

# SHAMANISM IN SIBERIA

SELECTED REPRINTS

Edited by  
Vilmos Diószegi and Mihály Hoppál



Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest







SHAMANISM IN SIBERIA



# Bibliotheca Shamanistica

*Edited by*  
Mihály Hoppál

International Society for Shamanistic Research

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## Volume 2

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

Published for the

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR SHAMANISTIC RESEARCH

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Edited by

Vilmos Diószegi and Mihály Hoppál

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Akadémiai Kiadó · Budapest

*Translated by*

S. SIMON

ISBN 963 05 6964 7  
HU ISSN 1218-988X

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Published by Akadémiai Kiadó  
Prielle Kornélia u. 19-35  
H-1117 Budapest, Hungary

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Typeset by PP Editors Ltd., Budapest  
Printed in Hungary



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# Introduction

by

M. HOPPÁL

It was over two decades ago, a few months after the sudden death of Vilmos Diószegi, that Gyula Ortutay, my director at the time, deposited several hundred pages of manuscript on my desk and asked me to edit the material and prepare it for publication. This work proved to be of decisive significance for me as a young researcher since it was the beginning of a lifetime commitment to the study of shamanism focussing on Siberia.

Russian and Siberian scholars of shamanism unanimously agree that the appearance in 1978 of *Shamanism in Siberia* represented a turning point in the evaluation of Siberian shamanism by science policy-makers in the Soviet Union. This was still long before the period of “glasnost”, when “shaman” was a taboo word belonging in the category of politically and ideologically non-existent things since it was related to the ethnic and religious traditions of the small ethnic groups of Siberia. The publication of the volume in Hungary, by the Academy Publishing House of a friendly socialist state, gave the colleagues in Russia a point of reference that could be cited. Even so, it was not for a good three years, at the end of 1981, that the first collection of studies on Siberian shamanism could appear. It was edited by I. S. Vdovin and bore a very misleading title (or perhaps one that was intended as a camouflage), promising a historical investigation of the social consciousness of the Siberian peoples (Vdovin 1981). The Russian work appeared in a very limited edition (it was printed in only 1950 copies) and *Shamanism in Siberia*, out of print for years, has become a rare book too.

The decision of Akadémiai Kiadó to bring out the book in reprint form is therefore especially welcome. As one of the editors of the original edition I considered it justified to make a few changes which is why the new edition bears the subtitle: *selected reprints*. Above all, the tribute read by Ortutay at Diószegi’s funeral has been left out from the beginning of the volume, as well as the original Introduction, since the studies not closely related to the theme of shamanism have not been included. As a result,

the earlier thematic order has changed. An important criterion in making the present new selection was to reprint as far as possible the purely ethnographic descriptions.

We have not included the monograph by Vilmos Diószegi: "Pre-Islamic Shamanism of the Baraba Turks and Some Ethnogenetic Conclusions", since it is intended to publish a separate volume of *Bibliotheca Shamanistica* in 1996 containing a selected collection of his studies.

The editor sincerely regrets that the list of works cited in the studies does not specify the pages (or, as is customary, the publishers), but Diószegi requested them in this form from the Russian authors and we are not able to correct these shortcomings (in addition, the names of some authors have been transcribed into English in various ways over the years, e.g. Gračeva = Gracheva) but this is due to the different transliteration systems used. We would also have liked to make some stylistic revisions in the occasionally too literal translation done by Sándor Simon but refrained from doing so since this is a reprint and not a revised edition.

It is a fact that the first edition did not appear until 1978, six years after Diószegi's death, while the studies it contained were written in the early seventies, most of them in 1971 and 1972. This did not favour those writings which gave an account of research history (Ivanov, Voigt) or which took an exceedingly theoretical approach (Krader); these have not been included either.

There is one exception in the present edition: the frequently cited and now classical study by Åke Hultkrantz: "Ecological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism". This writing has been placed at the beginning of the present selection since it has lost nothing of its timeliness and because it gives an excellent summing up of the main component elements of Siberian shamanism and the principal social functions of the shamans. To cite Hultkrantz: "The central idea of shamanism is to establish means of contact with the supernatural world by the ecstatic experience of a professional and inspired intermediary, the shaman. There are thus four important constituents of shamanism: the ideological premise, or the supernatural world and the contacts with it; the shaman as the actor on behalf of a human group; the inspiration granted him by helping spirits; and the extraordinary, ecstatic experiences of the shaman." It seems to us that such a clear definition of shamanism is in its way just as classical as the Swedish scholar's entire oeuvre.

Having given the reasons why some articles have been left out of this selection, it is only fitting to explain why the studies reprinted here are

significant. They are of importance first of all because they report new, previously unknown data, generally on the basis of then fairly recent field-work. For example, E. A. Alekseenko classified the shamans of the Ket, a small Paleo-Siberian people, drawing on data from her collecting trips made in the 1970s and on the basis of their attributes which, of course, refer to the helping spirits. She distinguished shamans with deer head-dress, with symbols of lightning and birds, with bears and anthropomorphic symbols; a clear distinction is made between shamans in contact with the underworld and the middle world (the earth). A longer version of this article by the researcher from St. Petersburg was published in Russian too in 1981 in the volume edited by Vdovin.

Her colleague, L. V. Khomič, classified the Nenets shamans on the basis of data collected between 1953 and 1964. (She too published a much more detailed Russian version in the 1981 volume!) She considers that there are three main types of Nenets shamans; the first is the “strong shaman” (*viđutana*) who heals and prophesies and communicates with the spirits of the underworld. The second (*janjanj tadebja*) is able to find the lost order, belongs to the earthly world and shamanises at night. The shaman belonging to the third kind (*sambana*) designates the place of the dead and his main task is purification. Shamans can also be distinguished according to whether they used a drum or not.

In a doctoral dissertation written in the early seventies, Péter Simoncsics examined the poetic characteristics of the Nenets shaman songs. There are very few studies based on textual analysis in the literature on Siberian shamanism. The Hungarian researcher made an exemplary analysis of the magic chant (*sāmǰadabc*) of a shaman recorded in 1842 by M. A. Castrén. The author concluded that the symmetry and parallelism identified on the levels of phonology, syntax and motifs serve mainly for visualisation of the text and, we could add, in the final analysis for its memorisation.

Aulis Joki wrote about Selkup shamanism among the Samoyed peoples of Northern Siberia, giving much factual material and also drawing on collections made by Kai Donner in the early years of the century (1911–1913) and texts recorded in his diary. The article is illustrated with photographs of Selkup shaman objects in the Helsinki Kansallismuseo. B. O. Dolgikh collected in 1938 among the Nganasan living on the Taimyr peninsula. His article in this volume, which is actually an excellent communication of data, not only describes the typology of the Nganasan shamans, but also gives the terminology related to the drum and costume. The greatest strength of the paper is that after a careful analysis of the

details, the author concludes it is clear from the shaman costume that the Nganasan people consist of two components: one is the small Uralic ethnic group, the Nganasan and the other the Dolgan.

We now know that G. N. Gračeva (1934–1993) was one of the outstanding figures of research on Siberian shamanism. She died in 1993 in tragic circumstances on a field trip (Reshetov 1994). She devoted practically her entire life to the ethnographic study of a small Siberian ethnic group, the Nganasans. In particular, she was especially interested in the famous shaman clan, the Ngamtusuo. She also wrote a number of studies on the traditional world view of the Nganasan, and each of these contains a few important details on shamanism.

In her article published in this volume she describes the shaman's cloak (*parka*); it was worn by the shaman to help him communicate with the overworld and the sleeves symbolise bird's wings. It is interesting to note the series of dual contrasts: the garment is divided into two halves (left and right), one side coloured black and the other red as symbols of winter and darkness opposed to the sun, light and spring.

Č. M. Taksami reported interesting information brought from his own people on how a person becomes a shaman. The story tells of a Nivkhi shamaness who in 1962 recounted how the objects used for the initiation rite were made and described the rite itself. Taksami has since published a lot of articles on shamanism among this small Far-Eastern ethnic group.

In 1995 under his direction the staff of the Institute of Ethnography arranged a major exhibition in the St. Petersburg Museum of Ethnography (Kunstkamera). It can be said that this exhibition presented the richest collection of material in the history of Siberian shamanism. Unfortunately, despite the fact that many unique objects were on display for a whole year, the organisers provided only a few panels with a very general text. No explanations were given as a guide to the individual items. (It is to be hoped that a catalogue to be published later will fill this gap.)

V. N. Basilov carried out research among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and published a monograph summing up his findings (Basilov 1992). Few scholars have examined the elements of traditional shamanism that have survived Islamic influence, and previously transvestism was also a theme to be avoided by Soviet-Russian research. In 1968 Basilov spent time with the Turkmen in the Fergana valley where he found an old shaman (*bakši*) who performed the shaman ceremony dressed in woman's clothing. This ritual transvestism clearly shows that the shaman stood outside the world of ordinary people since he mediated between people and the spirits and this state between the genders refers to the mediating

position of the shaman. In other writings (Basilov 1984, 1990) the Moscow scholar demonstrates that he is an influential, leading figure of Russian shamanism studies.

It is only very rarely that studies of Siberian shamanism also deal with the shaman's music and dance. The short article by M. Ja. Žornickaja fills a gap in this respect. Earlier descriptions dating from the 18th and 19th centuries had mentioned the dance of the Yakut shamans, but she is the only author to have made a typology of the dances. Later she further refined this, for example in a paper presented at an international conference held in Yakutsk in August 1992 when, in addition to simple rhythmic movements, she distinguished pantomimic and ecstatic dances in the dance culture of the small ethnic groups of Northern Siberia (cf. in Gogolev 1992: 48). Although it would be very important to deal with the various forms of dance of the shamans, studies of this kind are exceptionally rare. This was the reason why an effort was made to place the emphasis on examination of the performing aspects (song, music, dance, gestures) at the conference of the International Society for Shamanistic Research held in Budapest in 1993. Unfortunately, only a very few papers were prepared and published (cf.: Kim, Tae-gon–Hoppál, M. eds, 1995).

In the second half of the volume the authors give data on the shamanism of the Turkic peoples of Siberia. One year after the death, V. P. Djakonova found the grave in the taiga of a Tuva shamaness who died in 1958. Since the shamaness had been placed to rest in her full shaman costume, together with her equipment and drum, a precise description and inventory could be made. Details were revealed that can only be shown with certainty with the help of such a fortunate find (e.g. that the symbols of the head-dress and costume indicate precisely whether the shaman was strong or weak, whether the shaman's helpers were good or evil spirits). In Tuva only strong shamans could wear the cap-like head-dress. The present author was able to photograph a head-dress of this kind still in use in 1995 in Kyzyl, worn by an elderly shaman who belonged to the Dүngүр-Shaman Federation. It must be noted that Vilmos Diószegi (in 1960) lamented the disappearance of shamanism in Tuva, but this paper too showed that in the fifties it still flourished in its full richness in the remote taiga. This is why it is not surprising that this archaic healing occupation is now undergoing a complete revival. (Kenin-Lopsan has written a number of monographs on Tuva shamanism.)

Mongus Kenin-Lopsan dealt with the shaman burial rites of the Soyots, a small ethnic group in Central Asia or, as the republic is called, Tuva. He described in detail the ceremony for the burial of deceased shamans and

its different phases. One point that appears especially important is when an invited shaman marks the direction in which the shaman must be taken, that is, the place of the grave. Taking out the body (*undureri*) from the yurt is also important: it must not be taken out through the door but through an opening made for the purpose in the side wall. It is also important for the skin of the drum to be split and the drum placed on a post (*čagy*) together with the shaman's costume and other objects. The body is placed on a platform (*seri*) supported by four posts, meaning that this is the custom of burial in the air which is also found among the American Indians.

The last in the series of studies on Tuva shamanism is the writing by Sevjan Vajnštejn on the objects known as *ēren* which play a big role in Tuva shamanism. For the Tuva people the *ēren* is an object imbued with a spirit which can be used by the shaman, for example, to drive illness out of the body. The author spent many years of his youth in Tuva (where his father was banished in the early years of communism). In this article he examined the various types of *ēren*. These are excellent ethnographic data from the 1950s when the researcher, then still a young man, did the field-work.

It should be noted here that in footnote No. 3, in keeping with the political terminology and opinion of the time, a quarter of a century ago, the paper made the following observation on shamanism in Tuva: "Owing to the great success of socialism in Tuva, shamanism here has now lost its significance entirely...". Fortunately, shamanism in Tuva has not lost its significance at all, quite the contrary: while socialism has collapsed with great success, shamanism lives and flourishes.

\*

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

The concept of *modern* has been one of the most frequently repeated keywords of the 20th century and consequently had almost magical power. It was imbued with positive content, in part because it was associated



with development – mainly technical development – and in part because it meant rejection of the traditions of earlier periods: the repudiation, denial and destruction of *tradition* of all kinds.

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

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

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

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

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

Perhaps the best point to begin with is the most interesting case of the Koreans. Korea lies at the eastern extremity of the Eurasian continent, between China and Japan and has shaped a wholly autonomous culture. An important feature of this autochthonous culture is shamanism (*musok*). Scholars hold many different opinions on Korean shamanism, its character and components, but they agree on one thing: shamanism represents the oldest stratum in Korean folk religion (Carter-Covell 1981; Covell 1986; Guisso–Yu 1988).

All aspects of Korean culture, including religion, are imbued with the ideology of Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism. Nevertheless a stratum – presumably originating from Central Asia – can be found underlying these: the institution of the king-shaman which can be traced back to the Silla Kingdom (8th century). In general, right up to the present, beside the various Christian missionary activities and the “new religion” movements (such as the world-religion founded by the Reverend Moon), the strongest trend is the everyday religious practice performed by shamanesses (*mudang*) which Korean colleagues classify in the category of shamanism. Whatever the case, it is a fact that today’s over-ornamented and highly elaborate shaman ceremony, somewhat resembling a dramatic theatre performance (Kister 1995), wholly determines the everyday religious life of the Koreans, a people producing and exporting the most advanced technology at the end of the 20th century. The author personally visited Seoul three times and had a number of opportunities to take part in the ceremonies (*kut*) which were directed by shamanesses. These ceremonies lasting several hours not only convinced me of their very powerful stress-relieving effect, but also that they ensure cultural continuity from one generation to the next within the culture. The shaman ceremony has become an important vehicle for the transfer of tradition since it serves to maintain a “direct” relationship and communication with the ancestors. (The ceremony known as *chinogwi-kut*, which serves to evoke the spirit of deceased ancestors, in particular has such a function. The author participated in such

a full-day ceremony in Inchon, a suburb of Seoul, in 1994.) Although many different cultural elements are found in the Korean shaman ceremonies (in addition to those already mentioned, elements of contemporary life have also been incorporated), their principal characteristic is nevertheless cultural continuity since the activities of the *mudang* in South Korea has not been exposed to any violent influence. Naturally the situation is different in the North where the communist ideological hegemony did not tolerate systems of religious beliefs of any kind. In the South, in contrast, shamanism is seen as a traditionalising expression of national culture and its most outstanding representatives are valued as a *national treasure* and used for the strengthening of national identity.

It is interesting to observe that something similar happened in the field of cultural continuity in Manchuria, one of the regions of the People's Republic of China inhabited by nationalities. The Manchu nationality is one of the larger minorities in today's China (four and a half million) and has an especially strong historical awareness because they gave the empire the last imperial dynasty. In addition, they live in a compact group in Jilin province and shamanism has very ancient traditions among their religious notions: it takes a special form of clan shamanism and one of its most important functions is to maintain nationality, family and kinship relations on the occasion of large family gatherings.

Recent ethnographic documentary films made in the early nineties (cf.: Hoppál 1992: 191–196, and Shi 1993:49) show that this is a living tradition. A number of shamans appeared simultaneously at larger gatherings and the series of ceremonies held in conjunction with these and they drummed together. The fact that for centuries the Manchu shamans had hand-written ceremonial books almost certainly contributed to the continuous preservation of the Manchu shaman traditions. (In 1991, I personally visited Manchuria where I met an elderly shaman who also had a hand-written ceremonial book. Hoppál 1994; a photograph of the shaman can be seen on the cover.)

In China, Manchu shamanism survived the period of communist ideological repression relatively well and in recent years it has been possible to publish a growing number of books and studies (cf. Shi 1993). Researchers of Manchu origin (Fu 1993; Guo 1993) also reported that this tradition has a number of followers and active practitioners among the younger generation too.

On the other side of the Amur river in the Far-Eastern part of the Russian empire live the small Tungus peoples from whose language the word *shaman* is also derived. In 1993 I spent time among the Nanai people and

found that from the point of view of typology, the shamanism there can be regarded as essentially continuous. The elderly shamaness – Lindza Beldi – who is illiterate but nevertheless (or precisely for that reason) preserves a rich store of shaman narrative lore is definitely a fact of the continuity of tradition. In the remote corner of the empire, in the small village beside the Amur the local population needed the help of the shamans which is why they were not persecuted excessively during the period of communism.

This example does not mean that shamans were not persecuted more strongly elsewhere. In the case of the Yakuts, for example, the matter of the shamans was treated as a political issue right from the earliest Soviet times practically up to the present (Balzer 1990, 1993). There is nothing surprising about this since it was the shamans who preserved the traditions, the old belief and oral epic tradition (mythology). By practising their occupation almost daily they ensured the continuous existence of folk culture and so it is not by chance that from the thirties the local organs of repression began to persecute them. Many hundreds of shamans ended their lives in concentration camps or forced labour camps (Gulags).

Despite this, they were not entirely wiped out and when in the early nineties the restrictions of ideological repression began to ease, they immediately surfaced and while earlier they had only been taken to folklore festivals, in the last few years they have begun to work again, mainly engaging in healing. In 1992, when I visited the Sakha Republic, I found that the previously persecuted Yakut shamans (*oyuun, udagan*) had appeared again and were active as healers. They even held a theatre performance in the local National Theatre for the participants in the international conference on shamanism, in which actors played the part of the shamans in an attempt to preserve the continuity of the ethnic poetic tradition. This is because the great majority of the Sakha (Yakut) population no longer speak the language of their ancestors. The theatre is an excellent means for reviving certain elements of folk culture and in particular for keeping alive song and narrative traditions. At the same time, the Yakut scholar colleagues immediately recognised the ideological significance of shamanism as well (cf.: Gogolev 1992).

We found similar phenomena in Tuva where, after long decades of shaman persecution in 1995, what could be called a renaissance of shamanism can be observed now. The earlier communist political leaders, who are now the chief standard-bearers of nationalism, support lamaism in the republic in the same way as the revival of shamanism. It should be noted that in the early thirties there were even more shamans than lamas work-

ing to preserve the spiritual health of the people (cf.: Djakonova 1978), although the two forms of religious practice coexisted peacefully.

The situation is especially fortunate in Tuva because the study of shamanism there has long been in the hands of expert researchers (V. P. Djakonova, S. I. Vajņštejn and the local scholar-researcher M. B. Kenin-Lopsan – see his most recent works giving a general summary: Kenin-Lopsan 1993, 1996). A large body of collected material is available for further research, as well as for general enquirers. Mongus Kenin-Lopsan has played a considerable part in keeping this interest alive. He is not only an ethnographic collector but also a writer and president of the social organisation known as *Düngür*, one of those best acquainted with the Tuva folklore traditions, a living classic. The drum used by the Tuva shamans is called *düngür*, and this word was adopted as the name of the federation whose members are healing shamans who work in Kyzyl, the capital, carrying out their activity of forecasting, diagnosing and healing in a perfectly matter-of-fact way in today's modern (*post-modern* or post-communist) urban environment.

Today's Tuva shamans, many of whom I have had the good fortune to meet, are characteristic figures in the history of shamanism in Siberia: many of them were imprisoned in the fifties, spending years in the labour camps and despite this they are again practising their craft. Speaking to them, their commitment and readiness to help could be clearly felt, as well as their pride at the fact that they are preserving and continuing genuine folk (ethnic) traditions.

The situation is not so straightforward in the case of the Finno-Ugrian (Uralic) peoples living in the northern regions of the Russian Federation. Shamanism was never as strong there as among the Turkic-speaking peoples of Siberia. These small communities which now number only a few thousand persons were always more vulnerable to Russian cultural influence and the danger of russification. From the typological viewpoint it is the shamanism of these ethnic groups which perhaps came closest to complete oblivion (Balzer 1987). Nevertheless, signs of an interesting revival have begun to appear among the northern peoples and some researchers regard shamanism as “an expression of the northern identity” (Pentikäinen 1995).

The shaman tradition found among the Khanty, an Ob-Ugrian people, has taken an interesting course in recent decades. While the earlier literature on the subject essentially regarded the phenomenon as no longer living, ethnographic documentary films made on the bear ceremonies of the Ostyak ethnic group, mainly the work of Lennart Meri (for a description,

see Hoppál 1992: 184–187) drew attention to one of the last surviving shamans. As a consequence, a number of researchers made trips to visit the family and a number of studies have been published from the research done (Kerezsi 1993, 1995).

A similar case can be observed with one of the renowned shaman families of the Nganasan, a small ethnic group living on the Taymyr peninsula. For generations the community's shamans came from the members of the Ngantusuo clan. They have preserved this role right up to the present (Helimsky–Kosterkina 1992). In the seventies Lennart Meri made a film of the last big shaman, Demnime, and a number of other films have also been made since then. Practically all the relatives have now joined in the chain of folklorism, reproducing in theatre-like form the songs and art of the shaman father. On the one hand this activity is entirely authentic since they are repeating songs learnt from the authentic source (cf.: Dobzhanskaya 1995), but on the other hand it is not entirely authentic since the songs are performed and the drum produced outside the ritual (sacral) context. Not to mention the fact that the family members playing the part of the shaman are no longer initiated shamans and as such do not even have the right to perform the sacred songs. However, it is in this way that tradition finds a means of surviving, independently of the political and social environment.

The researcher has a tendency to proclaim that this is the last chapter in the history of shamanism in Siberia. When in the summer of 1994 at a folklore festival in the south of France I came across a small group formed of members of the Kosterkin family among the performers, dressed in Siberian fur costume to give a short programme in the summer heat, I thought that this is the end of “shamanism in Siberia”. But perhaps it is not really the end because it is precisely such festival invitations and opportunities to appear on film and television which lead the members of the younger generation to carry on the tradition, as performers enacting the ancient ritual. Naturally, this is an entirely different shamanism from that discussed in the studies of the original volume brought together by Vilmos Diószegi. The representatives of neo-shamanism have appeared in Siberia, as in other parts of the world and their role is just as deserving of attention as that of their predecessors (cf.: Kōiva 1995; Sarv 1995). However, an examination of this would lead very far, although cultural anthropology research cannot avoid investigating the new phenomena of shamanism in the future either (e.g.: Bulgakova 1995), but this would be the topic of another study.

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# Ecological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism

by

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## 1

It is a well-known fact that the terminology and definitions of most religious manifestations in so-called primitive cultures are a matter of great disagreement among scholars. Technology, kinship relations and political institutions have been successfully analysed and theoretically reduced to functional units, parts of more or less generally accepted scientific systems. However, phenomena like totemism, animism, fetishism and shamanism are today highly debated both as facts – do they occur at all? – and as concepts. This may seem surprising, at least as concerns shamanism. Is not shamanism a fairly well documented and circumscribed religious complex, is not the shaman himself a key-figure in primitive religions?

Some modern pronouncements are illuminating. An anthropologist like Geertz mentions shamanism among the “desiccated” and “insipid” categories “by means of which ethnographers of religion devitalize their data”.<sup>1</sup> His colleague Robert Spencer is just as adamant. He writes : “Is there really such a phenomenon as shamanism or is it that the term itself leads into a semantic trap? It is only relatively recently that the anthropologist concerned with religion has begun to shed the evolutionary typology of religions inherited from Tylor, Frazer, or Marett. The result is to cast an aura of doubt on such time-honored classifications as ‘totemism’, ‘ancestor worship’, and certainly, on such a concept as shamanism. It is evident that a reformulation of anthropological thinking about the religious institutions is in the offing. At least, when one considers that there is considerable sophistication in respect to other societal manifestations, there is an inclination to wonder why religion remains the kind of dustbin that it does. Still, whether in historical and structural-functional terms, or in phenomenological, psychological, and philosophical contexts, several

<sup>1</sup> Geertz (1966), 39.

kinds of breakthrough are called for, ones that get away at least from the purely semantic implications; of particular pigeonholes.”<sup>2</sup>

It is possible that this vivid reaction against a nuclear concept in the research on primitive religion has, at least partly, been brought about by the ambiguity of the concept as used hitherto. Indeed, some Anglo-American anthropologists and ethnologists have coined a meaning of the word “shaman” which is not compatible with the use of the word in other languages. They tend to conceive any medicine-man as a shaman, whereas most other scholars closely follow the original (Tungus, possibly ultimately Sanskrit?) import of the word, namely a particular, ecstatic diviner, healer and mediator between humans and the spirit world. On the other hand, historians of religion have tended to consider any ecstatic with relations to the spirit world as a shaman, in this way omitting the important social functions of the shaman. Furthermore, some sociologists do not clearly identify shamans as a separate “professional” category. Wach, for instance, presents the Eskimo shaman or *angakoq* as “the Eskimo priest, prophet, or magician”.<sup>3</sup> There is obviously a need to clarify what a shaman is and what phenomena may be included under the term shamanism.

All things considered, the critics of research on shamanism go too far when they dismiss shamanism as an evolutionistic label without correspondence in empirical facts. It is possible to handle the shamanistic complex in descriptive or analytical terms. Quite a few recent papers have done so on a universal, principal level, although some critics seem to have neglected reading them.<sup>4</sup> A reassessment of the “shamanistic problem” may be justified in view of the present negative criticism. In the following it is my intention to discuss shamanism as a phenomenological concept and to try to outline the ethnological position of the shamanistic complex. These two problems are intimately connected.<sup>5</sup> Space does not allow me to treat them as exhaustively as they really should deserve. The discussion will therefore be focussed on the main issues and some aspects which have been dealt with recently by authorities on shamanism. Their opinion will be presented at the same time as I express my own views. Attention will first of all be paid to northern Eurasiatic shamanism, the main field of shamanism, but parallels will be taken from other quarters as well, particularly from North America.

<sup>2</sup> Spencer (1968), 396.

<sup>3</sup> Wach (1947), 224.

<sup>4</sup> Seen in particular Schröder (1964) and Vajda (1964), Cf. also Closs (1960), Paulson (1964) and (1965).

<sup>5</sup> On the subject of phenomenology and ethnology, cf. Hultkrantz (1963).

## 2

Turning first to the phenomenological aspects of our investigation we may ask ourselves, what is the essential unity behind the cluster of ideas and rites that is labelled shamanism ?

To early students of shamanism the answer was easy: shamanism was the religion of northern Asia, or even any primitive religion.<sup>6</sup> This conviction was founded on the quite correct observation that the shamanistic complex contains a set of beliefs, tales and ritual practices which form a well-organized net of interrelationships. Just because of this diversity of religious activities and beliefs within an integrated structure a late student of shamanism, Findeisen, prefers to call shamanism a religion.<sup>7</sup> In his view it is, however, a religion that may coexist with other religions. When, he says, the Yukaghir sacrifices to the Ancestor are performed not by the shaman, but by the elders of the village, "I do not hesitate to assert that the Yukaghir have at their disposal at least two different religions, one shamanistic and one non-shamanistic. Why should a people always have only *one* religion?"<sup>8</sup> Here Findeisen makes the mistake of mixing together religion and religious configuration. What I design as a religious configuration is a semi-independent segment of an ethnic religion in which all beliefs, rites and epic traditions correspond to each other and make up an integrated field, often with the exclusion of beliefs, rites and traditions which play a role in another segment of the same religion. A nuclear feature of the religious configuration is what social anthropologists call the "belief system", i.e. the coordinated, interrelated chain of religious beliefs that constitutes the basic motivation of the segmentation.<sup>9</sup> Shamanism is a religious configuration with such a belief system, namely, an ideology and a set of expectations concerning shamans.

Shamanism is thus no religion in its own right, but a configuration or, as we shall see in the following, a complex. It is fairly typical of some religions, and even dominant in certain religions, such as the religions of North Eurasia. In the latter case we may talk about a dominating value (religious) pattern, a category built up in analogy of Benedict's pattern of culture,<sup>10</sup> or we may simply apply the concept of dominant interests and

<sup>6</sup> Czaplicka (1914), 166 and 168.

<sup>7</sup> Findeisen (1957), 200.

<sup>8</sup> Findeisen (1957), 201.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. in this connection, e.g. Hultkrantz (1968) B, 74 and 80.

<sup>10</sup> I am referring here to my analytical study of methods in comparative religion – Hultkrantz (1963).

state that the dominating religious interest in such an area as Siberia is shamanism.<sup>11</sup> In whatsoever way we phrase it, it would be false to proclaim shamanism as the religion of any area.

Shamanism is therefore to be defined by reference to the elements of which it is comprised, and to its general motivation. In other words, we have a central idea and a series of symbols which express it. Some of these symbols are so constitutive that they recur in all shamanistic connections, whereas others are less essential or formed by separate historical developments.

The central idea of shamanism is to establish means of contact with the supernatural world by the ecstatic experience of a professional and inspired intermediary, the shaman. There are thus four important constituents of shamanism : the ideological premise, or the supernatural world and the contacts with it; the shaman as the actor on behalf of a human group; the inspiration granted him by his helping spirits; and the extraordinary, ecstatic experiences of the shaman. Most definitions of shamanism disregard one or two of these constituents. Nioradze, for instance, finds the hallmark of shamanism in the immediate connection of a human being with the spirit world,<sup>12</sup> Shirokogoroff in the capacity of the shaman to use the spirits for an enhanced knowledge of the reality,<sup>13</sup> Dixon in the ability of the shamans "to have closer relations with the supernatural than other men",<sup>14</sup> Bouteiller in the shaman's relations both with the supernatural world and the social group whom he serves,<sup>15</sup> and Eliade – and after him Schröder – in the shaman's technique of ecstasy.<sup>16</sup> It is easy to see that each one of these definitions may lead to ambiguous interpretations. To select two of them, Dixon's shaman is simply a more pious and religious man than the rest of the people, and Eliade's ecstatic practitioner could be a prophet or a meditative saint or a Finnish trance-preacher as well as a shaman.<sup>17</sup> In justice to Eliade, however, we must quote his assertion that "as for the shamanic techniques of ecstasy, they do not exhaust all the varieties of ecstatic experience documented in the history of

<sup>11</sup> Eskeröd (1964), 85.

<sup>12</sup> Nioradze (1925), 90.

<sup>13</sup> Shirokogoroff (1935) B, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Dixon (1908), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Bouteiller (1950), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Eliade (1964), 4; Schröder (1964), 300.

<sup>17</sup> A prophet is, as is generally known, a person who has had a revelation from the gods or the spirit world and feels compelled to preach the revelation. Whereas a shaman may habitually fall in a trance, the prophet seldom does. The visionaries of the well-known Ghost Dance in North America were prophets, not trained shamans.

religions and religious ethnology. Hence any ecstatic cannot be considered a shaman; the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld."<sup>18</sup> We shall return to this characterization of the shamanistic ecstasy but for the moment note that it restricts Eliade's more sweeping definition of shamanism, without, however, pinpointing the importance of the shaman's social role.<sup>19</sup>

Let us now discuss more closely what I have called here the four constituents of shamanism.

### 3

The shaman establishes contacts with the supernatural world.

Much has been written about the supernatural world of shamanism. These approaches have, however, been rather insignificant. We learn, for instance, that Wilhelm Schmidt primarily combines shamanism with the agrarian and animistic ideology characterized by "moon mythology", ancestral spirits and spirits of the underworld – this is the "black shamanism" – whereas Eliade finds the true and original shamanistic complex in the "white shamanism" with its ecstatic journeys to the heavens and the heavenly spirits and gods.<sup>20</sup> This discussion of the original form of shamanism is rather conjectural ; indeed, it may be contested that we can make the sharp difference between white and black shamans as proposed by Schmidt.<sup>21</sup> Besides, in most cases it refers only to Yakut and Buryat shamanism.

The important thing is not the nature of the spirit world, its location and its inhabitants ; local historical developments blur the picture everywhere, and the only common denominator is the host of spirits from which the helping spirits of the shaman may be recruited (cf. below). The essential point is how, through its structure, cosmology makes the contact possible between shaman and spirits.

<sup>18</sup> Eliade (1964), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Eliade relegates the study of the social function of the shaman to the sociologist (and, I presume, the social anthropologist), while his own point of departure is that of the historian of religion (op. cit., xii). Even so I would regard it as impossible to define shamanism in a religious context without reference to the social role of the shaman.

<sup>20</sup> Eliade (1964), passim and 184, 495; Schmidt (1955), 633 and 696; Schröder (1964), 298.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Findeisen (1957), 202. The distinction between black and white shamanism is, however, old and was used by such early students of shamanism as Stadling (1912), 128 and Czaplicka (1914), 246.

In primitive societies all round the earth the direct contact with the supernatural world is often symbolized in the annual world renewal rite. A common element in this rite is the sacred post which stands as a symbol of the world pillar or world tree, the channel of communication between the upper world, our world and – in some cases – the lower world. Offerings are made in front of and even to the sacred pole which is in some quarters addressed as if it were a representative of the Supreme Being. The same pole or tree figures, however, in shamanism, where it serves as the vehicle for the mimic ascension of the shaman to the sky. Eliade who, more than any other scholar, has stressed the ties between the shaman and the cosmological world-pillar concept considers this point of primary importance: the shaman, he says, interiorized the cosmological ideogram, experienced it and used it as the itinerary for his ecstatic journeys.<sup>22</sup> It is indeed possible to go one step further. As Eliade has shown, the initiation of the shaman is in many places connected with his climbing the sacred pole (as among, e.g. the Tungus, Buryat, Dayak, Pomo, Carib and Araucan). Now it is a fact that such initiations may take place at the annual renewal rite, and that at this rite the shaman climbs the pole to meet the spirits (unless the spirits make their path down the pole to meet the shaman).<sup>23</sup> In other words, the pole climbing is part of a truly cosmic setting. The association between the sacred pole, other cosmological symbols and the shaman is thus very intimate, and it has – particularly in Siberia – influenced the experiences of the shaman on his way to the other world.

It would be premature, however, to insist that from the outset all contacts of the shaman with the supernatural world were mediated by the sacred pole. We have no means of proving that. Although shamanism in many places is connected with the symbolism of the world tree, or the shaman's tree ("Shamanenbaum") as it is called in Siberia, there are many cases of shamanism without this connection. Moreover, the world-pole or world-tree symbol alternates in shamanistic ideology with the world-river symbol, which in some cultures is identical with the river of death. The Buryat believe in a mythical river of the Universe, a world stream linking the upper world, the world of the humans and the lower world. When visiting the upper or lower world the shaman travels on this river.<sup>24</sup> It is apparent that world pole and world river are variants of the same cosmic

<sup>22</sup> Eliade (1964), 265.

<sup>23</sup> The connection with the renewal rite is apparent in the Americas, see Hultkrantz (1963), 107.

<sup>24</sup> See Anisimov (1963), A, 202 and (1963) B, 86, 98, 112; Diószegi (1968) A, 298.

ideogram, and that this ideogram stands for a communication both with the upper and the lower worlds. It does not only symbolize the means of ascension to the sky, as postulated by Eliade.

Still, it is possible to state that the concept of the world pillar or world tree has been much more common than the concept of the world river and that, where it existed together with shamanism, in one way or another it amalgamated with the latter. The shaman's pole-climbing, his dressing as a bird and "shamanistic flight", the drum prepared from the wood of the world tree,<sup>25</sup> the symbolism of the world tree and the three worlds on the drumskin, the progressive journey of the Yakut and Dolgan shaman via seven or nine poles to the realm of the gods, all these ideas and actions testify to the import of the world tree in shamanistic ideology. Evidently this concept achieved this importance because it provided shamanism with a model of communication with the other world.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4

The shaman is the intermediary between the human group and the supernaturals.

In elementary hunting societies the shaman is the servant of the powers and the representative of the social group before the powers. This relationship actualizes several interesting problems, of which a few will be dealt with here. The important problems of the shaman's position in his group, and the kind of socio-political organization that is combined with shamanism, must unfortunately be excluded from this summary discussion (cf. however, below, the ethnological position of shamanism).

As the agent of the social group before the powers the role of the shaman is similar to that of the priest, the cultic official. Indeed, in some ceremonies the shaman acts as the cult-leader, for instance at the horse sacrifices of the Altaians to the Heavenly God, *Bai-Ülgen*.<sup>27</sup> However, the shaman is only exceptionally in charge of the cult.<sup>28</sup> His primary task

<sup>25</sup> The drum is even interpreted as a symbol of the Universe – cf. e.g. Prokofjeva (1963), 150. This explains why all the cosmic worlds and their gods and spirits are depicted on a Lapp or a Tungus drum.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the Altaic drawing of the shaman's journey to the God of Heaven, conceived as a reduplication of the climbing of the cosmic tree, in Holmberg (1922–23), 135.

<sup>27</sup> Radloff (1884) vol. II. 20. Synopsis of the text published in the works by Czaplicka, Harva, Schmidt and Eliade.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Eliade (1964), 181. Cf. also his comments of the shaman's role at the horse sacrifice, op. cit., 198.

lies in opening the road to the supernatural powers through the medium of ecstasy. At the latter mentioned horse sacrifices the shaman made his ascent to *Bai-Ülgen* in ecstasy to find out if the sacrifice pleased him, and if he wanted more sacrifices.

The shaman's role as a mediator is founded on the idea that he alone is equipped to serve the interests of the society on the ecstatic level. In northern Eurasia, the gifts of shamanizing are usually inherited – Donner met a Samoyed shaman who had taken over his father who had succeeded his father and so on for seven generations.<sup>29</sup> This exclusivity may be contrasted with the situation in eastern North America where every man is supposed to have had supernatural experiences (the “vision quest”) and where the boundary-line between the shaman and other visionaries is quantitative rather than qualitative. Lowie considers that we have here a democratized shamanism.<sup>30</sup> A German scholar, Meinhard Schuster, offers, however, another theory according to which there was from the outset a general shamanizing, as exemplified today by the Chukchee and Koryak (who have a sort of “family shamanism” where each family has access to a drum) and the Naskapi of Labrador (where any hunter may strengthen his own free-soul to become a protective spirit for shamanistic exercises). Later, professional shamanism appeared as a secondary, specialized form of the general inspirational shamanism.<sup>31</sup>

There is no doubt that tendencies towards a general shamanizing occurred also in other places,<sup>32</sup> but it is less certain that they support Schuster's theory. Indeed, the latter is identical with the opinion launched at the turn of the century by Jochelson and Bogoras, the authorities on the Koryak and Chukchee, respectively, and in those days conforming to prevailing evolutionistic thoughts. Eliade notes that a number of facts disprove this view, and argues that the family shamanism represents a decadence. Among the facts, he adduces, are the competition for becoming a shaman, imitation of real séances without falling in trance (as against the true trance states of the old-time shamans as reported in Chukchee folklore), and the temporary exaltation at periodical festivals.<sup>33</sup> He concludes,

<sup>29</sup> Donner (1922), 136. Cf. Diószegi's genealogy of a Darkhat shaman family – Diószegi (1963) B, 73. and his identification of shaman families among the Karagas – Diószegi (1968) B, 242.

<sup>30</sup> Lowie (1934), 312.

<sup>31</sup> Schuster (1960), 36 and 39.

<sup>32</sup> This seems to have been the case among the northern Lapps where the ownership of helping spirits (*saivo*) was rather common among men and women. See Skanke (1945), 222.

<sup>33</sup> Eliade (1964), 249 and 252.



“As everywhere else in the history of religions, Siberian shamanism confirms the observation that it is the laymen who attempt to imitate the ecstatic experiences of certain privileged individuals, and not vice versa”.<sup>34</sup>

It is difficult to tell what has been the course of events, but the fact that the general shamanizing has occurred in isolated places (except in North America) and in widely differing forms makes the priority of professional shamanism most likely.

What, then, are the services that the professional shaman can provide for his clients? They are of different nature, and their only common denominator is the circumstance that they presuppose supernatural action. Furthermore, it is only occasionally that one and the same shaman masters all the shamanistic activities. If we have to pinpoint one central activity it should be that of the healer. However, not all shamans are healers. It is therefore difficult to define shamanism with reference to its professional functions.

It is characteristic that some Arctic peoples prefer to grade their shamans according to their powers rather than their functions. The Samoyed thus classify their shamans in strong, wonder-working shamans, medium shamans and small shamans; a fourth category are the dream-readers and soothsayers.<sup>35</sup>

People knew, however, in which specific cases they should consult the shaman. To single out one example, the Tofa (Karagas) visited the shaman when someone fell ill, if something got lost – for instance, a reindeer –, to find out how successful the hunt would be, or to have their future revealed.<sup>36</sup> Even if minor illnesses and small-scaled divination could be handled within the family circle, major afflictions and important divining issues were the field of the professional shaman in most Siberian and North American groups.

The main tasks of the shaman may be defined as follows.

(1) The shaman is the doctor. In this capacity it is his first obligation to make the right diagnosis of the disease, and to that end he calls on a spirit, unless through his own resources he is able to establish the cause. There are two main disease theories, soul loss and intrusion. At *soul loss*, the patient's soul (usually the free-soul, at least in Siberia) has left the body and either gone astray or been stolen by evil spirits, often the spirits of the dead. At *intrusion*, an object or a spirit has invaded the patient's body. In

<sup>34</sup> Eliade (1964), 252.

<sup>35</sup> Hajdú (1968), 165. Almost the same classification among the Yakut, see Czaplicka (1914), 196.

<sup>36</sup> Diószegi (1968) B, 301.

general it seems to hold true that soul loss is connected with total or partial loss of consciousness (coma, fever, delirium etc.), intrusion with physical injuries and ailments not involving alterations in consciousness.<sup>37</sup>

The shaman's procedure changes with the etiological picture. In soul loss he travels in extra-corporeal form to the other world to catch the soul of the patient from the spirits who hold it. In Siberia he travels in his shaman's dress which represents a bird, a reindeer or another deer. Findeisen identifies the dress as a symbol of a helping spirit, Diószegi as the symbol of one particular spirit, the so-called animal mother (cf. below).<sup>38</sup> These interpretations are evidently applicable in some cases; in other cases, the dress seems to represent the shaman's own hidden capacities, his free-soul. Harva's theory that the shaman's dress is a device to frighten dangerous spirits is less satisfactory.<sup>39</sup> Besides the dress also the drum and the drum-stick serve as travelling vehicles in Siberia: the shaman rides or sits on his drum which is addressed as his reindeer, or his horse (among the Yakut, Mongol and Buryat), or even his boat (to the lower world, among some Tungus), and the drumstick is conceived as a whip.<sup>40</sup> As has been referred to in the foregoing, the soul-journey of the shaman may be expressed as a monodrama, in which the shaman with his drum in his hand and dressed in his particular garment climbs the heavenly tree, at the same time as he relates to the audience the adventures that meet his free-soul in the different heavens.<sup>41</sup> In some reports there are descriptions of the shaman's fights with the spirits who have the sick person in their grip, and of his circumstantial troubles to catch the free-soul of the latter and restore it to its owner.

In the case of intrusion the shamanistic performance offers a different picture. The shaman summons all his assistant spirits to help him withdraw the intruding agent, whether the latter be animate or inanimate; sucking, drawing movements, sweeping with feathers and similar procedures are resorted to. Sometimes, however, the evil spirit is very strong and "possesses" the patient, and in such a case it has to be expelled by intricate ritual means.<sup>42</sup> Findeisen's statement that an evil spirit always takes

<sup>37</sup> Hultkrantz (1962-63), 348.

<sup>38</sup> Findeisen (1957), 81.; Diószegi (1963) A, 172.

<sup>39</sup> Harva (1938), 523. Also Harva's thesis that the shaman's dress has been developed from a mask for the head or the face (p. 524) is too far-fetched. The symbolism of the shaman's dress has been discussed in many papers by Anisimov and Diószegi and by Eliade in his monumental book on shamanism – Eliade (1964), 145.

<sup>40</sup> On the ideology of the drum, cf. in particular Emsheimer (1946), 166 and Eliade (1964), 168. On the drum as a boat, see Diószegi (1968) A, 298.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. e.g. Diószegi (1968) A, 302.

<sup>42</sup> According to Zelenin's theory this exorcism was once the beginning of shamanism. Zelenin (1936).

the patient's body in possession when his soul is leaving is not congruent with the facts.<sup>43</sup>

The shaman's agency as a healer has been compared with the psychoanalyst's and the psychiatrist's activities to the same end. There are resemblances, but it would scarcely be meaningful to emphasize them.<sup>44</sup>

(2) The shaman is the diviner.<sup>45</sup> The divination reveals unknown events in past times, things and persons lost, and future things to happen. Some shamans, such as the Altaian *yadachi*, can even influence the future, in this case the weather.<sup>46</sup> There are two main categories of diviners. One, the shamans who summon their helping spirits which either directly or after some research elsewhere tell the shaman and, through him, the people the information required. The other, the shamans who act without the assistance of spirits, solely on the basis of their own enlightened pre-cognitive talents. Among the Chukchee such shamans were held in very great esteem.<sup>47</sup> Shamans of the latter category not infrequently resort to using shoulder-blades which when heated expose cracks whose pattern gives the desired answers. Or they divine from the hand or from signs in Nature, etc.

(3) The shaman is the psychopomp who escorts the souls of the dead to their new realm in the other life. This is a most important task in many cultures, for instance, among the Goldi at the Amur river, among whom the shaman also directs the memorial ceremonies for the dead.<sup>48</sup> As in the 'soul-loss' therapy the shaman dispatches his free-soul to accompany the dead person.

(4) The shaman is the hunting magician of the group, both as a diviner and as a charmer of animals. The Forest Lapps of Finland, for instance, have cherished the belief that in a magic way the shaman may call the herds of wild reindeer to the hunting grounds of his own group.<sup>49</sup> Similar ideas occur in many places in Siberia and North America.

(5) The shaman is a sacrificial priest only in exceptional cases, as has been demonstrated above. The connection between shamanism and offerings may sometimes be traced: among the Buryat, where the shaman con-

<sup>43</sup> Findeisen (1957), 237.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis (1971), 192; Opler (1936), 1371.

<sup>45</sup> See Caquet and Leibovici (1968), vol. II. particularly the articles by Lot-Falck (1968) A, 247 and Hultkrantz (1968) A, 69.

<sup>46</sup> Czaplicka (1914), 200.

<sup>47</sup> Bogoras (1904-10), vol. II, 431.

<sup>48</sup> Sternberg (1925), 477.

<sup>49</sup> Itkonen (1960), See also Findeisen (1957), 137 and Eliade (1964), 183.

ducts such ceremonies, he knows through his powers what sacrifices shall be held.<sup>50</sup> A similar example from the Altaians has already been presented.

A particular chapter in shamanism worthy of a lengthy study is the role of the woman as shamaness. The whole subject needs a thorough reassessment, a task far beyond the pretensions of this article. Associated with this question is the problem of the change of sex in some shamans, a change which apparently may be imitative or genuine.<sup>51</sup> In some cases identification with a mythical personage seems to lie behind the ritual change of sex.<sup>52</sup>

## 5

The shaman receives his inspiration from his guardian or helping spirits.<sup>53</sup>

Much has been written on this subject, and only some major points will be discussed here. The auxiliary spirits may be said to express the supernatural aid that the shaman needs in order to establish the contacts with the other world. It is their arrival at the shamanizing act that marks the beginning of the trance, they deliver messages from the world of spirits, they assist the shaman on his way to the supernatural realm. Sometimes the shaman imitates them, sometimes he refers to their activities by lifting up small wooden images that portray them – here is the difference between imitative and demonstrative shamanism as I have outlined it elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> Sometimes the shaman conjures the spirits into his drum or his ceremonial dress. Among the Yakut, for instance, the shaman is ornated with a copper plate on his breast, called *ämägyat*, which somehow impersonates a mighty spirit by the same name.<sup>55</sup>

The question whether the shaman is possessed by the spirits will be dealt with later. For all we know, the spirits may exist side by side with the shaman, as his called-on informants, his escorts during the shamanistic journey or (if they have animal-form) riding animals: the bird for rides through the air, the reindeer for rides on land, the fish for rides in the sea.

