with the skull even though it was not heated. If the skull moved while he was diving, it was considered a significant omen. During the puppet Manchukuo period, before Liberation, in 1949, the boy shaman died of illness when the skull went missing.

### ***Dream interpretation***

As was noted earlier, special people sometimes need to make extraordinary efforts to find divination instruments revealed in dreams. Nonetheless, dream divination itself can be performed by anyone who gives their ordinary dream careful thought. Pondering the meaning of a dream after one awakes is a widespread ancient practice, but strictly speaking, it is not a method of shamanic divination. A person simply interprets the dream in relation to their mode of life, environment, and personal strong points in a relaxed way. Dream interpretation is also associated with one's subjective state and influenced by one's personal ideals and contingencies of the moment.

Divination by dreams is a commonly practised among all northern peoples. The Ewenki believe there are good dreams and bad dreams. If someone catches fish or sees fish in a dream, that is a good dream, implying that they will hunt down an animal the next day. If one cries, rides a horse or reindeer, dresses oneself in rags, runs into a gaunt person, or triumphs in a wrestling match in a dream, that is a good dream. A dream of crossing a river is believed to be the best, signifying that the person's whole family will be safe and sound for the next several years. If someone dreams of losing their upper teeth, however, a young member of the family will die, and if one dreams of losing their lower teeth, an aged member will die. If a person dreams of having their hair cut, that means some person or a reindeer will die. If one shaves, combs one's hair, bathes, fails in wrestling, smiles, or cheers in a dream, these are bad dreams. If one eats tasty food and wears fine clothes in a dream, they are going to fall ill. If one sees two people fighting, a reindeer will probably be eaten by wolves. If one dreams of killing a bear, a family member will die.

The Oroqen believe that ghosts and deities can appear in dreams and that dreams are caused by souls who leave their bodies. If someone cries in a dream, they will experience something unpleasant. If someone cannot find or catch up with their horse in a dream, a hunter will encounter troubles in hunting or fail to track down deer or elk. If someone dreams of wearing fine clothes



or becoming rich, they will have a serious illness, and if someone dreams of wearing silk, their parents will die. If someone has their hair cut in a dream, the dreamer will fall ill or die, and if someone heads in the direction of the sunset or follows boats down the river, their soul is on the way to the netherworld – a sign of death. Similarly, if someone's face gets plumper in a dream, they will fall ill, and if an aged person gets in touch with or dines with a deceased person in a dream, their days are numbered. On the other hand, if an Oroqen dreams of griefs and sorrows, happy events are thought to be approaching. If someone dreams of wallowing in or being covered with urine and faeces, this promises good luck in hunting. If someone dreams of the sun, the dreamer will be promoted, and if they dream of stars and the moon or pick up a gun, they will have a baby boy. If a hunter dreams of getting married, they will capture foxes or other valuable animals; if they drink liquor in their dream, they will hunt down plump, well-fed animals; if they hurt someone with their gun, they will hunt bears or boars. If someone catches numerous fish in a dream, it will rain or snow; if someone catches big fish, it will rain or snow heavily. If someone swims in a dream, illness will be alleviated; if someone flies, they will be promoted or become a shaman.

Since the Ewenki and Oroqen traditionally lived mainly by hunting, their dreams are mostly about hunting, and since they lived in mountain forests and were familiar with all kinds of animals, it is normal that they often dreamt about animals. They have other dreams, however, whose interpretations are very much the same as those of Manchu, Daur, Hezhe, Xibe, and Han Chinese. Because these minority peoples have long lived with the Han and had mutual contact with them, their thoughts were influenced by them and vice versa. So many of their dream interpretations are no different from those of the Han. For instance, dreaming of drinking liquor or dining on good food is commonly considered inauspicious and interpreted as signifying the onset of illness or, for some, simply bad luck. A dream in which one distributes a lot of money to others or loses something is considered auspicious – a sign that misfortune and disasters will not occur, but a dream that goes the opposite way is interpreted as an omen of illness, strife, or calamity.

As we have said, dream interpretation is a normal folk practice. It may be based in part on the shamanic belief that a dream amounts to the vision of a wandering soul, but it is not something peculiar to shamanic practices. It is frequently used by shamans in divining, but it should not be included as a main shaman divination method, because it lacks the rigid shamanic classification of souls. Nor is the interpretation of dreams inspired by a specifically shamanic attitude to religious worship.

### ***Casting lots***

Casting lots is widely popular and quite ancient in northern shamanism. Different ethnic groups cast different objects, but their concepts of divination by lots

are almost the same. According to some senior Manchu shamans, this divining method sprang from divination by reading the stars. They say that it came into use in line with the idea that people can divine weal and woe on the basis of the falling of meteors. When Manchus and their Jurchen ancestors migrated or chose an auspicious location, they would mostly select a site for settlement by releasing a wild pheasant. *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao* records that Nurhaci first launched his attacks against Hetu Ala (in present-day Liaoning Province) by casting lots, and *Records of the Grievances of the East Sea* recounts a Manchu fire rite, in which shamans use the teeth of a fish or a pig as lots when selecting a sacred tree, ritual site, or living area. After worshipping the gods, a shaman takes the teeth out of a sacred container and, as all clanspeople kneel down, casts a tooth and observes the direction in which its cusp points, to determine a living site. Some Manchu shamans cast a pig's tooth, too, to divine the success of a sacrificial rite before performing a trance dance and beating the drum.

The Ewenki are accustomed to tossing the lower jaw bone of a fish or animal in the air. If it lands upwards, that means good fortune, and lands downwards, that means bad fortune. If the bone lands upwards three times, they judge that they will hunt down wild animals, but if downwards, they will not catch prey. If people see a jaw bone that had been placed on a sheltered ledge fall to the ground, they should pick it up and toss it in the air while crying out the name of the animal – deer, elk, or roe deer, among others. If the bone lands upwards as they cry out, they will not catch deer, so they should not waste time hunting deer but rather track down other animals.

Another common way of diving by lots is to toss a *galaha* bone and observe the position of each surface when it lands. The four sides of a *galaha* are named in Chinese *zhen* (珍), *lun* (轮), *bao* (豹), and *keng* (坑), and different shamans interpret the four sides differently. Shamans of the Manchu Irgen Gioro Hala (Zhao clan) of Suihua County (绥化县), Heilongjiang, regard the *zhen* side up as auspicious, which does not happen frequently. Other objects are also used. A shaman of the Manchu Niohuru Hala (Lang clan) of Wangqing County, Jilin Province, once used a small snail shell which had a hole in it. When it landed on the ground, the direction in which the hole pointed was regarded as propitious. Shamans of the Nimaca Hala (Yang clan) and Siktere Hala (Shi clan) of Jiutai used the breast-bone of a white waterfowl.

### ***Atypical divination modes***

Some Manchu clans use the spiny hide of a hedgehog for divining. A tale of the origin of this usage as according with the intention of the heavenly goddess Abka Hehe appears in the creation myth “War in Heaven.” While fighting day and night against the sly demon Yeluli, the goddess was once lured into a vast stretch of clouds, where she became lost, intoxicated, and benumbed by the clouds. A deity's soul must be attached to a concrete object. If it is left to float about, it will be carried away by the clouds and gradually vanish. At that critical moment, Abka

Hehe grabbed several soul bones of hedgehogs in the clouds and let the animals enter the heavenly palace to hide and rest. She thus could escape from the clouds with the help of their souls, and Yeluli failed. She subsequently extolled the magical power of a hedgehog's sharp spines and told all animals that they should live by their own spiny weapons. Therefore, cattle, sheep, deer, and elk grew spines on their heads in the form of horns and antlers, and flying horses grew a spine-like bone on their right foreleg, which explains why horses have a keen sense of direction and can divine. In northern folklore, the bald, spiny bone exposed on the inside of a horse's leg is called night eye (*yeyan*, 夜眼).

The Oroqen also have an unusual method of divination: dancing the dance of the Aunt Zhaoli. Generally speaking, the dance has three forms. In one form, two people hold a *zhaoli* (箒篱, a spider web-like cooking skimmer) and slightly shake it while chanting *hanjian hanlie*. People then ask Aunt Zhaoli all kinds of questions, such as "When will someone will return?" The number of nods of the *zhaoli* indicates the number of days when the person will return, and if the *zhaoli* sways from left to right, that means the person will not return. In another form of the dance, a person lies on their back, feet tied to a *zhaoli* and slightly shaking. People ask questions and get answers as in the first form of the dance. In the third form, if someone gets lost in the mountains, they can tie a *zhaoli* to a fork in a tree and dress it with human clothes and a hat. The person then shakes the tree trunk, making the *zhaoli* move from side to side from the trunk's centre line. The side with the longest distance from the centre line is considered the right direction for the lost person to get out of the mountain (Folk Literature Forum 1989:80). This method was allegedly introduced to the Oroqen from the Daur.

An atypical mode of divination used by the ancient Jurchen drew on the prowess of young *baturu* ("hero" in Manchu) in capturing or killing bears and boars or trapping droves of *mihan* (wild piglets). Adorning themselves with the teeth of boars that they had killed, they won the admiration of their fellow clanspeople. A village of the Donghai Weji tribe had the custom of using their fights with bears, boars, or snakes as a form of divination. Fighting with a boar was the most dangerous, and using a fight with a boar or bear for divination was reserved for significant events, when tribal leaders or head shamans needed to make predictions about the coming year; to expel evil, unsettled spirits, or plague; or to seek revenge for a loss of land or water resources. The tribal chief or shaman or a selected *baturu* hunter would vow to fight against the beast. If it was killed, that was considered auspicious, but if the hero was wounded, it was inauspicious. Such a method of divining amounted to taking a sacred vow and receiving divine testimony.

The fight would take place in a grand sacrificial rite. The shaman, often stripped to the waist and barefoot, first welcomes the god by beating the drum and chanting a sacred chant while clanspeople cheer on the contender. The brave *baturu*, with only a stone knife in hand, stands in a wooden enclosure with incense burning in front of an altar. All at once, someone opens the boar's cage, and the wild beast, with sharp tusks and weighing thousands of *jin*, charges

towards the *baturu*. The fighter leaps forwards from the altar, jumps on the boar, and forces it to the ground, startled and squealing in terror, its tusks leaving deep furrows in the earth. The fearless fighter waves the stone knife to blind the boar's eyes and then lies down on the ground. In great pain, the boar darts towards the fighter, jaws wide open, but the fighter, still on the ground, stabs its heart and cuts out its heart and lungs as the beast meets its due death. The boar's tusks are then knocked out and presented before the altar, and the successful outcome of the battle is considered to be divine testimony of an auspicious conclusion. The winner was believed to be aided by the gods and the boar was believed to have been defeated and killed because they had snatched away its soul. The shaman would bore holes in the boar's tusks for the champion to wear on their chest, while clanspeople scrambled for the animal's ribs, which they polished and used for various ornaments. They would attach the ribs to their waists, believing that the bones of a beast killed in divine testimony had divine powers and that if a beast of the same kind charged against them and smelt the bone, it would flee. Such a boar fight is a unique and adventurous form of divination that brought honour to the hero, and it reflects the psychology and breathes the spirit of the North.

## 1.6 The mentality of shamanic divination

### *Soul concepts*

The notion of the soul always plays a leading role in northern shamanic divination. In shamanism, the soul is mysterious and believed to be immortal and eternal. As was discussed in Chapter 1 of Volume 1, the floating soul (*fuhun*, 浮魂) or true soul (*zhenhun*, 真魂), which has life as a living organism, can live forever, as long as the organism breathes. The floating soul is the dream soul (*menghun*, 梦魂). It is not confined to the human body when one falls asleep. Rather, it can leave the body to roam around anywhere and join in or manipulate activities without being restrained by the person in whose body it basically dwells. It can participate in activities left unfinished before falling asleep, visit places, join in a battle, fight someone, reconcile people, pick up things up, and send messages – in short, do whatever was planned but left unfinished before sleep. The floating soul can also do things that a person did not think about, have contact with, or know well when they are awake and conscious. It can ponder, experience, explore, and try out activities without the person's guidance. Because of this, for divination, some people can use the seemingly absurd dream activity that all humans experience. With wisdom and experience learned from dreams, they can predict future events and find solutions for difficult and puzzling problems.

The use of bones in divination is based on the shamanic idea of the volitional soul (and not of the floating or true soul), or will soul (*yinianhun*, 意念魂), a mysterious force that is superior to the floating soul and dwells in a living being's

bones. Although the floating soul can freely leave the body and roam around everywhere, it can do so only as long as the organism to which it belongs remains alive; if the organism ceases to exist and perform the activities that sustain the life force of the floating soul, the floating soul weakens accordingly and perishes. The volitional soul can also leave the body and roam about, but it is more vital to an organism, supplying it with energy and willpower while the organism is alive, and it remains an active force even after the organism ceases to exist. It normally lies hidden in the bones and retains its properties intact as long as the bones exist, though the organism itself may die and the body rot completely away. The bones in which it dwells can thus be used for divination long after the body has disintegrated. With the passage of time, however, the volitional soul can become weak and fall into a slump, so it must have its vital force periodically reawakened and ritually revived.

According to shamanic soul theory, the different souls all possess the mystic qualities of a deity. When an organism is still alive, however, it is the floating soul or true soul that is usually at work, while the volitional soul is hampered in its mystical power. Only a tiny portion of a volitional soul can by chance play an active role during an organism's life, and an ordinary living being cannot detect or make use of its potential. Only when one's life comes to an end can the volitional soul manifest its unique powers and drives.

In accordance with the lifeline, movement, and potentialities of the different souls, shamans and diviners use different divinatory skills and methods. They do so not by using a particular divination tool but by manipulating the potential of floating souls and volitional souls. Shamans and diviners are not influenced or disturbed by particularities of time, place, condition, or human difficulty; with the aid of floating souls and volitional souls, they can discern and scrutinize unknown places, people, and situations. Moreover, many diviners do not just exploit the powers of other floating or volitional souls; they can have their own souls travel somewhere in a moment, inquire into difficult matters, and foretell future affairs for themselves or the people who seek their services. Their clients are fully convinced of the accuracy of their prognostications and follow them with unswerving allegiance. Furthermore, some shamans and diviners can draw on the powers of the floating souls and volitional souls of other living creatures, spirit idols, or even certain physical objects to assist in divining when a problem lies beyond their power.

An old fisher, Blind Zhao (赵瞎子) of Aihui, was skilled at using wild birds to divine conditions of the Amur River. He had a method of fishing by long lines with multiple hooks set in the river that is dangerous but was widely used by Amur fishers. Zhao could reel in carp and other big fish, but inexperienced or negligent fishers could risk being caught up in the hooks or losing their lives when their boat sank. A story from the 1930s or 1940s has it that a fisher envious of Zhao's expertise once took advantage of his blindness to tie numerous hooks of his own to the blind man's long iron fishing lines so as to get him entangled in them. However, every time Zhao went fishing, he first performed divination,

and he knew that someone had plotted to murder him. So he netted a magpie and secretly used its soul to divine what was going on. With the help of the bird's soul, he learned that his iron fishing lines had been sheared off and buckled. If he would have dragged them out of the water without knowing this, there would have been dire consequences, but he saved himself with the help of the magpie's soul. After further divination, moreover, he discovered that his own wife had conspired against him with a certain Mr Zhang from his village (Fu Xilu 1930a).

Among the Manchu, Daur, Oroqen, Ewenki, Xibe, and Hezhe, there are some shamans and diviners who can exchange thoughts and words with foxes, pheasants, yellow weasels, badgers, raccoon dogs, hares, beavers, vultures, snakes, and other animals, becoming the animals' *ejen* ("owner" in Manchu). They then make use of the animal's volitional soul to perform acupuncture, give medical advice to patients, or divine for them. All adults can do this, but most such diviners have reportedly been middle-aged women. It was sometimes rumoured that they were seized by a kind of hysteria, but in fact, they were regularly quite clear-headed. They could predict, see objects that others could not see, and hear voices from hundreds of miles away.

On the whole, divining with the aid of floating souls and volitional souls has been quite important in northern China, and anyone who can do so is greatly revered. The voluminous official *Veritable Records of the Qing* (*Qing shilu*) that began to be written from the early 17th century, writes that some rabble rousers once used witchcraft against the standard-bearers (*qiren*, 旗人) of the Eight Qing dynasty banners and were burnt at the stake (Guo Yanshun and Sun Yunlai 1983). It seems that their activity actually involved some sort of shamanic practices, but they were not recognized as religious and labelled as witchcraft. In any case, the incident attests to how influential shamanic divination used to be and how well known it had been at that time. Shamanic soul concepts still have a place among northern peoples. They invite thought about many unfathomed problems that are open to scientific investigation, and this book aims to present them for further study.

According to the accounts of most shamans and diviners, divination on the basis of floating souls and volitional souls has its origin not in human beings but in certain shrewd animals who imparted ways of ferreting out signs to humans. Such animals are mostly weak, but they are alert animals that live in constant fear of being prey to stronger animals if they are not careful and that develop a keen sensitivity to what might endanger them. With something of the same kind of instinctive perceptivity, shamans are believed to be able to use the power of their volitional soul to influence beasts that threaten them, making the animal perplexed and striking panic in the animal. They can also use that soul to control other living beings and make them serve them. For their part, such beings appreciate being controlled by them and serve and protect the shamans well.

Accordingly, divining with small animals makes up a large percentage of northern shamans' divining activities. Shamans regard the volitional souls of the animals as deities and draw on their aid more than on the aid of the gods in heaven. People do not worship such animals with the sacrificial rites and trance dances

that they use to worship tigers, leopards, and other fierce animals, but they sincerely revere them and take care not to disturb or offend them. The deities that Manchu and other northern peoples worship are mostly these little animal deities. The families of some Manchu, Daur, and Hezhe set up small shrines in their honour, not inside the home, like the *weceku* ancestor niche, but instead outside, near their dwelling. These shrines have various functions.

### *Divine judgement*

It has been common among northern peoples to hold a solemn shaman rite to seek an impartial verdict from the gods to settle a significant tribal issue that they themselves cannot resolve or confirm. Different clans have used different methods and forms – yarrow, fire, water, or beasts – but the ultimate goal is to discern between right and wrong or good fortune and ill fortune by a formal rite of divine judgement and thereby decide how to act. The *mukūnda* (subtribe or subclan chief) presides over the rite, while a shaman, or in some smaller tribes a diviner, performs it.

In general, divine judgement is sought for the following issues:

- 1 When important disputes or conflicts break out and chieftains' opinions vary, so that only divine judgement can ascertain the facts.
- 2 When tensions regarding the unequal distribution of resources among *mukūn* come to a head such that it is necessary to ask the gods to decide on the distribution of wealth and possessions, to which every *mukūn* must then conform.
- 3 When a tribe seeks to allocate hunting grounds, water supplies, or other vital resources to its *mukūn* in accordance with divine judgement.
- 4 When the number of elected chieftains does not accord with the set number for the tribe or when the tribe cannot discern the intentions of unexpected guests or strangers, divine judgement is sought to reach a unanimous decision within the whole tribe.

To be more specific, divine judgement may be sought when, as we saw with the fire rite in Chapter 4 of Volume 1, various *mukūn* choose their camp sites on the basis of the perch of a pheasant or when a migrating tribe chooses its settlement on the basis of the direction of a bird's flight. If two *mukūn* are on bad terms or in prolonged enmity, they may adopt the *tiaohuochi* test of running over burning coals as a form of divine judgement. At the same time, they can all burn away the filth of their evil minds that made them distrust and accuse each other and thus become a united, brave tribe.

Divine judgement can also take the form of a ritual fight with a python. In the past, the Manchu Niohuru Hala of the Donghai Woji tribal group seen earlier would capture several pythons on rock outcroppings after the spring snow melted every year and hold such a rite. In the spring, pythons that are just awakening and anxious for food are reportedly particularly aggressive and arouse fear in the



small animals of the forest. Tribespeople of that *hala* would burn incense, beat their drums, and offer sacrifice. Then a valiant young warrior suddenly grabs a python, skins it, and leaves it dead. On the basis of the outcome, people predict whether they will have favourable weather and a good harvest for the coming year. If the python is weak and easily killed, this means that pests will invade the crops and it will not be a good year. But if the serpent twists around the valiant warrior more and more tightly so that their strength begins to fail, another warrior rushes forwards, grabs the python, scorches it with fire and rice wine, and lets it stretch itself out and slither away free into the wilds. This is taken as divine judgement that everything will take its proper course during the year. At the same time, the outcome indicates that the young *baturu* who overcame the python is an extraordinary individual who can confidently be chosen as chief.

Such rites of divine judgement indicate that divination has not only been used to pray for good fortune or predict the future. In primitive times, it could also play a significant role in reaching a verdict and achieving a harmonious balance of social forces. In those times when means of livelihood were backwards and life a struggle, what held a tribe together was mainly the organizational capacities and interdependence of different chieftains. When conflicts arose and harmony broke down, people could not easily find effective solutions and persuasive means to restore harmony, so they often resorted to divine judgement. At that time, interpersonal relationships were quite simple; ideologies were backward; and, to a large extent, primitive, superstitious notions of religion occupied a dominant position in peoples' ideology. It was believed that gods can make decisions on everything and that conflict resolutions based on their judgements are needed to maintain social unity, stability, and tribal peace. Thus, divine judgement became an important and irreplaceable divinatory method. It was convincing because it was believed to be fixed by the gods and most reasonable.

There can be little doubt that many of the divinatory methods still used in shaman rituals bear the traces of divine judgement. For example, boar teeth or fish teeth are still placed on a drum and then cast to the ground after prayer in order to predict the success of a sacrificial ritual. As done today, this form of sought assistance from the gods has turned into a stereotyped formal procedure that carries little intent of seeking divine will and is open to human interpretation. But this suggests that from the beginning, oracular pronouncements taken to be divine utterances were actually statements that reflected the intentions of the hearers. People resorted to it because human power, influence, and charisma were believed to be inferior to that of the gods, but the judgement of the gods was actually subject to interpretation by human beings. It then had, nonetheless, a religious function and psychological effect, but later, it gradually became simply a formalized means to achieve certain human ends.

### ***Divination ideology***

In terms of religious ideology, divination is a most easily spreadable and practical practice – simple and without a need for profound sacred words, cumbersome

sacrificial formalities, or specific occasions, places, or times. Anyone can do it anywhere, anytime. Because of this, belief in it was long ago widespread and popular, including among northern peoples. The author's surveys in northeast China reveal that among the Manchu and other ethnic groups of the region, anyone could master one or two divinatory methods, albeit with different skilfulness and varying efficacy. Why is it so well received and frequently used? Besides the influence of the shamanic concepts of the soul, people are just naturally curious to know the truth and yearn for the good, and they readily tend to reflect on phenomena in the external world. When they get stuck in a dilemma, they are eager to explain and resolve it.

The basic human desire to inquire into things naturally led primitive peoples to try divination, and their religious bent led them to think that they were assisted clandestinely by a spirit when they found an extraordinary object like an egg with sharp points or managed to do things that cannot be easily done, such as making chopsticks stand in water. They came, moreover, to believe that divination can solve difficult life problems, and living in a complex and dangerous world, they hoped that divination could promise good fortune. Finally, they developed a fascination with divination when by chance the desire that led them to divine was satisfied, such as divining the outcome of a hunt and actually capturing animals or divining the weather and it really rains. People thus believed that divination did work and that they were assisted by gods in the process.

Divination by reading the cracks in heated turtle shells appeared quite early, and with the development of Taoism, divination by using hexagrams came to prevail in ancient China in methods and contents that grew more and more theoretical. Ever since the Liao, Greater Jin, and Yuan dynasties, the divinatory culture of northern shamanism absorbed a great deal of the hexagram theory of the *Book of Changes*. It gradually became increasingly complicated, especially with the development of theories of reading the stars which were much weightier in thought than the horoscopes used in primitive religious practices. A study of popular shamanist divination in the North and its origins thus naturally leads to a comparative study between northern shamanic divination and that of the Central Plains and Taoism. Only in this way can one determine its origin and discern its specific characteristics.

In modern times, the intermingling of shamanic divination with that of Taoism is prominent in the practices of common people. For instance, the star god rituals (*Jixing yishi*, 祭星仪式) and star divination traditional in the influential and still-popular Taoist Baiyun Temple (Baiyansi, 白云寺) outside Xibianmen (西便门) in Beijing are strikingly similar to what we find in northern shamanism and popular divinatory practices in the North. Although first founded in the 8th century, the temple, legend has it, was established during the reign of 12th-century Jin Emperor Xizong (熙宗) at a time when the Jurchen founders of the Jin dynasty found it politically helpful to foster popular Taoist practices. Their Indigenous shamanic worship of heaven and the stars exerted profound influences on the temple's star worship, such that Baiyun Temple worship became

an amalgamation of shamanism, Taoism, and Buddhism. With further social development, the influence of shamanism on the temple, currently the seat of the Chinese Taoist association, has become faint and has been forgotten, but the influence of its Taoist practices on northern shamanism and common folk divinatory customs remains.

## Notes

- 1 The eight trigrams 八卦 represent the fundamental principles of reality as a scheme of eight interrelated concepts. Each consists of three lines, broken or unbroken, representing *yin* or *yang*, respectively.
- 2 The flowers used included balsamine, lily, day lily, winter jasmine, apricot flower, flower of the sorb tree, bell flower, common camellia, wild chrysanthemum, morning glory, dandelion, snow azalea, and so on. The grasses were *carex meyeriana*, *eupatorium fortunei*, *arundinella hirta*, horsetail, *medicago hispida* Gaertn, *althaea rosea*, duckweed, cattail, reeds, and so on. The commonly used trees included pine, willow, elm, locust, birch, poplar, oak, and cypress.

## 2 The northern mythic heritage

Cherished as the products of ancient spiritual culture, the myths of all nations and races have always been valuable to the peoples that treasure them and, on a secondary level, to scholars of such humane disciplines as religion, cultural anthropology, ethnology, and sociology. Myths have enjoyed a prestigious position among ancient civilizations because their creators, with their unique modes of livelihood, living conditions, and perceptions of reality, were able to create and pass down to generations “popular tales that narrate the deeds of gods and spirit beings with supernatural powers beyond the human imagination” (Mao Dun 1981:3). Peoples’ complicated perceptions of natural phenomena gave birth to mythical ideology. After all, people wanted to be able to deal with any spirit of nature that might do them harm, send friendly messages of respect to bizarre and treacherous demons, seek the aid of supernatural powers underlying natural phenomena and changes, and ultimately find a better life for their relatives or avert eminent danger. In reality, there was no such supernatural power. What primitive people could do was only reflect on the shadows of their own imagination to generate figures of such power, and their reflections were the ideological genes and embryos of shamanic myth.

Mythic tales reflect the primitive understanding not only of natural phenomena but also of the creation of humankind and various aspects of social life. Although they are often naïve and even absurd, they personify nature in an appealing and important way, in that they bring to life the psyche of human beings in our childhood. They are the special products of ancient people’s mental activity in their attempt to comprehend and tame the world in an unconsciously artistic way. They give accounts of historical events, project a view of reality, and articulate people’s ideals in simple and spontaneous forms of thought. As Plekhanov noted, “The Greek word ‘myth’ literally means ‘story’. Myths were created when people, upon seeing a certain phenomenon – real or imaginary – were surprised and so attempted to explain and recount its origin” (Plekhanov 1974:363). Generation after generation, moreover, people have sought through myths to create, understand, and acknowledge the past, the unimaginable history and culture of their ancestors. How could the ancestors’ mindset have been shaped in this way? What was our childhood like? Out of this desire and need, too, nations have spent strenuous efforts to collect, search and study their Indigenous myths. Greek myths

have played an important role in the development of European literature, and Chinese myths have greatly enriched Chinese culture.<sup>1</sup> Like Greek myths, they have a firm place in the world's cultural heritage.

As Hegel has said,

History is significant for every nation. Because people recognize their own "spirit" only through their history in the development of their "law," "manners," "customs," and "achievements." In its style and facilitation of social life, law reflects something permanent in the survival of a nation, but history is what endows a nation with its own unique image.

(Hegel 1963:206)

What the northern peoples of China have preserved through their myths is an astounding form of history that is rich in the living ideology of the cultural heritage they have accumulated in their strife against nature, their creation of new lifestyles, and their yearnings for a better future.

Ever since the rejuvenation of studies on Chinese myths during the New Culture Movement of the mid 1910s and 1920s, the attempts of Chinese scholars to recount the origin and development of Chinese myths have depended mainly on the rather odd, disconnected, and fragmented materials of anonymous writers in Chinese classics, especially *Classic of Mountains and Seas*. To supplement these materials, Zheng Zhenduo (郑振铎) and Mao Dun (茅盾) introduced ancient Greek mythology, Norse mythology, Egyptian mythology, and Indian mythology to China, and academia began to develop a set of scholarly concepts and traditions of mythic studies that solidified research and opened a new field of study. At the same time, ethnic groups in southern China made considerable progress in their own Indigenous mythic studies. They have made unique contributions to research by broadening the content of the Chinese mythic tradition and enlarging the area in which Chinese myths originated.

Through years of field work, we have obtained first-hand materials of northern myths that are far richer and subtler than the tales recorded in *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhaijing*). We have edited, translated, and probed inspired shamanic utterances that we have gathered among the Manchu, Mongol, Daur, Oroqen, Ewenki, Hezhe, Xibe, Kirgiz, and Yugur peoples of the Northeast. Many of these myths are not just cultural relics but part of the still-living cultural heritage of these peoples, and many of the deities in the myths still enjoy people's reverence and worship. Compared with the classic myths of many other nations, they are thus more alive and fertile. Although they are the products of primitive thinking, that is only part of the picture. They are part of the cultural heritage of particular peoples in specific geographical locations, and revived again and again, they have retained their ancient vitality and even spawned new mythic tales in various forms.

## 2.1 The shamanic roots of northern myths

The causal relations between myth and religion have always been at the centre of discussions on mythology. The first budding of religious awareness, no doubt,

surfaced before the last Palaeolithic period, but the burgeoning of shamanism has commonly been thought to be at the late period of matriarchal clan society, when tribal languages developed and people came to have primitive religious beliefs and myths. Shamanic belief does not focus on an afterlife or next world beyond the present world. Rather, it promotes the idea that gods, spirits, and human beings coexist, are co-present, collaborate, and blend together, such that shamanist believers do not seek a happy life after death or second chance of life but rather pursue good fortune and fulfilment in this life with the help of the gods and ancestral spirits.

By analysing early inspired shamanic utterances of northern peoples of China, we have found that the deities of early shaman worship in the region centred on female deities. This has been verified by the discovery of goddess images, sketches of fertility cults, female sculptures, carvings, and half-female, half-beast statues from the matriarchal society of the Upper Palaeolithic period. Northern shamanism apparently came into being during the early period of matriarchal clan society, prospered in the middle or late matriarchal period, and extended its influence to patriarchal society, when it still held a pronounced role. It began to wane at the end of the so-called feudal society of the last years of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), but in some regions, shamanic practices did not show signs of decline until the foundation of New China, in the mid 20th century.

One important heavenly goddess was Tacibuli. As depicted in myth, she possesses both male and female sex organs and can switch between the two roles at will, the bisexual image reflecting people's primitive understanding of sexuality and the custom of group marriage. She would mate with shamans, bringing intelligence to the human world, and she later became a star goddess. Some argue that she was worshipped in both matriarchal societies and patriarchal societies. But this was not so: according to her myths, all her offspring were female. When women desiring pregnancy sought out a shaman to offer sacrifice, they would not usually turn to her, lest they give birth to girls only.

The tendency of shamanism to worship all kinds of invisible spirits easily drove people in primeval times to personalize particular natural phenomena and forces, which in turn gave rise to myths as an explanation of such phenomena. The myriad myths of northern shamanism include creation myths and fanciful accounts of the origins of animals, plants, and minerals. Some involve totem worship, and most have been propagated by shamans, who serve as messengers or substitutes of mythic figures as they chant mythic tales in ritual trance. The strong bond between shamanic worship and myth gives both a mysterious aura. Shamanism and northern myths, both born in early matriarchal society, are like twin lotus flowers on one stalk, nourished by mythical concepts that are in turn spread and enhanced by shaman rites. What was originally, no doubt, a vague budding of religious awareness grew into the worship of distinct natural forces and into concepts of souls and soul worship, and that awareness gradually gave shape to shamanic rites worshipping clan divinities. To use another metaphor, primitive religion and myths are twin sister embryos relying on, compensating for, and nourishing each other. As brought to life in clan rituals, myths are vivid expressions of the

shamanic concepts that nurture peoples' religious sensibility, and they, in turn, are constantly enriched and expanded by their ritual expression. Shamanism is thus the main source and carrier of northern myths. Engaging shamanic rites enhances the appeal and charm of myths, transforming them into everlasting treasures of human artistic achievements.

## 2.2 Tungus peoples' mythic heritage

The word "Tungus" first appears in Chinese documents in *History and Memorandum of Northwest China (Shuofang beicheng)* by He Qiutao (1860) during the Qing dynasty. The work mentions a tribe called Solon, Kamunikan ("reindeer tamers"), or Tungus. "Tungus" in this document obviously refers to the Solon (Ewenki) people, but as used by Russian scholars, Japanese scholars, and Western scholars, the term has a much broader meaning. In an earlier Western document, *A Description of the Empire of China and Chinese-Tartary, together with the Kingdoms of Korea and Tibet (Zhonghua diguo zhi, 1741)*, by the French Jesuit historian Jean Baptiste Du Halde, we read that "there were natives living around Lake Baikal called Toangouse (Tungus) by Moscovites and Ozotchn by the Tartars." Japanese scholars and Western scholars have called all peoples who speak Tungus tribal languages the Tungus. The word thus became a linguistic term, and by extension a geographical term referring to all the regions inhabited by people speaking these languages. In today's China, the ethnic groups whose languages belong to that linguistic family include the Manchu, Xibe, Hezhe, Ewenki (Solon), Oroqen, Negidal, and the Jurchen ancestors of the Manchu. In Russia, they are the Ewenki, Negidal, Nanai (in China, Hezhe), Ulchi, Oroch (Nanai), Udege, and so on. The word "Tungus" is thus applied to a mixed and complicated language group. This book will not elaborate on its various possible connotations but use it simply to refer to the ethnic peoples that have contributed to the creation and development of the cultures of this core geographic area. We use the term as well in examining the geographical location, formation, and development of northern mythology and the mutual interaction of history and culture in the region.

The birth and spread of myths are, of course, rooted in language, so the shared languages and thought patterns of people of the same language group in ancient times made it possible for common myths to emerge. Long before the merging of the various ethnic groups of the region, their related languages served as a means of communication and the sharing of myths. By comparing myths handed down by Manchu-Tungus-speaking peoples, we can identify their particular characteristics and analyse them. Although all these peoples now have their distinct customs, languages, characters, and modes of livelihood, in ancient times their ancestors shared a common lifestyle and patterns of thought. The same is true of their myths. Tribal movements and interactions with other ethnic groups may have led to a differentiation of their mythic tales, but the basic elements and features of their myths were common to all and can still be identified.

From old documents and modern archaeological discoveries, we know that the tribes of Tungus-speaking peoples settled here and there along the Songhua



(Sungari) and Amur rivers, while the Manchu tribe, which enjoyed the longest history among all the Tungus groups, had a far vaster settlement. Lin Shushan writes that “As early as the beginning of the Christian era, ancient Asian people settled in all the regions stretching from Siberia to the Amur. Therefore, the homeland of the Manchu-Tungus cannot be what we call Manchuria.” He adds that

There are very few ancient Chinese loan words in the Manchu language, mainly from 500 to 1000 CE. This, plus the fact that there is very little Korean influence on the language, gives proof that the Manchu people at the beginning of the 1st century were not living in Manchuria, and also that they were not neighboring on the Han people.

(Lin Shushan 1984:21)

Lin elaborates still further:

I have found that the ancient Turkic-Mongol-Tungus people had their home country south of the Altaic region, while the Tungus-Manchu tribes originally dwelt along the Selenga River basin [in Mongolia and Russia]. To this day, we can still find in that area many Tungus place names, as well as tribes whose descendants have become today's Ewenki, Oroqen, Negidal, etc. Other tribes migrated along the Amur and occupied what is now Manchuria, where they evolved into tribes speaking Manchu languages, namely the later Manchu people, as well as the Hezhe, Oroch, Orok, and Udege. Later, some Han words penetrated into the Tungus language, which also absorbed some ancient Asian linguistic components. In addition, what's worth mentioning is that the Jurchen were ancestors only of the Manchu, not of all Manchu language-speaking tribes. So they cannot be the primitive Tungus-Manchu people.

(Lin Shushan 1984:21)

Dating back to the Heishui (Black River) Mohe (黑水靺鞨, c. 700 CE) who were mentioned in Chapter 2 of Volume 1, *Nüwa Patching the Sky*, the Wuji (勿吉, c. 500 CE), the still earlier the Yilou (挹娄, c. 200 CE), the ancient Sushen (肃慎, c. 1100 BCE), the Manchu tribal blocs, and their Jurchen ancestors settled along the vast land east of the Songhua River and on the north and south banks of the Amur (Heilong River), in Manchu Sahaliyan Ula (Black River), where they enjoyed a thousand years of culture and history. As early as the Han and Wei periods (1040 BCE–220 CE), the Yilou were recorded as a people “facing the sea in the east and stretching to the north without limit.” Later, in the Tang dynasty (唐代, 618–907 CE), the Heishui Mohe had sixteen subdivisions separated by the Amur as their southern and northern borders. The Hezhe were distributed roughly along the lower reaches of the Songhua River and the south stretch of the Amur from the Boli area (伯力, today's Khabarovsk). They were further divided into those who cut their hair and those who did not. In the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), the Hezhe were called *wuzhe* (兀者, savage), and in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), they

were included as one of three so-called “Savage Jurchen” (野人女真) tribes. The Udege noted in the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) also have a name that means “savage” in the Jurchen language. The Ewenki, for their part, had no distinct ethnic name until the Ming dynasty, but they are referred to in the 3rd-century CE work *Liao Annals (Quanliaozi)* by Li Fu (李辅) as savages of the northern mountains. To sum up, all these ethnic groups originated from Tungus tribes. As the Japanese archaeologist Torii Ryuzo has been quoted as pointing out,

The Sushen, Yilou, Wuji, Mohe and Jurchen were not the Donghu (东胡) nomads living in the Chinese northeast from the 7th to 2nd second centuries BCE, but Tungus. Their languages, customs, legends, modern archaeological discoveries, and other ethnic materials are all proof of this.

(Derevyanko 1982:119)

The Tungus peoples presently live along the northern bank and downstream of the Amur in Russia and along its southern bank and from the Ussuri River basin to the east of the Songhua River in China or near the East Sea (the Sea of Japan). All have shamanism as their major religious belief, along with myths of similar, mutually understandable, primitive ideologies. This book analyses this collective mythic heritage as the bulk of the myths of the North.

In recent years, the myths of individual tribes and clans have been studied as if they bore no relation to one another, but in fact, the myths and legends of all Tungus peoples are integral facets of a common Tungus mythology. If we compare the deities and plots of their myths, we easily find that they are closely related. In exploring the evolution and features of these myths, we thus cannot focus on just the myths of a single people; we need to grasp their relationships with the myths of neighbouring peoples – similarities and differences – and tease out their specific stages of formation and variants. Such a comparative study can help us to get to the roots of their common origin and draw objective conclusions about the uniqueness and changing patterns of each. This paves the way for a new field in mythic research in both China and abroad.

### ***The Manchu mythic heritage***

The Manchu people, with their rich history and culture, exceed other northern peoples in their preservation and propagation of Northern Tungus culture, customs, and myths. This has been amply demonstrated by the excavation and collection of shamanic artefacts in recent years. What accounts for this richness is that the Manchu are natives to the land and have a relatively longer history than do other ethnic groups there. As recorded history has shown, they have long occupied the vast stretch of land along the Amur, Ussuri, Mudan, and Songhua (Sunggari) rivers. The expression “White Mountain and Black River” (*Baishan heishui*, 白山黑水) people has commonly been used to indicate their Indigenous origin. Although they have drifted and migrated as much as other groups, they have preserved relatively intact a stable cultural heritage. They are one of the

oldest of the ancient Chinese ethnic minority peoples, with a recorded history of more than three thousand years, all the while keeping close contact with the dynasties of central China. This is further demonstrated by a large number of cultural relics excavated in recent years in the Yingge Mountain Range (*Yinggeling*, 莺歌岭) of the Jingpo Lake region along the Mudan River in Ning'an County of Heilongjiang and the Long Snake Mountain (*Chansheshan*, 长蛇山), Monkey Stone Mountain (*Houshishan*, 猴石山), and West Tuan Mountain (*Xituansahn*, 西团山) along the Songhua River in Jilin. The items unearthed in these areas give evidence of explorations by the early Sushen ancestors of the Manchu and indicate that the Manchu have enjoyed a long history and high level of civilization. Another division of the Manchu ancestors, the Jurchen, built the strong empire of the Great Jin dynasty, pushing northern culture to a new height. In the course of their rise from the Liao (916–1125) to the Qing dynasties, numerous luminaries have protected and developed Manchu culture and religion.

Many Manchu shamans have been the inheritors and propagators of their Indigenous culture as often the most talented and well-recognized storytellers and bard of folk epics. They have preserved a huge store of inherited mythology that is extremely rich and colourful. Some of the myths have been assimilated with those of neighbouring ethnic groups; others have deviated from them; and still others have drastically different contexts, so that it is hard to determine their origin. Diversified as the scene is, the exploration of the mythic culture of the Manchu, their ancestors, and other ancient Northeast Asian peoples in the mysterious recesses of human childhood can serve as a key to understanding the evolution of their modes of life and the formation of their conceptual thought.

In the strict sense, the notion of Manchu myths is not precise. According to historians, the use of the term “Manchu” appeared rather late in history, in 1635, the eighth year of the reign of Ming Emperor Chongzhen (崇祯, 1611–1644). At that time, Nurhaci, chieftain of the Jianzhou Jurchen (*Jianzhou nvzhen*, 建州女真), one of the three major groups of Jurchens, established the khanate of the Later Jin dynasty (后金), the precursor of the Qing dynasty. When his eighth son, Hong Taiji (皇太极), ascended the throne of the khanate in 1626, he began to use “Manchu” as the name of their tribe, and in the ninth year of his reign, he forbade the use of the term “Jurchen.” The following year, he changed the name of the dynasty from Later Jin to Qing, and he laid the groundwork for the overthrow of the Ming dynasty in 1644. Since those times, all Jurchen tribes began to refer to themselves as the Manchu people, even after the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1912 and even until today. In the days of Nurhaci and Hong Taiji, however, the Jurchen tribes that constituted the main stream of their ancestry entered into serfdom in the feudal system that went along with the rapid development of Qing civilization, and they lost the necessary historical conditions for the birth of further myths. Nevertheless, today’s Manchu have inherited their rich mythology from their Sushen, Mohe, and Jurchen ancestors, and their myths should be dated back to those ancient tribes.

I have long sorted out and studied the Manchu shamanic heritage, including massive creation myths and tribal foundation myths that have been handed down

for more than ten generations over two hundred years. The deceased great shaman Zhao Xingya (赵兴亚) of Yongji County (永吉县), Jilin Province, could recite inspired shamanic utterances handed down for nineteen generations. The gods that his clan worships are the eagle god Damin, the python god Jabjan, and the god of the penis Dodokv, which are all recorded in the clan's sacred ancestral writings, along with the myth of Chusongkuo. In Acheng (阿城), Heilongjiang, Ma Yachuan (马亚川) kept a document called *Annotated Jurchen Genealogy* (*Nvzhen puding*), in which are preserved numerous legendary myths of dynastic origins, including that of the Khitan founder of the Liao dynasty, Yelü Abaoji (Liao Emperor Taizu, 辽太祖), and the Jurchen founder of the Great Jin dynasty, Wanyan Aguda (Jin Emperor Taizu, 金太祖), as the central figures. In Hunchun (珲春) in Jilin Province and Dongning (东宁) in Heilongjiang, clan shamans have preserved creation myths and myths of the fish god, island god, and gods of the moon and sun that are the heritage of Jurchen tribes along the coast of the East Sea. In Ning'an, Manchu storyteller Fu Yingren (傅英仁) had in his possession East Sea shamanic myths handed down from his ancestors.

The content of this rich mythic heritage may well date back to matriarchal society, but the precise time frame cannot be determined. The myths are preserved mainly in the various forms of genealogies, oracles, clan rules, family creeds, ritual handbooks, and annotations on tribal origins, and they were shown to me in handwritten copies. Commonly included in the mythic accounts of a clan's tribal origins, they are the crystallization of its Indigenous ethnic traditions and ethos, and they therefore have often been preserved intact and privately handed down. In addition to these written materials, moreover, there is an abundance of orally preserved tales and legends spread widely by clan shamans and bards. In old family clans and prosperous households in Heilongjiang and Jilin, the narration of clan myths and tribal history as a traditional mode of entertainment has still been well preserved as a living form of culture.

Although the appellation Manchu myths might not be precise from a semantic perspective, it is a well-established and widely accepted term. In the study of northern myths, it has a broad sense that includes ethnic myths and traditions that have been handed down by all Tungus tribes since Jurchen times. Such study is thus a complicated, multidimensional, cross-disciplinary endeavour. It requires comprehensive analysis from various historical, ethnological, archaeological, cultural, and religious perspectives. I approached the task by attempting to identify myths, separating individual myths, sorting out their stems and streams of distribution, and determining the tribe of their origin and possession and the evolution of the myths as various tribes were formed. The aim is to determine the roots of the myths that have come to be handed down in the new tribal blocs and then ascertain when and under what circumstances they were finally recorded in the handwritten versions that we have today. To accomplish this task, I visited many ethnic peoples in Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Inner Mongolia, and rural areas around Beijing. The Manchu, Mongol, Hezhe, Xibe, Oroqen, and Ewenki living in these areas provided copious documents and testimonies, though some questions remain unanswered.

### *The Oroqen, Ewenki, and Hezhe mythic heritage*

In the later decades of the 20th century, folklore experts in Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning began to actively engage in rescuing ethnic folklore, and their endeavours raised research on northern myths to a stirring new phase. Meng Shuzhen (孟淑珍), the famous female Oroqen shaman bard of Xunke County, Heilongjiang, collected ancient epic forms of many ethnic groups over four years of constant efforts, centring on *mosukun*, the rich form of Oroqen oral literature combining storytelling and chant that includes myths, legends, toasts, odes, incantations, and ballads. The most representative *mosukun* work is *The Hero Gepaqian*, which contains the names, incantations, and transformations of the sun deity Dirqia Bukan, the moon deity Biya Bukan, the Big Dipper deity Eoulen Bukan, the fire deity Tuowo Bukan, the supreme deity of the mountains and forests Bowo Bukan, the love deity Ayuele Bukan, and divinities of the wind, snow, hail, reindeer, tiger and leopard. The work brings to life the grandiose scale of the epics and richness of the myths created by the ancient Oroqen people. Other myths of their, such as *Boerkanei Mergen* and *Butiha Mergen*, also contain typical mythic and epic elements.