<sup>50</sup> Czaplicka (1914), 191.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Ehrenberg (1970).

<sup>52</sup> Johansons (1972).

<sup>53</sup> In an as yet unpublished paper the Swedish scholar Louise Bäckman makes a clear distinction between the helping spirits of the shaman, assisting but not protective, and the guardian spirits of the common man, protective and benevolent. This distinction applies to Lapp spirit beliefs but may have validity wherever we find shamanism.

<sup>54</sup> Hultkrantz (1957), 255.

<sup>55</sup> Czaplicka (1914), 212.

Sometimes, however, we are told that the shaman turns into his accompanying spirit. These notices need not be taken as proofs of possession, as Paulson rightly states.<sup>56</sup> We have here, in the world of religious imagination, an oscillation between the conception of spirits in animal guise and the conception of the shaman's own extra-corporeal form of appearance, his zoomorphic free-soul.<sup>57</sup> The free-soul often shows itself in animal form and can, moreover, assume the same distance to his owner as the helping spirit, as I have shown for North America and Paulson for northern Eurasia.<sup>58</sup> There is thus a mutual attraction between the spirit and the free-soul ideas.<sup>59</sup> To make a clear distinction of these concepts in action would purely be an academic undertaking. Anisimov seems to express the same point of view when he declares that the shaman, although he appears in an anthropomorphic form, is no ordinary person but divided among his helping spirits.<sup>60</sup>

The provenience of the spirits is an interesting problem. Friedrich was quite right when he anchored the shamanistic ideas in the conceptual world of the hunters, the world dominated by the thought on animals and animal-like spirits – or the *Tierschicht*, as Findeisen said.<sup>61</sup> Friedrich saw the hunting ideology reflected particularly in the ideas of the shaman's death and revival by the spirits at the end of his vocation, the ecstatically experienced *rite de passage* of the shaman: exactly like in the old hunting rituals the bones of the consumed animals are arranged in order to make their revival possible, the shamans are restituted to life after having been dismembered by the spirits.<sup>62</sup> Several other authors have drawn attention to the theriomorphism of the helping spirits: eagle, loon, bear, reindeer, sturgeon and other animals figure in the cast.<sup>63</sup> Ivar Paulson thought it possible to associate the helping spirits with the concept of the masters of

<sup>56</sup> Paulson (1964), 137.

<sup>57</sup> Paulson (1964), 124 and 137.

<sup>58</sup> The soul beliefs of the Siberian–Arctic–North American areas have been analysed by Paulson (1958) and Hultkrantz (1953).

<sup>59</sup> The importance of the soul ideology for the understanding of shamanism has been stressed by many recent researchers on shamanism, Findeisen, Closs and others.

<sup>60</sup> Anisimov (1963) B, 114.

<sup>61</sup> Findeisen (1957), 18.

<sup>62</sup> Friedrich (1941–43), 43; see also Vajda (1964), 279, Findeisen (1957), 27 and Narr (1959), 271. On the treatment of the bones of the animals in northern Eurasia, see Paulson (1959) A, 269. Schröder, however, finds the prototype to the dismembering of the shaman in the myth of the dismembering of the cosmic primeval being ("the Ymer myth", according to the folklorists): Schröder (1964), 321. It is more likely that the death and revival motif in puberty (or tribal) initiation, shaman's vocation and animal ceremonialism has been projected into the Ymer myth.

<sup>63</sup> For an illustration, see Vasilevič (1968), 342.

the animals.<sup>64</sup> Undoubtedly many of these spirits belong to this category, especially in Siberia; others are perhaps animal spirits without any decisive function. Harva meant that some of the theriomorphic assistant spirits had been recruited from totemistic spirits,<sup>65</sup> and Findeisen was positive that the important “animal mother” (*Tiermutter*) among the Yakut and Dolgan has a totemistic origin<sup>66</sup> Whatever its origin the descriptions of this remarkable and enigmatic spirit fit, to a certain extent, the concept of the *nagual* or *alter ego* – the guardian spirit that also represents the life and strength of its *protégé* – as Vajda has pointed out.<sup>67</sup> The close connection between shamans and their helping spirits may also be observed among Lapps, Samoyed and Goldi and some North American tribes.

The spirits in animal shape thus constitute the majority of the shaman’s assisting spirits, but they do not stand alone.<sup>68</sup> The most important of them all is a controlling or main spirit who often takes up his abode inside the shaman, and this spirit is in many cases identical with the shaman’s ancestor or his dead predecessor. The concept of a ghost as the head assistant spirit is common in Siberia and in North America as well (in the Spirit lodge complex). In Siberia the ghost is a dead shaman, in North America this need not be the case. Although it is of human origin the Siberian head spirit may show itself in zoomorphic form, as when the Tungus shaman’s ancestor spirit appears as a loon.<sup>69</sup> In North America the ghost who is the shaman’s main spirit is supposed to be an owl.<sup>70</sup> Among the Yakut the main spirit and the animal mother are both important, although according to Troščanski the latter seems to be the most important.<sup>71</sup>

As Vajda rightly says, “without the belief in helping spirits shamanism cannot be spoken of”.<sup>72</sup> The ecstatic who attains the other world without the help of spirits is certainly no shaman.

<sup>64</sup> Paulson (1964), 124.

<sup>65</sup> Harva (1938), 468.

<sup>66</sup> Findeisen (1957), 33. On the animal mother cf. Friedrich and Buddruss (1955), 44 and 160.

<sup>67</sup> Vajda (1964), 272.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Diószegi (1968) B, 246.

<sup>69</sup> Harva (1938), 475. The loon is a mysterious bird in Siberia and northern North America and connected with many legends.

<sup>70</sup> Hultkrantz (1967), 63.

<sup>71</sup> Czaplicka (1914), 183.

<sup>72</sup> Vajda (1964), 271.

The shaman has ecstatic experiences.

With Eliade, Arbman, Lewis and Schröder we must stress the ecstatic nature of the shamanistic act. The ecstasy is the particular way in which the shaman establishes his contact with the supernatural powers. But what, then, is ecstasy?

May I here refer to what I have earlier written on this subject – that is, on the subject of trance, which is indeed the same thing, the term “ecstasy” being used by students of religion and ethnology, the term “trance” by psychopathologists and parapsychologists.<sup>73</sup> “The trance”, I wrote, “cannot be compared with ordinary comatose states. In its genuine form it is a psychogenic, hysteroid mode of reaction forming itself according to the dictates of the mind. It may also be described as a mentally anormal state of introversion which may be provoked suggestively or with suggestively acting artificial means (drugs, narcotics, etc.), and which is an expression for the conscious or unconscious desires of the visionary. The trance states may be of varying quality and intensity, from light trance to deep trance with amnesia – which is practically tantamount to complete unconsciousness – but the different types may gradually merge into each other.”<sup>74</sup> This definition comes rather close to the definition of ecstasy launched by Ernst Arbman, probably the best *connoisseur* of religious ecstatic states. Arbman says that he has “chosen to designate and describe the ecstasy or the religious trance as a state of suggestive absorption”,<sup>75</sup> and he expounds the matter thus: “The ecstasy ... can from the psychological point of view only be understood as a specific religious form of suggestive absorption in the complex of beliefs which in the state preceding it has constituted the sole, exclusive, or totally dominating object of the consciousness, and from which it may thus always be shown to derive its content and predetermined, strictly closed and organized visionary dream or experience.”<sup>76</sup> It should be observed that the foregoing definitions lay the stress on the psychological process, not on the contents or varying forms of ecstasy.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Findeisen (1957), 180.

<sup>74</sup> Hultkrantz (1957), 236.

<sup>75</sup> Arbman (1963–70) vol. I. xv and 224.

<sup>76</sup> Arbman (1963–70) vol. I. xv and 478. Alois Closs who partly quotes this passage thinks that “absorption” here means a kind of *unio mystica* where the ego is swallowed up by the supernatural entity, and consequently considers that such a definition does not fit the reality of shamanism – Closs (1969) B, 78. Here Closs has misunderstood Arbman: absorption refers to absorption into a complex of ideas, not identification with another being.

It is obvious, however, that the shamanistic trance only exposes certain forms of ecstasy ; for instance, we never find the mystical union with the Divinity so typical for the ecstatic experiences in the "higher" forms of religious mysticism. As we have seen, Eliade understands the shaman's ecstasy as a psychic state during which his soul goes to the sky or the underworld.<sup>77</sup> In other words, extra-corporeal experiences make up the shamanistic trance. Such experiences are indeed very important factors of the shamanistic complex, particularly where they correspond to the magical treatment of the soul-loss diseases (see above). However, there is another form of shamanistic experience that Eliade's definition does not account for, *viz.* the enlightenment of the shaman through the arrival of auxiliary spirits. So many *séances* of divination and curing take place in a state of ecstasy (according to our definition above), without the shaman's soul leaving him.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Eliade seems to underrate the role of divination in shamanism, and he is puzzled when a shaman is said to be in ecstasy without any extracorporeal journey being implied.<sup>79</sup> We may thus widen the concept of shamanistic trance to infer two distinctive experiences, one, the extracorporeal flight of the shaman with the assistance of helping spirits, two, on the spot information passed to the shaman by helping spirits. In both cases the *séance* opens with the calling of these spirits. The trance-state is identical with the mysterious world where they appear. Shamanism is unthinkable without the helping spirits, as we have stated before.

It is possible that Eliade's restriction of the concept of shamanistic trance lies behind his evaluation of this trance as even and intensive. He pronounces that "the shaman's trance, although having the same ecstatic intensity nevertheless differs in regard to its morphology".<sup>80</sup> This is, I think, scarcely the case. Firstly, the immersion into ecstasy is a gradual process, exactly as the *scala mystica* of Catholic mystics. Those who attend a shamanistic *séance* are quite aware of the "sinking" of the magician, the step-by-step absorption of his consciousness in the world of belief, as Arberman phrases it. Drumming, singing, calling on the spirits mark the first level of meditation, imaginary actions on the part of the shaman characterize the light ecstasy, stupor and catalepsy the last phase of the shamanistic

<sup>77</sup> Eliade (1950), 299 and (1964), 5.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. for instance the Shaking Tent-complex of North America, or the divinatory *séances* of northern Asia.

<sup>79</sup> Eliade (1964), 194.

<sup>80</sup> Eliade (1950), 302.



trance – at least in the “great” shamanism. Secondly, the depth of the trance varies with the act of shamanizing. The hunting for a lost soul may entail a cataleptic trance for the shaman, whereas the divination procedure may, on the contrary, entail a more shallow waking trance. Although in both cases the absorption of the consciousness, or monoideism, is probably the same, the effects of it differ due to the supposed strain of the experience. Little attention has been paid to this problem which deserves a fuller investigation.

In contradistinction to Eliade, Findeisen considers that the shamanistic ecstasy has its main feature in the shaman’s being possessed.<sup>81</sup> He is a *Besessenheitspriester*, a “possessed priest”.<sup>82</sup> He is a priest, for he makes (as we have seen) horse sacrifices, and he is possessed by spirits while his soul wanders or is in another way dislocated. The shaman is thus a spiritualistic medium, and consequently can compare with similar mediums within modern occidental spiritualism.<sup>83</sup> Now, these interpretations of Findeisen’s have provoked serious criticism. Ivar Paulson found it impossible to accept his thesis that the shaman is a possessed priest. He wrote, “by possession the students of the psychology of religion understand something different from what is the case with shamans, at least as a rule. Even if the shaman takes into himself, as the term often runs, the spirits, he nevertheless retains his own personality at that. He is the master, and not the slave or a passive instrument of the spirits, as is usually the case with a spiritualistic medium. There are certainly transitions with combinations of both phenomena, shamanism and mediumism, but basically there is a great difference in kind between them. Possession is more a characteristic of mediumism, the ‘soul-journey’ (the dispatching of the so-called free-soul, i.e. the person himself), however, a characteristic of shamanism.”<sup>84</sup> It is striking how close this opinion comes to Eliade’s: the latter also underlines the importance of the soul-journey, and he dismisses possession as an occasional phenomenon in shamanism.<sup>85</sup>

Findeisen rejects these interpretations. To him, ecstasy in shamanism is both extra-corporeal activity and possession (by ancestral spirits, etc.), at least in Siberia; and the journey to the other world is possible only if

<sup>81</sup> Possession is used here in its psychological sense, and not in the alternative sense, in the English language, of occupancy (for instance, as a consequence of the intrusion into man of an object or a spirit) without loss of the person’s personality. Cf. Clements (1932), 188.

<sup>82</sup> Findeisen (1957), 7, 201, 237.

<sup>83</sup> Findeisen (1957), 180.

<sup>84</sup> Paulson (1959) B, 225.

<sup>85</sup> Eliade (1964), 6.

spirits have entered the body of the shaman and liberated his soul from its fetters.<sup>86</sup> In a polemic article directed against Paulson's criticism of his book on shamanism Findeisen states his case once more and supplies some evidence to illustrate it. He repeats emphatically that "possession is the phenomenological centre of shamanism – without possession no shamanism".<sup>87</sup> Findeisen's article provoked in turn a rejoinder from another well-known writer on shamanism, Stiglmayr. Point for point he contested Findeisen's arguments, in particular the idea that shamanism is a spiritualistic religion (it is no religion, and the spirits of the dead have no particular importance which would justify the use of the concept spiritualistic). At the same time, however, he ascribed an important role to possession in North Asiatic shamanism.<sup>88</sup> He doubted, though, that this observation was valid for shamanism outside of Siberia.<sup>89</sup>

A British anthropologist, Ioan Lewis, has recently written about shamanism and possession in a way that reminds us of Findeisen – although he appears to know nothing of the latter and his publications. Like Findeisen he characterizes all shamans as medium and as practising controlled possession.<sup>90</sup> Like Findeisen, he also identifies trance as possession, that is, possession with a change of ego-consciousness.<sup>91</sup> As always in Anglo-Saxon studies the two meanings of possession – as possessing something, and as being possessed – play havoc in this otherwise intelligently written work.

In order to be able to discuss the problem of possession in shamanism, let us first find out what possession, in the psychological sense, is about. True possession, says Andrae, is a state in which a foreign being seizes a man's body so that his own personality is entirely or partly expelled. If he is conscious of his own state the possessed man does not consider the occupying agent as a part of his ego but as a completely foreign personality, and the spirit talks about the possessed person as another individual.<sup>92</sup> The possession is total, if the person has been entirely ousted by the spirit

<sup>86</sup> Findeisen (1957), 237. Eliade considers, on the contrary, that only when the soul of the shaman was on its voyage in another world could spirits take possession of his body. Consequently, he argues, "shamanism cannot be 'deduced' from the experience of possession". See Eliade (1961), 155.

<sup>87</sup> Findeisen (1960), 213.

<sup>88</sup> As a representative of the Vienna school he follows Father Schmidt who made possession the hallmark of "true" shamanism. Cf. Schmidt (1955), 696.

<sup>89</sup> Stiglmayr (1962), 40.

<sup>90</sup> Lewis (1971), 56 and 64.

<sup>91</sup> Lewis (1971), 30 and 50.

<sup>92</sup> Andrae (1968), 91.

and the normal personality is unconscious of the presence and actions of the same spirit, and partial, if the person retains his consciousness but identifies a foreign being within himself who forces him to actions against his own will.<sup>93</sup> In either case it is a matter of “doubling” the personality – or dissociation as psychopathologists would say – provoked, says Arbman, by a belief, converted to suggestion.<sup>94</sup> In Christian religion the dissociation paves the way for suppressed anti-social and anti-religious forces inside the human being, as exemplified in the demoniac possessions of mediaeval nuns; in shamanism, on the other hand, the powers which seek their entrance into man are mostly helpful and are even invited. In other words, they are socially approved and therefore of a gentle nature.

Although some authors make a distinction between trance, or ecstasy, and possession,<sup>95</sup> there is no reason to do so. “Possession” is a believer’s description of a trance state, his interpretation of what the trance is about in a certain situation. Total possession takes place in a state of deep trance with subsequent amnesia, whereas partial possession operates at a more lucid level of exterior consciousness, a kind of shallow trance where the person retains a certain control of himself. As Arbman observes, however, “a partially possessed person may easily run the risk of falling into a [deeper] trance and of thereby being afflicted with total possession”.<sup>96</sup> The interpretation of the trance as possession may, for the onlookers, be induced by traditional beliefs, the situations involved, and observations of the trance procedure; violent distortions of the face, changes in the voice, cramp and other signs of obsession are of course guiding to a credulous public. Usually, however, the performer’s own experiences and convictions are decisive for the public’s evaluation – and, we may add, for the psychologist’s analysis.

Possession in the sense defined here, total or partial, has been common in many religions. Radin made the rash statement that possession has been the “desired and genuine” religious experience in almost all parts of the

<sup>93</sup> Andrae (1968), 92 and 100. See also Arbman (1963–70) vol. II, 379.

<sup>94</sup> Arbman (1963–70), vol. II, 380.

<sup>95</sup> So, for instance, Lewis (1971), 45 and Bourguignon (1965). The latter maintains that spirit possession often, but not always, is accompanied by psychic dissociation (trance), and differentiates between supernatural causation, possession and dissociation as independent factors. In a more recent article the same author vindicates that it is possible to distinguish between trance behaviour and associated beliefs, possession beliefs and associated behaviour, and a third category, possession trance, which is a hybrid between the other two, cf. Bourguignon (1968) B. Much depends of course on how we define phenomena, but does possession at any time occur without psychic dissociation?

<sup>96</sup> Arbman (1963–70), vol. II, 380.

world, a statement to which it is difficult to subscribe. At the same time, however, he remarked more soberly that spirit possession has been the predominant religious experience in primitive cultures with a more complicated social organization, and particularly where there existed a social stratification and slavery.<sup>97</sup> It is possible that he founded his opinion on the distribution findings of Forrest E. Clements who regarded possession as a comparatively late phenomenon, an outgrowth of the spirit-intrusion idea, and who observed "the coincidence of its areas of elaboration with the regions of organized religion".<sup>98</sup> More recently Bourguignon has arrived at the same conclusion: trance states are interpreted as caused by spirit possession most often in cultures with a greater social complexity.<sup>99</sup> Now shamanism is above all a phenomenon of simpler societies, be they gathering and hunting societies or less developed pastoral societies with reindeer nomadism (cf. below). In so far as possession occurs at all in shamanism it is therefore scarcely a constitutive trait here, even if through regional specialization it should have become a characteristic trait in Siberian shamanism.<sup>100</sup>

It is, however, difficult to characterize Siberian shamanism as a case of institutional possession.<sup>101</sup> Schmidt, Findeisen and Stiglmayr have all done so, but scarcely convincingly ; indeed, Stiglmayr rejects the proofs of possession adduced by Findeisen.<sup>102</sup> Already fifty years ago the well-known psychologist, Oesterreich went through the ethnographical material of Siberian shamanism. He arrived at the conclusion that nowhere in this material is there any certain evidence of possession, although the dramatic, mimic representations of meetings with spirits which the shaman performs, and in which he imitates the voices and behaviour of spirits, may be interpreted as relics of ancient possessional states.<sup>103</sup> Arberman endorses Oesterreich's view on the lack of convincing evidence but does not accept his evolutionistic inferences. What may sometimes appear as true possession among such tribes as the Yakut, Tungus, Goldi, Yukaghir and Chukchee is basically a role play in which the shaman impersonates

<sup>97</sup> Radin (1951), 83.

<sup>98</sup> Clements (1932), 224.

<sup>99</sup> Bourguignon (1968) A. A distribution analysis will also be found in the same author's article, Bourguignon (1968) B.

<sup>100</sup> A similar development of Siberian shamanism has been assumed by Vajda (1964), 269.

<sup>101</sup> Knutsson makes a distinction between institutional or expected possession and extra-institutional or spontaneous possession, a distinction I find most meaningful. See Knutsson (MS).

<sup>102</sup> Stiglmayr (1962).

<sup>103</sup> Oesterreich (1921), 293.

the spirits, sometimes in a dialogue form.<sup>104</sup> Sometimes, says Arbman, this conscious, deliberate action passes over into an unconscious ecstatic automatism, a visionary dream, which may be mistaken for a possessional state. It is not possession, however, for the shaman may impersonate one spirit after another, and even if one of them, his main helper, is supposed to have taken up his abode within the shaman all the rest are outside him.<sup>105</sup> Arbman thinks that in North America and Siberia there are no cases of possession in shamanism because of the absence of “a living and typically developed *belief* in possession”.<sup>106</sup>

A perusal of the classic descriptions of Siberian shamanism may on the whole give support to Arbman’s interpretation. We can, in any case, state that the material is not sufficiently detailed to allow the possession hypothesis except in a few cases. Findeisen and other supporters of this hypothesis have been too rash in their handling of the material, taking for granted what really should be investigated. It is also obvious that from a functional point of view possession should be less apt to suit most shamanizing experiences and rituals, which in their turn, depend upon the tasks incumbent upon the shaman. Eliade and Paulson are unanimous that the shaman is the master of the spirits he has at his disposal, not their servant;<sup>107</sup> but, as Schröder, Vajda and Stiglmayr have pointed out, the relationship is not so simple as that.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, on his journeys to other worlds the shaman has sometimes to fight demoniac spirits who withstand his wishes.

Although it seems that in most cases of alleged possession true trance possession may be ruled out, there remains a suspicion of doubt, since the material is too incomplete to give definite certainty. In spite of his assertion that the possession tradition is missing in Siberia and North America Arbman admits that it plays a role for the hysterical attacks among unmarried or just married Samoyed women.<sup>109</sup> And Eliade is aware of ex-

<sup>104</sup> As Honko says in an important paper, “it is not enough that [the shaman] has visions or is in a state of trance – he must himself formulate interpretations of them which will serve the community” – Honko (1969), 39. Cf. also the analysis of the Yukaghir séance in Honko’s paper, where instead of possession Honko speaks of role identification – Honko (1969), 46.

<sup>105</sup> Arbman (1963–70), vol. III, 326. As Shirokogoroff remarks about the Tungus shaman, his body is a receptacle for the helping spirit – Shirokogoroff (1935) A. If not thus located the spirit is of imminent danger to common man. Anisimov says that by yawning the shaman receives the spirit into himself — Anisimov (1963), B, 101.

<sup>106</sup> Arbman (1963–70), vol. III, 332.

<sup>107</sup> Eliade (1964), 6; Paulson (1959) B, 225.

<sup>108</sup> Schröder (1964), 320; Vajda (1964), 271; Stiglmayr (1962).

<sup>109</sup> Arbman (1963–70), vol. III, 281 referring to the neuropathic “sobbing” disease.

ceptional cases of states of possession which, however, he does not find typical for shamanism.<sup>110</sup> Certainly, there are shamanistic feats which seem to presuppose a state of voluntary possession. Shirokogoroff and Jochelson tell us of Tungus shamans who, during the *séance*, speak the language of the spirit that has entered them, and this language is identical with the language of some neighbouring tribe, Yakut, Koryak, Manchu etc., which the shaman is unfamiliar with when in a lucid state.<sup>111</sup> Or Shirokogoroff relates how the body of the Tungus shaman swells when the spirit of a pregnant woman takes him in possession.<sup>112</sup> True, it is indeed possible to interpret these phenomena as products of unconscious ecstatic automatism, as Arbman would have argued. But where is the exact boundary-line between this state and possession? Arbman's answer would have been: all depends upon whether there is a living belief in possession. Contrary to my esteemed teacher and colleague I would say that the cases to which I have just referred definitely speak in favour of the presence of possession ideas among Siberian peoples.

To summarize, we find now and then possession states in Siberian shamanism, as we do in the closely connected shamanism of the American northwest coast. (Clements thinks that the Arctic and Northwest Coast occurrences of possession are continuous with the Siberian distribution.)<sup>113</sup> These possession cases seem, however, to have been very occasional and not at all so frequent that, together with Schmidt, we may see them as manifesting the apex of true (black) shamanism, or, with Findeisen, we may characterize the shamans as priests of possession. In evaluating the occurrence of possession in Siberian shamanism it seems to me we have to make a distinction – too often overlooked – between the vocation of the shaman and the shaman in action. During his *vocation*, the future shaman is harassed by spirits (often, but not always, beings who become his helping spirits) who make him seemingly insane and finally “kill” him in order to resuscitate him as a new, power-filled being, a shaman. In several cases the spirits are reported to have possessed the shaman. It is obviously so, as Arbman has himself pointed out, that states of obsession easily develop into states of possession.<sup>114</sup> During his *shamanistic activity*, on the other hand, the shaman imitates the spirits in a trance of varying

<sup>110</sup> Eliade (1964), 6; cf. op. cit., 81.

<sup>111</sup> See Harva (1938), 463; Jochelson (1905–8), 52.

<sup>112</sup> Harva (1938), 462.

<sup>113</sup> Clements (1932), 242.

<sup>114</sup> Arbman (1963–70), vol. III, 267.

depth, and sometimes exerts a hypnotic influence on his audience, suggesting their acceptance of a possession;<sup>115</sup> alleged cases of possession may thus come down to nothing else than genial imitation. In some cases, however, the step between imitation and experienced possession is very slight, and the latter may take place.

These conclusions are very preliminary, and should be tested against a complete investigation and covering of the shamanistic materials – a gigantic task. Only through a full documentation can we solve such further problems as the situation when possession occurs, the depth of the trance, and the presence of total or partial possession.

Before leaving the subject of the shaman's ecstasy some words should be dedicated to the hotly debated problem whether this ecstasy, be it interpreted as a visionary dream or as a state of possession, is of psychopathological kind.<sup>116</sup> That this is the case has been postulated by many writers, such as Ohlmarks, Devereux and Silverman,<sup>117</sup> and even field-researchers like Bogoras, Zelenin and Shirokogoroff have expressed similar opinions.<sup>118</sup> In this connection shamanism has been compared with hysterical phenomena spread in different parts of the Arctic regions, such as the Samoyed possession cramps, already noted, and the convulsive trembling and imitation movements among Tungus men. The common diagnosis of these and similar nervous disorders is "arctic hysteria", a term introduced in the scientific debate (as far as I know) by Czaplicka.<sup>119</sup> Extreme passivity, shyness and hiding, enforced crying, shouting and laughing, wild running and other sudden movements characterize this peculiar psychic state. Its closest parallel seems to be the Indonesian *lâttah* with the associated *amok*-running.<sup>120</sup> Proceeding from this parallel Czaplicka supposes that common racial dispositions are responsible for these hysterical outbursts. She dismisses the theory that climatic conditions in the Arctic should have been influential. Novakovsky and Ohlmarks, on the other hand, stress the importance of the environmental conditions in provoking arctic hysteria: the barren, monotonous landscape, the cold climate, the dark winters, deficiency in vitamins, etc.<sup>121</sup> It seems reason-

<sup>115</sup> Anisimov (1963) B, 102.

<sup>116</sup> The latest contributions to this debate have been made by Lewis (1971) and Lot-Falck (1968) B.

<sup>117</sup> Ohlmarks (1939), 19; Devereux (1956), 23; Silverman (1967), 21.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Lewis (1971), 179; Ohlmarks (1939), 20.

<sup>119</sup> Czaplicka (1914), 307. The term was, however, used by several field investigators before this date.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Czaplicka (1914), 321.

<sup>121</sup> Novakovsky (1942), 112; Ohlmarks (1939), 15.

able to assume that, to a certain extent, both theories are right: the Arctic environment executes a definite stress on individuals, and instances of arctic hysteria may be taken from the Lapps in the West to the Eskimo in the East. At the same time a labile nervous constitution which is hereditary seems to be implied; it is for instance a fact that certain Tungus families have more of this psychic disposition than others. And, what is particularly interesting, shamans rise from just these neuropathically disposed families.<sup>122</sup>

There are indeed hysterical or hysteroid traits in shamanism as we know it from Siberia and North America: the calling of the shaman, with all associated obsessional features, definitely speaks in favour of this interpretation, but also the convulsions and fits in the *séances* seem to actualize, although to a lesser degree, the hypothesis of an hysterical syndrome. And still, the shaman does not succumb to these hysterical attacks, he conquers them by adapting them to the role he assumes, the role of the shaman. It has often been said that the shaman heals himself from his hysterical disease during the vocation process, and this seems to be true to a certain extent. There is little evidence, however, to support Lommel's theory that this restitution of the shaman's personality involves his appearance as master artist, the creator of primitive art.<sup>123</sup> Certainly, shamanistic experiences lie behind some artistic expressions, but there are other sources as well.

Our conclusion is, then, that the shaman has a hysteroid disposition which, however, does not provoke any mental disorder. Instead it is released in confirmation with existing belief patterns at the shamanistic calling, when it appears as involuntary ecstasy, and in the shamanistic trance, when it appears as voluntary ecstasy. Even a state of possession can be brought about voluntarily. In most cases it has the character of an hysterically conditioned phenomenon, but there are probably cases without such preconditions and where the possession is induced by means of auto-hypnotic procedures.<sup>124</sup>

Of course, the question of whether we face a psychopathological state in the shamanistic trance is not solved entirely. But with what measure

<sup>122</sup> Vasilevič (1968), 343.

<sup>123</sup> Lommel (1967). Cf. also the discussion of this work by different authors in Lommel (1970), 39.

<sup>124</sup> Arbman (1963–70), vol. III, 336. Arbman's interpretation of shamanistic psychology is close to my own. He considers that the future shaman's dream of himself as becoming a prominent shaman matures to a fixed conviction. "Where such a dream ... has found its proper soil in an hysterical psychic disposition, it has obviously been easily converted into an overwhelming hypnotic suggestion", Arbman (1963–70), vol. III, 299.



shall we proceed? Kroeber reminds us, "What higher cultures stigmatize as personal, nonreal and nonsocial, abnormal and pathological, lower cultures treat as objective, conducive to ability, and socially useful."<sup>125</sup> Wegrocki makes an important distinction between the statistical concept of abnormality, covering deviations from a normative mean, and the psychiatric concept of abnormality, the tendency to choose a type of reaction which represents an escape from a conflict-producing situation.<sup>126</sup> It is difficult to see that in either sense the shaman's behaviour is pathological. Indeed, Bryce Boyer, himself both psychoanalyst and anthropologist, has reached the conclusion that "those who become shamans may be innately creative individuals who have more capacity than their culture mates to use regression in the service of the ego and, as a facet of this capacity, are more able to convincingly employ conscious and unconscious impostureship. If this hypothesis be valid, it would be logical to state that, in contrast to Devereux's contention, at least some 'shamans are less afflicted psychopathologically than their culture mates.'"<sup>127</sup> Boyer characterizes Apache shamans as both more hysterically conditioned and more healthy than their tribesmen.<sup>128</sup>

If, now, after this perusal of some pertaining materials to define shamanism, we turn to our second task, the culture-historical aspect, we shall here only make a cursory attempt at elucidating the ethnological position of the shamanistic complex. Since we deal with a world-wide phenomenon it is very difficult to create a satisfactory synthesis. Even those researchers who have concentrated their historical analysis to the central field, Siberia, have developed very divergent and contradictory theories. As examples may be mentioned Zelenin's and Anisimov's evolutionistic interpretations, Ohlmarks' reconstructions from psychological evidence and Schmidt's cultural stratification of types of shamanism.<sup>129</sup>

Instead of trying to create an historical survey of shamanism, a hopeless task because of lack of sources, shamanism will here be seen in its cultural and ecological context. Indirectly such an approach gives us certain historical clues, as I have tried to show in an earlier publication.<sup>130</sup>

It is evident that shamanism is deeply anchored in the old hunting cultures with their individualism, animal-spirit beliefs and hunting symbol-

<sup>125</sup> Kroeber (1948), 299. Cf. also Benedict (1934), 59 and Foley (1935), 279.

<sup>126</sup> Wegrocki (1939), 166.

<sup>127</sup> Boyer (1964), 254; cf. also Boyer (1969), 307.

<sup>128</sup> Boyer, Klopfer, Brawer and Kawai (1964), 178 and 179.

<sup>129</sup> Ränk (1967), 15; Voigt (1965), 379.

<sup>130</sup> Hultkrantz (1965).

ism. In one or another form the shamanistic practices occur in all recent marginal hunting cultures, and particularly there; shamanism is less well adapted to the cultures of the agriculturist and cultures with a higher level of technological and social complexity.<sup>131</sup> There is therefore good reason to expect that shamanism once was represented among palaeolithic hunters; however, Findeisen's and Lommel's identification of shamans in Magdalenian rock-paintings in France and Spain is purely conjectural.<sup>132</sup> It is impossible to say whether shamanism belongs to the very old ingredients of the once universal hunting and gathering cultures. Eliade has rightly pointed out that shamanism is represented in Africa only to a lesser extent.<sup>133</sup> We cannot tell if it once existed there as a normal part of the hunting cultures. The most careful conclusion we can draw is that shamanism may have been missing in the earliest hunting cultures.

Many authors have stressed the point that shamanism is a psychological and not a historical fact. If like Eliade we single out ecstasy as the determinating trait of shamanism this may seem correct. If, however, we define shamanism as has been done in this article, shamanism must be regarded as a continuous historical complex. Until recent times it has existed in three interrelated areas, South America, North America and Northern Eurasia (with Central Asia), and in isolated fields as South-East Asia, Australia, and Oceania. There is reason to believe that these isolated fields were once in contact with the Northern Eurasian shamanism. The differently organized religions of agricultural and some pastoral peoples have disrupted the connections, and a missionary religion like Buddhism (whose foundations may in the long run be derived from shamanistic ideology) has actively ousted shamanistic practice in its progress. Diószegi has convincingly shown, for instance, how during the eighteenth century shamanism was replaced by lamaism in Mongolia.<sup>134</sup> Vestiges of shamanism have been found in the old high-cultures, for instance, among Indo-European peoples.<sup>135</sup>

The main areas of shamanistic survival are, however, northernmost Europe, northern and central Asia, North and South America. The American cultures may indeed be considered an offshoot of the old Arctic hunting cultures.<sup>136</sup> The rise of agrarian cultures has certainly had a decrease of shamanism, or its reorientation, as its consequence in the central Ameri-

<sup>131</sup> Voigt (1965), 383.

<sup>132</sup> Findeisen (1957), 198 and 201; Lommel (1967).

<sup>133</sup> Eliade (1961), 153.

<sup>134</sup> Diószegi (1961), 205.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Closs (1969) A and Eliade (1964), 375.

<sup>136</sup> Hultkrantz (1965), 285.

can areas, but shamanism has nowhere completely disappeared.<sup>137</sup> A testimony to the influence of shamanism in the agrarian parts of North America is the dissemination of the so-called Orpheus tradition which was originally founded on shamanistic experience.<sup>138</sup> North American shamanism is very close to the Siberian shamanism and could without doubt be regarded as an attenuated prolongation of the latter. Moreover, in its northernmost and northwestern parts it has achieved an intensity which closely parallels Siberian shamanism. As I have shown elsewhere similar ecological conditions have created similar intensified shamanistic systems in the whole Arctic area.<sup>139</sup> There are also formal agreements between North American and Siberian shamanism, and they may briefly be expressed as follows:

(1) There is in North America a strictly ritualized pattern of the general shamanistic *séance* with the presence of spirits (usually for divination) which we find in Siberia. The American complex, which is disseminated among Eskimo, Algonkin and Plains Indian groups, is called "spirit lodge" or "shaking tent".<sup>140</sup>

(2) On the Northwest Coast of Canada and Alaska and among the Eskimo the shamanistic trance with the dispatching of the shaman's soul to seek lost souls or information has an intense occurrence.<sup>141</sup> As in Siberia, possession states or states similar to possession may take place, particularly on the Northwest Coast.<sup>142</sup> And as in Siberia, the shaman makes journeys to the supernatural world to persuade the master (mistress) of the game to release the animals, a ceremony well attested to among the Eskimo. The shaman's drum, a Eurasian instrument, is absent in America (where its place has been taken by the rattle), except among the Eskimo.

The real stronghold of shamanism has, however, been Siberia and its North European continuation (the Lapps until the end of the eighteenth century). The prehistory of this wide area is very complicated and does not give support to any suppositions of a much disseminated shamanistic complex.<sup>143</sup> Still, shamanistic practices need not leave any archaeological

<sup>137</sup> Steward (1950), 394; Hultkrantz (1963), 140.

<sup>138</sup> Hultkrantz (1957).

<sup>139</sup> Hultkrantz (1965), 310; cf. also Vajda (1964), 270.

<sup>140</sup> Hultkrantz (1967), 32 and 54.

<sup>141</sup> In most of America, however, the spiritual flight of the shaman is less common, as was already observed by Dixon (1908), 9.

<sup>142</sup> The difficulty in diagnosing the exact state of the shaman in the trance may lie behind Boas' vacillating attitude to the problem if possession occurred on the Northwest Coast. Cf. Boas (1906), 246, with Boas (1924), 27.

<sup>143</sup> Jettmar (1965), 289 and 331.

remains. There is reason to suppose that here shamanism is as old as in other hunting areas. The introduction of reindeer nomadism has apparently not weakened shamanism, as some other forms of pastoralism might have done (cf. above); the reason probably being that the traditional social organization was less disturbed among the northern herdsmen than among their more southern neighbours. On the contrary, impulses from the southern civilisations (Iran, India, Tibet), strengthened by the northward immigration of Turk tribes (Yakut, etc.), have definitely promoted the growth of Siberian shamanism.<sup>144</sup> Ecological adaptation processes have moulded the shamanistic varieties into a rather clear pattern, rich and intense at the same time. Thus in Siberia we find all the shamanistic traits which have been specifically developed in other "shamanistic" areas. This is why Siberian religion has been dominated by its shamanism and set off as *the* shamanistic domain in ethnology and comparative religion.<sup>145</sup>

This does not mean that there is no diversification in Siberian shamanism. On the contrary, there are great regional differences: there are differences in ideology ("black" and "white" shamanism, family shamanism, spontaneous and sought for vocation, etc.), and differences in paraphernalia (full shaman dress among central tribes like the Tungus and Yakut, only masks or headgear among some Samoyed and Palaeoasiatic groups). It is similar differences which have been used by scholars such as Diószegi and some Soviet ethnologists to reconstruct the finer network of shamanistic history, an immense task still in its beginning. All through this patchwork of influences and local developments run certain ritual and conceptual themes, but also folkloristic motifs giving strength to the shamanistic ideology.<sup>146</sup> One such motif concerns the shaman's trustworthiness: a person asks the shaman to report that everything is well in his distant home, and the shaman is demanded to show his reliability by telling his client where in the house the latter keeps his ring. The shaman does so, correctly. This story has been reported from the regions of the Lapps and the Yurak Samoyed!<sup>147</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Vajda (1964), 294; Eliade (1964), 495; Paulson (1965), 100.

<sup>145</sup> According to V. I. Anuchin the Creator of the Yenisei Ostyak in the myth of the primeval waters is depicted as a shaman, the great shaman Doh. Campbell generalizes this instance and concludes that wherever shamanism left its mark the Creator and the Trickster are modelled on the shaman – Campbell (1959), 275. Certainly not. Only in Siberia the Creator-concept could have been permeated with shamanistic ideology because of the dominance of the latter in this area.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. in this connection Hatto (1970).

<sup>147</sup> Arbman (1955), 52; Findeisen (1957), 174. Findeisen mistakes this migration story for a true memorate.

Shamanism, as defined in this opus, is a meaningful and clearly designated concept. It has been a world-wide phenomenon, but has reached its peak in Northern Eurasia and bordering areas, Central Asia and northern North America.

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# Categories of the Ket Shamans

by

E. A. ALEKSEENKO

What is known about Ket (Yenisei Ostyak) shamanism is mostly from the work of V. I. Anučin.<sup>1</sup> His book, published in 1914, was the first special ethnological work on the Ket people. The vast material assembled in it goes far beyond the range of not only shamanistic conceptions but also religious ideology on the whole. Anučin's excellently illustrated publication is still today an important source for the study of the world-view and folklore of the Ket people; it comprises also valuable information on other aspects of the people's life.

Even the diverse subjects and illustrations which Anučin collected among the Ket between 1905 to 1908, and which furnished a basis for the Ket collection of the Peter I Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology (Leningrad),<sup>2</sup> are of lasting importance. In these collections a paramount place is held by the material related to the shamanist cult (the shamans' vestments, paraphernalia, etc.) and published almost in full by Anučin in his book. V. I. Anučin even took down shaman songs on more than twenty phonograph-cylinders.

Subsequently the objects and the illustrative material and phonograph recordings on shamanist cult among the Ket were enriched thanks to the activity of N. K. Karger, who in 1928 made a journey to the Turukhansk region.<sup>3</sup>

Valuable ethnographic and mythological information is contained in a book by K. Donner, based on materials he received from the Ket I. F. Dibikov, and complemented by the observations and linguistic data the author himself collected during his trip to the Yenisei.<sup>4</sup>

The study of the religious ideology of the Ket is greatly helped by the data of mythology and folklore the collection and publication of which,

<sup>1</sup> Анучин (1914).

<sup>2</sup> Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology (МАЭ), Nos 1048, 1196, 1238, 1311, 1622.

<sup>3</sup> МАЭ, No. 4034, 1. – 1268.

<sup>4</sup> Donner (1933).

increased to a considerable extent during the past fifteen years, are linked with the names of A. P. Dulzon, E. A. Krejnovič, V. V. Ivanov, V. N. Toporov, B. A. Uspenskij and other participants of the 1962 expedition dedicated to the memory of M. A. Castrén.<sup>5</sup>

The collection of ethnographic material on the religious ideology of the Ket in general and on shamanist cult in particular still continues at present. The first field session concerned with this special subject took place in 1970.<sup>6</sup> It resulted in the collection of data that essentially remained unknown till now. Most interesting is the new information about various semantic categories of the Ket shamans. This is the very subject dealt with in the present paper.

Until now, there being no direct material of relevance, the existence of different categories of the Ket shamans has been a by-and-large hypothetical subject based only on the character of the shaman's vestments and paraphernalia. For example, such a feature of the parka as its tailwise tapering pointed back, pendants in the shape of bird-foot and bird, the allegorical name of the drumstick ('heathcock's tail'), the head-dress with bird images etc., would suggest that among the Ket the shaman impersonated a bird. This is evidenced by the belief that in summer, at the time of moulting, the shaman like the birds themselves became helpless and was vulnerable to his enemies.

On the other hand, the head-dress with antlers, specific pendants (horns, bones) are linked by semantics with the deer or the bear.

With regard to what is called bear shamanism as a special form, we have had more specific data,<sup>7</sup> and as regards other supposed personifications (deer, bird) and questions like their regular categorization, and so forth, much yet remains to be clarified.

At present, on the basis of information supplied in 1970 by the Ket E. S. Sutlin (Alinskoe settlement), we can describe five semantic categories of the Ket shamans.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly the shamans could impersonate: 1. the female reindeer (*k,aduk,ś*); 2. the dragon-fly (*duńd*); 3. a mythical bird (*gah*); 4. a mythi-

<sup>5</sup> See Toporov (1969). Nos 84, 88, 89, 93, 104, 147, 148, 151, 154, 187, 188, 189.

<sup>6</sup> The task was accomplished by the Turukhansk team of the northern expedition of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR according to the programme outlined by I. S. Vdovin, S. V. Ivanov and L. P. Potapov.

<sup>7</sup> Алексеенко (1967), 189-91.

<sup>8</sup> It cannot be ruled out that some new categories may be brought to light in the future.

cal anthropomorphic personage with bear's limbs instead of hands and feet (*kandelok*); 5. the bear (*k,oj*).

That the recent information about the shaman categories has not been acquired by chance, and that it is not the fancy of a single person (as is known, the role of the individual in shamanist cult is considerable), is corroborated by the following: the iron head-dress with antlers furnished by N. K. Karger is mentioned in the inventory as *gadagś dbrγ* (transliteration by Karger), i.e. *k,aduk,ś* cap.<sup>9</sup> K. Donner's book refers to the mythical bird, stating that among the iron instruments of shamans a special place is held by *day* – an ancient big bird that can obscure the whole sun.<sup>10</sup>

In Donner's dictionary we find analogous data : *dag, day* – the biggest bird of bygone days to be found among the iron objects of shamans.<sup>11</sup> The shaman impersonating the *gah* bird wore a copper or iron image of it on his parka and drum. After the shamans's death these pendants had to be kept by his kinsmen. Donner apparently writes just about these pendants.

It is interesting to add here that in an 18th-century Pumpokol vocabulary (Pumpokol is closest to Ket in the Yenisei family of languages) the component '*dago*' is noted as meaning 'flying': '*dago-ute* 'bat' (flutter-mouse).<sup>12</sup>

Donner hints at shamans of the *duńd* category. He mentions a string with a small bell at the end, called *donde his* 'dragon-fly's tail', which the shamans attached to their clothes. Donner writes furthermore that the name of 'dragon-fly' often appears in shaman songs.<sup>13</sup>

The illustrative material obtained in the recent years includes the photograph of a specific head-dress of a *duńd* shaman. As regards the *kandelok* category, oral information is complemented by illustrations and descriptions of the costume of such a shaman.

Information about bear shamans, as already stated, had been available before the new material was brought to light.

In the fancy of the Ket every one of the above-mentioned five categories had specific protectors. To the *k,aduk,ś* it was *Banrehip'* (*Bandehip'*), Son of Earth, who was born in a block of wood. Mythology has it that he married a supreme deity's daughter, *Eštehum* (*Eś* 'supreme deity', *huń* 'daughter').<sup>14</sup> After a quarrel with Son of Earth she left him for the heaven

<sup>9</sup> МАЭ, No. 4034–171.

<sup>10</sup> Donner (1933), 81.

<sup>11</sup> Donner (1955), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Дульзон (2nd ed.), 170.

<sup>13</sup> Donner (1933), 81.

<sup>14</sup> *Eś* originally signified 'sky, heaven'.

in the shape of a *k,aduk,ś*, one of seven reindeer. Her symbol (in the form of one of the seven deer) is always found on the drumhead. The drum itself was held to be a *k,aduk,ś*. The deer-drum served as a travelling vehicle for the shaman.

In the ceremony of drum-making among the Ket one can clearly trace an attitude towards the drum as a living being: not to hurt the deer, it was forbidden to use a scraper for removing the hair from the skin intended as a drumhead; the wood chosen for the hoop and the handle were only cut out of an unfelled tree; all the splinters resulting from this and further processes were carefully gathered, then taken to the woods and poured into a hollow on the eastern side of a tree (a characteristic ritual related with the idea of enlivening; this is how they 'buried' the bones of the slain bear, ungulates, etc. with a view to their posterior resuscitation).

Donner has noted down the name of the drum-making ceremony among the Ket: *häs selidubet*, which means 'make the drum a deer'.<sup>15</sup>

The facts adduced here are proof that the Ket observed a widely known ceremony of enlivening the drum, an act most specifically elaborated among the Selkups and the peoples of the Sayan Altai.<sup>16</sup>

In shamanist mythology *Baṅrehip'* lived in the second layer (circle) of the upper world.<sup>17</sup> He carried all the paraphernalia and attires of a shaman, except for the head dress and the parka. And, being 'the greatest iron-smith in heaven', he told the shamans what kind of pendants, representing the shaman's assistants, etc., to wear on their costumes. *Baṅrehip'* could diminish the 'power' of the shaman who did not carry out his orders.

The *k,aduk,ś* shamans were most conventional among the Ket.

The *duńd* (dragon-fly) shamans were considered the most powerful; according to the Ket they were seldom met. The first shaman of this category was the legendary *Doh*, who was assigned an important place in Ket mythology. The protectors of the *duńd* shamans were the powerful *Toman*, the mother of *duńd*, mistress of the warm upper world, and her elder brother *Hĩleś* (Placid God), who, in the fancy of the Ket, both lived in the fifth circle of the upper world. Also thunder and cranes were regarded as brothers of *duńd*, and swans as sisters. The activity of the shamans of this category was limited to the warm season (from the birds' arrival till their flying away).

<sup>15</sup> Donner (1933), 78.

<sup>16</sup> Прокофьев (1929); Потапов (1947).

<sup>17</sup> The upper world, according to shamanist cosmogony, was made up of seven layers (seven circles) parallel to the earth shaped like a flat disc.

The *gah* bird and the *kandelok* were believed to be brothers, their father was *Bissimdeś* (Western God),<sup>18</sup> to be found in the first circle (layer) of the upper world. It was held that *Bissimdeś* himself sent the cold and the wind to Earth. According to shamanistic mythology *Bissimdeś* was the elder son of *Eś* and *Hosedam*. He once descended on the western side to go out hunting; having failed to dress himself, he froze and remained there forever. Getting angry about this with her husband, *Hosedam* betook herself to Earth and changed into an evil being, equal in power to *Eś*.