With the aid of Professor Ma Mingchao (马名超), Meng Shuzhen sorted out, edited, and renovated her own shamanic treasures. She accurately stated that “shamans are not only the messengers of gods who lead people in worship but also chanters and storytellers,” pointing as an example to “the highly praised shaman Ulalin, who leads the list in his divine prowess and noted singing skills.” She also recorded and investigated the ritual memorials and competitions honouring the gods of the Oroqen Bilarlu people. In her records, she also sorted out the shaman rites called *weceku masinbi* of the ancient Jurchens, from which we can learn about the consistent character of northern religious ritual. In the rites, shamanic possession and dance displays amount to a form of competition focused on shamans’ abilities in chanting and inviting the gods. Through such ritual competitions, they exhibit their godlike prowess and supernatural skills in a solemn and passionate form of drama as they chant heart-stirring myths and perform thrilling feats. Meng visited, moreover, the Manchu language expert Mu Yejun (穆晔骏) and recorded and edited myths that Mu possessed of the Qiakala people, a Jurchen tribe that lived as hunters and beekeepers in the Zhangguangcai Mountain of the Changbai Range. They have been strong believers in shamanism, and their ancient Jurchen myths are filled with rustic pleasures.

In the early 1980s, Ma Mingchao and his colleagues collected examples of the *yimakan* chant/recitative storytelling genre of the Hezhe people mentioned in Chapter 2 of Volume 1 in an unprecedented contribution to northern folklore. The Hezhe are a fishing people that have their ancestry along rivers and streams, and their elders have been talented in propagating their folklore. One *yimakan* story is “Mergen Shooting the Sun” (*Morigen shetaiyan*), a long epic tale of a brave youth which exhibits the valour and feats of taming nature on the part of Hezhe deified heroes that is coloured with eye-catching mythical charm. There are also many *yimakan* tales concerning the eagle god Koris which reflect peoples’ shamanic nature

worship, totem worship, and matriarchal religious concepts. They provide scholars with a vast store of materials for mythological, ethnic, historical, sociological, religious, and linguistic research.

Ewenki folklore research has also been blossoming. Since 1979, Heilongjiang folklore scholars have carried out investigations in the Ewenki autonomous region in the north of Inner Mongolia, collecting examples of ethnic history, myths, tales, and legends. Among the Ewenki myths collected are “Where Human Beings Began” (*Renlei congnaillai*), “The Wind God” (*Fengshen*), “Ewenki Roots in Their Sierranju Dwellings” (*Ewenkeren de genzi zai cuoluozili*), and others.

In recent years, the oral literary heritage of the Daur people has also been rediscovered, most notably the *uqin* tales which eulogize their national heroes while bringing to life long and beautiful episodes of the people’s suffering and indomitable spirit. Along with Manchu myths and epics, the publication of the myths and epics of these various northern peoples has added to our appreciation of the splendid northern mythological system. It has echoes of central Chinese myths and demonstrates, like the excavation of Peking Man, that China has a profound ancient culture.

## 2.3 The transmission of northern myths

### *Shaman storytellers*

In contrast with many other religions, the fundamental feature of primitive shamanism lies in its emphasis on the universal existence of souls, a belief that, as we saw in Chapter 7 of this volume, human beings and other living creatures, as well as lifeless forms and all objects, all have souls or spirits, which exist long after the body is gone. In accordance with shamanic thought, a person cannot become a shaman at will; they must possess a shaman’s soul, *fayangga* in the Manchu language. Different from ordinary people, shamans must be equipped with the soul and bones of a shaman that have been fired by a “divine breath of air” (*shenqi chuixun*). Their souls are the floating souls (*fuhun*, 浮魂) of gods that choose a shaman’s body as a temporary abode, and their bones provide shelter for spirits. Their souls are possessed or “incarnated” by these floating souls and spirits, which can enter their body and direct their will and actions. Drawing on their personal experience, venerable old shamans are perspicacious in detecting people prone to such unearthly behaviour and recommend them to become clan shamans in their stead, inheriting their divine status. From primitive times, such people have always been widely regarded as individuals of miracles, representatives of the gods, and figures of great valour, wisdom, and intelligence that can startle earth and heaven and achieve contact with ghosts and demons. They enjoy prestige and authority as silver-tongued orators and debaters, moreover, with prowess in augury that allows them to know things of the past and future, home and abroad.

From *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao* (*Liangshi hanwang zhuan*) and *Records of Grievances of the East Sea* (*Donghai chenyuan lu*), we can see that among the Jurchen, venerable old shamans referred to as *mafa*, *amban mafa*, or *amban*

*mama enduri* not only had seniority in their own family but enjoyed authority that sometimes exceeded that of the tribal khan or chieftain. Their oracles and auguries were strictly followed, and in some peoples and tribes, the chief shaman was often the tribal leader. As recorded in the 14th-century *History of Jin* (*Jin shi*), Wanyan Xiyin, chief shaman of the founder of the Jin dynasty in 1115 CE Wanyan Aguda, served as general and prime minister and is famous as the creator of Jurchen script. In the epic *Umesiben Mama*, when the great shaman Umesiben was born,

She was as deaf and dumb as the tits and couldn't hear or talk, as dim-witted as a new-born beaver. But when the snow had thrice melted, she was able to catch crabs beneath the sea and fetch birds' eggs from trees. When dark clouds scudded in, she predicted a tsunami; when black torrents roared, she foresaw a hurricane. When *kadan* flowers blossomed, she foretold a plague, and when *jilun* herbs gave out their fragrance, she announced the visit of a guest. She was the beloved daughter of the East Sea Goddess Aomu Mama, the dearest little sister of the Star Goddess Tacibuli. They recommended her to be an *ajige* [little] shamanness, Umesiben, girl of three. She was like an auspicious star, able to ride the winds and command the clouds.

(Fu Yuguang and Lu Liankun 2007)

She thus later achieved the status of divine khanun of the seven hundred *gashan* ("village" in Manchu) of the Donghai Weji tribe.

Shamans like the historical Wanyan Xiyin and legendary Umesiben have for centuries been the indisputable leaders of theocratic regimes as the mortal representatives of the gods, as inspired mentors and pioneers in enlightening tribes in a barbarous world. They were recognized and even divinized as the only convincing and authoritative interpreters of universal changes, natural vicissitudes, the origins of the human race and human procreation, tribal prosperity, and future happenings.

The mythic tales told by shamans about the world of the gods are not just creations of fancy made up for entertainment. In ancient times, they were propagated to fellow tribespeople with a sincere and solemn mien and believed to be undeniable accounts of present realities or past events. At that level of cognition, people did not feel that their mythic accounts were naïve and absurd, as we do today. On the contrary, their mythic stories were told in earnest, passed on in all seriousness, listened to attentively, revered accordingly, and followed as preached. As has been said, myths were the holy text and history to primordial people: their code of etiquette, treasure box of wisdom, detailed psychology, and, last but not least, the source of their laughter and thoughtful understanding. They are not imaginary or whimsical, as we might think when we hear them; for both narrators and listeners, they are real happenings. Accordingly, as has been said as well,

Ever since the creation of myths, shamans have constantly enriched, polished and narrated them according to their wise insights, talents and experience in



order to cater to their gods and followers and enhance their practices of worship. Whenever they send up offerings to the gods, they chant the creation myths as the origin of things to entertain the gods and promote morality and virtue.

(Wu Baocai 1937)

Shaman myths have been collectively preserved in sacred chants and eulogies passed on orally from old shamans to new shamans, but to facilitate memorization, they were later collected and recorded in various forms of handwritten copies (Fu Yuguang and Meng Huiying 1982). In the epic *Umesiben Mama*, the story goes that the great shaman Umesiben had eighty-one (nine times nine) female shaman disciples distributed in eighty-one tribes. “She taught them to write down chants on bark cuttings or parchment lest they be forgotten with the passage of time. They used secret codes, drawing insects, birds, flying fish, etc.” (Fu Yuguang and Lu Liankun 2007). The inspired shamanic utterances that I collected were preserved in various written forms, some in old Manchu or modern Manchu, others in Mongolian, and still others in Manchu, but annotated with Chinese pinyin. Some elderly shamans could decipher creation oracles from carvings on sacred birch bark containers, such as “The land, the waters and human beings were born out of willow leaves (vulva).” With great skills in chant performance, they could bring to life tales from pictures and remember utterances passed down orally generation after generation. Some shamans are said to be able to give “thorough accounts of the tribes’ origins based on grooves and ridges” (Wu Baocai 1937).

The main contents of northern mythic chants and oracles fall into the following categories: the cosmic creation of the world, the creation of the human race, the origin of each tribe, myths interpreting natural changes, tales about souls and spirits of the other world or about plants and animals, myths of the underworld and demons and of objects possessed by spirits, and countless others. Interest in divine creation has been a passion of human beings, one that has never ceased since the dawning of religiousness and religious concepts: “Awed by the incomprehensible forces of nature, people build connections between them and human existence that give birth to theology as an interlinking chain of long stories” (Stiller 1980:226).

Some hold that belief in the creative activity of the gods ceased when human beings entered the threshold of civilization, but as long as religion has existed, creation myths have existed. When I visited the Manchu inhabitants of Jiutai (九台), near Jilin City, I came across a family named Shi, whose shamanic clan myths poured out as torrents. The Manchu become piously respectful when listening to such myths, even people in their forties who grew up after the foundation of New China. This shows the special charm of myth.

### ***Clan storytelling***

Chanting contests are commonly held annually in spring or on the occasion of the succession of family, clan, or tribal shamans, and this tradition has helped the preservation and spread of myths. Such contests are often a grand occasion that all

in the clan or tribe look forward to, as is documented in *Records of Khan Martyrs* (*Zhonglie hanwang shilu*) for those celebrated in the days of Wanyan Wushu, the Jurchen general and minister of the Jin dynasty. They traditionally include an oracle-proclamation contest and a god-summoning contest.

In the former, shamans narrate religious myths. Some eloquent shamans knew past and present history well and could tell stories of the origins of hundreds of tribes in great detail and good order, thus gaining applause from old and young alike. If they spoke of divine creativity, they could not only list hundreds of deities without a break but also narrate their best memorized myths without forgetting a word. They would chant tales from “War in Heaven,” which describes battles between gods and secrets of the divine world, along with numerous anecdotes and tales. The criteria in the contest are whether the stories have a good beginning and ending, whether they are told in clear and well-organized sequence, whether the description is vivid, whether the plots are lively and touching, and finally whether they help propagate the essence of shamanic belief. Some shamans can tell stories from morning till night, and the longer the story, the more excellent their art.

In the god-summoning contest, adept shamans would exhibit their lofty skills and supernatural powers in what is called shaman *ucun maksimbi* (shaman songs and dances). Each shaman has their own unique divine endowments and skills, and when a god descends on or possesses the shaman, the shaman can display all kinds of miraculous powers, such as diving in water for half a day, climbing to treetops and soaring over a gully like an ape, diving into a series of ice holes and emerging unharmed, pulling out trees like a bear, and so on. Sometimes, when a shaman is fully dressed in sacred ritual garments, with bells and tambourine, the outfit can weigh up to 100 *jin* (斤 = 12 kr), but they still need to chant and dance from morning till night, dusk till dawn. In introductory remarks to a shaman contest in *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao*, some shamans can

chant for three consecutive nights, but maintain a clear and sonorous voice, without messing up the lyrics. When later imitators try to do the same, they can only chant for less than a night, and then crawl to the ground, panting and almost dead.

Quite a number of Jurchen tribes “have held this grand celebration to entertain the people, with shamans competing in songs and dances.” Of course, this is not just recreational entertainment; it is beneficial in promoting shamanic worship and enhancing shamans’ skills to serve their tribe. At the same time, the contests help train the narrators and propagators of the tribe’s myths and promote the penetration of the myths into the corners of the most remote households, where old and young, female and male, can all to some extent retell them.

In the 1920s and 1930s, shaman storytellers Yuxiu (毓秀), Deshun (德顺), and many others propagated shaman beliefs in Bukui (卜魁, present-day Qiqihar), Ula, and Mukden (Manchu name for Shenyang) and participated in chant and shaman lore contests in Aihui County (爱辉县) on the banks of the Amur.<sup>2</sup> The great Daur shaman De of the Kunjiang (坤江) area, Oroqen shaman Mo, and Solon

(Ewenki) shaman Qi reportedly once joined a Hezhe shaman from upstream for a skill contest. The Manchu shaman Yuxiu did quite well, but the Oroqen, Solon, and Hezhe shamans reaped the championship. Because of the solemnity and liveliness of such competitions, they have been widely popular among the people. They constitute an important way, moreover, of passing shaman beliefs on to the next generation, and they have had an influence on people to this day.

I once had the good fortune to witness such contests in the Bilarlu clan of the Oroqen, who call them shaman bukan umu nates. They are held every three years, when shamans compete in singing, dancing, and displays of bravura and skill. Most shamans can read the weather, interpret the landscape, learn folk customs, and work magic feats which were previously incomprehensible for mountain people: a fired bullet reappears in the palm; a severed rubber band rejoins in the fist; deer-hide hairs cast on the ground fly away when touched; and so on.

According to a Manchu storyteller in Ning'an as recorded by Fu Yinren in *Collection of Manchu Myths and Legends* (*Manzu shenhua zhuanhuo xuanji*), "Teenage games often involve such skills as competing in sacred dance, inviting and chasing away spirits, chanting sacred songs, running races and engaging in various recreational activities." However, most of the tales listed in this book were narrated or chanted by old Ning'an shamans and heard by Fu Yinren when he was a young man. As he says in the preface to the collection,

Most of these venerable elders have passed away. Among them, three were famed great shamans in Ningguta (宁古塔) [Ning'an] who not only had a knowledge of Ningguta Manchu rituals on their fingertips, but also went to lecture and tell of them in Ula (乌拉) [Jilin City]. The venerable walking encyclopedia Fu Yongli (傅永利) and highly respected Mr. Shou, who was soaked in both Manchu and Chinese knowledge, as well as my own grandpa, grandma, grand-aunt, and mother, were all old shamans qualified to impart shaman lore and train disciples. These revered ancients were faithful followers of shaman teachings and knew legends and myths of the origins of the gods in and out.

(Fu Yinren 1985)

These simple but precise remarks once again attest to the fact that shamanic myths have commonly been orally inherited.

Northern ethnic groups have always been known for their tradition of singing and dancing, which they keep to this day. In the past, Manchu had their *ucun* (traditional songs), including *ucun hehe* (women's songs), *ucun uaha* (men's songs), and *ucun maksimbi* (songs and dances), and local Manchu used to perform *maksinbi* (shamanic dance). Their contests have unique features. People would perform different songs and dances on occasions, like the sacred tree sacrifice, fire sacrifice, willow sacrifice, and sea sacrifice, as well as weddings, funerals, the swearing of brotherhood or sisterhood, forming a liaison, celebrating a triumph or a good catch of fish, selecting the chief for a hunt, and so on.<sup>3</sup> The contestants dress up to play heroes and heroines of the myths, gods who are believed to have descended upon them, or grotesque figures like a fish or bird with a human head.

With all these deities and spirits dancing their own dances, the competition draws people into a fantastic world of gods.

Thousands of years of shamanic upbringing, along with the shaping force of the frigid climate, have endowed northern people with an unyielding character – extroverted, generous, optimistic, bold and unrestrained, straightforward, and passionate. In the face of danger and difficulties, they display their heroic endowments, never yielding, with the courage to topple mountains and overturn the sea. These qualities are expressed in their songs and tales of deities that punish the villain, praise the good, annihilate the wicked, support the upright, and benefit the multitude. Shamanic aphorisms echo such virtues, such as “Be like the elephant herd that choose to die for their den”; “Be like wasps with mangled bodies but hives intact”; and “Three strong men are the equal of a tiger.” The inculcation of such attitudes is the educational purpose of shaman tales of clan origins and age-old sayings that plant aspirations in people’s souls, and they have had a profound influence on not only the Manchu but peoples like the Oroqen, Ewenki, Hezhe, Xibe, Daur, and Mongols as well.

Some have attributed the tradition of clan storytelling to the tedious winters of northern China, when people had nothing to amuse themselves but telling stories. In fact, however, winter, with its snow and ice, was the golden season for northern people to display their valour and wisdom, with most sacrificial rites and ethnic sports games being held in winter – mountain climbing, skating, skiing, snow-leopard racing, net casting and ice fishing, wrestling, tracking down and capturing animals, elk riding, and moose or bear fighting. However, most singing and chanting activities are traditionally held in summer, which people thought was a bad time for hunting because the flourishing woods and underbrush blur one’s view, help wild beasts to hide and rear their young, and screen snakes, pythons, and other poisonous animals that pose unforeseeable threats. The mosquitoes and horse flies, moreover, are annoying for hunting.

Nevertheless, in both summer and winter, storytelling has been traditionally carried out by the clan chief, shaman, or respected elders as a recreational event. Old and young alike would gather to listen attentively in a room, shed, or traditional *sierranju* dwelling with the brazier fire blazing or in the wilderness around a bonfire. The storytellers could also be male or female, old or young, and the tales could be long or short, traditional or impromptu, but always passionate, unrestrained, and engaging. The elderly Daur storyteller Sajilahu never received formal schooling and just learned the Manchu language for one year with a tutor when he was eight. But ever after, he could read Manchu, Han, and Mongolian and recite ancient myths and legends concerning their customs, philosophical concerns, and morals. How could he come to tell so many stories? He once explained the following to a newspaper reporter

When I was young, there were many storytellers, and some could give translated versions of Manchu historical events. Whenever I heard such stories, I would always elbow my way into the crowd and listen with ears wide open until I could remember them by heart, word for word.

(E Lewen 1989)

At the original writing of this book in Chinese, Sajilahu was 72 years old but still able to tell stories with clear logic and vivid details. For his part, the Daur folk singer He Dezhi (何德志), was excellent at singing *zhaendale*, a form of straightforward Daur song. He was good at it because, it was said, "Since childhood, he loved learning singing skills and was bright enough to learn well after just a few repetitions." Daur lifestyle and sentiment also contributed to his great musical talent.

The Hezhe people love their singers of *yimakan* and *huli* (folktale), their *telungu* (folk singer), and ethnic storytellers. Two *yimakan* singers were active in the 1930s and 1940s, Guotuoli and Motee, from the latter of whom the famous Hezhe singer and bard Wu Liangui (吴连贵) learned his art. The Oroqen keep such traditions to this day. Scholars have noted that their epic *mosukun* has a similar pronunciation to *maksin*, which means "dance" in Manchu. The Oroqen storyteller Li Shuihua (李水花) says of the origin of the *mosukun* that "every day when it grew dark, hunters would gather together and chant and chat until midnight. If not so, how can the Oroqen be said to be so good at singing and dancing?" (Meng Shuzhen 1986:115).

What is rarely known, however, are the singing contests of the ancient Jurchen Donghai Weji tribes. As recorded in *Records of Grievances of the East Sea*, they held them on a grandiose scale twice a year after sea expeditions in the spring and autumn tidal seasons. After preliminary screening, contestants formed singing and dancing bands called *ucun zhuzi*. They would compete in costumes of gods and heroes, singing and dancing in imitation of the plots and actions of the myths and folktales. Tribespeople would come from afar on their moose, horses, or oxen or would gather with their families on large-wheel carts. They would drink around bonfires and enjoy a barbeque while watching the performance of each tribe. If excited, they could get up and sing and dance themselves. Sometimes the events became so popular that people waded long distances through the shoals or came on rafts along the coast. They would build scores of bonfires to attract forest rustics from hundreds of kilometres away to dance with them, waving their hands and shouting in unknown languages to add to the merriment. One of the myths that performers enacted would be how the East Sea goddess Aomu Mama led the fish gods to bless people with light and happiness. The goddess was beautiful and tender, and her dance imitated the "appearance of birds alighting, flapping their wings or whirling about; of fish schooling or slithering in the water; of naïve and charming roe deer or reindeer." Sometimes, several tribes joined in on a large scale to bring to life the creation myth of the fight between Abka Hehe and the demon Yeluli. The grandeur of the spectacle would be marvelled at even by today's audiences. Scholars tend to focus on southern peoples' song fests, but those of the Jurchen in the North commanded the same awe.

Also, Han culture and its myths penetrated into northern myths, enriching and nourishing them. Tombs from the Qin and Han dynasties have been excavated in as far north as Heilongjiang and Jilin. This means that northern China was home not only to Indigenous peoples but also to Han people who migrated to the area in ancient times. They coexisted, laboured, and shared with Indigenous peoples the same hostile weather on that fertile land. Han influence in the region has been

recorded since the era of Bohai (渤海), the Korean-Mohe empire in the North from 698 to 926. Called the prosperous state of East Sea, Bohai was established with a base on Han and Tang culture. The people of Liao and Jin, for their part, learned Han customs, and Buddhism was popular at that time. That 12th-century Jurchen Jin Emperor Shizong (世宗) emphasized the need to preserve Indigenous Jurchen customs is evidence that Han influence was strong at the time.

As an intertwined cultural complex, it was only natural that literary exchange and influence occurred between Han and northern mythic traditions. When Han culture was introduced on northern soil, Han classics and codes were on the compulsory reading list of Jurchen nobles, and Jin Shizong was a sinologist and poet of rhymed Chinese poetry. Jurchen myths experienced influences from both Han myths themselves and those of the Huaxia ancestral tribes of the Han that flourished along the Yellow River during the ancient Warring States Period (475–221 BCE). Among the Jurchen, Daur, Hezhe, and Xibe, myths and folktales have been widely memorized and told about the deified Eastern Han general Guan Yu (关羽, 160–220 CE).<sup>4</sup> Guan Yu was thus no longer only an authentic personage of Chinese history but also a deified figure that came to have typical northern characteristics. Myths concerning him were first recorded in the 14th-century Chinese historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*), but he became a key guardian deity of northern peoples, where he has been worshipped in shamanic traditions and folk culture as Guan Mafa. Later, as was noted in Chapter 1, he was worshipped in the palace *tangse* sacrifices of the Manchu Qing dynasty, as were Tathāgata and Avalokiteśvara.

Another example of such cultural overlapping can be found in myths of the netherworld. As was also noted in Chapter 1 of Volume 1, such myths are not basic to the religious culture of northern peoples. In its original form, northern shamanism involved a belief that people's souls do not die, but it did not have a concept of "the next world," where humans go after death; nor did it advocate belief in Yama, the king of hell, or netherworld myths. Through later contact with Han culture and the ideas of Buddhism and Taoism, such myths began to penetrate into northern shamanic myths. Figures of the ruler of the underworld Yama (阎罗王, Yanluo), judges of the underworld, and soul retrievers began to emerge in Manchu myths like "Shamaness Yinjiang" and other folk epics. In these mythical accounts, we find detailed depictions of Yama, with plotlines similar to those of Taoist and Han legends. With Han culture's taking a stronger grip on northern myths, storytellers began to tell more tales of gods of the underworld and ghosts. In modern times, Papa Dewu (德五爷), a storyteller in Dawujiazi Village on the banks of the Amur, specialized in the 1920s and 1930s in telling stories from the Han anthology *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi*) and telling other ghost stories. He could chant or narrate them for more than ten days on end during the period from the first lunar month to a few days before the spring ploughing season, and he attracted listeners not only from his own people but also from among the Manchu, Daur, Ewenki, and Oroqen, who would come on carts from 60 or 70 miles away to hear him. When the old bard passed away, a Manchu translation of the anthology was buried with him (Fu Xilu 1930a).

Still-another example of the influence of Han myths on the northern mythic tradition is the well-known legend of the benevolent Chinese dragon “Tailless Lao Li” (*Wuweiiba laoli*). Scholars debate the origin of this tale, but it was allegedly created by migrants from Shandong. In any case, it stands as undeniable proof of Han influence on northern myths. My years of investigations show, moreover, that the Han myths of “Nüwa Patching the Sky” (*Nüwa butian*, 女娲补天), “Great Yu Controlling the Waters” (*Dayu zhishui*, 大禹治水), “Yang Erlang Chasing the Sun and Shouldering Mountains” (*Yang erlang danshan gantaiyang*), and similar tales are known in every Manchu, Hezhe, and Daur household. “The East Expedition of Tang Emperor Taizong” (*Tangwang dongzheng*) enjoys such a great popularity as to be included in sacrificial rituals, most notably in the Manchu *jia* rites of Qing standard-bearers (*qiren*, 旗人), who were described in Chapter 6 of Volume 1.

On the whole, northern shamanic myths demonstrate strong multicultural features. Many of them need further comparative analysis to identify their particular features and trace them back to their origins. What complicates analysis, however, is the fact that in their dissemination over the centuries, the myths have been chanted by numerous ethnic groups, which has given rise to multiple versions that are constantly regenerated and polished with additions from other myths as peoples migrated and merged. Therefore, the notion that Chinese northern myths have a pure Indigenous origin is imprecise.

## 2.4 Northern creation myths

Most inspired shamanic utterances, whether in the original oral presentation or tribal records, begin with a prologue that takes the form of a creation myth and is commonly referred to as “Divine Origins” (神头), in Manchu *funcen uju* (ritual beginning). One must demonstrate pious respect for the past and gratitude for one’s ancestral legacy.

Myths of the creation of heaven and earth are referred to as Stems and Roots (*Fagen*, 发根) or simply Roots (Gen, 根) in common parlance and are similar to the records of creation of southern Chinese ethnic peoples. Our research shows that the most popular Manchu creation Roots can be found in “War in Heaven”; the unpublished *Ritual Schedules of the Fuca Clan* (*Fucha hala lixu tiaoshen lu*) recorded by my father, Fu Xilu; and the unpublished *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan* recorded by Wu Jixian (吴纪贤), noted earlier. The Wu clan myths were dictated by Wu’s father, the shaman Ulejunga. When he chanted or narrated the old myths, he mainly spoke Mandarin, but he embellished his accounts with Manchu-sounding words that could hardly be interpreted till this day. One *funcen uju* myth that he narrated invokes a Manni god:

*Mayiye, Mayiye,  
Huludunz habu Wuzhala re  
Niyelamu wesilin,  
Soolinde,  
Uzuj,  
Endugahaenaye.*



Wu thinks that Mayiye is the guardian hero god Manni (Manye), who is invoked as the primordial deity in charge of the chanting the clan's ancient myths and whose descent on the chanter enables them to tell divine tales. Wu says that the Manchu words that follow here refer to the local Wuzhala clan and mean something like "Let us piously invite the ancient divine bird Gasha to alight before our revered gods." In the chanting of creation myths, one should first invite Gasha ("bird" in Manchu) to recount the story. So birds are prominent in ancient Manchu shaman myths.

### ***Goddess creation myths***

As narrated by Wu's father, the "Divine Origins" prologue of the Wu clan addresses Gasha as

*Ambanha, whose spread wings can shield the firmament,  
And whose songs tell us of thunder and lightning.*

It then tells of the origin of the Goddess of Creation Geludun Mama:

*The first vine that bore the fruit of creation myths  
Was the green bough where the Golden Snake rested,  
And the most ancient Songs of Roots  
Were handed down by Gasha,  
Who sailed 99,000 birthdays  
To learn them from Geludun Mama.  
Many a year ago,  
As ancient as the days of the void,  
When no ice or snow could be found,  
And no river flowed or mountain stood high,  
When everywhere was cloaked in white mist,  
When water droplets floated about and mist clothed the firmament,  
When no sign of life could be sensed for thousands of years,  
And no trace of creatures could be told for ten thousands of years –  
Mayiye, Mayiye –*

*The world thus existed for years of unknown number,  
For no one could remember the time and year.  
Geludun Mama was born with a beam of light,  
Lo! She had nine heads and eight arms,  
And her nine pairs of eyes blazed and penetrated the mist.  
Her nine mouths blew out puffs of her breath that drove away the mist,  
And her eight arms held eight torches  
Which she kindled by striking against stones –  
White stones,  
Black stones,*

*Red stones,  
 Blue stones,  
 Green stones;  
 Stones that glittered,  
 Stones that were hard,  
 Stones that were soft.  
 Fire from the eight torches boiled the mist and waters,  
 Mayiye, Mayiye –  
 Some of the mist floated into the sky,  
 Some sank to the earth.  
 The light mist formed clouds,  
 The heavy mist formed mountains.  
 Geludun Mama of nine heads and eight arms  
 Set fire to the mountains, which then became soil,  
 Blew out puffs of breath on it, and woods and grasses sprang up.  
 She thus created the heaven and the earth,  
 Geludun Mama –  
 With a Gasha as her divine father  
 Come from the East Sea.  
 Mayiye, Mayiye – ho –  
 Ludunzhabu Wuzhala re – Geludun Mama ye  
 Minggan jalafun,  
 Tumen jalafun,  
 Shanyan shanyan weceku,  
 Mayiye, Mayiye –  
 Ma-yi-ye.*

Creation myths commonly eulogize the goddess of creation Geludun Mama. Homophones of *geludun* are found in many sacred lyrics, such as *uldun* (sunshine, aurora), and these point to her identity as the mother goddess of the sun. Her eight arms are often depicted in rock paintings as sunrays, and some of her icons are shaped like petals, which are hung in the west room of the house or facing the east, symbolizing sunlight and life. Her nine heads are depicted as joined by a golden ribbon symbolizing her multiple arms and light.



People believe that she is immortal – *minggan jalafun* or *tumen jalafun*, meaning “longevity.” This “Divine Origins” myth echoes the popular Han creation myth about Pangu (盘古), the mythic first living being and creator of everything. As recounted in the 3rd-century CE *Records of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors* (*Sanwu liji*), it begins as follows: “At the beginning, heaven and earth were in a chaos that looked like a chicken egg, out of which was born the giant Pangu,” who lived to be “eight or ten thousands of years old.” In shaman myths, too, heaven and earth look like a chicken egg, with the chaos appearing as “white mist.” In the Manchu creation myth “War in Heaven,” the heaven and the earth are like “water that is constantly overflowing.” Myths of the Huaxia (华夏) ancestors of the Han do not specify whether the god of creation Pangu is male or female, but in the shaman tradition, Geludun Mama is a goddess of creation, which points to the early worship of female deities and indicates that shamanism was formed during ancient matrilineal society. Signs of embellishment by later generations, however, are found in the colours and textures of the stones, which seem beyond the capacity of the primitive imagination and must have been added later.

The “Divine Origins” of the Fuca clan recorded in *Ritual Schedules of the Fuca Clan* were chanted by Fu Qiye (富七爷) in 1963 in Sunwu County (孙吴县) on the Amur. They eulogize the creation goddess Aoyazun in ways similar to the above Wu myth praising Geludun:

*Kalebenluye, kalebenluye –  
Luyelu, luyelu –  
When heaven and earth first sprung up,  
Aoyazun Mama with nine heads,  
Aoyazun Mama of Wuyunwuzhu,  
Airy lightness and a heavy mass separated heaven and earth,  
Divine stones of nine colors penetrated the clouds,  
Bringing light to the human world.  
The divine stones of Aoyazun  
Became stars when shattered,  
Her hair became the rainbow,  
Her beads of sweat poured onto the earth as rain and rivers,  
Her nine hands became myriad mountain ridges,  
Stretching as far as the eyes can see.  
Luyelu, Luyilu –  
On the mountain ridges grew elms and willows,  
And with the breezes came flying birds and insects,  
Chirping and croaking.*

Like the Wu clan myth praising Geludun, the Fuca myth celebrates the mother creation goddess of light and the sun with nine heads and arms (or hands), and it, too, speaks of divine stones which turn into stars and celebrates the goddess for bringing all things into being: heaven and earth, mountains and rivers.

This ancient mother creation goddess seems also to appear in the personally preserved chants of the great Daur shaman, Wu Degen (吴德根) of Aihui County on the banks of the Heilong River:

*Yimuya, yiya,  
Tenggele Maoya Nala Mamayi-  
Brought light to thousands of generations.*

Tenggele means “heaven”; *nala* means “sun”; and *Maoya*, a Jurchen word, could refer, like *Geludun* and *Aoyazun*, to the mother creation goddess. In any case, the Daur also believe that this creation deity is the goddess of light or the sun and so affix *Nala Mamayi* to the deity *Maoya*. Similar accounts exist in Oroqen chants, where the creation goddess was originally called *Aolun Mama* and had the care of sheds but later acquired divinity after flying to the moon and is thus a goddess who brings light.

In the early myths of Manchu and Jurchen tribes, the creation deity is called *Aolusio Mafa*, who is eulogized in a Manchu *Na* and *Xu* clans’ version of the myth of “Divine Origins” from the late 19th century. In “An Ode on the Divine Sparrow” included in the myth, *Aolusio Mafa* disperses the hazy mist with beams of light, separates heaven and earth with fiery stones, and then goes on to create mountains and rivers. In these myths, however, the creation deity is depicted as male, which means that not all such shamanic deities are female. In some stories, moreover, some female deities gradually become male, which indicates that some creation myths came into being fairly late or, like the myths of the *Wu* and *Fuca* clans, are later altered versions of the original. This gives evidence that when the worship of patriarchal ancestors took dominance in religious activities, the gender of the deities changed to suit people’s expectations.

I heard a slightly different version of the “Divine Origins” in 1980 in the *Namdulu Hala* in *Hunchun*, far-eastern *Jilin* Province, as the prologue to a *beideng* ritual (背灯祭), the Manchu rite held at night with all the lights out. It began by inviting the *Aoluwen* mother goddess to descend to the shrine: “*Eyiye, Eyiye, Namdulu Hala erinde, Aoluwen Mama Enduri solimbi,*” *Aoluwen* apparently being a phonetic variant of the *Fuca* light-bearing goddess *Aoyazun*. Myths change with time, but in remote areas as here, they are readily handed down in their ancient form. Thus, *Aoyazun*, though in some clans male, is here and in the general version preserved by the majority of clans in the area still the light-bearing creation goddess.

Due to many social ups and downs, the “Divine Origins” prologues of many clan oracles have been greatly simplified, as in the *Shi*, *Luo*, *Guan*, *Yang*, *Lang*, *Qi*, *Zhao*, and *He*. I found that none of their shamans could follow the lyrics, and some did not even understand the term “divine origins,” let alone recount the ins and outs of the storylines. Some clans still believe in creation goddesses, but their “Divine Origins” prologues are reduced to just one or two lines roughly translated from the original languages: “The earth and the sky were separated, one was airy light and the other dense” or “The earth and the sky were separated, and there

was the clear and the turbid. The stars and moon were in the sky and the rivers, and mountains were on the earth.” In any case, primitive belief that a goddess created the world can be dated back to matriarchal society as early as perhaps ten thousand years ago, when tribal religious awareness apparently began to flourish in northern China.

### ***Animal creation myths***

Beliefs that the earth has undergone periods of flood that did great harm to all creatures on earth are reflected not only in Norse myths and Hebrew myths but also in those of the Huaxia ancestors of Han Chinese. After the recession of believed flooding, a rich cornucopia of revival myths arises in China that forms other types of creation myths, including widespread myths of the creation of the world by animal deities. In the sacred book of the Seven Hulun Clans from Emperor Guanxu’s reign at the end of the 19th century, there is a typical myth of this type called *fuhe xengge* (creation spirit) about the seal god. One excerpt reads as follows:

A long, long time ago, there was water on the earth and water in the heavens. Seas and water were everywhere, with waves and tides glistening like sacred mirrors. In this chaotic scene, nothing could survive; men and women struggled hard, but just drifted on and on, finding nowhere to live. From afar, however, there came the seal god, who bore them to safety on his back. Blessed in this way by the gods, people found mountain caves in which to live and procreate.

Another such myth, the Manchu myth of Baiyun Gege, has been widespread along the Amur River. It eulogizes the magpie deity for saving the world, the main storyline going as follows:

Legend has it that when heaven and earth were first separated, heaven mingled with water, and the water married heaven. Heaven was yellow; the earth, white. The world was gradually filled with humans, birds, fish, beasts, and insects, but it soon got flooded. The rains poured down continuously from heaven for 3,336 days until all the land was covered with water and angry white torrents that almost reached the sky. Look at the people, the birds and the animal! Together, they drifted on the torrents, none having time to conspire against or hurt anyone else. All were struggling and howling in despair in the black currents. Seeing such a pathetic scene, benevolent magpies with a colored neck sent up their sorrowful cries to Heaven, inviting Baiyun Gege, the youngest daughter of the god of Heaven Abka, to save creatures. Without asking for her stern father’s consent, she cast tree sprouts onto the earth, and soon thousands of giant trees appeared in the water. People carved the trees into *weihū* (canoes) to escape their plight; birds began to build nests in the tall trees, flying about with twigs in their beaks, and insects and beasts climbed onto logs and drifted to remote areas. What about the remaining branches?

They took root in shallow sand flats and slowly, slowly grew into the dense Pine Weji [forest] of the Khingan Range [of the Amur region].

Polished over the centuries by generations of chanters, this myth focuses on the lord of heaven Abka, but with elements of the ancient flood myth.

In many northern creation myths, animals are the protagonists, because people in the North, due to their long history of hunting and fishing, came to praise and worship animals, and they created many interesting imaginative legends about them. The people respect hedgehogs, ancient animals that have existed for hundreds of thousands of years. Myths recount how it was the hedgehog that fed the first human couple with fruits stuck on their spines when they were saved by the seal god in the flood. Another myth has it that the eagle goddess nursed the first shamaness, but when Eagle Mama was away, hedgehogs shielded the baby girl from harm from poisonous creatures and wild beasts. The hedgehog is actually the heavenly goddess Ningge Mama, the messenger of heaven who monitors earth tremors. After returning to heaven, she became the Hedgehog Star (Cassiopeia), who guards families and households. On cold, snowy winter days, she guides the sun goddess Sūn Gege, mentioned in Chapter 2 of Volume 1, to appear in the sky and warm the earth with the sun's rays.

Fossils excavated in 1963 in Antu County (安图县), Jilin Province, indicate that the area was home to Palaeolithic animals such as mammoths and woolly rhinoceroses. It proved that these animals were distributed throughout the entire northeast region of China (Jiang Peng 1979). In northeastern creation myths, bizarre animal spirits thus appear, some exceedingly large and powerful, others with inexhaustible strength, and still others that are able to pull out trees and destroy all vegetation. Some ethnic groups regard such spirits as evil demons, whose frightening power entranced shamans magically exhibit. The Manchu Tong and Hu clans have traditionally worshipped the great hero god Manni, or Malu, whose spirit idol, however, as was noted in Chapter 3 of Volume 1, sometimes has a monstrous appearance. This deity possesses unparalleled power and sometimes fiercely devours humans and beasts. Such ferocious mythic figures may well represent remnants of ancestors' fear of ancient giant mammoths.

Myths with monsters as heroes or creators of the world are widespread among the Oroqen and Ewenki, and in a lyric of the Manchu Xu clan, there is the monstrous lord Amban (Amban meaning "high official"), who with the horn on his head is able to dig ditches, cultivate the land, and pile stones into mountains. Once, a mountain that he built was so high that it collapsed and toppled on him, burying him deep in the soil. The earth where he was buried swelled day by day until it became a mountain, but he sank deeper and turned into white stones. His descendants lived on a stone quarry at the foot of the mountain for hundreds of generations. In an Oroqen myth of the glacier age preserved in a lyric of the Manchu Irgen clan, the god Manni bored into the earth with his long horn and huge tusks to turn the gravel, such that the earth began to have valleys where roe deer grew.

Some myths eulogize bird gods as creator deities. Such are the myths of the Kanggata and Hexeri clans. The mythic "giant birds" (*dalishengniao*, 大力神鸟)

are commonly white water fowl, small but with the power to shoulder 1000 *jin*. When they descend on shamans, the shamans are thought to be able to carry 1000 *jin* of earth and stones with the aid of a shoulder pole while running as if flying or climbing tall trees. In shaman lore, white water fowl deities have a share in creating the universe. At that time, torrential currents were rising unabated. They carried stones to build a terrace, and a Manni god and Jabjan (python) god continued the work, building the terrace higher and higher until it was able to serve as a human habitat. For her part, the Eagle Mama nursed the first shamaness, who was protected against the lashes of wind and rain not only by the hedgehog god as mentioned previously but also by the white water fowl goddess as a mothering deity who aids shamans. The two bird icons on the shoulders of some shaman costumes are designed as a resting place for the water fowl goddess. Like the eagles on shaman headdresses, such icons are commonly seen on the shaman costumes of the Manchu clans of the Donghai Weji tribe, the Qiakala, the Heishui Jurchen, and the Oroqen, Ewenki, and Daur peoples. They make the shaman appear solemn and ominous.

### ***Myths of the creation of human beings***

Tales of the creation of human beings constitute a large proportion of northern myths. Out of their humble attempts to interpret the mysteries of phenomena and on the basis of their particular living conditions and modes of thought, the peoples of the North created many appealing mythical accounts of the origin of the human race. According to one Oroqen myth, in primordial times, humans and animals looked much the same, with two legs but no knees, all covered with hair and wearing no clothes. Living on raw mushrooms and sucking the syrup flowing from birch trees, these were the early Oroqen people (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986c). In another myth, the great god of heaven Enduri made human beings out of clay, along with all creatures that breathe. For the first batch of humans, Enduri mixed flesh with the clay. The humans could breathe but were unable to walk. On his second attempt, the god put bones in the flesh and clay, and lo, they could now both breathe and walk. In still-another version, tens of thousands of years ago, a volcanic eruption incinerated some people, and a flood drowned many others. There survived only one man and one woman, or in other accounts one man and a cat which later turned into a woman, and they had offspring. Another legend has it that in early times in the dense forest, there lived alone an old woman. One day, a kindly spirit turned into a monkey and came into the cave where she lived. They slept together, and a son and daughter were the fruit of their union. The brother and sister married, and the Oroqen are their descendants.

An Oroqen creation myth recounted by Mo Qingyun (莫庆云) and Che Jingzhen (车景珍) of Aihui County has it that many, many years ago, the Great Enduri saw that there were no humans on the earth, just wild animals. So he made a batch of humans out of elm bark and armed them with clubs and stones to attack wild beasts. They scared many beasts away, and what they killed served as meat



for their food. Ever since then, humans have grown in number, but animals have dwindled. One might ask, how did women first come to be separate from men? Legend has it that Enduri first made ten men out of a mixture of animal and bird flesh and feathers. He then thought of making women in the same way but found that he was running out of meat and feathers, so he had to make women out of clay. Made of clay as they were, however, they were too feeble to take up any work. Enduri then picked fruits from the trees and stuffed them into their mouths. Their skin turned tender and fresh, their movements became agile and flexible, and their strength increased considerably. No matter the job, they could do it better than men. This caused a complaint among the men, who protested to Enduri. The Great Enduri then bestowed on each man an arrow, and since then, they became hunters.

In an Ewenki version of human origins, a white-haired woman living near where the sun rose had a pair of giant breasts with which she nursed all creatures and bestowed on the people of the earth baby girls and baby boys. Some say that their birth was inspired by the Big Dipper and that they were given longevity by the Winnowing Basket (Sagittarius) (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986a). This accounts for the Ewenki tradition of offering sacrifice to the Big Dipper at the time of the Spring Festival. Another myth has it that long, long ago, the earth would collapse every now and then, though nobody was able to predict when. This happened so often that it never ceased collapsing. With each catastrophic collapse, creatures suffered greatly, until in the end only one man and one woman survived, who became the ancestors of later generations.

According to still-another Ewenki legend, there lived on the edge of the earth an old lady who always held a big dustpan. When she shook it, a gale would blow over the earth. Some say, too, that there was a great goddess called Bolugen Baksi who made humans and other objects on earth out of clay. In this way, human beings and all the objects that humans use came into being. Soon, however, she was on the point of using up all the clay and could make nothing else. By chance, she came to know that the remaining clay was under the belly of a huge turtle. Thanks to the heroic shamaness Nisang, who shot the turtle by using her arrows, the goddess could continue her creative work round the clock with her newly found clay. Since then, the earth became populated with men and women and numerous species and genera of animals. The four stout legs of the turtle turned into four pillars to support the boundless heaven, such that heaven and earth became separated. The only problem was that its four legs would become tired and once in a while, the turtle would relax a bit. When it then shook its gigantic body, it caused the earth to tremble and tumble, sometimes causing a great flood to gush out of the earth. Earthquakes, too, are said to be caused in this way.

Some tell still-another tale of the origin of humans: one day in the remote past, a fox came to be the companion of a hunter who lived by a big river and cooked for him. The fox gradually transformed into a beautiful maiden who married the hunter, and from their marriage, ten children were born, each having a special skill and all living together in harmony, speaking the same language. One day, a god who was making his routine inspection of the world turned into a giant pillar, which

everybody climbed. When they were about to reach the top, however, they all fell off in different directions. Since then, people began to speak different languages.

According to a Daur myth, in early times, human beings didn't have knees. Their legs were thus quite flexible, and they were able to run both backwards and forwards. They had inexhaustible energy, moreover, and they could outrun speedy animals like deer or hares and catch tigers, leopards and boars, which they killed with clubs and stones, so they did not have to resort to arrows or spears. Soon, however, the wild beasts protested bitterly to Enduri. They said if nothing was done to stop humans from preying on them, animals would all die out. Enduri then threw a saucer-like bone against humans' knees. The bone took root on their knees so that they couldn't run as fast as before and lost the ability to run backwards. It was also said that Enduri sent to the human world parchments with languages written on them that he put in trunks made of the wood of pine, birch, willow, or apricot trees or of tin, copper, iron, silver, or gold. When the ship carrying the trunks was crossing the sea, it suddenly met a gale and capsized in the torrents. The trunks made of wood all drifted on the waves until they reached shore and were picked up and used by human beings. However, the trunk containing the Daur language was made of iron. It was too heavy to float and so sank deep into the sea (Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 1986b). That accounts for the loss of Daur written script.

The Manchu have a myth that says that after the goddess Aoyazun created the rivers and mountains, she began to shape humans out of yellow clay. After she finished her work, she dried the figures under the sun, but soon it began to rain, so she had to quickly gather them all up. In her haste, some humans had their legs or eyes damaged. That is why in this world we have disabled people. Another Manchu legend says that when the first shamaness was nursed by the eagle goddess Gege, she was protected by that deity at night and by the hedgehog deity during the day, and she fed on bits of fruit from the beak of the white water fowl. When the little shamaness grew tall enough, the supreme god of heaven Abka Enduri bestowed on her divine powers. Suddenly, however, the god noticed that there were no human beings on earth. He summoned the white water fowl to fetch small green willow sprouts from the East Sea to feed the little shamaness. The white water fowl flew and flew for thousands of kilometres. On her flight, she met storms and high seas but wouldn't give up until she had reached the eastern shore, exhausted, where she hurriedly plucked willow sprouts and hastened to the girl. On returning from a visit to the mother goddess of heaven Abka Hehe, the eagle goddess Gege found that the white water fowl had fed the little shamaness with the sprouts but that the girl was so pleased with them that she had grabbed them all up and eaten them. Startled, the eagle goddess Gege picked up a few remnant leaves but found that they were not small green sprouts but rather big yellow willow leaves. In any case, as a consequence of the little shamaness' eating all the leaves, descendants of shamans were no longer all benevolent white shamans; instead, some were wicked black shamans. Since then, some shamans would dedicate themselves to clan interests, but others would work as sorcerers or witches who served demons and beguiled humans.

Finally, according to myths of the Qiakala descendants of the Udege tribe of the ancient Jurchens, in the early days on the vast land of northeastern China where they settled, all kinds of trees, flowers, and herbs grew and all kinds of animals ran about. In the ancient woods lived an old woman who grew so lonely that she began whittling humans of wood with her stone knife. She took them out to dry, and lo and behold, the sun's rays brought them to life. This accounts for the creation of human beings, old and young alike. Most Manchu creation myths are mixed with their particular tribal myths, and some are still chanted today.

## Notes

- 1 The myths are recorded in *Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shanhai jing)*, *Writings of the Huainan Masters (Huainanzi)*, and so on.
- 2 Such contests have been recorded in the unpublished notes of the author's father, Fu Xilu 富希陆 *Ritual Schedules of the Fuca Clan* and the unpublished manuscript of Wu Ji Xian 吴纪贤, *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan*.
- 3 Detailed descriptions can be found in *Records of Grievances of the East Sea*, *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao*, and *Legend of General Sabusu*.
- 4 Such are the Manchu *Legend of Guan Mafa* and *The Descent of Guan Mafa to Save the Jurchen*.

### 3    **The Manchu creation myth** **“War in Heaven”**

Among northern peoples, mythic tales about a fierce fight at the origin of the universe are widespread. The episodic tales contained in the Manchu “War in Heaven” (*Tiangong dazhan*) provide us with detailed descriptions of the actions of heaven and the gods involved in the creation of the earth and the universe in an important popular myth in the oral tradition. They narrate the intense strife and subtle balance between good and evil, light and darkness, and survival and destruction that northern shamanism imagines as having taken place in a life-or-death struggle between conflicting forces at the beginning of the world – the final victory going to the good, the true, the beautiful, and the light, to make it possible for all creatures to live and prosper. Expressed in mythic tales that have been handed down from generation to generation, the main theme is positive and inspiring. The work promotes the pioneering spirit nurtured by the hazardous environment of humanity’s childhood, during which the slightest manifestation of cowardice or intimidation would render human existence impossible. Exactly such unfaltering courage and valour nourished early northern peoples and provided them with an impetus for survival in fights against hostile forces of nature. The major adversary in the thousands of years of the northern shamanic tradition is Yeluli, a devil that represents the strongest and most irresistible of natural threats. This name of the devil exists not only in Tungus languages but can also be traced back to Turkic and can be found in Northern European languages. In prehistoric times, weak human beings would, no doubt, panic in the face of phenomena like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and rampaging floods. To understand such unpredictable perils and find some consolation and muster strength in the face of them, people gave them subjective, highly personified explanations. They believed, as Darwin wrote, that “all natural objects and forces have life and the power to generate life because of the intervention of an original spirit force” (Darwin 1983:140). In northern China, this belief is presented in the tales of “War in Heaven,” which depict the mythic conflict of two opposing creative forces, Abka Hehe and Yeluli, as patterned on conflicts found in real human relationships. The good is embodied in the goddess Abka Hehe, the almighty, unsurpassable representative of all positive natural forces, along with the spirits of tribal chiefs and animal and plant spirits that contribute to human livelihood. Yeluli, her wicked counterpart, is the caster of epidemics, calamities, and sudden natural disasters such as mountain slides and cave-ins, thunder storms and tsunamis.

The oral transmission of the tales of "War in Heaven" among various northern ethnic groups, the original name of the power of evil in such sun god myths, Yeluli, proceeded along the following course:

Yeluli – Yelesi – Mangsi – Mangus – Mangni – Mangli – Manggaili – Mang-  
gaisi – Manggini – Manggai – Manghu – Mahu – Mahuli – Mahuzi.

I believe that the currently used name, Yeluli, probably reverted back to the original name after experiencing these transformations in the linguistic evolutions and migrations of the peoples in the region. In any case, the symbolic meaning of the various names is identical, meaning "evil" or "devilish."

### 3.1 Mythic shrine tales, Weceku Uleben

In the ancient Tungus language, the "War in Heaven" myths themselves are called Weceku Uleben. Weceku means "divine shrines" or "memorial tablets," and *uleben* is a storytelling tradition. So Weceku Uleben literally means "shrine tales" – shamanic myths, divine oracles, and accounts. As used here, the term "myth" refers not to the literary genre but to its original denotation as a form of oracle transmitted to believers as the words of a deity in a solemn religious message that commands respect and awe. In the past, the sublime and sacred matters of the gods could not be preached or chanted by ordinary people. They could be transmitted only by the highest priest figure in charge of religious matters, the venerable amban mafa (grand shaman); under their guidance, only the tribal khan or *mukūnda* (subtribal chieftain) was endowed by gods with the authority to narrate the stories of the oracles.

Scattered throughout the folk cultures of northern peoples are numerous well-developed and reshaped tales that originated in Weceku Uleben, either as whole stories or parts of a story. Enriched by their inclusion in various folk cultures, these reshaped versions bear one particular feature: they have lost their original strong religious colouring and, for better or worse, have become more intimately connected with the local people and their daily reality.

As to the origin of the tales in "War in Heaven," elders of the Fuca Hala of Dawujiazi Village, Aihui (爱辉) County recalled to my father, Fu Xilu, in the 1930s that in the early days of the Republic of China an old man named Fu Decai (富德才) dreamt of catching nine black snakehead fish with his fishing rod in the Amur River. When he woke up, he ran around his house in a frenzy attempting to find the fish, and to everyone's surprise, he actually found nine snakeheads alive in a wooden tub outside the house. In the north, such fish are deemed to be unlucky: the sight of one of them means a lean year for fishing. Fu Decai said that in his frenzy the fish had led him to see a white-haired lady in the river, who orally imparted to him the tales of the nine episodes of "War in Heaven." Ever since, he was able to tell the tales in a trance state with details that were more vivid than in shamans' written texts. So even shamans respected and honoured him. This legend can also be found among the Oroqen and the Solon subgroup of the Ewenki.

While teaching at Siji Village Primary School, Sunwu County, Heihe, on the banks of the Amur in those years of the puppet Manchukuo period,<sup>1</sup> my father, along with Wu Jixian, collected Weceku Uleben tales chanted as oracles by shamans in Aihui and Sunwu counties. They recorded a version of the tales narrated by a Manchu shaman of Siji Village known as "White Mongolian" (original name unknown). Because he was good at trapping roe deer, and a good drinker too, he had this nickname, which pointed to his excellent hunting skills. Later, he grew addicted to opium, and Wu Jixian burnt opium for him. When smoking it, he would grow excited, and after being coaxed several times, he gave his account of the oracles. Wu kept coaxing him and my father, Fu Xilu, kept recording. So their joint efforts made it possible for this precious account to be enjoyed by later generations. However, some of the records are unintelligible, due to improper preservation. Some were stained by water, and others went mouldy. What's worse, bandits in the Heihe area plundered the people, causing several episodes to be lost. Nonetheless, Fu Xilu carefully preserved the rest.

At that time, most Manchu of the region spoke Mandarin, and Wu and Fu were excellent at ancient Chinese. They believed that the Manchu name Weceku Uleben (shrine tales) was not catchy, so they changed the title to "War in Heaven," in accordance with the main plot and in line with similar titles coined by others after the myths became widespread among the people, such as *War between Deities and Demons* (*Shenmo dazhan*), *The Heavenly Deities' Battle with Yeluli* (*Tianshen huizhan yeluli*), *The Story of Boodein Emu*, and so on. An anthology of folktales later included "War in Heaven," and it also became popular southeastern Heilongjiang in Ning'an, where the local version was "passed on orally by the Manchu Fu, Guan and Zhao clans and was very popular" (Ning'an Folk Literature Editorial Committee 1987).

The 1984 anthology *Buryat-Mongol Folk Tales* (*Buliyate menggu minjian gushi*), also includes many of the episodes of "War in Heaven." Many of the stories are fantastic and miraculous, such as that of the multiheaded demon Manggus, commonly called "The Story of Conquering Manggus." The introduction to this anthology follows:

In this world of fantasy, all that could be imagined is expressed realistically in clashes with nature or within society. In the tales, the generous and benevolent Buryat people behave just as they wish. They can transform into other beings, touch the clouds on their flying blanket, tap the ocean floor, walk on the moon, return from the world of the dead, shuttle at will between the sun and moon, communicate with all animals freely, and even disguise their human appearance like the god of the Underworld.

(Hao Sumin and Xue Shoubang et al. 1984:4)

The original mythic tales of "War in Heaven" were popular among the Heishui (Black River) Jurchen tribes of the Amur, who founded the 10th-century Jin dynasty. Legend has it, moreover, that soldiers of the Eight Banners sent to defend the border during the reign of Qing Emperor Kangxi (康熙, 1654–1722) were

stationed along the right bank of the Sahaliyan (Heilong River) River, where they fought many battles against Russia, such as the Yakesa Campaign of 1685–1687. At that time, there was a shamaness called Boodein Emu (mother), who was often seen on a white reindeer with full, nine-tined antlers. She travelled from village to village to cure and treat people and was sometimes seen wading the torrents. She was said to be able to make predictions according to a wad of white deer hair blown into the air. She made a pair of *ciyalaci* (wood clappers) from sturgeon bones, and playing them, she would chant, dance, and stroll among the people, sometimes telling stories for three days on end. The tales of Weceku Uleben were, reportedly, directly inherited from her.

Elders well versed in the Manchu language have said that Boode Yinmu means “shaman who has passed away,” but that the name may also suggest that the tales are myths passed on by her soul in shrine oracles. White-haired Boodein Emu was a goddess of song, dance and memory, a combination of Terpsichore and Mnemosyne of Greek myths. So there are many myths about her. Legend has it when she possessed a shamaness who delighted in singing and dancing, she would sometimes sing on and on till daybreak. Her voice was sweet and her songs melodious. When she sang, she knew no fatigue, and she preferred to dance as she sang rather than stay still. She would keep the beat with wooden sticks and stones to create beautiful melodies, and she could mimic the chirping of wild sparrows so well that no one could tell the difference. She could dance while riding a hog, and the startled hog couldn’t shake her off. What stunned people most was that if you asked a shaman possessed by her for anecdotes or lost tribal memories, she could pour out answers nonstop, with exact descriptions and times. In the past, when shamans wanted to know about the location of a lost item, the forgotten location of an ancestral grave or stream of their ancestral homeland, lost names of family ancestors, or doubts about blood relationships, they would invite the white-haired goddess Boodein Emu to possess them or descend upon their shrine to give them clues. She has thus been doubly respected among the Manchu for her lively song and accurate memory.

The White Mongolian of Siji Village used to say that he learned the Weceku Uleben tales from such a white-haired lady, who also recalls the shamaness in the *Legend of General Sabusu* who was popular among the Manchu. It tells the story of a general named Sabusu who defended the Amur borders, and in it, there is a solitary white-haired shaman called Boodein Emu who rode her deer as she wandered along the banks of the Amur. No one could tell her exact age; nor could anyone tell exactly where she went. She would chant *uleben* tales, clapping fish bones in her hands and dancing to the rhythm. People respected her and called her Mani Mama. Many legends about her were still told by elders in the Manchuria period, including stories of her curing the sick and helping the needy, and one of these elders was the White Mongolian. When people asked him about the mentor who taught him the tales, he only answered that his *sefu* (teacher) learned them in dreams from a white-haired lady.

The Weceku Uleben tales are influenced by Buddhism and Taoism and embody numerous oracles and auguries. They have been recorded in a disorganized



fashion in Chinese in *Collection of Ancient Northern Myths*, but they were originally chanted in the Manchu language. In Manchu, they have a strong beat and cadence that conveys deep emotions. The whole body of tales as they appear in “War in Heaven” is divided into episodic segments called *fiyelen*, which basically means “several times” or “several episodes” in the Jurchen dialect and represents the order of prayers. When the first *fiyelen* was narrated in Manchu, it reportedly would intoxicate listeners, drawing them into the treasured past of their people. Because the original chanting amounted to an impromptu recollection of the plot, the content is a bit inconsistent and contains few concrete details.

### 3.2 The White Mongolian’s “War in Heaven”

The nine *fiyelen* of Weceku Uleben as narrated by the White Mongolian and recorded by Fu Xilu and Wu Jixian are as follows.

#### *Fiyelen I*

From the lower east stream of Sahaliyan (Amur), riding her sacred deer of nine tines came the *saman* (shaman) Boodein Emu. When the rosy clouds glistened in the sky, when the waves shimmered on Sahaliyan, a carp of golden wings was blown down in the wind, and a silver reptile came crawling out on his four legs from his tree den. No one could tell which goddess was in charge, and no one could tell what year it was. From far downstream east of Sahaliyan emerged the shaman Boodein Emu on her sacred deer of nine tines. She was more than a hundred years old, but glowing with a healthy hue; white hair she had but appeared with a youthful poise. The eagle deity gave her power; the fish deity taught her swimming; Abka Hehe gifted her with longevity; a hundred birds taught her to sing; and an animal deity gave her mount to her. She had a hundred spells to repel evil, a hundred ways to predict disasters. Her *ciyalaci* passed on to her the divine oracles of the gods. Her love of her kin was as bright as the beams spread over the earth by the sun deity in the east.

#### *Fiyelen II*

What first came into being in this world? What was the world like many, many years ago? It was all bubbles of water at the beginning – no earth, no heaven. The earth was like the heaven and the heaven was like the earth – all overflowing. Gradually, the bubbles increased and expanded until from one bubble there came into being Abka Hehe. At first as tiny as the bubble, she grew bigger as the bubbles expanded. Where there was water, there she was; where there was a bubble, there she was. When small, she could be as small as a tiny droplet; when big, she rose higher than the sky. Finally she became the sky itself. She could be as light as floating vapour; she could be as heavy as lead and sink deep into the waters. She was omnipresent and omnipotent. Her physical body could be recognized by none; only through liquid dewdrops could she be discerned as a beam of divine

light of seven colours – white or bright, azure or dark blue. From her breath, she gave birth to all creatures; from her light, she generated all things; from her body, she brought to life the whole universe.

The empty universe was soon filled with all creatures, and soon the world was separated into airy lightness and a dense mass, the light ascending and the mass alighting on the earth. The brightness rose, the haze sank, and there came into being the upper and lower worlds. Then Abka Hehe split from her lower body to give birth to the earth goddess Banamu Hehe. In this way, what was a bright airy glow became the sky, and what was dense haze became the earth. From then on, humankind had the two sister goddesses to worship. What was glowing clear became the air; what was white and bright became heavenly light, the air floating in the sky, glowing with bright light. The air was still, but its light was active, its radiance regenerating the air when it ceased moving. But there arose a disharmony between the light and the air, and they suddenly separated. The air could no longer contain the light. Thus, Abka Hehe gave birth from her upper body to Weledū Hehe, the goddess of light, who was restlessly moving about on the earth and in the sky, taking charge of the light.

The three sister goddesses Abka Hehe, Banamu Hehe and Weledū Hehe were all born of the same body and stock, coming into existence, conceived and born at the same time. The breath of Abka gave birth to clouds and thunder; the skin of Banamu Hehe to valleys and springs, and under the eye of Abka Hehe, Weledū Hehe brought into existence the sun goddess Sūn, the moon goddess Biya, and the goddess of the Pleiades Nadan Nalahū. These three goddesses are immortal and breed perpetually, giving rise to a thousand times a thousand of worlds.

### ***Fiyelen III***

How did there come to be men and women? How did there come to be animals and insects? How did all creatures come to have their special gifts? It was because Abka Hehe was benevolent, Banamu Hehe lethargic, and Weledū Hehe restless. At the beginning, the three goddesses agreed to make people together, but Banamu Hehe soon fell into a deep sleep, leaving only Abka Hehe and Weledū Hehe to do the job. So the first creatures were all women, endowed with the special characteristics of these two goddesses – benevolent but restless. When Banamu Hehe woke up and remembered her task of making living beings, she found that her sisters had left her alone in the dark. She had to hasten with her job and so did it impetuously. Because the beings she created were born in darkness, they were all nocturnal animals, lethargic in the day – birds in the sky, beasts on the earth, and worms in the soil. Because they were born lacking the benevolence of Abka Hehe, they are cruel and devour one another, easily aroused and savage. Some are afraid of light and have a fondness for caves or dens.

Then how did there come to be men? When Abka Hehe saw that there were only women in the world, she got to work and out of her own flesh made the goddess Ocin. She had nine heads; though one head was sleeping, the others could stay awake. Abka asked for some flesh from the goddess Weledū and made eight

arms for Ocín. Some could keep working, while others could have a rest. She then sent Ocín to serve Banamu Hehe, to keep shaking her so that she couldn't fall asleep no matter how drowsy she was. Banamu could now remain awake and make men with the help of Abka and Weledū. Urged by her two sister goddesses and unable to sleep, however, she impatiently tore off pieces of her own shoulder bone and armpit hair and mixed them with flesh of benevolence and sinews of restless determination to make a man. This is why, compared with women, men are kind but unyielding, have more hair, and are physically stronger, made as they are of bone. But because Banamu Hehe was often accustomed to lay down and rest on her shoulders, the bone was covered with dirt. So men are dirtier than women, and they often have an axe to grind. Abka Hehe took a look and said "this can't be called a man." What's the difference between a man and a woman? Weledū Hehe didn't know.

So Banamu Hehe then sought to create a man after the fashion of birds, beasts and worms. Different from women, a man should have a *coco* ("male genital organ" in Manchu). With her eyes closed, she took a piece of her own flesh and put it on a pheasant; from then on, pheasants have had an extra piece of flesh on their rear, a little fleshy tip. The other two goddesses told her she made a mistake, so she stuffed a piece of flesh into a duck's belly, and since then, ducks have their *coco* inside their belly. Once again, her sister goddesses told her she was doing it wrong. In a hurry, she put a thin piece of bone on the belly of a doe, and the doe turned into a stag. Since then, deer, roe deer, and elk have had a dagger-shaped penis. When they are in heat, their penis can sometimes stab a doe to death; for when fully erect, it is sharp as a knife blade. Once again for a third time, the two sisters pointed out Banamu's mistake. Actually, the goddess wasn't completely awake until this moment. She then hurriedly borrowed a *coco* from a bear and put it under the man she had made. Thus, a man's *coco* is like that of a bear in length and thickness. This proves that men are latecomers to this world.

#### ***Fiyelen IV***

How was the first demon born? And who is the fiercest monster? The nine heads of the goddess Ocín enabled her to think about more things than any bird or beast. Her eyes were open in all directions every minute, her ears alert to all sounds every second, her noses sensitive to all aromas and fragrance, and her mouths kept feeding her at every moment. In this way, she learned the wisdom and abilities of birds and wild animals. Shaking up the drowsy Banamu Hehe every day, her strength grew limitless until she was able to jolt mountains. She got tired of having to be with Banamu all the time and would sometimes lose her temper and howl, and the clouds she breathed into the sky and flames she kindled disturbed Banamu's peace. In a rage and on the outs with her anyway, the goddess Banamu hurled two mountains down on Ocín. The one turned into a horn, rising straight up to the sky; the other landed beneath her belly and became a *coco*. The two mountains together turned her into a monster with one horn, nine heads, eight arms, and both female and male sex organs. Since she had her own *coco*, she could

reproduce and give birth to offspring on her own. Besides, she had the divine body and soul inherited from the other two goddesses. Her abilities were many and her craftiness mighty. She stabbed Banamu Hehe with her horn, bored into her belly, and gave rise to a monstrous transformation of herself called Yeluli. This fierce, glaring deity sometimes turned into vapour and rose up into the sky, sometimes it turned into light that outshined the sun; and sometimes it bored into the earth with its horn. It showed no piety towards the three goddesses. Rather, it bullied and insulted them, and Banamu Hehe could no longer slumber in peace. Yeluli rocked the mountains and shook the earth, causing the skin of the goddesses to crack and peel, subterranean waters to overflow all over the earth, and wind and thunder to howl and rattle in every nook and corner. The moon and sun dimmed, meteors streamed chaotically across the sky, and many creatures died in agony.

### *Fiyelen V*

What was the first fierce battle like? What was the deadliest war in the world? Having become a self-generating horned monster with nine heads, Ocín bullied the three great goddesses and considered herself to be unsurpassed in every art. When she found out that the goddess Weledū had a birch bark pouch that she used to spread out the stars, she wanted to cheat her out of it and to get it for herself. If she had it, she could rearrange the stars in the sky and hide in them as she challenged Abka Hehe. So she turned her nine heads into nine stars in the sky as bright as ten suns. Seeing this, Abka Hehe and Weledū Hehe were startled, and Weledū flung out the pouch to catch the nine stars. But when she had caught them all up in the pouch and was ready to carry them away, she was captured by the demonic monster Yeluli. For the nine heads that had turned into stars in the pouch were so powerful that they hauled the goddess down into the underworld. However, Weledū Hehe and Banamu Hehe were in charge of the bright orbiting stars, and when Weledū was kept captive by Yeluli in the underworld, her light blinded its nine pairs of eyes. The bedazzled monster hurriedly flung the birch pouch into the sky, where its stars travelled in a huge parabolic arc from east to west. The goddess of the stars chased after them and finally grabbed them back, but this explains why the stars have all risen from the east and headed towards the west for thousands of years in a parabolic path.

All the while, the savage Yeluli caused havoc on the earth until the heavens dimmed and the earth darkened. Not even the moon, sun, or stars could give out light. Having captured Weledū Hehe, the monster now wanted to conquer Abka Hehe. With its eighteen eyes and nine heads for scheming, Yeluli made a bet with Abka Hehe about who could find light and tell the colour of the sky and the earth. Thus said, it made full use of its devilishly good eyesight to find a huge block of white ice in the dark night and made a daring bet that all the earth and sky was white. It then sent the innumerable Yelulis to which it gave birth to take this white glacier from the white sea to trap Abka. The goddess felt she was at her wits' end because as far as she could make out, it seemed that everywhere was all white, freezing and grim. At this critical moment, Banamu sent her big-beaked

giant duck of nine colours to spread its wings to darken the sea, cry like a baby, and carry Abka on its back up into the sky, where she could avoid disaster. What remained a problem, however, was that the earth was still covered with ice and snow so dense that it seemed perpetually frozen. The giant duck then spurted out flames and pecked the glacier with its beak, leaving hole after a hole in it. In one breath, it made thousands of holes in the glacier, from which the stars could again shine and the sun's rays warm humankind. Yet the snow didn't melt completely, and in the course of this task, the giant duck's long sharp beak, which used to look like a pickaxe, has since become short, flat, and rounded, and its claws turned clover shaped.

### *Fiyelen VI*

Who are the immortal deities? Who is the almighty, all-powerful supreme god? The nine-headed demon Yeluli, with its offspring in tow, began to devour all creatures and became the dominant force in the universe, giving rise to thick mist and causing the deaths of animals and birds. The demon kept reproducing in many ways. Its heads and arms, eyes and ears, and even the pores of its skin could generate demons after the image of their begetter. Like swarms of ants and bees, they besieged Abka Hehe. The goddess dispatched troupe after troupe of fierce spirits, but Yeluli kept reproducing endlessly. The myriad demons not only increased in number but became more and more ferocious. At the time when the earth and the sky were not yet separated, there was a goddess called Dūkahū, who lived perpetually in a dwelling of stones in the body of Banamu Hehe. She was bisexual, and she was the one who helped the goddesses gain vigour and immortality. Hearing that the demon Yeluli had shown its might by throwing the world into chaos, seeing the scars all over Banamu's skin made by its horn, watching the stars fall, the white clouds scatter, and the divine light of seven hues being reduced to just red and black, and what's worse, realizing that the two goddesses could do nothing, the goddess Dūkahū talked with the goddess Sisilin, suggesting that she use her might and hurl the stones against the demons with the power of her winds.

Who is the goddess Sisilin? She's the beloved daughter of Abka Hehe. Born with extraordinary strength, she is the goddess in charge of all powerful forces. Physically, she is actually the two feet of Weledū Hehe. It happened that the flesh used to create the goddess Ocin from which Yeluli originally metamorphosized was partly taken from the feet of Weledū and partly from the flesh of Abka herself. It was that which accounted for the fact that Yeluli had the inexhaustible power of the winds to rock the world and dash swiftly around the universe. However, the demonic transformation of Ocin was no match for Sisilin, because Sisilin was in charge of all forces in the entire universe. The wind goddess, she had power over the winds at will, be it a gale or a gentle breeze, and she bore the birch bark pouch which contained all the stars and clouds. Seeing that Abka Hehe was trapped, she agreed with Dūkahū's suggestion. She grabbed all the stones in Banamu Hehe's body and hurled them at Yeluli's pack of demons. Just when Yeluli looked like the cat who had eaten the canary, it was suddenly pummelled by the stones, and

finding no place to hide, it returned to the underworld. With Yeluli gone, light reappeared in the sky.

Still, Yeluli would not yield so easily. The demon came back at Abka Hehe and challenged her to a contest in flying, saying, "If you can outfly me, I will surrender and never again disrupt the universe. I could even serve as your docile bodyguard." Abka surveyed her forces. She had her two sisters to help her, and she had the sky to herself. How could Yeluli outrun her in her own realm? She was confident and agreed to the contest. Yeluli was also confident in the power it had gained from the three goddesses – in the wisdom of its nine heads and the brightness of its nine pairs of eyes. It thought to itself, this time I must conquer the goddess. As agreed, they began the contest. Lo and behold, the demon Yeluli transformed itself into a nine-hued beam of light and disappeared in the distance. With the guidance of that light, however, Abka Hehe saw the route of Yeluli's flight clearly and pursued the demon at great speed. But Yeluli could reproduce itself. It gave birth once more to a myriad of Yelulis to trick Abka to head in wrong direction. Abka thought that the tallest and strongest figure running ahead of the other Yelulis must be the real Yeluli. She thought that this time she won't let it get away and chased and chased after it until she took hold of one of the nine heads. But all of a sudden, she felt everything becoming freezing cold and heavy. She found that mountains upon mountains of snow were piling down on her. Yeluli trapped her in mountains of snow and fled. The snow mountains were higher than the sky, and the cold and hunger became almost unbearable. The goddess Dūkahū kept Abka warm in her house of stones, but Abka felt so hungry that she ate the massive stones. With all the mountain stones she had eaten, plus the heat provided by Dūkahū, Abka felt hot. Filled with thermal power, she melted the snow mountains, one after another. But she herself was partially melted too. Her eyes became the sun and the moon; her hair turned into forests; her sweat became rivers and streams. . . . In accounts of later generations, many of the seas, trees, rivers and streams then plummeted down from the heaven. In any case, not only the stars and heavenly lights but everything else in the world was greatly disrupted by the fight between Abka and Yeluli. Some creatures did fall from the sky – snakes as the metamorphosis of light, and worms plunged down, too. This is why they can survive only in spring and summer and are reduced in autumn and winter to nothing but hibernation.

### ***Fiyelen VII***

Why do people hang lanterns on the top of poles? Why do we have the custom of adorning various things or themselves with flowers? When Weledū Hehe was defeated by Yeluli, the monster of nine heads, she lost half of her brightness and became listless and brooding, just staggering from east to west with her birch bark pouch for spreading out the stars. Abka sent Banamu Hehe to take care of her, play with her and console her when she was lonely. She also ordered three birds to sing in the sky to bring her dreary ambiance to life. In the night, *ghawusha* (owls) would hoot; at dawn, *galoo* (wild geese) would honk, and in the dusk, *gaha*

(crows) would caw. The three would cry out in turn during the day. Moreover, Banamu Hehe ordered the fire goddess Tumu, who dwelt in the star pouch in her bosom, to accompany Weledū Hehe in the sky and light her way. This is why people see dry lightning that brings no rain. It is said that bolts of lightning are shadows of the fire goddess Tumu and meteorites are the mud on her feet.

The demon Yeluli then burst out of the earth and wreaked havoc in the heavens, seeking to devour all the good gods and goddesses. The black smoke and evil winds it stirred up covered the sky and darkened everything. The turbid cyclone it blew up rose like a black dragon and whirled about among all the stars and crimson clouds in the sky and all the animals and birds on the earth. But the fire goddess Tumu was not afraid of this demon. With the help of her flaming hair, she turned into Ilan Usiha (three stars of Orion's Belt), Nadan Usiha (Seven Stars of the Big Dipper), Mingan Usiha (a thousand stars), and Tumen Usiha (ten thousand stars) to help Weledū realign the stars. However, Tumu herself became completely hairless; she turned into a bare white stone hanging onto Ilan Usiha, Orion's Belt, swung from east to west. But even at the last moment of her life, her glowing white stone still gave out a shimmer of light to illuminate and bless the earth and all creatures. It is said that the small stars beneath the stars of Orion's Belt in the southern sky are actually the fire goddess, twinkling as she gives out the last of her light like a heavenly lantern to illuminate the sky. So people later called her Ceku Mama, the swinging goddess.

To honour her memory, later generations would hang fish-oil lanterns on high poles, and in still later traditions, they would hang a lantern from the top of a high birch pole in front of their house or before their round, pointed *sierranju* log dwelling covered with birch bark in summer and deer hides in winter. Or they would raise a bone lantern of boar or badger oil on tall trees or mountain tops. Sometimes they also made ice lanterns to commemorate Tumu Mama while frightening away the horned devil Yeluli.

When the Nadan goddess of the Seven Stars of the Pleiades realized that the fire goddess Tumu had lost her light and became a meteor-like star, she sprung out of the star pouch and turned into a hundred starlets, shining like a hundred balls of fire to illuminate the sky that Yeluli had blackened. But the demon's heinous winds would blow them this way and that, giving some a round shape, others an ovaloid shape, and causing still others to lose their light until only the Seven Stars remained as the Big Dipper that we see today in the northern sky. It is they that lead the stars in their nightly orbit from east to west.

And why do human beings adorn things with flowers? There was a blue meadow in the east of the sky, where there grew a hundred kinds of birds and trees. In the foliage of these trees lived a goddess named Yilha, who gave out a rich aroma. It is said that she, herself, was made of the fragrant flesh of Abka Hehe. She worked day and night to weave balmy clouds in the sky. So the sky was always clear and lucid, pure and fresh. She relied mainly on the wings of the wind goddess Sisilin to fan breezes to keep Abka Hehe fresh and beautiful. Unfortunately, the devil Yeluli spied her charming, tranquil demesne, the only one of its kind, bright and clear with birds singing merrily in the sky, in marked contrast with the dark, dim



world of winds and mist created by Yeluli, himself. The demon realized it must be the spot where Abka took a rest in the heavens. Yeluli howled with seeming rage but secret delight. It disguised itself as old lady riding a crane as she drove geese with cries of *yoho, yoho*. Undaunted by the winds, swans closed their wings and dove into a clear stream where birds were chirping. The old lady covered her head with her cloak and plunged into the stream on her crane, following the geese. The geese were originally only two or three, but they soon gave birth to numerous goslings that proliferated greatly and filled the spot with white honking geese. She turned her crane into a pickaxe and dug open the ground where trees, herbs and flower beds were until only deep gorges and ditches were all that was left.

Abka was enjoying a moment of peaceful slumber, but she suddenly felt that she was bound up in a white net, which grew tighter and tighter every minute, entwined by the white geese and the huge, fierce wooden beak of the crane. They left wounds as serrated fish scales on Abka's body. The meadow where she lay had been transformed by Abka to avoid detection by the sharp eagle eyes of Yeluli, but her plot was seen through. Sisilin Hehe was sleeping at the time, and she only managed to protect Abka Hehe by fanning her with the wind of her beating wings. She could not rouse up anything like hurricanes to drive the demon away. Her battle formation of winds was soon broken through by Yeluli, who captured Abka Hehe. With Abka taken prisoner, the sky seemed to collapse; the heaven and earth began to tremble; the moon and stars got dim; and all the divine birds and animals began to die in great numbers.

These terrible scenes frightened and paralysed the two sister goddesses of Abka Hehe; for since the three were born of the same stock, if one was killed the other two would choke to death, too. It seemed that the devils would claim final victory and take over the entire heavens. The devils were all so delighted that they danced, hands and feet, and began to claim for their own dwellings among the stars and caves of the earth. It was a moment of life or death. Right beside the stream of Abka Hehe, however, there dwelt a group of goddesses called Jegulu, who protected the eyes of Abka, the stars and the moon, and kept them warm to bless the earth. Because they wore garments of radiant light and had souls of kindness, these goddesses were more powerful than other guardian goddesses despite their moderate size. When they knew that their Hehe was kidnapped and that the heavens and earth would soon fall into chaos, they turned into the pure, fragrant and lovely xandan usiha (Peony star), emitting light in all directions.

The devil saw this miraculous divine flower and loved it so much that it wouldn't give up until it had it for itself. All the devils joined battle to win the flower. None of them anticipated, however, that the peony would suddenly let fly thousands of arrows of light, blinding Yeluli's many eyes. In great agony, the devil shut its eyes, howled, tossed about on the ground, and in the end retreated into its deep cavern in the underworld. Abka was thus saved, and so were the heavens and earth. Abka Hehe, Banamu Hehe, and Weledū Hehe all gave a chorus of thanks to this Jegulu goddess, who was actually the hedgehog goddess in the sky, the constellation Cassiopeia. She had needle-like beams of light that could hide souls and help the three sister goddesses bring all creatures back to life. They were so sharp that they

could blind the devil. Meanwhile, the wind goddess Sisilin, that sleepyhead who had caused such a great calamity, was driven out of the heavens and deprived of her divine status. She later became a wandering male god, untamed and sultry, who joined forces with Yeluli. Sometimes this deity would rock the mountains and sway the moon, and he soon became a notorious devil aligned with Yeluli. Later generations of people would adorn themselves with garlands of flowers to startle and intimidate the devils, and they would cut the flower patterns to wear or sculpt in ice as white peonies. Abka Hehe cut out white snowflakes to whisk away demons, purify the world, and bless people for generations.

### ***Fiyelen VIII***

Why do people love white magpies and white water fowl? Why do they eulogize the feats of hedgehogs and moles? Colourful stones thousands of years old were loved by humankind's ancestors, who took them with them everywhere they went and never separated from them. The stones contained fire and radiated heat, power and life. Before she turned into a devilish male deity aligned with Yeluli, the goddess Sisilin once used these stones to fight against Yeluli. The stones in the north turned into mountains and hills, and pebbles turned into rocky valleys. These topographical features are relics of the ancient cosmic battle. Some of them contracted into serpentine mountain ranges, and some expanded to become mountain peaks. However, because all the rocks and stones were in mountainous regions, plains and valleys became short of fire-baked stones, and that led to a raging blizzard. The earth became freezing cold, and animals and other creatures huddled in caves to keep warm and survive.

Meanwhile, Abka Hehe was conceiving of strategies to defeat the ruthless devil Yeluli. First of all, she needed to become stronger. The Tumu goddess told her to get more stones to strengthen her body, and following her advice, she sent her maids – white-bellied birds and white-necked ducks – to fetch stones of nine stripes from the East Sea. The stones could give her power, strengthen her bones, and create a shield for her body so that she could keep warming and illuminating the heavens and the earth. The fowl were diligent and fulfilled their task with merit. Day and night, they would shuttle to fetch the stones. When they grew tired, they would rest on a sacred tree of nine branches, keeping guard against the manoeuvres of Yeluli.

People eulogized trees. They said that pines lived to a thousand years old and birch to ten thousand, and that elms and willows are sacred trees that have existed since the separation of the heavens and the earth. The long-leaved willows could speak human language and know human emotions. They nourished humans and supplied water and moisture to worms and frogs. Such trees could reach to the sky as the revered tree of heaven, the bridge to the firmament. As a bridge, it was divided into nine sections, where the gods of the universe dwelt. Driven by Yeluli from the earth, they had all taken up residence in Heaven, and on each of these nine sections dwelt thirty mama goddesses. On the first dwelt thirty goddesses of thunder and snow, on the second thirty goddesses of streams and creeks,

on the third fish and turtle deities, on the fourth long-winged birds, on the fifth short-winged bird, on the sixth water fowl with their fatty webs, on the seventh snake and hedgehog, on the eighth beast of Golden Caves, and on the ninth willow peony and silver flower. Altogether, there were 270 minor deities overseen by the three supreme goddesses.

These helper deities were not enough, however, to conquer the devil. So Abka Hehe sought advice from Banamu Hehe, who then caused the birds to grow sharp claws, the fish to fly with wings, the turtles to hide in shells, the snakes to shed their skin and slither over the grass, and beasts to shatter stones with their sharp hooves. In response, Yeluli caused wild boars to grow tusks, which they lacked at the beginning, and the demon itself had its unmatched horn. As a countermeasure, Abka Hehe scraped up mud to create many minor Miyaka deities who could expand and contract. They bored into the earth and got into Yeluli's horn. The demon felt itchy and had a headache and so soared up into the sky. But half the tip of its horn was broken by the Miyaka deities, and it was no longer as sharp and lengthy as before. The tip fell to the ground just as one of the wild boars was tunnelling into the earth and about to bite Yeluli. The tip of the horn landed on the boar's mouth and became part of it. Since then wild boars have had long deadly tusks that make them more fearsome than any other wild animal.

At the same time, drops of blood from Yeluli's nine heads fell on forest trees, rocks and soil so that many trees turned red and some rocks and soil have ever after had an ochre sheen. Yeluli was writhing in the sky when he saw 3000 goddesses pouncing on his devilish self. It immediately hid in the bed of a big river, screened by turbid black winds. There it turned into a tiny earthworm and hid in the mud. But soon the fish goddess Sirin Mama on the third segment of the Tree of Heaven chased after it in the water. She turned into a small carp, spied the devil-turned-worm, snapped its tail, and pulled it out of the water. Still, however, the worm contracted, causing billows of waves and torrents of mud that clouded the clear waters, blurring the goddess' view. She had to let go, and Yeluli escaped again, riding a heinous gale. Sirin Mama was rewarded for finding the demon and became the fish star, which continues to chase the devil day and night. From then on, all carps like to live in deep water, churning up mud and nibbling on grass roots and stems.

Yeluli returned with the help of the wind goddess turned male devil Sisilin and blotted out the light. So the sky turned pitch black again. The monster kept blowing vile winds and sand into the sky, attempting to befuddle the 3000 goddesses so that they couldn't track it down. Abka thus asked the Cloud Mother to turn into a star that could count the time. Abka enjoined her to edge her way along furtively so that Yeluli couldn't see her and draw on hurricane winds to have her swirl about and never have rest. But the Cloud Mother turned into the great and faithful star Taci Mama, who measures out time for the gods, day and night, so that even in the most ferocious night, wind, and darkness cannot beguile the stars. Yeluli could never catch her, nor even see her, and so could not tell time or direction and could not move as fast and freely as Abka.

Abka Hehe then shook off some mud to create the goddess Xinggeri, who could see in the dark and so greet and welcome the sun to beam its rays into the darkness. It is this mouse star Xinggeri that perpetually welcomes the sun hours before sunrise. Abka Hehe was afraid that Yeluli would come to cause trouble in the dark hours before dusk, so she also sent a beast of three ears and six eyes to crouch in the sky, head facing north and tail pointing south. The divine beast was ever on the watch for any sign of Yeluli and would not leave until the sun's rays had brightened the universe and all the stars disappeared. It is thus known as the indefatigable beastly deity that guards the sun, in ancient Manchu language the beast star Usiha Burgu.

The goddess Jegulu who had once saved Abka Hehe from Yeluli always wore a cloak of dazzling beams of light which are actually the power of all the deities under Abka's sway. The might and mastery of all the deities combined made her capable of anything. She could attack and defend, advance and retreat, expand and contract, crawl or march, unrivalled in battle. After losing in several encounters with Jegulu, the nine-headed devil was ashamed of its defeats. It ordered the wind devil Sisilin to send Abka Hehe a challenge, saying that Yeluli preferred to fight her one on one. Neither should have an aide, and the winner would be the lord Ejenda, who would rule the universe and have charge of all creatures, begetting or ousting them. Abka Hehe received the challenge and discussed it with the goddess of light Weledū Hehe. Weledū said, "My sister, though I cannot be present as your helper, I can help you in many secret ways. First, I would range the stars in formations to provide a refuge for rest when you are exhausted from fighting. Second, I can cause lightning to brighten your way with my long silver wings. And third, I can pile up the stars in my pouch to make mountains and gorges to prevent Yeluli from escaping or bringing his despotic power into play." These words delighted Abka Hehe, so she accepted the challenge.

The fight between the two brought chaos to the heavens and earth. It caused the earth to tremble and the stars to wobble. When they clashed, there broke out thunder and lightning. Yeluli puffed out black streams of wind and hideous waters that dimmed heaven and earth, gave rise to a rain of hailstones, and brought death to all creatures. Only the elms and willows could live out the life of the universe. From then on, all animals became tiny and slim to enable them to hide away in stone forests or thick snow. Out of fear of the hurricanes blown up by Yeluli, giant beasts and huge birds gave birth to smaller offspring, because only tiny and nimble beings could survive and live deep down in the grass.

Yeluli, himself, however, was trapped in the formations of starlight deployed by the goddess Jegulu and injured by her needle-sharp light beams. It was a one-on-one fight, and Yeluli became exhausted and wanted a rest, as did Abka. But when the devil sought to rest on the stars, the stars he stood on turned out to be the head of the goddess Dedeng, who was sent by the goddess Weledū to spy out information on the battle. She was actually one foot of Abka, but with a statuesque carriage of elegant grace. As tall as the sky, she was sensitive to the slightest vibrations of air in the universe, and she loved eating up the winds and devouring stars. As she was keenly watching the fight, all of a sudden, she saw Yeluli scurry

nearby. She spread out her hair to form a patch of star turf, beguiling Yeluli to believe it was actually a star. But when Yeluli stepped onto it, she suddenly tilted her body, causing the demon to lose its footing.

The devil fell underneath the goddess's foot, down into a cave at the centre of the earth that was actually the navel of another goddess, Banaji Emu. In the navel lived still-another goddess, Banaji Emu's beloved daughter Futejin, goddess of power, a herculean deity with four heads, six arms, eight feet, and a build as imposing as the goddess Dedeng. The difference between the two was that Futejin guarded not the sky but the lower three of the sky's nine strata. Her four heads could look in the four directions and her eyes spy crannies beyond the reach of birds and even see through rocks and mountains. Her six arms can raise up the sky and shake the earth, pull down mountains and uproot trees, catch birds and scurrying rabbits a thousand kilometres away. With her eyes closed, she can reach out to wild fruit-bearing trees and pick out herbs. She has both human and animal feet, birds' claws, and insects' legs, so when she runs, even the wind cannot catch her. Another difference from her sister goddess Dedeng is that her build is exactly the opposite: she is squat and wide, like a rock stretching a thousand miles.

When Yeluli fell into the cave navel of her mother Banaji Emu, the devil was grabbed by Futejin, who held fast to its nine heads. But Yeluli quickly escaped in the form of light and air and left many pores in Futejin's body, so till this day, we can still see pores in rocks like hives. That air turned into noxious fumes in the hills that cause epidemics and bring harm to creatures even now. The part of the devil that was caught by Futejin turned into black turtle shells, which in turn changed into gods of turtles, toads, and spiders that crawl about in river bottoms and grasses. These remains of Yeluli are used in traditional Chinese medicine to cure weakness of spirit.

Since then, the constellations of the stars have remained set in perpetuum and the sun and moon apart, giving off their light in turn. And ever since then, there has been a river of stars in the sky whose white radiance stretches out like an unsurpassable mountain chain raised up to block out Yeluli and put an end to the devil.

### ***Fiyelen IX***

When did the battle in the heavens settle down? When Yeluli was held fast by the goddess Futejin, the demon's skin cracked and its light and air broke out. The force of the remaining noxious winds was greatly reduced, and four of its nine pairs of eyes could only discern things at night, so the devil became afraid of light and the sun. Still, however, its nefarious intentions did not altogether die out. In the dark night when the stars and moon went down, it sought to break from its bondage and soar up and grab hold of the sky. It would puff out turbid winds and cataclysmic waters to flood the earth and the whole universe.

Rising up to the sky, Abka Hehe learned from the goddess Dedeng that Yeluli had captured the mouse star Xinggeri but let loose the eagle star goddess Gasha Usiha, which tore off Abka Hehe's battle tunic made of nine boulder mountains,

nine willow forests, nine creeks, and nine wild animal bones. With the tunic torn away, the unprotected goddess had to seek refuge. Shielded by the stars, she reached the sky but was so tired that she fainted by the shimmering golden Sun River. There was a tall tree by the river, and on the tree lived a divine bird of nine shades of colour named Kunjele. Out of compassion, it plucked off its feathers to heal the wounds on Abka Hehe's waist and side and weave a new protective tunic of nine sacred hues. It fetched water from the Sun River and washed her wounds, which soon all healed. Wearing the feathered tunic of nine colours, Abka Hehe regained consciousness and rose from the river's kind care.

Abka Hehe's sister, the earth goddess Banamu Hehe summoned the souls of the animals dwelling on her body – tiger, leopard, bear, deer, boa, snake, wolf, boar, lizard, eagle, condor, buffalo, river fish, and worms – and ordered each of them to offer their skills to help Abka Hehe. Banamu Hehe took a sacred animal bone and offered it to Abka, and on the banks of Sun River, the bird Kunjele had woven for her the new tunic with its feathers of nine colours. Since then, the sky took on the hues it has today, and Abka Hehe became the truly unmatched goddess of the universe. She and her two sister goddesses fought as one and with the help of all the beasts and birds defeated the nine-head devil Yeluli. They transformed the demon into a heinous bird of nine heads and buried it under the lowest layer of Banamu Hehe so that it could not break out and disrupt the universe. Many creatures that used to live in caves remained in the body of Banamu – such as ants, pangolins, and moles – along with remnants of Yeuli's souls that sought to be reborn as Mangni or Manggalli to bring ruin to the world of human beings. The danger of harm from them can be prevented as long as people light bonfires or hang up lanterns. When Abka Hehe defeated the devil, she tore out five pairs of its eyes and made it so blind that it became afraid of fire and light. People in later generations would light bonfires or ice lanterns to light up the darkest corners of the world to prevent the bird of nine heads from preying on them. This was the origin of bonfire and ice-lantern rituals. In the end, Abka became the immortal and undefeatable mother goddess who blesses the world and maintains it in order.