The father and protector of bear shamans was *Kojeś*, who lived on Earth. Moreover, bear shamans and *kandelok* shamans were associated with the principal spirit of Earth living in its centre who was called *Ill'banṭiḷ'tiγiṭ* (Navel of the Universe). He gave the shamans helpers like *Kholaj* – a female creature who lived in the butt of thick larches where, it was believed, the shaman's soul could be hiding in the period between shamanistic *séances*, and where also such of his instruments as the drumstick, the drum, the staff, and items of clothing like boots, mittens, breast-cover were symbolically preserved.

One and the same shaman usually abided by a single impersonation, but sometimes he combined in himself two or even three categories. In this case he had two or three sets of vestments and paraphernalia. It all depended on whether the ancestor from whom the shaman inherited his skill had belonged to one or more categories and to which. The shaman could acquire some new gift also by himself if it was so bidden by *Bok,sejgeś* (Fireplace God), another son of *Eś* who lived in the first circle of the upper world in the centre, in face of Navel of the Universe, and controlled the process of becoming shamans. *Bok,sejgeś*, it was held, gave the shaman an iron head-dress and a parka (the rest was said to have been kept by Son of Earth).

The vestments and paraphernalia of the *k,aduk,ś*, *duńd* and *gah* shamans were all of the same type and differed only in features determined by the semantic content of one or another category.

The description of the *k,aduk,ś* shaman's parka is well known from V. I. Anučin's publication.<sup>19</sup> What with the uniformity of the style that had become his everyday attire, the *duńd* shaman's parka differed from it in that it was still tighter and at the back ended in a more extended and pointed tail. This symbolized resemblance to the long slender body of the dragonfly.

<sup>18</sup> The appellations *Hileś*, *Bissimdeś* and the like, which comprise the element *eś*, can be used also as 'clear sky', 'western sky', i.e. in the original sense.

<sup>19</sup> Анучин (1914), 67–80, Figs 73, 74, etc.

The parka of the *gah* shaman also ended in a tail at the back, but it was more rounded and shorter.

Accordingly also the pendants representing the skeleton of the impersonated creature (deer, bird) were diverse. There were also various iron and copper symbols of the main helping spirits (dragon-fly, *gah* bird, *seloks* deer) which these shamans wore on their parkas, breast-covers and drums, but the system of arrangement was uniform for the shamans of the given three categories.

A common feature of their head-dress (made of iron for the *k,aduk,s* and *gah*, of sheet copper for the *duńd* shamans) was the rim with cross-bars, but the *k,aduk,s* had his transverse bar ended in antlers, the *gah* had bird figures fastened to it, while the *duńd* head-dress was distinguished by cloud (thunder) images. The longitudinal bars of all had tips in the form of knives.

The *k,aduk,s* shaman's head-dress is included in V. I. Anučin's material.<sup>20</sup> An exhibit of the same type was furnished by N. K. Karger to the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography. In Karger's inventory, beside the – to us – important indication (*gadagś dbyγ*) confirming the existence of the *k,aduk,s* category, interesting details are stated adding to the data on the personification of deer by this category of shamans: fastened to the head-dress from the left and right sides are chamois straps, exactly the same as those with which the Ket marked the ears of their deer. A chamois leather string symbolizing the deer's tail was fastened to the rim from behind.<sup>21</sup>

It is reasonably probable that we can see the head-dress of a *gah* shaman in another exhibit, also supplied by Karger.<sup>22</sup> Of the *duńd* shaman's headgear, unfortunately, there exist only illustrations.<sup>23</sup>

The *kandelok* and bear shamans distinguished themselves by the absence of the drum. Among their attributes was a bear's paw, replacing the drumstick, or a drumstick wrapped in the skin of a bear's paw. In addition the bear shaman had a small 'snout' (skin from the bear's nose and mouth) which in the act of shamanizing he applied to his face or put on with a loop of chamois straps. The bear shaman had a parka, boots and mittens sewn from raw bearskin. Fastened on the parka and the boots and the mittens were iron pendants representing bear's bones. The headgear was

<sup>20</sup> Анучин (1914), 80–83, Figs 103, 104.

<sup>21</sup> МАЭ, No. 4034–168.

<sup>22</sup> МАЭ, No. 4034–171.

<sup>23</sup> The *duńd* shaman's head-dress is presented in Алексеенко (1967), 191, Fig. 26, but it is incorrectly related to the attire of the bear shaman.

a tight bandage around the head, attached with a transverse stripe along the sinciput. The *kandelok* only had long elbow-high mittens sewn of skin from the bear's forepaws, and boots made of skin from the hind paws. On the boots and the mittens also there were irons pendants representing bones of bear's paws.

The shamans of this category had a singular iron head-dress. Its upper part (the usual rim with two intersecting cross-pieces, whose upward tips were shaped like knives) was linked by three props (one behind and two on the sides) with the wider lower rim. When the headgear was put on, its lower edge was on a level with the forearms. On the whole the head-dress was like the frame of a helmet covering one's head and neck.

It was held that the helpers of bear and *kandelok* shamans were first of all bears, but also supernatural beings living on earth, in particular the *alél* (anthropomorphic female figurines – family patronesses), *danoł's* (images of the dead), etc.

The differences in the vestments and the set of attributes of shamans of the various categories corresponded to their spheres of activity: the *k,aduk,ś*, *duńd*, and *gah* shamans had access to the upper world, the bear walked only on earth, the *kandelok* could ascend to the upper world, but for the most part he acted on earth.

The shamans of different categories on earth and in the upper world went their ways in different directions. Such directions were seven. Three of them were north-westerly ('on the west side of the road'), from south-west to north-west: 1. the *k,aduk,ś* roads; 2. the *gah* and *kandelok* roads; 3. the bear's roads. Three directions were south-easterly ('on the south side of the road'), from south to east: 1. the great, perpetual road of the *duńd*; 2. the little road of the *duńd*; 3. the common road (towards the sunrise); this could be walked by all shamans, except the bear. The seventh, northerly road was also common, it led to the kingdom of the evil *Hosedam*. Along this road the shamans (except the *duńd*) drifted searching for the souls of sick persons.

The idea that the shaman's powers and the nature of his functions depended on his sphere of activity (only on earth or only in the upper world) is not so plain and simple.

When ascending to the upper world, the *k,aduk,ś* and *gah* shamans asked for the assistance of their protectors, who helped them to find the soul of the sick person (when healing). On the other hand, in difficult cases the bear shaman's performances were recognized as especially efficient, and the *kandelok* shamans were considered second in strength in this respect, since their roads ran on the 'bad, northwest side', on the side of darkness

and cold, where the feeble souls most often got into trouble.<sup>24</sup> Finally it should be recalled that the most powerful of all were the *duńd* shamans who did not at all engage in healing. Characteristically the shamans who reached 'the sky's end' on the road of the *duńd* are known only to have lived in the legends, there being no mention of real persons among them.

The bear shaman himself, it was held, could promote success in the enterprise,<sup>25</sup> the others had to appeal to their protectors in the upper world for help.

The roads in the air led through the layers (circles) of the upper world, but only one of them – the 'great, perpetual road of the *duńd*' which was walked by the legendary shaman *Doh* – reached the seventh layer, 'the sky's end', where *Eś* was living.

In the conception of the Ket the roads ran in an entirely realistic environment. For example, the *duńd* road was known to end in the sea with waterlily growing on the surface. On the broad leaves of this plant were sitting the *duńd*.<sup>26</sup> Before the sea there was plain country overgrown with grass ('there was no kind of woody trunk'), etc.

The distance that the *k,aduk,ś*, *duńd* and *gah* shamans in trance could travel on their way to the upper world depended in the first place on the number of available helping spirits, 'celestial people' (*eśtendiŋ*). The assistant spirits were arrayed in superimposed rows ('shelves'), seven in a row (the row's name in Ket translation means 'seven persons'). Having traversed the seven rows, i.e. having acquired forty-nine helpers, the shaman made a halt (*taŋun* 'stop'). The distance of fourteen rows corresponded to the distance between two layers of the upper world.<sup>27</sup> Getting familiar with a certain section of his road, it was only within its limits that the shaman could perform for a definite period (about three months), and then he again moved on.

An outward expression of the shaman's 'power' at any given moment was the condition of his vestments and instruments. Changes in them (ad-

<sup>24</sup> The Ket saw one of the causes of human illness in the condition of the soul (more exactly, one of its seven hypostases) which got into trouble (missed its way, lost its strength). In this case the soul easily fell a prey to the evil *Hosedam*, the result of which could be fatal to the person concerned.

<sup>25</sup> The bear *Kajyuś* was regarded by the Ket as master of animals.

<sup>26</sup> On drums there are symbols of these leaves in the form of flat pendants broadening downwards.

<sup>27</sup> Those who came late for the start of the shamanistic *séance* asked those present about the stop the shaman was making, and in this way they knew which section of the road he had traversed, how many helping spirits he had at his disposal, with whom of his protectors he had met, etc.



dition of one or another part or renewal of the entire equipment) were made once in every three years and signified the shaman's becoming able to rise to the next layer of the upper world. A young shaman had no special costume and paraphernalia, save a naked drumstick made of rotten wood. With this he 'walked' to the first stop on his road (i.e. he acquired forty-nine helpers). In three years' time, when he came to the second stop (i.e. to the first layer of the upper world) and thus commanded ninety-eight helpers, the shaman had his first (textile) head-dress, a new, skin-covered drumstick, boots, mittens, breast-cover, and his first drum. On the boots, breast-cover and drum there was a set of pendants. On the next stage, which took another three years and signified the shaman's becoming able to ascend to the second layer of the upper world, he received his first iron headgear and parka; to the old pendants (taken off the former instruments and vestments) was added a new set with the newly made boots, breast-cover and drum.

On the third stage, i.e. after nine years of exercises, the shaman's attire and paraphernalia were again renewed and new pendants added.<sup>28</sup>

The complete cycle of becoming a shaman consisted of seven stages (according to the road traversed up to the seventh layer) and took twenty-one years of the shaman's life.

The condition of the instruments and vestments, the quantity of the specific pendants on them were symbols of a kind, giving information about the record of the particular shaman's performance, about his capabilities due to the number of helpers he had at his disposal, as well as about the aid of various protectors.

The material briefly described in this article on the diverse semantic categories of shamans among the Ket remains to be studied, but it can already be said that it not only provides very much for the purpose of characterizing the level and peculiarities of the people's world-view, but it also reveals some aspects of Ket shamanism in connection with the different times of their origin and with their diverse ethnic components. Parallels with the shamanism of the Southern Siberian peoples are most evident.

<sup>28</sup> The ceremony of making the shaman's costume and instruments always took place at a specific time and was accompanied by ritual acts, in which the entire population of the settlement participated.

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# A Classification of Nenets Shamans

by

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Of the existence of 'strong' and 'weak' shamans among the Nenets we have knowledge from rather early sources. 'Strong' shamans were capable of doing conjuring tricks, 'working wonders', strangling and knifing themselves without being harmed.<sup>1</sup> The main functions of shamans are also known to have consisted in healing sick persons, prophesying and in searching for lost things. Literature on the Nenets contains references to good and bad shamans.<sup>2</sup> Still the classification of Nenets shamans has not until recently been dealt with seriously.

The most complete material to date was collected by the well-known Soviet ethnographer G. D. Verbov among various Nenets groups between 1934 and 1939.<sup>3</sup> Some complementary information was picked up by the present author from two ex-shamans, I. Njaruj in Yamal in 1953 and I. Ledkov in the Krasnoye settlement on the Pechora in 1964.

The aim of this article is to summarize the available material on this subject.

Just as with other peoples of Siberia, it was customary among the Nenets to determine a person's becoming a shaman already from his birth.<sup>4</sup> Yet the prospective shaman began to develop some peculiar signs at the time of puberty. He was tormented by visions, had fits of nerves and eventually fell sick. When an already functioning shaman got to know that a 'sick man' would become a shaman of his category, he began to teach him.

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Зуев (1947), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Верецагин (1848), 153; Старцев (1930), 123, 126–7.

<sup>3</sup> *АЛОИЭ*, 2/1, No. 49a, 70. Part of the collected material was published in an article by E. D. Prokofjeva (1952); see also Хомич (1966), 210–12.

<sup>4</sup> The distinctive marks of the shaman-to-be was a pellicle at the crown of his head (G.D. Verbov) or a birth-mark. See Попов (1944), 90.

Usually it took the shaman no more than a night to transmit his experience to the novice.<sup>5</sup> In payment for this the parents of the 'pupil' gave the shaman a reindeer.

The young shaman first went to 'work' according to the instructions of the 'teacher' within a few days of his first lesson. He had no drum as yet and used, for example, the garter of his deerskin boots to bandage the sore place of the body of his 'patient'. Instead of a drum he used his girdle, on which the helping spirits assembled.

The kinsfolk of the patient paid the shaman for successful healing (gave him meat, new mittens, etc.). If during shamanizing a deer was killed, the shaman took half of the carcass.

After seven years the old shaman showed the young one where to find the larch for the frame of a drum. Sometimes the fledgling shaman himself saw in his sleep the tree he needed. He made his drum by himself if he could, but if not, he asked somebody else to make it for him.<sup>6</sup>

The skin for the drumhead was either from a reindeer sacrificed by the shaman or from one offered as a sacrifice by the family of a sick person. This animal might be a stag or a hind, but never a castrated bull. A piece of skin was cut from the forepart of the back without the neck (*pirvja*), then it was soaked in water and left spread out in the sun to dry, for the hair to fall out. After this some round object (for example, a silver coin) was pressed with a band on the centre of the skin. After a while the skin was attached to a rim, and that object was pulled out. The 'slack' thus formed then disappeared during the next drying in the sun. For the final drying the skin was laid on horizontal poles (*ti*) over the fire in the tent.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> G. D. Verbov does not mention what this original training consisted in. A. A. Popov writes about it as follows: "At the rite of consecration the old shaman shamanizes over the candidate from three to seven days, puts on him his costumes, lets him hold his drum and even gives him his drumstick as if transferring to him his prophetic language, and gives him his cap as if transferring to him his brains. Then he rings the bell three times, announcing to Num the appearance of his new choice." Попов (1944), 191.

<sup>6</sup> It was often the young shaman's brother or another one of his relatives. Before felling the tree in question, he smeared its root part with the blood of a killed deer. See Попов (1944), 92. – G. A. Starcev cites the following facts: "In the Bolshezemelsk tundra (Kolvin district) the shaman, according to the Samoyed Vanjuta, sees in his sleep a fir-tree of unusual shape. It goes after him and asks him: 'Fell me' (*mansim madad*). The shaman then goes in search of that tree, and it often takes him over a year to find it ..." Старцев (1930), 129.

<sup>7</sup> A. A. Popov says that the skin to be stretched over the drum had to be processed by a man. See Попов (1944).

The drumstick (*pêngabcj'*) was made of larch, with skin from a calf's frontal fastened to it. The handle by which the drum was held (*nja'morcj'*) could be made of any kind of wood. Such a drum served the shaman for several years. Then the experienced shaman, having tried out the drum, indicated what kind of pendants he needed.

Depending on the skills and talents acquired for shamanizing, the Nenets shamans, according to G. D. Verbov, had the following names: *mal tadebja*,<sup>8</sup> a shaman with no drum; *si'mja* or *ŋadimja*, ('the one who showed himself'), a shaman having a drum but no pendants; *inutana* or *janumpoj*, an accomplished, clever shaman, i.e. one who had already been trained and had all the necessary attributes (this term denoted all shamans ten years after the acquisition of their pendants).

The training of a shaman lasted altogether twenty years. It is worthy of note that the categories of shamans according to the degree of skills were determined only by the presence or absence of the drum. As if the presence or absence of the shaman costume had been irrelevant. But this was not so. The point is that only shamans of the *viđutana* category had a special costume, and here we have to start examining the categories of shamans according to their functions and spheres of activity.

The Nenets distinguished three categories: the *viđutana* category included the 'strongest' shamans. These could heal seriously ill persons, predict the future, work various 'miracles' (let themselves be shot at or stabbed, etc.). The *viđutana* contacted the spirits of the upper world, therefore his other name was *nuv'njanjĩ* ('belonging to heaven, related to heaven'). Only shamans of the *viđutana* category possessed a special gown to wear during shamanizing (*sa'morcj pani*);<sup>9</sup> it was kept with the drum in a sacred sledge.

It was believed that the shaman of the *viđutana* category had a heavenly double (*hêhê tadebja*). When conjuring on the occasion of healing a gravely sick person, the anthropomorphic *tadebcë* spirits<sup>10</sup> came together at the shaman's call. They entered the tent through the chimney hole, through

<sup>8</sup> The word combination *mal tadebja* cannot be accurately translated. In Nenets the word *mal* means 'closed from all sides', 'solid'. In the figurative sense this may somehow denote 'standing alone'. For example, *mal nenëcj'* 'a man who does not understand the speech of his interlocutor or is out of touch of the course of events'.

<sup>9</sup> It was sewn by a woman according to the instructions of the shaman. Here we do not touch upon the question of the costume, because this subject calls for special examination.

<sup>10</sup> *Tadebcë* 'helping spirits of the shaman'. The term is derived from the word *tadebja* 'shaman'. *Hêhê* is a term that has a very broad meaning. It denoted both the spirit and their receptacles or representations. As an adjective the word *hêhê* can conditionally be translated as 'sacred'.

cracks and chinks. They might not even have come, but only answered from heaven. Among these spirits also there was a *viđutana*, who repeated the words and acts of the earthly shaman. *Num*<sup>11</sup> saw this. If the spirits said, "Your patient will come through just at that time", then the shaman conveyed the message to the people. If the *hêhê* did not appear, it meant that *Num* did not protect the sick person. Then there appeared *Ija*, the principal spirit of the lower world, and the *ñileka* (evil spirits) carried off the deceased's *ind'* (breath) in a long sledge.

A few words must be said here about the Nenets past concept of disease. The Nenets believed that, when a man was asleep (or otherwise), *Ija* unnoticeably blew into his mouth, and the man got ill.<sup>12</sup> Then the shaman appealed to *Num*, who was able to compel *Ija* to come and remove the disease. During convalescence the sick man went out of the tent, and *Num* forced the wind to blow off the traces of *Ija*'s touch.

There was still another cause of sickness: on the sore place there might be a worm (*halî*) which the *viđutana* could remove by making an incision with a knife. He alone could see the worm. Allegedly, the worm was also sent by *Ija*. If the shaman knew from the spirits that the ailment had come by *Num*'s order, he declined to shamanize. He came to know this in particular by watching whether the deer offered as a sacrifice was writhing in convulsions. (If so, the sick man would recover; if not, he would die.)<sup>13</sup>

The shaman of the *viđutana* category was appealed to also in case of bad luck in hunting. It was held that the 'client' had lost one of his *hêhê*. By shamanizing with the drum the shaman got to know what should be done to repair the loss (for example, a new idol, *sjadêja*, had to be made).

When 'working miracles' and 'conjuring' the *viđutana* only did as if he repeated the actions of the supreme *hêhê tadebja* (*hêhê tadebjam' têltambida*). If the *viđutana* thrust a knife into his body, one of the on-lookers pulled it out (while in the case of the *hêhê tadebja* the pulling out was done by *nuv' hasava*, heavenly people). If it was easy to pull out, it was for the shaman's good, if it was difficult, the shaman was a dead man. Inaccuracy in repeating the words and actions of the *hêhê tadebja* was a deadly threat to the shaman.

When the *viđutana* foretold the future and looked at the knife's blade the spirits (*hêhê*) flew together. The *viđutana* sang a song for each of them. If the *hêhê* promised joy, the shaman said so plainly; if they prom-

<sup>11</sup> *Num* is the principal spirit of heaven.

<sup>12</sup> It was held that *Ija* hunted for peoples just as people caught animals, fish and birds.

<sup>13</sup> Data from G. D. Verbov.

ised grief, he beat about the bush. The reward of a shaman of the *viđutana* category was usually a stag of his choice. If the *viđutana* refused to help because of inability, he received nothing, as we could see from early sources. If his prophecy did not come true, he returned the reward. During shamanizing the *viđutana* made use of the help of an assistant (a young shaman or someone of those present).<sup>14</sup> The assistant was called *teltana* (from the Nenets verb *teltasj* 'to repeat, to echo').

The shamans of the second category were called *janjanj tadebja* (i.e. shamans belonging to earth). They healed sick people, tracked down lost deer, and assisted in prolonged labour. In contrast to the shamans of other categories the *janjanj* shamanized only by night, by the light of a fire. The helping spirits of these shamans were the *id' erv*, *ja nebja*, *parnj* (*id' erv* 'the master spirit of water'; *ja nebja* 'the patroness of women'; *parnj* or *parne* 'female evil spirits'). When shamanizing to heal a sick person, the *janjanj* told *Ija*: "It won't give you this sick man!" Sometimes he proved to be unable to help, then he laid aside his drum and said: "I can't. Look for somebody else."

If the whereabouts of the lost deer had to be found out, then the shaman struck at a wooden cup or a stump of tree with an iron axe or spade which 'stuck' firmly as soon as 'the spirit spoke', but afterwards it could easily be taken away.<sup>15</sup>

The shamans of the third category, *sambana*, sometimes showed the place where to bury the deceased, and then saw the deceased's soul off into the world beyond. As to what this 'seeing-off' consisted in, we have only fragmentary knowledge. Apparently it was closely related to the rite of 'purifying' the objects of worship which were guardians and helpers of the family of the deceased.

Until the *sambana* had come, the men living in the tent of the deceased were supposed for a few years not to touch the sacred sledge with the sacred objects kept there (as is known, women were by no means allowed to do so). Only the deceased's son or another older man could take anything out of the sledge and touch it. The rite of purifying was performed a few years after the person in question had died and been buried, but not later than seven years after: it was held that the deceased's shadow (*sidrjang*) lived in the tent and walked around there for seven years (the

<sup>14</sup> From the owner of the tent he received, for example, a pair of mittens as a reward.

<sup>15</sup> A shaman's divination on account of the loss of a reindeer was described also by M. A. Castrén (1860), 127.

*sidrjang* then died).<sup>16</sup> The invited *sambana* shaman came without his drum and usually shamanized during the evening and night. In his chants he mentioned all relatives of the deceased, various things that had belonged to him, and all kinds of animals, including the reindeer and the birds which the deceased man had killed during his lifetime. Then the *sambana*, with reference to all and everything he had mentioned, said: *Njaromdambidm'* that is, 'I purify'. The son or the younger brother of the deceased represented the latter during the *sambana*'s chant. After shamanizing the *sambana* picked a calf of any colour, which was then strangled and flayed by the side of the sledge; the *sambana* carried all things kept in the sledge and got them over under the calf or through a hollow in the snow beside the carcase. Now everybody could touch those things, they had been purified. The shaman received an old stag with a harness gear made from walrus hide or cowhide in payment for his services.

A few years later, when the grave post (*tin, pêm'b'*) had become weather-beaten, any shaman could cut a piece from it (from the top or the vertical plank) and make an image (*sidjang*) of the deceased. After the shaman's death his son or his brother's son became the shaman.<sup>17</sup>

This is how we can describe the functions and the sphere of activity of the shamans of different categories.

We have already quoted the terms denoting the shamans. Some of them coincide with analogous terms used by the Enets.<sup>18</sup> The terminology relating to the classification of shamans has been analyzed in detail by the well-known Hungarian scholar P. Hajdú.<sup>19</sup> Remarking that the Nenets shamans (whom we distinguish by their functions) have various categories, he analyzes the terms concerning these three categories and compares them with the corresponding terms in use among the Enets, Nganasans and Selkups.

We note here only a few of the etymologies discussed by P. Hajdú.

The general name of the Nenets shaman is *tadebja* (literary sources know of some variants: *tadibe, tadib, tadibej, tadabe*, etc.). Hajdú connects it with the verb *tadarasj* which he refers to the field of reindeer

<sup>16</sup> T. Lehtisalo mentions a different deadline: within a year of the date of burial. According to data we received from V. I. Jadne in the city of Salekhard in 1962, a man's 'soul' lives in the world beyond as long as the person concerned lived on the earth, and then dies, turning into a spider and having no more influence upon the life of living people.

<sup>17</sup> For lack of male heirs to the shaman, a woman could become a shaman of any category if the spirits chose her. Female shamans are not characteristic of the Nenets.

<sup>18</sup> Прокофьева (1952).

<sup>19</sup> Hajdú (1963).



breeding (*tadara* 'mating', 'excited'). In this verb (where *ra* is a verbal suffix: cf. for example, *sèdorasj* 'to sew' from *sèdasj* 'to sew together') he separates the root *tada* which has no clear form extant, but might have had the meaning 'excitement, ecstasy'.<sup>20</sup> Let us note that the Nenets term for shaman is *tadebja*, thus the root *tada* does not seem to be clear. However, in the Nenets language there is the verb *tadarasj*, which means 'to go off one's head, to go mad, to become confused (under the influence of a mystical fear)'.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Enets term for shaman is *tadabe*. Thus it is possible to accept P. Hajdú's assumption that the Samoyedic term for shaman is connected with the verb *tadarasj*.

Relying on the materials of T. Lehtisalo, K. Donner and E. D. Prokofjeva in the first place, P. Hajdú examines also other terms. Thus, rejecting the supposed connection of the Nenets word *sambana* with Finnish *sampo* (according to T. Uotila), he attempts to compare this term with the Tunguso-Manchu radical *ja-sa-ha* 'to know', from which, in the view of V. Diószegi, is derived the term *saman*, *khaman*, 'shaman'.<sup>22</sup> This comparison, however, is unconvincing. It would be interesting to attempt to clarify the connection of the Nganasan terms for shaman, *ŋa* and *nida*, with the Nenets term *ŋĭtarma*, which denotes the image of an ancestor (usually a shaman), but also the shaman himself according to some data. The suffix *rma* really can be regarded as being in the process of vanishing (cf. *neda* > *nedarma* 'road'). This question, however, calls for further investigation.

Let us make a brief summary. The 'title' of shaman among the Nenets was hereditary, as a rule, in the male line. It is natural that those who had shamans in their clans should not have all become shamans themselves, but only those who had a predisposition to that vocation (according to certain old beliefs, those whom the *tadebcë* spirits had chosen).<sup>23</sup>

The Nenets shamans differed in the degree of their skills (the beginner who had no drum, the one who had a drum but no pendants, and the accomplished shaman) and in their functions (or their spheres of activity: those who contacted spirits of heaven, spirits of the earth and spirits of the underworld.)

The Nenets shamanist concepts did not seem to have known any division into protecting spirits and helping spirits. The spirits which chose

<sup>20</sup> Hajdú (1963), 165.

<sup>21</sup> Терещенко (1966), 615.

<sup>22</sup> Hajdú (1963), 171.

<sup>23</sup> Interesting Tofalar's material on this subject was collected by V. Diószegi (1963).

the future shaman became his helpers (often they had been assistant spirits of the shaman's ancestor). At the same time, as we have seen, the helping spirits of the different shaman categories also differed. Spirits appeared to the shamans in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic form.<sup>24</sup>

In a few cases shamans were divided into good and bad shamans, but the example quoted by G. A. Starcev contradicts his own findings. The Nenets shamans, like the shamans of many other peoples, could sometimes use their power in order to cause harm to one or another person. Thus, if we accept the prevailing view that at the beginning of shamanism the shamans formed no special categories, but at the highest stage of its development there was a division into white and black shamanism, then the Nenets concept seems to have reached the medium level of development of this phenomenon.

By the categories of shamans and by terminology Nenets shamanism is close to Enets shamanism.

Categories	Nenets	Enets
Shamans contacting spirits of heaven	<i>vidutana,</i> <i>nuv'njanjĭ</i>	<i>budotê</i>
Shamans contacting spirits of the earth	<i>jananjĭ</i>	<i>djano</i>
Shamans contacting underworld spirits	<i>sambana</i>	<i>savode</i>

The classification of Selkup shamans follows a different criterion (shamans conjuring in a dark or a lighted tent),<sup>25</sup> in the same way as that of the Nganasan shamans, to judge from the data of B. O. Dolgikh. We can find much in common with Nenets shamanism also in Tuvan and Tofalar shamanism.<sup>26</sup>

The basic term for shaman in Nenets – *tadebja*<sup>27</sup> – occurs in all Samoyedic dialects (Enets *tadabe*, Selkup *têtĭpi*, Kamas *thārbu*). It may be supposed that originally (before those ethnic groups migrated farther

<sup>24</sup> In his book on the Samoyeds G. A. Starcev published an interesting drawing of a Nenets shaman and his spirits. Старцев (1930), 124.

<sup>25</sup> Прокофьева (1949).

<sup>26</sup> Вайнштейн (1961); Diószegi (1963).

<sup>27</sup> Term used for all categories of shamans (except the beginners *mal tadebja*) was *narka hora* ('big stag').

north and before they reached their actual ethnic composition) there was a single category of shamans, and the separation of various categories took place later, with the development of shamanist beliefs and the widening of the shamans' sphere of activity. Thus, the participation of the Nenets shaman in the funeral rite and in the subsequent 'purification' of the family objects of worship was not obligatory and is not to be found in earlier sources. It is also characteristic that the rite of 'purification' was performed by the shaman without his drum.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The Nganasans are an exception.

# The Structure of a Nenets Magic Chant

by

P. SIMONCSICS

This magic song was collected in December 1842 by M. A. Castrén in the village of Sjomza, in the west of the territory where the Nenets language is spoken in Europe. Considering that the great philologist and ethnologist set out on his first journey to Siberia in July 1842, and that earlier he had conducted research in Zyrian language territory, his notes of the words of this incantation may have been the first result of his encounter with the Nenets language. It is beyond doubt that this is the first recorded magic song from the Nenets language area. Its text was first published by Anton Schiefner with his own, not always fortunate, corrections.<sup>1</sup> Its second publisher was T. V. Lehtisalo.<sup>2</sup> Lehtisalo annotated the text, where he published data from Castrén's original manuscript as well as his own interpretations. Despite the carefully prepared apparatus the text is unclear in some places, so I am going to call attention to the problematic passages and the changes I have made in them. In my transliteration with the phonemic symbols now in use I have omitted the expletives indicated by Castrén, I have noted down only the basic text proper. I have refrained from publishing the morphophonological variants, too. The reason why I have chosen this doubtless puristic way of text publication is that deficiencies of the record and its inadequacy to present-day requirements have prevented me from undertaking to reconstruct the complete text. In formulating my interpretation I was guided by the endeavour to render literally as much as possible of the original text.

The changes I have made are the following:

I transcribed the word *njammaguem*<sup>3</sup> occurring in the first and second lines as *ńamawem*<sup>2</sup>, leaving out the *g* or the respective current phonetic symbol, because to the best of my present knowledge this kind of expletive sound is non-existent in the Nenets language.

<sup>1</sup> Castrén (1855), XXXIV, 404.

<sup>2</sup> Castrén (1940), Text 19.

The forms *bartamuada'* in the fifth line and *lorvada'* in the sixth are transcribed by me as *partamwado*<sup>?</sup> and *lōrwado*<sup>?</sup>, respectively, taking into account their German translation by Lehtisalo (... *sprangen sie...*, ... *nahmen sie...*), which is evidence that these verbal forms are in the third person plural, which in fact takes the suffix *-do*<sup>?</sup>, not *-da*<sup>?</sup>, in determinate conjugation. One may also conceive an explanation that supposes the presence in these forms of a participial suffix, *-wada*, which is followed by the indeterminate ending *-<sup>?</sup>* of the third person plural. In this case there is no need to change the original forms.

As to the original form *peändjundi* in line 32, I have again made use of its German translation (*mit der flachen Hand*) and transcribed it as *pe nāñi* and its only difference from the German translation is that a possessive ending of the first person singular is added to the postposition.

SĀMĀDABC

MAGIC CHANT

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>tāwida nāmawem</i><sup>?</sup><br/> <i>nūm pāw nāmawem</i><sup>?</sup>.<br/> <i>šāmān nāsañin</i><br/> <i>šumpuda χamarñaje</i><sup>?</sup>!<br/> 15 <i>āeda nīm partamwado</i><sup>?</sup>,<br/> <i>tāweda lōrwado</i><sup>?</sup>.<br/> “<i>šīwin añi nōckō</i><br/> <i>nūwun tīn pōdercun</i>,<br/> <i>tin jiñen mebcun!</i>”<br/> 10 <i>tīrin sāle χanijō</i><br/> <i>χanijō χajeχalī</i>.<br/> <i>tāweda χōñiñawa</i><sup>?</sup><br/> <i>nārcon χōjm χōñiñawa</i><sup>?</sup>,<br/> <i>nārcon χōjn tañana</i><br/> 15 <i>lōrca śeda tañewī</i>,<br/> <i>lōrcam śedam pōrjuwī</i><sup>?</sup><br/> <i>šīw tānso pōrjuwī</i><sup>?</sup>.<br/> “<i>tānso nēwe χādakaw</i><br/> <i>ōbom nūda tāriñin</i><br/> 20 <i>nāsadan tāriñin!</i>”<br/> <i>tānso nū nāsana</i><br/> <i>χeñkiχina pōrjuwī</i>.<br/> <i>sēram χōjm χōñiñawa</i><sup>?</sup><br/> <i>sēran χōjn χāewχana</i></p> | <p>Then I grasped<br/> my celestial tree, I grasped.<br/> All my friends<br/> should bow their backs before me!<br/> They sprang to their feet,<br/> then took me on their laps.<br/> “The smallest of the seven<br/> the celestial reindeer I must harness,<br/> the reindeer’s reins I must hold!”<br/> The cloud island’s sledge<br/> the sledge set off.<br/> Then we found<br/> the mossy ridge, we found,<br/> at the mossy ridge’s foot<br/> was a lawny hill,<br/> the lawny hill was bored through<br/> bored through by seven lizards.<br/> “Mother lizard, grandmother,<br/> give a child,<br/> give to my friend!”<br/> The lizard child, my friend,<br/> bored through my side.<br/> We found the ice ridge,<br/> on the side of the ice ridge</p> |
|---|---|

- 25 *χem jaχa tañewī,*  
*χew jaχa χajeparŋa*  
*jēntalida χajeparŋa,*  
*χew jaχa jēntakana*  
*matoraje χōricana*
- 30 *äeptarida tirconā<sup>?</sup>.*  
*χew jaχam jēnāwem<sup>?</sup>*  
*pē nāñi jēnāwem<sup>?</sup>,*  
*χew jaχa matedā*  
*jēntalida matedā,*
- 35 *χew jaχam madāwa<sup>?</sup>.*  
*ješe matam χōnajwa<sup>?</sup>,*  
*ješe matan turiwem<sup>?</sup>,*  
*śīw nē amtuwī<sup>?</sup>,*  
*śīw ní<sup>?</sup> maŋalŋam,*
- 40 *śīw nanim śedawī<sup>?</sup>.*  
*tāweda χajeχalī*  
*tirin śāle χanijō.*  
*mākana tāewina<sup>?</sup>.*  
*“χäexen tīwa<sup>?</sup> äedasun,*
- 45 *śīwin añi nōckō!*  
*śeŋkaχana parumam<sup>?</sup>;*  
*śāmān nāsañin*  
*śeŋkaχada χäerijada<sup>?</sup>!*  
*śīwχad χājurnaje*
- 50 *ōlerida χājurnaje!“*  
*nūm pāw χānuwī<sup>?</sup>.*  
*sawam śeŋkam nīmśi χō<sup>?</sup>,*  
*tun jeran sāpcosam.*
- was a blood river,  
the blood river got going,  
the current got going,  
in the blood river’s current  
to be cut  
plaits of hair are floating.  
I cut the blood river  
bare-handed I cut it,  
the blood river stopped  
the current stopped,  
we crossed the blood river.  
We found the iron tent,  
I entered the iron tent,  
seven women sat there,  
I embraced the seven,  
they swaddled seven boys.  
Then there set off  
the cloud island’s sledge.  
We arrived at the tent.  
“I must let our spirit reindeer go,  
the smallest of the seven!  
I start out for my camping ground;  
all my friends,  
go to your camping grounds!  
Of the seven let remain  
let just one remain!”  
My celestial tree they took away.  
Having found no good camping ground  
amid the fire I fall to pieces.

## The lower levels: an analysis of the phonological and syntactical material

Quite a few philologists have recently pointed to parallelism as a form-composing principle prevailing in folk poetry.<sup>3</sup> The substance and function of parallelism is precisely described by P. A. Boodberg.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Austerlitz (1962), 439–43; Jakobson (1969), 347–71.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Jakobson, in *Language* XLII, 399–429.

However, parallelism not only serves to connect two syntagmas or lines but, as in the case of this incantation, it can play a decisive part also in the construction of a whole linguistic composition.

12	<i>tāweda</i>	<i>χoniŋawa</i> <sup>?</sup>	Then we found
13	<i>ńārcon</i>	<i>χōjm χōniŋawa</i> <sup>?</sup> ,	the mossy ridge, we found,
14	<i>ńārcon</i>	<i>χōjn taŋana</i>	at the mossy ridge's foot
15	<i>lōrca</i>	<i>śeda tañewī</i> ,	was a lawny hill,
16	<i>lōrcam</i>	<i>śedam pōrjuwī</i> <sup>?</sup>	the lawny hill was bored through
17	<i>śīw</i>	<i>tānso pōrjuwī</i> <sup>?</sup> .	bored through by seven lizards.

The syntactic model of this passage is the following:

12	Adv	$V_1 + \eta a + wa^?$
13	$NP_1 + m$	$V_1 + \eta a + wa^?$ ,
14	$NP_1 + n$	$P_p$
15	$NP_2 + \emptyset$	$V_2 + w\bar{i} + \emptyset$ ,
16	$NP_2 + m$	$V_3 + w\bar{i} + ?$
17	$NP_3 + \emptyset$	$V_3 + w\bar{i} + ?$ .

Resolution of the symbols:

$V_1 = \chi\bar{o}^?-, \chi\bar{o}n$ ;  $V_2 = tañe-$ ;  $V_3 = p\bar{o}rju-$ ;  $-wa^? = VxPl_1Det-Indet$ ;  $-\eta a-$  = copulative suffix;  $-w\bar{i}-$  = formant of perfect tense;  $\emptyset$  = zero morpheme;  $-? = VxPl_3Indet$ ;  $NP_1 = \acute{n}ārcon \chi oj$ ;  $NP_2 = l\bar{o}rca \acute{s}eda$ ;  $NP_3 = \acute{s}īw t\bar{a}nso$ ;  $-m = AccSg$ ;  $-n =$  nasalized variant of GenSg; Adv = *tāweda*;  $P_p = taŋana$ . (The suffix *-m* of AccSg goes with both parts of the  $NP_2$  structure in line 16, but for the sake of simplicity I marked it only on the second member.)

If we take into account only the identical elements occurring in the parallelisms, the model will be this:

12		$V_1 + \eta a + wa^?$
13	$NP_1 + m$	$V_1 + \eta a + wa^?$ ,
14	$NP_1 + n$	
15	$NP_2 + \emptyset$	
16	$NP_2 + m$	$V_3 + w\bar{i} + ?$
17		$V_3 + w\bar{i} + ?$ .

This model demonstrates visually the sawtoothed interlacements of the parallelisms. But the linguistic dynamism inherent in parallelisms is more adequately demonstrated by the *topic-comment* relationships. The topic-

comment relationship examines the verbal statements in the correlation between the units containing the known (topic) vs. new information (comment). It has the advantage that it is suited also to the analysis of verbal statements shorter and/or longer than one sentence.

The passage in question can be broken up into three statements. Each of these is composed of two lines:

I.	12		$V_1 + \eta a + wa^p$
	13	$NP_1 + m$	$V_1 + \eta a + wa^p,$
		<sub>C</sub>	<sub>C</sub>
<hr/>			
II.	14	$NP_1 + n$	
	15	$NP_2 + \emptyset$	
		<sub>T</sub>	<sub>C</sub>
		<sub>C</sub>	
<hr/>			
III.	16	$NP_2 + m$	$V_3 + w\bar{i} + ^p$
	17	$T$	$V_3 + w\bar{i} + ^p.$
		<sub>T</sub>	<sub>C</sub>
			<sub>T</sub>

Of the identical elements occurring in the parallelisms the NP's nominal syntagms or noun phrases, breaking the boundaries separating the statements, connect these detached units. The connection consists in that those parallel and identical NP's which in one statement occurred in C would in the next statement appear in T. The transition of the NP's from C to T entails a decrease in 'news value'. This decrease in news value takes place also in the case of parallel identical V's. In our example the V's at the end of lines are repeated unchanged, and in such a case the news value of the statement drops to the lowest level possible.

	12	...	$\chi\bar{o}ni\eta a w a^p$	C
	13	...	$\chi\bar{o}ni\eta a w a^p$	T
or				
	16	...	$p\bar{o}rjuw\bar{i}^p$	C
	17	...	$p\bar{o}rjuw\bar{i}^p$	T

The case is different with the NP's, whose connective role has already been mentioned. The NP's occupy the first half of the lines and contain new elements also when they occur for the second time.



(a) At the level of phonology:<sup>5</sup>

15	<i>lōrcā śeda...</i>	C	NP <sub>2</sub> + $\emptyset$
16	<i>lōrcam śedam..</i>	T	NP <sub>1</sub> + <i>m</i>

The suffix *-m* of AccSg appearing in T is a new piece of information in contrast to the  $\emptyset$  morpheme of C.

(b) At the level of syntax:

12	<i>tāweda χōñinawa<sup>?</sup></i>		Adv	V1
	C $\emptyset$ C		C $\emptyset$	C
13	<i>ñārcan χōjm χōñinawa<sup>?</sup>,</i>		NP1	V,
	C T		C	T

The verbal form is transitive (*-wa<sup>?</sup>* = VxDetFl<sub>1</sub> 0 : Sg), it must therefore have a direct object. In line 12, however, there is no direct object, it appears in line 13. Consequently C  $\emptyset$  here is opposed to C. In these two examples a relationship of opposition exists between the elements, at the level of both phonology and syntax, so that an existing element is opposed to a  $\emptyset$  element.

In the examples quoted below a different relationship of opposition exists between the parallel elements.

(a) At the level of phonology:

13	<i>ñārcan χōjm...</i>	C	NP1 + <i>m</i>	C
14	<i>ñārcan χōjn...</i>	T	NP1 + <i>n</i>	T

The affixes *-m* of AccSg and *-n* of GenSg are opposed to each other, phonologically the opposition of *m* to *n* is a dull/sharp opposition.

(b) At the level of syntax:

16	<i>lōrcam śedam pōrjuwī<sup>?</sup></i>		NP <sub>2</sub> + <i>m</i>	V <sub>3</sub>
	C C		C	C
17	<i>śīw tānsō pōrjuwī<sup>?</sup>.</i>		NP <sub>3</sub> + $\emptyset$	V <sub>3</sub>
	C T		C	T

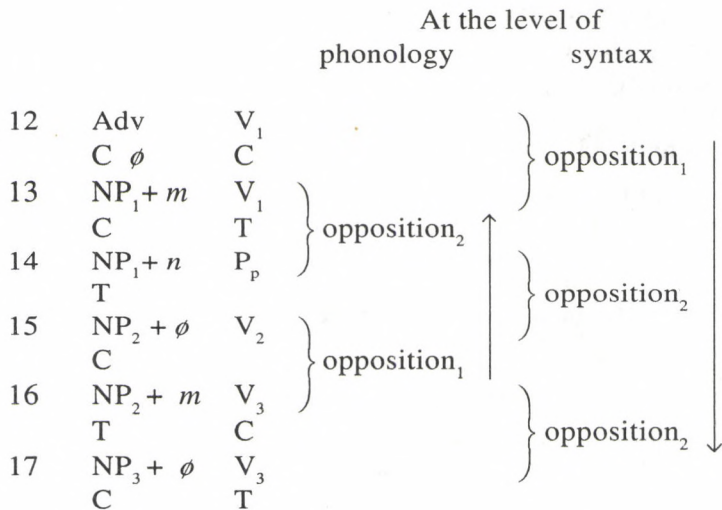
In this case the opposing elements differ from one another both materially and functionally.

In these two examples the opposing elements are also in opposition to each other, but while in the preceding cases opposition is indicated by the

<sup>5</sup> In these examples the level of phonology coincides with the level of morphology. It would thus be more accurately called morphophonological level. In spite of this - partly because of the broader sense of the new technical term, partly for the sake of simplicity - I abide by the term 'level of phonology'.

opposition of an existing and a  $\emptyset$  element, here we have to do with a relation between two existing and qualitatively differing elements. At the level of syntax this opposition manifests itself in that, under the pressure of the verb identically occurring in parallelism, a link of association comes about between two different NP's functioning as object and subject, respectively, and this emphasizes the difference of the two NP's from verb.

At a given moment the regular alternation of T's and C's the cyclical and gradual decrease and the simultaneous subsurface increase in the news value of the parallel elements result in the emergence of an element of entirely new informative value. The dynamism of the verse is created by the economical usage of two types of opposition, the relation between the existing/zero elements (opposition<sub>1</sub>) and the existing/existing elements (opposition<sub>2</sub>) both at the level phonology and syntax. The verse skips from picture to picture, from association to association. The following model demonstrates this dynamism :



While at the lower level of phonology the changes go from opposition<sub>2</sub> towards opposition<sub>1</sub>, i.e. from qualitative towards quantitative change, at the higher level of syntax the movement is in the contrary direction: tending from opposition<sub>1</sub> towards opposition<sub>2</sub>, from quantitative to qualitative change. The 'insert' of each new picture indicates such qualitative change. If we watch the concurrence of the two levels, we are fascinated, so to say, by the dialectic coincidence of opposites: the dynamism of the motion of linguistic material.

## The upper level: an analysis of the level of motives

The afore-mentioned decrease and increase in news value appeared more differentiated on the NP's at the beginning of lines, while the function of the V's situated at the end of lines was to make this motion possible. (The end-of-line position of V's is a fundamental syntactical peculiarity of versification in the Nenets language, just as in Ob Ugric; to be more exact, Nenets versification is based on this syntactical feature of language.) Stylistically, these NP's are *images* in the broad sense of the notion, i.e. they recall immutable units (persons, objects, etc.) which are real or exist in our imagination. By their contingent and flexible nature the V's press these immutable units into the current of linguistic process. In a narrow sense the image can only have one component (N), and the other component appearing in the NP's (Adj) denotes in this case the accessory element. The *images* together with the contingent, accessory elements belonging to them constitute the *motives*. The motive has therefore two components: an image of immutable character (linguistically: N or NP) and an accessory element (linguistically: Adj or V).

The changes of value taking place in the verse apply to the components of the motives as well: an accessory element can also gain immutable value, and conversely: an image of immutable character can also acquire accessory value. The most characteristic example of this change of value is called *khiasm*:

17	<i>šiw tānso...</i>	seven lizards ...
	C	
18	<i>tānso űewe...</i>	mother lizard ...
	T	

While in the first case *tānso* 'lizard' is an immutable unit, a basic component of an attributive construction, in the second case it is degraded to a possessive attribute, namely it is only an accessory element of the noun *űewe* 'mother'. The way this took place in the T-C relation is that the word *tānso* 'lizard' dropped from C to T.

Practically, a motive in the broader sense in any line composed of NP and V, and in a narrow sense any NP composed of Adj and N. Accordingly, the preceding model is completed by another level:

			At the level of		
			phonology	syntax	motive
12	Adv	V <sub>1</sub>	}	} opposition <sub>1</sub>	} motive <sub>1</sub>
	C ∅	C			
13	NP <sub>1</sub> + m	V <sub>1</sub>	} opposition <sub>2</sub>	}	}
	C	T			
14	NP <sub>1</sub> + n	P <sub>p</sub>	}	} opposition <sub>2</sub>	}
	T				
15	NP <sub>2</sub> + ∅	V <sub>2</sub>	} opposition <sub>1</sub>	}	} motive <sub>2</sub>
	C				
16	NP <sub>2</sub> + m	V <sub>3</sub>	}	} opposition <sub>2</sub>	} motive <sub>3</sub>
	T	C			
17	NP <sub>3</sub> + ∅	V <sub>3</sub>			
	C	T			

This model represents the sequence of the motives: the working of a chain of motives.

As a matter of fact, the whole incantation is nothing else than a string of motives. For reasons of construction the following analysis covers only the passage from line 12 to line 40. The lines preceding and following that passage will be analysed later on.

The text analysis of lines 12 to 17 is already finished, this new analysis begins with line 18 and deals with the changes at the level of motives only.

18	<i>tānso nēwe χādakaw</i>	Mother lizard, grandmother,
	T C	
19	<i>ōbom nūda tāriṇin</i>	“give a child,
	C C	
20	<i>nāsadan tāriṇin!”</i>	“give to my friend !”
	C T	
21	<i>tānso nū nāsana</i>	The lizard child, my friend,
	T T	
22	<i>χeṅkiχina pōrjuwī.</i>	bored through my side.
	C T	

Line 18 is linked to the preceding line 17 by means of the *khiasm* referred to before:

17	<i>šiw tānso pōrjuwī?</i>
	C
18	<i>tānso nēwe χādakaw</i>
	T

This change value (from qualified word to attribute, from C to T) ensures continuity. In the same way the repeated appearance as subjects in line 21, this time representing of course T, of the direct object (*ōbom űūda*) and the noun with a dative ending (*űāsadan*) – (both being C) – occurring in the parallelism of lines 19 and 20 likewise serves to link the motives smoothly. The verb occurring in line 22 refers back to line 17 and thereby brings the entire cluster of motives back to the initial motive (*šiw tānso*). The change of value taking place in lines 19 to 21 is again not unambiguous: a decrease in value takes place on the plane of T–C relationships, simultaneously with an increase in value (from O and Dat, respectively, to Subj) at the level of syntax.

23	<i>sēram</i>	<i>χōjm</i>	<i>χōniűawa?</i>	We found the ice ridge,
24	<i>sēran</i>	<i>χōjn</i>	<i>χāewχana</i>	on the side of the ice ridge
25	<i>χem</i>	<i>jaχa</i>	<i>taűewī,</i>	was a blood river,

These three lines are a repetition of lines 12 to 15, only the two NP's are different. The *χem jaχa* 'blood river' motive 'inserted' in line 25 continues until line 35.

25	<i>χem</i>	<i>jaχa</i>	<i>taűewī,</i>	was a blood river,
	C	C		
26	<i>χem</i>	<i>jaχa</i>	<i>χajeparűa</i>	the blood river got going,
	T	C		
27	<i>jēntalida</i>	<i>χajeparűa,</i>		the current got going,
	C	T		
28	<i>χem</i>	<i>jaχa</i>	<i>jēntakana</i>	in the blood river's current
	T	T		
29	<i>matoraje</i>	<i>χōricana</i>		to be cut
	C	C		
30	<i>āeptarida</i>	<i>tirconā?</i>		plaits of hair are floating.
	C	C		
31	<i>χem</i>	<i>jaχam</i>	<i>jēnāwem?</i>	I cut the blood river
	T	C		
32	<i>pē</i>	<i>űāűi</i>	<i>jēnāwem?</i>	bare-handed I cut it,
	C	T		
33	<i>χem</i>	<i>jaχa</i>	<i>matedā</i>	the blood river stopped
	T	C		
34	<i>jēntalida</i>	<i>matedā,</i>		the current stopped,
	C	T		
35	<i>χem</i>	<i>jaχam</i>	<i>madāwa?</i>	we crossed the blood river.
	T	C		

In the parallelism of lines 26 and 27 the motives *χew jaχa* 'blood river' and *jēntalida* 'current' fulfil the function of subject and are synonymous with each other. In line 28 they appear, subordinated and superordinated to each other, in the locative function; as regards T-C relationship a decrease in value takes place. In this case the decrease in value came about simultaneously at the level of syntax (from Subj to Loc) and in the T-C relationship, but continuity is ensured here as in lines 19 to 21. The *χew jaχa* 'blood river' motive alternates cyclically with other motives. This is a sort of pendular movement which implies of course similar alternations of the T's and C's and finally results in a sudden switch-over to a new motive.

35	<i>χew jaχam madāwa?</i>	we crossed the blood river.
36	<i>ješe matam χōnajwa?</i>	We found the iron tent,
37	<i>ješe matan turiwem?</i>	I entered the iron tent,

Line 36 is linked to the preceding line only by the identical syntactic structure and the accordingly identical morphemes: the suffix *-m* of AccSg and the verbal personal suffix *-wa?*. Unlike the foregoing, line 36 is linked to line 37 not by the V's but by the identical NP's. And the following motive appears without any connective element :

38	<i>šīw nē amtuwī?</i>	seven women sat there,
	C	
39	<i>šīw ní? maňalňam,</i>	I embraced the seven,
	T	
40	<i>šīw nanim šedawī?</i>	they swaddled seven boys.
	T	

These three lines are kept together only by the line-opening word *šīw* 'seven'. While dropping from C to T, the word *šīw* 'seven' obtains a syntactically higher status: it changes from attribute (line 38) to object (line 39) in order to drop back to attribute again (line 40).

The linkages of these three and the preceding two lines were looser than usual in verse: genuine parallelism, which is kept together by verbs, was not even to be found in them. In view of the mechanism of the verse, this phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the parallelisms closely following one another create in the listener schemata of a kind which after a while automatically 'dismember' the linguistic utterances.

The object of analysis has so far been the passage from line 12 to line 40, the passages preceding and following that have not yet been dealt with. These two passages are rather related to each other than to the passage surrounded by them. The relation between the two is symmetrical:

2	<i>nūm páw íamawem<sup>?</sup></i>	my celestial tree I grasped
3	<i>śāmān násañin</i>	all my friends
4	<i>śumpuda χamarnaje<sup>?</sup></i>	should bow their backs before me
7	<i>śiwin ańi nōckō</i>	the smallest of the seven
8	<i>nūwun tīn pōd'ercun</i>	the celestial reindeer I must harness
10	<i>tīrin salē χanijō</i>	the cloud island's sledge
11	<i>χanijō χajeχalī</i>	the sledge set off
17	<i>śīw tānso pōrjuwī<sup>?</sup></i>	bored through by seven lizards

And the same backwards:

38	<i>śīw íe amtuwī<sup>?</sup></i>	seven women sat there
41	<i>tāweda χajeχalī</i>	then there set off
42	<i>tīrin śālē χanijō</i>	the cloud island's sledge
44	<i>χäeχen tīwa<sup>?</sup> äedasun</i>	I must let our spirit reindeer go
45	<i>śiwin ańi nōckō</i>	the smallest of the seven
47	<i>śāmān násañin</i>	all my friends
48	<i>śeńkaχada χäeriηada<sup>?</sup></i>	go to your camping grounds
51	<i>nūm páw χānuwī<sup>?</sup></i>	my celestial tree they took away

The motives recur symmetrically. The motive *śīw íe* 'seven women' first appears concealed in the *khiasm* mentioned already twice before:

*śīw tānso*

*tānso íewe*, representing the other leg of  $\chi$ . This change of value has already been discussed.

In the case of lines 10–11 and 41–42 the change of value appears in the changed order of the lines.

10	<i>tīrin śālē χanijō</i>	41	<i>tāweda χajeχalī</i>
11	<i>χanijō χajeχalī</i>	42	<i>tīrin sōlē χanijō</i>

In lines 7–8 and the corresponding lines 44–45 the attributes and verbs acquire contrary meanings, while the order of the lines also changes:

7	<i>śiwin ańi nōckō</i>	44	<i>χäeχen tīwa ? äedasun</i>
8	<i>nūwun tīn pōd'ercun</i>	45	<i>śiwin ańi nōckō</i>

i.e. *nūwun tī* 'celestial reindeer' vs. *χäeχen tī* 'spirit reindeer', *pōd'ercun* 'I must harness' vs. *äedasun* 'I must let go'. Likewise, verbs having contrary meanings are opposed to each other in lines 2 and 51:

2	<i>nūm páw íamawem<sup>?</sup></i>	51	<i>nūm páw χānuwī<sup>?</sup></i>
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i.e. *íamawem* ? 'I grasped' vs. *χānuwī* 'they took away'.

Symmetry is a structural feature peculiar not only to the framework, it appears also within the text proper, though not everywhere as characteristically and as clearly as in the framework. We have already spoken about the recurrence of some passages, now we are going to deal with them separately.

Lines 1 to 11 (*a*) recur in lines 41 to 51 (*a'*), and the motives contained in them have polarly opposite values in relation to each other. Lines 12 to 15 (*b*) recur in lines 23 to 25 (*b'*), but the values of the motives contained in them do not represent the two opposite poles, their difference is half-way between these two poles. A recurrence, or at least an enlargement, of lines 16–17 (*c*) may be in lines 18 to 22 (*c'*) as well as lines 38 to 40 (*c''*). The motives contained in them – especially the basic motive, the motive *šiw tānso* ‘seven lizards’ – undergo a definite change of value (*tānso nēwe* ‘mother lizard’, *šiw nē* ‘seven women’, etc.). Lines 26–27 (*d*) recur in lines 31 to 35 (*d'*), the motives contained in them are antonymic:

26	<i>χew jaχa χajeparŋa</i>	33	<i>χew jaχa matedā</i>
27	<i>jēntalida χajeparŋa</i>	34	<i>jēntalida matedā</i>

i.e. *χajeparŋa* ‘got going’ vs. *matedā* ‘stopped’.

Lines 28 to 30 (*e*) stand alone, and so do lines 36–37 (*f*).

The motives thus present the following structure:

1–11	<i>a</i>	<i>journey</i>
12–15	<i>b</i>	<i>nārcon χōj</i> ‘mossy ridge’
16–17	<i>c</i>	<i>šiw tānso</i> ‘seven lizards’
18–22	<i>c'</i>	<i>tānso nēwe</i> ‘mother lizard’, <i>tānso nū</i> ‘lizard child’
23–25	<i>b'</i>	<i>sēra χōj</i> ‘ice ridge’
26–27	<i>d</i>	<i>χem jaχa</i> ‘blood river’
28–30	<i>e</i>	<i>matoraje χōrićana äeptarida</i> ‘plaits of hair to be cut’
31–35	<i>d'</i>	<i>χew jaχa</i> ‘blood river’
36–37	<i>f</i>	<i>ješe má?</i> ‘iron tent’
38–40	<i>c''</i>	<i>šiw nē</i> ‘seven women’, <i>šiw nani</i> ‘seven boys’
41–53	<i>a'</i>	<i>journey</i>

Exclusive of the framework, the chain of the motive *χem jaχa* (lines 25–35) reveals the most symmetrical structure, in the axis of which the motive contained in lines 29–30, *matoraje χōrićana äeptarida* ‘plaits of hair to be cut’, stands alone. So does the motive *ješe má?* ‘iron tent’ too (lines 36–37), which, however, is the ultimate object of the journey serving



as a framework, and as such it is also an axis of symmetry. Thus the structure of the motive chains is a sort of envelope: a smaller symmetrical structure is surrounded by a larger symmetrical structure.

### **The symmetry and the mythological aspects of the central motives**

The framework of this magic song is the shaman's journey to the otherworld and his return from there. In Nenets the shaman's journey is *wī*. The word *wī* is – in a way not entirely clarified – etymologically related to the word *widūta*, which is the name for the central part of the shamanist ceremony. This name is given to the shaman's act of cutting himself with a knife in the very midst of the ceremony. That can explain the role of the motive *χem jaχa* 'blood river'. This incantation is, in all probability, related to the shamanizing act concerning birth, its purpose is presumably to ensure the success of childbirth and allay the pains of the woman in labour. The blood lost in childbirth is actualized by the motive *χem jaχa* 'blood river' thereby strengthening its central role. And 'the plaits of hair to be cut in the blood river' (*χem jaχa jēntakana matoraje χōrićana äeptarida tirconā<sup>?</sup>*) are probably the woman's plaits of hair over which the shaman performs all manner of magic in order to rid her of her pains. The use of charm with hair is not unknown to Hungarian folklore either. In the case of this incantation the exercise of charm with plaits of hair is a mixture of contagious magic and imitative magic. It is contagious because the hair belongs to somebody, and imitative because this plait of hair is a substitute for somebody, it symbolizes somebody.

The other solitary motive is the 'iron tent' (*ješe mā<sup>?</sup>*). The iron tent is the ultimate object of the shaman's journey, from there the way already leads back home. It is known from Nenets mythology that an iron tent is the abode of the deity (*num<sup>?</sup>*). That is therefore where the shaman is proceeding to find out what the outcome of the event to be promoted by magic will be, the event in our case being a childbirth. Having found out what he wanted to know, he returns. Accordingly, there, in the iron tent, something has happened that will determine the outcome of earthly events. It is this happening, unspoken because unspeakable, that can explain the change of value of the motives in the second part of the framework. Namely, on the way back nothing is any more the same as it was on the way there: neither the reindeer that drew the sledge, nor the shaman himself who returns wiser after getting some (good or bad) news. As concerns the two lines constituting the 'iron tent' motive and the next three

lines, we have already stated that cohesion between them is weaker than between any other two lines of the verse. We have even found an explanation of some kind which put the linguistic automatism in the centre. But the phenomenon has depth-psychological aspects. Namely, at the climax of the ceremony the shaman seeks to express such layers of depth psychology which actually have no linguistic form. After the cutting (*widūta*) many a shaman lies speechless and motionless, almost like a corpse, while *blood* is trickling from his body. The shaman losing his power of speech while in trance, and lying like a *dead body* on the ground, and the *blood* flowing from him, *taken all together*, reveal more of the great mystery of shamanism than any loquacious talk: the interdependence, the secret connection, of *life* and *death*.<sup>6</sup> After this it is only natural that when the shaman prepares for this 'deep dive', his speech should become broken and his words incoherent.

The symmetry running through this incantation reflects not only the sequence of the shaman's way there and back, but it assigns also the place of the motives in the hierarchy of the entire system of motives. It is the structures of this kind which Suzanne K. Langer calls 'significant form' i.e. a form which carries some meaning in itself, too. The following quotation, although it refers to music, fully corresponds to the isomorphism that exists between the shaman's journey and the motive structure of our magic song :

"The tonal structures we call 'music' bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling – forms of growth and of attenuation, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm or subtle activation and dreamy lapses – not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both – the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentence; and the pattern of music is that the same form worked out in pure, measured sound and silence. Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life.

Such formal analogy, or congruence of logical structures is the prime requisition for the relation between a symbol and whatever it is to mean. The symbol and the object symbolized must have some common logical form."<sup>7</sup>

The dominant quality of the parallelisms, the extremely strong fabric of the motives, the nearly musical pattern and the 'significant form' are all

<sup>6</sup> In connection with the Eleusinian mysteries, similar phenomena are referred to by K. Kerényi on p. 248 of his book written with C. G. Jung as co-author.

<sup>7</sup> Langer (1953), 27.

means serving the purpose of *visualization*, not of *narration*. Although this incantation is about a journey, the shaman's journey, it does not narrate the journey but visualizes it by the above-mentioned means. And visualization is first of all characteristic of lyrics. In Nenets the magic chants of this lyrical type are called *šamṗadabc*. There exist also songs of an epic nature, called *tādepcō*, which could be rendered as shaman's song. These shaman songs differ from the magic songs: they display different structures and different forms of thought and, in contrast to the magic character of incantations, have a profane tint.

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# Nganasan Shaman Drums and Costumes

by

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The Nganasans are a small people in the north of the Asian territories of the USSR. They are one of those few peoples on the globe who have preserved elements of their ancient traditional culture practically up to the recent years. Shamanism was an interesting feature in the spiritual life of the Nganasans, and still in the 1920's and 1930's shamans were very prominent figures of Nganasan society.

Shaman in Nganasan is *ngá* (*ngó* was also heard sometimes). This Nganasan term for shaman apparently has a different etymology compared to corresponding names among other Samoyedic peoples. To shamanize is *ngótodátê* in Nganasan. The Nganasans also had female shamans, *ni-ngá*. They distinguished several shaman categories. Among these were the *ngíndië* or *ngíndilë* (*mindelë* was also heard occasionally) 'sign experts and sooth-sayers'; the *djučila* (*bakirë*) and *sajmêti* (possibly one and the same) 'seers, dream-readers'; together with the so-called *hósitala* (something like mediators between spectators and shamans) they acted as advisers and critics at shamanizing acts of big shamans; the latter also had assistants, *toptusi* (these were the future shamans, according to Tretjakov).<sup>1</sup> The Nganasans knew also the term *minesó*, translated by the younger generation as 'hypnotizer' or 'sorcerer'. They viewed as 'big' or, as they also called them, 'genuine' shamans the *ngá*, among whom they distinguished the 'big' shamans, *aniê-ngá*, and the 'small' shamans, *hurbakuču-ngá*; but of all shaman categories only the *ngá* had special vestments and drum.

Clothing was composed of a shaman parka (*kobjaši kêhê, kêhê*), head-dress (*ngojbuka*) apron (*hêlu*), boots (*fajmaču*); to the drum (*fêndir* or *hêndir*) belonged a drumstick (*fêta* or *hêta*) to make it sound by beating, and a case (*fênsirê boboj fodaj* or *hênsirê boboj fodaj*).

<sup>1</sup> (Tretjakov, P.) Третъяков, П. (1869) *Туруханский край...* [The Turukhansk Region ...], St. Petersburg, 430.

Below we shall give two descriptions of the instruments of two shamans, Togo (Simeon) Ngomde and Kheripte Jarockij. Simeon's costume and drum were held to be purely Nganasan, while Kheripte's costume and drum (he hailed from the Oko<sup>2</sup> clan) were Tungusic. Today all these things are kept in the Krasnoyarsk museum (Inv. No. 272). Both these descriptions were prepared on October 10, 1938, on the Taimyr river near the mouth of the Logata.

The shaman parka of Togo (Simeon) Ngomde is a collarless, open-breasted jacket reaching to the knees, with sewn-on sleeves and three triangular tails behind. In front it is held together with chamois leather strings. The parka was sewn from leather prepared from the skin of wild deer. The seams (*sočur*) and all decorative details are hemmed with white dew-lap hair of wild deer. The ornament consists of drawn triangles, arranged at the hem, the border and along the spine. Sewn upon the parka at the hem, the sides and sleeves are chamois leather bands (*čênda*) and twisted cords of cloth (*mojko*), with sewn-on bundles of polar fox and wolf hair. Bear's hair was not used here, because the shaman who had given Simeon his *djamadi* (demons) had none of it in his possession. These hair bundles were viewed as a guarantee of success in hunting for those animals. The cord plaits (*mojko*) served also to bring the soul of a sick child along by holding it with them. The chamois leather bands (*čênda*) served to cover as with a net an aperture in the ground, not to let the sickness come out of there. This particular purpose was served also by the *čênda* overhanging from an ornamented chamois stripe sewn by its ends to the sleeve; the shaman formed a ring of his arms as if laying a net round the aperture in the ground. Such stripes on the sleeves represented wings.

The three tail-triangles at the back of the parka represent three bird-tails (*nagur sontudadu*); they served to have the souls seated when taking them away from the spirits of diseases. The same tails helped the shaman also when he had to dive into the water during his wanderings to the gods' habitation in search for souls.

The ornamental stripe of black triangles at the back signified the spinal column and 'fortified' the shaman's own backbone. The ornament on the sleeves and mittens (*muhu*) was supposed to represent the motley colouring of the hair on the wild deer's leg, making the sleeves and mittens resemble that leg. The mittens differ from the ordinary ones in that they have three holes 'to make it more comfortable to hold the drum'. But, generally speaking, these mittens with the tips practically cut off remind one of the hooves of deer.

<sup>2</sup> A. F. Middendorf could yet meet Oko, the Dolgan (Tungus) founder of this clan.

The metal figures and decorations on Simeon's shaman parka are few and of poor quality. According to him, he himself as well as his father Fajkupte and grandfather Adajku had been shamans with shaman Djufade. Therefore he had lots of 'shaman irons' on his parka. A shaman ancestor of Simeon's died of smallpox, and his 'irons' had been put away in an 'ice vault' (sepulture), 'from where it was wrong to take them out'. Another time he told us that metal ornaments were so few on his costume because they had been put in the 'ice vault' of his deceased wife. We think that he (just like Kheripte; see below) simply hid away the best metal objects taken from his shaman costume. As is known, the 'shaman iron' was to be kept in the family even after the shaman's death (see below).

About the iron objects on his parka, Simeon said the following. The iron sheets sewn to the parka served to break the ice when the shaman descended to the 'lower world' (i.e. the realm of the dead). The small iron tubes (*tota* or *kingantu*) on the back denoted the hair of wild deer. The bent iron pieces (made of wire hangers) on the back represented the heads of six geese (*djaptu*). He still had geese here because he needed them in order to fly up to the gods. And these *djamadi* geese really flew up. He had no horns on his parka (and head-dress; see below), because his *djamadi* wild deer was hornless. But usually there were horns on the clothes and headgears of shamans, whereas it was held that those were horns of female deer, not of stags.

The apron of breast-cover (*hêlu*) is a trapezium having elongated non-parallel sides, made of clipped hide of wild deer, flesh-side up. The ornament of black triangles, along the edges and receding a little from them, is simple; down along the middle it is double. At a distance of two-thirds length of the breast-cover downward there is a black oval, from which two-fold black stripes go towards both sides. Just as on the parka, all ornamental details are sewn round with white dewlap hair of wild deer. The said oval on the apron represents the navel (*ki*). From below and towards both sides from the middle of the apron there are hanging chamois leather bands (*čên-da*) and cloth cords (*mojko*) with bundles of wolf and fox hair (see below).

The metallic objects on the apron are two copper half-moons (*basa*)<sup>3</sup> and two small copper chains. One of the copper half-moons covers the navel, the other is further down. In addition to their function of covering the navel, the copper sheets served for the shaman to lie down on and to break the ice with when he crawled into the 'lower world'. The copper chains served for him, when seizing the souls of sick persons in the 'lower

<sup>3</sup> Similar to those applied on women's overalls.

world' and seating them on the three tails, to bind them lest they should go astray. These chains are called *basa suontu* (or *súon*).

The head-dress (*ngojbuka*) is a headband, to which are sewn two ribbons crossing each other on the top of the head. In front the head-dress has tassels of red and blue stripes hanging down the face. The ribbons of the head-dress were sewn from red cotton, with strips of blue fabric and white deerskin on their edges. According to Simeon, earlier, he had a small metal plate on the top of his head. But now he did not sew it on because he was old and his skull bone was hard. It is to be noted that a headgear of approximately the same type was used by the Nganasans, men and women alike, during festivals (only without tassels before their faces).

Simeon's shaman boots (*fajmu*) are of a purely Nganasan type without the instep of coloured clipped hide, the hairy side facing inward (soles with the hairy side outward). The Nganasans usually wear nearly the same type of boots in autumn and winter. But Simeon's boots have an ornament of black stripes sewn round with dewlap hair of wild deer. This ornament consists of five vertical stripes on each boot: one in the middle in front, and two on each side. Below, 6 to 7 cm short of the soles, the lateral stripes are bent at nearly right angle, but sometimes even at almost acute angle, 5 to 6 cm backwards. The stripe in front above the knee forms a circle, from which two stripes run towards the closer one of the lateral stripes. Then from that same stripe, at equal distances from the circle above the knee and from each other, two pairs of stripes go in both directions, the lower being somewhat over the rising instep, while the middle pair, as mentioned above, is between the circle above the knee and the lower pair. Both pairs of these stripes are directed downward and they do not reach the closer one of the lateral stripes. Somewhat below the lower one of the said bifurcating pairs the front stripe forks at acute angle and each stripe descends very nearly reaching the sole of the boot.

All these stripes are called *sočur*. The bifurcation of the front stripe on the instep (see above) denotes the cloven hoof (*móno*) of the wild deer. The circle on the knee denotes the knee-cap or the knee itself (*fêgaj*).

It was particularly stressed that all these stripes were sewn round with dewlap hair of nothing but with deer. Shamans never used for their own clothing the dewlap hair of domesticated deer, because it was held to be working against success. Meanwhile it was said that when the women sewed ordinary parkas for everyday wearing, they used the dewlap hair of tame deer also. As if it meant nothing to such parkas whether the hair was from wild or tame deer. Whereas we heard that also for ordinary men's parkas it was better to apply the hair of wild deer.

The shaman drum (*hêndir* or *fêndir*) is egg-shaped, and its hoop is made of larch. The drum is stretched over with dressed skin of wild deer. If the skin of tame deer was used for the drum (or for the costume) of the shaman, it was held to be a sin, while the use of the skin of wild deer for that purpose was regarded as 'no sin'. During shamanistic *séances* the Nganasan shamans held the drum with its narrower end upward, while the Dolgan and Evenki shamans did the other way. Togo (Simeon) held the drum in the Nganasan manner, but Kheripte (see the following description) followed the Dolgan way.

The grip of the drum is of copper and cross-shaped. It is named *komísja*. The drum's grip is tied to four iron staples on the hoop. These staples denoted the shoulder-blades (*njuadu*) of wild deer, and the drum as a whole was considered a wild deer. Fastened to the tips of the grip is a chain (*basa bini*), whose end is attached to a staple on the hoop at the narrower end of the drum.

There are seven knobs (*djartu*) on the outside of the drum. They are of osier. They are tied around with a string woven of the sinews of wild deer. This string was intended to hold the knobs and give the drum a better sound.

On the outside of the drum there are still visible black and entirely obliterated red drawings. In particular, under the chain stretched between the ends of the cross-shaped handle, black and red circles were drawn. The chain on the handle of the drum had to be in line with those circles. Other obliterated red drawings signified wild deer, three sons and a daughter of the shaman himself (but his wife was not represented), a polar fox, a few *djamadi* sledges. The wolf as well as the cross functioning as the drum's grip were painted black. Simeon said he did not remember why he had drawn this black cross. The wild deer, the polar foxes and the children of the shaman were 'put' in the drum in order to be sheltered and to multiply. The wolf was represented, apparently, in order to show that the given shaman had killed a wolf (see below) and thereby to protect the deer against its attacks.

According to Simeon the Evenki painted everything on their drums red, the Nganasans black.

The drum-case (*hênsirê boboj hodaj*) was made of the skin of wild deer and was not decorated.

Togo (Simeon) had two drumsticks. Both were of the usual 'Tungus' type, in the shape of a longish bent shovel with a grip. A human face was painted on the grip of each. One of them was covered with legskin of wild deer at the convex side of the bend. It helped the shaman's descent to the



'lower world' during shamanizing. This drumstick was called *bonguadi honodi fêta*. Its grip was wound round with a strap, but this had no significance and served only to fasten the legskin to the drumstick. The convex side of the other drumstick was covered with skin from the horn of wild deer. It helped the shaman's rise to the 'upper world' during shamanizing. The name of this drumstick was *nêlja honodi fêta*.

By tossing up the drumstick at a *séance* the shaman used to divine the fate of sick persons. If it fell face up, it was a good omen, and *vice versa*.

The entire shamanist attire of Togo (Simeon) and his drum are held to be purely Nganasan. This drum is believed to be an old one. The shaman costume and boots, Simeon told us, were made (apparently after his instruction) when he had learned which shaman he was descended from. Having found out what that shaman's costume, boots and other equipment had been like, he copied them.

We now come to the shamanic accessories of Kheripte Jarockij. Let us recall that he was a shaman of Tungus (Evenki) descent.

His parka is of the same style as Simeon's, but was dyed red with ochre. It was also made of the skin of wild deer, and it was pointed out to us that to use the skin of domesticated deer for this purpose was forbidden. In particular, we were told that the skin of wild deer as material for a shaman's parka had to bring luck in hunting for wild deer. The seams and ornaments (*sočur*) on this parka were also stitched down with dewlap hair of wild deer, which again was supposed to symbolize success in the hunt for that animal. Dewlap hair was applied in needlework by women who were seriously ill. To recover from her sickness the woman concerned made such sewing with her own hands.

The ornamental execution of Kheripte's parka is the same as that of Simeon's, with the only difference that on the latter's border the triangles point downward, while on Kheripte's parka they point upward; on the border of Simeon's parka the points of the triangles are facing each other at the breast, while on Kheripte's parka they are turning outward from each other. The Nganasan name of Kheripte's parka is *kêhê*, its Tungusic name is *ahin*.

On Kheripte's parka also there are plaits of twisted cords (*mojko*) with bundles of the hair of a young polar fox. When the shaman had to bring back the soul of a child, he tied it with such a plait. Chamois leather bands (*čênda*) are on Kheripte's parka, too. In contrast to Simeon's parka, cords and stripes are attached not only to the hem and to the 'wing' on the parka's sleeve, but to its back. Both shamans had only one pair of ribbons

on their left side. Just as Simeon, Kheripte explained the purpose of stripes on the sleeves as follows: “When a deceased man is buried in the earth his soul goes off into an aperture in the ground. The shaman covered this aperture with his arms, and the stripes hanging from the sleeves formed a net to block the way of diseases.”

The bundles of hair from a bear’s paw and fox-skin on the ribbons and the bear representations of copper tied to the ribbons brought success in hunting for those animals. An ornamented bit of chamois leather on the sleeve, called *suodi*, together with the metal half-moon, also served to lock up the aperture in the ground lest a disease should return. The *suodi* was also an imitation of goose-wings. As Kheripte explained: “There is water underground, and all the souls dive into it. When overtaking them, also the *djamadi* – geese and loons – plunge after them. That is why the shaman had goose-wings on his parka.”

The mittens (*muhu*) and the sleeve are decorated so as to resemble the foot of wild deer. Kheripte explained also that since the drum was held with the thumb and the forefinger, for the latter to be free it was separated from the others on the shaman’s mittens.

About the tails on the parka Kheripte, just like Simeon, said that “the three tails (*nagur sóntudádu*) were of use to the shaman diving into the water. When the shaman went into the water the tails were sprawled. Having found the soul, he seated it on the tails and brought it to the meridional side. This custom was established by old shamans.”

The stripe of triangles on the back, the so-called *tiridja*, was useful in cases when several souls were seated on the shaman’s back, inasmuch as it prevented the shaman’s spine from breaking under the burden.

The small iron pieces (*tota*) on the back represented feathers of goose or loon. Here Kheripte added: “Goose was god at birth.”

With regard to the two bears of copper represented on the back, Kheripte said that “those are the he-bear and she-bear gods”, and added, “some shamans appeal only to the bear’s soul”.

The hornlike bent irons made of wire hangers are horns (*namto*) of white sheep (in Nganasan *kúma*, in Evenki *djaló*). As a rule, Kheripte said, they represented antlers of wild deer, but since he was of Evenki descent, and the white sheep was a game animal for the ancient Evenki, he wore horns of white sheep, not antlers of wild deer.

According to Kheripte’s explanation the iron objects on his shaman costume were few in numbers because upon his wife’s death he had put them in her ‘ice vault’ (sepulture). We think that he, like Simeon, just refused to give them to the museum.

The apron (in Nganasan *hêlu*; in Dolgan *tehêljuk*) was of the same form and material as Simeon's (see above), but was painted red on top. As Kheripte explained to us, just as the belly of wild deer and fish is different from the rest of the animal's skin, so the shaman's apron differed from the parka. When the shaman swam in the water, he was riding his apron as a branch of tree (paddling a canoe). All tassels made from chamois leather ribbons on the apron were sewn on below. Yet this apron is decorated not with triangles but with two simple black lines. Where these are intercrossing above the navel there is a circle covered with a round carved copper pendant.

The four iron and two copper sheets (*bodjamo*) on the apron helped Kheripte, when swimming in the water, to break the ice (cf. the analogous purpose of the metal sheets on Simeon's parka).

There three iron faces (*nagur foro*), represented at the lower edge of the apron, said to the other irons: "The faster you go, the better you break the ice." The face in the middle is one of a woman. If during the shaman's stay in the 'lower world' something on his costume or boots got torn, that woman mended everything, taking a needle with yarn out of the two sewing kits (*njajmisi*) also suspended on the apron.

The small iron pieces on the belly represented the wool (*bjaj*) of white sheep.

Kheripte's head-dress is a dark red cloth with stripes sewn on (as in the case of Simeon) along the cap-band and crosswise above the crown of the head. These are stripes of yellow cloth with a small black strip in the middle, where white beads alternating with green ones were sewn upon. In front there are tassels of black and red cloth representing hair (*ngáhta*). To protect the crown of the head a round iron plate was sewn on it. Here Kheripte gave the following explanation: "When a man becomes a shaman, he is born anew. The *djamadi* are born in one nest with a god. When the *djamadi* grow up, they destroy the nest and fly off to the shaman. To imitate them the shaman covers the top of his head."

On Kheripte's head-dress there are four ears. Two of them heard Nganasan speech from the west, the two others heard Evenki speech from the east. Two straps on the head-dress – one with an iron plate, the other with a copper tube – symbolized tresses of hair (*fóno*).

The shaman boots of Kheripte are ordinary, not Nganasan, in style. They were made of clipped hide, the hairy side facing inward (only the soles were hair upward). On each of them there are five stripes adorned with black, white and blue beads. The stripe in front forms a circle on the knee and bifurcates over the instep. The lateral stripes below are a little bent backward. Just as in the case of Simeon, the bifurcation of the front stripe

was the cleft of the cloven hoof (*móno*), the other stripes symbolized the spotted legs of wild deer, and the circle on the knee represented the knee-cap and was called *fêgaj* (knee).

Kheripte's drum is also egg-shaped and made of larch: it has nine knobs (*djar*) of osier. Round the drum goes an osier ring for improving the sound. The drumhead was made of the skin of wild deer. Kheripte explained that when he made his way 'down' he scraped a road with the knobs of his drum. The cross-shaped grip (*komísja*) is of iron, wound round with a red rag and hung up by red straps. Out of the four staples inside the drum, to which the grip is fastened, two are of copper and two of iron. They are called *četta njuadu* ('four scoops'). "When the shaman shamanizes, he walks like the wild deer. The four staples are the wild deer's four leg-joints."

The shaman's wife and children are depicted with red paint on the inside of the drum. Above them wild deers are pictured. Red patches denote the *djamadi* sledges. "There the shaman hides away the souls of his family and of his wild deer in order to shelter them." Further on Kheripte explained that he drew with red paint because shamans had always drawn in this way. Evenki shamans also do so. The Evenki prefer red colour, the Nganasans red and black. If a shaman shamanizes over a sick man and the latter dies, then after a while the drum will be thrown away and replaced with a new one. Kheripte confirmed that, when he had heard what kind of drum and costume the shaman Tinti (mentioned by Tretjakov) had owned, he himself had made his drum and his shaman costume.<sup>4</sup> Kheripte's drum was rated as now. All his clothes and his drum were said to have been made in the Evenki style. During shamanizing Kheripte held the drum in the Evenki manner, i.e. the broad ('dull') side upward.

Kheripte's drumsticks (*hêta*) are of wood and (just as those of Simeon's) of the ordinary Evenki type. One of them is wrapped in skin (*todja*) from a wild deer's head and decorated with red ochre. Two faces (*sitti horo*) are represented on it. They are faces of *djamadi* – shamanic demons. When Kheripte shamanized in the Evenki language or when he brought back the soul of a sick man, he used that drumstick. If the spectators doubted that the sick man would recover, then Kheripte tossed up his drumstick three times. If it fell face up, then the sick man was going to come through. If, however, the faces were downward, the spectators said that the shaman's performance was wrong, so he had to start shamanizing again. This drumstick is cracked and is fastened by a piece of wood bound to it with deer sinews.

<sup>4</sup> Probably he wanted to say that the women did the sewing after his instructions.

The other drumstick is sewn round with legskin of wild deer. Engraved on the handle is a *djamadi* face. Kheripte used this drumstick after the Nganasan fashion. This drumstick has an iron sheet attached to it and is undecorated.

According to information received from other Nganasans their shamans' drum was similar to that of the Forest Enets shaman, i.e. oval or egg-shaped.

Sometimes young shamans, who possessed no drum and costume yet, shamanized with the aid of a hook (*fo*) used to hang up kettles, etc. over the hearth. To shamanize with a *fo* instead of with the drum is in Nganasan *ngotodatê hóda hensirssja*. In such cases the *fo* was held in the left hand and beaten with a stick (*niba*), on which the *fo* was hung. This *niba*, like the *fo*, was never discarded, because they were held to be a sort of shaitan (*kojka*).

It was generally confirmed that the seams on the shaman costumes had to be sewn round with white dewlap hair of wild deer.

In addition to the costume and drum, an important instrument of the Nganasan shamans was the so-called 'shaitan's hand' (*kojka djuťju*). We did not see it, but our informant Nganduo Turdagin, who was considered a *djučila* (see above), also had one. It was cut out of a piece of sheet iron and ornamented the wrist. On sinew threads fastened to it were hanging beads and small copper wheels taken out of watches. The hand itself was thickly smeared with fat and served as an amulet.

According to Nganasans the way of becoming a shaman is this: "A man seems to be ill, and his soul passes the night in the tent with some god. This god gives him *djamadi* (shamanic demons) as presents if one goes to visit someone. Well, then the man begins shamanizing and he is going to feel better." Outwardly this process usually took place as follows. The man pretended to be sick or going off his head. But since he prepared to become a shaman, he did not tell about it. As a *djučila* he shamanized by night, in his sleep. Then in the morning he told of what he had seen, what he had gone through. That is how people got to know that he would become a shaman. Then he started talking with sick persons about the causes of their illnesses, foretold them the outcome of the illness, etc.

Sometimes he told a sick man that he would recover and suggested at the same time that he should assemble some of his future shamanic paraphernalia – first a cap (*ngojbuka*), then an eye bandage (*sjajmesjungume*). Such bandages were needed in order to find something blindfolded. Furthermore, some time after, he had a right-hand mitten (*muhu*) made for him. Then this shaman already began shamanizing with the hook (*fo*).

When he was called to another sick man, he asked for a genuine drum (*hendir*) to be made for him. Further on people made an apron (*hjalu* or *hijalu*) for him. A drumstick (*feta*) was made together with the drum.

Finally the shaman requested one of his next patients to make a costume and boots (*kjahe fojmatunanu*) for him.

When the shaman died, all metal accessories and ornaments were taken from his shaman costume, and his wife or other heirs were obliged to keep those objects. If a son or a grandson of the shaman also became a shaman, these irons were left to them. Sometimes the shamans themselves talked about this in their lifetime, or after their death they communicated their will by appearing in people's sleep, etc.

Contrary to ordinary people, the hood of the deceased shaman's parka was holed, and the hair of the deceased was pulled out through the hole. Sometimes his hair was simply let hanging down his face. All this was done to make the *djamadi* go out.

These two descriptions of shaman costumes reflect the existence of two different elements in the ethnic composition of the Nganasans: one of them can be defined conventionally as Nganasan in the proper sense, while the other is the Dolgan element.

# A Nganasan Shaman Costume

by

G. N. GRAČEVA

During his long journeys to Taimyr in 1930–31 and 1936–37 the eminent Soviet ethnographer A. A. Popov obtained information on Nganasan shamanism and shaman costumes, among others, from Djukhadie Kosterkin of the Ngamtusuo clan, the greatest shaman at that time in the Avam group of Nganasans. Djukhadie's father (Ajdaku) and grandfather (Fajkupte) were also famous shamans.<sup>1</sup> At present the Dudinka museum of regional studies preserved the costume of Djukhadie's son, Djumnime Kosterkin, who personally gave it to the museum after giving up shamanizing. In 1969 the present writer visited Djumnime Djukhadievič Kosterkin, who is now employed as a fisherman and hunter in the 'Volo-chansky' state farm of the Taimyr National District, and inquired about the signification of various objects and pendants on the costume.

The costume consists of a shaman parka, breast-cover and boots. The head-dress, a few metal pendants from the parka and breast-cover, as became known later, had been retained as a 'keepsake' by the ex-shaman. Those pendants were of great value: without them, Djumnime said, "it was not a costume, only half of it". What those pendants looked like was impossible for me to find out. Of all the Nganasan shaman costumes known at present from museums and literary sources, this costume is unique even despite its being incomplete. Therefore this author hopes that her present publication will help ethnographers to see some new aspects of the cultural interrelationships of the peoples of Northern Siberia.

According to the functions they fulfilled, Enets and Nenets shamans were divided into several categories.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless a Nganasan strong shaman could perform all functions, that is, he was able to do acts which a Nenets or Enets shaman belonging to any of those categories was unable to do. That is why the shaman had several costumes, each of which he put on for

<sup>1</sup> Долгих (1951), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Прокофьева (1951), 126; Хомич (1966), 212.

the performance of specific acts. Besides, according to A. A. Popov, various parts of one attire might be worn also with another complete costume.<sup>3</sup> This is to some extent evidence of the relatively late start of Nganasan shamanism, in which stringent regulations were not yet established.

Djukhadie, as his son told us, possessed three costumes: *hottarê* was the most intricate and heaviest one and served for communication with the 'underworld'; *hottarê* means 'loon', this was also Djukhadie's shaman name.<sup>4</sup> The second costume, *ɲuodëdiɲuo*, served to communicate with the 'upper world'. The lightest of the three was the costume *mindiljajɲuo* or *mindilê*, which was put on in order to know 'which way to go', what to do in one or another case, how to help. In addition to those three, there was a special costume, *sjudimɲuo*, in which the shaman 'drove away' smallpox and measles. Apparently the number of costumes was not fixed, but the need to make a new costume was dictated by the shaman's spirits.

Djumnime's costume described here belongs to those which helped to communicate with the upper world; at the same time, this costume could be used also for shamanizing over a woman in childbirth. The parka, breast-cover and boots were sewn, at Djumnime's direction, by his wife. She also did the colouring and stitching of the designs and ornaments.

The parka, called *koge* (130 cm long, 60 cm wide from arm-hole to arm-hole, 75 cm at the hem), was sewn from the skin of wild deer of light colour, hairy side inward. The seams are stitched with dewlap hair of reindeer. The hair on the entire parka and on the tassels is cut short. The parka is open-breasted. The hem is entirely sewn round with a band (2 cm wide) of the skin of light-coloured reindeer, nappy side outward. Two pairs of chamois-leather straps are sewn to the flap borders: one at the level of the girdle, the other just a little below. The collar is sewn round with a chamois-leather band. At the back, the parka ends in three bossed wedges of equal length. All along the hem, the wedges included, tassels (*čanda'o*) are sewn, made of the same skin, hairy side inward. Outwards the tassels are painted vivid red and consist of strips 1.5 to 2 cm wide. The strips are cut out of a whole piece, whose upper uncut edge is sewn up along the entire length of the hem. The tassels are 40 cm long and, sewn to the bossed wedges, are cut short to tally with the base line.

The parka's sleeves (50 cm long from the arm-hole down) are sewn of the same material. Sewn upon each sleeve at the elbow bend is a rectan-

<sup>3</sup> АЛОНЭ, 14/1/34, 340.

<sup>4</sup> *hottarê* according to Ju. B. Simčenko, is the very name of the mythical loon, which came from under the water to the earth, where humankind settled later. The common loon is called *ɲuona* in Nganasan.



gular piece of hide (7 cm by 36 cm), hairy side out. This piece is bordered with a strip of hide (1 cm wide), hairy side out. On the lower border are sewn tassels (*čanda'o*), similar to those on the hem, but shorter and made from narrower strips. Both pieces of hide are painted red on the flesh-side and edged with a black stripe, stitched along the length with reindeer hair. These details of the parka are named *suoditi'e* and symbolize wings. When many people are ill, the shaman gathers their souls and keeps them with himself, and during the shamanizing *séance* he hides and protects them with the wings, "as birds protect their fledgelings".

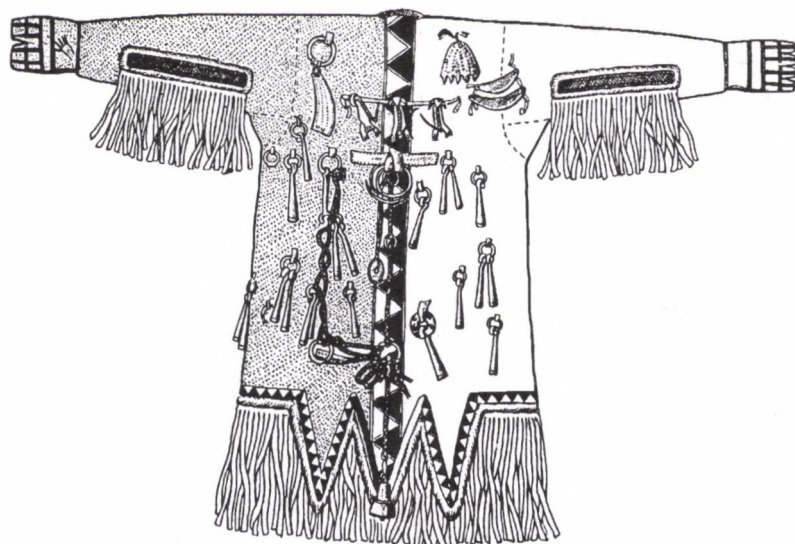


Fig. 1. Shaman parka (front view)

The whole parka is divided into two halves. Along the back (*čiriedapti*), from the collar down to the middle bossed wedge, runs a stripe 5 cm wide. It is ornamented with triangles (*mologu*) sewn round with white dewlap hair of wild deer. The triangles are alternately painted black and red. This alternation is called *hilti raki*. Starting from this stripe, the flesh-side of hide on the right half of the parka, including the sleeves and the flaps, is painted red, while that on the left half is painted black. The base of the black triangles is turned toward the red half, that of the red ones towards the black half. A similar ornament of smaller black-and-red tri-

angles with a 2.5-cm-wide ribbon borders the flaps and the hem above a strip of skin hairy side out. It has a regular pattern: the base of the black triangles is turned towards the red half, that of the red ones towards the black half. The right-side red half of the parka symbolizes the sun, daylight and spring, the black half represents darkness and winter.

On the right and left flaps below the waist there are drawings representing two walking bears (*ηarka*), sewn round with dewlap hair of reindeer; the eyes of the animals are also marked by stitchwork of hair. The bear on the dark half of the parka is red, the one on the red half is dark. Both bears are the shaman's helpers during the shamanizing act. Harnessing them to large and broad sledges, one of whose runners symbolizes winter and the other represents summer, the shaman can get swiftly to the place he wants to go, the bears carrying him wherever he wishes them to go, running at such speed that, according to Djumnime, "nothing can be seen, and only the wind is whistling loudly". The bear is, besides, the principal protector against all kinds of lies and evils.

The parka has pendants in front. At the level of the collar-bones four chamois-leather bands which are threaded through small holes serve to fix two quadrangular copper sheets (*moreiptida*), with two knobs on each. From corner to corner on each sheet four rows of bulging dots form a diagonal cross. The knobs are shaped like human faces with bulges denoting the nose and eyes. These faces represent a life-giving spirit, *Nilulemiηuo*. Sometimes there are five of them on every sheet. "It would have been better to make five faces", Djumnime remarked. In the arm-holes on both sides there are four chamois-leather bands to fasten two riveted metal sheets (*kijdê lêptie* 'rib-bones'). Such a sheet consists of seven double cross-bars riveted together and joined at the edges by horizontal bars. On the right hand red half, just barely below the collar-bone, there is, fastened with a leather band, a round open-worked copper pendant with notches in the form of two five-point stars and four rectangular holes arranged in pairs. Djumnime told me that the pendant was there 'for the sake of beauty'.

On the dark left half there are a few more pendants than on the right half. Beside the *Nilulemiηuo* image there is a round pendant having an embossed ornament arranged in concentric circles. Two halves of crescent-shaped copper sheets without ornament are attached lower down.

When he gave up his costume, Djumnime apparently took off most of the pendants from just the red half of his parka, where the helping spirits he had inherited from his father had been represented.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Прокофьева (1949), 362.

On right and left side on both flaps there are arranged, suspended from iron ringlets called *la*, hollow conical tubes (*nogoboda*) 'for the sake of beauty and jingle'. During the shamanistic *séance* three small tubes of the same kind (*santuda djaptidja* 'three nails') are in the hands of those present, "in order for people to breathe upon them; everyone takes one and says whether the shaman is going the right way". Where there are two such pendants on each ringlet, one of them is of iron and the other is copper.