Later Abka Hehe sent the eagle goddess to nurse a baby girl and bring her up as the world's first shaman. A star chained to the left foot of Weledū to protect the heavens, the eagle goddess nursed the baby with milk, the Sun River's water of wisdom and life fetched by Kunjele. In the fight against Yeluli, however, the sacred chain was broken, causing the eagle star goddess Gasha Usiha to float adrift in the sky, sometimes bright, sometimes dim. Abka Hehe entrusted this goddess to raise the first sage in the world, a shamaness who knew everything about the realms of gods, animals, spirits, and souls. The Sun River water fetched by Kunjele fed her as milk, and the light of Weledū inspired her. She soon grew to fullness with the flesh she had from Banamu Hehe, became skilled in prediction, and spread abroad medical lore about mating that she acquired from the self-generating skills of Yeluli. This shamaness became most clever, most adroit, most intelligent, and most artful in all graces. She consoled the world and passed on her powers to later generations.

Nevertheless, the heavens grew desolate; the sun aged; and the stars passed monotonously on from generation to generation. No one could tell how many years had passed when the sea of ice began to melt and flow south, causing rampaging floods everywhere. There was water on earth and water in the heavens, and soon the world was inhabited by only the eagle goddess Damin and one woman. The woman gave birth to human beings and became their mother goddess. Later, Abka Hehe directed the sun's rays and Kunjele to plunge into the waters to heat them up. The warm waters then unceasingly produced water bugs, weeds, fish and shrimp, water snakes, otters, and beavers. In the East Sea, there was a fish god with a human body, and under the sun's rays, many water bugs turned into gods of the rivers and swamps, with the heads of men and bodies of fish. Born out of light, they were clothed in seven shades of collectively called the goddess Delige.

People need to be able to tell directions, so the supreme goddess sent her maids of the four directions to come down and instruct humankind. Walege, the goddess of the West, leapt down, followed by the goddesses of the east, north, and south – Delige, Amalege, and Julege – along with Dulunba, goddess of the centre. These five deities worked together to map out directions. As for the rest of the water, Abka Hehe tore off her armpit hair, which turned into numerous water dragons – Muke Muduli – which drink up water day and night. Since then, the world of human beings has had wide, long, meandering rivers (in Manchu *bira* or *ula*), estuaries, streams, and creeks with numerous branches that nourish the sons and grandsons of Abka.

Tens of thousands of years had passed. In the time of the flood, Abka Hehe was called Abka Enduri. She lived on the ninth layer of Heaven and was always busy at work, breathing out puffs of moisture that formed rosy clouds and fire that condensed into stars. However, when the mountains and rivers were tranquil again, she became as sluggish, sleepy, and heedless as her elder sister Banaji Emu, and because she was constantly sleeping, the northern region turned cold, the air seemed frozen, and the fields were covered with ice. The snowy landscape stretched out endlessly, and no creature could live. Banamu Hehe taught people to live in caves and construct dwellings underground or in huge tree caverns. That is why in the North most houses are broad, with nine levels, and hedgehogs and bats are their guardian gods.

The insidious Yeluli would secretly steal into the human world and breathe out noxious fumes to spread disease, so skin ulcers, boils, and smallpox claimed the lives of the cave dwellers. However, the goddess Yageha was good at identifying nourishing herbs – *sohv* (beets), *taka* (mustard leaves), *fokutala* (ferns), *xengje* (mushrooms), and *xanca* (jelly fungi). Flowers nurtured people with their fragrance, trees clothed them with their bark, and wild animals provided them with meat. For their part, people burnt incense to get rid of ulcers and cankers while reverencing the gods. Abka Enduri, herself, gave human beings ninety-two Manni deities – gods and goddesses of smallpox, lameness, headaches, haemorrhage, and strength and of war, arrows, stones, and hunting; deities of ravines, boats, cave dwelling, childbirth, labour, and mating; divinities of judgement, prediction, rain summoning, and snow; and the god of storytelling, the god of song Ucun, and



the god of dance Maksimbi. In ancient times, moreover, the goddess Tuwayalha endowed human beings with the art of using fire. Before Abka Enduri gave people fire, they ate animals’ meat raw, drank their blood, and lived much like moles and rats. When snow melted, they came out of their caves, and when it snowed, they hid in the caves again, living in the same cave with snakes and sleeping in the same space with bats. So only one out of ten people could survive.

Finally, Abka Enduri caused a red tumour to grow on her forehead and named it Qiqidan. Qiqidan turned into a beauty who walked about on rosy clouds wearing a shimmering cloak and married the thunder god Sisilin. The thunder god bore the same name as the wind devil Sisilin and had the same supreme mother goddess, but he was born out of his mother’s snore. The thunder god had red hair, a white body and long arms, and he liked roaming and riding through the sky, giving out howls that would crack open the earth and split the sky. He had undaunting valour, but the wind devil, born originally as a goddess out of the feet of Weledū Hehe, could ride like lightning and electric current and was no second to his brother in causing havoc. When the wind devil saw that the thunder god had gone out for a ride, he kidnapped his wife, the goddess Qiqidan, intending to mate with her and send their offspring to the earth.

For her part, however, Qiqidan saw that there was snow and ice piled up to the heavens which could make people unable to bring up children, so she stole fire and descended to the human world. Lest the fire be extinguished, she swallowed it, and lest she travel too slowly, she sped forwards on all fours. Days and nights passed, and in the end, she was burnt to a monster with the eyes and ears of a tiger, the head and beard of a leopard, the frame of a badger, claws of an eagle, and tail of a lynx. This was the goddess Tuwayalha. Beneath her four paws were fiery clouds, and from her mouth puffed out billows of flames that could melt the earth’s ice and snow and repel cold and frost. She moved like thunder and lightning, lighting up the mountains, bringing fire to fields and human beings, and rousing springs to grace the earth. Nonetheless, when we hear thunder in the sky, we know it is the hot-tempered thunder god demanding that the wind devil return to him his beloved wife Qiqidan!

### **3.3 Other episodes of “War in Heaven”**

In the various episodes of “War in Heaven,” numerous ancient creation stories that bear the unique features of northern peoples’ customs, habits, topographic characteristics, ethnic beliefs, and unique peculiarities have been passed down from generation to generation. As a whole, the work reflects the primordial religious influence of a close relation with ancient shamanism and constitutes to a great extent the major body of northern shamanic creation myths and the epitome of shamanic cosmology. At the same time, it fully preserves the track of thought of northern people in the day-to-day activities of their struggle for survival – charting of new paths, conquering nature, creating works of art, and establishing living settlements. The work reflects, moreover, the ideals and wishes of humanity in its childhood. On the whole, the myths displayed in “War in Heaven” are

not just records of northern peoples' worldviews; they enrich the world's mythic treasure trove and culture.

In many sequences of the work, however, we can find obvious inconsistencies, gaps, and missing contents, due to the limitations of the conditions and modes of recording – simply seeing, hearing, and orally reporting what was heard. Some segments show later supplements and polishing by literary writers. The original Weceku Uleben shrine tales, moreover, were chanted in the Manchu language; in the Chinese retelling, the myths have, unfortunately, lost their original hue. Nonetheless, they have been passed on from ancient Jurchen shamans as they offered sacrifice and taught later generations. The myths give simple, naïve interpretations of ancient northern celestial phenomena, geography, natural forces, the birth of life, and concepts of survival that reflect primitive people's psycho-mental complex. They have enjoyed lasting vitality and forever shine with their unique artistic rays of humanistic wisdom.

The dispersion of the myths of "War in Heaven" is not confined to one tribe or clan; they have been spread multi-ethnically. As was said earlier, while teaching in Siji Village on the Amur in the 1930s, Fu Xilu (my father) and Wu Jixian collected from villagers in the area the Weceku Uleben tales that they later called "War in Heaven." In addition to the foregoing version that they recorded from the White Mongolian, Fu received from the father of a man named Yan Tiewen (阎铁文) a fragmented version that contains more Manni (Manye) tales than had previously been known and that enrich the narrative scope of the work. For example, the great goddess Jiazun Mayin, who is mentioned but not included in the White Mongolian's version, appears in a tale of the sixth *fiyelen* of Yan's version. It goes as follows:

Leluli (Yeluli) puffed up a black gale and belched out noxious waters. Abka Hehe sent two goddesses, Hülühun and Hülükun, to do some scouting, and they found that the earth was shaking, stones were being showered down from the heavens, and the land was sinking, causing spring waters to overflow. But it was too late to report back to Abka Hehe. Instantly, they began singing *ucun* (songs) at the top of their voice and danced hand in hand. They danced on the fallen stones and danced in the strong wind and oppressive rain, and soon their dance and songs charmed Yeluli into oblivion in a long deep sleep. When at last the demon suddenly woke up, Abka Hehe had rounded up all beasts and birds to encircle the devil. So it flew into rage and smashed the two goddesses into a bloody pulp which it spread out all over the grasses and trees. Each tiny droplet soon took the form of a chirping cricket or insect, whose chorus was sonorous and penetrating, reaching thousands of miles. The strain was sometimes teasing, sometimes musing, sometimes celebratory, warning, or inquisitive, all testifying that before their death they had not been intimidated by Yeluli. For generations and generations, they have kept singing to warn people. So when shamans summon the gods, they are sure to include the goddess Jiazun Mayin, who is skilled in the songs and chirping of all birds and insects.

In a version of the ninth *fiyelen* of "War in Heaven" discovered by Fu Xilu but not recorded from the White Mongolian is, in the gossamer clouds, a graceful goddess called Manjun Uyan who has also had a prominent role among northern peoples:

To the north of Sahaliyan (Amur River), there was a holy mountain called Manjun Uyan Hada ("snow" in the Manchu language), its peak piercing the clouds and its mass in perpetual snow. In the summer, streams and cascades flowed down from it with a joyous sound that could reach ten miles. When people wanted to fish, hunt or catch raccoons or eagles, they could predict the weather conditions by measuring the snow and snowmelt on Manjun Uyan Hada. It was said that when heaven and earth were first separated in the fight between Abka Hehe and Yeluli, this mountain was the Star of the Cold or Snow Star, one of the massive stars in the star pouch of Weledū Hehe. There lived the goddess Manjun Uyan, also called Manjun Eyun. She herself was all *nimanggi* (snow), Manjun Uyan being the star on which she lived. When Abka Hehe was fiercely battling against Yeluli, she suddenly landed on the star, where Yeluli grabbed hold of her so tight that she couldn't breathe. In trying to free herself, she suddenly jerked, and with a rumbling boom, the snow star split into two, one half falling to earth and the other remaining in the sky. Since then, the snow goddess has had two dwelling places, in the sky and on earth. When she dwells above, there is no snow in the north, and all is warm spring with blossoming flowers. When she visits the earth, it is covered with luxuriant snow, the whiteness of which binds the sky and earth together in a silver sheen. The half of the snow star that fell on the earth became the holy mountain Manjun Uyan Hada where Manjun Uyan lived. The first day of her visit on earth marks the beginning of winter, and the moment she returns to the heavens is the first day of spring. The mountain is also called Ningxeli Holy Mountain, and it marks the seasons in the north. The goddess Manjun Uyan has also been worshipped as goddess of the seasons and snow goddess of the north and has enjoyed receiving tribute year after year.

Another example of a sequence of "War in Heaven" that is not included in the White Mongolian's version was narrated by the Manchu Guan Suoluo, who learned it from an oral version chanted by shamans of the Gūwalgiya Clan. It is the tale of the sacred Mudan Alin (*alin*, meaning "mountain") in northern Heilongjiang:

The third maid of Abka Hehe was called Odosi, meaning "little girl." She had charge of the cloud animals of seven colors and would graze piebald cloud horses and other animals who pranced around according to her will looking like tigers, leopards, deer, rabbits, horses, pigs. It seemed that she was never at a loss to change clouds' shapes. When Abka was chasing Yeluli, Odosi couldn't catch up with the devil, but she came upon an idea. She used vines to knit a white steed for Yeluli to ride. This delighted the devil, but when it mounted the horse, the demon got tangled in the vines. By the time

it saw through the trick, it had already been caught by Abka and had to surrender. However, its soft words melted Abka's heart, so she let it go. The minute it was free again, it took another look and began to bring harm to people once more. But when it saw Abka Hehe in her resplendent cloak of nine colors, it thought she was so elegant and charming that it would be great if it could flirt with her and make love. The demon's wanton words enraged Abka, but the sight of it bedazzled her so that she was unable to see clearly its whole body, only its nine heads. She quickly ordered her maids to drive it away. Her first maid, the magpie, harassed Yeluli with her cackling cries, but the demon plugged its ears with mountains. Her second maid, Hedgehog, tried to turn Yeluli away with the glare of her needle-like sun beams, but the devil made eye-shade with white mist. The third maid, Odosi, then drove her cloud horses of seven hues right into Yeluli's eighteen eyes, which instantly wounded them, turning them into misty black hollows. In this way, the devil was chased off.

As the devil was fleeing, however, it took with it many of the heavenly steeds, which caused the sky to lose the lustre of its original nine tints, so since then, it has had only seven hues. Abka Hehe was incensed at the maid's neglect of duty, so she drove the goddess Odosi away. Without Odosi to graze the cloud animals and without the sound of their hooves, the sky became desolate and still – nothing but a vast expanse of light. However, Abka missed little Odosi and so summoned her once more and asked her to graze the heavenly herds again. Odosi was also the wise goddess of war. When clans held sacrificial rites, they would offer sacrifice to her as the goddess of war, goddess of grazing, and goddess of the household, asking her to bless women with their needlework. People normally positioned her idol towards the north.

The Mudan Alin is rich in jadeite, and this provides the background of yet another story:

In the remotest north reaches of Sahaliyan, there was a dense pine forest that had existed for thousands of years. Deep in the forest, there were seven mountain peaks soaring up into the sky with ancient boulders and deep caverns. These mountains are called Mudan Alin, a fairy land hidden among other mountains and shielded by white clouds on which there lived myriads of rare species of animals and chirping birds. There was a bird whose feathers of nine hues could talk like girls; a double-headed snake with rings of seven colors which guarded the mountain's jadeite of seven tints – the most precious of the jade family. Northern people often trudged thousands of miles in search of this jadeite for bartering with dealers of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Legend has it that the emperor would favor his concubines with the jadeite of Mudan Alin. The mountain was said to have come into being when the jade pendant of Abka fell to the earth. When she was fighting the devil Yeluli, she took it off and darted it at the devil. One of Yeluli's heads was struck and toppled down to earth. The pendant was broken as it

fell on the same spot and turned into the jade mountain to weigh down on Yeluli's head. But the demon wouldn't yield so easily. From the spot where its head fell, he caused six other mountain peaks to appear. When Abka Hehe and Banamu Hehe came to search for its head, they were so confused by the other six heads that they couldn't identify which one was exactly that of Yeluli. Meanwhile, Yeluli bored into the earth, found its head, and set it back on its neck. Since then, there have appeared seven peaks in the range, all rich in jade from the pendant of Abka. Deep caverns came into being because when Abka sent other gods and goddesses to find Yeluli's head, they bored holes that penetrated deep into the earth. Some of the caverns were long and deep with cascades of ice and underground streams where boas, leopards, and other fierce animals lived.

Mudan Alin and Ningxeli are both sacred northern mountains that enjoy people's worship. In the past, worshippers would bring their sacrificial animals from afar, spring to winter, winter to spring, on horse or foot or on the large, two-wheeled Mongolian *lele* carts drawn by horse or ox for carrying loads. Their meandering caravans would stretch out endlessly, and up unto the early Qing dynasty times, they could still be seen on mountain paths. To the north of the Amur and east of Mudan Alin was Mount Mahu, another sacred site where the Manchu, Oroqen, Solon, and Daur often offered sacrifice. This mountain came into being when Abka Hehe finally defeated the nine-headed devil Yeluli, torched its nine bird heads, and dumped them into the core of the earth so that the demon could never again come and disturb the universe. When its devilish bones were burnt up, the remnants fell on the site and became transformed into a never-ending range of rocky mountains – white bones, ebony bones, red bones, green bones, and yellow bones. So the mountain trees and stones all had these hues and their spirit essence as well. When shamans came to mine the stones with that essence, they would climb Mount Mahu, also known as Mangai Mountain or Devil Bone Mountain (*Mogushan*, 魔骨山). My research team collected there such artefacts as a sacred skirt, hat, and whip and a bowl made of polished Mahu stone. Shamans would commonly use stone chunks, slabs, cups, sticks, and needles to diagnose illnesses.

While teaching in Siji in the 1930s, Fu Xilu heard yet another Weceku Uleben excerpt told by Guan Suoluo. It resembles the story in *fiyelen* IX as narrated by the White Mongolian but with different details and an added *fiyelen* of the legend of Xili Emu (mother). Guan's grandfather had told him the story when he was a youth in Jiangdong (江东), Heilongjiang. It reportedly originated from a well-known deceased shamaness called Boodein Emu, who, as noted earlier, suddenly appeared in the world, riding up the river. When possessed by a deity, she would stand on a pig and, holding a pig's scapula, would beat her drum and sing the sacred Weceku Uleben chant. No matter how much the pig would dash about or bump into things, she would continue to sing her long tale:

Why did people like vines in the early years? Why do vines thrive on white rocks? Why are they useful for people? Legend has it that when the world

began, people on the earth could tell directions only by watching the stars and that they used stars to forecast changes of weather or fortune and thus came to know spring, summer and the worst of winter. When people had grown in maturity and settled in one place for a long time, they became able to identify local forest trees, grasses and flowers, and when they got fully accustomed to the area, they cultivated oak trees, birches and evergreen pines that they used to build houses and make chests. Year after year, they watched the Big Dipper in the sky and realized that their tribe was located at the northernmost point. Gradually, they learned that their right hand pointed east and if they kept going eastwards, they could reach the East Sea, the home of the mama sea goddess. They knew that their left hand pointed west and if they kept going west, they would reach the halcyon land of the offspring of Abka Hehe's elder sister Banaji Emu, where there were thought to be mountains, lakes, pine trees, birches, oaks, willows and Japanese pagoda trees. Their backs were toward the south, and if they kept going south, they would reach the birthplace of the sun mother Sūn. From then on, people could identify the four directions.

Many years later when Yeluli was on the earth, it kept a close, devilish eye on the three goddesses whom he feared – Abka Hehe, Banamu Hehe and Weledū Hehe. The sly devil finally found that the three had gone back up to heaven, so he used his nine heads, eight arms to dig out caves everywhere and spill out white-hot stones, bringing instant doom to people and all creatures. The three goddesses felt guilty for previously failing to punish Yeluli, so they returned to earth to fight against the demon. As Yeluli was afraid that they would disable his nine heads and eight arms, he tried his best to spout out the fiery stones up to the sky, scorching all birds and creatures on earth into ashes. Abka Hehe asked her elder sister Banaji Emu to put out the raging flames with the water of all her rivers, springs, lakes and seas, and she had her younger sister Weledū Hehe buffet the brutal Yeluli with heavy hailstorms. Nonetheless, Yeluli kept up its fierce assault, so that many humans and animals were killed by the rubble and fire. In that dire situation, the three goddesses pondered how to subdue the demon as quickly as possible. Finally, the virtuous, clear-headed Abka Hehe figured out a solution. She changed her long hair into the endless long vines called *xili* in Manchu and let out a sea of *xili* flying in all directions. All of a sudden, the hundreds of millions of burning stones of different sizes spurted out by Yeluli were caught in this web of *xili*. For fear that it would be caught as well, the sly demon escaped to a towering mountain in the southeast that was formed wholly from white rocks burnt by flames. Then Banamu Hehe poured out all the rivers, lakes and seas onto the mountain, leaving the devil deep in the water. This is Gūlmin Xangyan Alin, the Changbai Mountain Range.

Years later, many Manchu tribes settled in the Changbai Mountain, where they lived by hunting and fishing. Sometimes, they hunted mink, dug ginseng, and

collected deer antlers, magnolia, bell-shaped fritillaria flowers, and berry vines. All tribespeople held Abka Hehe in great reverence because she saved humankind by turning her beautiful long hair into *xili* vines, and they treasured *xili* and regarded its very name as auspicious. Tribal chiefs tended to call their tribes *xili*. During the Wei (魏) and Jin (晋) dynasties (220–420 CE), several dynamic *gashan* (villages) emerged around the Changbai Mountain Range, in one of which ruled a conscientious female chieftain. Beautiful and clever, she loved her tribe and people and was able to deal with volcanic eruptions. Her tribe became a powerful force of the Changbai Mountain, and she was called Mother Xili.

In addition to all these legends and myths, there are many tales about demons and the punishment of deities that demand attention. One of these complements what can be found in the third *fiyelen* as recounted by the White Mongolian:

Abka Hehe created the goddess Ocín to attend the lethargic Banamu Hehe so that she wouldn't keep falling asleep, but Abka Hehe didn't feel at ease because Ocín was so powerful with her nine heads and eight arms. If Ocín should break out of the realm of the gods, she could become the most powerful deity in the universe. So she sent the goddess Dukai to guard the gate of Heaven and ordered her to keep it shut at all times so that Ocín could only move about in the realm of the gods and not go around at will. With her nine heads, however, Ocín was unparalleled in cleverness and scheming, and she tricked the simple and honest Dukai into playing with her. They played a game of building cave dwellings, and Ocín lent Dukai her horn so that she could go and dig down deep into the earth. Caught up in her delight with the game, Dukai gave Ocín a chance to break through the gate and become Yeluli, a demonic creature with might as great as the heavenly goddesses. In great anger, Abka Hehe drove Dukai out of Heaven, but Banamu Hehe had mercy on her and allowed her to live on the earth, where she has commonly appeared in the form of earthworms, always burrowing through the soil to seek revenge. Since then earthworms have been afraid of the sun and die when the sun rises.

Northern shaman costumes have often been decorated with wormlike creatures. Some scholars think they are snakes or dragons, but they are actually earthworms. People imagine, too, that the decorations are unicorns in the mould of Yeluli's horn, which can penetrate the earth and guide shamans to travel in the caverns of the underworld to search for souls.

In the same vein, there is a tale that complements what can be found in the seventh *fiyelen* of the White Mongolian's narrative:

The earthworms transformed from the goddess Dukai could never survive above ground, but they bolstered the eyesight of Abka Hehe's guardian goddess with divine fire that could penetrate the earth, nourish the soil, and breed. To return into the good graces of the goddess Abka, Dukai thus tried her best to help the guardian by boring many holes into the earth so that the fiery



beams of her eyes could spread through the underground unhindered and transform into herbs and flowers. She thus became the fragrant *xandan usiha* (Peony star) which could trick Yeluli. The earthworm goddess Dukai was partly the reason of this final triumph over the devil, so to show her gratitude, Abka Hehe allowed her to self-reproduce and granted her immortality. The earthworm goddess is also called little boa goddess, who can aid shamans and mitigate peoples' pain.

There was a seventh-generation great-grandfather, surnamed Fu, an old shaman of Siji Village, according to whose version of the Weceku Uleben evil deities and the harm they cause can be categorized as follows:

|                                         |                                 |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Nine-headed Yeluli (wind devil Sisilin) | – Deadly waters                 |
|                                         | – Epidemics                     |
|                                         | – Poisonous worms               |
| Metamorphoses of Yeluli:                | – Glaciers                      |
| Nine-headed crow                        | – Draught                       |
| Black shamans who harm the world        | – Cave-ins                      |
| Mangai, Mangni, Mangus, Mahuyi, Mahuzi  | – Spirits of deceased ancestors |
|                                         | – Ice hail                      |
|                                         | – Whirling clouds               |
|                                         | – Black light                   |
|                                         | – Abnormal fetus                |

From what we have seen in this chapter, the myths of the Weceku Uleben, the Manchu ancestral shrine tales that came to be called "War in Heaven," had a profound influence on the beliefs of northern peoples. From the main myths, moreover, sprang up many subsidiary myths, some of which have been handed down in a way that has nothing to do with religion. Such are folktales about battles between human beings and beasts, between birds and beasts, and between mammoths and woolly rhinoceroses. All these can be classified as derived versions of "War in Heaven," though some tales about mammoths, ancient boas, and divine ducks cultivating land for people actually constitute another class of myths. The deities mentioned in "War in Heaven" are worshipped by various tribes and ethnic groups. As we have said, the work is not made up of the creation myths of just one tribe or clan; it is rich in mythic motifs, intricate plots, and names of deities that constitute a horde of northern myths that have been enriched with the social development of tribes, clans, and ethnic groups as they dispersed and reassembled in the process of taking final shape. Venerable elders collected, compiled, edited, and enriched them, and generations of shamans then inherited them and gradually spread them throughout the area in stable versions. The ancient Jurchen tribal ancestors of the Manchu enjoyed a profound history and culture, which had an enormous impact on other northern tribes. "War in Heaven" surely enjoyed a supreme position in the Jurchen and later Manchu people's beliefs. The Manchu

in turn must have been the major preservers, carriers, and chanters of its collection of myths, but influenced by the myths, other northern ethnic groups in turn helped to preserve and spread them.

In the 1930s, scholars thought that the lengthy ninth *fiyelen* must have been added to the collection and edited by shamans who had "mouths of gold." Gradually, its present form became the theological and theogonical sourcebook of shaman worship. As we noted earlier, in the Jurchen dialect, *fiyelen* means "several times" or "several episodes" and represents the order of prayers. "Ninth *fiyelen*" is thus not a stable term; in some clans, it has meant the order or number of sequences of old shaman chants. In different clans, it has different contents – some long, some short, some detailed in their description, some quite sketchy. The divergence shows that its myths are based on traditions of oral transmission. Shamans chanted them, and others heard and learned from them. Nonetheless, diverse as they are, the tales about the battles in heaven are no doubt creation myths that have been piously believed in by all ethnic groups.

As we have seen, the myths of "War in Heaven" cover natural phenomena, celestial changes, animals and plants, and ancestral activities. The deities, mostly goddesses, are personified natural forces: half-man and half-beast or half-bird. Listed in hierarchical order, more than three hundred goddesses fill out the solemn pantheon and theogony. Collectively called mama goddesses, they are benevolent and fertile and care for all. From their gender, we know that the battle series was created as early as the period of matriarchal society, because the goddesses' supreme social status and role reflects the core modes of social thought of a time when women had an eminent and influential role and were highly regarded. Accordingly, in the myths, they dominate and dictate what happens in the realm of the gods. The demon Yeluli, for its part, is the embodiment and symbol of the overpowering natural forces with which primordial people had to contend.

The time span of the myths in the "War in Heaven" series stretches throughout a rather long historical period, from humankind's simple survival to the use of fire, from matriarchal to patriarchal society, from simplistic thinking to intricate reasoning and the birth of numbers, all mapped out mythically. "War in Heaven" can thus be studied as early history, as a saga and treasure horde of prehistoric culture. Since its birth, its myths have all been closely related to primitive shamanistic worship. Most of the deities occupy significant positions in northern peoples' shaman shrines and are the focus of important rituals, and the myths as a whole provide the conceptual basis, mythological embodiment, and essential ideology of northern shamanism and have had a profound impact on the fundamental procedures of shaman rites. Later shaman practices can actually be interpreted as copies of "War in Heaven."

Religion is the lever of a whole civilization; every ascent of human society without exception is registered on this responsive building block. The world view embodied in primordial religion constitutes the basis for all religious concepts and provides the internal structure for all human activities, ancient and modern. Primordial religious beliefs do not just reflect mythological concepts but also are myths themselves, and the major concepts embodied in myths are religious.

Religious concepts provide intangible norms for human morals, and the mythic characters and ideas embodied in religious rituals constitute the behavioural guide for believers, providing a means for self-discipline and restraint. "War in Heaven" is a product of primordial pantheistic beliefs that can be read as the classic of primitive northern shamanism, and its picturesque episodes give expression to serious creedal beliefs. Scholars, domestic and abroad, have been accustomed to treating shamanism as a matter of simple, everyday sacrifice and prayer, but in fact, it embodies primitive modes of matriarchal clan life and religious belief. These deeper connotations are the basis for its continued vitality and popularity among multitudes of pious worshippers over the long course of constantly changing social structures and evolving modes of thought.

### **Note**

- 1 A puppet regime created in China's northeastern provinces by Japanese imperialists, 1931–1945.

## 4 Tribal myths and ancestor worship

In the past, some scholarly and historical accounts seemed to support the idea that there have not been many tribal or clan myths preserved among individual northern peoples or that the few examples we have are not worth noting. In fact, however, an abundance of tribal myths have been preserved and spread throughout northern China, and they give significant witness to peoples' thoughts and viewpoints in the course of their human development, especially at important turning points in the history of the primitive tribal period. As human societies evolved from simple matriarchal clan organization into patriarchal societies, they developed into clans on the basis of blood relations and eventually into tribes made up of many closely related clans. During this process, myths and legends arose that revealed the birth, burgeoning, migrating, conquering, and waxing and waning of particular tribes and interpreted their evolving world in fantastic mythical ways. These narratives were made holy, moreover, and revered as the true history of the tribe, and they gave evidence to other tribes of their unique tribal characteristics, special ancestral lineage, and intertribal social status. In the early tribal era, a tribe would disparage the origin myths and legends that consolidated the development and social advancement of other tribes. But such tribal creation myths created at the ideological stage of a people's childhood constitute significant cultural manifestations of humankind as it entered the tribal phase of human history. The study of such myths can thus be of significance for understanding and interpreting prehistoric modes of thought.

### 4.1 Origin myths of particular peoples

Ancient Chinese documents record the origin myths of some northern peoples, among the most famous of which are those of Turkic tribes, whose ancestors were believed to be grey wolves. The 7th-century CE *Book of Zhou: Records of Tujue* (*zhoushu tujuechuan*) says the following of Turks (Tujue) with the surname Ashina: "Their ancestors mated with wolves and became pregnant. . . . Ten boys were born of the unions, and when they grew up, they each married a wife and gave rise to separate clans. The Ashina clan was one of them." The same document records that in the ancient Xia dynasty (2100 BCE–1600 BCE), people embroidered golden wolf heads on their banners and flags and called their warriors

*fuli*, meaning “wolf,” no doubt because they did not want to forget that they had wolves as their ancestors. The 11th-century *New Book of Tang: Records of Tujue* (*Xintangshu tujuezhuan*) contains a similar account: “Before their camp’s gate, people would raise a flag with a golden wolf, normally sitting facing the east.” The wolf standard was the army flag of the Uygurs and other Turkic peoples. It was based on and fostered the belief in wolves as their ancestors and in the wolf as their totem and guardian ancestral deity.

An origin myth of another important ancient ethnic group, the Gogureo ancestors of the Korean people in northeast China, is documented in the 6th-century CE *Book of Wei: Records of Goguryeo* (*Weishu gaojulizhuan*):

The people of Goguryeo originated in Buyeo (Fufu, 夫余), and they said that their progenitor was called Jumong. . . . Courtiers of Buyeo conspired to kill him . . . but Jumong escaped from the city with two followers, Niao Yin and Niao Wei. On their way southeast, they encountered a great river. They needed to cross it, but there was no bridge. The courtiers from Buyeo came in pursuit, so Jumong said to the river, “I am the son of the Sun, the grandfather of Hebo the river god. Today I am on the run, and people are following me in fast pursuit. Please show me the way to cross.” They then witnessed a miraculous scene: Fish and turtles surfaced on the water and formed a bridge, so Jumong was saved. . . . He then went on to the Pushu River (普述水), where he met three people, one in linen clothes, another in cotton clothes and the third in clothes of sea weed. The three followed Jumong to Hesheng Gu City, settled there, and called their state Goguryeo. For generations, they lived and prospered there.

The 12th-century Korean *Samguk Sagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*, in Chinese *Sanguo shiji*) and the 13th-century *Samguk Yusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) contain similar stories.

Regarding myths of Mongolian origins, the first volume of *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh* (*The Compendium of Chronicles*), a 14th-century work of the Persian Mongol Ilkahnate, contains the myth “Melting a Path on the Snowy Mountains”:

In ancient times, infighting broke out between a Mongol tribe and Turkic tribes, and many innocent people were killed. The fighting ended with the ruthless slaughter and defeat of the Mongols, after which only two Mongol couples survived. They fled to a place called Erguna Kun, meaning “precipitous ridge,” where they settled and procreated. As more and more offspring were born, the names of their tribes and clans formed a separate ethnic group that became widely known in the world, and this group in turn became divided into the sub-branches that form today’s Mongolian tribes. As the number of births continued to increase, however, settlements became so crowded that people reached a unanimous agreement to emigrate from the cold and narrow valley of Erguna Kun. In the end, they found on a mountain an abandoned iron-ore mine and melted down the iron. They gathered heaps

of firewood and charcoal and packed them on their packsaddles. They then butchered seventy bulls and stallions and used their hides to make seventy huge bellows. At the foot of the mountain, they piled up the firewood and charcoal and, using the bellows, melted down the entire iron-ore mountain. In this way, they not only forged tons and tons of iron, but opened a gateway to a new life, breaking out of the narrow valley and reaching the vast plains.

This myth of clan origins no doubt presents a scenario of the primitive period of Mongol history, recording the adventurous endeavours and heroic feats of the ancient Mongols. With astounding wisdom and fortitude, they opened a path of survival for the entire people and built their future in the vast grasslands.

Another Mongol myth tells the story of the origins of people in eastern Mongolia, where it has long been popular:

When the sun was but a small and humble fire ball, two sisters set foot upon the sacred land. The older sister married a man in the South of the country, where the mountains were green and the water crystal clear. The younger married in the North, where the grass seemed coated with grease. Later, the elder gave birth to a baby with a chunk of earth in his hand. Called Hetus, he was the primogenitor of the Han people; the younger gave birth to a child with the lock of a horse's mane in his grip. Called Mongol, he became the forefather of the Mongols.

Such myths of clan or tribal origins are legendary and highly imaginative, but their imaginative fancy cannot be separated from peoples' actual living situations and the circumstances which their ancestors must have suffered or enjoyed. For instance, the Turkic myth of the wolf bears a close relationship to living conditions on the prairie, and the wolf totem embodies the unyielding spirit of the ancient Turkic people in their harsh living conditions.

In the 15th-century Ming dynasty *Geography of Liaodong* (*Liaodong dilizhi*), we find an origin myth of the Khitan people of Muye Mountain in Inner Mongolia:

About thirty *li* to the east of Liaoyang [in Liaoning Province], there was a temple in which were worshipped the painted statues of the earliest Khitan ancestors: Qishou Khan facing south, his wife Kedun facing north, and their eight sons. According to legend, a divine stalwart riding a white steed headed eastward around Mayu Mountain along the Futu River, while a heavenly maiden riding a cart drawn by a blue-green ox came down the Yellow River to a pine forest. They met at Muye Mountain where the two rivers merge, fell in love and married. They gave birth to eight sons, who prospered and sired offspring that burgeoned into eight separate tribes. Since then, when people waged war or sent offerings, they would be sure to offer a white horse and blue-green ox.

This myth has two important implications. One is that the Khitan ancestors were of no ordinary stock but were rather the descendants of immortals and nymphs.

The other is that their ancestral dwelling place was somewhere along the Xar Moron River by Muye Mountain in Inner Mongolia, not far from Liaoyang. The myth convincingly attests to the origin of this ethnic group for students of Chinese ethnic history.

The origins of northern ethnic groups have always given rise to controversial issues in the study of ethnic history, and they have spawned various schools of research and academic theories. To properly map the local origin of each ethnic tribe, clarify the relations among various tribes, and trace their mergers, we need much more evidence than we presently possess. Only with such evidence can we draw an accurate map of the distribution, migration, layout, and development of the languages and customs of different ethnic blocks. There were many such groups, especially before the Ming dynasty. Some say that the *hulun* (tribal group) of those days could have numbered in the hundreds and that the *daye* (chieftain) and *ejen* (head of a tribal group) could be counted in the thousands. However, it is a rather blurred scene and a complicated matter to retell the stories of the incessant conflicts, migrations, and merging among the tribes. What further complicates the matter is that many a northern ethnic group had no native written language, so as has rightly been said, the only accounts of their histories are scattered among fragmented records in Han scholars' works (Sun Jinyi 1989:2). Therefore, collecting and editing folk materials such as family albums and records and clan creeds and documents of individual clans' origin myths and oral materials is vital. Such materials were completely overlooked by scholars in the past, but in recent years, they have aroused wide scholarly interest for the rich authentic evidence that they provide for the study and compilation of the cultural history of ethnic relations. They fill in missing links in many historical periods. One of the aims of this book is to flesh out the history with mythical accounts of the origins of various Manchu clans.

### *Myths of divine metamorphosis*

Some tribal origin myths speak of spirit objects that metamorphosized into human ancestral deities. The Manchu Xu clan, for example, have worshipped a stone as their ancestral stone mama. According to their shaman tales, their forefathers, the so-called Savage Jurchen, originally lived in caves in Stone Cave Valley (*Shigougu*, 石洞沟) in Russian territory amid or downstream of the Amban Xangyan Bira (Big Yellow River), a branch of the Amur (in Manchu Sahaliyan Bira, Black River). Women in the stone caves became pregnant due to sunshine, and their offspring were covered all over with hair and so were called the Hairy Cave Dwellers (*Tongxue maoren*, 洞穴毛人). As the population grew with time, they formed various tribes and later came to be known as the Yellow River Dwellers. Their great grandfathers fought in the north against peoples of the Sahaliyan, whom they subdued and incorporated into their tribes. Over the course of the conflicts, however, they gradually migrated south to today's Liaoning Province – Chaoyang, Sudeng, and Gugou – and settled as the Siktere Hala, with the Chinese surname Xu under the Qing dynasty Plain Red Banner, the Hukeshu Niru.<sup>1</sup>



Till this day, even after migrating to the south, the Xu clan return to the old stone caves to perform their ancestral rites. They piously place three white pebbles in the sacred coffer of their ancestors, taking them to be their stone ancestral deity. This custom has been handed down from generation to generation for more than three hundred years, and many myths about the stone deity are still preserved among clan shamans and elders. The sacred lyrics of shaman chants eulogize the divine stone as Mama's Stone (*mama de zushi*), Stone of Brightness (*guangming de zushi*), and Stone of Life (*shengming de zushi*): the source of thousands of generations. All this bears traces of stone totem worship, in which stones are mythically transformed into ancestors.

Similarly, the Fuca Hala worship willows as transformed into their ancestral goddess. When they carry out their family sacrificial rituals on a sacred altar board, they offer willow sprays which must have nine green leaves and be newly pricked from the supple green willows along the river, where the air is intoxicatingly fresh and the water crystal clear. After the rite, the sprays must be carefully stored in the sacred coffer until the following year, when they are replaced by new ones and sent adrift on the stream. The reason for such piety towards willows is given in the ritual lyrics:

Ages upon ages ago, the Hurhan Bira [river] where our Fuca Hala ancestors lived turned into the Hurhan Sea without any warning. Its bright white waters drowned many creatures until only one of the earthly men made by Abka Enduri was left alive. On the waves and torrents, he drifted, threatened with drowning at any minute. All of a sudden, he spied a willow branch afloat on the current. He seized it in a desperate effort to avoid drowning, and it bore him to a cave half filled with water, where it turned into a beautiful maiden. They mated and had offspring.

The willow is thus the clan's ancestral deity, and the mythic tale of the willow's metamorphosis bears clear traces of willow totem worship.

### ***Myths of ethnic separation***

Some tribal origin myths point to differences between ethnic groups. Such a myth is popular among the Ewenki of the Ergun Banner in Inner Mongolia:

Once upon a time, there was a big stream, and by it there was a house where a man lived. One day, a fox came to crouch at his gate, and since then, every day the house was tidied and the meals prepared, which surprised him. One day, he found the fox had turned into a beautiful maiden. He married her, and from the marriage ten children were born, each having a special advantage over the others. One knew how to grow crops, another knew the carpenter's craft, still another knew how to write and calculate, etc. In later years, the ten brothers dispersed. The carpenters became the ancestors of the Ewenki, and the farmers the ancestors of the Han.

Another myth tells of how in the past all peoples shared the same language:

One day, the god inspected the world of human beings from the sky, and soon he decided to change himself into a tall column. Seeing it, many people used all their efforts to climb it, but when they had nearly reached the top, they fell down and were dispersed. Ever since, they began to speak different languages.

Still-another myth recounts the following:

“Long, long ago, there was a couple living in an underground cave who gave birth to eight children, seven boys and one girl. The boys later begot seven ethnic peoples – the Ewenki, Mongols, etc.”

A myth of the Ewenki of the Arun Banner in Inner Mongolia tells a similar story:

In ancient times, a great number of people lived near the headwaters of the Amur under their chief Lai Mergen. At the beginning, they lived on lichen, but soon Lai Mergen began to use bows and arrows to hunt wild animals. There were no cooking pots, so they had to roast the meat. Few wild beasts were left around the Amur, so Lai Mergen rode his chestnut steed to the northern bank, where he found a huge horse in the mountains on which there rode a giant. The horse and the giant shared one eye, and the sight of them so startled Lai Mergen’s steed that it began galloping away. The giant chased after him fast, and together they crossed the river to the south bank. Lai Mergen said to the giant, “Accept my challenge if you dare”, but the giant didn’t take up the challenge. So Lai Mergen led his people to hunt in that part of the mountains and told those who would follow him to give him a sign by sleeping facing towards the southwest. The next day, he thus led that group to the southwest of the Amur. Those who settled there along the river became the Ewenki, while those who stayed on the mountain became the Oroqen.

Similar origin myths exist among the Manchu. My father, Fu Xilu, used to tell of a man called Zhang Shitou in Dawujiazi Village, Aihui County, who was a walking encyclopedia of Manchu folklore and could narrate myths in the Manchu language. One of these is “EnduWulehuma”:

Legend has it that many and many a year ago, the supreme deity Abka Enduri set free from cages five colorful *ulehuma* (pheasants). Descending to earth, they turned into human beings – all women, beautiful women. But none of them was willing to live on the earth; they wanted to return to live comfortably with Abka Enduri and tried every means to climb up high in hope of reaching heaven. Finally, they happened to find a thick-wooded dead tree with many branches reaching to the sky. The sight of it delighted five beauties, who struggled to climb it. Higher and higher they climbed, until suddenly

the wood cracked and caused the five to topple down in four directions from the clouds. One fell by a river, where she met a school of fish; one fell under a rocky mountain, where she met families of tigers and leopards; another fell into a birch woods, where she met herds of deer and moose; still another fell on a fragrant plain, where she encountered a drove of pigs; the last was carried away by a gale and met a herd of cattle and flock of sheep. The five beauties then took their husbands respectively from the Hezhe, Solon [Ewenki], Oroqen, Manchu and Mongols.

What adds greater significance to these myths of differences among northern peoples is that they all contain tales of the origin of neighbouring peoples as well. They indicate that these others are brothers, which reflects their close mutual relationships, mergers and intercommunication. While pointing to differences, the myths thus stress group cohesiveness as well.

### ***Myths of conception by a goddess***

There are also tribal myths of humans conceived by a goddess. Such is the ancient myth *The Favor of Heavenly Maiden* (*Tiannv zhi hui*) told by the Durbet Mongols:

It is said that in the nomadic landscape of the Durbet people, there was Mount Yu reaching high into the clouds. The top was blanketed with perpetual snow and cloaked in mist and clouds. Spring waters gathered to form a crystal-clear lake, smooth as a mirror. Elders say the mountain is the realm of the gods. Once when a young man climbed it as he followed his prey, he found a band of nymphs playing in the water. Their lithe and graceful figures surprised him and commanded his admiration, so he ran down the mountain and returned with a lasso. The nymphs were still happily playing in the water, not noticing the young hunter. He suddenly lassoed one of them, and the rest hurriedly hid behind the clouds. He wooed the nymph and was not rebuffed. Sadly, their happiness was fleeting. That same day, they had to bid goodbye because the rules of heaven and earth are different. However, the nymph found herself pregnant and came down to the mountain lake where she and the hunter had first met and there gave birth to a boy. Since she could not linger long in the human world, she wove a small cradle and hung it on a branch with her baby in it. She sent a yellow bird to sing for the boy day and night and then in great agony returned to her place in heaven.

At that time, the Durbet people had no chieftain and were eager to find one. Under the guidance of a sooth seer, they climbed Mount Yu, where they heard the bird's song. Following the direction of the sound, they found the cradle on the branch with the infant boy in it and delightedly brought him back to their tribe. Later, he grew into a manly figure of great character, who performed herculean tasks and became the ancestor of the unruly Choros clan of the Durbet Mongols.

(Chimudorji 1981)

*Three Heavenly Fairies of Changbai Mountain* (*Changbianshan sanxianny*) is a similar origin myth of the Aisin Gioro clan of Nurhaci and the Manchu emperors that was commonly anthologized in classics of the Qing dynasty. *Veritable Records of the Qing Emperor Nurhaci* (*Qingtaizu nu'erhachi shilu*) contains the most authentic version of this tale:

The supreme head of the Aisin Gioro, with the honorable name of Nurhaci, had great grandfathers who prospered in the Changbai Mountain. The range rises up more than two hundred *li* high and stretches out thousands of miles, with stately trees and awesome vistas bathed in eddies of rising reiki. There is a deep lake at the top called Tamen (small gate), whose perimeter encompasses eighty *li* and whose head-stream springs from a remote chasm in the rocks that is said to be the source of the Yalu, Hüntung, and Aihu rivers. The Yalu originates from the south slope and flows westward and south into the Bay of Korea around Liaodong; the Hüntung originates from the north slope and empties into the North Sea, and the Aihu travels eastward until it empties into the East Sea. The three rivers have nurtured great treasures and rarities. The pearls in their shells are world famous, and because the wind is piercing and the air freezing, there grow rare species of trees and herbs that can be used to make elixir in season. In the summer, wild animals inhabit the mountains, and to the east is another mountain, Bukuli, at the foot of which is Ribul Lake.

Legend has it that there were three fairy maidens who bathed in the lake, Enggulen, Jenggulen, and Fekulen. Once when they had finished bathing, a divine bird took a red fruit and put it on the coat of the youngest. She liked it so much that couldn't have the heart to leave it aside on the ground, so she put it in her mouth and got dressed. But she felt that as she swallowed the fruit she became pregnant. She told her two elder sisters, "I feel heavy, I can't fly. What can I do?" Here sisters answered, "We are immortals; we live happy and carefree in the heavenly courts. Heaven has bestowed on you the gift of a child. You can come back up after you have delivered the baby." They said this and then left her alone on the mountain, where she gave birth to a baby boy. The boy was able to speak from birth and grew to have a manly build and handsome features. When he grew up, his mom told him the story of her pregnancy by a red fruit. She named him Bukūri Yongşon and told him to call himself Aisin Gioro. "Heaven has sent you to settle the fights and disputes over land and found a new nation. Go and make an emperor of yourself. You can go downstream and find out where." She gave him a small boat and then flew away.