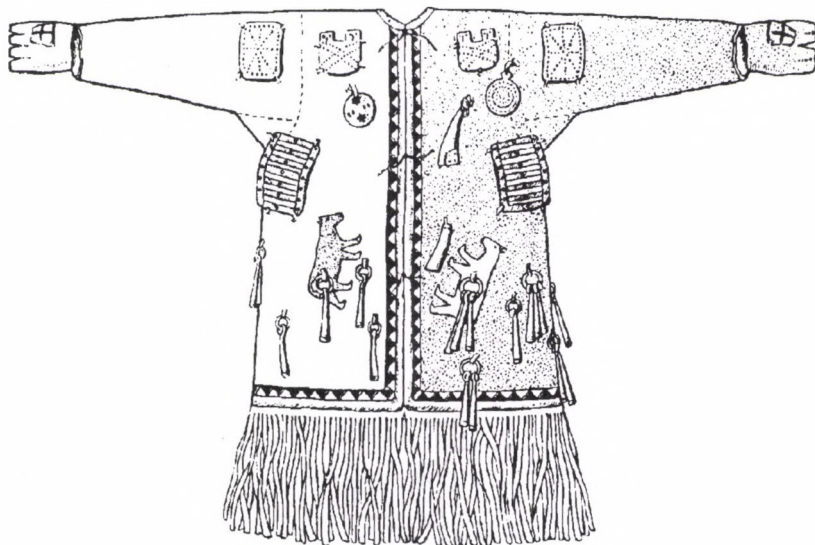


Fig. 2. Shaman parka (back view)

The same kind of tubes can be seen also on the back. By means of two chamois-leather bands sewn up crosswise, a large metal ring (*mogubin la*) is attached to the middle of the back. Passed through it is a strap or chain to support the shaman when shamanizing, to keep him from falling.<sup>6</sup> Just above the ring across the back, a chamois-leather strap fixes three bird figures (*djamkusi*) made of iron with twisted necks and long beaks – the helping spirits of the shaman. On the dark left side of the back at the shoulder there is a crescent-shaped copper pendant 'for the sake of beauty'. To the right at the shoulder-blade there is a copper sheet representing a bear's paw with five claws. Five rows of bulging dots denote the bones and veins of the paw. Right here, one above the other, there are two

<sup>6</sup> For the description of the shamanistic act, see Попов (1936), 76.

small crescent shaped pendants (*bodjamo*) fastened by two straps. Below the ring (*mogubin*) is a small iron ringlet (*la*), linked by strings with two more rings and a handbell (*sanku*), which hangs down below the middle boss. There had been bells also on each of the other two lateral bosses. When shamanizing to descend to the lower world, the shaman needed them because it was only with their aid that he could return to the middle earth. Wound into the lower ring is a similar string of leather stripes, and red and black pieces of fabric. That in turn is linked with several ringlets on the left side of the back. Bound to the upper ring there is also a small string ending in a metal gear-wheel taken from a watch mechanism.

On the sleeves at the humerus there are metal inlets (*koltirêptulê*). They are quadrangular sheets ornamented with bulging dots. On the dark side of the costume the sheet is of copper, on the red side it is of iron. The sheets protect the bones of the shaman against the blows which he is supposed to receive when communicating with the spirits.

Shaman gloves (*ŋalja ŋuhu*) are sewn to the sleeve ends as mittens are usually sewn to the parka, that is, only at the back. The fingers of the gloves have holes at their ends. The gloves are sewn of the same material as the entire parka, and are painted red. The left sleeve has a five-fingered glove, the right-hand glove has only three finger-holes: one for the thumb, one for the forefinger and the middle finger together, and one for the ringfinger and the little finger together. At the back side of the sleeve itself the picture of a five-fingered human hand is sewn up with dewlap hair of reindeer. On both gloves black stripes (*ŋikadja*) mark the bones and joints (*ŋadjuj*) of the shaman's hand (*djudjuđi ŋođo*). They picture also the veins (*sóčama*). The shaman takes the drum into his left hand and holds it with five fingers, because "the child is complete with five fingers". The thumb hole on the right-hand glove symbolizes the child's head, the second represents the arms and the third the legs. The three holes signify that in three months' time the embryo "is already an accomplished man if it has a head, arms and legs". In his right hand the shaman holds the drumstick.

The breast-cover (*hjalu*) is worn on the naked body. It is a trapeziform portion of the same kind of skin as the parka, the clipped hairy side turned inward. Its edges are sewn round with a strip of fur outward. The length of the breast-cover is 61 cm, its width 18 cm above and 41 cm below. Just as on the parka, tassels (*čanda'o*) hang from the lower edge. The outside of the breast-cover and the tassels are painted red, the drawings and ornaments are stitched with dewlap hair of wild deer. Running along the entire border of the breast-cover is a strip of ornament composed of contiguous black and red triangles (*mologu*). The bases of all red triangles face the

inside of the breast-cover along a black strip bordering the edges. A stripe ornamented with identical contiguous triangles runs along all the length of the breast-cover in the middle from above downwards. In its centre a circle, the shaman's navel (*kin*), is surrounded with red paint. The bases of the red triangles, from above downwards, are turned to the onlooker's left

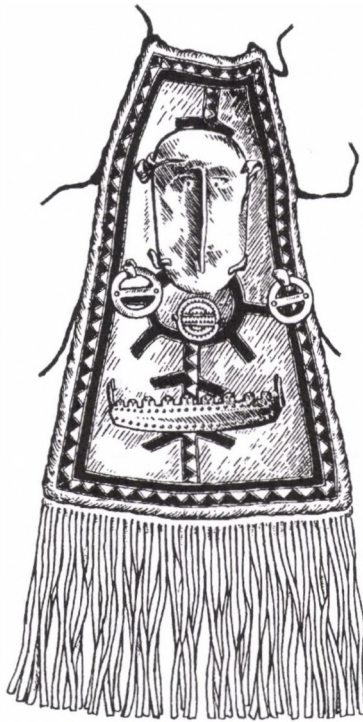


Fig. 3. Breast-cover

below the circle they look to the right. Three pairs of black stripes are going sideways from the middle strip above the circle, and two pairs below the middle circle. These stripes are fixed into the ornament bordering the breast-cover and are not completed with stitches of dewlap hair of reindeer. The upper design pictures the shaman's breastbone and ribs (*sindjalato, kijdijti*), the lower one his bowels (*betu*) and the intestines starting out from there.

The pendants are hung downwards. On the breast we find an iron mask (*hitađa*), an image of the spirit Moudjali (literally 'earthly day, daylight').

This spirit is master of the lives of people, deer, birds, plants. He has nine girls at his disposal, who are his maid-servants and carry out his will. Their representations are on the pendant *bodjamo* hung on the lower part of the breast-cover and composed of a copper sheet with nine 'cogs'. Each cog has eyes marked by hollow sockets and a nose by a bulge. The mouth

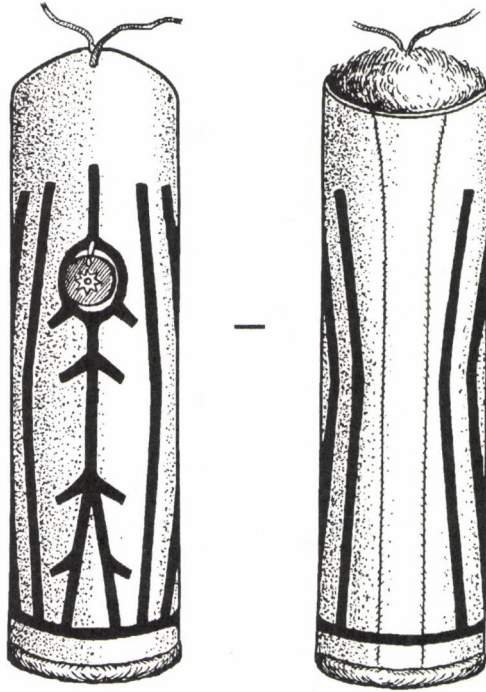


Fig. 4. Boots

is missing. The gaps between the cogs on the sheet are bent outward. A somewhat convex, round copper pendant with an embossed ornament (the navel *kin*) is fastened to the centre of the dark circle. Right and left from the circle there are two flat metal rings with a cross-bar each. Its purpose is not known.

The shaman boots (*hajmu*) (75 cm long) do not differ in semblance and style from the ordinary Nganasan fur stockings without insteps. The top is composed of two parts with the furry side turned inward. One piece of hide (about 40 cm in width) envelops almost the entire leg, while another is fitted in as a narrow band (6 cm wide) from behind. The upper part is sewn to the sole of dark hide from the frontlet of wild deer, in contrast to

the stockings, with the furry side turned outward. In front the boot-top is 7 cm higher than behind and has two laces of chamois leather at its upper end, while two more laces are sewn up right and left on a level with the knee-cap and are bound above the knee. The entire flesh-side of the hide is painted red and displays a design made with black paint. All seams and designs are stitched with dewlap hair of reindeer. A black stripe is painted round a little above the instep, with three vertical stripes both right and left; they are the *dër* 'legskins of reindeer'. There are twelve of them on both *hajmu*. They symbolize the reindeer's legs. When conjuring, the shaman 'walks' on fourteen legs, including his own. The picture drawn with red paint in front portrays the reindeer's leg bones (*kinkali*), and down below a small hoof (*monujtju*) is seen. The black stripes symbolize bones and veins at the same time. The black circle in the middle is a knee-cap. Fastened to it from above by a leather band, there is a little embossed circular brass pendant (*gegaj*) with a small copper rosette riveted in its middle. The pendant also represents a knee-cap.

These are the details of this costume as explained by its former owner. Much still remains to be made clear. Some obviously essential facts are hidden behind the expression 'for the sake of beauty'. This can be largely due to the relative difficulty of talking about such subjects, when the informant is to some extent still under the influence of his earlier world view.

The costume described here is for the time being the only one of the known Nganasan shaman costumes where the right and left halves are decorated differently, and on the flaps of the parka there are drawings depicting animals, bears in the given case, sewn round with dewlap hair of reindeer. Apparently there were also other similar shaman parkas. In Djumnime's words, one of his shaman ancestors had a parka with images on the flaps – a beluga (white whale) on one side, and a whale on the other.

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# Notes on Selkup Shamanism

by

A. J. JOKI

The following article is based primarily on the field notes collected by the Finnish linguist and ethnologist, Kai Donner during the course of an expedition to Western Siberia lasting from 1911 to 1913. Donner himself tells about this trip in his book "*Siperian samojedien keskuudessa*".<sup>1</sup> In the preface to the book *Kamassisches Wörterbuch*<sup>2</sup> I have given a general outline of Donner's research among the Selkups. In his book "*Siperia. Elämä ja entisyys*"<sup>3</sup> published in 1933 Donner also includes details on the Shamanism of the Selkups in the last chapter entitled "*Samaaneja, ihmisuhreja ym*".<sup>4</sup>

Kai Donner had intended to visit the areas inhabited by the Selkups once again, but there was no possibility to carry out this plan. Donner's notes, both the linguistic and especially the ethnological, remained regrettably sporadic and superficial in places, neither did he have the possibility of checking or augmenting them. Nevertheless, even in their paucity they are interesting because they describe a kind of tradition hardly accessible any longer as such.

In his diary Donner writes: "the region along the upper Ket can safely be designated as the blessed land of the shamans. Each yurt has its own mediator between men and spirits, and from almost each hut one can hear in the evening the dull roar of the magic drum and the strange chanting of the shamans. I had an opportunity to hear this well-known music daily and wherever I went, the shamans outdid each other with very lengthy and artful performances as well as in their expert handling of the drum."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Donner (1915) second edition 1923, also published in Swedish in 1915, in German in 1926: *Bei den Samojeden in Siberien* and in English in 1954: *Among the Samoyed in Siberia*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Joki's preface in Donner (1944) especially XV–XXXIII.

<sup>3</sup> Donner (1933) – it also appeared in French: Donner (1946).

<sup>4</sup> The title of the last chapter: "Shamans, human sacrifices, etc."

<sup>5</sup> Donner (1915), 69.



In the same book there is also a description of the shamans of the Ket river, giving information about their vestments and drum, as well as an account of a typical shamanistic *séance*.<sup>6</sup> In certain details this description differs somewhat from the notes made by Donner on location at the upper course of the Ket river during the autumn of 1912 in his travel diary. There we read:

“The presentation took place in the following manner. Around sunset someone goes to a store house located in a distant forest and fetches a drum, a costume, drumsticks and other paraphernalia. At this location the drum is ordinarily of a somewhat different type than that used at the Tym River.”<sup>7</sup>

The handle is of iron and a large number of objects made of the same metal jingle during the course of the ceremony. The most prominent shaman, specifically Trinkka who lives at the last yurt, has a drum the leather of which is decorated with all kinds of figures. Others have a drum the face of which is embellished with small, simple images of supernatural beings.<sup>8</sup>

The costume is most often of deerskin, the borderings of bearskin. Different kinds of iron objects are attached to the back and wings to the sleeves. The cap is made from parts of a bear’s snout and skull. Several articles of clothing hang from it. These are offerings to the gods. The drumstick is also covered with bearskin and inside there is an image of a snake or some other animal; the drumstick itself is usually made of wood. Additionally, the shaman has knitted socks up to his knees. In his right hand he has a drum, in the left hand he holds a drumstick and a small iron rod. Many have a quite simple suit of black broadcloth decorated with wide bordering and pictures of spirits (*lozi*).

Everyone seats himself on the floor of the hut, the shaman with his back towards the light or window, the onlookers in a circle around him. The sun sets and, for a moment, the glow of the sunset paints the sky gold. Outside the hut a good-sized fire burns in a birchbark tent next to which the drum is heated. The shaman smokes his pipe or yawns noisily. The drum echoes more and more intensely, and the shaman dresses quietly, complete silence prevailing. The drum is brought in and he grabs it, after which he dons his cap. He sits down on a deerskin, tilts his head in the direction of the drumstick and rod, covering his face with the hem of his

<sup>6</sup> Donner (1915), 143–149; in the English edition: Donner (1954), *Among the Samoyed in Siberia*, 77–81.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Diószegi (1960), 160 and see the picture in Donner (1915), 147.

<sup>8</sup> Joki (1959), 156 and see Donner’s sketch of Trinkka’s drum.

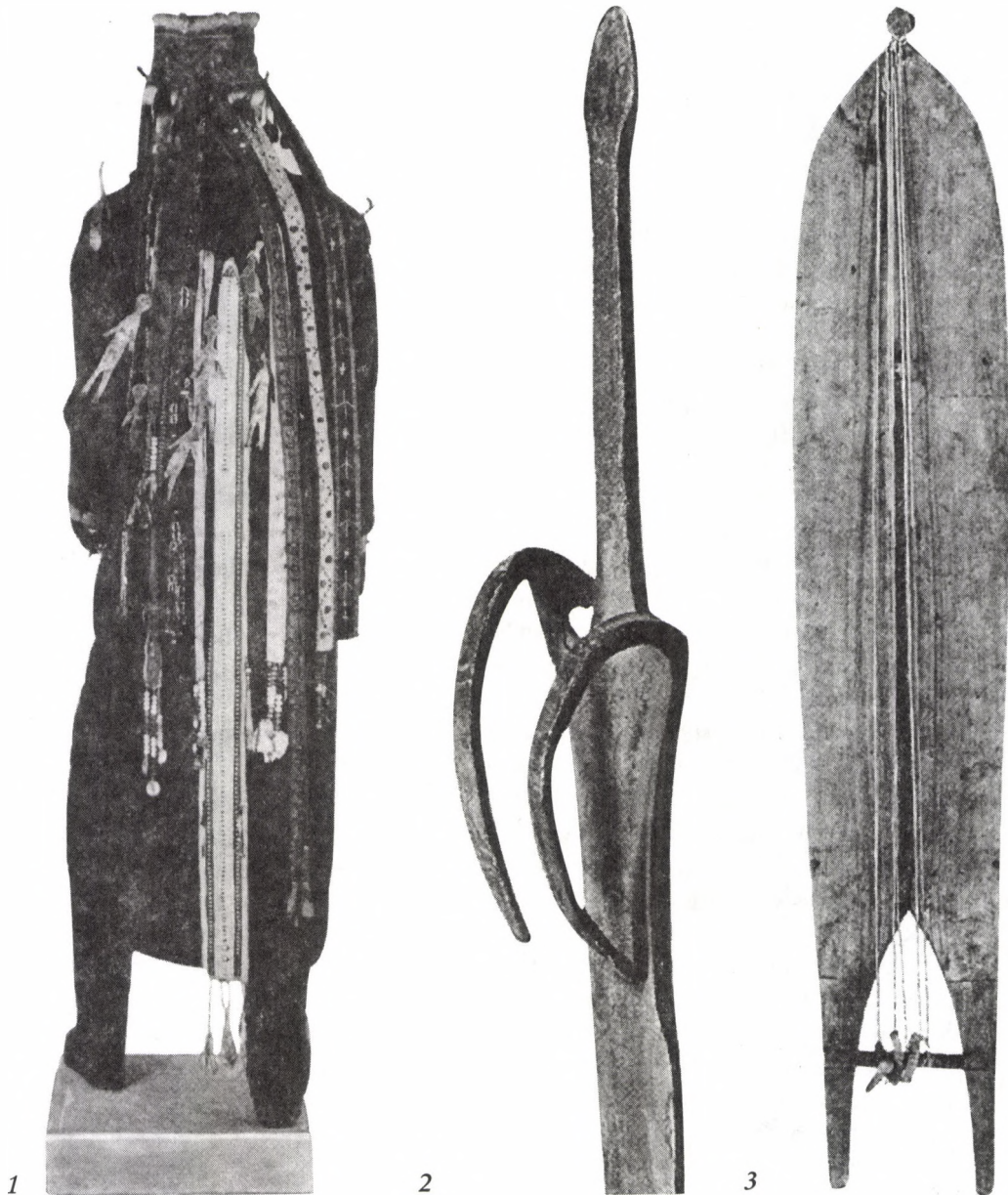


Fig. 1. The costume and headpiece used by a Selkup shaman of the Tym River area, viewed from the back. These are from the village of Napaas-eed. (Kansallismuseo, Helsinki)

Fig. 2. End of an iron rod (length 73 cm) used by a Selkup shaman of the Tym River area. (Kansallismuseo, Helsinki)

Fig. 3. A *Pəŋqər*; an instrument used in the Tym River area. (Kansallismuseo, Helsinki)

suit. He yawns, sighs deeply and gradually begins to murmur something in a distant and strange voice. Soon he begins to hum a tune and beat the drum. He summons his gods (*lōzila*)<sup>9</sup> and when, the noise of the music steadily increasing, they finally arrive, he requests their help. Then they begin to speak, explaining to him what he desires to know. He sings what they say, or to be more precise they speak through him.

The gods or spirits (*lōzila*) speak, and the shaman repeats, singing and uttering their words. These are, in turn, repeated by the entire audience. People who have not been present since the beginning of the *séance* are not allowed to participate in the song, however. When the song is at its peak the noise from the drum is so deafening that the windows rattle. During the first half of this performance the spirits (*lōzila*) usually announce in advance that which it is hoped will appear. Then the shaman seats himself, makes two rebuffing motions with his hand, and hisses a few times. The spirits are driven away and the shaman rests for a moment and smokes his pipe. But he is not allowed to drink in order to cool himself off, nor to quench his thirst, which is certainly raging.

Meanwhile the drum is being warmed and heated by the fire. When it is ready it is brought inside. The shaman takes hold of it and the second *séance* begins.

Donner made no notes on the continuation of the ceremony in his travel journal.

On the shore of the upper course of the Ket River Donner also recorded a 500 line "Shaman conjuring song" in the autumn of 1912. This is a very interesting linguistic specimen. It is unfortunately incomplete; evidently it was not checked and the translation is quite inadequate. One reason that this shaman song, recorded during a short pause, has remained incompletely explicated may also be that it contains shamanistic terminology, that is, terms not encountered in normal language.<sup>10</sup> A few fragments of the song in question are presented here in translation:

"Yawning *aj jaa*

I walk, seeing a dream

— — —

What spirit is that over yonder?

Cunning, dark cunning,

Cunning — I rejoice — it appeared,

<sup>9</sup> Plural form.

<sup>10</sup> Vasilevič (1963) on the difficulties of interpreting shaman songs.

To me, a man of the forest.  
There, a smoky gust of fire  
There, on the peak of a mountain,  
There a maiden, with eyes attentive, speaks.

— — —

The precious, leashed cradle  
Is being rocked by the *lōzi*<sup>11</sup>  
The precious, good, leashed cradle,  
Is rocked by the leash of an animal.  
There, further down, cunning, good cunning.  
Sat itself on the cradle and continued its journey.<sup>12</sup>  
There, the guards (?) of the seven old princes say,  
Out loud they say it:  
Which way shall you be let through?  
There the hero, a copper *Parkāj kwarqə*,  
There moves the head of the wave waters,  
There undulates the wave.

— — —

There the hero<sup>13</sup> spoke well.  
He yonder, what disease does he suffer from?  
My eyes do not see,  
My ears do not hear.  
The method, the dark method  
The method – I rejoice – it whitens.

— — —

Seated there, 'the precious throat'<sup>14</sup>  
Sits uttering the branched words  
Beginning a tale  
On a cold-spring day,  
On a long day spent conjuring.  
On white finned, judging (?) shaman,  
Whither shall I conjure you?  
You, shaman, tell me,  
My intelligence is not great enough,  
You, shaman, know the way ahead.

<sup>11</sup> Donner's explanation, i.e. 'a spirit'.

<sup>12</sup> Donner's comment.

<sup>13</sup> Donner's comment.

<sup>14</sup> Donner's term for the witch drum.

There, yonder – which of your spirits?  
What method do you use?  
There, the home of the squirrel,  
There, the peak of the mountain.  
The squirrel river, the animals wander.

---

There my precious god-father  
Let his animals into the water, taking no pay.  
The spirits [= *lōzila*] were surprised:  
There were not so many branches,  
More river animals were born.

---

The shaman pulls  
The hard and ironlike handle of the door hereto.  
He casts it away, door-post and all,  
From there he leaves.  
There a black-suited woodpecker<sup>15</sup>  
Hid itself in a hole.  
The woodpecker screamed.  
There yonder, the precious rods of the  
forest people.

At the base of a clearing,  
The son of the shaman's mother.”

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In addition, the shaman tells what he sees on each trip. “The black-jacketed woodpecker” goes through the hole made by a bird, but the shaman does not know where it fell: *man sajəm as aatuŋ, man qooum as üntaŋ* (= My eyes do not see, my ears do not hear). A squirrel's house (*ñajkan maati*) is encountered again. The animals scurry, but “a human being happens upon the place”. The shaman also sees the hero *Iite* walking and fishing with a net. Many different kinds of birds and other flying creatures sail through the air towards the south. “Seven ears, the ears of the drum are trembling today”. Soon the witch's song ends with the words “*tolloomara tolloomara*” (= bad, bad!) and the interjections:

*hoo jooj, jooj, jooj, jooj !*

<sup>15</sup> Donner's explanation: *lozi* 'a spirit'.

The shaman pleads further:

“čiiu, čiiu, čiiul lōō  
čiiul lōō, čiiul lōō,  
čiiu, čiiu, čiiul lōō!”<sup>16</sup>

Finally he sighs:

ηääh, ηxej, ηääh, ηxaj !

The “travel report” of a shaman of the Ket River resembles the descriptions of the shamanism practiced by the Selkups further north, to a significant degree, as interestingly discussed by E.D. Prokofjeva in her article.<sup>17</sup>

At the beginning of 1913 Donner made an arduous journey from Turukhansk to the Ob by way of Tas.<sup>18</sup> In the course of the journey he met several shamans and he gives a detailed description of his visiting shaman Nikolai Andrejev south of the Tas church on the 28th of January. In his journal the following description of the presentation is given:

“The drum was warmed and for four hours I was a witness to a horrible display. The shaman visited the spirit of death, *lattar-lōzi*, and defied death in a symbolic way by thrusting one knife after another into his naked chest. In the prevailing dusk the performance made a fearful impression. It was not designed for sensitive people. The shaman was in a state that could be described as the wildest madness. With uncanny facial expressions and inhuman howling, he seized the proffered knives and with them cut into his chest while violently drumming. Finally, fully exhausted, he sank into his place where he was purified by others with glowing coals and flaming wood chips, and freed from the spirits who continually lambasted him.”<sup>19</sup>

In his diary notes Donner tells that at the upper course of the Tas River he treated a Selkup suffering from caries of the jawbone.

“But the patient returned to the shaman. Having wandered into a house of different spirits, to places under god and under the earth on a sleigh for seven men and with reindeers of the spirits, the shaman saw there in the depths a bound man lying on the shore by seven princes. Finally he was released and the shaman considered this to signify that the sick

<sup>16</sup> Donner's translation: “Release my bones!”

<sup>17</sup> Prokofjeva (1961).

<sup>18</sup> Donner (1915), 100–132, and Donner (1944) XXIV–XXIX.

<sup>19</sup> Donner (1915).

person would recover after a while. There the shaman summoned *warqə qumən loosət*, the spirits of a great man<sup>20</sup> to help clarify the entire truth. But, he himself being slightly ill, the shaman noticed that *nuuŋaaqən kwejt t̄əŋku*, i. e. there are no spirits in the witch drum, and for this reason he was unable to continue. Besides, a *t̄apt̄ərəl qup*, i.e. telling person was sitting in their company and because he knew the *t̄apt̄ərəl wattet*, i.e. telling words, which the *twettəp*, i.e. shaman also uses, the entire matter could not succeed in any case. This same shaman requested that I bring him a pair of *kwesəl looset*, i.e. iron spirits from my home, so that he could, with their help journey to our country to see everything there and receive aid from there as well.<sup>21</sup>

Among the Selkup texts collected by Donner there is a charm in the Tas dialect. This charm is not recorded in the form of a poem, but as a prose text, with the scanning lacking. There are some points in the notes difficult to analyse. This rather short shaman song begins with the exclamation :

*“kijaa kuunen, ee, iiuun aanən ää aj!”*

The text itself is essentially as follows:

“Bone of the witch drum, what spirit torments the Selkup or what has descended from god ? What resurrected from this earth ? What kind of accident (or: end) for him ? – God of the heavens, why do you not allow (or: send) this to cross the river one day ? Your immortal shadow-soul descends from god to the world below. Your soul is transformed to a walking animal. Why does your power not suffice to ascend from the lowly earth? There in the sky is the father of the great-winged *čaaŋe* bird.<sup>22</sup> – The father of the great winged swan; descend for a minute from god! Come, enter this Selkup !”<sup>23</sup>

After this the shaman is said to go between the legs of the sick person in the shape of a bird.

This, then, is not the same kind of song telling of the wanderings of a shaman as the one recorded at the Ket River given above; this “witch song” of the Tas River is a typical short healing charm.

Both the Ket and the Tas Selkup shaman songs are completely different from those of the Yuraks, some of which T. Lehtisalo published in his

<sup>20</sup> Donner’s translations.

<sup>21</sup> Donner (1915).

<sup>22</sup> *čaaŋe* ‘a large grey bird, resembling an eagle’.

<sup>23</sup> Donner (1915).

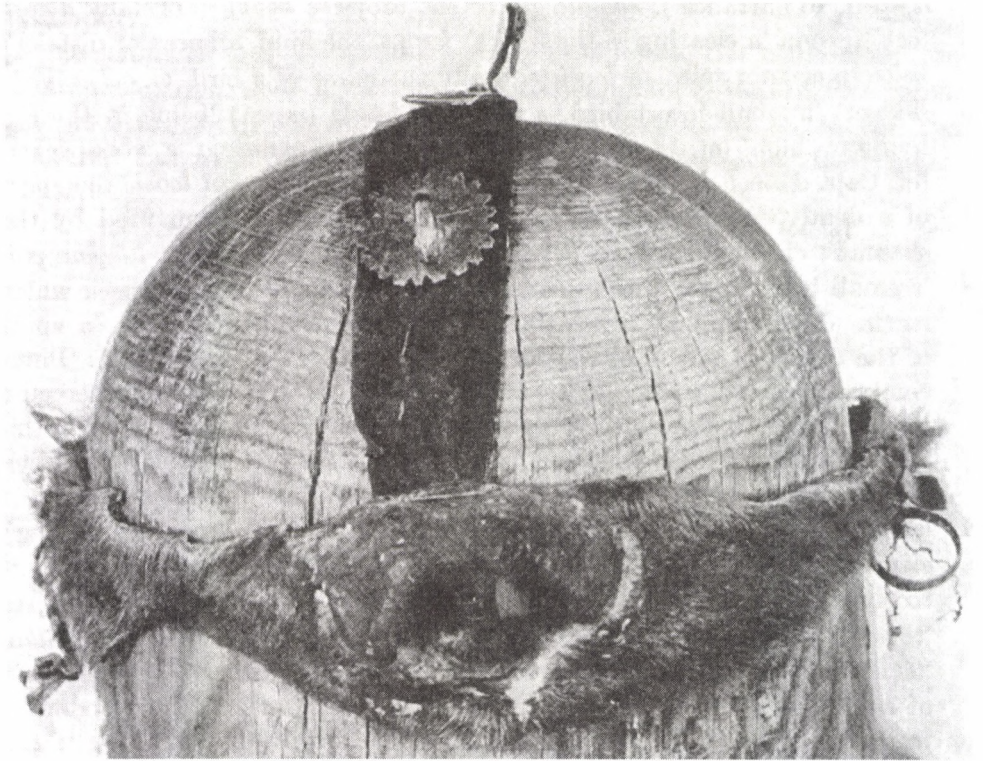


Fig. 4. Headpiece of a Selkup shaman from the Ket River area. The forehead piece of which is a bear snout. (Kansallismuseo, Helsinki)

book “Juraksamojedische Volksdichtung”.<sup>24</sup> It would be interesting to know whether there are any points in common between the Selkup and Ket (Yenisey Ostyak) shaman songs. For the time being, however, there is not sufficient reliable information about the latter.

A kind of vocabulary distinctively occurs in Selkup shaman songs which is foreign to everyday language and rather atypical of other folkloristic material as well. Kai Donner recorded this type of shamanistic terminology, a secret language of sorts, for the dialect of the Ket River. The following examples are representative:

*arku* ‘a black forest’, *ärri* ‘a gust of wind’, *qaaqaalčeenčan* ‘to cast a spell to act as a shaman’ (cf. Castrén : *kaagaldžam* ‘lenken ; to enchant,

<sup>24</sup> Lehtisalo (1947), 469–546.



cast a spell, to entrance'), *kaanac gu* 'to eat (object : bear)' (normally *awrgu* 'eat'), *qappi* 'a clearing in the forest', *kəppə* 'the land, an area or district', *kolqa* 'a certain spirit or *loosi* (actually the name of a bird, cf. *qolqa* (Caja dialect) 'a small forest bird, a thrush'), *künčə* (*mpeti*) 'being in the air, living on high' (cf. *künčə* (Ket dialect) 'sleet'), *qüüraaqqa* 'a woodpecker' (cf. Caja dialect *qüürq* 'a grey woodpecker'), *latta-riporqəl loosi* 'the spirit of a dead person which walks among the living' (a term used by the shaman; cf. *lattar* 'a dead person', *porqə* 'fur'), *länkaptut* or *länkaa-ptut* 'a small bell (on the witch drum)', *lukkə* 'a bone on a bird's neck which rattles during flight', *mančə* 'a clearing in the forest', *massu* 'a spirit of the forest, a person of the forest' (dialectally and cf. Castrén : 'Pinus cembra sibirica'), *nuussa* 'a tree in the shape of a human being erected in a certain place during the preparation of a witch drum', *ńorra* 'a mythical fish', *ńüssu* 'a lord, a master' (rare in shaman songs in the Ket dialect), *pəŋqər* or *pyynqaar* 'a witch drum', *puu* 'a bend in the river', *püüne* 'a large omnivorous mythical bird living beyond the sea', *saŋčə* 'long', *siipiiri* 'the soul', *siije* id., *sompi* 'magic, sorcery', *sompaarqu* 'to enchant, to conjure' *soomprəsa-* 'to heal', *sompəree-qum* 'a shaman', *sullaalčəmpan* 'to see', *suulmu, -o* 'stick or a spoon for beating the witch drum', *tillaŋ* 'to act as a shaman' (a rare word), *too-turnaŋ* 'a cradle', *töös* 'the spirit of a human being which lives outside of him', *taakku* 'the wood with which the shaman's hut is built', *tol(loo)mara* 'bad!' (shouted if the drumstick turns wrong side up during conjuring), *čüürə, čiirə* 'a stick, the shaman's iron rod', *čwarpə* 'a shaman; a priest'.<sup>25</sup>

This list contains terms for both the shaman himself and for his equipment. Of the Selkup words meaning shaman, one of the oldest is undoubtedly *tytebe, tatebel-qum* (*qum* 'human being, man'), which has, as is well known, cognates in the other Samoyed languages, the term having originated in the common Samoyed period. The family of words represented by the term *somp ree-qum* 'shaman' in the Ket dialect of the Selkup is equally ancient in origin.

Péter Hajdú has made a noteworthy analysis of the Samoyed terms for shamans in his article<sup>26</sup> so no further mention of them will be made here. Nevertheless reference should be made to one ancient shamanistic term: the Selkup verb *tillaŋ* 'to act as shaman' mentioned in the above list might be connected with the Yurak word family containing *teltana* 'shaman's

<sup>25</sup> In this article the Selkup phonemetic transcription devised by Pekka Sammallahti has been used.

<sup>26</sup> Hajdú (1963).

assistant' and *tōōltaa* 'to repeat the last words of the singer or singing shaman'.<sup>27</sup>

The shaman's most important piece of equipment, the witch drum, has two main designations in Selkup. The old common Samoyed term is the *pəŋqər*, *pyŋŋqaar* of the central and southern dialects which, in the Tym dialects, has acquired the additional meaning 'musical instrument': 'dombra'.<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 5. The iron headpiece of a Selkup shaman from the Ket River area. This one is from the village of Metaskina and was owned by the shaman Jefdakim Arbaldajev. (Kansallismuseo, Helsinki)



Fig. 6. The iron headpiece of a Selkup shaman from Ket River area; sacrificed to the spirits. Village of Metaskina. (Kansallismuseo, Helsinki)

Donner notes that the *pəŋqər* drum was no longer used in the Čaja area during the second decade of this century. In the northern dialects of Selkup the designation of the witch drum is *nuuŋa* (Tas) or *nowa* (Tym). In addition to these Donner recorded the term *sompər* 'witch drum' in Čaja. This is, of course, a representative of the same family of words as the term for shaman *sompəree-qum* discussed above. In the shaman song from the Ket River presented above the term *mirssəwe sooj* or 'precious throat' was used as a designation for the witch drum.

As a small addition to E. D. Prokofjeva's valuable article<sup>29</sup> some of the articles belonging to a shaman's paraphernalia were brought back from

<sup>27</sup> Hajdú (1963), 174.

<sup>28</sup> Hajdú (1963), 184–185.

<sup>29</sup> Prokofjeva (1949).

Siberia by Kai Donner and are now preserved at the National Museum (Kansallismuseo) in Helsinki.<sup>30</sup>

In the second decade of this century shamanism was already disappearing in some of the Selkup areas. Donner noted that along the lower course of the Ket River where the “culture of syphilis and vodka” had brought havoc among the Samoyed population, the religion of their fathers had been abandoned and there were no more shamans.<sup>31</sup>



Fig. 7. The iron headpiece of a Selkup shaman from the area of the upper course of the Ket River; sacrificed to the spirits. (Kansallismuseo, Helsinki)

Further north, on the shores of the Tym Tiver for example, regular use was made of the shaman's aid. In his notes for February 1912 Donner writes the following:

“Whenever someone is ill the shaman is summoned. He is given money vodka, or something similar. After this he appeases the spirits with sacrifices and drives them away with incantations. Once I asked if the Samoyeds' belief in shamans had not weakened. I was given the answer

<sup>30</sup> See figures 4–7.

<sup>31</sup> Donner (1944) – cf. Joki's preface XIX.

that this was not the case at all. They said: 'If we were not to believe in them and trust them, our sicknesses would come to a sad end. Since we have no doctors, we are not so stupid as to allow people to die just like that. Oh no, we have shaman and he helps us when we are in distress'.

One quite common demonstration of skill that the shaman used to do here (at the Tym) was to allow himself to be locked into a chest which is placed in the center of the room on the floor. The spectators form a circle around it. When the lights are put out a terrible racket ensues. The spirits run about the room howling and making a horrible noise. After a moment it is silent and the lights are put on. To everyone's surprise the shaman then enters from the garden. According to the Samoyeds the spirits have freed him and carried him along invisible roads out of the room.

When the shaman is predicting the future he placates the gods with different kinds of offerings. Then he begins to sing and plays a seven stringed instrument.<sup>32</sup> After a while there follow yawns and strange voices. Then he rises and some other person drags him around the room. He seems to fall into a swoon, sings even more strangely and plays all the more furiously. He waves the drumstick or spoon all the time in his right hand and twangs the *dombra* (the musical instrument) with it. After a while he walks around the images of the gods which he has arranged in front of himself on the floor. He throws the drumstick in every direction and, only after it has fallen inside out in every direction, does he begin to throw it for the purpose of predicting the future. If it falls in the manner mentioned above, it means happiness; if it falls in the opposite manner it means misfortune."<sup>33</sup>

It would be quite interesting to find out whether shamanism still survives in some remote areas among the Selkups and if so how it has changed during the course of the past decades.

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# The Story of a Nivkhi Shamaness as Told by Herself

by

Č. M. TAKSAMI

In the village of Beregovye Langeri on the west coast of Sakhalin in the summer of 1961 I made the acquaintance of the Nivkhi family of P. P. Kekhan. The family had four members: husband, wife and two children.

P. Kekhan was a ranger of the Rybnovsk forestry, his wife kept house for the family. Their children (a boy and a girl) were pupils at the eight-year boarding school of Rybnovsk. At the time of my stay in Sakhalin, they were on summer holidays and lived with their parents at home.

Having made myself at home in the Kekhan family, I came to know that in the past the wife had engaged in shamanizing and had just recently abandoned it. Living with the Kekhan family, for a whole week I collected ethnographic material on the customs and culture of the local Nivkhi and Evenki. But I could in no way induce Kekhan and his wife to talk of the Nivkhi shamans.

The day I left for Leningrad, when bidding me farewell, Kekhan and his wife asked me to call again, and they promised to tell me about shamanistic performances. I assured them that I would certainly come back.

I kept my word and started my 1962 ethnographic field work from the village of Beregovye Langeri. On arriving in Sakhalin, I visited the Kekhan family on the coast of the Tatar Strait, eighteen kilometres from Beregovye Langeri. There the Kekhans lived in a tent, catching Siberian salmon and preparing air-dried fish for the winter and food for the sled dogs. I stayed there six days. During that time they let me write down many texts, including the shamaness's story of herself. Here I found interesting facts of her becoming a shamaness. Lots of details were added to that story by P. Kekhan, who was present during our talks. This is understandable, since Kekhan himself had witnessed nearly all phases of his wife's becoming a shamaness. I am going to give here the essential points of her story.

In 1939, when she was about 30 years old, she went down with an illness and had frequent nervous fits. Doctors and nurses visited her. But the attacks just did not cease. Following such attacks of nerves, she usu-

ally started singing. Meanwhile her singing alternated with talking. As far as the sick woman could recall, she talked with some 'animals'.

At that time the persons surrounding her just sat there in silence, because they feared she would get still worse if they busied themselves about the house. Meanwhile nothing that emitted any smell was cooked in the house, for fear that it might cause her to become worse.

If at the time of her fits young female guests arrived, they were asked to leave, so that their presence might not make the sick woman feel worse. The sick woman remained in this condition for a time (they could not remember how long).

Once, after a spell of violent attacks, when the sick woman had returned to normal, the surrounding kinsfolk asked what to do to prevent her from falling so very ill and having such aching pains. She requested them to make chips from an alder (*χεοηι*), a young fir (*προυη*) and a willow (*κουηι*). The fir chips she hung around her neck and put the rest on her head, so that they looked like a wreath. Then, after a while, the sick woman asked that twigs of ledum (*τικρ*) and a plant called *ojra* in Nivkhi be burnt in the house. The odour of the burning *τικρ* and *ojra* twigs helped the sick woman feel better. Then she asked that two human figures and twin figures of animals be made for her. She asked also for a drum (*kas*) and images (*če zιηr*) to be made of young fir. All this was done as she required.

The *če zιηr* was made as follows. A young fir-tree (*προυη*) was felled. The branches were left on the top, and two symmetrically arranged branches were left somewhat below. As the Nivkhi say, the latter resemble human hands and are called *tot* 'hand'. Below these branches, at the trunk, was the carved figure of a human face. This fir, about three metres long, was set up not far from the house facing the rising sun.

An old woman, who was living in the sick woman's house, prepared in small shallow cups a jelly-like dish called *moś*, made of bits of skin (*mosk,ar*) of the following fish: *čil* 'salmon trout', *πιρηιr* 'carp', *nemla* 'lenok salmon', *carχ* 'grayling', *lonr* 'trout', *lok*, 'flounder'. The anthropomorphic figure on the fir trunk was 'fed' with that meal, its lips were smeared with it. The sick woman then put on a girdle (*janpa*) made of the hide of a sea-lion (*t'un*). Rings in two rows were hooked on the girdle. Small pipes shaped like horns were suspended from the rings, and hanging on the latter were representations of the heads of (female and male) animals in pairs: tigers, elk, reindeer, snakes, eagles, owls, swans and other animals and birds. A leash of sea-lion's hide was tied around above the girdle, and a black dog (*ιηr k,an*) with its tail unclipped was leashed to the free end of the strap. Only a male dog was fit for the purpose.

Secured with a strap between the sick woman and the dog was also a fir rod, about 1.5 metres in length, with branches on top. Its upper half was wrapped in birch bark. Four notches were made on it. This rod (*uz*) served as a staff for the sick woman.

Before coming out of the house the 'sick woman', while sitting on a bench, sang and talked. She summoned the tiger (*at*), the master of fire (*tyŋr iz*), the mistress of the sky or the universe (*tlj ičik*), the mistress of the taiga or forest (*pal ičik*), and called on some spirits by name to appear before her.

When, answering the sick woman's call, there came the tiger whom she called *at atak* 'Grandpa Tiger', she was again in a state of fits and was more dead than alive, Kekhan said.

Then, the tiger appearing again, the sick woman regained consciousness and slowly left the house in the direction of the *če zivr*. To prevent her from falling, five elderly men supported her, actually holding her by the leash to which were tied the dog and the staff. The Nivkhi say that, in such cases, the more people hold the leash, the better the sick person will get.

When reaching the *če zivr*, the sick woman walked round it four times counter-clockwise. In the meantime she sang and begged the tigers to have pity and help her not to fall sick. Then she returned home.

Before her arrival, a *t'ovs* made of larch was placed on the floor in the middle of the room, as requested by the sick woman. Conditionally we call it the 'shamanic hearth'. It was a small stump of tree in the form of a block on four short legs, their butts protruding above it.

Engraved on each protuberance was the figure of a head of flounder, bear, snake and man separately. The stump had four belts carved in it, between which the wood was hollowed out. This way each belt represented a separate shelf (called by the Nivkhi *tir* 'table'). On the upper shelf there was a small cavity.

Burning coal was put there, and twigs of ledum and fir and of the plant called *ojra* were thrown upon it. The twigs were smoking and began to emit a pungent odour. Entering the house, the sick woman with the dog, and the people who were holding the leash, went round this 'shamanic hearth' and then stopped. At this time the people accompanying her gave her white pebbles (*čanbaχ*), the men gave six each, the women eight each. She swallowed all these stones. She swallowed just as many also after her second, third and fourth walkings round the 'hearth'. The Nivkhi say that sometimes such sick persons gulped down a cupful of such pebbles.

Having swallowed the stones after the fourth 'round', the sick woman sat down on the bench and began to sing, thus calling the animals again and asking for their help in order that she might feel better and not relapse.



Having finished singing on the bench, the sick woman stood up, went to the door and again began to sing, swaying her hips and beating the drum. (This means *mjud'* in Nivkhi.) She then sat down on the bench again. The same people once more gave her pebbles, which the woman easily swallowed. After that the sick woman felt relieved and continued sitting on the bench.

According to what the woman and her husband, P. Kekhan, told me, she had such fits relatively rarely afterwards; and every time she recovered in the same way. In the view of my informants the shamaness herself could heal people only in such an ecstatic state, when she contacted living spirits of animals and birds. Our interlocutrix had a number of reasons for refusing to engage in shamanic exercises among the population. She cured only her husband, Kekhan. As they related it, this came to pass as follows. An abscess had developed on Kekhan's back, and in a few nights he could not sleep for the pain. His wife put on shaman vestments and summoned her animal helpers. As a result she learned from them that she had to gather some seaweed or catch shellfish called *tol mak*, and to apply them to the wound. But the needed things were not to be found then, so it became necessary again to shamanize in order to know where to get the *tol mak*. Then she drove by sledge to another village to call on an aged woman, who gave her the necessary supply. This was applied to the wound, as a result of which the pus oozed from it by the next morning, and the sick man felt easier.

On another occasion, while shamanizing, the old woman turned to her husband and said: "Go to the woods, first you will find the track of a bear and then you will lose it. Then you will again find that track and the bear himself." On his wife's advice P. P. Kekhan went to the woods with a kinsman of his and found a bear in its den. Kekhan told me that this event had been a great surprise to him.

As the woman and her husband affirmed, it had occurred frequently that during her sickness she shamanized and sang days on end. Otherwise, she could not help singing and shamanizing in January, at full moon, when the bears come out of their dens.

We asked our informants a few additional questions, which they answered readily. I think those answers are of interest as addition to what I have set forth above.

1. The *če zivr* was set up in the street at sunrise.
2. The figurines on the girdle were made of tin-plates upon the instruction of the shamaness. The figurines of female animals were smaller than those of males.
3. The dog was held by the shamaness on a leash, because it alone knew where to find the animals with which the shamaness communicated dur-

ing shamanizing. The strap used as dog's leash was called *lu buks*: this term can be rendered as 'song leash'. Without it the shaman could not see anything. In order that the shamaness might see better, old men held the leash when she walked.

4. Small sea pebbles were picked up when the shamaness said she felt unwell. Sometimes they were collected on the seashore even in the night. These stones she swallowed upon demand of the spirit of a sea-lion, whose image was on her girdle. Sea-lions swallow such stones themselves, and demanded that the shamaness do the same.

5. The 'shamanic hearth' (*t'ovs*) was a tree stump. Usually at the request of the shamaness, it was set up by her uncle, her father's brother. As a rule, such a 'hearth' was made by the Nivkhi at the very start of the ceremonials of becoming a shaman. The 'shamanic hearth' displays anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations. These are the shaman's assistants, whom the shaman would consult about all questions concerning shamanist practices. The assistants keep the shaman advised of how to heal, which tool to use, etc.

Each animal has a specific ability which can quickly help in the shaman's activities. Thus, for example, the loon is a strong, very deft and swiftwinged bird. The flounder can easily adapt itself to danger and hide in the sand. The snake crawls swiftly and can make its way into any place. The bear is a strong and fast-running animal, etc.

In order that the spirits of animals be strong and carry out their duties promptly, they were always 'fed' out of a wooden cup before shamanizing. The cup was of birch or alder and had two handles: one in the form of a loon's head, the other in that of a flounder's tail.

6. The drum (*k,as*) was somewhat elongated and reminded one of the leaves of a tree. The Kekhans described it as follows:

The hoop (*as*) was made from rowan twigs (*mezla ηiks*) and covered with deerskin. Stretched crosswise on the back side were straps to hold it, with a wooden ring in the middle. Glued to the inside were, cut from hide, silhouetted figures of reindeer, sea-lion, snake and elk. The smooth outside of the drum was thinly coated with fish-glue. The drum was the work of P. P. Kekhan himself. According to Nivkhi law, it must be made by the brother of the shamaness's father. But since she had no uncle, her husband made it for her.

Since the time of my visiting the family of P. P. Kekhan ten years have passed. Kekhan himself leads the same life as before and is working in Beregovye Langeri. His wife died in 1970. The notes we had taken as the shamaness spoke are of specific interest to anyone concerned with the questions of shamanism anywhere in the world, for they give some idea of how a Nivkhi shamaness came to start her activities.

# The Shaman Drum as a Source of Ethnographical History

by

L. P. POTAPOV

During research into shamanism among the Siberian peoples and into its ethnic peculiarities, Soviet ethnographers have come across interesting source materials valuable not only to the study of religion but also to the history of the peoples of Siberia, their genesis, the characteristics of the historical aspects of their culture and life, and to the exploration of their ancient ethnocultural and ethnogenetic ties.<sup>1</sup> This trend in the ethnology of Siberia is developing and brings positive results. Its importance is enhanced by the well-known fact that until the recent past there was hardly any people in Siberia that had preserved written records, written relics of their past history. Consequently, the study of their ethnographical history comes up against great difficulties because of the limited number of related sources. Some materials on shamanism can be used for filling this gap to a certain extent, especially in conjunction with other sources, such as ethnographical, archaeological, anthropological and folkloristic finds, and various documents concerning those peoples found in Chinese, Mongolian, Russian or other written relics.

This short article intends to show the significance of shamanic cultic instruments playing a prominent role in shamanistic rituals. The object at issue is the shaman drum, which I had studied for many years among the Turkic-speaking nationalities of Southern Siberia with the direct assistance of shamans, enabling me to gather really valuable factual information at the time. Part of this is included in my reports.<sup>2</sup> In this respect the shaman drum is highly interesting as a relic of cult that has preserved many basic features of the shamanism of the Siberian peoples: The shaman drum on the whole, the material of which it is made, its component parts and their symbolism, the drawings applied on it, the semantics thereof, etc. constitute an intricate complex whose study in detail provides valu-

<sup>1</sup> Потапов (1958); Иванов (1955); Потаров (1957).

<sup>2</sup> Потапов (1934a); Потаров (1934b, 1963); Потаров (1968); Потапов (1971).

able material for a scientific description of shamanism, its origin, its historical and ethnic classification, etc. At the same time, the study of the drum brings to light interesting facts as sources of ethnographical history. I will examine from this point of view only some drawings and the names given to the drum itself as an expression of its ritual symbolism.

When examining the drawings on Altaian drums I became particularly interested in the animal representations called *bura* by the shamans. Some of them resemble horses, others look like reindeer, sketched in a manner peculiar to the reindeer in ancient Yenisei rock drawings. Researchers who described Altaian drums mention the *bura* drawings, naming them celestial, mythical or winged horses which deities and spirits used to be riding. However, in a treatise I demonstrated that the *bura* had originally represented horned wild animals (reindeer, maral, etc.). Besides, I pointed to the obvious connection of their veneration with totemistic rituals.<sup>3</sup> Traces of such worship among the Altaians have survived until recently in the 'concept of the shaman's 'double' or 'soul' in the form of a horned *bura*, on whose well-being the shaman's power and very life depended. The image of the shaman's personal *bura* was applied on the drum in the form of a horned animal.

Relying on data taken from literature and on my personal observations in the field, I can confirm that from the second half of the 19th century to the 1930's, when shamanizing with the drum went out of usage, the Altaians in most cases interpreted the *bura* images on drums as draught animals of spirits and deities. Among the inhabitants of the forest zones of the Sayan Altai mountains, the idea of riding, considering the mode of life of pedestrian hunters, might of course have arisen under the influence of nomadic cattle breeders who at about the beginning of the first millennium B. C. had repeatedly subjugated those hunting tribes and made them pay tribute, as is narrated by written Chinese sources.<sup>4</sup>

In the period (approximately from the latter half of the first millennium) when pastoral states emerged in the eastern part of Central Asia and rapidly succeeded one another, the stormy political events, wars and marauding campaigns resulted in the disintegration and amalgamation of the peoples, tribes and clans of those states. Neither did the aboriginal populations of the taiga and the zones contiguous to the Sayan Altai uplands escape their fate. They merged with the nomadic people of Turkic-speaking cattle-breeders who remained there, often hiding from the en-

<sup>3</sup> Потапов (1935).

<sup>4</sup> Бичурин (1950); De Groot (1921); Liu Mau-tsai (1958).

emy, and adapted their traditional economy and customs to local conditions.

The changes in the ethnic composition of the Sayan Altai population made themselves felt in all aspects of life. New forms of economic, cultural and folk life appeared. The traditional forms underwent changes and were enriched by new ethnocultural elements. This phenomenon found expression also in the field of religion, clearly manifesting itself in a syncretism of beliefs characteristic of hunters and stock-breeders, in the blending of the images of spirits and deities, which are encountered even in the study of shaman drums. For the above reasons the traditional *bura* images on the shaman drums of some North Altaic ethnic groups were replaced by figures representing horses or being interpreted as horses. On the drums of the Kachins, the Sagais, Beltirs and other tribes of the Minusinsk valley it was just the horse figures that became predominant.

A detailed examination of the representations on shaman drums among the Teleuts in the basin of the upper course of the Inya river (a right-bank tributary of the Ob) and around the source of the Ninya (a right-bank affluent of the Biya river), furthermore among the Shors in the basin of the Mondubash (a right-side affluent of the Kondoma), enabled me to ascertain that almost all *bura* images were held to be draught horses belonging to various deities, such as those forming the category of clan divinities, the guardians of clans (*sōk*). Each clan deity rode a horse (*bura*) of a specific colour only. It is a stated fact that the Yutti clan's *bura* was of a pale reddish yellow; the Mundus clan's was black, the Merkit clan's was of a light olive brown, the Tumat clan's was grey, etc.<sup>5</sup> Thus the *bura* pictures are sources for establishing the clan composition of the Teleuts and Shors. The authenticity of these materials is confirmed by the notes of Radloff, who studied the clan structure of the Teleuts of the Kuznetsk district in the 1860's, and also by research works of Soviet ethnographers.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the fact that the *bura* images of clan deities occur in large numbers on Teleut shaman drums is indicative of the territorial consolidation of different Teleut clans, so those drums can be regarded as a source of ethnographical history. They evidence that the Teleut shamans did not belong to a specific clan but shamanized to representatives of various clans, and fitted out their drums for that purpose.

The source-research value of the materials suitable for the study of drums becomes more convincing in the analysis of the names given to it by the

<sup>5</sup> Потапов (1949), 193–4; Дыренкова (1949), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Radloff (1884), 216; Потапов (1971).

shamans during shamanizing. The present analysis was made possible as a result of my having established the symbolism of the drum as a saddle animal, on which the shaman 'travelled' during supplication. Usually the drum was identified with the animal of whose skin the drumhead was made. The strongest evidence of this is what I discovered among the Altaians and described as the special ceremony of 'enlivening' the drum made for the shaman before it was fit for shamanizing, furthermore the appeals of conjuring shamans to their drums, begging them not to stumble or fall on the way, especially when crossing rivers and passing through icebound territory.<sup>7</sup> Finally, a direct proof of it is the semantics of the drum's symbolic names. I noted down from Teleut, Shor, Kumandin, Chelkan, Telengit and other Altaian shamans the following symbolic appellations: *aq-adan*, *ergj-adan*, *er-podān*, *er-payič* (*er-payis*), *aq-čayal*.<sup>8</sup> Characteristically, the shamans who told me about these names did not know their etymology and could not tell why they called their drums by such names. They confirmed that during shamanizing they were riding animals with whose skin their drums were covered (i.e. maral, reindeer, roebuck, elk, or foal). But at the same time the words they used to name those animals were unintelligible even to themselves.

I examined those names using Turkic comparative lexicology, including also Old Turkic linguistic data. They turned out to be names of draught animals, mainly domesticated ones. *Aq-adan* is translated as 'sacred two-humped camel', but a castrated one, that is a harnessed animal. *Ergj-adan* means 'dromedary', of course a draught animal. The term *er-podān*, denotes the young male camel. All these names occur in the contemporary vocabulary of Tuvans, among the Central Asiatic Kirghizes and others. The term *er-payič* 'male *payič* (or *payis*)' is an old relic. I interpret it as 'male elk'. It has survived only in the language of the Central Asiatic Kirghizes as the name of a great tribe, the Sari-bayış, where the word *bayış*, according to Radloff, means 'elk'.<sup>9</sup> Elks do not live in the places inhabited by the Central Asiatic Kirghizes, so the term *bayış* was brought there by that Kirghiz group which had lived on the Yenisei in antiquity and mediaeval times. In the Sayan Altaic mountains elks lived in large numbers and have survived to our days. Hunting for elk was a principal occupation. However, the present Turkic-speaking population there calls it differently (*pulan*), having preserved the old name of elk only in re-

<sup>7</sup> Потапов (1947); Potapow (1963).

<sup>8</sup> Потапов (1971).

<sup>9</sup> Радлов (1885), I.

spect of the shaman drum. This fact is obviously important for ethnogeny. Finally, the name *aq-čagal* can be interpreted as 'sacred skewbald horse'.

The limited scope of this paper makes it impossible here to elaborate, from the point of view of source research, the importance of each term for the historiography and genesis of the peoples of the Sayan Altai. I raise here only the following point. The aforecited terminological data provide documented historical evidence that the ethnic composition of the contemporary North Altaians (Shors, Kumandins, Chelkans, etc.) – who, according to W. Radloff,<sup>10</sup> are classed among the Samoyeds Turkicized in language, but who, by their mode of life, can be reckoned among the primitive pedestrian hunters and gatherers of the mountain forests – reveals vestiges of cultural and ethnic elements indicative of their having been peoples of the steppe engaged in pastoral economy, in the breeding of camels and horses. These data provide a substantial correction to the established concepts of the ethnic and ethnocultural history of the peoples of the Sayan Altai. The assumption that the said elements of cultural life were borrowed is inadmissible because camel breeding is ethnographically incompatible with pedestrian hunters' life. Camel breeding is made impossible there also by natural conditions. Consequently elements of this type happened to appear with the arrival of ethnic groups of nomadic stock-breeders who raised horses and camels, and who mingled afterwards with the local population of the mountain taiga. The nomadic stock-breeders who, for one reason or another, had remained there gradually adapted themselves to the conditions of their local geographic and ethnographic environment. In accordance with this they step by step changed their economy and life style. But there was left the memory of the past economic structure and domestic animals, of the old customs, heroic epics and especially the religious beliefs as the stablest elements of culture. Therefore, when drumheads were prepared from the skin of marals or roebucks and the drum was 'enlivened' as a maral or roebuck, the shamans during shamanizing called that animal a 'draught camel' by tradition, although the word was already unintelligible to them. But all this becomes intelligible if we take into consideration that the North Altaians were ethnically comprised groups of Teleuts, who still carried on camel breeding in the first half of the 18th century when they lived on the Irtysh.<sup>11</sup> Reverence for the camel among the nomadic Teleuts, as also among some Southern-Altaiic peoples, was characteristic. Among the

<sup>10</sup> Radloff (1884), 212; Боропоз (1928).

<sup>11</sup> Потапов (1969), 85.

Teleuts the figure of the camel appears as one of the shaman's spirits, called *Aq-Tajlak*, guardian of the 'drum's master', for the word *Tajlak* means the camel's foal (from 2 to 3 years).<sup>12</sup> It is interesting that the protecting spirit of the shaman is called *Aq-Tajlak* also by the Kirghizes.<sup>13</sup> Altaian shamans revered the 'dim-eyed *Pura-хан*, with the frozen feet' among the spirits.<sup>14</sup> Kirghiz shamans not long ago still summoned the spirit *Pura-хан* who was represented in the form of a camel 'with frozen feet'. Therefore, materials on shamanism confirm the part played by Teleuts in the ethnic formation of the Shors, Kumandins, Chelkans, etc., evidence of which can be found in other sources as well.<sup>15</sup>

I encountered great difficulties in examining the term *aq-čayal*, that is 'sacred *čayal*'. Among the Yakuts I found it in the form of *čayıl, djayıl*.<sup>16</sup> It denotes a special spotted hue of horsehair, characterized by large brown spots covering chiefly the horse's neck and shoulder like a sort of netting. The given word in the form of *čayal* is to be found in a five-language vocabulary (Manchu-Tibetan-Mongolian-Uigur-Chinese) compiled in the 18th century and later published in Peking (1957) under the title *A Five-Language Mirror of the Manchu Language*.<sup>17</sup> It appears from that work that *čaχal, čayal* is an Uigur word denoting a horse having black and red stripes on the neck and breast. Its Mongolic equivalent is *jayal morin*, i.e. a horse with spots on the head and shoulders. Consequently, Teleut shamans called their drums horses, though not common horses, but skewbalds. Naming horses after the colour of their hair is quite usual among the Turkic-speaking nomads and has a long tradition. In the heroic epics of Altaians, Khakas, Tuvans, etc., the hair colour of the horse which the hero was riding was added to his personal name. For example, the hero 'Aq-tajči riding a white-grey horse'. In epics the heroic figure received his legendary name only when he acquired a horse for himself. From that time on the name of the hero and that of his horse (given usually after its colour) were combined. This tradition found expression also in religious beliefs concerning reverence for the clan's protecting spirits or for personages of the shaman's Pandemonium. The aforementioned spirits or personages were represented as riding a horse of a specific colour.<sup>18</sup> *Kudaj* – a celes-

<sup>12</sup> Дыренкова (1949), 113, erroneously rendered *Tajlak* as 'young horse'.

<sup>13</sup> Баялиева (1969), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Анохин (1924).

<sup>15</sup> Потапов (1969).

<sup>16</sup> Пекарский (1907), 770.

<sup>17</sup> As to this vocabulary, see Мальцева (1960).

<sup>18</sup> Among the Yakuts also the horses of each god had their own specific colour, and the demons were named after the hair of horses.



tial deity of the Kachins – rode a grey-blue horse. The Kachins and Sagais held that the mountain spirits of the Sayan range rode horses of different colours. Unicolour horses were destined to be sacrificed or dedicated to one or another divinity. The Teleuts offered the deity Ülgen a roan horse, while the mountain spirit Tezim was offered a sorrel horse. When making sacrifices to Ülgen, the Kumandins chose a horse of light colour, too, but in respect of a plain colour they kept within the customs of the clan (*sõk*) concerned. For this purpose some clans picked horses of a light bay colour, others chose roans, etc. The most conspicuous custom in the selection of unicolour horses, the ritual of dedicating the horses (*izix*) to the sacred mountains or worshipped personages, was observed on the clan basis among the Kachins, Kizils, Sagais and Beltirs – the closest ancestors of the contemporary Khakas. Each clan consecrated horses of some different single colour to its divine protectors: the Kaska clan dedicated bay horses, the Ary clan sorrels, the Purut clan light bay horses, the Soky clan white horses, the Kyrgys clan grey horses.<sup>19</sup>

Thus *čayal* as the name of the drum, i.e. of the shaman's symbolic horse, reflects the Turkic cattle-breeding nomads' habit of using the name of its colour to name the horse.

The term *čayal* presents a matter of ethnographic-historical interest for the scientific analysis also because it was the name of drums not of individual shamans but of all shamans of certain Teleut and Shor clans. I have already had to touch upon the significance of the given term on the broad plane of the genesis of the Turkic peoples by comparing it with the Old Chinese information about the Central-Asiatic tribe of the 'skewbald-loving' Alats (in Chinese *bo-ma*) who bred skewbald horses in such numbers that this feature of their economic activities became their ethnic name.<sup>20</sup> Relying on the present state of research into the ethnic history<sup>21</sup> of the Alats, I pointed to their connections with the Hunno-Hsienpi and Kaogüi-Telesk ethnic environment, to their role in the genesis of some medieval Turkic peoples (Kipchaks, nomadic Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Siberian Tatars, etc.). In this article I briefly mention other inferences and conclusions which enable me to study this term in depth. Identification of the shaman drum with the saddle horse gives proof that the above-mentioned clans of Teleuts and Shors used to breed just skewbald horses. The colour of the *čayal*, after which the shaman drum was named, is of specific interest for the study of some historical questions. The colour of the skewbald

<sup>19</sup> Personal information from the Sagai shaman Roman Kandarakov.

<sup>20</sup> Потапов (1969), 178.

<sup>21</sup> Зыев (1962).

attracted the attention of specialists studying the breeds of saddle animals raised by the Yakuts. Yakut cattle-breeding isolated in the far north attracts the interest of students of various subjects. Zoologists have arrived at the conclusion that the Yakut horse descended from horses of Central Asia. The most essential reason in their argumentation was the reference to the skewbald colour.<sup>22</sup> The said conclusion of specialists of zoology finds its confirmation in Chinese written sources.<sup>23</sup> In one of these it is said that skewbalds were raised by the Turkic-speaking Guligan tribe, which belonged to the Central-Asian confederation of the Turkic-speaking Tele tribes under the rule of the Uigurs. In Old Turkic runic scripts the word Guligan figures like *kurikan*. This tribe inhabited the region of Lake Baikal. The Kurikans, as is now established, were among the historical ancestors of the contemporary Yakuts.<sup>24</sup>

The Uigur word *čayal*, retained its original sense among the contemporary Uigurs and Yakuts alike, and also among the Altaians, meaning the colour of the symbolic horse, i.e. the shaman drum; this serves as evidence of the ancient genetic link between the Uigurs, Yakuts and Altaians. This is corroborated also by written historical sources. This connection appears also in other materials on shamanism. The Yakut shaman was called *ojun*, but the same name was given to the shamanizing act itself among the Uigurs of East Turkestan.<sup>25</sup> Let me state by the way that the Yakut shaman drum still bears witness to the Central-Asiatic origin of the Yakuts. Among them the drum also symbolized the shaman's draught-animal. In some groups it was not the common horse, but the onager. The notion of a swift-footed inhabitant of the Central Asian steppes was brought by the Yakuts to the north, of course, from their country situated farther south. The Yakuts guarded the memory of the onager in the symbolic name of the drum.<sup>26</sup> This fact reflects also the memory of occasional domestication of onagers and their use for riding, practised among the Asiatic nomads not only of recent times but of antiquity, too. As regards the Huns and their ethnic precursors, this is proved by most ancient written Chinese sources.<sup>27</sup>

In other Yakut groups the drum symbolized a horned wild animal just as among the North Altaians. This was expressed by knobs on the outside

<sup>22</sup> Леппинг (1937).

<sup>23</sup> Зуев (1960).

<sup>24</sup> Окладников (1955).

<sup>25</sup> Ольденбург (1918), 17.

<sup>26</sup> Окладников (1955), 230.

<sup>27</sup> Таскин (1964, 1968).

of the drum hoop, called 'horns', which A. P. Okladnikov defines as the horns of the mountain goat. "These horns, as it were, imitate in their general form the curving horns, with transverse cylinders, of the goat *teke* of the mountain sheep *arḡar*. The Altaians imagine them in just this manner. They call them 'horns', i.e. precisely as the Yakuts do."<sup>28</sup> Drums of the South Altaians are mentioned in the description by G. N. Potanin of the drum of shaman Engu from the Ongudai district: "On the outside of the rim under the skin there are bosses the size of hemp seeds; they are arranged in nine transverse rows; according to shaman Engu's interpretation this is a *qoçqor*, i.e. mountain sheep."<sup>29</sup> To a greater extent this comparison can be applied to the shaman drums of the North-Eastern Tuvans (basin of the Alash river), where I found on the vertical cross-bar handle made of wood a sharp embossed figure of the mountain goat *te* (phonetic variant of *teke*), whose skin served as drumhead and which was then enlivened as a *te*. During his performance the shaman called this image of the mountain goat *ḡolge*, i.e. pack and saddle horse, the image being destined to be buried with the shaman when he would die. The similarity between Yakut and Altaian drums appears also in the name of the wooden handle identified as the drum's 'master', etc.

Thus, the study of the shaman drum provides an interesting material of source-research value for establishing the ancient genetic links between Altaians, Yakuts, Uigurs, Kirghizes, these links being borne out by the analyses of ethnic names, ethnographical relics of material culture, etc. The limited scope of this article prevents me from examining on this plane other parts of the Altaian drums, for example, the vertical handles (usually identified as the 'drum's master'). But I hope that I have succeeded in demonstrating the importance of studying the shaman drum from the point of view of source research.

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<sup>28</sup> Okladnikov (1955), 232–3

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# Vestiges of Transvestism in Central-Asian Shamanism

by

V. N. BASILOV

International ethnographical literature has thus far interpreted the term 'shamanism' very broadly, and occasionally it relates to it also phenomena whose connection with this cult form is extremely questionable. Therefore, when investigating the religious traditions of various peoples, it is useful to compare what one intends to call shamanism with 'classical' Siberian shamanism in order to see the extent of their similarity and the cogency of their identification.

Transvestism, or change of sex, was especially peculiar to shamanism among the Kamchadal, Koryaks and Chukchis. In the beliefs of these Siberian peoples, the spirits forcing someone to become a shaman often wanted that person to change sex. Usually this was demanded of a man; in fulfilling the demand of the spirits he tried to look in every respect like a woman and he even 'married a man' and cohabited with him. Underlying this phenomenon, the departure from the biological norm was presented in religious beliefs as a result of the interference of supernatural forces and, on the other hand, was artificially maintained as an indispensable element of traditional culture.<sup>1</sup>

Transvestism has not so far been noticed among the peoples of Central Asia, although some scanty data in literature furnish a basis for the assumption that change of sex was known in Central-Asian shamanism. Thus, as early as 1909, A. N. Samojlovič noted down that among the Choudor-Turkmens (oasis of Khorezm) he had seen a male shaman "dressed up as a woman in a red gown with a red headkerchief".<sup>2</sup> In the view of S. P.

<sup>1</sup> For a concise, yet thorough, summary of data on shamanic transvestism, see Максимов (1912).

<sup>2</sup> A brief account of the journey in 1908 to Tashkent and Bukhara and the Khiva Khanate by the university lecturer A. N. Samojlovič commissioned by St. Petersburg University and the Russian Committee is to be found in Известия Русского Комитета для изучения Средней и Восточной Азии в историческом, археологическом, лингвистическом и этнографическом отношениях [Reports of the Russian Committee for Central and East Asiatic Studies

Tolstov this scanty information testified to survivals of transvestism in the shamanistic traditions of the Turkmens.<sup>3</sup> From the notes of Samojlovič it is not clear whether the shaman described by him wore a woman's dress at all times or had it on only during the shamanistic *séance*; according to information which K. Nijazklycev and I received 'in the field', old Choudors remember only a single shaman (порхан) who put on woman's apparel and did so only for shamanizing. Ju. V. Knorozov also wrote about similar cases among Kazakh and Karakalpak shamans. In his words, at the lower reaches of the Amu Darya shamanism "had a number of archaic traits, particularly widespread were transvestite shamans who put on woman's clothes (usually of red colour) during seances."<sup>4</sup>

But clothing alone, put on by a shaman for ritual purposes, is insufficient for considering change of sex to have once been typical of Central Asian shamanism. Such a conclusion was already made by A. N. Maksimov, who wrote: "Change of clothes does not necessarily imply change of sex."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the communications of Samojlovič and Knorozov do not yet give an assurance that what they observed were really survivals of transvestism. The matter is not made more definite by K. L. Zadykhina's information either. The Karakalpak shaman she saw "boars the man's name of Avez, has a moustache and beard, says his prayer like a man, but gets into woman's dress, performs all woman's jobs and customs at home and among women". However, there is here a special case: his companions regarded the shaman as a hermaphrodite.<sup>6</sup>

In this connection considerable interest is commanded by the materials which I obtained in another historico-ethnographical area of Central Asia – in the Fergana valley (Uzbek SSR). The information I have on an Uzbek shaman of this region makes more conclusive the supposition that vestiges of transvestism exist in the shamanism of the peoples of Central Asia.

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of History, Archaeology, Linguistics and Ethnography], St. Petersburg, April 1909, No. 9, 27. See also *ЭО* (1909) No. 4 (1910), 172.

<sup>3</sup> Толстов (1948), 324–5.

<sup>4</sup> Кнорозов (1949), 46. "As evidenced by a number of informants, transvested porkhans were subjected to cruel repression under the Khiva government. They were dug waist-deep in the ground and pelted with stones and then buried face down outside the cemetery." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>5</sup> Максимов (1912), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Задыхина (1952), 413.

In autumn 1968 an employee of the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, R. Ja. Rassudova, and I visited the Gavo settlement of Chust district of the Namangan region, situated in the hilly foreland of the Fergana valley. The population there is made up of Uzbeks who have not preserved their original tribal names and who know only about the traditional opposition of the respected religious group of khojahs (Uzbek хйжа) to the 'populace' (Uzbek пукора).



Fig. 1. Shaman Tašmat Kholmatov with drum

The village of Gavo was not included in our intended itinerary. What attracted us there was that by chance we heard about an old shaman who lived there and always wore woman's clothes. We managed to meet this shaman, Tašmat Kholmatov, nicknamed Tašmat-bakši (Uzbek бакши, 'shaman')<sup>7</sup> or Tašmat-bola (Uzbek бола, 'child'), who was born in 1886. The old man preferred not to tell of his shamanizing, and all the information I have got comes from the stories I was told by people of his village.

<sup>7</sup> The Uzbek words cited here and further on are used in the Fergana valley; different names may occur in other areas of Uzbekistan.



The only son of a rich man from the 'populace', Таšmat lost his father at the age of five and his mother when he was sixteen. He became a shaman in his youth. The explanations of how he was made a shaman remind us of the traditional pattern: he was 'touched by a *pari*' (Uzbek *пари тегипти*). Some think he was seven years old at the time, others place this event at when he was between twenty and twenty-five years of age. Таšmat fell sick and was taken to a female shaman, who gave her blessing (Uzbek *пара*) to his occupation with shamanizing. Таšmat acquired helping spirits. The present appellation of his spirits is *pari*, although colloquial speech more often uses other terms (*муаккал, аджина, одамлар*, etc.).

It is held that the *paris* help the shaman to heal diseases caused by pernicious spirits. Таšmat's 'healing' methods are common in the shamanism of the Fergana valley. How to 'heal' the sick the *bakši* knew by divination (Uzbek *пал қараб, ром кўриб*). In a bowl of water he threw a bit of cotton wool, the movements of which on the water's surface provided him with the necessary indication. Having finished divining, the shaman named the cause of the disease (usually the machinations of spirits) and told what was to be done.

When 'healing' serious diseases, Таšmat used to shamanize (Uzbek *кўчиради*), summoning his spirits: for this he usually played the drum, crying out the names of the *paris*.<sup>8</sup> When the *paris* appeared, he began exorcizing the evil spirits; while continuing to beat the drum, he kept repeating: "Go away, go away (Uzbek *кўч, кўч*)!"

It was imagined that with the aid of the *paris* the shaman ultimately 'tied' the hostile spirits. While beating the drum, the *bakši* said: "A horned snake (Uzbek *шахли йилан*) comes, tie! A lame *pari* (Uzbek *ок,сок, пари*) comes, tie!" and so on. Upon the word 'tie' (Uzbek *бойла*) one of the women sitting around the sick man tied a knot on a specially prepared thread: she 'locked in' (Uzbek *банд қилади*) the spirit; this was supposed to drain the strength of the spirit that had just been named by the shaman. The drum might be replaced by a panicle (Uzbek *хипчин*) of willow twigs (Uzbek *тол*). Drum and panicle were not used together at one and the same *séance*. Таšmat's drum (Uzbek *чилдирма* or *чилманда*), in his words, was an ordinary one with no designs on it. (Shamanizing with a drum is today regarded by many Uzbeks as an 'obsolete' method.)

In addition, at the time of 'healing' a serious disease, a hen was killed; with its blood the shaman smeared certain parts of the sick man, whom he

<sup>8</sup> An old man, a relation of the shaman's, told us that Таšmat did not use to call Muslim saints.

then got to press the bleeding hen against his heart as long as it remained warm. Afterwards the hen was given to a dog (according to some information it was then kept by the *bakši* for himself). There were cases when, for 'medicinal' purposes, the shaman ordered a sheep or goat to be killed.

Light ailments were treated simply. When a child's impulsive crying had to be stopped, the shaman made knots on a thread which he tied to the child's hand. Before shamanizing or 'healing' by other methods (except by divination) Tašmat lighted a lamp (Uzbek чирок,) – a stick (a stalk of sorghum) soaked in grease at one end, with red, white and black shreds of rag fastened thereto. The lamp was set up for the spirits (Uzbek момоларга, одамларга).

Some of the shaman's fellow villagers affirm that Tašmat also used to cure people of the evil eye (Uzbek кинна қилади) – he stroked the sick man with bread or with a bowl of ashes wrapped in cloth. Others hold the view that this was beyond his sphere of activities, and he only blessed old women wishing to resort to this magic for healing their children.

Tašmat's 'healing' methods are standard for Fergana valley shamanism and are of no special interest. But the shaman's very figure is uncommon. His spirits forbade him, firstly, to be a mullah (Tašmat had received Moslem education) and, secondly, to wear men's clothes. I saw the shaman in a knee-length shirt-dress of light-blue flowered crêpe with buttoned 'up-standing' collar, characteristic of traditional Uzbek women's wear. Under the dress I could see the trousers of dark-blue material with white dots – a colour combination not used in men's clothing. To this costume were added galoshes on bare feet and a skull-cap. As local residents say, Tašmat does not wear socks and boots in winter either. Nor does he put on a girdle, otherwise an important piece of men's clothing. Earlier he refused to girdle himself even when he donned a gown, but in recent years his sons, as I was told, prevailed on him to observe the rules of propriety by wearing a girdle-cloth with the gown. He was very reluctant to obey.

Tašmat has been dressed in woman's clothes since his youth. His dress would also be white and red. When asked why he preferred to wear woman's clothing, the shaman replied: "I like it." But native inhabitants, repeating the shaman's words, gave a different explanation: Tašmat's spirits demanded that he wear woman's apparel (Uzbek хотиннинг устибоши); if he should put on a man's shirt and girdle himself, the spirits would suffocate him in the night. An old man even seized himself by the collar to show how it would be done. Tašmat's spirits did not like men's clothes. As I was told by a woman residing in the settlement, who had more than once (and unsuccessfully) tried to get rid of a leg ailment with Tašmat's

help, he had female spirits; this opinion was confirmed by an old man, a relation of the shaman's, citing names the shaman used to call during conjuring: *Gülnar-pari*, *Miskal-pari*, *Zinnar-pari*.<sup>9</sup> Generally the *paris* appeared here in the form of women. According to one of my informants, as a rule "the *paris* are not male" (Uzbek пари эркак бўлмайди).



Fig. 2. Shaman Tašmat Kholmatov with drum

Feminine features in Tašmat's make-up are displayed not only on his apparel. At festivities (тўй), the shaman sits among men and women alike, having an evident preference for female company. At weddings (к.из-тўй), he sings *ёп-ёп* couplets together with the womenfolk. He sits like a woman. He swears like a woman. He greets people and takes leave like a woman. Later we had opportunity to see for ourselves: when greeting both R. Ja. Radussova and me, and bidding us farewell, the old man touched our shoulders with his hands (men greet each other by shaking hands). Tašmat's mincing rapid walk and his manners of gesticulating and talking are also regarded as feminine by local inhabitants.

<sup>9</sup> Old Turkmen (Choudors) explain the shaman's wearing woman's clothes for the shamanizing act on the grounds that his spirits (пари) are female; the spirits want the shaman to resemble them in clothing as well. Басилов, Ниязклычев (1975).

Complete feminization, however, does not exist outwardly either. The old man has his head shaven but leaves an accurately trimmed beard on his face. He has had four wives. The first two died, and he separated from the third after offering to divorce her. In his matrimonial life, the shaman has not at all shown signs of imperfect manhood. He has two sons and two daughters, and he already has grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Marriage caused no trouble to Tašmat. There was no talk about whether or not to give him a girl in marriage, for being married to him was not considered a *mésalliance*. Even respected people of the village let his sons marry their daughters. Lively, with smiling looks and sure movements, the shaman apparently was accustomed to being in the centre of public attention, and he behaved with considerable ease. When the old man talked with us, those present did not stop smiling. But this does not mean that the shaman's place in society can be compared to the position of a jester. Our conversation was listened to by people to whom much of the traditional mode of life had already become strange and obsolete. Some elderly people can afford a slightly bantering tone when speaking of Tašmat, but what their humorous remarks mean is: Well, you can see the oddity of the situation the man finds himself in through the will of spirits. The old man's womanish appearance is not regarded by them as an extravagance or a symptom of feeble-mindedness. Some of the local people, when asked why Tašmat was dressed in woman's clothes, replied: "He is a shaman, you know." Obviously, faith in Tašmat's connection with spirits was keeping the sharp-tongued fellow villagers from playing indelicate jokes on him.

There is one more interesting peculiarity which has left its mark not only on Tašmat's shamanistic exercises, but also on his everyday life: he is a generally recognized singer and musician. And to us the shaman showed himself to be an 'artist'. In his youth, Tašmat learned by himself to play the drum, and became a permanent participant of every celebration in his village. In his young days he even danced to his own accompaniment, but in his adulthood he confined himself to drumming and singing. Lately, he has been performing on rare occasions, and the role of first musician has passed to his youngest son.

Sufficient data have already been gathered to demonstrate that Central Asian shamanism had formerly been closely linked with music and singing; music during conjuring was held necessary to attract the spirits; shamans and singers in some areas had a common patron saint.<sup>10</sup> Shaman

<sup>10</sup> For details, see Басилов (1970), 62–3.

Tašmat is a new proof of this ancient connection, showing how this link was embodied in the performance of a single person.

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The above information considerably enriches our knowledge of Central-Asian shamanism. It reveals a phenomenon which has not so far been noticed in the shamanist traditions of the peoples of Central Asia. Tašmat-bola, the Uzbek old man, has preserved a very archaic shamanic mode of behaviour: firstly, he combines in himself the functions of both the witch-doctor and the singer (a trait characteristic of ancient stages in the evolution of shamanism); secondly, he always wears a woman's kerchief and in various situations he behaves like a woman. This case of partial feminization can be interpreted as an indication of the shamanic transvestism (change of sex) known among many peoples of Northeast Asia and America.

In his time, A. N. Maksimov expressed the opinion that change of sex was not peculiar to the shamanistic rites of the peoples of the Ural-Altai family.<sup>11</sup> Evidently such views have to be reconsidered. Do the facts described above attest to the genetic connections of Central-Asian with Siberian shamanism? No, they do not, for the phenomena closely reminiscent of change of sex are stated by sources to have occurred among peoples who lived in Central Asia before the appearance there of the Turks. In this respect, it should be noted that transvestism must not be regarded as a peculiarity only of shamanism. The assimilation of men to women is usually related to priesthood in its most diverse forms. As explained by J. G. Frazer, transvestism was generated by the process of transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, when priestly functions became accessible also to men.

Herodotus noticed that among the Scyths there was a class of diviners (*enareës* 'womanish men'), whose art of divination (by willow rods) was said to be a gift from Aphrodite (IV, 67), who sent down to them a sort of 'woman's disease' (I, 105).<sup>12</sup> Hippocrates wrote that the *enareës* "are occupied with womanish chores and talk like women". From Hippocrates' text it is clear that the question here is not of ordinary impotence, for "the natives ascribe the cause of this symptom to a goddess and therefore they respect and worship such persons, everybody fearing for themselves".<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Максимов (1912), 9–10, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Translated from Russian as published in *Вестник древней истории* (1947) No. 2, 251, 270.

<sup>13</sup> Гиппократ (1947), 297–8.

From the medical point of view, Hippocrates sees the cause of the defect in horse-riding; it is curious that it was just by riding exercises that the Pueblo Indians managed to cause the total loss of the male functions of those who had to change sex (such persons being needed for 'religious orgies').<sup>14</sup>

Muhammed Naršakhi, a 10th-century historian of Bukhara, mentions the custom in some Bukharan settlements "that every young man coming to sexual maturity, until he has taken a woman in marriage, finds gratification with this man, and in exchange he lets him use his wife for the first night".<sup>15</sup> In the view of S. P. Tolstov, the information about the *enareës* and the Bukharan custom leads to the conclusion that ritual transvestism might have been known in local Central-Asian traditions.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently the case I have described should not be regarded as proof of a genetic relationship between certain features of Central-Asian and Siberian shamanism. This fact only confirms a typological identity between the peoples of Central Asia and Northeast Siberia. Further field research no doubt will show that Tašmat-bola was not the only shaman in Central Asia who embodied in his activity the dying traditions of transvestism.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Максимов (1912), 17–8.

<sup>15</sup> Наршахи (1897), 95–6. See also *Description topographique et historique de Boukhara par Mohammed Nerchakhy* (Texte persan publié par Ch. Schefer), Paris, 73–4.

<sup>16</sup> Толстов (1948), 324.

<sup>17</sup> For details, see Басилов (1975).

# Dances of Yakut Shamans

by

M. JA. ŽORNICKAJA

Shamanizing performances had a definite dramatic form and were accompanied by chants and incantations which, with their poetic and singularly mystic force, must have exerted influence on the audience. All this was manifest in a peculiar languid dance to the accompaniment of drum-beat, with a clattering of the metallic pendants on the costume of the miming and gesticulating shaman.

These exercises already aroused the attention of the first students of the mode of life of the Yakut people.

Documents from the 17th century contain information mainly on the outward aspects of shamanism.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest written sources containing data on dances being one of the characteristic features of shamanizing acts, originated in the first half of the 18th century. Thus, for instance, in documents dating from 1768–69 we can find an interesting description of a shamanistic *séance* with dance as an inseparable part. “. . . And so shamanism is carried on by an *ojun*, that is a shaman, beating the drum and jumping about on his legs as much as he can and emitting unusual shouts; at the same time, jerking his head and calling on believers and worshippers, chasing the demons and confusing the people, he hits out with a hunting spear and a knife.”<sup>2</sup> Another source, dating from 1785, contains another characteristic description: “... And he [i.e. the shaman. – M. Ž.], having donned a robe of dressed hide with several iron rattles specially for shamanizing, and having tousled his hair, runs about the *yurta*, shaking his head, and delivering loud talks unintelligible to the Yakuts themselves, and this means that he calls for counsel every one of the devils he knows by name, he beats the drum resembling a skin-covered sieve and, grimacing, flings about in every direction, jumping as high as he can, while the Yakuts help him with deep

<sup>1</sup> Токарев (1939), 88–103.

<sup>2</sup> Окладников (1948), 32.

silence, and he finally loses consciousness and collapses, as if insensate, face downwards on the ground...”<sup>3</sup>

No less characteristic is the indication of the existence of dance during shamanizing found in a number of basic works on Yakut folk customs written by prerevolutionary ethnographers, and Soviet researchers alike.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for example, V. L. Seroševskij, in describing a shamanistic *séance*



Fig. 1. The 'bird-flight dance' of a Yakut shaman (Reconstruction)

and the related dance, pointed out directly that “... the wizard [i.e. the shaman. – M. Ž.] dances incessantly, singing and beating the drum; he jumps about madly...”<sup>5</sup> N. A. Vitaševskij observed that the dances of Yakut shamans were diverse, “... now quiet, now smooth, now frantic and even frenzied...”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Окладников (1948), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Сорошевский (1896), Виташевский (1918), Ястремский (1929), Ксенофонтов (1937), Попов (1949), Суслов (1931), Суслов (1932), Токарев (1939), etc.

<sup>5</sup> Сорошевский (1896), 643.

<sup>6</sup> Виташевский (1918), 170–1.



It appears from most descriptions that the dances of Yakut shamans were ecstatic in character. By dancing and chanting the shaman forcefully worked himself into a state of hysterical fits and fell into ecstasy. However, from the point of view of the professional choreographer, these dances are described in literature very superficially. This may be explained by the fact that shamanistic performances were of a syncretic character. The dance was organically blended with other exercises of the shaman, and was not clearly separated from the very act of shamanizing as a whole, and in this connection it was hardly suitable for independent notation. No scientific classification of the various kinds of shamanistic acts has so far been established.<sup>7</sup> Therefore it is to be stated with regret that in the current programmes of studies in shamanism the attention of researchers has in general not been directed specially to the necessity of working out the forms and methods of collecting and fixing the choreography of shamanist ceremonies.<sup>8</sup>

At the time of the expeditions to various districts of the Yakut ASSR in 1950, 1951, 1959 and 1960 we found some concrete materials on the performance of shaman dances and dance fragments.<sup>9</sup> When collecting information on shaman dances we came to realize that the radical social transformations in the life of the Yakut people during the years of Soviet government and their cultural development had inevitably to tell on shamanist folklore. By the time of our journeys to those Yakut areas in the fifties and sixties, there were only a few left of those who carried on the shamanizing rituals – usually elderly, some of them very old people. This substantially restricted the possibility of bringing to light the shaman dances accompanying such rituals, for our informants were, for the most part, extremely old shamans or shamanesses and their assistants. Some of them could reproduce and show us fragmentary details of shamanizing acts with dances.<sup>10</sup>

From a 70-year-old Yakut, I. N. Strekalovskij (Tebikov *nasleg*, Ust-Aldan district of the Yakut ASSR, V. I. Lenin kolkhoz) in 1950 we succeeded in taking down the following details of shamanizing over a sick woman. As I. N. Strekalovskij told us, when the spirit moves into the shaman, the latter starts to turn round and round, jumping, beating the drum and talking, while his helpers, the *kuturuksuts* (literally ‘the shaman’s tail’), repeat his motions and words. They imitate the shaman, who

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g. the lecture by G. M. Mikhajlov (1968).

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g. Трощанский (1897).

<sup>9</sup> Жорницкая (1966).

<sup>10</sup> Only a few former shamans, who could perform various minor rites, are still living on Yakut territory.

pretends to ride on horseback after the sick soul. Another of my informants, M. N. Fedorov (born in 1884 in Toibokhoy *nasleg*, Suntarsk district, 'Pobeda' kolkhoz), also confirmed that during shamanizing the motions of the shaman were mimicked by the *kuturuksuts*, and the motions themselves reminded one of the gait of a horse. The performances of shamans and their assistants reproduced the movements of a galloping horse (head-wagging, snorting, body-shaking, bouncing). In this connection it may be interesting to note the description of a shaman dance by the ethnographer G. V. Ksenofontov. In his view, the shaman dances essentially represent horse dances: "The essence of their [i.e. the shamans'. – M. Ž.] mysterious acts cannot be characterized otherwise than performances of a sacred horse dance. By means of the horse dance, which is an imitation of the saddle horse's trot on the road, the shamans get to the 'sea of troubles' into which they have to dive in the shape of a loon. With this horse dance during the second act of shamanizing they reach the point where it is necessary to ascend, so it seems, by assuming the shape of a bird. When dancing, the shaman reproduces exactly all habits of the horse – he neighs, snorts, unceasingly wags his head, lets himself be caught, feigning that a rope enclosure is drawn around him. . . He cannot dance without a 'halter' (*tehenin*) – a long leather belt sewn to the mantle collar at the back of the neck and pulled through both armpits."<sup>11</sup>

We have obtained interesting data from what 80-year-old F. N. Sivcev (Noyakhinsk *nasleg*, Ust-Aldan district) told us, namely that white shamans went east to shamanize to the goddess of cattle, and they were accompanied by special dancers, *bitihits*. In rhythm with the drumbeat, they kept jumping not too high, and waved their hands. In literature we also found information on white shamans who performed rites in honour of the bright deities, the guardians of fertility. The cult of these deities was connected with cattle-raising. Traditional summer 'koumiss feasts' (*isiakh*) were in the centre of this cult."<sup>12</sup>

In the Verkhne-Vilyuisk district in 1951 we could see exercises by former shaman G. K. Nikiforov, 76 years old, and we described the motions he made during shamanizing. He imitated a talk with birds.<sup>13</sup> The most characteristic figures of dance, in our view, were those related to the very

<sup>11</sup> Ксенофонов (1937), 244.

<sup>12</sup> *Якутия в XVII веке* [Yakutia in the 17th Century] I, Yakutsk 1953, 180.

<sup>13</sup> Archives of the Yakutsk branch of the Siberian Section of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 5/5/140: Materials of the 1951 Dialectological expedition in the Vilyuisk and Verkhne-Vilyuisk districts of the Yakut ASSR.

artistic and highly professional imitation of the flying and alighting of a bird. Nikiforov showed us how he performed the flight of the bird: he stood on one (the right) leg, and raised his left leg with the knee flexed forward. When doing so he extended his arms sideways, palms down, sticking out his neck and head (Fig. 1). He stood for a while in this posture. After that, to indicate that the bird alighted on the ground, he flexed



Fig. 2. The 'reindeer dance' of a Yakut shamaness

in his elbows, joined his palms and sat down on crossed legs, inclining his head. Summoning a raven, G. K. Nikiforov tossed his head back and, jumping on one foot, cried out: 'kuk!'. During this pantomime of joy he kept leaping from one foot to the other, made turns, looking out for somebody, lunged with his right leg, putting on it the weight of his entire body. He pulled back the hand holding his drum and put the other hand on his forehead in front of his eyes. All motions of the legs and body went in rhythm with the drumbeat.

In the Allaikhov district in 1959 we became familiar with details of shamanizing accompanied by imitative dancing elements. One of our informants was ex-shamaness Maria Andrianovna Suzdalova from the 'Perchik' farm. She represented a skipping reindeer. For this purpose she used the drum, sat on it astride, uttering at the same time snorting sounds (Fig. 2). She was no less skilful in imitating the habits of birds, reproducing their warbling. In this connection it is proper to recall that the well-known Soviet ethnographer S. A. Tokarev in one of his latest works made an apposite remark: "... as though the shaman became a bird or a reindeer. His drum is his saddle horse, reindeer, bull, and so forth. Every

detail of his costume, pendants and sewn-on ornaments represents some spirit.”<sup>14</sup>

Evidently the shaman dances were varied. Thus, in the Momsk district in 1960 an expert in local traditions, P. D. Slepcev, told us the following about shamanizing over a sick woman.<sup>15</sup> With various motions, dances and chants the shaman indicates his hurrying after the sick soul: he starts springing like a reindeer, while tapping himself with a stick as if spurring the animal, then he raises his hand to his forehead, protecting his eyes from the sun, and looks out for something ahead. He sings that a passage is ahead, and ties up his *učik* (i.e. reindeer). Further, he sings that now he becomes a *gjagičan* (i.e. hawk), and simulates flying, vigorously flapping his arms about. Afterwards he drops on his knees and stretches his arms forward: in this way he indicates alighting on the ground. Then he shows how the reindeer – his and the evil spirit’s – are fighting. In the course of this fight he approaches the sick woman and looks on to see how she feels, and depending on her condition either his or the evil spirit’s reindeer is the winner. If the patient feels better and is going to recover, then the shaman returns in good humour, but if the sick woman is going to die, then he returns with bowed head, and his drum sounds dull.

Likewise in 1960, in the Aldan district, we had occasion to see and note down a number of motions from certain details of shamanizing acts performed by former shaman Efimov Pavlovič Mamaev, 80 years old. He sang to the accompaniment of his drum, imitating animal voices. He raised the drum high and, holding it in his left hand, cried out, ‘*kuk! kuk! kuk!*’. The movements of his body were impetuous and calm alternately. He leapt from one leg to the other, making turns, stooped and continued jumping vehemently. With amazing ease and softness Mamaev simulated the characteristic habitual moves of the swan. He turned on one leg with hands stretched sideways, sprang from one leg on another, gently flapping his arms like wings. It is appropriate here to call attention to the fact generally known in literature that the Yakut shaman’s costume essentially reminds one of the plumage of birds.

Such a costume was of great help to the shaman in performing the imitative dances which expressed the flight of a bird and its whirling about. It is to be noted in general that the shaman when shamanizing used every

<sup>14</sup> Токарев (1965), 190.

<sup>15</sup> Archives of the Yakutsk branch ..., 5/5: Transaction of the Historical Department of the Institute of Linguistics, Literature and History. Report on the Work of the 1960 Ethnographical expedition team collecting materials on folk dances and games of the Evens.

imitative means, such as dance and drumbeat, pantomime and singing, in order to exercise the greatest possible emotional influence on the spectators. There is a vast literature dealing with the shaman costume and drum and their typology in general.<sup>16</sup> Therefore we wish only to add to those descriptions a few data we obtained from an expert in Yakut folklore, S. A. Zverev, about how skilfully the shaman made use of the clatter of the metal pendants on his costume. When he had to utter loud and shrill voices, he moved his body so as to get most of the iron pendants to clatter, and when emitting low and soft voices the shaman raised and lowered his shoulders and only slowly leapt from one foot to the other. At the shoulder of his costume, he had light and plain pendants sewn, which also provided a low-sounding accompaniment. As to their sound, the drumbeats were also different, especially in rhythm. Besides, they also conveyed distinctly characteristic meanings. Thus, for example, dull strokes corresponded to a sluggish, ominous movement, to slow motion in dance; light raps or rumbling sounds corresponded to hovering. And single abrupt drumbeats corresponded to high jumps.