Bukūri Yongşon travelled downstream by boat to the river's end and got out on the bank. He snapped some willow twigs and palm leaves to make a seat for himself and sat upright. At that time, three local clans were in conflict over the chieftainship. Every day they summoned their men to fight it out, and the conflict grew worse. One of the men went to the river for water, and when he saw Aisin Gioro, he felt strange about him. He returned and told his

kinsmen, "You should all stop fighting. When I went to the river for water, I saw a man who did not seem like an ordinary human being. Heaven must have sent such a person for a divine purpose." The men all went to see him, and they all thought he was very special. They inquired about his origin, and he told them, "I am the son of the fairy Fekulen. My given name is Bukūri Yongşon, and my surname is Aisin Gioro. I have been sent by the gods to settle your disputes." They all felt surprised at his knowing of their quarrels and said, "This man must be born a holy one. We should not let him walk on the ground." They made a carriage and bore him back to their homes. The heads of the three households gathered for discussion and concluded, "We should put aside our disputes and make this man our chief." They gave a maiden from the Bailei family to him in marriage, and their disputes were settled. All accepted him as their *beile*, meaning "lord," "prince," or "chief" in Manchu. In this way, Bukūri Yongşon settled down at the east of Changbai Mountain on the pasture of Emohui. There, out of the old city of Odoli, he established a domain called Manchuria, which became the base for future generations of the Manchu.

Similarly, a variant of the Korean myth from Buyeo about their king Jumong seen earlier presents him as the son of a fairy:

It is said that once upon a time a girl became pregnant while bathing in the sun. A big fleshy egg sprouted from under her left armpit and grew to about five liters. The king thought it was not auspicious for his country that a woman should give birth to a bird egg, so he then sent someone to take the egg and throw it under a herd of horses, expecting that they would smash it to smithereens. Strangely enough, however, the horses refused to stamp on it. The king then ordered the egg to be thrown into the deep mountains, yet the birds and beasts all protected it. When it was cloudy and the sun was hidden, the egg would give out light like the sun. The king was amazed. He sent someone to bring it back and gave it to the care of a woman. Before long, the fleshy egg cracked, and out of it stepped a baby boy. As he stepped forth from the egg, his cry was extraordinarily sonorous, and he was handsome, with a manly build. It took him less than a month to learn to speak, and he grew fast and acquired many skills. He often went hunting with the seven sons of the crown prince Jinwa.

One day, going out with more than forty attendants, the prince hunted but just one deer, but Jumong hunted down many deer single-handed. Prince Jinwa felt strange and told his father, "Jumong has unearthly powers. If we don't get rid of him as soon as possible, he might cause great trouble." So the king made Jumong a common herdsman, which enraged the lad. Deciding to go south and establish a new country, he secretly picked out a fine steed and left Buyeo. When he reached a river, he said, "I am the son of heaven, nephew of the river god. I am escaping persecution. Please bless me with a bridge or a sampan." Just as he was speaking, he saw fish and turtles rise to the surface of

the river and build a bridge for him. Just as he crossed the river, his pursuers came, but when they stepped onto the bridge, they immediately fell into the river and were drowned. Jumong then came to an area with beautiful green mountains and fresh water, where he built a new nation, Goguryeo.

### *Myths of saviours*

To the northwest of Ali River in the Oroqen Autonomous Banner of Inner Mongolia, there is a high mountain called Gaxian Gaogede. At the middle of the mountain was a dim cave that could hold more than a thousand people. Hunters gave it the name Gaxian Cave, and in ancient historical studies, it was established as the main place of origin of the ancient nomadic Xianbei tribal confederation. There are many Oroqen myths about the cave, the demons dwelling in it, and heroes who defeated them and brought prosperity to their tribe. For example,

Long, long ago, the demon Mangai with nine heads occupied Gaxian Cave. Because it had many heads, many eyes and many ears, the tiniest object could not escape its sight, the slightest sound its hearing. So hunters spent their days in great fear. The Oroqen hero Maogetiehan vowed to conquer Mangai. He pondered what to do until a brilliant idea hit him. He was a shrewd hero, and whatever plan he had, he would work out all the eventualities. He realized that because the monster had many heads, it would not be guided by just one of them and so was torn between making this and that decisions. When it tried to carry out its plans, its actions were thus all helter-skelter, and when it shot at something, it often missed the target. These drawbacks could be made good use of in Maogetiehan's plan. Waving about and gnarling its teeth, the demon Mangai arrogantly boasted, "Hey, who is that unweaned suckling that dares to challenge me? How dare you tread on my domain?" Maogetiehan shouted back, "I am the chieftain of the Oroqen tribe, the master of Khingan Mountains. I have come here to fight you"! These words made the monster laugh, "You have a small mouth, but make big threats. How many heads do you have to play games with me?" So they competed in many ways. Maogetiehan posed several hard questions: "How many steep peaks are there in this mountain range? How many meandering streams are there in the marshes?" To these questions, Mangai produced wrong answers, even when it summoned minor devils to make a count. For the second round, they competed in archery, and this time, too, the demon was defeated. It had to admit defeat in shame and surrender Gaxian Gaogede Mountain to Maogetiehan. Since then, the Oroqen tribe became the masters of the Khingan Mountains, with Maogetiehan as their chieftain.

While eulogizing the triumph of wisdom over a demon, this mythic tale points to the migration of the Oroqen people from the north banks of the Amur southwards to the Khingan region.

Another such myth is widely spread among the Oroqen of Xunke County, Heilongjiang. According to a person named Mopujiabu, it runs as follows:

Once upon a time, there was a span of Oroqen history called the Five States Period. In one of the five states, a small one, there was a family of five brothers. All were quite industrious, except the youngest, whom the father drove away because he was lazy and did nothing. So the good-for-nothing took his wife and went out into the mountains, where they lived by picking wild fruits. One day, however, an old man who seemed to come out of nowhere instructed him how to make bows and arrows by using a knife to carve wood, and he was able to shoot down roe deer. In winter, moreover, the old man taught him to hunt roe deer, make bow strings from their sinews, and sew coats and cloaks from their hide. The deer-hide coat, hat, and *haqimi* boots<sup>2</sup> kept him warm and made him look handsome. When it snowed, the old man taught him how to chase and trap martens, and when he had mastered this skill, he was able to capture several martens a day. Then the old man told him that the chief wanted marten hide. The chief summoned him, called him a hero and payed him in silver. His four brothers saw that his life had improved and that he had meat every meal, and they came to learn the art of hunting from him. After that, all five brothers would go hunting together, joined by the old man. They were the forefathers of the Oroqen.

Basically, many of the third and fourth types of myths of tribal origins cannot be separated. As tales of a tribal leader born from a fairy goddess, they fit one category; as tales of a saviour, they fit another. In many myths, moreover, the saviour begins as an ordinary human being but gradually comes to have extraordinary power to triumph over enemies, drive away demons, and accomplish unusual feats. This book lists the fourth type separately because the saviours in the cited examples are not born from a fairy but instead are basically just human beings. The length of this book does not allow for the inclusion of many other pertinent myths.

### ***Tribal myths and historical reality***

The majority of myths of tribal origins provide rich material for investigations of the history of ancient China, especially the prehistory of northern peoples. Along with other cultural relics, the origin myths of particular peoples need to be studied further as first-hand materials for grasping the significance of ancient tribal customs and ethnic characteristics. Some such myths can be treated as historical materials and as an indisputable basis for the division of a people's history into periods, and they need to be collected and properly understood. As cited in some historical writings, however, they may actually offer little in the way of a true perception and understanding of the ideology, thoughts, customs, and cultural phenomena of that time. Many of the mythical accounts are confined only to a people's ideology and are exaggerated. They have complicated relationships with their historical context and cannot be held simply as trusted historical evidence.



For instance, there are varying opinions about the relation to historical realities of *Three Heavenly Fairies of Changbai Mountain*, the Manchu myth of the fairy Fekulen swallowing a red fruit on Changbai Mountain and giving birth to the man who laid the foundation for the Manchu lands of Manchuria, Bukūri Yongšon. Although the myth is widely popular among the people and deemed one of the most important myths of the Manchu people, scholars have always held it in suspicion. Some have tried to show that it is a parody of what allegedly happened in the Shang dynasty (1600–1100 BCE) when a concubine is said to have swallowed the egg of a red bird and then given birth to Shang ancestors. Others take it as an edited version of the Goguryeo myth, in which Jumong was born of an egg. On the other hand, however, others believe that since fairies have for so long held a place in shaman worship, they could not have been altogether make-believe. I'm inclined to side with this latter opinion, because popular myths rise out of a people's customs and traditions and are not parodies or conjured-up tales of fancy. Some of the arguments that scholars give are not fully supported or well argued. It is commonly known that all ethnic groups went through a primitive stage of matriarchal society in which people knew their mothers but not their fathers. At that stage, the notion of self-conception or pregnancy by a divine agent was quite common as a means of understanding one's origins.

The most important criterion to tell whether a myth has a true relationship with historical events is to determine whether it accords with basic ethnic characteristics or historical facts of the period. A second criterion might be whether it is widespread within the ethnic group in line with historical facts and conditions. From these two criteria, we can recognize whether a myth has a creditable relationship with the identifying traits and history of the group. *Three Heavenly Fairies of Changbai Mountain* stands the test.

As we have seen, in it, the fairy Fekulen gives birth to Bukūri Yongšon and tells him to call himself Aisin Gioro. He later settles the disputes of the various tribes he encounters in his travels, is made their chieftain, and settles down on Changbai Mountain. From what I discovered in surveys of Manchu culture, we know that the myth not only *is* popular among Manchu people today but also *was* popular among their ancestors and has been so among neighbouring peoples as well. From the *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao*, we know of historical realities with which the myth is in basic accord: Hong Taiji, son of the chief of the Jurchen Aisin Gioro clan Nurhaci, was a cultured leader who gained his ruling position by a series of conquests on horseback and was outstanding in both military strategy and civil governance. Like his father, he was soaked in Jurchen, Han Chinese, Mongolian Ewenki, and Daur languages and customs. Before becoming the Qing emperor, Taizong had travelled to many places in uniform or in disguise around the Mudan, Nen, and Songhua (Sunggari) rivers and areas of Inner Mongolia. These travels no doubt tested his skills in communication with the local Jurchens, including the northernmost "Savage Jurchens."

Hong Taiji was a master of the Jurchen's rich oral literature and was skilled in telling their traditional tales as well as episodes from the 14th-century Han Chinese historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*) and the

Chinese classical novel *Outlaws of the Marsh* (*Shuihuzhuan*). Over the course of becoming emperor, he followed his father's aim of uniting Jurchen tribes along the east of present-day Liaoning Province, and he used the widespread Jurchen myth of "The Goddess Who Gave Birth to the Jurchens." That myth also tells of three fairy goddesses' giving birth to the Jurchen ancestors, and it had long been chanted in sacrificial rituals with only changes in names and details from *Three Heavenly Fairies of Changbai Mountain*. I discovered physical evidence of this myth in the form of three idols collected from people who had carefully preserved them for more than a hundred years.

*Three Heavenly Fairies of Changbai Mountain* was not taken by the Manchu from foreign sources, nor was it imagined out of thin air. It stems from the religious belief of the Jurchen people, who worshipped both heavenly goddesses and birds. On the basis of the earlier heavenly goddess myth, they created the myth of the origin of the Aisin Gioro tribe. The Manchu became a people as a result of the agglomeration of many complicated tribal structures, with their diverse and intricate cultural characteristics, beliefs, and customs. For many years, "Manchu" was just a common name for the union of the various tribes. The myth of *Three Heavenly Fairies of Changbai Mountain* came to be recognized by all the tribes and gave them a sense of unity and cohesion. Even after the founding of the Qing dynasty, various versions of the myth were chanted and preserved by different Manchu and other clans, but *Three Heavenly Fairies of Changbai Mountain* was the officially recognized version. If we want to study the mythology of northern ethnic groups, we thus need to understand it clearly and give it due respect.

## 4.2 Burial customs

Studies of ancient burial customs are important for providing physical evidence for interpreting primitive religious practices and the formation of peoples' mythical concepts. In accordance with primitive notions of souls and soul worship, people have traditionally held that "burial rituals send the soul of a deceased person dead to where it belongs" (Fu Xilu 1930a). Since "where it belongs" can be different for different peoples, their funeral customs, rites for the dead, myths of the underworld, and modes of contact with the world of the dead are also different. However, they all reflect the primordial religious belief that the soul does not die.

Many northern peoples have traditionally just laid the dead body out on the bare earth, which historians think is probably the most primitive type of burial. The 7th-century CE *Book of Jin* (*Jinshu*), under the entry "Sushen Tribe," records that "a deceased person was buried on the day of death in a field, covered with criss-crossed sticks of wood or with a pyre bearing a butchered pig for food in the afterlife." When people died, they were thus laid to rest naked in the fields, without an inner or outer coffin, and this mode of burial has been in practice from time immemorial. Some famous shamans and *mukūnda* would choose to be buried "naked in a deep pit, head towards the east and feet towards the west, with the blood of sacrificed animals mixed with earth and scattered upon the grave" (Fu Xilu 1930a). The intention was to free the soul of the deceased so that it could take

its place among the family deities as soon as possible. The head should be placed towards the east where the sun rises and the feet to the west, as if standing, where the east is the upward position. The corpse thus stands in death as they did when alive, indicating that the soul does not die.

This primitive mode of burial without a coffin continued into Jin dynasty times (1115–1234). The 10th-century *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiutangshu*), under the entry “Mohe,” records that the dead person was buried in a pit dug for them, that earth was directly poured over the body with no coffin or the like, and that the person’s horse was killed before the grave in sacrifice. More briefly, the 11th-century *New Book of Tang* (*Xintangshu*), under the entry “Heishui Mohe” records that “when people died, there were no coffins, and their horses were killed as sacrifice.” The thirty-ninth volume of the early 13th-century *Records of the Great Jin* (*Dajin guozhi*), titled *First Budding*, likewise reads that “If someone dies, the body is to be buried without a coffin.”

There exist many archaeological discoveries of ancient tombs and their remains. Typical are those of Jingu in the area of Yanji, Jilin Province.

The tombs there are arranged along a mountain slope from east to west, and they can be classified into three types based on structure: 1) a kind of stone coffin, in which the corpse is protected on four sides by stone slabs; 2) a grave dug upright in the earth with stones or stone slabs at the side; 3) a combination of the first and second types. Generally speaking, three to eleven bodies have been found in one grave, most of them in a stretched-out position facing the sky, some towards the east, some towards the west. Some bones were found to be buried only once, but some were moved from another location. The skeletons are arranged by twos, side by side, but some laid one above another in two or three layers. As for gender and age, some are male, some female, some old, middle-aged, and young, adolescents and even children.

(Archaeological Editorial Committee of Northeast China 1982:193)

This mode of burial points to a common family graveyard of people bound by blood relationship such as is found in primordial tribal society.

In northern shamanistic conceptions, the soul of the dead is a condensed, mist-like ball that is able to rise and sink, float and swim, and that prefers darkness to brightness, humidity to dryness, and cold to heat. So its favourite dwelling place is in a secure cavity of yellow clay soil. When people dig graves, they dig down into yellow soil that is humid, cool, and pure, which is believed to be the heart of the earth mother Banaji Emu. Another shamanistic concept is that while people are alive, they live by the support of their blood relatives, so when they die, they rely on the help of souls of their own blood. In the world of souls, those of related kinship draw together in tribally related groups of *yinzhi* (阴祇, underground spirits), who serve as the root base of their tribe and whose blessing affects the tribe’s life and prosperity. Newly deceased souls seeking secure and perpetual peace ask these spirits for sanctuary. It is like fertile soil on the earth: when leaves and fruit fall to the ground, decay, and become part of the rich soil, they give rise to

new sprouts and bring the earth prosperity. This belief constitutes the essence of ancestral worship.

When tribes expanded and flourished in the past, they commonly became dispersed. Some migrated to new settlements, where they built new homes and sometimes experienced changes in their ideas of burial. In ancient burial records, we find that some came to use fire burial, others tree burial, and still others sky burial, in which the corpse was pecked at by birds, devoured by beasts, or nibbled away by schools of fish. In the Liao and Great Jin periods, fire burial was popular among the Manchu. This marked a deepening of religious ideas and mythical concepts, and the ashes were light and portable when migrating. In fire burial sites, we find mainly small stone, wood, and urn-like vessels containing only the cremated ashes of the dead, not bodies. Whatever forms these vessels take – pottery vase, china jar, stone container, wooden chest, or birch basket – holes were made at the top or bottom as passages for the souls to travel out of.

In the primordial mentality, the notions of souls were simple, but gradually concepts of good souls and evil souls came into being. People began to believe that there are evil agents in the universe that cause people to succumb to epidemics, youth to die suddenly and prematurely, and tribes to suffer calamities. To prevent fiendish souls of the dead from roaming around and causing harm, they treated deceased people whom they believed to be possessed by demons or vicious ghosts with fire burial. Fire was considered a beneficial, chastening force that could purify them. Only when souls were purged by fire and their ashes preserved by tribespeople could they become pure souls who would bless their blood relatives with peace and stability. Fire burial was itself a blessing. The whole tribe would gather around, and a shaman would perform the rite: “A temporary wooden bier would be carried on the shoulders out into the wilderness and set on a pile of wood, and the shaman would light the fire” (Hu Pu’an 1986:138). The ashes would be collected into a purified container. Important for fire burial was the amount of wood used. It should be sufficient to fire the body until all the flesh was gone and the bones became white and crisp enough to be easily cracked. People would then gather the teeth, palm bones, ribs, and the chest bones into the container.

In accordance with their living areas and conditions, some northern peoples have tree burials – also called wind burials or hanging burials. The Oroqen, for instance, traditionally “wrapped the corpse in birch bark, carried it out on a set date, and hung it on the branches of a tree until the flesh was gone and the bones would fall to the ground. They then collected the bones and buried them” (Hu Pu’an 1986:146). Some Ewenki of the Ergun and Arun Banners in Inner Mongolia wrapped the dead body with birch bark or a reed or bamboo mat and hung it between tree branches supported by wooden poles, the head facing north and the feet south. When a hunter of the Hezhe downstream the Songhua River died while out hunting, people would carve out a big tree trunk, shape it into a coffin, and put the unfortunate body in it. His fellow hunters would then find four closely spaced trees of many branches, put two support poles on the branches, lay some smaller branches on top, and place the coffin on them. Two or three years later, when the

body was only bones, relatives would come and rebury them. The Manchu along the Amur also had the custom of wind burial when a person suffered a premature death.

Modes of burials are closely associated with primitive beliefs, the main purpose of the rite being to summon, console, and pacify the soul of the deceased. In ancient China, summoning the soul of the deceased was called *fu*, meaning “retrieval.” Through a series of rituals and sacrificial procedures, the soul is called back to its native place so that it not be left floating around somewhere between heaven and earth with no place to rest. Soul retrieval has also been commonly performed for an ill person whose disease is deemed beyond recovery. Called also “calling the soul” (*jioah*) or “calling back the soul” (*zhaohun*), this practice is based on the belief that the soul of an ill person is roaming about outside the body and needs to be drawn back by a shaman’s special powers to its rightful place in the person’s body. Myths of soul retrieval include many tales of ancestors’ souls’ returning to their home ground, dictating oracles, or predicting good fortune in dreams. Shamanistic believers regard this not as a matter of feared contact between human beings and ghosts but as a sign of blessing from the ancestors, whom tribespeople actually summon through a shaman to make inquiries concerning key tribal matters, astrological or climate changes, the aftermath of a disaster, or candidates for chieftain.

### 4.3 Ancestor spirit idols worship

The remembrance, reverence, and worship of ancestors is preserved and fostered not only in myths. Along the vast cultural belt of northern peoples believing in shamanism, there are diverse physical cultural relics of their worship of ancestral heroes. The voluminous objects from tomb excavations, enshrined ritual wares, spirit idols, items of gold, and gems collected in many clans, along with handwritten oracles and creeds and recent family albums, photos, and videos could fill many a museum of ancient ethnic culture.

According to shamanist notions, deities represent certain universal phenomena. As worshipped in shrines and ritual séances, however, they need to have a particular physical manifestation of their specific function. Shamans chant myths that give concrete expression to gods’ natures and functions, and they create spirit idols according to their believed features and various other specifications. Shamanism differs from Buddhism and Taoism, which worship what are basically purely spiritual entities. It regards every object in the world as a living mystery and expression of *lingqi* (灵气, spirit energy) and thus deserving of worship. At the same time, it stresses the naturalistic, pragmatic, and utilitarian role of religion.

As we have seen, moreover, in the myths of tribal origins, shamanism fosters the worship of ancestors and deities. One of the marks of the humanism of northern peoples is that almost every clan or tribe is careful to sing the praises of their ancestors in mythic tales and make offerings to them in regularly performed rituals. People admire their ancestors’ heroic deeds, commemorate them, believe in their continued life, and seek to have contact with their souls after death. Shamans

are mediums and spokespeople not only between humans and the gods but also between the living and the souls of loved ones who have died, including the “floating souls” (*fuhun*) of newly deceased. Although there is much scholarly discussion about shamans as mediums between humans and gods, however, there are but few about shamans as intermediators between living people and souls of the deceased. In the study of primitive myths, one needs to attend to the worship of souls, myths about spirits, and reverence for the recently deceased.

### ***Ancestor rites***

In shamanistic practices and ritual sacrifice, summoning the souls of the dead has an important role. They are summoned in brief but moving eulogy-like incantations or the lyric chants called *fobomi*. In line with shamanistic beliefs, when someone dies, the soul leaves its bodily shelter and floats about between heaven and earth. By chanting *fobomi*, a shaman can draw it back in the form of a flowing misty ball of condensed air enveloped in a film that can be seen only by shamans. However, it cannot remain in this state for long. It readily vanishes or leaves, not to be called again. So the power of the shaman’s incantation has a time limit. To achieve the goal of the incantation, the soul needs to be attached to something concrete that can allow it to remain for a longer period in the same way that the body contains the soul. It needs to be attached to a soul-inducing object, such as the willow branches and soul-summoning banners seen on Manchu tombs – long poles with flowing paper or cloth ribbons. Such, too, is the straw human figure used when raising up the coffin of a deceased Oroqen, a figure prepared by the shaman, who attaches to it many long strands held by a son or daughter of the deceased. Later, these are cut, marking the soul’s separation. In the case of the Ewenki, tombs are commonly surrounded by four tree trunks on which such strands are hung to attach the soul. In later traditions, the teeth or bones and also jars, urns, cases, and baskets all came to be used as soul-inducing objects or sometimes as the metamorphosized double of the soul of a valiant ancestor.

### ***Ancestor spirit idols***

In line with the belief that the soul does not die, people have traditionally fashioned idols of their gods and ancestral spirits for ritual use. They are of various size, patterns, and antiquity, and they are made of diverse materials – some sewn, some carved, some painted, and some filed into shape. The collective name of these idols, as we saw in Chapter 3 of Volume 1, is Mani gods, and most are of the souls of ancestors. They are thought to possess extraordinary power and have thus traditionally enjoyed the pious reverence and awe of the people of their tribe. No tribal outsider would dare to give them offence, but in the course of history, some soul idols lost their uniqueness as the icon of a particular group or use for a particular purpose and merged into a common spirit entity.

Through tribal shamans, ancestor idols might make demands of their children and grandchildren, and if their offspring would dare to delay in their response

or slight their wishes, they could suffer from illness or misfortune. If idols complained about their situation, their descendants would repair or redecorate the sacred coffer in which they were preserved, and if they felt cold and uncomfortable, their offspring would need to make leather clothes and shoes for them. If they felt a thirst for blood, moreover, beasts or birds would need to be slaughtered and the blood applied to their lips so that they could have a taste of fresh blood. The reason for such modes of reverence lies in the belief that ancestors' souls are still alive in the idols, just as they were in real life. So their offspring must wait on them hand and foot.

The following chapter will discuss the complex concepts associated with these icon-like idols. Here it suffices to note that these physical objects of ancestral worship are sacred doubles of the ancestors themselves and that they are revered by northern tribes and clans as their closest protectors and guardians. They fall roughly into four categories:

- 1 Ancestors.
- 2 Chieftains of earlier generations.
- 3 Heroic people of extraordinary valour and prowess.
- 4 Hereditary shamans and shaman mentors who have handed down the shamanic traditions.

Death is the end of existence in the flesh, but the soul is immortal. For continued physical existence, souls of the deceased have long been believed by northern peoples to settle into the idols made by their offspring so that they can continue to live in the human world. Their descendants offer them sacrifice and pray to them for assistance in times of need. Over the course of road construction in Dehua Village (德化村), Jilin Province, workers found a granite female statuette – full figure with distinct breasts and hair combed back – which scholars identified as an ancestral idol from the Neolithic period.



In the New Birth Community of Aihui County, Heilongjiang, people accidentally discovered a whole set of idols collected by an elderly Oroqen woman and preserved in five birch boxes. They include seventeen paintings and thirty-nine wooden idols. Most are of people in official Qing dress, but there are also images of forests, dogs, and serpents. The mouths of the idols were smeared with the blood of a sacrificed roe deer.



As recorded in *Old Jilin Records (Jilin Jiuwenlu)*,

In the past, the Heijin [Hezhe] had no medicine. When someone got ill, they would dance a sacred dance and chant to ask for blessing to get rid of the affliction. They would also cut a piece of wood into a long slab, round at the top and square at the bottom, and place it on the *kang* to commemorate their fathers and forefathers in the hope that they would bless them.

The *Ning'an Annals (Ningan xianzhi)* records that every year the Manchu held two *jia* rituals in which people prepared a row of wooden idols or coloured ribbons to represent the ancestors. The idols or ribbons are not simply those of one's own family but also those of the entire tribe, and the rituals have significance for the whole tribe. *Collected Records of Jilin (Jilin huizheng)* records that "Qiahala tribesmen were scattered along the East Sea near Hunchun [in Jilin Province]. Both men and women pierced their noses and decorated themselves with small silver or bronze idols about an inch tall." Similar records can be found in many other documents.

In that author's field studies, without exception, all the shamanic rituals that were viewed involved such idols. The difference lay only in the numbers of idols involved. Some of them, moreover, are associated with myths, which indicates that they were actually fashioned on the basis of myth. In fact, myths are the essential spiritual expression of the significance of such idols. In some Manchu clans, such as the Nimaca Hala, Siheteli Hala, and Husihali Hala, the idol worshipped is their heroic ancestor Dūkahū Manni, who is good at treating the arthritic waist and leg pains that are common among people in northern latitudes. Mythic legend has it that this Manni suffered a lot from this disease and treated himself with wild herbs. When he died, he zealously served his tribe. The following is a picture of this idol:



The clans just mentioned have also handed down idols of a married couple worshipped after their society became monogamous. Their office is traditionally believed to be that of blessing their descendants so that they can choose an appealing spouse and live a happy, harmonious, and loving married life. From the idols' costumes and decorations, we can tell that they were created in the fishing and hunting period. The many myths associated with them say that they often come down to the human world or advise young people in dreams where they can find their paradise of love. Sometimes with the revered couple's aid, ardent youth use feather bags to choose their sweetheart.



As we have indicated, some Manni deities are not famed chieftains or heroes but simply ancestors who after death have come to be in charge of certain matters. The most famous Daur ancestor goddess is Huozhuor Barcon, who was but an ordinary girl when alive. According to her myth, there was a maiden of the Aola Mukūn (subclan) who was engaged at an early age to a man from Bertala Mukūn. She was often afflicted by various illnesses, and when she was sixteen, a shaman took a look at her and declared that she should become a shaman. After offering many prayers, she was cured, but her father did not approve of her becoming a shaman. Once when her father had taken a carriage and gone away to a temple, she invited a shaman, became possessed by a god, and learned shaman skills. Before long, her father came back and in great anger cut her divine thread, and she died. Three days later, the father died too, and soon, people of the entire Bertala Mukūn began to die in large numbers as well. Feeling quite helpless, clanspeople began to offer sacrifice to the dead maiden as the goddess Huozhuor Barcon, and she became the ancestral mother of nine clans, had charge of ten families, and was the founder of twenty households.

Another example of an ordinary woman who became a Manni deity is the piously worshipped goddess Aolun, who is in charge of sheds. According to her myth, she was originally just an ordinary hunter, but she escaped to the moon and became a revered deity who blessed her tribespeople. Similarly, three Oroqen goddesses, Egudu, Niqikun, and Ehu – who are traditionally invoked in cases of smallpox, measles, and typhoid respectively – were originally three ordinary gentle nymphs who came down to marry hunters. When they died, their souls remained in the human world to dispel epidemics and hexes.

### ***The heritage of ancestor worship***

The rich cultural heritage of northern shamanism over the ages has been preserved for the most part in the ancestral myths and rites that are generally the same among all northern peoples. Except for some oracles and in a few particular clans, the primitive shamanic aura of the ancient mythic legends and rituals that has focused on gods and goddesses has faded from shamans' memories. They can no longer recount the origin myths of some deities, who remain only names. On the contrary, the worship of clan ancestral deities, including many Manni deities

and idols, continues to flourish. When some clans perform a ritual, they fill the altar table with idols of their forefathers that sometimes reach over a hundred. For the Hezhe and for the Manchu who originated from the Donghai Weji tribe, the number of idols can be even greater, and their images are sometimes quite complicated. Some are stationary, but some have been made into pendants or hanging objects, and some – such as those shaped as a fish carrying a man – are placed in tubs of water. The forms they take – wooden ghosts, birds, eagles, turtles, and so on – vary greatly, but they are commonly in pairs connected by strands of thread. People sometimes celebrate the great feats of their ancestors, moreover, by painting them ritually on large canvases and hanging them on the walls for worship.

The main features of northern shamanic ancestor worship can be summarized as follows:

- 1 Some ancestors and heroes, especially since the Qing dynasty, have become sublimated into deities that are commonly worshipped by all Manchu clans.<sup>3</sup> These gods and goddesses have different spheres of activities and functions, but they are all ancestor deities of the early Jurchens. Some were originally heroes living along the north bank of the Amur and have their stories told in moving poetic myths. Although time has let the stories escape peoples' memory, their names are handed down and preserved as an important content of the shamanic *jia* rites discussed in Chapter 6 of Volume 1.
- 2 Some ancestral myths have been preserved and continually developed. The charm of their poetic celebrations of native heroes has stood the test of time. *Memorial of Genghis Khan (Chengjisihan jidian)*, for example, has greatly enriched Mongolian shaman culture with its artistic depictions of solemn rituals and details of sacrificial procedures. In *Manchu Myths and Legends*, the Manchu storyteller Fu Yingren drew on the dictation of three famous Manchu shamans from Ningguta (Ning'an), Heilongjiang, to celebrate deified Manchu heroes in tales about Talayihan Mama, Dolong Gege, Adamu Enduri, and other deities, each with its own unique characteristics. In *Daur Folk Stories (Dawu'er minjian gushi)*, the Daur scholar Su Yong (苏勇) demonstrated the influence of *jia* rituals on Daur culture, and in *Shaman Deities (Saman de shen)*, he recorded deity myths dictated by a then sixty-four-year-old woman, Ao Chengmei (敖成梅), along with descriptions of shaman costumes and practices. The legend *Seven-Hued Divine Fire (Qicai shenhuo)* speaks of the piously worshipped ancestral heroes Arda Baturu, Mujen Baturu, and Weihūwang Babu as handed down orally by shamans, and *Bai Naca* and *Tales of Endure* are two other valuable works of northern shaman myths, rites, and culture.
- 3 The various ancestral myths have been preserved in shamanic *jia* clan rituals, which the myths in turn enrich and make continued transmission possible with no sign of waning. The worship of ancestral heroes is integral to the rites. In them, the clan's origin myths and heroic legends are narrated in detail and in accordance with rules, procedures, and times that are regularly amended and edited in the clan record book. With the enrichment and development of the *jia* rituals standardized in Qing dynasty times, the early *ye* rites

worshipping deities of nature have elapsed, and the *jia* rituals have come to take the form of ancestor rites performed in the home. With the development of agriculture and means of livelihood production, moreover, the content of the rites has drastically changed and shifted mainly to prayers for ancestors' blessings on occasions of seeking the cure of disease, exorcizing evil, or praying for a bountiful harvest.

- 4 The fourth feature of northern ancestor worship is the gradual incorporation of myths of the underworld in the shamanic belief system. As we saw in Chapter 2 of this Volume, primitive northern shamanistic beliefs did not include concepts of a "next world" or ghosts. Although traditional Yeluli-like monster myths were tinted with underworld ideology, such concepts took firm root only later under the penetrating influence of Buddhist, Taoist, and Han myths of the underworld. Only then did soul myths begin to include ghost stories. Shamans would expel and confine some souls to the underworld so that they could not return to the human world and become baneful spirits that could harm tribespeople. In the *jia* rituals of the Manchu and other northern peoples, people began to include some quasi-witchcraft practices when seeking to cure disease. They would interpret features of dwelling sites or people's physiognomy, exorcise ghosts and evil forces, and make paper figures of humans or horses and burn them to get rid of infectious *qi* in an ill person. Some shamans even ordered people to change grave sites or exhume and cremate the corpses of their ancestors to get rid of the evil spirits that might have brought about the illness. Only by doing so could vicious ghosts be dispelled and the host household made safe.

Later northern myths feature many legends of fighting off, punishing, or taming ghosts. The Ewenki and Oroqen have tales of folk "gurus" outwitting or conquering demons and ghosts. The Manchu folk epic "Shamaness Yinjiang" and the Daur epic "Nisang Shaman" in part include myths of the underworld. "Idiot Lord Selenga," a popular tale in the Mentougou District of western Beijing, celebrates the legend in of human beings bravely gaining the upper hand over fierce ghosts.

## Notes

- 1 *Niru* 牛录 is a subdivision of the Manchu army according to clan and territory. When the early Jurchen went out hunting or fighting, they stationed their soldiers according to clans or families, with one *niru* indicating the distance of their stationing. One soldier would shoot an arrow, another would shoot in the same direction from where the arrow landed, and so on. Once ten soldiers had shot their arrows, the distance and the soldiers guarding the territory within that distance were called one *niru*. On the basis of this quartering system, Nurhachi established the four banners system and later expanded it to the eight banners system. This material was cited from the oracles of a Jinkete Hala shaman.
- 2 *Haqimi* is an Altaic word for the winter deer-leather boots of the Oroqen, Ewenki, and Manchu. Inside they would stuff a kind of grass called *wule*, so another name for the boots is *piwule* (leather *wule*).
- 3 Such are the Changbai mountain god and Coocha Janyin, Muli Muliha, Anchun Ayala, Nadan Daihui, Enduri Sengge, Baiman Zhangjing, Ahui Nianxi, Nadan Weihuli, Endu Meng'ele, and Katun Nuoyan.

## 5 Spirit idols

Earlier chapters mentioned spirit idols, effigies, or natural objects that shamanist believers consider to be imbued with the supernatural powers of the deified heroes or ancestors that dwell in them and can affect people's destinies by their blessings. There have been periods when spirit idols were widely worshipped by peoples of the world, some even still today. In China, they have traditionally taken the form of both human beings and animals.

The 1st-century BCE *Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji)* speaks of spirit idols, and the 2nd-century CE *Book of Han (Han shu)* explains that "they are the statues of gods or the Buddha made of earth, wood or metals." Classic works relate an episode in which the 2nd-century BCE Han dynasty general Huo Qubing (霍去病) marched across Mount Qarasahr in Central Asia, carrying with him as a trophy for Hun King Xiutu (休屠) a golden idol for imploring heavenly blessings. This is the earliest recorded idol in China, and the story indicates that idol worship existed in those times. *Book of Han* gives a detailed story of an idol from 103 BCE:

In the second year of Emperor Wu (武帝), Gongsun He (公孙贺), the First Officer [in charge of horses] married the sister of Empress Wei and was made Chengxiang (丞相, First Minister). . . . Later, he was wrongly accused of casting a curse on the emperor. It was alleged that he had buried a wooden idol of the emperor on Chi Road in the Northern Hills leading to Ganquan Palace. The emperor believed the report and ordered his entire family executed.

*Book of Han* also recounts the legendary tale of the 1st-century BCE Handan medical practitioner Jiang Chong (江充), according to which the burial of a wooden idol of a phoenix in the crown prince's palace led to the punishment of Jiang's entire family. However, these are just shadowy records of sorcery in the Han court, with no clear indications of the nature, makeup, roles, or effects of the idols mentioned.

The rich, highly diversified, and eerily beautiful world of Manchu, Mongol, Hezhe, Ewenki, Oroqen, Daur, Xibe, and Siberian idols in the North has not attracted much attention by scholars, but it deserves research because of the unique features that it reveals of shamanist religious beliefs and practices of the

area. From at least two hundred years ago, we can find scattered historical records of northern idols.<sup>1</sup>

More concretely, *Duosang Mongol History* vol. I relates that when the 13th-century Franciscan explorer and missionary William of Rubruck travelled in the desert, he “witnessed shamans living in front of the emperor’s tent guarding idols in a cart. For the best results in divination with them, utensils used at court must be sent to the shamans to be purified.” For their part, northern hunters “take their prey and hang them on the forest trees as tokens of reverence to the mountain gods” (Wei Yuan 1984:12). Ling Chunsheng (凌纯声) has given a detailed introduction to the Hezhe idols, and Russian researcher Szymkiewicz travelled three times along the Tunguska River near Khabarovsk, made surveys of idols of the Goldi (Hezhe), and collected and made painted sketches of many of them. Another Russian scholar, P. Mark, has made records of idols of the Ewenki. The Japanese scholar Ishibashi Takao introduced idols in his 1933 book *Beiping Shamanism* (*Beiping de samanjiào*), and Akiba Takashi painted sketches of many idols that he discovered in his extensive field research in the Greater Khingan Range. These publications contain important materials for the study of northern religion and its systems of idols.

Since the foundation of the Peoples’ Republic of China in 1949, numerous Manchu and other northern myths have been collected, that provide ample archaeological, cultural, and historical evidence of idol worship in the region. Ling Chunsheng (凌纯声) has done groundbreaking work, and Guo Yanshun (郭燕顺) and Sun Yunlai (孙运来) coedited the periodical *Series of Ethnic Translations* (*Minzu Yicong*). The work of collecting idols made a breakthrough in the late 20th century, including the discovery of more than ten Manchu items and several Hezhe and Oroqen idols that help us understand the essence of shaman idol worship.

Studies of northern idols should not be confined to a particular locale or ethnic group, nor should the form of a particular idol be identified as worshipped by only one group. The complex system that northern idol worship has come to have represents an advanced stage of shamanism shared by all peoples of the area that can serve as a key to differentiate their religious practices from those of other religious beliefs.

## 5.1 The origin and forms of idols

The factors that have helped to bring about the rise of idol worship have been a compelling research topic for anthropologists all over the world, but they generally remain unidentified. Most scholars hold the idea that idols came into being fairly late in history. Some date idol worship to the Neolithic period, and archaeologists have found patterns on sacrificial wares and immolated objects from that period that might bear religious significance. Some think that it prospered after ancestor worship began or when societies had become more civilized. Karl Marx thought that primordial people believed in a vague form of pantheistic worship of natural phenomena but that their ideology had not become abstracted or elevated

to representative idols. In his view, idols emerged only when the human mind developed to the degree of being able to imagine more generalized or abstract figures to represent the natural force or deity in which they believed. Friedrich Engels likewise maintained that the worship of spirit idols emerged when the human mind came to a more mature stage. They both believed that idols could not have existed at the lowest stage of the tribal development but that they came to be worshipped in middle or late period of primitive times, namely in matriarchal society or, in sociologists' terms, in the transitional phase from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic periods. Unable to explain some natural phenomena on the one hand and with the expectation of blessing from mysterious natural elements on the other, people developed a religious consciousness that made certain objects holy, and they worshipped them to seek that blessing or enjoy their supernatural power.

Among Chinese historical documents, the *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan* (*Wushi wosheku jipu*) explicitly explains holy objects associated with deities when tracing the origin of "Manni" (Manye), the Jurchen term for ancestral or nature gods: the Wuzhala clan living to the south of the north ridge of a mountain called Wenli Hada (rock) near the Sahaliyan (Amur) River offered sacrifices to nine Manni: three eagle gods embodied in white feathers; a deity of birch bark with long arms and legs and triangular shaped head; a deity whose effigy is a cone-shaped, cylindrical pillar of red stone; a basswood pillar in the form of the serpent or hedgehog deity; a god represented by sturgeon teeth; and two gods of bear ribs in human form. The first seven of these are too old to trace their origins, and no one can tell their ages. But the two gods represented by the bear ribs can be traced roughly to the relatively recent reign of Qing Emperor Xianfeng (咸丰, 1850–1861). Legend has it that the emperor ordered the idols be made according to the story of a shaman named Yesongga, who had lost his way in the mountains for ten days. Stranded as he was, he dreamt of a god who provided clues for him to return to human civilization. The emperor ordered idols to be made out of bear ribs in honour of the god in his dream.

Most of the idols traditionally worshipped by the Wuzhala clan are from natural animate objects: bird feathers; birch bark; bass wood; the teeth of snakes, hedgehogs, or fish; or red stone. People did not distinguish between these concrete objects and gods or spirits. They treated them as divine objects that had the will and power to ward off misfortune and disasters, as representatives of the gods in heaven that could be prayed to for happiness, and they commonly wore them to enhance their defensive skills. We can safely say that the early forms of such idols were of concrete natural objects like the bear ribs and did not have human or spirit forms, which entail a higher level of abstraction.

This judgement can be supported by anthropological discoveries outside China. Indigenous peoples of West Africa often wear leopard paws, snail shells that contain leopard hair, or deer horns, most probably because they believe that these objects can enhance their valour. The Inuit of the North Pole, in accordance with their shamanic beliefs, use the mummified bodies of infants as sacred objects when hunting. The Hezhe of China, along with the Nanai and Golds of Russia, worshipped idols in early days which have the form of a tiger; a fish; a bird; a



hedgehog; a bear; or a minor animal like a frog, a lizard, or an insect that they believed could help them through their mystical power. According to *Investigations of Northeast Asia (Dongbei yazhou soufangji)*, the Solon (Ewenki) people who settled among the Barag Mountains upstream of the Hailar River in northeast China have idols in the form of a tiger, fish, bird, hedgehog, bear, and one of several minor animals. The Daur have the deity Najile Barhan, which is usually brought with her by a bride. It is made of birch bark or consists of a wooden sun, moon, insects, and snakes. The Oroqen have wooden idols of a fish, bird, eagle, and turtle that are sewn up for worship. The Manchu Namdulu and six other clans of the Donghai Weji tribe decorate their sacred garments with more than a hundred objects, such as colourful stone pendants; the tails of squirrels, mountain weasels, martens, or raccoons; strange-looking objects carved out of birch bark, rattan, golden cypress bark, reeds, or holly; the bones and teeth of beasts; feathers; and the paws, horns, or hooves of the Mongolian gazelle.

Idol worship may have been nourished by peoples' desire to give back to nature the blessings that they received from it. Perhaps when they narrowly escaped harm or a disaster, they happened to notice a particular animal passing by and attributed their survival to it. On the other hand, it is said in the *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan* that all gods that dwell in the bark of a tree honour the clan's ancestors. They remind people of their past and serve as memorial objects.

The mental development and consciousness of life represented in idol worship can be roughly categorized through two cognitive modes: visual and intuitive. In the one, when people see phenomena around them with their naked eyes, some of the objects may evoke long-term memories. They can familiarize people with the objective world and help cultivate a sophisticated knowledge of the world that involves rudimentary judgements about the phenomena that lead them to assimilate some of them into their lives and keep a distance from others. With those that they come to regard as good, virtuous, and helpful, they develop a kind of intimacy, but from those that evoke contrary feelings, they estrange themselves. In the other cognitive mode, when people have prolonged contact with certain objects, they abstract from them a conceptual form that embodies a recognition of their nature, features, or changes. That recognition gives people an impetus to make use of or ability to cope with their natural characteristics.

These two cognitive modes helped primitive people foster strengths and circumvent weaknesses. The conceptual notions that they gave rise to became their sole code of living, and the worship of animistic spirit objects springing from the experiences of thousands of years evolved into a mode of religious consciousness. However, these notions were fairly naïve and simple. The animism that manifested itself in the idols of that period amounted to just a rudimentary assortment of beliefs focused on nonhuman phenomena drawn from a people's particular living conditions and environment as perceived in accordance with their particular psychological inclinations.

The worship of idols that later came to take on human features is idol worship in the real sense. Worshippers used many kinds of materials and patterns to shape such idols, using methods, including painting, embroidery, knitting, sewing, and

carving. The earliest materials were wood, stone, clay pottery, but later, when people's lifestyles changed, they made idols of leather or animal hides and fine cotton cloth and decorated them with dazzling colours and intricate paint strokes to make them look more real. They then came to use copper, iron, silver, gold, and lead to forge or carve them into human shapes with ever-more-refined artisanship.

The various types of humanlike idols include the following:

- 1 Naked idols, full-body idols, bust idols, body-part idols (head, eyes, mouth, teeth, hands, feet, and organs).
- 2 Half-human, half-animal idols (human with beast, fowl, fish, snake or turtle; feathered man, snake man, fish man, tiger man; etc.).
- 3 Pillar idols (some 1 *chi* tall, others as tall as a human being or a flag pole on the city wall). Lookout pillar idols were roughly cut or carved into human figures with the head of a monster or bird or figures of monsters, birds, or bizarre beings with two or more heads. They were meant to express the notion that they will protect the city or citadel.
- 4 Mask idols worn by shamans in rituals to intimidate or dispel evil spirits. These masks are usually painted with the face of a human being, beast, bird, monster, worm, or insect. In northern shamanist rituals, mask idols are rarely seen, but in the Donghai Weji clan records, tales and rites of this type have been well preserved.

It is documented in *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao (Liangshi hanwang zhuan)* and *Legend of General Sabusu (Sadaren zhuan)* that mask idols were used in sacrificial rituals along with chant and dance. The Daur would hang masks on two birch trees called *geriyi tuoruo* (lookout pillars). One was Huozhuori Ayan (god of the mistress's side), the other *abagaridai*, a fierce, bear-like bearded mask. It is said that the origin of mask idols can be dated back to ancient hunting practices, in which people trapped wild beasts and birds while covering their heads with grass as camouflage so as to stealthily advance towards their prey (Morigendi 1981).