In this manner, a comparison of the existing materials shows that the shaman dances which existed among the Yakuts in the past can be divided in two groups: on the one hand there were imitative dances, and on the other there were ecstatic dances performed by the shaman usually towards the end of the shamanistic *séance* with a view to bringing himself into trance. Both sorts of shaman dances were lacking a strict composition; they were merely improvisations, but always with a clear rhythm. We could not discover any kind of direct connection between shaman dances and the traditional dances of the Yakuts. In addition to the shaman dances that were part and parcel of shamanistic ritualism, the Yakuts still have knowledge of dances performed during other specific ritual ceremonies. Among these there are, in the first place, the imitative dances, e.g. *kitalik unkūtê* (dance of the stork or the white crane). A singular dancing pantomime accompanied the ritual of *kumis urdê* (which means literally 'skim of *koumiss*'). Elements of dance occurred also in the hunting rites of Yakuts.

An extensive study of the shamanist folklore of the past, including the description and scientific classification of extremely rarely encountered Yakut shaman dances, is undoubtedly of considerable historico-scientific and artistic interest for any elaboration of a strictly scientific theory of the

<sup>16</sup> Попов (1932).

history of the spiritual culture of the Yakut people. Of incontestably great value are the records of shamanic mysteries from 1868 recently published by I. A. Khudjakov.<sup>17</sup> Shamanizing *séances* of the Yakuts have never before been given such great publicity in literature.

The author of the present article is fully aware that, owing to the inevitable difficulties of a first collection and study of Yakut shaman dances she could not solve all the tasks that need to be solved, nor answer all the questions that arise in this connection.

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<sup>17</sup> Худяков (1969), 303-64.

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# On the Shamanism of the Chulym Turks

by

E. L. LVOVA

The Chulym Turks are one of the Siberian ethnic groups that have scarcely been studied by ethnographers.<sup>1</sup> We know very little of their shamanistic beliefs. The question is hardly touched upon by the literature on ethnographical history known to us. Moreover, on the maps entitled 'Occurrence of the types of shaman drums', 'Occurrence of the names of shaman's drumsticks', and 'Occurrence of the names of shaman drums' in the *Historico-Ethnographical Atlas of Siberia* the territory inhabited by the Chulyms is indicated as the only 'unexplored' area.<sup>2</sup>

I do not intend to clarify this subject entirely, but I deem it necessary to point out that our data are rather incomplete because the contemporary Chulym population does not constitute a coherent entity either from the linguistic, ethnographical or administrative point of view. Some groups of the native population have been so much assimilated that they have lost their own language entirely, which makes it still more difficult to obtain information on the subject of our investigation.

At the same time we may assume that within the bounds of the territory at issue there is a uniform tradition relating to certain features of the shamanistic cult among the Chulyms.

The material set forth below is the result of the work of ethnographical expeditions along the Chulym river in the years 1965, 1969 and 1970, and is based on the author's personal collections from that region.<sup>3</sup>

The Chulym population was forcibly Christianized around 1720, when "the Chulym natives were baptized by Philophey, the former Metropoli-

<sup>1</sup> The Chulym Turks live beside the Chulym river, a right-side tributary of the Ob' mainly within the Tomsk Region, and partly in the Birilyus district of the Krasnodarsk Territory. Earlier ethnographic literature mentions them as Melets or Chulym Tatars.

<sup>2</sup> *Историко-этнографический атлас Сибири* (1961), 452-4.

<sup>3</sup> Field diaries of the ethnographical expeditions on the Chulym river in 1965, 1969 and 1970: Archives of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography of Siberia, Tomsk State University, 285/1-6, 375/1-8, 485/1-11.





Fig. 1. Headband of the Chulym shaman

tan of Tobolsk".<sup>4</sup> Papers of the ecclesiastical consistory from as early as 1730 mention the existence of churches at Melless and Achinsk and in the Tutalsk district on the Chulym river.<sup>5</sup> But the introduction of Christianity among the Chulym Turks, just as among the majority of the Siberian peoples, did not entirely wipe out the pagan beliefs of the local populations.

At present there are very vague survivals of shamanist concepts, and even the practice of shamanism has entirely disappeared. According to the many shaman stories told by the older generation of the native Turkic population, who had still been witnessed

to shamanizing acts forty or fifty years before, the present picture of Chulym shamanism is the following.

The Chulym shaman had no special costume. When shamanizing, the shaman (*qam*) wore his everyday clothes, but had to put on iron-shod boots in order to summon or to drive away spirits by stamping his feet. An obligatory attribute of the Chulym shaman was a white kerchief (*plat pagli, plat pahli qam päi*). The kerchief was folded to form a narrow band and tied on the forehead so that its ends hung down before the eyes (Fig. 1). Further on, the shaman conjured the spirits with the kerchief. When his hands were occupied, he put the kerchief on his left shoulder (because he communicated with the spirits on his left). Thus the kerchief was not only an accessory of the costume but played an independent role in the shamanist ritual.<sup>6</sup> There are indications that during the shamanizing act old women often used no kind of tool, only waved their kerchiefs to scare away the evil spirits. It is not without interest to note that women did not fall into trance when shamanizing as did the male shamans.

The drum so common among the peoples of Siberia was not used at all during the shamanistic ceremony. The principal tool of the Chulym shaman was an instrument which I call, for the sake of convenience, 'shaman

<sup>4</sup> Ярилов (1899), 13.

<sup>5</sup> State Archives of the Tomsk Region, 175/2-3, 164.

<sup>6</sup> Shamanizing with a kerchief is known also among other Siberian peoples. Cf. Василевич (1969), 255.

rattle' (*täm*). Besides, the shaman used a shovel that served both as a drumstick and as a spoon (*qallaq*).

To describe the rattle I take as a model the rattle (Fig. 2) made by one of our oldest Chulym informants, A. I. Šumilov. The model is preserved in the collection of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography of Siberia

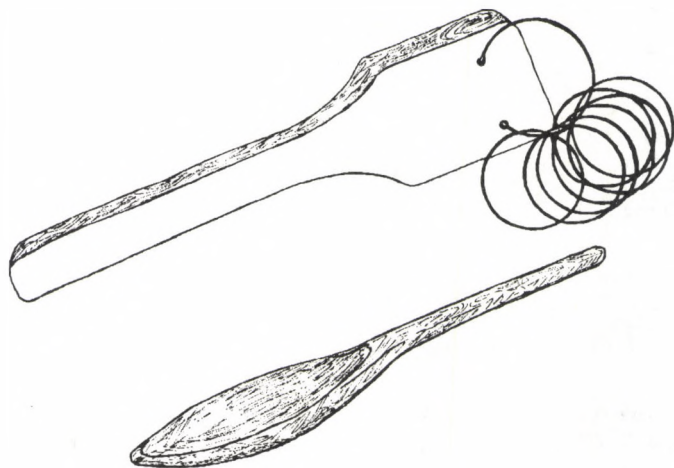


Fig. 2. Models of the shaman's rattle (*täm*) and the shaman's drumstick (*qallaq*) made by the informant A. I. Šumilov

(no. 8084/8085). The rattle consists of a wooden handle broadening towards one end and having a form reminiscent of a spade. It is 25 cm long, its width is 3 cm at the narrow end, and 7 cm at the other. The ratio of the wider and narrower halves of the handle is about 1 to 2. At the wider end of the shovel there are two round holes, into each of which a ring is hooked (the ring is aluminium in the model, but it used to be mostly copper or iron). A further eight rings, about 7 cm in diameter, are loosely fixed to the ring. Let us note that all informants who were shown this object identified it at once as a shamanic instrument.

The material of the Chulym expeditions includes dozens of descriptions of the shaman rattle. It is evident that there were several ways to make this object. Its basis was always the wooden handle to which an iron rod (5 cm thick) with rings on it was attached by different means. I received the description and a drawing of such a rattle from my informant

P. L. Budeev. His drawing is reproduced here (Fig. 3). The handle of the rattle is arched, made from a naturally crooked birch-root. A slightly bent metal rod with (in our case) 9 rings is fastened to the handle. In order for the rings not to knock against the shaman's hand, the upper arched wooden part is separated from the metallic part by a wooden cross-piece. The

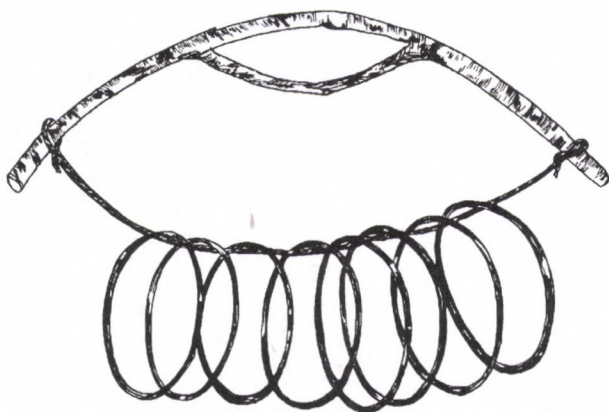


Fig. 3. The shaman's rattle described and depicted by the informant N. L. Budeev

most essential elements recurring on all the shaman rattles described were the metallic (copper or iron) rings. Their number varied from 9 to 60: mention is frequently made of 9, 12, 20 and 60 rings, directly depending on the shaman's efficiency – the stronger the shaman the more rings he had on his rattle. The rings were called *kübä* (pl. *kübälär*).<sup>7</sup> We find it interesting to compare the term *kübä*, denoting the ring on the rattle of the Chulyum shaman, with a verbal form known to several peoples of the Altai, where *kujbulan*, means 'running like the wind, excitement', used by Radloff in this sense with regard to shamanistic acts.<sup>8</sup>

The drumstick (*qallaq*, literally 'spoon' in Chulyum) was about the size of the rattle (20, 23 or 30 cm) – 22 cm in our model. The drumstick handle is very thin, 5 mm in diameter. The broad end is made in the form of a spoon, very shallow with a hardly perceptible convex side and a very

<sup>7</sup> A similar part bearing the same name is on the drumstick of a Kumandin shaman. Потапов (1968), 217.

<sup>8</sup> Радлов (1961), II/1, 94; see also Дыренкова (1949), I; *qam kujburjam* means literally "the shaman is off his head, the shaman is rushing about".

small concave side (Fig. 2). Like the rattle, the drumstick was usually made of birch wood. During the shamanistic ceremony it was used in different ways: its direct purpose was to feed the evil spirits out of the spoon, stirring with it meat soup and spirituous liquors; and during divination for a sick man, when the position of the spoon thrown to the ground over the shaman's shoulder determined the outcome of the healing: if the spoon fell bottom up three times in a row, it meant success. Symbolically the *qallaq* was regarded as a whip with which the shaman goaded his horse on the road to the underworld.<sup>9</sup>

The act of dressing the shaman before shamanizing was strictly regulated. First of all the shaman slipped a ring (*albäq*) on his finger, then put on a necklace of white beads (*munčak*), and only after that did he tie the kerchief around his head. The necklace had as many beads as there were rings on the shaman's rattle. The informants said that every two years the shaman added a bead to his necklace and a ring to his rattle.

It was held also that there were as many rings on the rattle as the number of times the shaman had ascended 'to the clouds'. We think it possible in this given case to link the symbolics of the rings on the rattle with the notion of different heavenly spheres which the shaman visited during his exercises.

The shamanizing over a sick person was done indoors, starting late at night when complete darkness had set in. The room was fumigated with burning Chinese fabric in a copper scoop. Then the shaman sat down on a block of wood or a stool; earlier he sat on a wrought-iron or copper chest. Apparently the chest had a specific part to play in the shamanizing ritual: according to certain evidence, the evil spirit was believed to hide the soul of the sick person in the chest, and it was from there that the shaman took it back eventually. It is noteworthy that the shaman always posted himself in front of the entrance door, taking a seat behind the main beam which in the Chulym house always runs across the room. The informants explained that according to Russian (Christian) custom the ceiling-beam was consecrated when laying the foundations, and the shaman, when making contact with evil forces, could shamanize only in the unconsecrated half of the room.

In the beliefs of the Chulyms most diseases are due to the fact that a person's soul is captured by evil spirits (*čak*),<sup>10</sup> devils, shaitans, unclean forces. The carrier of disease is often a spirit appearing in the form of a

<sup>9</sup> *Field diaries* (1970), 485/7, 66.

<sup>10</sup> Радлов (1961), III/2, 1947. In Shor *čak* means "arrogant nasty demon".

dog. But the soul suffers particularly from pains inflicted upon it by shaitan birds (*čak quš*).

The method by which the shaman entered into contact with spirits and talked them into letting go of the sick person's soul was the propitiatory sacrifice. They prepared soup, always unsalted, and killed a sheep for this special act of shamanizing. "There was no way of shamanizing without blood sacrifice", the informants told us. At the beginning of the ritual an iron pot with meat soup was set up to the shaman's right, and a large pot with home-made beer prepared for this very occasion was placed to his left.

When starting the shamanizing act, the shaman went round the room three times, keeping away from the sick person. He walked in a peculiar way, lifting his knees high. Then he sat down on a stool and proceeded to perform the act of shamanizing, which lasted 4 to 5 hours. According to what the informants told us, the shaman found the soul in the underworld where he had got through the 'shaitan's hole'. On the way to the underworld the shaman passed by local rivers, lakes and Chulym settlements. To judge from the fragmentary data available, the shaman rode there on horseback. A horse, 'as brown as coal', is often mentioned in the very incomplete text we were in a position to take down of a shamanistic act. The sound of the rattle, accompanying the entire ritual, imitated very accurately the clatter of hooves, now slow and quiet, now very swift and wild. As we have already mentioned, the rattle in the shaman's hand was regarded as a whip to spur on the horse.

Apparently the underworld was imagined as the kingdom of the dead, because on his way back the shaman met souls of deceased persons and even souls of those who were about to die and asked him to save them. Upon his return the shaman told those present about all he had seen, and then a new *séance* was appointed with the purpose of saving the man whose soul the shaman had seen in the underworld.

In particularly difficult cases the shaman had an assistant sitting by his side who, upon orders, shoot an arrow with a primitive hand-made bow at the evil spirits<sup>11</sup> with whom the shaman had been battling. (The model of such a bow is kept in the Tomsk University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography.) According to other evidence this function was fulfilled by invisible spirits, the shaman's helpers: hare, weasel, fox, ermine, red sable. There are stories which refer to shaman birds, *quš qačaq*, as very important aids.

<sup>11</sup> Shamanizing with a bow is known to several Altaic peoples. See Иоранов (1934).

A typical phrase repeated during shamanizing was '*šok mene, šok mene*'. A similar expression is also in use by the Shors and, according to Majnagašev, also by the Minusinsk Turks. In my opinion this term is untranslatable.<sup>12</sup>

A striking peculiarity of Chulym shamanism is that the shamanistic conceptions of the Chulyms are rather scanty. We could not take down proper names, nor distinguish categories of shamanic spirits. The shaman's helping spirits as well as hostile spirits are given the same name, *čaq*. There is an idea a very vague one, about *ulug čaq*, a chief devil or first shaitan, who was believed to live underground as 'a sort of subterranean god'. It is interesting that some informants, when speaking of *ulug čaq*, described it as a twelve-headed dreadful-looking and harsh-voiced being.<sup>13</sup> Among the Chulyms we found neither the idea of bright spirits and supreme beings nor any terminology that might have been indicative of such ideas having existed in the past. The notion of *Ülgen* and *Ärlük*, so widespread among the neighbouring Minusinsk Turks and Altaians, could not at all be encountered among the Chulyms.

The materials on the shamanism and pre-Christian beliefs of the Chulyms are of specific importance for complementing our knowledge of this insufficiently explored ethnic group. Their analysis, for all the incompleteness of the available data, makes it possible to reach some preliminary conclusions.

The shamanism of the Chulym Turks reveals some similarity to the corresponding ideas of the neighbouring Turkic peoples of the Sayan Altai. Thus, their terminology and the absence of a special shaman costume connect the Chulyms with the North Altaians and Shors.

In Chulym shamanism there are also a few analogies with the shamanism of the Minusinsk Turks (Khakas) who are territorial neighbours of the Chulyms. The largest number of similar features in this case are to be found in those shamanistic conceptions of the Chulyms which are related to the cult of *ongons* (*tös*) and the cattle-breeding cult. Both peoples practice the worship of *ongons* and the custom of setting up idols (*izykh*), sacrificing certain animals in case somebody or some cattle caught a disease. True, the whole of cattle-breeding cult, just as the very pursuit of cattle-breeding, was not too much developed among the Chulyms.

At the same time the existence of the shaman rattle and the absence of the drum so common in Siberian shamanism, the relative simplicity of the shamanistic ideas of the Chulyms, the absence of bright spirits and su-

<sup>12</sup> Майнагашев (1916), 100; see also Радлов (1961), IV/1, 1021: '*šok* (Teleut, Kumandin, Shor, Kirgiz) is an ejaculatory word of the Shors'.

<sup>13</sup> *Field diaries* (1969) 375/8, 17-8; (1970) 485/7, 61.

preme beings in their shamanist pantheon can only in part be explained by the fact that the Chulyms had lost many of their ancient beliefs. We find it admissible to assume that underlying the evolution of Chulym shamanism is some little known source whose origin is not clean enough for the time being. This question is all the more interesting as the Chulym Turks are historically related,<sup>14</sup> and live relatively near, to those Turkic peoples of Southern Siberia which traditionally are considered bearers of complicated shamanistic notions and a rather developed system of shamanistic attributes.<sup>15</sup> Obviously we may say also that Chulym shamanism is fairly archaic, which fact is confirmed not only by the above-mentioned data but by elements like shamanizing with a kerchief or a bow, instruments which belong to the usual rite of shamanizing with a rattle and occur independently as well.

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<sup>14</sup> Certain researchers even study the ethnography of the Turks living along the middle and upper course of the Chulym together with that of the Kyzyls, one of the ethnic groups belonging to the Khakas. See *Народы Сибири* (1959), 392–3.

<sup>15</sup> Вайнштейн (1964), 10.

# The Funeral Rites of Tuva Shamans

by

M. B. KENIN-LOPSAN

Tuva shamanism has for a relatively long time been in the forefront of research interest. Among the studies describing Tuva shamanism, mention must be made of the works of S. I. Vajňštejn<sup>1</sup> and V. Diószegi.<sup>2</sup> But there are many aspects of Tuva shamanism which have scarcely been investigated. Literature often refers to a peculiar interaction between shamanism and lamaism among the Tuvans of the 19th and the early 20th century.<sup>3</sup> All researchers who studied the religious beliefs of the Tuvans pointed out that this syncretism was an extremely interesting phenomenon in the history of religion. These links concerned various aspects of the activities of shamans, their ideology and practices. Their manifestation was quite unexpected in functions like funeral rites. Some data on rituals relating to the burial of shamans are available in literature,<sup>4</sup> but they are very incomplete and do not at all mention the role played in it by lamas. The valuable set of information on Tuva funeral rites compiled by S. I. Vajňštejn in his doctor's dissertation has not yet been published. The materials referred to below describe ancient funeral rites of shamans. The participation of lamas is a later phenomenon that did not alter the essence of the ancient rituals, but for the sake of completeness they must be taken into account. Our materials draw a picture of western Tuva shamanism in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The burial of a shaman took place in several stages.

*Orun buzary* ('removal of the bed'). The first thing to do after a shaman's death is to take away the bed in which he died (the bed usually stood in the east half of his yurt). A felt sheet is laid on the place of the removed bed, and the deceased shaman's body will lie there until it is

<sup>1</sup> Вайнштейн (1961), 170–94; Вайнштейн (1964); Вайнштейн (1969), 40–1.

<sup>2</sup> Diószegi (1962).

<sup>3</sup> Вайнштейн (1964).

<sup>4</sup> Потапов (1960); Дьяконова (1966).



taken out. By the head of the deceased, a candle is lighted, and in front of him a felt curtain is spread.

*Xam x̄ōru* ('summoning of the shaman'). The relatives invite the shaman who has to point to the direction in which the *kūdel* ('soul') of the deceased departed. The invited shaman stands outside the *yrta*, holding in his hands a piece of cloth with which to perform the rite of purification. The shaman pretends to talk with the deceased. The fumigator prepared for the deceased is smoking, the fumes are floating with the breeze.

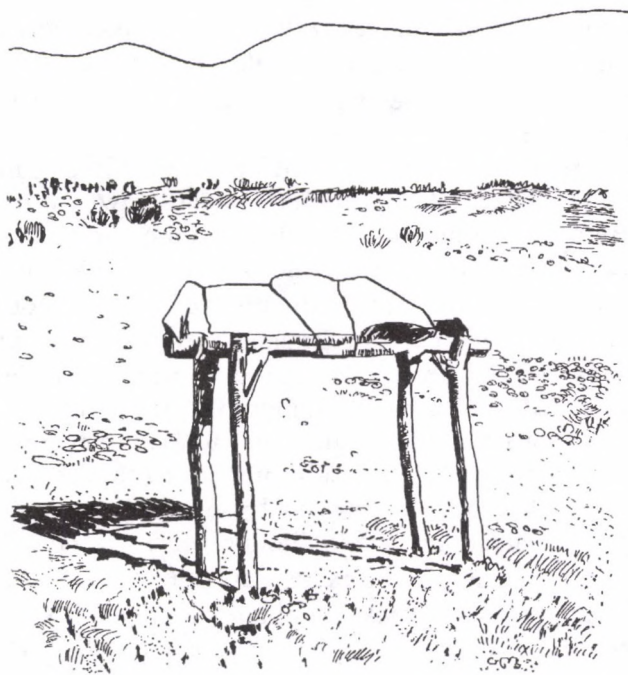


Fig. 1. *Xam serizi* ('shaman platform'). On the Alash river in the Barun-Khemchik district.  
Inv. No.1/886\*

“All right. Well, come here!”, the shaman says to himself as if talking with the spirit of the deceased. And, turning to the relatives, he asks: “Are there blood relations of yours in the place where the deceased’s soul has flown to?”

\* The photographic materials and illustrations are from the collection of the Aldan-Madyr Regional Museum of Tuva. They date from 1916. The place is called Alash and is situated in the Barun-Khemchik district of the Tuvian ASSR. The photos were taken by the oldest folklorist of Tuva, Vladimir Petrovič Ermolaev.

*Salyr čerin ščilip āry* ('selection of a burial site'). It is strictly forbidden to bury the remains of the dead shaman in a mountainous area. The best place to bury the deceased is a shallow depression or a glade in the steppe. Our informant V. Š. Kok-ōl told us an old version of a legend according to which shamans were reputed to have clean white bones, and therefore they were not buried in a common graveyard. That is probably the origin of the cultic concept of 'shaman grave for shamans' which is something exclusive and inviolable.

*Čydar čerin sadyp āry* ('purchasing the plot'). The plot of land in which the body of the deceased shaman will rest is designated by an invited lama. When this is done, in summer people drive a stake into the earth, in winter they sink a pole in the snow. Before this they procure a lasso 9 *kulaš* (about 12 to 14 metres) in length.

The first assistant of the lama ties one end of the lasso round the stake, and the second assistant takes the other end and draws a circle as the sun is moving. Between the man in the centre and the one on the outside the lama lies down on the ground facing the sky and guesses the approximate position of rivers and mountains in different directions. For designating the place of an aerial sepulchre for the shaman, a well-to-do family brings for the lama, as a reward, a saddled horse, two black sheepskins, ten to twenty head of cattle and some clothing of the best kind.

But such pompous funeral rituals were not accorded to all deceased shamans. Our informant K. B. Daš-ōl mentioned that the burial of shamaness Karanmaj had been a very shabby affair. She was buried beside Mount Kyzyl-Dash near the Anyak-Khondergei river in the Dzun-Khemchik district. Her shamanic instruments were put down on a stone, and the body was left lying under a rock illuminated by the sun's rays. No Buddhist prayers were read, no platform was raised for the body of the deceased shamaness, because she had been very poor.

*Undurer χunu* ('day of taking out'). There is a special day determined in advance by the invited lama. After reading the holy book *Loga*, the lama appoints a date for taking out the body of the deceased shaman: within one, two or three days. The day fixed by the lama is mandatory. And the lama also determines the precise hour, which the relatives of the deceased have to observe strictly.

*Undureri* ('taking out the body'). Traditionally, the Tuvans do not take out the dead body through the felt door of a tent. There is a special way of doing it: in order to take out the body of the deceased, one side of the yurta must be raised slightly and so the body must be drawn out into the courtyard, neither head nor feet first, but sideways. Before taking out the

instruments of the dead shaman, an opening is cut in the drumhead. It is forbidden to take out an intact drum. A horseman holds the drum in front of himself, beating it with the drumstick in rhythm with the march of the funeral procession. The slow drumbeat continues until the procession gets to the site where the remains of the shaman will be put to rest. The drumbeat conveys the following meaning: the shaman's spirit must not hide in his yurta where he died. We can read similar evidence in a monograph on the Todzhans, to the effect that "Cuts were made in the things, including the drumhead, in order that the spirits might fly out of them."<sup>5</sup>

Let us note that the funeral must be attended by 3, 5, 7 or 9 persons, that is an odd number of people. The general norm for the number of people to follow the deceased to the burial place depends on the past influence of the shaman himself. An ancient custom in Tuva prohibited women and children of both sexes from attending funeral rites.

*Čerideri* ('conveyance'). There are two ways of conveying the body of a dead shaman from the *aal* to the place of sepulture. The first way is by a *šyrğa* (or hay-cart) pulled by an ox. The dead body is laid on the cart and is carried to the grave.

The second way is to fling up the dead body over a pack saddle (*yngyr-žak*). The pad of the saddle is taken down in order to make a hollow. After adding two more saddles on the sides, the whole is tied with a lasso to the first saddle. That is how they construct a singular box across the back of the ox or horse to carry the body.

When the body of the deceased is conveyed from the *aal* to the burying place, it is put across the back of the saddle horse: head to the right and feet to the left. One man leads the horse by a halter, another man following with a goad.

*Seri* ('platform'). This is a structure for the aerial sepulture of the shaman. It is constructed in a simple way: four posts with forked ends are driven into the ground to serve as supports for two long and two short poles. The floor of the platform is made of strong rods specially cut down to a calculated length. Two types of platforms serve for the purpose, depending on the season of year.

*Čajgy seri* ('summer platform'). A felt sheet is spread on the finished platform standing on four posts. The dead shaman's body, enwrapped in white fabric, is laid out on a ready-made felt mattress. All the shamanistic paraphernalia are hung out on the same spot where the platform is raised.

<sup>5</sup> Вайнштейн (1961), 186.

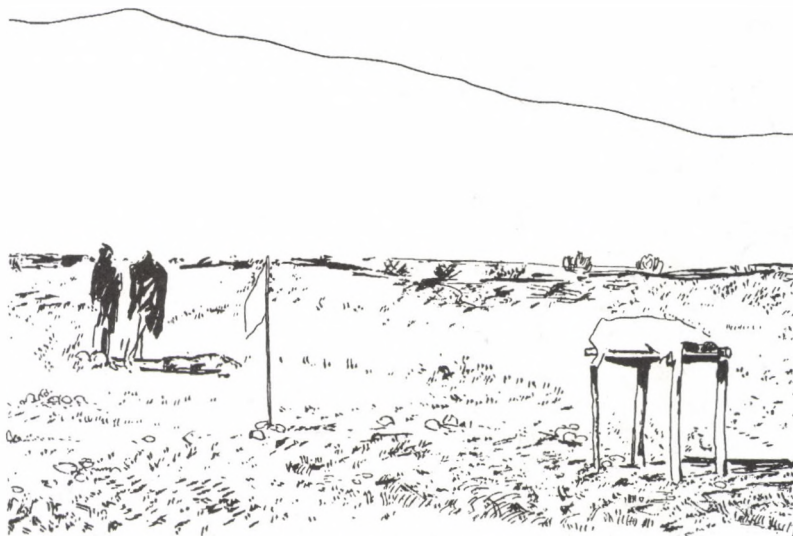


Fig. 2. General view of the burial site of a Tuva shaman. Inv. No. 1/887

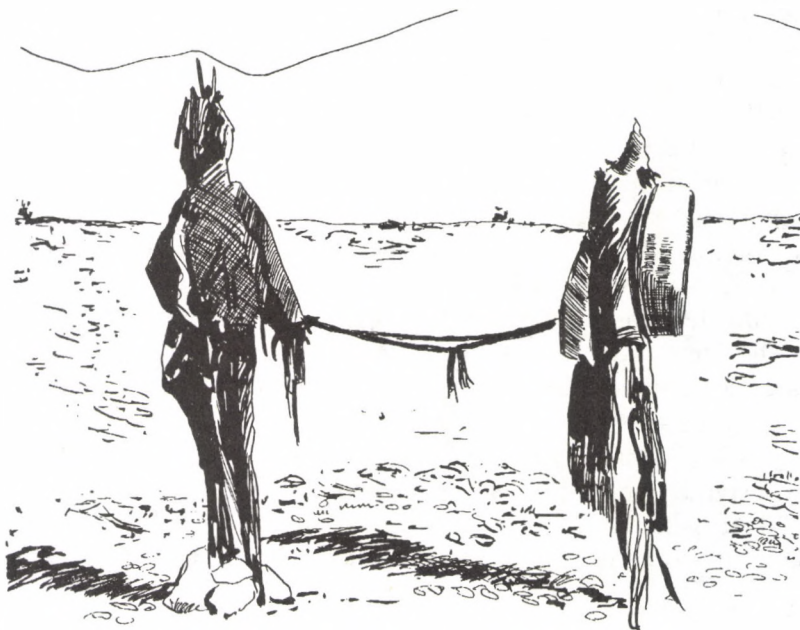


Fig. 3. Čagy, the post to hang the shamanist instruments on. Inv. No. 1/889

According to our informant, S. D. Kūlar, in the locality of Khondergei of the Dzun-Khemchik district, the shaman was buried in one of two ways: either on a platform; or, without this funeral structure, in the open air, on the ground. After the victory of the revolution platforms for the sepulture of shamans almost entirely went out of use. Later the character of the funeral depended on where the shaman died. Let us take as an example the great shaman Dongak Kajgal Kham, who was capable of performing various tricks during shamanizing. All his life, he had lived in the locality of Khondergei, but died an old man elsewhere, in Bora-Shai. He was buried without ceremony just as any ordinary man, in the open air, although in his lifetime he had been a dreaded and famous man. That year had been most difficult for the nomads of the Khondergei river, and after snowfall a cattle plague broke out. Apparently this was the main reason for the miserly funeral of the famous shaman.

*Kyšky seri* ('winter platform'). The frozen soil seems to have given rise to a different type of funeral structure for the burial of shamans. A low frame is constructed in the snow, sometimes forming a circle of specially cut rods, with the platform inside. A white felt sheet is spread upon it and the body laid out. Thereupon the winter funeral is ended.

A post (*čagy*) is staked beside the winter platform to hang the shamanist paraphernalia on. The lower end of the post is not driven into the earth but is fastened with wooden nails to the cross-piece (*davan-dajak*) lest a windstorm should take it down. It is usual to hang on it the shaman's drum, drumstick, cap, *ērens* and ritual costume.

The everyday clothes of the shaman are left in the yurta, and some of them pass into the hands of the closest relatives, while the best item is taken as a reward by the invited lama who read the prayer over the head of the deceased.

*Salyry* ('interment'). As soon as the deceased shaman is carried to the place prepared for the burial, his body is put down with the head towards the setting sun, i.e. facing west. And outside the already drawn circle the horsemen go round as the sun moves. Having completed the round, they make for the *aal*. Where the *seri* stands they do not drink arak and do not make noise.

On the way to the site of the shaman's grave, someone from the funeral procession picks up a nature-polished stone, and this is placed under the head of the deceased. The right cheek of the dead shaman has to rest in the palm of his right hand and the stone pillow is placed under the head of the deceased. The body is laid on its right side. The dead shaman's palm and fingers of the right hand cover an ear, the mouth and the right eye.

His left palm is placed on his left buttock. The legs have to be half-bent. The closed eyes of the deceased are bandaged with a white ribbon, because it is held that all nine openings of the human body must be closed after death.

*Orun solurū* ('transfer of the bed'). When the funeral of the shaman is over, his bed is soon rearranged: it is transferred from the right half to the left, or from the left half to the right of the yurta: As is well known, the left side of the yurta is eastward, and the right side is westward.

These rituals have preserved very ancient elements. One cannot but agree with S. I. Vajņštejn, who states that the interment of the shaman in a bent position, head facing west and with a stone pillow under the head, probably indicates an ancient tradition dating back to Scythian times, when the dead body was folded up in the grave, with a stone under the head which was turned towards west or northwest.<sup>6</sup>

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In conclusion I deem it necessary to point out that the above-cited materials were collected by me during conversations with many informants, among whom I have to mention with gratitude first of all Kedenčik Kūlar, Bora-xoo Monguš (Dzun-Khemchik district), Viktor Kok-ōl, Čymbu Lopsan (city of Kyzyl), Seden Ojun (Tanda district), Sengil Kūlar (Ulugh-Khem district); Khertek Tojbu-xā (Bai-Taiga district). I express my gratitude to S. I. Vajņštejn, Doctor of Historical Science (Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Moscow), V. P. Djakonova (Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR) and L. B. Grebnev (Tuva Scientific Institute of Philological Research, Kyzyl), both Candidates in Historical Studies, as well as to members of the Council of the Aldan-Madyr Regional Museum of Tuva, for their advice and aid when I prepared my manuscript for the press.

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<sup>6</sup> Вайнштейн (1969), 1133.

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# The Vestments and Paraphernalia of a Tuva Shamaness

by

V. P. DJAKONOVA

In the past, two systems of religious worship were widespread in Tuva: shamanism and Buddhism in its Lamaistic form. Their representatives were professional priests. Both the lamas and the shamans in Tuva had their own paraphernalia which they often used in their manifold spheres of activity. After the death of shamans and lamas their cultic attributes were treated differently.

The study of the funeral rites of Tuvans, on the basis of both published materials of different scholars of Tuvinian ethnography and individual field collections, has shown that the whole cycle of customs and rites concerning the burial of shamans had much in common with the rituals performed of ordinary Tuvans. The deceased shaman was buried in his customary dress by relatives, who left food for him at the burying place with his everyday belongings, etc. Nevertheless, many peculiarities could be seen at the burial of shamans, such as different funeral structures to bury them.

We have in mind here, first of all, the board platforms on four high posts, the one-tiered and two-tiered wooden sepulchral vaults, with wooden frames of a homely type, cheats, etc. A platform on four posts was described by W. Radloff who was visiting Tuvans of Kaba-Kohl in 1842.<sup>1</sup>

W. Radloff's reference that ordinary Tuvans were buried on platforms attests that the "aerial" sepulchre was not designed specially for shamans. Its occurrence in the past was later reserved exclusively for the priests of cult.

The singular funeral custom consisted in that the paraphernalia of the shamanist cult were buried together with their owners. They were usually hung out near the burial place of shamans, and the shamanic instruments were put on the upper tier if it was a two-tiered tomb. It may be assumed that such burial in Siberia of the cultic equipment separate from the body of the deceased takes its origin in the distant past, because according to archaeological materials of the various epochs explored notably in South-

<sup>1</sup> See Radloff (1864), 293.



ern Siberia, there is not a single sepulchre known in which one should have found any shaman head-dress, costume or drum, although there are Siberian rock drawings which portray shamans in full vestments and with the drum.

Highly significant was the selection of the shaman's burying place, preferably on a relatively isolated spot in the vicinity of a grove in the mountains. On the day of the funeral the shaman's vestment was hung up in a tree not far off. The western Tuvans hung up the costume, the drum with the drum-case and drumstick and the head-dress. Besides the afore-mentioned objects they placed in the tomb also the images of the assisting spirits. Unlike what can be seen among many nationalities of Siberia, the shaman's buried cultic objects among the Tuvans were not always damaged.

Tombs of shamans indicative of ancient burial customs in Tuva can now be found only by chance, if they have not been entirely destroyed by time.

The Tuvinian complex archaeological-ethnographical expedition of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1959–1960 explored the basin of the Kemchik river. In the locality of Inek-Tash on the right bank of the Upper Ishkim they discovered the very curious sepulchre of a shamaness, Matpa Ondar. It was found that Matpa Ondar had died in 1958 at the age of about sixty. She had married twice, first a lama of Mongolian origin. After his death she remarried, her second husband was a shaman, his name was Sotplakaj. Shamaness Matpa Ondar was buried in the ground at the foot of Mount Kyzyl-Taiga. The grave was not marked. Not far from it, about twenty yards uphill, there lay a bronze mirror (*küzüngü*) and the lid of a prayer shrine of Lamaists. Each of these objects was wrapped up in a blue silk kerchief. On the same place another small bundle was found containing texts of Lamaist prayers. In addition, at some distance off the shamaness' grave, her shamanic insignia were hidden in a cave. The cave entrance was blocked up with stones. The floor of the cave was covered with white cloth, on which lay the drum-case with the drum and drumstick enveloped in the shaman's gown, the gown's collar holding the shaman head-dress.

Thus in that sepulchre there were objects of the shamanist and Lamaist cults. As to the Lamaistic objects, it may be assumed that they were put there in accordance with the prevailing custom in order that in the other-world the shamaness might 'hand them over' to her first husband, the lama. What came to light here was also a custom of burying Tuva shamans: putting the drum, gown, etc. of the deceased close by his or her grave.

A study of the objects found in the cave (now kept in the collection of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences

of the USSR) enables us within the scope of this paper to give only a fragmentary description and analysis.

The drum (*tüngür, tūr*) is round in form (56 cm by 50 cm). Its hoop is made of a board 14.5 cm wide and 1 cm thick. Its ends are fastened with thin leather strips passed through holes. On the outside below the drum-head the hoop has seven transversal rows of four rounded small knobs each, 1 cm in diameter and 0.2 to 0.5 cm in height, and two parallel wicker rims (*aq tal*). The drumhead is thinly processed and given a (red) paint outside. The membrane at its edges is tucked up to form folds 7.5 cm to 4 cm wide. Every such fold is fixed by means of lisle thread, whose ends are passed through holes in the drum's hoop and knotted outside, a little farther from the edge. The drumhead bears traces of several repairs in the form of patches also in red paint. Inside the hoop of the drum there is a vertical four-cornered wooden handle 53 cm long and 3 cm by 2.5 cm in cross-section. It is rounded off at the middle (for holding in hand). Just above its middle there is a relief-like carved image representing the shamaness with drum and drumstick. It is a standing figure in full height (17.3 cm), with a head-dress and emphatically opened mouth. The dress on it is sketched in the form of an everyday traditional robe (*ton*) with a figured flap folded to the left, a broad fringed stripe from the knees to the feet forming the hem of the skirt. The right hand with the elbow bent holds the drumstick, while the drum is in the left hand. The toes of the boots stick out from under the tasseled fringes, and at the upper end of the handle there is a hole to which something might have been attached. On the lower part of the handle we can see three carved images of slightly coiling snakes (7.5 cm in length).

On a level with the shamaness's feet the handle has a circular hole, through which is passed a wooden cross-bar rounded in section (diameter 0.5 cm, length 51 cm). Suspended on two metal rings towards the left side of the cross-bar is an iron hook (13 cm long), and sewn to it are three pendants of twisted wire with flattened rhomboid ends. Four similar pendants (each 4 cm long) are hanging in the same way on the right side.

The drumstick (*orba*) is made of birch-wood in the form of an oval scoop. Its beating end is covered with skin from a wild goat's leg. Its opposite end is flattened. On the median line there is a metal strip to which are attached, by rings, three small round discs (on one either end and one at the middle). To each side from the middle plate three copper plates are nailed in looking like fir-tree ornaments. The handle of the drumstick is rounded in section (11 cm in length, 2 cm in diameter) with a hole at the end. This has a textile slip-knot in it.

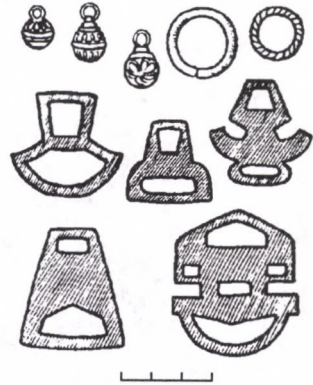
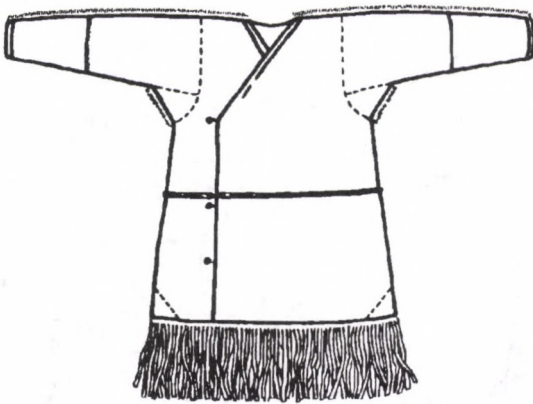
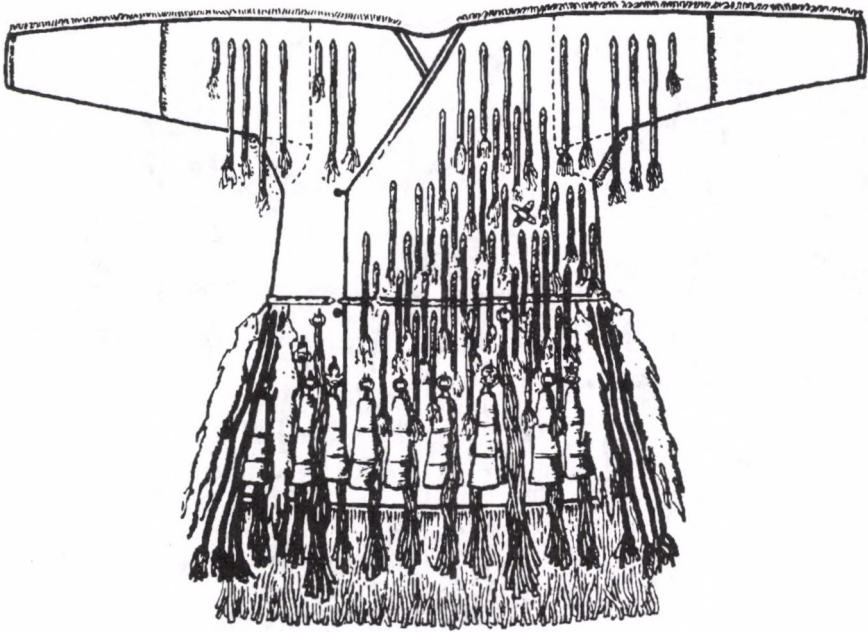


Fig. 1 (a) Front view of the costume decked out with pendants  
(b) The cut of the costume (front view)  
(c) Types of buttons, rings and leather buckles

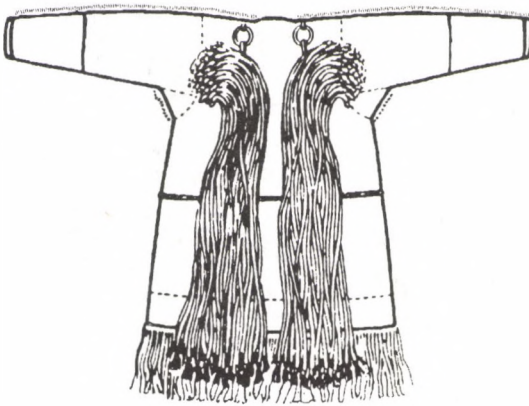
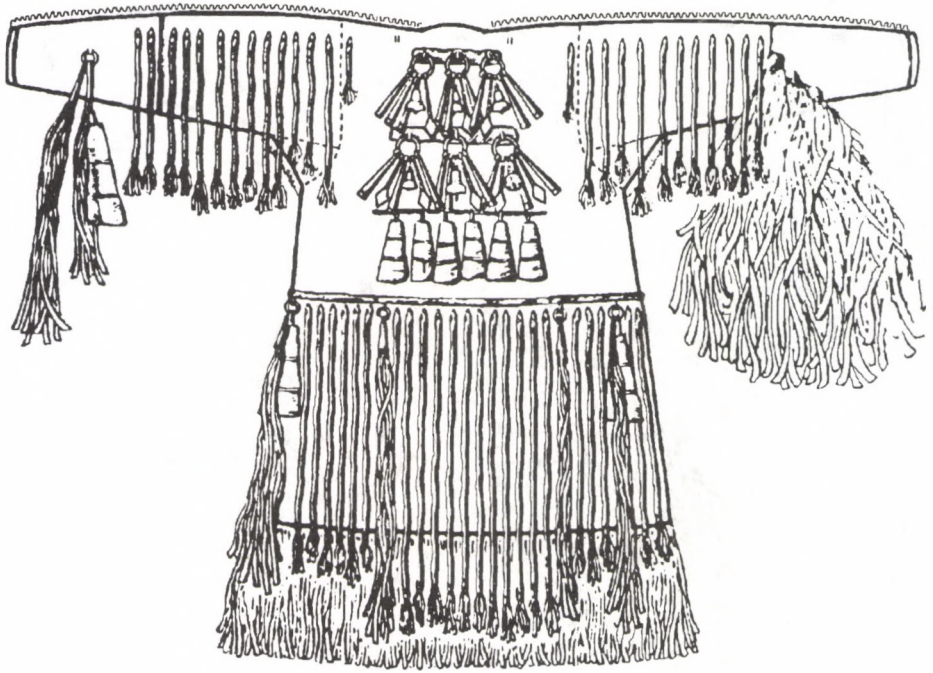


Fig. 2 (a) Back of the costume (minus two pendants – bunches of 'snakes')  
 (b) Cut of the back and two bunches of snake pendants  
 (c) Types of handbells, rattles and metal pendants at the back of the costume

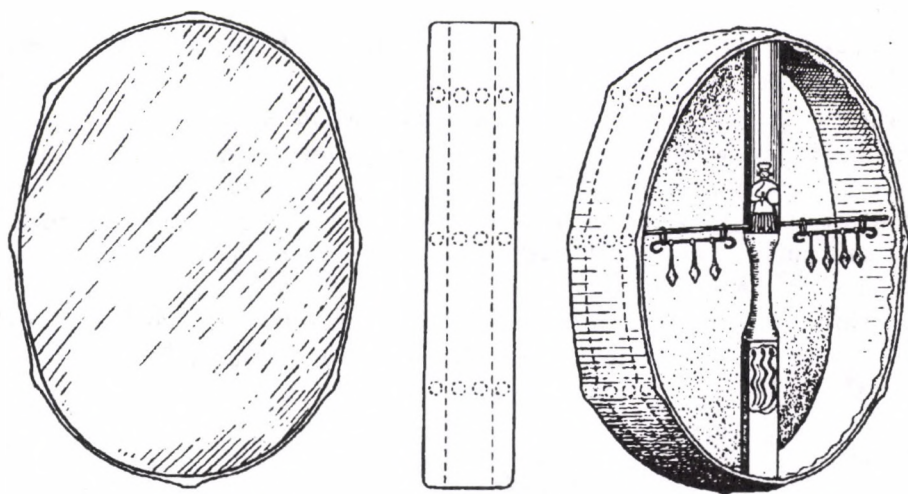


Fig. 3. Drum (front view, side view and inside view)

The drum-case (62 cm by 60 cm) is a complex object. Its interior is made of rough felt sewn with woollen yarn. The woollen lining is quilted with linen cloth. Both the lining and the top of the case are shaped to the figure of the drum. The drum-case closes with textile strings. Also a leather grip is sewn on the case in order to strap the drum in the case on the saddle of a horse and to carry the drum in hand.

The head-dress of the shamaness is a small conical cap. Its base is thin felt lined with cloth. Its top along the skull is trimmed with orange-coloured cloth. Sewn on the frontal part are two repp fringes of red colour, between which runs a wide brocaded ribbon with a rhomboid design woven with black and orange threads. The brim of the cap is trimmed with a narrow stripe of fluffy fur. Strings of beads and maral teeth are hung by woollen yarn from the fur edge around the brim. In its present state the cap has 26 strings of about the same length (from 4.5 cm to 7.5 cm). Each string consists of a certain number of beads (three of 3 beads, nine of 4 beads, nine of 5 beads, three of 6 beads, two of 7 beads), to which is added a maral tooth with a hole made in its root end. The beads are of coral, cornelian and blue glass. No string of beads is at the occipital part of the cap, here two textile ribbons are sewn to the brim, as can be seen on ancient everyday headgears of men and on festive head-dresses of women. One ribbon is of white and the other of black cotton fabric (38 cm long by 8 cm wide). To the ribbons are fastened two entire animal skins (35 cm long by 7 cm

wide). One skin is that of a suslik with very light hair. The eyes are imitated by black beads on the head. Sewn to the paws and tail are narrow (white, red and black) cloth stripes. The second is from a squirrel, on whose neck a white stripe is tied. The front of the cap has a "mask", on which the eyes are marked by two cornelian beads, the nose is made of a conically rolled copper sheet with a salient furrow in the middle. Sideways on the cap there are upstanding ears made of small copper triangles. A small mother-of-pearl button and a coral bead are sewn thereon a little lower down on either side, apparently symbolizing ear-rings. Near the ears on the cap there are "antlers" made of curved hollow copper pipes. Sewn on each of them is another copper pipe with an eagle feather tucked in (34 cm in

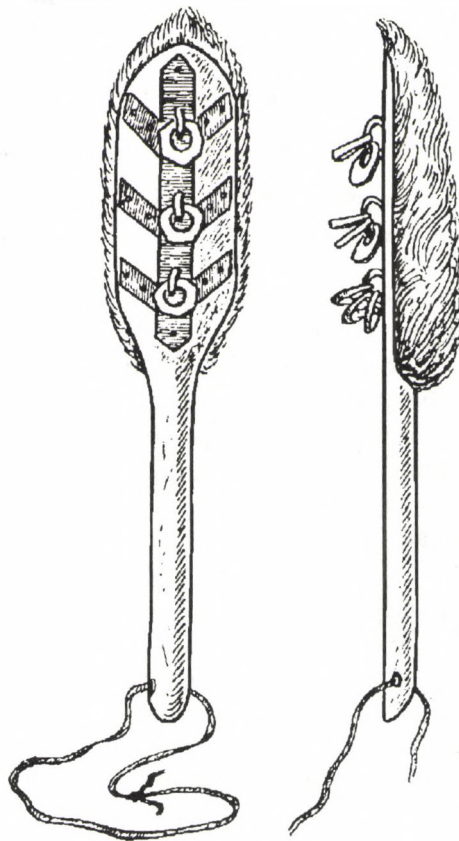


Fig. 4. Drumstick

length). There are on the cap nine small hoses (8.5 cm high each), sewn from orange-coloured fabric, with bases of eagle-owl feathers in them (the height of the barbules is 21 cm). They are all sewn standing straight on the top part of the cap as follows: one hose is fixed at a distance of 2.5 cm above the copper sheet representing the nose, seven hoses are sewn around the top, beginning from the antler-shaped copper pipes (the distance between each two is 3 to 4 cm), the ninth is fixed on the crown of the head-dress. At the base it is embroidered with threads in four concentric circles.

The shoulder part of the shamaness's clothing (*χamnar ton*) is sewn of goatskin with the fur inward. The back is straight, cut from a single skin. Below, at the hem, there is a fur stripe from another skin. The left-side flap is cut from a single skin, the right-side one is made of several pieces and is attached to the hem with a fur stripe. Both flaps are a little extended to the hem. The sleeves, tightening towards the wrists, are sewn to straight arm-holes similar to those seen in the everyday fur clothing of Tuvans.

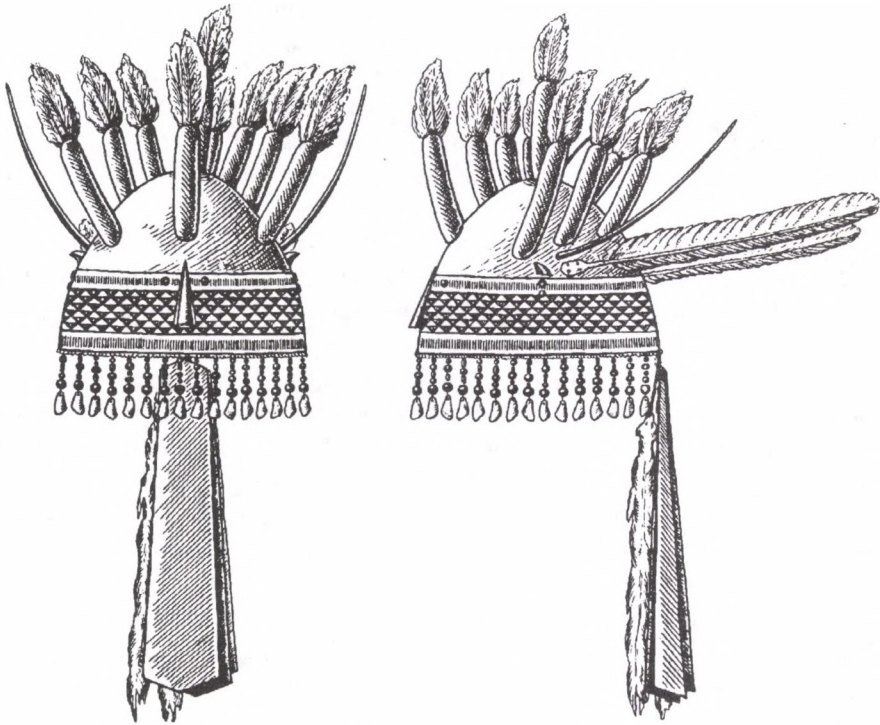


Fig. 5. Head-dress

Each sleeve is sewn of two fur pieces. The upper seam starts from the shoulder, the lower one from the arm-hole. At the back the collar is cut to fit the neck, in front it is pointed and trimmed with narrow, red fabric borderings. The jacket is fastened with a buckle. On the left-side flap, at the edge, three spherical copper buttons are sewn on (at the neckline, at the girdle and near the hem). On the other flap there are corresponding loops of cloth. When buttoned up, the flaps are close side by side, although the left flap of the jacket is wider than the right-hand one. The jacket of the shamaness is covered with various trimmings. Tassels (37 cm long) in two rows, made of dressed skin, are sewn on the jacket's hem. On the jacket's back, at the upper right-side shoulder-blade, is sewn a loop of leather in which is tucked a metal ring (5.5 cm in diameter), and hanging from it on a strap is a bunch of 59 snake plaits (60 cm long). The plaits vary according to the thickness and colour of the material. Both this pendant and the other snake plaits on the costume are made on the same principle. Essentially they are twisted woollen threads or rolled strips of wool trimmed on top with fabric of one, two or three sorts of material. Judging from the state of the cloth trimming, one can say that the textile used for it is basically plain or coloured cotton, sometimes black velvet.

The execution of the plait pendants makes it very difficult to distinguish them by colour. The upper end of such plaits is made in the form of an angular projection with symbols (small corals or beads) for the eyes. The lower end of every snake plait is trimmed with a ribbon-like leather tassel.

In the above-mentioned bunch of snake plaits there are six black-headed and several red-headed snakes. On the side of the left-hand shoulder-blade a second bunch of 57 "snakes" (96 cm long at moat) is hung in the same manner.

Between these pendants (approximately between the shoulder-blades) there is a strap (13 cm long by 3 cm wide) with three leather loops sewn upon at equal distances (on two edges and in the middle). In the loop farthest to the left is tucked a metal ring (4 cm in diameter) with three small cone-shaped pipes (10 cm long), and a copper pendant in the form of a twisted rod with a flattened rhomboid end (11.5 cm long), similar to the pendants on the cross-bar of the drum. The middle pendant is missing. Suspended also by a ring on the right-side loop are metal pendants like those described above, with a factory-made handbell added.

At a distance of seven centimetres downwards from the said strap another one (17.5 cm long by 3 cm wide) is sewn upon. Hanging from it in the same way are three rings with pendants. In the left side are three small



pipes a little larger in size (13 cm long), two twisted rods (12 cm long) with flat ends of rhomboid form, and a small copper bell. Three small pipes, a rod and a handbell are attached to the middle. To the right three small pipes, two rods (one of copper, the other of iron) and a small copper rattle are affixed.

Sewn on a third strap (at a distance of 12 cm downwards from the second) are seven tobacco pouches, the kind of which is still in use among the Tuvans in these days (12 cm long, 6 cm wide at the bottom). The pouches are sewn of white and red fabric.

A girdle in the form of a red snake plait is sewn on the waist-line. The girdle is fastened to the left and right flaps of the jacket, its ends are shaped like small heads with eyes of coral beads.

A row of 25 snake plaits (67 cm long) is fixed on the jacket's back below the girdle. Seven snakes with black beads are at the centre of this row. This same row includes three pendants (two at the side seams of the jacket and one in the middle) attached with metal rings. The left-side pendant is a three-piece textile plait with a leather tassel (55 cm long) and a textile pouch. The middle and right-side pendants are similar to the one described (55 cm and 65 cm long, respectively). That is how the back of the jacket is patterned.

The left-side flap of the jacket is profusely loaded with pendants. Five rows of snake plaits are sewn upon, running downwards from the shoulder seam to the waist-line. The first and second rows (10 cm distant from each other) include five 'snakes' (27 cm long) each, the third and fourth each comprise seven. Included in the third row is also a cross-shaped sign (8 cm by 7 cm) made of snake plaits, where each of the snakes has two heads. As to their size, the plaits of the third row are 25 cm long each; while those in the fourth vary from 13 cm to 37 cm. The fifth row includes twelve snake plaits and a pendant attached to the jacket by the aid of a metal ring with a three-coloured textile pouch (white, red and black), as well as a three-piece plait with a leather tassel (70 cm long).

As has been pointed out before, a girdle runs along the waist-line of the jacket. Sewn on the left flap quite close by the girdle is the next row of pendants consisting of eight snake plaits of different length (from 25 cm to 52 cm). To it belongs the skin of an Asiatic mink of light tone, with three small (red, white and black) ribbons tied to each of the four paws. Hanging on a metal ring are a three-coloured textile pouch (size 26 cm by 9 cm) and a three-piece plait with a leather tassel. The lowermost row consists of four pendants, three of which are attached to the flap with metal rings, while the fourth is imitation of leather and is fastened with a

metal buckle (*tergi*). Each pendant includes a three-piece plait with a leather tassel (55 cm long) and a three-coloured pouch. In one case two tobacco pouches are affixed to the ring. Judged by the marks left behind, there must have been seven, not four, complete pendants.

The right-side flap of the jacket, unlike the left-side one, is decked out less profusely. Thus only one row of three snake plaits is sewn on the shoulder seam. Much lower on the girdle near the side seam a three-piece plait and a pouch are fastened by means of a (leather) buckle. Almost close by there is another pendant, the skin of a mink pulled off the body together with the head. The eyes of the mink are substituted by coral beads, and three (white, red and black) small ribbons are tied to each of the four paws. In addition, a three-piece plait with a leather tassel (60 cm long) is suspended on a ring. Fastened to the ring of the said pendant is a second ring with a pouch and a three-piece plait (72 cm long). Below the girdle runs a row of pendants comprising two snake plaits (53 cm long), a metal ring and a (leather) buckle, with a pouch and a three-piece plait attached to each. The last row, running along the hem of the jacket, comprises five pendants. A pouch and a three-piece plait hang from each of the three rings and the (leather) buckle. The fifth pendant is the skin of a sable. Its head is imitated by cloth, the eyes are marked with beads. Three small ribbons are sewn on each paw and the tail. A pouch is also tied to the sable skin.

The sleeves of the jacket are also richly ornamented. A fur extension is sewn to the arm-holes and on the sleeve-bends. A tassel of dressed skin is fixed in the seams along the sleeves (from shoulder to wrist). Sewn on the left sleeve in front of the shoulder are six snake plaits diminishing in size (from 35 cm to 12 cm). On the reverse side there are 14 snake plaits in the same order. Below the elbow joint there are a pouch with remnants of tobacco, a three-piece plait and a bundle of white ribbons. In front of the right-hand sleeve as many snakes are sewn upon as on the left one. To the back side of the sleeve are fastened 12 snake plaits. Just below the elbow joint there is a large bundle of white ribbons with a narrow stripe of fur (17 cm long) sewn on its side, taken from the leg of a wild goat, and with a clawlike appendix.

The material at issue enables us to make a few conclusions in this short article. The given sepulchre of shamaness Matpa Ondar has the character of relic, for in Tuva today there are no shamans who might be buried with their cultic attributes. The above-described objects discovered by the expedition leave no doubt about their uniqueness.

It is quite obvious that the drum with the drumstick found in the cave – according to classification by the form of the handle – belongs to the

Sayan-Altaic type.<sup>2</sup> According to a more specific classification, proposed by E. D. Prokofjeva for the shaman drums of Siberian peoples, it is with good reason considered the Altaic variant of the Southern-Siberian type of drum.<sup>3</sup> The drum of shamaness Matpa Ondar doubtless belongs to the drums of the western group of Tuvans, who are known to have strongly differed by their mixed clan and tribal composition. As to its shape, colouring, and the form of the cross-bar (handle and cross-piece), it typifies the drums both of the Altai and the western Tuva shamans. Conspicuous in the given case is the wooden transversal cross-bar with seven metal pendants. As is known, the cross-piece (*kiriš*) on the Altaic and western Tuvanian drums is horizontal and, as a rule, was made of metal. And the cross-bar on the drum under review is similar to the Todzhan variant.<sup>4</sup> L. P. Potapov has established that such cross-bars among the western Tuvans are called *šežek* or *sīžek*, and not *kiriš*. The term *šežek* denotes the horizontal cross-piece on the Selkup shaman's drum.<sup>5</sup>

By its cut the head-dress (*хамнар бөрт*) of Matpa Ondar is fairly close to the low conical caps (*мāqtıq бөрт*), used in the past by ordinary Tuvans, with broad bands which were sewn on the top or attached to the brim at the back. Bands of just this kind are tied on the cap of the shamaness. The pattern of the given cap is original and semantically complicated. Its forepart makes it comparable to the caps of Altaian shamans who, however, attached to the strings of beads cowrie shells instead of atrophied maral fangs.<sup>6</sup>

The pattern of the images on the cap – the relief-like representation of the facial lines and ears (metal, beads), as well as the zoomorphic elements (antlers, eagle or eagle-owl feathers) – relates it to the headbands which, by S. I. Vajnštejn's definition, are the principal type of head-dress used by shamans of the central and western Tuvan steppes. Albeit he refers the cone-shaped caps to the headgears typical of the western Tuvan taigas.<sup>7</sup> It is also beyond question that the given head-dress carries in itself a complex ethnocultural heritage. Considering the peculiar way of making head-dresses with ornaments on them fashioned according to models of the caps of dead shamans, it may be supposed that the shaman's head-dresses among the western Tuvans were created not only af-

<sup>2</sup> Потанин.

<sup>3</sup> Прокофьева (1961), 447.

<sup>4</sup> Вайнштейн (1961), 181.

<sup>5</sup> Потапов (1969), 351.

<sup>6</sup> Анохин (1924), 48, Figs 35, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Вайнштейн (1964), 3–4.

ter the fashion of headbands. The everyday headgears had a certain role to play in their formation. Let us make the point that the shamans of the Altaians at times wore ordinary headgears, and only when shamanizing did they affix cultic paraphernalia to them. The complex execution of the head-dress of shamaness Matpa Ondar refers to the category of strong shamans. Many elements of it have analogies not only among the western Tuva shamans but also in the Altai.

By the character of its style the shoulder clothing of Matpa Ondar belongs to that type of shaman garments which, in E. D. Prokofjeva's classification, had a straight-cut waist and flaps as well as sewn-in sleeves. This kind of cut, in the opinion of Prokofjeva, was widespread among the Central Yakuts, the Dolgan, the Transbaikal Evenki, the (eastern and western) Tuvans, the Kachins, the North and South Altaians and the Nanais.<sup>8</sup> What is remarkable in Matpa Ondar's costume is the fact that its cut in some respects resembles that of the everyday fur clothing of the Tuvans (*alyj ton*) and the hunters' jackets (collar, length, looseness).<sup>9</sup> It is related to the ordinary dress also by the use of a girdle, this obligatory part of the everyday costume.

The jacket of the shamaness is rather heavy-laden, but in general outline it consists of the following few elements. Its materials: metal, felt, cloth, fur. The type of pendants: tassels (at the hem and the sleeves), snake plaits (on the entire costume), three-piece plaits (back, flaps, sleeve), metal pendants – small pipes, rods, handbells, rattles (at the back). All the enumerated types of pendants on the jacket of shamaness Matpa Ondar are also well tied up semantically with the pendants to be found among the western and eastern Tuvans, some Sayan-Altaiic peoples and the Mongols.

Let us note at once that the largest number of pendants are snakes which, besides the skins used by Tuva shamans, were the helping spirits of shamans. According to information received from Altaians the snakes also symbolized armour. Despite the fact that colouring, judged by the present state of the pendants, was very diverse, yet it can be affirmed that part of the snakes were red, part white, and the rest black. Such distribution by colour indicates also that shamaness Matpa Ondar had helpers – both good and evil spirits. Since the snakes helped shamans to expel the demons of disease, it may be assumed that she was engaged in this kind of shamanizing in the first place.

<sup>8</sup> Прокофьева (1971).

<sup>9</sup> Дьяконова (1960).

The entire row of pendants (*mančaq*) in the form of a three-piece plait with leather tassels was conceived as wings by the Tuva shamans. As regards the rattles and metal pendants, it is known that in the costumes of Tuvan and Altaian shamans they symbolized protective armours, and the shamans used them to guard themselves from the attacks of evil spirits. An especially interesting feature is the presence, among the pendants of the given costume, of a great many three-coloured pouches, some of which even contained remnants of tobacco. According to the data of A. V. Anokhin, the Altaian shamans' costumes also had leather tobacco pouches, which were held to be a means of inspiration for them during the act of shamanizing.<sup>10</sup> On the basis of this explanation, it may be supposed that shamaness Matpa Ondar was supplied with a very large quantity of such means, which helped her to the highest state of ecstasy.

The foregoing may be summed up by stating that the cut of the shaman's costume is derived from the ordinary clothing of the Tuvans. The style of the costume is in many details similar to the Altaian and Mongolian types (snakes). The abundance of ornaments on the costume expresses the real position of the shaman (strong, weak). Besides, the semantics of the costume reflects with full precision its connection with the pantheon of evil and good divinities, and testifies to the type of shamanizing (to demons of diseases, etc.).

In concluding what is set forth in this paper, we suppose that this material will find an appropriate place among the important sources both about what the equipment of shamanistic cult was like and about the very character of the funeral of shamaness Matpa Ondar.

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<sup>10</sup> Анохин (1924), 43.

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# The *ērens* in Tuva Shamanism

by

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In the beliefs of the peoples of Siberia a very important part was played by the cult of *ongons*. In spite of the fact that this cult attracted the attention of researchers already in the 18th century,<sup>1</sup> and that a relatively short time ago a detailed monograph was devoted to it by the Soviet ethnographer D. K. Zelenin,<sup>2</sup> many aspects of this cult, which is of immense interest for the treatment of general theoretical problems regarding the genesis of the early forms of religion, have remained little explored, and the approach to them has been pretty contestable. This has to a certain extent been due to the lack of concrete information on the *ongons* among the various Siberian peoples.

In the ethnographic literature on Tuva (in works by E. K. Jakovlev, G. N. Potanin, F. Kon, L. P. Potapov, etc.) there are only desultory, often extremely contradictory, data on Tuvinian *ongons*, a fact which as prompted the author to pay particular attention to the related ideas of the Tuvans in the course of the field investigations begun in 1950.<sup>3</sup> Here follows a brief description of the Tuvinian *ērens* chiefly on the basis of the author's own material collected in the field.

The *ongons* of the Tuvans were called *ēren*. By *ēren* they understood both the spirit itself and its receptacle.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. Георги (1777), 118.

<sup>2</sup> Зеленин (1936). It is to be noted that the term *ongon* is not generally adopted in Soviet ethnographic literature, and many authors do not use it when describing the beliefs of the peoples of Siberia. In our view the absence from present-day scientific literature of a better term for denoting the large and specific category of spirits and their receptacles justifies the use of the given term.

<sup>3</sup> Owing to the great success of socialism in Tuva, shamanism here has now lost its significance entirely, and its memories are retained by only a few very old men, but in the early fifties many former shamans were still alive and gave me precious information about Tuvinian *ongons*.

<sup>4</sup> See Вайнштейн (1964), 2. The name of *ongut* of Mongolic origin was also widespread in southeastern Tuva.

There is every reason to suppose that the earliest conceptions of *ongons* originated from the pre-shamanist beliefs of the peoples of Siberia, but later the cult of *ongons*, having undergone considerable development, became an integral part of shamanist ideology and practice. Let us point out in this connection only that the *lekans*<sup>5</sup> of *ērens* in the 19th and the early 20th century were made either by the shamans themselves or after their instructions.

Among the *ērens* one can distinguish two main groups – zoomorphic and anthropomorphic. The largest group was made up of the zoomorphized *ērens*, whose receptacles were images representing some part of an animal's body or its dummy, as well as consecrated domestic animals. The smaller group was that of the anthropomorphized *ērens*, whose receptacles were anthropomorphic figures.

The spirits of natural phenomena (e.g. rainbow, twilight), individual objects, particularly some of the paraphernalia of the shamanist cult, were also considered *ērens*.

The material used for making *lekans* was wood, felt, skin, metal, cloth. Most *ērens* are known all over Tuva.

The most frequent appearance of *ērens* in the capacity of zoomorphic *ongons* is in the form of snake, bear, crow, hare, sable, swan, cuckoo, eagle-owl, eagle, duck, falcon, horse, bull and other animals. The main function of most *ērens* was to protect man from the demons of disease. It was held that the *ērens* were distinguished both by the character of their functions and by their powers. Some *ērens* could be owned only by shamans.

Like other Siberian peoples, the Tuvans believed that diseases were caused mainly by the spirit of one or another animal. They held that such spirits could most easily be expelled by spirits of similar animals – their *ērens*. In this, it was held, the sick could be helped by shamans, who in their performances often relied on the appropriate *ērens*. It was supposed that even the shaman could cause sickness to overcome enemies by setting his *ērens* on them. The shamans thought, however, that they could expel the spirit of disease from their patient, often even without the aid of an *ēren*, by threatening the demon, fighting and killing it, or simply by sucking it out of the sick person and then spitting it out. The shaman's ancestor spirits were also believed to be *ērens*.

In the shamanistic conceptions an important part was played by the shaman's *ērens* – helping spirits, who not only guarded him from the de-

<sup>5</sup> Here and further on we use this term for denoting the receptacle (or representation) of the spirit.



mons of disease but also assisted him in his wanderings in the upper world, acted as scouts for him, etc. As is seen, by *ērens* one understood fairly different spirits and their receptacles.

Fastened to the *ērens'* *lekans* were cloth ribbons or bundles of such ribbons (*čalama*), as well as plaits of leather or hair. On some of them were hung strings of beads. All this served to express respect for the *ēren*. It was the custom to feed almost all *ērens*, but the feeding methods differed. While it was held possible for some *ērens* to content themselves with drops of tea or milk (for this purpose there was in the yurta a special spoon with nine holes), others needed extra greasing with butter and fat, fumigating with heather, etc.

Also the places reserved for the *ērens* in the abode were different. Some *ērens*, predestined to heal sick persons, had their *lekans* suspended at the bedside, others at the entrance to the abode, while the *lekans* of again others were kept in a chest. Some *ērens*, as usual, were kept at a place of honour in the yurta. The *ēren's* place in the abode was assigned by the shaman. Unfortunately the limited scope of this article makes it impossible for us to enlarge upon these interesting questions.

The bear *ēren* (*adig ēren*) was regarded as one of the strongest. It could be owned only by a "strong" shaman. It was held that this *ēren* had a good scent and could defend the shaman from evil spirits, first of all from those whom a hostile shaman might send against him. The *lekans* of this *ēren* could be different with the various shamans. The majority of shamans had receptacles shaped as a bear's figure carved out of wood or sewn of cloth at the shaman's request. I happened to see in southern Tuva a bear *ēren's* receptacle in the form of that animal. To it were tied a piece of hairy bearskin and a bear's claw. Other shamans, according to my informants, had *lekans* made of a bear's dried forepaw with claws. The bear *ēren* was kept suspended at the men's (western) side of the yurta. If it was a paw, the claws had to touch almost upon the floor. There are data to show that some shamans during conjuring had the bear's paw hanging on the yurta's door as is related in particular by E. K. Jakovlev.<sup>6</sup> The shaman did not take the bear *ēren* out of the tent, for it was held to be the guardian of the shaman only.

Let us note here that the Tuvans, just like the Yakuts,<sup>7</sup> considered the shaman who had a bear among his guardian spirits to be the strongest one. Bear *ongons* are known among nearly all peoples of Siberia.

<sup>6</sup> Яковлев (1907).

<sup>7</sup> Пекарский—Попов (1928), 19.

To be mentioned among the zoomorphic *ongons* of shamans is the crow *ēren* (*küskün ēren*), held to be the shaman's helper, his scout. A *lekan* was a wooden figure of this bird and was painted black. Further shamanic *ongons* were the bull *ēren* (*buga ēren*), the *lekan* of which was made in the shape of a bull figurine; the owl *ēren* (*ugu ēren*), whose *lekan* was an owl dummy; the skunk *ēren* (*morzuq ēren*), and a few others. Particular *ēren* whom the shamans summoned in their incantations might not even have had *lekans*.

A large group of zoomorphic *ērens* could serve both shamans and any other man whom the shaman recommended to keep such an *ēren*. Most widespread was the snake *ongon* (*čīlan ēren*). Its *lekan* was made from unused felt sewn round with red, less frequently brown, cloth. The head comprised a mouth, usually open, with a tongue of cloth in it, two bead eyes sewn on it and a copper horn. Sometimes several such snakes were sewn together. The particular types of snake *ērens* often had individual names.

As a rule, the shamans suggested the making of a snake *ēren* in cases when a calf caught a disease. The *ēren* was held to be especially effective against rabies of cattle. Shamans usually had a number of snake *ērens*; some of these the shaman hung on his costume, while keeping others hanging above the drum in the *yurta*. Some snake *ērens* had *lekans* longer than a metre. Some information on snake *ērens* among the Tuvana is supplied by E. K. Jakovlev.<sup>8</sup> Let us observe that one of the most frequent images on Siberian *ongons* is the snake, and that snake *ongons* are known among the peoples of Southern Siberia, the Khanty and Mansi, the peoples of the Amur, etc.<sup>9</sup>

The hare *ēren* (*aq ēren*; *aq* 'white') was widespread in all Tuva. It was used for healing diseases of the leg joints, pains in the stomach, etc. Its *lekan* was either of narrow hareskin stripes with a knot tied above or of a hare dummy stuffed with grass. Some shamans suggested that it be kept at a place of honour in the *yurta*, others recommended it to be set up at the entrance to the abode. Data on such *ērens* are to be found also in G. N. Potanin's work.<sup>10</sup> The hare *ongon* was known also to the Khakas and Altaians.<sup>11</sup>

Other zoomorphic *ērens* were the hawk, cuckoo, fish (salmon trout), etc. Their images were made, usually after the shaman's instructions, of wood and were painted black or brown. The Minusinsk and Irkutsk museums have a large collection of representations of Tuvanian *ērens*, among

<sup>8</sup> Яковлев (1907), 98, 99.

<sup>9</sup> Зеленин (1936), 14–5.

<sup>10</sup> Потапов (1881), 95.

<sup>11</sup> Потапов (1929), 136, 141.

them anthropomorphic figures as well as birds, animals and fish.<sup>12</sup> According to information I obtained in southwestern Tuva the cross-spider *ongon* (*arvalč ēren*) there enjoyed great esteem.

A singular zoomorphic *ongon* was the *ēren* whose *lekan* was a wooden figurine of a horse's foreleg hung on a leather trap. It was held that this *ēren*, bearing the name *šivar tajaq*, cured diseases of the arms and legs. It was the custom to hang it by the bedside.

The provenance and genesis of the zoomorphic *ongons* pose a complicated and far from resolved problem, with which we do not deal here. Let us point out only that the connection of *ongons* with totems, suggested by a number of researchers,<sup>13</sup> seems to us very probable and does not contradict the Tuvan materials.

Closely related to the cult of zoomorphic *ērens* is the cult of specially consecrated animals, called *idiq* or *idiq ēren* after consecration. Such could be only domestic animals – horses, reindeer, sheep, goats, cows. Their consecration had to be performed by the shaman.

In eastern Tuva they consecrated almost exclusively reindeer. I gave a description of this ritual in my work on the eastern Tuvans.<sup>14</sup> In the western and central districts mostly horses were consecrated. No one except the owner himself was allowed to ride a consecrated animal, and it was forbidden to kill an *idiq ēren*. The point of the ritual was to enable the disease spirit expelled from a person to move into another creature, in the given case into the consecrated animal. If the sick person owned no animal to consecrate as an *idiq*, upon the shaman's instruction it could be replaced with an image carved from wood. The shaman's performances aimed at making the spirit of disease move from the patient into the *lekan* of a horse, cow, tame reindeer, etc., are described also as having taken place among other Siberian peoples, for example, the Yakuts,<sup>15</sup> the Dolgan.<sup>16</sup>

Some or other variants of the custom of consecrating domestic animals exist among all pastoral peoples of Eurasia. D. K. Zelenin, who had collected considerable relevant information from literary sources, made an interesting attempt to explain this custom on the basis of his ample material.<sup>17</sup>

A considerable group of *ongons* comprised the anthropomorphic *ērens*. The principal *ērens* were held to be the ancestor shamans (*ēren dözü*).

<sup>12</sup> Minusinsk Museum: Nos 571, 776, 781; Irkutsk Museum: No. 1334–39, etc.

<sup>13</sup> Зеленин (1936), 111.

<sup>14</sup> Вайнштейн (1961), 177–9.

<sup>15</sup> Стефанович (1897), 44.

<sup>16</sup> Васильев (1909), 272. See also Зеленин (1936), 379.

<sup>17</sup> Зеленин (1936), 288–335.

They had very diverse representations. These were usually made of felt, cloth or wood and, as a rule, they represented the shaman with a drum in his hands. One such *ēren* is preserved at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Leningrad.<sup>18</sup> It is a rag-doll holding a small model of drum in the left hand. A few narrow cloth ribbons are hanging loosely from the *ēren*.

Among the eastern Tuvans the ritual's first implement which the young shaman received was a staff (*tajaq*). It was often topped with a human head of wood – the *ēren* of a shaman ancestor.<sup>19</sup> The image of the shaman ancestor appeared also on many cross-pieces of drums of western Tuva shamans which is characteristic also of a number of other peoples of Southern Siberia.

Singular *ērens* were the representations of shaman ancestors' masks on headgears. Some of our informants regarded as a shaman ancestor's *ēren* the image of a human face (embroidered with deer-hair or made with appliqués of linen cloth) on the headband of Todzhan shamans.<sup>20</sup>

In central Tuva two masks carved out of juniper tree were sewn on the sides of the shaman's head-dress consisting of a feather-crowned headband usually adorned with a copper horn or two. A man's mask to the right a woman's to the left. It was held that they represented shaman ancestors. The State Museum of Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR in Leningrad preserves two unique masks from a shaman's head-dress (coll. of F. Kon).<sup>21</sup> One of them (11 cm high) pictures a relatively narrow face of a man with a broad flattened nose, big round eyes without pupils, a fiercely gaping mouth, and bared teeth. The other is apparently a woman's mask (9 cm high), fashioned more gently and with severely tightened lips, while Mongoloid characteristics are hardly expressed on the facial lines, owing perhaps to an endeavour to portray the likeness of a certain face. These and similar bas-reliefs on head-dresses of western Tuva shamans, as a rule, were carved with great artistic skill and can be regarded as original pieces of Tuvanian folk art.

Some shamans in central Tuva had the images of shaman ancestors carved out of juniper tree in the shape of human figures holding a drum in

<sup>18</sup> See Вайнштейн (1961), Fig. 146b.

<sup>19</sup> On the cross-pieces of drums of the Tuvans, as a rule, the entire figure of the shaman was represented wearing a costume and holding the drum in his hands, while among the Altaians only a head or sometimes two were pictured. For the representation of the latter, see, e.g. Diószegi (1962), Fig. 165.

<sup>20</sup> See Вайнштейн (1961), Fig. 165.

<sup>21</sup> ГМЭ, Nos 650–18, 19.

their hands, and kept them on the upper part of the flaps of their robe; the male image was placed on the right-hand flap and the female one on the left, which probably was the reflection of an ancient tradition.<sup>22</sup>

The ancestor *ērens* of the shaman were believed to provide a kind of protection. In their incantations the shamans often called them *qamgalaŋan ēren* (Tuvan *qamgalal* 'protection'). It was held that also strong and famous shamans, just as even certain persons other than shamans, after death became anthropomorphic *ērens*. Thus, for example, in curing eye-disease Tuvans were helped by the *ēren* of 'a wandering soul from the white Tuba'.<sup>23</sup> Often such *ērens* had as their *lekans* anthropomorphic images with Europoid features. This was possibly the origin of the *nortaq ēren* executed by a local craftsman amazingly realistically and probably even with elements of fine portraiture. This *ongon*, held to be the *ēren* of happiness, is kept in the State Ethnographic Museum of Leningrad. Here we can see a really highly artistic work by an unknown master.

Especially remarkable among the anthropomorphic *ongons* is the *emegelči ēren*. This *ēren*'s *lekan* was prepared by women after instructions from shamans when children died at an early age or a woman remained childless in marriage. Also it was held that this *ēren* was the protector of women in childbirth and of the family hearth and property. For making the *lekan* of this *ēren* they used new white felt or clean linen. After the instruction of the shaman a woman sewed on this piece of linen cloth one or more anthropomorphic figures. The frame of the figure could be of wood or metal. The clothing of the figures was made of linen, felt or peltry. Beads marked the eyes and sometimes the nose as well. If there was more than one figure, then one symbolized an ancestor of the clan in the female line, the second figure represented the woman in whose honour the *ēren* was made, and the rest of the figures portrayed her children. The frames of female figures were often executed with signs of the sex, and if there was a boy among the figures of children, it was made with a diminutive bow and arrows in his hands. Besides, we have discovered an *emegelči ēren* with only a single figure representing an ancestor of the clan in the female line (this *ēren* was found in the family of shaman Šončurkhama at Tere-Khol). If a housewife died childless, as some informants said, the *ēren* was buried with her. The *emegelči ēren* was kept in the woman's half of the *yurta* by the entrance, and at night it was covered with a small curtain.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *The Book of Marco Polo* (in Russian), Moscow 1956, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Радлов (1907), 501.

It is to be noted that in literature there is an observation regarding the *emegelči ēren* to contradict the above information. L. P. Potapov states that in western Tuva the *emegelči ēren*'s figures represented father, mother and children, while the *ēren* served "to protect property kept in the *yurta*".<sup>24</sup> It may be that this observation was the result of the informant's mistake. Let us note that our materials are corroborated by findings of G. N. Potanin dating from the late 19th century. Potanin wrote that among the Tuvans living on the Ulugh-Khem and the Kaa-Khem there was an *Emegeldžin* or *Emegen ongon*: "this *ongon* was assembled by those who were childless (to whom no child was born, or whose child died after birth)".<sup>25</sup>

Some *ongons* akin to the Tuvinian *emegelči ēren* with similar functions are described among many Southern-Siberian peoples. Thus the Altaians described an *ongon* by the cognate name *emegender*, whose doll figures were put together out of pieces of cloth stuffed with oakum, while among the Shors as well as the Tuvans the frame could be of wood.<sup>26</sup> This *ongon* is known to the Kumandins and the Teleuts as well. Everywhere it protected the children first of all; and also the hearth and property.<sup>27</sup> This widespread occurrence of the *ongon* in question is an indication of its ancient origin. The *emegelči ēren* probably goes back to the cult of motherhood, the roots of which come from very remote antiquity and from part of the fecundity cult widespread among almost all peoples in the world. In this connection it is impossible not to think of the Old Turkic goddess *Umaj*, protector of the family hearth and progeny, whom A. N. Bernštam rightly regarded as a survival of the ancient mother cult.<sup>28</sup>

The *qirgīs ēren* was fairly widespread among the Tuvans (*qirgīs* is one of the ethnic groups making up the Tuvan people). It was made to heal a person of diseases 'in the upper part', i.e. above the waist. The *lekan* comprised one or more anthropomorphic representations. These were in the form of silhouetted human figures of felt or tin sheets and were 'attired' in linen cloth. I saw a *qirgīs ēren* with two figures (8 cm high) sewn on felt (size 15 cm by 15 cm). The left-hand one pictured the shaman and was represented holding a drum, the other (without drum) symbolized the

<sup>24</sup> Потапов (1960), 221.

<sup>25</sup> Потанин (1883), 99. In comparing the Tuvinian *ongons* with those corresponding to them in name among other Siberian peoples, one often discovers that they fulfil entirely different functions. Thus, when writing about the *emegelči ongon* of the Buryats, Georgi calls it the 'idol of struggle'. See Георги (1777), 119.

<sup>26</sup> Дыренкова (1937), 127.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Бернштам (1949), 99.

sick person. Sometimes the *qirgīs ēren* consisted of only the shaman's figurine. According to information I gathered from M. B. Kenin-Lopsan, the shamans consecrated this *ēren* together with a sorrel horse, thinking that only in this case was it possible for recovery to begin, because the disease demon expelled by this *ēren* could leave the patient more easily if it got an opportunity to move into the horse. In this connection it is impossible not to call attention to the fact that among the Khakas (Kizils) Klemenc described an *ongon* which had its own *idiq* – a sorrel.

It was held also that, in a tent where there was a *qirgīs ēren*, none of the neighbours should ask for milk or other products lest they should anger this *ēren* and let it do some wrong. It was always guarded behind a cloth curtain. The *qirgīs ēren* belonged to strong and evil *ongons* which could not only heal; these were believed to be able to inflict diseases if they were angered. In the *yurta* the *qirgīs ēren* usually hung by the bed of the sick person. I could not sufficiently clarify the origin and purport of this *ēren* as the shamans only hinted that the given figure was the spirit of a Kirghiz shaman who had died a very long time before.

In southeastern Tuva the *tožu ēren* was considered very strong. According to some shamans it was made in the form of a multicoloured cloth-covered stick, to the upper part of which was fastened a shaman figure of wood and cloth with a drum in his hands. This was held to be the *ongon* of the spirit of one of the strongest Todzhan shamans dead for a very long time.

The Tuvans knew also about other anthropomorphic *ērens*, which we cannot describe for lack of space here. Let us state only that they were made not only from felt and tin sheets; *lekans* were also carved from wood and often looked rather archaic. Such are, for example, the *ēren* figurines from the collections of the State Museum of Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR in Leningrad. Anthropomorphic representations of these *ērens* were prepared in an extremely schematic manner. They have elongated bodies, short stumps for legs and small projections on the sides for arms.<sup>29</sup> The face with the nose and eyes is executed in more detail. The head is topped with a cylindrical projection – a characteristic ancient feature of many Siberian idols, known also from cultic figurines of peoples of the Far East, Altaians and Siberian Tatars. Representations of idols with similar projections are to be found in the archaeological relics of Siberia from the Bronze Age, including rock drawings in Tuva, where the

<sup>29</sup> *ГМЭ*, No. 10754; and in the collection of *MH* (former Museum of the Peoples of the USSR): Nos 48663, 47991. The height of the figures is from 14 to 25 cm.

oldest petroglyphs display idols with hornlike projections over the middle of the head.<sup>30</sup>

Another very archaic-looking *ēren* represents a woman (from the collection of the former Museum of the Peoples of the USSR, now preserved in the State Ethnographic Museum).<sup>31</sup> The figure is about 24 cm high. It is executed crudely and schematically. On the head we can make out the eyes, nose and mouth, on the body there are slender arms placed on a round belly. The legs with slightly bent knees are extended. On the whole the figure is rather reminiscent of a carved wooden image found during excavations at the Kokel burial site dating from the Hunnic period.<sup>32</sup>

A very interesting type is the *čelēš ēren* (*čelēš* 'rainbow'). Such an *ēren* was used by shamans for finding out which disease spirit had settled in their patient. It was held that this *ēren* helped especially to heal small children, in particular when they were crying much in pain. In central Tuva I had occasion to see a *lekan* of this *ēren*. It was a rectangular piece of cloth (15 cm by 22 cm) sewn of nine shreds of different colours corresponding to the colours of the rainbow. Sewn on the cloth were silhouetted images cut out of thin copper sheets – to the left a crescent moon, in the middle a rider on horseback symbolizing the sick person, to the right a small disc representing the sun. The piece of cloth was 15 cm, the figures 5 to 8 cm high. Some shamans made a more modest *lekan* for this *ēren*, consisting of five ribbons of different colours tied to the top part. There were shamans who put on the top of this bundle metal images of the moon, the sun and a dragon's head.

The shamans used to appeal to the *ērens* during shamanizing rituals. We succeeded in collecting various texts of shaman's appeals to *ērens*, but we do not reproduce them here for want of space.

No doubt some Tuvian ongons were extremely old, such as the *emegelči ēren* known not only in all Tuva but among many other Turko-Mongolian peoples of Southern Siberia, while others were of recent origin, there being only a few specimens found within a small, locally very limited area. It is most likely that the ancestors of Tuvans, like other Siberian peoples, had common tribal and clan *ērens* but, to judge from materials characterizing the beliefs of Tuvans of the late 19th and the early 20th century, such gradations did not survive, owing evidently to the fact that by that time the Tuvian nationality had long been past the process of consolidation.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Грач (1957), Table XXXI.

<sup>31</sup> МН, No. 3034–17/359.

<sup>32</sup> Дьяконова (1970), Fig. 45–5.

<sup>33</sup> Вайнштейн (1958).



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# Abbreviations

AA	= American Anthropologist
AE	= Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
AMNHM	= American Museum of Natural History Memoires
AOH	= Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
ČE	= Československé Etnografie
FFC	= Folklore Fellows Communications
GME	= see ГМЭ
ICAES	= International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences
ICFNR	= International Congress for Folk Narrative Research
JSFOu	= Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne
MAE	= see МАЭ
MSFOu	= Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne
MSOS	= Mitteilungen des Seminars für ostasiatische Sprachen zu Berlin
NyK	= Nyelvtudományi Közlemények
RHR	= Revue de l'Histoire des Religions
SWJA	= Southwestern Journal of Anthropology
TNYAS	= Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences
ААН	= Архив Академии наук СССР
АИЭ	= Архив Института этнографии
АЛОИЭ	= Архив Ленинградского отделения Института этнографии АН СССР
АРГО	= Архив Русского географического общества
ГМЭ	= Государственный музей этнографии
ЖС	= Живая старина
ЗВСОРГО	= Записки Восточносибирского отдела Русского географического общества
ЗКВАМРАН	= Записки коллегии востоковедов при Азиатском музее Российской Академии наук

ЗПОРГО	= Записки Приамурского отдела Русского географического общества
ЗРГООЭ	= Записки Русского географического общества по отделению этнографии
ЗЧОРГО	= Записки читинского отдела Русского географического общества
ЗЯКО	= Записки Якутского краеведческого общества
ИВСОРГО	= Известия Восточносибирского Русского географического общества
Изв. ВГО	= Известия Всесоюзного географического общества
ИИООИС	= Известия Иркутского отдела Общества изучения Сибири
ИОЛЕАЭ	= Известия Общества любителей естествознания антропологии и этнографии
ИЭ АН СССР	= Институт этнографии Академии наук СССР
КПВ	= Культура и письменность Востока
КрС	= Краткие сообщения Института этнографии
КСИНА	= Краткие сообщения Института народов Азии
ЛОААН	= Ленинградское отделение Архива Академии наук
МАЭ	= Музей антропологии и этнографии
МИА	= Материалы и исследования по археологии СССР
МН	= Музей народов СССР
СБМАЭ	= Сборник Музея антропологии и этнографии
СВ	= Сибирский вестник
СС	= Советский Север
СТ	= Советская тюркология
СЭ	= Советская этнография
ТрБКНИИСО АН	= Труды Бурятского комплексного научно-исследовательского института Сибирского отделения АН СССР
ТИИАЭ АНК	= Труды Института истории, археологии и этнографии АН Казахской ССР
ТрИЭ	= Труды Института этнографии АН СССР
ТТКАЭ	= Труды Туванской комплексной археолого-этнографической экспедиции
ТТОИС	= Труды Томского общества изучения Сибири
УЗИФФВ	= Ученые записки Историко-филологического факультета во Владивостоке
Э	= Этнография
ЭО	= Этнографическое обозрение

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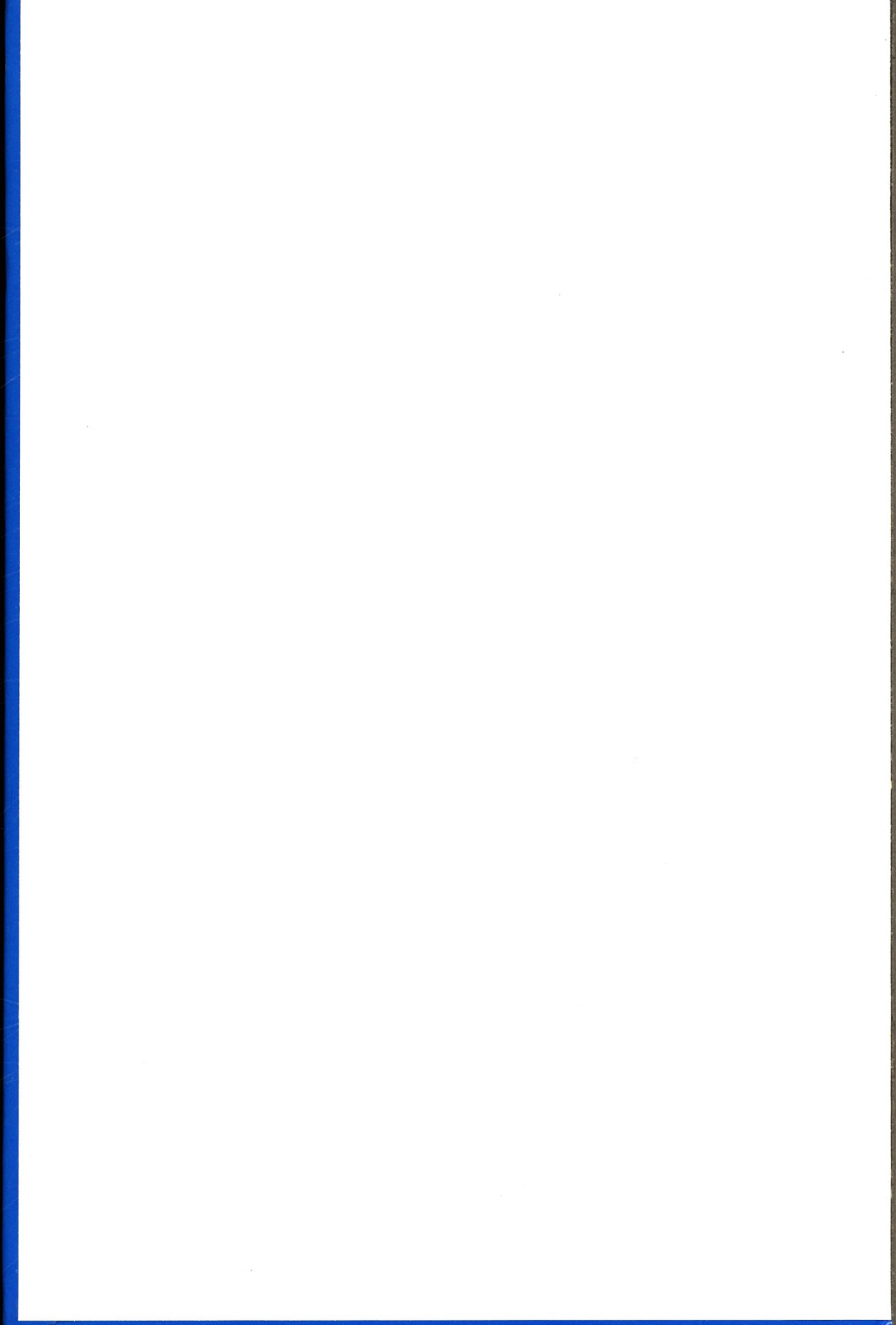












ISBN 963 05 6964 7



9 789630 569644

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