As we have said, some scholars think that the use of idols came into being with the rise of ancestor worship when societies became more civilized (Ren Jiyu 1998:958). When primitive tribes began to subdivide into clans, with a whole class of capable chieftains representing the height of clan power, clanspeople commemorated their chieftains after death, and this gave rise to early ancestor worship. It was not necessarily born at the stage of social evolution when patriarchal society took over from matriarchal society. I believe that it should have its origins in late matriarchal society, when chieftains were female. In any case, to commemorate and seek protection from their deceased chieftains, people made simple idols to worship in their stead. The idols bore strong features of totem worship in that they were mostly half-man and half-beast, such as a bird or another animal with a human head or a human with a bird or other animal head. Scholars believe that they represent a transitional stage of religious worship from that of physical spirit objects to the worship of human ancestors.

Although production was simple and rather unsatisfactory, people produced fairly intricate forms of art, such as rock paintings involving complex forms. Nevertheless, whether the result was a real portraiture or a simple sketch, they give a peep into a world where myth and reality are one. From their simple wild strokes, archaeological findings reveal that artists developed a galaxy of art forms, styles, and techniques and produced myriads of artistic works of delicate artisanship and elegant forms. This was at a time when music and to some extent dance enriched ritual expression and when oral literature in the form of myths and legends came of age. Some artworks represent a breakthrough of their kind for instance some coloured pottery of the Neolithic period, along with sculptures and carvings whose patterns are quite complicated and subtle. Ancient people painted their ancestors as simple and rough human idols to which they paid due respect in rituals as their ancestral gods. As time went by and civilization became fully developed, however, human-shaped idols became more detailed, delicate, and intricate. Their shapes, sizes, and expressions drew closer and closer to a subtle and vivid portrait of their ancestors. Facial features developed from abstract and symbolic ones to carefully carved ones. The clothes became more real, leather hides or skins being used to make garments and boots more like those of real human beings. Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, northern shamanic ancestor worship began to actually use coloured paintings of their forefathers, enhancing the paintings with depictions of the sun, moon, eagles, and other birds; tigers or bears; and cobras and other serpents. They apparently came to have a stronger consciousness of their ancestors in accordance with the filial piety of the Han people. They might have believed that ancient forefathers should be made into idols, while close ancestors should be painted in detail as expressions of respect.

Among the human idols that I collected from northern peoples, the latest were made in the years of the Republic of China (1912–1949). According to shaman notions, the earlier the idols were made and the more generations through which they have been handed down, the more powerful they become in granting peoples wishes. However, new idols generally show no sign of special power, so people try their best to collect the ancient idols that were cherished by earlier forefathers. In fact, only idols made by ancestors can be worshipped as gods. The inspiration for the shapes and characteristics of traditionally handed-down idols are believed to have been given by gods, so no one should change them without some sort of hint from the gods.

Idols do not have to resemble any real human figure in their looks, but they must have “godlike looks.” How can they acquire such looks? Through the rituals held by the generations of shamans who handed them down, they gradually became more “impressive” and “godlike.” They were born out of a shaman’s divine intervention, as they offered prayers and incense and performed the sacred procedures by which the idols acquire the status of being worshipped. Otherwise, even if they are made of gold or jade, they are not regarded as divine objects. They thus differ from their partial counterparts in other religions, such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity, whose statues and symbolic objects can be freely manufactured, used as public signs, presented as gifts, and even sold with a price tag

on an antiquity market. Shamanic idols are traditionally forbidden to be exposed in public, let alone presented as gifts or tokens of appreciation for people not of the tribe to wear or preserve. Clan members not involved in a ritual are traditionally not allowed to even touch them, let alone sell them. The value of the idols handed down from the ancestors lay in protecting their descendants and bringing them good fortune. Their purpose was to oversee a particular situation or care for the well-being of a certain person. They are thus very much task oriented and are inherited and worshipped in special situations.

These features of shamanic idol worship can be interpreted as evidence of the primitive narrowness and hemmed-in nature of early religious thought in that it did not allow anything like the idea of public exposure advocated by Buddhism in its advanced stage. Shamans' idols were rarely seen and were usually carefully preserved in casks or baskets. When holding a ritual, the shaman and *mukūnda* (subclan leader) piously welcome the idols as they would a real person of honour to take their place at the altar table. No one is allowed to lay a finger on them or even address them verbally, and teasing and playing around with them are strictly forbidden.

Traditionally, the Manchu and their Jurchen ancestors, as well as the Xibe and Hezhe, all had a sacred area called "Tent of the Enduri" (*Endulibao*, home of the ancestors), a realm where their ancestors continued to live after this life in the *tangse* (divine chamber). In early times, the Manchu kept their ancestors' idols in the *tangse*, and no one was allowed to lay a finger on it. According *Legends of Nurhaci and Wanggao*, a certain Wang Gao (王杲) built a *tangse* for as many as a thousand of his ancestors' idols, with figures of various shapes and expressions. Wan Khan of the Hada tribe worshipped almost the same number of idols in his *tangse*. Over time, the number of idols grew, but none were discarded or abandoned because that was believed to be impious. This explains why people could have so many idols. It is a pity, however, that since the latter half of the Qing dynasty, the number of idols dwindled greatly, due to wars and civil disturbances. Now, except for those from certain families, most have been lost.

## 5.2 Idols and souls

The factors that gave rise to spirit idols and their forms as delineated in the previous section of this chapter focus mainly on external factors and social conditions. Most scholars also stress that idols came into use out of ritual necessity – that is, to make concrete the natural and ancestral *lingqi* (spirit energy) that they worship. The secrets of idols must be deciphered, furthermore, on an ideological level. However, few scholars have touched on the real ideological reasons for the holy status that they have maintained for generations, on the extraordinary powers that they are believed to have and on the reasons for that belief. Spirit idols basically arouse from a belief in human souls. The form of each idol is the tangible representation in this world of the soul in the spirit world. As Darwin wrote, "Savages tended to believe in their imagination that all natural objects and forces have life because of a kind of spirit or vital force" (Darwin 1983:139). What exactly is

this life force? Vital force, in Chinese *yuanqi* (元气), is believed to be a kind of force or spirit that exists along with human life, the human soul. In the shamanist conception, a soul normally dwells inside the body of a human being or other creature. It is a spiritual entity that is the vital force of the body, but under certain circumstances, as we saw in Chapter 7 of this Volume, it can “roam” outside the body and communicate with other souls. Its physical form may be an airy mass, an active, lively, and highly dynamic flow of air, and it enjoys a far longer life than that of the body it possesses. The body may die, decay, and disappear, but the soul can still exist and will not die. This might seem absurd to a modern mentality, but it was a normal concept in primitive thought, and it provides the basis for shaman worship. Shamans differ from ordinary people in that they can be “possessed” by an external “air” or “spirit” that gives power to the air or spirit of the shaman to perform extraordinary deeds, such as dispelling evil and curing disease. Shamans are revered because they can be possessed by this divine spirit and air of the universe.

This dynamic air or *yuanqi* amounts to a kind of primal life force. It should not be simply identified with mist, fog, haze, or wind or viewed as the flowing spirit force of all phenomena. Rather, it should be understood as an intangible, drifting something that leaves the body in which it dwells when the body dies or decays. It then perpetually seeks new dwelling places, be it a spear of grass, a dewdrop, a hill, or a valley – in a word, any place or object where it can feel cool, humid, shaded, and dark. Such a concept might be based on ancient peoples’ experience of death. They found that human corpses tend to decay under some circumstances but remain less changed under others. This may have led them to think that cold, humidity, and darkness can help preserve organic material or contain preservative agents that allow deceased loved ones to stay around longer with their family. That idea could in turn have nurtured a belief that the soul of the deceased prefers a dark, cool, and humid environment and that the sun is its bane. On the basis of these notions, northern ethnic groups have tended to carry out their sacrificial rituals in darkness, in rites that later came to be known as the night *beideng* (背灯) rites with all the lights out, which we saw first in Chapter 3 of Volume 1.

The soul of a human being was though likely to linger around familiar sites, such as one’s home, in household utensils, in something half-finished when the person was still alive, and sometimes in the home of their most beloved children or grandchildren. In the folk culture of northern peoples, it has traditionally been believed that the soul likes “haunting its hometown.” In the past, when a man died, people would bury his wife and concubines, together with his horse, dogs, and birds and the utensils he had used. Such things were ritually incinerated, sunk in water, buried, or released to the winds, with the notion that they should all accompany the dead to console and pacify their soul. Otherwise, the offspring would be haunted. After the *yang* (殃, departed spirit) is “lifted” from the deceased, Daur and Manchu people require that participants in the burial walk over fire and wash their hands and mouths before they return home, lest some of the air of the soul adhere to them, follow them home, and disturb their households.

According to a shamanic understanding, this *yang* is the air expired by the deceased immediately after death. If it condenses over time and becomes a more

or less “stable” mass of air, it becomes the soul in our common sense, and if the soul can act on things and cause changes, it is called spirit or spirit soul. However, it takes a long time for the soul to be able to act on things and so become a spirit. The longer a soul floats around and lingers in the human world, the more dynamic and godlike it becomes, achieving even unmatched powers. Therefore, shamans believe that “a new soul can be easily tamed, but older ones can become gods” (Fu Xilu 1930a). From these ideas, we can conclude that northern shamans believe that air, soul, and spirit are interchangeable entities at different stages of being and should be understood as the prime vital agent of life.

Souls and spirits are different from the ghosts and spectres of witchcraft and Taoism. In the shaman view of things, souls are not ghosts. Nor should they be viewed as some sort of phantom or spectre. Rather, they are a substance that can meld with the air of things when its bodily host dies. Souls or spirits will not die again or disappear; they are a kind of substance that permanently lives in the human world, though ordinary humans cannot see them or tell of their existence. Like the evaporation, gathering, condensing, and movements of the air, they are a force that does not threaten human existence, and through certain religious rituals and practices, shamans can summon them and ask them to bless tribespeople.

As far as ghosts are concerned, in northern China, people believe that such phantoms are actually afraid of shamans, not that shamans are afraid of them. Ghosts have no part in shaman worship. Shamans recognize only those deities that possess supernatural powers to make changes in the universe; they don’t believe that ghosts can possess such power. This does not mean that there are no monsters and demons in shamanism, but such negative *lingqi* (spirit energy) represents the evil side of the universe, such as darkness, evil, ferocity, epidemics, and the myriad banes of human existence. Also, such forces are not mutants of souls or spirits or the demons of witches, wizards, or Taoist priests.

Quite different from such spectral beings, the drifting souls of tribespeople who have died can be summoned and asked to bless their fellow tribespeople. If not, they will remain in endless drift, but when summoned in shaman rituals, they can enjoy the status being worshipped by their relatives. Shamans summon only the souls of their own tribespeople, not those of people from other tribes. Since souls evaporate and move around, however, it is natural that they disturb one another. This is especially the case when their tribes have a long history of intercommunication, intermarriage, and intertwined affairs that develop for the souls a relationship like that of tribespeople in the mortal world. If such a soul happens to tread on the territory of an allied or friendly tribe, the shamans there will courteously treat it to incense and a sacrificial offering and then kindly show it the way back to its own territory. If, however, it unfortunately intrudes on the area of a tribe with which its own tribe has been a bloody foe or long-time enemy, it can be viewed as a demon or evil spirit. In that case, the shamans there show it no hospitality but whip it from their land. Shamanism entails a complex form of psychological activity that extends to souls of the deceased. They may wander here and there in endless drift, but when ritually summoned back among their clanspeople, they can enjoy a strong sense of belonging, piety, gratitude, and expectations of a future life, perhaps along with a certain

sense of fear and other possible emotions (Darwin 1983:140). In the long history of northern shamanism, the earliest way to console souls of the dead was to bury things they love with them, offer them sacrifice, or place their favourite mementos in their home for the soul to dwell in when it returns. These objects traditionally became “spirit objects” in the form of birch bark baskets or leather or cloth *tangse* pouches, serving as the communal dwelling home for all souls of the tribe. Later, common graveyards and shrines were built, which became permanent sites for dead souls and were used as well for shaman activities. In excavated soul repositories such as stone coffins, jars, and logs, people would dig a hole in them for the soul to come out.

With the flourishing of tribal populations over the years, people could no longer remain in their ancestral lands. They had to migrate and seek settlements elsewhere. However, they could not carry the original souls’ home in the Tent of the Enduri with them or move the site of the ancestral graveyard. To solve this practical problem and soothe the anxieties springing from people’s complicated psychological reliance on their ancestors, people used idols, which could be easily carried along with the tribe when they migrate. Whatever materials the idols are made of – wood, clay, leather, cloth, copper, silver, or gold – they are more portable than Buddhist sculptures or Taoist effigies. As we have indicated, people traditionally lived as if their ancestors were always still with them, providing divine protection. From their forefathers’ continued presence in the form of portable idols, they received consolation and fortitude when migrating to a new settlement or seeking adventure. Since shamanism believes that idols of whatever kind possess supernatural power, they cannot be created at will or by anyone, and their powers and status as idols need to be tested and ratified through many rituals. Compared with idols of other peoples in the world, we have found that northern Chinese idols are different not only in shape but also in the beings represented and associated religious taboos. There might have been as many as several hundred kinds of spirit idols, which points to the popularity of shamanistic worship as the main religious force of a tribe or entire ethnic group. As we have noted, although idol worship emerged immediately after the rise of spirit worship, ancestor idols appeared fairly late and human-shaped idols even later. Nonetheless, because ancestor idols are the most prominent group among all idols, they form the main body of idol studies.

As we said in Chapter 3 of Volume 1, in northern China, many ancestral deities are collectively termed “hero,” or *manni* – with *malu*, *mangni*, and *mayin* as variants. Some ethnic groups call them Burukan, Murihan, Sowen, and so on. The names vary, but most are phonological variants of Tungus language words that have been pronounced slightly differently over time.

### 5.3 The sources of Manni idols

What are the rituals used to create Manni god idols, and what kinds of supernatural powers do they possess? The procedures by which people traditionally acknowledge the status of Manni ancestor idols vary greatly among ethnic groups. This book focuses on some typical procedures, on the basis of the narrations of respected shamans.



*Idols acquired in dreams*

Dreams had an important place in ancient consciousness. According to northern shamanist belief, if a soul drifts outside the body, it will cause dreams. It does so by interacting with the soul still inside the body as well as with other souls in the world, and its activities take place in dreams. For ordinary people, dreams occur when their soul drifts out and about. But their dreams are simple, with no interaction with souls or spirits, and the time span is short and the complexity moderate. When shamans dream, however, particularly elderly shamans endowed with special powers, they are believed to have miraculous dreams. When they sink into dreams in search of divine hints from the gods in *miliu* (Manchu for a trance-like state), their souls drift out and travel far away. A shaman's wandering soul may meet the dream souls of tribespeople or shamans, of relatives, friends, foes, or even complete strangers or animals that used to belong to them. When souls meet one another in dreams, they can have a friendly chat, discuss important matters, air former grievances, or console a resentful mind. If hostile souls can achieve reconciliation in a dream, they will not haunt the tribe and cause disturbance. If souls see the souls of their ancestors or of good ancestral gods who have lost their way, they will guide them back so that, revived, they can continue to protect the tribe. If a shaman's dream soul encounters the souls of newly deceased people, it can guide them back to their graveyard so they can enjoy tribal tributes. In this way, souls and dreams are closely related. The trance that shamans fall into is commonly interpreted as the result of their soul's travelling outside the body, leaving the body in sleep.

The idea of dreams as populated with wandering souls and the concept of souls together form the religious basis of shamanism. Shaman accounts have it that if souls are drifting about, unattached to the body, they will become upset, but if they are reattached to the body, they will calm down. When souls drift around, they can communicate with the gods, and if they settle down, they can communicate with human beings that shamans meet their destiny in dreams, feel it, and acknowledge it. Their dreams have six steps: first they dream of gods and then greet, face, recognize, entertain, and serve them. Through dreams, shamans can control their own bodily movements, make souls enter objects, settle souls down, interpret for them, and guide them to come and live in the home and purify the air there.

The most common procedure by which people traditionally acknowledge the status of an ancestral Manni spirit idol is through dreams. As old shamans have concluded, the forms of idols can be acquired only through dreams. Shamans cannot make idols at will; they guide the intangible forms of idols revealed in dreams to enter the mundane world, where they are fashioned into tangible form as a spirit idol. All details of the form as revealed must be followed, none overlooked. Only idols acquired through dreams can enjoy divine power and receive peoples' tributes. As for who is qualified to acquire idols in dreams, the task is usually that of the chief shaman officiating over a whole sacrificial ritual.

They do so in two ways. In one way, when a tribe wants to acquire a new idol of a Manni god the chief shaman first needs to undergo a thorough personal ritual

cleansing. The ritual bath should take place in a river, where the current can carry defiling dirt away completely. Sexual intercourse is forbidden, moreover, before the grand moment. After the shaman has worshipped the major gods in the family shrine, they should take their sacred tambourine, put on their waist bells and sacred skirt, and walk towards the east or north until they reach high mountains and dense forests. If there are no mountains, they should choose a relatively high location where it is quiet and there set up a thatched hut or tent of animal hides. They must not eat food from their tribe or family, but only the flesh of sacrificed animals – beast, bird, fish – or wild plants from the hills, cooked in their own pot before their tent. They may drink only the water from a spring or mountain creek. They spend their days beating their drum to worship the sun god and moon god. For the first three days, they are not allowed to sleep, and to make sure they stay awake, assistant shamans stand guard nearby the whole time to listen for the shaman's drumming. The shaman is not allowed to chat or communicate with ordinary folk. On the third day, before the stars fully spread out on their heavenly curtains, they should pick elm and willow sprigs to make a bed and spread the teeth and bones of beasts and wild flowers on it.

When all this has been done, the shaman kneels before a make-shift shrine, chanting and imploring the ancestral gods to descend into their dreams, all the while murmuring their forefathers' names according to the order of generations, together with the names of great shamans. The shaman then slaughters the sacrificial offering and sprinkles the animal's blood in the sky and around the tent. According to shamanist notions, gods and souls enjoy blood. According to folk sayings, "They prefer blood to water" and "They like blood more than liquor." When the sacrifice has been completed, the shaman returns to their tent, and wearing their sacred skirt, hat, and padded stockings, they go to sleep. Their sacred waist bells lay at both sides of their pillow and feet, all our sets facing upright. The bells give out a murmuring ring as if a divine air is passing through them. If the assistant shamans cannot hear the humming of the bells, it indicates that the shaman is not in the kind of deep sleep in which divine dreams are supposed to occur. No noise is allowed to be made outside the tent. All birds should be scattered away. In fact, they have already left the site because of the drumming. So inside the tent, all is utterly quiet, the air fresh and pure. On the bed of bones and flowers, the chief shaman lies still, with an animal hide as a covering to keep them warm.

As some old shamans have recalled, the sacred dreams in which idols can be perceived are the hardest dreams to have. Usually, it takes three consecutive nights to fall into sleep that has such dreams, and even if the shaman doesn't feel sleepy, they have to try their best to fall asleep (Fu Xilu 1930a). With no food or drink, shamans feel dizzy, and without knowing it, they feel that their souls are elevated from their body as if they have taken an elixir of divine herbs. When they arrive at the upper sky, they see people who come to greet them in joyful dance. There are myriads of them, exactly in the images of the gods and ancestors portrayed in their sacred texts. In this moment, the shaman may see the figure and form of the idol. If they do not wake up the next morning, the assistant shamans all kneel down and beat drums to call the shaman's soul back. Dreams to acquire the shape of an idol

may be had for only three consecutive nights, no longer. If no divine indication is given by then, they should not be pursued any further. That is strictly forbidden. One must wait to try again the following year.

When the chief shaman wakes up, they dance a ritual dance and beats their drum, then kneel before the shrine and orally report the oracle that they have received to the assistant shamans and clanspeople, who kneel and listen. The report should include whether or not the shaman had dreams of the Manni ancestor god; what kind of deity has come down; and what the god's office, strengths, and temperament, likes, and dislikes are. Where has the ancestral god chosen to descend? What can be placed beside their idol; what can be their food; what is the number of generations in the ancestor's family lineage; and what were their great accomplishments and heroic deeds? The shaman should state, too, what the order of the new idol among those already in the ancestor shrine should be; whether tribespeople will be allowed to see it; whether it should be placed in the family home or in the shrine; and whether it should be taken care of only by shamans. For how long will the ancestor remain on the earth, and what is the date for returning to heaven? Once in heaven, what kind of sacrifice is preferred? Would they be cremated or buried? May famous people of the tribe be buried with the shaman when those people die?

The accumulated detailed accounts of such dreams constitute the bulk of an ethnic group's shamanistic concepts, myths, moral customs, and taboos and are the classic summation of the group's history and culture. The dreams should be regarded as the origin of shaman myths, but with the changing of times, dynastic successions, and social upheavals, many Manni tales have faded away. Many dream oracles have been preserved only in brief sketches, with the result that many Manni gods are worshipped, but their origins are completely unknown. It is quite a pity.

Dreams aimed at obtaining an idol's image have traditionally been part of a sacrificial ritual. At the beginning, such ritual activity was quite simple. As some old shamans and elders say, the shamans merely lived in the mountains and wilderness for days, in tent platforms on trees, or in tents of animal hides on mountain slopes. They would eat raw meat and drink only water from springs until they dreamt of an idol image. They then came back and began the difficult job of fashioning the dream image into a concrete form with the aid of other shamans. Over the course of seeking the image, a shaman might die from the attack of a wild beast or fall off a cliff into a ravine. If the shaman died, however, another major shaman would continue the job until a figure of the idol is dreamt of. Some tribes required two shamans to dream together, and only when the figures they dreamt of are identical or highly similar can the idol be made and worshipped. If not, they have to keep dreaming together until they receive similar versions of one and the same dream. To achieve this, shamans needed to be exceedingly devout, and their hardships were almost unimaginable.

In some special circumstances, a shaman may have a spontaneous dream of a special new idol. If the powers of the idol stand the test when he wakes up, a sacrifice will be offered and the new Manni god idol fashioned according to the

dream. The circumstances in which one might have such a dream can be a bizarre occurrence or calamity, epidemic, invasion, domestic upheaval, the seeking of a tribal alliance, the waging of war, the releasing of war prisoners, and so on.

In any case, new idols are added to the tribal collection of idols for receiving sacrifice. As we have indicated, the number of idols worshipped by a tribe or clan came to vary from generation to generation with each new addition and gradually could become astonishingly large. On the other hand, with fires, floods, and migrations, some Manni idols might be lost, and some were buried with deceased shamans or notable tribespeople, such that the number would likewise be reduced.

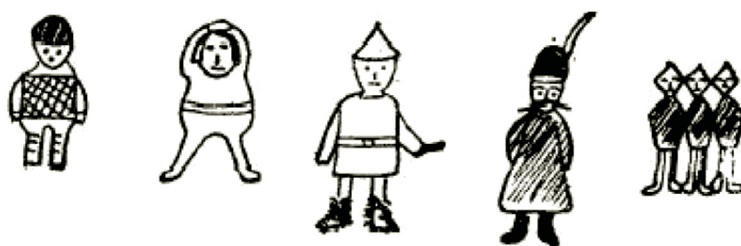
Every now and then, people thus need to have new idol dreams to fill vacancies. The same dream might occur again and again, and some new idols might have the same name as the one replaced but with a different form. Shamans believe this is perfectly OK, because the same god or ancestor might have chosen to take different shape over the course of the centuries. Of course, they may also want to appear in the same form that they have long held. Only senior shamans can identify idols and know their original form and how many times their forms might have changed. They must thus approve the addition of any new idol to the collection and make sure that the image is correct.

No matter whether Manni gods are invited to descend into dreams or are acquired as new ones in accidental circumstances, their concrete forms need to be determined in accordance with certain procedures.

According to what some elderly shamans have said, the procedures are normally as follows. First and foremost, the proper shape needs to be determined. Divine images acquired in dreams might be blurred and confused, sometimes resembling a human being, sometimes half-human and half something else, sometimes resembling a certain part of the human body, sometimes having a bizarre resemblance to something, and so on. With such a variety of possibilities, shamans have to carefully scrutinize the shapes until they are sure of the correct figuration. Once the figure has been determined, it is made into a concrete idol for receiving sacrifice. All this has to be done under the leadership of a chief shaman, with the offering of a sacrificial animal, burning incense, and kneeling day after day. For drawing the figure, normally fine white birch bark serves as paper. But sometimes in summer and autumn, white Chinese peony petals are used, and sometimes the tanned hide of a roe deer, river deer, or hare will do instead. For the pen, it has to be a burnt carbon stick selected from a sacrificial fire. While the chief shaman who had the idol dream tells of what he saw, a second shaman attempts to draw it accordingly. The chief shaman corrects the drawing until all shamans believe it has correctly caught the figure of the idol. During this process, the shamans should be pious and serious. It is not uncommon for shamans to continue drawing the entire night – kneeling down and forgetting to sleep and eat. It is a touching sight to see how shamans welcome the descent of their god in an idol, pure as a newborn babe. No one seems sluggish or tired.

The common forms of ancestral idol figures can be categorized as follows:

1 Full figures –



2 Half-man (the third figure was blurred in the dream so its features cannot be identified) –



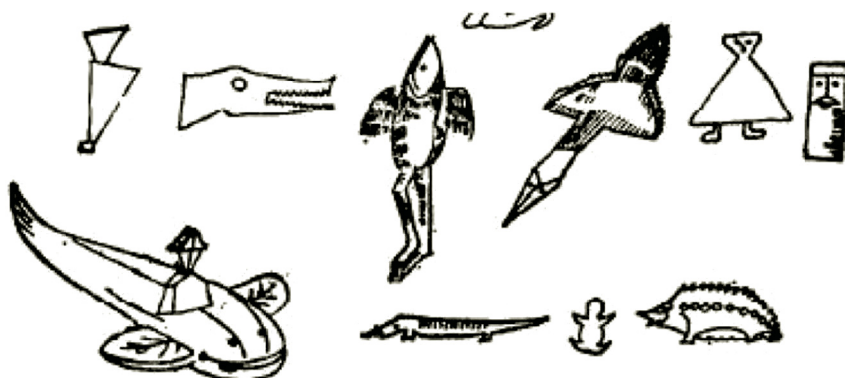
3 Limbs or parts of the body –



4 Bizarre figures –



5 Purely imaginary figures –



Since dreams involve physiological activities when the brain is sleeping, dream images can be grotesque and hard to pin down. When a shaman is trying to dream of an idol, their religious psychological state and other mental activities can be complicated, and the images and states of affairs in dreams can be constantly changing. The shapes that appear in shamans' dreams are thus mostly bizarre figures – for example, a fat female torso with the head and legs of a lizard. Unable to explain the ever-shifting forms in a convincing and scientific way, they think they may be those of transformed souls in another world and so regard them as deities and make them into idols for worship.

When shamans seek the identity of an ancestral Manni idol in a dream, it is sometimes impossible to find a clue for its image, not even in repeated dreams. They may then dream of a god who tells them of a location where they can find an object that fits the divine image, or they come to discern certain signs. The chief shaman leads other shamans to search for the object. The odyssey can be hazardous, requiring tough men who have fearless valour and patience. It may take days, months, or even years to find an object that exactly fits the dream image.

As was told by an old Manchu shaman, hundreds of ordeals must be endured before the task can be accomplished. For instance, one shaman was told in their dream oracle that they had to find the form of the image on the bone of the first bird seen after sunrise. So they had to sit and wait on the highest pine on the top of the ninth mountain peak in the east. They would have to climb the peak and then the pine to catch the bird, which could be as small as a swallow or as big and fierce as a vulture. Arrows, good shooting skills, and sometime a net were needed to snare the effigy, along with the cooperation of the entire tribe, shooting their arrows at the same time or setting out the net. If a small bird was caught, the bones of the whole bird would be fashioned into the required image; if it was a big bird, its thigh bone would be carved and polished to become the prescribed idol.

In another instance, a shaman dreamt that a bare black stone could be made into an idol. But such a stone could be found only deep in a cave whose mouth was on a knoll beyond a birch woods at the eastern foot of a cliff. People would have to find the cliff in the north, following three bends in the river and climbing another cliff to reach the right spot. The shaman must not try deceit or fraud or be sluggish in using their strength, and once they had found the stone, they would have to get down to business immediately. In still-another oracle, a shaman knew in their dream that they should walk to the east to find the object with the figure of the prescribed idol image. They should climb nine mountain peaks until they had reached a wood, where they should close their eyes; step forwards; hack nine times at a lush tree, no matter what tree it was; and use the wood to carve the idol.

An oracle can sometimes prescribe that the shaman be guided by an animal. With three ordinary dogs, nine dogs with black hair, and an eagle held by a thong on their arm, the shaman should ride a horse, reindeer, or elk or sometimes take a small skiff. Guided by the animal or borne by the boat for several sunrises and sunsets, they simply follow their course, not trying to determine the route on their own. When they stop, the location will be the site of the divine effigy. Usually, the first thing that catches their eye is the object that they should be take back with them to make the idol. It could be grass, stone, wood, earth, or an insect, rabbit, or other small

animal. Sometimes, the place may be a graveyard, where they will collect bones of the dead. In any case, they must find the image according to the oracle. Interesting enough, sometimes a shaman will have travelled far following the animal guide but end up at their own house gate. In such a case, they can do nothing but make the idol out of a tree trunk right there or from the wood of the doorframe, the skin of their tent, or clay just in front of their own gate. Shamans have said that in ancient times if the animal guides a shaman to stop before a living person who is not a member of the shaman's tribe, that person should be sacrificed and made into an idol. If the person is a tribesperson, however, the shaman should walk nine paces to the east of the person and choose an object there to make the idol. Later generations followed the latter practice, without having to sacrifice a human being.

According to shamanistic thought, because animals have lived in the vast wilderness, their souls and spirits are pure, so they can easily get close to wandering souls and spirits. Souls are parasitic in nature, attached to a particular object for certain period, while making it look "livelier" than usual. If the object is wood, stone, or earth, it will give out a bluish light at night and can forecast the weather. If it is an animal or bird, it may manifest abnormal behaviour – crazy or ferocious. Some such animals may walk around crying out all day long, some may be no longer afraid of fire or water, and some may avoid fighting their natural foes, take to eating earth, or be able to predict the weather. Such abnormal behaviour can lead shamans to identify them by the summoning the power of the soul that dwell in each body. In any case, when a shaman is to seek an object for an ancestor Manni idol according to the oracle, the soul of the ancestor will send out an appeal, and neither distance nor the state of its existence will matter much. Far or near, hidden or not, it will be pinned down.

To sum up, dreams are the best-known and most-sacred means of discovering idols. In shamanistic worship, souls, dreams, and the forms of idols have a mutual cause and effect relationship. Without souls, there would be no dreams; without dreams, there would be no idol effigies. Spirit idols are highly imaginative and illusive, and dreams offer the most important clues for making new idols. Also, some of the most precious idols have been obtained through the efforts of a shaman's entire life, some even the efforts of two generations. The processes point to the mystery, solemnity, and treasured character of idols. In almost every clan, the ancestral Manni god idols are valued as inviolable and untouchable objects that must enjoy the continued reverence of generation after generation as the soul and life-giving force of the entire tribe. This explains why on especially significant occasions, such as expeditions, war, actions of defence, setting out in hunting parties, the building of a forts, and entering into trade negotiations, when tribespeople and their chief wear or even see the idols, they can exhibit extraordinary valour and wisdom and be defenders and leaders at all levels.

### ***Idols acquired in healing trance***

In addition to dreams that give birth to the concrete forms of Manni idols, shamans can also have dreams of the idols during the course of rituals treating diseases and injuries, such as smallpox, the outbreak of an epidemic, or injury. Dancing a trance dance in a healing rite, shamans may acquire inspiration concerning idols.



In this case, however, except for an epidemic and disaster facing the entire *gashan* (tribe), most of the idols serve only individual cases or a small group of people.



Idol 1. For protection against bears or offering sacrifice to bears so that they will not harm villages and *gashan*. It is worshipped by shamans and all the tribespeople (idol of the Nanai people living downstream of the Amur).



Idol 2. For curing strokes and headaches (family idol of the Manhui clan downstream of the Amur).



Idol 3. Duohuoluo Manni idol for curing waist aches and arthritis (family idol of the Manchu Namdulu clan in Hunchun).



Idol 4. For curing diseases of the lower body, including cold or dumbness in the legs, paralysis, feeling cold, and shuddering all the time (Nanai).



Idol 5. For soothing fear, bite wounds, delusions, and coma caused by being mauled by a tiger or jaguar or to be worn for protection against such wild beasts (Nanai).



Idol 6. For alleviating fish bites and fear of fish (Nanai).



Idol 7. For warding off and curing smallpox (Manchu, Hezhe and Nanai downstream of the Amu).



Idol 8. For curing diseases of the arms and ribs (Manchu, Hezhe and Nanai).



Idol 9. For curing all kinds of body chills and malaria (Manchu, Hezhe and Nanai).



Idol 10. Tree god idol for preventing loss of direction in the forest (Manchu of Hushihali, Halain, and Hunchun Counties).



Idol 11. Bird god idol for good hunting and trapping (Manchu of Song Village, Youngji).



Idol 12. East sea ship god idol (Manchu of Hunchun).



Idol 13. Protective deity of water shores (Song Village, Youngji).



Idol 14. Hunters' long snake guardian god (Oroqen of Shibazhan, Tahe Region).



Idol 15. Hunters' guardian god. One leap can take it several thousand *li* (Oroqen of Shibazhan).

Innumerable other idols could be added to this list. They are painted or made by shamans according to the symptoms of the disease. Different from ancestral dream idols, however, they can be found within a short span of time. They come into being when shamans doing a healing rite go into a possessed trance in which the gods are thought to dictate their shape, make, material, and number. The shamans then fashion them accordingly. Their shapes and mode of construction can be simple, sketchy, and rough, and people rely on them only temporarily, for healing or dispelling disease.

Their dols serve as stand-ins for an ill person with no sign of recovery. They are burnt up or set adrift in flowing water to drive away the evil spirit tormenting the

person so that they can recover. If the person eventually dies of the disease, the idol should not be preserved but must be buried or incinerated, but if the patient survives, they are kept, worshipped, worn as a guardian idol, and then buried when the person dies a natural death. They are often hung in the room of the sick person or on the main gate, and some are sewn on the front of the patient's clothes or put under their pillow. Some clans keep idols that have cured their forefathers and hand them down to later generations for continued worship. In recent generations, shamans no longer use idol effigies to dispel disease; they use much-simplified alternatives, such as colourful ribbons or patches of cloth sewn under the lining of the patient's clothes or hung on the chamber door. Still others use a straw sheaf to represent the idol.

Another important feature of these temporary stand-in idols is that they are not necessarily made by a shaman. After performing certain rituals before the ancestral shrine, any tribesperson may make them out of ribbons or straw broom heads and hand them on to family members. Still-another important feature of these idols is that the idol of one family is forbidden to be taken to another household, and if it is spied in the wild, it should not be picked up or even given a second glance, because this would bring bad luck. When the sick person dies, moreover, the idol should not be simply thrown away at random; it must be burnt up, set adrift on water, or buried. Otherwise, people will feel afraid that it might return to the family and harm family members or domestic animals.

In shamanic thought exist honesty, kindness, and beauty but also deceit, evil, and ugliness. In the soul world, there are thus honest, kind, beautiful, false, evil, and ugly souls. "black shamans" (*hei saman*, 黑萨满) are able to incite evil deities and their own debased souls to bring harm to the world, but good shamans, with their special powers and skills, are able to have their spirits prevent epidemics and harm from taking place and to summon idols to cure disease.

If a shaman is lacking in competence, moreover, they will not be able to summon powerful idol gods to effect a cure, but if a shaman can summon them, it means that they possess the power to tame and order forces of the universe. Once a person has been cured, the idol should be thanked and escorted back to its place; or after several years of service, it should take its leave. If the idol is powerless to effect a cure, it should be chastised and purged by fire. Idols constitute a real, active, and spiritual soul world, a world of the gods, with its own tendencies to good and evil. They command respect in accordance with the particular powers and tendencies of each. Some are upright and firm in maintaining order and generous and helpful in tribal matters, but some are foes of the tribe. On the whole, however, through their interaction, instigation, manipulation, and dynamic spirit, idols bring peace and tranquillity to the human world and provide for prosperity, vitality, and physical well-being, just as the sun does in the spring.

### *Idols acquired by shamanic inheritance*

In addition to dreams and trance possession, people can also acquire Manni idols by inheritance. As was mentioned earlier, idols are sacred objects preserved by the

chief shamans and handed down by them to the next chief shaman. This inheritance process has never ceased. Except for circumstances like war and domestic upheavals that cause damage to or the loss of the idols, all northern tribes offer sacrifice to idols, and as we have said, people believe that the longer idols are transmitted and worshipped, the more powerful and awe-inspiring they become. This accounts for the dark colour of excavated idols, the colour of accumulated sacrificial blood stains. The acquisition of idols by inheritance does not require the inheritor to undergo any particular religious procedure. It occurs in a natural way: when a chief shaman dies, they yield their position to the next one, and before their death, they teach their successor the needed skills in a process called *Jiao'yun*. The old shaman instructs the new chief shaman to take charge of the idol shrine, and when the old shaman dies, the ancestral Manni god idols naturally get passed down to the new shaman, sometimes with their additions, but never with a deletion. The idols reportedly serve the tribe rather than the shamans, so they do not lose their value after a shaman's death.

According to shaman prescriptions, there is one case in which a shaman does not need to transmit all the idols in the shrine to the new chief shaman: when shamans die, they can take with them to the coffin those idols that they have dreamt of, along with certain other idols as their attendants or guardians in the world of souls. When later generations summon the ancestral gods, these idols will reappear in dreams to give oracles in place of the deceased shaman. In most cases, the successor of the deceased shaman dreams a dream in which the deceased hands on the ancestral idols that were buried with them or acquired on the path to the underworld. The new shaman then burns incense, beats the drum, kneels before the shrine, and remakes the idols according to the dream. They also practise divination in accordance with the dream and the office that the ancestor held so that the tribe can avoid disasters.

The majority of inherited idols are Manni gods that enjoy the tribe's worship because they bear a close relationship to peoples' daily life. Because the Manchu and their Jurchen forefathers enjoyed a relatively early settled agricultural civilization, most of their idols are of deities in charge of childbirth, gods of the natural forces or heaven, and especially ancestral Manni gods, which take the lion's share. In contrast, some nomadic peoples, such as the Oroqen and Ewenki, revere idols that can grant them good return in hunting, their traditional means of livelihood, or idols of animal deities. The peoples who long ago migrated to the East Sea, such as the Donghai Weji tribe, worship idols in the form of fish, boats, and water along with their Manni idols. Given the generally low level of production and culture among northern tribes in the past, moreover, the idols that peoples have been especially careful to hand down and value are those that are portable and so can protect people while they are working or migrating. Called *soweng*, *sowen*, *wenggun*, or *ecihe*, they have traditionally been worn by the Hezhe and also by the Manchu, Mongol, Oroqen, Ewenki, Daur, and Xibe peoples. A tribe's stealing the highly valued idol of a neighbouring tribe was not unusual. Such theft of idols is not a matter of conflict but rather a sign of mutual respect.

## 5.4 Idols' thirst for blood

All Manni gods – and evil deities like the epidemic god (Wenshen) – enjoy the taste of blood on their lips, so blood is painted on their “mouths” at regular intervals, usually annually. In shamanist thought, idols have souls and, just like living beings, must be fed daily. Because humans cannot survive without food, neither can Manni gods, and their preferred food is blood. Only by drinking blood every day can the soul of a Manni god retain its stamina. When a human being has not had food for a long time, their soul will drift out of the body. Likewise, when an idol has lacked nourishing blood, its soul will leave the idol effigy, causing it to lose its divinity and become nothing but worthless wood or straw. This is the case whether or not the idol is shaped in a human form. When the blood offered to an idol is abundant and hot, its soul grows bigger and mightier, becoming matchless in its ability to subdue enemies, ghosts, and monsters. However, the blood must be as fresh as possible. It cannot be blood that has been preserved overnight. Fresh flowing blood allows the soul to flow, but if the blood coagulates, the soul is cut short.

Offering fresh blood is a sign of piety, and northern shamans pay much attention to the notion that feeding Manni idols blood nourishes and sustains their soul. This can be interpreted in simple medical terms. Shamans treat Manni idols as human beings. To maintain their basic life needs, blood needs to be given them to prolong their life and thus allow them to remain in the human world and serve their clan. On the whole, shamans treat idols with earnest devotion as living beings, not as cold, lifeless objects. Their belief reflects a primitive outlook on life itself.

In shamanist worship, one required ritual involves the regular application of blood on the mouth or body of an idol. This is why many of the idols that we have acquired seem to be coated with a dark brown leathery material that is hard and shiny. That material is actually accumulated layers of blood. Another name for the idol gods is *piren* (皮人, leather people) or *heiren* (黑人, black people), but this does not mean they are actually made of leather or were originally black. Rather, because they have “drunk” blood for ages, the red blood has turned brown, and the brown scars have turned black and become thick like leather.

The reason for believing that idols like to drink blood might be that the early ancestors made their living out of hunting and considered blood a delicacy. The traditions of offering blood and blood sacrifice to the gods as an important part of a ritual dance are preserved in important rites of the Ewenki, Oroqen, Manchu, and Xibe. It is called “nourishing the souls” (*Yixueyanghun*, 吸血养魂), and in their folk cultures, people still believe that gods grow strong by drinking fresh blood. They thus sometimes dip fresh blood into an offering of rice liquor to thank a god, in the hope that the god may enjoy what they enjoy. Such a belief stems from real living modes, but as a ritual, it takes on religious meaning.

When shamans make an idol in accordance with a dream oracle, the process involves blood sacrifice. If the material of the idol is a bird's bones – those of a wild or domestic goose, for example – the bones need to be soaked in the bird's nurturing blood. They need to be emerged in the blood for an entire night or

sometimes, if the oracle so prescribes, many nights – seven, nine, eighteen, or twenty-seven (multiples of nine). If the material is the bones of another animal, then that animal's blood is used. If the material is wood or stone, the idol should be submerged in the blood of a deer, reindeer, hedgehog, or pig. If it is leather or cloth, that material must be soaked in blood. It then becomes supple and shiny, but when sewn into the idol, it becomes hard and can easily maintain the proper form. If the material is wood, the blood will soak into its inner texture, such that the wood will never crack, and the oil in the blood can prevent it from decaying for years. The blood-soaked idols are believed to have souls or gods within them, and the blood is believed to help preserve the souls and thus make them truly Manni gods. Because they have blood, they are conscious, and people believe they know what is happening around them when shamans beat their drums and can respond.

Once the newly made idol is taken out of its emersion in blood, it must not be immediately brought out into the sunlight, because souls prefer a cold, dark, and humid environment. The sunlight will crack them, and their soul will drift out from the cracks, causing them to lose their divinity. So shamans enclose them in a special case, some made of birch bark, some woven from yellow cypress peelings, and some made of thin birch wood. Some well-to-do families use a silvery case made of fish bones or animal ribs stuck together by fish-bladder glue. In general, idols prefer a quiet, cool place, usually outdoors, but on the shaded northern slope of a hill where heat and smoke cannot reach them. To prevent worm damage to the casing, people pick the roots of water hemlock or wolfbane, grind them, and line the inside of the casing to make it moth-proof. In a barren area with no sign of animals for hunting, shamans put the sacred case in the quiet wilderness, allowing the pure dew of night and early morning to wet the idol's lips, eyes, and body, or they place it in the middle of a river, where the water is believed to be pure and rich in spirit. Every spring and autumn or on the occasion of the annual grand tribal sacrifice, the idols are collectively invited to enjoy the celebration in the shrine chambers, where they enjoy the blood offerings smeared on their lips and bodies. An important part of the whole rite, this is believed to quench their thirst for blood and endow them with their divinity.

A nonbloody sacrifice is practically unheard of, especially one including the feeding and nourishing of idols. Shamans traditionally pay special attention to the preparation, feeding, and butchering of the animals to be sacrificed. Since, however, tribes gradually accumulated so many idols, the animals needed for sacrifice was insufficient, so shamans necessarily held blood sacrifice less frequently. With the development of agriculture among the Xibe, Hezhe, and others, moreover, hunting was no longer essential for people's livelihood, and hunted animals became less abundant, which also led to the diminishment of blood sacrifice by many tribes. Furthermore, the trend became especially apparent at the end of the Ming dynasty and beginning of Qing dynasty, when Lamaist culture, which disapproved of blood sacrifice, was introduced among northern ethnic groups and gradually took a foothold. The practice of killing made shamanism appear to be inferior to Lamaism. All this undermined the worship of idols, with their



insatiable thirst for blood, and the number of idols steadily dwindled. Nonetheless, their thirst for blood gave Manni idols the strength they needed to protect the tribe.

The ability of ancestral Manni idols to protect the tribe depends to a great extent on the power and scope of their eyes. People believe that they do not hear with their ears but rather perceive things with their eyes, even when in their casing. No matter how far the distance, how high and steep the mountain, be it day or night, they can spy out human activities, be it conspiracy or scheming, and provide meaningful and targeted help to their tribe. In making idols, shamans thus pay special attention to the eyes. They must be deep set and prominent, and their expressions must be godly. The eyes of idols carved out of wood, stone, or bones should look directly forwards with a profound gaze. For idols made of cloth or leather, black or red beads serve as the eyes; for painted idols, the eyes should be wide open. No idol has closed or half-closed eyes. Even the smallest effigies should be painted or carved with exceedingly impressive eyes. People believe that Manni gods are travelling ceaselessly around the universe with their eyes wide open, observing the human world, keeping guard against evil spirits, and remaining highly alert to perils, all so that they can always bring peace and harmony to their tribespeople.

In the process of being made, the idol's eyes must be soaked in fresh blood, and those of a cloth idol must be painted with blood or take the form of red stone beads. When asking for divine oracles in an important tribal sacrifice, their mouths and eyes are repainted with blood to the accompaniment of chants like "Open your eyes wide, penetrate the mist of thousands of *li*, clouds of hundreds of layers all around the universe."

The sex of the idols gradually became more and more prominent in Manni idols: male and female were made more distinctive. As some old shamans have said, the earliest idols had human form but had no clear sex. This is attested by oracles. Later, however, in the Liao and Jin dynasties, sex markings became more distinct. Female idols usually outnumbered the male ones, and they are marked with a triangular willow-shaped head, while the male ones have flat heads. Some female idols are covered with a triangle on the neck and part of the breasts, to represent the female sex organs, while male idols are marked with a flat line on the neck, to represent the male sex organ. The increase in number and difference between the female idols and the male idols indicates that concepts of fertility and lineage were becoming more prominent in tribal culture. Blood-soaked idols have traditionally been thought to be able to grant fertility in childbearing and the well-being of mothers and children. According to *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan*, if shamans want to make a pair of fertile potent idols, male and female, they must make them out of the hide of a Mongolian gazelle, male deer, male moose, or hedgehog, because these animals are believed to have high speed and powers of fertility. When the hide has been soaked in blood for many days and the leather has become red and half-transparent, it is fit to be sewn into male and female idols. If a household worships such a pair of idol gods while feeding expecting mothers with blood cakes made of the same blood, then allegedly they

can expect their pregnancy to be safe and the infant robust. In peoples' desire for safe childbirth, they would worship many other pairs of blood-leather idols as well. They would hunt moose and roe deer in the spring and autumn for blood for the idol casing and use their placentas to make tea. Many such idols came to be worshipped in the family without the control of a shaman.

## 5.5 The idol worship of individual ethnic peoples

Northern idol worship is rich in its various cultural expressions. *Investigations of Northeast Asia* gives detailed accounts of some of the representative peoples.

### *Ewenki*

If you visit the home of a Solon (Ewenki) head shaman, you will see idols made of strands of moose hair in the shape of human beings worshipped on a woollen carpet. The eyes of the idols are wide apart, about 6 *cun* (寸, 1 *cun* = 3.2 cm), and their total height is about 9 *cun*, with two figures standing side by side: one male and the other female. The male is called Jieshi Boluohan, the female just Boluoha (Burukan, "ancestral deity"). Every year on February 15 by the lunar calendar, millet is put on their mouths as food. On the right of the carpet is hung a linen cord to string chunks of meat, and under the cord is put a small rug. On the left of the carpet is hung a woollen packet containing goat hair (Torii Ryuzo 1926).

Among the Ewenki, each *ulileng*<sup>2</sup> has its Malu (Manni) ancestor deity, the collective name of twelve gods and spirits contained in a round leather pouch. People usually keep the pouch outside the *sierranju*<sup>3</sup> dwelling, but when the clan migrates, they hang it on a wooden tripod. Under it, they burn *kawawa* herb and *xijile* wood in a rite of wafting smoke to it, which is called *ulaganileng*.

The most important deity in the pouch is the ancestor Sewenki, whose idol has a human form, male and female, carved out of a *harka* tree. The pair have hands, feet, ears, eyes, and clothes made of deer or moose hide. Legend has it that Sewenki was transformed from a huge snake that fell from the heavens, has done many good deeds for human beings, and talks only with shamans, not ordinary people. The couple like the smell of oil and all kinds of fragrant aromas, so when people give them offerings, they add deer or moose oil to the fire. Tribespeople will then not be afflicted with disease and will have unusually good returns in hunting. Sewenki likes listening to drums, moreover, so when a shaman beats the drum, they descend. The Ewenki offer them the skin of the *gahei* bird so that when they come, they can freely fly on it. They also offer two squirrels' skins, one male and one female, because Sewenki likes them. If hunters do not have success in hunting squirrels, they take the skins and whirl them several times over a fire to ask Sewenki to grant them good hunting for squirrels. Along with Sewenki, the Ewenki also worship Umai (Umay), who is said to bless childbirth and whose effigy has the form of a small bird carved out of birch or pine wood.

The Ewenki also offer tribute to Jiyaci, the god of domestic animals, whose idol is two human figures sewn on a square piece of carpet from thread from the

manes of stallions corralled from other tribes. Between the two figures is sewn a large packet in which offerings are given. A rite worshipping Jiyaci is held yearly on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month or in June when animals are in full fat. In the packet, people then offer sorghum or rice milk porridge. The Ewenki also worship Maomu, the iron god, a human-faced masked deity cut out of an iron sheet. A tribe can have only one such iron-mask god, who is said to be the most basic source of power for shamans.

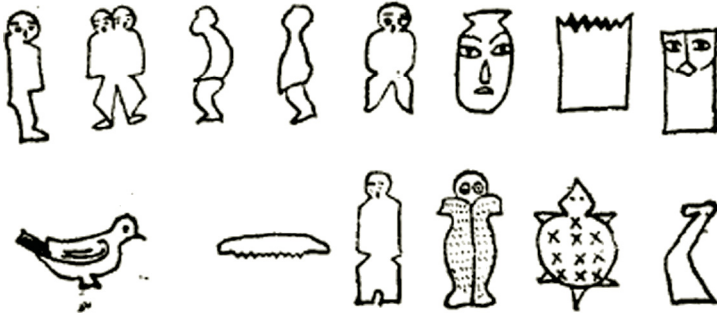
### **Oroqen**

The Malu ancestor deity of the Ewenki has its origin in the worship of the Oroqen people, where it is called Ajioru. Ajiaoru was originally the ancestor god of the people as a whole in ancient matriarchal society, but later in patriarchal times, each tribe came to have its own Ajioru, whose idol is carved out of pine and is worshipped in almost every household. The deity is believed to have unimaginal powers – blessing children, dispelling illness and disasters, and ensuring fruitful hunting or a fruitful harvest – all within the scope of his office. The fixed place where the god is worshipped is behind the *sierranju*. In a *sierranju*, the bed facing the door is called *malu* and two other beds on the right and left *aolu*. On the left of the *malu* are hung four or five birch bark containers, each containing a Burukan (ancestor idol), and on the right are hung sacred icons sewn with horse-tail hair on roe deer skin. Oroqen idols or icons fall roughly into three categories: the first is made of wood, called *maomutai* and consists mainly of their ancestor gods; the second is painted on cloth or paper and consists mainly of nature deities; and the third is sewn on cloth or roe deer skin and consists mostly of deities in charge of horses.

According to *Survey of the Oroqen in the Greater Khingan Range (Dui daxing'anling elunchun de shidi diaochaogao)*, by the Japanese scholars Akamatsu Chijyo and Akiba Takashi, idol worship among the Oroqen people in the past was rich and popular. In the autumn of 1935, the authors made extensive visits to Oroqen settlements from the Nuomin River, upstream of the Hailar River to the Zhuor River in the south, as well as in various scattered areas. They interviewed forty-five shamans, three from thirteen tents upstream of the Bira River. This proportionately high number of shamans shows how prevalent shamanism was then. With the help of the shamans there, the authors were able to see many kinds of idols, for each of which they made detailed recordings and sketches. According to their documentation, the ancestor god Ajiaoru idol is a simple black birch wooden figure 5 *chi* (尺, 1 *chi* = 1/3 metre) tall, whose mouth is painted with roe deer blood. The biggest idol, Jiaqidalai, has charge of hunting. It is 8 *chi* tall, and its mouth is also painted with roe deer blood. There is Asalandi, whose main office is to cure children's diseases. It is 3 *chi* tall and wears a garment made of young roe deer hide. There are also Magu gods who oversee hunting and healing, consisting of a pair of small wooden idols with nine faces; the Baoma god of healing, painted on cloth; and the pair of Ekuqiaoji fertility deities, husband and wife, wooden idols tied together.

**Daur**

The Daur generally worship Huolieli Barken idols, which consist of seventeen kinds of deities in the form of fifty-eight creatures and objects. Among the seventeen idols, fifteen are made or carved of wood; the other two are painted on cloth. Their shapes are as follows:



Whether in a *hala* (clan) or *mukūn* (paternal subclan, a legacy from the Jurchen that still exist among Manchu-Tungus peoples), each family has a Jiyaqi idol, the deity in charge of protecting domestic animals. They usually take the form of human icons cut out of white cloth and stuck onto blue or yellow cloth, and they are worshipped outside the house. People offer them a goat or sheep and burn a butter or sesame-oil lamp before them.

**Hezhe**

The ancestor gods of the Hezhe are wooden, almost 9 *cun* long, coated with bear hide. They have a kind of crew-cut-shaped head for the male one and a pointed head for the female one. They are usually worshipped on a suspended board on the wall of the west *kang*, but in the *jia* folk ritual explicated in Chapter 6 of Volume 1, they are invited to a table set up on the *kang*. In addition to the ancestor gods, the Hezhe worship idols in charge of the household and possessions, which are about 9 *cun* tall, as well as idols on guard against ghosts and evil spirits, idols that dispel evil and disasters, and those that ward off tuberculosis, stomach aches, and headaches. According to an early survey by Ling Chunsheng, their idols also include many animal deities – tiger, wolf, dog, wild boar, pig, turtle, tortoise, hedgehog, and so on. These animal idols are stowed in a leather pouch, which people carry with them when they go hunting and put on display when offering sacrifice. In addition, they have a hunting god, who takes charge of everything pertaining to hunting and whose idol is as tall as 29 *cun*, with a sharply pointed head and two long feet. They also have an idol in charge of animal hides, which has delicate and intricate carvings of the ears, eyes, mouth, nose, two hands, and two feet. It is usually wrapped in red cloth or hide, and its size varies: the biggest more than

7 *cun* tall and ordinary ones 4 or 5 *cun*. Its special office is to help people skin animals and tan the hides. Besides these various idols, the most ancient Hezhe idols are stone effigies called Zhuolu Mafa and Zhuolu Mama, male and female respectively. *Longjiang Annals* (*Longjiang xianzhi*) states that on the upper part of the effigy, people carve a circle to represent the head and paint brows and eyes to make it roughly resemble a human being. The Hezhe usually place these idols in the corner of their tent or room, and the longer they stay there, the more powerful they become. If a guest should offend them, someone in the household will become completely blind in just a few days with glaucoma that is said to be incurable no matter how much one prays. People worship these ancestor idols several times a year, offering a deer in sacrifice (Longjiang Annals Editorial Committee 1991).

### **Mongol**

The idols of shaman worship are called *wenggun* or *wengguda* in the Mongol language. They roughly resemble human beings, and historical records and excavated objects indicate that they are made mainly of one of four materials: wood, leather, wool, or bronze. The carved wood and leather *wenggun* are believed to represent their culture at the time when they lived by hunting in the forests; the woollen ones represent the culture of their nomadic period; and the bronze ones might represent a more advanced bronze culture. Another name for *wenggun* is *hurile*, meaning “bronze” in Mongolian, which shows that people named these gods according to the materials of which they are made. Along with the Jiyaci gods who oversee domestic animals, the Mongols worship Baomule gods, who guard over grazing. The Nutuke clan enshrine these two gods at the upper right of their yurt or door. For the Baomule, they usually wrap a bull pepper right of their yurt or door; for Jiyaci, they paint a shepherd at the right in a woollen carpet or bull hide. Both gods are believed to protect them while they are grazing their cattle.

Reportedly, a male shepherd once came down from heaven and stole a bull, so the heavenly emperor sent soldiers to catch him. However, he explained to the emperor that he took the bull because he wanted to use its bones and hide to offer the emperor sacrifice. This pleased the emperor, who forgave the shepherd. The shepherd later did use the bones and hide to worship the god, and since then, people began to have Baomule as their patron god of grazing. Jiyaci, too, for his part, was actually an old shepherd. When he was about to die, he refused to close his eyes, so the bewildered people asked him what the matter was. “When I die,” he told them, “dress me as a shepherd, with a crook in my hand and a light buff horse under me, and bury me in the valley below Erdun Baomubi Mountain.” The people buried him accordingly, but a few months later, their cattle died in large numbers. So they painted Jiyaci on wool and bull hide and presented offerings to him in the hope that he would bless them and their cattle with healthy animals, and since then, they have had livestock in abundance. These two gods show that the Mongols have the notion that their ancestors have souls that can still bless

them. They also worship mountain gods, whose offerings must be animal blood in accordance with the northern tradition of blood worship.

### *Xibe*

The prominent feature of Xibe idols is that most of them are paintings, mostly shaman figures painted on rectangular white cloth. Some of the cloths may have been preserved for as long as a hundred years. In addition to the figure of a shaman, they usually have painted clouds on the upper part, along with three goddesses, collectively named Ilan Enduri Gege. Standing beside the three on the right is a man named Guoxingma Gafa, meaning “benevolent male ancestor,” and on the left a woman named Jilangga Mama, meaning “benevolent female ancestor.” On the further right and left are painted the sun and moon and under the goddesses are painted various animals, including dragons, tigers, snakes, foxes, and weasels. On two other discovered paintings, there are deer, eagles, and other birds in various poses, along with winged human figures in the right margin. These figures are thought to be gods invited by shamans for help when they are practising their divine art.

Although idols in concrete plastic form did not prosper in Xibe shamanist culture, the iconic paintings are fairly well developed, and colour painting is still the most important form of worship in Xibe folk culture. Their worship of the fertility goddess Xili Mama is similar to that of the Manchu and Hezhe. *Gagai* (*galaha*, sheep or goat ankle bone), colourful ribbons, and cords used in her worship are believed to be symbolic replacements for idols. Worship in this more symbolic form can be interpreted as an advance in shamanic practices, earlier plastic effigies having been produced fairly early and representing a more “rudimentary state of mind.” With the development of shamanism, the plastic forms became less worshipped.

### *Manchu*

The idols of the Manchu and their early Jurchen ancestors are mentioned in *History of Jin* (*Jin shi*) and sporadic notes and records after the days of the Qing dynasty, but the actual idols had previously been seldom found. However, my colleagues and I collected many shamanic idols and materials from the Manchu autonomous regions, whose richness and variety of forms far exceed the few discovered by earlier researchers like as Ling Chunsheng (凌先生) and Russian scholar P. Mark. Our research found that Manchu idols have been widely worshipped in almost all regions and clans throughout northeast China, especially in Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces, with the Hunchun, Jilin, and Aihui regions being most typical. One typical example is a wooden idol that we collected from the Hunchun area, far-eastern Jilin. Called Endurimao, it has the form of a column about 3 *cun* tall, flat headed with two pits that possibly represent eyes and a carved indentation that may represent the mouth. Another idol is Weihūli Enduri, the sea voyage goddess. It is actually two goddesses, standing side by side on a boat, with a thread binding

them together, meaning that the boat will travel steadily on water. The figures have eyes painted as two short dashes and a carved mouth.

The Manchu Nimaca Hala of the Donghai Weji treat tree roots and make them into idols. Three female creation deities were found in a coffer made of birch bark in a niche in the home of a clansperson of the Mengzhele Hala. The front of the coffer is carved with patterns of clouds, water, and willow (*fodo*) leaves, which represent the female sex organs. In the bottom is whittled a hole, which symbolizes that the coffer is only one of the nine spheres of the heavens connected by the hole. Four goddesses of wind of the Manchu Han clan were found in Yongji County, Jilin. All four are carved with a round head and convex eyes, decorated with hair, and most of them are covered with a black strip of cloth. They represent the power of wind controlling the six directions of the universe: upper and lower, left and right, front and back. In the Yang clan are the gods of day and night, a couple posed as flying, with facial features painted with simple strokes. The fronts of the two idols are painted white, with the back of the female painted white to symbolize day and that of the male painted black to symbolize night.

In addition to these idols, my team found some small idols with protruding eyes lined with iron wire, braided hair, and arms stretching out as if flying. A couple of *ecihe* idols, which are thought to be the Manchu equivalent of the portable Hezhe idols mentioned earlier, were found in Jilin. They are made of lead and 1 *cun* tall, with sharp pointed heads and arms stretching forwards. The heads are pierced so that they can be worn as pendants. They are believed to be able to protect the wearer from harm, disease, and the loss of direction. Cloth idols of the gods and goddesses of the universe have also been found among Manchu clans. One is about 9 *cun* tall and 2 *cun* wide, made of black, white, and blue cloth. Their eyes are represented with black glass beads. The goddess wears a triangular emblem of black cloth on her chest, representing the female sex organs, and white pieces of cloth symbolize sunlight, blue water, and black night. Such idols are portable thanks to the light materials they are made of. Another idol, that of Fodo Mama, the guardian of children, was found in Xinbin County, Liaoning Province.

In recent years, Manchu clans have simplified their worship, using cloths of nine or seven colours to represent the ancestor gods. They call these *suoli* (ancestors). With the passing of time, moreover, some clans, such as the Li clan of Ning'an County, Heilongjiang, have come to use such multicoloured cloths to represent their ancestors because they can no longer recall the ancestors' forms. The Hu clan of Yongji County, Jilin, have painted their ancestors as dressed in Qing official dress. Other Manchu clans also worship simplified idols, mostly painted figures, especially in Heilongjiang and Jilin.

Like other ethnic groups, the Manchu have many taboos about the making of idols, the materials to be used, and the artisans who make them. These taboos must be strictly followed. For instance, the west wall must be kept clean for the idols, and they should face the south, with their backs towards the north. No ill words should be spoken before the idols, and offerings given them must not be arranged or changed at will. A sacrificial rite must be held regularly in each household, and the types of sacrifice should always be the same. If the idols enjoy



chickens, ducks should not be offered to them, and the colour, number, and sex of the sacrificed animals follow certain rules. The idols for each clan should be kept a secret; people with other surnames, and sometimes even their own clans-people, are not allowed to see them. Materials left over after an idol is made are regarded as sacred and must not be discarded. If they are bones or stones, they are placed under the foundations of the house or house pillar, and if they are leather scraps, they are made into cushions for women, bellybands for elders, kneelets, or small delicate decorations. Some of the bones and leather scraps are believed to be able to cure stomach bleeding, difficult delivery, and waist or knee pains.

## **5.6 The cultural significance of northern idol worship**

When trying to determine the existence of different stages in the evolution of primitive society, the concrete cultural relics left by people of different historical periods are helpful in that they bear clear features of their times. The idols of northern ethnic groups are such objects. They thus bear special significance for Chinese scholars in their study of the ethnic culture and religion of the northeast region. First of all, these idols are rich in forms and materials that represent various levels of people's psychological and needs and mental awareness. Their forms include human figures, half-men and half-animal figures, quasi-human figures, animals, birds, fish, serpents, and worms as representative of shamans' understandings of the universe. The materials used to make the idols – skin, bone, teeth, feathers, and animal scales – point to people's ancient beliefs in pantheism and animism. According to knowledgeable shamans, they are materials that can lose their physical form and be made divine as souls or spirits. The souls that they become, moreover, give inexhaustible power to the idols, bestowing them with divinity and spirit power to cure and save people. Therefore, idols cannot be treated as toys, playthings, or inert objects; rather, they have supernatural power as real divinities living among mortals. Their positions are much higher than that of shamans; as actual deities, they interact with human beings directly – blessing, healing, curing, dispelling disease and preventing disaster. They have experienced life together with the tribespeople in hardships and bountiful times, in bitterness and solace, like shadows at their side. They thus present us with an invaluable source for the study of primitive psychology and thought.

The discovery and collection of idols in northeast China have enriched the repository of relics of the Tungus worship system, revealing its unique features among the Siberian peoples that worship idols and enriching our historical and cultural resources of the area. From numerous Chinese books and published research papers,<sup>4</sup> along with folk-culture surveys carried out by Russian and Japanese scholars, we can safely conclude that in North and Northeast Asia, idols were once widely believed in and worshipped. From their geographical distribution, we can see that they were believed in by people living in the vast area from the source of Amur to its estuary, including the north and south branches and eastern islands of the Ussuri. The diversity of the idols reveals the splendour of northern shamanism.

Finally, from the multitude of idol forms, we can establish the mental process of their evolutionary course. From the worship of natural phenomena to idol worship, the concept of soul underwent several stages of development. We can roughly trace that development as follows. From the start, there was a belief that all phenomena possess souls which are immortal, can possess human beings, and can enjoy rebirth in a second life. From the evolution of the forms of idols, we can then see the association that such forces came to have with unexplainable phenomena and special human powers. By studying them now from a modern perspective, can we perhaps associate them with special forces in the physical atmosphere, with divination, and with the philosophical distinction between body and soul? Can we say that the *qigong* (气功) that some people believe in actually amounts to some sort of influence of such forces on the tissues or organs of an afflicted person similar to massage? Of course, the significance of idols is far more important than their potential for healing. In any case, we should not think of idol worship as a kind of superstitious practice. On the contrary, it offers us food for serious thought: Is there a real connection between spirit movements of the air and an influence on physical bodies that can cause or heal disease? Is it possible that idols contain a mechanism that can help solve physiological problems? For thousands of years, they have been believed to possess healing power. We should at least give that belief scholarly consideration so as to investigate the relationship between religious belief, psychology, and pathology. Unfortunately, for many years, shamanism has been held as nothing but superstition, as kind of spiritual trash. We need to give it a second look, analyse it from a scholarly point of view, and let it cast light on anthropological and ethnological research on primitive mental evolution and human culture as a whole.

## Notes

- 1 See, for example, *Annals beyond Heilongjiang (Heilongjiang waiji)* by Xi Qing 西清, *Records of Eastern Siberia (Xiboli dongbian jiyao)*, by Cao Yanjie 曹廷杰, *Jilin Annals (Jilin tongzhi)*, and the introduction to Solon (Ewenki) idols in *Investigations of North-east Asia (Dongbei yazhou soufang ji)*.
- 2 *Ulileng*, literally “descendants” or “people living together,” was once the family commune of Oroqen and Ewenki hunters in the Argun River basin. Every *urileng* includes four to eight nuclear families of the same paternal lineage as a self-sufficient basic economic unit. The means of production are communally owned, with joint labour and averaged distribution of the yield of the hunt. Important livelihood and living problems are decided by collective discussion at the family meeting.
- 3 This is a traditional Ewenki dwelling, covered in the summer with birch bark and in the winter with deer furs. It has a conical shape, is constructed from twenty to thirty pine poles, and is usually about 6 metres in diameter and 5 metres in height.
- 4 Such are the *Summary Records of Longjiang (Longjian jilue)*, *Records of Heilongjiang Province (Heilongjiang waiji)*, *Longjiang Annals (Longjiang xianzhi)*, *Ning'an Annals (Ning'an xianzhi)*, *Collected Records of Jilin (Jilin huizheng)*, and *Aihui Annals (Aihui xian zhi)*.

## 6 The northern shaman

Historical surveys show that the northern shamanist culture has been better preserved among the fishing and hunting peoples of the area, while it has become gradually simplified in ethnic groups more prone to economic reform. In any case, from early times, the social practices of northern Chinese peoples demonstrate that shamans and clans were inseparable. They depended on and supported one another, and shamans often exerted a significant influence on the rise and fall of a clan. They were born for the clan. The comforting psychological techniques that they developed would often bring consolation and hope to clanspeople in their struggles. In a kind of process of Darwinian evolution, in the primitive clan system of labour division for better survival and development, a class of clanspeople would naturally arise that is responsible for medical treatment, divination, sacrificial rituals, and spiritual leadership. With the improvement of social productivity and increased population, people willing to take on such tasks would grow, and their role would become clear-cut and more and more indispensable for the clan. Such were shamans. With their extensive knowledge of clan history, skill in ritual dance and sacrificial procedures, and believed ability to ward off disease and calamities, they were the clan sages.

Over the course of clan development, shamans came to inherit and accumulate a rich horde of material and spiritual cultural artefacts, including the myths and epic tales of various peoples and their song and dance traditions; oracles; handwritten notes; ancient geographic maps; and original artworks. The eye-catching shamanic exhibits in the national museums of various countries have drawn the attention of many visitors. Shamans worldwide have been acknowledged as creators of human culture. They “possess artistic thought” (Revunenkovna 1989) and are “the earliest artists” (Zhu Di 1988:344). The shamans of northern China have thus long won the admiration and praise of their peoples. As is written in the unpublished *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan* (*Wushi wosheku jipu*), noted in Chapters 2 and 5 of this Volume “shamans are unusually talented individuals who bring good fortune to their clans.”

Questions about the mentality and psychology of shamans as the creators, transmitters, and practitioners of shamanist ideology have been given great attention by scholars. In this final chapter, we take a brief look at how the northern shaman is viewed in traditional folk myths on the one hand and in modern scholarly

research on the other. We do so to further understand the vitality and popularity of the mysteries of northern shamanic culture and the inner world and characteristic traits of shamans.

### 6.1 Mythic celebrations of shamans

Along with the myths recounted in chapters eight, nine, and ten, myths, or rather tales or legends, about shamans, their curing powers, and their tribal governance are common among northern peoples. Compared with the oral traditions of other ethnic groups, tales about shamans among the northern peoples of China enjoy unmatched popularity and are rich in number and content. They have some similarity with Buddhist stories of the life of Buddha and can be classified as myths of ancestral heroes, but they have their own unique contents and features. As stories of shamans' experiences, they reveal how people thought humans acquired their divine teachings; how they dispelled evil and cured diseases with their divine powers; how they blessed their tribespeople after death when their souls became divine spirits; how they distinguished themselves from other shamans in courage, valour, wit, strategies, and skills; and how they recovered, revived, or restored the souls of even plants, birds, and beasts. Without exception, the myths and legends sing the praise of shamans' sublime virtues and invincible powers. Each tribe or clan has its own shamans and tales of their heroic exploits. Tales in which shamans conquer demons and subdue ghosts are as profound as the northern forests and seas. At the same time, they have a familiar ring and intimate feel among the people. Passed down orally, they are popular even among homemakers and children.

Of special interest is *Umesiben Mama*, an epic from perhaps around the 13th century CE that is based on legends that have been long handed down from the early Jurchen tribes about the great shamaness Umesiben. The sole existing epic of the ancient Jurchen, it gives a lively depiction of the ideal characteristics of a shaman as viewed by the people themselves, along vivid pictures of the life, customs, and history of the early Manchus. It is set along the Ussuri (Wusuli) River basin among the Donghai Jurchen. Much famed within the tribe, Umesiben had incomparable skills among her peers and became the khanum of the "Seven Hundred" East Sea Gashan (tribes). In Heilongjiang during the Republic of China era (1912–1949), the Guan, Zhao, and other Manchu families of Dongning County and elders of Dong'an could recount the *uleben* (tales) of the epic. Among fluent chanters in Dong'an was an elderly gentleman surnamed Lu who was born in the late years of the Qing dynasty. One of his ancestors served as hereditary *boxokv* in charge of documents and had served at the Qing court of the vice governor of Yilan County, Heilongjiang, and officer of the gate guard. Lu was deemed one of the most important inheritors of Manchu culture. He knew Manchu customs and many traditional oral tales, being especially familiar with the ancient culture of the Weji tribe. He was more or less versed in the Manchu language, having learned it in a private school run by the Banner government, but because he hadn't used it for many years, he could only chant Manchu tales by memory and was not able to write them down. In his versions, Manchu is mixed with Chinese. I

recorded his narratives from “Umesiben Mama” in the spring of 1972, four years before he died.

Umesiben’s tribe belonged to the Big Bai tribe. Umeson Hala or Umeson Gashan was the name of its specific subtribe in the days of the Jin dynasty, and it was fairly famous in the Ming dynasty. Several excerpts follow from Lu’s version of the epic:

*Umulin Bira [river] was the jade belt of the Fairies,  
Swaying and stretching out to the rosy skyline of white clouds.  
Like thousands of plum blooms,  
Tents of mink pelts lined the banks.  
Like thousands of silver petals,  
Tents of the pelts were scattered throughout the woods.  
The galloping hooves of chestnut steeds drowned out the roar of torrents,  
The flowing manes of golden steeds outshone the brightness of the clouds.  
The proud sons of the Sun God, blessed by Heaven,  
Enjoyed endless days of happiness and good fortune in Umeson Gashan.  
There lived the Seven Hundred Tribes, carefree and gay,  
The tribe of Juruhan at the east,  
Chemukenhan at the west,  
Huihan at the south,  
And the unmatched Umeson tribe at the north,  
Whose people were so good at marksmanship that no prey could escape them,  
Whose power extended to all eight points of the compass,  
Whose oracles told of everything in the four seas.  
The tribe’s wise khanum was Umesiben Sama [shaman].  
She conquered the Dumuken folk,  
Swept out the old Anchagan seaside pirates,  
Subdued the demon of the Inner Sea Bate Entu,  
Swept clean the Three Hundred Isles of enemy forces.  
The sun of the East Sea beamed upon the pastures,  
Where there were no battles or conquests.  
The moon of the East Sea brought calm to the tents,  
Where there was no weeping or sobbing.  
Silvery cups carved out of fish bones  
And silver hampers inlaid with clam shells  
Were all filled with wines and tasty mountain foods –  
Fish, mushrooms, sea food, whatever.  
All were grinning with joy,  
Eating to their hearts’ content,  
Sipping the nectar of their kanum.  
They lived by the East Sea where the sun rose,  
Lived in the lap of their mother Umulin Bira.  
They decorated their clothes with snowflakes,  
Warmed their feet with precious fish-skin shoes,  
Made quilts from goose feathers,*

*Had dried fish roe as their rations.  
The Umeson Gashan was unmatched,  
Forever blessed by hundreds of sama.*

The tales of the epic give an exquisite poetic description of how Umesiben acquired her divine powers and became a great shaman:

*The thin and sluggish Umulin Bira was like a man seriously ill,  
Its tribes quarreling endlessly like white-necked magpies.  
The pest set in,  
and dead bodies filled the streams and creeks.  
The old Gude Khan was helpless, knowing not where to put his hands,  
Would Abka punish them without a sign?  
All of a sudden, two suns appeared in the East Sea morning sky,  
The bright red glow brightened a leopard-hide tent by the river,  
And from the east slope came a speechless barefoot maiden.  
By a nod, she could summon swarms of white eagles,  
By a slight wave of her hand, she could call sturgeons to jump the banks,  
On her sacred tambourine, she could chase after birds,  
On the roaring torrents, she could surf as if treading on land.  
By gestures, she let the khan's tribesmen know  
She is the daughter of the East Sea Sun,  
Who has appointed her, a speechless girl  
Who knew only how to stew fish skin,  
To take lead of the 700 gashan as shaman  
And restore peace and happiness to Umeson.  
The place would become bright as the sunrise,  
Perpetually blessed with sunshine.  
All pirates and robbers would be subdued,  
All the seas have halcyon days.  
If she would not be appointed chief shaman,  
Punishment would befall the Umeson people, old or young alike!  
Although he shook his head in disbelief,  
The old khan had no choice but to obey.  
He ordered a sacred chamber to be built  
And there all gashan shamans should wait.  
The next morning, the conch horns sounded as one,  
And the tribesmen all came out behind the old khan.  
Before seas of men, mountains of men, the old khan knelt,  
Accompanied by shamans, attendants, servants,  
And thousands of maidens, whose clothes formed a sea of color,  
He invited the mute girl to appear.  
The mountains and deer,  
Green pines and jade willows,  
Russet geese and white cranes,*

*All raised their heads to witness the descent of the fairy shaman.  
 Jingling pendants rang,  
 Waist bells rang,  
 Sacred tambourine rang.  
 The shamans burned incense and knelt to the East Sea,  
 Where they saw from the center of the waves  
 The speechless maiden stepping forth, a wondrous sight. Behold!  
 From porpoise skin, she had made a tambourine.  
 When struck, it sounded like thousands of galloping steeds.  
 All of a sudden, the dumb maiden could speak and chant,  
 Divine lyrics, composed by the gods.  
 She was clothed in white weasel fur,  
 Gray squirrel fur,  
 Silver fox fur,  
 Jet black marmot fur.  
 Her hair was adorned with colorful stones,  
 With bird bones,  
 With fish bones,  
 With musk deer teeth.  
 Her apron was of leopard tails,  
 Tiger tails,  
 Bear paws,  
 Lynx tails.  
 Her whole attire weighing more than a hundred jin,  
 Upright she sat on her oval, porpoise-skin tambourine.  
 With a thunderous rumble, the tambourine lightly flew up  
 To the sky like a goose feather,  
 Hovering once above peoples' heads,  
 Then landing on Umulin Bira.  
 A flock of water fowls gathered round it,  
 And in a flash schools of fish leaped out of the water.  
 All the chiefains and ejen [lords] were stunned speechless,  
 All the ringleaders of thieves and robbers hightailed it,  
 All noxious drafts of air scattered like wisps of smoke,  
 The entire bira glistened and sparkled with bright sunbeams.  
 All the shamans knelt before the great shamaness,  
 The old Gude Khan knelt and kowtowed to the deity,  
 Bearing the golden seal of supreme shaman.*

The great shamaness then seized the old khan's hands and raised up the people, saying,

*I have come for the Umeson tribe,  
 Call me Umesiben Saman!  
 Ever since, the East Sea has sounded with new battle horns,*



*And the name of Umesiben Shaman has been celebrated  
For hundreds of generations.  
The East Sea was vast,  
The sun and moon bright.  
For her unparalleled feats and achievements,  
All praise Umesiben Mama . . .*

The epic later tells the story of her noble death:

*The slender and graceful Umesiben Khanum  
Served her office as chieftain with diligence, wisdom and kindness.  
Days she spent sleepless, duties attended to tirelessly,  
Until strands of white hair caressed her cheeks  
And wrinkles of age crept around her eyes.  
Three amorous suitors sought her hand,  
But none of them entered her bower;  
So she spent her life in pitiful loneliness.  
She thought her divine body  
Could not serve ordinary men.  
When one night she dreamed of beating drums,  
She realized it might be a sign she is summoned back.  
Knowing her life was near the end,  
She summoned two of her maiden disciples,  
Dearly loved Terqin and Terbin,  
Who were also shamans of great power,  
Dear and faithful helpers.  
When they entered and saw the old khanum, eyes closed and silent,  
They hurriedly knelt down, hot tears falling.  
“In a dream, I heard our forefathers summon me.  
You two must work in concord and live in harmony,  
Be kind and friendly to each other,  
Join hands and rule over our land.  
When I leave this world, learn from the crow Gege,  
Who was born for hardships and died from hardships.  
Be neither envious or corrupt,  
Neither lazy nor smug.  
What lies in your hands  
Are the prosperity and stability of our tribe  
For later generations and all our tribesmen.”  
Telcin hadn't heard the story of the crow Gege,  
So she asked Umesben, and she replied  
From her coach of tiger skins, her eyes closed.*

Her words give us a glimpse into northern creation myth, with its battles between the forces of good and the forces of evil:

*When the earth and the heaven were first separated,  
 The Devil Yeluli's violence was unbridled.  
 Storms, blizzards and dark torrents he hurled out,  
 Nothing could survive.  
 Abka Hehe, mother of all creatures,  
 Brought the sun to the earth,  
 Brought the moon to the world,  
 Ordered the goddesses to make creatures from clay,  
 To make grain from dew,  
 To make mountains from powdered rock,  
 To make streams from cloudy mists.  
 In this way, our world was created.  
 Yeluli was not reconciled with defeat,  
 With snow and ice, he covered the ground,  
 All was frozen, icy streams rampant everywhere.  
 Abka Emu's faithful attendant Gultai  
 Had the task of bringing back fire.  
 She fell hapless into an ice cave,  
 But laboriously climbed out  
 And in the end managed to warm the earth.  
 The world recovered, all creatures revived.  
 Yet our heroic maiden Gultai, while in the icy cave,  
 Out of hunger ate wolfsbane,  
 And when she died turned into a black crow.  
 Pure black with ebony claws,  
 She croaked day and night,  
 Flying about the fortresses to send the alarm.  
 For thousands of years, tirelessly she flew,  
 For thousands of years, true of heart.  
 When I die, in my long sleep,  
 Put me on the mountain top above Umulin Bira.  
 A shaman's soul and bones should not be buried.  
 Lay deer bones, fish blood and boar tusks under me,  
 Cover my body with fine beads and sacred bells,  
 Make a pillow of my fish-skin tambourine,  
 Put under my feet my waist bells and hedgehog skins.  
 My body shall waste away naturally with the winds, stars and the aurora,  
 My bones shall settle down naturally upon the land of Umeson.  
 When a hundred years have passed,  
 While the mountain still stands and the river still flows,  
 A new shaman will be born to the Umeson land.  
 That will be my return to the human world,  
 My drums will beat ever more furious and passionate . . .*

With its rich content, this precious shaman narrative thus evokes vivid pictures of the life, customs, and history of the early Manchu.

Another famous Manchu epic about an outstanding shamaness, “Shamaness Yinjiang”, or “Nishan Shaman,” highlights what people believed to be another characteristic of a shaman: the ability to travel to the otherworld to recover lost souls. Originally popular among the Manchu along the Amur, one of its versions was collected in the Aihui area on the Chinese side of the river and taken by Russians to Siberia, where it has been translated into many languages and spread to many areas. In recent years, numerous variant texts have been found among Northern peoples. The main plot runs as follows:

In the Ming dynasty, there was a village called Luoluo, where a rich man named Baledu Bayan lived. He had two sons (in some versions just one), who once went hunting in the mountains, but suddenly died. The parents were grieved by the sad news and invited Yinjiang shamaness to try to revive their beloved sons. Dancing a sacred dance, Yinjiang went down into the underworld and searched for their souls in the court of Yama, judge of the underworld. Through her divine powers, she finally managed to bring the boys’ souls back, revive the boys, give them long life, and reunite them happily with their parents.

The story celebrates the altruistic attempts and divine abilities of the shamaness Yinjiang. The text abounds in mythic tales conveying the notion that shamans can help people in this way, and it has long been a precious source for research at home and abroad. Its various texts are still spread orally among almost all the northern peoples: “Nisang Shaman” among the Daur and Ewenki, “Nishan Shaman” among the Xibe, and “Yixin Shaman” among the Hezhe – each of which has a similar plot to the others.

Another famous mythic tale of a shaman is “Sirin Amban Mafa,” which celebrates still-another facet of what people saw as characteristic of an ideal shaman: it praises the uprightness of the shaman Sirin in his heroic fight against demons, whom he drives away to provide succour for his people. Although just an ordinary human being, he is deified in the tale, with an ability to fly in the sky. In trance, his soul could leave his body and roam about freely in the universe in search of good deities and bad deities and thus bring bliss to his people as their patron god.

The widespread Ewenki tale “Origin of the Shaman Tambourine” sheds still further light on northern shamans. Before the appearance of human beings on this earth, there was another world before our own. The other earth was created by Tengri (heaven) and was tiny at the beginning, with low hills, narrow rivers, and trickling streams. Later, its rivers became broad, their torrents surging. Still later – no one knew how many years later – there came into being many a shaman troupe. The shamans of one troupe would sit on huge tambourines with leather hides on both sides and ride on clouds and mists to dispel evil spirits and bring bliss to the people. There was also a group of lamas, and the two groups strove for dominance. At first, the shamans took the upper hand, but soon after, the lamas braced themselves and began winning. The shamans kept fighting and wouldn’t yield their ground, but the lamas cast their musical instruments called *aosoula* at the shamans. They landed squarely on the tambourines on which the shamans sat

and split them in half. Since then, shamans began to use tambourines with only one side covered with hide, which caused them to give out an even greater sound that would startle heaven and earth alike. This gave more power to the shamans and in the end allowed them to defeat the lamas.

A similar myth of the Daur, “Shaman Sokedai and the Lama,” tells of a man named Gahuqia who had two powerful bronze mirrors acquired from Kulun (Mongolia). The bigger one was called *aerkan tori* (mirror worn on the back) and the smaller one *niker tori* (chest mirror). When Gahuqia died, the two *tori* fell into the hands of the shaman Sokedai. Every time he went out for a séance, driving people in his ox cart, the chest mirror would return home ahead of him. When his family saw it rolling back, they knew that Sokedai would follow soon after. There was also a lama living in a small temple who was said to have strong *mana* (magic). He couldn’t believe that a mirror could have such power, so he bought it from the shaman Sokedai for one silver ingot. He thought the mirror must be possessed by an evil spirit and decided to expel it by putting the mirror in a three-layered cloth bag. He sat up all night chanting prayers. Two days and nights passed, and he was exhausted. He felt the bag and found the mirror was still inside. When night approached, he fell asleep with the bag as his pillow, but when he woke up in the morning, the mirror was nowhere to be found. Later, he found that it had rolled out of the bag and caught up with its former master, the shaman Sokedai. Sokedai had been to Qiqihar, where he bought a lot of things with the silver ingot that the lama had paid him with. When he came to the Khingan Range, he met the lama and showed him the mirror. The lama had to admit his defeat and expressed his admiration for Sokedai.

### ***Popularity of shaman mythic legends***

Shaman mythic legends are popular for various reasons:

- 1 The influence of shamanism is deeply rooted among northern people, and out of piety, they have never ceased to create new oral versions or episodes of shaman myths. As handed down since the Liao and Jin dynasties (907–1234), the myths became greatly enriched. The foregoing tales celebrate northern shamans’ *mana*, wisdom, and altruism while embodying shaman doctrines at a stage when they had not yet been formalized.
- 2 Tribal shamans are the rare cultural prodigies of their people. They excel in many areas – healing, livelihood production, experience, cultural knowledge, and artistic taste – and people admire them as teachers of culture, virtue, religious belief, life, and human aspirations. Most shaman tales thus sing highly of their prowess, sublime character, and unreserved devotion in fights against enemies. Shamans are the personified icons of the spirit and culture of their tribe, and the praise that tribespeople bestow on them is a manifestation of tribal cohesion and esteem that comes from the heart. Through the legendary tales, people come to learn valour and wisdom.

- 3 Historical reasons also account for the popularity of shaman tales. Since the beginning of the Qing dynasty in 1644, the shamanist beliefs that had been handed down for hundreds of generations suffered a blow from the large-scale incursion of Tibetan Lamaism into the northeastern areas of China. This was for two reasons: on the one hand, the creeds of Tibetan Buddhism are more flexible, and on the other, they received official support from the Qing court. Still, however, because shamanism had been embedded in northern peoples' way of life for so many centuries, its belief system had a solid foothold and was well preserved in many areas and among many ethnic groups. There was thus a clash between the two religions, which is reflected in many epics and tales. Most of the stories denounce Lamaism as a form of aggression and eulogize shamans and their prowess.

Shaman myths and tales provide important research material not only for understanding northern peoples' views of shamans and their roles in society but also for the study of the history of religion in the area and people's age-old shamanic cultures in general. The oral traditions, though, bolstered the spread of shamanism in the region. The oral transmission of *Umesben Mama* includes many descriptive and narrative details of primitive religious practices at a time when creeds had not yet been formulated. It is a source of the many quasi-creeds, canons, and oracles that had been established, handed down, enriched, and polished in shaman chants over centuries. This book would have far from sufficient research data if we had based our studies merely on the oracles and handwritten records that we had collected, because most of these documents offer just ritual guidelines and abstract accounts. Shamans' living narratives add vivid details and descriptive background. The study of individual myths is thus indispensable for an integral view of peoples' religious beliefs and practices in terms of the complex relationships between their gods and the truths sketched in creedal summaries. *Umesben Mama* gives detailed accounts of various ritual procedures, taboos, and customs, along with specific rules for the selection and offering of sacrificial animals. *Sirin Amban Mafa* offers important clues to understanding shamans' powers and skills and their characteristic practices. Such unique features and their symbolic significance constitute an integral part of northern shamanism. In today's world, where shamanism is almost dying out, acquainting ourselves with such stories can draw us into the milieu where it was a dominant spiritual force and help us have a rational understanding of its religious beliefs.

## 6.2 Scholarly perspectives on shamans

Since the mid 20th century, modern Chinese scholars, like those of other countries, have paid attention to shamanic "spirituality," referring to it as "the shamanic tendency" (Zhu Di 1988:344) or, in my terms, "shamanic nature" and "shamanic wisdom or intelligence" (Fu Yuguang 2000:64). Like the bards of folk myths, scholars stress shamans' extraordinary capabilities, but how are they

extraordinary? Undeniably, shamans have practices that fit the spirituality of polytheistic worship, believed dealings with spirits, and the understanding of the operational laws of spirits and the movements of *qi* that comprise the themes of the traditional shamanism. On the basis of actual facts, however, it is hard for shamans to score high on spiritual achievements that have their origin only in their so-called divine power, the sacred mythic halo that surrounds them. It is not possible to give clear answers to who they are and what they do on the basis of a kind of confused mythic “theology.”

Eliade defined shamans in his famous statement in *Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* as people who can “leave the body to enter the supernatural world to search for answers” (Eliade 1974). He has pointed to ecstatic spirit journeys and necromancy as a standard to judge whether a shaman is true or false. However, on the basis of years of field surveys on the peoples of northern China, studies of shamans’ biographies and historical documents, and interviews with the elderly and with old and new shamans, we can safely say that no northern Chinese shaman really performs practices that accord with Eliade’s theories. While performing sacrificial rites for clan ancestors and nature deities, northern shamans remain conscious and sober-minded. With eyes closed, they shake and look into their subconscious mind, but they do so while listening attentively to the words of their assistant *zaili*. As an old saying goes, “shamans play 30% of the role, *zaili* 70%.” Drawn on and guided by the *zaili*, shamans look entranced and roll around on the ground in what are called *miliu*, but they maintain a sense of awareness of their surroundings and are careful not to bump into things.

Eliade describes such a trance as “ecstasy,” which can be thought to be a proper term, but the Chinese translation, “*hunmi*” 昏迷 (coma), is not accurate. According to pathological science, a coma is a state of deep unconsciousness resulting from a serious disease. Different from a mere faint, it involves a more or less lengthy loss of consciousness and physiological reflexes. Patients may go into a coma before death, but expressions like the “spirit leaving body” cannot accurately identify a shaman’s state of trance or the shamanic tendency or spiritual nature. Such an expression reflects what one scholar refers to as the kind of “morbid psychology” that “is the prerequisite of all religion” (Revunenkovna 1989).

How can we understand the ritual trance state of a northern shaman? Under the influence of highly concentrated, tense psychological activity bolstered by the traditional religious atmosphere and fanatical cheers and chants of the clan, shamans surely enter a special mental state that can be physically measured in terms of mental waves and field. But northern shamans do not actually lose consciousness, and their spirit certainly does not leave their body. Rather, they remain in control of the emotional vortex of the rite. In a large-scale ritual, their seeming trance state is actually a well-designed performance. In entering that state, their own human subjective activity, not divine power, is what is mainly at work.

At base, shamanic spirituality is practical and functional, and shamanic trance is an ancient technique of personal simulation for summoning and dispatching believed spirits, objectifying their presence, and proclaiming their oracles. Among

different religions, trance behaviour takes different mystic forms, but shamanic trance has its distinctive features. It is the means that harnesses and concentrates the power of the clan on the mysterious atmosphere of primitive ritual worship. It is not, however, mainly a matter of divine, supernatural influence. The shamans need to make painstaking efforts to acquire the special artistic skills needed to give full play to the dramatic effect of trance in a ritual performance, and they need to hone their mental perceptivity so as to aid their clan in addressing practical situations that arise over the course of daily life.

Exploring shamanic spirituality and the skills and techniques of shamans is quite complex. Such research can be pursued only by the joint efforts of scholars from different academic backgrounds – ethnography, folk religion, psychology, neurology, and cultural sociology. Key to such research is grasping the world of shamans' primitive psychology. Over many years, I have come to understand northern shamans' spiritual world through surveys of a dozen famous shamans of various ethnic groups, including Zhao Xingya, Yang Shichang, Shi Qingshan, and others. Shamans must believe in the deities, but they must be able to bring their belief to concrete life through their own human efforts and artistry. In speaking of "shamanic nature" and "shamanic wisdom or intelligence," I thus stress the role of shamans' sensitive perceptivity and artistic expertise, as opposed to so-called supernatural or spiritual forces. They have a sincere desire to serve their clan, which is how they win a sound reputation. They must have exceptional talents, a good voice, and a strong body, and they must be dedicated and dauntless in embracing difficulties and making the painstaking efforts required to mask the skills needed to serve the clan. Their "spirituality" comes from diligence and hard work.

Manchu shamans have given explanations of what is involved. In a *Jao'uyun* training class for shaman initiates, a sixty-seven-year-old shaman named Zang Hala once said,

Anyone who wants to be a shaman must study the *qi* (vital force) of all creatures, imitate the innate potential of all things, gather to himself the force of all things, and continue to study and practice what they learn. Then the gods will truly appear, and he will possess divine power.

Another aged shaman, Wu Botong, said, "In ancient times, divinity indicated limitless scope. You can become godlike if you understand all people's thinking, longing, imaginings and expectations." Similarly, the famous shaman Yisong'a of the Fuca Clan said,

Divinity means capability. A godlike shaman knows the properties of herbs, the nature of beasts, flight characteristics of birds, swimming ability of fish, and movements of mountains, rivers, the stars and the moon. He comes to have this knowledge by imitating hard-working bees and ants. A shaman who knows and understands nothing and does nothing is incapable and unqualified.

(Fu Yuguang 2000:83)



Most northern shamans are contemplative, solitary, and taciturn but sometimes vacillating. They often fret over something for a long time. They like planning things in accordance with their perceptions, but they tend to be introverted and melancholic. An old saying claims that shamans “get crazy after a lengthy period of meditation” and just “look blank.” This can be the external reflection of intense concentration when cerebral cortical neurons experience acute changes and when intense psychological activity movement leads to quick understanding. The unpublished manuscript *Explorations on Manchu Trance (Manzhou tiaoshen fawei)* says that when in trance, “shamans look crazy, lunatic, insane and spellbound, but they are actually the state of concentration” (Wu Jixian and Cheng Lianyuan 1930–1940). Shamans’ constant, long-term efforts to quickly form concise, well-integrated images and conclusions no doubt excites the cells and neural waves of the brain. They can then seem like lunatics, but they have a powerful sense of perception, a detailed understanding of things, and quick mental responses. In both animals and humans, intense sensitivity and quick response are sometimes needed for survival, and a shaman’s sense of perception can be ten times more sensitive than that of ordinary people. Their social position in the clan makes it necessary for them to constantly work at cultivating that valuable sense.

In clan rituals, shamans are transformed in a sacred trance frenzy the moment they put on their costume and hear the beat of the drum. Drawing on traditional chant and dance, they then draw their fellow clanspeople out of their daily perceptions of reality into a communal mystic realm in the name of the gods. They declare in the gods’ name that pressing difficulties will be solved, thus serving the practical function of dispelling people’s worries, sadness, and perplexity and unifying the scattered thoughts of all present into one voice.

### 6.3 Northern shamans’ sensitive perception

As the transmitters of clan culture, shamans must devote themselves to honing their skills in sensitive perception and becoming attuned to the *qi* of things in order to be trustworthy communicators. It is impossible to win the trust and support of the clan through false words and deeds or illusory myths. The clan has strict expectations of them. In the face of disease and disasters, it expects them to take well-thought-out and effective measures to turn calamities into blessings. True shamans thus attach much importance to self-discipline and self-cultivation. The unpublished *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan* exhorts shamans as follows: “Cultivate *qi* and don’t be lazy in the mornings and evenings. Lead a simple life, preserve moral integrity and control your sensual passions. Be fair, square and diligent. Then your *qi* will be smooth and enduring.” The *Records* goes on to say, “Be dedicated and discard distracting thoughts. Restrain from sexual activity that interferes with *qi*.” According to *Records of Fucha Clan Rituals (Fucha hala lixu tiaoshenglu)*, shamans should study hard to improve their sensitive perceptivity. They must conduct detailed analysis, work diligently, pursue a high standard

of integrity, and discover the essential points of complex phenomena (Fu Xilu 1930c). Shamans should thus be erudite, diligent, quick, and sensitive.

Northern shamans inherit a rich hoard of practical observations from generations of shamans skilled in medical treatment and disaster prevention, but their skills require continuous improvement by the careful observation of tested water sources, the animals of the area, local living conditions, and the overall natural surroundings. As saintly public sages, they need a high level of awareness in such matters to be able to divine matters properly and thus assist the clan chieftain in preparing and implementing policies related to economic production, social life, disaster prevention, and invasion by foreign forces. The chief can then implement food gathering, hunting, migration, and other matters in a coherent manner in line with the shaman's observations. A sensitivity to unusual phenomena and unforeseen dangers are the special responsibility of shamans, as well as talents in careful planning, making a quick response to a situation, dealing safely with danger in an emergency.

A survey of records about northeastern Chinese shamans shows that they have secrets formed over the centuries in doing so. Manchu shamans learn techniques passed down orally in closed groups of clan shamans. For the enhancement of their mental functions, they are trained in the use of herbal drugs, *qi* exercise, special methods of sleep, and hanging upside down. Such methods help them keep energetic and allow their brains to adapt to frequent lengthy use, so that they can habitually perform supernormal activities of fast breathing, strong memory, and quick recall. Their experience leads them to realize that human consciousness depends primarily on eye perception. So they practise round-the-clock visual observation and discernment of different phenomena in harsh natural conditions to improve their visual acuity. Shamans also regard it as crucial to train a strong, systematic, and orderly memory to allow them to know a position without presently seeing it, a sound without hearing it, a taste without smelling it, and a shape without touching it.

The Manchu text *Sacrifice for the Great Gods* (*dashenji*) emphasizes the importance of frequent, careful *baicabi* (Manchu for "observation");<sup>1</sup> and chants of northern peoples like the Oroqen, Dauer and Ewenki poetically express shaman observations that are helpful for clan livelihood. In "Spring Sacrifice," Oroqen shamans sing of how to locate prey:

*You can hunt deer on the cliffs,  
You can capture moose in the dense forest,  
You can prey on roe deer in the birch forest,  
You can get wild boar on the hillside,  
You can encounter black bear in the forest  
You can catch sable in the stone forest,  
You can get lynx in the birch forest,  
You can seize otter.*

(Meng Xiuchun 1989:16)

The song speaks of “divine instruction,” but shamans’ knowledge of such matters is not a matter of wisdom granted by a god but the results of the shaman’s experiences of hunting.

In “Song of Ominan,” my friend and teacher Daur shaman Yang Wensheng (杨文生) sensitively expresses his observations and appreciation of the local birds:

*In the gently shaking branches  
Lies the cuckoo’s nest;  
In the swinging branches  
Lies the raven’s nest;  
In new branches  
Lies the pigeon’s nest;  
In the thick trunks of two trees  
Lies the pheasant’s nest.*  
(Mandurtu 1999)

This ritual song as a whole praises the gods of the grasslands. It tells us that the great heaven and earth endow us with fertile land and herds; we should love and protect all mountains and rivers; and we will then lead a better life and be healthy and have good fortune.

As sung by the famous Ewenki shamaness Niura from the renowned reindeer tribe of Auluguya and the shamaness Oyonhua of the flourishing grasslands of Old Barag Banner near Hailar, “Song in Search of Deer” guides young women on how to look for a lost reindeer:

*Aonuo, Aonuo –  
You girls looking for the reindeer, run fast.  
Go to the ridge gap by the waterside,  
Go to the foot of the mountain by the riverside . . .*

On a more occult level, in the “Song to Call Souls”, Niura poetically summons lost souls:

*Return to your parents’ arms quickly.  
Your father has a white horse with a colorful-nose for you,  
A ram-horn saddle,  
A white silver stirrup.  
Your mother has prepared a cow-leather cradle strap,  
And bedding of marten fur.  
Your white-haired mother  
Has breasts like bags,  
Full of milk and thick foremilk . . .*

The secret methods that shamans use to nurture their perceptive observation are called “Shamanic Scripture” (*Samanjing*), *darani*, and *sheben*. The contents

and forms of Manchu shamanism have undergone significant changes after being standardized in the early Qing dynasty. The shamanic chants of family rituals are seldom heard, and the term “shamanic scripture” is seldom mentioned. However, *Supplement to Ancient Customs of Aihui* (*Aihui zufeng yishi*) explains that “*sheben* means ‘consciousness’ in Manchu, the source of all wisdom.” The *Supplement* includes axioms that require that shamans devote themselves to field surveys and the careful observation of actual conditions in order to contribute to the prosperity of the clan. For example, “Unpreparedness spells failure, but you can address difficulties when you have consciousness and perceptivity” (Fu Xilu 1930a). If a shaman wants to be perceptive, they must have consciousness in the sense of a sensitivity that can lead to understanding and knowledge. The shaman can then respond and take action to deal with problems, and thus, the whole clan will prosper. As *Ritual Records of the Wu Clan* states,

Observation should be adequate, including reflection along with watching, of which the former plays the primary role, the latter secondary. Remembered observations should include review and analysis, of which the former is primary, the latter secondary. Observation should include contrasting phases of searching and selection, of which the former is primary, the latter secondary. A person who just observes is commonplace, but one who observes in a detailed way is outstanding. A person who observes without examination is like a drifting cloud, but one who observes in a detailed manner can quickly answer all questions. A person who observes and examines can acquire endless knowledge.

(Wu Jixian 1930)

Repeated observation undertaken with sensitive perception can lead to the discovery of profound insights into human experience, but it requires painstaking exploration. One needs to walk farther, work harder, and think more. Mere visual observation is not enough. It must be conducted in an all-round manner, and after observation, one needs to review what one has observed and find its essence through comparison.

On the whole, *sheben* focuses on speculation and deduction on the basis of the mastery of extensive knowledge of local phenomena in the world at large. Shamans can then grasp the truth of a situation and make constructive suggestions after excluding all contrary possibilities. Sound divination recognizes that all things have two sides and confirms one side after careful consideration and detailed probing. So competent shamans conduct endless analysis.

The study of shamans’ down-to-earth practices of sensitive perception offer a creative path for shamanistic research both in China and abroad, research that breaks out of a long-time scholarly fixation on shamanic “spirituality” and trance contact with spirit worlds and recovers an appreciation of shamans’ original human function in clan society. Their sensitive perceptivity to ordinary matters is the fundamental reason why northern shamans have been trusted by their clans for generations. Scholarly analyses of this aspect of shamans’ skills can give better

understandings of shamanism as a respectable phenomenon and of the human toil behind the shaman's sacred halo. All religions deal with an external power that is believed to play a role in peoples' daily lives, but that power is in reality a reflection of peoples' minds as it takes the form of superhuman power. Pristine shamanism involves no element of cheating people with the pretence at being divine.

Finally, shamanic culture is wide ranging. As many scholars have pointed out, it has left us an enduring trove of colourful cultural treasures that are full of deep symbolic significance but that are sometimes hard for people today to understand – such as the bone calendar and sacred shaman's cape of animal bones discovered years ago in Heilongjiang and the Manchu shamanic puppets collected in Hunchun, Jilin Province. Hopefully this study can help uncover some of the secrets of the northern shamanic cultural heritage and explain some of the mystery of shamanism.

## Note

- 1 The lexical variants of *baicabi* suggest subtle differences in meaning: *baicale* means “observing”; *baicafei* “observing and saying”; *baicaha* “observed”; *baicadoumubi* “observing together”; *baicajimubi* “go to observe”; *baicaneibi* “in the face of observation”; and *baicalaku* “no observing.” Other Manchu terms also express various aspects of observation: *kimcime* means “detailed survey”; *sibkime* “in-depth questioning”; and *amcame* “investigation.”

# Bibliography

- Archaeological Editorial Committee of Northeast China 东北考古编委会 1982. “*Yanji jingugumu zangbao* 延吉金谷古墓葬报 [Report on Jingu Tombs in Yanji].” *Dongbei kaogu yu lishi* 东北考古与历史 [Archaeology and History in Northeast China]. Vol. 1. Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House 文物出版社.
- Cao Yanjie 曹廷杰 1934. *Xiboliyadongpian jiyao* 西伯利亚东偏纪要 [Records of Eastern Siberia]. Shengyang: Liaohai Book Press 辽海书社.
- Chimudorji 齐木道吉 1981. *Neimenggu wenxue jianshi* 内蒙古文学简史 [Brief History of Inner Mongolian Literature]. Hohhot: Inner Mongolian People's Publishing House 内蒙古人民出版社.
- Darwin, Charles 1983. *Renlei de youlai* 人类的由来 [The Descent of Man]. Beijing: Commercial Press 商务印书馆.
- Derevyanko, E. I. 1982. “*Mohe shiwei jiqi wenhua* 靺鞨室韦及其文化 [Mohe-Shiwei and Their Cultures].” Trans. Lin Shushan 林树山. *Heilongjiang wenwu congkan* 黑龙江文物丛刊 [Heilongjiang Cultural Relics]. Vol. 3. Harbin: Heilongjiang Publishing Administration 黑龙江省出版局.
- E Lewen 鄂乐文 1989. “*Liuxia minzu de yifen guibao* 留下民族的一份瑰宝 [Preserving the Ethnic Treasures].” *Dawo'erzu bao* 达斡尔人报 [Daur Daily]. 4th Issue.
- Eliade, Mircea 1974. “*Daying baike quanshu samanjiao citiao* 大英百科全书萨满教辞条 [Encyclopadia Britannica: Entry of Shamanism].” 15th ed. Trans. Zhou Guoli 周国黎 and Cui Zuke 崔祖珂. In *Shijie zongjiao wenhua* 世界宗教文化 [The Religious Cultures in the World]. Beijing: Institute for World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中国社会科学院世界宗教研究所.
- Folk Literature Forum 民间文学论坛 1989. “*Elunchun saman wenhua tiaocha* 鄂伦春萨满文化调查 [Survey of Oroqen Shamanism].” Vol. 3. Beijing: China Folk Literature and Art Association 中国民间文艺研究会.
- Fu Xilu 富希陆 1930a. *Aihui zuxun shiyi* 瑗瑄祖训遗拾 [Supplement to Ancient Customs of Aihui]. Unpublished Manchu Manuscript.
- 1930b. *Xiangsi bihuilu* 乡祀笔汇录 [Collection of Local Sacrificial Rituals]. Unpublished Manchu Manuscript.
- 1930c. *Fucha hala lixu tiaoshen lu* 富察哈拉礼序跳神录 [Ritual Schedules of the Fuca Clan]. Unpublished Manchu Manuscript.
- Fu Yinren 傅英仁 1985. *Manzu shenhua zhuanhuo xuanji* 满族神话传说选集 [A Collection of Manchu Myths and Legends]. Harbin: Northern Literature and Art Publishing House 北方文艺出版社.
- Fu Yuguang 富育光 2000. *Samanlun* 萨满论 [On Shamans]. Shengyang: Liaoning People's Publishing House 辽宁人民出版社.

- 2007. *Donghai chen yuan lu* 东海沉冤录 [Records of Grievances of the East Sea]. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House 吉林人民出版社.
- and Meng Huiying 孟慧英 1982. "Manzu saman shen yu qianxi 满族萨满神谕浅析 [Manchu Inspired Shamanic Utterances]." *Beifang minzu* 北方民族 [The Northern Peoples]. Changchun: Jilin Institute of Ethnology 吉林民族研究所.
- and Lu Liankun 鲁连坤 2007. *Wubuxiben mama* 乌布西奔妈妈 [Umesiben Mama]. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House 吉林人民出版社.
- Guo Yanshun 郭燕顺 and Sun Yunlai 孙运来 1983. *Qingshilu* 清实录 [Veritable Records of the Qing]. Changchun: Jilin Academy of Social Sciences 吉林省社会科学院.
- Hao Sumin 郝苏民 and Xue Shoubang 薛守邦 et al. 1984. *Buliyate menggu minjian gushiji* 布里亚特蒙古民间故事集 [Buryat-Mongol Folktales]. Beijing: Chinese Folk Literature and Art Publishing House 中国民间文艺出版社.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 1963. *Lishi zhexue jiangyanlu* 历史哲学讲演录 [Lectures on the History of Philosophy]. Beijing: Commercial Press 商务印书馆.
- Hu Pu'an 胡朴安 1986. *Zhonghua quanguo fengsuzhi* 中华全国风俗志 [Social Life and Customs in China]. Shijiazhuang: Hebei People's Publishing House 河北人民出版社.
- Inner Mongolia Editorial Committee 内蒙古自治区编委会 1986a. *Ewenkezu shehui lishi tiaocha baogao* 鄂温克族社会历史调查报告 [Social-Historical Investigation on the Evenki]. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House 内蒙古人民出版社.
- 1986b. *Dawo'erzu shehui lishi tiaocha baogao* 达斡尔族社会历史调查报告 [Socialhistorical Investigation on the Daur]. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House 内蒙古人民出版社.
- 1986c. *Elunchuzu shehui lishi tiaocha baogao* 鄂伦春族社会历史调查报告 [Social-Historical Investigation on the Oroqen]. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House 内蒙古人民出版社.
- Jiang Peng 姜鹏 1979. *Jilin anturen huashi yanjiu* 吉林安图人化石研究 [Fossil Studies on the Antu in Jilin]. Changchun: Jilin Historical Relics Group 吉林文物工作队出版.
- Lin Shushan 林树山 1984. "Sulian xuezhe lun tonggusi manyu minzu qiyuan 苏联学者论通古斯满语民族起源 [Soviet Scholars on the Origin of Tungusic Manchu Peoples]." *Heilongjiang wenwu congkan* 黑龙江文物丛刊 [Heilongjiang Cultural Relics Series]. Harbin: Heilongjiang Cultural Relics Publishing Office 黑龙江文物出版室.
- Longjiang Annals Editorial Committee 1991. *Longjiang xianzhi* 龙江县志 [Longjiang Annals]. Beijing: Chinese City Press 中国城市出版社.
- Mandurtu 满都尔图 1999. *Zhongguo geminzu yuanshi zongjiao ziliao jicheng dawo'erjuan* 中国各民族原始宗教资料集成·达斡尔卷 [Compendium of Original Religious Materials of the Ethnic Peoples of China: Daur]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press 中国社会科学出版社.
- Mao Dun 茅盾 1981. *Shenhua yanjiu* 神话研究 [Mythic Studies]. Tianjing: Baihua Literature and Art Press 百花文艺出版社.
- Meng Shuzhen 孟淑珍 1986. "Mosukun de youlai 摩苏昆的由来 [The Origins of Mosukun]." *Heilongjiang minjian wenxue* 黑龙江民间文学 [Heilongjiang Folk Literature]. Beijing: China Folk Literature and Art Association 中国民间文艺研究会.
- Meng Xiuchun 孟秀春 1989. *Shanlingshang de elunchunren* 山岭上的鄂伦春人 [Oroqen People on the Mountain]. Harbin: Harbin People's Publishing House 哈尔滨人民出社.
- Morigendi 莫日根迪 1981. "Dawo'erzu zhi zongjiao xinyang 达斡尔族之宗教信仰 [Daur Religious Beliefs]." *Neimenggu shehui kexue* 内蒙古社会科学 [Inner Mongolia Social Sciences] Vol. 3. Hohhot: Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences 内蒙古自治区社会科学院.



- Ning'an Folk Literature Editorial Committee 宁安县民间文学集成编委会 1987. *Ning'an minjian gushi jicheng* 宁安民间故事集成 [Collections of Folktales in Ning'an]. Printed by Editorial Committee of Ning'an Folk Literature.
- Plekhanov, Georgi 1974. *Puliehannuofu zhexue zhuzuo xuanji* 普列汉诺夫哲学著作选集 [Selected Philosophical Works of Plekhanov]. Beijing: Joint Publishig Company 三联书店.
- Ren Jiyu 任继愈 1998. *Zongjiao cidian* 宗教辞典 [Dictionary of Religion]. Shanghai: Shanghai Dictionary Publishing House 海辞书出版社.
- Revunenkov, E. B. 1989. "Lun saman qiren 论萨满其人 [On Shaman]." Trans Zheng Tianxing 郑天星. *Beifang minzu* 北方民族 [The Northern Peoples]. Vol. 1. Changshun: Jilin Institute of Ethnology 吉林民族研究所.
- Sima Qian 司马迁 (Han Dynasty) 1998. *Shiji* 史记 [Records of the Grand Historian]. Lanzhou: Gansu Ethnic Publishing House 甘肃民族出版社.
- Stiller 1980. *Makesi zhuyi yiqian de deguo weiwuzhuyishi luncong* 马克思主义以前的德国唯物主义史论丛 [On German Materialism Before Marxism]. Beijing: Commercial Press 商务印书馆.
- Sun Jinyi 孙进己 1989. *Dongfang minzu yuanliu* 东方民族源流 [Origins of Northeastern Peoples]. Harbin: Harbin People's Publishing House 哈尔滨人民出版社.
- Torii Ryuzo 鸟居龙藏 1926. *Dongbeiya soufangji* 东北亚洲搜访记 [Investigations on Northeast Asia]. Trans. Tang Erhe 汤尔和. Beijing: Commercial Press 商务印书馆.
- Wei Yuan 魏源 (Qing dynasty) 1984. *Shengwuji* 圣武记 [Military History of the Qing Dynasty]. Vol. 1. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.
- Wu Baocai 吴宝财 1937. *Heilongjiang Aihui youji* 黑龙江瑷琿俗记 [Aihui Folk Records in Heilongjiang]. Unpublished Manuscript.
- Wu Jixian 吴纪贤 1930. *Wushi wosheku jipu* 吴氏我射库祭谱 [Ritual Records of the Wu Clan]. Unpublished Manchu Manuscript.
- and Cheng Lianyuan 程连远 1930–1940. *Manzhou tiaoshen fawei* 满洲跳神发微 [Explorations on Manchu Trance]. Unpublished Manchu Manuscript.
- Zhu Di 朱狄 1988. *Yuanshi wenhu yanjiu* 原始文化研究 [A Study of Primordial Cultures]. Shanghai: Joint Publishig Company 上海三联出版社.
- Zhu Tianshun 朱天顺 1982. *Zhongguo gudai zongjiao chutan* 中国古代宗教初探 [Preliminary Investigations on Ancient Chinese Religion]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House 上海人民出版社.

# Index

- abagaridai* (bear mask) 119  
Abka Enduri vii, 63, 82, 83, 97, 98  
Abka Hehe vii, 13, 28, 52, 63, 65, 69,  
70–82, 84–90, 154  
Acheng 44  
Adamu Enduri 113  
*aerkan tori* (mirror worn on the back) 156  
*Aihui Annals* (*Aihui xianzhi*) 147n4  
Aihui vi, 7, 11, 19, 23, 31, 49, 58, 61, 66,  
67, 98, 110, 144, 147n4, 163, 155  
*Aihui, Supplement to Ancient Customs of*  
(*Aihui zufeng yishi*) 7, 11, 19, 23, 163  
Aisin Gioro 100, 101, 104, 105  
Ajiouru 141  
Akamatsu Chijyo 141  
Akiba Takashi 116, 141  
*alin* (mountain) 85–88  
Amalege (Goddess of the North) 82  
*amba urgun* (great fortune) 25  
*amban mafa* (venerable old shaman) 46, 66  
Ambanha 55  
Anchagan 150  
Antu County 60  
Ao Chengmei 113  
Aolun 58, 112  
Aoluwen (Mother Goddess) 58  
Aomu Mama (East Sea Goddess) 47, 52  
*aosoula* (a musical instrument) 155  
Aoyazun (Creation Goddess) 57, 58, 63  
Asalandi 141  
Ashina 93  
Auluguya 162  
Avalokiteśvara 53  
Ayuele Bukan 45  
  
*Bai Naca* 113  
Baledu Bayan 155  
Banaji Emu (Earth Mother) 80, 82, 88,  
106  
Banamu Hehe (Goddess of the Earth)  
70–76, 78, 81, 82, 87–89  
Baoma (God of Healing) 141  
Baomule 143  
Barag 118, 162  
Barag Banner 162  
Bate Entu 150  
*baturu* (hero) 29, 30, 34, 113  
Bayara 25, 26  
*beideng* ritual (night ritual with lights out)  
8, 58, 112  
*Beihu, Records of* (*Beihulu*) 11  
*beile* (lord, prince, chief) 101  
*Beiping Shamanism* (*Beiping de*  
*samanjiao*) 116  
Bertala Mukūn 112  
*bira* (river) 82, 96, 97, 141, 150–152, 154  
Biya Bukan (Moon Deity) 45  
Blind Zhao 31  
*Boerkanei Mergen* 45  
Boli (Khabarovsk) 41  
Bolugen Baksi 62  
Boluoha (ancestral deity) 140  
*boo* (shaman) 5  
Boode Yinmu 68  
Boodein Emu 68, 69, 87  
*Boodein Emu, Story of* (*Baodeyin emu de*  
*gushi*) 67  
Bowo Bukan (Supreme Deity of  
Mountains and Forests) 45  
*boxokv* (Qing position in charge of  
documents) 149  
Bukui (Qiqihar) 49  
Butha 9  
*Butiha Mergen* 45  
Buyeo (Fuyu) 94, 101  
  
Cao Yanjie 147n1  
Ceku Mama 75

- Changbai Mountain 1, 88, 89, 100, 101, 104, 105, 114n3  
*Changes, Book of (Yijing)* 10, 11, 35  
 Chaoyang 96  
*Characters, Interpretation of (Shuowen jiezi)* 10  
 Che Jingzhen 61  
 Chemukenhan 150  
 Cheng Lianyuan 160  
 Chimudorji 99  
*China and Chinese–Tartary, Description of the Empire of (Zhonghua diguo quan zhi)* 40  
*Chinese Studio, Strange Stories from a (Liaozhai zhiyi)* 53  
 Chongzhen 4  
*coco* (male genital) 71  
*Conquering Manggus, Story of (Xiangfu manggusi de gushi)* 67  
 Cooha Janyin 114n3
- Dabarken 8  
 Darwin, Charles 65, 121, 124  
*dashengding* (hunters, etc. offering their products to the Qing Court) 15  
*Daur Folk Stories (Dawo'erzu minjiangushi)* 113  
 Dawujiazi 53, 66, 98  
*daye* (chieftain) 96  
 Dehua Village 110  
 Delige (Goddess of the East) 82  
 Derevyanko, E. I. 42  
*Descent of Guan Mafa to Save the Jurchen (Guanmafa xianling jiu zhushen)* 64n4  
 Deshun 49  
 Diaoluo Hala 21  
 Dirqia Bukan (Oroqen Sun Deity) 45  
*Documents, Book of (Shujing)* 10  
*dodokv* (penis) 44  
 Dolong Gege 113  
 Donghai Weji 29, 47, 52, 61, 113, 118, 119, 136, 145  
 Donghu 42  
 Dongning 44, 149  
 Du Halde, Jean–Baptiste 40  
 Dūkahū 73, 74, 111  
 Dulunba (Goddess of the Center) 82  
*Duosang Mongol History (Duosang menggushi)* 116  
 Durbet 99
- ELewen 51  
 Eagle God Kori 45  
 Earth Goddess 70, 81
- East Sea Goddess 47, 52  
 Eastern Han 53  
*ecihe* (idol) 136, 145  
 Egudu 112  
*ejen* (lord) 32, 96, 152  
*ejenda* (lord) 79  
 Ekuqiaoji Fertility Deities 141  
*emu* (mother) 67–69, 80, 82, 87, 88, 106, 154  
*Endure, Tales of (Enduri de chuanshuo)* 113  
 Enduri Sengge 114n3  
 Enggulen 100  
 “Ewenki Roots in Their Sierranju Dwellings” (*Ewenkeren de genzi zai zuoluo zili*) 46
- fayangga* (soul) 46  
 Feiyio Gaxan 25  
 Fekulen 100, 101, 104  
 Fire Goddess Tumu 75  
 Fire Rite 28, 33  
*fiyelen* (epic section) 69, 84, 85, 87, 89, 91  
 floating soul (*fuhun*) vii, 9, 30–32, 46, 109  
*fobomi* (lyric chants) 09  
*fodo* (willow) 145  
 Fodo Mama (Goddess of Fertility and Protector of Children) 145  
*fokutala* (fern) 82  
 Fu Decai 66  
 Fu Qiye 57  
 Fu Xilu vi, 7, 16, 24, 32, 53, 54, 64n2, 66, 67, 69, 84, 85, 87, 98, 105, 123, 126, 161, 163  
 Fu Yingren 44, 113  
 Fu Yongli 50  
 Fu Yuguang i, ii, iii, iv, vi, 47, 48, 157, 159  
*Fuca Clan, Ritual Schedules of the (Fuchahala lixu tiaoshenlu)* 54, 57, 64n2  
 Fuca Hala 21, 66, 97  
 Fuhe Xengge (Creation Spirit) 59  
*funcen uju* (ritual beginning) 54  
 Futejin (Goddess of Power) 80  
 Fuxi 10
- gaha* (crow) 74  
*gahei* (bird) 140  
 Gahuqia 156  
*galaha* (small ankle or knee bones used in a game) 19, 21, 22, 28, 144  
*galoo* (wild goose) 74  
 Gao Qishan 25  
 Gasha (bird) 55

- gashan* (tribe) 19, 47, 89, 132, 149, 150, 151  
 Geludun (Goddess of Creation) 55–58  
*Genghis Khan, Memorial of (Chengjisihan jidian)* 113  
*Gepaqian, Hero (Yingxiong Gepaqian)* 45  
*geriyi tuoruo* (lookout pillar) 119  
*ghawusha* (owl) 74  
 Goguryeo 94, 102, 104  
*Goldi Tribe on the Lower Sungari River (Songhuajiang xiayou de hezhezu)* 3  
*Goldi, The (Guo'ereren)* 116  
 Gongsun 115  
*Grand Historian, Critique of Records of the (Gushikao)* 10  
*Grand Historian, Records of the (Shiji)* 10, 115  
*Great Yu Controlling the Waters (Dayu zhishui)* 54  
*Grievances of the East Sea, Records of (Donghai chenyuanlu)* 46, 52, 64n3  
*Guan Mafa, Legend of (Guanmafa de chuanshuo)* 64n4  
 Guan Suoluo 85, 87  
 Guan Yu 53  
 Guan Yunzhang 8  
 Gugou 96  
 Gultai 154  
 Guo Yanshun 32, 116  
 Guotuoli 52  
 Guoxingma Gafa (benevolent male ancestor) 144  
  
 Hada (tribe) 121  
 Hailar 8, 118, 141, 162  
*hala* (clan) 34, 142  
*hama* (knife) 7, 8, 21  
 Han dynasty 10, 115  
*Han, Book of (Hanshu)* 17, 115  
*Han, Book of: Treatise on Arts and Letters (Houhanshu Yiwenzhi)* 17  
 Hao Sumin 67  
 He Dezhi 52  
 He Qiutao 40  
 Hebo (River God) 94  
*hehe* (woman) 50  
 Hetu Ala 28  
 Hetus 95  
 Hu Pu'an 107  
 Huaxia 53, 57, 59  
 Hukeshu Niru 96  
*huli* (a folk tale) 52  
 Hülühun 84  
  
 Hülükun 84  
 Hun 5  
 Huo Qubing 115  
 Huolieli Barken 142  
 Huozhuor Barcon 112  
 Huozhuori Ayan 119  
*hurile* (bronze) 143  
 Hurmojin 7  
  
 Ilan Enduri Gege 144  
 Ilan Usiha (Three Stars) 75  
 Inan, Abdülkadir 6  
 Inner Sea Bate Entu 150  
 Ishibashi Takao 116  
  
*jabjan* (python) 44, 61  
*Jāmi 'al-tawārīkh (The Compendium of Chronicles)* 94  
 Jegulu Goddess 76  
 Jenggulen 100  
*jia* ritual (folk ritual as fixed in Qing times) 111, 113, 114  
 Jiang Chong 115  
 Jiangdong 87  
*jiao 'uyun* (training class for Manchu shaman initiates) 136  
 Jiaqidalai (Idol of the Hunt) 141  
 Jieshi Boluohan 140  
 Jilangga Mama (benevolent female ancestor) 144  
*Jilin Annals (Jilin tongzhi)* 147n1  
 Jilin i, 4, 7, 16, 23, 25, 28, 43–45, 48, 52, 58, 60, 106, 110, 145, 164  
*Jilin, Collected Records of (Jilin huizheng)* 147n4  
*Jilin, Old Records (Jilin jiuwenlu)* 111  
 Jin dynasty 4, 35, 42–44, 47, 49, 67, 106, 150  
*Jin, Book of (Jinshu)* 105  
*Jin, History of (Jinshi)* 47  
*Jin, Records of the Great (Dajinguo zhi)* 106  
 Jingu 106  
*jioahun* (calling the soul) 108  
 Jiyaci (Nature Deity) 140, 141, 143  
 Julege (Goddess of the South) 82  
 Jumong 94, 101, 102, 104  
*Jurchen Genealogy, Annotated (Nvzhen puping)* 44  
 Jurchen vii, viii, 2, 15, 23, 28, 29, 40–47, 49, 52, 53, 58, 61, 64, 64n4, 67, 69, 84, 90, 91, 96, 104, 105, 113, 114n1, 117, 121, 136, 142, 144, 149  
 Juruhan 150

- kadan* (a flower) 47  
 Kamunikan 40  
*kang* (heatable raised bed platform in northeastern China) 8, 24, 111, 142  
 Kanggata 60  
 Kangxi 67  
*kedun/ketun* (woman's title) 95  
 Khabarovsk 41, 116  
*Khan Martyrs, Records of (Zhonglie hanwang shilu)* 49  
 Khitan 44, 95  
 Kunjele 81, 82  
  
 Lai Mergen 98  
*lele* (cart) 87  
*Lesser Court Hymns, Classic of Poetry : (Shi Xiaoya)* 17  
 Li Fu 42  
 Li Shuihua 52  
*Liao Annals (Quan liaozhi)* 42  
*Liaodong, Geography of (Liaodongzhi dilizhi)* 95  
 Liaoning 4, 11, 44, 45, 95, 96, 105, 145  
 Liaoyang 95, 96  
 Lin Shushan 41  
 Ling Chunsheng 2, 3, 6, 116, 142, 144  
*lingqi* (spirit energy) 108, 121, 123  
*Local Sacrificial Rituals, Collection of (Xiangsi bihui)* 11, 23  
*Longjiang Annals (Longjiang xianzhi)* 143, 147n4  
 Lu Liankun 47, 48  
 Lv Zhenkuan 19  
  
 "Melting a Path on the Snowy Mountains" (*Huatie rongshan*) 94  
 Ma Mingchao 45  
 Ma Yachuan 44  
*mafa* (grandpa, ancestral god, great shaman) 46, 66  
 Magu 141  
*malu* (hero, hero idol) 124, 141  
*Manchu Myths and Legends, Collection of (Manzu shenhua chuanshuo xuanji)* 50  
*Manchu Trance, Explorations on (Saman tiaoshen fawei)* 160  
*manggai* (man-eating demon) 66  
*mangni* (hero, hero idol) 124  
 Mani Mama 68  
 Manjun Uyan 85  
*manni* (hero idol) 124  
 Mao Dun 37, 38  
 Maogetiehan (Oroqen hero) 102  
 Maomu (Iron God) 141  
  
*maomutai* (Oroqen idol) 141  
*maowen boo* (bone hair cracks divination) 25  
*Marsh, Outlaws of the (Shuihuzhuan)* 105  
 Marx, Carl 116  
 Masinbi 45  
*mayin* (hero, hero idol) 124  
 Meng Huiying 48  
 Meng Jinfu 1  
 Meng Shuzhen 45, 52  
*menghun* (dream-soul) 30  
*Mergen Shooting the Sun (Morigen shetaiyang)* 45  
*mihan* (wild piglet) 29  
*miliu* (trance-like state) 125, 158  
*mingan usiha* (1,000 stars) 75  
 Miyaka Deities 78  
 Mo Qingyun 61  
 Mohe 41, 42, 43, 106  
 Mopujiabu 103  
 Morigendi 119  
*mosukun* (type of Oroqen oral literature) 45, 52  
 Motee 52  
*Mountains and Seas, Classic of (Shanhajing)* 64n1, 38  
 Mouse Star Xinggeri 79, 80  
 Mu Yejun 45  
 Mujen Baturu 113  
*muke* (liquid) 82  
 Muke Muduli (Water Dragon) 82  
*mukün* (paternal sub-clan) 21, 33, 142  
*mukūnda* (sub-clan chieftain) 33, 66, 105, 121  
  
 Nadan Nalahū 70  
 Nadan Usiha (Seven Stars) 75  
 Najile Barhan 118  
*nala* (sun) 58  
*nianxi* (incense made from azaleas) 114n3  
*niker tori* (chest mirror) 156  
*nimanggi* (snow) 85  
*Ning'an Annals (Ningan xianzhi)* 111, 147n4  
 Ningge Mama (Messenger of Heaven) 60  
 Ningguta 50, 113  
 Niqikun 112  
 Nisang 62  
*Nisang Shaman (Nisang saman)* 114, 155  
 Niura 162  
*Northeast Asia, Investigations of (Dongbeiya zhousoufangji)* 118, 140  
*Nurhaci and Wanggao, Legends of (Liangshi hangwangzhuan)* 23, 25, 28, 46, 49, 64n3, 104, 119, 121

*Nurhaci, Veritable Records of the Qing Emperor (Qingtaizu nu'erhachi shilu)*  
100

Nüwa 10, 41

Odoli 101

Odosi 85, 86

*ominan* (clan ritual) 162

*Oroqen in the Greater Khingan Range, Survey of (Daxing'anling elunchunzu de shidi diaocha baogao)* 141

*padaoshan* (climbing knife ladder) 9

*panfeishushao* (climbing or flying to a treetop) 9

Pangu 57

*paohuochi* (running over burning coals barefoot) 9

Papa Dewu 53

Pine Weji 60

Plain Red Banner 96

Plekhanov, Georgi 37

Qapqal 5

*qianbingku* (diving through ice holes) 9

*Qing, Veritable Records of the (Qingshilu)*  
32, 100

*qiqidan* (red tumor) 83

Qiqihar 49, 156

*qi* (breath, air, gas; figuratively, material energy) vii, 2, 11, 114, 158, 159, 160, 161

Qing dynasty i, 3, 15, 32, 39, 40, 43, 53, 87, 96, 100, 105, 113, 121, 138, 144, 149, 157, 163

Ren Jiyou 119

*Sabusu, Legend of General*

(*Sadarenzhuan*) 64n3, 68, 119

Sahaliyan 41, 68, 69, 85, 86, 96, 117

Saicinga 15

Sajilahu (Daur storyteller) 51, 52

*saman* (shaman) vii, 2, 69, 113

*Samguk Sagi (History of the Three Kingdoms) (Sanguo shiji)* 94

*Samguk Yusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) (Sanguo yishi)* 94

Savage Jurchen 42, 96, 104

*Selenga, Idiot Lord (Shaye seleng'a)* 114  
*Seven-Hued Divine Fire (Qicai shenhua)*  
113

Seven Hulun Clans 59

Sewenki (Evenki ancestral clan god) 140

*Shaman Deities (Saman de shen)* 113

*Shaman Songs (Saman shen ge)* 49

*Shanman* 2

*sheben* (consciousness) 162, 163

*shen* (deity) 113

*shenqi* (spirit energy) 46

Shi Qingshan 159

Shizong 53

*Siberia, Records of Eastern (Xiboliya dongpian jiyao)* 147n1

*sierranju* (Evenki dwelling) 51, 75, 140, 141

Siji Village 54, 67, 68, 90

*Sirin Amban Mafa* 155, 157

Sirin Mama 78

Sisilin 73, 75–77, 78, 79, 83

*sitongzhao* (everything going well) 24

*sohv* (beet) 82

Southern Song 2

*soweng* (idol) 136

spiritual soul (*shenhun*) 135

Sudeng 96

Suihua County 28

Sukedai 156

Sūn Gege (*gege*: daughter) 60

Sun Yunlai 32, 116

*suoli* (ancestors) 145

Sushen (Sušen) 41–43

Su Yong 113

Swinging Goddess 75

Szymkiewicz 116

*sama* (shaman) 2, 8, 151

Solon (Evenki) 7, 40, 49, 50, 66, 87, 99, 118, 140, 147n1

Sunwu County 23, 57, 67

*Sacrificial Rituals, Collection of Local (Xiangsi bihuilu)* 11, 23

Taci Mama 78

Tacibuli (Star Goddess) 39, 47

*Tailless Lao Li (Tuweiba laoli)* 54

*taiyang boo* (Solar Divination) 25

*taka* (mustard leaf) 82

Talayihan Mama 113

Tang dynasty 11, 41

*Tang, New Book of (Xintangshu)* 106

*Tang, New Book of: Records of Tujue (Xintangshu tujuezhuan)* 94

*Tang, Old Book of (Jiutangshu)* 106

*tangse* (portable shrine, Qing Court Shrine) vii, 53, 121, 124

Tartar 40

Telcin 153

Telcin 153

*telungu* (Hezhe folk singer) 52

- Tenggele (Heaven, Sky God) 58  
 Tengri (Heaven, Sky God) 155  
 Terbin 153  
*Three Heavenly Fairies of Changbai Mountain (Changbaishan xiannv)* 100, 194, 105  
*Three Kingdoms, Romance of the (Sanguoyanyi)* 53  
*Three Reigns' Northern Alliance, Documents of the (Sanchao beimeng hui bian)* 2  
*Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, Records of the (Sanwuliji)* 57  
*tiaohuochi* (running over coals barefoot) 33  
*tori* (bronze mirror) 156  
 Torii Ryuzo 42, 140  
 true soul (*zhenhun*) 30, 31  
*tumen usiha* (10,000 stars) 75  
 Tummu (Fire Goddess) 75, 77  
 Tuowo Bukan (Fire Deity) 45  
 Tuyemuli Tribe 25  
 Twenty-Eight Mansions 16  
  
*ucun* (traditional Manchu songs) 49, 50, 52, 84  
*ucun hehe* (Manchu womens' songs) 50  
*ucun maksimbi* (Manchu songs and dances) 49, 50  
*ucun uaha* (Manchu men's songs) 50  
*ucun zhuzi* (Manchu song and dance band) 52  
 Ula (Jilin City) 50  
 Ulalin 45  
 Ulchi 40  
 Uleben (Manchu tales) 66, 67–69, 84, 87, 90  
*ulehuma* (pheasant) 98  
 Ulejungga 54  
*ulileng* 140, 147n2  
 Umai 140  
*Umesiben Mama* viii, 2, 19, 47, 48, 149, 150, 153  
 Underworld Yam 53  
*usih*a (star) 76, 90  
 Usiha Burgu 79  
  
 Walege (Goddess of the West) 83  
 Wang Gao 121  
 Wangqing County 28  
 Wanyan Aguda 44, 47  
 Wanyan Wushu 49  
 Wanyan Xiyin 47  
 “War between Deities and Demons” (*Shenmo dazhan*) 67  
 “War in Heaven” (*Tiangong dazhan*) v, viii, 19, 28, 49, 54, 57, 65–92  
  
*weceku* (ancestor niche) 33, 45, 56  
 Weceku Uleben 66–69, 84, 87, 90  
 Wei Yuan 116  
*Wei, Book of the: Records of Goguryeo (Weishu gaojulizhuan)* 94  
*weihū* (canoe) 59  
 Weihūwang Babu 113  
 Weji 25, 29, 47, 52, 60, 61, 113, 118, 119, 136, 145, 149  
 Weledū Hehe 70–76, 79, 83, 85, 88  
*wengguda* (shamanic idol) 143  
*wenggun* (portable idol) 136, 143  
 Where Human Beings Began (*Renlei shi cong nalilaide*) 46  
 will soul (*ynianhun*) 30  
 “Wind God” (*Fengshen*) 46  
 Wu Baocai 48  
 Wu Botong 159  
*Wu Clan, Ritual Records of the (Wushiwosheku jipu)* 8, 54, 64n2, 117, 118, 139, 148, 160, 163  
 Wu Degen 58  
 Wu Kingdom 11  
 Wu Liangui 52  
 Wu Xian 10  
 Wuji 41, 42  
 Wujiazi 7  
 Wuzhala 54–56, 117  
*wuzhe* (savage) 41  
  
*xanca* (jelly fungi) 82  
*xandaha* (white demon) 14  
 Xandan Usiha (Peony Star) 76, 90  
*xengje* (mushroom) 82  
 Xi Qing 147  
 Xia dynasty 10, 93  
 Xianbei 102  
 Xianfeng 117  
*xili* (long vine) 88, 89  
 Xili Emu 87  
 Xili Mama 144  
 Xinggeri (Mouse Star) 79, 80  
 Xiutu 115  
 Xu Mengshen 2  
 Xue Shoubang 67  
 Xunke County 45, 103  
  
 “Yang Erlang Chasing the Sun and Shouldering Mountains” (*Yang'erlang danshan gantaiyang*) 54  
 Yakesa Campaign 68  
 Yama (Lord of the Underworld) 53, 155  
 Yan Tiewen 84  
 Yan Wenkuan 15



- yang* (departed spirit) 122  
 Yang Shichang 8, 159  
 Yang Wensheng 162  
 Yanji 106  
*ye* ritual (nature rite) 4  
*ye* spirit (animal spirit) 25  
 Yelü Abaoji 44  
 Yeluli 28, 29, 52, 65–67, 72–82, 84–91, 154  
 Yilha 75  
 Yilou 41  
*yinianhun* (will soul) 30  
*Yixin Shaman* (*Yixin saman*) 155  
 Yongji County 44, 145  
*yuanbao* (old ingot currency) 16  
*yuanqi* (vital force) 122  
 Yue Kingdom 11  
*yuejianqian* (skipping across a ditch) 9  
 Yugur 38  
 Zang Hala 159  
*zhaendale* (Daur song style) 52  
 Zhang Shitou 98  
 Zhanglao River 26  
 Zhao Xingya 44, 159  
*zhaohun* (calling back the soul ) 108  
*zhaoli* (spider-web-like cooking  
     skimmer) 29  
 Zhaoli, Aunt 29  
 Zheng Zhenduo 38  
*zhenhun* (true soul) 30  
*Zhou, Book of: Records of Tujue* (*Zhoushu  
     tujuezhuan*) 93  
*Zhou, Rites of* (*Zhouli*) 10  
 Zhu Di 148, 157  
 Zhu Tianshun 17  
 Zhuolu Mafa 143  
 Zhuolu Mama 143